

The Contribution of Tong A Fie in Creating Religious Harmony in North Sumatera, Medan, Indonesia

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Abstract: Religion is the basic need of every human being who has a tendency to submit and obey God in his life. In Medan Tjong A Fie socializes widely and is known as a merciful and very generous trader, he maintains good relationship with many religions. He gave many contribution to some people with many religions by helping to build the places of worship such as mosque; church; Buddhist temple in term of money, land, building railway station, etc. The kindness of A Fie is famous until the whole of North Sumatra without distinguishing tribe, religion and race.

Keywords: religion; harmony; society; worship

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I. INTRODUCTION

In religious life, the Province of North Sumatra embraces a variety of religions. The religious composition of the people of North Sumatra is Islam 65.45%, Protestant Christian 26.62%, Catholic 4.78%, Hindu 0.19%, Buddhist 2.82% and others 0.14%. The number of Islamic houses of worship, *Mosque and Mushalla* 21,933, Protestant Christian temples 12,209, 1,848 Catholic temples, 61 Hindu houses of worship, 323 Buddhist temples and 11 Confucian temples. Adhesive of harmony in North Sumatra is the solidarity of religious communities and the intimate association between religious leaders. For example, scholars visit and dialogue with other religious leaders, and vice versa, so the atmosphere of tolerance among religious believers has become a tradition in most of these areas. There is a view among the public about the correlation line between Chinese ethnicity with Buddha. This is because the majority of Buddhists are ethnic Chinese, although on the other hand there are also ethnic Chinese who are non-Buddhist. However, as a good Indonesian nation should not have a narrow mindset to create competition. This diversity should create an atmosphere of mutual support, mutual trust, mutual respect and mutual assistance between one group of religions with other religious groups. It is Tjong A Fie, the legendary Chinese merchant in *Tanah Melayu Deli* as a benefactor and his success embraces the whole heterogeneous society. The kindness of A Fie is famous until the whole of North Sumatra without distinguishing tribe, religion and race.

When he first set foot in North Sumatra in 1880, A Fie was 20 years old. He came to the Malay land Deli following his brother, Tjong Yong Hian, who had moved five years earlier. In 1911, Tjong Yong Hian passed away. His position as Major Tionghoa in Medan was immediately replaced by A Fie while continuing to do social work. Many educational institutions managed by Christians, Muslims and Chinese themselves receive great attention. In fact, the development of the Methodist School is one of his contributions. Many other contributions made by A Fie can be seen not only in the various Pagoda, Mosque and Church. A Fie also contributed to the construction of the Shri Mariamman Grand Temple, built in 1884 and located in *Kampung Madras or Kampung Kling*, on *Jl. Teuku Umar number 13*, Medan. In honor of his generosity, in Kek Lok temple located in Ayer Itam, Penang, stands with the magnificent statue of A Fie. In fact, his name is also immortalized as name in Medan City and *Tebing Tinggi*. Over time, A Fie was appointed a Chinese Lieutenant because her talent muffled riot in Deli. He also moved to Medan to develop the task as Captain. Because of his position as Captain of China, flexibility in socializing and developing business, A Fie established good relationship with King Deli, Sultan Ma'moen al-Rasjid Perkasa Alamsjah and became a confidant of the Deli community leader. He got the right of concession to supply the nipah roof for the purposes of tobacco plantation and ward making. In a plural society, it is necessary to think that outside of the religion it embraces also the truth, although not as complete and as perfect as the religion it embraces. This view needs to be grown in society, and when viewed from the truth of each teaching, one still believes that its religion is the best and the right. However, at the same time they have a tolerant attitude and friendship with followers of other religions. In order to realize a

positive outlook in the society, it takes hard work by involving many factors, both political, economic, social and cultural. This effort can be realized if based on sincere intentions. On February 4, 1921, A Fie breathed his last breath due to 'apopleksia' or cerebral hemorrhage at his residence on *Jl. Kesawan*. The entire community of North Sumatra, Aceh, Padang, Penang, Malaysia, Singapore and Java, grieving. Thousands of people flocked to come and deliver to the last resting place in the area of Brayan Island.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Religion and Ethnic Relations

As for some options in society to answer religious plurality, First is to accept the presence of others on the basis of the concept of peaceful coexistence. Secondly, developing religious social co-operation through various activities that symbolically demonstrate and functionally fosters the process of developing a harmonious religious life. Third is the search for the Intersection of Religions to answer the problems, challenges and concerns of mankind. Based on the above-mentioned community option, it is a preliminary picture of the shared and basic conditions for each religious community to build a plural society that can live together in a community togetherness.

Religion is the basic need of every human being who has a tendency to submit and obey God in his life. The following will present some definitions of religion:

- a. Religion is a phenomenon so often everywhere. Religion is concerned with the human effort to measure the depth of the meaning of its own existence and the existence of the universe. According to him Religion can arouse the most perfect inner happiness, and also the feeling of fear and horror, even though Religion is directed solely to an unseen world but Religion also involves itself on the everyday problems of this world.
- b. Religion is the source of the images of this world that ought to be; repeated images can be reinterpreted to evaluate new and unexpected social patterns. Relevance of Religion relates to its ability to continually adjust its highest profile images to new situations and forms of criticism. A Religion can be generically defined as a symbol system (e.g words and gestures, stories and practices, objects and places) that serve the religion, which is a continuously used participant to approach and establish the right or proper relationship with something which is believed to be an absolute reality.

From the above definition it is clear that Religion has a fairly broad understanding and involves various aspects of life, the above definition is a fraction of the many definitions of Religion. The philosophy of life of the Indonesian nation which is formulated in Pancasila, where the first precepts are the principle of Belief in the One Supreme God, is the first reason for the government with the community to create a safe and peaceful atmosphere in fostering harmony of religious life. All religious people are the main elements of a state based on Pancasila. Religion must animate the life of the Nation and affect the attitude of life, behavior and daily actions. In carrying out the development of religious life, the government has aligned the program to make the three forms of religious harmony a reality and every person needs to welcome with a sense of responsibility, because as religious people and as well as citizens of Indonesia who are aware of responsibility for the development of the Nation and the State. North Sumatera Province is the fourth most populous province in Indonesia. based on statistics data of population percentage of ethnic population based on ethnic is Malay 11,86%, Karo 5.09%, Batak 20,62%, Mandailing 12,27%, Nias 6.36%, Simalungun 1.04%, and Pakpak 0.73%. The ethnic archipelago is Java 31.4%, Minang 2.66%, Chinese 2.71%, Aceh 0.97% and the combined ethnic world of other migrants by 3.29%. From the religious aspect of Islam 65.45%, Protestant 2.62%, Catholic 4.78%, Buddhist 2.82%, Hindu 0.19%, Khonghuchu and other faith followers 0.14%. From these data, North Sumatra is a plural, multi-ethnic, cultural, and religious society. DiversityThe power becomes the power so as to manage the differences into extraordinary potential. The province is also a meeting place of Religions. If back again before the Religions entered this area, there were beliefs of the indigenous people of Anemism and Dynamism, namely Parmalim, Pelbegu and Pemena. When the relationship between Religion and ethnicity is still harmonious, social relations are still running normally, in other words will minimize the occurrence of social conflict. Although the people of North Sumatra have social and cultural pluralism, but traditionally they have a strategy in fostering social integration through integration, it is hoped that the plural society can live in an atmosphere of mutual understanding and appreciation. They managed to knit the intersection of the space so that the public there is no desire to highlight the differentiating aspects among them.

2.2 Religion Conflict

Religion is part of life the Indonesian nation and participate in shaping the soul and outlook of human life of Indonesia. Basically humans are religious with the same goal, namely believing a reality of being transcendental and Perfect. A closed attitude and truth claim (correct determination) can lead to inconvenience and disharmony. Therefore it is necessary to build together the attitude of inclusiveness and openness for fellow believers in society by eliminating the identity of religious teachings adopted. In general, the term social conflict contains a series of phenomena of conflict and interpersonal dissension through from class conflict to

international conflicts and warfare. In this case the conflict model at its most general level considers society as a pluralistic having conflicting interests, and if the model in the group always describes the existence of two or more individuals, then one will only be able to determine whether those specific actions profit. People will never be able to determine whether their actions are beneficial to the system as a whole. If someone talks about it that way then he could be misguided.

There are several theories about the various causes of conflicts are as follows:

- a. Theory of public relations. This theory assumes that conflicts are caused by continuous polarization, unbelief and hostility among different groups within a society. The objective of this theory is to improve communication and understanding between conflicting groups, and to encourage tolerance so that people are more receptive to the diversity that is inevitable in society.
- b. The theory of principle negotiation. This theory assumes that conflicts are caused by unharmed positions, differences about things by conflict parties by separating personal feelings and issues or issues, how to enable them to negotiate based on their interests from a particular position which already exists, while still launching the process of achieving an agreement that benefits both parties or all parties.
- c. The theory of human needs. This theory assumes that conflicts rooted in human beings are caused by the physical, mental and social basic human needs, which are not met or impeded by security, identity, recognition, participation and autonomy. The goal the theory seeks to achieve is to assist conflict-affected parties in identifying and working with their unmet needs and producing choices to meet those needs. This is done so that the parties to the conflict reach an agreement to meet the basic needs of all parties.

In Medan, Tjong A Fie socializes widely and is known as a merciful and very generous trader, he maintains good relationships with Sultan Deli, Makmoen Al Rasyid Perkasa Alamsyah and Tuanku Raja Moeda. Tjong A Fie is finally trusted by Sultan Deli to represent him in various business affairs and this trust is well maintained and all affairs are well done, thanks to his reputation then his name becomes increasingly famous throughout the Deli, in addition to being the belief of the Sultan, Tjong A Fie also established a relationship with other merchants including European traders and local government officials. Being the belief of the Sultan of Deli was the beginning of success of Tjong A Fie, until the Sultan gave him a concession for the provision of Nipah roof for the manufacture of wards in the tobacco plantation. Tjong A Fie finally managed to monopolize the opium trade for the Deli area and from there he began to expand his business. By using his instinct he purchased Si Boelan rubber plantation which ultimately gave him many advantages, when at that time the prima donna was a tobacco plantation, Deli Tobacco was very popular in foreign countries all the way to America, in 1891 the price of tobacco had decreased very sharply due to the abundant harvest in many countries, by itself the price becomes drastically reduced, especially with the "McKinley" tariff system that raises the tobacco import duty, then people start turning to the rubber business, it is this event that gives Tjong A Fie a tremendous advantage.

III. DISCUSSION

As the leader of Tionghoa society at that time Tjong A Fie is highly respected and respected because he is very good at combining economic power and political power. Its Business Kingdom includes a variety of Plantations, Palm Oil Mill, Bank, Sugar Factory and Railway Company, at that time there were more than 10,000 people employees in various companies. On the recommendation of Sultan Deli he was appointed as *gemeenteraad* (City Council) and Culture Road (Council of Cultures), He was also appointed as an advisor by the Government of the Dutch East Indies for Chinese affairs. Tjong A Fie contributed one-third of the cost of building Masjid Raya al-Mashum Medan as his respect for Sultan Deli, Ma'mun al-Rashid and the population of Islam Medan.

Masjid Raya Medan, which stands not far from Maimun Palace is a building that also becomes a trace of the glory of Deli. Built in 1906, during the reign of Sultan Ma'mun Al Rashid, the mosque is still functioning as it was, serving Muslims in Medan who want to worship. Its flat dome and crescent-shaped crescent at the top, like other mosques, a towering tower look to add to the splendor and religious of this mosque. The application of oil paintings in the form of flowers and plants winding on the walls, ceilings and sturdy columns on the inside of this mosque, increasingly show the high value of the art of this mosque. *Masjid Raya al-Mashun* was built on August 21, 1906, completed and opened to the public on September 10, 1909 AD. At that time, the ruling in Deli Sultanate was Sultan Ma'mun al Rashid Perkasa Alamsyah IX. The entire cost of building a mosque, estimated at one million guilders is borne by the Sultan and a third of the cost of the construction is aided by Chinese merchant Tjong A Fie. This mosque is a royal mosque, therefore built very magnificent. At that time, the Sultan was principled, the grandeur of the mosque was more important than his own palace. There are three popular designations for this mosque are: *Masjid al-Mashun*, Deli Mosque and *Masjid Agung Medan*. *Masjid Raya al-Mashun* is the pride of Medan residents at that time. Along with the development, then formed a new settlement next to the mosque called Kota Maksum, so the mosque worshippers increasingly crowded. Currently, in addition to being the center of worship of Muslims in the city of Medan, *Masjid al-Mashun* also become a tourist

destination visited by domestic and foreign tourists. One of the advantages of this mosque is, still in its original form, has not undergone a specific change. Location of the mosque adjacent to the Palace Deli, in Medan Maimoon district, Medan, North Sumatera, Indonesia. Mosque building is divided into three: main room, place ablution and entrance gate. The main room is used as a place of prayer, the shape is octagonal not the same side. On the smaller side of the face, there is a porch, the unit that sticks and juts out. In front of each porch there is a ladder. On the front porch located in the east, there is arch compound, like arch contained in the mosques of Andalusia. The left (south-east) and right (north-east) sides of the main prayer hall are punctuated by alleys. This alley has rows of openings (leafless windows) of arch that stand on a block, not a column. The octagonal plan of the main space is shown with cylindrical columns at each marble point. The columns support the arch that is shaped and decorated with Moorish and Arabesque patterns.

Above the arch, there is tambour (dome support wall) the main dome pedestal. The largest main dome catered to the center in front of the *mihrab* and the pulpit. The shape of the dome follows the Turkish model, with a sharply shaped eightfold shape. Then, between the dome, gang around and the front of the prayer room is a single tilted sidewall. On the walls of the dome (tambour), there is an upper window, as well as on the upper wall of the inner terrace, so the main prayer room gets light enough. The main dome is surrounded by the same domed domes, but smaller. The mosque is located in a large open courtyard, surrounding the entire mosque building. Width of yard reaches approximately one hectare. On the *mihrab* and porch axes enter the front on the east, there is a gate. The existence of this gate strengthens the direction of the Qiblah position. There are allegations, this design gets the influence of the architecture of ancient mosques in India, Arab and Egypt. In a separate position, there is a main gate with Indian architecture, located separately from the main hall. The shape of a flat-roofed flat unit. At the front, there is a broken arch to enter. The top of the middle gate is decorated with molding and dentil, which is a row of small cubes, dense like a tooth on the right side (north-east) of the mosque there is a minaret with a unique shape, with a square plan supporting the upper part of a cylindrical shape. Minaret body ornaments are a mixture of Egyptian, Iranian and Arabic models. Gothic influences are also present in this mosque, among others, visible at the top of the broken floating window, at the top of which there are circular openings. *Mihrabnya* quite beautiful, made of marble and topped by a pointed dome. The designer of this mosque is JI. A. Tingdeman, an architect from the Netherlands. Old Mosque or *Gang Bengkok Mosque (Masjid-Medan road)*, Lama mosque construction or also known as *Gang Bengkok Mosque* is a request from local people who need worship facilities, this request is then approved and fully funded by Tjong A Fie, socially the building of the mosque impact on plural life in Medan City. The crooked alley mosque was founded by Major China Tjong A Fie as a tribute directly to the deli sultanate. With the building of this mosque whose land is represented by Datuk Kesawan (H. Mohammad Ali). Once completed, the stewardship of the mosque was given to the Sultan Deli Makmun Al Rashid which then name on July 19, 1874.

In terms of architecture of this mosque has privileges in comparison with other mosques because it uses a blend of Chinese architecture, Persian, Roman and added Malay ornaments. However, from the beginning of manufacture until now there is one thing that is not in other mosques that always use the ornaments of calligraphy, this mosque does not contain any calligraphy ornaments on the outside or in the mosque. But that is not a problem, but what should be an appreciation is the blend of architecture that symbolizes the interaction between cultures happening there peacefully. If at first glance it does not seem like a mosque building because it is similar *klenteng*, place of worship Khonghucu people. The roof is curved and there are four half-meter pillars supporting the entire building. Everything will change when entering the inside of which there is a pulpit in the form of tall buildings made of wood that has a staircase staircase as many as 13 which are used as a place of preaching before the prayers of Friday. Not only the pulpit, but there is one unique object in this mosque that is not present in other mosques in the modern era today, where there is a *bimbalbilaladzan* with four legs with a length of 2.10 meters and 1.90 meters wide and 2.20 meter whose function is to make the sound of the call to prayer more audible if one who echoes it from a higher place. Because when his development has not used a loudspeaker like a microphone. Those objects are one of the historical treasures that still exist today. In the main section of this 18x18 mosque there are four pillars with a circle diameter of 2.10 and the unique pole like this is also found in the Tjong A Fie palace located in JI. A. Yani, a nearby area also not far from the *Lama Gang Bengkok mosque*. It is therefore also expected that the architect who built by Tjong A Fie, is also an architect who built the *Lama Gang Bengkok Mosque*. The original room on the outside is equipped and at the end of 16 rectangular pole with side width more than 50 cm with a height of 5 meters.

However, because of age is only this pillar is still the original construction of the building on the inside, previously according to the word of the current demolition, roof framework all use wood but because the wood began to rot and had a collapse. So replaced was the roof frame with aluminum. Not only the construction part, which has improved. The walls of this mosque has undergone a very visible change clearly. But on the top of the wall there is a building ornament that is kept authenticity until now. On the outside of this mosque is much different when compared with the original. This expansion is done because the capacity of mosques pilgrims who have the main building only measuring 18x18 meters is not able to accommodate the more crowded

Muslims around the friend. Although there is still the original part of this building that is not removed on the outside, the bee ornament depends which is typical Malay. Another uniqueness of this mosque is to have an old well according to the explanation of the kenazira, the water in it never subsided despite the dry season. This well is used by worshipers to pray. About 2 meters in diameter and located in the female bathroom.

The remains of a crooked mosque are still continuing to take care of this historic mosque, which at present is headed by Mr. H. Saifudin Nasution, SH. Even this separation has a library that helps people to add insight about religion and want to know about the past of this mosque.

Picture I The Construction of the Old Mosque in Sipirok, South Tapanuli



When researchers conducted interviews with Guide Mansion, unfortunately, they do not know the history of the building of the mosque in Sipirok Tapanuli Selatan. After examining various sources, it turns out that this mosque is gone and the memories are only found in Tjong A Fie Mansion as seen in the picture above. But this has been a strong evidence that Tjong A Fie care about harmony of religious harmony in North Sumatera. After the Sunggal War a lot of Dutch soldiers who came to *Labuhan* and Medan among them coupled with the lordskebon. There are already about 300 Catholics. So at the beginning of 1879 was built Catholic church *Street Pemuda no.1* (Formerly this street named *PaleisWeg* . This is the first Church in Medan. The beginning of the Cathedral Church of Medan is just a hut-roofed palace where dozens of Indian-Tamil and Dutch Catholics are majority and sent a priest Jezuit (Dutch Army Pastor) from Padang dedicated to European Catholics. Also built in the area of Padang Boelan as the place of the pastor (Now the Karo Church) and that is where the first Karo people were baptized (1893).

The development of the people then encouraged the expansion of the church. The development was carried out gradually beginning in 1884. It was not until 1905, when the Catholics numbered 1200, the present Church construction began. The construction of the church in 1905 was initiated and carried out by the Jesuit priests who worked in Medan. The cathedral church was then built with stone walls, roofed with zinc and some still covered with palm leaves and palm fiber and inaugurated in November of that year. Beginning January 30, 1928, the Church expanded by adding parts of the priest's home, confessional space and with the front courtyard and tower. The permanent expansion and development in 1928 was designed by a Dutch architect named Mr. Han Groenewegen and conducted by Mr. Langereis. The result of the architect's design and execution can be seen today, which makes the Cathedral Church on *JIPemuda No 1 Medan* (known as the Cathedral Church) as one of the historic and architectural high-rise buildings in this city of Medan. The complete and official title for this Cathedral Church is the Sacred Catholic Church of the Immaculate Conception of the Cathedral of Medan.

There is one other old building on the right side of the Cathedral Church. The building is a house where pastors are commonly known as the rectory. Cathedral rectory was built in 1906 with wooden walls and also roofed with palm and palm fiber. It was only during the period 1964-1965 that the rectory building was replaced by a permanent building as can be seen at this time. (secretariat of Medan Cathedral). The existence of *KampungKeling* Medan started at the beginning of the 19th century. At that time, many Tamil Indians were imported from the original country to work as laborers at Deli tobacco plantations. Plantation owners prefer to

use imported labor from India because they are known to be quite active. And the longer, more and more Tamil Indians are working in the city of Medan. Over time, not only India Tamil who came to Medan to try his fortune. There are also Indian Punjab and Cheyttar who also come here. In addition to working as plantation laborers, the Indians also got jobs in the construction sector and not even a few who work as a trader. In the 1950s, *KampungKeling* Medan is still dominated by people of Indian descent. But the number of Indian descendants began to decline and many eventually chose to live to another location. Those who now mostly live in *Keling* Majority are Chinese descendants.

IV. CONCLUSION

In realizing the harmony of the religious community, Tjong A Fie realized his desire to *build the Temple Worship facilities in Klingenstraat* (now known as Keling) and in PuloBrayan, Buddhist Temple in Brayan, Hindu temple for Indians, and with great respect to Sultan Deli Makmun Al-Rashid and the Muslim population in Medan were main construction of the Great Mosque of Medan by contributing one-third of the total cost of construction, Tjong A Fie also built the *Gang Bengkok Mosque* near his home in *Jl. Kesawan* (now Jl. Jend. A. Yani), except the land Wakaf land from Datuk Haji M. Ali, built the cathedral church, built the Sipirok mosque in Central Tapanuli, and he also provided the burial ground in PuloBrayan and established a death gathering to care for the grave. He also founded Leprosy Special Hospital on Sicanang Island. Throughout the city of Medan, even in almost all of East Sumatra, Tjong A Fie is famous for its generosity. Lots of schools that get help both Chinese schools, Christian and Islamic schools. He also provides land for Methodist schools in Medan. He not only contributed to temples but also churches, mosques, and even Hindu temples were helped. Its overall contribution is in the background by the historical principle, economic power and humanity.

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