

# **PALEMBANG'S ART ARTIFACTS AND HERITAGE WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF CULTURAL ACTIVITY AND PERSPECTIVE OF ART MANAGEMENT**

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## **Abstract**

Palembang is one of important areas in Indonesia which has a lot of art artifacts and cultural heritages. All of those artifacts have been existed since the Pre-historic, Hindu-Budhist era until the coming of islam with its own characteristic. However, ythe reality seen tody is that many art and culttural heritages are not taken care of and treated well, especially from the government and community who live around the cultural region. Thus, it is considered to be necessary to fine a fundamental system to organize and manage the cultural heritage properly in order to support the activity of social-cultural life of the community surrounding.

**Keywords:** Palembang's art artifacts, Heritage, cultural activity, organization and management.

## **I. Introduction**

South Sumatera, with Palembang as its capital, is one of important areas which has important role in bearing art and culture diversity on Sumatera, especially and in Indonesia, in general. Historical records prove that Palembang is one of region which has given out much of art artifacts and culture heritage of the past that became benchmarks in giving direction towards today and

future cultures. The heritage, or called as artifacts in form of inscriptions, temples, statues, ceramics, traditional architectures, decorative arts, textiles in form of *sungkit* and other art products in many sizes, forms, styles and materials is spread in this cultural region.

Pre-historical artifacts (in form of paintings on wall caves, stone graves, *menhir*) and other artifacts from Megaliths era (in form of big stone sculptures which are stiff and direct in shape) are many to be seen in plateau areas of Pasemah-Pagar Alam and surrounding areas<sup>1</sup>. This proves that the area had civilization and community life in the past and they had quite good art appreciation. Then, the next development, around the 7<sup>th</sup> century, the big kingdom of Sriwijaya was born. The maritime kingdom which was well-known to Madagascar had a range of colony more extensive than the current Indonesian sovereignty.



Image 1 and 2. Megalithikum art artifact are seen not being taken care

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<sup>1</sup>John Miksic, “Kebudayaan Prasejarah Akhir di Sumatera”, dalam John Miksic, Ed. *Sejarah Awal* (Jakarta: Buku Antar Bangsa Untuk Grolier International, Inc., 2002), 44.

Since the century, South Sumatera was well-known to the South-East Asians as one of centers of the largest and strongest kingdom at that time. The position of Sriwijaya became important to be brought into play for spices and other crops trade route within shipping lines of the Archipelago, Malacca peninsula, Gujarat to the Chinese mainland.<sup>2</sup>

Along with the existence of the biggest maritime kingdom, a Buddhist cultural centre at Palembang; thus, Palembang is also known for being the biggest and first Buddhist cultural centre in Indonesia. Then, gradually, it also emerged an era when the Hinduism also affected and became the religion of smaller kingdoms in Sumatera and, particularly, South Sumatera. The existences of those religions were marked by the discovery of small temples made of bricks (clay) in some regions, such as Riau, Muaro Jambi in Jambi and Bumiayu Temple in the cultural region of Tanah Abang, Muara Enim District of South Sumatera. Even though they were not discovered in complete and intact conditions, the existences of those temples can still be seen today along with their supporting artifacts, such as statues of Vishnu, Shiva, “*kinara-kinari*” and equipments of the religions’ religious needs along with the ornaments attached at certain parts of the artifacts.

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<sup>2</sup> Y. Achadiati S, *Sejarah Peradaban Manusia Zaman Sriwijaya* (Jakarta: Gita Karya, 1988), 5.



Image 3 and 4. The remains of Bumiayu temple Hinduism heritage seem to be neglected

Started from the 13<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> century, gradually, the Islamic influence was developed within this cultural region. The Islamic influence was started from the entrance of traders of spices, gold and textiles; they came continuously from Malacca, Gujarat, China and it was started from the era of Sriwijaya Kingdom. The founders of this religion were predicted from Saudi Arabia and Egypt who were already settled in this region.<sup>3</sup> The Islamic

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<sup>3</sup> Slamet Muljana, *Runtuhnya Kerajaan Hindu Jawa dan Tumbuhnya Negara-Negara Islam di Nusantara* (Yogyakarta: PT. LKis Pelangi Aksara, 2005), 129-131.

influence was clearly visible when the power of Sriwijaya weakened; along, there emerged sultanates on Java Island and some regions in Sumatera, such as Aceh, Riau, Jambi, Palembang and some areas in the archipelago. Same as the earlier culture, the Islamic influence also left some arts and cultures in form artifacts and heritages which have amazing aesthetic values.

As known, in every sultanate or kingdom centre, there would be and emerged crafts centre which their existences were expected to support fulfillment of needs of the sultanate or kingdom; as a consequence, there were many and various crafts centre emerging. Art artifacts were in form of Kris, textiles, weapons, *sungkit*, containers and other live tools which were important to make. This reality shows that the Islamic influence also inherited various artifacts and heritages, such as house of worship, house and very amazing graves. <sup>4</sup>



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<sup>4</sup> Yulriawan Dafri, *Melacak jejak Artefak Seni Etnik Melayu Palembang* (Yogyakarta: Gama Media, 2010), 13-14.



Image 5 and 6. 18<sup>th</sup> century traditional architecture and decorated art artifact which are faded and decayed.

The division of history into periods of pre-historic, Hindi, Buddhist and, the last, Islamic eras in this region brought into births of various artifacts which had each nature and character. The varieties of the art artifacts and heritages which were left became local art and culture richness of Palembang and surrounding areas; and, indirectly, their existences also added to the richness of Indonesian cultural values. This condition gives a picture that Palembang is one of fatherland's regions that have art and culture to be proud of.

The existences of those artifacts and heritages should be maintained, treated and kept for their preservations so that they will not be lost in time; because, besides of being important and valuable assets for knowledge development, those heritages and artifacts are traces of history which are necessary to record within the journey of art and culture development of

Indonesia. Even though their existences are not so popular and exposed well, such as treatments of artifacts in Java, they are still important because they will give impacts in order of social-cultural life of the public in responding to the existences of those art artifacts and heritages that become parts of their lives.

However, the reality seen today is that many art and cultural heritages are not taken care of and treated well. There are many art and cultural heritages left that become broken, lost and wasted in vain because of the lack of public awareness on the importance of the heritages they have. Besides, it seems that the local government is not really hard in addressing the issue. In fact, in some regions where those art and cultural heritages belong, they are not considered as heritages with historical value; but, they are abandoned and not taken care of so that they will be broken at the end.



Image 7. The neglected graves of Moslem kings



Image 8. One of the traditional architecture which isn't in a good care eventhough this heritage is under cultural preservation.

The existences of art artifacts and heritages in Palembang should be taken care of, kept and made to be resources of study for science development, art and historical references and for development, or even made as part of attractions of art and cultural tourism which provide values of education, inspiration and enrich community's intellectual – that will be indirectly stimulate the growth of creative industry centre in those regions; thus, it is considered to be necessary to find a fundamental and appropriate solution to form social cultural, government's and public's awareness in living more sustainably, politely and wisely to participate in organizing, maintaining and providing protection for high-value cultural legacy.



The last hope of the awareness process for the government and community who live around the cultural region is the importance of awareness in forming public activity within management concept of art and culture so that the art artifacts and heritages in the region can exist harmoniously with the supporting community, to kept for their continuities and to instill the importance of concepts of conservation, organization and management continuously.

## **II. Community within Social-Cultural Life**

Be it realized or not, the process of cultural emergence is generally started by a community group who live side by side with the environment where they live. From the reciprocal process and dependence factor between human and its surrounding environment, it would bore various attitudes, ways and rules which they made to be a strategy in doing creativity and activity of daily life.<sup>5</sup> From such a process, various characters of social life and cultural patterns of community would be born. It cannot be denied either that the surrounding environment would have an important role in emerging attitudes, patterns, rules and community system in addressing the life they lead. Especially, with the ability to think which is owned by human beings, it would make them capable of choosing 'good from bad' and in coping with various obstacles they coped.

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<sup>5</sup> Marvin E. Olsen, *The Process Of Social Organization* ( New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc, 1968), 31-33.

As has been known, a culture is a human work in their attempt to defend themselves, to develop and to run daily life. A culture can also be said as an attempt and human embodiment on life-challenge within the process of adapting themselves to the environment.<sup>6</sup> It means that the culture can also be mentioned as human's whole knowledge as social being and to be used to understand and interpret environment and to utilize experience, science and expertise which were gained from a lifetime learning process to address the world.

When a culture has become a knowledge system, someone will use it to comprehend and interpret various events, phenomena and surrounding natural object. This comprehension will be valid for other human beings in their social groups and that the system becomes an integral part of social-cultural life of wider community in the end. The comprehension which happened to all things related to cultural system that they profess will continue according to social order and their survival as social beings.<sup>7</sup>

A comprehension and ability in carefully reading and interpreting various phenomenal, events, including objects, artifacts, heritages and all things around their life environment will give birth to many ideas and cognitive models which have role in forming frame of mind of the community in interpreting all things. Thus, human beings along with all of community

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<sup>6</sup> Hans J. Daeng, *Manusia, Kebudayaan dan Lingkungan :Tinjauan Antropologis* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2000), 43-46.

<sup>7</sup>James, P. Spradley, "Foundations of Cultural Knowledge" dalam James P. Spradley, ed. *Culture and Cognition: Rules, Maps, and Plans* ( Sanfrancisco: Chandler Publishing Company, 1972), 3-6.

groups will do and act according to conditions and customs they created. The community has owned concepts and clues in managing, selecting, stringing symbols and treating everything, including objects around them.

As an illustration, it can be explained that the a group of people who live along the river bank will tend to find a living as fisherman and doing life activity and learning things related to lives in the river instinctively and by learning process. The skill in making boat, oar, ship and raft is absolutely mastered than the intelligence in farming. It is different from a group of people who live in mountain range; their treatment and anticipation on environment will be clearly different; it is adjusted to the condition of their surroundings. From both illustrations, it can be learnt that environment is a part that cannot be separated from behavior of human life. As a social being, human must be able to treat, manage and interpret everything around; including, various forms of phenomena, events, water, forest, mountain, artifacts, heritages, activities and outcomes of cultural activities which are found many in social life of society.

Sensitivity and adaptability are based on cultural concepts that make humans being sensitive, responsive and knowing the best thing to do. Also, what should be done by a group of people who live in a certain cultural region which has many art artifacts and heritages; the ability to interpret and treatment towards the surrounding environment with all attributes

accompanying will determine the pattern of cultural activity which leads to the rescue and protection on art and cultural richness within the region.

From the description, it raises a question: what is actually happened within the Palembang cultural region and its surrounding? It is related to how the local government and community react to the existence of art artifacts and heritages distribution? In fact, it is not as expected. The situation at the field shows that there are many art artifacts and heritages, such as megalithic statues, Hindi statues and temples' attributes, porcelain fragments, ceramics, traditional architectures in Islamic era, gravestones of kings' tombs, etc. in fact, get less attention and serious treatment. Such a situation must be solved so that the existences of artifacts and heritages which have historical values will not be lost in time.



Image 9 and 10. Two artifact pictures of king's beloved friends grave Sriwijaya ancient inscription which are not well-maintained

Thus, it needs a leader who can control activities of community's social-culture, manage, protect and treat various artifacts and heritages to be treated and organized within the order of civilized social-cultural order; also, a leader who is able to appreciate remaining masterpieces of great ancestors. By good management in various aspects, the community is involved to be part of management of living space and they can adapt and appreciate any things around them, including objects of cultural heritage of previous generation.

In the end, can this issue be part of art management sector? It is this issue that will be subject of discussion.

### **III. Role of Art and Culture Management**

Before we discuss further about what is meant by art management, it is better that we should understand about what becomes the focus of work being done in this field. It is known that art conventional view is part of culture, because art is one out of seven elements in the concept of culture.<sup>8</sup> Both terms seem inseparable; they look even like one united word that own supporting understanding to one another.

What we know about art and culture management? Actually, there is no definite definition about the term. Many opinions explain this concept based on one's perception and view. However, whatever definition that has been tried to

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<sup>8</sup> Koentjaraningrat, "Peranan Local Genius Dalam Akulturasi", in Ayatrohaedi, *Kepribadian Budaya Bangsa (Local Genius)* ( Jakarta: Pustaka Jaya, 1986), 82-84.

be translated, art management has several important purposes, which are different with other management fields.

As an illustration, a manager is supposed to position himself to plan, manage, organize and implement a task well. However, in art field, tasks related to art organization, performing art, cultural performance, festival, exhibition, museum management, and temple preservation as well as other activities in art are generally become the responsibility of an art manager.

Art management is an interesting field because it can make someone able to unite among business, organization, skills and artistic with activities that can make difference in individual's life or community's life. Art management is an activity that eases people or community in performing art activity and cultural activity. In addition, art manager is someone who works in art management field, when in certain level he favors an art process to occur and is able to unite art and its enjoyers.<sup>9</sup>

Success in implementing art management is determined at least by five important factors, which are planning, organizing, controlling, monitoring, and setting of all facilities from art activities and cultural activities which are offered. The goal is to ease the process of communication, creativity, socialization, and adaptation to the public that enjoy it.

From the explanation above, the position of an art manager is the same as non art manager, which is the same in leading and making policies in

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<sup>9</sup> Derrick Chong, *Art Management* (New York :Routledge, 2010), 4-5

executing each job. What makes different in term things that they do is only the subject matter done. As known, the task of an art manager is to plan, organize, control, monitor and set all art facilities; therefore, his presence is greatly expected in the activities, related to art field. In any art activities, an art manager becomes the determinant factor of the success of the activity.

If connected to condition of art artifact and heritage, for people's socio-cultural life in South Sumatera in general, and people who live in the area of pertinent culture, the concept of art and culture management is highly to be implemented. The implementation is important for socialization and dissemination as well as for the local government's better sensitivity in responding to the presence of art and heritage. This can be a basic learning to guide all in order to do what is the best for cultural heritage preservation.

In practice, this task must be led by a manager; nevertheless, it has become the local government's obligation, starting from governor, regent, head of sub-district, and community in the related area or even individuals who have interests to cultural heritage in Palembang cultural are and surroundings. For that, efforts from the local government are needed in designing, controlling, monitoring and planting the concept to improve community's understanding about the importance of maintaining and preserving art and heritage artifact. People should grow their care and sense of belonging in their life, so that they can directly be involved in preserving cultures.

This is not easy to make all of the wishes come true. Hard efforts, spirit, and sacrifice from authorized parties and, of course, related community's participation. In addition, a long term period is needed to implement new culture, new habit, and thinking pattern as well as strategy in responding to life by showing tolerance with different environment and cultural artifact. In the end, here a harmonic relationship is expected to happen between human beings as culturally social beings with universe.



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