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Sub Theme: Vanishing Type

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Pekojan: Between the Disappearance of Muslim Arabs and the Emergence of Chinese Communities

Abstract

This paper discusses Pekojan, a historical quarter located in the old city of Jakarta. Pekojan derived from Koja, a term for Muslim Indian migrant from Bengali who initially settled in the area. Although no Muslim Indian are now living here, the survival of the Al Anshor mosque dates back from 1648 and marks the existence of this ethnic group in the past. Between ends of 19th century to early 20th century, Pekojan was designated as the first place to settle for Muslim Arab migrants from Hadramaut (South Yemen). Using policy called Wijkenstelsel, the Dutch established a ghetto-like system that Arabs could only live in Pekojan. They needed a passport to leave their quarter, and the men had to wear clothes to identify themselves as Arabs.

Viewing the architectural remains in Pekojan, one finds variations of mixed cultures through hybrid forms of cultural-material expression among Chinese and locals, which were reflected both in dwelling and mosques. Pekojan was not developed purely according to religious requirements nor adopted from the place of origin of Arab migrants.

Located in the neighboring side of Chinese enclave called Glodok, Pekojan has recently overlaid more regular patterns of Chinese shop-houses buildings laid out. The mosques, mushollas and madrasah however still maintain the important role in keeping members of spreading Arab communities together.

This paper tries to investigate the pattern of settlement and the process of transformation from Arab Muslim domination to Chinese communities. The case study used here is taken from the fieldwork concerning buildings and urban space as well as observations on community daily life cycles in Pekojan.

Keywords: Arab Muslim, Pekojan, Terrace Row House, Chinese ethnic, transformation

The Beginning Existence of Arab Muslim in Indonesia

The existence of Arab in the Indonesian archipelago has long history. Before the spread of Islam, Arab traders come to Indonesia from the Red Sea and Persian Gulf via the Silk Route (Persia-India-Burma-Malaya) on their way to China. By 1100 the Muslim merchants from Gujarat had combined trade and missionary activities in Indonesia. Early in the 14th century a Muslim state was established on the Malay Peninsula at Malacca, which soon became the dominant commercial power in South East Asia. Traders from Malacca spread their religion throughout the Indonesian archipelago, having their most notable

success in North Sumatra and the northern coastal of cities of Java. This encouraged the formation of early Islamic towns such as Tuban and Gresik.¹ However, nor Chinese settlements nor early Islamic towns presently remain except as the site of old temples and mosques.

By the end of the century, the Dutch and British had appeared as the competitors for Portuguese power in archipelago. In 1602 the United East India Company or *Vereenigde Oost Indische Compagnie* (VOC) founded Batavia - the present day Jakarta, as an autonomous administration for the colonial city. The city was modeled on the city of Amsterdam by dividing the walled city into blocks by roads and canals. Constitutional law recognized three categories of individuals in Batavia: Europeans (*Europeanen*), Foreign Oriental (*Vreemde Oosterlingen*), and Indonesians (*Inlanders*).² In 1798 the authority of Batavia was interfered by the Dutch government as VOC formally was bankrupt, and the trading empire was transformed into a colonial empire. The Dutch applied the segregation system (*wijkenstelsel*) in the city by dividing the people among themselves on the basis of territorial origin, language differences, and the customary law distinctions. Muslim Arabs could only live in Pekojan, the area in the western part of the city wall. Here, the history of Muslim Arab settlement in Jakarta originated.

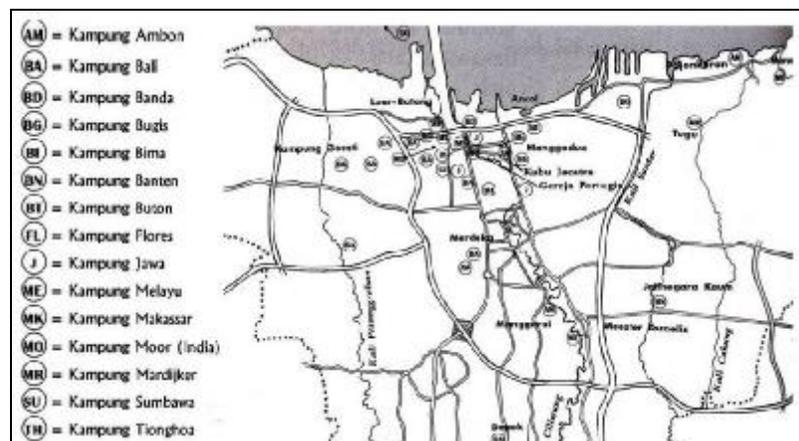


Figure 1: Ethnic Based Settlements in Batavia in 17-18 Century

Source: A. Heuken SJ, 1997

Historical Development of Pekojan

Pekojan is derived from Koja, a Moorish or Muslim Indian migrant from Bengali who initially settled in the area.³ Few records mentioned Moorish settlers living there, but the survival of Al Anshor mosque dates back from 1648 and Masjid Kampung Baru dates back

from 1748 remarks their existence.⁴ The map drawn by Johan Wolfgang Heydt in 1740 showed the walled city of Batavia and *Ommelanden*, a term referred to as the area outside the city wall.⁵ Pekojan appeared as *kampong* settlement outside the wall, although a large part of the land still in the form of agriculture. On the west side of the city near the shore were located the Chinese industrial establishments, the rice fields, the sugar cane plantations and gardens. At the time, the city was well known as the *Queen of the East*.

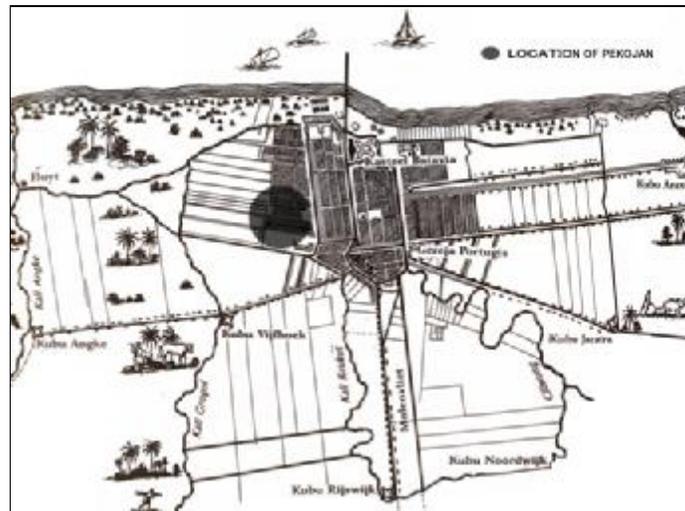


Figure 2: Location of Pekojan on the Map of Batavia drawn by Johan Wolfgang Heydt

Source: A.Heuken SJ, 1997

In 1741 a big Chinese rebellion against VOC occurred, ending with the famous massacre in Batavia. About 10,000 Chinese were killed. The Chinese quarter inside the city wall was burned down and afterward they no longer were permitted to settle within the city walls, or even allowed there after sundown. During and after this chaotic period, the economy of Batavia was in disarray and declined. In the meantime, the ecological condition of the old city started to deteriorating, caused by heavy pollution of the rivers and the spread of endemic diseases. Batavia transformed into “the city of the grave” (*Graf de Hollanders*). This situation forced the Dutch to move their city center further to the south to new location of *Weltevreden*. During this urban transformation process, the Dutch completely destroyed perimeter city wall and covered a large numbers of canals with soil directly effecting Pekojan. Since then, Pekojan, previously located outside the wall, eventually was engulfed into the inner city of Batavia. The map of Batavia in the beginning of 19th century shown Pekojan as a settlement closed to Glodok, the new concentration of Chinese quarters that had replaced the previous Chinese settlement inside the city wall.

Reports mentioned that Pekojan until the end of 18 century was dominated by Moorish or Koja settlers. But later on, along with the first wave of migration from Hadramaud or Yemen,⁶ the Muslim Arab population gradually increased and replaced the Moorish settlers that moved to Pasar Baru, and by the end of the 19th century Pekojan become entirely an Arab Muslim settlement.⁷ During those times Arab Muslims did not only have to live in Pekojan, but also needed a passport to leave their quarter (*wijken-en passen stelsen*), and the men had to wear clothes to identify themselves as Arab. In 1844 Van den Berg mentioned that Sjech Said bin Salim Naum, an Arab captain had been appointed as the head of Pekojan.⁸ Afterwards, a long list of Arab captains was elected. The last captain was Sjech Hassan bin Saleh Argoebi who ended his status during Japanese occupation in 1942.



Figure 3: the Ethnic Arab Clearly Identified from Their Clothes and Turban

Source: Heuken, SJ, 1997

In 1859, for the first time Arab population was mentioned explicitly in census as 312 people. From the 1830s onwards, and particularly after the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, travel on steamers increasingly became a faster alternative to sailing ships, in whichever direction migrants turned, they could be confident of meeting compatriots in the major ports, who had settled there as traders or religious teachers. This encouraged the next great wave of immigration. They came as sailors, peddlers, traders of all sorts, cloth merchants, spice dealers, preachers and religious teachers. The 1885 census mentioned that there were 1.448 Arab of which 972 were born in Batavia. Between 1900 and 1930, the Arab minority in Batavia increased from 2.245 into 5.231 or 7% of the whole Arab population in Indonesia.⁹ In addition to natural growth and the arrival of other new migrants, the continuing inter-marriage of Arabs with local people played a large part in this population increase.

The Settlement Pattern

Viewing the area from the map of Batavia in 1918, Pekojan formed an enclosed settlement within fixed boundaries. The open land in the west was bordered by railway that connected the port of Tanjung Priok with Batavia. In the north, Pejagalan Street runs in parallel with a navigation canal, while the Krukut River in the east and the Angke River in the south bounded the settlement. Although the Europeans viewed Pekojan as an unhealthy slum area with its congestion, the area should be a very ideal location for migrants, since it was located at the major crossing point of navigable rivers. During the colonial period, the river frontage became the focus of commerce for the transport of people and goods, so that it was common that buildings along the river have private access with their frontages on the canal or river.

It was reported that the land designated previously as housing sites for people in *Ommelanden* were private estates.¹⁰ The city bought the land and prepared them for building housing estates by laying streets and dividing the estate into parcels. After the preparation was done, the parcels were offered in the form of rental land (*erfpacht*) to the public. Parcels not taken up as *erfpacht* were subsequently sold as private property (*eigendon*).¹¹ Though Pekojan was a floating population of migrants from outside, the land ownership system of *erfpacht* showed relative merit through the proper arrangement of the settlement. Pekojan was determined as “kampong”, literally means settlement without any fields - to distinguished with *desa* or village surrounded by fields. However, unlike ordinary kampongs, Pekojan has straight and well maintained main streets, forming a compact grid plan. Pekojan was governed to a much more substantial extent by the problems of restricted sites and the regulations necessary for neighborhood design.

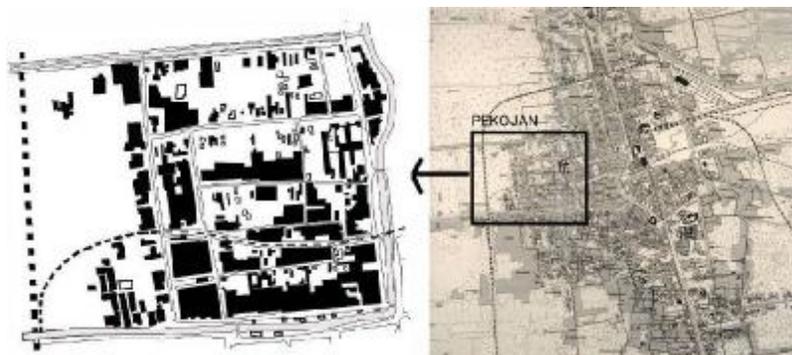


Figure 4: Figure Ground and Map of Pekojan in 1918

Source: Adapted from Batavia Map 1918

The area along the periphery of streets as mostly built up and lined with permanent buildings much closer together than the interior lots. The rest was still widely inhabited by poor people who lived in buildings built of bamboo or wooden structures that did not appear on the map. As report in Volkstelling 1935¹² mentioned that there were 1.379 dwellings in Pekojan and only 442 were brick buildings. It means that the rest of buildings in Pekojan were non-permanent. This situation was different from the Chinese Camp in Glodok - the neighbor of Pekojan, since almost all buildings in Glodok were shop-houses built of stone brick and plaster.

It was not only the poor and ordinary Muslim Arabs that lived in Pekojan. A small group of wealthier Arabs also lived there.¹³ Their dwellings were usually detached brick houses. One example of a house that survived until now is the house of 70 years old Abdurrachman Alatas. The house is known as *rumah gedong*, literally means big house, dated back from the middle of 19th century built by his grandfather. The house had open spaces in its spacious surrounding, though now the open spaces have been sold and transformed into buildings.

Although designated as Arab enclaves, not all the inhabitants were Arabs. Volkstelling reported in 1935, that Arab Muslims in Pekojan were 82% of total population.¹⁴ According to the recollection by some of the area elders, during the middle of 20th century, Chinese ethnic groups resided in Pekojan as minorities. Though they have different backgrounds, people on both sides freely acknowledge their relationship. As evidence of tolerance and harmony, they like to point to ongoing relations between both sides, such as at times of funerals and weddings. In Pekojan, festive occasions were not private matters for the family circle but were of the concern to the community as whole.¹⁵ This led to a web of obligations among the community members. Mutual help in fact existed not only for feasts but also for all undertaking in which the strength of a single family was insufficient. The degree of mutual understanding and tolerance between Arab and Chinese families have transcended religious as well as communal lines that lasting until now.

Mosques and Public Elements

As with other Muslim communities in other areas, virtually the mosque is the most important public building with its prime physical symbol in Pekojan. It is obligatory for Muslim men to offer prayers inside a mosque along with the Friday Prayer. Though principally compulsory five times a daily prayers (*salat*) requires no special space and can be

practiced anywhere which is neat and clean. Offering prayer in a congregation at a mosque is considered more virtuous than offering prayer alone. Therefore, Friday mosque (*jami*) and daily mosque (*musholla*) are the *genius loci* in Pekojan. Today there are 4 *jami* mosque and 26 *musholla* in Pekojan, some of them dated back during colonial period.

Since elements of the mosque are not prescribed except that it should oriented toward Mecca, most of the mosques in Pekojan expressed the hybrid of local architecture based on a Javanese pavilion with a pyramidal roof, though the continual process of rebuilding made the structure of many old mosques now difficult to date. Some mosques date from 1800, such as Azzawiyah dated back from 1812 and Al Anshor dated from 1648¹⁶. These mosques entirely rebuilt through removal of previously sophisticated details and ornaments, and transformed into modern buildings with flat roofs. Kampung Baru mosque that dates from 1768 still preserved some of its original parts, though the space enlargement was more dominant. The mosque of An Nawier dated back from 1760 and Langgar Tinggi *musholla* dates from 1829 remained relatively well-preserved. Annawier mosque previously was small *musholla* built by Syarifah Fatmah which was then rebuilt and enlarged by Habib Abdullah bin Husein Alaydrus. The hybrid of an Arab style and a Javanese roof for the mosque signifies Islamic traits universality. The Langgar Tinggi mosque, build by the first captain of Pekojan Sjech Said Naum is a unique two-storey mosque representing blended style of Chinese, European and Javanese architecture. Located in the bank of Angke River, the mosque has the opening face on the frontage of river for the purpose of loading and unloading both goods and people.



Figure 5: Old Mosques of Langgar Tinggi and Annawier

Sources: the Author

Other than mosques and *musholla*, public elements within the settlement of Pekojan are nothing more than public school, *madrasah* (small religious school), and old cemeteries of distinguished persons around the mosques. Another important element in the settlement is an Islamic based slaughterhouse and a butcher's shop (*pejagalan*), as food permissible for Muslims is only *halal* food, of which all meat must come from herbivorous animals slaughtered in the name of God. Arab meals include a preference for goat or lamb meat. There is still remained the bridge in Angke River in southern Pekojan named as "goat bridge" (*jembatan kambing*), referred as the bridge where goats were gathered before being slaughtered.

The Life Cycle in Pekojan

The elders in Pekojan memorialized their daily life cycle as routine activities between homes and *musholla*. The children are ordered to attend *madrasah* as well as public school. They started the day before sunrise (*fajr*) for prayers (*Subh*). Schooling ended after afternoon prayers (*dhuhur*) call and they should attend *madrasah* for Islam learning. After performing their obligation for afternoon pray (*Asr*) they spend a bit of time for playing, but before sunset they should be at home preparing for the sunset prayers (*Maghrib*). After the evening prayers (*isha'*), most of the community members sleep until sunrise to undertake the next routine cycle.

As the children get older and become the head of the family, their daily routines were more concentrated on obligations and legal rights of family members, since the basic unit of Islamic society is the family. The father was seen as financially responsible for his family, and was obliged to cater for their well-being. As Arab men in Pekojan mostly were occupied with a variety of trades, the father's daily routine started with leaving the dwelling for business engagements. In the past, women were not allowed to show themselves in public, so it was the father who visited the market to buy the household and daily supplies. Usually before *Asr* prayers the father was already at home, performing the *Asr* prayers at the neighboring *musholla* and then sitting on the terrace to entertain his neighbors. Sometimes they spent time waiting for *Maghrib* prayer call by performing *roha* or reading Al Quran. Unlike the children, the father would not have to focus the rest of the day at home, since he could spend the time with other men for chatting.

The domestic routines of women in Pekojan were very much influenced by the degree of the publicness. When girls get older, their movements start to be restricted and they are

isolated from public until they get married. From then on, the daily routine of the women were around the home, where they prepared themselves to be educated as good house wives before entering their role as home-makers and caregivers to their children. Since women assume the main responsibility for the home, they limited their social activities only among one another.

Although the area primarily expressed overcrowding from the beginning, the daily routine of activities created the peaceful environment as well as psychological security as the most important physical characteristic. This situation contrasted to Glodok, the neighboring Chinese settlement, which contributed more to a sense of public life. Similar to Pekojan, Glodok expressed unsanitary and overcrowded conditions, but Glodok attracted shoppers from other areas and concentrated on retail and business service. Other than shop houses, there were (and are) artisan shops, herbalists, sidewalk food and merchandise stalls, vendors and market as well as houses. As a result, the open street in the Chinese enclave is also used for a large variety of activities and it was here that the overcrowding became apparent.

The Social Life

The domestic routine in Pekojan would change when the time of ritual cycle arrived. The rituals take place on a regular basis according to the Islamic calendar. They are more often than not directed toward a community-wide orientation since participation is not limited to Muslim Arabs that reside in Pekojan, but also those from outside. Almost all rituals are held at mosque. In the past, rituals used to be vigorous with traditional Arab Muslim performances of *syarah* (singing to adore Prophet Mohammad), *zafin* (dancing by youngster), and *marawis* (music and singing by preachers).

The most elaborate and festive of all religious activities is *Muludan*, a celebration of the birth and life of the Prophet Mohammad. This is followed by *Ramadhan*, Islam's holiest month, where mosques are busy with many events. Following the final request prayer of the day, *isha*, optional *tarawih* prayers are offered every night. During the last ten days of Ramadan, mosques will host all-night programs to observe *Laylat al-Qadr*, the night Muslims believe that the Islamic prophet Muhammad first began to receive Koran. Mosques usually provide meals prepared by community periodically throughout these nights. On the eve of 27th of Ramadan, Muslim Arabs from the clan of Al Alatas, not only those who live inside, but also outside Pekojan, crowd into Azzawiyah mosque.

The first day of *Sawal* month signals the celebration at the end of Ramadan. In this case, Pekojan follows the fairly standard Indonesian pattern; mosques hold mass prayers in the morning, followed by two days of feasting. People visit from house to house and taste the vast amounts of dishes. But the important meaning of celebration is asking pardon for past sins and wrongdoings. The mutual forgiveness is not only participated by Muslim Arabs, but also non Muslim, including Chinese. The start of the new month of *Sawal* is not yet over, since on the 3rd day, Muslim Arabs in Pekojan celebrate the big feast to give thanks for having been given the strength to complete the fast. The day is again occupied with visiting around various communities.

Hari Raya Haji or *Idul Adha* is the feast to commemorate the sacrifice of Abraham and remember the pilgrims in Mecca. The day begins with prayers in the mosques followed by slaughtering of goats. The meat from the slaughtered animals should then be divided up among the *faqir miskin*, the poor. There is also a certain amount of visiting around in the communities. The feast among the women conducted in the afternoon and men at night.

The Houses in Pekojan

At the micro-morphological scale of family household, the common housing type in Pekojan is the tube-like terrace row house often called *rumah petak*. This house form is the consequence as Pekojan emerged following the increasing demand on urban land, especially along the streets. The streets were divided into many plots of equal width, about 4-6 meters in average. By purchasing only one plot, one could build a house which only 4 meters width, but could be as long as needed according to conditions. The longest house could be 40 meter length. This elongated row house is easily handled for distribution of inheritance among the successors. The buildings are constructed with brick outer walls and tile roofs. During the colonial period, carpenters and bricklayers were mostly Chinese. It is not surprising that the form of Arab dwellings in Pekojan had a similarity with Chinese dwellings such as a parapet gable wall decorated with European classical ornament and pilasters.



Figure 6: Some Examples of Terrace Row Houses in Pekojan

Source: the Author

The house facilitated the relationship between the activities of family member based on Islamic concepts through spatial boundary. Privacy is considered one of the most important physical characteristic of the houses. The most pervasive spatial practice was a restriction against women meeting men other than their husbands and immediate male kin (*muhrim*). Generally, the public area of the house was only the front terrace used as predominantly the male domain. Situated facing the street edge, this is the only space that faces outward. When male guests were present in this room, woman could remain out of view in other part of the house, or they could cover their heads with a veil (*jilbab*). The terrace and the main house are connected by double doors, one is a decorative glass panel door and the other is made of a strong, solid plank door with blinds that keep the room airy. Some houses does not have terrace and use a raised plinth surrounded by cement brick bench in return, forming a transition of space between the houses and the street. In some cases, two or three houses have common transition space as point to enter the houses.

Except for the terrace, the rest of the spaces in the house are clearly expressed so that women in the Arab Muslim family strongly identifies with “home”. Now, although women are no longer prohibited to be shown in public, in some degrees they tend to isolate themselves at home. In all old houses being observed, other spaces outside terrace become the place for woman to sew, iron, entertain female visitors, watch television and supervise children reading Koran. Since there are no windows on the side of the wall, ventilation and lighting for the houses are provided by means of courtyards. Kitchen, bathroom and area for washing are usually located in the enclosed courtyard.



Figure 7: Adapted Arab Muslim House after Distribution of Inheritance

Source: the Author

There is no doubt that the physical constraints of terrace houses met the social and cultural practices of Muslim Arabs in Pekojan. The pattern of the houses in Pekojan created enclosed spaces, yet enhanced the sense of togetherness among the Arab Muslims. Social practices are clearly expressed through the separation of the public sphere. Men move freely in the streets and the terrace in the absence of women, while women space is reserved for their convenience and privacy in the back-lane areas. Located between the opposing houses in at the rear, a back-lane used to connect the houses at the back doors. Women socialize and visit each other at the rear passages. As the passage is narrow and less illuminated, it also has the role as a threshold for an outsider. In the past times, there used to be doors on both ends of the passage to mark the access control. As there was strong social cohesion among the neighbors, it was also common for the woman to access her house through the opposite neighboring house in case of an emergency. During the revolutionary war, it was hard for the Dutch to seize Arab men since many Arab men took advantage of this spatial arrangement for escape and sneak attacks.

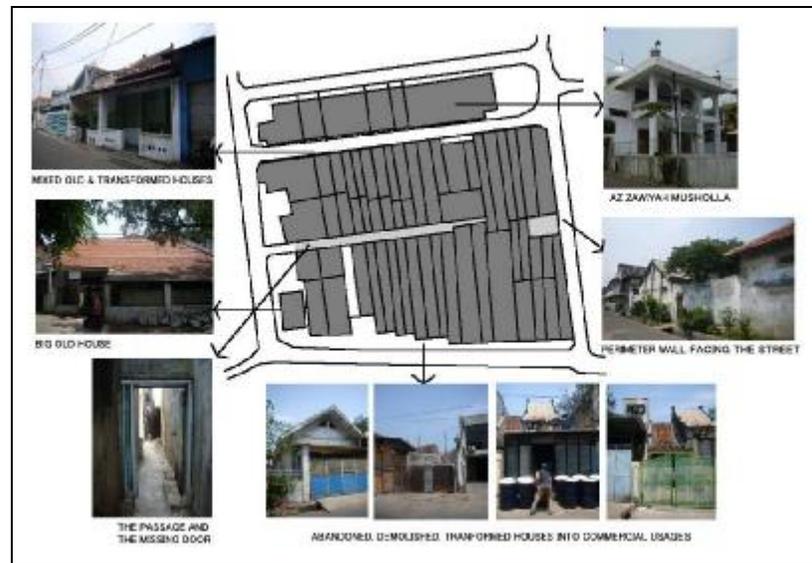


Figure 8: Neighborhood Situation in Pekojan Today

Source: the Author

A house in Pekojan is not only the place of daily routine but occasionally becomes the center for the passage of rituals, marriage, births, and death rites. In this case, gender territories skillfully are manifested through separation of time of space usage between male and female. The utmost important ritual is marriage. After legal agreement, which is stipulated in a written contract (*akad nikah*) the groom's side of the family would hold a party, called *Walima* to celebrate the welcoming of the bride to the family and the consummation of the wedding rites. There are only men participated in the celebration of *Walima*. They share *kebuli* or Arabian foods served on big trays and enjoy performance of *marawis*, *syarah* and *zafin*. In the following day, women gather to have their own wedding party.

Other than wedding, Muslim Arabs celebrate birth through *aqeqah*, or a big feast by slaughtering goats. Families with a son also conduct circumcision (*sunatan*), which frequently accompanies to the boy's ceremonial reading of the Koran to mark the completion of his basic Islamic education. In both *aqeqah* and *sunatan*, women contribute to the feast during daytime and then men share *kebuli* in the evening.

Neighbors, relatives, friends and others who arrive at the home without invitation participate in the funeral or death rituals. It is special occasion where Muslim Arab outside of Pekojan crowd together and undertake the ritual without any rigid gender separation. The rite

includes bathing and enshrouding dead body, funeral prayers and burial. Since there is no place for a cemetery in Pekojan, the body is usually buried in Tanah Abang.

The Continual Shrinkage of the Arab Muslim Population in Pekojan

From the beginning, people of Pekojan sponsored fellow villagers and lodged them in their homes for short periods. As the founding father of other settlements in Jakarta, Pekojan's role towards shaping a process of chain migration that continues to influence patterns of Arab settlements in Tanah Abang, Krukut, Sawah Besar, Jati Petamburan, Kwitang, Jatinegara and Cawang. Pekojan therefore had already experienced spatial mobility of the population from its colonial era. The spatial mobility generated problems, when the number of houses elapsed through time and the inheritance process has taken place along with the passage of time.

It was reported that during migration process, very few Arab women came to Indonesia that almost all Arabs of Batavia married Indonesian women and their descendents were Indo-Arabs. Arabs who later changed their children's ethnicity continued to maintain their Arab identity in other ways such as marriage to other Arabs, so that Arabic cultural practices were not abandoned.

Many Arabs gained an advantage of being married with local women to own land, since his native wife had the right to own land.¹⁷ When the parent died, the division of inheritance is specified in the Koran, which states that most of it is passed to the immediate family with the same rights of succession.¹⁸ Distribution of inheritance through dividing the longitudinal house was possible for those who only have a small number of successors, but it would be difficult for those who had many children. Nowadays, mostly three generations of old house inhabitants in Pekojan have passed on. The problem appeared when the house is impossible to be divided into smaller units any longer and it was occupied by descendants who did not have the right to own the whole part of the house. This leads to the process of *pecah waris*, or selling the house for the purpose of distributing the rights of inheritance among the family members. Usually, it was the Chinese who are interested to buy the properties. This was different from Betawi ethnic groups or, the Muslim indigenous groups of Batavia who owned abundant land on the outskirts. In this case, it was still possible to divide the land equally based on the right of succession.

The change of residential status also occurred as the impact of mismanagement of land business among the Arab Muslims. Many Arabs landlords engaged in the collection of rentals from urban lands – including lands in Pekojan that they later came to own through profitable accumulation. Unfortunately most of the Arab landlord applied the closed system of management and there are not any children being trained to continue his business. Many descendents eventually know nothing about the accurate amount of properties owned by their father. The burden increased when descendents – simply relying on their status, try to raise the rental fee,¹⁹ but they fail to show the land documentation to proof their right on the properties. In this case, the dispute between the owner and the tenant usually ends by expropriation of the property in the hands of the local government (Bureau of Housing). Together with other rental houses owned by local government (they were mostly the properties under *erfpact* system left by the Dutch) in Pekojan, there are large numbers of rental houses under the right of local government. There are also 300 rental house properties devoted as *wakaf* (conceptually similar to the common law trust), which ranges from private family trusts to public charitable trusts.

By the middle of 20th century, migration from rural areas took place in large scale in Jakarta, and Pekojan soon become more and more built up. The vacant land in western part of Pekojan, emerged as new kampong named Kampung Janis. It is a heterogeneous, unplanned and sub-standard settlement for the lower class of Indonesian natives. Vacant lands between buildings in the built up areas are soon infiltrated by fresh buildings so that now there are scarcely any vacant lands remaining in Pekojan.



Figure 9: Morphology of Pekojan Today

Source: Adapted from DKI Urban Planning Office 2003 and Google Map 2007

While Pekojan is gradually transformed into a high density residential area, the disappearing process of Arab Muslim population tends to increase. Official data from district (*Kelurahan*) office remarks that from a total of 30.794 people in Pekojan, 13.680 of the population are Muslims, of which not more than 1.000 inhabitants are Muslim Arab. The rest are non-Muslim dominated by Chinese. It is very clear that Arab Muslims are gradually disappearing and are being replaced by the Chinese inhabitants. There are two main reasons for the Chinese to prefer own the houses in Pekojan. First is because the area is already encircled by Chinese enclaves from all directions. Second is because they realize that living in Pekojan is proven to be relatively safe. During the Chinese riot in May 1998 the Arab Muslims demonstrated loyalty as well as cooperation to protect the Chinese who live in Pekojan so that none endured hardship as victims of riots, as had occurred in the neighboring Chinese settlement in Glodok.²⁰

Transformation is clearly visible in the new pattern of the Arab houses which are transferred to Chinese. Some maintain the original lot, but are rebuilt into new buildings to gain more floors. In some cases, transformation occurs through combining two or three old units and rebuilding these into a single new building. The Chinese intrusion does not necessarily transform building activities, since many new dwellers maintain the building function for residential purposes. In the area along the main streets, more change of use from residential to commercial or other more economic uses are expected, such as combining housing with storage. The latter relates to the fact that Pekojan is located adjacent to the commercial and retail center of Glodok. The transformation strikes the naked eye with intensity. High levels of congestion are observed – as result of high residential densities, multiple means of transport and the use of street for commercial and circulation purposes. The previously peaceful residential quarter is makeshift, transformed into mixed areas that imply congestion and degradation.

The main characteristic of morphological change in Pekojan is the intensification use of building lots. Existing small series of purchased lot parcel or smaller units of houses force the new owners to rebuild upward. Meanwhile, there is scarcely any transformation in the case of rental houses so that most of them are in a unreasonable state of disrepair. The low rental rate is the main reason why the landlord will not have anything to do with repairs. On the other side, tenants will not invest in expensive repair since there is no any guarantee of long-term security. Such tenants are really caught in a dilemma, sticking on because of the cheap housing as well as the convenience being located in the inner city.



Figure 10: High Building Intensities and Congestions in Pekojan

Source: the Author

Concluding remark

Observing the daily life cycle, the dwelling and the pattern of settlement in Pekojan, it is revealed that Pekojan was not developed purely according to religious requirements nor adopted from the place of origin of Arab migrants. Unlike the Chinese who try to adopt their dwelling forms from their homeland, Arab migrants did not attempt to create their own tradition nor transfer their tradition from Hadramaud or Yemen. It should be noted, as mentioned by Zandi, that many features of architectural design and town planning in the Arab peninsula effectively took into consideration the climatic and geographical elements of the region.²¹ Batavia had different climatic conditions so that there was not any reason for adapting their own tradition in building the houses and settlement. In return, the spatial organization and the use of space in accordance with gender distinctions had been adapted for the terrace houses and the settlement pattern, yet their construction and production was undertaken by the Chinese.

The disappearance of Muslim Arabs in Pekojan and the gradual emergence of the Chinese community raises the question: is the destiny of Muslim Arabs similar to that of Indian Muslims who have disappeared after the translocation process by Arab Muslims? The declining process of the Arab Muslim population might be difficult to resist, as long as the property inheritance consistently follows Islamic law. But one might be convinced that although the Arab population now (and then) remains as a minority, the mosque, *musholla* and *madrasah* would never shrink, as Muslim Arabs utilize *wakaf* (common law trust) for maintaining the subsistence of all religious features in Pekojan. This has been underway for a long time and until recent times remains significant. These *wakafs*, which bear the family names, whether private or charitable, are part of an inalienable religious endowment that

might preserve the name of old kampung Pekojan as the historical Arab Muslim settlement. Moreover, mosques and other religious buildings in Pekojan would bear a considerable role as the Islamic center for spreading Arab Muslims alongside an emerging Chinese community.

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Reference Notes:

¹ The 16th century saw the arrival of Europeans, pioneered by Portuguese who sought the spices of eastern Indonesia. When the Portuguese arrived in the archipelago they found on the north coast of Java many small states ruled by Arab descendants. This has been documented by Professor LWC Van Den Berg in his important historical text *Le Hadramout et les Colonies Arabes dans l'Archipel Indien*, which was published in Batavia (Jakarta) in 1886.

² According to the census in 1673, the population of Batavia was 27.068 people. However, the Dutch were only 2,024 people, a small minority among the other population groups. It was recorded that there were 1.339 Arab and Javanese, but it was not clear about the composition between Arab and Java. The Chinese population was 2,747 and the rest, or more than 50 percent of the populations were slaves originating from Bali, Banda, Makassar and other parts of the archipelago.

³ They often called as Mooren, derived from the Portuguese Mouro, meaning Mohammedan. The term was also used to refer Indian from the Malabar coast and other areas.

⁴ The building existence had reported by a Christian priest in 1648 who mentioned Al Ashor as a Moorish mosque.

⁵ In Dutch term, Ommelanden refers to environs or surrounding countryside that is used particularly for the Batavia area.

⁶ In the first half of 19th century, Hadhramaut had been severely affected by internal warfare and the overarching breakdown of security. Therefore, many youths contemplated emigration, either to India and further east, or to Aden and the Red Sea, or to the East African coast. See Interview: Hamid Al-Gadri, Yemen Update 34, 1944

⁷ In fact, Pekojan often accounted for the Moorish or Arab community being confused each other.

⁸ As quoted by Huub de Jonge in his essay *Sebuah Minoritas Terbelah Orang Arab Batavia* in Grinjns, Kees et.all, Jakarta Batavia: Esai Sosio-Kultural, Leiden, KITLV Press, 2000

⁹ Arab migrants settled not only in Batavia but also in Cirebon, Pekalongan, Semarang, Tuban, Gresik, Surabaya, Pasuruan, Bondowoso, Banyuwangi and Palembang. For more information see Castles, Lance, the Ethnic Profile of Jakarta, Indonesia Vol.1, Ithaca: Cornell University, April 1967

¹⁰ Wertheim, WF et.all, Selected Studies on Indonesia by Dutch Scholar, the Royal Tropical Institute, Amsterdam, 1958

¹¹ For more information see Milone, Pauline Dublin, Urban Areas in Indonesia: Administrative and Census Concepts, Institute of International Studies, University of California, Berkeley, 1966

¹² As quoted by Cobban, James L., the City on Java: an Essay in Historical Geography, University of California, Berkeley, Ph.D. 1970 Geography

¹³ The well-to-do Arab mostly engaged in trade, selling of *batiks*, money lending, the coastal trade, and the collection of rentals from urban and suburban land and from old *landhuizen* (mansions) they later come to own.

¹⁴ Cobban, 1970, *ibid*.

¹⁵ Even the poor could afford to invite the whole communities since guests usually brought presents of food or money which had to be returned in due course at similar festivities by other families.

¹⁶ Al Anshor is now declared as the oldest mosque in Jakarta.

¹⁷ Before the end of *Cultuurstelsel* in 1850, non-natives were not allowed to own land to prevent disposal by the natives of their land which was their only valuable possession.

¹⁸ The woman's share of inheritance is generally half of that of a man with the same rights of succession.

¹⁹ Original tenants paid very low rental before the war and usually his successors continued to rent the house.

²⁰ For more information about the Chinese violence in Jakarta see Kusno, Abidin, Behind the Postcolonial Architecture, Urban Space and Political Cultures in Indonesia, Routledge, London, 2000.

²¹ See Oliver, Paul, Encyclopedia of vernacular Architecture of the World, Cambridge University Press, United Kingdom, 1997