

Shared Urban Heritage: Traces of Sino-Moslem Malay Descendants from Johor in Mento-Bangka

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to trace back the descendants of Liem Tau Kian (a former minister of Chinese Emperor who sought asylum in Johor State) who established the town of Mento in the early 18th century. Mento is the latest pre-European colonial city in Bangka before the island occupied by British and Dutch in the early 19th century. These descendants migrated to Bangka due to the marriage between Palembang Sultan with one of Lim Thau Kian's grand daughter, and also due to the interest in tin mining exploration.

The issue raising on this paper concerns about shared urban heritage as the evidence of traces of relationship of these descendants (representing Sino-Moslem Malay from Johor) with people from Bangka, Palembang, Bugis and also Arab. The method to response on the above issue is through observation on historical physical relics including old burial grounds and buildings scattered in old Mento.

The findings tells multicultural paradigm of these shared heritage that were practiced through inter-ethnic marriages, transit, and migration around Malay Peninsula and the archipelago.

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1. Introduction

Mento was the capital town in the Bangka Island during the reign of Sultanate of Palembang (18th century) and the Dutch colonial (19th – early 20th century) that consisted of several ethnic groups: Malay, Arabian, Chinese and European. Tin mining and pepper tradings were the main commodities that internationally made this town well-known. Even, Sir Thomas Stamford Rafless initially planned to choose Mento as the capital city for the British East Indies Company before he chose Tumasik Island (Singapore). During Post-Independent era (1948/1949), Mento (Muntok) was also an exile place for several Indonesian political leaders when Class Action with Dutch colonial troops was happened.



Figure 1. Muntok position in the western part of Bangka Island

The formation of this town was inseparable from the history of migration of Malays and Chinese from several kingdoms in Southeast Asia, particularly from Malay

peninsula. It happened when a Prince from Palembang Kingdom (later became Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin I) that located close to Bangka Island, married the grand daughter of Liem Tauw Kian, a former minister from Chinese emperor who escaped and stayed in Johor, Siantan and Patani. After settled in Southeast Asian countries, Liem Tauw Kian who later became a Moslem, adapted into Malay customs and practiced it as his new everyday life.

Meanwhile, the grand daughter of Lim Thauw Kian, namely Lim Ban Nio (Zamnah) who got married with Palembang Sultan (as one of his wives) later chose to live in Bangka Island (Muntok) rather than in Palembang. She asked the Sultan for bringing his families and relatives from Siantan and Johor hereafter. Later, the descendants of these families played important roles in the exploration of tin mining in Bangka, that triggered the arrival of other workers from Johor, Siantan, Siam and Cambodia in large numbers to build tin trenches.

2. Material, Methods, Results and Discussion

Migration and Diaspora of Lim Tauw Kian Descendants

Lim Tauw Kian was a great minister who served as commander in the Ming Bowan Dynasty in China by the end of 17th C and early 18th C. When his plan to defect was heard by the emperor, he finally decided to bring his families and relatives to leave China. The Johor Sultan at that time gave asylum to them, and they embraced Islam in the country. Lim Tauw Kian became known as Abdul Hayat. His brother (Tu' Pangeran) got married with a Malay woman. From this marriage, his brother had two children, one of them then got married by the Prince from Trengganu Sultanate, Ence' Wan Awang and had three

sons namely Ence' Wan Akub, Ence' Wan Serin, and Ence' Wan Sabar. Because of the marriage, the Sultan of Johor granted the noble-man title to the families included Abdul Hayat whose name became Ence' Wan Abdul Hayat. Due to his smart thoughts and skills in navigation and administrative duties, he got important position as Harbour Master. Later, Sultan of Johor appointed Ence' Wan Abdul Hayat to head of 'Negeri' Siantan. Ence' Wan Abdul Hayat himself died not in Siantan as there was no his graveyard in Siantan. Also, there was no traces that Ence' Wan Abdul Hayat lived in Muntok or Bangka. Probably, his graveyard was in Patani.

Through marriage with his first wife, Liem Tauw Kian was blessed with 5 sons (Ence' Wan Abdul Jabar, Ence' Wan Ismail, Ence' Wan Zainal Abidin, Ence' Wan Abdul Rani, Ence' Wan Abdul Chalik). The son of Ence' Wan Abdul Hayat, namely Ence' Wan Abdul Jabar was then the father of Baniah or Zamnah who married with a Prince (Raden Lembu) from Palembang Sultanate who later became Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin I (reigned from 1724 – 1757). Zamnah became the third wife of the Prince, who escaped to Johor due to internal conflicts in Palembang. As the preparation to take over the throne in Palembang, Raden Lembu moved from Johor to Bangka Island and stayed in Bangka Kota before defeated Palembang.

After success to take over the Palembang throne, Raden Lembu became Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin I, and his wife Zamnah got title Mas Ayu Ratu. Sultan gave permission to Zamnah families, included Ence Wan Akub, Ence' Wan Serin and Ence Wan Abdul Jabar who came from Siantan to stay in Bangka Island. Sultan assigned these Sino-Moslem Malay's descendants to have honored titles of *Abang* (for male) and *Yang* (for female).

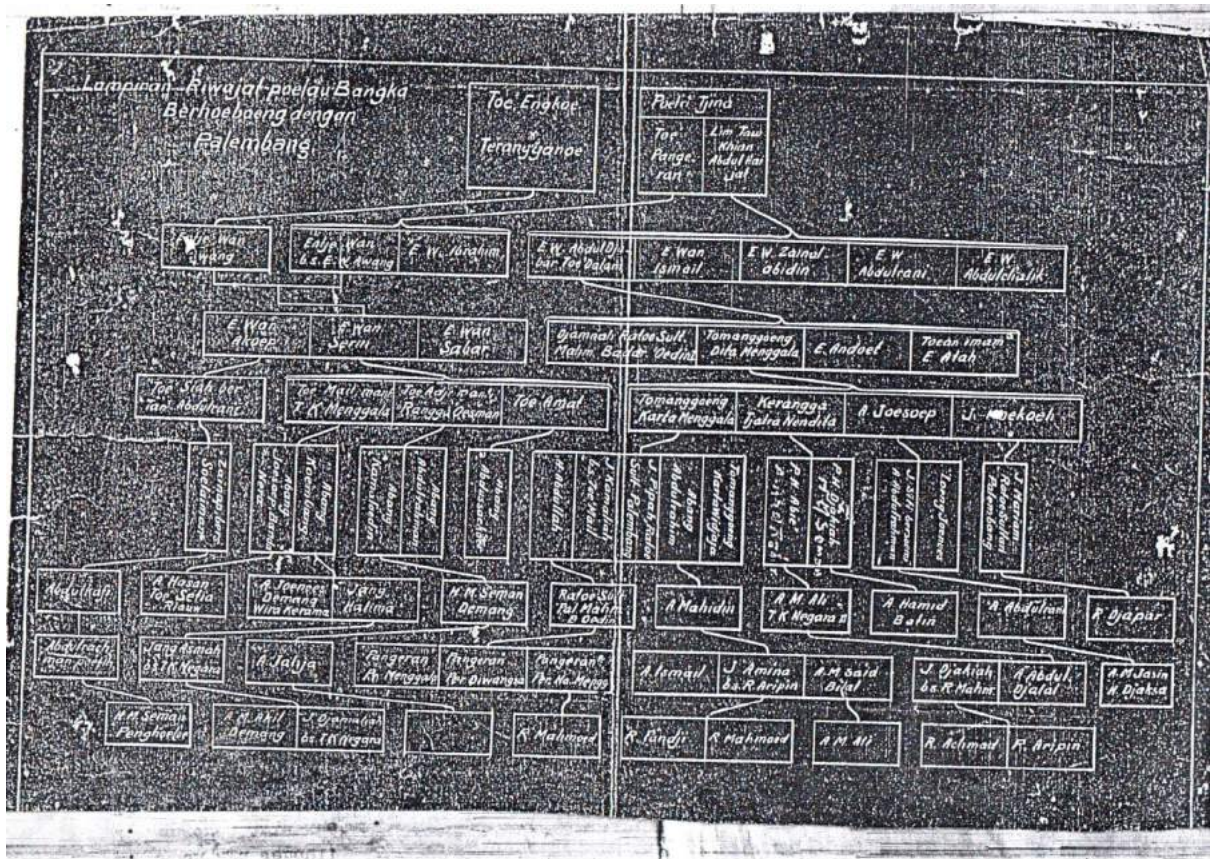


Figure 2. The Family's Tree of Liem Tauw Kian in relation to Palembang Sultanate.
 Source: Raden Achmad

The Zamnah families residence was set in the Bangka Island not in Palembang due to the Sultan worried about the presence of outsiders being able to create political chaos into his kingdoms. It was because he had the bitter memories of slander from outsiders in Johor. Zamnah then negotiated to the Sultan to give a place to her Siantan families and relatives that was not too far from Palembang, and it was in Bangka Kota in the island of Bangka.

Meanwhile, Zamnah herself was not too comfort to live in the Sultan Palace in Palembang as her families and relatives were not lived in Palembang, and her childhood memories made her missed the situation in Siantan. In order to make her wife a relief, the

Sultan commanded his Minister to find the best place in Bangka Island as Zamnah's request. When reaching Sungsang (the estuary of Musi river), the Minister and his entourage saw the Bangka Island with its black stripes and the silhouette of Mount Menumbing in the background, making the beautiful scene. They returned and conveyed this message to the Sultan in Siantan:

“... ‘Tempat ento’ sudah dapet, di dekat Tanjung yang keliatan dari Sungsang.’ Kemudian tempat yang akan dijadikan pemukiman itu nantinya, dinamai oleh Baginda Sultan dengan sebutan Ento’, yang berarti Itu dan selanjutnya berkembang dan

dilafalkan dengan perubahan dan penyempurnaan penyebutannya menjadi kata Mento' atau Muntok."
(Achmad dan Djalal, 1936 : 32)

In Wieringa, another version of stories saying that the word 'Ento' was said by Zamnah herself:

'Zamnah mengucapkan kalimat dalam bahasa Siantan: 'Ento'....Ento' 'Ntok', sambil menunjuk ke dekat lokasi sebuah tanjung yang terlihat. Ento' dalam bahasa Siantan berarti 'Itu', sementara tanjung yang kelihatan tersebut lalu dinamakan Tanjung Kelian' (Wieringa, 1990).

The word 'Ento' (Siantan Language) was believed as the root of the town name, as many written historiographies stated.

Consonant 'M' incorporated into the word 'Ento' according to local language habits to become the word *Men-Ento* or *Mento*. During British interregnum era, the colonializer changed the town's name of *Mento* to become the town of *Minto* (to honor British East Indies Company's Governor General Lord Minto). Meanwhile, from Dutch writing, the name of the town was also predicted coming from the name of native leader 'Mento' who existed before the arrival of Siantan families. However, the interesting information coming from other source in Palembang that related the name of the town with Palembang dialect: 'Mentu' means 'get out'. Although this later information seemed the closest word, it was rarely stated in written historiographies. During Dutch colonial period, the administrative name of the town became 'Muntok' and it was used for international trading brand for Muntok White Pepper, while local people called Mentok.

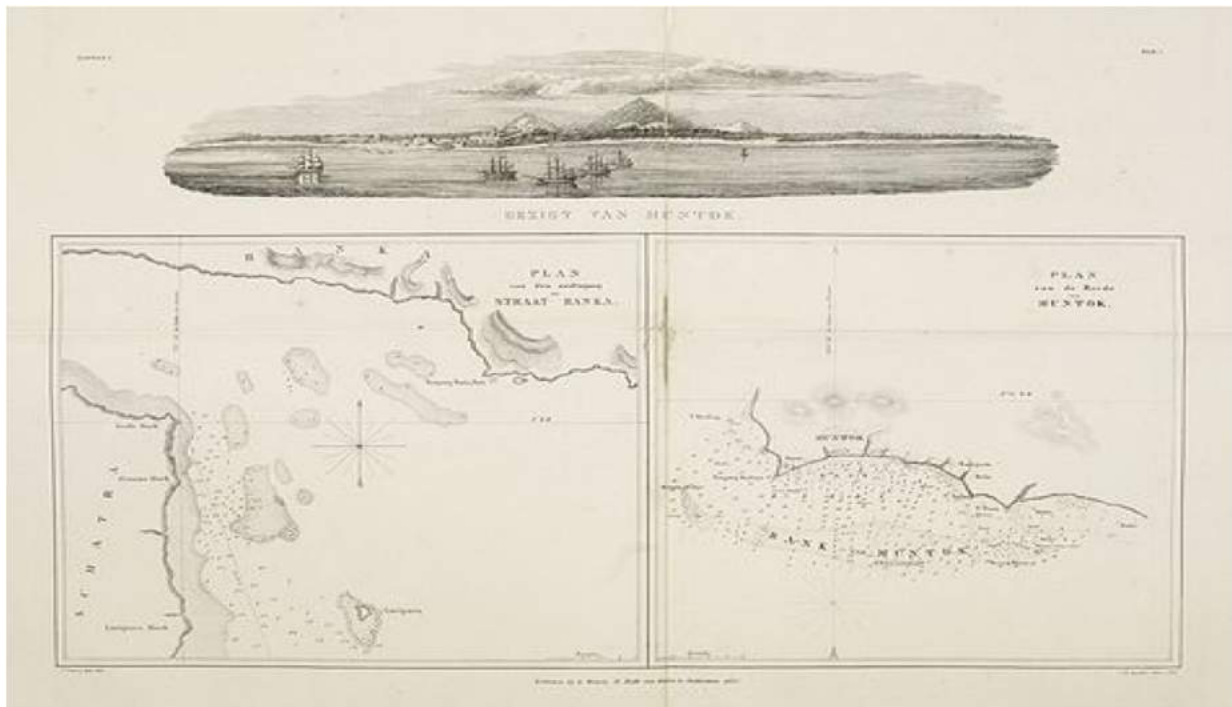


Figure 3. Muntok from the direction of Strait of Bangka with panorama of Mount Menumbing

Later, based on the Sultan's decree in 1734, in the chosen area, it was built the initial seven houses to home the family of Zamnah. The location of these seven houses was not clear. However, it was predicted that it was located near the Kota Seribu and Kampung Kauman Dalam. In this new town, the father of Zamnah, Ence' Wan Abdul Jabar got honored status as Datuk Temenggung Prabu Nata Menggala or Datuk Dalam. He became spiritual leader for this new 'Negeri'.

Not long after that, Ence Wan Akub was assigned by the Sultan to open trenches (tin mining) assisted by *Patih*, *Batin* and local people. He had experience building such these trenches in Johor. From these trenches in Bangka, each year he collected fifty tin ores and ships to the Sultan of Palembang. In addition to working for the Sultan, Ence Wan Akub himself also sold the tin ore for his personal gains through the help of Malay workers and residents around Mento'.

For the purpose of tin mining expansion, Ence Wan Akub then requested to the Sultan to send more workers to develop tin trenches. The Sultan agreed, and Ence Wan Akub asked his relative Ence Wan Serin to lead the voyage with several boats to pick up Siamese and Chinese workers in Johor, and invited their descendants who resided in Cambodia and were farmers in Siantan to come to Bangka.

The arrival of tin workers has enlivened Mento'. The increase in tin mining results prompted the Sultan to bring more Siamese and Chinese workers to Mento'. However, the influx of Chinese workers created another problem, as they wanted to dominate the tin mines, which led to the violence. Although Wan Akub succeeded to stop the fighting, a deliberation finally held to reconcile the atmosphere.

Share Urban Heritage

2.1. Pulau Seribu

After a Chinese rebellion against indigenous Malay and also after some piracies operation struck Mento', in order to avoid similar incidents and to protect the population from the enemies, the Palembang Sultan ordered Ence' Wan Akub to build a wooden fortress in the higher land, equipped with cannons to control the potential of riots.

The fort was then reinforced and enlarged in 1770s in the era of pre-colonial Temenggung (after Ence' Wan Akup died) and later was named *Kota Seribu*.

"According to Carita Bangka, the word Seribu (One Thousands) was derived from the 1,000 ringgit of money and 1,000 pikul (1 pikul is equal to 62.5 kg) of rice which were donated by Sulthan to help rebuild the previous wooden stronghold. Its circumference was approximately 1,300 m with walls made of 1 m thick soil. Canons and brandishes were placed in these walls, facing the south and east. On the outer side of the walls, ditches were dug with a 3 m depth and 2.5-3 m width." (Kurniawan, 2013 : 171)



Figure 4. Fort Kota Seribu position in Muntok (year : 1824)

Source : Nationaal Archief, Den Haag

The Kota Seribu (Fortress) then became an important place for Mento' because after its useful lives, the area around it became the burial grounds for the Mento's Malay leaders and their descendants. This cemetery became known as the Kota Seribu Cemetery. In this cemetery there are several important tombs of Mento's founder such as Tomb of Ence 'Wan Akup, Ence' Wan Serin, Ence 'Wan Abdul Djabar (Datuk Dalam), Abang Pahang Temenggung Dita Menggala, Abang Pahang's Wife, Abang Ismail Temenggung Kerta Menggala, Abang Muhammad Thayib Temenggung Kerta Widjaya, Sayed Habib of the late Hamid bin Abd. Rahman bin Ali Asegaf, Abang Muhammad Thayib's wife.

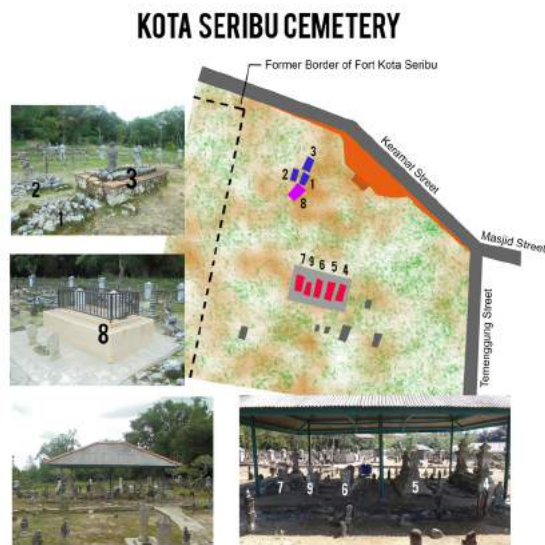


Figure 5. The position of tombs 1. Ence' Wan Akup, 2. Ence' Wan Serin, 3. Ence' Wan Abdul Djabar (Datuk Dalam), 4. Abang Pahang Temenggung Dita Menggala, 5. Abang Pahang's wife, 6. Abang Ismail Temenggung Kerta Menggala, 7. Abang Muhammad Thayib Temenggung Kerta Widjaya, 8. Sayed Habib Almarhum Hamid bin Abd. Rahman bin Ali Asegaf, dan 9. Abang Muhammad Thayib's wife
(Source : Author's documentation)

The tombstones in Kota Seribu obtained Malay influences, also known as Malay or Aceh Tombstones. The shapes of the tombstones were different between the noble families and the common people. The tomb of the leaders and their families were made with floral carvings and were written in Arabic calligraphy. Today, several of these main tombs are covered with the simple roof. On the other hand, the ordinary people graves only consisted of two tombstones without carving on the side of the head and feet.

According to Maxwell in his research on the Malay cemetery 'Tok Bidan Susu lanjut' in the Kemunting cemetery Malaysia, "The direction of the grave is as nearly as possible due north and south. The stones at its head and foot are of the same size and in every respect identical one with the other. They are of sandstone and are said by the natives to have been brought from Achin" (Maxwell 1878 : 237)



Figure 6. Mento Nobleman Tombstone in The Kota Seribu Cemetery
(Source : Muh. Isa Djamaluddin)

In Kota Seribu cemetery, the orientation of the tombs were almost north – south. It is in accordance with Islamic teachings to position the buried body facing the direction of Qibla (northwest). Each tomb also has two identical stones in the head and legs of the deceased. According to Othman M. Yatim, the type of stone used in the Malay cemetery has a

gender-related distinction. Men use round stone while women use flat stone. The size of the stone also corresponds to the age, children have a smaller stone size. The people with the closest kinship are buried with adjacent positions.

“The burying places are called crammat (keramat). They are held in extraordinary révérence, and the least disturbance or violation of the ground, though all traces of the graves be obliterated, is regarded as an unpardonable sacrilege”
(Marsden 1784 : 249)

The area of Kota Seribu is also recognized as sacred (*Keramat*). This is based on an old tomb located further west of Kota Seribu mentioned by local resident as Keramat Nyi Sengu’. Nyi Sengu’ was believed by local as the mother of Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin I. It was not clear why she was burried in Mento, not in Palembang. Today the road passing through Kota Seribu was named as Keramat Road. The cemetery is elevated from the level of the road with its edge anointed with red stones from Mento shore.



Figure 7. citizens Tombstones in The Kota Seribu Cemetery
(Source : Author’s documentation)



Figure 8. Kota Seribu Cemetery gate with red stones as plaster
(Source : Author’s documentation)

2.2. Malay Settlement

The initial Mento started from the edge of the land and coastal area overlooking the Sumatra Island (Palembang) and then continued to extend into the middle of the land to Menumbing Hill. According to Carita Bangka, the initially built seven houses for the families of Zamnah. Those first seven settlements were probably located in Kampung Kauman Dalam and Kota Seribu. This area initially looked like a Cape, it is why it was also named as Kampung Tanjung Jiran Siantan. It is located on the edge of the beach and on the mainland jutting into the sea or peninsula (*tanjung* or *semananjung*). The typology of settlement in Kampung Tanjung dominantly is traditional stage house and roof models that resemble ridge form. This is to adjust the ups and downs of sea water level and tropical weather in Mento’. This village is also known as Kampung Jiran Siantan to accommodate hundreds and more than one thousands people who migrated from Siantan.

Beside Kampung Tanjung Jiran Siantan and Kampung Dalam, there were also other villages such as Kampung Patmoen (kampung Ulu), and Kampung Kranggan. In its development, these villages could not be separated from the influence of Malay culture of Siantan, Johor, and Palembang. The whole culture is mixed through the arrival of the founders and the subsequent migrants from all three regions.

The Austronesian tradition to build the roof of wooden stage house that resembles the ridge form (Boat shape), was continued to be a typology of traditional houses that we found in Mento. The house represented knowledge and building skills influenced by Malay customs. The attic under roofs provides depository usually to store valuable things, or sacred heirlooms. While the space underneath the wooden floors usually used for women to weave Mento' traditional fabrics namely 'Cual'. The size of the house and ornamentation indicated social status or rank of the owner.

Moreover, regarding the vernacular architecture which is the result of local architectural product was mentioned also by Tjahjono et.al in his book entitled Indonesian Heritage; Architecture series: there are about four aspects of tradition to build vernacular architecture in Indonesia representing Austronesian tradition including Malay peninsula: 1) post foundation 2) elevated living floor 3) pitched roof with shaped saddle 4) local material such as wood and stone.

Furthermore, there were several typologies of Malay stage house in Mento: original Bangkanese hut type (Fig. 12 (a)), Palembang limas type influence, and Malay Peninsula type. The later typology were believed followed traditional houses in Johor

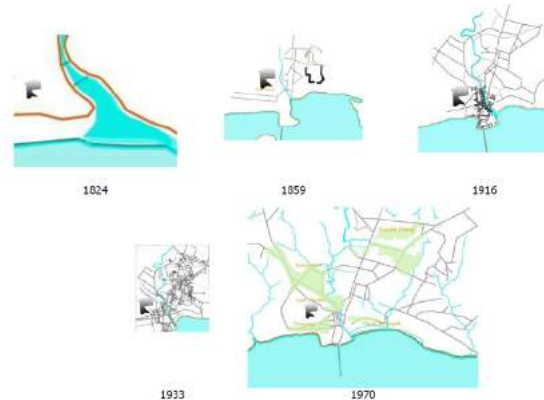


Figure 9. The growth of the town of Mento from time to time

and Malacca with its unique roofs in Kampung Tanjung (Fig 12 (c)) and Kampung Teluk Rubiyah (Fig. 12 (d)).

However, unfortunately, due to economic force and modern practicality, the number of these traditional houses decreased from time to time. The difficulty to obtain good quality of wooden materials due to its distinction and its high price resulted in the change of people preference to choose landed modern brick house rather than traditional stage house.



Figure 10. An artist sketch(1887), showed the Mento' Harbour and Bangka Strait with a traditional Malay Stage house hidden amongst the greenery.

Source: Tropen Museum

As mentioned before, the relationship between Malay Peninsula and Indonesia in Mento (Muntok) was not limited on the traces of heredity to families derived by Lim Tauw Kian, but also from the tradition of settlement, its patterns and the architecture of traditional Malay house. The evidences and remains of Malay traditional houses would be easy to find in the settlements that were originally as the initial core of Mento. Presently, the location is the heart of the center of urban activity as a downtown area.



Figure 11a (on the above) Maps the town of Muntok in 1918.

Figure 11b (on the below) Air Photograph on Muntok in 1927.

Then near the downtown of Mento, there was a Kampung Patmoen (kampung Ulu) located along the upstream of Mento' River. Mento' River itself initially was source of



Figure 12 (a) The sketch of Native hut in Bangka by a British visitor (Early 19th C).

Figure 12 (b) Kampung Tanjung Jiran Siantan – Mento' (1930-an).

Source (a) and (b): KITLV.

Figure 12 (c) Kampung Tanjung (2012)

Figure 12 (d) Kampung Teluk Rubyah (2012)

Source (c) and (d): Private

fresh water for Mento's inhabitants' daily uses. The architecture along the river also has the majority of stage houses and wooden materials to adapt to the overflow of river water and local materials sources, and use the ridge roof to follow the Mento' tropical climate.

The challenges of shared tradition and cultural heritage between Malay peninsula and Indonesia is not only on the architecture knowledge, but also continues on the technical aspects (building skills or techniques). The present building's skill had to face shortage of wooden material availability and climate changes which relatively similar between Malay peninsula and Indonesia. The form of vernacular architecture, which is the result of hybrid architecture of Malay and Indonesian architecture, needs to be rethought to adapt to globalization and more dynamic modern society.

3. Conclusion

The establishment of Mento' is inseparable from the connection with its neighbouring kingdoms in Southeast Asia. The flow of people (cultural migration) for centuries influenced by the attractiveness of tin mining had shaped the formation of the town. The intermarriage between Chinese and Malay that were practiced through everyday life creating multiculturalism perspectives amongst Muntok inhabitants.

The background of Malay culture of Siantan, Johor and Palembang brought by immigrants to Mento' (Muntok) has formed a cultural mixture that is reflected in several cultural results such as architecture. Some similarity of cultural heritage (shared urban heritage) is represented through historical architectural relics of settlement (Malay

wooden Stage house) and cemetery (former fortification of Kota Seribu).

Shared Urban Heritage in this case became a trigger and challenges for further cultural development to find a new strategy to strengthen cultural cooperation between Indonesia and Malaysia amidst globalization and unpredictable economic situation of the region.

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