

**The Social History of Ethnic Chinese in Theory and Methodology Perspective: The  
*Comparative Studies***

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**ABSTRACT**

The history of Chinese ethnicity is an interesting historical study to be studied by historians, sociologists and sinologists is trying to analyze and explain in various points of view from the arrival and the formation of the community. This is certainly requires by appropriate methods and methodologies to produce historical narratives. The social history of ethnic Chinese as a community is one of the approaches and methodology in narrating them. According to Raphael Samuel et al (on his book "What is Social History"?), social history also focuses on public issues, the history of ordinary life, family history, "a grassroots" compared to the lives of the elites, the military, the politics, and the economy. This study is about comparative history, I use the method of history from book, journals and the others. The view of social history is more about the experience than an action of their life. Based on Raphael's explanation, the above raises the question of how historiography provides an explanation of ethnic Chinese in terms of method and methodology through comparative studies, whether the Chinese ethnicity is general in its locality based on existing of historiography. Some major findings are that the Chinese history has been written in Indonesia is still limited and need to write more to enrichment the historiography about Chinese society.

*Keyword:* Social history, ethnic Chinese, theory and methodology, comparative studies

**Introduction**

The social History as a part of thematic history is speak about the social life of society. Basically social history arises because of the historians is consciousness that history as an event is not only experienced by the great man alone, but history as an event is also moved by the little people. Their role certainly contributes to history, but lacks a place in historiography because it is considered unimportant and not a part of historical events or just a complement.

In social history, according to Christhoper Lloyd as a historians must be understand about what is the meaning of an action, but for analyzing the social deconstruction as a whole.(Lloyd, 1950) Furthermore, the social history is also focused on public issues, the history of ordinary life, family history, "a grassroots" compared to the lives of the elites, the military, the politics, and the economy. The view of social history is more about an experience than action ( Samuel, Breuilly, Clark, 2005). The purpose of experience is preferred over action, the experience of the subject or community is related to the event to be written.

Understanding other social histories according to *fustel de coulanges*. He states that history not only accumulates all kinds of events that occurred in the past, but the history of the science of "human societies". Demonstrating that history not only deals with past event, but also about the lives of the people and what they experience so as to provide a holistic picture of historical phenomena. Social history also serves to explain about human activities

that are difficult to classify, except for things like attitudes, culture and daily life that are often associated with human activity.

In social history we are also sometimes experience what is known as the division of ideas. This division according to Hegel is very dialectical. The dialectical has the intention that the opposite relationship between the two ideas and the form of the debate is necessary to develop ideas. These ideas will then develop into concepts, such as thoughts based on one's intellectual, soul, ratio, virtue, morality that does not arise by itself, but through a long and customized process or will produce something according to what is believed (Smith, 2001).

The examples from other social histories that are closely related to indonesia for example in the history of Indonesian nationalism. The history of Indonesian nationalism can be an important indicator as a model in Indonesian social history writing, which do not always look at the importance of the elite or political organization as part of the development of nationalism. The idea of nationalism in accordance with what was stated by Bambang Purwanto in his book "The Failure of the Historia of Indonesiasentris?", does not always have to be about resistances to colonialism or patriotism to defend independece. However, we are expected to be able to understand the existence of Indonesian identity in accordance with changes that occuring at the local level.

The historical facts show that the formation of local identity within each region is different and not contradictory, but has a distinctive characteristic at the national level. Although it can not be denied that the process and form, even though the proclamation had taken place in 1945, but not at all of the former indies colonies then automatically became part of what we know the "Indonesia" and understand it. Therefore, according to Bambang Purwanto, historians need to perform a historical reconstruction of the process of Indonesian nationalism at various regional levels, because if there is going to be a different and unique thing about how the process is actually takes place in Indonesia. Therefore, according to Bambang Purwanto, then this is done if based on a local historical perspective, this will make the concept of autonomous history still relevant to use (Smail, 1961).

The thingking of frameworks can be obtained through the process of remembering and the experience is formed after a long and continuous observation. In the world of academic, the experience can take the form of writing. This process requires what is known as writing or literature to form "the frame work" (framework of thinking) that relates to the problem of study.

### Results

The Comparative study of chinese History in local perspective based on theory and methodology

The study of ethnicity especially the ethnic chinese in the recent period was rife by national and local historians. This is shown that what has been aspired by Indonesian historians from the other perspective of Netherlandocentris into Indonesiasentris is seen, because history not only makes the elites as an actor in history, but there are also other "actors" in history who play a part in the history of Indonesia. One of the ethnic that lacks place in the historiography of Indonesia is Tionghoa. Although the writing of ethnic Chinese history was originally encouraged by Chinese-blooded historians such as Leo Suryadinata, Melly G Tan, Benny G Setiono, Mona Lohanda and many more. However, over the times and historical writing about this ethnic then made Indonesian historians then began to write history about ethnic Chinese through their point of views.

Ironically, the historiography of Chinese ethnic is the same and even the stigma of generalization. However, the current ethnic Chinese historiography of attitudes or cultures adopted by them throughout Indonesia then slowly began to change where the start of a new

buzz by Indonesian local historians in viewing the position of ethnic Chinese in the history of Indonesia. The various stereotypes experienced by ethnic Chinese about their position and existence are different from each other in various regions. This suggests that the views on the ethnic Chinese presence differed according to their role in local history, some experienced discrimination that did not depend on their locality and social and economic relations in society. The method was still focused on conflict, discrimination, assimilation, nationalism, integration and life issues of ethnic Chinese in general. The history of ethnic Chinese regionally is not widely developed, but in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it is began to look specialization of Chinese history writing based on the different regional.

Here is some historiographical or historical perspectives on Chinese ethnic when viewed from the theory and methodology. The first discussion starts from the writings of Andjarwati Noordjanah on Chinese Community in Surabaya. By method, she began by using the source of historical problems that he would lift into a writing using a newspaper in 1936. The newspaper of this year, reveals a massive strike by Chinese ethnic in Surabaya. This strike was done because of the arbitrary attitude of the colonial government in applying the rules against Chinese ethnicity. The protests of ethnic Chinese are the biggest action with strikes conducted by Chinese citizens in Surabaya. As the result of this strike, economic activity suffered temporary paralysis, making it an interesting phenomenon to be studied further. Aside from the trade rivalry between colonial and Chinese, the indigenous position is also worth reckoning with, because in his writings Andjarwati also explains that this strike happened more because of economy and politics. In the economic field because of the competition between the Dutch trade association with the Chinese, Chinese with the indigenous population, and not be separated from the events of the revolution churned out in China or related to Chinese nationalism with their ancestral Chinese nation (Noordjanah, 2010).

The economic rivalry between ethnic Chinese and the colonial and indigenous governments, which ended in turmoil in the end, continued to bring ethnic Chinese into Indonesian history placed in economic positions. In the historical approach, the history of Chinese ethnic uses a socioeconomic history approach. The socio-economic history by Barry E. Supple is a historical study that discusses the efforts made by to meet the need for goods and services both through institutions and relationships that arise and have something to do with the economy. Based on this understanding, it is not wrong if the history of ethnic Chinese in Surabaya is included in the socio-economic history category, because it discusses ethnic Chinese as a community and economy as one of the triggers of conflict.

Based on Andjarwati's writings on the history of the Surabaya community, it can be seen that there has been a development in Indonesian historiography regarding the history of ethnic Chinese at the local level, although Chinese in local historiography remain positioned historically in their early activities as traders and economic actors in the archipelago. In terms of sources, Andjarwati uses colonial sources and local newspapers, but it would be great to use the original Mandarin sources, meaning the notes left by the ancient Chinese ancestors living at the time, will be richer and more balanced by using multiple sources based on their perspectives. However, as a historian we must certainly be critical of any source that we will use by using source criticism.

The next historical text that discusses the ethnic Chinese in Indonesia is the writings of Yerry Wiryawan entitled History of the Chinese People of Makassar: From the 17th Century to the 20th. Yerry Wirawan is a historian of Chinese ethnicity. He used the sources not only from the National Archives of Indonesia or the National Library (NLI), in addition to using national documents, he also uses the source of Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal, - Laand en Volkenkunde (KITLV). In addition to using sources originating in the Netherlands, Yerry is increasingly enriches the historical sources he uses by using sources from the EFEO

library in Paris. In addition to using sources from EFEO Paris, he is also using Mandarin-written sources, as well as Malay texts. In these Malay texts, Chinese people are always written in transcriptions of Hokkien (Wirawan, 2013).

With a variety of sources he uses, as well as his ability to use and interpreting the mandarin terms contained in the sources he used, as one of the Chinese *peranakan* (a Chinese who mixed blood with the native in Netherlands Indies) historian Yerry was used Chinese sources such as gravestone inscriptions, which describe the family tree Tionghoa so as to trace the genealogical relation of the ethnic Chinese family, and not infrequently in Bompay (stone for tomb (*batu nisan*) is usually told the year of birth, death, positions that he had and a little story about his personal life. This legacy serves for the next generation to know the person of his ancestors. For historians, another function of such sources is to trace the oldest Chinese family. So that it can be predicted who was the first Chinese ethnic who came to Makassar (Wirawan, 2013, pp.9).

Although in the end of the writing on Chinese is only able to give an idea of their arrival, their process of adapting and finally becoming a trader, as well as their relationship with local people and political changes that ultimately affect their existences nor need to be taken for granted, because the process traversed by each of these ethnic will certainly be different in each region.

Yerry also stressed that his research is purely to show that Makassar as well as Java also has important roles and positions. However, interesting from the approach that Yerry uses are many of the Makassar Chinese who embraced Islam in the 17th and 18th centuries. As the result, a *peranakan* Chinese community of Moslems is formed and it is difficult to distinguish it from Malay society, because when ethnic Chinese have converted to Islam, they will usually be assimilated to the local population and married. So the resulting offspring will be more similar to the indigenous descent than the Chinese.

However, in his writing, Yerry does not really explain how this conversion of confidence works, and what influences and why can this conversion was take place? What factors were encouraging, not explained by Yerry. So, I think this further research is needed to know the phenomenon. It was difference between Medan Chinese process and the native in the historiography of Indonesia as in the article Nasrul Hamdani. The history of the conflict between the Chinese and the native since the colonial period has always been on the basis of economic disparity and social jealousy. This is none of the other than aimed at politicizing the interests of the government and the transfer of the issue of government failure in improving the fate of the people. Nasrul is also explained that research on ethnic Chinese by European historians has different approaches, such as William G. Skinner on the socio-cultural aspect of overseas Chinese in Indochina as part of a diverse locality. While Benedict Anderson saw that the Chinese as a group of bourgeois merchants, in contrast to Benedict's view. Charles A. Coppel about the social class, but his views remained the same (Hamdani, 2013). Nasrul in his writing is more using the socio-economic approach, where, he explains about the process of ethnic Chinese was adapted in a new environment with different ethnic different, and their economic position as a coolie.

While in economic approached, Nasrun's writings is that he is able to explain and analyze how Chinese ethnicity is considered the same by historians as traders, but in Medan this ethnic actually undergoes changing phases. The point is that some of the Medan Tribal Chinese are able to experience a vertical change from porters to traders, if they are able to pass this phase of change well. Although we know that not all Chinese ethnic Medan are able to pass this phase, because they end up ending up at the gambling table, which impacts the debt to plantation owners, so that they are trapped in a vicious circle and become coolies forever. maybe, some of the people who worked as a coolie before can gets off and become a traders or going back to Cina.

The text on Chinese ethnic is different from the general view that describes the Chinese as rich Ethnic, merchant, and has tremendous influence and power, not seen in Marry Somers writing. In his work entitled "Gold Miners, Farmers and Traders in" Tionghoa District "West Kalimantan, according to Somers is not composed of middlemen, or economically successful, but are people of various professions if it is said to be like a trader small-scale, farmers and fishermen. More precisely there is a simple Chinese living up to what is known as poverty (Somers, 2008).

Somers in his book was explained that ethnic Chinese in West Kalimantan as an ethnic group called "small China in tropical country". giving this nickname because the majority of the population there comes from ethnic Chinese. In terms of sources used by Marry Somers is still struggling to sources that speak Dutch and Indonesian. The approach is more to population and social and economic history. In this paper, Somers analyzes that there has been a change in the pattern of economic and social activities of ethnic Chinese in West Kalimantan. Where in economic activity, the Chinese were originally a gold miner, then underwent a change after the joint war between the Chinese partnership with the VOC, Colonial and the Malay kingdom or the Dayak tribe. This change of ethnic economic activity then turned into small traders and cultivators. In addition to changes in economic activity, the spread and the arrival of the population also experienced a drastic decrease. This decline could be due to the discriminatory actions of the colonial government, as well as the destruction of some of the well-known *kongsi* which became the vessel for the Chinese people before in developing the network

In this type of writes in local historiography is often puts other ethnic histories as part of local history. Other texts tend to place ethnic Chinese as "traders, economic actors, and so on. The history of ethnic Chinese is often considered to be the same or a generalization in view of ethnic Chinese as an ethnicity. Yet historically, as well as others will be very different from one to another.

The historical phenomenon of the development of Chinese community in Bagan Siapi api and the complex problems is interesting to be explored. Considering the Bagan siapi api of the Chinese ethnicity as ethnic minorities who control the field of economy there. The research on Chinese Ethnic Bagan Siapi api has been done by some historians such as John G. Batcher in his article entitled "The Salt Farm and the Fishing Industry of Bagan Si Api api (Butcher, 1996).

In his writings, John sees that pacht or Towkays have a role in encouraging the growth of the fishery industry in Bagan Siapiapi, but did not last long since 1910 because it has been over-exploited by to reach its capacity threshold. So that Bagan siapi api known as the largest fish producer then decreased drastically. The decline and increase of the fishery industry is caused by the market system (the economic crisis and the increasing demand) and the participation of the Dutch East Indies government in regulating the fishery system of Bagan Siapi api.

Finally, in the literature study of Chinese ethnicity in Bagan Siapi api for the colonial period, I further reinforce my argument in researching Chinese ethnicity in Bagan Siapi api when I found the writing of Azmi Fitriisia with his thesis entitled "Fisheries in Bagan Siapi fire 1871-1942 completed in 2002. This thesis looks at Bagan Siapi fire from the historical side and its fishing industry, as well as the components that cause it to survive and advance. The progress and decline of this industry according to Azmi influenced one of them by the role played by the Colonial Government and the owners of capital of the Chinese ethnic in advancing the fishing industry in Bagan Siapi fire. Although Azmi initially pointed out that fisheries were initially aimed only at meeting the economic needs of the people. At askhirnya continues to grow to become the largest fishing industry city in the world. (Fitrisia, 2002). The temporal boundary of 1871 at the time of the collapse of the power of

the Siak Indrapura Kingdom after the Sumatra Treaty between the Netherlands and Britain, until 1942 during the Japanese occupation. In terms of timing, this article began when the Dutch East Indies government took over from England, so Bagan Siapi api then came under colonial rule. What is about the Bagan Siapi api when occupied under the British rule for several years is not visible in this paper nor in previous writings. The position of the Colonial government as the holder of power and rules and ethnic Chinese who are positioned as the owners of capital here, so that their other roles in the field of social or life and their related relations in the field of politics and culture both with other communities and with semenangnjai Malaya or Singapore not too explained further. So it seems that this paper only focuses on the development and decline of the fishery industry, and the position of local fishermen displaced from the roles and competition with the owners of almost the majority of the chart and the fishery industry in Bagan Siapiapi.

For writing about the contemporary period of the post-independence period of Indonesia, I am only temporarily finding the writing of Sudarno Mahyudin with his book entitled "Gema Proklamasi Kemerdekaan RI in Bagansiapiapi Event". Sudarno in his article discussed the great events of ethnic Chinese riots with natives in 1946 which occurred due to misunderstanding in obtaining information about Indonesia's independence, as well as ethnic Chinese attitude that remained in its political attitude that is inclined to behave to China, and did not recognize the existence of Indonesia's independence. Misconceptions and lack of communication and good relations between the two of these lead to riots and massacres against other ethnic and ethnic Chinese. The riots and dark history between other ethnic Chinese ethnicity is interesting to be studied from the historical side to see how the history of Chinese Ethnic Bagan Siapi Api in the colonial period and the formation of their identity as part of China when compared with Indonesia. Is the process of establishing the ethnic Chinese cultural entity that tends to Pan-China then causes this event ?, and how does the process of forming the identity of this nuance they get, through what? And how is that then internalized in their family and social life? So this process then resulted in ethnic Chinese feel Bagan Siapiapi has become their own homeland for them, but not in the sense of the motherland of Indonesia.

As once expressed by the Dutch, "Een China in Oost Indie". This statement then reminds me in his writing Marry Somers Heidhues about Gold Miners, Farmers, and Traders in the "District of Tionghoa" West Kalimantan. In this paper, Marry also uses the term "Chinese district" in West Kalimantan as "a small Chinese in a tropical country". This statement from Marry is interesting because, not just West Kalimantan as a small Chinese, but long before that it was the Dutch who gave this nickname to Bagan Siapi api. Interesting indeed, how these two regions got the nickname as well as the historical process they experienced.

Being a majority in the midst of a minority community forming a new community in the midst of social, economic, cultural and political life of Bagan Siapiapi is up to now, may still be able to influence in various fields or vice versa in Bagan Siapi api. Which became the background of my thinking then to make this topic as research materials, starting from the large enough Chinese community in Bagan Siapiapi as described above. Although in the end, in the next research on the Bagan siapiapi, I will not be separated from the socio-economic history approach. However, the theory that I will use more to indicate the occurrence of economic changes. Tuma distinguishes the indicator of economic change in two forms: primary indicators and secondary indicators. Primary indicator according to him changed directly while the second indirectly. A secondary indicator is needed to explain the change, while the primary indicator for measuring, recognizing and explaining changes. Studying the economic changes in primary indicators can be seen from productivity, such as whether input-output ratios improve or not, whereas technical and business organization

advances are used as secondary indicators (Haryono, 2011) From the above description, I try to see that after the change of economic position of Bagan Siapi fire from fishery industry to small trade or what need to be further investigated, thus, then we will be easy to see any change. the changes in how and why ?, maybe a changes in the economy factor of Bagan Siapiapi that was originally engaged in the fishing industry, but when the industry suffered a setback in the 60's or 70's. It is possible that Bagan Siapi fire has an alternative in building its economy, just as West Kalimantan has transformed into farmers, small traders and gardeners.

The earlier research on the Bagan Siapiapi did in fact use colonial periods or up to 1937, although Azmi in his thesis wrote in 1871-1942, but until the end of his writings there was no apparent process of power transition to Japan and the circumstances of Bagan Siapi fire during the Japanese occupation. Most of the results of research using colonial periods only focus on the advancement and retreat of the fishery industry in Bagan Siapi City, based on different periods, although some see in terms of the salt pachter, the fishery industry that was concerned with the world economic crisis of the 1930s , or the advance of the fish industry at that time, one of the fish source is still abundant as well as the invention of new fishing gear.

So the results of writing is more or less similar, but it does not show the position of ethnic Chinese in social relations, its culture with other people is no more limited to the relationship between employers and workers. So the lack of a place to explain ethnic Chinese in the history of Indonesia, and cause them as if the Ethnic exclusive and excluded in the history of Indonesia and Bagan Siapi fire. The Siyat flame chart of the Japanese period (1942) escaped in the historiography of Bagan Siapi api. Despite the execution of Sudarno, in this period.

*“All the economic activities of the people and fishing effort, stalled altogether, because all the people's energy was deployed by the Japanese military government in the Greater East Asian war”* (Mahyudin, 2006).

The contemporary period of Bagan Siapi api, which was continued by Sudarno, does not explain what the Chinese and other ethnic groups do for the Japanese interests, how the economic activity was taken place and what the impact it has still require deep answers and analysis in these periods. The source used by Sudarno in analyzing this contemporary period was also very minimal, and not explained enough through footnotes, or quotes from which he obtained the source. The sources that he uses are only listed in the bibliography and the majority of the sources he uses are derived from the writings obtained from the historical books of the Riau Region published by the Riau provincial government, so the lack of other sources is necessary for further review.

### Conclusion

Therefore, I think that in the periods of the revolution up to now it can be a topic of further research on Chinese ethnic and other communities in Bagan Siapi api. The long historical process and the events through which Bagan Siapiapi and the people of course will be of interest to further study, as it is possible that the Siapi Chart of fire that we know in the colonial past will undergo a change in the present moment both economically, socially, culturally and the ideology that he embraces, especially to the ethnic Chinese. It may be that in the later periods of this revolution, I will use sociological and anthropological, as well as economic approaches to see the changes experienced by Bagan Siapi api. The sources I will use will range from newspapers, interviews, or relevant books. For that reason I may need further assistance to the lecturers in the course of history seminars or theories and methodologies to help me deepen my research and set up my framework of thinking

that may be "somewhat chaotic" in this paper, in order to be well organized for the theme that I offer is acceptable and can find the side of "uniqueness" so it is worth to continue.

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