

History and Characteristics of the Arab Village Settlement Al-Munawar 13 Ulu, Palembang, South Sumatra

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Abstrak

Palembang dengan keindahan Sungai Musi yang mengalir melalui pusat kotanya, menarik sebagai titik sentral kehidupan masyarakat. Kota Palembang terdiri dari dua wilayah, Seberang Ulu (Ulu) dan Seberang Ilir (Ilir), dipisahkan oleh Sungai Musi sejak zaman Kesultanan Palembang. Komunitas etnis Arab di kota Palembang terfokus di beberapa kampung, salah satunya Kampung Arab Al-Munawar 13 Ulu Palembang, sebuah pemukiman keturunan Habib Abdurrahman atau Abdullah Al-Munawar yang menetap dari Kota Hadramaut. Mereka memegang teguh pola pernikahan dengan sesama keturunan Arab dan menetap di tepi sungai Sungai Musi. Kampung ini memiliki potensi untuk dikembangkan, tetapi juga perlu pelestarian untuk mencegah potensi penggusuran di masa depan. Rumah-rumah di kampung ini terdiri dari beragam bentuk, termasuk rumah limas, gudang, Indies, dan rumah panggung. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode penelitian sejarah untuk mengungkap warisan sejarah, karakteristik khas Palembang dan keragaman etnis dan budaya di Kampung Arab Al-Munawar 13 Ulu Palembang. Penelitian menyimpulkan bahwa Kampung Arab Al-Munawar 13 Ulu Palembang yang telah berdiri sekitar 250 tahun lalu, adalah tempat tinggal bagi keturunan pedagang dari Kota Hadramaut. Dengan pola pernikahan dan tata ruang pemukiman yang mencerminkan adaptasi komunitas terhadap lingkungan, kampung ini menjadi penting dalam konteks sejarah dan keberagaman budaya di Palembang.

Kata kunci: etnis arab, budaya arab, kampung arab.

Abstract

Palembang, with the beauty of the Musi River flowing through its city center, serves as a central point in the community's life. The city of Palembang is divided into two regions, namely Seberang Ulu (Ulu) and Seberang Ilir (Ilir), separated by the Musi River since the era of the Palembang Sultanate. The Arab ethnic community in Palembang is concentrated in several villages, one of which is Arabian Village Al-Munawar 13 Ulu Palembang, a settlement of the descendants of Habib Abdurrahman or Abdullah Al-Munawar who settled from Hadhramaut. They adhere strictly to the practice of marrying within the Arab lineage and reside along the banks of the Musi River. This village holds the potential for development but also requires preservation to prevent possible displacement in the future. The village's houses encompass various forms, including "limas" houses, warehouses, "Indies" houses, and raised platform houses. This research employs historical research methods to reveal the historical legacy, distinctive characteristics of Palembang, and the ethnic and cultural diversity in Arabian Village Al-Munawar 13 Ulu Palembang. The study concludes that Kampung Arab Al-Munawar 13 Ulu Palembang, existing for about 250 years, was the residence of traders' descendants from Hadhramaut. With marriage customs and settlement patterns reflecting the community's adaptation to its environment, this village holds significance in the historical and cultural diversity context of Palembang.

Keywords: arab ethnicity, arab culture, arabian village.

INTRODUCTION

The Arab community settlements in Palembang City are concentrated in

several areas, such as Villages 7 Ulu, 12 Ulu, 13 Ulu, and 14 Ulu. These settlements are located along the banks of

major rivers and tributaries. Some are named after their founders, whose descendants carry the surname. For example, the Al-Munawar Arab Village in 13 Ulu is the oldest settlement and the home of the descendants of Habib Abdurrahman or Abdullah Al-Munawar (Purwanti, 2009).

The residents of Al-Munawar are of Arab descent and adhere to the principle that marriages must be conducted within their own lineage, or in some cases, within the indigenous community, especially men. Marriage between Arab women and men of other ethnicities is considered taboo and will result in ostracization. The patrilineal kinship system provides a strong foundation for inheritance in this Arab community (Novita, 2012).

The Al-Munawar 13 Ulu Arab Village in Palembang has potential for development due to its cultural distinctiveness, strategic location on the banks of the Musi River, and the support of the Musi IV Bridge development area. However, preservation and development efforts are needed to prevent future displacement.

The houses in this village are of three types: Limas Houses, Stilt Houses, and Indies Houses (Arkeologi, 2012). Most are tall and stand on stilts. The spatial patterns of the settlements also reflect the adaptation of the community to their surroundings.

The purpose of this research is to explore and uncover the historical heritage and distinctive characteristics of Palembang, particularly in the context of ethnic and cultural diversity, within the settlement of the Al-Munawar 13 Ulu Arab Village, Palembang.

METHODS

This research uses the historical research method. The historical research method is an approach that applies the processes employed by historians in collecting historical facts. This approach involves aspects such as historiography, interpretation, explanation, and presentation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The history of the Al-Munawar Arab Village in Palembang's 13 Ulu neighborhood indicates that Arabs have lived around the Musi River in Palembang since the early 19th century (Tamaddun, 2009). At the same time, there are many Arab villages in the city, such as the Al-Munawar Arab Village on Jalan KH. Azhari, 13 Ulu Village, has its own unique character. This village has existed for over two centuries, with little change since the time of Habib Abdurrahman Al-Munawar. Located in a small alley leading to the Musi River, this alley was previously known as Al-Munawar Alley, named after a Yemeni family (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Geographical Location-Al-Munawar 13 Ulu Arab Village Settlement, Palembang
 (Source: Processed Data, 2023)

The first person to use the title Al-Munawar was Aqil bin Alwi bin Abdurrahman bin Ali bin Abdullah bin Abu Bakar bin Alwi bin Ahmad bin Abubakar As-Syakran bin Abdurrahman Asseqqaf. The title "Al-Imam Aqil" is derived from the word "Nur" (light), which represents the hope for enlightenment from Allah SWT. The words "Munawar" or "Nawir" describe a steadfast and pious person, often depicting a person with a radiant face and charisma. The combination of these two meanings is reflected in Habib Aqil. This title was passed down to his descendants, each of whom is called Al-Munawar (Yasmin, 2007). Along the Al-Munawar alley are unique old houses. All the houses are large, large enough to accommodate three to six families, and some have even been built with a ground floor and are now occupied.

According to information from Muhammad Kadir Al-Munawar, the head of the Al-Munawar village, the houses are estimated to have been built before 1206 AH. This is based on information from one

of the surviving houses. Habib Abdurrahman Al-Munawar built eight of the existing houses. According to Kadir, these houses were intended for his eight children. Habib Abdurrahman was apparently a wealthy merchant, able to afford eight large houses for his children. During his lifetime, Habib Abdurrahman served as a trusted merchant to the Sultan, supplying the needs of the people of Palembang using large ships. An informant, a fourth-generation descendant of Habib Abdurrahman, acknowledged that his ancestor was a wealthy merchant who also played a prominent role in spreading Islam during the Palembang Darussalam Sultanate. According to him, the houses were a gift from Habib Abdurrahman to his descendants (Figure 2). Habib Abdurrahman's descendants then looked after these houses and passed them down from generation to generation, which eventually formed the family village as it is today (Archaeology, 2012).

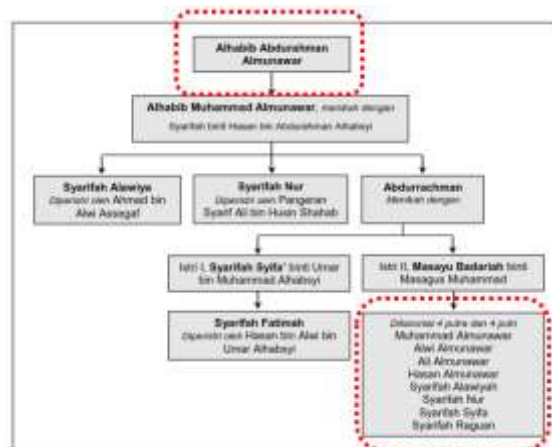


Figure 2. Genealogy and Settlement of the Arab Village of Al-Munawar 13 Ulu, Palembang
 (Source: Processed Data, 2023)

Habib Abdurrahman Al-Munawar was the only son of Al-Habib Muhammad bin Abdurrahman bin Agil Al-Munawar. Al-Habib Muhammad bin Abdurrahman bin Agil Al-Munawar was born in the city of Shewun, Handramaut, in the 7th century AH. From childhood to adolescence, he received a thorough education in Islam and commerce, hoping to follow in the footsteps of the Aslafuna Sholihin (the Righteous Prophets) who constantly moved around spreading the message of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) (Triyuly, 2008). Upon reaching adulthood and gaining sufficient religious knowledge, Al-Habib Muhammad bin Abdurrahman bin Agil Al-Munawar was permitted by his parents to migrate to other places to deepen his knowledge and spread the message of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). During his travels, Al-Habib Muhammad bin Abdurrahman bin Agil Al-Munawar arrived in Palembang. There, he married Syarifah Fatimah binti Hasan bin Abdurrahman Al-Habsy. From this marriage, Al-Habib Muhammad bin Abdurrahman bin Agil Al-Munawar had two daughters and one son. His first daughter, Syarifah Alawiyah, married Al-Habib Ahmad bin Alwi Assegaf. His second daughter, Syarifah Nur, married Prince Syarif Ali bin Husin Shahab. Meanwhile, his son was Al-Habib Abdurrahman bin Muhammad bin Abdurrahman bin Agil Al-Munawar (Assegaf, 1999).

Spatial Layout of the Al-Munawar 13 Ulu Arab Village, Palembang

From a study of the house forms in the Al-Munawar 13 Ulu Arab Village, Palembang, six types of houses were identified: 1) Tall House, 2) Land House, 3) Stone House, 4) Land Twin House, 5) Glass House, and 6) Sea Twin House (Figures 3, 4). The adornments on the houses in this village display a European style with floral, faunal, and geometric motifs. The layout of the houses in the Al-Munawar 13 Ulu Arab Village, Palembang, shares similar characteristics, with open spaces in the center and rear of the house. The floor plans of these houses feature squares and also regular or inverted "U" shapes. The settlement layout in this village exhibits a concentric pattern, with houses arranged around an open area, which serves both as a residential area and as a site for religious buildings. Among these religious buildings is a mosque located on the banks of the Musi River, although its form has changed from its previous condition (Novita, 2006).

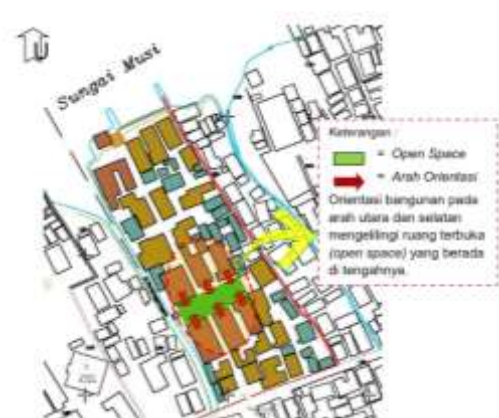


Figure 3. Settlement Pattern in the Al-Munawar 13 Ulu Arab Village, Palembang (Source: Processed Data, 2023)



Figure 4. Orientation of Residential Buildings in the Al-Munawar 13 Ulu Arab Village (Source: Processed Data, 2023)

House Structures in the Al-Munawar Arab Village, 13 Ulu, Palembang

The name Al-Munawar village is taken from the name of its founder, Habib Sayid Abdurrahman Al-Munawar. This village, like most villages in the past, is surrounded by rivers and flowing swamps. In Al-Munawar village, the Musi River is to the north, the Temenggungan River to the west, the Kangkang River to the east, and the swamp (which has now become the village and K.H.A. Azhari Street) lies. In this village, there are seven houses considered to have historical significance from the 19th to 20th centuries. These seven houses were named by local residents based on their architectural and construction characteristics (Syarofie, 2012). Various house shapes in the Arab village hold historical significance. For example, the "Limas House" is locally called the "Land House." This house is more than 200 years old, and the current owner is the 6th generation of the first owner of the house, namely Habib Hasan bin Ahmad Al-Munawar (Triyuly, 2008).

This house is called "Rumah Darat" (Land House) because it is quite far from the banks of the Musi River. Built on wooden pillars with brick walls, this house has an "I"-shaped design and has an open space in the center that separates the front from the back (Novita, 2002). The tall house is also pyramid-shaped and constructed entirely of wood. There are also multi-story houses, with floors resembling the Palembang limas house. Furthermore, the roof shape resembles a truncated pyramid, with the terrace rising to the same height as the roof, and inside it houses the living room and bedrooms. This house is a single structure (Syarofie, 2012).

The Arab village of Al-Munawar 13 Ulu, Palembang, also has a "Stilt House" locally called "Rumah Tinggi." This house is over 350 years old, and its current owner is the seventh descendant of the original owner, Syarifah Hasan. The building has two floors; the ground floor is made of stone, while the upper floors are made of wood. The design of the ground floor room is adjusted to the pattern of the room on the upper floor (Triyuly, 2008).



Figure 5. The Tall House of Al Munawar Village, built in the late 17th century (Source: Field Documentation, 2023)

This house has very distinctive characteristics, combining the characteristics of a warehouse house with a pyramid-style roof. Consisting of wooden walls and pillars, the house is divided into three rooms: the front, middle, and back. The front is an open terrace, parallel to the width of the house. The middle section houses the living room, family room, and bedrooms. Meanwhile, the back consists of a terrace similar to a pyramid-style house, a dining room, a kitchen, and an open space. The lower part of the house, which should be open, appears to have been filled with plank walls from a later period. This is evident in the differences in the characteristics of these "additional" walls, which are not aligned with the main building or were not built at the same time.

The open terrace parallel to the front of the house is one of the distinctive features of Indies houses built by Europeans in the archipelago. Uniquely, this house is built in a pillar-like format, while the stairs on the right and left sides adapt the stairs of a pyramid-style house, but are positioned oppositely. Although its roof resembles a pyramid-shaped house, this house does not have multiple floors (Syarofie, 2012). Al Habib Abdurrahman Al-Munawar built this house, which was the first house in the village.



Figure 6. The Land House of Al-Munawwar Village, built in the late 18th century (Source: Field Documentation, 2023)

This Land House is a pyramid-shaped structure, constructed entirely of wood. The floors are tiered (*kekijing*), resembling the typical Palembang *limas* house. The roof is a truncated pyramid without latticework on the *tenggalung* fence, which is replaced by plank walls. Unlike the *limas* house, this house has a symmetrical stone staircase at the front, rather than the two staircases typical of the *limas* house. It is unclear whether the wall on the *tenggalung* fence is a modification or was present during construction. Similarly, the addition of brick- and wood-walled rooms below the house is a new addition. The structure of this house is reminiscent of the *limas* house, with floors rising one *kekijing* from the terrace, approximately 30 cm high. The first room above is used as a living room. Up one *kekijing*, there are family rooms and bedrooms, all within the same main building. It's connected to an open courtyard, similar to a Palembang *limas* house (*Bengkilas*), for bathing and washing, but lacks a wooden floor, built directly onto the ground and cemented.

On the upper floor, there's an additional building that serves as a dining room and kitchen (pawon). Rumah Darat is the second house built by Al Habib Abdurrahman Al-Munawar for his son, Al Habib Muhammad Al-Munawar.



Figure 7. Stone House in Al-Munawar Village, built in the late 18th century (Source: Field Documentation, 2023)

The Stone House exhibits architectural and structural differences from other houses in Al-Munawar Village. However, in terms of layout, this house adopts the principles of the limas house structure. It is built on a raised brick and concrete foundation. While rectangular like the other houses, this house consists of two buildings connected by an open space in the center. The front includes a covered terrace, living room, family room, and bedrooms. The rear contains a space that serves as the kitchen and dining room.

This house uses a multi-level structure similar to a limas house. From the front terrace, the floor rises one level to accommodate the living room, family room, and bedrooms. The kitchen and dining room at the rear have a lower level. A unique feature is the front door,

which is approximately 4 m high and features 50 cm x 50 cm marble tiles imported from Italy. The roof of this house resembles a shield with gentle slopes on all four sides. This house served as a shelter for all residents of Al-Munawar Village during the battle that lasted 5 days and 5 nights on January 1-5, 1947. This is the third house built by Al Habib Abdurrahman Al-Munawar for his third son, Al Habib Ali Al-Munawar.



Figure 8. Twin Land Houses (South) of Al-Munawar Village, built in the late 18th century (Source: Field Documentation, 2023)

This house consists of two identical buildings facing each other. Both houses face the Musi River and are separated by a large field. The ground floor has brick walls, while the upper floor is made of wood. On the upper front floor, there are three windows the size of doors, while on the left and right sides, there are windows that are one-third the height of the walls. The Twin Land House, located to the south, was built before the northern house. It has an open space at the rear with an open terrace on the lower floor. This terrace has a roof that serves as the upper floor. To the left is a staircase

connecting the lower and upper floors. In the center of the lower floor, there is a living room and bedroom. The rear consists of an open terrace, a dining room, a kitchen, and an open space. The upper floor of the house is also divided into three sections. The front is a covered terrace, the middle section houses the bedrooms, and the rear is a covered terrace. The roof of the house is shaped like a cross shield. The construction and structure of this "twin" house are identical, except for the staircase, which is located on the left side to create symmetry with the house opposite. This Land Twin House is the fourth house built by Abdurrahman Al-Munawar, specifically for his fourth son, Al Habib Hasan Al-Munawar.



Figure 9. The Glass House of Al-Munawar village, built in the late 18th century (Source: Field Documentation, 2023)

This house resembles a warehouse in traditional Palembang architecture, rectangular in shape, with glass ornaments above the windows and doors. The staircase is located on the left, creating a balcony-like facade with a crossed-shield roof. However, there have been slight changes to the facade, and the roof resembles an Indies house, a European

dwelling made of brick. Currently, the glass house serves as a school, the Al Kautsar Islamic Education Foundation. Most of the house, especially the ground and second floors, have been converted into classrooms. However, parts of the original house remain intact, except for the brick ground floor, which appears to have been rebuilt. The front serves as a living room, while the middle section is divided into two sections: one for the family room and bedrooms, and the other for the dining room and kitchen. The rear of the house features an open veranda or terrace. In the context of Indies buildings inhabited by Europeans, this open space was typically used as a dining area.

This house has an important educational history in Palembang. The Arab Muhajirs, a minority in the city, played a significant role in religion and education. In the early 20th century, they established an educational association called Al-Ihsan in response to the ethnic Chinese in Palembang, who had established schools earlier. Madrasah Al Arabiyah was founded by the Al-Munawar family in 1914 in the Al-Munawar village. This glass house is U-shaped with an open space at the back. This house was intended for Abdurrahman Al-Munawar's fourth daughter, Hababa Roguan Al-Munawar, who married Al Habib Alwi bin Syech bin Ahmad Assegaf, better known as Al Habib Alwi Assegaf.



Figure 6. Twin Sea Houses (East) of Al-Munawar Village, built in the late 18th century
(Source: Field Documentation, 2023)

The twin sea houses are two structures built adjacent to each other along the Musi River with identical designs, connected by a covered terrace at both the front and rear. The lower part of the house features brick walls, while the upper part is constructed of wooden walls. Both houses were built almost simultaneously and have three sections, both downstairs and upstairs. The lower floor features an open terrace at the front, with a living room and bedroom in the middle, and an open terrace at the rear. At the rear of the building, an additional structure serves as the dining room and kitchen. The upper floor also consists of three sections, with a covered terrace at the front, a bedroom in the middle, and a covered terrace at the rear. The terraces at the front and back also serve as a connection between the two houses.

The roof of the sea house is a shield-shaped roof, but unlike other houses in the surrounding village, this sea house features decorative or pointed

ironwork. This ironwork is located above the ridge and also on the ridge of the terrace connecting the two houses. This decorative ironwork pattern features longer ironwork and petal-shaped ironwork arches in a geometric pattern. The peak of the decoration features a smaller petal-shaped arch pattern. At the corner of the roof, there is also a longer ironwork. The curved ironwork pattern is only found on the ironwork peak. This house is the residence of the first daughter of Al Habib Abdurrahman Al-Munawar, Habab Alawiyah Al-Munawar, who married Al Habib Abdullah bin Alwi bin Ahmad Assegaf.

Al-Munawar Arab Village Community, 13 Ulu, Palembang

The community in Al-Munawar Arab Village, 13 Ulu, Palembang, received special attention from Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin. The Sultan provided support and opportunities for the Arab community in the social and trade sectors. Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin gave permission for the Arabs to settle in the capital of his kingdom.

The Sultan's special attention is captured in Sevenhoven's book, which depicts Palembang as the capital city. It depicts Arabs and native Palembang residents living on land in wooden stilt houses, while the Chinese, Malays, and other foreigners live on rafts on the water. The homes occupied by the Arab

community in Palembang generally appear more comfortable and clean than those elsewhere. Most of these houses are stilt houses made of planks and built along the Musi River.

Archaeological discoveries, including the tombs of the Sultans of Palembang Darussalam and the Sultanate's nobles, indicate the presence of the tombs of ulama (Islamic scholars) who served as religious teachers to the Sultan and his relatives. In addition to the tombs, archaeological evidence demonstrates the closeness of the Arab community to the Palembang Darussalam Sultanate, such as the collection of religious manuscripts that served as the Sultan's collection. These manuscripts demonstrate the Arab community's role during the Sultanate's reign as writers of Islamic religious texts. The Arab community's close relationship with the Sultan is also reflected in the conferment of the title of Prince. Later, the Dutch East Indies colonial government even appointed an Arab member as the group's leader. Those appointed are given ranks like military ranks, such as Captain or Major (Novita, 2007).

In terms of numbers, the latter group constituted the largest immigrant group in Palembang. The presence of Arabs in Palembang did not create conflict with the indigenous population; instead, Palembang residents collaborated with Arab traders. This was because Arabs in Palembang were generally wealthy

merchants who were financially more stable than Chinese merchants. Most of them were successful merchants who controlled the linen trade and owned ships. The majority of the Arab community in Palembang is of Ba'alawi descent, considered descendants of the Prophet Muhammad through his grandson Hussein ibn Ali. Therefore, some of them are descendants of Sayyids, giving this community a respected position among the indigenous Palembang population. Interaction between the Arab community and the indigenous population significantly encouraged assimilation and acculturation. This process led to the emergence of a distinctive culture that became known as Palembang culture. This blending of cultures can include tangible aspects, such as food, building architecture, and so on. Meanwhile, the acculturation of Arab culture with local culture primarily involves intangible aspects, such as sanjo (rumpak-rumpakan), language, Jawi script, and others.

Although they have adapted significantly to Palembang's local culture, the Arab community maintains its own traditions. One tradition they maintain is the commemoration of the anniversary of the village's founder, Abdurrahman bin Muhammad al-Munawar, which coincides with the Isra Mi'raj celebrations. This celebration also serves as an opportunity for "mass" weddings for the residents of

Kampung Arab. Up to seven couples from Kampung Arab can marry at a single event. Weddings in the village are held exclusively on this anniversary. To add to the festive atmosphere, the residents of Kampung Arab present various regional arts, such as gambus, marawis, and dances, and more.

Historically, the Arab ethnic group can be explained as follows. Arabs came from Arabia to Palembang to trade and spread Islam. Most of them came from Hadramaut, the southern coastal region of the Arabian Peninsula (present-day Yemen). Many of them eventually settled and intermarried with the native people of Palembang, forming settlements within their groups. With their arrival, spreading Islam to Indonesia, some established their own settlements in several regions, including Palembang. Arab villages in Palembang are geographically located in two concentrations: Seberang Ilir and Seberang Ulu. In the Seberang Ilir area, the Arab community is located in Alley Asia and Sungai Bayas Village, Kotabatu Village, and Ilir Timur I District. Meanwhile, in the Seberang Ulu area, the Arab community is spread across several locations such as Alley Sungai Lumpur, 9-10 Ulu Village, Alley BBC in 12 Ulu Village, Alley al-Munawar in 13 Ulu Village, Alley al-Haddad, Alley al-Habsy, and Alley al-Kaaf in 14 Ulu Village, as well as the Assegaf Complex in 16 Ulu Village. The settlement of Arabs in Palembang was

initially influenced by the existence of rivers as a means of transportation, in accordance with the geographical structure of Palembang which consists of river basins and swamps, so that the settlement pattern spreads linearly along the banks of rivers or water as a transportation route.

CONCLUSION

Highlighting the important role of the Al-Munawar 13 Ulu Arab Village in the historical context, ethnic diversity, and cultural life of Palembang. Due to its strategic location along the Musi River, this village maintains its historical heritage dating back approximately 250 years. The descendants of traders from the city of Hadramaut who settled in this village adhere to marriage patterns that maintain their ethnic identity, while the diverse shapes of the houses demonstrate the community's adaptation to the surrounding environment. Historical research methods are used to uncover this information, highlighting the distinctive characteristics of Palembang and the cultural diversity of this village. The potential for development of this village is noted, but preservation efforts are also needed to prevent the possibility of eviction in the future. Through the spatial planning of the settlement and the preservation of cultural diversity, the Al-Munawar 13 Ulu Arab Village becomes an important representation of the historical

context of Palembang and the cultural diversity of the region.

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