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The Utilization of Rare Indonesian Local Church History Collection

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Abstract:

Jakarta Theological School (JTS) has a documentation centre unit, named Documentation Centre for Indonesian Church History (DCICH), and all collections connected to Indonesian church history. The collection itself dated around 1880's and many of them were come from Netherlands and also Indonesia until now. This research will explain about the using of those collections. The purpose of this research is to describe the using of those Indonesian church history rare collections which is developed in Indonesia, especially in JTS. By the qualitative approach, this research will using case study method that involving the administrator and user of DCICH. The result of this research found that the using of the Indonesian church history collections in the scope of academic theological school, commonly were used for the research about religion by the academia. Librarians and

archivists have important role to help and taking care the collections so that can be used by the communities from time to time. The conclusion is that the collections of Indonesian church history which is organized by the theological school are used by the researchers, academics, and also the local churches and give impacts for the development of churches in Indonesia. This research is addressed to those who have interest in the local collections with historical values, especially in the theological field. Suggestions for this research is that this research will be a sample and also an input for other information churches organizational in Indonesia in developing the using of their collections.

Keywords: historical, rare collection, local church, Indonesia.

Indonesia is located in Southeast Asia. Until 2018, Indonesia's population reached approximately 260 million people and spread in about 34 provinces. With this amount, Indonesia is become the fourth most populous country in the world. Population density in Indonesia has an impact on various aspects in Indonesia. There are various kind of culture, ethnicity, language, customs, traditions, and also religion. Indonesia accepted 6 religions, namely Moslems, Protestants, Catholics, Buddhists, Hindus and Kong Hu Cu/ Confucianism. However, there are several other religions that followed by Indonesian people.

Religious organizations or institutions have developed rapidly in all over the world. The increasing numbers of the institution is sometimes as fast as the other major of life in some areas. In Indonesia, religious things can be very sensitive to be talked or discuss. But in academic way, this should be seen through many points of view. As they developed, every religious organizations certainly has their own document about how they established at the first time. All religion spread wide to other areas and then stays to grow in particular areas. Then they blended with the culture in that area and raised a local community with adaptation of each rituals and activities. Inculturation then become way encounter the local communities among the religion. Christianity, as one of the religion in Indonesia and the church as the organization, developed in some areas represented as local church. The purpose of this paper is to explain the utilization of rare local church history collection in Indonesia.

Documentation Centre for Indonesian Church History Context

Jakarta Theological School (JTS)¹ is the oldest theological school in Jakarta. Firstly, JTS built in Bogor at 1934, then moved to Jakarta around 1936 (Soleiman, 2011). As the oldest one, JTS had many stories to tell orally, and also in writings. In 2004, JTS built new unit named Documentation Centre for Indonesian Church History (DCICH)². DCICH has similarities with library but more specific. It has reading room and room of collection. The specification is that DCICH consists of historical books from church denominations in Indonesia and also in Asia as the collections. The collection itself not only in the form of books but also in documents, such as archives, magazines, newspapers, maps, etc. The documents are old and new, the oldest is around mid-1800s. Most of collections are in Dutch, German and Bahasa (Indonesian language).

¹ The information is recalled by the author as the member of the institution; taken from some sources.

² In Bahasa it is called Pusat Dokumentasi Sejarah Gereja Indonesia.

The collections in DCICH mostly come from donations and contributions of other theological institutions, but some also from personal collections. Personal collections are belong to the historian in JTS as the lecturer and Professor in here. The head of DCICH is Prof. Jan Sihar Aritonang, Ph.D. He is the first professor in church history in 2011 and serves as the head of DCICH until now. Some of the collections, personally, were donations from professor and other lecturers. For the rare or old collections, mostly from grants and deposits from the former teacher (especially the foreign teacher, mostly from Nederland). Some teachers left their own historical sources of documents to be kept by the institution or library, so other generations could access it for research.

Not all collection in DCICH are categorize as rare collections. The collections they have around 3500s, including archives, books, newspapers, bound volumes, magazines, etc. The preservation is not as intense as the manuscripts treatment. The treatments still do in simple way with main things to be concerned, such as temperatures, fumigation, vacuuming, and etc. For old books, especially the books which in damage, we tried to make box cover to frictionless between one book to other. Box covers are made manually and simple in purpose to cover the broken book's cover.

Rare collections mostly accessed only by particular people who have interest in certain objects. The uniqueness and values of each collection give them special information that people might not find it in any common collections. That's why we can see that almost rare collections are rarely accessed. People, without specific intentions, probably won't accessed the rare collections just to read as they read novels or else. Author nowadays turns the source in the rare collections into modern story based on them. So people will have curiosity of real sources and search it by themselves. In the library, rare collections have different section and also different shelves. Sometimes they have special room with different temperatures and only accessed by librarian. And because it is apart from the other collections, people will not notice about the collection, unless they have purpose to search it.

One of the specific subjects that people rarely search is about history. History played with the old documents and archives. Most of documents still unorganized and spread in everywhere. Historians use those documents to support their research. Some historians were collecting the documents, bond it, and make some writings to help other researcher read the documents. Church history is one of the branches of history as a science. Every church; the people or the building; has its own story. Church created a history and its people keeping the history, orally or in writings. In this paper, I try to explain about the utilization of rare collections, especially the local church history, in Documentation Centre for Indonesian Church History.

Local Church History as Rare Collection

When we talk about rare collection, we have to know more about what kind of collection it is. As I mentioned above, DCICH has some collections not only in the form of books but also in documents. In the Cambridge Dictionary Online, the term of rare means not common; very unusual (CDO, 2018). The choosing of that term has considered about the relation of the collection itself. Something rare, mostly refers to collections at the museum, books, disease, phenomenon, etc. But sometimes we just don't realize how rare those are. The rare collection in the context of books or library or documentation centre, mostly in the form of paper or the creation from the people who lived in the past. How rare is it? Some, we can find the very rare collection from the kingdom era, where writings are something unusual

but they produce it well and well preserved until now. It means that rare collection is supported by –not only the value of the content- but also from the material of the container itself.

Based on University of St. Andrews, there are standard criteria that showed if the collections are rare (mostly for books), such as (University of St. Andrews, no date):

- Age
- Important or collectible first editions/seminal works
- Scarcity in other research libraries
- Market value
- Physical and intrinsic characteristics
- Condition

Those criteria help us to categorize the rare collections. But people nowadays can easily separate which the rare collection is based on its age. From the cover, if it is a book, we can easily know that the book is rare. But for documents or archives, we need to look more from the typical of materials, such as type of texts, papers, or maybe dates if they are written on it. That's why we need to pay more attention for the condition of the collections we have.

But, Powell, in his article wrote that:

“By the term "rare book" I mean something rather special; some quality of age, or scarcity, or research significance, or beauty, or association, that sets a book apart from its fellows. It need not be an old book.” (Powell, 1939)

It is mean that special collection have many different shapes, such as historical archives, old documents, personal papers or historical manuscripts. Historical manuscripts and personal papers have typical form and different from historical records and generally regarded as unorganized groups or individual documents of a private nature. It is created as the spontaneous expression of the creator, such as personal letter or diaries (Bradsher, 1988). All historical documents automatically categorized as rare collection. It depends how the collection has significance of scarcity of the theme. And this also applied to the history of the local church.

Local church history is one of the important things to be preserved. Its contents are about the historical value of each church that developed in some areas. Sandy Kintner, the Chair of Commission on Archives and History in Wisconsin Commission on Archives and History, said:

“Our local church history is like so many aspects of our life. We never truly appreciate what is precious to us until it's gone. Sadly, the task of preserving the story of our local churches is often neglected, unappreciated and under resourced. Even when a member feels called to this ministry, they can feel unsure and overwhelmed by the task at hand.” (Wisconsin United Methodist, 2013).

She said that it is the important thing to keep and even preserve local church history. But practically, many of us, especially those whose member of church, neglecting and do not appreciating those collections. Some of us, perhaps, see local church history as a treasure, but in other part, see them as a trash. In fact, local church history not only contain the stories of how one church were build, but also there are some cultural memories beneath in every historical story about it.

The same problem about historical religious documents ever mentioned by A.A. Lambing in his article. He wrote about the Rare Catholic Collection's problem back in 1887.

"How many rare articles of historical value are scattered here and there throughout the country where no care is being taken of them, where no value is set upon them, and where they must ere long disappear forever from sight. Other articles are in the hands of those who indeed appreciate their worth; but the public, and, most of all, the student of our early history, cannot have access to them, or if he can, it will be at great expense, inconvenience and loss of time, so widely are they scattered. Hence the advantage and necessity of collecting them together in places where they may be arranged and preserved, where they may be seen and consulted and where they may ever remain a living witness of the dead past." (Lambing, 1887)

The need to arranged and preserved and collecting rare collections then encouraged us to build a documentation center. So that, the accessibility of them can be easy and less expensive. Until now, around 131 years later, this problem is not finished yet. Though some churches already realized the need of it, but other churches still ignore it.

What kind of documents of local church that have to save permanently? WUM told us that there are some of the records that need to be save, including (WUM, 2013):

- a. Membership records, including baptisms, marriages, deaths, and transfers, are the key for documentation of the church.
- b. Legal documents, including property records and deeds should be saved permanently in a safe place.
- c. Annual budgets and year-end financial audits.
- d. Conference reports, church council or administrative board reports.
- e. Church newsletters and church organization news letters or publications.
- f. Scrapbooks, photos (identified), and other special mementoes of important occasions.
- g. Church histories and bulletins from special occasions.
- h. Information about past pastors, including photographs.

These all represents the value and story about local church because the information on those documents are contains all important things about the church. Just as a common organization, local church runs their operational activity just as other organization.

Another question is why we have to preserve the history of local church. Some opinions explain the reason why it is necessary to preserve local church history because of the following:

- The value of the content
- The social history → the context of local church.
- The blend culture between the church and the local area.
- The memories in the past of every church activity.
- The need to explore information about the history of the church

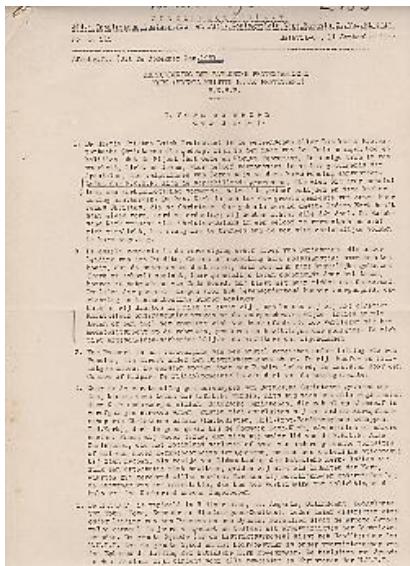


Fig. 1: Kerkorde van HKBP (Church order of HKBP – North Sumatra)

Some collections around the local church are reported in a bundle of notes from the Communion of Churches in Indonesia (CCI). The collection of archives from CCI is assisted by DCICH in collaboration with ANRI. CCI and ANRI create a sort of list of archive categories that help input data according to the contents of the archive. This management has been done by DCICH since 2012 although it had stopped around 2013. But until now, the process of sorting and input simple collection of this archive is still in the process.



Fig. 2 Collection of CCI in DCICH

The problem we face is that the documentation centre is always quiet and does not attract many people to visit or just look around. It makes a *boring* impression that arises when there is a term of documentation centre or archive centre. In fact, there are many things that can be shared for many people. The character of the documentation centre is certainly different from the library. Those who visit documentation centre certainly know their purpose. And it would be a bit awkward if people just want to visit without knowing their intentions are. DCICH is trying to develop the provision of space as well as displays for those who are just visiting. However, the presence of DCICH is primarily intended for those who need information or sources about a particular church's history. Another problem is the impression that rare collections are only intended for highly educated individuals such as

specialized researchers or alike. This makes the impression of a rare collection is indeed rare. In fact, it is not so. To eliminate such labels that there should be an effort from the management of the documentation centre in order to attract the attention of the public.

The Utilization of Rare Local Church History Collection in DCICH

Indonesia has around 89 main churches from each denomination. Those churches are registered in Communion of Churches in Indonesia (PGI, 2018). The main churches are the central of every denomination that bearing other local churches. Most local churches have name followed by the location. The main churches are called as synods. Synods play role as the centre of local churches. The history of the synods as the main/ centre church, leads to create other history of local churches. Every church has their own history as their local history. Some churches in Indonesia have their history orally. The members of congregation tell their local church history as a part of storytelling to other generation of congregation. But some churches realize the need to write down the history of their local churches and record it as their own historical documents.

For example, the Javanese Christian Church has a Synod that located in central Java, Indonesia. It is established in Central Java (with some specific location). Then, this Javanese Church develops and spreads wide to outside central Java. It is the congregation of Javanese Church who out from their territory to other part in Java. Javanese Church is more known in the central Java because of the people, the language and location of the establishment. Those people who moved out to other place then gather together, mostly because they have the same origins and local language. They built the first meeting in one place, a house of a member, then have worship together, and doing it routinely. It is happened every Sunday, and then the member added little by little until have a big congregation. Finally, they built and decided to name those meetings as the church and it is officiated by the central church.

DCICH provides some documents from each denominations, though it is not as complete as the church's belonging itself. As the documentation centre, DCICH realized that there are the needs of provides the accessibility to all historical documents from all churches in Indonesia. DCICH dream is to be a centre of database of all historical documents from all over churches in Indonesia. Thus, people who has the need to search the sources about one church, can be helped by DCICH. The purpose of DCICH are to inform, collecting, and managing (storing, classifying, researching and publishing) documents of the Church History of Indonesia, both in Indonesia and abroad, and then utilizing them to support formal studies at JTS and provide information for the church, the community, or anyone who needs information about it (STTJ, 2015).



Fig. 3: Kerkorde der Chirstelijke Kerk op Midden Celebes (Church Order of Middle Sulawesi)

The utilization of the documents in DCICH can be done by all members of church in Indonesia. Some of them asking for the data about their church, mostly for the anniversary of their church. Others, researcher from any institutions, both in Indonesia and abroad, came to DCICH to access the collections they need. But, since the historical documents are only talking about specific themes, then the access to them is also rare.

People might not interest in having old documents as their sources to write. They tend to use the newest articles or document that happening at the time. The numbers of visitors to DCICH is not as much as library. The probability is caused by:

1. The specific term and subject about church history
2. The simple and manual accessibility; DCICH only has online catalogue and not too describes much about all collections. In the next plan, DCICH will run the website to display collection so people can access it easily.
3. The organizing of collections still in progress. Because of that, DCICH still couldn't provide the collection online (requested by email or phone still not available).

Some students are suggested to utilize the collections of DCICH according to their course. Mostly, when they have church history course, the lecturers will use some books in DCICH to be accessed by them. For other visitors, some of them were from other institution, such as UIN (Islamic University Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta), CCI (Communion of Churches in Indonesia), GAMKI (The Christian Youth Movement), and etc. Others, personally, were from other country that having research in Indonesia. Most of them are from Nederland.

The collection about local church history in Indonesia also well preserved at Nederland, and the lists are written in *Raad voor de Zending 1797-2001: rechtsvoorgangers 1797-1950*. It is published by Het Utrecht Archief in 2010. There, the collections are displayed on the list as catalogue that can be accessed online. It means, if we need to access some document of Indonesian church history, we can ask it through mail and they will send it (softcopy) to us. But of course we have to follow the procedures they have.



Fig 4. Raad voor de Zending 1797-2001: rechtsvoorgangers 1797-1950 (Inventories of the archives of the legal predecessors of the council for the mission)

As I mentioned above, documentation centre is well-known as the quiet and rarity of visitors unlike library. It is because the nature of the place itself is different. Despite the rarity of visitors, the utilization of the DCICH collection is also mostly done by students from the JTS environment itself. Through certain courses, they are encouraged by the lecturers to access the collection related to the course in DCICH. This also has a positive impact because of the students will be scattered information about the collection contained in DCICH. The dissemination of this information is also required in order to improve the utilization of collections in DCICH. Based on DCICH data for the past 3 years, DCICH receives 225 visitors; 29 of them were visitors from outside the JTS and 196 came from JTS students (with various levels). Visitors from outside JTS generally are alumnae, lecturers in a particular educational institution, researchers and also students. Students from outside of JTS who visit are not always from theological background. There are also students from anthropology, sociology, and others background who utilize the collection at DCICH. The number of visitors is not constant and tend to change. But in the last 3 years it appears that there is a decrease in visitors to DCICH. The peak of the visit usually occurs in the weeks leading up to the exam so the need for circulation of borrowing collection is also increase.

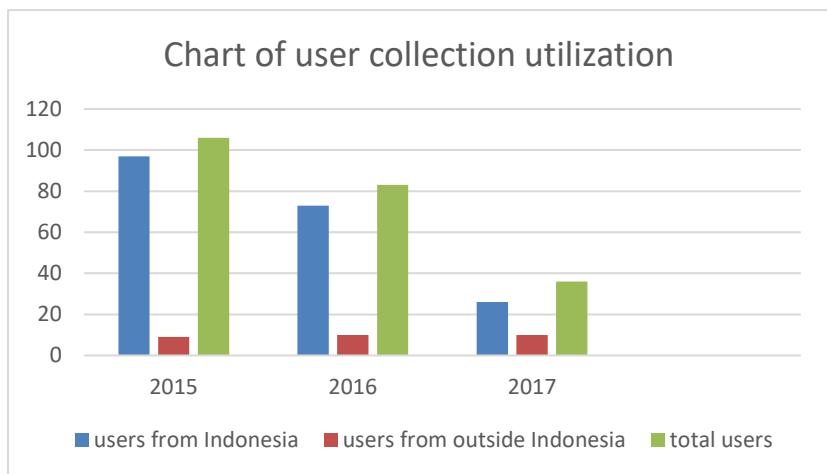


Fig. 5. Chart of user collection utilization.

Based on experience, there are several purposes of utilizing rare collections from the history of local churches. Some users, commonly students, have a goal to fulfil their lecture assignments. Sometimes, not all students can utilize rare collections because the

problem of the language. Dutch and German languages are pretty much available in rare collections. But, another language, such as Bahasa and traditional language are also appear. The utilization of those collections by students are depends on what theme and language. For lecturers, of course, they use the collection for writing the articles that they must submit as a regular assignment. In addition, they are using it for the preparation teaching materials. Another purpose of utilization by general researchers is usually as source articles or books that related to the history of a particular local church. In general, the purpose of collection utilization is as a source or material for research that will produce a new writing. A rare collection of local church histories can be a primary source for any writings. It is as the same in general as what Frederick R. Goff said in his article, *Who Uses Rare Books and What For* in 1957. He explained about those who utilize the rare collections in the Rare Book Division in the Library of Congress. There are numbers of professionals group of academia and also some investigators, such as journalist, researcher of some cases, collector, and even book seller. They have their own purpose when they utilize the rare books collection (Goff, 1957). And it is still the same until now in all libraries and or documentation centre.

To eliminate the rarity or quietness of visitors in documentation centre, an idea is proposed. It is helpful for each documentation centre to provide public reading rooms that are not intended only for those who already know the purpose visiting the documentation centre. As in ANRI (National Archives of Indonesia), they provide a diorama about the history of Indonesia. It certainly attracts visitors who just simply to come and look around. This is also inspire other archive centres to display some archives with certain unique forms. Thus, the interest of visitors will be increase and there may also be a positive impact in the utilization of existing collections.



Fig. 6. The diorama in National Archives of Indonesia

In addition, DCICH advises local churches to collect and maintain their own collections as part of the preservation of archives and historical documents. Do not let personal documents even not owned by his person. It is happened in DCICH, when there is one church has no source

of history of its own. Therefore, there should be awareness of every local church to pay attention to the preserving of their archives and documents. This may also apply to other religious institutions, where every local document can be maintained and properly managed

for present and future purposes (Sabatiari, 2017). And if we want to create a documentation centre, then there are some things to note. One of that thing is appraisal in determining the value of the document itself. It is necessary to see that not all historic documents need to be stored. According to The National Park Service, NPS Museum Handbook, Part II (2008) that cited by The Breus Group, they suggested the strategy for appraising archival and manuscript materials is to demonstrate the current value in one or more of the following areas: – evidential value, informational value and/or associational value (TBG, 2017).

Conclusion

From the explanation above, we can conclude that:

1. It is important to preserve and maintain all documents about history of the local church from various regions in a country.
2. Grouping all the documents in one room and place is also important so that the document is not scattered or separated anywhere.
3. The benefits of these all are helping researchers or other users to access information about the development of a local church.
4. The utilization of rare collections from local church history may not be so visible, but in the future, the need for that information will become an invaluable treasure for the next generation.

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