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Preservation and Conservation through Cultural Heritage Tourism. Case Study: Musi Riverside Palembang

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Abstract

Palembang is the center of political and economic power in Southeast Asia in the past and was visited by foreign traders from China, Middle East and Persia. This paper reveals the potential of cultural heritage tourism in Palembang and shows the role of tourism in urban heritage preservation and conservation. Cultural tourism creates jobs and new business opportunities and strengthens local economy. Cultural heritage tourism helps also to protect cultural heritage and to improve the quality of life of residents and visitors. Linking tourism with heritage and culture will benefit the local economy. The main idea in cultural heritage tourism is to save urban heritage and culture, to share it with visitors, and to reach economic benefits.

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1. Introduction

Palembang is the center for commerce, education and culture during the Sriwijaya Kingdom and Palembang Darussalam Sultanate until now. In the past during the Sriwijaya Kingdom in the 6-12th century, Palembang was the largest maritime empire, and the city had been visited by many foreign traders from China, Middle East and Persia. Many old buildings with various architectural style are located along the Musi River, which are clearly visible until today, such as Kampung Arab, Kampung Kapiten, Chinese Temple 10 Ulu, Sekanak Region, Pasar 16 Ilir, and Kampung Al Munawar. Unfortunately some heritage buildings are decaying although they are quite worth to become cultural heritage tourism.

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The National Trust for Historic Preservation in the United States defines heritage tourism as "travelling to experience places and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past", and cultural heritage tourism is defined as "travelling to experience the places and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past and present." Cultural heritage tourism in Palembang is important because it brings positive impacts to the economic and social life of the city, and reinforces the identity of the city. The tourism will help preserve the cultural heritage and facilitate the harmony and understanding among people (Richards, 1996). The concept of tourism development in Palembang should support the maximizing of heritage potentials and the diversification of touristic objects and activities. The main priority should be providing new facilities for tourism and preserving the heritage by involving local people.

2. Methodology

This study is developed through explorative descriptive methods in which field study and interview with residents are included. The samples for interview are representative of local people who live in the heritage area. The in-depth interviews are conducted with adult members of the resident covering a wide range of issues regarding resident's view on heritage buildings and the benefit of cultural tourism to local people. Through the interview data on personal history, experiences and perspectives are collected. The research is focused on the contribution of cultural heritage tourism to the preservation and conservation of urban heritage.

3. Findings

3.1 Cultural Heritage in Palembang

Culture heritage tourism in Palembang could not be separated from the existence of Musi River as a source of people's life and the starting point for the city growth. Musi River means a lot to local people as they rely on it for transportation system connecting one area to the other between Seberang Ulu and Seberang Ilir. In Seberang Ulu, most of heritage buildings are residential and public facilities such as mosques and temples. The area is characterized as multi-ethnic settlements of Malay, Arabic and Chinese. Some ethnic neighbourhood such as Kampung Arab, Kampung Kapiten, and 3-4 Ulu are identified as the origin of settlements in Palembang. The architectural style and authenticity of settlements along the Musi riverbank made this area unique and important to be preserved as a cultural heritage. The existing artefacts provide an ideal setting for conveying story of the past to the younger generation.

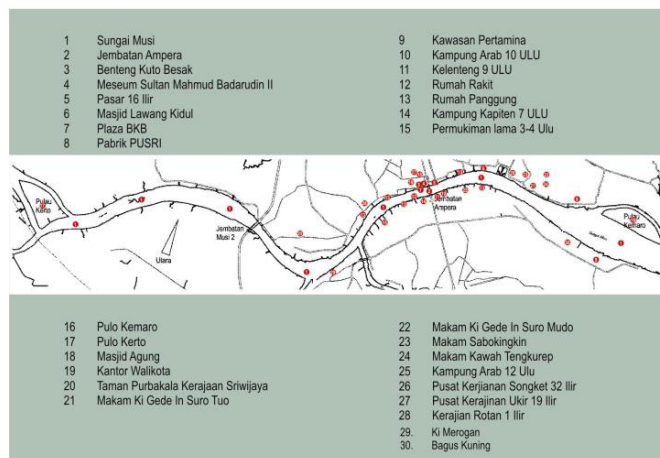


Fig.1. Map of Palembang heritage tourism. Source: Riverside Tourism Masterplan.

At first, the 9-10 Ulu area is inhabited not by indigenous people but by Arabic, Persian and Chinese migrants. They settled down as the trade was getting increased in quantity and intensity in that they must stay longer in land and finally get married to local people. People built at first shelters on raft, and later on improved the raft house to a stilt house. At that time people tend to live in a group maintaining their origin culture and tradition, leaving the traces of two types of settlement: the Arabian and Chinese.

Houses in Kampung Arab can be differentiated as stilt houses and landed houses whereby people take over the traditional architecture or local style for their houses and decorated it with Arabic ornaments. A variety of house style is found in this Kampung: limas house, gudang house and raft house. At the center of the settlement is an open space, which is used as a public space, surrounded by several houses. This pattern of settlement is quite different to the local pattern of indigenous settlement. This typology of settlement becomes a uniqueness that has been brought over by Arab community. The Chinese settlements are established around the temple Chandra Nadi. Houses are built in Chinese architecture that also differs from local architecture.



Fig. 2. (a) Arabian Settlement 10 Ulu; (b) Chinese Settlement 10 Ulu.

3.2 *Kampung Kapitan 7 Ulu*

Kampung Kapiten is a group of 15 stilt houses which is located in the Village 7 Ulu. The village was the residence of a Chinese officer, is called Kapiten, who worked for the Dutch colonial government. At that time, Kapiten was the person in charge for collecting taxes from Chinese people and indigenous people in Seberang Ulu district. The Kapiten is also responsible for keeping the security and managing the trade system in the district.

In the core area stand three houses, considered as the largest buildings in the area, that are built facing the river Musi. The house in the middle was used for organizing parties and meetings with people in great number, while both houses at the east and west side are used as dwellings. The middle house applied a mix of culture in its architecture; Malay, Chinese and colonial style are combined into a hybrid architecture. The spatial layout is following the Chinese style, in which a typical inner court is set up as core of the house which is quite different to local style of architecture. The house has a roof form of traditional limas house, yet, in front of the building pillars in European architecture are erected and decorated by Chinese ornaments. An open space at the opposite of the houses, approximately 83 m x 12.5 m and called as Plaza Kampung Kapitan, becomes the point of orientation for the houses. The plaza is used for festivals and other public activities until now.

3.3 *Traditional Kampong in 3-4 Ulu*

One of the original traditional settlements in Palembang is located in 3-4 Ulu area. Houses in this settlement are large and built in limas style. Unfortunately, many of them could not retain their original state, some are sold and the owner moved out from the district.

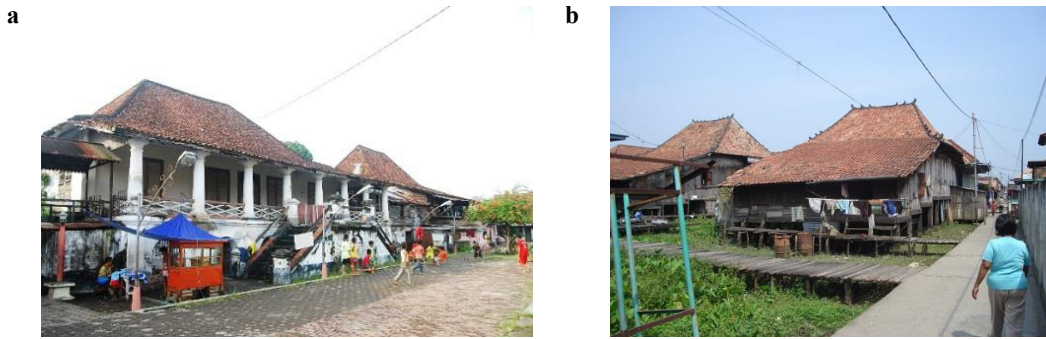


Fig. 3. (a) Kampung Kapiten, 7 Ulu; (b) Limas House, 3 Ulu.

There are some religious buildings such as great mosque and temples that are worth to be preserved as cultural heritage. The Great Mosque, formerly called the Sultan Mosque, is built by Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin I (Jayo Wikramo) in 1738 AD and inaugurated in 1748M. The oldest temple Soei Goeat Kiang was built in 1733 as a replacement for the first temple in Ulu 7 which is burned down in 1732. The temple is used by the Buddhist, Taoist and Confucian. The other famous temple in Palembang is located at Pulau Kemaro in Musi River, which is nowadays being used as ceremonial and festival place for the Chinese people.



Fig. 4. (a) The Great Mosque; (b) Soei Goeat Kiang Temple; (c) Kemaro Island.

Palembang has many interesting and attractive urban heritage but not enough initiatives from the government and other stakeholders in preserving and promoting them for cultural tourism. Major problems in facing this issue is the lack of people's awareness and attention in maintaining heritage buildings and the buildings are surrounded by dwellings of poor people that discourage tourists to come by. The planning for tourism development has been done, yet, the implementation process had to face funding resources.

3.4 *Tourism as a tool for preservation and conservation of urban heritage*

Tourism and culture have been developed worldwide as a way to revitalize obsolete buildings and open spaces for contemporary purposes, in that it provides opportunity to sustain traditional culture and contemporary values. Abandoned buildings and spaces are always at risk to be decayed or redeveloped, and not considering them as in critical situation leads to a loss of opportunity in building up the identity of a community and a place.

Cultural heritage tourism has a number of objectives that must be met within the context of sustainable development, such as conservation of cultural resources, accurate interpretation of resources, authentic visitor experience, and stimulation for revenues of cultural resources. The development of cultural heritage tourism deals not only with identification, management and protection of heritage values, but also with its impact on communities the regions, economic and social benefit, provision of financial resources, as well as marketing and promotion. (J. M. Fladmark, 1994). It is also important to think about the impact on indigenous people whose land and culture is visited by tourist. In the case of Palembang, the local people living in the neighbourhood of Kampung Kapiten and

Kampung Arab are low-income people who need to be actively participated in tourism activities, so that they may get some benefit from it.

Preserving and protecting the heritage is essential for cultural heritage tourism because the commodity to be offered has to be secured for its sustainability. For this reason, the major challenge in tourism programs is ensuring that increased tourism does not destroy the very qualities that attract visitors in the first place. The increasing number of visitor and additional pressure to infrastructure and heritage sites are some problems on tourism. As a service industry, tourism programs depend on the competence of people in different jobs and location. Tourism is a highly sophisticated and fast-changing industry, therefore, it presents challenges that are not only from visitor impact, but also from visitor expectations on quality of products and services.

3.5 *Strategy for cultural heritage tourism development in Palembang*

According to Partners and Tourism (2011) in *Getting Started: How to Succeed in Heritage*, there are some strategies to make cultural heritage tourism successful:

- *Collaborate*
Collaborate means that it is better to work together than to work alone. Much more can be accomplished by working together. Building partnerships is essential, not just because they help to develop local support, but also because tourism demands resources that no single organization can supply. Its success depends on the active participation of political leaders, business leaders, operators, artists, craftspeople, hotel operators, and many other people and groups. Regional partnerships are also useful to cultural heritage tourism. Cooperating in a regional arrangement will develop regional themes, pool resources, save money and expand marketing potential. Those resources include not only money for marketing campaigns, for example, but also facilities (accommodations for travelers) or expertise in tourism, preservation, and the arts.
- *Find the fit*
A few things to make cultural heritage tourism successful has to be considered, such as balancing the needs of residents and visitors, and the fit between residents and visitor expectation. It is important to ensure that cultural heritage tourism benefits everyone.
- *Focus on quality and authenticity*
Quality is an essential ingredient for all cultural heritage tourism, and authenticity is critical whenever heritage or history is involved. Existing heritage buildings must be preserved in order to maintain the authenticity in Palembang heritage area. The authenticity that is unique and charming will add real value and appeal to visitor. The true story of Kampung Kapiten, Kampung Arab, and Pulo Kemaro is worth to be explored for tourism. The story of previous generations that have made to the history and culture is interesting for visitor, because that is what distinguishes the place from every other place on earth.
- *Preserve and protect*
The cultural, historic, and natural resources of a community are valuable and often irreplaceable. The historic and cultural assets are important for tourism, and it is essential to protect them for the long term. The preservation and perpetuation of traditions is important to telling the story of the people who settled the land.

4. Conclusion

Palembang has many heritage buildings, but unfortunately, some are not in a good condition and some tend to decay although they are potential to be objects for cultural heritage tourism. Many urban heritage in Palembang are interesting and attractive, yet, supporting activities are not available to the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage tourism.

Linking tourism with heritage and culture will be a benefit for the local people and the local economy. The main idea in cultural heritage tourism is to save urban heritage and culture, to share it with visitors, and to get economic benefits from tourism. Some strategic steps to develop cultural heritage tourism in Palembang are to collaborate, to find the fit, to focus on quality and authenticity, to preserve and to protect.

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