IDENTIFYING OLD JAVANESE HINDU LEGACY AT MENARA KUDUS OF CENTRAL JAVA

Mengidentifikasi Jejak Hindu Kuno di Kawasan Menara Kudus Jawa Tengah

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Abstrak

Tujuan ditulisnya artikel ini untuk mengidentifikasi jejak Hindu Kuno di Kawasan Menara Kudus Jawa Tengah. Metode yang digunakan dalam riset ini adalah deskriptif analitik yakni cara mendeskripsikan dan menganalisa data berupa bangunan kuno berupa Menara Masjid Al-Aqsha, Makara/Kalla, dan dua gapura (kori) di Masjid al-Aqsha. Riset ini mendeskripsikan, menganalisis, dan menginterpretasi data berdasarkan observasi dan literatur. Penelitian ini menghasilkan informasi bahwa situs ini adalah hasil renovasi erakolonial tahun 1880, 1913, 1933, dan oleh BPCB Jawa Tengah tahun 1980, 2011, 2013, dan 2014.Kondisinya kini tidak lagi asli karya masa lalu tapi bentuknya tetap utuh, 80 persen hasil renovasi BPCB Jawa Tengah akibat Menara mengalami kerusakan diterpa hujan, cuaca/iklim/angin, dan getaran akibat pengguna jalan di depan Menara yakni mobil dan sepeda motor.Rekomendasi BPCB Jawa Tengah sejak tahun 2018 mobil umum dilarang melintas jalan di depan Menara oleh Pemda Kudus hingga kini, dua gapura (kori) di serambi dan di dalam Masjid Menara Kudus kondisinya baik dan utuh, dan kala/makara posisinya ada di tempat wudlu.Untuk merawat kesinambungan Kawasan Kauman Menara Kudus agar lestari, Pemda Kudus perlu mencanangkannya sebagai kota pusaka.
Kata Kunci: *Identifikasi, cagar budaya, dan kota pusaka.*

Abstract

The article seeks to identify the legacy of old Javanese Hindu at Menara Kudus Area in Jawa Tengah. The data gathered on Masjid Al-Aqsha, Makara/Kalla, and the two gates are observed. This research describes, analyzes, and interprets data based on observations and literature. The result of this research provides an information that this site having been renovated by colonial government in 1880, 1913, 1933, and by BPCB of Jawa Tengah dating 1980, 2011, 2013, and 2014 is not fully at its initial structure any longer. The series of renovations were necessary to amend the defects caused by pouring rain, climate, and vibration of the passing vehicles. The study indicates that (1) public transport has not been allowed to pass starting 2018, (2) the two gates are in good condition, and (3) *kala/makara* are available at ablution room. To maintain the sustainability of the Kauman Menara Kudus area so that it is sustainable, the local government of Kudus needs to declare it a heritage city.
Keywords: Identification, cultural heritage, and heritage city.

INTRODUCTION

A past life, with its significance, is one behind us; and understanding it would require the presence of historians and archeologists. In the past, the absence of the two enabled only oral tradition sharing of the events worth taking notes of, thus making it highly difficult for the so-called true narratives to come into place. To intervene, the Government of Indonesia (GI) then issued a regulation overseeing the preservation of the past cultural richness: *Undang-Undang Nomor 11 Tahun 2010*

tanggal 24 November 2010 tentang Cagar Budaya (The Law No. 11 / 2010 on Cultural Heritage), available on State Gazzette No. 130 / 2010. It is of the objective to highlight that cultural richness is a set of thoughts laid out by our countrymen needed in developing our nation. The main ideas of the Article 3 of the law are: (a) preserving the cultural heritage, (b) maintaining the honor and dignity through cultural heritage, (c) strengthening the identity of our nation, (d) fostering the prosperity of the people, and (e) promoting the legacy of the cultural heritage to the world. The law is amplified by the publication of the Law No. 5 / 2007 on promoting Indonesian culture. This article seeks to present the attractions at *Menara Kudus* complex. The following points are of interest. First, a tradition locally called *buka luwur* (taking off the white cloth covering the tomb) essentially means to care for the others, inviting the committee of the mosque foundation or *Yayasan Masjid, Menara, dan Makam Sunan Kudus (*YM3SK) with the people from Desa Kauman Kudus in the company of the other guests (Argarini, 2015). Second, *buka luwur* was carried out in Muharam month (Javanese Calendar), asserting the essence of tolerance, respect, charity, devotion and character building (Fathurohman, Irfai, & Setiawan, 2017). Third, *buka luwur* was motivated by grave pilgrimage to pay homage to Sunan Kudus, with Sunan referring to the holy men first bringing Islam to Java. Donation in the form of live stocks, mainly buffalos and goats are observable (Falah, Ngemron, & Moordiningsih, 2017). Fourth, it is forbidden in this tradition to sacrifice a cow. In a nutshell, this event advocates tolerance, education, religious values, single principle and enculturation (Khotimah, 2018). The current study discusses Hindu legacy at Menara Kudus (temple-tending style) where Masjid al-Aqsha resides, and the tomb of Sunan Kudus (in relation to buka luwur).

The legacy results in acculturation (Zuhroh, 2018). Kudus still has some Hindu devotees living in the area, but they are not the relative of their past counterparts, the pre-Islam period.

Candi is from the word *candhika grha*, meaning the home of *Dewi Candika*, *Dewi Maut* (goddess of death) or *Dewi Kematian Durga*; it is linked with a monument of *pendharmaan* to glorify the passing kings. It is where Hindu-Buddhist cohorts go for worship. Beyond that sense, candi is also associated with palace, bathing point, and gate. Candi is not a tomb; however it is a temple (Soekmono, 1973, p. 241). It is an object of the most value from Hindu-Buddhist Java (Usman, 1998, p. 4). To study candi would mean to cover three important aspects of it: *makara, kala,* and *kinnara-kinnari*. Makara is an ornament taking shape of an animal's head (most generally that of an elephant, crocodile, or snake), mostly located on the righ-left side of the temple's gate or on the ladders. Kala is a relief of lion's head (the strongest animal) or the embodiment of *banapasti*, the devastator of dark power or the protector of the forest since candi is a symbol of a mountain (in India called *simhamuka*), positioned at the edge of a door, window and niche of a temple. Kinnara-kinnari is an endearing animal, in the body of a bird with human head projected to complement the cosmos, typically observable in Candi Ngawen, Candi Gana, and Candi Plaosan (BPCB, 2017). Candi Sojiwan on the other hand, is in the possession of a grey andesite rock of beam shape with a dimension of 30 cm x 30 cm and 30 cm x 50 cm, in a flat carving of man and animal motif (Trisnayanti, 2015). To the best of the writer's knowledge, however, the last mentioned aspect is not present at Menara Kudus.

The research questions this study aims to tackle are: (1) What is the current state of the Javanese-Hindu legacy at Menara Kudus? (2) What is the extent of the maintaining efforts taken by the government? (3) How is the future prospects of the area?

METHOD

This study describes data gathered on old objects available at Menara Kudus: the tower of Masjid Al-Aqsha, Makara/Kalla, and two gates (*kori*) at Masjid al-Aqsha. The famous SWOT approach was also employed. The study contributes new data, serving as inputs to best take care of the valuable objects. Menara Kudus is an Islamic site by scientific reasons; but it is also believed to have been there prior to the introduction of Islam, as indicated in oral stories.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. The Area of Menara Kudus

As has been rightly said, Kabupaten Kudus of Jawa Tengah is home to a lot of cultural richness.

a. The Tower of Masjid al-Aqsha Kudus

No detailed information being gathered concerning the establishment date, the writer found out that Menara Kudus (sitting at the complex of Al-Aqsha) was first renovated in 1609 Saka/1685 or in 1549 AD/956 H, dating older than Masjid al-Aqsha, in 1609 Saka. The inscribed texts inside the tower in an upper position read:

Candra Sengkala "*Gapura Rusak Ewahing Jagat*"*gapura* refers to 9, *rusak* to 0, *ewahing* to 6, and *jagat*, meaning 1. Reading from the back to the front, it points to the year of 1609 in Java calendar or 1687 AD as the time of renovation (Rosyid, 2019). Local stories holding Masjid Al-Aqsha first came into being than the tower is not easy to be simply ignored. The mosque, built in 956 H/1549 AD with initial name Masjid Al-Manar or Al-Aqsa, was renovated in 1919, 1933, 1976, and 1978. Sunan Kudus initiated the mosque building in an area previously called Loaram, with al-Manar or al-Aqsha being inspired by that in Jerusalem, Palestine. At the end of the day, it takes further study to really confirm the story.

Menara Kudus resembled the shape of East Java's *langgam*, later reshaped according to its function (Rokhman, 2014). The observation which holds that tower is the acculturation of Javanese Hindu and Islam enabled the oral tradition saying the adjusted shape of what is now Menara Kudus is the response made by Sunan Kudus. It measures 17 to 18 M tall, with the total area reaching up to 100 square meters. In the time of Sunan Kudus – a muezzin, one who calls to prayers – was on duty to make

Figure 1. The Mosque Gate (**Source:** Rosyid, 2020)

sure the praying time is made known. Also available there is an inscription *mihrab* indicating a chamber in mosque showing the direction of Mecca. In the accounts passed down from generation to generation, prior to the introduction of Islam, Menara Kudus was a place where the corpses of the noble were burned; and the other one mentioned that it was a temple equal in structure to Candi Singosari and Candi Kidal of Jawa Tengah (Candi Kidal of 1250 AD). Two zidentical springs were around in the past, famously known as *banyu kauripan* or *amarta/tirta kamandanu*, meaning water of life: people from old Kudus believed that it was capable of bringing the dead back to life when drunk, thereby making it closed for it was against the faith, giving way to what is now Menara Kudus (Salam, 1986, p. 22).

The foundation of the tower has a geometric ornament on it, a decorative square stone, every edge of which was joined by triangular ornament. In 1980s, the tower appeared on IDR 5,000.00 banknote. The building has been managed by Yayasan Masjid, Menara, dan Makam Sunan Kudus (YM3SK) since 1980, replacing the service of *Takmir Masjid Menara* (Rosyid, 2018).

To well preserve the complex, YM3SK put a limit on visiting guests, particularly those trying to access the toppest point. According to Team Balai Pelestarian Cagar Budaya (BPCB) of Jawa Tengah, the building was made of wood, not andesite rocks, nor vulnerable ones. The renovation in the period September – October 2014 restored four *mustaka* pillars tilted 11 cm to the west back to normalcy. To prevent the same thing from happening in the future, they are tied using iron plate, not put together permanently, allowing easy knock down.

Figure 2. Ablution Tap (**Source:** Rosyid, 2020)

b. Gapura Masjid Al-Aqsha

Masjid al-Aqsha Kudus occupies an area of 1,723.84 m in a complex reaching up to 6,325 m. In the front part is a Hindu-style gate on the verandah, and the other one in the mosque. The front gate served as fortress in the time of SunanKudus, measuring 548 cm long, a width of 272 cm, a hight of 625 cm, door width of 116 cm and the hight, 271 cm. The one inside the mosque is the access point into it, measuring 10 m in width and 18 m long. It was constructed of bricks, shingle, and brick adhesive. The gate inside the mosque called kori in Hindu context, according to the local elders, was the inner access to the temple, while the one on the verandah was the one leading in and out of the mosque complex, originally used to secure the location (Supani, 2009, p. 17). The design of the two greatly resembled the temple *kori* (Figure 1).

Generally speaking, it takes passing through two gates (kori) to get into a temple. A temple consists of three major parts, that of Bali in particular: perimeter fence, *balai tajug*, the whorshipping area, and the main part. The second is next to the gate: which serves as a meeting point and to prepare offerings.

The mosque (in the back part) went through the first renovation in 1919. Preceding it, there was a dividing block in between the gate inside the mosque and the one on the verandah. Now being reduced to only two, there used to be three gates around in the time of Sunan Kudus. Holding on to the widely believed sources, the two gates left was set up around the time of that of the mosque. The verandah was expanded in 1933; the praying room for female was renovated in 2011, while 2013 was the time for tajug improvement (Rosyid, 2018, p. 93).

c. Makara/Kala at Ablution Place

In the past, the ablution point at Masjid al-Aqsha was in the form of *padasan,* a clay pot later changed into a *makara/kala*, a phenomenon not commonly observed. A makara of arabesque motif is present at the water tub with 16 showers. Padasan made of uncemented brick has knot weave ornament numbering to 18 units (similar to that of Masjid Agung Demak and Masjid Mantingan Jepara); padasan is alsp decorated with a mask (*kedhok*) in form of kala of three eyes. The water exits from the pipe holes right on the kala mouth, fenomenally acknowledged in Hindu-Buddhsit traditions. In Hindu-Buddhis mythology, *kala* is an imaginary being protecting against the evil and giving good power, taking influence from water irrigation, *jaladwara,* in the architectural design of Hindu-Buddhist. A little distinction discerned at Menara Kudus' padasan would be that it is flatter than that of the common. The external aspect ends in the peak point (angle), resembeling a crown with open mouth serving to channel water for ablution purposes, with two curved canines of *ukel* motif. Kala is a three-eyed being, one being in the center called *urna,* with big nose. The taps channeling ablution water number to 8 each row, in back to back manner, with certain precise knot-pattern ornament intact on each. The essence behind the pattern is unending flow, limitless, being the highlight of decorative art called *arabesque* in Islam. A few of kala can be found on some aspects at Candi Gedongsongo: on the door barrier, niche, dwarajala; while the seam of ladder surface shows a crown. At Candi Dieng of Jawa Tengah on the other hand, kala is present on door barrier and niche (Syafii & Supatmo, 2019). The kala on the ablution taps is linked with concept the Eightfold Paths, *asta sanghikamarga* – asta means 8 while *sanghika* denotes in multiple ways and *marga,* the path. It hints the eight practices made known by the Buddha to his 8 disciples in Benares, covering such aspects as right view, right resolve, right speech, right conduct, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right Samadhi (meditative

absorption or union) (Figure 2) (Salam, 1986, p. 19).

2. The Government Efforts in Taking Care of Menara Kudus Complex

It is a nature of a building, as are many other things in the world, to get deteriorated, thereby making it in need of maintenance measures. For the record, the building was amended in 1880, 1913, 1933, 1980, 2011, 2013, and 2014. The hallway was renovated in 1933. Team BPCB of Jawa Tengah went into action in 2014, following one in 2011. The 2013's restoration was on the roofs, taking off 3,000 vulnerable bricks and putting on the new ones; and the one in May 2014 was mainly putting 10,000 new bricks, clearing out the fragmented ones, on one by one detaching basis. When being renovated, the outline was to work it out from upper down, so as to bring some comfort to the visitors. To preserve the old relief panels, they were reproduced to the best way possible.

BPCB Jawa Tengah indicated that it was vibration generated by nearby vehicles contributing to the imperfections of the monumental building. The team coordinator, Rabiman said that the renovation did not only concern the new bricks installation, but it was also about making it sound-proof, with the system placed on the lower structure. The brick structure and the footplate (foundation) is 1 m away from each other, with concrete mix of river stone put in between. The eastern part of the building was one hit with the worst disfigurement, being the nearest to the roads. The team has long expressed their stance: which basically points to the area free from passing public vehicles (no public transportation means have been allowed since 2018). The project managed by the team empowered the local people: the bricks used were purchased from Desa Pasuruan, Kecamatan Jati, Kudus; the bricks were made of high quality clay without any other ingredient mixed into it, being 31 cm long, 5 cm thick and 15 cm in width. The project costed a sum of money amounted to IDR 419, 469.00 from state budget (APBN); the allocated money of 2014 was IDR 300,000.00 (Rosyid, 2019).

Some ornamental plates of ceramics slipping off were corrected in 1980s. To get rid of salt element, the corrective measures did not always engage with cement mix.

In addition to conventional methods, other ways worth trying include consolidation (strengthening the structure), rehabilitation (maintenance), restoration (preserving the old aspects) and anastilosis (reintegrating the scattered parts) (BPCB, 2017).

Speaking of the renovation side of things, one of the obstacles faced by the team was to have new dimension of bricks, from 4.5 cm in thickness to 7 cm. Aside from the major factor, vehicle vibration, the pouring rain and the burning sun were also held accountable for the disfigurement. The 2014's renovation contributed to the 40% transformation of the lower structure, artefacts and other vital parts not being touched; since doing so would mean to disrupt the harmony of their significance. Conserving as a method is still debatable: between retaining the original material or initial appearance. Anyhow, conservation is a broad term, covering historical, social, political and philosophical aspects.

Before the period of 1980s, a renovation was conducted to place a concrete mix of 50 cm deep to retain water, preventing it from getting into the lower part of the foundation. The 2014's assignment, the excavation, indicated that the southern and northern foundations are of the same depth of 190 cm, consisting of 30 layers of bricks. Those of the gates dan the fence, meanwhile, are 80 cm and 1.5 m deep respectively. Into September, 2014, the renovation was on 80% mark, finishing well before 2014 ended. Entering the last phase of the project, the carvings were put back to the right and left side of the tower.

Moving on to the hallway, anti-moss agent was sprayed into materials made of woods. It was picked up from tobacco and clove boiling, applied on the woods and bricks components. In the third week of September, the supporting parts from bamboos were dismantled. It was aptly finished in mid-October of 2014. The 10 old ceramics plates were put back into the tower, with the utterly broken one being remade to really resemble the original. Credit to Maastricht of the Netherlands, and despite the color not exactly matching the original, the broken successfully had its substitute applied on the tower. In total, the big plates number 20 pieces, while the small ones, 21, including the substituted one (Rosyid, 2019).

3. The Future Prospects of Menara Kudus

Article 13 of Undang-Undangan Nomor 11 tahun 2010 on Cultural Heritage objects stipulates that instead of the GI, the rights over managing a cultural heritage complex/object are only accessible to by a traditional community. The local community having no right over the area, the GI is highly expected to look after it. Article 29 Point (3) indicates that the second-level government should register the object managed by the GI, while Article 31 Point (1) stipulates that the proposal shall be reviewed by a team supervising the Cultural Heritage; Point (3) stipulates that the team is appointed by a regent/mayor, at the second-level government, through a decree.

Al-Aqsha complex has been appointed a cultural heritage object under a decree of Jawa Tengah No. 11-19/Kud/01/TB/04. The components referred to as cultural heritage objects include the tower, the mosque, and the tombs. The complex having been inducted into the cultural heritage, the government of Kudus needs to map it by means of SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threaths).

The aspects discernable to be the area's strengths cover universal values, integrity and authenticity, existing master plan, and legal protection as well as professional personnels. The fact that the area and the tomb of Sunan Kudus as well as Masjid Madureksan, Taman Beringin, and Kelenteng Hok Ling Bio are not on the same complex can be taken as a weakness; there comes a shopping block between them. But of paramount importance is the notion: a merit-based concept of a proposed building. Secondly, certain criteria must be met: cultural richness in terms of architectural uniqueness, inherent traditional customs, and technological dimension. Thirdly, an object should be in possession of preservation agenda or *P3KP*, in reference to Undang-Undangan Nomor 11 tahun 2010 on Cultural Heritage, the Law No. 28 / 2002 on Buildings and the Governmental Regulation No. 36 / 2005 on Implementing Regulations of the Law No. 28 / 2002, the Law No. 26 / 2007 on Spatial Planning and the Ministerial Regulations of the Minister of Public Works and Spatial Planning No. 1 / 2015 on Cultural Heritage Buildings need preserving. The monitoring of Cultural Heritage objects are far from effective due to weak law enforcement, limited number of capable archeologists, scant infrastructures, and the ignorance on the local people's part on discovery of the cultural heritage buildings (Prasetyo, 2018). Directorate of Cultural Heritage Preservation of Directorate General of Culture has been socializing the Law on CH to the majority of second-level governments. To the end of 2017, only 13.5% of the government has certified experts on CH objects; and 4% has managed to appoint CH objects (Pasaribu, 2018).

Kudus has had all it takes to become a CH object: a place to visit for Islamic pilgrimage (the mosque complex and the tomb of Sunan Kudus), Hindu legacy (Langgar Bubrah Site), Khonghucu influence (Kelenteng Hok Ling Bio), public

space, all capable of scaling up the economy and revisiting the old time Kudus.

The obstacle that can hamper Kudus from realizing its agenda is the absence of local government regulation on CH, a crucial aspect in protecting an object, as was the struggle on Jogjakarta's part in 2012 (Harjiyatni & Raharja, 2012). It is worth noting that it takes all stake holders to align their program to really make a city a CH object, as stipulated by the Article (3) of the Law on CH.

CONCLUSION

The efforts to identify the old Javanese-Hindu legacy in Kudus confirmed that Kudus had been in existence prior to the time of Sunan Kudus. Menara Kudus and the gates were taken to drive away dark power. That kala has not been considered a cultural heritage object while the two-mentioned have been, requires further studies.

Concerning Menara Kudus, 80% of the current state has been due to comprehensive endeavors from both colonial government and BPCB, periodically carried out in 1880, 1913, 1933, 1980, 2011, 2013, and 2014. The 2011, 2013, dan 2014's renovations were in response to natural aspects and vibration factor. Starting 2018, public transportation means have been denied access to pass by the area.

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