

BETAWI CULTURAL VILLAGE, THE LAST ASYLUM

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Abstract: SB Betawi Cultural Village is a region defined by the Jakarta administration as cultural preservation area. This research will discuss the link between this village with politics, history of Betawi ethnic origin, as well as field visits. This research will conduct a view from two perspectives, one is the perspective of an architect and the other is of a commoner. This research tries to understand the meaning of the presence of this cultural village and how it was presented as a preservation and reservation area, not only the nature but also the Betawi culture and ethnic. In addition, this research also describes an understanding of the participation of politic, architecture and space in building the image of the region and at the same time creating a development boundary. Because of the sensitive topic of this research then the subject has to be abbreviated into 'SB'.

Keywords: Betawi people, cultural village, heritage, power

Introduction

SB Betawi Cultural Village is one of the few Betawi villages in Jakarta. The village, which is actually a residential area that has long been the place of Betawi tribe's habitat, is the last refuge for the indigenous people of Jakarta in maintaining its existence. This area then becomes important village amid the rapid development of the city which has an impact on the shift of settlements (especially Betawi) into commercial area.

However, with the presence of some other Betawi villages in Jakarta such as Kampung Marunda which have more historical value, then the existence of

SB be questionable. More over SB has no more significant value than the other Betawi villages in Jakarta. It feels like this cultural village was forged to accompany an artificial lake created as a water catchment area of Jakarta. Although there is no doubt there are indeed betawi township residents in the vicinity.

I think that this cultural village has political content in it. Moreover, the existence of this village is like a manifestation of fear of loss of Betawi culture in Jakarta due to the rapid development progress. The loss of population settlements in Jakarta has helped eliminate the history of traces and culture of the natives. Globalization and moderniza-

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tion demanded massive changes and this is not in line with the understanding of conservation. Because of this then the Indonesian government, (in this case the government of DKI Jakarta) together with the demands and support of Betawi people, see the importance to establish a cultural heritage area that can sustain their existence.

Betawi cultural heritage is becoming of great importance considering the displacement of people from their own betawi land toward the periphery area. In addition, globalization will increasingly undermine the expertise and insight of Betawi people about their own culture.

Because of the demands and concerns of this, the city government finally decided to build a region that can be acted as the last "asylum" for Betawi people and at once as an area that can also be used as a place of learning and developing the culture and as well as an integrated Betawi tourism area in Jakarta.

Approaches and methods

In this article, I will discuss the historical origins of Betawi people in Jakarta. This is important because it relates to the existence of the Betawi in Jakarta. However, Betawi people always assumes that they are the true owners of the city, yet very ironic because they are also increasingly marginalized from the region as well as from the development of the city.

I also discuss about the design of the area of SB Betawi Cultural Village and relate to its function as a learning area about the culture of a society. This discussion will certainly prove whether this area runs in accordance with the intention of the founding of this area as a tourist village or whether there are other purposes behind it.

Political review will also be raised given the tourist area is often used as a showcase for some politicians to hold their official programs. Through this discussion I wanted to see whether this cultural village does have political content behind it and rather putting forward those purposes than conservation purposes that has always been touted.

I have collected data that come from variety of readings obtained from various literature which will be compared with some theories about power and politics. This literature study will compare each results of the discussion in order to gain new understanding about SB as Betawi's cultural site.

Assumptions and findings

Location Overview

SB Betawi Cultural Village is located at Srengseh Sawah, Jagakarsa, South Jakarta. This township has an area of 289 hectares to 65 ha of which are owned by the government. But the government of DKI has just only managed about 32 ha. Within this 32 hectares there is an artificial lake which is surrounded by inspection track. Visitors will find plenty of traditional Betawi snacks that are sold along the track. However, by viewing the name - which also displayed above the main gate, visitors will be a little disappointed if they really want to see the real Betawi culture. The Betawi Cultural Village does not describe at all the Betawi lifestyle even when we circled the inspection track. Settlement patterns and housing are very common and we can find it in many other villages in the Indonesian region. Except for some Betawi traditional houses that are still using traditional ornaments. In this regard, I was still doubt the authenticity of those traditional houses. In general, visitors will feel disappointed if they want to see

real life of Betawi in this area. Cultural performances that are staged according to the schedule were not even enough to describe the real Betawi culture.

Activities in the lake are the same with activities in any other water attractions. Water bike with a form of goose or other aquatic animals can also be encountered in other tourist attractions, such as in Ragunan for example. I even get the impression as if I were in Ragunan when visiting this region. Residents and citizens (especially males) do a lot of fishing activity along the ledges, which was not specific Betawi village activities.

In general SB Betawi cultural village does not even have an asset or historical value that can be promoted in addition to the Dutch heritage artificial lake which is not treated or managed properly. It is very different if we compare with the Betawi cultural village in Marunda for example that has historical value. Visitors can see the Pitung's house made of wood materials and is still standing in the way of Kampung Marunda Pulo street.

From these conditions I assume that the manager and the South Jakarta administration is not serious enough to develop and do not understand the meaning of this cultural village. The question is, what is the purpose of the establishment of this cultural village? Why should this cultural village established if not managed properly? What is to be conveyed to the public or visitors who are visiting this area? In my opinion, visitors to this cultural region does not benefit something special from the results of the visit. Visitors do not get any message unless this area is the usual tourist areas like many others we met with Betawi snacks in it, that's all.

Overview of History and

Politics

SB Betawi Cultural Village was established in 2004 by Sutiyoso, Governor of Jakarta at the time. However the determination of this region as a cultural heritage has been planned since 1996. Then, through the Governor's Decree No. 9 of 2000 SB was declared as Betawi Cultural Village. Previously, Jakarta administration has also considered Condet in East Jakarta as one of the alternative establishment of Betawi culture. However, this plan was aborted because of the consideration that the Betawi nuance and culture of Condet region has increasingly fading away.

Since the establishment in 2000, the government of Jakarta together with the community has made improvements to the area of SB. As one of the efforts to promote Jakarta as well, then in 2002 (two years before the opening of this area as a cultural heritage) SB was declared as a tourist destination for Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) conference attendees which took place in Jakarta.

From these events I assume that the establishment of SB indeed been planned and chosen as a lighthouse project for certain political interests. The determination in 2000 was very close to the conference hosted in 2002. It is possible government of Jakarta at that moment in confusion to set the area that can be used as a tourist destination, without giving a political sense in it, besides it is possible to win the hearts of betawi citizens in general. So the selection of this location feels as if forced. Why? Because once again, this area does not have any excellent potential to be promoted in addition except Betawi residential areas and a Dutch heritage artificial lake which is intended as a water catchment. Finally all the activities that exist seem

as if forced to be present in this area. Because clearly it is not culturally rooted in this area, the activities are hesitantly live, hesitantly die. It seems that all cultural activities present are mere complements to the presence of the cultural heritage of this region. Finally this SB Betawi Cultural Village ends up being a sort of ordinary culinary tourism area for family that we can actually encounter in other areas in Jakarta and Indonesia. Even more interesting facts found from small-scale research by me is that several food vendors are not originally from the area and not even Betawi people.

This region was again becoming the center of attention when Jokowi, the Governor of DKI at that time, wanted to inaugurate the South Jakarta Mayor Syamsuddin Noor in this cultural heritage. It is not the first time the Governor of DKI Jokowi doing outdoor activities in the official inauguration of governance. But the decision to choose SB as the location for the election was of course based on particular interest. SB becomes a strategic location if it is politically deemed because it has something to do with the Betawi citizens in Jakarta. Of course Governor Jokowi wanted to take this opportunity to draw sympathy from Betawi people. The issue of reservation and preservation of the environment was becoming a promoted topic to be associated with the lake and Betawi culture. However it is possible this was done to attract the attention of the importance of this region as a tourist area and Betawi culture heritage. Communicating to the public the importance of this region as Betawi cultural heritage. Legitimizing this area as a special area for Betawi people and a sanctuary and the last bastion from the current development, modernization, and globalization which continues to move from Jakarta to its suburbs. This is evident from the comments of Governor Jokowi at that time who emphasizing that

SB and its surrounding areas guarded from residential or commercial building construction because it is a catchment and water infiltration area. But the implied message can also be interpreted as a statement not to alter and disrupt the Betawi people's living conditions in the surrounding area.

Anthropological point of view

Betawi ethnic group present in Jakarta today, according to Pauline Dublin Milone in her book entitled *Queen City of the East: The Metamorphosis of a Colonial Capital* mentions that Betawi people are born to ethnic melting pot of many ethnic tribes. Mixing was initiated under the kingdom of Padjadjaran and also under the influence of Javanese kingdom of Demak while doing its expansion into the area of Batavia. The tribes who lived in Batavia include tribes, Malay, Bugis, Ambon, Manado, Timor, and also newcomers such as the European, Chinese, Arabic, and Japanese. These immigrants then do interbreeding with native who is the Sundanese. This mixed marriages eventually gave birth to a new ethnic group that loses its properties. At the end of the 19th century when trade is advancing, this increasingly widespread interbreeding produced a new ethnic group who used Malay language with the influence of languages like Portuguese, Balinese, Javanese, Sundanese, Chinese, Arabic, Dutch, and English. The language is then sounded like the Betawi language we heard nowadays.

In 1930 there were 64.3 % of Betawi people who lived in Batavia area. The ethnic group that was not known before then introduces himself formally through a youth organization that was established in 1923 under the name of The Organization of Betawi. So since then officially born Betawi ethnic group

or tribe in Jakarta.

When viewed from the process and the year of his birth, the Betawi is actually not the native of Jakarta. They are the ethnic group that is formed through a long process involving various ethnic groups whose at one time gathering in Batavia or Jakarta today. From this explanation I assume that the actual Betawi people do not have strong roots to Jakarta than Sundanese which is actually the native of Jakarta.

These conditions resulted in Betawi ethnic group can relatively accept a variety of other ethnic groups to enter and settle into Jakarta. It can be accepted by them because they themselves were actually the result of assimilation of various immigrants. But this tolerant attitude ultimately make Betawi people increasingly marginalized in the process of development in Jakarta. While many of their ancestral land has changed ownership, this Betawi people suddenly became aware of its existence is increasingly threatened.

Actually this is a very natural process. But in the cultural context of course this is a threat to the extinction of an ethnic which actually has a link and node importance of cultural development in the area of Jakarta. That's why the city government felt the need to define areas of cultural heritage to preserve Betawi important link in the history of cultural formation of "native" Jakarta.

Departing from these findings, I have the notion that SB Betawi Cultural Village is the expansion of the Betawi cultural heritage area, which existed before (like Kampung Marunda), in order to deal with the process of development and modernization which resulted in the loss of the Betawi area, nuance and culture. The decision of the region as a

cultural heritage is also one way of Betawi people through the city government to keep the land from disappearing as a result of the current development. Encroachment Issue may also associated with the presence of Marunda village, where the house of Pitung stood. Rumor has it that the area of Kampung Marunda will be rejuvenated (more precisely evicted) for the construction of residential or commercial, this makes Betawi people feel it is important to immediately divert this cultural heritage to another areas in preparation when this thing is really happening.

Research limitations

Of course this research full of my own viewpoints and backgrounds, so there will be many deficiencies. Among other is the limited viewpoints that does not include a more comprehensive insight about Betawi culture as a whole. However, by comparing the findings through site visits and study of literature with some theories about power, I hope to find answers to questions that disclosed in the earlier part of this research.

Discussion

SB Betawi Cultural Village in the beginning can be considered as a theme park that explores the culture. But if we examine further, this region cannot be called as a Theme Park. According to Michael Sorkin in his writings about the Variations on a Theme Park, says that there are three things that distinguish a theme park than other forms of the park. It is, among others, are first, the removal of any relationship be it cultural or physical with any institution, and break the bond with specific space. When we review of naming, as a cultural heritage of course SB region is not in accordance with the first criterion. SB wants to show this area as an area of reservation, con-

servation, learning, and knowledge of Betawi culture for future generations. This area is associated with a particular society and culture. The concept is of course good, but is it really true? When viewed from the concept and naming, of course, the region has failed to meet the criteria. But from the visit results to the region, the first criterion can be fulfilled anyway because this area has failed to show the real Betawi culture to visitors. Even I did not feel any bond with a particular society. This area does not have any ties culturally and spatially with certain institutions and society. Thus the first criterion is met.

Second, the obsession with security. A theme park is an area that is filled with a variety of tools to ensure the safety of the observation of the area. Each visitor will feel controlled and monitored all the time. Their activities are not necessarily free as you wish. This is where the region managed to not meet the criteria. Throughout the visit to the region, I feel free to do anything i want. Talking with food vendors, passing the car ticket, crossing the suspension bridge, walking on artificial island, whatever you want can be done freely without being watched. Even garbage strewn on the lake surface prove that residents and visitors can freely dispose of waste into the lake. There are no sanctions against everything we do in it. The only supervision is the ticket levy officer for visitors with car or motorcycle who want to pass the inspection lane. The second criterion fails.

Third, the place must be a simulation. Based on the wikipedia, simulation can be interpreted as a process of imitation of the real thing along with its surroundings (state of affairs). Action that perform these simulations generally describes the properties of the key characteristics of the behavior of physical or abstract systems. It's clear this Betawi Cultural Village has

failed to meet the third criterion. Visitors who come into this region did not find any imitation or simulation. Visitors do not feel the life of a real Betawi village when visiting the region. Life in this region is an ordinary life that can be found in any part of the villages of Jakarta and Indonesia as well and is not an imitation of a particular pattern of community life. The third criterion fails.

With the failure of the region to meet the criteria of a theme park it is clear that the development of this region is actually not based on essential needs to be a representation of a culture. This area is more to function as a preservation area for a particular community who are concerned about the loss of their existence amid the onslaught of development and globalization.

The development of this region is more of a pastoral action as expressed by James D. Faubion in his work entitled *The Essential Works of Foucault*. Although according to Faubion pastoral action is more to the action associated with the activities of the church or Christian, but I assume this view can describe what lies behind the establishment of the Betawi Cultural Village in this SB. According Faubion pastoral activity is a form of power whose sole purpose is to ensure the safety of every individual in the next life. This pastoral authority also sacrifice themselves to the safety of the community. And the sacrifice is not only for the group, but also concern for every individual in it.

From the above, I assume that the presence of this region is determined by parties who feel that the existence of the Betawi in Jakarta was in critical condition. The shift of their lands into the hands of the capitalists is increasingly shifting them to the outskirts of Jakarta. Supposed to sell this valuable asset, their

lives and livelihoods can be better. But in reality, not everything goes as such. It is found that many landlords who then fell into bankruptcy after they released their last “wealth”. That is why there is a need to present a reservation and preservation area that can sustain the existence of the Betawi in Jakarta. Not only to the interests of the whole, but also to the interests of each individual in it even the next generation. Of course, sacrifices must be made in any shape to preserve this ethnic. One way is to open the region to the public. Maybe this condition does not provide comfort for the residents around the lake, but on the other hand this condition is an opportunity for citizens to conduct business transactions that are expected to improve their lives. Although the real goal is to keep this region does not turn into a commercial area or residential real estate.

Even Political visits from government officials actually is one of conservation and preservation effort. With often hold events around the region, indirectly giving a message to the residents and the surrounding community that they are in is a supervised condition. So pastoral action in this area is completely visible and a saving-oriented action.

Conclusion

From all the above explanation, I conclude that the power (in this case political), architecture, and space can be jointly used as a tool to create limits the pace of development while creating the reservation and preservation areas. This limitation created a new form of understanding in society about what image and message you want to be delivered. In this case the Betawi Cultural Village is a submission tool to fulfill that purpose. It is of course the current development based on capitalism can not touch this area. Betawi people clearly expressed

their intention but still in a subtle way. SB is an area of the reservation and the preservation of nature and culture which not just any development can be entered. This area is the last sanctuary for Betawi people. SB Betawi Cultural Village is a place where Betawi people can always turn to build and preserve their culture with a sense of security and without fear of eviction brought by development. SB Betawi Cultural Village is a place where Betawi people can continue to exist without the fear of being eroded in time nor experience the ethnic extinction.

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