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Heritage, Tourism and Development: Synchronizing Global, National and Local Narratives

Devi Roza Krisnandhi Kausar

Abstract

This paper discusses heritage, tourism, and development in Muarajambi Temple Complex in the light of global, national, and local narratives that influence the heritage site. The study relies on literature study as well as data from the author's research in Muarajambi and past research on several heritage sites in Indonesia. It concludes that when put into the relativities of scale in the whole system, which include international (global), national, and local level, the policy and legal framework in the local level is often not adequate to realize the ideals that are suggested in higher level, in this case the national policy and international convention.

Background

The discussion of heritage has many facets. Heritage could be a place to perform religious practices; a reminder of historic pasts; a symbol of identity; an instrument for the exercise of power (Ashworth 2008); and a source of income for government. Throsby in Benhamou (2003) defined
heritage as the different forms of cultural capital, which embodies the community’s value of its social, historical, or cultural dimension. However, Schouten (1995) said that heritage is not the same as history, as it is processed through mythology, ideology, nationalism, local pride, romantic ideas or just plain marketing, into a commodity. Schouten’s idea of heritage as a commodity parallels the definition of heritage as the contemporary uses of the past (Ashworth and Tunbridge 1999). Ashworth and Tunbridge asserts that the interpretation of the past in history, historical buildings, artifact, and collective and individual memories are all harnessed in response to current needs, which include the identification of individuals with social, ethnic and territorial entities and the provision of economic resources for commoditization within heritage industries – of which tourism is the most apparent. Further, Ashworth (2006) argued that the concept of heritage is individual because each individual creates their known heritage for their own self-identification and positioning. Hence, he also argued that heritage is what we choose to preserve.

On the other hand, in contrast to the notion of heritage as something that is individual, the heritage discourse in the last three decades introduces the concept of patrimoniophilia or universal ownership by the peoples of the world through the World Heritage Sites inscription. Turtinen (2000) mentioned that the idea of “World Heritage” grew out of the experiences of devastation from the two World Wars, and from large international projects such as the rescue of the Temples of Abu Simbel during the construction of the Aswan High Dam in Egypt, which called for international assistance and co-operation. Finnemore, and Boli and Thomas in Turtinen (2000) argued that international organisations often have a fundamental role in defining and framing problems as global. This was certainly the case in the global problematisation of World Heritage and the set up of the international institutional system.

Concerns over heritage among the international community have led to the development of set global narratives in the form of World Heritage Convention (adopted in 1972) and the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention. Later in 2003, the Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage was also adopted. The aim of inscription to the World Heritage List is to
encourage conservation of the heritage resources within designated sites and surrounding buffer zones on a local level and also to foster a sense of collective global responsibility via international cooperation, exchange and support (Leask 2006). Nevertheless, in recent years, World Heritage Sites’ social impact and relevance to humanity, especially communities that live in the surrounding area, have been emphasized. Engelhardt (2005) suggested that to ensure the sites have positive social impact and relevance to humanity, especially for communities that live in the surrounding areas, the paradigm of World Heritage Site management needs to extend beyond conservation and include development or even poverty alleviation (Matsuura 2008).

One of the most observable contributions of WHS to development is through heritage tourism. In many case, tourism is the very motivation for governments when nominating sites to be listed in World Heritage list. Heritage tourism refers to any visits to heritage areas/sites, which may encompass all who visit regardless of their motivation and perception on the heritage attributes of the site (Poria et al. 2006). On the difference between heritage tourism and general tourism, Millar (1989) stated that the context of heritage tourism is fundamentally different from that of general tourism because heritage attractions represent irreplaceable resources for the tourism industry, thus conservation is a vital component of their management.

Considering heritage attributes as irreplaceable, Throsby (2003) stated that one of the principles of sustainable management in cultural resources is precautionary principle. The precautionary principle states that decisions that may lead to irreversible change should be approached with extreme caution. This principle should not only apply in the utilization of heritage for tourism but in the management of the site and its buffer zone. Laws, regulations and guidelines are therefore needed to ensure that in the heritage preservation, as well as the utilization of heritage for development through tourism, balance can be achieved between the needs to preserve heritage for the future and the economic and social aspirations for local development. These laws, regulations and guidelines are what we call narratives of heritage management.

In the context of Muarajambi Temple Compound which has been
listed in the Tentative List for World Heritage Site by Government of Indonesia since 2009, the World Heritage Convention and its guidelines are the global narratives in its preservation. However, these global narratives should have their parallels in the national and local level if their ideals are to be achieved. This paper discusses heritage, tourism, and development in Muarajambi Temple Compound in the light of global, national, and local narratives that influence the heritage site. Motivation to conduct this study was triggered by the fact that industrial pressures have been threatening the state of conservation of the temples (BBC Indonesia 16 February 2012 edition; Fahmy 2012; Sirait 2012) and heritage tourism potential that has yet to be developed optimally (Kausar and Zilberg 2013).

Study Methods

The study relies on literature studies and qualitative data obtained through field study to Muarajambi and semi-structured interviews with following relevant stakeholders: representatives of local community, an official from the Jambi Cultural Heritage Conservation Office (BPCB), an official from Jambi Provincial Tourism Office, a representative of the Association for the Conservation of Muarajambi (PPMJ), a prominent Indonesian archaeologist based in Jakarta, the Cultural Programme Specialist in UNESCO Jakarta Office, an official in charge of matters related to World Heritage in the Coordinating Ministry of Welfare and an official from the Directorate General of Culture, Ministry of Education and Culture. Table 1 summarizes research technique and issues addressed when collecting data from relevant stakeholders in different administrative level as mentioned in the previous paragraph.
Table 1: Stakeholders, research techniques, and interview themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholder</th>
<th>Administrative Level</th>
<th>Research Technique</th>
<th>Issues Addressed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UNESCO Jakarta Cultural Programme Specialist</td>
<td>International</td>
<td>Semi-structured interview</td>
<td>Tentative List of World Heritage Site; nomination and procedures for World Heritage nomination; issues in World Heritage nominations in Indonesia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head Division of World Heritage Sites, Coordinating Ministry of Welfare</td>
<td>National</td>
<td>Semi-structured interview</td>
<td>Roles and responsibilities of the Coordinating Ministry of Welfare in matters related to World Heritage Site; coordination mechanisms in world heritage management in Indonesia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of Planning and Budgeting, Directorate General of Culture, Ministry of Education and Culture</td>
<td>National</td>
<td>Semi-structured interview</td>
<td>Current situation/progress in World Cultural Heritage management; possibilities for increased involvement of local government in cultural heritage management; prospects for co-management between national, provincial and local government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PPMJ</td>
<td>National</td>
<td>Semi-structured interview</td>
<td>Initiative for “Save Muarajambi Petition”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Official from Jambi Cultural Heritage Conservation Office (BPCB)</td>
<td>Provincial</td>
<td>Semi-structured interview</td>
<td>Roles and responsibilities of BPCB; problems in the preservation of Muarajambi Temple Compound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Official from Jambi Provincial Tourism Office</td>
<td>Provincial</td>
<td>Semi-structured interview</td>
<td>Current situation in Muarajambi tourism development; involvement of local communities, especially youth groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Representatives of local community</td>
<td>Village</td>
<td>Semi-structured interviews, communications through email and social media, and field observation</td>
<td>Local youth initiative for heritage education program; involvement of local communities; current problems in heritage preservation and tourism development; community expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expert (Jakarta-based archaeologist)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Informal discussion</td>
<td>Cultural policy in Indonesia, the political economy of cultural heritage</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results and Discussions

The shift to decentralization of local governance in Indonesia since 2000 has given more power and autonomy to the local governments, including the right to issue licenses. However, after 10 years of its implementation, criticisms are increasing towards local governments for the negative social and environmental impacts caused by the surge in licenses issued by the local government for industries such as coal minings and palm oil plantations (Anam 2012; Wijayanto 2012). In Muarajambi Regency, these industries were given licences to have their activities on and nearby the Muarajambi Temple Compound by the local government of Muarajambi Regency. The two sectors are major contributors to the Regency’s Gross Regional Domestic Product (GRDP).

The mining and quarrying sector generates GDP of 218,669 million Indonesian Rupiah ( IDR) in 2009 or 19.5% of the GRDP that year, which accounts for 1,117,660.65 million IDR (BPS Jambi 2012). On the other hand agriculture sector, which encompasses palm oil plantation contributes a GDP of 384,007 million IDR in 2009 or around 34% of the total GRDP. The Muarajambi Temple Compound has not been declared a cultural preservation zone, hence the coal and palm oil companies actually operate without violating any laws. Since 2007, the Jambi Cultural Heritage Conservation Office (BPCB) has been lobbying the local government to protect Muarajambi Temple Compound. However, these talks have not been successful in changing the situation due to the temple compound is still lacking legal framework that could support its preservation.

Rizzo and Mignosa (2006) underlined that heritage is an output of regulatory process. While the World Heritage Convention is a soft law that serves as an umbrella for identification, protection, and preservation of natural and cultural heritage, the laws and regulations in the national and local level are the hard laws that are instrumental in achieving the purpose of the World Heritage Convention. Therefore, Rizzo and Mignosa (2006) suggested that it is important to evaluate the regulatory process and what regulations are now affecting a heritage site or preservation area.
Global Narratives: World Heritage Convention and the Tentative Lists

As a site that has already been included in the tentative list for World Heritage Sites, the World Heritage Convention should be the global narrative that Muarajambi Temple Compound adheres to. Nevertheless, like the nomination process of World Heritage Sites that is not free from political decisions and motivations of State Parties (Leask 2006), the listing of the sites to the tentative lists itself is not free from political nature that exist in the relationships between UNESCO and the State Parties. Most of the sites listed in the tentative lists by the Indonesian Government, for instance, have not had Management Plan that is actually required as according to the Operational Guidelines, including Muarajambi Temple Compound. Nonetheless, amid such fact, these sites could still be listed in tentative lists although they would face some difficulties in the nomination process for World Heritage Sites. As mentioned by Leask (2006), countries with lack of technical capacity to promote and prepare nominations, lack of adequate assessments of heritage properties, or lack of appropriate legal or management framework, are the ones facing more complexities that hinder nominations.

The somewhat “bargaining” situation between UNESCO and the State Parties in the tentative lists and the nomination process reflects the characteristic of World Heritage Convention as a soft law. Soft laws can be defined as regulatory conduct that is not legally binding as hard law (Hull 2006). Francioni (2008) stated that international convention, such as the World Heritage Convention, is an example of soft law instrument that imposes obligations, but is not legally binding. A clear example is the fact that no sanction has been imposed on sites already inscribed as World Heritage Site but without management plans. In the Indonesian case, this includes the famous Borobudur and Prambanan Temples which was designated as World Heritage Site before requirement for Management Plan was strictly imposed.

National and Local Narratives: Differing Interests and Needs

In Indonesia, the central government is responsible for preservation of
protected areas such as World Heritage Sites, and National Parks. However, in line with the spirit of decentralization, Law Number 11, 2010 on Cultural Heritage stated that the local government, in this case Regents or Majors, have to start the initial process of an establishment of a national cultural heritage site by declaring the area as cultural heritage in the local level according to recommendations from experts. The Muarajambi Temple Compound, on the other hand, has not been declared a cultural preservation zone despite the fact that President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono established it as an integrated historic tourism area on 22 September 2011.

The Provincial Government of Jambi expects Muarajambi Temple Compound to play a major role as resource for development through tourism. The temple compound is promoted in the tourism promotion booklets along with other tourists’ attractions in Jambi, such as Muaratakus Temple and Kerinci Seblat National Park. A Master Plan of the temple complex and its localities as well as a Detailed Engineering Design (DED) of the site was published in 2006 and 2007. These documents were intended to provide guidelines for the development of the area. However, as long as there is still differing perception about the significance of Muarajambi Temples between central and local government, it is difficult to hope for creation of legal framework and thorough management plan that will ensure the preservation of this invaluable archaeological site and the development of sustainable heritage tourism that benefits local communities. Tirtosudarmo (2013) wrote about the alarming conditions in some of Indonesia’s cultural heritage sites due to government’s lack of attention and non-committal attitude of the state to the policy of cultural heritage. In this case, Muarajambi is no exception to what he indicated.

In the case of tourism, the industry still has much room to grow in Muarajambi. For instance, when entering the compound, visitors might notice that supporting facilities for tourism is still very minimum. The presence of small and medium enterprises supporting tourism is still limited to modest food and beverage sellers. Cultural tourism activities have not been carried out together with the promotion of Jambi’s local handicrafts. This call for a thorough coordination and cooperation if tourism is going to be the strategy for development in Muarajambi that
takes into account the invaluable cultural heritage.

Like the spirit of decentralization that is increasingly visible in the quite recently enacted Law on Cultural Heritage, the new tourism law (Law No. 10, 2009) also encourages greater role of local government. Yet, the tourism law as the narratives for tourism development in the national level, should be made operational in the local level by forming legal framework in the local level. If heritage is to be a resource for development through tourism, potential issues need to be taken account in managing heritage tourism. From balancing tourism and preservation (Millar 1989), managing ownership issues and the shift in preservation purpose from local use to tourists use (Graburn 2013), to ensuring intra-generational equity or the fairness in access to cultural resources and to the benefit flowing from these resources across social classes and income groups (Throsby 2003). All of these are usually even more complicated with the presence of various organisations as stakeholders of the heritage site, along with the communities.

Concluding Remarks

This paper discusses heritage, tourism, and development in Muarajambi Temple Complex in the light of global, national, and local narratives that influence the heritage site. This article also presents the dynamic of heritage preservation and the politics of cultural heritage development through the case of Muarajambi. Competing interests in an era of decentralization is one of the highlights of the article. It can be concluded that as heritage is an output of regulatory process, the policy and legal framework for sustainable management of the heritage site in the local level should match the ideals that are suggested in higher level (national policy and international convention).
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