



Sunyaragi Cave as a Cultural Heritage Tourist Attraction of the People of Cirebon

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Abstract. This paper discusses how the process of changing Sunyaragi Cave from its initial function as a learning studio for the King's family to a place of deliberations on war strategies against Dutch colonialists to become a tourism industry at this time. This research uses a qualitative method approach to describe the natural condition of objects, where the researcher is the key instrument. The reason researchers choose descriptive research is to be able to describe systematically and accurately facts and characteristics about the population or a particular field. The researcher here intends to provide an overview of a particular social phenomenon that already exists. The discussion in this paper covers the history of Sunyaragi Cave, starting from its establishment and several restorations to its current condition. There is a cave management crisis until an agreement is reached by the responsible manager at this time and discusses how to change its function into a tourism industry and the uniqueness of cave architecture so that it has the potential to become a tourist destination for the cultural heritage of the people of Cirebon.

Keywords: Sunyaragi Cave, Cultural, Tourism, Heritage, Cirebon

INTRODUCTION

Sunyaragi Cave is an archaeological *site* with Regnas No: RNCB 19980616.04.000709, in 1998 and 2016, located in Jalan Brigjen Dharsono By Pass, Kesambi District, Cirebon City. Based on the Decree of the Mayor of Cirebon No.19 Th. 2001, Tamansari Sunyaragi Cave is a cultural heritage with a unique, strong historical character and a deep impression on tourists because Sunyaragi Cave Park is part of the Pakungwati Palace or Kasepuhan Palace.

Sunyaragi Cave is an ancient building complex that used to be a boarding house where kings and their families studied. The primary motif of Sunyaragi Cave building is *mega mendung* and *wadanan* as a symbol of life, complemented by plants, animals, and humans that symbolize the contents of world life. This cave complex presents a tasteful architectural art because it successfully combines several architectural styles: classical Indonesia, the Middle East, Ancient China, and Europe.

According to the book *Purwaka Caruban Nagari* written by Prince Kararangen or Prince Arya Carbon in 1720, the name Sunyaragi comes from the words Sunya, which means "lonely," and Ragi, which means "Raga," version of Carub Nagari. It can be interpreted that Sunyaragi Cave was a place for kings to meditate, calm, or control the body. Sunyaragi Cave was founded in 1703 AD by Prince Kararangen, the great-grandson of Sunan Gunung Jati. It was intended for palace officials and soldiers in Cirebon to improve Kanuragan knowledge and deepen war techniques.

If observed, the building in an area of 15 hectares combines the Indonesian style of the royal era with some ornaments of Islam, Hinduism, and China as immigrants who have lived for a long time in running the business industry. In 1852, this park was repaired because, in 1787, it was damaged by the Dutch. At that time, this park was used as a defensive fortress. Tan Sam Cay, a Chinese architect, is said to have been asked by Sultan Adiwijaya to repair it. However, the Chinese architect was arrested and killed because he was thought to have leaked the secrets of the Sunyaragi cave to the Dutch. Therefore, in the Sunyaragi Park complex, there is also a stake that reads "Chinese Cemetery."

The Dutch colonial government implemented the restoration of Tamansari Gua Sunyaragi in 1937-1938. The implementation was handed over to an officer of the Semarang Cultural Office, Krisjman. He only strengthened the original construction by adding pillars or reinforced brick pillars, especially on the plane of the arched roof. However, sometimes, he removes the original form if it is considered to endanger the construction of everything. This can be seen in the Cave of Guards and the right and left wings of the Jinem and Mande Beling buildings.

The last restoration was carried out by the Directorate of Protection and Development of History and Antiquities, Directorate General of Culture, which restored Tamansari from 1976 to 1984. After 1984, there were no maintenance and renovation activities. Sunyaragi Cave was inherited from the Kasepuhan Palace, which was part of the palace activities but changed its function. People are currently visiting this old construction because it is located right on the edge of the main road. The parking lot is quite spacious; the front field park gets a new touch for tourists to rest. There is also a cultural norm stage used for Cirebon art performances.

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative method approach to describe the natural condition of objects, where the researcher is the key instrument. The reason researchers choose descriptive research is to be able to describe systematically and accurately facts and characteristics about the

population or a particular field. The researcher here intends to provide an overview of a particular social phenomenon that already exists. This method can make it easier for researchers to analyze and understand data one by one and conclude it.

DISCUSSION

The Process of Sunyaragi Cave Tourism Attractions into a Tourism Industry

Initially, Sunyaragi Cave was managed by the Kasepuhan Palace, and then around 1976, it was taken over by the local Government for approximately 20 years. In 1997, the management of Sunyaragi Cave was handed back from the Government to the Kasepuhan Palace. The Palace needed more money to maintain Sunyaragi Cave, which must be addressed. Seventeen years later, in 2014, Sultan Kasepuhan PRA Arief Natadiningrat submitted a request to the Government for renovation and disbursed Rp2.5 billion to replace the guardrail and clean the rocks from moss and fungi.

The West Java Provincial Government is revitalizing the area by adding cultural stage facilities and ample parking lots and giving a touch at the front to make it more attractive. The lack of maintenance funds from the Palace has changed the function of Sunyaragi Cave into a tourist industry. This is supported by its strategic location, which is easy for the community to reach, and the uniqueness of the building that attracts the public's attention to enjoy it. Before it was renovated, Sunyaragi Cave's income was only from an entrance ticket of IDR 8,000.00 per person, and for a month, it was IDR 1,500,000.00. This income is divided into 4: for the Sultan, employees, operational, and maintenance costs. After renovation and entering the holiday period in December 2014, it was able to generate Rp21,000,000.00 per day (Diah, 2014).

Sultan Kasepuhan PRA Arief Natadiningrat formed the Sunyaragi Cave Water Park Management Board (BPTAGS). During the Covid pandemic, visitors dropped dramatically, even though the only new income came from selling tickets. As a result, there was a conflict after being fired by Sultan Sepuh XV, PRA Luqman Zulkaedin, the manager who is a member of the Sunyaragi Goa Water Park Management Board (BPTAGS), finally officially returned to duty. This was marked by the Kasepuhan Palace Decree No. 001/SK/PSKKC/XI/2021 issuance dated November 17, 2021. Patih Sepuh Keraton Kasepuhan, PR Gomelar Soeridiningrat, signed the decree. Representing Sultan Sepuh PRA Luqman Zulkaedin, Patih Sepuh Keraton Kasepuhan, PR Gomelar Soeridiningrat then inaugurated BPTAGS for the 2021-2023 period on Wednesday, November 17, 2021.

The inauguration procession was marked by the handing over the decree to the Deputy Director of BPTAGS, R Chaidir Susilaningrat. In his speech, Patih Sepuh Keraton Kasepuhan, PR Goemelar Soeridaningrat announced the inauguration of the new management of BPTAGS for the continuity of Sunyaragi Cave Water Park management as the wewengkon of Kasepuhan Palace and the nation's assets. Sunyaragi Cave needs to be cared for, maintained, and developed as an asset of the nation left by Cirebon's ancestors. With the management of this new management, he continued, the performance of BPTAGS is expected to increase further. Both services to visitors, as well as the maintenance and preservation of cultural heritage.

Economic Propositions of Sunyaragi Cave

The demand for Sunyaragi Cave tourist attractions is mainly from the people of Region III and West Java and foreign tourists. Suppliers of Sunyaragi Goa tourist attractions include BPTAGS, government, CSR, SOEs, and private investors, both local, namely the surrounding community, and national. The BPTAGS work program will focus on improving representative culinary tourism and open cooperation with various parties, both local and national private entrepreneurs and SOEs. Currently, they are just looking for investors to fix damaged outlets.

In the future, BP TAGS will only sell and rent stalls and raise funds from SOE CSR. The exit in the east is directly connected to the culinary and souvenir center; BPTAGS also plans to hold art and cultural performances in collaboration with artists in Pasanggrahan and the performance stage. We will perform art performances shortly, including mask dance, siren, Taliban, broken, and ronggeng Bugis, as we held a few years ago (Fajar Cirebon, November 21, 2021).

People can enjoy the beautiful combination of harmonious architectural styles wrapped in local cultural understandings and philosophies, also full of life lessons. To enjoy the uniqueness of this site with a tariff of IDR 10,000.00 open from 08.00 to 17.00. Motorbike parking is IDR 2,000,00, and the car is IDR 5,000,00 and. If you want to use the services of a tour guide to find out the story genealogy of the king of Cirebon and various information such as legends, myths, and mysteries around the cave, the rate is IDR 40,000.00 – IDR 50,000.00. The uniqueness of Sunyaragi Cave has turned this cultural heritage tourist attraction into a tourist industry.

Ticket prices are relatively low because demand is still low, and facilities must be well available. However, it is estimated that after suppliers' work increases sharply, both the number of visits and ticket prices can increase. The segmentation of Sunyaragi cave tourists is still limited to the people of Region III Cirebon and West Java. Tourists consist of students,

university students, and the general public. Visitors from abroad every day there are 2 or 3 people. Tourist visits to Sunyaragi cave since October 2021 began to increase. From September 1-30, 2021, there were 1956 people, with an average daily visit of 60-70 people. Families still dominate tourists.

The Management of the Cirebon City Culture and Tourism Office stated that the management efforts or strategies carried out by the Sunyaragi Cave Water Park Management Agency (BPTAGS) in developing and advancing the objects of Sunyaragi Cave Tourism Park are by Carrying Capacity technique (the carrying capacity of tourist areas) by conducting counseling and always involving the surrounding community, in addition to promoting through print media and social media, Also through several attractions and cultural events such as traditional gamelan music, mask dance, pencak silat art and so on. These efforts can increase the income of people who make a living or sell in the Sunyaragi Cave Tourism Park area, even though it is only sometimes crowded with visitors daily.

The Tamansari Gua Sunyaragi complex often holds festivals and cultural events in Cirebon and its surroundings, showcasing the indigenous cultures of Cirebon and the surrounding area. A cultural event usually held at Tamansari Gua Sunyaragi, namely Gotrasawthe ala Festival Cirebon, displays Javanese cultures, especially Cirebon culture. The event is international, so there are many tourists and foreign participants. The research results by Dini Nurhana (2013) show that Tamansari Sunyaragi Cave has good potential to develop into a cultural tourism area.

The response from tourists regarding the development of Sunyaragi Cave is welcomed because tourism development can increase cultural preservation. The government also supports the development of Tamansari Gua Sunyaragi as a Cultural Tourism Attraction. This research resulted in a tourist activity program to develop Tamansari Sunyaragi Cave as a cultural tourism attraction. As well as optimizing zoning to preserve cultural heritage, the policy is based on Law No. 11 of 2010 concerning Cultural Heritage.

Sunyaragi Cave Architecture

Sunyaragi Cave complex covers an area of 15,000 square meters and comprises 12 parts. The sequence of caves with each other describes the journey of human life, from before there was to after nothing. The front of the cave is a statue of Lord Surya. Sang Hyang Dewa Surya is a relic of Hindu Buddhism. Goa Bodyguard and twin balong. This describes the matchmaking of a man and a woman whom Almighty God has predestined. People mark kinang (betel leaf and

lime) and drink jug water. The Solar God illuminates this world. Then, the guard cave is a gathering place for the royal family before entering the cave deeper, and on the right is the Pande Packaging cave, a place to make sharp weapons.



Figure 1. Sang Hyang Dewa Surya (Hindu-Buddhist)



Figure 2. Chinese (left) and Dutch (right) ceramic motifs

The cave that functions as a receptionist is Simanyang Cave, where the guard post is. Then entered the Jinem ward, where the Sultan gave lectures and preached. The seats are stone and hollow in the middle so the Sultan can sit all day without getting tired. After preaching, the Sultan entered an open ward to rest, whose seats were surrounded by ceramics from several foreign countries, namely China and the Netherlands. Chinese ceramics depict peach blossoms, sunflowers, and lotus flowers, while Dutch ceramics depict windmills and royal dresses. The Sultan can relax while enjoying the view of the caves before him.

The cave where the cooking place is called Goa Pawon, in front of which there are tables and chairs all made of stone. Pawon Cave is also a place to store food. In front of Pawon Cave is Lawa Cave, which was once full of bats. If the Sultan has a problem, he will enter Goa Padang Ati, a quiet place to get inspiration and overcome his problems. Another quiet cave is Langse Cave, used to obtain permanence in life. Around this, Langse Cave is running water, and the mouth of the cave is also closed by a curtain of flowing water. Next is the Peteng cave, which describes human life in the womb for nine months.

Peteng Cave is also believed to be a tunnel penetrating Mount Jati—Dragon face, which is Chinese architecture. In front of Peteng Cave, there is a statue of Gadjah showing Indian culture coloring the Sunyaragi and Ganesha Cave complex, which is a relic of the Hindu Padjadjaran kingdom and Maung Bodhas. Other ornaments, namely lingga and yoni, indicate Hindu culture. A motif of egrets flying high and reaching for the sky shows Chinese culture. There is a man with the head of Gadjah wrapped around a snake, symbolizing that if we have succeeded, we must remain humble. Classical Javanese culture is a layer of wadasan soil and a mega mendung depicting life.

A blend of cultures is painted in front of Goa Peteng. All the existing building ornaments show a robust cultural syncretism originating from various worlds. However, it is generally influenced by Classical Indonesian or Hindu architectural styles with Buddhist monk ornaments and Cirebon architecture. Goa Arga Jumut, where to take the banquet, in Chinese architectural style, and front of it, there is a Chinese cemetery where the bodyguards of Princess Ong Tien Nio, wife of Sunan Gunung Jati, pray. In front of Goa Arga Jumut, there is Prawn Sunthi's pantung, which is believed to be challenging to get a mate if you hold it. The lesson is also so that girls should not be in the middle of the door.

Right and left of Goa, there is a pair of birds depicting the descendants of King Padjadjaran, who spread Islam. The right bird spreads to the north and west, while the left to the south and east. Cungkup Puncit is a joglo-shaped building that serves as a cooling space for the statue of the Chinese Princess, in front of which there is a Chinese cultural lantern. Moreover, several other caves in the Sunyaragi Cave complex include Langse Cave, a place to rest after seeking knowledge, and a special censorship ward for the Prince and Princess of the palace. The son was open, and stones and curtains of flowing water covered the uteri. There is a bridge that describes the Sirotol Mustakim bridge, ending with Bale Kambang, meaning floating, can move.

This kambang hall is used for gamelan places and symbolizes that humans must be consistent not to float. The architectural pattern of niches on the walls there are signs of Qibla or

worship equipment and some ablution places, and the shape of the Jinem Ward building resembling the Kaaba illustrates the influence of the Middle East or Islam because Sunyaragi Cave is indeed the relic of the Sultan who is Muslim. Dutch or European architectural patterns are seen in the ceramics in Mande Beling, the shape of windows in keputren buildings, the shape of rotating stairs in Goa Arga Jumut, and the shape of Pesanggrahan.

Sunyaragi has a sacred impression with a place of meditation in Padang Ati Cave and Kelanggengan Cave, with prayer places and ablution places in each hole of Goa. The sacred impression appears in the shape of the Jinem Ward, which resembles the Kaaba, and there is a statue that resembles Lord Vishnu. The Dutch bombed the history of Sunyaragi Cave, so there is a truncated cave slope and the ruins of Goa in the western part of the complex. The final part of Sunyaragi Cave is the passage of time door. The passage of time to the suitable leads to Mecca in the form of a dark cave and many insects. Laron, the symbol of eternal life, and to the left of the door of the passage of time, leads to bright China, and inside, there is a moss plant that shines a symbol of the sparkling life of the world.

CONCLUSION

Sunyaragi Cave, as a cultural heritage tourist attraction of the people of Cirebon, has undergone a change in function from a family learning place of the Kasepuhan Palace to a place of deliberation to formulate war strategies against Dutch colonialists and now a tourism industry. Several times, various parties have restored the era of the Dutch East Indies government, the government of the Republic of Indonesia, and finally returned to the Sultan of Kasepuhan. Considering that the palace needs more funds for maintenance, the Sunyaragi Cave Water Park Management Board was formed, collaborating with various stakeholders and making Sunyaragi Cave a tourism industry.

Sunyaragi Cave has the potential to attract both domestic and foreign tourists because of its unique architecture, a combination of various religions and countries, and its strategic location. In addition, there is also learning about life from nothing to nothing so that humans become the leading and successful humans happily in this world and the hereafter. Sunyaragi Cave has good management and is supported by government and private elements; if it is equipped with culinary facilities, typical Cirebon souvenirs, and Cirebon cultural art performances, Sunyaragi Cave is very prospective as a tourist destination of choice for the community.

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