‘No Fort in Fort City’: Lost Heritage and The Shift of Urban Conservation in Tangerang, Indonesia

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Abstract. The progress of modern heritage conservation has now reached a very local level. The need for researching and strengthening locals’ history and identity is inevitable, yet oftentimes the physical heritage was lost before the idea of preservation really caught on. As a local city that bears the retrospective name “Benteng” (fort) reflecting its history, Tangerang City is similarly challenged with the lack of actual fort heritage. This paper attempts to explain the dynamics in how the lost heritage had shaped the city identity throughout architecture and urban structure. This research shows that the disappearance of physical heritage consequently led to the loss of the main historical identity of Tangerang. It affected how local government and communities take different conservation strategies to develop other potentials of the place, including architectural buildings and urban landscape eco-tourism surrounding the old site of the fort. This indicates a shift in the city conservation efforts to other alternative to perpetuate the reminiscence of the historic city produced in various form of commodification of the memory about "Benteng" in Tangerang, Indonesia.

Keywords: conservation, fort, heritage, landscape, Tangerang, urban

1. Introduction

The progress of modern heritage conservation has now reached into a very local level, and the need to strengthening locals’ history and identity is inevitable, yet oftentimes the physical heritage they had was lost before the idea of preservation really caught on. Besides, there is much lesser attention and appreciation towards any historical areas whereas the everyday traditional activities are still living in. The dynamic evolution of conservation practices also shows the extension in which the conservationists perceive elements that are considered “heritage”. The focus of urban conservation generally changes from the ranges within 1) single monument, 2) urban morphologies, 3) urban structure, and finally with 4) the natural properties of the urban landscape. This indicates an intention and transition to reach an understanding towards city heritage in a wider scope. [1]

This dynamic also occurs in the condition of conservation in local cities in Indonesia. Bearing the retrospective name "Benteng" (fort) which perhaps reflects its history, Tangerang is similarly challenged with the lack of actual fort heritage. Fort was one architectural piece that had generally shaped the modern city structure we wish could preserve rather than destroy. The fort became a historical significance since the early period of Dutch colonial enterprise (VOC) in East Indies (Indonesia). However, due to the lack of historical researches on this topic, more researches only focused on the communities of Pasar Lama or other city heritage buildings and seldom mentioned the influences of the lost fort heritage in the city conservation. [2]
Pusat Dokumentasi Arsitektur (PDA – Architectural Documentation Center) by the commission of Indonesian Government under Ministry of Culture and Tourism and co-sponsored by The Government of the Royal Kingdom of Netherlands had curated, invented and identified during 2007-2010 about 422 forts built in 16th-20th century, scattered throughout the archipelago. The fort in this paper is also referred to “Benteng”, that by the PDA’s definition is a range of the various types of defendable buildings or settlement formed in massive earth mound. Some of other notable demolished forts were Kasteel Batavia in Jakarta, Fort Vestenburg in Solo, and Fort Amsterdam in Manado bombed by Allies in World War II. [3]

Therefore, this paper attempts to explain the dynamics of how the lost heritage had actually shaped the identity of a city throughout architecture and urban structure. The aim of this research is to analyze the rational consequence of Tangerang as a modern city that had lost its main heritage. This condition of the loss could negatively lead to a sense of ‘heritage at risk’, or exactly a positive stimulus for developing any new potentials of city heritage in wider urban scale [4]. Meanwhile, the protected status of architectural heritage should also be the part of urban development for the area. The physical and functional quality layouts of the environment adjacent neighborhood are important as well [3].

Furthermore, the findings will be able to open the discussion in re-evaluating what local government and stakeholders have done in the city development in accordance with the conservation principles. It is also important to look at the efforts on communities level in preserving the reminiscence of Tangerang heritage, or at least their own related history in the city.

2. Methods
The research employed the qualitative method and descriptive approach to narrate the current urban conservation program surrounding “Pasar Lama” (Old Market) of Tangerang where the lost fort was located. Those efforts involved local government’s intervention on historic urban landscape in Tangerang alongside Cisadane River, as well as the privates and local community actions toward heritage buildings. The data was collected by conducting field observations in some of built infrastructures related to the urban heritage conservation framework in the city which would be explained more detail in the following sections.

The findings later will be wrapped up by critical analysis using any relevant historical archives and documentation, as well as comparison of interviews with the community actors who have preserved the heritage buildings. The primary data will be elaborated by some supporting literature reviews, including the history of fort development during the early colonial period in 1684-1809.

3. Discussions
This section will firstly narrate the history of Tangerang as a consequence of colonial expansion. After the fort demolition, the story continues to the modern city infrastructure built by colonial government.

Moving on to the next sub-section, it will describe the efforts of conservation practices regarding the recent situation of urban and architectural heritage in the city, such as the development of Museum Benteng Heritage and other program alongside Cisadane River as the urban landscape.

3.1. Historical Background of Tangerang as “Kota Benteng”
The study on historical archives helps to trace the stories on how the fort(s) during the early period of colonial enterprise of Verenigde Oost-Indies Compagnie (VOC) in Dutch East Indies (1602-1799) were developed in urban scale and also shaped the cities of Indonesia later. In the context of Tangerang since 1684, fort had signified a military defence purpose of the regional border formed by natural landscape and political clashes between colonial Ommelanden of Batavia (Jakarta) and indigenous Banten Sultanate in Java.

The etymological origin of name Tangerang or Tangeran (in Dutch archives’ version) and Tamgara or Tangaram (in Tomé Pires version) is debatable to be derived from Sundanese word, tengger, tanggeran or tatengger that indicates a ‘sign’ to a border. The Cisadane River was also referred as one
of the six important trading ports in Sundanese Kingdom in Western Java amongst others, namely forts of Bantam (Banten) and Calapa (Sunda Kelapa) [5].

The fort building of Tangerang was initially a semi-permanent palisade (fences) covering amount size of land in Babakan across Cisadane River as an army camp (figure 1). Commonly, colonial forts were decidedly replaced the existing vernacular forts, and the fortification structures had begun since 16th century by the natives since the colonial arrival in 1511. Along with its development amongst the construction of many other fortresses and towers (roonduyt) around Batavia in 1708, VOC then designed and built in the old site a solid 20-foot-walled fort made of brickworks and stone taken from Aria Soetadilaga as the local regent of Tangerang [6]. In addition, the first construction of the riverfront (quala) guardhouse was built during the war with Banten Sultanate since 1682 and strengthened in 1752 after the second rebellion [7].

![Figure 1](image1.png)
![Figure 2](image2.png)

**Figure 1. Plan oder Grund-Riss des Forts Tangerang.** Source: Atlas of Mutual Heritage (Public domain)

**Figure 2.** The situation outside the fort Tangerang in 1763. Source: Atlas of Mutual Heritage (Public domain)

The fort building in 1779 (figure 2) was constructed with four bastions and ammunition powder storage and occupied by 38 Europeans inside and Makassar garrison outside the fortress, so it was also called as “Makassar fort”. Although it was not clear how the first settlement had firstly appeared between the fortification and the natives’ living environment, it is an undeniable fact that many of the villagers came to the city to live and made new settlement surrounding Makassar fort. It became a melting pot of many migrants with various ethnic backgrounds, such as Javanese, Sundanese, Malay, Arabic to Chinese community. The majority of the population in the Old Market was a mix of Sundanese-Betawi community, but there was also Chinese diaspora who influenced the early development of the city [8].

The land of Tangerang once used a cadastral and geometrical grids system, as shown in the map of living environment surrounding the fort and alongside Cisadane River dated 1770. The area consisted of Kampung Benteng Makassar, traditional market, and private land owned by Chinese landlords. It was planted with coffee, sugar cane and pepper. It also showed the residence of Aria Soetadilaga I-VII, which was the origin of Masjīd Jāmi' Kāli Pasir, the first mosque in Tangerang [9]. However, in 1809 following the bankruptcy of VOC in 1799, Willem Daendels as General Governor of the Dutch East Indies (1808-1811) as well as military dictator of the Bonaparte’s envoy instructed to abandon the entire fortresses in Java, although a new planning to build the fort in was constructed in 1800.

This also refers to the information in the Superintendent of Public Building and Work dated 6 March 1816, stating, “The fortress and barracks in Tangerang are now neglected, no one wants to see it again. The doors and windows are damaged and even taken for their own benefit.” It was also stated that the fort then was used as a prison, denoted pillboxes and bunkers of 20th century during World War II. The former site of the lost fort today is where the public mosque, shopping mall Plaza Tangerang, church, and other public buildings stand nearby the bridge over Cisadane River (figure 3).
Nevertheless, colonial government continued the history of first modern infrastructure in the city by building the water infrastructure (Bendungan Pasar Baru) and a train station of Tangerang during Ethical Policy period of Dutch East Indies Government in the early of 20th century.

3.2. Some Efforts on Heritage Conservation in Tangerang City

After the demolition of the fort, the urban heritages in the area were the complex of settlement, market and community buildings. The remaining name of “Benteng” there is only found in its street name, Jalan Bentang Raya. Later on, “Benteng” was also found in the prominent brands of home-industry products located in the Old Market, such as “Kecap Benteng Tong Giok Sen” and “Kecap SH (Shiong Hin)” made by ethnic Chinese descendants since 1882 and 1920. There is also a street called “Jalan Benteng Betawi”, although it is located far enough from the Old Market area.

![Figure 3. Map of Tangerang City, the location of architecture/urban heritage and new open spaces](image)

The fort as the lost physical main heritage affects the locals to undeniably find other related historical buildings. In August 2011, the municipal government of Tangerang City officially published Surat Keputusan Walikota Tangerang (Decree of the Tangerang Mayor) after selecting nine old architectures as the formal heritage buildings (“Bangunan Cagar Budaya”) in the city. They are 3 old buildings of prison, 2 local Chinese temples of Boen San-Bio and Boen Tek-Bio, 1 Masjid Jami Kalipasir, 1 water levee of Bendungan Pasar Baru, 1 train station of Tangerang and 1 vernacular local-Chinese house that is now functioned as a museum (Benteng Heritage). (figure 3)

The selection was held under the supervision of Balai Pelestarian Peninggalan Purbakala Serang (BP3S - Serang Archaeological Heritage Preservation Center) due to the absence of independent heritage conservation institution in Tangerang, and they took about a half-year during March-August 2011 for the research. The criteria given were the age of the building, the architectural quality, and other valuable considerations. The buildings were the legacies of Dutch colonial institutional
infrastructure and the public prayers buildings, which have strong relationship to the daily spiritual life and spaces of the community [10].

Ironically, the government’s intervention was only considered superficial effort, yet to be done recently in their planning is the erection of 2 x 1 m formal epigraph ceramic stones in the 7 out of 9 city heritage buildings, although the similar functioned board has actually been existed in each of the sites since 2011-2012. This action, regarding the official statement from Jajat Y. Bun’Yani as the Section Head of History and Preservation in Department of Culture and Tourism of Tangerang City, surprisingly costs approximately Rp12,000,000,- for each epigraph. However, they provides no assistance when it comes to the building maintenance costs; with an exception for the functioning public facilities like the train station, prisons and the water levee. As excerpted from the statements of some community actors like H. Syairodji as the advisory board of Masjid Jami Kalipasir and Udaya Halim as the founder of Museum Benteng Heritage, they admitted that they did the efforts for daily operation, maintenance, and even renovations of the buildings only by themselves. In case of the Kalipasir mosque, they take expenses from any funding and social charities from local Muslims living surrounding the mosque complex. For Benteng Heritage, the museum collected Rp25,000,- from the entrance ticket for each individuals.

3.2.1. The Conservation of Local Communities’ Heritage

On 11 November 2011, 3 months after the release of Surat Keputusan Walikota Tangerang (Decree of the Tangerang Mayor), Udaya Halim as one of the ethnic Chinese desents who used to spent his childhood times in Old Market community officially opened Museum Benteng Heritage The Pearl of Tangerang (2012) together with KPH. Prof. Dr. HE. Harimurti Kridalaksana and Ping Sopandi. Halim took the name “Benteng” for this historical museum that was a byproduct of adaptive reuse of an old 18th-century Chinese traditional house he bought. It is located nearly behind the Boen Tek-Bio temple on Jalan Baharudin No. 8 Tangerang 15111, Banten-Indonesia (figure 4).

Figure 4. Front entrance of Benteng Heritage

Figure 5. A stone epigraph erected on the museum’s front wall

However, after visiting the place, one hardly finds anything about the historical documentation of “Benteng” (fort) heritage itself, except for only a few mentions. The museum is nothing but cultural history of local Chinese in the city. Not surprisingly, many visitors claimed it as ‘the first museum of Chinese communities in Indonesia’, whilst an epigraph erected on the building’s wall stating the museum as cultural heritage of Chinese Tangerang (Warisan Budaya Peranakan Tionghoa Tangerang) (figure 5).
Udaya Halim once submitted Benteng Heritage Museum to UNESCO Bangkok and Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau Education to globalize his project, and also to receive 2012 UNESCO Asia-Pacific Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation. As learnt from Halim’s mailing archive, Tim Curtis, whose office in the Head of Culture Unit in UNESCO Bangkok on 14 September 2012 positively implied his appreciation of Halim for his efforts and dedication in conserving the hybrid ethnic Chinese culture, although the juries later also stated that the project “was difficult to fully understand…”, regarding its insufficient level of proper documentation.

Further analysis is that the extension of this conservation did not really attach to the whole story of the city (primarily the history of Tangerang as “Benteng” itself), because the collections and stories provided were more about the ethnic Chinese since the first place. It perplexes the UNESCO Jury, reflected from their impression that questioned the extent of the works, historic significance, and its cultural authenticity of the building, whereas more modest conservation interventions were actually more appreciated. This kind of conservation program done by privates (although officially recognized by the government) is still able to give different sense and unique example of how the history of the locals was preserved.

3.2.2. Approaches in Historic Urban Landscape
The heritage of urban landscape in Tangerang is now commercialized with culinary festivals, semi-permanent outdoor food stalls, and building infrastructure for future investments to gear the economic activities in the city. According to Arief Rachadiano Wismansyah as the Mayor of Tangerang, his vision to the city is manifested through the program grand design called “Tangerang Layak Dikunjungi” (Tangerang Worth Visiting). This program engages cultural heritage, local tourism, and the implementation of waterfront city concept in the urban landscape, where the river is the main plot of urban development.

Historically speaking, Cisadane River has become an integrated historic urban landscape that linked two communities’ sacred annuals: first is Arakan Perahu festival for local Muslims to celebrate the birth of Prophet Muhammad and second is Peh Cun festival for local Chinese community (that was held on last 18 June 2018). Besides that, the city government also has organized other annual “Cisadane Festival”. The program in developing eco-tourism also happens in the settlement along the river, as it is popularly implemented in “Kampung Bekelir” program that was finished in cooperation with PT. Pacific Paint anniversary in 2017 to create a unique character of local kampung (figure 6).

**Figure 6.** Aerial view of Kampung Bekelir. Source: Fahrurozi

**Figure 7.** Pedestrian promenade in Cisadane Walk, as shown in figure 3, the line between E-F
Besides, the local government has also provided many open spaces of theme parks. In the last four years alone as reflected in the results of field observation by the first author, more than 10 parks have been built surrounding the city. Two of them were built alongside of the Cisadane River named Taman Gajah and Flying Deck Cisadane. The other parks are: “Kalipasir Promenade”, an open space functioned as public sport field, “Taman Kunci” (an abbreviation of Taman Kupu-Kupu & Kelinci), Taman Pramuka (2013), Taman Pisang (2014), Taman Potret (2015), Taman Eco-Park (2015), Taman Bambu (2016), Taman Skatepark (2016), Taman Dayung (2016), Taman Gajah (2017), Taman Herbal (2017) and Taman Burung (2018). (figure 3)

Taman Gajah was an outcome of cooperation between Municipal Government of Tangerang City and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) of Gajah Tunggal, Tbk., the largest integrated tire industry in South-East Asia, operated in the city since 1978. The park, opened the area up to 6,066 m², consists of open spaces and amenities facilities for recreation, outdoor food court, bird watching, mosque, and the view of Cisadane river landscape alongside the park. Another open space related to Cisadane River is “Cisadane Walk”, that was built in last 2017 and located in western of Old Market complex, and along the street of Jalan Benteng Jaya to Jalan Kalipasir and Jalan Perintis Kemerdekaan, Tangerang. These pedestrian sidewalks install culinary stalls, open stage, children playground, flying deck and benches provided in stopping point of the sidewalks (figure 7).

Nonetheless, the banality of urban rejuvenation affects many local city landscapes by using a popular big ‘Hollywood sign’ style as the templates. As the examples above, “Flying Deck Cisadane” (figure 8) and “Kampung Bekelir” (figure 9), indicating a colorful theme for a living kampong settlement of the natives besides Old Market complex. On the other hand, this kind of facility inevitably creates a superficial city landmark surrounding the natural urban landscape.

4. Conclusion
From the initial research findings that authors have described and analyzed, this study concludes that the loss of a major physical cultural heritage of a city will be indirectly followed by the loss of the intrinsic values of historical city’s identity in the vast modern development. In this case, the lost heritage becomes only a name with an unknown physical object. It also demands different strategies of local government and local communities to preserve what remains.

This paper also shows the early eco-tourism program led by the local municipal government of Tangerang surrounding the old site of the fort. These efforts may not always refer to the main history of Tangerang as “Kota Benteng” at all, but this indicates an extension in the conservation scope, whereas Cisadane River plays a significant role to be a complementary historical urban landscape. In other words, the disappearance of “Benteng” can also be seen as a metaphorical symbol of the shift of city heritage conservation focus from one monumental object into a wider landscape.
On the other hand, the representation of the fort heritage seems to be produced in various forms of the commodification of the memory, as what Udaya Halim had attempted with Benteng Heritage Museum, that “Benteng” name was preserved as a reminder only to a particular history of the community. This commodification, either by local government or by individuals, somehow only works in particular individuals’ interests. Asserting a new kind of integrated conservation program is immediately needed to overview the Old Market complex, Cisadane River and the heritage buildings in Tangerang as a whole area. Finally, further research related to this issue is still urged to deal more with the past and future of city heritage in order to harmonize between preserving historical reminiscence and optimizing the potential of the modern urban spaces.

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