

Exploring the Impact of Pilgrimage Tourism on the Community

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ABSTRACT—*this study focused on the case of pilgrimage to sacred graveyard among Muslim people in the Javanese society in Indonesia. Pilgrimage to sacred graveyard become a promising tourism sector to be develop. There are thousands of graves that are visited every day in one year round. The research conducted in Gunungpring Sacred Graveyard, Central Java, Indonesia. By examining the recent pilgrimage phenomenon, the finding will discuss about the impact brought by pilgrimage tourism to the community.*

Index Terms—*community, impact, pilgrimage, tourism*

I. INTRODUCTION

Barber (1993, cf. Collins-Kreiner, 2010) described pilgrimage as “A journey resulting from religious causes, externally to a holy site, and internally for spiritual purposes and internal understanding.” Pilgrims going to a pilgrimage sites which they consider as a sacred. According to Turner (1978, cited in Julungwangi, 2019), mentioned that pilgrimage sites “Believed as places where miracles once happened, are still happening and may happen again.” There are various motivations while doing pilgrimage, from material and worldly matters desires to the sense of inner peace. Pilgrimage known in every culture and religion existed in the world including in Java, Indonesia. Julungwangi (2019) mentioned that,

“The phenomenon of visiting sacred locations as the main activity of religious tourism is also practiced in Indonesia. In Java, there are thousands of graves that are visited by varying numbers of pilgrims. The saints, buried in these graves, belong to various categories of people such as those who were Islamised in one particular region or those who were known for their science and piety, and those who are founders of *Pesantren* (Islamic boarding school). The most important saints in Java are the agents of the Islamization of the island. The reason for people visiting the sacred graveyard lies in will be surely granted through the intercession of these spirits.”

This research took places in Gunungpring Sacred Graveyard. The Gunungpring Sacred Graveyard is the major tourist destination located in Gunungpring Village, Muntilan, Magelang, Central Java Province. The legendary religious figures from Gunungpring Sacred Graveyard are Kyai Raden Santri and his descendants. Twelve graves built inside the graveyard complex. Kyai Raden Santri known as the one of the Islamization figures in Java, particularly in Central Java. There are many legends, myth and local histories regarding his supernatural power during his lifetime. As mentioned in Julungwangi (2019),

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“Most of the pilgrims believe that Kyai Raden Santri possessed supernatural powers during his lifetime. As told in one of the famous legends, one day, Kyai Raden Santri wanted to teach the soldiers to pray. He needed to perform wudlu, which is the Islamic way of washing parts of the body using water, typically in preparation for formal prayers. However, as there was no water available, he resorted to prayers, asking God for His providence. After praying, he used a stick to strike the ground, and suddenly water came out. To date, the ground has never stopped emitting water.”

As a global phenomenon, pilgrimages attract millions of people every year. It could not be simply described as religious practices, it further developed as a source of tourism destination. Hence, this research aim to discuss the impact brought by the development of pilgrimage tourism to the community.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Pilgrimage Tourism Studies

Some researchers argued that the studies about religious and tourism started from the 1970s, although the concept itself had been discussed before that period of time. Nash (2005, cited in Collins-Kreiner, 2010) stated that until the 1970s, the field of tourism barely existed and studies of the relationship among religion, pilgrimage and tourism frequently approached religion and tourism as two separate subjects guarantying little interrelated or comparative treatment. This trend continued until 1990s where the distinction between tourism and pilgrimage became the main discussion. However, some researchers began to realize that this differentiation is useless since motivation of doing pilgrimage could be vague. For example, Hudman and Jackson (1992, cited in Buzinde, et.al.) indicated that pilgrimage travel often combines religious devotion and touristic pleasure. These discussions face the new era in 2000s. According to Badone and Roseman (cited in Collins-Kreiner, 2010), the first ones who claimed that the rigid dichotomies between pilgrimage and tourism or pilgrims and tourists no longer seem tenable in the shifting world of postmodern travel.

In existing literature, there are a number of studies that have focused on the impact of pilgrimage big-scale destinations such as Borobudur Temple in Indonesia and Mecca in Saudi Arabia. Rinschede (1992) discussed the impact of Mecca as the backbone of the economy of Saudi Arabia. However, there is a lack of research examining the endurance of pilgrimage activities among Muslim people in small-scale destinations which mostly located in a rural area and managed by the local community. The researcher intends to show the recent phenomenon of small-scale pilgrimage tourism sites in Javanese Muslim Society in Indonesia. Many of these pilgrimage sites have been growing rapidly and attracting pilgrims. In this sense, these pilgrimage sites, with original local catchment areas, play a significant role in boosting the local economy.

III. Research Method

Qualitative research was employed as the main research method. The field research was conducted in to three periods during 2015 – 2018. Primary data were gathered using in-depth interviews, casual conversation and participant observation. The interviews were conducted through the dissemination of written questionnaires and

recorded after receiving permission from the interviewees. Local people and community in this paper are used interchangeably referred to the peoples living in Gunungpring Village.

IV.FINDINGS

Kim, et.al. (2013) discussed four different perspectives on the impact of tourism impact in general; namely, economic, social, cultural and environmental. The fieldwork data collected refers to the various types of impact on the community and to the pilgrimage activity itself owing to the coming of tourism. The finding stressed on a few impacts which mostly seen during the fieldwork.

a. Economic impact

Economic impact is the most visible impact which could be seen in tourism destinations. In the case of Gunungpring Sacred Graveyard, data show that tourism had an economic impact, mostly in a positive way such as job creation. Some of these jobs are parking attendant, shop owner, streetfood seller, owner of accommodations and so on. Understandably, economic activities will increase when peak seasons come. At such time, residents who work as farmers will temporarily switch occupations and get involved in a new economic activity in the graveyard complex such as selling street food. During the last decade, there was an evident increase in the number of pilgrims which, in turn, had a positive impact on the economy in Gunungpring Sacred Graveyard.

b. Social impact

Kim,et.al. (2013) stated that social impact could be seen both positively and negatively based on evidence related to public infrastructure and social problems. In the case of Gunungpring Sacred Graveyard, the positive impact brought about by tourism is reflected in the development of infrastructure. Undoubtedly, road development is one such example. The access road to Gunungpring Sacred Graveyard has been put in good condition and connected to the district and provincial route. Access is easier for visitors. The stairs along the west gate are built with stone and cement. Tourist facilities are increasing, such as toilets and parking space for motorcycles, cars and buses.

As discussed by Kim,et.al. (2013), tourism can also cause the deterioration of traditional culture. With the increasing number of visitors, the opportunity is created for some people to do unfavorable activities. For instance, there have been reported cases of attempts at fraud against the pilgrims such as by unscrupulous people claiming to possess supernatural powers that can help grant a pilgrim's wishes. Specifically, they tried to manipulate the pilgrims by claiming that they can communicate with the spirit of religious figures. Since the pilgrims came for a favor to ask, they can be easily manipulated. To prevent further incidents of this kind, written warnings have been put up on walls surrounding the graveyard complex.

c. Cultural impact

Some scholars argue that tourism is a 'culture exploiter'. Tourism is criticized for the disruption of traditional cultures which leads to changes in the essence of such cultures. On the other hand, tourism, on a more positive standpoint, can also be said to be revitalizing cultures in cases when a traditional culture is well-appreciated by

tourists. However, as Tosun (2002, cited in Kim et.al, 2013: 528) has argued that “cultural impact varied based on the residents’ social relationship with tourists and concluded that the difference in the social relationship in regions may be related to residents’ level of education, ability to communicate with tourist, and their image of international tourists”.

In the case of Gunungpring Sacred Graveyard, tourism has had an impact on the pilgrimage itself, which was disclosed in one of the interview. The pattern of pilgrimage have been modified since the coming of tourism. The informant said that before pilgrims started to packed the area and infrastructure was built, the peoples who came to visit were mostly practices a Javanese way of pilgrimage, which described as burning incense, myrrh and flower while the pilgrims ask for something by the spirit of religious figures in the graveyard. The visitors would usually only wear ordinary clothes. There were many people who did *putihan* fasting, and would only eat banana or cooked rice and drink some water. There were no obvious rules, and the pilgrimage depended on the pilgrim’s preferred way of doing it. After the development of tourism, the scheme had changed. The pilgrims mostly follow the Islamic way of pilgrimage, including reciting Al-Qur’an. The attire of the pilgrims also changed: hijab for women and long trousers or sarong for men.

d. Environmental impact

The studies on the impact of tourism on the environment have focused mainly on development and preservation. The positive impact brought about by tourism could be easily found in the increasing awareness to preserve the environment surrounding the tourist destinations. On the other hand, the negative impact could be easily seen in the case of environmental problems such as pollution, destruction of natural resources and garbage problem. As was observed during fieldwork, the most visible negative impact on the environment surrounding the graveyard is the problem of garbage disposal especially during the peak season.

There is more to say about the impact of tourism aside from the four different perspectives discussed above. As observed during fieldwork, it is worth noting how tourism in Gunungpring Sacred Graveyard had also brought about the positive impact of handing down tradition to the younger generation. From the perspective of tourists, the coming of tourism to a locality could be a way to introduce a tradition, in this case the pilgrimage, to the younger and more modern generation. Tourism, which allows the growth of economic activity in the areas surrounding the graveyard, can become an attraction for the younger generation. One of the pilgrims stated that children were enjoy visiting pilgrimage sites because there were many shops along the entrance of the graveyard complex which sell toys and foods. At first, they will come because they want to buy toys or snack, but parents could have a chance to introduce them to pilgrimage activity.

V. CONCLUSION

Findings from fieldwork shown a different impact have been bought by the coming of tourism. The impact not only affected the living hood of the local peoples but also to the pilgrimage activity itself. Pilgrimage tourism is one of the promising area to be developed in the future. The finding also disclosed that tourism could be seen as one of the strategy to transferring religious practices and local traditions to the younger generation. To conclude,by

discussing the impact of the pilgrimage itself, it is hoped that this discussion could be used as a reference to maximize the positive impact to the community.

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