

## WALKING TOUR AS CULTURAL TOURISM: MLAKU 01 CIREBON

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Cultural history of some places is sometimes difficult to recognize its original culture, one of which is due to transformation of some buildings in the area. Because of that, the origin will be spoiled and forgotten because local cultural shift is an inevitable social phenomenon. Cultural and historical tours through walking tours are one of ways to keep the story of a region unabated. Besides, the benefit of walking tours is also being a positive cultural exchange between local communities and visitors. Cirebon was a small village built by King of Tapa. In the course of time, it grew into a large village and it was named Caruban (means united according to the mixture of nations and other tribes such as Java, Chinese, and Arabic from Javanese Language). The goal of walking tour in context of cultural tourism is to remember, introduce, and promote original culture of an area in Cirebon City.*

**Keywords:** Cirebon, Culture, Historical Tour, Walking Tour

### **INTRODUCTION**

Cultural shift factors in society are due to some things such as the arrival of immigrants from outside the territory or the introduction of technology brought (Bahrudin et al., 2017). Immigrant ethnic diversity led to territorial changes in terms of culture and construction, as in Nepal (Acharya, 2022) and Nigeria (Madandola & Boussaa, 2023). Incoming presences are capable for creating new variables that have never existed before. Moreover, small towns have unique and interesting socio-economic characteristics (Bell & Jayne, 2009).

Sadly, sometimes this phenomenon is passed down from one generation to the next so that the descendants of the region do not realize their true identities of culture. The youngster generation tends to be rapidly influenced by new elements (Prayogi & Danial, 2016). Social change among adolescents also indicates a shift due to influences of massive digitalization (Ahnaf et al., 2023). As a result, misunderstanding and confusion about culture of origin can occur in everyday in daily basis. But the change is inevitable. Globalization often provides interesting lessons to understand history as a process of progress. In fact, people in any hemisphere of the world have already felt identity from various aspects (Moghadam, 2021) such as television technology and means of communication. Furthermore, multiculturalism can lead to development in an area (Atabik, 2016). A number of major cities around the world have become models of globalization, especially its capitals such as Seoul (South Korea), Budapest (Hungary), and Bangkok (Thailand) (Fahmi et al., 2014). For instance, the mosque buildings, some mosques such as Al-Alam Marunda and Al-Alam Cilingcing are influenced by the oleg acculturation of Islamic and Nusantara architecture brought by Middle Eastern merchants. (Schiffer, 2022). In addition to mosques, there are also some buildings in Indonesia whose architectural style has been mixed with several cultures such as Surakarta Gandrung Lodge by Indian style (Kusumahayu & Priyatmono, 2021), Candra Naya by Chinese architecture style (Harbyantina et al., 2022), and Surakarta Kauman Area by Indian style (Praiswari & Arsandrie, 2021).

Cirebon's diversity is the result of a mixture of Indonesian culture and culture brought by immigrants, the majority of whom were traders from India, China, Middle East, and Europe. This mixture is what makes Cirebon not only rich in native culture, but also culture and civilization as a product of acculturation of various cultures from various nations. Even though this mixture affects Cirebon's original culture, the cultural construction of various entities still places Cirebon's original culture at the same level. Specifically for

regional changes in Cirebon City, several previous studies described Cirebon City as an area that has been affected by a mixture of cultures from various regions. Dienaputra et al (2021) describe heterogeneity starting from the coastal area or Cirebon Larang and the inland area or Cirebon Girang which were visited by migrants to the next wave of migrants which is in line with the location of Cirebon Port which is strategically located on shipping and trade routes. The influence of the arrival of various entities made multiculturalism spread to various aspects such as language (ingsun from the standard Javanese equivalent), painting (Paksi Naga Liman from a blend of Indonesian, Chinese, and Hindu culture), and buildings (Panjuran Red Mosque from Hindu influence).

Research on walking tours has been discussed by several researchers, one of whom is Hyun et al (2016) on the underlying dimensions of tourist participation in walking touring. Researchers explained that there are four motivations for walking tours which are self-awareness of surrounding environment, desire to know new things in new environment, ambition to solve problems that exist in environment, and tendency to introspect values in personal tourists. Annisa (2023) also revealed four functions of walking tour in the sphere of tourism; walking tour as tourism development, urban walking tours as a strategy in shaping the perception of tourists, culinary walking towers as strategies in improving the local economy, and heritage walking tours as a strategy in acquiring urban tourism identity. In her research, walking tours can be used as a paradigm shift from fast tourism to slow tourism where tourists get more in-depth information about destinations. Specifically for urban tourism, walking tours can be a strategy to shape the perception of tourists, enhance the local economy, and shape an identity of a destination.

## THEORY AND METHOD

The teaching of history and culture does not prevail in the formal classroom. Walking tour is one of the options to explore historical areas and learn how it relates between tourists, destinations, and businesses (Londoño & Medina, 2018). Through the wealth of information acquired, participants can learn more about the places where they live, visit, and grow. The source of information obtained from the tour guide will give awareness to the tourists through communication strategies (Hidayat & Purnawijaya, 2019). Because, Indonesia is a country that has a path of cultural heritage polished reticular from the footsteps of Dutch civilization (Wahyuningputri et al., 2023). Therefore, the interest in culture through the walking tour is not only attracted by the local community, but also by cultural activists from different countries (Muhammad et al., 2018).

Benefits of walking tours can be felt by tourists who have constraints. This method provides implementation of regulations in specific regions, for example the Act No. 19 2011 which provides for the fulfilment of the fundamental rights of persons with disabilities. The matter was responded by the Government of Yogyakarta Special Territory in the field of tourism (Agustin et al., 2023). In Jakarta, blind tour guides also get the same rights as interpretation techniques through four components; enjoyable, relevant, well-organized, and theme (Sagala, 2021).

There are three reasons why walking tour is an effective way to introduce the history and culture of a region:

1. The best way to see a city is by walking. Walking tours allow tourists to get closer to the city they visit. When walking, the rhythm of visitors exploring somewhere is limited. But this becomes an advantage, visitors can enjoy the sights around longer. Those who take a walking tour can hear more of the local people's conversations, the typical scent of the market, and touch the objects that attract attention around them to feel like a local community.

The sensitivity gained from the walking tour is more sensitive than the narrative found on the site (Haanpää et al., 2022). Besides, by walking, visitors can go through small streets to discover more things that cannot be reached by means of transportation;

2. The source of information obtained from the walking tour can be explained directly by the tour guide. When visiting historical sites, there are many sources that do not speak the local language so information is difficult to understand. With the presence of a tour guide, the positive impact gained by visitors will increase so that the information obtained directly has little chance of being overlooked (Aksonova, 2023).
3. Walking tours open up new opportunities to interact with locals and economic actors at the destination so that it can be used to open up opportunities for cooperation between tourists and locals so that there is sustainable tourism. The tourist guide who is an intermediary between tourists and citizens also plays a major role so as to dispel doubts about the activities that tourists are going to do in the location, for example when shopping (Zhu & Xu, 2021).

The method used in this research is descriptive with a qualitative approach with data collection techniques based on secondary data. The secondary data used is the tourist map used for walking tours. Researcher elaborates routes holistically and describes places visited by walking tour participants. The route includes 4 main roads; Pasuketan street, Yos Sudarso street, Kebumen street, and Talang street. The research aims to equalize perceptions between the theory of cultural preservation put forward by Sendjaja, cultural experience and cultural knowledge.

## **FINDING AND DISCUSSION**

Tourists generally spend a lot of expenditure to get facilities at the destination. Unfortunately, some tourist attractions do not offer single

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admission prices. Whereas, this system provides potential savings for visitors because it provides more flexible access without spending additional payments at each location. Walking tours can be a solution for exploring a place while deepen all the attractions. Social interaction experiences implemented by walking tour also increases the experience of learning about the culture and origins of the place.



**Figure 1.** Relation of Walking Tour  
Source: Author’s Analysis, 2024

Walking tours are a strategy to explore the rich culture and history of a destination. Due to the rapid development of the times, it is very important that Indonesia's cultural diversity is introduced to children from an early age so that norms and values are not forgotten in future generations (Sanjaya et al., 2016). This is expected to instill a sense of pride in cultural traditions, love and maintain values, and have an attitude of respect for cultural diversity.

The idea for this walking tour was initiated by CCCC (Collaborative for Cirebon City and Culture). CCCC is an association of several tourism and cultural activists consisting of various backgrounds such as artists, copywriters, graphic designers, and teachers. CCCC aims to study, work and take the initiative to get to know Cirebon more deeply and share its findings through various media. Currently, CCCC only has one social media account on Instagram @cccc.project. Apart from that, this association also has a print publication *Mlaku 01 Walking Tour* and a visual work archiving business program through *Karya Raya*. *Mlaku 01 Walking Tour* is the first in a series of

walking tours that can be done independently or collectively. CCCC itself makes maps openly and can be accessed from social media @cccc.project.

Mlaku 01: Cirebon Walking Tour is CCCC's first project in the form of a walking tour and print publication. Through this project, CCCC invites the public to walk around one of the areas in Cirebon which is the forerunner to the growth of Cirebon City. Through this trip, participants can find out that the growth of the city of Cirebon has experienced 3 phases of change which are generally influenced by the orientation of transportation needs in each era. This project was carried out in the 2020-2021, starting from formulating ideas and concepts, research, collaborating with sources and collaborators, the design process, printing publications, to implementing activities. Some of the collaborators involved in this project are Alternative Space, Degradians Studio, Cirebon Heritage, Cirebon History, and several other individuals who are activists and creative actors in Cirebon. Mlaku 01 publication consists of maps, posters, postcards, and stickers printed using Risograph. There are 9 spots that will be passed. This tour comes with a map and audio guide. This activity can be done individually or collectively and is good for Cirebon residents and outside Cirebon.



**Figure 2.** Mlaku 01 Map  
Source: Author's Archive, 2024



**Figure 3.** Mlaku 01 Cover  
Source: Author's Archive, 2024

1. **First spot:** Mlaku 01 walking tour starts from British American Tobacco Building (number 1 Figure 1). British American Tobacco itself was a tobacco company that dominated the Central American cigarette market during the early 1900s (Holden & Lee, 2011). The British American Tobacco Cirebon building was originally owned by the SS Michael cigarette company, but now the British American Tobacco Cirebon building is owned by PT Bentoel International Investama. This building has two histories regarding its construction. Even though the building says it was built in 1924, the initial form of the British American Tobacco Building was built around 1917 which refers to the Indo Egyptian Cigarettes Company. However, in 1924, ownership of this building passed to the British American Tobacco Company. When this building was first taken over, British American Tobacco immediately renovated the building led by F.D. Cuypers & Hulswit by changing to an art deco design. Simultaneously with the renovation of this building, British American Tobacco occupied the position as the largest producer of white cigarettes in Indonesia during that period.

Irfany A & Purnama (2020) describe several building specifications. The British American Tobacco building has different areas on each level, namely 788.84 m<sup>2</sup> on the 1st floor and 390.32 m<sup>2</sup> on the 2nd floor. The 1st floor functions as a storage area for distribution goods, used goods warehouse and vehicle parking, while the 2nd floor functions as an office, meeting room, reception area, storage warehouse, place of worship, and kitchen. There are 3 spatial organizations in the building, namely public (living room), semi-public (work space, meeting room and place of worship), and service (toilet, pantry, and warehouse). Changes to the spatial layout of this building include changes to the area of space (increasing the area of the balcony due to the use of the front balcony space), changes to the number of rooms, and changes to the function of the space (additional functions of work space, place of worship, and storage space). On the other hand, changes to the shape of the building include changes to the roof (top of the tower), changes to the walls (addition of walls on



the balcony), and changes to doors and windows (the front of the building is based on changing the function of the balcony space).

2. **Second spot:** After they have finished exploring around the British American Tobacco Building, participants will be directed to Bank Mandiri which is located across the road. Bank Mandiri building in this area is a European style building. This building was originally named Kantoor van Nederlandsch Indische Escompto Maatschappij te Cheribon and was built in 1920 (see figure 4). This building is the office of a Dutch company which operates in the banking sector, has a purchasing monopoly and is an exporter of agricultural products.



**Figure 4.** Kantoor van Nederlandsch Indische Escompto Maatschappij te Cheribon  
Source: <https://digitalcollections.universiteitleiden.nl>

3. **Third spot:** The next place is the Dewi Welas Asih or Tiao Kak Sie Temple which is located right next to Bank Mandiri Building. This monastery is basically dedicated to Kuan Yin from China, in which there are altars honoring saints, heroes and gods (Blagden, 1921). In the past, this building was also used as a stopover for Chinese immigrants while waiting for permission to enter the Cirebon area. Inside the monastery, there is a 4 meters high anchor which is believed to have come from Admiral Cheng Ho's ship. Policies during the New Order era forced the local authorities to change the name of this place to the Goddess of Welas Asih Temple which was taken from the loving nature of the Goddess Kwan Im.

Damayanti & Mudhofar (2018) explained that Chinese architecture greatly influenced the ornamental elements and colors in the monastery, giving rise to a characteristic. The ornaments and colors are filled with symbolic messages regarding the meaning and meaning of life leading to safety and prosperity. Dragon ornaments, qilin ornaments, phoenix ornaments and lotus flower ornaments make the Goddess of Mercy Temple full of messages. Dragon ornaments placed on pillars and ceilings symbolize strength, kindness, courage, and endurance. The qilin ornament on the wooden structure of the front roof symbolizes long life, splendor, happiness, and wisdom. The phoenix ornament which is always installed with a dragon ornament depicts immortality, harmony, and luck, while the lotus flower ornament interprets purity which is placed on the supporting beam.

4. **Fourth spot:** After enjoying Tao Kak Sie, participants will take a long walk along Jalan Yos Sudarso for approximately 700 meters, participants will arrive at an Old Catholic Church, namely Santo Yusuf Church. At the end of the 17th century, the Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie or commonly known as the VOC built a lot of infrastructure during its reign in Indonesia, one of which was the Santo Yusuf Church Nur'Annisa & Nurhidayah (2022) . This building was founded in 1878 by a man of Portuguese descent named Louis Theodore Gonsalves. Initially, St. Joseph's Church was a sugar factory where the majority of its congregation were Europeans who worked in the plantation sector around the factory. This church is also the first Catholic Church in West Java.

The shape of the church structure in terms of columns, walls, beams, and roofs makes the aesthetics of this building very strong. Apart from that, the Santo Yusuf Church in Cirebon also has good building symmetry, which can be seen on the floor and exterior of the church building with a vertical plan and room arrangement. Because of its height, this building looks majestic horizontally and has artistry, aesthetic proportions and symmetry.

5. **Fifth spot:** The next stop is Pasundan Christian Church which is located next to the Santo Yusuf Church. Initially, this church was called Protestanche

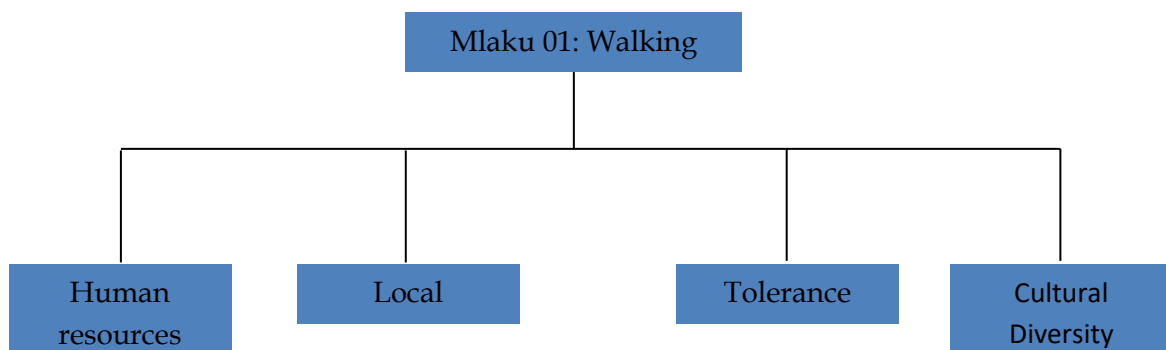
Kerk, which is thought to have been built in 1880. In the past, Protestanche Kerk was also built in several other cities such as Probolinggo. The presence of the Pasundan Christian Church is supported by Nederlandsche Zendingsvereeniging (NZV) which has a mission to spread the Gospel in West Java. Initially, Nederlandsche Zendingsvereeniging was sent to the West Java region because it was difficult to carry out evangelism due to the strong myths and challenges of the Islamic religion which had already entered (Adi, 2015). In the church yard there are three graves of VOC representatives and their families who died due to cholera.

6. **Sixth spot:** Right next to Pasundan Christian Church, there is former Internationale Crediet en Handelsvereeniging Rotterdam building which operates in the trade and finance sector. It is estimated that this building has been standing since 1911. Now former Internationale Crediet en Handelsvereeniging Rotterdam building is owned by PT Cipta Niaga. This building has two levels and is shaped like a cube, symmetrical left and right. There are towers that protrude upwards plus conical buildings like the tip of an arrow at the top of each building. Visually, Internationale Crediet en Handelsvereeniging Rotterdam has an art deco building style brought by the Dutch.

7. **Seventh spot:** Next, participants will see two schools with terraced roofs and high shutters. During the colonial era, the SMPN 14 building was used as a Kindergarten School (Frobelschool) for preparation for entering grade 1 Europeesch Lagere School (ELS), while SMPN 16 was used as a European elementary school. The buildings of these two schools are estimated to have existed since 1933.

8. **Eighth spot:** Right across from SMPN 16 Cirebon, there is a building which is thought to have been built in 1920. Its round shape makes this building called the Round Building. This building is thought to have functioned as a guard post on the road connecting the center of European government with the palaces.

9. **Ninth spot:** Walking west, participants will find a roundabout with three statues of masked dancers. Turning to the right, there is a temple which is estimated to have been built since 1415. Initially, this temple was a place to stop or stay for Muslim Chinese immigrants. This temple also once functioned as an administrative office for the Chinese community in Cirebon. In 1950, this building was converted into a place of worship.



**Figure 4.** Mlaku 01’s benefit  
 Source: Author’s Analysis, 2024

From this explanation, it can be said that Mlaku 01: Walking Tour participates in preserving local culture which has the potential to cultural shift; improving the quality of human resources in advancing local culture, encouraging the community to maximize the potential of local culture and empowerment and preservation, reviving the spirit of tolerance, kinship, hospitality, and high solidarity, and maintaining Indonesian culture so that it does not become extinct.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, walking tour can take a closer look at daily basis of local communities due to the shift in travel from fast tourism to slow tourism. Nowadays, walking tours are not only a means of traveling, but also an effort to foster a sense of love for the original culture of a region. Studying history,

traditions and origins can support local people to realize that identity is something that must be maintained.

Information source obtained from a walking tour is more holistic because the tour guide can fully direct visitors to the destination. Walking tours have the potential interaction between residents, economic stakeholders, and visitors, thus opening opportunities for collaboration for sustainable tourism. Cirebon is the right city for cultural tourism because of the mixture occurred in the past. Collecting historical places in one area can be used as cultural tourism.

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