



# History, Heritage and Patriotism in a Global Era

Facing globalisation and the pressure to conform for the sake of economic efficiency, Indonesia can save its national heritage by preserving sites of historic and patriotic importance.

STORY BY Martono Yuwono

**AS GLOBALISATION STRIVES TO ERASE** boundaries between nations, countries have been struggling to protect their culture, traditions and local wisdom by developing a sense of nationalism or patriotism as moral armour. The paradox of globalisation is that communities want to maintain individual cultures while reaping the benefits of a borderless economy. Nationalism and patriotism, as expressed through history, heritage and architecture, are key ways in which a country or a culture can develop its sense of imagined community.

Let's define some terms. Nationalism is a belief that creates and maintains sovereignty of a country by developing a collective concept of identity in a group of people. Meanwhile, a patriot is one who is willing to endure all for the sake of a nation.

In the West, where the concepts of nationalism first took root, tangible physical symbols, such as buildings and cities, have long been a reflection of national greatness and pride.

In 1980, when the US was in a recession, the city of Baltimore restored its Inner Harbour, a move that proved to be successful and boosted the city's vitality, as well as other cities in the area. It also became a model of successful urban redevelopment.

More recently, there was a similar development as the City of New York moved to make a new building on the site where terrorists destroyed the World Trade Center on the island of

Manhattan, which is the embodiment of the superpower status of the US. Freedom Tower, which stands 1,776 feet high (the number refers to the year of American independence) symbolises the resurrection of America's pride and dignity as a nation.

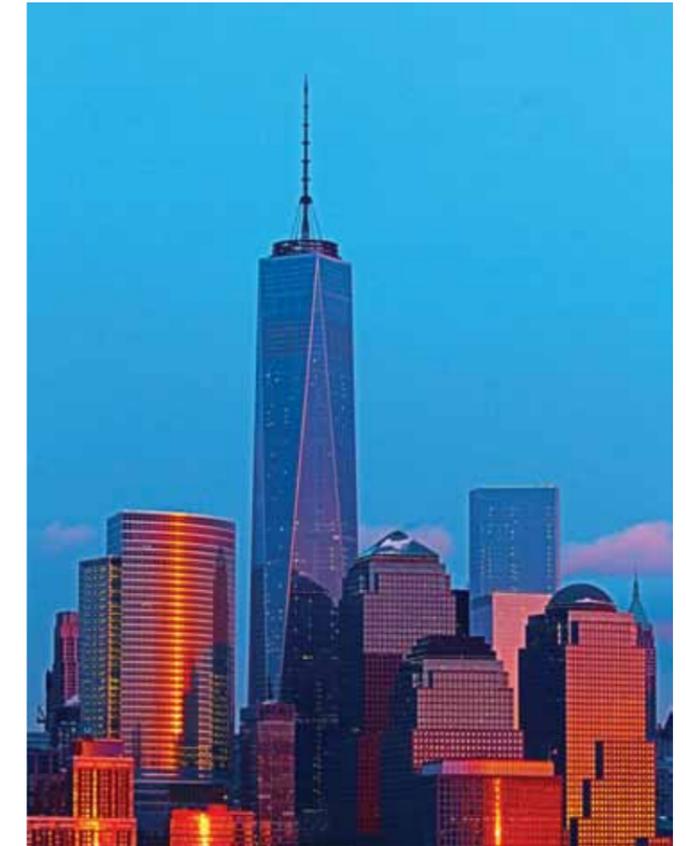
Similarly, a US-based NGO called the National Trust for Historic Preservation put forward the theme "Look Homeward America, Look in Philadelphia" during a conference created as part of a campaign to cultivate and preserve the patriotic spirit of the country.

In addition, a movement to protect the historical legacy and economies of old cities was launched. Called "The Main Street Program," the movement was aimed at preserving the quality and spirit of cities. The restoration of historical sites in some cities to commemorate the fighting spirit of old America can also be seen at the Alamo Memorial in San Antonio and Fort McHenry in Baltimore, among other places.

All of these historic sites are the pride of the American people — monuments that honour the patriotic battles in the struggle for their independence.

## What about Indonesia?

According to the tales of old, the indigenous people of the archipelago were part of a dynamic maritime society and characteristics that reflected their background. They were progressive, honest, brave, egalitarian, open, and



(CLOCKWISE FROM OPPOSITE PAGE) PHOTO BY DESTINASI WAHANA WISATA BAHARI TANJUNGP PERAK, TREK EARTH, ALAMO CITY PUNDIT



willing to embrace the spirit of pluralism. As the author Muhammad Karim said, Indonesians have long had an outward orientation, which is a quality needed in facing the tight competition between cities in the global era.

The Indonesian people were known to be ferocious warriors who secured independence after centuries of colonisation, a feat that has long been admired. Yet after more than 70 years of independence, and despite its existence as the largest island country in the world with remarkable natural resources, Indonesia has been slow to rebuild its identity as a maritime country.

Why did our archipelago, which was once a respected and esteemed maritime power, deny its legacy and turn itself into a non-maritime nation? Why did our seafaring ancestors fail to bequeath the maritime spirit to their descendants and heirs? Why did this cultural transformation from a maritime country into a non-maritime country go unnoticed – and what is the connection with the development of Indonesian cities?

The nation's current problems are rooted in its lengthy colonisation - a national trauma that has resulted in terrible consequences. This is the black box at the centre of Indonesia's history that has stunted its development for almost four centuries and altered the mind-set of a maritime people along non-maritime lines.

Moves such as the Djuanda Declaration in 1957 on Indonesia's territorial borders, the formation of the Marine Affairs and Fisheries Ministry in 1999 and the declaration of December 13 as National Archipelago Day have not been enough to rekindle the maritime spirit of the nation. Developments in Indonesia have mostly been oriented towards the land instead of the ocean. A spotlight was turned on to this unsolved national problem when President Joko "Jokowi" Widodo declared Indonesia as the Global Maritime Axis in the old harbour of Sunda Kelapa in 2014.

We need to rise from the ruins of the past and rebuild the maritime culture of Indonesia in the spirit of nationalism and

patriotism, in keeping with the first of the five pillars of Jokowi's Maritime Axis Doctrine.

In addition to building a strong island country that is esteemed for its solid maritime defence, we must adopt a cultural strategy to build cities with strong Indonesian characteristics through the restoration of old cities and old port towns across the archipelago in places that used to be Dutch strongholds during the colonial era.

In addition to the physical aspect, a city also has a soul, such as in the lifestyles of its residents. Such soul scan grows in accordance with personal values expressed through time and space. Therefore, the restoration of a city does not only involve physical rehabilitation of its buildings. It is also not aimed at boosting profits through tourism or in reminiscing about the nostalgic and romantic days of the past.

The restoration of a city as a heritage site should be done to regenerate the characteristics of the city that give pride to the country and increase the dignity

and honour of the nation. Restoration can also support the promotion of the city as a tourist destination on a global scale, as stipulated by the Cultural Conservation Law.

"Battle cities", or those involved in the fight to liberate Indonesia from colonialism, include Jakarta, the National Capital – the 'Battle City', Bandung, West Java – site of the "Sea of Fire"; Bekasi, West Java; Bukittinggi, West Sumatra; Surabaya, East Java; and Yogyakarta.

Bekasi is known as "The Patriotic City," for the tenacity of its residents during the Independence War, while Bukittinggi was the site of many battles between 1947 and 1949. Yogyakarta was where freedom fighters staged a daring attack on the Dutch that achieved global recognition and Surabaya, "The City of Heroes", is famed for the incident at Jembatan Merah where the first battle of the Independence War was fought.

Historian Roesdhy Hoesin says that the fighting spirit evinced by the arek-arek Suroboyo, or native Surabayans, reflects what can be done with what

locals call bonek, or bondho nekad armed only with determination or willpower. "The struggle of the people of Surabaya reflected the concept of the emergence of urban people, weaved from the alliance of all citizens in the city—from people in small kampongs, labourers, farmers, Islamic society, as well as various other ethnicities."

After independence, the country needed to develop its identity as a sovereign country. The nation's cities had their character restructured along the lines of nationalism and patriotism as cultural strategy to rebuild. Contemporary efforts to restore cities work in the same way, to counter trends in modern development toward permissively and exclusivity by developing an appropriate urban character.

One approach in restoring a city's heritage can be through developing a "Heritage Trail" or "Patriot's Trail", as seen around the globe.

The Lincoln Heritage Trail in the US, for instance, comprises a group of lanes in the states of Illinois, Indiana

and Kentucky spanning 2,200 miles, connecting the communities that president Abraham Lincoln belonged to. Meanwhile, the Black Heritage Trail in Boston, links more than 15 structures and historical sites that were of importance during the Civil War, The Boston Freedom Trail tells the tale of American independence along a 4-kilometre red brick lane and La Rambla in downtown Barcelona is a 1.2-km pedestrian mall lined with trees that is famous with local and foreign tourists.

The history of Jakarta, previously known as Batavia, is intertwined with the emergence of Indonesia. Ali Sadikin, the city's beloved governor who was in office from 1966 to 1977, took steps to develop this revolutionary heritage, restoring Kota Tua, or the old town of Batavia, into Taman Fatahillah (Fatahillah Park) and preserved other historical buildings in the spirit of nationalism and heroism that was in line with the vision of Sukarno.

The former governor's vision continues today, as evident in the construction of several monuments to

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(CLOCKWISE FROM OPPOSITE PAGE) PHOTO BY MUSEUM VOLUNTEERS, THE WOLFF CHRONICLES, STANLEY B. SEE, KIDNESIA, PARIWISATA SURABAYA, F\_CKFARE07

National Heroes by his successors.

To respond to the global era when strong competition between countries around the world is inevitable, Jakarta needs to build itself up to do its duties as the capital city of the republic, a trading metropolis and a harbour town. Yet Jakarta also needs to strengthen a national identity that has been developed over the course of five generations so that there is a propagation of the traditional values.

The capital needs what I call the “Jakarta Patriot Path” to continue Ali Sadikin’s example in developing the character of the city, which is currently endangered by modern development. It would offer an historical overview of the patriotic struggle in Jakarta for over generations, to reinforce the character of Jakarta as a “Battle City” and a Maritime City. It would comprise a heritage trail focused on history, a patriots’ trail focused on the city’s struggles and a freedom trail, focused on the independence war.

The trail could traverse a few of the city’s prestigious sites on paths between Sunda Kelapa Port and the Nusantara Gallery, Beos City Station, the National Monument and the Proclamation Monument, as well as a path between Juanda, Jalan Garuda, Kemayoran and Ancol. The independence trail could include the Museum of National Awakening, the Youth Pledge Museum, the Proclamation Monument, as well as the Grand Assembly Monument in the park of the National Monument.

Along with the idea for the Sunda Kelapa Waterfront, I pitched the Jakarta Patriot Trail to President Joko “Jokowi” Widodo when he was governor of Jakarta. While Jokowi gave a green light for the project, things came to a halt after his election to the presidency. This is unfortunate considering that it would be a strategic complement as a cultural bridge between the past, present and future city and also between the host city in the inland and the reclaimed area. In the former 1995 Presidential Decree on Jakarta Waterfront City Development having a theme the Rebirth of Jayakarta, Sunda Kelapa Waterfront was designated as the icon.

This approach of city restoration in the spirit of nationalism and patriotism should be developed as a model for the restoration in other old colonial cities across the archipelago.