

Kesawan Region: the Old City of Medan From the Past to the 21st Century as Historical Tourism

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Abstract: Medan City is the capital of North Sumatra Province which of course is on the island of Sumatra. The city of Medan as the third largest metropolitan capital in Indonesia also has a long history that started from a village whose initial opening was the size of a field opened by Guru Patimpus Pelawi who came from the Karo ethnicity who until now is known as the founder of the city of Medan. And in subsequent developments this city was dominated by ethnic Malays since the founding of the Deli Sultanate by Gocah Pahlawan who came from the Aceh Sultanate which made Medan until now still known as Tanah Deli or Medan Deli and at a time not much different, a person from the Colonial nation (Dutch) named Jacob Nienhyus around the 1860s established plantations especially for tobacco commodities which almost covered the city of Medan so that in the term Medan Putri was known or the producer of Deli Tobacco which was famous to foreign countries at that time. With the area of the plantation, of course, workers were needed, so Nienhyus brought in a large number of coolies from ethnic Chinese and of course the coolies needed a place to live. Until then the Kesawan area that we know today was formerly a Malay village which was then a result of the large influx of Chinese letnics making this area subsequently dominated by ethnic Chinese who then built houses in the form of shops and started businesses by trading and several administrative office buildings Colonialism also exists in the area as we can see to this day, both the buildings that still function as housing complexes and the remains of the ruins of the building's foundations. And until now this area has become one of the historic iconic locations in the city of Medan, especially at night decorated with various street lights that illuminate this area to just relax and even become a background in documentation for selfies to become a culinary center.

Abstrak: Kota Medan merupakan ibukota dari Provinsi Sumatera Utara yang tentunya berada di Pulau Sumatera. Kota Medan sebagai ibukota metropolitan terbesar ketiga se Indonesia juga memiliki Sejarah panjang yang dimulai dari sebuah perkampungan yang awal pembukaanya sebesar ukuran tanah lapang yang dibuka oleh Guru Patimpus Pelawi yang berasal dari etnis Karo yang hingga kini dikenal sebagai pendiri kota Medan. Dan pada perkembangan selanjutnya kota ini didominasi oleh etnis Melayu sejak berdiri nya Kesultanan Deli oleh Gocah Pahlawan yang berasal dari Kesultanan Aceh yang menjadikan Medan hingga kini masih dikenal Tanah Deli atau Medan Deli dan pada waktu yang tidak jauh berbeda, seorang dari kalangan bangsa Kolonial (Belanda) yang bernama Jacob Nienhyus sekitar tahun 1860an mendirikan perkebunan khususnya pada komoditi tembakau yang hampir meliputi Kota Medan sehingga dikenal istilah Medan Putri atau penghasil Tembakau Deli yang terkenal hingga ke mancanegara pada saat itu. Dengan luas perkebunan tersebut tentunya membutuhkan para pekerja hingga akhirnya Nienhyus mendatangkan kuli dari etnis China dengan jumlah yang besar dan tentunya para kuli tersebut membutuhkan tempat tinggal



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Hingga kemudian kawasan kesawan yang kita kenal saat ini dulunya sebuah perkampungan Melayu yang kemudian akibat dari arus kedatangan yang besar oleh etnis China tersebut menjadikan kawasan ini selanjutnya di dominasi oleh etnis China yang kemudian mendirikan rumah berbentuk toko dan memulai usaha dengan berdagang dan beberapa bangunan perkantoran administrasi kolonial juga ada di kawasan tersebut seperti yang bisa kita lihat juga hingga saat ini, baik bangunan yang masih berfungsi sebagai perkoan hingga pada sisa puing pondasi bangunan tersebut. Dan kawasan ini hingga sekarang menjadi salah satu lokasi ikonik bersejarah di Kota Medan terutama saat malam hari dengan dihiasi berbagai lampu jalan yang menyinari kawasan ini untuk sekedar bersantai bahkan menjadi latar belakang dalam dokumentasi untuk berswafoto hingga menjadi sentra kuliner.

INTRODUCTION

Medan City is the capital of one of the 38 Provinces in Indonesia, namely North Sumatra Province. Medan itself is located on the island of Sumatra, which is bordered by the Malacca Strait in the north, and Deli Serdang Regency and a city area of 265.10 km². At first glance, the history of the city of Medan comes from the Tamil word *Maidhan* or *Maidhanam* with the meaning of a field or field or a large area where this area was once a settlement opened by Guru Patimpus Pelawi who then turned into part of the Sultanate of Deli so that it became known as Tanah Deli and was still part of East Sumatra at that time and then continued with the presence of the Colonial nation by establishing plantations and making Medan with the nickname Medan Putri until finally at the time of independence the government established Medan as the name of the Capital of North Sumatra Province and became an absorption language by Malay which means big place to gather.

The city of Medan itself has several tourist attractions that are worth visiting while in the 3rd metropolitan city in Indonesia, it feels like less if you don't visit the iconic tourist attractions in the city of Medan, including: Maimun Palace, the old City Hall Building, Medan Post Office, Tirtanadi Water Tower, Hanging Point, London Sumatra Building, Medan Great Mosque, City Hall Office, Old Train Station, Bakaran Batu Tower, Kesawan, Tjong A Fie Mansion, and so on (Avan, 2010).

In this article, the author will discuss the historical tourist areas in Medan City, namely the Kesawan Area which is known as the old city, the streets and the oldest area in Medan City which used to be a Malay Village which was then brought by the colonials to bring in Chinese coolies from Malacca and also directly from China in 1880 and then slowly became a residential area of ethnic Chinese and also colonial offices which today can still be seen both intact buildings and the remains of the foundations of these buildings and often tourists, both domestic and foreign, tour around the area. It is for exploration and taking pictures and for the local community at night it is often used as a place to relax and have fun with friends and even some school children often hold documentation for yearbooks with the background of the Kesawan area.

METHODS

The research method used by the author in compiling this article, namely: using a type of qualitative research, the data collection method used is a literature study, namely solving problems by tracing written sources that have been designed and published previously (Nuryana et al., 2019). Then it is processed in the form of a description into several parts of the results and discussion which consists of the history of the Kesawan area to the present.

Qualitative descriptive research, descriptive is a formulation of the problem that

guides research to explore or photograph social situations that will be thoroughly, broadly and deeply examined (Hasudungan, 2021).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this section the author will present the results of field findings regarding the Kesawan area as a historical tourist destination which will be divided into several discussions starting from History, Problems and Solutions, including:

History of the Kesawan Region in the Past to the 21st Century

In the previous introductory section the author has provided an outline of the history of the Kesawan area where the beginning of this Kesawan area was a Malay village but the large wave of migration of Chinese ethnic coolies around the 1860s (Bremen, 1997) required them to look for a place to live and as time goes by and the coolies save their wages, slowly they start to build a business by building two or more storey shop houses where generally the first or ground floor functions as a shop and on the second floor functions as a house and it gets busier also to become ethnic Chinese settlements or called Chinatowns and not only the development of the number of shophouse buildings, but several administrative offices and colonial facilities began to be built around this Kesawan area including: Deli Mij Hospital (Deli Tobacco Hospital but has not been operating for a long time), Medan Stadhuis, De Javasche Bank (Bank Indonesia, Medan), Hotel De Boer (Hotel Innai Deli), Post Office, Major Train Station, Harrison And Crossfield Building (Bank Mandiri), Esplanade (Now called Merdeka Square or Merdeka Walk), Office of the rubber plantation company Harrisons & Crossfield (now known as the London Sumatra Building) and so on. (Rachmawati, Kompas: 2021). Kesawan comes from the word "rice fields", to go to the fields, or the Dutch say this place with the word "landelijk" which means village. Around the Kesawan area, there are many magni-

ficent buildings with a European architectural style which became one of the attractions in Medan City when it was first built until now. Therefore, the city of Medan was once called "Paris Van Sumatra" (Nurdin, 2020).

Then at the beginning or after Indonesian independence around the 1960s the Kesawan area underwent several restorations at several points of old buildings with modern buildings to be used as government offices or private offices as well as entertainment venues and some of these places began to be nationalized such as De Javasche Bank became Bank Indonesia, Medan. Furthermore, at this time the Kesawan area is often used by local, domestic and foreign tourists to explore and take selfies on foot around this area, both individually and in groups (travel agents) (Sidabutar et al., 2018). In addition, this area is often used as a backdrop by school children and influencers. Local residents do documentation or selfies with a concept that gives a retro and vintage impression and also as one of the hangout or *angkringan* places in Medan City which is usually visited by teenagers or also families/parents who bring their children to explore Medan's specialties starting from food typical Javanese, Chinese, Japanese to Indian ethnicities are here. In addition, there are also activities carried out by the Bicycle Community in the Medan Kesawan location. This is one of the goals carried out by tourists who come to visit Kesawan by traveling around the Kesawan area by bicycle.





Figure 1. Portrait of Kesawan in the Past (Indonesian Information Portal) and the Warenhuis Building (Budiman BM in Medium)



Figure 3. Images of Tempodulu Post Office and Harrison & Crossfield Building (Merdeka.com)



Figure 2. Recent Portrait of the Kesawan Area (Personal Documentation)



Figure 4. Recent Images of Medan City Post Office and PT. London Sumatra (Personal Documentation)

A Historical Destination That Almost Faded

The first problem that occurred was in 2004 where several abandoned buildings in this area were modified into several floors and did not follow the original building and the building was used as a wallet bird breeding business which usually took its nest and this damaged the authenticity and beauty of the building, which is actually in the Kesawan area. Over time, science and technology,



growth and population needs have affected the authenticity and beauty of this Kesawan area, where several problems have arisen. (Rachmawati, Kompas: 2021). As one of them is the result of the many non permanent *angkringan* that are present at night, of course, the environment around Kesawan becomes polluted with garbage, this is true, and the author sees this incident.

Then in the afternoon, as stated by Mr. Rizanul Arifin in the Seminar on the History of Problems in the Medan Heritage Area of Kesawan and Management Strategies on Friday, April 23, 2021 where he said "... for now, especially in the morning to the afternoon, it is very difficult to make Kesawan as a tourist destination with a pedestrian market model such as Malioboro Yogyakarta or Braga Bandung because the streets in the area have been made into Arterial Roads namely Jalan A. Yani and this is very difficult plus the conditions of narrow arterial roads, do not have parking pockets so that it disrupts tourism activities, commerce and even disturbs the arterial road users and has fatal consequences if they are negligent such as traffic jams that paralyze the road or accidents..." said Mr. Rizanul Arifin (Rachmawati, 2021).

In the 2000s to 2007, the Kesawan area itself was used as a Food Court, but this was again closed due to the reason that the Kesawan area and its surroundings are arterial roads in Medan City and the development is centered on Merdeka Square (not far from Kesawan). So that only leaves a few legendary culinary spots such as the Apek coffee shop on Jalan Perdana, Soto Kesawan and several typical outlets that are well known to the city community and tourists. In addition, several other buildings function as trade centers with two storey shophouses (*ruko*). These shophouses sell various musical instruments, sports equipment, souvenirs, household furniture to fabrics. Apart from that, shophouses are also used as banks, foreign currency exchanges, restau-

rants and supermarkets. Currently, there is only a slight aura of the beauty and shade of Medan in the past, including: a few remaining old trees, the old city hall building, the Medan post office, water towers and hanging points and the London Sumatra (Lonsum) building.



Figure 5. Portrait of one of the workers in the Kesawan Area (Personal Documentation)

Government Solutions and Efforts in Returning the Identity of the Kesawan Region

Here the author summarizes several solution ideas and government efforts in restoring the identity of the Kesawan area as a historical tourist destination by presenting views of buildings that are still preserved in their authenticity in various situations at any time and making it a pedestrian market area, including: (a) Move the arterial road that still connects the streets in the city center through the streets around the fort field, (b) When the arterial road is moved, the rest is to restore some of the remaining abandoned buildings and make it a retro or vintage-style culinary place and without having to sell on the side of the road and close the road for pedestrian tourists and not disturb the background of the remaining buildings to remain use it as a documentary background for taking selfies, (c) If you want to park the vehicle, the parking should be neatly arranged in the same direction and not take up the left and right sides of the road, just take one side, (d) According to Mr. Rizanul Arifin, if you want to create a pedestrian market concept, you should make efforts such as: "...The area is

revived by helping owners or house rights holders in the area to be active and open existing shops. With the opening of every existing building, as in ancient times. The arcade can be accessed by pedestrians, not for parking or sitting on the floor, business and traffic management to the city center are not hampered...”.

In addition, it was reported in several newspapers such as Kompas (Wednesday, March 23 2021), Medan Mayor Muhammad Bobby Afif Nasution began to improve the Kesawan heritage area by making it a culinary center to realize Medan The Kitchen of Asia where with Kesawan as one of the old city areas in Medan. Many cultural heritages with beautiful architecture still stand against the times. The improvements are combined with Medan's well-known culinary branding, not only culinary origins from North Sumatra and Indonesia but also Asian cuisines such as China, Thailand, Japan and India. "...Everything is known to be very delicious. Apart from that, one thing that can add value is to show how to cook it. The kitchen that used to be behind and closed, is now open so that people can see how the culinary is made. This will be entertainment that can add to the culinary value. We brand our culinary as The Kitchen of Asia..." said Bobby.

Then regarding efforts to revitalize the Kesawan area by the Medan city government, one of which was reported in the Kompas newspaper (14 April 2021), it was explained that several Satpol PP teams were deployed to destroy buildings that did not have permits which were right in the Kesawan area which was located at Jalan. Ahmad Yani 7 which coincides in front of the Warenhuis Building which has the goal of returning to normal. "All buildings in the heritage area must comply with regulations for the protection of cultural heritage. Especially in the Kesawan area, don't change shape, follow the regulations. We must preserve this place," said Bobby in a written statement (Leandha, 2021).

CONCLUSION

The conclusions that the author can get while compiling an article about the Kesawan Area: Medan's Old City From the Past to the 21st Century As Historical Tourism is that it starts in Medan City itself which is the capital of one of the 34 Provinces in Indonesia, namely North Sumatra Province. The city of Medan comes from the Tamil word Maidhan or Maidhanam with the meaning of a field or field or a large area where this area was once a village opened by Guru Patimpus Pelawi. The city of Medan itself has several tourist attractions that are worth visiting while in the 3rd metropolitan city in Indonesia, including: the Maimun Palace, the old City Hall Building, the Medan Post Office, the Tirtanadi Water Tower, the Hanging Point, the London Sumatra Building, Medan Grand Mosque, City Hall Office, Old Train Station, Bakaran Batu Tower, Kesawan, Tjong A Fie Mansion, and so on. The Kesawan area, which is known as the old city, the oldest streets and areas in the city of Medan, which used to be the Malay Village, which the colonialists brought in Chinese coolies who came from Malacca and also directly from China in 1880 and which then slowly became an area ethnic Chinese settlements as well as colonial offices including: Deli Mij Hospital (Deli Tobacco Hospital but has not been operating for a long time), Medan Stadhuis, De Javasche Bank (Bank Indonesia, Medan), Hotel De Boer (Hotel Innai Deli), Post Office Large, Large Railway Station, Harrison And Crossfield Building (Bank Mandiri), Esplanade (now called Merdeka Square or Merdeka Walk), London Sumatra Building and so on.

Furthermore, at this time the Kesawan area is often used by local, domestic and foreign tourists to explore and take selfies by walking around this area and also as a hangout or angkringan place in Medan City which is usually visited by teenagers or also families/parents who brought their children to explore Medan's special food and bicycle

community gatherings (pemukomedan.go.id, 2013). However, the problem that occurs is that several abandoned buildings in this area were modified into several floors and did not follow the original building and the building was used as a wallet bird farming business, the environment around Kesawan became polluted with garbage due to the presence of non-permanent ankringan at night. The streets in the Kesawan area are used as arterial roads in the city center so that they disturb tourists with the concept of a pedestrian market and road users due to the streets being so crowded and very risky for road congestion and accident proneness. So the solutions offered are to move arterial roads, restore buildings, streamline one-sided parking lots and make The Kitchen Asian by selling historic area branding, as well as the process of making delicious food that is characteristic of the ethnicity in Medan City, especially as the program launched by the Mayor Medan is currently Mr. Muhammad Bobby Afif Nasution.

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