

SPATIAL NARRATIVE OF PLACE NAMING IN TANGERANG: REPRESENTATION OF CINA'S BENTENG CULTURAL IDENTITY

Sonya Ayu Kumala

Indonesia University

Depok, Indonesia

sonyaa.ayuu@gmail.com

Abstract

An ethnic experiences changes and faces challenges from time to time. A cultural ethnicity may strengthen its existence from time to time or may be more marginalized and 'lost'. Cina Benteng as one of native of Tangerang deals with these challenges that affects their existence and identity. It is estimated that Cina Benteng stepped in Tangerang at 1600's as part of Laksamana Cheng Ho arrival in Banten. Cina Benteng takes roles in all historical stories during the era of Sumedang Larang's kingdom, Colonial era, and after the independence of Indonesia. However nowadays phenomenon, as the massive number of migrants enter Tangerang, the existence of Cina Benteng are being questioned. To deal with this changes and challenges, an ethnic can use a cultural marker strategy related to the concept of space. The process of cultural proclamation describes a symbolic demarcation of what can be accessed by outsiders and what remains the privilege of an ethnic within the scope of cultural space (Christomy, 2018). The concept of space in the study of cultural studies is close to the aspect of place naming of certain space. At the language level, place naming describe the meaning of names or places, explore social, cultural and historical information. At the level of social practice, it's describes the form of social practice, how space is constructed and interpreted by other people / groups. In this paper, space as a form of cultural marker is seen from the spatial narrative method spoken by an a member of ethnic, Cina Benteng. The spatial narrative which is chosen, is a narrative related to folklore or historical stories related to certain place naming. The purpose of this paper is to find out how space and place are constructed by ethnic Chinese Benteng through narrative and what the implications are for those involved in this construction. This paper will use a qualitative approach by utilizing ethnographic methods. This paper will utilize cultural studies theory such as the theory of place and space by James Fox (2006), spatial narrative theory by Christomy (2018), and Labov theory of Narrative Inquiry (2006). In the first part of this paper, the writer presents a scientific synthesis related to spatial representation from the point of view of cultural sciences. In the second part, this paper carried out discussions and conclusions related to the problem of the research.

Keywords : Cultural studies, Spatial narrative, Place and Space, Place naming, Cina Benteng

Introduction

Chinese in Tangerang who are referred as China Benteng have become part of a Tangerang's long history that began in ancient time, the struggling for independence, the new order era, and until nowadays. Chinese in Tangerang are well known as Cina Benteng or Ciben (in this paper the term Benteng Chinese or Cina Benteng is used instead of Tionghoa). Ciben is the native of Tangerang. The term Benteng derives from the ancestor of Cina Benteng who lived at Makassar Fort in their first settlement in Tangerang around

1600's. The fort, which was built in the colonial era, is located on the banks of the Cisadane River (around Sewan and Kampung Melayu areas) and is now demolished.

Cina Benteng in Tangerang lived outside the fort with farming activities for vegetables and fruits and also fishing or other jobs that are usually being done by the lower middle class economy. This is the story background of the name Cina Benteng, which is a mockery with the connotation of poor and lower class

Chinese. Those fact above shows that there is discrimination in the existence of Cina Benteng. In general, China Benteng received discrimination in the economic, political and cultural domain, this unfair treatment which made them become poor.

Another historical belief explains, Cina Benteng is the name given by the Chinese in Batavia (now Jakarta) to address an urban community with lower economical condition and social status, named Cina Benteng community in Tangerang (Go Gien Tjwan, 2008 in Radjimo, 2013: 2). The displacement of ethnic Chinese from Batavia to Tangerang was related to the Chinese Massacre in 1740's, when thousands of Chinese were massacred in Batavia. After this incident the number of Chinese in Tangerang increased with the exodus of the Batavian Chinese.

According to historical records, Laksamana Cheng Ho stepped first in Banten and Sunda Kelapa and then stepped at other port cities such as Jepara, Juwana, Tuban, Gresik, and Pasuruan by sea (Daradjadi, 2017: 46). The notes above are in line with the information given by the informants who are part of the Lingkar Benteng community. Based on a story that has been passed down from generation to generation by the Cina Benteng, the ancestors of the Benteng Cina were part of the expedition of Laksamana Zheng He who landed in Banten on the north coast, namely on the island of Untung Jawa and partly on the coast around Ancol, it is estimated circa 1400s. They came from southern China or Fujian (known as

Hokian). Because they were part of Zheng He's expedition who embraced Islam, Cina Benteng believed that their ancestor religion was Islam previously. After landing on the north coast of Java, they moved through the Cisadane river to the Sumedang Larang kingdom, which is estimated being located in the Tiga Raksa region (now). Furthermore, Cina Benteng spread and settle to various areas in Tangerang, especially along the area where the Cisadane River flows. Some areas to this day are known as the China town or *kampung pecinan* of the Cina Benteng settlement in Tangerang.

Regarding to the historical aspect above, nowadays the existence of Cina Benteng in Tangerang is questionable. Considering the language aspect, Banten Province language map was published by the Badan Bahasa in 2018 did't mention Betawi Ora dialect, which is the original dialect spoken by Cina Benteng based on language map that was composed by Lauder (1990) . As a comparison of the language map for DKI Jakarta province, there are four languages spoken, namely Bugis, Sundanese, Malay and Mandarin DKI Jakarta. For DKI Jakarta Mandarin, it is spoken by the Chinese people in Glodok area. As it is well known the Glodok is China town area in Jakarta. Similar to Jakarta, Tangerang also has some China town or *kampung pecinan* of Chinese, but in the language mapping made by the Badan Bahasa there are only three languages left, namely Javanese, Lampung Cikoneng and Sundanese as shown below,



Figure 1.1 : Map of Banten
Source from Badan Bahasa.kemendikbud.go.id

In the language map above, the administrative areas with purple shading marks the people of Banten with Javanese language, even though in some parts of the area there are mainly filled by of Cina Benteng. This fact lead us to big question, whether Cina Benteng still exist or they spoke different nowadays? In addition to the linguistic point of view, cultural influences that emerged in Tangerang and the government's concern to the preservation of Cina Benteng's culture. Cina Benteng's ethnicity aspect nowadays is less involved in City Branding programe by Tangerang's Government.

In the other hand, coming from internal point of view, unfortunately the pride's of being Chinese Benteng has been decreased during this modern time. The millennial generation who looks embarrassed to admit that they are Cina Benteng or Ciben. Being Ciben are also often found become a joke and made it fun of among the younger generation.

Another fact related to the existence of Cina Benteng is the naming of one area, for example, Karawaci – where the majority of Cina Benteng settle in this area – is now better known as Imam Bonjol. This is because the name of the main road in the area was changed to Jalan Imam Bonjol. Historical narrative recorded that name, Karawaci, actually has a deep meaning for Tangerang's people and Cina Benteng in particular. For Cina Benteng, Karawaci represents a space related to historical, cultural and mystical aspects that have become beliefs and are passed down from generation to generation through narrative. The changing of name of a street or area should consider the spatial, and location aspects related to the existence of certain cultural ethnic groups and other social issues.

Place names or what are known as toponyms in onomastics studies, is study of names (Rais et al, 2008). It is focused on how a name is being constructed, the meaning of name, and also social-cultural issues behind a name. Onomastics is being

divided into two main areas toponymy (a study of place name) and anthroponomy (a study of person name) (Lauder dan Lauder, 2015). Onomastics study utilizes other studies to investigates the meaning and other social issues behind a name. Those other studies such as cultural studies, geography, sociology, linguistics, economics and etc. Particularly, Linguistics uses the term toponymy to map the meaning, function and attachment of a name to the community. A toponym or a place name contains collective memories that must be preserved as a part of cultural preservation to maintain the national identity.

The position of toponymy studies in scientific studies invites several different opinions. However, the name and meaning of the name of a place or location shows a very close relationship with linguistic studies and cultural studies in general. This is confirmed by cultural studies theories, especially about place and space. Tuan (1977) explained that place is an area of power that has been marked by users who have boundaries or scope, while space is an abstract form of freedom. The concept of place and space is further discussed in the study of topogeny. In this paper, toponyms as linguistic evidence are examined through how narratives are constructed by cultural actors related to these toponyms. At the linguistic level, how the narrative is reconstructed is seen by the narrative theory by Labov (2006). Meanwhile, at the stage of representation of place and space, it is assisted by explanations from Fox (2006) and Christomy (2018) about spatial narrative.

2. Theory and Methodology

In this second part the author will synthesize three selected readings as the main theory of this paper, namely "Place and Landspace in Comparative Austronesian Perspective" by James J Fox in *The Poetic Power of Place* (2006) which will be referred to as reading 1, "Spatial Narrative in Traditional Sundanese

Village" by Tommy Christomy (2018) in the book *Cultural Dynamics in a Globalized World* which will hereinafter be referred to as reading 2, and "Narrative Pre-reconstruction" by William Labov in *Narrative Inquiry* (2006) which will be referred as reading 3.

Nowadays, the study of linguistics has been challenged to show that linguistics is not only concerned with language in the level of structure, but emphasis more on function by showing that linguistics can help describe social and cultural phenomena in language expression and elaborate with other social studies. Readings 1 and 2 are social and cultural studies, while readings 3 are linguistic studies. If readings 1 and 2 use linguistic expressions, namely social narratives about the cultural space. In line with readings 1 and 2, reading 3 also utilizes a narrative approach in obtaining data, the difference is in reading 3 the author starts from the structure of the story itself as a basis for uncovering social phenomena from personal narratives.

The use of narrative in the analysis of social representation leads the writer to analyze how the toponym or place naming in Tangerang is considered as a cultural space of various ethnicities, one of which is Cina Benteng (as being done in reading 1). Then dig deeper into the space as a form of spatial representation of the Chinese Benteng ethnic group regarding their existence (as being done in reading 2) and assisted by a micro approach to how a story is formed (as in reading 3).

Furthermore readings 1 and 2 discuss the same concept, namely the cultural space as a social representation that can be explored using the narrative method. If reading 1 is more general, it covers many aspects, while reading 2 gives more of a concrete application of the concepts in reading 1 in the case of traditional villages in Sunda. Reading 3 is discussed separately, because if readings 1 and 2 have a space - topogeny - social narrative framework of thought, while reading 3 is the opposite,

namely narrative - social problems. The existence of this different frame of mind not only makes the three readings different, but complements each other. To sum, readings 1 and 2 build a macro-thinking framework at the level of social practice, while readings 3 lead to micro-analysis at the level of language expression.

In reading 1 the author uses a broader concept, namely space, while in reading 2 the author uses the concept of space and place which is a detail of the cultural space. In reading 1, space is defined as a topography in which there is a related relationship between local experiences of cultural actors in the form of shared feelings, speech and memory. While in reading 2, space is defined as an arena used for social practice by both individuals and groups, while place is a representational structure of spaces that exist in social practice. Still in reading 2, it is emphasized that space and place both exist in spaces that exist in a context. Through the above definition, it can be seen that reading 1 is more general in nature, providing an overview accompanied by examples of several related studies. If the reader wants to know in depth about the spaces and places that make up the space, it can be found in reading 2.

Moreover, it is said in readings 1 and 2 that in a cultural context, social knowledge is in the spaces that exist in that culture. This social knowledge is passed down from generation to generation through a process of cultural creation in three stages: preserved, transformed and remembered. How are these three steps carried out? One of them is from the narratives that they preserve, they tell from time to time and they also remember and learn from it. Reading 1 suggests that spaces are narrated to form a place. A place is located not because of its direction but is identified by a form of name which is a component of social knowledge. This social knowledge, is narrated and being functioned to connect the past and the present. In line with reading 1, reading 2

suggests that in facing the challenges of social change, narratives about the space of the cultural space have an important role in preserving, maintaining and preserving the cultural, historical, and social memories that exist in a space.

Furthermore, readings 1 and 2 raise the discussion of topogeny. Topogeny in reading 1 is defined on its social knowledge content about the sequence structure of place names. Topogeny occurs in the process of compiling and transforming social knowledge. In general, names are attached to certain specific locations and topogeny describes how the externalized representation of the projected memory of the community can be possible related. Topogeny has variants, forms and functions depending on the context. Furthermore, the explanation of topogeny allows for ambiguity and uncertainty in a place name. One of these things can happen because a place may have more than one name or historical and cultural linkages from its predecessors so that it affects the process of interpreting a name. While in reading 2, the concept of topogeny is explained that genealogical explanations of place names can be carried out synchronously in the form of topogeny through historical narratives.

On reading 3 Labov starts his theory by explaining that before a story is being told, there is a pre-reconstruction process that occurs in the cognition system of language speakers. In this process, language speakers sort out which is the most appropriate to be told from the number of narratives available, what is the order of speech, and the purpose of the narrative. This pre-reconstruction process will at the same time give an idea of how an

event that has happened in the past can be related to the present and become worthy of being told. Why does the pre-reconstruction process become the central theme of Labov's writing? While other linguists may prefer to talk about the structure of a story itself. Labov said that narrative is the final product, which is the result of an unconscious process, the speaker can no longer control the construction process. So don't look at the reconstruction, but pre-reconstruction, what causes a story to be chosen or not chosen to be told, why and what is the purpose for telling it, what factors cause a story not to be chosen or chosen. So it can be concluded that at this pre-reconstruction level the exploration of the social, cultural, historical, or psychological aspects of a story is more dominant, not the structure of the story itself. The pre-reconstruction concept offered by Labov will fill the gaps that exist in readings 1 and 2, moreover Labov will guide through the linguistic evidence that exists in each story.

All theories synthesized from the three readings above are used to discuss examples of ethnographic method data. The author conducts interviews and ethnography method. In this paper, 2 interviewees were interviewed, they were Chinese cultural activists for the Benteng and the caretaker of the oldest Vihara in Tangerang. The interview process was followed supported by recording and note-taking techniques. In addition, the author also adds an observation process to the culture rituals, space and place to support the analysis. In the discussion section, the relationship between theory and data is explained through qualitative descriptive explanation.

3. Discussion

In this section there will be discussed some finding that has been found by observing the community, doing interview, and utilizing the theories and method, as below,

3.1 Cina Benteng Place has shifted

In this paper, several toponyms for the Tangerang area are described which are related to the Cina Benteng ethnicity and then explored the spatial aspect to get an idea of the existence of the ethnic group. In general, four of the toponyms for the Tangerang region related to China Benteng

are spread out in Kota Tangerang, Kabupaten Tangerang and Tangerang Selatan. Among those three area, Cina Benteng are mostly found in Kabupaten Tangerang which is geographically located on the coast, where they first landed in Tangerang. In addition, many Cina Benteng inhabit places along the Cisadane river. This is logically happened because, in the past, rivers play dominant roles as transportation routes, before the construction of inter-regional roads. Based on the information provided by the informants, currently China Benteng is mostly located in Kabupaten Tangerang (towards the airport and beach), the progress and density of the cities of Tangerang and South Tangerang have shifted the places of settlement and cultivation or farm area for Cina Benteng. The area along the Cisadane river that divides the city of Tangerang, is no longer crowded with Benteng Cina but is more inhabited by immigrants. The reason for the moving, was also due to the fact that many factories were being built in Tangerang during New Era regime. Cina Benteng, which is known for its middle to lower economic conditions, choose to settle near or close to industrial areas. Through the explanation above, we can conclude that the existence of Cina Benteng still exists in places in Tangerang, but it does experience a shift.

3.2 Cultural Space of Cina Benteng

The discussion in this section is divided as follows:

A. Sacred Value

Based on the results of the interviewee's narrative, there are several places that function as spaces that symbolize sacred concepts. The first is Kalipasir. Kalipasir is the location of an ancient mosque and tomb built by the elders of Cina Benteng. The elder who built this space is Cina Benteng who first landed in Tangerang, part of Laksmana Zheng He's expedition and still embraced Islam. Once upon a time this

mosque was a symbol of worship and sacred space because several remarkable figures of Cina Benteng, and Banten kingdom were buried. Nowadays, the mosque seems not to be part of the Chinese Benteng space, there is a collective memory that is lost so that Kalipasir does not become part of the Cina Benteng even though its position is in the middle of their settlement or Pasar Lama pecinan. The triggering factor is the change of religion, nowadays Cina Benteng are no longer a moslem, it is rare and even very difficult to find a Cina Benteng who embraces Islam. Their religions mostly are Buddhism, Tao, Christian, and Catholics.

Kalipasir was once considered sacred and used for worship because the existence of moslem Cina Benteng in ancient times were still large and their bound are strong. This is contrast to the current situation when the existence of moslem Cina Benteng nowadays is increasingly rare. The toponym of Kalipasir as a symbol space for sacred values that should be attached to be part of the Cina Benteng culture, nowadays as if it is no longer part of the Cina Benteng cultural space anymore.

Another narrative of place naming related to Karawaci. It is a space that represents the Cina Benteng existence in Tangerang. Karawaci is known as a sub-district or kecamatan, but it is also well known as the Cina Benteng residential area. In Karawaci there are not only residential areas but also cemeteries (eg Tanah Cepe, Tanah Gocap), funeral home, school, and universities for Cina Benteng. In Chinese tradition, when someone dies, the family need to pay respect by holding some memorial ritual. Relatives should come and show their condolences, as guest will be served treats at the table. The treats are generally in the form of nuts, namely Koro and Kwaci beans. That memorial narratives become one of spatial narrative being told regarding to the place naming, Karawaci.

In addition, Karawaci is narrated in other versions, some spatial narratives try

to relate place naming Karawaci to a Dwarf or they spell it as Kurcaci. Kurcaci is spelled by Chinese tongues as Karawaci. It is said that in the area there were many Dwarves who helped the Chinese and locals fight against the colonial. In spite of those two version, the third version of spatial narrative is, Karawaci is a place in Tangerang where some different ethnic assimilate. There are of assimilation of Arabic, Javanese and Chinese. It is being abbreviated as *kampung arab, jawa, dan cina*. Reviewing all three version of spatial narratives, Cina Benteng roles can't be separated from the spatial narratives of Karawaci.

In ancient times Karawaci functioned as a sacred space, but that function has shifted. Karawaci became a place to live for Cina Benteng and other Tangerang people, but this sacred value was vanished and not passed down to the younger generation. Even Cina Benteng itself is now more familiar with place naming Imam Bonjol rather than Karawaci (in 1990 the Tangerang city government changed the names of roads and regions).

The phenomena of Karawaci place naming tells us that both external and internal factor play significant roles. Internal factors, namely the process of cultural inheritance (preserved – transformed and memorized) which is less successful, the loss or shift of the cultural space of the Cina Benteng is also caused by external factors, the government does not consider the element of spatial representation of an ethnicity by renaming the street or region of the space. .

B. Livelihood

Ethnic Chinese are known for their resilience both in the economy, usually in trading activities. Cina Benteng in Tangerang is known as Chinese peasants, formerly Kampung Melayu was known as *kampung* or a suitable location for Cina Benteng. Kampung Melayu was formerly known as Pangkalan, a gathering place for migrants in Tangerang. This area was a gift

from the king of the Tiga Raksa kingdom, to Chen Chin Lung (the ancestor of the Cina Benteng who first landed in Tangerang). Chen Chin Lung was ordered to manage the area and produce crops that were used as commodities, most of which would be sent to Batavia. In Kampung Melayu there is a large area of land for farming. We can conclude that in ancient times Kampung Melayu was a space for farming as a livelihood for the Cina Benteng.

Meanwhile, nowadays, this has shifted, along with the number of immigrants in Kampung Melayu (Cina Benteng no longer become the majority), the narrowness of land for farming and the reluctance of some Cina Benteng to cultivate crops because they are more interested in working in factories. The explanation above illustrates that Kampung Melayu as a Cina Benteng cultural originally described a space for farming.

However, nowadays, along with the shift in the existence of the Cina Benteng in Kampung Melayu, their space has also experienced a shift. Their collective memory of Kampung Melayu is no longer a space as a place to grow crops, but has shifted to become an ordinary village for them.

C. The history of past glory

According to interviewee, in ancient times Cina Benteng had many roles in helping the King of Banten (Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa), Sumedang Larang, or the ruler of the kingdom in Tiga Raksa. The role of the Cina Benteng is also narrated a lot during the colonial period, until independence was achieved. That fact brings a positive aspect, Cina Benteng occupies many strategic areas in Tangerang. One of them is the Pasar Lama, Pasar Lama is known as the Chinatown area, the center of the economy and glory in the past. Pasar Lama area is also known as a prestigious settlement for the Cina Benteng in the past. It can be said that the Pasar Lama as a symbol space of past glory.

Meanwhile, in this modern era, the existence of Cina Benteng in the area has begun to shift. It is no longer a special settlement of Cina Benteng but mingles with other settlers. Previously, Pasar Lama was full of shops and businesses typical of Cina Benteng, now it has turned into modern cafes and places for children to hang out in Tangerang. As the Chinese Benteng existence shifted, the representation of space as a symbol of past glory shifted into a modernization space that was inherent not only for the Benteng Chinese but for Tangerang people in general.

In addition to the Old Market, another space is Kampung Tehyan. According to sources, Tehyan village is a village inhabited by the majority of Cina Benteng. Known as the village of Tehyan

because the village is the producer of Tehyan, a stringed instrument that is belonged to Cina Benteng. Instead of producing Tehyan, the village is also a gathering place for expert Tehyan players so that it can be said to be a symbol of the Cina Benteng cultural arts space.

Nowadays, China Benteng's millennial generation rarely still knows Tehyan. In the village where they lived one grandfather left who could make Tehyan. Today, as many Cina Benteng moved to the nearby factories surround Tangerang, Kampung Tehyan is no longer a special village for China Benteng. This village is abandoned and mostly inhabited by the older generation. So that the representation of space that is formed today is a village with welfare below the poverty line.

4. Conclusion

Historical narratives related to place-naming or toponyms in Tangerang show that a narrative can connect the past and the present. Historical narratives represent values that existed in the past and also provide significance related to historical values in this modern era. Cina Benteng cultural space is constructed by utilizing aspects of sacred values, economic aspects or livelihoods and historical aspects of past glory. The three aspects of the values above are preserved, transformed and stored in the cognition of the Cina Benteng ethnicity. Furthermore, along with the development of the era, the existence of the Cina Benteng place experienced a shift. This also shows the impact on the shift in the cultural space of the Cina Benteng. As an implication there is a space that is considered lost and is not part of the Cina Benteng culture. There is a space that still remains but its meaning and function has changed, or there is even a new cultural space. Cina Benteng ethnic cultural space dynamically follows the Cina Benteng existence.

Bibliography:

- Christomy, Tommy. 2018. *Spatial Narrative in Traditional Sundanese Village*. Dalam buku *Cultural Dynamics in a Globalized World*. London : Taylor and Francis Group.
- Daradjadi. 2017. *Geger Pecinan 1740 – 1743. Persekutuan Tionghoa – Jawa Melawan VOC*. Jakarta: Kompas.
- Fox, James J. 2006. *Place and Landspace in Comparative Austronesia Perspective*. Dalam buku *The Poetic Power of Place*. ANU Press.
- Labov, William. 2006. *Narrative Pre Reconstruction*. Dalam *Narrative Inquiry* ke 16 Vol 1, tahun 2006. John Benjamin Publishing Company.
- Lauder, A. F., & Lauder, M. R.T. (2015). *Ubiquitous place names Standardization and study in Indonesia*. *Wacana*, 17(2), 383-410.
- Rais, Jacob dan et all. 2008. *Toponimi Indonesia. Sejarah Budaya Bangsa*

*yang Panjang dari Pemukiman
Manusia dan Tertib Administrasi.*

Jakarta : Pradnya Paramita.

Tuan, Yi Fu. 1977. *Space and Place : The
Perspective of Experience.*
Minneapolis : University of
Mineasota Press.

Wiyono, Radjimo Sastro. 2013. *Wayang
Cokek : Tradisi Lisan dan
Pengelolaannya Pada Masyarakat
Cina Benteng, Tangerang.* Tesis,
Departemen Susastra, Fakultas Ilmu
Pengetahuan Budaya, Universitas
Indonesia.