



Fieldwork Notes
Visiting Megalithic Sites in Southern Banten

Rohman'

On a bright Thursday morning, 17-20 January 2013 the Bantenologi team gathered in front of the IAIN "Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin" Banten campus. They were waiting for the small bus that would take them to some historical places in the southern of Banten. Based on the plan, they would first visit Ciberang, one of the rivers in Banten that provides "River Tourism" especially known for rafting by Bantenese and other visitors who came from West Java and Jakarta. The second plan was that they would visit megalithic sites, such as Lebak Kosala and Lebak Cibebug. The journey was important for at least two reasons; (1) some Bantenese staff had not visited the important sites, and (2) Laboratorium Bantenologi believed that these sites must be well documented for the sake of maintaining the legacy of Banten civilization at least through pictures of the sites.

At 09.00 am, the small bus started to leave the campus to go to Rangkasbitung. They had to stop in Rangkasbitung because they should pick two guides who came from Baduy up and they had to buy logistics and equipment for five days adventure in a mini market in front of the bus station. Bantenologi team spent about two hours to come to Ciberang river and the rain welcomed the team. The team enjoyed the situation of the village surrounded by tropical forest and the sound of water coming from the river. The team had their lunch in the cottage near the riverbank. After they finished their lunch, they had a discussion about many issues. They stayed overnight there. As planned before, in the morning, they woke up quite early to do rafting in Ciberang river. After conducting warming up for about thirty minutes, six Bantenologi members took the challenge to enjoy the beauty of Ciberang river covered by tropical forest in the left side of the river. The rafting in Ciberang river was very challenging because of the river's very swift current. The rafting started from the point in the river located just in the bottom of the cottage and ended in the back yard of La Tansa Islamic Boarding School. The whole rafting experience took about two hours.

After having lunch and taking a quick rest, the Bantenologi team continued the journey to visit the first megalithic site. It took about an hour

to come to a small village where the car stopped. After parking the car, the team could see the announcement written on the board. The announcement was about the official statement of the local government on the Lebak Kosala site being protected by law due to its historical data, information, and legend. The statement also cited the punishment for those who destroyed the site was based on the Indonesian Government Regulation Number 11 year 2010 on Cultural Heritage. The board became the main clue and the entrance to visit Lebak Kosala site.

We had to walk through a small street in the village. Then we found the rice field that we should go through by walking on the small path between the rice field and other rice field. After passing the rice field, we walked about two hundred meters entering the forest. After walking for several hundred meters, we finally found Lebak Kosala site covered by a thick bamboo and other giant trees. Although, it was about 3.00 pm, Lebak Kosala site was quite dark due to the big trees that surrounded the site. Then, Bantenologi found and documented the site. There were some *menhir* in the form of flat rocks and oval rocks combined to become such a rock structure having philosophical values. According to the guide, the philosophy of each rock in the rock combination is different. One rock located in the center means the oneness of God. The two rocks signified the *coupleness* of a human body, e.g., two hands, two feet, and two ears. Furthermore, the seven rocks combination symbolized the seven layers of the sky.

In Lebak Kosala, we found various rocks that function as a weapon sharpener and small pond located at the lower part of the site. There were also some former excavation points in some parts of the site. According to the guide, there were some historical objects such as pottery found in the site and taken by the local government because of further research. If we look at the Lebak Kosala site, there was a staircase look-alike. We could assume that the staircase-steps made of rock surrounding the site. After taking several pictures of the site, the Bantenologi team then left the site and went back to the parking lot. Before we entered the bus, we were curious to enter a big house located beside the announcement board. The house had three floors and many rooms. To get to the second floor, there was a staircase which was long and dark. According to one of the students, the house became a place where a religious teacher gave Islamic teachings to his students which came from Bogor and Pandeglang. From the third floor, we could view the beauty of Mount Halimun and the rolling hills. After enjoying the view of Mount Halimun, the team gathered in front of the bus

and were ready to continue the journey to the Lebak Sibedug site located in The National Park of Mount I-lalimun-Salak.

Enjoying the natural situation of the mountainous road, the team finally could see a gate on which was written "*Wewengkon Ad.at Kasepuhan Citorek*". This meant that we would soon arrive in the Citorek community. Unfortunately, because of a very heavy rain, the road that connected the village of Citorek to other sub district in Lebak was buried by landslide. We had to wait for about an hour before we could pass the road. From this road we could see hundred of houses and rice barns of Citorek community.

The small bus finally could reach Citorek village in the afternoon. The road of Citorek village was quite crowded because in fact it was the market. The guide then led us to stay overnight in one of the villager's house. We spent the afternoon by walking surrounded the village enjoying the rice field, the river, and the fresh air. From a very short observation, we could see the daily life of Citorek community in which they depend the daily living from the rice field and the traditional gold mining in the mountains and hills surrounded the village. One of the most unforgettable experience during our stay at Citorek was when we needed toilet because most of the villagers of Citorek did not have toilet. Then, we had to go to the river located just behind the village. In the river, we could see many villagers young and old visited the river to take a bath, ablution, and so on. In the village, we also found many villagers had sacks consist of rock of gold. Those who were rich had their machine grind the rocks. Meanwhile those who had no much money, just hit the rock manually using axe. That night, we stayed overnight in Adung's house. Before we slept, we had a very delicious dinner and a discussion about the tract that we would pass through tomorrow. Mufti Ali and Helmy Fauzi of the Laboratorium then visited head of Citorek Community to ask for the permission to visit Lebak Cibedug site. After about an hour, they came back and then Adung suggested us to sleep well because we would have a quite long journey that took about four hours by foot to visit Lebak Cibedug site located in West Citorek village, sub district Cibeber, Lebak district.

In the morning, Adung 's wife looked quite busy since she had to prepare the breakfast for all of us. After having the breakfast, we started the adventure by following Adung's steps who walked down the village's street to the hills. Following Adung's step, we passed through the river that divides the village. After passing the village, we had to pass the rice field and the uphill roads. To be honest, the journey to reach Lebak Cibedug was quite exhausting for all of us. Perhaps it was because we never did any practice hiking or jogging before. Therefore, we had to take a rest several

times to regain our energy. After passing the rice fields and hills we found the waterfall which meant that the village of Lebak Cibebug was not that far any more. Finally, we could find the paddy barns in front of the village that became the location of Lebak Cibebug site.

Because all of the team were hungry and thirsty, we took a rest, drank, and ate in a small stall in the village. After that, we visited Olot Asbaji, the head of the village and the key informant who was responsible for keeping Lebak Cibebug site. Drinking the coffee and the fresh water served by Olot Asbaji's wife, we had a relaxing chat about the history of Lebak Cibebug, the villagers and the socioeconomic condition of the village. According to Olot Asbaji, there was no information about the actual time when the founder established the site. In fact, he said that those who tried to estimate the age of Lebak Cibebug site was wrong. Olot Asbaji then asked us to write our names in the guest list book provided in Olot Asbaji's house. Then, he showed us traditional musical instruments located in the room just beside the guestroom.

After the chat, Olot Asbaji accompanied us to visit the Lebak Cibebug site located in front of the village. We had to pass a small bamboo bridge to come to the Lebak Cibebug site. After passing through the bridge, we could see the first menhir which was quite large. The height was about 2meter and the diameter was about 3, meter. This site had an area about 2 hectares square that consisted of punden berundak with nine stages, nine rooms in each stage, and some menhirs. According to Olot Asbaji, the stages represented the number of village surrounding the Lebak Cibebug site. Moreover, the room on each stage functioned as a place for the villagers coming from the nine villages. On this site, we could also find a cone rock, a rock that resembled a cone which according to the local story, it raised from the ruin of an old tree. From the journey, we could obtain new important and interesting experiences. It also proved the richness of Bantenese culture and its historical legacies.

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