

Stone Jumping as A Tourism Object, In Bawomataluo Fau, Teluk Dalam, South Nias

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ABSTRACT : The South Nias Regency consists of thirty-five districts with a wide variety of racti resources and cultural practices. Perhaps the most prominent of these oral traditions, serving both ritual and entertainment purposes are *Hoho* (traditional choral singing), *Maena* (war dance), and *Fahombo* (stone jumping). The *Fahombo* has become the premiere icon of Nias culture. *Fahombo* embodies high philosophical values of its society passed on through generations. *Fahombo* is done by boys aged seven to twelve years as a rite of passage to prove their maturity. This article will discuss how this practice has become transformed to become a prominent tourist attraction

Keywords: Tourism, culture, *Fahombo*, *Teluk Dalam*, Southern Nias Regency, *Bawomataluo Fau*

1. INTRODUCTION

The Nias tribe is a group of people who inhabit the island of Nias. Nias people refer to themselves as *Ono Niha* (lit. human descendants). The island of Nias was referred to as *Tanö Niha* (the land of the humans, Hammerle, 2015, pp.31-33). Nias people live in accord with the customary law and culture of Nias, from birth to death. Evidence of the wealth of past civilizations can be seen in the numerous historical relics in the form of megaliths. These relics consist of artifacts in the form of *menhirs*, monuments, statues of spirits, stone tables and chairs, as well as *omo hada* (traditional houses) built on large flat stones with massive wooden pillars and covered with ancient symbolic carvings. Nias arts and culture are also rich in folklore, such as myths, legends, fairy tales, beliefs, traditional games, poetry, traditional ceremonies, poetry, traditional food, woven crafts, carvings and sculpture. According to Yoety (1994, p.52)., the preservation of art also serves tourism. However, the tourism industry cannot simply market traditional arts. It requires culturally informed strategies and participation of many others in fostering and conserving them.

In the regency of *Teluk Dalam* there is unique cultural practice with great potential for tourism development, found in one of the villages frequently visited by tourists named *Bawomataluo fau* (Hereafter referred to in common parlance as *Bawamataluo*). *Bawomataluo* has a wealth of cultural arts, including the well-known war dance or *Maena*, the *Ya'ahowo* (greeting or salutation) dance, and *Fahombo* (stone jumping). The practice of *Fahombo* traditionally has a high philosophical value for its people. In the past, *Fahombo* was a ritual performed by boys aged seven to twelve years to prove their maturity and chivalry. This is a cultural practice entirely unique to the people of Nias, and especially for the region of *Teluk Dalam*. It has been deployed as an icon of cultural identity for promotion of Nias nationally and abroad.

At this time, *Fahombo* in *Bawomataluo* is experiencing a crisis in regeneration. The *Fahombo* tradition and the war dance are no longer enacted as rituals, but currently rather practiced as ad hoc performances for iconic enactments of Nias culture for tourists. In the past, the *Fahombo* tradition was a cultural rite to

determine whether a youth in *Bawomataluo* could be recognized as an adult. Young men would demonstrate adult bravery if they could leap over a mound of stones two meters high. Dressed in ceremonial traditional clothes, they run and leap from a small supporting stone to literally fly over the tall stone structure. This unique initiation rite has subsequently become a tourism object quite well known in the greater global society. As such this resembles many other transformations of traditional practices elsewhere. Other aspects need attention to support tourism are as yet hardly represented. Spillane (2000, p.47) considers that tourism as an industry can be divided into five areas of endeavor, namely (1) tours and travel, (2) hotels and restaurants, (3) transportation, (4) tourist centers and souvenirs, and (5) tourism education. Properly organized and presented, such cultural performances could surely bring benefits to the *Bawomataluo* community provided all these aspects are fully addressed. At the moment none of these sectors are being actively with regard to *Fahombo*.

2. HEADINGS

South Nias Regency has thirty-five sub-districts, with diverse natural and cultural potential of its people. Various arts live and develop in society which originate from oral traditions, namely ritual arts, entertainment and various other works of high art, including: Hoho, War dance, Stone Jumping, and so on. The richness of art and culture that is unique to Nias is known internationally. The religiosity and social and cultural systems of society are reflected through unique and ethnographically interesting cultural expressions. In this regard, in South Nias Regency the nature and culture of the community have potential in developing tourism.

Baomataluo Village, Teluk Dalam, southern Nias, has natural and cultural arts and tourist attractions. Stone jumping is an attraction that has become an icon of tourist destinations for domestic and foreign tourists. Stone jumping is done by boys aged 7-12 years. The mythical meaning of this tradition is to show maturity and courage for Nias men. The tourism industry has shifted stone jumping from tradition to a show that is presented to visitors. Tourist attraction packages pay 300 thousand rupiah per jump.

3. INDENTATIONS AND EQUATIONS

The people of Nias revere and maintain their traditional values that have been passed down from generation to generation. The strength of indigenous customs becomes a strong representation of traditional values, as seen in the practice of crisis rituals like marriage and death ceremonies. In addition to the *Fahombo*, *Maena* (war dance) that is danced by boys. *Meana* is performed with costumes made of bark, property hats made of coconut fiber, and equipped with arrows, swords, and shields. The movement includes vigorous stomping on the ground repeatedly while moving the hands, body and head while uttering 'yes iye' as an appeal/call. According to J. Maquet. the concept of tourism performance art as art transformed also called is acculturation art, or pseudo-traditional art. The form still retains some characteristics of traditional art but has put aside its traditional values, such as the sacred, magical and symbolic (Soedarsono, 2002: 271-272). The *Fahombo* can be seen in the following image. Cultural performances and attractions are presently mounted on an ad hoc basis by the community in efforts to attract tourists, both local and foreign. The government has also adopted a developmental goal to utilize the natural and cultural potential for tourism projects at the regional and village level. Yet realization is hardly evident.

Over time this tradition has changed its function. Soedarsono (2002, p.123) suggests that the performing arts have three primary functions, namely: as a means of ritual, as a means of personal expression/personal entertainment, and as an aesthetic presentation. The *Fahombo* and the *Maena* war dance are no longer practiced solely as rituals, as preparation for facing conflict. The *Fahombo* attraction has become a spectacle in a tourism package that has become recognized internationally. The government's goals are in line with the aspirations of the people of *Bawomataluo*, namely, to maintain their cultural sites and identity in the face of tourism developments. Yet there seems to be no coherent practical strategy viewed from the field.

Tourism as has been developed in Nias generally not only presents its natural beauty, but also its on unique cultural history and diversity. The most obvious are found in locations of impressive historical megalithic sites. The shape of these megalithic objects is generally rectangular, with rounded edges accompanied by characteristic patterns resembling the form of human statues. Here you can see a picture of the king's house in *Bawomataluo*, megaliths in front of traditional houses still functioning as dwellings.

The massive house is of prescribed dimensions both inside and outside and replete with various traditional carved ornaments. In the *Teluk Dalam* district, there are approximately seven hundred traditional houses that represent the Nias people and their social environment (Duha, 2012: 65). The king's residence is a revered cultural object passed down from his ancestors with infinite value. In *Bawomataluo*, the king's house is a prime tourist destination. The commodification of the function of the traditional house into a tourist attraction diverts the values of the traditional house. This is a process of transforming something that was previously a cultural object into a commodity (Piliang, 2003, p.16). According to Matius Manau, *Hombo Batu* (the jumping stone) is the stone structure in the form of a trapezium. The structure of stone reputedly is erected apparently without any adhesive as high as two meters and yet remains durable over time for ceremonies and rituals. There is a belief that within the structure there is a human skull which represents a sacrificial element to imbue the structure with supernatural power.

In order to gain permission to engage in this rite of passage, eligible young boys with the blessings of their family will appeal for permission to the traditional customary leader in the village, who will then seek spiritual permission from the ancestors. If a young man is the first to jump *hombo batu*, then the young man's family is obliged to hold a banquet by slaughtering a pig or a rooster. The scale of this of course depends on the economic resources of the family involved. The simple ritual incantation includes the following succinct prayer to the ancestors, chanted as mantra:

Fahombo has become prime cultural attraction for visitors who come to *Bawomataluo*, used to welcome guests who come to visit Nias, and often used at traditional ceremonies (Yustika Manau, interview, 2017). In terms of cost, rock jumping carries a fixed rate with a single jump priced at three hundred thousand Indonesian rupiah per head. This can however be negotiated by the visitor with the leader of the rock jumping group. For example, two stone jumpers with two jumps or three jumps for both are valued at four hundred thousand rupiah.

Mattius Manau, the owner of the *Lareh* studio sets the fees for stone-jumping packages at several levels of much higher cost. Level one is fifteen million Indonesian rupiah; level 2 ten million; and level 3 five million. The difference in the packages depends on differences in the number of performers involved and the quantity of art displayed (Interview, 18 February 2022). J. Maquet, as cited in by Soedarsono (Soedarsono, 2002, pp.271-272) suggests the concept of a tourism performance such as this as art by metamorphosis, or often also called acculturation art. It is also possible to refer to it as pseudo-traditional art. The form still deploys traditional aspects but has put aside its traditional values of the sacred, magical and symbolic. This traditional practice has thus changed its function. According to Soedarsono (2002, p.123) generally performing arts have three primary functions, namely: as a means of ritual; as a means of personal expression/personal entertainment, and as an aesthetic presentation. These functions were recognized as a cultural icon were appropriated by the Indonesian government in 1994 when it placed a graphic of stone jumping on one of its monetary notes.

Even though tourism has an economic role, socio-cultural factors are a concern that should be proportionate. In this context, tourism must be conceived and shaped holistically from all sides so that the objects are not reduced to only commodities but should also retain associations with their older cultural context and meaning. Selo Soemartjan (in Bagus ed., 1997, p.120) states that "... *national development which gives top priority to economic development, the face of tourism in Indonesia, has fundamentally changed. Tourism is appointed as a service industry which is expected to generate foreign exchange.* Regarding government policies, the first objective of the development of the tourism sector is to increase the economy. The reference for its development requires appropriate costing and economic formulas.

In *Bawomataluo*, cultural/artistic performances can bring benefits to the community with a clear and consolidated strategy towards relevant sectors. Community income can benefit the quality of human resources as regional tourism actors in the public, private and community sectors work for a more holistic philosophy of action. This must include attention to supporting community skills, increasing community participation and contribution and community-based lower-middle economic actors to create business and work opportunities by mobilizing small industrial groups for the production of souvenirs local snacks, lodging, etc. Destinations also require other logistic readiness such as access and accommodations.

The tourism industry always has an impact albeit positive and negative on local communities, especially regarding socio-cultural aspects. From an economic point of view, it can also be beneficial for other

business sectors. While tourism is often judged as having the impact of 'commercialization of cultural arts', this need not be considered negative. When viewed from an idealistic perspective, commercialization is often construed as a betrayal of the ideals of preserving the traditional values of a nation and traditional ethnicity. With commercialization, the performers of cultural arts can enjoy 'added value or exchange value' through the economic benefits effectively promoting the survival of the arts and culture.

Figures and Tables



Figure 1: Traditional houses in *Bawomataluo* Fau, Nias Rosta Minawati, 2017



Figure 2: Renovated Nias style house Rosta Minawati, 2017



Figure 3: Stone monuments in front of King's residence Rosta Minawati, 2017



Figure 4: Iconic wood carvings on the Kings residence Rosta Minawati, 2017



(A)



(B)

Figure 5A and 5B : Aerial views of Fahombo taken from the King's Residence Rosta Minawati 2017



Figure 6 : Fahombo www.negerikuindonesia.com (accessed 19 April 2019)



Figure 7: Stone jumping on Indonesian currency di Ora Hili Nias Edward Van Ness, 2022

Table 1: Rock Jumping ritual spell

Nias Language	Translation
<i>Ya aha golo ndra tuada khou</i>	The ancestors have blessed you
<i>Yafahow'o ndra'ugo tuada samatua hili</i>	The founder of this village blesses you
<i>Yafao fao khou luluo tuada samatua hombo</i>	The <i>Hombo Stone</i> founder is with you
<i>Ya'aoha-aoha mbotou, na Fahombo ndra'ugo</i>	Be light as a shadow when jumping <i>hombo rocks</i>

Martinus, 2022

4. CONCLUSION

In *Baomataluo*, *Teluk Dalam*, South Nias, there are several natural, cultural and historical tourist destinations. The uniqueness of the social and cultural system makes the people of Nias interesting and different from other ethnic groups in the archipelago. Various cultural treasures, including *Fahombo* practiced in *Baomataluo*. This village, with its unique arrangement of traditional houses, has become a tourist destination and cultural point for the people of Nias. In the past, *Fahombo* was a ritual performed in the Nias community to prove the maturity and courage of boys. The practice transformed in its new contemporary context awaits further developments.

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