

The potential ethnic culture heritage of North Sumatra in globalization

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Abstract

The growth of local ethnic cultural production in the current globalized world has resulted in the revival of cultural ethnic identity and commoditization cultural heritage for the global tourism industry. Seeking a micro theory of the local ethnic performance arts, a multisite-ethnographic fieldwork was conducted in areas of tangible heritage among ethnic groups such as Malay, Karo, Mandailing, Toba, and the Chinese in the city of Medan. A series of fieldwork activities which included participatory observation, interviews and ethno-history documents for data collection was conducted. In reshaping cultural identities, the numerous cultural performances were found such as the realization of systems of beliefs, knowledge and social control. The Malay mode of the *Pasembahan* dance, the Toba *Tortor Somba* and the Chinese Lion dance revitalizes the belief systems, while social controls are reflected in the Malay's *Serampang XII* dance and the *Kijom kijom* of Mandailing. Those cultural performances have a significant compelling heritage for the global tourism industry.

Key Words: Micro theory, ethnic arts, ethnic plurality, cultural heritage, global tourism.

Introduction

The plural ethnic city of Medan, where the natives (Karo, Simalungun and Malay groups) of Sumatra, the urbanites of Mandailing, Aceh, Minang, Javanese, and immigrants of South China and India have been living for many years (Sinar, 2009), experienced the shaping and reshaping of cultural identity from the pre-colonial, colonial and to the national periods. Following the tradition of Processual Analysis of the Manchester Anthropology School (Gluckman, 1965; Turner, 1957, 1969; Kurtz, 1979) this paper theorizes (a micro-theory) of the rich cultural mosaic of ethnic groups in the form of heritage that basically reflected in the enactments of rituals and cultural performances of a plural society in Medan, North Sumatra. The proposed micro theory is based on the exploration of enactments of ethnic arts in the various social interactions. Cultural heritage currently forms (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998) Medan despite plural cultural performances that emerged from the intensive interactions of ethnic groups in the realization of systems of beliefs, knowledge and social controls, process

of interactions does not only structurally meets the colonial and national government policies in modernizing urban areas, but also any attempts by ethnic groups to maintain and endure the city. The beliefs, knowledge and social controls of city dwellers at the grassroots plays a significant role and reshapes the cultural identities.

The lack of valid data and grounded scientific elaborative theory on the features of Medan's cultural heritage motivated the publication of this article which reports on a fundamental research result about the potential cultural arts of ethnic groups in the aforementioned to develop global tourism. Therefore, a socio-cultural study on the intangible cultural heritage of ethnic groups in Medan is a necessity to compare regional and global studies. Based on the intangible heritage perspective, the ethnic arts performance should collaborate with global tourism studies. Ethnic cultural performances and cultural tourism in the global context are mutual research factors in creating a new micro or grounded theory in the Humanities. Referring to the *Convention of the Safeguard of Intangible Cultural Heritage* UNESCO in 2003 and the Convention Recommendations of UNESCO in 2008, there is a need to conduct the identification and inventory of cultural heritage which comprises oral traditions, cultural expression through languages as well as performance arts. Social practice, rituals, festivals, the indigenous knowledge of nature, and crafts are vital for diversity and creativity. For example, a series of *Malay Mak Inang, Kuala Deli and Serampang XII*, and ethnic Chinese performances in Medan; a ritual of *Cheng Beng* and dragon and lions dances for the Chinese New Year Celebration, (Imlek), has survived (in Medan). An investigation of this reality would harness the new ethnic heritage theory in the Humanities.

Definition of Cultural Heritage in Global Context

According to UNESCO (2008), cultural heritage comprises the oral traditions and cultural expression through languages. The cultural heritage in globalization includes the ethnic performance in the arts, social practice, rituals, festivals, indigenous knowledge of nature, and crafts. Adhering to and revitalizing those traditions are vital for cultural diversity and creativity as well as global tourism.

Theoretical Reviews

The anthropology of heritage and tourism has elaborated cultural heritage in globalization. The interaction of compelling local culture with globalization (Pieterse, 2009), has been

enhanced by information technology which is the source of micro theory of cultural productions. Local awareness of the influential ethnic heritage impacts on the survival and reconstruction of cultural identity and diversity in globalization (Kaufman, 2013; Shankar, 2010). Moreover, Grunewald's report (2006) reveals the power of ethnic culture heritage in the reproduction of the arts. Grunewald (2006) stresses the social practices of ethnic groups, and asserts that: "the ethnicity exercised in the terms of a cultural production of traditions to be exhibited as distinctive features within the touristic ambit that would signify the ethnic character of the interaction" (Grunewald, 2006: 7). In the Anthropology of Tourism, Storzana (2001) argues that a holistic research explores the local cultures and their relationship with the tourism industry and socioeconomic development. The cultural tourism locations gain the benefit of tourists' visiting such reconstruction of cultural representation through the identification and inventory of heritage and museum renovations. Gonzales (2008: 807) recommends new research for the local cultural identity interactive process with the global tourism industry. Since 1970, it has been perceived as the reinvention process of cultural heritage which meets global tourism.

Methodology and Design

A Symbolic Interpretative Approach

According to Geertz (1975), an ethnographic method is conducted by selecting informants, transcribe a collection of text, explore the origins of ethnicity in genealogy, and compile a diary/logbook of reports, while the most important procedure is data reconstruction through symbolic interpretation. It considers a holistic and integrated system of beliefs and cultures in which the elements of religion, myths, cultural practices and acceptance of ethnic members are functionally and meaningfully interrelated. The anthropology of art and tourism explores the meaning and functions of the performing arts in the context of dynamic cultural growth in the community to be developed into a scientific theory. Thereafter, the arts and tourism research methodology is conducted is done through the application of ethnographic techniques as well as secure data on ethnic culture heritage and art in the city of Medan and its prospects for the global tourism development. The implementation of ethnographic fieldwork for the identification, inventory, and mapping collected data (Meskell, 2013; Lury 2007) from each ethnic group is conducted through surveys, observation, and interviews. Ethnographic methods are conducted to explore the art of intangible culture (intangible culture).

Technique of Data Collection

There are three techniques of data collection: First, an inventory survey for arts and cultural performances of ethnic groups in the city of Medan, which is conducted to identify and inventory is compiled in the form of religious rituals, ceremonies and live entertainment of ethnic traditions in Medan. Survey questionnaires were distributed to respondents considered as the representatives of ten (10) ethnic groups in Medan, namely: Javanese, Chinese, Malay, Mandailing-Angkola, Mandailing, Karo, Simalungun, Toba, Aceh, and Minang. Second, observant participatory was conducted of ten different ethnic galleries (10) including places of worship, traditional buildings, public spaces and tourist destinations that perform rituals, ceremonies, and live entertainment. The observation was recorded / videoed with a camera and each activity was diarised of the art galleries and a ritual procession and cultural performances. The focus of the observation included all of the activities associated with religious rituals, ceremonies, and live entertainment. Third, the following stakeholders in the arts performance and tourism industry were interviewed, namely; dancers, painters, poets, creographers, art managers, journalists, bureaucrats, studio owners, businessmen and hotel tour leaders. This was the focus of the study.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data obtained through the surveys, observation and interviews were collected and converted to empirical data. These were analyzed by using qualitative techniques. The empirical data was linked to the systems of beliefs and culture as well as the process of cultural transmission and distribution within each ethnic group. The categorization of data makes it easier to interpret the form, content, and culture and sustainability of values. The data was recorded in the form of databases into three (3) categories, namely:

1. Category of religious rituals is the activity of ten (10) ethnic groups in Medan based on belief or interpretation of Scripture, which involves dance, drama and nyayian in peringan of their religious holidays.
2. Category of indigenous ceremonies is the cultural activities of the ethnic groups in Medan, which is generated from the traditions of the ancestors, not from Scripture.

3. Category of folk entertainment performance is the activity of the art of music, dance drama, performed as entertainment for business, family hajtan and national holidays.

Compelling Ethnic Cultural Heritage in Global World

The emergence of ethnic groups in the city of Medan since 1918 has resulted in the growth of *wijk - wijk* (Dutch)-ethnic settlements. The Malays inhabit the region Maimoon, Mandailing on the Sungai Mati River, Batak Toba living in the village *Durian*, and the Chinese the central market and the Asia Street region. As soon as the ethnic groups settled, they maintained the beliefs or religions and transferred the cultural traditions to the younger generation. Following the process of cultural mosaic of urban areas of city of Medan, an analysis of influential ethnic culture heritage through Processual Analysis of Anthropology was applied. This methodology encompasses role players, specific goals and changes during the different eras. In theory, Social Drama by Victor W. Turner (1969, 1967), the route of the rites of passage was advanced in four (4) processes, namely: (1) Breach (Life Normal), (2) Liminality (Transitions), (3) Redress (Recovery), and (4) Reintegration (Reunification). This theory is the foundation for the research and study of rituals and performing arts. Max Gluckman provides a foundation of anthropological theory in particular and methods of Social Sciences Humanities to realize the meaning of an initiation ceremony for children who through puberty, fertility of women who will settle down, and treatment for the patient serve as a guide for members of the tribes. Richard Schechner added that the theory of Social Drama Victor W. Turner is 'ritual process' more applicable in the Performing Arts in public social performance compared to approaches that are Structuralism Semiotics (Schechner, 1986). The Processual analysis is applied for the description and verification of socio-cultural change in an event or a situation in which the social actors are in competition for special purposes.

Various ethnic group performances in the city of Medan experience dynamic integration with regional and global cultural influences. The performing arts is the realization of the values of humanism and is more complex (complexity of sensory) than artifacts. The world of ideas (mind) which is realized in the form of cultural rituals and cultural performances is cultural behavior associated with beliefs and traditions in the form of symbols. Performing rituals and cultural activities by ethnic Malay, Aceh, Minang, Karo, Simalungun, Batak Toba and Mandailing and Chinese who settled in the city of Medan are the data respondents. Thirty-five cultural art performances were targeted during the fieldwork as well as the performing

arts of the cultural heritage of each ethnic group during the observation / fieldwork. Moreover, the rituals for the new buildings and houses, festivals, wedding ceremonies and other ethnic events provide invaluable cultural meanings. For practical purposes, those performances are packaged to be promoted the development of the tourism sector.

The performing arts contains a symbolic meaning which provides an opportunity for communities to interpret the idea of beliefs and traditions in their social interactions. The creative and dynamic performances are associated with Medan's ethnic arts. The data collected from ethnic performances provide a micro theory for the development of local culture for global tourism. In the discussion, the three subtopics presented results from a field study of the performing arts as cultural expressions: (1) the results of the survey on cultural arts etnik Medan which is often demonstrated by the respondent (2) field observations of the social function and the potential of art selected for pengembangan global tourist (global tourism) in Medan, and (3) the observation of potential sites for the development of a global tour in the city of Medan.



In the interaction of culture, every ethnic group develops the performing arts through beliefs which is manifested in a variety of rituals (ritual enactments) and regulation of social relationships (social relations) in a symbolic meaning (symbolic meaning) that better reflects social behavior in a cultural context. For example, the Offerings of Malay, *Tortor Somba* Batak Toba and *Tortor Onang Onang* (offerings) Mandailaing dances including the Chinese Lion Dance are driven from the rituals. On the other hand, the *Zapin* Malay, *Kijom-kijom / Endeng Endeng* of Mandailaing and *Tortor Sopsisik Hata* of Batak Toba dances are

categorized as social dances in a variety of cultural events. A survey revealed that performance arts and cultural events in the city of Medan is the reflection of religious rituals, social interaction and adaptation to the environment or nature by the ethnic groups who live in the city of Medan. The survey results revealed (35) thirty-five listed performing arts which the respondents are familiar with. The survey results also revealed that systems of beliefs and social relations are primary references of ritual and cultural activities. Rituals are associated with symbols and social relations in the fieldwork. It theorizes the manifestation of culture in social relations. Rituals and festivals are the realization of the world of ideas. Performing ethnic arts is not only for rituals but also shapes ethnic identity. Theorizing cultural identity for social practices in the public sphere also contributes to the concepts of cultural eternity, genius, and originality; the culture behavior of ethnic groups also displays the ethnic identity. Finally, it the recreations of ethnic traditions become stronger groups in the urban communities.

The results of the survey, which included 35 ethnic cultural performing arts in Medan is still maintained by the community and art galleries. Performances such as the Malay Persembahan dance, Serampang XII and Zapin are clearly reminisced by the respondents. The Chinese ethnic arts: lion and dragon dances with religious activities has maintained social solidarity. A number of dances are performed for offerings. The rituals and festivals of ethnic groups have an influential impact on the development of heritage tourism. The city of Medan is the cultural capital for global tourism development in the Asian region.

Conclusion

After conducting an ethnographic study in the fieldwork for more than five months, the following was revealed:

1. A micro theory of cultural heritage of ethnic groups who live in the city of Medan was formulated based on the transcendent of traditions in which rituals and festivals include local dances to realize the systems of beliefs and social relations. The ethnic cultural heritage in the urban areas of Medan have become compelling world tourism attractions. This city also has several potential sites for ethnic cultural centers.
2. The city of Medan has 35 ethnic rituals and cultural performances which have dramatically survived. We selected 10 ethnic cultural performances that have high potential meanings for humaity and could be commodified and promoted for future

heritage global tourism development. Dances and social dance, such as, Zapin Malay, Serampang XII and Dance Endeng Endeng Mandailing provide great values for humanity.

3. The compelling ethnic cultural performances solidify the communities in the beliefs and customs systems. Those cultural performances provide social control in the interaction system and are considered powerful for the prospective tourism sectors. This is useful for the growth of the city of Medan as a global tourist center.

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