

Urban Cultural Festivals for the Global Tourism Development

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Keywords: Urban festivals, tourism, global, development.

Abstract: This paper reported the ethnographic research on the urban festivals for the global tourism development. This study was to recount the potential urban festivals of Medan which might be developed into global tourism events, and to explore those events as ethnographic data. A Multisited ethnographic design was conducted in the urban areas of Medan. Data obtained showed that some of the urban festivals of Medan have a great potential and a few need more the modernization ways to uplift to global tourism. Medan has many urban festivals for global tourism events that need to be promoted more in international events.

1 INTRODUCTION

Referring to the UNESCO *Convention of the Safeguard of Intangible Cultural Heritage* in 2003 and *Convention Recommendations* in 2008, there is a need to conduct the identification and inventory of cultural heritage comprising the oral tradition, and cultural expression existing in language as well as in performing arts. Social practice, rituals, festivals, the indigenous knowledge of nature, and crafts are vital for diversity and creativity. The current globalized world has resulted in the dramatic revival of cultural ethnic identities and commoditization of cultural heritage for the tourism industry (Matondang, 2016).

To reshape cultural identities, the numerous rituals, carnivals, and cultural festivals are enacted by plural ethnics or social groups in the public spaces in urban modern cities. Those enactments become the realization of systems of beliefs, knowledge and social control in a multicultural environment; the belief systems may include the sources of rituals, carnivals, and cultural festivals that have a significant compelling heritage reconstruction for the global tourism industry. Based on the intangible heritage perspective, the ethnic art performances should be made in the collaboration project with global tourism. Ethnic rituals, carnivals, and cultural festivals reshape the cultural tourism in the global context. Mutual research factors are the foundation of a new micro or grounded theory in the humanities.

The polyethnic city of Medan where the natives (Karo, Simalungun and Malay groups) and the

urbanites of Mandailing, Aceh, Minang, Javanese, and immigrants of South China and India have been living for many years (Sinar, 2009), undergoes the shaping and reshaping of cultural identity from the pre-colonial, colonial and to the national periods. Following Gluckman (Gluckman, 1965) and Turner (Turner, 1957), this paper theorizes a micro-theory of the rich cultural mosaic of ethnic groups in the form of heritage that basically reflects in the enactments of rituals, carnivals, and cultural festivals of a plural society in Medan. The proposed humanity theory on the ritual, carnival, and cultural festivals is based on the exploration of enactments of ethnic arts in the various social interactions. Cultural heritage currently forms (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998) social spaces in Medan Metropolitan.



Figure 1: Urban Festivals Location, Maimoon Palace of Malay Deli Kingdom in Medan.

2 THE STUDY

A socio-cultural study on the intangible cultural heritage of ethnic groups in Medan Metropolitan is a necessity to compare regional and global studies. UNESCO (2008) determines cultural heritage comprises the oral traditions and cultural expressions through languages. The cultural heritage in globalization includes the ethnic performance in the arts, social practices, rituals, festivals, indigenous knowledge of nature, and crafts. Adhering to and revitalizing those traditions are vital for cultural diversity and creativity as well as for global tourism.

Local awareness of the influential ethnic heritage impacts on the survival and reconstruction of cultural identity and diversity in globalization (Kaufman, 2013 and Shankar, 2010). Moreover, Grunewald's report reveals the power of ethnic culture heritage in the reproduction of the arts. Grunewald 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, p. 7). In the anthropology of tourism, Storanza (Storanza, 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 from tourists visiting such reconstruction of cultural representation through the identification and inventory of heritage and museum renovations. Gonzales (Gonzales, 2008, p. 807) recommends new research for the local cultural identity interactive process with the global tourism industry. Since 1970, the reinvention process of cultural heritage which meets global tourism has been perceived.

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 humanity theory on the ritual, carnival, and cultural festivals of cultural productions.

2.1 Research Design

This ethnography research was conducted by using participant observation, depth interviews, and document analysis, and involved holistic and integrated systems of beliefs and cultures in which the elements of religion, myths, cultural practices

and acceptance of ethnic members are functionally and meaningfully interrelated. Geertz (Geertz, 1975) argued that an ethnographic method is conducted by selecting informants, transcribing a collection of text, exploring the origins of ethnicity in genealogy, and compiling a diary/logbook of reports, while the most important procedure is data reconstruction through symbolic interpretation. 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 through the application of ethnographic techniques as well as the secure data on ethnic culture heritage and art in Medan and their prospects for the global tourism development. The implementation of ethnographic fieldwork for the identification, inventory, and mapping collected data (Lury, 2007) from each ethnic group was conducted through surveys, observation, and interviews. Ethnographic methods were conducted to explore the art of intangible culture.

2.2 Techniques of Data Collection

Three techniques were used in the data collection: first, an inventory survey of arts and ritual, carnival, and cultural festivals of ethnic groups was categorized in types of religious rituals, ceremonies and live entertainment. Survey questionnaires were distributed to the representatives of respondents from each ethnic group. Second, observant participatory was held at different ethnic galleries, for instance places of worshiping places, traditional buildings, public spaces and tourist destinations that perform rituals, ceremonies, and live entertainment. The observation was recorded video-taped with a handycam and each activity was noted in diary under the categories of art galleries, ritual procession, carnival and cultural festivals. The focus of the observation was addressed to all activities associated with religious rituals, ceremonies, and live entertainment. Third, the following professionals of arts performance and tourism industry were interviewed, namely dancers, painters, poets, cartographers, art managers, journalists, bureaucrats, studio owners, businessmen, and hotel tour leaders.

2.3 Techniques of Data Analysis

Data obtained from the surveys, observation and interviews were converted to empirical data and

analyzed by using qualitative techniques. The empirical data was linked to the systems of beliefs and culture as well as to the process of cultural transmission and distribution within each ethnic group. The categorization of data helps easily interpret the form, content, and culture and sustainability of values. The databases were put into three categories, namely national, regional, and international events.

3 FINDINGS: URBAN CULTURE IN MEDAN

Despite the plurality of ritual, carnival, and cultural festivals that emerges from the intensive interactions of ethnic groups in the realization of systems of beliefs, knowledge and social controls, the process of interactions not only structurally meets the colonial and national government policies in modernizing urban areas, but also relates to any attempts by ethnic groups to maintain and endure the city. The beliefs, knowledge and social controls of city dwellers at the grassroots play a significant role and reshape the cultural identities. For example, a series of *Malay Mak Inang*, *Kuala Deli* and *Serampang XII*, ethnic Chinese performances in Medan such as a ritual of *Cheng Beng*, and dragon and lion dances for the Chinese New Year Celebration or Imlek survive. An investigation of this reality would harness the new ethnic heritage theory in the humanities.

The emergence of ethnic groups Medan since 1918 has resulted in the growth of *wijk-wijk* (Dutch) 'ethnic settlements'. The Malays lived at the Maimoon area, the Mandailing at the Sungai Mati area, the Toba Bataks at *Kampung Durian*, and the Chinese at Pusat Pasar and at the Asia Street. The ethnic groups maintained their beliefs or religions and transferred their cultural traditions to younger generations. Then after the process of cultural mosaic of urban areas, an analysis of influential ethnic culture heritage by the processual analysis of anthropology was applied. This methodology encompasses role play, specific goals and changes during the different eras. Turner (Turner, 1969) adopted the route of the rites of passage into four processes, namely: (1) breach life normal; (2) liminality transitions; (3) redress recovery; and (4) reintegration reunification, this theory was used in the research and study of rituals and performing arts. Richard Schechner argued that Turner's ritual process is more applicable for performing arts,

compared to structural semiotics approach (Schechner, 1986). The processual analysis was applied for the description and verification of socio-cultural changes in events or situations in which the social actors competed for special purposes.

4 DISCUSSIONS

Performances from various ethnic groups showed dynamic integration of regional and global cultural influences. The performing arts displayed the realization of humanism and were more complex than artifacts. The forms of cultural rituals, carnivals, and cultural festivals were regarded to cultural behavior associated with beliefs and traditions appearing in the form of symbols. During the fieldwork the performing arts of the cultural heritage of each ethnic group had been observed. Moreover, the rituals for the new buildings and houses, the festivals, the wedding ceremonies and other ethnic events provided invaluable cultural meanings. For practical purposes, those performances were packaged to promote the development of the tourism sector.

The performing arts contain symbolic meanings of traditional beliefs and ways of social interactions. The creative and dynamic performances are associated with Medan's ethnic arts.

With regard to cultural interaction, it was found that every ethnic group develops the performing arts based on systems of beliefs and customs. Those systems were manifested in a variety of ritual enactments and regulation of social relationships in symbolic meanings that better reflected social behavior in a multicultural context. A survey revealed that performance arts and cultural events were the reflection of religious rituals, social interaction and adaptation to the environment or nature. Rituals were associated with symbols and social relations while ethnic art performance was only carried out to show ethnic identity. Theoretically, cultural identity showing 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 is hoped that ethnic traditions might become stronger in the urban communities.

Medan is known for its annual ethnic rituals and festivals. The revitalization of Malay's *Serampang XII* and *Zapin* dances were clearly recalled by respondents and could be used in wedding ceremony locally and nationally. It was also found that the

Chinese lion and dragon dances have maintained social solidarity in Medan. A number of dances were performed as offerings during Chinese holiday[s] and religious events. The Maiteray Temple in Cemara Asri Complex facilitated Chinese religious events regularly. The rituals and festivals brought influential impacts on the development of heritage tourism. Medan can now be regarded as the cultural centre for the global tourism development in Asia.

5 CONCLUSIONS

After conducting an ethnographic study in the fieldwork for more than five months in 2016, we conclude:

The rituals, carnivals, and cultural festivals in Medan show the existence of plurality or multiculturalism among ethnic groups. The transcendent traditions in which rituals and festivals have been living for a long time refer to local dances which realize the systems of beliefs and social relations, and ethnic identities; all the systems may become potential for tourism attractions in this city

The rituals, carnivals, and cultural festivals [survive and provide great values for humanity because they are meaningful and can become the social control in the interaction systems which are of course good local development.

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