

Marine Cultural Festival of Berhala Island, Serdang Bedagai, North Sumatra: challenges, solutions and social impacts

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Abstract. This research was conducted to reveal a new phenomenon of organizing art festivals based on community mutual cooperation or better known as citizen festivals. The rationale for conducting this study is to produce a view and knowledge in seeing the challenges, solutions, and social impacts of citizen festivals. Of course, the results of this study are expected to be a reference and development in the courses of Music Anthropology, North Sumatra Urban Music, and Field Studies in the Performing Arts Study Program, State University of Medan. The objectives of this study consist of 1) Finding the challenges faced by the organizers in implementing the Pulau Berhala Serdang Bedagai North Sumatra Sea Festival; 2) Describing the organizers' solutions in facing the challenges of implementing the Pulau Berhala Serdang Bedagai North Sumatra Sea Festival, and 3) Finding the social impact of organizing the Pulau Berhala Serdang Bedagai North Sumatra Sea Festival for the local community. The method used in this study is a qualitative type with a descriptive approach. Data search is done through interviews, documentation, and literature studies. The research process consists of the preparation stage, data collection stage, data analysis and processing stage, production stage, to the stage of concluding the results..

Keywords: Study, Festival, Art, Society.

1 Introduction

The world of performing arts has always been an interesting thing to study and discuss. The human need to get artistic entertainment does not stop at one point, it always develops in every journey of time. Various ways are done to enjoy art, starting from exploring the digital world (radio, tv, youtube, podcast, etc.) or watching live performances such as coming to music concerts, galleries, theaters or art festivals. "A festival is a social event that occurs repeatedly and at a fixed time through various forms and series of activities that are neatly arranged and involve all members of society who are united by similarities in ethnicity, language, religion/belief, history and outlook on life" (Ramadhan, et. al., 2021: 2). We can also interpret a festival as a cultural event that exists in society.

Yoon Shik, Yoo, et. al. (2010: 335) “Shows that local festivals have been recognized as enhancing tourism which can facilitate learning about a wide variety of unique cultural heritage, ethnic backgrounds, and local”. This time we will talk about art festivals, in the last 10 years there have been various changes in form, character, and procedures for managing art festivals in Indonesia, especially in Java. Art Festivals that are generally held in city centers, town squares, or protocol roads, with 'Western' character content have now moved to the corners of villages, lakeside, middle of rice fields, to mountain peaks, with a traditional or 'village' appearance. For example, if in the past people knew the Java Jazz Festival with its metropolitan character, now there is Jazz Gunung Bromo with a traditional Javanese style. When viewed from the management side, it has also changed from the work of professional event organizers to mutual cooperation involving the community as the main actors.

This community-based art festival is known as the Citizen Festival. The initiators of this citizen festival are part of an Indonesian network called Begawai Nusantara. The Citizen Festival movement that started in Java eventually also had an impact on art festival activists in North Sumatra. One by one similar style festivals appeared. In the mountainous region there is the Tao Silalahi Arts Festival, Dokan Arts Festival, and Siosar Art Festival. In the coastal region there is the East Coast Festival, Kemah Zapin, and the Pulau Berhala Cultural Festival. In the urban area there is the Jawa Deli Festival.

“Cultural festivals will also be rewarded with policies in art, and will also be able to carry on life in the arts industry” (Gibson, et al, 2010: 281). The emergence of a community-based festival style in North Sumatra certainly lives with its own character and uniqueness that is different from its advancement in Java Island. This is an interesting phenomenon to be studied and studied more deeply. Through this research, the author wants to study the performance of the community-based art festival or the Citizen Festival on Berhala Island, Serdang Bedagai, North Sumatra from three perspectives, namely challenges, solutions, and its social impact on the local community.

We see this research as important to test the opportunities of the public or inhabitant Festival as a festival model that can be applied in North Sumatra and bring good impacts to the community. This effort is also specifically intended to be able to find new concepts to be used as references and developments in the courses of Music Anthropology, North Sumatra Urban Music, and Field Studies in the Performing Arts Study Program, State University of Medan.

2 Material and Methods

The research material is all activities carried out at the Pulau Berhala Serdang Bedagai Festival, North Sumatra, which took place in 2022. The accumulated impacts of these activities are believed to continue to be felt by the managers and local communities around Pulau Berhala Serdang Bedagai, North Sumatra to this day.

Norman K. Denzin & Yvona S. Lincoln (2011) argues that “Qualitative research is an activity that places the observer in the world, consisting of a series of interpretive material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world into a series of representations including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos about themselves. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive

naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings,” The method used in this research is a type of qualitative research method with a descriptive approach. Data collection was carried out through interviews, documentation and literature studies. The interview method is a method carried out by question and answer through conversations with resource persons, namely festival organizers and village communities regarding the challenges, solutions, and social impacts of the citizen festival that has been implemented on Berhala Island, Serdang Bedagai. The documentation method is pictures or photos obtained by researchers during interviews (Kurniawan and Wahyurini 2016).

Next, the library method is literature or readings used related to research methods, media coverage, and articles related to the festival. The data obtained is then processed into a descriptive narrative. After the data is collected and processed, it is continued with the process of selecting and sorting and grouping data according to the needs to answer the formulation of the problem proposed.

The stages and steps that will be implemented in this research is:

2.1 Research preparation stage which includes designing proposals, conducting literature studies, determining research topics, formulating problems and research objectives, determining research locations, and determining research methods.

2.2 Data collection stage. Primary data is obtained through interviews aimed at collecting data.

2.3 Data analysis stage is carried out by categorizing and analyzing data and then conducting discussions with experts. Furthermore, formulating challenges, solutions, and social impacts of the residents' festival.

2.4 Stage of concluding research results and findings. At this stage, the research results will be concluded, conducting research results seminars.

2.5 Stage of publication of research results in the form of scientific articles.

3 Result and Discussion

To answer the problem formulation of this research, namely what are the challenges, solutions, and social impacts of the Serdang Bedagai Berhala Island Festival in North Sumatra, the researcher conducted interviews with related sources and will describe them as follows

3.1 Marine Culture Festival of Berhala Island (2022)

The Marine Culture Festival of Berhala Island is a coastal cultural event initiated and organized by the Telangkai Arts Community (Terobosan Langkah Anak Bedagai). The Telangkai Arts Community is a group of young men and women from Tanjung Beringin District (Serdang Bedagai) who have an interest in art and aim to advance regional arts, especially coastal Malay culture as the majority ethnic group in Tanjung Beringin District, Serdang Bedagai Regency. This goal is realized in the form of organizing coastal Malay cultural performances which have been held several times since 2016, namely Festival Budaya

Pulut Kuning Cultural in 2016 and 2017, the "Ronggeng Petang" stage in 2018, and the 2022 The Marine Cultur Festival of Berhala Island (as the subject of this research).

The Marine Cultur Festival of Berhala Island was held on September 16-19, 2022 on Berhala Island, Bagan Kuala Village, Tanjung Beringin District, Serdang Bedagai Regency. Berhala Island is located in the Malacca Strait. This island is one of the outermost islands in Indonesia that borders directly with Malaysia. Berhala Island is now a leading tourist destination in Serdang Bedagai Regency which is starting to be popular with tourists, and this island is identical as a turtle hatchery because it is used as a stopover for turtles to lay eggs.



Fig. 1. Interview with Mr. Mukhlis (Mentor of the Telangkai Arts Community)

According to Mukhlis as the Mentor of the Telangkai Arts Community, the Pulau Berhala Marine Culture Festival is presented to promote the cultures of the Sea People in a professional performance stage package. In addition, with the presence of this Festival activity, it is hoped that it can be an attraction and increase the tourism potential of Pulau Berhala. The Pulau Berhala Marine Culture Festival is held for 2 days by presenting a variety of events, that is:

3.1.1 Sea Feast (Kenduri)



Fig. 2. The initial series of sea feast activities, humming

This tradition is a ritual of the Tanjung Beringin community in giving thanks for the blessings of the Almighty for the results of the sea. A series of activities in the form of singing presented by a group of people by presenting chants that describe gratitude to God and the sea that has provided sustenance and an abundance of blessings felt by the community. Then, the series of kenduri laut is closed by launching a boat into the sea as a symbol of expressing gratitude, gratitude, prayer and hope to God through the abundant sea.



Fig. 3. The final series of sea feast activities, releasing boats into the sea.

3.1.2 Cooking Parade

Performing a cooking show of traditional Malay coastal food from Tanjung Beringin, this activity was carried out as an effort to preserve and document Intangible Cultural Heritage in the culinary field.



Fig. 4. Cooking parade activities of traditional Malay food menus of Serdang Bedagai

3.1.3 Fashion Parade

This activity is in the form of a fashion creation parade with the theme of the life of coastal communities in Serdang Bedagai, presented by a group of young people who have a creative spirit with local wisdom of Malay culture.



Fig. 5. Creative fashion parade activities based on local wisdom

3.1.4 Release of Baby Turtle

This activity is carried out with the aim of helping to conserve animals that are threatened with extinction, while also helping nature to maintain a sustainable ecosystem, it is hoped that the next generation can still enjoy the wealth of marine nature through a well-functioning and sustainable ecosystem.



Fig. 6. Activities to release baby turtles into the sea by various levels of society

3.1.5 Coastal Dance Performance

The Lukah and Serampang Laut Dance performances are one of the cultural icons in the Pulau Berhala Serdang Bedagai festival. The dance is presented by a group of young people who depict the expression of the Serdang Bedagai Malay community in the form of a series of beautiful and energetic dances full of spirit.



Fig. 7. Serdang Bedagai Malay dance performance

3.1.6 coastal Music Show

Musical performances of Senandung Angin, Zapin Gambus Laut, and World Music, presented by a group of young people in a music group. The arrangement and processing of sounds in such a way and inspired by the local wisdom of the Serdang Bedagai Malay culture. This musical presentation is performed with full expression and energy with a spirit of limitless creativity based on local wisdom.



Fig.8. A presentation of creative Malay musical performances from Serdang Bedagai

3.1.7 Coastal Malay Martial Arts Attractions (silat)

This performance is also one of the icons of Serdang Bedagai Malay culture that is starting to be forgotten, presented creatively by a pair of “silat“ fighters with full enthusiasm and sportsmanship. This performance aims to reintroduce one form of Serdang Bedagai Malay tradition to the younger generation, it is hoped that it can inspire the spirit and sportsmanship formed in the ability of Coastal Malay silat.



Fig.9. A performance of the Serdang Bedagai Malay martial arts.

There are several obstacles that are challenges when implementing the Pulau Berhala Marine Culture Festival. Mukhlis said that the main challenge faced is the weather. The journey from the Bagan Kuala Village pier to Pulau Berhala takes 4 hours using a motorboat. The journey will not be possible if the waves are high on the day of departure, while the schedule has been set long ago because the boats have been booked and the artists and people involved in this festival have set aside time and cleared activities for this festival. In addition, in September, the potential for rain is quite high. Festival activities held in open areas will be threatened with failure if it rains. The ebb and flow of sea water is also another consideration. The stage positioned on the edge of the beach will be dangerous if the tide rises and eats up the land.

To overcome this situation, the committee anticipated it by conducting a SWOT analysis related to the weather forecast. The committee checked the weather forecast through the BMKG website which can see the weather potential for the next month. In addition, the committee also discussed with local fishermen who have traditional knowledge in seeing stars and high tides to predict nature. Thanks to this calculation, the activity ran smoothly in sunny weather. The trip there and back was passed safely in calm waves.

Another challenge faced is sea wind. Activities carried out on the coast will certainly face strong winds. In the implementation of the Festival Budaya Lau Pulau Berhala which presents music and dance performances, sound clarity is certainly the main aspect that must be considered. The strong sea wind on Berhala Island is a barrier to audio reaching the listener. For this reason, the organizers discussed with the sound system team to design the appropriate wattage for the geographical conditions of Berhala Island.

Next, the challenge faced is inviting the community to take part in The Marine Cultur Festival of Berhala Island activities amidst the busy daily activities of the community around Tanjung Beringin District, Serdang Bedagai. Seeing this, the Festival management collaborated with the local Village Government and Agencies that could be partners and provide support to carry out activities. The Bagan Kuala Village Government gave instructions to all people in Bagan Kuala Village to take part according to the creativity needed in the Festival Budaya Lau Pulau Berhala activities, and what's more interesting, the Village Government determined the Festival activities as part of the Village Government's activity agenda in order to advance the Tourism program. The Village Government also provided support for manpower and infrastructure by directing all Fishermen to prioritize boats to operate to support transportation to Berhala Island.



Fig. 10. Interview with Mr. Safril (Head of Bagan Kuala Village)

In an interview with the Head of Bagan Kuala Village, he said that the implementation of the Festival Budaya Lau Pulau Berhala involved many local people. According to Safril, the Head of Bagan Kuala Village, there are several social impacts thanks to the Festival, including this Festival becoming a space for people to express their artistic talents. The music and dance stages become an arena for local artists to display their expressions and creativity. The performance stage becomes a space for expression that is full of enthusiasm and sportsmanship. The longing for the artistic movement is overflowing in every series of activities, both the old and the young, together taking part in the success of the event.

From an economic perspective, the fishermen community gets additional income by renting fishermen's boats for transportation from Bagan Kuala Village to Berhala Island, this transportation route is the only one that is most possible and affordable for all levels of society. The Village Government, through the Village Head, conveyed to the fishermen to apply a logical and relatively affordable tariff so as not to make it difficult for visitors who want to attend The Marine Cultur Festival of Berhala Island

The artist community, such as art practitioners from the old and young groups, are said to receive a proper honorarium, the word proper here means quite decent and does not make the artists have to lose when they have to provide all the needs for them to perform. This is also agreed by the management and art practitioners who participate in the activities of The Marine Cultur Festival of Berhala Island.



Fig. 11. One of the Serdang Bedagai Malay music offerings from art practitioners

Furthermore, the mothers enjoy the wages of cooking services that are in accordance with the expected quality. This is also felt to provide good benefits to the community who have provided various types of typical Serdang Bedagai Malay cuisine at the festival activities.

Looking at the development of tourism, The Marine Cultur Festival of Berhala Island activities are felt to have a significant impact on the development of tourism in Bagan Kuala Village and the surrounding Pulau Berhala. This can be seen from the increasing number of enthusiasts and visitors to tourism around the coast of Bagan Kuala Village and visits to Pulau Berhala to see the natural beauty and other natural activities.

4 Conclusion

Seeing the development of art performances in North Sumatra, and added to the acceleration of information in society, we already need to take various preventive measures in order to evaluate the conditions resulting from various art activities in society, including festivals. The goal is so that we can sort and choose things that have positive and negative impacts from the development of performance offerings in the form of festivals. If it has a positive impact, it is continued and developed to be better. If it has a negative impact, it needs to be evaluated and alternatives sought. This can be done if we conduct an in-depth investigation through research activities such as those conducted in the research in this article. "It is important to make an effort to provide technical and conceptual guidance for the community to rise and develop in traditional arts culture." (Prastiawan, et. al., 2021:236).

The Marine Culture Festival of Berhala Island is felt to provide quite positive benefits to the community around Berhala Island, Bagan Kuala Village, Tanjung Beringin District, Serdang Bedagai. Although the activity has its own challenges, the management can still overcome them in a good way. The challenges faced can be resolved well. One of the most interesting things about the management's strategy is to involve various elements of society, the Village Government, and other agencies to support the smooth running and success of The Marine Culture Festival of Berhala Island. This needs to be appreciated and continued.

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