

**BANGKA MBULE-MBULE TRADITION
AS A CULTURAL TOURIST ATTRACTION
IN WAKATOBI, SOUTH EAST SULAWESI**

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ABSTRACT

Globalization has caused tradition to change, meaning that globalization has caused the sacred tradition to change into the propane tradition as it has been used as a tourist attraction. This present study discusses the Bangka *mbule-mbule* tradition used as a tourist attraction in Wakatobi Regency, South East Sulawesi. The study is intended to inform the public that the Bangka *mbule-mbule* has been performed as a cultural tourist destination. The study uses the descriptive qualitative method. The data which were obtained from the field were qualitatively described. The social theory combined with the theory of cultural tourism department was used to analyze the data.

The result of the study shows that Tradition can be defined as a right heritage or a heritage from the past which is still currently found in society. One of the traditions which is still performed is the *bangka mbule-mbule* tradition. It is still performed by Mandati people in Wakatobi Regency, South East Sulawesi. The owners of the tradition still believe in it. It has been performed to support the cultural tradition in Wakatobi. The implication is that it has increased the number of tourists visiting Wakatobi, South East Sulawesi.

Keywords: tradition, Bangka mbule-mbule, tourist attraction, culture

INTRODUCTION

Wakatobi Regency, as one of the world's tourist destinations, is rich in culture and marine bio data. Wakatobi used to be part of Buton Regency, South Sulawesi Province; however, it has become new regency since 2003. It is a group of islands situated in the eastern part of South Sulawesi Province. Its reliable sector is marine tourism. In addition, it is also rich in culture and traditions. Some of the traditions which the people living there still perform are *kabuenga* tradition, *duata* tradition performed by the *Bajo* ethnic group, *safara* tradition performed by *Tomia* ethnic group, and *posepaa* tradition.

Wakatobi Regency consists of eight districts; they are Wangiwangi District as its capital, South Wangiwangi District, Kaledupa District, South Kaledupa District, Tomia District, East Tomia District, Binongko District, and Togo Binongko District. As far as the conservation of traditions is concerned, the people living in Wakatobi Regency still strongly maintain their traditions. One of the traditions they still perform is the Bangka *mbule-mbule* tradition, although it has been performed to promote cultural tourism as an income generating attempt made by the local government.

The Bangka *mbule-mbule* tradition constitutes a ritual which can be defined as a boat which goes home. When it is performed, a boat with replicas of a man and a woman and different types of agricultural crops is washed away. Before it is involved in a procession around the city, prayers are recited to ward off misfortune 'tolak bala'. Then the replicas are carried in a liter around the village. Before it is washed away, the boat replica carried by a group of strong men and decorated with different crops is rotated right and left in the cross road eight times. After it is rotated right and left, it is carried to the beach where it is washed away.

As a traditional ritual, the *Bangka mbule-mbule* is one of the potentials which Wakatobi Regency has which is worth conserving. What is unique, as far as this tradition is concerned, is that it can be performed as a tourist attraction and to inform its existence to the public. The ritual which is highly rich in the local genius values can contribute to the empowerment of the Mandati society. The traditional society is empowered in order to improve their life condition materially and spiritually.

RESEARCH METHOD

This present study is a descriptive qualitative one; it describes the Bangka *mbule-mbule* tradition performed as a tourist attraction. The study was conducted in Mandati Sub-district, South Wangiwangi District, Wakatobi Regency, South East Sulawesi Province. The *bangka-bangka* tradition performed by the Mandati ethnic group in Wakatobi Regency is used as the data of the study.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Tradition refers to the sameness of any material object and concept inherited from the past, but it is still currently performed and has not been damaged. It can be defined as a right or past heritage. It is usually repeatedly and intentionally performed. According to C.A. van

Peursen, tradition is translated as a process bequeathing norms, customs and traditions, and properties. It can be adopted, denied, and combined with man-made different things (Peursen, 1988: 11).

Tradition can be more widely defined as an entity which includes the existence of the past in the present time; it does not only show the fact that the current era comes from the neglected or forgotten past era. This is supported by what is stated by Shils that tradition refers to all the material objects and concepts adopted from the past era but it is currently still in existence; it has not been damaged or destroyed. Tradition means everything which is inherited from the past era to the present era (Sztompka, 2007: 70).

Tradition is adopted from the Latin word *tradition* "being continued" or habit. As far as this definition is concerned, tradition means informing and submitting something through time. Tradition cannot be separated from the past time and, to some extent, includes sacred things such as the kinship system, the belief system, arts, customs and traditions, and the other forms of habits performed from generation to generation. Although it has changed with respect to time and space, it has not disappeared; it has not got extinct either as it has been continuously made to survive through current definition. As one source of the cultural treasure of the society in the past, different forms of local genius and traditions need to be maintained and developed.

Etymologically, the term *bangka mbule-mbule* is derived from the local language, namely the Pulo language or the language spoken by the people living in the Islands of Tukang Besi or Mbeda-mbeda language which is currently referred to as the Wakatobi language. The word *bangka* means "perahu" (boat), and the word *mbule* means "going home", which has then become a reduplication *mbule-mbule*, meaning "dipulangkan" (being sent home) and or "dilarung ke laut" (being washed way on the sea). *Bangka mbule-mbule* is a traditional ritual performed by the Mandati ethnic group living in South Wangi-Wangi District, Wakatobi Regency. It has become a culture which has been deeply rooted in the Mandati society since a very long time ago. It is performed once in four times and, if it is necessary, it can be performed once a year. It is performed when the traditional leaders view that the country in general and the Mandati society in particular are experiencing disasters such as crop failure, epidemic diseases, disputes, security instability, and other incidents which disturb the society.

The strategy used to develop the industry of cultural tourism in Wakatobi seems to have increased the local people's income, causing them to be more developed and welfare.

The local government has successfully developed the cultural tourist attraction *bangka mbule-mbule* to support the marine tourism in Wakatobi, as shown by the fact that the number of tourists visiting Wakatobi increased significantly from 2011 to 2016. In 2011 the tourists coming to visit Wakatobi totaled 7,698 and in 2012 the tourists coming to visit Wakatobi totaled 8,053, in 2013 the tourists coming to visit Wakatobi totaled 12,370, in 2014 the tourists coming to visit Wakatobi totaled 14,270, in 2015 the tourists coming to visit Wakatobi totaled 18,027, and in 2016 the tourists coming to visit Wakatobi totaled 22,380 (Source: the Department of Tourism and Creative Economy of Wakatobi Regency). Wakatobi is new regency and is rich in natural wealth; therefore, it has been promoted as a tourist destination. The programs made by the government cannot be separated from the attempt made to promote the potentials the region has. It has promoted natural tourism, cultural tourism, and man-made tourism. In addition, the government has also improved infrastructure and services to visitors. In this way it is hoped that Wakatobi will be able to attract tourists to always come with their families, relatives, and friends. Cultural tourism is promoted to support the marine tourism so tourists will never feel bored of enjoying the marine beauty. Interesting cultural traditions will also be offered to tourists as they reflect the past civilization.

At the moment the Indonesian government is developing superior tourist destinations better known as top ten destinations, one of them is Wakatobi Regency. The past cultural heritage is considered the cultural capital which can be used to support the development of cultural tourism (Richards in Ardika, 2015:57). Tourists can consume cultural tourism as a tourist attraction for several factors; they are aesthetics, emotion, technology or information, and values. They will always be interested in knowing how other people can live in the environment which is different from the environment where they live. These factors can motivate them to go from one destination to another destination. They make contact with local people; they appreciate customs and traditions, musical gastronomy, and arts.

Tourism is one of the globalized cultural phenomena which can be considered a system. In the model proposed by Leiper in Ardika (2015:58), it is stated that tourism is made up of three components; they are tourists, geographical elements, and tourism industry. In this model tourists are the most important thing as, basically, it is concerned with human experience; it is something which can be enjoyed, anticipated and can be eternally remembered. The geographic element includes the market or the region which can motivate people to travel and transit when they travel from one destination to another. The third

element is tourism industry which is concerned with an enterprise or business and organization regulating the products of tourism.

Furthermore, Cooper (Ardika, 2015:58) stated that a tourist destination should have four components; they are attraction, accessibility, availability of different facilities (accommodation, restaurant, entertainment, shopping center, and other amenities, and ancillary services).

In relation to the cultural tourism, Wakatobi is actually one of the regions in Indonesia which has different cultural heritages, resulting from the fact that there are many ethnic groups with their respective cultural heritages. They are the Wanci ethnic group, the Mandati ethnic group, the Liya ethnic group, the Kapota ethnic group, and the Bajo ethnic group occupying Wangiwangi Island, the Kaledupa ethnic group occupying Kaledupa Island, which is also occupied by the Bajo Sampela ethnic group and Mantigola ethnic group, the Tomia ethnic group occupying Tomia Island, the Binongko ethnic group or the Mbeda-mbeda ethnic group and the Ciacia ethnic group occupying Binongko Island. They have inherited cultural heritages from the pre-historic eras (the Hindu Budha era, the Islamic era and Colonial Era) which can be used as tourist attractions. In relation to that, it is not wrong if James Spilline (2003) stated that Indonesia is the most interesting country in South Asia with respect to cultural tourism. It is also stated that the development of cultural tourism should economically and culturally benefit local people.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTION

As a tourist destination, Wakatobi has been included by the central government as one of the top ten destinations in Indonesia. The Bangka *mbule-mbule* tradition has been used as its icon of tourism. It has been well-known for its marine and cultural tourism. The success achieved by the local government to promote tourist attractions has contributed to the increase in the number of tourists visiting Wakatobi. It is expected that the result of the present study can be used as a reference referred to by those who care about the development of tradition and cultural tourism, especially the tradition performed by and cultural tourism developed by the Mandati people in Wakatobi.

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