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The Role of Folk Culture in the Promoting Tourism. A Case of Folklore of Otanaha Fort in Gorontalo Province

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Abstract:

Gorontalo City embodies highly valuable tourism potentials to reveal. The city offers not only physical attractions for the tourists to please their eyes but also values of the objects that live along with the highlighted events within the historical timeline. Among the historical objects is Otanaha Fort, a tourist spot in Gorontalo, named after the place's feature of historical legend. Many believe that stories and legends behind the naming of a place or an object are highly related to the socio-cultural life of the ancient society. With that in mind, a study is essential to carry out and to reveal the historical events that lie behind tourism objects with the aims of enriching insights of local people. Such an effort is undertaken as a support of local contents acquisition to be capable of extending the information of a tourism object for the locals. The study aims to carry out the historical overview of Otanaha Fort as a supporting element of cultural tourism in Gorontalo. The researchers employed field survey and interview to obtain the data and folklore analysis to approach the research object. The result shows that the folklore of Otanaha Fort is a manifestation of features of social events of Gorontalo in the ancient times that depict the record of past events. The historical facts are further packaged in the form of imaginative fable for people to enjoy as an act of historical preservation. The evidence of the historical facts is observable by data tracking within the naming process of the objects, site or tombstone of influential figures of the story, preservation of address of traditional titles related to the figures, and distinct building techniques observable in the fort' architecture.

Keywords: culture; folklore; Otanaha; tourism; promoting

JEL Classification: Z32; Z33; Z11

Introduction

Tourism sector contributes 14.13% on the province's Gross Regional Domestic Product in 2011 (Regional Mid-term Development Plan of Gorontalo Province 2012-2017 2011). Gorontalo City is full of hidden tourism gems to be brought to the surface. The potencies of tourism income in Gorontalo can be classified into natural tourism, historical tourism, marine tourism, cultural tourism, and religious tourism; all integrate into a form of tourism area, if managed properly, it acts as a support in terms of empowering local people as key actors in the tourism business. The idea of expanding tourism potential is supported by Gorontalo government, one of which is by participating in domestic and international tourism promotion events. However, the result is far from optimal, due to lack of

information of tourism potentials in Gorontalo, hindering the government to spread the tourism promotion to attract visitors optimally.

There are various tourism potentials to be discovered in a single tourism object. The number of potencies in a tourism object goes in line with the opportunities of utilisation. Soekadijo (2008) once asserts that the potencies in a tourism spot are capitals to be developed into tourist attractions in situ (inside the place) or ex situ (outside the place). In this case, physical attractions are not always the priority for the tourists; but the historical values of the objects are also approachable as tourism commodity.

Among the historical objects is Otanaha Fort, a tourist spot in Gorontalo, named after the place's feature of historical legend. This leads us to questions that it is possible that stories and legends behind the naming of a place or an object are highly related to the socio-cultural life of society in ancient times. Henceforth, it is significant to conduct a study to reveal the historical events that lie behind tourism objects to enrich the locals' insights as well as their knowledge.

The previous statements are the fundamental reasons for the significance of research on Otanaha Fort. This research employs culture-oriented folklore approach, in which it attempts to elaborate the historical features of the legend of Otanaha Fort in the form of story transcription and narration to be promoted as a historical tourism potential, along with efforts of historical conservation to become local features.

Generally, the unique feature of a culture is a magnet to attract visitors (Correia *et al.* 2011). Canavan (2016) also highlights the significance of cultural tourism as a tool to unite concepts in tourism school of thought and to provide holistic, flexible, and reflective tourism. Moreover, Correia *et al.* (2011) state that cultural features of a region play major contribution towards a preference of tourist destination. With that in mind, it is advised to perform sustainable development of cultural tourism. The notion is in line with Qian *et al.* (2016) that one of the key factors of sustainable tourism is the development of local-oriented tourism in which the community contributes the most.

Well-implemented promotions of tour destinations emphasising on the local community are believed to make a significant contribution to the Local Own-source Revenue of Gorontalo and the multiplying process of domestic economic development surrounding the destinations. Community-based tourism, by Vitasurya (2015) and Qian *et al.* (2016), can further grow the community's interest in natural preservation (*e.g.,* tourism waste management), making the tourists comfortable and thus stay for longer period. Furthermore, local wisdom-oriented tourism can be one of the fundamentals of sustainable tourism development, if supported by the proactive participation of the community in developing supporting tourism infrastructures and media. (Vitasurya 2015).

Furthermore, this study is expected to identify and disseminate the existence of tourism potentials in Gorontalo and the historical features related by approaching using folklore as its scope of the study. Etymologically, the term 'folklore' derived from English 'folk' and 'lore' (Danandjaja 2005) Dundes (Ibid 2005) defines it as a group of people which shares identical features of physical, social and cultural aspects distinctive to other cultures. By that, Bascom (in Danandjaja 2005) formulates that a folklore consists of three main groups, *i.e.,* myth, legend, and folktale. The myth is a kind of folklore in which the community believes that it happened in the pastimes and considers it as a sacred event and played by god-like or superpower entities. Such event is perceived as sacred that sometimes the community believes that it happened in another realm. Moreover, the legend is folklore, also considered as a sacred event that happens and takes place in history. What makes it different from myth and legend is that legend tends to be secular and occurs in not-too distant past as well as in the human realm. Legend is sometimes considered as 'collective' history (in other terms, 'folk' history), despite that it is prone to narration distortion over ages since legends are generally unwritten and spread traditionally. Furthermore, legend tends to be migratory, in another way, it can spread from its origin to other regions.

1. Research Method

This study employed folklore approach, in which the researchers engaged field survey and interview to obtain the data and descriptive data analysis on local wisdom applied in the surrounding community regarding Otanaha Fort as the research object. Furthermore, the researchers highlighted the folklore of the naming process of the fort from a sociological point of view. By folklore approach, the story behind the naming process of Otanaha fort is further treated as social fact. For that reason, the object of analysis concerned with sociological and cultural aspects of the community. This is in line with Danandjaya (in Endraswara 2009) who asserts that motives of folklore analysis are inextricably tied to its cultural features. By folklore approach, it means that the study attempted to review from the cultural morphology of the story as a means of development of science. Therefore, it is expected to correlate the community's speech culture (in this case, the folklore) and the tourism potentials to develop Otanaha Fort as one of Gorontalo's main destinations.

2. Findings and Discussions

2.1. Geographical Condition of Otanaha Fort

Gorontalo City is located at the longitude of 122o 59' 44" - 123o 05' 59"E and latitude of 0o 28' 17" - 0o 35' 56"N. It has an area of 64.79 km2, about 0.55% of total area of Gorontalo Province. Sharing its border with Gorontalo Regency and Bone Bolango Regency, Gorontalo City consists of nine districts, *i.e*., Kota Selatan, Kota Utara, Kota Barat, Kota Timur, Kota Tengah, Dungingi, Dumbo Raya, Hulonthalangi, and Sipatana district.

There are at least eleven renowned tourism objects in the city, *i.e*., Otanaha Fort, The Sacred Tomb of Kali Baluntha, The Sacred Tomb of Ju Panggola, The Sacred Tomb of Nene Tabibi, The Sacred Tomb of Haji Bu'ulu, The Sacred Tomb of Ta Ja'iloyibuo, The Sacred Tomb of Pulubanga, The Sacred Tomb of Dutongo Pitu Loludu, The Sacred Tomb of Ta Ilayabe, Hunto Mosque, and Footprint of Lahilote Site.

Otanaha Fort is located at the longitude of 123o 00' 25.2" E and latitude of 0o 32' 57.4" N. Otanaha Fort is built approximately in 1522 AD by King Ilato by support from the captain of Portuguese ship as a mean of strengthening the kingdom's security from enemy threats. The materials of construction of Otanaha Fort are sand, limestone, and egg of Maleo bird as its adhesive material.

Otanaha Fort is located on a hill where the visitor needs to pass through 348 stairs and four stopovers to reach the fort. One of the distinct features of Otanaha fort is in the stairs composition that the total of stairs from one stopover to another is different to each other. From the bottom to the top, passing through four stopovers, visitors must pass through 52, 83, 53, 89, and 71 stairs respectively. The stopovers are provided as checkpoint place to rest and gather energy before proceeding to the top.

2.2. The Story Behind Otanaha Fort

Otanaha is derived from ota and naha; both are in Gorontalo language. Ota means fort, while naha stands for the name of the founder. Thus, Otanaha means 'a fort founded by Naha'. The history records that Naha founded the fort in 1585. There is two more fortresses inside the Otanaha fort, *i.e*. Otahiya, as a shelter for Naha's spouse, Otahiya, and Ulupahu, for Naha's son Pahu. Ulupahu derived from Gorontalo language phrase u wole pahu, which means Pahu's (fort). Otanaha fort is the oldest between three and made of mixtures of limestone, sand, and egg white of Maleo bird. There is a famous tale behind the fort repeatedly spread by the locals; eventually, the tale is considered as a legend in the community, particularly for the locals in Dembe subdistrict, Gorontalo.

The tale is about the origin of the fort, which is initiated by Ndoba and Tili'aya; both are daughters of King Ilato. King Ilato, with his sister Princess Tolangohula, is said to descend from the sky, in another word, they are said as 'eggs falling from the heavens'. Ilato and Tolangohula are addressed the customary title, in which Ilato is said as Ta Lonto Hulungo (man descended from the sky), and Tolangohula is addressed as Ta Lobuta'a to Putito (lady coming out of an egg). Ndoba and Tili'aya are the daughter of Ilato with his spouse, Queen Molo'u from Maluku. Both of them are the masterminds behind the building of Otanaha Fort, as a symbol of resistance against Portuguese invasion at the time. To get stronger, they asked for help to King of Gowa (Makassar).

On their journey coming home, Ndoba and Tili'aya were escorted by a company of four brave ship captains (Lakoro, Lakandjo, Laguna and Djaelani). Upon their arrival, the ship captains refused to go back to Makassar and stayed instead to help Ndoba and Tili'aya to formulate tactical strategies to seize back the land of Molo'u. It was also an act of prevention before the Portuguese invaders arrive in Gorontalo, since the land of Maluku had been conquered, and it is likely that the next stop will be Gorontalo. Having assured of the likelihood, Ndoba and Tili'aya gathered forces and strength to plan an ambush for the Portuguese, since they were not strong enough to face it frontally. Ndoba and Tili'aya assured that if they grow their strength altogether, they could win the battle. To anticipate any threats, Ndoba and Tili'aya also initiated to build strong forts as a mean of protection and defense from future aggressions. Therefore, these three forts are built to protect Gorontalo people from threats, later to be founded and named by Naha. During the construction process, some parts of current Gorontalo land were once sea floors, thus, providing an ease of the raw material transport.

2.3. Folklore Analysis of Otanaha Fortress

2.3.1. Related to events of object

Gorontalo society is renowned as a society that upholds and preserves its cultural and customary values from generations to generations, including natural preservation efforts. The cultural values of Gorontalo society lie on the fundamental philosophy of characteristic of nature. By growing bonds with nature, Gorontalo people believe that there is a supernatural realm, in which it is inhabited by spirits and beautiful fairies, that seldom transform themselves as human (coming down from the sky).

The spirits are treated as gods and believed to bear supernatural power and control of the universe. In the living philosophy of Gorontalo people, there are four basic elements of nature, which are believed to be the substantial compounds of the universe, *i.e*. huta (earth), taluhu (water), dupoto (wind), and tulu (fire). This also applies to the story behind Otanaha Fort. The place setting is a hill shaped like a mound (huntu) inhabited by a beautiful princess from the spirits realm. It is elaborated in the following quote: „Once upon a time, on a place called huntu lo bohu, there lived seven ladies named Bui Bungale, Bui Dalahu, Bui Bindelo, Langgi Ihe, and others (not narrated)". It is said that the seven ladies were descendants of the spirits from Gowa land in Makassar and lived the earth since the ancient times.

2.3.2. Beliefs of supernatural powers

Some tourist destinations in Gorontalo are associated with the presence of beings with supernatural and magical power, *e.g.,* Limboto Lake, Lahilote footprints site, the great Panipi, and others. In the story behind Otanaha Fort, Ilato is believed to bear supernatural power, as narrated in the following quote.

A man is named Ilato (Lightning), as his appearance mimics the traits of lightning. The history told that Ilato is the person beneath the tomb of Ju Panggola inside Al-Mukarramah Mosque in Dembe. During the moment he appeared, an egg from sky cracked, and he disappeared in the blink of eyes to where the sun rises (East), leaving young child named Tolangohula to be nurtured by Bui Bungale until her adulthood.

2.3.3. Related to traditional titles addressed to the characters

Gorontalo culture is highly associated with traditional title award for some people, either related to family or the community. (Baruadi 2011) Traditional titles within society are generally awarded to position holders during their lifetime (pulanga), or after their death (gara'i). Some characters in the tale of Otanaha Fort were also awarded traditional titles, as quoted as follows.

It is believed that the real identity of Ju Panggola inside Al-Mukarramah Mosque in Dembe is King Ilato himself. Ju Panggola is also called Du Panggola as it is easier by Gorontalo accent to pronounce. The lady is named Tolangohula which stands for moonshine, as her beauty shines magnificently. Ilato and Tolangohula are addressed as Ta Lonto Huwa (from the land of Gowa), Ta Lonto Hulungo (man descended from the sky) and Ta Lobuta'a to Putito (lady coming out of an egg).

2.3.4. Related to the prerequisites of a leader in Gorontalo

One of the basic prerequisites to become a leader in Gorontalo is buheli (bravery). Moreover, the candidate needs to possess the power or inherit the power from ancestors. Most of the folktale in Gorontalo is about beings with supernatural power and wisdom. This is depicted in the tale of Otanaha Fort, as follows.

As explained previously, Ndoba and Tili'aya are daughters of Ilato and Queen of Molo'u. It is written in the history that Ilato is somewhat different to normal human being since he was originated from something supernatural. He was quiet, hard worker, wise, and respected by the society for his words of gentle and politeness. It is for that trait that he was appointed as the leader of the community, besides of his sacred and magical powers.

2.3.5. Related to the traits of mutual cooperation and unity within the society

Gorontalo society is well-known for their characteristic of mutual cooperation in every layer of their activity. The traits are reflected in their actions to cooperate and work together in accomplishing tasks. The society forms work group*, i.e*., hulunga, huyula, ambuwa, timo'a, dembula, and others, all are formed to develop bonds within their cooperation. Related to the tale, when building the forts, Ndoba and Tili'aya also asked for help from the community, as a symbol of resistance against the Portuguese invasion. It is depicted in the following text: „The Portuguese are surely far stronger, but Ndoba and Tili'aya believed that only by cooperation they could win the battle. To prevent and avoid aggressions, they built forts to prepare for attacks on Limboto-Gorontalo land".

The analysis result is supported by interview results with the local community. It is quite an irony that currently, the tale of Otanaha only spreads within a particular group of the community. The tale only spreads within limited groups of elders. Most of Gorontalo people are unaware of the tale; almost all young generations even do not have the willingness to know and preserve the spread of the tale. As time progresses, the researchers are afraid that the tale of Otanaha will slowly be forgotten and extinct. This is due to the well-informed people of the story are currently in their elder stages. Aside from that, current progressive age tends to endorse people to not believe in supernatural tales. Some even consider that the tales are too exaggerated and hyperbolic. Nevertheless, there are some sides who value the tales as daily moral lessons and advise for future generations.

Conclusion

The previous analysis shows that the folklore of Otanaha Fortress is a manifestation of features of social events of Gorontalo ancient society. Consisted of record of past events, the historical facts are packaged in the form of imaginative fable for people to enjoy as an act of historical preservation. These are examples of the social facts applied in the society:

- the naming process of a place is associated with its origins, such as huntu lo ti'opo (pile of cottons) and huntu lo bohu (piles of coals), as observable in real life. The naming process of Otanaha Fort is also based on the story, where the founder's name Naha is referred to the fort, along with his spouse and son (Otahiya, and Ulupahu);
- the Tomb of Ju Panggola inside the site of Al Mukarramah Mosque is the remainder of the history of Otanaha Fort, in which Ju Panggola is a traditional title awarded to King Ilato. The tomb is currently treated as a tourist destination, in which the visitors come for religious pilgrimage;
- the presence of traditional titles to the current position holders as a heritage from the ancient times. As in the tale of Otanaha, the titles were awarded to Ilato and Tolangohula, as follows: Ta Lonto Huwa (Those who come from Gowa); Ta Lonto Hulungo (Those who descend from the sky); Manuruni (Coming from the sky), and Ta Lobuta'a to Putito (Lady coming out of an egg)
- the presence of Otanaha Fort is also a proof of the technology of the society of that time in the architecture of the building, *e.g.,* houses and fort. An interesting fact to notice that the strong materials and construction techniques of the fort only used limestone, sand, and egg white of Maleo bird as adhesives, in which Maleo bird is currently an endangered species, making the material composition difficult to replicate.

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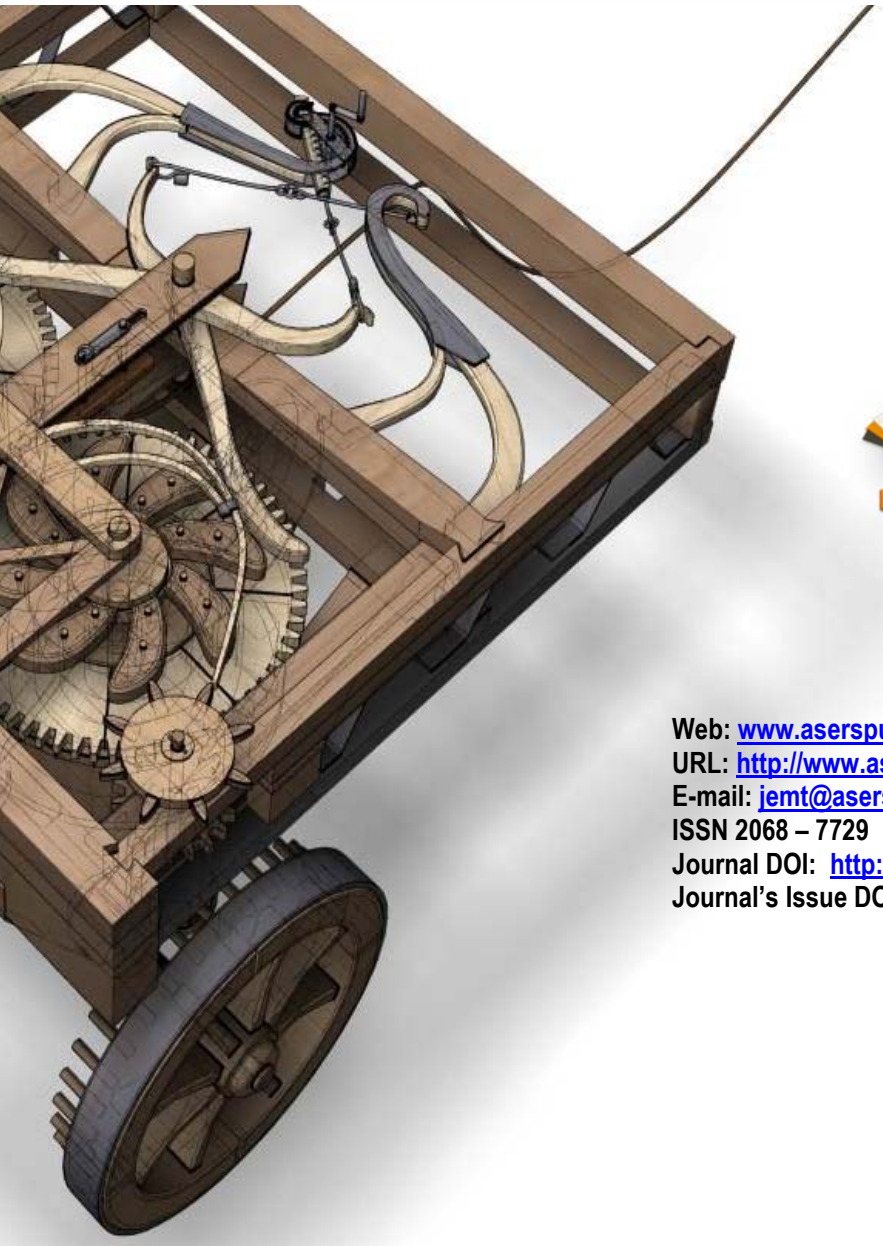

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