

# The Function of *Ya'ahowu* Party as A Receptacle for Performing Arts Nias Traditional Music in Gunungsitoli City

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**Abstract:** This study aims to determine the function of the *Ya'ahowu* Festival as a venue for the performing arts of traditional Nias music in the city of Gunungsitoli. This research uses qualitative research methods with qualitative descriptive types. Data collection techniques used are observation, interviews and documentation. The results of the study prove that the function of the *Ya'ahowu* Festival as a venue for performing arts of traditional Nias music in Gunungsitoli City is 1) the function of entertainment, which can be seen when the tafaeri ensemble and the moroi ba aekhula ensemble are played, there are cheers of joy from the community. 2) the function of physical reaction, this can be seen when the koko in the ngawalö zo li ensemble is played, a physical reaction appears from the people who gather in the field. 3) the function of cultural continuity, where through the *Ya'ahowu* party, Nias culture can be maintained. 4) the function of integrating the community, which can make friendship between Nias people continue to be established. Apart from the functions offered by Merriam, researchers found other functions, namely 5) economic support facilities, where the implementation of the *Ya'ahowu* party can increase the number of visitors which will affect the regional economy.

**Keywords:** Function, *Ya'ahowu* Party, Performing Arts, Traditional Music

## Introduction

Nias Island is located in the province of North Sumatra. Nias is a small island located in the west of the island of Sumatra, Indonesia. Nias Island has now been expanded into 4 regencies and one city, namely Nias Regency, South Nias Regency, West Nias Regency, North Nias Regency, and Gunungsitoli City. Gunungsitoli City is the place where research is carried out on the function of the *Ya'ahowu* Party as a forum for the performing arts of Nias Traditional Music.

"Cultural feast or commonly referred to as cultural festival is a celebration carried out by the community with activities including, a combination of a series of events, performances of art, music, costumes and dances" Yanthy, Kesumadewi (2015: 2). Cultural parties that are held in each region also have almost the same purpose, namely to maintain and preserve the culture that has existed for generations in each region. Telaumbanua (2019:1) says "millennials are expected to be able to participate in preserving and maintaining culture, so that they are not alienated from their own culture" which means *millennials are expected to participate in preserving and maintaining culture, so as not to be alienated from their own culture.*

Likewise, in Nias, there is a *Ya'ahowu* Feast which is a cultural event that is still maintained for generations by the Nias people and is held every year. Nias also has a variety of cultures and natural wealth that are very interesting to visit. The *Ya'ahowu* Party, also known as *the Ya'ahowu* Nias Festival, always displays a variety of *Nias* arts from each regency and city by sending its contingent. This activity aims to introduce *nias* cultures to all Indonesians and the world, especially to tourists. Where Nias has a culture that is very closely intertwined with daily life, so it deserves to be a tourism attraction.

Based on observations made by researchers, it is known that the *Ya'ahowu* feast, performing musical art featuring an ensemble of *mamözi göndra* and other traditional Nias musical instruments. The traditional musical instruments used in the implementation of the *Ya'ahowu* Feast are, *namely, göndra, aramba, faritia, doli-doli, koroco*, etc. Dance performs typical Nias dances, *namely maena dance, tuwu dance, war dance (faluaya)*, and so on. Fine arts features sculpture festivals that have nuances of Nias history and tradition.

At the *Ya'ahowu* Feast celebration, the presentation of traditional Nias music is different from the presentation in general. Generally, the only musical instrument used at traditional ceremonies is the *mamözi göndra* ensemble. *Ya'ahowu* parties, however, have other traditional musical ensembles performed by each of their regional representatives. The presentation of the ensemble is collaborated with other traditional Nias musical instruments such as *doli-doli*, *koko*, *koroco*, and so on. All traditional musical instruments are played by nias young people (*ono niha*) is men (*iraono matua*).

Traditional Nias music players at the *Ya'ahowu* party are selected or determined based on their ability to play each of these instruments. There are no rules that limit who is allowed to play the traditional Nias musical instruments in each of these ensembles. Married and unmarried men, young and old, can play the ensemble if they have a good ability to play each of the existing traditional Nias musical instruments.

The Nias traditional music ensemble performed at the *Ya'ahowu* Party has a function as entertainment in the event. One such ensemble is the *mamözi göndra* ensemble which is also used to accompany traditional dances, as well as the opening attractions of each representative of the district and city contingents at the event. The existence of the *Ya'ahowu* Party is one of the forums to introduce Nias culture and traditions to all people, both from an early age to the elderly.

## Research Methods

The approach in this study is qualitative research. "*Qualitative research* is a study that is shown to describe and analyze phenomena, events, social activities, attitudes, beliefs, perceptions, thoughts of people individually or in groups. Some descriptions are used to find principles and explanations aimed at the conclusion" Sukmadinata (2017:60).

The type of research used in this study is descriptive qualitative. Sugiyono (2020:9-10) said that "qualitative research method is a research method based on the philosophy of postpositivism or enterpretive, used to examine objects of natural conditions, data collection techniques are implemented and used in tringulation". The location or place of conducting this research is in the Gunungsitoli City Center or *Ya'ahowu Park*.

Data collection techniques are carried out by means of observation, interviews and documentation. The next stage is to analyze the existing data and then compile it systematically and then analyzed so that conclusions can be drawn, then classified and analyzed based on research interests described in the form of scientific papers, then classified according to the content or material of the data.

## Discussion

### The Function of *Ya'ahowu* Party as a Forum for Nias Traditional Music Performance Arts

This research was carried out in the Gunungsitoli City Center, namely in *Ya'ahowu* Park. Basedon the results of an interview with the speaker, Mr. Atofao Telaumbanua, said that the , *Ya'ahowu* party cannot be separated from the life of the people of Nias, because it has become a tribal identity. In accordance with the choice of the name of the activity, namely the *Ya'ahowu* Party, where *Ya'ahowu* itself is a typical *Nias* greeting or greeting. Mr. Atofao Telaumbania said that the traditional music played in the *Ya'ahowu* Feast has a very important function. According to Alan P. Merriam (1964:219-226) there are ten important functions of music, namely:

1. Emotional Disclosure Function

Music serves as a medium to express his feelings or emotions. In other words, the music player can convey his emotions through the playing of music.

2. Aesthetic Passion Function

A piece of music can be said to be an art if the music has an element of beauty or aesthetics in it. Through music we can feel the values of beauty both melodic and tune.

3. Entertainment Function

In general, music has a function as entertainment, referring to the understanding that a piece of music must contain elements that are entertaining. This can be seen through the melody, rhythm or lyrics.

#### 4. Communication Function

Music has a communication function meaning that a musical game contains its own cues that are only known to the people in the area. This can be seen from the playing of the instrument.

#### 5. Symbolism Function

Music has a function in symbolizing something. This can be seen from the elements of the music. For example, the tempo of a certain piece of music, if the tempo of a piece of music is slow, then most of the verses will tell sad things so that the music symbolizes sadness.

#### 6. Physical reaction function

If a piece of music is played, it can stimulate a certain stimulus or response in humans, causing our body to move to the rhythm of the music. If the music is fast then our movements are fast, and vice versa.

#### 7. Functions relating to social norms

Music in this case also serves as a medium for teaching norms or regulations. The delivery is mostly through text or chanting verses containing rules.

#### 8. The Function of The Promotion of Social Institutions

The function of music here means that a piece of music has an important role in a ceremony. Where music is not only an accompaniment, but as an endorsement of certain customs.

#### 9. Function as a cultural balance.

This function shows that music is capable of being the identity of an area that must be maintained and preserved continuously. This is done so that the culture in a certain area can be maintained.

#### 10. Community Integration Function.

Music has a function in integrating society. A piece of music if played together, unwittingly creates a sense of community among players or connoisseurs of that music.

Based on this theory, research was conducted by interviewing Mr. Atofao Telaumbanua as a resource person and the following are the most relevant functions found in the *Ya'ahowu* party:

##### 1. Entertainment

It is undeniable that cultural events are one of the platforms that can provide comfort to the community. The comfort provided will be very pronounced if it is packaged well. Likewise, *the Ya'ahowu* party is a folk feast or Nias cultural feast that is packaged in the form of a celebration of a major cultural feast. In Nias society, in every traditional ceremony or feast that is carried out, traditional music has become one of the media that becomes entertainment except during the traditional death ceremony. This also proves that the *Ya'ahowu* party functions as an entertainment that can strengthen the kinship system in the people of Nias. Where the researchers found, out how the community was very enthusiastic in participating in the entire series of *Ya'ahowu* party activities until late at night. This can be seen from the delivery of people's feelings of pleasure aimed at jokes and body movements that participate in enjoying the music and dance ensembles.

The melody, rhythm and atmosphere played in each nias traditional music ensemble will indirectly touch the feelings of the people, so that people who listen to the music really enjoy and feel the music. Music in Nias people has its own beauty to be enjoyed for people who are already attached to the sounds of Nias. With the function of music as entertainment that can be lived by all circles, making connoisseurs able to enter and feel every process of performance after performance performed.

Researchers also found that each performance of traditional music ensembles performed, each provided an entertainment function both for music performers, dancers, poets and all those present at the *Ya'ahowu* party. This can be seen as the *tafaeri* ensemble and *moroi ba aekhula* ensemble are played, there is a cheer of joy from the existing community, rumbling along with each stanza sung by the poet and the beautiful movements performed by the dancers. , How the *Ya'ahowu* party as a container for the performing arts of traditional music, can be ascertained to have a function as entertainment, because it really exists and is very obvious.

Like a party that is never separated from entertainment and celebration, so is the *Ya'ahowu* party which has been designed in such a way as to provide entertainment for the people of Nias and the wider community. For domestic and foreign tourists who want to find entertainment by enjoying the music of traditional Nias music, as well as other performances from each region, the *Ya'ahowu* party is one of the best choices to present unique performances typical of the Nias tribe.

## 2. Physical Reactions

Traditional music in Nias society can be likened to a magnet that can attract people's attention to follow the tempo of the game being played, whether realized or not. This phenomenon is referred to as a physical reaction that can affect human feelings and thoughts so that it shows a certain reaction. In the *Ya'ahowu* party, researchers found that when the traditional music of the *tafaeri* ensemble was played there were people who were immediately enthusiastic about docking dancers and dancing along. There are also those who do not participate in dancing and only watch on the sidelines of the field, but they follow the melodies and tempo of the music in the form of head shakes, body shakes or by singing along. Indirectly, the stimulus from the music played received a response in the form of a reaction from the people present.

In addition, each melody, rhythm, sound and movement in the *Ya'ahowu* party has its own form of physical reaction. The gestures made in every process of *Ya'ahowu* party activities will only be understood by the local community or the general public who really understand the sounds of traditional Nias music itself. Researchers found that other physical reactions that occurred in the *Ya'ahowu* party, can be seen from the *repertoire* played. When the traditional musical instrument (*koko*) of the *ngawalö zo li* ensemble is sounded, there is a hint that other traditional music players as well as the public should gather in the field because there is a big traditional party being held. This is also made clear by the *koko* batter himself, who conveys a narrative to provide information to people who do not yet understand.

*Koko* is one of Nias' traditional musical instruments, which used to function as a means of communication to the public or as a medium to notify if there is or will be a major event that occurs, such as a major traditional party or death. Since the development of the times, communication tools can be found everywhere, so *koko* has been used as a traditional Nias musical instrument. Similarly, in the *Ya'ahowu* feast, the *koko* has been created into a traditional musical instrument that cannot be separated from its function in ancient times, namely as a means of communication. Where when the *koko* of the *ngawalö zo li* ensemble is sounded or hit, it spontaneously and immediately causes a physical reaction from the existing community to gather in the field and watch the performance to be performed.

The presence of traditional music in every traditional ceremony and party certainly has signs that are able to give a certain reaction and are considered as signs that must be followed according to the traditional music performances that are performed. It is usually very synonymous with melodic form and tempo. The *melalui melodi* and tempo performed by each ensemble, indirectly will be the physical reaction of both the

musicians and dancers. Peneliti found that there is a *Ya'ahowu* party found a physical reaction when the musician changes the melody and speeds up the tempo of the game then automatically the dancers will also give a physical reaction by changing their movements and interactions without being given *aba-aba*. This shows that the traditional music performed in the *Ya'ahowu* feast, has a function as a physical reaction giver that influences the performance of *the Ya'ahowu party*.

### 3. Cultural Continuity

Cultural continuity has a wide scope in maintaining the identity of a tribe. The *Ya'ahowu* party is one of the forums that has a great influence on the introduction and preservation of Nias cultures that have existed for a long time. In their research, researchers found that through this *Ya'ahowu* party activity, it can provide a good stimulus to the younger generation who will continue the culture in the future and ensure that culture is maintained. This can be seen from the average perpetrator in the *Ya'ahowu* party. Where almost all the actors who play a role in it are *iraono si hino döla ono niha* or young people who are still fresh and strong in their energy, namely Nias young people, the more often art and cultural activities are carried out will make the culture continue to be remembered, so that it will remain sustainable until any time.

As we already know that music has a status that can describe the culture of an area and can also be a characteristic and will become a strong identity for every tribe in Indonesia. Similarly, in the nature of *the Ya'ahowu party in Nias* society, researchers found that traditional music performances in it, in addition to maintaining Nias culture, this activity was also to strengthen their identity as Nias people. Through this *Ya'ahowu* party, the people of Nias are also increasingly known and get a good view from the wider community. This indicates that apart from being a form of effort to maintain culture, the result obtained by the community is to get a recognition that the Nias community is still thick with culture that has been passed down by previous ancestors until now and will continue to be preserved in the future. .

Through cultural events such as this *Ya'ahowu* party, it will also bring together people from various regions. Community meetings from South Nias, North Nias, West Nias, Nias, and Gunungsitoli City in the event, directly became a medium to establish an effective relationship between regions. The movement created will make people aware of the importance of culture to always be maintained so that the identity as a Nias tribe never disappears until any time.

### 4. Community Integration

Through cultural events such as the *Ya'ahowu* party, it will make the community gather at one point and interact with each other. The meeting of people from South Nias, North Nias, West Nias, Nias, and Gunungsitoli City in the event directly became a medium to establish an effective relationship between regions. The movement created will make people aware of the importance of culture to always be maintained so that the identity as a Nias tribe never disappears until any time.

In the implementation of this *Ya'ahowu* party, researchers found that there was an integration of society in it, as seen from the delivery of the rules or history of Nias ancestors conveyed by the poets/singers to all the people present. For example, when a *fondrakhi* musical instrument is sounded to accompany a *hoho* verse. Where this *hoho* is in the form of poetic verses to express matters related to customary law and social order on Nias. This is a form of conveying a message to all circles of society to continue to maintain the customs and order that has existed in the midst of Nias society.

Apart from some of the functions offered in Merriam's theory, researchers also found other functions contained in *Ya'ahowu* party activities, namely functioning as:

## 5. Economic support facilities.

It is known that in addition to having the aim of introducing and maintaining or preserving the existing Nias culture, another purpose of implementing this *Ya'ahowu* party is to synergize the development of nias islands tourism that is cultured and competitive. This is certainly expected to support the economy of each region and help increase income from the region itself. Researchers also found that the function as a means of supporting this economy can be seen from the opening of exhibitions of superior products and Nias specialties.

Through each performance of these traditional music ensembles, it is also expected to increase the number of visitors who are interested or interested in seeing and witnessing the uniqueness of Nias traditional music, which has never been seen and heard, especially people from outside the region. In addition to increasing the number of visitors, the implementation of the *Ya'ahowu* party itself can also improve the economy of the community around the *Ya'ahowu* party location itself, especially street vendors, who try to find good luck by selling around the place where the *Ya'ahowu* party is held. Thus, it can be known that the *Ya'ahowu* party has another function, outside of Merriam's theory, namely as an economic means.

As for the *repertoire* of traditional music performed at the *feast of Ya'ahowu*, that is, as follows:

**ANSAMBEL TAFARI**

**Allegreto**

The musical score is for the Tafaeri Ensemble, marked 'Allegreto'. It consists of seven staves: Doli-doli (melody), Gondra (percussion), Aramba (percussion), Riti-riti (percussion), Koko (percussion), Mage-mage (chords), and Gitar (melody). The score is in 4/4 time and features various dynamics such as *f* (forte) and *sf* (sforzando). The piece is divided into two systems, with a triplet of eighth notes marked with a '3' above the first staff of the second system.

Figure 1. *Tafaeri* Ensemble  
(Source: Cindy Gloria Putri Mamonto)

## ANSAMBEL AEKHULA

**Allegretto**

Doli-doli  
Tamburu  
Koko  
Tutuhao  
Koroco

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Figure 2. Ensemble of *Moroi ba Aekhula*  
(Source: Cindy Gloria Putri Mamonto)

## ASAMBEL MAMÖZI GÖNDRA

**Allegretto**

Sanimbra  
Sanaha  
Faritia 1

Figure 3. *Mamözi Göndra* Ensemble  
(Source: Cindy Gloria Putri Mamonto)

## ANSAMBEL FETA BATU

The musical score for the Feta Batu Ensemble is written in 4/4 time and B-flat major. It features six parts: Feta Batu 1 and 2 (melodic lines), Riti-riti Sole (a rhythmic line with eighth notes), Koko (a simple harmonic line), Tamburu (a rhythmic line with accents and a *fff* dynamic marking), and Koroco (a harmonic line with chords). The score is divided into two systems, with the second system starting at measure 3.

Figure 4. *Feta Batu* Ensemble  
(Source: Cindy Gloria Putri Mamonto)

## ANSAMBEL NGAWALÖ ZO LI

The musical score for the Ngawalö Zo Li Ensemble is written in 4/4 time and D major. It features eleven parts: Lagia (melodic line), Doli-doli Hagita (melodic line), Tutuhao 1 and 2 (melodic lines), Fifi Wofu (melodic line with trills), Tabolia (rhythmic line with eighth notes), Fondrakhi (rhythmic line with eighth notes), Tamburu (rhythmic line with eighth notes), Riti-riti Sole (rhythmic line with eighth notes), Ndruri Mbalo Duhi (rhythmic line with eighth notes and a *f* dynamic marking), Koko (harmonic line), and Mage-mage (harmonic line with chords).

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Figure 5. *Ngawalö Zo Li* Ensemble  
(Source: Cindy Gloria Putri Mamonto)

## Conclusion

The *Ya'ahowu* party is a cultural feast or folk feast in the Nias community, which is never separated from the traditional music performances in it. The *repertoire* of traditional music ensembles played in the *Ya'ahowu* feast are, namely, *tafaeri* ensembles, *moroï ba aekhula*, *mamözi göndra*, *ngawalö zo li*, and *stone feta*. There are several of the most relevant functions of the *Ya'ahowu* party as a forum for the performing arts of traditional Nias music, namely: 1) fungsi entertainment, which is seen when *tafaeri* ensembles and *moroibaekhula* ensembles are played, there are cheers of joy from the community. 2) function Physical reaction, this is seen when the *koko* in the *ensemble Ngawalö Zo Li* is played, there is a physical reaction from the community to gather in the field. 3) the function of cultural continuity, where through the *Ya'ahowu party*, *Nias* culture can continue to be maintained, 4) the function of integrating society, which can make the silaturahmi between Nias people continue to be intertwined. Apart from the functions offered by Merriam, researchers found other functions, namely 5) economic support facilities, where the implementation of the *Ya'ahowu party* can increase the number of visitors which will affect the regional economy.

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