

## Youth In the Existence of Nias Ethnic Culture

By

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### Abstract

The increasingly modern era is considered to have shifted the role of youth in preserving their culture, but not for Nias ethnic youth. Many young people in Nias consider that culture is very important to maintain its existence. The thought of maintaining cultural identity certainly requires social movements that can be carried out through daily activities or certain activities. This research has revealed the strategies of social movements that have been implemented and are considered relevant by teenagers in preserving their culture. With the process of collecting qualitative data, the researcher will describe descriptively the strategies of the youth of Nias ethnicity in creating social movements to maintain the existence of ancestral culture. This cultural development process is considered to apply to teenagers through daily activities or cultural festival activities. Because the Nias ethnic group has many traditions that are still being held.

**Keywords:** Strategy, Youth Movement, cultural existence, Nias ethnicity

### Introduction

The role of youth in the modern era in preserving cultural values in an ethnic group will be able to create a peaceful atmosphere in the community (Schein, 1991; Purba et al., 2019). Because cultural values can be the highest guideline for behaving and interacting in everyday life (Crossick & Kasznska, 2016). The tradition preserved by youth in Nias ethnicity, for example, has become a form of awareness of the importance of maintaining cultural identity (Bonatz, 2002; Koentjaraningrat, 2003; Sugono, 2003). Because culture will symbolize personality and identity and an area that is reflected in attitudes and behaviors that are manifested in ideas, ideas, values, to norms in society. Therefore, parents must teach their children to participate in activities related to cultural values. Because young people have a higher spirit in introducing culture to society in general. The process of this activity has become one that is being carried out by the Nias community. As one of the ethnic groups in North Sumatra, the Nias tribe has a variety of cultures such as art, dance, food, beliefs and others (Anacin, 2021). All these cultures will not develop if the youth do not take part in preserving them. Because young people have more ideas in the process of preserving culture, especially in Nias.

Preservation of culture by the youth of Nias will create uniqueness for an ethnic group. By preserving cultural heritage, the identity of each ethnic group will be seen (Alivizatou-Barakou et al., 2017; Natsir et al., 2021). Because by preserving the culture, things that are destructive to identity can be avoided. This is because the culture in Nias aims to create peace or harmonization in society. With the role of youth in preserving culture in Nias, it is hoped

that the next generation can get to know the culture better. Therefore, we need to know how the youth in Nias implement these activities. Because in fact, it appears that the youth of the Nias ethnic group have various ways of preserving it. This method of preservation will also be a lesson for other ethnic groups.

Nias Island is also known to the public as one of the islands that have very interesting tourist attractions. Many foreign nationals often visit this island for tourism and research purposes. This goal can certainly increase the existence of the Nias tribe in foreign countries. One of the interesting aspects of Nias culture in the novel by J.A. Sonjaya tells about the persistence of the Banuaha community in upholding their customs, cultural values, kinship system, customary law, traditional rituals and customs which are considered sacred (Andriyanto, 2020). The persistence in maintaining these traditional values is certainly a challenge for the youth of the Nias ethnic group. The youths have made various activities to introduce how Nias ethnic should be in preserving their culture. These various activities are considered necessary to be imitated by other youths. So that the integrity of an ethnic group in maintaining and preserving its culture can be maintained.

## **Research Method**

Data collection in this study will be more efficient by using qualitative methods. Qualitative research will be explored, described and understood the meaning conveyed by a group of people or each individual related to social activities (Creswell & Poth, 2016). The purpose of the exploration and description process is to analyze and describe the strategies adopted by youth in preserving culture in Nias. This qualitative research uses a descriptive-analytical study approach which emphasizes the aspect of an in-depth understanding of a problem rather than looking at the problem for generalization research. This study uses an in-depth analysis technique that reveals the role of Nias youth in maintaining the existence of their culture.

Qualitative research will follow the stages that produce descriptive data in the form of writing and speech from research sources (Bogdan and Biklen, 1992). The main subjects used as research informants were the head of the indigenous Nias tribe, the community that was being portrayed and the ethnic youth of the Nias. This study uses general and directed interviews with the head of the Nias traditional tribe, the community they are leading and young people. Through documentation about the activities carried out by the youth, researchers also used data to strengthen the role of youth in every activity that supports the existence of Nias culture. In the advanced stage, data processing and citing references are carried out to be displayed as research findings and interpreted to produce knowledge for concluding.

## **Results And Discussion**

One thing that is very well known to the Nias ethnic group is their customary tradition. Almost all Nias people uphold traditional values. Even in their daily activities, the people of Nias pay close attention to traditional values such as ways of speaking, behavior, traditional ceremonies, weddings, mourning events such as ceremonies to bury the dead and other traditions. The implementation of all these activities cannot be separated from the role of teenagers as a group that still has high enthusiasm for preserving their culture. The youth of the Nias ethnic group play an active role when there are activities related to traditional traditions. All of these activities are certainly very useful because the extraordinary megalithic culture in Nias can make this island a major tourist destination (Fryauff et al., 2002). The

following are some of the activities that have become strategies used by ethnic Nias youth in maintaining their cultural existence:

### **1. Welcoming Guests “*Fangowai Tome*”**

The people of Nias, especially the youth, highly value mutual respect for one another, not to mention new people or people who have been known for a long time. For Nias youth, it is mandatory for everyone who comes or visits the house or meets on the road to be greeted or greeted. The greeting process can be used by extending a hand, greeting, lowering the hat, and even kissing (Kvilinkova, 2020). For the Nias people, the greeting commonly used from generation to generation is the greeting "Ya'ahowu". "Ya'ahowu" is a greeting that is often used by the people of Nias whenever they meet someone they know or with someone they just met. "Ya'ahowu" words contain a friendly impression on the people of Nias. In Indonesian, "Ya'ahowu" means blessed or is often equated with greetings such as good morning, good afternoon, and others. Parents have taught this behavior since childhood to children so that children to teenagers apply it. The youth said the word "Ya'ahowu" to others with the aim that the younger siblings and their environment would not forget that it is very important to uphold the cultural values that exist in Nias. It is evident from that role until now that "Ya'ahowu" words are always used by the people of Nias when they say hello.

### **2. *Upacara Adat***

### **3. Caste Ceremony “*Balugu*” / *Upacara Owasa/Faulu***

The people of Nias in general have recognized the caste system in their ethnicity. In general, caste describes how a person's position in a group (Kabra, 2020). The highest caste level in the Nias ethnic group is called "Balugu". To reach this level, one must be able to hold large parties for days by inviting thousands of people and slaughtering hundreds of pigs. Usually, the people who do this are people who are indeed descendants of the original Nias "Balugu" or in other words a group of people who have a lot of wealth and gold. The *Owasa/Faulu* ceremony is an element of culture which consists of various sub-elements. The series of sub-elements consists of material selection, material workmanship, and establishment/approval.

The *Owasa/Faulu* ceremony is a series of ceremonies related to the social structure or the formation of the social structure of society. The young people of Nias understand the meaning of this "Owasa/Faulu" ceremony. So that the youth who live in the islands of Nias and outside Nias struggle hard in working with the aim of being able to increase the caste of their family. Research data shows that almost all millennials struggle in working such as migrating and opening businesses to change their status in their families for the better (Telaumbanua, 2019). This struggle has the aim of making the family proud if they can carry out or make the *Owasa/Faulu* ceremony. Because of the ability of a family to hold *Owasa/Faulu* ceremonies, they are considered successful people or have the "Balugu" caste. The form of the *Owasa/Faulu* ceremony can be seen in Figure 1 below,

### **4. b. Wedding Ceremony “*Böwö*”**

Traditional ceremonies in a custom have become a respected form of communication because they will provide knowledge about cultural heritage (Daka, 2021). The role of youth in the traditional wedding ceremony is to carry out all the traditional wedding reception rituals. The wedding rituals in the Nias Community are very different based on each region. In general, weddings in Nias custom are very famous for the amount of dowry. As applied to *Böwö* (dowry) by young Nias people when they want to get married. *Böwö* in Nias culture is very important in holding a wedding party. *Böwö* has a very deep meaning, namely love (masi-

masi). In marriage customs in Nias, böwö is a term that refers to all the goodness (kindness) that is done by one person to another without any strings attached (Harefa, 2022). When Nias people receive selfless kindness from others, they say: "fefu böwösi sökhi si no öbe'e khöma tebai masulöni" (all kindness/kindness that you have given us we cannot repay). The dowry (böwö) is the entire procedure of handing over by custom that has been determined by the men to the women according to their respective social layers and positions before a man officially takes a woman.



**Figure 1: Ceremony Owasa/Faulu**

**Source:** Dramajiwa.com

Böwö in Nias traditional marriages shows (a) the social status of the Nias people; (b) recognition, respect, and respect for the dignity of women; (c) a symbol of respect and honour (in cultural contexts); and (d) as a tool to prevent divorce (Harefa, 2019). The term böwö in other areas is different from the Nias custom, in the Banjarese tradition the term böwö is honesty which is marked by a certain amount of money that has been given and which has been agreed upon by the male and female families. The honest money is not intended for women, but the money is used for needs at the time of the wedding party. Meanwhile, in the Batak traditional tradition, böwö is sinamot which is interpreted as tuhor (honest money). Sinamot is a transaction from a man to a woman, so sinamot is defined as the cost or price needed to create mutual joy in realizing a wedding party (Gulo & Telaumbanua, 2021; Napitu et al., 2021).

The series of wedding ceremonies in Nias tradition begins with the Fiance Event (Famatua), Determination of Honesty (Fanema bola), Presentation of the honest dowry (Fame'e bola), Preparation of traditional pigs (Fondöni bawi), and finally the implementation of the wedding party (Falöwa). The purpose of marriage for Nias people, in general, is to gain social status as a family (ngambatö), and to expand family relations (famakhai sitenga bö'ö) (Waruwu and Erniwati, 2021). In Nias traditional marriages, men and women have different positions, from pre-marriage to marriage even until the marriage ends (Salkeld, 2008). The difference in position is influenced by the position of women in the social status of the Nias community, which is much lower than that of men, because men are considered leaders, and are stronger (Savitri & Zalukhu, 2016; Ridwan et al., 2022). The form of marriage can be seen in Figure 2 below,



**Figure 2 : Wedding Ceremony in Nias**

**Source:** [Indonesiatime.com](http://Indonesiatime.com)

##### **5. The Traditional Ceremony of Giving Baby Names “Famatörö töi ndaono”**

The “Famatörö töi ndaono” ceremony has become an activity that is understood and practised by married youths. This ceremony is a culture that is still developing in the Nias ethnic group. This series of ceremonies include thanksgiving from the family concerned for the birth of a child in the family which begins with giving the name of the newborn child. The purpose of this event is to pray for the growth and development of the child by asking for the blessing of "howu-howu" from the extended family in the hope that the child will remain in God's protection. This ceremony also invites family and relatives by slaughtering a pig. The implementation of this traditional ceremony proves that the ethnic groups in Nias still adhere to the cultural system of their ancestors.

##### **6. Death Ceremony “Femanga wangasi zimate”**

People in Nias do not only perform ceremonies during the atmosphere of Suka only but there are also ceremonies during the atmosphere of Grief or commonly called “Femanga wangasi zimate”. This event is one of the hereditary customs with the intention of completing the customs of the deceased person. The implementation of this event can be done after the corpse is buried or 2 (two) months or a year after, depending on the readiness of the family concerned. This series of events includes the slaughter of several pigs, asking for blessings from the extended family who died and asking to be prayed for so that the family left behind will be given fortitude and sincerity and be decorated with happiness always in their lives. The implementation of the death ceremony is also always attended by teenagers. To know how and what they should do if it happens to their own family later. Teenagers think that taking part in the program "Femanga wangasi zimate" has proven that they care about their culture. Because by being active in traditional events, the culture can last forever. The form of the death ceremony can be seen in Figure 3 below,



**Figure 3 : Death Ceremony in Nias**  
Source: [Pasangmata.detik.com](http://Pasangmata.detik.com)

#### 7. *Traditional Dance*

#### 8. *Maena Dance*

Traditional dances have a major contribution to strengthening the cultural identity of an ethnic group (Georgios, 2018). The Nias tribe also has a dance as a form of culture. The dance is called the “Maena” dance. This dance is performed with musical instruments at every traditional event, especially wedding ceremonies. Dancing by involving musical instruments will create brain activation because it constantly remembers new steps in its movement (Douka et al., 2019; Sugiarkha & Arya, 2018). The involvement of the masses in this very large number is one of Maena goals. The more people involved in traditional ceremonies, the greater the opportunity to involve people in the “Maena” dance. That is why “Maena” belongs to the type of colossal dance. The role of the youth in this traditional activity is very visible. If someone gets married, the teenagers will come to join the dance. Even in the wedding ceremony, both the groom and the bride will perform the best dance in turn.

In addition to inheriting culture from ancient ancestors, the purpose of the Maena dance by teenagers is as a means to make the atmosphere more lively, and enthusiastic and show the happiness felt by both sides of the bride's family. “Maena” dance is usually led by a vocal leader "Sanotoi maena" which usually contains poetry that is sung to express happiness at the event. Expressions of joy were expressed by all participants in movements and songs in welcoming the ongoing traditional events. Based on the textual and musical analysis, “Maena” has indeed become a discourse because the poems that are sung and full of meaning are addressed to everyone present at the ceremony. The form of the Maena dance can be seen in the following figure 4,



**Figure 4:** *Maena dance*

**Source:** Kompasiana.com

#### **9. Eagle Dance “Tari Moyo”**

The eagle dance is also called the bird's dance which continues to gently flap its wings without getting tired. This dance symbolizes the spirit together in realizing something that is aspired to. Mayo dance is held on certain big day celebrations as well as to welcome guests. Usually, those who play a role in this dance are teenagers. They will gather and play a role in making Mayo dance activities when they know that a character or guest will come to their place. In addition, teenagers will also participate in dancing with the Moyo dance when there is a cultural party festival in another city. With the aim that introducing their culture to other communities. The image of the eagle dance can be seen in Figure 5 below,



**Figure 5:** *Moyo dance*

**Source:** Medcom.id

### 10. War Dance “Faluaya”

Dances have different cultural values in each ethnic group that exist in each region (Hewston et al., 2021). Like the war dance (faluaya) which is a symbol of chivalry for the youth in villages in Nias. The word Faluaya comes from the word fana, which in Indonesian is called *Ronda* or *siskambling*. Along with the development of the times, this tradition is carried out only on certain days or only to celebrate certain events. This war dance really shows the character of a Nias youth. Because this dance symbolizes that the youth of Nias are ready to go to war if someone wants to disturb their place of residence. Nias youth often make this dance at certain events with the aim that the Nias people do not forget their culture. They must maintain what is left of their ancestors. Pictures of war dances can be seen in Figure 6 below,



**Figure 6: Dance “Faluaya”**

Source: [Sumut.identimes.com](https://sumut.identimes.com)

### 11. Custom home “Oma hoda”

Traditional houses have symbolized history with different meanings for each ethnic group (Sopa, 2018; Farid, 2021). Like the Nias tribe, they also have a special traditional house called “Oma hoda”. Nias traditional house (Nias language: Omo Hada/Omo Niha) is a form of traditional Nias house on stilts. In addition, there is also another type of Nias traditional house, namely Omo Seuba, which is the house where the head of state (tuhenöri), village head (salawa) or nobles reside. This Nias traditional house has a distinctive shape from the traditions of the ancestors who always build houses to help protect them from various threats from the outside environment and wild animals. This Nias traditional house has the form of a house on stilts with a very extraordinary design and architecture. Each area in Nias has a house shape that is different from one another. As in Lasarabahili Village, Moro'o District, there is still one Nias traditional house "Omo Niha" which is still intact to this day.

The fact shows that the number of traditional houses in Nias is greatly reduced due to the earthquake that hit Nias Island in 2005 which caused thousands of houses to collapse and even claimed thousands of human lives (Pandya, (2006). In addition, it is difficult to find wood as the foundation for building houses, because Nias traditional houses were built without using nails to connect the poles. However, due to awareness of the decreasing number of traditional houses in Nias, the youths invited the Nias community to rebuild several traditional houses. This activity has the aim that the existence of the Nias traditional house does not disappear

even though the era is increasingly modern. Because the cultural change movement will have an impact and encourage the process of cultural reform (Rill, & Gonzalez, 2019). The shape of the Nias traditional house can be seen in Figure 7 below,



**Figure 7: Nias Traditional House**

**Source:** Rumah.Com

#### **12. Traditional dress “baru hada”.**

Traditional clothes have become proof that each tribe has local wisdom in its manufacture, design and cultural values (Farsani, & Jamshidi, 2021). The Nias tribe also has a traditional traditional dress, namely “Baru had”. Ornaments on traditional clothes have a relationship with the traditional architecture of Nias. The details of the ornaments on the Nias traditional clothes are typical carvings owned by the Nias tribe. Thus, every carving and colour that exists in traditional houses in Nias is a transformation of the ornaments on traditional Nias traditional clothes (Gulo, 2010). The traditional clothes worn by the Nias tribe are called Baru Ohulu for those worn by men. While the one worn by women is called Baru Ladari. The traditional clothes are usually gold or yellow. This shirt is used in combination with other colours. Other colours include black, red and white. All these colours also have a philosophy contained in them. Nias traditional clothes can be seen in the following figure 8,



**Figure 8. Nias Traditional Dress**

**Source:** Andalas Tourism.Com

Youth or often referred to as Millennials have a big role in preserving it. This is because young people are very familiar with social media and are very active in activities in the public sphere. Activities to maintain and pass on culture such as Nias traditional clothes have become one of the tasks of young people. Because young people are one of the few groups that have a role in cultural heritage conservation practice. Therefore, now many countries are trying to involve young people, including Indonesia in the preservation, valorization and promotion of cultural heritage (Goodwin & Martam, 2014).

Youth is also the successor between generations, so youth play a very important role in promoting cultural values (Syafrizal et al., 2022). Because young people represent 25% of the world's population, involving young people in the preservation of cultural heritage means developing attitudes and practices to promote their diverse citizenship values and cultural diversity to the world (Wal'alfrit and Basri, 2018). By utilizing online information and internet access, cultural development by Nias youth is also integrated into the agenda of youth activity forums (Damayanti & Murdani, 2020). The involvement of Nias youth is made in the form of promoting the value of Nias traditional clothes through cultural parties, local entrepreneurship, recreation, and so on (Duxbury & Campbell, 2011).

### **13. Rock Jump “Hombo Batu”**

The stone-jumping tradition has become a form of culture developed by the youth in Nias. This tradition has been carried out since the time of the ancestors, in ancient times they often fought between tribes so that they trained themselves to be strong and able to penetrate the opponent's fortress which was high enough to jump over (Sarumaha, & Laiya, 2018). The stone-jumping tradition is held to measure the maturity and maturity of men in Nias, as well as an event to test the physical and mental abilities of young men in Nias as they reach adulthood. This tradition is carried out by Nias men to prove that they are allowed to marry. The stone is about two meters high, 90 cm wide and 60 cm long. The stone that must be jumped is in the form of a monument-like building with a flat top surface. Because nowadays they are no longer at war, the stone-jumping tradition is only for ritual events, as well as a cultural symbol of the Nias people. The following is the shape of the Nias ethnic rock jump.



**Figure 9: Rock Jump**  
**Source:** Telisik. Id

#### 14. *Regional Songs (Tano Niha) and Nias Ethnic Musical Instruments*

Each region certainly has a classification of song types according to their geographical type (Li et al., 2017). The song “tano niha”, which is one of the pride songs of the people of Nias, is an example. According to the views of the people of Nias, the song “tano niha” has a high philosophy, therefore the song must be upheld. The majority of young people in Nias must have memorized the “tano niha” song. Even when they do cultural party activities, the “tano niha” song will always be sung as an offering when opening the event. Singing this song will of course be accompanied by traditional Nias musical instruments as well. By always listening to songs and performing Nias songs and musical instruments at every event, the youth hope that the next generation will not forget their own local culture of songs and musical instruments. Because by understanding the traditional music culture of the region, the youth have become the key to continuing their culture (Zhou, 2020).

In addition, there is also a uniqueness in Nias traditional musical instruments which are generally made from wood, bamboo, and tree trunks. Each musical instrument certainly has a unique sound and different functions (Sun, 2015; Amal et al., 2019). One of the unique traditional musical instruments is “Fetabatu”/rock musical instrument. The songs played in this rock Feta music are songs that have been passed down from generation to generation, such as the “nenu-nenu” (sifabolosi) song. In addition there is also a “Faritia” musical instrument used to welcome the groom at the wedding ceremony combined with a two-sided drum played by two people, as well as a gong. “Faritia” musical instruments are also often used by teenagers at cultural parties. With the aim that the general public can see one of the musical instruments owned by the Nias ethnic group. Because often taking part in each performance will be beneficial to create cultural responsiveness in others (Bond, 2017).

There is also a Lagia musical instrument made of a piece of wood that is drilled into a tube with a length of 30cm and a diameter of 20cm. The musical instrument "Lagia" is classified as a chordophone (sound source comes from the strings) and uses a bow. This musical instrument is played singly to accompany a song that expresses the impression and effort to escape from the grip of poverty. This instrument is usually used by young people when they are having problems, with the hope that playing the Legia musical instrument it can reduce the burden of the problem. There is also a musical instrument “Fondrahi” which is made of wood and is a wasp. This instrument was formerly used when reciting incantations. There is also "Aramba durian/famaondru" which is a musical instrument used to call people to gather in the hall or to broadcast messages from "Salawa". And there is also a gong whose social function is to convey the news that occurs on the battlefield, but now it is used to notify if there is news of a death. All of these musical instruments certainly exist among the youth in Nias. This can be seen from their role when there is a cultural party. Nias youth always carry these musical instruments with the aim that the Nias people and society in general can know their traditional musical instruments. The habit of frequently studying and playing traditional musical instruments will also make young people more aware of the meaning of cultural values on these musical instruments (Howard, 2018).

### Conclusion

Nias youth has become a bridge between the past, present and future generations. Nias youth have a role in passing on cultural values that can support understanding and respect for cultural diversity. This is because the Nias people are one of the ethnic groups that have a rich cultural heritage from their ancestors. Nias youth have a way to develop their culture by always taking part in every official and unofficial activity. The activity that actively displays Nias

culture in every activity and activity makes sure that the people of Nias and society, in general, will continue to see Nias culture as one of the interesting cultures. In addition, the active role of Nias youth in socializing their culture has also had a positive impact on people's interest in visiting the Nias islands. Because it is very useful in the economic development of the people of Nias.

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