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Preservation of Beghu Musical Instruments as Icons of Nagakeko Regency, Flores, East Nusa Tenggara

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Abstract: The preservation of local culture in Indonesia faces serious challenges, both from within the community and due to the influence of globalization. This article focuses on the study of the *traditional Beghu* musical instrument from Nagekeo Regency, East Nusa Tenggara, as a representation of intangible cultural heritage that is rich in historical, educational, and artistic value. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with *purposive sampling* and *snowball sampling techniques* to explore the meaning, function, and challenges in the preservation of Beghu. The results show that Beghu not only plays an important role in the traditional rituals and social life of the community, but also faces real threats due to lack of documentation, lack of interest from the younger generation, and limited institutional support. These findings confirm the importance of integrating traditional musical instruments in education and strengthening local communities through documentation, training, and cultural activities. Structured and collaborative preservation efforts are needed to keep Beghu alive as a symbol of the identity and cultural pride of the Nagekeo people.

Keywords: Beghu, local culture, preservation, traditional music,

1. INTRODUCTION

The complex challenges in preserving local culture in Indonesia come from within the society itself as well as from changes in the social and economic environment in each region. One example of research that illustrates these obstacles is the study of the traditional art of pencak silat in Tasikmalaya. This research shows that although pencak silat has the potential to strengthen local cultural identity, its preservation process is hampered by a lack of support and attention from the younger generation who are more interested in modern entertainment (Muslihin et al., 2021). A similar thing is also found in the preservation of traditional Beghu musical instruments from Nagakeo Regency, East Nusa Tenggara, where the gap between the theory and practice of cultural preservation is a major challenge.

The traditional Beghu musical instrument from Nagakeo Regency, East Nusa Tenggara, contains rich and diverse historical, educational, and artistic values. Historically, Beghu displays a cultural heritage that has existed for a long time, being an integral part of the social life of the people in the area. This musical instrument is often used in various traditional ceremonies and celebrations, reflecting the cultural identity of the Nagakeo people. Research on traditional musical instruments often highlights the importance of the social and symbolic functions contained in their use, as expressed in ethnomusicological studies that focus on the cultural context and traditions of the people who use the musical instrument (Malino et al.,



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2023; Kabnani et al., 2022). In an educational perspective, Beghu serves as a tool to transfer cultural values to the younger generation, introducing them to the history and traditions of their ancestors through music learning that is carried out from generation to generation. This is in line with efforts to preserve local languages and traditions, where it serves as a means to convey stories and character values that are desired in the community (Sawaludin & Salahudin, 2018; (Mone et al., 2024).

In terms of artistic value, Beghu not only serves as a musical instrument, but also as a work of art that demonstrates the creativity and hand skills of the artisans. Research on traditional musical instruments in Indonesia often describes the complexity of manufacturing techniques and the aesthetic beauty seen in the design of these musical instruments (Mone et al., 2024; Crysti et al., 2024). In addition, in the context of performances, Beghu also plays an important role in the accompaniment of traditional dances and regional songs, providing an immersive artistic experience for the audience. Through performances, the values of collaboration between musical performers are clearly reflected, creating a warm social atmosphere and bringing a deep meaning behind each performance (Hermawan, 2013; Chrysty, 2024). Therefore, the existence of Beghu is not only important for cultural preservation, but also to strengthen the identity and pride of the Nagekeo people in the midst of changing times.

The Nagekeo community has several important aspects, one of the most important of which is Beghu Music, which is one of the important aspects of Nagekeo people's culture, which encapsulates the meaning and social functions of daily life. In research conducted by Dopo, it was revealed that Beghu music is integrated into various traditional rituals, reflecting the values held by the local community. This music not only serves as entertainment, but also has an important role in various ceremonies that create social bonds among community members (Dopo, 2022). This is in line with the research of Ceme et al., which shows that there are certain techniques and organology in playing the Beghu musical instrument, which shows the cultural knowledge and skills possessed by the Nagekeo people (Ceme et al., 2021). The use of music in this traditional context shows how local culture is able to adapt and survive in the face of changing times.

The Beghu musical instrument is part of the rich traditional culture that originated from the Nagekeo people. Beghu is made from natural materials such as wood, bamboo, and animal skins, reflecting the close connection between the community and the surrounding natural environment. This instrument can be traced back to the oral tradition that has existed for many years in Nagekeo, where this musical instrument is used in various events, both as an accompaniment to traditional activities and as a medium of expressing folk culture. The main function of the Beghu musical instrument in the Nagekeo community is to unite the community through music performed in social and spiritual ceremonies, which gives meaning in strengthening the sense of community in the community.

In the cultural and spiritual context of indigenous peoples, Beghu not only serves as a means of entertainment, but also as a tool to preserve and convey cultural and spiritual values. Like other musical instruments in the archipelago's tradition, Beghu plays an important role in religious rituals and traditional ceremonies. The Nagekeo people believe that music can serve as a bridge between the real world and the spiritual world, bringing blessings and providing protection to the community. Musicians who play Beghu are often considered to be the holders of traditions, where they not only play the songs but also convey the story and philosophy contained in every note they hear.

However, today, the Beghu musical instrument faces various threats to its sustainability. These factors include the infrequent use of this tool in daily life, the lack of documentation, and the lack of recognition and appreciation among the younger generation. The rise of modern culture and globalization has led to a lack of attention to traditional musical instruments such as the Beghu, which has had an impact on shifting its meaning and function in society. In addition, the absence of formal and non-formal education curricula that prioritize traditional musical instruments has resulted in the younger generation losing connection with their cultural heritage. Research shows that the introduction of traditional musical instruments in formal education can increase the interest and knowledge of young generations about their own culture, while without it, musical instruments like the Beghu may be endangered.

Faced with these challenges, it is important for the Nagekeo community to actively promote and document the Beghu musical tradition. Cultural preservation initiatives through education and introduction among young people should be considered so that Beghu remains part of the cultural identity of the community. Through organizing cultural events, workshops, and speaking out on social media, the younger generation can be empowered to appreciate and preserve these traditional musical instruments and foster a sense of nationalism towards their cultural heritage. Therefore, efforts to integrate Beghu into the education system and daily life of the community are very important in maintaining its sustainability in the midst of rapid changing times.

Further research on music in Nagekeo should consider the educational aspect, especially in terms of developing a curriculum that integrates elements of local culture. Thus, Beghu music and other local traditions can be used as teaching materials that not only enrich students' knowledge, but also help form a strong cultural identity (Mawa & Wewe, 2024).

2. METHODS

Qualitative research methods are a very valuable approach in understanding the meaning, cultural values, and practices in cultural preservation, including the preservation of traditional musical instruments such as the Beghu in Nagekeo Regency. This research uses a qualitative descriptive approach (purposive sampling and snowball methods), which has proven effective in exploring cultural values and conservation practices carried out by the community. For example,

studies using purposive sampling and snowball sampling methods are relevant to identify the right informants (Khasanah et al., 2023). This allows for the collection of rich data on how people interpret and preserve their traditional musical instruments, such as the Beghu.

The importance of a qualitative approach is also emphasized by research that discusses the organology and playing techniques of Beghu musical instruments, as well as using interviews and documentation as data collection techniques (Ceme et al., 2021). Through this method, researchers can access an in-depth understanding of the meaning and value contained in Beghu musical playing, as well as see how this instrument is practiced in the social and cultural context of Nagekeo. This deepening is reinforced by findings from other studies that show that the preservation of traditional musical instruments is not only related to technique, but also to the cultural values and identity of the communities it represents (Umami et al., 2023).

In a broader context, other research underscores the importance of using qualitative methods in studying various social activities, including music, which are vital elements of culture that must be preserved (Rahayu & Abdilah, 2020). This research will emphasize that the musicality of traditional musical instruments such as Beghu is not only an artistic practice, but also a means for people to express and transmit their cultural values to future generations. Overall, qualitative research methods provide a solid foundation for investigating the complex interactions between the Bekhu musical instrument, its preservation practices, and related cultural values in Nagekeo County.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of Beghu's cultural significance reveals its embedded role in the social fabric of the Nagekeo community. It is more than just a traditional instrument; it acts as a cultural mediator that connects generations, rituals, and social cohesion. This is evident in the way Beghu is used during ceremonies to reinforce communal identity and values.

Furthermore, the musical structure and performance practice of Beghu reflect a deep knowledge system passed down orally. These practices include specific rhythms, roles of each instrument, and symbolic meanings tied to the sounds produced. The absence of written documentation makes this system vulnerable, especially as elder practitioners age without successors, which puts at risk the continuity of traditional knowledge.

In addition, Beghu's presence in the daily life of the community has drastically declined due to urban migration and a lack of integration in formal education. Traditional music is often excluded from school curriculums, contributing to the perception that Beghu is outdated or irrelevant in today's context. This disconnect between heritage and modern lifestyle underscores the urgency of educational reform and cultural curriculum inclusion.

The symbolic meaning of Beghu as a spiritual bridge during traditional rituals suggests a strong connection between music and cosmology in the Nagekeo belief system. Losing Beghu could mean a disruption in cultural-spiritual continuity, which is an aspect often

overlooked in modern conservation strategies. This shows that preserving Beghu also means preserving a worldview and way of life.

In light of these findings, preserving Beghu must not be limited to performance aspects alone. It must also encompass the holistic knowledge system that surrounds its construction, use, and cultural significance. By combining documentation, education, and community participation, Beghu can continue to thrive as a living tradition rather than a relic of the past.

From a socio-anthropological point of view, Beghu is not only a musical instrument, but also a system of symbols that reflects the social structure of the Nagekeo society. The way the performers are selected, the position of the musical instrument in the ceremony, and the relationship of music with social status show that Beghu has a role in maintaining harmony and collectivity values. Understanding this aspect is important so that preservation is not only focused on the physical aspect, but also on the social values that surround it.

Comparative studies with traditional musical instruments from other regions can provide a new perspective in understanding the position of Beghu. For example, in a study on Kendang musical instruments from Java and Gamelan in Bali, it was found that the preservation process is much more developed due to the existence of formal educational institutions that support and integrate in cultural tourism. This can be used as a reflection that Beghu also has great potential to be developed as a cultural icon as well as an economic source through cross-sectoral approaches such as tourism, education, and culture.

This musical instrument is a musical instrument that comes from one of the tribes in the village of Gezu. In a Gezu village lived a married couple named Ebu Owa (wife) and Ebu Uwe (husband), this married couple had not been blessed with children for a long time and always hoped for the arrival of a baby, long story short Ebu Owa had a dream that he could get offspring if he built a traditional house and was equipped with his assets, one of his assets was the "Beghu" musical instrument.



The Beghu musical instrument is a rhythmic musical instrument that is played by being hit. The Beghu musical instrument is included in the mixed ensemble musical instrument, as it consists of drum instruments and bamboo gongs. The Beghu musical instrument consists of two drums, namely the long drum (*laba lewa*) and the short drum (*laba bhoko*) and seven pairs of bamboo gongs (*toda*).

Each region has a traditional musical instrument that resembles a drum. And usually have different names in each region. However, the drum is also one of the musical instruments used for beghu musical instruments in Gezu Village. Drum instruments are played by being hit. The beghu musical instrument consists of 2 drums and 7 pairs of bamboo gongs.



The shape and size of the beghu musical instrument are: If we observe the size of the long drum and the short drum, we can see the difference. (1) Long drum (*Laba Lewa*); The long drum has a length of 1.30cm, The size of the hole in the middle image is 25 cm, the size of the animal skin is 30 cm, the bamboo blade has a size of 5 cm, The size of the bottom hole is 20 cm. (2) Short drum (*bhoko profit*) has a length of 1.15 cm, the size of the hole is 25 cm the same as a long drum, the size of animal skin is 30 cm, the bamboo blade is 5 cm in size and the bottom hole size is 2 cm.



Preservation of Beghu Musical Instruments

The preservation of *traditional Beghu* musical instruments from Nagakeo Regency faces serious challenges, one of which is the impact of modernization and globalization that displace local cultural values. The entry of popular culture through mass media and the internet has made local culture increasingly marginalized in the lives of the younger generation. Modern music that comes from outside is more accessible and enjoyable, so *Behu's existence* that relies on oral transmission and direct practice is marginalized. This phenomenon is in

line with the theory of *cultural homogenization*, which is the process of cultural unification due to global cultural dominance that erodes local diversity (Tomlinson, 1999).

The change in the interests of the younger generation is also a challenge in the preservation of *Beghu*. Children and adolescents in the Nagakeo area tend to be less familiar with and not interested in learning traditional musical instruments, as they are not considered relevant to their current lifestyles. *Beghu* is often perceived as a symbol of the past that is not "contemporary", so it has no place in the aesthetic and entertainment preferences of the current generation. This is related to the concept of *intergenerational transmission gap*, where there is a failure to transfer cultural values between generations due to a lack of space for cultural interaction (Sobel, 2001).

In addition, the preservation of *Beghu* is also hampered by the lack of documentation and regeneration. Currently, there are almost no adequate documentation and audiovisual sources regarding the technique, how to play, or the repertoire of *Beghu music*. This condition makes the knowledge of this musical instrument only in the memory of the old cultural actors, and is very vulnerable to extinction if not immediately transferred to the younger generation. According to UNESCO (2003), documentation is one of the main pillars in the protection of intangible cultural heritage because it supports the preservation, transmission, and revitalization of culture.

The absence of formal training and the lack of traditional art studios also exacerbate this situation. The absence of institutions or training programs that specifically foster the skill of playing *Beghu* causes the process of cultural regeneration to not run. Children and adolescents do not have the space to learn, practice, or even just get to know *Beghu* in the context of formal and non-formal education. In the context of art education, *the contextual teaching and learning approach* states that learning that is connected to students' experiences and environments will be more meaningful and effective (Johnson, 2002).

The last challenge that is no less important is the lack of support from institutions such as local governments, schools, and cultural institutions. Many cultural preservation programs are sporadic and unsustainable due to limited attention and allocation of funds. Governments often focus more on physical infrastructure than on strengthening local culture. According to Bronfenbrenner's (1979) theory of Ecological Systems, cultural preservation requires the support of various environmental systems, including families, schools, governments, and communities. Without adequate support from relevant institutions, *it will be difficult for the preservation of Beghu to develop systematically and sustainably*.

4. CONCLUSION

The Beghu musical instrument from Nagekeo Regency holds significant cultural, educational, and artistic value. As a traditional ensemble made from local materials like bamboo, wood, and animal skin, it not only represents the creative expressions of the community but also acts as a medium for transmitting ancestral knowledge and spiritual beliefs. Beghu has historically played a central role in ceremonies, rituals, and communal gatherings, serving as a symbol of identity and unity for the Nagekeo people.

However, the preservation of Beghu faces serious threats due to modernization, globalization, and shifting generational interests. The younger generation increasingly favors modern music and digital entertainment, leading to the marginalization of traditional arts. Moreover, the lack of documentation, limited educational integration, and absence of structured training programs further exacerbate the risk of cultural loss.

Efforts to safeguard Beghu must therefore involve multi-layered strategies. These include digital documentation, the integration of Beghu into formal and informal education, the establishment of community art studios, and active governmental and institutional support. Comparative studies with other successfully preserved traditional instruments like Gamelan and Kendang demonstrate that structured cultural policies and educational inclusion can enhance sustainability.

Technology can also serve as a powerful ally in promoting Beghu. Through social media campaigns, mobile applications, and online archives, Beghu can reach a broader audience and stimulate interest among youth. Combining traditional knowledge with modern platforms can make the preservation efforts more adaptive and effective.

In conclusion, preserving the Beghu instrument is not merely about safeguarding a musical tradition, but also about protecting a vital cultural identity. Collaborative efforts between communities, educators, cultural institutions, and policymakers are crucial. With sustained commitment, Beghu can continue to resonate across generations as a proud emblem of Nagekeo's cultural legacy.

One of the new approaches that can be taken to preserve Beghu is through the use of digital technology. Audiovisual documentation, the creation of gamification-based educational applications, and the dissemination of Beghu content on social media can attract the interest of the younger generation. In addition, creating an easily accessible digital archive can be a solution to the current lack of documentation. This approach has been successfully applied in the preservation of traditional music in several Southeast Asian countries such as Thailand and Vietnam.

AUTHOR'S CONTRIBUTION

Author one contributed to this research through planning, implementation, and in-depth data analysis on the preservation of Beghu musical instruments. Author two designed the research instruments, conducted data collection in the field, and analyzed the findings based on relevant theoretical approaches.

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