



THE EVOLUTION OF FAHOMBO: ANALYZING ITS CHANGING SIGNIFICANCE IN THE CONTEXT OF CULTURAL DYNAMICS AND MODERNIZATION

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Keywords	Abstract
<i>Fahombo, shifting meaning, diffusion of innovation, modernization, Nias culture, social adaptation, virtual interview, Everett Rogers..</i>	<i>This study aims to analyze the shift in the meaning of Fahombo in the dynamics of culture and modernization using the theory of diffusion of innovation from Everett Rogers (1962). This theory highlights how changes in Nias culture occur through the process of innovation, communication, time, and social systems. In this context, Fahombo is not only maintained as a cultural heritage, but also experiences adaptation due to the influence of modernization and globalization. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a virtual interview method via the Zoom application to explore in depth the information needed. The informants involved consisted of parents who had experienced or witnessed Fahombo in a traditional context, community leaders who had a deep understanding of the history and changes in the tradition, and local residents who witnessed firsthand the transformation of Fahombo in recent decades. The results of the study show that the shift in the meaning of Fahombo occurs through five stages of innovation adoption according to Rogers, namely: awareness, interest, evaluation, experimentation, and acceptance. Traditional values are maintained, but reinterpretation occurs in the context of tourism, cultural identity, and social expression. This transformation reflects the process of social and selective adaptation in which local and global elements interact to form a new understanding of Fahombo in contemporary Nias society. This study provides insights into how traditions can survive and thrive in changing social systems.</i>

1. INTRODUCTION

Modernization and globalization have brought significant changes to various aspects of life, including local traditions and cultures. Increasingly intense interactions between communities and advances in information technology accelerate the process of cultural adoption and adaptation. Some traditions remain in their original form, while others are reinterpreted to be relevant to evolving social conditions. In this context, the tradition of Fahombo (stone jumping) of the Nias people is not only maintained as a cultural heritage, but also experiences a shift in meaning due to the influence of modernization and globalization.

According to the Diffusion of Innovation theory proposed by Everett Rogers

(1962), social and cultural change occurs through the process of adopting innovations consisting of five stages: awareness, interest, evaluation, trial, and acceptance. This model explains how a tradition undergoes transformation when faced with new values introduced through communication, time, and social systems. In the context of Fahombo, this change can be seen from the shift in its function from being a test of maturity for Nias men to a symbol of tourism, cultural identity, and broader social expression (Lase et al., 2021).

Previous studies have shown how local traditions have transformed in the face of modernization and globalization. For example, Gea's (2021) research explores the perspectives of Nias students who are migrants regarding the changing meaning of Fahombo, which is now better known as a tourist attraction than as a coming-of-age ritual. In line with this, Lase's (2021) research reveals that Fahombo has shifted in meaning from sacred values to tourist entertainment, which is reinforced by the local government in cultural promotion. Furthermore, Zalukhu (2012) highlights how the values of heroism and courage in this tradition have begun to be replaced by elements of commercialization, where stone jumping is no longer part of the social initiation process, but merely a tourist spectacle.

The changes that have occurred in Fahombo reflect how the Nias people navigate between cultural preservation and the demands of modernization. If in the past Fahombo had a sacred meaning as a test of maturity and readiness to become a soldier, now it is more widely played as a cultural attraction for tourists, a medium for promoting regional identity, and a symbol of the resilience of the Nias people in facing changing times (Ramdhasuma, 2023). In addition, Pontas' research (2019) shows that although this tradition has shifted in meaning, the Nias people still view it as a symbol of honor and courage, although it is no longer a social requirement that binds young people as in the past.

This study aims to analyze the shifting meaning of Fahombo in the dynamics of culture and modernization using Everett Rogers' (1962) Diffusion of Innovation theory. Using descriptive qualitative methods and virtual interviews, this study explores how the Nias community understands the changes that occur in the Fahombo tradition and how they adapt to these changes. This study is expected to provide insight into how traditions can survive and thrive in a constantly changing social system, and how local cultural values are maintained despite being reinterpreted in a modern context.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The Diffusion of Innovations Theory developed by Everett Rogers (1962) explains how an innovation—either in the form of an idea, practice, or new object— can be accepted and adopted by a social group over a certain period of time. In a cultural context, this theory can be used to analyze how local traditions such as Fahombo experience a shift in meaning in the dynamics of culture and modernization. Rogers identified five main stages in the adoption of innovation, namely: awareness (knowledge), interest (persuasion), evaluation (decision), trial (implementation), and acceptance (confirmation). The application of this theory in understanding the shift in meaning of Fahombo reflects how a tradition can survive and thrive in a social system that is constantly changing due to modernization and globalization. The following are some of the main aspects of Rogers' theory that are relevant to this study:

a) Innovation and Cultural Change

Rogers (1962) explains that cultural change can occur through the spread of innovation in a community. In the context of Fahombo, innovation is not always something completely new, but can be a reinterpretation or adaptation of traditional values in a more modern social system. For example, Fahombo, which was previously only related to the coming-of-age ritual in Nias culture, has now developed into a tourist attraction and a broader symbol of cultural identity.

b) Diffusion Process in Modernization

Modernization brings changes in the way society accepts and maintains their culture. In Rogers' theory, the adoption of innovation is influenced by communication factors, information dissemination channels, and social interactions between individuals or groups. The dissemination of information about Fahombo through social media, tourism, and cultural performances has accelerated the process of diffusion and reinterpretation of the meaning of this tradition.

c) Factors Influencing Innovation Adoption

According to Rogers, innovation adoption is influenced by five main factors:

- Relative advantage: How far the innovation is considered better than previous practices. In the case of Fahombo, modernization provides advantages in the form of tourist attractions and cultural preservation through digital media.
- Compatibility: How appropriate the innovation is with the values and norms that already exist in society. Fahombo still maintains elements of pride and courage, but is now combined with economic interests and cultural promotion.
- Complexity: The level of difficulty in understanding and implementing the innovation. Fahombo in a traditional context may be more exclusive, while in a modern context it is more accessible to the wider community.
- Trialability: How easy it is for the community to test the innovation before fully adopting it. Fahombo cultural festivals and performances allow the community to get to know and try to understand its meaning in a broader context.
- Observability: How clear the impact of the innovation is in people's lives. Changes in the meaning of Fahombo can be seen in the shift in function from a coming-of-age ritual to a form of cultural expression and tourist attraction.

d) Social Reinterpretation of Tradition

The shift in meaning in culture does not only occur through individuals, but also in the wider social system. Rogers (1962) explains that when an innovation is widely accepted, society will begin to reconstruct the meaning and purpose of the innovation. In the case of Fahombo, the values of courage and maturity that were once the core of this tradition are now reinterpreted as symbols of a more inclusive and open cultural identity to the outside world.

e) Dynamics of Adaptation in the Context of Globalization

The diffusion of innovation is inseparable from the influence of globalization that accelerates the spread and exchange of culture. Fahombo, which was previously only known in local communities, has now become part of the representation of Indonesian culture at the national and international levels. This adaptation reflects how culture can survive and thrive in a constantly changing social system, as explained by Rogers in his theory of the innovation process in society.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach to understand how Fahombo

has shifted meaning in the dynamics of culture and modernization. This method was chosen because it can dig up in-depth understanding from the perspective of the local community. Data collection was conducted through virtual interviews with three main informant groups: parents who have experienced or witnessed Fahombo in a traditional context, community leaders who understand the history and changes in this tradition, and local residents who have witnessed the transformation of Fahombo in recent decades. In addition to interviews, this study also reviewed previous research journals to enrich understanding of the changes in the meaning of this tradition.

After the data was collected, analysis was carried out by identifying patterns that emerged in the changes in the meaning of Fahombo. The stages of analysis include compiling, grouping, and interpreting data to find the relationship between the original tradition and its meaning that has developed in the modern era. The validity of the data is maintained through a comparison of interview results in order to obtain a more objective understanding. With this method, this study is expected to provide a clear picture of the shift in the meaning of Fahombo in the dynamics of culture and modernization.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Shifting Meaning of Fahombo in the Perspective of Parents

From interviews with parents who have experienced or witnessed Fahombo in a traditional context, it was found that the original meaning of Fahombo is closely related to the test of maturity and readiness of a Nias man to become a soldier or leader. This can be seen from the results of the interview with (Informant 1, 2025) as in the following quote:

(Mefóna, fatua ló lawaó ono matua andró no ebua- bua, yaia no tola itokasi gara salawa. Daa tenga ha bóró waa bóló mboto nia, izai bóró wa ebua wangerá ngerania. Na notola berhasil, yaia andro la fosumange ia niha mbarua ba no tola ditagujawani fefu hadi zalua)

"In the past, before a boy was considered an adult, he had to be able to jump over rocks. It was not just about physical strength, but also mental strength. Once successful, he was respected by the community and considered ready to take responsibility." (Informant 1, 2025)

However, over time, this sacred value began to diminish. The younger generation is no longer required to perform Fahombo as part of the transition to adulthood, but rather as part of a cultural performance or festival. (Informant 1, 2025) also said in his quote as follows:

(Ono matua ia daa ló sae khóra wo tokasi gara sebua andró. Yaira ba daó asese la lau wa nokasi gara andró ha naso niha simeí manóró ba daó ma jui na so falówa sebua nifalua. Bóró daó fefu ahoi tefawua)

"Now young people are no longer required to jump over stones. They do it more often just for tourists or cultural festivals. The meaning has changed a lot." (Informant 1, 2025)

1.1 Analysis with Rogers' Theory

According to Rogers' (1962) theory of innovation diffusion, this change reflects the stage of awareness (knowledge) in the process of innovation adoption. Older people who used to witness Fahombo in its original form are now beginning to realize the changes in

function and meaning in this practice. They see that the younger generation is no longer experiencing Fahombo as a sacred ritual, but as part of a cultural attraction.

2. Community Leaders' Perspectives on Fahombo Reinterpretation

The community leaders interviewed revealed that the change in the meaning of Fahombo is part of cultural adaptation in facing modernization. This can be seen from the results of the interview with (Informant 2, 2025) who explained in the following quote:

(Ya ita ia daa taila gei wa oya sitewua ba ginótó daa, na fohombo daó simane melua no, ló oya ndraono sibohou ebua somasi wo lau yaia. bóródaó, ya ita gei ta dukung ia tobali parisawa ba wo bantu fangalui niha mbanua khóda.)

"We are aware that the world is constantly changing. If Fahombo remains the same as before, perhaps many young people will no longer be interested. Therefore, we support it as part of tourism, because it also helps the community's economy." (Informant 2, 2025).

Community leaders see that preserving Fahombo in the context of modern culture is not just about maintaining tradition, but also adapting it to remain relevant. Local governments and cultural communities are involved in preserving this tradition by adapting it to the needs of the times. (Informant 2, 2025) also said in his quote as follows:

(ia daa ta ombakhaó wa fohombo andró sitobali budaya khóda ba danô niha atau nias, daa tengah ha bórô wo tokasi gara salawa yaó, iza'i daa sitobali wa owóló-óló niha khóda atau org nias. Daa sitobali ma ombakhaó ba niha guli danó fefu)

"Now we promote Fahombo as a cultural identity. It's not just about stone jumping, but about the spirit and resilience of the Nias people. That's what we want to show the world." (Informant 2, 2025).

2.1 Analysis with Rogers' Theory

The views of community leaders reflect the persuasion and decision evaluation stages in Rogers' innovation diffusion theory. They have received information about the changes in the function of Fahombo and evaluated how this innovation can benefit the community, both in terms of cultural preservation and economic impact.

3. Local Residents' Perspectives on Fahombo Transformation

Local residents who witnessed the changes in the last decade provided their perspectives on how modern society accepts Fahombo as a developing cultural heritage. This can be seen from the results of the interview with (Informant 3, 2025) who said in the following quote:

(Itóró tódógu mei ide-idedo, fohombo asese lafalua ba acara adat. ia daa , eroso niha simei manóró moroi ba luar atau turis ba daa, ba daó asese lalau fa nawô gara sebua daó ba wo oromaó khó niha simei ba daó)

"I still remember when I was little, Fahombo was more often performed at traditional events. But now, almost every time a tourist comes, there is definitely a stone jumping performance." (Informant 3, 2025)

From this interview, it can be seen that the Nias people have adjusted the meaning of Fahombo to their socio-economic conditions. This tradition is still respected, but has undergone a change in function from a sacred ritual to a tourist attraction that contributes to the local economy.

3.1 Analysis with Rogers' Theory

Local residents are in the implementation and confirmation stages in Rogers' innovation diffusion theory. They not only accept this change, but also apply it in their daily lives, both in the form of cultural attractions and as profitable economic opportunities.

5. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that Fahombo has experienced a shift in meaning from a sacred ritual of adulthood to a broader cultural symbol in the context of tourism and modernization. Parents experience the stage of awareness in Rogers' theory, where they realize that Fahombo no longer has the sacred meaning it once did. Likewise, community leaders are in the persuasion and evaluation stages, where they support this change as part of a strategy for preserving culture and the economy. And also from the perspective of local residents have reached the implementation and confirmation stage, where they adopt Fahombo as part of their daily economic and social life. This change follows the pattern of innovation adoption according to Rogers, where traditional practices must undergo reinterpretation in order to remain relevant in the modern era. Thus, Fahombo remains sustainable, although with a more flexible meaning in accordance with the times.

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