

# Preserving Cultural Heritage Through *Sasando* Performance Art Management

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## ABSTRACT

*Sasando* is a traditional musical instrument typical of Rote Island, Indonesia which is currently threatened with extinction. One effort to preserve this cultural heritage is through *Sasando* Performing Art Management. This study aims to analyze *Sasando* Performing Art Management strategies in efforts to preserve cultural heritage. The research method used is a qualitative case study by collecting data through interviews, observations, and documentation studies. The results showed that there were four main components in *Sasando* performance art management, namely planning, organizing, implementing, and supervising. At the planning stage, the identification of potential, SWOT analysis, and determining conservation goals.

## KEYWORDS

Cultural Heritage,  
*Sasando* Performing  
Arts Management,  
Preservation

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## INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is an archipelago that has a very diverse culture. *Sasando* a traditional musical instrument from Rote Island, is one of its unique cultural heritages (Margareta et al., 2019). *Sasando* is a traditional stringed instrument made from palm fronds and equipped with strings that are played by plucking. This instrument not only functions as a musical instrument, but also represents the local wisdom and identity of the Rote people (Elda et al., 2023). Since centuries ago, *Sasando* has been an important part of the lives of the Rote people (Kabnani, 2020). This musical instrument was originally used by the local community in various traditional ceremonies and religious rituals, which originated from the Rote island culture. The basic form of the *sasando*, which consists of woven palm fronds, serves as a symbol of human balance with the environment. *Sasando* became widely known during the Dutch colonial period and received attention from the colonial government. (Natonis, 2018) There have been several efforts made to identify and develop the *sasando*, such as holding performances at various events and festivals. This has also caused people inside and outside Rote Island to appreciate the *sasando* more.

The government and local communities continued to protect the *sasando* after Indonesia became an independent country. To ensure the existence of this traditional musical instrument, various *sasando* coaching programs, courses and festivals were held. However, *sasando* began to face unique challenges to survive in the current era of globalization (Saefatu, 2023). Although the *sasando* has

become an integral part of the cultural identity of the Rote people, its existence is currently endangered. One of the main problems in sasando preservation is the declining interest of the younger generation to learn and preserve this traditional musical instrument (Muhammad et al., 2023). Many young people are turning to modern popular music, which is considered more modern and in line with their preferences (Augusta, 2022).

One of the reasons why the younger generation is not very interested in *sasando* is the lack of socialization and education about the importance of preserving cultural heritage. In addition to the lack of interest of the younger generation, *sasando* also has to compete with the rapid development of popular music, both locally and globally. (Imanningrat, 2017) The easier access of people, especially the younger generation, to modern music through digital media has also strengthened the dominance of popular music, changing people's preferences from traditional music such as *sasando*. Not much effort has been made to promote the *sasando* and make people more aware of it. People are unfamiliar with *sasando*, especially outside of Rote Island (Maria Tukan et al., 2020), as there are no performances, festivals or even cultural activities that specifically introduce it.

In addition, *sasando* preservation efforts face challenges due to limited support from various stakeholders, such as the government, artists and the community. To encourage sustainable *sasando* preservation efforts, coordination and collaboration between stakeholders still need to be improved. A comprehensive strategy and approach to preserving *Sasando* cultural heritage is needed to overcome these challenges. *Sasando* performing arts management is one approach that can be used. The management of various resources and activities related to staging or performing arts is known as performing arts management (Nursyirwan et al., 2021). In the context of *Sasando* cultural heritage preservation, this can be one of the strategic ways to maintain the existence and increase public appreciation of this traditional musical instrument. Planning, organizing, implementing, and supervising are the four main components of *Sasando* performing arts management.

According to (Ikhsan et al., 2020). The concept in performance asserts that realism must have the ability to "move" everyday reality on stage, not through stylization (stylization) or damage (restoration), but in an appropriate way so that illusion can be achieved. In the planning stage, some of the things that need to be done include: The first step in planning is to determine the possibility of *sasando* as a cultural heritage that must be preserved. (Syafrizal et al., 2022) This involves assessing the historical, cultural and artistic elements that make it unique. Furthermore, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) were conducted to determine the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats faced in *sasando* preservation efforts. Something that is institutionalized usually has a certain basis and reason in the form of conservation, guidance, development and or other reasons. If the performing arts as a branch of art are institutionalized, it means that at least they contain the intention, guidance and development (Joel & Agusti, 2023). This analysis will serve as the basis for building a successful performing arts management strategy.

The next step is to determine the goals of *sasando* preservation based on the results of potential identification and SWOT analysis. Increased public appreciation, artist regeneration, creative industry development, and soon can be part of this goal. After determining the preservation goals, an action plan is created that includes ways to achieve these goals. According to (Wirandi et al., n.d.), Stewardship can be defined as actions that include maintenance, rescue, preservation and management. Stewardship also includes actions to provide guidance, direction, excavation, recording, and quality improvement. This action plan includes the necessary budgeting, resource allocation, and scheduling of activities. At the organizing stage, some of the things that need to be done include: A clear organizational structure is essential for *Sasando* performing arts management. This structure can consist of various units that work together to achieve preservation goals, such as production, marketing, art, and finance. In *Sasando* performing arts management, the management of human resources (HR) is important in addition to the organizational structure. This includes hiring, training, and developing artists (Jazuli, 2014).

## METHOD

The qualitative approach allows researchers to thoroughly understand socio-cultural phenomena, such as dynamics in *Sasando* performing arts management and cultural heritage

preservation efforts. This approach also allows researchers to gather valuable information from the perspective of art performers, managers, and related stakeholders. Researchers can conduct case studies to learn and understand the various *Sasando* performing arts management strategies used by related parties. By doing this, researchers can see how implementing the management strategy has an impact on efforts to preserve cultural heritage. Data collection techniques allow in-depth interviews with artisans, managers, and stakeholders to learn more about what they know, what they think, and how they deal with the situation. Through data obtained from observations and interviews, it can be supplemented with publications, reports, and archives, so that it can better understand *Sasando's* performing arts management methods and how they affect the preservation of cultural heritage.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

*Sasando* is a cultural icon of the Rote people. *Sasando* is a traditional musical instrument of the Rote people of East Nusa Tenggara. Rote communities convey various cultural, philosophical, and historical values through *sasando* performing arts. *Sasando*, for example, is used in Sio Haning's performances to welcome important guests. *Sasando* symbolizes the hospitality, honor, and pride of the people of Rote for guests. *Sasando* became an important part of many other traditional rituals. *Sasando* is not only used for ritual purposes, but also used as entertainment and artistic expression of the people of Rote.

*Sasando* performances are usually performed during festivals, cultural festivals, and art performances. The people of Rote express their joy, pride, and cultural identity through *sasando* play, which is accompanied by traditional singing and dancing. Therefore, *sasando* is not only a musical instrument, it also represents the identity, history, and local wisdom of the Rote people.



**Figure 1.** Sasando Performance  
(Source: Emil, 2017)

*Sasando's* presence is very important to the people of Rote because it is very important to preserve it. Challenges in the preservation of *Sasando's* performing arts, while playing a significant role in the culture of Rote society, there are many challenges that must be overcome to keep this tradition. Some of the major challenges identified are the influence of modernization and globalization as times progressed and accelerated socio-cultural transformation, traditional performing arts such as *sasando* face the threat of extinction. The younger generation of Rote is no longer interested in traditional performing arts due to the popularity of modern entertainment, consumptive lifestyle, and popular culture. Many youths are more interested in popular entertainment that is considered more "modern" and follow global trends.



**Figure 2.** Sasando Musical Instrument  
(Source: Emil, 2017)

In addition, technological advances have affected the way people consume culture. The presence of digital media such as smartphones, the internet and television has changed the preference of the public, especially children, from live performances to digital mediums. This has led to people appreciating and participating less in the sasando performing arts, especially children. *Sasando* performance art preservation also faces challenges in the process of transmitting knowledge and skills from generation to generation. Many credible senior sasando players have aged or even passed away. Meanwhile, the regeneration of young *sasando* players has been difficult. Some of the factors that hinder regeneration include the lack of encouragement and interest of the younger generation to learn and master the art of sasando performance.



**Figure 3.** Sasando Performance  
(Source: Emil Ruku, 2018)

There are limited opportunities for the younger generation to learn to play *sasando* and get guidance from relevant parties such as the government and cultural institutions to facilitate the inheritance of *Sasando* performance art, as a result the knowledge and skills to play *sasando* are endangered, and the older generation of experienced *sasando* players will be lost. This raises concerns that in the future, the *sasando* performing arts will not continue. Weak Stakeholder Support to preserve the *Sasando* performing arts also faces challenges due to a lack of support from stakeholders. The Rote people themselves, the local government, cultural institutions, and academics have not shown a strong commitment to supporting sasando preservation. Some of the issues with stakeholder support include the lack of budget and programs to preserve the sasando performing arts. Minimal effort and cooperation between the local government, cultural institutions, and the Rote community in developing and implementing preservation strategies.



Good management is essential to preserve cultural heritage through *sasando* performance art. The management of *sasando* performing arts includes many things, starting from planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating. With proper management, *sasando* performance art can continue to grow and become an important part of the cultural identity of the people in Rote in particular, and Indonesia in general. Looking at a *Sasando* music performance can show that *Sasando* performing arts management consists of four main parts, namely planning, organizing, implementing, and monitoring. Potential identification, SWOT analysis, and determination of preservation goals are carried out at the planning stage. The organizing stage includes the formation of an organizational structure, resource management, and the implementation of training and promotion activities. Meanwhile, controlling, evaluating, and monitoring are used to conduct supervisory measures.

*Sasando* has ritual and spiritual purposes in Rote society in addition to being used as a musical instrument. *Sasando* is often used in traditional ceremonies such as marriage and death. Rote people can live and express their spirituality and religiosity through *sasando* music. *Sasando* performances are often performed at folk festivals, cultural festivals, or traditional gatherings, and contribute to the social harmony of Rote society. Performances give people the opportunity to gather, interact and strengthen their social relationships. The selection of raw materials, the manufacturing process, and the way the *sasando* is played demonstrate the local wisdom of the Rote people. It shows that Rote people can adapt to their natural and cultural environment. In addition to the cultural values mentioned above, *sasando* performance art has a high aesthetic value. This is due to the unique shape of the *sasando* instrument, its unique melody, and its beautiful playing movements. Effective and thorough management is needed to preserve cultural heritage through *sasando* performing arts.

The management of *sasando* performing arts has many aspects, one of which is planning. At this stage, it is necessary to identify the potential and resources owned, including *sasando* instruments, artists and players, and supporting communities. Based on these findings, the goals and strategies that will be used to preserve *sasando* performing arts will be formulated in strategies such as training programs, performances, and promotions, implemented through the preparation of action plans. In *sasando* performing arts management, the organizing stage includes the establishment of an organizational structure so that a clear and effective organizational structure can be required to coordinate the various parties involved in *sasando* performing arts preservation efforts.

## CONCLUSIONS

The results showed that *Sasando* performing art management consists of four main parts found, planning, organizing, implementing, and supervising. Potential identification, SWOT analysis, and determination of preservation goals are carried out at the planning stage. The organizing stage includes the establishment of an organizational structure, resource management, and resource allocation. Performance, training, and promotion activities are part of the implementation stage, and the supervision stage is carried out through monitoring, evaluation, and control. This research found that the overall management of *sasando* performing arts can help the preservation of cultural heritage. This research shows that various stakeholders must commit and work together to preserve *sasando* as Rote's cultural identity.

Conduct a thorough investigation in an attempt to understand the cultural values contained in the *sasando* performing arts. design a *sasando* performing arts management that covers all aspects of planning, organizing, implementing, and supervising. actively involve the local community, especially children, in various *sasando* performing arts events. To support preservation efforts, the government, private sector, artists and academics collaborate strategically to document and digitize *sasando* performing arts to improve access and conservation. Develop curriculum and educational programs related to *Sasando* performing arts in formal and non-formal educational institutions. Strategically promote *Sasando* performing arts to raise awareness of culture and tourism attractions. Building a creative industry based on *Sasando* performing arts to create jobs and support preservation. Building commitment, cooperation and collective awareness of all stakeholders in safeguarding cultural heritage by overseeing *sasando* performing arts. Consistently evaluate and adjust strategies to adapt them to progress and difficulties.

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