



Examining the Different Points of Meaning of *Su'i Uwi* Inculturation in Eucharist

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Abstract

One of the cultural peaks that the Ngada people still live by is the celebration of Reba. On the other hand, as Catholics, the Ngada also have the Eucharist as the culmination of church life. This study aims to examine various kinds of differences, criticisms, and recommendations on the inculturation of *Su'i Uwi* and its practice in the Eucharist. The results showed that the *Su'i Uwi* ritual has a different background from the celebration of the Eucharist. One of the most striking differences is the mention of symbols in the two celebrations, namely the Lamb and the Uwi. Another of the most significant differences is in the leader of the celebration and the type of sacrifice offered to God. Not all *Su'i Uwi* symbols are universal and can be used in the celebration of the Eucharist. *Su'i Uwi* cannot simply be equated with the Eucharist. Inculturation can occur on a practical and intellectual level. Inculturation is a collective effort. It needs a more intensive investigation for the Ngada people to find the true meaning of each symbol used in the *Su'i Uwi* ritual.

Keywords: *Reba; Su'i Uwi; Eucharist; Inculturation*

Introduction

The Second Vatican Council opened the Church's doors to recognize cultural and religious diversity. This is very important because the Church previously affirmed that only the Church can save mankind. *Extra Ecclesiam Nulla Salus*, outside the Church there is no salvation. Here the Church has sought to break out of the misunderstanding of the Church herself who identifies herself with the Kingdom of God.

The Church even recognizes that God's self-revelation is in and through other cultures and religions. The Church needs to also accept differences in doctrines that often differ, but reflect a ray of truth that illuminates all people. Therefore, the Church invites her sons and daughters to develop dialogue and cooperation. Even the Church says that whatever in the custom of nations, the Church considers it generously, to keep it in good and intact condition. The Redemptorist Encyclical *Missio* articles 28-29 also state that the Church is aware that God's saving act has been present and has always been present throughout history in the diverse cultures and religions of all nations.

This openness of the Church encourages the Church's own efforts in the context of local culture. The Church does not want to appear as a foreign institution, but the Church wants to establish itself as a local Church that is present involved and rooted in the local context (Sawu, 2002: 9). Therefore the Church sees itself as a communion that takes part in God's saving mission. In such a context the Church can no longer monopolize all truth and salvation as before. The Church is open to acknowledging what other nations, cultures and, religions do (Kleden, 2002:267).

This follow-up to the openness of the Church is seen in the Church's efforts to ground the Church in the local culture through a process of adaptation, inculturation, contextualization, and development of local theology (Muda, 2005: 10). Local cultural heritage, for example, has original spiritual treasures, which when examined further have helped the development of the Church. The heritage of cultural values is considered as a step of preparation by the Holy Spirit for new spiritual treasures, namely those that come from Christ's commission as the fullness of all the longings of every human being (Boff, 1997: 108).

One of the problems faced by Catholics is how to align their cultural life with church life. This settlement process sometimes encounters obstacles and obstacles that are no less light. There are parts of culture that are incompatible with the Church that have the potential to be eliminated. There are also appropriate cultural parts that have the opportunity to be accepted and integrated into the Catholic Church. This problem also arises in the *Ngada* community who are still loyal to living and inheriting their cultural traditions. One of the cultural peaks that the *Ngada* people still live by themselves is the celebration of *Reba*. On the other hand, as Catholics the *Ngada* also have the Eucharist as the culmination of church life.

Research Methods

This research is an interpretive qualitative research. This study aims to examine various kinds of differences, criticisms, and recommendations on the inculturation of *Su'i Uwi* as a cultural peak that the *Ngada* people still live by themselves and their appreciation in the Eucharist which is the culmination of their church life as Catholics. Data analysis using descriptive-analytical methods. Descriptive analytics are performed to describe the various points of difference between *Su'i Uwi* and the Eucharist, then formulate criticism and finally provide recommendations. Analysis is also carried out with the aim of obtaining answers from statements that have been compiled in the problem statement. Primary data are obtained through interviews with reliable informants. While secondary data come from the study of documents on the inculturation of *Su'i Uwi* and the Eucharist itself.

Discussion and Results



Fig.1. Equipment to be used in the *Su'i Uwi* ritual
(Source: doc. Benediktus Molo, 2022)

One of the celebrations that reveals the religiosity of the *Ngada* people is the *Reba* celebration, in which there is a *Su'i Uwi* ritual. The *Reba* celebration is an annual celebration of the *Ngada* people that is placed at the end of the annual life journey and simultaneously marks the beginning of the new year. From the agrarian side, this celebration is placed between the time of planting and the time of harvest. From the two ways of placing this celebration can be drawn the following points. First, the celebration of *Reba* is a moment of gratitude for God's providence in a year's life and an evaluation of the journey of a year's life. This means that in addition to expressing gratitude to God, *Ngada* people also evaluate themselves so that in the new year everyone can be better. The benchmark of kindness is in the *Su'i Uwi* ritual which is also the culmination of the celebration.

Second, through the advices contained in the *Su'i Uwi* ritual at the *Reba* celebration, indigenous people are always advised to work hard and frugally (Dhogo, 2009:25). Therefore, the placement of the *Reba* celebration between the planting season and the harvest season means that hard work must be continuous. This advice invites the *Ngada* people not only to wait for the earth to give a harvest, but to encourage the *Ngada* people to keep working hard to maintain crops so as to produce abundant harvests.

Thus, the celebration of *Reba* is the main celebration of the culmination of the series of life journeys of the *Ngada* people. In this celebration, *Su'i Uwi* becomes an important moment, because it connects vertical relations with God and horizontal relationships with others and ancestors. In addition, it is a moment of reflection on self-identity, how society should act and who it is before God and others (Demu, 2005:10). Considering this important role, *Su'i Uwi* becomes the peak and at the same time the source of life or life principles for the *Ngada* people which is a moment to reflect and express religiosity and at the same time gain strength for a new life.

On the other hand, the Church recognizes that liturgy, especially the Eucharistic Liturgy, is the culmination and source of Christian life. The Eucharist becomes the means of sanctification of man and the glorification of God. Through the celebration of the Eucharist, every Catholic wants to give thanks for the joyful message and the gift of life given by God through Jesus. Here people discover their true identity, that God never abandons them but is ever-present in every step of their life's journey. Therefore, there are two peaks and sources of life faced by the traditional *Ngada* community who also adhere to Catholicism. Yet in those two moments God was present and showed Himself. Through these two moments, the *Ngada* people express their religiosity and acknowledge God who bestows life. In short, at these two moments, the deepest relationship between man and God is revealed.



Fig 2. *Ngada* people singing o uwi in the middle of the village courtyard.
(Source: doc. Benediktus Molo, 2022)

As a celebration of thanksgiving, *Su'i Uwi* and the celebration of the Eucharist certainly have common ground. On the other hand, however, the two also have different points. However, a good understanding of *Su'i Uwi* has a relevant role for understanding and living the celebration of the

Eucharist. The ritual of *Su'i Uwi* has a different background from the celebration of the Eucharist. This is one of the main points that distinguishes these two celebrations characteristically, in addition to other different points. The following description highlights the different points of the two.

1. Symbol of *Su'i Uwi* and Eucharist

One of the most striking differences is the mention of symbols in the two celebrations, namely the Lamb and the Uwi. Jesus is called the Lamb of God who sacrificed Himself as a ransom for the sins of the Israelites. The symbol of the Lamb is taken from the Jewish tradition of Passover. If you look further, the tradition of slaughtering race children was born from a nomadic tradition when they wanted to move from one place to another. They slaughter a lamb to increase the fertility and size of their flock (Powers, 1999:53). Thus it can be said that the symbol of the lamb in the celebration of the Eucharist originated in the nomadic culture of the Israelites, when they were not settled and still in a wandering period, and tending sheep was a very common occupation.

Unlike the symbol of the Lamb, the *Su'i Uwi* ritual uses the uwi as the central symbol. Uwi are representations of different types of plants. With a livelihood as farmers, it is fitting that the *Ngada* people generally choose uwi as a symbol rather than a particular sacrificial animal. For this reason, it is understandable that in the celebration of *Reba*, especially in the *Su'i Uwi* ritual, the *Ngada* people do not offer animals as sacrifices (Jara, 2003:35). Uwi was chosen as a material for offering and sacrifice. Uwi, who has the potential to grow and develop, sacrificed their lives so that everyone can eat them. Eating uwi is a symbol of unity with God and others.

Therefore, in this ritual the center of attention is uwi. But when eating uwi, there is also Hui wu'u, which is meat that is preserved by smearing it with corn flour. The meat is taken, grilled, and cut into small pieces and divided together with the uwi. There is no obligation for everyone to eat it, but everyone is required to eat uwi that is distributed. This action confirms that it is the uwi that is the central symbol.

Hui wu'u is used to assert that the uwi is a victim. Uwi are aligned with animal or livestock sacrifices whose blood is shed. This alignment needs to be made because in many rites the *Ngada* people choose animals as sacrifices. However, what is really meant by sacrifice is the sacrifice of one's life, because in it there is a surrender of the life of God's servant who bears the wickedness of the people (Isaiah 53:4-5). Uwi is not understood as a cult but rather as total personal surrender (Jacobs, 1999:178). Thus, despite the common goal of sacrificing something for salvation, the rituals of *Su'i Uwi* and the Eucharist have different cultural backgrounds. The celebration of the Eucharist with the symbol of the Lamb was born from the culture of shepherding while the uwi was born from the culture of agriculture.

2. Jesus Is the Leader and the Sacrifice Himself

The most significant difference is in the leader of the celebration and the type of sacrifice offered to God. In the celebration of the Eucharist, Jesus Christ is the only leader of the celebration and the sacrifice Himself (Jacobs, 1999:155). Jesus was the High Priest who offered the Lamb, that is, Himself. He spoke, proclaimed glad tidings and communicated the Kingdom of God in His own name, for He was truly man as well as truly God. When offering sacrifices, He sacrificed Himself for the salvation of all. Therefore, in the celebration of the Eucharist, the figure of Jesus becomes the central figure. The Catholic Church believes that Christ Himself is the eternal High Priest of the New Testament who offers Eucharistic sacrifices through the service of faith. Likewise, Christ Himself is the material of the Eucharistic offering and sacrifice. He Himself was present in the likeness of bread and wine.

Therefore, the presence of a priest presiding over the celebration of the Eucharist does not replace the role of Jesus Christ. Through the Priest, Jesus Christ was present to present Himself (Jacobs, 1999:149). The priest is a symbol of the presence of Jesus Christ celebrating the Eucharist. In other words, he acts and celebrates the Eucharist in the name of Jesus Christ. That is why it is the culmination

of the celebration of the Eucharist between the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. In both peaks Jesus proclaims God's message of salvation and sacrifices Himself for the salvation of all people.

Unlike the celebration of the Eucharist, the ritual of *Su'i Uwi* is led by the tribal leader or by the person entrusted by the tribe members. Usually the leader asks for help from the ancestors from within the traditional house so that what is done does not deviate and contradict what is inherited by the ancestors. If you look carefully, the meaning of the words proclaimed by the leader in the act of *Su'i Uwi* does not belong to the ancestors of the traditional house concerned. The advice in the ritual is the principle of living with the entire *Ngada* community. Thus, the leader is only a mouthpiece for the community to jointly perform the ritual which is also an advice to the tribe members.

Another difference with the celebration of the Eucharist is that the sacrifice offered in this ritual is the uwi, not the leader himself. It would seem very strange if the leader gave himself up to save all the tribesmen. In a non-existent culture there is no culture to sacrifice a good person to save one's neighbor. What often happens is to communicate from the village those who commit grave mistakes such as incest marriages to avoid great catastrophe. The act of excommunicating the person is done by killing a buffalo that symbolizes the person to be communicated followed by expulsion out of the village.

3. The Universality of Jesus' Salvation and the Limitations of Uwi Symbolization

One of the characteristics of religious symbols is that they are born, alive, and developed in a particular historical context. As a result, the symbol is known only to the people from whom it was born. For example, the lamb, which became a symbol in the celebration of Passover, was known and understood only very well by the Jews themselves (Theckanath, 2001:75). Another example is ivory, which is a symbol in belis, has its own value and meaning that can only be understood by people in which the culture of belis wearing ivory lives.

One of the weaknesses of *Su'i Uwi* lies in the symbols used. These symbols can only be understood by the general *Ngada* people. For the faithful from areas that do not have the *Reba* tradition, uwi does not have the meaning that is held by the *Ngada* people generally. This limitation makes the symbols used in *Su'i Uwi* unable to be universal symbols. In relation to the celebration of the Eucharist, it seems that not all symbols in *Su'i Uwi* can be symbols that can be used in the celebration of the Eucharist. Even if the symbol of *Su'i Uwi* is used, it can only be understood by *Ngada* people who know *Su'i Uwi* itself.

The problem is that the joyful message brought by Jesus is universal. The joyful news met and greeted all nations and cultures (Kavunkal, 2003:47). On the other hand, the meeting brought tension because in addition to being a new form of culture, the symbols used in the preaching were less or even unknown and even not understood by the local community. Meanwhile, the Church's efforts to find local cultural symbols sometimes struggle because not all of them speak the universality of God's purposes. There are symbols that have the same value as the universal symbol of the Church, but sometimes they still have other values that may conflict with the Church.

This problem is also experienced in the *Su'i Uwi* ritual, although it has a number of fundamental similarities with the celebration of the Eucharist, still not all symbols represent these similarities and can be used in the celebration of the Eucharist. In this regard, (Amalorpavadas, 2001: 23). writes that inculturation will not produce a universal Christian culture, but many particular Christian cultures, in other words as many Christian cultures as there are in the world.



Fig 3. *Ngada* cultural inculturation in the Eucharist at *Reba* Celebration
(Source: tribunnews.com, 2017)

There are the following recommendations that must also be considered, especially by activists of the inculturation process in *Ngada*:

- Inculturation can occur on a practical level, but some occur on an intellectual level without being practical. In the second order, the inculturation did not cause any central change in the liturgy. He only tried to explain the liturgy so that it was better understood in the context in which the people were. In this way of thinking, this paper is a contribution to the efforts of inculturation of the Eucharistic Liturgy.
- Inculturation is a joint effort. It is not just the work of theologians or ministers of the sacrament. It is the common duty of the whole people. It means that it involves all people. Therefore, people have the right to know the writings or discussions about inculturation that the Church is working on. The opportunity and space to discuss this matter must be facilitated so that it does not just become writing or just a document that is difficult to implement because it is not understood by all people. In this context, the discussion of *Su'i Uwi* and the Eucharist can be used as a basis and reference for the creation of the possibility of inculturation in the Catholic Church in *Ngada*.
- *Su'i Uwi* and the Eucharist cannot be equated, it is good that the Church needs to provide an adequate explanation of the symbol of the Lamb considering that in addition to different cultures also because the *Ngada* themselves do not know the lamb.
- The Church needs to do a catechesis about the celebration of the Eucharist so that the faithful are truly aware that in the celebration of the Eucharist Jesus Himself is celebrating and sacrificing himself. The priest is the one who acts in persona Christi, acting as Christ. This is important because sometimes the faithful see the figure of the Imam more than Jesus who is present through an Imam. As a result, they are less or even less enthusiastic about attending the Eucharist led by a priest they do not like.
- It takes a more intensive investigation for the *Ngada* people to find the true meaning of each symbol used in the ritual because religious symbols can change meaning. The symbol in the *Su'i Uwi* ritual can be cleansed of elements that distance it from the universality of God's plan and used in the celebration of the Eucharist.

Conclusion and Suggestions

The Second Vatican Council recognized that the Church is not the Kingdom of God, but the Kingdom of God is present in the Church. The Church needs to always seek and discover God's will that can be revealed in and through culture. Contact with culture is one of the Church's efforts to capture the

movement of the Holy Spirit and the will of God. The church must be sure that God also speaks in other cultures. In those cultures the seed of the Word of God is planted.

In trying to ground the Church into the local cultural situation and conditions, it insists that there should always be a careful theological, historical, and pastoral investigation of each part of the liturgy that needs to be revisited. The Church seeks to form a mature theology, evaluate and refine it in the course of history and slowly open up to other cultures. This foundation needs to be known so that it becomes a strong and solid foundation for the process of seeking self-identity before God in various cultures. Although there are many similarities in many ways, there are significant differences between the celebration of the Eucharist and *Su'i Uwi*. One of the most striking differences is the mention of symbols in the two celebrations, namely the Lamb and the Uwi. Jesus is called the lamb of God who sacrificed Himself as a ransom for the sins of the Israelites. The symbol of the Lamb is taken from the Jewish Passover tradition. Unlike the symbol of the Lamb, the *Su'i Uwi* ritual uses uwi as the central symbol.

Another significant difference is in the leader of the celebration and the type of sacrifice offered to God. In the celebration of the Eucharist Jesus Christ is the only leader of the celebration and at the same time the sacrifice itself. Different from the celebration of the Eucharist, the ritual of *Su'i Uwi* is led by the tribal leader or by the person entrusted by the tribe members. Usually the leader asks for help from the ancestors from inside the traditional house, so that what is done does not deviate and contradict what is inherited by the ancestors. Although it has some fundamental similarities with the celebration of the Eucharist, still not all symbols represent these similarities and can be used in the celebration of the Eucharist. All these differences can affect the *Ngada's* misunderstanding of the celebration of the Eucharist itself.

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