



The Symbolic Meaning of O Uwi Song in the Traditional Ritual of Reba Traditional Village, Community Beja, Ngada Regency

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.18415/ijmmu.v12i1.6530>

Abstract

This study aims to find out 1) the process of the Reba traditional ceremony. 2) the symbolic meaning of *O Uwi* singing in the Reba ceremony to the Beja indigenous village community. This research was carried out using a qualitative approach and using ethnographic methods. The subject of this study is one of the Mosalaki who know about the *O uwi* song. Data collection that was used in this study was observation, interview, and documentation technique. The results show that the singing of *O uwi* in the Reba traditional ceremony is that each poem that is sung has the meaning of social motivation, namely historical, romance, brotherhood, praise, satire, peace, moral values, cultural values, and religious values. Based on the results of research and discussion, it was concluded that *O Uwi* is a song accompanied by a dance without music that contains mass performing arts carried out by both young people, parents, and children. The singing of *O Uwi* and Reba is not necessarily held immediately but must go through several stages in the presentation process. Thus, *O Uwi*'s song contains a deep meaning in every verse sung.

Keywords: *Reba; O Uwi; Symbolic Meaning*

Introduction

Indonesia is the nation that has a rich cultural. Indonesia includes many islands from Sabang to Merauke by creating a variety of different cultures from various ethnic groups. This diversity was the inspiration for the motto of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, which means different but still one. This motto describes the oneness and unity, even though Indonesia has so many ethnicities, religions, races, arts, customs, languages, and so on. Geertz (in Sobur 2003) said that culture is a pattern of meanings contained in symbols inherited through history. Culture is a system of concepts that are inherited and expressed in symbolic forms through how humans communicate, maintain, and develop knowledge about culture and how to behave towards this life. In culture, the use of symbols in communication is very important; it can provide an understanding of the meaning contained in an expression. As explained by Triyanto (2018), culture is the whole of knowledge, beliefs, and values possessed by social beings. East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) is one of the regions in Indonesia that has so many traditional ceremonies. East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) uses symbols in traditional ceremonies and rituals. One of which is the singing tradition sung by the community in Ngada Regency, Beja traditional village. Ngada is a part of the NTT region, which is located on the south coast of Flores. Ngada has a symbolic meaning in the traditional ritual, namely *O*

uwi, which is a song with a monotonous dance, forming a circle, without the accompaniment of music in the middle of the village that accompanies the traditional ceremony of Reba (an annual traditional celebration). In Beja traditional village, the singing of *O uwi* was a special attraction where this singing verse contains the meaning of the symbols used. Symbols in general are related to the rite and the surrounding community; the symbol itself also includes anything that can be felt or experienced (Elu 2019). The meaning of this symbol can be used as a guideline and life lesson for the younger generation, which is the heritage of ancestors. In this era, the young generation, especially in Ngada Regency, rarely listens to traditional songs; they are more proud to hear and sing modern songs that are popular today. This reality was what causes a sense of anxiety for lovers of traditional songs such as singing *O uwi*.

Research Methods

The type of research used in this study was qualitative research. This study uses the ethnographic method. This research was conducted in Beja traditional village, Bajawa District, Ngada regency. The main object in this study is the singing of "*O Uwi*". The role of the researcher as a key instrument that collected the data by interviewing a number of key informants at the research site.

Discussion and Results

Reba Traditional Ceremony

Reba was a traditional ritual that purposed to honor and be grateful to the ancestors for the harvest for a year. This ceremony was also an evaluation of everything about community life in the previous year that has been undertaken by the Ngada community. The purpose of this traditional ceremony was to honor and thank the ancestors and nature (Loparawi et al. 2022).

The stages in the Reba ceremony are as follows:

1. Bui

Bui is one of the initial ceremonies that held three weeks before the ceremony started, which was commonly called "Ibu Ngiu Rado Manu" (the ceremony of finding the chickens in each village, more precisely in the village).

2. Reba Holy Eucharist

This Holy Eucharist was held on January 15. This was a big holiday where the Reba Holy Eucharist was held. This Reba Holy Eucharist was a ceremony of gratitude for our harvest for one year to our ancestors.

3. Kobe Dekhe.

There were two steps of ceremony that must be held before entering the Kobe Dheke ceremony; they were Bama waka and Semo funu, which had the intention for all large families to gather into the Sa'o to feed the ancestors and the people would eat together.

4. Kobe Dhoi

Kobe Dhoi was the night where Bajawa people should prepare the winged and sweet potato leaves to hang on the Mataraga in preparation for Kobe Su'i; after that, they would feed the ancestors. The people called it Ka Maki Nari Inu Tua Teme.

5. Kobe Su'i

Kobe Su'i was the last night ceremony of the Reba event. The meaning of Kobe su'i was to gather with the family to discuss or talk about all the problems that were compatible between the brothers and sisters themselves. The problem would be solved on that very night.

Meanings and Values of the Reba Traditional Ceremony

In the Reba traditional ceremony there were meanings and values contained in it, including:

1. Historical Significance

This meaning tells the story of ancestors who came from far away and settled in Ngada Regency.

2. Meaning of Brotherhood

This meaning refers to the prohibition so that we do not enmity with others and must maintain the bond of brotherhood.

3. The Meaning of Peace

Reba ceremony taught the people to forgive each other, and those who are wrong must apologize and admit their mistakes.

4. Moral Values or Life Teachings

With the Reba traditional ceremony that held once a year, it indirectly taught the people to not forget their homeland and do not forget their relatives. It is also to maintain and exchange ideas in the brotherhood.

5. Cultural Values

As was the Reba traditional ceremony, the people would always remember that cultural values taught us to be humane human beings. With the Reba traditional ceremony, we could maintain unity and brotherhood, which would build a good nationality life.

6. Religious values

These religious values include the recognition of the existence of God, respect for ancestors, and celebrations in society.

***O Uwi* Song**

O Uwi was a song accompanied by a dance without music that contains mass performing arts carried out by both young people, the elderly, and children. All people who want to participate in *O uwi* must wear complete customary clothing. Men used brooms, lu'e, keru, boku, and marangia; their property

was spacious and Sau or Tuba. While women used Lawo, Gasa, Sese, Keru, Marangia, Butu, and the properties are Lega and Tuba. *O uwi* song was carried out in the courtyard or in the middle of the village. Before forming a circle, it begins with Kelo Ghae, Wuku uwi, and *O uwi*. *O uwi* was a song and dance without music that was carried out in the traditional ceremony of Reba. The song of *O uwi* was a vocal music that has meaning in each verse or poem; the words of the verse had their own meaning for the sustainability of Reba activities (Lembu et al. 2021). In the lyrics of *O uwi*, there were expressions that contained the history of the Ngada people, praise for Uwi (Cassava) itself, romance, and others in daily life. *O uwi* sung can also be a communication medium where we in our daily lives, whether romance, problems, or the rest of the world, can be discussed or conveyed by singing to the rhythm in *O uwi*. Lyrics *O uwi* that contain elements about the history of ancestors and praise for Uwi (Cassava) and the words of previous ancestors were fixed and not replaced, except for the lyrics that contain elements of morality and romance, which can be added at will and indefinitely but must use the Ngada regional language and have a meaning or symbolism in it. The lyrics of the *O uwi* song hold a lot of meaning, both directly and also with the use of terms or symbols in it, so as a society that knows culture, with the singing of *O uwi*, it hoped that we would follow it and take important points and meanings in it that could make us better human beings in socializing. We were also expected to be able to maintain and preserve the heritage of our ancestors, such as the song of *O uwi*, which now many young people do not participate in singing and do not know the lyrics and the meaning of the lyrics.

The Symbolic Meaning of O Uwi Song

Symbolic meaning is something that has a connection of meaning in an inanimate object, or a living object, through the process of communication either as a direct message or an indirect behavior, and the ultimate goal is to interpret a symbol or symbol.

The following is the symbolic meaning contained in the verse of the song O uwi:

1. Uwi (Cassava)

The symbolic word uwi contains historical meaning because uwi is a symbol of the life of the Ngada people, where uwi is used as a staple food and the core of the celebration of the Reba traditional ceremony. Uwi has long been the food of the Ngada people; even in long dry weather, Uwi has always been there to become a staple food. Uwi has a historical meaning and prosperity that is a symbol of life; for example, like us in our daily lives can be useful and useful people for others.

2. Ana wunga/eldest son

The symbolic word ana wunga/eldest son is associated with an ancestor of the Ngada people who came from far away and settled in Ngada and taught customs. This expression has a historical meaning that Sili, who teaches or creates customs, can be used as an example for us in our daily lives where we young people can make a new breakthrough that can be useful for many people.

3. Uwi tebhhu toko, or sweet potato growing bone.

The symbolic word growing bones in the hymn O uwi has the meaning that if the sweet potato grows its bones first, it will indicate that this sweet potato will grow luxuriantly. This expression of praise for sweet potatoes has the meaning of praise for uwi/sweet potato, which can be used as a motivation for daily life, especially for those of us who are still looking for or seeking knowledge. We must learn well because with us having a lot of knowledge, we will have a good mindset and become a quality person. This also refers to our character and behavior that must be improved properly.

4. Koba rako lizu/Reach the Sky

The symbolic word reaching the sky in the verse *O uwi* means that the sweet potato tendrils can reach the sky, which can be said that the uwi is very fertile. This expression of praise for sweet potatoes has the meaning of praise for uwi/sweet potato, which can be used as a handle for life where if we learn a lot and have a lot of knowledge, we don't need to be afraid to lead, and we must continue to try to achieve our dreams even if it is as high as the sky.

5. Lado tawa, or laughter.

The symbolic word laughter in the verse *O uwi* has the meaning of happiness. Where we in brotherhood establish good relationships and live in harmony, peace will produce a beautiful happiness. In the expression of the lyrics, *O uwi* has the meaning of brotherhood, which is important for us in life to learn to maintain harmony and live peacefully in the world and hug the bond of brotherhood closely; that is where happiness will come.

6. Lela Bhera Da Rongi Go Kaba Wea

The symbolic word lela bhera/shiny earrings symbolizes beauty, where beauty can bring kaba wea/buffalo and gold, which is a symbol of dowry from a man who is captivated by beauty. This meaning contains the meaning of romance. In everyday life, this expression has often occurred in life where only the beauty of a man will come to make him a wife. This verse can be used as a lesson for us where beauty (good morals) can bring good luck to us.

7. Manu da lalu bila/Good feathered roosters

The symbolic word of a good rooster has a fraternal meaning that people who have a leadership spirit and good character and are fair to others will be very accepted by everyone. We can use this verse as a life lesson where we must have good morals, and if we are entrusted to be leaders, we must be fair leaders.

8. Sturdy Tree

The symbolic word sturdy tree has an intention aimed at a leader who protects his people from harm. This expression is taken from the expression of the lyrics *o uwi*, namely the remnants of *rada nanga go tara da kaju waja*, which is a mangrove tree on the coast that protects with its strong wood. This expression is based on the use of mangrove trees, which are able to withstand the currents of seawater that erode the coastal land. This verse expression can be used as an example in daily life where we as living beings must protect each other so that we live in peace and peace.

9. Ngadhu Bhaga

Ngadhu and Bhaga are symbols of men and women in the Ngada community. The expression of the words Ngadhu and Bhaga is contained in the verse *O uwi*, namely *Ngadhu nee go Bhaga da rada go kisa nata*, which means Ngadhu and Bhaga are in the middle of the village. This expression has a historical and religious meaning where Ngadhu and Bhaga mean ancestors who protect and protect the Ngada community. This expression can be used as enlightenment for us, where our ancestors or ancestors always guard and protect us, so we as a living and familiar society must maintain and preserve the customs that are our obligation.

10. Sebuluh Wula Zua Danola Papa Mu'a/Meet only once a year

The phrase of the verse once a year only refers to the traditional ceremony of reba, which is held once every twelve months. The traditional ceremony of reba is an annual Thanksgiving ceremony for the harvest for a year. This reba event is also an event that has meanings ranging from brotherhood, harmony, and romance. In the traditional ceremony of reba, all families who come from far away come to celebrate the traditional ceremony of reba. The phrase from this poem teaches us young people not to forget history and must preserve history and establish a good life in harmony and peace.

11. Lawo Keto Kebo Da Wega Napa Tuma Dekho

The symbolic words found in this poem are lawo/women's traditional cloth and tuma dekho/perched stink. This expression means that a girl who is said to be beautiful can only be able to get a husband when she is no longer young. This sentence is a satire to women that is uttered in ceremonies in *O uwi*. This expression deliberately uses terms or symbols so that the listener is not easily offended, but they are expected to be able to understand the intention conveyed. This verse can be a lesson for us; for example, if we get an opportunity or a job, don't procrastinate because something we postpone can lead to something bad for us.

Symbolic is symbolism, for example, paintings (Poerwadarminta 1976). Symbols are the basic form that contains intent. It can be said that a symbol is a sign that tells something to others that is attached to an object outside of the conventional sign. In this study, the researcher focuses more on researching the symbolic meaning in the traditional singing of *o uwi* in the Beja community. It is understood that 'Symbolic Meaning' is everything that is interconnected with the formation of the meaning of an inanimate object, as well as a living object, through the process of communication either as a direct message or an indirect behavior, and the ultimate goal is to interpret a symbol or symbol.

So all the words and sentences in this poem *o uwi* are the traditional language of the Beja area, Bajawa district, Ngada regency, which contains an important meaning in the life of the Beja people. The moral message contained in the song of *O uwi* is that we should always be grateful to God Almighty and our ancestors, so that they continue to maintain customs, preserve local traditional languages, and inherit cultural knowledge for the next generation.

Conclusion and Suggestions

Based on the results of research in Beja Village, it was concluded that Singing *o uwi* was not held directly but through the stages of the event, namely 1) *Kobhe Dekhe* (eating with family and feeding to ancestors) consisting of *Bama Waka* and *Semo Funu*. 2) *O Uwi* (singing and dancing to worship or praise *uwi/yam*). 3); *Kobe Dhoi* (preparing winged leaves and sweet potato leaves to hang on *mataraga* and feed the ancestors); 4) *Kobe Su'i* (the last night and being a place of family conversation in *Sa'o* or traditional house) and being a sign that the reba ceremony is over. The song *O uwi* has a meaning that wants to be conveyed to the community as its listeners. There is an explicit meaning and an implicit meaning. The message in the song *O uwi* is that we should protect and preserve the heritage of our ancestors and maintain the bond of brotherhood in a harmonious and peaceful life.

Acknowledments

Thank you for contributing to this article so that it can be completed on time. Special thanks to the traditional leaders, resource persons, and community leaders who have made many valuable contributions in this paper about the symbolic meaning of *O Uwi* singing in the traditional Reba ceremony.

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