



Sara Douda's Essence of Symbols: Expressions of Art, Culture and Faith of the Loli Community West Sumba

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Abstract

The *Sara Douda* dance is a form of oral tradition of cultural arts that combines movement elements from the original dance of the Loli community accompanied by energetic traditional music, namely gongs and drums, as a powerful medium for expressing the experience of faith, namely thanksgiving to the Almighty for giving His grace in the life of Loli society. *Sara Douda* is full of verbal and non-verbal symbols, rich in meaning, messages and cultural values for the Loli community, used for social interaction and is also an expression of faith to the Highest. To obtain the meaning of symbols in *Sara Douda* cultural poetry, the author used qualitative methods to search for information related to *Sara Douda* tradition by conducting interviews in the Tarung-Loli village of West Sumba. The aim of this research is to obtain an overview of the essence, form and meaning of the *Sara Douda* cultural symbol as a form of expression of art, culture and faith of the Loli people in the study of Contextual Theology with Paul Tillich's perspective which is packaged in the title "*Sara Douda* Symbol: Expression of Art, Culture and Faith of the Loli Community West Sumba". *Sara Douda* is a cultural symbol of the Loli people and also a symbol of their faith. Religious symbols allow individuals to access Divine reality and express their experiences of faith within a cultural context. The verbal and nonverbal symbols in *Sara Douda* show the Loli Community's faith and belief in God, the Creator of heaven and earth as in the phrase of *Ama wolo Ama rawi*. Their offerings of praise and expressions of gratitude have been expressed through poetry in the form of couplets and lines as well as beautiful dances from time to time, from generation to generation until now. It can be said that the essence of *Sara Douda* culture is a means for Loli people to carry out theology contextually in social life.

Keywords: *Sara Douda* Symbol; Art and culture; Faith; Contextual theology; Loli Society

Abstrak

Tari *Sara Douda* merupakan salah satu bentuk seni budaya tradisi lisan yang memadukan unsur gerak dari tari asli masyarakat Loli dengan diiringi musik tradisional yang enerjik yaitu gong dan tambur, sebagai media yang ampuh untuk mengungkapkan pengalaman iman yaitu ucapan syukur kepada Yang Maha Kuasa karena telah memberikan rahmat-Nya dalam kehidupan masyarakat Loli. *Sara Douda* syarat akan simbol-simbol verbal dan non-verbal, kaya akan makna,

pesan dan nilai budaya bagi masyarakat Loli, digunakan untuk interaksi sosial dan juga sebagai ungkapan keimanan kepada Yang Maha Tinggi. Untuk memperoleh makna simbol-simbol dalam syair budaya *Sara Douda*, penulis menggunakan metode kualitatif untuk mencari informasi terkait tradisi *Sara Douda* dengan melakukan wawancara di desa Tarung-Loli Sumba Barat. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk memperoleh gambaran mengenai hakikat, wujud dan makna simbol budaya *Sara Douda* sebagai wujud ekspresi seni, budaya dan keimanan masyarakat Loli dalam kajian Teologi Kontekstual dengan perspektif Paul Tillich yang dikemas dalam judul “Esensi Simbol *Sara Douda*: Ekspresi Seni, Budaya dan Iman Masyarakat Loli Sumba Barat”. *Sara Douda* merupakan simbol budaya masyarakat Loli dan juga simbol keimanan mereka. Simbol agama memungkinkan individu mengakses realitas Ketuhanan. dan mengungkapkan pengalaman keimanan mereka dalam konteks budaya. Simbol verbal dan nonverbal dalam *Sara Douda* menunjukkan keimanan dan keyakinan komunitas Loli terhadap Tuhan Sang Pencipta langit dan bumi seperti dalam ungkapan *Ama wolo Ama rawi*. Persembahan pujian dan ungkapan rasa syukur mereka diungkapkan melalui puisi berbentuk bait dan larik serta tarian indah dari masa ke masa, turun temurun hingga saat ini. Dapat dikatakan bahwa hakikat budaya *Sara Douda* merupakan sarana bagi masyarakat Loli untuk menjalankan teologi secara kontekstual dalam kehidupan bermasyarakat.

Kata Kunci: Simbol Sara Douda; Seni budaya; Iman; Teologi kontekstual; Masyarakat Loli

INTRODUCTION

Dance as an element of national culture is a form of art that must be protected and preserved in the current era of globalization. Dance is an expression of the human spirit expressed through beautiful rhythmic movements (Soedarsono, 1978). Arts in East Nusa Tenggara, including dance, music and carvings, often have religious meaning and reflect the values of faith. This artistic activity not only functions as entertainment, but also as a means to express community beliefs and identity. Likewise, the *Sara Douda* dance which originates from the Loli area, West Sumba, East Nusa Tenggara is a cultural art form that combines movement elements from the original dance of the Loli community accompanied by energetic traditional music, namely gongs and drums. *Sara Douda* is a powerful medium for expressing the experience of faith, as thanksgiving to the Almighty who gave his gifts in the lives of the Loli people. In other words, *Sara Douda's* culture is an expression of their faith in the form of art that is practiced in society.

The *Sara Douda* dance is full of verbal and non-verbal symbols that are rich in meaning, messages, and cultural values. For the Loli community, it is used for social interaction and is also an expression of faith in the Highest. Geertz stated that ritual symbols as a culture contain meanings tied to aspects, such as religion, philosophy, art, science, history and myth. He continued that culture as a system of historically inherited meaning is contained in symbols (Geertz. C 1973). In this case, *Sara Douda* as part of culture represents a symbol system that has meaning in the context of Loli culture which refers to other realities from everyday experiences

related to cultural aspects such as religion, ethics, aesthetics and philosophy as a form of expression of people's faith. Loli.

Cassirer stated that humans think, feel and behave in symbolic expressions which are characteristic of humans (Cassirer 1989). Universal symbols can be found in all human life, including Loli society. Durkheim stated that any social group's existence depends on certain values held by its members; without symbols, existence is incomplete (Durheim E. 1986). Needham emphasized that symbols are considered very important to mark what is socially important and to make people want to adapt themselves by recognizing the values that are used as benchmarks in life in society. (Nedham 1979)

In Paul Tillich's perspective, culture and faith are two important aspects of human life. The two interact with each other and form an understanding of the existence of the relationship between faith and culture and its impact on society. According to him, faith is a "total experience" that goes beyond just religious beliefs, while culture influences the way people believe and understand their beliefs. Faith and culture complement, shape, and need each other. Cultural elements such as art, music, and traditions can enrich or challenge faith. Symbols in religion and culture are a bridge between human experience and divine reality. Symbols in this cultural context serve to help in understanding faith. (Tillich Paul 1973)

In his view, theology can also be expressed through art, literature and various other cultural forms. Tillich appreciated the role of art in conveying the experience of faith, providing a unique way to explain spiritual realities. Thus, researchers see theology as a vital tool in building bridges between faith and culture, helping to respond to the challenges of the times and enriching the spiritual experience of individuals and communities. Theology is not just a doctrine, but also a dialogical process that continues to develop in a dynamic cultural context.

There is a previous study that discusses *Sara Douda* as written by Sulistyastuti Sutomo in her article entitled *The Aesthetics of the Sara Douda Dance in the Loli Indigenous Community (A Cultural Linguistic Approach)* which concludes that art is not just for art but art has a fullness in itself and at the same time. has axiological benefits, both socially and economically. The aesthetics of *Sara Douda's* dance are in verbal symbols in the form of speech as well as non-verbal, namely rhythmic movements that are united by pieces of the cultural values of the Loli community about respect for ancestors, about social harmony, and about high respect for each other.

Different from previous research problems, this research on symbols in *Sara Douda* has important meaning because it is supported by the following views and thoughts. First, *Sara Douda* can be seen as a traditional dance preceded by traditional poetry which is only performed during the *Wulla Poddu* ritual which occurs once a year which represents intersubjective symbols of a society (cf. Cassirer, 1989; Kuntowijoyo, 1987; Kartodirjo, 1987; Faruk, 1988; (Kayam 1989). intersubjective, *Sara Douda* is not an artifact or material fact (cf. Pradopo 1985) and (Saryono

1997). Third, *Sara Douda* is an oral tradition in the form of dance which is a fact of mentality, a fact of collective cultural consciousness and a social fact of the society that produces it (check Durkheim, 1986:32; Brinton, 1985:201). Fourth, as a symbol system, *Sara Douda* is related to the world of reflection, memories, thoughts, ideas and views on certain values in the cultural context and expression of the faith experiences of the people who own them.

Based on the description above, researchers as the next generation, formulate a problem, namely the essence and meaning of the *Sara Douda* symbol as a form of expression of arts, culture and faith of the Loli community in contextual theological studies with Paul Tillich's perspective which is packaged in the title "The essence of the *Sara Douda* symbol: Expression of Arts, Culture and Faith of the Loli Community of West Sumba."

Research methods

This research uses a qualitative design with the aim of finding, identifying, analysing and describing the form and meaning of the cultural ritual symbol *Sara Douda* as a form of art and a means of expressing faith for the Loli Community. This type of research also aims to explain phenomena in as much depth as possible, more in depth than breadth. This research is descriptive interpretive using a contextual theology type of study. (El 2020).

Contextual theology is an approach in theology that emphasizes the importance of understanding social, cultural and historical contexts in theological interpretation. This approach views that theology must be understood and interpreted in the cultural and social context that influences the lives of the people in it, such as the *Sara Douda* cultural ritual which is a folk dance that is used in sacred ceremonies and rituals where the verses and every movement contains signs. or symbols and cultural values that express the faith of the Loli people of West Sumba.

DISCUSSION

Overview of SARA DOUDA

Sara Douda is an oral tradition in the form of a ritual dance that cannot be separated from the life of the Loli people, West Sumba district, East Nusa Tenggara province. *Sara Douda* is a means by which the Loli community communicates with the Supreme Being through their ancestors. They express everything through dance and song, since time immemorial in rituals and various other celebrations.

Sara Douda also has another unique feature, namely that there is oral literature in the form of poetry which is sung or spoken by Rato (the Marapu religious priest) before this dance is performed. The dancers or ronggeng will stand to listen to the speech and be watched by the invitees and spectators. This poetry is a form of culture that has been passed down from generation to generation, lived and practiced by the people of Loli, West Sumba to this day.

The *Sara Douda* dance is danced only by the Loli community, both men and women, but from designated traditional houses, and at its peak, only women dance it. This is done only once a year during the *Wulla Pod'du* traditional ritual (holy month ritual) and only occurs in the Loli community. At the peak of the end of the *Wulla Poddu* and welcoming the new year as well as the new planting season, the Loli people will dance and sing together. And, *Sara Douda* is danced as a closing dance for women which aims to ask for blessings and as a means of giving thanks to the Creator.

The linguistic phenomena used in *Sara Douda's* poetry in the context of the *Wulla Poddu* ritual are thought to have form, function and meaning or value. This forms an understanding that the concept of the existence of language in culture and culture in language is the main tool for analysing the functional relationship between language and culture adopted by a community group.

In this regard, this research aims to examine linguistic or verbal and non-verbal symbols as a form of expression of art, culture and faith in *Sara Douda* in the *Wulla Poddu* ritual in the Loli community in West Sumba Regency. Language which is a symbol contains meaning. Meaning corresponds to value. Values or meanings are related to culture, or specifically related to the symbolic world in a culture (Kleden, 1996: 5).

Apart from that, *Sara Douda* has an important position in the life of the Loli community because *Sara Douda* is used as a social communication medium for conveying teachings, advice and information containing life, reflections, memories, thoughts, ideas and views regarding the construction of cultural reality in the context of Loli culture. West Sumba to future generations As one of the works and oral traditions that are important and fundamental for the Loli community, *Sara Douda* expresses or represents the reality construction of Loli cultural values, West Sumba which is closely related to Loli cultural values, West Sumba because its existence and position represent a symbol system that contains cultural values and means of theology in the cultural context of the community that owns it. These symbols have a system that is interconnected and complementary to create a *Sara Douda* dance entity. (Sutomo 2014)

Symbols in *Sara Douda* are displayed in verbal and nonverbal forms. Woods suggests that symbols can be verbal and nonverbal (Woods 1992). Herusatoto suggests that the form of symbols can be language (stories, parables, rhymes, poems and proverbs), body movements (dances), voices or sounds (songs, music), colors and shapes (paintings, decorations, carvings, buildings) (Herusatoto 2000). The author focuses this research on these two symbols by emphasizing verbal symbols. In *Sara Douda*, the form of verbal symbols is expressed through language, in this case the song lyrics and rhymes spoken by Rato as the actor or performer of *Sara Douda* just before the dance is performed.

The form of non-verbal symbols in *Sara Douda* is realized through behavior or actions and movements carried out by ronggeng or dancers, for example body movements, facial views, dance formations, equipment worn by ronggeng such as costumes, accessories and make-up, as well as equipment that must be used. Presented as a condition for performing the *Sara Douda* dance are accompanying musical instruments (gongs and drums), offerings (betel and areca nut). In this relationship, the behavior or actions carried out contain meaning to be conveyed to other people. Woods revealed that symbols can be in the form of language, body movements, facial expressions, or anything that can convey meaning, and that meaning is arranged in a certain cultural context which is used for social interaction in people's lives. (Woods 1992)

Stories about *Sara Douda*

Before *Sara Douda* was performed, Rato Rumata (Marapu's spiritual leader) stood up holding a *wara* spear and began to do *manoba/nob'ba*, namely reading mantras and memorizing *wara*. *Wara* (WR) means reciting poetry/stanzas containing the journey of ancestors who are considered intermediaries to the Highest, asking for blessings, giving thanks, asking for wisdom and power, some also describe the process of human creation, life history, legends and myths. This *wara* is in the form of poetry which contains verses spoken in pantun or sung (*tieda*) with a distinctive tone and rhythm in the context of the *Poddu* party. The realization of songs or poems/rhymes called *wara* is "implemented or told" using certain or distinctive tones and rhythms. This *wara* marks the start of *Sara Douda's* dance. *Sara Douda* cannot be performed without *manoba* containing *wara* by Rato Rumata. However, in the view of the Loli community, *Sara Douda* is a cultural tradition that cannot be separated from their lives.

The types of stories about *Sara Douda*, as previously explained, are in the form of poetry or rhymes and in the form of songs which are usually called *walo* (WL). Poetry, including songs, are sung without using accompanying music, such as a drum. The function of *walo* songs and poetry in the context of the Loli people's lives is to raise enthusiasm or passion when they dance or work as an expression of feelings, impressions and experiences, to dispel loneliness, boredom, relax tension, fatigue, and so on. Judging from the form of the speech, it is a genre of oral literature which has patterns and forms like old poetry which consists of two lines in one stanza, the two lines being the content. Below is an example of a speech in the form of a song called *walo* as an illustration of the culture of the Loli community.

1) Walo waime ge

Walo waime ge wai

'Gather all and enter into the traditional oath'

2) Bana woki ge Koda Laya

Bana buy wo lota lara Saingo

'Our ancestors Koda Laya and Saingo have paved the way'

3) Wula ge papa ngidi we wali

Wula guardian dodo

'The month of traditional/ritual vows has arrived'

4) Kana tobula ge, toku taka jieru ka

Worutai tobula ma nanga

'Water boils in a pot and in a cave'

5) Kana ma goka ge boda fur

Kana taboka ge wanno raya ge

'Clean and broadcast in big villages'

6) Kana kinguka ge iron pogo wo

Said kuru ge lede talla

'Sound the iron ax and close the center of the gong'

The *walo* singing is performed in the courtyard where the *Sara Douda* will be performed, namely, in the middle of the village near the *Pemali* or taboo stone, which is the place where offerings in the form of betel and areca nut are placed as offerings and respect for the ancestors (Marapu). Meanwhile, the implementation of the *manoba*, which tells stories about *Sara Douda*, is led by Rato Rumata as the officer who has the right to tell or sing the poems.

In this research, the study focuses on stories about *Sara Douda* seen from the perspective of contextual theological studies held in the form of **Sara Douda** performances. This *Poddu* ritual event in the form of poetry and songs accompanied by dance (oral tradition) is attractive, unique and useful as a research focus. Not only poetry and songs and beautiful rhythmic movements, *Sara Douda* is also a way of expressing faith and a means of contextual theology for the Loli community. *Sara Douda's* distinctive and unique presentation and explanation is certainly useful in relation to efforts to uncover the nation's cultural treasures.

Implementation of Sara Douda

Sara Douda in the context of *Wulla Poddu* is carried out on the last day and starts at noon until sunset in the *Wulla Poddu* ritual once a year. In this activity, *Sara Douda* is performed by Loli women as a closing women's dance. It is said to be the women's closing dance because other dances are also danced at this event, namely *pakabeko*, *gasa*, *woleka* and *baddara*. The

performance of *Sara Douda* was not only attended by invited people, but extended family, relatives, as well as neighbours/spectators who were not invited were also present at the *Wulla Poddu* ceremony where *Sara Douda* was performed because the ceremony was open to anyone, allowing for all people around the village or even neighbours of the village come to participate or watch *Sara Douda*.

Sara Douda as a traditional/ritual dance is an expression of gratitude and joy as well as a request for guidance from *Ama wolo Ama rawi* or Allah, the Creator of heaven and earth through *marapu*/ancestors which is held in the form of a *poddu* party. This dance is embodied in a sacred, unique and magical feel. The unique thing is that the situation is solemn and religious, even though it shows a busy and happy party atmosphere with shouts of *payawou* and *pakallaka*, the ritual procession still takes place in a solemn manner.

Tarung Village is where *Sara Douda* is held. The place where *Sara Douda* is held to accommodate the actors, namely: rato, dancers, gong beaters, spectators and attendees, is held in the middle of the village where the pemali stone is placed. The pemali or taboo stone is the stone where offerings/betel nut are placed and its position is in the middle of the village not far from the *uma kabubu* or marapu house and is surrounded by grave stones/megaliths that are decades old.

Actors in *Sara Douda*

Rato Rumata

Rato means 'a person who works as a priest for the Loli community who have the marapu belief. Becoming a rato rumata does not necessarily happen, but there are a series of tests carried out based on the customary laws of the Loli community. Nowadays, adult men play the role, but the more representative ones are old men. In fact, in ancient times there were also female ratos who played an important role as ancestors in the *Wulla Poddu* ceremony as stated in WR1. But now that's not the case Rato women are found again in Loli society in the sense of playing an active role. It is likely that Loli women are reluctant to become Rato because the series of tests are considered too tough for a woman. As for a rato, apart from having expertise in *manoba* or *wara* or telling poetry, he must also have extensive knowledge relating to myths, legends, history, origins or genealogy, customs, language, life histories of traditional figures, and objects. an heirloom belonging to the Loli people. A rato's ability will be better if there are many moments in traditional ceremonies that allow for the narration of *wara*. The implication here is that apart from the *wara* poetry that is spoken before the *Sara Douda* dance is performed, it can also be a situation that supports the socialization of *Sara Douda* to the next generation, namely young and adult women.

Dancer/Ronggeng

Apart from Rato, other parties who have an important role in *Sara Douda* are the dancers who are directly involved in *Sara Douda*. The task is to dance during the time determined by Rato. Those who act as ronggeng in *Sara Douda* are young people and adults, both men and women. However, at the final peak it was only danced by Loli women who were sent from each traditional house.

As explained previously, the composition of the dancers in *Sara Douda* is divided into two parts, namely; (1) a group consisting of men/*koddola*, and (2) a group consisting of women/*negoti*. The formation of dancers forms a circle around the Pemali stone. The number of dancers involved in the *Sara Douda* is at its peak in accordance with the provisions or is limited based on the calculation of the month according to the Loli community and it is danced only by Loli women delegates from the traditional house.

The reasons according to local customs that underlie the role of female dancers in the *Wulla Poddu* ceremony, especially the *Sara Douda* peak dance, are only performed by women and cannot be performed by men as follows:

- a). Anthropologically, the patriarchal institution of the Loli tribe positions or conditions women as the second person in the family. Which refers to the first person, namely men. The wife (woman) as the second person in family life interactions must be obedient, obey orders, diligent, honest, resigned and sincere to her husband (man). Characteristics like this show us that a Loli woman must respect her husband (man). That is why, in the end, the *Sara Douda* dance is only danced by women as a manifestation of respect for the *Marapu*/ancestors.
- b). Women are synonymous with the source of life. With her milk, women drink, feed, protect, guide and educate children from infancy to adulthood. In the trajectory of a woman's journey as a mother, she learns more about the ins and outs of her child's life. From this context, women for the Loli people are conditioned as sources of history, sources of stories, sources of legends and sources of myths. He can save it and can also convey it as a tradition for the next generation. The implication of this tradition is that women have a great responsibility to be able to pass on the values of *Sara Douda* as an embodiment of traditional identity to their children and grandchildren before they die. The process of inheriting the traditional *Sara Douda* dance is only possible if there is a *Wulla Poddu* ceremony.
- c) The poems contained in WL and WR in *Sara Douda* is basically spoken before *Sara Douda* is performed, there are the names of female rato who are mentioned every time the *Wulla Poddu* ceremony is carried out. This indicates that the existence of women is very important in Loli society even though they are still inferior.
- d) Loli women's graceful body movements are indicated to convey meaning that can be read by the Loli community itself. Cultural messages are found in every movement in the *Sara Douda*

dance. It is these characteristics that prioritize Loli ethnic women to play the role in the *Sara Douda* dance.

Audience

The audience who attended on the last day of *Wulla Poddu* to watch the *Sara Douda* dance consisted of various ages, namely children, teenagers, adults, the elderly, both men and women from any background and from any *kabisu* could have the opportunity to be spectators. Spectators who are not Loli people are not directly involved in dancing, they come to watch and listen to WL and WR's narrative, while sitting or standing freely around the arena where Rato and Ronggeng are in a circular position. There are times when the audience laughs or chatters when the ronggeng makes a joke or makes a mistake in dancing. This kind of thing is not taboo or a taboo or prohibition, but is considered normal even though it is in the atmosphere of a sacred traditional ceremony.

The Meaning of Symbols in a Religious Context

Symbols apart from referring to language also refer to works of art, tradition and religion in a society. Apart from that, symbols can synthesize the ethos of a society regarding tone, character, quality of life, style, taste, morals and aesthetics as well as outlook on life. Thus, the meaning of a free and open symbol depends on the aspects where the symbol resides. For example, meaning in a religious context concerns how the community that initiated and owned *Sara Douda* expressed and presented their vertical relationship to a higher Being through symbols.

Expression of Trust

What is meant by expression of belief is behaviour in the form of actions and speech that is born as a reflection of emotions shown to an object that is believed to have an influence on one's life. The expression of belief carried out in *Sara Douda* is related vertically, both directly and indirectly, to the Highest and Most Holy Being. The expression of belief in a religious context identified in *Sara Douda* is essentially related to the spirits/souls of ancestors as seen from the perspective of Loli beliefs. For example, the lines of the songs spoken contain belief in the invisible/unseen world.

Based on the results of the identification and interpretation of the meaning of symbols in the *Sara Douda* religious context in the category of expression of belief, symbols were found to be classified into two forms of symbols, namely verbal and nonverbal symbols.

Verbal Symbols

The expression of belief contained in the symbols in the stories surrounding *Sara Douda* has a very close relationship with the mythology of the Loli people. The expression of belief in verbal symbols is found in the speech of the perpetrator *Sara Douda*, who is represented by

mythological figures. These characters are the contents of the lines and stanzas in the *walo* and *wara* in *Sara Douda*. The mythological figures in the story found are (1) Koda Laya, (2) Saingo and (3) Bala. Apart from that, it is also found in the names of mythological animals, namely (4) dara and (5) bog'ga. These names are also mentioned in the *walo* song on *Sara Douda*. Thus, these figures can be classified in the form of verbal symbols that have a relationship with the expression of belief. Apart from the characters, the words (6) *wulla* are also found in the lines (7) *Kiwa laga Kadiwano rato kawara, rato Tiala, Niga wulla malle pullu manu Padaka* (WR 1, B.15), (8) *Deke mama ne yemi mouri nuku mouri sara* (WR 2, B.06), (9) *Bana Koki Tagu Sieda Bana Wawi Tagu Mate* (WR 1, B.30) which is believed to be a mythological representation of the Loli people.

To understand the relationship between expressions of belief and the figures that are used as content and part of the *walo* and *wara* texts in *Sara Douda*, it is necessary to understand the Loli people's view of life, death and *marapu* or ancestral spirits. (Interview). According to their belief, *marapu* is around human life, especially among living families and can even be asked for help if needed. Therefore, in the *pod'du* ritual, before the *Sara Douda* dance is presented, *walo* and *wara* must be performed as a form of respect and supplication to *Ama wolo Ama Rawi* through the intermediary of *marapu*/ancestral spirits. For example, in the *walo* and *wara* texts, the names Koda Laya and Saingo are names that greatly influence the lives of the Loli people. They are believed to be figures who opened the way or were the initiators of this *pod'du* ritual. Their names must be mentioned when the ritual is to be carried out so that the event can run smoothly as expected. The Loli community expresses this belief through their *rato* when carrying out traditional rituals.

In the walo and wara texts, there is also a line that reads bana boki tagu sieda bana wawi tagu mate 'He who is innocent but made wrong' (WR I, B.30. shy when you pronounce His name. The Loli community's religious system does not allow pronouncing God's name in vain. This is the Loli way of contextualizing theology. The quotation from the line above is emphasized in the next line in the same stanza, namely bana pitu paka reiga bana wawi komu duada 'He who sacrificed his life not twice, but once forever' (WR 1, B.30. L2). The line quote refers to the highest Substance and not marapu. The all-loving substance is God, the creator of the universe, known to the Loli community as Ama wolo Ama rawi. Ama Wolo Ama Rawi has a child who is holy, pure and innocent as found in the parawi verse ana kuoga ana kaka/ nag'ga saga na panewe na arona ka douka 'He who made the white child/ He who is a talker and He bears the consequences' (WR 1, B.22). This stanza emphasizes the meaning of the expression of belief and faith of the Loli people regarding their recognition of the existence of a Creator who sacrificed His child and who can communicate with him only through the intermediary of marapu or ancestral spirits.

The Loli people fully believe in ancestral spirits who are able to communicate with the Creator and also His children. For this reason, they make offerings and offerings in the form of

betel nut and chicken as complements or tools in the ritual in the hope that their wishes, requests and thanksgiving will be accepted by *Ama Wolo Ama Rawi* through *Marapu*, as seen in the verse *deke mama ne yemi mouri nuku mouri sara/ ngga'l kama ti eba, ngga'a I wa'I dii ngga'a na mouri sara* 'Take betel with areca nut, you who are worshipped'/Biar we prepare the food for worship' (WR 2, B.06). The expression of belief in this verse means that if the ancestors accept the Loli Community's offerings and convey them to Mouri/God then all their wishes will be granted.

Apart from that, in walo and wara, there is also the word *wulla* 'moon'. The moon is a celestial body that is important for human life, especially the Loli community. In living their lives, the Loli people have a culture of calculating time based on the circulation of the moon. They determine when to plant, reap, build a house, hold a party, hold a wedding and so on based on lunar calculations. Likewise, the timing of the *wulla pod'du* ritual where *Sara Douda* is performed is closely related to the phenomenon of the moon. The Loli people's view of calculating even and odd months is a symbol of the meaning of the ups and downs and ups and downs of human life that must be lived to achieve the hope of a better life and the happiness that everyone dreams of.

The position of the moon in the cosmology of the Loli people shows that there is a very significant correlation between the moon and the lives of the Loli people. The moon in the sky always emits its rays to illuminate and shade the earth. The existence of the moon is a guide, climate guide, and determiner of the fortunes of the Loli people who live as fishermen, farmers, livestock breeders, and animal hunters in the forest. For example, the appearance of the dark moon in the northern sky indicates the fishing season, they usually look for food. A bright moon indicates turtles are laying eggs. Apart from that, the moon in the context of *Sara douda-pod'du* contains connotations that symbolize beauty, splendour, majesty, something big and high. The moon is used to show the beauty of a woman or mother. A mother's position is very important in the family apart from being able to give birth to the next generation. The mother referred to here is mother nature or earth. The earth, through the *Wul'la Pod'du* ritual, is expected to produce something good from within itself for the survival of the Loli Community.

The Loli community's expression of belief is also represented by the *dara* (WL1.B.10), namely the horse which is believed to be the ride of the ancestors. Horses are thought to be friends with souls/spirits. In the context of *Sara Douda*, horses are believed to be ridden by *marapu* when ritual events are carried out. Horses for the people of West Sumba in general, Loli in particular, are one of their proud treasures. Horses are very important, apart from being a symbol of wealth, pride, gallantry, masculinity, they are also the soul of their owner. So when the owner dies, the horse he rides on is slaughtered because horses are considered friends with his soul. When *Sara douda* is performed, *Rato* will summon ancestral spirits who are believed to be present through the neighing of horses as in this verse: *bur'ru mi ge dara maipa diewa/ bog'ga maipa ur'ra piega* (WL, B.10) and *Bur 'ruwu kalango kad'da ge dara, kalango sara douda/*

bur'ruwu kassa'di kadda ge dara 'The spirit of ancestor Sara Douda through the existing horses/ get down so the horses flinch' (WR 2. B.10).

The two stanzas above show a symbol of requesting the presence of ancestors through existing horses. The expression of trust of the Loli people is that they believe that the *marapu* will come down on a horse. The neighing of the horses symbolizes that they are there and are witnessing the ritual event and they grant all the wishes asked for.

Another mythological figure is the *bog'ga* (WL.B.10; WR1, B.09; B.12, B.23) or dog. This mythological animal is a symbol that contains the meaning of "loyalty". This can be heard in the verse (WR1, B.09) *Dara maipa diewa sape lapa leru ge/ bog'ga maipa ur'ra sape lakawa na ge* 'The spirit of a horse/the soul of a dog has been on my shoulders since childhood'. The word 'bog'ga' has a connotation of attitude and behaviour. In the context of *Sara Douda-Wulla Pod'du*, the word *bog'ga* shows how the Loli community should act and behave. Just as a dog is selflessly loyal to its master and dares to protect its master, the Loli Community is required to faithfully remember and honour their ancestors by holding the *Wulla Pod'du* ritual every year.

Nonverbal Symbols

Expressions of belief in the form of nonverbal symbols found in the *walo* and *wara* speech of *Sara Douda* in a religious context are in the form of (1) *kabu ged'de*, (2) *lodo*, (3) *mamale*. Meanwhile, the expression of beliefs about the spirit world and the journey of human life in nonverbal symbols can be found in the element of time. The implementation time for *Sara Douda* starts from *lod'do* 'noon' until sunset in *Mamale*. However, Manu Sara's chicken ritual' is slaughtered at *kabu ged'de* 'before sunrise/dawn' long before *Sara Douda* is carried out. At this time, namely during the day, it is time to work and the ancestral spirits are awake and watching over them. The symbolic meaning of the presence of these spirits is 'time to work with passion'.

The period of the *Pod'du-Sara Douda* ritual, namely *kabu ged'de*, *lod'do* and *mamale*, is considered a symbolic meaning of the time span of the human life cycle. The symbolic meaning is that humans are born as babies (*kabu ged'de*) then become children, experience adolescence and adulthood. This period has a symbolic meaning "a period of maturity, maturity and stability, calm, not easily swayed" (*lod'do*), "old age or old age when humans begin to weaken both in energy and productivity" (*mamale*) and then die. In the Loli belief, humans should 'live a life', which means giving meaning to the life they live or not wasting the time they have because the time that has passed will not be repeated. Moreover, humans do not have power without help from outside themselves, so the Loli people express their belief in *Ama Wolo Ama Rawi* through ancestral spirits.

The Essence of *Sara Douda* in a Theological Context

Paul Tillich views theology as a discipline that has an important role in bridging faith and culture. The role of theology in culture can be expressed through art, literature, and various other forms of culture. Tillich appreciated the role of art in conveying the experience of faith, as well as providing a unique way to explain spiritual realities. Cultural symbols in the appreciation of faith are certainly needed in contextual theology in the Loli community. These symbols allow individuals to connect spiritual experiences with everyday reality, making faith more relevant and accessible. (Tillich Paul 1973).

The cultural context of *Sara Douda* is closely related to the faith of the Loli people. Faith cannot be separated from the social and cultural context in which a person lives and culture can influence the way people understand and live out their faith. *Sara Douda* is a cultural symbol of the Loli people and also a symbol of their faith. Religious symbols allow individuals to access divine reality and express their faith experiences within a cultural context. The verbal and nonverbal symbols on *Sara Douda* show the Loli Community's faith and belief in God Allah, the Creator of heaven and earth as in the phrase *Ama wolo Ama rawi*. Their offerings of praise and gratitude are expressed through poetry in the form of couplets and lines and beautiful dances.

Dancing is discussed frequently in the Bible. The first time the Bible records dancing as a form of worship is found in Exodus 15:20: "Then Miriam, the prophetess, Aaron's sister, took a tambourine in her hand, and all the women appeared after her, striking tambourines and dancing." The dance of joy to God led by Miriam occurred after the crossing of the Red Sea to celebrate Israel's freedom from slavery.

In the context of *Sara Douda*, the Loli Community is theologically expressing their highest worship to God Allah *Ama wolo Ama rawi* with great joy accompanied by the gong 'talla' and tambur'bed'du' and with hearts full of gratitude for the blessings of the new year that they encounter every year and hope that the next planting season will be abundant with Divine blessings. This is proven in the *walo* and *wara* spoken by Rato Rumata.

The Book of Psalms highlights dance as a form of worship or worship. In Psalm 30:11, the Psalmist wrote, "You have turned me who mourned into one who dances." Psalm 149:3 advocates dancing as a form of worship of God: "Let them praise His name with dancing." In line with that, Psalm 150:4 invites, "Praise Him with tambourines and dancing" as Miriam did (see Exodus 15:20). The fact is that *Sara Douda* is danced after a period of fasting (no partying, silence, self-reflection) or *Pod'du* for one month and is performed with great fanfare. In this case, the Loli Community practices their faith through the *Sara Douda* cultural context in which the individuals live. Faith develops and is expressed within a specific cultural framework, which influences how people understand and live out their beliefs.

Apart from that, the unique way the Loli community uses theology through the *Sara Douda* culture which makes an analogy about Jesus Christ, is clearly visible in the *walo* and *wara*

traditional ritual speeches such as; *bana boki tagu sieda bana wawi tagu mate* 'He who was innocent but was made wrong' is believed to be the Highest, most majestic and holy being so that the Loli community is very shy or taboo about pronouncing His name. The Loli religious system does not allow pronouncing God's name in vain. This is in line with the book of Deuteronomy 5:11 in the Old Testament "Do not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will consider him guilty who takes His name in vain. "haphazard". Meanwhile, the phrase in the poem *bana boki tagu sieda bana wawi tagu mate* is in line with 1 Peter 3:18 'For Christ died once for all our sins, He who is righteous for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God;' another or parallel version 'He who was innocent replaced us who were guilty, to reconcile us to God. (See: 2 Corinthians 5:21, Isaiah 53:3-12). The Loli community, in their faith in Allah, admits that Allah bears all mistakes and sins and is willing to die to pay for their sins.

Culture comes from God and is carried out according to God's values and must return to God, that is the essence of the Christian faith. Culture cannot be separated from the existence of God, both its origin, its process and its final destination. However, culture cannot be separated from humanity's oldest struggle, namely sin. The existence of sin also plays a role in the development of human culture in various fields, so that there are those who abuse and assume that God is not supreme and must be glorified, and even reject the existence of God. *Sara Douda* in her symbols acknowledges the existence of Allah. The teachings of the Christian faith explain the concept of redemption which ultimately enables this culture to recognize the existence of God as the highest Person and declare His glory. The matter of penance is also expressed in the lines and stanzas of *Sara Douda's* poems.

The quotation from the line above is emphasized in the next line in the same stanza, namely *bana pitu paka reiga bana wawi komu duada* 'He who sacrificed his life not twice, but once forever'. The line quote refers to the highest Being (God in Jesus Christ) and not *marapu*. The all-loving substance is God, the creator of the universe, known to the Loli community as *Ama wolo Ama rawi*. *Ama Wolo Ama Rawi* has a child who is holy, pure and innocent as found in the *parawi verse ana kuoga ana kaka/ nag'ga saga na panewe na arona ka douka* 'He who made the white child/ He who is a talker and He bears the consequences' in line with the New Testament Bible in the letter 2 Corinthians 5:21 'He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God'.

Isaiah 53:3-12 talks about the suffering of Jesus who suffered the consequences because of our sins. This stanza emphasizes the meaning of the expression of belief and faith of the Loli people regarding their recognition of the existence of the Creator who sacrificed His son, Jesus Christ, and who can communicate with Him only through the intermediary of *marapu* or ancestral spirits. The Loli community, in their religious practices, integrates local cultural elements by

adopting local symbols and traditions, thereby making their faith more relevant and acceptable in society.

CONCLUSION

Dance as an element of national culture is a form of art that must be protected and preserved in the current era of globalization. *Sara Douda* is a powerful medium for expressing the experience of faith, as thanksgiving to the Almighty who gave his gifts in the lives of the Loli people. In other words, *Sara Douda* culture is an oral tradition as an expression of their faith in the form of art that is practiced in society. The *Sara Douda* dance is full of verbal and nonverbal symbols that are rich in meaning, messages and cultural values for the Loli community. It is used for social interaction and is also an expression of faith in the Highest. The cultural context of *Sara Douda* is closely related to the faith of the Loli people. Faith cannot be separated from the social and cultural context in which a person lives and culture can influence the way people understand and live out their faith. Faith and culture emphasize that they not only influence each other, but can also enrich each other and create a more holistic framework for understanding human experience in a spiritual and cultural context. *Sara Douda* is a cultural symbol of the Loli people and also a symbol of their faith. Religious symbols allow individuals to access Divine reality and express their experiences of faith within a cultural context. The verbal and nonverbal symbols in *Sara Douda* show the Loli Community's faith and belief in God Allah, the Creator of heaven and earth as in the phrase *Ama wolo Ama rawi*. Their offerings of praise and expressions of gratitude have been expressed through poetry in the form of couplets and lines as well as beautiful dances from time immemorial, from generation to generation until now. It can be said that the essence of *Sara Douda* culture is a means for Loli people to carry out contextual theology in social life.

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