

WOLEKA AND KATAGA ART DANCES AS CULTURAL EXPRESSIONS OF WEST SUMBA SOCIETY: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract: This article aims to examine the performing arts that come from the socio-cultural context of the West Sumba community which is essential to see the relationship between performing arts that are used as ritual arts by the community. This dance has a very important function, especially for people who still adhere to the Marapu belief. This function is closely related to the significance of the ritual, where the relevant rites are often referred to as woleka and kataga. Rites are a form of ceremony that aims to ask for blessings and sustenance from ancestors who have passed away. Both dances are still preserved today as the culture and identity of the West Sumba community. This study uses ethnographic research that aims to explore the cultural meaning behind the social practices of the West Sumba indigenous community. The research method used is participatory with data collection techniques through virtual interviews. the results of the study show that the Woleka and Kataga performing arts have deep cultural meanings and are related to their identity and culture.

Keyword: Woleka, Kataga, and West Sumba

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is some country rich in culture, both in the form of tangible cultural heritage and intangible cultural heritage. According to the National Literacy Movement, cultural heritage is defined as an element that has important value in terms of history, science and technology, and art. Based on data from Databoks.id, Indonesia has 1,239 intangible cultural heritages, making it one of the countries with a significant number in the world.

Intangible cultural heritage covers various aspects, including performing arts, oral traditions and expressions, customs, natural sciences, crafts, and celebrations. Of these categories, performing arts dominate with 378 cultural heritages. Intangible cultural heritage can be interpreted as all relics that cannot be held and are abstract, for example in the form of technology, dance, and language. Meanwhile, tangible cultural heritage refers to all cultural relics that have a physical form and can be seen and held, such as traditional clothing and traditional houses. districts located in the Province of East Nusa Tenggara (NTT), Indonesia. In this district, many areas can still be found that have historical value, such as in terms of history or socio-culture. Sumba Island is one of the many islands in Indonesia that still maintains its cultural and traditional

wealth. This can be seen from some of the Sumba people who still adhere to the Marapu religion, which is the local community's belief religion. On Sumba Island, there are various traditional arts that can still be witnessed, ranging from crafts, fine arts, to megalithic. Dance is one of the most prominent aspects in the cultural expression of the local community. One of them is the Woleka dance and the Kataga dance. One of the traditional dances in West Sumba is the Woleka dance, which in East Sumba is known as Goleka. This dance has a very important role, especially for people who still adhere to the Marapu belief. In 2017, the population of West Sumba Regency was recorded at 145,061 people.

The majority of the population in West Sumba Regency adheres to Protestant Christianity, reaching 71.24%. Meanwhile, the proportion of the population who adheres to Catholicism is 19.23%. In West Sumba Regency, 5.29% of the population identifies themselves as followers of the Marapu religion, and 4.13% as followers of Islam. Finally, the number of residents who follow Hinduism in West Sumba Regency is 0.11%. In the publication of West Sumba in Figures 2004, Marapu is not explicitly mentioned as a religious group, but is only referred to as an "other" religion. However, it has become common knowledge that what is meant by "other" is Marapu. The function of Marapu is closely related to ritual interests, where the rite in question is known as the woleka party. Literally, woleka means hitting the gong, which is a sign that the traditional rite has begun, and usually lasts for seven days and seven nights. This rite is a form of ceremony to ask for forgiveness, blessings, and sustenance from the spirits of ancestors. The local community calls it a 'party' because of the dominant element of 'eating together' in the activity. This statement is in line with what was conveyed by Koentjaraningrat (1992: 262-263), who stated that in addition to presentation, sacrifice, prayer, dance/singing, procession, and so on, the activity of 'eating together' is a very important aspect in various religious ceremonies throughout the world. Religious actions carried out in accordance with standard behavior are known as religious ceremonies or rites. This function is related to the interests of the ritual known as the woleka party. Literally, woleka means 'hitting the gong', which signifies the start of a traditional rite that usually lasts for seven days and seven nights. This rite is a form of ceremony to ask for forgiveness, blessings, and sustenance from the spirits of ancestors. The local community calls this rite a 'party' because of the dominant element of 'eating together' in its implementation. This is in line with the opinion of Koentjaraningrat (1992: 262-263) who stated that, in addition to offering, sacrificing, praying, dancing/singing, procession, and others, 'eating together' is one of the most important actions in a ceremony. There are various religions and beliefs in the world. Religious practices carried out in accordance with established norms and codes of conduct are referred to as religious ceremonies or ceremonial religious rites. The word "Kataga" in the Anakalang language comes from the word "taga", which means to cut or behead. The word "taga" has the addition of the suffix "ka" to become "Kataga", which can be interpreted as the act of cutting or beheading. Kataga Dance is basically a dance that depicts the act of beheading the enemy. It is said that Kataga Dance is a representation of the duels that often occurred between tribes in ancient times in East Nusa Tenggara (NTT). In general, the origin of regional dances in the NTT region, including Kataga Dance, is not known for certain, because there are no written historical sources that can be found. The history of Kataga Dance was obtained from the narratives of the elders of the Anakalang community, who stated that the emergence of this dance was the result of frequent duels between tribes or villages around Anakalang. The winner of the duel hangs the opponent's head in a courtyard which in Sumbanese terms is called Adung or Talora. However, if before the duel occurs both parties have made an agreement, the head of the loser can be taken home by his relatives as a symbol of peace. Kataga Dance itself originally appeared in Anakalang, Katikutana District, West Sumba Regency.

METHOD

According to the opinion quoted by Anslem Strauss, qualitative research is a type of research where the results cannot be obtained through statistical methods or other calculation methods. On the other hand, Djarm'an argues that qualitative research emphasizes quality or the most important things related to the nature of a good or service. In addition, Imam Gunawan stated that qualitative research does not start from a previously formulated theory, but rather departs from a field based on the natural environment.

Researchers identified various elements of local culture in images, videos, and texts shared by users, such as traditional clothing, typical foods, and traditional activities that emerged during Christmas celebrations. Data collection is one of the most important stages in the research process. The right data collection technique produce data with high credibility, while the wrong technique can produce invalid data. Therefore, this stage must be carried out carefully and in accordance with the procedures and characteristics of qualitative research that have been discussed previously.

Techniques for collecting and evaluating data include: (1) watching and listening to videos, (2) collecting information by noting down several sentences involving code switching and code mixing, (3) describing data by grouping several spoken words that have been obtained, and (4) presenting data and drawing conclusions.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Woleka Dance: An Aspect of Traditional Ceremony

Woleka Dance is a form of traditional dance that has its roots in society. According to Astuti (2004: 45), traditional dance is a dance that develops and is formed in a community based on a traditional value system that is upheld by its members. In the context of the West Sumba tradition, there is no aspect of life that is not influenced by religious feelings. Every human aspiration is conveyed through various offering ceremonies with offerings (*hungu maraku*) to God through the intermediary of Marapu. The types of offerings include betel nut (*papaha*), pieces of gold and silver (*kawadaku*), rice, and livestock (Hadikusuna, 1993: 47). Referring to the large number of animals slaughtered for the purpose of this ceremony, the activity often draws criticism, where the ceremony is considered to be an extraordinary waste. Many argue that malnutrition in some West Sumba communities is caused, among other things, by the holding of certain rites in the community that sacrifice tens to hundreds of large animals, which are sometimes only intended to show prestige. Levi-Strauss (1997: 152) uses the term "potlatch" to refer to such activities, which are a form of traditional party. The event is enlivened by various displays of wealth as a symbol of pride. Furthermore, the wealth can be shared or damaged as an effort to challenge and insult the opponent, or force him to retaliate with actions that exceed the "gift" of wealth that has been given. Consumption of animal protein is only focused on events like this. Outside of these events, over a long period of time, the slaughter of large animals occurs very rarely, resulting in low protein intake, because the large animals are prepared to welcome the next ceremony.

In the thinking of the West Sumba community, woleka is a matter of pride (*famous/famous*), because it is a story that is talked about by many people due to the success of killing more animals than other individuals who have ever held a similar party. Based on this understanding, if associated with the Sumba language, besides meaning to beat the gong, etymologically, woleka also means "revelry", which refers to the act of killing a large number of animals, having a massive meal together, and bringing home large amounts of meat, both cooked and raw, and sometimes also rice.

The term "animal slaughter" is almost never used in Sumba, because in reality, the slaughter of large animals such as buffalo is done by cutting their necks (*teba karambo*), while small animals such as pigs are killed by being stabbed right through their hearts. Praying is an activity aimed at worshiping Marapu or ancestral spirits by reciting traditional poems. The purpose of this activity is to ask the ancestral spirits to keep children and grandchildren and livestock away from all forms of disease, and to ask for success in an abundant harvest. The worship poems that are always recited are:

Inya kalada nganda, mono Ama mandeke Lii
Tilu rengni mono, pote katanga gama Lii
Gaika ghou Inya mono Ama papboto papoza ma
Psili gama wira, tengge, mono klawara
Psili gama kapore wawi, manu, mono anything
Yenggama, we milk, we baba
(I'm going to make a lot of money)
 Mama big mouth, Daddy big voice
 Your ears that hear our call

So that you, Mama and Father, who adore and worship, keep us from coughs, colds and fever for your children and grandchildren, keep away various livestock diseases and give us abundant milk and honey (namely rice and corn harvests).

Until now, the people of West Sumba still hold Woleka dance performances accompanied by singing. The event is held in the yard of a traditional house known as *uma kalada*, which is a large house with a high tower, resembling the shape of a *joglo* house in Central Java. *Uma kalada* is a house owned jointly by one *kabihu* (clan). The Woleka dance, which is the core part of the Woleka party, cannot be determined regularly. However, usually for families who are able, this celebration is held every five years. The event is generally held in June or July, considering that the rain has stopped falling. In addition, in those months, the people of West Sumba have just harvested their crops, namely corn, rice, and coffee. In its implementation, Woleka dancers are not limited to individuals who have dancing abilities, but are open to anyone who is interested in participating in the performance. Likewise, its supporters do not prioritize the high artistic values of the movements displayed. This action is more influenced by the drive related to beliefs, traditional celebrations, and requests for blessings from Marapu. The main thing is the purpose of the implementation.

The core dancers consist of two pairs of dancers (female and male) wearing traditional clothing complete with *giring-giring* on their feet. The dancers must be Marapu followers, with an effort being made for the children or wives of *Tuan Pesta* to be involved in this performance. Other couples follow the core dancers, where the male dancers dance while circling the arena wielding machetes, which symbolize the masculinity of Sumbanese men. The machetes used are authentic machetes, with the length of the sharp part being around 50 cm. Outside of the core dancers, anyone who feels they have "skills" and does not mind, is welcome to join in the dance.

These dances are generally performed at night until dawn, and last for approximately one week. Such a time of implementation is considered appropriate for communicating with Marapu. The Woleka dance in the traditional rituals of Marapu adherents plays an important role as part of the traditional party that functions as a bridge between the real world and the supernatural world. *Teko toi* (heritage machete) is also a symbol in this context. The accompaniment of the Woleka dance uses a series of musical instruments consisting of large gongs, small gongs, drums, drums, and *bedug*. There is a coherent relationship between the dance and the instruments. With the sound of drums, gongs, *bedug*, and drums, the dancers perform jumping and stamping movements, which in their native language are called *ndandu*, in the arena or yard of the house. The expressive power of the Woleka dance is greatly influenced by the integrated musical instruments, which include elements of melody, tempo, rhythm, and distinctive volume. Gongs generally number six, consisting of two large gongs and four small gongs. In a dance performance, if there are five small gongs, then the fifth gong functions as a distinctive marker for a *kabihu* (clan).

The drum used has one percussion surface that is hung on the drummer's shoulder using a rope. This instrument is considered to have certain powers, and its sound is believed to be able to influence human life. Therefore, the drum is a primary need in carrying out ritual ceremonies. This instrument is made of tubular wood covered with a membrane of animal skin that is stretched on the side of the percussion surface as a

source of sound. These instruments are the basic capital of sound that must be able to translate certain intentions through their musical expression. From a performance perspective, there are also aesthetic elements that can foster an emotional touch, which include the arrangement of instruments, instrument decorations, the attitude of the musician when performing certain gending, and the technical procedures of the performance.

Kataga Dance is a dance that can be seen in traditional events, special guest welcoming processions, and cultural performances originating from West Sumba, East Nusa Tenggara.

This dance is generally performed by eight men divided into two groups. The movements performed in this dance depict the history of the past when there was a war between villages, known as perang tanding.

Along with that, the winner of the duel take home the head of his opponent as a symbol of victory. If the losing party wants to take back the head of its member, then the village must ask for peace from the winning party.

The movements in Kataga Dance also have their own uniqueness, because they depict the dynamics of the war that occurs. The dancers demonstrate the body movements of tribal people in war, from fending off and holding opponents to demonstrating how to cut off the opponent's head.

The word "Kataga" comes from the term "Katagahu," which means cutting off the head. Therefore, this dance is very rich in historical value. This war dance is usually accompanied by gong beating, shield clapping between dancers, and the sound of bells on the dancer's costumes.

Because there are two camps in this dance, each camp of dancers usually wears a red and white headband. This dance depicts conflict and the achievement of victory in battle between one tribe and another. This dance has deep historical roots, emerging as a response to oppression by other tribes, which in turn triggered inter-tribal wars. In this context, there are also events of defeat and victory; the party that succeeds in achieving victory cheer or celebrate their success through dance. The distribution of Kataga Dance is limited to two village areas, namely Wanokaka Village and Anakalang Village. However, the Kataga Dance in the two villages shows differences in its movement motifs.

The variety of movements in Kataga Dance is relatively simple, but requires quite a lot of energy, because this dance symbolizes the determination of a fighter or soldier. There are three basic elements of movement in this dance, namely attacking, defending, and avoiding. This dance is accompanied by six male dancers and six female dancers, where the male dancers are selected based on certain criteria. In addition, this dance has several functions, including as a means of philosophy, ceremony, aesthetics, education, and social.

CONCLUSION

Woleka has a function to strengthen the sense of solidarity within the group. The solidarity referred to here is solidarity between fellow dancers, as well as between dancers and event organizers and other individuals involved in the activity. Through the Woleka dance performance, the community, especially those who have kinship ties with the event organizers, gather to play a role, carry out tasks, and show their respective responsibilities towards Marapu (ancestral spirits) who are believed to be able to provide protection to them. Likewise, with the Kataga dance, the Kataga Dance is an integral part of traditional ceremonies that celebrate the victory of war, which is heroic and very dynamic. This activity has an attraction for teenagers and young people, so that it can arouse and excite their sense of pride and love for regional arts. These two dances are cultures that are the identity of the West Sumba community. Which is still preserved and performed until now.

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