



DOA KASARO AND ITS CULTURAL CODES IN MUSLIM SOCIETY OF BIMA, EASTERN INDONESIA

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Abstrak: *Dou Mbawa*, an indigenous community as a small part of Bimanese Muslims, has a double minority identity since they have been sociologically and religiously considered as others. Having this character, they create a specific way of communication amongst themselves and between them and others through an annual ritual called *Raju* and *Kasaro* prayer. This article, using the hermeneutical and semiotical approach of interpretation, aims to discover a cultural interest in the *Kasaro* prayer. The *Dou Mbawa* not only positions the prayers as a form of spirituality but also utilizes it as a means of overcoming the problem concerning plurality, tensions, conflicts, and subordinations. This article illustrates the twisting of the politics of identity through *Kasaro* prayer. Beyond its function as a religious language, the *Kasaro* prayer carries a socio-cultural significance, yet politically meaningful as an ideology of resistance for the minority against the majority. The politics of identity adopted by the *Dou Mbawa* in Bima is symbolic. However, it implies the real struggle of a vulnerable-pluralistic society, mainly the struggle to maintain tradition, the consolidation of internal forces, and the imagination of multicultural societies. With this finding, this article offers a perspective on the formation of identity and dynamics of multiculturalism in Indonesia from the lense of spirituality.

Keywords: *Dou Mbawa*, *Doa Kasaro*, religious speech, cultural codes

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Introduction

PRAYER HAS POWER as a socio-political communication apart from its conventional function as a vertical communication with the Creator. Geertz, for example, sees prayer (*slametan*) as a secret

experience and religious expression that is inseparable from humans' life.¹ To some extent, prayer - especially large-scale prayer that involves many people as an audience usually in the form of communal rituals - serves as an identity, even a tool of struggle and an instrument of power. Rumahuru, in her study of the Ma'atenu ritual in Maluku described prayer as a vehicle for the consolidation of power through ritual practices, symbols and discourses in the chanting (*mantra*). In the procession of ritual, there is also a notion of identity to express certain characters of the community supporter of the ritual that they are different from other people and communities.² This is also called politics of identity in sacred rituals.

Communication through religious language (religious speech) such as prayer is carried out by various religious and traditional communities in many ways and numerous interests. This article reveals that *Kasaro* prayers in *Mbawa* community serve as a language echoing cultural interests such as social power as well as religious values, spirituality, and ethics. This functions of prayer are similar to other rituals from other ethnics in Indonesian society. For example, Dhasa Jawa ritual in Flores serves as a manifestation of obedience to spiritual force,³ while some rituals in Lombok serve as a source to mobilize people of having resacralization of local landscape⁴ and as the field in which inter-religious relations are being contested or negotiated.⁵ This key forms of ritual confirm universal understanding of ritual that is not only a manifestation of spirituality but also cultural, even a

¹ See Clifford Geertz, *The Religion of Java* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1960).

² Yance Z Rumahuru, "Wacana kekuasaan dalam Ritual: Studi Kasus Ritual Ma'atenu di Pelauw," in *Agama dan Kearifan Lokal dalam Tantangan Global*, ed. Irwan Abdullah, Ibnu Mujib, and M Iqbal Ahnaf (Yogyakarta: Sekolah Pascasarjana UGM & Pustaka Pelajar, 2008).

³ Ni Wayan Sumitri, *Ritual dan Dinamika Hidup Orang Rongga: Tradisi Lisan dalam Wacana Etno-ecologi* (Jakarta: Yayasan Obor Indonesia, 2018).

⁴ Kari Telle, "Spirited Places and Ritual Dynamics among Sasak Muslim on Lombok," *Anthropological Forum* 19, no. 3 (2009): 289–306.

⁵ Kari Telle, "Ritual Power: Risk, Rumours, and Religious Pluralism on Lombok," *The Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology* 17, no. 5 (2016): 419–438.

festival since it is found spaciousness as a celebrity character as an accumulation of excitement.⁶

The *Mbawa* community (*Dou Mbawa*) in Bima, West Nusa Tenggara, perform a communal prayer within a series of rituals called *Raju*. *Raju* is an annual ritual to welcome the planting season which is carried out by residents of *Mbawa* village with an exception from a small group of puritan Muslim and Christian. The *Dou Mbawa* are adherents of a thick agrarian culture because they live in the highland of Donggo on Sumbawa Island and earn a living as farmers/cultivators in rain-fed rice fields. They are people who live in agricultural, cultural circles, but interestingly, they live in a multicultural atmosphere. For a long time, they have been living together in the religious differences between Islam, Christianity and Catholicism, the three religions of the population. In the *Raju* ritual, all residents gather in one place, namely Uma Ncuhi, without any religious barriers, and are equally devoted to traditional teachings that have been sweetened from generation to generation.

In the *Raju* ritual, there is a core segment of prayer reading, called the *Kasaro* Prayer, which is actually a combination of mantras, prayers and advice. *Kasaro* prayer has a long duration, taking about 30 minutes accompanied by interludes of the procession of sowing the seeds on a plate, taking a sip after a sip, as well as a short chat. As a long prayer inherited from generation to generation, of course, the *Kasaro* Prayer has a standard or basic structure as an expression of spirituality which is core in communication with God and sacred powers. However, there are also other aspects of prayer that indicate horizontal communication with fellow residents or talk to the broader audience.

Kasaro prayer is unique for it is practised by people from different religious backgrounds and used to be stanzas of *mantra*, not *hizb* or *salāwat* as in the other Muslim communities. Yet, *Kasaro* is nuanced with the advice of ethics and spirituality to live by. This kind of advice is commonly known in Bimanese Muslim society as

⁶ Munim A. Sirry, *Islam Revisionis: Kontestasi Agama Zaman Radikal* (Yogyakarta: UIN Sunan Kalijaga Press, 2018), 47.

living advice or wisdom (*petuah kehidupan*), and it is recently called *fitua* among Bimanese. Compared to the *fitua*, a spiritual discourse considered as a local form of Sufism, *Kasaro* prayer should be similar, especially in its elements of content. Among the ethics which of *fitua* are moral etiquette (*adab*) or moral behaviour (*akhlāq*), and believing in divine grace (*baraka*), the world of the soul (*alam arwah*), supernatural powers miraculous acts performed by a saint (*karamah*), also drawing close to God (*taqarrub*) in order to seeking blessing (*tabarruk*). I argue that *Kasaro* is the one in which concepts of Islamic Sufism are performed in the term of indigenous custom or customary practices (*adat*). This resemblance of mysticism form among Bimanese society is possible due to the fact that this region is a cultural area where many cultures from across Malay and Austronesian worlds encounter. As Hitchcock notices that Bima is doubly impressive because it lies on the fringes of Indic influence in eastern Indonesia and thus shares elements of common heritage with Java,⁷ for example. Therefore, according to Sila, traditions of Bima Muslims are syncretic as result of past and present adaptations.⁸

In this study, the *Kasaro* prayer is put in the context of identity formation and negotiation between a universal religious doctrine and a local-ethnic culture. It thus contributes to the study of spiritualism and local identity culture. It is also considered as a form of Islamic Sufism and spiritualism practised in local circumstances. Therefore it needs some extensive analysis of the practice of the prayer, specifically on what socio-cultural atmosphere this sort of "mysticism" is being practised and how its practitioners utilize it as one of the identities. In order to have a better understanding and to see this practice in broader contexts, it is necessary to mention some anthropological works on practising Islam and traditions in Bima.

⁷ Michael Hitchcock, *Islam and Identity in Eastern Indonesia* (London: Hull University, 1998), 3.

⁸ Muhammad Adlin Sila, "In Pursuit of Promoting Moderate Indonesian Islam to the World: Understanding the Diversity of Islamic Practices in Bima, Sumbawa Island," in *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research (ASSEHR)*, vol. 129 (presented at the Third International Conference on Social and Political Sciences (ICSPS), Atlantis Press, 2017), 253.

On practising Islam in Bima, Sila's study concludes that being Muslim in Bima is situated by contestations which encompass ideas of religious purity and hybridity, whether accommodations or amalgamations have occurred in religious practices, resulting in both social tension and cohesion.⁹ This argument fits Hitchcock's study on *Islam and Identity in Eastern Indonesia*, which concludes that despite the intensity of the Islamic expression and identity, Bima Muslims did not totally abandon non-Islamic elements. While Islam becomes the dominant force in Bima, the indigenous religion known as *parafu* is not completely obliterated.¹⁰ The antagonistic relation between Islam as the newer identity for Bimanese and the indigenous belief may not be in the tension until the coming of re-Islamization in rural area under the notion of purifying movement. A study by Prager identifies the fundamental change of religious landscape in Bima after the early Islamization contributed by the local Mecca pilgrims (Haji) as agents of a local Islamic reformation. Prager also discusses the role of Muhammadiyah, a reformist Muslim organization, as well as the Hajis, in transforming Bimanese society from "the garden of magic" to the more conservative Muslim society in eastern Indonesia. Both factors, the Hajis and Muhammadiyah, despite their contribution to bringing Bimanese into the notion of modernizing Islam, they also switch onto the tensions between global and local Islam.¹¹ One of the sites of tension is *Mbawa*, or Donggo in general, where reformist Muslims and supporters of local belief are living together. Fortunately, the *Dou Mbawa*, as shown in Just's study, have a set of morality embodied in local knowledge which enables them to prevent from negative conflict.¹²

⁹ Ibid. See also Muhammad Adlin Sila, "Being Muslim in Bima of Sumbawa, Indonesia: Practice, Politics and Cultural Diversity" (Dissertation, The Australian National University, 2014).

¹⁰ Hitchcock, *Islam and Identity in Eastern Indonesia*.

¹¹ Michael Prager, "Abandoning the 'Garden of Magic': Islamic Modernism and Contested Spirit Assertions in Bima," *Indonesia and the Malay World* 38, no. 110 (2010): 9–25.

¹² Peter Just, *Dou Donggo Justice: Conflict and Morality in an Indonesian Society* (New York: Roman & Littlefield, 2001).

The above studies concluded that beyond the hegemony of dominant culture, there were always creative encounters of Islam and local culture, producing a synthetic tradition in Muslim societies. Wardatun's study on the marriage practice in Bimanese society reflects this creative encounters that have been embodied as an identity and moral values of that Muslim societies.¹³ For the *Dou Mbawa*, Just's study is the first anthropological account that unfolds moral community, political, spiritual and structural dimension of that community. Inspired by Just, Wahid's study is the second one to deal with this community, especially on the cultural practice of *Raju* ritual related to its function as a cohesive tool for countering hegemony.¹⁴ Yet, these two studies, as well as other studies as mentioned before, are very limited in addressing *Kasaro* prayer as a particular expression for the community to show their sense of the power of spirituality. This article differs from the above studies, even by Wahid and Just, for it is exploring *Kasaro* prayer in the perspective of cultural studies which emphasize the religious speech spoken by "subaltern."

From the point of view of Cultural Studies – a set of critics of contemporary culture, especially the semiotic school, *Kasaro* prayer is seen as a practice of the significance of representation. That is, the practice emerged and survived inseparably from the cultural atmosphere of its supporters. The culture here in the definition of Stuart Hall as the actual environment that triggers the birth of a particular community's practice, language and customs, as well as common sense (mind) which is rooted from and shapes the lives of many people.¹⁵ As a cultural product, this practice undergoes a cycle of "being influenced" then "influencing" a way of looking at life or perceiving self. This such perspectives on cultural practices lead to the understanding that language - including religious

¹³ Atun Wardatun, "Ampa Co'i Ndai: Local Understanding of Kaf'a in Marriage among Eastern Indonesian Muslims," *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 54, no. 2 (2016): 311–336, <https://www.aljamiah.or.id/index.php/AJIS/article/view/54203>.

¹⁴ Abdul Wahid, "Praktik Budaya Raju dalam Pluralitas Dou Mbawa di Bima, Nusa Tenggara Barat" (Dissertation, Udayana University, 2016).

¹⁵ Chris Barker, *Cultural Studies: Teori & Praktik*, trans. Nurhadi (Yogyakarta: Kreasi Wacana, 2009), 8.

speech (prayer) - is not a neutral medium in the formation of meaning and knowledge. Therefore, exploration of the formation of textual meaning must be carried out to understand the 'inner world' of certain cultures because texts are born from relations in contexts.

If the above argument underlies this research, then the consideration that arises when exploring the meaning of the *Kasaro* Prayer is to rethink the sacred and profane world of human culture, especially how the two aspects of life spiritually and culturally cannot be separated from each other. This has made implications for further understanding of the unification of religion and politics, for example, as the discourse has recently opened up widely in the country. Another thing that has raised is the question around the way text is being formed in a particular cultural context which makes the text bound by context and vice-versa. Exploration of these two levels in a certain way (critical studies on culture) such as this research will lead to a better understanding of the mysteries of culture so that the hidden power and economic materialism are revealed. That means there is an ideology operates, so the following question is what system of knowledge might work behind the production of meaning and knowledge from religious texts which allows the text to may be used as a tool of liberation or oppression, as well as a tool of maintaining the power or of attaining it.

The above considerations and questions seem complicated to answer to produce a universal argument. Therefore, by examining the particular aspects of religious practices of specific (ethnic) communities with particular perspectives (cultural studies as in this study) will help to understand the culture more clearly, because the culture is nothing but the practice of significance, representation, articulation, power subjectivity, identity, and text. Thus the research will run around the exploration of these concepts in a text called *Kasaro* Text.

Cultural code refers to the concept of relations in a particular structure such as rules of correspondence or structured relations. These concepts describe relations between complex elements that shape culture, such as the structure of consciousness and structure

of the social organization.¹⁶ Therefore, a code is that coherence means that something becomes code when it goes through a system in which surrounds it.¹⁷ This relation can be understood as a part of habitus as theorized by Bourdieu, which is a structure of cognition that underlies practice after gaining field in a particular culture. According to Bourdieu, there are three main aspects that became a starting point for the birth of cultural practices, namely habitus, capital, and field. Habitus, the product of behaviour that arises from various experiences of human life, is the accumulation of human habits and adaptations, which are firmly rooted in character. In turn, habitus forms a structure that underlies practice and representation.¹⁸

Cultural codes are born from the process of habituation, forming cultural formations which are consisting of signs or symbols. Signs or symbols keep the code as meaning, either explicitly or subtly. Some codes can be consciously studied and constructed; others are produced and internalized in unconscious habits. Regardless of how the codes are formed and transmitted, cultural codes clearly form agreements, conventions, and rules that are linked to across cultures, enable discourse and action become a general acceptance in a certain culture. In fact, the sign is not single. At the level of meaning, a single sign may have different meanings, depending on the subsystem in which the sign is used and interpreted.¹⁹

Cultural codes have characteristics, as explained by Berger, that is: 1) coherent, related to other systems, 2) residing in culture; 3) confidential because they are inherent in culture and are always unconscious; 4) but must be real, specific, clear, and continuous; 5) extensive and cover many things, and 6) being related.²⁰

¹⁶ Michael Kalberg, *Beyond the Culture of Contest* (Oxford: George Ronald, 2004), 8.

¹⁷ Asa Berger, *Pengantar Semiotika: Tanda-tanda dalam Kebudayaan Kontemporer*, trans. M. Dwi Satrianto (Yogyakarta: Tiara Wacana, 2010), 216.

¹⁸ Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), 53.

¹⁹ Tony Thwaites, Lloyd Davis, and Warwick Mules, *Introducing Cultural and Media Studies: Sebuah Pendekatan Semiotik*, trans. Shaleh Rahmana (Yogyakarta: Jalasutra, 2009), 55.

²⁰ Berger, *Pengantar Semiotika*, 216–221.

Religious speech such as prayer or mantra, as a language and a collection of signs, thus functions as a cultural code that can be interpreted as symbolizing something else outside of language itself and go beyond its main functions. "Something" maybe means resistance, and anxiety, a conflict, and imagination within society, identity, consolidation of power, maintaining the status quo, and legitimacy of authority. This all can be read in the context of local and specific cultures, in this case, the cultural of *Dou Mbawa*.

The Cultural Context of *Dou Mbawa*

Mbawa is a village in the Donggo highlands in Bima regency, West Nusa Tenggara province. *Mbawa* village consists of several hamlets separated by valleys; they are Mangge, Sori Fo'o, Kambantu, Jango, Sangari, *Mbawa* Na'e, Selere, and Tolonggeru. Located right under the top of Doro Leme mountain, *Mbawa* village is seen as a beautiful one, so that Peter Just, an American anthropologist, called the village in his study as Dorontika (beautiful mountain).

Culturally, the *Dou Mbawa* community are as a model of peasant society who inherited an agrarian culture. They have strong social ties, kinship, and communalism that are formed by genealogical factors related to heredity, kinship, and natural environment related to how to manage life in the midst of limited circumstances. This socio-cultural context forms ethnic identity for the *Dou Mbawa* people that they are part of the Donggo ethnic on one hand and that they prefer to perceive themselves as *Mbawa* ethnic on the other hand due to differences among them.

Mbawa-Donggo is a plural society with a balanced composition of Christianity and Islam. This religious life is not found elsewhere in Bima. Before Islam and Christianity came and being embraced by the community, local religions and beliefs of animism-dynamism is a major fad. There is "parafu" or "kakambakakimbi", that people believe in as supernatural and mysterious forces which reside behind natural phenomena. The adherence of various beliefs produced a variety of physical cultures in the form of traditions, rituals, or arts. This religion-based tradition and art can still be found in the practices of *mpisi*, *kalero*, and *dewa*, that are

dances accompanied by recitation of chanting that serve as means of communication with the sacred.

Islam came to *Mbawa* at the same time with the arrival of that religion to other Donggo region, brought by missionaries sent by the sultan of Bima, especially during the last sultan of Bima, Sultan Salahuddin (1917-1951). Being isolated, the Islamization effort has been slow, unlike other areas in Donggo. At the same time, Christian exodus from Sumbawa reach to the area and take shelter, and it was from them that Christianity was accepted. Then the two religions lived side by side in *Mbawa*. Now, the composition has changed somewhat since the coming of Christians from Ende-Flores, and Christian varies into two, Catholic and Protestant.

As a society with diverse religious cultures, harmony and balance are the central values for maintaining community cohesion. The phrase "*dou ndai ncau*" (all of us), for example, refers to the worldview of the *Dou Mbawa* regarding the position of humans as social beings who are brothers and need each other. Religious values embrace their lives, which they care for through rituals or practices of social piety and are socialized through social processes. However, as a society that shares the religion of missionary preaching, friction within people is also inevitable. Moreover, the balanced composition of society tends to result in competition between the two (or three) religions.

As a traditional community, the *Dou Mbawa* has a set of values drawn from cosmological views covered in cultural traditions and social life. In turn, these views, symbols, values, and myths are embodied in local wisdom and play a role as the cohesive tools for social bonds.

Interestingly a cultural bond between adherents of different religions in *Mbawa* is the *Raju* ritual. This practice has been carried down for generations as the legacy from the old *Ncuhi* (ancestors). *Raju* is an agricultural ritual. Before farming, people who support the ritual gather in a high place, usually in a small hill in the middle of the village where *Uma Ncuhi* (house of ancestors) located. They discuss and decide the excellent day when to start farming. Residents carry out this tradition through a ritual procession when everyone or family required to bring food, a kind

of potlac, to facilitate prayers. In this process, the *sando* (competent elders) lead the reciting mantras (*kalero*), which are accompanied by local dances (*mpisi*). The *Raju* ritual is basically an embodiment of *Dou Mbawa*'s spirituality, especially concerning cosmological views. With the *Raju*, the community expresses gratitude for the gift of nature while at the same time puts hope in the goodness of nature will embrace the whole community members. With this *Raju* the community is carrying out a process of social bonding through an inward warning that they actually have one inheritance, one ancestor, and one origin as the differences that come later cannot defeat the wisdom and value of their tradition.

Kasaro Prayer as Practiced

Kasaro Prayer is a ritual within ritual for it is one of a series of extensive rituals called *Raju*. The time of *Raju* procession usually takes place at the *wura nggupa* (the fourth month in the verse of the *Dou Mbawa*), ranging from September to October. It is said to be 'ranged' because *Dou Mbawa* is using calendar calculations based on climate change and follows traditional calculations on natural phenomena. As an agrarian ritual, its implementation depends on the season cycle, yet always right before the coming of the rainy season. A week before the first rain of the rainy season arrives, the *Raju* procession begins. The duration varies from year to year, some are 3, 5, or 7 days, take odd numbers, and are determined by the deliberation of the traditional elders led by Ncuhi. *Kasaro* itself is a small ritual, a ritual in ritual, which takes place in a simple but formal, non-dramatic, quiet, frenetic, exactly the same with the atmosphere of *slametan* in Javanese society as described by Geertz.²¹ The people present were dressed as everyday, unlike the Muslims in the city when carrying out the Eid-ul-Adha Eid rituals or the glorious and frenetic *Hanta Ua Pua* ceremony.²²

The *Kasaro* prayer puts in the peak of the *Raju* ritual series, that is praying by reciting of stanzas which is similar to a mantra or chanting. The mantra in *Kasaro* is the mantra *zāhir* (audible speech) rather than as mantra *bātin* (voiceless speech) that is less clear and

²¹ Geertz, *The Religion of Java*.

²² Sila, "Being Muslim in Bima."

only sounds interrupted. *Kasaro* takes place in the morning at Uma Ncuhi, read by competent traditional elders. The ones who usually recites *Kasaro* include Gegereu Ompu Nggawa and Ama Siti. *Kasaro* starts from the upper room of Uma Ncuhi where woman was there with some elders who were in charge of praying. They surround the offerings that have been prepared. The offerings consist of incense, betel, which is put on banana leaves, also fried rice, fermented water in several glasses, chicken eggs, cooked meat, bananas, rice grains, soybeans, green beans, and sesame seeds that will be the seeds for planting. *Kasaro* began with opening remarks from *Ncuhi* (customary leaders), followed by a long prayer voiced by one of the elders assisted by one other.

After the prayers are recited, the man who voiced prayer drinks the squeezed palm wine from the fermented sticky rice and pours it into the empty glass and then passed by all participants. All participants of the prayer drink the wine sip by sip. After that, the prayer leader fumbles the grain that has been provided while reciting the mantra in a voice that only he hears. Everyone may bring seeds that will be planted and prayed in *Kasaro*, with the hope of the growing fertile plants in their field swidden.

Kasaro prayer is pronounced in Bimanese language with the Donggo dialect, unlike the prayers of other Muslims who use Arabic. However, there are also Muslim-style of prayer expressions in Bima such as the mention of the word 'bareka' and "Muhammad" as the name of the Prophet. The Christian elements are also included in the *Kasaro* prayer by mentioning Jesus. It can be said that the *Kasaro* prayer is syncretic one which contains a combination of Muslim and Christian style with local elements. This strong local elements indicate that animism and dynamism nuanced lives of *Dou Mbawa* and inhabited in their inner religious. The contents of the prayers revolved around, hoping for the safety of the village and all of its inhabitants and the environment. They hope that eternal forces will be willing to save them from disaster and endowing all villagers with success in business and agriculture they do. One example of a *Kasaro* prayer is as follows:

Sarooo... ruma cou ruma ndaie, mai ngaha-pu ra toho ro dore ke, janga siwe mone ke mai ngaha-pu ake ese donggo Tuta Rasa Keto Rasa paha woha mai nggudu mai nggilo... ngaha mbocu ndondo ndao doho toho dou ro ada ro bodim

ke... ruma cou ruma ndaie... ai jana di mai kai satunu bohaba humpa ro mpori ndi ade mori ro woko kai ama ro ompu ina ro wa'i...

(Sarooo ... whos God (if not) our god, let's eat this offering, hens and males, let's eat now on the mountain in (between) *Tuta Rasa* and *Keto Rasa*, in the middle, let's pop let's scavenge ... eat until full all of which is offered by your servant, whos God (if not) our god, do not stumble and wrap ancestors and grandchildren in roots and grass in this life ...)

The final part of this ritual is called *paki ma-sampu* (cleaning the litter), meaning getting rid of things that are going to become an obstacle to the success of farming and village life. They brought the remnants of the offerings used in *Kasaro* to *Sera Lano*, a valley that became farmland located south of *Mbawa* village. Before the offerings are placed in their place, usually on a rock, a short *Kasaro* is read in stressing with the *Kasaro* in *Uma Ncuhi*, such as:

Sarooo... Ruma su'u ruma ra tala, ade mai ngguda kai akekaboro kai waliku, ede du kawara rau ama ra ompumu, ina ra wa'imu, adam harwa wati nefakaimu, ama ra ompu sa aka sampe sa ake.... Sarooo... poda malaikat upa, nabi tolu, madonggo nggahi wi'i wara. Makataroa rindi makese wara. Mantu'u di dana woko di dana, mantu'u di wadu woko di wadu, ro ma ntu'u di haju woko di haju...

(Sarooo ... God the lord of God (Allah) ta'ala, in order of us planting and gathering, also to remember fathers and ancestors, Adam and Eve were not forgotten, the ancestors from the past until now ... Sarooo .. it is correct that (there are) four angels, the three prophets, who have inherited the commandments which are stored, which illuminates the darkness, which is of the One. Who rests on the ground grows on the ground, which rests on the stone grows on the stone, who rests on the wood grows on the wood ...)

The metaphors contained in *Kasaro* are actually cultural codes that describe a communication strategy adopted by the *Dou Mbawa* in interpreting and giving meaning to their culture. Moreover, a speech strategy with metaphorical language is also a way for a particular culture to present itself and perceive others in the context of cultural relations.

Cultural Code in *Kasaro*

Kasaro is entirely religious texts, known in anthropology as 'ritual speech'. According to Keane, ritual speech is essential in the order of political and communal ties for a society that uncovers

relations with the spiritual world, also works as a socio-political cohesion and is needed for the establishment of a spirit in the group.²³

Kasaro can be seen as more than a prayer in ritual, that it serves as a system of human communication with the spiritual dimension (God). *Kasaro* is to some extent, also a mechanism of speak-out whose audience is its internal supporters (insider) as well as its opponent group or a passive outsider. If the ritual is seen as a symbol of political action, even part of the political activity itself, as ensured by Kertzer,²⁴ then *Kasaro* is the 'political language'.

Functioning as political language, *Kasaro* acts as a cultural code, which is a device communally agreed upon through cultural symbols to provide value and to steer attitude to the supporters. In turn, the cultural code is exchanged with other codes from other communities, in the sense of showing the community identity to be maintained in the middle of other culture.

As a cultural code, *Kasaro* prayer is a type of communication itself that is used by the *Dou Mbawa* to speak inward to the insiders as well as to other parties who have a relationship with them, as both patrons and enemies. To the insiders, *Kasaro* prayer gives advice on life that must be treated, containing cultural conservatism, also strengthening social vision and communal hope, maintaining harmony or social cohesiveness, and sharing mutual anxiety toward social difficulties. To the outsiders or other parties who have antagonistic tendencies, *Kasaro* prayer signalled the existence of power consolidation among the *Dou Mbawa* which must be considered for bargaining and negotiation, especially in multicultural relations they intensely involved.

The following are some referential meanings, refers to the aspects which are to be communicated through *Kasaro* prayer. The referential meaning is understood in the context of the complex relations of the *Dou Mbawa* and the cultural dynamics they live in.

²³ Webb Keane, "The Spoken House: Text, Act, and Object in Eastern Indonesia," *American Ethnologist* 22, no. 1 (1995): 102–124.

²⁴ David I Kertzer, *Ritual, Politics, and Power* (New York: Yale University, 1998).

The reading of the correlational between the expression of prayer as a text and the dynamics of culture as a context, forming a particular code or meaning which is "suspected" of being emic. Some cultural codes that can be displayed as follows:

First, the preservation of tradition. The *Dou Mbawa* is the leading supporter of ancestral traditions in Bimanese society which make them as so-called the last bastion of old customs. This character can be seen from physical cultures and collective behaviours which are strongly oriented towards ancestors. Relations to their past are intertwined in many ways that form a mode of thinking and practising cultural conservatism. From this way of thinking, the *Dou Mbawa* develop cultural practices that are believed as a manifestation of obedience to the holy world, whether it is ancestors or the spiritual phenomenon that shapes their lives. The idea of preserving traditions is reflected in the stanzas repeatedly uttered in the *Kasaro* prayer: "Wati ra-mpungga wati ra-mboda rawi ra-wi'i ra-kamu kai ai aka-na busu-na nisa bole-na dana criti-na moti ... "[The acts inherited are not made nor renew, they are ordered from (ancient times) in a period when the hill mounting and the land shaking and the sea chopping).

This such expression repeatedly appears in the *Kasaro* Prayer, indicates that the preservation of customs and ancestral heritages is one of the cultural core which provides a source of communal power to navigate the dynamics of social life. Seeing as the essential life, the old culture must not be forgotten, moreover to be thrown away. "*Mai kai-ra ndede-na wati-ra ra-nefa ro ra-mbure*" (therefore it can not be forgotten and ignored) ...

Mai kai-ra ndede-na wati-ra ra-nefa ro ra-mbure. Wati ra-mpungga ro mboda ba nami kai ra-parenta ro ra-kau kai ai aka-na saramba ndadi dou labo dana. Wati poda-ja ra-nefa ro mbure ba ada ra-kandadi.

(Therefore, it can not be forgotten, nor be ignored. We do not create and renew the sets of orders given from the first time since the creation of man. They are not forgotten and ignored by the created servant).

Apparently, cultural conservation is a social capital for the *Dou Mbawa* in order to form a network of ongoing social relations. If their culture is alive by this capital, there are bonds that enable society to be stronger.

Second, there is a consolidation toward strengthening internal community. In *Kasaro* prayer, there are expressions or phrases that indicate the ongoing consolidation of power among *Dou Mbawa*. Internal consolidation means strengthening their self-perception and social vision and identifying various social barriers they must lunge. Regarding self-perception can be read at the beginning of stanzas:

Sarooo... Nggomi doho dana ro rasa hudu nggudu dua laku nteli. Tala ca-da lalo uma ra-udu ku-ra wira lingga tuta tonda. Bune-si ntika ake ede-du nggori ra-wa'a mali dana mali rasa, de mai kai-ra ake dodo ncore sama amu ra dumu, waca rima waca edi, mai ngaha mbocu nono mawu, samena-na nggomi doho rapehe ro ndonta ka-mai. Sa-lao lalo-na nggana nggomi doho ndo'i ndala sampuru dua de ade kampo ro mporo rasa ro dana.

(*Sarooo ... All of you in the land and the village (which are trivial) as a bunch of lice (and are fragile) as two piles of stone. Lay down to the north all the houses so we can spread out a head pillow. This such of sacrifice is that cleaning off land and village, so with this, let's altogether from root to top, wash (your/our) hands and feet, let's eat a fully satisfied and drink - all of you who are called and invited to come. All of your grandchildren and descendants of twelve who are there in this village and land).*

The phrase "*Nggomi doho dan ro rasa hudu nggudu dua laku nteli. Tala ca-da lalo uma ra-udu ku ra wira lingga tuta tonda ...*" is a rhetorical allegory describes the human condition of the *Dou Mbawa* as they look as '*hudu nggudu*' (a group of lice) and '*dua laku nteli*' (two piled stones). This illustrates how weak and fragile their society is. Such self-identification in these two metaphors can be sourced – as referential code – from the relation of dominant culture toward subordinated, for example, in the context of their relations with the Bima society in many ways. In cultural relations in Bima, Bima and its representation are seen as two significant entities that dominate cultural life in the region. The greatness of Bima becomes more powerful when Islam bonds the people in the region in one identity, forming a Bima Muslim society. In the eyes of these great traditions, the *Mbawa* entity - and Donggo in general - are little traditions. Meanwhile, *Dou Mbawa* became more fragile when their fellow of Donggo left the *Dou Mbawa* alone for the sake of their affiliation into the Muslim society of Bima.

The *Mbawa* people become smaller than the others. In the eyes of the *Dou Mbawa*, the great Muslim Bima was the 'elephant', or such as the kingdom of Sulaiman, where its apparatus can easily dissolve a group of helpless ants. The ants are the subordinated *Dou Mbawa*, who can disappear at any time. Nevertheless, *Dou Mbawa* sees themselves as a group of bugs. Using this flea metaphor, *Kasaro* prayer is predicting a condition that must be faced vigilance. Compared to ants, lice are slowly animal, quiet, and tend to get divorced while ants are looking deft and sharp togetherness and have the ability to bite.

The word 'nteli' refers to a stone fence stacked to block the entrance of animals destroying plants. Constructing a fence is a common practice among cultivators and mountains people, to demarcate land and protect plants. Nteli is a symbol of strength and unity on one hand while implying vigilance and fragility on the other hand. The arrangement of the lined rocks revealed a frightening wildness (especially to animals destroying plants in the fields), but once it is touched it would collapse into pieces. The phrase "dua laku" shows an ambiguous meaning. On the one hand, it illustrates the social stratification in *Mbawa*, could be interpreted as two main lineages (descendants) - called rafu - in *Mbawa* who get along with each other and share roles in strengthening the structure of society. On the other hand, 'two rows' illustrates the friction within the community, perhaps representing two religious groups living in *Mbawa*, Islam and Christianity, who live side by side but compete and can tear each other.

Both metaphors '*hudu nggudu*' (collection of bug) and '*dua laku nteli*' (two rows of stone fences) can be understood in the context of cultural and socio-political relations the *Dou Mbawa* involved. In this context, *Dou Mbawa* is vulnerably subordinated, not only for they are indeed small and peripheral (mountain) community but also because of the cultural attacks they receive vigorously from the dominant coastal culture. That is why behind such self-identification there is an idea of consolidating internal forces to deal with the wave of cultural attacks from outside. The phrase "*tala ca-da lalo uma ra-udu ku-ra wira lingga tuta tonda*" (then lay down to the north all the houses so we can spread out

ahead pillows (for the head to live comfortably) is an example of the emergence of communal unity. The houses are stacked together to make them feel comfortable and safe in this sense, not merely a matter of land contours, but also a matter of how to mobilize internal forces and how to show power to the "enemy". Here there is also a strategy of mobilizing the forces that lead to the struggle for the power source. The source of power in this case is the cosmological site considered to be the centre of *Mbawa* village, namely *Tuta Rasa*, where *Uma Ncuhi* is located.

As it is known from one version of the historical narration, *Dou Mbawa* origin is from the exiles who were initially perched on the southern slope, now known as the hamlet of Salere. Salere settlement is relatively safe as a hiding place, but it is not strategic for developing communities. The choice of developing a northward settlement (*talaca-da uma*) is a good long-term strategy for community survival, moreover, in the north, there is a small hill which would later be constructed by the community as the centre of the *Dou Mbawa* cosmology. From this hill, the "enemies" who came freely were scouted, and the centre of Bima's civilization in Sila district was more clearly to be watched. This socio-political and cultural interaction with outsiders resulted in all *Dou Mbawa*'s shades and dynamics.

Social Imagination of Plural Community

Kasaro text echoes a social vision from its speaker, the *Dou Mbawa*. The social vision in the form of an image of social process and the environment state in which togetherness and harmony become the core values in society. This is also called social imagined). *Kasaro* Text stated:

Sarooo... Mai ta dodo renta sama-ku ede-du ndi osu wa'a mali dana mali rasa ke. Nggomi doho mbei maninta ro wela nggahi-na sora jara kuta nawa keto rasa. Mai doho mbolo ro dampa-ra sangaji lua lembo ra kadese ro kantasa du ncuhi ro naka. Mai kai-raake nggahi-na ndi dodo kai busi raho salama di ade laokai-nawa'a mali dana mali rasa.

(*Sarooo* ... Let's say a prayer together as a provision brought to clean the village and land. You give all strengths and goods in the form of horse spirit (and) life fence (in) *Keto Rasa*. Let's sit down and agree with the

great king who was appointed and held up by *Ncuhi* and *Naka*. So we pleaded fresh and safe in order to clean the village and land).

Rhetorically, this prayer implies an invitation to promote equality as social capital (*osu* - Bimanese) which can safeguard togetherness from various social difficulties. The phrase "*mali dana mali rasa*" describes the condition of the village, which is clean and comfortable, free of distractions, the thing that is every villager dream. The struggle to uphold a society with its identity requires strength and capital (*maninta ro-wela*) in the form of an unrelenting spirit of communalism in building and caring for life. *Sora jara*, like horse twitching, implies how they imagined the dynamics of a society which is full of vitality, though small but crisp, all in the same rhythm. It is this spirit that enables each member of the community to act as "*kuta nawa keto rasa*" (the fence/guardian of life [in] *Keto Rasa*). This requires the willingness to be involved and make sacrifices in order to protect every inch of land and culture from attacks and bad experiences in history.

The spirit of togetherness is a legacy inherited from the age of *Ncuhi* and *Naka*, which manifests deliberation. *Mai doho mbolo ro damp* is a call to organize a socio-political process, in the form of consensus in deciding a case. If so, then a sense of comfort in the life of the community will grow that allows villagers to become productive and developing. *Mbolo ro damp* (community discussion) developed in *Mbawa* society as a social institution which then formed a narrative about morality (moral narratives). As noted by Just, social institutions and local morality work as dramaturgy and manifest as a mechanism of conflict resolution among the community.²⁵

Characterized by pluralistic of different religious backgrounds, but formed from the same lineage, the *Dou Mbawa* have a unique presumption about the community life. The presumptions and communal ideas about better life are drawn from various expressions of idealization of harmony, peace, coolness, and vitality as manifested in *Kasaro*. *Raju* ritual itself in which *Kasaro* is voiced is a stage for harmony, so the ritual languages in *Kasaro* are full of invitations or representations of the

²⁵ Just, *Dou Donggo Justice*, 28.

imagined world. In the *Kasaro* text, for example, there is the phrase "ake ndi ka-poda kai ade nggomi doho ndo'i mboto dewa ore campo mena nuntu sampa'u nggahi nggomi doho" (It's time for you believe in God and being tied to Him to learn to unite your words). This sentence reflects the existence of a diverse society. To avoid the community from conflict is that it requires such a mechanism for conducting a coercive and agreement among community members.

The *Kasaro* prayer is clearly determined by the socio-historical context of the community in which the tradition is practised. The functions of this tradition include the sacred aspects of religion and the profane aspects of humans. In the context of *Dou Mbawa*, change is not in the aspect of the commodification of art, as happened in Balinese society,²⁶ for example, but rather its function as a space for negotiation and dialogue between old values and new ones. *Raju* ritual in which *Kasaro* prayer is sounded is the realm of cultural dialectics where the contestation between various meanings and interests is intertwined. Ritual is also a negotiating space to reach a consensus for better community life. As a cultural practice, ritual and its performances involving all community members to play a symbolic role that can illustrate the strength of the local community in preserving cultural treasures while taking on new values from the outside. This confirms Wolf's description of the peasant community as characterized by the *Dou Mbawa*:

... often retain the traditional form of religion, while the religious system of wider scope is being built up and carried outward by the elite. We, therefore, see that the activities of missionaries abroad have a counterpart in activities at home that synchronize that traditional first-order forms of religion with new-higher understandings and techniques. Such a process frequently takes the form of syncretism, the merging of forms derived from two cultural spheres, in this case, an older cultural tradition and a more recent one. This process may work unconsciously or consciously.²⁷

²⁶ I Wayan Dibia, "Sekularisasi Nilai-nilai Budaya Bali dalam Seni Pertunjukan Wisata," *Panggung Jurnal Ilmiah Seni dan Budaya* 20, no. 1 (2010): 32.

²⁷ Eric R. Wolf, *Peasants* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1966), 103.

Conclusion

Dou Mbawa in Bima, West Nusa Tenggara, is an indigenous people who live in the nuances of thick cultural conservatism. But in the midst of cultural preservation, they face a wave of influx expansive from outside which influenced their cultural style. They also become a plural society with the development of Islam and Christianity altogether. The coming and development of these two religions to displace the *Mbawan* tradition and bring it into the periphery, led to ongoing cultural dynamics, competition and conflict. This situation is engulfed by *Dou Mbawa* from generation to generation, brazing into a collective awareness and enshrined in cultural creations.

As an indigenous community vibrant with tradition, *Dou Mbawa* created their cultural codes for communication, and even became a cultural identity. The cultural codes are installed in the *Kasaro* Prayer, which is annually voiced, producing communal awareness and is passed down through generations. This working of oral traditions enables the community to be involved in the process of caring for and interpreting culture in a more subtle way to structure the people's cognition. Utilization of a unique speaking style through metaphors in prayer allows a ritual to accommodate many interests in it, including socio-cultural interests. In other words, *Kasaro* prayer is also infiltrated by sociological needs in order to communicate to both the supportive community and their opponents. The use of metaphors has the semantic advantage of giving a broader interpretation of meaning more than a religious interpretation.

Cultural codes are "messages" to be conveyed from the semiotic-communication device through ritual. In the *Kasaro* Prayer, the messages to be conveyed from the metaphoric sign are inseparable from *Dou Mbawa*'s interest in communicating their cultural and inner world of spirituality and aspirations in the context of socio-cultural relations in Bima. Social relations are interreligious relations which never absent from competitions but are unique for it takes place in the indigenous community that is basically monocultural. The interests of the local community (*Dou Mbawa*) which are persisted by the religious language include a)

self-identification as a vulnerable society, but willing to colour the living together; b) cultural maintenance from generation to generation, as well as culture itself, is the capital for communal life amid social vulnerability; c) internal consolidation among the *Dou Mbawa* enables them to have strength and bargaining position in the broader relations in the cultural field; and d) social vision on life in diversity or image of a harmonious multicultural society, communicating, filling and maturing with each other, in the term of local context surrounding their lives.

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