Interpretation of loga statues in Bada Valley culture: an interpretive anthropology study

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the symbolic meaning of Loga statues in the Bada Valley through the interpretive, symbolic anthropology approach of Clifford Geertz and the symbolic interpretation of Victor Turner. Using Geertz's theory, the perspective views Loga statues as cultural "texts" that reflect the worldview, values, and local identity of the Bada community. Turner's perspective views Loga statues with an emphasis on the role of statues in the context of rituals as symbols of social structure and community solidarity. The research method uses qualitative descriptive methods with an ethnographic basis; the research location is in Pada village, Bada Valley, Lore Lindu National Park, Central Sulawesi, and data collection methods are obtained through observation and in-depth interviews. The results of the study show that Loga statues function as symbols that connect people with their ancestors, maintain and strengthen social ties, and reproduce cultural values through rituals. The combination of these two theories provides a comprehensive insight into how the symbols in Loga statues play a role in maintaining cultural sustainability and strengthening the identity of the Bada community. Loga statues are not only artifacts but also active agents in the social and spiritual life of the people in the Bada Valley.

1. Introduction

Bada Valley is located in Lore Lindu National Park at an altitude of 700-800 meters above sea level. Administratively, it covers the sub-districts of West Lore and South Lore, Poso District, and Central Sulawesi. The valley is surrounded by mountainous forests, with savannah bordering the northern and western parts of Lore Lindu National Park and protected forest areas to the south and east [1]. The unique landscape makes Bada Valley one of the essential buffer zones of the biosphere reserve in the Central Sulawesi region. Historically, Bada Valley was inhabited by the To Bada or Tampo Bada indigenous people who, for generations, have protected and coexisted with nature and lived around this valley [2]. Their existence is an integral part of the context of preserving the area and passing on cultural values that are closely related to the natural landscape and their ancestral heritage. In the archaeological aspect, Bada Valley is famous for the findings of various megalithic objects, including Kalamba, Menhir Statues, Dakon Stones, Dulang Stones, Lumpang Batu, and various other types of stone structures such as dolmen, tetra lite, and *punden berundak*. At least 349 stones of various sizes and shapes were recorded in the Bada Valley and Napu Valley regions [3], [4]. These statues, especially those depicting male human figures, are considered to have symbolic values that reflect the social and religious aspects of past communities [5]. Archaeologists and anthropologists have long paid attention to the distribution of these statues. However, there are still many mysteries, especially those related to the symbolism, social function, and cultural meaning of the statues.

Although a number of studies have been conducted, most are still limited to visual and descriptive identification and documentation of artifacts. There have not been many studies that deeply explore the symbolic aspects and spatial relations of statues in a cultural context, especially on Loga statues. Therefore, this research aims to explore the symbolic meaning of megalithic statues in the Bada Valley and examine their relationship with the belief system and social structure of the Bada community. This research is expected to fill the void of studies on the cultural function of megalithic artifacts as a cultural heritage that is integrated with the natural landscape and the identity of the local community. The term Loga itself has a meaning by the local community, namely a statue that stares in the middle of the field, so the location of the statue is called Padang Loga. Sabana Hill and Production Road border the location of Padang Loga in the north; Sabana Hill borders the east, Longa Valley borders the south, and Sabana Hill borders the west. The distance from the road between Gintu-Bomba Village to Production Road to the hill where the Loga Statue is located is ± 472 meters. The hill is a savannah overgrown with weeds, and part of the hill area is a place for grazing buffalo owned by the local community. The Loga Statue does not stand upright, with a tilted position to the west, and faces south, with a face equipped with oval-shaped eyes. The nose is clearly marked, and the oval eyes are slightly set back, giving a different expression from the other statues in the Bada Valley; with its smaller size and located on a hill overlooking the Valley, there are remains of former dwellings [6]–[8]. The Loga statue is an object that is part of the symbols left by the community that lived in the past, which gave birth to a belief in the existence of supernatural powers and high magical value, making the Loga statue a megalithic site, something that is considered to have "*pamor*" for the Bada Valley community. The myths created by the Bada Valley Community about the megalithic site are one of the megalithic traditions that still survive in the Bada Valley [9].

Based on this background, this study focuses on the following questions: What are the symbols contained in the Loga statues in the Bada Valley? How can the meaning of these symbols be interpreted in the cultural context of the community that created them? How can interpretative symbolic anthropology provide deeper insight into these statues and their relevance to the social life of the Bada community? Research on megalithic statues in the Bada Valley has been conducted by a number of researchers, including a study conducted by Heeckeren, van (1958) in Nesterkina [10] on anthropomorphic Bada Valley statues that include statue forms dominated by male and female postures with hypertrophied sexual characteristics. Where the shape of the statue's face is displayed distinctively, there are two handles on the side of the head representing ears; a straight nose; the bridge of the nose extends to the eyebrows; and no mouth with round, protruding, or slanted eyes. Geertz (1973), in his study of symbolic and interpretive anthropology on cultural interpretation, emphasized the importance of symbolic meaning in understanding culture. According to Geertz, anthropology also means an interpretive process or a firm or participatory understanding of a culture in which the observer tries to understand "the meaning of the other." This is sometimes referred to as cultural texts [11].

Archaeological research by Smith (2001) also provides insight into the importance of symbolism in ancient artifacts. In addition, the work of Turner (2020) [12] and Berger (2016) [13] on symbols and rituals provides a strong basis for examining how symbols in statues can be linked to social rites and community beliefs. Theoretical Basis: This research uses an approach. This research uses the Geertz and Turner theoretical approach in analyzing symbols as part of a system of meaning and cultural practices, not just historical artifacts. This research also enriches local studies by bridging the symbolic and social dimensions through participatory interviews and in-depth observations. The main objective of this study is to identify and analyze the cultural symbols found in the Loga Statue. Interpreting the meaning of these symbols in the context of the social, spiritual, and cosmological life of the Bada community in the past. Developing a theoretical understanding of the symbolism of statues through the lens of interpretive and symbolic anthropology. This research is expected to provide theoretical and practical contributions by offering a new approach to the study of megalithic artifacts using the framework of symbolic and interpretive anthropology. At the same time, it becomes a reference source for the preservation of local cultural heritage. It encourages further studies on Indonesian cultural artifacts in the context of cultural and religious anthropology.

2. Method

The method used is descriptive qualitative; the qualitative approach was chosen because this study seeks to understand the meaning of the symbols contained in the appearance or visuals of the statue and how the local community interprets the meaning in a cultural context [14], [15]. Qualitative methods refer to ethnographic-based interpretation methods and text analysis as an anthropological approach in legitimizing two forms of theory, namely Geertz and Turner's theories, which may not only work in the context of evidence-based science where the discipline of anthropology is located but also how the process of discovery can meet the need to produce knowledge that can genuinely be researched [16], [17]. In Ethnography, direct observations are made on objects to interpret artifacts (formal analysis) and combine them with historical records [18] and texts to interpret the Loga statue. Observations were conducted in the Bada Valley, which is part of the Lore Lindu National Park, Poso Regency, Central Sulawesi Province (Fig. 1). The research will be based on ethnography by offering a qualitative approach with the potential to produce detailed and comprehensive reports on various social phenomena such as actions, influences, behavioral culture, interactions, and beliefs in the community [19]. Interviews were conducted with the head of the Central Sulawesi State Museum, community leaders from Gintu and Pada villages, residents, and local tourists visiting the site. Through this observation, researchers can observe how people treat statues and the symbols in them in the context of daily life and religious rituals. Researchers also conducted in-depth interviews with various key informants, such as traditional leaders, community leaders, and local historians. This interview aims to explore their understanding of the symbolic meaning of the Loga statue and how these symbols are interpreted in their culture [20]. Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner to allow flexibility in exploring topics that emerged during the discussion. After that, a narrative analysis was carried out with a focus on the story structure conveyed by the informant [21]. To examine the plot in the narrative related to the Loga statue. The final step is to triangulate sources as the last aspect for validity and reliability by comparing information from observations, interviews, and texts, ensuring a comprehensive and rigorous study.

Fig. 1. Location of Loga Statue in Bada Valley, Lore Lindu National Park *(source: Google map)*

Text analysis in addition to ethnography, this study also involves text analysis through literature studies and symbolic interpretation. In the literature study, the researcher reviewed various relevant literature, including journals, books, and articles that discuss megalithic statues, symbolic anthropology, and cultural interpretation. This literature study aims to understand the historical and theoretical context of the Loga statute and compare field findings with existing knowledge. Symbolic Interpretation: The researcher conducted an in-depth analysis of the symbols found on the Loga statue. This analysis involves identifying and interpreting the meaning of the symbols in the cultural context of the Bada community, using symbolic and interpretative theories from figures such as Clifford Geertz and Victor Turner.

Data Analysis Data collected through observation, interviews, and text analysis were analyzed using Qualitative Coding. The researcher coded the data to identify research results with central themes and symbolic categories that emerged from the results of interviews and observations. This coding process helps in compiling patterns that emerge from the data. To ensure the validity and reliability of data, Coding is a way to index or map data to provide an overview of different data that allows researchers to understand it in relation to the research question [22]. In simple terms, researchers use the triangulation method, namely comparing the results of observations, interviews, and literature studies. Triangulation is achieved when different methods from different theoretical perspectives are used and systematically combined to create conformity. Thus, triangulation becomes an additional source of knowledge [23]. The last is the preparation of an interpretive narrative based on the data that has been analyzed. Researchers conclude the symbolic meaning of the Loga statue and its relevance to the social life and beliefs of the Bada community. This interpretation is expected to provide deep insight into how the symbols in the Loga statue play a role in shaping the cultural identity of the local community. Fig. 2 is a diagram of the research method used.
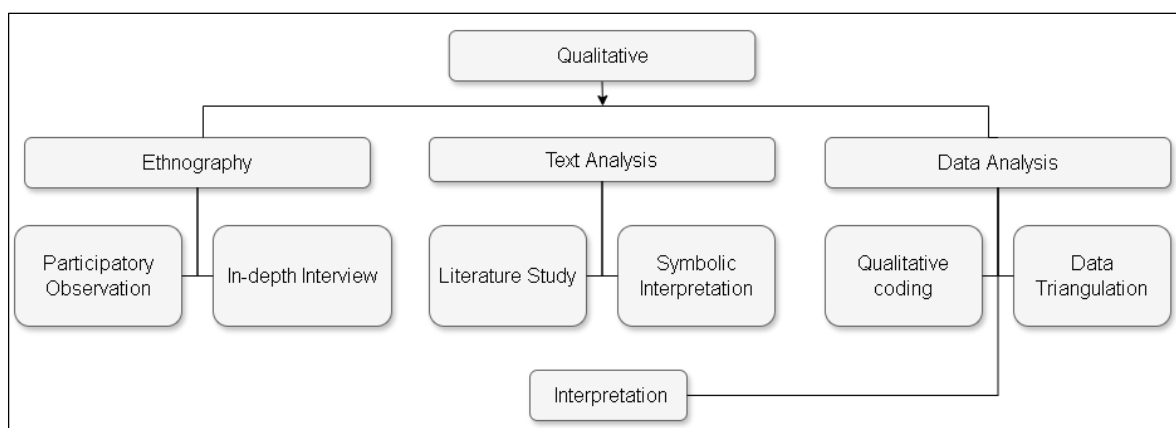

Fig. 2. Ethnography-based research diagram [12]

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Symbolic Formal Analysis

Geertz asserts that culture is a system of meanings woven through symbols, and each symbol can be understood to function as a "text" that can be read. In the context of symbolic anthropology, the existence of the Loga statue is seen as a symbol that reflects the worldview and cultural values of the people of Bada Valley. The position of the statue stands on a hill, and according to local residents, the Loga statue is a megalithic object that used to be a favorite of foreign tourists because of its theatrical position at the top of Bada Valley, and is best visited at sunrise or sunset. The material of the statue is made of andesite granite rock [5], [24] dating back to around 3000 BC. The Loga statue is a monolith-shaped statue [25] that was first documented by an anthropologist from Sweden named Walter J. Kaudern (1881 –1942) [26] with an expedition he carried out to Celebes Island in 1918 (Fig. 3).

Arca Loga is located in the production road environment, Pada village, South Lore district, with coordinates LS 1 ° 51 ′ 49.5 ″ - BT 120 ° 16 ′ 46.74 ″, with an altitude of 803 meters above sea level. The formal analysis obtained when standing side by side with the Loga statue is as follows: The Loga statue is one, with the position of the Loga statue not standing upright with a tilted position to the West and facing South with a face equipped with oval-shaped eyes, a broad nose, and oval-shaped ears and head where the conditions of the Pada village grass savanna, in 1918 when the statue was found in the bushes of grass. On the chest, there are two breasts, and both hands clasp each other and hug the lower abdomen. The size of the face of the Loga statue is 53 cm wide, 79 cm high, 47 cm wide forehead, 27 cm long nose, 71 cm high, and 68 cm wide body [27].

Fig. 3. Loga statue, statue near Pada, Bada Valley Documentation in 1918 (Source: https://collections.smvk.se/carlotta-vkm/web/object/113595)

Although it does not have a mouth carving, the shape of the face at a glance captures the gloomy impression of the statue's face, like a sad and troubled person (Fig. 4). Maybe because the shape of the eyebrows is slightly slanted to the middle of the face. Also visible are the carvings of both hands on the body of the statue, precisely on the side of the body, bending slightly towards the stomach. The statue stands (or perhaps is embedded) with a slight tilt to the right. Although not exactly on the top of the hill, the statue faces the broad valley in front of it.

Fig. 4. The current Loga statue at the Loga megalithic cultural reserve in Pada village [6]

The expanse of the Pada village valley savanna has wild grasslands mixed with several clusters of trees. Denotation analysis as a primary system is a natural depiction of the object considered as the symbol. The results of the analysis, which are also the results of literature and interviews with the Loga statue, among others, show that the Loga statue is in the form of a human figure with male genitalia standing upright (Fig. 5).

Fig. 5. The Loga statue stands on the village hill in the Bada valley [28]

1) Loga Statue as Cultural Representation

The people who now live in the Lore Lindu valleys believe that the megalithic statues in the valley and the village where they live are the embodiment of the ancestors of the cultural community who first lived in the valley. It is also not strange when some of the statues that can be found have names as their identities, including the Tadulako megalithic statue in the Besoa Valley, which is interpreted as a statue figure that symbolizes a leader figure, then the Palindo megalithic statue at the Padang Sepe site in the Bada Valley which is interpreted as a humorous figure and always smiling, likewise with the megalithic artifact at the Watunongko site in the Napu Valley which was given the name Tomabolopi because it is believed to be a statue of a woman or a mother of a child named Bolopi [29]. The Loga Statue Sketch (Fig. 6), if observed, gives the impression of a pose that depicts a representation of an ancestor (To Bada) who is respected in local traditional beliefs, which is considered a relic in the world that has passed spiritual power by surviving to supervise and become part of the To Bada community which is thick with social interaction based on social contracts [30] which of course aims to avoid the social conflict that occurred 20 years ago in Poso district. Through in-depth interviews and participatory observations, it was found that the Bada community viewed this statue as a relic of a figure from the past and lived between the human world and the spiritual world. This strengthens the fact that, at that time, the traditional Bada community was already familiar with the rice field system. In the history of the origins of the Bada Community, it is explained that in the ancient Bada Valley community, there were two groups of people, namely the Bada Valley field and the Bada rice fields. If the Bada Valley community had known about the rice field system, then this community would have settled in an area and would have developed in that area, and the Loga statue is proof of this.
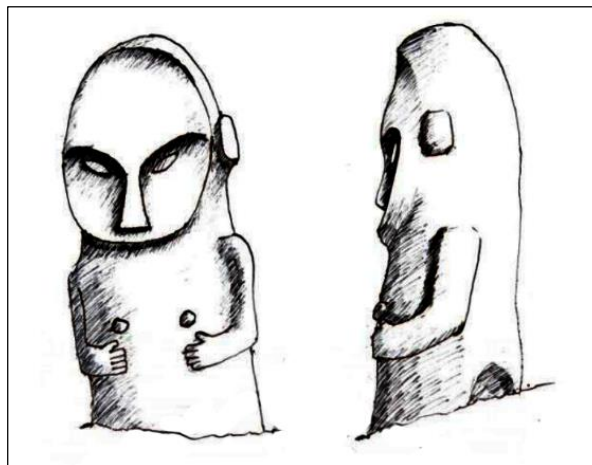

Fig 6. Sketsa Arca Loga tampak depan dan tampak samping [31]

2) Loga Statues as Cultural Texts

Following Geertz's theory, Loga statues can be understood as narratives that tell the history, cosmology, and social values of the Bada Valley community, Table 1. Every detail on the statue, from the facial expression to the physical appearance of the statue, conveys messages related to the identity and beliefs of the community. According to the Central Sulawesi archaeologist Tanwir La Maming [32], the sites found in the Bada Valley of Lore Lindu National Park have a uniqueness that is not found elsewhere. According to him, each site represented by a statue is a unity that symbolizes belief. For example, some of the statues symbolize the shape of ethnic houses, as well as the place of residence and the lifestyle of the local community at that time. For example, in one site, there are places of worship, bathing places, human statues, playing tools, and others. La Maming also said, "The cardinal directions of the statues in each site that differ from one site to another symbolize the existence of different beliefs in each clump," including the direction of the Loga statue.

Table 1. Symbolic Analysis of the Loga Statue Based on Geertz's Approach

Statue Elements	Observation Results	
	Symbolic Meaning (Geertz)	*Interpretative Culture*
Statue Posture	Monolith	Statues as a figure/figure/person in the past
Object Color	Old, Aged	Statues have gone through various phases in time
Hand Position	Symbol Of Protection And Blessing	Statues as representations of men and men as guardians of the community
Facial Expression	Reflects Serenity And Wisdom	Statues as representations of respected ancestors
Attributes held/displayed/visible	Symbol of spiritual power and authority	Statues as mediators between the human and spiritual worlds

3.2. Symbolic Analysis Based on Victor Turner's Approach

According to Turner, the position of the Loga Statue can be understood as a megalithic object that is both archaeological and anthropological, with a narrative that tells the history, cosmology, and social values of the Bada Valley community. Looking at the forms of megalithic relics in the Bada Valley, which are generally in the form of monuments such as large menhirs, stone chambers, dolmen megalithic statues, stone mortar, tetralin, etc., it is easy to assume that the construction of these buildings requires a large amount of energy and resources generated from the cooperation of past community life [33].

1) Loga Statues in Ritual Contexts

Social rites involving Loga statues are often associated with important events such as harvest or death ceremonies. In these contexts, the statues act as the center of a "social drama," in which the symbols on the statues are used to reaffirm social solidarity and cultural values, see Table 2.

Table 2. Symbolic Analysis of Loga Statues Based on Turner's Approach

Position	Symbolic Analysis	
The statue in the rite of "social drama" of the community	*Symbolic meaning (Turner)*	*Ritual Interpretation*
Harvest Ceremony	Symbol of abundance and gratitude	Statue as the guarantor of soil fertility
Death Ceremony	Symbol of transition between the world of the living and the dead	Statues as guardians of the spirit's journey to the ancestral realm
The position of statues in rituals	Centre of collective action	Statue as a symbol of social cohesion and community identity

2) Arca Loga as Media in the Context of "Social Drama"

The symbols in Loga statues play a role in communicating and strengthening social relations through community social rites. Loga statues are not only seen as artifacts but as active agents in ceremonies that reinforce community ties and affirm shared values. The depiction of human figures on statues will always be juxtaposed with the depiction of male human figures in full dress and weapons, reminding us of the subordinate relationship between the depiction of prominent human figures and the depiction of tiny human figures around them. The human figures on the statues do not represent teenagers but rather adults. The image refers to a specific power in the figure that symbolizes leadership and togetherness, which shows there is a will that must be followed. In a past society that already had a more organized or advanced organization, it was possible to have a group that was always ready to help, protect, and sacrifice their lives. This group is usually regarded as enslaved people from a particular circle, and not everyone can enslave people; only certain people and groups can. These connotation categories can be referred to as a hierarchy, which is a sequence of levels or positions or ranks or organizations with levels of authority from the lowest to the highest. The hierarchy symbols depicted through statues are government leaders, religious leaders, nobles, ordinary people, and enslaved people [33].

3.3. Discussion of Geertz and Turner's Joint Analysis

The combination of Geertz and Turner's theories allows for a comprehensive analysis of the Loga statutes. Geertz assists in understanding the statues as cultural texts laden with meaning. At the same time, Turner provides insight into the role of statues in ritual contexts and their relationship to the context of "social drama." This creates two meanings, as described below:

- Identity and Solidarity: Loga statues function as symbols that strengthen the identity of the Bada Valley community, both in individual and collective contexts. In rituals, the statue helps the community to reaffirm shared values and strengthen social solidarity.

- Cultural Sustainability: Through the symbols contained in the statues, the Bada people maintain and renew their cultural heritage. Rituals involving Loga statues are not only about tradition but also about the reproduction of meaning and cultural identity.

From Table 3, it can be understood that Geertz and Turner's interpretative symbolic anthropology approach provides a deep understanding of the symbolic meaning of the Loga statue in Bada Valley. These statues are not only seen as historical artifacts but also as symbols that play an essential role in maintaining the identity, social structure, and cultural sustainability of the people in Bada Valley. Through a combination of symbolic analysis and interpretive ritual, the results of this research study seek to reveal how the symbols in the Loga statue still have a common thread that can connect the people of Bada Valley with their ancestors and strengthen their social ties and cultural values.

Table 3. Combined Discussion of Geertz and Turner

Aspects	Geertz's interpretation	Turner's interpretation	Synthesis
Cultural Identity	Statue as a symbol of ancestral identity	Statues as ritual centres that reinforce collective identity. The statue was used as a place to bring transcendent powers to Earth in the past. That thing was done to unite the three cosmologies of the Bada people to navigate life and maintain survival.	Statue as an affirmation of individual and community identity
Social Structure	Statue as a reflection of social structure in symbols	Sculpture as an agent in "social drama" that reinforces social bonds	Statue as a link between symbolic meaning and social action
Cultural Sustainability	Statues as "texts" that convey cultural values	Sculpture as a medium in the reproduction of rituals and traditions	Statue as a tool of cultural sustainability and renewal

4. Conclusion

This study applies an interpretive anthropology approach based on the Geertz and Turner approach to examine the symbolic anthropological meaning of the Loga statues in the Bada Valley. The results of the study indicate that the existence of the Loga statues functions not only as physical artifacts or symbols of heritage objects but also as cultural symbols that are full of spiritual and social meanings. The people of the Bada Valley understand the Loga statues as representations of their ancestors. These statues maintain relationships with the spiritual world, a belief that is deeply ingrained in the cultural fabric of the Bada Valley, and strengthen social ties within communities in the villages in the Bada Valley, such as Sepe, Badangkaia, Gintu, and Bomba Village. The formal form of the Loga statue, such as hand positions, facial expressions, statue shapes, and other attributes, contains deep meanings related to the concepts of strength, wisdom, and eternity. The ritual conditions that were once believed also involved the Loga statues as physical objects that emphasized the social structure and the cultural values of the Bada people. In this context, the Loga statues function as cultural "texts" that convey important messages about identity, history, and views of past life. Overall, this study reveals that the Loga statue is a key element in the network of cultural meanings of the Bada Valley community, where its symbols function to strengthen social solidarity, celebrate shared identity, and maintain a balance between the physical and spiritual worlds, socially living in villages that still uphold local cultural values. This symbolic anthropological interpretation is expected to enrich the understanding of the important role of cultural artifacts in the social and spiritual life of the community. The hierarchy of the Bada Valley megalithic culture, which is generally brought by the ancestors who inhabited the Lorel Indu National Park in the past, is depicted by Bada anthropology in the form of statue symbols, where the statue symbols have implemented dynamic images that are interpretative in accordance with the background of the megalithic culture in the Bada Valley, which places the afterlife can be depicted in the world

through statue symbols that contain the daily social life of the community living in the village of Bada Valley.

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Declarations

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