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**Submission date:** 23-Mar-2023 12:40PM (UTC+0700)

**Submission ID:** 2044225784

**File name:** Transcendental\_Symbol\_-\_Metaphysical\_Dimension\_of\_Peo.pdf (689.9K)

**Word count:** 2801

**Character count:** 14673

# A Transcendental Symbol: Metaphysical Dimension of Peo Jawawawo – An Instrument for the Development of National Unity

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**Keywords:** Transcendental Symbol, Metaphysic Dimension, Peo, National Unity, Ngga'e Mbapo

**Abstract:** The development of national unity is a never-ending struggle. Various issues which disrupt national unity should be the trigger to trace an appropriate solution. This article raises the Jawawawo indigenous community which pivots on the Peo milestone as an inspiration for the development of national unity. Peo is a transcendental symbol with metaphysical philosophical forces which underlies the solidity of the Jawawawo indigenous community. Peo symbolism may inspire the government to create transcendental symbols which unite and bring to life the symbols of unity through the transcendental metaphysical dimension.

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

National unity is still a problem recently. The problems of separatism, ethnic and religious fanaticism, terrorism, and identity politics often threaten national unity. These problems cannot be resolved only by the creation of regulations, law enforcement, social and political reform. The government should discover a metaphysical philosophical basis that underlies and spiritualizes national unity. Many articles discussed these issues from different perspectives. This article raises the Jawawawo indigenous community as an inspiration for developing national unity.

Unity in the Jawawawo indigenous community has metaphysical dimensions which are monumented in the Peo milestone. Peo is a transcendental symbol which underlies the strength of unity and binds all elements of the Jawawawo indigenous community. The researcher who research Peo Jawawawo, funded by the Ministry of Research and Technology from March to July 2018 attempted to reveal Peo's transcendental metaphysical

dimension which underlies the robustness of Jawawawo indigenous community which support the development of national unity. This article focuses on three main issues, namely Peo's transcendental metaphysical dimension; Peo's role in the Jawawawo indigenous community; and the contribution of Peo's transcendental metaphysical dimension to the development of national unity.

## 2 RESEARCH METHODS

This research was conducted in accordance with qualitative design since the study of the metaphysical dimension relating to meaning. Meaning studies require more hermeneutics and descriptive depictions, and at the implementation level it relies more on reflection and heuristics. The data were collected using observation, interviews, documenting techniques. Then the data obtained were condensed and interpreted (hermeneutics); concluded, reflected heuristically.

### 3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1 History of Jawawawo Indigenous Peoples and Peo

Jawawawo is not only a village in the Kotowuji Timur, but it is also the main village as the center of the Jawawawo indigenous community, including two other villages, namely Ua and Romba Wawokota. The participation of Ua and Romba Wawokota in the Jawawawo indigenous community began with the involvement of the early ancestors of the Jawawawo villagers, Batu Zebho and Todi Tolo in the war against Rogo Rabi (Goa, 2017). The Rogo destruction caused some of the colonies to include Romba Wawokota and Ua to become part of the Batu Zebho-Todi Tolo power. Dora and Ari Clans who inhabited the Wawokota Romba, and the Koka Nosi clan who inhabited Ua were incarcerated to the Batu Zebho Todi Tolo Clan (Goa, 2017). Romba Wawokota and Ua villages have since become an integral part of the Jawawawo indigenous community, and Batu Zebho - Todi Tolo has become a landlord (ine tana ame watu) in both regions (Goa, 2018).

#### 3.2 Peo Jawawawo as the Axis of Indigenous Communities

Jawawawo's existence as the main village (nua pu'u) is marked by traditional monuments, namely Peo, madhu, sa'o en'nda, ia, basa damba and gana. Peo is the main monument which acts as the axis of the indigenous community. Peo's existence signifies that Jawawawo is the center of the indigenous community. The people of Jawawawo, Ua and Romba Wawokota, in traditional celebrations always emphasize their attachment to Peo and the same en'nda (kami a toko peo, a wewa enda) (Lasarus, 2017).

The Jawawawo main village has two Peos, namely Peo fai (female Peo), which is commonly abbreviated as Peo; and Peo aki (male Peo), commonly called madhu. The Jawawawo community assume the Peo fai as the main monument (Gani, 2018). Beside it is located in the middle of the village, series of rituals of restoration of Peo fai and madhu was focused more on Peo fai. In other words, the ritual was less for Madhu. Peo fai, as shown in the picture, also has more various symbol features.

The Peo fai pole is made of embu wood (cassia fistula), with two symmetrical branches resembling the letter Y (Tule, 2004, p. 110). The shape of the branches describes a woman's groin (Rangga, 2018). This symbol is emphasized by a white hole at the

base of the branch that describes the female genitalia, and earrings (uli wolo) on the East and West sides of the base branch, which emphasizes the feminism of Peo fai. On every side of the base of Peo fai, there are carvings of stars and earthly creatures (scales, centipedes, lizards and crocodiles). On the back of both branches, there are carvings of the palm leaves, and on the top of every branch, there is a statue of a magpie (koka).



Figure 1: Peo Aki or Madhu. Peo aki has four basic elements, namely pu'u Peo or Peo's base (number 3), toko Peo or Peo's pole (number 2), and ana jeo or the statue of naked man (number 1), with male genital (number 4).

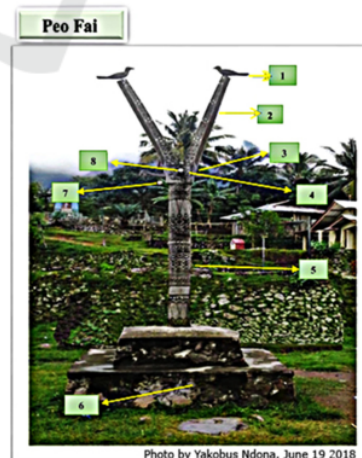


Figure 2: Peo Fai. Peo fai has eight basic elements, namely pu'u Peo or Peo's base (number 6), toko Peo or Peo's pole (number 5), nda'a Peo or Peo's branch (number 2), koka or magpie (number 1), left and right side: carvings of moli or crocodile, ebe or lizard, eko teko or scorpion, nipa kua or centipedes (number 3) and uli wolo or earrings (number 7), front side: carvings of ndada or star and eagle (number 4), odo mea ata fai or female genital (number 8).

The Peo fai branches leads to East and West resembling the hand of a wife who is stretched to open herself to her husband. Madhu is on the north side, one ten'nda (a yard) is higher than Peo fai. Madhu, like Peo fai is also made of embu wood, oblong, perpendicular shape, with the base embedded in the ground and the tip rising to the sky. On the top of madhu there is a statue of a naked man sitting staring at Peo fai. Madhu's position is identical to a husband who keeps looking at his wife. The structure of Peo and madhu describes the relation of matrimonial unity between husband and wife (muri nambu fai aki) (Rangga, 2018) "the wife is below and the husband is on top" (ta fai rade wena, ta aki reta wawo). Matrimonial relations of Peo fai and madhu, symbolically emphasized in the pala pije pu'u ritual (sacrifice celebration of Peo establishment).

The buffalo rope which is sacrificed at the pala pije pu'u ritual is placed in the Peo branch gap and connected to the base of the madhu. This symbolic action illustrates the intercourse relations between the two who reach a climax on the bloodshed of the victim. For the people of Jawawawo, Peo fai and madhu are a couple of a mother who has a big womb (ine mere) and a mighty father (ame dewa), who became the center and the foundation of the indigenous community.

### 3.3 Peo as a Transcendental Symbol

Peo fai and madhu, in the appreciation of the Jawawawo people, have a transcendental dimension. These two artifacts represent the elements of divinity in the traditional faith of the Jawawawo people. This is an evident in the appreciation of the Peo fai pole as an ancestral representative. Peo fai and madhu, as seen in the edicts of the founding of Peo fai and madhu, are called as ine mbupu (old grandmother) and ame uwa (gray hair grandfather) (Gani, 2018).

Some parties connect this greeting with their ancestors. Peo fai represented female ancestors while madhu represented male ancestors (Tule, 2017). Tule's opinion refers to the general meaning of Peo fai and madhu in most indigenous communities in the Keo region. The Jawawawo indigenous community, referring to the ritual of rain

request (kuda kepa) at the base of madhu, appreciates madhu as a representative of the powers of heaven, which controls the rain and natural cycles. The power of heaven, in the Jawawawo community appreciation is based on fatherhood, therefore it is called ame dewa. The statue of a naked man (ana jeo) at the peak of madhu describes the power of heaven which is based on men. The people of Jawawawo, like other communities in Keo, name the power of heaven with Nggae Mbapo, which means that God is all (Tule, 1998, p. 43).

The association of the highest divinity with the power of heaven has become a common phenomenon in traditional communities on the Flores mainland.

Table 1: The Supreme Beings of Flores People

No	District	Supreme Beings	Meaning
1	Flores Timur	Lera Wulan Tanah Ekan	Sun-Moon-Earth
2	Lembata Sikka	Lera Wulan Tanah Ekan	Sun-Moon-Earth
3	Ende/Lio	Ina Niang Tana	Earth-Sun-Moon
4	Bajawa	Wawa/ Ama Lero	Moon-Sun-Earth
5	Manggara	Wulang Reta	Earth
6		Wula Leja Tana Watu Deva zeta-Nitu zale; Mori Kraeng; bergelar: Tana wa awang eta/ Ine wa ema eta	Sky-Earth Land below, sky above

Mircea Eliade also found similar phenomena in primitive tribes in almost all over the world (Eliade, 1987, pp. 119-120).

On the other hand, Peo fai cannot be identified with female ancestors. The meaning of the Peo pole as an ancestor who supports the land is an indication that Peo cannot be interpreted as a female ancestor. The Jawawawo community adheres to a patrilineal system, so that land ownership is only owned by a generation of men from the father's descent. Peo fai pole is a representativeness of male ancestors who controlled the land of Jawawawo. The establishment of Peo fai illustrates the breakthrough and mastery of the ancestors against the land, which in upward motion raises the ground up so that it is in an eternal relationship with the highest divinity, Nggae Mbapo.

The ancestral breach of the land caused the two lands of Jawawawo, namely the land inherited from the early ancestors (tana odo watu ebho) and the land from the spoils of war (tana fai watu ana), united (sasi dhapi) in ancestral power, symbolized by two Peo fai branches which rest on the same Peo pole (Goa, 2018).



### 3.4 Peo as the Axis of Indigenous Peoples

The tenure of ancestors against the land causes the land to be controlled by divine powers. The ancestors, in the perspective of the Jawawawo people are the highest divinity representatives, Ngga'e Mbapo. The ancestral breakthrough into the land is an intervention of Ngga'e Mbapo to create a sacred space, so that it is suitable to be inhabited (tau ndi'i mera), the breadwinner field (tau kema ghawo) and live a life safely (weki ri'a do modo). The ownership of the ancestors against the land is Ngga'e Mbapo's action to create the cosmos, as painted on the cosmic boundaries on the declaration of the establishment of the Peo "my head was propped up against the mountain, my feet stepped on the sea; east borders Dhaja, west borders the river ". The creation of the cosmos means the provision of space for the community, because it underlies the unity, structure and role of every element of all elements, those who inhabit the cosmos and its instruments (traditions, norms, morality), which will always be recovered in every restoration of the Peo (Goa, 2012). Peo fai means as a center that unites all elements of the community (rembu sa kita jogho ena ke) (Goa, 2017), which is integrated into one large family and the same origin (ine kami a'mitu mite, ame kami a'dadu tolo), who inhabit the house and work on the same plot of fields (sa'o mengha a'di'e, mbede mengha a toko bhida toko odo). Thus, Peo is the axis that unites all elements of the community across generations (the previous generations <ancestors>, now and will come <descent> and between regions of the cosmos (heaven <divine>, world <life> and the underworld <land>) (Rangga, 2018).

### 3.5 Transcendental Symbols - The Art of Caring for National Unity

Peo is a transcendental symbol which is the foundation for indigenous peoples' unity. A transcendental symbol, called "chiffer" by Karl Jaspers (Jaspers, 1971, p. 114) represents the metaphysical entity, namely Transcendence, the absolute and infinite, which underlies all other dimensions (Citlot, 1971, p. xiv). The material object of Peo, by the Jawawawo community was appointed to the metaphysical level, in order to take part in the divinity of Ngga'e Mbapo in order to represent His presence for the community (Dillistone, 1986, p. 126). Through Peo, the people of Jawawawo put the godly mercy and the highest divine will (Nggae bhade modo, Mbapo wenggo mbe'o) as the source and foundation of unity. This baseline transforms the Jawawawo indigenous community unity to the transcendental level, so that

it has a dimension of divinity, sacred power that gives rise to the realization that the task of preserving and maintaining community unity is a part of the divine mandate and dedication to Ngga'e Mbapo

This underlying pattern can be an inspiration for the government in caring for and perpetuating national unity. For religious society, unity of the nation is sturdy when it gets grounded in divinity. Unity has a divine dimension, is sacred and eternal if God is placed as the basis and source of unity. God's involvement (absolute and unreachable) in national unity can only be presented through transcendental symbols. The government, in the preservation and perpetuation of national unity, can create transcendental symbols which consecrate and encourage unity, and revive the symbols of unity which already exist with the transcendental dimension.

## 4 CONCLUSIONS

There are three things that should be concluded from the discussion above. First, Peo is a transcendental symbol which presents a metaphysical dimension, namely the act of divinity over the land, creating the cosmos and uniting all elements of the community. Second, Peo as the symbol of divine intervention and the presence of divinity, is the center of the union of indigenous communities. The Jawawawo indigenous people who view the womb and the will of Ngga'e Mbapo as the basis for the existence of the community, live Peo as the center or axis of community unity as well as a paradoxical medium that connects with the highest divinity, Ngga'e Mbapo. Third, Peo's symbolism in Jawawawo indigenous people may inspire the government in developing and perpetuating unity by creating transcendental symbols which encourage national unity, and add meaning to the existing symbols of unity with the transcendental dimension.

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