

Dibata kaci-kaci: The face of God in the beliefs of the Karo Tradition

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Abstract. The purpose of this essay is to investigate the origins, structure, and model of the divine in Karo traditional faith, as well as its impact on Karo society's survival and its applicability and contribution to the growth of religious moderation in Indonesia's pluralistic religious community. In-depth observations, document gathering, and interviews with traditional leaders were the methods used to gather data. The collected data was analyzed using Schleiermacher's hermeneutical circle technique. The results of data analysis show that the divine structure in Karo traditional faith resembles a tripolar structure, which is rooted in the experience of natural revelation and resembles a pattern of neutral monism, and underlies the existence of Karo human life. These findings provide inspiration for the development of religious moderation in Indonesia's plural religious community, especially building faith dialogue, universal brotherhood and cooperation in building a more civilized world.

Keywords: *Dibata kaci-kaci*, Karo Tradition, Beliefs.

1 Introduction

Human struggle at its core has always been existence, since the beginning of time, humans have struggled to come to terms with their existence [1]. The quest to realise existence is the driving force behind all human endeavours, whether they take place in hallowed or profane spaces. If an activity results in the realisation of existence, it will acquire profound significance [2]. History demonstrates that the motivations for the realisation of existence from powerful parties are the source of many great works and catastrophes that have altered the course of history [3]. One could argue that existence dictates human history and movement. The word existence is derived from the English word existency, which is derived from the fundamental word exist, meaning "to exist" [4]. The Latin root word exist, *existere*, comes from the sounds *ex*, which means out, and *sistere*, which means stand. Standing apart from oneself is one way to understand the meaning of existence. In order to survive, humans must transcend their initial state or point of stagnation [5].

German existentialist Karl Theodore Jaspers asserted that several border conditions, or *grenzsituationen*, must be encountered in the human struggle to realise existence [6]. People become unaware of their own existence as a result of this. According to Jaspers, relationships are essential for achieving existence, particularly those involving transcendence. Religions refer to Transcendence through names like *Dewa*, *Ngga'e*, *Yahweh*, *Allah*, *Mulajadi*, and so forth. According to Søren Kierkegaard, boundary situations need to serve as the foundation for leaping to transcendence. According to Jaspers, transcendence possesses infinity, which is indescribable [7].

There is room for humans to overcome extreme circumstances in the infinite of transcendence. Thus, extension is only possible in reference to Transcendence, the infinite [8]. Because of this, human culture has long since established a relationship with transcendence. According to Philipus Tule, the term "community" itself designates a group of people who are in a connection with a deity [9]. Tule's view is consistent with Mircea Eliade's conclusions. Eliade claims that prehistoric tribes believed that "the divine" determined the significance of "the profane," which included human existence. Eliade argues that because humans are religious animals, a relationship with "the divine" is the only way for them to survive [10].

The trust in neutral monism that underpins Karo humans' existence is discussed in this article. The Bukit Barisan plateau in North Sumatra, Indonesia, is home to the majority of the Karo community [11]. Culturally speaking, the Karo people are a sub-tribe of the Batak people. It's also known as Karo Batak by many. In order to distinguish the Karo community Gugun from Karo Deli and Karo Langkat, which have a tendency to blend in with Malay and Javanese, the research focusses on the Gugun Karo community, which is regarded as native Karo [12].

The traditional beliefs of the Karo Gugun people are represented in a variety of artefacts, ceremonies, and moral conduct. Although there is ongoing discussion on the homogeneity of the Karo traditional belief system, it is often referred to as *pamena*. The majority of Karo people have now converted to Islam and Christianity. *Pamena* is now a little, isolated village in the countryside [13].

As *Pamena* has maintained, the majority of Karo people still practise traditional religion. To steer clear of arguments on the homogeneity of *pamena*, the text opts to refer to it as the Karo traditional faith. Many claim that the traditional Karo beliefs which involve worshipping many spirits and the *Dibata Kaci-kaci* are the real foundation for the acceptance of monotheists (Christianity, Islam). *Pamena* is a monotheist in and of herself. It is highly probable that monotheists are only repackaging the ancient Karo religion [14].

This calls into doubt the appearance of *Dibata Kaci-kaci* and other worship spirits, as well as the structure, modes of appreciation, relationship to existence, and applicability to modern culture [15]. Research in Karo Regency from July 2022 to May 2023 is centred on this subject, which is mirrored in the evolution of religious moderation across Indonesia [16].

2 Method

Qualitative methodologies are employed in the research. Interviews with Karo traditional leaders, observation of daily activities, and document collection were used to gather data [17]. Dilthey's hermeneutic circle technique, which grounds truth in the author's interpretation was

applied to the analysis of the gathered data [18]. The fundamental idea behind this method is that every component of the text is a part of the total, and the author is a part of the world and its time. Beginning with this pattern, each data element needs to be understood in light of the larger context, the Karo people's way of thinking, their culture, the world, and the era in which they were generated. Based on this pattern, the author investigates the veracity of the book using a variety of sources, records, and observations, as well as by looking at historical background, cosmology, Karo sociology, and historical context [19].

3 Results and Discussion

3.1. Siwaluh Jabu: The Traces of God in Tanah Karo

The first step in looking for Karo religion in this culture is to examine various artefacts. According to Karl Jaspers artefacts are the language of transcendence. Monuments that record the revelatory experiences of the ancestors of the Karo people are called artefacts. The initial sense of revelation in reality is translated into a tangible form through artefacts. One of the few surviving Karo artefacts is the siwaluh jabu, or typical Karo dwelling. The Dokan community continues to maintain this artefact [10]. When Mount Sinabung erupted in 2012, the majority of *Siwaluh Jabu* was destroyed, however it was still widely distributed ten years earlier in the Simacem, Bakerah, and Suka Meriah districts. *Siwaluh Jabu* symbolises the face of divinity on one side and the Karo human spirit on the other. The begi, a horned buffalo head devoid of sense organs, and the small entrance are symbolic of the Karo human spirit. Begin portrays the Karo people's will, who are always inclined towards goodness and value mahamet (respect) as the road leading to unity [11].

Raja Sulaiman, Para, Batu Perlanja Sira, and Capah's footsteps reveal more of *Siwaluh Jabu* heavenly nature. First, *Raja Sulaiman* palm. Gerga raja sulaimen ornaments are erected in many Karo people's homes, particularly Simaluh Jabu [12]. Among the others is the *Ndehara* site of *gerga Sulaiman*. *Gerga* Numerous sources claim that *Raja Sulaiman* ancestry is connected to *Sulaiman*, a strong preacher from Aceh who appeared in Karo tradition. The spread of Islam in Karo was preceded by *Sulaiman* [13]. *Gerga* Several accounts claim that *tapak raja sulaiman Ndehara Sulaiman* is descended from the bride of *Raja Sulaiman*. In the Karo people's traditional beliefs, the figure Sulemen is revered as a propagator of Islam as well as a guardian of the populace against threats from malevolent powers, illness, poisoning, and robbery. This ornament features a geometric pattern that is rectangular and has knots on either side. During an interview on October 17, 2022, Anton Sitepu stated that this ornament, which has four faces and two ears arranged in eight cardinal directions, serves as a cover for each corner of the house. Every end is linked to the others by a chain of clouds called sikawiten and a keret-ret, an adornment shaped like a lizard with two heads on either side and four legs [14].

The Karo people's adoration of the divine that envelops life is described in *Gerga Tapak Raja Sulem*. For the Karo people, the extent of divine might ensures their existence as well as a sense of security [15]. For the Karo people, true existence or selfhood can only happen in the presence of heavenly power. The sikawiten and sikawiten decorations, which highlight the sanctity of kinship, as well as the cimba lau, which points the gaze towards *Dibata kaci-kaci*, the highest divinity, support this notion. Second, making para in a fire kitchen is a custom

among the traditional Karo people [16]. The majority of paras have three tiers. In an August 15, 2022, interview, Djenap Ginting stated that the area serves as a location to ripen plant seeds, store valuables, and dry firewood [17]. The deity, also known as *Nini para*, is thought to reside among the people of the *Siwaluh Jabu* traditional home. It is said that this figure keeps the house from catching fire. As a sacrifice to the *Nini para*, Karo people frequently place offerings, such as curries and other delectable delicacies, on top of the para [20]. *Enda man bandu Nini para i datas kam guard our house enda ula meseng* is the prayer mantra chanted in conjunction with this activity. It means "eat this *Nini*, guard the house so that it is protected from fire, including because of children's play." Preserving goods above the para is most likely done to avoid the *Nini para*. The ripening of the plant seeds above is likely meant to do the same thing trust the *Nini* to create life [21].

And third, *sira*, the sluggish stone. River stones in the form of mortars hang beneath the ceiling of *Siwaluh Jabu*, the king's residence, and are held up by bamboo. The locals think that beating the *sira* paving stones with a certain kind of wood at the end of the year will bring salt water. These days, this custom has been abandoned. This ritual is only seldom performed by the Dokan people [1]. Folklore from the Karo region claims that the genesis of this rite is the belief in *Sira's* voyage. The Karo Mountain inhabitants used to think that salt was the most expensive commodity. In a March 30, 2023 interview, Feri Tarigan mentioned that there are rumours that the *Sira* travellers trekked hundreds of km to swap agricultural products for salt by walking from the Karo mountains to the shore of Belawan. Medan, the hub of bartering commodities at the period, was a frequent stop on his travels. Gradually, the salt that was exchanged was returned to the Karo mountains [3]. Many travellers were unable to return to their villages because of the exhausting and protracted trek, either because they passed away or became lost. What relationship there is between this travel and the stone hanging beneath the house's roof is the question that emerges [2]. According to Zjenap Ginting's assertion (during a January 10, 2013 interview), stones are much like human bones. The body's strength lies in its bones. According to Simbolon, the mortar stone that hangs beneath the house's roof represents the bones of the wanderers who left the community [22]. It is more than simply a regular stone. For his family and other relatives, *Perlanja sira* is revered as a hero. While the bodies of *Sira* travellers who pass away or become lost on their journey cannot be returned, their spirits do return and serve as a conduit for blessings for the local community. The Karo people equip this stone with *tongkeh-tongkeh* (sticks), symbolising the perseverance and exhaustion of the *Sira* travellers, as a result of this understanding [23].

The purpose of the *Sira Perlanja Stone* is twofold: it is meant to honour bravery and it also represents the actual presence of *Sira Perlanja*. This serves as the context for reverence and adoration for this object [24]. The *sira's* progressive elevation to the divine level will be verified by placing the *sira* stone beneath the house's roof. The advancement that *Sira* is making in the skies is exactly like his grandfather's headpiece [25]. The custom of striking stones to create salt water demonstrates the object's divine ability to provide blessings for eternity. Because of this notion, *tongkeh* magic which was frequently employed as a weapon of war or as a means of murder came to be appreciated [26]. Fourth, This item has the form of a sizable plate. The Karo people have long used *capah* for communal dining or for feasts, particularly during holidays. Five to ten persons can eat at a single *capah*. Similar findings have also been reported for the Simalungun community [27]. The majority of Karo people no longer practise *capah*. The Karo civilisation of today uses little plates instead of bowls for

eating. Because of this, the capah only survives as a historical artefact. During a talk on May 2, 2023, academician Karo Pulumun Ginting stated that the Delf museum in the Netherlands is one of the few that still maintains capah [28]. In Karo civilisation, capah serves more purposes than just hosting banquets. The capah was another offering vessel used by the Karo people [29]. Additionally, the Karo people offer offerings to *Dibata kaci-kaci* in a capah that is placed beneath the roof of the home and is held up by a bamboo pole [30]. In an interview on October 21, 2022, Rokky Tarigan stated that the two food types that are typically placed in this container are sugar cane and bananas. In an interview on December 11, 2022, Anton Sitepu stated that sugar cane and bananas are examples of mountain foods that have a sweet flavour [31]. The purpose of using these two items is to bring about a sweet life by pleasing the *Dibata*. The hanging of sugar cane and bananas on the house's roof while the roof is being built is an example of the same concept. Sugar cane is customarily used as an offering item, which frequently gives rise to ideas about the object's magical potential [32].

3.2. Karo Traditional Ritual

The Karo tradition's investigation of the divine face must involve a number of associated rites. In the traditional Karo faith, the author highlights a number of ceremonies that profoundly show the face of the divine [33]. The customs around the rice fields come first. The Karo people practise numerous customs related to rice fields. The majority of post-nomadic Karo people reside in rice fields [34]. According to Feri Tarigan (in an interview on December 10, 2022), this practice started to change in the 1980s when many Karo people started growing vegetables, carrots and oranges. The Karo rice field community upholds a number of customs pertaining to rice plants. The main character in these different rites is *Beru Dayang Jile-jile*. *Beru Dayang Jile-Jile* is a goddess and the messenger of *Dibata kaci-kaci*, according to the Karo myth. *Dibata kaci-kaci* despatched *beru dayang jile-jile* to bring rice seeds and teach the Karo people rice field techniques (*rengkep*) because he felt terrible for their famine-stricken state. Rice plants yield copious amounts of grain [35]. When the produce is eaten in its entirety, issues occur. The *beru dayang jile-jile* must return in light of this circumstance. Once more, rice was sown, and bountiful harvests resulted. Running out of rice seeds is once again a problem. In the third coming, *Beru Dayang Jile-jile* employs an other pattern. Each person receives seeds through *Kalimbubu* rather than directly. Through *Kalimbubu*, the Karo people receive rice seeds along with guidance on frugal living and intelligent living practices, such as preserving rice seeds. Since then, *Kalimbubu* has evolved into the *debata sini idah* party, representing divinity [36].

According to Tarigan, *Beru Dayang Jile-jile* is the object of prayer in all rice planting rites because of this tale [37]. During the rice-planting practice, a part of a prayer says “*Beru dayang jile-jile enda I suan kami page ngarap kel kami maka page enda banci ngasuhi anak ras kempu-kempu kami emaka enda panganndu (.....)*”. Another name for *Beru Dayang Jile-jile* is the moment when rice begins to become pregnant. In this practice, the prayer mantra is simply an appeal for the rice to bear excellent fruit. At the harvest festival (year's work), *Sang Beru* is also called upon to ensure a bountiful harvest, to ward off harm, and to partake in *mang-mang*, or food offerings [38].

One could refer to *Beru Dayang Jile-Jile* as the rice goddess. Included in this figure are heavenly beings or orders from heaven that are subject to *Dibata kaci-kaci*, the highest

divinity. In monotheistic faith, *Beru Dayang Jile-Jile* is equivalent to angels, or *nitu* in Keo [39].

The custom of felling and replanting trees comes in second. The *Karo Gugung* people perform a tree-planting and tree-cutting ritual. Loggers typically recite a prayer phrase before cutting a tree, effectively pleading for forgiveness and sparing the tree's wrath. In addition to sowing fresh seeds, this ceremony involves gifting the *Nini* a cigarette by placing it at its base. The majority are seeds from downed trees [40]. In order to prevent the *Nini* from feeling bereaved, the new tree takes the position of the previously fallen tree as the new resident. It is thought that down trees without following this ceremony can lead to catastrophe. In an August 21, 2022 interview, Djenap Ginting stated that history demonstrates that numerous loggers have experienced mishaps that led to fatalities as a result of the *Nini*'s rage [41]. The Karo people also have a custom of putting flowers on graves and planting trees around the hamlet (*ketun*). The custom of making offerings and praying to the *Dibata kaci-kaci* (Andayani, Rumapea, and Ekomila, no date) goes along with these two rituals. The following is an example of a prayer chant for planting bamboo: “*kerina enda o Dibata kaci-kaci lalit beluh jelma* (none of this has human intelligence) *Kam nge kerina metehsa emaka ban enda mehuli enda me kari buluh perlanjangan* [42].

The younger generation is frequently counselled by traditional elders to place flowers near graves. This demonstrates that cemeteries and bamboo forests are not places for profane activities. *Nini Kerangen* was a resident of both places. Putting flowers on a grave signifies that those who have passed away are still alive and have an impact on coming generations. Life does not stop with death [43]. According to Ginting et al., the suggestion to place flowers on graves will highlight the aspects of life beyond death. The custom of paying respects to ancestor spirits and visiting graves serves to strengthen the notion that departed family members continue to exist in other dimensions. The subject of where the dead's spirit resides emerges. According to the majority of accounts, departed family members' spirits transform into *begu jabu* or *Nini para*. Living family members frequently experience this spirit through possession, nightmares, shamans, and other means. The dead of the community became *Nini rangen*, or Kuta's guardians, and the souls of those who passed away unexpectedly from accidents to sudden illnesses to delivery to murder became *Nini* in different places [44].

Third, *ku lau erpanggir*. The *erpanggir ku lau* ceremony is still practiced by many Karo people, particularly those in the Pemena community. The custom of taking a river bath is known as “*erpanggir ku lau*”. This practice releases the body from bad energy in addition to purifying it. *Erpanggir kulau* is performed in a river that is flowing in order to receive positive energy from upstream and wash away all negative energy downstream. In addition, traditional drum music, offerings, and kaffir limes are a part of the rite. These days, a lot of gatherings contain different kinds of flowers [45].

The leader of the rite, repeating the prayer mantra to *Dibata kaci-kaci*, is the *guru sibaso*. In essence, prayer intentions are requests to be cleansed of various negative energies that lead to sickness, failure, roadblocks to good fortune, protracted conflict, and so on (Purba and Astuti, 2019), in exchange for positive energy that gives prosperity, health, peace, and so forth. Shamans also frequently execute *erpanggir ku lau* to expel evil spirits and replenish healing energy that has been depleted during therapy [46]. The Indian Hindu tradition that arrived in Sumatra early in the AD is most likely where *erpanggir ku lau* got its start. As evidenced by

the Karo genealogy story (Nastiti, 2014), the original parallels with the nearest neighbour, Pakpak, the pure site in Bintang Festive, reliefs on the gate in Pulo village, Kuta Buluh, remnants of corpse burning rituals, and other instances, the modern Karo people have in fact converted to Christianity and Islam. Nevertheless, Hindu beliefs are still frequently found in this region. The similarities between the *erpanggir ku lau* ritual and the Melasti ceremony of Balinese Hinduism and Nagasankritan India can be noted [19].

The main character in *Erpanggir Ku Lau* is *Dibata kaci-kaci*. Everybody prays for *Dibata kaci-kaci*. Because of his status as the progenitor of all *Dibata*, this individual is frequently referred to as *Dibata Simada Tinuang*. The Karo word *Dibata* means "a divine object, person or substance". It is similar to the Indonesian word *dewa*, which is derived from the Sangsekerta word *deva*. The Karo people hold the belief that there is a higher realm, the sky, where *Dibata simada tinuang* exists. The *Dibata* cannot be sensed or contacted by humans since they exist in the higher world. *Dibata kaci-kaci* is identified as the applicant's primary aim in the *erpanggir ku lau* ritual [47]. An exception was made by the Karo Lau Sidebuk-debuk community's *erpanggir ku lau*, who designated *Beru Ertak Ernala* as a go-between for *Dibata kaci-kaci*. The use of rituals in hot spring pools may serve as inspiration for this. During ceremonies involving the chopping of trees, near rice fields, at home, and so forth, *Dibata kaci-kaci* are not directly greeted. What causes this discrepancy, and why? *Dibata kaci-kaci* is who? What does this have to do with rivers and water? *Dibata Kaci-identity Kaci* [48]. This ritual's prayer mantra refers to *Dibata kaci-kaci* as the source of water. The supplicant grounds the request in the *Dibata*, the fundamental principle that created rivers and waters. Why is it necessary to emphasise *Dibata kaci-kaci* as the source of water? Did the *Dibata* not also produce other objects? This has to be taken in the context of water being the most primordial substance and possessing the ability to purify and sustain life [49]. According to ancient mythologies from many different ethnic groups, the supreme divinity directly created water (river) as the first element. Even the development of other animals uses water as a vehicle. According to certain stories held by the Keo people, the first humans appeared from a spring [18].

Additional references to the presence of water in primordial conditions can be found in ancient Jewish writings. The Book of Genesis describes water as the element of beginnings, existing before all creation. According to Genesis 1:2, "the Spirit of God hovered over the face of the waters." The idea that God's Spirit hovers above the water's surface represents both God's tremendous power in creation and the way that water and God interact. According to Siswanto (2017), religious communities always see the primordial condition as the real situation, complete and in charge. Numerous healing techniques that employ water as a medium are based on this idea. The first element is water, which possesses creative force and works in harmony with God [50].

Although the phenomena of this object, which has the ability to both create and destroy life, is connected to the utilisation of river flow, the primary goal is to restore the subject to its original state in order to reclaim it and transform it into a new creation with undamaged energy. According to Purba and Astuti recovery encompasses not only individuals but also other aspects of life, including plants, animals, children, mending relationships, and more [51].

Why it has to be in rivers rather than ponds, lakes, or seas is another topic. Understanding the cosmology of rice field communities may have influenced how rivers are used. Rivers play a

crucial role in the cosmology of rice fields. Life revolves around rivers. Historically, settlements were situated along riverbanks [52].

But the source of water upstream is where life begins, not in the rivers. The water moves upstream into the river and then out into the rice fields. Following the flow of water or streams, the inhabitants of the early villages likewise grew and established new communities in the East and West. Estuaries or the sea are where most major rivers finish.

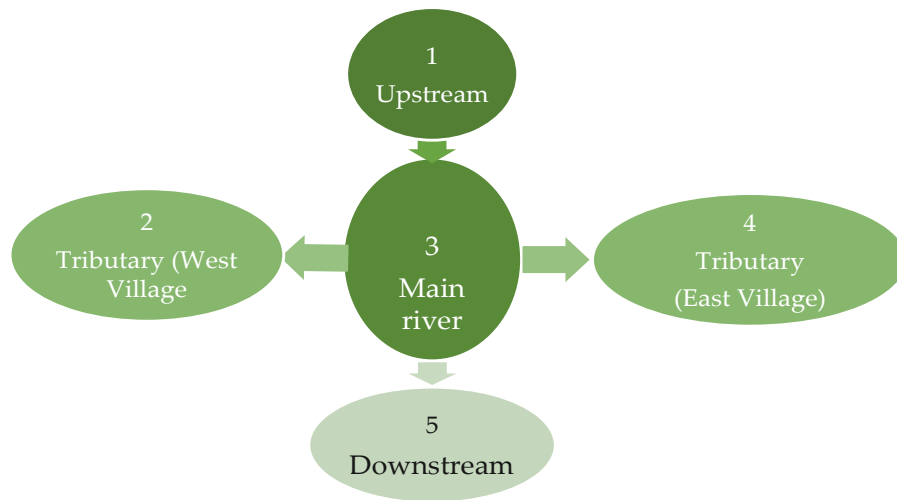


Fig 1. Karo traditonal Ritual

With the river as the centre, upstream as the base, source, and top, east and west as development zones, and the estuary or sea as the downstream to become the tip or bottom point, the river phenomenon paints a picture of the universe that Jacobs Sumardjo refers to as the five pattern. The religion of rice field communities, which is based on the river and comes from upstream, is shaped by the five pattern cosmology. The majority of rice field villages' ceremonies have something to do with rivers and water. Rivers possess a heavenly, vital force. The river is home to the divinity, also known as the god of life, which expands to the east and west with the flow of water. However, the river divinity is not independent. The energy of the river is produced upstream. Thus, the home of ultimate divinity is thought to be the headwaters of the river. The residents of the rice fields of Karo respect the upstream river as the home of *Dibata Kaci-kaci*, the supreme deity. Because they define life, rivers and water are the source of life that originated in *Dibata Kaci-kaci*. High-level rituals are always performed in rivers or upstream, particularly in emergency situations like grave disease, impending death, or protracted droughts. There is a history behind this admiration of rivers' use in the *erpangir ku lau* ceremony [53].

3.3 Divine Structure in Karo Traditional Faith

A study of the ceremonies and artefacts of the Karo people paints a picture of divinity that is divided into two categories: visible and unseen. Kalingubu depicts a tangible deity. This character makes an appearance in the myth of *Beru Dayang Jile-Jile's* entrance. The Karo

people and *Dibata kaci-kaci* use *Kalimbubu* as a communication tool, according to *Beru Dayang Jile-Jile* third arrival. The Karo people are claimed to have regarded *Kalimbubu* as *Dibata idah* (visible God) ever since. In all customary ceremonies, *Kalimbubu* serves as a divine representation and is synonymous with kinship priests. Men from the wife's and mother's line of origin are referred to by the Karo people as *Kalimbubu*. There are still multiple subs for this position, as the following table illustrates [54].

Table 1. Structure in Karo Traditional Faith

No	Sub	Arti
1	<i>Kalimbubu bena – bena</i>	<i>Kalimbubu</i> from grandfather (<i>bolang</i>)
2	<i>Kalimbubu binuang</i>	<i>Kalimbubu</i> father
3	<i>Kalimbubu simada dareh</i>	Mother's brother (the origin of my blood/genes) ;
4	<i>Kalimbubu siertimbang siperdemui</i>	Wife's parents
5	<i>Kalimbubu sipemerren</i>	<i>Kalimbubu</i> from siblings
6	<i>Puang Kalimbubu</i>	<i>Kalimbubu</i> from <i>Kalimbubu</i>
7	<i>Puang ni puang</i>	<i>Kalimbubu</i> from <i>Puang Kalimbubu</i>

Kalimbubu Simada Dareh was given the lead role. *Kalimbubu* simada dareh is thought to be the source of blood and genes because it is the mother who gave birth to them. It also symbolises divinity, the fundamental source and foundation of life. Second place goes to *Kalimbubu Siertimbang Siperdemui*, as it is the source of the wife and simada dareh for the kids. Every ritual includes these two subs, especially those that are part of a nuclear family. Other subs typically show up during significant rites like getting married, moving into a new home, and dying. *Kalimbubu* holds the top spot in the kinship hierarchy because it is a symbol of god. In every traditional ceremony, the wearing of ues on *Kalimbubu* is equivalent to wearing liturgical apparel in order to bless *beru* and mediate diverse intentions with the *Dibata*. On the one hand, this appreciation creates the worshipful attitude that is innate in interactions with *kelimbubu*; on the other hand, it transforms love and *pasu-pasu* into the attitude that *kalimbubu* has towards the *beru* [2].

One frequently asked question is why *Kalimbubu* is considered a divine character. Karl Jaspers' views on the portrayal of people as gods and goddesses may be relevant to the solution to this query. According to Damanik and Ndong, humans are regarded as the most ideal creatures and have numerous attributes that can be used to symbolise heavenly superiority. Since this use is obviously that of a superhuman rather than a regular person, it is still supported by other features that convey superiority and mystery [55]. Hindu gods and goddesses are frequently shown in statues as superhuman animals like snakes, eagles, and horses, or as specific things like arrows and sticks, or as natural phenomena like the moon, clouds, and so forth. What *Kalimbubu*? The most essential requirements for portraying deity

as the source and giver of life are met by *Kalimbubu*. Women who are moms or wives and who give birth and raise their children are known as Kalangubu. The mother's family's usage of the phrase "simada dareh" indicates how much the Karo people value this substance as the source of life. Mothers are the ones who give birth to and raise children, and mothers are from *Kalimbubu* [56].

Since *Kalimbubu* most closely resembles divinity as the fundamental source and blessing of life, it is the source of life as *simada dareh*. In kinship, *beru* is downstream, whereas *kalimbabu* is synonymous with upstream. This is the history of the term *Dibata ni idah* and the worship style taught by *Kalimbubu*. *Kalimbubu* is not a self-contained deity [57]. Because *Kalimbubu* is a figure that symbolises a divine substance that transcends itself, it is perceived as a symbol. The *Kalimbubu*'s divine substance is found in the entity it depicts, not in the object itself. Spirit is true divinity. The Karo people believe in many kinds of spirits that have relationships that are hierarchical. Ancestral spirits come first. Ancestor refers to deceased family members, such as grandparents and ancestors. The Karo people have the belief that the souls of the dead become celestial entities and have an impact on the lives of coming generations. Families that are still in existence are still accompanied and influenced by ancestral spirits. Ancestral spirits will occasionally speak with family members through trances, dreams, and other means. Within the universe, ancestral spirits are divinities that coexist with life. The Karo people's custom of pilgrimage is based on this admiration [58].

Nini comes in second. *Nini* lives in the second floor. In the world of living, *Nini* is a goddess. These many entities, such as ancestor spirits and *Nini para* and *Nini Karanen*, are recognised by the Karo people. In the realm of life, divinity is commonly referred to as *Nini*. Even though they are less often the subject of rituals, the Karo people are still able to identify a number of *Nini* figures, including *Nini gugung* (the mountain goddess), *Nini jalin* (the goddess of roads), *Nini galuh* (the banana goddess), and so forth [59]. The Karo people hold that a *Nini* resides in every location that is thought to be haunted or sacred. A belief in *Nini* in different contexts shows that without supernatural abilities, there is no such thing as empty space. Transcendental power permeates every corner of the cosmos. The locations thought to be *Nini*'s home are centres that radiate outward and serve as coordinate points for the existence of transcendental force with greater strength. The universe is filled with a divinity that is the divinity of life. According to this idea, *Nini* is the source of life. *Nini* is derived from the souls of the dead. For the Karo people, dying signifies the transition from life to *Nini*. This understanding of the origins of *begu* and *nitu* is similar to that of Indonesian tribes and Batak sub-tribes. In an interview on May 20, 2022, Feri Tarigan stated that the term "*Nini*" refers to an elderly lady or grandmother who wears a *tudung* as a head covering, as opposed to the phrase "*bolang*," which refers to an elderly man or grandpa who wears a head covering. Additionally, female ancestors are frequently referred to as *Nini* (Silvana RR Ginting and Effendy, 2019). Why is the divine figure of life referred to as *Nini*? The Karo people have male and female ancestors as well. The word "*Nini*" is most likely derived from the notion of earthly divinity held by many traditional tribes, which is centred on women [60].

The goddess, a celestial being who lives in the universe and is engaged in human affairs, is referred to by the name "*Nini*." The goddess, a celestial being who lives in the universe and is engaged in human affairs, is referred to by the name "*Nini*." Ladies of paradise, third level. This includes *Beru Ertak Ernala* in the Lau Sidebuk-debuk village and *Beru Dayang Jile-jile* as observed in the rice field rite. In addition to these two figures, Pamena people may have

more figures in other localities [61]. Unlike the *Nini*, who exist in the universe and are part of the sphere of life, the maids of heaven are more celestial beings assigned by the highest divinity to assist humanity in their particular role. Whereas the heavenly women are celestial beings who join the cosmos and partake in life and yang, *Nini* begins as a human spirit and evolves into a divine being. It is possible to think of the ladies of heaven as divinities existing between the *Nini* and the highest deity, in the midway space. *Dibata kaci-kaci*, or Supreme Divinity, is the third level. *Dibata kaci-kaci* is the highest level of Karo society's heavenly system. Often referred to as "God who reaches all things," *simada tinuang* is this figure [24]. This interpretation bears a striking resemblance to the terms Elohim in Judaism and Allah in Islam. The ultimate deity, *Dibata kaci-kaci*, is the source and basis of all spirits. The idea of *Dibata Kaci-kaci* as the fundamental origin and determinant of life is illustrated by the symbolism of the upstream river as the dwelling of this figure. For communities living in rice fields, life comes from upstream [25].

Seldom is *Dibata Kaci-kaci* mentioned in different rites. Karo people frequently communicate with the spirits of their ancestors, *Nini*, and ladies of heaven in their day-to-day interactions. Only in dire circumstances, such as catastrophic disease, crop failure, starvation, or protracted drought, is *Dibata Kaci-kaci* the object of prayer. The Karo people hold that the spirits beneath them are unable to prevail in such a circumstance [26]. The Karo people are forced to gaze directly into the eye of the beholder, or the highest divinity, in order to determine their fate in life. In fact, the argument regarding *Kaci-Kaci* as the *mada tinuang* is far off and unachievable. The distance is shown by describing the upstream as *Dibata Kaci-kaci* home. Mediums who communicate with spirits at lower levels are required to communicate with *Debata Kaci-kaci*. Only in dire circumstances can *Dibata Kaci-kaci* be the object of prayer; in the meantime, many other channels are still used, including rivers, *sabah*, *guru Sibaso*, and so on. The existence of the *capah* beneath the roof of the house and the numerous ceremonies that surround it are in conflict with the appreciation of the upper parts of the river as the *Dibata Kaci-kaci* home. This custom demonstrates how the Karo people's perception of deity is not universal. Belief in *Nini rangen* and *Nini kuta* further demonstrates that the Karo people's understanding of life's holiness extends beyond the river [27]. The farming Karo group appears to hold a disproportionate amount of belief in *Nini kerangen*, *capah* traditions, and different rites associated to this object. An appreciation of divinity that resembles a quantum or particle wave paradox is formed by the blending of the two traditions, rice fields and farming. The Karo people believe that while rivers are the source of heavenly force, divine power also permeates the surrounding environment, including fields, communities, and woods. The Karo people sometimes see the *hula*, the water source, as the home of *Debata Kaci-kaci*, but other times they gaze up to the sky as the dwelling of the highest divinity [37].

The Karo people have stopped viewing the sky or the upper regions as the home of the *Dibata Kaci-kaci* as a result of their absorption of the customs around rice fields and cultivation. The Karo people's imagination was opened by assimilation to the fundamental idea of the infinite deity that exceeds the grandeur of the sky's heights and higher regions. An understanding of the grandeur, height, depth, breadth, distance, and infiniteness of *Dibata kaci-kaci* is brought about by the phenomena of majesty, mystery, magnificence, and life's determination that are displayed in the sky and the river upstream. Numerous ethnic communities around the world also exhibit this kind of respect. In his study of ancient societies, Mircea Eliade discovered that people valued comparable sites, such as the summits of mountains, since they believed

them to be the home of the highest deity. These places turn into archetypal sanctuaries that unite people with the pinnacle of divinity [38].

3.4 Karo's Nautral Monism

The Karo traditional faith's heavenly structure demonstrates a model resembling nautical monism. According to this model, divinity is all-encompassing and based on a single power. The Toba [56], Simalungun [6], Pakpak [7], and other Batak sub-tribes all broadly use this paradigm. Indonesian tribes: Javanese, Toraja, Balinese, Keo [8] and so forth [9]. The Karo people hold that Ngga'e Mbapo is the centre of divine force that permeates the entire cosmos. The Karo people hold that the god *Dibata Kaci-kaci* is the source or focal point of all divine force that permeates the entire cosmos. *Dibata Kaci-kaci* is referred to as *si mada tinuang*, which encompasses all divine abilities and signifies the pinnacle of divinity [10]. While celestial ladies, nitu, and ancestral spirits are divine entities, they are independent divinities. The *mada tinuang*, *Dibata Kaci-kaci*, is the source and the centre of this creature's divine power. The divine force that penetrates every part of the universe is described by the existence of ancestral and ancestral spirits. Divine force permeates the entire cosmos and is not limited to the place thought to be the abode of the *Nini* and ancestors. According to Ndonga and Tibo the place thought to be the *Nini* and ancestors' home is a coordinate point or concentration point with divine power that surpasses the surrounding area. This idea creates a kind of cosmic culture that includes *sentabi* at the place thought to be the *Nini* home, courteous speech, and asking permission before acting. The Karo people hold that forbidding the ethos of the universe might have negative effects on the offender [25].

In actuality, the portrayal of divinity in Karo adoration is a painting of Karo people. The Karo people do not discuss the nature of God or God as God. The Karo people discuss God in relation to their struggle for survival. The Karo people believe that the divinity that underpins all aspects of life is *Dibata kaci-kaci*. In this sense, God is a relational deity. God is discovered in the existential struggle, or in the basic issues of life and natural events, which gives rise to the sense of *tramendum et facinosum*. *Dibata kaci-kaci* and all the aspects of divinity are God. The conclusion drawn from this existential experience is that God is the source of stability and the solution to one's limits [27]. The Karo people include the kind of person who becomes a self by depending on the transcendental, limitless, absolute power that permeates the universe and structures life, alluding to earlier depictions of God's visage and ritualistic activities. According to Ndonga et al, Karo humans believe that existence can only be attained in relationship or contact with the mystery rather than from within [28]. This encourages ritualistic behaviour, the use of symbols, the growth of religious sentiments and values, and the elevation of religious leadership and order to the status of the most powerful organisation and political party always a point of reference in conflicts and the resolution of life's issues. Therefore, achieving existence also means bowing to religious authority and striking a peace with the government [29].

3.5. Universal Natural Dimensions of Karo Monism - Inspiration for the Development of Religious Moderation

3.5.1 Universal Dimensions of the Roots of Divine Structure

Numerous parts of the Karo faith's depiction of god can be compared to different ideas held by other religious communities. This parallelism can be seen in the roots and structure. Aligning the structure first. The way that god is portrayed in different religious communities seems to be comparable to how it is structured in Karo appreciation. The Keo, Javanese, Toraja, and other indigenous groups have comparable arrangements. The tripolar structure can also be seen in Islam [41], Christianity [58], and Judaism. All three Abrahamic religions acknowledge Allah, also known as Elohim, as a singular, unchanging, and infinite deity [6]. The one God frequently manifests himself in a variety of ways, including angels, seraphim, and other entities [50].

These figures move in the middle world and serve as messengers of the ultimate divine. Saints and other supernatural figures that exist in the divine sphere are likewise acknowledged in Abrahamic religions. This admiration led to the development of numerous rituals for caring for and visiting sacred tombs. Mircea Eliade discovered that numerous ethnic groupings shared nearly the same structure [52]. This feature validates the perception of Karo as a universal phenomenon, hence legitimising its divine image. Root similarity comes in second. The origins of the deity in the Karo faith are comparable to those of the object of faith in many other religious organisations, which is the actual experience of revelation. According to Karl Jaspers authentic insights are what constitute divine encounters in actuality. According to Ndonga faith in *Dibata kaci-kaci* most likely stems from transcendental experiences in natural phenomena and a variety of life problems [57]. The inhabitants of Karo Gunung are blessed with the allure of forests, majestic mountains covered in ever-lasting clouds, pleasant rain, cool breezes, warm sunshine, a country that sustains life in its purest form, and rivers that never stop flowing and granting life to all living things. However, the natural mountains also display a force that stirs the soul behind all of that beauty. A light wind might quickly become a storm. Deadly predators and flash floods can result from river water ripples. A stunning mountain has the potential to trigger an avalanche that instantly upends the order [27].

The *tremendum et fascinans*, or amazing and terrifying, as well as charming and awe-inspiring natural occurrences, are a struggle for the people of the Karo Mountains. They come to believe in the supernatural force that underlies nature's order and fury, as well as its beauty and magnificence, as natural phenomena unveil mysteries and inspire feelings of amazement. The enormous, shaded trees in the forest, which exhibit both beauty and a sense of hauntedness that simultaneously gives life and poses a menace, are probably the source of beliefs about *Nini rangen* [49]. The terror of seeing a house fire that destroys all of one's belongings is perhaps the source of the belief in *Nini para*. The Karo people look to heavenly power, conceived as *Nini para*, in their submission to confronting the language of fire. It's conceivable that experiences in life and natural phenomena are the sources of belief in other *Nini* figures. It is possible to view belief in the existence of supernatural beings and all the rituals that go along with them as a means of adapting to different natural forces and bitter life experiences. Today's growth of religious moderation is inspired by the parallelism of structure and resemblance of roots. Doctrinal disparities are a common issue for Indonesian and other pluralistic religious communities. According to history, these distinctions have led to unequal

treatment, negative stigma, social tension, and even conflict. The darkest time for traditional belief communities came during the New Order era. These groups are seen as animistic, dynamic, and even superstitious rather than religious [62].

Social violence and discriminatory treatment follow from negative stigma. Diversity has historically fostered extremism and acts of terrorism. Religions share a common foundation, which is confidence in the transcendent, absolute, and limitless, which in the perfection of love and goodness has become the solution to life's mysteries, constraints, and basic issues. This is demonstrated by the parallelism of divine structures and the resemblance of roots [63]. Therefore, the transcendence is the aim for people to break free from the bonds of constraints. *Tramendum et facinosum*, the sensation of being in awe of the mysteries of nature and the wonders of existence, is undoubtedly the source of awareness of this transcendental power. Diverse realities lead to diverse encounter experiences, which are then constructed into various languages and symbols, which are the source of various doctrinal and cultural differences [8]. A grasp of the multiple levels of transcendent infinity is brought about by the multiplicity of experiences, and this understanding serves as the foundation for the development of distinct doctrines and symbols. Therefore, diversity needs to be viewed as a richness and motivator for interfaith communication that helps religious people understand one another's varied linguistic and symbolic systems. Religious individuals will come into contact with the substance hidden in other societies' symbols and language as a result of the penetration movement. Naturally, religious people will follow this movement's lead and explore the depths of divine mystery and infinity while cooperating to create a world that is more just and civilised [64].

4 Conclusion

The Karo traditional faith's revelation of the divine face demonstrates a neutral monism structure with structural similarities and roots to other religious communities. This highlights that all kinds of religiosity share the same foundation the experience of revelation in reality while also validating the veracity of the Karo traditional faith. The existential struggle of forging a robust self is the source of faith in the transcendence. The ultimate source of existence for all religions is transcendence.

Therefore, it is essential to use doctrinal differences and religious symbols as a foundation for developing in-depth dialogues about faith in order to enhance the understanding of the mystery of divine grandeur and absolution, foster worldwide brotherhood, and collaborate in the creation of a more civilised society.

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