

# Interpreting the Existence of *Dewala* and *Ina Leta* as the Center of the Tounwawan People's Life Narrative in Southwest Maluku, Indonesia

Paulus Koritelu,<sup>1\*</sup> Fridus Steijlen<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Sociology, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Pattimura, Ambon – Indonesia; <sup>2</sup>Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology, Faculty of Social Sciences, Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam – the Netherlands

## Abstract

*Dewala* and *Ina Leta* mean stone walls and mother village, respectively. These are monuments that symbolize “the beginning of life” narrative of the Tounwawan people of Moa Islands, Maluku, Indonesia. This first settlement narrative has become the collective memory of the Tounwawan community. It preserves their socio-cultural identity and helps them understand their roles and positions, perceiving themselves and others living together in the same environment. The research method used in this study is a qualitative approach with a phenomenological type. The data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation. The research results show that the Tounwawan people preserve *Dewala* and *Ina Leta* to symbolize the origin of their lives, elements of collective memory that can endure the test of time. The findings also show that the Tounwawan people maintain their intersubjective relations, which allows the noble values represented by these two monuments to be passed down as interpretable knowledge and experiences for the following generation.

*Dewala* dan *Ina Leta* adalah simbol yang memiliki makna permulaan dari narasi kehidupan orang-orang Tounwawan di Pulau Moa, Maluku, Indonesia. Narasi ini menjadi memori kolektif orang-orang Tounwawan dalam melestarikan identitas sosial budaya mereka dengan memahami peran dan kedudukan mereka dalam memandang dirinya dan orang-orang yang hidup bersama dalam lingkungan yang sama. Metode penelitian yang digunakan dalam studi ini didasarkan pada pendekatan kualitatif dengan jenis fenomenologi. Teknik pengumpulan data yang digunakan adalah wawancara mendalam, observasi, dan dokumentasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa orang-orang Tounwawan masih melestarikan *Dewala* dan *Ina Leta* sebagai monumen cikal bakal kehidupan mereka. *Dewala* dan *Ina Leta* dimaknai sebagai unsur memori kolektif yang dapat bertahan melintasi waktu karena orang-orang Tounwawan menjaga relasi intersubjektif di antara mereka sehingga nilai-nilai luhur yang direpresentasikan oleh kedua monumen tersebut dapat diwariskan sebagai pengetahuan dan pengalaman yang terus dimaknai oleh setiap generasi.

**Keywords:** collective memory; *Dewala*; *Ina Leta*; intersubjective relations; phenomenology

\*Corresponding Author: Paulus Koritelu (koritelupolii@gmail.com), Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Pattimura, Jl. Ir. M. Putuhena, Ambon, Maluku 97233, Indonesia.

## Introduction

The life narrative of the Tounwawan people of the Moa Islands cannot be separated from the history of the creation of *Ina Leta* (mother village) and *Dewala* (the stone walls that surround it). These monuments bind the collective memory of the displaced community, reminding them how they managed to rise again to continue their lives in what is now known as Tounwawan Village. This juncture marked the continuation of their tribe, ensuring that the Soa Ersupun community's generations do not cease to exist. Collective memory is a repository for storing and preserving memories and knowledge that are crucial in the historical journey of a group, with the aim of maintaining awareness of its identity. This also implies that collective memory allows a society to erase memories of the negative events that have occurred in its past (Foote 1990; Schwartz 2009).

The Tounwawan people choose to remember the dark journey of their group in establishing a new settlement after being displaced from their ancestral land due to defeat in past wars. They nurture this collective memory as a valuable lesson for facing current and future challenges. It becomes a story for the Tounwawan people to maintain historical awareness of their identity and understand their roles and positions, perceiving themselves and others living together in the same environment.

The efforts of the Tounwawan community in establishing a new settlement and inhabiting it permanently have provided them with deeply meaningful life experiences gained through interactions with other humans and the material culture in their environment (Hastorf 2003). These experiences then accumulate into a body of knowledge that continues to grow and

change along with the emergence of new understandings (Budiningsih 2005).

Tounwawan community's effort to preserve the existence of *Dewala* and *Ina Leta* is championed by individuals who have directly experienced the benefits of these sites in their lives. The Tounwawan people see these sites beyond their physical form, which can be interpreted as a link between worldly matters and the *Uplera*, or rulers of the supernatural realm. The Tounwawan community's interpretation of *Dewala* and *Ina Leta* can be understood as a result of the interaction between subjects and the experienced phenomena (Hamid 2015).

The Tounwawan people are part of the socio-cultural community of Southwest Maluku, which has a unique way of life distinct from the socio-cultural communities around Moa Island and other Maluku communities. Maluku is an archipelagic region with inter-group migration from one island to another due to past wars. As a result, the values and local wisdom of the Maluku people are often related to maritime aspects, which include *pela gandong* (the value of brotherhood) (Akerina and Omega 2019; Hehanussa 2009; Montana, Loisa, and Utami 2019; Pesurnay 2021; Ritiau and Malatuny 2017) and *sasi*, a sustainable natural resource management system (Judge and Nurizka 2008; Karepesina, Susilo, and Indrayani 2013; Kennedy, Nomleni, and Lina 2019; Kusumadinata 2015; Persada, Mangunjaya, and Tobing 2018). *Pela gandong* resurfaced during the conflict in 1997.

Indeed, communities in Southwest Maluku have a wealth of local wisdom. The Imroing Village community practices *wakra meke*, local wisdom related to food security. The Nuwewang Village community holds the *hnyoli lieta*

philosophy, which embodies the value of mutual assistance in disaster mitigation. The Tounwawan community, in addition to *pela gandong* and *sasi*, implements the *tommara* customary law, an unwritten sanction for adultery and infidelity (Noya and Ririhena 2022; Pakniany, Tiwery, and Rakuasa 2022; Unwaru, Pattiselanno, and Thenu 2022).

The appreciation of such ancestral wisdom is not entirely obtained through explicit recommendations or prohibitions; some of it is embedded in the physical mediums such as sites, material objects, or animals. In this context, the Tounwawan people have long recognized the use of symbols that represent their worldview. This symbolism not only serves as a narrative tool or a local wisdom people adhere to arbitrarily, but also has practical purposes for addressing various issues in the community. For example, in addition to *Dewala* and *Ina Leta*, the community places a value to a buffalo as a gift. The animal is not only gifted in ceremonies, as a dowry in marriage or an offering in funerals, or served as a dish in royal ceremonies, but is also used as a medium for reconciling disputes (Meikudy, Pattiselanno, and Wenno 2015; Noya and Ririhena 2022).

The implementation of values and customs cannot be separated from the dynamics of culture, economy, politics, and society. As such, the practices of these values and customs rise and fall along with the dynamics or disappear altogether (Patriana et al. 2016). This shift in local wisdom values is largely due to rapid development, population growth, globalization, modernization, homogenization, neoliberalization, and widespread digitalization, which desensitized the cultural values (Basyari 2014; Hidayati 2017; Mujahidah and Maddatuang 2022; Sukarniti 2020; Tadius et al. 2023; Thohari 2022). Such massive waves of change have shifted, of not

erored, some traditional values, especially if they happen for a long time.

Indeed, changes within the Moa Islands communities have been ongoing for a while, touching on fundamental aspects of life. For example, the people of Klis Village now allow the previously prohibited *inter-soa* marriages (Kwuwulay 2022). Similarly, the way of life of the Tounwawan people has undergone drastic changes due to population growth. Their settlement patterns have now spread beyond *Dewala*. As the Tounwawan Village expands geographically, the housing of Tounwawan people have become closer to other communities. Interactions with other communities have become more intense, naturally impacting their transactional needs and their reliance on money. However, their strong belief in the *Uplera* as protectors and helpers compel them to manage money's influence on their social life to prevent undesirable outcomes. Amid the rapid and perpetual changes, *Dewala* and *Ina Leta* remain central in the life of Tounwawan community.

Research specifically analyzing the life of the Tounwawan people is still very limited. Therefore, the researcher is interested in conducting a study that focuses on the Tounwawan community's journey in preserving their collective memory through intersubjective relations among its members, as they strive to interpret the existence of *Ina Leta* and *Dewala*, which are highly sacred to their lives.

This study employs a phenomenological approach that has been used in various previous studies. For example, this approach has been applied in epistemological themes discussing individual thought or comparing the ideas of phenomenological theorists such as Alfred Schutz, Max Weber, and Edmund Husserl to analyze socio-cultural influences on institutions,

communities, and religious studies. It has also been used in social sciences, communication, and musical theater (Ahimsa-Putra 2012; Anshori 2018; Nindito 2013; Suyanto 2019; Wita and Mursal 2022), demonstrating its suitability for examining the issue proposed in this study.

This research aims to understand the practice of local wisdom by the Tounwawan people, as exemplified above, particularly on their experience interpreting the existence of *Dewala* and *Ina Leta*. The research method used in this study is based on a qualitative approach with a phenomenological type. The qualitative approach aims to explore the personal experiences of subjects. Qualitative research seeks to understand the perspectives of subjects based on their daily experiences that are not previously known (Basrowi and Suwandi 2008; Moleong 2006). Phenomenological research was chosen because it offers extensive space for interpreting reality and places the researcher's subjectivity as the primary reference for describing experiences and meanings of the observed phenomena (Deddy 2001; Kuswarno 2009).

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The primary data collection technique in phenomenological studies is in-depth interviews with informants selected based on their ability to articulate their life experiences. The informants for this research consist of three individuals, as shown in Table 1. The researcher selected these informants because they represent three different generations of the Tounwawan community, and their knowledge of *Ina Leta*, *Dewala*, and the Tounwawan society is considered substantial by the researcher.

In addition to interviews, data collection may be supported by observations of the real-time conditions, behaviors, and objects and documentation of written materials (Anis and Kandung 2014).

Table 1  
Key Informant Formation

No.	Informant	Description
1	Mr. Lumostret Herman (53 years old)	Head of Tounwawan Village
2	Mr. Jefry Likko (61 years old)	Former Head of Tounwawan Village
3	Mr. Yopy (78 years old)	Community Leader

This study focuses on the existence of *Dewala* and *Ina Leta*, ancestral legacies amid the rapidly changing world. The three questions to be addressed in this study are: 1) how the Tounwawan people maintain their collective memory of *Dewala* and *Ina Leta*; 2) how the Tounwawan people view *Dewala* as the protector of *Ina Leta*; and 3) how the Tounwawan people practice intersubjective relations in interpreting *Dewala* and *Ina Leta*. What has been known thus far is that the Tounwawan people have managed to maintain social interactions among their members through mutual learning based on shared identity, fostered by, among other things, *Dewala* and *Ina Leta*.

### ***Dewala* and *Ina Leta* as Monuments of the Tounwawan People's Collective Memory**

The Tounwawan people continuously interpret the issues of their daily lives. The meaning-making process by the Tounwawan community in phenomenology does not happen in isolation because subjects/individuals will encounter other individuals within the same living environment. Individuals living in a society have their idiosyncratic awareness. Still, through social interaction, these individuals learn from one another, leading to the formation of social awareness or, in this context, intersubjective awareness.

*Ina Leta*, enclosed by *Dewala*, refers to the first settlement of the now Tounwawan people. The mother village (*Ina Leta*) was created by draining a pond in a forest, filling it with soil for building settlement, and surrounding it with stone walls (*Dewala*). These historical aspects tell tales of the formation of their settlements in the past. Understanding the lives of the Tounwawan people is inseparable from this

concept of *Ina Leta*. The narrative brings peace, protection, and wisdom to the people. It emerges from two elements: the tangible physical structure and the intangible ancestral values accompanying the physical structure. Both of these elements are part of the collective memory that forms the social identity embedded in the minds of the Tounwawan people, passed down from one generation to the next. See Figure 1.

This collective memory is illustrated by the story of one informant who stated,

"The *Dewala* that stands majestically today and continues to protect us, dating back hundreds, even thousands of years, is a manifestation of assistance from *Uplera*, which was established in just three nights. At that time, our ancestors called upon them using traditional language and prepared all the necessary conditions for their presence, including *tuak* (palm wine) and *tabaku* as mediums to perceive *Uplera*." (YP., interview, Desember 23, 2022)

Collective memory is often intertwined with heroic, traumatic stories and events that accompany a community's historical journey. It may vary between generations, as changes around and in the community are inevitable. In other words, this collective memory is dynamic and continues to evolve (Wattimena 2016). However, some remain intact, just like *Ina Leta* and *Dewala* as symbols of the Tounwawan life. The knowledge and experiences of past generations are continuously passed down to the next generations of the Tounwawan people to ensure the community's existence.

Collective memory connects socio-cultural conditions with material places or environments, such as cities, streets, architecture, and other material forms within a community's living environment. It serves as a bridge to understanding a community's past and projecting its future and scope of life (Ardakani and Oloonabadi 2011; Wattimena 2009).

Figure 1.  
The Layout Plan of Tounwawan Village



*Description:* The area circled in red indicates the origin of the Tounwawan community's center of life. This complex consists of three main layers, each with its own designation: 1) *Ina Leta* refers to the origin of the Tounwawan community's homeland, marked on the map by a right-angled trapezoidal line; 2) on its outer boundary, *Ina Leta* is surrounded by *Dewala*, which is represented on the map by an image of stacked stones in the upper right corner, serving as a fortress to protect the Tounwawan from external attacks and the spread of disease; 3) at the center of the *Ina Leta* complex lies *Natar Wauna*, depicted on the map by an image of a fig tree in the lower right corner, which serves as a meeting point between the Tounwawan people and *Uplera*, often used for rituals to resolve urgent issues, such as cases of theft or rape.

The collective memory among the Tounwawan people can be preserved because of their continuous efforts to engage in social interactions and learn about and from each other's experiences. It allows each member of the Tounwawan community to understand and

interpret the phenomena occurring around them and to appreciate the values inherited from previous generations. Their collective memory continues to evolve in response to changes within the community as they practice and preserve it.

### ***Dewala* as a Symbol of Protection Creating a Sense of Security for the Tounwawan People in *Ina Leta***

The Tounwawan community's ancestral root is the Soa Ersupun community. They migrated from Klis Village in Kampung Ersupun to the eastern part of Moa Island after losing a war with the Soa Simupun and Sairupundan Sairupun communities in 1789. They left their origin, journeyed, and discovered a pond in the forest, which they transformed into a settlement by draining it, filling it in, and encircling it with stones. This area subsequently became known as Tounwawan Village.

The Tounwawan people refer to their original settlement as *Ina Leta* (mother village). *Ina Leta* is distinguished from typical villages because it is surrounded by *Dewala*, or large stone walls that protect it. *Dewala* encompasses an area of 2.702129 hectares, with a radius of 92.7237 meters and a diameter of 185.4474 meters.

*Dewala* was constructed by the Tounwawan ancestors as a fortress to defend from outsiders' attacks. They learned to defend themselves after they were displaced from their home village due as they were defeated by their enemies. Ancient villages in Maluku are scattered in several locations, including in Southwest Maluku and Southeast Maluku. Their notable characteristic is their location, which is on elevated terrain that from a stronghold to defend from any threats (Ririmasse 2008).

The Tounwawan people are familiar with symbolism, which serves as a guide to understanding meaning among humans (Cassirer 1987). This is reflected in the layout of *Ina Leta* as the center of Tounwawan life, serving as a meeting place of the sacred and profane elements. *Ina Leta* is a link between

*Uplera* (the divine) and humans on earth. Therefore, the sacredness of *Ina Leta* is protected by *Dewala*, safeguarding it from enemy attacks or infectious diseases. *Ina Leta* can be interpreted as a spiritual and cultural space maintained by the Tounwawan people to signify their resilience in a rapidly changing world and to shield their community from potential adversities. This layout reflects the cosmological system and worldview of the Tounwawan people regarding their living environment. It can be said that the narrative of Tounwawan's life begins and develops in a space between *Uplera* and *Ina Leta*.

Human understanding of the world is incomplete due to the separation between thoughts and culture. According to Cassirer (Cassirer and Verene Donald Phillip 1979), humans need symbolic markers for thoughts, activities, and objects to address this issue. Symbols generally represent the social practices of a community, so communities worldwide have their own symbols and meanings that are shared and understood within their group (Kusumawardani 2013). Therefore, symbols do not always have universal meanings that all communities can understand. Symbols can be contextual, applicable and comprehensible only within a community (Berger 2005; Jary and Jary 1991). Symbols can also specifically represent aspects of worldly (profane) activities, such as behaviors deemed social or sacred in value.

A symbol is an object or event created to represent something else. Therefore, symbols always utilize various mediums for their expression. A symbol can be represented by a monument, architecture, statue, color, tree, ritual, village layout, movement and gestures, language, sounds, or anything meaningful (Sambas 2015). The diverse symbols humans create aim to serve as milestones and enhance

human sensitivity to their surroundings (Berger 2010).

In the past, the life of the Tounwawan people was heavily dependent on supernatural forces called the *Uplera*, or the deity of life, symbolized by the sun as a sign of the day. The Tounwawan people understood that every day brought life, and only the *Uplera* (God) could provide and guarantee it. The concept of *Uplera* is embedded in the history of Tounwawan people as it is believed to have been a protector and helper in critical situations such as warfare. This reality was common among the communities on Moa Island, Lakor Island, Leti Island, and other islands in Southwest Maluku and other places in the past.

For the Tounwawan people, *Uplera* has been a crucial element since the inception of *Dewala*. They believed that *Uplera* accelerated the construction of *Dewala*, which took only three nights, yet resulting in very strong and well-preserved structures. The ancestors of the Tounwawan people had a noble desire for their descendants to be protected from threats of inter-village warfare and conflicts with foreign powers in the future.

"We believe that God exists in the form of a supernatural power that transcends human strength and consciousness. Others may see this as spirits or supernatural forces, but that doesn't matter to us, as we are not concerned with others' opinions. To this day, we have not severed our connection with them. We have great faith in them because they have consistently proven to help and protect us, especially during times of war and when we need them the most; they are always present." (JL, interview, Desember 23, 2022)

*Uplera* is sanctified by the Tounwawan community because, as Eliade states (in Pals 2011), the essence of something sacred represents things beyond rational understanding, is supernatural, and is extra-

ordinary. Consequently, these supernatural elements become ingrained in the memory of the community that believes in them, as they reflect order and perfection.

*Dewala's* form is circular, punctuated by four gates that equally divide the circular form. Within the circle is *Ina Leta*, where the inhabitants are protected. In the cultural context of the Maluku Islands, *ina* means mother, so in Central Maluku, *nusa ina* refers to the motherland. In Southwest Maluku, *Ina Leta* signifies the land of birth or homeland. The gates of *Dewala* align with the four cardinal directions. These directions represent the unity of human purpose and life journey. The four gates also indicate potential threat directions; thus, the Tounwawan people have a generational social responsibility to protect these gates. To fulfill this responsibility, the Tounwawan people must guard the purity of their heart and control themselves against various temptations of life.

The Tounwawan people believe that wherever they go, they are always protected by *Uplera*. They believe that if their journey is heading north, they must exit through the northern gate, and throughout their journey, they will be accompanied by *Uplera* from the north. Similarly, if the Tounwawan people face an attack from the north, *Uplera* will strengthen their defenses by repelling and defeating their enemies through the northern gate. This concept also applies to the southern, western, and eastern gates.

"In addition to providing help, *Uplera* continues to follow and guide us to live a pure life in truth. We call upon them during every sacred event, especially for a demonstration of truth that transcends human logical understanding. Human eyes may not see, but *Uplera* knows the essence of truth and the nature of the issues at hand. Thus, when we communicate and



prepare the conditions for their presence, they come to assist us." (LH., interview, Desember 23, 2022)

Human thought can be understood through its knowledge of both profane and sacred matters. The profane is closely related to worldly things that can be empirically proven, while the sacred pertains to matters that are understood through personal experience (Zakiah, 1996). The community's belief in being watched over by *Uplera* is a manifestation of sacred reality. Thus, when someone is present in a consecrated place, worships, or lives with a pure heart, Eliade (in Elvinaro, Syarif, and Rohmana, 2022) describes this human manifestation as hierophany.

For this reason, each household specifically assigned to a gate of the *Dewala* has a strong social responsibility and must be fully committed. They are committed not only to the customary leaders, village heads, and the entire community but also to *Uplera*. Often, their lives are at stake due to this commitment. It represents the core of the Tounwawan people's social responsibility for the well-being and safety of their community members. Neglecting this responsibility would result in significant problems for the individuals and the Tounwawan community as a whole. The identities of the gatekeepers are kept confidential within the Tounwawan community and must not be known by outsiders. This secrecy ensures they can work with dedication and sincerity when dealing with *Uplera*. Additionally, from a social perspective, this confidentiality aims to protect the gatekeepers from external malicious intentions, such as bribery, which could compromise the *Dewala* gates.

Spiritually, *Dewala* serves as the center of life focused on *Uplera*. Amid *Ina Leta* lies the central area known as Natar Wauna, which is the focal

point for transcending worldly matters and facilitating a connection with the spiritual realm. Natar Wauna functions as a venue for conducting important traditional rituals, such as making customary decisions and proving or testing hidden truths, like identifying perpetrators of theft or assault. Being present in Natar Wauna require the purification of one's heart and the pre-emption of harmful thoughts. The place is where the Tounwawan people connect and communicate with *Uplera* and where they seek protection and assurance for the continuity of their lives. The symbol of this assurance is represented by the fig tree located precisely in the center of Natar Wauna.

"Tounwawan is not a place for thieves, rapists, and those who engage in evil deeds. We ensure that such wicked individuals will not face us but will directly confront *Uplera*. If someone commits an evil act but does not confess their sins and seek forgiveness in Natar Wauna, there is no other way; they will certainly die in horrific ways. This has led the people of Tonwawan to maintain and uphold every tradition in Natar Wauna, located in the midst of *Ina Leta* and surrounded by *Dewala*, from the past until now." (LH., interview, Desember 23, 2022)

Durkheim views the supernatural reality as a totemic principle, an impersonal power often associated with objects, stones, rivers, or living beings like animals and plants that possess sacredness. There is a general belief within society that these sacred elements should not be damaged, neglected, touched, or consumed. Sacredness can also encompass values and beliefs within a community. Societies form perspectives and beliefs about objects, living beings, or places, considering these three elements as sources of sanctity. This belief leads individuals to understand that by upholding the value and respect for the sacred, they will be protected from harm (Nottingham 1985; Pals 2011).

As sacred spaces, *Dewala*, *Ina Leta*, and Natar Wauna represent the highest symbols of the Tounwawan's living environment. These sites are among the sacred symbols with immense power. The community members must honor them as they represent the community's worldview and provide the people with guidelines for their daily lives (Geertz, as cited in Wardani 2010). Symbols not only represent societal regulation but also embody cosmological aspects.

*Dewala* and *Ina Leta* are crucial to the Tounwawan community, including as a medium for considering decisions during times of war.

"The Tounwawan people never start conflicts or wars, but if they occur, the Tounwawan community will consult *Uplera* to determine the decision to go to war. If *Uplera* commands an attack, the Tounwawan will fight; however, if *Uplera* instructs them to stay and take refuge within *Dewala*, the Tounwawan will remain passive. This practice has been in place for thousands of years and has proven to keep our community safe." (YP., interview Desember 23, 2022)

Every community in various regions around the world has sacred elements that are highly respected. This sacredness becomes the center of social dynamics as it provides guidance for behavior. Such sacredness can be found in the reverence for rituals related to beliefs, agriculture, the cycles of life, and objects (Supriyono 2005). Essentially, sacred objects are ordinary items, yet according to Durkheim (in Nottingham 1985), their sacredness is attributed to the attitudes and behaviors of people, which lend justification to their significance. By attributing value to these objects, individuals develop feelings of awe, respect, and fear, believing that these objects can influence their lives. Similarly, in the context of the existence of *Dewala*, *Ina Leta*, and Natar Wauna, which the Tounwawan people believe

play significant roles in influencing their lives, their behaviors are closely linked to the presence of sacred objects, rituals, and spaces in their surroundings

Although the three symbols of the Tounwawan are inanimate objects, the Tounwawan people living within *Ina Leta* need to maintain social interactions to ensure that these symbols' messages and meanings are conveyed. Understanding the meanings of the symbols can alter the people's behavior. Through the interpretive behaviors of symbols by other community members, individuals can learn about behaviors and experiences in comprehending the meanings of these symbols.

According to Mead (Elvinaro 2007), the process of interpreting symbols operates through three mediums: thought, self, and society. Thought is closely related to the application of symbols to the social meaning used by others, necessitating interactions with other individuals. The self pertains to the ability to reflect on oneself based on the judgments or opinions of others. Society relates to individual construction within a community, which encourages a member of a community to play roles within that society voluntarily.

The cultural interaction process between the Tounwawan people and *Uplera* results in strict compliance as they maintain the trust-building process daily. One example of the community's dependence on *Uplera's* guidance is when they face warfare and are desperate. If *Uplera* instructs them to remain and take shelter within *Dewala*, they will stay safe and protected even if they do nothing but remain there.

Furthermore, *Dewala* and *Ina Leta* are not relics of the past but symbols of future hope. It is affirmed by *Dewala's* function as a defensive fortress against potential enemy attacks and as a symbol of boundaries to filter out dangerous

infectious diseases that could threaten their lives. At this point, the Tounwawan people are aware that the world continues to evolve and change, so the preservation and maintenance of *Dewala* and *Ina Leta* is the right choice for their community today and in the future.

For example, the Tounwawan people protect themselves from the influence of money, which can continually alter their social and cultural order. They are cautious about selling land, especially to outsiders. To this day, the Tounwawan remain a cultural community that does not engage in land transactions with individuals outside their cultural group. For them, *Dewala* and *Ina Leta* are not just relics of the past providing collective identity but fundamental to Tounwawan's social and cultural existence.

The Tounwawan people continue to maintain their way of life to reduce and minimize the influence of money, which could shift their social order from cultural meaning to economic values. This approach represents a more rational lifestyle where money dominates social change, affecting social status, cultural status, and various other influences and meanings of money within Tounwawan life (Nugroho 2001).

Ultimately, the Tounwawan people cannot prevent changes in their environment. However, every new experience they gain daily can be adapted to their existing knowledge, leading to the development of their social identity.

### **Intersubjective Relations of the Tounwawan People in Interpreting *Ina Leta* and *Dewala***

The Tounwawan people residing in Kiera, Weet, Watioriori, and Poliwu Hamlets are known for upholding the values inherited from

their ancestors. Ancestors play a crucial role in the cultural history of the Tounwawan people. They are believed to have the power to influence social dynamics within the community (Ririmasse 2012). However, these ancestral values are threatened by the rapid advancement of modern science and technology (Keraf 2006). The younger generation is increasingly attracted to external cultures rather than their community's traditions (Fikron, Suntoro, and Nurmalisa 2017).

The ancestors of the Tounwawan people passed down ways of life, values, knowledge, and beliefs related to transcendent matters. These pieces of wisdom link generations and form a shared identity (Bell 2009). Additionally, the Tounwawan people practice Christian values faithfully. Their belief in Christianity and their traditional views complement each other, as no belief is invalid. Despite embracing Christianity, the Tounwawan people continue to maintain their relationship with *Uplera*. They see the church as a place for communal fellowship, while their connection with *Uplera* remains central and to be practiced. They believe that it genuinely helps guide and protect them from actions that could harm others around them.

“It is a mistake to think that Christianity disrupts our intense relational patterns with *Uplera*. For us, going to church is a necessity for fellowship with others. However, a deep personal relationship with *Uplera* is still recognized and practiced because it genuinely helps us and controls us from any actions that could harm others.” (JL, interview Desember 23, 2022)

Respect for the sacred and the accompanying rituals represents a stage in human life that sets aside individualistic attitudes in favor of a sense of togetherness. The sacred does not negate the belief in a community's ancestors and the religion they

practice; rather, both can support each other. According to Durkheim (in Bustanuddin 2007), performing rituals in community life primarily enhances solidarity. In the case of the Tounwawan community, they have never conflicted the values of their ancestors with the teachings of Christianity.

The Tounwawan people have a unique perspective on understanding their sphere of life. The presence of *Dewala* encircling *Ina Leta*, protected by *Uplera*, is also typical to the migration patterns of ancient people in the Maluku Islands. This phenomenon was not exclusive to the Tounwawan. The Seram people also migrated to the lands of the Ambon-Lease Islands. The migration of the Seram ancestors marked the establishment of villages and social order in Ambon-Lease. This historical pattern is similar to the formation of Tounwawan villages, initiated by the *totua* (elders) who relocated after being defeated in wars. Both communities refer to their ancestral lands with names such as *ina* (*nusa ina* for the Seram and Ambon-Lease people, and *Ina Leta* for the Tounwawan), which signifies "mother," akin to the concept of Mother Earth.

The persistence of honoring ancestral values were manifested in maintaining *Dewala*, which surrounds *Ina Leta*. This preservation ensures that different generations share similar experiences through interaction and integration. This situation reflects intersubjective relations because the actors involved exist within the same lifeworld, allowing each actor to become aware of others' (intentional) consciousness in addition to their own (Hamid 2015). In this context, consciousness relates to social relations as a form of shared ownership. As Schutz put it (in Waters 1994), everyday social life is a blend of intersubjective relations and meaningful experiences, so what

individuals display is a reflection of both transcendental experiences and *verstehen* (understanding) of the meaning of their environment.

The world of the Tounwawan people is an intersubjective world full of meaning. Their process of meaning-making begins with sensory perception of their surroundings. As inhabitants of *Ina Leta*, the Tounwawan people, consciously or subconsciously, first experience their exclusive living space within the complex surrounded by *Dewala*. At this sensory stage, individuals have not yet developed meaning. Over time, as they interact within a broader social group and gain diverse experiences, they begin to assign meaning to their daily experiences. They become conscious of their daily experiences, which they reflect upon in their social interactions (Campbell 1994).

The key to understanding human everyday life is understanding the subject's actions. According to Schutz (Jesus et al. 2013), subjects can position themselves in the real world because humans naturally can intervene in their own lives, either influenced by others or influencing others. This process can lead to a sustainable change in their personality and alter social structures. This natural process of meaning-making significantly impacts the formation of cooperation within a social group or organization.

The social world of the Tounwawan is shaped by the alignment between understanding and actions of its members, even though each of them has their own interpretation of their surroundings. To align these differences, the Tounwawan community members are expected to understand each other and act within the same common ground. From a phenomenological perspective, such personal experiences allow individuals to relate

to one another. They could perceive an event or object from the same perspective as others, giving them an equal opportunity to experience the phenomena around them. To share these experiences, they communicate in two-way interactions (Littlejohn 2002).

Social interactions among the Tounwawan people are crucial for understanding the significance of *Dewala* and *Ina Leta*. The intersubjective relations established and maintained by the Tounwawan, *Dewala*, and *Ina Leta*, as central elements of their life narrative, have been well-preserved. The intersubjective relations among the Tounwawan facilitate the exchange of knowledge and experiences, allowing community members to attribute meaning and reinforce the existence of *Dewala* and *Ina Leta*.

## Conclusion

*Dewala* and *Ina Leta* are central elements of the Tounwawan people's collective memory, marking the origin of their way of life. They embody the heroic tales and hardships of the Tounwawan ancestors when they were displaced from their homeland. The Tounwawan's journey in establishing *Ina Leta* has rekindled the spirit of the displaced people, enabling them to reunite and form a socio-cultural identity that characterizes the community living on Moa Island. *Dewala* and *Ina Leta* symbolize the intersection of the sacred and the profane. On the one hand, *Ina Leta* serves as a place of worldly concern for the Tounwawan. On the other hand, *Dewala* and *Ina Leta* provide a space to connect with *Uplera*.

*Dewala* and *Ina Leta* have endured through generations because the Tounwawan people are committed to preserving their ancestral monuments. The experiences and knowledge passed down from previous generations

represent a journey of human meaning-making regarding values that greatly benefit their lives.

Finally, it should be noted that this study does not focus heavily on the social changes occurring among the Tounwawan people. Instead, it emphasizes the intersubjective relations of the Tounwawan people in maintaining the collective memory of the existence of *Dewala* and *Ina Leta*. As such, future research could analyze the social changes among the Tounwawan people, which would expand the understanding of the Tounwawan people's journey in preserving their collective memory amidst the rapid social changes.[]

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