

## **Wayang as a Bridge of Transformation and Conveying Good News to Javanese Society**

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### **Introduction**

When addressing the Javanese population, it is necessary to identify who the Javanese people are. Javanese people are members of the Javanese ethnic group, which is one of the most numerous ethnicities on the island of Java, especially in the east and central parts. Javanese people have moved and lived in other parts of Indonesia and can be found all across the nation. Those who have moved and lived in other places may adopt the cultures of the areas where they have resided. Others remain in the Javanese community, including East Java, Central Java, and the Yogyakarta Special Territory. Budi identified the influence of Javanese culture on the power structures in Indonesia. In the late twentieth century, the political culture of the Indonesian government was dominated by paternalistic rule reflecting Javanese cultural values. The Javanese have long dominated governance and the Indonesian armed forces.<sup>1</sup>

### **Geographical Background**

Most Javanese live on the island of Java. According to the Indonesia Data Statistic Center, with a population of 14.76 million, Java is the world's most populous island, accounting for approximately 55% of the Indonesian population.<sup>2</sup> According to Ricklefs, the area of Java is about 150,000 square km.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Budi Santoso, "The Influences of Javanese Culture in Power of Making Decision in Indonesian Universities: Case Studies in MM Programs," *Journal of Indonesian Economy and Business* 27, no. 2 (2012): 226.

<sup>2</sup> "Statistics Indonesia," last modified 2021, <https://www.bps.go.id/>.

<sup>3</sup> M.C. Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia since c.1300* (M.C. Ricklefs:

The Jasa Tirta Corporation claimed that it is about 1000 km (620 mi) long and up to 210 km (130 mi) wide. The longest river on the island is the 600-kilometer-long Solo River.<sup>4</sup> The average temperature ranges from 22°C (72°F) to 29°C (84°F), with about 75% humidity. The northern coastal plains are typically hotter, with daytime temperatures averaging 34 °C (93 °F) in the dry season. The south coast is often cooler than the north, while highland locations inside are considerably cooler.<sup>5</sup>

According to the same source, the city has a total area of 32.5 square km and a population density of 1,281 people/square km. The city's geographical area is surrounded by lots of mountains and hills, and major streams run through it (the Code and Progo). Yogyakarta is located on the coast of Java, close to the sea. Many beautiful beaches are within 30-60 minutes' drive. On February 13, 1755, the Gianti Agreement established the city of Yogyakarta with special autonomy. It was led by a Sultan (Hamengkubuwono X) who resided in Keraton, the royal palace.<sup>6</sup>

### Demographic Background

Based on the same source, the religious composition of the population is just as follows: Islam 83.40%, Christian 16.19% (Catholic 9.89% and Protestant 6.3%), and others 0.41%. As relics of historical sites, there are twenty Hindu and Buddhist temples spread around Yogyakarta. Per the Aritonang, Christians in Java account only for 20.5% of all Indonesian Christians, despite the fact that Java is host to approximately 60% of the nation's people. This figure already gives a clear picture of Christianity's minority status on the archipelago's major island. The Sultanate of Yogyakarta had a substantially larger percentage of Christians.<sup>7</sup>

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MacMillan, 1990).

<sup>4</sup> "Management of Bengawan Solo River Area," Jasa Tirta I Corporation.

<sup>5</sup> "Management of Bengawan Solo River Area," Jasa Tirta I Corporation.

<sup>6</sup> "Yogyakarta," <https://yogyakarta.bps.go.id/publication>.

<sup>7</sup> Jan Sihar Aritonang and Karel Steenbrink, *A History of Christianity in Indonesia* (Leiden: Brill NV, 2008).

Yogyakarta is known as the city of education, culture, and tourism.<sup>8</sup> There are 110 universities in this city, with 368,000 students and 12,800 lecturers. There are 750 doctors, 2,295 nurses, 313 midwives, 598 pharmacies, and 83 nutritionists (for a total of 5,000 health workers). Because many students come to study in this city, it is a miniature of Indonesia. According to the 2020 population census, Yogyakarta City has a population of 374,000 people (49% male and 51% female). Seventy-one percent of the population is of productive age, while 29% is of non-productive age. Sixty-four percent work full-time, 28% work part-time, and 8% are unemployed. The current rate of unemployment is 9.13%. The minimum monthly wage is \$132 per person, and 7.64% of the population is poor. The average lifespan is 74 to 76 years.<sup>9</sup>

Yogyakarta city has a low murder rate compared to other cities in Indonesia. The following graph depicts the performance of the crime rate.<sup>10</sup>

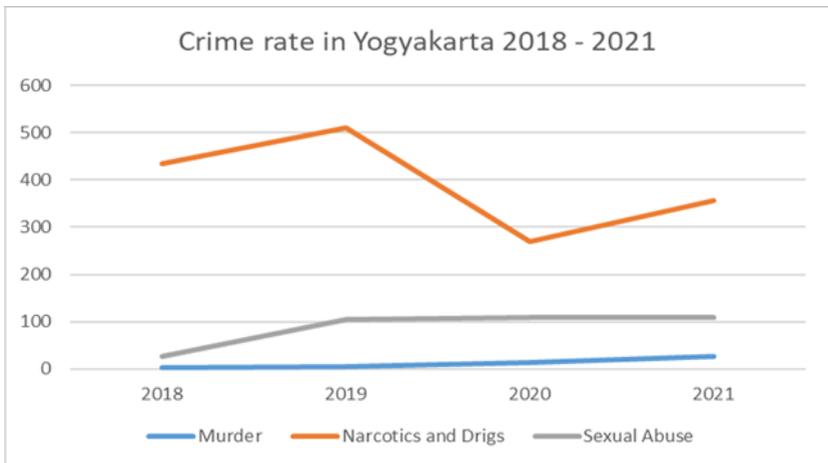


Figure 1  
The Crime Rate in Yogyakarta 2018-2021

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<sup>8</sup> “Yogyakarta,” <https://yogyakarta.bps.go.id/publication>.

<sup>9</sup> “Yogyakarta,” <https://yogyakarta.bps.go.id/publication>.

<sup>10</sup> “Yogyakarta,” <https://yogyakarta.bps.go.id/publication>.

### Historical Background

The history of the Javanese people started in ancient times when the Javanese excelled at marine explorations and trading. According to Robert Dick-Read, in the early first century, Javanese merchants and sailors made frequent sea voyages between India and China.<sup>11</sup> Beale discovered that the Borobudur ship from the Sailendra dynasty took sailors and immigrants from the Archipelago to Ghana and Madagascar in the eighth century;<sup>12</sup> however, as Ardika suggested, they could have been present as early as 500 BC.<sup>13</sup>

Cavendish discovered that various empires in Java were actively involved in the spice trade via the Silk Road sea routes at the time. Although these kingdoms were not major spice producers, they were able to stockpile spices by trading them for rice, the island of Java's main product. Wink discovered that, at the time, Majapahit was widely regarded as the largest of these kingdoms. The emperor wielded agrarian and maritime power, combining wet rice cultivation and foreign trade.<sup>14</sup> Finally, it is clear when the influence of Hinduism and Buddhism came through trade contacts in the Indian subcontinent, as Miksic identified.<sup>15</sup> This fact indicated how, in the end, the impact of Hinduism and Buddhism still persists in the cultural and social life of Javanese society. Spiller concluded that since Hindu and Buddhist traders and visitors arrived in the 5th century, the religion of the

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<sup>11</sup> Robert Dick-Read, *The Phantom Voyagers: Evidence of Indonesian Settlement in Africa in Ancient Times* (Thurlton, 2005).

<sup>12</sup> Philip Beale, "From Indonesia to Africa: Borobudur Ship Expedition," *Ziff Journal* (2006): 22, [http://www.swahiliweb.net/ziff\\_journal\\_3\\_files/ziff2006-04.pdf](http://www.swahiliweb.net/ziff_journal_3_files/ziff2006-04.pdf).

<sup>13</sup> I Wayan Ardika & Peter Bellwood, "Sembiran: The Beginnings of Indian Contact with Bali," *Antiquity* 65, no. 247 (1991): 221–232, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003598X00079679>.

<sup>14</sup> André Wink, *Indo-Islamic Society, 14th-15th Centuries* (Brill, 2004).

<sup>15</sup> John N Miksic and Marcello Tranchini, *Borobudur: Golden Tales of the Buddha's* (Tuttle Publishing, 1996).

Javanese people has been integrated into a unique local philosophy.<sup>16</sup> Javanese values and beliefs eventually absorbed Hindus and Buddhists.

Ricklefs observed that after that period, Islam developed a foothold in port cities on Java's north coast, such as Gresik, Ampel Denta (Surabaya), Tuban, Demak, and Kudus. Wali Songo was traditionally attributed to spreading Islamic da'wah among the Javanese.<sup>17</sup> Dutch colonization of Indonesia (and Java) began in 1619 when the Dutch built their trading headquarters in Batavia. The Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie (VOC) began taking over the island of Java, and 350 years later, in 1945, Indonesia gained independence. The arrival of missionaries in all areas of Indonesia marked the start of the spread of Christianity. The word *Doopsgezinde Zendings Vereeniging* refers to Dutch missionaries who dominated the missionary population (NZV). This was due to the fact that the Dutch came not just to trade but also to promote Christianity.

### Cultural Background

#### *Javanese Influences that have Helped Shape the Cultural Components of the Group*

The sociologist Geertz stated that culture is the fabric of meaning in terms of how human beings interpret their experience and guide their action.<sup>18</sup> This means that everything that results from a community's interpretation process and outcome becomes part of the culture. Culture is expressed through a variety of means, including symbols, language, manners, family structures, rituals, arts, how people express their thinking and feelings, and numerous items generated by a community's or group's value system.

Some points that need to be noted as important locus about Javanese

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<sup>16</sup> Henry Spiller, *Focus: Gamelan and Music of Indonesia* (New York: Routledge, 2008).

<sup>17</sup> M.C. Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia since c.1300*, 2nd Edition (London: MacMillan, 1991).

<sup>18</sup> Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Culture* (USA: Basic Books, 1973).

characteristics are:

1. In relation to the Javanese trait, Nadar discovered that for Javanese, hidden feeling (*rasa*) is essential but not clearly articulated; however, it can be assumed partly through symbols and facial motions.<sup>19</sup> This study backs up Geertz's claim that the inclination towards indirectness or "indirection" in Javanese culture is related to this cultural predilection for concealing feelings because people frequently do not communicate directly what they mean.<sup>20</sup> For the Javanese, expressing feelings openly and directly is impolite, uncivilized, and embarrassing. A person's politeness is measured by their ability to "hide" their feelings (joy or sadness, anger or peace, optimism or despair) so other people do not know what they are. A person's maturity level also uses these same parameters.

2. Language is one of the most important elements for the Javanese. Language is not only a means of communication for Javanese but also shows social status, the level of politeness, and the expression of the social hierarchy that occurs in society. According to Wardhaugh, the relationship between language and culture is that the language used determines how speakers of that language view the world or how speakers view the world is expressed in the language used.<sup>21</sup> Hadiatmaja continued by stating that the Javanese language has several levels: *Ngoko*, *Madya*, and *Krama*.<sup>22</sup> These levels in the Javanese language identify the rough and smooth level of a language used according to a person's social status and age. This language system is still preserved and applied by all social strata of the Javanese to this day.

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<sup>19</sup> FX Nadar, "The Prominent Characteristics of Javanese Culture and Their Reflection in Language Use," *Humaniora* 19, no. 2 (2007): 171, <https://www.neliti.com/publications/11651/the-prominent-characteristics-of-javanese-culture-and-their-reflections-in-langu>.

<sup>20</sup> Clifford Geertz, *The Religion of Java* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1976).

<sup>21</sup> Ronald Wardhaugh, *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*, Second Ed. (Oxford, Victoria: Blackwell Publishing, 2006).

<sup>22</sup> Sarjana Hadiatmaja and Kuswa Endah, *Filsafat Jawa* (Yogyakarta: Kanwa Publisher, 2011).

*How Language Applied in the Javanese Society Relates to the Other Cultures Around*

Status is strongly associated with social structures in the language used to represent the hierarchy in Javanese culture. To maintain harmony and togetherness, Nadar emphasized and demonstrated the practical relevance of this principle in the daily lives of the lower class of Javanese society, who acknowledge their position within the social structure and consider it normal to use Javanese high language to people of higher status and who permit higher status people to use lower language in interactions with them.<sup>23</sup>

Somewhat similar to the caste system in Hinduism, in Javanese society, language uses castes for various social layers of society. How language relates to the other cultures around indirectly provides information for outsiders to master the level of Javanese language so they can enter the Javanese community better. By mastering the language, outsiders will be able to know the Javanese cultural context better. Most of the missionaries of the Church of the Nazarene were fluent in Javanese (though not very fluent), and they managed to win Javanese hearts. Javanese people see the missionaries as an integral part of the group because all are united by the same language, the language understood by the community context.

In terms of social stratification, Koentjaraningrat categorized the Javanese into two major social levels: the *wong cilik* (or common people), which included peasants and the urban lower classes, and the *priyayi* (or high-class society), which included public servants, intellectuals, and the nobility.<sup>24</sup> These are the two social classes and the language system practiced in the society.

*Wong cilik* have to talk to people from higher social class in Madya and Krama, but they can talk to each other in the same social class in Ngoko. If

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<sup>23</sup> F.X. Nadar, "The Prominent Characteristics of Javanese Culture and Their Reflection in Language Use."

<sup>24</sup> Koentjaraningrat, *A Preliminary Description of the Javanese Kinship System*. Southeast Asian Studies, Cultural Report Series, 1 st ed. (USA: Yale University, Southeast Asia Studies, 1957).

the *wong cilik* violated this rule, they could be considered rude, uncivilized, and dissident. For the *priyayi*, higher social classes do not have to speak Ngoko and Madya to people below their social status. The *priyayi* speak Ngoko quite well, but in describing the Javanese family, the Javanese do not explicitly distinguish between *wong cilik* and *priyayi* families, although some distinctions between social classes are noted.

*Response to the Issue of the Culture in “Decline” and the Solidarity*

Hofstede supports a similar perspective by proposing four characteristics of cultural difference: individualism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and masculinity. According to Hofstede, the dimension of power distance specifies the extent to which less powerful persons in a society tolerate and accept inequality in authority.<sup>25</sup> This confirms that for the Javanese community and the outsiders, obeying the norms and behavioral systems that exist in Javanese society is a part of the process of socializing, contextualizing, and becoming part of Javanese society. Geertz, a Javanese cultural researcher and observer, stated: “Javanese society believes that individuals play a role as a harmonious part of the family group.” To be Javanese means to understand and adapt to one’s manners and place in either the family group or society.<sup>26</sup> So, as Geertz stated, living in harmony in society is a value that is upheld in Javanese society. Every person in society realizes that everyone has a responsibility to create harmony. Javanese (as a people and community) will give priority to a harmonious social life over other interests. A Javanese realizes and records personal, family, and community life.

In the research on Javanese culture, persistence, and change, Mulder identified how these values have penetrated society. Mulder found that among Javanese,

the whole of society should be characterized by the spirit of *rukun* . . . its behavioral expression concerning the supernatural and to superiors

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<sup>25</sup> Geert Hofstede, “Cultural Differences in Teaching and Learning,” *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 10 (1986): 302.

<sup>26</sup> Hildred Geertz, *The Javanese Family: A Study of Kinship and Socialization* (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1961).

is respectful, polite, obedient, and distant, its expression in the community in “*akrab*” (intimate) as in a family, cozy, and “*Kange*” (full of the feeling of belonging).<sup>27</sup>

According to Mulder, harmony in Javanese society is conveyed through *rukun*, *akrab*, and *kangen* in interpersonal relationships. *Rukun* means pursuing peace in one’s life, wanting peace with others (and the community), putting people’s interests over one’s own, and seeking peaceful solutions when conflicts arise with others. *Akrab* is defined as developing a close and interpersonal relationship with others, considering them as close family, and developing relationships without cultural boundaries that can hinder closeness. Similarly, *Kangen* is defined as a sensation of longing experienced by a brother and sister who have not seen, interacted, or communicated in a long time. When you are feeling “distant” from someone and want to meet up soon, it is an expression of personal loss. What characteristics are favorable for bringing harmony to Javanese society? There are initial basic values that still exist in society today.

## Contextual Study

### *The Family Values and Structure*

As previously stated, the basic value of Javanese culture is the maintenance of social harmony (*rukun*), which is used as moral guidance for social interaction within both the family and the community, such as the workplace, schools, and political organizations.<sup>28</sup> Harmony is a principle that is supported and an inherent trait of Javanese; it has created all systems and values that apply in society and are intrinsically tied to it. The spirit of always being in harmony with others colors people’s lives in the home, workplace, society, nation, and state. Some of the characteristics of the values passed

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<sup>27</sup> Niels Mulder, *Mysticism and Everyday Life in Contemporary Java: Cultural Persistence and Change*. (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1978).

<sup>28</sup> Koentjaraningrat, *A Preliminary Description of the Javanese Kinship System*. Southeast Asian Studies, Cultural Report Series.

down from generation to generation in Javanese families are as follows:

1. According to Kunjtoroningrat, the nuclear family is the most important group in Javanese society. Family members are expected to pay attention and care, as well as perform mandatory obligations, and neglecting to do so is a serious offense.<sup>29</sup> In Javanese families, the position of parents and elders is very crucial. Parents and elders normatively get respect from all family members. Advice and orders from parents and elders “must” be obeyed. Violation, which is translated as rebellion and an expression of disrespect, means breaking the rules and norms. Conflicts with parents are believed to remove the parents’ blessing, and such a loss is believed to threaten the child’s life.

2. Children are obliged to care for and maintain their parents when they are old and no longer self-supporting. Supporting the lives of parents when the children are already working and married is an unwritten rule and is natural to do so in this society. Therefore, most elders will live with children who are married or working. This is a form of respect and remuneration that children owe to their parents. Usually, elderly parents will live with their daughter because, in Javanese culture, the daughter is considered to be more responsible and caring and better able to care for elders.

3. In the nuclear family, a **wife must show respect to her husband**, as the husband is assumed to be older than the wife. The husband is supposed to be the leader of the household but is concerned primarily with external matters. The wife’s sphere of interest is internal household matters. Handayani defined the woman’s role in the Javanese family as “*wani ditata*,” which means she allows herself to be policed by a rule that has set her position and responsibility.<sup>30</sup> It can be explained that, generally, the role of women in the family (as a wife and as a mother) is to serve the needs of husbands

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<sup>29</sup> Koentjaraningrat, *A Preliminary Description of the Javanese Kinship System*. Southeast Asian Studies, Cultural Report Series.

<sup>30</sup> Krishnan Widyaningsih and Bambang Indiatmoko, “The Literary Style of Javanese Female Characters in the Novel *Jemini* by Suparto Brata,” *Seloka: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa dan Sastra Indonesia* 9, no. 2 (2020): 147–158, <https://journal.unnes.ac.id/sju/index.php/seloka>.

and children. In the ancient Javanese tradition, women do not have a voice to be counted. Women were only those who maintained the household and cared for life. Of course, nowadays, this perspective has shifted. Javanese women today have a more modern and advanced life. The emancipation of women in various parts of life has been recognized by men, especially Javanese men and Indonesian society. Lower-class women chat and joke together during shared activities. In contrast, middle-class women are more home-centered, with limited daily interaction outside the family, although to a certain extent, they are part of a female network in the village. Hull questioned whether reduced participation in the world beyond the home reflects “progress” or “regress” among middle-class women.<sup>31</sup>

4. In Javanese society, children of **both sexes are equally wanted**. Preferential treatment based on gender has never been noted in Indonesia. Unlike some tribes in Indonesia, the Javanese do not recognize the clan system for continuing the lineage of the family. Having a daughter or a son is both equally good and valuable. Children, according to Geertz, are a source of family warmth, joy, and happiness, and infertility can rise to family conditions that lead to divorce. A childless couple usually adopts a child, usually from relatives on either the husband’s or the wife’s side.<sup>32</sup> The main goal of marriage, according to the Javanese, is to have children. According to Kuntjoroningrat, having a big family is considered prestigious.<sup>33</sup>

5. According to Kuntjoroningrat, one fascinating tradition among Javanese families is that parents teach their children a “pessimistic view of life,” portraying life as a series of hardships and tragedies.<sup>34</sup> This is reflected through the habit of living in a “conscious” and “concerned” way.

6. *Eling* means being alert, not rash, and careful, not easy to make fatal

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<sup>31</sup> Valerie J Hull, *Women in Java’s Rural Middle Class: Progress or Regress* (Illinois, USA, 1982).

<sup>32</sup> Hildred Geertz, *The Javanese Family: A Study of Kinship and Socialization*.

<sup>33</sup> Koentjaraningrat, *A Preliminary Description of the Javanese Kinship System*. Southeast Asian Studies, Cultural Report Series.

<sup>34</sup> Koentjaraningrat, *A Preliminary Description of the Javanese Kinship System*. Southeast Asian Studies, Cultural Report Series.

mistakes in life. *Waspada* is defined as getting used to a simple life, not luxurious, trying to save, and being able to manage money (and other resources) properly. *Eling* and *Waspada* are intended as exercises for children, anticipating if in the future children would experience a difficult life, so the children can survive and succeed in the future.



Figure 2

Javanese family in traditional clothes and traditional Javanese houses

### *The Economic Basis of the Group*

Most Javanese people are farmers, earning income as cultivators of rice and other crops, either in their fields or as laborers hired to work in others' fields. In the research about natural commodities and resources of Indonesia, agriculture is very common because of Java's fertile volcanic soil, and the important agricultural commodity is rice. Durham further stated that in locations where the land is less fruitful due to the short rainy season, other

basic crops, such as cassava, are cultivated.<sup>35</sup> Farming families have more children than non-farming families because the number of children is identical to the number of workers who can help cultivate the fields.

Communities on the north and south coasts of the island of Java work as fishermen, but the number of farmers is more dominant than fishermen. Fishermen on the coast of Java still work traditionally. Although fishing is now more modern and organized for the preservation of marine life, most coastal communities still catch fish traditionally. Compared to agriculture and fisheries in other Southeast Asian countries, these two fields are still struggling to become the backbone of the regional and national economies because there are still the practices of middlemen who do not favor the interests of farmers and fishermen.

As a comparison, Mulder hypothesized that one reason why economic development in Indonesia has not progressed as rapidly is because the Javanese view of the material world is less positive. He argues that material accomplishment, or development in modern times, also means individual mobility, the upsetting of the harmonious social whole, frustrated feelings, and lack of a sense of social well-being.<sup>36</sup> Javanese society views development and modernization as something that leads to instability (outside of its comfort zone). The Javanese society, as a strong advocate of the value of harmony in society, considers that sometimes modernization and development are third parties that can disrupt the already stable harmony in society.

A real example is a Javanese society that adheres to the “*mangan ora mangan sing penting kumpul*,” which means that even if you do not have anything to eat (no money), the important thing is that the whole family gathers (at home). This mentality, on the one hand, is negatively charged because it does not allow the younger generation to go away from their

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<sup>35</sup> Ann Dunham, *Surviving Against the Odds: Village Industry in Indonesia* (Duke University Press, 1990).

<sup>36</sup> Niels Mulder, *Mysticism and Everyday Life in Contemporary Java: Cultural Persistence and Change*.

families and conquer the world. But on the other hand, it maintains harmony in the family. The departure of family members to distant places is considered to destroy the stability of the harmony that has been achieved.

### *The Worldview of Javanese People*

Emmanuel Kant describes “worldview” as a set of beliefs that serve as the foundation for and shape human thoughts and actions.<sup>37</sup> Albert M Wolters, a theologian, defined worldview as “the comprehensive framework of one’s basic beliefs about things.”<sup>38</sup> Hiebert defined “worldview” in anthropological terms as “the foundational cognitive, affective, and evaluative assumptions and frameworks that a group of people makes about the nature of reality and uses to organize their lives.”<sup>39</sup> So, “worldview” can be interpreted as how a community group uses all the abilities to think, feel, behave, and identify how they describe their group characteristics.

Frans Magnis Suseno, a Dutch scholar and Javanese social and cultural researcher, noted that attributes that help peaceful social integration are valued in Javanese society. Obedience to superiors (*manut*), charity, conflict avoidance, understanding of others, and empathy are examples of ideal human characteristics.<sup>40</sup> All these characteristics are maintained to keep harmony in the group (family, workplace, community). But in their own family, the Javanese are relatively free from such tensions, and Javanese relationships among family members should be based on unconditional love or *tresna*. Magnis Suseno emphasized that feelings of shyness or *isin/sungkan* should not be felt among family members; rather, family members should be free to express their emotions without fear of losing

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<sup>37</sup> James W. Sire, *Naming the Elephant: Worldview as a Concept* (Downer Grove: InterVarsity, 2009).

<sup>38</sup> Sire, *Naming the Elephant*.

<sup>39</sup> Paul G Hiebert, *Transforming Worldviews – An Anthropological Understanding of How People Change* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008).

<sup>40</sup> Frans Magnis-Suseno SJ, *Etika Jawa: Sebuah Analisa Falsafi Tentang Kebijaksanaan Hidup Jawa* (Jakarta: PT Gramedia, 1984).

family support, especially that of the parents.<sup>41</sup>

Jamilah discovered that the way Javanese people see the world is represented in their language, and through language, they pass on moral principles to the next generation. When the younger generation no longer speaks Javanese, they will undoubtedly miss the moral ideals entrenched in it.<sup>42</sup> This viewpoint was consistent with Yumarma's, as communication in Javanese can unify the various human persons and different structures in society into a whole community, in which everyone can be conscious of his or her place and position; but it also has the potential for misuse, as superiors or elders can use it to dominate their subordinates by preserving feelings of inferiority, which are facilitated by the structure of Javanese language.<sup>43</sup>

The Javanese's adaptation to the use of language demonstrates their cultural attachment through the use of language and spirit to maintain social harmony. Berman observed that, for cultural reasons, Javanese speakers whose first language is Javanese often consider themselves to be distinct from members of other ethnic groups in Indonesia and frequently prefer to converse with other Javanese people in Javanese, even though they can express themselves in Indonesian.<sup>44</sup> This fact shows that tolerance to maintain harmony is more important than anything else, including adapting the use of the mother tongue in various contexts and purposes.

### *How is the Leadership of the Group Manifested and Compromised?*

Even in family and society, harmony is ensured by conformity to a social hierarchy, economics, and business in which every person in society knows

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<sup>41</sup> Frans Magnis-Suseno SJ, *Etika Jawa: Sebuah Analisa Falsafi Tentang Kebijaksanaan Hidup Jawa* (Jakarta: PT Gramedia, 1984).

<sup>42</sup> Jamilah., "Have Young Javanese People Lost Their Cultural Identity?" (n.d.), [http://staffnew.uny.ac.id/upload/131763786 %0A%0A](http://staffnew.uny.ac.id/upload/131763786%0A%0A).

<sup>43</sup> Andreas Yumarma, *Unity in Diversity – A Philosophical and Ethical Study of Javanese Concept of Keselarasan* (Gregorian Biblical BookShop, 1996).

<sup>44</sup> L.A Berman, "First Person Identities in Indonesian Conversational Narratives," *Journal of Asian Pacific Communication* 3, no. 1 (2004): 3–14.

both his or her place and obligation in the social structure. In practice, Rademakers identified that harmony is expressed in obedience to superiors, generosity, conflict avoidance, understanding of others, and empathy in the workplace.<sup>45</sup> One of the special things about making decisions is that the Javanese people rarely vote. Javanese people prioritize discussion and a personal approach to getting consensus, where decisions are made by mutual agreement that involves all community members. The approach is taken informally, not formally. It is known as *musyawarah mufakat*, or discussion to reach an agreement.

A child believes that significant notions about organizational structures derive from cultural, religious, and political concerns. Cultural theory, in particular, states that the dominant cultural values in an organization significantly influence behavior and thinking within the organization.<sup>46</sup> It is comparable to what Hardy observed in other places and cultures; research of the decision-making process in Canadian universities suggested that the powerful individuals or groups in the decision-making processes were impacted by the established various traditions of the decision-making processes committed in the universities, rather than being solely subject to organizational hierarchies.<sup>47</sup> This fact recognizes that everyone's cultural background will affect people's attitudes and mindsets wherever they are. It also has a significant effect on formal interactions in the workplace, how the organizational structure is run, and how decisions are made in an organization. Cultural values will remain inherent in individuals and affect the process of interaction, both formally and informally.

According to Jarzabkowski, the issue of distributing power in decision-

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<sup>45</sup> Martijn F. L. Rademakers, "Market Organization in Indonesia: Javanese and Chinese Family Business in the Jamu Industry," *Organization Studies* 19 (6) (1998).

<sup>46</sup> John Child, "Culture, Contingency and Capitalism in the Cross-National Study of Organizations," *Organizational Behavior*, Vol. 3, 1981.

<sup>47</sup> Cynthia Hardy, "Strategy and Context: Retrenchment in Canadian Universities," *Organization Studies* 11 (2) (1980).

making in organizations is not easily managed by formalizing organizational structures but rather tends to follow practices from the organizational environment accepted by individuals involved in decision-making.<sup>48</sup> As Foreign Affairs in Indonesia has observed, Javanese society is very hierarchical, with what appear to be large power gaps between each level within a social structure.<sup>49</sup> So, even in a professional work context, harmony is still applied in communicating politely and respectfully to elders in the organization and using language standards that are under the norms in Javanese society. According to Nadar, Javanese etiquette requires a person to first know the exact standing of the other person before engaging in an interaction. The higher a member of a Javanese community's rank, the more authority they hold. This authority is possibly visible in the manifestation of Javanese speech levels.<sup>50</sup>

In informal contexts, Javanese society is connected with patriarchy and an authoritarian decision-making style. The male is the supreme authority and the highest-ranking member of the family, clan, and tribe in a patriarchal society.<sup>51</sup> The most respected leaders in Javanese society are men and elders. These two things are prerequisites for leadership widely accepted in society. As Sagie discovered in her research on how culture influenced decision-making in an organization, seniority fostered a sense that older people were more skilled and knowledgeable in decision-making.<sup>52</sup> Santoso

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<sup>48</sup> Paula Jarzabkowski, *Strategy as Practice, an Activity-Based Approach* (London: Sage Publications, 2005).

<sup>49</sup> Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, "Doing Business in Indonesia, from a Western Perspective," *Canberra: East Asia Analytical Unit, Dept. of Foreign Affairs and Trade*, last modified 2001, <https://kemlu.go.id/download.%0A%0A>.

<sup>50</sup> FX Nadar, "The Prominent Characteristics of Javanese Culture and Their Reflection in Language Use."

<sup>51</sup> Hyangjin Lee, *Contemporary Korean Cinema: Identity, Culture, and Politics* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001).

<sup>52</sup> Sagie Abraham and Aycan Zeynep, "A Cross-Cultural Analysis of Participative Decision Making in Organizations," *Human Relation Journal* 56, no. 4 (2003): 462,

strengthens this claim by using the same research topic about decision-making in this situation to determine that obedience or loyalty to the senior male person is essential in resolving disagreement.<sup>53</sup>

### *The Threats to the Survival of the Group*

Bryant Myers outlines several reasons why it is critical to understand a community's survival system, one of which is the necessity to see the world as the community sees itself.<sup>54</sup> Some things that can be listed as to how Javanese form a survival system in the community in their daily lives are:

#### ***Slametan.***

*Slametan* was influenced by syncretism before Islam and Christianity entered Java Island. *Slametan* is a ritual to ask for salvation for human souls who are facing (or have passed) a stage of life, for example, *mitoni* (asking for a blessing for a mother who will give birth to a baby), salvation for a person who has died, asking God to accept someone's soul, and another form of *slametan* which until now is still practiced by the Javanese people. Geertz identified almost all occasions of religious significance.<sup>55</sup>

#### ***Kampung.***

Javanese prefer to identify themselves as members of their villages called "*kampung*." Most Javanese villages are divided into smaller units known as either "*rukun kampung*" (village mutual assistance association) or "*rukun tetangga*" (neighborhoods association). According to Kuncjaringrat, "*rukun tetangga*" and *rukun kampung* can be viewed as social systems that share collective acts in which members participate in family

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[https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1177/0018726703056004003 %0A%0A](https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1177/0018726703056004003%0A%0A).

<sup>53</sup> Budi Santoso, "The Influences of Javanese Culture in Power of Making Decision in Indonesian Universities: Case Studies in MM Programs."

<sup>54</sup> Bryants L. Myers, *Walking with The Poor—Principles and Practices of Transformational Development* (New York: Orbis Books, 2011).

<sup>55</sup> Geertz, *The Interpretation of Culture*.

rituals such as “*arisan*” (rotating credit associations).<sup>56</sup>

The social system in the *kampong* is organized in a socially hierarchical manner so that every *kampong* member receives community protection in all aspects of life. Some of the rules covered in the *kampong* system are environmental security systems, volunteers to help preserve *Slametan* tradition, emergency assistance from neighbors in all matters, shelters, and community mobilization when natural disasters occur. As Kuntjoroningrat wrote, the Javanese frequently use the following phrase to describe the relationship between close neighbors: “If there is only a little, (each) will receive little, but if there is much, (each) will receive a big share.”<sup>57</sup>

### ***Gotong Royong.***

*Gotong royong* means “mutual help,” and *rukun tangga* means “the bond of households.” In other terms, *gotong royong* is similar to *sambatan*. Regarding *gotong royong* or mutual help, there is an institution called *sambatan*, which, through ethnography study, formerly provided mutual help among neighbors in corporate functions, such as building or repairing someone’s house, participating in celebrations, or cooperating in farming.<sup>58</sup>

*Gotong royong* is defined as working together voluntarily to help neighbors or relatives who are in trouble. *Gotong royong* is not only a characteristic of Javanese society but also a characteristic of Indonesian society. Until now, *gotong royong* is still being carried out as part of solidarity and empathy for those who are experiencing difficulties in life. *Gotong royong* is intended to help and lighten the burden.

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<sup>56</sup> Koentjaraningrat., *A Preliminary Description of the Javanese Kinship System. Southeast Asian Studies, Cultural Report Series*, first ed. (USA: Yale University, Southeast Asia Studies, 1957).

<sup>57</sup> Koentjaraningrat, *Javanese Culture* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1985).

<sup>58</sup> “Kebudayaan Jawa,” in *Seri Etnografi Indonesia No.2* (Jakarta: Balai Pustaka, 1984).

## The Analysis of “Progressive-Prone” Versus “Progressive-Resistance”

### *Religious Orientation and Believe System*

Since its beginning, Java has been a melting pot of religions and cultures, which has created a broad range of religious beliefs, including animism, spirit cults, and cosmology, named *kejawèn*. According to Mulders and Niels, *kejawèn* was derived from the Javanese language, culture, and religious beliefs and practices of the Javanese of Central and East Java. It is not a religious category but rather an ethic and way of life influenced by Javanese thought.<sup>59</sup>

Mulder stated that Javanese cosmology is the Javanese philosophy of life regarding the deepest nature of the cosmos, which is still tied to the spirituality of harmony in society.<sup>60</sup> Harmony is not just life on earth, but more than that, a cosmic harmony in the universe. Javanese people believe that the cosmic system is connected to the transcendent and becomes a supernatural force in the universe (and human life). Pamungk has stated that, due to the similarity of these essential aspects, harmony between macrocosm and microcosm must always be maintained. It is a Javanese way of life that defines the cosmos as a sacred entity.<sup>61</sup> On the other hand, from a Muslim perspective, Waston identified that the Javanese people think that the universe belongs to God (in faith). In other words, the universe, humanity, and God are all the same things. As a result, they believe that the nature of human life is *manunggaling kawula-Gusti*, or the nature of humanity’s unity with God.<sup>62</sup> Finally, it can be concluded that for the Javanese

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<sup>59</sup> Mulder, *Mysticism in Java*.

<sup>60</sup> Niels Mulder, *Mistisisme Jawa* (Yogyakarta: LKIS, 2001).

<sup>61</sup> Onok Y. Pamungkas and friends, *Javanese Cosmology: Symbolic Transformation of Names in Javanese Novels*, n.d.

<sup>62</sup> W Waston, “BuildingPeace Through Mystic Philosophy: Study on the Role of Sunan Kalijaga in Java,” *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 8, no. 2 (1982): 301–302, <https://doi.org/10.18326/ijims.v8i2.281-308%0A%0A>.

people, the life of the universe and the humans in it exist in a large system controlled by The Transcendent, who regulates and determines the harmony in the universe and on earth. This belief is identified through the history of syncretistic beliefs and then proceeds with the various religions that entered Java in the early centuries.

The next major influence upon Javanese religion is Islam, which is strongly influenced by Islamic mysticism. The Javanese seek hardship and suffering deliberately for religious reasons. Fasting, known as *tirakat*, is one of the mystical rituals adapted to Islamic rituals under the impact of syncretism, according to Kuntjoroningrat.<sup>63</sup> *Tirakat* is different from the fasting known in Islam. The principle is the same: no eating or drinking until the fast is broken; however, *tirakat* is more about self-training to live in simplicity and learning to gain good self-control from the world's lusts. *Tirakat* is done every Monday and Thursday for a period that can be arranged (not limited), with the aim of living a concerned life and being able to control oneself in all things. Kuntjoroningrat went on to say that *tirakat* is appropriate in any crucial circumstance, such as when facing a tough situation, going through a crisis in one's family life, job, or social relationships, or when the entire community is going through a terrible time.<sup>64</sup>

As the majority religion of the Javanese people, Islam is divided into three major groups of adherents: *santri*, *abangan*, and *priyayi*. The *santri* are devoted Muslims, the *abangan* are nominal Muslims or Kejawen followers, and the *priyayi* are nobility.<sup>65</sup> Based on these categories, the *priyayi* are not included as a religious category but are only related to a social class.

The *santri* is a group of adherents of Islam who carry out Islamic reli-

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<sup>63</sup> Koentjaraningrat, *A Preliminary Description of the Javanese Kinship System*. Southeast Asian Studies, Cultural Report Series (New Haven, Conn, 1957).

<sup>64</sup> Koentjaraningrat, *A Preliminary Description of the Javanese Kinship System*. Southeast Asian Studies, Cultural Report Series (New Haven, Conn, 1957).

<sup>65</sup> Hamish McDonald, *Suharto's Indonesia* (Melbourne: Fontana, 1980).

gious traditions consistently and seriously. This group understands everything about Islam, and (usually) since childhood, they have received *pesantren* education, starting with basic, secondary, and high education in Islamic boarding schools. This school has a curriculum of religious courses larger than other science subjects. Meanwhile, Muslim *abangan* is a group of Muslims who only identify themselves as Muslims but do not consistently practice Islamic law. It is like people who claim to be religious just to show that they have one but do not understand or practice Islam in their daily lives. For most Javanese villagers, Islam was simply part of their attitude toward the world seen and the world unseen. Maggay described in her research that Islam was not a religion or sect in the sense of being an ideology and a defined social allegiance so much as a vocabulary by which people defined the sacred forces in everyday life.<sup>66</sup>

*The Indigenous Religious Beliefs, Symbols, Rituals, Ceremonies, and Institutions*

Van der Kroef stated that Hinduism and Buddhism penetrated deeply into all aspects of society, blending with the indigenous tradition and culture.<sup>67</sup> This is because, based on chronology, these two religions came earlier than Islam and Christianity. Java adopted Islam around 1500 CE, as Van Bruinessen wrote about the chronology.<sup>68</sup> The learned versions of *Sufi* Islam and *Shari'a*-oriented Islam were integrated into the courts, blending with the rituals and myths of the existing Hindu-Buddhist culture. Following that, Van Bruinessen stated that Islam was initially welcomed by the elites and top echelons of society, which helped in its spread and acceptance. Su-

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<sup>66</sup> Melba Padilla Maggay, "Culture, Context and Worldview" (Manila, 2022).

<sup>67</sup> Justus M Van der Kroef, "New Religious Sects in Java," *Far Eastern Survey* 30, no. 2 (1961): 18.

<sup>68</sup> Martin van Bruinessen, "Muslims, Minorities, and Modernity: The Restructuring of Heterodoxy in the Middle East and Southeast Asia," 2000.

fism and other forms of Folk Islam blended in most easily with Java's existing folk religion.<sup>69</sup>

About the Christian history in Java island, Aritonang explained the important point that there were Christian communities on Indonesian soil before the arrival of the Portuguese.<sup>70</sup> There were no indigenous Javanese Christian communities in the first half of the nineteenth century. Additionally, there were no coordinated and ongoing missionary operations.<sup>71</sup> The real beginning of Javanese Christianity started with some local initiatives by Eurasians. The Christians were obliged to attend Sunday morning worship, as well as the midweek meeting in private houses.<sup>72</sup>

The history and track record of the journey of Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, and Christianity are recorded in various symbols in the form of works of art, rituals, traditions, and behavior of the Javanese people. Rene Padilla stated that the "gospel" is not unconditioned by culture. The actual religion of a people is a product of interaction between the formal tradition and its historical and cultural appropriations.<sup>73</sup> According to Hans Kung, it requires space, which means brick and mortar, which costs money. Its relationship to these symbols is deliberately built to strengthen the characteristics of each religion that is absorbed through various forms of art and cultural products of the community. Similar to this idea, according to Renard, visible expressions of institutions in the life of significant religious communities often warrant special attention to the aesthetic and symbolic qualities that make a structure into a work of monumental art.<sup>74</sup>

For example, churches on Java Island today adopt elements of original

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<sup>69</sup> Bruinessen, "Muslims, Minorities, and Modernity."

<sup>70</sup> Aritonang and Steenbrink, *A History of Christianity in Indonesia*.

<sup>71</sup> Aritonang and Steenbrink, *A History of Christianity in Indonesia*.

<sup>72</sup> Aritonang and Steenbrink, *A History of Christianity in Indonesia*.

<sup>73</sup> Magay, "Culture, Context and Worldview."

<sup>74</sup> John Renard, *Islam, and Christianity* (Berkeley: University of California Press,

Javanese architecture rather than Western architecture, as do mosques. The church in Bali does not look like a church building at all but like a temple for Hindu worship. When compared to Western architecture, the architectural form of houses of worship that adopts local Javanese content is seen as more familiar and friendly, easily accepted by non-Christian communities for native Javanese people.

One more example is the influence of Hinduism, which eventually became a Javanese tradition in *wayang* performances. *Wayang* is a kind of flat doll made of animal skin and created according to the figures of the *Mahabharata* story. *Wayang* is played by a *dalang*, whose job is to tell stories (about Javanese beliefs and values) to the listeners. The *dalang* tells the story while moving the puppets and changing them from one character to another. *Wayang* performances are used as a medium to educate community groups. The *Wayang* section will be explored more deeply in the next explanation.

*The Form has Christianity Expressed Itself and the Perception or Attitude of the Majority towards Christianity*

The author will provide a comprehensive view of the perceptions of Christianity in Javanese society (Yogyakarta city) so that readers can get a balanced and complete picture of this. Some things that need to be understood in connection with the perception formed are:

1. Generally, Christianity is viewed as the religion of the colonizers. This is understandable because of the history of the entry of Christianity into Indonesia, along with Dutch colonialism. Christianity is considered a product of the West and not native to Indonesia. This is a difficult situation for Christians in Indonesia, particularly in the predominantly Muslim city of Yogyakarta. Lerner noted that the majority of the indigenous population believes that Christianity is a colonialist religion and a legacy of the colonial era that is not established in Indonesian culture.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Daniel Lerner, *Memudarnya Masyarakat Tradisional*, Gajah Mada. (Yogyakarta,

2. Socially, because Christians are a minority, the lives of Christians tend to be highlighted by society. Mistakes made by Christians tend to cause more severe social pressure than when the same thing is experienced by the majority. As a minority, Christians are more likely to succumb and forgive socially. Resistance will cause turmoil in society and has the potential to lead to religious conflict. This should be avoided.

3. Aside from the issues raised above, Christians were the originators of health and education services in the city. These actions had a significant impact on shaping the public's opinion of Christians. The public health organizations were not the same but were the outcome of cultural contact in human civilization from a different period. According to the Yogyakarta book, in general, there was a transformation effort in human activities, and it affected the existing social structures and behavior of a community.<sup>76</sup>

The list below identified some hospitals and schools that have been giving service to the community for many years.

a. *Onder de Bogen* was built in 1925. Currently, it has become the largest Christian school in Yogyakarta. At the beginning of its mission, this school not only provided a good education for the community but also managed to reach many souls to receive the good news. Since that time, Christian schools have been built, starting with kindergartens, elementary schools, junior high schools, senior high schools, and even universities that provide good competency and well-character education for students. Christian schools in Yogyakarta have a very good reputation. As a result, there is a social stigma that if you want the best education, you should attend a Christian school.

b. *Zendingsziekenhuis Petronella* was built in 1899. People at that time knew the school as "Doctor" *Pitulungan* (Doctor Help). This health service was originally part of the church's service to the community (Javanese

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1983).

<sup>76</sup> *Sejarah Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta* (Jakarta, 1993), <http://repositori.kemdikbud.go.id/>.

Christian Church).<sup>77</sup> This first hospital in Yogyakarta was originally a leprosy hospital, but it later expanded to become the city's largest hospital. At the beginning of its establishment, the health services provided by this hospital dominated the community's need for health. The existence of missionaries who were also health workers had a significant influence on reaching many people for God at that time. A good stigma in society is that Christianity connotes a character who is willing to help voluntarily. After this period, many Christian hospitals were established, as well as Islamic hospitals.

c. The missionary initiatives in the field of medical care fared better because they served the population as a whole. Here, too, initially, it was the individual missionaries who started giving medical treatment. They had received elementary medical training before leaving for the mission field. Often, they used home medicine. Several hospitals and well-equipped medical personnel were overseen by missionaries from the Netherlands. The latter were sent by churches in the Netherlands but also included educated Indonesians. Also, several schools were opened.

*The Dynamic Equivalence, Redemptive Metaphors that Link the Culture Implicitly to Christianity*

In this section, the author discusses dynamic equivalence and redemptive metaphors that link the culture implicitly to Christianity. The principles of redemptive metaphors will be based on Dr. Maggay and Dr. Tink's course about Culture, Context, and Worldview, and then the author will draw a line of contextualization that occurs in Javanese society at every point.

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<sup>77</sup> *Sejarah Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta* (Jakarta, 1993), <http://repositori.kemdikbud.go.id/>.



Figure 3  
The Integral Mission

Maggay and Tink explained that the redemptive work of Christ on the cross is related to the **integral mission**, which includes **The Three C's** below:<sup>78</sup>

### **The Cultural Mandate** (Creational Dimension)

The cultural mandate is given from the biblical perspective in Genesis 1:26-28.

**26** Then God said, "Let us *make mankind in our image, in our likeness*, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

**27** So God *created* mankind in his image, in the image of God he *created* them; male and female he *created* them.

**28** God blessed them and said to them, "*Be fruitful and increase* in number; fill the earth and subdue it. *Rule over* the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the

<sup>78</sup> Maggay, "Culture, Context and Worldview."

ground.”

As Dr. Maggay explained in the course, this section contains a cultural mandate about the new heaven and new earth. It is the story of creative growth and progression: the human story moves from the “garden” to the “city” of new earth. It is the story of creative growth and progression: the human story moves from the “garden” to the “city,” from old to “new” Jerusalem. Similarly, the closer cultural elements are to providing answers to ultimate questions of meaning, purpose, or the nature of God, the more they serve as an integrating influence on the entire culture. In Christ, we are a “new creation,” not merely recycled or restored but increasingly “conformed to the image of his Son,” the new Adam (2 Corinthians 5:17, Romans 8:18-25). We bear the image of the “man of dust” and the “man of heaven” (1 Corinthians 15: 49).

This tension between the “old” and “new” Adam in us accounts for the “two steps forward, one step backward” movement in Paul’s teaching on relationships: “In Jesus, there is neither Jew nor Greek, male nor female, slave nor free,” and all are to “submit to one another out of reverence for Christ”; yet “wives, submit to your husbands,” and “slaves, obey your masters.” There are things rich and strange, like the wolf and the lamb grazing together or a city with no need of sun or moon, but also, the “kings of the earth” will bring the splendor and glory of the nations into the new Jerusalem (Isaiah 65:17-25; Revelation 21:22-26). Finally, the professor concluded, “This is our Father’s world, and all creation waits with eager longing for our revealing as sons and daughters of God.”<sup>79</sup>

The new vision of heaven and earth is recognized by the Javanese people as a prosperous and peaceful world under the reign of Ratu Adil (a king who rules justly). Ratu Adil was understood by the Javanese people as a “savior” figure, a future leader who would bring the people to a prosperous and peaceful state. This condition speaks of a time in the future that would have been fulfilled (based on the prediction of King Jayabaya) centuries ago.

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<sup>79</sup> Maggay, “Culture, Context and Worldview.”

Until now, the Javanese people still believe in and wait for the arrival of *Ratu Adil*. Based on the missiology perspective, the point about *Ratu Adil* is often used as a mission bridge in contextualization and is relatively easy to understand when talking about the “savior.”

### The Great Commandment (Relational Dimension)

The great commandment gives the biblical perspective in Matthew 22:34-40.

34 Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. 35 One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question:

36 “Teacher, which is *the greatest commandment in the Law?*”

37 Jesus replied: “*Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.*” 38 This is the first and greatest commandment.

39 And the second is like it: ‘*Love your neighbor as yourself.*’

40 All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

The great commandment essentially means the restoration of relations between humans and God and between humans and others, where **forgiveness** and **reconciliation** are the starting points.

The principle of forgiveness and reconciliation is very relevant for Javanese people who uphold harmony in life. All of a person’s actions and decisions are always aimed at achieving harmony in thoughts and feelings, as well as harmony in society, even if someone has to sacrifice for the realization of harmony. Therefore, the Javanese easily forgive. The character traits of surrender and sincerity are very strong in the Javanese; this helps the Javanese live peacefully side by side with other people.

**The Great Commission** (Transformational Dimension)

The great commission is given as the biblical perspective in Matthew 28:16-20.

**16** Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go.

**17** When they saw him, they worshiped him, but some doubted.

**18** Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

**19** Therefore *go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,*

**20** and *teaching them to obey* everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

The great commission primarily contains the responsibility of believers to transform and carry forward the transformation that was done via national discipleship.<sup>80</sup> Bryant stated that because God is working out God’s redemptive purposes in spiritual, physical, and social realms, this also means that we are God’s agents of redemption. When we work for transformational development, we are working as God’s hands and feet.<sup>81</sup>

The following section explores the impact of these in the Javanese community in the city of Yogyakarta. Yogyakarta is a city with various ethnic backgrounds. As an educational city, Yogyakarta is the center of study in Indonesia. The society is very diverse, and Yogyakarta is a dynamic and advanced urban city. As a city that is the basis of higher education in Indonesia, Yogyakarta has special characteristics where the community has an open-minded character that makes it easy to adapt and accept new things; it has a high level of tolerance and is not easily provoked or intimidated by issues that are not crucial. These characteristics are prerequisites for the success of a transformation in a community group. Based on this fact, it can be concluded that the Javanese people in Yogyakarta as a community easily

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<sup>80</sup> Maggay, “Culture, Context and Worldview.”

<sup>81</sup> Myers, *Walking with The Poor*.

adapt and transform according to the demands of the times.

*The Roadblocks (Political, Institutional, Cultural, Sociological) to the Acceptance of Christianity*

Several roadblocks prevent Christianity from being properly interpreted in Yogyakarta or among the Javanese. So, even though the Javanese people are very welcoming, friendly, easy to forgive, open-minded, and can live with differences (they are highly tolerant), it is very difficult to remove the negative stigma about Christianity among the Javanese people. Some things can be explained as follows:

**Historically**, the development of Christianity in Indonesia, which was full of the involvement of people from the West (traders, invaders, and missionaries), has resulted in the negative stigma in the minds of the majority of the indigenous population that Christianity is the religion of the colonialists. Three hundred fifty years of suffering under Dutch colonialism did not easily erase this stigma. Christianity is a religion that has had a bad impact on society.

**Politically**, there is not much space for minorities (including Christians) to take part in national and local government. Political policy in Indonesia tends to favor the majority vote, and the percentage is determined by an electoral vote. For a Christian, there are very high criteria for being a government leader.

**Culturally**, not many obstructions were found. This is because, culturally, Javanese people are very welcome and friendly and love to build relationships with other people. In terms of values and beliefs, there are many similarities between Javanese culture and Christianity. Many bridges can be used to reach Javanese people for Christ through a good cultural contextualization process.

**Sociologically**, there are not many opportunities and bridges to be found in society. Nowadays, because of the influence of social media, politics, and easy communication, many hoaxes have negative consequences and contribute to society's stigma against Christians. Coupled with identity

politics, which have resulted in society becoming increasingly fragmented and intolerant in this decade, the bad example given by Christian figures adds tension to this aspect. Aritonang gave an example of two aspects that have been emphasized: self-support and self-activation of the congregations and urban or rural development. The medical work of the churches (hospitals, small clinics) continued to function well, as did the educational program. Continuing the latter project became more difficult in the 1980s as government regulations tightened, Islamic schools and hospitals became more competitive, and subventions from Western partner churches and organizations decreased.<sup>82</sup>

Without underestimating other aspects, cultural bridges are more likely to be a means of contextualization and transformation than other aspects.

*The Unique “Christian” Beliefs or Practices Held Within Any Expressions of Christianity in the Culture*

There are several elements of unique Christian beliefs that are relevant to Javanese culture and considered to be the starting point for establishing relationships and instilling influence in Javanese society. Discussing the unique Christian beliefs, whether in the form of oral or literate culture and how the Gospel is most accessible to this society will be very relevant to how this uniqueness affects how these values and beliefs have penetrated Javanese society.

*The Degree Christianity Penetrated the Group*

Rene Padilla wrote about the existence of the Gospel between culture and mission. The Gospel does not come from the people but from God. Its entrance into the world necessarily leads to conflict. Its presence alone means a crisis between God and false gods, between light and darkness, and between truth and error.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Aritonang and Steenbrink, *A History of Christianity in Indonesia*.

<sup>83</sup> C. Rene Padilla, *Mission Between the Times* (Grand Rapids Michigan: Langham

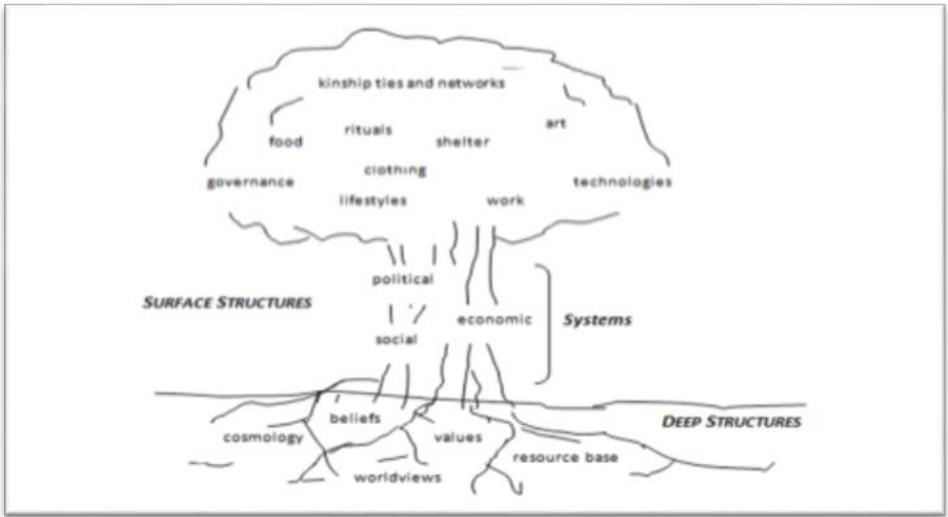


Figure 4  
Cultural Degree

In her lecture, Melba Maggay stated that there are two degrees where Christianity penetrates community groups: surface structure and deep structure.<sup>84</sup> Both are equally important, but penetration is done through a different approach. The approach taken to influence the surface structure is different from the approach taken to change the deep structure. Changing the deep structure is done by giving impulses to things that change beliefs, values, world views, cosmology, and the base of human resources. The transformation that occurs at the deep structural level is very basic and can transform the surface structure. The surface structure is expressed through various attitudes and behaviors that appear from the community, which originate from the deep structure. So, changes in the deep structure become the priority and first step in changing society, whether changes in belief systems or values.

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Monographs, 2010).

<sup>84</sup> Maggay, "Culture, Context and Worldview."

Beginning here, the author will concentrate on changing the deep structure by demonstrating how *wayang*, a Javanese tradition, can be used as a bridge to change the value system, belief system, and world views of Javanese society. This is based on the fact that:

1. *Wayang* is considered the original culture and tradition of Java, accepted as part of the hereditary culture by the community, and has become part of the life of the Javanese people. There is no rejection of *wayang* performances for any reason.
2. In *wayang* performances, almost 100% of the material presented in the story is about teaching rooted in Javanese philosophy.
3. *Wayang* aims to change people's thoughts, perspectives, and behaviors under the norms and ethics of Javanese society. The goal of teaching is to guide people down the right path. Maggay stated that we are to treat our ancient religions not so much as "wrong" but as "shadows" of the real thing that is to come.

All cultures have a sacrificial system and shamanic visions that, at their best, are merely "dark speech" but find fulfillment in Christ.<sup>85</sup> In *wayang* performances, all these elements are met. This performance is about "shadow" puppets enjoyed by the audience. The teaching material is also about bringing people to the right path, which is the story of Baratayudha and Mahabharata, which are just "shadows" of the real human need (eternal salvation). According to Wiryoamarto, the concept of the Javanese world is likely invisible from the tale of *muwakala* (the origin of time), which is usually used for the opening segment of a shadow puppet show (*wayang*). The origin of kala is viewed by the Javanese as the beginning of a new period free of turmoil, starvation, impurity, disorder, and suffering. *Bhawana* or *jagad* (world) is believed to have arisen from the darkness known as *sukerta* (anguish, agony, and torment).<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Maggay, "Culture, Context and Worldview."

<sup>86</sup> Bagoes Wiryoamartono, *Javanese Culture and the Meaning of Locality - Studies on the Art, Polity, and Society* (London: Lexington Book, 2016).

### *How the Worldview Influenced Penetration of Authentic Christianity Within This Culture*

As a community that loves *wayang*, Javanese people are very enthusiastic about *wayang* performances. This is understandable, given that a *wayang* performance is an event that brings people together regardless of social status. In *wayang* performances, the social barrier is only divided into two: the *dalang* as director, the person who plays and tells stories using *wayang*, and the audience. While enjoying a puppet show, the entire audience is brought together regardless of social class. The audience enthusiastically and carefully listened to the teachings about the values of life delivered by the *dalang* (in English, “to teach”).

*Wayang* performances are used as a medium to educate community groups. Yumarma stated that the entire *wayang* performance is also linked with moral and religious teaching, known as *piwulang*.<sup>87</sup> Through the stories of Mahabharata and Bharatayudha, the audience is taught the values and beliefs of the Javanese, who strive for a harmonious life. Achieving harmony is always faced with challenges that require a person to be noble and sublime, defeat evil with good, and uphold good morals in society. Through *wayang* performances, community character is formed, relationships with God are improved, and relationships with others are strengthened through togetherness.

Politically, the government often holds *wayang* performances to persuade the public to take action or choose a candidate for a particular leader on election day. This means that *wayang* has begun to shift its role from educating the public about forming character to becoming a tool for the political interests of a particular group. This shows how *wayang* plays a very important role in directing and shaping people’s perceptions. This idea is well captured with the conclusion that the most valuable aspect of the performance is its capacity as the spiritual messenger of the Javanese ideals

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<sup>87</sup> Andreas Yumarma, *Unity in Diversity—A Philosophical and Ethical Study of Javanese Concept of Keselarasan*.

of ethics and aesthetics. Regarding this capacity, political leaders and their ideological machinery try to use *wayang* performance for their political interests and agenda.<sup>88</sup> Because *wayang* has a very crucial role, *wayang* performances are often used as a propaganda tool for *da'wah* (by Islamic religious leaders to the people). On the other hand, evangelistic institutions and churches also often use *wayang* for the same purpose: to educate the public, provide information, shape perceptions, and preach the good news (evangelism). The ideals inherent in *wayang* performances, according to Sunardi, include religious, ethical, and aesthetic qualities that are recognized as references for community action.<sup>89</sup>

Martohadmodjo was a vigorous and independent member and elder of Yogyakarta's Gondokusuman congregation. He conducted *wayang* performances in his garden, which irritated native Christians and missionaries. During the 1960s and 1970s, for example, attempts were made to use *wayang* performances based on Bible stories as a means of evangelizing. Despite its success, the authentic shadow play elements are from the Hindu tradition, in which noble characters combat each other above the Christian *wayang wahyu!*<sup>90</sup> *Wayang Wahyu* is a type of *wayang* performance aimed at evangelizing the Javanese community.

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<sup>88</sup> Bagoes Wiryomartono, *Javanese Culture and the Meaning of Locality - Studies on the Art, Polity, and Society*.

<sup>89</sup> Sunardi, "Model Pengembangan Wayang Untuk Generasi Muda," *Lakon – Jurnal Pengkajian dan Pengembangan Wayang* 8, no. 1 (2016): 49, <https://jurnal.isiska.ac.id/index.php/lakon/article/view/2161/2288>.

<sup>90</sup> Aritonang and Steenbrink, *A History of Christianity in Indonesia*.



Figure 5  
The Dalang is telling a story using *wayang*

In the field of visual arts and dance, the name of Bagong Kussudiardjo (1928–2004), a well-known painter and choreographer in Yogyakarta, has to be mentioned here.<sup>91</sup> *Wayang* performances cannot be separated from the art of dance. In between *wayang* performances, Javanese dances are performed to complete the story of the *dalang*. The dance is done by telling a story through the art of motion. Bagong Kusudiarjo, a Christian artist, creates many dances that contain Christian philosophy, which is used as a means of preaching the gospel to the Javanese people.

Santoso and Bagus linked *wayang* performance to evangelism and noted that in Javanese community arts, particularly in Central Java, East Java, and Yogyakarta, there are various types of puppet shows called *wayang*, such as

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<sup>91</sup> Masao Takenaka, “Christian Art in Asia The Seashore Is the Meeting Ground of Time and Eternity. In Memoriam of Bagong Kussudiardja,” in *Image. Christ and Art in Asia*, 2004, 4–5.

*wayang golek* and *wayang klithik*.<sup>92</sup> Fariza went on to say that in order for people to communicate with one another, culture must provide a means of communication and construct facilities that can serve as a model for society's behavior based on the demands of the community.<sup>93</sup> So, it can be said that the teaching gained from *wayang* performances becomes a parameter of Javanese behavior and morals. Once the story told by the *dalang* is reliable, *wayang* performances can achieve their goals as a benchmark for people's behavior. Abdulah found that in Javanese philosophy, good and bad are inseparable from human existence, manifested in diverse desires, and associated with the four passions: *mutmainah*, *amarah*, *lawwamah*, and *supiah*. Good intentions (*mutmainah*) will always be met with negative intentions (*lawwamah*, *supiah*), expressed in human behavior. Therefore, Arifin affirmed that there is a basic ability to be religious in every human being,<sup>94</sup> so that the teaching in *wayang* is enough to be a stimulus for the community to live according to the norms, ethics, and rules that apply. Darmoko concluded by saying that in this context, it may be claimed that humans can exist because they are accompanied by passions, but that these passions must be controlled so that they do not run wild and lead to anger.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Trisno Santoso and Bagus Wahyu Setyawan, "Wayang Golek Menak: Wayang Puppet Show as Visualization Media of Javanese Literature," in *Seminar and Workshop on Research Design, for Education, Social Science, Arts, and Humanities, SEWORD FRESH*, 2019, 2, <https://eudl.eu/doi/>.

<sup>93</sup> Fariza Wahyu Arizal, "The Ethno Photography of Krucil Puppet Art," *JoLLA: Journal of Language, Literature, and Arts* 1, no. 4 (2021): 477.

<sup>94</sup> H.M Arifin, *Menguak Misteri Ajaran Agama-Agama Besar* (Jakarta: PT Golden Terayon, 1986).

<sup>95</sup> Darmoko, "Moralitas Jawa Dalam Wayang Kulit Purwa – Tinjauan Pada Lakon Laire Semar," *Darmoko* 5, no. 2 (2015): 122, <http://paradigma.ui.ac.id/index.php/paradigma/article/view/52/pdf>.

What “Christianizing” of Javanese Culture Looks Like

Maggay stated,

Where there is no concept of the universal sovereignty of God, there is no repentance, and where there is no repentance, there is no salvation. Christian salvation is . . . liberation from the world as a closed system, from the world that has room only for God bound by sociology, from the “consistent” world that rules out God’s free . . . the gospel, then, is a call not only to faith but also repentance, to break with the world.<sup>96</sup>

Essentially, Javanese society needs salvation. In Javanese’s understanding of their own culture, *Ratu Adil*, the philosophy of truth that always wins against evil, harmony that is always the goal of life, and *Kejawen* (the application of Javanese tradition) that leads to a prosperous life—all are just interpretations of a real need: salvation. The figures that the Javanese have been waiting for to bring society to a just and prosperous world order are only “shadows” of the only Savior of mankind: Jesus Christ.

As Maggay wrote,

It is not surprising that any criticism of evangelism should fall on deaf ears or be interpreted as a lack of interest in the propagation of the gospel . . . “Christianize” the world through the scientific control of the environmental condition and human genetics, but the facts on the ground (Javanese society) are not that simple.<sup>97</sup>

In the Islamic community, the most dominant identity politics that sharpens differences and obscures diversity, “Christianizing” is seen as a dangerous movement and must be anticipated.

Every action taken by Christians, both personally and organizationally, is seen as an attempt to Christianize by certain community groups that are overly sensitive to non-Muslims. As a result, the church must be cautious

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<sup>96</sup> Padilla, *Mission Between the Times*.

<sup>97</sup> Maggay, “Culture, Context and Worldview.”

and wise in determining the steps of evangelism so that it is not perceived as Christianizing others. Many cases of religious conflict occur in Indonesia, and the Christian side has never won this case. Many cases of intolerance occur in Indonesia and Yogyakarta, but Christians are too cautious to take steps so as not to cause friction in society, which ends up harming themselves. In many ways, the acts of Christians to reach non-believers are very limited. It takes wisdom, courage, and special strategies in every context to be able to reach the soul without causing a commotion in society.

### *The 5% of the Culture that Needed to be Transformed*

Maggay stated that from a missiology perspective, it is estimated that only 5% of cultures need to be challenged and judged, but these tend to be central structures.<sup>98</sup> As an insider, I observed that Javanese society is essentially a cultured society, friendly, welcoming, adaptable, easy to accept change, and easy to teach and transform. However, the bad practical political influence in the past two decades has brought a shift in people's values and beliefs. Coupled with the influence of globalization, which led to modernization, it also erodes the authenticity of cultural values, so there is a shift in values, norms, and ethics in society.

Religious behavior (Islam), which is increasingly oriented towards the radicalism movement and tends to erode the sense of nationalism, is one of the phenomena that influence the Javanese people's perspective and behavior. Through the influence of identity politics, Muslims are increasingly establishing themselves as part of a Muslim community that is intolerant, difficult to tolerate, and difficult to live in diversity. This massive movement started with the opposition group that lost the general election. The president-elect in Indonesia has always been a nationalist. He puts forward the spirit of unity in diversity and is supported by nationalist groups. As part of the political dynamics, the opposition groups position themselves as non-nationalist groups that try to undermine people's nationalism through massive radical movements. Many acts of human rights violations in Yogyakarta

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<sup>98</sup> Magay, "Culture, Context and Worldview."

(and Indonesia) were masterminded by this radical group. Alim found that many young people are less aware of the noble values of the nation's culture and tend to look for values outside the nation's personality.<sup>99</sup>

The main target of radical groups is young people, who are easily influenced. Slowly but surely, the propaganda and doctrine of radicalism have eroded the cultural values and beliefs of the Javanese. This massive movement infiltrated high schools, universities, and government agencies and encompassed various strategic professions.

The government made many efforts to counter this massive movement. One thing that is comforting is that the nationalist group is still the most dominant, both in parliament and in the composition of society, but the government is not complacent with data. Together with the government, the church works and serves the community so that people do not lose their identity as part of the Indonesian people.

So, when asked which 5% of the Javanese community's characteristics need to be changed, the answer is the need to rebuild and strengthen their identity as a virtuous, noble society, as the character passed down from ancestors from generation to generation. Today, the Javanese need to learn tolerance from the start. Politics reduces the sense of solidarity and tolerance. This condition creates disharmony in society.

Efforts are needed to transform Javanese society and rediscover its identity, which has the characteristics of a noble Indonesian society. Starting from this, it is necessary to inculcate Christian values and beliefs so that they are well-interpreted in every community group.

Note there are two categories of Islamic society in Indonesia: *santri* groups and *abangan* groups. In addition, Bachtiar found that the distinction between *abangan* and *santri* is made when people are classified regarding

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<sup>99</sup> Dhara Alim Cendekia, "Designing Javanese Costumes, and Characters as Transforming Tradition for Cultural Sustainability," in *Social Science, Education and Humanities Research*, 2019, 261, <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0>.

religious behavior. A *santri* person is more religious than an *abangan* person. Those who have no interest in religious affairs, accordingly, are considered to be *abangan*.<sup>100</sup> The *Abangan* group is a group that makes Islam part of their identity in society but does not know the teachings of Islam well. This group only follows Islamic traditions to avoid social pressure but does not absorb Islamic values properly. This is the right audience for the gospel message, and it is relatively easy to reach. Through the right strategy, this group can be reached for Christ and influence their community.

### Conclusion

Javanese culture, like other cultures in Indonesia and the world, is part of human civilization that expresses values and beliefs in various channels of expression that can be captured by humans. The core value that is at the center of Javanese life is harmony: harmony with God and harmony with others. Every element of society upholds, maintains, and strives to achieve the value of harmony. Harmony is a priority, and all efforts, traditions, values, and norms are directed toward achieving it.

Nowadays, due to globalization, modernization, and the influence of social media, harmony has been eroded and reduced, resulting in a lot of friction in society. Intolerance and national disintegration threaten, but Javanese culture also provides a bridge where reconciliation and restoration in society can be achieved again. Theological studies and cultural contextualization are very relevant to the creation of harmony in Javanese society. Supposedly, this bridge can be a starting point for how the Bible can be well interpreted in Javanese society.

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<sup>100</sup> Harsya W Bachtiar, "The Religion of Java: A Commentary," *Madjalah Ilmu-ilmu Sastra Indonesia Vol. 1/4* (1973).

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