

Javanese Culture and Its Actualisation within Christian Faith: Study in the *Gereja Kristen Jawi Wetan*

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Abstract: In the East Java region, a Christian sect known as the *Gereja Kristen Jawi Wetan* exists. This particular sect incorporates Javanese cultural traditions into its worship rites. However, most religious communities believe they should not merge between culture and spiritual activities, as they consider them distinct and separate components. In this study, the researcher aims to accurately comprehend the significance of Javanese culture in executing worship rituals by the *Gereja Kristen Jawi Wetan* congregation. Integrating Javanese culture into these rituals is believed to enhance the congregation's faith. This study employs a qualitative-anthropological methodology to address the research inquiry by examining objects that have served as conduits to the supernatural, stemming from established societal practices. The researcher gathered data by employing interview procedures with multiple congregations and pastors and through direct observation. This interview ensured that the gained data aligned with the researcher's theory regarding the potential growth in faith resulting from the merger with Javanese culture. This study demonstrates the compatibility and integration of Christianity and Javanese culture without any discernible division. Conversely, the establishment of the *Gereja Kristen Jawi Wetan* provides a refuge for Javanese individuals who wish to maintain their cultural practices during religious ceremonies. This research inferred that the *Gereja Kristen Jawi Wetan* utilises Javanese culture to transmit religious values to the congregation. This strategy ensures that the adherents accept and absorb the teaching easily, enhancing the congregation's faith. Importantly, this spiritual practice recognises the cultural traditions deeply ingrained within the congregation.

Keywords: Faith; Javanese culture; *Gereja Kristen Jawi Wetan*.

Abstrak: Daerah Jawa Timur terdapat aliran Kristen, yaitu Gereja Kristen Jawi Wetan yang menjunjung tinggi tradisi Budaya Jawa dalam ritual peribadatnya, namun mayoritas masyarakat beragama berasumsi, bahwa budaya dan praktik keagamaan tidak bisa digabungkan, karena kedua aspek tersebut sangatlah berbeda. Di sini peneliti berusaha untuk memahami dengan benar mengenai kontribusi budaya Jawa, yang dianggap penting pada pelaksanaan ritual peribadatan jemaat Gereja Kristen Jawi Wetan, yang notabene dapat menambah keimanan jemaat ketika terjadi penggabungan antara keduanya. Untuk menjawab pertanyaan penelitian yang dimaksud, penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif-antropologis dalam melihat objek berdasarkan adat istiadat yang telah ada dalam diri masyarakat dan menjadi perantara kepada yang supranatural. Peneliti mengumpulkan data dengan menggunakan teknik wawancara dengan beberapa jemaat dan pendeta serta melalui observasi langsung, agar data yang didapat sesuai dengan hipotesa peneliti mengenai Iman yang dapat meningkat akibat adanya penggabungan dengan budaya Jawa. Penelitian ini menjelaskan bahwa ajaran Kristen dan budaya Jawa dapat berjalan bersama tanpa adanya keterpisahan di antara keduanya. Di sisi lain, terbentuknya Gereja Kristen Jawi Wetan dapat

menaungi masyarakat Jawa yang masih melestarikan budaya mereka saat melaksanakan ritual peribadatan. Berdasarkan penelitian ini, dapat disimpulkan bahwa Gereja Kristen Jawi Wetan menjadikan budaya Jawa sebagai perantara dalam menyampaikan nilai keagamaan kepada para jemaat, sehingga ajaran yang disampaikan mudah diterima, dan dipahami serta timbullah rasa cinta mereka kepada agama sampai menjadi penyebab meningkatnya keimanan para jemaat tanpa menghilangkan tradisi budaya yang telah tertanam dalam diri para jemaat.

Kata Kunci: Iman, budaya Jawa, Gereja Kristen Jawi Wetan.

1. Introduction

The majority of Javanese individuals widely adopt Islam as a means to govern their way of life. The populace readily embraced the da'wah propagated by Sunan Kalijaga because of its compatibility with Javanese society's deeply ingrained cultural norms, hence avoiding their eradication (Alif et al., 2020). A significant portion of the Javanese populace adheres to Islamic doctrines, influenced mainly by the efforts of revered spiritual leaders (Wali) who employ wayang, a traditional form of puppetry, as a means to disseminate religious teachings and connect with the local community (Setyaningsih, 2020) Islam places significant emphasis on the Javanese culture, which has become deeply ingrained within the populace, resulting in a majority of individuals adhering to Islamic beliefs.

The incorporation of Javanese cultural elements into the teaching of Islam is the reason why a particular Christian group is emulating Muslims in propagating their religious beliefs. An example of a Christian denomination in East Java is the Gereja Kristen Jawi Wetan (GKJW). C.L. Coolen and Johannes Emde, the church's founders, have propagated the Christian mission by employing syncretism, including preserving the Undhuh-Undhuh tradition (Agustina et al., 2021). The dissemination of the Gospel within the Madura region occurred through a dialectical progression involving diverse values, customs, and environmental circumstances, ultimately leading to a cultural synthesis (Hidayah et al., 2023). The congregation of Gereja Kristen Jawi Wetan can delightfully engage in religious teachings while still maintaining their commitment to the Javanese traditions and culture that deeply intertwine with their identity.

Integrating religious teachings with regional cultural practices can help them spread more effectively. The people of Lombok readily embraced immigrants and traders, thereby cultivating a unique blend of cultural and Islamic elements, resulting in a robust Islamic presence akin to that of the Middle East. However, they also remained steadfast in preserving their Indigenous cultural heritage (Aminah & Suhastini, 2021). Accepting religious teachings can be facilitated by adhering to the principle of respect inherent in a given local culture. This approach allows for integrating a religion into a society, irrespective of its moral or ethical aspects (Solihah, 2019). The Bible utilised in the Gereja Kristen Jawi Wetan is rendered into the Javanese language, facilitating the audience's accessibility and comprehension of religious doctrines (HW, Personal Communication, Juli 11, 2023). Based on the assertion above, we may infer that religion and culture exhibit robust interdependence, rendering them inseparable entities.

The coexistence of religion and culture within a worship ritual can foster a robust feeling of nationality within a particular region, exemplified by the Gereja Kristen Jawi Wetan congregation. The worship rituals at Gereja Kristen Jawi Wetan incorporate both the Indonesian and Javanese languages, serving as a poignant reminder to the local community of their deep-rooted linguistic heritage. Most Javanese individuals should pay more attention to the reciting of praise accompanied by playing the gamelan musical instrument, not only about the Javanese language but also in a broader sense (Natalia, 2019). It fosters a sense of love among the congregation of Gereja Kristen Jawi Wetan for the culture of their region so that a sense of nationalism arises.

The remarks mentioned above indicate a research interest in doing a comprehensive study on the manifestation of faith within Javanese culture, focusing on Gereja Kristen Jawi Wetan, located in Pare, Kediri, East Java. Examining the interplay between faith and culture presents a compelling avenue for

further scholarly inquiry, as these two constructs are intricately intertwined and inseparable from the fabric of religious communities.

This study expands on previously unexplored studies, although they remain linked. Dewi Salindri examines Undhuh-undhuh ritual change of Gereja Kristen Jawi Wetan (GKJW) in Jember by elucidating the factors, both internal and external, that contribute to the changes in church rituals (Salindri, 2020). Wahyu Purwadi Utomo Ragil explores how differences in religious beliefs frequently lead to societal issues and how the GKJW Malang congregation aims to mitigate these problems (Ragil, 2021). In his thesis, Chairul Anam elucidates that the culture and religious community in the 'City of Santri' are functioning effectively and displaying tolerance. The Undhuh-Undhuh tradition, which exists within the Christian and Muslim populations, is a conserved culture (Anam, 2021).

This study employs an anthropological methodology, a subfield of research used in the study of Religious Studies. Researchers utilise religious anthropology to study the profoundly ingrained customs of various regional communities (Connolly, 1999). One of them lies in East Java. These customs are employed in tandem with worship rites by a specific Christian denomination, Jawi Wetan Christianity. When a cultural context accompanies the act of worship, the congregation will have a greater sense of ease and immersion in their worship practices (PR, Personal Communication, August 11th, 2023). Anthropology plays a crucial role in conducting a thorough analysis of the belief system that intensifies alongside the presence of a cultural framework expressed through a ceremonial act of reverence. It pertains to Malinowski's idea of participant observation. The idea can serve as a foundation for researchers to examine the connection between social and cultural aspects, which is an integral part of the anthropological method (Connolly, 1999; Rudyansjah et al., 2012).

The researcher aims to examine the integration of Javanese customs into the religious rituals of the Gereja Kristen Jawi Wetan congregation and assess the impact of these customs on the faith of the GKJW congregation. To comprehend it, the researcher took four observations. Observation 1, undertaken on July 11th 2023, involved gathering diverse data and factual information regarding GKJW. It included investigating the establishment history of GKJW and identifying Javanese religious practices incorporated into its traditions. On July 15th, 2023, the researcher witnessed the rite of Holy matrimony at GKJW, Pare, and observed the following. The third research was conducted on August 20th, 2023, during which the researcher met with Samuel Hurulean, the Pastor of GKJW. During this study, the researchers interviewed the Pastor to gather information on several aspects of GKJW, including the Undhuh-undhuh procession, the origin of GKJW's name, and Javanese cultural symbols inside GKJW. On September 24th, 2023, the researcher concluded their observations by directly witnessing the Sunday worship parade conducted in the Javanese language, including the chanted songs and the delivered sermon.

This research employs a qualitative descriptive methodology integrating literature review and field research. The researchers collected the secondary data from relevant literature on GKJW while collecting the primary data through field research conducted on July 15th, 2023, and September 24th, 2023. The primary data includes vague and candid observations and interviews with multiple GKJW congregations and one Pastor from the GKJW stream. These interviews occurred on July 11th, 2023, and August 20th, 2023. Data reduction was performed on the received data to concentrate on the ongoing debate.

Moreover, the data is provided in an orderly manner as descriptive material within a paper, which concludes with verification and conclusions based on the presented discussion. This research made four observations. Observation 1, held on July 11th 2023, involved gathering diverse data and factual information regarding GKJW. It included investigating the establishment history of GKJW and identifying the Javanese traditions that incorporate religious ceremonies. On July 15th, 2023, the researcher witnessed the rite of Holy matrimony at GKJW, Pare, and observed the following. The third research was conducted on August 20th, 2023, during which the researcher met with Samuel Hurulean, the Pastor of GKJW. During this study, the researchers interviewed the Pastor to gather information on several aspects of GKJW, including the Undhuh-undhuh procession, the origin of GKJW's name, and Javanese cultural symbols inside GKJW. On September 24th, 2023, the researcher concluded their

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2. The History of the *Gereja Kristen Jawi Wetan*

The first encounter of Catholic doctrines into the archipelago was during Portuguese and Spanish colonial rule. In the 17th century, specifically in 1602, the Dutch East Indies Association (known as the *Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie* or VOC) established its presence in Indonesia, thus assuming control over political, commercial, and military affairs that were previously under the dominion of the Portuguese and Spanish in the region. In addition, the VOC undertook a Protestantization campaign targeting Indigenous groups that had previously been evangelised and converted to Catholicism by the Portuguese and Spanish. The VOC executed the movement mentioned above based on the premises of a Dutch commercial enterprise (Aritonang, 2019). The individuals in question assumed the responsibility of upholding the ecclesiastical authority inside their nation, which adhered to the Calvinist denomination. This obligation entailed the dissemination of Protestant Christian doctrines in each location they inhabited.

In summary, on January 1st, 1800, the Dutch colonial government assumed control of the Dutch East India Company (VOC). In conjunction with the advent of the Enlightenment movement in 18th-century Europe, the Dutch colonial administration initially adopted a stance of religious neutrality within its borders and with its colony, specifically Indonesia. Nevertheless, King Willem 1 of the Netherlands perceived it as advantageous to establish a Protestant church under the control of the government, both within the Netherlands and its colonies. Subsequently, the formation of the GPI, also known as the Protestant Church in Indonesia, took place (Aritonang, 2019).

However, because of the deeply rooted cultural customs that the native population of Java had developed, the spread of Christian beliefs faced considerable obstacles. Consequently, the Dutch colony had considerable difficulties suppressing these cultural norms with their desired religious beliefs (Subqi, 2018). Java is an island renowned for its cultural wealth. Hence, any religion or lifestyle seeking to establish a presence in the heart of Java must engage directly with Javanese culture (Subqi, 2018). The convergence of Christian and Javanese identity necessitated a dualistic framework to disseminate Christian principles inside Javanese society, ultimately giving rise to a novel identity known as Javanese Christianity (Tampake & Utomo, 2019). Scholars' views regarding Javanese Christianity reveal discernible differences, primarily centred around the concern that the assimilation of Christian principles into the local culture may potentially engender sinful behaviour. This phenomenon arises due to the influence of culture, which can incite individuals into opposition and defiance against the divine being (Tanuwidjaja & Udau, 2020).

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The historical personalities who played prominent roles in establishing GKJW include Johannes Emde, born on December 18th, 1774, and Coenrad Laurent Coolen, whose birth is estimated to have been in the 1770s. J. Emde, a German-born individual, espouses the principles of pietism and mysticism, disapproving of Christians who embrace a secular way of life. J. Emde holds a dissenting perspective regarding the amalgamation of Western Christian doctrines and way of life with indigenous cultural practices. Individuals who aspired to embrace Christianity were required to relinquish their cultural identity and wholeheartedly adhere to European doctrines. This perspective diverges from C.L. Coolen, who disengaged from pietism due to a desire to avoid the limitations imposed by pious regulations (Sulistiani et al., 2021).

According to Pastor Moesa Samuel Hurulean, an individual associated with GKJW Pare in Kediri, the primary objective of their organisation is to impart Christian principles throughout the community. It is important to note that their intention differs from official missionaries formally dispatched to propagate the Gospel. J. Emde arrived in the archipelago to verify the veracity of a region devoid of winter conditions, precisely the absence of snow (HU, Personal Communication, August 15th, 2023). The person was well-known for their authentic Christian faith and commitment to pietist ideals, which is evident in their demeanour and attitude. They appointed J. Emde as the chairman of the OSS, also known as the Orang Saleh Surabaya group. Due to his incomplete educational background, J. Emde developed a limited cognitive perspective during his formative years. However, it is noteworthy that his conviction in the integrity of religious scripture remained steadfast. He combated societal perceptions of the evolving nature of the universe through the manifestation of prejudice (Sulistiani et al., 2021).

In contrast, a character known as C.L. Coolen exists, who, as previously stated, is a dissenter from the OSS. Observers noted that the ideology of pietism was incompatible with the colonial milieu of Surabaya, as it posed challenges to accepting Christian doctrines within the societal framework (Sulistiani et al., 2021, p. 108). C.L. Coolen, driven by a strong sense of purpose, embarked on a personal mission to disseminate the principles of Christianity. The individual in question imparted their insights on religion and divinity to *Ngelmu*, who strongly connected to the Javanese community (HU, Personal Communication, August 15th, 2023). Additionally, he incorporated moral principles from biblical teachings into his puppet performances and extended invitations to male individuals for an evening of socialising over tea and refreshments (Sulistiani et al., 2021). His actions aimed to foster a sense of affinity between the Javanese community and the Christian principles he sought to introduce.

The Gereja Kristen Jawi Wetan congregation arose from merging two divergent notions given by J. Emde, a proponent of pietism, and C.L. Coolen, who used culture to spread Christianity. Within the Gereja Kristen Jawi Wetan, there exists a divergence of perspectives toward preserving and validating their cultural heritage. While some members actively advocate for the recognition and continuation of their culture, others refrain from critically examining its significance and validity. While some individuals still observe the tradition of Thanksgiving, a segment of the population abstains from participating in this holiday. Not all members of the GKJW congregation actively engaged in the Javanese language Sunday services. Within the GKJW community, individuals possess the autonomy to choose whether or not to uphold the cultural practices that coexist alongside the ever-changing nature of Christian life. No one imposes this decision upon them, nor does anyone compel them to relinquish their cultural heritage.

3. Cultural elements in worship rituals in Gereja Kristen Jawi Wetan

The link between humans and culture is distinctive. Humans create culture; however, once established, culture ultimately regulates and moulds human behaviour. The dynamic between humans and culture is a mutually influential and mediated interaction. This association inevitably gives rise to conflicts in the human experience. One of the resulting tensions is whether religion is a byproduct of culture or vice versa (Lola, 2019).

Religious activities generally do not incorporate cultural elements in their worship. Inverse proportionality characterises the relationship between the East Javanese Christians in the Gereja Kristen Jawi Wetan and the cultural norms in the region. It is because the acculturation of Javanese tradition has influenced the worship rites of these Christians. The GKJW congregation's ability to carry out worship is facilitated by their preservation of cultural traditions, ensuring they can do so without apprehension of losing them. This text provides a detailed account of the Ritual of Worship practised by the Gereja Kristen Jawi Wetan, as well as the cultural components inherent in the ritual.

Table 1. Acculturation of Javanese Culture and Christian Practices in Religious Ceremonies

No	Religious Ceremonies	Typical Christian Ceremonies	Javanese traditions	GKJW Ritual
1	<i>Undhuh-Undhuh</i>	-	Farmers make sacrifices to Dewi Sri, the Goddess of Rice, to express their gratitude for the successful rice harvest they have obtained.	The GKJW congregation presents an offering to the Lord God to express gratitude for the favourable outcomes of their livelihood.
2	Sunday Worship	Chants or sermons presented in the designated language of a nation	Javanese serves as the medium of communication during Sunday worship	. The worshippers engage in the recitation of religious songs dedicated to Allah while the sermon using the Javanese language
3	Holy Matrimony sacrament	The groom typically wears a suit, while the wife wears a wedding dress.	The kebaya is the customary attire worn by the Javanese population	The bride and groom wear kebaya during the wedding ceremony

Table 1 describes religious ceremonies in regular Christian practices, Javanese traditions, and GKJW rituals, demonstrating how Javanese culture and Christian practices coexist in many religious ceremonies. The *Undhuh-Undhuh* commemoration is a religious ceremony observed by the Gereja Kristen Jawi Wetan congregation. According to Mr. Prio Haryono Winoto, a prominent figure in the *Gereja Kristen Jawi Wetan*, the *Undhuh-undhuh* ritual is a traditional Javanese practice to show appreciation to Dewi Sri, the deity associated with rice, for a successful harvest (Salindri & Handayani, 2022). However, it has become a sacred sacrifice dedicated to the divine deity (HW, Personal Communication, July 11th, 2023).

The *Gereja Kristen Jawi Wetan* is a Christian denomination that has assimilated elements of its culture, particularly in its worship practices, exhibiting a distinct cultural style. The GKJW congregation engages in several ceremonies and worship rites, including the observance of the *Undhuh-Undhuh* festival. According to Mr. Prio Haryono Winoto, a prominent member of the *Gereja Kristen Jawi Wetan*, the *Undhuh-undhuh* rite holds significance as a Javanese cultural practice that historically served as a means of expressing thanks towards Dewi Sri, the deity associated with rice cultivation (Salindri & Handayani, 2022). However, it has become a religious offering dedicated to the deity (HW, Personal Communication, July 11th, 2023).

"*Undhuh-undhuh*" originates from the Javanese language and denotes collecting or gathering agricultural produce during the harvest. Farmers eagerly anticipate the harvest season when they may finally reap the rewards of their months of hard work (Christofandi, 2023). The *Undhuh-Undhuh* process is undertaken biannually between March and November (HU, Personal Communication, August 15th, 2023). The *Undhuh-Undhuh* procedure consists of four stages: preparation, procession, worship, and auction. The initial phase occurs around two to three weeks before the commencement of the *Undhuh-Undhuh* event. Following the completion of construction, during the second stage, the project will be positioned onto a cart to facilitate its effortless lifting and transportation to the church (Anam, 2021). The third phase entails a church ceremony involving the *solah bawa* procession, a ritualistic act of presenting offerings to God, conducted according to Javanese liturgy (Anam, 2021).

Next, the fourth phase commenced, known as the auction procession (Anam, 2021). The auction earnings stand towards the church's construction or the facilitation of religious rites.

The *Undhuh-Undhuh* rite and the weekly Sunday morning worship session contribute to the acculturation of the culture. Typically, Christianity observes Sunday worship in the official language of a nation. However, the *Gereja Kristen Jawi Wetan* conducts three worship sessions every Sunday. Figure 1 shows Sunday morning worship that features lyrics in Javanese. The initial session takes place at 06.00 WIB in the Indonesian language, followed by the second session at 09.00 WIB in Javanese. The cultural patterns in worship are evident, as the songs sung are translated into Javanese, as shown in Figure 2. The final session resumes at 5.00 pm in Indonesian (Mizro'atul, 2021).



Figure 1. Javanese Sunday Worship

1. ALLAH IKU MAHAKWASA

do = D

2 6 4 5 5 4 3 2 0 2 4 5 6 1 7 7 6 0
 Al - lah i - ku ma - ha - kwa - sa, kang ni - tah - ken langit - bumi,

6 5 6 5 4 3 2 3 2 0 4 4 4 5 4 3 2 1 0
 ti - na - les - an sra - na sa - mo - dra, tumumpang ing ka - li - ka - li.

2 6 6 4 6 5 4 3 0 6 5 4 3 2 4 5 3 2 . ||
 Yek - ti Al - lah Ma - ha - kwa - sa, yog - ya tan - sah pi - nu - ji - pu - ji.

2. Kang kepareng ngabyantara* anèng Padaleman Suci,
 kang resik tangan wah manahnya, tan naté dosa ing lathi.
 Yéku tyang mursid sanyata, tansah setya dumugèng jarji.
3. Berkahing Pangèran tumrah mring tyang ajrih - asih yekti,
 gesang tansah tentrem - rahayu wit kaadilan Gusti.
 Kang tansah ngupadi Allah, kangen Gusti rina lan wengi.
4. Gapuraning Padaleman kangkata**, mrih ombèr sèstu,
 krana Sang Ratusning kamulyan kepareng tindak lumebu,
 yéku Gustining kaswargan Kang Mahakawasa, Allahmu.

Psalm 24
 Melodi 1542/1547 Louis Bourgeois (± 1510-1572)
 Jeneva 1542/1543
 * ngabyantara = sowan
 ** kangkata = kaangkata

Figure 2. One of the Pasamuhan Jawi chants

Furthermore, within GKJW, aside from the *Undhuh-Undhuh* commemorative feast day and weekly Javanese worship services, there is a cultural church activity known as gamelan games. The congregation plays these games, particularly women, during significant celebrations such as Christmas,

August 17th, and Independence Day. These games aim to enhance the worship experience. Javanese spiritual music complements the gamelan (Agustina et al., 2021; Wahyuningsih & Mkari, 2023).

GKJW has assimilated the Sacrament of Marriage into Javanese culture. It is evident in the attire of the bride and groom, as well as several members of the congregation who observed the ceremony, donning kebaya and Javanese traditional garments emblematic of Javanese culture (Anam, 2021). The declaration above proves that the assembly of the *Gereja Kristen Jawi Wetan* Pare congregation does not eradicate their Javanese identity. Typically, Christian grooms wear a suit for the rite of marriage, while brides wear a wedding dress, as shown in Figure 3.



Figure 3. Holy Sacrament of Marriage

4. The role of culture in building the faith of the *Gereja Kristen Jawi Wetan* congregation

The longstanding Javanese culture not only adds vibrancy and structure to the social fabric of its surroundings. Instead, it impacts the domain of religion and the faith-based practices of the local inhabitants (HW, Personal Communication, August 11th, 2023). Javanese society possesses numerous practices that have significantly influenced worship rites. Despite the prevalence of various religions in Java, the local culture still exists. In particular, Christianity upholds religious and cultural aspects (Sidik, 2021).

The concept of the soul of Christ posits that all things were brought into existence by a divine being, and the presence of destiny and provisions is an essential aspect that the principle of karma has predetermined. Christianity profoundly impacts the universe and its surroundings because it holds that all creation results from God's divine will. Subsequently, adherents of the Christian faith must be responsible for safeguarding and conserving their immediate environment to mitigate potential risks and adverse consequences (Kusuma, 2010). One crucial aspect that necessitates preservation is cultural variety.

Kristen Jawi Wetan is a Christian sect that emphasises the significance of indigenous culture and a specific geographical region. The term "Jawi" denotes its association with the Javanese region, resulting in a close connection with numerous Javanese cultures (HW, Personal Communication, Juli 11, 2023). One of the games played by Javanese people in this church during worship services is a gamelan game, which is highly recognisable. The congregation performs gamelan by chanting praises to God in the Javanese style. Including musical instruments in worship and rituals enhances the church members' enjoyment and fosters a profound sense of seriousness during the worship proceedings (Wahyuningsih & Mkari, 2023). The feeling of seriousness experienced during rituals contributes to the growth of their religion. Furthermore, reading hymns in Javanese and giving sermons in the same language are cultural practices wholly and firmly rooted in Javanese religious ceremonies.

Similar to the *Undhuh-undhuh* ceremony performed by Christians, which is rooted in Javanese tradition. This custom fosters a heightened sense of thankfulness within the community towards God, as they consistently reserve a portion of their crops during each harvest season as a tangible manifestation of their appreciation (Salindri, 2020). The congregation's heightened thanks for God can foster an augmentation of their faith. This custom enhances religion and fosters tolerance across all religious communities (HU, Personal Communication, August 15th, 2023). The participants of the Undhuh-Undhuh ceremony include Christians and people of all religious backgrounds. Preserving Indigenous culture is crucial to preventing extinction (Anam, 2021; Christofandi, 2023).

According to the findings from our interviews, all sources widely concur that culture significantly influences the circumstances and the beliefs of the individuals within this religious community. The objective is to establish a connection between nationalist and religious ideologies, fostering the development of a generation characterised by a strong feeling of nationalism and a deep-rooted commitment to the principles of Christianity. The influence of culture on religious teachings and the beliefs of its followers is not absolute; instead, faith retains its inherent nature while being shaped by significant regional characteristics (KI, SI, & SD, Personal Communication, August 16th, 2023). Contrary to Wahyu Purwadi Utomo Ragil's thesis, which discusses the Gereja Kristen Jawi Wetan congregation seeking assistance from KAUM (Interfaith Commission) to address inter-religious conflicts and reduce instances of inter-religious prejudice (Ragil, 2021).

In his interview, Pastor Samuel Hurulean, S.Th, who serves as the GKJW pastor in the Pare area, expressed that we should not dismiss the emergence of this religious group as lacking any underlying reasons. However, a significant issue of citizenship arises when several individuals residing in local communities fail to acknowledge and, in some cases, completely disregard the importance and presence of culture (HU, Interviewed by Maulana, August 15th, 2023). Jawi Wetan aims to address potential issues by reconciling the perceived divide between religion and culture, as he recognises the enduring significance of the human experience.

5. Conclusion

The Gereja Kristen Jawi Wetan is a Christian place of worship that strongly embraces Javanese culture and is situated in East Java—the profound richness of Javanese culture results in incorporating cultural acculturation into the practised rituals. The congregation, which possesses a solid devotion to Javanese culture, will experience a sense of ease when performing their worship rites, allowing them to practice their faith while still upholding the longstanding local traditions. In addition, this church does not compel its congregation to maintain cultural traditions when performing rituals, as certain customs do not assimilate the Javanese culture.

The GKJW incorporates various cultural rituals, such as the Undhuh-Undhuh ceremony, which serves as a means for the congregation to express gratitude to Allah for their livelihood. Additionally, Sunday worship involves using Javanese language in the form of chanted hymns and sermons delivered by the worship leader. Furthermore, Gamelan games are accompanied by the chanting of Javanese hymns. Lastly, in the marriage sacrament, the couples use traditional Javanese attire. Cultural acculturation in worship rituals can cultivate the congregation's affinity for local traditions, creating a heightened sense of nationalism. Culture plays a role in facilitating the congregation's acceptance of the church's values. It also leads to an increase in their faith as culture serves as an intermediary in expressing the importance of the church.

The research primarily focuses on the descriptive aspects of cultural acculturation without exploring the variability in acceptance and participation among different age groups or demographics within the congregation. Other segments of the population might have varying degrees of affinity for cultural traditions, which could impact the overall effectiveness of cultural acculturation in worship rituals.

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