

ASPECTS OF LEADERSHIP WITHIN THE JAVANESE WORLDVIEW

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Abstrak

Dalam semua budaya, orang mulai mengembangkan asumsi dan nilai dasar yang membentuk pandangan dunia mereka sejak dini, biasanya diajarkan dalam lingkungan keluarga. Orang Jawa tidak jauh berbeda. Mereka diajari (kadang-kadang melalui perumpamaan dan peribahasa, kadang-kadang melalui wayang) apa artinya menghormati orang lain, terutama mereka yang memegang kekuasaan. Mereka diajari pentingnya hidup rukun dengan sesamanya. Mereka telah belajar bahwa pemimpin mereka memiliki kekuatan supranatural batin yang diberikan Tuhan, dan oleh karena itu tidak perlu dipertanyakan, terutama selama pemimpin merawat mereka dengan baik. Pemimpin juga dapat belajar dari tokoh wayang Semar, yang meskipun layak dihormati karena posisinya bersedia untuk “merendahkan diri” mengambil peran sebagai pelayan demi orang-orang yang dilayaninya. Dalam artikel ini kita melihat bagaimana studi Teori Kepemimpinan dapat meningkatkan kehidupan dan pelayanan para pemimpin Jawa.

Kata kunci: rendah hati, jawa, kepemimpinan, wayang

Abstract

In all cultures people begin to develop the basic assumptions and values that make up their worldview very early in life, usually taught within the family environment. The Javanese are no different. They are taught (sometimes through parables and proverbs, sometimes through the *wayang*) what it means to have respect for others, especially those in positions of authority. They are taught the importance of living in harmony with their fellow man. They have learned that their leaders have an inner supernatural power that is God given, and therefore should not be questioned, especially as long as the leader is taking good care of them. The leader can also learn from the *wayang* character Semar, who though worthy of honor because of his position was willing to “humble himself” taking on the role of a servant for the sake of those he was serving. Within this article we look at how the study of Leadership Emergence Theory can enhance the lives and ministries of Javanese leaders.

Keywords: humble, javanese, leadership, wayang

PENDAHULUAN

Yakob Tomatala notes that unfortunately the concept of leadership in Indonesia has been influenced by the Dutch definition which goes back to the earlier theories of leadership believing that “leadership is an ability that a person is born with, not something he receives through particular education”¹.

Lucian Pye writes, that a crucial part of leadership in Asia is power. Throughout Asia today the drama of politics is being played out by leaders and followers whose roles are largely prescribed by culturally determined concepts about the nature of power. The political power is extraordinarily sensitive to cultural nuances, therefore, cultural variations are decisive in determining the course of political development.² It would be safe to argue that ecclesiastical power is sensitive to cultural nuances as well. Therefore, Javanese leaders (and those leading Javanese followers) need to understand the “cultural nuances” of the Javanese worldview, especially as it deals with leadership and followership.

METODE PENELITIAN

Research method that will be used in this article is quantitative approach method, by interviewing several javanese leaders at the community and the church.

As stated above, one of the things in this research dealt with those characteristics in Javanese society that influence leadership. As it has been observed young leaders mature and develop, and worked alongside many including friends, the three Javanese pastors, it has sought to find out what principles did they grow up with that contribute to them being leaders today? And where did these principles come from? A brief look at the Javanese worldview sheds some light. Before dealing specifically with the concepts of leadership from within the Javanese perspective it is necessary to look at the Javanese worldview.

HASIL DAN PEMBAHASAN

¹ Yakob Tomatala, *Kepemimpinan Yang Dinamis* (Malang: Gandum Mas, 1997).

² Taylor, R. H. “Lucian W. Pye: Asian Power and Politics: the Cultural Dimensions of Authority. Xiii, 414 Pp. Cambridge, Mass. and London: Belknap Press, 1985.” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 50, no. 3 (1987): 597–598.

The Javanese Worldview

Resources that were helpful in understanding the Javanese worldview included: Frans Magnis-Suseno (a German born Jesuit priest who has been working in Indonesia over forty years), Koentjaraningrat (himself a Javanese, considered by many to be one of the foremost Indonesian anthropologists), Hildred Geertz (wife of Clifford Geertz, but a perceptive anthropologist in her own right), Clifford Geertz (writing principally from the perspective of the religion of Java, but with background insights on underlying worldview facets), Robert Jay (part of Geertz's anthropology team to Java in the 1950's writing primarily about Javanese village life), and Philip van Akkeren (while writing about the indigenous church in Java had some good insights into Javanese worldview).

Of these sources Frans Magnis-Suseno was the more helpful. He is obviously very well read and has been very observant during his years of ministry. His sections on Javanese philosophy and relativism quite complex³. Koentjaraningrat's material is in-depth and very complete with references to other research that must have taken years to compile. It was very helpful to hear him, as a Javanese, respond to the research done by others from "outside" Java like Clifford Geertz, bringing a bit of balance⁴. Koentjaraningrat was quite positive about the observations written by Hildred Geertz and Robert Jay. Hildred Geertz's writing about the Javanese family was extremely valuable in supporting some things that had already witnessed from researcher's observations, but added additional insights. It would be helpful if anthropologists could return and conduct follow-up studies in Java (both village and urban) to determine how far things have changed within the culture, given the influences from "the outside" (television, music, movies, fashion, etc.) over the past fifty years, since some of these studies were done⁵.

Working cross-culturally requires one to not only have a handle on one's own culture with its peculiar preconceived ideas of reality, but he/she must strive to comprehend how the people in "this new place" perceive reality in their culture.

³ Frans Magnis Suseno, *Javanese Ethics and World View* (Jakarta: Gramedia, 1987).

⁴ Koentjaraningrat. "The Javanese of South Central Java" (n.p.). Quoted in Frans Magnis-Suseno: *Javanese Ethics and World View*. Jakarta: Gramedia. 1987.

⁵ Hildred, Geertz. *The Javanese Family: A Study of Kinship and Socialization*. New York, NY: Free Press of Glencoe. 1961.

Paul Hiebert writes, “People perceive the world differently because they make different assumptions about reality”⁶. But what exactly is “culture”? Hiebert offers this definition: “We will define culture as ‘the more or less integrated systems of ideas, feelings, and values and their associated patterns of behavior and products shared by a group of people who organize and regulate what they think, feel, and do’⁷. Anthropologists have endeavored to define the concept of worldview to help us understand ourselves as well as those around us, even those from very different cultures. Charles Kraft offers this definition: “the culturally structured assumptions, values, and commitments underlying a person’s perception of reality”⁸. Every person has a worldview, however the underlying assumptions about reality are usually hidden, not visible. Kraft describes those underlying, unseen elements of culture as our worldview: “...culture consists of two levels: surface and deep levels. The surface level is largely visible and consists of the patterns according to which people behave. These behavior patterns are, however, closely linked to a deep level of largely unconscious and invisible assumptions we call worldview”.

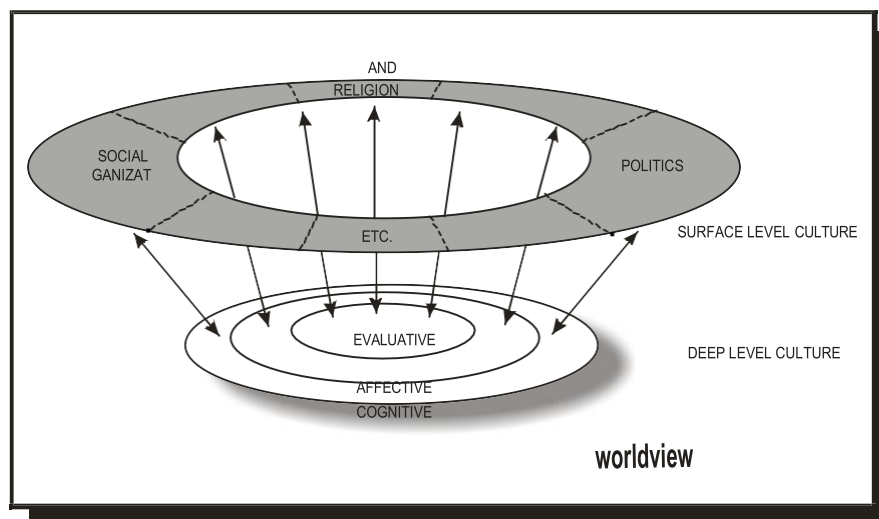


Figure 1. Hiebert’s Model of Worldview
(adapted from Hiebert 1985:46 and Crow 2000: 183)

⁶ Paul G.Hiebert, *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House. 1985.

⁷ Ibid, 30.

⁸ Charles H. Kraft, *Christianity With Power*. Ann Arbor, MI: Vine Books. 1989.

Hiebert's Model of Worldview in Figure 1 illustrates how the deep level culture (invisible worldview) has a shaping influence on surface level culture (visible behaviors). Mike Crow explains that, "by *cognitive*, Hiebert means knowledge, categories, logic, and wisdom. The *affective* consists of feelings and aesthetics. The *evaluative* includes values and allegiances". Kraft and others point out that there are at least five "worldview universals", categories of assumptions to be found in every worldview⁹. These include: 1) categorization, 2) person/group, 3) causality, 4) time/event, and 5) space/material. Time and space does not allow me to expound on how these universals can be found within the Javanese worldview¹⁰. Certain elements will be mentioned below.

The Javanese have complex worldviews. Frans Magnis-Suseno explains the need for the Javanese to view their world as a coherent unity: By world-view, understood here that the totality of all descriptive beliefs about reality, insofar as they form a united whole from which man can structure his experience in a meaningful way. A world-view is the frame of reference in relation to which man comprehends the various elements of his experience. It is characteristic for the Javanese world-view that it does not split up the world into several unrelated areas, but views it as a coherent unity.¹¹

THE JAVANESE FAMILY

Within any culture, a person's worldview begins at home. The underlying assumptions and perceptions of reality are built from the very beginning within the family. Lingenfelter and Mayers describe it this way: "Each one of us is born into a particular social context and family. It is within that context that we are socialized, or acquire what might be seen as our personal cultural heritage... (which) we define as the early learning which the child unquestionably accepts"¹². Mike Crow calls

⁹ Charles H. Kraft, *Christianity With Power*. Ann Arbor, MI: Vine Books. 1989. p. 195-205

¹⁰ John C. Mulkey, "Javanese and Western Worldviews: Preparations for Cross-Cultural Ministry." Unpublished paper from: "Worldview and Worldview Change" MB525, Charles H. Kraft, School of World Mission. 1993.

¹¹ Frans..Magnis-Suseno, *Javanese Ethics and World View*. Jakarta: Gramedia. 1987, p. 84

¹² Sherwood G. Lingenfelter, Marvin Keene Mayers, *Ministering Cross-Culturally: Incarnational Model for Personal Relationships*. (Baker Book House, 1986),p.19.

the family structure “the primary incubator of the culture and worldview”. This is definitely true of the Javanese family. Many Javanese live, or have been raised in a village environment. Koentjaraningrat estimated that in 1970 approximately 82.5 percent of Javanese were living in villages¹³. Over the past thirty years since that statistic many have moved to the cities, but still have a basic worldview from their life in the village. Hildred Geertz conducted in-depth research on the Javanese family within a village setting in East Java in the mid 1950’s. She states that the family, in any society, is the bridge between the individual and his culture. The intimate family group and the more extended network of kinsmen provide each person with basic models for social relationships with the rest of the world. His childhood experiences in particular are given fundamental form by the institutional structures of the family, and it is through these experiences that he gains the understanding, emotional equipment and, above all, the moral commitments which make it possible for him, as an adult, to act as a full-fledged member of his society.¹⁴ The norms and values that the child learns should prepare him/her for adulthood. Koentjaraningrat states regarding values stressed in the village family, young generation generally consider being *manut* (obedient), keeping good relations with others, helping as much as possible, sharing with neighbours, trying to understand others, and placing oneself in the situation of others (*tepa slira*), as ideal human virtues; children are therefore constantly taught to approximate these ideals.¹⁵ Hildred Geertz found an interesting set of values emphasized within the Javanese village family, all of which were designed to prepare the child for courteous conduct. She found that there is: a component of “respect” signified by the three Javanese words, *wedi*, *isin*, and *sungkan*, which denote three states of feeling that are considered appropriate to situations demanding respectful behavior. The three words form a sort of continuum of intensity and specificity, ranging from *wedi* which is most intense and diffuse, to *sungkan* which is least intense and specific. The Javanese word *wedi* can be translated “afraid in both the physical sense and in the social sense of apprehension of unpleasant consequences of an action”, while

¹³ Koentjaraningrat, 1985, p. 99

¹⁴ Hildred. Geertz, *The Javanese Family: A Study of Kinship and Socialization*. New York, NY: Free Press of Glencoe. 1961.p. 146.

¹⁵ Koentjaraningrat, 1985, p.122.

the word *isin* means, “shame, shyness, embarrassment, guilt. A child even as young as three begins...to ‘know isin’, which is thought to be the first step toward growing up”. Geertz points out that, “*isin* is a complex anxiety reaction, involving not only fear but also a lowered self-esteem, and it concerns only social anxieties, most usually those having to do with social distance”. The word *sungkan* on the other hand “refers to a feeling of respectful politeness before a superior or an unfamiliar equal” or “the graceful constraint of one’s own personality out of deference to the other person”.

So a child is taught that “to know *isin* is simply to know the basic social proprieties of self-control and avoidance of disapproval, whereas to know *sungkan* is to be able to perform the social minuet with grace”. To know these values, writes Geertz, “and to know when and how they are appropriate is to have attained the more general ideal of being *djawa*: being proper, sane, and mature, in short being fully Javanese”. Tied to this concept of respect is the child’s attitude toward his father. Koentjaraningrat writes, “A Javanese child is less often punished or chided by his father than by his mother, yet the child has a greater respect for his father’s authority. As soon as the child begins to speak, he is taught to develop a formal attitude towards his father”¹⁶. Hildred Geertz found that at a certain point in the child’s upbringing the father’s role begins to shift “from being a warm, accepting companion to a distant, dignified stranger”. This is to help the child begin to learn respect for those in authority. It is my contention that the respect (or lack of respect) a child has for his father in childhood greatly affects the respect (or lack of respect) he will have for authority as an adult later in life.

Often parents make use of fear as a means of discipline in an effort to achieve obedience and self-control. Geertz writes that often the mother will use threats of “some agency outside the family—evil spirits, dogs or strangers will hurt him if he does not behave”. I experienced this one day while participating in a village project. I overheard a mother telling her naughty boy to “Straighten up or I’ll have Pak John take you to the clinic for a shot!” Now I understood why this little guy always seemed so frightened of me.

¹⁶ Ibid,110.

Moelyono gave an example of some of the kinds of advice given to Javanese children by their parents as guidance. He said, “The goal of any person is to lead a happy life. He/she must therefore guard against the five ‘ma’s: *maling* (stealing), *mabuk* (drunkenness), *madon* (chasing after women), *madat* (heroin and other drugs), and *main* (gambling)”¹⁷

This discussion on certain essential values within the Javanese family is important as we begin looking at those values that form the basis for leadership. Mike Crow asks,

What molds our leadership values? At least six worldview sculptors have a profound influence on shaping leadership expectations: (1) civilization, (2) nationality, (3) inter-personal relationships, (4) family structure, (5) assumption about power, and (6) cultural cosmology or worldview. These six factors, which I label “the cultural contours of leadership,” sculpt and form our views of what leaders ought to be and do¹⁸.

Crow points out that of these six “sculptors” of leadership values, “family structures shape the other five sculptors...(and) they are the single most important sculptor of leadership expectations”. The family structure within the Javanese family is basically “vertical” in orientation which Crow describes as one in which the father (or perhaps even a grandfather) is in charge. The wife under him is the second in command. Often even older siblings command respect from younger brothers and sisters. Under this type of family structure, specific concepts of respect are taught and enforced. I have observed, for example within Bapak Moelyono’s family this vertical orientation being played out. A father of eight, five of whom are now married and have their own families, Bapak Moelyono is seen as the patriarch of the family. The adult children still look to him for guidance and rarely are major decisions made without his consultation. His grandchildren, though still young, are being taught proper ways to respect their own fathers, but they are also being taught the appropriate way in which to address their grandfather: “*mbah kakung*” (grandpa).

¹⁷ Interview with Moelyono..“Personal Case Study: Response Paper for Leadership Emergence Study.” Salatiga, Indonesia. 2003.

¹⁸ Ibid, Koentjorodiningrat, 185.

Often the honorific titles of relatives are used as opposed to particular names. Within the Javanese family there are a total of about sixty-five kin terms used¹⁹. The way for example that children would address their mother's older sister ("bu dē", literally "Ibu gedē" meaning big mother) would be different than how they would address their mother's younger sister ("bu lik", from "Ibu cilik", meaning little mother).

Hildred Geertz shows how the people within the Javanese person's family provide the socialization needed to last a lifetime:

For each Javanese, his family—his parents, his children, and usually, his spouse—are the most important people in the world. They give him emotional security and provide a stable point of social orientation. They give him moral guidance, helping him from infancy through old age to learn, and relearn, the values of Javanese culture. The process of socialization is a continuous one throughout the life of the individual; and it is a man's closest relatives who, by their day-to-day comment, both verbal and non-verbal, keep him from deviating too far from the cultural norms. Of the myriad number of values taught in the Javanese home, I have found two that are very important and relate to leaders and followers. These are the concepts of "respect" and "harmony".

Concepts of "Urmat" and "Adji"

As we have spent time in the homes of Javanese families we have had opportunity to witness various aspects of honor and respect that children convey on the parents and relatives. The concept of respect is an integral part of the Javanese worldview and one that relates directly to our discussion on leadership values.

Hildred Geertz believes the Javanese attitude regarding respect lies beneath what has already been said regarding isin, wedi and sungkan. She writes that the Javanese words for respect are not easily translated.

The words for respect (*urmat*, *adji*) have complex meanings which only slightly overlap with the American notion of "respect". First, the respectful action is not evoked by the individual himself but by his status—as father, headman of the

¹⁹ Ibid, 265

village, or educated government official. Further, unlike some usages in the West, “respect” does not necessarily refer to an attitude toward a person superior in power: in the Javanese family the mother exerts the real authority, but the father receives the “respect”²⁰.

Another difference between the Javanese definition of respect and the Western idea, says Geertz, “is that, for the Javanese, it does not matter whether a person actually ‘feels’ respectful ‘inside’ or merely acts as if he did, in fact, a significant aspect of all Javanese social relationships is that the important thing is not the sincerity of the action but the successful concealment of all dissonant aspects of the relationship”. There is a part of this that is much harder for those of us coming from the West to detect. Geertz adds:

Although in many social interactions both sides are well aware that the true situation between them is not as it appears on the surface, all are happy as long as the superficial accord is not disturbed. It does not follow that there is no emotional aspect to Javanese respectful behavior; on the contrary, there may be a very acutely felt emotional accompaniment.

Koentjaraningrat helps with what appears to be a dichotomy. He differentiates between the two words for respect. Regarding the word “*urmat*” he states that the Javanese usually use this word “in the sense of ‘paying respect by applying the correct etiquette’. Used in this sense, *urmat* naturally means ‘acting as if a person pays respect to another person, without feeling respectful inside’. In the notion of *aji*, however, a person pays respect to another person, and also feels respectful inside”.

A leader must be able to dig through the layers of etiquette to determine if the follower is paying respect (i.e. obeying a command, fulfilling a task) with true respect (“*aji*”) or just respecting his/her leader on a superficial level (“*urmat*”). Frans Magnis-Suseno writes that “a good superior is expected to find out what his subordinates think and feel....Respectful conduct is therefore not a guarantee of obedience. He goes on to quote Peter Polomka who writes that villagers “have learned that it pays to be deferential to authority, but this does not mean they

²⁰ Fivien Luthfia Rahmi Wardani and Zahrotul Uyun, “Ngajeni Wong Liyo”; Menghormati Orang Yang Lebih Tua Pada Remaja Etnis Jawa,” *Indigenus: Jurnal Ilmiah Psikologi* 2 No.2. (2017).

cooperate willingly with authority's request. The Javanese have seven ways of saying 'yes', and depending on how it is pronounced, the same word can mean anything from 'yes' to 'maybe' or even an insulting 'no'²¹.

In fact, the Javanese are found of the art of "*ethok-ethok*", telling a person what he wants to hear. Lucian Pye explains, that Javanese fondness for indirect communication is of course another obvious source of misunderstanding.... The Javanese believes that is it better to tell another what will please him than to aggravate him with the truth. The results is the Javanese art of indirectness, which is calculated to ensure that one neither provokes another nor reveals one's own feelings).

Another way in which the concept of respect is seen within the Javanese worldview is through the structure of the Javanese language. A very complex system has developed over the years with several levels. In most parts of Central and East Java there are three distinct levels: *ngoko*, *kromo madya*, and *kromo inggil* (low, middle, and high), each with its own particular vocabulary. A person would use a different level (and vocabulary) depending on who he was talking to. For example, if a farmer was talking with his friend they would use *ngoko* or perhaps *kromo madya*. However, should the farmer go by the government office to speak with an official he would use, out of respect, *kromo inggil*. The official (having a higher status) might use *kromo madya* in answering back. During the conversation, whenever the farmer would come to a sentence where he needed to relate something about himself he would switch to *ngoko*, thus lowering himself even more humbly. Clifford Geertz writes,

The entire etiquette system is perhaps best summed up and symbolized in the way the Javanese use their language. In Javanese it is nearly impossible to say anything without indicating the social relationship between the speaker and the listener in terms of status and familiarity Basically, what is involved is that the Javanese pattern their speech behavior in terms of the same *alus* (refined) to *kasar* (rough) axis around which they organize their social behavior generally²².

²¹Franz Magnis Suseno, *Javanese Ethics and World View*. Gramedia: Jakarta, 1997, p. 71.

²² Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (Philadelphia: Basic Books, 1977). p. 248.

Magnis-Suseno echoes Geertz: “The nature of the Javanese language renders it impossible to address someone and speak to him without revealing how one perceives one’s own social ranking in relation to him”²³. If the person talking were to address another person using *ngoko* (low level) it would automatically say to the listener “I consider myself higher than you”. On the other hand, if he were to address another in *kromo madya* or *kromo inggil*, he would be showing his respect for the listener. Lawrence Yoder²⁴ has pointed out a fascinating thing regarding the difficulty a Javanese child has in order to learn the language:

Perhaps the most obvious point at which the peculiar character of the Javanese language leaves its mark on people is in the process a child must go through to learn it. There are very few other languages in the learning of which a child will be completely wrong if he responds to his father using the same words and phrases his father uses in speaking to him. In the case of practically every other language children learn by directly imitating their elders.

Concept of “Rukun”

Another key value that is taught in the home, and forms a very crucial part in the Javanese worldview is the concept of “rukun”. The word *rukun* can be roughly translated “peace” or “harmony”. Frans Magnis-Suseno defines it: “to feel oneself in a state of harmony, calm and peaceful, without quarrel or dispute, united in purpose for mutual help”. The neighborhoods throughout Indonesia are divided into divisions of about fifty families with one of the neighbors as an area chief. Each unit is called an “R.T.”, which is an abbreviation for “*rukun tetangga*” (harmony in the neighborhood). Each “R.T.” unit is part of a larger division (about six to nine RTs) to form an “R.W.”—*rukun warga*—(harmonious citizens) with a leader over that unit. One quickly sees that the idea of harmony is strongly sought after and emphasized.

“Rukun” according to Hildred Geertz is “conflict avoidance”. She defines this as “the determination to ‘maintain harmonious social appearances,’ to minimize the

²³ Ibid, p. 63.

²⁴ Yoder, L. M. (1986). Book Review: Pilgrimage in Mission. *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, 10(1), 43–43. <https://doi.org/10.1177/239693938601000131>

overt expression of any kind of social and personal conflict”. She says that what is primary here is the “maintenance of the appearance if not the substance of ‘social harmony,’ for the sake of inner psychic equilibrium”. Geertz observed that, during the Javanese child’s first years, even before he can comprehend in any coherent way such concepts as “respect” and “the maintenance of social harmony,” the psychological preparations are made. Both of these values require the ability to sharply inhibit one’s behavior, to choose inaction rather than action.

So the Javanese grow up striving for inner harmony in order to maintain harmonious social appearances. The *rukun* state is a condition in which everyone finds themselves at peace with one another. The situation is one of mutual support, communal acceptance, tranquility and unity. Magnis-Suseno writes that *Rukun* is the ideal situation that Javanese wish to see prevail in all relationships, in the family, the neighborhood, the village. The entire society should be determined by the spirit of *rukun*.... Everyone must work to prevent anything that can harm the *rukun* condition in society, the condition of ostensible harmony.

A special kind of *rukun* in the Javanese society is something called “*gotong-royong*”. This is mutual assistance that someone offers to help the village or a particular family. Everyone is expected to help. You would not be *rukun* if you didn’t help. I will give a personal example. One morning I heard my neighbors talking out front. As a good neighbor I went out to inquire as to the nature of their conversation. It seems one of our neighbors had a death in the family. Pak Tanto’s mother had passed away and the neighbors felt they should make an effort to attend the funeral later that day. “Seems the right (*rukun*) thing to do”, I thought to myself. I asked where the funeral was to be held. “In Blitar” they answered, “but none of us has a car. Would you be willing to drive us, Pak John?” Even though I had a million other things to do that day I said “Sure, I’d be happy to. By the way, where is Blitar?” They answered, “Oh it’s just the other side of Kediri, about a six hour drive from here.” So we all changed our clothes, hopped in the car and headed for Blitar, arriving right after the funeral, but in time to express our sympathy to Pak Tanto and his family and then drove back home. Another six hours! All along the way my “Western” side kept saying “This is crazy!” But my “Javanese” side would remind myself, “Hey, it’s *rukun*!”.

The ramifications of the *rukun* principle for church leaders is two fold. On the one hand, it would be ideal if church members could approach their church membership with the same sort of effort toward harmony as they do their neighborhood relations. I've seen this happen in Javanese village churches. For example, one church decided several years ago they wanted to built a building to meet in. They determined that in order for it to happen everyone was going to have to pitch in "harmoniously". One family donated land, others donated wood for the rafters, the women offered to supply and cook the food for the volunteers that were going to do the construction. But an entire year before ground was broken, in preparation for the foundation, the church determined to have a "rock offering" every week for a year! Every member, young and old, was asked to bring a rock to church! They were still meeting at a house next to the "future site". So every week whenever there was an activity at the house church (worship, youth group, Sunday School, ladies fellowship, etc.) each person would carry a rock, usually one they had dug from their fields, and place it on the ever growing pile. When it came time to build, they had all the foundation stones they needed! This was a "godly *gotong-royong!*"

The other ramification of "*rukun*" for church leaders is the challenge to determine whether or not people are being "*rukun*" just for the sake of harmony, all the while troubled on the inside. Or are they really agreeing and willing to cooperate with the plans of the church? Which of the seven ways to say "yes" are they using!?

Proverbs and Parables

Many important values for life are taught to children in the form of proverbs and parables. This is true throughout the world; "Mother Goose" stories and nursery rhymes with "a moral to the story". Many of the proverbs are simple, easy to memorize and often use nature to illustrate their meaning. Here are a few examples in Javanese: "*Sira aja adigang, adigung, adiguna*", which roughly translated means: "Don't put your trust in your own strength, position, or brains." "*Rukun agawe santosa, crah agawe bubrah*", which means "Unity brings harmony but fighting only brings defeat." "*Sapa ngalah luhur wekasane*", meaning "Whoever is willing to yield will be respected and honored." "*Sepi ing pamrih, rame ing gawe*",

roughly translated means “Stay the task without looking for honor because you’re conscious of your responsibility.”

One proverb which originates from a Javanese educator by the name of Ki Hajar Dewantoro highlights advice to those destined for leadership:

“*Ing ngarsa sung tulada; Ing madya mangun karsa; Tut wuri handayani*” which translated means: “The leader who is out in front must lead by example through actions, words and deeds; The leader in the midst of those being lead must drive them on to be bold and proceed; Sometimes the leader must lead from in back providing advice and moral support”²⁵.

In Java parents use parables and allegories to teach morals. Pastor Moelyono recalls one “set of nature pictures” that he was taught as a boy and has passed on to his children called the “*Hastha Brata*” that suggests leadership qualities.

INFLUENCES FROM “KEBATINAN”

Various religions have influenced the Javanese worldview. Hinduism and Buddhism were some of the earliest religions to arrive in Java from India, Hinduism approximately two millennia ago and Buddhism around the fifth century A.D.²⁶. Islam came by Muslim traders around the 14th century. Time and space does not permit me to explore the influences these world religions have had on leadership concepts in Java. This in itself would make an interesting study²⁷.

These religions did not arrive on virgin soil. “The early Indonesians were animists, and practiced ancestor and spirit worship”²⁸. These indigenous ancient belief systems flavored the “outside” religions coming in so that today, the Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam of Indonesia look nothing like those religions in other parts of the world. A great deal of syncretism has taken place. Scholars have endeavored to dig deep down below the Hindu-Buddhist-Islamic layers in order to try and find

²⁵ Interview with Moelyono. “Personal Case Study: Response Paper for Leadership Emergence Study.” Salatiga, Indonesia. 2003.

²⁶ Holden, Gregory B. “Lifelong Development” ML 530 class notes and syllabus. Pasadena, CA: Fuller Theological Seminary. 1993.

²⁷ Geertz, Clifford. *The Religion of Java*. New York, NY: Free Press of Glencoe. 1960.

²⁸ Tomatala, Yakob.. *Kepemimpinan Yang Dinamis (Dynamic Leadership)*. Malang: Gandum Mas, 1997

what the “original” belief systems looked like. Yoder uses the phrase “aboriginal” religion to describe it:

The character of the Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam of Java even to this day suggests strongly that behind and beneath the expressions of these belief systems introduced from the outside, there lies hidden a core of aboriginal assumptions and impulses that must be revealed if we are to gain a clear understanding of the introduction and expression of those religions – and Christianity – into the Javanese context.

One element of Javanese belief system that is quite evident today is called “*kebatinan*”, referred by some as “Javanese mysticism”. In fact Mike Crow alludes to the idea that *kebatinan* is this “aboriginal” belief system Yoder was referring to above. The word “*batin*” refers to one’s inner self, *kebatinan* is the spiritual mysticism of the inner being.

One of the goals of *kebatinan* is called “Manunggaling Kawulo-Gusti” roughly translated means “unity between me and God”. One strives to become one with God. Magnis-Suseno writes that according to Javanese mysticism, “at the basis of his being, every human is at one with the divine reality from which he emerged. The task of internalizing this reality is the central issue of Javanese mysticism... In the attempt to realize the unity of the I with the divine primal ground of all being, the Javanese world-view reaches its deepest dimension”²⁹

Niels Mulder writes, “The practice of *kebatinan* is an effort to communicate with original reality; as a division of knowledge, *kebatinan* studies the place of mankind in the world and in the cosmos. This is based on the conviction that there is true unity in all things”³⁰

The *kebatinan* philosophy can even be seen in existing political leadership. The current sultan of the Javanese kingdom based in Yogyakarta named Sri Sultan

²⁹ Magnis-Suseno, Frans.. *Javanese Ethics and World View*. Jakarta: Gramedia. 1987, p. 115

³⁰ Mulder, Niels. *Kebatinan Dan Hidup Sehari-hari Orang Java*. Jakarta: Gramedia. From the original: *Mysticism and Everyday Life in Contemporary Java*. Singapore: Singapore University Press. 1984.

Hamengku Buwono X (who also serves as the governor of Yogyakarta province), wrote an article recently published in the *Kedaulatan Rakyat* newspaper, entitled “The Philosophy of Javanese Leadership”.

He began his article by saying, “The Javanese leadership philosophy...can be studied from the teaching of Manunggaling Kawulo-Gusti”³¹

Former Indonesian president Soeharto (believed by many to be a mystic), a Javanese, wrote this advice to his children: “If you wish to know the eternal world, you have to discover your inner self. If you have not yet discovered your inner self, you are far from that world”³²

If these basic elements of mysticism are so ingrained within the Javanese worldview, what does that say about leader-follower relationships? Again we return to the concept of power. Magnis-Suseno helps us gain some perspective:

In Javanese thought, power is a supernatural reality that is self-perpetuating. The empirical bearer of power is a mere vessel, containing power, without conditioning it. Power is sovereign unto itself and its acquisition or use is in no way the responsibility of the individual in whom it is invested....Power provides its own legitimacy....Power is not used; it is there, it flows from within itself, it is not applied by the ruler, but he lets it flow out and the only thing he can do is to contain it and to let it flow. Any action which proves itself powerful is, in itself, justified.

The people being “ruled” assume that the power their “ruler” has is legitimate, coming from some supernatural source within. They also assume that their ruler will always use his power to take care of them. Therefore, Magnis-Suseno says, “Because he has an interest in providing evidence to his people that he possesses power, he remains under pressure to do everything that would be expected of a benevolent prince”.

³¹ Hamengkubuwono X, Sri Sultan..“Falsafah Kepemimpinan Jawa” (“Philosophy of Javanese Leadership”). *Kedaulatan Rakyat* Newspaper, June 17: Section A, pp.1. Yogyakarta. (translation: Paulus Martono). 2003

³² Soeharto. *Butir-Butir Budaya Jawa: Mencapai Kesempurnaan Hidup Berjiwa Besar Mengusahakan Kebaikan Sejati*. (Grains of Javanese Culture: In Search of Perfect Life Noble and Generous Mind In Quest of the Essence of Goodness). Yayasan Purna Bhakti Pertiwi: Jakarta. 1987.

This makes sense to me as I consider the dilemma described by Rob Sellers in his account of conversing with Javanese pastors about “servant leadership” following a seminar. One of the pastors addressed their distinguished lecturer from the West and said, “Sir, the ministry you have been describing is admirable. We all know New Testament teachings about servant living. But we do not believe servant leadership will work here. I cannot be that kind of pastor. My people do not want me to be a servant, but to be their spiritual father”³³. Sellers goes on to show that due to these underlying influences there has developed what appears to be a tendency for autocratic leadership. “The cosmological explanation of royal power [has] legitimated authoritarianism”.

In Asia the “ruled” are very much dependant on the “ruler”. Dependency is not a bad word in Asia. Apparently this is not just a “Javanese” phenomenon as Lucian Pye explains, “Asian cultures have historically had a rich variety of concepts of power. They share, however, the common denominator of idealizing benevolent, paternalistic leadership and of legitimizing dependency”. Crow summarizes Pye’s conclusions. He writes that the West extols autonomy for self-realization and development. Dependency is seen as immaturity, distorted growth and weakness. But in Asia, dependency is positive, a constructive force for national development. Conformity suppresses assertiveness making it easy to work smoothly with others....But this requires sympathetic, supportive leadership. Formal rules of equal treatment are not enough. Without nurture, anxiety will build tension rather than teamwork. Yet leadership can be stern and authoritarian, since dependency seeks durable authority. Asians seek out strong, sympathetic authority figures for leaders.³⁴

³³ Mulkey, John C. “Javanese and Western Worldviews: Preparations for Cross-Cultural Ministry.” Unpublished paper from: “Worldview and Worldview Change” MB525, Charles H. Kraft, School of World Mission. 1993

³⁴ Taylor, R. H. “Lucian W. Pye: Asian Power and Politics: the Cultural Dimensions of Authority. Xiii, 414 Pp. Cambridge, Mass. and London: Belknap Press, 1985.” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 50, no. 3 (1987): 597–598.

Regarding the church in Asia, I would have to agree with Crow's observation: "This is why church leaders in Asia, whether Asian or Western, who take an authoritarian but benevolent approach are more effective. Though often criticized as autocratic and overbearing by Westerns, Asian followers find this a secure and powerful approach to leadership"³⁵

Crow points out that "Both leaders and followers have implicit and explicit images of what a leader ought to be and do. Leadership expectations occur for both leader and led. Leadership expectations are shaped by cultural background". So, if the Javanese expect their leaders to "take care of them", in what ways can their leaders guide them with "strong sympathetic authority" yet portray a servant attitude?

LEADERSHIP VALUES FROM THE WAYANG

The wayang performances have formed an integral part in Javanese culture for centuries. During my research I frequently stumbled onto certain leadership values that have originated in (or have been conveyed via) the *wayang*. Several of the sources mentioned above were helpful. Three others are worth noting: H. Ulbricht, Sri Mulyono, and Katsuhiko Seino (who touched on the wayang as it related to Islam in Java in his D.Miss. dissertation for the School of World Mission, 1990). Sri Mulyono's book is what he calls an attempt to see "the wayang's elaborate typology of human character"³⁶.

The *wayang* is a traditional theater art form that goes back many centuries. The *wayang* holds a very important part in Javanese life. Lee Khoon Choy writes, "[N]othing has influenced the Javanese mind more than the *wayang*. To understand the *wayang* is a first step towards understanding the Javanese"³⁷

³⁵ Ibid,243

³⁶ Mulyono, Sri.. *Human Character in the Wayang*. Singapore: Gunung Agung. 1981, p.5

³⁷ Lee, Khoon Choy.1977. *Indonesia: Between Myth and Reality*. Singapore: Federal Publications Pte. Ltd. Quoted in: Robert Preston Sellers: "Power and Ministry in Indonesia: Christian Models and Cultural Myths in Conflict". Ph.D. dissertation, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1993., p. 137.

The *wayang* performances can be presented in any one of a number of forms, for example the *wayang kulit* also known as *wayang purwa* (two-dimensional shadow puppet made of dried water buffalo skins), *wayang golek* (three-dimensional wooden puppets), or *wayang wong* (where people act out the parts of the story). The *wayang kulit* is by far the most popular with the Javanese. A puppeteer (*dalang*) will sit cross-legged before a translucent screen with a bright lamp over his head. He will display a variety of puppets on the screen. The shadows are visible to the audience sitting in the opposite side. Using various voices to match the characters in a performance, the puppeteer will reenact the story (“*lakon*”) that has been selected for the evening. A group of *gamelan* musicians sit behind the puppeteer adding the “sound track” to the story. A typical performance will run from about 9:00 pm until sunrise the next morning. The *lakons* for the *wayang* are based on a repertoire of stories taken from the large epics *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, which originated in India, but have become flavored with Javanese ideas. Most Javanese, having grown up watching the performances, can readily identify the various figures of the shadow puppets. Some are heroes, some are evil villains, some are clowns. Sri Mulyono, himself a *dalang* expresses his love for *wayang*:

If we wish to understand the deepest elements of the *wayang*, we shall have to peel away the layers that cover its deepest secrets. If we succeed, then we shall find that the *wayang* is a living encyclopedia of life, a ball of many layers. The outer skin is the *wayang* as entertainment; beneath that are seven layers more, the *wayang* as painting, sculpture, music, literature, acting, voice, and instrumental music; deeper is the layer of the *wayang* as education and information; still deeper is the layers of the *wayang* as scholarship and science; at the core, indivisible, is the *wayang* as a system of symbols expressing the truths of the spiritual world³⁸.

The Javanese sense this mystical side to the *wayang kulit* because of the element of the shadow. H. Ulbricht explains, that the phenomenon of the shadow is so common that nobody seems to ponder about it. People are hardly aware of the fact that the shadow has only two dimensions and that it is the only visible non-material thing.

³⁸ Sri Mulyono, 1981, p. 25.

It is unique in that being visible it shares a characteristic with the material world, and that being non-material it shares a characteristic with the invisible world.³⁹

The interesting thing I came across in this study came from an unlikely character named “Semar”. I have often seen Semar in the wayang kulit performances. Given his unusual shape, he is easy recognizable. He has large breasts and a huge protruding bottom. When he appears on the screen the audience loves it. Magnis-Suseno writes that “Semar is the most loved of all wayang figures” and when the *dalang* presents Semar he will asks the audience, “Who is as fat as a tub?”. Semar usually leads a band of other odd shaped characters. Some say these are his sons. They are Gareng, Petruk and Bagong, each with a unique shape that everyone recognizes. Together with Semar they form the “*panakawan*” (clown servants). They are like jesters who bring humor to an otherwise long program. However, there is another side to this motley crew. Magnis-Suseno explains:

The task of Semar and his sons is to steer the hero of the story safely through all the dangers of the course, to reach his goal. If he gets into difficulties, Semar will provide advice. If he becomes too aggressive or irritated, Semar calms him down and restrains him from overdoing things. If he is troubled, they cheer him up with jokes and farces. If he feels abandoned, they provide good company. Whenever he is in real danger, they sometimes save him. Because of their form and demeanour, the *panakawan* are the servants of the hero. They always address him in respectful speech (*krama inggil*) even if they readily get tangled up in its high-level usages. It is the *panakawan* who ensure that the hero attains his objective. Anyone accompanied by Semar never fails in his duty and never loses in battle. The invincible nature of the *Pandawas* (five heroes of the *Mahabharata*) therefore, both in the eyes of the public and in reality does not lie in their own power, but rather in the fact that they are accompanied by Semar. If Semar were ever to abandon the *Pandawas*, it would be catastrophic for them⁴⁰.

I began to realize that there is something special about these “clowns”, especially Semar. While on the one hand he can talk to the gods and “when he is angry the

³⁹ Ibid, 1981, p.4.

⁴⁰ Frans Magnis Suseno, p. 184-185

heavens tremble” At the same time he is a humble servant willing to accept his place in the greater scheme of things. Magnis-Suseno adds:

As a servant, he is completely free from self-interest. He lives entirely for his duty to accompany and protect the *Pandawas* on their journeys. He makes no claim for recognition and is happy to remain in the background and to be regarded as ignorant by many of his fellow-travelers. His loyalty and sense of devotion know no bounds. He gives himself over completely to his *darma* of being a good servant and is content with his place in society.

In the newspaper article mentioned above written by Sri Sultan Hamengku Buwono X entitled “The Philosophy of Javanese Leadership” the sultan highlights the leadership qualities of Semar. He writes, “Yet another example of ideal leadership quality can be seen in the *Pandawa-lima* (five heroes), characterizing the faithfulness and willingness of *Semar* and his children. Here we find the description, derivation and applications to actual leadership practice...”. It was interesting that he praises the leadership qualities of the “clown servants” rather than the five heroes. Their faithfulness and willingness (availability) are qualities a Javanese leader should have, according to the Sultan.

Moelyono shares of another character from the *wayang*, who according to him is similar to Semar in terms of portraying leadership qualities. He writes,

The character is a *dewa* (god) named *Bethara Ismaya* who through incarnation comes to earth to serve the king *Janaka* (also known as King *Madukara*). Frequently *Bethara* advises King *Janaka*. Leaders need to be humble and mix with the people in society, enter the situations of life of other people in such a way as to be able to see with their eyes, think from their perspective, and feel what they are feeling⁴¹.

There is an endless supply of values and guidance to be found within the *wayang* stories. One must be cautious, of course, to separate out the elements of Hindu, Javanese mystic (and even Islamic) philosophies.

CONCLUSION

⁴¹Interview with Moelyono ..“Personal Case Study: Response Paper for Leadership Emergence Study.” Salatiga, Indonesia. 2003

Leadership according to the Javanese philosophical background has a big influence in the way of Christian living with a good ethos and imitate Jesus Christ. The aspect of working together (rukun), respect one another (urmat), and humility as the key of leadership. The concept of top down are not emphasized yet in a sense of working as one unity that give higher value. When mythical and other beliefs underlying the thought about leading others in communal setting or family, the value of Javanese ethos are considered and put in the high respective mindset.

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