

# Cultural Inculturation: *Riyaya Undhuh-Undhuh* Celebration in Worship in Java Christian Church, Dagen-Palur, Surakarta

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**Abstract:** *Pluralism is a necessity in human tradition and culture. Through culture, humans can live together, adapt and inculturate according to the context of place and time. Cultural products, including knowledge, morals, law, capacity and other behaviours, become a human experience in interacting. The Dagen-Palur Javanese Christian Church develops local theology in contextual cultural inculturation. Kejawan culture in the land of Java is not an obstacle in interacting horizontally between people and the surrounding community but can also interact vertically through liturgical facilities that build human interaction with God. Riyaya undhuh-undhuh celebrations are a form of inculturation in which church culture and teachings unite, making social togetherness and togetherness in worship in the church. The local theology developed by the Javanese churches, in this case, the Dagen-Palur GKJ, became the starting point for developing a very diverse cultural inculturation in Indonesia. This paper hopes that studies of local culture will emerge, which can be studied academically. This study and research are also expected to contribute to preserving indigenous culture, which is the most beautiful and precious gift from God for the Indonesian people who live in a diversity of ethnicities, cultures, and languages.*

**Keywords:** Cultural inculturation, riyayaundhuh-undhuh, GKJ Dagen-Palur

## 1. Introduction

Progress in this era of globalisation has helped a lot and provided solutions to various difficulties experienced by humans. For example, interpersonal relationships can be facilitated with the invention of mobile phones. The distance between humans seems to be no longer far than before. Therefore, science and technology are modern cultural products for humans today. Culture as encompassing all human experience. Culture includes knowledge, art, morals, law, and other capacities and behaviours accepted or learned by humans and members of society [1]. Products in various inventions have provided a space for inculturation, where every country is more open and can accept western culture or developed countries for common goals and progress. Inculturation becomes natural if it does not conflict and does not interfere with the existing culture. Culture is inherited not from a genetic process but through inculturation, namely the process of human interaction where an individual learns and accepts his culture [2; 3]. Humans acquire their culture consciously through direct learning and unconsciously through interaction [4]. Science and technology as a product of modern civilisation are windows for the life of a new culture for communities, groups, regions and even a country. In this case, cultural inculturation has indirectly been accepted and lives to build new habits from a country, especially in globalisation.

The Javanese Christian Church (GKJ) Dagen-Palur, as a religious institution whose mission is to proclaim the Gospel and maintain the safety of the people, is more than that GKJ Dagen Palu has to open up to various backgrounds in one's life. It means that the church needs to develop openness to the diversity or diversity of traditions and cultures that its people have. Then cultural inculturation becomes a whole meaning to build constructive cultural communication. Openness and willingness to accept cultural diversity in church life are necessary to preserve the rich traditions that

the ancestors of this nation have passed down. Indonesia has 1700 islands, 1001 regional languages and 1331 tribes (BPS 2010) [5]. Cultural inculturation needs to be supported, even attempted to build contextual theology based on the local wealth.

*Riyaya undhuh-undhuh* is one of the traditions built between Javanese tradition and Christian teachings. The word *undhuh-undhuh* or *ngundhuh* means memetic [6; 7]. In general, picking crops from crops or agriculture has been waiting long. So when the harvest has produced good results, as a form of joy, the Javanese people carry out *riyayaundhuh-undhuh* or celebration of the crop. This tradition is a form of gratitude to God, who has bestowed his blessings on humans. In Javanese tradition, this expression is carried out by holding shadow puppet shows until late at night, sometimes even until dawn. In addition to the shadow puppets, songs performed by the Sinden (singers who accompany the shadow puppet show) are also performed.

Since 1984, as a mature church, GKJ Dagen-Palur has periodically held the tradition of *riyayaundhuh-undhuh* in a Sunday service. Usually, the *riyayaundhuh-undhuh* event is held to coincide with the church calendar, the descent of the Holy Spirit. At the *riyayaundhuh-undhuh* event, the congregation brought their harvests, limited to agricultural products and various kinds of gifts. Those who do not have crops can bring livestock, carving, cooking, etc.

The author sees that cultural inculturation is a social fact. There may be still some parties who reject cultural inculturation on the grounds of syncretism. So in this paper, the author tries to explore through the interview/interview method and collect data, then analyse before presenting the results and conclusions.

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## 2. Literature Review

The word inculturation comes from the Latin "inculturation". Formed from the word "in" which indicates something exists/goes; in (in), on (above) or indicating something is moving; to, towards, in, up, and the verb "colo", *colere*, *colui*, *cultum* (cultivating, cultivating, working, inhabiting, nurturing, respecting, and worshipping). The verb comes from the noun *cultura* (employment, cultivation, farming, education, worship, worship). It can be seen from the combination of all these meanings that the word *cultura* gets the meaning of culture. Through the word's origin above, "inculturation" literally means "insertion into a culture".

In a broader and general sense, inculturation is an adjustment and adaptation to society, groups of people, customs, language, and behaviour usually found in a place. Inculturation usually leads to contextualisation or indigenisation [9; 10]. Contextualisation has existed since the early church met with the other world. As an ecumenical endeavour, there are two kinds of patterns in contextualisation, namely: First, the attitude for the receiving church. It explains the relevance of the theological struggles for the churches in the Indonesia mission area. The receiving church first thinks about relevant matters in their place before, in turn adapting to the ecumenical liturgical pattern. Second is the attitude of the sending church. It means that there is an awareness that contextualisation is not like changing outer clothes without changing the soul. The receiving church started the contextualisation process by considering the ecumenical liturgical pattern, then, from the results of these considerations, tried to apply it in its place [11; 12].

Therefore, it can be stated that inculturation is a process of integrating the faith experience of a local Church into local culture in such a way that the experience does not only reveal itself in the elements of the culture concerned, and thus creates a new unity and "communio", not only in that culture but also as an element that enriches the mission of the church.

The expression *undhuh-undhuh* comes from the word *undhuh* or *ngundhuh*, which means to pick. At the same time, the word *riyaya* means holiday. Therefore, the expression *riyayaundhuh-undhuh* can be understood as a harvest day, where residents or the community perform a kind of celebration to express gratitude for the blessings they receive. In this *undhuh-undhuh* ritual, people generally bring various crops, fruit, livestock, rice, cakes made from cooking and various community works [13; 14]. After all the work and harvests have been collected, they make mountains whose contents are the results of the harvest, for example containing vegetables, long beans, carrots, rice, eggplant and others. The mountains are paraded according to the route made by the stakeholders or elders who are trusted by the local community. The *riyayaundhuh-undhuh* tradition is very close to the Javanese nuances that are in contact with syncretism, especially the agrarian beliefs of the ancestors in the existence of Dewi Sri. In ancient times it was believed that Dewi Sri had a very important role in determining the harvest's success. Therefore, in the ancient tradition of

*riyayaundhuh-undhuh*, it was a thanksgiving ceremony for the Javanese people to Dewi Sri for the harvest's success [15].

When people have embraced religion, especially Christianity, the tradition is not immediately eliminated but instead is "uri-uri" or preserved with new nuances to suit Christian teachings. This inculturation resulted in a cultural transformation that synergised to create a new tradition. This tradition is packaged into a *riyayaundhuh-undhuh* worship held by the church in the context of thanking the people to God for His protection and blessings so that all the hard work in trying something in the form of agriculture, fisheries, livestock can harvest or even produce abundant results.

GKJ Dagen-Palur is a tribal church whose residents are mostly Javanese. In the current development, the Dagen-Palur GKJ consists of various ethnic groups; Java, Sumatra (Batak), Sulawesi (Menado), Chinese, Papuan and others. Even though it is located in Central Java, to be precise, Surakarta GKJ Dagen-Palur has become a Mini Indonesia in togetherness and fellowship. GKJ Dagen-Palur was matured into an independent church on June 2, 1984, by GKJ Margoyudan, which was previously the mother church, whose task was to advise and assist in becoming an independent church which is currently named; Dagen-Palur Javanese Christian Church [16]. Historically, the name Dagen-Palur was taken from the territory of two communities or fellowship groups, namely the people in the Dagen hamlet area and the Palur Perumnas area. GKJ Dagen-Palur services are growing and expanding to the Mojolaban area, Karanganyar Alit.

The history of GKJ Dagen-Palur grew and developed when the first Pastor was ordained for Pdt. Novemberi Choeldahono, MA. Ecclesiology in the the ministry of GKJ Dagen-Palur history was developed through a vision and mission that empowers all elements and potentials that exist in the existence of the congregation's life. One of the ecclesiological movements for evangelism is to develop local contextual theology, rooted in the treasures of life and Kejawan traditions [17; 18]. The GKJ Dagen-Palur congregation has a variety of lives; some are farmers, teachers, civil servants (PNS), entrepreneurs, traders and housewives. This illustration shows that the diversity of work supports each family's "financial" life in the Dagen-Palur GKJ congregation. Infinite gratitude to God is manifested in the *riyayaundhuh-undhuh* worship, usually set by the Assembly in October, along with the family week or month. At the *riyayaundhuh-undhuh* celebration, the Church Council usually establishes a committee to carry out the event properly, smoothly and successfully. For this celebration to take place to live, the committee began to record each family what would be brought as an offering to the church in the *riyayaundhuh-undhuh* celebration.

The assembly, in this case, the Pastor, explores the kejawan ritual, which is full of mystical and critical aspects and is transformed into a celebration that has the nuance of gratitude to God for His blessings. A sociologist, Durkheim, once studied society that rituals cannot be understood apart from people's lives. It means that understanding ritual cannot

be separated from the social aspect. In this case, Durkheim emphasised that the most basic aspects of religion are sacred and profane. The sacred is defined as the powerful and respected. While the profane is defined as part of daily life [19; 20; 21]. The ritual, which is inculturated in the church tradition, becomes a liturgist celebration of *riyayaundhuh-undhuh* as a part of gratitude which is filled with nuances of Christian teachings based on the Bible (the holy book of Christians). This cultural inculturation runs and merges into a new tradition through a long journey that has been carried out by the predecessors who carried out evangelism based on the traditions and culture that existed in the local community where the church was founded.

### Research Method

Related to research on inculturation of culture and religion, including qualitative research. Qualitative research is "methods for exploring and understanding the meaning that some individuals or groups of people ascribe to social or humanitarian problems" [22; 23]. This research is more descriptive qualitative in nature, where researchers want to describe problems and phenomena that occur in the field as they are to get facts [24]. Data collection is done by studying literature, grouping data, analysing, and concluding.

### 3. Result and Discussion

The *Riyaya undhuh-undhuh* tradition was originally a kejawan tradition carried out by the Javanese people as a form of gratitude to Dewi Sri. It was done and believed by the Javanese people at first that Dewi Sri was the giver of blessings and protection to the farmers. All efforts, efforts and hard work that begins with ploughing the fields, planting rice seeds to harvesting are the role of Dewi Sri, who is believed to be the element of success so that the harvest is abundant without any disturbance from pests, especially disasters or disasters. Even in the *riyayaundhuh-undhuh* tradition, people share their gratitude by "responding" to the Javanese term, which means renting, organising or holding a shadow puppet show all night until dawn. Many various performances accompany it apart from Wayang Kulit performances. The melodious voices of the "sinden", a Javanese expression for singers in wayang performances, add to the liveliness of the Wayang Kulit performance. Gending accompaniment and mixed saris in the repertoire of Javanese music traditionally carry a message of gratitude to Dewi Sri, who has guarded and blessed the farmers until the harvest arrives.

The *riyayaundhuh-undhuh* tradition is a "super noble" cultural wealth for the Javanese people. It is a phenomenon of local cultural wealth that needs to be "scrutinised" or preserved. The tradition of *riyayaundhuh-undhuh* became a sociological phenomenon where people have a religious sense to be grateful to the giver of blessings, who was believed to be Dewi Sri. Indeed, on the one hand, this can lead to syncretism, namely the worship of gods constructed by humans themselves as gods whose existence is higher than humans. Even though it seems syncretistic, the deepest meaning in *riyayaundhuh-undhuh* carries a religious message, "nguri-uri kakulturn", or preserving/preserving culture and social messages where all members of the community can feel harvest happiness.

In general, the Javanese Christian Church, which stands on the land of Java, sees that every tradition that exists in Javanese society is the existence and identity of the Javanese people. The *riyayaundhuh-undhuh* tradition symbolises the Javanese respect for nature which has sheltered and helped various toils and jobs in cultivating their agricultural products. This tradition is inculturated with church traditions through a cultural transformation so that every cultural symbol that has grown is developed into a celebration of joint worship directed to God according to Christian teachings. The Javanese Christian Church of Degen-Palur living together with local traditions and culture is not without problems and friction. For example, the tradition of "slametan" three days, seven days to 1000 days after someone dies, "kenduren", "ruwatan", "tumpengan" and many others are local cultural treasures which if able to be inculturated through cultural transformation will emphasise that culture is not an obstacle for humans to know and believe in Christ [25; 26; 27].

The Javanese Christian Church of Dagen-Palur, which has matured since 38 years ago, has built a Vision and Mission that leads to the preservation of tradition and culture as local wisdom that needs to be preserved and preserved. Catechism and Bible Understanding, as well as discussion vehicles in various seminars, serve as a bridge for integrating local culture, becoming part of the wealth in concocting worship that has cultural nuances where traditions and teachings meet for the glory of God's Name.

### 4. Conclusion

It is a fact in history that Indonesia is one of the countries with a high level of cultural diversity. The cultural diversity of ethnic groups and cultural diversity in civilisation, traditional to modern and regional. One area with a diversity of traditions and culture is the island of Java. And one area that has a diversity of traditions, such as *riyayaundhuh-undhuh*, is the residency of Surakarta in Central Java. This tradition has inculturated the religious life embraced by the people in Surakarta, especially the church congregation at GKJ Dagen Palur, Surakarta. The tradition of *riyayaundhuh-undhuh* has been inculturated in worship in GKJ Dagen-Palur and various Java churches. Various traditions and cultures that grew up in the Javanese society contributed positively to the growth of faith in God in the development of worship models through a touch of culture that existed earlier in the church where the church was founded. The GKJ Dagen-Palur vision and mission, which is based on the living Christ proclamation, has greeted culture to develop local theology of GKJ Dagen-Palur through history for the younger generation as well the foundation of the church in the future. Thus, further research is needed on cultural inculturation that is full of human and togetherness values, such as; slametan, kumbokarnan, ruwatan, banchakan, etc. So that through this research can enrich the repertoire of worship that has a rich Indonesian style with ethnicity, culture and language. Through research that produces a study, it is hoped that it can be the starting point for more in-depth research that can be justified academically to become a vehicle for constructive discussion.



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