

THE CULTURAL IMAGES OF COMMUNITY LIFE AMONG THE CATHOLIC SUNDANESE AND JAVANESE

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ABSTRACT

This article is a result of an ecclesiological and catechetical survey conducted among the Catholics of two parishes in Java. Two themes were explored, namely, (1) *relationship of the self and the community*, and (2) *sharing of experiences as an encounter of faith*. These were put within the larger project to search for images from within the local cultures that may support catechetical materials about the church. This survey was intended to open the theological discourse of the church to the local cultures *without* proposing particular models to the believers. It explores the sociocultural realities of the local believers without direct reference to the church. It refers to faith and religious experiences of the believers but only insofar as they are related to the people's understanding of the *self* and the *community*. There were traces of how the believers relate themselves as cultural persons to the society as a community. Another presumption behind the themes was that *sharing of faith* experiences might happen through the daily conversations in the community life. These themes can

corroborate the exploration of the community life among the believers in Java, since it is through the sharing of faith experiences that the people may see their community life differently. By considering *faith* in its broadest sense, this article wants to trace the possible cultural images that may shape the believers' cultural preferences in living their life as church members. An emphasis will be put on the *daily matters* of the believers' responses in order to collect the cultural images 'from below'.

Key Words:

•*Culture* •*Images* •*Religious community* •*Sundanese* •*Javanese*
•*church* •*the believer's experience* •*relationships* •*local culture*
•*ecclesiology* •*faith encounter* •*cultural preference* •*community life*

Introduction

Sunda and Java are two of the main cultures in Java we are studying in this article. It has been known that community life in Java has existed a long time ago and prevailed among the religious communities of our day. This paper bears the presumption that this community life has kept and developed some important culturally embedded images that are beneficial for every research on religious community, which, in our case, is the church. These images are familiar to the local believers and are assumed to have been used to embrace the reality of the church which is not emerging from these cultures. Our leading questions determining the questionnaire are: (1) In what ways the local people describe their *relationships* with the sociocultural community? (2) In what situations the sociocultural communities support the members' *sharing of experiences* to be encounters of faith? In the course of our explorations, these questions will be answered by analysing the results of the survey and at the same time by considering the cultural tendencies related to the emerging preferences. Some cultural images may not appear quite figurative, given that the people in Java can explain particular relationships they live by referring to some words commonly used to express their preferences. More concrete cultural images can be expected after we interpret these preferences with the traditions in their cultures. Some images may refer to other images. The

Sundanese and Javanese word for society, that is, '*masarakat*', for example, can be regarded as an image containing a series of other images related to the social activities of the society, rather than simply a word to translate the word 'society'.

To answer the questions above, we divided each of the themes in our survey into three dimensions, that is, (a) *experience content*, (b) *cultural reason* and (c) *prospective expectation*. This distinction has been employed to facilitate the formulation of statements in the questionnaire. Nevertheless, these dimensions were not intended to separate sharply the believers' responses, but to suggest the context of each series of statements explored in the survey. The dimension 'experience content' can help us note the realities as experienced by the respondents. The dimension 'cultural reason' is intended to display what the respondents have learned from their culture. The dimension 'prospective expectation' can indicate the people's hopes in relation to the realities experienced and the cultural reasons learned in the society. All questionnaires were translated into Javanese, Sundanese and Indonesian when delivered into the hands of the respondents. The cultural images we are observing may not be immediately obvious from the believers' responses considering that the structure of the questionnaire was designed in five degrees of (dis)agreement. In doing so, we would like to give room to the respondents considering that complete (dis)agreement might be too strong as the only choice. In responding to the statement, the respondents were required to choose 'CA' (Completely Agree) if the statement always happens or conforms very much to their view, 'A' (Agree) if the statement frequently happens or conforms to their view, 'LA' (Less Agree) if the statement happens infrequently or not really conforms to their view, 'D' (Disagree) if the statement very rarely happens or does not conform to their view, and 'CD' (Completely Disagree) if the statement never happens or does not conform at all to their view. Our interpretations of the results will be related to the local traditions and cultural activities so as to note the meaningful images concerning the two themes surveyed.

The basic method of this paper is *exploratory*, given that we do not refer to a particular model or theory of community life in the cultures observed, but limit ourselves to the two themes mentioned above. These themes are presumed to support any further discussions on the cultural images applied by the believers to the church. Given the exploratory character of this survey, our interpretations on the results will be oriented towards the 'cultural' images that are meaningful for the local cultures.

Brief Observations

The Catholics in the parishes of Cigugur, and Ganjuran are the respondents of this survey. The Catholics in *Cigugur* will indicate the Sundanese culture, and those in Ganjuran will indicate the Javanese culture. Cigugur, a village located about 3 kilometers from Kuningan regency, West Java, is well-known as an area dominated by the Sundanese. The Catholics in the parish of 'Christ the King' in Cigugur are still young in their faith. They were converted to Catholicity in the 60s, following the urge of the government at that time to choose a religion other than the 'Sundanese-Javanese Religion' (ADS). This parish is also known for its place of Marian pilgrimage located in Cisantana, about 5 kilometers from the parish church. The parish of the 'Holy Heart of Jesus' in *Ganjuran*, 17 kilometers south of Yogyakarta, Central Java, is wellknown for its '*candi*' (shrine) of the Sacred Heart of Jesus at the yard of the parish church. The Catholics in the village Ganjuran, mostly populated by the Javanese, are older in their faith, dating back to the 20s when there were a few Catholics presumably initiated by the Schmutzer family. Long before the existence of the church building, the Schmutzer family had initiated the religious activities and catechesis in one of its houses in Ganjuran with the help of Fr. Van Driessche, SJ. The church building was built in 1924.

Our survey in these area was conducted in March 2007, involving 300 respondents of each of the parishes. The data from a total of 600 respondents was gathered through various encounters with the people in both areas. Many of the questionnaires were distributed and collected with the help of the catechists and priests from the local parishes. Meetings in the '*lingkungan*' (smallest group of Catholics as part of the parish structure) were mostly the place of this data collecting process. Our respondents range from those of the junior high school to those in their pension age. The respondents in Cigugur range from school teachers, breeders, students, housewives and merchants. Most of the respondents in Ganjuran are farmers or rice field workers, students, teachers, pensioners and housewives. We can find the statistics of the respondents on the table below.

Table 1 *Personal Characteristics of the Respondents*

Age	N	%	Having been Baptised	N	%
13 - 22 years old	56	9.3	> = 51 years	35	5.8
23 - 32 years old	90	15.0	41 - 50 years	157	26.2
33 - 42 years old	133	22.2	31 - 40 years	167	27.8
43 - 52 years old	153	25.5	21 - 30 years	139	23.2
53 - 62 years old	103	17.2	11 - 20 years	80	13.3
63 + years old	62	10.3	5 - 10 years	14	2.3
<i>missing value</i>	3	.5	< 5 years	4	.7
			<i>missing value</i>	4	.7
Sex	N	%			
Male	310	51.7			
Female	290	48.3			
Occupation	N	%	Occupation	N	%
Student	59	9.8	Employee / Entrepreneur	197	32.8
At House	84	14.0	Civil Employee	40	6.7
Labourer & Farmer	111	18.5	Pensioner	30	5.0
Teacher	75	12.5	<i>missing value</i>	4	.7

More than half of the respondents were 33 to 62 years old, and that is 64.9%, and could be considered as those who were actively working in the society. Considering that they were mostly labourers and farmers (18.5%), (civil) employees and entrepreneurs (39.5%), as well as those staying at home (14.0%), we can say that most of our respondents are ordinary Catholics. By 'employee' and 'entrepreneur', the questionnaires told us that these terms refer to the people who are working for other people but also by themselves. To maintain consistency, we will refer to the *respondents* as the '*believers*', albeit with a knowledge that in this survey they are situated in the sociocultural aspect of the discussions. The believers in Cigugur will also be mentioned as *Sunda* and those in Ganjuran as *Java*, even though we know that it's the believers of the respective culture that we have in mind when discussing the survey results.

A particular condition may need our attention considering the situation in Ganjuran, Central Java. The questioning step in Ganjuran was conducted just nine months after the earth-shattering earthquake in Yogyakarta on 27 May 2006. Ganjuran, which lies in the southern part of Yogyakarta, was one of the areas badly struck by the earthquake. Thousands of casualties were counted in Yogyakarta, and about eighties were found in Ganjuran. Six people died under the falling roof of the parish church when they were attending the mass early in the morning of that unforgettable day. This situation was slightly going better at the time of the data collecting

process, but the trauma was still in the people's eyes. Even almost one year after the earthquake, most of the social as well as ecclesial meetings were arranged in open space under the fear of subsequent earthquakes. Nevertheless, this situation might have fostered the care and solidarity among the people. Telling one's stories has become a certain relieve for the Ganjuran's people to get along with their life.

Some brief observations can be carried on based on the Mean values of our data. The statement receiving the lowest Mean is Q8 (Theme 1, 'experience content') which says that “When encountering life difficulties, you tend to be *'pasrah'* and wait for help from the leaders”. The mean value in Cigugur is 1.95 and in Ganjuran 1.99. It means that the believers in both parishes would not agree to the attitude of *pasrah* and the dependence on the help of the leaders. This may give us a thought that in the Sundanese and Javanese cultures, the significance of the community as something other than the self does not need to reduce the role of the self. The self is not 'consumed' by the community and that is shown by the willingness to struggle and to get up on one's own feet (cf. Q9). There has been a stereotype in Indonesia that the people in Java seem to believe too much in the good aspect of the incidents in their lives so that they will simply be *pasrah* in front of these realities. This stereotype seems to have stigmatised them as passive people. However, it appears not to be the case when we recognise that the self in these cultures is interpreted contextually in the community life. We will see different responses around a number of other statements that display the low Mean scores in the following table.

Table 2 *Less Preferred Statements*

	Statement	Sunda		Java	
		M	Sd	M	Sd
Q5	In “ <i>kampung</i> ” activities, you prefer following decisions taken by the leaders of ‘ <i>Rukun Tetangga</i> ’ or ‘ <i>Desa</i> ’, as it is. ³	3.12	1.13	2.53	.98
Q7	In the ‘ <i>kampung</i> ’ meetings, you like to pose questions and propose your opinions actively.	2.98	1.18	3.46	.94
Q15	In your neighbourhood, you still find attitudes of “ <i>priyayi</i> ” (“ <i>ningrat</i> ”) ⁴ besides of ordinary citizens.	2.87	1.18	2.32	1.13
Q16	Major voices in the society usually represent the best choice and therefore should be followed.	3.53	1.11	2.73	.99
Q25	You often feel uneasy to share your religious experiences with the neighbours, yet with those of other religions.	2.92	1.02	3.49	.93
Q29	You will greet your neighbours and other people only for the sake of politeness (formality), rather than from heart to heart.	2.70	1.11	2.56	.92

Most of these statements show 'negative' perceptions about the respective ideas or circumstances they contain, except Q7 that measures the believers' state of being active in the social meetings. Nevertheless, the low

Mean values of these statements may insinuate more than their contents and could refer to some particular situations of the believers. Statement Q5, for instance, has been scored low due to the possibility that the believers would not simply follow their leaders' decisions as it is, but rather, want to take part in the process of planning and preparing the common activities in the society. The responses to Q5 seem in consonance with those to Q16, given that the latter also underline personal involvement in the communal meetings. However, it seems that this intention has not been accomplished easily considering that their responses to Q7, concerning their willingness to be actively involved in the social meetings, tend towards less agreement. The tendency indicates that there seems to be a bit hesitation to get involved in the meetings by way of posing questions and proposing ideas. If we attend to the difference of the Mean scores between the Sundanese and the Javanese on the table, we could also suggest that there must have been different circumstances underlying the different responses. Higher Mean value of Q7 could indicate greater readiness in the believers' involvement in the society. The lower score in Q15 may point to the social reality that probably does not allow anymore the distinction of higher and lower classes, and this may also indicate that the relations in the society have involved many people of different strata. It is therefore understandable that people tend to greet each other not only for the sake of politeness, but rather, out of some deeper reasons (cf. Q29). The fairly higher Mean score of the Javanese in Q25 compared to the Sundanese, might indicate that there could be particular situations in Ganjuran that make the believers feel uneasy to share their religious experiences with the other.

The believers' responses to these statements, which seem to arouse 'negative' thoughts about particular matters, tend to be 'cautious'. I would say that our respondents are quite '*evaluative*' in their reflections of these statements, given that the responses also show a tendency towards less or disagreements on the matters. This 'evaluative' attitude might be caused by the social control of the communities towards the members, a characteristic that could be linked to a social value 'appropriateness' (of gestures, language levels and actions) in Java.⁵ Generally every newcomer in the society would be assessed by the neighbours based on the cultural values lived by the people of the area. This may also explain why it is not always easy to propose new activities in the society because there should be a kind of social assessment before these activities can be approved by the community.

A brief observation of three statements with highest scores can also draw our attention about some of the most important values considered by the believers of both cultures. We would only have a glance of these three statements so that we won't take over our further observations in the next section concerning many other statements receiving positive responses from the believers. The three statements are displayed in the following table.

Table 3 *More Preferred Statements*

	Statement	Sunda		Java	
		M	Sd	M	Sd
Q11	Politeness and hospitality are the most important things in the social life.	4.64	.54	4.70	.54
Q12	When problem occurs in ' <i>kampung</i> ', it has to be solved together as family and in the spirit of a family .	4.48	.66	4.58	.56
Q13	A good leader is someone who is supposed to shepherd rather than reign the members of the society.	4.44	.82	4.61	.56

From these statements we can see that *politeness* and *hospitality* are two values that are highly appreciated by the Sundanese and the Javanese (Q11). The standard deviations of this statement (.54) indicate that the variability of the responses was low across the respondents, which means that there has been a higher degree of agreement concerning the statement. The image of 'family' noticed in Q12, which is here related to the way of resolving problem in the society, will also surface in our further discussions as one of the most important cultural images among the believers. This spirit as a family together with the values politeness and hospitality might have given a different sense of community life in Java. Therefore, we might not be surprised to see that statement Q13, about the escorting and accompanying characters of a leader as a '*shepherd*', also receives very positive responses. One may also imagine that there must have been many cultural images among them that can illustrate the nature of community life. However, in line with our themes mentioned earlier, we need to focus our discussions on the relations of the self in these cultures with the sociocultural community and in which communal contexts these relations can provide space for the sharing of faith. If it's true that the believers in these cultures would need particular characters to be applied in their social communities, then it might be true as well that they would need specific images familiar to them to build their religious communities. In the following section about sociocultural preferences, we want to mark these images which often will be shown in the social characters, attitudes and values preferred by the believers.

The Cultural Images

A number of sociocultural preferences have emerged from the results of our survey. We will mark the similarities and differences in the believers' responses of both cultures. The similarities will be classified and discussed according to the believers' (complete) agreements in relation to certain cultural images or values. The differences will be interpreted qualitatively according to the situations of the respective culture that probably have caused them. Some of the statements with fairly different tendencies will be displayed in tables to facilitate us in characterising the tendencies. We may find in the following sections that some statements can be grouped together constructing or supporting certain cultural tendencies. The tables display the believers' responses in percentage.

Theme 1: “Relationship of the Self with the Community”

Dimension 'Experience Content'

Table 4 *Language Level*

	Statement	CNA	NA	LA	A	CA	
Q1	In day-to-day encounters in your family , you prefer referring to yourself with the word 'abdi' / 'kula' than 'kuring' / 'aku'.	2.7	10.3	15.7	48.0	23.3	<i>Sunda</i>
		21.3	5.7	12.3	43.3	17.3	<i>Java</i>
Q2	In day-to-day encounters in your society , you prefer referring to yourself with the word 'abdi' / 'kula' than 'kuring' / 'aku'.	1.0	9.3	11.3	51.7	26.7	<i>Sunda</i>
		.3	.3	3.3	36.3	59.7	<i>Java</i>

CNA = Completely Not Agree, NA = Not Agree, LA = Less Agree, A = Agree, CA = Completely Agree

Language level in the family and in the society. The believers' responses to statements Q1 and Q2 refer to their use of politer word (Snd. 'abdi' and Jv. 'kula' = first person singular pronoun, 'I') in referring to themselves in the encounters in the family and in the society. However, we must consider that the use of the other less polite words ('kuring' and 'aku') may also promote more informal atmosphere, given that some circumstances would probably situate the believers among close relatives and friends. We could see a slight difference in the usage of the word, namely, that the Javanese show a fairly high percentage of those who prefer the use of less polite word when they meet each other in the *family* (21.3% of “complete disagreements” only, or almost 40% of less and disagreements). This might indicate that in the family, some Javanese would probably prefer to experience informal conversations among the family members. Nevertheless, this difference seems not too obvious compared to the common tendency that both

cultures appreciate the usage of higher language level to be used in the family as well as in the society. Quite noticeable is the percentage positive responses among the Javanese when having conversations in the *society* (96% of “(complete) agreements”).

Table 5 *Social Involvement*

	Statement	CNA	NA	LA	A	CA	
Q03	You like to be actively involved in the activities organised in the society you are now living.	.7	7.0	16.7	47.7	28.0	<i>Sunda</i>
		.3	1.7	6.3	41.0	50.7	<i>Java</i>
Q04	You are or have been assigned with a position in one of the activities in the society you are living.	19.0	18.3	15.3	36.0	11.3	<i>Sunda</i>
		10.7	10.7	15.3	54.0	9.3	<i>Java</i>
Q05	In ' <i>kampung</i> ' activities, you prefer following decisions taken by the leaders of ' <i>Rukun Tetangga</i> ' or ' <i>Desa</i> ', as it is .	6.3	28.7	22.3	32.0	10.7	<i>Sunda</i>
		14.3	36.3	34.0	12.7	2.7	<i>Java</i>
Q06	Activities organised in your neighbourhood have supported your personal growth as society's member.	4.3	10.3	13.0	57.0	15.3	<i>Sunda</i>
		2.7	14.0	6.3	52.0	25.0	<i>Java</i>
Q07	In the ' <i>kampung</i> ' meetings , you like to pose questions and propose your opinions actively.	11.7	25.3	27.3	25.0	10.7	<i>Sunda</i>
		6.0	8.3	24.3	56.0	5.3	<i>Java</i>

Social involvement and personal growth. Statements Q3 to Q7 of the first theme contain matters referring to the believers' involvement in the society and social meetings as persons. Both cultures show quite positive tendency towards *active* involvement in the social activities (Q3, Sunda 75.7% and Java 91.7% of “(complete) agreements”). This tendency might not appear completely as a reality considering that the responses to Q4, concerning the believers' experiences with assigned 'position' in the social activities, only show moderate percentages of those who agree and less or not agree.⁶ The believers' *personal growth* as members of the society seems to have been supported much by the social activities organised in their neighbourhood, given the moderately high percentage of those who agree with statement Q6 (Sunda 72.3% and Java 77% of “(complete) agreements”). This feeling of being supported by the society in one way or another conforms with their responses on Q3 above. The believers seem not to prefer following the decisions taken by their leaders *as it is*, considering the quite strong “disagreements” to Q5 (Sunda 57.3% and Java 84.6%). This response may indicate their critical and *evaluative* attitude towards the decisions taken for the common good. The believers in a way do not simply want to follow their leader's decision without reflecting on it beforehand. It means that the involvement of the self in the society should already be characterised by a kind of personal responsibility, i.e., the *internal sensitivity* of the self ('*rasa*').⁷ However, *not all* of believers seem really want to take part actively in the

meetings, given that their responses to Q7 (“In the *'kampung'* meetings, you like to pose questions and propose your opinions actively”) are only moderate (Sunda 35.7% and Java 61.3% of “(complete) agreements”).

Learning from difficulties. The statement Q8 (“When encountering life difficulties, you tend to be *'pasrah'* and wait for help from the leaders”) is the one receiving the *lowest* Mean value in this survey. The responses tend strongly towards “(complete) disagreement” (Sunda 88.3% and Java 91.7%). This percentage indicate that both Sundanese and Javanese do not want to give up easily in face of the difficulties in their life. They want to struggle first with their strength and we may presume that they also want to *learn* from these difficulties by not depending too much on the help from the leaders. This willingness to struggle is mirrored in their positive responses on Q9 (“When encountering life difficulties, you tend to get up on your feet and struggle on your own strength”; Sunda 90.6% and Java 96.3% of “(complete) agreements”).

Dimension 'Cultural Reason'

Most statements of theme 1 in this second dimension receive very positive responses, *except* the statements Q15 and Q16 which may have provoked disputable and even *negative* tendencies in the society (on the attitude of *'priyayi'* among the higher elites and on whether the major voices in the society should be considered the best choice).⁸ The negative responses could point out further that these attitudes are not favoured among the cultural values of the Sundanese and the Javanese. The first statement implies that people in these cultures would appreciate the persons who can live their life as ordinary people in the society, instead of positioning themselves higher than the others. *Being 'ordinary'* is an attitude which is highly valued by the people because it also implies one's humble, plain and simple appearance. We might find out later that this cultural value can bring some implications on the believers images of a religious community. The second statement suggests that personal contributions should also be appreciated in the common life of the society. Not every decision taken by the majority should be followed uncritically. It means that the community may not abandon the personal reflections of its members. We may presume that the believers in these cultures would prefer a sort of community that can provide *freedom* and *openness* to its members.

Harmony and solidarity as in a family. The believers' responses to Q10 (“Your society seems to have lived in harmony and worked together in

solidarity”) signify a strong unanimity about the values (Sunda 95.6% and Java 97.3% of “(complete) agreements”). The believers' preference towards harmony⁹ may have motivated them to work together in solidarity. However, it seems that the image *'family'* has been the overarching framework of these values, especially if we attend to their responses to Q12 and Q17 in this dimension. Q12 says that “When problem occurs in *'kampung'*, it has to be solved together as family and in the spirit of a family” (Sunda 96% and Java 98% of “(complete) agreements”). When solving problems together in the spirit of a family, the Javanese and the Sundanese may have in mind an image of a *'suasana kekeluargaan'* (Ind. 'familial atmosphere'), which requires each person to see the other as one's own brothers and sisters. Within that atmosphere, everyone is supposed to avoid a too emotional situation and may come into a good solution. This way of solving problem strongly mirrors the believers' wish of a social community as a family. Therefore, straight reference to this image in Q17 (“Your society is better illustrated as a family rather than a kingdom”) is also responded positively by the believers (Sunda 91.3% and Java 94.0% of “(complete) agreements”). It seems that this cultural image *'family'* is typical of the two cultures, which inhabitants are dominated by people who usually have certain degrees of familial relationships. One may not be surprised to find out that in Cigugur and Ganjuran there are many people who live in the same neighbourhood are still family to each other. An ideal community in these cultures must be bound as a family and consequently will employ the familial spirit, i.e., the spirit of harmony and solidarity as family members.

Politeness and hospitality. Notwithstanding that we can argue about the connection of these values, the Sundanese and the Javanese seem not to find it difficult to agree with the importance of both values in their society. It's obvious in their responses to statement Q11 which says that “Politeness and hospitality are the most important things in the social life” (Sunda 98.3% and Java 99.0% of “(complete) agreements”). The very strong agreement on these values could lead us to suggest that the importance of these values may corroborate an *open community* among the these cultures. Very noticeable in the daily life in Cigugur and Ganjuran is the custom of the people to greet everyone they meet on the street, regardless the person is familiar to them or not. The common greetings such as *'punten'* (Snd. literally 'pardon'), *'mangga'* (Snd. and Jv. with different pronunciations, meaning 'please'), *'badhe dhateng pundi?'* (Jv.) or *'bade ka mana?'* (Snd. 'where are you going?') will be heard frequently and all over the place. The latter is absolutely not

intended to snoop into other people's affair, but simply the people's way to be polite and friendly to everyone. If there should be an ideal Sundanese or Javanese community, it should be a community characterised by politeness and hospitality. These values also have been maintained in the appropriateness of language level and in the gentleness of their gestures in day-to-day conversations.

A listening and accompanying leadership. Statements Q13 and Q14 say something similar about the leadership understood in the sociocultural context. The believers responses to these statements are very positive. Q13 states that “A good leader is someone who is supposed to *shepherd* rather than reign the members of the society” (Sunda 93.0% and Java 98.0% of “(complete) agreements”), while Q14 says that “In social groups, a wise leader is one who is willing to *listen* to the aspirations of the members” (Sunda 91.4% and Java 96.7% of “(complete) agreements”). We can see here that the figure of a *leader* plays an important role in supporting a preferred cultural image of a community. In other words, an ideal image of a social community may have to start with a good figure of the leader who, in the case of the believers, is a listening and accompanying leader. One may find that in these cultures a leader is viewed as the one who protects the people. A community leader is a charismatic figure who is always ready to take care of the people as a shepherd. The leadership figures like '*sultan*' in Yogyakarta and '*pangeran*' in Cigugur, though appear as king, are noted by the people as caring persons. These figures do not need to reign by way of domination, because the people will always be faithful to them as their caring leaders.

Dimension 'Prospective Expectation'

Coping with differences. The relationships of the believers with the society might not always come about as expected. A particular issue that needs to be noted would be about *plurality*. Statement Q18, saying that “Togetherness and religious plurality, and not just the interest of major religion(s), must be noted in the society,” has been responded quite positively by the believers, though also has brought a bit hesitation. The positive responses (Sunda 87% and Java 73.7% of “(complete) agreements”) may indicate that the believers start to realise the importance of the issue concerning (religious) differences in the society. A minor reluctance towards this statement was shown in the presence of 26.3% “(complete) disagreements” among the Javanese respondents. This variability might give rise to a consideration that the current situations in Java could have been a problem for the believers in

their efforts to maintain the relationships with the society. The positive responses, however, could indicate a kind of hope, directed towards the society. This hope is also a self-criticism that mirrors the actual situations in the societies in Java. If we read this hope in relation to the responses in the cultural dimension above, we may find out that this expectation would more depend on the leaders of the society. When the believers cannot bridge the differences which seem to have been rooted deeper in the society, they will voice their hope towards the leaders.

What appears in this prospective dimension could mirror some current circumstances that haven't surfaced in the first and second dimensions. Nevertheless, this hope for togetherness and unity in differences may help the local believers to find the strength in their religious communities. The society, on the other hand, can become a *school* to learn about plurality, as reflected in the believers' responses to Q21 ("The society should become a 'school' to learn to accept differences, rather than a 'house' where everything has been set up for anyone"). A high percentage of "(complete) agreements" can be seen on both cultures (Sunda 94.0% and Java 97.0%). The implication of this image is that the society should be a *learning community*, to wit, a community that is always in the process of learning. If seen in relation with the image of a *family*, this community would invite the members to live and learn from each other also in the spirit of a family. The latter could explain the believers' positive responses to Q20 which says that "Relationship among the members of society should be like brothers/sisters rather than simply neighbours" (Sunda 94.3% and Java 97.4%).

Participation in simplicity. There seems to be a somewhat different kind of participation according to the Sundanese and the Javanese. Their responses to Q19 ("You want to participate more in making important decisions in the society"), though quite positive (Sunda 76.3% and Java 65.7% of "(complete) agreements"), yet show a moderate percentage of "disagreements" (Sunda 23.7% and Java 34.4%). While we could understand that there must be a hope among the believers to participate in the community life of the society, there is also a possibility that the way they participate would be interpreted differently. The phrase 'important decisions in the society' in the statement might have aroused an atmosphere as if the participation should be done with regard to the exceptional and county decisions only. If this has been the case, the believers in Java would have opted for the kinds of participation that might appear simpler and more everyday to them.

Theme 2: “*Sharing of Experiences as an Encounter of Faith*”*Dimension 'Experience Content'*Table 6 *Religious Matters in Society*

	Statement	CNA	NA	LA	A	CA	
Q22	Meetings in ' <i>kampung</i> ' should also discuss the religious matters of the society's members.	4.7	9.7	14.0	49.7	22.0	<i>Sunda</i>
		17.7	17.3	33.7	29.7	1.7	<i>Java</i>
Q26	Your society has supported an atmosphere of religious openness and tolerance .	2.7	9.7	18.3	49.7	19.7	<i>Sunda</i>
		.3	6.3	11.7	72.7	9.0	<i>Java</i>

Between religious openness and social meetings. These matters could be challenging for the believers in Java. Moderate percentage among the Sundanese (71.7%) and even very low percentage among the Javanese (31.4%) can be noted concerning the believers' agreements to statement Q22 (“Meetings in '*kampung*' should also discuss the religious matters of the society's members”). When said in relation with '*kampung*', then it means that the meetings seem not to be associated with religious activities. They are considered simply social meetings of the '*kampung*' members, which usually talk about about the well-being of the people. The believers may have realised the significance of religious matters in the society, so that not only the earthly welfare but also the spiritual well-being should be fostered through the discussions in the meetings. However, some circumstances in the local contexts seem to have played a great role in affecting the implementation of this idea. A majority of Javanese believers in Ganjuran, as seen on the table above, would find it tough to discuss religious matters in the '*kampung*' meetings. This hesitation, if not cautiousness, might have been motivated by some experiences that probably have challenged the society's openness to discussions about religious matters that must concern people of different religions. The condition of the Christians as a minority in the midst of Muslims majority could be one of the reasons, and the readiness of the society could be another. The Sunda homeland particularly has been strongly influenced by Islam since the first expansion of Islamic monarchy in west Java.¹⁰ On the other hand, if we refer to the positive responses to Q26 (“Your society has supported an atmosphere of religious openness and tolerance”; Sunda 69.4% and Java 81.7%), we might be led to think that religious openness in the society's context could have been about giving opportunities to organise activities according to the respective religions. This kind of 'openness' and 'tolerance', however, doesn't mean

that religious matters can then be discussed openly in the society's meetings. Society's meetings in this sense should be distinguished from religious activities. If that's the case, there might be a degree of unreadiness on the level of the believers to open space for faith conversations in the social meetings. This would bring some implications we can observe in the following subject.

Sharing of faith informally but circumspectly. The second theme of the survey pertains to the possibility of faith encounters in the believers' daily conversations with their neighbours. The fact that the believers' responses to Q23 ("Your faith experiences need to be shared with people of other religions") are only moderate (Sunda 61.4% and Java 59.7% of "(complete) agreements") might indicate that the need to share faith experiences with other people is not their main concern. Even if this idea is to be carried on in small groups rather than in a large community, the believers seem not really distinguish the difference. The latter is shown on their responses to Q27 ("You would prefer telling and sharing faith experiences in a small group rather than in front of many people"; Sunda 71.0% and Java 67.3% of "(complete) agreements") which are slightly more positive compared to the responses to Q23. It's true that based on this percentage the believers would appreciate that faith experiences are shared in the small groups, but it seems that it's not the only option to facilitate the sharing activities. On the other hand, there might be a more liberating circumstance for this in their sense, namely, through the daily conversations. We can see this preference in their responses to Q24 ("Sharing of religious matters needs to be carried on in day-to-day encounters with the neighbours"; Sunda 82.7% and Java 74.4% of "(complete) agreements"). It means that *spontaneity* and *informality* in doing these faith conversations would be more important to them than the more programmatic occasions. Even so, if we attend to the responses from the believers of each culture to Q25 below, we may find out quite different situations between the two cultures.

Table 7 *Sharing Religious Experiences*

Statement		CNA	NA	LA	A	CA	
Q25	You often feel uneasy to share your religious experiences with the neighbours, yet with those of other religions.	8.3	27.0	33.3	27.3	4.0	<i>Sunda</i>
		2.7	17.7	12.7	62.3	4.7	<i>Java</i>

This table shows that the majority of the Sundanese would find it okay to share their religious experiences with their neighbours (68.6% of "(complete) disagreements"), while more Javanese might think that this

sharing of religious experiences would not always be easy (67.0% of “(complete) agreements”). We could presume that this result may indicate the possibility that the Sundanese might have been more accustomed with the religious plurality in their society than the Javanese.¹¹ But needless to say, we could not interpret this difference too far, considering that there might be various reasons that have caused the variability. However, in relation to the spontaneity and informality mentioned above, we may presume that sharing of faith remains as something valuable to the believers in Java, though it would have to be weighed according to the circumstances. Some flavours could be pursued for the sake of an informal encounter, but one still ought to be prudent when the situations, which usually concern the religious differences in Java, call for different approaches.

Sharing life matters, from heart to heart. Now when conversations are about life matters, it seems that there might be greater chance that the believers could get involved with other people. Their responses to Q28 (“You like to invite your neighbour who seems to have problem, to share the problem with you”) are quite positive, with 67.3% (Sunda) and 91.7% (Java) of “(complete) agreements”. We could notice that the tendency seems to be greater among the Javanese, and this could indicate that due to particular circumstances the believers would have felt the need to share their problems in life with each other. We could mention here that the earthquakes endured by the believers in Ganjuran not long before this survey could have been one of the reasons. Nonetheless, one may presume that when the dialogues could start with matters and problems in life, the believers would be readily moved to reach out their hands towards others. Another tendency showed by the result on Q29 (“You will greet your neighbours and other people only for the sake of politeness (formality), rather than from heart to heart”) could reveal the different aspect of the believers' daily encounters. The negative tendency towards this statement (Sunda 76.0% and Java 89.7% of “(complete) disagreements”), on the other hand, shows the believers' intention to speak to each other from heart to heart, and not simply for the sake of politeness. Informality in the daily conversations is here complemented by sincerity, and politeness as also an important values in these cultures is reconsidered critically. This result could also refer us to the significance of *greetings* among the Sundanese and the Javanese, since these are not only a sign of politeness, but rather, as it were, an expression of 'faith', insofar as the latter is comprehended as trust, from heart to heart.¹²

Dimension 'Cultural Reason'

Togetherness and faith encounter in cultural events. A meaningful cultural situation is visible on the believers' responses to Q30 ("Your society favours to get together, particularly in some special events") which show 80.0% (Sunda) and 96.0% (Java) of "(complete) agreements". As illustrated in the celebrated Javanese adage "*mangan ora mangan waton ngumpul*" (Jv. '[whether we] eat or not, as long as [we] get together'), '*togetherness*' among the people in Java is a remarkably meaningful image. This saying is so widely known by everyone that in the events of togetherness with the families or friends, anyone could utter saying simply to express the gratitude of being together. In many occasions, people are accustomed to bring food to the meeting to be shared with one another. Food shouldn't become a problem hindering people to get together. Furthermore, this spirit teaches the people to be free from any hidden agenda such as the attitude '*pamrib*' (Snd. and Jv., 'an attitude of expecting reward from others'). It's not that hard to presume that this togetherness in sociocultural events could also encourage the people to grow in their religious attitudes. Therefore, Q34 ("The society has provided many cultural activities that support the religious attitude of the members") has been responded positively by the believers, with 67.0% (Sunda) and 83.0% (Java) of "(complete) agreements". The lower percentage among the Sundanese might refer to the local believers' need for more cultural activities that support their religious attitude. Nevertheless, this necessity seems to have been commonly acknowledged in the '*kampung*' activities, as shown in the responses to Q35 ("Activities in '*kampung*' can be illustrated as an encounter of people of different beliefs"; Sunda 80.3% and Java 80.0% of "(complete) agreements"). This statement, however, contributes to the tendency towards plurality of faith in the sociocultural activities.

Freedom in religious activities, respectively. For the believers, it appears that the society has given enough space to each religion to organise religious activities, given that their responses are considerably positive to Q32 ("The society has given the freedom to organise religious activities according to each religion"; Sunda 90.0% and Java 96.0% of "(complete) agreements"). We might need to note the phrase 'according to each religion', since it might be different if the activity is intended to involve many different religions. There seems to be a kind of '*proportionality*' in the mind of the society's members when it concerns the integration of religious matters in the sociocultural activities. We can sense this tendency, for instance, from the

believers' responses to Q31 (“In official meetings of *'kampung'*, people also discuss matters concerning the religious life of the members”), which show 48.0% (Sunda) and 46.3% (Java) of “(complete) disagreements”. This means that there might have been a sort of hesitation among the believers whether their religious life should be other people's concern in the society.¹³ If this 'proportionality' is related to the presence of religious communities in Java, it may surface as an unspoken conviction that religious matters are the religion's affair and cultural matters are the society's business. Then what appear in the social activity, though seemingly 'religious', might be considered simply as its 'cultural' aspect. We may point this interpretation to the believers' responses to Q33 (“The meetings in your society are also coloured by religious matters, such as common prayers and discussions about faith”; Sunda 67.0% and Java 70.0% of “(complete) agreements”). The 'religious' matters mentioned in the statement would have to be distinguished from faith experiences encountered and shared by the believers of each religion respectively.

Cultural traditions provide space for (religious) differences. Moderate negative responses are addressed to the statement Q36, which says that “Too much emphasised cultural values can make social meetings too formal and not really open” (Sunda 56.7% and Java 65.6% of “(complete) disagreements”). Behind these responses, there might be a perception among the believers that not all cultural values in their cultures provoke formality and selectiveness. There must have been a certain degree of *informality* and *openness* in the cultural traditions that may encourage *flexibility* in the social meetings and activities. When considering this, religious communities in Java could actually find the chance to get involved in the social meetings and activities without too much concerned about the presumed formality and exclusivity of the local cultures. This recognition would be helpful to encourage the religious communities in finding their rootedness in the local cultures. One of the meaningful images to describe the society's openness would be *togetherness as family*, as reflected in the statement Q37, saying that “Local culture traditions help citizens to live together as family, albeit religious differences” (Sunda 92.7% and Java 95.4% of “(complete) agreements”). Its highly positive responses must have mirrored the believers' genuine appreciation of the cultural traditions in their respective local society.

Dimension 'Prospective Expectation'

Between the formal and the informal sharing of faith experiences. This subject of (in)formality seems to recur. However, the believers' responses in this dimension would be considered differently than in the previous dimensions, given that the results on Q38 and Q40 displayed on the table below might reveal different senses between the Sundanese and the Javanese concerning this matter. These two statements virtually refer to the local society, towards whom the believers of both cultures express their hopes respectively. We could see that the emphasis of each culture is quite different to the other between the two statements. The Sundanese seem to 'prefer' the statement Q40 (92.3% of "(complete) agreements") and the Javanese would rather support the statement Q38 (95.0% of "(complete) agreements"). If we look at the statements, we could discover that Q38 basically insinuates a somewhat formal situation by stating that the society should 'adequately respect' the faith experiences shared by its members. This statement suggests that the appreciation of sharing of faith experiences would have to be noted openly, and the implication is that the occasion may not be informal to a certain extent. The opposite can be found on statement Q40, which explicitly mentions the informal and spontaneous characters of faith conversations. By pondering this, we could point out that there might be a greater tendency towards *informality* among the Sundanese, rather than among the Javanese (cf. the percentage of Sundanese disagreements to Q38). We could presume that the Javanese may have a slight preference towards *formal* circumstances, which means that the atmosphere of faith encounters may not be too spontaneous or too relaxed (cf. the percentage of disagreements to Q40). Without criticising which way would be more advantageous for the sharing of faith experiences, we could suggest that the efforts to stimulate the encounters in the respective culture should take into account these differences. Our further discussions of the models of religious communities which will be suitable to the local cultures would also have to consider this distinction.

Table 2.8 Faith Conversations

Statement		CNA	NA	LA	A	CA	
Q38	The society should adequately respect the faith experiences shared by its members.	2.0	4.0	27.7	52.7	13.7	<i>Sunda</i>
		0	0	5.0	58.3	36.7	<i>Java</i>
Q40	Conversations about faith with neighbours should be promoted in informal and spontaneous atmosphere.	0	.3	7.3	67.0	25.3	<i>Sunda</i>
		.3	19.3	5.7	56.3	18.3	<i>Java</i>

Opportunities and cultural events in the society. Fair to strong positive responses to statements Q39 and Q41 have surfaced through the survey. The statement Q39, which says that “The society must give more opportunities to speak about faith and religious life in its meetings”, receives 77.0% (Sunda) and 64.7% (Java) of “(complete) agreements”. This fairly positive response probably mirrors the reality that there have been sufficient opportunities in the society to speak about faith and religious life. We would have to refer to the preceding discussions concerning the appropriate situations for these faith conversations. Nevertheless, if these opportunities are to be related with the value of cultural togetherness, we might have to attend to the responses to Q41 (“There should be more faith discussions and common religious agendas organised in the society”; Sunda 82.0% and Java 88.7% of “(complete) agreements”). Quite specific in this statement is the mentioning of 'common religious agendas', because the believers in Java would have interpreted this reference as *cultural events* in the society that may involve people of different religions. Usually the local people would appreciate the uniting character of such cultural events and therefore it would be easier as well for these people to recognise the presence of elements of different religions. Introducing religious differences to the people in Java seems to happen more fluently when performed through the cultural events. We could presume that faith communities, in order to find their rootedness in the society, might have to explore the possibilities of getting involved in the cultural events organised by the society.

Review and Outlook

The common issues of *community life* and the ways local people participate in it have emerged through our observations of the survey results, notwithstanding the other subjects that have been closely related to the two main themes structured in the questionnaire. In addition to the 'cultural' images and values surfacing from the believers' responses to the statements, we also noticed that a number of sociocultural preferences were interpreted based on the tendencies observed in the responses. Many of these preferences might not come into view without our efforts to 'listen' to the cultures in this survey. The people in Java tend to 'learn by doing' through the various events and experiences in their sociocultural realities. Our approach in this survey to mark the cultural images and values of the Sundanese and the Javanese in their daily life may not reveal all the hidden

aspects of these cultures. Some cultural images might remain hidden. However, our effort so far has exposed the *cultural preferences* of the local believers in being the members of the society which is viewed as a community. This contribution will be significantly advantageous for our further discussions of the church, considering that the believers themselves are the main subject of this study. This survey is dedicated to the believers' ways of imagining 'from below'. The process of finding the roots of faith experiences on this grass'-roots' level of sociocultural realities has to go on in our further efforts by re-imagining the relations between the sociocultural communities as the context of cultural images and the ecclesial communities as the context of church images.

Through the exploration, we also have observed various expressions of the believers as a sociocultural community together with people of different religions. We realise that these expressions were not always in the forms that can be accepted by the local society. There were problems and difficulties reflected in the believers' responses to particular statements. Most of these problems were related with the unreadiness of the societies in Java to cope with religious differences. Nonetheless, these difficulties have aroused unique aspects of community life that might be telling in our further discussions about the ecclesial communities. This is why the negative aspects of the survey results should not always lead us to abandon the believers' responses to the matters. All things considered, this survey has provided sufficient materials concerning the cultural images describing the relationships of the believers with the community, the cultural reasons that may have shaped their ways of sharing experiences, and the possibilities for sharing faith experiences in the social communities. The next step from this exploration should be an attempt to make sense the projection of the observed 'cultural' images on the church images regarded as contextual and meaningful to the Sundanese and Javanese believers.

End Notes:

- ¹ Though generally the word '*pasrah*' (=to let things happen) is interpreted as a good attitude among the people in Java due to the sense of not pushing one's own obsession, there has also been negative interpretation of the word as simply giving up one's effort in face of a certain occurrence or difficulty. However, when related to another attitude of waiting for the help of the other as in this statement, '*pasrah*' tends towards the negative sense.
- ² "According to Muslims, the proper response to tragedy is to submit oneself (*pasrah*), to the will of God and examine oneself to search for the meaning of the tragedy"; Bernard Adeney-Risakotta, "The Impact of September 11 on Islam in Southeast Asia," in K. S. Nathan and Mohammad Hashim Kamali (Eds.), *Islam in Southeast Asia: Political, Social and Strategic Challenges for the 21st Century* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2005).
- ³ '*Kampung*' is 'a fairly smaller area than a village'. '*Rukun Tetangga*' which often abbreviated as '*RT*' is the smallest neighbourhood organisation under '*desa*', which is practically a village.
- ⁴ '*Priyayi*' and '*ningrat*' often refer to the elites of a higher class in (royal) society, in contrast to the ordinary people ('*wong cilik*').
- ⁵ A detailed exploration of the *evaluative* character especially expressed in language in Java can be found in Laine Berman, *Speaking through the Silence: Narratives, Social Conventions, and Power in Java* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).
- ⁶ On 'participation' and its relation to 'position' in the society, see Laine Berman, *ibid.*, 136-138.
- ⁷ Cf. Sugiharto's description of 'rasa' in the matter of appropriateness, "[But] rasa also means *the sensibility that leads to knowing the right virtues* and behaving in accordance with one's duty and place in society;" Bambang Sugiharto, "Javanese Epistemology Revisited" in *Melintas* Vol. 24, No. 3 (Desember 2009), 374. See further discussion of '*rasa*' in 3.3.1.
- ⁸ "In its most simplified and idealized form, Javanese society recognizes *priyayi* as the educated elite, the noble class whose high status is apparent in the refined use of the most formal styles of Javanese language and the gracious, elegant behavior that must accompany it. At the other end of the social order, lacking the social refinements and linguistic abilities of their betters and making up most of the population of ethnic Javanese, are the *wong cilik*. These are the ordinary people, the working classes who look up to the *priyayi* as models of the ultimate art of refinement"; Laine Berman, *op. cit.*, 6.
- ⁹ "And, as in harmony, the ultimately correct relationships are fixed, determinate, and knowable, so religion, like harmony, is ultimately a kind of practical science, producing value out of fact as music is produced out of sound. In its specificity, *tjotjog* is a peculiarly Javanese idea, but the notion that life takes on its true import when human actions are tuned to cosmic conditions is widespread"; Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 130.
- ¹⁰ On the influence of Islam and the marginalization of Christianity by the Muslim rulers, especially in west Java, we may refer to Jean Gelman Taylor, *Indonesia:*

Peoples and Histories (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2003), 120-122.

¹¹ On this interpretation, see Djunatan's exploration on the Sundanese openness to plurality as mirrored in their world-view; Stefanus Djunatan, "The Nuance of Affirmation: The Epistemological Foundation of Sundanese Wisdom," in *Melintas* Vol. 25, No. 1 (April 2009), 57-73.

¹² If this understanding of 'faith' indeed emerges among the cultural believers in Java, we can link this discussion with further reflections on local spiritualities within the larger context of ecclesiology.

¹³ Some religious topics are considered as 'sensitive' matters by the people in Java. Religious tolerance has long been an issue to deal with despite the fact that it has always been stressed by the leaders. It seems to be a problem among the Muslims rather than among the people of other religions. See Douglas E. Ramage, *Politics in Indonesia: Democracy, Islam and the Ideology of Tolerance* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 50, 52, 110, 191.

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