

## Contextualized *Tirakat* Form to Christian Spiritual Formation among Javanese

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### Abstract

*Tirakat is an important part in Javanese culture. It points to a spiritual path in a sense of a method of a spiritual practice. The ways of tirakat have been an element of the culture for centuries. It is for this situation that evangelizing and nurturing newly non-Christian Javanese converted have been a challenge for Adventist ministry. This research attempts to seek an answer of the church which is expected to find some strategies for nurturing the members from Javanese culture background. The new converts are isolated from their background and stay in a new culture in the church. Consequently, some of the new members cannot survive in the new culture, custom, and rituals. This study addresses the issue of contextualized tirakat form to spiritual formation as a part of discipling new members in the local church. An analysis of both theological-biblical and cultural practice indicates that some elements of the tirakat ritual are strongly correlated with the Christian spiritual formation. The tirakat form can be contextualized in the spiritual formation form to experience spiritual growth. By giving a new meaning and modified form the believers are able to keep the tirakat ritual based on the Scriptures teaching. An evaluation of tirakat practice found some positive elements which can be continued to the form of Christian formation. However, the negative aspects need functional substitutes or discontinued. Through the worldview transformation the tirakat form as spiritual formation activity will lead the Javanese congregation to have good spiritual growth, strong faith, and ability to involve in the church mission and ministry.*

**Keywords:** *tirakat*; discipleship; spiritual formation; Javanese congregation

### Introduction

Evangelizing and discipling newly converts from Javanese Muslim background is a challenging task of SDA church. When a Muslim converts and becomes a member of Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church, he or she may meet some difficulties. Islam as a culture and religion has differences with the other cultures and religion. There are many differences between Muslim and Adventist in worship style, dressing, eating, ritual, and other customs. Further,

nurturing the Christian converts from Islamic background need a redefinition and continual reexamination of every custom.<sup>1</sup>

*Tirakat* is an important practice of Javanese Muslim religious rituals. The term itself points to the spiritual path, especially in the sense of a method of a spiritual practice.<sup>2</sup> In the setting of Central Javanese Muslim of Indonesia, *tirakat* is expressed as a practice of austerities to seek spiritual power and peace. The ways of *tirakat* have been an element of the culture for centuries, are regarded as special to the Muslim. It is for this situation that evangelizing and nurturing newly converted Muslims in Central Java have been a challenge for Adventist Ministry for a long time.

The problem of this research seeks to answer the challenge of the church which is expected to find some strategies for nurturing the members from Muslim background. The work for nurturing newly converts from Muslim background is lack of cultural consideration. At the same time, the ways for discipling the members are the same with those who have Christian background. The new converts are isolated from their background and stay in a new culture in the church. As a result, some of the new members cannot survive in the new culture, custom, and rituals.

This study addresses the issue of contextualized *tirakat* form to spiritual formation as a part of discipling new members in the local church. More specifically, this study will address the following questions: Firstly, can the contextualization of Central Javanese Islamic Tirakat be used as an avenue to nurture the new Adventist convert through Christian spiritual formation? Secondly, how can it be contextualized so it may become compatible with Bible truths and principles?

### Javanese Religions And Practices

The Javanese religion can be described like an onion resembled of many layers. Each layer upon layer has element which builds its own character.<sup>3</sup> The first part of the layer is early Javanese religion that based on ancestor worship. There are three basic beliefs of this religion. They are a belief in spirit, the worship of objects and the practice of magic.<sup>4</sup> This is the original and indigenous religion of Central Javanese.

Furthermore, the second element is built of Buddhism and Hinduism. The indigenous Javanese religion got much influence when Hindu and Buddhist as the religion of early Javanese kingdom during the fourth century. Consequently, Hinduism and Buddhism were strengthened the Central Javanese religion in the animistic beliefs.

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<sup>1</sup> Phill Parshall, *New Paths in Muslim Evangelism: Evangelical Approaches to Contextualization* (Grand Rapid, MI: Baker, 1980), 85-89.

<sup>2</sup> Carl W. Ernst, Tariqa. In R. C. Martin, *Encyclopedia of Islam and the Muslim World*. (New York: Thomson and Gale Group, 2004). 680-684.

<sup>3</sup> Sutarman S. Partonadi, *Sadrach's Community and Its Contextual Roots: A Nineteenth Century Javanese Expression of Christianity* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1988), 18-19.

<sup>4</sup> Koentjaraningrat, "The Javanese Religion," in the *Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Mircea Eliade, ed. (New York, NY: Macmillan Publishing, 1987), 559.

The next layer is made of Islam and Christianity. Islam entered to Indonesia through the commerce route of the Indian people between fourteenth and seventeenth century. On the other hand, Christianity came to Indonesia through colonialism of the European countries during nineteenth century. However, the Western Christianity is not regarded as another element of Central Javanese religion since it failed to take hold because “as a result of the uncompromising attitude of the missionaries toward the local culture.”<sup>5</sup>

In general, when a question on religion is asked to the Central Javanese people, most of them will say as followers of Islam. However, the practices of Javanese Muslim have been influenced by the Sufi belief. One of the focal motives that Islam could be rooted in the heart of Javanese because of distinct Islamic approach. This distinct Islamic form is Sufism that emphasized with local cultural practices and rituals. The philosophy and practices of Sufism were compatible with the development of Javanese mystical perspective.<sup>6</sup>

### The Spiritual Power and Mysticism

Javanese mysticism and religious movement draw on earlier strands of animistic beliefs and existing religions. It was supported by the two courts in Central Java. The Yogyakarta and Surakarta courts have developed mysticism concept to encounter the Western idea of colonialism. The reappearance of mysticism among Javanese was given a formal status by these two states. However, this stream did not consider as full formal affiliation to the existing religions. This movement has been a growing highlighting mystical on monotheism and disparity from *klenik* or supernatural power.

#### *The Javanese Concept of Power*

There are several scholars have investigated the idea of power in the Javanese point of view. Anderson finds that the Javanese consider power as a concrete existential reality which exists independently of its possible users. Further, he describes Javanese view of power as something concrete, a homogeneous, constant in quantity, intangible, divine energy which animates the universe and it thus without inherent moral implication as such.<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, Koentjaraningrat argues that the Javanese think of power in terms of abstract quality. The Javanese attributes this quality as *kawibawan* (authority). This quality is human quality which is “idealized by the majority of the members of society and which therefore have deep moral quality.”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Partonadi, 20.

<sup>6</sup> Sartini, Heddy S. Ahimsa-Putra, & Al Makin, “A Preliminary Survey on Islamic Mysticism in Java,” *Analisis* 16 (December 2016), 1-40. Accessed July 1, 2019 from <https://doi.org/10.24042/ajsk.v16i2.1116>

<sup>7</sup> Anderson, B. R, “The Idea of Power in Javanese Culture,” In C. Holt (ed), *Culture and Politics in Indonesia*, (Singapore: Equinox Publishing, 2007), 1-70.

<sup>8</sup> Koentjaraningrat, “Javanese Terms for God and Supernatural Beings and the Idea of Power,” In A. Ibrahim, S. Siddique, & Y. Hussain (eds), *Readings on Islam in Southeast Asia*, (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1985), 290.

However, the Javanese orientation about power can be associated in both concrete and abstract. It depends on the purpose of the implementation of the power. The power can be a concrete in term of fulfillment of daily needs such as health, guidance, success, and prosperity. The power as an abstract concept can be found for many Javanese who eagerly to seek abilities to dispense justice, to have and show great wisdom, or to display great wealth through generous and bountiful.<sup>9</sup>

### *The Javanese Concept of Mysticism*

The idea of Javanese mysticism is in close relation with the perspective of power as abstract. Javanese believe the form of *ngelmu* (knowledge) underlies the philosophy of mysticism. According to Paul Stange the Javanese unmistakably alludes to gnosis, to a supernatural or otherworldly type of learning which is not simply intelligent yet in addition natural.<sup>10</sup> Another method for explaining what is implied by *ngelmu* is that it is at last the entire body, and all organs inside it, instead of simply the mind that knows. This feeling of information is as opposed to human self. Javanese magical hypothesis does not just underlie of awareness, yet in addition of its relationship, which is basically reflexive, to social and political power.

The purpose of mysticism in Javanese context is for the high levels of purity and harmony. Javanese looks the human mind is a *wadhah* (container) for the divine spirit to gain the perfection and harmony of life. In this state, he mystic is free to contemplate the mysteries of God in peace and serenity. The ultimate result of this idea is to let the inner spiritual life adhere to the essential values of the search for spiritual purification and perfection. This spiritual condition will lead to the attainment of the ultimate experience of *manunggaling kawulo lan Gusti* (unity between man and God).<sup>11</sup>

### **The Spiritual and Mystical Path**

Mystical practice is alive and well in both country and city in Central Java and has captured the interest of people who are well educated in the general education system even members of the national elite. In the study of Madjid describes that mysticism has very strong roots in the Qur'an. It is stronger than the legal orientation. *Shari'ah* or Islamic law as a discipline of knowledge was born as a necessary answer to the political and military expansion of Islam. The law itself actually does not have much to say about religion.<sup>12</sup> In the Javanese context, however, they focus more emphasis on the inner relationship to God rather than to the Islamic

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<sup>9</sup> Koentjaraningrat, *Javanese Terms for God and Supernatural Beings and the Idea of Power*, 292.

<sup>10</sup> Paul Stange, "The Logic of Rasa in Java," *Indonesia* 38, 114. Accessed July 13, 2019. doi:10.2307/3350848

<sup>11</sup> Koentjaraningrat, *Javanese Culture*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 170.

<sup>12</sup> Nurcholis Madjid, "Tasawuf Sebagai Inti Keberagamaan" *Pesantren* 3 (1985), 3-9.

law. To quest the perfect harmony and unification with the divine spirit they do the ascetical practice through the *tirakat* rituals.

The Tirakat Javanese People are interested in seeking hardship and suffering discomfort deliberately for religious reasons. They express this practice through the *tirakat* rituals. The ultimate the goal of Javanese mysticism in this form is the union with an omnipotent and omnipresent God. The theory of the union with God develops a theory “psychognostic states commencing with normal human awareness and culminating union with God”<sup>13</sup> As a result people will experience ultimate peace in their heart.

While the theory and practice of *tirakat* path is rooted in quest for knowledge and union with God, Javanese people also have worldly consequences. People will receive a power from God to face a difficult task when experiencing a crisis in family life, career or social relationship, or even in the midst of natural disaster.

There are four basic rituals practice of *tirakat* in the Javanese context. They are as follows: (1) fasting (*siyam*). The main purpose is to make the power of the mind stronger to reach some goals. (2) Meditation (*semedi*). Javanese meditation is to empty the inner life of all worldly mundane content. (3) *Dhikr* and *rapal*. This practice has a purpose to have an experience of constant remembrance of God. (4). *Tirakatan*. People stay awake together in certain place to seek guidance, remembrance of God’s blessing and celebrate the *tirakat* practice.

**Fasting or Siyam.** Fasting is one of the key elements of five pillars in Islam. The fourth duty that fall to every good Muslim is the practice of ritual fasting. The Arabic word for fasting, saum, defines as implication of “abstaining from food or, with ritual fasting, abstaining from food, drink and sexual activity.”<sup>14</sup>

The number of Javanese Muslims also do this ritual because fasting is a part of “Hindu-Buddhist custom as well as Islamic one and deeply engrained in the culture generally”<sup>15</sup> However, the goal of the abangans fasting is more in the emphasis of the gain for the mystical power rather than doing good merit for God. Even though the abangans fast during the month of Ramadan they have other forms of fasting rituals.

People believe that fasting makes the power of the mind stronger to reach some goals. They believe “to build up perseverance; and besides, it is based on the idea that suffering will be compensated by happiness”<sup>16</sup> Consequently, the one who fasts will understand the feeling of the poor. Fasting can give the supernatural power or magic which will deliver both physical and mental strength. Therefore, the Javanese will able to pass through every critical situation by the exercise of fasting.

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<sup>13</sup> Mark R. Woodward, *Islam in Java: Normative Piety and Mysticism in the Sultanate of Yogyakarta*. (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1989), 68.

<sup>14</sup> Kees Wagendonk, “Fasting,” in *Encyclopedia of the Qur’an*, Edited by J. D. McAuliffe, (Leiden: Brill Publisher, 2002), 2:180.

<sup>15</sup> Clifford Geertz, *The Religion of Java*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1960), 223.

<sup>16</sup> Koentjaraningrat, *Javanese Culture*, 372.

**Meditation or *Semedi*.** Javanese traditional context believes meditation can help to experience a harmony and unity with God. The present of human in worldly existence is evidence of a temporary separation from God. Every possible care must be taken for the development of the soul. The tendency of wrong doings has to be overcome through self-deprivation and mental discipline. The ultimate goal of the *semedi* is the heightened sense of release, ineffable joy, and peace being the unification with God.

Koentjaraningrat gives description of the reasons of Javanese Muslim practices *semedi*. There are several reasons for doing this ritual. First, *semedi* gives mental strength for overcoming socio economic or political crisis. Second, *semedi* can help to obtain higher creative and artistic abilities. Third, *semedi* leads a total concentration to receive divine inspiration which will enable one fulfill an extraordinary responsibility, or to complete a difficult mission. Many, however, practice the *semedi* to obtain magical power or *kasekten*.<sup>17</sup>

**Dhikr and Rapal.** The harmony and unity relationship with God needs the awareness constant with Him. Dhikr literally means remembrance of God. Howell understands *dhikr* as elaboration ritual in litanies in which the holy names of God or short passages in the Holy Qur'an are repeated rhythmically over and over again. The litanies of *dhikr* are popular with Sufi masters, who prescribe specific *dhikr* for members of their orders and for the needs of individuals under their guidance.<sup>18</sup> Further, the litanies are also used by other Muslims as additional devotions appended to the required daily prayer.

Javanese has remembrance and invocatory formulas in Arabic or Sanskrit which taken from the Qur'an called *bacaan* or *rapal*. The *rapal* is performed in the pre-Islamic era. The recent study of Ricci points out that the pre-Islamic mantras in Sanskrit, valued for their powers of sound rather than their lexical meaning, in a similar fashion Arabic phrases too gained much esteem. Such phrases were often referred to, in Malay and Javanese as *rapal*. The power of the *rapal*, quotes from scripture, and the hadith tradition exemplify this well, pointing to the authority residing in the use of Arabic even when listeners were often unable to judge its grammatical correctness or the accuracy of a quote.<sup>19</sup>

**Tirakatan.** This tradition is related to the symbolic Javanese society, including religion, world view, ethics, and Javanese culture as a whole. Those of course have philosophical meaning and deeply spiritual value. They believe that *tirakatan* is used by the Javanese as self-calmness and a medium of communication to God. *Tirakatan* is the final ritual in the *tirakat* form. Javanese

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<sup>17</sup> Koentjaraningrat, *Javanese Culture*, 374

<sup>18</sup> Julia Day Howell, "Modulations of Active Piety: Professors and Televangelists as Promoters of Indonesian 'Sufisme'," In *Expressing Islam: Religious life and politics in Indonesia*, edited by Greg Feally, & Sally White, (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2008), 40-62.

<sup>19</sup> Ronit Ricci, "Citing as a Site: Translation and Circulation in Muslim South and Southeast Asia," *Modern Asian Studies* 46, (March, 2012), 331-353. Accessed June 10, 2019. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0026749X11000916>

people who seek hardship deliberately and austerities stay awake for a night in certain place that Javanese called *kramatan*.

According to Woodward the word *kramat* refers to characteristic the religious attainments of saints. A *kramatan* is a place that considered as holy area for Javanese people. It relates to graveyards of the saints and ex- retreats (*petilasan*) of distinguished ancestors, kings or wise men and women. Many people are doing pilgrimage to various places considered having strong supernatural power. This can be attained “only through the purification of the soul and the development of close relationship with Allah.”<sup>20</sup>

Pilgrimage activities to a grave or a site that considered as holy place is popular in Java. Pilgrims visiting graves offer requests and prayers, ask for the deceased’s blessing, or come to fulfill a vow. Motivations range from seeking true spiritual experiences, to wishing to honor the dead, to deliberately seeking worldly gains. However, Doomn-Harder and de Jong concludes that the ultimate goals of *tirakatan* are to seek esoteric knowledge (*ngelmu*), to obtaining magical powers (*kasekten*), and to seek the unity with God (*manunggaling kawulo Gusti*).<sup>21</sup>

In summary, through the *tirakat* rituals which are expressed through fasting, meditation, *dhikr* or *rapal*, and *tirakatan* the Javanese gain the ultimate peace in the harmony, union with God and get super natural power. People experience the purification and perfection of the spiritual life by the power of the divine spirit. Consequently, the people have psychological strength to face each problem and physical blessings.

### **Contextualized *Tirakat* Form to Christian Spiritual Formation**

The incarnation of Jesus is the greatest example of how God chose to meet people. God Himself became human flesh and lived among humans. The incarnation of Jesus demonstrates the depth of God’s commitment to meet human beings where they are in their specific time, place, language and circumstances. At the same time, in Jesus’ ministry, Christ embraced a strategy that was contextually related, in initial witness, to felt needs.

The church is God’s agent in the earth. The local church is the place where the Gospel should be contextualized through the life style and real practice of its members. In the context of Central Javanese, the church should be an agent of the Gospel. In the context of contextualization the concept of *Tirakat* form to Christian spiritual formation among SDA in Central Java needs a proper understanding its forms and meanings.

### **Transforming Javanese Muslim Worldview to the Christian Worldview**

Worldview is a reality of assumptions which underlying a culture. However, a worldview may change when it is inadequate to explain a human experience and when a there is a new and better experience are coming. If one’s worldview changes the reality or experience of reality changes. Consequently, the way to reacts to reality will also change.

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<sup>20</sup> Woodward, 170.

<sup>21</sup> Nelly van Doom-Harder & Kees de Jong, The Pilgrimage to Tembayat: Traditional and Revival in Indonesian Islam. *The Muslim World*, (Fall, 2001), 325-354. Accessed June 10, 2019. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1478-1913.2001.tb03720.x>

The goal of contextualization *tirakat* form to the Christian spiritual formation is to make the Gospel rooted and understandable in the heart among Javanese. In spiritual transformation people are called to leave their false gods and beliefs to return to the true God. Biblical spiritual formation involves the real people in their real daily lives. In other words, the contextualization of *tirakat* form to the Christian spiritual formation involves the transformation of Javanese worldview to Christian worldview.

Paul G. Hiebert gives two basic ways of worldview transformation. These two models are normal change and paradigm shift. Normal change occurs where there are constantly changing in response to changes at the level of surface culture. Paradigm shift happens when there is a radical reorganization in the internal worldview itself to reduce the tension between worldview and surface of culture.<sup>22</sup> In the case of *tirakat* contextualization can be categorized in the radical change of worldview. The old beliefs and meanings are replaced with the biblical beliefs and meanings.

By examination of the Javanese Muslims worldview and Biblical worldview will help the church understands the need of transformation and continuation of the spiritual growth. Some Javanese Muslims might be converted to Christianity in their old worldview. However, if the new converts do not transforms their old worldview to biblical worldview, the church can lose the message of the Gospel and lead to the syncretism of the believers. Therefore, the *tirakat* form contextualization through the spiritual formation process needs the transformation in the deep level of Javanese worldview.

### **Critical Contextualization in the *Tirakat* Rituals**

The Gospel has to come and meet the needs of the people. It is not enough to know their backgrounds and cultures. However, it is important to be sensitive to their beliefs and ways of thinking. Wiklander says “no method or technique is holy. These are simply tools that are chosen or discarded depending on their effectiveness in reaching lost people.”<sup>23</sup>

Contextualizing the Gospel in the context of the *tirakat* ritual may face some problems of cultural elements which is incompatible and contradiction with the Bible teaching. There are several elements which are not compatible with the biblical truth in the *tirakat* ritual, however, there are some aspects are compatible with the Christian faith. This critical process is an attempt to contextualize the presentation of the *tirakat* ritual in the form of Christian spiritual formation for the church members. This process has three steps: rejection of the old practices, acceptance of the old practices, and dealt with them critically.

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<sup>22</sup> Paul G. Hiebert, *Transforming Worldview: An Anthropological Understanding of How People Change*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 319.

<sup>23</sup> Bertil Wiklander, “Incarnational Ministry: Mission and Contextualization,” *Ministry*, November 200, 12.



### Rejection of the old practices

Several elements of the old practices are not compatible with the biblical teaching. They must be rejected in the contextualization of the Gospel. The followings are some aspects of the *tirakat* ritual cannot be continued to the Christian spiritual formation.

**The Seeking of Kasekten (magical power).** Javanese magical power is concerned with *ngelmu* (knowledge) of supernatural things. Some Javanese employ supernatural means as well as natural ones to resolve the problems they face in daily life. They believe that the one can gain extraordinary powers through the exercise of magic. *Tirakat* ritual can be a way to exercise magical power. The one who fulfill the *tirakat* requirement can perform the supernatural power. Some Javanese use the *tirakat* ritual for a magical means. They believe that by fasting, meditation, recite *dhikr* or *rapal*, and perform the *tirakatan* ritual the cosmic and spirits supernatural powers become the part of power in the body and mind. In addition, some Javanese people who involve in the *tirakat* ritual will get some amulets and charms when they finished the ritual.

**Inviting the presence of the spirit beings.** The invitation of the spirit beings in Javanese context has two purposes. Firstly, the spirit beings can help to perform the magical power. Secondly, spirit beings give guardian and prosperity in life. Javanese believe in the concept of immortality of the soul. They believe to control and manipulate spirits and forces in the trans-empirical world by chanting the Qur'anic words and amulets (*jimat*). The ancestor's spirit can be invited to be his or her guardian spirit. At the same time this spirit also can give success and prosperity.

The Javanese make a visit to a cemetery or other potent holy places to practice *tirakatan*. This ritual is part of *tirakat* ritual that solely dedicated to attain vertical harmony with the dead and other spirits. The place for *tirakat* ritual is very important to give deep meaning of the *tirakat* and gain its ultimate goal. The person involved prays for the dead or the guardian spirit support (*pangestu*). *Pangestu* of the dead and guardian spirits is requested in order to attain financial success for their business, others want to pass important exam, while others come to pray for blessing and physical healing.

It is important to evaluate the both components above. Javanese magical view of power and spirit beings is for the sake of self-serving. This is one effort of the Javanese beliefs to control life. This view is in contrast with the biblical teaching. The Gospel demonstrates God's power to show His love to others. For example, when Jesus was on this earth He had full access to power of the Godhead. He created food for the thousands (Matt. 14:13-21; 15:29-39). In the beginning of His ministry He transformed water into grape juice (John 2:1-11). He performed several miracles to heal the sickness of the people. However, Jesus did not work miracles for Himself. The divine power was concentrated to serve other people.

The biblical light rejects an ego centered belief and its magical mentality. God calls people to center and submit their lives to God and follow God's plan (Jer. 27:9-10; Gal. 5:20; Rev 21:8). Hiebert, Shaw, and Tienou look the self-centered and self-possession is the central concern for most folk religious practice and beliefs.<sup>24</sup> Folk religious beliefs try to control the

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<sup>24</sup> Paul G. Hiebert, R. Daniel Shaw & Tite Tiéno, Responding to Split-Level Christianity and Folk Religion. *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 16:4. Winter 1999/2000. 174. Accessed 16 July 2019. [https://www.ijfm.org/PDFs\\_IJFM/16\\_4\\_PDFs/02\\_Hiebert\\_Shaw\\_Tienou.pdf](https://www.ijfm.org/PDFs_IJFM/16_4_PDFs/02_Hiebert_Shaw_Tienou.pdf)

spirits, ancestors, and other beings by magical approach to meet the need of the people and their prosperity. It can be a temptation for Christians to seek the control of God by sacred formulas when their prayers are not harmony with the desired results.

Based on this evaluation, the seeking of magical power and inviting the spirit beings cannot be continued to the Christian practice. These both elements must be avoided when the *tirakat* form is contextualized to the Christian spiritual formation. The church members who have Javanese Muslims background must understand the biblical view of magical power and spirits beings through careful study of the biblical beliefs. Therefore, the contextualized the *tirakat* ritual to Christian spiritual formation will lead the believers to the total submission to God and empower to do the God's mission to others.

**Accept the old practice.** It is possible to accept and retain some positive aspects of the *tirakat* ritual to be practiced in the spiritual formation. In the practice of *tirakat* ritual people have the spirit of total submission to God to fulfill their needs and the spirit togetherness and equality of the people who practice the ritual. The Javanese believes that all human lives are controlled by God. God is the source to meet needs of the present and eternal life. In this view, the most important bridge is the role of Christ as the Creator, Sustainer, Comforter, and Saviour. People need to release from their suffering. It is more than romantic idea, but it should be in a real daily life.

The *tirakat* ritual brings people in equality with love. Phil Parshall states that, "to the mystic, love is the very core of his being. Hate is the antithesis of all he stands for."<sup>25</sup> The Javanese Muslims is a person of community who emphasis in togetherness (*gotong royong*). *Tirakat* provides people with a sociological sense of belonging. In the Christian spiritual formation practice this spirit can be continued as a warm, loving fellowship of people who care one for another.

**Deal critically with the old practice.** Contextualization of the *tirakat* ritual to the Christian spiritual formation needs to create functional substations of the *tirakat* ritual elements which are contrast with biblical message. This paper deals with the functional substitution of the form of *tirakat* ritual and gives its new meanings. Based on the Nida theory of "dynamic equivalence," Charles Kraft developed the "dynamic equivalence church." According to Kraft the term dynamic equivalence and applied it to translation, inspiration, theologizing, transculturation, conversion, leadership, and church. He joined the idea of receptor oriented which the gospel communicated and understood by the receptor.<sup>26</sup> Therefore, the functional equivalence is needed in the communication the Gospel cross culturally.

The *tirakat* ritual has several elements which are not harmony with the Scriptural teaching. They are as follows: the concept of *manunggaling kawula Gusti* (unity man and God), the ritual practice, and the motive of *tirakat*. These concepts are necessary a critical contextualization before to be implemented to the Christian practice. Consequently, the practice of the old form in the Christian spiritual formation with new meanings which are compatible with the Gospel message will help the Javanese understand the truth through their culture.

<sup>25</sup> Phil Parshall, *Bridges to Islam*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1983), 130.

<sup>26</sup> Charles H. Kraft, Dynamic equivalent churches in Muslim society, in *Gospel and Islam: A 1978 Compendium*, edited by D. E. McCurry, (Monrovia, CA: MARC, 1979), 125.

***The concept ngelmu (knowledge) of manunggaling kawula Gusti (the unity between man and God).*** The ultimate goal of Javanese mysticism is the union with an omnipotent and omnipresent God. This goal can be attained by *tirakat* which gives *ngelmu* (knowledge) to of God. However, the Javanese *ngelmu* “clearly refers to gnosis, to a mystical or spiritual form of knowledge which is not just intellectual but also intuitive.”<sup>27</sup> Javanese like to feel that they have reached out and received something from God that is unique and somewhat removed from the normal stream of human experience.

There is similarity between the Javanese Muslims concept of *ngelmu* (knowledge) and the doctrine of Gnostic teaching. Gnostics believe the transcendent God sent down a redeemer who brought salvation in the form of secret gnosis. They emphasized that spirit was good and matter was evil. Man as matter had to overcome evil in order to have knowledge of God. In order to get this goal they need all kinds of secret knowledge and esoteric learning. They hoped to escape from the prison of their bodies at death and the soul to be reunited with God.

The Javanese mysticism paradoxically upholds both world denial and self-fulfillment. The goal is the releasing of the soul from the worldly flesh. While biblical teaching makes a place for the subduing of the flesh, the meaning of the flesh in this context is wider and deeper than bodily appetite (Rom. 8:1-11; 13:11-14; Gal 5:16-24; Eph 2:3). According to Bloesch the biblical view finds the source of knowledge of God in an encounter between the divine person and the human person. He says, “God is not subordinated to the general category of person, but personhood is illumined by God’s self-revelation in Jesus Christ.”<sup>28</sup>

Ellen G. White views the connectedness of human to the transcendent dimension. This relationship with Christ is not the aftereffect of an individual's capacity to accomplish self-amazing quality through religious exercise yet it is made out of an individual's getting up to the real perfect nearness and an eagerness to open the heart to its consistent changing and engaging movement. She looks this view by saying:

“The self-examination, the confession of sin, the reconciling of differences, has all been done. Now they come to meet with Christ. They are not to stand in the shadow of the cross, but in its saving light. They are to open the soul to the bright beams of the Sun of Righteousness. With hearts cleansed by Christ’s most precious blood, in full consciousness of His presence, although unseen, they are to hear His words, ‘Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, I give unto you.’ John 14:27.”<sup>29</sup>

She looks that the confidence is the fundamental interfacing join and the existence line between an individual and Christ. She does not allude to the association with Christ as a definitive and the main objective in the otherworldly adventure yet in addition sees as a way to continue otherworldliness. Therefore, the Javanese perspective of knowledge of *manunggaling*

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<sup>27</sup> Paul Stange, 114.

<sup>28</sup> Donald G Bloesch, *Spirituality old and new: Recovering authentic spiritual life*. (Nottingham: Apollos, 2007), 38.

<sup>29</sup> Ellen G. White, *The desire of ages*, (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1898/1940), 565.

*kawula Gusti* (unity between human and God) which refers to the Gnosticism understanding must be replaced with the view of union with Christ. This suggests that entering into a spiritual union with Christ is not a matter of human choice since the initiative has come from God for the sake of spiritual growth to be Christlikeness.

***The Concept of Tirakat ritual.*** The concept of the *tirakat* rituals which are not in harmony with the biblical teachings may be replaced with functional substitutes: (1) the meditation meaning, (2) the *dhikr* and *rapal* (chanted formula), (3) the place of *tirakat* ritual, and (4) the motive of *tirakat*.

*The meditation or semedi meaning.* Javanese meditation meaning is different with Christian meditation. Javanese context of meditation is empty the inner life of all mundane world. This concept of meditation is similar with other Eastern concepts of meditation. Dybdahl looks that Eastern meditation attempts to get in touch with and nurture the divine consciousness inside oneself. It tries to empty of self, and the experience of mystic consciousness deep within.<sup>30</sup> Further, Eastern forms of meditation emphasis the need to become detached from the world. There is a longing to be freed from the burdens and pans of this life.

On the other hand, the Christian meditation is centered in God. It is a form of human encounter with God to seek the true God's infilling and the transformation that His presence bring. Therefore, the Javanese concept of meditation must be changed to the Christian meditation which is seeking communion with a personal God who enters and fills the heart of the believers. It starts with thoughts about God's presence, God's Word, and His Work. Finally, The Holy Spirit will transform "the written Word becomes a living word addressed to you."<sup>31</sup> It implies not to flight from the world but instead bringing the world into submission to Jesus Christ.

*The dhikr and rapal (Chanted Formulas).* The goal of Javanese *dhikr* and *rapal* is to block out of worldly distractions and become completely thinking about God. By chanting the short word of the Qur'anic words can lead to the ultimate goal union with God and move the devotee away from sin and on the state of holiness. Others function of *dhikr* and *rapal* such as to make the mind focus during the meditation, channels through which miracles are performed, and brings the relief of pain and cure disease.

It needs replacement of *dhikr* and *rapal* to the Christian spiritual formation. *Dhikr* and *rapal* can be replaced by meditating the Bible verses and prayer songs. However, the believers should understand that goal and meaning of this practice is to have an interactive communication that transpires between God and His people. The ritual form may be applied in two ways. First, the atmosphere chanted *dhikr* and *rapal* is transformed into an atmosphere of worship, prayer, and fellowship. Second, the form may be implemented to "meditative prayer." Richard Foster defines meditative prayer as "the listening sight of the communication."<sup>32</sup> He argues that in the meditative prayer the people bring both mind and heart into the presence of the God then they listen to the Lord.

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<sup>30</sup> Jon L. Dybdahl, *Hunger: Satisfying the longing of your soul*. (Hagerstown, MD: Authumn House Publishing, 2008), 45.

<sup>31</sup> Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*, (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1988), 29.

<sup>32</sup> Richard J. Foster, *Sanctuary of the soul: Journey into meditative prayer*, (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2011), 123.

*The place of tirakat ritual.* Other elements in *tirakat* ritual which are not compatible with Scripture is the place of *tirakatan*. The place of *tirakatan* usually connects to the magical atmosphere such as the grave of Javanese saints, or other holy places which give mystical meaning to the visitors. Javanese believes in the power of place. On this place usually they chants the *dhikr* or *rapal*. Fasting and meditation are important as well. The petitioners mention the name of the saint of the place in their prayers. However, the place of this ritual leads the devotee believes to the immortality of the soul.

There are two observations to determine a place for practicing the *tirakat* form to the spiritual formation activity. First, it needs to be understood that every place is holy when God presence is there. However, some people try to look certain places that may be more conducive for prayer, meditation, or worship. The second is the consideration of spiritual formation activity in personal or communal form. Personal practice of spirituality can choose any places where the person comfortable on it. However, the important thing is a place where makes comfortable, free from emotional and physical distraction is recommended.

*The Motive of the Tirakat Ritual.* The motive of the *tirakat* ritual is to attain the stronger power of physical and mind, union with God, and ultimate peace (*tentrem*). The rituals are counted as good deeds to reach the goals. The motive of *tirakat* must be changed to the biblical motive of Christian spiritual formation. The motive of spiritual formation is to open space for intimate relation with God. The goal is to experience of God's grace and love in the presence of the Lord where He can remake and revive the believers. It is a response to Jesus' love or a desire to commune with that love.

Therefore, the *tirakat* ritual is no longer functions as means to attain peace, but functions as a response of God's love and grace by total submission in the spiritual formation motive. In the Christian spiritual formation the content is Christ-centered. It will lead into a caring concern for mission to others above than perfecting the self-soul. It is about God's work throughout the process of spiritual formation to bring transformation of the believers in the spiritual growth.

### Conclusion

Indonesian churches have born a western stamp, changes has been taking place within the churches which indicate that this Western stamp will gradually disappear. The church which is part of the context can speak from inside the particular concrete situation in which it placed to fulfill the mission and ministry of the church. Therefore, some approaches to contextualize the *tirakat* form to Christian spiritual formation in the setting of Central Javanese can be defined as follows: (1) It needs to understand their cultural diversity of the Central Javanese and it's essential to engage in incarnational ministry. (2) The church should implement critical contextualization and evaluate the adaptation with the Bible as the primary standard. In the case of contextualized *tirakat*, the better understanding of the context of *tirakat* and biblical-theological perspective on *tirakat* should be understood well. Then, teach the members to know the true purpose and significance of *tirakat* and its meaning in spiritual formation activities. (3) The theological-biblical survey indicates that some elements of the *tirakat* ritual is strongly correlated with the spiritual formation in the biblical practice. The negative aspects need functional substitutes or discontinued. It is concluded, therefore, the *tirakat* ritual can be used as a tool for nurturing and discipling the believers and communicating the Gospel to the Javanese.

(4) This research presented the general issues on *tirakat* ritual. Thus, this paper needs a further study in practical strategies, process contextualization on *tirakat*, and empirical research to the Central Javanese Adventist Church members.