

RATU ADIL: A JAVANESE FACE OF JESUS?

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1. INTRODUCTION

The words of an Indian Hindu, Keshub Chunder Sen (1838-1884) should remind us of the necessity of undertaking serious theological reflection from our Asian perspective:

It seems that Christ has come to us as an Englishman, with English manners and customs about him, with the temper and spirit of an Englishman in him...Is not Christ native land nearer to India than England? Are not Jesus and his apostles and immediate followers more akin to Indian nationality than Englishmen? Why should we, then, travel to a distant country like England in order to get truths which are found much nearer to our homes? Go to the rising sun in the East, not to the setting sun in the West, if you wish to see Christ in the plenitude of His Glory.¹

What Chunder Sen said merits attention. For many years Asians have not experienced the full impact of Jesus' life and ministry due to the fact that most of previous works in Christology have been done in the West. While there is a good Christology in the West, it must be admitted that by and large that Christology reflects the thought patterns,

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¹ R. S. Sugirtarajah, ed., *Asian Faces of Jesus* (New York: Orbis, 1995), p. 1.

general orientation, and the contextual need of the West. However, the time has come for Asians begin to seek “the biblical images of Jesus” which arise out of their particular contextual need.² This wonderful effort is commendable. By redefining Jesus in their own context, Asians not only enrich the Christian understanding of Jesus, which so far has been dominated by Western theologians, but also make sense of Jesus for their own time and place.

This effort to seek an “Asian face of Jesus” undoubtedly inspires me to write this paper. I choose my upbringing, Javanese culture, as the context in which I do theology. You may ask: Why is an Asian face of Jesus, or more specifically a Javanese face of Jesus needed? Simply, I would say that Christianity is still a mystery in the midst of million Javanese.³ Primarily this has happened because Christianity in Java is marked with a very strong western influence.⁴

Therefore, I will attempt to highlight *Ratu Adil*, a mysterious and popular messianic-eschatological figure among the Javanese⁵ and then compare it to the biblical teaching of Jesus as the Messiah who came and is to come. I hope that what is presented here can help Christians in Java to reveal the mystery of Christ to their Javanese neighbours.

² See Vinay Samuel and Christ Sugden, eds., *Sharing Jesus in the Two Thirds World* (Bangalore: Partnership in Mission Asia, 1983). This excellent book is a collection of 14 papers presented by twenty five theologians during the First Conference of Evangelical Mission Theologians from the Two Thirds World in Bangkok, Thailand, March 22-26, 1982.

³ Lawrence M. Yoder, “The Introduction and Expression of Islam and Christianity in the Cultural Context of North Central Java” (Ph.D. dissertation, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1986), p. 360.

⁴ Yusak Tridarmanto, “Using Folklore as a Way of Doing Theology,” in *Doing Christian Theology in Asia Ways*, eds. Alan J. Torrance and Salvador T. Martinez (Singapore: ATESEA, 1993), pp. 12-23 (12).

⁵ The History of Java shows that there were several people movements inspired by the belief of *Ratu Adil*. Several notable historical events in Cilegon and Srikaton (1800 C.E.), Gedangan (1904 C.E.), Jebrak Bangkal (1919 M) and Tambak Merang occurred due to the fact that people believed that *Ratu Adil* would have come to deliver them from oppression and bring justice and prosperity in their lives. See. Karkono K. Partokusumo, *Kebudayaan Jawa, Perpaduannya dengan Islam* (Yogyakarta: Ikatan Penerbit Indonesia, 1995), pp. 28-29.

2. UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT

Java is the political center of the Indonesian archipelago and the home of Javanese, the largest ethnic group in the Southeast Asian Population. Today, based on the result of the 1990 census,⁶ there are about 100 million people living in Java. Most of Javanese adhere to Islam. However, we cannot assume that they are adherents of a pure form of Islam. Clifford Geertz, an American cultural anthropologist, informs us that the expression of Islam in Java is unique. Its syncretistic character makes it far different from the expression of Islam in other parts of Indonesia.⁷ Based on his field research in a small town called Modjokuto,⁸ Geertz comes to the conclusion that, as far as

⁶ According to the official report of government of Indonesia, in 1990 there were 10,661,000 people living in Java. See William H. Frederick and Robert L. Worden, *A Country Study: Indonesia* (Washington, D.C.: Federal Research Division of Library of Congress, 1993), p. 351.

⁷ Clifford Geertz, *The Religion of Java* (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1960). Recently, Mark R. Woodward (especially in his book, *The Shari'a and the Sacred Doctrine: Muslim Law and Mystical Doctrine in Central Java* [Ann Arbor: UMI, 1985]) has challenged Geertz' thesis. Theoretically, Woodward has presented convincing arguments to disclose the negative side of the older assumptions concerning Javanese Islam and to advocate the status of Javanese Islam as pure as Islam in other parts of the world. However, in reality, the picture of Javanese as "half-Islam" is still prevalent today. Therefore, although Geert'z taxonomy for Islam in Java needs to be revised, it still provides an acceptable framework of thought to understand the unique character of Islam in Java. For a good discussion of this topic see, Hendro Prasetyo, "'Mengislamkan' Orang Jawa: Antropologi Baru Islam Indonesia," *Islamika* 3 (January-March 1994), pp. 74-85; A good critique on Woodward's methodology can be found in Paul Stange, *Politik Perhatian: Rasa dalam Kebudayaan Jawa* (Yogyakarta: LKIS, 1998), pp. 195-214. Frans Wijzen, "Terlebih Dulu Jawa: Kontekstualisasi dan perkembangan Gereja di Indonesia," *Orientasi Baru* 10 (1997), pp. 116-30 (119-21) shows how the resurgence of Islam in Java has not been able to eliminate the original element of Javanese religion which creates the unique expression of Islam in Java.

⁸ Actually Modjokuto is pseudonymous. The real name is Pare, a small town, about 40 miles from Malang, the second largest city in East Java. Cf. Niels Mulder, *Mysticism and Everyday Life in Contemporary Java* (Singapore University Press, 1983), p. 3.

religious participation is concerned, the Javanese Muslims can be divided into three groups: the *Abangan*, the *Santri*, and the *Priyayi*.⁹

The first group, the *Abangan*, constitutes no less than 75% of the total number of Javanese Muslims.¹⁰ It is generally comprised of people from the lower class of society, such as the ordinary people, peasants and labourers.¹¹ Geertz describes the *Abangan* as an expression of Javanese syncretism.¹² In everyday life, they neglect the basic rituals of Islam¹³ - they do not practice *Sholat* five times a day, they do not fast during *Ramadhan*, nor do they go to Mecca for the Pilgrimage. They adhere more to the original belief of animistic Java than the Holy Koran.¹⁴

The second group, the *Santri*, constitutes five to ten percent of the total number of Javanese Muslims.¹⁵ Geertz describes this group of people as the adherents of a rather purist form of Islam. In everyday life, they are careful toward basic rituals – the *Sholat*, the Fast, and the Pilgrimage.¹⁶ In the beginning of Islam in Java, the *Santri* were always associated with the trades.¹⁷ However, today they are often associated with ardent students of Islam.

⁹ Another name for the *Santri* is *mutihan*, (meaning “white” in Javanese) used as an opposite term for the *Abangan* (meaning “red” in Javanese). Since in the 12th century, religious people have called themselves “*apinghay*” (white). However, some try to explain these terms through etymological lenses. *Mutihan* is similar to an Arabic word, “*mutih*,” meaning “to obey,” while *abangan* is similar to “*aba*,” meaning “not to care.” See Bambang Noorsena, *Antara Bayangan dan Kenyataan* (Yogyakarta: Andi, 1992), p. 78.

¹⁰ Adi Sutanto, “A Strategy for Planting Church in Java through the Sangkakala Mission” (D.Miss. dissertation, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1986), p. 164.

¹¹ Cf. Sutanto, p. 164; Geertz, p. 6.

¹² Geertz, p. 6.

¹³ Philip van Akkeren, *Sri and Christ: A Study of the Indigenous Church in East Java* (London: Lutterworth, 1970), p. xvii.

¹⁴ Sutanto, p. 184.

¹⁵ Mulder, p. 1.

¹⁶ Geertz, p. 6.

¹⁷ Geertz., p. 6.

The last group, the *Priyayi*, refers to the group of Javanese Muslims that stresses neither the animistic elements in the over all Javanese syncretism, as do the *Abangan*, nor the pure Islamic element, as do the *Santri*, but rather the Hinduistic elements.¹⁸ Originally the *Priyayi* were comprised of white-collar nobles. However, today the term is widened. Guru (teachers), bureaucrats, and professionals are included in the *Priyayi*. Their life-style usually is characterised by the intuitive mysticism.¹⁹

A question may arise: How could the different expressions among Javanese moslems be explained? Most probably, the answer for this question lies in the Javanese way of life and etiquette. For centuries, as Koentjaraningrat says, "The Javanese have emphasised the outward harmonious and peaceful relationship between men."²⁰ To live in such an environment forced the people to recognise different beliefs. At a certain point, even amalgamation between different beliefs was inevitable.²¹ Thus, syncretism occurred. Of course, there were different levels of syncretism in the body of the Islamic community in Java. Those strongly influenced by animistic beliefs undoubtedly confessed themselves as Muslims. However, they never broke with their original belief. Thus, so-called *Abangan* emerged. Those who were strongly influenced by Hinduism undoubtedly saw themselves as Muslims also. However they also retained their old belief. This brought about the *Priyayi*. Finally, the *Santri* were some who were not strongly influenced either by Hinduism or animism. However, since there was a continuous contact with a *kyai* (a Muslim teacher) in the so-called *pondok pesantren*,²² they became adherents to a more purist form of

¹⁸ Geertz, p. 6.

¹⁹ Geertz, pp. 6, 229.

²⁰ Koentjaraningrat, *Javanese Culture* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 335.

²¹ King Kertanegara (1248–1292 C.E.) of the Kingdom of Singosari was the first Javanese king who identified himself both as a Shivaist and a Buddhist. This practice later was followed by his successors. One of them was the greatest Javanese King Hayam Wuruk from the Kingdom of Majapahit. Cf. Yoder, p. 112.

²² *Pondok pesantren* is a self-sufficient religious training community, consisting of *kyai*, his family, and several students. In *pondok pesantren*, there are usually compound with dormitories, workshop and mosque. The lessons

Islam. The evidence for this can be seen when we observe the region in which the first *pondok pesantren* were built (for example, Gresik, Jombang, Banten, Cirebon and several other places). Today no less than 80% of the population in those regions are adherents to a more purist form of Islam.

To this point, a question may arise: What is the relevance of Geertz's taxonomy to this study? Geertz's this description of Javanese Islam is essential for explaining the phenomenon of why the belief *Ratu Adil* generally is more pervasive and popular within the communities of *Abangan* and *Priyayi* than of *Santri*. *Ratu Adil* never appears either in the Koran or the Hadiths. It is genuine Javanese innovation within Islam. Therefore, it is natural that *Santri* Muslims, who adhere to a rather purist form of Islam, consider the belief of *Ratu Adil* not to be essential.²³

3. RATU ADIL

It is extremely difficult to trace the origin of the belief of *Ratu Adil*. However, it is most probable that this idea emerged as a natural reaction toward suffering.²⁴ In the early part of their history, the ancestors of the Javanese lived in a very repressive situation. They had

given in *pondok pesantren* are: 1) Arabic syntax and morphology; 2) *fiqh* (jurisprudence); 3) *usul fiqh* (historical jurisprudence); 4) *hadits* (tradition of the prophet); 5) *tafsir* (interpretation); 6) *tauhid* (theology); 7) *tassawuf* (mysticism) and ethics; and 8) history. See Koentjaraningrat, "Javanese Terms for God and Supernatural Beings and the Idea of Power," in *Readings on Islam in Southeast Asia*, compiled by Ahmad Ibrahim, Sharon Siddique, and Yasmin Hussain (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1985), pp. 286-92 (287-88); Yoder, p. 187.

²³ A good example for this can be seen in the life of H. Oemar Said Tjokroaminoto, the leader of Islamic political party *Sarekat Islam* (Islamic Alliance) in the beginning of this century. Tjokroaminoto refused to be identified with the awaited figure of *Ratu Adil*. His Islamic background as a *santri* seemed to lead him making this decision. Because of this, he failed to gain the sympathy of the Javanese. See, Karkono K. Partokusumo, p. 31; Weinata Sairin, *Tempat dan Peran Yesus di Hari Kiamat: Menurut Ajaran Islam* (Jakarta: Sinar Harapan, 1997), p. 15.

²⁴ Andreas Yewangoe, *Theologia Crucis in Asia* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1987), pp. 227, 233.

to move with their tradition further and further into the Javanese tropical forest, clearing land to form new villages and agricultural enterprises.²⁵ Perhaps, in such a very difficult environment, the embryonic idea of *Ratu Adil*²⁶ – the hope for a leader who would bring them into *Tata Tentrem Karta Raharja* (such an ideal situation), as the expression of the people's "rebellion" against suffering and a dream to get free from it, was born.²⁷

In addition to suffering, the embryonic idea of *Ratu Adil* may have also emerged as a natural reaction towards the Javanese way of life and etiquette. For centuries, the Javanese have emphasised the outwardly harmonious and peaceful society in which every person has a good relationship with the supreme being, with the spirits, with nature and fellow human beings.²⁸ Koentjaraningrat says:

To live in such a situation forces people always to laugh away the problems of their lives, but a certain point they will need to escape, either inwardly into the realm of mystical speculation, where the individual may become completely purified and released from the heavy burden of social responsibility, or into a world of fantasy about a better social order in the future.²⁹

²⁵ Regarding this, van Akkeren, p. 3, comments, "History repeatedly shows the same picture as regards these forces. Time and again wandering groups people penetrate the jungle of Java to carve out for themselves a piece of arable land, that will provide food to keep them alive where they can build themselves a *desa* (village), there they will be safe from the force of the water and from the wild animals, and can escape from too oppressive a government and from the lack of economic prospects in their home village"; Yoder, p. 85, comments that the migration of the people to an inner jungle might be as a result of their desire to get free from the oppressive and corrupting influences of a certain government.

²⁶ I use the term, "embryonic," because Javanese had no idea about *Ratu* (king) up to the coming of the Hindus who introduced the idea of kingship.

²⁷ Yoder, pp. 84-5.

²⁸ Cf. Koentjaraningrat, *Javanese Culture*, p. 335.

²⁹ Koentjaraningrat, p. 335.

3.1 The Development of the Belief of *Ratu Adil*

With the advent of Hinduism to the land of Java, the embryonic idea of *Ratu Adil* was shaped by Hindu eschatology. The Hindu believes that all events in the world can be divided into cycles of four periods, namely, *Kertayuga*, *Tetrayuga*, *Dwaparayuga*, and *Kaliyuga*. The last period, *Kaliyuga*, is considered the worst period. It is characterised with spiritual and moral entropy which then will be followed by the destruction of the cosmos and humanity. However, Vishnu will descend from the heaven to save mankind and establish an ideal society.³⁰ During the period of Hindu-Javanese Kingdom, this idea, I believe, was incorporated into the embryonic idea of *Ratu Adil* by the Javanese. During that time, kingship and authority were legitimized on the basis of divine incarnations.³¹ Therefore, Vishnu who incarnated in the form of *Ratu Adil* (the Just King), was eagerly awaited in order to bring *tata tentrem karta raharja* (an ideal society) to the land of Java.

When Java underwent the process of Islamization, particularly in the eighteenth century, the expectation of *Ratu Adil* was enriched by Islamic eschatology. Various *primbon* (foretelling books), *suluk* (books containing the recitations of Javanese shadow-puppeteers), and some didactic poems furnished a general eschatological theme – there will be the *jaman edan* (the Mad-era) in the history, when suffering, injustice, moral and spiritual entropy reach their highest peak. However, following this decline, the golden age will come. That will be the time when *Ratu Adil* will reign over the land of Java to restore order, justice and prosperity.³² After that, the Kiamat (doomsday) will come. The obvious influence of Islamic idea of history can be seen here. The cyclical idea of history found in the Hinduism was transformed into the linear concept of history. In Islam, history is not a never-ending process anymore, but it has a *telos* (goal), namely the realisation of the *eschaton*.³³

³⁰ See van Akkeren, p. 41.

³¹ Koentjaraningrat, *Javanese Culture*, p. 39.

³² Cf. Koentjaraningrat, *Javanese Culture*, p. 336.

³³ Cf. Ira G. Zip, *A Muslim Primer: Beginner's Guide to Islam* (Westminster, Maryland: Wakefield Edition, 1992), p. 236; Norman L. Geisler

The most important and well-known version of the idea of *Ratu Adil* among Javanese Muslims is the one that is recorded in the treatise entitled *Prelambang Joyoboyo* (the Prediction of Joyoboyo). None knows exactly when it was written or who wrote it.³⁴ The usage of the name of Joyoboyo suggests that the author tried to make a connection between himself and the older tradition – the Javanese-Hinduistic tradition. Joyoboyo himself was the king of the Hindu Kingdom of Kediri (1135-1157 C.E.). He was believed to possess the supernatural ability to predict the future. Perhaps the author used his name to convince his readers of the reliability of his treatise. The following is summary of a part of the treatise of *Prelambang Joyoboyo*.

3.2 *Prelambang Joyoboyo*

One day when King Joyoboyo was served seven dishes, he then began to reveal the mysteries contained in those dishes. These seven dishes symbolised the seven eras to come and their respective kings and kingdoms which the Javanese would face in the future. The names of those seven eras are: 1) *Kala Wisesa*; 2) *Srikala*; 3) *Kala Wisaya*; 4) *Kala Jangga*; 5) *Kala Sakti*; 6) *Kali Jaya*; and 7) *Kala Bendu*. All these era covers a period of 2100 years. The seventh era and events which succeed it are worth further study.³⁵

and Abdul Saheeb, *Answering Islam: the Crescent in the Light of the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), pp. 112-14.

³⁴ Some older people in Surakarta believe that this treatise was written by Pangeran Wijil in 1741 C.E. However, in Batavia (the older name of Jakarta), during the leadership of Jan Pieterszoon Coen (1627-1628 C.E.), there was a report of the existence of *Prelambang Joyoboyo*. Thus, to believe that this treatise written by Pangeran Wijil is most probably incorrect. To this point, the authorship and date of this treatise are still unknown. Cf. Karkono K. Partokusumo, *Kebudayaan Jawa, Perpaduannya dengan Islam*, pp. 19-21.

³⁵ For a detailed description, see Karkono Kamajaya Partokusumo, *Kebudayaan Jawa, Perpaduannya dengan Islam*, pp. 11-4; Andjar Any, *Jayabaya Ranggawarsita dan Sabdopalon* (Semarang: Aneka Ilmu, 1990), pp. 76-86; Yewangoe, pp. 234-35. But here, Yewangoe makes a mistake by dating the reign of King Joyoboyo in the ninth century C.E.. The correct date must be 1135-1157 C.E..

The name of the seventh era in *Prelambang Joyoboyo* is *Kala Bendu*. Often, it is called simply *Jaman Edan* (the Mad-era). This era would be marked by difficulties in life. Trouble and chaos, the death of law and government, and moral and spiritual entropy. At the end of the *Jaman Edan*, *Ratu Adil* will come. He will establish *tata tentrem karta raharja* (an ideal society) in the land of Java. In his Kingdom, there will be no suffering. All evil disappears. This righteous kingdom will remain for one century. After that, a situation of trouble and chaos will return.³⁶

When the island of Java reaches its 2100th year, the doomsday will come. Before that event, there will be a great war between *Imam Mahdi*,³⁷ *Raja Iblis* (the King of Satan) and *Ja-mak-juja* (Gog and Magog). *Imam Mahdi* will win and destroy *Raja Iblis* and *Ja-mak-juja*.³⁸

4. THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION: DRAWING "A JAVANESE FACE OF JESUS"

4.1 Jesus Christ as the Liberator

What can be learnt from the Javanese expectation of *Ratu Adil*? First, it opens our eyes toward the deepest need of the Javanese. They are longing not only for the spiritual liberation – freedom from sin and the power of darkness, but also, for the social liberation – freedom from poverty, suffering, social injustice, and backwardness which are still prevalent in their everyday life experience.³⁹

³⁶ Yewangoe, p. 235.

³⁷ Whether *Imam Mahdi*, the awaited eschatological figure in the Shi'I Islam, and *Ratu Adil* are same person is questioned. However, it is generally believed that both of them refer to the same person. Cf. Van Akkeren, p. 4; "Ratu Adil," *A Dictionary of Indonesian Islam*, ed. Howard M. Federspiel (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Center for International Studies, 1995), p. 219; Reynaldo Iletto, "Religion and Anti-colonial Movement," in *Cambridge History of Southeast Asia*, 2 vols, ed. Nicholas Tarling (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), II, p. 298.

³⁸ Yewangoe, pp. 235-36; Anjar Any, p. 86.

³⁹ Based on the latest data provided by the ILO (International Labour Organisation), in the first half-year of 1998 there are about 75 million people in Indonesia who are living in poverty (37% of the total population). Because of

What does Jesus say about himself? At the momentous event in Nazareth which marked the beginning of his public ministry, Jesus revealed himself by proclaiming his messianic mission:

The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
because he has anointed me
to preach good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for prisoners
and recovery of sight for the blind,
to release the oppressed,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor (Luke 4: 18-19, NIV).

In the light of the context of Luke's audience⁴⁰ and the entire books of the Gospel of Luke and Acts, it seems that the messianic mission of Jesus announced here embraces both the spiritual and earthly dimension. In other words, Jesus pictured himself as both the spiritual and social liberator.⁴¹

Based on this insight, therefore as a complement of their pietistic theological heritage, which typically put much emphasis on the picture

the monetary, economical and political crises, it is predicted that in the next year (1999), this percentage will increase to 66%. It means that there will be 140 million very poor people. Two out of three Indonesians will be very poor in 1999. "Prediksi ILO untuk Tahun 1999: Dua dari Tiga Penduduk Indonesia Sangat Miskin," *Jawa Pos*, September 1, 1998, p. 8.

⁴⁰ See Joel B. Green, *The Theology of Gospel of Luke* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 7-16. Here, we can find that in Luke's world, religion, economics, politics, group identity are closely interwoven. Therefore, emphasis in Lukan studies should be neither on the worldly-focus nor otherworldly focus of Jesus' message, but on the two focuses.

⁴¹ By saying that Jesus is the social liberator, I do not mean to say that Luke portrayed Jesus as the social reformer who encouraged rebellion against the political structure of his world as did the Zealots. My point is the Lukan Jesus is the one who is deeply concerned with the literal, physical needs of men (poverty, sufferings, sickness, etc.). Cf. John Nolland, *Luke 1-9:20*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, 1989), p. 197; In the conclusion of his book, Richard J. Cassidy, *Jesus Politic and Society* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1978), p. 78, seemed to be clearly articulating what Nolland says "... by espousing radically new social pattern and by refusing to defer the existing political authorities, Jesus pointed the way to a social order in which neither the Romans nor any other oppressing group would be able to hold sway."

of Jesus as the spiritual liberator, churches in Java must dare to proclaim to their Javanese neighbours, that as *Ratu Adil*, Jesus Christ is the social liberator as well.

4.2 Jesus Christ as the “Harmonizer”

Secondly, the Javanese expectation of *Ratu Adil* reveals to us the highest value in the Javanese culture, namely *keselarasan* or harmony.⁴² The Javanese believe that disharmony (between man and God, man and his/her fellows, man and nature) is the root of trouble, chaos, pestilence and evil in this world. If disharmony reaches the highest peak, the mad era (*jaman edan*) will come. However, with the advent of *Ratu Adil*, this mad-era will end. Thus, we can see here the role of *Ratu Adil* as the one who restores harmony.

The role of *Ratu Adil* as the harmonizer is very similar to the role of Jesus Christ as the agent of reconciliation in the theology of Paul. In the Epistle to Romans, Paul explains that sin not only creates a gulf between man and God (1:21-25) but also disrupts relationship between man and his or her fellows. This disruption is evidenced by the existence of envy, murder, strife, etc. (1:29-31). Finally sin also brings destructive effect to the natural order (8:19-32).⁴³ All human effort to restore his primal state is futile (Rom 7:19-21). He needs God’s help. Thus, whereas in 2 Corinthians 5:18, Paul describes how God was reconciling himself to man through Jesus Christ, in Ephesians 2:14 he speaks about Jesus Christ as the one who has destroyed the dividing wall of hostility between Jews and Gentile. While the former draws a picture of Jesus as the “peace maker” who restores the harmony between God and man, the latter depicts Jesus Christ as the one who restores harmony between man and man. Finally, in Colossians 1:19-22, Paul extends the scope of reconciliation. Here, Jesus Christ is depicted as the agent of cosmic reconciliation who restores harmony in the whole universe.

While going about the city of Athens, Paul saw something interesting, namely a wayside altar with the inscription *to an unknown*

⁴² Frans Magnis-Suseno, *Wayang dan Panggilan Manusia* (Jakarta: Gramedia, 1995), p. 71.

⁴³ This passage may be Paul’s personal reflection on the primeval curse on nature (Gen 3:17-19).

god. Paul then eagerly seized this inscription as a point of contact to proclaim the true God (Acts 17:22-31). It is probably true there was no real connection between an unknown God and the true God. However, to be sure, as Howard Marshall says there was "the true God who was ultimately responsible for the phenomena which they attributed to an unknown God."⁴⁴ I believe that the true God has instilled the need of perfect harmony in the hearts of the Javanese. This idea later was encapsulated in the belief of *Ratu Adil*. If Paul dared to alter the wording in that inscription to suit his purpose, why should we not be afraid of using the same way? If Paul dared to say, "For while I was passing through and examining the object of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription, 'To an unknown god'." What therefore you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you (Acts 17:23 – NASB)," why should we not be afraid of saying, "For while I was passing through and examining your beliefs, I also found the idea of *Ratu Adil* whom you are waiting for, but you do not exactly know who he is. What therefore you are longing for in ignorance, this I make clear to you. Jesus Christ is your *Ratu Adil*, the one who brings about the perfect harmony to you."

4.3 Jesus Christ as the Hope of the Javanese

Finally, the Javanese expectation of *Ratu Adil* opens our eyes toward the Javanese concept of history. The historical process is not cyclical but linear. History has its *telos* (goal), namely the last day, when the *eschaton* will be *realised*. The coming of *Ratu Adil* is decisive, because it ushers in the eschatological era.

This concept is undoubtedly similar to the eschatological concept of the New Testament. Peter, in his apostolic kerygma, stated that the first advent of Christ ushered in the eschatological era (Acts 2:17-36). The evangelists saw the presence of the eschatological Kingdom (the Kingdom of God) in the mission of Jesus Christ.⁴⁵ Paul saw that the *eschaton* had begun at the coming of Jesus Christ, based on the

⁴⁴ I. Howard Marshall, *The Acts of the Apostle*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), p. 286.

⁴⁵ For an excellent discussion about this topic, see George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, revised by Donald A. Hagner (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), pp. 42-211.

evidence of the overcoming and the reduction of the evil powers to impotence (Col 2:13-15). However, just as the expectation of *Ratu Adil* believes that the righteous kingdom of *Ratu Adil* serves only as the transition between the evil age and the doomsday which marks the coming of the new world and the total destruction of the evil powers, so the first advent of Jesus Christ ushered in the “transition time” between the present age and the full advent of the age to come.

Jansz, one of the earliest missionaries who ministered among the Javanese noted once that “Javanese people are not typically very concerned about the future, about death and judgement.”⁴⁶ This seems to be true because the earliest expression of Christianity in Java seems to emphasise the coming of Jesus Christ, not only as the fulfilment of *Joyoboyo*'s prophecy of *Ratu Adil* but also the dawning of the righteous era in the midst of them. A fragment of *tembang*, a Javanese song, which was sung in the earliest Christian community in Banyutuwo⁴⁷ clearly shows us such an emphasis.

Duh Jesus Rauning gesang
Putranipun Allah ingkang ampun ngawon kenging pejah
Sawer tuwan remuk sirah nalika jaman pinesti
Tuwang ingkang anetepi Janjine Allah kang setya
Mitulungi tyang nista
De sangking swarga tumedhak
Kadamel kurbaning panrak...⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Yoder, p. 339.

⁴⁷ This is the name of the village, in which *Kyai Tunggul Wulung*, the local pioneer of Christianity in Java founded one of the earliest Christian communities in Java. *Tunggul Wulung* is frequently condemned because of preaching “Jesus with Javanese face” (*Ratu Adil Isa Rohollah*). In spite of its syncretistic character, his preaching was proven to work well. By the time of his death, on April 29, 1885, he was able to win 1,058 people to Christ. See Van Akkeren, p. 156. Compare this to the result of missionary activities done by the Dutch in Central Java during 19th century, given by C. Guilot, *Kiai Sadrach: Riwayat Kristenisasi di Jawa* (originally published under the title, *L’Affaire Sadrach, Un Esai de Christianization a Java au XIX e Siecle*), translated into Indonesian by Asvi Warman Adam (Jakarta: Sinar Harapan, 1985), pp. 69-70. Jansz ministered only to 150 people in Jepara, Bieger, 50 people in Tegal, Philips and his wife, 29 people in Purworejo, Oostrom-Philips, 30 people in Banyumas.

⁴⁸ This is the translation of this song (quoted from Yoder, p. 343):

During the first century, Jews waited many years for “the second Elijah,” who would prepare the coming of the awaited Messiah. Ironically, the one whom they had been waiting for, was already with them. They never knew that, until Jesus revealed it, that John the Baptist was “the second Elijah” (Matt 17:9-13; Mark 9:9-13; Luke 1:17). In the same manner, many Javanese today may never know that Jesus Christ is the true *Ratu Adil* (the Just King). Thus, Christians in Java must be ready to become “a finger of Jesus” to point out that *Ratu Adil*, the one whom they are longing for, is in the midst of them in person of Jesus Christ.

5. CONCLUSION

I have presented a picture of a Javanese Jesus. Historically, it has proven to work well in the soil of Javanese culture. Ironically, today unaware of their own church history and influenced by imported methods of evangelism from the West, most Javanese Christians have failed to recognise the value of using of *Ratu Adil* to a theological bridge to witness to the people of their own culture. Bear in the mind that I do not claim that this will work without fail in the Javanese context today. However, there are sufficient reasons to be optimistic.

Further, I would like to say that doing theology is a never-ending task, at least until *parousia* of Jesus Christ. Therefore, the Javanese Christology which I have presented here must be redefined, corrected and enriched in order to be culturally intelligible and situationally relevant to our times, and at the same time, faithful to the biblical theology.

Oh Jesus King of Life
Son of God who gave himself up to die,
Crushing the head of the serpent,
Giving a glimpse of the age to come
The Lord keeps his promises
God is steadfast in bringing
Help to the oppressed,
Making *heaven down*
To work out the perfect sacrifice...