# keluarga gerejani

## A CATECHETICAL EXPLORATION OF CHURCH - IMAGES AMONG CATHOLICS IN JAVA

Hadrianus Tedjoworo

# Keluarga gerejani, an ecclesial family

## A catechetical exploration of church-images among Catholics in Java

Proefschrift

ter verkrijging van de graad van doctor
aan de Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen
op gezag van de rector magnificus prof. mr. S.C.J.J. Kortmann,
volgens besluit van het college van decanen
in het openbaar te verdedigen op maandag 18 maart 2013
om 10.30 uur precies

door

Hadrianus Tedjoworo

geboren op 16 september 1971
in Yogyakarta

Cover image by the author
Front cover design by Ignatius Yunanto

**Keluarga gerejani, an ecclesial family**


**A catechetical exploration of church-images
among Catholics in Java**


Doctoral thesis

to obtain the degree of doctor
from Radboud University Nijmegen
on the authority of the Rector Magnificus, Prof. dr. S.C.J.J. Kortmann,
according to the decision of the Council of Deans
to be defended in public on Monday, 18 March 2013
at 10:30 a.m. precisely


by


Hadrianus Tedjoworo


born in Yogyakarta
on 16 September 1971

*All these things Jesus spoke to the crowds in images,*
*and He did not speak to them without an image.*

Matthew 13:34

*To the simple and devoted faithful in Java*

# Acknowledgements

This book evolved out of the imaginations of Catholics in Java I have encountered, listened, and served all through the years. I wish that by exploring their cultural images and faith stories for the greater context of theology I respect their noteworthy role in the life of the Church. I ask their generosities for any shortcomings for which I take full responsibility.

I am grateful to my confreres of the Ordo Sanctae Crucis (OSC) who have always supported my study, including Fr. Antonius Subianto Bunyamin, OSC, provincial of Sang Kristus Province, Indonesia, Fr. Huub Wagemans, OSC and Fr. Harry Leermakers, OSC of the Province of Theodorus de Celles, Europe.

A special thank you goes to Harold van Lent for being my liaison in matters related to the Radboud University Nijmegen, for his translation of some texts into Dutch, and for his enthusiasm and attention to every detail in getting the manuscript ready for production.

I am especially indebted to Prof. dr. A.J.M. van den Hoogen and Prof. dr. A.Th.M de Jong, my supervisors at the Radboud University Nijmegen, who have showed outstanding forbearance and offered incessant encouragement and suggestions.

Most of all, I am indebted to my family and all my friends who have always accompanied me through the years of my study. Through their grace and love, they bring joy and vigour in my journey to finish this study and keep my theological exploration down-to-earth for the faithful.

# Table of contents

# Introduction to the theme of research

There have been reams of ideas about the church. But these are ideas. Theology has been dealing with these abstract ideas. It is a church-talk. However, when it comes down to the faithful, the church is 'seen' and experienced in its reality, rather than talked about notionally. There is a move from ideas to images, from talking to imagining.[1] In the light of John Henry Newman, on matters of church-images theology might need to 'consult' the faithful.[2] This study has originated from my day-to-day ruminations as a religious, born in a Javanese culture, and grown up in a Catholic family. I have been matured, culturally as well as spiritually, within these realities, realising that together-ness in the circles of friends and families has always been an everydayness of the people surrounding me. And in this togetherness, what is spoken about is not the abstract idea, but first of all the 'image' of a family, an 'ecclesial family' (Ind. 'keluarga gerejani'). The Christians in Java have a lot of time to share *how* they live their faith in their together-ness as family.[3] Their simple hopes and concerns are always oriented towards the 'harmony' of their community life.[4] They imagine, interpret and evaluate many things, so as to find the relatedness of realities in their apprehension of the church. It is in this sense that I have decided to start this study, that is, to capture those marvellous moments driven by the believers' imagination.

This yearning might appear impossible. But it has not stopped challenging me each time I see how the faithful in Java are participating in the church activities, expressing their belief in God who is always present in their communities. All this continues to happen every day in this society where Christianity is only about three per cent of the island's population. There must have been a strong spirit of being family in the hearts of these faithful, so that they always seem to have the need to come together as a church. There must have been some specific ways that appear familiar and therefore helpful to them in order to survive as a church and a minority in this society. The spirit of being community has surfaced from their imaginations, and not simply from the thought ideas about the church conveyed to them. Their ways of figuring the church and of being church are the crucial points of their faith that bring about *renewal* and *transforma-*

---

[1] This section is an introduction to the theme of this research. Further elaboration on the research design will be given in Chapter 1. This initial process was carried on with reference to Piet Verschuren and Hans Doorewaard, *Designing a Research Project* (Utrecht: Publisher Lemma, 1999); translated by R. Poper.

[2] See John Henry Newman, *On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine*, ed. John Coulson (London: Chapman, 1961).

[3] Cf. Franz Magnis-Suseno, Etika Jawa: Sebuah Analisa Falsafi tentang Kebijaksanaan Hidup Jawa (Jakarta: Gramedia, 1984), 168-176.

[4] *Ibid.*, 38-81.

*tion.* A theology of the church in the midst of these realities, in order to address the real situations of the faithful, has to be a theology of the church from within the sociocultural realities of the faithful.[5] Based on this theology, I want to focus my research further on the ecclesial content of *catechesis* among the local churches, i.e., the believers' images of the church.

Needless to say, there are difficulties in this kind of catechetical and ecclesiological study. Since the starting point of all this is the believers' reality reflected in the ways and images through which they imagine the church as their new 'home', the first difficulty is the local resource to begin this endeavour. There is a posthumous book by Y.B. Mangunwijaya entitled *Gereja Diaspora*, which describes the contemporary situation and some particular challenges encountered by the church in Indonesia.[6] However, this book has been criticised as conceptually inconsistent and too much focused on the organisational aspects of the church.[7] By mentioning this limitation, I do not intend to propose new models of the church in Java, but rather to explore new possibilities of church images associated with the culturally embedded images that will improve the content of catechesis. This limitation has been the reason to conduct an exploratory research about the believers' ways of (re-)imagining the church from within their own cultures. What I would like to propose here is an interpretation of these ways through the observations and explorations of the believers' preferences. We want to *listen* carefully to those ordinary Christians in Java and to *learn* from them about what it means, and how it is carried on, to become church members in their local realities. What I am trying to do is to figure the church through the believers' eyes, that is, from their perspectives and in faithfulness to their imagination.[8] The church re-imagined from the local viewpoint may contribute fresh and fertile fruits to the larger church, the fruits yielded from different types of soil in Java.

---

[5] Cf. Tom Jacobs, SJ, "Gereja dan Dunia" in JB. Banawiratma, SJ (ed.), *Gereja dan Masyarakat* (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 1986), 13-44; JB. Banawiratma, SJ (ed.), *Gereja Indonesia, Quo Vadis? Hidup Menggereja Kontekstual* (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 2000); Roger Haight, "Ecclesiology from Below: Genesis of the Church," *Theology Digest* 48:4 (2001): 319-328.

[6] Y. B. Mangunwijaya, Pr., *Gereja Diaspora* (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 1999).

[7] Detailed assessments of the book from various authors can be found in A. Sudiarja, SJ (ed.), *Tinjauan Kritis atas Gereja Diaspora Romo Mangunwijaya* (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 1999) and also in J.B. Banawiratma, SJ, "Hidup Menggereja yang Terbuka: Jaringan dari Berbagai Macam Komunitas Basis Kontekstual," in JB. Banawiratma, SJ (ed.), *Gereja Indonesia, Quo Vadis? Hidup Menggereja Kontekstual* (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 2000), 181-195.

[8] Cf. Hadrianus Tedjoworo, "Understanding through the Eyes: A Dialogue with Sallie McFague on the Role of Images and Metaphors in Current Theological Epistemology," Master of Theology thesis at Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, 2002.

The next difficulty leads to the main *problem* of this research. The Christians in Java seem not yet habituated to figure the church from their own point of view. There has been a *gap* between the more *traditional concepts* of the church learned by the believers during the catechetical process and the *images* embedded in their socio-cultural realities. In Java, the church concepts are commonly learned by the believers through the catechesis process before the baptism, while the gap emerges mainly through the catechetical process after the baptism. The faithful are more prepared to describe the church using the ideas taught in catechesis rather than the images that are more familiar to them. For example, the church as 'people of God' might have been heard frequently during catechesis and probably came up in their conversations about the church, but this idea remains an abstract idea to the believers and will need other images in order to apprehend its meaning. The idea 'people of God' might have been learned by heart, but apparently not spoken of from the believers' hearts.

There might have been customary reasons behind this. For the faithful in Java, expressing their relatedness to and participation in the church with the so-called images from the culture is not always taken for granted. If that is true, the fault might lie in the less usage of local cultural images in the content of catechesis and in the community discussions about the church. The catechetical content tends to be 'notional' in the sense that it may require certain theoretical knowledge and language in order to apprehend the church from that point of view. Based on the existing catechetical content and methods, the believers are often stimulated to talk about the church conceptually rather than to imagine, interpret and share their own perceptions and experiences of its aspects from their own sociocultural perspective.[9] A plain example might give us some idea. The image of the church as a 'vineyard' as referred to in Matthew 21:33-41 brings forward some ideas of how to live and work as members of the church. However, as the image 'vineyard' is unfamiliar to the believers in Java, the catechetical content based on this 'biblical' image may only evoke discussions on the notional level which are not easily apprehended by each person. To make sense of the meanings contained in the image, the believers would need particular images from their own culture, which should be provided in the catechesis, so that they have greater opportunity to share real experiences of the related aspects of the church. This study is directed towards providing the necessary associations between the church images from the bible and the relevant socioculturally embedded images that support the believers' apprehension of the former. In that direction, the content of catechesis will be improved to address the day-to-day experiences lived by the believers in Java within their own cultural context.

---

[9] See the material of catechesis about the church in Java in the several sources mentioned on note 276.

When all is said and done, these relations are not so much to complicate as simply to shore up the believers' apprehension.

To begin the effort towards an improvement of the ecclesial content of catechesis in Java, the voices of the faithful have to be heard in the process. The believers' local spiritualities may have shaped and strengthened their communal life as members of the church.[10] I want to unearth in this study how the cultural images are influential in propping up the believers' profound faithfulness in the church. This endeavour is motivated by the hope that a kind of acknowledgment of these images may improve the believers' apprehension of the church and support the future of the local churches in this land. In this way, we could also help the church to find its rootedness in the local cultures. The catechetical contents about the church will be of the main concern in carrying on the observations, given that catechetical meetings in Java are still the main place of the encounters that mirror the dynamic of the local church.

Java consists not only of one culture. Therefore, I would like to focus on two of the dominant cultures in Java, that is, *Javanese* and *Sundanese*. The Javanese culture can be found mainly in Central and East Java, while the Sundanese culture particularly in West Java. The similarities as well as the differences between these cultures might bring meaningful contributions to the larger context of the church in Java and Indonesia. Further, I will concentrate on the Catholics in two parishes which can be considered as good samples of the two cultures. The first, indicating the Javanese, is the parish 'Hati Kudus Yesus' ('Holy Heart of Jesus') in Ganjuran, Bantul, Central Java. The second, indicating the Sundanese, is the parish of 'Kristus Raja' ('Christ the King') in Cigugur, Kuningan, West Java. In focusing on the faithful in these parishes, I will try to explore their preferences towards their available cultural images about *community life* in the society. These images are in turn employed to their communal togetherness and partici-pation in the church. This contextualisation will be completed by associating these cultural images with the church images found in the Scriptures (the so-called 'biblical' images in this study).[11]

In line with the main problem stated above, the main *question* of this research is: what images of the church in catechesis in Java can bridge the gap between the

---

[10] Cf. Robert J. Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies* (London: SCM Press, 1985), 124-125; Peter C. Phan, *In Our Own Tongues: Perspectives from Asia on Mission and Inculturation*, (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2003), 67, and see for example St. Darmawijaya, "Ekklesiologi dalam Lakon Wayang", in Johannes Banawiratma, Tom Jacobs, B. Kieser, I. Suharyo, and M. I. Emmy Tranggani (eds.), *Mewartakan dalam Kebebasan: Gereja di Asia dalam Dialog dengan Agama-Agama, Kebudayaan dan Kemiskinan*, Orientasi Baru, No. 5 (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 1991), 100-123.

[11] Further explanation of the strategy in this research can be found in Chapter 1, especially in section 1.2.2 (starting page 24).

traditional concepts of the church as taught in the actual catechesis and the believers' culturally embedded images, in a way that is not contradictory to the bible? The Christians in Java have grown up in their own cultures and to a large extent have been accustomed to the cultural images in their social realities. Everydayness and realness characterise these images.[12] In our efforts to answer this question, we will try to observe how the believers illustrate the church by means of their cultural images and to relate them to the 'biblical' images of the church. This question also marks the hermeneutical aspect of this study by allowing the believers' 'imagerial' interpretations to emerge through the employment of their imagination.[13] There must have been transformative moments that occurred during the imagining process.[14] This research wants to bring some contributions for the improvement of catechetical contents and towards the development of an ecclesiology in Java. Our answers to the central question of this study will surface in the attempts of recommending themes and materials that are meaningful for catechesis about the church in Java and acknowledging the believers' practices of faith in community involving cultural images and expressions. In line with the exploratory character of this research, the *method* in this study will consist of three main steps, namely, (1) the first survey to explore the believers' cultural images about community life in the society, (2) the second survey to explore the believers' images of the church as a community, and (3) the reassessment step to associate these images with the relevant 'biblical' images of the church and their contributions to a larger context of ecclesiology.[15] I intend to do an exploration for the sake of providing relevant and useful material for the catechesis about the church in Java. The research design of this study will be detailed in chapter 1. The results of the first survey will be explored in chapter 2. Afterwards, in chapter 3, I will discuss the cultural tendencies and the local perspectives to assess the cultural images surfacing in the first survey and in anticipation for the next survey about church images in chapter 4. Chapter 4, which indicates the second step of this research, will explore the believers' church images in the sociocultural context based on the second survey. Finally, chapter 5 will be the

---

[12] Cf. John Henry Newman, *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent* (New York, London, Toronto: Longmans, Green and Co., 1947), 57.

[13] An 'imagerial' way of thinking for our study can be described as a way of apprehending or assenting to the teachings about the church with the help of (local, cultural, familiar) images; see 1.2.1.1 (starting page 15).

[14] Cf. George M. Newlands, *Transformative Imagination: Rethinking Intercultural Theology* (Aldershot etc.: Ashgate, 2004), 12, 34, 79.

[15] Further explanation of these steps will be given in Chapter 1, the section on research strategy (section 1.2.2, starting page 24). Cf. the method employed in José de Mesa, *Following the Way of the Disciples: A Guidebook for Doing Christology in a Cultural Context* (Quezon City: East Asian Pastoral Institute, 1996).