

Navigating Faith and Identity: The History of Catholic Community in Pugeran Parish of Yogyakarta, 1934-1968

Gregorius Andika Ariwibowo✉, Hary Ganjar Budiman

National Research and Innovation Agency (BRIN), ✉andikaariwibowo@gmail.com

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Abstract: This study examines the history and evolution of the Catholic Church in Pugeran Parish, Yogyakarta, from 1934 to 1968, with particular attention to the ways in which the Church integrated Javanese cultural elements into its practices and architecture. By fostering a unique Catholic-Javanese identity, the Church became both a symbol and an agent of cultural synthesis in the region. Employing a historical methodology, this research draws on primary and secondary sources—including periodicals, commemorative books, and oral histories—to trace the development of this distinctive identity. The findings demonstrate that the Pugeran Catholic Church, established in 1934, played a key role in blending Catholicism with local Javanese culture, thus reflecting the coexistence and mutual enrichment of religious and cultural diversity. Beyond serving as a place of worship, the Church also functioned as a center for community engagement and social services, embodying an inclusive approach to both faith and culture. This integration enabled the Church to navigate significant sociopolitical changes, especially during the post-independence era, thereby establishing it as a prominent religious and community institution in Yogyakarta. Importantly, the process of inculturation was not merely a strategy for indigenizing Catholic liturgy, but also a complex negotiation of identity—between being Catholic and being Javanese—shaped by the broader dynamics of postcolonial nation-building.

Abstrak: Artikel ini mengkaji sejarah dan perkembangan Gereja Katolik Paroki Pugeran, Yogyakarta, dari tahun 1934 hingga 1968, dengan perhatian khusus pada cara Gereja mengintegrasikan unsur-unsur budaya Jawa ke dalam praktik dan arsitekturnya. Dengan membangun identitas Katolik-Jawa yang khas, Gereja menjadi simbol sekaligus agen sintesis budaya di kawasan tersebut. Menggunakan metodologi sejarah, penelitian ini memanfaatkan sumber primer dan sekunder—termasuk majalah, buku peringatan, dan sejarah lisan—untuk menelusuri perkembangan identitas khas ini. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Gereja Katolik Pugeran, yang berdiri sejak 1934, memainkan peran penting dalam memadukan Katolik dengan budaya Jawa, sehingga mencerminkan koeksistensi dan saling memperkaya antara keragaman agama dan budaya. Selain berfungsi sebagai tempat ibadah, Gereja juga menjadi pusat keterlibatan komunitas dan layanan sosial, mewujudkan pendekatan inklusif terhadap iman dan budaya. Integrasi ini memungkinkan Gereja menghadapi perubahan sosial-politik yang signifikan, khususnya pada era pascakemerdekaan, sehingga menempatkannya sebagai institusi religius dan komunitas yang menonjol di Yogyakarta. Penting untuk dicatat, proses inkulturasi ini bukan sekadar strategi mengindonesiakan liturgi Katolik, melainkan negosiasi kompleks identitas—antara menjadi Katolik dan menjadi Jawa—yang dibentuk oleh dinamika lebih luas pembangunan bangsa pascakolonial.

INTRODUCTION

The Pugeran Catholic Church, also known as the Sacred Heart of Jesus Pugeran Church, is one of the earliest Catholic churches established in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. Inaugurated on July 8, 1934, it not only signifies an early milestone in the development of Catholicism in the city but also embodies the cultural inculturation between Catholicism and Javanese culture (Paroki Pugeran, 1994, 2004; Uitgave van de Indische Missievereeniging, 1934, 1935). Inculturation refers to integrating and



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adapting local cultural elements into religious practices and doctrines, enabling religion to be readily accepted and understood by the local community. This concept is frequently employed in the Catholic Church, which strives to accommodate and respect diverse cultural heritage across different countries (Ballano, 2020; Doyle, 2012). Specifically, in the context of the Catholic Church in Indonesia, particularly in Java, inculturation involves adapting various cultural aspects, such as Javanese culture, into liturgy, symbols, and religious practices. This adaptation aimed to make the teachings and practices of Catholicism more relevant and accessible to the Javanese community (Ariwibowo, 2008; Setyoningrum, 2008; Steenbrink, 2007).

The inculturation of Javanese culture into Catholicism was a significant aspect of the Catholic Church's missionary activities in Central Java, introduced primarily by the first Catholic missionaries in the region, Father (Fr). Fransiskus Van Lith S.J. and Fr. Petrus Hoovenars S.J. Their initial mission in Central Java around 1894 marked a crucial point in the spread of Catholicism in the Central Java and Yogyakarta regions (Centrale Raad der Nederlandsch-Indische Katholieke Sociale Bonden, 1934; Steenbrink, 2007). The presence of the Catholic Church in the Yogyakarta Residency dates to 1865, with its activities and events initially confined to the European Catholic community in Yogyakarta, Kedu, and Bagelen Residencies. The first Catholic Church outside the Yogyakarta Palace walls was established in the Kidul Loji area in 1874, following the land acquisition from the Sultanate of Yogyakarta. This land grant was an expression of gratitude from the Sultanate for the assistance provided by the Catholic community during the reconstruction after the 1867 earthquake. The expansion of missionary activities beyond the royal territories of Surakarta was sanctioned by the Dutch East Indies government in 1894, a decision made to prevent conflicts with the Sunanate of Surakarta and Sunan Pakubuwono X (Banawiratma, 1985; Steenbrink, 2003).

Integrating Javanese culture into the Catholic Church has significantly influenced Catholic missionary activities in the Java region. Initially confined to areas outside royal states (*Vorstenlanden*), these missions eventually expanded into the Yogyakarta Residency (Ariwibowo, 2008; Martasudjita, 2022; Steenbrink, 2007). Catholic communities, primarily indigenous (*Bumiputera*), began to grow and flourish, even around Yogyakarta. This growth was marked by the emergence of a community of 100 workers from the Gondanglipuro sugar factory

in 1915 (Centrale Raad der Nederlandsch-Indische Katholieke Sociale Bonden, 1934). The development of the indigenous Catholic community in Yogyakarta over the subsequent two decades led to the establishment of the Pugeran Catholic Church, located within the residential area (*Ndalem*) of the princes of the Yogyakarta Sultanate.

Catholic missions, following a pattern seen in European colonialism, integrated with local communities globally while maintaining their identity and doctrine. They adapted Christian teachings to local cultures, leading to unique religious practices, and, by the late 19th and early 20th centuries, began respecting local customs. This was part of the Church's mission to spread the Gospel worldwide (Baker 2013; Brown 1997; Brown et al. 2014; Escobar 1987). The Church's mission, central to Catholicism and outlined in "Redemptoris Missio," involves spreading Jesus Christ's teachings universally, transcending cultural boundaries. It focuses on salvation, liberation, and truth, fostering global Gospel values and interfaith dialogue (Brown & O'Reilly, 2017; Yohanes Paulus II, 2021).

In Catholicism, "church" and "Church" carry distinct meanings, differentiated by their capitalisation. The word "church" (lowercase) refers to a physical building where worship is conducted. This denotes where Catholics gather for Mass, prayer, and the administration of religious sacraments (Agus Tridiatno, 2023; Qamariyah, 2017). On the other hand, "Church" (uppercase) pertains to the entire Catholic community of believers. This term encompasses all Catholics worldwide and the hierarchical structure and organisation leading them, including the pope, cardinals, bishops, and priests. It also refers to the "Catholic Church" as a religious institution, including its doctrines, traditions, and canon laws (Agus Tridiatno, 2023; Cavendish, 2018; Kaptijn, 2022).

In the Catholic faith, a parish is defined as a territory or area for the pastoral care of Catholics, headed by a pastor or priest. In the Catholic Church, a parish is a permanently established community of the faithful, delineated by specific territorial boundaries within a Diocese (Particular Church) (Kaptijn, 2022; Zech & Gautier, 2004). As "Church" refers to the collective body of Catholic believers, a parish is primarily understood as a gathering of people rather than merely a geographical area. A parish has church ministry responsibilities and values its members' freedom and initiative, encouraging them to engage in spiritual and religious activities and serve their community, irrespective of social, cultural, and religious back-

grounds (Cavendish, 2018; Kaptijn, 2022). A parish is a key organisational unit in the Catholic Church, typically encompassing members from nearby areas who engage in both religious and social activities at their local parish church. The parish priest plays a central role in the spiritual life of the parish, responsible for administering sacraments (like masses, marriage blessings, confessions, and baptisms), providing religious education, and offering various pastoral services. Beyond these spiritual duties, parish priests are often actively involved in community activities and various parish organisations, contributing to the overall well-being and cohesion of their parish community (Cavendish, 2018; Kaptijn, 2022).

Based on this understanding, this study aims to answer research questions regarding the nature and process of Javanese cultural and social inculturation in the Pugeran Parish Catholic Church in Yogyakarta. This study also discusses the social role and contributions of the Catholic community in the Pugeran Parish with the broader Yogyakarta community. This study focuses on the Church and the life of the Catholic community in Pugeran Parish from 1934 to 1968. In 1934, the establishment of the Church and Catholic community in Pugeran Parish, Yogyakarta, initiated a period of significant cultural fellowship and the inculturation of Javanese culture into Catholicism from the colonial era to the early years of independence. 1968 concludes the discussion of this study, a point at which the Sacred Heart of Jesus Pugeran Church in Yogyakarta became an independent church, and its territory eventually expanded into two parishes: Wirobrajan and Padokan (Ariwibowo, 2008; Paroki Pugeran, 1994, 2004).

This study adopts a sociocultural approach to understand the Javanese cultural inculturation at the Pugeran Parish Catholic Church. This study seeks to deepen the research on the Church at a more local level by examining the relationship between the Church and its congregation, focusing on the socio-cultural impact within the Pugeran Parish community in Yogyakarta. The study aims to highlight the role of the Church and the Pugeran Parish community in fostering tolerance and building social and religious communication within the diverse society of Yogyakarta.

Research on the history of the Catholic Church in Indonesia has been conducted by several researchers, including Steenbrink (2003, 2007, 2015), Wietjens (1995), and Ricklefs (2023). The studies reviewed reveal a gap in research regarding the interaction between Javanese sociocultural life and Catholic liturgy, particularly in local church

contexts like Pugeran Parish in Yogyakarta. While Steenbrink provides an extensive macro-level analysis of the institutional development of Catholicism, its adaptation to Dutch colonialism, and its efforts to remain relevant amid independence and modernisation, his focus remains largely on church leadership, state relations, and broad cultural encounters. These works, though invaluable, often do not capture the lived experiences and creative agency of local Catholic communities in shaping hybrid identities through daily practices, local liturgy, and social initiatives.

This study aims to address this gap, drawing on Karel Steenbrink's extensive and detailed research on the development of the Catholic Church in Indonesia (Steenbrink, 2003, 2007, 2015). Building on his analytical framework, this study moves further by exploring how ordinary parishioners—women, youth, artisans, and lay leaders—actively negotiated and embodied Javanese-Catholic identity at the community level. It aims to place the unique development of the Pugeran Church in Java and Indonesia into context, examining its historical evolution during the colonial era and its response to the challenges following Indonesia's independence. By focusing on microhistorical processes such as inculturation in architecture, liturgy (e.g., the integration of Javanese gamelan and language), and community outreach, this article offers a detailed portrait of how Catholicism was localised and transformed in everyday life, thus providing a new perspective that complements and extends existing macro-historical accounts.

Additionally, the work "Church and Society: The History of the Catholic Church's Development in Yogyakarta" by Jan Wietjens S.J (1995) is also referenced in this study. Wietjens's book discusses the development of various churches in Yogyakarta, including their establishment in the Viceroyalty of Yogyakarta. While Wietjens's work provides a general overview of the institutional and organisational development of the churches in Yogyakarta, it does not delve deeply into social interactions among Parish members. In contrast, the present study foregrounds the daily realities of parishioners, highlighting the role of grassroots actors in fostering social cohesion, negotiating religious identity, and contributing to broader community life in Yogyakarta. Nevertheless, this book offers a general picture of the development of the Catholic Church in Yogyakarta, which will assist the author in understanding its broader history and Catholicism in Yogyakarta.

According to Derksen (2016a; 2016b), Steen-

brink (2003, 2007), and Weitjens (1995), historical analysis reveals the intertwined nature of Catholic missions and European colonialism in Java, particularly since the late 19th century (Sri Hartatik & Shintasiwi, 2021). During this period, Catholic missionaries, mainly Jesuits and Dominicans, navigated the challenges of spreading Christianity in a predominantly Muslim region with deep-rooted local traditions. They focused on religious conversion, education, social services, and establishing schools and healthcare facilities.

In examining the development of Catholicism in Java since the late 19th century, particularly among the abangan community or traditionalist Muslim community, M.C. Ricklefs (2023, pp. 19–20) explains that the emergence of the abangan identity was a response to a more orthodox version of Islam (Geertz, 1976, p. 9). This development highlights a cultural shift in Java, where segments like the abangan, known for their nominal Islamic adherence and syncretic openness, distanced themselves from orthodox Islam. As Ricklefs noted, this shift may have created opportunities for Catholic missionaries, as the abangan could be more receptive to other religious influences, including Catholicism. While Ricklefs's analysis provides essential insights into the broader socio-religious landscape, the current study offers an in-depth exploration of how these dynamics unfolded at the parish level, where community members actively shaped the contours of their hybrid Javanese-Catholic faith through localised adaptation and negotiation. This understanding of the internal dynamics of Javanese Islam is crucial for comprehending Catholicism's resonance and acceptance among the abangan, who were increasingly alienated from orthodox Islamic practices.

METHOD

This study employs a historical methodology encompassing the selection of themes, gathering sources, critical source analysis, and culminating in the construction of a historiography (Kuntowijoyo, 2003). This study uses diverse sources from the colonial era to the post-independence period. A book commemorating the 400th anniversary of the Jesuit Mission in the Dutch East Indies (Centrale Raad der Nederlandsch-Indische Katholieke Sociale Bonden, 1934) and Magazines such as *St. Claverbond* and *Kolonial Missie* (Deijl, 1934; Rickevorsel, 1935; Soesanto, 1935; Uitgave van de Indische Missievereeniging, 1934, 1935) served as the primary references for examining various reports on Catholic community activities and different forms

of cultural inculturation, particularly in Central Java and Yogyakarta during the colonial era. Regarding the Pugeran Church, these magazines provide extensive information about the background of its establishment, the Church's consecration, and the daily dynamics of the Parish community during the colonial era. For the independence period, two commemorative books of the Pugeran Parish Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, published in 1994 and 2004, were referenced to explore the social and institutional dynamics of the Church. In addition, interviews were conducted with several members of the Pugeran Parish community (Paroki Pugeran, 1994, 2004).

This study adopts a comprehensive historical approach to analyse the Pugeran Church's evolution and influence by combining an analysis of periodicals, commemorative books, and oral histories. The initial analysis focuses on the Church's role during the colonial era using *St. Claverbond* and *Kolonial Missie* magazines to explore the Catholic Church's adaptation and influence on the local cultures in Central Java and Yogyakarta. The study then contrasts this with the Church's post-independence development by examining two commemorative books highlighting shifts in social roles, governance, and religious practices within a changing socio-political context. Supplementing these documentary sources, interviews with longstanding Pugeran Parish members offer personal insights, capturing the Church's impact on community life and evolution from the late 1940s to the late 1960s. This triangulation approach effectively constructs a detailed narrative of the Church's history and illustrates its physical, institutional, and sociocultural dynamics.

JAVANESE-STYLED CATHOLIC CHURCH (1934-1947)

The early traces of the Catholic Church in Yogyakarta began in 1865 with the arrival of Fr. Jan Baptist Palinckx S.J. Initially, Fr. Palinckx's ministry and church activities were limited to serving the European and Indo-European communities. The Yogyakarta Parish was officially established on October 25, 1865, following the introduction of the provisional church. This church governed a vast area, encompassing the entire residency of Yogyakarta, Kedu, Bagelen, and Banyumas, serving a community of about 1000 parishioners. This was undoubtedly challenging for a single priest like Fr. Palinckx (Weitjens, 1995, p. 3). On June 10, 1867, a significant earthquake struck Yogyakarta and damaged the church. Fr. Palinckx and other Catholics

were dedicated to assisting earthquake victims. In recognition of his services, the Sultan subsequently donated a plot of land near the Kraton for church use. Consequently, in 1871, St. Francis Xavier Church was established in Kidul Loji. The construction of this church, set against the backdrop of the Yogyakarta Kraton, took four years. However, the establishment of the church did not significantly increase the number of Catholic followers. At that time, Catholic adherents were predominantly Dutch colonial officials and military personnel residing around Fort Vredenburg (Weitjens, 1995)

In 1915, Fr. van Driessche, SJ (1875-1934) commenced his mission in Yogyakarta, working in the Javanese community. A catechist, Daoed Djajengsapoetra, assisted him. During Fr. van Driessche's tenure, the propagation of Catholicism in Yogyakarta reached an impressive pinnacle, laying the groundwork for the further development of religion. Fr. van Driessche S.J. and Fr. FX. Stater S.J. actively provided liturgical services throughout the Yogyakarta region. Their efforts were instrumental in empowering the local Catholic community, marking significant success in fostering and strengthening Catholic faith. During this period, under Fr. van Driessche S.J.'s leadership, several new parishes emerged and developed, including Medari (1927), Klepu (1925), Kalasan (1932), Wonosari (1931), Bintaran (1934), and Pugeran (1934) (Steenbrink, 2003, pp. 390-95; Ariwibowo, 2008, p. 54).

Since its inception in 1865, the Kidul Loji Church in Yogyakarta primarily served KNIL soldiers' families stationed at the nearby Fort Vredenburg, leading to its name. Initially, European Catholics showed reluctance to integrate with the indigenous converts, prompting the establishment of a separate facility for the indigenous Catholic community, later known as the Kanisius Library. By 1934, the growing number of indigenous Catholics in the Kidul Loji Church led to forming a new church and parish in the Bintaran area for this congregation, the Church and Parish of St. Joseph, Bintaran. (Paroki Pugeran, 1994; Ariwibowo, 2008, p. 79). Similarly, at St. Antonius Church in Kotabaru, established in 1926, there was a hesitance to integrate indigenous and European Catholics. This church, an extension of the Kidul Loji Church and managed by St. Paul's Seminary, was built alongside the development of a new suburban area catering to both European and indigenous elite. The architecture of Kotabaru Church mirrored a simplified Dutch style, reflecting the ethnic and cultural divisions of the time. These divisions contributed to the

perception of Catholicism as a predominantly Dutch faith, posing challenges to its growth and acceptance in the region. (Ariwibowo, 2008, pp. 78-80)

Early churches in Yogyakarta, like Kidul Loji (1874), St. Anthony in Kotabaru (1926), and St. Joseph in Bintaran (1934), displayed European architectural styles, primarily serving European congregations. This European influence in church architecture and culture led some Yogyakarta Catholics to establish a church for the Javanese community, reflecting local style and culture. Supported by the Jesuit Order and the growth of indigenous Javanese Catholics, this initiative saw the construction of a church near the Kraton complex and residences of influential nobles like Prince Suryodingrat, who founded a rural credit union, Prince Tedjokusumo, active in the arts, and Prince Puger, a political figure. The Pugeran Parish Church is located among the military and royal employee complexes like Mantrijero, Patangpuluh, Gedongkiwo, and Wirobrajan and also stands near the esteemed Krapyak Islamic Boarding School. This location underscores the church's integration into Yogyakarta's diverse cultural and religious tapestry. (Paroki Pugeran, 1994).

The area surrounding Pugeran Church was predominantly inhabited by batik workers from the local Prawirotaman industry and poor farmers whose agricultural lands were diminishing due to industrial and plantation expansions. These parishioners, deeply rooted in their humble Javanese community, endeavoured to preserve and develop their traditions and culture within the framework of their Catholic faith. Despite the socio-economic changes, they successfully maintained their identity as Catholics integrated with Javanese culture. This commitment to their dual identity motivated the construction of a Javanese-style church, reflecting local identity and culture, and was a collaborative effort involving community members ranging from nobles to farmers. The church's design, incorporating Javanese architectural and cultural elements, symbolises the parishioners' expression of their faith and cultural heritage, embodying their unique synthesis as both Catholic and Javanese (Paroki Pugeran, 1994).

On November 5, 1933, a significant event marked the growth of Catholicism in Yogyakarta with the laying of the foundation stone for a new church. This project was funded by donations from the *Dames Congregatie Z.Z Ursulin* of Maastricht, Netherlands, an organisation known for its missionary services in Yogyakarta, supported financial-

ly by the Catholic community in the Netherlands. The land, registered under Fr. Djajaseputra S.J.'s name, was strategically located behind the Kraton in the Pugeran District. The foundation stone ceremony, led by Fr. Rietra S.J. and assisted by Fr. de Kuyper S.J. and Fr. A. Soegijapranata S.J., attracted Catholics from across Yogyakarta. Fr. Rietra highlighted the church's unique feature of being built in the Javanese style, a rarity that garnered significant attention and attracted many visitors, including those from outside Yogyakarta. The church's design, combining concrete foundations with Javanese architectural elements, was a novel concept in the community, symbolising a significant cultural and religious integration (Deijl, 1934).

After several months of anticipation, the eagerly awaited Catholic Church in the Pugeran and Yogyakarta was completed. The church was rated on July 8, 1934, with a mass concelebrated by Fr. van Kalken S.J. and Fr. A. Soekitman Prawiratama S.J. The choir, led by Javanese and named J. Prawira Soemarta, was composed of Javanese individuals who performed Latin hymns, including "Aan U, o Konig der Seuwen" (O Lord, King of the Ages), with grace and reverence. The consecration ceremony proceeded smoothly and in a festive manner, attended by hundreds of parishioners. The Pugeran Church was dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus (Tyas Dalem) to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the Jesuit mission and 400 years of the Catholic mission in the Dutch East Indies. An estimated 15,000 Catholics attended the Jubilee Mass and church consecration, including approximately 1,200 to 1,400 children. Fr. Van Kalken noted that the large turnout of Catholics made Pugeran Church a blessed place and a pilgrimage site for Catholics in Yogyakarta and Java ("*Poegeran*" van Djocjakarta tot Dank en Votief Kerk). The church also symbolised the manifold blessings bestowed by God upon the Jesuit Mission and its workers over 75 years of age (Deijl, 1934; Rickevorsel, 1935, p. 100).

In gratitude, a statue of the Sacred Heart of Jesus was placed in front of the church, depicting Jesus extending his hands in blessing to all who came. Engraved beneath the statue were beautiful words: *Iya Ingsun Karahayonira*, meaning "I am Your Salvation." The same sentiment, *Salus Vestra Ego Sum*, meaning "I am Your Salvation," was inscribed above the altar. The Sacred Heart of Jesus Church in Pugeran symbolised the success of the Catholic mission in Java. The inculturation initiated by Fr. Van Lith in the late 19th century bore fruit and transformed Catholicism in Java into Javanese



Figure 1. The first Mass at Pugeran Catholic Church, Yogyakarta. Source: Soesanto, 1935, p. 51.

Catholicism. Therefore, to celebrate this achievement, Pugeran Church was named after the Sacred Heart of Jesus, also signifying that "Java is dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus" or *Java voor het Heilig Hart van Jezus* (Soesanto, 1935, p. 48).

The Pugeran Church in Yogyakarta is a unique Catholic church whose architectural philosophy was meticulously designed by architect Th. van Oyen. Every detail was designed considering Javanese cultural elements, from the building's shape to site planning. This church symbolises the synthesis of Western and Eastern cultures, merging Christian traditions with Javanese culture. In Catholic culture, a church has two symbols: as a pulpit for listening to and reflecting on the words of Jesus Christ and as an altar for commemorating the Last Supper before the crucifixion. Before the Second Vatican Council in 1963, priests usually stood with their backs to the congregation, but after the Council, they stood facing the congregation, a change interpreted as supporting active participation by the laity (Ariwibowo, 2008, p. 84; Paroki Pugeran, 2004).

Entering the Pugeran Church, visitors are greeted by an attractive complex with classic Javanese architectural characteristics. The statue of Jesus at the main entrance seems to welcome each visitor. The church walls separate the complex from the outside world, and *sawo kecil* (*Manilkara kauki*) trees add a relaxed and serene atmosphere. *Manunggaling Kawula Gusti*, the union of humanity and God, has become increasingly evident inside the main church building. Upon entering the church, parishioners feel transported to a divine realm. The church walls cut off the outside world, and the high ceilings create a sense of smallness in parishioners, complemented by the dominance and architecture of the altar (Ariwibowo, 2008, pp. 89–91; Uitgave van de Indische Missievereeniging,

1935, pp. 80–81).

The Pugeran Parish Church has unique architecture. It adopts the “Indies Style,” an architectural approach that blends Dutch and Javanese elements. From the use of the joglo roof, combined with the art deco architectural style, to the ornaments within the church, all elements reflect the integration of Javanese cultural symbolism with European culture. Visual expressions such as roof shapes, layouts, structural systems, and ornaments emphasise this adaptation process. In Javanese building architecture, there are four main types of roofs: *tajug*, *kampung*, *limasan*, and *joglo*, each representing social status in Javanese society. The Pugeran Parish Church chose the *joglo* roof, symbolising that Catholics were part of a large family and an integral part of the global church. This combination of architectural elements not only creates a unique aesthetic for the church but also serves as a symbolic manifestation of the Catholic community’s identity and beliefs of the Catholic community (Ariwibowo, 2008; Idham, 2018, pp. 318, 323–325).

The 1935 records from *St. Claverbond* highlight architect Van Oyen’s thoughtful design of the Pugeran Church, emphasising harmony with its surrounding Yogyakarta environment, notably the ndalem houses of local princes. These traditional Javanese residences influenced the church’s architectural style. Van Oyen’s design choices, like the ndalem-style church gate and moderately high boundary walls, were intentional to make the church’s activities visible to the public, symbolising its openness and inclusivity. This architectural strategy aimed to dispel perceptions of the Church as an exclusive entity tied to colonial religion and culture, showcasing its commitment to blending with and embracing the local community and culture. (Deijl, 1934).

The Pugeran Church’s architecture is a distinct fusion of Dutch and Javanese styles, evident in its main structural features. It combines a load-bearing wall system with four primary columns, known as *Soko Guru*, which serve both a supportive and symbolic role, representing the four Gospel authors: Luke, Mark, Matthew, and John. The design also incorporates elements of traditional *Kejawen* philosophy, such as the interpretation of the Javanese’ *senthong*’ (main room) in the church’s tabernacle that houses the Holy Sacrament. Additionally, the church includes the *Pendhita* Well, a feature typical in Javanese homes used for purification rituals. Surrounding the church are *Sawo kecil* trees, valued in Javanese culture for their protective symbolism, enhancing the church’s environmental

harmony. Overall, the church’s architectural design and decoration embody the Catholic concept of being “Salt and Light of the World,” serving as a spiritual symbol and reflecting a blend of religious and cultural values.

In its early days, Pugeran Church attracted a diverse Javanese congregation from various social classes, including royalty, government employees, labourers, and farmers. The practice of reserving seats for Sunday Mass created a unique blend of social strata, fostering a unified community spirit and transcending social divisions. This egalitarian approach within the church exemplified the breaking down of socio-economic barriers, reflecting the Church’s role as a unifying and inclusive institution within the community. The Pugeran congregation was actively involved in communal activities, including retreats, recollections, and visits to Marian shrines like Sendangsono, which fostered community spirit and deepened spirituality. These activities strengthened faith and unity and emphasised the congregation’s commitment to social responsibility. Engaging in these initiatives, the church extended support to the broader community, reinforcing its role as a positive force and building bridges of respect and cooperation within the diverse Pugeran district.

During the colonial era, the Pugeran Parish Church operated a polyclinic, serving its congregation and the local community. This facility was part of a network connected to St. Elisabeth Hospital in Ganjuran, managed by the Sisters of St. Carolus Borromeus and under the Apostolic Vicariate of Batavia. Originating as a clinic in 1920 to support a sugar factory’s operations, it expanded due to growing patient needs. It was officially established as St. Elisabeth Hospital in 1930. It was named after St. Elisabeth, known for aiding the underprivileged (Sint Carolus Klokje, 1937; Tromp, 1938, p. 75).

At the Pugeran Parish Polyclinic, significant healthcare efforts were dedicated to combating malaria and yaws, with sisters and doctors providing essential services like injections to communities around Pugeran, Ganjuran, and the Pasar Kliwon area in Bantul every 35 days. Despite challenges like difficult road access, these medical professionals, including indigenous doctor Dr. Poedjoesowarna, were committed to this mission. The clinic operated on a sliding scale, where patients who could afford the treatment paid, while those who could not received free or reduced-cost services. Addressing malaria and yaws, prevalent health issues in rural Yogyakarta, was critical to their healthcare strategy. (Sint Carolus Klokje, 1937).

The growth of Catholicism in Yogyakarta faced significant challenges during the Japanese occupation, a period marked by the Japanese control over many churches, seminaries, and schools. This era disrupted regular Catholic worship practices due to the internment of numerous European priests. A pivotal moment in this period was the appointment of Fr. Albertus Soegijapranata S.J. as the first indigenous bishop of the Apostolic Vicariate of Semarang in 1942, signalling a new phase in the development of the local Catholic Church in Java. During the Japanese occupation, Pugeran Parish underwent leadership changes and faced challenges. Fr. Reksaatmadja SJ took over from Fr. Djajaseputra S.J., starting his service on June 12, 1942, with assistance from Fr. D.C. Warmers S.J. However, both were captured by the Japanese on July 10, 1942. Fr. Reksa was soon released, but Fr. Warmers S.J. remained detained until 1944, his release facilitated by the Vatican. The occupation disrupted regular worship; Mass was held sporadically, depending on priest availability, leading to the suspension of daily morning masses and the absence of Easter and Christmas services. During this period, a Japanese priest, Fr. Imatushi, conducted the Mass (Paroki Pugeran, 1994).

EMBRACING INDEPENDENCE AND EMPOWERMENT IN YOGYAKARTA'S CATHOLIC COMMUNITY (1948-1968)

On Sunday, December 19, 1948, following the Dutch attack on Maguwo Airport and the arrest of the leaders of the Republic at the State Building, Dutch forces quickly took control of Yogyakarta City. They encircled the Yogyakarta Sultanate Palace (*Kraton*) to control the Sultan and isolate him from external influences. As this unfolded, many residents flocked to the southern part of the city to avoid conflicts. Over time, the number of refugees seeking shelter increased, and the courtyard of the Church became overcrowded (Pugeran, 2004).

Initially, Pugeran Church mainly sheltered Catholic refugees, but as the situation worsened, many others from nearby areas sought refuge there, believing it to be safe from Dutch attacks. The church, known for its ample food and provisions, became a haven for those seeking safety and spiritual solace, serving as a sanctuary for all in its vicinity. The area, especially after the Dutch takeover of Pojok Beteng Barat District, became increasingly tense. Fr. Sandiwan played a crucial role in caring for the refugees, providing medical aid, arranging burials, securing logistics, and negotiating with Dutch authorities for safety. Despite being a target

of suspicion and threats from the Dutch, who believed it sheltered Republican fighters, the church remained a protected zone due to Fr. Sandiwan's efforts, ensuring the safety and well-being of its refugees (Paroki Pugeran 2004).

During Indonesia's revolutionary period, the youth of Pugeran Parish, including prominent members like Mr. FX. Haryono and Mrs. C. Sri Subaryati, actively contributed to the struggle for independence. Mr. Haryono was one of the student soldiers (*Tentara Pelajar*) in Magelang. At the same time, Mrs. Subaryati collaborated with the Red Cross and engaged in guerrilla activities, notably during the NICA II police action. Their primary motivation was the defence of the Republic, emphasising that, during this critical period, religious distinctions were set aside in favour of a united goal of protecting Indonesia's independence (Ariwibowo, 2008).

Catholics played a significant role in opposing Dutch occupation, demonstrating notable loyalty and dedication to the Indonesian nation. Their resistance to the colonisers' temptations contradicts any notion of them being Dutch collaborators or the Church being pro-Dutch. This involvement underscores a shared nationalistic spirit transcending religious boundaries, highlighting the Catholic community's deep commitment to Indonesia's independence movement. Their active participation and sacrifices offer a broader view of the diverse community contributions to the struggle for independence, challenging stereotypes and emphasising national unity and allegiance above religious or colonial ties (Ariwibowo, 2008).

During the revolutionary period, the situation in Yogyakarta's churches, including Bintaran, Kotabaru, Jetis, and Boro, was fraught with tension as they served as shelters for refugees amidst threats from Dutch forces and local militias. Following the withdrawal of Dutch troops, many refugees returned home, although some stayed due to their homes being destroyed. The Pugeran Church, known for offering protection and salvation during these tumultuous times, left a lasting impression on those it sheltered. Recognising its significant role during the revolution, the Regional Head of the Special Region of Yogyakarta honoured Pugeran Parish with a plaque of appreciation on July 29, 1954 (Paroki Pugeran, 2004).

For Catholics, independence was an opportunity further to demonstrate their existence and loyalty to the Indonesian state. During this period, it was common for Catholicism to be still regarded as the religion of colonisers, leading to a dichotomy

in which Catholics were perceived as Dutch collaborators. This dichotomy was addressed by encouraging Catholics to recognise themselves as part of the Indonesian nation and actively participate in the spirit of independence. As stated by Mgr. A. Soegijapranata SJ:

“Catholics should be grateful to the unilaterally proclaimed Republic of Indonesia and should not reject the Republic but rather offer their support and assistance. We promise to collaborate with all layers of society to demonstrate steadfast independence and the will for equality.” (Gonggong, 1993, p. 95).

Mgr. A. Soegijapranata S.J. expressed the hope that Indonesian Catholics would actively participate in shaping the nation’s independence. He advocated for them to embody a dual identity — being “100% Catholic and 100% Indonesian.” This concept was crucial, encouraging Indonesian Catholics to fully commit to their faith while dedicating themselves to the Indonesian nation. It promoted their positive contribution to national development and active involvement in social and political affairs, thereby emphasising their vital role in the tapestry of Indonesian society. (Ariwibowo, 2008; Soegijapranata, 1952, pp. 6–9).

Following the War of Independence and guided by Archbishop Mgr. A. Soegijapranata S.J., Pugeran Parish embarked on a recovery and organisational enhancement process. This included forming a parish council, restructuring internal roles, and developing service organisations within the church. The parish prioritised recruiting and training lectors, altar servers, sacristans, and sextons, focusing on church development and enhancing its community role. These efforts, while complex, significantly boosted congregational participation in church activities, transforming the church into a centre for socialisation, personal development, and community service. Recognising its role beyond religious activities, Pugeran Church encouraged its congregation to actively engage in the development of the local area, aiming to contribute positively to the community and strengthen its regional presence. (Ariwibowo, 2008, pp. 97–98).

Pugeran Parish’s services are centred on four main areas: liturgy, preaching, community, and service. The church actively celebrates the Catholic faith and encourages congregation involvement in Eucharist ceremonies. In preaching, the church applies Catholic teachings to daily life, while in service, it provides tangible assistance to the congregation and the wider community. The community pillar, *koinonia*, supports church growth through

various organisations. The goal is to build a welcoming, inclusive church that is a hub for worship, community life, and service, strengthening ties between the church and the community while reflecting the Catholic faith’s inclusive nature (Ariwibowo, 2008, pp. 98–100).

Established in 1936, the Indonesian Catholic Women’s Association at Pugeran Parish began as a prayer group for mothers. In 1938, it expanded with *Mudha Wanita Katolik* (Youth Catholic Women) Pugeran, focusing on involving young women in church activities and community relations. This organisation aims to empower women, enhance their lives based on the Gospel and church teachings, and promote equality and justice. The Catholic Women of Pugeran are active in various church functions, including liturgy, preaching, *diakonia* (social services), *koinonia* (community life), engaging in choirs, religious education, community leadership, and parish management. They also participate in broader church activities, including neighbourhood events, retreats, and Catholic women’s congresses at local and diocesan levels, demonstrating their commitment to the church and the wider community (Paroki Pugeran, 1994, 2004).

In their interaction with the surrounding community, the Catholic Women of Pugeran also played an active role and were willing to participate in their societal roles. Their community activities included providing health services with free treatment, organising affordable markets, and social visits (*Anjang Kasih*) to orphanages or nursing homes. They collaborated with the Sisters of Carolus Boromeus to provide health services. These Catholic Women also actively participated in *rewang* (community mutual help activities) for events in their surrounding communities. The *rewang* activities organised by the Catholic Women of Pugeran served not only as a means of communication with the community but also stemmed from their understanding that they live within and should actively engage in the community, avoiding exclusivity. This approach reflects the belief that Catholics should be able to integrate into society, recognising that they are an integral part of the community (Paroki Pugeran, 1994, 2004).

In the 1950s, Pugeran Parish established a Catholic youth organisation called *Mudika* (*Mudamudi Katolik* or Catholic Youth), initially nurtured by Fr. Poesposoegondo SJ. *Mudika* played a vital role in spiritual activities and community service, fostering harmony between the church and society. They participated in Eucharistic celebrations, organised significant church events, and were in-

volved in the youth-focused *Legio Maria* (Legion of Mary), which emphasised spiritual growth and religious education. Activities in *Legio Maria* aimed at developing an active and spiritually mature youth included choir practices, meetings, devotions, and retreats. Mudika also engaged in community-building activities, fostering unity among members and strengthening their religious commitment. This involvement reflects the church's focus on nurturing a dynamic and engaged youth community, contributing to the spiritual and social aspects of church life (Paroki Pugeran, 1994, 2004).

The Mudika actively participated in community services, social work, and local events. They frequently interacted with other Mudika groups and held inter-parish meetings, fostering harmonious relationships within the church community and broader society. This legacy of unity and tolerance continues to influence the current church environment. During Fr. Hardjowardojo Pr's tenure, a Mudika community for married individuals was established, evolving into the Young Catholic Workers Community. This initiative aimed to sustain communication and relationships among ex-Mudika members, serving as a bridge between different generations and strengthening intergenerational bonds within the church community (Paroki Pugeran, 1994, 2004).

Since 1956, Pugeran Parish Church has uniquely incorporated *gendhing*, a traditional Javanese music genre, into its Eucharistic ceremonies, following Mgr. A. Soegijapranata SJ's advocacy for gamelan use in church services post-Indonesia's independence. This integration, initiated in 1955 and realised with a successful demonstration by Atmo Darsono and C. Hardja Soebroto, led to the regular inclusion of *gendhing* in church services. This distinctive blend of *gamelan* and *gendhing* in ecclesiastical music not only characterises Pugeran Parish but also extends to joint Christmas celebrations with other Catholics of Yogyakarta and the Yogyakarta Special Region Province, held annually since 1956 in the 'Bangsal Pakuningratan' at the Governor's Office. This cultural fusion in worship has significantly enhanced the spiritual experience of parishioners, positioning Pugeran Parish as a notable example of cultural and religious integration (Idham, 2018; Paroki Pugeran, 1994, 2004; Pri-er, 1989).

During the 1960s, Pugeran Parish experienced significant growth and development, with its various organisations and institutions established in the 1950s playing a pivotal role. This period saw Pugeran Parish gain considerable acceptance and

respect within the surrounding community, primarily due to its parishioners' unity and the broader Church's positive influence in Indonesia. A notable event of this era was the live broadcast of a Javanese language Mass by Radio of the Republic of Indonesia (Radio Republik Indonesia, RRI), facilitated by parishioner Thomas Soegito, the Head of Broadcasting at RRI II Yogyakarta. The parish priest, Fr. Djajiswaja Pr., alongside Fr. Hardjowardojo Pr's, spearheaded the preparation for this broadcast, involving *gendhing* specialists, *gamelan* players, and composers to ensure an authentic and engaging service. The parish community actively participated in these preparations, demonstrating enthusiasm and dedication to showcasing their unique cultural expression of Catholic worship. This event marked an important milestone in the parish's history, highlighting its commitment to preserving and celebrating its cultural identity. (Ariwibowo, 2008, pp. 116–17).

In July 1963, responding to the Second Vatican Council's outcomes, the Pugeran Parish Council convened a plenary meeting leading to significant changes. A critical development was the establishment of a social communication section within the Council's management, tasked with various initiatives, including publishing a parish magazine, "Merpati," creating theatre, drama, and vocal groups, setting up a daily operational information centre in the church, and enhancing the parish library. Additionally, the parish underwent notable liturgical changes, particularly in the Celebration of the Eucharist. These changes included a new format where the priest faced the congregation, introducing a subdeacon role for distributing the host (the consecrated bread representing the Body of Christ in the Catholic tradition) and updating church facilities like seating and lighting, reflecting the parish's commitment to align with the broader changes within the Catholic Church (Ariwibowo, 2008, pp. 118–20).

During the period from 1962 to 1968, the people of Pugeran Parish faced challenging times due to the spread of communist intervention and poverty. Fr. Djajiswaja Pr. took the initiative to alleviate their suffering by distributing *bulgur* to the community around Pugeran Church daily until 1966. After the September 30 Movement outbreak, many members of the Pugeran Parish participated in actions against the communist movement and the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI). The youth were active in the Catholic Student Association of the Republic of Indonesia (*Perhimpunan Mahasiswa Katolik Republik Indonesia*) in Yogyakarta,

while the priests of the Pugeran Parish provided mental and spiritual strength to political prisoners and their families, following the directives of Mgr. J. Darmajuwono S.J. This support led to a significant increase in the Catholic population in the Pugeran Parish area, particularly in the communist stronghold of Padokan (Ariwibowo, 2008, pp. 118–20).

In 1966, after a series of events of the September 30 Movement, Fr. Djajasaputra Pr initiated a procession of the Blessed Sacrament around the city, involving all the Catholics of the Yogyakarta Vicariate. This procession was planned to last 12 hours, with the Blessed Sacrament visiting each parish for two hours. The route began in Baciro Parish, moved to Bintaran, then to Pugeran, continued to Kumetiran and Kotabaru, and concluded in Jetis. However, this was envisioned as a one-time event. Repeating this activity was feared to cause problems, such as giving the impression of a Catholic “show of force,” despite its religious significance (Paroki Pugeran 2004).

During the 1960s, Pugeran Parish responded to its growing congregation by expanding its territory, establishing Padokan Station and Wirobrajan Station in 1967. This expansion was necessary to manage the increasing number of parishioners and the resultant challenges in church capacity, administrative needs, and service provision. The creation of these new stations signified the evolution of the Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish in Pugeran into a self-sufficient and independent church capable of supporting the development of new churches in its vicinity.

INCULTURATION, HYBRIDITY, AND DECOLONISATION IN THE PUGERAN PARISH OF YOGYAKARTA

The concept of inculturation received formal theological recognition in the Catholic Church during the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965), which stressed the need to adapt the faith’s expression to diverse cultures (Second Vatican Council, 1965a, 1965b). While this recognition was articulated in the 1960s, inculturation practices had already been developing earlier in various regions, including Java, Indonesia. Missionaries such as Fr. Frans van Lith, S.J., began incorporating Javanese language, arts, and customs into Catholic liturgy, laying the foundation for a distinct Javanese Catholic identity (Ariwibowo, 2008; Steenbrink, 2007, 2015). Today, theologians view inculturation as a dynamic and reciprocal process—one in which Christian faith and local culture continually shape and transform each other, moving beyond simple adaptation or

syncretism (Dulles, 1991; Schreiter, 1985).

The term “inculturation,” from the Latin *inculturatio* (“to become rooted in a culture”), describes how the Catholic faith is expressed and lived within local cultural frameworks. Unlike “acculturation,” which often involves a one-sided adoption of cultural traits, inculturation emphasises a reciprocal, creative interaction in which both the Gospel and the host culture are transformed (Doyle, 2012; Schreiter, 1985). This concept has become central to Catholicism, especially after Vatican II, reflecting the Church’s openness to integrating local customs, art, and language—so long as these align with core doctrine. While other world religions, such as Islam, have also historically adapted to local contexts, the formal theological articulation of inculturation remains most prominent in Catholic thought, where it is regarded as both a pastoral strategy and a theological imperative aimed at making faith authentically “at home” in diverse societies.

The aim of making faith “at home” is especially significant in regions with a history of religious plurality and cultural exchange, such as Java. Clifford Geertz’s *The Religion of Java* (1976) offers a valuable framework for understanding this context, highlighting the fluidity of religious boundaries and the syncretic nature of Javanese society—particularly among the abangan group, which is open to new religious forms. Geertz argues that Javanese religious life is defined more by ongoing negotiation between local tradition and external influence than by rigid doctrine. Within this environment, Catholic inculturation in Java—such as the adoption of Javanese language and symbols in liturgy—emerged as a natural continuation of local patterns of accommodation and adaptation, enabling Catholicism to become culturally resonant and meaningful within Javanese society.

While Geertz’s analysis emphasises the social openness that enabled inculturation in Java, Homi Bhabha’s concept of cultural hybridity offers further insight into its creative results. Bhabha (1994) posits that interactions between distinct cultural traditions produce a “third space,” where new hybrid identities and meanings can emerge. In Pugeran’s Catholic community, this hybridity is visible in the blending of Javanese and Catholic elements across liturgy, architecture, and social life. The resulting identity is a dynamic synthesis—neither wholly Javanese nor purely Catholic—reflecting a continuous negotiation between both traditions. Viewed through Bhabha’s framework, inculturation in Pugeran represents a creative reconfiguration that

produces novel religious and cultural expressions beyond mere adaptation or imitation.

In the context of the Pugeran Parish, this hybrid identity is vividly manifested in the church's everyday life, religious practices, and Church architecture. The blending of Javanese musical instruments and melodies within Catholic liturgy, the incorporation of local architectural motifs in church design, and the adaptation of communal social structures all exemplify the creation of a "third space" where Javanese and Catholic elements are continuously reinterpreted and integrated. This ongoing process enables the Catholic faith to resonate authentically with local culture, demonstrating that inculturation in Pugeran is not merely a passive accommodation but an active and creative negotiation that produces new forms of religious expression and communal identity.

The process of Catholic inculturation has taken diverse forms across different cultures, shaped by unique local histories and sociocultural dynamics. In China, early inculturation efforts were pioneered by figures such as Zheng Manuo (Manuel de Sequeira), one of the first Chinese Jesuit priests, who strategically adapted Christian teachings to Chinese philosophical and cultural traditions, translating doctrine into the local language and context. However, these efforts often faced resistance from both the Roman Catholic Church and local communities, as demonstrated by the "Chinese Rites Controversy" and the recurring reluctance of church authorities to ordain indigenous clergy (Chirkov, 2023; Meynard, 2024a, 2024b). Parallel initiatives, such as the Belgian Catholic project for Chinese students in the early twentieth century, focused on fostering intercultural understanding in Europe to prepare local agents for evangelisation in China (Pan, 2024). These efforts highlighted that inculturation is not simply about adopting local customs but about fostering genuine dialogue and the formation of a faith community that is both authentically local and universally Catholic.

A different trajectory is observed in Vietnam, where Catholicism encountered a deeply rooted Confucian social order. Here, inculturation has manifested through the creative synthesis of Confucian and Catholic virtue ethics, particularly visible in how Vietnamese women reinterpreted traditional womanly virtues (tâm dức) through Marian Catholic models to promote justice and community solidarity. Unlike the more hierarchical and conflicted history of inculturation in China, the Vietnamese case demonstrates a convergence between Catholic and Confucian ethical frameworks, allowing the

Catholic faith to become relevant to local values of family, duty, and moral conduct (Nguyen, 2024). In contrast, the inculturation of Catholicism in the Philippines has been strongly shaped by a close collaboration between missionaries and anthropologists, resulting in a more empirical, participatory approach that respects local traditions while critically discerning elements compatible with Catholic doctrine (Ballano, 2020). Compared to these cases, the Pugeran Parish in Java presents a hybrid model: inculturation here is characterised by an ongoing, dynamic negotiation between Javanese cultural forms—such as music, social organisation, and ritual—and Catholic liturgical practices. This results in a hybrid identity that is neither simply Javanese nor merely Catholic, but a creative synthesis formed through the continual interaction and mutual transformation of both traditions.

In the case of the Pugeran Parish, the process of inculturation is most visible in the creative adaptation of local language, music, and ritual into Catholic worship. For instance, Javanese is used as the primary language in liturgical celebrations, and traditional gamelan ensembles frequently accompany church services and festivals, blending Catholic hymns with local melodies. The incorporation of *wayang* (shadow puppetry) as a medium for conveying Biblical stories and religious values further exemplifies the dynamic negotiation between Catholic and Javanese traditions. These adaptations not only make the liturgy more accessible and meaningful to the local community but also actively contribute to the preservation and revitalisation of Javanese cultural expressions within a modern religious framework. As shown in comparative studies from Eastern Indonesia, such as the Catholic Church in Flores, inculturation is similarly marked by the translation of prayers, songs, and scripture into local languages (e.g., *Manggarai*), and the integration of indigenous rituals like the "misa kaba" (buffalo mass) into Catholic celebrations. However, the process in Pugeran is distinct in its continuous dialogue with the sophisticated Javanese court culture and its emphasis on syncretism and aesthetic refinement (Widyawati et al., 2025). This highlights that, while inculturation follows broad principles—valuing local languages and traditions, fostering cultural preservation, and nurturing a sense of belonging—its practical forms are constantly negotiated and reshaped according to each community's unique historical and cultural landscape.

This highlights that, while inculturation follows broad principles—valuing local languages and traditions, fostering cultural preservation, and nur-

turing a sense of belonging—its practical forms are constantly negotiated and reshaped according to each community's unique historical and cultural landscape. In this sense, the case of Pugeran not only exemplifies the broader Indonesian pattern of inculturation—which is characterised by active engagement with local aesthetics, rituals, and community life—but also demonstrates how inculturation in Indonesia is distinguished by its creative syncretism, capacity for cultural dialogue, and ongoing adaptation to evolving local contexts. These characteristics make the Indonesian experience of Catholic inculturation a unique and dynamic model within the global Church, illustrating the diverse ways in which universal faith traditions can become meaningfully embedded in vibrant local cultures.

The movement toward inculturation in post-independence Indonesia is inextricably linked to the broader project of decolonisation that swept across Asia and Africa after 1945. Decolonisation, as conceptualised by scholars such as Lamin Sanneh (1989), involves political independence and the reclamation and reimagining of cultural, religious, and intellectual life from the dominance of colonial powers (Sakupapa, 2023). Similarly, Philip Jenkins highlights that this postcolonial era witnessed the Catholic Church increasingly recognising the demographic and spiritual vitality of the Global South—particularly Asia, Africa, and Latin America—as new centres of gravity for global Christianity, necessitating new forms of engagement and expression rooted in local contexts (Jenkins, 2002). In the colonial era, the Catholic Church in Indonesia was closely associated with foreign—particularly Dutch—models of leadership, liturgy, and institutional culture, often rendering it distant and alien to the lived realities of local communities (Steenbrink, 2007). After independence, however, there emerged a growing imperative to decolonise church life—not just by appointing indigenous clergy and using local languages, but by reconfiguring rituals, symbols, and social practices to affirm local identity and agency. In parishes such as Pugeran, this imperative was found in the creative integration of Javanese music, language, architecture, and communal traditions into Catholic worship. This was not merely a pragmatic adaptation, but a deliberate act of cultural emancipation: a process of reclaiming the faith from its colonial past and re-rooting it in an independent, plural, and authentically Indonesian context (Ariwibowo, 2008).

This wave of inculturation in Indonesia also mirrored broader global trends in Catholicism, especially the Church's shifting gaze toward the Glob-

al South in the mid-twentieth century. As observed by Philip Jenkins (2002) and Victor Ballano (2020), the postcolonial era saw the Catholic Church increasingly recognise the demographic, theological, and cultural vitality of Asia, Africa, and Latin America, which came to form the new centre of gravity for global Christianity. This transformation set the intellectual and pastoral foundation for the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965), where the Church formally embraced inculturation as both a theological and practical imperative. Within this historical context, Bishop Soegijapranata—Indonesia's first native Catholic bishop—articulated the powerful motto “100% Catholic, 100% Indonesian,” expressing the ideal of a faith that is both fully rooted in Catholic universality and entirely committed to national identity and cultural emancipation. This principle became a hallmark of the Church's postcolonial journey, signalling a decisive move to shed the legacy of colonial Catholicism and establish a truly Indonesian Church (Gonggong, 1993; Soegijapranata, 1952).

The experience of the Pugeran Parish provides a vivid example of this dual commitment. During the Indonesian War of Independence, the church and its community played a key role in supporting the local struggle—offering sanctuary, logistical aid, and moral support to the nationalist cause. In the turbulent years following the 1965 coup (G30S), Pugeran became a space of reconciliation and social solidarity, facilitating dialogue and healing in the aftermath of violence and upheaval. Through these actions, the parish not only embodied Soegijapranata's vision but also demonstrated how inculturation, decolonisation, and local agency could converge to produce a Catholicism that was genuinely relevant, resilient, and engaged with the life of the Indonesian nation (Ariwibowo, 2008; Sukanto et al., 2019).

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the historical journey of the Pugeran Parish Catholic Church in Yogyakarta, emphasising its successful integration of Javanese culture with Catholicism and its substantial social impact. By incorporating Javanese elements into its architecture, liturgy, and community customs, the church has fostered a profound and respectful process of inculturation, embedding Catholicism within local traditions. Such integration transcends superficial adaptation, instead facilitating a dynamic interplay between religious faith and local cultural practices. Furthermore, the Catholic community of Pugeran Parish has made significant contributions

to the broader society of Yogyakarta through a range of communal activities, healthcare services, and social justice initiatives. These efforts have extended the church's influence beyond spiritual guidance, establishing it as a pillar of social service and community development. This commitment to embodying Christian values in daily life has made the church an integral part of the local community. The experience of Pugeran Parish thus provides a valuable model for religious communities seeking to harmoniously blend faith and cultural identity, serving as effective agents of social change and community cohesion. Taken together, the example of Pugeran Parish demonstrates how empowered religious minority communities can play a vital role in fostering cultural resilience and advancing post-colonial transformation.

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