

Reflection paper of academic and cultural programme – Yogyakarta: June 19-25th., 2023

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Introduction

With the courtesy of the Dutch Embassy in Jakarta, I recently travelled to Indonesia. The purpose of my journey was to participate in two conferences in Yogyakarta. First, the *International Conference on Scripture for Peace and Humanity: Scriptural Reasoning, Contextualist Approach, and Social Reception*, June 20-21, 2023, organized by UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta. Second, the *8th Interfaith Dialogue Conference “Decolonizing Religion”* organized by NICMCR and held at Universitas Kristen Duta Wacana (UKDW) on June 22nd, 2023. Apart from the academic programme, there was also the cultural exposure on 23rd June as an integral part of the journey. In this contribution I will reflect on some elements that contributed to the successful programme during the entire journey.

Organisation

Prior to the journey, the UKDW and the Indonesian Consortium for Religious Studies (ICRS) had recruited two students to assist the Dutch delegate in all matters concerning residence, transportation, programming and exposure. This intervention certainly contributed to an easy flow of events. The location of residence at the Syantikara Youth Centre was excellent. Within easy reach of both UKDW and UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta. The accommodation had all facilities that ensured a peaceful and quiet atmosphere for study, rest and reflection. The kitchen staff was brilliant in preparing healthy and delicious meals. Transportation to and from UIN as well as other destinations was well organized. Additionally, other options for transportation via digital application (e.g., Go-Jek app) enhanced the individual freedom to move around and explore other sites. Having said all that, I must acknowledge one aspect which I personally felt would be a valuable contribution to the organisation. That is that we never got the opportunity to meet with the persons who prepared the meals at Syantikara Youth Centre. I would have appreciated the opportunity to personally express my gratitude. I think these persons deserve credit for their efforts.

Academia

The opening ceremony at UIN was a welcoming introduction to Javanese culture, by way of traditional dance. This occasioned a proper atmosphere for the conference. The presenters were well prepared, which they demonstrated by their comprehensive presentations. The manual book provided a handy resource for an overall view, and was helpful in selecting from the parallel sessions.

To similar extent, the 8th Interfaith Dialogue Conference showcased many scholarly activities and creative grassroot initiatives that I valued as being enriching. However, what I hoped for was to witness a concrete example by way of illustrating the practice of interfaith dialogue in an academic setting. Since this was lacking, the conference on Interfaith Dialogue remained a theoretical enterprise, whereas any form of dialogue is primarily on the practical level. Hence, I valued the visit to Salatiga, where in the kampong setting we had the opportunity to dialogue with each other (with our different religious and philosophical backgrounds) on concrete examples of local theology. The programme at Salatiga was a valuable addition, for its mix of entertainment, hospitality, creative exposure, information, reflection and dialogue.

NICMCR's future

The NICMCR is a valuable venue for exploring and deepening the relation between Dutch and Indonesian (academic) institutes. People are a valuable asset to its working. I have shared my experiences of the Indonesian journey with two other colleagues who felt enthusiastic about the NICMCR workings. The next step will be to get them engaged in one of the working groups or pokja's. I have shared the NICMCR's website, from which they have already identified pokja's of their interest. We share the common conviction that the historical bond between the Netherlands and Indonesia justifies research and promotional activities that benefits people and institutions of these two countries. We are eager to contribute to that, either separately or jointly.

Concluding remarks

Much can be added to what I've described above. For me as a Surinamese born citizen of the Netherlands, with exposure to Javanese culture during my entire childhood, the journey was also reminiscent to passed experiences. Especially the visit to Salatiga with its kampong reminded me of the Gotong-royong principle, the Gamelan music, and the exquisite Javanese cuisine. I'm therefore deeply grateful to have had the opportunity to experience such a remarkable and fruitful encounter.

Duncan Wielzen,
Monster, July 8th, 2023