The Mystical Quest as a Path to Peacebuilding

A Cross-textual Reading
of the Stories of “Dewa Ruci” and “Jacob at the Jabbok”
as a Contribution to Asian Multi-faith Hermeneutics

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This research is presented especially to my Indonesian community, who in their socio-cultural-religious hybridity, has been, is and will always be the challenging as well as inviting context for Biblical scholars to celebrate our uniqueness as God’s lovely gifts to the world. I offer this dissertation as my humble contribution to this life we share as Asian Christians.

May God be glorified in all things.

ix
INTRODUCTION

“Why We Need to Dive to the Bottom”

This research focuses on the field of multi-faith hermeneutics and is intended as an investigation of to what extent a cross-textual reading of two religious texts can offer possibilities for peacebuilding. In this Introduction, the structure, scope, and development of the thesis will be explained.

0.1 Introducing the Challenges

It is important to start by formulating several challenges presented by the context in which this investigation takes place. These challenges are related to the socio-cultural-religious context in which has to be developed what has been called Indonesian contextual hermeneutics. This is done by taking into account the encounter of different sacred texts and their contribution to strengthening the potential peacemaking dimensions of the texts in the midst of a life that is felt by many to be full of tension.

Challenges dealt with in this research are: the interaction and hybrid realities of several groups of Indonesian people, particularly those identified as Javanese religious adherents and Christians and the importance of developing a proper attitude towards the existence of other religions, of making constructive encounters within the religions and their sacred texts (which here means: the religious story, especially the mystical genre), and of building a contextual Bible reading in the specific hybrid context of Asia, specifically Indonesia, which is the main area we will concentrate on in this research.

0.1.1 The Place of Interactions

By way of setting the context for my study, I want to emphasize the complexity of the hybrid situation I will discuss. To be able to sense at a glance, the reader is invited to an exercise in imagination. Stepping into my social context of two interconnected historical cities located about forty kilometres apart on Java Island (in Indonesia), namely Yogyakarta (the capital of Special Region of Yogyakarta) and Surakarta (which is located in the Province of Central Java), the reader would find himself/herself in the heart of Javanese hybrid realities.¹ As the epicentre of Javanese culture, the cities of Surakarta, Yogyakarta and their surroundings serve as prominent cultural barometers for measuring elements of the dynamics of Javanese society on the island of Java and in all of Indonesia. In the surroundings of these two cultural centres, we can easily sense the influence of several religious traditions. Both cities have Javanese palaces or kraton that continue to be ruled in some form by a sultan and royal household, in which we can sense

¹ Niels Mulder (1998: 13) notes that “the Javanese constitute the single biggest ethnic group in Southeast Asia. They compose some forty-five per cent of the Indonesian population. As with most Indonesians-well over eighty-five per cent-they adhere to Islam.”
the values of the Javanese indigenous belief systems (kepercayaan/kebatinan Jawa) usually referred to as Kejawen.² It contains the acculturative struggles of Javanese society to incorporate a number of influences (Banawiratma 1977: 16). It seems that this acculturation is still in process.

Northwest of Yogyakarta is the Temple of Borobudur, the largest Buddhist temple in the world. To the northeast, in direction of Surakarta but still inside the Yogyakarta Special District, we find the Temple of Prambanan, a Hindu temple. In the city of Surakarta itself, we discover that the Church of GKJ/Javanese Christian Church Joyodiningratan (built in 1939) and Mosque Al-Hikmah (built in 1947) stand elegantly side-by-side in Gatot Subroto Street, no. 222. Besides these worship places for official religions in Indonesia, these two cities and their surroundings also hold many adherents of Kejawen. In these two cities and their surroundings, varieties of religious traditions have developed and offer values for the life of Javanese society and for the non-Javanese communities as well.³ In the past and also in this present time, there are many socio-cultural-religious interactions and events taking place.

For instance, on April 5, 2013, a unique event happened in Surakarta in the celebration of the 90th anniversary of the Catholic educational foundation Yayasan Pangudiluhur Surakarta: a festival of shadow puppet performances (wayang kulit⁴) delivered by seven dhalang (shadow-puppet masters), each dhalang performing for an hour. What made this event unique was not just the uninterrupted sequence of seven performances, but also the identity of these shadow-puppet masters. All of the dhalang are Christian. Moreover, several of them are actually Catholic priests and Protestant pastors. This is not a common role for the priests or pastors. Usually the dhalang of the shadow-puppet theater come from a background in the Javanese religious tradition (Kejawen). But in this event, the dhalang came from the Christian religious background, as priests and leaders of Christian congregations. Moreover, the stories selected for that event were not the usual ones found in more traditional wayang performances.⁵ The

²According to Mulder (1998: 14) Kejawen contains “basic animistic thinking and so-called Hindu-Buddhist doctrines and practices that, combined, offer a fertile matrix for magic, mysticism, the veneration of powerful souls, spirit cults, and the worship of holy places. All this was not in marked contrast to the mystical and devotional type of Islam that reached the island [....] (The elements of Kejawen) are generally thought to hark back to the Hindu-Buddhist period of Javanese history, and combine in a philosophy – in the sense of a particular system of principles for the conduct of life. As a system of thought, Javanism is singularly elaborate, containing a cosmology, a mythology, a set of essentially mystical conceptions, and suchlike.” In later cultural development we find that there is also influence from Christianity in Kejawen, as we may find in the group of Pangestu.

³ In my own personal communal context, one of the non-Javanese communities which is influenced by the Javanese values are the Chinese who live in this Javanese neighborhood.

⁴Besides the wayang kulit (shadow puppet), there is also wayang orang (the characterization is played by a human being) in the provinces of Central and East Java and the special region of Yogyakarta. Particular to West Java is wayang golek, where the shadow-play is performed with dolls.

⁵The dhalang and the stories they performed in the festival, according to Rev. Yusak Tridarmanto of Duta Wacana Christian University as one of the team coordinators, were as follows: (1) Ki Dhalang Frank Fosdhadhi, in the story of Wahyu Mamanggal Sejati (The Trully Manifested Revelation); (2) Ki Dhalang Robi Santosa Wignyacarita, in the story of Kadarmaning Daud (The Works of David); (3) Ki Dhalang Zabdiel Wahyu Dunung Raharjo, in the story of Ksatria Pilihan (The Chosen Knight); (4) Ki Dhalang cilik (little) Salya Tedjo, in the story of Lahire Sang Timur (the Birth of the East); (5) Ki Dhalang Bruder Frans Sugi, in the story Musa Nampa 10 Angger-angger (Moses Receives the Ten Commandments); (6) Ki Dhalang Fendi Susanto, in the story of Madege Pasamunwan (The Start of the Congregation); (7) Ki
seven shadow-puppet performances were adapted from the genre of *Wayang Prajanjian* or the shadow-puppet of Covenant, which portrays Bible stories via characterization inspired by Javanese traditional *wayang* figures, and *Wayang Wahyu* or the shadow-puppet of Revelation, which uses the “reconstruction of face” meant to resemble the biblical figures portrayed. Both of these genres use markers of Javanese culture, including dress as well as *gamelan* (Javanese percussion orchestra that accompanies shadow-puppet performances) and style of performances by singers called *sinden* as found in ordinary *wayang*. According to Rev. Fendi Susanto, one of the seven *dhalang* in the unique event mentioned above, these priests/pastors-*dhalang* also plan to perform *Wayang Purwa*, the common traditional style and story depicting portions of the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*. Some have already done so in the Javanese Christian Church communities in Purworejo, a city near Yogyakarta, and in the Catholic communities in Yogyakarta on several other occasions.

It is important to underline here that what we see is religiously and culturally accepted. The Christian (Catholic/Protestant) priests and pastors perform the shadow-puppet plays in the style of the *dhalang*, and are able to sing the *suluk* (introductory song) and to move the *wayang* in the proper ways. By doing so, they have already borne witness to the significance of accepting, embracing and even celebrating the socio-religious worldviews of their context.

The shadow-puppet theater is one medium for preserving and offering perspective on the search of meaning and values in life via performing mythological stories (Geertz 1960: 270; Mulder 1998: 15). Despite the decline in interest among youth regarding traditional art performances such as *Wayang*, the value of the wisdom contained in its stories is significant. It still seems operative in offering a frame of orientation and reflection on the basic values in the worldview of the Javanese society in its socio-cultural-religious hybridity. This is intended mostly for the adherents of Javanese beliefs but also for the adherents of the formal religions of Indonesia: Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism.

### 0.1.2 Cultural Hybridity as Identity

Indonesia, and Java in particular, is characterized by cultural hybridity. Cultural hybridity is about identity. People are influenced and formed by their experiences. This is true for individuals and for communities. In his book on hybridity, Robert Young describes it as follows:

> At its simplest, hybridity, however, implies a disruption and forcing together of any unlike things, grafting a vine or a rose onto a different rootstock, making difference into sameness. Hybridity is a making one of two distinct things, so that it becomes impossible for the eye to detect the hybridity of a geranium or a rose. Nevertheless, the rose exists, like the vine, only in so far as it is grafted onto the

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*Dhalang* Handi, in the story of *Naaman, Gudhig Sang Senopati* (Naaman, the Scabies of the General). Before and after the festival, there were several workshops of the *Wayang Prajanjian/Wahyu* to discuss the problems and the usage of these particular media in the Javanese Christian context. Several agreements of this workshop will be worked out via the churches’ networking.

6 This information concerning differentiation was provided by Rev. Tridarmanto.
different stock. Neglect to prune either, and the plant eventually reverts to its original state [. . .] hybridity thus makes difference into sameness, and sameness into difference, but in a way that makes the same no longer the same, the different no longer simply different. (1995: 26)

Hybridity, as a matter of fact, is never static. Instead, it is dynamic. Young notes that “there is no single, or correct, concept of hybridity: it changes as it repeats but it also repeats as it changes” (1995: 27). It is clear that hybridity, in its cultural clothing, is developed together within the historical, social, and physical features of the life of each person or people (Young 1995: 26-28). Quoting Edward Said (1993), R.S. Sugirtharajah (1998: 16, 17) writes: “Hybridity is a wider and more complex web of cultural negotiation and interaction, forged by imaginatively redeploying local and important elements. It is not about melting away the difference between ‘us’ and ‘them’, or East and West, or about dislodging the colonial construct of the ‘Other’, but involves a newfound independence, achieved not simply by rejecting provincial, national, and imperial attachments, but by working through them.” Here he shows that the notion of hybridity finds its place outside binary oppositions.

In general, Asians are living amidst “a hybrid set of locations” (Archie Lee 2003:5). I find that this statement is quite right. If we take the people on Java Island as an example, we will easily find that many of them are hybrid persons mostly in the cultural-religious domain, as well as through inter-marriage. Similarly, many Christians in Java also live in hybrid realities in the socio-cultural domain as well as in that of religious belief. For example, those in Yogyakarta, Central and East Java live amidst the broader Javanese customs, worldviews, and values of Javanese religious traditions that intermingle with Islam. Therefore, one who lives in the midst of people with these worldviews, by which I mean the gathering of insights that give direction to one’s life, ideals, negative judgments on behaviour, aims and hence all the norms and values (Vroom 2006: 10), will notice the importance of dealing with and understanding these hybrid realities with consideration.

Denys Lombard (1996), a French historian who wrote his *magnum opus* about Java Island, strongly shows the intersection among the Javanese cultures. According to Lombard (1996: 107-127) there have been many influences coming from the European world (mostly Dutch), as well as from other Asian countries. They have colored the Indonesian cultural characteristics, especially among the Javanese. Moreover he says that:

There is no single place in the world – except Central Asia – where the presence of almost every major culture of the world lives side by side, melting into one. Around one thousand years, from the 5th century until 15th century, the cultures of India had influenced Sumatra, Java and Bali, together with the low land areas in the Indochina peninsula. In Central Java, the Borobudur and Prambanan temples are as precious of monuments as Angkor and Pagan. Up to now, the Balinese people still embrace a form of Hinduism, and the Indonesian language still creates new vocabulary based on Sanskrit. However, since the 13th and especially

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7 The original title of his book, which is written in French, is *Le Carrefour Javanais, Essai d’histoire globale*. The French word “Carrefour” (means: Crossroads) is translated as *Silang Budaya* in the Indonesian language.
15th century, two other influences are more strongly felt: Islam and China. Around 80-90% of the Indonesian population is Muslim; this country (Indonesia) is the most populated in the Islamic World. We come to know about the significance of the Overseas or Diaspora Chinese in all of South East Asia, especially Indonesia, the population of which has increased to around 3 million. European civilization, which had a presence since the 16th century, still shows its traces everywhere. The first European influence came from Iberia (Spain and Portugal). These traces are especially seen on the political level, since all islands in Nusantara/Indonesia for a relatively long time period were bound to the colonial imperium of Spain (Philippines), Great Britain (Malay Peninsula and the northern part of Borneo), and especially Holland. (Lombard 1996: 107-127, our translation)

In the context of Java Island, Lombard (1996) shows that those influences can still be detected in architecture, clothing, vehicles, languages, organizations, education, governance systems, court systems, and the mass media, etc. According to postcolonial criticism, what could happen within the spheres of cultural hybridity is the rising of several scattered intersections of identity, socio-cultural customs, religious beliefs and some mixtures in various degrees and dimensions. The mixture of these things is a result of the process of adaptation or assimilation (two different concepts). The identity of an individual or community could become fragile since some uncertainties have been created and the need for reaffirming who one is and from which religious tradition his or her convictions stem, is born.

0.1.3 Socio-Cultural-Religious Context and Tensions

Besides experiencing many kinds of disasters within the natural, social, and ecological realms (Ngelow 2006), Indonesia also has the Asian characteristics of overwhelming

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8 However, Lombard (1996: 107-127) further comments on what he calls the “process of westernization in this present era”. On the one hand, the westernization usually is very shallow and limited only to the outer forms. On the other hand, he warns us to take notice that the westernization is mainly connected to the (elite-conservative) minority, who have better opportunities than the others.

9 According to Sugirtharajah (1998: 15) “‘postcolonialism’ is a contentious term. The question of its usefulness and validity has provoked a vigorous debate among people at different institutions. Considering its relatively recent entry into the Western academy, it has successfully brought to the hermeneutical agenda the overlapping issues of races, empire, diaspora, and ethnicity. It must be stressed that it is not a homogenous project but a hermeneutical salmagundi [the literal meaning of salmagundi is “a mixture of different types of things” (Encarta Dictionary)], consisting of extremely varied methods, materials, historical entanglements, geographical locations, political affiliations, cultural identities, and economic predicaments.”

10 Related to the postcolonial idea of hybridity, Sugirtharajah (2002: 191) utters that the notion (of hybridity) “is not about the dissolution of differences but about renegotiating the structure of power built on differences. It is not synonymous with assimilation. Assimilation is something that the colonialist, and later the nativists, advocated. It is a two-way process – both parties are interactive, so something new is created.”

11 In order to maintain the dynamics in the community, Sugirtharajah (1998: 24) sees that “the task before us is not so much to celebrate the new hybridized identity or to marvel at the way we have used the right jargon as a posture and power play, but to help in addressing the questions which affect people’s lives. The worth and credibility of postcolonial criticism will be judged by how it orchestrates the unique, fragile and imagined claims of one community against another.”
poverty and multifaceted religiosity (Pieris 1988: 45-50). Regarding the plurality of religions, the Annual Report on Religious Life in Indonesia issued by the Center for Religious and Cross-Cultural Studies (abbreviated as CRCS) at Gadjah Mada University reports that out of 213 million Indonesians, Muslims form the majority (88.58 %), followed by the Christians (Protestant and Catholic, 8.86 %). The remaining are divided into Hindus (1.73 %), Buddhists (0.61 %), Kong Hu Chu (Confucianism) –which has just been recently accepted as a formal religion - (0.10 %), and others (0.11 %). The groups classified as “others” are adherents of traditional religions, namely “penghayat kepercayaan”, who are not officially part of the six formal religions (CRCS 2010: 13). There is a wide variety of organizations classified as “penghayat kepercayaan.”

Historically, Muslim populations have been concentrated in the more populous western islands of Indonesia such as Java and Sumatra. In the less populated eastern islands, the Muslim population is proportionally lower. Most Indonesian Muslims are Sunnis, but around one million are Shias. Others are Sufi, adhering to the inner or mystical dimension of Islam (Engineer 2012). Most Indonesian Muslims belong to either the Nahdatul Ulama (NU) or the Muhammadiyah organization. In the Annual Report done by CRCS-UGM (2010: 12), it is stated: “Although Islam is embraced by the majority of Indonesians nationally, other religions have majorities in certain provinces, such as Hinduism in Bali and Christianity in East Nusa Tenggara, North Sulawesi and Papua. The composition of Muslim and Christian citizens is quite balanced in Maluku. In North Sumatra, West Kalimantan and North Maluku, Christians form significant minorities. Although according to censuses and national surveys, shifts in total populations based on religion are not considerable over a long period; more significant shifts have occurred at the provincial and city/district levels.” In general, in the case of Java Island we can say that Islam is the majority and that Christianity (both Protestant and Catholic) is the minority religion. Meanwhile, Kejawen, as a dynamic acculturation containing elements of animism, Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism (as we will find out later in Ch 2) and Christianity, is primarily found in the area that surrounds Yogyakarta and Surakarta as the two cultural epicentres of Javanese tradition.

In the context where varieties of socio-culture-religious life are present together, we find that religious plurality is expressed in the richness of various religious insights; however, it also generates tension. According to Jan Aritonang (2004), throughout the history of encounters between religions in Indonesia (mostly between Christians and Muslims), there have been and are still many tensions in political discourses and in practical life. CRCS in its Annual Report mentions that in the year 2011, the three most prominent tensions among the religions were over the issues of (a) buildings and places of worship, (b) accusations of heresy, and (c) terrorism (CRCS 2012: 26-60).
In addition to various incidents that occurred involving several churches on Java Island, another religious community has become the victim of religious repression starting in 2010, mostly in West and East Java provinces and Lombok in the province of Nusa Tenggara Timur. This new victim is the Ahmadiyah, one of the branches of Islam that has been declared heretical by the MUI, Majelis Ulama Indonesia. One of the possible reasons for this complex tension is the difficulty in accepting and creating mutual relationships with the contrasting practices of other(s) in rites/ceremonies, teachings and socio-cultural policies. The ethnic tensions that have given rise to conflict between the indigenous people of certain islands and the “outsiders” in Central and West Kalimantan/Borneo, Aceh, Papua, Poso in Sulawesi, and Ambon could also be connected with the practices of persons in the socio-cultural domain and religious spheres.

In some parts of Java Island, there are tensions between the Javanese and Chinese in addition to the tensions in religious matters between Muslims and Christians. The tensions between Muslims and Christians are mostly rooted in the issues of evangelization, state policies (Aritonang 2004) and building churches (CRCS 2012). Meanwhile, the tensions between the Chinese and the indigenous Javanese people are usually a result of cumulative socio-economic problems from before and after the Java War, arising again and again, in 1918, 1946-1948, 1963, after 1965, 1974 and 1998.\(^\text{14}\) It is little wonder that there are still latent tensions in the relations of these two groups. Today, of course, there have already been many good (and even beneficial) interactions between them, but suspicion and hatred – although not always obvious – still exist and sometimes appear in the usage of abusive words in reference to the other.\(^\text{15}\)

Here is another noteworthy news topic regarding religious antagonism. On May 31st, 2013, the President of Indonesia Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono received an award from the Appeal of Conscience Foundation (ACF) honouring, it was said, his efforts for religious tolerance, in a ceremony held in the Pierre Hotel, New York City. However, in Indonesia, this award received sharp criticism. The earliest open critique was written by the Catholic priest and philosopher Franz Magnis Suseno, who on May 15th sent an email to the board of ACF with the title “World Statesman Award Versus HRW.” In his email, Suseno questioned the validity of and reason for granting this award to the President of Indonesia, since according to him, during eight and a half years in office, the President had done nothing to protect members of minority religions from violence, intolerance, and threats from “hardline religious groups toward so-called deviant teachings like the Ahmadiyah and Shia communities.”\(^\text{16}\) In his letter, Suseno also mentioned “the growing difficulties of Christians to get permits for opening places of

\(^\text{14}\) Usually the Chinese are portrayed as stronger in economic life, but this is not an absolute phenomenon. Furthermore, from the time of Dutch Colonialism until the era of Indonesia’s independance, there have been socio-political policies that deliberately situated the Chinese people in problematic positions (Benny G. Setiono 2003; Liem Tiong Liat 2004; Kwartanada 2008, Daradjadi 2013).

\(^\text{15}\) The abusive words as “dasar Cina” (used by the Javanese when they refer to the Chinese), and “Hwana” (used by the Chinese when they refer to the Javanese people) are used for humiliation. Sindunatha, a Catholic pastor who is of Chinese descent but also a Javanese expert, shows his struggle and concern of this matter in his book on René Girard’s theory which refers to the scapegoating mechanism present in the life of Chinese people in the Javanese context (Sindhunata 2006: 396-397).


The ACF defended the award by pointing to objections, explanations and apologies given by several ministers, the spokesman for the President, and the Ambassador of the Republic of Indonesia to the United States.\footnote{The article written by Dino Patti Djalal in Kompas. Retrieved May 21, 2013, from: http://nasional.kompas.com/read/2013/05/21/02293474/World.Statesman.Award.untuk.SBY.} The bottom line was that the President’s supporters refuted his critics by saying that Suseno’s opinion was wrong, that in Indonesia tolerance between religious groups is working well and progressing, and that the giving of this award is not surprising. The same message of this supposed Indonesian progress was also delivered by the President of Indonesia himself in his speech when he received the Award.\footnote{“President Yudhoyono dedicates World Statesman Award to all Indonesian people.” Retrieved May 31, 2013, from: http://www.antaranews.com/en/news/89118/president-yudhoyono-dedicates-world-statesman-award-to-all-indonesian-people.} However, the difficulties, threats and violence as results of intolerant attitudes of several groups towards minorities and others cannot be denied. Being religiously “other” in this situation of intolerance is not easy.

0.1.4 Different Attitudes and Challenges Appear when Religions Meet

In what follows, I want to address how to overcome three shortcomings in how we approach other religions: the tendency to undervalue sacred scriptures from other religions and traditions, the fear of syncretism, and the fear of finding insights that could demolish our own exclusivism. The more one fosters an exclusivist standpoint, the more fear exists toward other sacred texts. If we want to discuss interreligious dialogue, then we should be aware of the different positions that are available. Knowledge of those positions helps to discover where we stand and then, if one wants, to start a dialogue. To reflect on the existence of the plurality of religions and their sacred resources in an adequate way, we should be aware that there are at least three possible positions in this endeavour. One position is to look with suspicion and then reject the other (exclusivism). The second is to appreciate the resourceful insights of the other but maintain that our belief system is better (inclusivism). And the third is that which admits that we and the other have the same values and concerns (pluralism). The next chapter addresses the details of these theological standpoints (also in relation to my own chosen position), what each position implies, and the question of what tools and skills of reading are needed.
For now, we should be aware that the consequence of the third position (pluralism), as it seeks to offer hospitality to other religious traditions and their sacred texts is that we are called to reflect critically (1) on what has been termed interreligious hospitality and fragile identity look like in the encounter of religions and (2) on how to overcome the fear of syncretism based on the underestimation of the other religious tradition.

0.1.4.1 Toward Interreligious Hospitality and Fragile Identity

The concept of “interreligious hospitality” has been elaborated by Marianne Moyaert in an attempt to promote the significance of making room for the religious other within the encounter of religions (Moyaert 2011). It is important to note that in the encounter between one’s own religion and the religious other, a devoted believer who appreciates and wants to interpret the religious other faces a significant obstacle since he or she should adopt a go-between role, constantly moving between his/her own and the other religion, between the familiar and the strange and unknown/unfamiliar (Moyaert 2011: 228). Precisely in this reality we find what is called a fragile identity. Moyaert argues that this is not an easy undertaking since:

The theologian is confronted with the task of understanding the other in his or her otherness and to live up to the hermeneutical circle with an attitude of hospitality. The risk that the theologian does not do justice to the religious other because of his or her structure of prejudices is not non-existent. There is no perfect and complete understanding. The interpreter will always fall short with respect to the strange other. But the theologian not only swears an oath of loyalty to the religious other; there is also the possibility that he does injustice to his faith commitment to God. (Moyaert 2011: 275)

Moyaert’s argument is that a theologian is situated in a kind of moving, dialectic intersection where he or she “promises hermeneutical openness to be faithful to the otherness of the other, in the full understanding that there is the constant danger of betrayal. But the situation of the theologian is still even more difficult because the theologian is not only a hermeneut (sic!) or a translator but also someone who is connected to God in a constantly mediated way” (2011: 276). However, although there are tensions within fragile identity, this situation is not meant as a cul-de-sac. It is compulsory for a theologian to attend this invitation of reflecting on what to do with the gaps with an open mind, great courage, and hospitality (a point discussed more detail in chapter 1).

0.1.4.2 Facing the Fear of Syncretism, Handling the Underestimation of the Other.

Since this research refers to the interaction of two selected religious traditions (Christianity and Kejawen), I want to briefly discuss the relation of the two in this section. According to Gerrit Singgih, a prominent theologian in Indonesia, there should
be critical as well as dialectical progress within Christian and Javanese interaction. In his article entitled “Contextualization and Inter-Religious Relationship in Java: Past and Present,” Singgih affirms:

Awareness of the context in which Indonesian Christians live is a fairly recent phenomenon. Before that the world tended to be regarded as an object that had to be confronted upon. The world was the world of darkness and corruption, of magic and superstition, of idolatry and atheism; in short, the world of nothing. The missions of the church and the Christians were to bring light to this darkness, to overcome this corruption, and to strive so that the world can be something which makes sense to us as Christians. This confrontational stance was for a long time mistakenly understood as contextual awareness. This, of course, might be true to some extent, as we often come to be aware of the reality around us by confronting it and in turn by being confronted by the reality. However, confrontation is only one aspect of our perception of reality. There will never be a real perception of reality without appreciation of that reality. To get an objective picture of reality or the context in which we live, it is better to start from appreciation rather than confrontation. Ideally appreciation, or even better, confirmation, should go hand in hand with confrontation in a dialectical way. (1997: 248-249)

In order to dialectically come to terms with the hybrid context of the Indonesian (in this case, Javanese) Christians, I believe it is really important and essential that from the very start, we are able to appreciate the existence and insights given by the other religious traditions and that, on the other hand, we should also openly face the fear of syncretism. Archie Lee writes:

We need to review our understanding of syncretism and overcome our fear of it before we can engage in fruitful cross-textual and cross-scriptural hermeneutics within a context of religious and cultural pluralism. After all, syncretism is regarded as a positive development and much encouraged in the history of most Asian religions. In the end, all religions are syncretistic in one way or another, and neither the Christian faith nor the Bible is an exception in this regard. No religion is non-syncretistic in one way or the other. The Bible is no exception. (1998: 252)

Regarding the encounters of religions, we can see the various possibilities that happen. Religions contain either some common ground or specific characteristics. Therefore, various models could rise. If the religions underline or even absolutize their own truth claims, it is easy to imagine that a no-interaction model is given. The variant of this model could be an “artificial interaction”, which means there is interaction but on a very surface-banal-technical level. This happens if religions stress their resistance capacity more than their coexistence potency. In the worst model, we can imagine the spirit of “erasing and combating the other” or at least “dominating the other” based on the socio-economic-political power. Another possibility is a kind of “indifferent pluralism” characterized by a type of “careless-banal syncretism” which tends to combine the insights of various religions in a recklessly mixture. Some authors have proposed the “Encounters in Creative Tensions” model. We will examine this model in which we can find such key words as dialogue, dialectical, genuineness, openness, symbiosis, as well as

0.1.5 The Importance of Religions and their Sacred Texts in Peacebuilding.

Like other parts of Asia, the life of the people of Indonesia was, is and will be continue to be nurtured and shaped by many formal religions as well as local and indigenous religious traditions and their sacred texts and stories. In this context of socio-cultural-religious hybridity, people have read, listened to and/or are influenced by more than just one text and, thus, it is important to work on the differences between sacred texts in order to have beneficial insights in developing socio-religious enrichments and building more peaceful situations.

Peacebuilding in this context cannot be done without the transformation of persons, including readers and believers, and of hermeneutical standpoints. This concerns the transformation of the perception of the sacred text of the other. For that transformation three elements are needed: motivation, knowledge and the skills/tools to establish transformation. My tool in this hermeneutical discourse is cross-textual reading. As instruments to deepen and delve into this concern of doing cross-textual reading, I choose to analyze the treasures contained within two essential stories from two religious traditions (among many) within my personal and community context.

0.1.5.1 Significance of Story and Religious Story

Why story? It might be said that in general, human beings love story. As human beings, we grow together with many stories in each step of life and our own lives actually create many narratives. In their general remarks of the meaning of story, Gunn and Fewell (1993:1) state that story is “a staple of human life”. From the domain of the Philosophy of Religion, Hendrik Vroom (2006: 104) underlines that “stories are needed for morality, to show the intent or moral guidelines, and to show how we can handle (or fail to handle well) conflicting duties and temptations.” The reason of the efficacy of a story in capturing many sides and dimensions of reality is because of its content of several basic insights of the worldview such as ontology, ethics and feelings (Vroom 2006: 11, 105). Thus, narratives are fundamental to understanding how people think, perceive reality, experience good and evil, and how they see their own lives in relation to those of others.

Furthermore, when pointing out the significance of the biblical stories, Gunn and Fewell (1993: 2) assert that (biblical) stories impact the lives of their readers in a variety of ways, such as: (i) to “powerfully shape people’s lives”; (ii) to order and reorder humans’ experience in which the story reveals “the way things are in the real world”; (iii) to “give meaning to life, implicitly making proposals for thought and action which are then embodied in a re-created world”; and (iv) to contain “the potential to create new social worlds.” However, I believe that these four ways of impacting of the biblical stories are not the monopoly of the biblical tradition since they correspond to the other religious (non-biblical) traditions as well (for the specific audience/hearer/reader within those religious traditions). Thereby, as Vroom (2006: 105, 106) says, it seems that any
religious story is able to evocatively “point directly or indirectly to the great connections in which our lives exist, and so to transcendence.”

The significance of these religious stories is related to human beings’ desires to interpret their reality “as a whole and of the place of humans within it, and particularly of the recommended manner of life” (Vroom 2006: 105). Therefore, we may find that in enjoyment to hear, sense, feel, absorb, value, and interpret the religious story which contains evocative content and basic insights, human beings are served best to delve into and then find existential meanings, reflections and perspectives of reality in their actual life. This is, for me, the essential reason of the significance of the (religious) story for the sake of humanity and human responsibility toward the entire world.

0.1.5.2 Significance of the Story of Mystical Quest

If we want to reach transformation through sacred texts with mutual reading, then what are the stories that in the most profound manner talk about transformation? What kind of story would serve me if I want to go deeper and investigate what happens when two texts from different religious traditions – that both touch upon the heart of human existence and talk very profoundly about transformation – are brought in interaction one with the other? I believe that the story of the religious-mystical quest/experience will be adequate. According to Knitter,

There is a core mystical experience pulsating within the religious traditions that have endured through the ages. And if there is a core mystical experience, there is a core Mystical Reality within them all. Yes, each religious individual and community will hear this Reality through their different “socially constructed” antennae [. . .] the deeper a person enters into the religious experience that is made possible through her own particular religion, the more aware she will be that what she is experiencing cannot be limited to her own religion- and the more openness and sensitivity she will have to recognizing the same Mystery in other religions. The deeper one descends into one’s own religious well, the more one will realize the one underground river that nourishes them all. (2003: 125, 126)

Considering the reason above, it seems that a story which tells about the core of every religious experience may be able to contribute something beneficial to the transformational process of peacebuilding between the readers, hearers and adherents of different religious traditions within the interaction of their different sacred texts.

0.1.5.3 Brief Discussion on the Meanings, Varieties and Elements of Mystical Experience

For the development of my argument it is necessary to reflect more thoroughly on the nature of mystical experience.21 According to Andresen “mysticism may be described as

21 Quoting Mallory (1977), Jensine Andresen (2003: 586) declares that “St. John of the Cross may be primarily remembered for explicating a so-called via negativa mode of spiritual engagement in which one prays without focusing on imagery and without actively pursuing any specific intellectual content.” Steere,
the level of deep, experiential encounter with the divine, or ultimate, however that may be understood, that links religious and spiritual pursuits across culture and across centuries” (2003: 585). Unlike more defined forms of religious experience, mysticism “frequently transports the individual beyond the confines of the religious tradition itself to a realm often described as lacking in any sense of differentiation, whether it be between aspirant and God, or between self and non-self (Andresen 2003: 585).”

According to Dorothee Sölle, a German theologian, the basic assumption when referring to someone as a mystic is that the person has particular experiences that bring about altered states of consciousness deriving from the encounter with the other, the divine reality. In the nontheistic religions, this altered state is generally referred to as “illumination,” where theistic religions speak of it as the union of the soul with God (unio mystica). This union of the divine-within and the divine-without occurs in the spark of the soul. There is a fusion of the divine that resides in every human being’s soul with the divine, who is absolute being and the ground of all that is. (2001: 16)

Aware of the complexity of the mystical experience, Sölle (2001: 17, 18) further adds that “mystical experiences are neither above nor below those heightened experiences described in religious language as being made whole, liberation, the peace of God, coming home, and redemption. The difference lies only in how mysticism deals with these experiences. Mysticism lifts such experiences out of the abstractness of religious doctrine and frees them for feeling, experience, and certainty.”

The map of the complexities of mystical experiences might be composed quite well in the condensed article written by Donald Bishop (1995). Quoting both the ideas of Walter Stace (1960) and William Inge (1948), Bishop notes that the mystical experience is distinguished by two types, namely the extrovertive and introvertive mysticism and two characteristics, namely the nature and theistic mysticism. Regarding the characteristics, Bishop quoting R.C. Zaehner (1961), asserts that “while in both cases (meaning: in nature as well as theistic mysticism) the mystic is seeking unity, in the case of the nature mystic it is union with ‘some principle or other’ and with the latter it is

as quoted by Andresen (2003: 586), writes that Meister Eckhart (1260-1328) is a mystic person who “utilized a kind of ‘negative theology’ to point towards the inadequacy of human language and perception in capturing the fullness of mystical experience: “There is no knowing what God is.” Another type is named as via affirmativa, an approach to God through positive assertions about His attributes which relate to the yes-function in the human being (Ferguson 1976: 200, 205). Meanwhile, for instance, Ferguson (1976: 201) mentions the typology of mysticism offered by C. Jinarajadasa as follows: Grace (stressing the gulf between man and God), Love (stressing God’s love to man), Pantheism (stressing that God and man are one), Nature (stressing that God is revealed in nature), Sacramental (stressing ‘Real Presence’), Theosophical (stressing the Plan of Logos).

22 According to Bishop (1995: 11), the extrovertive type “looks outward and through the physical sense into the external worlds and finds the One there, while the introvertive mystics turns inward and finds the One at the bottom of the self.” Quoting Stace (1960), Bishop (1995: 11) mentions that the second type (introvertive type) is more common as the major strand in the history of mysticism meanwhile the extrovertive way is a minor one.

23 Bishop (1995: 11) explains that “the nature or pantheistic mystic’s experience is limited to, aroused by, and finds its fulfillment in nature. The theistic mystic goes beyond nature to a transcendent Being that is realized in the mystical experience.”
Furthermore, he also mentions another way of classifying different types of the Being as Personal and Impersonal or Non-Personal (Bishop 1995: 11-12).

Another classification, according to Bishop (1995: 12) quoting Geoffrey Parrinder, is to put the mystical experience into three categories: theistic, monistic, and non-religious mysticism. The theistic mysticism is the type in which “the mystic seeks union with God but not identity; monistic mysticism wherein identity with a universal principle, which may be called divine, though that would imply a difference from the human is sought; and non-religious mysticism in which the mystic seeks union with something, or everything, rather like monism.” As a further way of characterizing monistic and theistic mystics, Bishop notices that we could divide them into non-dualist and dualist types: In the dualist types, “a distinction between the subject, man, and the object, God, remains” while in the non-dualist types, “all multiplicities and dualities are transcended” (1995: 12).

We should also note the investigation of what is called the ‘threefold way to God’ (Bishop 1995: 15; Johnston 2000: 142). Quoting the section on Dionysius in Evelyn Underhill’s book (1920), Bishop summarizes, “the first is the way of purification, in which the mind is inclined to learn true wisdom. The second is the way of illumination, in which the mind by contemplation is kindled to the burning of love. The third is the way of union, in which the mind by understanding, reason, and spirit is led up by God alone.” In the stage of purification, one should get rid of such obstacles as “self-will, pride, and self-centeredness which keep one from realizing the final goal” (15). In the stage of illumination, which naturally follows the purification level, “the mind becomes emptied of falsehoods and misconceptions, it can then be filled with or illuminated by truth. Illumination is associated with freeing also, for the mind and the self must be freed from passions, ill will, and negative attitudes such as jealousy and pride if one is to become kind, compassionate, and humble” (17). Afterward, in the third stage of union, “the final goal has been reached of the union of the self with that Being or Principle that is beyond, other than, or greater than oneself” (18). However, Bishop still warns us that the nature of this relationship is a major question: “Is it a matter of the self becoming one with God yet retaining self-identity? Or does the mystic lose all sense of separate selfhood in the uniting with God just as the river loses its identity when it has flowed into the sea and become absorbed by it?” (18). About what is experienced by a person at this stage, he notes that one “no longer feels torn between antinomies, contradictions, opposing aspirations, and conflicting ambitions. Doubts have been resolved. The external world no longer distracts one. A sense of integration, completeness, or wholeness is

24 Following Zaehner’s further distinction between the monistic and theistic mystics, Bishop (1995: 12) informs that a major difference between the two is that the monistic mystic emphasizes merging into God or the Absolute, and the theist stresses communion with God.

25 Bishop (1995: 12) mentions that “Christian mystics generally tend to conceive of it as personal, Hindu mystics of the Upanishadic-Vedantist tradition as impersonal or non-personal. Chinese mysticism, whether Buddhist or non-Buddhist, is also of the second type [. . .] Suzuki asserts emphatically, for instance, that the personal/non personal distinction is the basic one between Eastern and Western mysticism.”

26 In this moment, in another word, one is experiencing enlightenment as” the darkness of ignorance is dispelled and the mind becomes alight with the truth of reality” (Bishop 1995:17). I am convinced, that is, why “the imagery of light and darkness is often found in mystical writings” (Bishop 1995:17).
experienced [. . .] the mystic has become an integrated personality. He or she has transcended the little self, or put off the old self”(19).

We should also notice that the explanation above is subjected to what is referred to as the ‘mysticism of love and union’ type (here, Bishop refers to F.C. Hapgood’s categorization). Besides this first type, we have another group known as ‘knowledge and understanding mysticism’. Regarding to these types, Bishop (12, 13) comments that, “although dissimilar, they are not exclusive of each other, in part because they spring from two different urges found in everyone. The mysticism of love urges to escape from a sense of separation, from the loneliness of selfhood, towards a closer participation and reunion with Nature or God, which will bring peace and rest to the soul.” Meanwhile the mysticism of knowledge and understanding urges “to find the secret of the universe, to grasp it not in parts but in its wholeness.”

It is also important for us to basically understand what the characteristics or values of the so-called mystical experience(s) are. Quoting William James (1902), Bishop mentions that some of the characteristics of the mystical experience are: ineffability, noetic quality, transiency, and passivity. Ineffability means that a mystical experience “cannot be fully described. It defies expression, and no adequate report of its contents can be given in words. Although incommunicable, it is, nevertheless, authoritative or indubitable to the mystic.” Transiency means that the mystical experience “does not last for long” and there is “invariably a speedy return to normality.” By the sense of passivity, it means that “the mystic feels as if his own will were in abeyance and indeed sometimes as if he were grasped and held by a superior power, therefore they are carrying with them, ‘a feeling of something given.’” Meanwhile, by noetic characteristic is meant that “the mystical experience results in insights which carry with it a tremendous sense of authority” (Bishop 1995: 13-14).

There remain significant discussions among scholars as to whether there are or are not “universal common characteristics of mysticism in all cultures, ages, religions, and civilization of the world,” and to what extent the mystical experiences are influenced by the mystic’s particular religious traditions, cultural orientations and/ or conceptual schemes.27 However, some conclusions might be made, for instance: (1) there are different variations of mysticism or differences in mystical experiences, at least, when viewed externally or from a phenomenological standpoint. However, these differences do not take the side of what might be called “internal” similarities; (2) [that] “the turning to mysticism may be stimulated by either or both internal factors or external conditions where self-purification, 28 in its broadest sense, seems to be the major one”; and (3) that the different external forms of mystical experiences are similar in the end as they “sought and gained such as a meaningful experience with God, the One or the Absolute and a change in the nature and resultant actions of the experiencer”(Bishop 1995: 25-28).

Besides the threefold ways of purification, illumination and union, it is important to consider another view of the mystical quest. Regarding what is called the religious paradigm, Mathew Fox (1983) offers his theory on the creation-centered spiritual

27 Namely as “constructivist and non-constructivist position on mysticism” (Bishop 1995:26).
28 We may observe that “on the personal level one realizes the emptiness of dissolute, negligent, indulgent life. Mystics often experienced firsthand the tyranny of self-will and the insidiousness of pride and vanity. Therefore, the soul must be purified. Mystics experienced more intensely than others a sense of separation from God and other persons; they keenly felt inner contradictions and tensions” (Bishop 1995: 24).
tradition/spirituality. This is an alternative to the older paradigm of fall/redemption. According to Fox, the fall/redemption spirituality stresses that all nature has fallen. On the other hand, creation-centered spirituality teaches the believers about creativity, justice-making, and social transformation; moreover, about Eros, play, pleasure, the God of delight, love of the earth, care for cosmos and listening to the pleas of anawim, the little one of human history (Fox 1983: 11). As mentioned earlier, mysticism deals not only with the way of via negativa (in the sense of pointing towards “the inadequacy of human language and perception in capturing the fullness of mystical experience” (Andresen 2003: 586). It also deals with via affirmativa, an approach to God through positive assertions about His attributes that relate to the yes-function in the human being (Ferguson 1976: 200, 205). Fox proposes to replace the term via affirmativa by via positiva. He also expands the meaning so that it is not just about the human language or perception in capturing the mystical quest but this is also about a spiritual attitude to the “path of affirmation, thanksgiving and ecstasy” where we can taste “the beauties and cosmic depths of creation.” The via positiva, according to him, “represents a new power, in the sense that it has been forgotten; the power that pleasure is and that wisdom is” (Fox 1983: 34).

In its essence, Fox (1983) stresses the importance to hold several ways in the spiritual life/mystical life, which are: via positiva (in befriending creation, as mentioned in the previous paragraph); via negativa (in the befriending darkness, letting go and letting be) that which “opens us to our divine depths”, in which we find that “the depth of nothingness is directly related to the experience of everythingness” (Fox 1983: 130); via creativa (in befriending creativity, befriending our divinity) in that which celebrates the union of via positiva and via negativa. Fox (1983: 175) affirms that “in letting both pleasure and pain happen, both light and darkness, both naming and unnaming, both cosmos and void, we allow a third thing to be born: and the third thing is the very power of birth itself”; and via transformativa (in befriending new creation: compassion, celebration, erotic justice), where creation is “renewed, seen anew, and righted from its state of sinful or unjust relationship” (Fox 1983: 247).

Taking the various emphases put forward by Sölle, Bishop, and Fox into consideration, we may say that the basic idea of the mystical quest, in its various ways, is that it produces a profound, intimate, direct awareness of and immediate encounter with and within the Divine Presence/The Ultimate Reality, with existential discoveries and experiences as the outcome. This brings about fundamental, existential, enlightened and authoritative transformation within the person’s life as that person comes either to merge into or have communion with the Ultimate Reality, and where his or her life and relations with all things become transparently grounded in that experience.\(^{29}\) According to Dale Cannon (1996: 63), “those who pursue the mystical quest have a passion to reach out and taste what is ultimately real with their very being.” The aim of this mystical quest is, then, the transformation of “one’s awareness as well as one’s entire life so that nothing of oneself might be in conflict with or out of touch with ultimate reality.”\(^{30}\) Tranquillity and

\(^{29}\) See the exploration on Bishop (1995: 11-27); Ferguson (1976: 126-128); and Cannon (1996: 64).

\(^{30}\) Cannon (1996: 64) states that the mystics “are discontent with ordinary awareness as a species of unconsciousness, conditioned and fettered by ignorance, lust and egoism. Persons who pursue the way of mystical quest passionately seek an extra ordinary, contemplative consciousness of ultimate reality that is free of distortions of ordinary experience and the distractions of extra-ordinary experience too.\(^{30}\) Tranquillity and
serenity then take the place of conflict and unease and it is no wonder that Sölle defines these feelings as “being made whole, liberation, the peace of God, coming home and redemption” (2001: 17, 18).

Now, the important insights in and definitions of mysticism and mystical experiences so far collected can serve as a lens for examining the extent and the nature of the mystical elements found in the two selected stories in this research.

0.1.6 The Importance of Doing Contextual Theology and Hermeneutics

The willingness to openly admit and embrace the existence of religious traditions and the importance of their interactions as mentioned above is really important for the person or communities who live in this kind of a situation and want to reflect in a meaningful manner on it. Here, many possibilities and challenges are at hand. I am convinced that interactions between these religious traditions should continually be contributing to the work of making peaceful contextualization in Indonesia. In his book *Models of Contextual Theology*, Stephen Bevans (1992: 7) underlines the importance of taking into account in this process such elements as: Scripture, Church Tradition, Personal/Communal Experience, Local Culture, Social Location and Social Change. I agree that we should take into account these factors when we set out to develop our contextual theological models.

As an Indonesian of Chinese descent who lives in the Javanese socio-cultural context, and as a Mennonite Christian shaped by historic peacebuilding theology who is interested in contextual hermeneutics and contextual theology, I am aware of the significance of endorsing and strengthening the work of peace within the dynamics of the encounter of elements proposed by Bevans. Like many Asians, I am a hybrid person by culture. I myself am an Indonesian Chinese by blood and, in addition to my Chinese ancestry, I am also living in and am very much influenced by the Javanese culture. Besides the influences of the *Kejawen*, my environment in Yogyakarta is also influenced by the interaction with the Muslim communities. Since I live within this mix of religious worldviews, I realize that in order to make a contextual biblical interpretation I will have to consider and take into account several of these factors and bring them into dialogue one with another. Considering this socio-cultural-religious reality, I see at least two parallel points of contact available in my context in which religion, and sacred texts, are important. One point of contact between Christians (Javanese and Chinese) and Muslims (primarily Javanese as Chinese ethnic Muslims are a rarity in Java) is the Javanese religious tradition, including its religious texts. The other point of contact between the Javanese (Christians) and Chinese (Christians) who live in the Javanese culture is the Bible as *the* Christian sacred text. Therefore, I am hopeful or even convinced that a

Additionally, they are discontent with any lack of integration between awareness on the one hand, however true that awareness may be, and how life is lived on the other; they seek to be integrally united with ultimate reality in their whole being.”

31 I grew up in Jepara, Yogyakarta and Salatiga within the Javanese society, married a Javanese woman, and served as a pastor for 12 years in a church where 98% of the congregation came from a Javanese background. I now live with my Javanese extended family in a Javanese neighborhood in Yogyakarta, a city which is the center of Javanese culture. So, day by day, I live within the broader Javanese society’s customs, worldviews, and values of its religious traditions.
dialogue between the Javanese religious texts and the Christian sacred texts not only will be possible but even may contribute to a significant learning process on both sides. However, we should continue to ask, what is the purpose of organizing encounters between these religious traditions via their texts? The purpose should be concrete and contribute something beneficial to the larger context of society.

This research is an attempt to develop a proper contextual biblical hermeneutics through a cross-textual reading of some mystical texts in the context of Javanese Christians in Indonesia. I propose a biblical hermeneutics-reading method of two mystical texts, one from the Old Testament and the other from a Javanese religious tradition, in order to explore possibilities for peacebuilding within the Indonesian socio-cultural-religious context. As this research attempts to find some shared and challenging aspects contained in both the Biblical text and the Javanese religious text, I hope this will offer new and shared insights for the readers of these texts. Cross-textual reading comprises a set of practices, tools and theoretical insights dedicated to what people/readers do when they read the Bible. What I want to achieve is to offer or formulate a model for people/readers/adherents/believers to enable them to become sensible or open-minded vis-a-vis their own religiosity and belief system and then also willing to interact with others. The first step is to reflect on possible connections between the Christian and Javanese worlds: how they can be brought into dialogue and thus get to know these (be informed), and the second is how to make this fruitful for transformation \(^{32}\) (Schneiders 1991: 114-112).

\[ \text{0.1.7 How to Do Contextual Hermeneutics} \]

Basically, contextual (biblical) hermeneutics is an attempt to read and reread the biblical text within the specific living context of its readers. Therein, in order to develop Indonesian contextual hermeneutics, we need to take Asian socio-cultural contexts and the plurality of religions/religious traditions into account for biblical hermeneutics. In general, the problem is how to develop that contextual hermeneutics within the multi-faith context of Asia (the more detailed discussion will be presented in Ch 1).

According to several Asian hermeneuticians, the attempt of doing Asian multi-faith hermeneutics should be understood as an important even existential invitation and not as an obstacle. Kwok Pui-lan, for instance, writes that “Asia is a multiracial and multicultural continent, the birthplace of many of the historical religions of humankind. Divided into seven major linguistic zones, Asia has numerous religious scriptures from the major religions that have shaped her cultures for millennia” (Kwok 1995:20). That is why a multi-faith hermeneutics is significant in this socio-cultural-religious context. In Lee’s opinion of Asian Biblical Hermeneutics, he states that Asians are aware that they “live in two worlds: the world of the Bible and Christian faith, and the world of Asian scriptures, cultures and religions. Both identities and both worlds should be upheld in a

\(^{32}\) According to Sandra Schneiders (1991: 114-121), in interpreting the Bible we see that there are two kinds of objectives. The first one is “the objective of information”, through which a method of biblical interpretation will enable the reader to get important cognitive insights of and about the text. The second one is “the objective of transformation”, through which a method of biblical interpretation will endorse the reader to take steps of being changed in heart and life.
creative, dynamic, interrelated, interactive and integrated way, so that integrity is safeguarded” (Lee 2012: 34). Therefore, the Asians should take in their contextual reading of the Bible into serious consideration the necessity of bringing the realities of Asian cultures into “conversation with those of the biblical tradition” (Kuan 1999: 71). Herewith we should note that culture is something dynamic and therefore refers to more than just the customs, habits, rites, etc, on a surface level. Exploring the deeper and more existential level of culture, Clifford Geertz has defined culture as worldview that refers to a web of meanings created by human beings (1992: 5).33

There are some important publications written by Asian theologians/ hermeneuticians on these Asian contextual hermeneutics which bring into interaction the Bible and Asian cultural-religious traditions. According to Kwok’s analyses, there are currently three approaches being used by Asian scholars. The first approach is comparing “similar motifs through cross-textual studies in order to draw out hermeneutical implications” (Kwok 1995: 62). The second approach is what we may call ‘seeing through’, in which scholars “look at the Bible through the perspective of other religious traditions” (Kwok 1995: 62). In this approach we hope to find new ideas and discoveries in our biblical interpretation. Meanwhile, the third approach is to “discern biblical and theological insights in people’s stories, myths, and legends” (Kwok 1995: 62). Unlike the second approach, in this third model the focus lies more on Asian resources. From these resources, theologians build several Christian reflections when relating them to the Bible.

Kwok (1995: 62), giving several examples, writes that the first approach “can be found in the work of Archie Lee, who has written a number of essays comparing the creation myths in Genesis with the creation stories in China.” Another example that uses the first approach is the work of George Soares-Prabhu who compares “Jesus’ Great Commission (Matt. 28: 16-20) and a “mission command” given by the Buddha to his followers in the text Mahavagga” (Kwok 1995: 62-63). Regarding the second approach, which is to look at the Bible through the perspective of people of other faiths, one can see that Gandhi, who, although he was “rooted deeply in his Hindu spirituality, was fascinated by Jesus’ teaching, especially the Sermon on the Mount” (Kwok 1995: 64). Another example of the second approach can be found in the work of Seiichi Yagi, who studied the dimension of “I” in the words of Jesus. Kwok (1995: 64) shows that “looking at the Bible from the perspective of other faiths, Gandhi and Yagi34 are not bound by the Christian framework when they read the Bible. They treat the Bible as a religious resource to address issues common to all humankind or as a mirror offering a reflection of their own tradition.” An example of the third approach, given by Kwok (1995: 65-66), is that of the work of Choan Seng Song, Yuko Yuasa and Levi V. Oracion, “who

33 Geertz (1973: 4-5) shows the complexity of this matter by quoting definitions of culture suggested by Clyde Kluckhohn, such as: (1) the total way of life of a people; (2) the social legacy the individual acquires from his group; (3) a way of thinking, feeling and believing; (4) an abstraction from behaviour; (5) a theory on the part of the anthropologist about the way in which a group of people in fact behave; (6) a store-house of pooled learning; (7) a set of standardized orientations to recurrent problems; (8) learned behaviour; (9) a mechanism for the normative regulation of behavior; (10) a set of techniques for adjusting both to the external environment and to other men; (11) a precipitate of history; (12) a behavioral map, sieve, or matrix.

34 Different from Kwok who suggests that Yagi is a Buddhist with expertise in Christianity, in A History of Japanese Theology (1997), Yasuo Furuya identifies Yagi as a Christian scholar.
elaborate the Asian myths, stories, fables and legends to do theology and to interpret biblical stories.”

Above are several approaches of contextual reading methods which take into account the resources of Asian religious traditions. These models of elaborating the religious dimension appear to be a part of postcolonial (biblical) studies which give “advocacy of a wider hermeneutical agenda to place the study of sacred texts within the intersecting histories which constitute them” (Sugiirtharajah 1998: 23). Regarding this matter, Segovia writes important remarks:

This exposition of various lacunae in Postcolonial Studies leads me to a final observation regarding yet another noteworthy absence in the literature, quite evident in the works surveyed above. It is rare to find any mention of religion whether by way of cultural production or social matrix. It is almost as if religious texts and expressions did not form part of the cultural production and as if religious institutions and practices did not belong to social matrix of imperial-colonial frameworks. I would argue, as a student of religion in general and of the Christian religion in particular, that religion is to be acknowledged and theorized as a constitutive component of such frameworks, and a most important one - as important as, say, literature or economics (2005: 74-75).

Thus, the notion of taking into account Asian religious dimensions into the contextual biblical hermeneutics should be held together with the critical discussions in the literature and socio-economic-political dimension as usually developed in the postcolonial (biblical) studies and interpretation (Lee 2008: 183; Segovia 2005; 74-76).

0.2 Focus of Research

In this research, I will focus on the field of multi-faith hermeneutics and investigate the extent to which a cross-textual reading of two religious texts, one from the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible, the other from a Javanese religious tradition, will offer possibilities for peacebuilding. Like many of Chinese descent and Christian believer who live in the epicentre of Javanese culture in the region of Yogyakarta, my socio-cultural-religious context is partially defined by Javanese-Christian relationship(s). Within this Javanese-Christian context, I want to engage in a cross-textual reading. Cross-textual reading is a method coined by Asian biblical scholars like Lee, Soares-Prabhu and Kwok and is used as an answer to the Asian multi-faith context in which hybridity plays a key role. Cross-textual hermeneutics is the reflection on the results of that method.

Considering the socio-cultural-religious context where this Javanese-Christian interaction takes place (including their sacred texts), I intend to do a cross-textual reading of very well-known and central texts in both religious traditions. The two stories, which underline the significance of transformation in the midst of tension, are: “Jacob at the Jabbok”, found in Genesis 32: 22-32, and “Dewa Ruci”, a famous Javanese story. The

35 As previously defined, hybridity could be understood as “a wider and more complex web of cultural negotiations and interactions forged by imaginatively redeploying local and important elements” (Sugiirtharajah 1998: 17). Within those dynamics people foster or have mixed worldviews as a result of their incorporated religious values.
reasons for choosing these texts are because they play an important role in reading practices of the respective believers in their contexts and that they carry similar motifs. They share a parallel narrative structure in which a very important element is found, that which we will call the mystical quest. A core theme of the mystical quest is the radical transformation of the relationship between brothers. Thus, I want to analyze to what extent a cross-textual reading of these two texts can be a catalyst for more peace between the readers of those religious traditions.

For Christians, the story of “Jacob at the Jabbok” from the Hebrew Bible can be read as an important story of a mystical experience that prepares Jacob for a crucial meeting and reconciliation with his twin brother Esau. For the Javanese, the story of “Dewa Ruci” - mostly in the encounter between Bima and Dewa Ruci in the search to find the living water - is an important mystical quest story which is framed in the brotherly tension between the Pandawa and Kurawa.

The relevance behind this choice is the common experience in my contexts of tension in Muslim-Christian relationships (in religious matters) and in Javanese-Chinese relationships (mostly in socio-economic matters). The people that experience such tensions – because of the social aspects – are naturally also the people who share some commonalities. In this regard, people need to nurture harmony, peace and justice as they live together in family membership in the wider society. One could say that they live in a kind of “Jacob and Esau” relationship (using the lens of the Bible) or a “Pandawa-Kurawa” one (using the lens of the Javanese religious story). By taking this specific context as my point of departure, I try to find important shared insights/aspects of both aforementioned texts and ask to what extent these can be used as a constructive tool for peacebuilding.

0.3 Objectives

One important objective of this study is to investigate how Asian Biblical Hermeneutics may contribute to peace and reconciliation processes within one local context, through promoting the mystical-spiritual quest in which transformation takes place: from struggle and enmity via introspection, to understanding, acceptance and openness to the other. We may find that this research will underline the importance of elaborating cross-textual reading that offers an appropriate theoretical framework for a proper reading of Scripture in a situation where a variety of socio-religious hybridities are present. Both religious communities (the Kejawen and Christian) possess a variety of religious texts and scriptures. In this research, I will try to apply the method of cross-textual reading within the context of the plurality of religions, beliefs and social tensions for the benefit of my implied addressees since I believe that in the mutual interaction and examination of the two selected texts we can find differences, commonalities and also important enrichments of meaning. The implied addressees of my study are the people who have hybrid socio-cultural-religious worldviews. They are mostly: (1) adherents of Kejawen; (2) the Javanese Christian as well as the Chinese Christian people who are deeply influenced by

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the Javanese worldviews, values, and beliefs and who also use the Bible as their scripture; and (3) the Moslem adherents who are influenced by the Javanese beliefs.

In applying the method of cross-textual reading and reflecting on its results, I expect to find some important keys that may challenge this implied audience to take a responsible hermeneutical position vis à vis the sacred text of the other faith community. This research will be a (further) contribution to a method proposed by several Asian biblical scholars who want to contribute to and reflect on Indonesian contextual biblical hermeneutics, emphasizing the importance of the following issues.

In the first place stands the importance of the local context. Contextual biblical hermeneutics seeks to concentrate on the results of the interaction between common believers, their context and their sacred texts. Contextual biblical hermeneutics does not want to take supposed universal moulds as its starting point or operate within the space they offer. This, then, indicates at the same time the limitation and scope of this research. Though it will be necessary to define my own position with respect to the issue of interreligious dialogue, the present study does not intend to make interreligious dialogue its main theme. This research will address in particular the context I am part of.

In the second place comes the fact that most Indonesian socially-engaged biblical scholars define the role of the exegete as a scholar who is willing to let his scientific practice be partly constituted by the interests and needs of, in this case, Javanese-Christian readers of Scripture.

In the third place, Indonesian socially-engaged biblical scholars consider it an important part of their task to develop the literacy enablement and hermeneutical competence of (common) readers\(^{37}\), i.e. to teach (common) readers how to relate in a responsible and adequate manner to their own (hybrid) contexts where multiple religious texts - stemming from different religious traditions - exist, are being read and presented as important sources for developing their worldviews and behaviours.

In the fourth place, socially-engaged Indonesian biblical scholars emphasize the importance of exploring the possibilities offered by the reading process (of Scripture) for becoming a transformative process. An important goal is responding to the question of how to bring about interaction between text(s) and readers in a manner that becomes a script for peacebuilding in a situation characterized by (the tensions of) hybridity and multi-religiosity.

### 0.4 Research Method

The method used in this research is called cross-textual reading. It is a method intended to establish a critical and creative dialogue between two texts stemming from different religious traditions, but being read in the same (hybrid) cultural context, and to bridge gaps and strive for more understanding between readers of those sacred texts. Before applying this specific method, the two stories will be investigated in their own literary context, using a narrative approach. We will formulate this in more details when we explain our method.

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\(^{37}\) This concept relates to those activities, qualities and devices which, in a particular socio-religious field, are seen as necessary for attempting to bridge between the divine-scriptural sphere and the worldly realm.
0.5 Research Question

Based on what has been said previously, now we can formulate our main research question as follows: Can a cross-textual reading of two important narratives about transformation (‘the mystical quest’) from two different religious traditions contribute to equipping Javanese Christians better for peacebuilding processes? To what extent can the conclusion of this investigation be formulated as a message for the intended audience in order for them to take a new position on the hermeneutical field in a responsible and adequate manner?

0.6 Sub Research Questions

In order to find answers to our main research question we will have to find answers to the following aspects of that question: How can the method of cross-textual reading be applied? In doing so, we will analyze what are the narrative settings of the “Jacob at the Jabbok” and “Dewa Ruci” stories, and what are their commonalities and differences? Afterward, we will need to examine how a cross-textual reading can enrich the interpretation of both texts. Do the two stories follow the same patterns of mystical quest? What can be learned from differences, how should they be dealt with? It follows that we will have to ask in what ways both stories presuppose or call for a significant spiritual experience as a catalyst for peace-building.

0.7 Development of the Research

We will start by offering a discussion on the field of Asian Biblical Hermeneutics and its relation to postcolonial criticism. We also will reflect on the method of multi-faith reading and its underlying hermeneutical theory. A critical assessment will be offered on the debate going on amongst practitioners of these hermeneutics addressing issues as where and how the method has been used and applied, the reasons for choosing this method, what should a critical appraisal of the method entail and the significance within contextual Bible study in my Asian and Indonesian context. Several examples of how Asian hermeneuticians and theologians have been using the method will also be presented along with critical remarks placing them within the dialogue about the tension between openness to the other and commitment to one’s faith identity. This chapter will close with an explication of my own hermeneutical position and assessment of the value and practice of cross-textual reading within interreligious dialogue (chapter 1).

Then, in the following chapter, I will analyze the narrative development of the “Dewa Ruci” story, including the perspective of the narrator, the role of actors, plot, suspense, keywords, several important symbols and several core teachings. Primarily using a narratological approach to the story, I will underline my intention of searching for the significance of the characters’ transformation via mystical experience. The interpretations and opinions of Javanese scholars, who explore the meaning of some symbols in the story, will be considered important but will not be taken as the main focus of this chapter. In the last part of this chapter, I will offer a summary of how a
transformative-existential mystical quest can help in addressing social tensions in a peaceful manner (chapter 2).

The following chapter will present a narrative approach of the story of “Jacob at the Jabbok” (Gen 32: 23-33) by taking the mystical quest as its lens. By doing this, I want to find elements that confirm that the story of “Jacob at the Jabbok” is full of mysticism and that it is possible to read it as a mystical story. In this chapter we will also approach the text synchronically and use narrative criticism as a tool understanding the messages of the story, the result of the quest, its socio-religious significance and the challenges it offers (chapter 3).

In the next chapter I will apply the method of cross-textual reading by examining and reflecting on the differences (conflicts), the commonalities of both texts. I will compare the texts in a critical manner and make them interact. The question which new horizons of meaning and understanding may be offered by one story to the other will be answered. This chapter will also examine what the stories have in common where mysticism and mystical quest are concerned (chapter 4).

In the final and concluding chapter I will examine to what extent this research has been able to respond to the questions that led to our journey. This section will also investigate the relation between mystical experience and peacebuilding as well as an examination of to what extent the final conclusions of the reading of the two texts may connect to some central ideas about peace and reconciliation from the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition (to which I belong). Some recommendations and suggestions for future study will be offered.
CHAPTER 1

Cross-textual Reading:
Challenges for Asian Biblical Hermeneutics

Introduction to the Chapter

This chapter offers a discussion of Asian Biblical Hermeneutics and its relation to postcolonial biblical criticism which partly includes a multi-faith hermeneutical method. Several discussions such as where the method was used and applied, reasons for choosing this method, critical appraisal to the method, as well as its significance for contextual Bible study within my Asian and Indonesian contexts will be examined. A critical discussion of several examples of how Asian hermeneuticians and theologians have been using the method will also be presented. I will finish this chapter and make my own hermeneutical standpoint clear by elaborating how a cross-textual reading of sacred texts can function as an important instrument within the field of interreligious dialogue.

1.1 What is Asian Biblical Hermeneutics?

Asian Biblical Hermeneutics is an effort to interpret the Bible in the dialogic and dynamic interaction between text and context and vice versa within the mixed socio-political, cultural and religious realities of Asia.\(^{38}\) The phrase of ‘vice versa’ is very important here. Doing Asian Biblical Hermeneutics is not just applying the word of the Bible that is treated as a timeless, universal, unchanging record of God to the context of readers (Lee 1993: 35), but requires creative interaction between the text and context. D. Preman Niles (1985: 283) suggests that “the most acute criticism of the commonly practiced mode of the interpretation of text and context in Asian Biblical Hermeneutics is whether ‘theology is always a matter of relating text to context? Or is it not also a matter of relating context to text so that the context may speak to the text? Is Asia there to receive? Has it nothing to contribute?’”

Regarding the context, we could agree with Aloysius Pieris’s proposal that Asians have two major characteristics: overwhelming poverty and multifaceted religiosity (Pieris 1988). To be more detailed, Lee divides these characteristics into a kind of sub-correlated issue. He observes that regarding the Asian context “there are two major things: the socio-political reality of suffering and the religio-cultural characteristic of the plurality of religions and cultures” (Lee 2008: 183). He then draws attention to some of the following details: “Though suffering is universal and not exclusively the plight of Asian people alone, the reality of suffering in Asia in terms of its extensiveness, its magnitude and its far-reaching consequences on the bodies and minds of people should not be overlooked or brushed aside lightly. Besides natural mishaps and hardships, there are economic exploitation, military violence and political oppression, coupled with the national

\(^{38}\)I do not intend to say that this kind of hermeneutics cannot be found outside of Asia. Instead, my intention is to underline that this biblical hermeneutics is especially likely to appear in Asia with its socio-cultural-religious negotiations.
machinery and the transnational corporations that deliberately violate human rights and transgress human dignity” (Lee 2008: 183). The social realities mentioned by Lee are prominent in Asian contexts that also need to be addressed by biblical studies and theology, as it is necessary to make a contextual effort on a more relevant basis. Asian Biblical Hermeneutics should address either the issue of socio-politics or the plurality of culture and religions in the midst of Asia’s tensions and struggles.

The context of plurality of religions and hybridity in the socio-cultural life of Asians convinces me that the significance of doing an Asian Biblical Hermeneutics is at stake. Therefore, in this section I want to discuss what Asian Biblical Hermeneutics is; what kind of reasons underlie this concern; and how the Asian theologians try to elaborate their works in order to strengthen the significance of doing an Asian contextual interpretation, taking into account both Asia’s socio-politic context as well as the various religions and their religious text in a situation of hybridity.

Elaborating more on the issues mentioned above, Asian theologians must demonstrate: (1) historical awareness; and (2) sensitivity to the present invitation (the invitation extended by Asian scholars to become sensitive). The historical awareness is mostly connected with the presence of domination in the biblical interpretation discourse. In his writing, Lee states that:

The interpretation of the Bible has, until recent years, been done mainly by European and American scholars who consciously or unconsciously assumed universal validity for ways of reading the Bible. The western missionaries who came to Asia taught us about the uniqueness, exclusiveness, normativeness, and finality of the Christian Bible. This kind of view is still very common among Christian churches in Asia and is haunting the minds of some biblical scholars who approach the Christian canon from a different perspective. The task of doing theology in Asia is primarily one of performing theological exorcism. It is a fact that the rich cultural-religious traditions of Asia and the socio-political experiences of injustice, suffering, exploitation, and poverty in Asia were left outside the historical Judeo-Christian communities of faith of which shaped the Christian canon in its successive stages of development and formation. Some scholars with conservative missionary zeal strongly believed that the Bible is the “Text”, the only Word of God. They also claim that their interpretation of it is of absolute validity and primary authority for all peoples. (1993: 35)

Meanwhile, the present invitation is, according to Lee, laid out in the reality that “Asia may be said to constitute a special region of the world in this regard, given the fact that it possesses of a number of living religious traditions. These religions have prospered, closely associated as they are with the life and culture of the people. Their scriptures and classics have nurtured the life and spirit of numerous Asians” (1998: 248).

So, again, there are two dimensions of context for Asian Biblical Hermeneutics: the socio-political dimension and the variety of culture-religious realities. Each contains tensions for the lives of the Asian people. The former can be represented by the Dalit or Minjung Interpretation and Theology which, according to Lee (2008: 184), strives to reread the Bible from the socio-cultural liberation perspective and to make sense of the text for the poor and oppressed people in their struggle to regain their freedom and
humanity. Meanwhile, the later dimension could be related to the need for multi-faith hermeneutics that shows readers’ eagerness to seriously and respectfully reread the text and context within Asians’ culture-religious resources. The attempt of making an Asian reading which combines these two spheres is an ongoing call for Asian biblical scholars.

1.2 Relation of Contextual/Liberating Reading and Multi-faith Hermeneutics: Its Place and Objective

My method is developed in the broader field of what can be called multi-faith hermeneutics. Therefore, in this section this multi-faith hermeneutics will be discussed specifically in its relation to the contextual/liberating reading of the Bible for Asians. Addressing the call to do Asian Biblical Hermeneutics contextually in a liberating atmosphere, Soares-Prabhu affirms:

At least two main approaches to an Asian interpretation of the Bible: One will read the Bible primarily in the light of Asia’s poverty, the other in the light of its religious traditions. Corresponding roughly to these concerns one can think of two strategies of interpretation. The first of these will confront the Bible with Asian social concerns [. . .] The second will relate it to the texts of great Asian religions. One can best interpret the Bible in Asia by relating it inter-textually to Asia’s living stories or Asia’s religious texts. These two strategies are obviously not exhaustive, nor are they to be practised in isolation from one another, for the concerns to which they (roughly) correspond interpenetrate. Biblical reflection on the stories expressing Asia’s broken humanity, takes place in the context of the dominant non-Christian religiosity of Asia, and cannot ignore Asian religious texts. And biblical reflection on Asian religiosity cannot be restricted to confronting the Bible with religious texts only, since the religiosity of the great mass of the Asian peoples is expressed in unwritten traditions. The stories that we

39 Lee (2008: 186) mentions that “Dalit and Minjung biblical interpretations are just two of those many approaches to the Bible from the perspective of the experience of the oppression of the people, who attempt to seek empowerment from their reading of the biblical text. Contextual socio-political sensitivity to the plight of the people is the point of departure, and the aim of biblical interpretation is largely communal liberation from social injustice imposed by oppressive socio-political structures.”

40 Soares-Prabhu (1995: 325, 326) states that “in the Asian context, the basic concern which will determine our ‘matrixing’ of these Asian stories and texts with the Bible will be liberation, for this is, in different ways, the primary goal both the biblical and the Asian religions, besides being Asia’s most urgent social need. Interpreting the Bible in its postmodern Asian context must always, therefore, be liberative. But it can be liberative in at least three different ways. The liberation that interpreting the Bible brings to its Asian context can be: (1) the liberation of Asian religions – not excluding Christianity – from the pre-critical dogmatism as well as the domination of Western critical reading of historical criticism that should function as ancillary role rather than the dominant one; (2) in the prophetic critique of Asian reality that will foster the social liberation of Asia’s marginalized people from their overwhelming poverty, social oppression and patriarchy; (3) a spiritual liberation of the individual from the bondage of inordinate attachments, which is the primary goal of the non-Semitic religions of Asia, where the reading of the Bible must be illuminated by the Asian religious texts and stories which are brought to it ...”
bring to the Bible will be stories not only of Asia’s broken humanity but also of Asia’s religious quest (1995: 325).

In his statement, Soares-Prabhu stresses that the intention of developing multi-faith hermeneutics arises from the awareness that the reality of Asian multi-scriptures, or sacred religious resources, must be taken into consideration very seriously. This is part of the two interrelated dimensions in elaborating Asian Contextual Hermeneutics, the socio-political context and the hybridity within the various culture-religious contexts of Asia. As stated above, the former can be represented by the Minjung or Dalit Interpretation and Theology. In this kind of reading, it is obvious that the socio-political context has played a significant role in how to re-read, understand, and criticize the biblical reading. Meanwhile, multi-faith hermeneutics lies mostly in the second dimension, the context of plurality and hybridity within the various cultural-religious scriptures or sacred resources in Asia as Asian texts. By the word ‘texts’ here, I refer to both the written and oral religious traditions and customs. Asia has provided many religious resources as sacred texts that have shaped Asian values for a long period of time. That is why the monoscriptural reading of the Bible should not be taken as a universal norm in itself, but rather as a partner of dialogue with the other Asian texts in their multi-faith realities. Western biblical methods should also be taken as beneficial tools in their own capacity and could be treated more constructively as a dialogic partner in Asian readings rather than as definitive in measuring and gaining the truth and meaning of the texts.

Even though each of these dimensions (the socio-political and culture-religious spheres of Asian contextual Bible reading) has its own emphasis, the two are meant to be held together. Therefore we should not separate Asians’ struggles starkly in different compartments but rather recognize that the Asian contexts contain ‘a hybrid set of locations’ (Lee 2003:5). The context here is not just the situation of Asia but also the Asian readers within. Lee (2008: 190) underlines this when he writes that “context is not just a setting of the intersection of time and space; it is a conglomeration of texts in the conventional sense of written documents, as well as in the more elusive socio-scientific notion of historical events, people’s movements, daily experiences and human actions in community as being ‘social text’.” If the first dimension could be called a contextual-liberating biblical reading in the face of socio-political reality, then the second dimension can be understood as a contextual-liberating biblical reading vis-a-vis the mono-scriptural reading as well as in the face of dominating Western readings (primarily historical criticism) of the biblical text. Regarding multi-faith hermeneutics - in the midst of the realities of the availability of many sacred texts or scriptures within the Asian world - we have already been reminded that the spirit of making “comparison with traditional myths and scripture in Asia is not meant to prove that Christianity is compatible with indigenous tradition but aims at a ‘wider inter-textuality’ and a fruitful and continuous cross-cultural dialogue” (Soares-Prabhu 1995: 281).

1.3 Some Examples of Asian Biblical Hermeneutics of Asian Theologians

In this section, examples of the work of several Asian Biblical scholars will be presented briefly. I choose to address the work of Sugirtharajah, Kwok, Banawiratma and Soares-Prabhu. I will take the last two together because of their similarities. The reason for choosing these scholars is that each of them has tried to be aware of the Asian socio-
culture-religious resources and has tried to point out his or her positions. Sugirtharajah proposes several ideas, appropriately thought out in the attempt to celebrate the multi-faith reality in Asia. Kwok is a well-known feminist Asian theologian, famous because of her use of the concept “dialogical-imagination”, a method which attempts to take the Biblical text and the Asian event, story, and ideas in a reciprocal dialogue to fill the gaps through a liberative reading. Banawiratma and Soares-Prabhu have tried almost the same thing (each in a different manner) in elaborating the Asian text, idea, and wisdom in their interactive encounters with the Bible. These Asian theologians have a common concern for doing Asian Biblical Hermeneutics contextually.

1.3.1 “Interfaith Hermeneutics” in the Work of Sugirtharajah

According to Sugirtharajah (1991: 440) the work of interfaith hermeneutics, including efforts at comparative research, “is not an entirely new enterprise. There have been earlier attempts, but they were prompted by missionary apologetics, where Christian texts were set over the others as prior, and ethically and spiritually superior.” However, he writes that “in a changed theological climate, where other religious texts exert a great influence, the task is not to be combative, but to complement each other’s textual resources” (1991: 441). In his two articles published in 1991 (in the first edition of *Voices from the Margin*), Sugirtharajah shared some ideas on Inter-faith Hermeneutics. Elsewhere in his articles, he also uses the term multi-faith hermeneutics. The core idea he wants to underline is how important it is for biblical interpreters to “take into account the people of other faiths in their exegetical cogitations.” In their efforts to do biblical hermeneutics in a multi-faith context like Asia, Asian theologians should be aware of at least two things. These two things are: (1) sensitivity “to the scriptural texts of other faith communities and the spiritual sustenance they provide for many of their adherents”; and (2) consciousness of Christians scholars “that their literary output is likely to reach a wide audience which is not necessarily exclusively Christian” (Sugirtharajah 1991: 352-353). His deep intention is to encourage Asian biblical interpreters to reread and formulate the message of the Bible anew by investing the biblical text with new meanings and nuances in the light of discoveries in the spiritual world shaped by direct experiences common to all faith.

As a point of departure, Sugirtharajah takes the story of the apostle Paul’s journey, specifically the story that is usually titled Paul’s Conversion, and offers a different interpretation of the story through what he calls as the Dialogical Approach (rather than what he calls the Conquest and Re-orientation Approach). What he means...
by ‘dialogical approach’ is “an approach which acknowledges the validity of the varied and diverse religious experiences of all people and rules out any exclusive claim to the truth by one religious tradition” (1991: 358). What is important about this approach is that in it we observe the positive and constructive view of other religions. According to Sugirtharajah (1991: 356), “every religion is worthy of love and respect. All religions contain liberating as well as oppressive elements and the hermeneutical task is to enlist the liberating aspects to bring harmony and social change to all people.”

As implications of this positive and constructive view of other religious traditions, Sugirtharajah stresses the significance of having an open understanding in doing interpretation contextually and tentatively since, according to him, there can be no universal interpretation of a text. Moreover, he mentions that “a text becomes authoritative and sacred when it has contextual quality” (Sugirtharajah 1991: 359). This idea is laid out in the understanding of the biblical text as a dynamic text, rather than a static or final one. According to him, the biblical texts “possess a reservoir of meanings and nuances. When one particular meaning fails to meet the need of a community, one can always choose other meanings or other texts that can speak to the situation meaningfully and imaginatively [. . .] In other words, the community chooses to re-tell the episodes that empower them to meet new demands” (Sugirtharajah 1991: 359). Since Sugirtharajah believes that “there is no value-free exegesis,” and that “all interpretations are biased” (1991: 359) and dependent on many things (for instance the academic, ideological and religious background of the interpreters that offer some biases into their interpretation (1991: 359-360)), he then suggests that in order to overcome our own prejudices we should be engaged in what is called as a ‘communitarian exegesis’ (1991: 360). What he means is that “the community of the faithful – lay and professional, male and female, oppressed and oppressor, adults and children, Blacks and Whites – read the text in a dialectical relationship, each questioning, correcting and enabling the other. This way the pre-suppositions of one community are mutually challenged and critiqued by the other. It is an enterprise in which the questions posed by one section of community preoccupied with their context are read along with the critical reflections on the text with a view to seeking the truth together” (Sugirtharajah 1991: 360).

Since in the present hermeneutical task Christian interpreters cannot ignore the religious texts of other faith communities, Sugirtharajah wants to give ground rules for multi-faith hermeneutics. He reminds us that it is important to allow each scripture to be unique and speak on its own terms instead of speaking of the sacred writings in a way that exalts one and denigrates the other:

A proper hermeneutics should go beyond these tendencies and look for what these religious texts are trying to convey, and understand them on their own terms rather than pre-judge them. All scriptures seek to tell in their own way the story of how they understand the mercies of God and the mysteries of life. Of course there is a radical diversity in the form and content of their stories [. . .] Christians may tell their story differently, but they cannot claim that theirs is the only story. In fact, these stories belong to all humankind. (Sugirtharajah 1991: 361)
Even though Sugirtharajah is very much aware of the potency of diversity in both the form and content-message of each scripture, he also sees the possible path of encountering the various scriptures within the multi-faith context into the same point. The point is laid in the Wisdom tradition. According to him, the strength of the Wisdom tradition is that it is universal and not confined to one culture or nation. Even more, the Wisdom tradition has an ability to borrow freely and modify materials from other cultures and sources. Quoting an African proverb he stresses that “it is through other people’s wisdom that we learn ourselves, and no single person’s understanding amounts to nothing” (Sugirtharajah 1991: 362). It seems to him that it is important for the biblical interpreter to be within the intersection of a simultaneously creative dynamic which is to acknowledge the distinctiveness of each tradition on the one hand and also to bring out the common elements on the other hand. Furthermore, Sugirtharajah also mentions that:

The task of Asian scholars is to pursue this matter further and detect similarities and possible influences and borrowing between different traditions. The purpose is not to minimize the truth-claims of any one tradition, but to show that religious traditions are earthly, relative and do not exist in complete isolation, and that they cannot grow rejecting one another. Such an exegetical undertaking can also serve to point to the universal resonances of different sacred texts. More importantly, it can help to remove religious bigotry and communal tension caused by the alleged superiority and uniqueness of one faith tradition over another. (1991: 442)

I am grateful to Sugirtharajah since he also notices that elaborating multi-faith hermeneutics should not be trapped in an ivory tower of the “games within the texts” but should make a significant impact on the social context of the peoples. In other words, the aim of the task of multi-faith hermeneutics is not to stop at the level of theoretical understanding but should also be able to touch the reality of the socio-praxis of human beings. Related to this, he writes:

Finally, the task of interpretation is not merely description but engagement. The goal of biblical interpretation is not only understanding of the biblical text, but ultimately enacting it. The meaning of a text is discovered not only through reflection upon it, but also in concrete social action based upon it. The primary concern of an interpreter lies not only in transforming social inequalities, as the Latin American liberation theologians are vigorously reminding us, but also in bringing racial and religious harmony among people of different faiths. (1991: 362-363)

1.3.2 “Dialogical Imagination” in the Work of Kwok Pui-lan

Kwok, an Asian feminist theologian, has written several papers that were collected and then published in 1995 as a book that became well known with the title Discovering the

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43 Sugirtharajah’s dream for Asian hermeneutics is “to engage in an interpretative enterprise that will go beyond the identification of the influences of Jewish and Greek thinking on the faith of the early Christians and detect possible Hindu or Buddhist elements in the faith articulations of the early Christian movement” (1991: 441).
**Bible in the Non-Biblical Word.** In her book, she sharply emphasizes how important it is for Asians to do biblical interpretation from perspectives of their own socio-political-cultural and religious contexts. In particular, she has stressed the significance of feminist reading of the Bible, free from the bondage of male-patriarchy as well as from the European historico-critical methods. She chooses the Bible as the focal point of her study for several reasons:

First, the Bible has a very controversial, ambivalent, and often conflicting status in Asia. During the nineteenth century the Bible was introduced to many parts of Asia as an integral part of the colonial discourse. It has been used to legitimate an ethnocentric belief in the inferiority of the Asian peoples and the deficiency of Asian cultures. But the same Bible has also been a resource for Christian struggling against oppression in Asia, especially in the Philippines and South Korea. Second, in Asia the Bible encounters a wholly new cultural context, one with a long hermeneutical tradition that challenges the hegemony of western models of interpretation. Third, many new paradigms for biblical interpretation have emerged in the past several decades, creating more space in which to raise new questions and to use one’s creativity and imagination. With new insights from the social sciences and cultural and literary studies, our understanding of the relationship among the text, the context, and the reader, becomes much more diverse and sophisticated. (Kwok 1995: 2)

One of her contributions to Asian biblical reading is laid out in her proposal for “dialogical imagination” as a proper approach to biblical interpretation, since “such approach uses Asian myths, legends, and stories as the context for biblical reflection, and the social biography of Asian people as a hermeneutical key to understand the Bible and Asian reality” (Kwok 1995: 4). Therefore, within this method she offers an image of the Bible as a “talking book, inviting polyphonic theological discourses and ongoing dialogues, to conceptualize the pluralistic use of the Bible in Asia” (Kwok 1995: 5). She reminds us to be aware that “to interpret the Bible for a world historically not shaped by the biblical vision, there is a need to conjure up a new image for the process of biblical interpretation” (Kwok 1995:12). The basic reason of ‘dialogical imagination’ is quite simple: “Asian Christians are heirs to both the biblical story and to our own story as Asian people, and we are concerned to bring the two into dialogue with one another [. . .] Likewise, biblical interpretation in Asia must create a two-way traffic between our own tradition and that of the Bible” (Kwok 1995: 12). According to her, Asian Christians must be aware that there is a dissonance between the kind of biblical interpretations inherited by Asians and the reality that Asians are facing. Within this situation Kwok calls on Asians to find “new images for our reality and to make new connections between the Bible and our lives” (Kwok 1995: 13).

Agreeing to the steps proposed by Sharon Parks, Kwok shows that the process of creative imagination involves the following stages: a consciousness of conflict (something not fitting), a pause, the finding of a new image, the re-patterning of reality,

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44 According to Kwok (1995: 4,12), the phrase of “dialogical imagination” is her own proposal based on her observation of “what Asian theologians are doing.” Earlier, there was an almost similar phrase “analogical imagination” proposed by David Tracy in his famous book *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism* (1981).
and interpretation. The act of dialogical imagination involves a creative two-way traffic, as Kwok points out that: “On the one hand, we have to imagine that the biblical tradition - formulated in another time and in another culture - can address our burning question of today. On the other hand, based on our present circumstances, we have to reimagine what the biblical world was like, thus opening up new horizons hitherto hidden from us” (Kwok 1995: 13). Moreover Kwok declares that the intention and nature of her method is:

To convey the complexities, the multi-dimensional linkages, and the different levels of meaning that underlie our present task of relating the Bible to Asia. This task is dialogical, for it involves ongoing conversation among different religious and cultural traditions. It is highly imaginative, for it looks at both the Bible and our Asian reality anew, challenging the historical-critical method, presumed by many to be objective and neutral [. . .] Dialogical imagination attempts to bridge the gaps of time and space, to create new horizons, and to connect the disparate elements of our lives into a meaningful whole. (1995: 13)

In the case of Asians’ materials, she specifies these two: “the first is the use of the Asian myths, legends, and stories in biblical reflection. The second is the use of the social biography of the people as a hermeneutical key to understand both our reality and the message of the Bible” (Kwok 1995: 13). The work of C.S. Song (with its concern on the richness of Asian tradition as well as folk resources) and Minjung theology (with its concern for socio-economic-political injustice46) are noted by Kwok as examples of elaborating a dialogical imagination interpretation (Kwok 1995: 16). Besides her feminist activity, Kwok also offers many biblical reflections with this very method,47 including, for instance, a ‘dialogical imagination’ interpretation between ‘Mary’s Magnificat’ and the tragedy at the Tiananmen Square, and a reinterpretation of the story of the Syrophoenecian woman in Mark 7, etc.

Kwok encourages us to bravely relate the human story and God’s action. This is important since, according to her, “the dialogical imagination operates, not only by incorporating the cultural and religious traditions of Asia, but also in the radical appropriation of our own history [. . .] we have tried to define historical reality in our own terms and we find it filled with theological insights”(1995:15). Again, in order to energize the spirit of doing this and inviting a biblical method, she also comes to the matter of normativity. According to her:

46 Kwok (1995: 16) furthermore notices that “Dialogical Imagination operates in the attempt to reclaim the minjung as the center of both our Asian reality and the biblical drama.”
47 Kwok (1995: 37, 38) mentions on several scopes: “A dialogical model highlights the possibilities of different readings according to our race, class, culture, and sexual orientation [. . .] A dialogical model of interpretation emphasizes that Christian churches exist in dialogue with other human communities, including different faith communities. In the multireligious Asia, we do not have one scripture, but many scriptures, not only one religious narrative, but multiple religious narratives [. . .] In contrast, a dialogical model suggests the genuine possibility of responding to many different narratives at the same time, of trying out different versions of each story, and of creating alternative narratives [. . .] A dialogical model understands the self not as an isolated, monolithic identity but as a center of multiple relationships.”
There is no one norm for interpretation that can be applied cross-culturally. Different communities raise critical questions about the Bible, and they will find diverse segments of it addressing their specific situations. Our dialogical imagination has infinite potential to generate more truths, revealing hidden corners we have failed to see [. . .] our truth-claims must be tested in public discourse, in constant dialogue with other communities. Good news for Christians might spell bad news for Buddhists or Confucians. (Kwok 1995: 19)

Here I am convinced that Kwok’s sensitivity to the Asian context and its potencies opens up many challenging discoveries in the realm of contextual biblical hermeneutics.

1.3.3 “Encounters of the Sources” in the Work of J.B. Banawiratma and George Soares-Prabhu

As mentioned before, J.B. Banawiratma and George Soares-Prabhu are taken together here since these two Asian theologians have a common concern for the invitation of doing Asian Biblical Hermeneutics contextually.

1.3.3.1 Learning from the Work of J.B. Banawiratma (Indonesia)

In 1977, J.B. Banawiratma, among others, began to share his contextual and dialogical reading of the Biblical text and religious traditional resources in Indonesia in his book, written in Indonesian language, Yesus Sang Guru: Pertemuan Kejawen dengan Injil (“Jesus The Guru/Teacher: A meeting of Kejawen/Javanese traditional belief and the Gospel”). This academic work has successfully given a fresh view for connecting the Bible and other religious traditions. Of course, several pros and cons arose but the discourse of contextual and inter-religious biblical interpretation in Indonesia has made its convincing start.

The method used in this book is called a dialogical meeting method between the Javanese beliefs or Kejawen and the gospel of John. In each, the study focuses on and deepens the concept of Guru which is commonly translated as Teacher. Firstly, Banawiratma elaborates the concept of Guru and its relation to the murid or disciples in (a) the Gospel of John, using the historical criticism method of some Johannine texts and then secondly in (b) Kejawen worldviews through studying several Javanese religious texts within their socio-cultural environment. After taking these two steps, he then comes to the third step: (c) a dialogical meeting of the two discoveries. However, according to

48 According to Kwok (1995: 9-12), “The central problem of biblical hermeneutics for Christians living in the ‘non-Christian’ world is how to hear God speaking in a different voice – one other than Hebrew, Greek, German or English. The interpretation of the Bible is not just a religious matter within the Christian community but a matter with significance political implications for other peoples as well. The Bible can be used as an instrument of domination, but it can also be interpreted to work for our liberation. Biblical interpretation is never simply a religious matter, for the processes of formation, canonization, and transmission of the Bible have always been imbued with the issues of authority and power. The introduction of the Bible into Asia has been marked by difficulty and resistance, mainly because Asian countries have their own religious and cultural systems.”
him, the most genuine of dialogical meetings at last happens within a person when he/she faces his/her religious experience of the Javanese society as well as the religious experience of the Gospel of John (Banawiratma 1977: 119).

Banawiratma notices that even though the witness of the Bible has normative characteristics, this normative guidance should not deny the reality of God’s salvation plan in its universal and incarnate nature. For the God who saves, is also the God who comes into and embraces the world in Jesus Christ. God calls human beings but does not pull the humans out from the earth where they stand; God desires that human beings will accept the Divine by standing upright on the ground. Therefore, being a Christian does not mean to be alienated, but rather to find oneself as well as one’s own life. These are the realities that demand the significance of realizing both the biblical religious experience and a person’s own cultural-religious experience at the same time. Banawiratma is arguing that one does not have to choose between being Javanese or Christian. A Javanese person who follows Jesus Christ is a Christian who is still Javanese. In the dialogical meeting – faced with the decisive Jesus Christ – one is expected to find oneself in one’s vocation and grow as a Christian who is rooted in one’s own world: this is called the processing and growth of new life (Banawiratma 1977: 119).

According to Banawiratma, the starting point for creating a dialogical encounter is the concern for life. In Javanese society, the concern for life comes as the quest for the perfect life, which will in turn lead to the unity of human beings with God, or what is called in Javanese terms “pamoring kawula Gusti”. The perfect life in Javanese society is pursued through the help of a teacher. Therefore, in the Javanese religious experience, one seeks to be a disciple, to look for and choose the right and trustworthy Guru/Teacher/Master. Meanwhile, in the Gospel of John there is a concern for believing in Jesus and that belief will bear the eternal life. According to the witness of John, Banawiratma continues, the Guru in the religious life is none other than Jesus. Thus, as a Guru, Jesus has a unique position and function since He himself is the encounter of God and humankind, the Messiah and the Son of God. Therefore, in the frame of life between the Javanese religious experience and the Gospel of John, there is the “sharing” of the experience of being a disciple with pursuing the perfect life within the context of Guru and disciple (Banawiratma 1977: 120). This depiction could be the guideline of a dialogical meeting between the Javanese religious experience and the religious experience of the Gospel. In that dialogical meeting, can be found a very deep and meaningful sharing (Banawiratma 1933: 121).

Banawiratma goes on to discuss the (1) significance of meeting Jesus as Guru, followed by (2) the ideal characteristics of being a disciple by elaborating the commonalities contained both in the Kejawen and in the Gospel of John. In order to explain the nuances of exclusivism in some parts of the Gospel (i.e. the statement in John 14 that Jesus is the only way, etc), Banawiratma notes the importance of remembering that these expressions in the Gospel of John are limited expressions in the scope and situation of the Gospel of John itself. Banawiratma mentions that one could be misled by thinking that the Gospel of John spreads an impression of fanaticism. If this is so, however, the other point that should be remembered is that the Gospel is a testimony of faith that is also limited by its environment (Banawiratma 1977: 126).

Banawiratma then elaborates on two important questions: the mystical experience and the task of being a witness in both Kejawen and the Gospel of John. Here
Banawiratma shows how in those two things we can see how *Kejawen* and the Gospel can be engaged in mutual dialogue, whether by showing the same ideas supported by both or in the particularities of each. In the mystical quest, Banawiratma mentions that the peak religious experience of the Javanese spirituality, *pamoring kawula Gusti* (unity between human and God/Divine), can also be grasped through the help of the teacher who talks to the disciples about the origin and the aim of this life (*‘sangkan paraning dumadi/ Javanese language*). Within this experience the relationship between *Guru* and the disciples should reach the depths where they achieve the unity of spirit and is nothing like the relationship between a master and slave. This kind of relationship is supported by the Gospel of John which is clear that the relationship between Jesus and his disciples bears no resemblance to that of a master-slave, but rather is deep, mystical connection, since, it is written that whosoever believes in the Son of God, Jesus Christ, and comes into unity with him shall be adopted as a child of God.

The experience of being touched by God in unity with the Son of God is the mystical experience gained within spiritual efforts. If this is so, then to be a true disciple of Jesus is also the fulfillment of the Javanese religious experience’s desire (Banawiratma 1977: 128). Meanwhile, though both the Gospel of John and *Kejawen* endorse the real action-involvement of the disciples in the world as the result of their transformative relationship with the *Guru/Master/Teacher*, there are some differences in the task of being a disciple in the matter of “bringing the message of the Teacher to the world.” For instance, the Gospel of John contains missiological and ecclesiological characteristics, while these kinds of characteristics are not so visible in the Javanese religious experience. In the Javanese religious experience, the *Guru* is functioning as a Deliverer and not as the one who possesses a universal value within himself and so the relation between *Guru* and disciples in the Javanese experience is limited to inside the group itself (Banawiratma 1977: 129-130). Banawiratma encourages us to respect the differences as the colours of their specific traditions, but he tends to not elaborate on these differences, something we need to deal with in a later discussion.

In the final stage of this dialogical meeting between Christianity and *Kejawen*, Banawiratma supposes that Javanese Christians will tend to feel closer to the predicates or names of Jesus as *Guru* than to such other names in the Gospel as the Lamb of God, the Son of David, etc. This is caused by the mutual resonance contained in the concept of *Guru* in the Javanese religious experience and in the Gospel of John.

### 1.3.3.2 Learning from the Work of George Soares-Prabhu (India)

Soares-Prabhu, an Indian theologian, published an article entitled “Two Mission Commands: An Interpretation of Matthew 28:16-20 in the light of a Buddhist Text” in the 2nd edition of the book edited by Sugirtharajah, *Voices from the Margin* (1995). The core of Soares-Prabhu’s article has succinctly been summarized by the book’s editor as follows: “This essay is an exercise in inter-textual study of the two missionary commands, one Christian (Matthew 28: 16-20) and the other Buddhist (Mahavagga I. 10-11.1). In this comparative analysis, Soares-Prabhu uses the Buddhist text to illuminate the Christian one. In doing so, he draws out the similarities and differences, continuities and
absences in these ancient texts and uses such a cross-religious reading to question the traditional triumphalistic exegesis of the Matthean passage” (1995: 319).

This summary suggests that the direction of the so-called “cross-religious reading” is a kind of one-way illumination from the Buddhist text to the Matthew text. One illuminates the other but not vice versa. However, according to Soares-Prabhu, his effort proves that “attempts at interpreting the Bible through a ‘wider intertextuality’ that links biblical texts with texts from the other religious scriptures promise to be a fruitful source for a richer understanding of the Bible” (1995: 334). He also says that the aim of his work is “to provide an example of an Asian interpretation of the Bible by comparing a familiar biblical text with a ‘parallel’ from the Buddhist tradition. The comparison has highlighted significant elements of the biblical text, and lit up its dark corners. Elements in the biblical text not found in its Buddhist intertext have stood out strongly; other elements, conspicuous in the Buddhist intertext but not mentioned in the Gospel, have been shown to be implicit in it” (Soares-Prabhu 1995: 333).

In order to explain the tools of his reading, Soares-Prabhu devotes half of his essay to explaining the heuristic discourse and significance of the very method. He starts by describing the strength of the historical criticism method which is rooted in the Western tradition of Enlightenment and that stresses the empirical ‘objectivity’. This method “purported to disclose the one true meaning of a text through the skilful use of its precisely crafted philological, grammatical and historical tools, without being influenced in any way by the concerns of the interpreter” (Soares-Prabhu 1995:320). However, in the progress of biblical interpretation the hegemony of reading the Bible no longer exists, as he writes:

The situation is very different today, because historical criticism is no longer the dominant model of biblical exegesis in a post modern world. It has been dethroned by new developments in philosophical hermeneutics, and a new postmodern climate which has given up the ‘positivistic ideal of a scientific realm freed from all interpretation’ [quoting Tracy, 1987] which used to be the mythos or the unifying narrative of the modern world [. . .] If historical criticism was the exegetical method appropriate to the post-Enlightenment, ‘modern’ age, a radical pluralism of exegetical methods with particular emphasis on the role of the reader seems to be the characteristic feature of postmodern exegesis. For in postmodern interpretation, as in philosophical hermeneutics, a text is not seen as an ‘object’ already possessing a meaning but as a linguistic network inviting a reader response. (Soares-Prabhu 1995: 320-321)

Soares-Prabhu then states that “the focus of biblical exegesis has been steadily shifting from the author to the text and from the text to the reader” and this opens up a new way for the biblical interpretation within the postmodern awareness, which underlines the importance of the readers’ responses. Asian Biblical Hermeneutics, which has been developed within the dynamic interaction between the biblical text and Asians’ realities (meaning: their social struggles, religious traditions, sacred texts, and the people(s) as adherents of religions and readers of sacred texts as well) could emerge in a strong position. And as the principle of the proper and contextual Asian reading, he argues that it is the current Asian reader within their Asian realities (socio-economic struggles as well as multifaceted religious traditions) - not the so-called “implied
reader” of the biblical text - that should come forward and do the inter-textual reading of the Bible by elaborating the insights of other (Asian) texts into the biblical text, even though “in practice such an Asian reading is fraught with difficulties. These come from the complexity of the Asian situation and the contingency of its history” (Soares-Prabhu 1995: 323).

When he comes to a comparison of the two Mission Commands texts, Soares-Prabhu (1995: 326-327) boldly reveals his intention, which is to make “a comparison of the two missions commands’, one from a Christian, the other from a Buddhist scripture, in the hope that such a comparison might help us to an Asian understanding of the Christian text.” Again, we could expect that there will be an equal comparison. However, as I noted in some of the previous paragraphs, what happens then is a tendency to elaborate “a one-way direction of illuminating only”, and not vice versa (although in one point, regarding *agape* and *nirvana*, he makes a link between the two texts).

Starting with categorizing some differences as well as similarities, Soares-Prabhu finds that (a) the two texts belong to very different literary contexts: “The mission command in Matthew concludes a coherent, carefully constructed narrative about Jesus, meanwhile the mission command of the *Mahavagga* is part of a loose collection of traditions, put together to serve as ‘rules of discipline’ for the Buddhist monastic community” (1995: 328); and (b) the content of the two commands is “markedly different”(1995: 330). In the sense of the ‘thing’ commanded, he shows that the liberation of the *bhikkus* (Buddhist monks) mentioned in the Buddhist text has no parallel in the Matthean text. Meanwhile, the command to baptize in Matthew has no parallel in the Buddhist text. These content differences are noted carefully by Soares-Prabhu in order to discuss them in the next steps.

Furthermore, Soares-Prabhu finds some similarities. These are: (1) The two mission commands have the same life-context: both define the missionary task of the respective communities to which they are addressed; (2) The two mission commands are similar in form of the same tripartite structure:

- A (a grounding of the mission in the authority of the sender)
- B (proceeding to spell out the mission)
- C (concluding with a return to the sender whose presence in one form or the other accompanies those who are sent). (1995: 329)

He then comes to the core of his attempt of inter-textuality by explicating several parallel stages of the texts, through which the Buddhist text illuminates the interpretation of the Matthean text. In the first parallel stage, Soares-Prabhu notes that in the Gospel of Matthew:

The mission command is grounded solely in the authority of Jesus (‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me’), meanwhile in the

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49 Soares-Prabhu (1995: 322) mentions that “methods of reader-response criticism which focus on the implied reader (the ‘reader in the text’) suffer from several limitations. They (1) succumb to the ‘intentional fallacy’, that is, they locate the meaning of the text in the intention of the author, which is supposedly revealed by the implied reader for whom the author writes; they (2) ignore the creative role of the real reader in producing the meaning of the text; and they (3) so decontextualize the text which is being interpreted, that they neutralize its significance.”
Mahavagga it is based not only on the liberation of the Buddha himself (‘I am delivered . . . from all fetters, human and divine’), but, equally, on the similar liberation his followers have achieved (‘You, O Bhikkus, are also delivered from all fetters, human and divine’). The Buddhist mission rests as much on the experience of the bhikkus he sends, as it does on the authority of the Buddha himself [. . .] This need for such ‘enlightenment’ (in Christian terms, for ‘conversion’) on the part of the missioner is not explicitly stated in the command of Matthew [. . .] But attention to the Buddhist intertext adverts us to the fact that those who are sent to make disciples are themselves, ‘the eleven disciples’ [. . .] The Buddhist intertext thus reminds us that the Christian mission, for all its Christological grounding, also presupposes the ‘enlightenment’ of those who are sent. (1995: 330, 331).

In his second parallel stage, Soares-Prabhu also points out the symbiosis of the two texts: “Both the Christian and the Buddhist mission commands include a summons to teach. The command in Matthew mandates the disciples to teach all that Jesus has commanded them, once again revealing the Christological focus of the text. The Buddha commands his bhikkus to preach the dhamma. If this dhamma is the way to perfect and pure life of holiness, so this is also what Jesus has commanded.” Consequently, he arrives at a very interesting discovery when he intertwines the two texts: “Christian love (agape) is not Buddhist freedom (nirvana). But there is a convergence between them, for the Buddhist ideal of absolute freedom implies unlimited compassion; just as the Christian goal of unconditional love leads to perfect freedom. The ideal of the free and the compassionate person stands as the desired goal of both traditions” (Soares-Prabhu 1995: 331). In addition to this point of contact, Soares-Prabhu also mentions that there is a profound difference which is possibly implied in the Trinitarian formula of baptism in the gospel of Matthew, in which “a person becomes free and loving as part of a community of disciples among the Christians, whereas he or she is liberated as an isolated individual in Buddhism” (1995: 331).

In the third parallel stage, Soares-Prabhu mentions a similar matter as well as a different formula. The similar matter is the ultimate liberation of human kind. However, this ultimate aim is expressed in very different ways by these two commands. In Buddhism “the aim of mission is, expressly, the welfare of all, indeed not only of humankind, but of all other beings in the world as well” (Soares-Prabhu 1995: 331). This welfare of human and other beings is, according to Soares-Prabhu, “much less clear in Matthew” where the aim of mission is in making disciples of Jesus through baptism. In the Gospel of Matthew, this means “to bring the ‘converts’ through a rite of initiation into a distinct social group. Such ‘baptism’ implies, of course, the welfare, indeed the supreme welfare, of the people baptized” (Soares-Prabhu 1995: 332).

Soares-Prabhu is also critical of the kind of triumphalistic reading on the Matthew’s Command which is usually called as ‘The Great Commission’ because this command “can then become a call to an aggressively selfish mission, a form of ‘conquest’, in which the numerical growth of the missionizing church or political interests of its colonial patrons, becomes more important than the welfare of the evangelized peoples [. . .] Once again the Buddhist intertext draws our intention to a dimension of the Christian text (all mission must be for the good, the profit, the happiness of the world and human beings) that is not explicitly expressed in it and can easily be overlooked” (1995: 332). This, for sure, is one of the Buddhists’ contributions to new
perspectives on the Matthean text, besides the more universal scope of the Buddhists’ command “since it is more conscious of the unity of humankind than the national differences within it” (Soares-Prabhu 1995: 332).

Finally, Soares-Prabhu notes that both mission commands end with a promise. In Matthew there is a Christological and eschatological dimension. These two elements are “wholly lacking in the mission command of the Buddha, who merely promises his bhikkus to go out, just like them, to preach the dhamma. His [Buddha’s] presence fulfils at best an exemplary function”(1995: 333). Here, he wants to be fair to the characteristics of the two texts that are bound to and coloured by their specific theology. Christianity frames the eschatological idea within the Christocentric value as its peak while, within Buddhism, enlightenment is the peak of one’s religious experience.

1.3.4 Evaluation of the Given Examples

In this section, I will evaluate the examples given from the works of Asian theologians by considering their hermeneutical positions in the inter-scriptural discussion through the insights of the theology of religions and interreligious hospitality. To begin with, I will firstly address the insights of theology of religion as a critical lens. The next step will be an elaboration of the examples through this lens.

1.3.4.1 In the Discussion of Theology of Religion

I believe that various models within the discussion of theology of religions are already well known. The classical model names exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism (Moyaert 2011: 5). Meanwhile according to the more recent theoretical views of Paul Knitter (2003), there are four main theological options or ‘models’ for Christian reflection on other religions which he calls the Replacement, Fulfillment, Mutuality and Acceptance model.51

50 The critical insights from the theology of religion as well as from the discussion of interreligious hermeneutics mostly use Moyaert’s idea. Meanwhile, for the chosen method in this research (Cross-textual reading) I will offer my own critiques. The further comments that are related to my own hermeneutical standpoint will be placed in the last part of this chapter.

51 Knitter explores these four expanded models based on his former categories (exclusivism, inclusivism, pluralism). It seems that the fourth model (Acceptance Model) does not fully fit into any of the old categories. Here are the condensed ideas, as we read in “Plurality of Religion as a Kairos” retrieved March 18, 2011, from: http://www.sekty.cz/www/stranky/studie/RD.pdf.

a. "The Replacement model (more commonly called exclusivism), is the traditional view in most of Church history. According to Knitter, this approach is aprioristic, it does not pay sufficient attention to the reality of other religions, nor does it really interact with the claims, practices and social realities of other religions.

b. The Fulfillment model (traditionally called inclusivism), is most typical of post-II Vatican Roman Catholic theology. This model considers Christianity to be the best articulation of divine truth, the normative expression of God’s revelation. The Fulfillment is willing to see God’s truth and grace operating in non-Christian religions, its insistence on the necessity of interreligious dialogue and its sober reminder that there are some non-negotiables in each religious tradition. However, this model presupposes that Christianity is the best and normative religion which often hinders
These models serve as answers offered to address the question of salvation. According to Moyaert (2011: 14), “the question of salvation arises from the two traditional Christian axioms: (1) God’s will for universal salvation and (2) the notion that salvation comes through Christ. These two axioms symbolize the tension between universality and particularity. Different answers are formulated to the questions of salvation, and these answers are usually classified in the now widespread typology of exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism.” As in Knitter’s classification, Moyaert (2011: 15) summarizes that “according to exclusivism, only those who explicitly confess Christ as Savior can be saved. The inclusivist model holds that a personal confession regarding Christ is not necessary for one to be saved. But at the same time it affirms that Christ is already involved in the process of salvation. Pluralism separates the possibility for salvation from mediation through Christ and holds that the religions form different and equal ways of salvation.” However, Moyaert also shows that there is a variant which combines both elements of inclusivism and pluralism. She sees it in the position of Jacques Dupuis (1999). Dupuis’ theological position, as quoted in Moyaert, is described as ‘inclusivist pluralism’ or ‘pluralistic inclusivism’. Both of these terms confirm the element of “the universal and constitutive significance of salvation of the Christ event on the one hand and the continuing salvific value of the different religious traditions as being part of God’s single plan of salvation for humanity on the other” (Moyaert 2011: 27).

genuine dialogue with people of other faiths or local religious traditions because it is not a dialogue among equals.

c. The Mutuality model (earlier called pluralism in Knitter’s previous book) is a relatively new approach. This model is to leave behind the exclusive claims of Christianity which they consider arrogant and triumphalistic. This model offers three different bridges: philosophical-historical, mystical and practical-ethical. The first bridge (philosophical-historical) consists of discovering the historical situatedness of every religious tradition, both in its origins and its truth claims which effectively relativizes any claims for exclusivity and absoluteness. Religions are viewed as historically conditioned responses to the Real. The second bridge (mystical) points to the depth of religious experience as the common core of all religions, variously expressed in different cultural and historical circumstances. These diverse circumstances account for the seemingly conflicting truth claims. The third bridge (practical-ethical) views salvific liberation as the common goal and aspiration of all religious traditions; this approach is therefore soteriocentric or (in Christian theological terminology) Kingdom-oriented. All three bridges presuppose a rough parity of all religions and explicitly reject any claims of Christian superiority.

d. The Acceptance model welcomes religious plurality and makes no assumptions concerning other religions. The representatives of this view take seriously the epistemological situation of postmodernity. Clooney advises fellow believers to start the theology of religions not from the Bible and church tradition, but from reading the sacred texts of other religions and then note what productive and enriching semantic clash results when the biblical world project meets the world projects of other sacred writings.”

52 Moyaert notes two critiques given by the pluralist to the inclusivists. According to pluralism, “the inclusivist model is problematic for two reasons: First, it assumes a confessional perspective; other religions are judged on the basis of criteria belonging to Christian tradition [. . .] In light of the contemporary experience of the spiritual and moral vitality of religious diversity, it is best to search for non-confessional criteria that allow the religions to be judged equally. Second, inclusivism, presupposes an asymmetry between religions. The various religions (including Christianity) are different, incomplete answers to mystery of the ultimate reality that can be experienced in different ways. These different answers must be completed by the human face of God” (2011:33).
Still quoting Dupuis, Moyaert writes that “the inclusivist-pluralist model means that while keeping to the inclusivist position by holding fast to Jesus Christ as universal Savior, one may affirm at the same time a plurality of religions paths having same salvific value for their adherents; not however without being essentially and organically related to the Christ in accordance to the one divine plan of salvation for humankind” (2011: 27)

It is clear that biblical scholars as Sugirtharajah, Kwok, Soares-Prabhu and Banawiratma have not located their methods in the scope of theology of religion but rather in hermeneutics. However, if we use the theology of religion’s terms we could deliberately say that their hermeneutical stand points do not belong to the exclusivism model because they have a definite openness to the other sacred texts. In their works there is no such idea as degrading or subjugating the other texts in the shadow of the Christian Bible. More than tolerance, these Asian theologians have considerable appreciation for the other sacred texts in comparison to the Bible. Thereby, the other texts are counted as equal partners in the dialogue.

Sugirtharajah’s hermeneutical standpoint (within his multi-faith hermeneutics) is fair as he states that all religions contain either liberating or oppressive elements. However, he tends to deal more with the liberating elements that can create benefit to societal life. According to him, we can select and decide those meanings or texts that meaningfully and imaginatively fit the needs of a community. Here the community may pick out the meanings that serve it. This attitude, even though meant to nurture the community, could also be valued as making ‘a canon within canon’ where selection of the texts is made according to one’s own agenda, leaving the dynamics of the text behind. Here the question of validation of the text emerges: “Who has the right to validate the text? Which ones of the interpreters, the community or the texts themselves are able to distinguish the validity?” Here Sugirtharajah tends to avoid elaborating the question of the diversity. His rule of multi-faith hermeneutics is to allow each scripture to be unique and speak on its own terms. This attitude is definitely colored by postmodernism. However, he also describes the Wisdom tradition as a point of convergence between scriptures. Therefore, it seems that, on the one hand, Sugirtharajah holds to uniqueness, but, on the other, he also points out the commonality. This attitude shows his inclusivist as well as his pluralistic perspective. In my opinion responding to Sugirtharajah, it seems that the issue regarding the available interactions of differences between the texts needs to be more digested.

I have shown in the previous part that Kwok has plainly stated the ambivalence of the Bible, either as an integral part of the colonial discourse or as a resource to struggle against oppression in Asia. Working through this ambivalence, Kwok proposes a “dialogical imagination” between the Bible and the Asian texts and scriptures. In this proposal, she views the Bible as a “talking book” that encourages dialogue. This hermeneutical attitude is clearly driven by a huge openness to the other sacred texts. Kwok’s pluralistic standpoint could also be found in her statements that “there is no norm for interpretation that can be applied cross-culturally” (Kwok 1995: 19). For me, it is clear that Kwok’s hermeneutical position is absolutely against exclusivism. This anti-exclusivist standpoint is declared clearly when, in the following challenging sentences, she calls Asians not to be trapped by a kind of ‘mental-theological fear’ concerning the issue of truth:
We must liberate ourselves from a hierarchical model of truth, which posits one truth above many. This biased belief leads to the coercion of others into sameness, oneness, and homogeneity, excluding multiplicity and plurality. Instead, I suggest a dialogical model for truth: each has a part to share and to contribute to the whole. In the so-called non-Christian world, we tell our sisters and brothers the biblical story that gives us inspiration for hope and liberation. But it must be told with the open invitation: What treasures have you to share? (Kwok 1995: 19).

Banawiratma’s work is driven by a dialogical motive. He is very aware that the genuine dialogical meeting happens within a person in his/her experience as a Javanese as well as a Christian. Henceforth, Banawiratma underlines the religious experience’s hybridity as the genuine locus of this dialogical meeting/encounter between the different religions as well as their texts. In his own words, Banawiratma says that “each person is expected to find himself in his vocation and grow as a Christian that is rooted in his world” (my own translation of Banawiratma 1977:119). I sense the idea of inclusivism here, but it does not mean that Banawiratma stops in this inclusivist position. Moreover, he is indeed a pluralist theologian since he wants to take the Javanese texts as an equal counterpart to the Bible. This hermeneutical attitude shows the equal appropriation for the other religious texts, besides the Christian text itself. The Bible then is considered as a partner of dialogue. In his work, Banawiratma draws on the commonalities of the two texts (Javanese texts and the Gospel of John) in order to encourage the occurrence of a mutual dialogue between them. He also notes some differences, especially in the missiological character that can be found only in the “teacher-disciples” relationship in the Gospel of John and not in the Javanese texts. It is here where we need to ask a question that was not raised by Banawiratma: “What do we do with the differences?” This question leads us to the discussion of inter-scriptural or interreligious hospitality. Moreover, the attempt to elaborate the differences is precisely what will be done in the work of cross-textual reading. Therefore, when we come to the application of cross-textual reading, I will try to further discuss and elaborate the differences within the two texts in my research.

Soares-Prabhu’s attempt is to compare the Biblical text to the Buddhist text. Through this step he tries to fill the gaps he sees in the Bible by utilizing the Buddhists’ ideas in such a way that they become useful for the enrichment of the biblical understanding of mission. Here we find that Soares-Prabhu very much appreciates the other religious’ insights and even uses those other religious’ ideas to enlighten the Christian text. This hermeneutical attitude should be taken as an open, as well as critical, pluralist perspective which is offered to Christianity. However, in his article we could not yet find a movement to the opposite direction. This opposite direction is from the Christian text to the Buddhist text. Clearly this is my main critique concerning the one-way direction of illumination: from the Buddhist to the Matthean text and not vice versa. Even though the “two-way” direction of illumination will be more balanced, my critique to the “one-way traffic” approach does not mean to say that there is nothing beneficial in this method, since within this “one-way traffic” we can still find some important and beneficial insights.

In order to receive the insights, it is compulsory for Christians to have humble hearts, open minds, and wide horizons. From the Buddhist critical remarks we learn from Soares-Prabhu that by the dominion of the Risen Christ and the Christological
concentration portrayed in the Matthean Mission Command’s text, “the mission command in Matthew tends to neglect, on the one hand, the dispositions of the missionaries sent by the Risen Lord, and on the other hand, the welfare of the people to whom the missionaries are sent. That is why the command can and has sometimes become the occasion for a mission more preoccupied with aggrandizement of the missioner rather than the welfare of the missionized. The Buddhist intertext with which it is ‘matrixed’ draws attention to these ‘gaps’ in our text” (1995: 333). By this effort, Soares-Prabhu wants to offer critical insights from a Buddhist text and its underlying worldview and belief system to the Matthean text which possibly has different intentions and naturally has a different worldview.

Henceforth, we can still discuss the validity of making a comparison of the two texts based on their own different worldviews. However, this occurs in the context of Asian hybridity. In my view, the best way of making this comparison is beginning by gaining a deep understanding of each text as it functions in its own worldview. Beyond all question, such work requires academic skill. However, many of the (theologically) uneducated lay Asians do not have this scholastic privilege yet. Should the understanding of the worldviews be taken as a must? Or should it be taken as a complementary attempt within the communitarian reading that consists of both the learned theologians and the lay people as the members of Asian community? I believe that even though the understanding of each worldview is a very important stage, that beneficial stage should not be taken as a barrier but as a calling to Asians’ (who have inherited both texts as the important sources that have formed their hybrid worldviews) hermeneutical attempts.

1.3.4.2 Interreligious Hospitality?

In addition to all the enrichment elaborated in the hermeneutical works of the Asian theologians mentioned above, they should still answer such questions as: “What happens when the other religious text points to elements of human existence that are not in the Christian text, because the tradition where the text is written has another point of view?” Put differently we can ask: “When text A illuminates text B and vice versa in a positive way in a moment of learning and enriching, what do we do with the differences situated within the texts?”

Discussing what to do with differences firstly has to be connected with the nature of the text as something that belongs to specific tradition(s) and contains a specific worldview(s). If we put it in a ‘black and white view’, then the text becomes relatively familiar to one but at the same time also becomes relatively strange to the other. In the interaction of texts done by the interpreters, it is very possible that we will have some gaps between the familiar and the strange/foreign. This is the gap which Moyaert calls a “fragile hermeneutical space” (2011: 236). Moyaert has her reason in the using of the word ‘fragile’, as she argues that it is “fragile because every interpreter finds herself in a field of tension between faithfulness and betrayal. It is fragile because the interpreter has to find a difficult balance between continuity and discontinuity, between commonalities and differences, between interconnectedness and fissure, etc. It is fragile also because there are no final criteria for determining the equivalence and adequation of ‘interreligious translation’ once and for all” (2011: 236). Echoing Ricoeur (2006), when exploring the idea of linguistic and hermeneutical hospitality Moyaerts (2011: 235)
asserts that “complete understanding is impossible not only in the relationship between
the familiar and the strange but also in the way believers relate to the mystery of their
own tradition. Every linguistic tradition contains an unsaid, a mystery, something that
cannot be spoken of, something that resists translation, something untouched by
hermeneutics.” In this context, hermeneutical hospitality is meant not as absorbing the
other, nor as a projection of the other (Moyaert 2011: 262) but rather as an openness to
the other.53 Quoting Thele (2003), Moyaert (2011: 262) writes that this hermeneutical
openness is an attempt of “making room in one’s own abode to receive the other.” This
hospitable attitude, which welcomes and then makes room for the stranger, has its
biblical basis.54 Moyaert intentionally shows that the biblical motivation contains twofold
ideas:

On the one hand, Israel is called to receive strangers because the Jewish people
were themselves strangers (Lev. 19: 33-34, in Egypt), on the other hand, God
reveals himself among strangers (Gen. 18). Both notions are very relevant with
respect to the interreligious dialogue [. . .] God calls Israel to act differently than
the Egyptians did. The theological motivation is that God acted in a liberating way
toward Israel and that Israel must act as God acted toward them. This is a way of
being in the image of God. God enters the picture wherever hospitality is observed
(2011: 262).

Moreover, Moyaert argues that the ideas of strangeness and fragility do not only fit
in order to refer to the other, but are also suitable for referring to one’s own identity. This
recognition is based on the fact that there are involuntary dimensions within a personal
identity. Moyaert (2011: 263, 264) notes “there are certain dimensions of our own
identity that we do not choose ourselves and are also beyond our control: the body, the
unconscious, the contingency of existence. The self is never completely at home with
itself.” This self-awareness is a good reflection for one in his/her way to accept the
otherness of the other, as Moyaert argues:

As long as identity and otherness are thought of as opposites, openness for the strange
other will be difficult. It is only to the extent that the strangeness of one’s own identity
is acknowledged that one can open oneself to the strangeness of the other.
Hermeneutical openness concerns, from this perspective, not only the strange other but
also one’s own strangeness. The moment when one’s own strangeness is forgotten is
the moment that closedness arises. (2011: 264)

In the interreligious hospitality, the differences of the other/the strange are not
meant as weaknesses but as strengths since the religious other is “proud of her belief,
faith commitment, and religious tradition [. . .] The religious stranger appears not as poor

53 Moyaert (2011: 197) mostly attempts to build and elaborate her arguments in the face of the challenges
pointed by George Lindbeck with his cultural-linguistic theory of religion, which “holds that religions are
untranslatable.”
54 Moyaert also refers to Ricoeur’s argumentation that a living retention of the memory of being a stranger
oneself promotes hospitality. Because we ourselves are strangers, we must be hospitable to other strangers.
This connection between the recognition of one’s own status as a stranger and hospitality is reminiscent of
Ricoeur’s anthropology: oneself as another (Moyaert 2011: 263 quotes Ricoeur “Etranger soi-même”
(1999)).
but as rich and yet the strange other asks us to receive him or her hospitably, i.e. to be understood” (Moyaert 2011: 265). This attitude of hermeneutical hospitality in a certain sense is the reverse of biblical hospitality, since, as Moyaert (2011: 266) states, in the biblical hospitality “the host provides (food, drink, shelter) and receives the guest. Hermeneutical hospitality actually requires the ‘hermeneutical host’ to hold off on ‘giving’ and to restrain himself and draw back so that the other can unfold his world. The other who asks to be understood and comprehended challenges the interpreter to listen and to make room in his own identity for the strange.”

Furthermore, Moyaert (2011: 266) reminds us of the consequences we should be ready to bear since “making room for the other entails forgoing giving the other a place immediately within one’s own theological framework (theology of religions). Thus, hermeneutical openness means that the dialogue partners interrupt their own structure of prejudices [. . .] it requires a great deal of trust from the interpreter.” It is very obvious that this attempt needs and calls for a valid theological foundation. Then, our question is: “What is the source of strength for this hermeneutical openness?” According to Moyaert, the very source should be dealt with through pneumatology, as she writes:

Theologically, it seems that this hermeneutical openness is possible only on the basis of an optimistic anthropology, a belief in the ‘readability’ and thus comprehensibility of the creation, and the trust in faith that God also reveals himself in the other religions. Here pneumatology seems to have an important role. Hospitality is assisted by the activity of the Spirit [. . .] The Spirit does not remove the differences but makes them accessible. This trust in the activity of the Spirit confirms the trust of interreligious hermeneutics. Without this trust in the Holy Spirit’s help it is difficult from a Christian perspective to understand where Christians can get the courage and trust today to adopt such an attitude of receptivity in interreligious dialogue. (2011: 266, 267)

Moyaert then explains that in light of interreligious dialogue and hermeneutical openness, we should be aware of the fact that understanding is not always the same as accepting the strange or the difference of the religious other religiously, i.e. “for Jews, praying to Christ as the Son of God is not possible. For Muslims, the doctrine of Trinity is blasphemy” (2011: 274). Moreover she admits that the main problem of the strangeness of the other does not lie in our incapability to understand the other but in the fact of the limit translation of religions offer, as she argues that “Translation in the context of interreligious dialogue always has to do with ‘untranslatability’, precisely because there is a gap between understanding and having sympathy for something. It is always possible – and it will even often occur- that the strange other remains inaccessible even though we have appropriated him hermeneutically” (Moyaert 2011: 274).

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55 The biblical tradition involves people who are in need; however, what hermeneutical openness asks is hospitality for a stranger who is not in need (drink, shelter, food etc). Rather, the religious other asks to be heard and understood. (Moyert 2011: 265). Furthermore, it is important to note that “from a theological perspective, the purpose of interreligious dialogue is not the complimentary between religions. Nor does interreligious theology have in mind an interreligious consensus that removes the conflicts between religions” (Moyaert 2011:268).
Finally, Moyaert comes to the conclusion that there is no perfect and complete understanding in doing interreligious dialogue since the theologian finds him/herself always in the in-between and in tension, as she articulates the following:

That tension points precisely to the fact that both the faith commitment to God and the otherness of the other are taken seriously. Interreligious dialogue can be theologically fruitful only if the theologian endures this tension and wrestles with it. The moment theology no longer wrestles with the religious other is the moment the stranger other is reduced to the same or is deleted as a *totaliter alter*. The moment the theologian no longer wrestles with his faith commitment to God is the moment he has fixed God to the familiar or deleted God as the mysterious, unknowable *Real*. Theology means wrestling: wrestling with God, with the strange other and with one’s own faith, and understanding that this wrestling can never occur without injury (Genesis 32: 22-32). (Moyaert 2011: 276)

In my opinion, even though this interreligious dialogue contains a risk, it does not mean that we should be passive, indifferent or even depart from it. Instead of being passive, indifferent or removed, we are called to be active in hospitality and elaborating the tension dialectically, since by doing so we could constantly underline the mutual attempt of understanding as well as challenging each other in the ongoing motion between the commitment to our own religious tradition and the openness to the religious other. In this light, I think Asian Christians are blessed by the works, including inter-textual, cross-textual, inter-scriptural, multi-faith hermeneutics, and so on, done by Asian theologians like Kwok, Sugirtharajah, Banawiratma, Soares-Prabhu, and others who focus in their works on this contextual issue.

### 1.4 The Broader Theoretical Framework of Cross-textual Reading

In this section, the historical developments behind this model will be briefly searched. Later I will discuss Archie Lee’s approach which emphasizes (a) the relation between text and the context of readers within their Asian hybrid set of locations as well as (b) the process of interrelating the two texts with each other.

The method of cross-textual reading is not a new discovery but is composed of many layers within and below it. This very method, on one hand, includes the work of comparing texts, but on the other hand also moves forward to encountering and even interrelating the two different texts. Parts of this method, of course, owe much to many previous efforts over the years. Sugirtharajah (1998: 4-8) mentions that this process started in the work of Krishna Mohan Banerjea (1813-1885) who attempted to compare the Christian Scriptures and the Hindu Vedic tradition within what Sugirtharajah calls an Orientalist model. Banerjea’s intention, which took the Vedas as preparation for biblical

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56 Lee notes that “It was not uncommon that in the historical processes of co-existence, quite a few of the Asian scriptures engaged with one another in constant interactions. Buddhist scriptures from India were translated into Chinese, accommodating Confucian conceptions and terminology. The Taoist Cannon and its scriptural commentaries employed Buddhist idea. Even in conflict. Criticism of and attacks on another tradition resulted in an interactive transformation and enriched articulations. Some commentarial works took a synthesized interpretive mode of reading other scriptural texts. The three religious traditions of China stand as good examples of cross-scriptural hermeneutics” (2008: 189).
faith, is very different from the intention contained in the cross-textual reading. However the project of comparing two texts started there.

The element of filling the gaps in one text by using the insights from other religious resources was also not genuinely new. Some older efforts of doing cross-cultural reading have also already been done with this intention. Another serious attempt done for many years was in the work of Pieris, a Sri Lankan Buddhist-Christian scholar, “who conducted the reading of the Bible and Tripitaka in seminars for Buddhist-Christian dialogue groups in the last twenty years or so” (Lee 2008: 192). In his article, Pieris (who calls his method, following the suggestion of Preman Niles, ‘cross-reading of scriptures’ (2003: 234)), proposes grouping together some efforts at such a reading into three major approaches (1) the inclusive approach (interpretative accommodation) of texts, (2) the liturgical appropriation of texts, and (3) the symbiotic encounter of the texts (2003: 240-253). By doing this, Lee mentions that Pieris “has already made some efforts of ‘cross-scriptural reading’ in the mutual illumination of the biblical text by Buddhist scriptures and vice versa,” in order to, as one of its purposes, create some symphonies in the encounters of the texts (2008: 193).

Though cross-textual reading is not really a new method, Lee is eager to develop this approach in a more significant way, especially in stressing the mutual interaction event when the two texts encounter each other. He coins the phrase ‘cross-textual interpretation’ or ‘cross-textual hermeneutics’. The fact that there are various sacred

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57 According to Sugirtharajah (1998: 4), the Orientalists see their task “as not only collecting information about Indian textual traditions, customs, and practices, but also making Indian proud custodians of their own history – a history which was capable of rejuvenation, though it had entered a dormant phase through a series of historical accidents. Orientalist policy was instigated partly out of the need to acquaint rulers with the native way of life, and partly as a way of effectively controlling and managing the Indian people.”

58 Works from several contextual theologians collected in One Gospel – Many Cultures: Case Studies and Reflections on Cross-Cultural Theology, (eds) Oduyoye, Mercy and Vroom, Hendrik, 2003, could be taken as examples. Here we can find some works, for instance, done by V. Chakkarai (mentioned by Thomas Thangaraj) and Ryu Young-mo (written by Heup Young Kim) who have creatively elaborated the resources of Asian religious tradition and the Bible.

59 According to Pieris (2003: 234), “the exercise of cross-reading of scriptures in the context of an inter-religious encounter must necessarily take into account the sacred character of this literature whilst utilizing tools and methods of exegesis that make an allowance for the human deficiencies of its compilers, redactors and editors.”

texts that have nurtured Asian life and world views for centuries, and the reality of the hybridity contained within many Asians - including Asian Christians who possess Biblical insights as well as insights from the Asian texts - is really a matter of abundant possibilities to adequately make a proper and contextual approach. No wonder, as Lee observes, Asians should utilize their hybrid realities as a beneficial tool to understand and empower the biblical message within the creative interaction with other sacred texts that influence their worldviews. Related to that idea let me quote extensively Lee’s proposition as he argues:

Yet, contemporary hermeneutics has shown that our reading and understanding of the past is deeply influenced not only by the presuppositions and biases of readers, but also by their contemporary socio-political post modern situations. In effect, the social location of the interpreter is now seen as entering decisively into the process of interpretation. Such a “location,” moreover, is further seen as encompassing the complicated questions of race and gender as well as economic and political relationship. As such, the concept of “location” actually involves, therefore, a “hybrid set of locations.” Consequently, literary critics now place much greater emphasis on readers, the response of readers to texts, and the act of reading as shaped by the interaction between reader and text. Biblical critics have come to realize, therefore, not only that the biblical text reflects different time periods but also that views and interpretations of the Bible from different generations cannot be separated from their respective historical contexts. Thus, biblical studies in the West have been shaped by the social setting and historical background of different generations to answer questions of their own age [. . .] Asian biblical scholars are certainly no exception in this regard. We have inherited the legacy of the biblical faith, the Christian doctrine handed down to us from the history of Western Christianity, and the tradition of contemporary Western biblical studies. At the same time, we remain very much rooted in Asia. (Lee 1998: 247, 248)

While taking the text and biblical context seriously, the contextual biblical reading method should also take the context of the reader of the text as an important one. Every reader has his/her own characteristics, whether in the West or in the East. In the Western world, according to Stanley Samartha (1991: 58), the church “had no scriptures of other faiths to take into account. Therefore, its hermeneutics inevitably had to be a mono-scriptural hermeneutics”. In this context of the church in the West, he continues, “had to develop its hermeneutics in response to developments in science, philosophy and historiography and other secular movements.” Meanwhile, he argues, “Christians in a multireligious world cannot ignore other scriptures that provide spiritual support and ethical guidance to millions of their adherents” (Samartha 1991: 58). This opinion is in agreement with Lee who also affirms that the biblical interpretation in the Asian context “must go beyond a mono-scriptural hermeneutics. The need at present is for a cross-textual or cross-scriptural approach, an approach that not only allows the various scriptures to enter into dialogue with one another but also - and very importantly from the

words have different meaning. The term reading is meant for the practical method of analyzing the text, meanwhile hermeneutics is a term used in a broader sense: i.e. the theoretical framework and analysis of that reading. Regarding the difference, I would like to use the term ‘cross-textual reading’ when I intend to refer to the practice itself of analyzing or interpreting a text.
1.4.1 What is Cross-textual Reading?

In short, cross-textual reading is a method that tries to understand the biblical text in relation to the cultural-religious text of Asians and seeks to achieve inter-penetration and integration of the two texts (Lee 1993: 35). The word “cross” has meanings such as “interaction”, “meeting” in mind, along the lines of crossing a river from one shore to the other” (Lee 1998: 251). Lee prefers to call it ‘cross-textual’ rather than ‘inter-textual’ interpretation. One reason is that “in the Jewish rabbinical tradition of hermeneutics, ‘inter-textual’ refers to the relationship between texts within the Bible” (Lee 2003: 10). This method of cross-textual reading is situated in the realm of multi-faith hermeneutics, which elaborates on the comparison, encounter, interrelation, and making symbiosis between the two different texts: one from the Bible and one from the Asian religious text. Of course, before elaborating this specific method by comparing, encountering, crossing and making the symbiosis of the two selected texts, each of which will be investigated in their own corpora by using the narrative criticism approach (if the text is a story).

In this method, differences and commonalities of text A and B are discerned and interconnected. Besides putting two texts side by side, this method also enlightens one text by using the point of view of the other. Through this mutual “encounter-interaction”, new meanings can be discovered. Furthermore, Lee continues that “cross-textual interpretation does not stop with one crossing, for it envisions the possibility of many crossings, nor does it start from only one text and end up with another. The aim of such multiple crossings is not comparative studies such but rather transformation and enrichment: the transformation of one’s whole life, a process of self-discovery. The result in the end is an “enriched-transformed existence””(1998: 251).

Referring to the basic idea behind the method, Lee reminds us that in order to personally integrate the encounter with and challenge of the otherness represented by Christianity, “Asian biblical scholars must take equally serious both our Asian cultural and religious heritage (Text A) and the Bible (Text B), instead of subjugating one “text” to the other or making one of these “texts” the absolute norm. Both text A and text B must be held in reactive dialogue and interaction. One text has to be open to the claims and challenges of the other text in order for transformation to take place in a meaningful way”(1998: 249).

It should become clear that this method is not just a comparison, but rather one which brings two texts into encounter as well as interrelation dialogically and dialectically. Some differences and commonalities will be addressed and then an attempt at interpenetrating and integrating the texts within the nuances of ideas available and supported by the two texts will be taken into consideration, since “the differences can be used to amplify certain dimensions of the biblical text or to bring to the surface divergences in the religious worldviews shaping the text” (Kwok 1995: 65). The

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61 I once thought that the term “Interscriptural (Hermeneutics)” was adequate for my research. However, I then found that for the Javanese people, the story of “Dewa Ruci” is considered more as a text from a ‘great tradition’ than as scripture. That is why I settled on the phrase “cross-textual”.

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enrichments undergone by each text are apparent and prove themselves clearly since, quoting Zhang Longxi (1992), Lee mentions that the task of cross-textual hermeneutics is “to transcend the limitation of a narrowly defined perspective and to expand our horizon by assimilating as much as possible what appears to be alien and belonging to the Other” (1998: 250). Intertwined with that task, here we should also mention again the very aim of the cross-textual reading which is to facilitate “the Christian community to open itself up to multi-textuality and the plurality of faiths” (Lee 2008: 200). In this task, Lee continues, “the Bible has to constantly engage and negotiate with other scriptures in order to shape a Christian identity in a multi-scriptural context, which is, as it should be, ambiguously hybrid in a post-modern and post-colonial global setting; but still it is empowering and life-sustaining” (2008: 200).

1.4.2 Reasons for Using the Method

Referring back to the method I have chosen in this research, it is important to say that although the method of cross-textual reading is not totally new, I believe that doing this method of reading is very worthwhile in my context. The reason for using this method is based on the awareness that if we want to do a contextual biblical interpretation we should be aware that “what we see depends on where we stand. One social location or rhetorical context is decisive of how one sees the world, constructs reality or interprets biblical texts” (Fiorenza 1988: 5).

Asia, with its multiracial and multicultural resources, is a unique part of the world and can offer many possibilities for adequate contextual hermeneutics in a multisciptural society (Samartha 1991: 58, 59). By underlining this invitation, we should also be aware that, more than just dealing with the matter of methodology, there is something more basic. One strong reason for this method’s adequacy is the fact of Asian socio-cultural-religious hybridity (Lee 2003: 5). Quoting Wai-Ching Wong (2006), Lee deliberately underlines that “hybridity is the key to the Asian theological agenda of the twenty-first century and to the construction of the identity of Christian community in Asian. It helps theology and biblical interpretation to go beyond the binary opposite of east and west, which sees Asian identity in the category of difference constructed and designated by the west” (2008: 197). As Lee repeatedly utters, Asian Christians “live in two worlds: the world of the Bible and Christian faith, and the world of Asian scriptures, cultures and religions. Both identities and both worlds should be upheld in a creative, dynamic, interrelated, interactive and integrated way, so that integrity is safeguarded” (2012: 34).

In this hybrid socio-cultural-religious context Lee affirms that the aim of cross-textual interpretation “is not simply to engage in the luxury of doing comparative studies, but rather to bring about an integrated self. Unless genuine crossings take place between these two texts within the self of Asian Christians, the self will remain disintegrated – a self torn between two worlds” (1998: 249).

Another reason is that the issue on how to interact with the otherness (within the cultural-religious traditions) should always be freshly maintained and developed time and again. Difference is something ontological, determined by culture and belief. This is and should be a blessing rather than a curse. Here, the Asian Contextual Biblical Interpretation could give a serious contribution to this human calling within its interaction
with the other readers of Asian sacred books. It is precisely within this spirit that this research contains its deepest concern, since together with Lee I believe that “the plurality of scriptures in Asia has immense implications for biblical hermeneutics and biblical pedagogy” (Lee 1998: 251).

1.4.3 Evaluation of the Method

Even though the method I choose in this research (cross-textual reading) is promising, I would like to make some critical remarks. First, in elaborating this very method there are assumptions that the influence of the two worlds in their intermingled hybridity is relatively equal and finely blended. In fact, there are some degrees within the layers of these intermingled worldviews. The nuances could be varied from the “relatively influenced” to “in-between identity” and then ultimately to the fine composited hybrid entity. Therefore, assuming that cross-textual reading is applicable to every Asian sounds too good to be true.

Second, the selected texts cannot be just any texts chosen at random from the Bible and Asian religious traditions. There is one basic requirement. The two selected texts should contain the same motifs regardless of their differences as they are stemming from different religious traditions, but being read in the same (hybrid) socio-cultural context (Kwok 1995: 62).

Third, using this method academically also assumes that the interpreter/hermeneutician knows the two “materials” equally well. This is an ideal situation, of course. However, finding this ideal condition for interpreting the two texts is not easy.

Fourth, in order to compare and then interrelate two texts, the intention to adapt to the insights offered by other biblical interpretation methods is still valid and even beneficial. Therefore, we should not think that the ideal of cross-textual reading or interpretation is laid only on the spontaneous direct crossing of the texts. For instance, if each corpus of the text is a story, we could use the tools of narrative criticism to address them. In some cases, it could also be useful and possible to take a historical exercise to put the stories in the interaction between their Sitz im Leben (“setting in life”) and the Sitz im Leben of the present reader who seeks understanding (Banawiratma 1977: 131). My intention here is to say that using other methods as complements or in an ancillary role (not as the dominant one) of this cross-textual reading is valid, since it will be hard to find just one method that will be sufficient to do the job. The basic idea of a cross-textual approach that must be developed is given in the consistency of elaborating the possible crossings between the two texts; however, one must not ultimately reject other beneficial tools that can be used properly to understand each text.

Fifth, just as Lee suggests that we should analyze the commonalities and differences of the two texts, I think we need to develop more theoretical reflection on this since it seems important for the interpreter to firstly qualify those available commonalities and differences. Regarding the commonalities, we should analyze whether there are several resonant ideas in the pattern, motives and basic elements of the two stories. Meanwhile, regarding the differences that come to the fore in this reading method, in general, I think it is important to firstly (for the time being) categorize the
differences in several groups such as: (a) appreciative differences, (b) enriching differences and (c) irreconcilable differences. The adequacy as well as the non-adequacy of these kinds of categories will be explained more in chapter 4 especially when we try to apply them to the two selected mystical stories. However, basically it is important to mention that qualifying the commonalities and differences will help us more effectively in gaining our aim to compare and interrelate the two texts.

Sixth, instead of making a careless mixture in interrelating the two texts, developing cross-textual reading requires hermeneutical skill. In this case, knowing the philosophy behind the reading and knowing the proper steps required is compulsory. In this matter, the method tends to be used only by the elite and not by the lay community. That is why the best way to develop this kind of reading is within the ongoing dynamic interactions of the academic and lay people that function both as the interpreter and reader of the two texts in an open, humble and challenging (but non-oppressive) conversation. Since in this research I limit my focus to a scholarly attempt at making a cross-textual reading of two selected stories, I therefore take this (my own) sixth critique as a promise to develop this method in the future.

1.5 What Can Cross-textual Reading Contribute?

The scopes of contribution I offer here are limited to the discussion of postcolonial biblical criticism and then to Indonesian contextual Bible reading.

1.5.1 Postcolonial Biblical Criticism

We could say that cross-textual reading is able to strengthen the discourse of post-colonial Biblical Criticism in Asia and specifically in my context of Indonesia. In its concerns with the question of cultural and discursive domination as well as its “emphasis on a relationship of inequality” (Segovia 2005: 75), post-coloniality is also about “acquiring a new identity. One of the legacies of colonialism is an intermingling of people and culture, and the result is a hybridized identity - the formation of hyphenated, fractured, multiple, and multiplying identities” (Sugirtharajah 1998: 16).

Sugirtharajah adds that this post-colonial criticism “negatively put, is not about historical stages or periodization, neither is it about lowering the flags of empire and wrapping oneself with new national flags. Positively, it signifies three things: representation, identity, and a reading posture, emerging among the former victims of colonialism” (1998: 16). This reading is another angle for understanding the Bible within the discourse of biblical interpretation. According to Sugirtharajah, in the colonial era, there are three types of biblical reading. Sugirtharajah categorizes them as the Orientalist, Anglicist and Nativist Models (1998: 4-14). Lee summarizes Sugirtharajah’s three types as follows:

The Orientalist mode advocates the promotion and revival of the native texts and constructs local history and civilization as a preparation for biblical faith (partly as a way of effectively controlling and managing the colonized people at that time); The Anglicist mode endeavours to, on the one hand, replace the indigenous
text by integrating the colonized into the culture of the colonizer and, on the other hand, import the Enlightenment and the modernist conviction of grand narrative as well as western reading techniques of historical criticism in order to ascertain the single objective meaning of the Christian Bible; The Nativist interpretation attempts to recover the vernacular forms as a corrective measure against the pitfalls of the first two modes. Though Nativist interpretation has something to recommend it, Sugirtharajah rightly warns of its inherent tendency to idealize the indigenous tradition, privileging it as a pure, static and uncontaminated. (2008: 180)

Lee notes that Sugirtharajah sees that aside from the three readings mentioned above, “the postcolonial discourse assists the formerly colonized community to resist the hegemonic claim of the Bible, to expose the implicit and explicit colonial codes in the text and to critique the imperial Eurocentric interpretation based on colonial ideology and practices” (2008: 181). Moreover, according to Sugirtharajah, there are some marks of the postcolonial criticism or post-colonial reading. Several of them address the social-political-power discourse, and one of them relates to the need to engage with the multi-faith hermeneutics agenda. Here are the marks: first, postcolonialism will look for protesting or oppositional voices; second, it will not romanticize or idealize the poor; third, unlike the dominant reading, it will not blame the victims, but will direct attention to the social structures and institutions which spawn victimhood (Sugirtharajah 1998: 21-23). The other mark of postcolonial biblical criticism, noted in my introductory chapter, will be demonstrated in:

its advocacy of a wider hermeneutical agenda to place the study of sacred texts within the intersecting histories which constitute them. It will replace the totalitarian and totalizing claims of biblical narratives with the claim that they have to be understood as the negotiated narrative strategies of a community, to be read and heard along with other communally inspired sacred narratives. A postcolonial reading will see these texts within an inter-textual continuum, embodying a multiplicity of perspectives. This will mean looking for the hermeneutical relations that these texts imply and inspire, and will resist any attempts to subsume one relationship under the other. The issue is how these diverse texts can help us account for our collective identities. (Sugirtharajah 1998: 23)

Considering the brief discussion above and underlining the marks mentioned, especially the fourth one, I believe that within its motive, driven idea, aim, and ‘how to’ practical method as well as in its nature of method we can strongly assume that the cross-textual biblical interpretation could be understood as an appropriate approach to accommodate and to facilitate “a fruitful negotiation between them for the benefit of the multi-scriptural Christian community of Asia” (Lee 2008: 181-182).

Together with Lee, I am convinced that “by means of cross-textual interpretation not only will the foundation of Asian contextual theology be further consolidated, but also the vitality and spirituality of Asian Christians will become much more distinctive. This encounter among various contexts will provide the resources thereby for coping with the social and political complexities of Asia and beyond as well as for making our societies more human. Asian Christianity will then be able to leave its own mark in the traditions of the ecumenical church and make its own contribution to both Christian
religion and humanity as a whole” (Lee 1998: 251). As a part of post-colonial Bible reading strategy, cross-textual reading needs more elaboration developed by Asian theologians as well as by Asian lay-communities and their abundant resources of religious worldviews. As stated by Segovia, as discussed in the introductory chapter, post-colonial analysis should include the religious dimensions. Religion should be acknowledged and theorized as a constitutive component of the postcolonial framework and “a most important one – as important as, say, literature or economics” (Segovia 2005:75).

1.5.2 Contextual Bible Reading in Indonesia

I hope this attempt at doing cross-textual reading will create space and useful hermeneutic insights to strengthen contextual Bible reading in Asia, especially within the Christian Javanese communities in Indonesia. We should be aware of the positive and negative elements of Indonesia’s religious demography. On one hand, the co-existence of various and different religions and beliefs can create tensions, but, on the other, it can also result in beneficial insights for humanity in general. By taking the specific context of the interaction between Christianity and Javanese religious traditions, I believe that both religious traditions will offer some important shared aspects or affinities from their respective sacred religious texts for the hybrid society of their readers.

I am also aware that part of the present discussion in Indonesia is about the role of Islam as the majority religion. Even though I limit myself to the encounter of one Javanese religious text and the Bible, I do also think that the impact of this exercise could somehow reach Muslims. This is because of the Javanese influences (from the story of “Dewa Ruci”) on the Javanese-Islamic web of meanings of spiritual life (Sri Mulyono No Year: 1 and Panitya Perpustakaan Yayasan Sosrokartono 1971). I believe that this research, in one way or another, could also contribute to a process of reconciliation between Muslims and others.

1.6 Where Do I Stand? Some Considerations about the Chosen Method

In these last paragraphs, I will draw on the stories I have chosen in this research by elaborating the method of cross-textual reading. However, I do realize that this selected method is relatively situated in just one of the two Asian domains (namely the social struggle and plurality of religions/cultures): my cross-textual reading method places greater emphasis on the interrelation of texts within the hybrid religious worldviews of Asia. Therefore, I will briefly evaluate the extent to which the socio-struggle domain could address the cross-textual reading approach. In the following, I want to explain my

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62 Some of Javanese religious texts are: Ramayana, ArjunaWiwaha, Ikhtisar Hariwangsa, Ikhtisar Bharatayuddha, Ikhtisar Gatotkacasraya, Ikhtisar Krsnayana, Ikhtisar Smarakadana, Bhojantaka, Ikhtisar Sutasoma, Prapanca and Nagaraktagama, Ikhtisar Ladbhaka (Swararitikalpa), Ikhtisar Parthayajna, Ikhtisar Kunjarakaruma, Subhadrawiwaha, Parthayana, Abhimanyuwiwaha, Hariwijaya, Ikhtisar Kidung Harsawijaya, Kidung Rangga Lawe, Kidung Sorandaka, etc (Zoetmulder, 1983). Among them, the story of “Dewa Ruci” is one of the most prominent texts for Javanese people because of its mystical message (Adhikara 1984 : 7a).
own hermeneutical standpoint by using terms promoted in the theology of religion. This hermeneutical standpoint is directly related to the understanding of the function of the Bible as well as to the significant work of the Spirit which empowers creativity.

1.6.1 The “how to” in Elaborating the Two Stories in this Research

In my attempt to elaborate the method of cross-textual reading, in the following chapters I will analyze and qualify some commonalities, differences, and the interrelations of elements of the two texts that can be interrelated in an enriching manner. However, before the section of cross-textual reading itself will be applied in chapter 4, each story will be investigated within its own broader literary context in chapters 2 and 3, primarily by taking mystical experience as the lens to investigate the narrative synchronic aspects of the story.

As I explained in the previous chapter, the two stories I have selected are the story of “Dewa Ruci”, a mystical story from a Javanese religious tradition, and the story of “Jacob at the Jabbok” told in Genesis 32. I believe that investigating each text in its own context is important for discerning its dynamics in order to grasp some significant ideas, meanings and nuances as well as the ideological importance of the story in its own context (meaning the socio-religious significances which the story can offer). This part could be referred to as an academic exercise of the cross-textual reading. As I have already explained, I offer some critiques to this method. One of my critiques responds to the perceived need to create an ‘ideal formation’ which takes the academic work of the Asian theologian in a dialectical encounter with the reading of the lay community of believers. In this study I want to emphasize only the academic aspects of this cross-textual reading and so I leave the ‘ideal formation’ (in which there is an exchange between academic and ordinary readings, between scholarly and lay-people’s approaches to the two texts as well as between the adherents/readers of the two intended religious traditions) as a promise of doing cross-textual reading for future research.

1.6.2 Addressing the Challenge of Asian Bible Reading within or and Social Struggle

Taking into account the socio-struggle lens used in Asian Biblical Hermeneutics, there is an important question to ponder: “How would the Dalit or Minjung people (who emphasize the socio-economic reference of the text) react to this research with its method and selected stories?” This is a very important question, since Asian Biblical Hermeneutics (as mentioned previously) has at least two roots: (1) the socio-economic-cultural aspects of Asian social life and (2) the fact of religious plurality in Asia, where many sacred texts, beliefs, religious traditions, and worldviews share the same continent. This is a question asked by one root to its complement. I can imagine that Asian Biblical Hermeneutics which takes the social struggles as its point of departure will criticize the Cross-textual reading method if this method is: (a) limited to being “rightly owned” by the elite of scholars; (b) telling an account (story) of the elites rather than the ‘grass root’ people; (c) supporting hegemony of interpretation.
Addressing the possible critiques above, I will offer some considerations below:

a. If there is an assumption of the need to understand each story in a relatively balanced measure, then the danger arises that cross-textual reading could be “trapped” to some extent within the limited company of elite academic scholars. If such conditions are required, then cross-textual reading cannot be done properly. However, we should not imagine a perfectly balanced condition is desirable, or even possible, since the most important thing is to be situated not in exactly the same measurement as others but in the hybridity of one’s self or community in order to imagine pictures and values of one’s world through the religious worldviews in the two stories. Connected to this matter, the written form is not a must. One can join actively in this cross-textual reading method by using oral tradition which frequently is the “text” lay uneducated people ‘read’. Furthermore, the open discussion between the academic hermeneutics done by a theologian should be confronted with an empirical reading of the community, in order to create more dialogue and possibilities for mutual enrichment. Even though the encounter between the academics and ordinary readers could be ideal (as I mentioned in the previous paragraphs), I strongly believe that cross-textual reading can also be done fruitfully in the same group (academics and ordinary readers) themselves.

b. Both stories examined here tell of elites in their respective societies. Jacob is the patriarch of Israel and Wrekudara (Bima) belongs to the elite group of Pandawa, the descendants of King Pandu. However, we cannot blame their position in the story as a mistake in itself. The main point is what the stories aim to emphasize. What we can evaluate and criticize is whether or not the stories underline the supremacy of the elite, whether or not the stories promote repression of the needy, and whether or not the stories can be used to strengthen the power hegemony of the elite. As long as the stories can be interpreted as promoting the constructive, positive, and good virtues of life, these kinds of stories (no matter their narrative settings) can be used to strengthen humanity.

c. In order to avoid a hegemonic reading, I want to underline again that in the ideal setting, the result of academic cross-textual reading should be dynamically checked by the lay community, since the reasons for this method are located in the hybrid set of locations contained in the Asian peoples. Here a theologian should situate him or herself as a member of the broader Asian community which should be treated as the active subject of the communitarian reading. The function of the theologian with academic knowledge is to become an inspiring facilitator on the one hand, a participant ready to be inspired by the community on the other. By taking this method as a kind of dialectical dialogue, we can avoid the hegemony of interpretation by scholars, or at least be alert to that danger. This, again, can and should be the future trajectory of what might be called a dialectical communitarian model of cross-textual reading.
1.6.3 My Hermeneutical Standpoint and Its Relation to the Function of the Bible and the Significance of the Spirit.

Now I come to my hermeneutical standpoint in this research. In order to elaborate my position of using the cross-textual reading method within the field of interreligious dialogue, which usually works through one of the three classical models of theology of religion, I need to mention several points.

First, the classical models in theology of religions (exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism), cannot be taken as absolute in every aspect of religion and religiosity, since a perspective and attitude could be exclusivist in one aspect, inclusivist in another, and pluralist in a third. This evaluation is based on our framework of value and reference. The border between categories of these models cannot be absolute. It is possible for our attitudes and perspectives to vary depending on the specific considerations and frameworks of reference.

Secondly, we can evaluate other religions critically but this evaluation should be made without judging them one-sidedly. The critical insight could rightly be offered to another in openness to the difference in worldviews. The same attitude should also be ours, if the others give their critical evaluations (based on their own worldviews) to ours. We should, therefore, not refrain from criticism, but only do that in openness and the willingness to also receive criticism.

Thirdly, it is possible to hold together the openness to the other and the commitment to identity within its tensive and creative mutual correspondence. Here open-mindedness and humility in seeing the other not simply as an enemy are a must.

Situated within the inter-textual dialogue or hermeneutics of religious resources, my position is that of a “pluralist but rooted in Christianity”. If we have to use the classical terms of theology of religions then my position might be addressed –using Dupuis’s terms - as “pluralist-inclusive” or as a “inclusivist-pluralist” by which I mean: “moving constantly back and forth from inclusivism to pluralism dialectically.” What I want to underline by these phrases is that Asian hybrid Christians should hold to the biblical insights faithfully with an openness to elaborate the insights given by other religious resources, which can either challenge or widen our understanding of the Biblical text. Every religious tradition, as well as formal religions (in Indonesia’s case), should be appreciated since each contains some essential and true religious experiences lived by

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63 For instance, in the position of rejecting violence in the name of religion one can be exclusivist, since according to this person religions should promote peace instead of violence. The attitude on promoting peace more than violence cannot be compromised and is always firm. In this case, again, one can be exclusivist but ethically right. On the personal devotion to Jesus one could be inclusivist, meanwhile in the case of truth claims the same person could be pluralist. This multifacetedness of religion and religiosity, bound within their history and culture, needs more than just one appropriate attitude. In addition, a person who absolutizes the pluralist position, then rejects other attitudes – including the attitude of exclusivism as a matter of fact – could be trapped as a pluralist-exclusive attitude in the sense that he always rejects anything that does not belong to the pluralistic position. In conclusion, I think in some cases we could adhere more to the commonalities but in some other cases we could also let the differences lead the way since we agree in disagreement. Our framework of reference will guide us in making various evaluations on the various aspects of religion.

64 As mentioned in the introductory chapter, there are five formal religions which are acknowledged by the Indonesian government: Islam, Christianity (Protestant and Catholic), Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism.
its adherents. However, Christians should not reduce their Christianity to some kind of sameness with other faiths.

Even though every religious tradition may contain specific characteristics within its own worldview, these characteristics need not be obstacles but rather points of encounter of enrichment between religious experiences that can be appreciated in true openness. Moyaert affirms that “the tension that arises between the strange and the familiar can be creative theologically” (2011: 272). Therefore, the insights from religious others should be treated as a mutual, challenging, and constructive partner within one’s own or one’s community’s religious journeys. In his famous book, Tracy also affirms “if we do not deny the witness of experience itself in the human search for love, then we also know that listening, argument, conflict, confrontation are internal dialectical necessities operative in the demands for self-transcendence present in every loving relationship” (1981: 447).

Here, the Bible as the sacred book is addressed as a critical partner of dialogue or as, in Kwok’s memorable phrase, a “talking book” for Asian Christians who can still believe in the Bible as the Word of God but with a capacity to be critically open, enriched by and dialectically interacting with the challenges given by the insights of other religious traditions and our societal context. Becoming a Christian who is faithful to the Bible can go hand in hand with the acknowledgement that God’s works through other religious sacred texts are true and valid. On the one hand, the Christians can still hold their Christianity and the role of the Bible while, on the other hand, they should also admit to the valid works of God through others religions and their scriptures or sacred texts.

There need not be any epistemological ranking of the religions since adherents of specific religions should maintain a faithful commitment to their own traditions. As together we hold openness to the other religious traditions and commitment to our own faith, the mutual tolerance could also go elegantly with respect to one’s identity. I have a theological anchor in my hermeneutical standpoint. The anchor of my position (“here where I stand,” echoing Martin Luther’s famous phrase as also being referred to by Ricoeur (Moyaert 2011: 273)) within this interreligious hermeneutics is fundamentally rooted in faith in the work of the Holy Spirit. Herewith I want to underline Moyaert’s reflection that “the Spirit does not remove the differences but makes them accessible. This trust in the activity of the Spirit confirms the trust of interreligious hermeneutics. Without this trust in the Holy Spirit’s help it is difficult from a Christian perspective to understand where Christians can get the courage and trust today to adopt such an attitude of receptivity in interreligious dialogue” (Moyaert 2011: 267). In the belief of the works of the Spirit, I believe that we can open up new possibilities for enlightenment through dialectic interactions of openness and identity, as we are sure that after “the Spirit of God hovered upon the face of the water, then God said: “Let there be light, and …..there was light” (Gen. 1).
CHAPTER 2

The Story of “Dewa Ruci”

Introduction to the Chapter

Without doubt, Javanese scholars understand the story of “Dewa Ruci” or “Bima Suci” as a mystical story very important in Javanese culture. S.K. Trimurti, for example, sees this story as a symbol or an illustration of the search for the pure reality or real aim of this life. It can also be interpreted as a search for one’s own God (1984:22). In essence, this story tells about the journey of Wrekudara, also known as Bima and Sena, who after meeting with and receiving lessons through the teaching from the Dewa Ruci, becomes, at last, a purified and holy person (Tanaya 1979: v). In this section, in order to elaborate the basic contents and messages of this distinctive story (as my text A) in its own literary corpus, I analyze its narrative elements in the same way as I will apply in the next chapter to my text B, the story of “Jacob at the Jabbok”, taking into account the perspective of the narrator, the role of actors, plot, suspense, keywords, important symbols and core teachings.

However, from the very start, there are several caveats I should mention. Firstly, I am aware that I am not an expert in Javanese culture, let alone Javanese literature. I rather see myself as a Biblical scholar. Therefore, in this research I will examine the story known as Serat Dewa Ruci or Bima Suci based primarily on a narratological approach. According to David M. Gunn, the narratological approach is a method of literary-critical analysis which seeks to interpret “the existing text (in its ‘final form’) in terms primarily of its own story world, seen as replete with meaning, rather than understanding the text by attempting to reconstruct its sources and editorial history, its original setting and audience, and its author’s or editor’s intention in writing” (Gunn, 1999: 201). Through this method, I try to elaborate my intention of searching for the significance of the character’s transformation via his mystical experience. I will consider the interpretations and opinions of several Javanese scholars who offer the meaning of some symbols within the story but will not take them as the main focus of this section.

Secondly, I deliberately limit my analyses to certain sequences in the story: (a) the journey, (b) the meeting of the actors, (c) the core teachings of Dewa Ruci, though not in detail, and (d) the impacts on one of the actor: Wrekudara (its transformative effects), synchronically. My reason for focusing on these sequences is that I intend to make a “crossfertilization” between this story and the story of “Jacob at the Jabbok” (in the next chapter) which also emphasizes the journey, the meeting of the actors, and the impacts on Jacob and his surroundings.

Thirdly, it is important to mention that brief information regarding the date, aim and forming influences of the story (according to Javanese scholars) will also be given in order to help the lay readers of the Javanese literature to grasp the story better.

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65 These three names are referred to the same figure, see i.e. Tanaya (1979), S.P Adhikara (1984), Trimurti (1985), Seno Sastroamidjojo (1967).

66 Since the entirety of the “teaching parts” of the story is quite long, in this research it needs to be condensed.
Fourthly, I have deliberately chosen one version among the four available versions, the one found in the work of Tanaya.\(^6^7\) My reasons for this choice are: (a) the version written by Tanaya is in prose, as is equivalent to the story of “Jacob at the Jabbok” and (b) it is written in bahasa Jawa Baru, the more common Javanese language used by Javanese people nowadays. Tanaya started his work of publishing Javanese books in 1919,\(^6^8\) but in this study, I will be focusing on the version published in 1979 under the title *Bima Suci*, since this is the newest version by Tanaya, while considering an older version from 1962 with the title *Serat Dewa Ruci, Kakawin lan Kidung*. These two stories are almost the same in content with certain omissions in the latter version that do not change the story. However, there is also an ending scene in the 1962 version that I think needs to be considered in comparison to the version of 1979.\(^6^9\)

Fifthly, Tanaya explicitly mentioned that his Latin-alphabet version of “Dewa Ruci” or “Bima Suci” originated from the work of Kyai Ngabehi Yasadipura I, Pujangga Karaton Surakarta which was written in the Javanese alphabet (Tanaya 1979: xix, vii). Based on this information I think it is legitimate to consider and look at the opinions of Javanese scholars regarding their interpretations on Yasadipura’s version of this same story.

After taking these factors into consideration, we are now ready to deal with the story itself and with the analyses I present in this chapter. The structure of the chapter is as follows: (a) I start by informing the date of the text and its aim according to Yasadipura as the original author from which Tanaya’s work was derived. I then (b) offer a brief discussion about several possible influences from other traditions that shape and form the story. Then we arrive at (c) the core of this chapter, the analysis of its narrative elements. The final step will be (d) to present the societal context and benefit of the story in suggesting how the story of “Dewa Ruci” teaches how a transformative-existential mystical quest can be of help in addressing social tensions.

2.1 The Making of the “Dewa Ruci” Story

Below are the data regarding the date, the aim and the influences of other traditions which have given shape to the story of “Dewa Ruci” according to various Javanese scholars.

\(^6^7\) There are four versions of the “Dewa Ruci” which is also known as the story of “Bima Suci” (Holy Bima), since both Dewa Ruci (the name of the dewa or divine figure) and Bima (sometimes called by such other names as Wrekudara or Sena) are the names of the important figures in the story. The earliest version, titled *Nawa Ruci*, was written in prose form in bahasa Jawa Tengahan by Empu Syiwamurti (lived around 1500-1613) and intended as a script for the shadow-puppet theater. The second version is *Dewa Ruci*, written in the form of Tembang Gede (Tone Poem) in bahasa Jawa Tengahan while the third version, also titled *Dewa Ruci*, was written in the form of Tembang Matjapat (Tone Poem) in bahasa Jawa Baru (not in Kawi language) by Yasadipura I (the 1st). A fourth version called *Bima Suci (Dewa Ruci)* was written in the form of prose and in bahasa Jawa Baru by R. Tanaya (Tjabang Bagian Bahasa Djawatan Kebudajaan Kementerian Pendidikan, Pengadjaran dan Kebudajaan di Jogjakarta (1958, 11-13); S.P. Adhikara (1984: 7a)). Note also that Tanaya himself states that his story was written in the basa Mardawa (Tanaya, 1979: vii), which, according to the Kamus Lengkap Jawa-Indonesia, Indonesia-Jawa means ahli in Indonesian or expert (Majendra Maheswara, no year: 402). It seems that basa Mardawa is equivalent to basa Jawa Baru.\(^6^8\) See the information in the back cover of R. Tanaya, *Bima Suci* (1979).

\(^6^9\) The detail of the story (1979) and the scene ending (1979 and 1962) is available in the Appendix.
2.1.1 The Date and the Aim of the Story

Yasadipura wrote *Serat Bimasuci* in the meter of Macapat in 1793 AD (1720 in the Javanese calendar) (Tanaya 1979: xix; Adhikara, no year: 1). Ten years later, he rewrote it (still in Javanese poetry) in the meter of Jawa Kuna (Adhikara no year: 1). Adhikara gives no reason why Yasadipura changed the meter in his second edition but he suggests Yasadipura had the specific intention for the stories by finishing them in specific sengkala/sangkala or chronogram or specific words denoting specifically significant years in the Javanese calendar. The *sengkala* for the Javanese year 1720 (the first writing) is *niring sikar wiku tunggal* (Tanaya 1979: xix) which means “by the disappearance of all the barriers, the holy person can unite himself with the Divine” (Adhikara no year: 1).

With this *sengkela*, Yasadipura emphasized that the core of the story is found in Dewa Ruci’s teaching to Wrekudara/Bima/Sena in his journey as driven by his strong desire to search for the *Tirta Pawitra/Prewita* or Living Water, that can be interpreted as the desire to unite with the Creator or to experience *Unio Mystica* (Adhikara 1984: 7a).

In his second edition, Yasadipura showed that human beings are afraid to face death in their life. Then he felt the importance of giving guidance to the people who were not daring enough to face death so that they might understand the knowledge of true death. This is shown by the *sengkala* for 1730: *maletiking dahana goraning rat*, meaning “the jump of the fire (soul, spirit, sukma) which shakes (frightens) the wheel or globe, i.e. the world of human beings”. In classical Javanese literature, the teaching of the knowledge of true death is called *kelepasan*, meaning “freedom” (Adhikara no year: 1).

Javanese scholars have shared their ideas on the significance of the “Dewa Ruci” story. Trimurti (1984: 48), for instance, summarizes that in its essence, “Dewa Ruci” contains teachings about Sufism (Islamic mysticism). Adhikara (1984:44) consistently emphasizes the mystical union of creature and Creator as the core of the story. Meanwhile, Soetarno and Suryo Negoro as quoted by Firman Panjaitan (2003: 122) see this story as a representation of a mystical journey and as a mirror of the Javanese inner life as well.

2.1.2 Influences of Other Traditions

According to Javanese scholars, there are at least three influences which have given shape to the “Dewa Ruci” story. These three influences are: the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, Hindu religious thought, and the atmosphere of *Tasawuf* or Islamic Sufism.

According to Panitia Perpustakaan Sosrokartono (1971: 1-3), Adhikara (1984: 7a), and Tjabang Bagian Bahasa Djawatan Kebudajaan Kementrian Pendidikan, Pengadjuran dan Kebudajaan di Jogyakarta (1958: 7), it seems that the “Dewa Ruci” story was somewhat influenced by and is similar to *Nawa Ruci*, the Indian version of the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, which was written by Empu Syiwamurti (1500-1613) in prosaic form using bahasa Jawa Tengahan. Of course there are several differences between *Nawaruci* and the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, but the idea of finding the Plant of Life in the *Epic of Gilgamesh* tells about a half-human, half-god who attempts to gain eternal life through finding the source of eternal life in the middle of the ocean which he then loosens, after being deceived by a giant dragon he lost that plant of life. It was written around 3000 BCE (Panitya Perpustakaan, 1971: 1-3).
Gilgamesh and the Water of Life or Living Water in Nawa Ruci as well as “Dewa Ruci”, seems to resonate with each other. The influence of the Hindu religious thought lies in the idea of non-duality as seen in the emphasis on the union of creature and Creator, pamoring kawula – Gusti (in Javanese), in the microcosm (the oneself) which is made equivalent to the macrocosm (the outer world). It seems that this idea originated from the Hindu idea of the union of Atman as the nature of human being and Brahma as the nature of God (Harun Hadiwijono 1989: 25).

Meanwhile the atmosphere of Tasawuf or Islamic Sufism is seen in the emphasis in the “Dewa Ruci” story on the purification of oneself via finding Living Water.\(^{\text{71}}\) Among the Sufism experts in the Middle East, mawas diri or introspection is very important in personal devotional worship to God Almighty: “one who desires to know God, must first know one’s own self” (Adhikara 1984: 3).

2.2 “Dewa Ruci” in Narratological Perspective

The following section employs a narratological perspective to the story. First, a brief background of the story and the actors, a synopsis as well as plot of the story will be given. Afterward, an examination of the narrative elements in the story will be presented.

2.2.1 Background of the Story and its Actors

The story is set amidst tensions between one family of five brothers known as the Pandawa and another known as the Kurawa, consisting of one hundred brothers, who are their cousins. These two groups of brothers live in high tension stemming from matters to do with power and dignity.\(^{\text{72}}\) Ultimately the two groups fight each other in the great battle known in the Indian epic of that name as the Mahabharata or the Bharatayudha in Javanese. The Pandawa are victorious and live, while the Kurawa are defeated and die as a consequence. The tension between the Pandawa and the Kurawa provides the setting for the story of “Dewa Ruci”, but because of its character as a Javanese invention or carangan story, this story cannot be found in the original Mahabharata from India.\(^{\text{73}}\)

At least nine characters appear in the story of Wrekudara, the central figure on whose quest to gain the Living Water and whose experience of a journey, meeting, core teachings and impact I focus on here.

Wrekudara

The main actor of the story is one of the five Pandawa brothers, Wrekudara, who is also named Bima and Baratasena (Bratasena), in which Barata is the name of his

\(^{\text{71}}\) Quoting Mustafa Zahri (1982), Adhikara (no year: 3) informs that in Sufism there are several steps needed in order to know the Divine. The steps are: Takhalli, one should purify him/herself physically as well as spiritually; Tahalli, one should pursue to have noble attitudes both physically and spiritually; and Tajalli, one should be able to fuse oneself into the attitude of the Divine in order to feel and gain for the Divine’s reality, truth and existence.

\(^{\text{72}}\) The complete story is told in the Indian epic, The Mahabharata. Usually the Pandawa are portrayed as good and the Kurawa as evil.

\(^{\text{73}}\) Carangan (Javanese) are story/ies created by Javanese dhalang/shadow-puppet masters/story tellers, in order to develop ideas or alternative story/ies based on but at once different from the original story.
dynasty and Sena means warrior. Batara Narada, an advisor of Batara Guru, the king of kahyangan (heaven) in Javanese shadow puppet stories, has named him Bima (Bhima), an epithet of god Shiva, meaning “scary”. Batari Uma names him Wrekudara, since he has a strong belly like that of a wolf. In Sanskrit, wreko or vrika means wolf and udara means belly/stomach. He is portrayed as a consistent, simple, handsome but rough person. When he speaks he has no manners. He describes himself as something like “a wild animal, still young, being insulted by the world and being ridiculed on the earth”. Metaphorically, he sees himself as a keris or Javanese short sword without its sheath (Tanaya 1979: 15). One important characteristic is gurusyusyura, which means “always respectful to the teacher and obedient to the teacher’s instruction because he believes that the opinion of the teacher is absolutely right and has no suspicion of it” (Adhikara no year: 27).

Druna
Resi (a Brahmanic title for a religious holy man) Druna is actually the teacher of both the Pandawa and Kurawa, though he is on the side of the Kurawa. The narrator tells us that the order to find the living water is actually a deceit created by him because he desires Wrekudara’s death before the battle between Pandawa and Kurawa starts. Most the Javanese scholars have portrayed Resi Druna as a negative and even wicked character.

Rukmala and Rukmakala
The two are what the Javanese called a butha or giant. Usually they are portrayed as awful in appearance.

Hyang Endra and Hyang Bayu
These figures are gods. But both of them are cursed to be the giants Rukmuka and Rukmakala. However, according to Adhikara, it is not clear whether Hyang Endra and Hyang Bayu are two gods or just one (Endra-Bayu) (Adhikara no year: 13). Tanaya refers to them simply as Endra Bayu. He also refers to a previous appearance of them in the shape of giants: Sang Rukmuka Rukmakala (Tanaya 1979: 5-6).

Pandawa
The five sons of Pandu Dewanata are Yudhistira, Wrekudara (Bima/Sena), and Arjuna or Dananjaya who were born to his first wife Kunti (Kuntipritha), and the twins Nakula and Sadewa, sons of Madrim, Pandu’s second wife. Together they are called the “Pandawa” which means the descendants of King Pandu (Adhikara 1984: 7). Their palace (as well as their territory) is called Amarta or Ngamarta.

Kurawa
The Kurawa are the one hundred children of Destarastra and his wife Gendari. The eldest of these ninety-nine brothers and one sister is Suyuddhana, who is also known as Duryudana. The second most important figure among the Kurawa is his brother Dursasana (Mahendra Sucipto 2009). Several other figures mentioned in the story are Jayadrata, Jayasusena, Sudarma Suranggakara, Suwiry, Sangkuni, and Bisma. Their palace, as well as their territory, is called Astina or Ngastina.
Kresna

In this story, Kresna is portrayed as Pandawa’s advisor. In the Javanese worldview, Kresna is usually understood as an embodiment of the god Vishnu (Seno Sastroamidjojo 1967: 17).

Nemburnawa

Nemburnawa is the sea dragon who fights brutally with Wrekudara/Bima in the middle of the sea.

Dewa Ruci

Dewa Ruci or Marbudyengrat Dewa Ruci is one of the main actors in the story. There are several opinions regarding the meaning of “Dewa Ruci”. Some Javanese scholars think that the name means the shining or luminous dewa/god (Panitya Perpustakaan Sosrokartono 1971: 29) but Adhikara proposes a different opinion. He interprets “Ruci” as dirty. However, this does not mean that Dewa Ruci is the dirty God but rather that Dewa Ruci is a god whose holiness cannot be compared to that of other gods who will only look dirty in comparison (no year: 27). Tanaya and Yasadipura do not describe the appearance of Dewa Ruci except as a god small in stature (dewa katik). However, in the shadow puppet show as well as in Trimurti’s article (1985:20), Dewa Ruci is always depicted as an exact look-alike of Wrekudara smaller in size.

2.2.2 Synopsis

If we look at the story according to the version written by Tanaya (1979), there are several sections of the story. However, as mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, these sections can be summarized within four clusters: the journey, the meeting (with Dewa Ruci), the core teachings, and the impact of the quest on Wrekudara.

The Journey: Wrekudara (the name used in Tanaya 1979) is ordered by Resi Druna, his Guru/Teacher, to look for the Living Water in the cave of Gandamana which is located below the mountain of Candramuka, in the forest of Tibrasara. This is actually part of the deceit planned by the Kurawa. There he meets with two giants and fights with them. After he defeats and kills the giants, their corpses then disappear and a voice comes to tell him the real identity of the giants. This voice, which belongs to the Hyang Endra-Bayu, also advises him to ask Druna again for the true location of the Living Water. The

74 Here are the sections in the story: The opening of the story (Wrekudara is ordered to find the Tirta Prewita, the living water which is able to cleanse his body); going to the land of Ngastina; in the Ngastina; going to the mountain of Candramuka; Rukmuka and Rukmakala; Hyang Endra and Hyang Bayu; in the land of Ngastina; in the land of Ngamarta; the beauty of nature; Wrekudara plunges into the sea and wrestles with the sea dragon; the Marbudyengrat Dewa Ruci is introduced; in the land of Ngamarta; Wrekudara meets Marbudyengrat Dewa Ruci; Wrekudara comes into Dewa Ruci’s womb in order to receive Dewa Ruci’s teachings; the Teachings of Dewa Ruci; the end of teaching- and Wrekudara comes out from Dewa Ruci’s womb; on the mistaken aim of death and symbol of ilmu sajati (true knowledge); being enlightened, Wrekudara goes home to Ngamarta (Tanaya 1979) and is reunited with the other Pandawa (Tanaya 1962).
second answer given by Druna is in the middle of the ocean. Wrekudara then makes his second journey to the sea, where he meets and fights with the sea dragon Nemburnawa in a ferocious battle. At last Wrekudara kills the sea dragon.

The Meeting: After defeating the sea dragon, Wrekudara notices a small god playing on the gigantic waves of the sea. This small god is Dewa Ruci. At first Wrekudara does not know that he is facing a god, but after Dewa Ruci explores Wrekudara’s genealogy and shows him his lack of knowledge, Wrekudara confesses his stupidity and asks for the teaching of wisdom from Dewa Ruci. Wrekudara, then, is invited to come into the gua garba (the womb) of Dewa Ruci through Dewa Ruci’s left ear.

The Teaching: In Dewa Ruci’s womb, Wrekudara receives the teaching of ilmu kasunyatan or the knowledge of reality.

The Impact: After he comes out from Dewa Ruci’s womb, Wrekudara goes home to Ngamarta as Bima Suci, the holy Bima/Wrekudara.

2.2.3 Plot

I propose to plot the story in the following chart:

These twenty-two alphabetical letters denote the sequences of the story as follows:

(A) The beginning of the story: Wrekudara is ordered to find the Tirta Pawitra, the living water by Druna, his Guru.

(B) Wrekudara goes to Ngamarta to tell his brothers about his duty and to say farewell.

(C) Discussion among the Pandawa, who suspect Druna’s motives in ordering this task.
(D) Wrekudara insists on fulfilling his duty and then departs (the first journey).

(E) Wrekudara goes to Ngastina.

(F) In Ngastina, Wrekudara suddenly appears in the Kurawa’s gathering in order to hear instruction from Druna on how to find the Tirta Pawitra, the Living Water.

(G) Druna says that the location of the Living Water is in the forest of Tibrasara, in a cave below the mountain of Candramuka.

(H) Wrekudara suddenly leaves and the Kurawa are overjoyed because their deceit has started to work.

(I) Wrekudara goes to the mountain of Candramuka. There he meets, fights with, and kills the giants. Their dead bodies disappear and the voice of Hyang Endra-Bayu is heard.

(J) Wrekudara is advised to ask Druna again for the true location of the Living Water.

(K) Wrekudara goes to Ngastina and meets with Druna and the Kurawa and asks again for the true location of the Living Water. The answer is given: in the middle of the sea.

(L) The return of Wrekudara to Ngamarta is welcomed with joy by the Pandawa.

(M) Suddenly Wrekudara tells his brothers of his plan to find the Living Water in the middle of the sea. Though they try to persuade him not to go, he insists on a second journey to find the Tirta Pawitra.

(N) The beauty of nature during the second journey to the sea.

(O) At the beach, Wrekudara is briefly in doubt.

(P) Wrekudara plunges into the sea and wrestles with the sea dragon.

(Q) Known by Dewa Ruci; flash back to Ngamarta: anticipating grace.

(R) The meeting between Wrekudara and Dewa Ruci.

(S) Invitation to come into the womb.

(T) Teachings of Dewa Ruci received by Wrekudara.

(U) Wrekudara comes out from the womb.

(V) Impact: Wrekudara is transformed and goes home to Ngamarta; the end of story.
I note the following dynamics within the story: the beginning of the story, complication (twice), suspense (twice), climax (three times), resolution (twice), and the end of the story.

2.2.4 Examination of the Narrative

In this part, I will now analyze sequences of the structure I just represented and the dynamics of the story by dividing them into the following clusters: journey, meeting, core teachings and impact.

2.2.4.1 The Journey (From A to P: The Beginning of the Story to Climax 2)

(a) A to B: The Beginning of the Story

The story starts with the depiction of Druna’s command to Wrekudara to search for the living water. Druna is portrayed as the owner of this idea. The opening sentence of Tanaya’s version is clear about the role of Druna: “When Wrekudara learned from Druna, he was ordered to search for the Water which is able to cleanse his body.” Here the narrator informs us that Druna directly tells Wrekudara the usefulness of this Water. Wrekudara is portrayed in a rather passive position, in a sense that he is not the one who is eager to search for the Water for his own benefit or in order to fulfill his desire for something essential. He is ordered and responds directly to that order. This characterization of Wrekudara in Tanaya’s version is different from the Adhikara’s, since according to Adhikara (1984:4) it is Wrekudara himself who has a desire to look for the living water in order to unite himself with his Creator when he dies.

In Tanaya’s version, Wrekudara is in a passive but loyal position to his Guru’s command. Later we are informed by the narrator that this idea is part of the tricky deceit to defeat the Pandawa when the Great War or Bharatayuda occurs; but in the beginning of the story, this deceitful motive has not yet occurred to Wrekudara. Soon after receiving the command, he goes home to Ngamarta and meets his brothers to tell them of his duty. In contrast to the artless Wrekudara, the Pandawa are directly aware of the danger. Tanaya writes, “Sena/Wrekudara tells his brothers that he will go to search for the Water as commanded by his Master/Teacher/Guru. Sri Darmaputra (meaning Yudhistira, the oldest of Pandawa) wonders and thinks of the danger. The King (Yudhistira) grieves, and Dananjaya (Arjuna, the third of Pandawa) comments that ‘It is not good’. The twins (Nakula and Sadewa) say politely to Yudhistira, ‘Do not give your permission for the departure of your brother, because it feels uncomfortable. The character of our cousin, the

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75 “Duk Wrekudara puruhita ring, Dhang Hyang Druna kinen angupaya, Toya ingkang nucekake, maring sariranipun” (Tanaya 1979: 1).

76 In the perspective of Adhikara, it is actually Wrekudara who starts the journey in order to gain something existential for his life. This existential desire of Wrekudara himself is then used by the Kurawa, via Druna’s advice, as part of a tricky plan to kill him.
king of Ngastina, tends to lead to calamity. It seems that Druna was persuaded to lie for the sake of the fall of Pandawa.”

(b) C: Complication (1)

Here, complication arises: The Pandawa have sensed from the very start that Druna’s command is not an ordinary order from a guru to his pupil; instead, it is a part of an evil plan. However, Wrekudara’s reaction seems to be very confident, “Ingsun masa kenaa den ampah, mati ya umurku dhewe” (“I cannot be cheated, if I die this is my own life”) (Tanaya 1979: 2).

It seems that here the narrator opens up several possibilities: (a) that Wrekudara, with his strong will, is starting to be aware of the evil plan devised by Druna and the Kurawa; (b) that Wrekudara really is an artless, even stupid and stubborn person who is not able to grasp the possible deceit which has already been laid out in front of him, or (c) that the narrator deliberately drives the readers to characterize Wrekudara in ways that suggest both his strong will (as a strength) and artlessness (a weakness) at once.

Wrekudara’s brothers seem to be more sensitive to the trap, but they cannot do anything to prevent their strong-willed but artless brother from following his own decision. The narrator tells that “Wrekudara suddenly goes and leaves behind Yudhistira and his other three brothers feeling strange and lost.”

(c) D to G

After excusing himself in front of the Pandawa, the first journey of finding the Living Water starts. The first step is going to Ngastina in order to ask Druna of the location of that amazing Water. The narrator tells that in Ngastina, the Kurawa were having a meeting. The aim of the discussion in that meeting is how to destroy Pandawa via a tricky deceit so that the Great War (Bharatayuda) might be avoided. After the Kurawa agree on the plan of a smooth deceit, Wrekudara suddenly comes in a rush into their palace. Everyone is shocked by his coming but the king of Ngastina (Suyudhana) calmly welcomes him. Here we, as readers, are informed that the smooth-deceit is on its way.

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78 In Tanojo’s 1962 version, another complication appears since here Wrekudara seems to show his own intention on the benefit of this Living Water. He says, “Ingsun masa kenaa den ampah prapteng tiwas ingsun dhewe, wong nedya amrih putus, ing sucine badanireki” (I cannot be cheated and killed because of my desire to gain the purification of my body) (Tanojo 1962: 5). Wrekudara’s own existential desire then is being used by the Kurawa, via Druna’s advice, through a tricky plan in order to kill him. The part which tells about Wrekudara’s own intention seems rather uncertain in Tanaya 1979.

79 “Arya Sena saksana, kalepat sumebrung, Sri Narendra Yudhistira, miwah ari katiga angungun kadi cinebak ing wona tun” (Tanaya 1979: 2).

80 “Ingkang dadya wuwu, aywa kongsi Bratayuda, yen kena ingapus sangkanging aris, simaning kang Pandhawa” (Tanaya 1979: 2).
Wrekudara directly moves toward Druna and bows in front of him. Druna embraces the neck of Wrekudara and encourages him to search for the Living Water or *Tirta Pawitra*. Druna explains the benefit of having that water, “That Clean/Holy Water, if found, is able to cleanse the self, enables one to gain perfection, become prominent among others, ensure protection by parents, become prominent in the three worlds (triloka) and become immortal.” After telling the function of the *Tirta Pawitra*, Druna gives the location of the Holy Water in the forest of Tibrasara, in the cave of Gandamana located below the mountain of Candramuka. In the past, nobody knew its location (Tanaya 1979: 4). Full of joy, Wrekudara excuses himself and bows in front of Suyuddhana, the eldest of the Kurawa, who plays his role hypocritically by saying, “Be careful O’ Brother. Do not get lost because of the difficulty and obscurity of its location.” Bravely yet artlessly, Wrekudara replies that he will not find any difficulty in his way to obey his guru’s instruction. Here, again, the narrator shows us (as readers) of Wrekudara’s obedience to and trust in Druna.

(d) H: Suspense

Soon after Wrekudara takes his leave, the Kurawa are satisfied. They smile at Wrekudara’s naivete. The King of Mandraka (who is on the side of the Kurawa) has actually known what kind of danger awaits Wrekudara below the mountain of Candramuka. He declares, “How can he get the water? In the cave located at the mountain of Candramuka, there are two very frightening giants. They are as big as mountains. Nobody has ever dared to fight with them.” In response, every one of the Kurawa laughs and is assured that their tricky deceit will succeed. Thus, they celebrate by having a party. At this point, the reader feels that suspense of the story begins to increase, as danger is waiting for the strong-hearted but artless person.

(c) I: Climax 1

The narrator tells how Wrekudara goes into the forest with a joy-filled heart: “Wrekudara strides into the forest slowly with a joyful heart. Since he is looking for the Crystal Water as ordered by his Master, he never thinks about the danger.” Furthermore, the narrator tells about the situation within the forest: animals are running away, trees are being  


82 “Babo sutenggulun, sira sida ngulatana, ingkang Tirta Pawitra sucining urip, yen iku kapanggiga. Nirmala panggah wiseseng urip, wus kawengku aji kang sampurna, pinunjul ing jagad kabe, kauban bapa biyung, mulya saking sira nak-mam, linuwih ing tri loka, langgeng ananipun” (Tanaya 1979: 4).

83 “Yayi-mas den prayitna. Bok kasasar denira ngulati, panggonane ewuh tan tetela” (Tanaya 1979: 4).

84 “Nora pepeka ingsung, anglakoni tuduh Sang Yogi” (Tanaya 1979: 4).

85 “Paran polahe ika. Gunung Candramuka guwaneki, dene kanggonan rekasa krura, kagiri-giri gedhene, sayekti lebur tumpur, ditya kalih pangawak wukir, tan ana wani ngambah” (Tanaya 1979:4).

86 “Lampahe Sang Wrekudara, lajeng ngambah praptrainre wanadri, ririh ing reh gandrung-gandrung, sukanireng wardaya, Toya Ening pamungkas wekasing guru, tan nyipta bayaning marga, kacaryan kang den ulati” (Tanaya 1979: 4).
uprooted, heavy winds and lightning strikes all around, but Wrekudara keeps walking until he finds the cave of Candramuka and then moves away the stones and trees surrounding as well as inside the cave. But he cannot find the Living Water. Inside of the cave, the giants Rukmuka and Rukmakala are disturbed by the noise he is making.

The angry giants smell human odour and they come out and shout angrily, “the human being who destroys the mountain where we dwell must die.” Then they suddenly attack and fight monstrously with Wrekudara. At the end of the fight, Wrekudara is triumphant; both of the giants have died horribly. Afterward, the narrator informs, “After Rukmuka and Rukmakala die, their dead bodies disappear, leaving two gods in their place.” This odd information is then followed by a statement from the narrator regarding the relation between the giants Rukmuka-Rukmakala and the two gods named Hyang Endra and Hyang Bayu: “They were condemned by Hyang Pramesti (an important god in Javanese godhead also called Hyang Guru, meaning Bhatara Guru) to be giants in the mountain of Candramuka.”

There comes a voice addressing Wrekudara as *putuningsun liwat kaswasih* “my very piteous grandson.” The voice states directly sympathy for Wrekudara’s failed effort to find the thing he is looking for because of having been misled and, hence, searching in the wrong place (Tanaya 1979: 6). Wrekudara wonders whose voice it is but he replies at once confirming his desire to still look for the Living Water, “Whose voice is this? I cannot see you, but if you want to take my life I am ready; it is better for me to die than to not find the thing I am looking for.” Then the voice laughs and reveals its identity. It is the voice of the god Hyang Endra-Bayu, until that moment the giants Rukmuka and Rukmakala who have been killed by Wrekudara. The voice also informs Wrekudara that by killing Rukmuka and Rukmakala, he has freed them from the curse (Tanaya 1979: 6).

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87 “Manusa mengko mati, dursila dhusthamu muput, ngrusak wukir nggoningwang” (Tanaya 1979: 6)
88 In his remarks on this scene, Adhikara proposes an interesting angle in his effort to interpret its meaning. According to him, the fighting-wrestling scene is part of Wrekudara’s contemplative journey. Adhikara’s explanation is founded on the meaning of several significant names in the story which, according to him, are meant to draw out the intention of the story. Here are several meanings of word and phrases used in this scene: the name Tibrasara consists of *Tibra*: sadness; *sara*: arrow; the name Gadumadana consists of *Gada*: club, *madana*: obsession, pleasure; the name Candramuka consists of *Candra*: allegory and *Muka*: face, facing; the giants Rukmuka and Rukmakala (*Rukma*: gold-worldly matter, *Kala*: snare, trap) - thus, the giant/raksasa is a symbol of greed; the god Endra-Bayu (*Endra*: king, sincere/Bayu*: wind, soul, life) - the god represents goodness, sincerity, holiness, etc. The data has been taken by Adhikara from the dictionary of “Keterangan Tegesing Temboeng-temboeng” (Baoesastra Tjilik), composed by W.J. S. Poerwadarminta, published by J.B. Wolters Uitgevers Maatschappij, N.V. Groningen-Batavia in 1940 (Adhikara no year: 13, 14). The original meaning of Druna’s command to Wrekudara to find the Living Water can be interpreted as follows: Wrekudara is ordered to withdraw to his retreat for meditation. There he witnesses the battle within himself, between the good values and the bad ones. The good values win. This inner battle can be described in this way: “O Bima, what you face (muka) in the forest is an allegory (candra) of the greed (raksasa/giant) and pleasure (madana) of this worldly matter (rukma) that are faced by (muka) humans, so at last that person is heading toward (sara) and being trapped (kala) by sadness (tibra). Therefore, kill (gada) the greed (raksasa) within yourself” (Adhikara 1984: 18).
89 “Sareng pejah Rukmuka Rukmakala wus, sigra bangkene tan ana, jer samya Jawata kalih” (Tanaya 1979: 6).
90 “Kena ing papa cintraka, Endra Bayu dinukan Hyang Pramesthi, dadya ditha kalihipun, neng wukir Candramuka” (Tanaya 1979: 6).
91 “Sinten kang swara, dene boten katingal dening mami, punapa yun ngambil tuwuh, kula inggih sumangga, leheng pejah angulati tan ketemu” (Tanaya 1979: 6).
Considering the conversation between the voice of the unseen figure (Hyang Endra-Bayu) and Wrekudara, the readers are told by the narrator that Hyang Endra-Bayu has/have\(^2\) already known the purpose of Wrekudara’s presence and actions as he moved stones, bushes, and trees in the forest and in and around the cave. Therefore, after revealing their identities, the voice directly informs Wrekudara, “You look for the Water as ordered by Druna. The Living Water actually does exist, as said by Resi Druna, but the location of that Living Water is not in here.”\(^3\) Wrekudara, then, is advised to go back to Ngastina and re-ask his Guru, Druna, for the true location of that Living Water.

This advice of Hyang Endra-Bayu seems to contain a kind of resolution. However, in that resolution we still sense the presence of suspense. Firstly, the advice given to Wrekudara is that he still needs to continue his journey by going back to the first step: asking Druna, the Guru who purposely gave him the wrong information. Secondly, on account of this advice, the reader might ask such questions as “Because of their existence as gods, don’t they themselves (Hyang Endra-Bayu) know the exact place?” The answer of this probable question is not clear. There are two possibilities: whether Hyang Endra-Bayu actually know(s) the right place but is/are not willing to inform Wrekudara (with assumption that there could be specific reason(s) behind it); or that their knowledge is partial (only knowing of the existence of the water but not its true location). Facing these probabilities, we can only guess.

After listening to the information and advice from the Hyang Endra-Bayu, Wrekudara is no longer in confusion and returns to the palace at Ngastina. There he meets the Kurawa and Druna. The narrator reveals that the Kurawa are actually surprised. They never thought that Wrekudara was still alive because they knew what kind of danger he faced in the forest. But now, Wrekudara stands before them. The narrator tells how hypocritical the Kurawa are as they welcome him and say, “My brother has come; of course you have got results by your coming.”\(^4\) Responding to them, Wrekudara reports that his effort to find the Living Water on the mountain of Candramuka was not successful: “I could not find it, but, on the mountain Candramuka, I found two giants, Rukmuka and Rukmakala, whom I have killed. The mountain was already turned over but I found nothing. Please give me the true information so I need not repeat my work.”\(^5\)

Responding to this, Druna immediately embraces Wrekudara and tells him that the trial in the Tibrasara was actually just a test of his loyalty (to Druna). The true

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\(^2\) See notes of Adhikara (no year: 13), regarding the number of Hyang Endra-Bayu.

\(^3\) “Donirangulati Toya, pituture Dhang Hyang Druna ing nguni, nyata na Banyurip iku, tuture Resi Druna, nanging nora ing kene panggonanipun” (Tanaya 1979: 6)

\(^4\) “Babo ariningsun prapta, antuk karya sun watawis. Yayimas ngempek kewala, praptanira sayekti antuk kardi” (Tanaya 1979: 7).

\(^5\) “Pukulun boten kapangguh, dene wukir Candramuka, mung ditya kalah pinanggih. Rukmuka lan Rukmakala, sampun sirna sami kawula-banting, dene ditya kalahipun, sikara ing kawula, wukir kabeh binalengkrah tan katemu, paduka tuduh kang nyata, sampun amindho-gawen” (Tanaya 1979: 7).
location of the Living Water is in the middle of the sea” (Tanaya 1979: 7). This information is given while stressing the requirement to prove his loyalty: “If you truly want to learn from me (your father), come into the middle of the sea.” Hearing both the information of the location of the Tirta Pawitra and the challenge of loyalty, Wrekudara answers, “Not only to come into the great sea, but even to heaven or to the bottom of the earth (I shall go). I am not afraid of death in order to obey your true command.” Here the characterization of Wrekudara is once again re-inforced by the narrator. Wrekudara is really a loyal, artless but strong-willed person. Even when Suyuddhana, the king of Ngastina and the first of Kurawa, pretends to give his sympathy to Wrekudara regarding the danger of his second journey into the middle of the sea, Wrekudara directly responds to Suyuddhana, “Do not be childish, pay attention. Kurupati, I have surrendered my life to the Divine. Do not hesitate but let me go; do not grieve because of me, your brother, I will surely be safe.”

(h) L to M: In Ngamarta (Complication (2))

Upon hearing the second time the location of the Living Water, Wrekudara returns home to Ngamarta in order to excuse himself in front of his brothers (the Pandawa) and Prabu Kresna. The narrator precedes the story of Wrekudara’s return to Ngamarta with a kind of flash-back: the situation after Wrekudara’s first departure (D) is told in a grey situation. In this grey situation, the Pandawa invited Kresna, king of Dwarawati and advisor to the Pandawa, to come to Ngamarta. Soon after Kresna came, the Pandawa told him everything about Wrekudara and his desire to find the Living Water as ordered by Druna. Then Kresna remarked that even though Wrekudara was being deceived by Druna and the Kurawa, the Pandawa should always surrender to God regarding this matter. Bhatara Di (God) will punish the wicked ones (Tanaya 1979: 9).

It is within this kind of discussion that Wrekudara arrives in the presence of the Pandawa and Kresna (L). Naturally, his homecoming is welcomed with much relief. They all become overwhelmed with abundant joy. Kresna even suggests having a party. But the situation is suddenly turned into grief as Wrekudara tells them that he has been commanded to continue his search and is willing to find the Living Water in its true location in the middle of the sea. They are shocked. Being alert to the trap, danger and deception from their own point of view (C) and strengthened by Kresna’s remarks (L), his brothers try to prevent him from going: “Immediately King Prabu Yudhistira

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96 “Yen sireku ngguru pun bapa yekti, ngesuk teleng samodra gung” (Tanaya 1979: 7)
97 In this scene, it is important to note that Druna adds something regarding the efficacy of the Living Water. This is a kind of familial benefit, as he informs Wrekudara that “yen iku pinanggiha, bapa kaki nini kang wus padha lampus, besuk urip saka sira, lan sira punjul ing bumi. Tan ana aji tumama sirna kasor kawengku ing sireki” (“if the Living Water is found, the departed father and grandfather will live from you, and you will be prominent in the earth. No weapons will be able to harm you, you will destroy and defeat them [the weapons!”) (Tanaya 1979: 7).
98 “Sampun menggah sajrone ing samodra gung, wontena nginggiling swarga, dhasaring kang sapta bumi. Nora ajrih ing palastra, anglakoni tuduh Sang Maha Yekti” (Tanaya 1979: 7).
99 “Aja sira kaya bocah, den prayitna. He Kurupati wakingsun, srahena ing Bhatara, aywa malang tumolih lilakna insgun, aywa nggarantes ing kadang, pirabara yen basuki” (Tanaya 1979: 7).
100 “Pituduhe Dhang Hyang Druna, angulati Toya Urip, Enggone teleng samodra, iku arsa sun ulatì”(Tanaya 1979: 10).
embraces his brother, Arjuna-Nakula-Sadewa cry at Wrekudara’s feet, Pancawala Drupadi and Sumbadra Sri kandhi also cry. The Pandawa are strongly pleading him not to go while Kresna still tries to give advice to Wrekudara. Crying, Arjuna holds Wrekudara’s hand, the twins Nakula and Sadewa grasp Wrekudara’s legs, and Sri khandi and Sumbadra try to block him. However, Wrekudara cannot be prevented from going forward. Everyone is thrown off.”

Wrekudara then jumps up and runs out; he cannot be stopped. The Pandawa, then, are left behind in profound sadness. Kresna is in silence. Everybody is in confusion. Sounds of crying are heard everywhere. Kresna keeps comforting the Pandawa until they solemnly pause. The complication arises again (M).

N to O: Journey to the Sea (Suspense)

After taking a long journey and seeing the beauty of nature, Wrekudara finally arrives at the beach. The narrator tells of the inner doubt happening within our actor: “The waves sound like the voice of war [. . .] Wrekudara arrives, stands at the beach, and is in doubt.” According to Trimurti (1984: 26), while seeing the vastness of the ocean, Wrekudara realizes that he has been cheated by one who wants his death, Druna. However, he has already promised his teacher that he will find the Living Water. He would rather die than break his promise. He does not want to go home to challenge Druna even though Druna has misguided him. Then the narrator tells that “Wrekudara does not want to retreat.” He goes forward to plunge into the sea!

(j) P: Plunge into the Sea, Wrestle with Nemburnawa (Climax 2)

The narrator tells that Wrekudara assures his heart and thinks no more of danger. He comes into the water. The situation is gradually described: “Water splatter his calf, waves flow splashing to his face, striking his body and touching up to his neck.” Within that condition, Wrekudara then remembers his aji Jalasengara or magical-spiritual words of Jalasengara and utters it. Then, “the waters are parted as Wrekudara walks forward to the middle of the sea.”

The narrator continues by directing our attention to the danger waiting for Wrekudara: there is a sea dragon coming towards him. The name of the sea dragon is Nemburnawa. This is the description of the sea dragon, as given by the narrator: “really

101 “Sigra Prabu Yudhistira, amengkul marang kang rayi, Arjunangkula Sadewa, ing suku samya nangisi, Pancawala Drupadi. Sumbadra Sri kandhi ngayun, nggubel samya karuna, miwah Nata Harimurti, andrawili pitutur mring Bayuputra. Samya nangis ngampak-ampak, tan kengguh ginubel tangis, Dananjaya nyekel asta, Raden Kalih suku kalih, sarwi lara anangis, Kresna munggwing ngarsanipun, Sri kandhi lan Sumbadra, samya mangrubung nangisi, kinipatken sadaya sami kapesat” (Tanaya 1979: 10).

102 Sumyak lir suraking aprang [. . .] prapta Sang Wrekudara, umadeg tepining warih, mangu mulat tumon trunaning udaya (Tanaya 1979: 11).

103 “Wrekudara tan mengeng amrih mundura” (Tanaya 1979: 11).

104 Banyu sumaput wentis, melek angganira, alun pan sumamburat, sumembur muka nampeki, melek ing angga, waket jangga kang warih (Tanaya 1979: 12).

105 Jala means the net; sengara means barrier. So, aji Jalasengara means the magical formula to remove the entire barrier (Adhikara no year: 25).

106 “Iun ageng anangkebi, gadgada manengah, sira Sang Wrekudara” (Tanaya 1979: 12).
wild, floating on the water, the size as big as a small mountain, looks shiny and ferocious and its venom scarily spurting everywhere.”

The battle between Wrekudara and Nemburnawa, as told by the narrator, is a very fierce one. The sea dragon opens his huge mouth its fangs are shiny. As the sea dragon strongly twists around Wrekudara’s body, its venom is spurted into Wrekudara’s face (“wisane kang naga, tumempek mukanira”) (Tanaya 1979: 12).

In this difficult situation, Wrekudara thinks that he will surely die. However, in this crucial moment, he remembers that he has with him the finger nail named Pancanaka. Suddenly he stabs his nail into Nemburnawa’s body. The sea dragon’s body is disunited, blood flows out like rain so that the water of the sea becomes red, and the sea dragon dies (Tanaya 1979: 12). Thus, Wrekudara is triumphant for a second time in fighting and wrestling within his journey to look for the Tirta Pawitra.

It is interesting to see what the Javanese scholars say regarding the sea dragon. Different than the nature of the giants, the sea dragon is not the embodiment of any god. According to Seno Sastroamidjojo, for instance, the dragon symbolizes a huge disaster that threatens life and causes ichting, trembling, headache, throbbing, and imbalance in such a way that one become anxious, trembles, collapses and is afraid of death (1967: 21, 23). According to Adhikara, who sees the story from a Freudian perspective, the sea dragon symbolizes Wrekudara’s virility to preserve his genus and is thus connected with sexual desire (1984: 18). I see that this Freudian interpretation, developed by some Javanese scholars like Adhikara and Trimurti, opens up varieties of interpretation. Besides referring to man’s sexual desire, there also are different ideas about the meaning of the dragon and its poison. Firman Panjaitan, for example, gives several options. According to him, “the dragon can be the symbol of the manhood in destructive attitude, but the dragon can also be interpreted as a whip, and the fluid spout to Wrekudara’s face is meant as the cleansing process at work: Wrekudara is forced to purify himself before gaining the Living Water” (2003: 151).

Although less direct, Trimurti, following Djojodiguno’s opinion, also guesses that the dragon could symbolize sexual desire (1985:23). This Freudian perspective comes to Adhikara, since, according to him, the story of “Dewa Ruci” basically can be interpreted as an attempt at self-introspection (mawas diri) undergoing ascetic meditation within the psychological process (1984: 11-12). Thus, the general interpretation of Trimurti and Adhikara is that the dragon symbolizes the sexual passion which needs to be tamed in Wrekudara’s inner combat. However, the narrator in Tanaya’s version does not give any interpretation regarding the sea dragon. Thus, if we are consistent in basing our analysis on the narratological approach, the most probable conclusion we can reach is that the sea dragon represents the huge dangers and troubles that every person must face in the process of marturation in order to gain one’s ultimate aim. The proposed interpretations given by Adhikara and Trimurti are interesting but still debatable since if we use the

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107 "Krura makikikan, ngambang katon kumambang, gengnya lir prabata siwi, galak kumelap, sumembur angajirhi" (Tanaya 1979: 12).
108 “Mangap kadya guwa”: “resembling a cave.”
109 In Tanojo (1962: 18), the venom is spurted into Wrekudara’s body (naga wisanira, tumempek ngangganira).
110 For instance, according to Adhikara, the sea’s dragon venom that spurts at Wrekudara’s face is meant to turn off the five sense of Wrekudara, since he was practicing to communicate within his psyche (soul) in the condition where he turns off his own five sense (1984: 19, 20).
narratological approach then the giants and sea dragon should be interpreted within the plot of the story and not outside of it. However, if we want to also consider the opinion given by these Javanese experts who tend to give meaning to symbols, then we may take these two possibilities of the sea dragon (as the symbol of desires and dangers) hand in hand, by interpreting that desire is a form of danger one should tame in one’s existential journey.

2.2.4.2 The Meeting (Q to S: From Grace Anticipated to the Invitation into the Womb, Climax 3)

(a) Q: Known by Dewa Ruci; Flashback to Ngamarta, Anticipating Grace

This section consists of two intertwined events. The first is that after defeating the sea dragon and thus bringing happiness to the entire ocean, Wrekudara is seen by Dewa Ruci who is also known by the names Amurwengrat or Marburyengrat. The narrator then declares: Wrekudara is “being sent without any understanding of the nature of his duty, which is to find the Crystal Living Water, which has no direction, Water that understands the Water, the soul with a mysterious-filled spirit, can never be found unless receiving the true grace.”111 This idea of receiving the true grace also appears in the story when the narrator takes us back to look at what happened in Ngamarta after Wrekudara’s second departure.

The flash-back to Ngamarta is the second intertwined event, which is connected with the idea of grace. When the Pandawa grieve over Wrekudara’s second departure, Kresna comforts them by telling them that Wrekudara will not die, but will instead receive grace from God (“malah antuk kanugrahaning Bathara” (Tanaya 1979: 14)). Kresna also reveals Wrekudara’s fate: “Wrekudara will return with holiness, being loved by Hyang Suksma Kawekas (God), thus permitted to transform the self into the body of Bathara (God), which is able to see things clearly.”112 This is the reason the Pandawa should not be overwhelmed by grief and sorrow. To the reader, it seems that, in this section, the experience of receiving grace is on the way to realization and that the climax of the whole story is at hand.

(b) R to S: From the Meeting to the Invitation

The narrator tells how, after defeating Nemburnawa in the middle of the sea, Wrekudara meets someone who is described as “a kind of god with long hair, named Dewa Ruci, like a little child who is playing.”113 Then the dewa bajang or small god asks Wrekudara his intention for being in the middle of the sea, “What are you doing here, Wrekudara? What is your intention? There is nothing here, nothing to eat, nothing to wear. What is here is only dry leaves which fall in front of me. This is what I eat. If there are none, then I do

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111 “Dinuta tan uninga jatining lampah, Tirta Martha Mahening, mapan tampa arah, Tirta Kang Wruh Ing Tirta, suksma-sinuksma mawingit, tanghe mangghiha, yen tan nugraha yekti” (Tanaya 1979: 12).
112 “Besuk praptane suci, iya pan simhan, de Hyang Suksma Kawekas, winenang aliru dhiri, raga Bathara, putus ing tingal ening” (Tanaya 1979: 14).
113 “awarna rare bajang, peperab Sang Dewa Ruci, lir rare dolan” (Tanaya 1979: 14)
not eat anything.”

Stuck by wonder at the sight of this small figure or bajang, alone, in the middle of the sea, Wrekudara cynically asks the bajang its identity, “What kind of person is this, who is alone and no bigger than my little finger, but talks and acts so arrogantly?” It seems that at first Wrekudara does not understand that he is facing a god, but, after Dewa Ruci recites his genealogy and shows knowledge of Druna’s command for him to find the Living Water, and further reveals Wrekudara’s ignorance, Wrekudara confesses his stupidity and asks for the name of the bajang. The bajang then replies, “Ya ingsun Dewa Ruci” (“I am Dewa Ruci”) (Tanaya 1979: 15).

It seems that the narrator makes deliberate choices in the portrayal of the dynamic of the meeting between Wrekudara and Dewa Ruci. The odd feeling of curiosity from the side of Wrekudara is followed by inquiries from both the cynical Wrekudara and the existential Dewa Ruci. Dewa Ruci’s unexpected knowledge of Wrekudara’s history and intention leads the latter to self-recognition and to humble himself before Dewa Ruci: “I beg your favour. Teach me to cleanse my body and spirit. Actually I do not know how to learn. I am like a wild animal. I do not know what is meant by the holy body. I am still young, insulted in the world and ridiculed on the earth. I am like a keris (Javanese sword) without its sheath for when I speak, I have no manners.” Again, this surely is Wrekudara’s self recognition/acknowledgement that then leads him to come deeply into his spiritual journey in the guidance of Dewa Ruci.

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114 “Heh ta Wrekudara apa karyanira, prapta ing kene iki, apa sedyanira, iya sepi kaliwat, tan ana kang sarwa bukti, myang sarwa boga, miwah busana sepi. Amung godhong aking iku lamun ana, tiba ing ngarsa mami, iku kang sun-pangan, yen norana norana” (Tanaya 1979: 14).

115 “Iki ta wong apa, gedhe jejenthikingwang, ing pangucape kmaki, ladak kemethak, dening tapa pribadi” (Tanaya 1979: 14).

116 “Iya pan sira uga, bebete Sang Hyang Pramesthi, Hyang Girinata, turase pan sayekti. Saking Bram a wite ingkang para Nata, iya bapakireki, turun saking Bram a, mencarkan para Nata, dene ibunira Kunthi, kang duwe tedhak, iya Sang Wisnu Murti. Mung patutan telu lawan bapakira, Yudhistira pangarsi, panenggake sira, panengah Dananjaya, kang loro patute Madrim, jangkep Pandhawa” (“You are the descendant of Hyang Pramesthi, Hyang Girinata, Brama is the ancestor from whom the kings were born. Your mother, Kunthi, was descended from Sang Wisnu Murti. Kunthi gave birth to the three of you, Yudhistira is the oldest, you are the middle (second), and then Dananjaya, the other two (Nakula and Sadewa) were born by Madrim, so then the Pandawa are complete”) (Tanaya 1979: 14, 15).

117 “Praptamu kene iki. Iya Dhang Hyang Druna akon ngulatana, Banyurip Tirta Ening, iku gurunira, pituduh maring sira, iku kang sira-lakoni, mulane tapa, angel pratingkah urip” (“Regarding your coming here, it is Dhang Hyang Druna who commands you to find the Banyurip Tirta Ening, the Crystal/Clean Living Water. You are following your Master’s command and that is why it is not easy for a person who meditates to have enjoyment in life”) (Tanaya 1979: 15).

118 “Aywa lunga yen tan wruh ingkang pinaran: lan aja mangan iki, lamun norana wruha, arane kang pinaran; aywa nganggo-anggo ugi, yen durung wruha, arane busaneki. Ing werahe tetakon bisane ika, lawan tetiron negghi, dadi lan tumandang, mangkono ing ngagesang, ana jugul saking wukir, arsa tuku mas, mring kemasan den wehi. Lanyung kuning den anggep kancana mulya. Mangkono, ing ngabekti, yen durung waskhita, prenahe kang sinembah” (“Do not go before you know the direction, do not eat before you know what kind of thing you eat, do not wear clothes before you know what clothes you want to wear. You can know by asking and also by imitating, as well as by practicing. There is a foolish man from the mountain who wants to buy gold but to him yellow paper (which he thinks as gold) is given instead. This is the same matter with the person who learns devotedly but not yet understands regarding the place he worships”) (Tanaya 1979: 15).

119 “Pukulen yen makatena, pun patik anuhun sih, kula inggih datan, wruh puruhiteng badan, sasat sato wana inggih, tan mantra-mantra, waspadeng badan suci. Langkung mudha punggung cinacad ing jagad, kesi-kesi ing bumi, angganan curiga, ulun tanpa warana, wacana kang tanpa siring” (Tanaya 1979: 15).
In response to his humble request, Wrekudara receives an unexpected invitation: “Wrekudara hurry up, come into my womb.” What a surprise! Wrekudara is invited to come into the womb of this small figure. It can be understood why at first Wrekudara laughs out loud at this odd idea, saying: “You are so small, I am so big and tall like a mountain. Where I can go? It is even impossible for a little finger.” Dewa Ruci’s answer is also surprising: “Who is bigger, you or the world? This entire world, including its mountains and seas, can enter my body unimpeded.” Hearing this, Wrekudara obeys. He is told that the entrance is through Dewa Ruci’s left ear (talingan ngongkering). Thus, Wrekudara immediately jumps into that ear. He arrives directly in Dewa Ruci’s womb, where he sees a limitless sea and an immense sky. He no longer knows which way is north, south, east, or west, and what is below, above, front, or back. Then Dewa Ruci appears inside Dewa Ruci’s own womb. Suddenly everything becomes clear and Dewa Ruci is luminous. Wrekudara receives orientation of the north, the south, the east, the west, etc. In this jagad walikan, this topsy-turvy (or upside down) world, Wrekudara is reassured: “his heart feels comfort as he sees the Wiku (Dewa Ruci).” He is ready to learn important teachings.

The meeting of these two actors is colored by many surprises for Wrekudara and much knowledge as well as mysteries on the part of Dewa Ruci. It is precisely within those “poles” where Wrekudara’s courage and strong will are challenged. It is the right response to that challenge which is able to open up ways to discovery and transformation. It is important to note that the ultimate way to experience existential discovery and transformation is through responding to the invitation initiated by the Dewa Ruci as a divine figure. It is the divine figure who initiates this existential experience, not the seeker. The idea of responding to an invitation seems to resonate with the idea of grace. Hence, like grace, the invitation is opened up and offered to Wrekudara. The existential discovery and transformation is not made by Wrekudara himself. It is true that Wrekudara must take several steps in his journey, but, at last, it is the invitation of Dewa Ruci that makes him finds the true way to discover existential meaning and undergo transformation. The idea of an existential invitation which is available to whosoever responds to it, demonstrates that Asian religious traditions also contain the ideas of grace and divine initiative to transform human beings. Thus, this sola gratia or “grace alone” is not, so to speak, the monopoly of Christian theology. Asian religious resources, exemplified by the story of “Dewa Ruci” also share this treasure.

2.2.4.3 The Teachings of Dewa Ruci (T)

Within the womb of Dewa Ruci, Wrekudara receives important teachings through both visions and hearing interpretations of symbols. As laid out in my appendix, this teaching is actually quite long. Since delving into those teachings is not the main intention of this

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120 “Lah ta mara Wrekudara aglis, umanjeinga guwagarbaningwang” (Tanaya 1979: 15).
121 “Dena paduka bajang, kawula geng luhur, inggih pangawak parbata, saking pundi margine kawula manjing, jenthik masa sedhenga” (Tanaya 1979: 15).
122 “Gedhe endi sira lawan jagad, kabeh iki saisine, kalawan gunungipun, samodrane alase mami, tan sesak lumebuwa, mring jro garbaningsun” (Tanaya 1979: 15).
123 “eca tyase miwah Sang Wiku kaeksi” (Tanaya 1979: 15).
research, I will only briefly mention several central ideas of the teaching, as proposed by Javanese scholars. Adhikara groups the teaching of Dewa Ruci into five basic ideas: pancamaya or “five images”, macrocosmos and microcosmos, pramana, ilmu pelepasan/kalepasan or the knowledge that liberates, die in life and live in death (no year: 32). Below are the condensed ideas of the five:

a. Pancamaya.

The meaning of pancamaya is “five images”. According to Adhikara (no year, 36), pancamaya are images of the cosmos as responded to by the five human senses and recorded unconsciously in the human heart. In response to everything in its surroundings, our five senses are driven by our desires. The desires (as well as human attitudes) are in turn symbolized by four colours (catur warna): black, red, yellow and white.  

Whoever is able to tame and master these desires is also able to achieve the unity between the servant and the Creator (manunggaling kawula-Gusti).

Panitya Perpustakaan Sosrokartono (1971: 37-41), for instance, explores their interpretation in a sense of Islamic ways, as such: “The explanation of Catur Warna. Three of the four kinds of human passions (Lauwamah/black, Amarah/red, and Sufiah/yellow) are daily binding the human soul in social life. As long as human beings cannot tame these three passions, they cannot face Dhat Yang Maha Suci, the Divine/Most Holy Being. We are told by Javanese scholars that there are positive and negative characteristics of these colours: (1) Black, or Nafsu Lauwamah, comes from the essence of the earth. The positive characteristic of this colour is physical strength and endurance through hunger and thirst, cold and heat, physical illness and lack of rest. Meanwhile its negative characteristics are materialism, egoism, self-centeredness, stubbornness conservatism, and cruelty. The gate of this passion to the human body is the mouth; (2) Red, or Nafsu Amarah, comes from the essence of fire. Its positive characteristics are bravery, high spirits and strong will, and diligent work. Its negative characteristics are a passionate flaming and rushing spirit and hot-temper. Its gate is the ear; (3) Yellow, or Nafsu Sufiah, comes from the essence of water. Its positive characteristics are flowing like water and having lasting endurance. However, this passion is easily involved with the beautiful or aesthetic things. Moreover, it can take charge over Black and Red. Its gate is the eye; (4) White, or Nafsu Mutmainah, comes from the essence of air. It can be said that all characteristics of this passion are good. It does not cooperate with the negative characteristics of the other three passions. The colour white means clean and holy. It likes to move, work and do things which result in holiness, cleanliness, purity, peace, happiness, grandeur, and reality. It tends to loosen egocentricity and strengthen the sense of togetherness. Its gate is the nose, since the nose is the way breath comes in and out from the human body. In the Ilmu Kelepasan, the true human (manusia jati) can experience the Divine by purifying breath to the highest or most pure level.”

To come to this level, one should know where human beings come from before they are born and where they will go after they die (sangkan paranig dumadi); one also should understand the truth of non-duality which is manunggaling Kawula lan Gusti (the unity between God and human): “Yen wruh pamoring Kawula Gusti, sarta Suksma kang sinedya ana, de warna neng sira nggone, lir wayang sarieku, saking dhalang solahing ringgit, mangka panggung kang jagad, lire badan iku, asolah lamun pinolah, sasolah kumedhep myarsa ningali, tumindak lan pangucap. Kawisesa amisesa sami, datan antara pamoring karsa, jer tanpa rupa rupane, wu aneng ing sireku, upamane paesan jati, ingkang ngilo Hyang Suksma, wayangan puniku, kang ana sajroning kaca, iya sira jenenging manusa iki, rupa sajroning kaca” (“Once you have known about the union between the servant and God (the Creator) and the available Suksma (spirit) within you, what you desire is present because the form of colour that is located within you. Your body is like a shadow puppet which is moved by the shadow puppet-master. The stage of the shadow puppet is the world. Your body moves when it is moved, whether it is eye-blinking, hearing, seeing, doing or talking. There is no distance between the guidance of the will because the shape/form is shapeless/formless, and the shape/form is already in you, like the mirror. Truly, the one who looks in the mirror is Hyang Suksma and the shadow in the mirror is you, a human being, the shape in the mirror”) (Tanaya 1979: 20; Adhikara no year: 44, 45).
b. **Macrocosmos and Microcosmos**

The macrocosmos is the entire universe that can be grasped by humans’ five senses. It is kept in our unconsciousness as *pancamaya*. Therefore the contents of the universe are within the human in the form of images or *maya*. The contents of the universe are symbolized by the eight colours (in one light),\(^{126}\) seen by Wrekudara. This one light is actually the convergence of all things from every direction, including the *catur warna* of the macrocosmos. The reality of the big world (macrocosm) is similar to the reality of the small world (microcosm), which is the entire human body.\(^{127}\)

c. **Pramana**

The next vision seen by Wrekudara is of a shining ivory doll named *pramana* or heartbeat (Adhikara no year: 39). This organ in the human body functions as a mediator who guards life. Its master is *Sukma Jati*\(^{128}\) (who is able to sense divine natures within the human body). When the human body dies, the *pramana* also dies but the *Sukma Jati* will live into eternity (Adhikara no year: 40).

d. **Ilmu Pelepasan or the Knowledge that Liberates**

This is a knowledge that wants to deepen the meaning of death, to break down barriers to having a perfect death, and to give true guidance for having real life. Adhikara (no year, 45-46) summarizes that since life is eternal, death happens to the human body, but not the soul, which never dies. In a human’s death, the soul returns to *Sang Akartining Buwana*, the creator of the universe. The barrier of to the perfect death is the worldly bonds in which one should not be trapped. The guidance offered here for having a real life is not just mastering the needs of life but also mastering the needs of death (Tanaya 1979: 19; Adhikara, no year: 46).

e. **Mati sajroning Ngaurip, Urip Sajroning Apejah: Die in Life and Live in Death.**\(^{129}\)

The narrator explains the idea as such: “The meaning of the command to ‘die in life and live in death’ is to live forever. It is the lust or desire that dies. It is the physical body that

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\(^{126}\) Adhikara (no year: 38) interprets the eight colors as sun, moon, star, earth, ocean, water, wind, and fire.

\(^{127}\) In his dissertation, S. Soebardi (1975: 52) mentions that the essence of the doctrine of the Unity of Being is to be found in the teaching of Dewa Ruci to Bhima (Wrekudara).

\(^{128}\) It is also named as *Hyang Saksma Kawekas* (Panitya Perpustakaan Yayasan Sosrokartono, 1971: 44-46).

\(^{129}\) The significance of the idea of “Life and Death” in the story of Dewa Ruci was already examined and discussed by Anne Wind in his dissertation at Vrije Universiteit, entitled *Leven en Dood in het Evangelie van Johannes en in de Serat Dewarutji: met een elenctische confrontatie* (Franeker T. Wever, 1956). In the summary (which is written in English) of this dissertation, it is found that this academic writing focuses on the problem of Life and Death in the Dewa Ruci, as he wrote “On the one hand Wrekodara has to purify himself in a laborious expedition, has to kill his senses, cut through every tie binding him to this world, and to practise ascetism and concentration, on the other hand he receives the highest instruction from the true pundit. Particularly the transition from the material world, the self-abandonment, fana, and the absorption into the god, may be defined as “dying in order to life”(Wind 1956: 317).
undergoes death and is considered the real body. Be in one form, but feel its death.”

Meanwhile, Adhikara (1984:3) proposes his interpretation regarding the meaning of this sentence: “Live in Death means that as long as each human being lives in this world he or she must strike to kill his/her evil passions. Die in Life means that even though a human being is able to kill his/her evil passions, he or she still must live in this world.” Here the term “death” is used as a symbol for taming evil passions.

These five ideas above are the condensed teachings taught by Dewa Ruci to Wrekudara in Dewa Ruci’s womb. From these teachings, Wrekudara learns that one should be alert to every temptation that can mislead the human heart and therefore one should guard oneself against being bound by the pleasures of life. In order to achieve unity with God one should live in purity so that one will not be afraid of death. When the seeker achieves this, the cleansing function of the Living Water (Tirta Pawitra) has fulfilled its purpose.

It is important to note that the knowledge taught by Dewa Ruci is not meant to be shown or exhibited, hence Wrekudara is reminded to keep it in his heart: “If you have already understood all this responsibility, then keep it in secret and cover it. Do not show off your clothes, but keep it in your heart. Do not ever forget to cover it in its physical appearance.” Then, Dewa Ruci closes the teaching by sweetly saying, “There is nothing left, you have already received everything. There is nothing left to be seen which you have not mastered. Courage and toughness have been with you as well as with in every stratagem you make.”

2.2.4.4 The Impact on Wrekudara (Its Transformative Effects)

U: Wrekudara Comes Out from the Womb (Resolution to go)

After receiving the teachings, Wrekudara comes out from Dewa Ruci’s womb. The narrator tells: “Since the teaching of Dewa Ruci has finished, Wrekudara’s heart is no longer in confusion and everything has been understood [. . .] like a flower’s bud that is now blossoming and becoming more fragrant, the Pancaretne (referring to Wrekudara) has been permitted to come out from the womb of Dewa Ruci. The nature has changed to the previous one; there the Dewa Ruci has been disappeared. It is told that the heart of Wrekudara has passed from the perfume-smell of kasturi jati and the heat or pollution of

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130 “Lire mati sajroning ngaurip, iya urip sajroning apejah, urip bae salawase, kang mati iku nepsu, badan lair ingkang nglakoni, katampan badan nyata, pamori ng sawujud, pagene ngrasa matiya” (Tanaya 1979: 21).

131 Panitya Perpustakaan Sosrokartono (1971: 48) for instance, connects this advice to the prohibition of doing any of the so-called “five Ms”, commonly known as Malima : madat, madon, main, minum and mangan. Madat refers to addictions like hashish; madon comes from the word wadon (woman) and means engaging in extra-marital sexual activities; main here means gambling; minum means getting drunk; and mangan means having a big desire for eating.

132 “Yen wus mudheng pratingkah kang iki, den awingit sarta den asasab, sasat pamer panganggone, nanging ing batinpun, ing sakedhap tan kena lali, laire sasabana” (Tanaya 1979: 21).

133 “Tan ana aji paran, kabeh wus kawengku, tan ana ingulatana, kaprawiran kadigdayan wus kawingking, kabeh reh-ing ayuda” (Tanaya 1979: 21).
his heart is no more.” It seems that here the narrator wants to emphasize the impact within Wrekudara’s inner life. The one who came into the Dewa Ruci’s womb is no longer the same as the one who now is coming out from that womb. He is transformed. His heart is clean, capable, calm, blossoming and fully comprehended as he has passed through the meaningful teachings, metaphorically depicted as the *kasturi jati* fragrance of Dewa Ruci.

V: Transformed and Goes Home to Ngamarta; the End of Story.

After he comes out from Dewa Ruci’s womb, Wrekudara goes home to Ngamarta. In this closing event, the narrator again openly states Wrekudara’s inner rebirth: “Then, Wrekudara goes home, his heart is no longer in doubt, and he knows his true self, one form, one soul, in one, but this should be hidden and kept in secret (not for exhibition); it is implemented in his gentle and patient knighthood. He knows all things about the universe, the birth of his inner life is clear, everything unites integrally.” Here, in receiving the teachings that enlighten his mind, Wrekudara has acquired the Living Water, the *Tirta Pawitra*.

It is interesting to mention that in the older version written by the same author (Tanojo 1962), there is something that cannot be explicitly found in his newer (Tanaya’s) 1979 version: a family reunion between Wrekudara and his brothers, the Pandawa, in Ngamarta. The Tanaya 1979 version concludes simply, “Wus mangkana, Wrekudara mulih,” meaning “Then, Wrekudara goes home.” In that reunion (Tanojo 1962), everyone is overjoyed and Wrekudara goes into a state of reflection. He knows that (a) he has been deceived and that (b) there was a Wiku (i.e. Dewa Ruci) who has sent him home, since there is no Living Water in the middle of the silent sea either and nobody is able to get it. By saying this, it seems that Wrekudara wants to keep his mystical experience to himself, as he was ordered to by Dewa Ruci. In response to these, Kresna reminds Wrekudara not to forget everything he has experienced.

2.3 Socio-historical Environment and the Peaceful Message of the Story

In taking these ideas as important insights, I am interested in two things: (1) the possibility of the correlation between historical events and the message of the story and (2) the function of the “Dewa Ruci” story for the epic of *Mahabharata/Bharatayuda*.

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134 “Telas wulangira Dewa Ruci, Wrekudara ing tyas wus tan kewran, wruh ing namane dheweke [. . .] saingane sekar maksih kudhup lami, mangkya mekar ambabar. Wuwuh warnane lan gandaneki, wus kena kung Pancaretna medal, saking ing guwagarbane, wus salin alamipun, angulati alame lami, Dewa Ruci wus sirna, mangkana winuwus, tyasira Sang Wrekudara, lulus saking gandaning kasturi jati, pepanasing tyas sirna” (Tanaya 1979: 21).

135 “Wus mangkana Wrekudara mulih, wus tan mengeng ing galih gumawang, datan pangling sarirane, panuksmaning sawujud, nanging lair sasab piningit, reh sa-reh kasatriyan, linakon winengku, pamurwaniajagad traya, kalairan batine nora kasilib, satu munggwing rimbagan” (Tanaya 1979: 24).

136 Usually the *dhalangs* (shadow puppet master) perform Wrekudara after he has had the Living Water with a different appearance by changing his clothes and hair style. This information was taken from Rev. Yusak Tridarmanto, a Javanese expert and biblical lecturer in Duta Wacana University, Yogyakarta.

I wonder whether this story has any historical correlations with social tensions in the Javanese social environment. The Java War (Perang Jawa) of 1825-1830 between the Javanese troops led by Pangeran Diponegoro and the Dutch colonizer, seems too far from the time when the “Dewa Ruci” was written, but, the impact of social tensions brought by the presence of the Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (VOC) starting in 1602 cannot be avoided or neglected. Another possible explanation is the socio-economic-political tensions between the Chinese and Javanese before the Java War (Carey 1984: 4; Setiono, 2003: 147, 153-159; Kwartanada 2008: x, xv-xxix; Daradjadi 2013: XXVIII-XLIII). However, these hypotheses require more thorough examination.

Finally, I would like to offer my point of view regarding the peaceful-message as the contribution of this story. It is important to notice that although it uses the setting of brotherly tension between the Pandawa and Kurawa facing the Great Battle (Mahabharata/ Bharatayuda), this story is a Javanese story, composed by Javanese pujangga for a specific aim, and cannot be found in the corpus of the original Indian Mahabharata text. Therefore, I suggest that there is a significant social-peacebuilding message contained in this story about a human who is invited to kill his own evil passions and, hence, to purify himself in union with the Almighty. So, although the story of Pandawa-Kurawa brotherly tension leads them to the battle, I argue that the story of “Dewa Ruci” can be interpreted as a story that does not necessarily lead to conflict.

2.4 Conclusion

The “Dewa Ruci” should be read as a story of mystical wisdom, one which teaches its reader(s) how to undergo a mystical quest by wrestling intensively with challenges, difficulties, and mistakes on one hand and also with guidance, comfort, and grace on the other. This is done in a way that enables the seeker to experience the most significant discovery in life: purification of the self and union with the Divine. As an important keyword, the Living Water/ Tirta Pawitra, which Wrekudara searches for, is found, but not as ordinary water. It is not even a thing, but rather is: “invisible and has no form, no shape, no body, and no spatiality; it is residing only in those who are always in alertness. Only its meaningful and communicable godly signs are in the world; if you touch, it isn’t there/it is untouchable.”

The Living Water is not a material thing but an existential experience and, at once, a thorough understanding that transform the seeker to be a new person after the long journey.

Wrekudara has been transformed from an ordinary and rough person into one who has been enlightened and purified. This is, surely, a result of the mystical journey. That is why the dhalangs interpreted this newness in Wrekudara as Bima Suci, the Holy Bima. However, we should notice that in Tanaya’s 1979 version of the story, the name Bima Suci does not appear, except in the title of the book, in an introductory section, and in a later part of the story with the title of Kamekaring Kasusastran Bima Suci (Tanaya 1979: 25 et.al), but not in the text of the story itself. However, it is common for the dhalangs as well as Javanese readers to affirm the existential transformation that happened within

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138 “Tan kena sira dulu, tanpa rupa datanpa warni, tan gatra tan satmata, iya tanpa dunung, mung dumunung mring kang awas, mung sasmita aneng ing jagad ngebeki, dinumuk datan ana” (Tanaya 1979: 17-18).
Wrekudara by using the famous name *Bima Suci* for he has been enlightened and purified.

The story of Wrekudara moves from the deceit to grace and glory; from a rough, artless and strong-willed person to one who has been purified, enlightened, and transformed (since “he knows about his true self”: *datan pangling sarirane* (Tanaya 1979: 24)) which suggest the influence of Buddhism within the story. He has moved from sadness within familial community to the fellowship of happiness and from the need to be cleansed to having experienced purification of the self. In front of many dangers, deceptions, and difficulties, he is maturing in character as well as in his spiritual life journey. It seems that the Dewa Ruci’s teachings, consisting of the five ideas of human’s existence, nature, and socio-spiritual struggles, have helped Wrekudara to understand and maintain his entire life – as a one of the Pandawa as well as a pupil of Druna, who belongs to the Kurawa, in a deep and transformative way. Wrekudara’s journey, thus, can be taken as a clean mirror that reflects the way for all to come into and to see wisely into personal as well as social struggles.

The story closes by describing the happiness shared in the Pandawa’s community (Tanojo 1962). By taking the “already illuminated-transformed” Wrekudara back to the community of Pandawa, the narrator seems to promote the idea that the enlightened person should return to society to live in new and significant ways instead of withdrawing from the world. The impact of the presence of this person should positively influence society, although that person should keep the mystical experience within his/her heart and not show it off. By considering the social impact of Dewa Ruci’s teaching, it seems that the narrator wants to present the idea that the transformation within oneself is meant also for the benefit of others. It strongly suggests that the significance of the mystical journey is in offering and extending it for the benefit of a better and more peaceful society.
CHAPTER 3

The Story of “Jacob at the Jabbok”

Introduction to the Chapter

The heuristic question in this chapter is: “What do we see when we read this text through the lens of the mystical quest?” My exegetical tool is the narrative approach. Through this narrative approach, I want to find elements to confirm my hypotheses that, like the story of Dewa Ruci in chapter 2, the story of “Jacob at the Jabbok” in Gen. 32: 23-33 is full of mysticism and that it is possible to read this text as a mystical story. Therefore, in this chapter, I will attempt to examine the story, which I consider as a mystical story, from a narrative perspective focusing on the synchronic aspects of the text. To interpret a text synchronically means to see the text “as a meaningful whole containing the essential elements of its own understanding rather than as understandable only as the product of a historically determined process of composition” (Gunn, 1999: 204). Thus, it is not my aim to discern literary sources. What I need for my investigation is not what can be achieved and discovered by a historico-critical approach, i.e. its genesis, its layers, its historical and theological trajectory as well as its socio-political content and background. The method I would like to apply is narrative analysis, which means that I will approach the text as a literary and narrative composition in its final form with the intention to find and elaborate the meanings contained in the story and that I will not devote attention to such questions as: which textual traditions gave rise to the text or which historical events contributed to its composition. In this narrative analysis, the meaning of a story “is to be found by close reading that identifies formal and conventional structure of the narrative, exposes language play, and relates all to some overarching, encapsulating theme” (Gunn, 1999: 201).

From the very start, I am aware that there are various notions of what may be considered a mystical experience. In my introductory chapter, I delineated the key elements of the mystical experience and showed the main categories of these mystical experiences. However the mystical experience cannot be fully described. What I mean by the mystical experience, is a profound, intimate, direct awareness, in an immediate encounter with and within the Divine Presence and or Ultimate Reality that brings fundamental, existential, enlightened and authoritative transformations within one’s life. As one comes to merge into or experience communion with the Ultimate Reality, one’s life and relationships with all things become transparently grounded in that experience (Bishop 1995: 11-27; Ferguson 1976: 126-128; Canon 1996: 64).

This chapter explores different approaches, including psycho-spiritual, midrashic reading, and stylistic-structural analysis, to the text as offered by various scholars. I will

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139 The method of narrative analysis will give attention to the role of the narrator, character (characterization), plot, ploy and detail of style, see in David M Gunn and Danna Nolan Fewell (1993); also Shimon Bar-Efrat (1989).

140 Some categories of the mystical experience are extrovertive and introvertive, nature and theistic mysticism, monistic and theistic mysticism, the mysticism of “love and union” and “knowledge and understanding”, “inward way” and “way of unity”, etc (Bishop 1995).
try to discern how insights from these approaches can be valued, considered, and taken into account. In my approach, I will use the narrative method to interpret the text as a story and hope to discover what elements the story contains that correspond with the scheme of mystical experience. Sometimes it will be necessary to examine also the clause-structure of the story and to delve deep into its syntax and grammar. However, my final goal is not a purely syntactical-grammatical approach to the story. The exploration of the clause structure is necessary because it is helpful for better discovering the narrative and literary structure of the text.

The structure of this chapter is as follows: (a) I will first analyze how the broader narrative context, of which Gen. 32 is a part, is constructed. The broader contexts of Genesis are explored in order to enable us to locate this chapter in its broader and ‘logical’ place. I also hope to show that in the broader context, in the moments anticipating the Gen.32 story, elements of a process of maturation related to the mystical experience can be found. A second step will be (b) to narrow the focus to Gen. 32: 23-33 and to discover elements that belong to the mystical quest type-scene. The final step will be (c) to offer some conclusions of the story and the significance of socio-religious transformation it depicts in the context of enmity and its challenges. By developing these mentioned steps, I hope to arrive at, or at least come closer to, the several aims of this research which are: (1) to find the elements of the mystical quest narrative in the text so that it can be considered a mystical narrative; and (2) to examine how an existential-spiritual journey can lead to transformation or conversion within a person that leads to the ability to address the other in courage and openness and hence gives impact to social milieu as well.

3.1 The Aims of the Story and Its Mystical Elements

According to Walter Brueggemann, Gen. 32: 22-32 is perhaps the most extensively interpreted text in the patriarchal materials. Its rich expository possibilities are based in part on its lack of clarity, which permits various readings (1980:266). Scholars have offered varying ideas concerning the atmosphere of this story, which, according to J.P. Fokkelman, contains great profundity (1975:209).\footnote{Fokkelman (1975:209) writes that “in this text we feel that only the top of an iceberg is in sight [...] and it is nearly impossible to fix in a description the line between what is expressed and what is not, between ‘foreground’ and ‘background’.”} Though this story contains information about the name Pniel (Coats 1983: 23)\footnote{Coats (1983: 23) mentions: “As a distinct unit, it is an etiology of the name change. The etiological element in vv.31-33 attaches to the primary unit and do not affect its genre classification. Earlier stages of the tradition were probably etiological myth. The etiological cannot be defined, however, as an explanation for Peniel, either as a name etiology or as \textit{a hieros logos}.”} as well as for an Israeli’s customary dietary restriction (Hamilton 1995: 328), these aetologies are secondary according to many scholars. Bona Marcel affirms that the main features of the narrative is not in explaining these customs but “suggests rather a blessing story, blessing that gives a new name and a new destiny [. . .] this is the decisive point towards which is directed the attention of the reader” (1992: 209). Meanwhile according to Heather McKay (1987: 3), the author of the Jabbok story “was constructing a hope-giving paradigm which would give his audience a theological understanding to cope with the tension between the rival
concepts of success in life being a mark of Yahweh’s favour and failure in life being sure
to evoke his concern.” This hope-giving paradigm is connected to the provision of an
image of the future in a new land and God’s active guidance (Mc Kay 1987:11). Besides
these theological and etiological purposes, Robert Stoudt (1993) notes the possibility of
an existential psycho-spiritual aim contained within the story. Along the same lines as
Stoudt, Henry Knight, who emphasizes the psycho-spiritual dimension of the story
through a Midrashic reading, sees the significance of the story in the matter of Jacob’s
struggling with the reality of internal shame and guilt (1992:459). Considering these
possibilities, we may suggest at the very least three contents of the “Jacob at the Jabbok”
story: theological, (socio) etiological, and psycho-spiritual.

In this chapter, I will investigate the approaches mentioned above, and then
follow my own hypotheses that the story of “Jacob at the Jabbok” can also be read as a
mystical account that happened to and within Jacob, one of Israel’s patriarchs. In the
introduction, I discussed the mystical quest and the key elements of the mystical
experience: purification, illumination, union, ineffability, noetic quality, transiency,
passivity, change from darkness to enlightenment, integrity, wholeness, feeling of
“coming home”, which result in a change in nature and resultant actions of the
experience. Then the next step is to see whether the key elements are corresponding with
the first look at what Gen.32 offers. A close examination of the Jabbok scene, reveals the
following possible key elements of the mystical quest in this story:

a. Events of a ripening progress leading up to the mystical moment
b. The significance of Jacob’s movement in the river of Jabbok and the meaning
   of word play and specific names.
c. The “night” and the “dawn = the sun rose” reality (Gen. 32: 23, 25-32)
   account.
d. The profound, direct, and intimate encounter within the Divine Presence via
   wrestling and conversation.
e. The transformation of the name from Jacob to Israel.
f. Exterior changes.

3.2 Stages Leading to the Mystical Experience at the Jabbok

We should be aware that to look at Gen. 32 by itself is not sufficient. In order to grasp
more profoundly the depth of Gen. 32, it is necessary to locate this text in its broader
context. My examination of this will suggest that the mystical elements have already been
present in the previous events. Therefore, we will first go to the broader context of the
Jacob-Esau story in order to discover elements that might fit into the scheme of mystical
quest. We will finish this part with a summary of the most elementary narrative elements
of the broader story.

3.2.1 The General Overview of the Sequences of the Story of Jacob and Esau

The Jacob-Esau story appears in Isaac’s toledot (lineage, literally in Hebrew, generations)
in Gen. 25:19-34, where from the very start conflict and differences between the two
brothers are noted. In their mother’s womb the two babies already struggled against each
other (25:22). When they were born, their physical appearances were distinct. Esau was hairy and while no detailed information is given about Jacob’s appearance, it is implied that he was not like his brother. They were different. The narrator informs us of their differences as they became men, in both their life styles as well as in their chosen living conditions. Esau was a skilful hunter who lived outside while Jacob was a quiet man who lived in a tent. Esau was the favourite of their father Isaac, while Jacob was the favourite son of their mother Rebecca (Gen. 25:28).

There were two main conflicts between Esau and Jacob, as they grew up. The first tension had to do with Esau’s selling of his birthright, as narrated in Gen. 25:29-34. Returning from hunting, Esau was hungry and tired and asked for a red pottage cooked by Jacob. Jacob gave it to him on one condition: that Esau exchanged this meal for his birthright as the elder son. Esau agreed to this condition and then the exchange was sealed with an oath (Gen. 25:33). The second tension was over the blessings each received from their father Isaac as he was nearing death, as narrated in Gen. 27:1-40. Isaac was old and was aware that his death was near. Therefore, he planned to give Esau the special blessing of prosperity, power and good destiny. Before giving that blessing, Isaac ordered Esau to go to the fields, hunt for an animal, and cook it for him. When Isaac would have eaten the food, he would bless Esau. This plan was overheard by Rebecca and she, then, planned her own agenda for Jacob, her favourite son, to receive the blessing. She had Jacob bring her a goat to be cooked, and then commanded Jacob to wear Esau’s cloak. Jacob followed his mother’s instructions and went to Isaac. After deceiving his father by pretending to be his brother, Jacob was blessed by their father with the special blessing that was meant for his brother (Gen. 27:18-29). When Esau returned from the field, cooked the meal and brought it to Isaac, it was revealed that Jacob had deceived their father and usurped Esau’s blessing (Gen. 25:35). Esau became very angry and planned to kill his brother (Gen. 27:41). In fear and at Rebecca’s urging, Jacob escaped north to Haran to the house of Laban (Rebecca’s brother). On his journey north, Jacob arrived at the place that he named later “Bethel”. In that place, Jacob had a dream in which he saw angels of the LORD ascending and descending a ladder set upon the earth reaching to heaven. Here Jacob received the promise of guidance, well-being, and prosperity from the LORD, the God of Abraham and Isaac (Gen. 28:13-15).

After Jacob arrived at Haran, he lived in Laban’s house and worked for him for twenty years, fourteen of which were in order to have Laban’s daughters Leah and Rachel as his wives. In these twenty years, Jacob had a difficult life under Laban’s power. Laban cheated Jacob by replacing Rachel with Leah as Jacob’s first bride (Gen. 29: 15-30) and also changed Jacob’s salary ten different times (Gen. 31:41). Jacob’s life was difficult. There in Haran, he had children with Rachel, Leah, and two maids. There was also the case of Leah exchanging mandrake fruit for a sexual interaction with Jacob (30:14-21). However, even though his life was hard, Jacob was blessed by the LORD with many possessions and cattle. One day, Jacob decided to return home to the South. He took his family and belongings and ran away from Laban (Gen. 31:21). Laban chased Jacob and they met at the mountain of Gilead. Because of God’s protection, Laban did no harm to Jacob and let him go. Overwhelmed by the fear of Esau, Jacob then continued his journey south to Mahanaim (Gen. 32: 1-21) where he planned a strategy to soften Esau’s anger. The very night he and his household arrived at the river of Jabbok. Jacob had an
existential-spiritual experience (Gen. 32: 23-33) before he was to meet Esau, the supreme source of his fear and anxiety, the next day (Gen. 33).

3.2.2 The Most Basic Narrative Elements of the Broader Story

This is the story of a conflict and then reconciliation. In this story we find several of the most important narrative elements from a narratological point of view: the birth scene, the selling of the birthright, the father’s blessing, the Bethel experience, and the life of Jacob under Laban’s power. Some quotations from the story will show those elements:

- **The Birth Scene**
  “The children struggled together within her” (Gen. 25:22)
  Even before they were born, the twins have already struggled against and crushed each other within their mother’s womb.

  “The first came forth red, all his body like a hairy mantle, afterward his brother came forth, and his hand had taken hold of Esau’s heel” (Gen. 25:25, 26)
  The physical appearance of the baby Esau is described, but for Jacob there is no description of his physical appearance, only the gesture of holding his brother’s heel. It seems that the narrator wants to stress their differences in such a way that the differences can be seen easily, directly and without any further analyses needed.

  “Esau was a skilful hunter, a man of the field while Jacob was a quiet man, dwelling in tents” (Gen. 25:27)
  Their characters are much different in both in their ways of life and in their preferred living places.

  “Isaac loved Esau…but Rebecca loved Jacob” (Gen. 25:28)
  The brotherly conflict seems rooted and also supported by the favouritism of their parents.

- **The Selling of the Birthright**
  “Jacob said, ‘First sell me your birthright’” (Gen. 25:31)
  Esau does not value his right, while Jacob is full of strategy. Here Jacob wants to have his brother’s birthright, which means power over the family and household, since the son who holds the birthright inherits the legacy from the father.

- **Isaac’s Blessing**
  “But he (Isaac) said: ‘Your brother came with guile, and he has taken away your blessing’” (Gen. 27:35)
  This is the source of Esau’s anger and hatred. This hatred is so huge that he plans to kill Jacob, his brother. However, Jacob’s deception in some way was fulfilling an earlier prophesy that “the elder shall serve the younger”(Gen. 25: 23). Jacob’s strategy for gaining the blessing of the birthright actually was already portrayed by the narrator in the event of Esau’s selling of his firstborn rights. The fearful Jacob, after listening to his
mother’s advice, leaves for Paddan-aram in the north, to the house of Laban, his uncle and future father-in-law.

- **The Experience at Bethel**
  “How dreadful is this place! This is no other but the house of God…” (Gen. 28:17)

Bethel is Jacob’s first spiritual experience. The function and connection of this experience to the second spiritual experience at the Jabbok is significant.

- **The Experience Under Laban’s Power**
  “These twenty years I have been in your house; I served you fourteen years for your two daughters, and six years for your flock, and you have changed my wages ten times.” (Gen. 31:41)

The many years under Laban’s house were hard experiences but were also beneficial for Jacob to experience God’s protection.

### 3.2.3 Two Meetings on the Journey to and at the North

Departing to the north, Jacob experiences two meetings. The first was the meeting with God via a dream and the second was the meeting with man (Laban) for twenty years of hard life in Haran. Since these two meetings are important, I will try to explore their interconnectedness with the return journey to the South, via the Jabbok event.

#### 3.2.3.1 Spiritual Encounter at Bethel (Gen. 28)

There, in the middle of his fearful journey to the north, Jacob receives his first spiritual experience via a dream (28:10-22). In his dream Jacob sees a vision (v.12) and hears the words of the LORD (v.13-15). When he wakes from sleeping, he realizes that the place where he slept is a holy place because there he had experienced the presence of the LORD (v. 16). It seems that here Jacob has experienced an element of mystical quest since it appeared that he got the “altered states of consciousness deriving from the encounter with the other, the divine reality” (Sölle, 2001: 16). Then he named the place: בֵּית-אָלֹם, which means “the house of God”. By receiving the promise of well-being, prosperity, and protection of the LORD (v.13-15), Jacob receives the guarantee for his own life and also for his descendants. This divine promise, from Jacob’s perspective, could refer to the element of political power. However, this is not the ultimate intention of the chapter since, as we will see, the significance of this spiritual experience at the peak of Jacob’s fear is to strengthen and comfort him. The “Bethel experience” happened during the vulnerable time of young Jacob, during his first experience away from home, away from his mother’s protection and from Esau’s anger. Meanwhile the “Jabbok-Penuel” experience happens during the vulnerable position of Jacob as a husband, a father, and a chief of his community in the face of his own historical-supreme fear: Esau (Gen. 32-33). Considering the context of the two stories, I find that the significance of the two spiritual experiences (Bethel and Pniel/Penuel) is the same. Both could be seen as kind of a “bridge” which delivers Jacob to face the powerful human figures.
These “bridges” are not passive bridges. They are meant to strengthen Jacob to face future danger. Therefore, these spiritual events as bridges could be understood as moment of empowerment: in the dreaming event at Bethel, Jacob was empowered to live under Laban, his future father-in-law. In a similar way via the wrestling event at “Jabbok-Pnuel”, he is empowered to approach and encounter Esau, his skilful-hunter brother. These two spiritual experiences (dreaming and wrestling) have provided a convergence, a point of contact between Jacob’s fear and the Divine’s blessing. Both experiences contain a so-called ‘Divine Presence’ (Ferguson 1976: 126) within Jacob’s existential crisis.

3.2.3.2 Jacob-Laban Encounter (Gen. 29-31)

Besides the “Bethel event”, we then find that the narrator depicts the difficult years Jacob endures during his “Laban event”. Through this “Laban event” as told in the “Jacob-Laban” story (Gen. 29-31), the narrator shares with the reader the development of Jacob’s character. Within this section Jacob learns how to struggle and stand on his own feet. There he is, far away from his mother’s protection, but at once he learns that he has always been protected by the LORD whom he has met and who promised to guard him in the “Bethel event”. The promise of the LORD is real as the years pass by. Jacob matures through many difficulties. Seen from the perspective of the ripening process, I identify several functions of the “Laban event”:

1. A story which tells about equal punishment for Jacob. Jacob, who cheated his own brother Esau, is then cheated by Laban, his own father-in-law, for many years.
2. A story which tells about Jacob’s own perseverance, cleverness, and struggles, no longer being facilitated by anyone, especially his mother who always orchestrated his “success” in the past.
3. A story of preparation for the return journey: After twenty years of hard work Jacob who now has two wives, two maids, eleven children, and many cattle and goods, plans to return home, back to the South.
4. A story that proves the fulfillment of the LORD’s promise = a promise-fulfilling story of the “Bethel event”, which could function also as a prototype as well as guarantee for the same fulfillment in Jacob’s way to meet his ultimate human fear: meeting Esau through the “Jabbok/Pniel-Pnuel event”.

3.2.4 Functions of the Several Previous Episodes; Broader Schemes

By these two events (Bethel and Laban), we find that the narrator shares the significance and benefit of a specific spiritual event (for Jacob). The spiritual experience in the “Bethel event” was meant to prepare as well as strengthen Jacob for the human interaction experience in the “Laban episode/event”. Likewise, the spiritual experience of the “Jabbok event” is told in order to empower Jacob on his way to a human meeting experience in the “Esau-Jacob encounter”. Thus, from Jacob’s perspective, the Bethel and Laban events/episodes can be read as a background as well as prototypical notion that served and gave guarantee to another spiritual-human meeting of the “Jabbok/Pniel-
Esau’s episode. The schemes of all these interconnected episodes (from Gen. 25 to 33) could be set as:


The ‘other’ is the dangerous enemy (who wants to kill Jacob, Gen. 27: 41 - Esau)

Twenty years of Ripening and Maturing Years under Laban’s yoke (Gen. 29-30)

The ‘other’ is the cheater (who cheats Jacob, Gen. 29: 25, 41 - Laban)

The ‘other’ is the more powerful one (who can ‘hire’ Jacob sexually, Gen. 30: 16 - Leah)

Journey Home → Escape (Gen. 31) → Fear (Gen. 32:7) → Spiritual Experience (Gen. 32: 23-32) via Wrestling → Conversation → Being Blessed (at the Jabbok/Pniel) → Transformation → Promise accomplished → Jacob-Esau Encounter.

We will see that here radical changes occur in Jacob’s perception of the other.

Taking the discussion above, we notice that the spiritual events (that happened to Jacob) were not meant to serve an individualist-egocentric concern, but rather are mostly aimed at preparing and strengthening one to have or to experience the existential meeting with other(s) within his real struggle and growth. In this way the previous events can be comprehended as preparation-educative moments and also as strengthening-prototype moments for Jacob to be really transformed by a profound-intimate-direct awareness, immediate encounter with the Divine Presence (a mystical event) within his own existential struggle.

3.3 “Jacob at the Jabbok” in Narratological Perspective

We are now arriving at the ‘occurrence of mystical event’ in the scene of the “Jacob at Jabbok” story. The stage is open and the lens of camera is now focusing on the specific event told in Gen. 32: 23-33. In this part we will try to read Gen. 32 as a mystical quest ‘type-scenes’. This term ‘type-scene(s)’, introduced by Robert Alter (1981: 51), refers to “a narrative convention where a series of recurrent narrative episodes are attached to the

The case of Leah’s mandrake fruit is a subordinate element compared to Laban’s power and cheating upon Jacob. However, this case is important to be mentioned either as a hint to Jacob’s powerless position or in its permutation resonance to the case of Jacob-Esau’s birthright selling.
careers of biblical heroes.” Herewith, after Bethel we have the Jabbok story where our actor Jacob, for the second time, got his special existential and intimate religious experience with the Divine.

3.3.1 The Text of “Jacob at the Jabbok” (Gen. 32: 23-33).

The Masoretic Text (in Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia/BHS)

144 Alter (1981: 51) identifies six different biblical type-scenes: 1) the announcement of the birth of the hero to a barren woman; 2) encountering the bride at the well; 3) the epiphany in the field; 4) the initiatory trial; 5) the danger in the desert and discovery of a source of substance; and 6) the testament of the dying hero.

145 I take the Hebrew text (the Masoretic Text) as my basic text. English translation of the Bible (such as RSV, NRS, YLT, NIV, etc) usually have a different numbering by putting the story in verses 22-32, but my translation will be based on the Hebrew numbering.
My Translation

23 Then he arose at that night and took his two wives, and his two maids, and his eleven children and crossed the ford of Jabbok.
24 And he took them and made them cross the river, then he made his belongings cross.
25 Then Jacob was left alone and a man wrestled with him until the dawn had come.
26 And he saw that he was not able to prevail, then he touched the hollow of his thigh and Jacob’s hollow of thigh was dislocated when he wrestled with him.
27 Then he said “Let me go for the dawn has come,” but he said “No, I will not let you go unless you bless me.”
28 And he said to him, “What is your name?” And he said, “Jacob.”
29 Then he said, “Your name shall no more be called Jacob but Israel because you have striven with God and with men and you have prevailed.”
30 And Jacob inquired and said,” Tell your name, I pray” and he said, “Why is this that you inquired for my name?” And he blessed him there.
31 And Jacob called the name of that place Pniel for “I have seen God face to face and my life has been delivered.”
32 Then the sun rose upon him as he passed over Pnuel and he was limping upon his thigh.
33 Therefore the children of Israel do not eat the sinew of the hip which is upon the hollow of the thigh until this day, because he touched the hollow of Jacob’s thigh on the sinew of the hip.

3.3.2 Plot of the Story (Gen. 32: 23-33)

Scholars plot the story in various ways. Roland Barthes (1977: 128), Gordon Wenham (1994: 297) and Victor Hamilton (1995: 328) divide this story in three parts, however their divisions are different. Fokkelman (1975: 209) elaborates extensively on the structure of the scene which, according to him, is very transparent. In this section, I will elaborate the plot of the story by mainly using and developing the ideas of Marcel. My reason for using and developing Marcel’s view on the structure of the story is that I find the frame of narrative suspense of Exposition, Complication, Climax, and Resolution to be convincing because this frame might help to locate the dynamics of

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146 The literal translation is “No, I will not let you go until you make me blessed.” We will return to this point further on when we discuss the detail of the structure.
147 Barthes’ three parts are: the Crossing (vv. 22-24 in English Version), the Struggle (vv. 24-29) and the Namings or Mutations (vv. 27-32). Wenham’s scenes are: Description of the fight (vv. 25-26), Dialogue: naming Israel, naming of Pniel (vv. 27-31), Departure and Etiological comment (vv.32-33). Hamilton’s scenes are: narrative (vv.23-26), dialogue (vv.27-30) and etymology (vv. 31-33).
148 Fokkelman’s structure: vv.23f : the preliminaries
25-26 : fight, ending in:
27-30 : conversation
31-32 : Jacob’s evaluation and departure
33 : an etiological side-note
149 Marcel’s plot is: (i) Exposition, (ii) Complication (vv. 23-24), (iii) Climax (v. 27), and (iv) Resolution (vv. 28-30). Fokkelman, Marcel and I use the Hebrew text numbering. In order to make an adjustment, I
the story in specific as well as continuing clusters. However, I amend it in several ways, mostly regarding what I see to be the significance of (a) the inclusio of the time setting (verse 23-24 and 32) and (b) the climax event (28-30). I want to analyze the plot of the narrative of ‘Jacob at the Jabbok’ by departing from the mystical quest story ‘type-scene’. By using the mystical quest type-scene, in which the actor deals with the Divine Presence, resulting in a change from darkness to light, purification, illumination, intimate-direct encounter, integrity, wholeness, I suggest the plot of the narrative of ‘Jacob at the Jabbok’ as follows:

Scene Plot:

Explanation:

Vv. 23-24: Night, crossing event, names (Jacob is behind his family and belongings)
Vv. 25-26: The stage is set by the narrator; wrestling with the ish; the narrator leads the reader into greater suspense when Jacob is brought to his knees by the mysterious touch;
V. 27: Conversation 1: “Let me go…I will not let you go unless…”
Vv. 28-30: Conversation 2: “You have striven with …and you have prevailed” The query of the name → Blessing → Israel.
V. 31: Reflective acknowledgement “I have seen God….my life is delivered”
V. 32: Dawn, Jacob crosses Pniel limping
V. 33: Etiological information and remembrance of the new mark of Jacob.

will be re-numbering the verses referred to by the scholars mentioned afterward in the same text’s numbering.

150 Marcel (1992: 214) says that “The dramatis personae of our story are Jacob and a certain ish (a man). The tempus is at night time during Jacob’s return homeward journey. The ford at Jabbok is the locus.” And the quid of the story is an “inner struggle” and its “outward manifestation” as Jacob finds himself in solitude on cis-Jabbok.” The dramatis personae are “the characters in a play or story”, the tempus means “time setting”, the locus is referring to “place” and the quid is the “something” in the story.
I now intend to analyze the sequences of the text according to this structure.

3.3.3  Time Setting: The Night (Inclusio), Crossing the Jabbok, Names

23 Then he arose at that night /
and took his two wives, and his two maids, and his eleven children/
and crossed the ford of Jabbok/
24 And he took them and made them cross the river/
then he made his belongings cross.

3.3.3.1  From “the Night” to “the Sun Rises”.

The *inclusio* of the time-frame from “at that night” בלילה in v. 23 until “the sun rose upon him” השמש in v.32, gives the reader several ideas to ponder. It is important to note that both during the escape from the presence of Esau leading to the Bethel experience and during the return journey facing the coming of Esau after the encounter at the Jabbok-Pnuel, both spiritual experiences happen at the same time: during the night. According to Fokkelman (1975: 216) and Marcel (1992: 214), this hint of time is meant to underline something important, since “night is symbolic of Jacob’s position and that God has always revealed himself to Jacob only in the night”. This aspect, too, makes the Penuel-scene the counter-part to Bethel. Marcel (1992: 214) notices that the night is contrasted with the post-conversion position: later, the sun dawns brightly as the narrator ends this story by referring again to the time as an *inclusio* – “the sun rose upon him” - which contains a significant mark for spiritual transformation. By this phrase, the narrator emphasizes that “the natural happenings have been taken into the service of the ‘inner’ happenings” (Fokkelman 1975: 221-222).

In my opinion, by taking this *inclusio* of time as a frame, it seems that the narrator deliberately wants to tell the reader that Jacob’s wrestling (from night to dawn) is not just an ordinary matter. This should also be taken as an existential experience which drives a person into newness by passing the time of darkness (symbolized by לילה, night) into the time of light (symbolized by “the sun rose” at שָּׁהֲרָא, dawn), a total passage of reality. This hint can be read, in my opinion, as referring to and reflecting the inner world of the person who is encountering a mystical experience.151

151 St. John of the Cross for example, also talked about the darkness/night experience as an important part of a mystical journey. See in Ascent of Mount Carmel, 3rd revised edition, translated and edited by E. Allison Peers.
3.3.3.2 The Crossing Event

Why is it that Jacob “arose” that night and made his nocturnal departure? There is no explanation in the text and so we are left to conjecture. According to Fokkelman (1975: 211) and Wenham (1994: 292), it is because Jacob was so disturbed in mind and he was too worried to sleep. Fokkelman (1975: 211) notices that Jacob “continues to be conscience-stricken”.

In this situation, Jacob continues his procession again (the previous procession is told in Gen. 32: 14ff). The opening verb is “took” (lāqah). He took wayyiqqah and then he crossed/passed (‘br): waḥəbər. The word “crossing (abar)”, according to Fokkelman, is one of Jacob’s key words.

It seems that Jacob has something in mind as he initiates a new plan. But, it seems that this is not the idea of “removing the others to enable Jacob to be alone” (Fokkelman 1975: 212).

Fokkelman, who based his argumentation on the stylistic structure, states: “The most conspicuous stylistic phenomenon in v.23f is a fourfold ‘br (three times occur in verb: waḥəbər; waḥəbəhmiph; waḥəbənhiph; and once in a noun: maḥbar). Jacob makes the actual members of his house ‘pass on’, whereas in the previous phase the servants had to ‘pass on’ so that Jacob and his people might follow safely. This can only mean that in the restlessness of his longest night, Jacob has woken up to the fact that staying behind means hiding oneself, shirking one’s responsibility” (1975: 212). Here, Fokkelman interprets that in the crossing event “Jacob wants to make amends that he wants to lead the way himself and wants to go to meet Esau himself… the repetition of ‘br also indicates what a toilsome operation this is for Jacob” (1975: 212, 213). Meanwhile in my opinion, though this could possibly be the ‘fact’ told in the story that Jacob is then left behind, cannot remove the shadow of the old plan entirely: shielding himself using his gifts, and even his family. At least, if we want to take Fokkelman’s idea into account, what we can say is that Jacob could probably arrive at the intersection of his conscience: he might want to make a change by leading his household as a captain that walks in front of his group, but this idea is not proven in the reality as told in the text.

The discussions regarding the crossing event are somehow also debatable. They usually develop as follows: in what condition and how many times does/do the crossing(s) happen? On what side of the river does Jacob finally take his household and find himself alone, and what does it means? According to Hamilton (1995: 329) one can read vv.23-24 in two ways: “First, Jacob himself crosses the river. Second, Jacob sends his entourage across, but he himself does not cross. The second interpretation suggests that the distance between Jacob and his party included at least the Jabbok, and that Jacob fought with the man on the north side of the Jabbok in a rearguard position. But if Jacob has crossed the river with his caravan and subsequently put a distance between himself and them, then Jacob fought with the man on the south side of the Jabbok.”

Fokkelman (1975:211) writes: “Here he feels that he is not tam any longer, a man of character. As purposeful and efficient as he was as deceiver, so estranged and split has his personality now become; […] After twenty years at Haran all this comes to light unmercifully on the eve of the confrontation with Esau.”

Throughout his life-story there are some key words that refer to Jacob’s account: abar, lifne, hen, mahane, histahawa (Fokkelmann 1975:226-227). Meanwhile according to Wenham (1994: 294), Jacob’s key words are: abar, panim, and the theme of blessing.

97
Another opinion comes from Sergey Frolov (2000: 46-47). According to him, there are significant differences between v.23 and 24. In v.24 the verb “to cross” (wayyaʿāḥīrēm and wayyaʿāḥēr) which comes from the root ʿāḥar is hiphil which means: to cause something to cross. Meanwhile in v.23, the pattern is qal and therefore intransitive: he crosses himself (Frolov 2000: 46). Moreover, Frolov explores the possibility that Jacob first checked the ford alone and then transported the women and children, but the present of ʿlāqah in v.23 refers to the “family’s participation in both phases of the maneuver” (2000: 46). Therefore, as Frolov suggests, there could be two different moves that happened: “In v.23, Jacob crosses the river together with his family: once taken, they are presumed to be with him, and the narrator does not deem it necessary to clarify that they also reached the opposite bank. Then in v.24 Jacob helps the family to cross the river once more and sends away all his possessions, but stays behind” (2000: 47).

Since the idea of “doing the crossing twice” (so the majority of the caravan returns to the starting point) simply in order to stay alone is, according to Frolov (2000: 47), at the first glance incomprehensible, therefore he offers another idea based on the second differences in v.23 and v.24. These lie in the specific name of the places: “the Jabbok ford” (maʿāhar yabboq, in v.23) and the river (nāḥah) of Jabbok in v.24. His alternative idea is simply that there could be a possibility for Jacob (along with his wives, maids, children, and cattle) to cross two rivers. His reason is that “this interpretation is more attractive, since it makes Jacob’s behavior more understandable, explaining that he did not drive his household in meaningless circles; it also seems to be more compatible with the initial location of the patriarch’s camp presupposed by the wording of his prayer in Gen. 32:10-13” (Frolov 2000: 47). Thus here we have two possibilities: either Jacob brought his family across twice (so they finally were back in the previous place) or that there were two crossings over two rivers.

However, I think there is a third possibility which is mainly based on the circumstances of the story: the crossing event for his family and belongings happened just once but is narrated twice. In my opinion, the verbs in verse 24: wayyiqqāḥēm (lāqah, qal), wayyaʿāḥīrēm (ʿāḥar, hiphil), and wayyaʿāḥēr (ʿāḥar, hiphil) are meant to re-tell and emphasize the verb in verse 23: wayyiqqah (lāqah, qal) and wayyaʿāḥōr (ʿāḥar, qal). So, the first group that crossed the Jabbok went with Jacob’s gifts to Esau (see 32: 14-22), then his family (two wives, two maids and eleven children) and everything he had were in the next queue (one crossing, but narrated twice), then at last he himself, left behind alone. The emphasis on this crossing twice is to tell us that there is nobody and nothing left. Jacob is totally alone. By telling this situation, I guess, the narrator implicitly wants to show us the inner character of our actor, Jacob. He was a man full of fear and anxiety. In this part, Jacob was portrayed “using his own family as a human shield as he is trying to survive by pushing others into the line of the fire” (Frolov 2000: 56). By remaining alone, Jacob makes his ultimate effort to not be exposed in front of the enemy. He wants to be safe from Esau’s anger. Of course, he wants to protect his family and belongings but what he really cares about, above all, is protecting himself. However, this ignoble technique of shielding himself using his own household could not save Jacob from danger. Soon after his meticulous but tricky strategy had already been

154 The idea that there are two crossings is also supported by S.R. Driver (1991: 294).
set up in his effort to avoid hard confrontation with his predicted adversary (Esau), Jacob finds himself directly engaged with an unpredicted adversary in his aloneness, in his solitude.\(^{155}\)

### 3.3.3.3 The Names and the Wordplay: Several Previous Hints

Scholars show that discussing the wordplay of specific names in this text is important. Representing many other scholars, McKay (1987: 4) sees that there is the play on the proper names: קְנֵן ya‘aqôb and הבו’yabbôq\(^{156}\) with the accompanying use of the similar-sounding but rare word for ‘wrestle יִבְאַב יִבְאַב (v.25). This “seems rather to be an attempt to put the meaning of the story right into the roots of the words actually used to tell the story....[the narrator] is deeply structuring his writings to create a climate for the acceptance of particular theological concepts” (McKay 1987: 4). These affinities for names also denote the “crux of the matter [which] is rightly articulated with this set of three words” (Marcel 1992: 214). According to Fokkelman (1975: 210), this set of three words articulates “the heart of the matter by means of a hard alliteration. Tripping his fellow-men by the heel (’qb) has for Jacob come to its extreme consequence: a wrestling (’bq) with a ‘man’ which to Jacob is the most shocking experience of his life, as appears from the fact that thereafter he proceeds through life a man changed of name, and thus of nature, and under the new name he becomes the patriarch of the Israelites.”

On the one hand, I agree that the wordplay plays an important role. However, on the other, we should not neglect the hint that was already available in its simplest way: the meaning of the name of the place (stage) where the event of wrestling happened. In my opinion, by mentioning the name of the river/ford, the narrator hints toward something important contained within the meaning of the place itself, besides its connection to the wordplay. These two possibilities should be taken into account together. Keil and Delitzsch show that the river receives its name (Jabbok) from the word: wrestling יִבְאַב יִבְאַב. It starts from the word neabaq, an old word, which only occurs here (vv.25, 26). It signifies to wrestle, which is either derived from abaq: to wind something, or related to habaq: to contract one’s self, to plant limb and limb firmly together (1949:304). Another explanation came from The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible (Buttrich [ed], 1962: 778) which told that the name of Jabbok may be derived from the sound of the gurgling of its water. Added to this, Skinner notes that ybq could be the gurgler from the Aramaic word: bakka, which resembles ‘bq as a popular wordplay (1912: 407). The possible original meaning of Jabbok as the gurgling of the water has it resonance with the meaning as suggested by Fausset’s Bible Dictionary, which is “pouring out or emptying.”\(^{157}\) We should remember that Fokkelman made the effort of a structural analysis connection both in meaning and form between the topographical name of Mahanaim (as the name of place) with the phrase of “double army”/“two camps”

\(^{155}\) According to Barthes (1977: 130), the solitude is the mark of Jacob because of the familiar setting apart of the one chosen by God.

\(^{156}\) According to Keil and Delitzsch (1949: 303-304), “Jabbok is the present Wady es Zerka which flows the east towards the Jordan, and with its deep rocky valley formed at that time the boundary between the kingdoms of Sihon at Heshbon and Og of Bashan. It now separates the countries of Moerad or Aljun and Belka.”

\(^{157}\) Fausset’s Bible Dictionary in Bible Works programme, 6.0 Version.
(maḥānāyim), as well as of ʿēṣēr (as the name of a place) with the explanation of Esau’s hairy/saʿēr (1975: 199, 200). Therefore, I think that if this kind of structural connection between the meaning, form and the name could work well to several names of place like Mahanaim and Seir, then it should also work for the name of the place called Jabbok.

Furthermore, I think it is possible to consider that the meaning of the river Jabbok as “pouring out or emptying” contains an important and significant hint offered to the reader. In the discussion above, again, I am aware that scholars (Fokkelman, Hamilton, Wenham, Keil-Delitzsch for instance) are mostly returning to ‘the Jabbok’ (yaḥbōq) in its word play with yaʿāqōb and yyēḇāq, instead of in the literal meaning of the river’s name itself. Therefore, we shall take both the wordplay and the idea of “pouring out” hand in hand. From the standpoint or perspective of a mystical quest which is sensitive (in a positive way) to symbols, I would think that the meaning of the name Jabbok itself, implicitly, shows something important. It is a hint of a ‘happening event’. The person of the name Jacob “being emptied” to become the person of the name Israel. The ‘old being’ of this person is emptied, during that night, in order to be fully and existentially fulfilled with the new quality, when the sun rises up at dawn. Thus, from the lens of a mystical experience, I suggest that the best way to discern this topic is by taking both the richness of the wordplay of proper names and also the meaning of that specific place and its reflective implication, hand in hand.

3.3.4 Complication – Wrestling

25Then Jacob was left alone/
and a man wrestled with him until the dawn had come.
26And he saw that he was not able to prevail/
then he touched the hollow of his thigh/
and Jacob’s hollow of thigh was dislocated when he wrestled with him.

By giving the information in v.25a that “Jacob was left alone”, the narrator sets the stage for “the heart of the scene in our narrative [which] is the confrontation of two persons: Jacob and a man” (Marcel 1992: 207). In the situation of loneliness, here we find double signifiers which point to Jacob’s progress: like in the Bethel experience where the ties with his mother were cut off, now in the Jabbok experience the ties with his family are also cut off within Jacob’s loneliness. This is the condition of growth. It is precisely his loneliness that enables him to grow. Alone, the stage of wrestling is openly prepared by the narrator. The solitude situation, which according to Barthes (1977:130) functions as Jacob’s mark, could be presented purposefully by the narrator. However, according to
Fokkelman, it was not Jacob’s intention to arrive at the isolation of 25 a. This means that in 25b he is surprised by the appearance of a figure whose significance and plans are still a mystery (1975: 212). From the text we do not get any clues whether Jacob predicts the coming of his assailant. Very likely he does not suspect it. Thus, it is a surprise for Jacob when a man suddenly comes and wrestles with him.

The wrestling event is told in four sub-sentences, starting from wayyë˘äbëq ṭis ṭimmô (25b) and ending with hë|´äbqô ṭimmô. Hamilton notes that here we have an acoustical similarity: the consonantal pattern of y’qb/ybq/y’bq. Vv.25 and 26 are the only two places where this denominative verb ’bq occurs in OT and both are in Niphal stem. The noun from which the verb is built is abaq or “dust”, suggesting perhaps that when one wrestles on the ground, one gets dirty or dusty (1995: 329). Related to this, however, Wenham stresses a different idea. According to him, abaq is often said to be a by-form habaq “to embrace” (cf. 29:13; 33:4), a friendly gesture. But Wenham sees that in this verse there is nothing friendly about this encounter (1994: 295). I agree with Wenham’s opinion. Here we are told that a man wrestles and gets dusty with Jacob in a tough struggle (each should have an equal capacity) until a specific ploy made by the man: touching the hollow of Jacob’s thigh. Since this wrestling is told quickly, the reader has a solid right to ask questions about this very curious and mysterious event.

3.3.4.1 Identity in Question

Who is Jacob’s assailant? Definitely, this simple question allows for no simple as well as no single answer. Barthes (1977: 132) and Brueggemann (1980: 267) propose that the man is actually God himself. In his Midrashic reading of the story, Knight shares the various possibilities offered by scholars regarding the identity of this ish. The ish could probably be the guardian angel of Esau; Esau himself who sneaks under the darkness; the personification of Jacob’s fear and guilt; or even God personified (1992:452). Elie Wiesel, quoted in Knight (1992: 452), mentioned the possibility that the ish could also be the other Jacob hitherto hidden from view: weak, vulnerable, feeling unworthy of everything he was and had, and dependent on his mother.

Even though these possible answers are worthy of consideration, it is clear that my approach is different. This does not mean that such speculation would say nothing about the text. We can find the enrichment of the text from another perspective as well. However, what I am doing here is trying to figure out the identity of the ish as given by the text in its final form. Therefore, in my opinion, our effort to discuss the ish’s identity should be elaborated within the narrative approach of the story itself. The narrator tells us that there are only two characters that appear in the story: Jacob and an ʿywḥ, ish, “a man”. While the reader clearly knows who Jacob is from earlier stories, the identity of this man is interestingly enough clear neither to Jacob as the actor nor to the reader. Who is this ish (man) actually? This ish has no name. He is the unnamed ish. Knight refers to him as The Unnamed Other (1992: 453). This man comes from nowhere. But in him, in this

158 Although abaq here indicates the dusty wrestling, it is also important to note the rhyme in its relation to another encounter in the next chapter (with Esau) as seen by Hamilton (1995: 329). Hamilton argues that there is a connection between ’bq in Gen. 32: 25-26 and habaq in Gen. 33:4, as he affirms: “In ch.32 a man wrestles (abaq) with Jacob (embrace for fighting). In ch. 33 Esau embraces (habaq) Jacob (embrace for greeting). Two verbs that rhyme are chosen to describe the start of Jacob’s encounters” (1995: 329).
‘man’, we find the significance of the *dramatis persona*. Knight (1992: 453), again, says that “the one encountered remained, even as it remains now, shrouded in mystery.” The story itself informs us that this *ish* is not an ordinary man, since this *ish* himself (by the words spoken out from his own mouth in verse 29) says to Jacob “because you have striven with God and with men.” Here two plurals are found in juxtaposition: *élohîm* and *ânâšîm*. Since the word *ânâšîm* is in plural form, this word of course does not refer to the *ish* (singular) who wrestled with Jacob that night. Hence, the *ish* in verse 25 could possibly be someone related to God\(^{159}\) as stated by the *ish* himself and also by Jacob’s own acknowledgement of his experience in verse 31: “I have seen God face to face.”

There are several opinions offered by scholars. In his commentary, S.R. Driver (1991: 294) identifies the man as an angel.\(^{160}\) In *The Legends of the Jews*, Louis Ginzberg (1937) informs us that the *ish* in Gen. 32 was actually the archangel Michael, who then after his wrestling with Jacob was commanded by God to be Jacob’s guardian angel.\(^{161}\) However, an angel is not the only strong candidate. Using the contemporary viewpoint of depth psychology, Stoudt interprets the intruder in at least two strata: (a) at the outermost level, the intruder with whom Jacob wrestled that night is the local river deity (water *numen/daimon*); and (b) at the innermost level, the intruder is understood to be Jacob’s own shadow (1993: 273). Informed by Jungian psychological approach, Stoudt (1993: 273) explains that “the shadow is that part of the personal unconscious (appears in the form of the same sex of the person who is experiencing, the shadow is called as shadow–archetype) that contains all the rejected aspects of one’s personality.” Meanwhile, Marcel (1992: 212) refers to the identity of the *ish* in a more ‘neutral’ way: as a “supernatural visitor” as he noticed that this *ish* should make his exit from the world of men before day break.\(^{162}\) However, the story actually does not state, explicitly, that the ‘man’ *needs to leave the scene, because day is breaking*. That would be too much of a spectre or ghost who cannot stand the daylight.

Before proceeding, at this point we should notice that regarding the identity of the “man”, the narrator of Genesis (regardless of the sources) has previously narrated two scenes of the divine appearance which were presented in the shape of a human being. Those stories are the story of Abraham, Sarah and the “three men” (it seems that one of the three men was the LORD) at Mamre in Gen. 18: 1-16, and in the story of Sodom and Gomorrah in which Lot met the two angels who are depicted as “men”, Gen. 19:1-29). Although, if we compare how the narrator tells his story it seems that the identity of the

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\(^{159}\) The Hebrew word *élohîm* is plural in form. When referring to the one true God, it will be treated as a singular noun; when referring to “gods”, it will be treated as a plural. See in Mark D Futato, *The Bible Works 6.0.Version.*

\(^{160}\) This divine-celestial figure is also mentioned in the book of Hosea 12: 4, as a part of the raw materials supposed by form criticism. There we are informed referentially about the identity of the *ish* as an angel: “In the womb he took his brother by the heel, and in his manhood he strove with God. He strove with the angel and prevailed; he wept and sought his favour.”


\(^{162}\) Barthes (1977: 133) argues that the theme of the nocturnal combat is structurally justified by the fact that at a certain moment, fixed in advance (as is the rising of the sun, as is the duration of a boxing match), the rules of the combat will no longer obtain. The structural play will come to an end, like the supernatural play (the ‘demons’ withdraw at dawn).
“three men” in Gen. 18 and “the two men” in Gen. 19 are actually revealed in a quite clearer, more explicit and forthright way rather than in Gen. 32:23-33, but the theme and the key element are the same: the perception of the other. The important point I would like to mention here is that the Gen. 32:23-33 text does not stand alone in telling of the appearance of mysterious divine-human actor(s) in the narrative.

Regarding the identity of the *ish* in Gen. 32: 23-33, there could be more than just one possibility, including the psychological angle which refers to Jacob’s inner self. By focusing on our close reading of the text itself, we could narrow it down by observing the information provided by the narrator: the intruder that night was not an ordinary human being. Very possibly the intruder was also not the inner self of Jacob since the result of this wrestling damaged him physically: Jacob began to limp (verse 32). Although the identity of the *ish* could still be debatable, we could at least see it in two interwoven layers: (a) according to the words of the *ish* (v.29 b) and Jacob himself (v.31), this *ish* possesses what Brueggemann (1980: 266) calls divine qualities; (b) this divine quality is taking the shape of a man, *ish*. In this human shape, Jacob sees God. In his very existential encounter with the human, Jacob sees that the human is like the divine.

These two layers above should be held together in the context of Jacob’s mystical quest instead of being separated. The standpoint of holding these two layers together is not meant to erase the mystery of the *ish*. The important thing we should underline is that in the whole story we are warned that it is impossible to thoroughly define the *ish*. Our primary concern is that the narrator is not allowing for us to define the identity of the man. The story does not permit us to reduce the other to whatever we would like to reduce him to. Not even a name. And this is exactly what Jacob (in the next scene) tries to do. It seems that we have to let the *ish* become and always be “the other”.

### 3.3.4.2 The Act of Wrestling as a Profound, Intimate, Direct Encounter

Since the wrestling (*qbeîa‘* ye’*abeq*, which literally means “get dusty”) that lasts for a whole night is quickly told in these two verses, Marcel (1992: 215) argues that “the fight is only a preamble to the true story in which greater issues are at stake. Actually the dialogue forms the heart of the story.” In opposition to Marcel’s theory, Knight quotes Arthur Waskow to stress the significance of the wrestling and its impact on Jacob and the Israeli people:

> Jacob’s thigh was put out of joint. The wound was physical and permanent. Thereafter, he would walk with a limp. For a tradition that speaks of the way of right living as *halakhat*, to be permanently hindered in one’s walking could never mean just a simple physical wounding. The linguistic echoes penetrate far deeper. Right living or ‘*halakhah*’ is literally derived from the verb ‘to walk.’ The lingering limp of Jacob could not have been just in his legs. It would have reached to every fiber of his identity as he stood before God, now as the ‘Godwrestler.’ (Knight 1992: 454)

I agree with Knight and not completely with Marcel, since from the point of the religious encounter, I see that besides the importance of the conversation that happens within it, the moment of wrestling itself is also meant as an important event by the narrator. By this wrestling, Jacob experiences a direct and intimate (even physical)
encounter with the human-divine intruder in a very empirical-physical genre. According to Wenham, this wrestling is “neither a dream nor can it be spiritualized into wrestling in prayer. It does appear that a real fight was involved” (1994:295). Here the narrator wants to tell us that Jacob actually did not only encounter or meet with the human-divine intruder portrayed as the ish, but that he wrestled or “got dusty” with this ish. The result of his limping, then, can be our strong evidence. This expression of wrestling should not be minimized by reducing such real involvement to only a preamble like what is proposed by Marcel.

Another interesting opinion was offered by Stoudt (1993: 273) in his exploration of the wrestling event from the perspective of depth psychology. According to Stoudt, who takes the ish as Jacob’s archetype shadow, the wrestling is an arena where one has to struggle with one’s own shadow, which tends to frustrate and humiliate. Therefore, it is understandable when our reaction to our own shadow is a fresh attempt to overcome and repress it. This inner struggle actually prepares the greatest opportunities for purposeful growth. Stoudt even states that “struggle is the route, apparently the only route to authenticity and integrity” (Stoudt 1993: 279-280). I see the wrestling as an event which, on the one hand, functions as a pitch of contact but on the other hand (and at once) also functions as a frame for the event of conversation between Jacob and the ish: the conversations happen during the wrestling. There, in the moment of wrestling, one (here i.e. Jacob) gets the biggest opportunity to be bent by and conversely to bend the mysterious other divine-human partner in both a very much empirical and trans-empirical reality. Here, the narrator tells that the direct, intimate event happened with and within the Divine Presence and becomes its peak experience: wrestling or getting dusty together during the night! Thus, it seems this is not an immediate experience. The explanation of the duration of time here could also mean that both parties have equal strength, until the ish has to make an additional move which is told by the narrator (according to Fokkelman 1975: 214) in the much lighter word “he touched him”, as opposed to “he beat him.”

The exact location and meaning of the touching of Jacob’s thigh have been discussed by scholars, but, it seems that the narrator wants to stress the ability of the ish in using an alternative ploy in the last moments of the wrestling match. On the one hand, the ish is reported as one who “saw that he did not prevail against Jacob”. On the other hand, by his last ploy of ‘touching the hollow of Jacob’s thigh’, which put Jacob's thigh out of joint as he wrestled with him, it seems that the ish actually has more power than Jacob. Who, then, is the winner? It depends. From the perspective of injury, the ish

163 Barthes comments that a “complication stems from the interchangeable character of the pronouns which refer to the two opponents in the combat. Is it ‘a man’ who does not succeed in getting the better of Jacob or Jacob who cannot prevail over this someone? Is it ‘he’ of ‘he prevailed not against him’ (25) the same as the ‘he’ of ‘and he said’ (26)? Assuredly everything becomes clear in the end” (1977: 131-132).

164 Interesting opinion offered by Hamilton (1995:331): “The word for ‘hollow of thigh’ is Kap-yerek. Kap normally refers to the palm of the hand or the sole of the foot. Here it means socket or hollow. Its presence provides another instance of the selection of words with similar sounds or consonants. On the clustering q\b/bq/bq we can add kp. Several other texts in Genesis involve the thigh. Abraham had his servant place his hand under his thigh (24:2, 9; cf. 47:29), which may be instances of “thigh” meaning genitals. Exod. 1:5 refers to the seventy offspring who came forth from “the thigh of Jacob.” Since kap has the connotation of hollowness (as in a vessel or pan, or pouch), and yerek may have the meaning of genitals, it is possible that the phrase kap-yerek refers to the scrotum, the pouch of skin holding the testicles, rather than the hip socket. Thus the situation would be that two men are engaged in combat and at some point in the contest one combatant touches/strikes the scrotum of the other combatant.”
might be portrayed as the winner. But we should note that it is the *ish* who asks to be set free from the wrestling.\(^{165}\) It seems that the narrator wants to show that even if there is someone who wins (depending on what perspective we use), that someone is not the absolute winner. It seems that the important message is not in who wins the wrestling match, but precisely what occurs in the wrestling (*2^3ibaq*) event itself as an arena of the empirical/trans-empirical struggle between a man named Jacob and an unnamed man (*ish*, who is later acknowledged as the portrayal of the Divine Presence). These two parties definitely come together into a profound, intimate, direct encounter (in the dust) with one another, within the shrouded mystery that takes place from night until dawn. In other words, we can also say that there is no winner, but rather that the struggle allows for peace (Gen.33).

3.3.5 Suspense: Conversation 1 = Intentions appear

27 Then he said/
“Let me go for the dawn has come”/
but he said/
“No, I will not let you go unless you bless me.”

Here we can get the impression that the *ish* was somewhat ‘afraid’ of the dawn. This man (*ish*) asks to be released by Jacob from wrestling, “Let me go, for the day is breaking.” We should search for the reason of this fear. Was he afraid that the daylight would reveal his identity, since Jacob could not identify him during the night darkness as suggested by Wenham (1994: 296) and also Hamilton (1995: 332)?\(^{166}\) Or is there any other reason? In the popular collection of *Legend of the Jews*, which reveals the identity of the *ish* as Michael the archangel, it is suggested that the real reason of the *ish*’s fear is related to the schedule of singing time in heaven that cannot be delayed (Ginzberg 1937: 386).\(^{167}\) Some scholars interpret this fear as a hint that the *ish* is not an ordinary human being. Bona Marcel, for example, argues that the statement ‘for the day is breaking’ denotes the supernatural identity of the *ish* since the supernatural visitors must make their exit from the world of men before daybreak (1992: 212). But again, the story does not actually

\(^{165}\) According to Barthes, the opposite occurs as “the decisive blow fails. A man who gave the blow is not the victor, which is the structural paradox” (1977: 133)

\(^{166}\) According to Hamilton, Jacob has already passed one night in his life close to somebody, a somebody whose true identity he learns only in the morning, in the case of Leah, Gen. 29:25 (1995: 332).

\(^{167}\) Ginzberg (1937: 386) writes that “At that moment appeared many different hosts of angels, and they called unto Michael: ‘Ascend, O Michael, the time of song hath come, and if thou art not in heaven to lead the choir, none will sing.’ And Michael entreated Jacob with supplications to let him go, for he feared the angels of Ararat would consume him with fire, if he were not there to start the songs of praise at the proper time.”
state, explicitly, that the *ish* is a kind of spectre who needs to leave the scene, because day is breaking.

If we look closely at the narrative itself, it is clear that the narrator does not intend to give any reason regarding the *ish'*s plea. Therefore, the possible reasons given by the reader can be various but speculative. However, the reason of such a plea is actually not the main concern of the narrator. The core point of this suspense is more laid on Jacob’s response to the mysterious plea of his intruder. Since the narrator in biblical narratives “appears to be omniscient, able to see actions undertaken in secret and familiar with the internal working of characters and displaying their innermost thoughts to us” (Bar-Efrat 1989: 17), our narrator in Genesis also directs us to the interior motives of Jacob when he takes advantage of the situation by saying, “I will not let you go, unless you bless me.” Here it seems that Jacob has already realized whom he has before him. Suddenly his natural character’s intention appears: he is directly aware that he could take advantage of the situation.

It seems that although Jacob has matured under Laban’s yoke, we find that he still is somewhat colored by the character of the ‘old’ Jacob (Gen. 25: 19-34) who tends to seek personal gain from anyone who is at a critical juncture. It was Esau when he was hungry (Gen. 25), and now at the Jabbok it is the *ish* (Gen. 32) from whom Jacob wants to take something beneficial for himself. In his way to present Jacob, it seems that the narrator knows Jacob thoroughly, including his inner intentions. Regarding a deepening of the inner intention, Bona Marcel (1992: 215) sees that here lies emotional convergence as he argues “The plight of both fighters is pitiable; both have a request and the summary of the bargain is very well brought out. Moreover, there is a parallelism between the requests of both: the man fears the breaking of the day, which will be a *berakah*, a blessing, in disguise for Jacob.” And before Marcel, Fokkelman had described:

> Although lame below the belt, Jacob keeps clasping the man in his arms. He does not let him go until he, the adversary, has blessed him. Blessed him! That is Jacob all over! From the most miserable situation he wants to emerge an enriched man. The key-word of this phase of his life, also found in the Haran-period, here appears in the third period. At Bethel he had, among other things, received the blessing of Abraham, at his departure; now, at his return, he wants to receive a blessing from the mysterious adversary, on the eve of his most difficult moment. (1975: 215)

Fokkelman’s point of view is strengthened by Brueggemann, who sees this verse as the part where Jacob knows he has the advantage and exploits the situation to seek a blessing. At this point the *ish* finds that Jacob is “as quick with words as with wrestling” (Brueggemann 1980: 268). Based on the comments above, it seems that the narrator wants to show the dynamic of Jacob’s personality or character which is in the process of transformation. By putting the sentences *lō? ʿāšālēḥāḵā kī ʿīm-bērāḵtānī* : “No, I will not let you go unless you bless me” (the phrase of *kī ʿīm-bērāḵtānī* literally means: “unless you make me blessed” since the stem of *bērāḵtānī* is in Piel which usually used to point to the causing of a state of being) in Jacob’s mouth, the narrator wants to remind the reader that the Jacob we have is both the ripening one and also the one who brings his

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168 A note to Marcel, the word ‘fear’ is not explicitly mentioned in the text.
previous trait of pursuing for ‘blessing’, brk, no matter what. Jacob has in himself mixed traits to overcome. He is not ‘white or black’, since he contains all these traits in his progress to pass the Jabbok and meet Esau - his greatest fear and anxiety. This ‘Esau matter’ was, is, and will soon be Jacob’s existential crisis. Within this crisis, Jacob’s mixture of traits is shaken and stirred. The request he asks of the ish, who also is in a critical moment, showed us the reality of this mixture of traits of Jacob’s inner life. Besides this original mixed character, is there any other reason why Jacob requests a blessing, and of what the blessing should consist? There is no specific information from the text. However, the context of the story could give the possible answer(s). According to Fokkelman (1975: 217), “it is not unlikely, though, again, no longer verifiable, that Jacob makes such an important demand in 27b because in v. 26b he had realized, with a shock (in his hip), that indeed his adversary has supernatural, even divine, power at his disposal.” Hamilton (1995: 332-333), who sees that in this Jacob wants to gain something profitable for himself, writes “Jacob is insisting on something that he cannot provide for himself. He received Isaac’s blessing by duplicity, but he can receive this blessing only by clinging. It would appear that what Jacob desires in such a blessing is the strength of his assailant. Perhaps he will need such strength in facing Esau and his four hundred men. Thus it is not certain that Jacob’s request is an act of piety.” Here we understand how Jacob is as clever as he is sensitive to the “opportunity in disguise” available in the midst of crisis.

3.3.6 Climax: Conversation 2 = The Query and Change of Name (Blessing):
“From Jacob to Israel”

28 And he said to him, “What is your name?”
29 And he said, “Jacob”

28 And he said to him, “What is your name?”
And he said, “Jacob”
29 Then he said/

169 Hamilton (1995: 332) portrays that “Jacob is the person mixed within himself traits both of godliness and profaneness.”
“Your name shall no more be called Jacob but Israel/
because you have striven with God and with men and you prevailed”/
30 And Jacob inquired and said/
” Tell your name, I pray”/
and he said/
“Why is this that you inquired for my name?”/
And he blessed him there.

These verses (28-30) are the climax, since they are crucial in their content as the time of 
acknowledgement and transformation. In this section, the narrator gives us several direct 
conversations between Jacob and the ish concerning the name. However, deeper into this 
conversation about names, there are at least six existential ideas:

First, we find that the vv.28 and 30 mirror each other:

v. 28 (A)
wayyô´mer َقَلَّاَيَثَ ئَاخَمُبَثَ
wayyô´mer ya´äqôb

v. 30 (A’)
wayyô´mer hâggî|dâ-nnä َشَمْمَكَبَ
wayyô´mer lâmmâb َث َشَلِةَ لِيَسِمَي

According to Fokkelman, this mirror form, in which v. 30 (A’) at first seems to be the 
exact reflection of v.28 (A) in reversed direction, provides the frame for v.29 (B) and 
therefore it indicates the name-giving as the high point of the confrontation (1975: 217).

Second, before giving his blessing to Jacob, the ish asks (A): “What is your 
name?” This is rather odd, since the ish has already wrestled with Jacob all night for no 
apparent reason. If the ish does not know who the man he wrestled is, then what is the 
point of wrestling? Therefore, this question should not be interpreted as asking for 
information only. Rather, this question functions as a gateway to the transformation of 
the name and also of the destiny in responding to the previous verse: Jacob’s plea to be 
blessed. By ‘forcing’ Jacob to speak his name, the ish seeks for the truth from Jacob 
himself of the two interconnected things: the meaning of the name as well as of the 
previous story that happened in Jacob’s name reality. Added to that, it is also important to 
notice that Marcel understands this question as something which both contains reflection 
on the past and functions as a bridge to reach the future as well. He writes: “Jacob is 
brought face to face with things he has been accustomed to. He is reminded both of the 
past by the query ‘what is your name?’ which refers to cunning and human adroitness of 
Jacob and to the glorious future that lies ahead of him, by the sheer fact that the man asks 
his name” (Marcel 1992: 208). We should also notice that one’s name contains the
function and mostly, as Stoudt states, the essence of the human being (1993: 276).\textsuperscript{170} Therefore it is understandable that in order to bless somebody effectively, one needs to know the name. In the case when the anonymous figure (the ish) is willing to bless, then it is necessary to know whom he would be blessing.

Third, Jacob boldly answers the question by saying that his name is יָהֹ֫וּדּ, יָאָ֫וִ֫וּכּוּ, Jacob. This is not just about giving information. By divulging his name, Jacob also discloses his character (Wenham 1994: 296). According to Hamilton (1995: 333), Jacob is making a confession about the appropriateness of his name. This very name, as we have already noticed, has at least two meanings: “supplanter, holding the heel (of Esau his brother)” and refers to “the insidious remark” (Gen. 27: 36). Within that wrestling, when the dawn is coming Jacob acknowledges what/who his name is with its “disadvantaged” meaning within.\textsuperscript{171} Another connected idea is shared by Pol Vonck (1994: 82) who suggests that the identity and the question of the name could also be viewed from a psychological terms, “condensation”. This is a mechanism where, according to Vonck (1994: 82), “objects and persons that show forth certain similarities tend to merge into one fluid figure […..] The dialogue between Jacob and the assailant recalls the vital conversation between old father Isaac and Jacob: ‘Who are you, my son? – ‘I am Esau, your first born’ (Gen. 27: 18-19); but now Jacob is forced to confess his real name, Jacob the cheat!”

Herewith I see that the narrator wants to take the reader to look again at Jacob’s inner struggle. It is common to our understanding that Jacob has always been eager to be a supplanter. He was the one who always wanted to be like Esau (remember the case of the birthright sale); however, the narrator also wants to impress that this ‘supplant issue’ is also not an absolute destiny of Jacob, our actor. The future destiny could be different. However, the way to crack the destiny is through a confession, a thorough acknowledgement of his reality. In this moment, he is truly confessing that he is a Jacob. This is an important acknowledgment. Hamilton sees that the acknowledgement of the old name and its unfortunate suitability paves the way for a new name since the Biblical Hebrew uses the idiom לֹֽוְּיָ֫וִ֫וּדּ יָאָ֫וִ֫וּכּ יָאָ֫וִ֫וּדּ שָ֫יִ֫וּמּ קיָ֫וִ֫וּ יִ֫יְוֹרֻאֶל (it shall be said no more… but) to indicate a spiritual metamorphosis (Hamilton 1995:333, 334). Then, the time of transformation is coming near. No wonder that Vonck (1994: 82) sees this moment as a moment of rehabilitation and emergence of one’s new being.

Fourth, these verses, which culminate in v. 29, are told to provide witness to what can be called the moment of transformation, symbolized by the change of name. That event is now happening (B): \textit{wayyōֽ֔וֹֽוּמּ lōֽ֚וְּיָ֫וִ֫וּדּ יָאָ֫וִ֫וּכּ יָאָ֫וִ֫וּדּ שָ֫יִ֫וּמּ קיָ֫וִ֫וּ יִ֫יְוֹרֻאֶל}

\textsuperscript{170} According to Barthes, the exchange of names is the promotion of new status and new powers (1977: 136)

\textsuperscript{171} Marcel (1992: 210) reflects: “In the obscurity of the vision of Isaac, Jacob had exploited Esau his brother; now in the obscurity of the night Jacob is left defenseless before the assault of a stranger. Aided by his mother’s counsel Jacob had fought Esau who was protected by his father; but now Jacob is made to fight unaided. When Isaac had asked for his identity, Jacob had manipulated the name of Esau for interior motives; now his name is manipulated by the man for superior motives and is changed to Israel, for he cannot any longer take refuge in cunningness to skulk and dog another man’s steps as his old name suggested. Then he had appropriate to himself a paternal benediction through fraud but now he must struggle through purgative way and puts him before the \textit{mysterium tremendum et fascinans}. Thus the narrator concludes the trapping of \textit{Y’qb}, and opens the new prospect of an \textit{Israel}.”
This is the significant name changing from Jacob to Israel. The act of Naming, according to Barthes (1977: 136, 140), is clearly related to Blessing, since to bless and to name are both suzerain acts. Fokkelman sees it as a consecration (1975:221). Here, the transfiguration of the hero is happening; such a transfiguration seems to be present in the changing of the Name and the rebirth it implies. This event of new name-giving, according to Fokkelman is proof that the Old Testament text presents a kind of “baptism”. Here, he writes, “the evil and awkward name of Jacob is authoritatively replaced by a beautiful, theophorous name” (Fokkelman 1975: 216). Herewith, we find that Jacob is not consulted about his identity. It is given, even imposed (Brueggemann 1980: 269). He is now Israel. The bottom line is that we are informed by the narrator that there is someone (the ish) who has the power to change the name of another. It means to change somebody’s function and essence.

However, according to Hamilton (1995: 334), the literal meaning of Israel is much debated. He suggests that in Gen. 32, one must interpret Israel as “El will rule or strive,” or “Let El rule,” rather than as “he has striven with El”, for “it is very unusual for the theophoric element in a personal name to serve as anything but subject” (Hamilton 1995: 334). However, I would agree more with Fokkelman who bases his opinion on the context of the narrative. He sees the meaning of Israel, which literally could be: “God fights”, since the word sara, means fight, used in two interconnected ideas, either “God fights with you, because he is forced to by your stubbornness and pride” or “henceforth God will fight for you, for he appreciates your absolutely sincere and undivided commitment” (Fokkelman 1975: 217). The explanations for Fokkelman’s interpretation are found in the data present in the story itself. This new name is not given to Jacob without reason, for according to the ish’s acknowledgment; Jacob has striven with God and with men and prevailed. On one side, the sub-sentence of “you have striven with men” is not too difficult to be grasped. For instance, Fokkelman said, “Even at the prenatal stage Jacob strove with his brother [....] and from Laban he disappeared untouched after a twenty years’ struggle for, again, the blessing” (1975: 216). Even in this story of Gen. 32, Jacob also prevails against this ‘man’.

The more problematic matter is actually laid in the second sub-sentence: “you have striven with God”. What could this phrase possibly mean? Brueggemann interprets this phrase not in the sense of which one is stronger or weaker than the other, but that “Israel is a newness which has prevailed with God” (1980: 269). I partly agree with Brueggemann when he says that the phrase is not about winning but otherwise underlines the significance of the change in one’s quality. However, we should notice that Brueggemann changes the phrase a bit, from "Jacob has striven (with men) and God and prevailed" into “Jacob has prevailed with God”. I think that by doing this, Brueggemann wants to put Jacob on the same side with God as the ruler, which could refer to the one possible meaning of Israel that he suggests: “God rules” (1980: 268). The newness is that now in Jacob, the old pattern where ‘God rules and humankinds obeys’

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172 The options are “God rules”, “God heals”, “God judges” (Hamilton 1995: 334); “God preserves”, “God protects” (Brueggemann 1980: 268); and “God fights” (Wenham 1996: 296; Fokkelman 1975: 216).

173 In his Word Biblical Commentary, Wenham notices that “the literal meaning of Israel which is ‘God fights’ is not exactly the same as ‘you have struggled with God,’ but it should be remembered that popular etymologies in the Bible generally take the form of a play on a name rather than a precise historical etymologies” (1994: 296).
has changed since Jacob has prevailed with God, and he gained new power (Brueggemann 1980: 269). Regardless of the attractiveness of this interpretation, my objection to Brueggemann’s little twist is mostly laid in the fact that his twist can hardly be taken into the context of the story itself.

In its own context, the story is a narrative of transformation and blessing and does not primarily underline the idea of ruling or winning. On this point I agree with Brueggemann. However, by twisting the position of Jacob to the side of God’s position, Brueggemann makes the tension and the difficulty contained in v.29 become loose and blurred. In my opinion, in order to explain the difficult phrase of “you have striven with God and you prevailed,” we should return to Jacob’s previous narrative within the story, his previous struggles to gain his father’s blessing. He is the one who makes efforts in various ways: tricky, clever, full of effectiveness and preparation-- in order to be blessed in his life. Thus, I agree with Fokkelman who sees this phrase “you have striven with God and you prevailed” as a kind of appreciation for how Jacob constantly revolts in order “to realize his destiny in his own accord and by means of deceit since he was too self-willed and too proud to let the blessing be given to him” (1975: 216). Although Hamilton (1995: 335) does not think that the change of name could carry any guarantee of Jacob’s transformation, making his opinion different from Barthes’ and Fokkelman’s, he also agrees that the change of name from Jacob to Israel is focusing on Jacob’s assertiveness, his ability to cling to his stronger assailant despite his injury, and his insistent desire for his opponent’s blessing.

Fifth, in v.30 (A’) the conversation seems unequal since the same question (v. 28, A) offered by Jacob is not responded to by the ish in the same way (A’: “Tell your name, I pray”). In asking Jacob his name, the man need not add “I pray” as Jacob did when he asks his question. Here, according to Hamilton, the man’s question is introduced as a statement (“he said…”), meanwhile Jacob’s request is introduced as an inquiry and a statement (“Jacob inquired and said…”) (1995: 335). The reason why Jacob asks the other man’s name, according to Fokkelman, is easily understood: the event of a reciprocal question is exceptional and Jacob feels that someone with whom he wrestles is speaking with full power. This also means that amidst his thorough knowledge about Jacob, the ish is qualified to renew Jacob’s identity (1975: 218). Instead of giving the information asked by Jacob, the ish asks back to Jacob: “Why is this you inquired for my name?” Yes, Why? What is the intention of the ish and of the narrator?

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174 Hamilton (1995:334) informs that “the ancient versions disagreed on the meaning of sarita in Gen.32:29. LXX, Vulg., and Pesh. derive it from srr (Aramaic), ‘be strong’. Aquila and Symm, derive it from sarar, ‘to rule.’ As already noted, Targ. Onqelos attempts to eliminate the idea of a mortal engaged in combat with God: “for you are great [or: ’a prince,’ reading sar for sarita] before the Lord and among men, therefore you have prevailed”. Furthermore in the footnote of his article, Hamilton (1995: 3345) mentions that “LXX varies somewhat: hoti enischyas meta theou kai meta anthropon dynatos = “since you have been strong against God, so you will triumph over me”. Vulg: quoniam si contra Deum fortis fuisti, quanto magis contra homines praevalebis = “because you have been strong against God, in the same manner you will prevail against men with great strength”. In both LXX and Vulg., Jacob’s exhibition of strength against God is a token of his success against humankind. In the traditional translation the phrase “with God and with men” could be understood as a hendiadys, “you have struggled with everybody, God and men, and have prevailed.””

175 Here we see that Jacob asks a kind of ‘Moses’ question’: “What is your name?” (Exod. 3:13). Since this is a divine presence the holy name cannot be given as a response. The name cannot be pronounced.
According to Knight (1992: 453), this is not a matter of inequality. There are various other possibilities available. He writes that between Jacob’s question and the *ish*’s reply, there is something that has happened. The alternatives of what is happening in between are explored by Knight in several questions:

Did the returned question become the occasion for further wrestling? Perhaps Jacob, then, inquired more deeply about his own motives in the encounter: Why did he want to know the intruder’s name? Did he want to control the *ish*, which he would be able to do if he learned the name? Did he want to master the encounter and the one whom he encountered? Was he playing a power game of mastery and deceit even in the wrestling? Did Jacob care about the stranger’s reality or simply his own welfare? Perhaps the question was ironic, in effect, asking Jacob, “Do you really need to ask?” Certainly, you know whom you have encountered. (1992: 453)

Meanwhile, according to Fokkelman (1975: 217) and Hamilton (1995: 336), the refusal to reveal his identity straight away at the same time has pointed to his secret. Therefore, although the *ish* still has not introduced his name, Jacob already knows who the *ish* is. This unnamed *ish* on the one hand is still the unnamed other, or more precisely the unnamed other divine-*ish*, but on the other hand, this unnamed other divine-*ish* is the one who has intensely wrestled with Jacob. He then is very much able to pour out his transformative blessing to nurture the transformation of Jacob to become Israel (Fokkelman, 1975: 217).

This story can provide an important theological point in the text: the other could be the one who blesses me; encountering the other can make one blessed. The unidentified *ish* is the other man in Jacob’s wrestling experience. In telling the story this way, the narrator wants to convey that Jacob is wrestling with the humanity that could lead him to feel the presence of divinity. This point is then leading Jacob to address Esau in a parallel way (Gen. 33:10), as shown when we are told the words that come out from Jacob’s mouth when he finally meets Esau again: “for truly to see your face is like seeing the face of God.” Here we find the story has then become very sober about the ‘man’; in order to give Jacob an empiric spiritual experience, the divine took a shape of human so by this the struggle and the conversation within that struggle could happen. Wrestling existentially with a human being, could then lead to seeing and experiencing God as a profound, intimate, and direct Divine Presence. And otherwise the profound, intimate,

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178 Hamilton (1995: 336) argues that “the context contains no evidence that Jacob desires to know the name of the adversary so that he might exercise power over him. This interpretation is based solely on parallels drawn from primitive religion in which demons and numens played a large part. Jacob’s question is nothing more than a request for information from and identification of his adversary. This request is a formal element in the theophanies of the OT (Judg. 13:6, 18). A feature of those theophanies seems to be that only with the disappearance of the deity does the protagonist realize he or she has had contact with the divine.”

177 Fokkelman (1975: 218) writes, “Jacob draws his conclusion, that “man” cannot be a mortal being. It now also dawns upon him that the God of Abraham and Isaac is afraid of his Name being taken in vain; that is why Yhwh is cautious in revealing his identity, for giving up the Name means being exposed to magic manipulations with it. That is why in 30b his question was parried.”

176 In the story itself we are not informed of what kind of blessing it would be. However, Eising as quoted by Fokkelman (1975: 217), “defends the view that this blessing is the promise of land and offspring, thus the blessing of Abraham.”

179 The parallel between 32:30 and 33:10 is not totally exact, but almost. Certainly there is a lot of resonance between the two verses.
and direct encounter with the Divine Presence could empower one to face the other human being in courageous, pure and coherent quality, as Fokkelman has also commented that “the completely renewed, purified relationship with God makes a renewed, authentic relationship with his ‘brother’ possible” (1975: 222). Therefore, I am convinced that this can be read as a mystical event!

Sixth, in addition to these remarks above, the hint of a place provided by the last word in v.30: šām, ‘there’, is important in my opinion. The importance of this word is based on two reasons: (a) the moment of blessing and the change of name (šēm) happens in ‘there’ (šām). In ‘there’, the ish blesses and changes the name of Jacob into Israel. Changing one’s name means changing the essence and function of one as a human being. This ability belongs to the Divine, whose name is not revealed to Jacob when he asks for it. Therefore we notice that the name of God is hidden implicitly in the blessing and in the name-changing which happens in that specific place. The changing of the name and authority to change the name (šēm) happen in ‘there’ (šām), in the place (Jabbok) that later, because of this event, will be named as ānāfēl ānāfēl: “the face of God”; (b) besides the event of conversation, name-changing, and blessing, it is important for us to reflect also on the place where the transformation is real, since that existential transformation/change happens neither without reason (Jacob has striven with men and God) nor out of the blue. As I have written in the previous section (v.23-24), the literal meaning of the place where these events (wrestling, conversation, and blessing) happen is Jabbok, ֟בּוֹק: yabbbōq, which could be translated as “pouring out” or “emptying”. From the lens of mystical quest, this should mean something. In this place (Jabbok), Jacob’s name is being poured out or emptied in order to have a new name as a meaningful replacement. Quoting Buber, Fokkelman says, “The evil and long-awkward name of Jacob is thrown away” (1975: 216), since there (šām), Jacob was blessed and his name (šēm) was changed into Israel. It is no wonder then that the name of that specific place would later (after Jacob’s acknowledgement) also be changed.

3.3.7 Resolution: Reflective Acknowledgement → “I See God Face to Face - Pniel”

31 And Jacob called the name of that place Pniel/ for “I have seen God face to face/ and my life has been delivered.”

After the blessing given to Jacob, the story does not mention whether (a) Jacob lets go (šīh) of the fighter, or (b) how the adversary disappears (Fokkelman 1975: 222). The reader “was not informed, at the end, how it all comes out whether the stranger blesses and departs in his freedom or Jacob permits him to leave. Here in any case, the stranger (ish) has maintained his inscrutable role” (Brueggemann 1980: 269). Therefore, what we can do is guess. It seems that the query of how the ish disappears is not meant to be the
main focus, according to the narrator. According to Fokkelman, the text is admirably directed to the essential point so that “the line from blessing via *panim* and deliverance can lead, without interruption, to shining and passing” (1975: 222).

Now, after the wrestling, acknowledgement, and transformation, Jacob names that very place as “Peniel” (the face of God [El]). This is for the third time (after Bethel and Mahanaim) where Jacob immortalizes one of God’s revelations to him by means of a name-giving. The reason for this name-giving and reflection is that: *kî-râºîìì *êîhîm *pâºîìì *êl-pâºîìì, “for I have seen God face to face”. I agree with Hamilton in considering that the expression ‘face to face’ should be meant to stress the idea of having the direct, intimate character of a manifestation of presence as it describes a “‘person-to-person’ encounter without the help of hindrance of an intermediary” (Hamilton 1995: 336), rather than confining it to literal visual perception. Jacob is now aware of the real identity of the *ish*. Thus, this awareness also strengthens his nocturnal encounter as something deeply spiritual. This theophany is a mystical experience since (again) Jacob describes his experience as a direct, intimate (but not immediate) encounter with the unnamed other divine–*ish*, with the Divine Presence, face to face, after wrestling tightly in the night until dawn. Therefore the name Jabbok is not referred to anymore as “Jabbok” by Jacob for he has experienced that kind of existential experience.180

Fokkelman, Hamilton, and Wenham analyse the sentences and give us a warning and a clue on the phrase of *kî-râºîìì *êîhîm *pâºîìì *êl-pâºîìì *waTTinnäêîl *napšî. According to them, this phrase should not be understood as, for example, “I have seen God (…) and yet [in spite of that] I have been delivered” or that Jacob is happily surprised that he has seen God and is still alive, since according to Hebrew Bible’s theological understanding (such as Exod. 33:20; Isa 6:5), seeing God puts man in mortal danger (Wenham 1994: 297). Such an interpretation as above, according to Hamilton “misses the thrust of the double use of the root *nts* in this chapter” (1995: 337). Fokkelman,182 Wenham,183 and Hamilton184 agree to interpret this phrase (*waTTinnäêîl *napšî*) as a recognition made by Jacob that God has answered his prayer of deliverance (“my life has been delivered or preserved” - Jacob’s reflection in Gen 32:31 has a connection with the previous prayer in Gen 32: 12-13). In my opinion, the direct impact

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180 The state of unmediated “unio mystica” within the Divine Presence does not fit with the “Jacob at Jabbok” story since there no union event happened and there is also an *ish* in between.
181 Jacob does not say “I live” or “I have escaped”. The expression put by the narrator into Jacob’s mouth was “my life has been preserved or delivered”, *waTTinnäêîl* (in stem Niphal) *napšî*.
182 Fokkelman (1975: 220) finds that it is the same verb as the key verb of Gen. 32:11-12 (English version) where Jacob had prayed to God to deliver him. Fokkelman’s pivotal point is: “By now using *nts* again the narrator tells us: my prayer for deliverance has been answered by God [. . .] Jacob now understands that because he has seen God face to face he will now also see his brother Esau properly, face to face, no longer afraid, and that therefore he has been delivered.”
183 The phrase “was rescued” harks back to v.12 and so Jacob confesses that his prayer for deliverance from Esau is answered. If he has survived meeting God, he will survive meeting with Esau (Wenham, 1994: 297).
184 Hamilton (1995: 337) comments that “earlier Jacob had prayed, ‘Preserve me (*hassileni*) from my brother’ (Gen. 32:12). Now he says, ‘My life has been preserved’ (*waTTinnatsel* *napši*). In other words, Jacob’s recognition that none other than God himself stands before him gives to Jacob the assurance that Esau shall not destroy him. Jacob’s earlier prayer for deliverance is now answered by God in this encounter.”
of this existential reflection is that Jacob is now strengthened to face Esau – his supreme fear and anxiety- with courage. This is also agreed upon by Hamilton, as he sees that in this verse “Jacob moves, in his own words, from a proclamation of revelation (‘I have seen God face-to-face’) to a statement of testimony (‘and yet my life has been preserved’), that is, he shifts from awe to relief” (1995: 337).

It is now very clear that the narrator wants the reader to connect Jacob’s reflection with the future meeting with Esau (under God’s shelter). In my opinion, this strengthening experience of Pniel (which is the second divine experience he gets) should also and could be connected with the first experience at Bethel. The Bethel experience is somehow repeated and at once is strengthened in the Jabbok-Pniel experience. Within the heart of his crisis, Jacob finds that God is really making contact with him through the dream and the wrestling, in order to transform Jacob in his future meeting/involvement with his existential struggle, fear and anxiety either with the ‘not yet predicted’ party (represented by Laban) as well as in the near future with the ‘already predicted’ one (to be represented by Esau).

3.3.8 Time Setting: Dawn (Inclusio), Pnuel, and Limping

32 Then the sun rose upon him as he passed over Pnuel/
and he was limping upon his thigh.

3.3.8.1 “The Sun Rose” at Pnuel

The night has passed, and morning has broken. Fokkelman reflects that “the nights of Bethel and Haran have been replaced by the glorious day of the Penuel” (1975: 222). It is within the glorious day that the sun rose upon Jacob, but the narrator explicitly tells us that this Jacob is not the same as the previous Jacob. He is now Israel. The darkness is over, since the sun rose upon this new man. The newness is marked in at least two things here: 1) his name is new, and 2) his style of walking is also new: he is now limping. Later we will read that the newness is also proven in his gesture toward the danger when he put his household behind him (not in front of him like before). Now under the sun, after wrestling in the night, the new Jacob passes Pnuel as victorious Israel in his new existence, as noticed by Bona Marcel (1992: 211): “Jacob’s triumph is described as a triumph of the spirit over nature and innate temperament. It is the dawn of a new day, the beginning of a new life. Jacob is reborn at Penuel in a kind of spiritual regeneration. He has now become an authentic Israelite in whom there is no longer any guile.” This kind of change is summarized beautifully by Fokkelman when he reflects on the Penuel scene as “a high point in the ambivalences of Gen. 32 but also the final point [...] at Penuel the

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185 In this part Hamilton (1995: 337) again comes back to say that since “Jacob’s exclamation I have seen God face to face is mentioned before the rising of the sun, this should indicate that it is not the displacement of the darkness by the sun that permits Jacob to identify his antagonist.”
die is cast and the balancing between good and evil, light and dark shifts finally towards the positive side:
- from the night to the glorious day
- from passing (or making others pass) in distress to passing in relief
- from prayer for deliverance to deliverance
- from deceit and self-deceit to the confrontation eye-in-eye
- and from Jacob to Israel” (1975: 222).

Fokkelman’s and Marcel’s reflections lead us to find the mystical experience Jacob had at the Jabbok-Pniel very meaningful. It is also clear that the explanation of “then the sun rose upon him as he passed over Penuel” is described to emphasize the completeness of Jacob’s mystical struggle. It is now over and the result is clear. He passes the place of his wrestling and does not call it Jabbok anymore. The ‘pouring out’ (Jabbok) event has reached its completeness: the ‘old’ Jacob has already been poured out and now he is filled with the quality of newness, Israel. Added to this, it is necessary to remember that the existential transformation in this spiritual journey is not only marked by his new name and by the new name he gave to the place, but is also physically marked in his body. The new Jacob is limping, an empirical mark of his struggle with the ısh. The wrestling was real. The new Jacob will bear its mark for the rest of his life and his descendants (the Israelites) honour this moment by developing a tradition of not eating the sinew of the hip. The reason for this tradition is very clear: because the unnamed other divine ısh touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh on the sinew of the hip (verse 33).

3.3.8.2 Physical Damage (Its Deeper Meaning)

The limping of Jacob actually contains deeper meanings than just the physical way of walking. Brueggemann, for instance, sees that:

He has penetrated the mystery of God like none before him. Jacob has dared to do what the Israel of Moses will not dare (Exod. 19:21-25; 20: 18-20). And he has prevailed. But his prevailing is a defeat as well as victory. There is a dangerous, costly mystery in drawing too near and claiming too much [. . .] Jacob did gain a victory. And he limped every day thereafter to show others (and himself) that there are no untroubled victories with this holy One [. . .] Israel does see and live. But it is not suggested that the seeing leaves one the same, unscathed. He lived, but he lived a new way, with new power and with new weakness. And then he faced his brother. (1980: 270-271)

Another possibility is that by his limp as the mark of his transformed mystical experience, Jacob is also no longer capable of imitating his brother, as he had in the case of the birthright. All of his life he has tended to stand under Esau’s shadow. He wants to be like Esau. When he was born he held Esau’s heel. When he grew up, he took Esau’s firstborn right. But Esau is different from Jacob. Esau is a skilful hunter, a man of the field while Jacob is a quiet man, dwelling in tents. Now, this injury leads Jacob to be aware that he will never be Esau. Jacob cannot be what Esau is, since by his lameness he cannot be Esau the hunter, for there are no lame hunters! Thus, this lameness points to the significance of being original. Jacob becomes himself in his transformation as Israel. His
lameness functions as the eternal remembrance of his conversion. As Vonck (1994: 86) said that “what really matters is not to remain intact and sterile, but to let oneself be injured and to make the injury fruitful. This is indeed a mysterious fecundity: ”There is no fruitfulness without hurt, no hurt without possible fruitfulness.” Therefore, the limping gesture is not only a clue or proof of the transformation of Jacob, but also to show how he should shape his perspective to live differently. Now he is himself. Besides the newly given name, this mark of lameness surely denotes the deepest conversion of Jacob, physically as well as spiritually.

3.3.9 Aetiology as a Remembrance

Therefore the children of Israel do not eat the sinew of the hip which is upon the hollow of the thigh until this day/ because he touched the hollow of Jacob’s thigh on the sinew of the hip.

According to Hamilton, the tradition about the thigh sinew is clearly subordinated to the acquisition of Jacob’s new name, thus the food taboo may be read secondarily to the main thrust of the story, i.e. Jacob’s change of name to Israel. Hamilton concludes that v.33 is more than simply a postscript (1995: 339). Historically, it seems that this part is a short comment from the author or editor and not from the narrator. In this case, v.33 could be a latter addition to the story. However, since my aim is not to discuss the sources, then it is not my task to enter into this kind of discussion.

What we can say about this verse from the narrative approach is that here we are informed by the text that the bodily mark that happened within (as a result of) Jacob’s spiritual experience has also made its mark in society’s daily customs. The empirical injury in Jacob’s body is then framed ontologically in social life. Regarding the dietary restriction, even though it is only given in the Hebrew Bible and is not featured in later Jewish law (Wenham, 1994: 297), it seems that Jacob’s injury is meant to be aetiology as well as a remembrance, celebrated by the community of Israel. If aetiology drags present matters into their ‘original’ causes in the past, then remembrance is dialectical traffic from the present to the past and vice versa. Of course this seems to work more operatively in the worldview of the implied reader than the real reader.

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186 Wenham (1994: 297), for instance, comments that nowhere else in the OT is this custom of not eating the sciatic nerve mentioned. Nor does it feature in later Jewish law. He also quotes Westermann’s remarks that it could be a late insertion into the story.

187 Hamilton (1995: 298) states that “By refraining from eating this sinew, the Israelites were constantly reminded of Jacob’s meeting with God and the promise of ultimate victory and blessing he wrung from God.”
3.4 Impacts of the Mystical Experience at “Jabbok-Pniel”

In this section, I will now harvest some important attainments and insights present in the story and try to connect them with the mystical quest experience.

3.4.1 The Changes Appear

In the broader story of Jacob, the theme of changes happens at some crucial moments: (a) the change of the firstborn right (Gen. 25:29-34); (b) the change of blessing (Gen. 27: 27-29; 39-40); (c) the change of life of the cheater (Gen. 25:29-34; 27:1-29) to one who is being cheated (Gen. 29-30); (d) and a change in Jacob’s physical appearance from a man with healthy and perfect posture (םִּתָּן, ish tām, Gen. 25:27) to a limping man. Jacob is very much affected by the encounter; he has a new name and an injured thigh.

3.4.2 Blessed Life

In Jacob’s story we read both (1) the blessing from one human being to another human being and (2) the blessing from the Divine to a human being. The human’s blessing is represented by Isaac’s blessing to Jacob and Esau in Gen. 27; and Laban’s blessing to Jacob’s family (Gen. 31:55). Meanwhile the Divine blessing is done by God at Bethel (Gen. 28: 13-15) and by the ish (Gen. 32:30). These blessings are mostly about protection and prosperity, two things that seem most important in Jacob’s life. However, through the event of the Jabbok (on his way to meeting Esau), Jacob actually receives another blessing, which is self-transformation/conversion.

3.4.3 Not Avoiding the Problem but Facing and Embracing It

Stoudt (1993: 280) notes that “in the end Jacob is blessed not because he fights skilfully against an opponent who is more than his match, but because he affirms and embraces the route of struggle, rather than going out of his way to delay or escape it. It is his commitment to that way, not the final fight results, which makes possible his transformation.” In accordance with Stoudt’s reflection, it is interesting to note that while Jacob is now limping, he is blessed. He is now limping, but he also is a blessing for his household. Bravely he walks before them to face danger and at once faces his existential fear and anxiety, his prime source of conflict. After Jabbok-Pniel he is now more responsible and has courage in his heart. His way now is not avoiding conflict but facing it and hopefully managing it well and fruitfully.

Let us turn back to our camera, as the narrator tells us in verse 23 and 24 that Jacob “took and sent them (wives, maids, children, and belongings) across the stream”. So, the family and belongings were in front of him (in the direction from which Esau was coming; Jacob was behind his family). According to Frolov (2000: 58), by placing himself at the bottom of the hierarchy Jacob has neglected his duty and therefore he has
become the most worthless or at least the most expendable member of the group. Moreover, with sharp sentences Frolov puts forth strong criticism:

Viewed in a non-patriarchal perspective, the story of Jacob’s return to Canaan becomes anti-patriarchal. Tacitly exposing ancestor’s cowardice, treachery and lack of faith, it graphically demonstrates that the gender-based distribution of roles – that is, of power and expendability - not only degrades females but also corrupt males. As a result, patriarchy fails to stabilize a nuclear or extended family, both spatially, by providing it with a territory of its own, and temporally, by ensuring successful reproduction. Instead of a (more or less) efficient way to common success, there is a means of an individual’s survival at the expense of the whole group. (2000: 58)

This sharp and hard critique above might be true, however the story does not end with those critiques. The new gesture and leading position toward Jacob’s household after the “Jabbok wrestling” is deliberately designed to show the shifting attitude of Jacob as the result of his real thoroughly essential and existential wrestle. The result of this kind of such essential and existential wrestle is obvious, as Stoudt writes:

The perceived relationship between struggling and growing, then, implies much more than simply the assurance that, if we manage to struggle well, we shall benefit from the temporary inconveniences that we have had to endure. It implies, more radically, a commitment on our parts to be, to greater or lesser degree, in almost constant travail. It suggests a decision to participate in a life that is characterized by perennial crisis of one sort or another, of one magnitude or another. If struggle is the route to spiritual development and maturity, then one must not only be able to negotiate it when it occasionally befalls us, but, when required, one must be able to seek it out deliberately and to steer oneself directly to it. (1993: 280)

3.4.4 Leading to Other ‘Human-Theophanic’

Besides (a) the change of Jacob’s leading position (from behind his households to in front of them), the effects of that mystical experience in Jacob’s inner world is also shown in (b) in the fact of the Jacob-Esau meeting itself face to face, which culminates in the reflection spoken by Jacob in Gen. 33:10: “for truly to see your face is like seeing the face of God.” After the ‘Jabbok-Pniel’ wrestling-mystical event, the narrator tells us that there is an inner and empirical-gestural transformation that happens as well: from anxiety and fear to courage and a peaceful attitude when Jacob then walks in front of his family to face Esau (Gen. 33:3).

Jacob was wrestling with the mysterious ish, later acknowledging it as an experience of theophany: “I have seen God face to face” (Gen 32: 31). Afterward, when Jacob finally meets Esau (as a human) in a direct, intimate, and (here) unmediated encounter, the “enlightened” Jacob, overwhelmed with a feeling of relief and gratitude, says to his brother: “for truly to see your face is like seeing the face of God” (Gen. 33:

188 The guileful and fearful Jacob has prepared to meet Esau, his wounded-heart twin brother who has planned to kill him for a long time.
10). Here Jacob experiences another “theophany”. The wrestling experiences with humanity lead him to feel the presence of divinity. We grasp that there is a constant struggle until this moment but at the same time there is a turning point when there is no more struggle of destiny. It is in the end, we can deeply reflect, that it is ‘the other’ who has to give you the new destiny.

3.5 Socio-religious Significance of the Story

3.5.1 Change/Transformation in the Enmity of Brothers

The spiritual changes or transformation should not be trapped only within the spiritual-inner world of one. The mystical experience also is not meant to be the monopoly of the individual-spiritual domain. Sölle (2001) endorses her readers to take both mystical experience and socio-resistance in their hands and develop a beneficial as well as contextual contribution to real life. A mystical story such as “Jacob at the Jabbok” could and should contribute to the significance of openness and reconciliation into this arena of enmity between brothers-sisters in our world.\(^{189}\)

3.5.2 Challenges Offered

We should never forget that this spiritual journey will not solve the entire problem automatically, both in the text and in the real context of people’s life. Even though in Gen. 33 we read about the peaceful encounter between the brothers in conflict, it does not mean that the encounter automatically removes all the problems at once as suggested in Gen. 33. Knight shares my concerns:

In the end, our encounter with Jacob, just as Jacob’s encounter with his sibling, remains unfinished. The tale unfolds in the biblical text with Jacob (still identified as Jacob and not yet as Israel) confronting Esau the next morning. Eventually, they embrace, weeping (Gen. 33:4). Some would thereby conclude that the two were reconciled. Yet, as the tale continues, a painful distance remains between the two siblings. They do not unite in a shared journey, even though Esau invites his brother to accompany him to Seir. Jacob declines, saying his people and livestock are too fatigued for such a journey. He promises to follow at a slower pace but does not. Whether Jacob has given his real reason or simply offered an alibi to cover lingering suspicion is up to the reader to interpret. What is clear is that Jacob and Esau remain at arm’s length, even if they have been reconciled […] After their tearful embrace, Jacob and Esau remain significantly other. Their journeys lead in different directions: Jacob, eventually to Bethel; Esau to Seir. Their otherness, because it is familial, remains covenantal. Nonetheless, the biblical tradition leaves the subsequent relationship between Jacob and Esau unspecified, thus open to interpretation, except to identify Esau with Edom and, thereby, with a long tale of enmity and violence. (1993: 459).

\(^{189}\) We note that in Gen.33 both Jacob and Esau are changed.
Knight’s analysis is important. However, the story continues and many more things happen. There are dynamics in the character and relations of Jacob. It is interesting to note that Jacob and Esau meet again for the second time in Gen 35:29, at the burial of Isaac. The first meeting of Jacob and Esau, after twenty years apart, is told in Gen.33, but then they separate once again. However, at the death of Isaac, the source of the blessings that separate the twins, they come together. Taking Knight’s comments above as an important reminder, we should understand that it is not the aim of the story for them to come to ‘sameness’. Instead, the story emphasizes the dignity of difference. The significant points amidst the encounter of the parties lie in their fruitful acceptance and openness towards others. In doing this, the story tells us that the spiritual quest should be considered an important element in transforming the enmity into meaningful acceptance and constructive openness toward others in social life. The text of Jacob’s encounters with the ish and with Esau tells us that the other is not an enemy; instead, in his difference, the other could be the one “who blesses me” either in an ordinary human encounter or in the epiphanic domain. This should be taken as our challenge, both in our inner life as well as in our socio-daily presence in our violent world.

3.6 Conclusion

If we consider the story as a whole, we find that it is important to underline several discoveries such as: the function of conversions, the notion of experiencing God through the other, and the significance of exchanges and the break within Jacob’s cycles. Below are several significant results:

3.6.1 Conversions

Of course I am aware that it is important to take into account what the story itself says, namely that the two brothers (Jacob and Esau) are representing two peoples. This makes the whole story even more important. It is not only about the personal and individual transformation but also operates on a bigger scale. The story indeed has its socio-political significance. However, it is not my aim to widely elaborate these socio-political issues in this section. In my narratological approach to the story in its final narrative format, I find that besides the significance of blessing, the “Jacob at the Jabbok” story is primarily about change or conversion. In the process of change, spiritual experiences happen. The function of the first spiritual experience in Bethel is meant to prepare Jacob during his difficult days under the power of the cheating Laban. The second spiritual experience in ‘Jabbok-Penuel’ is meant to transform Jacob on his way to face Esau, under the burden of a historical brotherly tension.

3.6.2 Experiencing God through the Other

The story of “Jacob at the Jabbok” definitely denotes the transformational journey from conflict/tensions to encounter/reconciliation. Amidst these journeys, the narrator tells us how a person can be transformed in order to face the other in openness, humility, and
courage. It is told in Jacob’s life stories that in order to have a successful or meaningful encounter with other human beings (Laban and Esau), Jacob is always being prepared via the encounter with the Other (Divine), either at ‘Bethel’ or ‘Jabbok-Penuel’. Especially in front of the most fear-inducing other human being (which is Esau), Jacob is prepared through wrestling and conversation, which is “beyond any human scheme” (Fokkelman 1975: 212). Jacob experiences a profound, direct, intimate, and existentially transformative encounter with the ish - who portrays himself in divine predicate (Gen. 32: 29) - as Brueggemann sees that while Jacob anticipates the wrath of his brother he must first face an assault from the deity (1980: 267). In the Jabbok story, we find that the mystical quest is never egocentric, never solely between one person and God.

The Jabbok mystical quest is not about the unmediated unio mystica of human and God. There is an ish in between. Here, God is experienced through the other. God is nowhere else to be found than in a presence of the other. On the one hand, we could note that the encounter with the Divine can function as a meaningful element before an encounter with a fellow-human with whom there is tension. On the other hand, our effort to find a way to make peace and address the other human enemy with an open and mindful heart can also lead us to feel the Divine Presence.

3.6.3 Exchanges and the Break

Another important notion contained in the story refers to the theme of exchange. As we know, the theme of exchange is prevalent in Jacob’s story cycles. We have several events of exchange: between a meal and the birthright (Gen. 25:29-34), between a meal and the blessing of prosperity, guidance, and well-being (Gen. 27:25-29), between hard work and daughters/wives (Gen. 29:15-29). In the wrestling at the Jabbok, we find that Jacob will not let the ish go unless he (Jacob) is blessed. This is also a kind of exchange.

We should note that it is in the Jabbok story where the only one who explicitly receives something is Jacob (in the form of the blessing and the new name from the ish). Later in Gen. 33, as the story gradually flows in which we also find a much more gradual, lighter pattern of a so-called “exchange,” we see that the only one who receives something is Esau when he finally agrees to receive Jacob’s gifts, after being asked repeatedly to accept them, but in Esau’s perspective these gifts are not essential.

In the post-Jabbok story (Gen. 33), as in the Jabbok story (Gen. 32), Jacob receives something immaterial. Meanwhile, in post-Jabbok (Gen. 33), Esau receives something material. The material reality received by Esau is Jacob’s gifts while the immaterial received by Jacob is Esau’s grace, which is revealed in the form of a positive attitude and mercy. Here, the exchange after the “Jacob at the Jabbok” story does not come from ordinary actions (in which each party, reciprocally as well as deliberately, is supposed to take and give something) but stems from liberty and grace. This is the break.

It could be that the ish might receive relief once Jacob has let him go but actually he has “more” power than Jacob, as shown by his touch of Jacob’s hips that causes limping.

The motive for the exchange(s) could also be the principle of do ut des: “give in order to gain.”
CHAPTER 4

A Cross-textual Reading of “Dewa Ruci” and “Jacob at the Jabbok”

Introduction to the Chapter

In this chapter, we now come to the heart of this research in which we will try to offer a cross-textual reading and analyze what we will see when we take this reading method into action. As suggested by Lee (see chapter 1), in this cross-textual reading we will try to interrelate the two selected texts: the story of “Dewa Ruci” as Text A and the story of “Jacob at the Jabbok” as Text B. To begin with, we will analyze (a) the commonalities, (b) the differences, and (c) the point of mutual enrichment of the two selected texts (see Scheme A).

As previously mentioned, the aim is to discover how both texts can be enriched and new meanings can be found through those interactions. In doing this reading, Lee writes, the “Asian texts should be regarded as being ‘on a par with’ the Bible in order to bring out of the biblical text a fuller range of meanings” (Lee 2012: 35). As mentioned in chapter 1, the most significant reason for making use of this reading method is found in awareness and acknowledgement of the socio-cultural-religious hybridity of the worldviews of the Asian readers (Lee 2003: 5).

However, since it seems that Lee does not give any more theoretical details regarding these steps, I offer several theoretical contributions to that reading method in each of the following section of this chapter. Some of these theoretical suggestions have been mentioned in my evaluation of this cross-textual reading method in chapter 1 in that each story should first be analyzed within its own broader literary context before any further analysis based on comparing and interrelating the texts. Afterward, it will be useful to create several qualifications regarding the nature of the commonalities and differences through which the comparison and exchange of meanings of the texts can be
realized. At that point, from each text critical challenges and enriching ideas for the interpretation of the other text will be formulated. It is my hope that through these steps, new horizons will be displayed by each story vis à vis the other text. Then, in the last subsection of this chapter, we will also examine whether and in what ways the two stories follow the patterns of mystical experiences.

4.1 Commonalities of the Two Texts

As stated above, I will try to qualify the commonalities shared by the two texts. Of course, there are differences between the two stories because they stem from two different religious traditions. However, for the sake of comparability, they should share the same motif (Kwok 1995: 62). In this research, that motif is self-transformation through mystical experience and its contribution to peacebuilding. Thus, the basic requirement for doing a cross-textual reading of the two stories is met.

Naturally, there will be no precisely detailed commonalities as the two stories stand within their own “worlds.” However, what we might find are several convergences or, in other words, resonances between them. The following are several of the most prominent convergences (resonances) that can be found when we compare the story of *Dewa Ruci* and Jacob at the Jabbok.

4.1.1 Setting of the Story: Tension between Brothers

We start by explicating that both texts (A and B) share a similar background: the mystical experiences the actors in their journeys experience are located within the broader context of tensions between brothers. In text A, the tension is between the Pandawa and their cousins, the Kurawa. In text B, we find that the tension arises between twin brothers, Esau and Jacob. Although the members of Pandawa (five brothers) and Kurawa (a hundred) form a collective number, their conflict seems very personal. Meanwhile in the personal tensions between the individuals Esau and Jacob, we can sense the impact on the tensions between the Israelite and Edomite societies. The interrelation of the personal and communal spheres in both stories seems to be quite strong.

4.1.2 The Initiator of the Journey

In text A, the story starts with the information about Druna’s command to Wrekudara to search for the Living Water. Here, Druna is portrayed as the owner of the idea (Tanaya 1979:1), and Wrekudara is portrayed in a rather passive position; he is not the one who desires to search for the Water for the benefit of himself or in order to fulfil his desire for something essential. He is ordered and then directly responds to that order in obedience.\(^{192}\) In text B, we also find that the journey home to the South is not initiated by

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\(^{192}\) Let me repeat the information from chapter 2, that the characterization of Wrekudara in this matter in Tanaya’s version is differs from the information told by Adhikara (1984:4). From the perspective of Adhikara, it is Bima (the other name of Wrekudara) who starts the journey in order to gain existential
Jacob but by the LORD as He commands Jacob to go home (Gen. 31:3, 13, 16). So neither Wrekudara nor Jacob is the initiator of the journey. They both seem to be passive; however, both Wrekudara and Jacob are active and responsive in obeying the instruction given by the honoured others: Druna as the Guru in text A and the LORD in text B. Besides several differences in their personal natures, the values of loyalty and obedience seem to be the convergent aspects in characterizing these human actors in both stories.

4.1.3 Meeting with the Deceitful Person (On the Way to Transformation)

On their way to maturity and transformation, both Wrekudara and Jacob meet a deceitful person. In text A, Wrekudara meets the ‘tricky’ Resi Druna - with his complex role - who commands and misleads him to go to the forest (the first instruction), and then to the middle of the sea (the second instruction). In the previous events of text B, Jacob meets and even lives for years under the yoke of Laban, his tricky father-in-law.

In text A, Druna’s deceit, which leads Wrekudara into dangers, has in some sense “warmed up” Wrekudara in becoming more ready in delving deeper and further into his existential experience. Even though Druna’s deceit appears as evil plans, the experience of handling several dangers which happen during those “evil plans” could function as preparatory steps towards the final goal.

In text B, considering the broader narrative of Jacob and Laban, we get the impression that Jacob is changing from the protected and favourite son of his mother to a mature, diligent and responsible man and husband. These processes of change are mainly happening during Jacob’s hard days under Laban. Twenty years under Laban’s yoke (which is full of deceitful strategies by Laban and also by Leah in the case of mandrake fruit) mean that Jacob has (a) served for fourteen years (to have Laban’s two daughters as his wives in return); (b) served for six years to have the flock; (c) found that his wages were changed ten times (Gen. 31: 41). These experiences have really worked to prepare Jacob so that he may grow and mature in life. These experiences are needed before he must face the very existential experience at the Jabbok and then meet with Esau afterward.

With this perspective, we discover that both Druna (the Guru) and Laban (the father-in-law) are playing the same role for their counter-part’s existential growth. Herewith, their roles should not be categorized as evil or starting from bad intentions only.

4.1.4 The “Bridge(s)”

What I call “bridge” in my semiotic analysis of the two stories is not just the narrative events which connect parts of the whole story, but more like the necessary step(s) for the actor(s) to take, who then are enabled to take another step in their journey. These “bridges” (see: scheme B) offer ideas which contain several clusters, i.e.:

attainment in his life. It is this existential desire of Wrekudara himself that afterward is used by the Kurawa via Druna’s advice, through a tricky plan in order to kill him. Herewith, Tanaya offers a different angle.
(a) confrontation (when the stories tell about a clash or disagreement)
(b) confirmation (when the stories tell about the validity of something or some ideas)

Through these bridges as moments of transition, the actors have been prepared to go chronologically further and spiritually deeper in their journey. The “bridges” are as follows:

4.1.4.1 The Confrontation

In text A, confrontation can be found in several scenes, i.e.: (i) in the tricky strategy prepared by Druna – and the Kurawa – in which Wrekudara is ordered to search the Living Water in the forest; (ii) in the Pandawa’s disagreement regarding the stubbornness of Wrekudara in obeying Druna’s command; and (iii) in the fight with the giants (Rukmuka and Rukmukala) and the sea dragon (Nembunawra). We notice that both the giants and the sea dragon have different original natures. The giants are defeated and afterward freed as dewa, meanwhile the dragon is defeated as itself, i.e. as dragon. Both represent huge dangers and, if we also consider some Javanese scholars’ interpretation, evil and sexual desires which need to be tamed before one is able to go further and deeper.

in the spiritual journey. Therefore, these giant and dragon events can be considered as “confrontational bridges” for the following Divine-Human meeting (Dewa Ruci and Wrekudara).

In the previous event of text B, Jacob has been confronted twice with two different persons before the Jabbok event, first with Esau and then with Laban. The confrontation with Esau occurs in the event of the blessing of the first-born (Gen. 27:1-40), when Jacob deceives Isaac by pretending to be Esau. When it is discovered that his blessing has been stolen, Esau becomes very angry and plans to kill his brother Jacob (Gen. 27:41). Meanwhile the confrontation with Laban appeared in several events: the matter of replacing Rachel with Leah as Jacob’s first bride (Gen. 29:15-30), and in the changing of Jacob’s salary ten times (Gen. 31:41). In a sense, the confrontation Jacob has with Esau, shares an important similarity with the confrontation he has with Laban. In the confrontation between Jacob and Laban for twenty years (Gen. 29), we might find that these hard years have ripened Jacob to be a man, a father and a husband. Meanwhile, the confrontation between Jacob and Esau (Gen. 27) has also “forced” Jacob to live independently from his mother’s protection. However, he will always be with the guidance of the LORD, as promised at Bethel (Gen. 28:12-21).

4.1.4.2 The Confirmation

In text A, the idea of confirmation is present in the conversation between Wrekudara and the voice of Hyang Indra-Bayu after they are released from the curse via their deaths at the hand of Wrekudara. In that conversation, the voice confirms that the Living Water is real. The problem is that the location of that Living Water is not in the jungle as firstly pointed out by Druna. Regardless of the false information of the location, the confirmation of the existence of the Living Water per se has successfully strengthened Wrekudara to take the next step in his journey. Before Wrekudara’s second journey, Druna also reconfirms the existence of the Living Water and points to its location: in the middle of the sea. In the Pandawa’s circle, who were anxious about the fate of Wrekudara when he insists on going to the middle of the sea on his second journey to find the Living Water, the confirmation comes from Kresna when he declares that Wrekudara shall not die. Instead, he will receive grace from God when he returns with holiness. He will also be loved by Hyang Suksma Kawekas (God) and transformed into the body of a Bathara (god) in which he will be able to see things clearly (see cluster Q, chapter 2).

In text B and its broader narrative, we could also find the existence of these confirmational bridges in the form of the mystical experiences themselves: the Divine-Human meetings between Jacob and the LORD via a dream in the “Bethel Event”; and between Jacob and the Unnamed Divine Other ish via the wrestle in the “Jabbok/Pniel Event”. These confirmational bridges and (at once) the mystical experiences seem to be intended to deliver Jacob to his next Human-Human meetings. Thus, the Jacob-Laban meeting (Gen. 29-30) was “served” by the Bethel Event; meanwhile, the Jacob-Esau meeting (Gen. 33) was “served” by Jabbok/Pniel Event. Read from this perspective, we find that the Divine-Human meetings in text B might be understood as the confirmational
events (again: “bridges”) for delivering the main actor (Jacob) into the next important meeting between the humans.\footnote{However, we may also read it from the other way around: The Human-Human meetings (Jacob-Esau and Jacob-Laban) always happen before the Divine-Human Meetings (Bethel and Jabbok/Pniel), if we allocate the Human-Human meeting as confrontational bridges to bring Jacob to, at last, gaining his Mystical Experiences.}

Herewith, the patterns look the same in general: there are important events that serve as preparation for delivering the actors into their existential-important meetings, both with the divine-partner (i.e. between Wrekudara and Dewa Ruci, text A) as well as with the ordinary but uneasy human partners (i.e. between Jacob and Laban [Gen. 29] and between Jacob and Esau [Gen. 33], in the broader context of text B).

4.1.5 Alert but Unknown

In text A, it seems that Wrekudara does not to know what precisely will happen to him in his journey. What he only knows is the information regarding the location of the Living Water as told by Druna. As in text A, we find that although in text B Jacob knows that he has to return to the south - as ordered by the LORD (Gen. 31) - it seems that he also does not know what will happen to him when at last he has to cross the Jabbok in the dark (and wrestle through the night). He also does not know what will happen when the time comes for him to meet Esau afterward. This unknowingness is not just a matter of the superficial plot of the stories but also contains a deep level (or existential level) of meaning. This unknowingness seems to contain a message.

Of course, our actors are aware of the dangers in their journey, but there is no exact knowledge regarding the surprises that will happen to them. Thus, on the existential level, the unknowingness and the surprises that follow, in this regard, could be put on the same level as the deceitful plans; namely, that they have emerged as important events for the actors in their examination of their own toughness and alertness (regarding the significance of surprise that will be elaborated more below).

4.1.6 Significance of Surprise

Both the stories contain and promote the significance of surprise. Surprises happen in the two stories not only because of the arrival of unpredictable and unprecedented events, but also due to the depth and hugeness of the mysteries contained in several specific events.

In text A, surprise can be seen in several elements of the story such as: (a) when the Pandawa find that their brother is really so stubborn in his desire to find the Water; (b) when the Kurawa and Druna are shocked because of Wrekudara’s arrival after defeating the giants; (c) the locations of the Living Water given by Druna (first in the cave of Gandamana, below the mountain of Candramuka in the forest of Tibrasara, and, later, in the middle of the ocean); (d) the two giants and sea dragon appearing to Wrekudara; (e) the explanation given by a voice regarding the true identity of the two giants; (f) the form of Dewa Ruci in a small figure (dewa bajang) and his location in the middle of the sea; (g) the ability of Dewa Ruci to understand Wrekudara’s genealogy and
intention; (h) the invitation given to Wrekudara to come into the womb of Dewa Ruci (whose posture is as small as Wrekudara’s little finger) through his left ear; (i) the topsy-turvy world Wrekudara experiences inside the womb of Dewa Ruci as well as the symbols and colours he sees there; (j) the warning to not exhibit the discovered Living Water (as existential teachings) but keep it in secret.

Meanwhile, several events of surprise are contained in text B: (a) the sudden and direct struggle that happens between Jacob and the unnamed ish (an unpredicted adversary); (b) the unclear reason for this struggle: there are two men who wrestle through the night until dawn without any explicit reasons mentioned; (c) the one who asks to be released and thus appears weaker is in fact the one who gives the blessing and thus stronger; (d) the final maneuver of the ish, touching the hollow of Jacob’s thigh; (e) the ability of the ish when he renames Jacob as Israel, since what Jacob has asked for is actually a blessing, unspecified but could be read as protection and prosperity as before. Meanwhile what appears from the ish is more existential than just material blessings. The ish grants Jacob a new name, a new function and essence of life. What a surprise! The real identity of this ish then becomes clearer to Jacob, as the sun rises; and (f) at last, as mentioned in the chapter following the “Jabbok event” (i.e. Gen. 33), the change of Jacob’s position is also a surprise. He had remained physically behind his family (Gen. 32), but, after that mystical experience, he surprises everyone in his household by walking in front of them (Gen. 33:3), facing the danger and leading his family forward with courage, dignity and openness.

4.1.7 Solitude

The principal actors in text A and B are both alone when they undergo their existential journeys. They face their struggles, difficulties, crises and experience several encounters by themselves. Nobody is with them in their journey. The respective narrators describe the families in each story (the Pandawa in text A, the Jacob’s household in text B) but the role of each is kept in the background, functioning only as the supporting actors. The stories tell us that the aloneness of Jacob and Wrekudara is the important condition where growth and maturity might be attained. Certainly, in order to experience the grace of having a mystical journey, it is the solitude which appears to be the compulsory condition. Wrekudara is by himself when he goes into the womb, receives grace and then emerges enlightened, as Jacob is also when he wrestles with the ish during the night, receives blessing and comes away limping.

4.1.8 The Quality of Perseverance in the Human Actors

Both Wrekudara (in text A) and Jacob (in text B) have proved their perseverance during their dangerous journeys. Wrekudara has gallantly fought the two previous dangers (the two giants and the sea dragon) whereas Jacob, who has never had a fight before wrestling with the ish, has to work hard for twenty years under Laban’s repressions. In those hard times, Jacob has indeed proved that he is able to endure difficulties. The perseverance of Wrekudara and Jacob shows that both have a patient and strong-willed capacity to handle
the many kinds of outer and inner wounds that happen within their lives. This capacity is, for sure, a very important one. The narrators of the two stories seem to underline that this capacity of perseverance contains significant elements in their growth: since there is no growth without injury, there can be no maturity without wounds.

### 4.1.9 Role of the Divine-Partner

The “method” for revealing the identity of the so-called “divine-partner” in the stories may differ, but the ideas contained in the two texts parallel each other. We find that the presences of the divine-partners in text A and B emphasize that: (a) there are different qualities between the ordinary human actors (Wrekudara/Jacob in one group) and partners who represent a divine other (Dewa Ruci/the ish in another group); and (b) both stories tend to emphasize the intimate interactions that could happen in that inequality, either through “coming into the womb to receive teachings” (in text A) or through “wrestling, inquiring and being blessed” (in text B).

The medium of these spiritual experiences may differ, but both texts share an event of mystical experience which occurs in direct, profound, intimate encounters between a human (Wrekudara/Jacob) and a divine-human person (Dewa Ruci/the ish). Without these direct-profound-intimate encounters, there can be no transformation. Again, the tools of transformation may differ but the role of these “divine partners” is the same: leading the human actor to become a new person. The role of Dewa Ruci and the ish as “the other-divine partner” is to facilitate the human actors’ existential transformation.

### 4.1.10 Mystery Still Remains

Both the human actors (Wrekudara and Jacob) ask for their divine-partners’ name. The result is not the same, since unlike Dewa Ruci (in text A), the ish (in text B) is not willing to declare his name. However, from the human actor’s point of view, the act of asking the identity of their partner is actually part of their spiritual journey. The person who experiences such kind of a mystical quest is overwhelmed with questions and wonders, which are responded to in fascinated awe, deep curiosity and eventually, a tremendous experience. Even when the name is revealed (as in the case of Dewa Ruci, see scene R, chapter 2), it does not mean that the mystery of this partner becomes thoroughly clear afterward. When we stand in front of the Divine, we become aware that we do not fully know what we have seen and experienced. The mystery that is revealed when both Wrekudara and Jacob at last know who their divine others – Dewa Ruci and the ish – are, as well as the ones that remain unrevealed, become part of the focal point of an existential spiritual journey that usually happens in the mystical experience.

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Knight (1992: 453) does not agree with the idea of inequality. Viewed from the patterns of having mutual information in asking question and giving answer (as told in text A), the idea of the absence of inequality cannot be firmly grasped.
4.1.11 Function of the Genital Element

In text A, Wrekudara is invited to come to the womb (guwagarba) of Dewa Ruci. We do not precisely know the gender identity of Dewa Ruci. On the one hand, this Dewa Ruci is portrayed as having a womb, suggesting womanhood, but, on the other hand, this Dewa Ruci is also called by the male term: dewa, not the female dewi. And it is also important to consider Trimurti’s notation (1985:20) that this Dewa Ruci is always shown as an exact look-alike of Wrekudara, in a smaller size. From here, it is assumed that Dewa Ruci is a male. However, the narrator admittedly does not speak clearly about Dewa Ruci’s gender identity. It seems that this Dewa Ruci is deliberately portrayed with ambiguously, as a dewa (male) who has a garba or womb (female). It could also be part of the mystery and surprise.

Likewise, it is important to consider that the touching of the hollow of the thigh (kap-yerek) in text B could mean ‘touching the scrotum.’ Hamilton (1995: 331) makes this suggestion when he intertextualizes Gen. 32: 26, 33 with Gen. 24: 2, 9; 47: 29, in which Abraham ordered his servant to place his hand under Abraham’s thigh, which might be understood as genitals, and also with Exodus 1: 5, which refers to seventy offspring who came forth from “the thigh of Jacob.” Here, we find that the genital element is mentioned in the process of wrestling. This is addressed within the context of remembrance in which the name and the physical appearance of the actor are changed.

It is interesting to find that the transformational event into a “new person”, which happens to the human actor in each story, as a birth (in relation to genital elements, scrotum and womb, kap-yerek in Hebrew and guwagarba in Javanese).196

4.1.12 Importance of Confession and Vulnerability of the Human Actors

In text A, without asking any information from Wrekudara, Dewa Ruci has proved to him that he knows (a) his genealogy and (b) his intention to find the Living Water as ordered by Druna, his Guru. The ability to do so has led to recognition, after which Wrekudara utters his apology, then also his confession regarding his own nature (“that he is like a wild animal, inexperienced, and a rough person in manners, language and wisdom of life”). This confession means that Wrekudara does not have any intention to polish or wrap himself up with any covers or excuses. Meanwhile in text B, the ish asks Jacob to utter his name and Jacob does so. In so doing, Jacob also opens up his nature as merely “Jacob,” with all the layers of meaning of cunning and bad intentions lying hidden in the name and tricks he made in his former life, mostly to his brother Esau and his father Isaac.

It seems that both stories contain and serve to emphasize the significance of self-acknowledgement or confession as the pre-condition to experiencing a mystical journey. It is Wrekudara’s and Jacob’s self-recognition/acknowledgement that, after being taught and blessed by the divine-partner, leads each deeply into his own transformational/existential change: in text A, from an inexperienced, artless and rough.

196 We should notice that in the Hebrew Bible, the New Testament and afterward in Christian tradition, the mystical symbols often appear in a symbolic portrayal of marriage: bride-bridegroom, lovers; this resonates the sexual spheres within their relations (Ferguson 1976: 33).
Wrekudara to Bima Suci (the Holy Bima); and in text B, from Jacob with all his past history into Israel, patriarch of the Israelites. The narrators suggest that there will be no existential change without proof of self-awareness and self-acknowledgment. It also seems that the humility and openness of their own fragilities, which go hand-in-hand with a deep eagerness to keep interacting with the mysterious Divine Presence, at last leads them deeper into the existential-spiritual reality of life (and also of death, especially in the case of Dewa Ruci’s teaching in scene T, chapter 2).

In text A, undergoing such consistent alertness and ongoing self-introspection (mawas diri, a Javanese term) of one’s past actions, limitations, mistakes, and desires in order to finally become aware of one’s true nature (datan pangling sarirane), appears to be an important message. We may gather this from the Dewa Ruci story, as has been shown in Wrekudara’s journey. Reading through this perspective, we may also interpret the Jabbok event as an event of introspection for Jacob. When near the end of their wrestling, the ish asks Jacob, “What is your name?” Jacob answers by telling his name and thus acknowledges that he really is a “Jacob” (meaning: supplanter, holding the heel of his brother Esau, having insidious qualities). This answer could be understood as Jacob having an awareness of himself (like in the case of Wrekudara). This self-awareness is a reality of what can be called the mawas diri of Jacob, a self-introspection/self-acknowledgment that is the vehicle that delivers Jacob and Wrekudara towards progress in transformation, in or with the Divine figure.

We find that the mystical experiences in both text A and B have “forced” the actors to dive deeply to the bottom of their own person. They build their new and transformed person based on their acknowledgment of their true natures. The two stories seem to underline the prominent idea that a person really needs to be first “knocked down” to the bottom of the self before transformation can be delivered in its full efficacy. Herewith, the actors in both text A and B, in their humility, have responded rightly during their mystical journeys, so that afterward a way is opened up for them to undergo existential transformation.

### 4.1.13 Changes/Transformations of the Human Actors

Both stories describe changes that happen to the actors in what they really are and do. The differences appear in the type of changes while the commonalities are in the fact of the presence of change(s). In text A, most of the changes happen within the self, but, the actor’s behavior is also transformed when, after receiving the enlightened teaching as he has acquired the Living Water, the Tirta Pavitra, Wrekudara’s heart is no longer in doubt and he knows about his true self. From the rough, inexperienced and artless person, Wrekudara is transformed to become a gentle and patient knight who is wise and knowledgeable about reality of the self and the universe (Tanaya, 1974: 24). Meanwhile in text B, besides the changes of his name (with its function, essence and status), Jacob becomes a man of courage so that he can face the coming danger. As for Jacob’s physical situation, we are told in Gen. 32 that he has also been transformed: from ish tam (a perfect man) to a limping one.

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4.1.14 Returning instead of Withdrawing from the Community

Engaging with one’s family is one of the commonalities that appears in both stories. In text A and B, the narrators report that the actors come back to their communities after they are transformed: Wrekudara returns to the Pandawa, who exchange their worries for happiness (appears in Tanojo 1962), while Jacob comes back to his family and leads them forward to meet Esau (Gen. 33:1-3).

In text A, the narrator states that Wrekudara is a kind of person who always tells of his progress (to the family, here meaning the Pandawa). In both his first and second journeys, Wrekudara begins his experience by telling his family about what he will do and what he has already decided. As we know, their objections cannot shake Wrekudara’s strong will. However, the act of letting his family know his progress should still be considered an important fact showing Wrekudara’s family ties. It seems that in his mind, his family is always one of the important coordinates in his life. As we are told in Tanojo’s 1962 version, Wrekudara returns to his family – his important socio-reality after his mystical journey.

In text B, Jacob is the father, husband and head of his household. All of his decisions and considerations can be connected with the family issue. At the beginning, he takes his household and runs away to the South. At the Jabbok, he (mis)uses them as a shield to protect himself, but afterward, because of his mystical experience, he makes significant amends by walking ahead of them to face the coming of the most terrifying figure in his life, Esau (Gen. 33)!

4.1.15 Cosmotheandric Spheres

Both stories share what is called the cosmotheandric vision, which is a perspective that “sees the entire reality as the interaction of a threefold polarity: cosmic, divine and human” (Panikkar 1999: 24). In text A, the existential relation between the Divine/God (Theos), human being (aner) and the world (cosmos) appears most clearly in the teaching of Dewa Ruci to Wrekudara, which uses images, colours and metaphors to underline the significance of having a macrocosmic and microcosmic awareness and unity in one’s mystical experience (Adhikara no year: 32, 38; Hadiwijono 1989: 25).

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197 Wrekudara even tells his intention and stance to his other family, the Kurawa (notice that Kurawa is the cousin and, at once, the enemy of Pandawa).

198 When commenting on Panikkar’s idea of the fundamental religious fact, Knitter (2003: 127) reflects that this fundamental religious fact is “something that can be known only through experience, but once experienced, it tells us something very real about the world and about ourselves. As an experience, it imbues us with a sense of being at-oned, connected, united, part of. And that with which we are at-oned is not only a divine or transcendent Mystery; it’s a Mystery that is also immanent, right here, part of the finite world [. . .] so there are three components to the mystical experience and to what is revealed in such experience: the Divine (theos), the human (aner) and the world (cosmos). All three are so interrelated that they have their very being in each other; they can’t exist without being related to each other.”

199 For instance, Tanaya writes metaphorically that “since the teaching of Dewa Ruci has finished, Wrekudara’s heart is no longer in confusion and everything has been understood [. . .] like a flower’s bud that is now blossoming and becoming more fragrant, the Pancaretna (referring to Wrekudara) has been permitted to come out from the womb (of Dewa Ruci)” (1979: 21).
In text B, we are informed that after Jacob is blessed and newly changed with dignity to become Israel, the sun rises upon him as he passes over Pniel, the place where he “sees God, face to face” (Gen. 32: 31, 32). Here, the interaction between the human/aner (Jacob) and God/theos – whom he saw face to face – and the universe/cosmos (represented by “the sun that rises”) is indisputable.

4.1.16 Evaluation of the Commonalities

It seems that the commonalities between the two texts strengthen my argument that the two stories share several resonant parallels in their motifs, patterns and other elements/ideas, and that each of them portrays an actor in a transformational-existential journey via the mystical quest. This quest, in one way or another, deliberately underlines the beneficial impact(s) to society. The existential-spiritual changes are not meant to lead the person to withdraw from his/her community. On the contrary, the transformed-enlightened one should embrace his/her societal milieu as his/her deepest vocation and mission.

4.2 Differences of the Two Texts

In this section, the differences between text A and B will be analyzed. As described in chapter 1, the function of examining the differences is to “amplify certain dimensions of the biblical text or to bring to the surface divergences in the religious worldviews shaping the text” (Kwok 1995: 65). However, as previously mentioned in my evaluation of the cross-textual reading method (chapter 1), it is important to firstly acknowledge that difference normally leads to struggle. However, here we attempt to honour and qualify the differences and then offer challenges. To do so, we need an attitude of openness, the knowledge of doing the analyses and to the ability to categorize the differences. In this study establishing interrelations and reflecting on differences between two mystical texts, we should notice that there are appreciative differences (the first category). The second category is the enriching differences in which we create the possibility that text A may enlighten text B and vice versa. In this category, through the eyes of story/text A, I will re-read story/text B, and vice-versa. Hopefully there will then be moments of disclosure and discovery.

We should notice that, regarding the qualification in the cross-textual reading, in general, we can also think of a third type of difference: the irreconcilable difference(s). These are the differences that lead to opposition and are the most difficult to cope with because they contain fundamental contradictory values and attitudes. For instance, suppose we find that the one story endorses the message and attitude of violence and in the other story we find the exact opposite, the promotion of peace. However, I do not find this kind of irreconcilable difference in the two mystical stories considered here. In the dialogical and dialectical encounters-interrelations of our two selected mystical texts, the things that we find are not irreconcilable, but rather are the different mystical languages as well as mutual resonances of that mystical quest (Scheme C).
Therefore, now we will move forward by analyzing the appreciative differences of the two texts. Later I will work to elaborate the enriching differences of the two texts as one of the main points in this research.

4.2.1 Appreciative Differences

The appreciative differences consist of (a) informational differences found in our effort to compare and then interrelate the two selected stories, a process directed at accepting and properly applying them; (b) the plot and emphases of the two stories. In scheme C, we draw the interaction of the differences of the two texts by using the dashed line (-----).

The informational differences include the elements of the story like the meaning of names and the characterization per se - with respect to its inherent nature - of the actors (Jacob, Laban, the ish, Esau, Wrekudara, Druna, Rukmuka-Rukmakala, Hyang Endra-Bayu, Nemburnawa, Dewa Ruci, etc); the referential information of places (Bethel, Pniel, Ngamarta, Ngastina, forest Tibrasara, etc); time of the event (night, day); the socio-historical dates of the two stories (when they are written and composed and the ‘atmosphere’ surrounding them); and other referential-secondary aspects (for instance, the number of Jacob’s wives, maids and children, the situation in the forest of Tibrasara, numbers of the Pandawa and Kurawa, etc.), as they are told in both stories. We define the differences in plot and narrative emphasis as follows.
4.2.1.1 Trust-Distrust of the Actors and the Motifs of Evil Intention of the Deceitful Persons

In text A, Wrekudara gives his loyalty and trust to the one who has cheated him (Druna); meanwhile, in the broader context of text B, Jacob is reported as the one who, on the one hand, gives his loyalty to Laban and works for him for twenty years but, on the other hand, he never puts his full trust in Laban because he knows who Laban is as the one who has replaced Rachel with Leah (Gen. 29) and changes his wages ten times (Gen. 31). Jacob recognizes Laban as a tricky and deceitful person because he is a strategic man himself.

In text A, it seems that Wrekudara is still naive after he is cheated by Druna twice regarding his question of the location of the Living Water. His doubt later emerges after Wrekudara jumps into the sea and sees the vastness of the ocean. There, Wrekudara is becoming aware of Druna’s deceitful plan (Trimurti 1984: 26). Regarding the evil intention, the narrator says that Druna is the one who wants to kill Wrekudara (in order to erase the existence of Wrekudara before the Great War, Bharatayuda) by giving him the two orders to find the Living Water in dangerous places, in the forest and in the middle of the sea (see scene G and K, ch 2). Meanwhile, in text B, Laban never wanted to kill Jacob since Jacob’s existence appears to be useful for his own benefit.

4.2.1.2 How the Main Actors Meet

At the beginning of the meeting between the main actors in text A, the narrator reveals that Dewa Ruci has already known about Wrekudara’s name (when the Dewa Ruci asks for Wrekudara’s intention to be in the middle of the sea [see scene R, chapter 2]). There is also a moment where each party deliberately introduces his “nature” to the other (still in scene R, chapter 2). Meanwhile, in text B, there is no formal or even polite introduction from the side of the intruder ish or Jacob. The ish wrestles directly with Jacob without any inquiry as a preamble. What we find in text B is a bold, sudden and direct wrestling match, followed by a short conversation. It is clear that the narrators use different ways to describe the meetings of the actors.

4.2.1.3 Nature of the Wrestle and the Fight

According to some Javanese scholars (Adhikara 1984: 11, 12 and Trimurti 1985: 23), the two fights in text A – between Wrekudara and the giants (scene I, chapter 2) and later with the dragon (scene P, chapter 2) – are not meant to be understood as ordinary physical reality. Instead, they should be spiritualized or psychologized. These scholars argue that the essence of the fights (either with the two giants or the sea dragon) is a kind of psychological or spiritual meditative journey within Wrekudara’s inner world. In this case, these fights should be understood as a symbol of his interior struggle to defeat and tame his own negative passions.\footnote{In my opinion, the proposed interpretations of Adhikara and Trimurti are interesting but still debatable. If we use the narratological approach, then the giants and sea dragon should be interpreted within the plot} However, based on the method I apply to text A
(which is the narratological approach), it seems reasonable to interpret both the moment of fighting (with giants [scene I] and the sea dragon [scene P]) and the nature of those giants and the dragon as the existence of huge dangers. It is likely that the narrator wants to direct our intention – as readers – to the important idea that Wrekudara should face these huge dangers as the preliminary/preparatory and ripening process in order to attain his transformation.

Meanwhile in text B, although Wiesel and Stoudt have also proposed to interpret this wrestle as an inner struggle (Knight 1992: 452; Stoudt 1993: 273), it seems clear that the narrator’s intention is that the struggle which happened between Jacob and the “unnamed divine other ish” is a physical-ordinary event, since in the end it leaves a mark in the form of a physical damage in Jacob’s lameness (Gen. 32: 31). The information of Jacob’s physical damage in text B, thus, might surely ruin the possibility of spiritualizing the wrestle, which is suggested by some Javanese scholars as the existence of the fights in text A.

4.2.1.4 Being Invited vs Forcefully Requested

In text A, the invitation to come into Dewa Ruci’s womb in order to receive existential teaching is given and offered by Dewa Ruci after Wrekudara (after searching for the Living Water with a strong will in his dangerous journeys) has sincerely and politely asked for wisdom (see scene R, chapter 2). Meanwhile in text B, the transformative blessing is given to Jacob after he has strongly demanded: “I will not let you go unless you bless me.” Thus, on the surface, we find the presence of the polite and sincere request in text A, and a strong insistence in text B.

4.2.1.5 How to Attain Existential Being

We see that in one of the teachings of Dewa Ruci, who invites Wrekudara to come into his womb, it is explained that a human being should be aware of and able to elaborate his own desires. Human beings should be able to to Mati sajroning Ngaurip and Urip Sajroning Apejah: “Die in Life and Live in Death”. As already explained in chapter 2, Adhikara (1984:3), for instance, proposes an ethical interpretation regarding the meaning of this sentence: “Live in death” means that as long as the human being lives in this world he/she should kill (or tame) his/her evil passions, and ‘die in life’ means that even though a human being is able to kill his/her evil passion, he/she still has to live in this world (not escape from it).” Herewith we sense a basic idea that it is important for a human being to always attempt to gain the victory by his/her own struggle to defeat his/her own evil desires ethically (as proposed by Adhikara). However, we may also interpret this teaching of the story and not out of it. However, it is better to take these two possibilities (as the symbol of desires/passions and dangers), hand in hand.

201 It is also a possibility that the story may, partly, be interpreted as a posteriori explication, but I would rather emphasize the intention shared by the narrator of the Jabbok story, who deliberately wants to underline the physical effect as a result of the wrestle.
in a more mystical dimension in which we are asked to let go of our own ego in order to come into the Divine presence.

Meanwhile in text B, the attainment of existential being (in the form of being blessed as Israel) is, on the one hand, the result of Jacob’s own perseverance, acknowledged introspection and strong demand, but on the other hand the attainment is last granted by the ish via the blessing. It is the ish who “ordains” or “proclaims” that “Your name shall no more be called Jacob but Israel because you have striven with God and with men and you have prevailed” (Gen. 32:29). Here, it seems that regardless of Jacob’s effort, in the end, the victory that changes Jacob to Israel still comes definitively from the Divine Partner, the “unnamed divine other ish”.

4.2.1.6 Name Changes

In text A, after receiving and understanding the teaching of Dewa Ruci, Wrekudara is being transformed in his perspective of himself, of life and death, and the existence of this universe (scene V, chapter 2). However, until the end of the story (see in the appendix), when the actor is at last enlightened and purified, there is no changing of his name. He is still addressed by his old name: Wrekudara. The adjective “Suci” which means “Holy” and is connected to “Bima” (the other name of Wrekudara) which then forms the title “Bima Suci” – as commonly interpreted by the dhalangs and the Javanese audience – can only be found in the title of the story, in the introductory part of that story (Tanaya 1979: vii, xvii, xix) and also in section following the “Dewa Ruci” story, under the title of Kamekaring Kasusastran Bima Suci (Tanaya 1979: 25 et.al).

Meanwhile in text B, we are informed of a change of name in the moment of transformation. There is no old trace of the previous name in the meaning of the new name. In that moment of “inauguration”, the old name Jacob, which contains an awkward meaning, has been completely replaced by the new name “Israel” which contains a theophorous meaning (Fokkelman 1975: 216). Thus, this moment marks a new birth. After this renaming, however, the narrator still addresses Jacob as Jacob, and not Israel, in the next chapter (Gen.33) and so forth from there. Note also that the idea of change of name is then repeated in Gen. 35:10.

4.2.1.7 Strength and Vulnerability

Before the mystical experience, Wrekudara is portrayed as strong and brave, having a mainstay weapon, the fingernail Pancanaka and the magical-spiritual words of aji Jalasengara (scene P, chapter 2). After the mystical journey, Wrekudara has a new perspective in his heart and a fully balanced understanding of reality as he has already been enlightened and purified. He becomes a holy person (again, even though not explicitly mentioned in text A, he is commonly addressed as Bima Suci). Wrekudara appears to be a balanced, courageous, tough and deeply wise person (scene T and U, chapter 2). There is also no damage to his physical appearance as far as is told in the story. Meanwhile, in text B, we are informed of Jacob’s toughness and physical strength in which he can wrestle through the night. However, in addition to gaining the new
4.2.1.8 Secrecy and Remembrance

In text A, Wrekudara is warned to always keep his mystical experience as a secret (scene T, chapter 2). This is necessary. He obeys in keeping and not exhibiting his mystical experience as ordered by Dewa Ruci, even though Kresna reminds him not to forget everything he has experienced (scene V, chapter 2). Meanwhile in text B, Jacob also does not want to exhibit his mystical experience but the result which emerged from that mystical experience cannot be kept secret, since he is now limping and his lameness even functions as a remembrance for his descendants. This lameness, thus, operates as an open and clear testimony or a kind of icon of Jacob’s existential journey. Everyone who sees him, directly and empirically, is able to sense something different in him. This physical change is also meant to be an obvious reflective event to everyone who remembers Jacob and his story, which happens whenever the Israelites observe this dietary restriction. Thus, we may conclude this idea by saying that regarding their mystical experiences, there is no etiological remembrance in Wrekudara’s existential journey (text A) as there is in Jacob’s (text B). It also seems that the mystical experience should never be important for self-purification only but also for social and prophetic mysticism as well. This is the difference between the secret in the text of “Dewa Ruci” (Tanaya 1979) and the limping in the text of “Jacob at the Jabbok” (Gen. 32).

4.2.1.9 Unio Mystica and Encounter

In text A we find (a) the grace of invitation where Wrekudara comes into the body of Dewa Ruci; and (b) the teaching of how a person is able to come into unity with the Creator (manunggaling kawula-Gusti, see in scene T.a, chapter 2). There, in the womb of Dewa Ruci, Wrekudara receives the teaching and learns that whosoever wants to experience unity between the servant and the Master, or the unity between a person and God, should have an awareness of the source of being (sangkan paraning dumadi), understand the truth of non-duality, and be able to tame and master the desires, which are symbolized by specific colours (Tanaya 1979: 20).

202 Wrekudara is kindly invited: Lah ta mara Wrekudara aglis, umanjinga guwagarbaningwang: “Wrekudara hurry up, come into my womb” (Tanaya 1979: 15).

203 “Yen wruh pamoring Kawula Gusti, sarta Suksma kang sinedya ana, de warna neng sira nggone, lir wayang sarireku, saking dhalang solahing ringgit, mangka panggung kang jagad, lire badan iku, asolah lamun pinolah, sasolahe kumedhep myarsa ningali, tumindak lan pangucap. Kawisesa amisesa sami, datan antara pamoring karsa, jer tanpa rupa rupane, wus aneng ing sireku, upamane paesan jati, ingkang ngilo Hyang Suksma, wayangan puniku, kang ana sajroning kaca, iya sira jenenging manusa iki, rupa sajroning kaca” (“Once you have known about the union between the servant and God (the Creator) and the available Suksma (spirit) within you, what you desire is present because the form of color that is located within you. Your body is like a shadow puppet which is moved by the shadow puppet-master. The stage of the shadow puppet is the world. Your body moves when it is moved, whether it is eye-blinking, hearing, seeing, doing or talking. There is no distance between the guidance of the will because the shape/form is shapeless/formless, and the shape/form is already in you, like the mirror. Truly, the one who looks in the mirror is
We are also informed (according to Trimurti and shadow puppet masters or *dhalang*), that the appearance of Dewa Ruci resembles that of Wrekudara but in a smaller form. If we consider this information, we can interpret that Wrekudara is invited to come into his own body (which contains divine quality since the body is actually Dewa Ruci’s body). The human quality (in Wrekudara) resonates with the divine quality (the Dewa Ruci in Wrekudara’s own appearance). Here we sense the Hindu idea of the unity between *Atman*, the nature of human beings, and *Brahman*, the nature of God (Hadiwijono 1989: 25). This non-duality is proven in the emphasis on the fusion or union of creature and Creator (*pamoring kawula-Gusti*), and in the concept of microcosm (one self), which is equivalent to the macrocosm (outer world). It is precisely at this point that Wrekudara becomes “aware of his true self”: *datan pangling sarirane* (Tanaya 1979: 24).

If we compare this category in text A with the mystical quest happening in text B, we will find that here we have two different variants/languages of mystical experience. The type of mystical quest happening in text A is an example of *unio mystica*, where one has an experience of merging into one-ness or unity within the Divine (Wrekudara came into the Dewa Ruci’s womb). Meanwhile in text B, Jacob does not have the *unio mystica* experience. Instead, Jacob experiences another kind of mystical journey: profound, direct, intimate interaction with the Divine (via the mediator *ish*) as he wrestles, talks with and is blessed by the unnamed other–*ish* who has divine qualities. As Jacob says afterward, “I have seen God face to face” (Gen. 32: 31).

### 4.2.1.10 Addressing the Enemy Afterward

After the event of the mystical experience in Gen. 32 the narrator in text A does not say whether or not Wrekudara finds Druna or the Kurawa. We are told that the transformation of Wrekudara finally leads him to return to his brothers, the Pandawa but the narrator does not say whether he reconciles with the Kurawa or Druna. Thus, we do not have any information regarding that matter, but what we do know from the broader story of tension between the Pandawa and Kurawa ultimately leads to the Great War, known as the *Mahabharata* in Sanskrit and the *Bharatayuda* in Javanese. Regarding this broader context of the story, we can only assume that there will be some form of a meeting yet to come and that it will be important to emphasize that Wrekudara, whom the Kurawa have cheated before, is no longer the same person. The Dewa Ruci story, which emphasizes the significance of living in wisdom, enlightenment and full awareness of taming the evil passions and dangers, might be offered – in my opinion – as a story which promotes the significance of being existentially transformed in order to avoid the Great War, or at least to deal with the enemy differently.

Meanwhile, in the event told in Gen. 33, the narrator of text B reports that, after experiencing his mystical quest, Jacob then encounters Esau. In other words, we can say that in text A the transformed actor does not seem to directly face his “enemy” while in text B the transformed actor meets his brother who used to be his enemy. Although we know from later stories that ongoing relations between the descendants of Esau (the Edomites) and the Israelites are not always smooth (Knight 1992: 459), we read in this

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Hyang Suksma and the shadow in the mirror is you, a human being, the shape in the mirror”) (Tanaya 1979: 20; Adhikara no year: 44, 45).
text that Jacob finally meets Esau in peace and not in hatred. In that meeting, full of tears, we do not find any conflict occurring between the two brothers. Although Jacob and Esau ultimately part ways (Gen. 33: 16, 17), this text concludes with a warm and peaceful scene of a brotherly encounter.  

This peaceful encounter bears a kind of divine dimension as we read what Jacob says to Esau: “for truly to see your face is like seeing the face of God” (Gen. 33:10). In the following event of text B, the meeting between brothers is obvious. This is told in Gen. 33:1-10. We read here that the two brothers meet, embrace, kiss and weep. Jacob feels such a spiritual atmosphere when he says “for truly to see your face is like seeing the face of God, with such favor have you received me” (v. 10). Repeating the ideas in chapter 3, it is after Jacob sees the face of God in the face of a man (ish) that he is able to see God in the face of his brother. Here, God is experienced through the other. God is to be found nowhere else other than in a presence of the other. The wrestling experiences with humanity lead him to feel the presence of divinity. Here the enmity has changed to reconciliation.

Next we find the scene in which the gift is offered. We might be curious whether the gift is really accepted or extended. Normally, in tribal society, reconciliation happens when gifts are exchanged. Meanwhile in the story of text B, the reconciliation is not about the gift itself but about the reconciliation which transcends and is beyond the gift. Esau rejects the gifts. And it is only after being urged intensively by Jacob that the gifts are accepted (v.11). In the usual moment of reconciliation, it is understood that the perpetrator asks for forgiveness and the victim forgives as the only one who can. Then the victim accepts compensation as the normal consequence. But this is not happening in the Jacob-Esau event (Gen. 33). The result is that they cease being enemies (see the event of blessing, embracing, offering, refusing and urging the gift, thence parting ways) and are both free to go but there is no shared agency.

4.2.2 Enriching Differences: Mutual Interactions of the Two Texts

Now we arrive at the enriching differences or the “crossing” section. In this section I will read the two stories in mutual interactions using the methods of cross-textual reading. The pragmatic way in order to create mutual interactions is through illuminating and re-reading one text with the point of view or perspective given dialectically by the other text.

In the following session, I offer a reading of each text through perspectives offered by the other. Since the use of multiple crossings is meant to lead to transformation and enrichment, my hope is that several new meanings and discoveries (Lee 1998: 251) as well as interconnected ideas will appear and evolve in the process of this reading activity (see Scheme D).

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204 In the future, there are also tensions between the Israel and its neighbors as shared in the other parts of the Old Testament, see Gerda Hoekveld-Meijer (1996).
4.2.2.1 Positive Contributions of Difficult Experiences (Text B to Text A)

In text A, Druna is portrayed as a wicked and deceitful Guru whose goal is the death of his loyal and obedient pupil, Wrekudara. By commanding Wrekudara to seek the Living Water in dangerous places (the cave at the forest Tibrasara, where the two giants dwell, and in the middle of the sea where the sea dragon lives), Druna seems to be a false teacher/Guru. However, regarding the depth of the spiritual journey, his role can be understood as more complex than that of the deceitful and false Guru, if we apply the ideas from Jacob’s mystical quest (text B) to the role of Druna (text A).

In text B, there are two events of struggling which contain elements of education. The first is Jacob’s hard life under Laban’s yoke. From being a favorite son under the full protection of his mother, Jacob gradually becomes an adult, an experienced and mature man, because of Laban’s behavior towards him. Laban cheats him in the matter of replacing Rachel with Leah at his first wedding and in the matter of changing wages numerous times. Laban’s sons also view their brother-in-law Jacob as a threat to their welfare. Twenty years is quite long for Jacob to learn how to be tough and persevere amidst the difficulties and deceits surrounding his life. There, he becomes a husband, a father and the head of his own household. He owns many cattle and belongings even though he experiences pressures caused by his surroundings. It seems that the “Laban event” has become a very important stage in Jacob’s maturity. The deceitful circumstances and tricky person have somehow become his teacher in life. Without facing this problem, Jacob might have been the same as he was before. However, this
hard life under Laban has given him the opportunity to grow, to be different. Laban, then, is a “good teacher” for the maturity blossoming in Jacob.

The second event is the struggle with the ish. This is the first physical wrestling match to happen to Jacob since what happened with his twin brother in their mother’s womb. Thus, this is a really new experience for him. But Jacob is a quick learner. He must do well since it lasts through the night and he seems to be in an equal position with the ish. In essence, this struggle initiated by the ish has brought, in one way or another, a kind of lesson for Jacob. It is through this struggle that Jacob finds that he is actually able to resist in a physical fight. Thus, it gives him a more confident perspective.

We learn from text B that facing difficulties in life can serve as an effective means to maturity. This is also precisely what happens to Wrekudara in text A. His assertiveness and endurance have been put to the test and he passes into a new stage of maturity more ready to continue his journey. It seems that Jacob’s hard struggles under Laban and with the ish can be used to amplify Druna’s complex role within Wrekudara’s mystical quest. We know that Druna is a teacher/Guru of both the Pandawa and the Kurawa, but he is usually portrayed in a negative manner, as unfair to the Pandawa since Druna tends to be on the side of the Kurawa, wicked, tricky and full of deception. Most Javanese scholars provide an interpretation that Druna is on one hand a Guru but on the other an enemy from the perspective of Wrekudara and the Pandawa as a whole. We should notice that, according to Trimurti (1984: 26), Wrekudara does finally realize that he has been cheated by Druna, his own teacher, in whom he trusted wholeheartedly. However, the deceit of this tricky person can also serve to further the maturation of the one who is cheated on, as happens to Jacob while he endures years under Laban’s yoke and his father-in-law’s deceitful strategies.

Thus, if we use the perspective of Jacob’s story (text B) to re-read Wrekudara’s story (text A), the challenging question might be: “Can Guru Druna be considered necessary, his deceit a phase in the spiritual and mystical quest of mankind?” We could understand it in this way: even if Druna’s intention is deceit, the experience which follows may be considered a good and even beneficial journey for Wrekudara. We do not know whether Druna deliberately intends the fighting with the giants and later with the sea dragon to be an important process in Wrekudara’s future transformation, but the events in the Tibrasara forest and later in the sea do prove to be important in the transformation of Wrekudara. Through this moment and process, Wrekudara is maturing and, at the same time, the fighting in Tibrasara has also functioned as a way to transform the evil giants into the good god Endra-Bayu. Here, Wrekudara’s journey of maturation also seems to be a blessing for another, for the giants as the enemy. All of this could happen because of Druna’s command. Through this command from Druna as the “teacher-enemy”, Wrekudara is able to act as the tool of blessing and transformation for the “enemy,” (who then, as the god Endra-Bayu, advises him to re-ask Druna about the true location of Tirta Prewita). This is also a step forward towards receiving transformation from the encounter with Dewa Ruci. Here we learn that the enemies, including Druna and the giants, can also be the “one who blesses me” (like what happened in Jacob’s story during his struggle with the ish [Gen. 32] – when at least the ish is interpreted as an enemy who wrestles with Jacob during the night – and by Jacob’s meeting with Esau [Gen. 33]).
If we also consider the opinions of Adhikara and Trimurti who interpret the fighting with the sea dragon as the fighting with Wrekudara’s own evil desires, then the meaning of Druna’s positive role can become more concrete. Thus we find that in his spiritual mystical journey, the “bad” things done by Druna can also be beneficial for Wrekudara since those experiences help him go deeper and reach further into his future enlightenment.

4.2.2.2  Perspective of “Teachership” (Text A to Text B)

We found that the Dewa Ruci and the ish have different “methods” in their strategic deliverance of our main actors to attain transformation. In text A, Wrekudara is transformed through the invitation to come into Dewa Ruci’s womb in order to receive deeply the five teachings (Pancamaya, Macrococos-Microcosmos, Pramana, Ilmu Pelepasan, Mati sajroning Ngauri - Urip Sajroning Apejah). Here the Dewa Ruci serves as a wise and true Guru who explains the knowledge of wisdom in such a way that at the end, the pupil is enabled to be enlightened because he “knows everything about the universe, the birth of his inner life is clear, everything unites integrally.”

The whole story of Dewa Ruci’s teachings (in the Appendix) is quite long. Therein as the true Guru (compared with the deceitful Druna), Dewa Ruci opens up many layers of ignorance in the mind of Wrekudara.

The way of facilitating ideas down to the depths of Wrekudara’s heart is done through an approach called “reasoned inquiry” (Dale Canon 1996), in which one is enabled and encouraged to think, ponder and reflect on ideas offered to one. One should have a hermeneutical orientation within one’s spiritual journey so that one will be able to gain the right perspective. As we know, the right perspective is the basic thing that is needed by one to make the right decisions and to determine the right directions in life. This is what happens to Wrekudara in text A. As we know, the mystical quest is ineffable (Bishop 1995: 13), but that does not mean that the activity of teaching wisdom then has no meaning. It is in text A that we learn about the explorative teachings which are able to make a huge contribution in leading one to one’s existential spiritual discovery. The experience itself could be ineffable and incommunicable, but we are still able to communicate what kind of barriers one should let go of, as well as the kind of steps one should undertake on one’s way to come to that experience. This kind of model cannot be found strongly in text B. In a moderate way, we can say that the volume of detailed, informative teachings in the mystical journey seems less in text B compared to what we find in text A.

However, that does not mean that there is no teaching at all in text B. Indeed, the ish is not acting as a teacher of wisdom (like Dewa Ruci in text A) and yet we can still see that by his actions the ish also teaches something to Jacob as he wrestles with him, inquires about him and at last gives him his blessing which transforms him into Israel. However, the fact that Jacob then learns something by confessing his “Jacobness” and then becoming aware with whom he has wrestled also points to the “teachership” of the

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205 Wus tan mengeng ing galih gumawang, datan pangling sarirane, panaksmaning asawujud, nanging lair sasab piningit, reh sa-reh kasatriyan, linakon winengkua, pamurwaning jagad traya, kalairan batine nora kasilib, satu munggwung rimbagan (Tanaya 1979: 24).
ish. By this, it seems that the ish also functions as a teacher, but surely he is a teacher in a different genre than Dewa Ruci. Teaching through inspiring ideas is not the way of the ish. His way of teaching is through direct bodily experience and exercising authority to force his pupil to open himself and then be blessed.

It is obvious that in the meeting of the actors in text A, we find an abundance of teachings of wisdom, while, in text B, there seems to be no teaching at all. Yes, there are no systematic and long teachings in text B but rather a tough wrestling match and a short but sharp conversation between the actor and his opponent. However, (again) this does not mean that there is no wisdom in the encounter of the actors in text B (between Jacob and the ish). The wisdom is not delivered orally in detailed teachings in the scheme where a Guru gives lessons to his pupil. The wisdom which is contained in text B appears not so much in a classical teaching format; instead, it is woven into the whole struggle, conversation and statement afterward.

The moment of wrestling and query can also be the moment of teaching provided by the unnamed ish, who deliberately forces Jacob to struggle with the need to acknowledge himself boldly through the entire events of his life (as Jacob). It is clear that via this existential encounter with the ish, Jacob learns something that later enables him to confess—in his moment of enlightenment—that he has seen God panim el panim, “face to face.”

4.2.2.3 Existential Wrestle (Text B to Text A)

Both text A and text B tell about the journey of an “old” person transforming into a “new” one. This transformation is an event that the actor shares with the Divine partner—via a direct, profound and intimate encounter. This Divine partner invites and teaches Wrekudara (text A) and wrestles, queries, then blesses Jacob (text B). These verbs are not limited within the corpus text (A or B) itself, but can be used for the counter-part text in order to widen and amplify the meaning of each story.

Taking the perspective of text B to text A, we can see that the “invitation” to come into Dewa Ruci’s womb is also a moment of “wrestling” for Wrekudara. In that moment, he surely wrestles with his own logic, prejudices and questions (“Who is this figure that invites me to come, via his left ear, into his womb?”). At first there is reluctance in Wrekudara to accept this invitation. After being convinced by Dewa Ruci, Wrekudara experiences that inside Dewa Ruci’s womb, there is a reality of blessing offered via receiving and comprehending several important-existential teachings. He can learn how to “die in life and live in death” in order to have union with the Creator (pamoring kawula-Gusti). This blessed moment of coming into Dewa Ruci’s womb and learning his teachings tell us how Wrekudara (as the representation of human beings) should have a very deep interaction with the “other” who offers a blessing of transformation. By entering Dewa Ruci’s womb, Wrekudara is invited to celebrate the existential encounter within the Divine. It is not the “physical fighting” with the giants or with the sea dragon that transform Wrekudara. Instead, it is the “existential wrestling” with the Dewa Ruci’s invitation that finally leads Wrekudara to transformation.
4.2.2.4 Grace Offered and Grace Demanded (Text A to Text B, vice versa)

In both the stories, we find the existence of what Christians call grace. In Wrekudara’s story, grace in the form of an invitation from the Dewa Ruci to come into his womb to receive existential teaching is given after Wrekudara asks sincerely, “I beg your favor. Teach me in order to cleanse my body and spirit. Actually I do not know how to learn. I am like a wild animal, I do not know what is meant by the holy body; I am still young, being insulted in the world and being ridiculed on the earth. I am like a keris (Javanese sword) without its sheath; when I speak, I have no manners” (Tanaya 1979: 15). Meanwhile in text B, grace in the form of transformative blessing is given to Jacob after he says: “I will not let you go unless you make me blessed.” Thus, the question is: “Should grace be asked for politely or demanded forcefully?”

What can be offered from text A to B is that “grace” is always the prerogative right of the Divine. What we as humans can do is ask for Divine favor to be placed upon us, according to what Dewa Ruci teaches Wrekudara: “the soul with a mysterious-filled spirit can never be found unless it receives the true grace.” Viewed from this perspective, Jacob’s demand on the ish seems to be an impolite as well as an “insincere” (do ut des: giving in order to receive) request. There is no polite and sincere request in forcing someone to do what we want, using the other’s disadvantageous position (as happens to the ish who wants to be released). Regardless of the result, the way of conditioning the Divine party in order to fulfil human’s will seems strange in a sincere pilgrimage.

However, on the other side, text B also challenges text A in understanding, that in the relationship with the Divine, our strong will to gain grace is calculated. Grace is not given as something cheap. We must struggle for it and struggle well to present our deep desire for it. Grace is truly a Divine prerogative but yet we should prove that we really are asking for it. If necessary, we are permitted to persistently fight for it. By this persistent, direct and honest (yet impolite) perseverance to gain grace, we might hope that our Divine partner will appreciate our will and then accomplish it. This point has strengthened the meaning of the previous journeys as they are undertaken by Wrekudara (since he actually has proved his strong will to search for the grace, the Living Water, through facing the dangers he experienced before meeting with and coming within Dewa Ruci) as the preparation for him (Wrekudara) to, at last, receive grace. Herewith, we might find that the dichotomy of understanding grace as (1) something merely given (as is usually developed in Christian theology) and (2) the hard effort of a human being in order to experience the Divine’s love, should not be located in two different compartments.

4.2.2.5 Between Covert and Overt (Text A to Text B, vice versa)

In text A, the divine-partner clearly announces himself as Dewa Ruci. He introduces his name and his habit of “eating only dry leaves which fall in front of him, if there are none then he does not eat anything” (see in scene R, chapter 2), and his ability to know Wrekudara’s genealogy and Druna’s command as well. Therefore, Wrekudara becomes

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206 “Suksma-sinusma mawingit, tangeh manggiha, yen tan nugraha yekti” (Tanaya 1979: 12).
aware who the divine-partner is almost from the very start. This knowledge drives Wrekudara to (1) admit the partner’s merit and (2) ask for the teaching of wisdom from this divine-partner. Meanwhile, in text B, the divine-partner (the *ish*) does not only conceal his name but he even scolds Jacob for desiring to know it. As discussed in chapter 3, the *ish*’s answer in the form of the question: “Why is it that you ask my name?” to Jacob’s query, can be interpreted in several ways, such as (1) a rejection of being controlled by Jacob who desires to dominate the *ish* (which he [Jacob] would be able to do if he learned the name of that *ish*) and (2) a warning for Jacob whether he has truly recognize the real identity of the *ish* when, according to Knight (1992: 453), the *ish* is in effect asking Jacob, “Do you really need to ask? Certainly, you know whom you have encountered.”

In text A, Dewa Ruci announces his names, while, in text B, the *ish* never does. In text A, the identity of Dewa Ruci is obvious. Javanese scholars are clear about it. After Wrekudara confesses his stupidity, he asks the name of the *dewa bajang*, then the *dewa bajang* replies, “Ya ingsun Dewa Ruci”: “I am Dewa Ruci” (Tanaya 1979: 15). The meaning of Dewa Ruci, as told in the chapter 2, is also clear as either “the shining or luminous Dewa/God” (Paniyta Perpustakaan Sosrokarto 1971: 29) or as a “dirty” God in a sense that Dewa Ruci is a god whose holiness cannot be compared to others since the holiness of other gods/ *dewas* will look dirty in comparison to that of Dewa Ruci (Adhikara no year: 27). As discussed above, both Tanaya and Yasadipura explain simply that the physical appearance of Dewa Ruci is in the form of a small-statured god (*dewa katik*). Again, it is important to re-state here that, in the shadow puppet theater, Dewa Ruci is always shown as an exact look-alike of Wrekudara in a smaller size (*Trimurti* 1985: 20). This should be a connection with the idea of microcosmos and macrocosmos in Dewa Ruci’s teaching (see scene T, chapter 2), when Dewa Ruci invites Wrekudara to come into his womb and see the whole world therein.

Meanwhile in text B, the identity of the *ish* is covered in mystery. Therefore, we may easily find many interpretations given by Biblical scholars regarding the real identity of this unnamed *ish* though the *ish* reveals nothing regarding his own identity, except that he has “to leave for the dawn has come.” Thus, it is understandable why the *ish* has been variously interpreted as God himself (Barthes 1977: 132; Brueggemann, 1980: 267), an angel (Driver 1991: 294), the archangel Michael (Ginzberg 1937: 384, 385), the guardian angel of Esau, Esau himself who sneaks in under the darkness, the personification of Jacob’s fear and guilt, the Unnamed Other, God personified (Knight 1992:452), the other Jacob which is hidden from view who is dependent on his mother and feels weak, vulnerable, and unworthy of everything he has (Wiesel 1976: 123-124), the local river/ *numen*, Jacob’s inner shadow (Stoudt 1993: 273), or a supernatural visitor (Marcel 1992: 212). Many options are given. However, as has been explored in chapter 3, it seems important to note that throughout the story we are reminded that it is impossible to define the *ish*, who is not an ordinary man, since he contains divine qualities (Brueggemann 1980: 266). The *ish* himself never reveals his identity but Jacob seems to understand, at last, who the unnamed divine other *ish* really is, which is why he asks the *ish* to bless him. Concealing is revealing, and otherwise revealing is somewhat concealing. The relation of covert and overt regarding the identity of the divine partner in such a mystical experience is somewhat blurred.
4.2.2.6 Social Impact of the Spiritual Attainment (Text B to Text A)

In text A, Wrekudara’s desire of gaining the Living Water after his first and second farewell has caused anxiety and profound sadness in his family (the Pandawa brothers). It seems that these solitary journeys have impacts on his community. In addition, his two departures and returns also create social impact: the Pandawa are, of course, very happy and relieved at the return of Wrekudara, and even more with his success in gaining the Living Water to cleanse his life. We do not know whether Wrekudara’s attainment gives them a beneficial social impact, beyond their relief and joy that he has come back safely, since it is not explicitly reported by the narrator in the story.

Meanwhile in text B, before the Jabbok event, Jacob sets himself behind his companions and belongings but after his struggle and conversation with the ish, and subsequent transformative blessing, he goes before his family to face Esau. It seems that the narrator wants to emphasize that the Jacob who had been struggling during the night is not the same as the one after dawn. His position is now to protect his family in the face of possible danger from the enemy. His mystical journey and the spiritual attainment seem to have created a beneficial impact to his societal environment. Again, we do not know whether or not Wrekudara’s attainment impacts his role in society, since it is not explicitly reported by the narrator. However, I think that Wrekudara’s attainment should implicitly offer something beneficial to the community of Pandawa, as they live in an atmosphere of conflict with the Kurawa as the “others”. This is because by taking up nafsu mutmainah (see the Teaching of Pancamaya) Wrekudara learns to tame, even kill, his negative passions of laumawah, amarah and sufiah in order to “die in life and live in death” in his union with God. Therefore we may sense that the presence of the transformed person, who has already comprehended the existence of the self and the world and who has gained an integrated and balanced self, should ideally bear a positive effect to his surroundings.

The story of the enlightened Wrekudara (text A), like that of Jacob (text B), should be used as a meaningful example of facing the other, even in conflict. It is through the encounter with the other that one can see “the face of God”, not because the other is good but because one (the person who undergoes the experience) has already been enlightened by the spiritual-mystical journey. Again, here I would like to repeat and strengthen my suggestion in chapter 2 that by (a) considering the content of Dewa Ruci’s teaching to Wrekudara and (b) elaborating on the amplified perspective within its interaction to text B, I can offer an interpretation regarding the function of “Dewa Ruci” story amidst the tension between the Pandawa and the Kurawa: this “Dewa Ruci” story might be meant not to lead the conflict of Pandawa-Kurawa to the great war of Bharatayuda. Instead, it suggests that by focusing deeply on the inner struggles within the person, we may be able to create a bridge to bravely face the other, the other with whom we have conflict but who is not seen as an enemy but rather as someone who can offer a blessing through difficult interactions.

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207 It is interesting to note that in the Old Testament, living water (in the sense of “fresh, running water”) is very frequently used for the process of cleansing. See Leviticus 14 and Ezekiel 47.
4.2.2.7 Strength and Vulnerability in the Mystical Journey (Text A to Text B, vice versa)

In text A, Wrekudara starts the journey as a simple, rough and strong-willed person, and, in passing through his mystical quest, he becomes a gentle, enlightened and patient knight. The result of his mystical quest seems positive in all aspects. Meanwhile in text B, Jacob starts with mixed traits, as someone who has matured under Laban’s yoke, on the one hand, but also as one who still tends to be opportunist by shielding himself using his household, and then passes through his mystical quest as a new positive person (Israel) who has a weakness, a limp. This note on the limping is interesting, since by showing this weakness, the narrator in text B attempts to underline the significance of imperfection as a matter of attainment in the mystical quest. Jacob’s limping shows his vulnerability in his encounter with the Divine. The story suggests that weakness and vulnerability are not a kind of rejection or alienation in the spiritual journey. Rather, weakness and vulnerability can be a mark that one has been deeply touched by the Divine. In Jacob’s case, his limping also appears to be his strength. The border between strength and weakness, as between toughness and vulnerability as well, appears to be blurred. It is exactly in this point that pride has been put aside and humility becomes more real and intensely promoted. This is an important point of the mystical quest as offered by text A to text B.

If we look from a different perspective, we may ask whether there is any new vulnerability and weakness that defines Wrekudara after experiencing his mystical quest. Yes, there may be, but this vulnerability and weakness do not appear as physical damage. Instead, they may be found in patience and gentleness, if viewed from the perspective of the power struggle between the Pandawa and the Kurawa. We know that it is the physical strength and roughness of Wrekudara that Kurawa fears in the context of the future Great War. If then, Wrekudara becomes gentle and patient through his mystical quest, he will not be considered as strong and frightening as before. With this point, Wrekudara’s mystical quest bears a kind of “vulnerability and weakness”. However, this vulnerability and weakness actually are his strength as well. By becoming a wise and balanced person who knows how to tame evil desires with an integrated understanding, enlightenment and transformation to gentleness and patience, Wrekudara could act as a peacemaker in the battle to come. We can assume that he could address the other (here, the Kurawa) in peaceful interaction instead of warfare and violence. This amplified idea given by text B to text A, from the benefit of Wrekudara’s “vulnerability” to peacebuilding, seems to resonate with the assumption given in the last part of chapter two. Since the story of “Dewa Ruci” cannot be found in the original corpus of the Mahabharata or Bharatayuda (related to its nature as a carangan story), I propose that there is a significant social-peacebuilding message contained in this story itself which stresses that human beings are invited to kill their own evil passions and hence, may purify themselves in union with the Almighty. As such, we might assume that the “Dewa Ruci” story may not necessarily lead to conflict.
Regarding his mystical quest, Wrekudara is ordered to keep his experience secret: “If you already understood all this responsibility, keep it in secret and cover it; do not show off your clothes, but keep it in your heart; do not ever forget, cover it in its physical appearance.”208 The reason behind this order, according to the story, is that the mystical quest is not meant for exhibition as an attainment or personal success. Of course, the possibility it will be known by others seems to be evident (i.e. consider Kresna’s remarks to Wrekudara after his return). However, the person who has been transformed through the mystical experience should not show off the grace he has received. The examination of others should come from their own perspectives instead of coming from promoting or showing off oneself. Thus, the enlightenment, humility and purification will always be maintained properly in the mystery of the grace of the Divine. Viewed from the perspective of grace, the purposeful promotion and pride concerning attainment in one’s inner life appear to contradict the meaning and aim of grace itself. This is the perspective given by text A regarding the necessity of keeping the mystical quest a secret within oneself.

In text B, Jacob certainly does not intend to show off or flaunt his mystical quest to the public. In this matter, Jacob cannot be blamed for his own new mark. His lameness cannot be hidden. Rather it is the intention of the story to present this physical change as empirical evidence that he has had a very deep spiritual encounter with the Divine. That is why the personal moment then becomes a public remembrance. However, the idea of not exhibiting the change, as in text A, is still at work. Jacob’s lameness is certainly not a kind of exhibition or a proclamation of success. He does not create his lameness on purpose. He does not intend to become limping. His intention is to be blessed. The meaning of being blessed, in Jacob’s previous understanding, is certainly not to be limping, but this lameness is a mark given by the Divine. If we discuss the matter of promoting the attainment to the outer world, we should say that it is the Divine who intends it to be. As long as the person who experiences such a deep encounter does not intend to boast about his/her attainment, then that person (here, Jacob) is still a sincere pilgrim in the spiritual journey. The fame connected to social impacts related to his attainment should not be seen as a violation of humility and/or sincerity. If people then learn, ponder, reflect and are inspired by the empirical-physical mark, then it is an opportunity for spiritual education.

### 4.2.3 Evaluation of the Differences

If we analyze the found differences between the two stories above, we may find several levels when we compare and interrelate them. There are elements in which the differences are obvious but do not lead to any confrontation of ideas. Regarding the mystical experiences, these obvious differences stem from different mystical languages and also create mutual resonances, both dialogically and dialectically. I suppose that the

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208 *Yen wus mudheng pratingkah kang iki, den avingit sarta den asasab, sasat pamer panganggone, nanging ing batinipun, ing sakedhap tan kena lali; laire sasabana* (Tanaya 1979: 21).
adequate attitude regarding this kind of difference is honouring the dignity of their specific categories in the mystical worldview.

Meanwhile, there could also be other differences - in the category of enriching ones - in which we may sense the existence of several interconnected perspectives in the mutual interaction between the two stories via the effort of the reader. Here, the available contradictions or the enriching differences can be taken as tools to offer a dialogical and critical reading challenge as well. Besides all of these findings, we also have to be attentive and careful in examining the directive content or recommendation for a certain practical behaviour/praxis, in the context of the enmity that serves as the background in each story. Regarding what might generally be addressed as irreconcilable differences, the third category of differences that lead to opposition and is the most difficult to cope with because it contains fundamentally contradictory values and attitudes, I find that this kind of difference can hardly be found in the encounter of the two mystical texts I analyze in this study. The dialogical and dialectical encounters-interrelations of our two texts present different mystical languages as well as mutual resonances of that mystical quest.

We might also notice that the two stories have broader narrative contexts. As discussed in ch 2, the broader setting of the “Dewa Ruci” story is the tension of the Pandawa and the Kurawas on their way towards the Great Battle (Mahabharata/Bharatayuda), in which ultimately all of the Kurawa will be destroyed and the Pandawa will be victorious. However, the story of “Dewa Ruci,” which is a Javanese story, composed by Javanese pujangga for a specific aim, cannot be found in the corpus of the original Indian Mahabharata text. Therefore, I propose that there is a significant social-peacebuilding message contained in this story about a human who is invited to kill his own evil passions and hence, to purify himself in his union with the Almighty. So, as has been stated in ch 2, although the story of Pandawa-Kurawa brotherly tension leads them to the battle, I suppose that the “Dewa Ruci” story could be offered and interpreted as a story that might not lead specifically to conflict. On the part of text B, we find that in addition to the conflict in 2 Kings 14 between the Israelites under King Amaziah and the Edomites, Gerda Hoekveld-Meijer (1996) has also shown that there are various polemics between Israel-Judah on one side and the Edomites on the other. It seems that the social tensions between Jacob and Esau continued to exist although, again, this is not within the scope of this research. Within this broader story of Israel-Edom, the mystical experience in Jacob’s life (Gen. 32) that enables him to face Esau with a new attitude and perspective (Gen. 33), should offer an important contribution to that social tension between the societies. Thus, with the peaceful contribution of these two mystical stories to their broader accounts, we may see that there is no irreconcilable difference.

4.3 Insights from Both Texts and the Discussion on Mystical Quest

In this section I will locate the insights from the stories within the discussion of the mystical experience. Since the condensed ideas regarding the characteristics and nature of various mystical experiences have been presented in the introduction, this section examines to what extent the mystical journeys of the two actors can be attributed to the scheme presented in that introductory chapter.
4.3.1 Locating the Stories in the Category of Mystical Quest

Considering the information on types and characteristics, I will try to locate the process and event of transformation of the two actors, Wrekudara (text A) and Jacob (text B) in several related typologies.

In text A we have the profound, direct spiritual encounter experience and awareness of the union between the creature and the Creator (Wrekudara and Dewa Ruci). This occurs after the man undertakes a journey to tame or kill the dangers as well as negative passions, commits to confession and self-introspection, responds positively to the invitation to come into the existential reality of the womb of the divine, and gains understanding of the teaching. These steps then lead the human and divine natures – Atman and Brahman – to come to their union. Within the womb of Dewa Ruci, Wrekudara becomes aware of his true self and is transformed and renewed with the qualities of a gentle and wise knight who now understands the reality of the self and the universe. Considering these indications, it seems that we might “locate” the spiritual experience in text A in the cluster of mysticism that contains elements such as:

a. Introvertive
   (Turns inward, finds the One at the bottom of oneself (Bishop 1995: 11)): Wrekudara is taught of the relation between microcosmos and macrocosmos; Adhikara and Trimurti interpret the story as an inward journey within Wrekudara’s self; Wrekudara finds Dewa Ruci in a small form of himself (as a dewa bajang).

b. Theistic and Monistic characteristics
   (In theistic mysticism, the mystic tends to seek union with God or the Absolute, while in monistic mysticism, the mystic seeks identity with a universal principle as described by Bishop who quotes Parrinder (1976: 15). The invitation for Wrekudara to come into Dewa Ruci/deity’s womb is a symbol of the unity between the individual and God. Notice also that Dewa Ruci appears in a small figure that resembles Wrekudara himself. This is characteristic of theistic mysticism.

In the Dewa Ruci’s womb, Wrekudara receives and comprehensively understands several existential teachings of pancamaya, macrocosmos-microcosmos,

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209 As discussed in the introductory chapter, Bishop (1995) presents the opinions of some experts in mysticism (i.e. Stace, Zahner, Happold, Otto) regarding the types of mysticism using a series of pairs: Extrovertive and Introvertive; Nature (Pantheistic, Monistic) and Theistic; Dualist and Non-Dualist; Principle and God/the Absolute; Non-Personal and Personal; Merging into and Communion with; Love-Union and Knowledge-Understanding; Mysticism of Instrospection (inward way) and Mysticism of Unifying Vision (‘way of unity’). Another classification comes from Parrinder (quoted by Bishop 1995: 12) who divides mysticism in three types: Theistic Mysticism (emphasizing the Union with God), Monistic Mysticism (emphasizing the Union with Universal Principle/Divine) and Non-Religious Mysticism or Monism (emphasizing the Union with Something/Everything). Another classification can be found in the categories offered by Fox in his four ‘befriending with’ types: in befriending creation (via positiva), darkness (via negativa), creativity (via creativa) and new creation (via transformativa) (1983).
pramana, ilmu pelepasan and mati sajroning ngaurip, urip sajroning apejah. This is a representation of monistic mysticism. This type can also be categorized as nature mysticism, since it also emphasizes the unity of some principles (Bishop 1995: 12).

c. Contains the personal nature of a transcendent being (Bishop 1995: 12) in Dewa Ruci.

d. Merging into God or the Absolute
The non-dualist type, in which all multiplicities and dualities are transcended (Bishop 1995:12) is seen in the significance of Dewa Ruci’s teaching on pamoring Kawula-Gusti/Atman-Brahman: unio mystica of self and the Self, of one and God.

e. Love-Union and Knowledge-Understanding type
In the ‘love-union’ type, “the mystic no longer feels torn between antinomies, contradictions, opposing aspirations, and conflicting ambitions. Doubts have been resolved. The external world no longer distracts. A sense of integration, completeness, or wholeness is experienced” as the mystic becomes integrated in personality by putting off the old self and transcending the little self (Bishop 1995: 19). The mysticism of love urges “to escape from a sense of separation, from the loneliness of selfhood, towards a closer participation and reunion with Nature or God, which will bring peace and rest to the soul” (Bishop 1995: 12 quotes Happold). Meanwhile, the mysticism of “knowledge and understanding” urges to “find the secret of the universe, to grasp it not in part but in its wholeness” (Bishop 1995: 12 quotes Happold). Both characteristics of the two types can be found in Wrekudara’s transformation as he gains the Living Water.

f. Via Positiva and Via Transformativa
Even though Wrekudara is told to keep his mystical experience a secret, we may also sense the corresponding idea with what is called the via positiva, according to Fox. Wrekudara comes to a comprehensive understanding of his self and the universe in which he experiences the existence of being a balanced and wise person. This matches with the idea that the mystical quest is also about a spiritual attitude to the “path of affirmation, thanksgiving and ecstasy” where we can taste “the beauties and cosmic depths of creation” (Fox 1983: 34). In his mystical experience and afterward, Wrekudara as the Bima Suci (as the dhalangs will say) tastes the power which connects pleasure and wisdom (Fox 1983: 34). The other connected typology of the mystical experience, as undergone by Wrekudara, seems to be related to what Fox calls the via transformativa which comes in befriending new creation through compassion, celebration, erotic justice\textsuperscript{210} where

\textsuperscript{210} According to Fox, erotic justice which employs “imagination in addressing the responsibility dimension of justice” (Fox 1983: 291) is a transformation of life which contains power to awaken the human being, to help the human being to see the recurring presence of passion, feeling return, hope and transcendence. In this erotic justice lies “authentic conversions, changes of heart and work and lifestyle, so that one becomes committed to working for social transformation in whatever profession one is involved in” (1983: 290). This
creation is “renewed, seen anew, and righted from its state of sinful or unjust relationship” (1983: 247).

Meanwhile, in text B we also have a profound and direct encounter between the actor (Jacob) and the *ish*. During the night, he struggles with a human (humanity) in order to see the divine, and during the day he is aware that he has been enabled to see God *panim el panim*: face to face. Later, he is also enabled to see the face of the “other” (Esau) as if he sees the face of God. Text B also informs us that this profound and direct encounter with the unnamed divine other *ish* has helped the transformation occur in our actor; he changes from the fearful and tricky Jacob into the brave, dignified but limping Israel. In the process from “night” to dawn (“sun rise reality”), there is also a change from self-acknowledgement into self- transformation which endorses the rising of Jacob’s peaceful and courageous attitude to the other. Viewed from the genus of the mystical experience, it seems that we might able to “locate” the spiritual experience in text B as:

a. **Extrovertive**
   (Looks outward and through the physical senses, finds the One in the external world; Jacob endures a physical struggle with the *ish* and bears lameness afterward).

b. **Stresses communion with God rather than the union within God or merging into God or the Absolute** (Bishop 1995: 12).

c. **Jacob finds his fulfilment in his meeting with the Unnamed divine other *ish* as the transcendent Being** (Bishop 1995: 12).

d. **Relational Communion with God**
   The distinction between the subject (Jacob) and the other subject (the Unnamed divine other *ish*) remains.

e. **Love but not Union Type.**
   At his transformation, it seems that Jacob experiences the reality of “no longer feels torn between antinomies, contradictions, opposing aspirations, and conflicting ambitions. Doubts have been resolved. The external world no longer distracts one. A sense of integration, completeness, or wholeness is experienced” (Bishop 1995: 19) as one becomes integrated in personality by transcending the little self or putting off the old self (Bishop 1995: 19) when Jacob is blessed and transformed into the new Israel. But, there is no union between Jacob and God. What he has experienced is seeing God face to face: *kî-rāʾîṯī ʾĕlōhîm pānîm ʾĕl-pānîm*. This is an absolute existential encounter with the Divine but not a union in which the man is merged with or absorbed into the Divine.

kind of justice, Fox argues, “flows from a panentheistic theology wherein all creation is in God and God is in all creation. For if God truly loves all creation, even erotically loves all creation, so that God in loving creation is loving herself, then when creation is in pain God is in pain and feels the pain” (Fox 1983: 290).
f. **Via Transformativa**

Using Fox’s typologies, it seems that Jacob’s experience can in some way also be located under the *via transformativa* category since it seems that in text B the name of Jacob (and also his nature) is “renewed, seen anew, and righted from its state of sinful or unjust relationship” (Fox 1983: 247) to be Israel.

We see that there are convergences as well as divergences in our two mystical texts. This is important. On the one hand, we are made aware of and have examined that although “the theological definition points to the specific difference between mysticism of the different religions, saving us from relativism and from the oversimplification that ‘all are the same’” (Johnston 1970: 139-140), on the other hand, we may also acknowledge that considering its same generic classification, effective dialogues could be done “based not upon common dogmas, but upon common religious experience” (Johnston 1970: 139-140).

### 4.3.2 Locating the Stories in the Steps of Mystical Quest

We find that in text A we have the type *Unio Mystica*, in which one is absorbed within the Divine (the self is united with the Self) and in text B, we have the type of Dualist Communion with the Divine where there is no union but a profound encounter. However, with respect to the difference, it is important to discuss the steps where one moves from one stage to another, as proposed by experts in the mystical quest. For instance, Bishop, quotes Dionysius, when he summarizes what is called “the threefold way to God”; this consists of purification-illumination-union (Bishop 1995: 15). Every stage has its own characteristics, as has been presented in the Introduction.

In text A, the purification where “the mind is inclined to learn true wisdom in which one should rid him/herself of such obstacles as self-will, pride, and self-centeredness which keep one from realizing the final goal” (Bishop 1995: 15), begins at the moment Wrekudara defeats the giants and the sea dragon, interpreted as huge dangers and passions, or the dangers which are contained within the passions. Then, in the Dewa Ruci’s teaching, Wrekudara learns that one should be alert to every temptation that can mislead the human heart and therefore should guard oneself against being bound by the pleasures of life. In order to have unity with God, one should live in purity so that one will not be afraid of death. With this attainment, the cleansing function of the Living Water (*Tirta Prewita*) reaches its aim (Tanaya 1979: 21). Meanwhile in text B, the idea to rid oneself of the obstacles might be not explicitly presented; however, we could still interpret the Laban event as a kind of purification where Jacob must learn to undergo hardship under his father-in-law’s pressure. This is where he learns to stand on his own feet and how to be more mature in life. This experience, of course, contains pragmatic wisdom. The confession of the “Jacob” element in the inquiry during the wrestle and the eagerness to be blessed might also be seen as a moment when Jacob wants to attain more in the existential struggle with himself.

The illumination is a state where “the mind becomes emptied of falsehoods and misconceptions, it can then be filled with or illuminated by truth which associates with freeing also, for the mind and the self must be freed from passions, ill will, and negative
attitudes such as jealousy and pride if one is to become kind, compassionate, and humble” (Bishop 1995: 17). In text A, this illumination might be seen when Wrekudara comes out of the womb and understands the teachings of the Dewa Ruci, coming to the point where “wus tan mengeng ing galih gumawang, datan pangling sarirane, panuksmaning sawujud, nanging lair sa-sab piningit, reh sa-reh kasatriyan, linakon winengku, pamurwaning jagad traya, kalairan batine nora kasilib, satu mungggwing rimbagan” (His heart is no longer in doubt, and he knows about his true self, one form, one soul (being integral in his body and soul) – but this should be hidden and kept in secret (not for exhibition); it should be implemented in his gentle and patient knight-ness. He knows everything about the universe, the birth of his inner life is clear, and everything unites integrally (Tanaya 1979: 24)). Meanwhile in text B, the illumination event happens when Jacob is blessed and transformed as Israel (with the touching of the thigh). The result, according to biblical scholars like Bona Marcel, is a triumph for Jacob, which can be described as “a triumph of the spirit over nature and innate temperament. It is the dawn of a new day, the beginning of a new life. Jacob is reborn at Penuel with a kind of spiritual regeneration. He has now become an authentic Israelite in whom there is no longer any guile” (1992: 211).

The union is an existential experience of the mystic where “the mind by the understanding, reason and spirit is led up by God alone” (Bishop 1995: 15) reaches “the union of the self with that Being or Principle that is beyond, or other than, or greater than oneself [. . .] one no longer feels torn between antinomies, contradictions, opposing aspirations, and conflicting ambitions. Doubts have been resolved. The external world no longer distracts one” (Bishop 1995:18, 19). In this stage, a deeper sense of integration, completeness, or wholeness is experienced as “the mystic has become an integrated personality. He or she has transcended the little self or put off the old self, as St. Paul said, to become a greater self” (Bishop 1995: 19). As stated before, there is no *unio mystica* in text B (as it is in text A) but there is an extensive personal communion with the Divine (in the form of the unnamed *ish*) through a physical struggle throughout the night, through the questions each asks, through the blessing and through a life-long mark of vulnerability in his lameness.

After undergoing the mystical journey, the state of newness as “Bima Suci” or “Israel” is where Wrekudara and Jacob experience the dispelling of the darkness of ignorance. It is the moment when their minds become “alight with the truth of reality” (Bishop 1995:17) and have “a contemplative consciousness of ultimate reality that is free of distortions of ordinary experience and the distractions of extra-ordinary experience [. . .] they are discontent with any lack of integration between awareness on the one hand, however true that awareness may be, and how life is lived on the other” (Canon 1996: 64).

### 4.4 Conclusion

In the application of cross-textual reading, we make several discoveries and offer ideas on the table of our hermeneutics discussion. The important thing offered here is the appearance of several (alternative) enrichments as they emerge within the mutual encounters of the texts via the effort of the reader. This is important since one of the
issues in reading the Bible is about domination. Pretension arises when not enough room is given for the other. As the postmodernists say, the texts are polysemic. The narratives and the language contain significant spectrums within which every interactive community may orient in a singular way, therefore bearing and bringing perspectives that are different from what other communities or persons may find in the same text.

In order to change toward recognition of the other as a legitimate reader, we need openness and awareness of our own blind spots; the text will always be more than us. Herewith, the other reader/interpreter(s) may offer findings in interpreting the text. We engage theirs in critical, dialogical and enriched encounters. The ultimate goal, then, is shared ownership as we permit the other to be an equal legitimate owner of the text. Furthermore, we then share the agency and consequences of reading the text. Herewith, the method of reading mystical texts (“Dewa Ruci” and “Jacob at the Jabbok”) cross-textually offers opportunities to expand the meanings of the text(s) and to strengthen the shared agencies contained within the Javanese-Christian religious resources, also promoting peace and reconciliation in its social context.

Finally, it is important to see that in the comparison and interrelation of the texts (A and B), we find that the mystical experiences in our stories are also built upon the interaction with the Divine, with human beings and with the universe. Jacob acknowledges the presence of the Divine in the form of humanity represented by the ish in Gen. 32 and Esau in Gen. 33, during the night until the sun rises, just as Wrekudara acknowledges the presence of the Divine in Dewa Ruci who afterward enables him to understand the reality of the self and the whole universe (in the idea of microcosmos-macrocosmos). The connection between the several basic elements of God, humans and the world (universe) has been considered by Knitter (2003: 127) when he defined Raimon Panikkar’s term of cosmotheandric as the interrelated realities of God, humans and the world in the mystical experience. In the dialogical-dialectical relations of mystical experiences, we grasp for the resonances of those experiences in which, in Panikkar’s own words, “God is neither the Other nor the Same but the One: the one in a cosmotheandric insight” (1999: 24).
CHAPTER 5

Conclusions and Recommendations

Introduction to the Chapter

In this final chapter we will attempt to provide answers to our research questions by harvesting insights from the previous chapters. As formulated in the Introduction, the two main questions of this study are: (a) Can a cross-textual reading of two important narratives about transformation (‘the mystical quest’) from two different religious traditions contribute to equipping Javanese Christians better for peacebuilding processes? and (b) To what extent can the conclusion of this investigation be formulated as a message for its intended audience to take a new position within the hermeneutical field in a responsible and adequate manner?

Responding to these leading questions, in the following sections of this final chapter we will (1) offer a reflective re-examination of the cross-textual reading as a continuation of what has been discussed in the previous chapters especially in discussing its validity and challenges within the discussion of contextual Bible reading, (2) reflect on the inner life as well as outer attitudes and changes which happen in both actors who experience the mystical journeys in both stories and then review the constitutive elements of the mystical experience. This section will be followed by (3) a discussion of the relation between mysticism and peacebuilding and an examination of to what extent the final conclusions of the cross-textual interpretation process of the two texts may connect to some central ideas about peace and reconciliation from the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition (to which I belong and which is usually considered one of the historic peace churches). Then, we will (4) come to the final conclusion, will offer several recommendations and suggest themes for further study.

5.1 Cross-textual Reading Reviewed

Our critical assessment of the chosen method will address two items. The first is a reflection on the validity of the use of this method, including whether this hermeneutical method is proper, workable, and legitimate in relation to the possibilities offered by the Asian context with its multiple religious sacred texts. The second is a reflection on the challenges that appear within this kind of biblical reading approach, challenges this method should face constructively, in the Asian context.

5.1.1 Validity of the Use of the Method

As I probed into the question of method, I found that via cross-textual reading Lee has offered a hermeneutical framework. This is important and interesting since he offered a theory and also a model for or a way of interpreting texts interactively. Nonetheless, regarding the practical details concerning the use of his method, we found that when we
want to take the perspective of reading given by the cross-textual approach, several other biblical reading strategies are still needed, depending on the genre of both the Asian and biblical texts. This kind of reading strategy method is also needed when we start practicing our cross-textual reading of both texts.

The detailed elaboration contributed by these reading methods may seem not too clear in Lee’s theoretical framework (Lee 2012). This may have been caused by the emphasis he places on the general hermeneutical framework, offering “con/text” approach as a third option to the previous options of “text-alone” and “text-context approach”, as mentioned in chapter 1. What we find, again, is that when we come to details, then the hermeneutical framework seems to require complementary technical tools. I think we should not bring the two texts directly into interaction at the outset. As I mentioned in chapter 1, what we need to do first is delve into each text as a literary work by its own. The reason for doing so is to find first the richness of meanings in each text by itself. This is important because afterward we can compare this first level of discovery (insights in each text) with a second level (insights that emerge after we have cross-textualized the two texts).

However, while proposing critical remarks concerning this method, I still find that Lee’s reading strategy of placing the Asian and biblical texts side by side, comparing the commonalities and differences, and then developing a cross-textual reading of the two texts by using the insights of text A to amplify and challenge text B and vice versa, appears to be a proper, important and beneficial hermeneutical tool, a “down to earth reading strategy” for Asians or Indonesians who want to read the Bible creatively. I believe, this reading method, as shown in my investigation in chapter 4, has enabled my research to offer new horizons and foster constructive, mutual conversations and transformations in the social lives of Javanese-Christians. What I have found after addressing several commonalities and differences in both stories, is that several points of intersection between the two selected texts appear to be able to create enrichments in each text. Text A is no longer text A, and text B is no longer text B. There are insights from each text that can be embraced as advanced reflections of the other text. These enrichments as suggested by this reading strategy enabled us to underline the ‘promise’ of this method. As we can see, the several new meanings and valuable discoveries that can be found in the interaction of the enriching differences in the two texts lead us to (a) the amplification of the complex role and function of the enemy; (b) the interactions of “lessons of wisdom” via teaching and wrestling; (c) understanding of what it means to attain divine grace in its relation with our strong wills and persistent struggles; (d) appreciation regarding both the clarity and mystery of the Divine partners who both conceal and reveal themselves at significant points in these stories; (e) the deeper wisdom that what seems to be weakness and vulnerability in Jacob and Wrekudara can be seen as strength and as the mark of one who has been deeply touched by the Divine and transformed in a mystical experience.

It is important to mention that this kind of research, which seeks to find hermeneutical responses to the situation of hybrid Javanese–Christians believers as well as cross-textual hermeneutical tools which interrelate both sacred texts within that intended context, do not want to hold as point of departure that the texts have a different status. The texts are considered equal in the sense that both are considered part of a religious legacy. Therefore cross-textual hermeneutics does not present any danger to the
corpus of Christian theology. The process of taking such religious evocative elements as symbols, stories, and metaphors (Vroom 2006: 88) and bringing them into an honest and mutual dialogue does not merely lead us to be able to compare, evaluate, understand and appreciate others but can also enrich our Christian transformative values in the human community. Through this challenging path, all discernment concerning the Bible as the Christian community’s sacred book would gain its significance as the abundant source for actualizing the contextual Christ-events as rooted in the metaphorical meanings of the Word of God (Merwe 1988: 291), *hic et nunc*, here and now. In addition, according to Heup Young Kim (2003: 146), “understanding the Gospel (read: the Bible in general) universally (the Word) presupposes first and foremost understanding it locally (the flesh)”. Vroom adds that all Christian believers have their legitimate socio-cultural lenses to read, reread and also to be interpreted by the Bible (Vroom 2003: 229). It seems that this method can function as a constructive contribution to stretch out the singular meaning of the biblical text and thus help us to discover all kinds of ‘biblical treasures’ (Thangaraj 2003: 122), not seen before the cross-textual reading. This is done via dialogue and openness toward many other perspectives and ways of believing (de Klerk 2004: 174, 175) since “there is no single context against which the Bible can be read” (Vroom 2003: 230). Any biblical contextual interpretation whether in the scholarly academic domain or the pragmatic domain of the church as a ‘hermeneutical community’ (Bouteneff and Heller 2001: 136) should include consideration of these inter- and intra-connected realities in order to develop its true significance.

5.1.2 Discussing the Challenges Cross-Textual Reading Offers

Regarding the process and results, some people may criticize this cross-textual reading approach by pointing out tensions within the discussion of interreligious dialogue. Among others, there are at least two main challenges that need to be addressed, namely: syncretism and domination. What follows is discussion of these challenges.

The first matter is (still) how to deal with syncretism. We should be aware that this classic issue arises in these kind of dialogues whenever other cultural religious traditions’ values are assumed as equal to the Christian-Biblical insights (as has been previously mentioned in chapter 1). The basic idea of this alleged tension is that syncretism, on the one hand, could result in contaminating, blurring, betraying or even erasing completely Christian-Biblical uniqueness as well as the “pure interpretation of the Biblical message” (Wessels 1989: 52). On the other hand we should also be aware that, in many cases, so called syncretism arises and develops harmlessly and positively in our intermingled worldviews. We should also notice that, in the matter of hybridity in socio-religious realities, if we do not admit and wrestle with syncretism critically as well as openly in its many dimensions and forms, it will be much more difficult to enter and work out dialogical encounters of religious traditions properly. In this case, we could be restrained, framed and trapped by our own pre-understanding since we tend to evaluate and judge other religious traditions as subordinate to our own religious beliefs in one way or another. Responding to this problem, as Christian Bible scholars and readers as well as the church, we should notice that there are at least two kinds of syncretism. The first type, we might say, is careless syncretism, which mixes the insights of religions
recklessly, while the other type is what I refer to as careful-constructive syncretism, which takes into consideration the proportional discernment of “means of knowledge.”

In my opinion, dialectical encounters with the other will not reduce religions into careless syncretism since these encounters also contain critical perspectives that allow the interlocutors to discern crucial elements of the experience, its implications, consistency and witness (Vroom 2006: 66) within the relations of the religions in the same category. According to Droogers who quotes Pannenberg, the presence of syncretism within Christianity might be evaluated in a positive light in that “it is the way in which the universal Christian message incarnates within other cultures. Christian faith may be enriched in contact with other cultures by the influence and the challenging questions which come from them” (1989: 13).

We come to the second challenge of cross-textual reading, which, according to me, is the alertness to prideful domination of one party at the expense of the other and which can lead to neglecting the reality of socio-cultural-religious hybridity. Wherever and whenever these hybrid realities are ignored, denied or even rejected, Christian insights and witnesses tend to be trapped and chained in their own egocentricty and chauvinism. We should be critically aware that by including the other religious traditions (within the Asian cultural hybridity) in a critical and open dialogue, Asian contextual biblical interpretation could empower its transformative and emancipative values in the real life of the wider society. The basic reason for this hermeneutic attitude is that the unique and helpful insights of Christianity will be sharpened and elaborated within the encounter with the other religious traditions which we welcome in humbleness. Through this attitude of humility (as the opposite of prideful domination) we might share references and categories of basic insights into worldviews as we have the opportunity to come to respectful conversations regarding our common humanity (Vroom 2006: 59).

This humble as well as critical hermeneutic attitude should be continuously maintained and trained in academic as well as in practical biblical reading. In doing so, we need to be alert so as to not to be trapped in our own hermeneutical prejudices. While explaining Gadamer’s famous theory, Lawrence Schmidt states that “all understanding begins from our prejudices. The throwness of our understanding implies that all our prejudices are inherited from our past in the process of acculturation” (2006: 101). What

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211 Vroom makes important remarks concerning the way to develop a possible dialogue with other worldviews and discuss “whether adherents of different religious traditions are able to give an account of their beliefs to one another, learn from one another and pose critical questions” (2006: 67). He reminds us to first examine the nature and internal connections of four criteria (experience, implication, consistency, and witness) which function as means of knowledge (2006: 71). Vroom’s further explorations show that “consistency (two assertions side by side without contradiction) and coherence (two assertions evidently connected)” (2006: 70), are important in doing such evaluation to the others although these four criteria “cannot be made fully because the divine, transcendent reality is beyond the cognitive powers of human beings” (Vroom 2006: 71). Therefore, “a right balance between the various means of knowledge and of a fair application of the criteria” should be maintained in order for us to develop a reasonable and responsible attitude toward religions (Vroom 2006: 71).

212 For instance, Kwasi Wiredu offers a critical remark when anthropologists develop such of misleading comparisons between African traditional thought and Western scientific thought. According to him, “African traditional thought should in the first place only be compared with Western folk thought. For this purpose, of course, Western anthropologists will first have to learn in detail about the folk thought of their own peoples. African folk thought may be compared with Western philosophy only in the same spirit in which Western folk thought be compared also with Western philosophy...” (1980: 48).
Schmidt means by ‘thrownness’ is that “one has always already understood in some manner, and hence that any act of understanding commences with the fore-structures of understanding and interpret these as something. Therefore the interpreter cannot escape the hermeneutic circle and attain direct knowledge” (Schmidt 2006: 99). It is clear that in understanding, we cannot run from the presence of this prejudice (understood in a neutral way). Our prejudice or pre-understanding is a kind of a lens in our minds that helps us to see things and interpret them. As far as we are aware of these lenses, we can keep our pre-understandings open and remain critically alert. The danger that lies in the inability to open our culturally bounded lenses could drive us to absolutize our pre-understandings. In this kind of epistemology, our closed pre-understanding could then fall into a prejudice which tends towards a closed one-sidedness. However, as long as we acknowledge and are aware of our own biases as a critical tool, then the pre-understanding can function as a constructive lens for us to delve into texts and then create responsible cross-textual interpretations. This kind of interpretation will lead us to mutual and fruitful understanding of the other’s cultural-religious traditions in a “reciprocal dialogue” (Vroom 2004: 52).

5.2 Reflecting on Elements and Results of the Mystical Quest in the Stories

Having finished our cross-textual reading of the two texts in the previous chapter, we have already examined the type and characteristics of the mystical experiences as reported in each text. From this examination we found that there are convergences as well as divergences. These discoveries are important in order for us to be aware of the possible interactions as well as mutual enrichments between the two different religious traditions on one hand and also assist us to not oversimplify various mystical experiences as somehow the same. In chapter 4, we have also examined to what extent the two stories may fit the threefold steps scheme of the mystical experience, namely as purification, illumination and union (Bishop 1995: 15; Johnston 2000: 142).

Therefore, as a complement to those previous examinations, the following section of this chapter suggests ways in which we may bring together elements of the mystical quest in the stories and examine them anew from the religious studies’ point of view as well as from the perspective of mystical study as offered by Fox (in chapter 1). We can then present important qualities from the results of the mystical experiences for the work of peacemaking. The aim of this section is to collect and then reflect on important elements of transformation in the life of one who experiences a mystical journey. In doing so, we will also re-emphasize the nature of the two stories as mystical narrative.

213 Schmidt refers to Heidegger’s ontological description of understanding as such: “Heidegger reveals understanding to be a fundamendal ontological structure of human being. This means that we are always understanding in one way or another. Understanding is thrown projection. As projection, understanding concerns the future possibilities of human being and culminates in self-understanding.” (Schmidt 2006: 99).

214 Schmidt (2006: 100) explains, “Neither understood the original meaning of prejudice, which Gadamer employs: a prejudice as a prejudgement, is neither positive nor negative until the final judgement is rendered. Since “prejudice” plays a central role in philosophical hermeneutics, the reader must bear in mind its intended neutral connotation.”

215 According to Vroom, “one-sidedness is not necessarily a sin, but sticking to one-sided and culturally bound beliefs that we do not really test again is” (2004: 51).
5.2.1 Reviewing Mystical Elements in the Stories

As we have found in chapter 4 there are both commonalities and differences between the mystical quests through which Wrekudara and Jacob have attained their transformation, either within their inner lives or in outer attitudes, since it seems that the two actors have “reached out and tasted what is ultimately real with their very being” (Canon 1996: 63).

In the section of Commonalities (chapter 4), I showed how several qualities such as directness, profoundness and intimacy in the encounter with (text B) and/or within (text A) the Divine are present in both texts. Regarding several specific terms which have been used to describe the mystical quest elements (as found in religious studies), we find that several profound ideas, as shown in both stories, are the elements of passivity, the noetic, positive sensations and resultant changes of attitude and behaviour (Bishop 1995; Ferguson 1976). Below we offer a short description of these elements:

a. Both Wrekudara and Jacob are aware that they have been “grasped and held by a superior power” as they have “a feeling of something given” (Bishop 1995: 14) in their transformation (passivity). Wrekudara becomes “Bima Suci”, while Jacob receives the new name Israel.

b. After their respective mystical quest, each actor gains “a tremendous sense of authority” (Bishop 1995: 14), which means that one has a solid self-assurance. This happens in the moment when Wrekudara is able to understand the reality of the self and the universe (text A), and when Jacob sees God face-to-face (text B). Both actors are shown to have already experienced a kind of noetic element.

c. The stories (text A and B) also tell that both actors seem to attain positive sensations of joy, bliss, love and peace and show resultant changes in attitude and behaviour in the event when Wrekudara is transformed from a rough, inexperienced and artless person into a gentle, wise and patient knight; and when the opportunistic Jacob, who once wanted to use his household as his shield, becomes an entirely different person as he courageously walks in front of his household to face the danger presented by Esau, who is his brother and his enemy as well.

Regarding other indications which are ineffability and transiency (Bishop 1995: 13, 14), we also found that:

d. The characteristic of ineffability (which means that a mystical quest is something beyond the human ability to adequately describe in words) is not explicitly expressed by the actors. However, in text A, the resonance of this ineffability can be implicitly discovered in the message -from Dewa Ruci to Wrekudara - of not telling about that specific experience he has gone through within the Dewa Ruci’s womb. As told in the last part of Dewa Ruci’s teaching, the mystical lessons of Dewa Ruci are meant to be comprehended deeply and not to be shown off. Meanwhile, in text B, Jacob expresses his experience in just one sentence: “I have seen God face to face and my life has been delivered.” According to some scholars, this statement (Gen. 32: 31) is a reflective answer and also recognition of his earlier prayer (Gen. 32: 12-13).
Jacob feels at ease. No other words come out from his mouth. It might be that the wrestle, the inquiry and the blessing he received appear to be more than words could ever tell.

e. Concerning the transiency element (which means that the mystical experience “does not last for long” (Bishop 1995: 13)), we should admit that it is difficult to show this characteristic in the two stories. Considering the length of the teaching within the Dewa Ruci’s womb in text A (see the Appendix), we may predict that the experience seems to happen over quite a long period. Likewise, regarding the direct encounter in text B between Jacob and the unnamed divine other *ish*, it is true that, on the one hand the narrator depicts the encounter in just one verse, but, on the other hand, we should also consider the information given by the narrator regarding the length of the encounter as happening throughout the night until dawn. From these data we may conclude that the mystical experiences in neither story happen in a relatively quick duration of time.

If we review the result of mystical experiences in both texts by using Fox’ categories (1983), we may find that there are connections between Fox’ “befriending” types and the “cosmotheandric idea” mentioned in the last part of chapter 4. According to Fox, mystical experiences not only deal with the model of *via negativa* (equal to the ineffability of the mystical experiences that happen to both actors), but also with models of *via affirmativa* or *via positiva* which represent the presence of a new power and wisdom (Fox 1983: 34). In both texts we may find that the two transformed actors have come into a creation-centered spiritual tradition or spirituality which emphasizes creativity, justice-making, and social transformation through the mystical experience. These qualities are explicitly mentioned especially in the last part of text A when Wrekudara is changed to “Bima Suci” as he understands deep and significant things from the Divine about himself and about this world, seen as macro- and microcosmic reality. Meanwhile, in text B, the appearance of these qualities can be seen in Jacob’s acknowledgement that he has seen God “*pānīm ʿēl-pānīm*” and afterward in the narrator’s comment about the “sun” which rises over him. It seems that both actors (Wrekudara and Jacob) have captured the “path of affirmation, thanksgiving and ecstasy” in which they can taste “the beauties and cosmic depths of creation” (Fox 1983: 34). Therefore, here we are led to grasp the presence of the cosmotheandric atmosphere which is connected to “the very power of birth” through which, according to Fox, creation is “renewed, seen anew, and righted from its state of sinful or unjust relationship” (1983: 247). This quality is the result of attaining existential transformation in the mystical journey.

5.2.2 The Transformed Actors

As we know, the transformation is not the final adventure for either actor. They are transformed in their encounters with the Divine and changed to new persons who gain new dignity, new knowledge and understanding, and a new inner world as well as a new attitude and behaviour. But again, after being transformed, they have to face their realities
of life. Therefore, we will examine what kind of effects appear in them after their transformation and which are related to the proper and adequate attitudes for meeting with others with whom our actors have relations of enmity. These points are mostly expanded from the amplified ideas presented in the “crossing” section of this chapter.

5.2.2.1 No Withdrawal

In text A and B we find that the mystical experiences in Wrekudara and Jacob have helped them to address and accept their enemies with openness as well as peaceful attitudes. Based on the information given in the story, we are informed that in text A, the transformed Wrekudara comes back to his family. It means he does not withdraw from his life in society. Being enlightened does not mean escape from that tension. The Pandawa still must face the Kurawa and the Great War (Bharatayudha) is still coming. In text B, Jacob has to meet Esau face to face soon after his transformation. He meets his brother in honor and peace (Gen. 33). It appears that both stories can contribute to the peace and reconciliation process through promoting the mystical-spiritual quest in which transformation can take place.

5.2.2.2 Tolerance to the Ambiguity of the Other

These efforts at interrelating the two texts have equipped us to see that, with open minds which evoke deep reflection, others may appear—in one way or another—as blessings in life. The “hostile” others, as represented by the figures of Laban and Druna, can, for instance, be seen to open ways to create maturity, to examine perseverance, and to bring growth. The same is true of the “peaceful” others as represented by the figures of Dewa Ruci and the ish. With this open perspective and attitude toward others, we are better able to understand that the “enemy,” as represented by the figures of Kurawa and Esau, are not supposed to be neglected or abandoned per se. Instead, the others might be addressed and even accepted with tolerance for their ambiguity since we believe that these others could also possibly be the ones who bless, teach, transform, and provide growth to us, as we may to them.

5.2.2.3 Meekness and Courage

The mystical experiences have given to Wrekudara and Jacob mild but strong personalities. This authoritative meekness (in the sense of having solid self-assurance) appears in how Wrekudara is portrayed in text A as a gentle and patient knight, and Jacob in text B is transformed into a new dignified person who bears a name which contains a divine quality. These depictions might become one of the many reasons in which one can reap the rewards of a very existential transformation which happens to one’s very life. It seems that the result of this inner transformation can also be grasped, in one way or another, in the exterior appearance of the transformed person. In the stories of Wrekudara and Jacob, the quality of meekness is not identical to cowardice. It is often the opposite.
Since it is in sincere meekness that is the result of the mystical quest that one builds his courage and dignity and also spiritual qualities, one can make a path to peacebuilding in this quality of meekness which contains a mild but strong nature and attitude. One reason for this is that the quality of sincerity does not contain any deceit, threats or possibility of betrayal. Instead it contains the possibility of facing the other/s with whom one is in tension in a calm and peaceful as well as fair and constructive manner.

5.2.2.4 Vulnerable and yet Coherent

Just as text B has offered to text A the significant of being vulnerable, it now offers us an important insight for broadening its significance. We read in text B that Jacob is transformed and is blessed and renewed and, moreover, that the mystical quest also brings about such vulnerability. Jacob is changed inside and outside. He is now Israel, but he is now a limping Israel. In that condition, he has to face his greatest fear and anxiety: his brother Esau, a strong and skilful hunter. There is no way for Jacob to run from his brother because he is limping and therefore shows physical weakness, while Esau is physically perfect. It would be very easy for Esau to capture him, but Jacob does not avoid his brother. He even walks toward Esau, leading his entire household to meet his enemy-brother face-to-face. It seems that his nocturnal experience when he saw God face-to-face now accompanies him to also meet his brother in dignity, even when he is now very much vulnerable.

We might say that being vulnerable is important in the process of peacebuilding. It is not because we want to plea for the other’s compassion, but because we can offer our existence fairly and openly in the face of the other. This attitude to present our existence leads to vulnerability because we permit the others to deliver an impact on us. However, it is within this point that vulnerability plays its important role. As the limping Jacob accepts his lameness as part of his new existence, he bears the awareness that being fragile is a part of God’s design for him. This vulnerability is the mark of God’s intervention into his life. And it is by this mark, by his vulnerable condition, that Jacob lets Esau intervene into his life openly. Thus, vulnerability creates space for the other to contribute something in us, as we are also able to do for the other. It is in our vulnerability that each of us stands in front of the other and takes on the risk of what might happen in this interaction. This open attitude and perspective contains greater opportunity for peace compared to the opposite attitude of building threats and demonstrating power.

5.3 Relationship between the Mystical Quest and Peacebuilding

After reflecting on the insights concerning the ideal attitudes that appear in the transformed actors as the results of their mystical experience and which enable them to constructively address the others with whom they are in a tense relationship, this section will discuss connections between the mystical religious experience and the calling to peacebuilding. The discussion will include several ideas put forth by Sölle as a theologian, mystic, and activist in peace and ecological movements, and highlights
resonances with the discoveries that emerged from the cross-textual reading of the two texts.

5.3.1 Mysticism and Resistance

In her 2001 book, Sölle puts forth the phrase of “mysticism and resistance”. The idea of relating mysticism and resistance (mostly to the negative powers in the socio-politico-cultural domain) is an attempt to hold together what Roger Schütz of the community of Taizé termed “lutte et contemplation” or struggle and contemplation (Sölle 2001: 2). According to Sölle, religion and ethics should not be separated from one another. Precisely because God is love, “the separation of religion and ethics is dangerous as well as detrimental to both sides” (Sölle 2001: 5). The reason she offers is that it will be a self-destruction “for religion and ethics because it empties religion, reducing its basis for experiencing the world. It turns ethics into arbitrary arrangements of individual tribes, and hordes” (Sölle 2001: 5).

As she emphasizes that the “history of mysticism is a history of the love for God” which embraces “the political and praxis-oriented actualization that is directed toward world” (Sölle 2001: 2), Sölle criticizes mysticism in favour of “perennial philosophy” that “looks at God and soul alone, without any social analysis” since what interested her is “how mystics in different ages related to their society and how they behaved in it” (Sölle 2001: 3). It is obvious that she deliberately points out that her mystical inquiry is focused on social reality and by doing so she is deliberately criticizing many mystics who “have turned their back on the world” as they “politically are totally resigned” and therefore “swallowed up by their own narcissism” (Sölle 2001: 5).

On the one hand, Sölle makes a distinction between a mystical internal and political external, but on the other hand it should be clear that these two are interconnected to each other, as she said “everything that is within needs to be externalized so it doesn’t spoil, like the manna in the desert that was hoarded for future consumption. There is no experience of God that can be so privatized that it becomes and remains the property of one owner, the privilege of a person of leisure, the esoteric domain of the initiated” (Sölle 2001: 3). The same notion of engagement between the mystics and the real world in the spirit of emancipation and solidarity has been underlined by Johnston when he reflects:

The authentic mystic can never flee from the world. He or she must resonate with the suffering and the agony that is the common legacy of humankind. Even the solitary mystic who retires to mountain or desert must remain in contact with the world, loving the world, suffering with the world, confronting the evil of the world. And active mystics who live in the hurly-burly enter into the same inner silence as those who live in the desert. They experience the inner fire and the inner light; they experience the living flame of love that makes their being to be being-in-love. Now the inner fire drives them no longer to the wilderness (though they may spend some time in the wilderness) but to the crowded marketplace and to the inner city. The living flame of love drives them to walk in peace marches, to demonstrate in the streets, to denounce oppressive structures, to confront princes and kings, to go to prison and to die. Like the mystic in the desert they pass through agonizing dark nights and come to profound enlightenment (2000: 268).
As we find in text A and B, neither Wrekudara nor Jacob seem to have privatized their mystical experiences. The results of their mystical quest seem clearly for the benefit of their communities in fostering the need to address the other constructively as well as to address deeply the person one is in its deepest self since “the inner peace, as freedom from greed and the limitation of the self, translate itself into the practice of peace” (Sölle 2001: 263). Strengthening the message which connects “mysticism and resistance,” neither Wrekudara nor Jacob renounce their respective social responsibilities and challenges. We should remember that Wrekudara (in text A) is told to come out of the womb of Dewa Ruci and then returns back to his family who is already in tension in the midst of a future battle with the Kurawa. Likewise, Jacob (in text B), also comes back to his family and leads them to face directly the challenges that exist. Therefore, this section begins by offering frames through which both mystical stories can be read to understand the need to build peace with the other in the world and not escape from the world.

5.3.2 Holding Together Teaching, Action, and Inner Life

Regarded as “the heart of every religion that infinitely exceeds anything a human being, or community, can feel and express” (Knitter 2013: 125), mystical experience is rightly assumed to be very important in offering constructive contributions to people of faith, especially concerning the call to build peace and reconciliation where tension characterizes reality. Both stories of having a spiritual experience in the midst of brotherly tension and their crossings have offered significant insights that enabled us to answer the question to what extent mystical experience can contribute to peacebuilding. These important elements can be found as the teaching of wisdom, and recommended attitudes and spiritual exercises.

We find that the stories underline such important concepts as the significance of perseverance which leads to the growth, solitude which empowers the blossoming of maturity, courage and vulnerability which lead to a peaceful yet authoritative (in the sense of having a solid self-assurance), mild but strong attitude towards oneself and others, and being present in and not withdrawing from the community in order to foster peaceful and constructive interactions with the other. Therefore, it seems that the work of peacebuilding is always contingent on continuing mutual interactions among three elements, namely right concepts/teachings/wisdom or orthodoxy, right manner and action in the embodiment of the concepts or orthopraxy, and right inner or spiritual life as the source of everything, which I call orthopneumaty. I believe these are the three frames we need to take into account and hold together when we connect the work of peace with mysticism, as suggested by the two mystical stories.

5.4. Insights from the Anabaptist-Mennonite Legacy

As mentioned in the Introduction, this last chapter will also investigate to what extent the final conclusions of the reading of the two texts may connect to some central ideas about peace and reconciliation from the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition (to which I belong).
The Anabaptist-Mennonite churches are commonly included in the category of pacifists. This term pacifist does not come from the word passive, which means not active, but is instead derived from the Latin word, *pax-pacis* meaning peace. One intention of Mennonite theology is promoting the religious culture of peace in life and in deed. We will now examine in brief to what extent our discoveries can be connected to several of the main ideas of the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition including interactions between mysticism and resistance and/or non-resistance. We should notice that the idea of ‘resistance and non-resistance’ used here, has, on the one hand, a connection with what is meant by Sölle when she uses the term ‘resistance’, but that, on the other hand, it is not identical to the Anabaptist-Mennonite idea. I will examine the notion of resistance and non-resistance in Anabaptist-Mennonite theology in writings of Mennonite theologians such as Dorothy Weaver, after first briefly looking at several concepts below.

According to Arnold Snyder, a prominent Anabaptist-Mennonite scholar who has explored the history and theology of the Anabaptist-Mennonite movement, there are several basic Anabaptist theological issues held in common, including teachings on antisacramentalism, anticlericalism, the authority of Scripture, salvation by Grace through Faith, the activity of the Holy Spirit, Spirit and Letter, Soteriology, Discipleship, *Gelassenheit* (serenity), Doctrines of Sin and Free Will, the Last Days, Ecclesiology, Water Baptism, the Ban, the Supper, Mutual Aid, Suffering and Martyrdom (1995: 83, 98). Central in these theological ideas are distinctive Anabaptist emphases on non-violent resistance underlying as building blocks of a culture of peace (Yoder and Swartley (eds) 2001; Kreider, Kreider and Widjaja 2005). Examining Anabaptist-Mennonite theological confessions, several decades ago Harold Bender proposed three values that he considered central to the Anabaptist-Mennonite theology. In his classic and very significant 1944 article, Bender named these three fundamental values as the Anabaptist Vision. The first is the discipleship as the essence of Christianity, the second is the church created by the central principle of newness of life which is in turn based upon true conversion and commitment to holy living and discipleship, while the third is “the ethic of love and non-resistance as applied to all human relationships” (Bender 1944: 20, 26, 31).

Considering the opinions offered by several Anabaptist-Mennonite scholars mentioned above, I find that two key emphases of Anabaptist-Mennonite theology that can be connected to the results of my readings of the two mystical stories are, first, the value of discipleship and, second, the peace theology that is lived out in orthodoxy, orthopraxy and orthopneumaty. Below we will examine these two values and their interactions in the two stories.

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217 Regarding the church as a religious community created from the newness of life in conversion and commitment to holy living and discipleship (Bender’s second value), I see that, on one hand, this idea of the church as a religious community which emphasizes qualitative changes in its members cannot be connected directly to the transformative changes that are pivotal in the two stories. The stories of Dewa Ruci and Jacob at the Jabbok do not explicitly depict newness of life in the community --either in Jacob’s
5.4.1. Value of Discipleship

The Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition grounds its teachings and values in reflection on the life, actions and teachings of Jesus as told in the Bible. Repeatedly, Snyder (1995: 88, 89, 91, 92 et al) declares that the basic idea of discipleship in Anabaptist theology is laid in the “necessary connection between the inner life of spirit (faith, rebirth, regeneration) and the outer life of discipleship (obedience).” This connection, is also prominent, for instance, in the teaching of Hans Denck, one of the early Anabaptist leaders (died 1527) who endorsed enthusiastically “the inner reality of God’s love living in one’s heart is the absolutely primary command” (Snyder 1995: 307). Well-known for his spiritual-mystical perspective, Denck stressed the significance of obedience for every Christian believer. One of his famous sayings was “No one truly knows Christ unless he follows him daily in life.” In this statement, which is famous in Anabaptist-Mennonite circles, Denck wanted to underline that the reality of being the obedient disciple of Jesus Christ is at the heart of Anabaptist-Mennonite theological values.

Therein, the emphasis is laid on the perseveranace to live as commanded by the Lord to be “focusing continually on the living character of God’s presence with the human beings” (Snyder 1995: 308). Snyder puts forth the following conclusion concerning the discipleship vocation in Denck’s theology, “Hans Denck and the spiritualists assumed a dualistic universe in which the ‘outer,’ physical world was of no essential use in the saving process; it had a secondary significance only. The only reality to be heeded was ‘spiritual’; the physical reality could, at best, provide the ‘proving ground’ for inner regeneration (discipleship) and provide reminders and pointers to that ‘more real’ spiritual world” (1995: 308).

Thus, it is strongly stated that according to Denck, the life of a disciple is not just a matter of having faith in Christ, but rather involves “living a sanctified life, in the power of Christ’s spirit” (Snyder 1995: 70). Receiving grace is important but is not enough; each believer must live that grace in faith, meaning to live actively and persistently according to the will of the Lord. We may also notice that the significance of family or among the Pandawa—as religious values as deliberate as in the Anabaptist-Mennonite theology of church, which is grounded in both the newness quality of individuals and of the interactions of those who share their lives within the religious community. On the other hand, however, we should also consider that the important emphasis of both stories on the newness experienced as change (i.e. conversion and holy life) within the individual lives of the central actors which may also be understood as producing fruits in or impact on the communities which these persons belong to and interact with and which can also be understood in a religious sense, i.e. through the concept of ecclesiola (family churches).

One of the key text in this tradition is the ‘Sermon on the Mount’ found in Matthew 5-7. There are some principles of the Mennonite values regarding several things such as the baptism of believers, the authority of the Bible, the significance of the discipleship, and the value of non-violence.

Snyder (1995: 87, 88) quotes the 1526 catechism teaching of Balthasar Hubmaier, one of the first Anabaptist leaders, who declared that “faith is the realization of the unspeakable mercy of God, his gracious favor and goodwill, which he bears to us through his most beloved Son Jesus Christ”. Hubmaier also emphasized that there are two kinds of faith, namely a dead one and a living one. A dead faith is “one that is unfruitful and without the works of love” and a living faith is “one that produces the fruits of the Spirit and works through love.” The ideas of ‘rebirth’ and ‘regeneration’ are meant to address new qualities which can be understood to have “emerged as the result of the action of the Holy Spirit” (Snyder 1995: 45).

obedience and persistence and of a new life as a faithful disciple as the preconditions as well as the fruits of receiving grace from the Divine are also important elements in the mystical journey of Wrekudara to attain the Living Water and also for Jacob in the long process of his transformation into Israel. Wrekudara and Jacob are invited to live differently after their mystical experiences since one’s daily, profane or physical existence should connect to and be based on one’s spiritual life. Related to this it is thus important to consider Snyder’s reflection that “this ‘inner/outer’ connection, basing discipleship on a ‘living faith,’ was also constitutive of the Anabaptist theological approach” (1995: 89).

5.4.2. Value of Non-Violence

One problem that recurs in this theology is the relationship between the ideas of non-resistance on the one hand and the non-violent resistance on the other hand. The important question is whether the non-resistance contradicts to non-violent resistance or whether there are convergences between these two ideas. In her examination of the New Testament texts presented at the Mennonite World Conference Assembly in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, in July 2003, Dorothy J. Weaver argues that the two strategies “do not in fact contradict each other but rather create a profound and paradoxical tension within which both Jesus and his disciples are called to live out their lives and their mission” (2003: 27). Weaver mentions that the idea of resistance or confrontation is found in the call to (1) “resist the seductive temptations of Satan” and also (2) “not to resist the one who is evil”. It is in the second category that we may find the difference in emphases between Weaver and Sölle when both of them use the term “resistance”.

In Weaver’s ‘resistance/non resistance’ pairing we find the “call to radical perseverance which challenges Jesus and his disciples to respond peaceably and without retaliation in the face of persecution and suffering inflicted on them by earthly ‘powers’ who oppose them and their mission to proclaim the reign of God. And it is only as Jesus and his disciples live deeply and persistently into both halves of this paradoxical tension that the New Testament task of ‘confronting the power’ is brought to its completion” (2003: 27).

Herewith, the value of resisting the evil and being committed to non-violence in front of the other (here meaning both the enemy and the one who is evil) has a strong connection to the value of perseverance which has its roots in the spiritual grounding. The vocation of perseverance which connects to peaceable understandings and attitudes toward others (even hostile ones) seems to be in accord with the deeds of the mystics which evolved from deep awareness arising from the encounter with the other.

This value corresponds with the message of the two mystical stories as is told explicitly in the following event of text B (Gen. 33) as well as implied in the presumably peaceful motives of the author of text A. The principle of obedience as one regenerated by the Spirit of God or the Divine to peace must be made real in the life of the community. Thus, by using the perspective of Anabaptist-Mennonite insights, we come to underline that the work of peacebuilding as the fruit and service of a person or community obedient to God and to others, as experienced by both Wrekudara and Jacob in their narrative contexts, can be seen as a significant and beneficial deed that belongs to
a “pneumatological strain” (Snyder, 1995: 89) in the sense that the newly transformed existence and obedient actions of both actors are driven by the active work of the Divine Spirit.

5.5 Conclusion

In this study, we found that for appropriately doing contextual hermeneutics in the context of Asia, it is necessary to continuously stimulate and invite Asians to develop skills and methods to read the Christian Scripture with an open mind and in interconnectedness to the Asian contexts (both social-political and the multi-cultural and religious), both in the academic and ecclesial community.

We also found some significant key elements for peacebuilding and transformation in the midst of tensive relationships that mark this context. These are part of these stories of personal transformation through mystical experience which also may have an impact on society. Acknowledging limitations, weaknesses and past ‘grey even black histories’ in interactions with the other and with our selves, as seen in both Jacob and Wrekudara is important. If every party involved in a conflict is willing to start with this acknowledgment, the process of peace-building and transformation has already begun.

We may also underline that an existential encounter with/within the divine and with humanity is needed to address the tensions between self and the other. By this I mean to underline the significance of promoting serious action to realize the inward journey of each believer (i.e. developing Pannikar’s idea of ‘Intra Religious Dialogue’) as a tool for addressing the otherness of the other as something beneficial for creating mutual encounters among human beings. The spiritual reflection during the inward journey is this: “The other, whether with good or bad intentions, could be someone who can bring me to maturation, and even bless me”. We learned that it is important to ponder on the effort to grasp the spiritual attainments provided by the other, not only focus on evil or goodness, but striving for non-duality, and attempt to ponder in what ways the other can be portrayed as someone who can bless us and teaches how to meet the Divine in spiritual-existential encounters. We found also that emphasizing the spiritual journey includes the obligation to return to the community with a new perspective, rather than withdrawing from the community. Because conflict is happening within and between human communities, coming back to the human society is required of everyone who attains a spiritual experience with the Ultimate Reality.

Above all, in situations of religious or political conflict, suffering continues until the perpetrator and the victim undergo a profound process of change and transformation in which the truth is proclaimed so that the perpetrator repents and the victim forgives. The ultimate result is shared agency for peace and justice. Herein lies the motivation for our ongoing daily actions as well as our continuing mystical-spiritual journey.

5.6 Recommendations and Further Study

Having examined the use, validity, and contributions of my chosen method and then looking to what extent the messages of the two mystical stories can contribute to ideas of
peacebuilding in social context, I will now focus on common readers of the Bible and offer several recommendations for developing contextual biblical reading within ecclesial and multi-religious communities (i.e., the Christians and Kejawen).

5.6.1 The Need to Develop Transformative Communitarian Hermeneutics

There are at least two kinds of transformative communitarian hermeneutics we need to develop: (a) in the community of Christian readers, and (b) in the interaction between the Christians and the other religious tradition adherents.

a. In the community of Christian readers

The development of what might be called communitarian hermeneutics (in the Christian communities) owes much to the work of Gerald West and Musa Dube (1996) who have tried to open the way for creating this kind of reading process. For them, the parties involved in communitarian reading (in the African context) consist of both socially engaged biblical scholars and ordinary readers. Dube explains that by the ‘ordinary readers’ she means the “Two-Thirds World” readers who include “those who read from different cultural perspectives, those whose reading techniques are unrecognizable to the Western trained reader, and those who stand outside the hall of mirrors for whatever reasons, but whose standards are still defined and seen through the structures that subordinate and marginalize differences” (West and Dube 1996: 12). To examine what happens and what should happen when two groups read the Bible together is what the project of “Reading With” (1996) or “Reading Other-Wise” (West 2007) is about. The aim of this kind of approach which wants “to read with ordinary readers” (see my scheme 1) is to investigate “the interconnections of our immediate and global power relations and how they inform, or should inform, our biblical practice” (West and Dube 1996: 13). According to them, this approach may challenge “scholars to become even more socially engaged, more ethically committed by situating themselves within their immediate and global contexts” (West and Dube 1996: 15). In this concern, we find the significance of the “interface” between critical and ordinary readings of the Bible.

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221 After West and Dube examined both the Western biblical scholastic tradition as well as the non-Western ones, they stated that on the one hand we should acknowledge that the standard of critical biblical readings of the West seems very strong. However, on the other hand, we must also admit that “the cry against biblical textual violence, its suppression of diversity – be it gender, race, class, ethnicity, sexual and cultural orientations- and its alignment with global structures of dominance must finally be addressed by those concerned with reading for differences, for liberation, and for both immediate and global social justice” (West and Dube 1996: 15).
The two groups mentioned in Dube and West’s project are socially engaged biblical scholars and ordinary readers. Whereas the socially engaged exegete (in the Dube and West project) is mainly just one person involved in communal reading, the group is really a group. In this case, therefore, it seems that there are not exactly two groups that read. The real ‘reading with’ experience where one group reads the Bible and is linked with another inter-culturally, may be found in the project of intercultural reading of the Bible as developed by Hans de Wit et.al as presented in the book *Through the Eyes of Another* (2004). This intercultural reading seeks to analyze what will happen “if ordinary Bible readers from radically different situations and contexts read the same Bible story and enter into a conversation with each other about this reading” (De Wit 2004: 41).

In his pivotal article, De Wit proposes three phases when one group of ordinary readers reads and exchanges its reading with a partner to whom the group is linked. In the first phase, which could consist of a number of meetings, one group reads the selected text. A report is made in every meeting. The reports consist of both the interpretation of the text and information about the group i.e their socio-cultural contexts, personal information, and their church background. After the reading report is interchanged with the partner group, the second phase starts. In this phase each group reads the text once again through the eyes of the partner group. Here the group searches and discusses several items — such as the similarities, the differences, the role of the culture which is operative in the partner’s reading, the new discoveries found by the group from the partner’s reading — and reflects on the changes of perspective which happen in the group. Afterwards, the group sends a response to its partner. Then comes the third phase, which is responding to the responses of the partner group, looking back over the entire process and deciding whether they wish to have further contact (2004: 5). The central goal of this project is to create a transformative and liberating process intended “to design a

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222 This reading provides the core moment of ecumenical learning by following these steps: “People (1) get to know each other’s context, (2) similarities are discovered, (3) prejudices are adjusted, (4) from longing to unity, and (5) the situation of asymmetry is critically involved in the discussion. (6) One tries to discover a structure and origin in the differences, (7) puts them into perspective and searches for what can bind them. (8) One looks critically at one’s own context. (9) Mechanisms of exclusion from the partner group are criticized (De Wit 2004: 33).
method for Bible reading that enables one to see differences: which readings are truly life-giving, and which ones lead to exclusion and sorrow” (De Wit 2004: 49).

In his effort of developing a reciprocal interpretation process of biblical reading which could lead to transformative reading, John Prior has suggested several important phases (2015: 75-98). Similar to De Wit’s design, Prior offers three phases in his concern for developing a transformative process through cross-cultural reading between two groups (each may consist of both academics as well as ordinary participants; see my scheme 2) who read the same biblical text: (1) the naive first reading, (2) mutual listening and questioning, and (3) extending horizons. Laying out the best conditions for the first phase of “in-group conversation” Prior underlines the significance of maintaining an atmosphere of trust and openness among the members as well as appreciating an authentic “naive” readings by individuals and groups in order to develop readiness to permit “the other” to question each reading and freely acknowledge that “no one cultural interpretation is final” because “we can and need to learn from people embedded in other cultural contexts” (p. 78). In the second phase in which each group exchanges its reading with its partner, the participants are facilitated to acknowledge the impact of ethnocentrism that might blind them to their home culture and then to be willing to alter the cultural lenses they usually see through. Here, the participants are fostered to re-read the texts in the light of the other’s report, to take up aspects of the text they had not highlighted before, and to place themselves in the other’s position and then to re-read their own report anew (p.83). The important point for this second phase is that, on the one hand, the participants are led to experience transformative inter-cultural readings as well as to build a meaningful inter-cultural relationship (p. 81). Prior underlines that the participants may then enter to the next phase in which this inter-cultural reading can “bring to the surface in each group the core themes and values that are central to each group’s life and reading of the Bible” (p. 91). As a result, the participants may be facilitated to clarify their “understanding of God and the role of religion which plays in their lives” (p. 92).
Through these phases, Prior believes that we will be able to “discover a shared identity, history and purpose within and beyond our cultural plurality,” if we maintain the “central kerygma, with its concomitant core values expressed in diverse cultural contexts” in honest, open inter-cultural conversation which wants to “listening carefully to the whole symphony of voices” (p. 93). Finally, Prior affirms that the readers of this reading will experience the transformation as they recognize “that we need each other, the academic and the ‘ordinary’ reader, when we experience how inter-cultural conversations shock and liberate, disturb and challenge, prod and sensitive, refute and confirm, question and transform, interfere and create a new. The more we enter and find ourselves at home in both cultures-our own and that of our partner- the more our understanding and commitment are open to transformation” (p. 94, 95).

Another work of “reading with”, which has been done in the circle of WCC in 2001, is the project of reading the Bible in the interactions among different confessional, regional and cultural Christian contexts in order to “examine the ways in which their different hermeneutical approaches have effectively caused or perpetuated their division” (Bouteneff & Heller 2001: vii). This World Council of Churches project is entitled “Interpreting Together.” The book examines the relationship between biblical hermeneutics and ecumenism and argues that the church is a hermeneutical community which, according to Houtepen (2001: 5), must relate “the ecclesiological issues of unity and reconciliation, mission and dialogue.”

It is also possible to articulate an Asian model different in intention from these three models: (1) “Reading With-Interface” of West and Dube, (2) “Intercultural-Empirical Hermeneutics” of Hans de Wit and others, and (3) “Interpreting Together” of the WCC. In the context of West’s article, the first party are scholarly readers who are trained in the academic community and the second consists of ordinary readers who are trained to read the Bible in their first (family) or secondary (church and school) communities (West 2007: 2). The audience of readers for the WCC project are the Christians from many denominations while Intercultural-Empirical Hermeneutics is directed at ordinary Christian readers in different cultures and contexts who read together the same biblical text.

b. In the interaction between Christians and readers from other religious traditions.

Meanwhile, in our Asian context the audiences of what is called communitarian hermeneutics are both Christians and adherents of other religious traditions with whom we share the resonant socio-cultural-religious hybridity. Both the Bible and other sacred texts might be read together, openly compared and interrelated. In doing so, the spirit of discovery should be stronger than the spirit of competition. In order to make such a “fair” and fruitful interaction, the premises of this cross-textual reading (i.e. method, motive and constructive hermeneutical attitude) should be honoured and followed. The common ground for this hybrid audience is that they share the same socio-politico-cultural-religious concerns, such as: the problem of human rights, the question about theodicy in the disaster contexts, commitment to peace in the realm of conflict, etc. In this situation, it is easier for academic communities (from whatever religious background, and as the tertiary community (West 2007: 2)) to appear as the hermeneutical pioneer due to their expertise, experience, distance and more critical approach to (both) texts.
As discussed in chapter 1, herewith we may affirm Pieris’s general principle as he has, for more than two decades, developed the work of “cross-reading of scriptures” as follows: “only a scrupulous regard for the other’s understanding of his or her religious texts as well as a strict adherence to the distinctive paradigm within which each religion defines its identity and creates its own idiom, can guarantee the moral rectitude and the intellectual honesty required in inter-religious dialogue” (2003: 234). This “cross-reading of scriptures,” as mentioned in chapter 1, can be done via: (a) an inclusive approach of interpretative accommodation in the studies of scriptures;  

223  (b) a liturgical appropriation of texts when people develop “a concerted search for scriptural inspiration from one another’s religions” in their liturgies (Pieris 2003: 242); (c) a symbiotic224 encounter of texts, which according to Pieris is “the procedure most conducive to reciprocal spiritual nourishment among the members of multi-religious communities” (2003: 244). In my opinion, it would be meaningful for Asians to sit together and discuss how far the insights of different religious texts could help them in discerning the commonalities, differences and resonances of their respective sacred texts. I am convinced that in a respectful, open and creative discussion between Christians on the one hand and Kejawen believers on the other hand sharing and assessing the interconnectedness of their scriptures will create very promising ways to expand the scope and quality of Asian Biblical Hermeneutics.

In doing so, it is important to remind Kwok’s remarks that “the most difficult task for multifaith hermeneutics is how to reinterpret the Bible after seeing it through the lens of other faith traditions. It requires intellectual humility and radical openness to divine disclosure in other faiths and cultures [. . .] At the same time, it must be recognized that the insights and wisdom found in the Bible are but one religious resource of humankind, and they must be shared, tested, and corrected in the wider community of the human family” (1995: 93). Thus, doing this kind of contextual Bible reading contains a kind of a difficult task, a task that consists in remaining open to the invitation to read our Scriptures in a contextual, reciprocal manner. This kind of invitation should also be understood as a call to a vocational as well as existential dedication to our world.

5.6.2 Towards Inter-religious Reading for Peacebuilding in the Community

In addition to existing models for transformative communitarian reading (i.e. in the design of De Wit and Prior), we may also develop ways to read the sacred texts inter-religiously (i.e. in the work of Pieris and Lee) by using, deliberately, the lens of a peacebuilding perspective. Regarding the use of a specific lens to read the Bible in a communitarian reading, we may learn from the ‘readers’225 in Solentiname who are

223 As shown in the reflection of Christian-Buddhist dialogue by Bhikku Buddadhasa Indapanño who demonstrates that Buddhists can “accommodate the basic teachings of Christianity within their own religious framework so as to legitimize such doctrines as teachings acceptable to Buddhists, inviting the Christians to acknowledge that there can also be a Buddhist way of reading the Christian Scriptures apart from the orthodox Christian exegesis.” (Pieris 2003: 241).

224 What Pieris means by “symbiosis” is “a living encounter of the texts within the encounter of religions, resulting in a further articulation of implicit meanings which these texts would not reveal unless they are mutually exposed to each other’s illuminating disclosures” (2003: 244).

225 Several of the peasant members (campesinos) in the Solentiname community are illiterate. However, they too are counted as readers in this reader-response approach. These ordinary readers discuss the text
inspired by the Holy Spirit and read the Bible from the perspective of liberation (see my scheme 3) in the context of the social struggle of the poor and oppressed people in Nicaragua (Cardenal 1976: x, 27).

In our sacred texts there are many accounts of life both in their humane-profane and spiritual dimensions. Therein we can discover and use specific concerns like the call for peacebuilding or the spirituality of peace as a hermeneutical lens to examine the texts in a way that may contain an important message for peacebuilding processes. This kind of reading can start in the Christian community, but can also be extended to the ordinary readers of other religious traditions as mentioned in the previous section. However, this kind of reading should not end in the act of reading itself. It should bear fruit for the community through actions, mediations, and conversations, and more importantly in the lives of the readers as the reading of the mystical experience can liberate readers to be transformed and to return to their own context as transformed and enlightened peacemakers. One social benefit of cross-textual interpretation lies in its potential for empowering the Christian community to be open and to work for peace by nurturing interfaith dialogue programs. These programs can be promoted together with interfaith communities as well as with centres of peace and reconciliation in the society.

Through our analysis of the story of “Dewa Ruci” and “Jacob at the Jabbok”, we discovered how fruitful it can be to develop a future step for further hermeneutical discussion. I am thinking of the importance as well as significance of contributions for us to creatively explore more options to develop the objective of transformative reading of the Scripture, readings not monopolized by the objective of information only (Schneiders 1991: 13, 14). This could be explored by developing hermeneutical skills to link triangularly the study of biblical interpretation, spirituality, and sources in religious tradition for peacemaking.

and explore the polyvalent potential meanings contained in the text which evolve from ongoing conversations. This reader-response approach seems to fit Heidegger’s idea, as quoted by E.V. McKnight, that “the understanding of a text does not simply involve the discovery of an inner meaning contained in the text but also that to understand a text is to unfold the possibility of being that is indicated by that text” (1999: 371)
5.6.3 The Need to Continuously Nurture the Study of Mystical Journeys

From the analysis of each text and of the encounter of the two stories, we learn that mystical experiences involve diverse language based on different types and characteristics (as mentioned in our introductory chapter and chapter 4). However, we may also continue to matrix our steps and deepen the discussion of mystical experiences and their ‘language’ in the spirit of liberation, from both the domination of secularism and the instrumentalization of women (Pieris 1996: 61). In his book, Pieris, for instance, has offered critical reflections as theoretical perspectives or frameworks on ‘Cosmic-Human-Metacosmic Continuum’ and “Male-Female Dialectics of Continuum” (Pieris 1996: 50-62). In the first framework, the discussion focuses on the meaning and significance of humankind (men and women) as the “conscious link between the cosmic and metacosmic,” while the second framework deals with the dialectical tendencies between agape as a female-gendered impulse and gnosis as a male-gendered impulse (Pieris 1996: 53).

The discussion of mystical experience should also and always consider the contribution of the cosmotheandric framework (see chapter 4) in order for us, as humans, to acknowledge our interconnectedness with the Divine and with our cosmos. Even though there are limitations due to the nature of being human and the ineffability of the mystical experience, the dialectical and continuing future study of mystical experiences which elaborates the socio-ecological-humane concerns seems to contribute in one way or another in developing a more humble, deeper and more proper understanding and assessment of the reality of our world and beyond.

5.6.4 Further Study

As we return to the Asian Contextual Hermeneutics, we may find that much value is located in the dialectical growth that occurs between the understanding of the readers and the meaning of the texts. Here it is important to recall Lee’s statement: ‘On the one hand, the reading process is shaped and governed by readers’ social location and the power dynamics within which they are situated. Readers are in fact neither passive nor autonomous. When taking an active role in reading the biblical text, they not only bring a perspective to the interpretation of that text, they also critique the text from the perspective of their own cultural or social text. On the other hand, their life will have to be examined, critiqued, and claimed by the text too. Interpretations, however, must also be tested by interpreters in dialogue” (Lee 2012: 36).

This means that there should be more inter- or cross-scriptural/sacred texts encounters done within and by the communities in Asian –in my specific context: the interaction of Christians and Kejawen believers (including both Christian and non-Christian Kejawen adherents). Herein, the text from the Asian traditional-cultural-religious context and the Bible may be read and reread together by both the traditional-cultural-religious group and the Christians (see my scheme 4). In this cross-scriptural/sacred texts dialogue, the reading partners can offer their readings of both texts to one another in order to find new insights that may deepen and enrich their
understandings of their own text as well as of the other text without ignoring the significance of each text for the community to which it “belongs.”

In developing the contextual cross-scriptural/sacred text readings between two religious groups, we may adapt the code systems offered in the reciprocal readings previously mentioned \(i.e.\) in the designs of De Wit and Prior while at the same time developing the interrelationships of the texts by looking at similarities, differences and enrichments, as proposed by Lee. I believe that in order to develop this dialectical growth in contextual Bible reading, we should maintain this kind of interaction (of the texts and readers) so that we can create ways to guide readers to new discoveries in their sacred texts and strengthen the praxis of transformation of the heart and of the socio-cultural hybrid realities the readers live in.
SUMMARY

This dissertation underlines the importance of reflecting (and then developing) practices of cross-textual reading of sacred texts in situations in which a variety of socio-religious hybridities is present. To demonstrate how this can be done, this dissertation presents a reading of two texts, one from the cultural and religious tradition of Java referred to as Kejawen that was formed through layers of indigenous, Hindu, Buddhist, and Islamic influence and one from the Hebrew scripture as read by and for the Christian minority in Indonesia. The aim is not to biblical hermeneutics for its own sake but to create mutual interactions that lead to more understanding, openness, and peace within the hybrid socio-cultural-religious realities of Asian religious life. The purpose of cross-textual reading (as promoted by Asian theologians, especially Archie Lee) is to juxtapose two different religious texts and read each text in the light of the other in order to find mutual interactions, while honouring the differences, and discovering enrichments found in the interaction of the two texts as each illuminates the other.

It is certain that maintaining a proper biblical hermeneutics amidst hybrid socio-cultural-religious contexts like in Asia in general and Indonesia in particular can start from constructive encounters between sacred texts in order to strengthen the peacemaking potential for individuals and society as a whole. Doing so is an important calling as well as an existential challenge for biblical scholars. In contexts where varieties of social, cultural, and religious life are present together, religious plurality is expressed in the richness of religious insights. Such contexts may generate tension between religious and cultural groups on one hand, but, on the other, also make possible creative and mutual interactions. What is needed to respond to such complex situations requires an open, creative, as well as perceptive attitude in order to maintain a living existential dialogue among the groups who have a shared agency and who also must live their differences with dignity so that there can be peace. As in other parts of Asia, the life of the people of Indonesia has been, is, and will continue to be nurtured and shaped by the world’s formal religions as well as local and indigenous religious traditions and their sacred texts and stories. In this context, it is important to appreciate the value of a critical but positive hermeneutical attitude towards what is often called syncretism as the dynamics of fragile identities in the encounter of religious traditions.

The main objective of this study is to investigate how, as a method of reading texts in the context of social and cultural hybridity, Asian contextual hermeneutics through cross-textual readings may contribute to peace and reconciliation processes by promoting awareness of the mystical-spiritual quest through which individual transformation can take place. Through the inward journey, struggle and enmity become understanding, acceptance and openness to the other. Peacebuilding cannot be accomplished without the transformation of persons, including readers and believers, and hermeneutical standpoints, including perceptions of the sacred text of the other. In contexts of lived, socio-cultural- and religious hybridity, where people have read, listened to and/or are influenced by more than just one text, it is important to examine the differences between sacred texts in order to have beneficial insights that can lead to religious enrichments and more peaceful lives together.
This dissertation makes use of the method used in the field of multi-faith hermeneutics and want to investigate possibilities for peacebuilding that emerge from a cross-textual reading of two religious texts: “Dewa Ruci,” one of the prominent Javanese mystical texts often performed as wayang or shadow puppet theatre, and “Jacob at the Jabbok,” an episode in the Old Testament/ Hebrew Bible. These texts were chosen because they are important in the respective contexts in which they function and because that they carry shared motifs and a parallel narrative structure of which one very important element is what I will call the mystical quest.

In my reading, the “Dewa Ruci” story of the hero Wrekudara’s search for the “Living Water” teaches its readers how to undergo a mystical quest by wrestling intensively with challenges, difficulties, and mistakes, on one hand, and with guidance, comfort, and grace, on the other. This is done in a way that enables the seeker to experience the most significant discovery in life: purification of the self and union with the Divine. The Living Water (or Tirta Pawitra) the hero eventually finds in mystic union with the divine is not an ordinary water but an existential experience and, at the same time, a thorough understanding that transforms the seeker to be a new person after the long journey. Wrekudara is transformed from an ordinary and rough person into one who has been enlightened and purified in his unio mystica with the god Dewa Ruci. The impact of the presence of this enlightened person should influence society positively, but keep the mystical experience within his/her own heart and not show it off. This story is a Javanese story, composed by Javanese pujangga for a specific aim, and cannot be found in the corpus of the original Indian Mahabharata text. Therefore, I argue that there is a significant peacebuilding message contained in this story about a human who is invited to kill his own evil passions and, hence, purify himself in union with the Almighty. Finally, although the story of Mahabharata also tells of how brotherly tension between the Pandawa and the Kurawa leads them to the battle, I argue that the story of “Dewa Ruci” can be interpreted as a story that does not necessarily lead to conflict.

The story of “Jacob at the Jabbok” found in Genesis 32: 22-32 depicts a transformational journey from conflict to encounter and reconciliation. Jacob is transformed in order to face the other –his twin brother Esau, whom he has deprived of his birthright and who seeks revenge against him-- in openness, humility, and courage through the experience of wrestling and questioning in a profound, direct, intimate, and existentially transformative encounter with the ish, a mysterious and presumably divine stranger. In my reading, the story shows that the mystical quest is never egocentric, never solely between one person and God. It is not about the unmediated unio mystica of human and God, but rather as shown by the presence of an ish in between, God is experienced through the other. Indeed, God is to be found nowhere else than in the other. On one hand, it can be argued that the encounter with the Divine can function as a meaningful element that must precede the encounter with other persons with whom there is tension. On the other hand, the effort to find a way to make peace and address the other, the human enemy, with an open and mindful heart can also lead to feeling the Divine Presence.

When the two texts interact, we find similarities and differences. These findings are counted as important discoveries. This is when one text offers its perspective to its partner-text. If we analyze the found differences between the two stories mentioned, we may find several levels when we compare and interrelate them. There are elements in
which the differences are obvious but do not lead to any confrontation of ideas. Regarding the mystical experiences, these obvious differences stem from different mystical languages and also create mutual resonances, both dialogically and dialectically. I suppose that the adequate attitude regarding this kind of difference is honouring the dignity of their specific categories in the mystical worldview. There are also what I call enriching differences which may be sensed through interconnected perspectives that look for the mutual interaction between the two stories via the efforts of the reader, which can be taken as tools for a dialogical and critical reading. At the same time, an attentive and careful reading calls for a certain practical response to the question of how the mystical encounter with a divine other requires a new relationship with the human other, in the context of the enmity that serves as the background of each story.

As a conclusion, we find that the two stories underline such important concepts as: (a) the significance of perseverance which leads to the growth; (b) the presence of solitude empowers the blossoming of maturity, courage, and vulnerability which then leads to a peaceful yet authoritative (in the sense of having a solid sense of self-assurance) reality; (c) the presence of mild but strong attitude towards oneself and others; and (d) the quality of being present in and not withdrawing from the community. These findings are necessary to foster peaceful and constructive interactions with others. Therefore, I argue that the work of peacebuilding is always contingent on continuing mutual interactions among three elements of: right concepts, teachings, and wisdom (orthodoxy); right manner and action (orthopraxy); and right inner or spiritual life as the source of everything (orthopneumaty). These are the three frames we need to take into account and hold together when we connect the work of peace with mysticism, as suggested by the two mystical stories. It is also found that the ideas of discipleship and peace in both stories resonate with certain basic values of the Anabaptist-Mennonite community of faith, to which the author belongs.

Finally, this dissertation offers the promise of future encounters through communitarian readings of sacred texts from Asian cultural and religious contexts and the Bible in which these world-shaping texts may be read and reread together by both groups bound by tradition and culture (in the case of this dissertation, adherents of Kejawaran beliefs, some of whom may also be Christians) and Christians in the hybrid contexts of Java and of Asia more generally. In this kind of cross-scriptural/sacred texts dialogue, the reading partners can offer their readings of both texts to one another in order to find new insights that may deepen and enrich their understandings of their own text as well as of the text of the other without ignoring the significance of each text for its own the community.
SAMENVATTING

Dit proefschrift onderstreept het belang van het reflecteren op (en vervolgens verder ontwikkelen van) het cross-tekstueel lezen van heilige teksten in situaties waarin een verscheidenheid van sociaal-religieuze hibriditeiten (socio-culturele-religieuze vermengingen) aanwezig is. Om te laten zien hoe dit edaaan kan worden, presenteert dit proefschrift een ezing van twee teksten, één afkomstig van de culturele en religieuze traditie van Java, die Kejawen genoemd wordt, die gevormd is door indigene, Hindoeïstische, Boeddhistische en Islamitische invloedssferen en één afkomstig van de Hebreeuwse Heilige Schrift zoals die gelezenwordt door en voor de Christelijke minderheid in Indonesië. Het doel is niet het ontwikkelen van een bijbelse hermeneutiek voor het interne belang van de hermeneutiek, maar het scheppen van wederkerige interacties, die leiden tot een beter begrip, openheid en vrede binnen de hybride cultureel-religieuze realiteiten van het Aziatische godsdiensstig leven. Het doel van cross-tekstueel lezen (zoals het gepromoot wordt door Aziatische theologen, in het bijzonder Archie Lee) is om twee verschillende religieuze teksten naast elkaar te plaatsen en elke tekst te lezen in het licht van de andere om zo wederkerige interacties te vinden, wel met respect voor de verschillen, en verrijkingen te ontdekken op basis van de interactie van de twee teksten waarbij elke tekst de andere verlicht.

Het is zeker dat het in stand houden van een geschikte bijbelse hermeneutiek temidden van hibride socio-religieuze contexten zoals algemeen in Azië en in het bijzonder in Indonesië, kan beginnen met constructieve ontmoetingen tussen heilige teksten om het potentiële om vrede te sluiten, zowel voor individuën als voor de samenleving als geheel, te versterken. Het is een belangrijke roeping en tevens een existentiële uitdaging voor bijbelgeleerden om dat te doen. In contexten, waarin variëteiten van sociaal, cultureel en godsdiennig leven samen aanwezig zijn, komt godsdienstige pluraliteit tot uitdrukking in de rijkdom van godsdiensstige inzichten. Dergelijke contexten kunnen enerzijds spanning opleveren tussen godsdiensstige en culturele groepen, anderzijds is er de mogelijkheid tot creatieve en wederzijdse interacties. Om dergelijke complexe situaties het hoofd te bieden, is een open, creatieve en ook ontvankelijke houding nodig om een levende, existentiële dialoog in stand te kunnen houden tussen de groepen die een gemeenschappelijke vertegenwoordiging hebben en die ook in waardigheid moeten leven met hun verschillen, zodat er vrede kan heersen. Evenals in andere delen van Azië was, is en zal het leven van het volk in Indonesië gevoed en gevormd worden door de formele wereldgodsdiensten samen met de lokale en indigene religieuze tradities met hun heilige schriften en verhalen. In deze context is het belangrijk om waardering op te brengen voor een kritische maar ook positieve hermeneutische houding ten opzichte van datgene wat vaak syncretisme genoemd wordt als de dynamiek van kwetsbare identiteiten in de ontmoeting van godsdiensstige tradities.

Het hoofddoel van deze studie is onderzoeken hoe, als een methode van het lezen van teksten in de context van sociale en culturele hibriditeit, een Aziatische contextuele hermeneutiek via cross-tekstueel lezingen een bijdrage kan leveren aan processen van vrede en reconciliatie door het bevorderen van het bewustzijn van de mystiek-spirituele zoektocht waardoor individuele veranderingsprocessen kunnen plaatsvinden. Via deze innerlijke reis worden strijd en vijandschap veranderd in begrip, aanvaarding en
openheid voor de ander. Vredesopbouw kan niet bewerkstelligd worden zonder het veranderingsproces van personen, met inbegrip van lezers en gelovigen, en hermeneutische standpunten, met inbegrip van de waarneming van de heilige tekst van de ander. In contexten van geleefd, socio-cultureel- en godsdienstige hybriditeit, waarin mensen gelezen hebben, geluisterd hebben naar en/of beïnvloed zijn door meer dan één enkele tekst, is het belangrijk om de verschillen tussen heilige teksten te onderzoeken om heilzame inzichten te verwerven die kunnen leiden tot godsdienstige verrijkingen en een meer vreedzaam samenleven.

Dit proefschrift maakt gebruik van de methode die gebruikt wordt op het gebied van multi-religieuze hermeneutiek en wil de mogelijkheden onderzoeken voor vredesopbouw die voortkomen uit een cross-tekstueel lezen van twee religieuze teksten: “Dewa Ruci”, één van de prominente Javaanse mystieke teksten die vaak opgevoerd wordt als wayang oftewel schaduw poppen theater, en “Jakob bij de Jabbok”, een episode in de Hebreeuwse Bijbel. Deze teksten werden gekozen omdat ze belangrijk zijn in de respectievelijke contexten waarin zij functioneren en omdat zij gedeelde motieven bezitten en tevens een parallele narratieve structuur hebben waarvan een erg belangrijk element is, dat wat ik zal benoemen als de mystieke zoektocht.

In mijn lezing leert het “Dewa Ruci” verhaal van de zoektocht van de held Wrekudara naar het “Levend Water” zijn lezers hoe een mystieke zoektocht door te maken via intensief worstelen met uitdagingen, moeilijkheden en fouten aan de ene kant, en met begeleiding, troost en genade aan de andere kant. Dit is zo gedaan, dat het de zoeker in staat stelt om de belangrijkste ontdekking in het leven te ervaren: zuivering van het zelf en eenheid met het Goddelijke. Het Levende Water (oftewel Tirta Pawitra) dat de held uiteindelijk vindt in de mystieke vereniging met het goddelijke, is geen gewoon water maar een existentiële ervaring en, tegelijkertijd, een volmaakt begrijpen dat de zoeker in een nieuwe persoon verandert na de lange reis. Wrekudara is veranderd van een gewone en ruwe persoon in een persoon die verlicht en gezuiverd is in zijn unio mystica met de god Dewa Ruci. De invloed van de aanwezigheid van deze verlichte persoon zou de samenleving positief moeten beïnvloeden, maar tegelijkertijd moet men deze mystieke ervaring in zijn/haar eigen hart bewaren en niet aan de buitenwereld vertonen. Dit verhaal is een Javaans verhaal, gecomponeerd door een Javaanse pujangga voor een speciaal doel en kan niet gevonden worden in het corpus van de originele Indiase Mahabharata tekst. Daarom argumenteer ik dat dit verhaal, over een menselijke persoon die uitgenodigd wordt om zijn eigen slechte hartstochten uit te roeien en vervolgens zichzelf te reinigen in eenheid met de Almachtige, een specifieke boodschap voor vredesopbouw bevat. Tenslotte, hoewel het verhaal van de Mahabharata ook vertelt hoe de broederlijke spanningen tussen de Pandawa en de Kurawa hen uiteindelijk tot een veldslag leidt, argumenteer ik dat het verhaal van “Dewa Ruci” geïnterpreteerd kan worden als een verhaal dat niet noodzakelijkerwijs tot een conflict leidt.

Het verhaal van “Jakob bij de Jabbok”, gebaseerd op Genesis 32:22-32, schildert een transformerende reis van conflict naar ontmoeting en verzoening. Jakob wordt veranderd om de ander –zijn tweelingbroer Esau, die hij beroofd heeft van zijn eerstgeboorterecht en die daarvoor wraak wil nemen op hem- moedig tegemoet te treden in openheid, nederigheid, op basis van zijn ervaring van zijn worsteling en zijn vertwijfeling in een diepgaande, directe, intieme en existentiële transformatieve ontmoeting met de ish, een mysterieuze en vermoedelijk goddelijke vreemdeling. In mijn
lezing laat het verhaal zien dat de mystieke zoektocht nooit egocentrisch is, nooit enkel tussen één persoon en God. Het gaat niet over de onbemiddelde *unio mystica* van mens en God, maar eerder zoals aangetoond wordt door de aanwezigheid van een *ish* als bemiddelaar, dat God wordt ervaren via de ander. Inderdaad God kan nergens anders gevonden worden dan in de ander. Aan de ene kant kan beredeneerd worden dat de ontmoeting met het Goddelijke kan functioneren als een betekenisvol element dat vooraf moet gaan aan de ontmoeting met andere personen met wie men op gespannen voet staat. Aan de andere kant kan de poging om een weg te vinden om vrede te sluiten en zich tot de ander, de menselijke vijand, te richten met een open en behoedzaam hart ook leiden tot het voelen van de Goddelijke Aanwezigheid.

Als de twee teksten op elkaar inwerken komen we overeenkomsten en verschillen tegen. Deze resultaten worden beschouwd als belangrijke ontdekkingen. Dit gebeurt wanneer één tekst zijn perspectief aanbiedt aan zijn partnertekst. Als we de verschillen die we gevonden hebben tussen de twee genoemde verhalen analyseren, kunnen we verschillende elementen ontdekken als we ze vergelijken en met elkaar in verband brengen. Er zijn elementen waarin de verschillen overduidelijk zijn, maar die niet leiden tot ook maar één confrontatie van ideeën. Met betrekking tot de mystieke ervaringen, deze overduidelijke verschillen vinden hun oorsprong in verschillende mystieke talen en scheppen ook wederzijdse weerklanken, zowel dialogisch als dialectisch. Ik veronderstel dat de juiste houding, met betrekking tot dit soort verschil, het honoreren van de waardigheid van hun specifieke categorieën in hun mystieke wereldbeschouwing is. Er zijn ook, wat ik verrijkkende verschillen noem, waarvan men zich bewust kan worden via onderling verbonden perspectieven die zoeken naar de wederzijdse interactie tussen de twee verhalen via de inspanningen van de lezer, die genomen kunnen worden als werktuigen voor een dialogale en kritische lezing.

We kwamen tot de conclusie dat de twee verhalen belangrijke concepten onderstrepen zoals: (a) het belang van volharding, (b) de eenzaamheid, (c) een mild maar sterke houding voor zichzelf en de anderen, en (d) de aanwezigheid in de gemeenschap. Deze resultaten zijn noodzakelijk om vreedzame en constructieve interacties met anderen aan te moedigen. Daarom beweer ik dat het werk van vredesopbouw altijd afhankelijk is van voortdurende wederkerige interacties tussen drie elementen: juiste concepten, leer en wijsheid (*orthodoxy*); juiste manieren van doen en handelen (*orthopraxy*); en een juist innerlijk of spiritueel leven als de bron van alles (*orthopneumaty*). Dit zijn de drie frames, waar we rekening mee moeten houden en die we bij elkaar moeten houden om het werk van vrede te verbinden met mysticisme, zoals gesuggereerd wordt door de twee mystieke verhalen. Er kan ook geconcludeerd worden dat de ideeën van het leerling zijn en vrede in beide verhalen weerklank vinden in bepaalde basiswaarden van de Doopsgezinde Geloofsgemeenschap waartoe de auteur behoort.

Tot slot, dit proefschrift wil een belofte zijn voor toekomstige ontmoetingen via het gezamenlijk lezen van heilige teksten van Aziaanse culturele en godsdienstige contexten en de Bijbel, waarbij deze wereld-scheppende teksten gezamenlijk gelezen en herlezen kunnen worden door beide groepen, die verbonden zijn door traditie en culuur
(in het geval van dit proefschrift, aanhangers van Kejawen geloofsovertuigingen, waarvan
enkelen ook Christenen kunnen zijn) en Christenen in de hibride context van Java en
meer in het algemeen van Azië. In dit soort van cross-schriftuurlijke dialoog van heilige
teksten, kunnen de lezende partners hun interpretatie van beide teksten aan elkaar
aanbieden om tot nieuwe inzichten te komen, die het begrijpen van hun eigen tekst zowel
als de tekst van de ander kunnen verrijken zonder het belang van ieder tekst voor de eigen
gemeenschap te negeren.
RINGKASAN

Dissertasi ini menggarisbawahi pentingnya merefleksikan (dan kemudian mengembangkan) pembacaan cross-textual (lintas teks) atas teks-teks sakral dalam konteks sosio-religius yang bersifat hibrid. Untuk menunjukkan hal termaksud, dissertasi ini mencoba mengetengahkan bagaimana melakukan pembacaan atas interaksi dua teks: yang satu berasal dari tradisi kultral-religius Jawa yang disebut dengan *Kejawen* dengan lapisan-lapisan pengaruh tradisi lokal, Hindu, Budha dan Islam; dan teks yang lainnya adalah teks dari Alkitab Ibrani sebagaimana dibaca dan diperuntukkan bagi komunitas Kristen yang minoritas di Indonesia. Maksud dari upaya ini tidaklah ditujukan bagi hermeneutik alkitab pada dirinya melainkan untuk menciptakan interaksi timbal balik yang akan menuju pada ke pemahaman, keterbukaan dan perdamaian di dalam konteks realitas kehidupan keberagamaan Asia yang bersifat hibrid secara sosial, kultural dan religius. Tujuan dari cross-textual reading/pembacaan lintas tekstual (sebagaimana diajukan oleh para teolog Asia, terutama Archie Lee) adalah untuk menyandingkan kedua teks religius yang berbeda dalam rangka membaca setiap teks dari perspektif teks lainnya untuk menemukan interaksi timbal balik, sembari menghargai perbedaan dan menemukan pemerkayaan dari interaksi kedua teks tersebut, yakni ketika teks yang satu mencerahi teks yang lain.


Tujuan utama dissertasi ini adalah untuk menelaah bagaimana, sebagai suatu metode pembacaan teks, hermeneutik kontekstual Asia melalui apa yang disebut cross-textual reading (pembacaan lintas tekstual), dapat berkontribusi bagi proses perdamaian dan rekonsiliasi yang transformasi dalam diri individu. Melalui suatu ziarah batin,
pergumulan dan permusuhan berubah menjadi pemahaman, penerimaan dan keterbukaan terhadap “yang lain” (*the other*). Jelas bahwa upaya perdamaian tidaklah dapat dituntaskan tanpa transformasi dalam diri orang, dalam diri pembaca teks sebagai orang orang beriman, serta juga dalam sikap hermeneutis (termasuk di dalamnya adalah persepsi mengenai keberadaan teks-teks sakral dari pihak lain). Di dalam konteks di mana ada hibriditas dalam realitas sosial-kultural-religius, di mana orang membaca, mendengar atau dipengaruhi oleh keberadaan lebih dari satu teks sakral, maka adalah penting untuk memeriksa perbedaan-perbedaan yang ada dalam teks-teks itu dalam rangka mendapatkan tilikan yang berguna dan yang dapat menuntun pada pemerkayaan religius, serta mengarahkan kita pada kehidupan bersama yang lebih damai.


Kisah “Yakub di Yabok” yang terdapat dalam Kejadian 32: 22-32 menggambarkan tentang perziarah pandemkin transformatif dari konflik ke perjumpaan dan rekontiliasi. Yakub diterapkan dalam rangka menemui “yang lain” (the other) yakni Esau, saudara kembarnya, yang hak kesulungannya pernah diambilnya dan yang ingin melakukan pembalasan denda kepada— dalam keterbukaan, kerendahan hati, dan keberanian setelah ia menampuh pengalaman bergulat dan ditanyai dalam suatu perjumpaan transformatif yang bersifat eksistensial, mendalam, langsung dan intim dengan sesorang (ish) yakni seorang asing yang misterius dan agaknya mengandung keillahian. Dalam pembacaan saya, cerita ini menunjukkan bahwa petualangan mistik tidak pernah bersifat egosentris, tidak pernah hanya merupakan petualangan satu orang belaka dengan Allah. Dalam cerita ini, pengalaman mistik Yakub bukan suatu pengalaman unio mystica tanpa perantaraan, melainkan sebagaimana ditunjukkan oleh kehadiran sesorang (ish) sebagai pengantar, Allah itu dialami melalui “yang lain” (the other). Demikianlah Allah tak ditemukan kecuali dalam keberadaan diri dari “yang lain.”

Di satu pihak, dapatlah dikemukakan bahwa perjumpaan dengan Yang Illahi bisa berfungsi sebagai suatu unsur penting yang mesti mendahului perjumpaan dengan orang-orang lain yang mengannya kita merasakan suatu ketegangan. Namun di lain pihak, upaya untuk meretas jalan bagi terciptanya perdamaian dan menjumpai “yang lain” (musuh kita) dengan hati yang terbuka dan berkesadaran penuh, dapat pula menghantar kita merasakan kehadiran Yang Illahi.


Saya menyarankan agar terhadap perbedaan semacam ini, kita perlu mengetengahkan sikap yang menghargai kewibawaan dari setiap kategori khusus dalam pengalaman mistis itu. Ada juga jenis perbedaan yang saya sebut sebagai perbedaan-perbedaan yang memeriksa, yakni perbedaan yang didapati ketika kita menginteraksikan secara yang mutual kedua cerita yang berbeda ini secara dialogis dan sekalian kritis: teks yang satu memberikan tantangan pada teks yang lain dan dengan demikian memekarkan teks yang lain itu. Pada saat yang sama, pembacaan yang seksama dan penuh perhatian akan mengunggah hadirnya suatu respon praktis tertentu untuk memberi jawab bagaimana semestinya perjumpaan mistis dengan Yang Illahi (sebagai “yang lain”) dapat menghadirkan sebuah relasi baru dengan sesama manusia (juga sebagai “yang lain”) yang berada dalam konteks permusuhan. Inilah yang menurut saya menjadi latar belakang dari kedua cerita terpilih dalam dissertasi ini.

Sebagai kesimpulan, kita mendapati bahwa kedua cerita ini menggarisbawahi pentingnya beberapa konsep seperti: (a) signifikansi dari keteguhan yang membawa kepada pertumbuhan, (b) kesendirian itu memberdayakan kemurnya kematangan, keberanian, dan kerentanan yang kemudian dapat mengarah pada munculnya realitas yang damai namun sekalian otoritatif (dalam artian bahwa seseorang mengalami
keteguhan yang sedemikian mantap); (c) hadirnya sikap kuat yang lembut terhadap diri sendiri dan orang lain; (c) bahwa seseorang tetap hadir dalam komunitasnya dan tidak menyingkirkan diri dari komunitas itu. Penemuan penemuan ini meningkatkan interaksi yang konstruktif dan bernilai damai dengan pihak lain. Oleh karenanya, saya berpendapat bahwa karya perdamaian selalu bergantung pada interaksi yang timbal balik dan berkelanjutan dari tiga unsur berikut: konsep/ide, ajaran, dan kebijaksanaan yang benar (orthodoxy); tindakan dan sikap yang benar (orthopraxy); dan kehidupan batin atau spiritualitas yang benar sebagai sumber dari segala sesuatu (orthopneumaty). Inilah ketiga kerangka dasar yang patut kita pertimbangkan dan pegang bersama jika kita hendak mengaitkan karya perdamaian dengan mistisisme, sebagaimana diasumsikan oleh kedua cerita terpilih. Dalam kajian dissertasi ini penulis juga menemukan bahwa gagasan-gagasan tentang kemuridan dan perdamaian yang terkandung di dalam kedua cerita dapat beresonansi dengan nilai-nilai dasar tertentu dari komunitas iman Anabaptis-Mennonite, yang adalah komunitas penulis.

Pada akhirnya, dissertasi ini menawarkan janji untuk, di masa mendatang, memperjumpakan teks-teks sakral dari konteks budaya serta religiusitas Asia dengan Alkitab dalam dan melalui suatu pembacaan yang komunitarian. Pembacaan komunitarian ini dilakukan oleh komunitas yang dibentuk oleh kedua teks, dan yang sekaligus mau membaca dan membaca ulang bersama kedua teks ini, karena kedua kelompok (komunitas) juga diikat oleh tradisi dan budaya yang sama (dalam kaitan dengan dissertasi ini, tentu yang dimaksudkan adalah komunitas Kejawen yang beberapa anggotanya adalah orang beragama Kristen dan komunitas Kristen dalam konteks hibriditas Jawa secara khusus dan konteks Asia secara umum). Dalam dialog lintas teks suci (yang komunitarian) semacam ini, suatu kelompok pembaca dapat menawarkan pembacaan mereka kepada kelompok mitranya agar ditemukan tilikan-tilikan baru yang tentunya dapat mendalamkan dan memperkaya pemahaman mereka atas teks milik mereka sendiri maupun teks milik “komunitas yang lain,” tanpa kemudian mengabaikan makna masing-masing teks bagi komunitasnya sendiri-sendiri.
APPENDIX

Text of “Dewa Ruci,” also named as “Bima Suci”

Kidung basa Wardawa, kaimpun sarta kataliti dening
R. TANAYA
PN BALAI PUSTAKA
Jakarta 1979

(Tanaya 1979: vii)

PAMBUKA

Serat Bima Suci Kidung basa Mardawa, ingkang kapacak ing ngriki punika, babonipun ingkang asli sakawit gubahanipun Kyai Ngabehi Yasadipura I, Pujangga Karaton Surakarta.

Titi-masa Bebukaning Pamungun tinengeran Sakakala: niring sikara wiku tunggal (1720), alamipun Sri Susuhunan Pakubuwana IV.

Titi-masa Tamating panedhak ingkang sapisan tinengeran Sakakala: mulukiing her pangandikane Sang Aji (1740), taksih alamipun Sri Susuhunan Pakubuwana IV.

Titi-masa Bebukaning panedhak nyagotus damugi Tamating panedhak ingkang kaping kalih tinengeran Sakakala: rasa pandhita sabda Ji (1776), alamipun Sri Susuhunan Pakubuwana VII.

Inggang kasebut ing nginggil punika wau sadaya, taksih seratan carik sastra Jawi dhateng sastra Latin, kalayan panalitinipun R. Tanaya ing Surakarta.

Titi-masa pambangunipun tinengeran Sakakala: kalepasaning buddhi nembus panunggal (1910).

R. TANAYA

Babon asli sakawit gubahanipun
Kyai Ngabehi Yasadipura I
Pujangga Karaton Surakarta

(Tanaya 1979:1)

BIMA SUCI
Kidung basa Mardawa

Bebukaning panedhak ingkang kaping kalih

DHANDHANGGULA Memanising amuryani warti, Dite Manis tanggal Kalih-dasa, wulan Ramelan taun Be, marengi Adi windu, waku Wukir Sengkan Srigati, kazungan-dalem serat, Bima Sucinipun, awiting paneratira, Sinangkalan: rasa pandhita sabda Ji (1776), nedhak sungging kewala.

Bebukaning Pamungun

DHANDANGGULA Srangkaraning amuryani warti, Rabi’u’lakhir tanggal ping Sanga, Respati Wage wayahe, pukul sanga anuju, wuku Bala Kapating akhir, nawi windu Kunthara, taun Belumaku, sangkala; Nir-ing sikara, wiku tunggal (1720) carita di Bima Suci, winangun lawan jarwa.

Bebukaning gubahan ingkang asli sakawit ingkang ugi dados bebukaning cariyos.

DHANDANGGULA Duk Wrekudara puruhita ring, Dhang Hyang Druna kinen angupaya, Toya ingkang nucekake, maring sariripun, Wrekudara mantuk wewarti, marang nagri Ngamarta, pangghid kadang sepuh, sira Prabu Yudhistira, kang para ri sadaya samya marengi, munggwing ngarsaning raka.

Arya Sena matur ing raka Ji, lamun arsa kesah mamrih Toya, dening guru pituduhe, Sri Darmaputra ngungun, amiarsa aturing ari, cinipta pratieng baya, Narendra mangun kung, dyan satriya Dananjaya, matur nembah, ing raka Sri Narapati, “Punika tan sakeca.

(Tanaya 1979: 2)


Ngener dhateng nagari Ngastina

Tan winarna kang kari prihatin, kawawusa lampahing Sena, tanpa wadya amung dhevhe, mung bajra sindhunget lesus, ambebener murang ing margi, prahara munggwing ngarsa, gora reh gumuruh, kagay miris padesesan, ingkang kambah kaparanggu ndhodhok ajrih, andhepes nembh-nehmbah.

Kathah sesegah datan tinolih, langkung adreng prapteng Karuksetra, margi engg kambah lamaha, glising lampahireku, gapura gung munggul kaeksu, pucak mutyara muncar, saking doh ngenguwung, lur lumebyaring baksara, kuneng wau khang maksih wonten ing margi, wawusen ing Ngastina.

Ing nagari Ngastina

Prabu Suyuddhana animbali, Dhang Hyang Druna prapteng ing jro pura, Nateng Mandraka sarenge, lawan Ngawangga tumut, pra santana andeling westhi, pra sanyaa ingandikan, marang jro kadhatun, wong agung ing Sindu Nata, Jayadrata miwah Ki Arya Sangkuni, Bisma myang Dursasana.

Raden Suwirya Kurawa sakit, miwah Rahaden Jayasusewa, Nateng Rekadurjerayane, prapteng ngarsa Sang Prabu, kang ginsasthi mrih jayeng jurit, sor sinaring Pandhawa, ingkang dariy daadya wuwus, aywa kongsi Bratayuden, yen kenaan inggus sangkaming aris, sirnaning kang Pandhawa.

Golong ature mangkaka ugi, Raden Suwirya Suranggakara, anut tempek samaa ture, sira ta Sang-a Prabu, Suyuddhana menggah ing galih, datan pati ngarsaka, ing cidrianeke, ragi kagagas ing kadang, lagya eco gunem Wrekudara prapti, durnorje manjing pura.


(Tanaya 1979: 4)

Nirmala panggah wiseseng urip, wus kawengku aji kang sampurna, pinunjul ing jagad kabei, kaban bapa huyang, mula saking sira nak-mami, linuwih ing tri loka, langgeng ananipun, “Arya Sena matur nembah. Inggih pundi prenahe kang Tirta Suci, unten pada dukab tehah.


Dhungkarana ingkang wukir-wukir, jroning guwa jro panggonanira, tuhu Her Ning Pawitrate, ing ngunci-ani durang, ana kang wruh nggone Toya Di, “Thrusta Sang Wrekudara, pamit awot santun, mring Druna Sri Sayuddhana, angandika sira Prabu Kurupati,” Yayi-mas den prayitina.


Gunung Candramuka guwaneke, dene kanganan rekisas kra, gagiri-giri gedehne, sayekti lebar tumpar, ditya kalih panguwak wukir, tan anu wani ngambah.” Sadaya gumuyu, ngrasantuk upaya-nira, sukan-sukan boga ndrawina menah, kuneng ingkang Kawanat.

Ngener dhateng wukir Candramuka

PANGKUR Lampahie Sang Wrekudara, lajeng ngambah praptenireng wanadri, ririh ing reh gandrung-gandrung, sukanireng wardaya, Toya Ening pamungkas wekasing guru, tan nyipita bayaning margar, kacaryan kang den ulai.

Ngambah wukir sengkan-sengkan, anut tembing kapering lemah miring, geger meger agra gugrug, jurang rejeng kang parang, angragancang keri sarya lata umung, myang enggar katihan warsa, sele ngapit margga supit.

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Keksi kang pala kasimpar, pan kawarsan ing masa Catur asri, panjrah pan wewah rum-arum, abra kang patra wijah, ambelasah boeng nanas capakandal, anggsana myang kanigara, wilasa lan gandasuli.

(Tanaya 1979: 5)

Aglar ingkang anggrek-wulan, janggamure araras wora-wari, argulo kalawan menur, anjrah gambir-gambahnya, nagapuspa angsana malathi tanjung, prabu-setmata sridenta, kenanga miwah kumuning.

Tumiling-tingting nut hawan, kadya manambroma ingkang lumaris, bremarareh nguswa umung, anglir karukanira, Kang Kaswasih neng marga saya malat kang, Ri Sang Arya Wrekudara, lengleng ngulati Toya Ning.

Surya mangrangansang lampahnya, kamyus ingkang riwe saingga warit, gunregut sangsaya sengkid, wigar kang kabaskaran, nerang nunjang kasandhung sukaning gunung, wrekda rug rebah mbalasah, sora dheidhet erawati.

Geger satusing wana, de kang pancavora prahara tarik, sato kaberatasa mawur, gunyur sumyr wurahan, saking genging ampuhan sato kabenth dus, kidang-kidang matyeng jarang, tibeng parang kang ngemasi.

Andaka keh ting karingkang, bujangga geng manrhi memulet ing wit, rumakading wrekda karangkud, lumajar maring jarang, wau ingkang tapa-tapa aneng gunung, ajar-ajar kapalajar, prahara prabawa gumirwis.

Munya genhaning pamujan, gugup denny manawurken wewangki, kangsari ganda sumawar, wau ta lampahira, prapteng wukir Candramuka gawantipun, binubak wukir dhinungkarg, sela kasingsal abeih.

Rukmuka lan Rukmakala

Wreksa geng-ageng dhinungkarg, kaideren mbalasah bosah-basah, prenahe Toya rinuruh, dangu datang kapanggaya, kawawusa diya kang wonten ing ngrik, sang Rukmuka Rukmakala, kagay denira ningali.

Gebruging wukir dhinungkarg, kang prahara gora reh nggeregiris, lawan kongus sira mambu, gandanira sujalma, gadjada sang Rukmakala saren metu, ngrik angrik kadya Bathara, Birawa anggempur bumi.

Gora sabda liir butula, mahitala liir Kala Rudra Marti, girindra kontrag gamuntur, katon Sang Wrekudara, binandhemen wukir ...

(Tanaya 1979: 6)

panggrah asra mawus, “Heh ko dhik diya bebaya, dursila grama mri pati.”


Sela tan tumamek angga, carnia siyung punggel ingkuk lahar. Kadya andaut sumebyt, ingaben lawan wreksa, Rukmakala anggaminang aanggalepun, utek wuitah sumambarat, Rukmakala was ngemasi.

Rukmuka angrik manrajang, was cinandhak winayangken binanting, ing sela diya maihngur, sumyur rah sumambarat, sareng pejah Rukmuka Rukmakala was, sigra bangkene tan ana, jen smiya Jawata kalih.

Hyang Endra lan Hyang Bayu

Kena ing papa cintraka, Endra Bayu dinukan Hyang Prameshi, dadya ditha kalihipun, neng wukir Candramuka, ya ta wau Sang Sena kalangkung wuru, kang wukir was kabalengkrah, Toya tan ana pinanggih.

Sadangunira ngupaya, jurang gunung kawur den obrak abrik, sayah kasaput ing dalu, madeg soring mandira, gryuh ing tya denira ngulati Banyu, Pauitrina dangu tan ana, miyarsa swara dumeling.

Tan katon kang dawe swara, “Adhuh putuningsun liwa t kaswasih, ngupaya nora ketemu, tan antuk tuduh nyata, ing prenahe kang sira-ulati iku, salah ion tuhu solahnya.” Wrekudara duk miyarsi.

Sira duk mateni buta, heh katengsun iya Jawata mami, kena ing papa gya ingan, kang nampurnaken sira, Endra Bayu araningsun kang satuhi, duk ditya Sang Rukmakala, kalawan Rukmuka mami.

Donira ngulati Toya, pitutur Dhang Hyang Druna ing ngani, nyata na Banyuirip iku, tuture Resi Druna, nanging nora ing kene panggonanipun. Becik baliya ngatasa, enggone ingkang sayekti.”

(Tanaya 1979: 7)

Duk miyarsa Wrekudara, kodel sarwi wagegen tyasireki, saksana wau sumebrung, mantuk marang Ngastina. Tan winarna ing margha Ngastina rawuh, pendhak ing dina samana, kang wonten ngarsa Sang Aji.

Ing nagari Ngastina

Kadya duk angkate Sena, Resi Druna Bisma miwah para Ji, lan pra santana gung-agung, Nateng Wangga Mandraka, Sangkuni lan Sindu Nata aneng ngayun, Sudarma Suranggakara, Suniruya Kurawa sekti.


Rukmuka lan Rukmakala, sampun sirna sami kawula-hanting, dene ditya kalihipun, sikara ing kawula, wukir kabeh binalengkrah tan kateru, paduka tuduh kang nyata, sampun amindho-gaweni.”

Dhang Hyang Druna ngrangkul sigra,”Babo babo lagi ingsunayoni, kateru ingkang sayekti.

Iya telenging samodra, yen sireku ngguru pun bapa yekti, ngesuk teleng samodra gung.” Wrekudara turira,”Sampun menggah sajrone ing samodra gung, wontena nginggiling swarga, dhasaring kaping sapta bumi.

Nora ajrih ing palastera, anglakoni tuduh Sang Maha Yekti.” “Iya babo suteng-ulun, yen iku pinanggih, bapa kaki nini kang wus padha lampus, besuk urip saka siras, lan sira punjul ing bumi.

Tan anjir kena ngusap waspa ing wadanipun, kaestokna Jeng Nata, yen sampun kaka Prabu nuntun rawuh, yekti barubuh-barubah, rayi-dalem sadayeki.”

(Tanaya 1979: 9)

Ing nagari Ngamarta

Matur ing raka Ngamara, kuneng Wrekudara lampahirek i, wau ta ingkang winuwus, nagari ing Ngamarta, duk angkate Wrekudara kesahipun, dene tan kena ingampah, kalangkang samya prihatin. Sang-a Prabu Darmapatra, wakingsun Dhananjaya lan aneke samya, sampun agagarmanipun, prihatin watir ing tyas, dadya rembag utusan ngaturi wewan, saking sungkawa punika, marang Prabu Harimurti.

Mesat caraka Ngamarta, mawi surat ing marga tan winarna, ing Dwarratwa wos rawuh, katur ing Sri Narendra, saking Ngamarta sinuksmeng kalbu, kagayat garjitenj wardaya, Sang-a Prabu Harimurti.

Datan saka 80 Iyajosa, angundhangi budhal wadya sakti sang Aji, sawadya kaswa kasusus, ing marga tan winarna, ing Ngamarta Sang Nata lampahnya rawuh, geger amethuk busekan, Yudhistira lan para ri.

Samya ngabekti sadaya, wasnya tata lenggah aneng jro puri, Prabu Darmapateta matur, myang Arya Dhananjaya, sola woswa waspa ing wadanipun, katur mrig raka sadaya, Ri Sang Prabu Harimurti.

Ngandika Narendra Kresna, “Yayi Prabu sampun sungkaweng galih, polahe arinireku, Ki Arya Wrekudara, ndayan silih wruha yekine panguhpus, ing tingkah Kurawa cidra, den pasrah ing Bathara Di.

Wong anedya puruhita, ujar becik upama den alani, santosa ing Bathara Gung, ingkang nedya bencana, masa wuung nemu wewales ing pungkar.” Punagi ing aturira, marang Prabu Harimurti.

“Yen prapta ari-aduka, miwah lamun sande ngguru ngulati, kawula bajana nayuh, kaestokna Jeng Nata, yen sampun kaka Prabu nuntun rawuh, yekti barubuh-barubah, rayi-dalem sadayeki.”
Layeca imbal wacana, praptanira wong agung Jodhipati, gumurah samya angrubung, katur trusthanking driya, Dananjaya Nangkula Sadewanipun, myang Pancawala Sumbadra, Drupadi miwah Srikandhi.


(Sanaya 1979: 10)

ingsun iki aveh weruh, arsa mring teleng samodra, ngupaya Sinoming Warih.


Sigra Prabu Yudhistira, amengkul marang kang rayi, Arjunankula Sadewa, ing suku samya nangisi, Pancawala Drupadi. Sumbadra Srikandhi ngayun, nggubel samya karuna, miwah Nata Harimurti, andrawili pitutar mring Bayuputra.

Samya nangis ngampak-ampak, tan kengguh ginabel tangis, Dananjaya nyekel asta, Raden Kalih suku kalih, sarwi lara anangis, Kresna munggwing ngarsanipun, Srikandhi lan Sumbadra, samya mangrubung nangisi, kinipatken sadaya sami kapalesat.

Amberot Sang Wrekudara, tan kena den gegujengi, nginhath lampahae wus tehak, kadya tinilar ngemasi, sadaya ingkang kari, apan ta arsa anusul, amrih pangampilahira, sira Prabu Harimurti, dadya kendel sadaya wayang-wayungan.

Saenggonpenggon karuna, sakathathe santanestri, kakunge ngadhep sadaya, ing Narendra Harimurti, tan pegat mituturi, kang rayi pra samya ndheku, dadya wau kang raka, makuwon sajroning puri, kawuwusa wau kang adreng ing lampah.

Kahanan Kaendahaning alam

Sahira saking jro kitha, nulya srw manjung wanadri, tan kesthi durgameng hawan, tan ana baya kaeks, saung wong tepisirring, gawong ing pandulunipun, lampahae Arya Sena, lir naga krura ngajrihi, anrang baya amrih tuhuning ngagesang.

Kayon katembing maruta, sumrek ing swaranira tri, kadya ngatag sekar mekar, samirana mawor riris, panjirahing sarwa sari, karririsan marbuk arum, jangga kumaning suway, angsanra puhak kasilir, tinon kadya kang wentis kesisan singjang.

Sore tibra ganing driya, sahira saking nagari, cunggareret mawurahan, kadya napu ring Sang Brangti, mbak munya aneng wuri, barungan kang paksi cucur, lir akeh awangsula, kidang wangsul saking ngsari, kadya naput suwun sengayang waydarya.

(Tanaya 1979: 11)

Resres munya asauran, yayah kadya mituturi, bebeluk daces lan dokan, anumber-number wiyati, anglir ngadhangi margi, wangsula Sang Amalat Kung, kongkang neng rong lir rentang, mawarah upaya sandi, endrasila tanduking sampeka sru.

Divasanaing diwungkara, tis-tis sunya tengah wengi, kadhhasi munya timbangan, musthikeng ganeya muni, mangun oneng saliring, kadya mawarah mrie lampus, upaya Dhang Hyang Druna, tan tuhu amrih basuki, mawi ngamandaka durgamaning hawan.

Siweda sikaringasta, Ri Anak Sang Hyang Bayweki, anut ujungipun alilaka, denira lunaris aris, purwa ima raktek, sirat-sirat was kadula, wimbaning Hyang Haruna, manirith ing jalamiddhi, keksi praba Sang Maharsi Dinaningrat.

Anari kang paksi wijah, anyengak cangak munya sri, sasmita aken wangsula, ring Sang Kasanggayeng Ragi, sata wana munya njrit, warah Ri Sang Amoneng Kung, manerak wanapringga, konjas tepining udadi, alun ageng gumurah anempuh parang.
Sumyak lir suraking aprang, gumuruh mrepek kaeksi, karang munggul kawistara, dan awun-awun nawengi, ana kang kadya esthi, karang mengo lir liman njrum, prapta Sang Wrekudara, umadeg tepining warih, mangu mulat tamunum taunining udaya.

Umbak angembang galagah, mandaki karang mangsuli kadya nambrama Kang Prapta, wangsula Sang Amongragi, gora reh anekani, agra rug koster gumantra, manuilak mawalikan, Sang Honeng moneng dikani, sangsayeng tyas enget welinge kang raka.

Tuhu darma komandaka, tudahira Sang Maharsi, yen wangsula arda merang, nganteji ujar ing ngumi, suka matiyeng tasik, mangkana wau kadulu, palwa awarna-warana, kumerap ing jalaniyih, ting karethap kadya wancak sumamburat.

Lengleng mulat ing udaya, rencekaking taus kaliling, nglangat datanpa watesan, Sang Moneng lir tuku manig, lun ageng nggegisiri, langgeng agolong gumulung, wenyana mancar angalang, kekisik wingkis kaeksi, wedhinya lir ising kang sekar mekar.

Sangsong ingkang lembak-lembik, lir cemara uwal sa king, ukeling dyah sinjang lukar, tan was ucapan ingkang sri, isining kang jaladi, piru-piru langenipun, raras rum jroring toya, panjang winarnaheng tulis, Wrekudara tan mengeng amrhi mundura.

Sang Wrekudara anggebyur saganten
DURMA Musthi ring tyas sira Arya Wrekudara, ing bay a tan kaeksi, yen tan amanggiha, Toya Reh Tata Darwin, tan wrin palas-

(Tanaya 1979: 12)

tra ing tasik, mangsah mbek pejah, cancun gumregat manjung.

Ing samodra wiragani lir rawa banyu sumaput wentsis, melek angganira, alan pun sumamburat, sumembur muka nampekii, melek ing angga, wakat jangga kang warih.

Enget ing tyas angaji Jalasengara, lun ageng anangkebi, gadjada manengah, sira Sang Wrekudara, sayayi genjor ingkang wentsis, datan kaetang, kuneng wonten kawarni.

Kang naga geng kyat ing rat Sang Nemburnawa, namanira duka prapti, krua makikikaka, ngambang katon kumambang, gengnya lir prabata siwi, galak kumelap, sumembur angajirhi.

Lir kiniebur samodra kolah prakempa, kagay duka aningali, Arya Wrekudara, iki bebaya prapta, eram umiyat gengneki, datan antara, kotbota anekani.

Kadya guntur kumebur ingkang samodra, prabawanira atri, mangap kadya guwa, siyung mingis kumilat, sumembur wisa lir riris, manaut krura, muleti kadaya ambanting.

Nengah pan kasangsong pinulet ing naga, angres Sang Banyasiwi, wisane kang naga, tanumpek mukanira, kewran ing tyas cipta mati, sayayi pinolah, kang naga mobat-mabiti.

Sariyane kemput kagubed sadaya, mung tenggi ingkang maksih, sangsaya manengah, sangeng kang palwa nggiwar, nyana pancawora prapti, prahara salah, gusis palwa was nebih.

Lir sinapon palwa tan ana katingal, wau kang manrhi jurit, sayayi Arya Bima, emut sang amikara, cinables ing kanaka glis, kang munggwing angga, pasah rahnya dres miij.

Pancanaka manjung awake kang naga, tatas pating saluwir, rah miij lir udan, abang toya samodra, sapendeleng kahan kering, toya dadaya rah, naga geng wus ngemase.

Kauningan Sang Marbudyengrat Dewa Ruci
Sirna dening Sena sadaya pan cara, suaiting jaladi, wau kawawusa, Ri Sang Murweng Parasdaya, wruh lakumireng Kaswaisi, Sang Amurwengrat, praptane Sang Amamrih.

Dinuta tan umainga jating lampah, Tirta Martha Maheneng, mapan tanpa arah, Tirta Kang Whruh Ing Tirta, suksma-sinuksma mawingit, tangeh manggiga, yen tan nugraha yekti.

(Tanaya 1979: 14)

Ing nagari Ngamarta

Kuneng sanalika wawasen Pandhawa, kalangkang aprihatini, sangsaya kagagas, marang ing kadangira, arsa nusila pra sami, ayywa sulaya, yen nemahana pati.

Sama ngubel nenuwun kang pangandika, mring Prabu Harimurti, samnya tinangisan, sira Narendra Kreema, “Wus ayywa na kung prihatini, pan kadangira, nora tumekece pati.

Malah antuk kanugrahaning Bathara, besuk praptane suei, iya pun simhan, de Hyang Sukisma Kawekas, winenang aliru dhiri, raga Bathara, putus ing tinggal ening. Iya uwis mariasa ayywa sungkawa.”
Enggar tyasira sami, sirna susahing tyas, dene wau miyarsa, pandandika kang sayekti, saking ing raka, Sang Nata Harimurti.

Sang Wrekudara pinanggihan dening Sang Marbudyengrat Dewa Ruci
Ya ta malih wuwuse Sang Wrekudara, neng tengahing jaladri, sampun pinanggihan, awarna rare bajang, peparab Sang Dewa Ruci, lir rare dolan, ngandika tetanya ris.

"Heh ta Wrekudara apa karyanira, prapta ing kene iki, apa sedyanira, iya sepi kaliwat, tan ana keng sarwa buki, nyang sarwa boga, miwah busana sepi.

Amung godhong aking iku lamun ana, tiha ing ngarsa mami, ika kang sun-pangan, yen noro nana noro." Nggareja tyasnya miyarsi, Sang Wrekudara, ngungun demnya ningali.

Dene bajang neng samodra tanpa rowang, cilik amenhik-menthik, "Iki ta wong apa, gedhe jejentikweng, ing pangucape kumaki, ladak kumethak, dening tapan pribadi."

"Lan manginge Wrekudara ingkang prapta, iya ing kene iki, akeh pancabaya, yen noro etoh pejah, sayekti tan prapta iki, iki tang kene mapan, sakalir sarwa manring.

Nora urup lan ciptam papiaksa, nora angeman pati, sabda kaluhuran, kene masa ana." Kewran Sang Wrekudareki, sesaurira, dene tan wuruh ing gati.


Saking Brahma wite ingkang para Nata, iya bapakirek i, turun saking Brahma, mencarken para Nata, dene ibunira Kunthi, kang dawe tedhak, iya Sang Wisnu Murti.

(Tanaya 1979: 15)

Mung patutan telu lawan bapakira, Yudhistira pangarst, panenggake sita, panengah Dananjaya, kang loro patute Madrim, jangkep Pandhawa, praptau kene iki.

Iya Dhag Hyang Druna akon ngulatana, Banyurip Tirta Ening, iku guranira, pituda maring sita, iku kang sita-lakoni, mulane tapan, angel pratingkah urip.

Aywa lunga yen tan wuruh ingkang pinaran: lan ajja mangan iki, lamun noro wurua, arane kang pinaran; aywa nganggo-ango ugi, yen durang wurua, arane busaneki.

Ing werhe tetakon bisane ika, lawan tetiron neggih, dadi lan tumandang, mangkono ing ngagesang, ana jugul saking wakir, arsa taka mas, mring kemasan den wehi.

Lanyung kuning den anggep kancana mulya. Mangkono, ing nagabeki, yen durang waskhita, prenahe kang sinembah." Wrekudara daka miyarsi, ndheku nor raga, dene Sang Wiku sidik.


Matur alon. " Fukulen yen makatena, pun patik anuhun sih, kula inggih datan, wuruh puruhiteng badan, sasat sato wana inggih, tan mantra-mantra, waspadeng badan suci.

Langkung mudha panggung cinacad ing jagad, kesi-ke si ing bumi, angganing curiga, ulun tanpa warana, wacana kang tampah siring." Ta ta ngandika, manis Sang Dewa Ruci.

Sang Wrekudara manjing guwagarba tampi wejanganipun Sang Dewa Ruci

Dewa Ruci angandika malih, "Gedhe endi sita lawan jagad, kabehe iki suisine, kalawan gunungipun, samodrade alase mami, tan sesak lumebuwa, mring jro garbaningsun." Wrekudara dak miyarsa, esu ajrih kumel sandika turneki, mengleng Sang Ruci Dewa.

"Iki dalan talingan-ngong kering." Wrekudara manjin g sigra-sigra, wus prapta ing jro garbane, andulu samodra gung, tanpe tepi nglangut lumaris, ngliyek adoh katingal, Dewa Ruci nguwuh,...

(Tanaya 1979: 16)

"Heh apa katon ing sita?" Dyan umatur Sang Sena, "Inggih atebih tan wonten katingalan.

Awang-awang kang kula lampahi, uwung-uwung tebih tan kantenan, ulun saparan-parane, tan mulat ing lor kidul, wetan kiten boten udani, ngandap ing nginggil ngarsa, kalawan ing pangkur, kawula boten uninga, langkung bingung." Ngandika Sang Dewa Ruci, "Aja maras tyasira."
Byar katingal ngadhep Dewa Ruci, Wrekudara Sang Wiki kawawang, umancur katon cahyane, nolih wruh ing lor kidul, wetan kulon sampun kaeksi, ing nginggil miwah ngandhap, pan sampun kadalu, lawan umiyat huskara, eca tyase miwah Sang Wiki kaeksi, aneng jagad wakal.


Wejangan Pancamaya Kuwasaning Tyas lan Durgamaning Tyas


Mangka tinulak ahywa lumari, awasena sira ahywa samar, kawasaning tyas empane, tingaling tyas pinuku, anengeri maring sajati.” Enak Sang Wrekudara, amikarsa wawus, layag medey tyas sumringah.

“Dene ingkang abang ireng kuning pututh, iku durgamaning tyas.
Pan isine jagad amepeki, iya ati kang telung prakara, pamurunge laku dene, kang bisa pisah iku, yakti bisa amor ing gaib, iku mungsha tapa, ati kang tetelu, ireng abang kuning samya, angdanghapi cipta karsa kang lestari, pamoring Sukma Mulya.
Lamun noro kawilet ing katri, yeke ati kitemsan sarira, lestari ing panunggale, poma den awas emut, durgama kang mungwing ing ati, pangwasane wewah, wijiji wilispun, kang ireng lujhi prakosa, panggawane kasrengan sabarang runtik, andadra ngambara-ambara.

Iya iku ati kang ngadhangi, ambuntoni marang kabecekan, ...

(Tanaya 1979: 17)

kang ireng iku gawene. Dene kang abang iku, iya tuduh nepsu tan beci, sakheing pepengkingan, metu saking iku, panasten panasbaran, ambuntoni marang ati ingkang eling, marang ing kawaspadan.

Dene iya kang arupa kuning, pangwasane nanggulang sabarang, cipta kang becik dadine, panggaw amrih tulus, ati kunung ingkang ngadhangi, mung panggawane pangrusak, binanjar jinurung.
Mung Kang pututh iku nyata, ati anteng mung suci tan ika iki, pravira ing kaharjan.
Amung iku kang bisa nampani, ing sasmita sajatinie rupa, namanipun, urub siji wolu kang warni, ingkang sanyata, rupa kang suhutu, wonten kadi retna muncar, wonken kadi maya-maya angerbait, wonken abramarkata.”

Marbidyengrat Dewa Ruci angling, “Iya iku kaajateni tunggal, saliring warna tegese, iya na ing sireka, tuwin iya isning bumi, ginambar angganiarta, lawan jagad agung, jagad cilik tan prabeda, purwa ana lor kidul kulon puniki, wetan ing dhowur ngandhap.

Miwah abang ireng kuning pututh, iya pangguripe ing buwana, jagad cilik jagad gedhe, pan padha isinipun, tinarhangken ing sira iki, yen ilang warnaning kang, jagad kabehe iku, saliring reka tan ana, kinumpulken aneng rupa kang sawiwi, tan kakung tan wanodya.
Kadya tawon gumana puniki, kang asawang putran-putran denta, lah payo dulunen kuwe.”
Wrekudara andulu, “Ingkang kadaya peputran gadhing, calya muncar kumilat, tumeja ngengawung, panapa inggih punika, warnaning Dzat kang pinrih dipun ulati, kang sajatinie rupa.”
Anaauri aris Dewa Ruci, “Iku dudu ingkang sira-sedya, kang mumpuni amek kabehe, tan kena sira dulu, tanpa rupa datampa ...

(Tanaya 1979: 18)

kalimeku kang ginambah, wus kaasta sanalika aywa lali, ulun thu ambeknya. warni, tan gatra tan satmeta, iya tanpa dunung, mung dumunung mring kang awas, mung sasmita aneng ing jagad ngebeki, dinamuk datan ana.

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Wejangan Reh Uriping Pramana

Dene iku kang sira-tingali, kang asawang peputran motyaara, ingkang kumilat cahyane, angkara-kara murub, pan Pramana arane nenggih, uripe kang sarira, Pramana punika, tunggal aneng ing sarira, nanging datang milu sungkaw pribatin, enggone aneng raga.

Datan milu mangan turu nenggih, iya nora milu lara lapa, yen iku pisah enggone, raga kari ngalumpruk, yekti lungkrah badan sireki, ya iku kang kawasa, nandhang rahanusip, inguripan dening Saksma, iya iku sinung anandhang urip, ingaken rahanusip Dzat.

Yeku sinandhangakek ing sireki, nanging kadya simbar neng kekaywan, ananing raga enggone, uriping Pramaneku, inguripan ing Saksma Jati, misesa ing sarira, Pramana punika, yen mati milu kaleswan, laman ilang Saksmaning sarira nuli, uriping Saksma ana.

Wejangan Reh Pepingitaning Jagad


“Nora kena iku yen sira-prih, lawan kahanan ingkang satmata, gampang angel pratikele.”

Wrekudara umatter, “Kula nuwun pamejang malih, ingghi kedah uninga, babar-pisanipun, pun patik ngaturken pejah, ambencana aggen-agen ingkang pesthi, sampun tuwas kangelan.”

(Wewahan gangsal pada, saking satunggaling pujangga, kakaki, kasebut ing dalem serat Cebolang, kados ing ngandhap punika)

Angandika alon Dewa Ruci, “Wrekudara sira noer kena, yen kudu wruh samengkone, yektine sira luluh, yen ngantiya sira udani, yen sira kudu meksa, ana tatrapiyipun, sirnakena wujudira, iya lawan netranira iku kaki, supaya yen tuneka.

(Tanaya 1979: 19)


Nanging ana tresandhane kaki, lamun ngrasa wujudira sirna, kari netra ati bae, nanging tan na kadulu, bumi langit datan kaeki, iku tandha yen prapta, ngraha Hyang Agung, kari lenyepe kewala, jagad anyar kabehe tan ana nimbangi, warna kadya mangkana.

Yen wis luwar den angati-ati, den wspanpadaj sajonering wardaya, benjag prapteng wasanane, poma kaki den emut, pununggale Kawula Gusti, sahir kabir tan ana, was dadi sawujud, tan ana nggone anglapal, wujud iku alam kabehe wus kawingkis, yeku jatinung tunggal.

Nora beda wong sinau kaki, iya mati sajonreng ngagesang, lan yen prapta wekasane, sayekti tungal iku, tan prabeda tingalireki.” Wrekudara anembah, “Nuwan sih Pakulan, sosampet ana karasa, tyas sumringah madege kasudhiran amrihi, marang aman camuksan.

(Babonipun ingkang asli sakawit, dereng wonten wewahanipun gangsad pada kasebut ing nginggil punia wau. R. Tanaya)

Yen makaten kula boten mijil, sampun eca neng ngriki kewala, boten wonten sangsanyane, tan niat mangan turu, boten arip lan boten ngelihi, boten ngraos kangelan, boten ngeser linu, amung nikmat lan manfaat.” Dewa Ruci lingira, “Iku tan keni, yen nora lan antaka.

Wejangan Piweling Pungkasan

Sangsaya sihira Dewa Ruci, marang Sang Kaswasih ing panedha, “Lah iya den awas bae, mring pamuruning laku, aywa ana karemireki, den bener den waspadia, ing anggepereki, yen was kasikipek ing sira, aja amung den nganggo parah yen angling, yeku reh pepingitan.

Nora kena yen sira-rasani, lan sasama samanining manusa, kang nora lan ngrahane, yen ana nedya pado, angrasani rerasan iki, ya teka kalahanha, aywa kongsi banjar, aywa ngadekken sarira, aywa kratek mring wisuayaning ngaaurip, balik sikepen uga.

Kawisayan kang maring ing pati, den kaasta pamanthenging cipta, rupa ingkang sabenere, sinengker buwaneku, urip nora nana ...

(Tanaya 1979: 20)
ngurip, datang antara masa, iya ananipun, pan wus ana ing sarira, tuhu tunggal sasana lawan sireki, tan kena pisahena.

Datan waneh sangkanira nyuhi, tunggal Sang-a Karti ning Buwana, pandulu paniyarsane, wus aneng ing sireku, panyarsane Sukasma kang yekti, iya tan lawan karna. Ing pandulunipun, iya tan kalawan netra, karminira netranira kang kinarudi, anane aneng sireku.

Laire Sukasma aneng sireki, batinira kang ana ing Sukasma, iya mangkono tarape, kadya wreksa tinunu, ananing kang kakeusin agni, sarta kalawan wreksa, lir toya lan alun, kadya menyak aneng puhan, raganira ing reh ohab lawan mosik, iya sarta nugraha.

Yen wruh pamoring Kawula Gusti, sarta Sukasma kang sinedya ana, de warana neng sireku senggone, lir wayang sarireku, saking dhalang solahing ringgit, mangka panggung kang jagad, lire badan iku, asolah lamun pinolah, sasolahi kumedhek myarsa tingali, tumindak lan pangucap.

Kawisesa amisesa sami, datan antara pamoring karsa, je tanpa rupa ranape, wus aneng ing sireku, upamane paesan jati, ingkang ngilo Hyang Sukasma, wayangan puniku, kang ana sajroning kaca, iya sire ja ningening manusa iki, rupa sajroning kaca.

Luwih gengnya kalepasan iki, lawan jagad ageng kalepasan, kalawan luwih lembate, salembutanan banyu, apa lembut kamaksan ugi, luwih alit kamaksan, saaliting tengu, pan maksih alit kamaksan, lire luwih amisesa ing sakali, lire lembut-alinya.

Bisa naksma ing lembat lan alit, kalimputan kabehe kang rumangkang, gumremit iya tan pae, kaluwihan satuhu, luwih iya denny nampani, tan kena ngandela, ing warah lan wruh, den sanget pangwsuwanira, badanira wasuh praknya ngungkhi, wruha rungtsing tingkah.

Wuruk iku pan minangaka wihi, kang winuruk upamane papan, pama kacang lan kadhele, sinebarna ing watu, yen watune datana siti, kodanan kapanasan, pasthi noru thukul, lamun sire bijakans, tingaliria sirnaksna nganarireke, dati tingaling Sukasma.

Rupanira swaranira nuli, uhihena mring kang darbe swara, je sire ingkang bae, sesilh kang satuhu, nanging ajawa sireki, pakaremen kanyang ika, saking Hyang Luhur, dadi sarira bwana, obah-asiki wus sah dadi siji, wra roro anggepira.

Yen dariya angeepira yekti, yen angrasa roro makshi was-was, kena ing rengu dadi, yen wus siji sawujud, sakarentek ing tyasireki, apa cinipita ana, kang sinedya rawuh, wus kawengku aneng...

(Tanaya 1979: 21)

sira, jagad kabehe jera sire kinarya yekti, gegentih den apanggah.

Yen wus mudheng nangka kik, den awingit sarta den asasab, sasat pamer pangganggone, nanging ing batinipun, ing sakedhap tan kena lait, laire sasabana, kawruh patang dhaupur, padha anggonen sadaya, kalimane kang siji iku premati, kango ing kene kana.

Lire mati sajroning ngaauri, iya urip sajroning apejah, urip bae salawase, kang mati iku nepsa, badan lair ingkang nglakoni, katakanan badan nyata, pamoring sawujud, pagene ngrasa matiya.”

Wrekudara tyasira padhun nampani, wahyu prapta nugraha.

Lir singkanga taweng ima nipis, prapi航运ing wahyu ima nirmala, sumilak ilang regede, angking malih tulya rum, Dewu Ruci manis aririh, “Tan ana aji paran, kabehe wus kawengku, tan ana inggalatan, kraparwirin kadigdayan wus kawingking, kabehe reh-ing ayuda.”

Telas wulangcing Sang Dewu Ruci
Sang Wrekudara sampun ening penggalihupun
lan sampun medal saing guwagarba

Telas wulangira Dewu Ruci, Wrekudara ing tiyana wus tan kewran, wruh ing namane dheweke, ardaning swara muluk, tanpa elar anajah bangkit, sawengkon jagad traya, angga wus kawengku, pantes pamatiningsa basa, sainggana sekar makshi kudhap lahi, mangkya mekar ambabar.

Wuwuh warnane lan gandaneke, wus kena kung Pancaretna medal, saing ing guwagarbarane, wus salin alamipun, angulati alame lahi, Dewu Ruci wus sirna, mangkana winuwus, tyasira Sang Wrekudara, lulus saing gandane kasti jati, pepanasing tiyas sirna.

Wus leksana salekeining bumi, ujar bae wruh pantakanira, nir-ing wardaya malane, mang panarimeneng mangghuh, kadayanggone nganggo surra di, maya-maya kang sirra, rehnya kang sarya las, sinaksmas wu inggemasan, arja ingkang sesotya manik minak, wruh pakenaking tingkah.

Milu samping bra puspita adi, winarnendah kintaki sumekar, kasturi jati namane, pratandha datan korup, ing pangwikan kenaka tangdi, angungkabi kabisan, kawruh tan kalira, poleng bang bintulu lima, pan winarna daraga milet tulya siri, lancangkung kampuhira.
Mangka pangemut katon ing nguni, tetiga duk sajroning kang garba, Dewa Ruci pangengete, bang kuning ireng iku, pamurunging ... 

(Tanaya 1979: 22)

laku ngadhangi, kang aputih ing tengah, sidaning pangsampangkuh.

Saking sangete karya ling-aling, pambengkasing sumengah jab riya, kang kesthi siyang-dalune, pan kathah dennyा ngrungu, pratingkaking para maharsi, kang sami kaluputan, ing pangangkuhupun, pangancabe kawruhira, wus ambener wekasan mati tan dadi, kawilet ing tratapan.

**Pangancabing kamuksan ingkang sami lepat**

Ana ingkang ingati dadi peksi, amung mrih pencokan kewala, kayu kang becik warnane, angsona nagasantun, tanjung ana ingkang waringin, kang ana pinggir marga, engkak mangkruk-mangkruk, angungkuli wong sepasar, pindha-pindha kamukten sapele pinrih, kasasar kabelasar.

Ana ingkang anitis para Ji, sugih rajabrama miwah garwa, ana kang pilih putrane, putra kang arsa mengku, karemante wong siji-siji, samyantak kaluwihan, ing panitisipun, yen munggah Sang Wrekudara, durung arsa amung amrih ing pribadi, sadayeka ingaran.

Titang kang wadaka tan pasthi, durung jumeneng jamma utama, ingkang mengkono angegepe, pangrasane anemu, suka sugih tan wruh ing yakit, yen nuli nemu duka, kabanjur kalantur, sanggone nitis kewala, tanpa wekas kangelan tan nemu becik, tan bisa babar pisan.

Yen luputa anyakarabawani, iya pakaremken duk ing duru, maring ing pati tibane, ing kono karemipun, nora kuwat parenging pati, keron pan kasamanan, misih wowor sambu, abote ulah kamuksan, nora kena tolih bapa anak, sajroning mrih kamuksan.

Yen luputa patakaning bumi, leheng si yen aywa dad i janma, sato gampang pratikele, sirnane tanpa tutur, yen wis aris bener ing pati, langgeng tanpa karana, angga buwaneku, umeneng tan kali sela, enengira iya nora kadi warith, warta tanpa tuduhan.

**Pamudhare mung graitaneki, nguni-uni durung mambu warah, saking tan eca manahe, katur ing gurunipun, langkung ngungun nunat ngangepe, sinemantakken marang, pandhita gung-agung, wus pasthi nanggep kang nyata, iku wahyu nugraha dhateng pribadi, sahbat ingaku anak.

Pan sinungga-sungga gung tinari, maring guru yen arsa amejang, tan tehah sinandhing nggone, sahbat kang temah guru, guru dadya sahbatin batin, lepas ing panggrafta, tanduk sarta wahyu, yeku utama kalihnya, kang satengah pandhita durung sayekti, kasasar pangakunya.

Kudu tinut satuture sami, dene akeh lumaku sinemba, nen pucake gunung nggone, swaranira manguwuh, angebeki pratapanke, yan ana kang amarar, wekase abikut, lur gubar beri tinatab, kumarampyang binubak datapani isi, tuna kang puruhita.

(Pralambanging ilmu sajati)

Aja kaya mangkono ngaurip, badan iki dipun kadi wayang, kinudang neng panggun nggone, arja tetali bayu, padhung ingkang pangguniringi, damar raditya wulan, kerir alam uwung, kang angangga-nangga cipta, debog bumi ikepe adeging ringgit, sinangga mring kang nanggap.

Kang ananggap aneng ironing puri, datan osik panggung karsa, Hyang Pramana dhedalange, wayang pangadezipun, ana ngidul ana lor tuwin, mangkana kang sarira, ing sosolahipun, sinolahaken ing dhalang, lumakawa linakokken lembehaning, linembehen ing dhalang.

Pangucapke ingucapken nengghi, yen umup kinihatat iya, tinutur anuturake, sakarsaka-karsanpun, kang anonion pinolah sami, tinontonken ki dhalang, kang ananggap ikut, sajagad masa na wruha, tanpa rupa kang nanggap aneng jro puri, tanpa warna Hyang Sukma.
Sang Pramana denira angringgit, angucapken ing sarirana, tanpa mawas ing sanane, wimbuh pan nora tumut, ing sarira upamaneki, kang menyak munggwing puhan, geni munggwing kayu, an-
(Tanaya 1979: 24)
drepati tanpa tedah, Sang Pramana lir gesenging kayu panggrit, landhesan sami wreksa.

Panggritane molah saking angin, gesenging kayu kukuse medal, datan antara genine, agni kalawan kagus, saking kayu wijile sami, wruha eling duk kala, mula mulanipun, kabe iki kang gameler,
pan saking Heb manusa tinitah luwih, apan ingkaken rahsa. Mulya dhewe saking kang dumadi, aja mengeng ciptanira tunggal, tunggal saparibavane, isining bawaneku, anggep siji manusa jati, mengku
sagung kahanan, ing manusa iku, den wruh wisesaning tunggal, anuksmani saliring jagad mepeki, tekad
kang wus sampurna.

Kondur dhateng nagari Ngamarta

Wus mangkana Wrekudara mulih, wus tan mengeng ing galih gumawang, datan pangling
sarirane, panuksmaning savuajud, nanging lair sasab piningit, reh sa-reh kasatriyan, linakon winengku,
pamurwaning jagad traya, kalairan batine nora kasilib, satu munggwing rimbagan.

Tamating panedhak ingkang sapisan

Titi tamat kalane tinulis, tanggal ping Kalih dina Salasa, nuja Paing pasarane, Jamudi’iakhhiripun, wuku
Bala Hyang Durga Dewi, mapan akhirings Sanga, Adi windunipun, warisa Ehe Sinangkalan, muluking her
pangandikane Sang Aji (1740), wanci pukul sadasa (dalu).

Tamating panedhak ingkang kaping kalih

Titi tamat paneratireki, panedhaking abdi juru cri ta, ing ari Tumpak Manise, kaping Nembelasipun, wukunipun Sungsang marengi, madyaning masa Kapat, Dulkangidah tangsu, pan maksih
Ehe sang waruwa, tuwin kang lumaris maksih windu Adi (1776), wanci pukul Satunggal.

Note:
Tanaya wrote 2 versions of this story, the first one was written in 1962, and the other in 1979. In the first
version (R. Tanojo. 1962. Serat Dewa Rutji, Kakawin lan Kidung), we find a longer “coming home” scene
of Wrekudara, as follows:
(Tanojo 1962: 34)

Mulih Marang Nagara Ngamarta

Tekad ingkang wus sampurna, sawusira mangkaneni, Raden Arya Wrekudara, lajeng mantuk
mring nagari, tan mengeng tyasireki, tan paling sariranipun, savuajud panuksmanya, lair sinasab piningit,
linakonan mengku kasatriyanira.
Pamurwaning jagad traya, kalairan batinekni, apan nora kawistara, pan kadya satu upami,
munggeng rimbaqan nenggi, wau ta ing lampahipun, Dyan Arya Wrekudara, prapteng Ngamarta nagari,
pan dumrojog lajeng manjing jroning pura.
Sira Prabu Judistira, lan Sang Prabu Harimurti, pinarak munggeng panehgat, kang rayi tetiga
sami, munggeng ngarsanireki tan liyan kang ginunem agung, kang rayi kesahira, denira manjing jaladri,
dereng dugi Sang Nata dennyang ngandika.
Kasaru Sena pratanya, neng ngarsa rinangkan sami, mring Sang Prabu kalihira, sawusa tata
linggi. Dananjaya nalya glis, lang Nangkula Sadeweku, saka angarasa pada, kang raka ravuliireki, Prabu
padmanaba alon angandika.
Yayi praptamu bageya, sokur anemu basuki, kaya paran lakunira, nggonira manjing jaladri,
Wrekudara nauri, lamun lampahe ingapus, ara Wiku kang marah, lamun ing sagara septi, nora nana
ingkang Mahosadi Tiria.
Enggoning langit watesan, tan ana kung bisa ngambil, sun kinen mulih kewala, dadine mangkene ikil, was tiu sun titen, Karawa ing cidranipun, suk duk amiyarsa, ngandika Sri Harinurti, pan ing wuri iku yayi kawruhana.

(Tanojo 1962: 35)
Yya lalai sabarang karya, ingkang was kalakon iko, Sena umatur sandika, wau Ngamart nagari, salaminya prihatin, lir wit-witn ron sadyalum prapataning labuh Kapat, wit-witan sadaya semi, sampun titi Dewa Ruci caritanya.
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Short Biography of Daniel K. Listijabudi

Daniel K. Listijabudi, was born in Jepara, Central Java, on February 18, 1971 as the first of three children of the late Tjondro Listijabudi, a.k.a Liem Boen Tjong, and Mother Kamelia Widjaja. He graduated from the Faculty of Theology in Duta Wacana Christian University, Yogyakarta with a BD in 1996, and an M.Th in 2006. Continuing his studies at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, he received the MARRT (Master of Art in Research Reformed Theology) in 2010. In order to obtain his doctoral degree, he continued his research and completed his dissertation in June 2016.

Listijabudi was ordained as a Mennonite pastor by the Salatiga congregation of the Gereja Kristen Muria Indonesia (GKMI), a member synod of the Mennonite World Conference, in 2001. He served there for twelve years (1996-2008). In 2008, he was appointed Pastor with Special Task by GKMI to serve as lecturer in the Faculty of Theology in Duta Wacana Christian University and continues in that position. He has also been the head of Theological Department of the GKMI Synod for two terms (2009-2014; 2015 – 2019), and has served as Editor-in-Chief of GEMA TEOLOGIKA: Academic Journal of Contextual Theology since 2008 and of berita GKMI synod magazine since 2010.

In addition to a number of theological articles, Listijabudi has written four books. The first Tragedi Kekerasan dalam Balada Kain Habel [The tragedy of Violence in the Ballad of Cain and Abel] (Taman Pustaka Kristen (1997) examines the story of Cain and Abel from the perspective of Rene Girard. His second book, Meracik Jamu Kehidupan [Composing the Ingredients of the Elixir of Life: Theological Reflections on Personal and Socio-cultural Realities in Indonesia] published by Gloria Graha (2008). His third book is his first to take up the method of Asian Biblical Hermeneutics: "Bukankah Hati Kita Berkobar-Kobar?" Suatu Upaya Menafsirkan Kisah Emaus dari Perspektif Zen Budhisme secara Dialogis [“Did not our hearts burn?”: an Attempt to Interpret the Emmaus story from the perspective of Zen Buddhism] was published by Interfidei Indonesia in 2010. His most recent book is Mendulang Sabda: 15 Artikel Teologis Kontekstual Sederhana [Mining the Word: 15 contextual- theological articles] published by Taman Pustaka Kristen in 2012. He has also translated several works from English to Indonesian, including Job, the Victim of his People by Rene Girard (BPK, 2003) and Transformation of Conflict by John Paul Lederach (Duta Wacana Press, 2005).

Listijabudi lives in Yogyakarta with his wife Candradewi and their four children, Ratya, Smita, and fraternal twins Tristaninghyang and Hasmaranu.