

## 5 Independent Churches on Nias and the Batu Islands (1930-1965)

### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

RM-Inspector Rudolf Wegner had, by the end of the nineteenth century, already adopted Venn's and Anderson's 'three-self' formula for the development of national churches on the mission fields. He wanted each of them to become 'fully independent and self-supporting, with its own leadership and self-propagation'.<sup>1</sup> But, the missionaries on Nias had, until the early 1930s, been less enthusiastic about this idea. Only when faced with severe financial difficulties due to the world economic crisis in the early 1930s, and following developments in the Batak Protestant Christian Church (HKBP) on Sumatra<sup>2</sup>, the German Nias-missionaries, too, had the courage to take concrete steps towards the 'autonomy'<sup>3</sup> of the Niasan church. They were, however, not willing to hand over the leadership to the Ono Niha until May 1940, when, due to World War II, they were detained. In August 1945, after the Japanese occupation of Nias and the Batu Islands (1942-1945), the independent Protestant Christian Church of the Batu Islands (BKP) was proclaimed.

In the 1950s, a second branch of Christian mission on Nias and the Batu Islands was established by the Roman Catholic Church. At the same time, the Protestant churches, faced with substantial internal problems and challenges, established relations with the ecumenical movement. In 1960, the BKP merged with the BNKP. This history of the Niasan church ends with the 'jubilee' on 26-27 September 1965. The ecclesiastical feast was immediately followed by a national disaster: the alleged Communist coup attempt on 30 September 1965. This event marked the beginning of a new epoch in Indonesian history, and, consequently, also in that of the churches, including the BNKP, which is beyond the scope of this study.

### 5.2 PREPARATIONS FOR AN INDEPENDENT CHURCH ON NIAS (1930-1936)

During the years 1930-1936, the missionaries and their indigenous co-workers directed their efforts towards making preparations for the independence of a Protestant Christian church on Nias.<sup>4</sup> This encompassed the self-support, self-

<sup>1</sup> Cf. R. Wegner, 'Die Mitwirkung der eingeborenen Gehilfen in der Rheinischen Mission', in: *BRM*, 1899, p. 35. The 'three-self' formula (self-governing, self-supporting and self-extending) goes back to the Anglican Henry Venn (1724-1797) and the Congregationalist Rufus Anderson (1796-1880), cf. J. Verkuyil, *Contemporary Missiology*, 1978, pp. 184-187. From 1906 until 1928, Rudolf Wegner was the third inspector of the RM responsible for the Dutch East Indies (later also for Africa).

<sup>2</sup> In 1930, the first synod assembly of the HKBP took place and resolved a new church order. Cf. Th. Müller-Krüger, *Der Protestantismus in Indonesien*, 1968, pp. 263-276.

<sup>3</sup> Term used by F.L. Cooley, *The Growing Seed*, 1981, p. 344.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. A. Schneider, *Turia*, 1965, p. 43, calls the period from 1930 until 1940 'Auf dem Wege zur Kirche' (On the Way to Becoming a Church); W. Gulö, *Benih yang Tumbuh XIII*, 1983, p. 20, calls the years 1930-1940 'Berdirinya BNKP' (The Founding of the BNKP).

governance and self-propagation of the church by indigenous Ono Niha<sup>5</sup>, as well as strengthening the ties with the Niasan Christians in the diaspora.

#### 5.2.1 Self-Support

More than anything else, the financial malaise compelled the RM-missionaries on Nias to take concrete steps to enable indigenous Christianity there to become less dependent on the mother organisation in Germany and to make preparations for an independent Niasan church.<sup>6</sup> On 31 December 1929, the financial support granted by the Dutch government for the work of the RM on Sumatra and Nias during the years of severe inflation in Germany after World War I, was terminated.<sup>7</sup> The colonial government implemented a policy of austerity in subsidizing mission schools. In addition to this, the World Economic Crisis, as well as the strict foreign-exchange restrictions enforced by the German government as of 1933, caused the worst financial problem ever in the history of the RM.

Since money could no longer be expected from either Barmen or from Batavia, the Niasan church had to be prepared for financial self-support. This goal was, however, not reached by the time of the first synod, nor ever afterwards. The missionaries lessened the financial burden by dismissing some of the teacher-preachers (*guru*) and reducing the number of evangelists (*sinenge*).<sup>8</sup> But the situation remained 'desperate'.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, the administration remained orderly and a special 'diaspora fund' was built up during these years.<sup>10</sup>

#### 5.2.2 Self-Governance

Based on the premise that God has appointed a variety of 'forms of leadership' in the church (1 Cor 12:28b), it was clear that the leadership in the congregations and the developing church could not be a 'one-man-show', i.e., reduced to the missionary. Therefore, from the earliest beginnings of missionary work on Nias, gifted men had been chosen from among the Ono Niha and trained to assist the missionaries. This, however, had not resulted in ecclesiastical self-governance. The missionaries had remained in charge of everything. In preparation for an

<sup>5</sup> This triad pattern (the 'three-self' formula) became increasingly popular in missionary circles and among indigenous church leaders in the 1930s. In 1933, the conference of missionaries in Ombölatä used the 'three-self' vision as the theological justification for resolving that an 'independent' Niasan church be formed. The eventual results were, however, rather modest. Cf. 'Protokoll Nias-Konferenz' 1933, p. 2 § 3 (RMG 2.782). The third conference of the IMC in Tambaram (1938) discussed the selfhood of the younger churches in earnest.

<sup>6</sup> The goal of independence was first defined in 1922 by RM-Director Fries, former missionary on Nias. Other missionary areas of the RM had to be transferred to the Finnish Missionary Society (Ovambo-Mission), the Basel Mission (Borneo), the Lutheran Mission of Papua New Guinea (Kaiser-Wilhelm Land) and the Reformed Church in the Cape Province (cf. G. Menzel, *Die Rheinische Mission*, 1978, pp. 272-287, 289, 349).

<sup>7</sup> *Voorschotten* (advance payments) from the Dutch government, granted from 1 January 1920 until 31 December 1929.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. *JBRM*, 1932 (1933), p. 39. In 1932 there were 68 *sinenge*, compared to 103 in 1927. In 1932, forty *guru* were dismissed because the government could no longer pay their subsidies.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. *BRM*, 1933, p. 310 (*Notzeit*). While the congregations were growing rapidly, the number of missionaries was reduced. One missionary was responsible for about twenty thousand souls. The number of Niasan office-bearers also plummeted.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Ch. 5.2.4.

independent church, therefore, the necessary prerequisites for self-governance, such as a church order (i.e., a constitution) and qualified indigenous leadership, now had to be provided.

#### 5.2.2.1 Church Order

Deliberations concerning a uniform order for the congregations on Nias had begun as early as 1906 in connection with the ordination of the first *pandita Niha*.<sup>11</sup> In 1921, Fries drafted a synodical order for Nias.<sup>12</sup> It was a top-down rather than a bottom-up model, having a characteristic emphasis on the position of the *ephorus*. The traditional term *banua* was adopted to manifest the unity of the Niasan church.<sup>13</sup>

Based on these foundations, some missionaries and indigenous pastors under the leadership of Albert Lück<sup>14</sup> now developed a church order. Among the Niasan theologians involved in the work was *Pandita* Josefo, a brilliant graduate of the first *pandita*-course (1914-1916). Unfortunately, he died on 30 December 1933 in his home town, Sogae'adu, before the new church order had been presented.<sup>15</sup>

The new structure necessarily involved more Ono Niha in the leadership and in pastoral care, but the Ono Niha's request to increase the number of chiefs as delegates to the synod was not granted.<sup>16</sup> From 1933 until 1936, the draft of a church order was discussed, or rather explained, in most congregations on Nias.<sup>17</sup> Eventually, this church order formed the basis on which the BNKP was founded in 1936 and acknowledged by the government in 1938.

#### 5.2.2.2 Leadership

Beginning in 1914, parallel to the training of teacher-preachers (*guru*), regular courses for indigenous pastors (*pandita Niha*) and evangelists (*sinenge*) had also been given at the Seminary in Ombölata, providing the Christian congregations with qualified leadership. For three reasons, however, the teacher-preachers had gradually lost much of their former influence:

1. They had played an insignificant role during the Great Awakening;
2. Their teaching tasks demanded much of their time and energy, thereby reducing their presence in the congregation;
3. Those assuming the 'new ministries' (*pandita* and *sinenge*) had more time to dedicate themselves fully to the main functions of church work, thus taking over from the *guru* the position of the missionaries' pastoral assistants. Soon

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<sup>11</sup> Cf. Ch. 4.4.5.2.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Ch. 4.6.5.4.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Ch. 2.6.2.2 and Ch. 7.5.3.

<sup>14</sup> Albert Gustav Lück (7 February 1886 Altsorge / Posen – 19 January 1942 on the 'Van Imhoff', near the Niasan coast).

<sup>15</sup> Cf. *Barmer Missionsblatt*, 1934, p. 83; A. Momeyer, 'In Memoriam', in: *BRM*, 1935, pp. 37-44.

<sup>16</sup> According to this draft, the *ephorus* had to appoint either a chief or a civil servant from each of the seven *resor* or circuits of the church as representatives, cf. 'Protokoll Nias-Konferenz', Ombölata, 11-17 July 1933 (RMG 2.782). Eventually, this was limited to two representatives only, who could either be civil servants or chiefs. At the first synod in 1936, both representatives attending were civil servants; cf. A. Schreiber, *Turia.*, 1965, pp. 56-57; cf. H. Schekatz, 'Der Einfluß der Häuptlinge in der Nias-Kirche', in: *EMZ* 1969, pp. 230-239.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. *BRM*, 1934, p. 218.

the indigenous pastors and evangelists were regarded as the rightful substitutes for, or even successors of, the missionaries as the leaders of the church.

Faced with the severe crisis in the 1930s, the missionaries were forced to reduce, and eventually give up the training of *guru*. In June 1934, the *guru*-seminary in Ombölata had to close completely.<sup>18</sup> The admission of new students had already been discontinued as of the previous year. Those who passed the examination could not be employed and the lower classes had been dismissed.

Anticipating the approaching autonomy of the Niasan church, most remaining resources were directed towards training indigenous pastors. In 1934, a course for six indigenous pastors was convened, financed by friends of the mission in the Netherlands East Indies.<sup>19</sup> By 1940, a total of six *pandita*-courses had been held, in which a total of thirty indigenous pastors had been trained.

In addition to the *pandita*-courses, a new and less expensive mode of upgrading was developed in the form of retreats for Niasan church leaders (*pandita*, *sinenge* and *guru*).<sup>20</sup> The goal was to improve the skills of the churchmen in both organisational management and pastoral counselling. The theme topic of the first such retreat, held 1-3 September 1936 in Gunungsitoli, 'What is the meaning of the Bible for Protestants in comparison to Catholics?', might well be called clairvoyant, considering that there were no Catholics on Nias until three years later. A second retreat was held in Sogae'adu 10-14 October 1936, shortly before the first synod.

#### 5.2.3 Self-Propagation

The Great Awakening had been the birth of the Ono Niha's participation in the preaching of the Gospel on a large scale. This included not only the above-mentioned professional church workers (*pandita*, *guru* and *sinenge*), but also lay Christians. Many Ono Niha were first introduced to Christianity by compatriots (e.g., during family visits, feasts, or even by self-appointed lay evangelists). While certain charismatic modes of self-propagation were suppressed by the missionaries (prophecy, speaking in tongues, the songs of the awakening, etc.), laypeople propagated their faith especially through devotions in private homes and through active participation in the worship services (e.g., choirs). Such activities were usually led by the Christian elders (*satua Niha Keriso*), who, often chosen from among the noblemen, were strong advocates of the Christian way.

#### 5.2.4 Diaspora Work

The work in the Niasan diaspora on Sumatra and Java was begun in 1926 in the Niasan congregation in Padang. By 1930, about four hundred Ono Niha Christians had settled in Tanjung Basung, an outer suburb. Many more were living on the plantations along the West Coast of Sumatra and in Tapanuli. They were often subject to a strong influence of Muslims.<sup>21</sup> Missionary Hendrik de Kleine in Sidem-

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<sup>18</sup> Cf. *BRM*, 1934, p. 221.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. *JBRM*, 1934 (1935), p. 72.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. A. Lück, 'Freizeiten unter unseren Mitarbeitern', in: *BRM*, 1937, pp. 5-9.

<sup>21</sup> Concerning diaspora-work, cf. *BRM*, 1934, p. 217; *BRM*, 1936, p. 11; *BRM*, 1938, pp. 73-82.

puan, a Dutch national and later the director of the RM, to a certain extent supervised the pastoral service to the Ono Niha on Sumatra.<sup>22</sup> Financially, the work was supported by the above mentioned special diaspora fund from Nias, called *Dana Oe'aloel Dalifoësögoe*.<sup>23</sup>

The bond of mutual support between Ono Niha Christians on Nias and those in the diaspora became an important factor in maintaining the identity of a specifically Niasan Christianity in an increasingly changing society. The founding synod in 1936 officially declared this work to be one of the major duties of the church.<sup>24</sup>

The second synod, held in November 1937 in Sifaoro'asi, discussed the service to the Niasan diaspora more thoroughly. It added the Banyak Islands (to the north of Nias, adjacent to Aceh) to the scope of responsibilities, where an evangelist (*sinenge*) was to be appointed for the small congregation of *Ono Niha Keriso*. The synod also decided that all congregations should make regular contributions for the work in the diaspora.

#### 5.2.5 Medical Service

Medical service was the most important part of the charity<sup>25</sup> (*diakonia*) of the RM on Nias. Generally speaking, Ono Niha were suspicious if someone offered them charity, but since the missionaries had, from the earliest beginnings, provided medicine either free of charge or for very little money, this was accepted as a Christian duty.

The first auxiliary mission hospital, opened in Sifaoro'asi in 1913, was, in the 1930s, still functioning well under its matron, Sister Margarete Dungs.<sup>26</sup> There were also clinics in Soga'e'adu and Hilisimaetanö. In the early 1930s, Missionary Friedrich Dörmann<sup>27</sup> built a second auxiliary hospital in Hilisimaetanö with support from the colonial government. The military hospital in Gunungsitoli was to be handed over to the RM.

The first missionary physicians of the RM arrived on Nias in 1934 in the persons of Dr. Martin Thomsen<sup>28</sup> and his wife, Dr. Margarete Thomsen.<sup>29</sup> They had already been prepared to go to the mission field in 1931. However, since, due to the financial crisis, the colonial authorities had hesitated to agree to subsidize this 'joint venture' with the RM, they could not be sent at that time.<sup>30</sup> Fortunately, help had been received from the 'Rhenish Society for Medical Mission'<sup>31</sup>, as well as from the Dutch philanthropic society SIMAVI.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Cf. *BRM*, 1934, p. 217. Cf. G. Menzel, *Die Rheinische Mission*, 1978, pp. 368-369.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. *Toeria*, 19/1 (1932); *Toeria*, 22/8 (1935); *Toeria*, 23/9 (1936); *Toeria*, 23/11 (1936).

<sup>24</sup> 'Synodalakten' (RMG 2.804).

<sup>25</sup> Medical service was considered a 'service of love' (*Liebestätigkeit*), cf. *BRM*, 1938, pp. 82-83.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. *JBRM*, 1932 (1933), p. 44.

<sup>27</sup> Friedrich Dörmann (25 August 1901 Gelsenkirchen – 30 December 1983 Waldbronn).

<sup>28</sup> Martin Thomsen (2 September 1902 Rendsburg / Holstein – 9 June 1978 Lich).

<sup>29</sup> Margarete Thomsen née Kühn (23 June 1902 Weidenau – 26 April 1987 Lich), cf. *BRM*, 1934, p. 222.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. *BRM*, 1932, p. 280; cf. S.C. Graaf van Randwijck, *Handelen en denken in dienst der zending II*, 1981, pp. 562-569 (cf. pp. 573-574 n. 43).

<sup>31</sup> Cf. P. Kupfernagel, '50 Jahre Rheinischer Verein für Ärztliche Mission', in: *BRM*, 1956, pp. 233-236.

<sup>32</sup> 'Steun In Medische Aangelegenheden Voor Inheemsen' (support in medical matters for indigenous people), founded in 1926 in the Netherlands. SIMAVI did not bear running costs, but it provided support for medical apparatuses and travelling expenses.

Upon the Thomsens' arrival on Nias, they first went to the auxiliary hospital in Sifaoro'asi to learn the Niasan language and customs.<sup>33</sup> They were then stationed in Gunungsitoli to work in the former military hospital, which, in the meantime, was in the hands of the RM. At regular intervals, they also visited the auxiliary hospitals in Sifaoro'asi, Hilisimaetanö and, as of 1937, also that in Sogae'adu.

The fact that the first Niasan nurse, Mariza Telaumbanua, came to assist the Thomsens in Gunungsitoli in 1934 contributed towards the rapidly growing acceptance of the mission's medical service.<sup>34</sup> By the year 1939, the hospital in Gunungsitoli had had 2817 patients.<sup>35</sup>

#### 5.2.6 Educational Service

On 1 July 1931, a secondary school for girls, headed by mission-sisters Hanna Blindow<sup>36</sup> and Emilie Röhm, was opened for 41 pupils, of whom fourteen stayed in the boarding house in Tohia, an outer suburb of Gunungsitoli.<sup>37</sup> The school was later moved to the centre of town, but throughout its history never had more than 56 girls at a time. It then had to be closed due to World War II. In 1936, a Dutch secondary school, supported by the 'Dr. Nommensen School Society' on Sumatra, was established on Nias and provided an additional institution for training future leaders.<sup>38</sup> On the other hand, beginning in 1932<sup>39</sup>, many mission schools in the interior had already had to be closed because of the government policy of austerity on subsidies and because many parents could not afford the school fees of three cents a month.<sup>40</sup>

### 5.3 INDEPENDENT NIASAN CHURCH (1936-1940)

The RM-mission church in the Batakland had already achieved 'autonomy' in 1930 by convening its first synod. The Batak Protestant Christian Church (HKBP) was founded as the first Indonesian church.<sup>41</sup> Six years later, in 1936, the church on Nias followed suit, and the Protestant Christian Church of Nias (BNKP) was established.

#### 5.3.1 The Founding Synod on Nias (1936)

The first synod assembly on Nias, held in 1936 in Gunungsitoli<sup>42</sup>, was called an *owasa sinode* (great synod feast).<sup>43</sup> At its opening, four thousand people were

<sup>33</sup> Cf. *JBRM*, 1934 (1935), pp. 72-73.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. *Toeria*, 22/8 (1935).

<sup>35</sup> *BRM*, 1940, p. 126 (this is the last official statistic before the war).

<sup>36</sup> Hanna Blindow (10 February 1896 Görlitz – 9 October 1959 Gunungsitoli).

<sup>37</sup> Cf. *BRM*, 1932, pp. 281, 299; *JBRM*, 1932 (1933), p. 44 (Dutch: *Meisjes Vervolgschool*; German: *Gehobene Mädchenschule*); Blindow held Bible classes for women, cf. *BRM*, 1940, pp. 127-129.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. A. Schneider, *Turia*, 1965, pp. 47-48.

<sup>39</sup> In 1932-1933 the number of teachers dwindled by 25% from 218 to 163, cf. *Barmer Missionsblatt*, 1934, p. 83.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. *JBRM*, 105/1934 (1935), p. 71.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. F.L. Cooley, *Indonesia: Church & Society*, 1968, pp. 67-69.

<sup>42</sup> The synod assembly met from Sunday, November 8, until Wednesday, November 11, 1936. Big tents were set up to house the members of the synod and the guests; cf. 'Protokoll der 1. Synode, 9-11 November 1936' (RMG 2.804); *Toeria*, 23/12 (1936).

<sup>43</sup> An *owasa* is the highest-ranking traditional pig-feast, convened in order to enable the donor to

present, including the missionaries, indigenous pastors (*pandita Niha*), teacher-preachers (*guru*), evangelists (*sinenge*), elders (*satua Niha Keriso*), civil servants (*pegawai negeri*), Christian chiefs (*salawa*) and the musicians. There were, altogether, seven hundred choir singers, in addition to one hundred trombonists, all of whom had prepared themselves for this great event for more than three months.<sup>44</sup> The guests of honour were the three surviving first fruits of Hilina'a, who had been baptised in 1874 by Denninger and Kramer: two men and a woman, whose names were N. Go'e, Ama Zilasi and Ina Gabonoa.<sup>45</sup>

On the opening day, a number of speeches were given and sermons were held. For the sake of the Batak and Ambonese Christians attending the celebration, these were both in the vernacular and in Indonesian (BI).<sup>46</sup> Ephorus Albert Lück preached on Ephesians 2:19-22 and *Pandita* Filemo Gulö on John 15:16.<sup>47</sup> *Pandita* Atöföna Harefa, *Guru* Ama Matia and *Tuhenöri* Siado also used the occasion to speak. The *tuhenöri* emphasised the important contribution made by the missionaries to Niasan society, stressing also that the base of the church should always remain the council of the local congregation, as well as the assemblies of the district and of the church circuit (*resor*). Unfortunately, the decentralized model suggested by the *tuhenöri*, which would have been in accordance with the traditional social structure centred on the village (*banua*) and the federation (*öri*)<sup>48</sup>, was not implemented, although as long as the missionaries were on the island, the church circuits did enjoy a certain degree of autonomy.

On November 9, the 26 members of the synod, consisting of fourteen *satua Niha Keriso* from the seven church circuits (*resor*), two *sinenge*, two *guru*, two *pandita*, two *pegawai negeri* and four missionaries, began deliberations concerning the formation of a Niasan church and its church order.<sup>49</sup> The provisional name of the church was to be 'Banoea Niha Keriso Protestant ba danö Nias', abbreviated as 'B.N.K.P.-Nias'. In 1948 this changed to BNKP.<sup>50</sup>

Fundamental to the church order<sup>51</sup> was that the 172 congregations and their respective councils would be clustered in 'districts' (*distrik*), usually headed by a *pandita*, while a number of districts formed a circuit (*resor*), coordinated by a missionary. Above the seven circuits, the highest decision making body of the church was the synod.<sup>52</sup>

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ascend to the highest social position, i.e., that of a *balugu* in North Nias or that of a *balö si'ulu* (a leading chief) in South Nias.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. *BRM*, 1937, pp. 208-211.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. *Toeria*, 23/12 (1936); cf. G. Menzel and H. Schekatz, '125 Jahre Evangelium auf der Insel Nias', in: *In die Welt für die Welt*, 27/3-4 (1991), pp. 11-16.

<sup>46</sup> Batak and Ambonese Christians, many of them in the service of the colonial administration or the colonial army (KNIL), were living on Nias.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. A. Schneider, *Turia*, 1965, p. 55 (quotation from the sermons are given here).

<sup>48</sup> Kinship (*mado*) plays a less dominant role among the Ono Niha compared to the Batak. There has never been an all-embracing monarchy on Nias.

<sup>49</sup> The agenda was prepared by the Nias Conference, cf. 'Konferenzen Nias 1930-1936' (RMG 2.782).

<sup>50</sup> When the Niasan church was acknowledged by the government in March 1938, the provisional name was maintained, cf. 'Besluit No. 138' dated 18 March 1938 (cf. RMG 2.804). On 14 December 1948, the church was registered as Banua Niha Keriso Protestan, abbreviated as BNKP ('Lembaran Negara No. 38 YO 14 Desember 1948 No. 1857/18/AK/48').

<sup>51</sup> *Lala Nihonogöi (atoeran) ba Mbanoea Niha Keriso Protestant ba Danö NIAS, 1938* (Arsip BNKP); cf. *BRM*, 1937, pp. 212-216.

<sup>52</sup> Nothing could be decided and implemented against the will of the board in Barmen. The annual conference of missionaries prepared the major issues, which were then discussed and officially decided upon by the synod. It was not until the next period, after 1950, that the synod became the

The ministries of the church would essentially be of two kinds: preachers (missionaries, *pandita*, *guru*, *sinenge*) and elders (*satua Niha Keriso*). At this stage no mention was made of deacons. Instead, the basic presbyterial-synodal structure was combined with the strong, almost Episcopal position of the *ephorus*, who was both the head-counsellor (*pastor pastorum*) and the executive leader of the church.<sup>53</sup> The church was thus given a centralistic and hierarchical organisation with the positions of leadership on the levels of the church circuits and the synod board tightly in the hands of the missionaries.

The missionaries, in their role as leaders of the church circuits and the synod board, were still responsible for church discipline, whereas the indigenous pastors (*pandita*) did most of the preaching, administered the sacraments, performed marriage services, and were responsible for confirmation, as well as for the supervision of the teacher-preachers (*guru*) and evangelists (*sinenge*). Special provisions were made for courses for training and upgrading, held on circuit level. Furthermore, a financial commission was appointed by the synod to administer the treasury (i.e., the central fund, the church aid fund and diaspora fund) and to deliberate on ways to raise funds and achieve financial self-support for the church.<sup>54</sup>

It was subsequently regretted that the RM had been hesitant in preparing the young churches on Sumatra, including Nias, for full independence. The lack of eagerness in matters of church order may be blamed on Pietism<sup>55</sup>, but the lack of trust in the capability of the Ono Niha to lead their own church was rooted in the racism predominant among the Europeans in colonial times.

### 5.3.2 Further Development of the Church Discipline

In 1923, the first general church discipline (*amakhoita*) had been implemented<sup>56</sup>, but this no longer fulfilled the requirements. The further development of the church discipline demanded more deliberations on the relationship between the new Christian way of life and the traditional beliefs and customs.<sup>57</sup> This became an important point on the agenda of the second synod, held in Sifaoro'asi 7-10 November 1937. *Pandita* Filemo Gulö<sup>58</sup> held a paper on 'Old and new Adat', focussing on the immensely high *böwö*-dowry, betrothals and marriages between children and close relatives, as well as polygamy and the erection of memorial megaliths (*gowe*) in honour of the chiefs, all of which were rejected as being contradictory to the Christian faith.<sup>59</sup>

During the third synod, held in Hilisimaetanö 14-18 August 1938, at which the official acknowledgement of the 'B.N.K.P.-Nias' by the government was announced<sup>60</sup>, the development of the church discipline necessitated a further discussion concerning Christian teachings and culture. Filemo Gulö suggested that all elements which seemed in conflict with Christianity be discussed in the congregations, the

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sovereign leading body of the church.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Ch. 4.6.5.4 and Ch. 6.5.1.3.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. 'Protokoll der 1. Synode', 9-11 November 1936, p. 5 (RMG 2.804).

<sup>55</sup> Such was the self-critical assessment of the RM-commission for Indonesia after World War II, cf. 'Bericht der Indonesien Kommission', Wuppertal-Barmen, 30 July 1946 (RMG 514).

<sup>56</sup> Concerning the *Amakhoita*, cf. Ch. 5.2.2.1 and Ch 6.3.3.2.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. *Toeria*, 23/11 (1936).

<sup>58</sup> Often referred to as Filemo II.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. A. Schneider, *Turia*, 1965, pp. 58-60. The *böwö*-dowry as such was not rejected.

<sup>60</sup> 'Besluit No. 138', dated 18 March 1938.



intention being that the new disciplinary polity would thereby become more relevant to the context.<sup>61</sup>

At the conference of missionaries in Ombölata on 21 June 1939, and in preparation for the forthcoming synod, Dörmann presented a paper entitled 'What could we, as leaders of the circuits, do to strengthen Christian morals in our church on Nias?'.<sup>62</sup> His intention was to fight against the remaining traits of paganism within Niasan Christianity. Dörmann's opinion was that syncretism, of whatever kind, was to be avoided.<sup>63</sup>

The new church discipline<sup>64</sup> was decided on by the fourth synod of the BNKP, convened in Sogae'adu 15-18 October 1939. A number of paragraphs are directed against remnants of the primal religion.<sup>65</sup> Again, the fourth synod discussed the dowry (*böwö*). The custom as such was not considered to be contrary to Christian beliefs, but the amount of the dowry was not to be set so high as to be a hindrance to marriage for young men, which could easily lead to lascivious behaviour. The synod issued a pastoral letter to all congregations, urging them to stand solidly on the foundation of the Word of God, seriously to fight all sin (i.e., things prohibited by the disciplinary code), and to lower the dowry.

While trying to eradicate all remnants of the primal religion, the missionaries nevertheless wished to maintain much of the *adat* as a civil code.<sup>66</sup> Certain fundamental characteristics, such as kinship (*fahuwusa*), hospitality, helpfulness (*faoböwö*), mutual respect (*fasumangeta*), knowledge about traditional architecture (*omo hada*), jewellery, poetry, dance (*hoho*), etc., did not conflict with a Christian (or any humanitarian) ethos. The development of the *amakhoita* as the disciplinary code of the BNKP was continued until 1940 when it was abruptly halted by World War II, and continued in the 1960s until now.

The pattern followed in developing the church discipline was to identify remnants of 'heathendom' in order to prohibit them. The absolute standard applied was the theology and traditions of the missionaries, rather than encouraging the Ono Niha to read the Bible from their own cultural perspective and applying it to their needs. The result was a legalistic approach, full of prohibitions and commandments, similar in nature to the *adat* but often more remote from the reality of life. Officially,

<sup>61</sup> Cf. 'Synodalberichte' (RMG 2.804).

<sup>62</sup> Cf. 'Was können wir als Ressortleiter tun, damit die christliche Sitte mehr und mehr in unserer Niaskirche gefestigt und vertieft wird?', in: 'Referate' (RMG 2.785). This paper was sent to the board in Barmen with a critical note from A. Lück, who had a less dramatic view of the dangers of syncretism than did Dörmann.

<sup>63</sup> Dörmann indicated four 'old heathen practices' still common among Niasan Christians, in order to prove that 'heathendom' was still alive. These 'heathen' practices were 1. the ancient custom of 'reading the heart of a chicken' (*famaigi tödö manu*) in connection with betrothal; 2. the ceremony of 'giving advice to the child that will be taken away' (*fame'e nono nihalö*), during which the bride would be told about the 'facts of matrimony'; 3. the 'name-giving to a newborn child' (*famatörö töi nono*), which occurs seven to fourteen days after birth; and 4. the ceremony of 'throwing away the objects of a deceased person' (*fanibo'ö gama gama zi mate*), performed due to the fear of the spirit of a deceased person. These issues are discussed more extensively by Telaumbanua in Ch. 2 and Ch. 6 in this book.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. 'Kirchenzuchtordnung' (*Amakhoita*), cf. *BRM*, 1939, pp. 79-84; *BRM*, 1940, pp. 118-119.

<sup>65</sup> The following were prohibited on penalty of excommunication: 1. Praying and sacrificing to the ancestral spirits or *adu zatua* (§ 7 and § 8); 2. erecting a megalith (*behu* or *gowe*) after a great pig-feast, since this practice was connected with the *adu nuwu* (§ 9); and 3. activities of the traditional priests (*ere*), such as magic, talismans, taboo-regulations (*amonita ba alakhao*) and shaman rituals, were to be abstained from (§ 10 - § 12).

<sup>66</sup> Cf. Ch. 2.4.3 and Ch. 6.3.3.2.

the Christian community adhered to the church discipline, while practically (and sometimes clandestinely), it also followed the code of the old *adat* (e.g., *böwö*, polygamy). Therefore, instead of bringing liberation through the transformation of the *adat*, Christianity actually added more rules and regulations which were very difficult to keep.

#### 5.4 PREPARATIONS FOR AN INDEPENDENT CHURCH ON THE BATU ISLANDS (1930-1942)

The gradual formation of an independent Protestant Christian Church of the Batu Islands was in some ways in stark contrast to the developments on Nias. During the first two decades of the DLM's service on the Batu Islands (1889-1919), the DLM as such, as well as its missionaries, had demonstrated both reluctance and negligence in the matter of preparing the Batunese Protestant Christian Church to stand on its own.

This changed considerably after the arrival of a new generation of missionaries in the 1920s. Parallel to the geographical expansion of the missionary work, the process of gradually building church structures gained momentum. The envisioned independence, intended to make European missionaries dispensable<sup>67</sup>, included the development of financial self-support, self-governance and self-propagation.

##### 5.4.1 Self-Support

Although rudimentary attempts to create a certain measure of financial self-support had been made during the first period, no regular system of church finances had been built up. Schröder and Steinhart improved this situation considerably. The magic word was 'church contribution'<sup>68</sup>, a kind of ecclesiastical poll tax. This system was introduced throughout the Batu Islands in 1925. Each adult member of the church who paid five guilders in taxes to the government had to contribute one guilder to the church.<sup>69</sup>

At the outset, this system of coupling the church contribution with the hated taxes raised by the colonial government caused quite a lot of confusion and opposition to the duty to pay.<sup>70</sup> On Sigata, the Christians did not want to pay it at all. It was only after Schröder had brought up the probability that the mission aid would dry up and that financial self-support was inevitable, that the issue was brought before the village councils and reluctantly accepted.<sup>71</sup> Generally, 'old Christians' (who had been baptised as children) were more reluctant to pay the annual church contribution than were 'new Christians' (who had become Christians as adults).<sup>72</sup>

Thus, since many neglected their financial duties, the implementation of the church contribution made sluggish progress. On Pulau Tello, a breakthrough came in 1929 during the preparations for the fortieth jubilee of the mission. The missionaries promised that the surplus of the contribution would be used to renovate the main

<sup>67</sup> So formulated in *EVB*, 44/3 (1926), pp. 58-59 and *EVB*, 49/4 (1931), pp. 81-86.

<sup>68</sup> Actual 'head-contributions' (*hoofdelijke omslag*), cf. *EVB*, 43/4 (1925), p. 76; 44/3 (1926), p. 58.

<sup>69</sup> For ten guilders in taxes, the church demanded two guilders in contributions. For every ten guilders more in taxes, one guilder was added to the church contribution.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. *EVB*, 44/4 (1926), p. 82 (a case on the island of Hayo).

<sup>71</sup> Cf. *EVB*, 44/3 (1926), p. 58.

<sup>72</sup> Cf. *EVB*, 45/2 (1927), p. 61.

church. This was to everyone's satisfaction and the church contributions were paid readily.<sup>73</sup> Apparently, local Christians could be motivated to contribute to concrete projects but not to make routine payments.<sup>74</sup>

When, in 1930, the mission was severely hampered by the world financial crisis, efforts were increased to move swiftly towards financial self-support.<sup>75</sup> Schröder believed that the annual church contribution should be linked to a 'funeral fund'.<sup>76</sup> No additional contributions would be necessary, but if someone died without having paid his contributions, he would not receive a Christian burial. On the other hand, the widow or children of a deceased man who had paid his contributions regularly had the right to receive a small pension. The premium would amount to five guilders for adults and two-fifty for children. But a person who was under church discipline would receive nothing. Orphans who did not attend catechism classes would also not receive the premium.<sup>77</sup> This somewhat coercive system proved difficult to implement on Pulau Tello and Sigata, but worked well on the islands with only one Christian village.<sup>78</sup> In addition to the 'funeral fund', on 29 December 1931, the small church council created a 'pension fund' for indigenous church workers.<sup>79</sup>

In 1938, there was a backlash in most of the congregations, since the low selling-price of copra was causing hardships. Schröder adjusted the system, intensifying personal encounter and spreading the burden. Church workers had to collect five to ten cents a week from each family, rather than an annual amount.<sup>80</sup> Gradually, the congregations became more self-sufficient<sup>81</sup>, balancing out the decline in the contributions from the DLM, as well as from the government (i.e., subsidies for schools). Management-wise, this worked as long as the missionaries controlled it, but it is doubtful whether there was any spiritual motivation among the Niasan Christians. Twenty years later, Gerhard Reitz reported the following impression:<sup>82</sup>

Giving to God out of a thankful heart for all that God has done for us, especially for the gift of His only-begotten Son to save us and make us heirs of eternal life, is not practiced in the B.K.P. As one paid and still pays today for the service of a "datu", medicine man, so one pays for the new "datus" of the church. As the "datus" of old regard certain villages as their source of livelihood, so the new "datus" of the church regard the church as their livelihood.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. *EVB*, 49/4 (1931), p. 81.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. *EVB*, 56/1-4 (1938), p. 45. This situation has not changed up to the present.

<sup>75</sup> Cf. *EVB*, 50/3 (1932), pp. 58-59. See also announcement by the board of the DLM in *EVB*, 51/4 (1933), pp. 73-76: 'NOODKREET. Onze Uitwendige Zending in nood. Een groot tekort. Haastige hulp gewenst'.

<sup>76</sup> Dutch: *Begraffenis fonds*.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. *EVB*, 50/1 (1932), pp. 6-7.

<sup>78</sup> Cf. *EVB*, 49/4 (1931), pp. 85-86.

<sup>79</sup> Cf. *EVB*, 50/1 (1932), p. 4. A service of fifteen years was required to qualify to receive this pension.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. *EVB*, 56/1-4 (1938), p. 45.

<sup>81</sup> Cf. *EVB*, 58/1-4 (1940), pp. 25-26, 29.

<sup>82</sup> G.O. Reitz, 'A report of the Church in the Batu Islands', 1959, p. 14. The Batak term *datu* for a traditional priest has never been used on Nias. The Niasan equivalent to *datu* is *ere*.

#### 5.4.2 Self-Governance

As on Nias, the preparations for the self-governance of the Batunese church entailed, basically, the drafting of a church order (constitution) and the development of indigenous leadership.

##### 5.4.2.1 Church Order

For the missionaries of German Lutheran origin, the introduction of councils of church elders (*satua Niha Keriso*) had not been an urgent matter. The first three elders of Pulau Tello had been installed on 27 October 1912 (twenty years after the first baptisms)<sup>83</sup> and on Sigata the first two were appointed in January 1914.<sup>84</sup> In 1915, Frickenschmidt set up some general guidelines which can be regarded as an embryonic church order.<sup>85</sup>

As the congregations grew and expanded, more differentiated structures became necessary. Schröder and Steinhart, who were Dutch, appointed elders in every congregation, thereby significantly improving the administration and organisation of the developing church. Through newly created councils, the indigenous church leaders were informed and consulted in orderly procedures, although their advice was not necessarily binding to the missionaries.

In the 1930s, a two-step electoral process was introduced. First, a grand council of all Christian men would choose candidates. These would then be acknowledged by an electoral commission, consisting of a missionary, two teacher-preachers of the respective area, and the paramedic of Pulau Tello.<sup>86</sup>

In 1930, a 'small church council' (*kleine kerkenraad*) was formed, consisting of all the elders and teacher-preachers of Pulau Tello, the paramedic and the missionaries, and was convened on a monthly basis. The meetings were well-attended, though some may have regarded this merely as an opportunity to eat pork.<sup>87</sup> In addition to the small church council, at the end of the year there was a 'grand annual conference of all the elders and *teacher-preachers*' of the Batu Islands, held on Pulau Tello.<sup>88</sup> That this was not merely a belated Christmas party is evident from the serious topics of these meetings (especially disciplinary and cultural matters). In addition to these regular meetings, there were also occasional ones held between the missionaries and the Christian chiefs, usually concerning the schools.<sup>89</sup>

Parallel to the small church council, an 'extended church council' (*grote kerkenraad*) was also established, consisting of all the members of the small church council plus a representative from each Christian village on Pulau Tello. The confirmed Christian men of each village chose representatives out of their midst, who then had to be acknowledged by the small church council.<sup>90</sup> In addition to their

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<sup>83</sup> Cf. letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 3 January 1913 (GAA 552/35).

<sup>84</sup> Cf. letter Ziegler to DLM, Sigata, 28 January 1914 (GAA 552/34).

<sup>85</sup> Cf. letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 19 August 1915 (GAA 552/35).

<sup>86</sup> Cf. *EVb*, 53/2 (1935), p. 39. *Mantri* Kajoe Hondrö was a member of the electoral commission on Sigata.

<sup>87</sup> So W.F. Schröder in *EVb*, 49/4 (1931), pp. 81-82; 58/1-4 (1940), p. 31.

<sup>88</sup> Cf. *EVb*, 50/1 (1932), pp. 4-10 (*Groote jaarlijksche Ouderlingen- en Goeroeconferentie*).

<sup>89</sup> Cf. *EVb*, 58/1-4 (1940), p. 32.

<sup>90</sup> Cf. *EVb*, 50/1 (1932), p. 12.

task as delegates to the council, the village representatives functioned as elders in their respective congregations. It was their duty to make sure that all Christians regularly attended worship services.<sup>91</sup> On 7 September 1931, the first meeting of the extended church council was held, attended by ten representatives of the villages, two regular elders, *Guru Fae'ö Gamuata*, *Mantri Kajoe Hondrö* and Missionary Schröder. Due to heavy rains and ill health, no representatives from Ikhu Mbanua or Folele were able to attend this historic meeting, which dealt with disciplinary matters concerning the church services.<sup>92</sup>

Given its representative character, the extended church council was soon regarded as a kind of a 'Batunese synod'<sup>93</sup>, although essentially the missionaries still made all the important decisions, particularly in matters surpassing the local village level and those concerning church discipline. The status of the extended church council, or 'Batunese synod', changed after the outbreak of World War II and the subsequent internment of the German missionaries on Nias. As far as was possible, Dutch missionaries had to assume the tasks of their German colleagues. Schröder was asked by the mission consulate in Batavia to move to Gunungsitoli. Steinhart was on furlough and could not return. For the first time, there was no European missionary shepherding the young church on the Batu Islands.

On 7 July 1940, three days after Schröder had left Pulau Tello for Gunungsitoli, a grand assembly of all the government and church leaders on the Batu Islands was convened. It appointed a church board, consisting of *Pandita Kana Wa'ambö* as chairman, *Guru Fae'ö Gamuata* as administrator and *Mantri Kajoe Hondrö* as treasurer.<sup>94</sup>

#### 5.4.2.2 Church Discipline

The missionaries still 'guided' the common deliberations on church discipline. Nevertheless, new regulations, ranging from simple technical rules to highly complex ethical directives, were developed in close cooperation with the *teacher-preachers*<sup>95</sup> and, ultimately, decided by the councils. Here are a few examples of such decisions:

1. Auctions (*lelang*), the proceeds of which go to church projects, may take place in the Sunday church service since they are not for personal benefit, but for the work of God.<sup>96</sup>

<sup>91</sup> Cf. *EVB*, 50/1 (1932), p. 12.

<sup>92</sup> Cf. *EVB*, 49/4 (1931), pp. 82-83; 50/1 (1932), pp. 11-12. The decision to form the extended church council was taken by the small church council on 18 August 1931.

<sup>93</sup> Not long after the extended church council had been established in 1931, W.F. Schröder used the term 'Batoesche Synode?' (with a question mark), cf. *EVB*, 50/1 (1932), p. 6. Later, the missionaries hoped that the synod might contribute toward deepening the spiritual life of the congregations, cf. *EVB*, 58/1-4 (1940), p. 35.

<sup>94</sup> Cf. G.O. Reitz, 'A report of the Church in the Batu Islands', 1959, p. 3.

<sup>95</sup> Three teacher-preachers, whose names are not mentioned, reportedly presented papers on the topic 'Engagement, marriage and burial, as practiced among the heathen and among Christians' ('Verloven, trouwen en begraven, zoals dat onder de heidenen gewoonte is en zooals het onder de Christenen wenschelijk is') before the extended church council in July, 1934, cf. *EVB*, 53/2 (1935), pp. 37-38.

<sup>96</sup> Cf. *EVB*, 49/4 (1931), p. 83; *EVB*, 50/1 (1932), p. 12. One of the elders objected, claiming that it turned the house of God into a place of business, an opinion which reflects a more Lutheran, rather than a Reformed attitude towards the church as a sacral place. But he could not convince the other

2. Christians wearing amulets or talismans (*jimat*) are to be expelled from the congregation.<sup>97</sup>
3. Christians using medicine from a traditional priest/priestess (*ere*) or Muslim medicine man or woman (*duku*) are to be expelled from the congregation.<sup>98</sup>
4. Christians committing adultery, including polygamy, are to be expelled from the congregation.<sup>99</sup>

On 29 December 1932 the extended church council passed a church discipline (*amachoita*) for the Batu Islands<sup>100</sup>, regulating issues such as Christians' converting to Islam or reverting to the worship of 'idols' (*adu*), church contributions, a funeral fund, etc. The regulations were implemented very strictly, misdemeanours occasionally resulting in excommunication.<sup>101</sup> Any person falling under church discipline was prohibited to attend the Lord's Supper and his or her children could not be baptised. No member of his or her family could receive a Christian burial, nor would the widow and orphans receive the premium of the funeral fund.

#### 5.4.2.3 Leadership

Since the beginning of the Christianisation of the Batu Islands, teacher-preachers (*guru*) had assisted the missionaries, both as schoolmasters in the mission schools and as pastoral assistants in the congregations. Such being the case, they also exercised considerable influence within society (e.g., Nathanael Ziliwu as chief of Baromado'u).

In the early 1930s, Steinhart suggested that a few teacher-preachers be employed by the DLM as 'evangelists', who would serve more than one mission post as a preacher, while also acting as wandering schoolteachers in more remote areas. While considerably strengthening the bond between the various congregations

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members of the extended church council, who followed the pragmatic reasoning of Missionary W.F. Schröder. Auctions are still held, not only at harvest festivals, but also in other Sunday services, rather often for the benefit of prestigious projects (e.g., buildings).

<sup>97</sup> Cf. 'Report on the meeting of the Small Church Council', Pulau Tello, 29 December 1931, in: *EVB*, 50/1 (1932), p. 5.

<sup>98</sup> To restore one's status, one had to attend all church services regularly for at least three months and also attend catechism classes during this period.

<sup>99</sup> To restore one's status, one had to attend all church services plus catechism classes for at least one year. This was acceptable, since in pre-Christian society adultery had been punished by death. Less acceptable was the even more severe punishment of polygamy. The transgressor had to attend church and catechism classes for two years and could not partake of the Lord's Supper as long as more than one wife was still alive.

<sup>100</sup> Cf. 'Amachoita Sarani ba Hoelo Batoe', 1932. The statement by G.O. Reitz that the 'B.K.P. had no written church constitution. Only customary regulations remained from the time of the Dutch missionaries' does not take this 'discipline' into consideration (G.O. Reitz, 'A report of the Church in the Batu Islands', 1959, p. 5).

<sup>101</sup> Though Steinhart followed this policy, he repeatedly raised doubts about the practice of excommunication; cf. letter Steinhart to DLM, Hilisimaetanö, 20 October 1924 and his report 'Het Zendingswerk op Zuid West Hibala', Pulau Tello, 16 September 1936, p. 5. In the case of the corrupt *demang* and former *guru*, Nathanael Ziliwu, Steinhart agreed to the implementation of harsh disciplinary measures, though not explicitly mentioning excommunication (cf. letter Steinhart to DLM, Pulau Tello, 3 February 1928).

scattered over vast areas, such an evangelist would also be more loyal to the church than would a government-subsidised *guru*.<sup>102</sup>

In 1940, just before Germany invaded The Netherlands, the board of the DLM in Amsterdam appointed *Guru Kana Wa'ambö* as *pandita*, which was considered an 'important step on the road to self-governance' and 'a fact of historical importance' for the Protestant Christian church on the Batu Islands.<sup>103</sup> In the absence of Kana Wa'ambö, who was studying in Sipoholon and Gunungsitoli (8 August 1941 - 9 January 1943), *Guru Gamuata* served as acting chairman of the church board.

#### 5.4.2.4 Ordination of a Batunese Minister

Whereas on Nias the first indigenous minister had already been ordained in 1906, on the Batu Islands the idea of a *pandita Niha* did not come up until 1912<sup>104</sup>, and even then was not acted upon. *Guru Gamuata*, the potential candidate for this ministry, was, instead, promoted to the position of evangelist of Sigata, while the DLM borrowed another Nias-missionary from the RM, Julius Ziegler, to serve temporarily (1913-1916) on Sigata.<sup>105</sup> The next generation of missionaries (Schröder and Steinhart) again saw the need for Batunese pastors, but did not push the matter.<sup>106</sup>

The missionaries of the DLM procrastinated far too long before taking the step of preparing Ono Niha for the ministry. As of 1939, Schröder requested of the DLM board in Amsterdam that Wa'ambö be allowed to enter the pastors' training course in Ombölata on Nias, considering that he was the only fitting candidate on the Batu Islands to be ordained to the ministry of Word and Sacrament.<sup>107</sup> However, due to the German occupation of the Netherlands in May 1940, the course on Nias did not take place.<sup>108</sup> Nevertheless, Wa'ambö did, indeed, become the first ordained minister of the Protestant Christian Church of the Batu Islands, albeit in a somewhat adventurous way.

Kana Wa'ambö was born in 1902.<sup>109</sup> He completed the mission school on Pulau Tello and learned the crafts of carpentry, iron work, and lamp repair.<sup>110</sup> At the age of eighteen, he entered the seminary in Ombölata, completing it in 1924 as the second best in his class. After having returned to the Batu Islands, he first served as the *guru* of Lorang until 1926<sup>111</sup>, after which he was transferred back to Pulau Tello. There he served the main station, while *Guru Golitö* served the branch congregation in Polele.<sup>112</sup> Wa'ambö and Steinhart, who valued him for his evangelistic zeal, worked

<sup>102</sup> Cf. *EVb*, 51/2 (1933), pp. 37-48 ('Evangelist', cf. *ibid.* p. 39).

<sup>103</sup> *EVb*, 59/1-4 (1941), pp. 19-20. For the year 1940, no annual report was made.

<sup>104</sup> Cf. letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 12 October 1912 (GAA 552/35); 'Notulen Hoofdbestuur', Amsterdam, 12 October 1915 (GAA552/7). At first, Frickenschmidt had considered a 'Pandita Batak', then a 'Pandita Nias'.

<sup>105</sup> Cf. Ch. 4.5.2. Ziegler arrived in March 1912 on Nias. On 20 May 1913 he arrived on Pulau Tello and from 24 September 1913 until the re-centralization of the mission work on Pulau Tello in 1916 he worked on Sigata.

<sup>106</sup> Cf. *EVb*, 49/2 (1931), p. 41; *EVb*, 49/4 (1931), pp. 81-82; *EVb*, 56/1-4 (1938), p. 30.

<sup>107</sup> Cf. letter W.F. Schröder to DLM, Pulau Tello, 27 February 1940 (GAA 552/38).

<sup>108</sup> Cf. 'Notulen Hoofdbestuur', Amsterdam, 21 June 1940 (GAA 552/9).

<sup>109</sup> Cf. A. Steinhart, 1889-1989. *100 jaar Kerk op de Batu-eilanden*, 1989, p. 53. His father was Mandija Tjadi.

<sup>110</sup> Cf. G.O. Reitz, 'A report of the Church in the Batu Islands', 1959, p. 3. Informant: Kana Wa'ambö.

<sup>111</sup> Cf. W.L. Steinhart, 'Jaarverslag 1926', Pulau Tello, 27 January 1927 (GAA 552/39).

<sup>112</sup> Cf. *EVb*, 45/2 (1927), p. 62.

well together.<sup>113</sup> From mid 1929 until 1939 Wa'ambö served as one of two teacher-preachers on Sigata. Throughout those ten years, he wrote excellent annual reports and ran his school in an exemplary manner.<sup>114</sup> When, in August 1939, his colleague Nikana Li was transferred from Sigata to Bötua (against the wishes of his congregation in the village of Fuge), Wa'ambö had to serve the whole of Sigata alone.<sup>115</sup> But he did good work even in this difficult situation.<sup>116</sup> He was regarded as an excellent preacher and exemplary in his family life.<sup>117</sup>

For the jubilee of the mission on the Batu Islands in 1939, Wa'ambö wrote an article<sup>118</sup> about the history of Christianity in this region, describing the traditional way of life ('when we were still heathen') in terms of 'complete darkness', 'brutal behaviour', 'no clothing' and 'dirt'. Christianity had brought 'light', 'civilization', 'cleanliness' and good medical treatment. His non-Christian ancestors had had 'no hope', having known 'only fear'.

When Schröder moved from Pulau Tello to Gunungsitoli in July 1940, Wa'ambö, who had just been appointed as *pandita* by the board of the DLM in Amsterdam<sup>119</sup>, was (temporarily) entrusted with the leadership of the Batunese church.<sup>120</sup>

It is uncertain when Wa'ambö was actually officially ordained. According to one source, Wa'ambö was ordained by Schröder the day before the latter left Pulau Tello for Gunungsitoli (on 3 July 1940)<sup>121</sup>; another source mentions that Wa'ambö was ordained by Schröder in a ceremony (*famahowu 'ö*) on 7 July 1940 in the church of 'Ndilo' (i.e., Pulau Tello).<sup>122</sup> According to Wäösaro Zandroto and Arnold Steinhart, however, this had happened 'just before' Schröder was forced to leave Pulau Tello by the Japanese conquerors on 16 August 1942.<sup>123</sup> Strangely, according to yet another source<sup>124</sup> claiming to go back directly to Wa'ambö, the latter was

<sup>113</sup> Cf. letter Steinhart to DLM, Pulau Tello, 11 August 1927 (GAA 552/39).

<sup>114</sup> Cf. letter W.F. Schröder to DLM, Pulau Tello, 20 April 1940 (GAA 552/38). The original reports by Kana Wa'ambö have been lost.

<sup>115</sup> Cf. *EVB*, 58/1-4 (1940), p. 42.

<sup>116</sup> Cf. *EVB*, 49/2 (1931), p. 38 ('Het werk te Sigata is oogenschijnlijk bij goeroe Kana Wa'ambö in goede handen').

<sup>117</sup> Cf. *EVB*, 47/3 (1929), p. 49.

<sup>118</sup> Kana Wa'ambö, 'Ter herinnering aan den vijftigjarigen zendingsarbeid op de Batoe-eilanden' (remembering fifty years of missionary work on the Batu Islands). 25 February 1889 - 25 February 1939, original in GAA 552/40 and published in *EVB*, 57/2 (1939).

<sup>119</sup> *EVB*, 59/1-4 (1941), pp. 19-20. For the year 1940, no annual report was made.

<sup>120</sup> Cf. 'Notulen Hoofdbestuur', Amsterdam, 30 October 1940 (GAA 552/9). There is no mention of Kana Wa'ambö's being ordained by W.F. Schröder, contrary to post-war statements (cf. 'Notulen Hoofdbestuur', Amsterdam 17 October 1945, GAA 552/9), in which W.F. Schröder claims that he had ordained Kana Wa'ambö as a 'Pandita' on 3 July 1940.

<sup>121</sup> 'Notulen Hoofdbestuur', Amsterdam, 17 October 1945 (GAA 552/9).

<sup>122</sup> Kana Wa'ambö, 'Amachoita Pulau Tello ba B.N.K.P', p. 3 (Arsip BNKP).

<sup>123</sup> A. Steinhart, the oldest son of Missionary W.L. Steinhart, holds that Kana Wa'ambö was ordained in 1942 by W.F. Schröder just before the latter's internment by the Japanese ('vlak voor zijn internering door de Japanners'), cf. A. Steinhart, *1889-1989. 100 jaar Kerk op de Batu-eilanden*, 1989, p. 26 and pp. 44-47; 'Historical Review' by W. Zandroto on 25 February 1989, in: *ibid.* pp. 10-11.

<sup>124</sup> G.O. Reitz, 'A report of the Church in the Batu Islands', 1959, p. 3. Kana Wa'ambö was one of twelve aspirant pastors from the BNKP to be ordained at that time. Kana Wa'ambö was commissioned to serve on the Batu Islands. A salary was promised him by the BNKP but never paid, so that he felt no allegiance to the BNKP, cf. G.O. Reitz, 'A report of the Church in the Batu Islands', 1959, p. 3. This ordination is not mentioned in the report of Kana Wa'ambö himself, cf. 'Amachoita Pulau Tello ba B.N.K.P', Arsip BNKP, Gunungsitoli.



addressed as 'assistant-pandita' and not as 'pandita' by the meeting of 'all government and church leaders on the Batu Islands' on 7 July 1940 (four days after the first alleged ordination) and ordained by Vice-*Ephorus* Fahede Mendröfa (also known as Ama Obedi) on 13 December 1942 (four months after the second alleged ordination). These contradictory data can be explained in the following way:

1. An ordination on 7 July 1940 on Pulau Tello is not possible, since Schröder had already left Pulau Tello on 4 July 1940. The author of the report probably confused the date of the ordination with the date of the meeting of 'all government and church leaders on the Batu Islands';
2. Zandroto and Arnold Steinhart seem to have confused the temporary removal of Schröder from Pulau Tello to Gunungsitoli in July 1940 (to preside as 'chairman' of the council of the 'Batak-Nias-Mission') with his later forced departure in August 1942 (after the Japanese had occupied the Batu Islands).
3. Whereas an ordination on 3 July 1940 would explain the announcement in the DLM mission magazine in 1941<sup>125</sup>, it does not explain why Wa'ambö was not acknowledged as *pandita* by the other church leaders on the Batu Islands and why he was later ordained again by the *ephorus* of the BNKP. This is contrary to the traditions and practice of both the Lutheran and the Rhenish churches.
4. An alternative explanation would be that Schröder had had no opportunity to ordain Wa'ambö until August 1941, after he temporarily returned from Gunungsitoli to Pulau Tello. According to the sources, however, Wa'ambö did not return from Gunungsitoli to Pulau Tello until January 1943, after Schröder had already been interned. He had not been on the Batu Islands when Schröder was forced to leave in August 1942. Schröder had transferred the leadership to Gamuata<sup>126</sup>, the administrator and Wa'ambö's substitute. Also, the last annual salary, paid out by Schröder before he was interned, was transmitted to Wa'ambö in Gunungsitoli by the medical officer Doctor Hetz.<sup>127</sup>
5. One must therefore conclude that Wa'ambö was only appointed by the board of the DLM, but never officially ordained by Schröder. The missionary had postponed the ordination, waiting for the aspirant pastor to finish his *pandita*-course in Sipoholon<sup>128</sup> first. In the end, Schröder's internment prevented his performing the candidate's ordination, so that Wa'ambö was ordained by the vice-*ephorus* of the BNKP on 13 December 1942.

On 9 January 1943, *Pandita* Kana Wa'ambö departed for Pulau Tello. Back on Pulau Tello, poverty was severe. Wa'ambö had to earn a living by taking up his trades again and opening a shop, while continuing to serve the church. He suffered a

<sup>125</sup> Cf. *EVB*, 59/1-4 (1941), pp. 19-20.

<sup>126</sup> Cf. report of W.F. Schröder, 1947, in: A. Steinhart, *1889-1989. 100 jaar Kerk op de Batu-eilanden*, 1989, pp. 44-47; Fae'ö Gamuata (abbreviated as 'Wae'ö'). The 'administrator' was a kind of general secretary.

<sup>127</sup> Cf. G.O. Reitz, 'A report of the Church in the Batu Islands', 1959, p. 3; information from Kana Wa'ambö.

<sup>128</sup> Wa'ambö attended the training course for aspirant pastors in Sipoholon, North Sumatra (8 August 1941 - 12 May 1942). He was one of the best students. Afterwards, he went to Gunungsitoli for some additional theological training at an 'emergency school', run by Niasan pastors; cf. letter W.F. Schröder to W.L. Steinhart, Medan, 2 December 1945 (GAA 552/38); 'Notulen Hoofdbestuur', Amsterdam, 17 October 1945 (GAA 552/9).

great deal of pressure for refusing to venerate the emperor of Japan (*Tenno Heika*).<sup>129</sup> Throughout all of these tribulations, as well as the following struggle for Indonesian independence, right up to the merger of his church into the BNKP in 1960, Wa'ambö led the 'Batunese synod',<sup>130</sup> and largely succeeded in keeping the church together and functioning.<sup>131</sup> Seen in retrospect, it cannot be denied that the ordination of a Batunese minister had happened at the last minute, or perhaps even too late.<sup>132</sup>

#### 5.4.3 Self-Propagation

During the 1920s and 1930s, Christianity spread to most of the more remote regions of the Batu Islands, albeit in fierce competition with Islam.<sup>133</sup> In addition to the teacher-preachers, and especially to the newly appointed evangelists, it was often *Niasan* lay-people, who had settled on other Batu Islands as farmers and fishermen, who introduced Christianity to the local population.

Sometimes Christian witness assumed quite unique and not altogether 'orthodox' forms. This can be illustrated, for example, by a remarkable report about an 'Abrahamic sacrifice', that had been brought by the wife of Mböta (the brother of *Guru* Wania on Hajo and *Guru* Nikana Eli in Lumbui) in Saeru, Tanah Masa. She had not yet been baptised, not because she did not believe in Jesus Christ, but because she had not yet had an opportunity to attend catechism classes. When one of her children died and the older one was also very ill, her family wanted her to call a traditional priest (*ere*), but she refused. Then a prominent Christian man by the name of Fabö'ö (who later became a kind of free-lance evangelist<sup>134</sup>), also from Saeru, prayed for her. The woman took an oath: if her child lived, she would take him to Pulau Tello to be baptised. In order to praise God, she wanted to sacrifice a goat. This was to be a 'burnt offering', just like Abraham's. Fabö'ö then called all the Christians from Saeru together and they burned a goat as an offering to God. The child lived and Schröder came to Saeru. On 9 July 1934, Schröder baptised mother and child after having examined the woman in the basics of the Christian creed. Concerning the 'Abrahamic sacrifice', the missionary explained that this had lost its significance for Christians, for whom a much greater sacrifice had been made by Jesus Christ on the cross.<sup>135</sup>

Guarding the 'pure' teachings of Christianity, as it was understood by the missionaries, and forging a unity among the widespread, often extremely remote, congregations in the Batu archipelago made communication an indispensable, but

<sup>129</sup> Cf. G.O. Reitz, 'A report of the Church in the Batu Islands', 1959, p. 4.

<sup>130</sup> Cf. letter Steinhart to DLM, Utrecht, 4 March 1943, p. 7 (GAA 552/39). Wa'ambö was supported by the Batunese synod ('bijgestaan door de Batoesche Synode').

<sup>131</sup> Kana Wa'ambö retired in 1960, the year his church merged with the BNKP. He died in 1987, cf. A. Steinhart, *1889-1989. 100 jaar Kerk op de Batu-eilanden*, 1989, p. 8.

<sup>132</sup> Cf. J. Hallewas, *Lutherse Wereldzending Nu*, 1955, p. 8, 'zijn we niet te laat toegekomen aan de zelfstandigmaking van de Batu-kerk? Had niet reeds eerder één zendeling vervangen dienen te worden door een geordende Niasse predikant?'.  
<sup>133</sup> Cf. Ch. 4.8.2.

<sup>134</sup> Fabö'ö was a settler from Pulau Tello, who had come to Saeru for farming coconuts. Every Sunday, he used to gather Christians for Bible study and reading the magazine *Toeria Hoelo Batoe*. He arranged successful Christmas celebrations in Saeru, for which he made torches from bamboo and resin from trees, cf. *EVB*, 52/4 (1934), pp. 76-77.

<sup>135</sup> *EVB*, 52/4 (1934), pp. 74-76.

difficult, venture.<sup>136</sup> The often problematic issues and the subsequent decisions of the councils had to be communicated to the congregations and scattered groups of Christian settlers in order to be implemented. For this purpose, the production and spread of literature in the vernacular (i.e., the Niasan dialect of the Batu Islands) had high priority. In 1927 a printing press was put into operation on Pulau Tello, which produced materials for the mission's own administration and its schools, as well as booklets and a church magazine in the Batunese vernacular.<sup>137</sup>

In October 1928, the first edition of the church magazine, *Toeria Hoelo Batoe*, was published. As of January 1929, it appeared regularly every month and soon became the major means of communication between the mission and the congregations. Every family which paid its annual contributions received the magazine free of charge and others could obtain single copies for 25 Cents.<sup>138</sup> It seems to have been very influential and popular, reaching a circulation of 160 copies by 1931 and 180 by 1940.<sup>139</sup> In 1932, a series of ten articles from 'The Little Book of the Heart'<sup>140</sup> had appeared, having a lasting impact on the spiritual life of the readers of and listeners to *Toeria Hoelo Batoe*.<sup>141</sup> In addition to the mission magazine, the hymnal (*Boekoe Nainö*) and Luther's Short Catechism also served as instruments for the propagation of the Christian faith by the Ono Niha.

#### 5.4.4 Establishing Mental Links between Christianity and Primal Religion

As was the case with the RM on Nias, the attitude of the DLM on the Batu Islands towards the indigenous culture was, to say the least, unappreciative, especially towards aspects considered to be closely related to the primal religion. Open aggressiveness was even more marked among the indigenous church workers than among the missionaries. The former rather often contrasted the 'complete darkness, fear and dirt' of the past with the 'light, civilization and cleanliness' of Christianity (Wa'ambö).<sup>142</sup>

Steinhart's approach, however, was quite contrary to this pattern. He not only attempted to adapt himself to some of the habits of the Ono Niha<sup>143</sup>, but also studied Niasan culture with unusual intensiveness. For this, he was criticised by members of the board of the DLM, but praised by such a 'big name' as Hendrik Kraemer.<sup>144</sup>

<sup>136</sup> Cf. W.L. Steinhart, 'Tolken van Christus?', in: *De Opwekker*, 76/4, 1931; cf. Ch. 6.2.1.

<sup>137</sup> Three hundred copies of the Short Catechism by Martin Luther and three hundred copies of a hymnbook encompassing 102 hymns (*Boekoe Nainö*) were published in 1928, reaching a third edition in 1940, cf. *EVB*, 49/2 (1931), pp. 34, 38; *EVB*, 58/1-4 (1940), p. 58. The Gospel according to Mathew in the Batu dialect and parts of the Old Testament were available by 1938, cf. *EVB*, 56/1-4 (1938), p. 34.

<sup>138</sup> Cf. *EVB*, 49/2 (1931), p. 38; 56/1-4 (1938), p. 34.

<sup>139</sup> Cf. *EVB*, 47/2 (1929), pp. 36-37; 50/2 (1932), p. 51; 58/1-4 (1940), p. 58.

<sup>140</sup> The Sundermann translation, *Tödö Niha* (ca. 1890), had been adapted to the Batunese dialect.

<sup>141</sup> Cf. *Toeria Hoelo Batoe* 4/1-10 (1932).

<sup>142</sup> Kana Wa'ambö, 'Ter herinnering aan de vijftigjarigen zendingsarbeid op de Batoe-eilanden. 25 Februari 1889-25 Februari 1939', original in GAA 552/40 and published in *EVB*, 57/2 (1939).

<sup>143</sup> E.g., Steinhart ate with his fingers in order to show his respect for his hosts; *EVB*, 46/3 (1928), p. 49. He maintained friendships with 'outsiders' such as ex-guru Mandija and the traditional priest Fözi Dzihönö. The tone of his reports regarding cultural matters is more appreciative than that of other missionaries on the Batu Islands.

<sup>144</sup> Cf. letters Steinhart to Westermann, Hagenburg, 19 September 1931; letter Steinhart to W.F. Schröder, Pulau Tello, 21 October 1933 (this letter mentions a reaction of H. Kraemer to Steinhart's article, 'Iets over de Zending en haar arbeiders ten opzichte van het Inheemsche huwelijk', in: *De Opwekker* 78/8 (1933), letter Steinhart to Westermann, Pulau Tello, 16 January 1934 (this letter

Steinhart wanted to know the 'soul' of the Ono Niha.<sup>145</sup> To this end, he studied their culture, neither idealising it nor denying its fundamental differences to Christian teachings<sup>146</sup>, saying that the *adat* of the Ono Niha (*hada nono niha*) was directed to the past, whereas the Gospel is directed to a new future. But this by no way meant that the *adat* had no spiritual perspectives towards the living God: 'In the jungle of one's own ethnic life, one must learn to discover the beaten tracks and paths which lead to Christ, the source of life.'<sup>147</sup>

Steinhart considered one's cultural heritage to be a necessary point of orientation for being able to comprehend the proclamation of the Gospel and, in some respects, a genuine pre-Christian conception of God's truth. The missionary must thus be aware that his destruction of an indigenous culture instead of reorienting it towards Christ<sup>148</sup> has a paralysing effect on the members of that culture and leads to a tragic loss of both their identity and self-confidence. Establishing mental links to traditional symbols can have an astonishingly illuminating effect, as in the case of the Christmas tree and the mythical world-tree of the Ono Niha, which was a genuine piece of good fortune (the missionaries were flabbergasted by the effect the Christmas tree had on Ono Niha, not realising that the Christmas tree was being associated with the world-tree).<sup>149</sup> Steinhart advised that even the inseparable connection between physical remedies and the spiritualistic (or magic) ceremonies of traditional healing be valued by the missionaries for its merits, and not, in the name of Western 'Christian medicine', simply rejected as being 'devilish'.<sup>150</sup>

Steinhart's work as a collector and preserver of Niasan poetry and priestly litanies<sup>151</sup> is also remarkable.<sup>152</sup> In his scholarly articles, he often concentrated on religious concepts of the primal religion, comparing them with the Christian counterpart. The most striking example is to be found in Steinhart's deliberations concerning the concept of 'the holy', which he worked out in cooperation with Gamuata.<sup>153</sup> The mystical experience of 'the holy' becomes the connecting point

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mentions the correspondence with Kraemer), letter Steinhart to Manger, Pulau Tello, 23 January 1935 (GAA 552/39); 'Notulen van het Hoofdbestuur', Amsterdam, 11 March 1938, 30 June 1939 (GAA 552/9); cf. A. Steinhart, *1889-1989: 100 jaar Kerk op de Batu-eilanden*, 1989, pp. 32-37.

<sup>145</sup> Cf. letter Steinhart to DLM, Hilisimaetanö, 20 October 1924 (GAA 552/39).

<sup>146</sup> Cf. W.L. Steinhart, 'De spanning tussen Christendom en cultuur op de Batoe-eilanden', paper presented at the general assembly of the DLM on 12 April 1944 in Amsterdam (GAA 552/9).

<sup>147</sup> W.L. Steinhart, 'De Evangelie-prediker en zijn houding ten opzichte van de Inheemsche cultuur', in: *De Opwekker* 82/4 (1937), p. 149 ('In het oerwoud van het eigen volksleven moet men de weggetjes en paden leeren ontdekken, die op Christus, als de Levensbron, uitloopen').

<sup>148</sup> He uses terms such as 'renewal' (*vernieuwing*) and 're-creation' (*herscheping*), cf. 'De spanning tussen Christendom en cultuur op de Batoe-eilanden', 1944 (GAA 552/9).

<sup>149</sup> Cf. W.L. Steinhart, 'De Evangelie-prediker en zijn houding ten opzichte van de Inheemsche cultuur', in: *De Opwekker* 82/4 (1937), pp. 155-158 (see p. 158 n. 1). Further references, cf. U. Hummel, *Sirihpruim en Kruis*, 2002, pp. 66-68, 104.

<sup>150</sup> Cf. W.L. Steinhart, 'Magie en geloof bij het behandelen van zieken', in: *De Opwekker* 82/9 (1937), pp. 421-433.

<sup>151</sup> Most well known are *Niassche Priesterlitanieën*, 1938, and *Niassche Teksten I-XL*, 1934-1954.

<sup>152</sup> Cf. H. Maier, *Stories from Nias. W.L. Steinhart and Fözi Dzihönö*, 1990, p. 145, argues that this is probably not typical of Niasan culture in a more general sense. However, Steinhart did not claim that his findings in the Batunese context had a *pars pro toto* relevance for the whole cultural realm of the Ono Niha.

<sup>153</sup> Cf. *EVB*, 46/3 (1928), pp. 54-55; cf. W.L. Steinhart, 'De Christianiseering van het Niassche begrip "heilig"', in: *De Opwekker* 74/2 (1929), pp. 47-58. Steinhart refers to Rudolf Otto, *Das Heilige*, 1917/1924. The commonly used Niasan term *amoni'ö* may mean that which is untouchable or holy. However, if the passive tense *ni'amoni'ö* is used as the adjective 'holy' in Holy Ghost (*eheha ni'amoniö*) or holy God (*Lowalani ni'amoni'ö*), as is done in Sundermann's Niasan translation of

between the Batunese primal religion and the Christian faith. The mission merely needs to add an ethical meaning to the Niasan concept of the holy.<sup>154</sup> 'The old form has to be given a new content'.<sup>155</sup>

In another article<sup>156</sup>, Steinhart struggles with the problem of exclusive 'missionary language', often following a Western pattern, which is not in accordance with the Niasan context (e.g., the negative connotation of 'cold' and the positive connotation of 'hot' in Revelations 3:15-16, which is precisely the reverse of the connotations in the Niasan context). He explicitly mentions the challenge of the encounter between Gospel and culture and the new insights it makes possible into the inexhaustible richness of Christ. The question arises concerning the degree to which the Ono Niha have adopted Christianity. Referring to the use of the title Lord (*So'aja*) for God and Jesus, and the original magic meaning of the term in the vernacular, he argues that the Ono Niha emphasise the magic powers of Jesus, rather than his suffering on the cross for the salvation from sin.<sup>157</sup> He holds that this is an authentic expression of faith, documented in parts of the Bible<sup>158</sup>, but of a lesser degree of religious development.<sup>159</sup>

Steinhart's appreciative attitude towards the traditional culture of the Ono Niha – including the primal religion – had come too late to correct the extreme dualism which had already been adopted by indigenous church leaders like Wa'ambö. Nevertheless, it was a salute to the dignity and cultural identity of the Ono Niha.

#### 5.4.5 Medical Service

The medical service was further developed under the supervision of Missionary Schröder, who, as a male midwife, was quite famous among the Ono Niha. The missionary wives, especially Margarethe Steinhart, née Teudt, who had received training as a nurse in Germany, also offered a great deal of valuable advice and help to women and children. In addition to the health education provided during house visits or in courses, the mission magazine *Toeria Hoelo Batoe* was also occasionally used to spread general health instructions.<sup>160</sup>

The Batunese paramedic, *Mantri* Kajoe Hondrö<sup>161</sup>, developed remarkable skills in treating ailments, using medicine provided by the colonial government.<sup>162</sup> His service was appreciated by Christians, Buddhists and Muslims alike. When the missionaries, in 1933, requested a European nurse for the hospital on Pulau Tello, the board in Amsterdam not only raised the question of the additional financial

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the Bible, this leads to misunderstandings and infringes on the majesty and absoluteness of God. Steinhart is convinced that pre-Christian Ono Niha had a true sense of the 'holy' in its basic, non-ethical meaning. Referring to Otto, he argues that the Ono Niha know the awe and fascination of the 'totally Other'. The experience of the 'rough holy' is expressed in the term *amonita*. The correct adjective would then be *mo'amonita*.

<sup>154</sup> Cf. W.L. Steinhart, 'De Christianiseering van het Niassche begrip "heilig"', in: *De Opwekker* 74/2 (1929), p. 51.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.* p. 53.

<sup>156</sup> W.L. Steinhart, 'Karakteristiek geloof', in: *De Opwekker* 75/7 (1930), pp. 365-374.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 369-371.

<sup>158</sup> E.g., Mt 8: 5-13, 9:20-22, 25:14-30; Acts 8:9-24.

<sup>159</sup> Cf. W.L. Steinhart, 'Karakteristiek geloof', in: *De Opwekker* 75/7 (1930), pp. 371-374. Steinhart considers the prophetic and the ethical to be superior to the magical and the sacral.

<sup>160</sup> Cf. *Toeria Hoelo Batoe* 5/1 (1933), concerning the treatment of malaria.

<sup>161</sup> Cf. Ch. 4.7.3.

<sup>162</sup> Cf. A. Steinhart, 1889-1989. *100 jaar Kerk op de Batu-eilanden*, 1989, pp. 49-50.

burden to the DLM, but also mentioned the problem that a European nurse would infringe on *Mantri* Kajoe's independent way of working, which was so highly valued. Although the missionaries continued to urge that a European nurse be sent, this was not granted by the board of the DLM.<sup>163</sup>

By 1938, the hospital on Pulau Tello was completely self-supporting. Despite an increasingly desperate economic situation on the Batu Islands, the missionaries were even able to raise enough money within the local population to build a house for *Mantri* Kajoe.<sup>164</sup> Later that year, an extension ward was added to the hospital. The medical service of the DLM on the Batu Islands was praised by both the governmental medical officer and by RM-physician Dr. Thomson from Nias, who visited Pulau Tello repeatedly.<sup>165</sup>

When the Japanese occupied the Batu Islands in 1942 (see below), Schröder received permission to continue serving as director of the hospital on Pulau Tello for some time. On 16 August 1942, he had to terminate his medical service and enter Japanese internment on Sumatra. After World War II, a medical team which had been prepared by the DLM to continue the medical service was not able to enter the Batu Islands.<sup>166</sup>

After the Indonesian war of independence, the hospital was taken over by the Health Department of the Republic of Indonesia. The loss of the medical service, traditionally the most important service of the church to society next to Christian education, not only contributed to the deterioration of public health<sup>167</sup>, but also weakened the status of the Christian Protestant Church within the Batunese society.

#### 5.4.6 Educational Service

Until the mid 1930s, teacher-preachers (*guru*) were trained regularly in the seminaries in Depok (until 1936) and Ombölatata (until 1934). These well-qualified men worked as educators in the mission schools, while also serving local Christian congregations in a pastoral capacity. Though they were highly respected, their life was very hard. The salary of a teacher-preacher was 25 to thirty guilders a month (less than an eighth of the income of the missionary<sup>168</sup>), and since he was frequently transferred from one island to another, it was difficult for him to find sources of additional income.<sup>169</sup> As a local dignitary, he had financial responsibilities towards his extended family. His sons would often marry nobility and the subsequent high dowry would be a heavy burden.

For schools of at least 25 pupils, there was a government subsidy, of which support the mission eagerly made use. Occasionally, this led to a conflict of loyalties

<sup>163</sup> Cf. letter Steinhart to DLM, Pulau Tello, 21 October 1933; letter of Steinhart to Manger, Pulau Tello, 20 October 1937; letter Steinhart to DLM, Pulau Tello, 15 October 1938 (GAA 552/39).

<sup>164</sup> Letter Steinhart to Manger, Pulau Tello, 16 January 1938 (GAA 552/39).

<sup>165</sup> Cf. letter Steinhart to DLM, Pulau Tello, 15 October 1938 (GAA 552/39).

<sup>166</sup> The DLM wanted to station a missionary, Willem Jense, a medical doctor, Ms. Bep Fransen, and two nurses, Ms. Jo Decae and Ms. Miek Zier, on the Batu Islands or on Nias. Due to the presence of the Republican army on Nias and the Batu Islands, they served, for less than two years, on Sumatra and Java. Cf. A. Steinhart, *1889-1989. 100 jaar Kerk op de Batu-eilanden*, 1989, pp. 49-50.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.* p. 11.

<sup>168</sup> Steinhart considered an annual income of two thousand guilders insufficient for a missionary; cf. letter Steinhart to DLM, Pulau Tello, 6 November 1925 (GAA 552/39). Cf. 4.5.6.

<sup>169</sup> For some of the every-day experiences, methods and problems of the teacher-preachers on the Batu Islands, cf. W.F. Schröder, 'Wat onze Goeroes beleven', in: *EVB*, 50/4 (1932), pp. 73-83.

on the part of the teacher-preachers. When, due to the financial crisis, the colonial government drastically reduced the subsidies in the 1930s<sup>170</sup>, the missionaries introduced school fees, much to the regret of the local population. Since some schools had to be closed, Steinhart suggested that a few teacher-preachers be employed as evangelists, who would serve more than one mission post and teach the children whenever they visited a village.

Until World War II, all indigenous church workers<sup>171</sup> had to meet with the missionaries on Pulau Tello once a month to receive their salary, discuss disciplinary matters and prepare sermons.<sup>172</sup> Schröder and Steinhart provided a reference library for their use.<sup>173</sup> Occasionally, the teacher-preachers would contribute meditations and articles for the church magazine, *Toeria Hoelo Batoe*. Guru Gamuata operated the printing press on Pulau Tello and translated books into the Batunese dialect.<sup>174</sup> After World War II, Christian education was only partially maintained by the Batunese church.

## 5.5 MORATORIUM ON NIAS AND THE BATU ISLANDS (1940-1950)

The term 'moratorium' is used here in the sense of a temporary suspension of the links between the Ono Niha churches (i.e., the BNKP on Nias and the BKP on the Batu Islands) and the missionary societies (i.e., the RM in Barmen and the DLM in Amsterdam) during World War II and the subsequent struggle for Indonesian national independence (May 1940 - December 1949).<sup>175</sup> On the Batu Islands, this period resulted in both the birth of an independent Protestant Christian church and a total break with the DLM.

### 5.5.1 Internment of the German Missionaries and its Consequences

On 10 May 1940, Hitler's army invaded the Kingdom of the Netherlands. On that same day, the order was issued to intern all German nationals in the Dutch East Indies, including all 43 missionaries of the RM on Sumatra, Nias and Mentawai. On Nias, all German men were detained on 10-11 May 1940 and soon taken to Fort de

<sup>170</sup> Steinhart reported that the colonial government could guarantee subsidies for only nine mission schools on the Batu Islands. A tenth school, on Sifika, was still subsidised in 1931, but then the subsidies were stopped. Cf. Letter of Steinhart to DLM, Pulau Tello, 10 January 1931 (GAA 552/39).

<sup>171</sup> By 1925 there were seven teacher-preachers on the Batu Islands, while two others were serving as evangelists. By the time the missionaries had to leave in 1942, there were twelve teacher-preachers, one evangelist, and an assistant minister, cf. *EVB*, 43/1 (1925), p. 8; *EVB*, 44/2 (1926), p. 40; *EVB*, 45/2 (1927), p. 62.

<sup>172</sup> Cf. *EVB*, 49/2 (1931), pp. 54-55.

<sup>173</sup> Cf. *EVB*, 49/2 (1931), p. 55; *EVB*, 51/3 (1933), p. 67.

<sup>174</sup> Cf. *EVB*, 46/3 (1928), pp. 54-55.

<sup>175</sup> Alfred Schneider includes the years 1940 until 1950 in the period which he calls 'the new era' (*die neue Zeit*; 1940-1965). Whereas, from a political point of view, a 'new era' began for the Ono Niha, as for all Indonesians, with National Independence in 1945, the years 1940 until 1950 on Nias and the Batu Islands can be characterized as perseverance under extreme conditions. As of 1950, however, the BNKP opened itself for ecumenical cooperation on both the national and the international levels, while standing firm in the face of internal and external challenges. Cf. A. Schneider, *Turia*, 1965, pp. 63-93.

Kock on Sumatra.<sup>176</sup> The leadership of the church was transferred to Niasan office-bearers.<sup>177</sup> One day later, on May 12, the fifth synodal assembly of the 'B.N.K.P.-Nias' began in Gunungsitoli.<sup>178</sup> It was called the 'synod of grief'<sup>179</sup>, since, for the first time, the church on Nias was bereft of its missionaries. A new synod board was elected and *Pandita* Atöföna Harefa became the first Niasan *ephorus*.

The wives and children of the missionaries remained on Nias until August 1940. The women rendered an indispensable service during the transition, assuming tasks of their detained husbands and keeping in close contact with the indigenous leaders of the BNKP.<sup>180</sup>

On 19 January 1942, there were six RM-missionaries among the 411 Germans who drowned on the Dutch ship 'Van Imhoff', on course from Sumatra to Bombay. The 'Van Imhoff' sank, after it had been attacked by a Japanese bomber off the West Coast of Nias.<sup>181</sup> Among the victims was Albert Lück, the last German *ephorus* of the BNKP. 66 Germans survived the catastrophe and were detained in Gunungsitoli. After the Ono Niha had successfully revolted against the Dutch in the beginning of March, 1942, the Germans were released by the rebels. Gottlob Weiler from the Basel Mission, previously on Borneo, was asked by *Ephorus* Atöföna Harefa to assist the BNKP. He preached, in *Bahasa Indonesia*, in a number of worship services in Gunungsitoli during Holy Week, after which he departed from Nias.<sup>182</sup>

#### 5.5.2 Transfer of Dutch Missionaries

Since a few of the RM-missionaries on Sumatra were Dutch citizens, they had not been detained.<sup>183</sup> One of them was Hendrik de Kleine.<sup>184</sup> He did a great deal to help the detained wives and children of his colleagues, including those from Nias. On 14 May 1940, the Mission Consulate in Batavia officially assumed responsibility for the RM missions in the Batakland and on Nias, and the 'Batak-Nias-Mission'<sup>185</sup> (BNM) was formed to assume responsibility for the assets of the RM on Sumatra, Nias and Mentawai.

<sup>176</sup> Cf. *BRM*, 1940, p. 158 and p. 200; *BRM*, 1941, pp. 3-4. Later they were transferred to Koetatjane, North Sumatra.

<sup>177</sup> In a letter smuggled out of the camp, the missionaries transferred the leadership to *Pandita* Atöföna Harefa (cf. F. Zebua, *Kota Gunungsitoli*, 1996, p. 103). He was then elected *ephorus* by the synod assembly.

<sup>178</sup> Cf. A. Schneider, *Turia*, 1965, p. 64.

<sup>179</sup> 'Trauer-Synode', cf. A. Schneider, 'ER segne unseren Eingang mit dem Evangelio', in: *In die Welt für die Welt*, 1/8-9 (1965), pp. 158.

<sup>180</sup> Cf. the moving letter of Klara Lück née Oehl to the RM, in: *BRM*, 1941, pp. 3-4.

<sup>181</sup> Cf. Gottlob Weiler, *Der Untergang der van Imhoff*, 1957; Gerrit Grobben, *De Van Imhoff*, 1997; G. Menzel, *Die Rheinische Mission*, 1978, pp. 352-353. The missionaries of the RM who died were Wilhelm Kamman, Albert Lück, Julius Möller, Eduard Müller, Wilhelm Müller and Johannes Siegner.

<sup>182</sup> Cf. *BRM*, 1949, pp. 14-17. Weiler visited Fort de Kock in May-June, after the Japanese had occupied this camp on 16 March 1942. After the war, he reported the 'Van Imhoff' catastrophe to the wives and children of the missionaries, as well as to the mission societies.

<sup>183</sup> In the HKBP, they were the missionaries Hendrik (Heinrich) de Kleine, J. Karelse and D. Rijkhoek, as well as the teacher A. van der Bijl.

<sup>184</sup> Cf. 5.2.4.

<sup>185</sup> Dutch: *Batak-Nias-Zending*.



Thanks to the 'auxiliary board of missions'<sup>186</sup> in Batavia and the initiative of Mission Consul Maarten de Niet, who visited de Kleine during his visit to the Bataklands, 18 to 27 May 1940<sup>187</sup>, a number of missionaries from Dutch missionary societies were transferred to Sumatra and Nias to fill some of the gaps caused by the detention of the RM-missionaries.<sup>188</sup> They worked under the auspices of the BNM. On 29 June 1940, Missionaries L.H. Put<sup>189</sup> and Henk Pol<sup>190</sup> arrived in Gunungsitoli.<sup>191</sup> Schröder, from the DLM, was transferred from Pulau Tello to Gunungsitoli on 4 July 1940, to serve as the administrator of a three-man council of the BNM on Nias.<sup>192</sup> The fact that Schröder had to coordinate the missionary work from afar reduced the work on the Batu Islands to a very low level. A year later, he returned to Pulau Tello.

Doctor van der Plas, who had previously worked as a ship's physician, assumed the tasks of the Thomsens<sup>193</sup> in the hospital in Gunungsitoli. Henk J. Teutscher, who had been working in Dutch New-Guinea, arrived on 1 September 1940 and became the rector of the seminary in Ombölata, as well as assuming responsibility for the mission schools.<sup>194</sup> Despite some communication problems, due to the fact that most pupils could not speak Indonesian (BI) well, he managed to revive the courses for teacher-preachers and, despite the opposition of many Ono Niha, also initiated a course for women.<sup>195</sup> When Schröder returned to Pulau Tello in the second half of 1941, Missionary Cornelis (Kees) Zwaan from Talaud came to augment the ranks.<sup>196</sup> The Zwaan family was stationed in Hilisimaetanö until the Japanese invasion in April 1942.<sup>197</sup>

Although, officially, the BNM did not want to interfere with the leadership of the autonomous BNKP, it temporarily created a second leadership structure in addition to the synod board and controlled certain church districts, the schools and the seminary. For all practical purposes, it functioned as the successor to the conferences of missionaries. It was, however, not very effective.<sup>198</sup>

<sup>186</sup> The *Zendingsnoodbestuur* (emergency mission board) was formed shortly after 14 May 1940 to assist the mission consuls; cf. *Verslag van het Zendingsconsulaat*, 1946, pp. 6-7.

<sup>187</sup> Cf. letter of H. de Kleine to RM, Medan, 6 March 1946 (RMG 456); *Verslag van het Zendingsconsulaat*, 1946, p. 9.

<sup>188</sup> Cf. G. Menzel, *Die Rheinische Mission*, 1978, pp. 349-353.

<sup>189</sup> Previously a missionary of the *Nederlandsche Zendingsvereniging* (NZV) on West Java.

<sup>190</sup> Previously a missionary of the *Gereformeerde Zendingsbond* (GZB) in Torajaland.

<sup>191</sup> Cf. *Toeria*, 27/6 (1940), p. 42.

<sup>192</sup> According to Kana Wa'ambö, W.F. Schröder became the 'administrator', while L.H. Put was the chairman on Nias, cf. 'Amachaita Pulau Tello ba B.N.K.P.', p. 3 (Arsip BNKP, Gunungsitoli); 'Notulen van de Algemeene Vergadering', Amsterdam, 30 October 1940, 17 October 1945 (GAA 552/9); G.O. Reitz, 'A report of the Church in the Batu Islands', 1959, p. 3. (According to Reitz, W.F. Schröder was the chairman).

<sup>193</sup> Husband and wife were both physicians, cf. Ch. 5.2.5.

<sup>194</sup> Cf. *BRM*, 1941; letter H. de Kleine to RM, Medan, 6 March 1946 (RMG 456).

<sup>195</sup> Telephone interview, on 16 December 2003, by the author with Johanna Hendrika Teutscher née Valk, born 20 December 1915 in Utrecht.

<sup>196</sup> Zwaan had been a missionary of the Committee for Sangir and Talaud (*Sangi-en Talaud-comité*, STC).

<sup>197</sup> Interview with Dick Zwaan, Gouda, 13 September 2001.

<sup>198</sup> The Batak Protestant Church (HKBP; constituted on 10 July 1940), inspired by nationalism, did not want the BNM to control its assets, cf. J.R. Hutaeruk, *Die Batakirche vor ihrer Unabhängigkeit*, 1980, pp.243-271; the same author, *Kemandirian Gereja*, 1992, pp. 185-211. No indication has been found of any similar disagreements between Dutch missionaries and the BNKP-leadership on Nias.

### 5.5.3 Japanese Occupation

Nias was invaded by the imperial army of Nippon, which had landed at Sibolga, on 17 April 1942. On 29 April 1942, the Batu Islands were then invaded by the Japanese, using Padang as a base of departure. The occupation of both Nias and the Batu Islands lasted until 15 August 1945.<sup>199</sup>

The Japanese occupation put an end to all missionary activities, leaving the congregations in an 'orphaned' condition. The Ono Niha had, at first, received the Japanese as liberators, but their enthusiasm soon died down, due to the hardships under the fascist regime, which reached all the way down to the village level. Many young Niasan men were compelled to enter the Japanese army. The people were forced to dig trenches and to supply food. Women were raped. There was hunger and horrible torture. Though religion was not prohibited, many churches were desecrated, being used as storehouses.

The three-and-a-half years of Japanese occupation, which ended on 15 August 1945, after the nuclear bombing of Nagasaki by the United States of America, was 'hell' for most inhabitants of Nias and the Batu Islands.<sup>200</sup> Only a few traders of Chinese origin could make use of the opportunity for lucrative business with Singapore.<sup>201</sup> It is remarkable that Christianity on Nias and the Batu Islands did not wither away under such extreme hardships.

### 5.5.4 National Independence of Indonesia

On 17 August 1945, Soekarno and Hatta declared the independence of the Republic of Indonesia.<sup>202</sup> The Netherlands did not accept this declaration and tried to regain its 'properties' in the East Indies. During the subsequent War of Independence (1945-1949), Niasan Christians on Nias and the Batu Islands were outspokenly pro *merdeka* (freedom), although those in Padang were less so.<sup>203</sup> This national vision of *merdeka* demanded that the time of European leadership be finished, once and for all. What had been prevented by the missionaries during the Great Awakening could now become reality: both the religious and the national aspirations were supported by the churches on Nias and the Batu Islands.

Lothar Schreiner's analysis<sup>204</sup>, that the close relationship between church and state in Indonesia had taken form during the Christians' participation in the nationalist movement, also applies for Nias and the Batu Islands. Only in the 1950s and early 1960s, Indonesian nationalism (as propagated, among others, by Soekarno)

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<sup>199</sup> Cf. Ch. 2.7.4.

<sup>200</sup> Cf. F. Zebua, *Kota Gunungsitoli*, 1996, pp. 103-107, quotation on p. 106 (*neraka*). For the general situation of Christianity in Indonesia under and shortly after Japanese rule, cf. Kerkbestuur Batavia, *De Protestantsche Kerk in Indonesië tijdens bezetting en terreur*, 1946.

<sup>201</sup> Cf. Th. Müller-Krüger reported that some Chinese traded pigs and copra with Singapore, making good profits during the Japanese occupation (cf. 'Bericht über Nias', 1950, RMG 2.956).

<sup>202</sup> Cf. Ch. 2.7.5.

<sup>203</sup> In Padang, Niasan Christians seem to have sympathised with the Dutch, cf. G.J. Petri, *Met dominee W.L. Steinhart op Sumatra*, 1990, pp. 2-28. Padang was a Dutch bridgehead in 1947, whereas most of the rest of Sumatra was in the hands of the Republican Army, cf. F. Zebua, *Kota Gunungsitoli*, 1996, pp. 108-112.

<sup>204</sup> In: *Evangelisches Kirchenlexikon*, 1982, p. 655 ('Das Verhältnis der Christen zu Gesellschaft und Staat ist durch die Beteiligung an der nationalen Bewegung geprägt worden').

began constituting a challenge to the pro-Western identity of the Protestant churches on Nias and the Batu Island (see below).

#### 5.5.5 End of the Dutch Missionary Activities

Around Easter 1942, all Dutch men on Nias were interned by the Japanese invaders and three weeks later, all women and children were put in a number of camps on Sumatra. Schröder, who had returned from Gunungsitoli to Pulau Tello in August 1941, was not interned immediately; he received a special permission to continue to serve the hospital temporarily.<sup>205</sup> In July, he was ordered to go to Sibolga, and on 16 August 1942, he and his family were forced to leave Pulau Tello and be interned on Sumatra.<sup>206</sup> Schröder never returned to the Batu Islands after his release after World War II.<sup>207</sup>

Steinhart, who had been on furlough when the war broke out, could not return to Sumatra until September 1947. His instructions were to investigate the possibilities for resuming the work on the Batu Islands.<sup>208</sup> Because these were under the control of the Indonesian Republican Army, he settled into a hotel in Padang, serving the Niasan diaspora in Padang by training some Ono Niha as evangelists and one as a minister.<sup>209</sup>

In February 1948, Steinhart made use of the opportunity to sail to the Batu Islands as a substitute navel chaplain on board a Dutch torpedo boat, the H.M. Banckert. On February 15, he first stepped ashore at the Muslim village of Rafa-Rafa on Pulau Tello. Though the people were quite afraid of the warship, they received him in a friendly way. Here, Steinhart also met with some Christians from Hili Analita.

The ship's second landing was at the Islamic village of Sinauru Malaju. Eventually, they neared the main harbour of Pulau Tello. Only Steinhart, as a man of the cloth, received permission from the Republican Army to visit the administrative centre<sup>210</sup> for five hours and to meet with *Pandita* Kana Wa'ambö. Perhaps due to intimidation by army officials, the latter showed no interest in restoring relations with the DLM. He was hesitant to answer questions and refused the literature offered him by Steinhart, claiming that church and schools were blossoming and that Christianity had greatly expanded since the missionaries had left (though, as he admitted, all the teacher-preachers were inactive). After this short meeting with Wa'ambö, Steinhart left Pulau Tello, quite discouraged.<sup>211</sup>

Considering the fact that he had come on a Dutch military vessel, Steinhart's rejection on Pulau Tello should not have caused such great disappointment. What

<sup>205</sup> Cf. 'Notulen van de Algemeene Vergadering', Amsterdam, 17 October 1945 (GAA 552/9).

<sup>206</sup> Cf. A. Steinhart, *1889-1989. 100 jaar Kerk op de Batu-eilanden*, 1989, pp. 44-47.

<sup>207</sup> After his release from the camp, W.F. Schröder was appointed, on 20 December 1945, to be the minister of the Protestant Church in Indonesia in Medan. On 3 May 1947, he departed from Sumatra to the Netherlands. Cf. correspondence W.F. Schröder, Medan, 2 December 1945 until 2 May 1947 (GAA 552/38); Kerkbestuur Batavia, *De Protestantsche Kerk in Indonesië tijdens besetting en terreur*, 1946, p. 46.

<sup>208</sup> Cf. 'Notulen Hoofdbestuur', Amsterdam, 5 August 1947, 11 October 1949 (GAA 552/9)

<sup>209</sup> Cf. letter Steinhart to DLM, Padang, 9 May 1950, and a report from 3 April 1951 (GAA 552/39); also: *Documentatieblad Lutherse Kerkgeschiedenis* VII (1990), p. 20.

<sup>210</sup> The former residence of the Civil Administrator, then headquarters of the army.

<sup>211</sup> Cf. report W.L. Steinhart, Padang, 16 February 1948, in: A. Steinhart, *1889-1989. 100 jaar Kerk op de Batu-eilanden*, 1989, pp. 52-54.

else could the Batunese church leader have done under these circumstances? Amazingly, the DLM used this incident as the reason for terminating its entire mission to the Batu Islands. In September 1949, Steinhart was ordered back to the Netherlands<sup>212</sup>, but he was not able to get passage on a ship until 10 December 1950.

When asked by the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) to resume responsibility for the BKP, the DLM was not willing to restore the relationship.<sup>213</sup> Although, the DLM did, until 1963, occasionally provide aid indirectly through the Commission on World Mission (CWM) of the LWF<sup>214</sup>. Nevertheless, its refusal actively to involve itself in enabling the BKP to overcome its immense problems, approached gross irresponsibility.

#### 5.5.6 Return of the German Missionaries

The first official contacts between the RM and the BNKP after the release, in May 1940, of the interned missionaries came about in January 1950. After learning that a BNKP delegation had attended the synod of the HKBP in Sipoholon in November 1949, RM-Director Hermann Berner wrote a letter to *Ephorus* Atoföna Harefa, dated 12 January 1950.<sup>215</sup> In addition to providing some information about the fortunes of former Nias missionaries during the past decade, he offered to have two hundred Niasan hymnbooks sent to Nias. Harefa first answered Berner with a postcard, dated 24 March 1950, and then with an affectionate and informative letter, dated 9 April 1950. On 31 May 1950, the *ephorus* again wrote to the RM, this time requesting the renewed assignment to Nias of missionaries Friedrich Dörmann and Alfred Schneider<sup>216</sup>, as well as that of Doctor Thomsen.

In July, 1950, Theodor Müller-Krüger<sup>217</sup>, a lecturer at the theological college in Jakarta and a missionary of the RM, paid a visit to Nias.<sup>218</sup> This increased the Ono Niha's eagerness to renew the partnership. Thus, the synod of the BNKP, convened 18-21 August 1950, passed a resolution to ask the Thomsens (husband and wife were both physicians)<sup>219</sup> to resume their medical services on Nias. The Thomsens were then, in 1951, the first RM-missionaries to return to Nias. Theirs was the task of rebuilding the medical service and of establishing a general hospital (*Rumah Sakit Umum*) in Gunungsitoli.<sup>220</sup> Though German nationals, they were granted the status of Indonesian civil servants.

<sup>212</sup> Cf. letter DLM to Steinhart, Amsterdam, 10 September 1949 (GAA 552/10).

<sup>213</sup> Cf. letter Arne Sovik to Gerhard Reitz, Geneva, 18 November 1957 (correspondence LWF, RMG 974).

<sup>214</sup> Cf. P. Boendermaker, *Terugblik*, 1958, p. 14; I.H. Enklaar, *Onze blijvende opdracht*, 1968, pp. 159-160.

<sup>215</sup> For the correspondence between RM and BNKP as of 1950, cf. RMG 2.805.

<sup>216</sup> Alfred Schneider (21 February 1905 Hilchenbach / Siegen – 4 February 1992 Kreuztal).

<sup>217</sup> Theodor Müller-Krüger (19 August 1902 Langenberg – 28 March 1980 Tübingen). Before his marriage to Katharina Krüger (6 July 1900 – 3 November 1994) on 22 March 1993, his surname had been Müller. After his retirement, he temporarily served as a lecturer at the Theological Seminary of the BNKP on Nias (1968-1970).

<sup>218</sup> Cf. T. Müller-Krüger, 'Nias-Bericht', July 1950 (RMG 2.956); T. Müller-Krüger, *Nach 10 Jahren*, 1951, pp. 45-76.

<sup>219</sup> Cf. 5.2.5.

<sup>220</sup> Cf. A. Schneider, '„ER segne unseren Eingang mit dem Evangelio', in: *In die Welt für die Welt*, 1/8-9 (1965), pp. 160-161.

Two theologians, Schneider and Dörmann, and two deaconesses, Blindow and Jung<sup>221</sup>, followed in 1952. Their functions were now different from those they had had before the war. In the post-colonial situation, they no longer held positions of leadership, but were, instead, to serve as 'advisors' (*penasihat*)<sup>222</sup> to the BNKP.

Schneider soon improved the level of teaching at the seminary in Ombölatä, which had continued to operate at a very low level during the past ten years.<sup>223</sup> He was succeeded in 1958 by Karl-Christoph Töpperwien.<sup>224</sup> Dörmann served as advisor to the synod board of the BNKP in Gunungsitoli. He was succeeded in 1958 by Jürgen Kosack,<sup>225</sup> Helmut Illing<sup>226</sup>, who had been serving in Teluk Dalam since 1955, was succeeded there by Wolfgang Schmidt<sup>227</sup> in 1962/63. Herbert Schekatz<sup>228</sup> was stationed in Lahewa in the far north and, in 1963, the RM stationed Rudolf Heering<sup>229</sup> on the Batu Islands. Sister Margarete Kissing<sup>230</sup>, who returned to Nias in 1954, was stationed at the auxiliary hospital in Hilisimaetanö. Doctor Gottfried Hartmann<sup>231</sup> became the first missionary physician in South Nias, serving there from 1957 to 1964. A proper hospital (*Rumah Sakit Lukas*), replacing the former auxiliary hospital, was built in Hilisimaetanö with funds from Germany<sup>232</sup> and directed by Deacon Horst Krank.<sup>233</sup>

Sisters Jung and Blindow worked in the fields of medicine and of education respectively. Jung trained Niasan nurses at the hospital; Blindow was assigned the task of building a school for deaconesses (*Sekola Diakones*), but this proved not to

<sup>221</sup> Käte Jung (3 June 1910 Duisburg – 13 July 2000 Essen). Hanna Blindow had previously served on Nias from 1930 until 1940. Cf. H. Blindow, *Ein Licht fiel auf den Weg*, 1957.

<sup>222</sup> Cf. A. Schneider, *Turia*, 1965, pp. 70-75.

<sup>223</sup> The BNKP had offered three emergency courses for training pandita in 1941-1942 (thirteen graduates, of whom one was from the Batu Islands), 1946-1947 (eighteen graduates) and 1946-1948 (eighteen graduates), as well as a number of three-month training courses for teacher-preachers and Bible-training courses for elders, cf. letter of Atoföna Harefa to Hermann Berner, Gunungsitoli, 9 April 1950 (RMG 2.805).

<sup>224</sup> Karl-Christoph Töpperwien (18 March 1928 Solingen – 15 August 1983 Wuppertal). Along with his wife, Annemarie Töpperwien née Daubert (2 March 1929 Cologne), he worked in Ombölatä from 1958 until 1969. Cf. letters RM to BNKP, Wuppertal-Barmen, 8 September 1956 and 26 April 1958; letters of appointment as lecturer and Vice-Director of the Seminary in Ombölatä by the BNKP, Gunungsitoli, 5 July 1958, 31 July 1958 (RMG 2.805).

<sup>225</sup> Cf. Ch. 4.6.5.5.

<sup>226</sup> Helmut Illing (23 December 1907 Münster / Westfalen – 30 March 1979). Illing first went to Nias in 1935. After World War II, he worked in Germany until 1955, when he returned to Nias until 1963.

<sup>227</sup> Wolfgang Robert Schmidt (15 May 1933 Liebenscheid / Westerwald). He joined Illing in Teluk Dalam in 1956.

<sup>228</sup> Herbert Schekatz (4 July 1931 Chelchen / Ostpreußen). From 1958 until 1967 on Nias, with his wife, Hellborg Schekatz née Damm. Thereafter, Asia-Secretary of the RM / United Evangelical Mission until 1996.

<sup>229</sup> Rudolf Heering (31 August 1935 Schwerin). Along with his wife, Ingeborg Heering née Göbelsmann (Höxter 12 August 1943); he served from 1963 until 1973 on Pulau Tello and in Gunungsitoli.

<sup>230</sup> Margarete Kissing (6 July 1904 Barmen – 12 February 1998 Wuppertal). On Nias, with interruptions, from 1931 until 1965.

<sup>231</sup> Gottfried Walter Hartmann (20 February 1920 Zwickau – 27 November 2001 Allendorf). He was accompanied by his wife, Hildegard Elisabeth Hartmann née Ender (28 December 1921 Stralsund – 20 March 1971 Ebsdorf / Hessen).

<sup>232</sup> Primarily from 'Brot für die Welt', cf. A. Schneider, 'ER segne unseren Eingang mit dem Evangelio', in: *In die Welt für die Welt*, 1/8-9 (1965), pp. 161-163.

<sup>233</sup> Horst Krank (28 February 1942 Villingen). Along with his wife, Christa Krank née Gutjalu (born on 15 August 1945 Berlin), he worked in Hilisimaetanö from 1971 until 1975.

be feasible.<sup>234</sup> The male BNKP-leadership claimed that, as a rule, women on Nias were not able to fulfil the minimum school qualifications.<sup>235</sup> Other sources reveal that the ministers (*pandita*) of the BNKP were unwilling to employ females in positions of authority.<sup>236</sup> The RM regretted this attitude, not least, because it jeopardized the renewed deployment of Sister Blindow.<sup>237</sup> Blindow subsequently offered an improvised course at her home for sixteen 'mature, unmarried Christian women'. Unfortunately, they were not accepted as deaconesses by the BNKP. The same was the case with three Niasan women<sup>238</sup> who had received training in Germany (1956-1957): the church would not ordain them to a ministry.

As an alternative, the BNKP envisaged a more general basic school education for Christian girls (*Sekolah Kepandaian Puteri*, known as SKP). This idea was in accordance with government plans and the RM was willing to support it. The first course for Christian women (*Kursus Wanita Kristen*, known as KWK) was officially opened on 6 July 1955<sup>239</sup>, but regular coursework could not begin until January 1958, after the new building at the foot of the Hili Hati in Gunungsitoli had been completed. When Hanna Blindow died on 9 October 1959, Sister Dorothea Richter<sup>240</sup> and Sister Ruth Jödicke<sup>241</sup> became her successors. Beginning in 1961, in Teluk Dalam in the south, Sister Ruth Sauer<sup>242</sup> and Sister Rosemarie Behrens<sup>243</sup> offered training sessions for mostly female Sunday-school teachers. This regular women's work, as well as the many retreats and courses offered in the villages, though often causing conflicts with the traditional authorities, became increasingly popular among the womenfolk and provided new, liberating perspectives for Niasan women and girls.

## 5.6 THE NIASAN CHURCH IN THE REPUBLIC OF INDONESIA (1945-1965)

The after-effects of the devastation suffered by the Niasan church and society due to World War II were still felt throughout the 1950s. Schneider describes the extreme poverty, confusion and dissolution he witnessed there.<sup>244</sup> Almost as if to personify the pitiful state of his church, *Ephorus* Atoföna Harefa became seriously ill. However, despite all their privations, and their making some fundamental criticism of the Protestant churches, the poor people of Nias identified themselves with Christianity more strongly than ever.

<sup>234</sup> Cf. articles about Hanna Blindow in: *Des Meisters Ruf* 26/1 (1996), pp. 5-15.

<sup>235</sup> Cf. letters *Ephorus* F. Mendröfa to RM, Gunungsitoli, 9 March 1953 and 1 September 1953 (RMG 2.805).

<sup>236</sup> Cf. A. Schneider, *Turia*, 1965, p. 82; *Des Meisters Ruf* 26/1 (1996), p. 13.

<sup>237</sup> Cf. letter RM to BNKP, Wuppertal, 14 October 1953 (RMG 2.805).

<sup>238</sup> Radina Hura, Amina Zega and Merisa Lase, cf. letter RM to BNKP, Wuppertal, 15 February 1956 (RMG 2.805).

<sup>239</sup> Cf. 'Lapuran Pembukaan Kursus Wanita Keristen (KWK)', Gunungsitoli, 6 July 1955 (RMG 2.805).

<sup>240</sup> Dorothea Richter (18 May 1928 Nürnberg – 29 November 1998 Nürnberg). From 1957 until 1990 on Nias.

<sup>241</sup> Ruth Jödicke (26 March 1930 Nordhausen / Harz). From 1961 until 1990 on Nias.

<sup>242</sup> Ruth Sauer (1 January 1927 Dortmund – 25 April 2001 Koblenz). From 1961 until 1989 on Nias.

<sup>243</sup> Rosemarie Magdalena Dorothea Behrens (11 May 1928 Halle / Saale). On Nias from 1961 until 1990.

<sup>244</sup> Cf. A. Schneider, *Turia*, 1965, p. 65. Cf. Ch. 2.7.5 and Ch. 6.5.3.2.

### 5.6.1 Ecclesiastical Developments

Two structural adjustments proved to be significantly helpful in creating at least a minimum of stability in the church during these tumultuous times: the new ministry of the *sinenge* and the new church order (1955).

#### 5.6.1.1 *Sinenge*

In 1943, the teacher-preachers were compelled to leave their pastoral tasks in the congregations and to dedicate themselves solely to their teaching tasks in the schools. Since there were not enough *pandita*, the *sinenge* gradually assumed the ecclesiastical duties previously fulfilled by the *teacher-preachers*.

Whereas formerly, a *sinenge* had been a gifted all-round evangelist who had received one year of seminary training and then been sent out by the missionaries to non-Christian areas, he now became a local preacher and counsellor chosen from among the elders. Each congregation or branch congregation elected one *sinenge* to lead the church work in the absence of a pastor. The *sinenge* functioned as a kind of head elder, authorised to lead the congregation except for performing the sacraments, confirmation and the consecration of marriages.

In 1954, the synod of the BNKP decided to open a 'School for Teachers of the Gospel' (*Sekolah Guru Indjil* - SGI)<sup>245</sup> in Ombölata, in order to train *sinenge*, but only a small percentage of the *sinenge* actually attended the courses. In 1956, this school was transformed into 'Education for Teachers of the Christian Religion' (*Pendidikan Guru Agama Kristen* - PGAK), which also qualified its graduates to teach in state schools. The PGAK did not have the capacity to train all of the *sinenge*, but it served a number of them as a steppingstone toward the pursuit of higher theological training in Pematang Siantar on Sumatra.

Although the office of *sinenge* was (and still is) an emergency ministry, it provided a minimum of service and leadership to the local congregation. As *sinenge* were (and still are) also elected to the synod, some of them have played a significant role in the development of the BNKP.

#### 5.6.1.2 A New Church Order (1955)

The new church order, which was ratified by the synod on 1 June 1955, was a revision of the 'concept church order' of 1936.<sup>246</sup> Dörmann and Schneider played an important advisory role in the process of formulating the ten articles (plus a short preface).<sup>247</sup> Although the concentration of power in the person of the *ephorus* was limited and the collegial leadership of the synod board (of which the *ephorus* is the chairperson) strengthened, this did not prevent the character of this new church order from being ethnocentric, legalistic, and hierarchical.<sup>248</sup>

<sup>245</sup> Cf. A. Schneider, *Turia*, 1965, p. 76.

<sup>246</sup> Cf. Ch. 5.2.2.1.

<sup>247</sup> For the complete church order of 1955, cf. W. Gulö, *Benih yang Tumbuh XIII*, 1983, pp. 250-261.

<sup>248</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 56-71. This situation was improved in the church order of 1973. A major role in strengthening the role of the laity in the polity of 1973 was played by Bazatulö Chr. Hulu.

### 5.6.2 Participation in the Ecumenical Movements

Paradoxically, the strong ethnocentric character of the BNKP did not hinder its cultivating ecumenical relations with other Protestant churches. There had been contacts with the neighbouring HKBP.<sup>249</sup> But the scope was wider than that. Undeniably, the BNKP understood itself as part of a national, or even international community of Christians. Considering the isolated geography of Nias and the Batu Islands, participation in the wider ecumenical arena became a significant aspect of the church's identity. At the same time, efforts to restore the unity of the church at the local level, i.e., with the Roman Catholic Church or the schismatic churches (see below), were non-existent during our time-span.

In 1950, the BNKP was one of the founding members of the Indonesian Council of Churches (DGI).<sup>250</sup> In 1964, it became a member of the East Asia Conference of Churches (EACC) and in 1965 it joined the regional council of churches in North Sumatra (*DGW Sumatera-Utara*). There had been intensive contacts with the LWF during the 1950s and early 1960s concerning the BKP, which was considered part of the Lutheran family. However, since the closest partners of the BNKP (the RM and the Rhenish Church) were a 'United' (*unierte*) type of church, an affiliation with the LWF was not seriously considered until the end of the twentieth century.<sup>251</sup>

### 5.6.3 Confrontation with Roman Catholicism

After their unsuccessful missionary attempts in the first half of the nineteenth century, the Roman Catholic Church did not send any more missionaries to Nias until 1939.<sup>252</sup> The initiative for a new start was taken by four Ono Niha from Lölöwua: H.B. Gantie, Lö'aefa Zebua, Folulu and Fangaro<sup>253</sup>, who were not satisfied with the church discipline of the BNKP.<sup>254</sup> Beginning in 1936, they wrote letters to Roman Catholic leaders on Sumatra, inviting them to come to Nias. On 13 December 1937, the priest Chrysologus Timmermans, based in Sibolga, paid a short visit to Nias, contacting European and Chinese Roman Catholic families in Gunungsitoli. He also called on Lölöwua, where he stayed for one hour, reportedly making quite an impression on the local population. The colonial authorities frowned on this visit to the interior, fearing 'dual mission'.<sup>255</sup> For two reasons,

<sup>249</sup> Cf. Ch. 5.7.2.

<sup>250</sup> 'Dewan Gereja-gereja di Indonesia'. This was changed to 'Persekutuan Gereja-gereja di Indonesia' (PGI) during the assembly of the DGI in 1984 in Ambon.

<sup>251</sup> *Pandita Bazatulö Chr. Hulu*, General Secretary of the BNKP as of 1965, and after that *Ephorus* for three terms, was particularly opposed to an affiliation with both the LWF and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches. It was not until after he had retired at the end of 1997 that the prospect of joining the LWF came up again. In 2001, the BNKP became a member of the LWF.

<sup>252</sup> Cf. K. Steenbrink, *Catholics in Indonesia 1808-1942*, vol. II, 2006, p. 239, 242-244.

<sup>253</sup> Cf. U.M. Telaumbanua, *Evangelization and Niasan Culture*, 1993, pp. 121-136 (n. 103). Bishop Matthias Brans (Apostolic Prefect in Medan) reacted to the request of these four Ono Niha from Lölöwua.

<sup>254</sup> Dissatisfaction with church discipline was a common reason for Protestants to convert to Catholicism in other missionary areas, as well, cf. Th. van den End and J. Weitjens, *Ragi Carita II*, 2002, p. 92 (Minahasa).

<sup>255</sup> The authorities clung to the much-disputed § 177, which prohibits missionaries from different organisations to operate within the same area in Indonesia. This was in accordance with the 'Indische Staatsregeling § 177' of 1925, previously (1854-1925) called 'Regeeringsreglement § 123', cf. S.C. Graaf van Randwijck, *Handelen en denken in dienst der zending*, vol. I, 1981, pp.



however, the Roman Catholic missionary activities were not prohibited: 1. There was no Islamic majority which could cause a commotion if confronted with a second Christian mission; 2. An influential Ono Niha had solicited signatures to obtain permission for the Roman Catholic Church to operate.<sup>256</sup>

Subsequently, a Dutch Capuchin, Burchardus van der Weijden, arrived on Nias in August 1939. He seems to have been preceded by the Niasan catechist Petrus L. Gea, a former adherent of the SDA in Padang.<sup>257</sup> In 1940, another Dutch Capuchin, Ildefonsus van Straalen arrived to assist Van der Weijden. Together, they founded a 'Catholic centre' in Hilisimaetanö.<sup>258</sup> In the faith-instruction courses they offered to Ono Niha (June-December 1940 and February-August 1941)<sup>259</sup>, the instruction material was of a polarising nature, emphasising the differences between Catholicism and Protestantism. According to the Protestants, who practised a similar strategy, the Catholics presented themselves as the one, true and undivided church, cleverly exploiting the fact that a number of divisions had occurred within the body of the BNKP.

During World War II, the Dutch Capuchins were interned by the Japanese. By that time, about three hundred Ono Niha had been baptised by the Catholic missionaries and another 1500 to two thousand were preparing for baptism as catechumens. During the following eight years, 1942-1950, there was no Roman Catholic priest on Nias or the Batu Islands. However, a teacher, Singamböwö Harefa (from Gunungsitoli) and a lay preacher, Komme Dakhi<sup>260</sup> (from the Batu Islands), became the principle leaders of the Catholic community, and, supported by some chiefs and some wealthy Chinese, formed a simple organisation, appointed catechists and continued to spread the Roman Catholic doctrines, influencing many of their compatriots. Three Dutch Capuchins returned in 1950-1951.<sup>261</sup> Their ranks were augmented in 1952/1953 by six German Capuchins from Tienhsui (Kansu, China), who had fled from the Communists. Among them was Bishop Gratian Grimm.<sup>262</sup>

Since 1955, Roman Catholic activities had been increasing on the Batu Islands, especially on Simuk, Tanah Masa and Marit, exploiting the weakness of the

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300-306. Steenbrink writes: 'the priest had distributed leaflets with summaries of the Catholic doctrine, the police gathered all the papers and accused the priest of illicit propaganda and abuse of government facilities' (K. Steenbrink, *Catholics in Indonesia 1808-1942*, vol. II, 2006, p. 239).

<sup>256</sup> The influential Ono Niha was a former *guru* of the BNKP who had been disciplined; cf. J. Kosack, 'Doch kein Wettlauf mit dem Blech?', in: *BRM* 111/7 (1961), p. 134.

<sup>257</sup> Cf. U.M. Telaumbanua, *Evangelization and Niasan Culture*, 1993, p. 126 (Petrus Lathow Gea).

<sup>258</sup> Cf. K. Steenbrink, *Catholics in Indonesia 1808-1942*, vol. II, 2006, p. 243.

<sup>259</sup> At his station in Hilisimaetanö, Van der Weijden trained representatives from different villages in a six-to-twelve-month-courses as catechists. He also undertook a number of missionary tours to other parts of Nias, cf. Th. van den End and J. Weijtens, *Ragi Carita II*, 2002, p. 451.

<sup>260</sup> Steenbrink also mentions a teacher by the name of Sohiro Dachi (from South Nias) as a principle leader. Concerning Singamböwö Harefa he writes: 'After the return of the expatriate missionaries, Harefa could not adjust to a modest role in the back benches and was dismissed by the returning missionaries', K. Steenbrink, *Catholics in Indonesia 1808-1942*, vol. II, 2006, p. 244.

<sup>261</sup> Van Straalen had arrived in March 1950 and Van der Weijden in August 1950. In 1951, Guido de Vet replaced Van der Weijden.

<sup>262</sup> Cf. M. Booz, 'Bischof Gratian Grimm', in: M. Booz (ed.), *Werft die Netzw aus*, 1976, pp. 16-19; U.M. Telaumbanua, *Evangelization and Niasan Culture*, 1993, pp. 139-140. When the apostolic prefecture of Sibolga, embracing Nias and the Batu Islands, was founded on 17 November 1959, Grimm became the first prefect apostolic. On 18 November 1980, the apostolic prefecture was converted into a diocese.

ineffective leadership in the BKP.<sup>263</sup> Komme Dakhi convinced about half of the population of Simuk (about three hours by steamboat from Pulau Tello) to enrol as members of the Roman Catholic Church. Dakhi had formerly been a member of the BKP. He studied a book about the Roman Catholic Church after visiting South Nias and had then toured several Batu Islands, propagating his new insights. Dakhi seems to have been quite eccentric and charismatic, calling himself 'bishop' (*uskup*), wearing a long robe and having two large horns fastened to his head. Wanting to imitate the manner of Jesus Christ, he was always accompanied by two young women, called Mary and Martha. He had no official permission of the Roman Catholic Church for any of this. But the young parishes founded by this self-appointed Ono Niha missionary, were, nevertheless, thereafter always served regularly. Dakhi later became a Roman Catholic catechist.<sup>264</sup>

By this time, the BNKP and the RM-missionaries regarded the Roman Catholic mission on Nias and the Batu Islands as a major offensive or an all-out attack.<sup>265</sup> It has, however, been much disputed, whether this was indeed a 'counter-mission' (Kosack<sup>266</sup>). Pater Silvester Braun argued that the Roman Catholic mission did not harm the work in the 'Lord's vineyard' on Nias, since it led the BNKP to 'self-contemplation'.<sup>267</sup> Most of the Christians who joined the Roman Catholic Church were said to have come from the Fa'awösa.<sup>268</sup> But in everyday reality, relationships were much less fraternal, particularly between the European leaders of the two branches of Christianity. This sometimes expressed itself in such profane things such as the supply of corrugated iron.<sup>269</sup>

One big bone of contention was the issue of 'rebaptism' or baptism under the condition that the person was not properly baptised (*sub conditione*). Protestants were furious, when they heard that the Roman Catholic Church rebaptised former members of the BNKP and the BKP. Against the advice of the missionaries, the BNKP countered by calling the baptism of the Roman Catholic Church invalid.<sup>270</sup> Both sides, in fact, practiced 'rebaptism' without any strong theological argument to support the practice. The Roman Catholic Church, while in principle acknowledging the baptism of non-Roman Catholic Christians, argued that Protestant pastors used too little water, hardly moistening the person's forehead, which could not be regarded as 'rite' in a Roman Catholic sense.

<sup>263</sup> Cf. A. Steinhart, *1889-1989. 100 jaar Kerk op de Batu-eilanden*, 1989, p. 14; cf. G.O. Reitz, 'A report of the Church in the Batu Islands', 1959, p. 7.

<sup>264</sup> Cf. G.O. Reitz, 'A report of the Church in the Batu Islands', 1959, pp. 17-19. Reitz reports that the BKP had been tardy in taking the Gospel there even though some of its members were closely related to the Simuk people. A Protestant congregation on Simuk was formed shortly after the BKP joined the BNKP in 1960, consisting largely of immigrants from other Batu Islands.

<sup>265</sup> The phrase 'Großangriff der römisch-katholischen Mission' (major offensive or all-out attack by the Roman Catholic Mission) is used by Th. Müller-Krüger, *Der Protestantismus in Indonesien*, 1968, pp. 285-286.

<sup>266</sup> The term 'counter-mission' (*Gegenmission*) is used by J. Kosack, 'Doch kein Wettlauf mit dem Blech?', in *BRM* 111/7 (1961), p. 132.

<sup>267</sup> Cf. S. Braun and H. de Kleine, *Rede und Antwort, Diskussion mit einem katholischen Missionar*, 1965, p. 171.

<sup>268</sup> *Ibid.* p. 172.

<sup>269</sup> For the discussion, cf. J. Kosack, 'Wettlauf mit dem Blech?', in: *BRM*, 110/5 (1960), pp. 83-91; G. Grimm, 'Kein Wettlauf mit dem Blech', in: *BRM*, 111/7 (1961), pp. 128-131; J. Kosack, 'Doch kein Wettlauf mit dem Blech?', in: *BRM*, 111/7 (1961), pp. 132-138.

<sup>270</sup> Cf. the reports on the synods of the BNKP from 1960 until 1963 (RMG 2.804).

While the question of the use of more or less water can never be an acceptable argument for Protestants to justify rebaptism, the actual practice of many Protestant pastors even now, of using very little water is indeed an unnecessary nuisance. There is certainly enough water on Nias and Holy Baptism does lose some of its symbolic power if the congregation can hardly see the water. It seems likely that this practise is a result of unintended enculturation. Baptism as administered by many Protestant pastors resembles the traditional Niasan blessing given by a dying father to his son and heir – only a few drops of water are sprinkled on the recipient.

To the Ono Niha, Roman Catholicism appeared to be an easier religion (*agama saoha*) than Protestantism. The church contributions (*ame'ela*) were much lower than in the Protestant churches. Poverty among Protestant congregations caused some members to join the Roman Catholic Church for material benefits. In the Roman Catholic parishes there was no prohibition of images (*adu*), so that many were impressed by the much richer use of symbolism. The Roman Catholic Church even seems to have been less strict regarding polygamy.<sup>271</sup>

Despite the disturbances brought about by the Roman Catholic mission on Nias and the Batu Islands, it never really challenged the status quo of Protestant congregations. The Catholics concentrated their work mainly on former Protestant schismatics, the Chinese community and on Ono Niha in areas or islands not yet reached by Protestantism. In fact, its 'remarkable evangelising efforts'<sup>272</sup> should not be underestimated. Especially in the field of conserving the traditional culture of the Ono Niha and integrating it into liturgy, architecture and art, the Roman Catholic Church has, since even before the second Vatican Council (1962-1965), been more progressive than her Protestant counterparts.<sup>273</sup> Lately, suspicion has lessened between the two Christian denominations and good cooperation is increasing.

#### 5.6.4 Schisms and Heresy in the Protestant Christian Church

Soon after the declaration of Indonesian independence in the latter part of 1945, the fragile Niasan church was shaken from within by schisms (i.e., the AMIN-schism and the ONKP-schism) and by a number of groups for prayer and Bible study inspired by the 'heretical' teachings of Ama Haogö.

##### 5.6.4.1 Indonesian Niasan Christian Communion (AMIN-Schism, 1946)

The first major split-off from the BNKP occurred in the district (*öri*) of Idanoi, south-east of Gunungsitoli. The initial cause of this schism was the order that the *pandita* of Ombölata, Singamböwö Zebua<sup>274</sup>, be transferred to a much more remote

<sup>271</sup> Cf. J. Kosack, 'Wettlauf mit dem Blech?', in: *BRM*, 110/5 (1960), pp. 89-90.

<sup>272</sup> These efforts (*beachtliche katholische Evangeliumsarbeit*) were acknowledged, though critically, by some Protestant missionaries, cf. A. Schneider, *Turia*, 1965, p. 67. Martin Pörksen marked the rapid growth of Roman Catholicism on Nias in the years 1958 (10.000 members) until 1963 (40.000 members, including catechumens). Some young Protestant Ono Niha saw this as a threat ('Hier besteht offenbar für die junge Generation eine ernsthafte Not'), cf. M. Pörksen, 'Ein Abend mit jungen Christen auf Nias', in: *In die Welt für die Welt*, 1/3 (1965), pp. 46-50; quotation on p. 47.

<sup>273</sup> Traditional Niasan art was considered unsuitable for Christianity by the Protestants. 'Carving adu has never been an art as such, which could be neutralised or Christianised, but it was part of idolatry. In paganism there is no profane art, which could be used in a sacral way ...', J. Kosack, 'Doch kein Wettlauf mit dem Blech?', in: *BRM*, 111/7 (1961), p. 137.

<sup>274</sup> Singamböwö Zebua, trained in Sipoholon (Sumatra), served in Hilimaziaya before he moved to

congregation in Lahusa-Masio. This was meant as a disciplinary measure, since he was accused of collaboration with the Japanese occupation in the 'padi bakti' (rice planting)<sup>275</sup> program. Zebua refused, not agreeing with the viewpoint of the synod board of the BNKP.<sup>276</sup> He reportedly believed that the Holy Spirit wanted him to stay in Ombölata, where he was subsequently dismissed. With the support of the paramount chief of the *öri* Idanoi, *Tuhenöri* Adolf Gea, Singamböwö founded his own church on 12 May 1946 in Helefanikha, a village in Idanoi. This new church, initially encompassing eleven congregations, was called AMIN<sup>277</sup>, which is the abbreviation of *Angowuloa Masehi Idanoi Nias* (*Idanoi* was later changed to *Indonesia*).<sup>278</sup> At first, the AMIN was a smaller copy of the BNKP (less than 5% of the BNKP members transferred their membership to AMIN) and largely restricted to Idanoi, in accordance with the traditional organisational structure. The AMIN later developed a more nationalist and more Lutheran identity and made its peace with the BNKP.<sup>279</sup>

#### 5.6.4.2 Protestant Niasan Christian Fellowship (ONKP-Schism, 1952)

In April-May 1950, *Ephorus* Atoföna Harefa undertook an urgent visitation to West Nias in an attempt to prevent a split within the BNKP in Tugala-Sirombu and the Hinako Islands. Unfortunately, he fell seriously ill during the journey, so that he could not do very much to regain the sympathies of the dissatisfied leaders.<sup>280</sup> The reason the leaders in the western region preferred to handle their own church affairs was that they felt neglected by the synod board. Since pre-Christian times, the clan of the Marundruri had ruled this relatively affluent area and they did not want to submit to the BNKP leaders in Gunungsitoli who originated from other regions.

On 22 May 1952, the 'Association of Protestant Christians' (*Orahua Niha Keriso Protestan*, abbreviated as ONKP), split away from the BNKP and convened its own first synod during the following two days.<sup>281</sup> A visitation by German missionaries in September of the same year was not able to effect any change. On 26 February 1953, the Indonesian government officially acknowledged the ONKP.<sup>282</sup> Its first 'president' was *Pandita* Dalihuku Marundruri and the first general-secretary was *Pandita* Dalimanö Hia. Other leaders were *Pandita* Fosasi Daeli and *Pandita* Fangaro Gulö. Besides the president, there were only three pastors for some fifty congregations in the ONKP. This schism resembled the split-off, since in both cases there was a resurgence of traditional social structures (*öri*).

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Ombölata.

<sup>275</sup> The Japanese had compelled the inhabitants in and around Gunungsitoli to make rice fields in back-breaking forced labour, cf. F. Zebua, *Kota Gunungsitoli*, 1996, p. 106.

<sup>276</sup> Cf. interview with *Ephorus* Soahao Mendröfa in *BRM*, 1961, p. 114.

<sup>277</sup> The data relating to the AMIN-Church were obtained on 18 January 2003 from the central office of AMIN, Kantor Pusat, Tetehösi Idanoi, P.O.Box 9, Gunungsitoli-Nias 22871, Indonesia.

<sup>278</sup> *Angowuloa* = communion or assembly; English: Christian Communion of Indonesia Church in Nias.

<sup>279</sup> Shortly after Indonesian independence, the Department of Religious Affairs of Tapanuli mediated an agreement between BNKP and AMIN (T. Müller-Krüger, 'Bericht über Nias', 1950, RMG 2.956). In 1980, the BNKP supported AMIN in the latter's request of becoming a member of the Indonesian Council of Churches (DGI).

<sup>280</sup> On May 8, Harefa fell seriously ill, cf. letter Atoföna Harefa to Hermann Berner, Gunungsitoli 31 May 1950 (RMG 2.805). Harefa died of this disease three years later.

<sup>281</sup> Cf. 'Protokol Rapat Sinode Orahua Niha Keriso Protestan' (RMG 2.815).

<sup>282</sup> Cf. 'Lembaran Negara No. J.A. 5/19/12', 26 February 1953.

#### 5.6.4.3 The Ama Haogö-Heresy

The charismatic leadership of Dalimanö Hia, or Ama Haogö<sup>283</sup>, a pastor first of the BNKP and then of the ONKP, was notorious, but unique. His theological impulses, concentrating on dreams, revelations, trance, knowledge of the hidden secrets of the Bible, faith-healing and the supernatural strength of 'holy men', had a lasting influence on the Niasan churches. His 'indigenised' teachings of Christianity, which had become quite a hot issue in the early 1960s, were considered heretical by the church authorities and were condemned by the thirty-second synod of the BNKP in 1967 and again by the forty-second synod in 1980.

According to Kosack<sup>284</sup>, who had known Ama Haogö personally, this Niasan theologian operated in the following way: He formed a number of groups for prayer and Bible study, to whom he revealed the 'secrets' of the Bible. He would also instruct individuals. The 'secrets', which, according to Ama Haogö, other pastors did not want to share with the congregation for selfish reasons, were various Hebrew and Greek words and phrases. His followers were especially impressed by names for God from the Bible, such as 'Yahwe' and 'Elohim'. They believed that he possessed supernatural powers, such as walking on water.

Kosack holds that Ama Haogö was a systematic thinker and the first contextual theologian on Nias. He was a major threat to the ecclesiastical establishment there. As a means of intimidation, or as an expression of contempt, charismatic enthusiasts are, even now, sometimes compared to Ama Haogö. But such charismatic enthusiasts are, nevertheless, popular among the Ono Niha.

#### 5.6.5 Jubilee (1965)

On 27 September 1965, the BNKP celebrated the centennial of the arrival of the first missionary of the RM on Nias.<sup>285</sup> According to German custom, on special birthdays, godparents give their godchildren a larger gift than usual. For the Rhenish Church, which is 'godparent' to the BNKP, this meant a present of two church buildings (one in Gunungsitoli and one in Teluk Dalam), a ship (named 'Agape'), a new head office in Gunungsitoli, a parsonage for the *ephorus* and a guesthouse. The LWF added furniture for the head office, as well as building Junior High Schools in Teluk Dalam and Pulau Tello, a Senior High School in Gunungsitoli, and a complex of dormitories in Tohia.<sup>286</sup> This was the largest foreign-aid action ever in the history of the BNKP.<sup>287</sup> As the 'representative of the godfather', *Präses* Joachim Beckmann<sup>288</sup>, the then head of the Rhenish Church, travelled to Nias to take part in the

<sup>283</sup> Haogö, the name of the eldest child of Dalimanö Hia, literally means 'refined', and 'Ama' means 'father'.

<sup>284</sup> Interview with J. Kosack, Wuppertal, 8 June 2002; according to Kosack, Ama Haogö combined Christianity with 'animism'. Cf. W. Gulö, *Benih yang Tumbuh XIII*, 1983, p. 25. Cf. Ch. 6.2.1.1.

<sup>285</sup> The BNKP celebrates this date as its 'jubileum', rather than that of the first baptisms on Easter Sunday, 1874, cf. Ch. 4.1.

<sup>286</sup> Information from Jürgen Kosack, who coordinated the activities in Gunungsitoli.

<sup>287</sup> Only the foreign-aid actions by German and Dutch churches and Non Governmental Organisations after the Tsunami-disaster of 26 December 2004 and the big earthquake of 28 March 2005 were larger.

<sup>288</sup> Joachim Beckmann (18 July 1901 Wanne-Eickel – 18 January 1987 Haan).

celebrations of the jubilee, which were led by outgoing *Ephorus* Sohahau Mendröfa.<sup>289</sup>

The preparations for this jubilee had occupied the leadership of the BNKP for at least a year and pushed the discussion on indigenous culture, so prominent in the preceding years, off the agenda.<sup>290</sup> Despite its grandeur<sup>291</sup>, which surpassed that of the fiftieth anniversary, this anniversary had less impact on the development of church life than the fiftieth had had.<sup>292</sup> Shortly afterwards, the Republic of Indonesia faced a national crisis, the alleged Communist coup attempt on 30 September 1965, which – in hindsight – gives the jubilee a similarly grim political setting as that of the seventy-fifth anniversary, celebrated in 1940.<sup>293</sup>

## 5.7 THE BATUNESE CHURCH IN THE REPUBLIC OF INDONESIA (1945-1960)

During the Japanese occupation of the Batu Islands, no meetings of the church board could take place. However, the day after the Japanese contingent had left Pulau Tello on 15 August 1945, an assembly of all of the leaders of the church was convened in order to deliberate about the future of the Batunese church.

### 5.7.1 Proclamation of an Independent Church (1945)

The deliberations of the assembly on 16 August 1945 resulted in the official proclamation of the Protestant Christian Church or *Banua Keriso Protestan* ('B.K.P.')<sup>294</sup> on the Batu Islands. The synod board (*pengurus besar*) consisted of nine members<sup>295</sup>, including Assistant-*Pandita* Sokobamböwö Nehe of Sigata as president and *Pandita* Kana Wa'ambö as minister-in-charge (*pandita umum*) - a kind of *pastor*

<sup>289</sup> It was an important gesture of the newly elected *Ephorus* Tandrombörö Hulu and the newly elected General Secretary Bazatulö Chr. Hulu to leave the organisation of the jubilee to *Ephorus* Mendröfa. On Nias, a major feast traditionally celebrates the honour of the leader. However, since Mendröfa had been responsible for the preparations, it was wise to let him also lead the celebration itself. Cf. *In die Welt für die Welt*, 1/8-9 (1965), pp. 146-163, 176.

<sup>290</sup> Cf. 'Programm-Vorbereitungen Jubiläum' (RMG 3.404).

<sup>291</sup> All the streets in Gunungsitoli were decorated with palm branches and huge banners; many thousands of Ono Niha streamed into Gunungsitoli, although there were also celebrations in all of the other congregations, as well. Delegations and choirs from Protestant churches on Sumatra attended the activities, staying for two days; high-ranking politicians held speeches. Cf. Leni Immer, 'Bei den jungen Kirchen auf Sumatra und Nias. Hundertjahrfeier der Nias-Kirche in Gunung-Sitoli', in: *In die Welt für die Welt*, 2/1 (1966), pp. 11-15. For the program, cf. RMG 3.356 Part PQ.

<sup>292</sup> Considering that the jubilee in 1915 was one of the underlying impulses leading to the Great Awakening, cf. Ch. 4.6.4.2.

<sup>293</sup> The seventy-fifth anniversary was celebrated one day after all of the German missionaries had been detained because of the attack of Nazi Germany on the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

<sup>294</sup> Arnold Steinhart, following Waösaro Zandroto, mistakenly dates the assembly on 10 August 1945 (cf. A. Steinhart, *1889-1989. 100 jaar Kerk op de Batu-eilanden*, 1989, pp. 5, 11). According to Gerhard O. Reitz, the assembly was held 'A day after the Japanese had left'. Since the Japanese had left Pulau Tello on 15 August 1945, the correct date for the proclamation of the BKP seems to be 16 August 1945 (cf. G.O. Reitz, 'A Report of the Church in the Batu Islands', 1959, p. 4).

<sup>295</sup> The Vice-President Philemon Laowö, the Secretary-Treasurer Janani Hondrö, plus five Commissioners: *Sinenge* Hasameföna Wanaitu from Sigata, *Sinenge* Nibadji Zamili from Lorang, *Sinenge* Amaodula from Marit, and two elders, Martin La'ia and Salomon Laowö, both from Pulau Tello; it is possible, that the elders Nifae'ö Sarumaha and Siwariföna Garamba acted as substitutes for the above-mentioned Martin La'ia and Salomon Laowö (cf. G.O. Reitz, 'A Report of the Church in the Batu Islands', 1959, p. 5).

*pastorum*. The treasurer was *Mantri* Kajoe Hondrö.<sup>296</sup> Altogether, fifteen men were employed as salaried church workers.<sup>297</sup> Most of the congregations were served by a teacher preacher (gradually being replaced by a *sinenge*) and two elders (*satua Niha Keriso*). The sacraments and confirmation were administered by the *pandita* and the assistant-*pandita*.<sup>298</sup> Christian marriages were normally consecrated in church by the *pandita*, *guru* or *sinenge*. Sometimes, an elder could also assume this task, as well as that of performing funeral services. The BKP was never acknowledged by the Indonesian government and played no significant role in the development of the Batu Islands.

### 5.7.2 Ecclesiastical Developments

At the termination of the work of the DLM on the Batu Islands<sup>299</sup>, the responsibility had allegedly been transferred to the RM in October 1948.<sup>300</sup> However, since the capacities of the RM were limited, and work on Nias had not recommenced until the 1950s, the devastating situation of the BKP had drawn the attention of some international ecumenical organisations.

On 2-10 August 1957, the Commission on World Mission (CWM) of the LWF met on Staten Island, New York. A decision was taken that the CWM would request a deputation, consisting of representatives from the HKBP, the LWF and the RM, to pay an official visit to the Lutheran church on the Batu Islands (i.e., the BKP) and report on their findings. The representatives were authorised to initiate such help as they deemed necessary after consultation with the CWM.<sup>301</sup>

The LWF was willing to help the BKP in areas where it was really necessary, such as in matters of church organisation and training (e.g., scholarships<sup>302</sup>). The BKP had no official relationship with the HKBP or the BNKP, though delegates of the BKP had attended synod meetings of the BNKP twice since World War II and four *sinenge* of the BKP had been trained at the seminary in Ombölata.<sup>303</sup> A major problem was the fact that the BKP had not been legally recognized, so that there was

<sup>296</sup> Kajoe Afore Hondrö had been a member of the Church Council and the Electoral Commission for electing elders on the other islands since 1934, cf. *EVB*, 53/2 (1935), p. 39. When W.F. Schröder had to move to Gunungsitoli in 1940, Hondrö, Fae'ö Gamuata, and Kana Wa'ambö were entrusted with the leadership of the Batunese Church (cf. A. Steinhart, 1889-1989. *100 jaar Kerk op de Batu-eilanden*, 1989, pp. 44-47).

<sup>297</sup> Minister-in-Charge Kana Wa'ambö, Assistant-Pandita Sokobamböwö Nehe and Assistant-Pandita Janani Hondrö, plus twelve *guru* or *sinenge*: Sana Zörömi (Bawönorahili, Pulau Tello), Aseri Maduwu (Sigese, Sigata), Hasanisumba (Bötua), Benyamin Sarumaha (Hayo), Niwiu Bahuku (Fono), Paramaina Bu'ulölö (Balögi'a), Da'u Ladjira (Lumbui, Tanah Bala); Rubeni (Eho, Tanah Bala), Pile Maduwu (Hiligeho, Tanah Masa), Ondröita La'ia (Hiligeho, Tanah Masa), Ama Udula (Mari) and Nibadji Zamili (Luahanidanö, Lorang); cf. G.O. Reitz, 'A report of the Church in the Batu Islands', 1959, p. 5.

<sup>298</sup> *Ibid.* p. 6.

<sup>299</sup> Cf. Ch. 5.5.5.

<sup>300</sup> Cf. A. Steinhart, 1889-1989. *100 jaar Kerk op de Batu-eilanden*, 1989, pp. 3, 5, 59. No mention of this is made in the minutes of the Indonesia Commission (RMG 514), nor in the minutes of the board of the DLM in 1948 (GAA 552/10). If the DLM had transferred the responsibility for the Batunese Christians to the RM in 1948, why then was Steinhart not recalled until a year later? Cf. letter DLM to Steinhart, Amsterdam, 10 September 1949, and 'Notulen Hoofdbestuur', Amsterdam, 11 October 1949 (GAA 552/10).

<sup>301</sup> Cf. G.O. Reitz, 'A report of the Church in the Batu Islands', 1959, p. 1.

<sup>302</sup> *Ibid.* p. 26.

<sup>303</sup> *Ibid.* p. 31.

a real danger that church properties could be confiscated by the state. Both the HKBP and the BNKP were willing to help their little neighbour.

Due to the political situation on Sumatra<sup>304</sup>, it was impossible for a commission such as had been proposed by the CWM to visit the BKP before July 1959. The delegation that finally made the visit consisted of Adelbert A. Sitompul, a Biblical scholar at Nommensen University (HKBP), Tahadödö Dana Telaumbanua (a pastor of the BNKP) and Dr. Gerhard O. Reitz of the LWF.

Sitompul and Reitz arrived on Pulau Tello on July 10, and Telaumbanua joined them two days later. Upon their arrival on Pulau Tello, they were heartily welcomed by *Pandita* Kana Wa'ambö, Assistant-*Pandita* Yanani Hondrö and other leaders of the BKP. The delegation's visit lasted twelve days, six of which were spent visiting congregations on other islands in the vicinity. Reitz stressed that the BKP should have closer ties with neighbouring churches.<sup>305</sup>

### 5.7.3 Merger of the Batunese Church with the Niasan Church (1960)

Some BKP leaders reportedly desired to become affiliated with any one of the larger churches, which had already been recognised by the government (i.e., the BNKP or the HKBP), but other fractions did not want to be incorporated into such a large organisation. They feared they would not be able to maintain a certain degree of self-determination. All the more so, since their own leadership was quite ineffective.<sup>306</sup>

The option to affiliate with the HKBP was kept open for some time. The advantage of joining this Batak church would be that the BKP would automatically become a member of the LWF, which was in accordance with its confessional (Lutheran) status. On the other hand, joining the BNKP would have clear cultural advantages, since Nias had much greater similarities in language and *adat* to the Batu Islands than did the Bataklands. Furthermore, as of 1928, the Batu Islands had become part of the regency (*onderafdeeling*, later *kabupaten*) of Nias. These cultural and political considerations eventually tipped the scales in favour of the BNKP.<sup>307</sup>

The prospect of unification between the BKP and the BNKP was discussed favourably during the twenty-fourth synod of the BNKP on 14-18 May 1959 in Teluk Dalam. Subsequently, the annual synod of the BKP, held in August 1959 on Pulau Tello, took a decision to unite.<sup>308</sup> At the following meeting between the synod board of the BNKP and a delegation of the BKP in Gunungsitoli, it was agreed that the church on the Batu Islands should become a special type of church circuit (*resor*

<sup>304</sup> The rebellion of the 'Revolutionary Government of the Republic of Indonesia' or P.R.R.I (*Pemerintah Revolusioner Republik Indonesia*) was an offspring of a mutiny of the army in West Sumatra against the Central Government, which had begun in December 1956. On 15 February 1958, the P.R.R.I. was founded with Syafruddin Prawiranegara as prime minister. After troop landings, West Sumatra was again largely under government control by June 1958, but the rebels did not concede defeat until 1961. Cf. R. Cribb, *Historical Dictionary of Indonesia*, 1992, pp. 362-364.

<sup>305</sup> Cf. G.O. Reitz, 'A report of the Church in the Batu Islands', 1959, p. 1

<sup>306</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>307</sup> These reasons were explicitly mentioned by *Ephorus* Mendröfa in a meeting with the RM, cf. 'Protokoll Indonesien Kommission', Wuppertal, 28 April 1961, p. 2 (RMG 514).

<sup>308</sup> Cf. 'Notulen Pengurus BNKP', Gunungsitoli, 21 September 1959 and 30 September 1959: 'Penggabungan B.K.P. Pulau Tello menjadi satu Ressort istimewa pada B.N.K.P. Nias harus dirembak (sic) bersama sjarat'nja kalau datang utusan dari B.K.P.' (RMG 3.406).



*istimewa*) of the BNKP. On 3 June 1960, the twenty-fifth synod of the BNKP, meeting in Ombölat, resolved that the BKP merge into the BNKP.<sup>309</sup> The Batu Islands thus became the thirteenth church circuit of the BNKP.

To overcome the problem of the inefficient church leadership on the Batu Islands, Reitz had suggested that an 'ordained expert' (i.e., a missionary) be stationed on the Batu Islands as an advisor. Should the BKP join the BNKP, this person could be sent by the RM.<sup>310</sup> This had been an important point in the negotiations between BKP and BNKP. The BNKP promised to request the RM to send a missionary for this 'special resort', which it did during the visit of *Ephorus* Sohahau Mendröfa in Wuppertal in 1961. In answer to this request, from June 1964 until May 1968, Rudolf Heering<sup>311</sup>, an ordained theologian of the Rhenish Church, worked on the Batu Islands as advisor and educator. During his time on Pulau Tello, the Rhenish Church accepted a sponsorship as 'godparent' for the Batu Islands.<sup>312</sup> In addition to this theologian, a professional German deacon and a nurse were envisaged to up-grade the auxiliary hospital on Pulau Tello, but this plan could not be realized.<sup>313</sup> When, in 1966, the thirty-first synod of the BNKP was held on Pulau Tello, this was an indication that the merger of the Batunese church into the BNKP had also taken place emotionally.

A remarkable aspect of the merger of the BKP with the BNKP is that the choice for unification was made on cultural rather than on denominational grounds. While the Batunese congregations show distinctly Lutheran tendencies, especially in liturgical matters<sup>314</sup>, the sense of communion between the two groups is determined by ethno-cultural relations. Similarities in vernacular and *adat*, and especially family links between Nias and the Batu Islands by far outweigh any differences in ecclesiastical tradition.

<sup>309</sup> Cf. A. Steinhart, *1889-1989. 100 jaar Kerk op de Batu-eilanden*, 1989, pp. 5, 12. Though the report of the synod does not explicitly mention the merger, it is put on the agenda for 8.<sup>30</sup>-10.<sup>00</sup> on 3 June 1960 (cf. 'Tertip Atjara Rapat Synode ke 25 di Ombölat', RMG 2.804). W. Gulö, *Benih yang Tumbuh XIII*, 1983, p. 24, incorrectly places the merger in 1961. *Ephorus* S. Mendröfa explicitly mentions the merger in 1960, cf. 'Protokoll Indonesien Kommission', Wuppertal, 28 April 1961, p. 2 (RMG 514); cf. *BRM*, 111/6 (1961) p. 116.

<sup>310</sup> Cf. G.O. Reitz, 'A report of the Church in the Batu Islands', 1959, p. 23.

<sup>311</sup> Heering arrived on Nias in Mai 1963, where he studied the Niasan vernacular and the cultural context until June 1964. During his second term (May 1968 - May 1973), he was the director of the BNKP's agency for literature and advisor to the BNKP in administrative matters. On 30 September 1973, he left the RM (by then the *Vereinigte Evangelische Mission*).

<sup>312</sup> The term used was *Patenschaft* (sponsorship as godparent), cf. 'Protokoll der Mitarbeiterkonferenz der Rheinischen Mission', Gunungsitoli, 3 October 1963 (RMG 514). The LWF asked the Rhenish Church in 1963 to take over a 'trusteeship' (*Treuhandenschaft*) for the BKP and a sponsorship as godparent for the BNKP, cf. P. Lohmann, 'Neuanfang auf den Batu-Inseln', in: *In die Welt für die Welt*, 1/4 (1965), pp. 68-71.

<sup>313</sup> Cf. 'Protokoll Indonesien Kommission', Wuppertal 22 December 1964, p. 3 (RMG 514).

<sup>314</sup> I.e., the arrangement of the liturgical centre with a dominant altar, often with a crucifix, flowers and candles, stained-glass windows with biblical motives and pictures. Until recently, certain parts of the liturgy were sung. The author noticed that the Christians on the Batu Islands have a sense of awe and respect when entering the 'house of God', while on Nias the sacral atmosphere is often missing.

## 5.8 CHALLENGES TO THE PROTESTANT CHURCHES ON NIAS AND THE BATU ISLANDS (1930-1965)

Although by now firmly rooted in the Niasan and Batunese context and increasingly headed by indigenous leaders, the Protestant churches on Nias and the Batu Islands were severely challenged during this period, also. As in missionary-led times, there were challenges arising from the local situation, i.e., the primal religion, Islam, and new Christian movements, such as the Fa'awösa, the 'holiness movement' and the 'jumping awakenings', as well as challenges arising from non-local factors, such as Seventh-Day Adventism and Nationalist Politics (*Parkindo* and *Nasakom*).

### 5.8.1 Primal Religion

During the 1930s, Christianity became the nominal religion in those sectors of society on Nias and the Batu Islands not adhering to Islam or, as in the case of most Chinese, to Buddhism. In 1935, the entire village of Börö Nadu Gomo embraced Christianity.<sup>315</sup> This had been the last major stronghold of the primal religion on Nias.<sup>316</sup> In Fuge on Sigata, Batu Islands, the last prominent animist priestess was reported to be practising until about 1940.<sup>317</sup> However, whereas the primal religion ceased to exist as a distinct religion, the remnants of the traditional beliefs were now doomed to a shadowy existence under the cloak of Christianity (or Islam). From this 'underground' existence, they continue to 'irritate' the church even now. So-called *duku* (the term *ere* was dropped) still practice shamanist rituals and healing methods, and their services are eagerly sought after by most Ono Niha, including the Christians. Until very recently, the BNKP regarded these 'heathen' practices as a major challenge to the church.<sup>318</sup>

### 5.8.2 Islam

Whereas, in the 1930s, the relationship between Islam and Christianity on Nias had largely become stabilized, on the Batu Islands, the atmosphere between Muslims and Christians gradually became more contentious and the 'race' between them for the remaining villages adhering to the primal religion gained momentum. The

<sup>315</sup> In 1913, E. Fries visited Börö Nadu and subsequently sent a *sinenge* there. The *sinenge* was not received well. Beginning in 1917, Skubinna stayed in Börö Nadu for two years, but was unsuccessful in drawing the people to the Gospel. In 1920, a few *Ono Niha Keriso* from Ziwi, a Christian village near Börö Nadu, held Christian worship services in Börö Nadu and attracted a few people. In 1924, the hearts of the people of Börö Nadu began to open up to the Christian message. The first fruits of Börö Nadu were baptised in 1928 by the Niasan *Pandita* Solo'ö. In 1935, the *ere* died and a *sinenge* was able to settle there. In that year, the chief and all of the people of Börö Nadu embraced Christianity. A church was built and the place of worship of Tuada Hia was no longer maintained, but neither was it destroyed. Cf. *Toeria*, 22/8 (1935).

<sup>316</sup> Until now, there is a sacred *fösi*-tree and a shrine of Tuada Hia, the primal ancestor of the Ono Niha in Börö Nadu Gomo. According to the ancient mythology of the Ono Niha, Tuada Hia was the first man who descended from the golden upper world or *Tete holi ana'a*. The *fösi*-tree of Börö Nadu Gomo is believed to have grown out of the heart of Tuada Hia. The *ere* of Börö Nadu held a very high status (*tohude*). He was believed to know the art of invulnerability (*kekebalan*) and to be able to kill a man through his curse; cf. U. Hummel, *Sirihpruim en Kruis*, 2002, pp. 66-68.

<sup>317</sup> Cf. *EVB*, 58/1-4 (1940), p. 43.

<sup>318</sup> Cf. Ch. 7.2.1.

propaganda also became more aggressive.<sup>319</sup> The missionaries strictly prohibited marriages between Christians and Muslims if one of the conditions were that the Christian partner would have to convert to Islam. Christian widows who married a Muslim were excommunicated, along with their Christian children.<sup>320</sup> Muslims had the feeling that Christians were in favour of colonialism.

A critical situation developed when the son of the last ruling *raja* wanted to marry the daughter of Nihela, the district chief of Pulau Tello. The girl, still a child, had been baptised, but in order to marry the Muslim prince, she would have to convert to Islam. Missionary Schröder and *Guru* Fae'ö Gamuata tried to intervene with a letter to Nihela. If only the prince would become a Christian, they would not object to the marriage. Nihela followed their advice, demanding that the royal family eat pork when they came to his house.<sup>321</sup> Eventually, however, he succumbed to the demands of the Muslims. In 1937, when the girl was eleven years old, she had to marry the prince and convert to Islam. Her father, the district chief, was subsequently put under church discipline<sup>322</sup> – a significant victory for the Islamic minority. At the end of the 1930s, Islamic religious propaganda and proselytising (*dakwah*) also entered Christian areas, such as Howia, Bötua, Lorang and Mari<sup>323</sup>, sometimes causing distressing dissension among the population.

### 5.8.3 Fa'awösa

The Fa'awösa<sup>324</sup> was a charismatic-prophetic movement, principally Christian, but incorporating strong elements of the primal religion of Nias. It began in Sogae'adu under the leadership of Toma Lömbu, usually called Ama Wohakhi, around 1930.<sup>325</sup> Wilhelm Müller<sup>326</sup>, missionary of Sogae'adu at the time, saw this movement as an expression of the Niasans' will for independence, caused by dissatisfaction with the authoritarian way in which the missionaries led the church.<sup>327</sup>

Ama Wohakhi was a talented man, who had once worked as a civil servant. During an illness, he had a vision of Missionary Fries appearing to him and urging him to repent and change his life. He then met a relative, Tomari Lömbu, a 'prophetess' from Tuhemu'asi, who claimed to have a relationship with the Holy

<sup>319</sup> The missionaries compared Mohammed to Jesus, arguing that Jesus was the stronger one, having no sin, whereas Mohammed, a polygamist, had obviously been a sinful human being. The Muslims ridiculed the teaching that Jesus was the Son of God, asking: How could God have a child born of a woman? The missionaries and teacher-preachers countered this with the illustration of the trunk of the banana tree. The 'child of the banana' (*ono gai*) comes out of the mother-trunk without there being a visible father. So also, the 'apple of one's eye' (*ono hörö* = 'pupil of the eye'), as Jesus was endearingly called, has no visible father, cf. *EVB*, 50/4 (1932), p. 79; cf. *Toeria Hoelo Batoe*, 6/7 (1934).

<sup>320</sup> Cf. *EVB*, 53/2 (1935), p. 39.

<sup>321</sup> Cf. *EVB*, 50/3 (1932), pp. 63-64. It seems that the Muslims submitted to this demand.

<sup>322</sup> Cf. *EVB*, 56/1-4 (1938), pp. 24-25.

<sup>323</sup> Cf. *EVB*, 58/1-4 (1940), pp. 44-46.

<sup>324</sup> Also called *sekola wa'awösa* (community school), cf. W. Gulö, *Benih vang Tumbuh XIII*, 1983, pp. 19-20; A. Schneider, *Turia*, 1965, pp. 52-54; H. Kayser, *Aspekte des sozio-kulturellen Wandels auf Nias*, 1976, pp. 92-93. Cf. Ch. 6.2.1.3.

<sup>325</sup> Toma Lömbu was born in 1878 in Tuhemu'asi. Cf. 'Absplitterungen von der BNKP', in: 'Die Selbständigkeitsbewegung im Sogae'adoegebiet, Nias, Mai 1937' (RMG 2.815); *BRM*, 1932, pp. 286-293; cf. A. Schneider, *Sekola wa'awösa*, 1941, pp. 303-311.

<sup>326</sup> Wilhelm Müller (20 June 1905 Klafeld / Siegen – 26 April 1976 Essen).

<sup>327</sup> Cf. W. Müller, 'Stationsberichte' 1937-1938 (RMG 2.772). Cf. G.O. Reitz, 'Report on Nias', 1957, p. 5.

Ghost and be able to interpret dreams and tell the future.<sup>328</sup> She became Ama Wohakhi's 'spiritual mother', and he her 'spiritual son'.<sup>329</sup>

Missionary Müller did not approve of the illegitimate relationship between Ama Wohakhi and Tomari. He urged them to terminate it, which they did. In order to get this extraordinary man under control, the missionary then offered Ama Wohakhi the position of *sinenge* of Hilibadalu. He accepted it without a salary. A rapidly growing number of people from Sogae'adu and Sifaoro'asi came to his prayer assemblies (*sekola wangandrö*), which took place every second week on Wednesday evenings. There was 'speaking in tongues', invocation, exorcism, and open sectarianism (some pupils of Ama Wohakhi called themselves 'Disciples of the School of Jehovah').<sup>330</sup> In spite of all this, Müller allowed Ama Wohakhi to continue with these assemblies, not the least reason being that the collections were huge.

Since 1931, Ama Wohakhi had been in contact with the former *tuhenöri* Benyamini, who had fallen under church discipline, and with the former *guru* Samu'eli, who had lost his job because many schools had had to be closed down. Both rebelled against the missionaries. Later, two other former teacher-preachers, Badurani and Norodödö, also known as Natanaeli<sup>331</sup>, the notorious chiefs Hukunidada of Fangedanö and Aseri of Tugala-Oyo, as well as the ambitious assistant-*demang* Jonata supported the *sekola wa'awösa*.<sup>332</sup>

This strongly charismatic movement rejected the institutional power of ecclesiastical organisations and wanted to submit solely to the Holy Spirit. Ama Wohakhi and his six assistants were accused by the missionaries of carrying out unauthorized baptisms and of conducting unregistered marriage services.<sup>333</sup> The fact that polygamy was considered by the Fa'awösa to be no problem made the movement popular among some of the chiefs.<sup>334</sup> Its teachings were syncretistic, in substance mainly Christian, but mixed with elements of the primal religion (e.g., shamanism) and later also of Islam (i.e., using the crescent and star in addition to the cross as symbols<sup>335</sup>). At a certain stage, the emancipation from the missionaries was propagated, since they were considered to be no longer necessary as spiritual 'stair steps'.<sup>336</sup> One of their slogans was: 'The church of the missionaries is the church of the law; people who are rooted in the Gospel do not need church discipline'.<sup>337</sup> Contributions to the church and government taxes were also rejected.<sup>338</sup> Another slogan was more political: 'separation from Europe'.<sup>339</sup>

<sup>328</sup> Cf. *JBRM*, 1934 (1935), p. 71.

<sup>329</sup> Cf. A. Schneider, *Sekola wa'awösa*, 1941, p. 303. This became characteristic of the movement, *ibid.* p. 307.

<sup>330</sup> Cf. *JBRM*, 1932 (1933), p. 40.

<sup>331</sup> Both under church discipline for trespasses. According to W. Gulö, *Benih vang Tumbuh XIII*, 1983, p. 19 and U.M. Telaumbanua, *Evangelization and Niasan Culture*, 1993, p. 117, his Christian name was Natanaeli.

<sup>332</sup> Cf. 'Die Selbständigkeitsbewegung im Sogae'adoegebiet, Nias, Mai 1937', p. 2 (RMG 2.815).

<sup>333</sup> Cf. *BRM*, 1932, pp. 289-293.

<sup>334</sup> Cf. *BRM*, 1939, pp. 72-73.

<sup>335</sup> Cf. W. Gulö, *Benih vang Tumbuh XIII*, 1983, p. 20 (cf. n. 23); Lothar Schreiner calls it 'a kind of Krislam' (a mixture of Christianity and Islam). In 1960, the Indonesian government prohibited the depiction of the crescent together with the cross; cf. L. Schreiner, 'Besuch auf Nias', in: *BRM*, 110/1 (1960), p. 7.

<sup>336</sup> Cf. *BRM*, 1932, p. 288 ('der Missionar als Treppenstufe').

<sup>337</sup> Cf. A. Schneider, *Sekola wa'awösa*, 1941, p. 307.

<sup>338</sup> Cf. *Barmer Missionsblatt*, 1934, p. 82.

<sup>339</sup> Cf. *BRM*, 1934, p. 219; cf. U. Rottschäfer, *Heinrich Rabeneck*, 1989, p. 88.

These incitements, as well as a quarrel between Missionary Müller and Ama Wohakhi about some money for books, resulted, in 1933, in a deep division between the Fa'awösa-movement and the mission. At one stage, 1146 Christians, mainly in Sogae'adu, broke off their relations with the mission. This quest for ecclesiastical independence spread to Sifaoro'asi, Tugala Oyo and even as far as Amandraya. A community council (*rafe wa'awösa*) was elected as leadership, and all money which had up to that time been raised by the movement for the mission church was demanded back. For 'legal reasons', this was not conceded.<sup>340</sup> The movement soon grew to about three thousand supporters. *Guru Samu'eli* convened a one-week course for evangelists, which was attended and completed by seventy elders in November 1935, thus providing leadership for the movement. Some of these elders were later promoted to the rank of *pandita*. The missionaries threatened the movement with sanctions from the government should they administer the sacraments. On 28 November 1936, the Fa'awösa broke away from the 'B.N.K.P.-Nias'.<sup>341</sup>

After 1936, the growth of the movement slowed down, partially because it was not successful in gaining government approval.<sup>342</sup> Former paramount chief Benjamini and some others repentantly returned to the B.N.K.P.-Nias. They accused the movement of bad financial management and improper administration of the sacraments.<sup>343</sup>

When Ama Wohakhi died on 21 July 1938, his followers took an oath at his grave to carry on the struggle of the Fa'awösa.<sup>344</sup> It lingered on under the leadership of *Guru Samu'eli*. Probably by this time, its name had changed to 'The Fellowship in the Spirit' (*Angowuloa Fa'awösa khö Geheha*, abbreviated as AFG). In 1944, a part of the AFG split off, naming itself 'The Fellowship in Jesus' (*Angowuloa Fa'awösa khö Yesu* or AFY).

Even after World War II and the struggle for Indonesian independence, the movement (encompassing AFG and AFY) was still 'strong and dangerous'.<sup>345</sup> In its unique features, the Fa'awösa remained confined to the Ono Niha society on Nias. On the Batu Islands it was registered only in the southern parts of Tanah Bala, where some BKP Christians joined it in the 1950s.<sup>346</sup>

Walter Freytag valued the Fa'awösa principally as 'an authentic approach of genuine spiritual experience', but since it caused divisions and strife among the Christians and was not bound solely to the Word of God, it had become 'worse than paganism'.<sup>347</sup> This harsh verdict, however, neither appreciates the sincere efforts undertaken by the Fa'awösa of bringing together the different living roots of the religious heritage of the Ono Niha, namely the primal religion and Christianity, nor does it actually serve the unity among local Christians if European outsiders condemn a critical and somewhat unorthodox minority against the established church.

<sup>340</sup> Cf. A. Schneider, *Sekola wa'awösa*, 1941, p. 309.

<sup>341</sup> Cf. 'Die Selbständigkeitsbewegung im Sogae'adoegebiet, Nias, Mai 1937', p. 2 (RMG 2.815).

<sup>342</sup> The Fa'awösa as a 'malafide' schismatic movement, cf. *Verslag van het Zendingconsulaat*, 1946, p. 69.

<sup>343</sup> Cf. *BRM*, 1934, p. 219, p. 311.

<sup>344</sup> Cf. W. Müller, 'Stationsberichte 1937-1938', Sogae'adu (RMG 2.772).

<sup>345</sup> Cf. T. Müller-Krüger, 'Bericht über Nias', 1950 (RMG 2.956).

<sup>346</sup> Cf. G.O. Reitz, 'A report of the Church in the Batu Islands', 1959, p. 7.

<sup>347</sup> W. Freytag, *Randbemerkungen*, 1941, p. 320.

#### 5.8.4 Holiness Movement

Müller-Krüger reported<sup>348</sup> about another charismatic movement, the 'holy people' (*niha ni amoni'ö*), which had flared up in the region of Idanöi not long before his visit to Nias in 1950. The movement emphasised perfection in holiness and the true presence of the Holy Ghost. As in the Fa'awösa and in AMIN, certain chiefs – especially from the Gea clan of Lasara – played a dominant role here, also. The 'holy people' used traditional melodies with biblical lyrics. By 1950, the membership had reached about five hundred adults in five villages. Though the movement withered away within a few years and did not cause a schism, it was yet another independent expression of indigenous Christianity and of the need for a stronger emphasis on pneumatology and eschatology in the Niasan church.

#### 5.8.5 Jumping Awakenings

From the time of World War II until the early 1960s, 'jumping awakenings' (*fangesa solaya*) took place at various locations on Nias. A medium (*fakake* or *tuka wangesa*), usually a woman, would lay her hands on a person, who had to keep his or her eyes closed. Energy would then emanate from the medium, causing the recipient to jump up and down, and climaxing in his or her proclaiming a revelation. The BNKP condemned these enthusiastic outbursts as resurgences of shamanism.<sup>349</sup>

#### 5.8.6 Seventh-Day Adventism

Activities of SDA on Nias are recorded as of 1932, much later than on the Batu Islands.<sup>350</sup> Reportedly, they concentrated on the central and southern areas (i.e., Sifaoro'asi, Hilisimaetanö and Hilisatarö).<sup>351</sup> Hilisatarö became their stronghold. Here they had exploited the struggle for the succession to the throne to establish their position. Taögö, also known as Aseri, an Ono Niha from Hilisatarö, had been trained by Seventh-Day Adventist in Sabang and then returned to Nias as an evangelist. He collaborated with the usurper to the throne of Hilisatarö, Haka, and waged a counter-mission against the RM. His simple message consisted of three points:

1. RM-missionaries are thieves, for they take the collections without accounting for them to the congregations.<sup>352</sup>
2. RM-missionaries are a gang of forgers, counterfeiting the pure Word of God.
3. RM-missionaries are swindlers, for they teach that Sunday and not Saturday is the biblical day of rest.<sup>353</sup>

<sup>348</sup> 'Bericht-Nias', July 1950 (RMG 2.956).

<sup>349</sup> Cf. W. Gulö, *Benih yang Tumbuh XIII*, 1983, p. 22; cf. Ch. 6.2.1.3.

<sup>350</sup> Cf. Ch. 4.8.3.

<sup>351</sup> Cf. *Toeria*, 22/2 (1935) p. 17; H. Kayser, *Aspekte des sozio-kulturellen Wandels auf Nias*, 1976, p. 93.

<sup>352</sup> It is true that during these difficult times the missionaries used collection money for their own needs, but they reported this to the board in Barmen; cf. letter Nias-conference to RM, Gunungsitoli, 19 October 1934 (RMG 2.782).

<sup>353</sup> Cf. *BRM*, 1937, p. 13.

Because of their stress on Saturday, on Nias the SDA were called *ugamo Sabtis* (Religion of the Sabbath). In answer to the arguments of the RM-missionaries, all based on the New Testament<sup>354</sup>, they quoted numerous verses from the Old Testament and argued that 'the Father is greater than the Son', which meant that what God the Father had commanded (i.e., to hold the Sabbath on the seventh day), could not be revoked by his son Jesus Christ (i.e., presumably by changing it to the first day of the week or Sunday). In reply to this, the RM-missionaries used a rather dubious argument which referred to tendencies in Germany at the time: 'We don't want to become Jews, but to remain Christians'.<sup>355</sup> To the Ono Niha this meant nothing, since there are no Jews on Nias and those mentioned in the Bible are usually identified with Christians. Nevertheless, Seventh-Day Adventism was a serious challenge to the Protestant *status quo* and compelled Niasan theologians and laity to defend their own faith.<sup>356</sup>

On the Batu Islands, another 'onslaught' of the SDA took place in 1937, into the new congregation of Gitö on Tanah Masa. The people were promised money, beautiful houses and the possibility of becoming teacher-preachers if only they would join the sect.<sup>357</sup> Schröder and Steinhart feared the detrimental results of 'dual mission' in this sparsely-populated region, since the government did not intervene.<sup>358</sup>

In 1938, the missionaries dedicated a number of articles in the church magazine *Toeria Hoelo Batoe* to the topic of SDA. In the May edition, following the Easter celebrations, the standard thesis was defended that every Sunday reminds the believer of Easter, the resurrection of Jesus Christ. In Christ the law of the Old Testament has reached its goal (Rom 10:4), so that Sunday has become the Sabbath of the New Covenant. 'Therefore, the Christians meet on Sundays'<sup>359</sup> – a dogmatic gag, not sufficient to smother the more Bible-based arguments of the SDA.

#### 5.8.7 Nationalist Politics (*Parkindo* and *Nasakom*)

The spirit of Indonesian nationalism had inspired many Ono Niha in the 1930s and 1940s. At the time, this had not challenged the Christianity inherited from the missionaries. In the early 1950s, however, the 'socio-religious' character of Indonesian nationalism<sup>360</sup>, inherently critical of all foreign, especially Western, dominance, had an increasing impact on the people of Nias and the Batu Islands.

As of 1953, many members of the BNKP began to support the *Partai Kristen Indonesia* (*Parkindo*), a political party based on the Christian creed and nationalist principles. *Parkindo* was allowed to use church buildings for its gatherings and located its offices on a plot owned by the BNKP in Gunungsitoli.<sup>361</sup> Moved by nationalist propaganda, some leading members of the BNKP developed a very critical attitude towards the influence of the missionaries. A. Maru'ao, a minister of the

<sup>354</sup> Jn 20:19; Acts 20:7; I Cor 16:2; Heb 10:25. Cf. *Toeria*, 22/2 (1935), p. 18.

<sup>355</sup> Cf. *BRM*, 1937, p. 13.

<sup>356</sup> Cf. Ch. 6.2.2.2.

<sup>357</sup> Cf. *Toeria Hoelo Batoe*, 10/8 (1938).

<sup>358</sup> Cf. *EVB*, 56/1-4 (1938), pp. 45-46.

<sup>359</sup> Cf. *Toeria Hoelo Batoe*, 10/5 (1938), 'Femaoso Jesou no loeo wemöna. Ya'ia mböröta wa ma ofoelo niha sanerönoe chö Jesou ba loeo migoe ba lö na ae ba loeo satoe'.

<sup>360</sup> Cf. Matti J. Schindehütte, *Zivilreligion als Verantwortung der Gesellschaft*, 2006, pp. 87, 127-128, 139-141.

<sup>361</sup> Cf. Ch. 6.5.3.2.

BNKP, speaking at the opening ceremony of the *Parkindo* branch in 1953, accused the European missionaries of having, before World War II, forbidden the Christians to participate in political activities, and of having suppressed the spirit of Indonesian nationalism.<sup>362</sup>

As of 1954, the leadership of the BNKP became openly involved in the political arena. In connection with the election campaign, the synod board authorized *Parkindo* freely to dispose of the BNKP's facilities.<sup>363</sup> The victory in the general elections in 1955, in which *Parkindo* received 55% of the votes on Nias and the Batu Islands, was also a political victory of the BNKP.

Towards the end of the 1950s, the socio-political atmosphere in Indonesia became heated up by ideological rhetoric about liberation from the remnants of colonial bondage. Social problems were often blamed on Western imperialism and the ideological grip it continued to have on many Indonesians.

In his speech on Independence Day, 17 August 1959, well-known for the introduction of his political manifesto for a 'Guided Democracy', President Soekarno called on all Indonesians to take up the struggle against 'cultural imperialism' (*imperialisme kebudayaan*).<sup>364</sup> He considered the 'cultural revolution' (*revolusi kebudayaan*)<sup>365</sup> to be part and parcel of the multi-complex revolution of the Indonesian people against colonialism and feudalism. In his opinion, the Indonesian people had to restore their national heritage by simultaneously destroying colonial and anti-revolutionary conventions (and 'all crazy foreign culture'<sup>366</sup>), while at the same time building up a genuine Indonesian identity, which had to be protected against the 'remote control'<sup>367</sup> of neo-colonialism.<sup>368</sup> This national identity, while being revolutionary, had to be based on ancient cultural principles common to all Indonesian peoples, such as mutual cooperation and community self-help (*gotong-royong*), mutual deliberation (*musyawarah*), and consensus (*mufakat*).<sup>369</sup>

These slogans were also eagerly received by many Ono Niha, including some of the church leaders in Gunungsitoli, who, from 1960 to 1965, dared to challenge the missionaries' theology on cultural issues. During the synod assembly in 1962, for example, this resulted in a controversy on the pre-Christian practice of planting flowers on the grave on the fourth day after the burial<sup>370</sup>, as well as on whether the traditional *adat*-marriage should be acknowledged by the church. The missionaries,

<sup>362</sup> 'Laporan Rapat Anggota lengkap Partai Kristen Indonesia (PARKINDO), Tjaban Gunungsitoli-Nias, tanggal 1 September 1953' (Arsip BNKP).

<sup>363</sup> Cf. Ch. 6.5.3.2.

<sup>364</sup> Cf. Soekarno, 'Penemuan kembali revolusi kita', Pidato Presiden 17 Agustus 1959, in: Soekarno, *Dari Proklamasi sampai Takari*, 1965, pp. 419-420.

<sup>365</sup> *Ibid.* p. 423; 'Laksana malaekat jang menjerbu dari langit djalannja revolusi kita', Pidato Presiden 17 Agustus 1960 in: Soekarno, *Dari Proklamasi sampai Takari*, 1965, pp. 441-455.

<sup>366</sup> 'Berantastlah segala kebudayaan asing jang gila-gilaan! Kembalilah kepada kebudayaan sendiri' (wipe out all crazy foreign culture! Return to your own culture), Soekarno, 'Tahun "Vivere Pericoloso"', Pidato Presiden 17 Agustus 1964, in: Soekarno, *Dari Proklamasi sampai Takari*, 1965, pp. 620-621.

<sup>367</sup> '... neo-kolonialisme itu adalah ... pendjadjahan by remote control ...', Soekarno, 'Tjapailah Bintang-Bintang dilangit!', Pidato Presiden 17 Agustus 1965, in: Soekarno, *Dari Proklamasi sampai Takari*, 1965, p. 674.

<sup>368</sup> Cf. Soekarno, 'Re-So-Pim', Pidato Presiden 17 Agustus 1961, in: Soekarno, *Dari Proklamasi sampai Takari*, 1965, pp. 484-500.

<sup>369</sup> Cf. Soekarno, 'Tahun Kemenangan', Pidato Presiden 17 Agustus 1962, in: Soekarno, *Dari Proklamasi sampai Takari*, 1965, p. 535.

<sup>370</sup> Cf. Ch. 2.5.4.3 and Ch. 6.4.4.4.



as advisors to the synod, warned about a possible resurgence of paganism and the dangerous influence of Soekarno's *Pancasila* ideology.<sup>371</sup> While it was undisputed that compromises with remnants of the primal religion were intolerable, the spirit of nationalism created a sense of self-worth in the Ono Niha which, to some extent, challenged the pre-World War II status quo in the Protestant churches on Nias and the Batu Islands.

A few very progressive leaders of the BNKP, such as Tahadödö Dhana Telaumbanua, general secretary of the synod board, even succumbed to the temptation of supporting Soekarno's rather leftist vision to bring in line Nationalism, Religion and Communism, for which Soekarno created the acronym *Nasakom*. In a 'General Statement of the BNKP' (*Pernyataan Umum BNKP*)<sup>372</sup>, presented during the centenary in September 1965, Telaumbanua stated six points, concerning:

1. The unconditional support by the BNKP of the President and Leader of the Revolution, including his program for self-reliance (*Takari*) based on the *Pancasila*.
2. The necessity of implementing the principles of self-reliance, particularly concerning the labour market.
3. The necessity of supporting Soekarno's decision to withdraw Indonesia's membership in the United Nations (January 1965) and to support the efforts of other revolutionary nations to change the United Nations into an instrument for developing 'one world free of neo-colonialism (*nekolim*), oppression and exploitation'.
4. Critically to support the Bogor Declaration which revealed the will of the Indonesian people to support revolutionary nationalism, following the vision of *Nasakom* to thwart the neo-colonialist aspirations of Malaysia.
5. To acknowledge the success of the International Africa-Asia Conference (K.I.A.A., 1965) which united the nations of Africa and Asia in their struggle against colonialism and exploitation.
6. To call on all Christians in Asia and Africa, and all over the world, to become aware of the fact that all colonialism, exploitation of one class by another, or of one nation by another, is against the Word of God, and must therefore be eradicated from the face of the earth. In the stead of injustice, the national and international church councils were called on to strive for justice, prosperity and reconciliation between all nations.

Even though the leadership of the BNKP did not demand of its church members that they accept the ideology of *Nasakom*, it was a very popular vision and a real challenge to all Ono Niha who piously adhered to the Christianity inherited from the missionary era.<sup>373</sup> After the so-called Communist *coup d'état* (G-30S / PKI), on 30

<sup>371</sup> Cf. 'Protokoll der Synode der BNKP', 6-12 June 1962 in Ombölata (RMG 2.804). Eventually, compromises were reached, allowing the planting of flowers while strictly denying it any spiritual significance and consenting that holy matrimony could be consecrated by a minister during the *adat*-ceremonies at the house of the parents of the bride, instead of in the church, as the missionaries had demanded. For synodal decisions concerning the dowry in 1964, cf. W. Gulö, *Benih yang Tumbuh XIII*, 1983, pp. 29-30; cf. Ch. 6.4.4.4.

<sup>372</sup> T. Dana Telaumbanua 'Pernyataan Umum Umat Kristen dari Banua Niha Keriso Protestant Nias pada Perayaan Yubileum 100 tahun Berita Injil di Nias (1965) di Gunungsitoli' (Arsip BNKP). Paraphrased by the author.

<sup>373</sup> Cf. W. Gulö, *Benih yang Tumbuh XIII*, 1983, pp. 239-240.

September 1965, the BNKP soon clearly dissociated itself from any leftist leanings of its members. All employees and office-bearers who had been members of the Communist Party (PKI) were dismissed.<sup>374</sup> During the Soeharto era (1966-1998), former members of the PKI could not hold office in the BNKP.<sup>375</sup> The undisputed status quo of the pre-World War II missionary theology was once again restored.

## 5.9 FINAL OBSERVATIONS

The transition from mission fields to independent churches<sup>376</sup> on Nias and the Batu Islands was characteristic of the period from 1930 until 1965. An important motive, which was particularly felt by the RM, was the world economic crisis and the financial malaise. The three-self-formula (self-support, self-governance and self-propagation) was more a theological justification on the part of the mission societies than the actual driving force behind the process of independence. On the part of the Ono Niha, however, the quest for ecclesiastical independence had been inspired by the struggle for national freedom (*merdeka*).

In 1930, serious preparations began for an independent synod on Nias, certainly encouraged by the recent founding of the HKBP-synod. Step-by-step, the parameters for a viable organisation were worked out. Whereas financial self-support was not achieved by the time of the founding synod of the BNKP (1936), the church had obtained some instruments to govern itself, such as a church order (constitution) and qualified leadership. Concerning the former, the strong position of the *ephorus* (bishop) favoured a hierarchical, top-down culture of decision-making, although a presbyterial-synodal structure was envisaged. This rather authoritarian structure resembled that of the RM's organisation. In its 'United' rather than 'Congregationalist' (i.e., *banua*-centred) character, the BNKP was more a copy of the German churches in the Rhineland and Westphalia, than a typical Niasan organisation. Whereas the term *banua* was adopted to demonstrate ecclesiastical unity, the decentralist meaning of the term was disregarded.

In the area of leadership-training, partially due to the lack of funds, the training of teacher-preachers (*guru*) was reduced and eventually stopped (1934), while at the same time the number of training opportunities for indigenous pastors (*pandita Niha*) and evangelists (*sinenge*) was increased. Thanks to the Great Awakening, many lay-members of the congregations willingly bore witness to their faith in public. Particularly through the choirs, but also through regular devotions in private homes, the laity supported the office-bearers of the church in the propagation of the Faith.

In addition to these typically ecclesiastical activities, the special services, such as medical aid and education, were also further improved. In 1934, two physicians of the RM, Mr. and Mrs. Thomsen, began their service on Nias. In the same year, Mariza Telaumbanua became the first Niasan nurse in the service of the RM. Despite the necessity, due to the economic crisis, to close down a number of mission

<sup>374</sup> W. Lempp, *Benih yang Tumbuh XII*, 1976, p. 32.

<sup>375</sup> Cf. 'Laporan Team Perumus Hasil-hasil Rapat Kerja Pendeta BNKP', Gunungsitoli, January 1977.

<sup>376</sup> Terminology used by Hendrik Kraemer in: *From mission field to independent church*, 1958. Cf. J.A.B. Jongeneel, *Philosophy, Science, and Theology of Mission in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries* 1, 2002, pp. 268-269.

schools, the educational service of the RM remained an important instrument of Christianisation.

Before the outbreak of World War II, the BNKP was an 'autonomous' church governed by missionaries who had an anxious preoccupation with the prospect that the Niasan Christians could fall back into 'heathendom'. There were constant deliberations on church discipline (*amakhoita*). The *adat* was to be maintained as a civil code, while all 'heathen' beliefs and practices were to be filtered out. In this, the missionaries were energetically supported by their indigenous protégés, especially the *pandita Niha* and the *sinenge*. Since most Christians assumed the obligation, faithfully to adhere to both the *adat* and the *amakhoita*, this resulted in ever more rules and regulations, effectively limiting the degree of liberation promised by the Gospel.

On the Batu Islands, the new generation of Dutch missionaries had significantly improved the quality of the missionary work. Steinhart seriously studied the indigenous culture, including the primal religion, in search of 'mental links' between the context of the Ono Niha and the text of the Bible. A system of regular church contributions had been introduced in 1925. Whereas this was opposed at first because it resembled the hated government taxes, the clever linking of the church contribution to both the funeral fund and the pensions for widows and orphans, as well as to the receipt of the church magazine, *Toeria Hoelo Batoe*, convinced most critics. Unfortunately, the system of financial self-support lasted only as long as the missionaries controlled it. After the independence of the Protestant Christian Church (BKP) in 1945, the system of church contributions could not successfully be re-implemented.

In the field of church governance, the missionaries of the DLM established both local and regional church councils. They could give advice, but the top decision-making power remained with the missionaries. The DLM was slow, perhaps even too late, in training indigenous ecclesiastical leadership. In the 1930s, two teacher-preachers were promoted to become evangelists. In practice, this meant that they travelled from one remote congregation or group of Christian settlers to the next to teach and preach. Since they were now fully in the service of the DLM, not receiving government subsidies, they were considered to be more loyal the church than were the teacher-preachers. Virtually at the last minute before the missionaries had to terminate their service on the Batu Islands due to World War II, an indigenous minister (*pandita Niha*) was appointed, without sufficient prior training.

As on Nias, on the Batu Islands the medical and educational services were further developed by the mission. Schröder, as director of the hospital on Pulau Tello (the one on Sigata had already been closed in 1916), and the Batunese paramedic, *Mantri* Kajoe Hondrö, provided such convincing services that the hospital became completely self-supporting, acknowledged for its quality by both the government physicians and by RM-doctor Thomsen, who occasionally helped out on Pulau Tello. After World War II and the subsequent War of Independence, the hospital was handed over to the Indonesian government and the educational service was only partially continued by the BKP.

When, in 1940, the German missionaries on Nias were interned, they handed the full responsibility over to the indigenous church leaders of the BNKP. This sudden independence was, however, to a certain extent curtailed by the Batak-Nias-Mission (BNM) and the Dutch missionaries who were brought in. In addition, Schröder was transferred from Pulau Tello to Gunungsitoli in July 1940, reducing

the missionary influence on the Batu Islands to a minimum. When he was interned in the Japanese detention camp in August 1942, the missionary work came to a complete stop. However, due to the newly invented ministry of the *sinenge*, which had been introduced by *Pandita Kana Wa'ambö* on the Batu Islands in 1943 following the example of the BNKP on Nias, Christianity did not wither away during these difficult times. The moratorium was the ultimate test of whether the churches could survive in times of extreme hardship without the help of the missionary societies. The *Ono Niha Keriso* persevered and did not fail this test – on the contrary: this period of lonesome, existential struggle was the time during which the Niasan churches came of age. The fact that the churches on Nias and the Batu Islands managed to survive under these extreme circumstances proved that Christianity had already become deeply rooted in the hearts of the *Ono Niha*.

On 16 August 1945, a day after the Japanese had retreated from the Batu Islands, the indigenous Christian leaders proclaimed their independent church: the BKP. When, in February 1947, Steinhart made an attempt to continue his work on Pulau Tello, this was rejected by the leader of the BKP, *Pandita Kana Wa'ambö*, albeit under some pressure from the Indonesian Republican forces. The DLM believed this to be 'handwriting on the wall', and took the decision to terminate all missionary activities on the Batu Islands and to transfer the responsibility to the RM.

Internally, the BKP was in an even greater state of devastation than the BNKP. Considering the church's lack of preparation for independence before the war, the actual needs of the people, as well as the fact that international bodies had asked the DLM to resume responsibility in the 1950s and 1960s, the DLM's refusal to return to the Batu Islands approached gross irresponsibility.

In the 1950s, a second branch of Christian mission on Nias and the Batu Islands was established by the Roman Catholic Church. Although this was regarded as a 'counter-mission' by many Protestants, particularly by the RM-missionaries, the evangelizing efforts of the Capuchin monks and Catholic laity among the *Ono Niha* must not be underestimated. The Roman Catholic mission concentrated mainly on former Protestant schismatics, the Chinese community and on *Ono Niha* in areas or islands not yet rooted in Protestantism.

At the same time, the Protestant churches were faced with substantial problems, such as inefficient organization and lack of funds, as well as schisms, charismatic movements, and even heresy. Prophets and visionaries rebelled against the ridged Western theology of the BNKP by practising faith-healing, magic, and syncretism, by advocating polygamy, and by claiming to have received revelations directly from the Holy Spirit. While some of this may have been 'an authentic approach of genuine spiritual experience' (Walter Freytag), it was considered by the BNKP to be heretical. A means to react to these disturbances and to establish a minimal degree of stability was provided by the new church order (1955). On this new basis, the leadership of the BNKP implemented strict church discipline and placed heavy financial burdens on the local congregations and districts. On the other hand, however, the synod board was not able to provide the degree of pastoral care necessary to overcome, let alone prevent, local problems. In fact, the dissatisfaction of local leaders with the 'synod office' in Gunungsitoli increased.

Despite its internal problems and tensions, however, the BNKP opened up to the national, and later to the international, ecumenical movement. In addition, the relationship with the RM in Germany was renewed in the 1950s. The returning missionaries, now acting as advisors, rendered an indispensable service in the

medical and educational fields, preparing many members of the church for an effective role in society. Much to the regret of the leaders of the BNKP, this also included the empowerment of women.

In 1957, the BKP was visited by a delegation of the LWF and the HKBP, which gave the advice that the small, ailing Batunese church join either the Lutheran HKBP or the 'United' BNKP. The BKP's choice of the BNKP, rather than the HKBP, shows that the Batunese Christians considered common cultural identity to be more important than a denominational allegiance to Lutheranism. The merger of the BKP with the BNKP took place in 1960.

In the early 1960s, some important synods were held which deliberated mainly on matters concerning indigenous culture, church discipline and the revision of the church order. Despite some improvements, the BNKP maintained its centralistic and hierarchical organisation. The ministers, *sinenge* and elders took all decisions, while the opportunities for lay participation became more restricted. This model proved to be vulnerable to schisms caused by the revival of traditional paradigms, e.g., the AMN and the ONKP schisms. A ministry of indigenous deacons was virtually non-existent in the congregations, even though German deaconesses and deacons played an important role there.

Again, as during the previous period, there were serious challenges to the dominant Protestant churches on Nias and the Batu Islands. Primal religion, though almost completely destroyed in its outward form by the mid-1930s, still lived on in the hearts and minds of most Ono Niha. Islam, particularly on the Batu Islands, entered into a 'race' with Christianity for the remaining 'heathen' areas. New Christian movements, such as the Fa'awösa, the 'holiness movement' and the 'jumping awakenings' rebelled against the institutional power of ecclesiastical organisations, wanting to submit solely to the Holy Spirit. Just as the Seventh-Day-Adventists, they criticised the pro-colonialist character of the missionary-led churches. This was not altogether justifiable, since the Christian Ono Niha on both Nias and the Batu Islands had supported Indonesian nationalism. Nationalist politics, especially Soekarno's ideological rhetoric concerning liberation from Western 'cultural imperialism' and the leftist concept of *Nasakom*, however, challenged the theological heritage of the missionaries, particularly concerning the appreciation of ancient Niasan values in the light of the Gospel.