

Cross and Adu

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Sarambia and *adu* figures, serving as an artistic inspiration for depicting the blessing Niasan Christ, Lord over the ancestors (Collection Völkerkundemuseum / Ethnological Museum of the Archives and Museum Foundation Wuppertal).

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Cross and Adu

A Socio-Historical Study on the Encounter between
Christianity and the Indigenous Culture on
Nias and the Batu Islands, Indonesia (1865-1965)

Kruis en Adu

Een socio-historische studie over de ontmoeting van het Christendom
met de inheemse cultuur op
Nias en de Batoe-eilanden, Indonesië (1865-1965)

(met een samenvatting in het Nederlands)

Proefschrift

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des ochtends te 10.30 en te 11.30 uur

door

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geboren op 31 maart 1957 te Hamburg, Duitsland

en

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geboren op 21 juli 1963 te Gunungsitoli, Nias, Indonesië

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Prefaces

1 PREFACE BY UWE HUMMEL

This study has taught me much about the dynamics of intercultural encounter, which I believe is the greatest challenge of our times. Writing this dissertation was not only a long and demanding academic endeavour, but also a personal adventure. The close cooperation and sharing with my Niasan colleague and co-author, the Reverend Tuhoni Telaumbanua, granted me a deeper insight into the life of the Ono Niha and their unique culture, as well as enriching me spiritually. Thank you, Ony, for your marvellous efforts, your encouraging visions and our fine friendship.

At the beginning of my academic career, it was my father, the late Civil Engineer Uwe Hummel, who encouraged me to do post-graduate studies; later, it was my mother, the late Ellen Hinsch, née Röbbing, who by her love and trust gave me the self-confidence to progress on my path. I am very grateful to both of my parents!

Shortly after I first arrived in the Netherlands at the end of 1986, I met Prof. Dr. Jan A.B. Jongeneel at the University of Utrecht. Ever since that meeting, I have appreciated his broad ecumenical vision, the intensity of his faith and his patience as a teacher. Without his encouragement as our supervisor, this dissertation would not have come about. We were also very fortunate to find two co-supervisors with equal dedication to the study of Missions and the Church History of Indonesia: Dr. Jan S. Aritonang from Jakarta (Indonesia) and Dr. Thomas van den End from Apeldoorn (The Netherlands). I thank them, too, for their guidance, as well as for very fulfilling academic and personal relationships.

Many others have also supported us over the past years in our research and in writing this dissertation. The board of the *Nederlands Luthers Genootschap* (DLM) made financial contributions for our travels and our stays in Amsterdam when visiting the Lutheran archives; DLM-board members, such as Ms. Coby Aartsen-Kraaypoel, Drs. Hans B. Val and Drs. Ernst J.W.Chr. de Haan, took a great interest in the topic of the dissertation and encouraged us all along the way; Prof. Johannes P. Boendermaker, Drs. Theodorus A. Fafié and the Reverend Cornelis (Cees) Pel advised us concerning the archives of the DLM and of the Dutch Lutheran Church, and some of them also provided us with important data; Ms. Anneke Werner and Mr. Frans Rozemond advised us on the archives of the Dutch Missionary Society (NZG) and the library of the Hendrik Kraemer Institute in Oegstgeest and later in Utrecht. Mr. Wolfgang Apelt was our guide in the archive of the Rhenish Mission in Wuppertal and made significant comments on some of the chapters; Dr. Folke Obermark-Stiller of the Ethnological Museum Wuppertal gave me permission to photograph the *sarambia* and *adu*, and use it as cover design; Dick Zwaan and Leo Steinhart, sons of former missionaries to Nias and the Batu Islands, as well as the former Nias missionaries, the Reverend Herbert Schekatz and his wife, Hellborg, the Reverend Jürgen Kosack and his wife, Ruth, as well as Ms. Annemarie Töpperwien invited us to their homes for long talks about their experiences during their times on Nias and the Batu Islands. Still during my own time on Nias, the Reverend *Ephorus* Bazatulö Christian Hulu and the General Secretary, the Reverend Lala'aro Gulö,

patiently introduced me to some of the secrets of the Ono Niha. I would also like to thank the present leadership of the BNKP, especially the Reverend *Ephorus* Arosökhi Geya and the General Secretary, the Reverend Y.S. Harefa, for their support.

I am most grateful for the help of the 'native speakers' who read the proofs: my friend Drs. Ernst J.W.Chr. de Haan, who read the Dutch Summary, Mr. John McLaughlin, who critically read the conclusion, and especially Mrs. Pat Thimme, wife of former West-Papua missionary, the Reverend Hans-Martin Thimme, who in a scrupulously precise way read the Ch. 1 until Ch. 5 of this dissertation. A word of thanks also to *Uitgeverij Boekencentrum* for the advice given in matters concerning the layout, and to *Stichting Zonneweelde* and the DLM for their financial contributions for the publication.

Last but not least: this book is dedicated to my wife of more than 22 years, the Reverend Drs. Sonia C. Parera-Hummel, and our beloved children, Thea and Uwe (Brudy). The three of them patiently accepted the fact that even during our holidays I was busy with 'Nias'. Sonia carried the burden of a full-time job so that I could have more time for this study-project. Without her encouragement, understanding and love, this task would not have been accomplished

2 PREFACE BY TUHONI TELAUMBANUA

I am greatfull for the opportunity which has been given to my colleague, Uwe Hummel, and me to meet and to cooperate in a process of research and writing which resulted in this dissertation that we have the privilege of submitting to the University of Utrecht. Writing this dissertation was an ecumenical experience of great significance to me. Uwe is a very critical, energetic, and patient friend who has an awareness of the cultural differences existing between us. Through continuous sharing and discussion, I developed a better understanding of my own culture and people, as well as the Western missionaries societies which served on Nias and the Batu Islands. For this inter-cultural learning proses, I want to express my gratitude to him.

We have been very fortunate to find such a supervisor as Professor Dr. Jan A.B. Jongeneel, a man full of wisdom and patience, as well as two very experienced and critical co-supervisors, Dr. Thomas van den End and the Dr. Jan S. Aritonang. They have guided us in our quest to understand the essence of Niasan culture and history, and to reconstruct the identity of the *Ono Niha Keriso*.

At this moment in my life, I realize intensely that I have undergone a process of development for which I am very grateful, first and foremost to my parents, Talidödö Telaumbanua and Sarifati Waruwu. They not only gave me life, but have also always been my most important teachers. Thanks be also to my educators, from primary school through university, who have contributed very much toward moulding my personality and broadening my horizons. An experience which has been fundamental for my personal development has been my service in the Niasan Protestant Christian Church (BNKP). I honour the members of the synod board of the years 1989 until now, who have entrusted me with ministries in Community Development (Pelmas BNKP), Education (Schools Foundation and as Rector of the Theological College 'STT BNKP Sundermann') and also as the Pastor of the City Congregation of Gunungsitoli. Many have accompanied me along my way. It would

go beyond the framework of this preface to name them all one by one, but I thank all of them for their cooperation and support.

This dissertation was made possible through the recommendation from my synod board (the Reverend *Ephorus* Ar. Geya and the General Secretary, the Reverend Y.S. Harefa), a scholarship from the *Nederlands Luthers Genootschap* (DLM), which was continued by the Protestant Church in The Netherlands (PKN), as well as support from the United Evangelical Mission (UEM) and the church district of Gladbach-Neuss of the Rhenish Church (EKiR), both in Germany. A special word of thanks also to the Reverend Uwe Hummel and the Reverend Sonia Parera-Hummel, as well as to their children Thea and Uwe (Brudy), who received me as a member of their family during my stays in Germany. Thank you for your love, sacrifices and friendship.

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Last, but in no way least, I must admit that there is one person who has played the most significant role in my life ever since 7 July 1993, namely, the Reverend Nurcahaya Geya (Ina Chania), my beloved wife. I was able to begin this project and to reach its conclusion because she constantly encouraged and advised me critically, comforted me when I was sad, and sacrificed a great deal of time and energy towards my well-being. I often had to leave her behind on Nias or in Jakarta when traveling to Europe. Although she herself continued her studies, reading a Masters Degree in Jakarta, she faithfully raised our daughter, Chantika Della Kurnia Telaumbanua. I want to express my regrets for having neglected them for the sake of my studies, and thank them from the depths of my heart! Herewith, I dedicate this work to my wife and child, to the *civitas academica* of the STT-BNKP Sundermann, to the BNKP and to the Ono Niha. May it become a blessing for God's people all over the world. *Ya'ahowu*.

Abbreviations

Included in this list are all abbreviations used more than once in this study.

| | |
|------------|---|
| Acts | The Acts of the Apostles |
| AD | Anno Domini (Latin: the year of the Lord; a date after the birth of Christ) |
| AFG | Angowuloa Fa'awösa khö Geheha (The Fellowship in the Spirit) |
| AFY | Angowuloa Fa'awösa khö Yesu (The Fellowship in Jesus) |
| AMIN | Angowuloa Masehi Indonesia Nias (Indonesian Niasan Christian Communion) |
| AMZ | Allgemeine Missions-Zeitschrift (mission magazine) |
| BI | Bahasa Indonesia (Indonesian language) |
| BKP | Banua Keriso Protestant (Protestant Christian Church of the Batu Islands) |
| BKPN | Banua Keriso Protestant Nias (Christian Protestant Church of Nias) |
| BNKP | Banua Niha Keriso Protestan (Protestant Christian Church; 1936-1948 'B.N.K.P.-Nias', Protestant Christian Church of Nias) |
| BNM | Batak-Nias-Mission (<i>Batak-Nias-Zending</i>) |
| BPMS | Badan Pekerja Majelis Sinode (legislative synod board) |
| BPS | Badan Pekerja Sinode (synod board) |
| BRM | Berichte der Rheinischen Mission (reports of the Rhenish Mission) |
| cf. | Confer; compare |
| Ch. | Chapter |
| Col | The letter of Paul to the Colossians; cf. <i>NRSV</i> |
| 1 Cor | The first letter of Paul to the Corinthians; cf. <i>NRSV</i> |
| 2 Cor | The second letter of Paul to the Corinthians; cf. <i>NRSV</i> |
| CWM | Commission on World Mission of the LWF |
| Deut | Deuteronomy; cf. <i>NRSV</i> |
| DGI / PGI | Dewan Gereja-gereja di Indonesia / Persekutuan Gereja-gereja di Indonesia |
| DKM | Der kleine Missionsfreund (Rhenish mission magazine) |
| DLM | Dutch Lutheran Mission / Dutch Lutheran mission society |
| Dr. | Doctor |
| EACC | East Asia Christian Conference |
| Ed. / eds. | Editor / editors |
| e.g. | Exempli gratia (Latin: for instance) |
| EMZ | Evangelische Missions-Zeitschrift (mission magazine) |
| ENI | Encyclopaedia van Nederlandsch-Indië |
| Eph | The letter of Paul to the Ephesians |
| et al. | Et alia (and others) |
| Etc. | Etcetera (Latin: and so on) |
| EVB | Een Vaste Burg is onze God (Dutch Lutheran mission magazine) |
| Ex | Exodus; cf. <i>NRSV</i> |
| f. / ff. | Following page / following pages |
| GAA | Gemeentearchief Amsterdam (archive of the city of Amsterdam) |

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| Gal | The letter of Paul to the Galatians; cf. <i>NRSV</i> |
| Gen | Genesis; cf. <i>NRSV</i> |
| GKS | The Sumba Christian Church |
| GMIM | The Minahasa Evangelical Church |
| G-30S / PKI | Gerakan 30 September / Partai Komunis Indonesia (alleged Communist Coup) |
| Heb | The letter to the Hebrews; cf. <i>NRSV</i> |
| HIK | Hollandsch-Inlandsche Kweekschool (teachers training college) |
| HKBP | Huria Kristen Batak Protestant (Batak Protestant Christian Church) |
| LAI | Lembaga Alkitab Indonesia (Indonesian Bible Society) |
| <i>Ibid.</i> | <i>Ibidem</i> (Latin: in the same place) |
| IMC | International Missionary Council |
| i.e. | Id est (Latin: that is, namely) |
| <i>JBRM</i> | Jahresberichte Rheinische Mission (annual reports of the Rhenish Mission) |
| Jn | The Gospel according to John; cf. <i>NRSV</i> |
| KITLV | Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde |
| Km | Kilometre |
| KMK | Kawasan Misi Kristus (zone of Christ's mission) |
| K.P.M. | Koninklijke Paketvaart Maatschappij (Royal Parcel Shipping Company) |
| KWK | Kursus Wanita Kristen (course for Christian women) |
| Lk | The Gospel according to Luke; cf. <i>NRSV</i> |
| LMS | London Missionary Society |
| LWF | Lutheran World Federation |
| Mk | The Gospel according to Mark; cf. <i>NRSV</i> |
| Mrs. | Mistress (married woman) |
| Ms. | Mistress or Miss |
| Mt | The Gospel according to Matthew; cf. <i>NRSV</i> |
| n. | Footnote |
| <i>Nasakom</i> | Nasionalisme, Agama dan Komunisme (Nationalism, Religion, and Communism. An ideological acronym used by Soekarno) |
| n.d. | No date |
| NBG | Nederlands Bijbel Genootschap (Dutch Bible Society) |
| <i>NRSV</i> | New Revised Standard Version of the Holy Bible |
| NZG | Het Nederlandsch Zending Genootschap (Dutch Missionary Society) |
| ONKP | Orahua Niha Keriso Protestan (Protestant Niasan Christian Fellowship) |
| <i>Parkindo</i> | Partai Kristen Indonesia (Indonesian Christian Party) |
| p. / pp. | Page / pages |
| PGAK | Pendidikan Guru Agama Kristen (Christian teacher's training) |
| Phil | The letter of Paul to the Philippians; cf. <i>NRSV</i> |
| PKI | Partai Komunis Indonesia (Indonesian Communist Party) |
| PLPI | Pusat Latihan Pendidikan Injili (Protestant educational centre) |
| PNI | Partai Nasional Indonesia (Indonesian National Party) |
| <i>RGG</i> | Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart (theological encyclopedia) |
| RM | Rhenish Mission / Rhenish Missionary Society |
| RMG | Abbreviation for Rheinische Missionsgesellschaft used only in |

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| | signatures of unpublished archive-materials of the RM and in the Dutch Summary |
| Rom | The letter of Paul to the Romans; cf. <i>NRSV</i> |
| SDA | Seventh-Day Adventism |
| SGI | Sekolah Guru Indjil (school for teacher-preachers) |
| SKP | Sekolah Kepandaian Puteri (girls' vocational school) |
| SLUB | Stichting Lutherse Uitgeverij en Boekhandel |
| STT | Sekolah Tinggi Theologia (theological seminary) |
| <i>Takari</i> | Tahun Berdiri di atas Kaki Sendiri (propaganda slogan for self-support) |
| <i>Trikora</i> | Tiga Komando Rakyat (Indonesian military terminology) |
| UEM | United Evangelical Mission (Wuppertal) |
| VOC | Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie (United East Indies Company) |
| vol. / vols. | Volume / volumes |
| WCC | World Council of Churches |

Glossary

For all names of persons and places in Indonesia we use the modern spelling of the Indonesian language according to the standard dictionary (*Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia*, 2002). Some frequently used technical terms are as follows:

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| <i>adat (hada)</i> | Customary law in Indonesia, originally incorporating the whole cosmos of a specific tribe or clan, including the primal religion |
| <i>adu</i> | Image (idol), usually from wood or stone, used to call upon the spirits in ceremonies; the <i>adu</i> symbolises the primal religion of the Ono Niha |
| <i>adu zatua</i> | An image of the forefathers; a special, often artistically sculptured <i>adu</i> , representing the ancestors; also known as <i>sangehowu</i> (the source of blessing) |
| <i>aetu noso</i> | A euphemism for death that is used in Nias was amputation of the soul |
| <i>afdeeling</i> | Section or administrative region |
| <i>afo</i> | Betel nut quid, consisting of five elements |
| <i>Afökha</i> | According to some myths, Afökha was an evil spirit born along with Lowalangi and Laturedanö from the upper branch of the <i>tora 'a</i> ; in translating the Bible, the missionaries used the term <i>afökha</i> for the devil or Satan |
| <i>afore</i> | A measuring staff |
| <i>amaedola</i> | Parables and proverbs |
| <i>amakhoita</i> | Formerly the order of the ancestors; later church discipline |
| <i>ame'ela</i> | Offering or sacrifice |
| <i>amonita</i> | Taboo; holy; cf. <i>famoni</i> |
| <i>ana 'a</i> | Gold |
| <i>atua guli danö</i> | The Niasan concept of the end of the world |
| <i>baya</i> | The root; cf. <i>sibaya</i> |
| <i>Bahasa Indonesia</i> | The Indonesian national language, similar to Malay |
| <i>balö zi'ulu</i> | Ruling hereditary chief from South Nias |
| <i>balugu</i> | Highest, non-hereditary rank of nobility attainable through an <i>owasa</i> |
| <i>banua</i> | Village; community; sky; heaven |
| <i>bekhu</i> | Spirits |
| <i>bawa gawuwukha</i> | 'The mouth of the ocean' (hell) |
| <i>bekhu gatua</i> | Spirits of the jungle |
| <i>bekhu dalu mbamua</i> | Spirits of the air |
| <i>bela</i> | Spirits of the trees, who are the owners of all wild animals in the forest |
| <i>Bhineka Tunggal Ika</i> | Unity in diversity |

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| <i>böwö</i> | Dowry, hospitality or helpfulness |
| <i>börö nadu</i> | Feast of reconciliation in Nias tradition |
| <i>böröwösi</i> | A high priest associated with the <i>fösi</i> -tree |
| <i>controleur</i> | Dutch colonial officials |
| <i>daludalu ni fahede</i> | Traditional medicine |
| <i>duku</i> | Medicine man or shaman; in the earlier days of the mission often used for Muslim traditional healers; derived from Malay 'dukun' |
| <i>eheha</i> | Spirit; honour |
| <i>Eheha Ni'amoni'ö</i> | Holy Spirit |
| <i>elemu</i> | Black magic |
| <i>enoni</i> | Servant |
| <i>enoni Lowalangi</i> | Servant of God |
| <i>enoni Gaföcha</i> | Servant of the devil |
| <i>ephorus</i> | Chairperson of the synod board (bishop; <i>pastor pastorum</i>) |
| <i>ere</i> | Priest or priestess of the primal religion of the Ono Niha; <i>ere</i> can also refer to a specialist of a traditional art or craft |
| <i>ere börö nadu</i> | The highest priest and lawmaker |
| <i>fa'asia'a</i> | Maturity, seniority or <i>primus inter pares</i> |
| <i>Fa'awösa</i> | The community-movement on Nias |
| <i>fali'era</i> | A scale, as well as seeds for plants, animals, jewellery |
| <i>falöwa</i> | The wedding day |
| <i>famagobi högö</i> | The heads of the bride and bridegroom would be gently knocked against each other, as a symbol that the wedding had been conducted well |
| <i>fame'e laeduru</i> | Giving of the ring; 'engagement'. In South Nias it is known as <i>ana'a wamatuasa</i> (fiancé's ring) |
| <i>famoni / amonita</i> | Taboo; holy |
| <i>famoto</i> | Genital incision |
| <i>fangorifi</i> | Salvation |
| <i>fangesa dödü sebua</i> | The Great Awakening on Nias |
| <i>fangöhözi or famofo</i> | Smoothing down of the teeth |
| <i>fa'ogömigömi dödü</i> | Darkness of the heart |
| <i>fa'onekhe</i> | Intelligence |
| <i>fo khö</i> | Wealthy |
| <i>fondrakö</i> | A traditional ceremony, in which the law was resolved, renewed and authorized |
| <i>fondrahi</i> | The hand-drum, beaten by the priest (<i>ere</i>) in his shaman rituals |
| <i>fösi</i> | The sacred tree, cf. <i>tora'a</i> |
| <i>glossolalia</i> | Speaking in tongues |
| <i>guru</i> | Literally 'teacher', until World War II used for a combined or dual ministry of school teacher and assistant pastor or catechist (teacher-preacher); as of 1943, the church function of the <i>guru</i> was effectively taken over by the <i>sinenge</i> |

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| <i>hiwö</i> | Dance symbolizing a snake |
| <i>hoho</i> | Litany; sung rhymes |
| <i>howuhowu</i> | Blessing |
| <i>huku fōna</i> | The 'old law' of the primal religion and the <i>adat</i> of the Ono Niha |
| <i>huku Lowalangi</i> | The 'new law' of God as taught by Christianity |
| <i>hulö zi tenga niha</i> | Inhumane brutes or inhumane way; cf. <i>Urmenschen</i> |
| <i>Insulinde</i> | A moderate political party in colonial times |
| <i>khoikhoi Lowalangi</i> | The traditional law of God |
| <i>lakhömi</i> | Honour; glory (<i>molakhömi</i> = having authority or charisma) |
| <i>laoya</i> | Brass |
| <i>lauru</i> | A rice measure |
| <i>Li Nono Niha</i> | Niasan language |
| <i>lumölumö</i> | Shadow |
| <i>mado</i> | Niasan clan |
| <i>maena</i> | Traditional dance of Nias |
| <i>mala'ika zatua</i> | Spirit of the ancestor(s) |
| <i>mantri</i> | Paramedic trained in Western medicine and nursing |
| <i>Matiana</i> | The spirit of a woman who died in childbirth, which then disturbs other women who are about to give birth |
| <i>öri</i> | Loose federation of villages |
| <i>omo / omo hada</i> | House / Niasan traditional house |
| <i>onderafdeeling</i> | Sub-section (cf. <i>afdeeling</i>) |
| <i>Ono Niha</i> | Literally 'child of human'; the term by which the original inhabitants of Nias and the Batu Islands call themselves. Equivalent to 'Niasan(s)' |
| <i>Ono Niha Keriso</i> | Ono Niha who confess the Christian creed |
| <i>osali</i> | A sacred place for the <i>adu</i> and gatherings; later used for the church building |
| <i>owasa</i> | Pork-banquet / grand feast for achieving a high rank in society |
| <i>Pancasila</i> | The Indonesian state ideology based on five principles |
| <i>pandita</i> | Ordained minister / indigenous pastor (from the Sanskrit: 'pandit', a wise and learned human beings). BI: <i>pendeta</i> |
| <i>pandita Niha</i> | Indigenous, Niasan minister; cf. <i>pandita</i> |
| <i>posthouder</i> | Government administrator |
| <i>penasihat</i> | Advisor |
| <i>rapatgebied</i> | Area under Dutch colonial jurisdiction |
| <i>religiöse Gefühle</i> | Religious feelings |
| <i>resident</i> | Leading Dutch colonial administrator |
| <i>residentie</i> | Administrative region headed by a <i>resident</i> |
| <i>resor</i> | Church-circuit |
| <i>rodi</i> | Forced labour |
| <i>salawa</i> | Chief |
| <i>salöfö</i> | A spirit of a person who is predator and all evil spirits living in caves, big trees and rivers |

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|--------------------------------------|---|
| <i>samatörö</i> | Ruler |
| <i>sambua mbanua, sambua mbuabua</i> | 'In different places, there are different traditions' |
| <i>sanguhuku</i> | Judge |
| <i>satua Niha Keriso</i> | Local church elder |
| <i>sibaya</i> | Uncle; cf. <i>baya</i> |
| <i>sifatewu</i> | Stranger |
| <i>Silewe Nazarata</i> | A goddess often associated with the high priest |
| <i>simalapari</i> | Spirits of the river mouths |
| <i>simo</i> | Tin |
| <i>sinenge</i> | Literally means 'messenger'; as of 1914, a trained evangelist; as of 1943, a local teacher-preachers chosen from among the elders |
| <i>si'o</i> | Literally means 'stick'; a mediator or go-between in wedding procedures |
| <i>si'ulu</i> | Hereditary nobles from South Nias |
| <i>sokhö</i> | Owner |
| <i>somböi</i> | Creator |
| <i>sotanö</i> | Land owners |
| <i>sotöra</i> | Silk |
| <i>sowanua</i> | Villager |
| <i>Teteholi Ana'a</i> | The primeval kingdom or (golden) upper world |
| <i>Tanö Niha</i> | Niasan name for Nias |
| <i>tanömö niha</i> | The seed of humankind |
| <i>tora'a</i> | World tree or tree of life |
| <i>tuhenöri</i> | Paramount chief on Nias |
| <i>turia / toeria</i> | Message or news |
| <i>Unmenschen</i> | Inhumane brutes or inhumane way; cf. <i>hulö zi tenga niha</i> |
| <i>ulö sesolo</i> | A giant dragon-snake |
| <i>zendingsgesprek</i> | Mission-chat |
| <i>zihi</i> | Spirit(s) of the sea |

1 Introduction

1.1 PRESENTATION OF THE PROBLEM

This study deals with the encounter between Christianity, symbolized by the cross of Jesus Christ, and the realm of the indigenous people of Nias and the Batu Islands (the Ono Niha) and their culture, symbolized by the images of the primal religion, the *adu*. During the course of one century (1865-1965), two missionary societies, the Rhenish Mission (RM) and the Dutch Lutheran Mission (DLM), were working among the Ono Niha, each propagating a certain type of Protestantism. As a result of their work, a considerable number of people were converted to Christianity and a large number of viable Christian congregations sprang up on Nias, the Batu Islands, and elsewhere. These congregations later united, forming two independent churches, which then merged in 1960. By 1965, the majority of the Ono Niha had embraced Christianity and the Protestant Christian Church (BNKP)¹, established in 1936, had become the most dominant social factor on Nias and the Batu Islands.

The course of Christianization transformed the Niasan culture. In its turn, the Niasan culture shaped a unique type of Christianity. Although this whole transformation was a reciprocal process, the two entities involved were not equal. The stronger Christianity grew, the more dominant and uncompromising it became towards most aspects of the indigenous culture, particularly primal religion.² Nevertheless, the indigenous culture did strongly influence the form Christianity assumed among the Ono Niha. The gradual shift in dominance from the veneration of the *adu* to the worship of Jesus Christ, however, gave evidence of the transformation within the communal identity of the Ono Niha.

The process of the growth of Niasan Christianity will be discussed from two complementary points of view: the historical and the sociological. Questions such as the following have guided the authors: What were the motives of the European missionaries? How was Christianity communicated and how was it received by those addressed? What impact did Christianity have on the society as a whole and vice versa? Have the young churches been more than mere copies of their European 'mothers'? To what extent did the policy of the Niasan churches concerning the indigenous culture differ from that of the missionary societies? What role did Christianity play in national liberation and development? Has Niasan society been

¹ This translation of *Banua Niha Keriso Protestan* (BNKP) was introduced by Ephorus Bazatulö Chr. Hulu, who, in 1988, was the director of the Training Centre for Education and Evangelisation of the BNKP (PLPI-BNKP). The reason for this translation was that the BNKP is not confined to the borders of the Nias Regency. Also, Hulu was aware of the danger of an exclusive ethnic identity of the BNKP. During the years 1936-1948, the official name was 'Banoea Niha Keriso Protestan ba danö Nias' (B.N.K.P.-Nias), The Protestant Christian Church of Nias (note: *niha Keriso* = Christian).

² Previously used terms, such as 'animism', 'tribal religion' and 'ethnic religion', have a discriminatory tone and should be avoided. The terms 'traditional religion' and 'primal religion' are neutral and not disparaging. The authors choose the latter, since both Islam and Christianity on Nias claim to be traditional religions. F.L. Cooley, *The Growing Seed*, 1981, p. 173, uses 'autochthonous religion'. Rachmat Subagya, *Agama Asli di Indonesia*, 1981, p. 1, says that traditional religion or primal religion is the spiritual uniqueness of one tribe, as long as it developed within that tribe itself without any influence or imitation of other religions.

transformed by Christianity? What is the significance of the Christian faith for the new cultural identity of the Ono Niha? And finally: How is one to find a new paradigm for constructing a contextual theology for the Niasan churches?

1.2 SETTING OF THE GOSPEL AND CULTURE PROJECT

Applying the Christian teachings to a particular cultural context has been problematic throughout the history of the expansion of Christianity³ ever since biblical times.⁴ After the Protestant missions had reached Nias and the Batu Islands in the wake of the colonization process of the nineteenth century, the European missionaries – and a little later also the indigenous Christian leaders – were confronted with the problem of whether and how to bring together or to keep apart what they understood as being the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the indigenous culture of the Ono Niha.

The attitudes of the missionaries, and subsequently of their native protégés, toward ‘Gospel and culture’ were determined by certain devotional patterns and theological choices. The most vigorous and continuous spiritual undercurrent in the missionary movement of Europe, as well as in the younger churches, was Pietism and Revivalism. Essentially, both Pietism and Revivalism considered a compromise between ‘the Gospel’ and ‘this world’ to be dangerous. This led to a tendency among the Christians to hold themselves aloof from secular public life. On the other hand, especially at the seminarian level and, so to speak, as a dialectical antithesis to the devotional undercurrent in the missionary circles, the influence of Cultural Protestantism was at work, attempting to reconcile Christian teaching with the dominant intellectual (usually bourgeois) ideals of Western civilization.⁵

During the second half of the nineteenth century, many German theologians joined the chorus of colonialist chauvinism, claiming the superiority of white Christian civilization over other cultures. For champions of the colonialist movement, such as Friedrich Fabri (1824-1891), the very fact that Germany was a Christian country justified, yes, even necessitated, its becoming a colonial power, since they were sure that ‘heathen’ cultures had no right to existence and would fade away in the face of a victorious Christianity.

Others were less aggressive, though none the less arrogant. The prominent German missiologist Gustav Warneck (1834-1910) claimed to appreciate non-Christian cultures while nevertheless holding that all nations could and should be ennobled by Christianization. This was similar to the Ethical Policy implemented by the Dutch in their colonies around the turn of the century. It merely served, however,

³ The most complete overview of the spread of Christianity is given in the seven volumes of K.S. Latourette, *A History of the Expansion of Christianity, 1937-1945/1971*. Specifically concerning the problem of ‘Gospel and culture’, cf. H.R. Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 1951/2001.

⁴ Cf. S.W. Ariarajah, *Gospel and Culture*, 1994, p. 1; Choan-Seng Song, ‘Culture’, in: N. Lossky, *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, 1991, pp. 257-259.

⁵ For Cultural Protestantism, reaching back to the apologetic theology of Friedrich D. Schleiermacher (1768-1834) and culminating in the ethical theology of the Kingdom of Albrecht Ritschl (1822-1889), it is not the church, but civilization in accordance with the teachings of Christ which is the realization of the kingdom of God. In fact this often results in a Christian justification of cultural achievements. Christ becomes a symbol for the highest values of bourgeois culture; cf. H.R. Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 2001, pp. 83-115.

as a moral justification of colonialism and was a haughty glorification of Western civilization.

The World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh (1910) harshly denounced primal religions as containing 'no preparation for Christianity'.⁶ Not long afterwards, Christian Europe manifested its spiritual bankruptcy in two world wars caused by inhumane ideologies. While Europe was struggling with National Socialism, Fascism, and Communism, the most urgent topics on the theological agenda in Asia as of the 1920s were national independence and the relationship of Christianity to other faiths. The conviction was growing that Christianity was not necessarily bound to Western civilization. Christ belongs to all. The door was opening for the development of indigenous forms of Christianity.

Symptomatic of this development outside Europe was the second general assembly of the International Missionary Council (IMC), held in Jerusalem in 1928, which called on Christians to adopt values from different religions. Hendrik Kraemer (1888-1965), who attended this assembly, saw this as a dangerous trend which distorted the essential message of the Bible. Ten years later, at the third assembly of the IMC in Tambaram, South India (1938), he successfully translated his biblical, culturally non-compromising position into the missiological context. He rejected 'the call of Jerusalem' as syncretism⁷, emphasizing that Christianity centres on the unique revelation in Jesus Christ. Therefore, other religions, or parts of them, and be it 'values', are neither 'preparatory stages' towards Christianity, nor can they contribute anything substantial to the truth of this unique revelation. Kraemer was of the opinion that, on the other hand, the 'adaptation' or 'incarnation' of concepts and practices from other religious and cultural settings in order to 'translate' and 'interpret' the Gospel, was permissible, as long as it did not change the essence of the Christian message.

Kraemer's call in Tambaram was a clear farewell to 'Culture Protestantism'; it added to the fear of syncretism. According to Theo Sumartana⁸ from Indonesia, such an exclusive approach in no way furthers the contextualization of Christianity in Asia.

After World War II, theologians in the so-called Third World were busy with de-colonisation and nation building. This led to a resurgence of indigenous values. In Indonesia, the ideology of *Pancasila* provided a code of mutual respect among the religions and enhanced a pride in cultural diversity. Christian leaders involved in constructing a national Christian identity, such as Tahi B. Simatupang (1920-1990), wished to position Christianity firmly within the cultural and ideological setting of Indonesia.⁹

⁶ The World Missionary Conference, Report of Commission IV; cf. D. Ford (ed.), *The Modern Theologians*, 1997, pp. 426-439.

⁷ H. Kraemer, *Christian Message in a non-Christian World*, 1938/1947. As a philologist, Kraemer takes this term very literally (from Greek *synkretizein*, which means to combine).

⁸ Th. Sumartana, *Mission at the Crossroads: Indigenous Churches, European Missionaries, Islamic Association and Socio-Religious Change in Java 1812-1936*, 1991, pp. 332-344.

⁹ Concerning the history of the indigenous Protestant theology in Indonesia, cf. A.G. Hoekema, *Denken in dynamisch evenwicht: de wordingsgeschiedenis van de nationale protestantse theologie in Indonesië (ca. 1860-1960)*, 1994; by the same author, *Berpikir dalam keseimbangan yang dinamis: sejarah lahirnya teologi Protestan Nasional di Indonesia (sekitar 1860-1960)*, 1997.

Gospel and Culture

In the 1960s, 'Gospel and culture' became one of the main topics of the ecumenical movement. This was encouraged, firstly, by the third general assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC), held in 1961 in New Delhi, India, during which not only older churches from the Orthodox tradition, but also many of the younger churches from the 'Third World' challenged the predominantly Western character of theology. A second influential factor was the Roman Catholic program of enculturation decided upon by the second Vatican Council (1962-1965).¹⁰ The fundamental studies of Richard Niebuhr (1894-1962)¹¹, Paul Tillich (1886-1965)¹² and Lesslie Newbigin (1909-1998)¹³ placed the topic of 'Gospel and culture' high on the theological agenda.

In Asia, the pioneering endeavours of Christian thinkers such as Vengal Chakkarai (1880-1958) and Pandipeddi Chenchiah (1886-1959)¹⁴ inspired Indian theologians such as Paul D. Devanandan (1901-1962), Daniel T. Niles (1908-1970) and Madathiparampil M. Thomas (1916-1996) to develop Asian contextual theologies. Another leading Indian theologian after independence is Stanley J. Samartha (1920).¹⁵ In Japan, Katsumi Takizawa (1909-1984) and Seiichi Yagi (1932) both dedicated themselves to the dialogue between their Buddhist context and Christian theology.¹⁶ In his book *Reconciliation and Renewal in Japan* (1967), the Japanese Masao Takenaka touched on the relevant social and cultural issues in his native land. His compatriot Hideo Ohki wanted to free Japanese theology from its 'German prison'.¹⁷ Kosuke Koyama (1929), also Japanese, developed his 'Water Buffalo Theology' while working as a missionary in Thailand.¹⁸

In 1965, at the East Asia Christian Conference (EACC) in Kandy, Sri Lanka, Asian Christian leaders arrived at the insight that it was necessary to develop more systematically in Asia a contextual theology which had been liberated from its Western cultural domination.¹⁹ The next year, the EACC, convened in Hong Kong, made the criticism that Asian churches had, for fear of syncretism, treated Western confessional formulations as absolute truths.

In the 1970s, Asians, like Africans, focussed increasingly on the relationships of Christianity with other religions and with the multitude of diverse non-Western cultural settings. Koyama, using an illustration from the above-mentioned Niles, stressed the endless multiplicity of the possible contextual settings of the Gospel, which has to take root in local soil, rather than being transferred as a 'potted plant'.²⁰

¹⁰ Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 1966, pp. 1025-1120.

¹¹ H.R. Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 1951 / 2001.

¹² P. Tillich, *Theology of Culture*, 1959.

¹³ L. Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks*, 1986.

¹⁴ Cf. J. Verkuyl, *Contemporary Missiology*, 1978, pp. 263-265. P. Chenchiah, *Rethinking Christianity in India*, 1938.

¹⁵ Cf. V. Küster, *Die vielen Gesichter Jesu Christi: Christologie interkulturell*, 1999, pp. 86-101.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* pp. 102-128.

¹⁷ Cf. D.J. Elwood, *Teologi Kristen Asia*, 1993, pp. XXV, 117-131.

¹⁸ K. Koyama, *Water Buffalo Theology*, 1974/1999.

¹⁹ Cf. D.J. Elwood, *Teologi Kristen Asia*, 1993, pp. 3-8.

²⁰ K. Koyama, *Theology in Contact*, 1975, p. 67.

Contextuality

Shoki Coe from Taiwan coined the term 'contextualization'²¹, warning that 'enculturation' has the tendency merely to look backwards to the traditional culture. While cultural continuity is important, the Christian message must also address current trends of urbanization and modernization (and we have to add: globalization), providing orientation toward a more humane culture in the future. Asia has no need for a 'chameleon theology'²², which merely changes its colour according to the cultural context, but it does have need of a critical analysis of that context, detecting the latter's virtues and values, while at the same time challenging its inhumane aspects.

As of 1976, the development of contextual theologies has been coordinated by the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT), which has distanced itself from dominant Western theology, opting for local theologies. Characteristic here is the creative interaction of Gospel and culture (including interreligious dialogue), and the preferential option for the poor.²³

Today, Africans are among the leading 'contextual theologians'. Their insights are of global significance. Lamin Sanneh from The Gambia, for instance, puts much emphasis on the 'translatability'²⁴ of the Christian faith into cultural idioms. Translations of the Bible into the vernacular have 'destigmatized'²⁵ non-Western cultures from the odour of 'heathenism'. Dora R. Mbuwayesango and others from the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians disagree with Sanneh, arguing that the use of symbols of the pre-Christian tradition for expressing the Christian faith was 'religious usurpation' or 'religious colonialism' which effectively destroyed the primal religion.²⁶ John Mbiti, Kwame Bediako, and others²⁷ set the trend concerning the 'rehabilitation' of the indigenous religious heritage. They hold that 'heathen societies' had a genuine knowledge of God and a variety of rich religious cultures prior to the coming of the missionaries. By having underestimated this, Western missionaries had pre-programmed a long-lasting identity crisis.²⁸ However, despite the misconceptions of the past, the young churches acknowledge the positive significance of the service of Western missions. Mbiti emphasises that the missionaries were right in putting Christ at the centre. Without Jesus Christ, any religiosity would be incomplete.²⁹

Indonesia

In Indonesia, Eka Darmaputera was the first to abandon Western theology, developing a local theology in the context of the Indonesian *Pancasila*-state³⁰. His

²¹ S. Coe, 'Kontekstualisasi sebagai jalan menuju pembaruan', in: D.J. Elwood, *Teologi Kristen Asia*, 1993, pp. 10-18; for the history of the use of this term, cf. D.J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 1991, pp. 420-432.

²² Cf. S. Coe, 'Kontekstualisasi sebagai jalan menuju pembaruan', 1993, p. 16.

²³ Cf. K. Schäfer, 'Kontextuelle Theologien – eine Zwischenbilanz', in: *Afrika? Afrika! : Staat, Nation und Kirchen*, Jahrbuch Mission 34, 2002, pp. 185-195; L. Sanneh, *Encountering the West*, 1993, p. 12.

²⁴ L. Sanneh, *Translating the Message*, 1989, p. 47.

²⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 1-8, 88-125; by the same author, *Encountering the West*, 1993, pp. 78-140.

²⁶ Dora R. Mbuwayesango, 'How Local Divine Powers Were Suppressed: A Case of Mwari of the Shona', in: Musa W. Dube (ed.), *Other Ways of Reading*, 2001, pp. 63-77 (quotations on p. 67).

²⁷ Cf. D. Ford (ed.), *The Modern Theologians*, 1997, pp. 426-434.

²⁸ *Ibid.* pp. 428-429.

²⁹ *Ibid.* p. 433.

³⁰ Cf. E. Darmaputera, *Pancasila, Identitas dan Modernitas*, 1987.

goal was to prevent the rise of a destructive Christian fundamentalism.³¹ Since only contextual theology is genuine theology, Darmaputera holds that a thorough knowledge of hermeneutics is the most important prerequisite for a theologian. How can the Christian truths (*kerygmata*), as handed down through Holy Scripture and the Christian tradition, meaningfully be communicated in the present context?³² In Darmaputera's opinion, the answer lies in an interdisciplinary approach. In order to find the right idiom for communicating the Gospel, the theologian has to cooperate with the sociologist, the politician, the economist, etc.

Emmanuel G.Singgih³³, also an Indonesian, uses a different approach in relation to contextualization. Instead of taking 'indigenisation' as his starting point, i.e., wrapping Christianity up in a cultural cloak (traditional architecture, art, music, etc.), he departs from the practical experience of Christians in Indonesia, and particularly their cultural contexts, which, in his opinion, provide a preconception (*prapengertian*) or a foreknowledge (*prapaham*) of the Gospel.

Andreas A. Yewangoe wrote his dissertation on 'The Theology of the Cross in Asia'.³⁴ The suffering of Jesus Christ lies at the centre of his deliberations, leading him towards an Indonesian theology of liberation. Yewangoe holds that the Cross is the sign of the presence of the Kingdom of God, a presence which entails justice, the unity of humankind and freedom. Therefore, he wants the churches of Indonesia to become churches of the Cross, i.e., that they never forget nor neglect the suffering of Christ. This, in turn, will open their eyes and ears to the suffering of their fellow human beings. God can not be found within the church if he is not recognised in the suffering of his creation in this world. This does not mean that the church is to have a masochistic pleasure in suffering, but that the church is called upon to side with the poor, the unfortunate and the downtrodden.

Similarly to Darmaputera, Yewangoe wants to develop an Indonesian contextual theology against the background of the *Pancasila*-ideology.³⁵ Concerning the interaction between Gospel and culture, he emphasises the transforming power of the Gospel. However, he also holds that, conversely, culture also transforms the Gospel. Theology is, in his opinion, the skill of bringing the deeper values of culture into dialogue with the Gospel.³⁶

A number of substantial contributions to the topic of the interaction between Gospel and culture have also been made by Indonesian theologians who have focused on a specific cultural context at the local level. Fridolin Ukur, for example, studied the interaction between Gospel and culture among his native Dajak in Kalimantan³⁷, drawing the conclusion that, in the past, the European missionaries had not taken into account the Dayak's unique socio-religious character. Due to a lack of understanding, they had regarded the primal religion as worthless heathen-

³¹ *Ibid.* pp. 17-18; cf. J. Verkuyl, *Contemporary Missiology*, 1975, p. 272.

³² E. Darmaputera, 'Menuju teologi Kontekstual di Indonesia', in: E. Darmaputera (ed.), *Konteks Berteologi di Indonesia*, 1988, pp. 8-15.

³³ E.G. Singgih, *Dari Israel ke Asia: Masalah Hubungan di Antara Kontekstualisasi Teologi dengan Interpretasi Alkitabiah*, 1982, pp. 17-29; the same author, *Berteologi dalam Konteks: Pemikiran-pemikiran mengenai Kontekstualisasi Teologi di Indonesia*, 2000.

³⁴ Cf. A.A. Yewangoe, *Theologia Crucis di Asia*, 1989, pp. 268-364.

³⁵ Cf. A.A. Yewangoe, 'Implikasi Teologi Pembebasan Amerika Latin terhadap Misiologi', in: John Campbell-Nelson et al. (eds.), *Mengupayakan Misi Gereja yang Kontekstual*, 1995, p. 82.

³⁶ Cf. A.A. Yewangoe, 'Injil dan Kebudayaan: Skema Niebur dalam Perspektif Sumba', in: John Campbell-Nelson et al. (eds.) *Mengupayakan Misi Gereja yang Kontekstual*, 1995, pp. 201-209.

³⁷ F. Ukur, *Tantang-Djawab Suku Dayak*, n.d..

dom. As a consequence, the Dayak still face difficulties in integrating Christianity into their tribal culture. These difficulties, in turn, impede effective pastoral counselling. Ukur therefore demands of the church a theological reinterpretation of the indigenous culture of the Dayak, leading to its subsequent transformation, in order to overcome the fragmentation of the tribal identity.³⁸

Another example is Theo Kobong from South Sulawesi, who wants to develop a contextual missiology in the cultural context of his native Toraja.³⁹ He uses the concept of the traditional clan-house, the *tongkonan*, in his endeavor to forge a paradigm for the ideal Christian community or church. In his opinion, the traditional *tongkonan* must, however, undergo a fundamental transformation in order to become the *tongkonan* of Christ. And this transformation can take place only as the result of a dynamic process of 'inspired' interpretation.

An essential problem of cultural transformation through Christian interpretation is that pre-Christian culture is usually regarded as something which has to be developed, adjusted, or raised to a 'Christian' level. Quite a different approach is used by Benny Giay from West-Papua (Indonesia), who argues that, prior to the coming of the missionaries, the important doctrinal themes of Western Christianity, such as God, Bible, salvation, Jesus Christ, and eschatology had already existed in the form of 'indigenous counterparts' in the primal religion.⁴⁰ It was the Christian 'redefinition' of the 'perceived indigenous religious beliefs', as practiced by Zakheus Pakage, a local religious leader among the Me of Paniai in the highlands of West-Papua (the place of origin of Dr. Giay), that had caused the people to accept the Gospel.⁴¹ Therefore, Giay defends the right of a free, local interpretation of the Bible, even at the risk of, in the eyes of Western theologians, heresy. Whereas this may happen at the expense of the universality of the Gospel, it certainly ensures the integration of pre-Christian religious traditions into local theologies.

On Nias and the Batu Islands, particularly on the part of the mainline Protestant churches, very little has been undertaken in terms of finding a paradigm for constructing contextual theologies.⁴² At present, there are, however, increasing efforts among Christian intellectuals to reinterpret pre-Christian religious traditions and to integrate them into a local theology. This study attempts to make a contribution towards achieving this goal.

³⁸ *Ibid.* pp. 310-313.

³⁹ Th. Kobong, *Evangelium und Tongkonan: Eine Untersuchung über die Begegnung zwischen christlicher Botschaft und der Kultur der Toraja*, 1989.

⁴⁰ B. Giay, *Zakheus Pakage and his Communities: Indigenous Religious Discourse, Socio-political Resistance, and Ethnohistory of the Me of Irian Jaya*, 1995, p. 3.

⁴¹ *Ibid.* p. 242 ('To the people, Zakheus' program was a new religious system built on the existing religious views through which they could see the changes and historical developments which was (sic) taking place in the region').

⁴² Indigenous Christian movements or individuals which diverged from the missionary theology and challenged the ecclesiastical status quo were not tolerated. Their activities usually resulted in schisms or them being condemned as heretics (cf. Ch. 5.6.4 and Ch. 5.8 in this study). In Roman Catholic circles on Nias, inculturation has, since the 1960s, assumed programmatic significance, both in liturgy and theology. Cf. U.M. Telaumbanua, *Evangelization and Niasan Culture, A Pastoral Study towards Inculturation of the Christian Faith among the People of Nias*, 1993.

1.3 RESEARCH IN CONTEXT

1.3.1 Cross-cultural Cooperation

Traditionally, researching and drafting a dissertation in a faculty of Divinity, as in most other disciplines, is regarded and experienced as a very long and lonely business. This individual competition stands in sharp contrast to the cherished praxis of relational learning in the Judaeo-Christian tradition. For studies involving cross-cultural, missionary and ecumenical relations – as in the case of this dissertation – the individualistic approach is prone to be one-sided, to say the least. Therefore, Dr. Hans Visser from the Hendrik Kraemer Institute (previously in Oegstgeest, now in Utrecht), suggested that it should be done in teamwork, the team being comprised of an Asian (or African) and a European (or North American). The promotor and co-promotors received this suggestion well.

In cross-cultural cooperation, the perspectives of both the European missionary societies and the indigenous Ono Niha could be explained by the authors, who stem from different continents and races. Since Hummel and Telaumbanua have worked together on Nias (for about seven years) and in Europe (in the course of this study project), they have equipped themselves for cooperation on various occasions. Each has his specific cultural, linguistic, and academic background. Together they can communicate fluently in Indonesian and English. Telaumbanua, however, has not mastered speaking Dutch and German and Hummel cannot speak the Niasan vernacular. Nevertheless, they can – with mutual help and use of dictionaries – read some basic texts and understand terms' meanings.

The teamwork has involved regular consultations, translating sources and discussing them with each other, visiting resource persons, historical places and archives together, and reading each other's chapters. The authors have experienced their teamwork in the course of investigating and writing this dissertation as an ecumenical endeavour in its own right. It was a fruitful, time consuming and sometimes difficult process of intercultural interaction, leading to a more objective dealing with the subject matter.

1.3.2 Division of Tasks

Despite the close teamwork, the actual writing was done separately, except for the initial Introduction and the final Conclusion. The basic division of tasks has been as follows:

- Ch. 1 Introduction: Hummel and Telaumbanua.
- Ch. 2 Land and People of Nias and the Batu Islands: Telaumbanua.
- Ch. 3 Societies doing Missionary Work on Nias and the Batu Islands: Hummel.
- Ch. 4 Christian Missions on Nias and the Batu Islands, 1865-1930: Hummel.
- Ch. 5 Independent Churches on Nias and the Batu Islands, 1930-1965: Hummel.
- Ch. 6 The Encounter between Christianity and Niasan Culture: Telaumbanua.
- Ch. 7 Towards a Contextual Theology for Nias and the Batu Islands: Telaumbanua.
- Ch. 8 Conclusion: Hummel and Telaumbanua.

The authors have commented on and added to one another's chapters. The list of abbreviations, the glossary, the maps, the bibliography and interviews, and the indexes of personal names, places and subjects have been compiled together. Hummel, in close cooperation with Telaumbanua, has also provided a summary of the entire study in Dutch.

1.4 METHODOLOGY

This study largely follows an empirical, inductive methodology⁴³ in reconstructing the historical and sociological data as objectively as possible. To a lesser extent, it is deductive, when drawing conclusions and offering new perspectives.

Telaumbanua approaches the subject matter mainly in terms of sociological description and analysis. In Ch. 2 he employs a more descriptive manner, while in Ch. 6 he uses a systematic and anthropological approach, in order to discuss critically the way of life of the Ono Niha in its interaction with Christianity. In Ch. 7, he outlines the present-day situation of Protestant theology on Nias. For this he focussed on the BNKP, which is by far the largest Niasan church. Telaumbanua then makes some deductive suggestions for a contextual local theology on Nias and the Batu Islands within the larger framework of the debate on contextual theology within Indonesia.

Hummel uses historical description throughout his chapters. In Ch. 3 he describes and analyses the two Protestant missionary societies in a comparative manner. In Ch. 4 and Ch. 5 he reconstructs the history of mission and church among the Ono Niha in a more systematic way. Wherever necessary, the historical data are ordered thematically, following the chronological sequence of events, and are discussed critically. Both Hummel and Telaumbanua intentionally favour a focus on those who have been the object of missionary and cultural activities, paying relatively more attention to the indigenous people. They also give due appreciation to the efforts of women (the wives of missionaries, deaconesses and Niasan Christian women).

1.5 STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY

This study has eight chapters, including an introduction and a conclusion. In Ch. 2 and Ch. 3 a general overview is given, first of the land and peoples of Nias and the Batu Islands, after which the two missionary societies which brought Christianity to this part of the world are outlined. The history of Christianization, at first under the leadership and close supervision of the European missionaries and subsequently within the independent churches on Nias and the Batu Islands, is reconstructed in Ch. 4 and Ch. 5. In Ch. 6 the historical reconstruction is complemented by a sociological description and analysis of the interaction between Christianity and the Niasan culture within the society. This is followed, in Ch. 7, by an evaluation of the present character of the BNKP and some suggestions concerning what shape a contextual Niasan theology should take in the future.

⁴³ Cf. J.A.B. Jongeneel, *Philosophy, Science, and Theology of Mission in the 19th and 20th Centuries* 1, 2002, pp. 175-181.

1.6 SOURCES

1.6.1 Primary Sources

Unpublished primary written accounts come largely from minutes, reports, letters and papers of European missionaries⁴⁴, as well as the Niasan churches. Also, published primary materials in the Niasan and Indonesian languages, as well as European publications such as mission magazines offer first hand information. The authors consulted these sources in the following archives:

1. The church archive of the Protestant Christian Church (BNKP) in Gunungsitoli.
2. The archive of the Theological Seminary, STT BNKP Sundermann, in Gunungsitoli.
3. The archive of the Regency of Nias.
4. The archive of the Rhenish Missionary Society in Wuppertal-Barmen.
5. The archive of the Dutch Lutheran Missionary Society in Amsterdam.
6. The archive of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Amsterdam.
7. The archive of the Mission Council of the Netherlands Reformed Church and the library of the Hendrik Kraemer Institute in Utrecht.

Unpublished materials, given to the authors by former missionaries, were deposited for insight at the above-mentioned archive of the Rhenish Missionary Society in Wuppertal.

1.6.2 Secondary Sources

The secondary sources used in this study are limited to published books, parts of books, articles in magazines, as well as academic theses relating to Nias and the Batu Islands. They include the works written from a missionary or church perspective (e.g., Theodor Müller-Krüger, *Die „große Reue“ auf Nias*, 1931, and Ubald M. Telaumbanua, *Evangelization and Niasan Culture*, 1993), as well as a selection from the enormous library of ethnographical, anthropological and sociological research, the most remarkable of which are the works of E.E.W.Gs. Schröder, *Nias I and II*, 1917 (the first volume encompasses 866 pages of detailed descriptions of the ethnography of Nias and the second presents 270 photographs and maps), Peter Suzuki, a Japanese American who did his research in Leiden, The Netherlands, resulting in a systematic reconstruction of the primal religion of the Ono Niha (*The Religious System and Culture of Nias, Indonesia*, 1959), and Andrew Beatty, *Society and Exchange in Nias*, 1992, 'an ethnographic analysis and a contribution to theoretical discussions in that tradition' (*ibid.*, p. 1), as well as the works of Johannes M. Hämmerle⁴⁵, a Roman Catholic priest and acknowledged expert on

⁴⁴ For an evaluation of the written accounts of missionaries during the years 1861 until 1914, cf. Maren Fuhrmann, *Der historisch-ethnographische Aussagewert deutschsprachiger Missionsliteratur über die Batak auf Sumatra und die indigene Bevölkerung von Nias*, 1989.

⁴⁵ Two recent works of Hämmerle are: *Asal usul masyarakat Nias: Suatu interpretasi*, 1999, and *Nias – eine eigene Welt: Sagen, Mythen, Überlieferungen*, 1999.

Niasan culture, of Bamböwö La'ia⁴⁶, a Niasan Protestant theologian and anthropologist, and of Sökhi'aro W. Mendröfa⁴⁷, the most famous cultural observer on Nias and the Batu Islands.

1.6.3 General Literature

Since the focus of this dissertation is on 'Gospel and culture', some theological literature on this theme has been consulted as well. While, naturally, the main focus here is on Indonesian scholars, the authors have also referred to works of other Asian, as well as African, American and European theologians (cf. Ch. 1.2). Lastly, a number of historical and sociological works were read to gain an understanding of the general background and context of this topic.

1.6.4 Oral Tradition

Concerning the oral tradition, a number of interviews were held with elderly Ono Niha and with former European missionaries or their children.

⁴⁶ The most well-known study being: B. La'ia, *Solidaritas Kekeluargaan dalam Salah Satu Masyarakat Desa di Nias-Indonesia*, 1983.

⁴⁷ S.W. Mendröfa, *Börö Gotari Gotara*, 1969; by the same author, *Fondrakö Ono Niha: Agama Purba, Hukum Adat, Hikayat dan Mitologi Masyarakat Nias*, 1981.

2 Land and People of Nias and the Batu Islands

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In order to understand the processes of interaction and the social changes which resulted from the encounter between Christianity and the Niasan culture, it is very important to be familiar with the context or 'mission field' on the one hand, and the Gospel, as well as the missionary societies, on the other hand. To be familiar with the missionary area, one needs to have a clear picture of the geographic location, the inhabitants, and the religious and cultural systems.

In line with the theme of this study, the missionary area described here is Nias and the Batu Islands. The majority of its inhabitants belongs to the Niasan tribe (Ono Niha). They possess their own unique and ancient culture, with variations in the different geographic regions of North Nias, South Nias, East Nias, and West Nias.¹ Before the colonial period, the Ono Niha had governed themselves, on the basis of their traditions and their customary law (*adat*). Under colonialism, however, the Batu Islands were linked to the province of West Sumatra², while Nias became part of Tapanuli. When Indonesia became independent, Nias and the Batu Islands were combined to constitute a region, named the Nias Regency.

This chapter will treat Niasan societies starting from pre-Christian times until the end of the Indonesian 'Old Order' (1965). Attention is drawn to the geography of the Nias Regency, its people, religious system, customary law (*adat*), social system and economy, as well as to colonialism and nationalism insofar as they affected the Ono Niha.

It is not the intention of the author to give a complete reconstruction of the culture and the primal religion, since this would transcend the scope of this study, but rather to provide a general description, based on the available sources. The interaction with Christianity and the social changes resulting from this encounter will not be elaborated upon comprehensively, since they will be discussed fully in Chapter 6.

2.2 GEOGRAPHY

From north to south along the West Coast of Sumatra, there is a chain of small islands: Simeulue, the Banyak Islands, Nias, the Batu Islands, Mentawai, Nassau, and Enggano. Of these islands, Nias and the Batu Islands are located approximately seventy miles from Sumatra.³

¹ Koentjaraningrat, *Introduction to Anthropology*, 2003, p. 193. He states that Nias and the Batu Islands constitute a single ethnic, different from the other ethnics that are native to Indonesia. Experts of ethnology have divided the traditional law circle into nineteen regions. Nias and the Batu Islands were classified as constituting one region of the traditional law circle.

² *Indisch Staatsblad Nr. 104*, cf. *Beknopte Encyclopaedie van Nederlandsch-Indië*, 1921, p. 348. In 1864, the Batu Islands became part of the Province of West Sumatra.

³ P. Suzuki, *Critical Survey of Studies on the Anthropology of Nias, Mentawai and Enggano*, 1958, p. 2. Cf. E. Fries, *Nias: Amoeata Hulo Nono Niha*, 1919, p. 1. Fries notes that the distance between Sumatra and Nias is about 120 km from Singkel, Barus or Sibolga.

Under Dutch rule, the name 'Nias' was used only for the island of the same name, which extends about 120 kilometres, from Duru Laoya in the north to Teluk Dalam in the south. It is about 40 kilometres wide, from Sirombu in the west to Foa in the east. The total area of Nias is about 3900 square kilometres.⁴ The Hinako Islands off the western coast of Nias and the Batu Islands off the southern coast of Nias were treated separately, the former being incorporated into the Residency of Tapanuli and the latter into the Province of West Sumatra.⁵

As of 1928, the Batu Islands and Hinako were incorporated into the Nias-district (*afdeeling*). When Indonesia became independent, Nias, Hinako and the Batu Islands were treated as one regency of the Province of North Sumatra. The Nias Regency consisted of 132 islands covering about 5.625 km² or 7,8 % of the Province of North Sumatra, situated between 0° 12' and 1° 32' northern latitude and 97° and 98° eastern longitude, with the following boundaries:⁶

- To the north: the Banyak Islands, Aceh Province
- To the south: Mentawai, West Sumatra Province
- To the east: Central Tapanuli, North Sumatra Province
- To the west: the Indian Ocean.

In 2002, the Nias Regency was divided into two regencies: the Nias Regency, with its capital city of Gunungsitoli, encompassing fourteen districts, and the South Nias Regency, with its capital city of Teluk Dalam, encompassing eight districts (including the Batu Islands).⁷

Nias is surrounded by the sea, which contains rich natural resources and provides impressive tourist attractions, such as white beaches in Mo'ale and Toyolawa, unique waves for surfing in Lagundri, and exquisite marine life off the Batu Islands. The topography of the interior of Nias is varied, from plains areas to hills, and even mountains as high as 886 meters above sea level (e.g., the Lölömatua in the centre of Nias island).⁸ The plains cover only 24 % of the entire island, while the lower hillocks cover 28,8% and the higher hills and the mountains cover about 51,2 %. This topography makes it difficult to construct straight and wide roads. For this reason, the main cities are located on the coasts.

⁴ E. Fries, *Nias: Amoeata Hulo Nono Niha*, 1919, pp. 1-2. Cf. E.E.W.Gs. Schröder, *Nias*, 1917, p. 636. He notes that the total area of Nias Island is 3980 km².

⁵ BPS Kabupaten Nias, 'Nias dalam Angka 2000', 2002, pp xii-xiii. Cf. *Indisch Staatsblad Nr. 104* (cf. *Beknopte Encyclopaedie van Nederlandsch-Indië*, 1921, p. 348). In 1864, Nias became part of the *residentie Tapanuli*, whereas the Batu Islands were incorporated into *Sumatra's Westkust*. Then, in 1919, Nias became one *afdeeling* (led by an *asistent-resident*) with Gunungsitoli as its capital. The formation of Nias as an *afdeeling* was based on an anthropological perspective, because there has never been one kingdom able to unite the whole of Nias. The *afdeeling Nias* consisted of two *onderafdeelingen*, namely, *onderafdeeling Zuid-Nias*, with its capital in Teluk Dalam, and *onderafdeeling Noord-Nias*, with its capital in Gunungsitoli. Each *onderafdeeling* was led by a *controleur*. Subordinate to the *onderafdeeling* there were other governmental structures, namely, *district* and *onderdistrict*, headed respectively by a *demang* and an assistant-*demang*. In December 1928, the Batu islands were included as an *onderafdeeling* of the *afdeeling Nias*.

⁶ Cf. E. Fries, *Nias: Amoeata Hulo Nono Niha*, 1919, p. 2. Cf. *ENI* 1 (1917), p. 207.

⁷ The fourteen districts of the Regency of Nias are the following: Gunungsitoli, Lahewa, Afulu, Alasa, Tuhemberua, Lotu, Namöhalu-Esiwa, Hiliduho, Gidö, Idanögawo, Bawölato, Lölöfitu Moi, Mandrehe and Sirombu. The South Nias Regency encompasses the following districts: Teluk Dalam, Gomo, Lahusa, Amandraya, Lölömatua, Lölöwa'u, Pulau-pulau Batu and Hibala.

⁸ J.T. Nieuwenhuizen en H.C.B. von Rosenberg, *Het eiland Nias*, 1863, p. 24.

Most of the coastline consists of coral reefs, with some beautiful, albeit narrow, beaches. The coastline is very uneven, with a large number of small capes (*ujung*) and bays (*teluk*). The most important bays are: Teluk Sumbawa and Teluk Balaika in the south-east, Teluk Dalam and Teluk Lagundri in the south, Teluk Sirombu in the west, Teluk Lafau in the north, and Teluk Gunungsitoli in the east.⁹

There are also rivers on Nias, the longest being the Muzöi, the Moi, the Oyo, and the Susua. Since rain falls throughout the year, with about 273 rainy days in a year or 23 days in a month and an average precipitation of 3145,1 millimetres per annum, the structure of the soil is labile, resulting in floods, landslides and changes in the riverbeds, which often cause damage to the roads and bridges. In addition to the rainfall, due to its location in an equatorial area, Nias is hot and damp. The average temperature is between 14,3° in the early morning and 30,4° during the day, with a humidity of between 65% and 90 %. The average wind speed is around 5-6 knot per hours.¹⁰ These geographic conditions show that Nias and the Batu Islands form an isolated archipelago with a climate and topography, which make life difficult for their relatively large populations.

2.3 THE PEOPLE

2.3.1 Residents

In the regency of Nias¹¹, the largest ethnic group consists of native Niasans, or Ono Niha. There are also several smaller ethnic groups living there, such as Acehnese, Minangkabau, Bataks, Buginese, Javanese and Chinese.¹² The Ono Niha believe that their ancestors were the first human beings to arrive on Nias. These ancestors thus thought of themselves as land owners (*sotanö*) or villager dwellers (*sowanua*), while those who came later were called 'stranger' (*sifatewu*). They were not yet bound by the *adat*.¹³ For this reason, the members of the Niasan tribe call themselves Ono Niha, which literally means 'the children of the human beings'. Nias and its surrounding islands are called 'the land of people' (*Tanö Niha*).¹⁴

The term *dawa*, indicating a person who engages in Islamic propaganda, is used generally to refer to non-Ono Niha (except for Europeans), particularly for Acehnese and Malayan Muslim people. In pre-Christian times, *dawa* expressed the less than harmonious relationship between the Ono Niha and the Acehnese and Malay slave traders. The Ono Niha thought of them as *dawa* in the sense of *Ummenschen*

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ BPS Kabupaten Nias, 'Nias dalam Angka 2000', 2002, pp. vii-xii .

¹¹ The term Nias Regency (*Kabupaten Nias*) indicates the area including Nias, the Hinako Islands and the Batu Islands.

¹² J.M. Hämmerle, *Asal-usul Masyarakat Nias*, 2001, pp. 164-206. Pastor Hämmerle believes that most probably some of the Ono Niha ancestors came from China.

¹³ F. Zebua, *Kota Gunungsitoli*, 1996, p. 7.

¹⁴ The term 'Nias' comes from people from the outside (Malay, Aceh and Europe); cf. James Danandjaja, 'Ono Niha: Penduduk Pulau Nias', 1976, p. 90. Cf. *BRM*, 1867, p. 110. L.E. Denninger noted that Ono Niha in 'sumbawa' dialect is *Nikha*. It is probably their way of calling their ancestor Tuada Hia. The term *Tanö Niha* was taken from *Tanö Hia* (Hia's land). Therefore, *Ono Niha* can mean *Ono Hia* (Hia's children) in *Tanö Hia* (Hia's land). Cf. E. Fries, *Amuata Hoelo Nono Niha*, 1919, pp. 2-4.

(inhumane brutes).¹⁵ The background of this was that Acehnese treated Ono Niha in an inhumane way (*hulö zi tenga niha*), kidnapping them and selling them into slavery.¹⁶ Long before the slave trade began around the eleventh century¹⁷, the Acehnese had bartered goods such as gold, brass, bauxite, nickel, and various kinds of silk and wool for the products of the land of Nias, such as coconut, poultry, etc. Commercial trade went hand-in-hand with cultural interaction. Acehnese terms, such as gold (*ana'a*); silk (*sotöra*), tin (*simo*); brass (*laoya*), are used in the oldest Ono Niha poems, aphorisms and proverbs (*amaedola*).¹⁸

One ethnic group that must not be forgotten in the history of Nias is the Buginese tribe, i.e., the Maru group, which settled on the Hinako and Batu Islands in the seventeenth century. Willem L. Steinhart¹⁹, said that the Bekhua on the Batu Islands were considered to be the land owners, i.e., the original natives of the land. Their ancestors were called Maru.²⁰ Until the eighteenth century, these people still used the Buginese vernacular and traditions in daily life. The majority of them were Muslims. However, after a long process of assimilation, they were themselves considered to be Ono Niha and used the Niasan language (*Li Nono Niha*).

2.3.2 Origin of the Ono Niha

One very old source comes from a merchant from Persia by the name of Sulayman. He came to Nias in the year of 851 AD and noted that the people of *Niyan* (i.e., Nias) had large amounts of gold. Coconuts constituted their main food. If one of them had wanted to get married, he would be given a wife only if he were able to bring the skull of an enemy. If he was able to kill two enemies, he was allowed to have two wives. If he was able to kill fifty enemies, he was allowed to have fifty wives, and so on.²¹

The origin of the Ono Niha has not yet been satisfactorily clarified. Several experts have been conducting research using, essentially, three different methods, namely: the genealogical, the ethnological and the mythological methods.

Ludwig E. Denninger²² rejected the theory of Nieuwenhuizen and Von Rosenberg that the Ono Niha were a branch of the Batak.²³ He argued that the physiognomy, the customary law (*adat*) and the language of the Ono Niha are very

¹⁵ *BRM*, 1867, pp. 108-116.

¹⁶ For many centuries, Nias had established trade relationships with the people of Aceh, Barus, and China, as well as the Malay, cf. F. Zebua, *Kota Gunungsitoli*, 1996, pp. 10-11; cf. E.M. Loeb, *Sumatra: Its History and People*, 1972, p. 135.

¹⁷ After the Trumon kingdom of Aceh had become a regional superpower, around the eleventh century, the Acehnese began abducting Niasans on Nias to sell them into slavery. These abductions practiced by the Acehnese were most painful for the Ono Niha, creating the term *emali ndrawa Ase* (Acehnese thieves and kidnappers). E. Fries, *Nias*, 1919, p. 126. cf. J.M. Hämmerle, *Ritus Patung Harimau*, 1996, p. 46. Hämmerle notes that through the slave trade, there were many Ono Niha living in Sumatra, especially in Padang, but also as far as Penang.

¹⁸ E.g., the following proverb: *Siloe Sotöra, sumbölö afasi, ha sowöhö zi lö möi ba zi sökhi*. This proverb expresses the opinion that silk is so beautiful that only foolish people do not want it; only fools do not want the good things in life. Cf. B. Ama Wohada Mendröfa, 'Amaedola Nono Niha', 1982, p. 284.

¹⁹ Cf. Ch. 3.5.1 and Ch. 4.7.1.

²⁰ W.L. Steinhart, *Niassche Priesterlitanieën*, Deel LXXIV, Eerste Stuk, p. 20.

²¹ E.E.W.Gs. Schröder, *Nias*. 1917.

²² Cf. Ch. 3.5.1 and Ch. 4.2.

²³ J.T. Nieuwenhuizen and H.C.B. von Rosenberg, *Verslag omtrent het eiland Nias en deszelfs bewoners*, 1863, pp. 1-153.

different from those of the Batak. His theory was that, instead, the people of Nias had originally come from Burma.

F.M. Schnitger, on the other hand, found great similarities between the Ono Niha and the Naga of Khassi in Assam in relation to customary law, the use of megalith stones and the grand pig-feasts (*owasa*). This view is supported by the Indonesian ethnologist James Dananjaja, who points out that the feasts held in connection with the erection of big stones on Nias are unique, as the sacrifices brought consisted of pigs instead of buffalos. Martin Thomsen²⁴ categorized the Ono Niha as ancient tribes (*Altvölker*), which had originated from the southeast Asian realm of China around the year 1000 AD. This theory is verified by the fact that the first settlers on Nias seem to have lived from agriculture, used iron tools and worn golden jewellery, similar to that used in China at that time.

On the basis of physiognomic studies of faces from both the northern and the southern parts of Nias, Elio Modigliani²⁵ held the view that the ancestors of the Ono Niha had come from the regions of north-eastern India, arriving in several waves of immigration.

On the basis of his studies of the genealogies of various Niasan clans (*mado*), Johannes M. Hämmerle²⁶ reckons that there have been one hundred generations of Ono Niha from the year five hundred before of Christ until the present. The different *mado* seem to have had more than one ancestor, who would then, in accordance with Modigliani, have arrived on Nias in several waves. Linguistic studies seem to support this theory, although Eduard Fries²⁷ (1877-1923) was of the opinion that they indicated that the Ono Niha belonged to the Malay race.²⁸

Denninger noted that the Niasan myth about the ancestor Tuada Hia and his wife²⁹ says that they descended from the upper world (from the primeval village, named Teteholi Ana'a). After having given birth to one boy and one girl, they again returned to the upper world. According to the myth, the tenth generation of their progeny then began to settle on the earth. At first, this generation stayed in Gomo on a big rock, under a big tree. Both the rock and the tree, which had originally come from the upper world, continued to exist, but in an invisible form which could be seen only by the priests/priestesses (*ere*). In another myth about the creation of the world, the creator is named Lowalangi. He had four sons, who descended to earth and became the ancestors of the Ono Niha.

Heinrich Sundermann³⁰ also mentions a creation myth, according to which Lowalangi, like the first human being, was a fruit of the *Solambayö-nga'eu*, the primeval tree, growing where the thirty winds of creation meet. The very first man died, but from his heart grew the 'tree of life' called *tora'a* tree. The golden fruit of the *tora'a* are the actual ancestors of the Ono Niha.³¹

²⁴ Cf. Ch. 5.2.5.

²⁵ Cf. Elio Modigliani, *Un Viaggio a Nias*, 1890.

²⁶ J.M. Hämmerle, *Asal-usul masyarakat Nias*, 2001, pp. 208-209. Hämmerle is a Roman Catholic missionary serving on Nias.

²⁷ Cf. Ch. 4.4.1.

²⁸ E. Fries, *Amuata Hoelo Nono Niha*, 1919, pp. 52-54.

²⁹ Ch. M. Thomsen, 'Die Sage vom Stammvater Hija: Ein Gesang aus Mittelnieas', in: *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, 104/2 (1979).

³⁰ Cf. Ch. 4.3.1.3.

³¹ Cf. H. Sundermann, *Die Psychologie des Niassers*, 1887, p. 289.

The myth of the Tora'a tree is also mentioned by Johann W. Thomas.³² It is said to have had three flowers. The first flower gave birth to Lowalangi, Lature and Nadaoya (or Afökha); the second flower gave birth to Barasi-luluö, Baliu and Feto-alitö. The third flower, at first, did not produce anything. Then there was a fight between Lature and Barasi luluö or Baliu concerning the possession of the third flower. They agreed that whoever could make a 'human being' out of the flower would be the flower's owner. Lature tried, but he had no success. Then Barasi-luluö or Baliu tried, but she was able only to shape two bodies, male and female, with their respective genitals. Then Lowalangi ordered Baliu to take some wind and blow it into the mouths of these creatures, enabling them to talk. The names of these human beings were Futi (the female) and Tuha-Barege-danö (the male). They were the inhabitants of the third world. Their sons lived in different worlds, namely: Golu Mbanua in the fourth, Tarewe Kara in the fifth, Hulumogia in the sixth, Dundru Tanö and Saota in the seventh, and Sirao in the eighth world. The land of the Ono Niha was created by one of Sirao's sons.

Faogöli Harefa³³ also affirmed the origin of the Ono Niha from the upper world (Teteholi Ana'a) as descendants of Sirao. Hia Walangi Sinada and his wife, the first ancestors, had been placed in Gomo. When they had descended to the earth, they had been given certain things to take with them, namely, an temple (*osali*), an house (*omo*), an measuring staff (*afore*), a rice measure (*lauru*), a scales (*fali'era*), as well as seeds for plants, animals, jewellery, and images (*adu*). Hia Walangi Sinada is said to have had in his possession all the rules and laws (*huku*), as well as the standards for measures and weights (*so'aya gafore, lauru, fali'era*).

When Hia Walangi descended to Gomo, the island leaned over to the south. In order to restore the balance, Gözö was put down in Hilimaziaya (North Nias). Because this made the island arch in the middle, Daeli Sanau Talinga then descended to Ono Waembo Idanoi (East Nias) and Hulu Börö Tanötanö, the son of Silögu Mbanua, descended to the banks of the Oyo river (West Nias). This established a good balance and harmony then reigned on the island.³⁴ From this description, we may conclude that there is no agreement among the researchers concerning the origins of the Ono Niha. A Niasan proverb says: in different places, there are different traditions (*sambua mbanua, sambua mbuabua*).³⁵ It seems plausible that the variety of myths indicates a variety of origins, times, and places of settlement on Nias in different stages.³⁶

³² Cf. Ch. 4.3.1.1 and 4.3.1.2; for the myth, cf. E. Modigliani, *Un Viaggio a Nias*, 1890, pp. 614-615.

³³ F. Harefa, *Hikayat dan Ceritera Bangsa serta 'Adat Nias'*, 1939, pp. 9-23.

³⁴ F. Harefa, *Hikayat dan Ceritera Bangsa serta 'Adat Nias'*, 1939, pp. 17-23. Cf. S. Zebua, 'Menyelusuri Sejarah Kebudayaan Ono Niha', 1984, pp. 67-68. Cf. E. Fries, *Amuata Hoelo Nono Niha*, 1919, pp. 52-53. Cf. J.M. Hämmerle, *Famatö Harimao*, 1986, pp. 72-74.

³⁵ B. Laia, 'Sendi-sendu Masyarakat Nias', in: *Peninjau* 1/1975 sees the probability that the Niasan ancestors came in several waves and from different backgrounds. J.M. Hämmerle, *Asal Usul Masyarakat Nias*, 2001, points out the indications to be found in the names of the families that the Niasan ancestors had come from different backgrounds: Ono Mbela, Laturedanö, Nadaoya, Tuhangaröfa, with the last ethnic being Ono Niha, with Hia as its main figure.

³⁶ Cf. R. Subagya, *Agama Asli Indonesia*, 1981, pp. 28-29. Subagya classifies the Ono Niha in South Nias as belonging to the 'protomelayu ethnic', saying that their ancestors were the first immigrants from South East Asia, whereas other settlers on Nias belonged to the 'Deuteromalay'. Cf. *ENI* 3 (1919), p. 25. Kleiweg de Zwaan, 'De „Pontianak“ op Nias', 1912, pp. 25-35, says that the Ono Niha are not a homogenic race, but instead a mixture of many elements.

2.3.3 Language

The Ono Niha have their own language, *Li Nono Niha*, which is very different from other languages in the region, including the languages of the neighbouring Batak. The vernacular of the Ono Niha belongs to the Malayo-Polynesian (Austronesian) language family.³⁷

One characteristic of the *Li Nono Niha*, which makes it different from other languages in Indonesia, is that at the end of the word there are no consonants so that it sounds vocalic. In addition, the *Li Nono Niha* has a single sound vocal, the *ö*, which is rarely found in the other ethnic languages of Indonesia. The Niasan *ö* in *efa'ö* or *abölö* sounds similar to the German *ö* in *lösen* or *können*, but it is pronounced as a midback unrounded vowel and not, as in German, as a front rounded vowel.³⁸

Two different dialects of *Li Nono Niha* can be distinguished, the one to be found in North Nias and the other in South Nias. In general, they have similar vocabularies, but differ in pronunciation. However, there are also some examples of different words, such as:

| Terms | South Nias (Standard Teluk Dalam) | North Nias (Standard Gunungsitoli) |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| head | <i>delau / telau</i> | <i>högö</i> |
| coconut | <i>sikhula</i> | <i>banio</i> |
| above | <i>Lawa</i> | <i>yawa</i> |
| God | Lowalani | Lowalangi |
| image / idol | <i>azu, adju</i> | <i>adu</i> |
| what is your name? | <i>hata döimö?</i> | <i>haniha döimö?</i> |

These two variants can again be differentiated into a number of dialects, (e.g., Hinako, Alasa, Lahewa, etc., in the north; Gomo, Amandraya, Lahusa and the Batu Islands in the south).

The samples given above could be an indication of the different ancestors of the Ono Niha. These differences in language sometimes create difficulties in communication. However, because of the long interaction, as well as the Christian influence through the translations of the Bible, liturgy, and hymns, which are used in the entire Nias Regency, the people in the south can understand the language of the people in the north and vice versa. Nevertheless, the awareness of the differences often leads to demands for special materials for worship and school in the dialects of South Nias and the Batu Islands there is, e.g., a different hymnal, called the *Buku Nainö*, on the Batu Islands.³⁹

³⁷ J. Feldman, 'Nias and Its Traditional Sculpture', in: *Nias Tribal Treasures*, 1990, p. 23; J. Danandjaja, 'Ono Niha: Penduduk Pulau Nias', 1976, p. 91.

³⁸ Cf. A. Beatty, *Society and Exchange in Nias*, 1992, pp. 7-8.

³⁹ During the period of the DLM on the Batu Islands, the Bible was translated into the Batunese vernacular, particularly the Gospels of Matthew and John. The missionaries also translated the liturgy. But after the BKP merged into the BNKP in 1960, officially, everyone used the Bible and the liturgy in the North Niasan translation. In actual practice, however, the leaders of the worship services on the Batu Islands translate all the texts directly into the Batunese dialect. Cf. Ch. 4.5.6.

2.4 PRIMAL RELIGION AND COMMUNITY LIFE OF THE ONO NIHA

Before the arrival of Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism⁴⁰ to Nias, the Ono Niha had already had their own religion. A number of sources call the Ono Niha 'worshippers of spirits'⁴¹, 'worshippers of deities'⁴² or 'worshippers of idols' (*molohe adu*).⁴³ In this study, the authors use 'primal religion' to indicate the ancient religion of the Ono Niha. The focus of this chapter is on the description of the primal religion and community life of the Ono Niha, while in Ch. 6 there will be an analysis of the encounter between this primal religion and Christianity.

2.4.1 Cosmology

The cosmology of the Ono Niha is expressed in stories or myths concerning the divine powers and the ancestors.⁴⁴ The Ono Niha belief was that this earth is the centre of the universe, while there is an upper world above the earth and a lower world below it, both of them inhabited by the gods.

According to some of the myths, at the beginning, there existed only chaos and darkness. The first god emerged from the midst of this chaos and darkness. In North Nias, this god was called Sihai⁴⁵, in the south it was called Inada Samihara Luo,⁴⁶ while on the Batu Islands it was called Inada Dao.⁴⁷ This first god was believed to be the creator of the sky, the earth, the other gods, human beings and all other things.

There were nine levels of this upper world which Sihai had created.⁴⁸ He himself stayed on the first level (the furthest from the earth), in a place which exceeded the size of a house and was supported by the winds. The ninth layer was the nearest to the earth. It was here that the great kingdom was built with the name of Tetembori

⁴⁰ BPS Kabupaten Nias, 'Nias dalam Angka 2002', 2003, p. 114. According to the statistics for 2002, the majority of the inhabitants of the Nias Regency is Christian, and there are also minorities of Moslems, Hindus, and Buddhists. Of the 725.949 inhabitants of Nias Island and the Batu Islands, there are around 557.632 Protestant Christians, 135.969 Catholic Christians, 31.227 Moslems, 1.042 Buddhists and 79 Hindus. From this data, we can see that the Christian missions have been far more successful than those of other religions. The mission boards represented by the missionaries who came and proclaimed the Gospel in Nias were the RM on Nias Island and the DLM on the Batu Islands, as well as missions from the Roman Catholic Church, which came later. Islam was spread by Acehnese and Malayan people who had come to trade, and then stayed and married Niasan women. The Hindu and Buddhist influences were brought by adherents of these religions who came to Nias and then settled on Nias Island and the Batu Islands.

⁴¹ Cf. Koentjaraningrat, *Manusia dan Kebudayaan di Indonesia*, 1990, p. 50.

⁴² Cf. H. Hadiwijono, *Religi Suku Murba di Indonesia*, 1985, p. 84.

⁴³ Cf. J. Danandjaja, 'Ono Niha: Penduduk Pulau Nias', 1976, p. 107.

⁴⁴ Cf. Th. van den End, *Ragi Carita: Sejarah Gereja di Indonesia 1, 1500-1860*, 1985, p. 13. He states that each tribe has stories, myths, which explain the genesis or background of that tribe, referring to their ancestors and gods. These myths also inform the people about the norms, i.e., traditions that the gods have commanded the people to follow. These traditions are to be kept by all members of the respective tribes, but do not apply to people outside these tribes. All members of a tribe will join in the worship of the gods and the ancestors.

⁴⁵ S.W. Mendröfa, *Börö Gotari Gotara*, 1969, pp. 1-2. Cf. P. Suzuki, *The Religious System and Culture of Nias, Indonesia*, 1959, pp. 3-4. and W.L. Steinhart, *Niassche Teksten I en II*, 1934, pp. 329-330.

⁴⁶ P. Suzuki, *The Religious System and Culture of Nias, Indonesia*, 1959, pp. 3-4.

⁴⁷ W.L. Steinhart, *Niassche Teksten I en II*, 1934, pp. 329-330.

⁴⁸ F. Harefa, *Hikayat dan Ceritera Bangsa serta 'Adat Nias'*, 1939, pp. 4-6.

Ana'a or Teteholi Ana'a.⁴⁹ The Ono Niha believed that Teteholi Ana'a was the village of origin of the ancestors who later descended to the earth.

Although Sihai was known as the first and the highest god, he was a mortal being. When he died, from his breath came Alölöa Nangi. However, this creature also died and from its heart grew the 'world tree', *tora'a*. From the *tora'a* there appeared three branches: the upper branch, the middle branch, and the lower branch. From the upper branch Lowalangi and Laturedanö were born, along with two evil spirits, Nadaoya and Afökha. From the middle branch were born two good spirits and one evil spirit (their names are not mentioned). The lower branch did not produce anything.⁵⁰

In South Nias, this myth has been transmitted in a different form, which does not mention *tora'a*.⁵¹ According to this myth, Inada Samihara Luo caused the creation of the world. She gave birth to Inada Samaduho Hösi. Although Inada Samaduho Hösi had no husband, she bore two pairs of twins: Laturedanö and his sister (who later became his wife) and Lowalani (in his youth, he was called Sabölö Luwe Gögömi) and his sister (who later became his wife). Lowalani was the god of upper world and dwelt in the upper world, while Laturedanö was the god of the lower world. This lower world supported the world from below.⁵²

In the myth of the Batu Islands, it is said that Inada Dao emerged from the midst of the fog and the darkness. She was the one who created the sky and the earth. Even though she had no husband, she became pregnant and gave birth to children, namely Laturedanö or Lature Rao (a creature with a head), and Lowalani Luo or Sobawi Zihönö or Sobawi Zato (a creature with buttock).⁵³

Although the myths differ, throughout Nias the belief was held that Lowalangi/Lowalani (or Luo Mewöna or Luo Zaho) inhabited the upper world and that Laturedanö (or Bauwa Danö) inhabited the lower world. Lowalangi is the creator of the human beings and the source of life, goodness, prosperity, luck, light, and all other good things. The Ono Niha regarded Lowalangi as the most important god. There were a multitude of prayers, mantras, and curses invoking the powers of Lowalangi. He determined the life and the death of human beings, allotting blessings and curses, wealth and poverty. He was the one who established or toppled the chieftains. He was omnipresent and omniscient.⁵⁴

Laturedanö, on the other hand, was the god of the storms, the earthquakes, and natural disasters. This does not mean, however, that he was the source of all evil while Lowalangi was the source of all good. The Ono Niha believed that human beings were the pigs of Lowalangi and Laturedanö. They were treated well, but every now and then, their shadows would be eaten by Lowalangi or Laturedanö, causing illness and death.⁵⁵ This could be avoided by sacrificing pigs to them. This shows that the two gods were considered to complement each other: both could do well or bring harm to human beings. The polarization of absolute goodness and

⁴⁹ S.W. Mendröfa, *Börö Gotari Gotara*, 1969, p 2-5. Cf. F. Harefa, *Hikayat dan Ceritera Bangsa serta Adat Nias*, 1939, p. 6.

⁵⁰ H. Hadiwijono, *Religi Suku Murba di Indonesia*, 1985, pp. 87-88.

⁵¹ In South Nias, there is another myth about a sacred tree, the *fösi*, also known in North. The *fösi*, however, is not mentioned in connection with the creation of this world.

⁵² Cf. E.E.W.Gs. Schröder, *Nias*, 1917, p. 476.

⁵³ W.L. Steinhart, *Niassche Teksten I en II*, 1934, pp. 329-338.

⁵⁴ *BRM*, 1868, p. 141. Due to these phenomena, Denninger and other missionaries adopted the name Lowalangi for the God of the Bible.

⁵⁵ Cf. E.E.W.Gs Schröder, *Nias*, 1917, p. 476.

absolute evil was not characteristic of the primal religion of the Ono Niha, nor of many other primal religions.⁵⁶ This was often not understood by the Europeans who came to Nias.

In translating the Gospel of Luke, Denninger and Sundermann used the term Afökha for the devil or Satan. According to some myths, Afökha was an evil spirit born along with Lowalangi and Laturedanö from the upper branch of the *tora'a*.⁵⁷ But in other myths, Afökha was not described as having a personality, as does Satan in the Bible. On the contrary, Nadaoya or Gado Nadaoya, the other spirit from the upper branch of the *tora'a*, is always mentioned as being evil. He always threatened human beings. He lived in a piece of wood called *eufogi* at Laido-Toyolawa. During drizzling rains, he came out to hunt human beings. Unfortunately, the missionaries did not choose Nadaoya as a synonym for Satan.⁵⁸

Another important figure in the Niasan cosmology is Silewe Nazarata. She is a goddess who was often associated with the high priest. Sometimes, this goddess was thought of as the creator of this world. According to the myth, Sirao wanted Silewe Nazarata to marry Luo Mewöna (Lowalangi), but she refused. This rejection caused a very powerful earthquake, through which several villages in Teteholi Ana'a 'fell down' to the level which later became the earth. Impressed by this, Silewe Nazarata changed her mind and married Lowalangi. Henceforth, the couple worked together. They gathered soil from the fallen villages, stretched it out, and by applying magic, they formed a circle in the shape of a giant dragon-snake (*ulö sesolo*), which became the foundation of the earth.

Silewe Nazarata was also believed to be omnipresent. On the one hand, she helped human beings, but sometimes she was the one who destroyed human beings. That is the reason Silewe Nazarata was so daunting. She had many names and was connected to both the upper world (Lowalangi) and the lower world (Laturedanö), functioning as a mediator and reconciler between the gods and the human beings.⁵⁹ Though she was predominantly female, she also possessed male characteristics. There are huge images (*adu*), more than two meters tall, representing Silewe Nazarata as a woman without hands, wearing male head accessories in the form of horns. Other *adu* show her with female breasts and either a penis or a beard and mustache. Often the *adu* has two heads. The sexual ambivalence depicted in the *adu* of Silewe Nazarata corresponds to the ambivalence characteristic of the whole of the ancient Niasan cosmology.

Silewe Nazarata was also considered to be a good example of an *ere* (priest or priestess). It was often said that Silewe Nazarata dwelt in the moon, and therefore she was also called the Moon Goddess (*gaweda Silewe ba mba'wa*).⁶⁰ The erection of an *adu* and the execution of sacrificial rituals connected with this goddess, for instance in cases of disasters, wars, or grave sins, such as murder, treason, and adultery, were the exclusive right of the *ere* and the noble people (*si'ulu* or *balugu*).

⁵⁶ Cf. P. Suzuki, *The Religious System and Culture of Nias, Indonesia*, 1959, p. 9. 'It may come as no surprise to those who are familiar with such contrasts as upperworld-underworld, sun-moon, right-left, good-evil, etc., which bipolarized the religious aspect of the culture, to say nothing of the social, indeed the culture in its entirety; in like manner Lowalangi and Laturedanö are this religiously based cosmic dualism incarnate'; cf. W. Stöhr and P. Zoetmulder, *Die Religionen Indonesiens*, 1965, pp. 79-80.

⁵⁷ Cf. P. Suzuki, *The Religious System and Culture of Nias, Indonesia*, 1959, p. 8.

⁵⁸ Cf. F. Harefa, *Hikayat dan Ceritera Bangsa serta 'Adat Nias'*, 1939, pp. 7-8.

⁵⁹ P. Suzuki, *The Religious System and Culture of Nias, Indonesia*, 1959, pp. 10-11.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* pp. 11-16.

This worldview of the Ono Niha was basically cyclical, quite contrary to the linear worldview of the Bible, propagated by the missionaries of the RM and the DLM. The consequences of this encounter will be discussed in Ch. 6 of this study.

2.4.2 Deities, Ancestors and Priests

Before the arrival of Christianity on Nias, the Ono Niha understood themselves as 'creatures' of the gods. Human beings were thought of as 'the pigs of the gods'. According to the Niasan myths, the deities were admitted as their distant ancestors. Therefore, for the sake of harmony within the cosmos, it was necessary that the attitudes and behavior of the human beings reflect the life in the upper world (Teteholi Ana'a).⁶¹

Obedience and worship of the good gods is also a way of asking for protection from the evil powers. The Ono Niha feared spirits called *bekhu*, such as: spirits of the jungle (*bekhu gatau*), spirits of the air (*bekhu dalu mbanua*), spirits of the sea (*zihi*), spirits of the river mouths (*simalapari*), spirits of the trees, who are the owners of all wild animals in the forest (*bela*), the spirit of a woman who died in childbirth, which then disturbs other women who are about to give birth (Matiana), a spirit of a person who is predator (*salöfö*), and all evil spirits living in caves, big trees and rivers.⁶² In order to avoid all of these evil spirits, the Ono Niha were eager to fulfill all of the *adat*, to attend all of the rituals performed by the *ere*, to observe the taboos (*famoni*), and to use various kinds of talismans and traditional medicines.⁶³ Based on this observation, Missionary R. Wagner later said that fear was a central factor of the primal religion of Nias.⁶⁴

2.4.2.1 Images (*Adu*)

When the missionaries arrived on Nias and the Batu Islands, they found *adu* in every house, and they witnessed rituals led by priests (*ere*) in which *adu* functioned as media of worship. According to the myths, when the human beings descended from Teteholi Ana'a, they brought with them places of worship (*osali*) and images (*adu*).

⁶¹ In the myth, it is explained that when the ancestors descended from Teteholi Ana'a, they were equipped with everything necessary for daily life, such as: a house (*omo*), a temple (*osali*), all kinds of tools for measuring and weighing, such as: (*afore* = a tool to measure a pig; *lauru* = a tool to weigh rice; *fali'era* = a tool to weigh gold), as well as plants, animals, images, jewelry, and – not to be forgotten – the *afo* or *sirih* (a chewing-packet consisting of areca, gambier and betel nut). Also the law (*böwö*, *amakhöita* or *huku*) and the religion in this world are supposed to reflect what applies in Teteholi Ana'a. Therefore, it is very important for human beings, through obedience and worship, to maintain a good relationship with the gods. Such a life blessed with health and prosperity (*lakhömi*).

⁶² Cf. B. La'ia, *Solidaritas Kekeluargaan dalam Salah Satu Masyarakat Desa di Nias-Indonesia*, 1983, p. 30, p. 25.

⁶³ Cf. H. Sundermann, *Die Insel Nias und die Mission Dasselbst*, 1905, p. 76. 'Das Feld des Aberglaubens ist bei den Niassern viel besser angebaut, als ihre Reisfelder. Da gibt es günstige und ungünstige Tage für den Hausbau, das Reispflanzen, die Hochzeiten usw. Es gibt allerlei Dinge die man bei gewissen Gelegenheiten nicht nennen und mit denen man nicht in Berührung kommen darf. Es gibt Talismane und Mittel sich unverwundbar zu machen usw. usw.' (The field of superstition is cultivated much better than are their rice fields. They have days on which one may build a house, plant rice, celebrate marriages, etc. There are all kinds of things which may not be mentioned upon certain occasions or which may not be touched on certain occasions. There are talismans and remedies for becoming invulnerable, means by which to become invulnerable, etc.).

⁶⁴ R. Wagner, *Die Mission auf Nias*, 1915, p. 31.

The ancestors who descended to Gomo built settlements and included *osali* and *adu*. Later, their descendants commemorated their forefathers by making *adu zatua* or *hia walangi adu*.⁶⁵

Aside from their function as a means to show respect for the ancestors and to keep harmony within the cosmos, the *adu* were also used as a means for healing, as well as for warding off all kinds of disaster. According to tradition, there was a time when human beings were disturbed by evil gods and spirits who caused illness. This illness was very dangerous because it could lead to death. To confront this problem, Sinoi, Hulu's wife, went to the upper world and asked Silewe Nazarata for help. Then Silewe Nazarata sent her children, thirty of them, to the earth in the form of all kinds of wood. From that wood, the people were to make *adu*, which then be entered by the spirits of Silewe Nazarata's children.⁶⁶ Through these *adus*, people could then be healed.

For the Ono Niha, an *adu* is a mediator, enabling them to interact with the gods, the spirits, and the ancestors. The Ono Niha did not pray to the *adu*, but through them to the gods and ancestral spirits. The *adu* were considered to be manifestations of the presence of gods and spirits. They were present to listen to the requests of their descendants.⁶⁷ That was the reason the Ono Niha loved their *adu*: they represented the parental spirits. It was therefore extremely difficult for them to abandon the *adu*, because an *adu* was considered to be a source of blessing, protection, and healing. Naturally, they did not want to abandon their parents now and in eternity.⁶⁸ Although the missionaries found many different *adu* in the houses of the Ono Niha, only six kinds played a significant role in their lives, these being the following:

Image of the Forefathers (Adu Zatua)

Adu zatua is the 'image of the forefathers'. For the Ono Niha, parents are the visible manifestation of the gods (*ama*, *Lowalangi ba gulidanö*). They are believed to be protectors in all situations and providers against all needs. A father has the right to bless or to curse. For this reason, the Ono Niha worshipped their parents as gods, obeying their every command. This paternal command is called *amakhoita zatua*. At the earliest four days after the father had died⁶⁹, wealthy people would carve his likeness in wood, calling it *adu zatua* or *adju ndra ama*.⁷⁰ They would then hold a feast, to which the *ere* was called.

⁶⁵ M.G.Th Thomsen, *Famareso Ngawalö Huku Föna*, 1976. pp. 24-26.

⁶⁶ Cf. J.M. Hämmerle, *Asal usul Masyarakat Nias*, 2001, p. 202. He notes that there was a possibility that the first *adu* was made from steel, but because it was lost, it was made again from wood by Silewe Nazarata and another version was made by Hia Walangi Adu.

⁶⁷ R. Wagner, *Die Mission auf Nias*, 1915, p. 32.

⁶⁸ W.H. Sundermann, *Der Kultus der Niasser*, 1891 (RMG. 1-025), p. 1. In his study, Sundermann mentions that the religious cult of the Ono Niha had the aims of : 1. recovery from illness, 2. prevention of sickness, 3. banning evil spirits, 4. banning curses.

⁶⁹ Poor people would often wait some years before they were financially able to make the *adu* and celebrate the corresponding feast, which would then be called *Fanao*.

⁷⁰ E.E.W.Gs. Schröder, *Nias*, 1917, pp. 587-591. The *adu zatua* was placed in the front room, on the right side to those entering the house. The surviving relatives of the deceased asked blessings of the *adu zatua*. This act was called *mangandrö löfö*.

The *ere* would then lead a ritual to invite the spirit of the dead.⁷¹ First, they would clean the grave and put a piece of cloth over it. On top of the cloth, they would then put some jewelry and rice, in order to invite the 'spider' (*mökömökö*), sometimes also called *alölöa dödö* (the core of hearth). When the *mökömökö* came out of the grave, they would insert it into a small pipe and take it to a forest which was believed to be the gathering place of the ancestral spirits. The *mökömökö* would then be freed and a pig be butchered, while the people recited poems or litanies (*hoho*). They would then catch the *mökömökö* again, and place it on the *adu zatua*. Here, they would bring offerings, dance, recite more *hoho* and recite the genealogy of the deceased.⁷²

The Ono Niha believed that, in the presence of the *adu zatua*, the spirits of their ancestors were always with them. Therefore each generation makes a new *adu zatua* and bound together with the old *adu zatua* by *tutura*-strings, they were placed in the upper part of the house. The *adu zatua* had power over the children and grandchildren. They could do harm if the younger generations did not obey the ancestral commands (*amakhoita zatua*), and, conversely, they would bless the younger generations if they abided by the traditions. Abandoning the *adu zatua* was equivalent to abandoning one's own parents. Overcoming this conviction was the greatest challenge faced by the Christian missionaries in their efforts to proclaim the Gospel.⁷³

Image of Disease (Adu Wökhö)

The *adu wökhö* was used in times of illness and disease. Ono Niha believed that all illness came from evil spirits which constantly attacked human beings, wanting to destroy their lives. For treatment, the *ere*, who had received a divine revelation, would first establish what kind of evil spirit had attacked the patient. After having identified the kind of evil spirit, the *ere* fabricated an *adu*, using a kind of wood specific to the illness. Then he struck the *fondrahi*-drum, while reciting mantra, calling on the good spirits to heal the patient. In addition, the *ere* also practiced sacrificial rites to redeem the *lumölumö* (the shadow), which had been eaten by the evil spirit.⁷⁴

There was no guarantee that the *ere* would always make a correct diagnosis. If the illness was not cured, the *ere* would suggest a different rite using a different kind of *adu wökhö*. This often quite a costly procedure for the family which had called the *ere*.⁷⁵ If everything in his/her power with no success, he or she would proclaim that this was the will of the gods (*no nifakhoi zokhö*).

⁷¹ H. Sundermann, 'Die Psychologie des Niassers', in: Gustav Warneck (ed.), *AMZ* 14, 1887, p. 289. A human being not only consisted of a body, a soul, and a spirit, but had six elements, namely: 1. *Boto* (the body); 2. *Noso* (the spiritual principle of life); 3. *Tödö* (the heart as the center of spiritual life); 4. *Eheha* (spirit); 5. *Mökömökö* (the spiritual part of the heart or a specific soul that is at the center of the body and the soul of human beings. The *mökömökö* is incarnated in a certain spider), 6. *Bekhu zimate* (the spirit of death). Cf. F. Harefa, *Hikayat dan Ceritera Bangsa serta 'Adat Nias'*, 1939, p. 100.

⁷² W.H. Sundermann, *Der Kultus der Niasser*. 1891, p. 2 (*RMG*. 1-025).

⁷³ *Ibid.* p. 3.

⁷⁴ E.E.W.Gs. Schröder, *Nias*, 1917, pp. 595-599.

⁷⁵ *BRM*, 1868.

Image of the Sinner (Adu Horö)

An *adu horö* was used to punish sinners, or to prevent sins and injustice. It was the largest *adu*. An *adu horö* was needed by someone who executed justice (e.g., a chief in his function as a judge).⁷⁶ Sometimes a judge fell ill, and the people suspected his illness to be the result of a mistake in his judgment. To remedy this situation, they had to make an *adu horö*, in the form of a crocodile.⁷⁷ If the judge had harmed both parties, the crocodile would have two heads.

Image of the House (Adu Siraha Nomo)

Adu siraha nomo means 'image of the house'. It was made for the house-blessing ceremony. Usually, it was placed on top of the altar on the central pillar of the house. Its function was to keep all evil spirits from the house and also to grant to the people who dwelt there.

Image of the Gates (Adu Lawölö)

The 'image of the gates' (*adu lawölö*) is usually placed in the main gate of a village to guard the village. It is intended to protect the residents from illness and from attacks by evil spirits (*bekhu*) who want to kill them.

Image of the Priest (Adu Bihara)

The *adu bihara* were belonging to and representing the priest or priestess (*ere*). To make an *adu ere*, fifty different kinds of wood were needed. From each kind of wood, two *adu bihara* were fabricated. These images were not very large, no larger than big fingers, and they usually hung in the garret, decorated with palm leaves.

There are still other *adu* which were used to prevent illness or disaster, such as the *adu fangola*, which protected from illness by forming a boundary around a house or village which evil spirits or *bekhu* could not pass. The *adu fanguru wökhö* was made to cure serious illnesses, such as cholera and chickenpox. This *adu* was also usually placed along the boundary of the village. The *adu famökhö niha* was made if there was no movement of an unborn child during a pregnancy, or if a woman was about to give birth to twins, or if the child was delivered with its feet first. The *adu soloyo* was used to prevent a fisherman's having bad luck. For hunting, there was the *adu samagö waulu*; for protecting the children, there was an *adu side'ide*. Three types of *adu* were reserved specifically for the chiefs (*salawa*; *si'ulu*), namely: the *adu lasara* for celebrating a feast of merit (*owasa*) or for displaying his newly-obtained golden jewelry; the *osa osa* was an *adu* in the form of a chair, used to elevate a chief during an *owasa*, while the *sarambia* was the *adu* put into a chief's coffin.⁷⁸

The making of *adu* (images) had been a command passed down through generations from the ancestors of the Ono Niha. Its purpose was to create harmony between the human beings and the gods. The Ono Niha made *adu* in order to commemorate and to honor the ancestors, in hopes of material blessings, of their help in disasters, and of healing in times of illness.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ W.H. Sundermann, *Der Kultus der Niasser*, 1891 (RMG. 1.025), pp. 3-4; Cf. E.E.W.Gs. Schröder, *Nias*, 1917, p. 597.

⁷⁷ For the crocodile cult of Balögia on the island of Batu Makele, cf. 4.7.2.1.

⁷⁸ E.E.W.Gs. Schröder, *Nias*, 1917, pp. 590-603.

⁷⁹ J.M. Hämmerle, *Hikaya Nadu*, 1995, p. 7. He states that an *adu* was really the pledge of an Ono Niha in the face of various sicknesses, suffering and death.

2.4.2.2 Priests (*Ere*)

The missionaries interpreted the term *ere* as meaning 'priest'⁸⁰, whereas it literally means 'expert or skillful person' (for example *ere huhuo* = an expert of oration; *ere hoho* = an expert in telling stories or genealogies or myths in a very poetic way; *ere maena* = an expert in leading a traditional dance called *maena*; *ere nadu* = a priest of the primal religion, or an expert who has skill in leading rites related to *adu*; *ere börö nadu* = the highest priest and lawmaker), who served in the region of Börö Nadu.⁸¹

Religious activities required no special house of worship. However, in many a village there was a small sacred place called *osali*, where the ancestral spirits dwelt and a multitude of *adu* were kept. Both men and women could learn the will of the ancestors or receive healing through the mediation of an *ere*. During a shaman rite, the *ere* would receive revelations from the realm of the spirits. A person could be healed of any illness if the *ere*, through sacrifices⁸², could succeed in influencing the deity or the evil spirit represented by the *adu*.⁸³

An *ere* did not necessarily have to belong to a certain caste or class. However, he or she was always regarded as a powerful and respected person. Sometimes, a noble person could become an *ere*. An *ere* was not given a regular wage. Instead, for each ritual he or she would receive a fee or a gift in the form of a pig or of gold.

How did a person become an *ere*? It began with a person's being possessed by a spirit. This person would then leave the *banua* and stay in the wilderness for some time. Out there, he or she would have visions, experiencing hunger and thirst.⁸⁴ After some time, the person would return to the *banua*, dressed in the skin of a snake, which could, however, be seen only by the *ere*.⁸⁵ If, however, the person did not come home, he or she was said to have been taken to a place called *Anunua*, located in Toyolawa (North Nias). In this case, a pig had to be slaughtered and sacrificed for the soul of that person.

The candidate *ere*, after having returned to the village, was required to sacrifice to the *adu zatua* and to take lessons from a more senior and experienced *ere*. He or she would be trained in certain skills, such as how to hit the *fondrahi*. He or she would be taken to the sacred places, such as graves and mountains. After having

⁸⁰ H. Sundermann, *Niassisch-Deutsches Wörterbuch*, 1905, p. 62. Cf. J.W. Thomas and E.A. Taylor Weber, *Niasch-Maleisch-Nederlandsch Woordenboek*, 1887, p. 54.

⁸¹ E.E.W.Gs. Schröder, *Nias*, 1917, p. 609.

⁸² E.E.W.Gs. Schröder, *Nias*, 1917, pp. 605-606. B. Laia, *Solidaritas Kekeluargaan dalam Salah Satu Masyarakat Desa di Nias-Indonesia*, 1983, pp. 25-26. There are many kinds of offerings, such as: 1. Pigs and chickens. Its feathers are offered to the *adu* before the animal is slaughtered. After the animal has been slaughtered, certain parts will be offered to the *adu*, whereas others will be eaten by the people. This offering is a sacrifice of redemption, and is also intended as an invitation and a gift to the spirits of the ancestors. 2. Eggs. These are not eaten but are, instead, broken on top of the head of the *adu*. 3. Rice, liquor of the sugar palm or coconut, and water. Only a little of these elements were smeared on the lips of the *adu*. Then the *ere* and the elders would eat the rest. 4. Human beings. This was the paramount offering. Sometimes only human hair would be sacrificed, or an ear would be cut off, but often the severed head of the unfortunate person would be used as a sacrifice. 5. A banana trunk could replace a human being.

⁸³ W.H. Sundermann, *Der Kultus der Niasser*, 1891 (RMG 1.025), pp. 2-4.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.* p. 3.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.* p. 4. There are four other places where an *ere* was taught and prepared for his/her task: 1. in the graves at night. Here they would meet with a spirit in the white form; 2. on the next day, they would meet with the god of rivers, Tuha Sangaröfa; 3. the next day, they would meet with the mountain spirit, who appeared in the form of an animal's spirit or of a man with long hair.

completed this phase successfully, he or she would visit various villages. Whenever leaving a village, he or she would take a young branch of a tree, split it and walk through it, thereby leaving behind the evil spirits of that village. If the candidate completed this tour without harm, he or she had passed the examination and was considered to be a qualified *ere*.⁸⁶

2.4.3 Community Life

Life on this earth is a reflection of Teteholi Ana'a. Therefore, for the pre-Christian Ono Niha, the community life could not be separated from the primal religion. Besides fulfilling the spiritual duties, as was explained above, everyone had to obey the laws as determined by the *adat* (*hada* or *böwö*).⁸⁷ The *adat* was transmitted from generation to generation, but when necessary, be revised or renewed. Two ceremonies for the renewal of the *adat* will be discussed in the following:

2.4.3.1 Traditional Ceremonies (*Fondrakö*)

The term *fondrakö* comes from the verb *rakö*, which designates a process of palaver among the elders, a ceremony of solemn vow-taking, and the implementation of a new law. Whenever social changes made a revision of the *adat* necessary, the elders would come together to talk about necessary expulsions from or additions to the existing *adat*. In the end, they would agree on a new law. In order to sanctify this law, a *fondrakö*-ceremony was held. Henceforth, the new law would be an integral part of the *adat* as the absolute norm for behavior and social control.⁸⁸

What were the topics discussed by the elders? Naturally, this could involve any aspect of communal life or religion. Usually, however, the palaver concentrated on five main issues: firstly, everything related to physical safety (*huku sifakhai ba mboto niha*); secondly, everything related to communal and individual ownership (*huku si fakhai ba gokhöta niha*); thirdly, everything related to personal dignity and honor (*huku sifakhai ba rorogofö sumange*); fourthly, everything related to the cycle of life (birth, adolescence, marriage and death) and, fifthly, everything related to work and leadership.

How was a new law ratified? The result of the palaver was read to the public by the paramount chief (*salawa* or *balö zi'ulu*), after which the *ere* would come to the front to lead a ceremony. For the incantation, he (a male; a priestess never practiced this rite) would stand on top of a stone table. After each blessing, the people would answer by saying: huuuuuu (which means: that is right, Amen).⁸⁹

The *ere* would then leave the table and stand beside the *adu siraha lato* near the campfire. Here he would utter curses at those who break the *fondrakö*. In a theatrical manner, he would underline the curses with symbolic actions, such as:

⁸⁶ W.H. Sundermann, *Der Kultus der Niasser*, 1891, p. 4.

⁸⁷ F. Harefa, *Hikayat dan Ceritera Bangsa serta 'Adat Nias'*, 1939, pp. 23-24.

⁸⁸ S.W. Mendröfa, *Fondrakö*, pp. 10-11.

⁸⁹ The wording of the blessings was as follows: *mi'o'ö wondrakö mi'erönu* (obey the *fondrakö* and meditate on it); *mi'o'ö wondrakö mi'ehao* (obey the *fondrakö* and keep it always); *ya mamahowu khömi Luo Walangi* (may Luo Walangi, the sun above, bless you); *ya mamahowu khömi Luo sambua* (may Luo Sambua, the fullness of the sun, bless you).

1. The *ere* would take the rib of a palm-leaf from a coconut tree (*likhe*), wrap it in *jelatang*-leaves and throw it into the fire, saying: Let every person who violates this *fondrakö* share the fate of this *likhe* and be devoured by flames.
2. The *ere* would take a palm blossom (*sigaru nohi*), slam it against the *adu siraha lato*, and, throwing it into the fire, would say: Let any person who denies or disobeys this *fondrakö* share the destiny of this palm blossom and be smashed and burned.
3. The *ere* would slam a living cock (*silatao*) against the *adu siraha lato*. Then he would pour hot liquefied tin into the beak of the chicken, break its legs and wings, and, finally, wring its neck, while saying: Let this be the fate of every person who breaks, neglects or distorts the *fondrakö*. The dead chicken would then be thrown into the fire.
4. The *ere* would take a male dog, bind its feet, slam it against the *adu siraha lato*, and while throwing it, still alive, into the fire, he would say: Let every trespasser against the *fondrakö* share the fate of this dog.
5. The *ere* would take a red-hot axe, touch the *adu siraha lato* with it and then hold it against the root of a coconut tree. The paramount chief and some of the noblemen, who were standing by, would take clubs and beat the axe into the tree. While it sank into the soft wood, the *ere* would shout: 'Let the fate of every person who disregards the *fondrakö* be like this tree without a root and without a top; be he dead, but not buried, and lost without a trace'.⁹⁰

When the *ere* had finished his incantations, all the people would come closer to the *adu siraha luo*. The *ere* would then plunge young coconut leaves into water in a bowl and sprinkle the people with it, repeatedly blessing them.

In everyday life, the *fondrakö* was implemented in the following way: If the *adat* was violated, there would be sanctions in the form of fines, such as pigs, or gold or Guilders (Dutch coins). The most severe sanction was the death penalty, applied only in cases of adultery, murder, and treason. But even in such cases, the Ono Niha had the institution of redemption (*hölitö*). A criminal could be redeemed by pigs, gold, or Guilders. However, due to the huge amount necessary, ordinary people could never pay it. The rich, however, could redeem a person, who would then become their slave (*sawuyu*).⁹¹

The ultimate goal of the *fondrakö* was to maintain social control and to restore harmony on this earth in accordance with the rules of the upper world (Teteholi Ana'a). A violation of the *adat* destroyed the human beings' relationship with the universe. It

⁹⁰ S.W. Mendröfa, 'Terangkum dalam Fondrakö', in: D.P. Lase (ed.), 'Menuju Gereja yang Mandiri', 2005, pp. 42-51. He notes that the curses during the *fondrakö*-ceremony sometimes sounded as follows: *Ha niha zanawö fondrakö, ya'afatö waha, aboto dalu* (may the legs of anyone who disobeys the *fondrakö*, be broken and his stomach cracked). *Ha niha zo nönö, ya'aboto Dödö, asila waha* (may the heart and legs of anyone who adds anything to this *fondrakö* be broken). *Ha niha zangalösi, ya asila hulu, ba aetu mbisi* (may the back of anyone who takes anything away from this *fondrakö*, be split in two, and his calves be broken). *Ha niha zondra'u fotaroma ba sangosilö'ögö, ya'aetu waha, aetu nga'ötö, lo mowa'a ba danö ba lö olehe ba mbanua, ya mate ia si lö lewatö, ya taya ia lö mu'ila zau* (whoever robs or belittles the position of a person, let him have no children; in earth he has no root, and in the sky he has no top; he will vanish without a trace, and died without a grave). The words of blessing are as follows: *Mi'o'öwondrakö mi'erönu* (obey *fondrakö* diligently); *Mi'o'öwondrakö mi'ehao* (obey *fondrakö* and apply it); *Ya mamahowu khömi Luo Walangi* (the god will bless you) *Ya mamahowu khömi Luo sambua* (the gods will bless you), etc.

⁹¹ F. Harefa, *Hikayat dan Ceritera Bangsa serta 'Adat Nias'*, 1939, pp. 55-71.

was always necessary to reconcile oneself, by means of punishment and redemption, with the realm of the spirits. As we have seen, the traditional law (*adat*) was not rigid. It was flexible enough to provide for changes by means of a *fondrakö*, based on the challenges to and needs of the community. Unfortunately, the Dutch colonial government did not integrate the institution of the *fondrakö* into their version of the *adat-law* (*adatrecht*). The *adat* was reduced to comply with colonial legislation. This attitude of the Dutch government was supported by the missionaries, who considered the *fondrakö* ceremonies to be a violation of the Christian faith.

2.4.3.2 Rites of Reconciliation (*Famatö Harimao* and *Famadaya Saembu*)

The feast of reconciliation, celebrated in Teluk Dalam, i.e., in Maenamölö, was called *famatö harimao*, which described a symbol for the family name of the Fau-clan and the Sarumaha-clan, or *famadaya saembu*, which described the symbol for the Dachi-clan and the Hondrö-clan. This feast was celebrated by a federation of several *banua*, called *öri*, once every seven years. Its purpose was to renew, and to reformulate the law, and then to validate the law as thus renewed.⁹²

The *famatö harimao* and *famadaya saembu* rites began with a meeting in the place of origin of a specific clan, namely Dakhi and Hondrö in the villages of Hilisimaetanö, Fau in Bawömataluo, and Sarumaha in the village of Siwalawa. The people of each village would dance the *maluaya* according to their clan's own specific tradition. At this point, all conflict and enmity would have ceased. It was the moment of peace and happiness. After seven days, coming from three different directions, the clans from Hilisimaetanö, Bawömataluo and Siwalawa would congregate in Ono Hondrö village. From here, carrying huge tiger statues (*harimao* and *saembu*), they made a procession to the Jumali-Gomo River (near the village of Ono Hondrö). Upon their arrival, the *ere* or *börö nadu* would throw the images down into the river, where they would be shattered. This was the symbolic ritual of redemption for individuals and the community. In other words, the pigs that would then be butchered were symbolic substitutes for the human beings who were, for the time being, thus rescued from death.⁹³

The next day, all the people would again gather in Hili Amaigila, which was considered to be the equivalent of Börö Nadu in Gomo, since it was the residence of the *ere*. Here, a meeting (*orahu*) was conducted, particularly by the *adat* chiefs, including the *ere*. During this meeting, they would inspect and if necessary adjust all the *afore* (a staff or rod for measuring pigs), the *lauru* (a tool to weigh rice), the *saga* (weights for weighing pork), the *ondrekhata* (tools for weighing gold), and fix/set the prices for all daily needs (e.g., rice, pigs, gold, etc.), as well as discussing and agreeing upon things related to community concerns and customs. Just as in the case of the *fondrakö*, the *adat* could be renewed or adapted to a changed situation.

The renewed law was strictly binding for all the people and was carried out scrupulously. Those who violated it faced heavy sanctions. For example, the death penalty – by beheading, hanging, drowning, spearing, or burying alive – was imposed for arson, adultery and for the murder of a nobleman or a noblewoman.⁹⁴

⁹² B. La'ia, 'Sendi-sendi Masyarakat Nias', in: *Peninjau* 1/1975, p. 14.

⁹³ Cf. D. Becker, '„Sie Werfen Satans Bande und Ihre Götzen fort?“, in: R. Riess (ed.), *Abschied von der Schuld?*, 1996, p. 193.

⁹⁴ J.M. Hämmerle, *Famatö Harimao*, p. 73.

The guilty person could be redeemed from this capital punishment in two ways: either by paying a huge amount of gold, or by becoming the slave of a very rich man, who then redeemed him. However, this was not possible in cases of adultery involving a commoner and a girl or woman of noble birth. The special punishment for this was that the man was to be executed, and each adult male member of his family was to pay three grams of gold, as a symbol of their having separated themselves from the trespasser. If both parties who committed adultery were commoners, they could either be married to each other, or the man could be fined twenty-four grams of gold and three pigs. If he could not pay this fine, he would be either executed or enslaved.⁹⁵

After the *orahu*, the *bawi mbawa duo*, a sacred pig which was left free to roam outside for seven years, and which was allowed to enter any place and eat whatever it wanted, was slaughtered. The meat of the pig was believed to bring blessings, for which reason it was also called *bawi famanoi niha* (the pig which brings wealth). This pork was distributed to all of the people, even if each person received only a small part – a kind of sacramental meal. Afterwards, every village would offer one pig of the size of four *alisi*; about fifty kilograms to the *ere*, asking him to pray for a divine blessing (*fanandrö howuhowu*). Before the ceremony ended, one piglet had to be released as a replacement for the pig which had been butchered, thus providing for the next feast, seven years ahead.⁹⁶

Famatö harimao and *famadaya saembu* were rites of reconciliation and of the renewal of the law, and, were necessary for the restoration of the harmony of the cosmos for the sake of the welfare of the human beings. Unfortunately, in 1914, the Dutch colonial administration, in cooperation with the missionaries, strictly prohibited these rites. The reason given was to prevent possible revolts during the mass meetings and to pave the way for the proclamation of the Gospel.

2.5 RITES OF PASSAGE IN THE CYCLE OF LIFE

So far, we have seen that the primal religion was an integral part of the *adat*. Adherence to the *adat* ensured a blessed life. What was regarded as the ultimate blessing? The answer is *lakhömi*, which encompasses wealth, many children and honour. To achieve *lakhömi*, Ono Niha should, on the one hand, maintain good relationships with the gods and the ancestors, while on the other hand also maintaining good relationships within the community. It was therefore necessary, throughout a person's life cycle, from birth until death, to adhere meticulously to specific religious rites and customs. Here we shall focus on the four major types of rites of passage: those relating to birth, to adolescence, to marriage and to death.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 73-74.

⁹⁶ Cf. B. La'ia, 'Sendi-sendi Masyarakat Nias', in: *Peninjau*, 1/1975, p. 15.

2.5.1 Birth and Name-giving

2.5.1.1 Pregnancy and Birth

For Ono Niha, the birth of a child, especially a son, is a great blessing, and is the first step towards attaining *lakhömi*. A child is a gift of Lowalangi, a new creation like 'a fresh breeze'.⁹⁷

The birth of a son elevates his father's position within the stratification of the community (*bosi*). A son will continue the family line and inherit the position of his father (*ono wangali mbörö sisi, ono wamatohu nga'ötö*), whereas girls will merely serve as labourers and expand the family's relationships at betrothal and marriage (*ono famakhai sitenga bö'ö*).

During the marriage ceremony, after the bride has arrived at the house of the bridegroom, a little boy will be put on her lap, symbolizing the hope that someday she herself will bear a child – preferably a boy. In South Nias, when the *ere* blessed the new couple, in his blessing, he (in this case always a male priest) would promise them nine sons and nine daughters. The fulfillment of this blessing would then also increase the honour of the paramount chief (*balö zi'ulu*), as well as that of the villagers.⁹⁸

If the couple has been married for a long time, but there is still no sign of a pregnancy, the Ono Niha will seek the cause or 'barrier' (*tahi*) responsible for this situation. *Guru* Faogöli once wrote down three customs of the Ono Niha in the case that a married woman does not get pregnant:

Firstly, the family would study the behaviour of the husband and the wife, and of all of the other relatives, and make inquiry as to whether all of the ancestral commandments (*amakhoita zatua*) – the *adat* applying to a specific family – had been carried out. If they came to the conclusion that something was disturbing the harmony with the ancestors, the relationship had to be restored by means of a ceremony. The *adu zatua* had to be appeased with offerings of praise and sacrifice. The oldest man in the family would call on the ancestors, saying: 'O, *adu* my ancestor, *adu* my father, may you give a child – a boy and a girl – to this N (name of the woman)'.

Secondly, they would look for a mistake in the conduct of the mediator (*si'o*) who had been responsible for the marriage ceremonies. An inappropriate word, sign or action of the *si'o* could have caused the barrier (*tahi*). They would ask him or her to 'comb the hair of the bridegroom' as a sign of his or her satisfaction that he or she had received his/her appropriate wage after the completion of the marriage ceremonies. Upon this occasion, the *si'o* had to be treated to a meal of pork. In return, he or she would pronounce a blessing over the couple while sprinkling them with some water from a plate containing some golden objects or silver guilders (called *tefe idanö*).⁹⁹

⁹⁷ *Ono tanömö sibohou, hulö nangi sohauhau*. Cf. B. La'ia, *Solidaritas Kekeluargaan dalam Salah Satu Masyarakat Desa di Nias-Indonesia*, 1983, p. 36.

⁹⁸ J.W. Thomas, *Drei Jahre in Süd-nias*, 1892, pp. 12-13.

⁹⁹ *Ya'okafukafu, ya'odöwädöwä, yatumbu khömi nono matua, ya tumbu khömi zibolowua, ya tobali ami tanömö, ya tobali ami töwua, ya hulö ndrofi ba mbanua, ya hulö nene ba nasi* (may you become fresh, like this water; may you become happy, like sparkling water; may boys and girls be born from your womb like the stars in the sky and the sand on the beach, so that you become the seed).

Thirdly, especially in the coastal regions, the couple would then seek help from a Malay soothsayer.¹⁰⁰ In other places, the family of the husband would urge him to consider taking a second wife, although this would depend on their ability to provide a dowry.

If, after this, the wife then did get pregnant, the couple would go to her family for the *fangaruwusi ba nadu* (a ceremony held in front of the *adu*, asking the ancestors to strengthen the foetus). During this rite, while smearing pig's blood on the *adu*, the father of the bride would say: 'Oh, *adu* of our ancestors, oh, *adu* of my father, make the womb sturdy, keep heat away from the womb, keep heat away from the stomach'.

Since the child inside the womb is considered holy, during pregnancy both father and mother should abide by the *famoni ba dabina* (taboos of pregnancy).¹⁰¹ These are practiced throughout Nias. There were, and still are, many kinds of taboos during pregnancy, such as not being allowed to hunt or slaughter pigs, to kill a chicken, to catch fish, to make a hole in a coconut, to plant bananas, to take vows, to visit a grave, to kill a snake, or to say certain specific words. What was the purpose of abiding by these taboos? To assure that the child will remain safe inside the womb, that there will be neither a miscarriage nor a premature birth, and that the child would/will have neither a handicap nor any of the characteristics of the objects or animals considered to be taboo.¹⁰²

If the calculated time of childbirth had come, but there was a delay, in several places in North Nias the members of the family of the woman, and sometimes the *ere*, would fasten speed up the process by opening all of the things that had been touched by the wife before the scheduled time of childbirth, (e.g., the string that was tied would be untied, the cupboard which was closed would be opened). The *ere* would make an *adu* in order to protect the baby at birth from evil spirits, especially from the spirit called Matiana (North Nias) or Maciana (South Nias).¹⁰³

After the birth, the *ere* would cut the umbilical cord and the placenta with a knife made of bamboo.¹⁰⁴ The placenta is called *ga'a* (in South Nias *ka'a*), which means 'oldest sibling'. The placenta was wrapped up and either hung in a tree or thrown into a river. A later development, still in practice now, is to bury it in the ground.

In pre-Christian times, an *adu* was made immediately after a child's birth and an egg was rolled over the body of the child, while saying: 'If there has been a mistake by the parents, if the parents have violated the *amakhoita*, then let this egg bear that mistake. Let the child be far away from any kind of skin disease, and let the skin of

¹⁰⁰ *Toeria*, 3/9 (1916), pp. 2-3.

¹⁰¹ B. La'ia, *Solidaritas Kekeluargaan dalam Salah Satu Masyarakat Desa di Nias-Indonesia*, 1983, p. 36. He says that the husband's readiness to abide by the taboo means that the father participated in the process of pregnancy.

¹⁰² P. Suzuki, *The Religious System and Culture of Nias, Indonesia*, 1959, p. 78. Cf. *Toeria*, 3/1 (1916), p. 3. Cf. B. La'ia, *Solidaritas Kekeluargaan dalam Salah Satu Masyarakat Desa di Nias-Indonesia*, 1983, pp. 36-37.

¹⁰³ The number of *adu* made in each place differs throughout Nias. In South Nias, there were 3 *adu*, two male *adu*, and one female *adu*. In Central Nias and the North, there were only two *adu* (male and female). The goal is same: that the wife will have no difficulties in giving birth. The *adu* is the helper, the giver of strength and blessing.

¹⁰⁴ In some places in Nias, there is tradition that someone will stomp his foot next to where the baby has been laid down to make a loud noise, so that the baby will not easily be shocked.

the child be like the skin of this egg'. Then this egg would be bound to the neck of the *adu* (*aya nadu*).

In order to protect the child from being stolen by an evil spirit, a bit of *afu*-lime (betel nut quid, consisting of five elements) was smeared onto the bed where the child had been born (*mbewewö*). If the parents leave the child alone, they would first place a basket beside the child, so that no evil spirit could step over the child. If the child was suffering from a disease, such as chicken pox, an abscess or scabies, they would find herbal medicine or callan *ere* to heal the child.

In the special case that a male child has no visible testicles (*si lö otara*)¹⁰⁵, Ono Niha will be quite fearful, because this is considered to be a sign of a curse. Therefore, two *famoni* will be implemented: 1. for four days, no one will speak to the mother who just delivered the baby. If she be given food, the server should say: 'This is your food, oh piece of wood' (not mentioning her name); 2. after four days, a *tugala* will be cut in two and placed in the door. Then all the members of the household will pass through it when entering or leaving the house. Then the curse will be banished.

If there were twins, the Ono Niha would be even more afraid, since this was considered to be a powerful curse. In some *banua*, this could be redeemed by a sacrificial ritual¹⁰⁶, while in most other villages one – or even both – of the twins were killed by letting them starve while being hung in a sack in a tree.

In South Nias, two days after the child was born, the *ere* and some of the relatives of the mother were invited for a meal as a symbol of gratitude for the help received. This was called *ma me ö zolohe*¹⁰⁷ (giving a banquet for the helpers). In North Nias, this was combined with the name-giving ceremony.

2.5.1.2 Name-giving Ceremony

Before the name-giving ceremony (*famatörö töi*¹⁰⁸ or *guwulo döi*¹⁰⁹) has been held, a nickname is usually used. If the child is a boy, he will be called *ka uco*, *ka buyu* or *ka zoyo*; if it is a girl, *ka lae*, *ka bute*, or *galawe* are popular pseudonyms.

There are various kinds of ceremonies for the name-giving. In North, Central, East and West Nias, the name was given by a chief (*salawa*).¹¹⁰ In South Nias, the name-giver was the chief (*balö zi'ulu*) or a leading priest (e.g., *ere börö nadu*).

The giving of the name was related to the primal religion of the Ono Niha, and thus also to the worship of the *adu*. The *adu zatua* was asked to bless the child (*fangaruwu ba nadu zatua*¹¹¹). A pig would be offered to the *adu zatua* to assure that the child be introduced to its ancestors by its real name. A few days later, the parents

¹⁰⁵ *Toeria*, 3/2 (1916), pp. 6-7.

¹⁰⁶ Five such rituals are known among the Ono Niha: 1. For one month the mother would not be allowed to talk to anyone and could receive no guests; 2. After seven days, the family would make an *adu fanasala* to atone for the trespasses of the couple; 3. The couple would ask an *ere* to make a large image and would then invite many people for a worship ceremony; 4. The parents would take an oath that these twins would later marry twins; 5. The *ere* would remind the parents that if one of the twins died, a coconut palm should immediately be planted as a replacement for the dead twin.

¹⁰⁷ B. La'ia, *Solidaritas Kekeluargaan dalam Salah Satu Masyarakat Desa di Nias-Indonesia*, 1983, p. 37.

¹⁰⁸ The term *famatörö töi* is used in North, Central, East and West Nias.

¹⁰⁹ The term *guwulo döi* is used in South Nias.

¹¹⁰ P. Suzuki, *The Religious System and Culture of Nias, Indonesia*, 1959, p. 80.

¹¹¹ Another name for this blessing-visit is *fangai bowoa*.

of the child would visit the wife's parents and take them a gift consisting of rice and pork. During this visit, they would tell the grandparents the name of their grandchild and also pay the remaining dowry, called *ömö ndraono* (the debt of the child). The parents of the young mother would then slaughter another pig and the *ere* would smear its blood onto the *adu zatusa* while saying the name of the child.

There was also a tradition of moistening the lips of the *adu* with the bleeding heart of the pig and cleaning the *adu's* mouth with its bristles, thereby ensuring protection and a long life for the child. Then, after the parents and the grandparents had had a meal together, the grandparents would present gifts to the baby.

Finally, the parents would prepare some water in a plate containing gold or silver Guilders for the grandparents, asking them for a blessing for the child. This was called *fane fe idanö* (sprinkling water). Then, when the parents returned to their home, the grandparents would give them a parcel containing rice and pork, as well as a cooking pot for the child, containing rice and an egg and covered with a banana leaf. When the young family had arrived back home, the baby would be guided to tear the banana leaves. This was to make the child speak sooner. The contents of the pot would then be cooked as food for the baby.¹¹²

In South Nias, the rite of name-giving took place four days after the child's birth. If the baby belonged to a noble family, it would be shown around the village while three pigs were being butchered and distributed among all the villagers. An *adu* would be made and water would be sprinkled on the head of the child. The father of the child would give his in-laws gold, placing it in a plate containing water. Later, this water would be used to sprinkle the head of the child. The name-giving was done by the *ere*, the parents, or the brother in-law (the brother of the mother). The name-giver would bless the child by sprinkling water on its head.¹¹³

The choice of the name of the child is based on the status of the parents when the child was born. If, for instance, the father is classified as someone who is able to hold many feasts of merit, the name of the child might be *Sökhimböwö* (one who has a good sense of *adat*) or *Dahamböwö* (a rich person with a generous heart) or *Sebua Ana'a* (a man of great wealth) or *Sofutö zihönö* (the hope of many people). But if the parents are poor, the name given can be *Silötöi* (no name) or *Limi* (one grain of rice). It is also possible to give the child the name of an event which occurred at the time of its birth, resulting in names such as *Malesiaty* (during the Malaysia crisis in the early 1960s), *Borobudur* (after a visit to the Buddhist temple in Central Java), etc. Other possibilities for the name given can also be one reflecting a hope, a dream, or a principle, such as *Angenanö* (be careful), *Khamötö Dödö* (a heart's dream), or *Fatizatulö* (believe in what is right).

After the name has been given, the parents will be called by the name of the firstborn child. For example: the name of the author's child is *Chantika*, so that he should be called *Ama Chantika* (father of *Chantika*). Correspondingly, the mother of the child is called *Ina Chantika* (mother of *Chantika*). The name-giving rite gives the parents a new status. If a man has no children or lack of children, this is considered to be an imperfection and will result in a lack of respect for him (*ambö molakhömi*). This was one reason for polygamy.

¹¹² F. Gulö, in an interview by the author on 21 January 1999, in Gunungsitoli.

¹¹³ B. La'iyä, *Solidaritas Kekeluargaan dalam Salah Satu Masyarakat Desa di Nias-Indonesia*, 1983, p. 38.

With the exception of worshipping the *adu*, all of these *adat*-ceremonies, beginning with pregnancy, or even before that, up to and including the name-giving ceremony, are still practiced. The element of worshipping the *adu* has been replaced by Christian rites, such as prayer-services and baptism.¹¹⁴

2.5.2 Adolescence

Young people are eager to gain respect and dignity (*lakhömi* or *sumange*) by observing all of the *adat* regulations relating to adolescence. Failure to do so is considered to be a disgrace to oneself and one's parents, as well as being a disruption of the harmony of the cosmos. There is a saying: 'It is better to die than to bear shame'.

There are two essential rites of passage connected with increasing one's status (*bosi*) in the community: *fangöhözi* or *famofo* (smoothing down of the teeth), applies to both young men and young women, and *famoto* (incision of the foreskin) applies specifically to young men.

2.5.2.1 Filing of the Teeth (*Fangöhözi*)

Fangöhözi or *famofo* was a tradition practiced, albeit with variations, throughout the island of Nias and the Batu Islands. In Gomo, for example, *fangöhözi* was practiced only by the nobility (*balugu*) and the leaders (*salawa*). The outstanding front teeth were filed level, but not, as in most other *banua*, down to the gums. The purpose of this practice was beautification, as well as being a sign of distinction for the nobility, setting them apart from the common people and the slaves.¹¹⁵ In some other areas, all young people would practice *fangöhözi* or *famofo* when entering adolescence, as a means of increasing one's social status.

The person performing *fangöhözi* or *famofo* was a male *ere*. He made an *adu* and sacrificed a chicken, in order to prevent a swelling of the gums. The *ere* would file the teeth¹¹⁶ with a kind of file called *farökha*, usually up to the gums (*famofo*). After *famofo*, the teeth were blackened with soot (*jelaga*). Afterwards, the ceremony was finished with a banquet of pork.

In addition to increasing a person's social status, *fangöhözi* or *famofo* was also a sign of entering maturity. The deeper meaning was to be 'born again'.¹¹⁷ The pain felt during the *fangöhözi* symbolized the pangs of death. However, after the person's teeth had been filed and blackened, a new stage of life – including marriage – was open to the young person. The pre-Christian Ono Niha were of the opinion that this deserved a feast of merit. The missionaries, however, were of the opinion that *fangöhözi* or *famofo* was a very bad habit. Therefore, during the conference of elders in 1917-1918, it was agreed to prohibit the practice of *fangöhözi* or *famofo* completely.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴ Cf. Ch. 6.4.1.3.

¹¹⁵ Ama Wa'ö Telaumbanua, in an interview with the author on 9 January 2004, in Gomo, as well as Ama Osara'ö Bu'ulölö, in an interview with the author on 13 January 2004, in Gomo. They were in agreement that *fangöhözi* or *famofo* was performed only on the children of the nobility or of the leaders, as a sign of distinction from the common children.

¹¹⁶ Cf. P. Suzuki, *The Religious System and Culture of Nias, Indonesia*, 1959, p. 83.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ J. M. Hämmerle, *Asal Usul Masyarakat Nias*, 2001, p. 196.

2.5.2.2 Incision of the Foreskin (*Famoto*)

The term used to refer to the incision of the foreskin of the penis is *laboto* or *lakhai*, which means to break, to split or to cut. Technically, the outer skin of the male sexual organ is cut once in length. The origin of *famoto* was not related to Muslim influence, as held by Ama Waomasi¹¹⁹, but was an integral part of the primal religion of the Ono Niha.¹²⁰ Hämmerle¹²¹ holds that there was no *famoto* in South Nias, but this is denied by Fatosola Gulö¹²², who states that *famoto* was merely abandoned at a later stage in South Nias because of the frequent wars in that area. A warrior would be unable to defend his village for some time after having undergone *famoto*.

Boys aged eight to fourteen years undergo this small operation, which, in pre-Christian times, was performed by an *ere* in the early morning at full moon. Before the ceremony began, the boy would go to the river to cleanse himself. An *adu* was made to guarantee protection during and after the ceremony. After making the incision, the *ere* applied some of his medicine, usually consisting of a charcoal mix with oil or areca. For four days, the patient would wear only a blanket and not be allowed to eat fish, salt or chili. On the Batu Islands, he was also not allowed to drink coffee.¹²³

The incision of the foreskin marked the beginning of the initiation phase for entering adulthood. Not a public ceremony, it took place in a family setting. Nevertheless, even now, it is considered to be quite shameful for a mature man not to have undergone *famoto*. He would not speak in public for fear of being insulted as *famago mbawa*, which literally means 'to close the mouth'. In pre-Christian times, even if someone had undergone *famoto*, but had not make an *adu* and provided a banquet of pork for the members of his extended family, he could be insulted as *niboto ba lou* (incision hidden in a box).¹²⁴ For this reason, even if Ono Niha, neglect some of the rites and rituals due to poverty, they will always practice *famoto*.

Famoto increases a male's social status within the community. A child who has undergone it will be regarded as a mature person and allowed to get married. In addition, *famoto* also has a religious dimension.¹²⁵ By having an *adu* made and practicing the ceremony around the full moon, as well as abiding by the taboo-regulations and providing a meal of pork, the male involved signifies that he has been rescued from death in the underworld to be born again in the upper world.¹²⁶

Famoto, too, was disapproved of by the missionaries. The German missionaries would have felt that way because of the Jewish implications of the practice, as well

¹¹⁹ Cf. S. Zebua, 'Menyelusuri Sejarah Kebudayaan Ono Niha', 1984, p. 12.

¹²⁰ Cf. E.E.W.Gs. Schröder, *Nias*, 1917, p. 56.

¹²¹ J. M. Hämmerle, *Asal Usul Masyarakat Nias*, 2001, p. 196. Hämmerle said that, in general, the Ono Niha in South Nias were not familiar with 'circumcision' (i.e., incision of the male genitals), whereas in North Nias, 'circumcision' was a step toward improving one's status (*bosi*), and it was considered shameful if a male had not undergone *famoto*. According to Hämmerle, this difference was due to the difference in the origins of the ancestors who settled in North and South Nias respectively. In South Nias, there is Chinese influence.

¹²² F. Gulö, in an interview by the author on 21 January 1999, in Gunungsitoli. This is also in accordance with P. Suzuki, *The Religious System and Culture of Nias, Indonesia*, 1959, p. 85.

¹²³ P. Suzuki, *The Religious System and Culture of Nias, Indonesia*, 1959, pp. 83-87.

¹²⁴ F. Harefa, *Hikayat dan Ceritera Bangsa serta 'Adat Nias'*, 1939, p. 41.

¹²⁵ According to J.T. Nieuwenhuizen and H.C.B. von Rosenberg, *Het eiland Nias*, 1863, p. 27.

¹²⁶ P. Suzuki, *The Religious System and Culture of Nias, Indonesia*, 1959, p. 88.

as because of the local heathen implications. In the conference of elders in 1919, it was agreed that *famoto* should be abandoned. However, this prohibition was not accepted by the Ono Niha, and therefore the practice is still followed, although without any 'heathen' rites or ceremonies.

Nowadays, a change in the significance of *famoto* has taken place. *Famoto* is now practiced only for the sake of tradition and to preserve one's dignity. As a sign of maturity, its significance has been assumed by confirmation in the church. This change of significance occurred completely without coercion.

2.5.3 Marriage

Marriage is most important of all the traditional feasts of the Ono Niha. The great importance the Ono Niha place on marriage and establishing a family is due to the various connotations involved: continuing heredity, improving the social status of the bride and the bridegroom, and improving the status of the family of the bridegroom through what is called the 'guessing of the heart' (*fanahö-tödö*) feast in North Nias.¹²⁷ Furthermore, through marriage, relationships are forged between clans and villages, and peace is made.¹²⁸

Through marriage, a man and a woman find wholeness. The man is related to those who are from below (*soroi tou*), or downstream, while the woman is related to the upper course (*ngöfi*) of the river or the resident of the place (*sitohöna*). The woman is also related to the upper world, the source of life, the origin (*ulu* or *uwu*) or the root (*baya*), and therefore the purity of a woman is highly valued. Men are related to the lower world and to death.

In order to find the seed of humankind (*tanömö niha*), the man must struggle against the current (*manösö*), from downstream towards the upper course. To acquire a wife means to acquire the source of life. This struggle is symbolized by the crocodile or the small house lizard. The marriage process, pictured in terms of this struggle upstream, follows the *adat*-regulations and entails paying an expensive dowry to the party of the bride-giver (*böwö*).¹²⁹ Marriage is thus not merely a private matter between two persons; it involves their extended families and even the entire population of their villages.

The terms for marriage are not the same in every place throughout Nias, but there is a general understanding that marriage has a religious dimension. This can be seen in the rites and ceremonies. To provide a clearer picture of this situation, as an

¹²⁷ Cf. Rosthina R. Sirait-Laoli et al. (eds.), Depdikbud, *Adat dan Upacara Perkawinan Daerah Nias*, 1985, p. 32.

¹²⁸ Cf. B. La'ia, *Solidaritas Kekeluargaan dalam Salah Satu Masyarakat Desa di Nias-Indonesia*, 1983; cf. P. Suzuki, *The Religious System and Culture of Nias, Indonesia*, 1959, p. 87.

¹²⁹ P. Suzuki, *The Religious System and Culture of Nias, Indonesia*, 1959, p. 95. The sources do not give any names or special terms, if they exist at all, for the groups participating in the ritual battle. What we do know is this; there is a fixed connubial relationship between groups. The term used for this relationship is *Fahalö*=fixed marriages (carried out) mutually between certain clans. The transitive of this term means, "to take equally from everything, to balance, to bind to each other, to unite, to gather" and the intransitive of this term means, to make even, balance, stressing again the reciprocal notion behind marriage. Another interesting feature is the usage of the following terms: *Sitohöna* = those present and *Soroi Tou* = those who are from below. The former term is applied to the bride's family and the latter, to the groom's family. The meaning of these terms is brought to light in several South Nias texts relating about how the groom's father climbs up a flight of stairs or a step-ladder in order to enter the house of the future bride's family to propose a marriage between his son and the host's daughter.

example, the steps leading to and involved in a typical wedding in North Nias will be explained exemplarily, comparing them whenever necessary with those in other regions.

2.5.3.1 Looking for a Bride

When the family has agreed that the son is ready to get married, it will look for a proper bride, involving other relatives as well.¹³⁰ In general, the marriage system is exogamic in the sense that it is not permissible to marry with a person who has the same clan name (*mado*), unless there are at least nine generations between the two people. In South Nias, however, the daughter of the uncle (the brother of the mother) will be approached first as being the most suitable bride.¹³¹ However, if the uncle does not have a daughter or there is no agreement between the two parties, a bride must be found in another village which has no relationship to the groom's family. It is strongly forbidden for a man to marry a daughter of his father's brother or sister, or of his mother's sister.

If a possible bride has been selected and the girl has not yet been asked by another family, a relative of the man, specifically some women of his family, will make a bride-viewing visit (*famaigi niha*) to her house. In North, Central and West Nias, certain taboos must be observed for such a visit:¹³²

1. If someone sneezes at departure, the trip will be postponed. Sneezing indicates that there would be obstacles or disasters if the marriage were to go through.
2. While on their way, the members of the party will pay attention to the names of the people whom they meet. If the meaning of the name of such a person is not very good, for example: laziness (*Sareu*), this is taken as a sign that the desired woman is a lazybones. On the other hand, if they meet a priest (*ere*) or someone who has a good name, such as kind heart (*Sökhidödö*), this is a good sign. They also pay attention to the animals they see along their way. If they come across a snake, a dog or a cat, this is a sign of an impending disaster, and they will not continue their journey.
3. Upon their arrival at the house of the possible bride, attention is paid to what the girl happens to be doing. If she is fetching water, cleaning the house, or dressing up, this is a good sign. But if they find that the girl is carrying firewood or plates, or working in the kitchen, it is considered to be a bad sign, because it will bring disaster and it shows that the girl is greedy.
4. Finally, they must also pay attention to the dreams they have while sleeping in the home of the girl. If one of them, particularly the bridegroom, dreams about rain or a source of water, this means that the girl is a source of freshness. But if the dream is about a flood, this is a sign of disaster. If they dream about a snake, it means danger, but if they dream about a fish, it means refreshment. If they dream of fire, this forebodes illness. It would be better

¹³⁰ Cf. H. Lagemann, *Das niassische Mädchen von seiner Geburt bis zu seiner Verheiratung*, 1893.

¹³¹ B. Laia, *Solidaritas Kekeluargaan dalam Salah Satu Masyarakat Desa di Nias-Indonesia*, 1983, pp. 41-42. He uses the term 'system perkawinan saudara sepupu bersilang yang matrilateral'.

¹³² *Guru Andrea*, 'Falöwa föna', in: A. Pieper (ed.), *Realienboek*, 1928, pp. 117-118.

for them to dream about coconut seeds or other seeds; because that means that the girl will be a seed in the family.

If the results of the *famaigi niha* visit were satisfactory, as the next step, the family of the bride-seeker will hold a 'looking-at-a-chickens-heart' (*famaigi tödö manu*) ceremony. If the heart of the chicken is soft and its nerve passes through the heart, this is a good sign and the wife-seeking process can be continued. If, however, the heart of the chicken is a little bit black and its nerves are not in order, this is a bad sign. In the latter case, a different bride must be sought.¹³³

2.5.3.2 Choosing a Mediator or Go-between (*Si'o*)

When the first stage has been well satisfactorily completed, the man's family will then choose someone among their family members, or anyone else who is articulate enough to be their mediator, to discuss with the bride's family any important matters relating to the wedding plans. This mediator is called *si'o*.

In North Nias, a *si'o* is chosen among men¹³⁴, whereas in South Nias, a *si'o* is chosen among mature women.¹³⁵ The *si'o* is responsible for conveying the intention of the man's family to the representative of the woman's family, who is called *Samatörö* (a person who answered)¹³⁶, who will pass the message on to all of the members of the family. The *si'o* is strictly forbidden to speak directly with the bride's parents. Therefore, the *si'o* and the *samatörö* are constantly in communication with each other till the wedding is performed. They never act independently, however, but always under the guidance and supervision of the family members as a whole.

2.5.3.3 Engagement

After having fully understood the intention of the *si'o*, the woman's family should then ask the woman whether she accepts the proposal or not. If the woman accepts, the stage which then follows is called 'the giving of the gold bracelet' (*fame'e köla*) and indicates the new relationship now existing between the two parties. In North Nias, this is called 'giving of the ring' (*fame'e laeduru*), while in South Nias it is known as fiancé ring (*ana'a wamatuasa*), or agreement (*fasa manömanö*).¹³⁷

Following *fame'e köla*, the relationship moves to a higher level, this new stage being called: 'roasting chicken' (*fanunu manu*) or 'eating the pork which has been cut up' (*femanga bawi nisilahulu*). In Gomo, however, the first location settled by the Niasan ancestors, the term used is 'eathing the chicken' (*fe'a manu*). This occasion is marked by exchanging betel nuts, signifying the mutual respect of the two families, and by serving pork to the whole community, called *Bawi Nisila Hulu*. At this stage, the two families announce to the whole community that they are now engaged to each other.¹³⁸ That is the reason that the *salawa* or *si'ulu* and all of the villagers are involved in this event.

¹³³ J.M. Hämmerle, *Hikaya Nadi*, 1995, p. 464.

¹³⁴ F. Harefa, *Hikayat dan Ceritera Bangsa serta 'Adat Nias'*, 1939, pp. 29-30.

¹³⁵ B. Laia, *Solidaritas Kekeluargaan*, 1983, p. 42.

¹³⁶ F. Harefa, *Hikayat dan Ceritera Bangsa serta 'Adat Nias'*, 1939, p. 29.

¹³⁷ P. Suzuki, *The Religious System and Culture of Nias, Indonesia*, 1959, p. 91.

¹³⁸ A. Beatty, *Society and Exchange in Nias*, 1992, p. 121.

Before the arrival of Christianity, in North, West and Central Nias, this rite was performed by going to the *adu*, a procession called *famaböbö ba gatia adu* (a bound on the *adu*) and led by the *ere*. It was begun by tying coconut leaves, which had had their ribs removed, to the *adu zatua*, symbolizing the unification of the man and the woman under the rule of the *adu zatua*.¹³⁹ Another practice was to place pig's hair on the *adu zatua* after the *ere* had declared that the man and the woman would soon be married and had then blessed them.¹⁴⁰

The leader of the community (*salawa hada*) would take this opportunity to give advice to the bridegroom- and bride-to-be. He would also proclaim the wedding day, called *bongi nono zalawa* (the dated of chief), which included the warning that if the man were to change his mind, then the dowry that had been paid would be as lost as if it were the sound of a gong, or as if it had been eaten by chickens. But if the woman were to change her mind, she would have to repay the dowry many times over.¹⁴¹

2.5.3.4 Before the Wedding

The agreed wedding date could be changed or postponed to accommodate the ability of the bridegroom to pay the full dowry. In order for the bridegroom to acquire the means to provide the required dowry, he would have to work harder on the farm, taking care of pigs and other livestock, as well as soliciting funds from his relatives.

The period of time between *fanunu manu* and wedding day (*falöwa*) is traditionally a time to build up and to strengthen the relationships between the two families. The bridegroom would frequently visit his future in-laws and involve himself in the affairs of the bride's family. The impression the bridegroom made during this period could affect the amount of the dowry (*böwö*).

When the preparations had been completed, the *si'o* would discuss with the woman's family the exact date to hold the wedding. This step is called *fangandrö bongi walöwa* (asking for the wedding date). This was an occasion in which only the family members, and not the other villagers, participated. The bridegroom was required to provide pigs for this occasion. It is important to note that, at this meeting, not only the date of the wedding would be decided, but also a series of activities which preceded the wedding, called: *fame'e fakhe toho*. For these events, also, the bridegroom was required to provide pigs and rice, symbolizing the bridegroom's honest intention to honor and respect his future in-laws. The pigs provided were called *bawi fangehao soroi tou*. During this event, the wedding date was also confirmed.¹⁴²

All goods or substances provided by the bridegroom (pigs, gold, silver, and rice) were considered to be part of the dowry. *Böwö* was different for each man, depending on the level of his social status in the community.¹⁴³ At the latest by the wedding day, the family of the bridegroom was to pay all *böwö*, the amount of

¹³⁹ F. Gulö, in an interview by the author on 21 January 1999, in Gunungsitoli. Cf. A. Beatty, *Society and exchange in Nias*, 1992, p. 122.

¹⁴⁰ Guru Andrea, 'Falöwa föna', in: A. Pieper (ed.), *Realienboek*, 1928, p. 119.

¹⁴¹ In the Niasan language, the wording of this lyric is: *He ya 'ugö umönöma, ena 'ö na ya 'ugö zawuwu, ba no fao ba li garamba gana 'au. Na awuwu 'ö, ba nidou manu gana 'au. Ban a ya 'ugö satua nono alawe zawuwu, ba öfabali gana 'a si no ötema.*

¹⁴² Guru Andrea, 'Falöwa föna', in: A. Pieper (ed.), *Realienboek*, 1928, p. 119.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

which had been agreed upon earlier. Throughout Nias, *böwö* was symbolized by the word *aya*, which literally means a certain kind of necklace, which was considered to convey respect or *lakhömi*.¹⁴⁴ Thus, the Niasan people have never regarded the dowry as a 'price', but always as an indication of respect, dignity and love.

When the wedding day was drawing near, the woman's family invited the women in their village and of the bridegroom's relatives to do what was called *fame'e* (literally: make cry) referring to the giving of advice by the elder women in the community to the bride about how to deport herself in the house of her husband when she had become his wife.

The day before the wedding was called *folau bawi*, the time for the bridegroom's family to provide pigs, called *bawi zo'ono* and *bawi mbanua*. As the bridegroom's family approached the bride's house, they would begin to beat gongs, drums, and other traditional instruments. At this time, the bride was expected to cry. When the group arrived in the houseyard, they would ask, through using poetic lyrics (*hoho*), the location to tie up the pigs. *Hoho* was also used to convey the humility and meekness of the bridegroom's family, to which the bride's family then responded with praise and compliments. After this responsive *hoho*, the bridegroom's family would be invited to enter the house and the exchange of words of respect was continued while eating betel nuts and having a meal together.¹⁴⁵

2.5.3.5 Wedding

The next day, which was the wedding day, or *falöwa*, all of the villagers from both sides were invited to attend the party. On the way to the bride's house, the members of the man's family expressed their happiness by performing the dance *böli hae*. Soon after their arrival, the wedding would be begun by exchanging signs of respect and betel nuts, which, for Ono Niha, constitutes the eldest *böwö*. Then the bridegroom would offer *afo* to his in-laws and to certain other people, which would be continued by having a meal together, during which, advice, called *fanika era'era mböwö*, was given to the young couple. *Fanika era'era mböwö* provided the opportunity for the woman's family to explain their family background and genealogy to the bridegroom. In closing, they usually reminded the bridegroom, always to show them respect and honor. Then the bride and the bridegroom would be led to the image of the forefathers (*adu zatua*) to be blessed by the *ere*. As a symbol that the wedding had been conducted well and in the approved manner, the heads of the bride and bridegroom would be gently knocked against each other (*famagobi högö*). After having completed all of these traditional activities, the bride, the bridegroom and his family would return to their village, performing the *böli hae* dance the whole way home.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.* p. 120. *Aya gawe, Aya nina, Aya niwa Aya mbanua Aya niwu Famazuzugö mbanua Fanika Era'era mböwö.*

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ Guru Andrea, 'Falöwa föna', in: A. Pieper (ed.), *Realienboek*, 1928, p. 121. The dance expressed that: *Talau wa mbolihae alawa Dödö, talau mbolihae alawa mbo, me no moi ita wauzei mufaigifaigi, me no moi ita wauzei wondrondrongo, no moi ita mbe'e laharo gana'a, no moi ita mbe'e laharo hamo, lo aekhu golo daelutaehu, lo abua golo hudehude, wangai ono zalawa helano wangai ono duha terongo, khoda mboli zinowu gana'a, khoda mboli zinowu hamo. No ifehedehede lafau Adu, no ifahedehede lafau luo Lini mahemolu mbanua ba aekhu luo, lo tegilo.*

When the bride and the bridegroom had arrived at the bridegroom's house, a shawl would be given to them with which they were to cover both of their heads. Together, they would be welcomed to enter the house, with the one stipulation that they not touch the pillar of the main stairway. What they should do, however, was to touch the main pillar of the house (*gasö matua*), as well as the *adu zatua* (image of the forefathers), and then sit down under the idols (*sangehowu*). The bride would be asked to hold a child as a reminder that later on she was going to have her own child. After holding a child, the bride would be asked to hold a plate containing betel nuts. The bride and bridegroom were each given half of an areca that had been sliced into two parts and mixed with betel nuts. If the man came from an upper class family, another activity, called *fanahö döddö*, referring to holding a special feast for all of the guests could then follow. This, however, was not obligatory.

2.5.3.6 After the Wedding

Two days after this feast, the family of the bride brought food (*mame'e gö*) to the bride, consisting of rice and pork. The bridegroom's family was to respond to this by inviting them to have a meal together and giving them pigs (*orifitö*) when they went back home.

Seven days later, it was the turn of the bride and the bridegroom and some other relatives to visit the bride's family, bringing them rice, pork, pigs, and betel nuts. This occasion was called *famuli nukha*. The bride's family was to provide a meal for everyone. When it was time to go back home, the bride herself remained a few more days in her parents' home. She used this opportunity to drop by the homes of her friends and relatives, where she would be given various gifts. After a while, the bridegroom would fetch her back. Together, they would return home, taking their gifts with them, such as: pigs, other livestock, and household tools.¹⁴⁷

Most of these customs related to the wedding are still practiced, although some variations and new meanings have since developed. The missionaries did not forbid people to practice their traditions, with the exception of those traditions related to the worship of idols or which were morally wrong, such as: child marriage, polygamy, and the cruel treatment of widows.

2.5.4 Death and Funeral

As birth was commonly considered to be the beginning of a new life as an individual, marriage joins two lives and was ideally, a source of new life, whereas death was the departure from this earthly life. A euphemism for death that is used in Nias was amputation of the soul (*aetu noso*). The body becomes dust and the soul returns to Lowalangi. In other myths, it is said that the giver and owner of the soul is *Baliu*, the child of Lowalangi. The span of a life was thought to depend on the weight of the soul while still inside the womb. The death of a person ought not to be regretted, for this was his or her request while still a fetus. This idea can be seen in the saying 'arriving at the limit of one's request' (*no irugi fangandrönia*).¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁷ Guru Andrea, 'Falöwa föna', in: A. Pieper (ed.), 1928, p. 122.

¹⁴⁸ H. Sundermann, 'Die Psychologie des Niassers', 1887, pp. 291-292.

In addition to the concept of the soul (*noso*), which returns to *Baliu*, the Ono Niha also had the concept of the spirit (*bekhu zimate*).¹⁴⁹ During a person's life the *bekhu zimate* assumed the form of a shadow (*lumölumö*). When the person died, the *bekhu zimate* would stay close to the body of the deceased, since the *bekhu zimate* did not want to become separated from the body. For this reason, the Ono Niha always brought the possessions of the deceased to his or her grave.

Even now, they still provide the body with food for four days, so that his or her *bekhu* can still eat. If a rooster starts to crow, it is a sign that the rooster has seen the *bekhu*. After four days, the *bekhu* will descend to the underworld. We do not know where this was located, but it is identified with the grave. The underworld was the city of the dead. Here the *bekhu* would die one more time. The number of times the *bekhu* dies depends on the age of the deceased, but at least nine times. In the city of the dead, the *bekhu* live as if they were still alive in the world of the living. The status of a *bekhu* in the lower world is the same as his or her status was while he or she was still alive. The *bekhu* of a person who did evil things while alive would return to the grave, covered with earth, as expressed in the saying 'let it be covered with earth' (*yamulangögö ia tanö*).

It was also believed that the dead were subject to judgment. They had to justify the deeds they performed while they were in this world. The ground earth, i.e., the world itself was the one passing judgment. The Ono Niha concept of the end of the world (*atua guli danö*) was that the world would sink into the sea. Then, a new world, that is the ninth world, would descend from above. Here, the spirit of the cat would help the *bekhu* of the deceased to cross the bridge spanning 'the mouth of the ocean' (*bawa gawuwukha*). This bridge looked like a sharp sword. If, while in the world, a person killed a cat without any reason, that person's *bekhu* would be put down by cat (*mao*). For this reason, Ono Niha were afraid to approach a cat. Only good people and those of the nobility would enter the world of the dead whereas those who did evil things would go to the grave. Those who had male descendants would be able to cross the *bawa gawuwukha* (the mouth of the ocean), they become butterflies (*löhölöhö*). The *bekhu* of children could be included if they were still inside their mother's womb. The *bekhu* of children in the mother's womb shared the mother's fate.

The rites related to death were of considerable significance to the Ono Niha, since they are related to the end of a person's life¹⁵⁰, to the continuity of leadership, and to descendants¹⁵¹, as well as to the hope of the grieving family to be blessed by the *adu zatua*, the source of blessing (*sangehowu*), especially if the deceased was the father and was a member of the nobility.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.* pp. 301-302.

¹⁵⁰ H. Sundermann, 'Die Psychologie des Niassers', 1887, p. 19. He found out that the Niasans had six concepts concerning the self: *boto* indicated the *ösi* (body); *noso* indicated the soul, i.e., everything that is the guiding principle of the *boto*; *tödö* (the heart, the centre of life); *eheha* (the spirit); *mökömökö*, the condition of the body that is very remarkable or heart and soul together; *bekhu zimate* (soul that is pointed to the spirit, everything in the person that is everlasting).

¹⁵¹ W. Gulö, *Benih yang Tumbuh XIII*, 1983, p. 204. This fact is marked by the fact that the eldest receives *lakhömi* (glory), which was approved by the villagers by means of a *hoho* (litany) in the *fangasi* celebration.

¹⁵² F. Harefa, *Hikayat dan Ceritera Bangsa serta 'Adat Nias'*, 1939, pp. 100-102; cf. *Guru Fetero*, 'Lewatö', in: A. Pieper (ed.), *Realienboek*, 1928, pp. 149-150; cf. S. Zebua, 'Menelusuri Sejarah Kebudayaan Ono Niha', 1984, p. 396. The observance of traditions related to the death of a person was based on the financial capabilities and status of the deceased. If the deceased came from a poor

All the activities of the *adat* death ceremonies have cosmological symbols (for the world above and below) pointing towards the process of the return of the spirit to its origin. A silk cloth was wrapped around the coffin, the head of the coffin was placed under the statue of the ancestors, the corpse was dressed in clothes with colours referring to his social status, namely red or dark for commoners and yellow or gold for noblemen. Gold jewellery was put on the body of the deceased or beside it. There were dances symbolizing an undulated eagle and snake in the *moyo* dance (*moyo* is a sort of gold- and red-feathered bird) and the *mondröni hîwö* (dance symbolizing a snake, where the front row of dancers uses gold-coloured umbrellas). *Lauru* was placed at the head of the coffin. At the burial, the coffin was placed facing either the source of a river or east. The hut on the grave was equipped with a peak in the shape of a perched chicken; sometimes the head of a crocodile was carved into the coffin. All these were symbols of the world above and below.¹⁵³

2.5.4.1 Rites for Dying

If the parents, particular father is critically ill, and there is no hope for his recovery, then the children will perform the rite of giving food (*fangotome'ö*) to the father. The whole relatives and the villagers will be invited.¹⁵⁴ This is a sign of respect to the parent and a way of asking him for his blessing, as well as being a good opportunity for all of the members of the families to apologize to one another and to reconcile themselves with each other if there were conflicts among them. Sometimes the parents divided the inheritance among the children on this occasion.¹⁵⁵

Fangotome'ö is still practiced by the Ono Niha. There are some people who still call it *fangotome'ö*, and there are those who call it prayer communion or intercessory prayer for parents. The old elements are still to be found now, most especially the 'parts of pork', which consist of meat, brains, fat, heart, and liver. These, as well as rice and something to drink, are still the special parts offered to the sick parent.¹⁵⁶ *Fangotome'ö* was begun with the announcement to the relatives that the life of his or her parent resembles a sunset. Therefore, they all paid their respects to that parent and asked him for a blessing.¹⁵⁷

2.5.4.2 Funeral Rites

In the past, when the parent was about to breathe his last breath, all his clothes and jewelry would be placed near him, so that he could die in peace. At that time, the wife, children, grandchildren and other relatives would encircle him. The eldest son would sit close to him. According to the belief, each male parent (noble) had a glory, which was called *lakhömi zalawa* (honor of chieft), since his body was the dwelling place of the *salawa's* spirit (*eheha wa'asalawa*). If the father died, his eldest son should accept the father's spirit, so that the glory and power of his father would be

family, the rites that performed were simpler than those performed for a rich person.

¹⁵³ Cf. P. Suzuki, *The Religious System and Culture of Nias, Indonesia*, 1959, pp. 117-126.

¹⁵⁴ There is the belief that if that feast is held, the sick parent can either have a long life or will be able to die sooner. It is also understood that the blessing given by the parent is valid, because the parents are god in this world. If the parents ask Lowalangi for his blessing, Lowalangi will grant it.

¹⁵⁵ J.A. Fehr, *Der Niasser im Leben und Sterben*, 1901, p. 52.

¹⁵⁶ W. Gulö, *Benih yang Tumbuh XIII*, 1983, p. 204.

¹⁵⁷ Cf. J.W. Thomas, *Drei Jahre in Südnias*, 1892, pp. 3-15.

transferred to him. The spirit sometimes left the mouth of the parent or noblement (*balugu*) when he breathed his last breath. Its color was a shining white, like the effervescence of boiling rice. If the *eheha* has been seen, the eldest son should open his mouth close to the father's mouth to capture that *eheha*.¹⁵⁸ If the son was afraid to do so, the *eheha* would go to a place called *tokosa* and remain there. Other ways to capture the *eheha* were by connecting a length of yarn from the mouth of the father to that of the eldest son, or by catching it with a piece of clothing. The *eheha* would then be kept in a place called *lauru*, or in the *adu zatua*.¹⁵⁹

Although this tradition is no longer practiced in the present community, the element of demonstrating one's respect to the parents is still very strong. For those Ono Niha who are Christians, when one of their parents is about to die, all of the children should gather around him or her and conduct a short worship service to prepare that parent to meet his Creator. Some families even request the sacrament of Holy Communion for a dying parent.

When the parent had breathed his last breath, the body would be bathed and orange leaves and other aromatic plants would be applied to the body. If the deceased was a *salawa* or a *balugu*, he will be dressed in clothes of honor and seated in the special stone chair called *sarambia*. Ordinary people, however, will simply be laid inside a coffin (*hasi*). A deceased *salawa* will be wrapped in silk materials and his house will be encircled with yellow cloth as a sign of glory. In South Nias, however, a deceased *salawa* will not merely be seated in the special chair, but will also be carried around the village, so that all of the people are made aware of his passing.¹⁶⁰

In the evening, many people would come to the house of the deceased to conduct a vigil service, to comfort the family and also to perform the traditional acts called *molaya* (a kind of dance) and *hoho ba zi mate*, a litany.¹⁶¹ *Molaya* and *hoho* are meant to pay respect to the deceased, as well as to remind the families to care for the honor and good reputation of the deceased (*mangeni*), so that his power and his glory will not be negated by other people. During the following night, 2-3 pigs would be slaughtered and served to all who come, and particularly to those who held watch over the body in the house. This meal is called *ö mbongi*.¹⁶²

In the past, the body was not buried in the ground, but placed inside a coffin, which was later brought to a place called *lahare*. Some others were placed in the big rock, called *lewatö* or *atela*, which means the grave.¹⁶³ As the community grew larger, the bodies were then buried in the ground, in connection with a funeral service led by the *ere*, in combination with a traditional dance expressing the departure of the beloved parent.¹⁶⁴

¹⁵⁸ P. Suzuki, *The Religious System and Culture of Nias, Indonesia*, 1959, p. 116.

¹⁵⁹ J. Danandjaja, 'Ono Niha: Penduduk Pulau Nias', 1976, p. 101.

¹⁶⁰ J.W. Thomas, *Drei Jahre in Süd-nias*, 1892, p. 14.

¹⁶¹ Cf. M. Thomsen, *Ein Totengesang von der Insel Nias*, 1981.

¹⁶² W. Gulö, *Benih yang Tumbuh XIII*, 1983, p. 205. Cf. J. Danandjaja, 'Ono Niha: Penduduk Pulau Nias', 1976, pp. 101-102. The guests from other countries were not allowed to enter so that the spirits of the parents would not run over to them.

¹⁶³ P. Suzuki, *The Religious System and Culture of Nias, Indonesia*, 1959, p. 117. This kind of burial is no longer allowed by the government for health reasons.

¹⁶⁴ In earlier times, if the deceased was a *salawa* or a *si'ulu*, the foundation of his grave would be prepared and called 'Tandraya högö gahé (pillow)', which means he would be buried together with the slaves. This was no longer practiced during the missionary period.

2.5.4.3 After the Funeral

After the funeral vigil was finished, the family would conduct the traditional ceremony called *fangasi*. For this ceremony, pigs would be slaughtered and cooked. The number of pigs depends on the social and economic status of the deceased. This pork would be served to those who had helped in the vigil service, either by digging the grave or by taking care of the body, as well as to all of the villagers. *Fangasi* contributed to the status of the bereaved families. If they failed to perform *fangasi*, then their status would be lowered and they would be slighted by the community.

However, the main purpose of *fangasi* was to declare to the deceased that no more people wished to die, and that therefore a pig was being sacrificed in place of the human beings. The Ono Niha believed that if 'feast after funeral' (*fangasi*) were not performed, the spirits of the deceased would become angry and would harm the family, for example, by strangling relatives and by causing members of the family bad luck financially.

On the fourth day, the family would perform the ceremony of building of shelter on the grave (*fobale lewatö*) or placing of a mattress and clothes of the deceased on the grave (*fanibo tufo*). At this moment all of the belongings of the deceased, such as: his sleeping mat, clothes, plate, cup, etc, would be placed inside the grave. This was done because the people believed that a dead person would not realize that he or she was dead until the fourth day after death. At this time, he or she would then want to return to the house and socialize again with the other members of the family. To prevent this from happening, a ceremony called *fobale lewatö*, or *fanibo tufo*, or *fanano bunga* was to be conducted. When placing the belongings of the deceased in his or her grave, the people would say: 'These were your possessions while you were alive. Do not be angry, do not touch a living person, and do not curse the plants that have been planted by Lowalangi'. Then flowers and stones would be placed around the grave. As part of this ceremony of *fobale lewatö* or *fanibo tufo* or *fananö bunga*, two or three pigs, depending on the economic and social status of the deceased, would be slaughtered and eaten together.

Another significant after the funeral was called 'rites for took of spider' (*fangai mökömökö*).¹⁶⁵ If the *mökömökö* had not yet been taken from the deceased parent, the Ono Niha understood this as a sign of future disaster in their lives. Therefore, another ceremony, called *fanao*, was conducted, led by the *ere*.¹⁶⁶ When a person was buried, a kind of ginger plant (*tugala*) was long enough to coffin, would be stuck into the ground next to the head of the deceased. After four days, the glory of the deceased person would be called to dwell inside the *adu zatusa*, which was the source of blessing for the family that was left behind. This act was called *sangehowu*.

Then the *tugala* (kind of ginger plant) would be extracted, and at its hole, the *ere* would pray and place one rib of sugar palm (*aren*) in the hole. From that hole, *mökömökö* would emerge and alight on the tip of the *aren*. The *ere* would then insert the *mökömökö* into a bag called *tamböyö sotödö mbawi*, the shape of which resembles the heart of a pig. Then later on, the *ere* would take it to his house. This ceremony was conducted at sunset.

¹⁶⁵ H. Sundermann, 'Die Psychologie des Niassers', in: G. Warneck (ed.), *AMZ* 14, 1887, pp. 299-300.

¹⁶⁶ P. Suzuki, *The Religious System and Culture of Nias, Indonesia*, 1959, pp. 118-124.

While these ceremonies had been taking place in the house, preparations had been made for the next ceremony. The *adu* had been made and decorated with young coconut leaves. There were betel nuts, rice, yeast, pork, boiled eggs, and gold, to be offered to the *adu*. When the *ere* arrived, the lights were turned off. Then the *ere* began to beat the gong and uttered incantations.

After having done that, the *ere* would see the spirit of the deceased parent (*lakhömi zatua* or *malaika zatua*) being transferred to the *adu zatua* and would accept all of the offerings. Common people could testify that during this event they had seen the eggs turn blue, the form of the rice change, and the arrangement of the betel nuts also change.¹⁶⁷ The *adu zatua* would then be placed in the upper part of the house, called *buatö*, where it held constant watch over the family members, protecting them from any evil spirits and blessing them.

Some kind of ceremony around dying is still practiced. However, some elements have been given new meanings or interpretations by the missionaries. The missionaries prohibited all activities indicating devotion to the *adu*. This is still the stand of the Niasan church, and anyone who disobeys it is subject to sanctions. This topic will be discussed further in Ch. 6.

2.6 SOCIO-ECONOMIC SITUATION ON NIAS BEFORE THE ARRIVAL OF CHRISTIANITY

2.6.1 Traditional Economy

For a long time, the Ono Niha practiced a nomadic system of farming, often moving from place to place. They planted corn and rice, and also raised pigs and chickens.¹⁶⁸ In the coastal areas, some people planted coconut palms.

Before the arrival of Dutch colonialism and of Protestantism, the Ono Niha had already been familiar with various plants, such as coconut and other palms (areca, sugar-palm, etc), as well as sago, cotton, nutmeg and coffee. They were also raised various short term plants, such as: rice, cassava, banana, corn, sugar cane and tobacco.¹⁶⁹ In addition to farming, the Niasan community was also familiar with hunting as an alternative method of acquiring food. Professional trading was practiced essentially only by those who came to Nias later, such as those from Barus and Aceh (Sumatra), Arabia and China, as well as by the VOC.¹⁷⁰ Trade between local people was rare.

In the year 1669, the VOC (Dutch East India Company), which was called *Gomböni* by the people of Nias, made a contract with the *salawa* or *si'ulu* in North Nias, in South Nias, and on Hinako Island. The contract allowed the VOC to purchase the products of the land.¹⁷¹ Due to the very limited supply of those pro-

¹⁶⁷ S. Zebua, 'Menyelusuri Sejarah Kebudayaan Ono Niha', 1984, pp. 404-412.

¹⁶⁸ F. Harefa, *Hikayat dan Ceritera Bangsa serta 'Adat Nias'*, 1939, pp. 115-116.

¹⁶⁹ E. Fries, *Amuata Hoelo Nono Niha*, 1919, pp. 13-35.

¹⁷⁰ E.M. Loeb, *Sumatra: Its History and People*, 1972, p. 135. The kinds of goods imported from the outside to be sold were cloth materials (silk and wool), copper, gongs, gold, weapons, dishes, and bronze jars. The merchants would exchange their goods for the products of Nias Island, such as: rubber, rice, latex, and animals. Cf. B. Laia, 'Sendi-sendi Masyarakat Nias', in: *Peninjau* 1/1975, pp. 4-5. Laia states that after the arrival of the Acehnese traders, the Ono Niha also made acquaintance with the slave trade.

¹⁷¹ E.E.W.Gs. Schröder, *Nias*, 1917, p. 310.

ducts, however, the trade brought the VOC no profits. To counteract this situation, the VOC then decided to engage in the slave trade, which of course yielded more profits. They bought Niasan people as slaves and forced them to work on the farms owned by the VOC on Sumatra. This explains the presence of the large number of Niasans in Padang even now.¹⁷²

To increase the business of the VOC, in 1693, another contract was made with all of the chiefs in the central places and harbour areas of Nias Island. It prohibited any activities which would create problems for the merchandise of the VOC. With this contract, the VOC increased its profits. It built a storehouse and an office in Gunungsitoli, in the coastline area. The VOC ships were anchored there.¹⁷³ As the VOC continued to expand, an increasing number of Niasan people were taken to the island of Sumatra to be slaves. This situation continued until 1755. The VOC finally terminated its activities when war broke out in Europe and India fell to the English.¹⁷⁴

The relationship of Nias with the VOC had protected Nias from war and abductions, such as had occurred in Aceh; but on the other hand, this relationship had also caused slavery to flourish, which had inflicted tremendous pain and suffering on the Niasan people. This was comparable to escaping from the crocodile's mouth, just to land in the tiger's mouth. This situation was one factor which kept the Ono Niha underdeveloped and in a state of poverty.

In the field of agriculture, the Ono Niha practiced what was called *dwi*-farming, referring to farming the land and raising pigs. When Ono Niha established a new farm, the forest would be cut down and the cuttings burned. Half of the land would be planted to corn and rice, while the other half was made into a piggery. The piggery would be enclosed with a bamboo fence with a gate in it, and then one-to-two-year-old pigs would be put inside. This was called *arö göli* (*arö* means under or inside and *göli* means gate). The produce of the farm was the source of food for both the family and the animals.

The income earned would be used to pay debts, to build a house, to finance the childrens' wedding celebrations, and to hold feasts which could increase the family's social status in the community. On the basis of their economic status, the Niasan population could be divided into the classes of rich people, ordinary people, and slaves. The rich were those who had much land, a big house, and who could hold a big party for their children's weddings. The majority of the Niasan people, however, belonged to the class of the ordinary people. They were those who had to work hard to earn their living, and were therefore seldom able hold big parties. They were even unable to pay a dowry when their children got married. They had nothing to offer to the gods when they fell ill.

The slaves were those who were not merely poor, but also under the rule and control of their master or owner. They were the ones who worked for the rich people, making their masters prosperous, while they themselves owned nothing. There were two kinds of slaves in Nias: those who had become slaves because they had not been able to pay the debts they had accrued when getting married or when they had fallen ill, and those slaves who were prisoners of war. Slaves of this latter type were called *binu*. They became workers in the homes of noble people and

¹⁷² E. Fries, *Amuata Hoelo Nono Niha*, 1919, p. 126.

¹⁷³ S. Zebua, 'Menyelusuri Sejarah Kebudayaan Ono Niha', 1984, pp. 89-90.

¹⁷⁴ F. Harefa, *Hikayat dan Ceritera Bangsa serta 'Adat Nias'*, 1939, p. 121.

salawa or rich people. They were treated harshly and sometimes very inhumanely. Denninger noted that in North Nias, in Lafau and Muzöi villages, there was a center of the slavery market, as well as a big farm where these slaves had to work.¹⁷⁵ Those who had become slaves due to debt were called *sawuyu*. They had no other way to pay off their debt than by working for their creditor.

The Ono Niha had a communal, rather than an individualistic concept of work. Therefore, in a village, they always began with a meeting to discuss how they were going to proceed with their work. They had to agree on the time of planting, the system of weights and measures, the system of hunting and the system for coordinating all of these aspects. The Ono Niha called this system of work *falulusa* (helping each other). For example: if today they work together on Farm A, then tomorrow they will work on Farm B, and so on. In the past, this system was very strong, enabling the people to cultivate large tracts of land together. It also strengthened the solidarity and unity among them. In this *falulusa* system, each farmer would raise food for all members of the community.

For the Ono Niha, work also had a religious dimension. In their understanding, plants and animals, such as rice and pigs, belonged to the gods. The owner of the rice was called Sibaya Wakhe (*sibaya* = uncle, owner, ruler, and *wakhe* = rice); the owner of the domestic pigs was called *Sobawi* (pig owner) and the owner of the wild pigs in the forest was called Bela (the god who dwells in the big woods), and the owner of the fish in the river was called Tuha Zangaröfa (the god who living in the river).¹⁷⁶ Thus, farming, hunting, and fishing always included the element of spiritual and traditional rites. The Ono Niha believed that disobedience to the traditional law, as elaborated in the *fondrakö*, would have a negative effect on their economic situation.¹⁷⁷ To enable a better understanding of the relationship between belief and work, the author will elaborate on the ceremonies conducted in the fields of agriculture, hunting and fishing.

2.6.1.1 Agriculture

In pre-Christian times, the farming season was begun making an offering to Sibaya Wakhe. The *ere* led this ritual. First, he would make an *adu* of wood, then smear pig's blood onto the *adu*, and, finally, offer the pig as a symbol of the seeds of the plants to be blessed by the *adu*. At the sound of the *fondrahi* (a type of tambourine) the *ere* would pray that Sibaya Wakhe would bless their plants.¹⁷⁸ Then the *ere* and all of the farmers would eat a meal together.

The planting time would be adjusted to the season. The Ono Niha have a lunar calendar. Denninger noted that the Ono Niha had a concept of cyclic time only within a day. They had names for thirty days within a month, but had no names for

¹⁷⁵ BRM, 1867, pp. 114-115.

¹⁷⁶ W. Gulö, *Benih Yang Tumbuh XIII*, 1983, p. 210.

¹⁷⁷ Cf. S.W. Mendröfa, 'Memahami Agama Suku Masyarakat Ono Niha dan Pengaruhnya dalam Kekristenan'. This lecture was delivered to the meeting of pastors from BNKP, AMIN and ONKP, held 25-29 August 1997, in Gunungsitoli. S.W. Mendröfa said that the economic system of Nias had always been based on the worship of the *adu*. If something failed, the people were convinced that some tradition had been violated or neglected.

¹⁷⁸ W. Gulö, *Benih yang Tumbuh XIII*, 1983, p. 211.

the weekdays (Sunday-Saturday), or for the months within a year (January - December).¹⁷⁹

The good times for planting were 'the eleventh day before full moon' (*mendröfa desa'a*), 'the seventh day before full moon' (*mewalu desa'a*) and 'the third day before full moon' (*mewelendrua desa'a*). These were the times that had been blessed by the plant's owner, so that insects would not harm the plants. For certain plants, there was considered to be a good time for planting, for example: cassava was planted during *tuli* (full moon), in the hope that it would grow to be as big as the full moon. Banana was planted at sunset, so that its fruit would still be within reach, not too high up. Corn was planted by using a piece of wood called *olalu* for digging the hole for the seed, so that the kernels would be dry and delicious.¹⁸⁰

In the coastlands, the Malay tradition influenced the Ono Niha's concept of and names for time. The Ono Niha had already begun before the missionaries arrived to take over the names of the months, such as: the rainy month (*bawa nidanö*), the haji feast month (*bawa haji*); the windy month (*bawa nangi*); the stormy month (*bawa Toendro*), the Malay Month or Ramadhan (*bawa Melayu*), the married month (*bawa mburuti*), the Dutch Month or Christmas (*bawa Ulöndra*), etc. It was believed that the good months for planting were *bawa haji* and *mburuti*.¹⁸¹

Part of observing the good time for planting was *famoni* (taboo), i.e., certain taboos had to be observed. If the farmers failed to plant during the traditional time, then the products would not be of good quality. While the plants were growing, the Ono Niha would perform another ceremony, called *pesta Saho*, to ask the god Saho to protect their farm from all harm. In Fagülö, Ködding and Mohri witnessed how *pesta Saho* was celebrated.¹⁸²

When someone was about to harvest a crop, he should get a *tugala* (kind of ginger plant), cut it into two pieces, and walk between the cut edges. The intention was to prevent evil spirits from following him. The evil spirits would thereby be rendered unable to destroy the harvest. Then, when he entered the farming areas, he or she had to take the road where there were young coconut leaves on both sides, to make sure the harvested products would not leave the farming areas.

During the harvest, the Ono Niha also had to be careful not to say things that could invoke the anger of Sibaya Wakhe.¹⁸³ Shouting was not allowed. Everyone should use refined and kind words, instead of ordinary ones. For example: *manga* (to eat) should be replaced with the word *tazowo* (to consume), *mate* (dead) replaced with *azori*; *ose* (shelter) replaced with *lögulögu*; *iramatua* (man) replaced with

¹⁷⁹ L.E. Denninger, *Eerste Schoolboekje voor het Eiland Nias: Nowi huno Lihede ba hulo Nono Niha*, 1870, pp. 32-33. Cf. *Toeria*, 2/10 (1915), pp. 35-36. The names of the days in a month were: *Sambua Desa'a*; *Dumbua Tesa'a*, *Tolu Tesa'a*, *öfa Desa'a*, *Melima Desa'a*, *Me'önö Desa'a*, *Mewitu Desa'a*, *Mewalu Desa'a*, *Meziwa Desa'a*, *Fulu Desa'a*, *Mewelezara Desa'a*, *Mewelendrua Desa'a*, *Feledölu Desa'a*, *Fele'öfa Desa'a*, *Tuli (purnama)*, *Sulumo'o (Samuza Akhömi)*, *Mendrua Akhömita*, *Medölu Akhömi*, *Mendröfa akhömi*, *Melima akhömi*, *Me'önö'akhömi*, *Mewitu akhömi*, *Mewalu akhömi (börö zikho)*, *Meziwa akhömi (sikho)*, *Mewulu akhömi (Börö mugu)*, *Mewelezara wa'aekhu (Angekhula)*, *Felendrua Wa'aekhu (Börö ndr iwakha)*, *Sambua-lö aekhu (Talu ndr iwa)*, *Aekhu mbawa (Ahakhöwa)*, *Fasulöta (Fasulöna)*.

¹⁸⁰ W. Gulö, *Benih yang Tumbuh XIII*, 1983, pp. 210-211.

¹⁸¹ *Toeria*, 2/10 (1915), p. 36.

¹⁸² *BRM*, 1870, p. 40.

¹⁸³ W. Gulö, *Benih yang Tumbuh XIII*, 1983, p. 211. In various places in Nias, taboos could also include the following: they were not to plant if someone had died, they were not to plant when they were hungry during the daytime, and they were not to wear T-shirts if the plant that was about to be planted was a kind of plant that has a skin.

silai'i; *ira alawe* (woman) replaced with *sibölöwua*; *idanö* (water) replaced with *sokafu*. After the harvest, the Ono Niha conducted another rite to give thanks to Sibaya Wakhe, which was led by the *ere* and in which all of the villagers, including all of their family members.

2.6.1.2 Farm Animals

As has been mentioned above, the Ono Niha believed that all domestic pigs are owned by Sobawi (deity of pig). In raising pigs, the Ono Niha were also to keep in mind the propitious time to put pigs inside the piggery (*arö göli*), which was during the full moon, in the hope that the pigs would grow to be as big as the full moon. When putting pigs inside a piggery, one should not step or jump over the gate, which could be slid up and down, but crawl under it, the way the pigs entered the piggery. This was intended to prevent the pigs from escaping from the piggery, as well as to ask Sobawi for help, so that the pigs might be protected from any harm. The pigs were very necessary during a wedding, or when owner held a feast to raise his social status.

2.6.1.3 Hunting

The Ono Niha hunted in groups. No one was allowed to hunt as he liked. Before going hunting, the group first had to ask the elders in the community for permission. In exchange for their permission, the elders received two kilogram of salt pork.

A series of rites was to be performed before going to the forest to hunt. The people would gather at the end of the village and perform rituals led by the *ere*. As the *fondrahi* sounded, the *ere* would pray and make an offering to Bela Hogu Geu, using the words: *Fanaya walowalo, sumange nono Zalofo Mbela Hogu Geu*, asking that Bela Hogu Geu grant his blessing, so that they might have good fortune on this hunting excursion.

On this occasion, everyone would be reminded of the rule that whatever the results of the hunting excursion might be, the catch was to be shared by all, even if it was not much.¹⁸⁴ The group would select a leader, called *foe*, as well as his assistant, called *hogoe*, and a guide, called *sama'ötö*, as well as the order of the lance-throwers when the quarry was at bay. The first thing to be done in hunting was to study the footprints in the forest. Then the hunting party would decide on the strategic location to place the trap. When the quarry had been trapped, the dogs would be let loose to hold the quarry at bay. If the hunters were lucky, they would get a pig or a deer. The first one to throw his lance was called *sahulu* or *solau ba naya*. The second one was called *faohita* and the third one was called *fanöwa*, or *tundre höwa*. The catch would be taken to the agreed place, and there it would be carved up and apportioned. The system of apportioning was as follows:

1. The *sahulu* received the part called *raham*, which consisted of a certain part of one foreleg, some of the liver along with some of the bile, the tail, and some of the meat;
2. The *faohita* received the other part of the *raham*, including the meat in the arm part;

¹⁸⁴ E. Fries, 'Fealu', in: A. Pieper, *Sura Wamahaö ba kelas v-vi*, 1920, pp. 66-68.

3. The *fanowa* received the *tola muyu* (a part of thigh);
4. The *sialu* received one of the forelegs;
5. The one who carved and apportioned received half of the bones and meat in the neck part.
6. The owners of the dogs and of the net received the other half of the bones and meat in the neck part.¹⁸⁵ The rest would be cooked and divided into three parts: one third would be given to the leader *foe*; one third would be given to the *hogu*; one third would be given to the hunters. This last part was then divided into four parts: one-fourth was given to the one who cooked and three-fourths would be distributed among all of the villagers. Whether the part one received was large or small, it should be accepted with gratitude.

If anyone complained, the hunters would not have any luck in the future. Bela, the owner of the animals, would be angry with them and would no longer give them animals to hunt. If the hunters later had difficulty in finding prey, the people would investigate the root cause and then offer a sacrifice to assuage the anger of Bela Hogu Geu.

2.6.1.4 Fishing

Nias is part of a region surrounded by sea, but the Niasan people in general are not fishermen. In contrast, the tradition of farming the land and raising farm animals is deeply in the life of the Niasan people. The context in which this tradition arose is that fishing was not very popular with the Niasan people because the sea had such rough waves. Nevertheless, some Niasan people did become fishermen, especially those living on the eastern shore. They fished using very traditional boats and tools. Recently, however, there are some who have acquired motor boats.

To have additional income in the rural areas, some people would also catch river fish, using: seine or dragnet (*pukat*) and fishing nets. A kind of fish that is usually found in the Niasan rivers is a small fish called *mugu*. These fish are almost always found in swarms, in a very long formation, which makes them easy to catch, just by using a kind of landing-net (*buwu*). The Ono Niha believed that the *mugu* came from the sky.¹⁸⁶ Aside from the *mugu*, other kinds of fish to be found in the rivers are: eel, freshwater catfish (*lele*), *tabes*, and gurami. The catch was usually not to be sold, but only for family consumption.

Fishing required certain rituals to honor and to pay respect to the owner of the rivers and the sea. For example, on the Batu Islands, the fishermen first made and worshipped an *adu* before going fishing. This was to ensure that the *adu* understood their intention and was willing to grant them success in fishing.¹⁸⁷

From the above descriptions, we can conclude that the life of the Ono Niha could not be separated from their rites and rituals. They believed that every aspect of life had an owner, to whom the proper honor and tribute had to be paid. Most of these rituals were banished when Christianity was introduced by the missionaries. The missionaries strongly forbade the people to worship or to offer sacrifices to *adu*.

¹⁸⁵ With that category, everyone who participated in hunting received their share, at least on the part of the dog owner, the net owner, and those people who worked with them.

¹⁸⁶ J. Danandjaja, 'Ono Niha: Penduduk Pulau Nias', 1976, p. 97.

¹⁸⁷ E.E.W.Gs. Schröder, *Nias*, 1917, p. 141.

However, up to the present, there are still some Ono Niha who practice *famoni*, but without making an *adu* or requesting the assistance of an *ere*. Dualism has found its place in the life of some Ono Niha. On the one hand, as Christians, they believe in Jesus Christ, on the other hand, they continue to practice traditional rites and beliefs. This situation will be further discussed in Ch. 6.

2.6.2 Traditional Society

2.6.2.1 Consanguinity System

Within the Niasan community, the smallest group in a local community is the nuclear family (*sangambatö*), consisting of father, mother, and children. However, the most important group is the big families (*sangambatö sebua*), which is a group of people who live together in the same house, prepare their food in the same kitchen, and have a common economic basis, which usually means that they manage a farm or land together. Therefore, these people constitute a single household.¹⁸⁸ This household consists of a family with the family or families of their children, i.e., the patrilineally extended family. This clan system based on the family name is called *mado* in North, East and West Nias, and *gana* in south and Central Nias and is known in anthropology as patrilineal maximal lineage. Examples of some clan names to be found in Nias are: Hia, Daeli, Hulu, Telaumbanua, Harefa, Gulö, Gea, Waruwu, Larosa, Mendröfa, Sarumaha, Fa'u, Laia, Zebua, etc. The purpose of *mado* is to establish boundaries specifying who may marry whom.

In Nias, it is not permissible to marry a person who has the same family name unless the last direct relationship was more than ten generations in the past.¹⁸⁹ The marriage process is arranged in *fondrakö*, as has been explained in a previous section.

2.6.2.2 The Village (*Banua*) as the Basis of the Community

The village (*banua*) as the basis of the community¹⁹⁰ has two meanings: the village as a location or a group of houses, arranged on the basis of the village ordinances, and the village as a community compare the word *banuama*, which means our village, but can also mean our brothers and sisters.

The Ono Niha established villages in the countryside, near a hill, to be able to have a good view of the surrounding countryside and anticipate any enemy planning to enter the village. As has been mentioned above, wars between villages broke out among the Ono Niha quite frequently. Therefore, the defense factor had to be the main consideration in selecting a location for a village. Each village then developed its own traditions and *fondrakö*.

Nias has never been united as one political unity or kingdom, but has always been a multitude of more or less independent village communities. *Banua* formed the basis of the community. Each autonomous *banua* was considered by its inhabitants as a reflection of the upper world. Therefore, all activities in the *banua*, including rituals of the primal religion, the *adat*, leadership, the building of houses,

¹⁸⁸ J. Danandjaja, 'Ono Niha: Penduduk Pulau Nias', 1976, p. 99.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁰ B. La'ia, 'Sendi-sendi Masyarakat Nias', in: *Peninjau* 1/1975, p. 7.

etc., were performed in order to maintain or restore the cosmological harmony, the prerequisite for blessings (*howuhowu*).

Later on, some villages merged, forming a union of several villages (*öri*). During the Dutch rule, the role of the head of an *öri* was divided into two sectors, namely: the administrative sector and the sector of cultural tradition. Many of the foreign writers who have attempted to write about Nias were familiar with *öri* only in the context of big party (*owasa*), who was chosen on the basis of the line of his ancestors and who had the task of maintaining good social order in the community.

2.6.2.3 Housing

Based on his observations, Hämmerle wrote that thousands of the ancestors of the Niasans he knew had lived in caves or up in tree houses.¹⁹¹ This was no longer the situation during the period of colonialism and the first missionaries. At that time, the people were already living in villages, building their houses on high land (hills or mountains) for purposes of defense and security.¹⁹²

In pre-mission times, a village consisted of a thousand houses belonging to four *marga*, i.e., clans, each having a family name. Each house was occupied by a virilocal extended family. In Nias, there were two patterns for the ichnography of a village. In Central Nias, the ichnography resembled the letter U. The house of the leader (*balö zi'ulu*) was located at the bottom of the U, facing an area that was paved with stones. The residents' houses were located along both sides of the road. In North, East and West Nias, the houses in a village formed parallel lines, built along each side of the road, facing the road. The house of the leader (*tuhenöri* or *salawa*) was in the same line as the houses of the other residents.

Throughout the island of Nias, the house of the leader was usually bigger and better than the other houses. In front of the house of the leader, there were usually megalithic stones, like monuments, in the form of a man. In South Nias, these are called *saita gari*; in Central Nias, they are called *behu*; and in North, West, and East Nias, they are called *gowe zalawa*. These monuments showed that the one who lived in that house had conducted an *owasa* feast, a big, expensive party to increase the owner's social status (*bosi wa'asalawa*). There were also some residents' houses made of flagstones, found in South Nias, where they are called *darodaro*, while in North, West, East and Central Nias, they are called *harefa*.¹⁹³

The traditional Niasan house is called *omo hada* or *omo niha*. There are two types: one with an egg-shaped or oval floor plan, found in North, East, and West Nias, and one with a square floor plan, found in South and Central Nias. Both types of houses are set on stilts. To get into the house, one must use a ladder. Each house was divided into two parts: the front part was for receiving visitors, for dining, and for any type of social activity, whereas the back part was the family's sleeping quarters.¹⁹⁴

In pre-Christian times, the highest part of the house was reserved for the *adu*, the middle part was the people's living quarters, and the lower part was for the pigs and/or chickens. This arrangement was changed when the Dutch issued an

¹⁹¹ J.M. Hämmerle, *Asal Usul Masyarakat Nias*, p. 55.

¹⁹² J.W. Thomas, *Drei Jahre in Süd-nias*, 1892, pp. 6-7.

¹⁹³ J. Danandjaja, 'Ono Niha: Penduduk Pulau Nias', 1976, pp. 92-93.

¹⁹⁴ Cf. E.E.W.Gs. Schröder, *Nias*, 1917, pp. 104-114.

established the rule that animals should be transferred to a place designated by them.¹⁹⁵

By now, most of the traditional villages have disappeared, with the exception of one in South Nias, and a few traditional houses in Central, East, West, and North Nias. There are several reasons for the fact that traditional houses are no longer to be found in Nias:

1. The Dutch government commanded the people to move their houses nearer to the roads and to the location of their work,
2. In 1863, the Dutch government burned many of the traditional houses during the war, particularly houses in South Nias.¹⁹⁶
3. As a result of their interaction with other tribes, some Ono Niha tried to imitate the traditional houses of Aceh, Minangkabau, Jawa, China, and other house designs they had seen on television. Houses built according to non-Niasan designs are called *omo* (house) or *omo ndrawa* (foreign house).

The traditional house is usually characterized by walls which have engravings reflecting the cosmology, the upper and lower worlds, and illustrating unity and wholeness.¹⁹⁷ This reflection of the cosmology and illustration of wholeness was highlighted by the presence of an *osali* or *bale* in each village. In the northern, central, eastern and western parts of Nias, *osali* or *osali nadu* designate different things. The *osali* was a meeting place to discuss all things related to community affairs, whereas the *osali nadu* was the place to keep the *adu* as well as the severed heads of people who had been captured during a war. The *osali nadu* also had the function of being a place to worship the *adu*. It was here that *fondrakö* was discussed and resolved.¹⁹⁸ In South Nias, the *bale* was a meeting place to discuss traditional law, things related to the ancestors, the life of the people in the village, and also any conflicts which might arise in the village. The meeting was led by the *si'ulu* and *si'ila* (adviser), and everyone in the village was expected to attend, especially the adult men. The *bale* was also the place to hang the heads of enemies who had been captured during a war. This was also the place where the body of a noble person would be kept until his or her heirs were able to collect the number of pigs needed to perform the funeral ceremony.¹⁹⁹

2.6.2.4 Hierarchy and Leadership

The hierarchy of a Niasan community was as follows: At the top, there was a nobleman (*balugu* or *si'ulu*), and a chief (*salawa* in North, Central, East and West Nias), or a *balö zi'ulu* in South Nias)²⁰⁰ was the highest ruler in the community, above all other noble people in the community. This group of noble people itself was also divided into two categories: those who were involved in the government and those who were not. The

¹⁹⁵ Cf. A. Pieper (ed.), *Realienboek*, 1928.

¹⁹⁶ Cf. J.M. Hämmerle, *Omo Sebua*, p. 155.

¹⁹⁷ P. Suzuki, *The Religious System and Culture of Nias, Indonesia*, 1959, pp. 65-77.

¹⁹⁸ E.E.W.Gs. Schröder, *Nias*, 1917, pp. 118-122.

¹⁹⁹ J.M. Hämmerle, *Omo Sebua*, pp. 163-164.

²⁰⁰ J. Feldman, 'Nias and Its Traditional Sculpture', in: *Nias Tribal Treasures: Cosmic reflection in stone, wood and gold*, 1990, pp. 23-24. Cf. D. Harefa, 'Kepemimpinan di dalam masyarakat tradisional Nias dan perbandingannya dengan struktur BNKP', 1996.

second group was 'ordinary people' (*sato* or *sihönö*), and the third group was made up of the slaves (*sawuyu* or *harakana*). The slaves were composed of three groups: the *sondrara hare* (become slaves because they had not been able to pay their debts); the *binu* (enslaved because they were prisoners of war), and the *hölitö* (enslaved because their present master had redeemed them from the death penalty).²⁰¹ Of the three groups, the *binu* had the worst lot, because they were not only forced to work, but could also be sacrificed whenever a traditional ceremony required a human sacrifice.

The noble class (*nga'ötö zalawa* or *si'ulu*) was regarded as being similar to the gods, and the ordinary people (*nga'ötö niha sato/sito'ölö*) were regarded as belonging to the lower world. Originally, slaves, or *nga'ötö sawuyu*, were not to be found in the social stratification of the Niasan people. Slavery emerged because prisoners were taken in wars, or because some people were not able to pay their debts, or because a person who had been sentenced to death had been redeemed by a noble person and become his slave. The structures within the local societies mirrored those attributed to the gods: the nobility had the role of the creator and supreme god, who maintained harmony. The ordinary people had a role similar to that of Laturadanö, who protected and maintained harmony in the cosmos, and, like him, were also prepared to die in war to protect the harmony of the *banua*.²⁰²

In the traditional Niasan society, the leader of a community was called *salawa* or *balö zi'ulu*, while at the level of the *öri*, the leader was called *tuhenöri*. F. Harefa writes: 'Salawa means "the highest". He is called such because, in comparison with other people, he is the highest in all respects. For example: in terms of tradition, he is the eldest; in terms of material wealth, he is rich; in terms of intelligence, he is the smartest, etc'.²⁰³ In line with this observation, La'ia writes that the leaders in Nias fulfill certain criteria, such as:

1. Having authority or charisma (*molakhömi*), manifested by having everyone's respect.
2. Maturity (*fa'asia'a*), in which there are two factors involved: the first has to do with a person's chronological age, and the second with a person's natural, in-born authority, causing people to treat him as an elder, although in terms of his chronological age he may still be young. A person who is old has seniority, but a person with natural authority is recognized as *primus inter pares*.
3. A well-off family (*fo khö*). One who was rich was treated as a leader. In Nias, there is a saying: 'First see whether there is a fire in the hearth', which means, first find out whether that person is well-off or not.
4. Intelligence (*fa'onekhe*).²⁰⁴

²⁰¹ J. Danandjaja, 'Ono Niha: Penduduk Pulau Nias', 1976, p. 104.

²⁰² B. La'ia, 'Sendi-sendi Masyarakat Nias', in: *Peninjau* 1/1975, p. 16.

²⁰³ F. Harefa, *Hikayat dan Ceritera Bangsa serta 'Adat Nias'*, 1939, p. 77.

²⁰⁴ B. La'ia, *Solidaritas Kekeluargaan dalam Salah Satu Masyarakat Desa di Nias-Indonesia*, 1983, p. 30.

2.7 COLONIALISM AND NATIONALISM

2.7.1 United East Indies Company (VOC)

Before people from European countries, such as the Portuguese, the Spanish, the English and the Dutch, came to Asia in the sixteenth century, merchants from Arabia, Persia, India and China were making trading excursions even as far away as Europe.²⁰⁵ Persian traders explored the possibilities for trade with the Niasan people in the ninth century, but because of the very limited quantity of the products of Nias, this proved not to be very appealing. It was not until the eleventh century, when the traders from Aceh, Barus, Malaya and China came to Nias, that they were able to conduct transactions by exchanging various kinds of materials, such as gold, silver, and tin, for Niasan products, such as: copra and poultry.

Although the Spanish and the Portuguese started trading in the area in the sixteenth century, only the VOC came to Nias, around 1660. They did not come to spread Christianity, but purely to trade with the local people. To control the trading, the VOC established relationships with the local rulers and even used military force.²⁰⁶ In 1669, the VOC succeeded in making a contract with the *salawa* or *si'ulu* in North Nias, South Nias and Hinako Island. The content of that contract was that the Niasan people would sell their products only to the VOC (*Gomböni*).²⁰⁷ This contract was eagerly welcomed by the *salawa* and *si'ulu*, because it enabled them to free themselves from the domination of the Chinese, Acehnese and Malay merchants. *Balugu* Samönö Tuhabadanö Zebua in North Nias, for example, thought that the contract with the VOC would benefit him, because he would then be able to establish a 'tax harbour' in the Pelabuhan Luaha Idanoi.²⁰⁸

Later on, the VOC realized that trading in Nias brought them very little profit, because the products were so limited. Hence, in 1693, the VOC began to exchange its gold with some of the chiefs (*salawa* or *balö zi'ulu*) for slaves, to be taken to Sumatra to work on the plantations owned by the VOC.²⁰⁹ This practice continued until the 1740s, when the VOC just left. This situation was related to the new policy of 'indirect governance', established in 1743 for areas under their control. 'Indirect governance' meant that the VOC gave the local ruler the authority to procure the local products, which would then be submitted to the VOC. This system was called 'compulsory deliveries and contingents' (*verplichte leveranties en contingenten*), and was basically just the same as the previous framework of forced labor and imperialism.²¹⁰

However, the supply of local products was meager, because the slave trade had led to more wars between villages. The people had the tendency to abduct members of other villages and hand them over to the VOC to become slaves.²¹¹ Being a slave

²⁰⁵ N. Madjid, *Indonesia Kita*, 2003, pp. 17-18.

²⁰⁶ G. Knaap, 'Pola Konfrontasi, Kerja sama, dan Kontrak dalam Ekspansi VOC di "kepulauan Indonesia"', in: Irma H.N. Hadi Soewito (ed.), *Forum Dialog Indonesia-Belanda: Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie (VOC)*, 2003, pp. 44-59. Cf. Capt. R.P. Suyono, *Peperangan Kerajaan di Nusantara: Penelusuran Kepustakaan Sejarah*, 2003, p. 43.

²⁰⁷ E.E.W.Gs. Schröder, *Nias*, 1917, p. 310. Cf. 2.6.1.

²⁰⁸ F. Zebua, *Kota Gumungsitoli*, 1996, p. 25.

²⁰⁹ E. Fries, *Amuata Hoelo Nono Niha*, 1919, pp. 126-128.

²¹⁰ Soemartini, 'Pembentukan dan Susunan Organisasi VOC', in: Irma H.N. Hadi Soewito, *Forum Dialog Indonesia-Belanda. Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie (VOC)*, 2003, p. 17-28.

²¹¹ F. Harefa, *Hikayat dan Ceritera Bangsa serta 'Adat Nias'*, 1939, p. 121.

was a nightmare, for such an unfortunate person was not only forced to work, but was also torn away from his or her homeland.

In some places in Indonesia, there were revolts against the VOC²¹², but none occurred in Nias. The reason for this was that in Nias, the VOC was not involved so much in regular trading, but mostly in the slave market. In other areas of Indonesia, the VOC concentrated on acquiring spices, which was a source of large profits for them.

2.7.2 The English

Due to economic difficulties, the VOC left Nias (1740), never to return. In 1756, the English came to the island and raised their flag in Gunungsitoli. However, they did not stay long, because they found no good opportunities to develop business in Nias. Only Chinese and Malay continued to trade with Nias. They especially hired people to work on their plantations.²¹³

As of 1 Januari 1800, the VOC's properties, rights, and responsibilities were taken over by the Dutch state. But that did not mean the Dutch returned to Nias. At that time the Netherlands had become a satellite of France, which for more than twenty years was almost continuously at war with Great Britain. The Dutch governor (*stadhouder*), William V, Prince of Orange, had fled to England. He tried to save the Dutch possessions in Asia from occupation by the French. Therefore, he made an agreement with the English, which stipulated that as long as the French occupation of Holland lasted, its overseas possessions would be under English protection. When the war was over, these areas were to be returned to the Dutch.²¹⁴

Under this agreement, the Dutch activities in Indonesia were taken over by the English. From 1811 until 1816, an English governor resided in Batavia (Thomas S. Raffles). When the French had been defeated and the Netherlands became an independent kingdom (1814-1815), the English kept to their word and the Dutch returned to Indonesia. Only Sumatra for the time being remained inside the English sphere of influence. At that time, the English had become opposed to the slave trade.²¹⁵ In 1819-1820, John Prince and William Jack came to Nias and prohibited the selling of slaves. This measure was against the interests of the *si'ulu or salawa*. However, since the nobles, who were the ruling class in Nias, were still allowed to keep slaves as long as they did not sell them, there was no revolt against the English policy.²¹⁶

2.7.3 Dutch Colonialism and the Niasan Revolt

In 1824, the Dutch and English reached an agreement about the boundaries of their possessions in Southeast Asia. According to this agreement, Sumatra was to belong to the Dutch sphere of influence. A government administrator (*posthouder*) was established in Gunungsitoli and in Hinako. However, this lasted for only a year, then

²¹² Cf. R.P. Suyono, *Peperangan Kerajaan di Nusantara*, 2003.

²¹³ E.M. Loeb, *Sumatra: Its History and People*, 1972, p. 9. Around 1685, the English controlled Bengkulu, South Sumatra, and developed areas around it. They did not get to Nias until 1756. They did not stay long, since they were only to explore the possibilities for trade relationships.

²¹⁴ Cf. R.P. Suyono, *Peperangan Kerajaan di Nusantara*, 2003, pp. 109-110.

²¹⁵ F. Harefa, *Hikayat dan Ceritera Bangsa serta 'Adat Nias'*, 1939, p. 121.

²¹⁶ W. Gronert, *Introduction*, in: *Nias Tribal Treasures*, 1990, p. 13.

the Dutch just left Nias alone (1826).²¹⁷ That provided an opportunity for the Acehese slave traders. They returned to the practice of abducting Niasans and revived the slave market. War broke out because some Niasan people fought against this practice. To solve this problem, the *salawa* around Gunungsitoli then agreed to have a talk with a Malayan organization leader by the name of Raja Ibrahim Chaniago. They agreed to write the Dutch government, asking the Dutch to prohibit the slave market. In addition to writing Governor Michiel in Padang, they agreed to send Raja Ibrahim Chaniago to speak with the governor himself, and they also agreed that for this trip, the *salawa* would pay his travel expenses, which equalled the price of six slaves.²¹⁸

In response to the request of the *salawa* in Nias, in 1840, the governor sent a military battalion, led by Lieutenant Badak. They established a military camp in Gunungsitoli. From there, they watched over and controlled the security of Nias. However, F. Harefa writes that the slave trade was still active in West, North and South Nias, because this military detachment was not able to reach all parts of Nias island.²¹⁹ The Dutch government issued a prohibition of slavery, with the exception of Sumbawa harbor. This prohibition remained in force until 1852. In 1853, the Dutch government became very strict about the prohibition of slavery and even became involved in freeing slaves from their masters on the island of Sumatra, including the city of Padang, where the slave population had reached 5600 by that time.²²⁰

The present of Dutch government was not accepted by all Niasan people, particularly in South and Central Nias. In 1846, when Donleben was asked to map Nias island, he was attacked by the people of Lagundri, South Nias. Therefore, the Dutch government became very angry and, in 1847 attacked that the village and burned it down. They then built their fortress on that site. This resulted in the destruction of many traditional houses which were an inherent part of the Niasan tradition.

The attack in 1847 had left a terrible pain in the hearts of the Niasan people, particularly in South Nias. For some time, however, during the rule of General Van Swieten on the west coast of Sumatra and Tapanuli, the people remained quiet. He asked the *resident* of Tapanuli to advise the *salawa* in Nias to develop the economic situation on the island by improving the methods of farming and also by establishing animal farms. He also requested the Dutch government to send some missionaries to proclaim the Gospel. His goal was that the Niasan people would abandon their traditional beliefs and religion. However, the government did not grant these requests directly. The matter rested until 1854, when Nieuwenhuis and Rosenberg were sent to make a map of Nias Island. They stayed in Nias for only a year, because there was real trouble in the southern part of the island at that time. The problem had begun when the residents of Orahili village had robbed a Chinese merchant in Lagundri and also killed a chief from Wadoro/Simaetanö village. The Chinese merchant reported this case to the Dutch government in Gunungsitoli, and also reported the conflict between the village of Wadoro/Simaetanö and the village of Orahili. The Dutch government tried to solve this problem, but was not successful. Therefore, the Dutch sent thousands of soldiers under the leadership of Captain De Voss to attack Orahili, and war became inevitable.²²¹ The people of Orahili decided to confront the Dutch army. In that war, in 1855, the Dutch

²¹⁷ Guru Ta'aloeci, in: *Toeria*, 10/2-5 (1923). Cf. F. Harefa, *Hikayat dan Ceritera Bangsa serta 'Adat Nias'*, 1939, pp. 121-122.

²¹⁸ F. Zebua, *Kota Gunungsitoli*, 1996, pp. 93-94.

²¹⁹ F. Harefa, *Hikayat dan Ceritera Bangsa serta 'Adat Nias'*, 1939, p. 122.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*

²²¹ E. Fries, *Nias: Amoeata Hoelo Dano Niha*, 1919, p. 129.

were defeated. This was seen as the people's first resistance to the Dutch government in the history of Nias Island.²²²

Because this first attack had not been successful, in 1856 General Van Swieten sent Lieutenant Heyligers to Nias, where he built a fortress in Lagundri. Lieutenant Heyligers was known to be very kind, patient and gentle with the people in the Lagundri area, and the people liked him. This situation created peace, and the people were willing to follow the rules and policies of the Dutch government.²²³ However, this situation did not last long. In 1859, Lieutenant Heyligers was transferred, and his successor did not get along with the people, so that the people were no longer willing to obey the Dutch government. In 1861, the people in Mbotohösi attacked the Dutch fortress, causing the Dutch great losses. In 1863, the Dutch attacked again, with six hundred soldiers led by Major Fritzen, and defeated the people in Mbotohösi, Orahili, Lölöwa'u and Lagundri.²²⁴ Once again, many traditional houses were burned, as well as the whole villages. Although the victory was in the hands of the Dutch, they no longer maintained their fortress there. They only created a Government Protected Area (*rapatgebied*) around Gunungsitoli and placed an administrator there. According to E. Fries, during the years 1864 - 1902, except for the *rapatgebied*, it was as if the Dutch had left the island of Nias.²²⁵ Controlling Nias as one part of the governance was not done until the year 1864, when Nias became part of the *residentie* Tapanuli²²⁶, while the Batu islands became part of the West Coast of Sumatra.²²⁷

In 1865, missionary E.L. Denninger arrived in Nias and proclaimed the Gospel. The first 25 years was a very difficult time. The missionaries were only able to proclaim the Gospel around Gunungsitoli (*rapatgebied*). Missionary Ködding tried to preach in the village of Fagulö and South Nias, but his efforts did not meet with success. The main obstacles were the very strong traditional belief, the isolated areas, and the inter-tribal wars, during which people were beheaded (*emali*). During a visit of the RM Inspector, Dr. Schreiber, he noticed that insecurity was the main hindrance to proclaiming the Gospel in Nias. To solve this problem, he asked the Dutch government to exercise control over and to rule the whole of the Niasan population.²²⁸ In response to this request, in 1900-1901, Lieutenant Baptist was sent to Nias with a large army. His task was to attack the revolters. Sitambaho was captured, but he was able to flee to the forest.

The Dutch in subsequent year sent a new *controleur*, Lieutenant Eman (1902-1904), to continue the attacks on the revolters. He however, employed a different strategy: instead of making war, he approached the people and established good relationships with the missionaries, with very good results. *Balugu* Balöhalu Waruwu, of the Ma'u tribe, who was revolting against the Dutch, finally surrendered himself to Heinrich Sundermann in Lölöwua.²²⁹ It was the same situation with Iraono Huna, who surrendered himself to Missionary Krumm in Lölöwa'u. The Iraono Huna even became Christians. Sitambaho surrendered himself to the mis-

²²² Cf. F. Telaumbanua et al. (eds.), 'Sejarah Perjuangan Rakyat Nias', 1989.

²²³ E. Fries, *Amuata Hoelo Nono Niha*, 1919, p. 130.

²²⁴ Cf. W. R. Schmidt, *Das unbeeendete Gespräch*, pp. 8-9.

²²⁵ E. Fries *Nias: Amoeata Hoelo Dano Niha*, 1919, p. 131.

²²⁶ Bappeda, *Monografi Kabupaten Daerah Tingkat II Nias tahun 1992*, 1992, p. 2.

²²⁷ *Indisch Staatsblad* Nr. 104, (cf. *Beknopte Encyclopaedie van Nederlandsch-Indië*, 1921, p. 348).

²²⁸ *Ibid.* p. 132.

²²⁹ F. Zebua, *Kota Gunungsitoli*, 1996, p. 95. Zebua said that submission was part of a strategy to handle a difficult situation, but after that Balöhalu Waruwu fled and arranged another attack to the Dutch.

sionary in Sogae'adu.²³⁰ In addition, the cooperation between the colonial authorities and the missionaries led to the construction of new roads to reach isolated areas. The missionaries encouraged the people to work together to build the roads. This effort also bore fruit. A new road along the eastern coast to Lagundri, Teluk Dalam, was built and also one in the northern part, to Afulu. After the new roads had been opened, the Gospel was also proclaimed in South, West, East and North Nias.

During the period 1840-1902, the Dutch government showed no interest in the development of Nias. It was not until the arrival of the missionaries that primary or higher schools were established. Nias remained impoverished and backward. In the year 1903, a new rule was imposed on the Ono Niha by the Dutch government. The Dutch stressed that Nias was no longer ruled by the *salawa* or *balö zi'ulu*, but by the Dutch government. Therefore, everyone was to follow and obey all Dutch rulings. Some of the new Dutch policies came into force in 1908 (*rodi*²³¹). The people were compelled by the Dutch to submit to forced labor to build new roads and establish new infrastructures. The Dutch also forced the people to move their pigs from their piggeries to places designated by the Dutch. Moreover, the Dutch also forced the people to plant coconuts throughout the island of Nias and to establish new farms in the plains areas.²³² The people were also compelled to move from the mountain area to the lowlands.

Forced labor created a new social system for the Ono Niha. Not they, but the Dutch government now determined what was to be done on their farms. They had to plant crops which would benefit and provide profits for the Dutch, such as coconuts and rice, neglecting their own needs. If they did not obey, they would be punished. An important aspect is that this forced labor was not followed up by the implementation of technological farming. Therefore, the Ono Niha were not able to learn anything from the Dutch in the field of agriculture.

The new roads, however, had a great impact on the trade sector. More and more people visited other villages to buy and to sell goods. When the coconuts were harvested, the Chinese merchants, who controlled the market at that time, would buy them for a low price, since the coconuts had not been processed in the factory.

A lack of education was also one reason for the Niasans' poverty. Regardless of the Dutch ethical laws for their colonies, the Dutch government had no intention of educating the Ono Niha. Throughout the period of Dutch colonialism, only three schools were built: 'Gouvernements-school II Klasse' where the classes were held in Malay in Gunungsitoli, Teluk Dalam and Lahewa. The teachers were Niasans who had graduated from the mission school. In 1906, the Dutch colonial government stopped subsidizing schools established by the missionary societies.²³³ In 1930, the Dutch elementary school (*Eerste Particuliere H.I.S.*) and the Secondary School for

²³⁰ *Toeria*, 10/2-5 (1923).

²³¹ Cf. Guru Jonata, 'Rodi', in: A. Pieper (ed.), *Realienboek*, 1928, pp. 44-48. There were five types of *rodi*: 1. road building (*rodi lala*); 2. improving living conditions (*rodi nomo*); 3. cultivating coconuts (*rodi kabunohi*); 4. planting rice (*rodi laza*); and 5. hunting (*rodi wealu*). These strict laws caused the Niasan guerrillas to become stronger after 1908, cf. Tim Penyusun, *Sejarah Perjuangan Rakyat Nias*, 1989, pp. 66-83.

²³² *Ibid.* Jonata writes that at the beginning, the Ono Niha were very sad and suffered under this forced labor. In addition to having to transfer the pig pens, they were also forced to till farmland, whereas they had been familiar with the system of gardening. Later on, however, the people got used to the farming system.

²³³ R. Wagner, *Die Mission auf Nias*, 1915, pp. 72-74.

Girls (*Meisjesvervolgsschool*) were founded – however, not by the Dutch government, but by non-government organizations.²³⁴

In 1902, the Dutch defeated the revolters, and they then controlled the whole area, except for Batu Islands, which at that time was not yet a part of Nias. In 1914, the conquest of the whole of Nias was completed, leading to the Repentance Movement a year later. The struggle of the Niasan people, which was considered by Dutch to be a 'revolt', was not influenced by any nationalist movement. It was an independent movement with local origins.

In the early twentieth century, some Niasan people who had travelled to Aceh, Tapanuli, Padang and Java had a nationalist movement in those areas. When these people returned home, they tried to establish this movement, called *Insulinde*, on Nias, too. H. Fischer²³⁵, in his lecture at the missionaries' conference, held 19-25 July 1921 on Nias, reported the foundation of *Insulinde* on Nias. Its members were from Gunungsitoli, Bio'uti, Hinako, Hilimaziaya and Sogae'adu.

This party was a continuation of the *Indische Partij*, which was based on general on ethical principles rather than on religion. Since the missionaries had not involved themselves in trying to lessen the people's suffering caused by forced labor, and had even maintained good relationships with the colonial government²³⁶, the *Insulinde* party was the only instrument which provided any protection for the people. Fischer explained that in 1916, there had been a revolt as a result of a spirit of nationalism.

One example Fischer gave of the influence of *Insulinde* was what had happened in Idanögawo (near Bio'uti village). When the people were forced to work, they went to Gunungsitoli and reported the matter to the *Insulinde* party, in order to get a membership card. They were willing to pay the monthly membership fee for 6 months, as long as they got the card. When they returned and showed their cards to the foreman, the foreman did not make them work anymore. Fischer also explained that some church members had come to the missionaries and had asked the missionaries to help them. However, the missionaries had not wanted to get involved. Then these people had threatened that if the missionaries would not help them, they were going to report this case to the *Insulinde* party. When the missionaries heard this, they had been afraid. In his lecture, Fischer strongly warned Christian people against joining the *Insulinde* party, because it was a very revolutionary group. He was of the opinion that the missionaries should think of a strategy to handle this party, and he advised Christian people to join the *Christelijke Ethische Partij*.

The Dutch also rearranged the system of governance in Nias. In 1919, Nias and the surrounding islands (except for the Batu Islands), became one *afdeeling* in the *residentie Tapanuli*, which was divided into two *onderafdeeling*, the *onderafdeeling* North Nias, with its capital city of Gunungsitoli, and the *onderafdeeling* South Nias, with its capital city of Teluk Dalam.²³⁷

²³⁴ J. Danandjaja, 'Ono Niha: Penduduk Pulau Nias', 1976, p. 143.

²³⁵ H. Fischer, 'Die Sozialpolitische Volksbewegung in Niederländisch Indien und ihr Einfluss auf unsere Niasschen Christen' (Referate Nias I 1900-1923, RMG 2.784).

²³⁶ H. Rabeneck, 'Stellung der Missionare zur Kolonialregierung und ihre Beamten' (Referat Nias I 1900-1923, RMG 2.784).

²³⁷ BAPPEDA TKT II NIAS, 'Monografi Kabupaten Daerah Tingkat II Nias', 1992, p. 2. Cf. S. Zebua, 'Menyelusuri Sejarah Kebudayaan Ono Niha', 1984, p. 447. Zebua explains that in 1915, the status of Tanö Niha was reduced to that of an *onderafdeeling* under the *afdeeling Tapanuli Tengah*, with its

In this connection, in addition to the assistant-*resident* in each *onderafdeeling*, the Dutch also appointed what was called a *demang* (the head of a district) and an assistant-*demang*. However, there were no Niasan officials qualified to fill those positions, and therefore the Dutch appointed Batak and Minahasa (Sulawesi) people to those positions. *Tuhenöri* were elected as the helpers of the *demang* and of the assistant-*demang*.²³⁸ This led to a differentiation within the status of *salawa* or *tuhenöri* in Nias into the *salawa / tuhenöri hada* (as the traditional leader) and the *salawa / tuhenöri fareta* (as the helper of the assistant-*demang*). Then in 1928, the Batu Islands, which were part of the Residency of the West Coast of Sumatra, were made into an *onderafdeeling* and placed under the *afdeeling* Nias, Tapanuli Residency area. Therefore, Nias then consisted of three *onderafdeeling*.

During the period of Dutch governance, 1902-1942, no significant development took place. Nevertheless, the Dutch supported or cooperated with the missionaries in establishing schools, health centres and hospitals. However, the main concern of the Dutch government was the construction of roads and bridges. In the sector of sea transportation, the Dutch government used a merchant ship that came to Nias twice a month and picked up copra and pigs for export.²³⁹

2.7.4 Japanese Colonialism

Dutch colonialism continued till 1942. After the Dutch had been, Japan then ruled Indonesia. In April 1942, the Japanese army arrived on Nias and took control of the area.²⁴⁰ Before the arrival of the Japanese, the Ono Niha had tried to steal weapons from the Dutch. An incident was unavoidable. The *controleur* for North Nias, Van der Plas, was shot in the leg by a policeman, Abdul Hamid Ziawa. This action was supported by the *demang*, Herman Hutabarat.

When Japan assumed the rule over Nias island, the Japanese issued Constitution Number 1, 1942, which treated the governmental management of Nias. There was no significant change, except that the term *afdeeling* was changed into *bunsu sibu* and led by a *secoco* whose name was Suzuki. District was changed into *gun* and led by a *gunco*. There were two *gun* on Nias: one was in Gunungsitoli and one was in Teluk Dalam. A sub-district was called *fuku gun*, and was led by a *fuku gunco*. There were nine *fuku gun*, led by *fuku gunco*, on Nias, and of these *fuku gunco*, six were Niasans.²⁴¹ The nine *fuku gunco*, with their *fuku gun*, were: L. Andries (Gunungsitoli), Ch. Zaluchu (Tuhemberua), S. Gea (Idano Gawo), Sultan Ibrahim (Lahewa), T. Hulu (Mandrehe), D.Z. Marundruri (Lolowa'u). K. Harefa (Balaekha), T. Zebua (Teluk Dalam) and M. Zuldin Tanjung (Batu Islands).

At first, the Niasans welcomed the arrival of the Japanese, all the more so because of the slogan 'Asia for the Asians' but the people soon felt the difference between Dutch colonialism and the Japanese rule. The Niasan people suffered. Their life worsened. They lacked food, shelter, clothes, etc. The new government did not

headquarters in Sibolga. But this policy was maintained only till 1918, because it was impossible to have Nias merely as an *onderafdeeling*.

²³⁸ S. Zebua, 'Menyelusuri Sejarah Kebudayaan Ono Niha', 1984, p. 447. Cf. S. Segawa, 'Some Preliminary Result of the Research on Culture and Society of Nias Island, North Sumatera', 1984, p. 30.

²³⁹ S. Zebua, 'Menyelusuri Sejarah Kebudayaan Ono Niha', 1984, pp. 446-454.

²⁴⁰ F. Telaumbanua (ed.), 'Sejarah Perjuangan Masyarakat Nias', p. 84.

²⁴¹ S. Zebua, 'Menyelusuri Sejarah Kebudayaan Ono Niha', 1984, p. 460.

care at all about their welfare. The people were forced to work on the farms, but the produce and profits all went to the Japanese to pay the war expenses and to satisfy the needs of the military.²⁴²

During the period of Japanese colonialism, life was even worse for the Ono Niha. Although at the beginning, the Ono Niha welcomed the arrival of the Japanese because of the slogan 'Asia for the Asians', the truth was far from that. In this context, S. Zebua writes:²⁴³

A bitter experiences at that time caused tremendous pain in the life of the people. There was a lack of food; they were haunted by fear; education and schooling were neglected. The only thing that was important to the Japanese rulers was to get the people to produce things needed for the war and for military supplies. The people were forced to farm, but the products were enjoyed by the Japanese armed forces.

The orders of the Japanese had to be followed. Any noncompliance was punished with horrible sanctions.²⁴⁴ The Niasan people lived in constant fear, since the Japanese had no reservations concerning cruel acts, such as killing and raping. Famine spread throughout the land. During those times, only the teachers had a better life, since the Japanese government paid the teachers' salaries.²⁴⁵

In addition to all this, in 1943, three hundred young men from Nias were called up by Japan to be trained in Siborong-borong as non-commissioned officers, *bintara*, or, in Japanese: *kambung soi*. They were to become sergeants major (*gunco*) in the voluntary army of Japan. Of these three hundred young men, fifty-two passed the examination and underwent training as *kambung soi* for three months. After graduation, they returned to Nias and were given the task of training other young men to be common soldiers, called *gyugun*. Thus was life for the people during the Japanese occupation. Although this Japanese colonialism lasted for only three years, the suffering of the people was extreme. This situation continued until 15 August 1945, when Japan was defeated in World War II.

2.7.5 Republic of Indonesia in the Soekarno Period

Nias consists of many islands, separated from North Sumatera. This isolated situation has always delayed communication. When Soekarno and Hatta proclaimed Indonesian independence on 17 August 1945, Nias did not learn about it until 6 October 1945, through a wire sent by the *Residen* of Tapanuli, Dr. F.L. Tobing.

Because of this delay in information, it was not until 8 October that Nias celebrated Indonesian Independence. Before that, *Secoco* Suzuki had informed the Niasan people about the war and promised to return after the war. To fill the vacuum of power, Suzuki appointed D.Z. Marundruri (the *fuku gunco* of Lölöwa'u) as *secoco* of Nias, and the other staff members remained in their respective positions. The Marundruri administration continued to follow the Japanese concept, without knowing that Indonesia had already achieved independence. After receiving this

²⁴² *Ibid.* p. 464.

²⁴³ *Ibid.* p. 464.

²⁴⁴ Ama Watörö Lase, 'Waöwaö wa'aniha Keriso ba Danö Niha (Nias) Barö zi Otu Fache Wa'ara, Wanuriaigö Turia Somuso Dödö', in : *Majalah Turia Röfa*, 7/9 (1971), p. 6.

²⁴⁵ K. Mendröfa, 'Sedjarah Sekolah ba Danö Niha (Pulau Nias)', in *Majalah Turia Röfa*, 6/11 (1970), p. 5.

information from the *resident* of Tapanuli, D.Z. Marunduri sent a letter to the government of the Republic of Indonesia, expressing their loyalty to the Indonesian government. Then the Indonesian National Committee (*Komite Nasional Indonesia*) was formed, led by P.R. Telaumbanua²⁴⁶, and various political parties emerged again, such as: PNI, *Majelis Islam Tinggi* (MIT), *Parki* (which became *Parkindo*), *Parsi* (which became PSI), PRI (which became *Pesindo*) and *Petwani* (which became *Perwari*).

The spirit of Independence created courage in the Indonesian government, in the lives of the young people, and in the political parties. When Suzuki (ex-*secoco* of Nias) returned to Nias in November 1945, and requested that the leadership in Nias be returned to the Japanese government, he was rejected and even expelled from Nias.²⁴⁷ In the new spirit of independence, the people tried to face all challenges and problems, even if they were in dire straits, particularly during the Dutch 'First Aggression' in 1947, during which Gunungsitoli, Hinako Island and Pulau Tello were bombarded from the sea by Admiral Meriam.²⁴⁸ To protect themselves, some people fled to other places, such as: Sihare'ö, Onowaembo, Hilina'a-Bawaohe, Ombölata Simenari and Tumöri.

Nias has always been loyal to Indonesia, and did not succumb to Mansyur's attempts at persuasion. He wanted to establish the State of East Sumatra (*Negara Sumatera Timur*) in March, 1949.²⁴⁹ Nias did not send a representative when Mansyur invited them to attend the conference of the State of East Sumatra in Medan. Nias sent a letter saying that they were loyal to the Indonesian government.

Under the governance of the Republic of Indonesia, Nias and the Batu Islands were united as one regency, named Nias Regency. The term *binsu sibu* was changed to *kepala lurah*, *gun* became *urung* and was headed by an assistant of a *kepala urung* (*demang*), and *fuku gun* became *urung kecil*, led by a *kepala urung kecil* (*asisten demang*). The government also formed the National Committee for the Region, whose task was to manage and to develop the island. It was active until 1949. Then a new organization was formed, by the name of *Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat* (DPR) or: the Parliamentary Organization of Nias. In 1949, the Nias Government was changed to the Nias Regency, governed by a *bupati*, and Reverend Ros Telaumbanua became regent to replace D.Z. Marunduri (*kepala luhak*). The period from independence till the end of Sukarno's governance was called the 'Old Order', and this order adopted a traditional organization, the *öri*, a gathering of several *banua*, as part of the governmental structure. Its rank was between the *kecamatan* (sub-district) and the *banua* (village). Unfortunately, at the end of the Old Order, the *öri* was removed from the governmental structure by the decision of the Governor of North Sumatra, dated 24 Juli 1965, Nr.

²⁴⁶ P.R. Telaumbanua was a pastor of the BNKP. He studied at HIK Sala, but did not graduate, and in 1940 he returned to Nias and entered the theological school as a student along with people who had just returned from Sipoholon as a result of World War II. He was ordained as a pastor of the BNKP in 1943. His involvement in politics was not on behalf of the BNKP, but due to personal involvement.

²⁴⁷ Yayasan Bhakti Wawasan Nusantara, *Profil Propinsi Republik Indonesia : Sumatera Utara*, 1992, pp. 7-8.

²⁴⁸ F. Zebua, *Kota Gunungsitoli*, 1996, pp. 108-109. Dutch and United Nations delegates came to Nias twice to conduct diplomatic discussion. Their aim was to return the control over Nias Island to the Dutch. No agreement was achieved because all the people blockaded the entire city and were ready to go to war.

²⁴⁹ Cf. Supartono Widoyosiswoyo, *Sejarah Kebudayaan Indonesia*, 2000, p. 224. This was the strategy of the Netherlands to have puppet states. Some of these puppet states were: *Negara Indonesia Timur*, *Negara Sumatera Timur*, *Negara Sumatera Selatan*, *Negara Pasundan*, *Negara Jawa Timur*.

222/v/GBU.²⁵⁰ And with its removal, the traditional system of Niasan government was also removed. During the New Order, the Indonesian Government imposed the same rules and systems of government on all areas, with no consideration for the unique character, culture, or race of a local area.

During the period 1949-1950, as the result of the Den Haag Agreement, Indonesia came to be known by the name *Republik Indonesia Serikat*, or the Federal Republic of Indonesia. In 1950-1959, Indonesia used the term *Demokrasi Liberal*. At this time, there was so much internal conflict that the cabinet had to be reorganized seven times. In general, the cabinet was dominated by the PNI, the *Masyumi*, and the *Nahdeatul Ulama* parties, which won the election in 1955. The Communist party was not included in the cabinet, although it had won a fourth place in the elections, following the three parties mentioned above.²⁵¹ Then, in the period 1959 - 1966, President Soekarno introduced *Demokrasi Terpimpin*, or 'Guided Democracy' and cabinet *gotong royong*, or 'Cooperative Cabinet' with a *Dewan Nasional*, or 'National Council'. During the period 1966-1998, under the leadership of Soeharto, the term 'New Order' emerged and Indonesia implemented what was called *Demokrasi Pancasila*. Development was organized in five-year-plans, known by the acronym PELITA (*Pembangunan Lima Tahun*), which stressed the improvement and development of the economy, supported by a stable political system.

Neither in the Old Order nor in the New Order was the development of Nias taken seriously by the government. The Nias Regency remained the poorest and the most backward area in North Sumatera, as indicated by low incomes, a low educational level, low levels of health and sanitation, as well as limitations in terms of infrastructure. Nias continue to be isolated from the social, economic and educational centre.

2.8 FINAL OBSERVATIONS

Nias and the Batu Islands constitute the area described in this chapter, where the encounter between Christianity and the Niasan culture took place within the time frame of this study (1865-1965). The Ono Niha, the inhabitants of these islands, are among the oldest peoples of Southeast Asia.²⁵² In contrast to many other peoples of Indonesia, they have never been influenced by the great Hindu and Buddhist kingdoms in the region. Some Buginese traders on the Hinako Islands and the Batu Islands are completely assimilated into the Niasan society. Furthermore, contacts with merchants from Aceh, Minangkabau, Malaya, China, or Europe had only little impact on the *adat* and did not challenge the primal religion. The Christian missionaries were the first who intentionally came to Nias to challenge the Niasan culture.

When the missionaries arrived in the nineteenth century, they came upon poor and underdeveloped people. The geographical isolation of the islands off the West Coast of Sumatra and the lack of unity between the villages (*banua*) constituted the predominant causes for this situation.²⁵³ Instead of cooperation, there were division

²⁵⁰ Bappeda, *Monografi. Kabupaten Nias*, pp. 4-5.

²⁵¹ S. Widyosiswoyo, *Sejarah Kebudayaan Indonesia*, 2000, pp. 227-228.

²⁵² J. Danandjaja and Koentjaraningrat, 'Penduduk Kepulauan Sebelah Barat Sumatra', in: Koentjaraningrat, *Manusia dan Kebudayaan Indonesia*, 1977, p. 37. and E. Modigliani, *Un Viaggio a Nias*, 1890, pp. 6-8.

²⁵³ The variety of the *banua* had an impact on Christianity. When the majority of the Ono Niha turned

and strife between the different tribes and clans. In addition to this, these hot and humid islands on the equator were infested with disease.²⁵⁴

It is important to understand, however, that various cultures do not separate the natural from the supernatural and that the concept of religion as a separate category of thought and action is rooted in the Western tradition. Religion, which goes back to the beginnings of the human species, is experienced as an integral aspect of culture. The antiquity and universality of religion have led many anthropologists to speculate about its origins and function. One of the important functions of religion is to give meaning to and to explain those aspects of the physical and social environment that influenced the lives of individuals and societies. Religion deals with the nature of life and death, the creation of the universe, the origin of society, the presence of groups within society, the relationships of the individuals and groups to one another, and the relation of humankind to nature. This whole cognitive system constitutes a cosmology or world view.²⁵⁵ According to the above-mentioned cosmology of the Ono Niha, all activities in this world are a reflection of the upper world. In order to secure the harmony of the cosmos, the Ono Niha practiced the rites of their ancestors and obeyed the *adat*.

The *adu* is a symbol of the Niasan primal religion, and thus of the ancient *adat*. Therefore, all *adat* activities in the cycle of life, including agriculture, husbandry, hunting, as well as social activities, such as the building of a house, feasts of merit and the institution of *fondrakö*, always require an *adu*. The worship of the *adu*, especially the *adu zatua*, is based on the expectation of receiving blessings from the ancestors. An *adu* was believed to be able to cast out all evil spirits causing physical and mental illness. Hämmerle describes the significance of the *adu* for the Ono Niha in the following way:²⁵⁶

What was their security, and who could save them in all difficulties of life, in all disease, suffering, and threat? Who would be their helper in their anxiety facing the power of evil spirits and death, as well as other fears? What was to be their support in the face of a curse, of war, black magic, poison, headhunters, slavery, etc.? There was no other helper for the ancient Ono Niha than the *adu* and the *fo'ere*. Because that was their religion, that was their guide to salvation.

Therefore, when the missionaries came and saw the 'idols' and the 'heathen' ceremonies, they believed it to be their solemn duty to fight these dark practices with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The social system and the indigenous culture of the Ono Niha has undergone rapid change ever since its first prolonged encounter with Dutch colonialism and the Christian missions. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the entire Nias Regency was subdued by the Dutch. All opposition was stamped out and taxes and forced labour were introduced. Although this impact caused a lot of suffering and a loss of cultural identity, it also opened the isolated interiors of Nias and the Batu

to the Christian faith, the majority of the *banua* made haste to enter the church. On the other hand, the diversity of the *banua* became a constant source of conflict and schism within Niasan Christianity.

²⁵⁴ Cf. T. Müller-Krüger, *Sedjarah Geredja di Indonesia*, 1966, p. 236.

²⁵⁵ Cf. Serena Nanda, *Cultural Anthropology*, 1991, p. 161.

²⁵⁶ J.M. Hämmerle, *Hikaya Nadu*, Pusaka Nias 1995, pp. 7-8.

Islands to the outside world. In addition, the *pax Neerlandica* ended the practices of slavery and headhunting, as well as the wars between the *banua*.

The Dutch enforced a new administrative system, which, although it did integrate some elements of the traditional structures for this purpose, also made changes (e.g., by appointing minor chiefs with Western education, while disregarding the traditional paramount chiefs). And, of course, the highest authority always remained in the hands of the Dutch colonial officials (*controleur*, *assistent-resident*, etc.).²⁵⁷

The *adat* also underwent a significant change. The Dutch accepted it as a set of traditional laws and customs, but only to the extent to which *adat* was not contrary to the Dutch legal codex. All this provided the context in which the missionaries worked and the early church grew among the Ono Niha.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁷ ENI 3 (1919), pp. 29-30.

²⁵⁸ W.R. Schmidt, *Das unbeeendete Gespräch*, 1967, pp. 25.

3 Societies doing Missionary Work on Nias and the Batu Islands

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Christianity entered the life of the Ono Niha in the second half of the nineteenth century through the agents of two Protestant missionary societies¹ related to but independent of the established churches. The larger of the two was the Rhenish Missionary Society (RM)², centred in Barmen (Wuppertal³), Germany. Its work among the Ono Niha in Padang and Nias began in the 1860s.

Some thirty years later, the much smaller Dutch Lutheran Missionary Society (DLM)⁴, centred in Amsterdam, The Netherlands, sent its missionaries to the Ono Niha on the Batu Islands. Until the 1930s, the DLM and the RM cooperated closely in this area.

Both on Nias and on the Batu Islands, the indigenous churches gradually grew, transforming Ono Niha society into a predominantly Christian one. During World War II, the work of the missionary societies was stopped and the young churches assumed full responsibility for the church work. In the 1950s, relations between the BNKP and the RM were restored in a different way. It was not until 1988/1989 that the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Kingdom of the Netherlands, which since 1943 had had a missionary council assuming most of the missionary responsibilities of the DLM, and the BNKP church-circuit of the Batu Islands began a renewed partnership.

3.2 RHENISH MISSIONARY SOCIETY (RM)

The RM was the first missionary institution to work continuously among the Ono Niha: first in Padang and then also on Nias.

¹ Societies were free associations of persons of similar interests with the purpose of achieving common goals, cf. W.W. Mijndhardt, *Het Nederlandse Genootschap in de achttiende en vroege negentiende eeuw*, 1983, pp. 76-101; J. Boneschansker, *Het Nederlandsch Zending Genootschap in zijn eerste periode*, 1987, pp. 24f.

² 'Rheinische Missionsgesellschaft' (German abbreviation: RMG). In English, RM is used.

³ 'Wuppertal' (valley of the Wupper) is a region situated along the river Wupper in the Rhineland, bordering on Westphalia. In 1929, the city Wuppertal was founded, which included the towns of Elberfeld and Barmen, and other smaller ones. The first mission station of the RM in South Africa was named 'Wuppertal', using the spelling then current, nearly one hundred years earlier, in 1830.

⁴ 'Nederlandsch-Luthersch Genootschap voor In- en Uitwendige Zending'. English abbreviation: DLM.

3.2.1 Spiritual Context

The spiritual context of the RM is the Pietism⁵ and the Revivalism⁶ of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the Union⁷ churches of the Rhineland and Westphalia. Spiritually and financially, the work was supported by mission-minded individuals, groups and congregations. Among the supporting congregations there were many of a Reformed character, especially in the Siegerland⁸, often with close links to the Netherlands and adhering to the Heidelberg Catechism.⁹ Others, especially in the Ravensberger Land¹⁰, were Lutheran, using the Catechism of Dr. Martin Luther.¹¹ Their common devotional character, however, which gradually spread to influence large areas of church life, smoothed out sharp differences between Calvinism and Lutheranism. Even when confessional tensions flamed up highly in the 1850s, especially in Lutheran circles which were suspicious of the Union, twice an inter-confessional 'Day of Church-unity' (*Kirchentag*)¹² was held in Elberfeld (1851) and in Barmen (1860), near the headquarters of the RM. Though the

⁵ E. Kriele, *Die Rheinische Mission in der Heimat*, 1928, pp. 9-17. 'Die Rheinische Mission ist ein echtes Kind des niederrheinischen Pietismus' (The Rhenish Mission is a genuine child of the Lower Rhine Pietism), quotation on p. 9.

⁶ The revivals in Germany in the nineteenth century took place parallel to the 'Evangelical Awakening' in the Anglo-Saxon world, cf. F.W. Graf et al., 'Erweckung/Erweckungsbewegungen', in: *RGG*⁴ II (1999), pp. 1490-1499; U. Gäbler, 'Enkele kenmerken van het Europese en Amerikaanse Réveil', in: *Documentatieblad voor de Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis na 1800*, 13/33 (1990), pp. 2-16; Gäbler has shown that the aims of this movement were very similar in Europe and in North America. The expectation of the nearness of the second coming of Jesus Christ caused a sense of crisis. The true believers had to be gathered and build the Kingdom of God. Personal faith, mission and charity were the true answers against atheism and secularism.

⁷ Unification of previously Lutheran and Reformed churches. 'Unierte' (from Latin *unire*) means 'united'. In response to an urgent request of the Prussian King, Friedrich Wilhem III in 1817, the Lutheran and Reformed territorial churches in Prussia began to form an administrative Union, practicing intercommunion and intercelebration. Within this *Union* (in the west, including the provincial churches in the Rhineland and Westphalia), the individual congregations could opt to be Lutheran or Reformed or United, whereby the United congregations could opt to use either Luther's catechism or the Heidelberg Catechism.

⁸ Siegerland is the area around the town of Siegen in the (former) Prussian province of Westphalia. According to Missionary Edmund Sartor, the later awakening on Nias was very similar to the one he had experienced in Siegerland in his youth; cf. E. Sartor, 'Jahresbericht 1919 über die Station Sa'ua' (RMG 2.769).

⁹ Zacharias Ursinus and Caspar Olevianus, *Heidelberger Katechismus*, Pfalz, 1563.

¹⁰ The awakening in Ravensberger Land in the (former) Prussian province of Westphalia, between the Teutoburg Forest and the Wiehen Mountains, was influenced by the Moravian Brethren and the *Deutsche Christentumsgesellschaft* in Basel (1780-1839). It spread from Gütersloh (Revival sermons of Volkening in 1826) and Steinhagen (first mission festival in Ravensberger Land in 1835) to Herford, Bünde, Jöllenbeck, Bielefeld, Minden (on the northern edge of the Wiehen Mountains), and other places. Cf. Th. Sundermeier, *Erweckung in Ravensberg: Predigten und Auslegungen Ravensberger Erweckungsprediger*, 1962. Concerning the *Deutsche Christentumsgesellschaft*, cf. H. Weigelt, 'Deutsche Christentumsgesellschaft', in: *RGG*⁴ II (1999), p. 246.

¹¹ *Großer Katechismus* (1529) and *Kleiner Katechismus* (1529); in families, schools and catechism classes Luther's Short Catechism (*Kleiner Katechismus*) was used.

¹² Huge lay-events for demonstrating the basic unity of German Protestants. The *Kirchentage*, held from 1848 until 1872, were a reaction to the revolution of 1848, and thus different in character from the modern *Kirchentag*, held since 1949. Cf. H. Schroeter-Wittke, 'Kirchentag', in: *RGG*⁴ IV (2001), pp. 1303-1306.

confessional tensions caused some staunch Lutherans to leave the RM, a schism on confessional grounds could be avoided.¹³

The fathers of the Pietism in the Rhineland and Westphalia were Gerhard Tersteegen (1697-1769)¹⁴, Samuel Collenbusch (1724-1803)¹⁵ and Johann H. Volkening (1796-1877).¹⁶ Strong influences also came from Pietistic circles in Basel, London and the Netherlands. Characteristic of the movement were the strong role of the laity, cross-denominational openness (though there was some harsh anti-Catholicism¹⁷), and Biblical preaching.¹⁸ The Pietists vehemently rejected both Rationalism and historical-critical exegesis.¹⁹ While they had a critical attitude towards the church as an institution, politically they were anti-revolutionary and rather supportive of authoritarian structures.

An early supporter of the RM in the Siegerland was Tillmann Siebel (1804-1875).²⁰ He was a layman who founded small devotional circles²¹, urging its members to take a faith decision and to sanctify their lives. These 'Quiet in the Land'²² emphasized a personal relationship to God and yearned for the coming of his Kingdom.²³ They met regularly in private homes for prayer, Bible study and the reading of missionary reports.

Revivalism was rooted in the theology of Pietism, but had more appreciation for the Lutheran and Calvinist confessions and a greater concern for church and society. It was 'Pietism gone public', openly taking up the arms of faith against atheism and

¹³ August Hardeland, from 1848 until 1856 RM-missionary in Borneo, left the RM in 1856 and joined the Hermannsburg Mission. Heinrich Schöneberg, from 1850 until 1857 RM-missionary in Hereroland (Namibia) and the Cape-Province (South-Africa), was dismissed as a RM-missionary because he declared not to be willing to have church communion with Reformed or Union Christians (cf. E. Kriele, *Die Rheinische Mission in der Heimat*, 1928, pp. 202-204).

¹⁴ For the influence of his writings and hymns, cf. W. Nigg, *Gerhard Tersteegen: Eine Auswahl aus seinen Schriften*, 1967. By the same author, *Gerhard Tersteegen. Der Verstand des Herzens*, 1997. Cf. D. Meyer (ed.), *Gerhard Tersteegen: Ich bete an die Macht der Liebe*, 1998. G. Tersteegen was influenced by the Dutch Pietist Jean de Labadie (1610-1674) and by Roman Catholic mysticism.

¹⁵ Cf. D. Meyer, 'Collenbusch', in: *RGG*⁴ II (1999), pp. 421-422.

¹⁶ Cf. F.-M. Kuhlemann, 'Volkening', in: *RGG*⁴ VIII (2005), pp. 1153-1154.

¹⁷ Anti-Catholicism did not play a role in the missionary areas on Nias and the Batu Islands until after Roman Catholic missionary work expanded in the 1950s and 1960s. Cf. Ch. 5.6.3; also Th. van den End and J. Weitjens, *Ragi Carita II*, 2002, pp. 393.

¹⁸ Cf. G. Menzel, *Die Rheinische Mission*, 1978, pp. 16-17. Pastors gathered to prepare biblically based sermons at the 'Farbmühlen-Konferenz'.

¹⁹ Rationalist theology was inspired by Georg F.W. Hegel (1770-1831), for whom reason is the divine principle in the human being. Missionary circles rejected the historical-critical approach of the German Ferdinand C. Baur (1792-1860, 'Younger School of Tübingen') and the Dutch Abraham D. Loman (1823-1897, Lutheran) and Johan H. Scholten (1811-1886, Reformed). Rationalism was accused of turning the pulpit into a lecturing rostrum, cf. U. Köpf, 'Baur', in: *RGG*⁴ I (1998), pp. 1183-1185; H. Berkhof, *Geschiedenis der Kerk*, 1941, p. 270; C.Ch.G. Visser, *De Lutheranen in Nederland: Tussen katholicisme en calvinisme 1566 tot heden*, 1983, p. 132; A.J. Rasker, *De Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk, vanaf 1795*, 1986, pp. 115-118.

²⁰ Cf. W.A. Siebel, *Tillmann Siebel, der Vater des christlichen Lebens im Siegerland*, 1947.

²¹ The first 'Missionshilfsvereine' were founded in 1830. Until 1848, they were among the few religious gatherings legally permitted in addition to the official church services (cf. A. Bonn, *Ein Jahrhundert Rheinische Mission*, 1928, pp. 27-28).

²² 'Die Stillen im Lande'; influenced by the works of Philipp J. Spener (1635-1705) and Gerhard Tersteegen, these circles practiced a Protestant version of Quietism. Their highest objective was to reach peace of the soul in inner contemplation and prayer which, ultimately, needs neither religious activities nor words. Cf. Hans Schneider, 'Quietismus', in: *RGG*⁴ VI (2003), pp. 1865-1868.

²³ Cf. E. Kriele, *Die Rheinische Mission in der Heimat*, 1928, p. 21; J.C. Hoekendijk, *Kerk en volk in de Duitse zendingswetenschap*, 1948, pp. 19-21, 24-26. Kingdom of God was not understood as a political theocracy, but as the rule of God in personal lives and in the community of believers.

secularism. Revival preachers were the controversial star-entertainers of the nineteenth century, idolized by their fans and scorned by their foes. Some, like Friedrich W. Krummacher (1796-1868), who served for more than twenty years in Barmen and Elberfeld, drew great multitudes to the church services.²⁴ Others, such as Volkening in Ravensberger Land, developed the annual mission festivals²⁵ into a major driving force behind the missionary movement. The main theme of the revival-preachers was 'salvation through the blood of Christ'²⁶, and damnation without it. This uncompromising spiritual coercion often led to emotional outbreaks and occasionally to mass awakenings²⁷ or religious revivals.²⁸ In the early industrialized valley of the Wupper, leading middle-class families were practising the spirit of the revival by providing active social care among members of the working class.

Embedded in this spiritual atmosphere, there were at least five motives which inspired thousands to devote their lives to missionary service:²⁹

1. The sense of crisis caused by the expectation of the near Second Coming of Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God. Jesus will come as the Judge of the World and the Saviour of true believers.
2. The sense of duty towards the Great Commission of the risen Lord (Mt 28:19).
3. The love for the immortal souls of the multitudes of lost heathen 'out there'.
4. The disgust for the sins 'of this world', such as fornication and idolatry.
5. The longing to honour King Jesus through brave witness.

Popular in most of these Pietistic and Revivalist circles were two devotional books, which later were translated into the Niasan vernacular and, even today, have a strong influence on the church life on Nias and the Batu Islands: *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678/1684) by John Bunyan (1628-1688)³⁰, a masterpiece of eschato-

²⁴ Friedrich W. Krummacher was the minister of the Reformed church in Barmen-Gemarke as of 1825. In 1834 he transferred to the Reformed congregation in Elberfeld, where his uncle Gottfried D. Krummacher was the First Minister. In 1847, the Prussian king called him to the Dreifaltigkeitskirche in Berlin. The sermons of Friedrich W. Krummacher were greatly responsible for Friedrich Engel's negative views concerning Christianity. Engels originated from a Pietistic family in Barmen and had himself experienced Krummacher's church services. Cf. Harald Schroeter-Wittke, *Unterhaltung*, 1999, pp. 164-186; Hans P. Bleuel, *Friedrich Engels, Bürger und Revolutionär*, 1981.

²⁵ Cf. H. Rzepkowski, 'Missionsfest', in: *Lexikon Missionstheologischer Grundbegriffe*, 1987, pp. 283-289; Karl Rennstich, 'Mission - Geschichte der protestantischen Mission in Deutschland', in: U. Gäbler (ed.), *Der Pietismus im neunzehnten und zwanzigsten Jahrhundert*, 2000, pp. 315-316.

²⁶ This was also the motto of the Dutch Missionary Society (NZG), cf. J. Boneschanker, *Het Nederlandsch Zendeling Genootschap in zijn eerste Periode*, 1987, p. 191.

²⁷ In the Lower Rhine region, and other areas closely affiliated with the RM, there were awakenings in Wülfrath (1784) and Elberfeld (1800-1837).

²⁸ The revival in the Ravensberger Land began in 1835, during a mission festival in Steinhagen, cf. Th. Sundermeier, *Erweckung in Ravensberg*, 1962, p. 10. Earlier there had been revivals in other supporting areas of the RM: in 1784 in Wülfrath under the leadership of Johann Herminghaus and 1800-1837 in Elberfeld under Gottfried D. Krummacher, the uncle of Friedrich W. Krummacher.

²⁹ Cf. I.H. Enklaar, 'Motive und Zielsetzungen der neueren niederländischen Mission in ihrer Anfangsperiode', in: *Pietismus und Reveil*, 1978, pp. 282-285; I.H. Enklaar, *Kom over en help ons!*, 1981, pp. 16-22; U. Gäbler, 'Enkele kenmerken van het Europese en Amerikaanse Réveil', in: *Documentatieblad voor de Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis na 1800*, 13/33 (1990), pp. 2-16; G. Menzel, *Die Rheinische Mission*, 1978, pp. 19-20.

³⁰ Heinrich Sundermann translated it into Li Nono Niha (*Jalan Musafir*, 1905).

logical (apocalyptic) devotional literature, which follows the motif of the 'way' (Mt 7: 13-14), and *The Little Book of the Heart* (1812³¹) by Johannes E. Gossner³², which pictures the different stages of the human disposition from the hellish-dark heart of the lost sinner to the blissfully light heart of the born-again, saved Christian.

The Pietism and Revivalism of the Rhineland and Westphalia – the hinterland of the RM – has remained the strong undercurrent of the Rhenish mission throughout its history. However, at times the eschatological hope of the Kingdom was overlaid with or distorted by a tendency to equate Christianity with Western civilization. In the second half of the nineteenth century and on up to and including World War I, a foggy German nationalism³³, sometimes mixed with colonialism (Fabri³⁴), was the more or less dominant overtone. The disillusionment resulting from the loss of both the war and the colonial empire led to giving more serious attention to the socio-logical context in the mission areas.

In 1933, National Socialism challenged the RM. At first, almost all of the seminarians, as well as some of the teachers and the staff, joined the Nazi-movement.³⁵ Fortunately, this lasted only for a few months. In October 1933, the German Missionary Conference, convening in Barmen, rejected the 'linking of the mission to the church structures and to the Germanic Christian movement'.³⁶ The leadership of the RM, with a few embarrassing exceptions, sided with the anti-Nazi

³¹ *Das Herz des Menschen* (usually called *Das Herzensbüchlein*). This booklet originates from a French version by an unknown French Catholic priest. A German translation had been published in Würzburg in 1732 under the title: 'Geistlicher Sittenspiegel, in welchem jeder heilsbegierige Christenmensch sich ersehen, den Stand seiner Seele erkennen, und seinen Lebenswandel nützlich darnach einrichten kann'. It was dedicated to the bishop of Würzburg. Gossner (see the next n.) adjusted it to the taste of his time, without changing the essential content. He published his 'Herzensbüchlein' in 1812. In approximately 1890, Heinrich Sundermann translated it into the Niasan vernacular under the title *Tödö Niha na tenga naha Lowalangi ba naha halöwö chö Gaföcha*. In order to commemorate the second centennial of its first German publication 1932, the *Little Book of the Heart* was published by the DLM on the Batu Islands in ten editions of the Mission Magazine *Toeria Hoelo Batoe*; *ibid.* 4/1-10 (1932). Cf. Ch. 6.2.1.

³² Johannes Evangelista Gossner (14 December 1773 Hausen / Ulm – 30 March 1858 Berlin), former Roman Catholic priest. He converted to Protestantism in 1826. 1829-1846 he led the Moravian-Lutheran congregation in Berlin and sent out missionary-workmen, lay preachers who had to earn their own living and were not supported financially by a missionary society. Cf. M. Laube, 'Goßner', in: *RGG*⁴ III (2000), p. 1093.

³³ Cf. J.C. Hoekendijk, *Kerk en volk in de Duitse zendingswetenschap*, 1949, pp. 36-38. This arrogant 'Germanising' of the Gospel – sickening, in hindsight – comes out clearly in the sermons of Friedrich W. Krummacher, cf. H. Schroeter-Wittke, *Unterhaltung*, 1999, pp. 167-168.

³⁴ Friedrich Fabri had a theology of the Kingdom of God, but he differentiated – at least as far as his choice of language was concerned – between his 'biblical', his 'historical' and his 'practical' perspectives of the world. This 'split' view of reality was widely held around the turn of the century, cf. H. Beyer, 'Friedrich Fabri über Nationalstaat und kirchliche Eigenständigkeit, Mission und Imperialismus', in: *Zeitschrift für Bayrische Kirchengeschichte* 30 (1961), pp. 82, 87, 94-96.

³⁵ Cf. E. Delius, 'Bemerkungen zur Geschichte der Rheinischen Mission in den Jahren 1929 bis 1939', 1940 (RMG 1.287): 'Seminar, Kontor und die Missionarschaft wurden erfaßt von der Welle der neuen Begeisterung' (*ibid.* 17); 'Nach den Sommerferien traten die Brüder fast alle in die S.A. ein' (*ibid.* p. 18). Eberhard A. Delius (2 July 1903 Lippspringe – 1 Mai 1945 Frankfurt/Oder), himself a supporter of the 'Confessing Church' (*Bekennende Kirche*), taught at the Barmen Seminary from 1930 until 1943/44.

³⁶ *Ibid.* p. 21 ('... daß die Opposition auf dem Missionstag sich aufs schärfste gegen jegliche Verkoppelung der Mission mit dem Kirchenregiment und der deutschchristlichen Bewegung wehrte' (RMG 1.287).

'Confessing Church' (*Bekennende Kirche*). Before the end of 1933, most seminarians had also turned their backs on Adolf Hitler.

The dialectical theology of Georg Eichholz, a former student of Karl Barth and since 1935 a teacher at the Barmen seminary³⁷, restored to some extent the old vigour of the theology of the Kingdom of God, which was critical of all secular ideologies. However, when missionary work was resumed in the early 1950s, the missionaries' general suspicion of any ideology, based on their recent experiences, sometimes resulted in a general scepticism towards the nationalism inspiring the young churches in post-colonial areas, which, for instance in Indonesia, often brought with it a new appreciation of traditional culture.

3.2.2 Establishment and Organisation

The RM was a union of a number of smaller missionary societies, which followed the model of institutions such as the London Missionary Society (founded 1795), the Rotterdam-based Dutch Missionary Society³⁸ (1797) and the Basel Missionary Society³⁹ (1815).

The first of the original cells of the RM was the Elberfeld Missionary Society⁴⁰, founded on Whit Monday, 3 June 1799, in the home of the leather-merchant Johann Ball.⁴¹ They took over the English tradition⁴² of meeting on every first Monday in the month to pray for the growth of the Kingdom and to read and discuss about what was happening on the British and Dutch 'mission fields'.⁴³ A chairman, treasurer and secretary were chosen, but the correspondence was divided among other members according to their language skills. At each meeting, a voluntary collection was taken up, to which each one present contributed some money.

Every member of the missionary society was obligated to collect donations in his own neighbourhood. The money was sent to the London Missionary Society for the mission in South Africa, to the School for Missionaries of Johannes Jänicke⁴⁴ in

³⁷ G. Menzel, *Die Rheinische Mission*, 1978, pp. 326-328. Cf. Ch. 3.5.1.

³⁸ 'Het Nederlandsch Zending Genootschap' (NZG).

³⁹ 'Evangelische Missionsgesellschaft zu Basel', cf. Paul Jenkins, 'Basler Mission', in: *RGG*⁴ I (1998), pp. 1159-1161; Karl Rennstich, 'Mission – Geschichte der protestantischen Mission in Deutschland', in: U. Gäbler (ed.), *Der Pietismus im neunzehnten und zwanzigsten Jahrhundert*, 2000, pp. 308-311.

⁴⁰ 'Die Elberfelder Missionsgesellschaft'.

⁴¹ A. Bonn, *Ein Jahrhundert Rheinische Mission*, 1928, p. 3. Bonn reckons that all nine participants in that meeting were followers of the teachings of Tersteegen. According to G. Menzel, *Die Rheinische Mission*, 1978, p. 18, there were ten men attending this first meeting.

⁴² This tradition, established in the London Missionary Society, had also been taken over by the Dutch Missionary Society and other European Missionary Societies, cf. R. Lovett, *The History of the London Missionary Society*, 1899, p. 12, J. Boneschansker, *Het Nederlandsch Zending Genootschap in zijn eerste Periode*, 1987, pp. 84-88.

⁴³ The term 'mission field' had been frequently used in missionary literature, but was abandoned by many missiologists after World War II. Cf. J.A.B. Jongeneel, *Philosophy, Science and Theology of Mission in the 19th and 20th Centuries I*, 2002, p. 268.

⁴⁴ Jenjk Jänicke, born 6 July 1748 of Bohemian immigrant parents, was the pastor of the Bohemian-Lutheran congregation in Berlin as of 1779. He started a School for Missionaries with seven poorly educated, but pious young craftsmen on 1 February 1800. In the more than 25 years of the existence of this school, it prepared eighty missionaries for British and Dutch missionary societies. In 1823 this school was taken over by the Berlin Mission Society. Jänicke was influenced by the Pietism of the Moravians of Herrnhut and consciously used Lutheran terminology. His ideal was to equip young preachers and missionaries with the 'pure teachings' of the Bible. His sermons were Christ-centred, and of an apologetic and eschatological nature, cf. P. Strümpfel, 'Johannes Jänicke: Eine

Berlin, and the like. Besides fundraising, the Elberfeld Missionary Society spent a lot of time and energy collecting and translating mission news and publishing a newsletter.⁴⁵ It also distributed Bibles and parts of the Bible, hymnbooks, etc. among the poor.⁴⁶ Its first missionary, Friedrich W. Becker, who was sent to the above-mentioned school of Jänicke in Berlin for his studies, did not enter the mission among the heathen (as had been the intention), but became a missionary among the Jews⁴⁷, instead. In 1828, the Elberfeld Missionary Society was asked by the neighbouring Barmen Missionary Society to unite with it.

The Barmen Missionary Society had been founded on 8 September 1818. The main initiator was the young Lutheran assistant pastor Wilhelm Leipoldt, who had been inspired by the director of the Basel Missionary Society, Christian G. Blumhardt (1779-1838).⁴⁸ Though Leipoldt was a minister, clergy in no way dominated this society. Leipoldt did not become its chairman, but its secretary. Each member of the board of directors of this society was responsible for one district in Barmen, where he also had to collect money for the support of mainly the Basel Mission. Its relationship to the School of Mission in Basel was very similar to the relationship of the Elberfeld Society to Jänicke's School of Mission in Berlin.⁴⁹ Characteristic of the Barmen Mission Society was its discipline⁵⁰ and its focus on mission among the 'heathen'. For this purpose, a Mission Seminary was founded on 11 July 1825⁵¹, which soon started to publish its own mission magazine.⁵²

The third cell that joined the union in 1828 was the Cologne Missionary Society.⁵³ The small Protestant congregation in Cologne, a recent unification of Reformed and Lutherans, had survived oppression since the sixteenth century and received freedom of existence after the Peace of Lunéville (9 February 1801). The missionary ideal was very much alive within it. In 1814, a Bible Society was founded, followed in 1822 by a Missionary Society, which, like Barmen, was also inspired by Blumhardt. Its first president was a layman, the merchant Wilhelm Jurjans.⁵⁴ The structure of its organisation was similar to that of the Elberfeld and

Säkularerinnerung an die Begründung der ersten Missionsschule', in: *AMZ* 27 (1900), pp. 305-315. Jänicke died on 21 July 1827.

⁴⁵ 'Nachrichten von der Ausbreitung des Reiches Jesu'. Also tracts and sermons (i.e., 'Dorfgespräche').

⁴⁶ 'Wuppertaler Traktatgesellschaft' and 'Bergische Bibelgesellschaft'. Later taken over by Bible-and-Tract societies in 1814. Cf. W. Mundt, *Sinners directed to the Saviour*, 1995.

⁴⁷ So did Johann C. Reichardt and Karl W. Nösgen, who later worked for missionary societies in England and Scotland; from 1820 to 1828, the mission among the Jews had been the main objective of the Elberfeld Missionary Society, cf. E. Kriele, *Die Rheinische Mission in der Heimat*, 1928, pp. 26-27; A. Bonn, *Ein Jahrhundert Rheinische Mission*, 1928, pp. 5-6.

⁴⁸ Christian G. Blumhardt must not be confused with Johann C. Blumhardt (1805-1880), author of *Handbüchlein der Missionsgeschichte und Missionsgeographie* (1844), and with Christoph F. Blumhardt (1842-1919).

⁴⁹ Cf. E. Kriele, *Die Rheinische Mission in der Heimat*, 1928, p. 32.

⁵⁰ I.e., for coming late to a meeting, a fine of '12 Stübern' was imposed. 'Barmen' did not involve itself in secondary activities (i.e., distribution of Bibles; serving Germans in the diaspora), nor in mission to the Jews.

⁵¹ At the unification in 1828, a Commission for the Seminary was formed, consisting of eight members, six from Barmen and two from Eberfeld, plus the Inspector. This Commission was abolished in October of the following year, when the 'deputation' (see below) took over the full responsibility for the mission seminary.

⁵² 'Das Barmer Missionsblatt' (first ed. January 1826), the first such mission magazine in Germany.

⁵³ 'Die Kölner Missionsgesellschaft'.

⁵⁴ Cf. Letters of the board of the Missionary Society of Cologne, 17 July 1822 and 15 October 1823 (RMG 133). According to E. Kriele, *Die Rheinische Mission in der Heimat*, 1928, p. 44, his name

the Barmen Societies. It had a very close relationship with the Basel Mission, which it supported financially. In the Lower-Rhine region, the Cologne Missionary Society was successful in soliciting funds for the mission, as well as in distributing revival tracts (colportage).

The Wesel Missionary Society was founded on 29 March 1822, about the same time as the Cologne Mission. Although it had close contacts with the friends in Cologne, it was intended as an auxiliary society for Barmen. Many of its members were either clergymen or merchants.

None of these small missionary societies was able to send out missionaries. For this reason, talks about unification began at the beginning of 1828. On 23 September 1828 in Mettmann, the Elberfeld, Barmen and Cologne societies united and the Rhenish Missionary Society (RM) was founded. 'Wesel' joined in June, 1829. On 24 June 1829, the RM was officially recognized by the government. At first, each member society continued its own programs while contributing to the common goal, which was defined as follows: 'To act directly to promote the Kingdom of God among non-Christian nations through sending out and supporting missionaries, by joining already existing missions or by founding new mission stations'.⁵⁵

In order to realize these objectives, a board, called the deputation, was formed. Elberfeld and Barmen each delegated three deputies; Cologne and Wesel could each delegate one or two representatives. Since the three executives of the board (*Praeses*, Secretary and Treasurer) all came from Barmen, it can be said that the old Barmen Society formed the core of the new RM. Although the deputation understood itself as the agent of the missionary circles, congregations and auxiliary societies in Germany, it had quite a patriarchal attitude towards both its missionaries and the young churches.⁵⁶

3.3 DUTCH LUTHERAN MISSIONARY SOCIETY (DLM)

The second Protestant missionary society which played an important role in the history of Christianity among the Ono Niha, especially on the Batu Islands, was the Dutch Lutheran Missionary Society (DLM), centred in Amsterdam.⁵⁷

3.3.1 Spiritual Context

Lutheranism is a small yet early stream of Protestantism in the Netherlands.⁵⁸ The first official Dutch Lutheran church was founded on 2 September 1566 in Ant-

was W. Jürgens, probably a later adaptation. Wilhelm Jurjans had been the director of a cotton mill, cf. Barbara Becker-Jäkli, *Die Protestanten in Köln*, 1983, p. 249.

⁵⁵ G. Menzel, *Die Rheinische Mission*, 1978, p. 25.

⁵⁶ Cf. E. Kriele, *Die Rheinische Mission in der Heimat*, 1928, pp. 82-85. The deputation was the 'spiritual office' (*geistliche Behörde*), responsible only to the general assembly, which could veto its decisions.

⁵⁷ For the activities of the DLM, cf. *Een vaste burg is onze God! (EVB)*, 1889-1942; *De Wartburg, Luthersch Weekblad*, 1899-1942, 1945-1948.

⁵⁸ In 1812, Lutherans made up 3.65% of the Dutch population. Due to increased mobility in the age of industrialisation and secularism, the number decreased to 1.65% in 1859 and 1.27% in 1920, R.P. Zijp, 'Luther in de Lage Landen', 1983, p. 27.

werp.⁵⁹ Later, the centre of the church moved to Amsterdam. There were no missionary activities until the nineteenth century.⁶⁰

In the eighteenth century, Pietistic influences from Herrnhut (Moravian Brethren), and from Halle (August H. Francke) were being felt in the Lutheran Church in the Netherlands, which, in orthodox Lutheran tradition, was under the strict direction of the church council of Amsterdam. Some Pietistic ministers caused trouble by not acknowledging this authority. They rejected formal liturgies, pre-formulated prayers, and even the church order, claiming direct authorisation from God and freedom in the Holy Spirit. Despite pressure from Amsterdam, however, they usually remained faithful to the Lutheran church.

In the second half of the eighteenth century, Rationalism and Enlightenment became increasingly popular in prominent and intellectual circles of the Lutheran church, especially in Amsterdam. This culminated in a schism on 3 July 1791 with the foundation of the Restored Evangelical-Lutheran Church.⁶¹ Most of its members adhered staunchly to the Lutheran confessions, but some were pietistic, which led to tensions.

A few individual Dutch Lutherans were also involved in the interdenominational Dutch Missionary Society.⁶² Soon, a Mission Society Auxiliary⁶³ for supporting the Dutch Missionary Society was founded among the members of the Restored Evangelical-Lutheran congregation in Amsterdam.

Towards the end of the first half of the nineteenth century, the liberal theological tendencies of the 'Groningen Theology'⁶⁴ became strong in the circles of the Dutch Missionary Society. Around 1848, this caused harsh criticism by influential leaders of the Dutch Awakening or *Réveil*, such as Guillaume Groen van Prinsterer, and by messianic Jews, such as Isaïc da Costa and Abraham Capadose.⁶⁵

⁵⁹ Hendrik Vos and Johannes van den Esschen, Augustinian monks from Antwerp, were burnt at the stake in Brussels on 1 June 1523, for their 'Lutheran heresies'. They were honoured by Luther as the first martyrs of the Reformation in the Netherlands, cf. C.Ch.G. Visser, *De Lutheranen in Nederland*, 1983, pp. 9-19.

⁶⁰ Lutheran congregations in Dutch colonies like Nieuw-Amsterdam/New York (1649), Batavia / Jakarta (1743), Paramaribo (1742), Curaçao (1763), Rio-Beribe (1753), and Cape Town (1779) were the result of migration, not of mission.

⁶¹ 'Hersteld Evangelisch-Lutherse Kerk', acknowledged by the state on 7 August 1835 (by Royal Decree). The DLM recruited its members, supporters, and later its missionaries, from both churches. In 1952, the Dutch Lutherans were reunited as the Evangelical-Lutheran Church in the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Cf. C.Ch.G. Visser, *De Lutheranen in Nederland*, 1983, pp. 107-112, 120, 151-153.

⁶² *Ibid.* p. 133.

⁶³ 'Het Hulp-Zendinggenootschap onder de Leden der Herstelde Evangelisch Luthersche Gemeente te Amsterdam'. Cf. 'Archiefstukken betreffende de zendingsarbeid van het Nederlandsch Luthersch Genootschap, Bij het Hulpgenootschap ingekomen stukken 1824-1885, Inv. No. 1018, 1 omslag (De archieven der Hersteld Evangelisch-Luthersche Gemeente, Amsterdam); Handelingen NZG (1829), p. 74; (1831), p. 27; (1832), p. 14; (1834), p. 24; (1835), p. 44; (1836), p. 22; (1837), p. 15; (1838), p. 17; etc. (Archief NZG, Oud Archief Raad voor de Zending, Het Utrechts Archief).

⁶⁴ Representatives of the 'Groningen Theology', such as Petrus Hofstede de Groot (1802-1886) and Louis Gerlach Pareau (1800-1866), wanted to address the intellectuals of their time. According to them, Jesus Christ had come primarily to educate humanity, and not to redeem lost sinners through his blood. The 'Groningen Theology' had strong nationalist tendencies. Educating and civilising the 'heathen' in the Dutch colonies was both a Christian and a nationalist duty, cf. Arie L. Molendijk, 'Groninger Schule', *RGG*⁴ III (2000), p. 1299.

⁶⁵ Cf. I.H. Enklaar, *Kom over en help ons!*, 1981, pp. 67-88.

Eventually, many conservative supporters left the Dutch Missionary Society and formed new, confessional societies of a Calvinist character.⁶⁶

3.3.2 Establishment and Organisation

Parallel to the reactions against liberal theology in Reformed circles, and inspired by the Lutheran missionary movement in Dresden and Leipzig⁶⁷, some pietistic confessional Lutherans in Holland founded their own, independent missionary society on 5 April 1852 in Amsterdam.⁶⁸ It was called 'Dutch Society for the Evangelical Lutheran Mission'. The leading figure was the German-born Lutheran pastor of Amsterdam, Ludwig C. Lentz⁶⁹ (1807-1895). The society was firmly based on the Lutheran confessions, especially on the Catechism of Martin Luther and on the Augsburg Confession of 1530, and had a threefold goal:⁷⁰

1. To support the mission among the heathen being carried out by the Lutheran Missionary Society located in Leipzig, Germany.
2. To further the knowledge of the pure Word and Sacrament, especially through spreading literature and founding of Lutheran schools.
3. To further the unity among Lutherans worldwide.

Though distinctly confessional in character, it had 'friendly' relationships with other missionary societies, with whom it shared the objective of building the Kingdom of God.⁷¹ The attitude towards the official institutions of the Lutheran churches in the Netherlands was positive, although not particularly close. The missionary society willingly offered them its services, but the churches ignored it for a long time.⁷² The 'Dutch Society for the Evangelical Lutheran Mission' did not attempt to send out any missionaries itself. This led to dissatisfaction among its supporters⁷³, who felt a need for a Dutch Lutheran contribution to the mission among the heathen in the colonies.

A new development in Dutch Lutheran mission circles began in 1872, when the 'Dutch Society for the Evangelical Lutheran Mission' was reorganized and re-oriented. It lost some of its staunch confessional character and became the meeting point for all conservative, mission-minded Lutheran pastors from Dutch Lutheran

⁶⁶ I.e., Java-Comité (1855), Nederlandsche Zendingsvereniging (1858), Utrechtsche Zendingsvereniging (1859) and the Nederlandsche Gereformeerde Zendingsvereniging (1859), cf. E.F. Kruijff, *Geschiedenis van het Nederlandsche Zendelinggenootschap en zijne zendingsposten*, 1894, pp. 477-479, 490; Th. van den End, *Tweehonderd jaar Nederlandse zending: een overzicht*, 1997, pp. 6-9.

⁶⁷ Cf. J.C. Hoekendijk, *Kerk en volk in de Duitse zendingswetenschap*, 1948, pp. 27-31.

⁶⁸ Cf. 'Stichtingsacte Nederlandsch Genootschap voor de Evangelisch-Lutherse Zending', 1852 (GAA 552/17). The notary public was Johan H. Bok Jr. The founding ceremony took place on Monday evening at the residence of the Consul-General of Sweden and Norway, George F. Egidius (who became Treasurer). Others present: Ludwig C. Lentz (Chairman), Reinhard Lauer (Secretary) and F.C.H. Büchli Fest (Librarian).

⁶⁹ Lentz was not a member of the Restored Evangelical-Lutheran Church. He condemned the schism in the church.

⁷⁰ Cf. 'Stichtingsacte' § 1-2. The members came from both Dutch Lutheran churches (GAA 552/17).

⁷¹ 'Stichtingsacte' § 8; cf. J. Boneschanker, *Het Nederlandsch Zendeling Genootschap in zijn eerste periode*, 1987, p. 55.

⁷² J. Hallewas, *Lutherse Wereldzending NU*, 1955, p. 4.

⁷³ Cf. C.Ch.G. Visser, *De Lutheranen in Nederland*, 1983, pp. 133-135.

churches.⁷⁴ The name was changed to 'Dutch Lutheran Society for Interior and Exterior Missions' (DLM).⁷⁵ Its new primary objective was to start its own Dutch-Lutheran mission abroad. Remaining Lutherans in the above-mentioned mission society auxiliary, who had become increasingly dissatisfied with the Dutch Missionary Society's handling of the case of an Indonesian student of Theology in Amsterdam, Lambertus Mangindaan⁷⁶, also transferred their membership to the DLM.

A discussion about the necessity for a specifically Dutch Lutheran mission among the 'heathen' emerged in the 1880s, parallel with the first commissioning of missionaries to Indonesia. A programmatic paper by G.A. Alers⁷⁷ presented during the autumn assembly of the DLM in 1885, emphasized that it was not 'Lutheranism' which was important, but rather the 'theology of the cross'. The goal was: 'to lead the heathen to the cross of Christ, so that they may be taken up into the multitude of those who are saved by the cross.'⁷⁸ Though the speaker leaves no doubt that this teaching is preserved most purely in the Lutheran church, he sees the necessity of working together with others who are of the same spirit. He outlines the mission strategy of the DLM as follows:⁷⁹

1. To acknowledge, on the basis of the Bible (Rom 8: 22 and Acts 16: 9) and on the history of missions, that the heathen are yearning for salvation.
2. To honour the yearning and fear of the heathen.
3. To arouse in the heathen the consciousness of their need of salvation.
4. To satisfy the spiritual needs of the heathen. Only God can do this. The missionary is merely the instrument to this end. God desires the ultimate happiness of the heathen. The ultimate satisfaction for the heathen is not civilization, but rather the Gospel of God's grace in Jesus Christ, his son.

⁷⁴ J. Hallewas, *Lutherse Wereldzending NU*, 1955, p. 4. 'Conservative' in this case is intended to mean cultivating a distinct Lutheran identity and rejecting the positions of liberal theology.

⁷⁵ 'Nederlandsch Genootschap voor In- en Uitwendige Zending', often referred to as 'Luthersch Genootschap', cf. C.Ch.G. Visser, *De Lutheranen in Nederland*, 1983, pp. 135-136, 154 (Visser uses the new Dutch spelling: 'Luthers Genootschap').

⁷⁶ Mangindaan, an 'Alfoer' (native) from Minahasa, had come to Holland in 1853 for further theological studies under the auspices of the Dutch Missionary Society. The Lutheran 'Auxiliary Society' assumed responsibility for Mangindaan and in 1854 requested that he be sent back to the Minahasa as a missionary. This was at first rejected, the reason given being that the missionary society in Basel had come to the conclusion that such Indonesian missionaries, educated in Europe, usually could not adjust themselves again among their own people. Nevertheless, in 1858 Mangindaan was accepted as an assistant-missionary, after he had passed the examinations for 'third grade teacher' and for catechist, all with the support of the Lutheran Mission Society Auxiliary. He then returned to the Minahasa, working under the supervision of Dutch missionaries. When, again in 1863/1864, the Lutheran 'Auxiliary Society' asked for Mangindaan to be ordained as a missionary, this was rejected. The dubious reasons given were that indigenous co-workers lacked originality and that the (white) missionaries could not tolerate a native as a colleague, cf. E.F. Kruijff, *Geschiedenis van het Nederlandsche Zendelinggenootschap en zijne zendingsposten*, 1894, pp. 390-391; *Handelingen NZG* (1858), pp. 17, 27 and 64; *Mededeelingen NZG* 7- 8 (1963/64), pp. 200-225.

⁷⁷ G.A. Alers, 'Het verlangen der heidenen' (the yearning of the heathen), in: *EVB*, 5/2 (1887), pp. 25-37.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.* p. 36.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.* pp. 27-35.

In an article by Dirk C. Meijer Jr. (treasurer of the DLM), two controversial arguments are put forward to justify a specifically Lutheran mission:⁸⁰

1. Lutherans have a much more appreciative attitude towards the traditions of the Catholic Church than do the Reformed, who do away with everything which is not strictly necessary. This is the reason the Lutheran way is more attractive to both underdeveloped people, being more emotionally than rationally inclined, and developed people with a sense of art;
2. The Reformed mission strategy is considered to be very individualistic, whereas the Lutheran approach is directed towards the nation as a whole. Lutheran missions are therefore more inclined to develop the political and social institutions, respecting all the cultural institutions and values of the people which are not contradictory to Christianity. Lutheran missions in India and Greenland can be taken as examples.

An argument of the opponents of Lutheran missions was that Martin Luther himself did not consider mission necessary. This was countered in a paper read by H.R. Snijder⁸¹, based on Mt 24:14a ('And this good news of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the world, as a testimony to all the nations'). He argued that even if Luther had not been in favour of missions, this was not binding for his followers. In matters of faith, Lutherans should not bow to human authorities, but be responsible to Jesus Christ alone. Being a good Lutheran means being a good Christian⁸², who as such cannot ignore the voices of the many heathen calling: 'come over and help us'.⁸³

The DLM claimed participation in building the Kingdom of God by making a distinctly Lutheran contribution. This vision was explicitly mentioned by Johannes Kersten, the first DLM-missionary to the Ono Niha. In his speech upon departing for the mission field, he said that the goal of his mission was to help build God's church in a Lutheran spirit.⁸⁴

3.4 COOPERATION BETWEEN RM AND DLM

That the RM received financial aid from Dutch supporters of missions can be traced back to as early as 1869.⁸⁵ Johannes W. Dornsaft⁸⁶, RM-missionary in Padang, seems to have been supported by these Dutch 'friends' since 1881. A 'Mission Society

⁸⁰ 'Lutherse Heiden-Zending' (Lutheran mission among the heathen), cf. *EVB*, 16/5 (1898), pp. 175-179.

⁸¹ 'Our internal and external Lutheran mission', in: *EVB*, 17/6 (1899), pp. 189-196. This paper was presented during the autumn-assembly of the DLM on 25 October 1899 in Amsterdam.

⁸² 'Lutherse Heiden-Zending', 1898, p. 194.

⁸³ *Ibid.* p. 196. The first request for Christian missionaries, according to Acts 16:9 ('Come over to Macedonia and help us'); and a popular mission-slogan in the nineteenth century, cf. I.H. Enklaar, *Kom over en help ons!*, 1981, pp. 5-15.

⁸⁴ Speech held at the commissioning service held on Wednesday, 20 April 1887 in the Old Lutheran Church in Amsterdam, *EVB*, 5/3 (1887), p. 63 ('medehelpen Zijne Kerk in Lutherschen geest op te richten').

⁸⁵ This was arranged by Fabri during a visit to Amsterdam, mentioned in the 'Deputationsprotokoll' (minutes of the board) of 10 May 1869 (RMG 10).

⁸⁶ Johannes W. Dornsaft (23 November 1847 Duisburg – 6 November 1915 Padang), cf. Ch. 4.2. and Ch. 4.3.4.4.

Auxiliary'⁸⁷, also called the 'Amsterdam Aid Committee', regularly collected funds for and published information about the missionary activities of the RM.⁸⁸ In 1932, the 'Committee for the support of the Rhenish Mission on Sumatra, Nias and Mentawai'⁸⁹ was founded in Amsterdam in order to help the RM-missionaries during the depression.

From 1885 onwards, there was also close cooperation between the RM and the DLM.⁹⁰ In the minutes of the meeting of the DLM board on 8 February 1886 the 'very good relationship with Barmen' (i.e., with First Inspector Dr. August W. Schreiber⁹¹) is mentioned explicitly in connection with the serious illness (and subsequent death) of Missionary Asmus Festersen⁹² on Sumatra.⁹³ The RM provided some important emergency assistance to Festersen and his wife through its missionary in Padang, Dornsaft.

Their cooperation soon assumed a more permanent character. In March of 1886, a concept for an agreement between the DLM and the RM for the recruitment by the DLM of missionaries trained in Barmen was discussed.⁹⁴ It stipulated that in future the DLM would recruit all its missionaries from the RM. They would stay at least half a year in the Netherlands to learn the Dutch language before leaving for Indonesia and accept all the conditions laid down by the DLM.⁹⁵ The final draft of the agreement between RM and DLM (dated 11 August 1886), written in both Dutch and German, was signed by both the board of the DLM in Amsterdam and the 'deputation' of the RM in Barmen.⁹⁶ It underlines their good cooperation, while carefully maintaining the independence of the DLM in its relations with the larger RM.

Henceforth, before taking important decisions concerning the mission on Sumatra, the DLM consulted the RM. This was in accordance with § 6 of the above-mentioned agreement. When, in 1887/1888, the mission area of the DLM on Sumatra, in the Pasemah Ulu Manna, had to be surrendered to the Roman Catholics⁹⁷, RM

⁸⁷ 'Vereeniging tot bevordering der belangen van het Rijnsche Zendelinggenootschap ten Barmen', also called 'Steun-Comitee', 'Hilfskomitee in Amsterdam' or 'Holländisches Komitee' (RMG 214; RMG 215).

⁸⁸ *De Rijnsche Zending*, 1870-1916/1920. The publications of this mission magazine was edited by 'De Halfstuivers-Vereeniging der Rijnsche Zending' in Hoenderloo, The Netherlands.

⁸⁹ RMG 815 and 816.

⁹⁰ Cf. U. Hummel, 'Die Zusammenarbeit zwischen der Rheinischen Missionsgesellschaft und der Niederländisch-Lutherischen Missionsgesellschaft in Ausbildung und Verkündigung, Missionsarbeit auf Sumatra, Nias und den Batu Inseln', in: Beate Magen et al. (eds.), *Monatshefte für die Evangelische Kirchengeschichte des Rheinlandes* LIV, 2005.

⁹¹ Schreiber had previously been a RM-missionary on Sumatra and *Praeses* of the conference of missionaries. As of 1880, he was a member of the deputation, as of 1884 the second inspector and from 1889-1903 he became the first inspector; Cf. Ch. 3.5.1 and Ch. 4.4.1.

⁹² Asmus Festersen originated from Stenderup, nearby Schleswig (Northern Germany).

⁹³ 'Notulen Hoofdbestuur', Amsterdam, 8 February 1886 (GAA 552/2); cf. Ch. 3.5.4.

⁹⁴ 'Notulen Hoofdbestuur', Amsterdam, 1 March 1886 (GAA 552/2).

⁹⁵ 'Notulen Hoofdbestuur', Amsterdam, 6 April 1886 (GAA 552/2).

⁹⁶ 'Correspondentie Hoofdbestuur' (GAA 552/19); cf. U. Hummel, *Sirihpruim en kruis*, 2002, pp. 109-111.

⁹⁷ The Roman Catholic priest Jan (Joannes) P.N. van Meurs settled in Tanjung Sakti in the Pasemah Ulu Manna, the mountainous border area between Bencoolen and Palembang, with a research-visa in April, 1887. On 12 October 1887, the board of the DLM discussed this problem in an extraordinary meeting and decided not to enter into competition with the Catholics. Although Kersten received a work-permit for this area shortly after Van Meurs in June, 1888, the DLM followed the advice of Dr. Schreiber of the RM to begin a new mission on the Batu Islands. On 8 June 1888, the DLM decided to give up Tanjung Sakti as missionary area. Cf. 'Notulen

inspector Schreiber suggested the Batu Islands as a new mission area for the DLM.⁹⁸ On Pulau Tello, the centre of the Batu archipelago, there were both a Dutch administrator⁹⁹ and a friendly tribal chief. In addition, the prospect of RM-missionaries being able to assist the DLM with cultural (i.e., linguistic) knowledge concerning the Ono Niha were decisive for Schreiber's suggestion.¹⁰⁰

There were, of course, also slight tensions between the DLM and the RM, especially concerning correspondence with the missionaries and concerning the status of (former) RM-missionaries in the service of the DLM. In 1889, when Missionary Christian W. Frickenschmidt¹⁰¹ wrote a letter directly to inspector Schreiber about the journey of his bride Katharine to Sumatra, the DLM objected to this procedure as not being in accordance with the 'Agreement' (§ 6).¹⁰² The board in Amsterdam demanded the leading role in such matters. There was also a difference of opinion in the case of the missionary candidate August Landwehr. Inspector Schreiber did not agree that he should spend half a year in the Netherlands before leaving for Sumatra, which was in breach of § 4.¹⁰³

A rather dramatic misunderstanding between the two missionary societies arose regarding the Dutch Lutheran seminarian Martinus Koolen, who in 1895 spread rumours about the poor quality of the Barmen seminary to the board in Amsterdam.¹⁰⁴ Either suspicion about the moral integrity of Koolen, or indeed doubt about the standard of education, or both, led to an *in cognito* visit of a DLM delegation to Barmen in August 1896, causing an angry reaction of RM-Inspector Schreiber.¹⁰⁵ Eventually Koolen was rejected as a missionary candidate by the DLM¹⁰⁶ and became a missionary of the RM in German New Guinea.¹⁰⁷ Although the Koolen case had been settled, the DLM nevertheless remained somewhat wary of domination by its larger partner.¹⁰⁸

The relationships of the missionaries with both missionary societies was indeed somewhat complicated. According to § 2 of the agreement, missionaries recruited by the DLM from the RM remained 'Rhenish missionaries in the service of the Dutch Lutheran Missionary Society'.¹⁰⁹ Some missionaries used this unclear formulation to demand that the DLM will treat them according to the regulations of Barmen in matters concerning wages, furlough and pensions, whenever it suited them.

Buitengewone Vergadering van het Hoofdbestuur', Amsterdam, 12 October 1887 (GAA 552/2); 'Notulen Buitengewone Vergadering van het Hoofdbestuur', Amsterdam, 6 January 1888 (GAA 552/2). Cf. article by Carl F. Westermann, in: *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 27 December 1896 and 7 January 1897; cf. K. Steenbrink, *Catholics in Indonesia 1808-1942*, vol. I, 2003, pp. 65-66.

⁹⁸ Cf. 'Notulen Buitengewone Vergadering Hoofdbestuur', Amsterdam, 12 October 1887 and 7 December 1887 (GAA 552/2). It seems that at this stage the Batu Islands were confused with the islands of Mentawai further south. Cf. letter of the DLM to the Minister of Colonies, cf. 'Notulen Hoofdbestuur', Amsterdam, 8 November 1888 (GAA 552/2).

⁹⁹ 'Notulen Hoofdbestuur', Amsterdam, 7 December 1887 (GAA 552/2).

¹⁰⁰ 'Notulen Hoofdbestuur', Amsterdam, 10 January 1889 (GAA 552/2).

¹⁰¹ Christian Wilhelm Frickenschmidt (12 June 1856 Espelkamp / Rahden – 6 March 1935 Bünde).

¹⁰² The board in Amsterdam had the final determinative authority (*het leidend gezag*).

¹⁰³ 'Notulen Hoofdbestuur', Amsterdam, 11 January 1894 (GAA 552/2).

¹⁰⁴ 'Notulen Hoofdbestuur', Amsterdam, 19 September 1895 and 23 January 1896 (GAA 552/3).

¹⁰⁵ 'Notulen Hoofdbestuur', Amsterdam, 20 August 1896 (GAA 552/3).

¹⁰⁶ 'Notulen Hoofdbestuur', Amsterdam, 12 November 1896; 'Notulen Algemeene Vergadering', Amsterdam, 13 October 1897 (GAA 552/3).

¹⁰⁷ Cf. RMG 297. Later, he left the RM and became a Lutheran pastor in the United States of America.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. 'Notulen Hoofdbestuur', Amsterdam, 12 November 1896 (GAA 552/3) and 3 December 1908 (GAA 552/5), ('onder den plak van Barmen').

¹⁰⁹ 'Rheinische Missionare im Dienst der Niederländisch-Lutherischen Missionsgesellschaft'.

Nevertheless, the cooperation between the DLM and the RM, both in the mission areas and in Europe, continued for more than fifty years, with the exception of the training of Dutch aspirant-missionaries, which was discontinued after World War I.

After World War II, the Dutch Missionary Council (founded in 1929) considered for a while the option that the DLM take over the work of the RM on Nias.¹¹⁰ International Lutheran agencies were willing to help with the finances.¹¹¹ The DLM was ready to deploy three missionaries, a physician and two nurses.¹¹² However, after Missionary Steinhart was rejected by the nationalist-minded Ono Niha in February, 1948, the plan was soon abandoned.¹¹³

3.5 MISSIONARIES OF THE RM AND THE DLM

During our time-span, most candidates for missionary service came either from farmers' or working class communities and usually had a poor educational background.

3.5.1 Training of the Missionaries

The missionaries of the RM who worked among the Ono Niha received their vocational training at the mission seminary in Barmen.¹¹⁴ The DLM, too, which never had an institute of its own for training missionaries, either recruited German missionaries from Barmen or had Dutch men trained there. It was only after the Dutch School of Mission of the Cooperating Mission Agencies had moved from Rotterdam to Oegstgeest in 1917¹¹⁵ that the DLM sent its missionaries there. Willem F. Schröder¹¹⁶ was the last Dutch missionary trained in Barmen (he completed his training in July, 1918), whereas Willem L. Steinhart¹¹⁷ was the first to have completed his education in Oegstgeest (he finished in April, 1924).

The Barmen seminary, supported by mission-minded individuals and congregations, did not provide a full-fledged theological education. It began as a preparatory school for aspirants to mission service, who would then be sent to the seminary in Basel, or, to a lesser degree, to Berlin (Jänicke). The most fundamental criterion for receiving a young man into the mission seminary in Barmen was his

¹¹⁰ Cf. 'Notulen Hoofdbestuur', Amsterdam, 6 June 1945 (GAA 552/9), 'Voorstel tot Reconstructie van den Zendingarbeid op Sumatra en Nias'. This proposal was decided favourably in the meeting of the Dutch Missionary Council on 18-19 September 1946 (GAA 552/21).

¹¹¹ 'Notulen Hoofdbestuur', Amsterdam, 6 June 1945, 22 February 1946, 17 January 1947 (GAA 552/9). Letter Director Ralph Long to Professor Pieter Boendermaker (undated reaction to a letter of the DLM, dated 26 June 1947, GAA 552/21). Letter Professor Pieter Boendermaker to Archbishop Erling Eidem (Lutheran World Convention), Hilversum, 20 July 1946 (GAA 552/21).

¹¹² Letter of Professor Pieter Boendermaker to Archbishop Erling Eidem (Lutheran World Convention), Hilversum, 20 July 1946 (GAA 552/21).

¹¹³ Cf. Ch. 5.5.5.

¹¹⁴ Even the academic theologians, like Eduard Fries, who studied mainly under Martin Kähler (1835-1912) at the University of Halle, prepared themselves for missionary service at the seminary in Barmen.

¹¹⁵ Cf. S.C. Graaf van Randwijck, *Handelen en denken in dienst der zending*, 1981, vol. II, pp. 683-694.

¹¹⁶ Willem Frederik Schröder (25 November 1889 Amsterdam – 14 June 1969 Amsterdam).

¹¹⁷ Willem Leonard Steinhart (29 July 1898 Amsterdam – 9 June 1982 Utrecht).

'inner vocation'¹¹⁸, meaning a calling from God to go into missionary service, recognizable in the applicant's general attitude.

At the outset, the only lecturer at the Barmen seminary was Ignaz Lindl, a former Roman Catholic priest and member of a Revivalist circle in Bavaria¹¹⁹ and a friend of Gossner. Lindl was interested in mystics (Jakob Böhme) and theosophy. His theology was eschatological, with little regard for church structures. Due to conflicts with the Reformed, he was prohibited to preach from their pulpits. When Richter was appointed as Inspector of Studies on 28 May 1827¹²⁰, Lindl left and established his own free church.

Richter had graduated in Theology from the University of Halle/Saale, long the centre of Pietism in Germany. He was an energetic representative of revivalism, mentally akin to F.W. Krummacher and rather sceptical of academic theology.¹²¹ Before coming to the RM, Richter had been a lecturer at a teachers' seminary in Halberstadt. Following his employment as inspector, the Barmen seminary developed into a more proper educational institution for missionaries and there was no more need to continue the intensive cooperation with Basel. The duration of studies in Barmen was three years. Until his death in 1846, Richter and his family lived in the same building as the seminarians, among them Ernst Denninger, the pioneer of Nias.¹²² During the subsequent inspectorate of Johann C. Wallmann¹²³, a former student of the revival theologian Friedrich A. Tholuck and a Lutheran of strong convictions, no missionaries were trained to serve on Nias and the Batu Islands.

Among the teachers who strongly influenced the early missionaries to Nias and the Batu Islands was a former student of Friedrich D.E. Schleiermacher, Ludwig von Rohden¹²⁴, who joined the RM in May 1846. In his theology, von Rohden focused on Jesus Christ as the perfect human being. He taught that, since in every human being there was a divine spark, a similar state of holiness to that of Jesus could be attained through purifying one's heart and improving one's morals. He taught that it was the

¹¹⁸ E. Kriele, *Die Rheinische Mission in der Heimat*, 1928, p. 65.

¹¹⁹ Lindl, like Gossner (cf. Ch. 3.2.1.), had been a member of the Seeger Kreis, an inner Roman Catholic circle of Revivalists in Allgäu. He had a close relationship with Protestant Revivalists in Franconia and Basel. Later he converted to Protestantism. Cf. F.W. Graf, 'Erweckungsbewegungen in Europa', *RGG*⁴ II (1999), pp. 1493-1495; Horst Weigelt, 'Die Allgäuer katholische Erweckungsbewegung', in: U. Gäbler (ed.), *Der Pietismus im neunzehnten und zwanzigsten Jahrhundert*, 2000, pp. 85-111.

¹²⁰ The title 'Inspector' was used until 1909, when it was replaced by 'Director'. The organisation had expanded and it was necessary for the leader to be clearly recognisable. Besides the Director, there were Inspectors for different departments (cf. E. Kriele, *Die Rheinische Mission in der Heimat*, 1928, p. 293.).

¹²¹ Concerning the theology of the teachers at the Barmen Seminary (Richter, Wallmann, Von Rohden, Fabri and Schreiber), cf. L. Schreiner, *Adat und Evangelium*, 1972, pp. 33-85.

¹²² Ernst Ludwig Denninger (4 December 1815 Berlin – 27 March 1876 Batavia). Previously a chimney-sweep, he was ordained as a missionary on 29 September 1847. Cf. Ch. 4.2 and Ch. 4.3.1.1.

¹²³ Cf. E. Kriele, *Die Rheinische Mission in der Heimat*, 1928, pp. 104-119, 137-141. Wallmann worked for the RM as inspector and teacher from 1848 until 1857. F.A. Tholuck (1799-1877), as of 1826 professor in Halle.

¹²⁴ L. von Rohden (1815-1889) had been a student of F.D.E. Schleiermacher (1768-1834; he died on 12 February 1834) and Karl I. Nitzsch (1787-1868). Nitzsch, whose ideas were similar to those of Schleiermacher, was in favour of a Union of Consent between Lutherans and Reformed. Von Rohden highly appreciated the religious intensity and ethical conviction of Nitzsch and Schleiermacher, but criticised the latter's theology as not being Christ-centred. Cf. E. Kriele, *Die Rheinische Mission in der Heimat*, 1928, p. 87; G. Menzel, *Die Rheinische Mission*, 1978, pp. 209-214; L. Schreiner, *Adat und Evangelium*, 1972, pp. 38-52.

mission's task to assist the heathen to achieve this objective. By the time of his death in 1889, von Rohden had taught all of the pioneer missionaries to Nias and the Batu Islands.

Due to the seminarians' poor educational background, the character of the studies was still rather practical, and certainly not academic. Nevertheless, the curriculum drawn up by Richter in 1829 was quite demanding, offering the following main subjects: Biblical Studies, Dogmatics¹²⁵, Ecclesiastical History and Pastoral Theology.¹²⁶ In addition, Geography, Natural Sciences, Pedagogy, Rhetoric, English, Dutch, drawing and singing were also taught. Attention was given to the study of Islam and 'animist' (primal) religions.¹²⁷ Although not part of the regular curriculum, a general knowledge of medical skills was considered useful for missionary work as well. Among the first RM-missionaries to the Cape Colony there was a physician, Dr. Theobald von Wurmb¹²⁸, but this was a rare exception during this early period. Usually, the seminarians received practical training in the Municipal Hospital in Barmen or attended occasional lectures offered by physicians in Barmen providing theoretical or practical instructions.¹²⁹

In 1858, Inspector Friedrich Fabri¹³⁰ introduced some important reforms into the seminary, extending the duration of studies from three to six years, including the preparatory school. Later, regular instruction in Latin and Greek was added. Hebrew was optional. The aspirant missionaries had to be capable of consulting the original texts when translating the Bible into the vernaculars. The 'confessional issue' in the RM was settled in as far as the RM followed a firmly 'United' (*unierte*) policy, while the fact was respected that its missionaries came from both Reformed and Lutheran backgrounds.¹³¹ The 'history of salvation' (*Heilsgeschichte*), however, was taught in accordance with the books of the Reformed Pietist theologian Carl Ernst, as of 1863 minister of the Reformed congregation in Barmen-Gemarke.¹³²

¹²⁵ Basic literature: P.J. Spener, *Anleitung der christlichen Lehre*; Jean Calvin, *Institutio Christianae religionis*.

¹²⁶ Basic literature: A.G. Spangenberg, *Unterricht für die Brüder und Schwestern, die unter den Heiden am Evangelium dienen and Von der Arbeit der Evangelischen Brüder unter den Heiden*. Spangenberg (1704-1792) had been the leader of the Moravian Brethren (Herrnhut) after the death of its founder, N.L. von Zinzendorf (1700-1760).

¹²⁷ The curriculum followed by Denninger and other early missionaries, included the 'Introduction to the total content of the Bible', 'History of the Kingdom of God', 'The Teachings of the Christian Faith and Life', 'Christian Church History', Pastoral Theology, Mission History, Geography, 'History of Natural Science', Pedagogy, Homiletics, English and Dutch (cf. G. Menzel, *Die Rheinische Mission*, 1978, p. 27).

¹²⁸ Cf. Ch. 3.5.4.

¹²⁹ Cf. A. Bonn, *Ein Jahrhundert Rheinische Mission*, 1928, pp. 197-211; G. Menzel, *Die Rheinische Mission*, 1978, pp. 155ff.

¹³⁰ Fabri, director of the RM for 28 years (1857-1884) and a leading figure in the colonialist movement in Germany, followed the principle of individual conversion and the subsequent gathering of a chosen people from among all the nations. For Fabri, the church is not the equivalent of the eschatological Kingdom of God, but somehow represents it vis-à-vis the state. He deviates from traditional Pietism by advocating collaboration between colonial expansion and mission. Cf. H. Beyer, *Friedrich Fabri über Nationalstaat und kirchliche Eigenständigkeit, Mission und Imperialismus*, 1961, pp. 72-73 (n. 5), 90-91.

¹³¹ Cf. G. Menzel, *Die Rheinische Mission*, 1978, pp. 80-83; *JBRM*, 1858 (1859) p. 11.

¹³² Carl Christian Ludwig Ernst (1834-1902) was a member of the RM deputation (1865-1871) and a friend of Fabri. Ernst's most influential works, used both in the seminary and on the mission fields, were: *Die christliche Heilslehre in Worten der heiligen Schrift*, 1871 (translated into the Niasan vernacular by Sundermann and, in 1892, published as such under the title *Famahaõ ba lala Wangorifi*), and *Der Heilsrat Gottes, schriftgemäße Betrachtungen nach der Ordnung des*

Under Fabri, the issues of culture and colonialism became increasingly dominant. Since a 'heathen' could be saved solely through individual conversion, Fabri demanded that he left behind all fetters of his non-Christian culture which, as such, was doomed to extinction.¹³³ Part of the task of the missionary is to bring a more advanced culture to the heathen; he had to root out whatever was incompatible with Christianity and adjust indigenous culture to the level of the colonial order. For Fabri, Christian mission is the pioneer of European Christian civilization.¹³⁴

Despite his pietistic conviction that the church was the communion of the regenerated, individually converted Christians and that church structures have a merely interim function, which becomes superfluous in view of the growing Kingdom of God, Fabri placed much emphasis on the development of ecclesiastical structures in the missionary areas (e.g., the church order of the Batak church of 1881¹³⁵). In 1884, Fabri resigned as inspector of the RM. His 'mission ideology', however, had a rather lasting impact on the missionaries.¹³⁶

Since the inspectorate of Schreiber (1889-1904), the mission theology of Gustav Warneck¹³⁷ (1834-1919) became dominant in Barmen. Warneck, who himself had taught at the RM seminary from 1871 until 1874, held a more appreciative attitude towards non-Western indigenous cultures.¹³⁸ Warneck's principle was the 'Christianisation of nations', based on Matthew 28:19-20. Johannes C. Hoekendijk has, however, argued that this view had no sound basis in biblical exegesis. The strong focus on ethnicity was a dangerous, deceiving 'bourgeois-myth', which in practice enhanced conservatism and consolidated the status quo of colonialism.¹³⁹

As of 1926, the period of studies at the Barmen seminary was extended to seven years. In 1935, the theological quality was considerably improved when in defiance of the Nazi dominance of the state educational faculties, the 'church college' of the 'Confessing Church' moved into the localities of the Barmen seminary. Henceforth, seminarians attended the same theology lectures as did the ministerial students.¹⁴⁰ Eichholz was the rector of the mission seminary and also lecturer in New Testament at the college. As of 1953, seminarians could attend lectures at a theological faculty for a few semesters and as of 1961 their education was considered adequate to enter the ministry in a German church. The seminary was officially closed in 1975.

¹³³ 'Katechismus für evangelische Gemeinden in Worten der heiligen Schrift', 1872.

¹³³ Cf. G. Menzel, *Die Rheinische Mission*, 1978, pp. 70-79. Fabri uses the story of Noah and his sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth (Gen 9:18-27) for justifying his racist paradigm. The sons of Noah are seen as the prototypes of racial superiority and inferiority, cf. F. Fabri, *Die Entstehung des Heidenthums und die Aufgabe der Heidenmission*, 1859, pp. 3-54. Cf. by the same author, *Bedarf Deutschland der Colonien? Eine politisch-ökonomische Betrachtung*, 1879.

¹³⁴ Cf. W.R. Schmidt, *Mission, Kirche und Reich Gottes bei Friedrich Fabri*, 1965, pp. 43-45, 78-81.

¹³⁵ 'Gemeinde-, Kirchen- und Synodal-Ordnung für die evangelische Missionskirche im Battalande auf Sumatra', 1881, in: 'Kirchenordnungen v.a. der Batak-Kirche' (RMG 2.963).

¹³⁶ Cf. C. Veltmann, '„Es geht „vooruit“ auf Nias"', in: M. Humburg et al. (eds.), *Im „Land der Menschen“*, 2003, p. 76. Fabri's 'mission ideology' included racism and cultural imperialism.

¹³⁷ G. Warneck, 'Volkschristianisierung als Missionsaufgabe', cf. *AMZ* 10 (1883), pp. 318-320; G. Warneck, *Evangelische Missionslehre: Ein missionstheoretischer Versuch I-III*, 1902, pp. 243-286.

¹³⁸ G. Warneck, *Evangelische Missionslehre*, vols. I-III, 1892-1903, cf. vol III, pp. 57-85, 243-286, 301-315.

¹³⁹ J.C. Hoekendijk, *Kerk en volk in de Duitse Zendingswetenschap*, 1948, pp. 84-87, 90-95, 104-107 (quotation on p. 104).

¹⁴⁰ For the history of the Church College (*Kirchliche Hochschule*) and its cooperation with the Mission Seminary, as well as the role of Eichholz, cf. H. Aschermann and W. Schneider, *Studium im Auftrag der Kirche*, 1985, pp. 259-265, 272.

The second school which trained missionaries for the work among the Ono Niha was the Dutch School of Mission in Oegstgeest.¹⁴¹ After Willem F. Schröder had passed his final examinations in Barmen in mid 1918¹⁴², he had to take additional training in Oegstgeest for another year.¹⁴³ From the Dutch point of view, the Barmen seminary no longer met the demands of modern missionary service. Henceforth, no more Dutch candidates were sent to Barmen.

Two Dutch Lutherans, Willem L. Steinhart and Willem F. Jense¹⁴⁴, were trained in Oegstgeest to serve on the Batu Islands. In the end, only Steinhart actually served there. He had entered 'Oegstgeest' in 1917 under the headmastership of Anneus M. Brouwer.¹⁴⁵ The latter had given the curriculum a new, less Holland-centric orientation, with much emphasis on the history and ethnology of Indonesia.¹⁴⁶ Some professors from Leiden University also taught at Oegstgeest. Two missionary-lecturers who had a strong, lasting influence on Steinhart concerning the indigenisation of the Gospel, were Nico Adriani (who lectured in Oegstgeest during his furlough 1917-1919) and Hendrik Kraemer (who lectured there 1919-1921). Beginning in 1920, many German and Swiss students, among them also former RM-seminarians, entered the mission school in Oegstgeest for further studies.¹⁴⁷

'Oegstgeest' basically followed the 'Ethical Theology' (which must not be confused with the 'Ethical Politics' of the Dutch colonial politics¹⁴⁸), which to some extent was a continuation of and gradually replaced the 'Groningen Theology', but which had a less disapproving attitude towards the confessional teachings of the church and accepted the personal faith which was so important to the *Reveil*.¹⁴⁹ The Dutch school of Mission had the policy that the young churches in the Dutch colonies should not be estranged from their indigenous culture.¹⁵⁰ Steinhart, a graduate of 'Oegstgeest', openly disagreed with the 'Pietistic' and 'Methodist' approach, which had little interest in cultural elements and symbolism. He was of the opinion that just as in Europe the Christmas tree and the Easter fire had successfully been Christianised, so could pre-Christian elements in other cultures, too.¹⁵¹

¹⁴¹ Dutch: 'De Nederlandsche Zendingsschool'.

¹⁴² His studies lasted a year longer because of World War I. On 28 July 1918, W.F. Schröder was ordained in Barmen, cf. W.F. Schröder, *De Zending op de Batoe-eilanden*, 1927, 100ff.

¹⁴³ He attended a training course for schoolteachers in Amsterdam and additional courses in Malay (under N. Adriani), as well as courses for Ethnology and Tropical Diseases in Oegstgeest, cf. 'Notulen Hoofdbestuur', Amsterdam, 6 September 1918 (GAA 552/7).

¹⁴⁴ Willem F. (Wim) Jense (23 March 1921 Hoenderloo – 18 June 2005 's-Gravenhage).

¹⁴⁵ Anneus Marinus Brouwer (1875 Longowan – 1948 Zeist), was the Director of the School of Mission, first in Rotterdam and then in Oegstgeest, from 1910 to 1921.

¹⁴⁶ Cf. S.C. Graaf van Randwijck, *Handelen en denken in dienst der zending*, vol. II, 1981, pp. 680-683; cf. A.M.B. Petri-Abelmann, 'Dominee Willem Leonard Steinhart', in: *Documentatieblad Lutherse Kerkgeschiedenis VII* (1990), p. 29.

¹⁴⁷ Cf. S.C. Graaf van Randwijck, *Handelen en denken in dienst der zending*, vol. II, 1981, p. 686.

¹⁴⁸ Cf. Ch. 4.4 and Ch. 6.3.2.

¹⁴⁹ Van den End points out that the *Ethische Theologie* appealed to the whole personality, the will, the feeling and the reason of the believer. Its 'synthetic' approach to some extent formed a compromise between rationalism, pietism and orthodoxy (Th. van den End, *Tweehonderd jaar Nederlandse zending*, 1997, p. 12).

¹⁵⁰ Cf. S.C. Graaf van Randwijck, *Handelen en denken in dienst der zending*, vol. II, 1981, pp. 429-441.

¹⁵¹ W.L. Steinhart, 'De verkondiging van het hemelrijk tot aan het einde der aarde', paper presented at the general assembly of the DLM, cf. 'Notulen Algemeene Vergadering', Amsterdam, 23 April 1941 (GAA 552/9).

3.5.2 Ordination of the Missionaries

Before being dispatched, the fledgling missionaries from the Barmen seminary of the RM were ordained, either by the superintendent of the Rhenish church-circuit of Elberfeld, or, as of 1898, by the superintendent of Barmen.¹⁵² Since this ordination was valid solely for the 'ministry among the heathen', it did not entitle the missionary to hold a service of Word and Sacrament inside the Kingdom of Prussia (Germany).¹⁵³

In Holland, as in the case of Steinhart, missionaries were not ordained directly by the church. Instead, there was an institution responsible for the churches in the colonies, the so-called Hague Commission¹⁵⁴, which had the task of examining and ordaining Dutch Reformed and Lutheran missionaries. As in Germany, the ordination entitled missionaries to administer the sacraments in missionary congregations in the colonies ('Christians from among the heathen'), but not in their home churches.¹⁵⁵

3.5.3 Instructions of the Missionaries

In order to understand what was expected of these missionaries, as well as the rules and regulations of their service, we must take a look at their instructions. For the RM, Johann Heinrich Richter (1799-1846) drew up the prototype instruction in 1829, the first of its kind in Germany.¹⁵⁶ It subsequently became the standard for all future instructions for RM-missionaries.

Richter emphasized the community, but had a paternalistic, top-down paradigm, stricter than was usual in the egalitarian Rhineland. Menzel¹⁵⁷ remarks that the missionaries were treated like members of a religious order. Though Protestants, they had to adhere to the classic monastic ideals of poverty, chastity and obedience. They were at all times to be aware that the funds for missions were derived from free gifts. They therefore had to restrict themselves to the basic necessities and not to expect the same comforts as missionaries of other societies. A comfortable life was considered to be detrimental to mission work. Marriage had to be permitted by the

¹⁵² The ordination examination was taken in the presence of the Consistory of the Rhine-Province, after which the ordination was requested from the superintendent of the church-circuit of Elberfeld, or, after the new church-circuit of Barmen had been founded in 1898, from the superintendent of Barmen. Most ordination ceremonies took place in the main church of Lower Barmen, but some were also held in the Reformed church of Elberfeld, cf. 'Deputationsprotokolle' (RMG 14).

¹⁵³ *JBRM*, 1958 (1959), p. 10.

¹⁵⁴ Full name: 'Commissie tot de zaken der Protestantsche Kerken in Nederlandsch Oost en West Indiën'. As of 1946 it was called 'Commissie tot behartiging in Nederland van de belangen der Protestantsche Kerk in Indonesië'. The members of the Hague Commission consisted of ministers and laymen of the Netherlands Reformed Church and one representative of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Netherlands. For detailed research on the ordination of Dutch missionaries, cf. U. Hummel, 'De status van de zendeling binnen het Nederlandsch Zendelinggenootschap gedurende de eerste decennia van zijn bestaan', in: Th. van den End et al. (eds.), *Twee eeuwen Nederlandse zending*, 1997, pp. 61-69.

¹⁵⁵ Even baptising Europeans in Indonesia was considered a problem by the Dutch churches. Missionary Steinhart reported such a baptism to the board of the DLM in Amsterdam, hoping that this might not be considered a 'problem of church law' (letter Steinhart to DLM, Pulau Tello, 30 July 1938, GAA 552/39).

¹⁵⁶ Cf. G. Menzel, *Die Rheinische Mission*, 1978, pp. 44-46. This instruction is different in character from the 'Instruction to all Heralds to the Heathen' (1738) by Nikolaus L. Graf von Zinzendorf.

¹⁵⁷ G. Menzel, *Die Rheinische Mission*, 1978, pp. 97-100.

deputation, usually five years of service were the condition to get permission. Celibate life for a missionary was regarded favourably in the earlier days¹⁵⁸, but was later abandoned for practical reasons.

The deputation to whom regular reports were to be sent, had to be obeyed as the highest authority. Missionaries were not allowed to make debts on behalf of the RM. If a missionary was discharged by the conference of missionaries to which he belonged, or directly by the deputation, he had to return his instruction and certificate of ordination to the RM. If he had not yet served for five years, he also had to reimburse the RM for the costs of sending him out.

Last, but not least, the instruction of the RM defined the basic character of the new congregations which were to be gathered by the missionaries on the mission field: they were to be 'Evangelical Christian congregations' and part of the universal Evangelical (Protestant) Christian church. Denominationalism or differences between denominations were not to be emphasized. The sole objective was to win souls for Christ.¹⁵⁹ However, as a guideline, every missionary was given three confessional documents: the Augsburg Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism and Luther's Catechism.

The recruitment policy of the DLM, as laid down in the instructions, was pronouncedly Lutheran. The first missionary, Festersen, came from the 'Breklum Mission'¹⁶⁰, a centre of Lutheran pietism in northern Germany. For the following candidates, who were taken from the mission seminary of the RM in Barmen, there was an official agreement that they should all have distinctly Lutheran convictions.¹⁶¹ Consistently, they all came from Lutheran backgrounds and were willing to build 'Lutheran National churches' in the missionary areas.¹⁶²

3.5.4 Early Missionary Activities

The destination of the first four missionaries of the RM was South Africa.¹⁶³ A few days after their ordination on 30 June 1829 in the United Protestant Congregation of

¹⁵⁸ Engagement while in seminary resulted in expulsion. This caused debate among the students, who saw it as a restriction of 'evangelical freedom', cf. E. Kriele, *Die Rheinische Mission in der Heimat*, 1928, pp. 72-74.

¹⁵⁹ Certain aspects of this instruction are similar to the objectives of the LMS, e.g., its goal, being 'the salvation of souls', its non-denominational character and the fact that the missionaries were 'subject to the will of the Directors', cf. R. Lovett, *The History of the London Missionary Society 1795-1895*, 1899, pp. 26, 37, 44.

¹⁶⁰ Schleswig-Holstein Evangelical Lutheran Mission Society at Breklum, cf. Ernst Henschen, *100 Jahre Mission unter der Losung Jesus allein*. Eine Breklumer Chronik, Breklumer Verlag, 1976; Doreen Gliedmann (ed.), *125 Jahre Breklumer Mission – 30 Jahre NMZ*, Nordelbisches Zentrum für Weltmission und Kirchlichen Weltdienst, Breklum/Hamburg, 2001.

¹⁶¹ These missionaries had to adhere to the Lutheran confession of faith ('Deze zendelingen moeten de Luth. geloofsbelijdenis zijn toegedaan'), cf. 'Notulen Hoofdbestuur', Amsterdam, 1 March 1886 and 6 April 1886 (GAA 552/2). For the text of the agreement (*Overeenkomst*), cf. U. Hummel, *Sirihpruim en kruis*, 2002, pp. 109-111.

¹⁶² Cf. 'Instructies voor de Zendingen', 1882-1924 (GAA 552/48). This term is first used in the instruction of Asmus Festersen. In the instruction of A. Landwehr (24 April 1894) a qualification is added: '... to establish a national Lutheran church among the Niasans' ('...eene Luthersche volkskerk onder de Niassers te vestigen'). Later, for example in the instruction of W.L. Steinhart, this has been reduced to rendering service in accordance with the Lutheran confession ('naar onze Luthersche belijdenis').

¹⁶³ The missionaries were: Gottlieb Leipoldt, Gustav A. Zahn, Daniel Lückhoff and Baron Dr. Theobald von Wurmb. Von Wurmb was accompanied by his wife, who was a sister of Zahn (cf. G.

Lower-Barmen, they departed for Cape Town. Because of the density of missionary activities in South Africa, as well as growing moral and financial support in Germany for missions¹⁶⁴, the RM soon envisioned other missionary areas in Asia (Borneo and China).

Starting a mission among the Dayak in Borneo was the result of an article in the Mission Magazine of the Basel Mission in 1830, written by Walter H. Medhurst¹⁶⁵, missionary of the LMS in Batavia (now Jakarta). Crown Prince Friedrich Wilhelm of Prussia also supported the idea. So the first two RM-missionaries to Indonesia, Philip-Jacob Heyer and Johann-Heinrich Barnstein, were sent out on 4 July 1834. Probably because of their collaboration with the colonial government¹⁶⁶ and their practice of buying slaves¹⁶⁷ in order to release them, they found it difficult to communicate the Gospel convincingly to the indigenous people. When the sixteen 'first fruits' (i.e., first converts to Christianity) were baptized on 31 October 1842, this caused resentment among the population.

In May, 1859, there was an unexpected uprising among the Dayak, caused by the interference of the Dutch in the succession of the Sultan of Banjarmasin. The revolt turned against all Europeans, regardless of whether they were government officials or missionaries. Nine members of the Rhenish mission were murdered. The others, among them Ernst Denninger and his family, managed to escape and became the pioneers among the Ono Niha.

For the DLM, Festersen and his wife Christine¹⁶⁸ opened a mission post in Tanjung Sakti in the Pasemah Ulu Manna in Bencoolen (Sumatra)¹⁶⁹ in 1884 and started a school for fourteen pupils in 1885. Festersen had to leave his post in December, 1885, because of serious illness. He died on 31 January 1886 in the Bay of Bencoolen on his way to Padang. Although at first the DLM wanted to continue the work in Tanjung Sakti, this plan was subsequently dropped and a new missionary area was opened among the Ono Niha on the Batu Islands.

3.6 FINAL OBSERVATIONS

The spiritual context of both the RM and the DLM in the nineteenth century was Pietism and Revivalism. Characteristics were an emphasis on personal faith and sanctification, an uncritical way of reading the Bible, a sense of crisis awaiting the Second Coming of Christ, a sharp dualism between 'this world' (sin, darkness,

Menzel, *Die Rheinische Mission*, 1978, pp. 94-97).

¹⁶⁴ Cf. A. Bonn, *Ein Jahrhundert Rheinische Mission*, 1928, p. 42. There was a growing number of aspirant missionaries.

¹⁶⁵ Walter Henry Medhurst (1796-1857) was the founder of the still existing Anglican congregation in Prapatan, Jakarta. Along with Dirk Lenting (1789-1877), he published a New Testament in the Malay language in 1835.

¹⁶⁶ A. Bonn, *Ein Jahrhundert Rheinische Mission*, 1928, pp. 43-45.

¹⁶⁷ The slaves, called *pandelingen*, were debtors who had to sell themselves in order to pay their debts.

¹⁶⁸ Christine Festersen née Schöttler gave her pension from DLM for the mission work in Pasemah Ulu Manna (cf. letter Christine Festersen née Schöttler to DLM, Hamburg, 5 February 1888, 'Ambtelijke Correspondentie', GAA 552/32). She later married Missionary Johannes W. Dornsaft and was involved in the work among the Ono Niha in Padang.

¹⁶⁹ Cf. 'Notulen Hoofdbestuur', Amsterdam, 8 February 1886 to 6 April 1886, and 'Ambtelijke Correspondentie' (GAA 552/32); W.F. Schröder, *De Zending op de Batoe-Eilanden*, 1927, p. 5; Newspaper Articles by Carel F. Westermann, in: *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 27 December 1896 and 7 January 1897; cf. U. Hummel, *Sirihpruim en Kruis*, 2002, pp. 24-28.

politics) and 'the world to come' (the Kingdom of God), as well as the submission to charismatic (not ecclesiastical) authorities.

The two poles of this spiritual context were, on the one hand, the 'Quiet in the Land', pious Christians who gathered regularly in devotional circles. They prayed feverishly for the coming of the Kingdom of God. On the other hand, there were the public mass events involving charismatic preachers. Most supporters of the missionary movements were both members of pietistic circles and attracted to revivalist mass events. The spiritual coercion typical of this context, namely the demand to take a faith decision and to dedicate one's entire life to the service of the Lord Jesus Christ (which usually implied a strict denial of so-called worldly pleasures), occasionally expressed itself in awakenings or religious revivals.

The missionary movement, which grew in this context, was essentially laity-based. The organisational model was that of the society, willing to cooperate with the churches if possible and necessary, but carefully maintaining its independence. In both RM and DLM this went hand in hand with a strictly top-down structure of regency, which was neither clericalism nor attachment to high-church traditions, but rather a tendency towards an authoritarian rather than a democratic mode. In a paternalistic manner, the board in Amsterdam and the deputation in Barmen ruled over the missionaries and subsequently over the young churches on the mission fields (until 1940/1942). Total obedience was expected of the missionaries, and they in turn demanded it of their indigenous protégés on Nias and the Batu Islands.

The concern for personal salvation and the responsibility for the world bridged the gap between the Protestant confessions. In the RM, a variety of different confessional inclinations of missionaries were tolerated. However, beginning with the inspectorate of Fabri, there was a relatively strong Reformed tendency in the Barmen seminary. The DLM, however, wanted to establish a distinctly Lutheran church in its missionary areas. But this did not prevent her from having close contacts and cooperation with other Protestant missionary societies, especially with the RM. In fact, the different confessional bases of the RM and the DLM proved to be less problematic than the difference in size and the different national settings, especially after World War I. In the missionary area of the DLM (Batu Islands), only certain outward characteristics of Lutheranism (i.e., in liturgy, catechism, and church architecture) were implemented, while the theology and the missionary practice very much resembled that of the RM.

Characteristic of the mission theology was its grappling with the relationship between Gospel (i.e., Western Christianity) and 'heathen' culture. The early teachers at the Barmen seminary taught that 'heathen' cultures were not fundamentally evil, but, in a moral and spiritual sense, had, in the remote past, fallen deeply from a much higher original level. Fabri, however, applied the principle of a total break with the past to the colonial context in a radical sense, declaring Western Christian culture to be an absolute standard for all nations. Christian mission had, willy-nilly, to serve the interests of colonialism, and vice versa.

Though Fabri influenced a whole generation of missionaries who worked on Sumatra, including Nias and the Batu Islands, the more moderate concept of Gustav Warneck, the 'Christianization of the nations' (*Volkschristianisierung*), eventually prevailed in the RM. This concept had a more appreciative attitude towards indigenous, non-Western cultures. However, it was also supportive of Western colonialism and authoritarian paternalism. In a hazy way, the RM cherished German chauvinism, if not nationalism. All elements of the indigenous culture, which did not

fit into the Western-Christian paradigm (e.g., primal or 'animist' religion and Indonesian nationalism) had to be rooted out.

Since the end of the nineteenth century, the Ethical Theology, which combined a scientific approach (e.g., historical-critical exegesis) with the confessional teachings of the church and personal faith-experience, had gradually established itself in the Dutch missionary circles and, later, in their network, the Cooperating Mission Agencies (Oegstgeest). It had a rather positive approach to non-Western and non-Christian indigenous cultures, and even – to a certain extent – to primal religion. Unfortunately, only one missionary to the Ono Niha, Steinhart, had enjoyed an education of this nature in Oegstgeest.

Faced with National Socialism in the 1930s, some influential leaders of the RM in Barmen returned to the biblical, dynamic roots of the theology of the Kingdom. In its seminary, a dialectical version of the theology of the Kingdom aroused sympathy for the anti-Nazi 'Confessing Church'. The result was a general suspicion towards any ideology. This did not, however, further the appreciation in the 1950s and 1960s of non-Western world-views in the missionary areas.

4 Christian Missions on Nias and the Batu Islands (1865-1930)

4.1 INTRODUCTION

When does the church history of a certain area begin? With the arrival of the first missionaries? With the baptism of the first indigenous Christians? Or even as late as the independence of the young church? From a theological point of view, most Christians will agree that holy baptism is the constituting sacrament of the church. As a matter of fact, however, there is no consensus concerning how the anniversaries of the various churches, including those in Indonesia¹⁷⁰, are to be dated. The BNKP annually commemorates the date of the arrival of the first missionary of the RM, Ernst Denninger, in 1865.¹⁷¹ This year will therefore be taken as the *terminus a quo* for this historical reconstruction, though for the sake of completeness there will be brief mention of a few previous missionary attempts as well.

This chapter will focus on the process of the Christianization of the indigenous societies on Nias and the Batu Islands, though some Niasan communities elsewhere will also be mentioned. The time frame is from 1865 until 1930, the years of missionary pioneering and subsequent expansion, when all the work in the congregations was under the missionaries' leadership and close supervision. The indigenous helpers, though vital for the actual spread of Christianity, were merely fulfilling the tasks entrusted to them by their European superiors. It was not until after 1930, when the tremors of the Great Awakening had subsided and all attention was directed towards building an independent church, that more decision-making power was gradually granted to Niasan officials, who finally assumed full control within their church at the outbreak of World War II.

4.2 PRELIMINARY MISSIONARY ATTEMPTS ON NIAS (1832-1865)

As of 1669, the beginning of commercial cooperation between the United East Indies Company (VOC¹⁷²) and some Niasan chiefdoms around Gunungsitoli¹⁷³, the Ono Niha had occasional contacts with European Christians. However, though functioning as a Christian government in its colonies, the VOC had no interest in

¹⁷⁰ For example: the Batak Church (HKBP), the church in West-Papua (GKI di tanah Papua), and the Nias Churches (BNKP, AMIN and ONKP) celebrate the coming of the first missionaries. The Toraja-Church celebrates the first baptism in 1913, while the Moluccan Church (GPM) celebrates the day of its independence in 1935.

¹⁷¹ Though F.L. Cooley, *The Growing Seed*, 1981, p. 344, mentions the year of first baptism (1874) and also the year of 'autonomy' (1936), these dates are not celebrated annually as the birthday (*hari ulang tahun*) of the BNKP. On the Batu Islands, the arrival of Johannes Kersten in 1889 is also celebrated at jubilees.

¹⁷² Cf. Ch. 2.7.1.

¹⁷³ Cf. *ENI* 3 (1919), pp. 29-30; F. Zebua, *Kota Gunungsitoli*, 1996, pp. 87-90; R. Mittersakschmüller (ed.), *Joachim Freiherr von Brenner-Felsach: Eine Reise nach Nias*, 1998, p. 22.

mission.¹⁷⁴ Nor did the English, who conquered Nias from the Dutch in 1756, engage in any missionary activities.¹⁷⁵

Jean-Pierre Vallòn and a Niasan couple from the island of Penang (*Pulau Pinang*), referred to as the catechist Francisco and his wife Sophie¹⁷⁶, were the first missionaries to Nias. They were in the service of the Paris Foreign Missionary Society (*Société des Missions Étrangères*), which had, since 1662, worked on Penang among the Ono Niha, who were living there either as slaves or as manumitted former slaves. In 1824, thirty Ono Niha had been baptized on Penang.¹⁷⁷

Vallòn, Francisco, his wife Sophie and another priest, Jean-Laurent Bérard, left Penang for Nias on 14 December 1831. Because of illness, they had to spend some time in Tapanuli (Sumatra). From here, Vallòn and Francesco sailed straight for Nias, where they arrived in March 1832.¹⁷⁸ After having visited a few villages, they settled in the village of Lasara, near Gunungsitoli.

It has been supposed that Vallòn learned the local Niasan vernacular and ‘baptized a few children’.¹⁷⁹ The children may have been pupils¹⁸⁰ or house boys (*anak piara*), sons of influential Ono Niha serving the missionaries. But there is no description of the actual state of affairs, nor is there a single authentic report.¹⁸¹

Vallòn died in June 1832, less than three months after his arrival. His colleague Bérard, who had stayed behind ill on Sumatra, came to Nias some time after Vallòn’s death. He died on the third day after his arrival before he could begin any missionary work. Almost sixty years later, an old Ono Niha man from Lasara told Missionary Friedrich Kramer¹⁸² that the Roman Catholic missionaries had been accepted well by the people of Lasara, but were then poisoned by Muslim clerics.¹⁸³ Other sources speak about ‘mysterious circumstances’, but the actual cause of their death might have been malaria.¹⁸⁴ After this, there were no more attempts by Roman Catholic missionaries to work on Nias and the Batu Islands until 1939.¹⁸⁵

¹⁷⁴ Cf. C.W.Th. Baron van Boetzelaer, *De Protestantsche Kerk in Nederlandsch-Indië*, 1947, pp. 4-5, 12. The VOC acted consciously as a ‘Christian authority’ (*Christelijke Overheid*); though mission was not part of their policy, it was not an alien concept to the VOC.

¹⁷⁵ F. Zebua, *Kota Gunungsitoli*, 1996, p. 90.

¹⁷⁶ Their original names and *marga* are unknown.

¹⁷⁷ Cf. A. Reid, *The French in Sumatra and the Malay World, 1760-1890*, 1973, pp. 205-208; J.M. Hämmerle, *Sejarah Gereja Katolik di Pulau Nias*, 1985, pp. 3-9; U.M. Telaumbanua, *Evangelization and Niasan culture*, 1993, pp. 90-96; R. Mittersakschmöller (ed.), *Joachim Freiherr von Brenner-Felsach: Eine Reise nach Nias*, 1998, p.23; K. Steenbrink, *Catholics in Indonesia 1808-1942*, vol. I, 2003, pp. 11, 20; F. Huber, *Das Christentum in Ost-, Süd- und Südostasien sowie Australien*, 2005, p. 178.

¹⁷⁸ The sources mention only that Sophie was very ill upon arrival in Tapanuli. Furthermore, hereafter, her name is not explicitly mentioned (cf. U.M. Telaumbanua, *Evangelization and Niasan culture*, 1993, p. 95; for further sources, cf. *ibid.* p. 95 n. 17).

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.* p. 95.

¹⁸⁰ According to a document by a Protestant missionary, Henry Lyman, quoted by Karel A. Steenbrink, the Vallòne had had a child of a neighbouring chief as his pupil shortly before his own death (cf. K. Steenbrink, *Catholics in Indonesia 1808-1942*, vol. I, 2003, p. 20).

¹⁸¹ Cf. J.M. Hämmerle, *Sejarah Gereja Katolik di Pulau Nias*, 1985, p. 9 (Hämmerle mentions a letter of Bérard to Embrecht dated 15 June 1832. Bérard, however, could not have witnessed a baptism conducted by Vallòne on Nias).

¹⁸² Friedrich Kramer (30 November 1844 Detmold – 24 April 1920 Gütersloh). Cf. Ch. 4.3.1.1, Ch. 6.2 and Ch. 6.4.

¹⁸³ Cf. *De Rijnsche Zending*, 1889, pp. 160-161 (RMG GVI 1b, *Mahomedaansche priesters*).

¹⁸⁴ The same fate had befallen Caspar de Hesselle, a Dutch diocesan priest who came to Gunungsitoli in 1854 to consult the Dutch physician. He too died shortly after his arrival on 31 August 1854. Cf. E.E.W.Gs. Schröder, *Nias*, 1917, p. 755; U.M. Telaumbanua, *Evangelization and Niasan culture*,

Unfortunately, there are no records about what happened to catechist Francisco and his wife Sophie. If they survived and remained on Nias, they, along with the hypothetically baptized children, could be considered to be the 'stem-cell' of the church on Nias. However, there is no evidence at all of a Niasan Christian community until after the RM had begun its work.

In 1834, two years after the unsuccessful attempt by Vallòn and Bérard, two Protestant missionaries from Boston, Massachusetts, United States of America, Samuel Munson and Henry Lyman, came to Nias. They had been sent out by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM). After investigating the eastern coast, travelling northward from the south¹⁸⁶, they returned to Sibolga because they could not get permission from the Dutch authorities to work on Nias. Subsequently, they entered the Bataklands, where they became victims of anthropophagi.¹⁸⁷

It was not until almost thirty years later that another Protestant missionary, the German Ludwig E. Denninger¹⁸⁸ from the RM had contacts with an Ono Niha community, albeit initially in Padang rather than on Nias. In this town on the West Coast of Sumatra, there were numerous Ono Niha, living in close communities in special settlements.¹⁸⁹ Many of them had been brought over from Nias as slaves and were working as servants and dockers.¹⁹⁰ Most were adherents of the primal religion of Nias, though some had come under the influence of Islam, especially those who had attended government schools.¹⁹¹

Denninger is called the 'Father of the Nias Mission'.¹⁹² From 1848 to 1859, he had served among the Dayak in Kalimantan, but in that year he had to flee because of a revolt which turned against all Europeans. After an interim on Java, Denninger and his wife Sophie¹⁹³ arrived in Padang on 21 November 1861. Because of Sophie's poor health¹⁹⁴, Denninger, who had actually been assigned to work among the Batak¹⁹⁵, settled temporarily in Padang. The longer it was necessary for him to

1993, pp. 95-96 (for more sources cf. n. 23 on p. 96); K. Steenbrink, *Catholics in Indonesia 1808-1942*, vol. I, 2003, p. 63.

¹⁸⁵ Cf. Ch. 5.6.3.

¹⁸⁶ R. Mittersakschmöller (ed.), *Joachim Freiherr von Brenner-Felsach: Eine Reise nach Nias*, 1998, p.23.

¹⁸⁷ Cf. Joh. Warneck, *50 Jahre Batakmission in Sumatra*, 1912, pp. 15-16.

¹⁸⁸ Usually called Ernst Denninger. Cf. 3.5.2 and Ch. 6.3.1.

¹⁸⁹ According to W. Gulö, *Benih yang Tumbuh XIII*, 1983, p. 6, there were about 3000 Ono Niha in Padang at that time; other sources mention 5000-6000 (cf. *De Rijnsche Zending*, 1870, pp. 82-83). The Ono Niha constituted the largest non-Malay community in Padang in the nineteenth century.

¹⁹⁰ The Niasan slaves were brought over to Padang by the Dutch and settled there after they had obtained their freedom, cf. *ENI* 3 (1919), p. 29.

¹⁹¹ *BRM*, 1865, p. 34.

¹⁹² 'Vater der Niasmission', phrase used by Kramer, *BRM*, 1877, p. 177.

¹⁹³ Sophie Denninger née Jordan (3 July 1816 Kassel – 18 January 1892 Amsterdam). For her arrival on Nias, cf. *BRM*, 1862, p. 213.

¹⁹⁴ According to A. Bonn, *Ein Jahrhundert Rheinische Mission*, 1928, p. 69, this was caused by an attempt of poisoning.

¹⁹⁵ This was the result of a 'miraculous' inspiration ('ein Wink vom Herrn') of RM Mission Inspector Doctor Friedrich Fabri, which he had in October 1859, during a visit to Holland. When visiting the office of the Dutch Bible Society, Fabri discovered a translation of the Gospel according to St. John in the Batak language, made by the Dutch philologist Dr. Herman Neubronner van der Tuuk. A number of biblical books had already been translated, and a Batak grammar and a dictionary were also available. After Fabri had spoken to Van der Tuuk personally, he was convinced that God wanted the RM to join the few Dutch missionaries (from the missionary congregation of Hermanus W. Witteveen in Ermelo) already working on Sumatra. Fabri ordered former Borneo-missionary,

stay there, the more certain he became that a mission post there would be of strategic importance, both as a bridgehead for Sumatra in general, and, specifically for taking Christianity to Nias. A Nias mission, however, would have to be centred on Nias itself, rather than being treated as a satellite of the Sumatra Mission.¹⁹⁶ Discouragingly, both the Roman Catholic priest and the Dutch Reformed minister in Padang were opposed to this plan, although for different reasons.¹⁹⁷ Denninger left Padang in September 1865 and there was no follow-up until 1881, when Dornsaft¹⁹⁸ founded a permanent mission station there, which, though located on Sumatra, was henceforth listed under the Nias Mission.

These preliminary attempts by both Roman Catholic and Protestant missionaries were the first contacts between Christianity and the Ono Niha in recorded history. They were too short and superficial to result in a substantial encounter. Only Denninger, who had started to do literary work in the vernacular and who had discussed religious issues with some Ono Niha in Padang, might have made some impact on the Niasan community.

4.3 DIFFICULT BEGINNINGS ON NIAS (1865-1890)

The first period in which one could speak of any continuous encounter between Christianity and Niasan culture began in 1865 with Denninger's arrival on Nias. These 'difficult beginnings'¹⁹⁹ were marked by immense hardships and painful setbacks in the attempt to plant Christianity on Niasan soil. Basic instruments of communication, such as the language, first had to be acquired and common trust had to develop before any significant interaction could take place between the counterparts. This period ends in 1890 with the beginning of the successful expansion of the Nias-mission beyond the *rapatgebied*.²⁰⁰

Van Hoefen, to undertake an exploratory trip to Sumatra. In the meeting of the deputation on October 8, and subsequently in the general assembly on 26 October 1860, RM decided to initiate the mission. The colonial government gave its permission in November 1860. One year later, in October 1861, the first RM-missionaries began their work on Sumatra. On 7 October 1861, along with the Witteveen-missionaries Friedrich W. Betz and Gerrit van Asselt, the RM-missionaries Carl J. Klammer and Wilhelm K. Heine held their first conference in Sipirok. This is commonly known as the birth of the mission on Sumatra. Denninger was unable to attend this conference (cf. J. Warneck, *50 Jahre Batakmission in Sumatra*, 1912, pp. 22-24; G. Menzel, *Die Rheinische Mission*, 1978, pp.81-82).

¹⁹⁶ Cf. *BRM*, 1876, p. 296 (Nias mission not as the 'Appendix' of Batak mission).

¹⁹⁷ According to A. Bonn, *Die Sonne geht auf über unseren Bergen*, 1940, pp. 6-7, there had been an agreement between the Dutch Reformed and the Roman Catholics in Padang, that Sumatra should become Protestant, while Nias should become Roman Catholic. The Dutch Reformed minister accused the 'Prussian missionaries' of the RM of being the 'spies of Bismarck'. Cf. A. Töpperwien, *„Und er führte sie an das ersehnte Gestade“*, 2004, pp. 100-101.

¹⁹⁸ Cf. 3.4 and Ch. 4.3.4.4; cf. U. Hummel, *Sirihpruim en Kruis*, 2002, pp. 22- 28.

¹⁹⁹ Cf. A. Schneider, *Turia*, 1965, pp. 7-17. Schneider calls the period 1865-1890 'schwerer Anfang' (difficult beginning), referring mainly to the difficulties of the missionaries. W. Gulö, *Benih yang Tumbuh XIII*, 1983, pp. 5-13, follows Schneider's lead (*masa permulaan yang sulit*).

²⁰⁰ The *rapatgebied* was an area under Dutch Colonial jurisdiction, which extended sixteen kilometres to the north and sixteen kilometres to the south of Gunungsitoli. Cf. *ENI* 3 (1919), p. 28; also F. Zebua, *Kota Gunungsitoli*, 1996, pp. 94-95. Zebua gives a description of the borders of the *rapatgebied*, which is similar to the present sub-district of Gunungsitoli.

4.3.1 Gaining a Foothold

First and foremost, the missionaries had to gain a foothold within the Ono Niha society. This involved obtaining permission and support from various authorities (colonial, ecclesiastical and tribal), as well as obtaining help from the local communities. For reasons of safety, mission work was largely confined to the *rapat-gebied*, which consisted of a radius of sixteen kilometres around and including Gunungsitoli. Three mission stations were successfully established within the *rapat-gebied*, while two attempts outside of it failed.

4.3.1.1 Gunungsitoli

While still in Padang, Denninger applied to the board of the RM in Barmen, as well as to the colonial government (both in Padang and in Batavia) for permission to start a new mission on Nias.²⁰¹ The RM procrastinated in giving its official approval. According to Kriele, a mission to Nias was considered to be only part of the mission among the Batak.²⁰² Fortunately, Denninger received the necessary permission from the colonial authorities on 13 August 1865.²⁰³ Although still lacking an official instruction from Barmen²⁰⁴, he departed for Nias via Sibolga, arriving on 27 September 1865. This date was later acknowledged by the RM as the beginning of a new, independent mission and is celebrated by Protestants as the birthday of the church on Nias.

Denninger, his wife, and their daughter Karolina²⁰⁵ – who had returned from Germany in order to nurse her mother – settled in Gunungsitoli. This was the centre of the colonial administration and military, and therefore quite safe. They moved in with the Government Secretary in the 'European quarter',²⁰⁶ which consisted of four houses adjacent to the fortress. When his host was transferred to Sumatra, Denninger bought the house, which spared him the immense trouble of building a mission station. Conversely, it strengthened the impression that the missionary was part of the colonial establishment. He held church services in Dutch twice a month and participated in the social life in the European quarter.²⁰⁷ As a return favour, the

²⁰¹ The request to the Governor of the West Coast of Sumatra was made on 2 March 1865. Denninger reported this to the RM on 29 March 1865 (cf. letter Denninger to RM, 29 March 1865, RMG 1.793). Denninger had begun requesting a mission to Nias as from 1862, both of the RM and of the Governor-General. The latter supported the assignment of a Protestant missionary to Nias for educational reasons and began suggesting it to the RM in 1862, cf. letter Denninger to RM, 29 March 1865 (RMG 1.793); E.E.W.Gs. Schröder, *Nias*, 1917, p. 755; *Toeria*, 2/3 (1915) and 2/6 (1915).

²⁰² Cf. G. Menzel, *Die Rheinische Mission*, 1978, p. 83.

²⁰³ *BRM*, 1865, p. 378.

²⁰⁴ There had been no formal decision of the deputation, nor had the general assembly given its permission, cf. E. Kriele, *Die Rheinische Mission in der Heimat*, 1928, p. 200.

²⁰⁵ Karolina (called Lina) Denninger was born in Bintang (Borneo) on 24 August 1848. She arrived in Padang in July 1864 and in September 1865 accompanied her parents to Nias. In 1869, she married the Dutch military physician Van der Veen on Nias. Later, they moved to Buitenzorg (now Bogor) on Java, where Doctor van der Veen died on 29 March 1875. Ernst and Sophie Denninger also had a son, Elias, born on 1 January 1851.

²⁰⁶ Cf. *Kom over en help ons!* 8 (1866), pp.113-119; A. Bonn, *Die Sonne geht auf über unseren Bergen*, 1940, p. 15.

²⁰⁷ Cf. Annemarie Töpperwien, *Seine „Gehülfin“*, 2002, pp. 76-77.

controleur occasionally offered him the opportunity to join exploration parties into more remote areas.

From 1872 to 1873, Denninger was assisted by Johann W. Thomas.²⁰⁸ In 1873, Friedrich Kramer arrived. The latter soon built up catechetical classes in Onozitoli (Niasan suburb of Gunungsitoli) and Hilina'a (seven kilometres from Gunungsitoli). Eventually, after Denninger had had to leave Nias on 10 August 1875 for sick leave in Batavia, Kramer assumed the leadership of the station.²⁰⁹ On 21 January 1876, Kramer married Pauline Garschagen²¹⁰, which opened the door for work among the women. By the time of her death in April 1888, the congregation in Gunungsitoli had grown to 167 members.

4.3.1.2 Ombölata

During his first year in Gunungsitoli (1872), Thomas was visited by *Balugu* (nobleman) Tödölala, the paramount chief of Ombölata, who urged him to come and settle in his area. The chiefs of nearby Sihare'ö and Lölömboli also received Thomas well. They offered him about nine square kilometres of land, including twelve coconut palms, plus wood for building the station. Thomas wisely returned a gift of five guilders to the chiefs and then began to build his house about two hundred metres outside the village of Ombölata. The station, which was completed towards the end of 1873, was also called Ombölata.²¹¹

After Thomas and his wife Wilhelmina²¹² had become well settled, opposition arose from some of the chiefs, including Tödölala. The chiefs had realized that their power was slipping away and that they could not manipulate the missionary to serve their own interests. Nevertheless, in the end, the mission gained the upper hand in the struggle for the hearts and minds of the people of Ombölata.²¹³

4.3.1.3 Dahana

Heinrich Sundermann²¹⁴ arrived at the beginning of 1876. Like Thomas, he first spent some time in Gunungsitoli. From there he visited Tugala Oyo on the western coast, where he considered opening a new mission station. However, due to intensified Islamic propaganda activities, provoked by the first baptisms of Ono Niha (1874/75), it became necessary to further strengthen the work inside the *rapatgebiet*.²¹⁵ In 1878, after having obtained the consent of Oroisa, the highest-

²⁰⁸ Johann Wilhelm Thomas (13 June 1843 Eibach, Nassau – 30.12.1900 Humene, Nias).

²⁰⁹ Denninger never returned to Nias, but died in Buitenzorg on 27 March 1876.

²¹⁰ Pauline Kramer née Garschagen (23 May 1849 Radevormwald – 23 April 1888 Gunungsitoli).

²¹¹ Ombölata means 'the place of the rising sun', which is appropriate, given the magnificent view eastwards over the ocean. Sometimes the silhouette of Sumatra can be seen in the far distance. The chiefs gave three-and-a-half *morgan* of land to the RM. It is not sure whether this was measured in Prussian *morgan* (2553,22 m²) or Rhenish Cologne *morgan* (3176,61 m²).

²¹² Wilhelmina Thomas née Müller (30 October 1851 Elberfeld – 17 June 1912 Dillenburg).

²¹³ Cf. A. Schneider, *Turia*, 1965, p. 13. The decisive 'last straw' might have been that in 1887 Missionary Adam Fehr prohibited the Christians of Ombölata to attend all 'heathen feasts', cf. *BRM*, 1888, p. 24.

²¹⁴ Heinrich Wilhelm Sundermann (29 October 1849 Ladbergen - 24 April 1919 Göttingen). Cf. *Zum Gedächtnis: D. Heinrich Sundermann*, in: *BRM*, 1919, pp. 57-59; *BRM*, 1961, pp. 147-155; U. Hummel, 'Sundermann', in: *RGG*⁴ VII (2004), p.1903.

²¹⁵ Cf. A. Bonn, *Die Sonne geht auf über unseren Bergen*, 1940, p. 20.

ranking chief, Sundermann founded a station in Dahana, near Gunungsitoli.²¹⁶ From Dahana, he penetrated the neighbouring districts of Tumöri and Sihare'ö.

Eight days after Sundermann had settled in Dahana, he invited chief Oroisa and other notables for a banquet of pork, rice and palm wine, thus sealing a treaty, the implications of which the chief was unable to fathom. When Oroisa realized that Sundermann would not bend to his authority, he was disappointed and withdrew his support, which obstructed the work quite seriously. In spite of this, however, with the help of Sundermann's wife Luise²¹⁷, and the support of Fali'era, also known as Ama Mandranga²¹⁸, village-chief of Sifalaete, the work was making progress.

At first, border quarrels with Dahana made it difficult for the people of Tumöri to open themselves to Christianity, even though their chief asked to be baptized. After the colonial authorities had settled the issue, Tumöri became an important Christian village.²¹⁹ By the time Sundermann left in 1896 to establish a station in Lölöwu'a, Christianity had become well established in Dahana, Tumöri and Sihare'ö.

4.3.1.4 Painful Failure in Fagulö

In 1866, Denninger received assistance from Wilhelm Ködding.²²⁰ As a pupil of Fabri²²¹, Ködding had no genuine appreciation of the culture and customs of the Ono Niha. In the course of his explorations outside the *rapatgebied*, he came to Fagulö, about forty kilometres south of Gunungsitoli. Here he received a warm welcome from Gaisa, chief of the Iraono Limbu. Encouraged by the cordiality, and despite the lack of any protection in that area by the colonial authorities, Ködding decided to start a mission station there and bought a piece of land from the chief.²²² Despite his insufficient command of the language, he settled in Fagulö on 8 September 1867. That same year, August Mohri²²³, also a novice in the mission business, arrived to assist him. Both were bachelors, which complicated their negotiations with the chiefs, since an unmarried man had a low status and was not supposed to speak at a palaver. Niasan women would keep their distance from unmarried missionaries.²²⁴

Right at the outset, an incident put a heavy strain on the fragile relationship between the missionaries and the people of Fagulö. Reportedly, a Malay servant of Ködding did 'evil things'²²⁵ in the absence of his master. Puritan Ködding did not mention what these 'evil things' were, but it is likely that they had sexual connotations. Customary law (*adat*) is very strict on unauthorized intimacy between men

²¹⁶ Cf. H. Sundermann, *Die Insel Nias und die Mission daselbst*, 1905, pp. 98-99; later, Oroisa strongly opposed him.

²¹⁷ Luise Sundermann née Beyer (14 March 1857 Kalimantan – 4 March 1929 Mülheim). Luise married Sundermann on 30 January 1879.

²¹⁸ According to Niasan custom, a father (*ama*) is called by the name of his first child, be it a boy or a girl. The same is the case with a mother (*ina*). This is also common in other parts of Indonesia (e.g., West-Papua). There is no indication that this custom stems from Arabic influences. Cf. Ch. 2.5.1.2.

²¹⁹ H. Sundermann, *Die Insel Nias und die Mission daselbst*, 1905, p. 121.

²²⁰ Wilhelm Ködding (28 October 1837 Hundshausen – 5 February 1878 Sibolga); he arrived in Gunungsitoli on 27 February 1866.

²²¹ Cf. Ch. 3.5.1.

²²² *BRM*, 1868, p. 274.

²²³ August Mohri (25 August 1835 Allendorf, Nassau – 13 June 1907 Purba).

²²⁴ For the role of missionary wives, cf. Annemarie Töpperwien, *Seine „Gehülfin“*, 2002, pp. 38-58, 109-142.

²²⁵ Cf. W. Ködding, *Aus den Anfängen meiner Arbeit auf Nias*, 1882, p. 11 (*böse Dinge*).

and women, which in certain cases was punishable by death.²²⁶ In any case, the chiefs of the Iraono Limbu demanded the expulsion of the Malay youngster from their area, indicating that it must have been a very serious matter. Ködding complied with the demand, but a breach of trust could not be avoided.

To make things worse, Ködding and Mohri themselves behaved disparagingly towards the local customs. Initially, Ködding was respected for following the local code of conduct by sharing both betel nut (*afo*) and bed with the Iraono Limbu.²²⁷ He was called 'brother' (*talifusö*)²²⁸, and was given the title 'one who makes straight the law of God'.²²⁹ However, since he really had no genuine appreciation of the 'heathen' culture of the Ono Niha, the situation did not last. Once the missionaries had become settled in Fagulö, they no longer showed any respect for the local traditions. Ködding was disgusted by the clothing, or rather the lack of it, worn by the Iraono Limbu and forced them to wear 'decent dresses'²³⁰ in his presence. This had an alienating effect, rendering meaningful communication impossible. On top of this, they got into a conflict with the local high priest of the primal religion, the *böröwösi* of Lawinda. Subsequently, the *böröwösi* forbade all the chiefs of the Iraono Limbu to show hospitality to the missionaries.²³¹

In such an unpleasant atmosphere, even good intentions were likely to backfire. In the attempt to gain acceptance, Ködding and Mohri regularly awarded little gifts, like tobacco, to those who would come and listen to them. This was considered a fair deal. However, when they invited all the chiefs for a meal of pork, with obviously ulterior motives, the situation got out of hand.²³² Just before the meat was to be divided up, the missionaries held a sermon and invited the guests to become Christians. This caused a commotion. The distribution of the meat, traditionally a very joyful part of the feast, became chaotic. Some grabbed the meat, while threatening the others with their swords. In the end, some of the guests got nothing. They had to leave hungry and angry, an unforgivable insult to any Ono Niha, let alone a chief.

While Ködding was of the opinion that this was all due to the wild and uncivilized character of the Ono Niha, it seems more likely that the missionaries were to blame for false pretences. They wanted to convert the Iraono Limbu to Christianity before the latter were ready for it. Among the Ono Niha, a meal of pork is the most sensitive cultural means of making friendship. Held in the usual cordial

²²⁶ Cf. Ch. 6.3.3.4.

²²⁷ Cf. *Kom over en help ons!* 12 (1866), pp. 183-184.

²²⁸ Cf. *Kom over en help ons!* 11 (1867), p. 165.

²²⁹ Cf. *BRM*, 1867, p. 325 (*sangatulö khöi khöi Lowalangi*).

²³⁰ W. Ködding, *Aus den Anfängen meiner Arbeit auf Nias*, 1882, p. 10 (*anständige Kleider*). The clothes issue was linked not only to Christianization; it was a more general trend of modernisation. Muslims and Chinese also looked down on sparsely clothed Ono Niha. Few missionaries separated the clothes issue from Christianity, some, like Ködding, even considering it as a prerequisite for attending church services. Interestingly, however, Frickenschmidt on Pulau Tello did not want the Niasan Christians to wear Western clothes, but they themselves demanded it in order to demonstrate their new Christian identity. For traditional Ono Niha clothing, cf. H.S. Zebua and Y. Zebua, '101 Kumpulan Catatan, Pra Survei Benda-benda Koleksi Kebudayaan Daerah Kabupaten Nias', 1984, pp. 110, 134-136, 185-187.

²³¹ Cf. *BRM*, 1868, p. 277; *BRM*, 1870, pp. 195-197. The *böröwösi* was a direct descendent of Hia, the first ancestor of the Ono Niha. He possessed a mysterious crucifix (*geheimnisvolles Krucifix*), which he kept in a sanctuary. Cf. W. Ködding, *Aus den Anfängen meiner Arbeit auf Nias*, 1882, p. 6, and A. Bonn, *Die Sonne geht auf über unseren Bergen*, 1940, p. 17.

²³² Cf. W. Ködding, *Aus den Anfängen meiner Arbeit auf Nias*, 1882, pp. 21-22.

manner, it has the authority of sealing a treaty. Thus, by creating chaos, the Iraono Limbu showed their rejection of and utter contempt for the missionaries.

Understandably, the venture in Fagulö failed completely. This was due not only to external circumstances (lack of protection by the colonial authorities), but also to a clash of cultures, more extreme than that possible within the *rapatgebiet*. As free people, the Iraono Limbu saw no need to compromise, and the missionaries became subjected to the shameless arbitrariness of the chiefs. Under these intolerable circumstances, Ködding and Mohri terminated their mission in Nias and left the island in order to work among the Batak on Sumatra.

4.3.1.5 Risky Intermezzo in South Nias

Although in some ways similar, the deployment of three RM-missionaries in the densely populated and independent south of Nias from 1883 to 1886 was even more dramatic. In 1880, Thomas, by now an experienced missionary, made an investigative trip to the south, accompanied by Adam Fehr.²³³ Encouraged by the friendly attitude of Faösi'aro, chief of Bawö Lowalani²³⁴, Thomas decided to settle in this territory. On 8 March 1883, Thomas and his wife left their well-organized congregation of 207 members in Ombölata. Along with Heinrich Lagemann²³⁵, they sailed on the *Denninger*, the first mission sailing vessel, down the eastern coast of Nias. The voyage took three days. Thomas took along a portable forge for the purpose of bartering a piece of land from Chief Faösi'aro.²³⁶

From the point of view of this sovereign chief, the missionaries stood under his jurisdiction. But the missionaries did not share this opinion. They had officially obtained permission from the colonial authorities to settle in this area and did not respect the independence of southern Nias. In fact, they expected it to enter the well-ordered realm of the *pax Neerlandica* quite soon. It was this difference in point of view, rather than the more obvious problems of communication²³⁷, health²³⁸ and security²³⁹, which doomed this venture from the outset.

One major problem was to be able to maintain a neutral position between the rival tribes and villages.²⁴⁰ Though living under the protection of Faösi'aro, they also had friendly relationships with Chief Sidöfa of Hili Geho, a serious rival and later enemy of their landlord. This led to grave misunderstandings. Chief Faösi'aro, who had offered the missionaries his help and protection, regarded them as his subjects and considered it to be solely his privilege to benefit from them in every possible way. In times of war, Faösi'aro expected the missionaries to become his

²³³ Johann Adam Fehr (20 September 1851 Herleshausen, Hessen – 17 October 1932 Herleshausen). Before Fehr entered the Seminary in Barmen, he had been a tailor. He left Germany for Nias on 7 November 1880.

²³⁴ Cf. H. Sundermann, *Die Insel Nias und die Mission daselbst*, 1905, p. 109. Bawö Lowalani borders on Teluk Dalam, then called Luaha Wara by the Ono Niha.

²³⁵ Heinrich Lagemann (3 January 1851 Lengerich – 11 October 1933 Düsseldorf). Before Lagemann joined the Barmen Seminary, he had worked as a farmer. He left for Nias on 10 May 1882 and spent a year with Sundermann in Dahana.

²³⁶ J.W. Thomas, *Drei Jahre in Südrias*, 1892, pp. 17-18.

²³⁷ Thomas had to adjust to the dialect of South Nias, cf. J.W. Thomas, *Drei Jahre in Südrias*, 1892, p. 32.

²³⁸ The whole family suffered from serious malaria.

²³⁹ Constant rivalries between the villages and direct threats of murder and arson against the missionaries.

²⁴⁰ Cf. *BRM*, 1886, p. 197, 202-204; J.W. Thomas, *Drei Jahre in Südrias*, 1892, pp. 115-117.

allies. According to Ono Niha custom (and universally so), a ruler expects settlers to be loyal to him. In the opinion of the missionaries, however, the chief was making impossible demands.²⁴¹

Thomas held regular worship services at the station and held devotions when making house visits. In times of threatening war, all such gatherings met inside the village of Bawö Lowalani.²⁴² The chief felt entitled to 'guide' his people by making comments, much to the dismay of the missionaries. They, in turn, cleverly undermined his authority by preaching sermons which encouraged individual emancipation, thus leading to the disintegration of the traditional society.

The second station in southern Nias, Bawö Sa'ua (Mazingö), was founded on 25 July 1885 by Lagemann and Hermann de Weerd²⁴³, who had arrived six months earlier. This step was taken to create an alternative to Bawö Lowalani, where the mission's prospects had become dim due to the circumstances leading to the death of a nobleman (*si'ulu*) from Hili Geho. He drowned while crossing over the bay in a boat from the mission ship 'Denninger' to the mission station. A war between Bawö Lowalani and Hili Geho, both having a special relationship with the missionaries, therewith became unavoidable.

Concerning a station in Bawö Sa'ua, there had been negotiations with Chief Sidöfafaha. The chief had given permission for the missionaries to settle and work in his area, on the condition that they only preach 'the law of God' (*huku Lowalangi*) and not introduce forced labour (*rodi*, for the Ono Niha being the synonym for colonial rule).²⁴⁴ Soon after Lagemann and De Weerd had settled, a grave misunderstanding spoilt the good relationship. The reason for this was that after Sidöfafaha had lent some of his slaves to work on the mission station, the missionaries had paid the wages directly to the slaves. This was unheard of and dangerously threatened the authority of the chief. The missionaries had disturbed the fragile trust by enforcing their own egalitarian norm in a strongly hierarchical society.

When the war between Bawö Lowalani and Hili Geho broke out, it brought Thomas's work practically to a standstill. In mid-1885, shortly after her five-year-old daughter Luise had died of fever, Wilhelmina returned to Germany with her remaining children.²⁴⁵ In Bawö Sa'ua, De Weerd had fallen mentally ill and died shortly afterwards.²⁴⁶ Mission work had become impossible. Early in 1886, Thomas and Lagemann were evacuated by a government ship, provided by the Dutch *resident* of Tapanuli.

This whole strenuous intermezzo in South Nias had lasted less than three years. Since in that area there was no protection and immediate support by the colonial authorities, it could have succeeded only if the missionaries had sided unconditionally with the chiefs, who had offered them residence and protection. Had

²⁴¹ J.W. Thomas, *Drei Jahre in Südrias*, 1892, p. 33 (*unmögliche Forderungen*); cf. *ibid.* pp. 35-36.

²⁴² A. Bonn, *Die Sonne geht auf über unseren Bergen*, 1940, p. 111.

²⁴³ Hermann G. de Weerd (27 August 1857 Ostfriesland – 27 August 1885 Mazingö, Teluk Dalam); he arrived on 19 January 1885 in Teluk Dalam in the middle of an extremely complex and dangerous situation.

²⁴⁴ Cf. H. Sundermann, *Die Insel Nias und die Mission daselbst*, 1905, pp.114-115.

²⁴⁵ Cf. J.W. Thomas, *Drei Jahre in Südrias*, 1892, pp. 25-26.

²⁴⁶ De Weerd could not stand the constant insecurity and tension and died at the end of August 1884. He was buried next to Luise Thomas in Bawö Lowalani, cf. J.W. Thomas, *Drei Jahre in Südrias*, 1892, pp. 112-114.

they done that, however, it would, for both cultural and for ideological reasons, have caused conflicts with the colonial authorities as well as with the RM.

4.3.2 Learning Culture

The missionaries invested much time and energy in learning the various aspects of the culture of their counterparts. The Ono Niha, of course, also scrutinized the behaviour and implements of the intruders. In their role as students of culture, however, the missionaries were more dependent on the Ono Niha than vice-versa. This mode of communication not seldom resulted in friendships.

For the missionaries, cultural learning meant, first and foremost, grappling with the vernacular. Learning about the customs and the primal religion was integrally connected with these linguistic studies. Rudimentary literary activities, such as the compilation of simple dictionaries, grammars, basic educational materials and parts of Holy Scripture, can be categorized as 'learning by doing'. Regular reports and occasional essays on various aspects of life on Nias invited the supporting communities in Europe to join their learning process.

4.3.2.1 Using the Vernacular

In Padang, Denninger had studied the particular *Soembawa* dialect of the Ono Niha.²⁴⁷ He mentions a relationship with a Niasan headman, who owned a Malay New Testament in Arabic transliteration and claimed to be reading it regularly.²⁴⁸ Once in Gunungsitoli, Denninger had to adjust to the local vernacular. He preferred this north-central Niasan idiom, considering it a 'more noble judicial language'.²⁴⁹ Besides this local vernacular, Malay had already become the *lingua franca* in Gunungsitoli.²⁵⁰

Thomas and Kramer developed very good skills in communicating Christian teachings in the vernacular. Though they acknowledged their severe difficulties²⁵¹, the Ono Niha they served appreciated their willingness to learn the *Li Nono Niha*.

4.3.2.2 Selecting Traditional Customs and Beliefs

All of the missionaries looked into both the *adat* and the primal religion of the Ono Niha, because knowledge of them was indispensable for communicating Christian teachings. Denninger, in the paradigm of his teacher Von Rohden²⁵², believed that the Ono Niha had, in a moral and spiritual sense, fallen deeply from a much higher original level in the remote past²⁵³, to its present degenerated reminiscence.²⁵⁴ He felt that now, through Christian refinement, Niasan culture – including the primal religion – had the inherent potential to achieve a higher level of civilization.

²⁴⁷ *BRM*, 1866, p. 193. Soembawa was the traditional slave market on a little island near Balaikha off the East Coast of Nias, supplying slaves for West Sumatra, cf. *BRM*, 1867, p. 112. Cf. Ch. 6.2.1.

²⁴⁸ *BRM*, 1865, p. 34.

²⁴⁹ *BRM*, 1874, p.210 (*vornehmere Gerichtssprache*).

²⁵⁰ *BRM*, 1866, pp. 193-194.

²⁵¹ *BRM*, 1874, p. 245.

²⁵² Cf. Ch. 3.5.1.

²⁵³ Cf. E. Denninger, 'Bilder aus dem Leben eines Missionars auf Nias', in: *BRM*, 1869, p. 41.

²⁵⁴ E. Denninger, 'Der Cultus der Niasser', in: *BRM*, 1868, p. 149 (*verkümmerte Reminiscenz*).

Denninger's younger colleagues did not start from such an affirmative premise. As former students of Fabri, they were influenced by his beliefs in the inferiority of certain races²⁵⁵ and the virtues of colonialism²⁵⁶, which led to the opinion that the missionary should function not only as a pioneer of the Kingdom of God, but also as an agent of German culture. In their opinion, Niasan culture was inherently inferior and the eradication of the primal religion was a 'victory over the dark forces'.²⁵⁷

The missionaries claimed that they did not want to change the customs of the Ono Niha, but only to sanctify them through the word of God.²⁵⁸ But in fact they were very selective, making use of what could aid the introduction of Christian beliefs and institutions and discarding what seemed unfitting. Kramer, for instance, turned the sacrificial ceremony after the birth of a child into a Christian blessing ceremony²⁵⁹ and transformed the traditional name-giving ceremony (fourteen days after birth) into holy baptism.²⁶⁰ In both, he maintained ritualistic elements, including the pork-banquet, while radically changing the spiritual contents.²⁶¹ Upon other occasions, however, he could rejoice that '...among Christians the old customs gradually fade away and are replaced by good, Christian ones'.²⁶² Sundermann, like Denninger before him, studied the primal religion in the search for suitable concepts and terminology for his translation of the Bible. He could, however, also apply his insights to mission methodology, for instance by transforming the traditional significance of dreams into a missionary medium.²⁶³

The biggest bones of contention, which were rejected by the missionaries and thereby caused friction between them and those Ono Niha willing to convert to Christianity, were practising polygamy, filing of teeth (*fangöhözi*), incision of the male genitals (*famoto*)²⁶⁴, the use of 'decent clothing', i.e., avoiding traditional Ono Niha wear, attending sacrificial feasts, consulting traditional priests or medicine men (*ere* or *duku*), attending shaman rituals, using traditional medicine (*daludalu ni fahede*) and wearing talismans, and venerating the sculptured images of the primal religion (*adu*).

The missionaries assumed that the Ono Niha would be 'relieved' to surrender their *adu*²⁶⁵, but this was only partially true. Especially the ancestral images (*adu zatua*)²⁶⁶ were very dear to the Ono Niha. Thomas was aware of their deep religious significance. He acknowledged their power, reporting that many Ono Niha were

²⁵⁵ Cf. F. Fabri, *Die Entstehung des Heidenthums und die Aufgabe der Heidenmission*, 1859, pp. 3-54.

²⁵⁶ Cf. F. Fabri, *Bedarf Deutschland der Colonien?*, 1879. The chance to obtain colonies was seen as 'divine provision', an 'ethical duty' (*ibid.* p. 56), and 'utterly helpful' and 'indispensable' for the mission (*ibid.* p. 98).

²⁵⁷ *BRM*, 1886, p. 137.

²⁵⁸ Cf. *BRM*, 1875, p. 313.

²⁵⁹ *BRM*, 1887, 201; the missionary and the father of the child both raised their hands to bless the child.

²⁶⁰ *BRM*, 1883, pp. 238-239. The term used: *umgestalten* (transform).

²⁶¹ The missionaries realized the importance the Ono Niha placed on formal meals, usually consisting of pork, rice and palm-wine, cf. H. Sundermann, *Die Insel Nias und die Mission dasebst*, 1905, pp. 98-99, 102-103.

²⁶² *BRM*, 1878, p. 69; *BRM*, 1879, p. 115. Kramer refers, a. o., to the decrease of emotional mourning at burials.

²⁶³ *BRM*, 1882, p. 116.

²⁶⁴ Cf. Ch. 2.5.2.2.

²⁶⁵ *BRM*, 1886, p. 138.

²⁶⁶ Cf. Ch. 2.4.2.1. For an excellent description of the *adu zatua*, cf. W. Marschall, *Die Bedeutung eines Kunstwerks*, 1979, pp. 165-169.

more vulnerable to illness after having destroyed them.²⁶⁷ Needless to say, he added that this negative effect was more than compensated for by the much stronger Christian faith. Dornsaft was sure that Ono Niha just could not envisage religious concepts without visible images to guide them. He reports about a man from the Batu Islands, who found a way out of this dilemma by mentally substituting the missionary for his *adu zatua*, an ingenious method of substitution also followed by other Ono Niha.²⁶⁸ More often, however, Christian chiefs and even church elders kept the *adu zatua* for quite some time.²⁶⁹

Thomas showed some leniency in this matter and permitted them to honour but not to venerate their ancestors. They could have their ancestral images as a keepsake on the condition that they did not make requests of them through prayer and sacrifice.²⁷⁰ Generally, however, the missionaries considered the situation to pose less danger to the converts' souls if the ancestral images were removed. The veneration of the ancestors was thus dealt with not in a theological, but rather in a surgical manner: bad tissue which had to be cut out like an aggressive cancer. In 1888, Sundermann reported triumphantly: 'We succeeded in burying a great grand ancestor and a number of other idols of a clan which in its majority is still heathen. They had kept it in the house of one of our Christians'.²⁷¹ Sundermann did not realize that he had just destroyed an important symbol of the identity of that clan.

4.3.2.3 Initiating Literary Activities

Closely intertwined with linguistic and socio-religious studies were rudimentary literary activities. Instead of waiting until they had acquired a thorough knowledge of the language and the local situation, the missionaries began such literary activities right at the beginning, as part of the 'learning by doing' process. From the outset, simple dictionaries²⁷² and grammars were put together. Denninger wrote the first textbook for the school, which was financed by the Dutch Bible Society (NBG).²⁷³ Later Sundermann added more school materials.²⁷⁴ As their knowledge of Ono Niha culture increased, the missionaries wrote basic essays on ethnographical matters.²⁷⁵

In the course of these literary activities, some fundamental decisions were made in choosing Niasan terminology for matters which were quite alien to the local context.²⁷⁶ Most influential was the standard which was set in the Niasan Bible. Denninger had started translating parts of the New Testament²⁷⁷ into the Niasan

²⁶⁷ *BRM*, 1875, pp. 100, 102-105.

²⁶⁸ Cf. *BRM*, 1884, pp. 22-23.

²⁶⁹ I.e., Chief Zimoluo and Elder Fagala, cf. *BRM*, 1886, pp. 136-138.

²⁷⁰ *BRM*, 1875, p. 100.

²⁷¹ *BRM*, 1888, p. 308.

²⁷² Thomas wrote a dictionary of seven thousand words, cf. *BRM*, 1882, p. 114.

²⁷³ *Nowi Huno Lihede Ba Hulo Niha*, 1870.

²⁷⁴ *Soera Zekola Si Föföna chö Nono Niha*, 1883.

²⁷⁵ Cf. E. Denninger, 'Der Cultus der Niasser', in: *BRM*, 1868, pp. 141-149; W. Thomas, 'Niassische Götter und Geisterlehre', in: *BRM*, 1879, pp. 210-216.

²⁷⁶ These problems became a regular point on the agendas of the annual conferences of missionaries, cf. *BRM*, 1881, pp. 209-210.

²⁷⁷ Cf. Ch. 6.2.1. According to W. Gulö, *Benih yang Tumbuh XIII*, 1883, p. 7, Denninger first translated John and then Luke. But, in fact, Denninger had submitted his translation of John to the RM in 1874, two years after he had send his translation of Luke to the publishers in London. Denninger was assisted by Abdul Abib, a Muslim inhabitant of Nias. Cf. A. Töpperwien, „*Und er führte sie an das ersehnte Gestade*“, 2004, 56-57.

tongue in Padang. Later, as his knowledge of the vernacular improved, he had to rewrite and adjust his translation. From 1869 until 1873, Denninger, with financial support of the NBG, prepared the Niasan edition of the Gospel according to Luke. Unfortunately, this project was not approved by the NBG.²⁷⁸ Eventually, however, the Gospel according to Luke was published by The British and Foreign Bible Society.²⁷⁹ Five hundred copies of the first and only edition arrived in 1874, one year before Denninger left Nias.²⁸⁰

A few years later, Sundermann picked up the thread again. Although he did not consider Denninger's translations to be very good²⁸¹, he nevertheless – mostly for practical reasons – took over most of the basic choices of his predecessor, such as, for example, Lowalangi for 'God', Eheha ni amoni'ö for 'Holy Spirit', horö for 'sin', and Afökha for 'devil'.²⁸²

In 1880, the conference of missionaries in Dahana appointed Sundermann to translate the whole New Testament. He agreed to do this after having finished his stories from the Old Testament.²⁸³ Almost ten years later, in 1889, the New Testament was reported to be finished.²⁸⁴ The whole Bible was completed in 1910, after Sundermann's return to Germany.²⁸⁵ In 1912, the University of Halle acknowledged his work by bestowing an honorary degree upon him.

4.3.3 Propagating Christianity

The propagation of Christian teachings began soon after the missionaries had settled on Nias and had learned the most elementary means of communication. For creating trust and obtaining access to the Niasan women, the role of the missionaries' wives was decisive in this course.²⁸⁶

Because there was so much fluctuation in the population, Gunungsitoli was a difficult place to build up a congregation. As the biggest town on Nias, however, its market and government offices attracted many visitors. Therefore, Denninger's

²⁷⁸ Reasons being: 1. very critical statements by Herman Neubronner van der Tuuk, accusing Denninger of creating an artificial unitary language; 2. unsteady cooperation between Denninger and the Dutch Bible Society; and 3. doubts on the part of the Dutch Bible Society, whether the mission on Nias would be successful (cf. J.L. Swellengrebel, *In Leijdeckers voetspoor I*, 1974, pp. 219-220). After the NBG had spent 1.800 Guilders per year for the project, the translation was rejected.

²⁷⁹ *Turia Amusoladödö Gamonita Tesua wa Luka*, 1874. Cf. Ch. 6.2.1.

²⁸⁰ *BRM*, 1875, p. 115; cf. A. Töpperwien, „Und er führte sie an das ersehnte Gestade“, 2004, 58-59.

²⁸¹ Cf. A. Schneider, 'Heinrich Sundermann', in: *BRM*, 1961, pp. 152-155.

²⁸² Cf. Ch. 6.2.1. According to A.G. Möller, *Beitrag zur Beleuchtung des Religiösen Lebens der Niasser*, 1934, p. 162, it would have been better if the missionaries had chosen *Sirao*, the creator of the gods and the first humans. *Sirao*, however, is a passive and remote deity (transcendent in a deistic sense). Lowalangi, on the contrary, is very much involved in all important ceremonies and rites, and even in everyday life. Cf. J.L. Swellengrebel, *In Leijdeckers voetspoor I*, 1974, pp. 219-230; cf. H. Sundermann, 'Die Psychologie des Niassers', in: *AMZ* 14 (1887), p. 289; P. Suzuki, *The Religious System and Culture of Nias, Indonesia*, 1959, pp. 1-10; J.M. Hämmerle, *Nias – eine eigene Welt*, 1999, pp. 299-307; W.L. Steinhart, 'De Christianiseering van het Niassche begrip "heilig"', in: *De Opwekker* 74/2 (1929), pp. 47-58.

²⁸³ *81 Zeritera moroi ba zoera gamaboe' oela li si foföna*, ca. 1885; cf. *BRM*, 1881, p. 212.

²⁸⁴ *BRM*, 1890, p. 102.

²⁸⁵ As of 1905, Sundermann worked in the service of the Dutch Bible Society.

²⁸⁶ Cf. Annemarie Töpperwien, '„Sie hat ihrem Mann zur Seite stehen dürfen"', in: Beate Magen et al. (eds.), *Monatshefte für die Evangelische Kirchengeschichte des Rheinlandes* LIV (2005), pp. 131-144; Annemarie Töpperwien, *Seine „Gehülfin"*, 2002, p. 119-121; from the same author, „Und er führte sie an das ersehnte Gestade', 2004, pp. 23-30, 140-159.

strategy was to make it the bridgehead for the mission on Nias.²⁸⁷ In the early 1870s, regular teaching and preaching activities could take place in the court building, offered to the missionaries by the head of the civil administration. After some time, some Ono Niha were reportedly moved by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and the salvation offered to them.²⁸⁸ By 1872, between one hundred and 150 people were attending these evangelising activities.

In these early beginnings, material benefits were an important factor attracting Ono Niha to attend evangelising activities. During the first years, churchgoers were treated as guests of the missionary²⁸⁹ and offered coffee, tobacco, cake, or given a little money.²⁹⁰ Denninger invited people from the market, offering them coffee and a small amount of money (later also tobacco and medicine) after the sessions. In return, the chiefs often publicly expressed their agreement with the sermon by exclaiming traditional compliments (*fangowai*).²⁹¹ This was an honour to the host, who wisely tolerated the interruptions and respected their habits. Wilhelmina Thomas attracted the women to the Sunday worship services by sewing dresses for them.²⁹² After the community had been Christianised, the missionaries tried to stop this dubious practice, but unfortunately the expectation of receiving material benefits from the church could not always be eradicated.

After his arrival in Gunungsitoli, Kramer put quite a bit of time and energy into gathering groups of Ono Niha in catechetical evening classes²⁹³; soon some of those attending began preparing for holy baptism. The work in Gunungsitoli, unlike that in the more remote areas, focussed not only on the chiefs and priests, but was aimed also at the general population. In the mid-1880s, many poor people and slaves joined the congregation.²⁹⁴

In Ombölata, Thomas regularly gathered people for instruction and simple sermons on the veranda of the mission house. He would beat a hollow tree to call them.²⁹⁵ Twice a week, once in Ombölata and once in Lölömboli, he held open Bible studies, where all aspects of the Christian faith could be discussed freely. Thomas also provided opportunities for the personal confession of sins.²⁹⁶ In his propagation of the Gospel, he made much use of parables and proverbs (*amaedola*)²⁹⁷, which is in accordance with the traditional rhetoric of the Ono Niha. The participants in these sessions were impressed not only by the biblical stories, but even more so by the moralistic admonitions of the missionary, whose prime objective was 'to make them

²⁸⁷ BRM, 1872, p. 166 (*Stützpunkt der Mission*).

²⁸⁸ Cf. BRM, 1872, p. 164, 168; according to Denninger, the Ono Niha had an intuitive understanding of what the Christian worship service was about, since they treated it with more respect than their own assemblies.

²⁸⁹ For a description of Niasan hospitality (*fatomesa*) in these early days, cf. 'Gastfreiheit auf Nias', in: DKM 21/11 (1875), pp. 163-170.

²⁹⁰ For some time, the newly baptized were supplied with second-hand clothing, sent in Christmas boxes by mission-minded Christians in Germany and Holland, cf. *De Rijsche Zending*, 1877, p. 176.

²⁹¹ Cf. BRM, 1874, p. 208; A. Bonn, *Die Sonne geht auf über unseren Bergen*, 1940, p. 16.

²⁹² Cf. Annemarie Töpferwien, *Seine „Gehülfin“*, 2002, p. 120.

²⁹³ BRM, 1875, p. 110.

²⁹⁴ BRM, 1884, pp. 235-237.

²⁹⁵ BRM, 1874, pp. 243-244.

²⁹⁶ BRM, 1877, p. 180.

²⁹⁷ BRM, 1875, p. 99.

into poor sinners²⁹⁸, i.e., to make them recognize their sinful character. The Gospel was presented to them as a strict law (*huku Lowalangi*).

The fact that Thomas attracted an ever-growing audience was also due to his exceptional speaking talent – traditionally one of the most highly esteemed virtues among the Ono Niha. Thomas adopted the gestures and facial expressions of his Ono Niha listeners, which, supported by his thorough knowledge of their customs and by his strong, impulsive personality, had a convincing effect. De Weerd wrote about Thomas: 'He is excellent in speaking to the people, imitating all their gestures and facial expressions; they all respect him very much. He is the great *tua*, as they say, and he knows all of their customs and habits very well.'²⁹⁹

Balugu Tödölala, who regularly attended the worship services, reportedly appreciated this so much that he eagerly passed the new teachings on to others.³⁰⁰ The chief (*salawa*) of Lölömboli even praised Thomas' teachings about the damaging influence of the *adu*.³⁰¹ The fame of the eloquent orator drew individuals and delegations from beyond the boundaries of Ombölata. Once, the *ere* of Hiligara attended the Sunday worship service, along with two hundred of his people.³⁰²

Thanks to the involvement of Wilhelmina Thomas, the women and children³⁰³, traditionally excluded in Niasan society, received attention. Women would come to the station now. In cooperation with *Guru* Jonatha, Wilhelmina built up a Sunday school.³⁰⁴ Ombölata soon developed into the most prosperous mission station.

Sundermann, in Dahana, was fortunate to be able to win the energetic chief Ama Mandranga to Christianity. He attended the Sunday worship, as well as the regular morning devotions held by the missionary for all his workers and pupils³⁰⁵, and soon became one of the first catechumens. Sundermann would teach or preach and Ama Mandranga would explain to the people what the missionary actually meant.³⁰⁶

Lastly, the spiritual motives attracting Ono Niha to the mission stations during these early beginnings should be mentioned: according to Ama Mandranga, his people had the impression that the Christians were good and honest people and that their faith purified the heart. The fact that Jesus Christ had lived earlier than Mohammad, and was therefore the older prophet, was also attractive to the Ono Niha.³⁰⁷

4.3.4 Establishing Christian Congregations

The formation of a Christian congregation begins when the first Christian believers from a local community are baptized. Naturally, this also entails preparatory instruction for the catechumens. Holy baptism was always preceded, and sometimes also followed up, by catechetical instruction given by the missionary. After the first

²⁹⁸ *BRM*, 1875, p. 101.

²⁹⁹ *BRM*, 1885, p. 181.

³⁰⁰ *BRM*, 1874, p. 244.

³⁰¹ *BRM*, 1875, p. 100.

³⁰² *BRM*, 1875, p. 99.

³⁰³ Cf. 'Mädchen und Frauen auf Nias', in: *DKM* 21/8 (1875), pp. 118-128. Cf. Ch. 6.3.3.4.

³⁰⁴ *BRM*, 1879, p. 111.

³⁰⁵ *BRM*, 1879, pp. 102-103.

³⁰⁶ Cf. H. Sundermann, *Die Insel Nias und die Mission daselbst*, 1905, pp. 99-108.

³⁰⁷ *BRM*, 1880, p. 170.

teacher-preachers had been trained in the 1880s, these would assist in teaching the catechumens and the young Christians.

4.3.4.1 First Fruits of Nias

The missionaries used the term 'first fruits' from the New Testament (Rom 16:5 and 1 Cor 16:15, *NRSV*) to refer to the first converts baptized in a certain area. Initially, these were groups of interested individuals and families gathered from different villages around the mission station. Later, the focus was more on families within one specific village.³⁰⁸

The first Ono Niha to become a Protestant Christian was a young woman in Padang, Sumatra, by the name of Ara, who had grown up in a Christian atmosphere in a Dutch home.³⁰⁹ She was baptized in 1862 by Denninger and given the name Gertruida Christina. She is now known by her Niasan name (*ara*, meaning 'how long?'), which symbolizes the yearning of the missionary to see the Ono Niha turn to Jesus Christ.

In Gunungsitoli, Kramer began to teach catechism classes in 1873 with a group of Ono Niha from Onozitoli and from Hilina'a. Among them was also the chief of Hilina'a, Jawaduha Zebua. Denninger's evangelizing activities had evidently been making an impression on them for quite some time.³¹⁰ Before holy baptism was administered during an impressive church service, the aspirant family had to surrender its sculptured images. This was a token that they had completely severed their bonds with the primal religion. Individuals from non-Christian families had to promise not to participate in any ceremonies or veneration offered to the *adu* in their house. On Easter Sunday, 1874, eight-and-a-half years after the Nias mission had begun, the first 25 men and women from Hilina'a and Onozitoli were ready to be baptized. During the ceremony³¹¹, which was held in Gunungsitoli and attended by the Dutch officials, the candidates made a free confession of faith. Then Denninger baptized the first twelve candidates and Kramer the other thirteen. A short sermon was held after the sacrament had been administered, emphasising God's love and the wish that all the newly baptized Christians, would help spread the Gospel on Nias.

After the church service, all people present were invited to a banquet. Seen from the cultural angle of the Ono Niha, such a meal, consisting mainly of boiled pork and rice, is, as had been mentioned above, the formal confirmation of a treaty. This explains why the young congregation, especially in Hilina'a, was soon subject to tremendous pressure from the outside, threatening both the property and the lives of the Christians.³¹² They were considered to be traitors, who had turned against the traditions of the ancestors and collaborated with the intruders. In a society which did not distinguish sharply between religion and government, conversion to Christianity was considered to be treason.

³⁰⁸ The concept of Gustav Warneck recommending the 'Christianization of Nations' (*Volkschristianisierung*) was implemented only during the immediately following period, cf. *AMZ* 10 (1883), pp. 318-320 (ed. G. Warneck); also G. Warneck, *Evangelische Missionslehre*, vol. III-1, 1902, pp. 243-286.

³⁰⁹ *BRM*, 1874, p. 208.

³¹⁰ Cf. A. Schneider, *Turia*, 1965, pp. 10-12.

³¹¹ Cf. *BRM*, 1874, pp. 207-208.

³¹² Cf. *BRM*, 1875, p. 107; cf. A. Schneider, *Turia*, 1965, p. 11.

Kramer and Denninger did thorough follow-up work. Three to four times a week, in an evening-school, the Christians were instructed in the Short Catechism of Martin Luther.³¹³ Later in 1874, another nineteen Ono Niha, two complete families, among them noblemen and former priests of the primal religion, were baptized. But then the first real set-back cooled down the enthusiasm: the sudden death of chief Jawaduha Zebua in 1875. However, the cynical criticism by the foes of Christianity was countered with an impressive Christian burial for the chief of Hilina'a.³¹⁴ The missionaries permitted the traditional form for funerals, minus sacrifices and prayers to the ancestors, thereby giving it a Christian aspect and thus shutting the mouths of the critics. The climax of planting the church in Gunungsitoli was the celebration of the first Lord's Supper, on 8 August 1875. Two days later, Denninger left Nias for ever. Like Moses on Mount Nebo (Deut 34), he was granted only a glimpse of the promise fulfilled.

In October 1875, Thomas baptized the six first fruits of Ombölata. As this mission station developed, he founded branch congregations in Lölömboli, Fodo and Faekhu-Madula. At this last location, he built a chapel. The first large church building on Nias, with a tower and a bell and seating three hundred worshippers, was consecrated in 1877 in Ombölata.³¹⁵ When, in 1883, Thomas turned Ombölata over to Adam Fehr, there were 207 Christians in the congregation (altogether, he had baptized 244), as well as a fund for social aid, a vegetable garden belonging to the congregation, and a cemetery.

As has been shown above, the growth of the church in Dahana cannot be separated from the work of Sundermann and Ama Mandranga. The latter, the gifted village-chief of Sifalaete, was among the first fruits baptized on 25 May 1879. He became an influential lay preacher in his own right³¹⁶ and was the driving force behind the Christianization of Dahana. Due to this chief's influence, Sundermann was able to baptize the first two families in the neighbouring village of Sihare'ö. A number of families from Tumöri who had become Christians settled near the mission station, but on the Dahana side of the border.³¹⁷ In Tumöri itself, Chief Kadaögö requested holy baptism on his deathbed.³¹⁸ Though no one else in the village converted to Christianity at that time, Sundermann nevertheless administered the sacrament, foreseeing that this request was more than just a visible crack on the surface of the primal religion. Just before Sundermann went on furlough at the beginning of 1890, he baptized another sixty persons. Christianity had thus by then developed good roots in Dahana. Chief Oroisa, who had held himself aloof from Sundermann for some time, was baptized at the end of 1893, a year after the missionary's return to Nias.

³¹³ Denninger had already made a translation of the catechism before Sundermann did, cf. *BRM*, 1875, p. 113. Sundermann's revised edition, in use since approximately 1880, is entitled: *Amahao ba lala Wangorifi*.

³¹⁴ Cf. *BRM*, 1875, pp. 313-314.

³¹⁵ *BRM*, 1877, p. 179.

³¹⁶ Cf. A. Bonn, *Ein Jahrhundert Rheinische Mission*, 1928, p. 72 (Bonn calls Ama Mandranga an *Evangelist*).

³¹⁷ Cf. H. Sundermann, *Die Insel Nias und die Mission daselbst*, 1905, pp. 121-122.

³¹⁸ *Ibid.* pp. 104-106.

4.3.4.2 Niasan Assistant Teachers, Teacher-Preachers and Elders

From the beginning, gifted Ono Niha - usually from influential families - were trained as assistant school teachers. The first was Kanoma, son of a nobleman, who stayed with Denninger for some time.³¹⁹ When Kanoma began his service as a government employee under the supervision of Denninger, he was not yet a Christian. Later, when Christians were entrusted with such tasks, they received a blessing in the Sunday service.³²⁰ Assistant teachers were beneficial to the Christianization of Nias, though to a lesser degree than either active elders, such as Ama Mandranga, or the much better qualified teacher-preachers (*guru*). The thesis of Menzel and Hulu³²¹, that Denninger had laid the foundation for the training of indigenous human resources in the Niasan church, is questionable, since Kanoma was not a church worker. The first Niasan teacher-preacher and the first elder were appointed at the conference of missionaries in 1880.

The first plans for a training-school for teacher-preachers were made by Sundermann in 1879.³²² In 1881, Sundermann received instructions to train teacher-preachers. From 1882 until 1890, he held two courses in his 'seminary' in Dahana³²³, which brought forth nine qualified teacher-preachers³²⁴, who would henceforth assist the missionary both as government-approved teachers in school and as preachers, catechists and counsellors in the congregation.

These teacher-preachers were to a certain extent copies of the missionaries, but they were more effective in reaching their own people. Towards the end of the 1880s, the teacher-preachers increasingly joined the campaign against the primal religion, successfully evangelising even priests and priestesses (*ere*).³²⁵

4.3.4.3 Rudimentary Ecclesiastical Structures

After the first fruits had been baptized, the new local Christian community had to organise itself in terms of leadership, service and discipline. Initially, the missionary and his wife carried the main burden. By and by, tasks were delegated. Baptized chiefs and former priests assumed leading roles in the congregation.³²⁶ In some areas, especially in southern Nias, from then onwards the traditional chiefs had a great deal of influence in the everyday business of running church life.

The following basic structures were developed: In every Christian family, the oldest man (in rare cases the oldest woman) would lead simple devotions in the morning and in the evening. He (or she) would remind the younger members of the family of their religious duties, such as attending Sunday service. Ten to fifteen (or

³¹⁹ *BRM*, 1866, p. 194; cf. *Kom over en help ons!* 8 (1866), p. 114.

³²⁰ Cf. *BRM*, 1876, p. 221; *BRM*, 1880, p. 168. Among them were Andrea and Jonatha from Ombölatä.

³²¹ G. Menzel and B. Chr. Hulu, 'Denninger', 1990. According to this unpublished essay, Denninger had developed three characteristics of the Niasan church: 1. the centres of mission (strategy); 2. indigenous human resources; 3. financial self-support of the congregations.

³²² *BRM*, 1879, p. 218.

³²³ Cf. A. Bonn, *Die Sonne geht auf über unseren Bergen*, 1940, p. 21 (*Gehilfenseminar*). The Niasan assistants were called 'Gehülften' or 'Gehilfen' (helpers).

³²⁴ Cf. A. Schneider, *Turia*, 1965, p. 45. (They were tested by a government commission).

³²⁵ *BRM*, 1888, pp. 311-312.

³²⁶ *BRM*, 1875, p. 312. After chief Jawaduha Zebua of Hilina'a died, the small, persecuted congregation faced a leadership crisis. In this situation, Kramer was temporarily acknowledged as 'chief'. Missionaries were identified with the nobility (*si'ulu*), cf. *BRM*, 1884, p. 345.

more) families would be led by an elder, who was usually a Christian chief or nobleman. Christian school-teachers would have the status of elders.

The first teacher-preachers each led a local congregation under the overseeing eye of the missionary, who was the undisputed master of his extended mission station. The missionary's wife would usually lead the Sunday school, often along with an assistant teacher or teacher-preacher. During this period, church discipline remained largely in the hands of the missionary.

The first ecclesiastical structure on Nias at a level above that of the mission station or the local congregation was the annual conference of missionaries on Nias. The participants, however, included neither indigenous Ono Niha nor laity. The first conference to be attended by all the missionaries on Nias was held on 21 March 1877 in Gunungsitoli.³²⁷ This meeting was a rather informal one, without a chairman. The first official conference of missionaries was convened in 1880 in Dahana and chaired by Sundermann. From 1882 until 1902, the latter was officially acknowledged as 'president' (German: *Präses*). He thus became the predecessor of the later bishop (*ephorus*) of the Niasan church.

4.3.4.4 Strategic Post in Padang

After Denninger left Padang for Nias in September 1865, no RM-missionary worked in Padang until 1881, when Dornsaft³²⁸ was stationed there. Dornsaft had previously served on Nias (1879-1880). Though Denninger had, in 1862, baptized the first Ono Niha women, Gertruida Christina called Ara in Padang, she had subsequently joined the Roman Catholic Church³²⁹ and Dornsaft had had to start from scratch in building up a congregation there. He succeeded in doing so. For many years, Dornsaft played an essential role in Padang, ministering not only to the Ono Niha, but also to the Dutch military. Of strategic importance was his logistic support of the missionaries in more remote regions, including Nias and the Batu Islands.³³⁰

4.3.5 Being Present in Society

From the very first day the missionaries arrived in Niasan communities, they had an influence, even if they were considered to be only a curious attraction. In Padang and Gunungsitoli, there had already been European residents before the missionaries' arrival. The latter thus strengthened that component. Part of any social impact made by the missionaries was therefore linked to the fact that the missionary, his wife and his children were Europeans. Besides that, there were specific factors directly connected to the missionary task, such as medical care, education and community development, which had some impact on the everyday life of the Ono Niha.

³²⁷ Before that, there had been occasional 'conferences' of two or three colleagues, but the one in 1877 was the first attended by all of them. Present were Kramer, Thomas, Sundermann and Israel, cf. *Konferenzprotokolle Nias, 1876-1899* (RMG 2.777); also *BRM*, 1877, p. 212. Johann Chr. Heinrich Israel served on Nias from 1877 until 1879, and then in the Bataklands until 1882, after which he left the RM.

³²⁸ Cf. Ch. 3.4. and Ch. 4.2.; cf. *BRM*, 1881, pp. 196-197, 214-216.

³²⁹ Cf. *De Rijnsche Zending*, 1874, p. 123; A. Bonn, *Die Sonne geht auf über unseren Bergen*, 1940, p. 7.

³³⁰ Cf. U. Hummel, *Sirihpruim en Kruis*, 2002, pp. 22-28, 41.

4.3.5.1 Medical Missions

From the very beginning, medical aid had been one of the most important 'auxiliary services' of the RM's missionary work. During the nineteenth century, however, neither physicians nor nurses were sent out to Nias. In compensation, the missionaries had, however, received some general medical training in Barmen.³³¹ Although these were only very basic medical skills, their application on the mission field was usually the initial 'point of contact'³³² with the local people. The effectiveness of Western, so-called 'Christian medicine'³³³, was interpreted by both sides as a token of the superiority of Christianity to the primal religion.³³⁴

This can be illustrated, for example, by a report of Missionary Thomas in Ombölata. Along with his wife, Wilhelmina, he often visited the sick. Chief Tödölala praised Thomas for his service to the people and the village priest advised the people to accept the 'strong medicine' of the missionary.³³⁵ On one occasion, however, Thomas' intimidating, somewhat fiery temperament flared up when the *ere* of Mazingö, a small hamlet near Ombölata, tried to practice a traditional *aduritual* at the mission station.³³⁶ Thomas intervened, casting away the priest's 'medicine' and reprimanding him harshly. Then, before the chief and twelve witnesses, he accused the priest of intrusion, and won his case. A short while later, when the child of the *balugu* became deathly ill, Thomas faced his first major crisis. If the child died, the blame would be placed on him to the detriment of the Christian cause; if the child was cured, he would have proven the power of Christ over the angry spirits. Fortunately, his 'strong medicine' (a Western remedy combined with prayer) healed the child: a 'victory of the Gospel' over the primal religion, effectively shaking the foundations of the old order.³³⁷

4.3.5.2 Educational Missions

In the field of primary education, the missionaries cooperated closely with the colonial government. The motive of the government was to introduce Western culture to the Ono Niha; that of the mission was to introduce the Gospel.³³⁸ Denninger was asked by the authorities to become the supervisor³³⁹ of a government-sponsored school, which was subsequently opened on 21 March 1867 with six boys, all but one of them between the ages of ten and twelve.³⁴⁰ Some (if not all) of the pupils were sons of local chiefs.³⁴¹ Denninger was assisted by a

³³¹ Cf. Ch. 3.5.1.

³³² Cf. *BRM*, 1900, p. 8 (*Anknüpfungspunkt*). Cf. Ch. 6.3.2.4.

³³³ *BRM*, 1886, p. 146.

³³⁴ In the paradigm of the primal religion, disease is always caused by metaphysical powers (cf. J.P. Kleiweg de Zwaan, *Die Heilkunde der Niasser*, 1913, p. 7). For the mission, medical care was an aid in spreading the Kingdom of God and to help destroy the primal religion (cf. Petra Krömer, *Heilen für das Reich Gottes*, 1998, pp. 187, 195).

³³⁵ *BRM*, 1874, p. 244.

³³⁶ *BRM*, 1874, pp. 244-245.

³³⁷ Cf. *BRM*, 1875, p. 98. Reportedly, 'heathendom' was undermined in Ombölata and Lölömboli.

³³⁸ H. Kayser, *Aspekte des sozio-kulturellen Wandels auf Nias*, 1976, pp. 103, 105.

³³⁹ Cf. *BRM*, 1866, p. 193.

³⁴⁰ This was the first Western-type school on Nias. The earlier school of the Malay Muslim community in Gunungsitoli may have been a Koranic school, cf. *BRM*, 1867, p. 113; H. Kayser, *Aspekte des sozio-kulturellen Wandels auf Nias*, 1976, p. 100.

³⁴¹ Cf. *BRM*, 1867, p. 129; *BRM*, 1867, p. 321.

Niasan schoolmaster, as well as by his younger colleagues Ködding (temporarily), Thomas (for a few months) and Kramer. The latter continued to serve as overseer after Denninger had left. The missionaries and the Niasan schoolmasters taught the pupils reading, writing, mathematics, drawing and geography.³⁴² Daily, there was one hour of Bible study, for which Denninger's translation of the Gospel of Luke was used.

A second school was opened by Thomas in Ombölata and a third by Sundermann in Dahana. Generally, the Ono Niha pupils were reluctant to attend, because they saw no purpose or advantage in Western education.³⁴³ Usually, the chiefs sent their boys in order to please the Europeans, who were urging them to do so. Sending a boy to school was a gesture of submission to the new authorities. Thus it is no wonder that the boys demanded a reward for coming.³⁴⁴ This attitude changed gradually after the first Ono Niha had been baptized in 1874.³⁴⁵

In addition to the mission school, Kramer, who came to assist Denninger in 1873, initiated catechism classes preceding baptism.³⁴⁶ Naturally, most of those attending were adults. The first Sunday school for children was started by Wilhelmina Thomas and *Guru* Jonatha in Ombölata. Both formal and informal education in the hands of the missionaries gradually undermined the traditional worldview of the Ono Niha by introducing Europe-centred, Christian principles.

4.3.5.3 Community Development

From the beginning, Denninger attempted to improve the standard of living by suggesting better methods of farming, such as introducing buffalos for ploughing in the rice fields, manufacturing, commerce (i.e., cigars), and even mining (coal, perhaps even gold).³⁴⁷ Kramer was concerned to help overcome poverty through improving gardening and farming methods. Thomas was eager to set an example in agriculture.³⁴⁸

Missionaries improved the infrastructure (roads and bridges) in order to reach their posts more easily. All of these efforts were supported by the Dutch *controleur*. There were praiseworthy cases of medical care³⁴⁹ and missionary wives would acquaint the women and girls with modern methods of housekeeping.³⁵⁰ Notwithstanding the limited and rudimentary nature of these attempts, during this period the missionaries nevertheless did more to improve the material conditions in their local communities than did the colonial authorities.

³⁴² The first schoolbook was the Reading Lessons, *Nowi Huno Lihede ba Hulo Niha*, 1870, by E. Denninger.

³⁴³ Cf. H. Kayser, *Aspekte des sozio-kulturellen Wandels auf Nias*, pp. 100-103. This changed during the next period (1891-1915), when the Ono Niha were more eager to attain Western education (*ibid.* pp. 104-113).

³⁴⁴ Thomas had to pay his pupils money (*Duiten*), cf. *De Rijnsche Zending*, 1874, p. 133. The school began operating on 1 October 1874 with seven boys.

³⁴⁵ Cf. H. Kayser, *Aspekte des sozio-kulturellen Wandels auf Nias*, 1976, p. 102.

³⁴⁶ *BRM*, 1875, p. 113. Denninger's translation of the Short Catechism of Martin Luther was used.

³⁴⁷ *BRM*, 1872, pp. 167-169.

³⁴⁸ *BRM*, 1881, pp. 203-205.

³⁴⁹ Cf. H. Kayser, *Aspekte des sozio-kulturellen Wandels auf Nias*, 1976, pp. 126-128. The efforts of the missionaries to fight disease were impressive, whereas the colonial authorities did little to improve the health situation.

³⁵⁰ Cf. *BRM*, 1875, p. 99; cf. Annemarie Töpperwien, *Seine „Gehülfin“*, 2002, pp. 119-121.

4.4 EXPANSION OF THE MISSIONARY WORK ON NIAS (1890-1915)

The most prominent characteristic of this second period of Christianity on Nias is the expansion of the mission beyond the *rapatgebied*.³⁵¹ The year 1890 marks the beginning of a continuous process of successful penetration of missionary activities into areas beyond the direct control of, though under some degree of protection by the colonial authorities. After 1908, when the whole of Nias was subjugated by the Dutch³⁵², RM-missionaries established themselves permanently in South Nias. Parallel to this geographical expansion, there was a rapid numerical increase in church membership.³⁵³ The increase in the number of stations and branch congregations necessitated a further consolidation of the ecclesiastical structures. The support of the mission among the local population, as well as its strategic network of mission stations and its increasing emphasis on community development strengthened its position vis-à-vis the colonial government. Cooperation between the mission and the state was further enhanced by the 'Ethical Politics', implemented by the Dutch as of 1901.³⁵⁴

4.4.1 New Missionary Vision

The expansion of missionary activities was to some extent inspired by a new understanding of mission. There was a shift of focus from individual to communal conversion, with the ultimate goal of developing national churches. At the same time, the missionaries began to differentiate more sharply between the various aspects of the local culture and gained an appreciation of some of these aspects.

While Fabri³⁵⁵ had held that only through an individual conversion could a person free himself of his inferior non-Western and non-Christian culture, the post-Fabri era in the RM was characterized by the slogan 'Christianisation of nations'.³⁵⁶ This missionary vision, formulated elaborately by Gustav Warneck, was strongly

³⁵¹ Cf. W. Gulö, *Benih yang Tumbuh XIII*, 1983, pp. 10-13, calls this period 'The Period of Expansion' (*Masa Penyebaran*).

³⁵² Cf. Tim Penyusun, *Sejarah Perjuangan Rakyat Nias*, 1989, pp. 25-50. In 1908 Nias became a section or *afdeeling* under its first assistant-resident, Van Vuuren (1908-1913).

³⁵³ Between 1894 and 1899 the number of members increased by 104%, from 2106 to 4334 (*BRM*, 1900, p.181).

³⁵⁴ As of the end-1870s, the anti-revolutionary policy of 'ethically responsible politics' was pioneered in the Netherlands by Abraham Kuyper, a leader in the church (*Gereformeerde Kerken*) and in politics (Anti-Revolutionary Party). Similar demands for a more humane policy concerning the colonies had sprung up in the United Kingdom. When Kuyper became Prime Minister in 1901, the Head of State announced in her Queen's Speech that it was the duty of the Netherlands as a Christian country to improve the situation of the indigenous population in the colonies and for the government to support the Christian mission. By providing humanitarian development aid, the mission would be able to repay some of the debt which the state owed its exploited subjects (*eereschuld*). Major roles in the implementation of this policy were played by A.W.F. Idenburg, minister of colonies in 1902-1905, 1908-1909 and subsequently Governor-General of the Dutch East Indies (1909-1916), and J.B. Heutz, Governor-General 1904-1909 (cf. S.C. Graaf van Randwijck, *Handelen en Denken in dienst der zending*, vol. I, 1981, pp. 217-251; G. van Klinken, *Minorities, modernity and the emerging nation*, 2003, pp. 18-24).

³⁵⁵ Cf. Ch. 3.5.1 and Ch. 4.3.2.2.

³⁵⁶ Cf. G. Warneck, 'Volkschristianisierung als Missionsaufgabe', in: *AMZ* 10 (1883), pp. 318-320; G. Warneck, *Evangelische Missionslehre* vol. III-1, 1902, pp. 243-286.

propagated by RM-director August Schreiber.³⁵⁷ Henceforth, the objective was to transform, or better to ennoble, an entire ethnic entity towards Christian standards.

Though the whole concept of the 'Christianisation of nations' was based on a 'bourgeois myth' (Johannes C. Hoekendijk), rather than on Biblical exegesis, and therefore served more the interests of colonialism than those of the Kingdom of God, it undeniably led to an increased appreciation of non-Western indigenous cultures. In its turn, this interest in other cultures resulted in a sharper differentiation between what was considered compatible with Christianity and what was not. Generally, a three-level approach was followed. Certain elements, especially the vernacular, were held in very high esteem. Others, such as customary law, were considered to be tolerable if cleansed of 'heathen' remnants. And yet others, such as the primal religion, were considered to be an abomination to God which had to be eradicated completely. One and the same missionary would praise the one aspect of Niasan culture while condemning the other. Sundermann, for instance, who had studied under Warneck³⁵⁸, developed a great admiration for the Niasan language.³⁵⁹ Through his translation of the Bible into the Niasan vernacular (*Li Nono Niha*), he up-graded an essential element of Niasan culture by transforming it into a Christian medium.³⁶⁰ Similarly, Eduard Fries³⁶¹, an academic theologian of a like mind with Warneck and Schreiber, advocated the in-depth study of traditional songs and poetry in order to gain an understanding of the rhythm, idioms and hidden symbolism of the Niasan language, which would then make a better communication of Christian teachings possible.³⁶²

Simultaneously, however, these missionaries had an aversion towards pre-Christian Niasan religiosity. They saw the primal religion as a degenerated piece, rather than as the central nerve, of the Niasan cultural identity. They believed that they could cut it out and replace it with Christianity, thereby ennobling the whole of Niasan culture.³⁶³ In actual fact, however, by eradicating the central nerve, they paralysed the whole body. By destroying that which was most dear to the Ono Niha, they committed 'cultural vandalism'.³⁶⁴ However, despite all radical efforts to prune

³⁵⁷ Cf. Ch. 3.4. and Ch. 3.5.1. Schreiber rejected any form of racism and held that all nations are capable of developing culture and civilization. The term 'refinement' or 'ennoblement' (*Veredelung*) occurs quite often in Schreiber's writings; cf. A.W. Schreiber, *Cultur und Mission in ihrem Einfluß auf die Naturvölker*, 1882. Schreiber was a former Sumatra missionary of the RM.

³⁵⁸ Sundermann attended the Barmen Seminary from 1870 until 1875.

³⁵⁹ Sundermann considered the Niasan language to be, in a certain sense, the most highly developed among all Malayo-Polynesian (*malaiischen*) languages, cf. H. Sundermann, *Niassisch-Deutsches Wörterbuch*, 1905, p. 269.

³⁶⁰ Cf. Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message*, 1989, pp. 1-3, 47. Although Sanneh refers to African contexts, among others, rather than to the Indonesian one, his theory of the 'translatability' of the Christian message into all cultures and languages, effecting the development, rather than the destruction, of indigenous cultures, applies to Nias as well.

³⁶¹ Eduard Fries (6 March 1877 Barmen – 10 May 1923 Barmen). On Nias from 1904 until 1920. Then, until his death in 1923, director of the RM in Barmen. Cf. M. Humburg, '..... die Sehnsucht nach Nias hat ihn nie verlassen', in: Beate Magen et al. (eds.), *Monatshefte für die Evangelische Kirchengeschichte des Rheinlandes*, vol. LIV, 2005, pp. 117-130.

³⁶² Cf. E. Fries, 'Niassische Gesänge', in: M. Humburg et al. (eds.), *Im „Land der Menschen“*, 2003, pp. 95-101.

³⁶³ Cf. 'Die Umgestaltung der heidnischen Sitte in eine christliche', in: *BRM*, 1892, pp. 133-139.

³⁶⁴ Cf. *Globus* 82/11 (1902), pp. 179; *Globus* 82/17 (1902), pp. 280. (*Missionsvandalismus auf Nias*). The ethnographic magazine *Globus*, reacting to an article in *BRM*, 1902, pp. 139-140, criticised the 'wild zealotism' of some missionaries, who destroyed cultural treasures of immeasurable value. *Globus* regretted that the missionaries did not receive even a minimal training in Ethnology. Cf. also

out all aspects of 'heathendom' from Niasan culture, fundamental religious patterns continued to exist in the hearts and minds of Ono Niha.³⁶⁵

While on the one hand, the missionaries' greater sensitivity towards certain cultural issues increased the Ono Niha's acceptance of Christianity during this period, on the other hand, the taboo on indigenous religiosity caused a certain amount of inhibition and reluctance among many Ono Niha, especially in South Nias, joyfully to embrace the new faith.

4.4.2 Successful Missionary Advance Southwards

The first attempt, during the years 1883-1886, to gain a foothold in the south of Nias, had been a failure. In 1890, Thomas again crossed the southern boundaries of the *rapatgebied*, though this time not going as far as South Nias. According to Sundermann³⁶⁶, this second advance southwards initiated the new period of missionary expansion. In Humene³⁶⁷, Thomas obtained a plot of land for a mission station and settled there in January 1891. At Easter in 1892, he baptized the 63 first fruits, reporting a 'very strong movement towards Christianity'.³⁶⁸ Humene became the fastest developing missionary area on Nias. It was here, too, that the Great Awakening later began.

4.4.3 Penetration into the Western Regions of Nias

A few months after Thomas had begun his southward advance, Lagemann and August Lett undertook an exploratory journey to the West Coast of Nias.³⁶⁹ Encouraged by the friendly attitude of some of the chiefs, Lett paid a second visit to the area. This time he came by boat from the south and was accompanied by the *controleur* of Gunungsitoli.³⁷⁰ After the *controleur* had left again, Lett stayed for three weeks as the guest of the chief of Tugala-Lahömi while searching for a good plot of land to set up a mission station.

4.4.3.1 Fadoro / Sirombu

Between the villages of Tugala-Lahömi and Fadoro, he found a plot with a good location on a hill with an adequate supply of water. Subsequently, the station Fadoro – later named Sirombu³⁷¹ – was founded on 31 May 1892 by Lett and Reitze.³⁷² The

BRM, 1903, p. 50.

³⁶⁵ One example is the burial ceremony, which, in actual practice, was transformed into a Christian funeral service. The prohibition of excessive mourning and banqueting was simply ignored, and the traditional beliefs in the spirits of the deceased were secretly maintained.

³⁶⁶ Cf. H. Sundermann, *Die Insel Nias und die Mission daselbst*, 1905, p. 124.

³⁶⁷ The station was located in the vicinity of the village Bawö Dezolo and initially called Gumbu Humene, cf. *JBRM*, 1891 (1892), p. 54. The name was changed to Humene at the conference of missionaries in 1899.

³⁶⁸ Cf. *JBRM*, 1892 (1893), p. 62.

³⁶⁹ August Lett (4 September 1861 Strasbourg – 20 August 1909 Mentawai). Lett was accompanied by Lagemann, Ama Mandranga and six porters, cf. A. Lett, *Im Dienst des Evangeliums auf der Westküste von Nias*, vol. I, 1901, p. 31; H. Sundermann, *Missionar August Lett*, 1910, pp. 10-11.

³⁷⁰ The *controleur* introduced Lett, saying that the place where the missionary settled was to be considered the property of the colonial administration, cf. A. Lett, *Im Dienst des Evangeliums auf der Westküste von Nias*, vol. I, 1901, p. 71.

³⁷¹ The station was called Fadoro until 1899; at the Conference on 13-15 February 1899, the name was

population was eager to receive the missionaries for two reasons: Firstly, during their first visit, Lagemann and Lett had proven to be good arbitrators³⁷³, and secondly, the presence of Europeans protected the region from attacks by head-hunters (*emali*).³⁷⁴

Chief Sihönöbela, or Ama Gahonoa, had befriended Lett. Their close relationship was of great importance for the Christianisation of the West Coast. Lett's wife, Dora³⁷⁵, who arrived in December 1892, attracted the women to the mission station. Lett made an effort to adjust to Ono Niha customs. He ate with his fingers³⁷⁶ and allowed the churchgoers to chew betel nuts (*afö*) during the worship service.³⁷⁷ In addition, he also cleverly used mechanical instruments, such as a chiming clock, a sewing machine, a harmonium or a mirror, as 'bait'³⁷⁸ to attract the people.

The pro-Christian prophetic activities of the priestess (*ere*) of the primal religion located in Tugala, Kaiduha³⁷⁹, her baptism on her supposed deathbed and her subsequent miraculous recovery, was one of the decisive factors leading to a growing interest in Christianity. The baptism of the 43 first fruits of the West Coast was officially celebrated on 5 November 1893. Unfortunately, Lett had to leave Nias soon afterwards for reasons of health. After his recovery, he worked among the Batak on Sumatra and later among the people of Sikakap on Mentawai, where he was murdered on 20 August 1909.

By the turn of the century, the western expansion had reached the Hinako Islands, off the Sirombu coast.³⁸⁰ In 1899, Wilhelm Hoffmann³⁸¹ had begun the work in this affluent area of the Nias regency, and soon the non-Muslim population began attending church activities.³⁸²

4.4.3.2 Lahusa / Lölöwa'u

Further south on the West Coast, Ewald Krumm³⁸³, a real son of the Siegerland³⁸⁴, began missionary work in 1897 in an area bordering on the hunting grounds of the

changed to Sirombu.

³⁷² Heinrich Reitze (15 August 1862 Homburg – 1 October 1938 Bergheim). He served on Nias from 1891 until 1893.

³⁷³ In a dispute between Tugala-Lahömi and Fadoro in 1891, cf. A. Lett, *Im Dienst des Evangeliums auf der Westküste von Nias*, vol. I, 1901, p. 37.

³⁷⁴ Ama Gahonoa threatened to move to Hinako for fear of head-hunters (A. Lett, *Im Dienst des Evangeliums auf der Westküste von Nias*, vol. II, 1901, p. 3). Later, when the notorious head-hunter Siwahumola tried to enter this area, he was indeed scared off by Reitze and Lett (*ibid.* p. 44; M. Koch, *Wie aus einem Tiger ein Lamm wurde*, 1908, pp. 9-10).

³⁷⁵ Dora Lett née Meuret (19 May 1866 Buoth – 3 January 1946 Gütersloh). They were married on 7 December 1892 in Gunungsitoli.

³⁷⁶ Cf. A. Lett, *Im Dienst des Evangeliums auf der Westküste von Nias*, vol. III, 1901, p. 35.

³⁷⁷ *Ibid.* p. 58.

³⁷⁸ *Ibid.* pp. 22-23 (*Lockmittel*).

³⁷⁹ *Ibid.* pp. 43-48.

³⁸⁰ The initiative for the Christianisation of Hinako originated with the indigenous, non-Muslim Ono Niha. The missionaries preferred to evangelise Hinako from Lahusa, because the climate on Hinako is quite unbearable for the average European, cf. *JBRM*, 1896 (1897), p. 68; *BRM*, 1898, p. 26; *BRM*, 1898, p. 121; Hoffmann arrived in the middle of 1899, cf. *JBRM*, 1899 (1900), p. 59.

³⁸¹ Wilhelm Hoffmann (8 April 1868 Elberfeld – 27 November 1920 Hinako); he served on Hinako 1899-1908 and 1911-1920.

³⁸² Cf. *BRM*, 1900, pp. 191-192.

³⁸³ Ewald F. Krumm (1 January 1866 Zeppenfeld / Siegen – 6 May 1903 Lahusa). Cf. 6.2.2.1 and Ch. 6.3.2.1.

³⁸⁴ Cf. P. Witteborg, *Ein frühvollendetes Missionarsleben*, 1905, pp. 20-28.

clans of the Iraono Huna. Although there was a constant threat of raids from Lölöwa'u, the bulwark of headhunting and the slave trade, in mid-1898 the mission station was nevertheless opened in Sihene'asi.³⁸⁵ It was subsequently called Tögimbogi, and a year later renamed Lahusa.³⁸⁶ In 1899, 61 inhabitants were baptized.³⁸⁷

Through the assistance of the nobleman Solagö Bawabawa, Krumm managed to penetrate the lands of the Iraono Huna as far as Lölöwa'u. During his first visit, he followed the advice of a teacher-preacher to honour the litany (*hoho*) sung to his praise. In return for Krumm's having acknowledged the traditional way of honouring a guest, his message was received.³⁸⁸ Solagö's brother, Fadoli Badusanuwö, the notorious chief of Lölöwa'u, also became a supporter of the mission. This may also have had a political motive: 37 years earlier, in 1863, Lölöwa'u had been subjected to a purge by a Dutch punitive action. Fadoli had managed to escape. Now that it had become obvious that the Dutch would soon control the whole of Nias, becoming a Christian was a prudent way of evading punishment. There was even the prospect of forming an alliance with this new superpower in the region, expecting some kind of material gain from an alliance with the Europeans.³⁸⁹

Solagö Bawabawa, however, had spiritual motives for embracing the Christian creed: he was influenced by a dream of his wife³⁹⁰ and Gossner's *Little Book of the Heart* (1812). Though illiterate, he had come across the book by chance, was touched by its impressive illustrations, and, after having received some explanation from a Niasan Christian, began to talk about it to his compatriots in Lölöwa'u.³⁹¹ It was his wife's vivid dream about Christ inviting the people of Lölöwa'u to receive the *huku Lowalangi*, however, which had brought about the breakthrough.³⁹²

Solagö called all the people of the village together to tell them about the dream and all listened spellbound. Afterwards, they decided to follow the *huku Lowalangi* and throw away their *adu*. The impressive illustrations in the *Book of the Heart*, the powerful symbolism of the dream of Solagö's wife, the enthusiasm of Solagö for the new teachings, and last but not least the patient service of Krumm, paved the way for Christianity's entrance into Lölöwa'u, once a staunch bastion of traditional beliefs. After they had followed catechism classes for two years, Fadoli and hundreds of his people were baptised on the last Sunday of 1901.³⁹³

Unfortunately, Krumm's family was struck by fever at the end of 1902, of which first his wife, Emilie³⁹⁴, then his son Paul and eventually he himself died at

³⁸⁵ Krumm thought this to be the name of the village, but it actually means 'those villages at the sea-site'.

³⁸⁶ The name Tögimbogi was changed to Lahusa at the Conference in 1899, cf. *JBRM*, 1899 (1900), p. 58.

³⁸⁷ Cf. 'Nias. Ein Hallelujah auf der Westküste', in *BRM*, 1900, pp. 107-109.

³⁸⁸ Cf. H.v.L., *De Zending op Nias*, part 1, 1931, p. 7-8.

³⁸⁹ Cf. R. Wegner, 'Die Mitarbeit der eingeborenen Gehilfen in der Rheinischen Mission', in: *BRM*, 1899, p. 103.

³⁹⁰ Cf. A Lett, *Im Dienst des Evangeliums auf der Westküste von Nias*, vol. IV, 1901, p. 100; *JBRM*, 1900 (1901), pp. 347-352.

³⁹¹ Cf. *BRM*, 1900, pp. 160-166.

³⁹² For 'The Dream Factor' in Niasan religion and a reconstruction of Solagö's wife's dream, cf. Ch. 6.3.2.3.

³⁹³ Cf. *BRM*, 1902, p. 163.

³⁹⁴ Emilie Krumm née Siebel (25 August 1871 Siegen – 27 July 1902 Lahusa).

the station Lahusa.³⁹⁵ The work on the west coast was continued and further expanded by Missionary Heinrich Seher³⁹⁶ and his wife Auguste.³⁹⁷

4.4.4 Overall Network

After the southward advance and the penetration of the western coastal regions, the 'joyful growth'³⁹⁸ of Christianity in the 1890s and early 1900s was further strengthened by a gradual but strategically planned extension of the network of mission stations. After additional stations had been built in the south 1908, a number of stations in Central Nias united, some of them becoming branch congregations within a larger circuit.

4.4.4.1 East-West Axis

As a 'link' between the eastern and western missionary stations, in 1893 Heinrich Lagemann founded a post in Lahagu, on the banks of the Oyo River in Central Nias.³⁹⁹ Sofu, the son of the local chief, was willing to become his assistant teacher.⁴⁰⁰ On the Sunday after Christmas of 1894, Lagemann baptized the 45 first fruits of Sisobahili-Lahagu.⁴⁰¹

Sundermann, who had turned Dahana over to Karl Probst⁴⁰² in 1895, subsequently founded Lölöwu'a (not to be confused with Lölöwa'u), which became the halfway-station between Gunungsitoli and Lahagu. He actually settled in Lölöwu'a in January 1896, bringing with him seventeen Ono Niha Christians from Dahana. In practice, these Ono Niha had the function of 'colonist-missionaries'.⁴⁰³ In the mission school, Sundermann was assisted by Kornelio Lakhömi⁴⁰⁴, an Ono Niha trained in Depok. Sundermann's wife, Luise⁴⁰⁵, started a Sunday school.

Lölömboli in Moro'ö, halfway between Lahagu and Sirombu was founded by Julius Sporket⁴⁰⁶ in 1899.⁴⁰⁷ In 1900, Hoffmann could baptize the 128 first fruits of the island of Hinako on Christmas day. The congregation continued to grow steadily, even though the Islamic community under the leadership of the Malay

³⁹⁵ Emilie died on 27 July 1902, Paul on 2 January 1903 and Edwald on 6 May 1903, A. Bonn, *Ein Jahrhundert Rheinische Mission*, 1928, p.73.

³⁹⁶ Heinrich Seher (18 January 1864 Elberfeld – 7 November 1925 Essen); he served in Sirombu from 1892 until 1907.

³⁹⁷ Auguste Seher née Schmidt (11 December 1867 Erdbach – 11 June 1940 Essen); she arrived in Sirombo in 1894.

³⁹⁸ Cf. *BRM*, 1899, pp. 211-216. The phrase *fröhliches Wachstum* is also used in *JBRM*, 1894 (1895), p. 78 and *BRM*, 1899, pp. 211-216.

³⁹⁹ (*Bindeglied*), cf. *BRM*, 1893, pp. 187-188; 1894, p. 40; 1894, pp. 202-206; 1895 pp. 16-20.

⁴⁰⁰ Cf. *JBRM*, 1893 (1894), p. 73.

⁴⁰¹ Cf. *BRM*, 1895, p.206; *JBRM*, 1894 (1895), pp. 78-82.

⁴⁰² Karl Probst (23 January 1865 Cologne – 9 November 1918 Brazil). After two years on Sumatra (Pansurnapitu; Balige), he worked on Nias (1894-1906), cf. *JBRM*, 1895 (1896), p. 61.

⁴⁰³ A rare contextual application of a missionary method advocated by Ludwig Harms (1808-1865) and Wilhelm Löhe (1808-1872), cf. J.C. Hoekendijk, *Kerk en Volk in de Duitse Zendingwetenschap*, 1948, pp. 68-75. Though unparalleled on Nias, RM practiced this concept in Namibia.

⁴⁰⁴ Cf. *JBRM*, 1896 (1897), p. 67.

⁴⁰⁵ Luise Sundermann née Beyer (14 March 1857 Kalimantan – 4 March 1929 Mülheim).

⁴⁰⁶ Julius Sporket (2 February 1868 Barmen – 19 June 1955 Brazil); Sporket had assisted Lagemann in Lahagu before settling in Lölömboli-Moro'ö. He left Nias in 1908 and later served as a pastor in South America.

⁴⁰⁷ Cf. *JBRM*, 1899 (1900), pp. 57-58.

headman (*kepala Malayu*), Mara'ali, threatened the missionary.⁴⁰⁸ The establishment of stations in Sifaoro'asi⁴⁰⁹ to the south of Lahagu by Eduard Fries and Lölömoyo by Dietrich Bassfeld⁴¹⁰ in 1905, as well as Tugala Oyo by Adolf Pilgenröder⁴¹¹ in 1907, completed the most important coordinates on the east-west axis.⁴¹²

4.4.4.2 East-North Axis

Bo'usö, founded on 23 March 1903 by Johannes Noll⁴¹³ and considered part of the eastern region, soon became the stronghold from which the sparsely populated areas of the north could be reached. In certain parts there were Islamic communities (e.g., Oloro), hampering the progress of the Christian mission. Nevertheless, the missionaries managed to cut Christian breaches by setting up a network of branch congregations in Awa'ai, Hiligeo-Afia, Sowu and as far north as Helera.⁴¹⁴

The first independent northern mission station was Hilimaziaya, named after the four hundred-metre high mountain in that vicinity. Here Emil Schlipkötter⁴¹⁵ settled on 21 June 1911 and soon had 195 catechumens. In September of the same year, he founded a branch congregation in Lawira⁴¹⁶ and in November 1912 another in Namöhalu. The first Ono Niha to be converted in Hilimaziaya, Ama Sawili, an artist and a carpenter, was baptized on his deathbed in 1912.⁴¹⁷

In 1913, there was a unique, and locally restricted, 'penitence movement' in Hilimaziaya, which was a forerunner of the Great Awakening a few years later.⁴¹⁸ After 1915, Christianity also entered Afulu and Lahewa, slowly but surely closing the gap in the northern region of Nias.⁴¹⁹

4.4.4.3 East-South Axis

Around the turn of the century, the densely populated regions of South Nias became the explicit goal of missionary efforts.⁴²⁰ After Thomas's initial, successful advance into Humene, August Momeyer⁴²¹ moved further south to Sogae'adu on 26 April

⁴⁰⁸ Cf. *JBRM*, 1901 (1902), p. 68; 1907 (1908), p. 74; 1913 (1914), p. 121. When, by 1913, the chiefs of the main clan of the Maru'undruri had received Christianity, the 'transformation' (*Umwälzung*) of Ono Niha society on Hinako had become an irreversible fact.

⁴⁰⁹ Cf. E. Fries, *Aus den Bergen von Sifaoro'asi*, 1938.

⁴¹⁰ Dietrich Bassfeld (16 June 1877 Dinslaken – 25 December 1940 Düsseldorf)

⁴¹¹ Adolf Pilgenröder (23 December 1869 Barmen – 7 March 1949 Elberfeld); he baptized the first fruits of Tugala Oyo on the third Sunday in Advent of the year 1908. In 1911 Lahagu merged with Tugala Oyo.

⁴¹² In missionary-circles at that time, this east-west axis was called 'die Missionsstraße' (the mission trail), cf. E. Kriele, 'Der Siegeslauf des Evangeliums auf Nias', in: W. Fries (ed.), *Geschichten und Bilder aus der Mission* 24 (1906), p. 31; cf. Anonymous, *Eine alte Priesterin, die erste Christin auf der Westküste von Nias*, 1901.

⁴¹³ Johannes Noll (3 April 1869 – 28 October 1954); Bo'usö 1903-1913; cf. *JBRM*, 1903 (1904), p. 49.

⁴¹⁴ Cf. *JBRM*, 1908 (1909), p. 79.

⁴¹⁵ Emil Schlipkötter (31 January 1879 Neviges – 13 August 1965 Düsseldorf).

⁴¹⁶ Cf. *JBRM*, 1911 (1912), p. 100.

⁴¹⁷ Cf. E. Fries, *Tropfen aus der Wahrheit*, 1925, p. 14.

⁴¹⁸ Cf. *BRM*, 1936, p. 17.

⁴¹⁹ Cf. *JBRM*, 1915 (1916), p. 35. The station of Lahewa was founded by Skubinna in 1921 (cf. A. Schneider, *Turia*, 1965, p. 19. Cf. W. Gulö, *Benih yang Tumbuh* XIII, 1983, p. 13 (he dates it 1922)).

⁴²⁰ Cf. *JBRM*, 1902 (1903), p. 52 (*Ziel unserer Arbeit*).

⁴²¹ August E.C. Momeyer (28 July 1868 Rengershausen – 3 April 1941 Barmen); Momeyer served in Sogae'adu until 1908, then in Gunungsitoli.

1899⁴²², reportedly invited by Ono Niha from Sogae'adu and Bozihöna.⁴²³ Subsequently, Christianity was received 'surprisingly well'⁴²⁴ and the first convert (a former *ere*) was baptized on 29 April 1900.⁴²⁵ In 1903, Heinrich Rabeneck⁴²⁶ went a step further south to Bio'uti and in 1905 Johannes Bieger⁴²⁷ entered Baŵalia, a bastion of the primal religion. Since South Nias had not yet been subjugated, the expansion temporarily came to a halt here.

In anticipation of better conditions in South Nias, a reorganisation of the central and eastern stations was begun in 1906.⁴²⁸ How intense the focus on the south was, becomes evident from the moving description by Rottschäfer⁴²⁹ of the destruction and subsequent closing down of Rabeneck's station in Bio'uti after it had been completely consumed by fire on 23 July 1907, less than half a year after the first fruits had been baptized and the first church consecrated. It was an accident, not arson. Though Rabeneck was eager to rebuild the station, the conference of missionaries and the board in Barmen decided against it.⁴³⁰ Bio'uti became a branch congregation linked to Baŵalia⁴³¹, while Rabeneck was given instructions to be ready to push through to Teluk Dalam. In 1909, he settled in Bawö Sa'ua, reinstating the station once pioneered and lost by Lagemann in 1885. Chief Tanönibasi, who disliked Rabeneck, tolerated him only because of the Dutch military presence in Teluk Dalam.⁴³²

Bieger, too, had to leave Baŵalia and move on to Teluk Dalam. Temporarily, this major southern port was regarded as the second station of South Nias⁴³³, after Bawö Sa'ua. The strategic aim, however, was to reach the two fortified centres of power in the south: Bawömataluo and Hilisimaetanö. In both places, schools were opened in 1910, run by assistant teachers.⁴³⁴ The next year, Borutta started a mission station in Hilisimaetanö⁴³⁵, which now assumed from Teluk Dalam's role as the second mission station of the south, with Bawö Sa'ua remaining the first. The choice of Hilisimaetanö as a mission centre, while passing over Bawömataluo, destroyed the delicate age-old balance of power between the two.⁴³⁶

⁴²² Cf. *BRM*, 1900, pp. 10-13.

⁴²³ Cf. *JBRM*, 1898 (1899), pp. 54-55. This step was taken in accordance with the decision of the conference of missionaries (13-15 February 1899), attended by Schreiber. Besides Sogae'adu, the foundation of stations on the Hinako Islands and Moro'ö was decided during this conference.

⁴²⁴ *JBRM*, 1899 (1900), p. 57 ('geradezu überraschend guten Eingang'). During the first year, Momeyer already had eight hundred Ono Niha attending church and six hundred catechumens, cf. *BRM*, 1900, p. 279.

⁴²⁵ Cf. *BRM*, 1900, pp. 327-328.

⁴²⁶ Heinrich J. Rabeneck (26 June 1875 Hiddenhausen, Herford – 14 August 1939 Oberbeck, Löhne).

⁴²⁷ Johannes N. Bieger (17 January 1877 Tegal, Java – 8 July 1967 Utrecht), son of a Dutch missionary. Cf. 4.4.7.2.

⁴²⁸ From 1906 until 1914 eight stations were able to become congregations, cf. E. Fries, *Niassische Pandita*, 1922, pp. 6-7.

⁴²⁹ Cf. U. Rottschäfer, *Heinrich Rabeneck 1875-1939*, 1989, pp. 18-21; cf. *JBRM*, 1908 (1909), p. 76

⁴³⁰ 'Protokolle der Nias-Konferenz 1908-1913', Ombölata 27.10.1908 (RMG 2.779); 'Protokoll der Vorstandstagung der Rheinischen Missionsgesellschaft', June 1908, p. 251. Rabeneck was in Lölömoyo for one year (1908-1909), then in Sa'ua (1909-1914).

⁴³¹ Cf. *JBRM*, 1908 (1909), pp. 82-83.

⁴³² Cf. *BRM*, 1936, p. 200.

⁴³³ Cf. *JBRM*, 1909 (1910), p. 99.

⁴³⁴ Cf. *JBRM*, 1910 (1911), p. 103. The assistant teacher in Bawömataluo was a Christian from Pulau Tello.

⁴³⁵ Cf. *JBRM*, 1911 (1912), p.108.

⁴³⁶ Cf. W.R. Schmidt, *Das unbeeendete Gespräch*, 1967, pp. 27-42. Much later, in 1995, this led to a major schism in South Nias, burdening the Niasan church even today.

A decisive beneficial factor determining Christianity's success in the whole of South Nias was the attitude of Barani Dakhi, as of 1908 paramount chief of Hilisimaetanö, towards the missionaries. According to Schmidt⁴³⁷, the reason Barani was much less vicious towards white intruders than his late father Solagö had been, was that he wanted to learn the secrets of the Europeans in order to understand their success. From the very beginning, Missionary Borutta received all the support he needed to build his station and Chief Barani attended both the worship services and the evening school.⁴³⁸ However, since Borutta trespassed against some important customs and collaborated with a rival chief, Barani was in no hurry to convert to Christianity and the relationship between the chief and the missionary was less than cordial.⁴³⁹ Nevertheless, in 1914, before a council of chiefs (*rafe zi'ulu*), Barani surrendered to the missionary the *adu* and the skulls of his ancestors, symbols of the primal religion.⁴⁴⁰ Thereafter, he became a catechumen and began to build a church. Though he was not baptized until 21 January 1917, and was later excommunicated for several years because of bigamy, the *rafe* of 1914 may be considered to be a decisive turning point in the history of the mission in South Nias.⁴⁴¹

4.4.5 Consolidation of the Ecclesiastical Infrastructure

Although, initially, it was the missionaries who sowed the seeds of the Gospel, Christianity could grow only if Ono Niha themselves were involved in the missionary venture and subsequently assumed leadership in the congregations. The liturgy for the worship services, church discipline and church order, as well as a seminary for training church workers constituted the most basic infrastructure needed by the congregations.

4.4.5.1 Niasan Co-workers

Mutual support and friendship between missionaries and influential Ono Niha leaders were often decisive for the spread of Christianity. During the previous period, the good cooperation between Sundermann and Ama Mandranga had led to the Christianisation of Dahana. Now, as mutual trust and understanding between the missionaries and the people further increased, more such working relationships developed. One of the most vivid personalities in this period was Chief Fetero Sihönöbela or Ama Gahonoa, who had made a 'covenant of the grave'⁴⁴² with Missionary Lett. After his baptism on 5 November 1893, Ama Gahonoa became the 'Evangelist of the West Coast'.⁴⁴³ The fact that Christianity was able to enter

⁴³⁷ *Ibid.* p. 27. Cf. Ch. 6.2.1.4 and 6.3.2.1.

⁴³⁸ Cf. *JBRM*, 1912 (1913), p. 113.

⁴³⁹ Cf. *Barmer Missionsblatt* 1912, p. 58; W.R. Schmidt, *Das unbeendete Gespräch*, 1967, pp. 28-29.

⁴⁴⁰ Cf. *JBRM*, 1914 (1915), p. 108.

⁴⁴¹ 'Doch in dieser Stunde beginnt die neue Zeit in Südnias. Das Schweigen der Ahnen und Götter zum Tun Baranis war zu eindeutig!', W.R. Schmidt, *Das unbeendete Gespräch*, 1967, p. 31.

⁴⁴² Cf. A. Lett, *Im Dienst des Evangeliums*, vol. I, 1901, p. 84 (*Grabesbund*); H. Sundermann, *Missionar August Lett*, 1910, p. 13. The covenant demanded complete mutual loyalty between the two men and their families, including providing a worthy burial for each other. Cf. Anonymous, *Fetero oder der goldene Faden der vorbereitenden und berufenden Gnade Gottes*, 1901.

⁴⁴³ A. Bonn, *Ein Jahrhundert Rheinische Mission*, 1928, pp. 73, 278-283 (*Evangelist der Westküste*); cf. H. Sundermann, *Missionar August Lett*, 1910, pp. 20-22.

Lahusa, Lölömboli, and even the Hinako Islands was, to a great part, due to his convincing propagation of the Gospel.⁴⁴⁴

Other decisive joint ventures were the cooperation between Krumm and the nobleman Solagö Bawabawa in Lölöwa'u⁴⁴⁵, that between Momeyer and Chief Nisaetö of Buasi in Sogae'adu⁴⁴⁶, and that between Bieger and Chief Sirörösihönö of Baŵalia – the latter led to the destruction of the 'sacred tree of life' (*fösi*) in Baŵalia.⁴⁴⁷ The friendship between Fries and Ama Dahamböwö led to the first baptisms in Sifaoro'asi on 26 December 1909 and to the spread of Christianity to the surrounding areas⁴⁴⁸, whereas the 'brotherhood' between Paul von Erlen and *Balugu* Laso decisively furthered the work of the mission in Sirombu.⁴⁴⁹ These Christian leaders also set the standard for the emerging ministry of the elder (*satua Niha Keriso*) as overseer and assistant catechist.⁴⁵⁰ Following the example of the Batak church⁴⁵¹, the top positions of leadership in the numerous branch congregations were, as far as possible, to be delegated to teacher-preachers (*guru*), or to indigenous pastors (*pandita*). Wegner⁴⁵² lists a number of cultural, practical, and financial advantages of having such indigenous co-workers.

4.4.5.2 The First Niasan Minister

In 1906, a year before a disaster struck Bio'uti, this station had hosted the annual conference of missionaries (6-9 March 1906), which had taken the far-reaching decision to ordain the first Ono Niha to the Ministry of Word and Sacrament.⁴⁵³ The fortunate one, who was talented and experienced but had very little additional training, was *Guru* Sitefano from Humene. He had been a long-time assistant of the late Missionary Thomas. Sitefano was ordained on 25 March 1906 by the chairman (*Präses*) of the conference of missionaries, Kramer, while the past-chairman, Sundermann, held the sermon, on 1 Peter 2. Altogether, twelve missionaries attended the ceremony.

⁴⁴⁴ He often accompanied the missionaries on their tours, but also acted independently.

⁴⁴⁵ Cf. A Lett, *Im Dienst des Evangeliums auf der Westküste von Nias*, vol. IV, 1901, p. 100; *JBRM*, 1900 (1901), pp. 347-352.

⁴⁴⁶ Cf. *BRM*, 1900, p. 141.

⁴⁴⁷ Cf. J.N. Bieger, *Erlebnisse eines Missionars in 12jähriger Arbeit auf Nias und Sumatra*, vol. I, 1916, pp. 39-48. Cf. Ch. 2.4.1.

⁴⁴⁸ *Ibid.* pp. 5-10; E. Fries, *Aus den Bergen von Sifaoro'asi*, 1938, pp. 11-15; J. Warneck, *Eduard Fries*, 1949, pp. 59-72. Instead of 'Dahamböwö', some sources use the alternative spelling 'Dahömböwö'. Both names are possible, but 'Dahamböwö' ('two-branched wealth', meaning that he had held more than one *adat*-feast) seems more likely.

⁴⁴⁹ Paul von Erlen (21 April 1877 Barmen – 12 September 1914 Lölöwua); cf. Anonymus, *Wie die Götzen fallen*, 1910, pp. 20-21; also Personalakte RMG 1.866.

⁴⁵⁰ For the development of these ministries, cf. A. Bonn, *Die Sonne geht auf über unseren Bergen*, 1940, pp. 33-35.

⁴⁵¹ Cf. A. Bonn, *Ein Jahrhundert Rheinische Mission*, 1928, p. 74 ('nach dem Muster der Batakkirche').

⁴⁵² Cf. R. Wegner, *Die Mitwirkung der eingeborenen Gehilfen in der Rheinischen Mission*, in: *BRM*, 1899, pp. 36-49. Wegner mentions the following advantages: close cultural relationship; mutual trust; shared thought patterns, feeling and colour of skin; common language and customs; setting an example that Christianity is not the religion of the whites only; better physical adaptation to the tropical climate; fewer material needs than the missionaries, who come from a more developed culture – a fact which justifies lower wages for the indigenous co-workers; a step for the indigenous churches towards greater financial self-support; the possibility of gradually reducing the number of European missionaries.

⁴⁵³ Cf. 'Konferenzprotokolle Nias', 1876-1899 (RMG 2.778).

Sitefano was wearing a Prussian clergyman's gown at his ordination, a gift from the missionaries. According to Fries⁴⁵⁴, this was 'stupid' because the robe could cause the *pandita Niha* to become haughty. Seen in retrospect, this did not happen. Reverend Sitefano remained a humble and diligent pastor for more than ten years. However, the Prussian gown does signify that the Niasan minister was expected to be an exact copy of the missionary, albeit on a smaller scale. His function was to be that of the missionary's right hand, his faithful 'deacon' or 'vicar'.⁴⁵⁵ The fact that among the Ono Niha, the gown's colour, black, traditionally signified common, earthly things, was not taken into account.

In 1906, Sitefano was installed as the *pastor loci* of Dahana, which thereby ceased to be a mission station, becoming instead the first indigenous congregation within the circuit of Gunungsitoli.⁴⁵⁶ In 1911, Sitefano was transferred to Baŵalia, and in 1916, when a new generation of Niasan ministers was ready to be ordained⁴⁵⁷, he was pensioned. He continued to serve even in retirement, so that the institution of the Niasan minister was able to convince even the staunchest of critics.

4.4.5.3 Conferences

In the 1890s, in conjunction with the annual conference of missionaries (officially held since 1880), Christian elders and chiefs irregularly held parallel conferences of their own.⁴⁵⁸ These conferences were sometimes attended by more than two hundred leaders from all over the island, thus constituting the most representative gatherings on Nias. Beginning in 1898, an annual conference for teacher-preachers was convened regularly. Important decisions for the conference of missionaries were prepared in all of these conferences of the indigenous church leaders.

4.4.5.4 Liturgy

Whereas during the first decades there had not been a fixed liturgy, in 1892 the missionaries introduced a regular agenda for the Sunday worship service, called the *Agendre*.⁴⁵⁹ This was an almost exact copy of the agenda of the Evangelical Church in the Rhineland translated into the Niasan vernacular.⁴⁶⁰ In 1898, the first hymnal, the *Zoera Zinunö ba Niha*, was printed.⁴⁶¹ It contained only German hymns translated into the Niasan vernacular, without any original Niasan elements. This hymnal was amended in the year 1905 and included some prayers⁴⁶², which enriched the worship services in the homes during the week and in church on Sundays.

⁴⁵⁴ Cf. E. Fries, *Niassische Pandita*, 1922, p. 5 (*törichterweise*).

⁴⁵⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 35-36.

⁴⁵⁶ Contradictive term 'independent branch' (*selbständiges Filial*) used at the Conference in 1906 (RMG 2.778).

⁴⁵⁷ On 23 July 1916, four *pandita*, who had graduated from the first theological course in Omböläta, were ordained. They were: Filemo, Kolingö and Faogöli from Omböläta and Josefo from Soga'e'adu.

⁴⁵⁸ Cf. 'Konferenzprotokolle Nias', 1876-1899 (RMG 2.777); cf. *BRM*, 1899, p. 106.

⁴⁵⁹ Cf. Anonymus, *Zoera Zinunö ba Niha* (Niassisches Gesang-Büchlein), 1898.

⁴⁶⁰ Cf. Anonymus, *Vademecum Pastorale Niassicum*, 1892. Cf. Ch. 6.2.2 and Ch. 6.2.2.1.

⁴⁶¹ Cf. Anonymus, *Zura Zinunö ba Niha* (Niassisches Gesang-Büchlein), 1898.

⁴⁶² Cf. Anonymus, *Soera Zinoenö ba Niha*, *Niassisches Gesang-Büchlein*, 1905.

4.4.5.5 Discipline and Order

At the above-mentioned conference of missionaries in Bio'uti in 1906, the need was felt to develop a uniform 'church discipline and church order'.⁴⁶³ Previously, each missionary had been responsible for the order in his own area of operation. After a general discussion on 'nurture and discipline in the congregations'⁴⁶⁴ in 1907, from 1908 until 1910 the focus was mainly on 'Christian marriage and worship'.⁴⁶⁵ In 1911, a decision was taken on polygamy: All polygamists (usually chiefs) were to be excommunicated and could not return until after the second wife had died. In 1912, the consul of missions in Batavia, D. Crommelin, asked the conference of missionaries on Nias to discuss the regulations for Christian families with the chiefs and then forward the results to the government official (*resident*) of Tapanuli.⁴⁶⁶ These regulations became the basis for a Christian *adat*, implemented in 1915.

4.4.5.6 Seminary

An urgent need in the course of missionary expansion was the availability of more well-trained Niasan assistants. During the 1880s, Sundermann had trained nine teacher-preachers (*guru*) in his so-called seminary in Dahana. A few others had graduated from the seminary in Depok in Batavia. After Sundermann had moved to Lölöwu'a in 1895, Thomas started similar vocational training in Humene. An attractive side-effect was that each seminarian helped the missionary with the work in his circuit. The first five aspirant *guru*, who attended the course led by Thomas, graduated in March, 1897. Five more followed two years later. After Thomas' sudden death at the end of the year 1900, the 'seminary' moved to Ombölata in 1901, where Thomas' son-in-law, Conrad Ufer⁴⁶⁷, continued the task along with the gifted Niasan *Guru* Andrea. In the course of time, the seminary grew and the standard of teaching improved.

Fries, the first truly academic theologian in the service of the RM on Nias⁴⁶⁸, was elected to the office of chairman of the conference of missionaries in 1913 and moved from his mission station in Sifaoro'asi to the seminary in Ombölata. In 1914, he initiated the first two-year course for up-grading *guru* to become Niasan ministers (*pandita Niha*).⁴⁶⁹ The graduates of this course were to play an important role in the following period of the Great Awakening.

⁴⁶³ Cf. 'Kirchenzucht und Kirchenordnung', in: 'Konferenzprotokoll Nias', Bio'uti, 6-9 March 1906 (RMG 2.778).

⁴⁶⁴ Cf. 'Konferenzprotokoll Nias', 1900-1907 (RMG 2.778).

⁴⁶⁵ Cf. 'Konferenzprotokoll Nias', 1908-1913 (RMG 2.779).

⁴⁶⁶ Cf. E. Fries, 'Gemeindeerziehung und Kirchenzucht', in: *AMZ* 40/6-40/11 (1913).

⁴⁶⁷ Conrad Ufer (17 Augsut 1871 Barmen – 12 March 1953 Kaiserswerth).

⁴⁶⁸ Around the turn of the century 1800s-1900s, an academic theologian as a missionary was still a rare phenomenon in most missionary societies. An exception was the orthodox Reformed Mission League (*Gereformeerde Zendingsbond*, GZB, founded in 1901), which regarded mission to be one of the principle tasks of the church and wanted to send out ordained ministers as missionaries, but could not find ministers willing to go. So she had to adopt the general system. Cf. Th. Van den End, *Transfer of Reformed Identity on the Missionfield in Indonesia*, 1995. Fries came from an academic middle-class family and had studied theology in Halle, Greifswald and Tübingen. He had been greatly influenced by the theology of Martin Kähler (1835-1912), who combined revivalist piety with dogmatic biblicism, as well as by the missiology of Gustav Warneck.

⁴⁶⁹ Cf. E. Fries, *Niassische Pandita*, 1922; A. Pieper, 'Gewinnung und Ausbildung der Führer', in: *Evangelisches Missionsmagazin Neue Folge* 72 (1928), pp. 100-107.

4.4.6 Expansion of Activities in Society

4.4.6.1 Medical Missions

After the missionaries had successfully expanded the range of their work beyond the limits of the *rapatgebied*, a more general medical service had the potential of becoming a major instrument with which to reach the masses.⁴⁷⁰ Sundermann wanted to build a hospital on his new station Lölöwu'a, where he had begun work in 1895. This was in line with the policy of Schreiber, who – inspired by the English – strongly encouraged the development of the development of a German medical mission.⁴⁷¹ At the time, unfortunately, the RM could supply neither the funds nor the doctor.

The first RM physician in Indonesia was Julius Schreiber⁴⁷², who worked in Pearaja, Sumatra, as of mid-1900. The second one, Dr. Johannes Winkler, was intended to go to Nias. But, to the regret of the Nias-mission, he, too, was placed in Pearaja.⁴⁷³ By now, however, the prospects for a synergy between mission and government had become better. Missionaries were involved in the development of the public health service.⁴⁷⁴

During the epidemics on Nias in the years 1908 until 1911 (dysentery and smallpox), the infrastructure of the mission proved to be indispensable. The missionaries distributed medicine effectively and inexpensively. As a return favour, the government gave its full support to a regular 'auxiliary hospital'⁴⁷⁵, begun by Fries in 1912/1913 in Sifaoro'asi.⁴⁷⁶ In the absence of a physician, auxiliary hospitals usually had an European nurse in a full-time capacity. In Sifaoro'asi, not even this was possible. Sister Maria Fischdick⁴⁷⁷, a deaconess on Nias at that time, could work there only periodically⁴⁷⁸, since she had to visit the other stations all over the island as well. It was not until 1934 that the first missionary physicians⁴⁷⁹ were permanently stationed on Nias. Nevertheless, the auxiliary hospital in Sifaoro'asi

⁴⁷⁰ Concerning the role of the medical service in the mission, cf. C.H. Grundmann, *Gesandt zu heilen*, 1992, pp. 290-294.

⁴⁷¹ Cf. J. Winkler, *Im Dienst der Liebe: Das Missionshospital in Pearaja 1900-1928*, 1928, p. 5.

⁴⁷² Cf. J. Warneck, *50 Jahre Batakmission in Sumatra*, 1912, pp. 245-254. Before Schreiber and Winkler, RM physicians had been sent to China and New Guinea. A mayor problem was that all German doctors had to pass the Dutch state medical examination before they were allowed to practice in the Netherlands Indies.

⁴⁷³ Cf. letters Winkler to RM, Pearaja 6 June 1907 and 19 September 1907. He visited Nias in 1907 and suggested sending two physicians, one for the north and one for the south. Winkler preferred Dahana to Ombölata, because in the absence of a missionary in Dahana, the mission doctor would be able to work with a Niasan pastor (*pandita Niha*).

⁴⁷⁴ A subsidy arrangement for private hospitals, including mission hospitals and dispensaries, was established by ordinance in the Government Gazette (*Staatsblad* 1906 no 276), cf. S.C. Graaf van Randwijck, *Handelen en denken in dienst der zending*, vol. II, 1981, pp. 547-575.

⁴⁷⁵ Auxiliary hospital (*Hilfskrankenhaus*), in use by 1912; the building activities were completed in 1913, cf. *JBRM*, 1912 (1913), p. 110. Cf. H. Kayser, *Aspekte des sozio-kulturellen Wandels auf Nias*, 1976, p. 128-132.

⁴⁷⁶ Fries served in Sifaoro'asi from 1905 until 1913.

⁴⁷⁷ Maria Fischdick (24 September 1885 Dümpten – 30 November 1958 Honnef). Cf. *Aus vergangenen Tagen: Erinnerungen einer Missionsschwester*, 1959.

⁴⁷⁸ Cf. *Des Meisters Ruf* 5/4 (1913), pp. 60-62.

⁴⁷⁹ The couple M.G. Thomsen and his wife G. Thomsen née Kühn. Cf. 5.2.5.

was extremely well-frequented by Ono Niha. As expected, it was a successful tool for Christianisation, soon discrediting traditional medicine and the primal religion.⁴⁸⁰

4.4.6.2 Educational Missions

Winning the people's trust and gradually implementing a type of 'social discipline' similar to that in Europe⁴⁸¹ was achieved first and foremost through Western education, a field in which mission and government had cooperated since the very beginning. The atmosphere for mutual assistance in this field was considerably improved through the 'Ethical Politics'. Around the turn of the century, but especially after 1908, when the entire island had come under colonial rule, the number of pupils in schools rose rapidly.⁴⁸² This might indicate that to the Ono Niha attending school was a token of both political and religious allegiance to the new status quo.

4.4.6.3 Literature

It is fortunate that from the beginning the missionaries used the vernacular (*Li Nono Niha*) as the means of communicating the Gospel.⁴⁸³ Malay was only the second language in the schools. Quite in line with the thesis of African scholar Lamin Sanneh⁴⁸⁴, the use of the vernacular not only 'translated' the message into the Niasan idiom, causing a sense of identification, it also up-graded the Niasan culture to which the vernacular is essential, thereby removing the stigma of backwardness from this culture, preserving and eventually renewing it.

As the number of Ono Niha with Western education increased, the ministerial and teacher training in Niasan seminaries developed, and the congregations grew in size and maturity, the need for more literature in the vernacular grew correspondingly. Sundermann's translation of the New Testament was available in 1895, and his Niasan Bible (*Soera Niamoni'ö*) was published in 1912.

In addition to the Bible, the missionaries also produced other literature, which subsequently shaped the general theology of Niasan Christianity. A printing press at the seminary in Ombölatata made a wider distribution possible. The most popular and influential publications were translations or interpretations into the Niasan vernacular of the *Little Book of the Heart*⁴⁸⁵, *The Pilgrim's Progress*⁴⁸⁶, and the *Christian Guide to Salvation*⁴⁸⁷, all translations having been done by Sundermann.

⁴⁸⁰ During its first year of operation, 287 people made use of the hospital ('Es ist offenbar, wie die Leute dadurch von der Ohnmacht ihrer Götzen und von der Macht des lebendigen Gottes überzeugt werden'), cf. *JBRM*, 1913 (1914), p. 119.

⁴⁸¹ Nurturing a European work-ethos in the population, so they could function well in the modern capitalist labour process, cf. C. Veltmann, '„Es geht „vooruit“ auf Nias', in: M. Humburg et al. (eds.), *Im „Land der Menschen“*, 2003, pp. 82-83.

⁴⁸² Cf. Helga Kayser, *Aspekte des sozio-kulturellen Wandels auf Nias*, 1976, pp. 144, 196 (*sprunghafter Anstieg*).

⁴⁸³ Cf. J.L. Swellengrebel, *In Leijdeckers Voetspoor I*, 1974, pp. 219-230.

⁴⁸⁴ Cf. L. Sanneh, *Translating the Message*, 1989, pp. 1-3, 47, 88-125; by the same author, *Encountering the West*, 1993, pp. 152-171.

⁴⁸⁵ A translation of Gossner's 'Herzensbüchlein', *Tödö Niha*, was available in 1890. Chief Ndrohugö of Faekhu converted to Christianity when the book was read to him by his Christian brother (Anonymous, *Niassische Häuptlinge I. Ndrohugö, Siwahumola, Golajama*, 1911, p. 9).

⁴⁸⁶ J. Bunyan, 1678. Full title: *Fekoli Niha Keriso wanawa Banoea si jawa*, 1905.

⁴⁸⁷ C. Ernst, *Die Christliche Heilslehre*. The Niasan translation, *Famahaö ba lala Wangorifi*, was

Beginning in 1904, the Niasan church magazine *Toeria* was printed at the mission press in Laguboti, Batakland, appearing at irregular intervals. After the Nias mission had received its own printing machine in Ombölata at the end of 1914, the magazine appeared monthly until 1940. The impact of *Toeria* as a news carrier (including international news) and a spiritual guide cannot be overestimated. The frequent articles on the progress of Christianity on Nias and elsewhere, on other religions (i.e., Islam), international news (for instance, the progress of World War I), and on cultural matters significantly helped to shape the new Christian identity of the Ono Niha.

Here the first Niasan hymnal must also be mentioned: *Sura Zinunö ba Niha*, which appeared in 1898, containing 115 songs, words of consecration for appointing Niasan assistants and a sung blessing (*fangandrö howuhowu*). Though all of the hymns were copies or interpretations of German church or folk music, having no resemblance with the traditional Niasan chants, they were soon enjoyed and sung by Ono Niha Christians.⁴⁸⁸

4.4.7 Relationship between Mission and State

According to Julius Richter⁴⁸⁹, the imposition of colonial rule was the turning-point for the expansion of the mission in Indonesia. The colonial state needed the missionaries to win the hearts and minds of the people for the *pax Neerlandica*. The implementation of 'Ethical Politics' in 1901 caused a remarkable change in the atmosphere. Now the government became 'very kind' towards the mission, seeking its cooperation and supporting its activities in a variety of ways. However, the attitude of many colonial civil servants remained 'unfriendly' and suspicious towards the missionaries⁴⁹⁰, while the missionaries, on their part, were sometimes quite critical of the means of implementation of colonial rule.⁴⁹¹

4.4.7.1 Suspicions between the Germans and the Dutch

The close cooperation between the German missionaries and the Dutch colonial state was not always free of tension. After Germany had joined the 'club' of colonial powers in 1884, there was suspicion on the part of Dutch government officials that RM-missionaries working in the Dutch East Indies could become a Fifth Column. This suspicion was not completely unfounded, since Fabri was a strong advocate of the colonial expansion of the German Empire and wanted the RM to play an active role in it.

finished in 1892.

⁴⁸⁸ Westerners can recognize these hymns, but they are sung more slowly than in the original and with different intonations.

⁴⁸⁹ Cf. J. Richter, *Die evangelische Mission in Niederländisch-Indien*, 1931, p. 31 (*Wendepunkt*).

⁴⁹⁰ Cf. H. Rabeneck, 'Die Stellung der Missionare zur Kolonialregierung und ihren Beamten', 2 April 1912, in: *Referate Nias I, 1900-1923* (RMG 2.784).

⁴⁹¹ Cf. Ch. 4.4. Jan S. Aritonang, following J. Verkuyl, points to the ambivalence of the Ethical Politics. On the one hand it attempted raising the standard of living of Indonesians mainly through education, but, on the other hand, it intensified the Dutch colonial rule by supporting the policy of 'pacification' by force (cf. J.S. Aritonang, 'Pengantar', in: J. Verkuyl, *Ketegangan antara Imperialisme dan Kolonialisme Barat dan Zending pada Masa 'Politik Kolonial Etis'*, 1990, p. 5).

According to Claus Veltmann⁴⁹², however, suspicion against RM-missionaries was unnecessary. He is of the opinion that they were loyal to the Dutch state and that their German identity was secondary to their identity as labourers of the Kingdom of God. Indeed, there is no indication that any of the missionaries had subversive political ambitions. They acknowledged the Dutch as the legitimate authority and willingly, albeit sometimes critically, collaborated with them.

4.4.7.2 Cooperation in Pacification

The colonial government needed the missionaries to appease the Ono Niha, to nurture in them a sense of duty and to build a Western type of order.⁴⁹³ The missionaries, on their part, sharing the same fundamental ideology as the colonizers (i.e., European superiority⁴⁹⁴), also looked for assistance from the colonial authorities. For building the Kingdom of God, the mission needed protection of its stations and the 'pacification' of insecure areas.⁴⁹⁵

The conference of missionaries in 1898 demanded that Sifaoro'asi (a mission station in Central Nias) be taken by force. Fries writes: 'Since European culture first came to Sifaoro'asi with gunpowder and soldiers, with betrayal and arson, it was no wonder that the consequences were not the desired ones'.⁴⁹⁶ RM-Inspector Schreiber, too, visiting Nias in early 1899, directed a letter to the Governor-General⁴⁹⁷, appealing that the remaining areas, especially around the mission stations, be brought 'under the authority of the government'. He wrote that the missionaries wished to work 'hand in hand' with the authorities and that, since permission had been given for the establishment of eight stations across the whole width of Nias from east to west, it was the duty of the government to protect them, as well as the surrounding population, from 'robbers and head-hunters'.⁴⁹⁸

The sometimes destructive character of working 'hand in hand' can be illustrated by the enforced changes in the Niasan traditional house (*omo hada*).⁴⁹⁹ The *omo hada* had three levels, which were of cosmological significance: the ground level between the supporting poles, where the pigs used to be kept, symbolized the underworld. The highest part under the roof was the realm of the spirits of the ancestors. In between lived the humans. The colonial administration, for hygienic reasons, prohibited having the pigsty underneath the house; the missionaries cleared the houses of all carved images (*adu*) and declared the part under the roof to be free of spirits. As a result, the traditional worldview of the Ono Niha was shattered.

⁴⁹² Cf. C. Veltmann, '„Es geht „vooruit“ auf Nias"', in: M. Humburg et al. (eds.), *Im „Land der Menschen“*, 2003, pp. 76, 84. Fries supported and cooperated with the Dutch but was opposed to the punitive actions they undertook on Nias, *ibid.* p. 77.

⁴⁹³ Especially after 1903, when the Sultanate of Aceh had fallen to the Dutch after thirty years of war, the last peripheries of Sumatra, including Nias, had to be 'pacified'. Cf. Ch. 6.3.2.1.

⁴⁹⁴ Cf. Th. van den End, *Tweehonderd jaar Nederlandse zending: een overzicht*, 1997, p. 18.

⁴⁹⁵ Cf. H. Rabeneck, *Stellung der Missionare zur Kolonial-Regierung und Ihren Beamten, 1900-1923*, n.d. (RMG 2.784); M. Fries, *Kolonisierung und Mission*, 2003, pp. 66-72; F. Huber, *Das Christentum in Ost-, Süd- und Südostasien sowie Australien*, 2005, pp. 30-38.

⁴⁹⁶ E. Fries, *Aus den Bergen von Sifaoro'asi*, 1938, p. 5 ('Die europäische Kultur kam nach Sifaoro'asi also zuerst mit Pulver und Soldaten, mit Verrat und Brandstiftung, so war es kein Wunder, dass die Folgen andere waren, als man erhofft hatte').

⁴⁹⁷ Cf. A. Schreiber, 'Memorandum aan Zijne Excellentie den Gouverneur Generaal van Nederlandsch-Indië', Gunungsitoli 13 February 1898 (RMG 2.947).

⁴⁹⁸ *Ibid.*; cf. A. Schreiber, *Eine Missionsreise in den fernen Osten*, 1899; cf. *JBRM*, 1899 (1900), p. 53.

⁴⁹⁹ Cf. A. Viaro, *The traditional architectures of Nias*, 1990, pp. 45-76. Cf. 2.6.2.3.

Another example is the felling of the holy *fösi*-tree by Missionary Johannes Bieger, known as the 'Boniface of Nias', in 1908 in Baŵalia. The destruction of this religious symbol and the subsequent 'religious vacuum'⁵⁰⁰ occurred precisely in the year of the physical subordination of all Ono Niha under Dutch colonial rule.

The missionaries supported the colonial government's forced-labour system (*rodi*)⁵⁰¹, compulsory passes and the taxation of the Ono Niha.⁵⁰² They enthusiastically supervised government-financed road-building projects connecting the eastern, western, northern and southern areas. To many Ono Niha, mission and government were therefore the two sides of the same coin.⁵⁰³ However, due to their knowledge of the indigenous culture, their language skills and their closer relationship with the primal people, the missionaries played an important mediating role.⁵⁰⁴ Contrary to the colonial officials, the Ono Niha trusted the missionaries. Famous Niasan rebels (or notorious 'head-hunters' and terrorists, depending on the point of view), such as Fadoli Badusanuwö⁵⁰⁵, Siwahumola⁵⁰⁶, Balöhalu⁵⁰⁷ and Sitambaho⁵⁰⁸, submitted themselves to the missionaries and eagerly attended church activities, rather than to surrender to the colonial authorities.⁵⁰⁹ A missionary could at times achieve amnesty for former 'criminals' who converted to Christianity; but he also could condemn an obstinate man to forced labour (*rodi*). Generally, as Jan Artonang had argued convincingly, the mission had had some critical reservations against the injustices of colonial rule and occasionally even sided with the indigenous people against the colonizers.⁵¹⁰

4.4.7.3 Cooperation in Establishing a Code of Law for the Christians

In February 1914, a delegation of government officials met with the leadership of the Nias-conference in Ombölatä⁵¹¹, in order to discuss a code of law for Christian

⁵⁰⁰ Cf. D. Becker, '„Sie werfen Satans Bande und ihre Götzen fort?“, in: R. Riess (ed.), *Abschied von der Schuld?*, 1996, pp. 191-194; J.N. Bieger, 'Eine Donnars-Eiche auf Nias', in: *Barmer Missionsblatt* 83/10 (1908), pp. 76-77.

⁵⁰¹ Cf. Ch. 2.7.3.

⁵⁰² Cf. E. Fries, *Niassische Pandita*, 1922, p. 6.

⁵⁰³ In a statement of Ama Gahonoa, made around 1893 to adherents of the primal religion, he said that if they did not receive the good law of God and leave their old ways, they would get in trouble with the Dutch *controleur* (cf. A. Lett, *Im Dienst des Evangeliums auf der Westküste von Nias*, vol. III, 1901, p. 79).

⁵⁰⁴ Cf. C. Veltmann, '„Es geht „vooruit“ auf Nias', in: M. Humburg et al. (eds.), *Im „Land der Menschen“*, 2003, p. 83.

⁵⁰⁵ Cf. Ch. 6.3.2.1.

⁵⁰⁶ Siwahumola, sometimes called Siwahumongo, submitted himself to Ewald Krumm; cf. *BRM*, 1902, pp. 140, 203; *BRM* 1904, pp. 266-269; *JBRM*, 1904 (1905), p. 52; Anonymous, *Niassische Häuptlinge I*, 1911, p. 24. Cf. Ch. 6.3.2.1 and Ch. 6.3.2.2.

⁵⁰⁷ Balöhalu from Ma'u submitted himself to Missionary Heinrich Sundermann in Lölöwua. Cf. Ch. 6.3.2.1 and Ch. 6.3.2.2.

⁵⁰⁸ Sitambaho from Sifaoro'asi submitted himself to Missionary Momeyer in Sogae'adu.

⁵⁰⁹ Cf. Ch. 2.7.3. Cf. Anonymus, *Niassische Häuptlinge I*, 1911, pp. 10-27; M. Koch, *Wie aus einem Tiger ein Lamm wurde*, 1908, pp. 12-16. Another well-known Niasan rebel around the turn of the century was Söröharimau.

⁵¹⁰ Cf. J.S. Artonang, *The Encounter of the Batak people with Rheinische Missions-Gesellschaft in the Field of Education (1861-1940): a historical-theological inquiry*, 2000.

⁵¹¹ Cf. 'Christliche Weiterbildung der Niassischen Adat' (9 February 1914), in: 'Protokoll Nias-Konferenz', Ombölatä, 4-11 February 1914 (RMG 2.780). This was supported by the board in Barmen (letter of 11 May 1914). Cf. Ch. 6.4.3 until Ch. 6.4.4.4.

Ono Niha. The suggestions of the missionaries⁵¹² were partially taken into account, so that a special codex of *adat*-law for Christians of the Nias-district (*afdeeling*), with the exception of the sub-district of South Nias, could be implemented by the *resident* of Tapanuli in 1915.⁵¹³ Attached to this codex were regulations for the dowry (*böwö*), agreed on by the Christian chiefs in 1912. Though the government effectively strengthened the status of Christians by implementing this special customary law (*adat-recht*), it did not solve the problem of a 'dual system'⁵¹⁴ of values – the spirit of the *adat* continued to determine many aspects of everyday life.

4.5 BEGINNINGS ON THE BATU ISLANDS (1889-1919)

After the DLM had had to leave its former missionary area in the Pasemah Ulu Manna, it turned its attention to the Ono Niha on the Batu Islands. The indigenous inhabitants of this archipelago between Nias and Mentawai, off the West Coast of Sumatra, have close cultural relations to Nias. The initial pioneering work, which began in 1889, was done by German missionaries recruited from the RM, and their wives. The arrival, in 1919, of the first Dutch missionary marked the beginning of a new period.⁵¹⁵

4.5.1 Pioneers of Pulau Tello

Johannes Kersten was the first DLM-missionary on the Batu Islands. His theological inclination was neo-orthodox Lutheran pietism, emphasizing sanctification, conversion (as a process of growth), the struggle with the devil, self-constraint, discipline (like a soldier's), accountability on the Day of Judgment, and the importance of the teachings of Martin Luther.⁵¹⁶ He wanted to spread the Kingdom of God among the heathen 'in the spirit of our Lutheran church'⁵¹⁷, in order to pre-empt the further expansion of Islam in this region.⁵¹⁸

The original intention of Kersten was to continue the work of Festersen and his wife Christine in Tanjung Sakti.⁵¹⁹ When this venture proved to be unrealistic⁵²⁰,

⁵¹² Cf. 'Bepalingen voor de Inlandsche Christenen op het Eiland Nias', in: Anonymous, 'Adat-Recht f. Christengemeinden' (RMG 2.800). Not taken into account were the paragraphs concerning Sunday rest and the progressive suggestions concerning inheritances for widows and orphaned daughters.

⁵¹³ Cf. Anonymous, 'Adat-Recht f. Christengemeinden: Beschrijving van het bijzondere adatrecht der Inlandsche Christenen in de afdeeling NIAS, met uitzondering van de onderafdeeling Zuid-Nias, van de residentie Tapanoeli' (RMG 2.800).

⁵¹⁴ Term used by Robert J. Schreier in *Constructing Local Theologies*, 1985, pp. 144-158.

⁵¹⁵ Cf. A. Steinhart (1889-1989. *100 jaar Kerk op de Batu-eilanden*, 1989, p. 6) dates the first phase from 1889 until 1909, suggesting that the year 1909 (consecration of the first church building on Pulau Tello) marks the beginning of a new era. This dating cannot be accepted, considering both the dates of the first baptisms (1892 Pulau Tello; 1900 Sigata) and the fundamental change in missionary approach brought about by the Dutch missionary, W.F. Schröder, as of 1919.

⁵¹⁶ Taken from a sermon on John 17:17, held in Amsterdam before his departure, cf. *EVV*, 5/2 (1887), pp. 38-42, and a lecture 'Gedachten over het ontstaan van het heidendom' (Thoughts on the origin of heathendom), cf. *EVV*, 5/3 (1887), p. 68.

⁵¹⁷ Cf. *EVV*, 5/3 (1887), p. 63 ('medehelpen Zijne Kerk in Lutherschen geest op te richten').

⁵¹⁸ Cf. letter *Resident* of Bencoolen to DLM, 30 September 1885; he quotes a certain Bettink, who had visited the area and held that, due to Muslim influence, it was no longer 'heathen' ('Ambtelijke Correspondentie', GAA 552/32).

⁵¹⁹ Cf. Ch. 3.4, Ch. 3.5.3 and Ch. 3.5.4.

⁵²⁰ When Kersten arrived, he found that Festersen's station was destroyed and a Roman Catholic priest,

Kersten returned to Padang in July 1888, where he stayed with the Missionary Dornsafft. In the meantime, another DLM-missionary, Christian W. Frickenschmidt⁵²¹, had also arrived in Padang. As a new mission area had to be found, a number of different options were considered, especially the islands of Enggano and Mentawai off the South-West Coast of Sumatra. Eventually, following the advice of RM-Inspector Schreiber, the DLM decided on the Batu Islands⁵²², in part because a Dutch administrative officer on Pulau Tello would be able to provide protection for the missionary.⁵²³

Frickenschmidt went over to Nias to learn the vernacular from Sundermann, while Kersten made a first orientation trip to Pulau Tello from 10 to 14 October 1888. He went there by government boat, which took two days. The Dutch official on Pulau Tello introduced him to the regent of the Batu Islands, *Raja* Alam Laut. Back in Padang, Kersten had to wait for the permission from the colonial government. But even before it was issued, he was able to make use of another chance to go to Pulau Tello on a government steamer in January 1889.

On 11 February 1889, the permission to start a mission on the Batu Islands was granted.⁵²⁴ On February 20, Kersten, his wife and a Batak *guru* by the name of Johannes Lumbantobing⁵²⁵ sailed for Pulau Tello. They arrived on 25 February 1889, the official beginning of the Batu-mission.

When the house which Kersten had rented in the Moslem quarter of the main village proved to be unsuitable, he built a new house on another plot, which he had obtained from the *raja*. On 17 August 1889, the couple moved in, just before the birth of their daughter Amanda two days later.

Due to the hard physical work in the extreme tropical climate, Kersten fell seriously ill. Frickenschmidt, who had arrived on Pulau Tello on 31 December 1889, accompanied him to Padang in May 1890. The doctor advised Kersten to return to Europe as soon as possible⁵²⁶, which he did on 21 June 1890. Back in Germany, he soon died.⁵²⁷ Though Kersten and his wife had served only about fifteen months on Pulau Tello, with no baptisms to their record, they are remembered by the Ono Niha – and especially by the Batunese Christians⁵²⁸ – as the pioneers of the Batu Islands.

Jan P.N. van Meurs, had just arrived. Although they eventually received permission for missionary work in Tanjung Sakti, the Lutherans decided to abandon this area, cf. *EVB*, 5/4 (1887) p. 98; cf. W.F. Schröder, *De Zending op de Batoe-Eilanden*, 1927, pp. 6-7.

⁵²¹ Cf. Ch. 3.4.; for Frickenschmidt's bio-data, cf. Wilhelm Frickenschmidt Junior, 'In Memoriam', in: *EVB*, 53/3 (1935), pp. 57-60. Frickenschmidt arrived in Padang in May, 1888.

⁵²² Three large islands (Tanah Bala, Tanah Masa and Pulau Pini) and 48 smaller islands situated to the south of Nias off the West Coast of Sumatra, between 0° 10' Northern Latitude and 0° 45' Southern Latitude and between 97° 50' and 98° 35' eastern longitude. Cf. *ENI* 1 (1917), p. 207.

⁵²³ This reason is explicitly mentioned in *EVB*, 19/3 (1901), p. 66. The Dutch official was a *controleur*.

⁵²⁴ Cf. 'Notulen Hoofdbestuur', Amsterdam, 2 May 1889 (GAA 552/2).

⁵²⁵ Cf. G.O. Reitz, 'A report of the Church in the Batu Islands', 1959, p. 2; W.F. Schröder, *De Zending op de Batoe-eilanden*, 1927, p. 14. Lumbantobing had previously served the Mennonite mission in Pakantan, Sumatra.

⁵²⁶ 'Aerztliches Attest', Dr. Elogner, Padang, 12 June 1890 (GAA 552/30).

⁵²⁷ Cf. C.W. Frickenschmidt, *Erinnerungen aus Pulu Tello*, 1895, p. 13. On 27 July 1890, J. Kersten arrived in Amsterdam. On 30 August 1890, he died in Leverkusen (Lennep), Germany. His widow later took upon herself the education of her daughter and the two daughters of Frickenschmidt. On 18 April 1918, she died of a stroke in the mission-house in Barmen.

⁵²⁸ For the centennial of the mission to the Batu Islands on 25 February 1989, which was attended by the author, the pastor of Pulau Tello, Waösaro Zandroto, commemorated the beginnings of the mission in a jubilee-lecture with special reference to Johannes Kersten, cf. U. Hummel, *Reis naar Indonesië*, 1989.

Frickenschmidt, who carried on Kersten's work, was a man of the solid but simple spirituality of Ludwig Harms.⁵²⁹ He is said to have 'studied Latin behind the plough'.⁵³⁰ On 22 July 1890, he married Katharine Ostermeier⁵³¹ in Padang and on 7 August 1890 they arrived together on Pulau Tello. Katharine played a significant role as a liaison between the missionary and both the Ono Niha and the Chinese⁵³² women on Pulau Tello.

After giving birth to a third child, Katharine Frickenschmidt died on 2 June 1894 on Pulau Tello.⁵³³ Leaving the work in the hands of his new colleague, August Landwehr⁵³⁴, Frickenschmidt left for Europe with his three children on 3 April 1895. Eight months later, he married Pauline Teudt⁵³⁵ from Bückeburg-Lippe, daughter of the later Superintendent. He left his three sons behind in Elberfeld, where their grandfather Ostermeier was a teacher. On 28 November 1895, the newly wedded couple left Holland and arrived on Pulau Tello on 16 January 1896. Pauline Frickenschmidt adjusted well, wearing the traditional Malay clothing worn by many Ono Niha women. She was lovingly called: 'Gawe' (grandmother).⁵³⁶

During Frickenschmidt's second furlough (March 1905 - May 1906), the RM offered Missionary Heinrich Kienlein⁵³⁷ to assist Landwehr. Kienlein served on Pulau Tello and Sigata⁵³⁸ from 22 November 1903 until 1 July 1908, after which he moved to Nias. After returning, Frickenschmidt continued his service on the Batu Islands without another furlough until 1922. He extended the work to other villages and islands, built a hospital, wrote a simple church order and did some literary work (see below). His views on indigenous Niasan culture were not disparaging. He even insisted that the first fruits of Pulau Tello, who wished to adopt a new identity by dressing up in Western-style clothing, should wear traditional clothing instead.

Frickenschmidt seems to have been a bit stubborn. There were tensions between him and some of his colleagues, both Europeans and Ono Niha. Landwehr accused Frickenschmidt of acting like a bishop.⁵³⁹ Willem Schröder held that Frickenschmidt was not 'democratic' in his way of dealing with the teacher-preachers⁵⁴⁰, that he

⁵²⁹ Ludwig G. Harms (5 May 1808 Walsrode - 14 November 1865 Hermannsburg). Leader of the Awakening and founder of the Hermannsburg Mission.

⁵³⁰ Cf. *EVB*, 53/3 (1935), p. 58. Cf. 'Notulen Hoofdbestuur', Amsterdam 8 June 1887, GAA 552/2.

⁵³¹ Katharine Ostermeier, sometimes 'Ostermeyer' (27 June 1867 Lindau - 2 June 1894 Pulau Tello).

⁵³² The term 'Tello-Chinese' was often used for people of Chinese descent who settled on Pulau Tello as merchants in the nineteenth century; cf. C.W. Frickenschmidt, *Unter den Palmen von Pulu Tello: Ein Gruß aus der Heidenwelt für die heimatliche Missionsgemeinde*, 1929, 9ff. For Chinese in Gunungsitoli, cf. F. Zebua, *Kota Gunungsitoli*, 1996, pp. 98-99.

⁵³³ Cf. obituary by C.W. Frickenschmidt, *Gottes Lob an dem Grabe einer armen Magd im stillen Heimgarten auf dem Batu-Eilande Tello*, ca. 1895.

⁵³⁴ August Landwehr (6 May 1864 Werther - 9 October 1912 Mühlhausen). Cf. Ch. 4.5.2.

⁵³⁵ Pauline Teudt (1863 Frille / Minden - 1945 Bünde).

⁵³⁶ Cf. A. Steinhart, *1889-1989. 100 jaar Kerk op de Batu-eilanden*, 1989, p. 19.

⁵³⁷ Heinrich Wilhelm Ludwig Kienlein (14 April 1876 Hahlen / Minden - 7 June 1929 Gunungsitoli). In the service of the DLM 1903-1908; 1908-1929 he served with the RM on Nias (Lölöwa'u and Hilimaziaya). Kienlein arrived on Pulau Tello on 22 November 1903. On 1 April 1906 he moved to Sigata.

⁵³⁸ Sigata, founded by A. Landwehr, was the second mission post on the Batu Islands.

⁵³⁹ Cf. letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 23 October 1906 (GAA 552/35), ('als of ik eene aard ephorale plaats heb willen innemen'). Both Mandija and Nathanael Ziliwu clashed with Frickenschmidt, cf. 'Notulen Hoofdbestuur', Amsterdam, 29 November 1912 and 14 March 1918, letter Pulau Tello, 7 October 1913, GAA 552/7 ('bittere vyandschap tusschen Mandia en Frickenschmidt').

⁵⁴⁰ Cf. letter W.F. Schröder to DLM, Pulau Tello, 4 February 1920 (GAA 552/38).

practised an 'inefficient' missionary method⁵⁴¹ and did not work systematically.⁵⁴² On the other hand, it cannot be denied that Frickenschmidt was a steady, headstrong worker, who managed to establish a considerable position for the young church in a traditional and complex society. He constantly manoeuvred cleverly between a less than consistent colonial government, often hostile traditional chiefs and priests, and a population suffering under the immense changes of the times.

On 8 March 1922, Frickenschmidt left the Batu Islands on board the 'Bellatrix'. Temporarily, Ludwig Borutta took over the work. This experienced former missionary to Nias arrived four days before Frickenschmidt's departure. Even in retirement, Frickenschmidt continued to render services to the DLM, such as teaching the vernacular to his later successor, Willem L. Steinhart⁵⁴³, and writing articles about the Batu Islands. In November 1932, he wrote a last letter to the Christians on the Batu Islands, commemorating the first baptisms forty years earlier.⁵⁴⁴ In 1935, Frickenschmidt died in Bückeburg, Germany.

4.5.2 Pioneers of Sigata

In 1896, a second mission station was started on Sigata by Landwehr. He arrived on Pulau Tello on 15 June 1894, a few days after Katharine Frickenschmidt had died. Before Frickenschmidt went on furlough in 1895, he and Landwehr visited Sigata, a neighbouring Batu Island, together.

Landwehr helped Frickenschmidt to introduce the practice of taking up a collection in the church services on Pulau Tello.⁵⁴⁵ Then, on 16 January 1896, he started his own mission post on Sigata. His fiancé, Agnes Kämpfer⁵⁴⁶, arrived in Padang on 5 April 1897 and, after their marriage had been consecrated by Frickenschmidt on Pulau Tello (21 April 1897), they moved to Sigata. For about one year, they stayed in a small room in the school building. Landwehr was busy teaching and building the mission house and Agnes Landwehr dedicated herself to the service of women and children⁵⁴⁷, teaching them skills such as handicrafts, child nursing, and the treatment of simple illnesses.⁵⁴⁸ At every meeting, she explained something about Christianity. Her simple but effective method was to tell stories by making use of Sunday-school pictures⁵⁴⁹, have her pupils learn some verses from the

⁵⁴¹ Cf. letter W.F. Schröder to DLM, Pulau Tello, 3 March 1920 (GAA 552/38). Frickenschmidt is accused of not being effective in catechetical instructions and of having chosen morally unqualified men for the position of elder. Schröder held that Frickenschmidt was dishonest and had lost his idealism. Also the consul of missions, C.W.Th. Baron van Boetzelaer, noticed Frickenschmidt's 'inefficient' missionary methods when he visited Pulau Tello in October 1917, cf. 'Notulen Hoofdbestuur', Amsterdam, 14 March 1918 (GAA 552/7). Frickenschmidt himself evaluated the consul's visit positively (postcard to DLM, Pulau Tello, 11 October 1917).

⁵⁴² Cf. W.F. Schröder, *De Zending op de Batoe-eilanden*, 1927, p. 18.

⁵⁴³ Cf. A. Steinhart, *1889-1989. 100 jaar Kerk op de Batu-eilanden*, 1989, p. 19. It was at Frickenschmidt's house in Bückeburg that Steinhart met his wife-to-be, Margarethe Teudt.

⁵⁴⁴ Published in the church magazine *Toeria Hoelo Batoe*, 4/11 (1932).

⁵⁴⁵ Cf. W.F. Schröder, *De Zending op de Batoe-eilanden*, 1927, p. 25. A first step towards self-support. Agnes Kämpfer (1873 Barmen – 13 November 1905 Sigata).

⁵⁴⁶ Cf. A. Landwehr, *Dem Andenken der Frau Missionar Landwehr geb. Agnes Kämpfer*, 1906, pp. 5-13.

⁵⁴⁷ Cf. *EVB*, 16/3 (1898), pp. 120-121.

⁵⁴⁸ Cf. letter Agnes Landwehr née Kämpfer to DLM, Sigata, 17 October 1898, in: *EVB*, 17/1 (1899), pp.18-21 (*plaatjes*).

Bible, and sing hymns with them. The Sunday-school became so popular that four years later 81 children were attending regularly.⁵⁵⁰

Unfortunately, Landwehr often suffered from fever. In addition to his suffering from the unhealthy climate, it was difficult for them to get a variety of healthy food.⁵⁵¹ On 12 July 1898, their first child, Johannes Bernhard, was born, but it died a day later. During the second quarter of 1899, they had to go on vacation to the much cooler and healthier Fort de Kock (later Bukit Tinggi) on Sumatra. Here, Agnes attended a course in midwifery. Three months later, they were back on the Batu Islands. On 17 January 1900, their daughter Elisabeth was born. Besides attending to her chores in the household, Agnes continued to teach, evangelise and nurse the Ono Niha.

In 1905, Landwehr contracted pneumonia and scurvy. Thanks to excellent nursing by his wife, his condition improved after six weeks. At about the same time, an epidemic, which lasted approximately six months, broke out on Sigata and a few neighbouring islands. Agnes often went to the villages to care for the sick. In the end, Agnes Landwehr got ill herself.⁵⁵² On 13 November 1905, this first female pioneer of Sigata suddenly died, probably of typhoid.⁵⁵³ Landwehr and his three children were cared for and comforted by the small group of Christians, especially Fija Wanaetu (see below). On 1 April 1906, Kienlein moved to Sigata, so Landwehr could leave on furlough three days later.⁵⁵⁴ In May 1908, Landwehr became engaged to Paula Simoneit.⁵⁵⁵

On 1 July 1908, Landwehr was back on Sigata and took over the work from Kienlein, who moved to Nias. Landwehr immediately began to build a church, for which Frickenschmidt had already collected money during his furlough (1905-1906)⁵⁵⁶ – as Landwehr had done for Pulau Tello.⁵⁵⁷ On November 15, Paula Simoneit arrived on the Batu Islands and Frickenschmidt consecrated their marriage on 3 December 1908.

Paula Landwehr, like Agnes before her, dedicated herself to Sunday-school work⁵⁵⁸ and nursing, while Landwehr spent much of his time and energy building the church, which was dedicated that same year. The congregations on Sigata developed well and Landwehr even managed to expand his work to the islands of Bötua and Hayo. In 1912, Landwehr suffered a very serious attack of malaria.⁵⁵⁹ His wife took him to Padang for medical examination. The doctor decided that he had to return to Europe as soon as possible.⁵⁶⁰ Paula and her little son, Siegfried, returned

⁵⁵⁰ Cf. A. Landwehr, *Dem Andenken der Frau Missionar Landwehr geb. Agnes Kämpfer*, 1906, p. 19.

⁵⁵¹ *Ibid.* p. 9 (*die Ernährungsfrage*).

⁵⁵² Cf. A. Landwehr, *Dem Andenken der Frau Missionar Landwehr geb. Agnes Kämpfer*, 1906, pp. 20-30.

⁵⁵³ Cf. letter Landwehr to DLM, Sigata, 16 November 1905 (GAA 552/36).

⁵⁵⁴ Cf. A. Steinhart, *1889-1989. 100 jaar Kerk op de Batu-eilanden*, 1989, p. 10. Despite his sorrow, Landwehr visited many mission-minded congregations in the Netherlands. Once he spoke at a meeting in Amsterdam. In the audience was W.F. Schröder, who was later to become a missionary on the Batu Islands himself.

⁵⁵⁵ Paula Simoneit (1883 Sumatra – 1957 Freiburg).

⁵⁵⁶ Cf. letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 20 January 1904 (GAA 552/35).

⁵⁵⁷ Cf. W.F. Schröder, *De Zending op de Batoe-eilanden*, 1927, p. 72.

⁵⁵⁸ Cf. Paula Landwehr née Simoneit, 'Zondagschoolwerk op Sigata', 20 August 1909, in: *EVB*, 28/1 (1910); GAA 552/36.

⁵⁵⁹ Cf. Letter Paula Landwehr née Simoneit to DLM, Padang, 16 August 1912 (GAA 552/36).

⁵⁶⁰ Cf. Medical Attest, Doctor A. Rivai, Padang, 15 August 1912 (GAA 552/36). 'Return for at least one year'.

to Sigata to arrange the removal, while Landwehr was nursed by Missionary Dornsafft and his wife.⁵⁶¹ The Landwehrs left Sumatra on 14 September 1912 and were back in Europe three weeks later. On their way home, in a hotel in Mühlhausen, Germany, Landwehr passed away on 9 October 1912.⁵⁶² *Guru Göba* (see below) took over as head of the station but he, too, soon died.

The last missionary to reside on Sigata was Julius Ziegler.⁵⁶³ In 1916, the mission post (the missionary's place of residence) was officially moved to Pulau Tello and the mission work became centralized⁵⁶⁴, the main reason being that Sigata was too unhealthy a place.⁵⁶⁵

4.5.3 Forming Christian Congregations

The first Christian congregations were established after the baptism of a number of Ono Niha in a particular local community had taken place as a result of the evangelising activities of the European missionaries and their indigenous co-workers. At this early stage, the success of the Christian mission was quite dependent on the support of chiefs or other influential personalities within the Niasan society.

4.5.3.1 First Fruits of the Batu Islands

In 1891, there was a first breakthrough in the missionary work on Pulau Tello. Mandija Ladjira⁵⁶⁶, a young man born in Bawö Norahili (Pulau Tello) in 1875⁵⁶⁷ as the eldest son of the village chief, Defaö, had followed his aunt – the concubine of the Dutch *controleur* – to the Bataklands. There, in Sipirok, he had come under the influence of the RM-missionary, Ludwig Hanstein⁵⁶⁸. The following letter, written by Mandija in 1890, changed the history of the Batu Islands:⁵⁶⁹

⁵⁶¹ Cf. letter Dornsafft to DLM, Padang, 16 August 1912 (GAA 552/36).

⁵⁶² Cf. letter Paula Landwehr née Simoneit to DLM, Mühlhausen 8 October 1912 (GAA 552/36). On the back of this letter is a handwritten note from C.F. Westermann (Chairman of the DLM), saying that Landwehr had passed away at 11 a.m on Wednesday, 9 October 1912. Cf. Telegram Paula Landwehr née Simoneit to DLM, Mühlhausen 9 October 1912 (GAA 552/36). The text reads: 'Landwehr heimgegangen. Leiche morgen Missionshaus Barmen' (Landwehr gone home. Body tomorrow Mission House Barmen).

⁵⁶³ Julius Ziegler (24 March 1885 Hirschlanden / Baden – 13 July 1959 Gramads). On Sigata from 1913 until 1916.

⁵⁶⁴ By August 1916, when the re-centralisation was accomplished, there were eleven mission posts on the Batu Islands; cf. letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 7 August 1916 (GAA 552/35).

⁵⁶⁵ Cf. *EVB*, 43/1 (1925), p. 9. Frickenschmidt always denied that Sigata was more unhealthy than Pulau Tello.

⁵⁶⁶ In his correspondence with the board of the DLM, he signs as 'Mandija' (cf. GAA 552/40). In the secondary literature we also come across other spellings, such as 'Mandia' and 'Mandria', cf. W.F. Schröder, *De Zending op de Batoe-eilanden*, 1927, p. 21; T. Hulu, *Waöwaö halöwö fangombacha turia somuso dödö ba danö niha irugi tefatörö döi amarahuta ya 'ita BNKP di Nias*, 1971, p. 23.

⁵⁶⁷ According to Frickenschmidt, Mandija was about 22 or 23 years old in 1898, cf. *EVB*, 16/2 (1898), p. 60.

⁵⁶⁸ On Hanstein's struggle against Islam, cf. J. Warneck, *50 Jahre Batakmission in Sumatra*, 1912, pp. 186-190.

⁵⁶⁹ Quotation from W.L. Steinhart, 'Van ons zendingsveld, 1889 - 25 Februari - 1939', 1939 (GAA 552/39).

Dear parents,

Recently I heard that now there also is a missionary on Tello. Here in the Bataklands, I have had ample opportunity to see the good influence of Christianity. If I may advise you, don't become Mohammedans. Seek contact with the missionary and ask him to teach you.

The result was that in 1891 the chief and some other Ono Niha from Bawö Norahili joined Frickenschmidt's catechumen classes. In due time, holy baptism was administered on the first Sunday of Advent, 27 November 1892, to the twelve first fruits of Pulau Tello.⁵⁷⁰ Among them was Mandija, who had returned from Sipirok. The DLM considered this date to be the 'founding day'⁵⁷¹ of the Batunese church. The first Lord's Supper with local Ono Niha communicants was held on Good Friday, 1893.⁵⁷²

On Easter, 16 April 1900, the fifteen first fruits of Sigata, from the village of Bawö Sitöra, were baptised by Landwehr. On Christmas of the same year, another eight persons followed. The first Lord's Supper on Sigata was celebrated on Pentecost 1903. With the exception of two women, all adults took part.⁵⁷³

4.5.3.2 Church Order and Discipline

In the early instructions for the missionaries of the DLM, the development of an overall church order for the young congregations was not considered to be particularly urgent, the opinion being that this could be done at a later stage.⁵⁷⁴ Though in 1915 Frickenschmidt had made a first simple set of regulations⁵⁷⁵, during the first thirty years the rules and regulations were largely decided upon arbitrarily by the missionaries. Occasionally, there was also a directive from the board in Amsterdam. Some more contextually relevant orientation was received from the annual conferences of missionaries of the RM on Nias, which as of 1909 was attended also by the DLM-missionaries. The Christian community needed directives for social stratification to replace the traditional ones (*bosi*).

Some decisions of the conference of missionaries on Nias were also adopted on the Batu Islands. They deal with the following topics:⁵⁷⁶

1. The baptism of children when one parent is not a Christian who may be baptised only if the non-Christian parent gives his or her consent;

⁵⁷⁰ Cf. 'Notulen Hoofdbestuur', Amsterdam, 30 January 1893 (GAA 552/2). The names of the first fruits of Pulau Tello are mentioned by Frickenschmidt in *Toeria Hoelo Batoe*, 4/11 (1932). They were: Defaö (the chief of Bawö Norahili; father of Mandija), Saronatola, Dawa (a former Muslim), Mandija (who later became the first *guru*), Sombuyu Li (brother of Mandija), Tjadi (brother of Mandija), Sowuagere, Utia, Kamao, Safusi Uli, Mani and Falaete Ambö.

⁵⁷¹ Cf. *EVB*, 51/2 (1933), p. 36 (*stichtingsdag*). The BNKP does not celebrate this day.

⁵⁷² Cf. 'Notulen Hoofdbestuur', Amsterdam, 19 November 1891 (GAA 552/2). The very first Lord's Supper on Pulau Tello had already been celebrated on Good Friday, 1892, but in this ceremony only European government officials, Batak Christians and *Guru* Josefo from Nias had taken part.

⁵⁷³ Cf. annual report by Landwehr to DLM, Sigata, 14 January 1904 (GAA 552/36).

⁵⁷⁴ Cf. 'Instructies voor de Zendelingen', 1882-1924 (GAA 552/48). The instruction for Frickenschmidt is missing in the archives.

⁵⁷⁵ Cf. letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 19 August 1915 (GAA 552/35). He calls it a church order (*Kerkorde*).

⁵⁷⁶ Letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 25 February 1909 (GAA 552/35).

2. The conditions for Confirmation which should not take place before the age of fourteen and only after thorough catechumenal instruction; and
3. The condition for Christian marriage which should not take place before both partners have been confirmed (in order to avoid traditional child-marriages).

As were most missionaries of his generation, Landwehr was very strict on discipline. During his time on Pulau Tello, he had already excommunicated a Chinese woman, 'Nonah Ketjil', because she had become the concubine of a European.⁵⁷⁷ On Sigata, Landwehr disciplined Christians who dared to attend non-Christian funeral feasts, got involved in gambling, used talismans or traditional medicine, or practiced polygamy.⁵⁷⁸ Landwehr was particularly eager to eradicate all symbols of the primal religion, especially the so-called idols (*adu*). Before administering holy baptism, he (like most other missionaries) would visit the houses of the catechumens. The objective of the visit was to determine whether all *adu* had been removed. Sometimes this was a very difficult step for the Ono Niha to take. But occasionally, the *adu* were handed over quite willingly to the missionary, since the new believer wished to make a total break with the past. This, for instance, happened in the case of the former priest of the primal religion, Sa'ukhu.⁵⁷⁹

4.5.3.3 Administration

The early missionaries were rather negligent in the matter of creating structures in the congregations related to leadership and decision-making. The first elders (*satua Niha Keriso*) on Pulau Tello were not installed until October 1912 (twenty years after the first baptisms) and on Sigata in January 1914 (fourteen years after the first baptisms). However, no real church boards were developed during this period. Frickenschmidt and Landwehr, Lutherans with authoritarian leanings, did not think in terms of presbyterial-synodal structures.⁵⁸⁰

Even though Landwehr himself had been a deacon before he became a missionary, the office of deacon was not created. With the exception of the medical service, there was no organised service for the poor. The only regular consultative body during this period was the monthly conference of teacher-preachers, convened on Pulau Tello as of 1916. Its purpose was to coordinate the work, discuss reports, prepare sermons, distribute medicine, take decisions on disciplinary matters and plan the finances (salaries, loans, subsidies for buildings, accumulation of contributions).⁵⁸¹

Attempts to create a certain measure of financial self-support had already been made in the 1890s. During the time that Frickenschmidt and Landwehr worked together on Pulau Tello (June 1894 - April 1895), they introduced the regulation of

⁵⁷⁷ Cf. W.F. Schröder, *De Zending op de Batoe-eilanden*, 1927, p. 27.

⁵⁷⁸ *Ibid.* pp. 44-69.

⁵⁷⁹ Cf. annual report Landwehr to DLM, Sigata, 14 January 1904 (GAA 552/36).

⁵⁸⁰ This was no different from the situation in other parts of Indonesia. Only the missionaries of the orthodox Dutch Calvinist Church-Missions in Southern Central Java and on Sumba (GKN), Mamasa (CGK) and Toraja (GZB) created presbyterial church councils soon after the first congregations had been established.

⁵⁸¹ *Guru*-conference on Pulau Tello, 20-27 August 1916, where urgent matters concerning church discipline were discussed, cf. letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 5 September 1916 (GAA 552/35).

taking up collections during the church services.⁵⁸² Although Frickenschmidt also managed to motivate the Christians to donate quite a lot of money for special projects (i.e., the church buildings), he did not build up a regular system of church finances.

4.5.3.4 First Church Building

After returning from his second furlough (1905-1906), Frickenschmidt's most important new project was to build a church. The school had already become too small for the worship services in 1903 and plans had then been made to build a church vis-à-vis the school.⁵⁸³ Landwehr collected money in Germany and the Netherlands for the church on Pulau Tello, as Frickenschmidt did for the church on Sigata.⁵⁸⁴ By 1908, about half of the amount needed for Pulau Tello had been accumulated by selling large shells and *adu* to Europeans, and through gifts received from friends of the mission in Germany, Holland and Switzerland.⁵⁸⁵ The collections among the Ono Niha for this purpose were also exceptionally large.⁵⁸⁶ This first church was consecrated on 10 November 1910 (the birthday of Martin Luther). It had some specifically Lutheran characteristics, such as an altar with a picture of the blessing Christ and two colourful stained glass windows, one depicting the baptism of Christ and the other the crucifixion, with Mary and John.⁵⁸⁷

4.5.3.5 Christian Witness of Traditional Leaders

As had been the case on Nias, the witness of some influential former adherents of the primal religion (i.e., nobility and traditional priests/priestesses) who had converted to Christianity was also essential to the interpretation and expansion of the Christian message on the Batu Islands. They also provided leadership for the congregation during this early period. Many church elders were recruited from their ranks. They usually worked closely with the missionaries and their wives.

According to Frickenschmidt, the conversion of a noble couple, Lugu and Lai Hulandro⁵⁸⁸, had been 'an important step in the Christianisation'⁵⁸⁹ of Pulau Tello. Lai was the daughter of a mighty chief and a priestess in her own right. Lai Hulandro was baptised in 1908, the year of the total subjugation of the Ono Niha on Nias. It is unclear whether she took this step for opportunistic reasons or for more authentic ones. In either case, it was a powerful witness and significantly furthered the cause of Christianisation. Lai and Lugu Hulando had a close relationship with

⁵⁸² Cf. W.F. Schröder, *De Zending op de Batoe-eilanden*, 1927, p. 25.

⁵⁸³ Cf. letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 27 August 1903 (GAA 552/35).

⁵⁸⁴ Cf. letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 20 January 1904 (GAA 552/35).

⁵⁸⁵ Cf. letters Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 11 February 1907, 1 February 1908, 15 August 1909 (GAA 552/35). For the fundraising and building, cf. special report by C.W. Frickenschmidt, 'Kerkgeschiedenis van Poeloe Tello' (unpublished manuscript, added to the annual report of 1910, GAA 552/35).

⁵⁸⁶ *Ibid.* more than eight hundred guilders in six years.

⁵⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸⁸ The meaning of this family name is 'Dutch ear of wheat'. While there is no indication that this family was of (mixed) Dutch origin, it is likely that they were descendants of former immigrants.

⁵⁸⁹ Cf. annual report of Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, January 1909 (GAA 552/35).

Guru Nathanael – himself a chief. One of their sons, Fae'ö Gamuata⁵⁹⁰, became a successful evangelist on the Batu Islands.

Another aristocratic women, Fija Wanaetu of Sigata⁵⁹¹, may be called the catalyst behind the Christianisation of this second centre of missionary activities. She became a functionary in the women's work begun by Agnes Landwehr in the village of Bawö Sitöra. Although already an elderly women at the time, Fija Wanaetu was impressed by the teachings of Agnes Landwehr, particularly by the stories from the Old Testament, and was deeply moved by Jesus' spiritual struggle in Gethsemane.⁵⁹² Though she became a believer, due to family ties she could not be baptised for some time. Her son was engaged to the granddaughter of the paramount chief of Sigata, Faronö. The latter, strongly rooted in primal religion, did not approve of Christianity for his people. He was afraid that allegiance to the missionaries would make the people less loyal to him. Loyalty was demonstrated, first and foremost, at grand sacrificial feasts (e.g., funerals), where large masses would come to honour the deceased and his or her family. Faronö had heard that Christians were not allowed to attend such feasts. He regarded this as an insult to the spirit of the deceased and could not allow it to be tolerated.⁵⁹³ Subsequently, anyone showing an interest in the teachings of the missionaries was treated with intolerance. This included such a noblewoman as Fija Wanaetu. Despite the scorn of the paramount chief, however, she dared to oppose him in many ways. Finally, Faronö threatened to annul the engagement of his granddaughter to her son if she were to get baptised.⁵⁹⁴ For eight days, she resisted, but then gave in for the sake of her son and to end the immense pressure on her family.

As a next step, Landwehr intervened, successfully negotiating with Faronö some guarantees for the few Christians on the island. As a result, Fija Wanaetu and some twenty others continued to attend the religious services and the school for catechumens. Although she herself was not among the fifteen first fruits of Sigata baptised in April 1900, one of them, He'ugö Taögö, had become a Christian because of her witness.⁵⁹⁵ Eight months later, she stood up to Faronö by receiving the sacrament herself.⁵⁹⁶ In September / October 1901, Nawu'a Ziliwu, the wife of Faronö, and then Faronö himself died. This was a blow to the primal religion and an advantage for Christianity.

Soon after Fija Wanaetu started her 'missionary work'⁵⁹⁷, her area was struck by an epidemic, especially among the younger children. A number of them died, in-

⁵⁹⁰ Cf. letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 14 August 1910 (GAA 552/35). Fae'ö Gamuata had been a pupil of Nathanael Ziliwu.

⁵⁹¹ Her clan-name (*mado*) is often referred to as 'Wanaoetoe' (i.e., W.F. Schröder, *De Zending op de Batoe-eilanden*, 1927, p. 45). This seems to be a wrong spelling, since such a name is unheard of in Ono Niha society.

⁵⁹² Cf. letter Agnes Landwehr née Kämpfer to DLM, Sigata, 25 March 1900, in: *EVB*, 18/4 (1900), pp. 123-124.

⁵⁹³ Cf. *EVB*, 18/5 (1900), p. 166.

⁵⁹⁴ Cf. letter Landwehr to DLM, Sigata, 25 April 1900, in: *EVB*, 18/5 (1900), p. 165; cf. W.F. Schröder, *De Zending op de Batoe-eilanden*, 1927, p. 45.

⁵⁹⁵ Letter Landwehr to DLM, Sigata, 25 April 1900, in: *EVB*, 18/5 (1900), pp. 170-171.

⁵⁹⁶ Cf. W.F. Schröder, *De Zending op de Batoe-eilanden*, 1927, pp. 50-51. Four men and four women were baptised.

⁵⁹⁷ The term 'zendingsarbeid' (missionary work) was used by Agnes Landwehr. It demonstrates a great deal of respect for the endeavours of Fija Wanaetu, cf. letter Agnes Landwehr née Kämpfer to DLM, Sigata, 25 March 1900, printed in: *EVB*, 18/4 (1900), p. 123.

cluding three of her own grandchildren.⁵⁹⁸ Naturally, this was a great trial of her faith and it gave her critics an opportunity to discredit Christianity as a religion which was not suitable for the people of Sigata. Despite of her dreadful loss and the defamations, Fija Wanaetu remained strong in her faith. Just as one of her sick grandchildren was shaken by a convulsion, she removed the *adu* of her non-Christian husband. The next morning the little one was dead. A traditional priest threatened that the spirits of the ancestors would never protect her anymore. But she declared her faith: 'Even if they cut off both of my arms, I will still remain with Jesus'.⁵⁹⁹

A year later, in 1902, the situation again changed. A dysentery-epidemic swept over the island. Among many other people, three of the four traditional priests in Bawö Sitöra fell victim to it. The trust in 'Christian medicine' began to grow, and by-and-by more people from Bawö Sitöra, Sigese, Talulala, and eventually even from Fuge flocked to the Christian worship services. Fija Wanaetu extended her missionary work as far as Pulau Tello, convincing her sister Tawö Watema and brother-in-law Satarö Zimane from Hilinitaya to embrace the Christian faith.⁶⁰⁰

When Agnes Landwehr died in 1906, Fija Wanaetu and other Christian women of Sigata gave the missionary spiritual comfort. Fija held intercessory prayers for the deceased.⁶⁰¹ As of 1907, she reportedly assisted in the instruction of catechumens on Sigata.⁶⁰² She was a critical and independent personality. She held that the way Landwehr brought up his daughter Elisabeth was much too strict.⁶⁰³ Her judgement concerning the work of Missionary Kienlein was harsh. He had shocked his listeners by cursing a man, by saying: 'Jahumukumi Lowalani' (may God punish you), which in the ears of the people of Sigata was an expression of blatant hatred. Fija later revealed her disappointment about this incident, saying 'How could Kienlein have said something like that? How could he curse us? A Christian may not do that!'.⁶⁰⁴ 'Old Fija'⁶⁰⁵ was the backbone of the congregation on Sigata for more than twenty years and a missionary of Jesus Christ in her own right. She died in 1924.⁶⁰⁶

4.5.3.6 *Raja* between Tradition, Christianity and Islam

The royal family of the Batu Islands was not of Ono Niha, but of Buginese or Minangkabau descent. They called themselves *Orang Bulu'aro* (those from Bulu'aro) or *Behku'a* (those who deal with the spirits).⁶⁰⁷ Their actual residence was a traditional house (*omo hada sebua*) in Koto Bulu'aro on Tanah Masa. On Pulau

⁵⁹⁸ Cf. W.F. Schröder, *De Zending op de Batoe-eilanden*, 1927, pp. 59-64.

⁵⁹⁹ Quotation in W.F. Schröder, *De Zending op de Batoe-eilanden*, 1927, p. 64. For the struggle with the primal religion on Sigata, cf. *EVB*, 21/3 (1903), pp. 106-107. Christianity was considered a 'white man's religion' (*ibid.* p. 107).

⁶⁰⁰ Cf. *EVB*, 21/2 (1903), pp. 54-55. She, three of her children and thirteen others were baptized on Christmas, 1902.

⁶⁰¹ Cf. letter Elizabeth Kienlein née Kleine to DLM, Sigata, 4 May 1906 (GAA 552/31).

⁶⁰² Cf. annual report Kienlein to DLM, Sigata, 27 January 1908, in: *EVB*, 26/3 (1908), p. 141.

⁶⁰³ Cf. *EVB*, 18/4 (1900), p. 124.

⁶⁰⁴ Cf. letter Landwehr to DLM, Sigata, 24 July 1908 (GAA 552/36).

⁶⁰⁵ Term used in a letter of W.F. Schröder to DLM, Pulau Tello, 8 November 1920 (GAA 552/38).

⁶⁰⁶ Cf. letter W.F. Schröder to DLM, Pulau Tello, 9 April 1924 (GAA 552/38).

⁶⁰⁷ Cf. L. Horner, *Batoe-eilanden, ten westen van Sumatra gelegen*, 1840, pp. 368-370. At the time of Horner's visit in 1838, the *raja* of Koto Bulu'aro was not as powerful and rich as some other chiefs, e.g., the chiefs of Pulau Tello, Lorang and Sigata; cf. also W.L. Steinhart, *Niassche Teksten III-XXVI*, 1937, pp. 79-80.

Tello – where the *raja* stayed most of the time – he had a colonial-style house.⁶⁰⁸ Until 1915, the *raja* was the highest traditional ruler over all the Batu Islands and treated as a government official, accountable to the Dutch *controleur* of the Batu Islands. He received a government allowance of 75 guilders per month and presided over the monthly meetings of chiefs (*hari rapat*).⁶⁰⁹

Since the beginnings of their mission work, the pioneer missionaries had tried to win the *raja* to Christianity.⁶¹⁰ The two regents who played a significant role in the history of the mission on the Batu Islands both held the titles of *Alam Laut* (lord of the seas) and *Siwa Farono* (the one who is listened to nine times).⁶¹¹ Although Alam Laut I never became a Christian, he supported the work of the DLM and even attended the baptism of the first fruits in 1892.

On 7 January 1902, the old Alam Laut passed away in Koto Bulu'aro. Frickenschmidt had once again visited him three days earlier, hoping in vain that the king would convert to Christianity.⁶¹² At the burial, held on 27 May 1902, about three hundred pigs were slaughtered and 150 *pikul* of rice was prepared for the guests, costing almost as much as the annual salary of a missionary.⁶¹³

'Si Alam' (later also called Alam Laut⁶¹⁴), was borne approximately 1880. His mother, who died early, was the First Wife of the *raja*. He attend mission school and the church services. After he had finished school, Frickenschmidt trained him and in 1898 he appointed him as assistant teacher.⁶¹⁵ In December 1898, he accompanied Frickenschmidt to the Bataklands, in order to see for himself what a Christianised indigenous people could be like.⁶¹⁶

In mid-1899, the old *raja* withdrew Si Alam from the mission school, so that the boy could render his services to the *controleur*.⁶¹⁷ Even so, according to Ms. Reiche, who visited Pulau Tello in the first half of 1899, he was well on his way to becoming a Christian.⁶¹⁸ After he had succeeded his father to the throne in 1902 and had been approved as regent by the colonial government, he continued to maintain a positive attitude towards the mission.

Beginning in 1904, Alam Laut's attitude gradually changed. According to Frickenschmidt, the cause of this was his smoking opium in the Chinese suburb of Pulau Tello.⁶¹⁹ Landwehr affirms this and adds that the *raja* was in the process of becoming corrupt. He organised cock fighting, involving very high bidding, to the

⁶⁰⁸ Cf. *EVB*, 19/4 (1901), p. 117.

⁶⁰⁹ Cf. *EVB*, 19/3 (1901), p. 71.

⁶¹⁰ Cf. Ch. 6.3.2.1 and Ch. 6.5.1.1.

⁶¹¹ Not to be confused with the paramount chief of Sigata, Farono (the one who is listened to), the greatest enemy of the mission. Frickenschmidt also used the name 'Sitipu' for the old *raja* (*Unter den Palmen von Pulu Tello*, 1929, p. 135). While his father was alive, Alam Laut Junior was referred to as *Si Alam* (little lord).

⁶¹² Cf. *EVB*, 20/2 (1902), p. 38.

⁶¹³ Estimated costs of the burial: at least 1500 guilders; 1 *pikul* = 137 pounds, cf. *EVB*, 20/5 (1902), p. 130. The annual salary of a missionary of the DLM amounted to approximately 1.600 guilders at that time, cf. 'Rekening der Uitwendige Zending over 1902', in: *EVB*, 21/3 (1903), p. 98.

⁶¹⁴ W.F. Schröder also calls him by his title Siwa Farono (*De Zending op de Batoe-eilanden*, 1927, p. 31).

⁶¹⁵ Cf. *EVB*, 16/5 (1898), pp. 186-187; *EVB*, 16/6 (1898), p. 212.

⁶¹⁶ Cf. *EVB*, 19/3 (1901), p. 71.

⁶¹⁷ Cf. *EVB*, 17/6 (1899), p. 214; *EVB*, 18/1 (1900), p. 12

⁶¹⁸ *EVB*, 17/6 (1899), p. 219.

⁶¹⁹ Cf. letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 1 July 1904 (GAA 552/35).

detriment of his people.⁶²⁰ In 1907 Frickenschmidt wrote: 'Our relationship with the *raja* is friendly. We do not flatter him, but we render him the respect to which he is entitled as a king. We also still hope that he will become a Christian some day'.⁶²¹ Occasionally, Alam Laut still attended Christmas celebrations. Like other non-Christians, he was impressed by the illuminated Christmas tree.⁶²² When the church of Pulau Tello was consecrated on 10 November 1910, he held a speech, praising the missionary's efforts.⁶²³

Having lost all formal power in 1915, when Nathanael Ziliwu became *demang*⁶²⁴, the *raja*, who by the Dutch was considered 'not altogether trustworthy' and prone to exploit his people⁶²⁵, nevertheless retained considerable moral authority inside the Ono Niha community. The fact that he became opposed to Christianity and took a second wife, from Sigata⁶²⁶, was a heavy blow to the developing church. Polygamy was usually punished with excommunication, so that the chance of winning the *raja* over to Christianity had become virtually null and void. Since a part of the royal family had already converted to Islam, the fear was that Alam Laut would follow suit. But he did not convert to Islam. Instead, as he grew older, the Christian education he had received in his youth came back to him again. He came back to the church and asked for holy baptism. Missionaries Schröder and Steinhart visited him to examine his beliefs. His knowledge of the Bible was astounding.⁶²⁷ Eventually, the *raja* was baptised, on 7 November 1925, in Koto Bulu'aro, the old royal village. Only a few weeks later, on 8 January 1926, Alam Laut died. He received a Christian burial.

Contrary to the hopes of the missionaries, the conversion of Alam Laut had come too late and did not have any effect on the Christianisation of Tanah Masa.⁶²⁸ Despite the *raja*'s conversion, the whole royal family became Muslim, begrudging the 'Christian' colonial government. They continued to exercise a strong influence.⁶²⁹ Koto Bulu'aro became a Muslim stronghold, dividing the Batu island of Tanah Masa into a strongly Islamic part and a mainly Christian part (Lasondre).⁶³⁰

4.5.4 Medical Missions

Similar to Nias, the Batu Islands are notorious for their extremely unhealthy living conditions and numerous diseases. The missionaries wrote regularly about diseases and even about devastating epidemics on the Batu Islands, such as, for example, a dysentery epidemic on Pulau Tello in 1903⁶³¹ and a smallpox epidemic on all the

⁶²⁰ Cf. letter Landwehr to DLM, Sigata, 1 July 1904 (GAA 552/36).

⁶²¹ Letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 4 January 1907 (GAA 552/35).

⁶²² Cf. letter Pauline Frickenschmidt to 'Friends of the mission' in Germany, Pulau Tello, 29 December 1908 (GAA 552/35).

⁶²³ W.F. Schröder, *De zending op de Batoe-eilanden*, 1927, p. 79.

⁶²⁴ Cf. Ch. 2.7.3 and Ch. 4.5.5.3.

⁶²⁵ W.F. Schröder, 'Schetsen uit Tello', in: *EVB*, 43/1 (1925), pp. 6-7.

⁶²⁶ Cf. letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 29 June 1915 (GAA 552/35).

⁶²⁷ Cf. W.F. Schröder, *De Zending op de Batoe-eilanden*, 1927, pp. 109-110; cf. Ch. 6.3.2.1.

⁶²⁸ Cf. *EVB*, 44/2 (1926), p. 38.

⁶²⁹ This happened, for example, when one of the sons of the late *raja* married with the daughter of the Christian district chief Nihela of Pulau Pulau Tello. She had to convert to Islam, cf. *EVB*, 50/3 (1932), pp. 63-64.

⁶³⁰ Cf. *EVB*, 44/1 (1926), p. 12; *EVB*, 53/2 (1935), pp. 45-47.

⁶³¹ Report Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 15 January 1904 (GAA 552/35).

Batu Islands in 1908 until 1909.⁶³² *Guru Göba* died of beri-beri, Agnes Landwehr died of typhoid and August Landwehr died of malaria. Also cholera was very common in those days.

4.5.4.1 Western Medicine Versus Traditional Medicines

From the beginning, medical care was considered to be one of the major missionary tasks.⁶³³ The prototypical ideal was the example of the Good Samaritan in the New Testament.⁶³⁴ Medical care was considered to be a very effective tool in the competition with the primal religion. Treating both physical and mental illnesses was in accordance with the holistic worldview of the *Ono Niha*.⁶³⁵ The fact that the medical treatment was always combined with Christian prayer and worship made it impossible for the indigenous people to differentiate between Christianity and Western medicine.

4.5.4.2 Hospitals

One of the goals Frickenschmidt had set for himself was to build a hospital on Pulau Tello. Although the DLM did not finance it, because a hospital was seen as an instrument of evangelisation it did give permission for the solicitation of funds from friends of the mission.⁶³⁶ The hospital was ready for use in 1896. Frickenschmidt himself served as a medical practitioner and the first unskilled nurses were a man, 'Dawa'⁶³⁷, and the latter's wife, Sirögi. The goal was: 'to heal the soul via the healing of the body, in order to tear that soul from the grip of Satan and to add it to the number of Christians'.⁶³⁸

The medical services offered by Landwehr, who was a qualified male nurse (a former deacon of the Von Bodelschwingh Institution in Bethel, Bielefeld⁶³⁹), was impressive. The mission hospital on Sigata was completed in August 1903. It had two wards, one for women and one for men. The following rules were drawn up by Landwehr:⁶⁴⁰

1. Any person who is ill and desires admittance is to be admitted. The patient must be accompanied by someone who will prepare food and clean the ward.
2. Medical treatment and medicine are free of charge. The patient may not meet or deal with animist priests or use indigenous medicine (*inlandsche geneesmiddelen*) while using mission medicine (*zendingsmedicijnen*).

⁶³² Letters Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 12 November 1908 and 1 April 1909 (GAA 552/35).

⁶³³ Cf. article by W.F. Schröder, 'Onze Luthersche Medische Zending', in: *EVB*, 51/3 (1933), pp. 57-67.

⁶³⁴ *Ibid.* p. 57 (Luke 10: 29 - 37).

⁶³⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 65-66. Cf. Ch. 2.4.1.

⁶³⁶ Cf. W.F. Schröder, *De Zending op de Batoe-eilanden*, 1927, pp. 28-29.

⁶³⁷ The meaning of 'Dawa' is stranger. It is unlikely that this was the real name of the nurse. The *mado* (clan-name) of Dawa has also not been recorded.

⁶³⁸ Cf. *EVB*, 17/1 (1899), p. 4.

⁶³⁹ Cf. *EVB*, 51/3 (1933), p. 58. Landwehr had been recruited by the DLM after he had finished his training at the Barmen seminary in 1893.

⁶⁴⁰ Letter Landwehr to DLM, Sigata, 26 September 1903 (GAA 552/36). The size of each ward was 6.30 metres long, 4.30 metres wide and 5 metres high.

3. The patient will receive two tins of rice every day. Side dishes must be provided by the patient himself or herself.
4. Every patient is required to take part in the religious services held in the hospital.
5. After the patient's recovery, the missionary will determine when he or she may go home. If he or she wants to leave earlier, that is at his or her own risk.

Agnes Landwehr was also involved in this medical service. In addition to distributing the regular medicine provided by the government, she also produced homeopathic medicine.⁶⁴¹ She formulated an evening prayer for the devotions and occasionally substituted for her husband in leading the worship service in the hospital.⁶⁴²

4.5.5 Educational Missions

Like most other Protestant missionary societies, during this period, the DLM considered basic education to be the first step toward Christianising the people. At the beginning of every Christian congregation stood a mission school. Temporarily, school buildings were used as places of worship and as homes for the missionaries or teacher-preachers.

4.5.5.1 First Schools

The governor of West Sumatra had already urged Kersten to build a mission school on Pulau Tello upon Kersten's second preliminary visit there in January 1889.⁶⁴³ Soon after having become settled, Kersten and *Guru* Lumbantobing thus began with the building activities. On 1 August 1889, the first school building on Pulau Tello was inaugurated. *Guru* Josefo made an unsuccessful attempt to build another school in one of the neighbouring villages.⁶⁴⁴

Since the instruction in the mission school was Christian-oriented, soon all Muslims and some Chinese withdrew their children.⁶⁴⁵ The instruction was, nevertheless, continued.⁶⁴⁶ Years later, the Chinese component would still be a majority, and there would again be some Muslim pupils.⁶⁴⁷

4.5.5.2 First Teacher-Preachers (*Guru*)

Both Kersten and Frickenschmidt had, at their arrival on Pulau Tello, been accompanied by teacher-preachers (*guru*), i.e., Johannes Lumbantobing and Josefo. These qualified teachers and preachers received a salary from the DLM. In November 1890, Johannes Lumbantobing returned home and was replaced by another Batak,

⁶⁴¹ Cf. A. Landwehr, *Dem Andenken der Frau Missionar Landwehr geb. Agnes Kämpfer*, 1906, pp. 13-14.

⁶⁴² Cf. Report Agnes Landwehr née Kämpfer, Sigata, 11 January 1904, in: report of Landwehr to DLM, Sigata, 14 January 1904 (GAA 552/36).

⁶⁴³ 'Notulen Hoofdbestuur', Amsterdam, 2 May 1889 (GAA 552/2).

⁶⁴⁴ Cf. W.F. Schröder, *De Zending op de Batoe-eilanden*, 1927, pp. 17-18.

⁶⁴⁵ Cf. 'Notulen Hoofdbestuur', Amsterdam, 16 January 1891 (GAA 552/2).

⁶⁴⁶ Cf. 'Notulen Hoofdbestuur', Amsterdam, 12 March 1891 (GAA 552/2).

⁶⁴⁷ Cf. Letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 15 January 1904 (GAA 552/35).

Christiaan Lumbantobing.⁶⁴⁸ *Guru* Josefo returned to Nias in 1891. Since the training of indigenous teacher-preachers was considered by the DLM to be of high methodological significance⁶⁴⁹, the missionaries chose some men from among the first Batunese Christians to attend the four-year study program at Depok seminary.⁶⁵⁰

The first teacher-preacher originating from the Batu Islands was the above-mentioned Mandija Ladjira. He left Pulau Tello for Batavia on 12 June 1893.⁶⁵¹ He was an excellent student, fluent in Malay, Batak, Dutch⁶⁵² and the Niasan vernacular. In October 1897, he received his diploma with good marks.⁶⁵³ After his return to Pulau Tello, he was also examined, with good results, by the local school commission, consisting of the *controleur*, the *raja* and the chief of the Muslim Malay minority, the *panghoeloe Malaja*.⁶⁵⁴

Guru Mandija, as he was called, was a talented teacher.⁶⁵⁵ The number of pupils more than doubled after he began teaching there, which could partially be explained by the fact that the Tello-Chinese and the Muslim Malay trusted an Ono Niha teacher more than a Batak one.⁶⁵⁶ After the number of pupils had risen to 69, he was given an assistant, the gifted Chinese assistant teacher Siakhi.⁶⁵⁷ Frickenschmidt praises Mandija for his school choir, which could sing harmony.⁶⁵⁸

Due to the lack of Christian matches, finding suitable spouses was a problem for early Niasan Christians on the Batu Islands. Mandija took his wife, Rasia, from the Niasan community in Padang. According to Frickenschmidt, this was a good choice,

⁶⁴⁸ Cf. W.F. Schröder, *De Zending op de Batoe-eilanden*, 1927, p. 18. According to Wäösarö Zandroto, BNKP minister on Pulau Tello, the *mado* (clan-name) of Christiaan was Lumbantobing; cf. also A. Steinhart, *1889-1989. 100 jaar Kerk op de Batu-eilanden*, 1989, p. 10. *Guru* Christiaan was replaced by the Niasan *guru* Mandija and returned to Batakland in 1898, cf. *Toeria*, 10/2 (1923).

⁶⁴⁹ Cf. *EVB*, 16/1 (1898), p. 1. DLM Chairman K. Scharren said: 'Het behoort tot de zendingmethode en het is een eisch onzer zending om in alle landen en onder alle volken van de Christenen uit de heidenen mannen in de Evangeliewaarheid nader in te leiden en ook voor het zendingwerk op te leiden, opdat zij als hulppredikers en schoolonderwijzers de blijde boodschap der zaligheid kunnen brengen aan oud en jong in hunne eigene taal, op de wijze van hun eigen volk, waardoor zij te gereeder ingang vinden in het hart van menigen stamgenoot'.

⁶⁵⁰ Cf. S.C. Graaf van Randwijck, *Handelen en denken in dienst der zending*, vol. II, 1981, pp. 473-475; Th. van den End and J. Weitjens, *Ragi Carita II*, 2002, pp. 220-221. This school, originally planned for training indigenous assistant-missionaries (*School voor Inlandsche hulpzendingelingen*), was founded by J.A. Schuurman (a minister of the Protestant Church) and opened on 21 August 1878. Depok Seminary closed down on 1 July 1926.

⁶⁵¹ Cf. *EVB*, 16/1 (1898), p. 1.

⁶⁵² In his letter to C.F. Westermann, chairman of the DLM (Pulau Tello, 7 October 1913), Mandija uses Malay (GAA 552/40). Frickenschmidt mentions that Mandija functioned as translator between Bataks and Ono Niha (letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 27 August 1903, GAA 552/35). Besides the missionaries and the *controleur*, only Mandija and Nathanael could write Dutch (letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 2 October 1912, GAA 552/35).

⁶⁵³ Cf. W.F. Schröder, *De zending op de Batoe-eilanden*, 1927, p. 30.

⁶⁵⁴ Cf. *EVB*, 16/2 (1898), p. 60.

⁶⁵⁵ Cf. letters Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 15 January 1904, 13 January 1905. Mandija was praised by the inspector of schools (GAA 552/35). According to L.H.L. Reiche, 'Een bezoek aan de Batoe-eilanden', in: *EVB*, 19/6 (1901), p. 176, Mandija was more suitable and successful than the previous Batak teacher had been.

⁶⁵⁶ Cf. W.F. Schröder, *De Zending op de Batoe-eilanden*, 1927, p. 30; cf. *EVB*, 16/3 (1898), p. 60; *EVB*, 16/4 (1898), p. 153. There were fifteen Ono Niha, seventeen Chinese and eighteen Malay-Muslim boys and no girls at this stage. At the end of 1898, the number of pupils rose to sixty, since the competing Chinese and Malay schools had closed, cf. *EVB*, 16/6 (1898), p. 211.

⁶⁵⁷ Cf. *EVB*, 19/2 (1901), p. 52.

⁶⁵⁸ Cf. Letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 6 February 1910 (GAA 552/35) (*meerstemmig*).

not only because she was 'healthy and strong, fit and ready for work', but also because there were fewer 'strings attached'. Once Mandija had paid the dowry of three hundred guilders, he was not subject to any additional claims from her family.⁶⁵⁹ Rasia died on 8 October 1900, after having given birth to a daughter.⁶⁶⁰ Mandija married again in 1903, his new wife being Bunoate, one of his nieces.⁶⁶¹

In his spiritual life, Mandija seems to have been intense and cheerful.⁶⁶² One of his published sermons on Mark 16:15⁶⁶³, displays an orderly structure⁶⁶⁴, following the pattern of revival sermons and calling on the listeners to follow the command of Jesus Christ. The commission of Christ is applied to the concrete situation, identifying the disciples with the *Ono Niha Keriso*, whom he addresses. For Mandija, 'Gospel' means salvation in Christ, whose teachings are the truth for this life and for the life hereafter.

After fifteen years in the service of the DLM, Mandija resigned in September 1912. According to Frickenschmidt, the reason was that he wanted more money⁶⁶⁵, which seems a groundless, if not prejudicial explanation. Mandija did not complain about his wages. It seems more likely that the poor personal relationship between him and *Guru* Nathanael, exacerbated by the role Frickenschmidt played in this conflict, was the primary cause for his resignation. The relationship between Mandija and Nathanael had been deteriorating for five years.

It all started in 1906, when Frickenschmidt promised Nathanael a visit to Europe, comforting Mandija that next time he would also get a chance. This was an insult to Mandija's seniority.⁶⁶⁶ The second time Mandija 'lost face' (*aila*) was when Nathanael married to Wuti, daughter of Siwabadan⁶⁶⁷ – the richest chief after the raja – which raised Nathanael's social status and aroused Mandija's jealousy.⁶⁶⁸ A third factor was that Nathanael had published two schoolbooks, which he had translated into the Batunese dialect, without consulting Mandija (his senior), nor involving him in this project. When these books came from the press, Mandija was disappointed and his pride was hurt.⁶⁶⁹ The last straw, however, was a 'very ugly' anonymous letter, which was addressed to Nathanael in Dutch. Mandija was

⁶⁵⁹ Cf. Letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 19 October 1899, published in *EVB*, 18/1 (1900), pp. 11-12.

⁶⁶⁰ Cf. *EVB*, 19/1 (1901), p. 21.

⁶⁶¹ Cf. *EVB*, 21/2 (1903), p. 59.

⁶⁶² Cf. quotation from the letter of Mandija to Mozes, seminarian at Depok, in: letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 12 November 1908 (GAA 552/35).

⁶⁶³ 'Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation', *EVB*, 16/1 (1898), pp. 3-8. This sermon was read at the mission-day in Den Helder on 23 January 1898, cf. *EVB*, 16/2 (1898), p. 67.

⁶⁶⁴ Four parts: 1. Who gives the command to proclaim the Gospel? 2. To whom is it to be preached? 3. To whom are the disciples sent? 4. What is preached to all humanity?

⁶⁶⁵ Cf. letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 2 October 1912 (GAA 552/35). There are three letters with this date.

⁶⁶⁶ Cf. Letter Frickenschmidt to Nathanael, Gütersloh, 24 January 1906 (GAA 552/35). Cf. letter Nathanael to DLM, Baroemadooe 29 March 1906 (GAA 552/40). The board of the DLM did not agree with this invitation.

⁶⁶⁷ Cf. *EVB*, 26/3 (1908), p. 82. Cf. letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 24 June 1907 (GAA 552/35).

⁶⁶⁸ Frickenschmidt mentions jealousy and hatred, cf. letter to DLM, Pulau Tello, 3 January 1913, (GAA 552/35). The letter of Mandija to DLM / Westermann (7 October 1913, GAA 552/40) smacks of enmity.

⁶⁶⁹ Cf. letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 2 October 1912, letter 2 (GAA 552/35).

suspected of being the author. Though this might have been true⁶⁷⁰, the problem was blown up unnecessarily by Frickenschmidt. He revealed the contents of the letter in a church service, hinting at Mandija as the author, and calling him a 'servant of the devil' (*enoni Gaföcha*).⁶⁷¹ Mandija had no choice but to quit his service with the DLM. For an Ono Niha, losing face (*aila*) is worse than death. He could no longer have any peace of mind (*ahono dödö*).⁶⁷² On 22 September 1912, Mandija was honourably dismissed. Galitö, who had just finished his training at Depok, assumed his tasks.⁶⁷³

After this, Mandija changed to coconut farming in Lumbui, the extreme south of the remote island of Tanah Bala. He stopped attending church services.⁶⁷⁴ For ten to fifteen years, he kept his distance from the mission. Later, he had a good relationship with the missionaries Schröder and Steinhart, who visited him.⁶⁷⁵ Steinhart, who appreciated Mandija's bright intellect, wrote about the tragic seclusion of this extraordinary first *guru* of the Batu Islands:⁶⁷⁶

It's a pity that, to a large extent, he has not remained a Niasan. For years he has lived in his neat and beautifully situated home outside the village community. He told me honestly that he could no longer stay in a Niasan village with his Niasan countrymen ... In my opinion, his education as a missionary-teacher has, to a certain extent, been the cause of this.

On Sigata, the first qualified teacher-preacher was Göba, born around 1880. At the age of seventeen, he joined Landwehr's catechism school. This was a brave thing to do, since catechumens were mocked and discriminated against. Temporarily, Göba fell back into his old habit of gambling and he had to repeat the course.⁶⁷⁷ At Christmas of 1899, Landwehr still hesitated to baptise him.⁶⁷⁸ However, since he was precise in his duties, the best in his class and openly confessed Christianity⁶⁷⁹, he, along with fourteen others, received the sacrament on Easter Monday, 16 April 1900.⁶⁸⁰

⁶⁷⁰ Considering another slanderous letter, written by Mandija to the board (Pulau Tello, 7 October 1913, GAA 552/40).

⁶⁷¹ Cf. letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 2 October 1912, letter 2 (GAA 552/35).

⁶⁷² Cf. letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 2 October 1912, letter 2 (GAA 552/35).

⁶⁷³ Cf. letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 2 October 1912, letter 1 (GAA 552/35). In November 1912, the DLM board invited Paula Landwehr née Simoneit (the widow of the former missionary of Sigata) to come for a consultation, in order to ask her advice on the whole matter. She held that Mandija was absolutely trustworthy (*absoluut geloofwaardig*) and had written the truth to the board. Mandija's behaviour had been blameless (*onberispelijk*), cf. 'Notulen Hoofdbestuur', Amsterdam, 29 November 1912 (GAA 552/7). But the board was not convinced, cf. letter of C.F. Westermann to Mandija, Amsterdam, May 1913 (552/40).

⁶⁷⁴ Cf. letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 15 April 1916 (GAA 552/35).

⁶⁷⁵ Cf. *EVB*, 49/1 (1931), pp. 3-4; *EVB*, 53/3 (1935), pp. 62-65.

⁶⁷⁶ Cf. *EVB*, 53/3 (1935), pp. 63-64.

⁶⁷⁷ Cf. Annual Report of Landwehr to DLM, Sigata, 2 January 1899, in: *EVB*, 17/3 (1899), pp. 131-132.

⁶⁷⁸ Cf. *EVB*, 17/6 (1899), p. 216.

⁶⁷⁹ Cf. *EVB*, 18/5 (1900), p. 169.

⁶⁸⁰ Cf. letter Landwehr to DLM, Sigata, 25 April 1900, in: *EVB*, 18/5 (1900), pp. 168-171. Besides Göba, the other first Sigatan Christians were: Laowö Wanaetu (a forty-year-old goldsmith), Rane (a forty-year-old handyman, husband of a priestess), Kogö Lamböri and his two sons, Heugö Manaögö and his wife Rasia Laowö, Defaö Omböila and his wife Fija Zifugi, together with their three children, Omböila Manaögö and He'ugö Taögö.

Landwehr recognized Göba's gifts⁶⁸¹ and prepared him for the seminary in Depok. However, he had to wait for Lawö – another Sigatan, who had already been attending the seminary since 1897 – to return first. When Lawö came home in 1901, he did not have a diploma.⁶⁸² Before departing for Batavia, Göba first went to Pulau Tello for four months, to learn Malay from *Guru Mandija*.⁶⁸³ Five letters, all written by Göba from Depok to his family and friends, were translated by Missionary Landwehr into Dutch. They provide insight into Göba's inner life:⁶⁸⁴

1. To his mother he reveals his struggles in coping with his studies, his fear of failing, but also his trust that God will strengthen him.
2. To his aunt, Lagasi, he expresses his joy that if she became a Christian they could share in the joy of the glory of the Kingdom of God.
3. To his 'dear father Lawö' (possibly the *guru*, who had had to return to the Batu Islands in 1901) he marvels about the Christians in Depok, who are just like the Dutch, with tidy homes with window panes, much better than the Malay and Chinese. In comparison, he finds the Tello-Chinese arrogant, exploiting the Ono Niha like buffalos. He writes that the only way out of this bondage is Christian education.
4. To his friend, Tofati Dödö, he explains different aspects of life in the seminary. Then he describes his dream for Sigata: 'Every Sunday, I think about Sigata. Here in Depok there are so many Christians, but over there there are so few. But that is no obstacle. God will still bless you on Sigata if only we all seek the salvation of our souls. Now it is still possible, but on the Last Day it will be too late'.
5. He urges another friend, Dofana, to continue school. He writes enthusiastically about the high level of instruction at Depok and is impressed that the Christians are 'higher' than the Chinese, whereas on Pulau Tello the latter act like lords.

It thus appears that both the soteriological or salvatory aspect, promising bliss in the afterlife, and the civilising aspect, guaranteeing a better and more honourable life in this world, were of great importance to Göba.

At the end of 1903, Depok Director Johann P. Hennemann⁶⁸⁵ reported that Göba had caught up with his studies, being an excellent student, just like his fellow Ono Niha, Nathanael Ziliwu.⁶⁸⁶ However, when he received his diploma in 1906, he received the mark 'just sufficient'.⁶⁸⁷

Göba returned to Pulau Tello on 25 September 1906 and was subsequently examined by the local school commission.⁶⁸⁸ After a short time on Pulau Tello⁶⁸⁹, he returned to Sigata and started his own school with up to forty pupils. After a while it

⁶⁸¹ Cf. *EVB*, 19/2 (1901), p. 46.

⁶⁸² Cf. W.F. Schröder, *De Zending op de Batoe-eilanden*, 1927, p. 31.

⁶⁸³ Cf. *EVB*, 20/5 (1902), p. 132.

⁶⁸⁴ Cf. *EVB*, 21/4 (1903), pp. 131-134 (all of the letters are dated 18 August 1902).

⁶⁸⁵ Johann Philip Hennemann (1835 Horhausen / Hessen – 1912 Salatiga), a German, was the director of Depok Seminary until 1905.

⁶⁸⁶ Cf. *EVB*, 21/6 (1903), p. 189.

⁶⁸⁷ Cf. letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 27 April 1907 (GAA 552/35); cf. *EVB*, 26/3 (1908), p. 83 (*even voldoende*).

⁶⁸⁸ Cf. *EVB*, 26/3 (1908), p. 103.

⁶⁸⁹ Cf. *EVB*, 26/3 (1908), p. 83.

dwindled to fifteen, which he took very personally.⁶⁹⁰ He had more success in his pastoral tasks, assisting and often substituting for the missionary.⁶⁹¹ No hardship or animosity could dampen his enthusiasm.⁶⁹² In August/September 1912, Göba assumed the full responsibility for the church circuit of Sigata, but soon fell ill.⁶⁹³ On 9 November 1912, Göba, the 'beloved and faithful co-worker'⁶⁹⁴, passed away – allegedly to the hour exactly one month after Landwehr.⁶⁹⁵ The result was that all the work on Sigata stopped for some time.

4.5.5.3 A Special *Guru* and Politician

Probably the most flamboyant teacher-preacher ever on the Batu Islands was Nathanael Ziliwu⁶⁹⁶, son of Bötua Geho and Kōba Ziliwu, a wealthy non-Christian chief of Baromado'u on Pulau Tello.⁶⁹⁷ He was born around 1878. According to Reiche⁶⁹⁸, Nathanael had come to the Christian faith through Missionary Kersten. If this is true, it is remarkable, since he must have been only eleven or twelve years old at the time. When Landwehr worked on Pulau Tello during the absence of Frickenschmidt (3 April 1895 - 16 January 1896), he reported about an eighteen-year-old, called Nathanael, who was eager to go to school and church, having an inquisitive mind.⁶⁹⁹

Nathanael realised that the mission offered him and his people the opportunity to develop.⁷⁰⁰ Subsequently, he became involved in church activities. After the son of the *raja* withdrew as assistant-teacher in 1899, Nathanael assumed this position temporarily.⁷⁰¹ He also took the initiative to build a chapel just outside Baromado'u, in the direction of Hilinitaya. Four hundred guilders were donated by a female mission friend in Germany, but one hundred guilders came out of his own pocket.⁷⁰² The consecration of the chapel took place on 1 May 1900. Frickenschmidt sponsored the feast with two pigs and enough rice for both villages (Baromado'u and Hilinitaya).⁷⁰³

Nathanael was granted the opportunity to become a student at Depok, but he withdrew himself in mid-1900, because of the sudden death of his father.⁷⁰⁴ Soon

⁶⁹⁰ Cf. letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 20 October 1906 (GAA 552/35); *EVB*, 26/3 (1908), p. 139.

⁶⁹¹ Cf. letter Paula Landwehr née Simoneit to DLM, Sigata, 6 October 1910 (GAA 552/36). He was an excellent co-worker of both missionaries Kienlein and Landwehr. His sermons were fresh and practical.

⁶⁹² Cf. *EVB*, 26/3 (1908), p. 83.

⁶⁹³ Cf. letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 12 October 1912, 6 November 1912 (GAA 552/35). Göba suffered from Beri-Beri.

⁶⁹⁴ Cf. letter Paula Landwehr née Simoneit to DLM, Padang, 16 August 1912 (GAA 552/36).

⁶⁹⁵ Landwehr died on 9 October 1912, at 6 a.m., cf. Letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 2 December 1912 (GAA 552/35).

⁶⁹⁶ How he could have been baptised while both his parents were still non-Christians is unsure.

⁶⁹⁷ The district of Polele on western Pulau Tello consists of three villages: Hilinitaya, Eho and Baromadou.

⁶⁹⁸ L.H.I. Reiche, 'Een bezoek aan de Batoe-eilanden', part IV, in: *EVB*, 19/4 (1901), p. 119.

⁶⁹⁹ Cf. W.F. Schröder, *De Zending op de Batoe-eilanden*, 1927, p. 27.

⁷⁰⁰ Cf. *EVB*, 19/6 (1901), p. 181.

⁷⁰¹ Cf. *EVB*, 18/1 (1900), p. 12.

⁷⁰² Cf. *EVB*, 17/4 (1899), p. 154; *EVB*, 18/5 (1900), p. 162; *EVB*, 18/2 (1900), p. 36.

⁷⁰³ Cf. *EVB*, 18/5 (1900), p. 163.

⁷⁰⁴ Before dying, Kōba Ziliwu had wanted to be baptised. However, Frickenschmidt had arrived too late, which caused uncertainty in the heart of Nathanael. Bötua Geho, Nathanael's mother, had been

after the burial, he was chosen as his father's successor as village chief. Notwithstanding this chieftainship, he left for Batavia, temporarily delegating his civil duties to a representative and handing over his task as assistant teacher to Siahki, a gifted Tello-Chinese.⁷⁰⁵ In January 1902, Frickenschmidt received good tidings about Nathanael's progress.⁷⁰⁶ Being an excellent student⁷⁰⁷, he graduated in due time and returned home on 27 September 1904.

Nathanael began holding evangelisation services in 'his' chapel on Wednesday evenings. In 1906, Omböila became the first convert as a result of Nathanael's work. Others soon followed.⁷⁰⁸ Nathanael was considered 'equal to even the most excellent of European missionaries'⁷⁰⁹, so that occasionally he filled in for them.⁷¹⁰

A problem came up when Frickenschmidt raised doubts about the *guru's* preaching freely on Sundays (i.e., not using a pre-prepared sermon which had been acknowledged by the missionary). As a Lutheran with strict confessional standards, he wanted to preserve this right solely to the missionary as *pastor loci*. However, when he was on furlough (1905-1906), Nathanael contacted the DLM-board directly, asking for permission to preach on Sundays.⁷¹¹ The board was indignant, considering Frickenschmidt's standpoint to be incompatible with the more lenient view current in Dutch Lutheran circles⁷¹², and issued a direct permission for Nathanael to preach on Sundays.⁷¹³ This decision was implemented against Frickenschmidt's will, and later he blamed Nathanael's lack of subordination on the board's direct mingling. He was of the opinion that the authority of the missionary had to be acknowledged undisputedly by all indigenous helpers.⁷¹⁴ The only compromise offered by the board was that on every fourth Sunday Nathanael and his congregation had to attend the service held by Frickenschmidt.⁷¹⁵

On 25 April 1907, Nathanael married Wuti, granddaughter of Siwabadanö, the 'owner of the golden parasol' and the most powerful chief after the *raja*.⁷¹⁶ The dowry amounted to 1389 guilders⁷¹⁷, a horrendous sum (more than the annual salary of the missionary). This marriage was considered supportive of the progress of the mission, attracting other members of the nobility.

baptised the previous year, cf. *EVV*, 18/2 (1900), pp. 34-35; *EVV*, 18/5 (1900), p. 172; *EVV*, 19/2 (1901), pp. 49-50; *EVV*, 19/4 (1901), p. 119.

⁷⁰⁵ Cf. *EVV*, 19/6 (1901), p. 189; *EVV*, 20/2 (1902), p. 37. Siahki held this position until the end of 1901.

⁷⁰⁶ Cf. *EVV*, 20/2 (1902), p. 37.

⁷⁰⁷ Cf. *EVV*, 20/6 (1903), p. 189.

⁷⁰⁸ Cf. *EVV*, 26/3 (1908), p. 82. In 1907, five young men and Omböila's wife, Sanifi Manaögö, were baptized.

⁷⁰⁹ Cf. *EVV*, 26/3 (1908), p. 103 ('evenaart ... zelfs een uitstekenden Europeeschen zendeling').

⁷¹⁰ Cf. letter H.W.L. Kienlein to DLM, Pulau Tello, 3 June 1905 (GAA 552/31). Landwehr requested to be replaced either by Kienlein or by Nathanael, cf. 'Notulen Hoofdbestuur', Amsterdam, 25 January 1906 (GAA 552/5).

⁷¹¹ Letter Nathanael to DLM, Baroemadooe, 29 March 1906 (GAA 552/40); Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 22 July 1907 (GAA 552/35).

⁷¹² Cf. 'Notulen Hoofdbestuur', Amsterdam, 21 June 1906 (GAA 552/5).

⁷¹³ 'Notulen Hoofdbestuur', Amsterdam, 6 September 1906 (GAA 552/5); cf. letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 2 October 1912 (second letter), GAA 552/35.

⁷¹⁴ Cf. letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 2 October 1912, letter 2 (GAA 552/35).

⁷¹⁵ Cf. letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 2 January 1907 (GAA 552/35).

⁷¹⁶ Cf. *EVV*, 26/3 (1908), p. 82. In his letter to the DLM, Pulau Tello, 24 June 1907, Frickenschmidt gives 24 April as the date. The *adat* ceremony lasted three days, at the end of which the church blessing took place (GAA 552/35).

⁷¹⁷ Cf. letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 24 June 1907 (GAA 552/35).

By 1910, Nathanael's attitude had begun to change.⁷¹⁸ He neglected his schoolwork.⁷¹⁹ Mandija wrote that Nathanael had taken to using misleading 'poems' (*sadjak*) in his teaching, leading the Christian congregation astray.⁷²⁰ His spiritual life declined, while his political activities increased.

In 1915, the Dutch colonial government appointed a district chief or *demang*⁷²¹ as the highest indigenous authority of the Batu Islands, accountable to the Dutch *controleur*. The hereditary ruler, the *raja* (see below), was passed over in favour of the village chief, Nathanael Ziliwu. Though the missionaries considered the former *guru*, now in quite an influential political position, to be an advisor for the mission, he distanced himself more and more from them. One important reason seems to have been that he was secretly supportive of the encroaching Seventh-Day Adventists.⁷²²

In February 1928, Nathanael was accused of adultery and other shameful practices. Since some Christian Dutch officials were living with concubines without being disciplined, it proved to be difficult to discipline an indigenous Christian ruler.⁷²³ But after Nathanael had openly become the enemy of the missionaries, he was, eventually, placed under church discipline.⁷²⁴ In 1928, he was transferred to Gunungsitoli, to face charges on corruption.⁷²⁵ The question remains whether Nathanael Ziliwu, the gifted first Christian politician of the Batu Islands, had failed in the end because he had not submitted himself totally to the demands of the colonial status quo (including the mission), or because he had succumbed to the temptations of power.

4.5.6 Literature

In 1895, Frickenschmidt published 75 biblical stories in the North-Niasan vernacular, which was not appreciated by the Batunese Christians. They would rather have read a book in Malay, which they could understand, than in a Niasan dialect which was not all that familiar to them.⁷²⁶

Frickenschmidt used his second furlough (March 1905 - May 1906) to have his Batunese translations of the Gospel and Epistle pericopes printed. This was sponsored by the Dutch Bible Society (NBG) and the pericopes had already been printed by the time he returned to Pulau Tello on 27 June 1906.⁷²⁷ A few years later,

⁷¹⁸ Cf. letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 12 October 1912 (GAA 552/35). According to Paula Landwehr, the change in Nathanael's attitude had started with his marriage with aristocratic Wuti ('Notulen Hoofdbestuur', Amsterdam, 29 November 1912, GAA 552/7).

⁷¹⁹ Cf. letters Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 24 November 1910, 19 May 1912 (GAA 552/35).

⁷²⁰ 'Chabarnja diseloeroeh Poelau Batu, maka sadjak itoelah sampai sekarang ini iman orang² Christen disini djadi lemah dan tawar. Mereka itoe tidak maloe dan tidak semboenji lagi berboeat dosa', cf. letter Mandija to DLM, Pulau Tello, 7 October 1913 (GAA 552/40).

⁷²¹ Beginning in 1914, the position of *demang* was gradually introduced into West-Sumatra, cf. *ENI* 1 (1917), p. 286.

⁷²² Cf. *EVB*, 47/2 (1929), p. 38; letters Steinhart to DLM, Pulau Tello, 10 October 1928, 19 January 1929 (GAA 522/39).

⁷²³ Cf. letter Steinhart to DLM, Pulau Tello, 3 February 1928 (GAA 552/39).

⁷²⁴ He reportedly incited people against the missionaries, cf. letter Steinhart to DLM, Pulau Tello, 10 October 1928 (GAA 552/39).

⁷²⁵ Cf. *EVB*, 47/2 (1929), p. 38. He had reportedly misused his office in various ways.

⁷²⁶ Cf. W.F. Schröder, *De Zending op de Batoe-eilanden*, 1927, pp. 27-28.

⁷²⁷ *Ibid.* p. 72; letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 25 July 1906 (GAA 552/35). Cf. J.L. Swellengrebel, *In Leijdeckers voetspoor I*, 1974, p. 225.

Frickenschmidt distributed a Batunese hymnal (*Buku Nainö*).⁷²⁸ Two schoolbooks were also printed, which were translations by Nathanael Ziliwu from Malay into the Batunese vernacular.⁷²⁹

4.5.7 Comparison of the Work on Nias and the Batu Islands

In many ways, the work of the DLM on the Batu Islands resembled that of the RM on Nias during these years. But there were also some distinct differences. Some of these can be explained by the particular contexts, but some were also due to the confessional leanings of the individual missionaries.

Both on Nias and on the Batu Islands, the missionaries invested much time in efforts to win the nobility over to Christianity. The corporate character of the societies provided a good possibility that once a chief had converted to Christianity, his subjects would follow suit. Whereas on Nias, the missionaries' success usually depended on the support of converted chiefs, on the Batu Islands, the spread of the Gospel often either succeeded against the will of the paramount chiefs (as in the case of Farono of Sigata), or failed despite his support (as in the cases of Alam Laut in Koto Bulu'aro and Lasondre on Tanah Masa). Quite a unique feature in comparison with Nias was the conspicuous role played by aristocratic women, such as Fija Wanaetu and Lai Hulandro, in spreading Christianity on the Batu Islands.

Although the general pietistic spirituality shared by both moderated the theological distinctions between the Lutheran DLM and the 'United' RM, there nevertheless remained some specific differences. The DLM recruited its missionaries from a Lutheran background and was determined to build a Lutheran church on the Batu Islands. The missionaries on Nias, however, though not following any particular confessional model, came largely from a Reformed background (e.g., the Siegerland), which to a certain extent determined their views concerning the preparation of new converts for the sacraments and also concerning church organisation. Due to an indifference concerning responsible membership common to the Lutheran churches in Germany at that time, for instance, the preparation for holy baptism on the Batu Islands was less intensive than on Nias. Whereas on Nias it had taken almost nine years before the first fruits were baptised, on the Batu Islands it took little more than three years.

The DLM-missionaries were also less seriously focused on matters concerning the development of a church order, church discipline and leadership structures (in 1916 centralized on Pulau Tello) than were the RM-missionaries. While on Nias, various forms of councils and conferences, as well as the ministries of the indigenous pastors (*pandita*), the elders (*satua Niha Keriso*) and the evangelists (*sinenge*) ensured a certain (though still very limited) degree of participation of the Ono Niha in the governance of the congregations and in the propagation of the Gospel, on the Batu Islands, all of these institutions were still underdeveloped or non-existent during this period. Church councils did not come into existence at all, an annual *guru*-conference was not established until as late as 1916 (on Nias in 1898).

On the Batu Islands, the establishment of the financial self-support of the Christian congregations was quite neglected during this period. Although, through

⁷²⁸ Cf. letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 19 August 1915 (GAA 552/35).

⁷²⁹ Cf. W.F. Schröder, *De Zending op de Batoe-eilanden*, 1927, p. 84.

the initiative of Landwehr, a regular collection was introduced in the church services, this did not prove to be a substantial means of income. On the contrary, project-orientated fundraising, especially for church buildings, was favoured by the Christians on the Batu Islands.

The distinctly Lutheran character of Christianity on the Batu Islands was manifested in the interior of the churches, which were decorated with symbols (including a crucifix) and stained glass windows. The altar was situated prominently in the liturgical centre, characteristic of Lutheran churches and quite different from the situation in most churches on Nias, with their more sober, Reformed, interiors.

In addition to education, in which the mission on the Batu Islands cooperated with the colonial government in the same way as did the RM on Nias, medical service was the second instrument of Christianisation. As on Nias, 'Christian medicine' was used on the Batu Islands quite intentionally to discredit and destroy the influence of the primal religion and its traditional medicine. However, though the mission on the Batu Islands had begun almost 25 years later than had the mission on Nias, it began building hospitals sooner than did the latter.

4.6 THE GREAT AWAKENING ON NIAS (1915-1930)

The most powerful and vivid phase in the ecclesiastical history of Nias is the so-called Great Awakening⁷³⁰, a revival movement which spread over the whole island in several 'waves'⁷³¹ from 1915 until 1930.⁷³² It was the time of a victorious, conquering Christianity, voluntarily borne by the Ono Niha themselves, but significantly influenced by the attending political and economic circumstances. The number of Christians more than quadrupled during this period.⁷³³

⁷³⁰ The term 'Awakening' is the translation of the German *Erweckung* (Dutch: *opwekking*), first used by the Pietists of Halle, Germany, in the eighteenth century. Subsequently, 'Great Awakening' was used to refer to the awakening in Northern America in the eighteenth century, cf. F.W. Graf et al., 'Erweckung/Erweckungsbewegungen', in: *RGG*⁴ II (1999), pp. 1490-1499.

⁷³¹ The term 'waves' of awakenings is used, among others, by A. Pieper, *Die Auswirkungen der Erweckung auf Nias*, 1928, p. 3 (*wellenartige Weiterbewegung*) and A. Schneider, *Turia*, 1965, p. 37 (*in verschiedenen Wellen*).

⁷³² Usually, the Great Awakening on Nias (*fangesa dödö sebua*) is dated roughly from 1916 until 1930. Fahede Mendröfa, quoted by W. Gulö (*Benih yang Tumbuh XIII*, 1983, p. 16), divides the awakening into four phases, 1916-1919, 1920-1921, 1922-1924 and 1928-1930, without giving any further specifications. T. Müller, *Die „große Reue“ auf Nias*, 1931, pp. 25-52, also has four phases, but dates and titles them differently, as follows: 1916/17 (*Die große Erweckung*), 1917-1922 (*Die Zeit der „kleinen Dinge“*), 1922/23 (*Die Erweckung im Jahre 1922/23*), 1923-1930 (*Letzte Regungen*).

⁷³³ 1914: 17 795 baptised Christians, 9000 catechumens, 120 congregations;
1922: ca. 52 000 baptised Christians (alternative counting: 49 877), 30 000 catechumens;
1926: 65 000 baptised Christians (alternative counting: 70 000), 23 000 catechumens;
1929/30: ca. 84 000 baptised Christians, ca. 13 300 catechumens, 164 congregations.
These statistics do not include the Batu Islands. Cf. *Toeria*, 2/2 (1915), *Toeria*, 10/4 (1923), *Toeria*, 11/3 (1924); R. Wegner, *Die Erweckungsbewegung auf Nias*, 1924, p. 54; J. Warneck, *Die Volkskirchen auf Sumatra und Nias*, 1927, p. 29; A. Pieper, *Die Auswirkung der Erweckung auf Nias*, 1928, pp. 22-23; A. Schneider, *Turia*, 1965, p. 34; W. Gulö, *Benih yang Tumbuh XIII*, 1983, pp. 16-21.

4.6.1 Awakenings in Protestantism since the Eighteenth Century

Awakening means 'to be woken up' from religious lethargy to active spiritual life.⁷³⁴ As of the first half of the eighteenth century there were a number of awakenings in Christian congregations in England⁷³⁵, Scotland⁷³⁶, Northern America⁷³⁷, The Netherlands⁷³⁸, Switzerland⁷³⁹, Germany⁷⁴⁰, and in missionary areas abroad.⁷⁴¹ They usually came about in pietistic or revivalist settings as a response to both the Protestant Orthodoxy and the Enlightenment.

General characteristics of an awakening are the intense awareness of individual sin and unworthiness before God, the fear of hell and of the loss of the kingdom of heaven, public confession of sin and the experience of salvation in Christ, a public pledge to become a proper Christian, as well as strict social control, excessively long spiritual exercises (praying all night, evangelisations every evening, fasting) and the creation of religious songs and hymns. There are almost always charismatic manifestations, such as visionary dreams, hearing voices, prophecy, and speaking in tongues (*glossolia*). The devotions are often marked by strong expressions of emotionality (crying, screaming, making weird sounds), fainting or trance. Whereas in some cases this results in psychological instability, delusions, fanaticism and insanity (religious craze), the awakening often leads to a deepening of spiritual life and a change in ethical behaviour. Sometimes, as in the case of the Madagascan revival of 1905, it brought about reconciliation between archenemies.⁷⁴²

⁷³⁴ There have been revival movements in Islam as well, such as the revival under Imam Bonjol (1821-1838) in Minangkabau, West Sumatra. This Wahhabite movement, called Paderi (*Pidari*), was opposed to the traditional Minangkabau rulers, who collaborated with the Dutch. The Paderi also attacked the Bataklands and killed the Priest-King, Sisingamangaraja X.

⁷³⁵ I.e., the rise of Methodism (John and Charles Wesley, George Whitefield) as an awakening in the Anglican Church in the eighteenth century.

⁷³⁶ I.e., Tabernacles Movement (Robert and James A. Haldane) and the Evangelical Alliance (Thomas Chalmers).

⁷³⁷ I.e., the Great Awakening from the 1730s until the 1750s. The Second Great Awakening in Northern America started in the 1790s and reached well into the nineteenth century (cf. C.E. Hambrick-Stowe, 'Erweckungsbewegungen in Nordamerika', in: *RGG*⁴ II (1999), pp. 1495-1498).

⁷³⁸ I.e., the Nijkerk Movement (*Nijkerksche beweging*), which first began in 1745 in Amsterdam and, as of 1749, continued in Nijkerk as a result of the preaching of Gerardus Kuypers (cf. H. Kluin, *De Opwekkings-Beweging op Nias*, 1927, pp. 36-38). The awakenings in England and Switzerland had great influence on the founders of the Dutch Missionary Society (cf. J. Boneschansker, *Het Nederlandsch Zendeling Genootschap in zijn eerste periode*, 1987, pp. 185-187), and other famous personalities of the Dutch Reveil, such as Isaïc da Costa, Abraham Cappadose, and Guillaume Groen van Prinsterer.

⁷³⁹ I.e., the circles of the *Deutsche Christentumsgesellschaft* in Basel, founded in 1780.

⁷⁴⁰ Cf. Ch. 3.2.1.

⁷⁴¹ I.e., on the Samoan Islands (1840), Fiji (1845-1846, 1854), New Hebrides / Vanuatu (around 1850) and Madagascar (1869, 1905, etc.). In Indonesia there were smaller awakenings in Northern Java (Semarang and Salatiga) in the nineteenth century. In the twentieth century, there were awakenings in Timor in 1921, 1943 and in the 1960s, cf. Th. van den End and J. Weitjens, *Ragi Carita II*, 2002, pp. 110-111, 115-116. By far the most well-known awakening in Indonesia took place on Nias. (cf. Th. Müller-Krüger, *Der Protestantismus in Indonesien*, 1968, pp. 130-131, 214-215, 279-284).

⁷⁴² Cf. H. Kluin, *De Opwekkings-Beweging op Nias*, 1927, p. 41.

4.6.2 Outbreak and Spread of the Great Awakening on Nias

The Great Awakening on Nias, or 'the great repentance' (*fangesa dödö sebua*)⁷⁴³, was not only a revival within Christianity, but also a campaign of a rapidly growing Christian minority in their efforts to evangelise the vast majority of adherents of the primal religion.⁷⁴⁴ The symptoms were similar to the general characteristics mentioned above. Additional unique phenomena can be explained largely by socio-political circumstances and cultural factors. One fundamental experience, often mentioned in the reports of the missionaries, is existential community fear⁷⁴⁵, which was a matter of the collective, rather than the individual conscience, and therefore led to changes in the communal identity.

The first reference to an 'awakening', which was said to have happened in Sihareö and Fadoro as early as 1881, was made by Johann W. Thomas.⁷⁴⁶ But this was either an isolated incidence, or perhaps an overenthusiastic interpretation on the part of the missionary, who was speaking to the annual festival of the RM in Barmen.

The actual movement of the *fangesa dödö sebua* began at the end of 1915 in Helefanikha, a branch congregation of Humene. Missionary Otto Rudersdorf⁷⁴⁷ was concerned about the lack of an awareness of sin⁷⁴⁸ among the members of his congregations, especially in their preparation for the Lord's Supper.⁷⁴⁹ He therefore held special services during the seven weeks before Christmas in 1915, both in the church on Sunday afternoons and in the branch congregations on weekdays. These meetings were frequented by an increasing number of Niasan Christians. On one of these occasions, a Niasan assistant teacher by the name of Filemo⁷⁵⁰ experienced an unusual awareness of his sins and subsequently a strong conviction that his sins had been forgiven by the crucified Christ. This changed his life convincingly, affecting others.⁷⁵¹

The special services were continued in February 1916. On Friday evenings, there were, in addition, Bible-study groups at the mission station. In March and April of the same year, there were numerous conversions in Humene. Through the preaching of born-again *sinenge* and some church elders, the awakening rapidly spread to other villages in the vicinity. At the seminary in Ombölata, there was some

⁷⁴³ This is a unique term for an awakening. It is not certain whether it originates from Christian Ono Niha or from the missionaries. Cf. Felix Meier-Hedde, *Die „Große Reue“ auf Nias*, 2003, pp. 13-14.

⁷⁴⁴ Cf. *A Dictionary of Asian Christianity*, 2001, pp. 695-696, where five particular revivals in Indonesian Christianity are mentioned, including the Niasan awakening. Cf. W.L. Steinhart, 'Missionaris Dr. Keyzer over de opwekking op Nias', in: *De Opwekker*, 78/2, 1933.

⁷⁴⁵ The missionaries observed a fundamental 'fear of God', a sudden frightening of the conscience, a burdened conscience (*Gewissensforderung; Gewissensurteil*), and a crisis of conscience (*Gewissensnot*). This took place within the community setting, predominantly in larger assemblies (R. Wegner, *Die Erweckungsbewegung auf Nias*, 1924, pp. 12-14; E. Fries, 'Die Erweckungsbewegung in Nias', in *BRM*, 1931, p. 73.

⁷⁴⁶ *BRM*, 1888, p. 275.

⁷⁴⁷ Otto Rudersdorf (9 September 1869 Haiger – 29 May 1952 Kaiserswerth) originated from the Siegerland. He served in Lahusa (1900-1901), Humene (1901-1919) and Hilimaziaya (1930-1933).

⁷⁴⁸ Cf. H. Kluin, *De Opwekkings-Beweging*, 1927, pp. 26, 29-30 (*zondebesef*).

⁷⁴⁹ Rudersdorf demanded that his listeners practice introspection (*Selbstüberprüfung*) and even threatened them with expulsion from the Lord's Supper, should they not repent and change their lives, cf. W. Oehler, *Die große Reue*, 1926, p. 22.

⁷⁵⁰ According to A. Bonn, *Die Sonne geht auf über unseren Bergen*, 1940, p.42, the name was Filimöñö.

⁷⁵¹ Cf. W. Gulö, *Benih yang Tumbuh XIII*, 1983, pp. 14-15.

scepticism. This changed after Niasan seminarians had visited Humene and had personally been moved by the awakening. They henceforth joined in as agents of the awakening.⁷⁵²

From Humene the awakening spread south-eastwards to Sogae'adu and westwards to Sifaoro'asi and as far as the Hinako Islands. In the absence of missionaries, the awakening in Sogae'adu assumed an eschatological character. The doomsday atmosphere caused some to destroy their property and others to commit suicide. Two women stood out as charismatic leaders: one as a prophetess and another as the incarnation of the Holy Spirit.⁷⁵³

Eventually, the enthusiasts of Sogae'adu carried the awakening westwards to the mission station Sifaoro'asi, wanting to convert the German Missionary Wilhelm Skubinna⁷⁵⁴ there. In Holi, one of the branch congregations of Sifaoro'asi, the awakening took on tumultuous and violent dimensions. Skubinna managed to suppress the movement, declaring a number of its adherents as being mentally ill and putting them in hospital and sending one of its leaders, the 'pseudo-Christ', to Missionary Fries in Ombölata. On the following Sunday, the enthusiasts had to appear before the congregation in the church of Sifaoro'asi, confessing their heresy and their spiritual arrogance.⁷⁵⁵ Henceforth, the Ono Niha of Sifaoro'asi held themselves aloof from the awakening.

A similarly repressive attitude towards the enthusiasts operating in Lölöwua⁷⁵⁶ was taken by Ludwig Borutta.⁷⁵⁷ A *guru* from the mission school, who followed a prophetess from Humene who was evangelising along with a large group of young women in this area, was threatened by the missionary with expulsion from his teaching post and subsequent forced labour (*rodi*).⁷⁵⁸ This not only intimidated the *guru*, but also hampered the spread of the awakening in this area.

By 1917 the initial élan of the movement had calmed down a bit; but it did not stop. It moved beyond Humene and Ombölata to Gunungsitoli, where first signs were registered in 1918, and reached its peak a few months later in several prayer groups (*sekola wangandrö*). *Pandita* Josefo, who served in Gunungsitoli at the time, was at first surprised (*ahölihöli dödö*), but then judged these outbursts of enthusiasm

⁷⁵² Though the first Niasan minister (Sitefano) had been ordained in 1906, the first two-year's course in advanced theology as preparation for the ministry did not begin until 1914. In 1916, four graduates from this course were ordained as *pandita*. They were Filemo I. Harefa, Kolingö Lase, Josefo Lawölö and Faogöli Lase. In Lölöwua, Missionary Paul von Erlen trained specially chosen church elders in two-month courses to become teacher-preachers (*sinenge*). The first *sinenge* were installed in 1914.

⁷⁵³ Cf. R. Wegner, *Die Erweckungsbewegung auf Nias*, 1924, pp. 26-27.

⁷⁵⁴ Wilhelm Skubinna (1 Februar 1885 Düsseldorf – 10 October 1965 Gummersbach). In Sifaoro'asi until 1920 (RMG 446).

⁷⁵⁵ Cf. R. Wegner, *Die Erweckungsbewegung auf Nias*, 1924, p.27.

⁷⁵⁶ About seventeen kilometres southwest of Gunungsitoli in the interior; the event occurred in Gada, a village in this area.

⁷⁵⁷ Ludwig Borutta (7 September 1879 Georgenthal – 1 August 1959 Detmold). Before entering seminary in 1901, he had worked as a clerk. From 1907-1910, he was missionary in Bawalia, then in Hilisimaetanö and Lölöwua (until 1919). After his furlough, he worked for the DLM on the Batu Islands (1922-1924), then as a clerk in Padang. From 1926-1932 he returned to Nias as missionary of Lölöwua and Sogae'adu (RMG 392).

⁷⁵⁸ Cf. R. Wegner, *Die Erweckungsbewegung auf Nias*, 1924, p. 29 ('er könne keine Minute länger mehr in der Arbeit bleiben, überhaupt nicht mehr Lehrer sein; es sei für ihn nur gut, wenn er wieder Rodidienste (Regierungswegearbeit) täte. Da gewann er doch wieder Teilnahme für das irdische und kehrte aus den himmlischen Regionen zurück').

to be the work of the Holy Ghost.⁷⁵⁹ Around this time (1917-1918), the Great Awakening also reached Hilimaziaya in the north⁷⁶⁰, where the ground had already been prepared some years before by a local 'penitence movement'.⁷⁶¹ Even in South Nias there were numerous conversions in Sa'ua⁷⁶² and Hilisimaetanö.⁷⁶³

In 1922 the Great Awakening flared up again in full force, this time beginning in Gunungsitoli. It strengthened Christianity in Hilimaziaya and reached out as far north as Lahewa. Sifaoro'asi and Lölöwua also succumbed to the strength of the awakening. Many who had been suspicious in 1916, were now moved by it.⁷⁶⁴ This time the constructive influence of the *pandita* was felt, in addition to the continuing strong witness of the *sinenge* and some women.⁷⁶⁵

Unfortunately, 1922 was a very troublesome year for the people of southern Nias, including the missionaries. An epidemic claimed many lives.⁷⁶⁶ But this hardship was not the main obstacle hampering the spread of the awakening in some areas and causing a number of villages to return to the primal religion or to fall into religious indifference.⁷⁶⁷ A more serious obstacle was the uncompromising attitude of certain missionaries, who rejected the *adat*.

The case of Heinrich Rabeneck⁷⁶⁸ and Barani Dakhi, paramount chief of Hilisimaetanö, can illustrate how such an attitude actually stalled the dynamics caused by the Great Awakening. Missionary Rabeneck was not satisfied that the Ono Niha had abandoned merely the primal religion. He insisted that they abandon ancient custom as well. Barani, who was baptised but wished to maintain the *adat* for the sake of keeping the community stable, took a second wife. For this reason, he was excommunicated by Rabeneck in 1921. Consequently, many other chiefs also distanced themselves from Christianity. Only after Barani had confessed sin and been received back in 1928 was the work of the mission in Hilisimaetanö again able to make good progress.⁷⁶⁹

In 1923, some *sinenge*, inspired by the Great Awakening, reached Börö Nadu Sifalagö Gomo, an ancient centre of the primal religion in southern Nias.⁷⁷⁰ After

⁷⁵⁹ Cf. *Toeria*, 6/10 (1919), the first official mention of the Great Awakening in Gunungsitoli. In 1920, Momeyer reports a revival in Hiliduho, effecting both Christians and 'heathen' (*BRM*, 1920, pp. 61-62).

⁷⁶⁰ Cf. *Toeria*, 8/11 (1921); the first village in Hilimaziaya to be affected by the Great Awakening – through the activities of teacher-preachers – was Lawina in 1918.

⁷⁶¹ This had been a unique penitence movement (*Bußbewegung*), which had begun in 1913, cf. *BRM*, 1936, p. 17.

⁷⁶² Missionary Sartor reported at the end of 1919 that the Great Awakening had reached all branch congregations of his area up to and including Teluk Dalam. A significant role had been played by a *sinenge* from Bo'usö. There was a strong but incidental awakening in Hiligehe. In Hilisatörö the primal religion was wiped out completely and all the inhabitants began attending church (*ein wahrer Gottesstaat*), cf. E. Sartor, 'Jahresbericht 1919', RMG 1.872. Edmund Sartor (15 April 1883 Wahlbach/Siegen – 26 June 1941 Wahlbach).

⁷⁶³ In 1919, Lück in Hilisimaetanö had to go on sick leave to Sumatra. Sartor helped out. He asked the *guru* and *sinenge* of Hilisimaetanö to come over to Sa'ua for the preparation of sermons, etc. Here they came under the influence of the Great Awakening (cf. Edmund Sartor, 'Jahresbericht 1919', RMG 1.872).

⁷⁶⁴ Cf. H. Kluin, *De Opwekkings-Beweging*, 1927, p. 61.

⁷⁶⁵ Cf. R. Wegner, *Die Erweckungsbewegung auf Nias*, 1924, pp. 49-53.

⁷⁶⁶ Cf. E. Sartor, 'Stationsbericht von Sa'oea über die zweite Hälfte von 1922' (RMG 1.872).

⁷⁶⁷ Cf. R. Wegner, *Die Erweckungsbewegung auf Nias*, 1924, p. 35.

⁷⁶⁸ H. Rabeneck (26 June 1875 Hiddenhausen – 14 August 1939 Oberbeck / Löhne). Cf. U. Rottschäfer, *Heinrich Rabeneck*, 1989.

⁷⁶⁹ Cf. W.R. Schmidt, *Das unbeendete Gespräch*, 1967, pp. 34-37.

⁷⁷⁰ In 1927, Missionary Johannes Nol baptized the 145 first fruits and in 1929 the remaining 119

1925, however, the strength of the Great Awakening decreased continuously until it had disappeared by 1930. But by then, Christianity had become the strongest religion and the primal religion had almost disappeared from public life.

4.6.3 Aftermath of the Great Awakening on Nias

The Great Awakening faded away, like first love. A point of mature saturation had been reached. Apart from the mainstream, however, the 1930s also brought some remarkable outbursts of religious enthusiasm, especially in Sogae'adu. These were incidental and limited in character. While phenomena such as trance, glossolalia (*li bö'ö*) and faith healing, characteristic during the Great Awakening, were also prominent in these later minor awakenings, they were now practiced by so-called Masters of Awakening (*tuka fangesa dödö*).⁷⁷¹ According to the synod of the BNKP, these minor awakenings, including the so-called 'jumping awakenings' (*fangesa solaya*) in the 1940s and 1950s (see below), were different in nature to the Great Awakening, since they included a resurgence of pre-Christian magic (*ilmu sihir*) and resulted in schisms.⁷⁷²

4.6.4 Causes of the Niasan Awakening

A great deal has been written about the causes of the Great Awakening.⁷⁷³ Although it has been stated time and time again that the Awakening was the work of the Holy Spirit, it also needs to be stated that a number of psychological, socio-economic and ecclesiastical factors determined the conditions in which this awakening made its appearance and developed. Three general factors and three more ecclesiastical ones must be distinguished.

4.6.4.1 General Factors

Psychological Strains

In the opinion of Theodor Müller-Krüger⁷⁷⁴, the psychological disposition of the Ono Niha was the prime factor causing the awakening, i.e., the importance of

inhabitants of this place of descent of the ancestor Hija; cf. M. Thomsen, 'Die Sage vom Stammvater Hija: Ein Gesang aus Mittelnias', in: *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, 104/2 (1979), p. 210.

⁷⁷¹ Cf. T. Müller-Krüger, *Der Protestantismus in Indonesien*, 1968, p. 283 (*Erweckungsmeister*).

⁷⁷² Cf. Th. Müller-Krüger, 'Neue Erweckungsbewegungen in der Nias- und Batakirche', in: *EMZ* (1950), pp. 161-170; cf. Ch. 5.8.3 and Ch. 6.2.1.3.

⁷⁷³ Cf. Th. Müller, *Die „große Reue“ auf Nias*, 1931. He explicitly mentions three causes: 1. the unconscious psychological; 2. the witness of other Christians; 3. the effect of missionary preaching. No sociological explanation is given. R. Wegner, *Die Erweckungsbewegung auf Nias*, 1924, pp. 8-9, emphasises the role of the Niasan preachers, especially the *pandita Niha*, the pastoral care of the missionaries, the jubilee in 1915 and the psychology of the Ono Niha. A. Schneider, *Turia*, 1965, pp. 35-42, quotes Niasan *Ephorus* Fahede Mendröfa, who made a study of the awakenings after 1915 and those after 1942. W. Gulö, *Benih yang Tumbuh XIII*, 1983, pp. 13-18 also takes his data from Fahede Mendröfa, ('Waöwaö Halöwö Fangombacha Turia Somuso Dödö ba Danö Niha').

⁷⁷⁴ Th. Müller, *Die „große Reue“ auf Nias*, pp. 131-134 ('Die auslösenden Kräfte'); in the 1970s, Wolfgang M. Pfeiffer, a Medical Psychologist from the University of Westphalia, Münster, did research on the psychological disposition of the Ono Niha. He argued that the Great Awakening was an emancipation from the culture of fear, caused by the ridged authoritarian structures of the *adat*. Pfeiffer, however, did not take into consideration the socio-political strain caused by Colonialism and Mission, cf. W.M. Pfeiffer, 'Konflikte, psychoreaktive und psychosomatische Störungen in einer traditionsbestimmten Kultur (Nias/Indonesien)', 1974, pp. 24-30 (manuscript, archive RMG).

dreams, visions and trance in the primal religion, combined with an individual awakening of conscience, determined the outbreaks of enthusiasm and the willingness to change. However, since this analysis ignores politico-economic factors, it is far too limited and superficial.

Psychological strains there were, indeed, both communally and individually. But it was caused by intense social hardship and a lack of orientation in a rapidly changing situation. Due to the subjugation of the whole region under colonial rule, pass laws, various kinds of taxation, forced labour (*rodi*)⁷⁷⁵, changes in tribal government, resettlement of whole villages, and the economic instability caused by World War I (drop in the prices for cash crops), there was a nearly total collapse of the social order. Intense frustration needed an outlet. Venting it through political parties with a revolutionary character was not an option for Niasan Christians during this period⁷⁷⁶, so they poured their frustration into religious enthusiasm.

The missionaries, too, suffered an increase of psychological stress caused by war news from Germany and the economic decline. The connections between Barmen and Nias were almost completely severed. There was no fresh missionary personnel⁷⁷⁷; there were no prospects of furlough and hardly any wages. This affected the tone and emphasis of the preaching and explains the somewhat gloomy stress on sin, sanctification and eschatology. There is a somewhat morbid romanticism of sin in the reports of the missionaries. Kluin⁷⁷⁸ explains their mood in terms of a dissatisfaction with the complacency of nominal Christianity in the second or third generation of Ono Niha. Be that as it may, the overall severe psychological strain provided fertile ground for a charismatic awakening.

Socio-political Strains

As of 1908 the Dutch colonial administration had control over the whole of Nias, including the South.⁷⁷⁹ By 1915 the impact of this occupation was felt increasingly in everyday life.⁷⁸⁰ A system of educated, non-hereditary district officials was introduced into Tapanuli, including Nias, in 1916.⁷⁸¹ This was a significant challenge to the position of the traditional chiefs.⁷⁸² The *demang* and assistant-*demang*, as well as other chiefs acknowledged by the government, were usually

⁷⁷⁵ Men had to do fifty-two days of communal labour per year. The Mission defended the *rodi* system, cf. *Toeria*, 4/4 (1917).

⁷⁷⁶ Cf. H. Fischer, 'Die sozialpolitische Volksbewegung in Niederländisch Indien und ihr Einfluss auf unsere niassischen Christen', paper held during the Conference of Missionaries, Ombölatá 19-25 July 1921 ('Konferenzreferate I', 1900-1923, RMG 2.784). *Sarikat Islam* was popular among the Muslims, but among Niasan Christians only the moderate *Insulinde* seems to have had any following during this period.

⁷⁷⁷ In 1915 there were fifteen RM-missionaries on Nias and by 1920 only twelve.

⁷⁷⁸ Cf. H. Kluin, *De Opwekkings-Beweging*, 1927, pp. 22-24.

⁷⁷⁹ The 'turning point' (*keerpunt*) in the history of Nias was 29 January 1908, when the *controleur* of Nias was attacked at the Upper Soesoewa Valley when he wanted to pass through this area. The Dutch reacted with military force. They subsequently entered the interior of Nias and conquered the entire island that same year, cf. Cf. *ENI* 3 (1919), p. 30.

⁷⁸⁰ Cf. Wilhelm Oehler, *Die große Reue*, 1926, p. 17, mentions the helplessness the Ono Niha experienced in the face of the colonial subjugation ('Die Leute fühlten sich hilflos den Forderungen der Regierung gegenüber').

⁷⁸¹ One to two years later than in West Sumatra, including the Batu Islands, cf. *ENI* 1 (1917), p. 286. Cf. Ch. 2.7.3 and Ch. 4.5.5.3.

⁷⁸² Cf. J.R. Hutauruk, *Die Batakirche vor ihrer Unabhängigkeit*, 1980, pp.91-92; the same author, *Kemandirian Gereja*, 1992, pp. 26-29. Hutauruk analyses the effect of the *demang*-system on the status and influence of traditional chiefs in the Bataklands.

chosen from among noblemen educated in mission schools and adhering to Christianity. Conversely, Christian elders, often chosen from among the chiefs, were exempted from *rodi*-labour.⁷⁸³

According to Maren Fuhrmann⁷⁸⁴, the prospect of being acknowledged by the colonial government was a reason for many chiefs to become Christians. Opting for a new role as 'Christian chief' was a way to maintain some of their traditional power. Since they brought along all of their communities, this was indeed a major factor in mass conversion after 1915.

Christian chiefs abolished traditional ceremonies, such as *fondrakö*.⁷⁸⁵ This was a very serious blow to their absolute authority as lawgivers. In the eyes of the Ono Niha, the new supreme masters were the Europeans. The missionary used to be addressed as lord (*tua*) and his wife, or the white deaconesses, as grandmother (*gawe*). Even paramount chiefs called themselves 'children' of the missionary.⁷⁸⁶ They submitted themselves to the leaders of the new order (*huku si bohou*). A common gesture during the awakening was that 'sinners' threw themselves onto the ground at the feet of the missionaries.⁷⁸⁷ If surrender to the new order was inevitable, it seemed more honourable to surrender to the missionary than to the government official. Therefore, the awakening can be seen as the capitulation of a subjugated community to the new power structures, both religious and civil.

Communal Ties

Since the different villages (*banua*) and clans (*mado*) throughout Nias are related by family ties, the next of kin became the most effective bearers of the Christian message. Various *adat*-feasts and ceremonies provided ample opportunity for the newly inspired Christians to bear the message to the most remote places. This was facilitated by the new roads and bridges, built by means of forced labour (*rodi*), often in cooperation with the missionaries.⁷⁸⁸

Concerning the *banua*, the innovations in village- and regional government, the removal of villages from the hills to the roads for economic reasons, and the subsequent new infra-structure, initiated by the colonial authorities also upset the Niasan worldview, in which every major village is not only an independent republic, but in fact signifies an autarchic cosmos.

⁷⁸³ Cf. *BRM*, 1914, pp. 48-51.

⁷⁸⁴ Cf. Maren Fuhrmann, *Der historisch-ethnographische Aussagewert deutschsprachiger Missionsliteratur über die Batak auf Sumatra und die indigene Bevölkerung von Nias*, 1989, pp. 14, 61.

⁷⁸⁵ Cf. Ch. 2.4.3.1; cf. W. Gulö, *Benih yang Tumbuh XIII*, 1983, pp. 27-28.

⁷⁸⁶ Cf. Maria Fischdick, *Gottes Walten auf der Insel Nias*, 1935, p. 4

⁷⁸⁷ *Ibid.* p. 2 ('Es war ganz ergreifend, wenn die Leute tief gebeugt kamen und nichts als Sünde und Verderben vor sich sahen. Aber es war auch eine wunderbare Segenszeit. Wie manche Frau hat ein, zwei Stunden vor mir auf dem Boden gelegen und mit Tränen und Schluchzen ihre Sünden bekannt!').

⁷⁸⁸ Cf. R. Wegner, *Die Erweckungsbewegung auf Nias*, 1924, p. 9; W. Gulö, *Benih yang Tumbuh XIII*, 1983, pp. 15-16.

4.6.4.2 Ecclesiastical Factors

The Jubilee as Mass Rally

Fries⁷⁸⁹ sees the outbreak in close relation to the celebrations for the fiftieth anniversary of the mission in Gunungsitoli on 27 September 1915. The missionaries and indigenous co-workers had used this mass celebration as an opportunity for intense exhortatory preaching ('hellfire-and-brimstone').

The jubilee brought hundreds of leaders (elders and chiefs) from the Christian congregations together at the central celebration in Gunungsitoli.⁷⁹⁰ It was therefore seen as a Christian version of the 'grand feast' (*owasa*).⁷⁹¹ Special services were also held in all of the congregations all over Nias. The experience of unity at the mass gatherings, the challenge to self-examination (questioning everything old as being non-Christian and as the cause of all suffering), and the vision of a new, better age dawning with the rise of Christianity, created the atmosphere which sparked off the awakening. The missionaries, at first flabbergasted, soon tried to subdue the outbreaks of enthusiasm, to prevent their assuming anarchic or revolutionary forms.

Religious Vacuum

It cannot be denied that both the colonial government and the missionaries had contributed to the disintegration of the Niasan culture.⁷⁹² Dieter Becker⁷⁹³ convincingly argues that the Ono Niha experienced a 'religious vacuum' as a result of the destruction of the core of the primal religion. This made them to seek a new religious frame of reference, which they found in Christianity. The Great Awakening functioned as a substitute for the lost 'feast of reconciliation' (*börö nadu*)⁷⁹⁴, formerly celebrated every seven or fourteen years, but in 1908 prohibited by the colonial government. The year 1915 was thus about the time a 'feast of reconciliation' was due to be celebrated.

The Ono Niha expressed their aspiration through the Christian alternative: Jesus Christ as the substitute for the sacred pig, which was formerly killed during the reconciliation ceremony as the atonement for the sins of the community. Another substitute was the Christmas tree, which, to a certain extent, replaced the sacred tree (*fösi; tora'a*) of the primal religion.⁷⁹⁵

It was important to the Ono Niha that the missionaries permitted the consumption of pork at regular church feasts and on special occasions. Therefore, Christian feasts at Christmas, around birth, baptism, confirmation, marriage and funerals, as well as during jubilee-celebrations soon replaced all the festivals of the primal religion.⁷⁹⁶

⁷⁸⁹ Cf. *BRM*, 1916, pp. 250-251; E. Fries, 'Die Erweckungsbewegung in Nias', in *BRM*, 1931/3-4, pp. 70, 72-73.

⁷⁹⁰ For the preparations for and the program of the anniversary, cf. RMG 2.799.

⁷⁹¹ Cf. *Toeria*, 2/2 (1915).

⁷⁹² Cf. W. Marschall, *Der Berg des Herrn der Erde*, 1976, pp. 195-202.

⁷⁹³ D. Becker, '„Sie werfen Satans Bande und ihre Götzen fort?“, in: R. Riess (ed.), *Abschied von der Schuld?*, 1996, pp. 196-200.

⁷⁹⁴ Cf. Ch. 2.4.3.2.

⁷⁹⁵ Cf. W.L. Steinhart, 'De Evangelie-prediker en zijn houding ten opzichte van de Inheemsche cultuur', in: *De Opwekker* 82/4 (1937), p. 158 n. 1.

⁷⁹⁶ Cf. Arlette Ziegler, 'Festive Space, Territories and Feasts in the South of Nias', in: *Nias Tribal Treasures*, 1990, pp. 79-104. Cf. Ch. 6.4.1 until Ch. 6.4.4.4.

The religious vacuum found compensation in the new faith. But there remained some open issues for which no parallel was to be found in westernised Christianity. This caused a certain dualism between Christianity and *adat*, while remnants of the primal religion 'germinated' again and remained alive as an undercurrent. This would remain fertile ground for sectarianism and occasional resurgences of the pre-Christian traditional identity.

Contextualization of the Message

'But he did not know that the LORD had left him' (Judges 16:20c). This verse from the story of Samson, the Judge of Israel, who lost his extraordinary strength in the treacherous arms of his beloved Delilah, became one of the central texts of the Great Awakening on Nias.⁷⁹⁷ This Biblical text impressed the Ono Niha in an unusual way. Though the missionaries of the time liked to explain this in terms of 'a new awareness of sin' or 'fear of God', as a first step towards a living faith, the contextual cultural background may not be overlooked. Three essential aspects of the *adat*, including the primal religion, come to the fore:

1. The story touches the prime concern of the primal religion, which is the attainment of glory (*lakhömi*) through strength (*fa'abölö*).
2. The failure of Samson, the holy man of God, was caused by unauthorized sexual intercourse. Adultery is punishable by death by the *adat*.
3. The biblical story has some similarities with an old mythological tale of the Ono Niha: 'Laowömaru'.⁷⁹⁸ Laowömaru was a giant of extraordinary strength who, with his hair, pulled the island of Nias towards Sumatra, but was not able to join the two islands together.

Some missionaries had adapted their sermons to the ancient mythology of the Ono Niha, which had an astonishing effect on the listeners.⁷⁹⁹ The Niasan preachers usually hesitated to quote directly from the primal religion, but they nevertheless gave an interpretation and application of the Gospel which was understood by the common people. The use of the aphorism (*amaedola*), the pearl of traditional Ono Niha rhetoric, was a mark of their sermons. Christianity was presented as the new, progressive law (*huku si bohou*), replacing the old, backward law (*huku föna*) of 'heathendom'. More intuitively than intellectually, they managed to strike a cord in the souls of their countrymen by referring to paradigms familiar to the primal religion. This contextualization of the biblical message was both an underlying stimulus and a strength of the Great Awakening.

4.6.5 Lasting Impact of the Great Awakening

The lasting value of the Great Awakening, or the so-called 'fruits of the awakening', have been discussed controversially by Müller-Krüger and others.⁸⁰⁰ However, their

⁷⁹⁷ Cf. Maria Fischdick, *Gottes Walten auf der Insel Nias*, 1935, (cf. Foreword).

⁷⁹⁸ Cf. H. Sundermann, 'Laowömaroe', in: A. Pieper (ed.), *Realienboek*, 1928, pp. 28-30.

⁷⁹⁹ Cf. W.L. Steinhart, 'De Evangelie-prediker en zijn houding ten opzichte van de Inheemsche cultuur', in: *De Opwekker* 82/4 (1937), pp. 147-160. Cf. Ch. 6.2.2.1.

⁸⁰⁰ Cf. T. Müller-Krüger, *Der Protestantismus in Indonesien*, 1968, pp. 281-282 is of the opinion that the awakening did not bring about any positive changes, since the Church had not reached lasting financial self-support and the customary law, especially concerning the dowry, had not been

main focus is on the spiritual life of the Ono Niha and the growth of Christianity, rather than on society and culture. They deal with the latter only in relation to the Christian ideals of the missionaries. In the following, we shall attempt to focus more on the significance of the Great Awakening for the transformation of Niasan culture and society at large during this period.

4.6.5.1 Decline of Primal Religion

The curb on headhunting and the prohibition of the 'feast of reconciliation' (*börö nadu*) by the colonial government, the chopping down of the sacred tree (*fösi*) by Missionary Bieger⁸⁰¹, as well as various governmental prohibitions and missionary crusades against everything 'heathen', had been external factors suffocating the primal religion and causing a religious vacuum (see above). The Great Awakening had become the turning point in the hearts of the majority of Ono Niha, so that Christians increasingly scorned the primal religion and called for a radical conversion to Christianity. It became customary for catechumens to make a general confession, renouncing all darkness of the heart (*fa'ogömigömi dödö*), and surrendering all kinds of *adu*, amulets, traditional medicine, poison, and instruments of so-called witchcraft to the minister before confirmation. Later, however, they would often secretly return to certain 'dark practices'.

One token of the old way of life, the filing of teeth (*fangöhözi*), disappeared completely. But another, incision of the male genitals (*famoto*), managed to survive in many regions, having an undefined significance.⁸⁰² Other remnants of the primal religion, such as revelations, dreams, mediation (trance-medium), representation (*adu zatua*), holistic healing, fortune-telling (reading of intestines), the invocation and exorcism of spirits, submerged from public life and were given the stigma of being old-fashioned, evil and subversive. But clandestinely, it remained part of everyday life, up to and including the present. The term 'heathendom' was gradually replaced by 'black magic' (*elemu*).

The vacuum left by the destruction of the primal religion was filled with a new spiritual reality, called Christianity. However, since the new religion did not offer substitutes for each and everything formerly provided by the primal religion (e.g., dream interpretation, dealing with the spirits – both good and evil ones – and obtaining invulnerability), the latter soon clandestinely germinated again.

The new paradigm of fragmentising reality into different, strictly separated realms, gradually replaced the holistic, traditional way of thinking. Though this was an unavoidable change towards modernity, it undermined the integrity of primal religion.

changed. A whole sequence of consequences for the spiritual life of the Ono Niha is given by A. Pieper, himself a missionary on Nias during the Great Awakening, in: *Die Auswirkung der Erweckung auf Nias*, 1928, pp. 6-22.

⁸⁰¹ Cf. J.N. Bieger, *Erlebnisse eines Missionars in 12jähriger Arbeit auf Nias und Sumatra*, vol. I, 1916, pp. 39-48; by the same author, 'Eine Donnars-Eiche auf Nias', in: *Barmer Missionsblatt* 83/10 (1908), pp. 76-77. Note that this was only one of a number of sacred *fösi*-trees on Nias at that time.

⁸⁰² Cf. Ch. 2.5.2.2; Ch. 6.4.2. Pandita Kolingö compared it with circumcision in Judaism, where it is the sign of the covenant. This was fulfilled in the New Testament in Jesus Christ. The new sign is holy baptism. Only the circumcision of the heart is demanded of a Christian (1 Cor 7:19), cf. *Toeria*, 6/4 (1919). For recent thinking about Israel-theology on Nias, cf. J. van Slageren, *Missiologie in Joods perspectief. De plaats van Israël in de zending*, 1996, pp. 88-90.

4.6.5.2 Birth of an Eschatological Awareness

A fundamental impact of the Great Awakening was the birth of an awareness among the Ono Niha that the destiny of this world, and of every individual soul, is prepared by God at the beginning of time. Keeping God's commandments, or ignoring them, will determine whether a person will enter heaven or hell. Christian faith thus persuaded the Ono Niha to move from a cyclical view of time and history, inherent to primal religion with its golden era in the past (Teteholi Ana'a), to a linear view, with the golden era in the future (*sorugo*).

Eschatological awareness, i.e., the fear of not becoming part of God's future, often caused whole communities to convert to Christianity within a very short time. An example of this was given by Ludwig Borutta, the missionary of Lölöwua as of 1914. Using the example of the developments in Hilihambawa⁸⁰³, a village about eight kilometres from Lölöwua, which in 1914 was still determined 'not to become Christian', he demonstrates how the total conversion of an entire village – initiated and led by the chief – took place within a month or two. Even before the villagers started catechumen classes, they destroyed their *adu*. Both a school and a house for the teacher-preacher were built. Young and old, who would not even have greeted the missionary before, now eagerly attended school and worship services. Moved by the question: 'How can I attain eternal life?', the elderly chief even took part in the activities related to building the church, which was completed without any financial help from the RM.

4.6.5.3 Christianity as a New Identity

The Great Awakening has been the crucial moment (*kairos*) in the modern history of Nias. It brought about a metamorphosis of Niasan society. As the traditional identity declined, gradually there was the rise of a Christian identity.⁸⁰⁴ After fifty years of missionary work, major coordinates of the message of the Christian religion had entered the frame of understanding of many Ono Niha, both within and outside of the church. Christian rituals, symbols, songs and stories were no longer considered alien. A significantly new impulse in this respect came from the above-mentioned Niasan pastors (*pandita Niha*) and teacher-preachers (*sinenge*).

Shortly before the outbreak of the Great Awakening, a Niasan Christian leader, such as Chief Ama Ga'uzi of Tumöri, was developing a vision of a pan-Niasan Christian unity. In his jubilee address held in September 1915, he spoke of the advantages of becoming Christian and asked the rhetorical question: 'Has there ever been a time when Ono Niha from all areas could come together like this?'. He then explained what the new alliance with Christianity demanded of the Ono Niha: they had to go out and preach the Gospel as the spears in the hands of the missionaries (*tohu dangara*), in order to overcome the chaos of darkness (i.e., to replace the primal religion with Christianity).⁸⁰⁵

Another token of a growing new identity was the speech held by the paramount chief of Zowu, *Tuhenöri* Dawido, at the wedding ceremony of a mixed couple in Hiliga'uko. He stated frankly that such a wedding between a Christian and an ad-

⁸⁰³ Cf. *BRM*, 1934, pp. 106-108.

⁸⁰⁴ Cf. Ch. 6.2.2.4.

⁸⁰⁵ Cf. *Toeria*, 3/2 (1916).

herent of the primal religion should not be allowed, because it was against the law of God, who wanted the two to be as one.⁸⁰⁶ This speech was extraordinary, not only in its tenor (weddings are very sensitive occasions, where one should avoid insulting one of the parties), but also as a criticism of the missionary, who had given his permission for the wedding.

In the course of the Great Awakening, in the wake of a mass-relocation in religious affiliation, the church became the new symbol of Niasan communal identity. It effectively functioned as a new village community, the *banua* of the Christian people (*banua Niha Keriso*), as opposed to the 'non-Christians', who were labelled aliens (*Niha baero*). The fact that Christianity had managed to replace the essential rites and feasts of the primal religion with its own was not the least reason that this had occurred.⁸⁰⁷ Whereas previously these rites and feasts continuously reinforced the social relations and strengthened the common identity, it was now Christianity which did just that – even though the community of the Church was much larger and more inclusive.

The traditional feasts of merit had aimed at attaining a higher social status (*boſi*); now holy baptism, confirmation (and subsequently holy communion), matrimony, ordination (of pastors), appointment (of teacher-preachers and elders) and Christian funerals replaced the feasts of merit. Old symbols (*adu*-images, *gowe*-megaliths and *fösi*-trees) had been replaced by new ones (photographs, radios and Christmas trees). Pigs, however, remained just as important for Christian feasts as they had been for the traditional ones, except for its religious significance.

Whereas much of the basic pattern of thought had changed little, the Christian feasts naturally had a different mythological background and meaning. Gradually, this brought about fundamental changes in the perception. It is significant that, as a lasting consequence, the Great Awakening had both 'rescued' the communal identity of the Ono Niha as a people, and reshaped it by surpassing the traditionally very limited geographic realm of the *banua*, in principle – though not always in praxis – opening it to people of other races, such as Europeans, Chinese and Malay.⁸⁰⁸

4.6.5.4 Christian Law Versus Customary Law (*adat*)

Originally, customary law (*adat*) had its metaphysical anchor in the primal religion and could not be separated from it. *Adat* was 'order' in a holistic, cosmic sense. The spirits of the ancestors consecrated and sanctioned *adat*, giving *adat* the image of holiness.⁸⁰⁹

The missionaries feverishly weeded out everything considered to be part of the primal religion, yet permitted what were considered to be legal aspects of the customary law. Factually, this resulted in a distinction between a religious realm (i.e., Christianity) and a social realm (i.e., *adat*), though attempts were made in cooperation with the government, especially during the years 1912 until 1915, to Christianise certain aspects of the customary law. This was not very successful in praxis, however, because the authority of the chiefs, the traditional custodians of the *adat*, was already weakened and the rites for renewing the *adat*, namely *fondrakö*

⁸⁰⁶ Cf. *Toeria*, 2/6 (1915).

⁸⁰⁷ Cf. Arlette Ziegler, 'Festive Space', in: *Nias Tribal Treasures*, 1990, pp. 78-104.

⁸⁰⁸ Cf. R. Wegner, *Die Erweckungsbewegung auf Nias*, 1924, p. 17 (a Malay *dukun* converted to Christianity).

⁸⁰⁹ Ch. Ch. 2.4 and Ch. 6.4.

and *börö nadu*, had been prohibited. Without these cultural mechanisms, the traditional *adat* could not be renewed, and was thus doomed to become static, while, on the other hand, the new Christianised *adat* could not be effectively implemented.

Meanwhile, the often chaotic situations created by the Great Awakening raised the awareness of the need for order. The general regulations of the government on moral matters (i.e., included in the 'Christian *adat*') were often quite indifferent in character and dissatisfying to the missionaries.⁸¹⁰ Only a uniform church order and a clear code of discipline could help out. In 1921, Eduard Fries presented a draft of a synod order for Nias.⁸¹¹ This order opted for a more authoritarian structure, centring on the overseer or *ephorus*, rather than a strict 'presbyterial-synodal' structure.⁸¹² This was indeed congruent to the existing social structure of Nias, which traditionally centres around the chiefs. Strong ecclesiastical leadership had to provide order in a rapidly changing situation.

By 1922, most aspects of a Christian code of discipline had been discussed, so that a commission was formed to draft a 'church discipline for use in the Christian fellowship on Nias' or *amachoita*.⁸¹³ This church discipline was subsequently passed by a vote (nine for and four against) in the conference of missionaries in 1923, printed and distributed. This provided important standards for orientation for church members, though it did not effect the customary law (*adat*) other than to divorce it totally from the church. On issues that affected both church and *adat*, the intensity of a person's religious conviction determined whether that person would give priority to Christian values or to the traditional customs.⁸¹⁴

4.6.5.5 Improvement of the Rights of Women and Children

In the realm of social life there were important developments, such as the acceptance of monogamy and greater freedom and more chances for women and children.⁸¹⁵ Fries⁸¹⁶ demonstrates that the victory of Christianity during the Great Awakening transformed family life, especially by improving the position of girls and women. The great importance of liberating females from oppressive traditional structures and giving them access to education had already become a major concern of the RM

⁸¹⁰ Cf. 'Protokoll 1919', in: 'Konferenzprotokoll Nias', 1914-1921 (RMG 2.780). Cf. L. Schreiner, *Adat und Evangelium*, 1972, pp. 135-151. Referring to the encounter between Gospel and culture among the Batak, Schreiner argues that the introduction both of 'Christian laws' (as well as the development of a 'Christian *adat*') by the colonial government, and of a church discipline by the mission had brought about a dual order (*doppelte Ordnung*, *ibid.* p. 138), since the traditional worldview of the Batak (and, to a certain extent, also the theology of the missionaries) did not differentiate absolutely between a secular and a spiritual realm.

⁸¹¹ 'Entwurf einer Synodalordnung für das Arbeitsgebiet der Rheinischen Mission auf Nias', 1921 (RMG 2.804).

⁸¹² The ministry of the *ephorus*, the overseer or bishop of the church, was first introduced in 1881 by RM Inspector F. Fabri in the church order of the Batak church. On Nias, too, the fundamental structure of the new church order was to be 'synodal-presbyterial', with an Episcopal element in the position of the *ephorus*. Until the internment of the RM-missionaries by the Dutch in May 1940, the *ephorus* (a European missionary) did indeed function like the local governor of the board of the RM. Cf. W.R. Schmidt, *Mission, Kirche und Reich Gottes bei Friedrich Fabri*, 1965, p. 53.

⁸¹³ 'Amachoita sogoena ba mbanoea Niha Keriso ba danö Nias', 1923 (cf. RMG 2.803).

⁸¹⁴ This became evident in matters such as polygamy, traditional medicine and shamanism (*daludalu nijahede*), the willingness to send children to school, Sunday rest, marriage (regarding age and dowry), and funerals (cf. R. Wegner, *Die Erweckungsbewegung auf Nias*, 1924, pp. 23-24).

⁸¹⁵ Cf. Ch. 6.3.3.3 and Ch. 6.3.3.4.

⁸¹⁶ Cf. E. Fries, 'Die Erweckungsbewegung in Nias', in *BRM*, 1931/3-4, p. 115.

during the first decade of the twentieth century.⁸¹⁷ Deaconesses joined the male missionaries. During the Great Awakening, one of the positive developments reported was the fact that the conditions for women and girls had amazingly improved.⁸¹⁸

Temporarily, indeed, the awakening had resulted in the lowering of the dowry (*böwö*). A more lasting improvement was that the number of girls attending mission schools increased considerably, and not only among the daughters of nobility.⁸¹⁹ Among the more educated, women would also be consulted before the marriage was arranged.

The biblical teaching that man and woman had been created as equals in the image of God (Gen 1:27) sometimes led to a more humane status for women in the Christian congregations. Interestingly, there are certain old myths of the Ono Niha which, like the biblical witness, stand in sharp contrast to the extremely patriarchal attitude towards women which had been practiced in everyday life.

To a certain extent, the Great Awakening had revived an ancient root in Ono Niha culture. Jürgen Kosack⁸²⁰, a former missionary on Nias, reported that in former times, old women would take the final decision if the leading men were not able to come to a compromise.⁸²¹ Thus, a certain respect for women had not been alien to Ono Niha culture, but it had degenerated, and not revived again until the Great Awakening. Christian widows, though they could not inherit anything, would now at least be cared for. A Christian woman who died in childbirth would henceforth no longer be cast away like a dog, but would receive a decent burial.

Similar improvements can be seen in the attitudes towards children. The Great Awakening resulted in the overall cessation of killings of twins⁸²², or of children whose mother had died in childbirth.⁸²³ Whereas in the past, a female child would have a much lower status than a male child, the new Christian awareness at least challenged the conscience of the men to regard a girl-child as a blessing, rather than as a curse.

4.6.5.6 Dawn of Literacy

One aspect of traditional Niasan identity which was neither condemned by the missionaries (as was the primal religion), nor merely tolerated (as was customary law), but held instead in great esteem, was the Niasan language, the *Li Nono Niha*.⁸²⁴

⁸¹⁷ Cf. 'Die Frauenarbeit der Rheinischen Mission', in: *Des Meisters Ruf* 1/1 (1909), pp. 3-5. The first deaconess of the RM on Sumatra was Hester Needham, who went out in 1890. The first deaconess on Nias was Magda Reineke, who served in Gunungsitoli from 1904 until 1908.

⁸¹⁸ Cf. Maria Fischdick, *Jafusi und andere niassische Geschichten*, 1950

⁸¹⁹ In 1914, some 1562 girls had attended school. By 1930 this had risen to more than three thousand; cf. A. Schneider, *Turia*, 1965, p. 34; Helga Kayser, *Aspekte des socio-kulturellen Wandels auf Nias*, 1976, p. 195.

⁸²⁰ Jürgen Kurt Theodor Kosack (9 June 1929 Weißensee / Thüringen). Together with his wife Ruth Kosack née Otten (20 November 1930 Dinslaken) he worked from 1958 until 1969 in Gunungsitoli (RMG 1.893). This information he obtained in the 1960s from the elderly Solawa Dakhi of Hilisimaetanö.

⁸²¹ Interview in Wuppertal on 8 June 2002.

⁸²² A common practice in pre-Christian Nias, cf. *BRM*, 6 (1883), p. 166; *BRM*, 5 (1889), p. 151.

⁸²³ Cf. J.P. Kleiweg de Zwaan, 'De „Pontianak“ op Nias', 1912, p. 26. He mentions that children whose mother had died while giving birth were killed for fear of the evil Matiana spirit or in order to appease Matiana through this sacrifice.

⁸²⁴ Ch. Ch. 6.2.1.

In contrast to the Batak and the Javanese, the Ono Niha had had no literary tradition before the arrival of the missionaries. Through the schools, a gradually increasing number could read and write, but it had not yet become a popular need. Now, however, the Great Awakening had opened new regions for a Western type of education and motivated larger numbers of people to spend money for the acquisition of literature. Thousands of Bibles, hymnals and other publications written in the Niasan vernacular, were bought from the mission press in Ombölatä.⁸²⁵ Those who could not read became eager to listen to the readings in church, at meetings or at home. Ono Niha developed a way of identifying themselves with the biblical stories (e.g., with the Judge Samson) or with the path of the seeker of truth (Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*). The Bible became a source of inspiration and to a certain degree a standard for justice. Through the mission magazine *Toeria*, perspectives were opened for development beyond the village, and even beyond the island. Literature provided significant help in overcoming the intellectual isolation of the Ono Niha.

4.6.5.7 Music and Songs

Initially, the missionaries held the prejudice that non-Christian Ono Niha were very bad singers and that the art of singing had actually been introduced through the Sunday school.⁸²⁶ The traditional way of singing was considered improper for Christian use and the first generation of *Ono Niha Keriso* were obviously unable to adapt immediately to the European melodies. But the second and third generations were then able to sing the Niasan versions of European hymns.

A new and contextual development in Christian music since the beginning of the Great Awakening were the so-called songs of awakening (*sinunö wangesa*). Kosack⁸²⁷ has made a thorough study of a collection of 55 of these original songs from Central Nias. There had been many more in other areas. A central theme in these spiritual songs is the 'way' (*lala*) to salvation, leading through the temptations and afflictions of this world to heavenly peace. A translated version of Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*⁸²⁸ had exerted a strong influence.

The songs of awakening were often sung in choir competitions, which performed a crucial service by bringing together Christians from different villages and areas.⁸²⁹ Though the songs of awakening have often been frowned upon (and sometimes forbidden) by theologically correct pastors, they have become one of the most important elements of Christian culture on Nias and are sung at all kinds of occasions, including at work.

At the beginning of the Great Awakening, there were extensive discussions related to the traditional synchronized group dance with singing (*maena*)⁸³⁰, concerning whether this could be continued by Christians or not. Eventually, the

⁸²⁵ Concerning the foundation of the mission-press in Ombölatä, cf. E. Fries, *Niassische Pandita*, 1922, p.13.

⁸²⁶ Cf. Pauline Kramer née Garschagen, 'Sonntagsschulfest in Gunong Sitoli', in: *DKM* 26/7 (1880), p. 99. Cf. Ch. 6.2.2.1.

⁸²⁷ Cf. J. Kosack, 'Grundzüge einer Erweckungstheologie in niassischen Erweckungsliedern', 1964.

⁸²⁸ *Jalan Musafir*, translation by Heinrich Sundermann in 1905. Cf. 3.2.1.

⁸²⁹ Choirs from Hilisatarö, Balaecha and Hilisimaetanö competed in singing songs of awakening at the beginning of the Great Awakening in South Nias (E. Sartor, 'Jahresbericht 1920 über die Station Sa'ua', *RMG* 2.769).

⁸³⁰ Cf. *Toeria*, 2/11-12 (1915).

compromise was reached that *maena* could be performed at feasts (but not in Church), as long as the lyrics followed the Christian idiom.

Traditional instruments were either frowned upon or prohibited. The hand-drum (*fondrahi*), beaten by the priest (*ere*) in his shaman rituals, in which he called upon the spirits of the ancestors in cases of illness or other crises, was not adopted by Christianity. Similarly, the missionaries and indigenous church workers did not integrate the gongs (*aramba*), xylophones (*doli-doli*) and other traditional instruments into the worship services, although they were allowed to be used at feasts. Instead, church bells, brass trumpets, and harmoniums were imported by the mission.

4.6.5.8 Ecclesiastical Self-Consciousness

A significant, though not altogether lasting achievement of the Great Awakening was a certain degree of ecclesiastical self-consciousness. Three developments stand out clearly in this respect: An increase in and better quality of human resources, additional conferences and financial independence.

Many traditional chiefs and even office-bearers in the congregations were against the Great Awakening for fear of losing their status, which was challenged by charismatic laity and women.⁸³¹ According to the missionaries, the teacher-preachers with government diplomas actually failed completely during the first phase of the Great Awakening. Since they had a good income and status, they showed little or no interest at all.⁸³² Fortunately, new strengths were generated by the congregations, namely a new generation of indigenous pastors (*pandita*) from the seminary in Omböläta and the newly trained *sinenge*. They supported the Great Awakening and managed to control it. Being 'on top of the wave' of the renewal strengthened the self-confidence of and the strong grass-roots support for these men. They became accepted leaders of the Christians and in society in general⁸³³, though the missionaries still functioned as overseers.

In addition to already existing conferences⁸³⁴, the first conference for assistant teachers was convened in May 1920.⁸³⁵ The conferences played an important coordinating role during this period. Christian leaders from all over Nias met in more or less regular intervals. Such continuous unifying activity was unique in the history of the Ono Niha. The conferences dealt with difficult issues, especially disciplinary matters. They coordinated the work and were a good exercise in the basics of presbyterial-synodal church governance.

The reports of the missionaries are full of praise that the Great Awakening had increased the willingness of Christians to bring sacrifices in the material sense. The church collections were higher than before, there were voluntary gifts, and families would pay their annual church contribution willingly. Even the Muslim and Chinese merchants were amazed that born-again Christians were seriously paying back their debts. Unfortunately, this financial self-support did not surpass the ecclesiastical

⁸³¹ Cf. R. Wegner, *Die Erweckungsbewegung auf Nias*, 1924, p. 74.

⁸³² Cf. E. Fries, *Niassische Pandita*, 1922, p. 19.

⁸³³ Cf. W. Gulö, *Benih yang Tumbuh XIII*, 1983, p. 17; R. Wegner, *Die Erweckungsbewegung auf Nias*, 1924, pp. 32-38. E. Fries, 'Die Erweckungsbewegung in Nias', in *BRM*, 1931/3-4, pp. 114-115.

⁸³⁴ I.e., the annual conference of missionaries (officially since 1880), the annual conference of the teacher-preachers (since 1898), irregular conferences for Christian elders and chiefs (since 1895).

⁸³⁵ Cf. 'Protokolle Nias-Konferenz', 1920-1921 (RMG 2.780).

boundaries. The missionaries did not encourage Niasan entrepreneurship, or any other modern form of economic progress in the hands of the people. When the awakening cooled down, the church again experienced want and the society as a whole remained poor. The economy remained largely in the hands of the Chinese, Muslims and (until World War II) Europeans.

4.7 GROWTH OF CHRISTIANITY ON THE BATU ISLANDS (1919-1930)

4.7.1 New Generation of Missionaries

Whereas formerly the DLM had recruited all its missionaries for the Batu Islands from the RM, Schröder and Steinhart⁸³⁶ were the first Dutchmen to be stationed there. Schröder arrived on Pulau Tello on 6 November 1919 and Steinhart on 31 December 1924.⁸³⁷ As native Dutch, they received relatively more attention and support from Lutherans in the Netherlands than had their German predecessors. At intervals, Schröder worked alongside German missionaries in the service of the DLM, such as Frickenschmidt (who left on 8 March 1922) and Borutta (1922-1924).

Schröder and Steinhart both originated from Amsterdam, but they came from different ecclesiastical and educational backgrounds. Schröder was a member of the Restored Evangelical-Lutheran Church and the last student of the DLM in Barmen; Steinhart was from the Evangelical Lutheran Church and the first to be educated in the Dutch School of Mission of the Cooperating Mission Agencies in Oegstgeest.⁸³⁸ This difference in background partially explains their diverging theological inclinations. Schröder represented pietistic orthodox Lutheranism, at the time still dominant in the DLM, while Steinhart had a more cultural, less dogmatic manner. This became particularly clear in matters concerning the indigenous culture of the Ono Niha. Using Richard Niebuhr's vocabulary, Schröder's position could best be described as 'Christ against culture', and Steinhart's approach as 'Christ and culture in paradox'.⁸³⁹ Despite these differences, however, they represented a new generation of missionaries and both brought some renewal to Christianity on the Batu Islands. In contrast to their German predecessors (and temporary colleagues), they placed an emphasis on pastoral counselling by making home visits, not only to Christians but also to non-Christians, feeling that the best method of reaching people was not only through the missionary sermon, but also through the 'mission-chat'

⁸³⁶ Cf. Ch. 3.5.1.

⁸³⁷ Steinhart first arrived on Pulau Tello on 5 June 1924, but left again two days later for Nias. Under the guidance of H. Rabeneck in Hilisimaetanō he studied the Niasan language until December 1924.

⁸³⁸ Cf. Ch. 3.5.1.

⁸³⁹ H.R. Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 1951/2001, pp. 45-82, 149-189. The positive side of the 'Christ against culture' position is that it 'resolutely rejects culture's claims to loyalty' (*ibid.* p. 45), is radically loyal to Jesus Christ as Lord, and critical towards spiritual laxity. On the other hand, it denies the fact that there is no human being without culture. Therefore, the danger of this position is that, while rejecting the cultures of others, it enthrones one's own supposedly true Christian culture as the only valid measure of all things. The 'both-and' position ('dualist', though not 'dualistic') of the 'Christ and culture in paradox' position tries to hold together as well as to distinguish between 'loyalty to Christ and responsibility for culture' (*ibid.* p. 149). In the heritage of Paul and Luther, culture is acknowledged as an authentic expression of humanity corrupted by sin, as against the miracle of God's grace. Unchristian cultures are therefore not per se more sinful than Christian cultures. The problem about the 'Christ and culture in paradox' is that it tends towards cultural conservatism and often lacks the dynamics of cultural transformation. Cf. Ch. 6.1.

(*zendingsgesprek*) during a house visit.⁸⁴⁰ Among their other virtues were efficient church management and intensive study of the indigenous culture. Schröder, who was the administrator, invested much energy in developing more democratic (i.e., presbyterial-synodal)⁸⁴¹ church structures, while Steinhart excelled in thorough, internationally acknowledged studies of the indigenous culture of the Ono Niha on the Batu Islands.

4.7.2 Geographic Expansion of the Missionary Work

The different approach of this new generation of Dutch missionaries represented by Schröder and Steinhart brought about a steady spread of Protestant Christianity from the original main stations (Pulau Tello and Sigata) to the other villages in the vicinity, as well as to neighbouring islands. Around 1930, the focus of the mission had shifted mainly to the larger Batu Islands of Tanah Masa (*Tanö Hamasa*) and Tanah Bala (*Tanö Hibala*), which fell into Steinhart's realm of responsibility due to an agreement between Schröder and Steinhart outlining a clear division of tasks between the two of them.⁸⁴²

4.7.2.1 First Fruits

Remaining villages on Pulau Tello, where the conversion to Christianity was more an individual decision in comparison with the tendency to group conversions on the more remote islands⁸⁴³, were evangelized by Ono Niha.⁸⁴⁴ Hili Amaedula was completely Christianised by 1925, as was Polele, the area of Nathanael Ziliwu.⁸⁴⁵ Only the Islamic villages on Pulau Tello remained closed to Christianity, as did a part of the Chinese-Buddhist community. Later, Roman Catholicism became a more viable option for many Chinese on Pulau Tello.

On Sigata, where the first fruits had been baptised in Bawö Sitöra in 1900, the major shift towards Christianity had not come until Sa'ukhu, the last influential priest (*ere*), had converted to Christianity in 1903⁸⁴⁶, and the people of Sigese, the

⁸⁴⁰ Cf. *EVB*, 44/4 (1926), p. 66 ('huisbezoek de enige methode om de menschen te bereiken').

⁸⁴¹ The Lutheran churches in the Netherlands never had a hierarchical, let alone an Episcopal, structure like many other Lutheran churches. The church councils show similarities to the Reformed tradition (i.e., elected elders and deacons, who work together with and not under the supervision of the ministers).

⁸⁴² Since 1930. The congregations on Pulau Tello were served together. Sigata, Hayo, Mari, Fono and Sifika formed the church-circuit of Schröder. Bötua, Lorang, Balögia, Baluta and Lasondre formed the church-circuit of Steinhart. Schröder was the manager of the hospital; Steinhart the inspector of schools, cf. *EVB*, 49/2 (1931), p. 34.

⁸⁴³ Cf. *EVB*, 49/2 (1931), p. 46.

⁸⁴⁴ Cf. *EVB*, 44/1 (1926), pp. 2-7: Ikhu Mbatu (Ujung Batu) was evangelized by *Guru Fae'ö Gamuata*. Though he did not succeed with his school, the village was opened for Christianity in the early 1920s. *Guru Omböila* knew very much about the ceremonies and secrets of the animist priests. He also had knowledge about the practices of the Islamic *dukun*. He became a powerful witness of Jesus Christ, so that most of the people of Hili Analita and vicinity converted to Christianity. Borutta baptized the chief Hili Tawere in 1923, but the *Ono Niha Keriso* themselves developed the congregation. By 1925 Hili Tawere had become a mainly Christian village.

⁸⁴⁵ Cf. *EVB*, 44/1 (1926), p. 7. The villages of Eho, Barumado'u and Hilinitaya belonged to the district of Polele.

⁸⁴⁶ Cf. Agnes Landwehr née Kämpfer, 'Aan hollandsche Zondagschoolkinderen over Afgodenpriesters op Sigata', 27 October 1903, in: annual report of Landwehr to DLM, Sigata, 14 January 1904 (GAA 552/36). Here, the *ere*'s name is spelled as 'Sauhu'.

largest and richest village, began to open up for the Gospel in 1905.⁸⁴⁷ Nevertheless, it was not until the time of Schröder and Steinhart that the people of Sigese as a whole were ready to identify themselves with Christianity.⁸⁴⁸ In addition to Bawö Sitöra and Sigese, a third strong congregation on Sigata was Fuge, which had been difficult to reach until Landwehr and Kienlein had taken the initiative to build a road across the island in 1908.⁸⁴⁹ In 1931, the congregation of Fuge finally managed to open a regular mission school under *Guru Kahonoa*.⁸⁵⁰ By 1937, there were almost no rituals of the primal religion on Sigata, the traditional initiation rites having been replaced by confirmation.⁸⁵¹

On Bötua (near Sigata), the first 23 believers were baptised on Christmas 1917, but the actual breakthrough for Christianity came when Chief Faodo Gamuri was baptised on 18 March 1927.⁸⁵² His good example did much to further the course of Christianity. Due to a political division between two villages, Kampung Lama and Kampung Baru, as well as to the interference of the colonial authorities, Kampung Baru closed itself to the Christian mission and opened its gates to Islam.⁸⁵³ Quite a few Christians from Bötua emigrated to other Batu Islands, carrying Christianity with them.⁸⁵⁴

The 27 first fruits on Hayo were baptised by Schröder in 1921.⁸⁵⁵ The growth of the congregation was slow. During the Communist uprising in May 1926⁸⁵⁶, Hayo was considered a centre of the rebels. After the rebellion had been suppressed, Chief Januwö Ziliwu⁸⁵⁷ feared that the Dutch military would invade Hayo. Steinhart visited the island to comfort the people and organized some food for them.⁸⁵⁸ This led to the Christianisation of Hayo.⁸⁵⁹ By 1934, only three families had not yet been baptised, though two of them were attending catechism classes. One of the men was Fawunu Zörömi, an elderly man, whose wife was a well-known animist medium (*kataruna*), strongly opposed to Christianity. Fawunu Zörömi was baptised on his sickbed a week before he died, after having confessed his faith with the words: 'my heart is steady in our faith' (*aro dödögu ba wanerönuda*).⁸⁶⁰ One year later, in 1935, *Guru Wania* of Hayo reported that the whole population of the island had become Christian⁸⁶¹, even though the chief wished to conserve some remnants of the primal

⁸⁴⁷ Cf. *EVB*, 22/6 (1904), p. 181.

⁸⁴⁸ Cf. *EVB*, 47/2 (1929), pp. 39-42 (Steinhart's annual report of 1928).

⁸⁴⁹ Cf. *EVB*, 26/3 (1908), p. 84.

⁸⁵⁰ Cf. *EVB*, 49/4 (1931), p. 91.

⁸⁵¹ Cf. *EVB*, 56/1-4 (1938), pp. 29-31.

⁸⁵² A mission post on Bötua was opened in April 1914. Cf. letter Julius Ziegler to DLM, Sigata, 4 April 1914 (GAA 552/34); *EVB*, 49/2 (1931), pp. 48-50; J. Hallewas, *Lutherse Wereldzending NU*, 1955, p. 7.

⁸⁵³ The colonial authorities did not acknowledge the chief of Kampung Baru, cf. *EVB*, 56/1-4 (1938), p. 35; *EVB*, 58/1-4 (1940), pp. 39-41.

⁸⁵⁴ Cf. *EVB*, 53/2 (1935), p. 42.

⁸⁵⁵ Ziegler had started the work on Hayo in 1914, cf. *EVB*, 43/3 (1925), p. 64; *EVB*, 43/4 (1925), p. 70; cf. G.O. Reitz, 'A report of the Church in the Batu Islands', 1959, p. 2.

⁸⁵⁶ Cf. Ch. 4.8.4.

⁸⁵⁷ Reportedly, the chief was uncompromising towards colonialists and mission, cf. *EVB*, 43/4 (1925), p. 69.

⁸⁵⁸ Cf. *EVB*, 46/1 (1928), pp. 5-8.

⁸⁵⁹ Cf. *EVB*, 50/3 (1932), pp. 66-68; 55/4 (1937), p. 75. In 1932 a quarrel between an elder, Lugu Jamoföfö, and the teacher-preacher, Wae'ö, almost split the congregation. Fortunately, Schröder managed to reconcile the two. Lugu Jamoföfö, one of the first fruits, died in 1937.

⁸⁶⁰ *EVB*, 52/4 (1934), pp. 77-78.

⁸⁶¹ Cf. *EVB*, 53/2 (1935), p. 39; 56/1-4 (1938) p. 28. Three years later this changed due to frequent

religion in the Christian ceremonies, especially in the context of funerals. When the coffin was carried through the village gate, the people would shout: 'sweep it clean, beat it!', in order to drive away the evil spirits. The missionaries tried to prohibit this, but the chief did everything in his power to hold this particular *adat* rite in honour⁸⁶² – and he succeeded.

In February 1924, Kana Wa'ambö, just back from seminary, became teacher-preacher of Lorang and the mission work now began in earnest.⁸⁶³ Soon he had gathered some catechumens and on 3 January 1926 the eight first fruits were baptised by Steinhart.⁸⁶⁴ In the 1930s, influences from Islam caused division in Lorang.⁸⁶⁵ In 1940, Schröder reported that Lorang was the most difficult missionary area in the Batu Islands, because Islam was so strong there.⁸⁶⁶ Despite the challenge, the Christian congregation of Lorang later became one of the larger ones on the Batu Islands.⁸⁶⁷

Mari is an island very close to Lorang. Göba, the first teacher-preacher of Sigata, originated from one of the four villages on Mari. The first baptism in Sawolohela on Mari was performed on 9 March 1926, by Schröder.⁸⁶⁸ By 1938, there were 51 Christians in Sawolohela and Gobö, including the family of the chief of Sawolohela.⁸⁶⁹ The people of Sasua were also preparing to become Christians. Only the Islamic village of Luaha-Idanö withstood Christian penetration.⁸⁷⁰

Howia is another island close to Lorang and Mari. In the 1930s, the *guru* of Lorang went there once a week to preach and hold catechism classes. Soon the majority of the women were attending the catechism classes.⁸⁷¹ Despite a strong Islamic influence, a congregation about the size of that on Mari could be established there.

The island of Sifika (about the size of Pulau Tello, but very sparsely populated) and the islet of Fono are within sight of each other. A mission school on Sifika was opened in 1913.⁸⁷² The first assistant-teacher was the Muslim Elias.⁸⁷³ In June 1915, when Elias was transferred to Lorang, he was replaced by *Guru Fae'ö Gamuata*.⁸⁷⁴

migration.

⁸⁶² Cf. *EVB*, 55/1 (1937), pp. 2-5 (cf. n. 1).

⁸⁶³ The school building of Lorang was inaugurated on 24 June 1915, with 33 pupils and Elias (a Muslim) as the teacher; cf. letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 29 June 1915; cf. 'Jaarverslag', 11 January 1916 (GAA 552/35); cf. W.F. Schröder, *De Zending op de Batoe-eilanden*, 1927, p. 84.

⁸⁶⁴ Cf. G.O. Reitz, 'A report of the Church in the Batu Islands', 1959, p. 3. Information: Kana Wa'ambö, *guru* of Lorang.

⁸⁶⁵ Cf. *EVB*, 49/2 (1931), p. 51; 53/2 (1935), p. 43.

⁸⁶⁶ Cf. *EVB*, 58/1-4 (1940), p. 44.

⁸⁶⁷ Cf. W. Gulö, *Benih yang Tumbuh XIII*, 1983, p. 55 (in 1972, Lorang had 416 members, compared to 436 in Bawö Sitöra and 2482 in Pulau Tello).

⁸⁶⁸ A mission school was opened in 1913, cf. post card Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 21 June 1913 (GAA 552/35); letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 3 July 1913 (GAA 552/35); report Pauline Frickenschmidt to DLM, 'Die Einweihung der Schule auf Mari', Pulau Tello, 1 November 1913 (GAA 552/35). About the seven first fruits in 1926, cf. *EVB*, 44/4 (1926), pp. 84-85; W.F. Schröder, *De zending op de Batoe-eilanden*, 1927, p. 81.

⁸⁶⁹ Cf. *EVB*, 56/1-4 (1938), p. 31 (W.F. Schröder writes: 'Sawolohene').

⁸⁷⁰ Cf. *EVB*, 56/1-4 (1938), p. 31; 58/1-4 (1940), p. 46.

⁸⁷¹ Cf. *EVB*, 53/2 (1935), p. 44.

⁸⁷² Cf. W.F. Schröder, *De Zending op de Batoe-eilanden*, 1927, p. 83.

⁸⁷³ *Ibid.* pp. 83-84.

⁸⁷⁴ Cf. letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 29 June 1915; cf. 'Jaarverslag', 11 January 1916 (GAA 552/35).

The mission school on Sifika could now finally serve its second purpose, that of becoming an instrument of Christianisation. The five first fruits on Sifika were baptised in 1929 and the people requested an evangelist, who would then be able to serve the congregation along with the congregation of nearby Fono.⁸⁷⁵ In 1930, the first believers on Fono, the branch congregation of Sifika, were baptised. Among them were the chief and his wife.⁸⁷⁶ Two years later, it was reported that the majority of Ono Niha on Fono had embraced Christianity.⁸⁷⁷ By 1938, there remained 'a handful of heathen' on Fono⁸⁷⁸ and the congregation had become quite an active one, even holding regular evangelisation services in the early 1940s.⁸⁷⁹ This might explain why later the BNKP congregation on Fono was able to become almost twice the size of its former mother church on Sifika.⁸⁸⁰

Balögia on the island of Batu Makele, which belonged to the district of Sifika, was one of the least developed areas on the Batu Islands.⁸⁸¹ The people there had a mystic belief related to crocodiles.⁸⁸² In 1929, the first 27 inhabitants of Balögia to have become Christians were baptised.⁸⁸³ The district chief Sinuyu, who had formerly worked as warden of the jail on Pulau Tello and had been baptised in the congregation of Pulau Tello, was very active in furthering the cause of Christianity on Balögia.⁸⁸⁴ The congregation grew so rapidly that in 1940 the majority of the population had become Christian and Balögia was considered a main congregation, even having a branch congregation in Gitö on Tanah Masa. The first teacher-preacher of Balögia was Laowö, who also served on Sifika (Hili Satulö) and in Gitö.

Between Fono and Hayo, just south of Pulau Tello, lies the tiny islet of Siberanu. In 1917, Frickenschmidt applied for a school to be built in the village of Hoioia on Siberanu, since there were enough children there to qualify for a government subsidy.⁸⁸⁵ Due to the fact that many inhabitants left Siberanu to settle on other Batu Islands, the spread of Christianity was sluggish, despite the presence of the school.⁸⁸⁶ It was not until 1935 that Christianity began to penetrate the hearts and minds of the people. On 14 December 1937, the sixteen first fruits of Siberanu were baptised.⁸⁸⁷

The chief of Lasondre (northern Tanah Masa), though not a Christian, supported the mission. In March 1930, a small mission school was opened in Lasondre and on 3 August 1930 it was upgraded to become an evangelisation post, served by teacher-preacher Nifae'ö Gabölata.⁸⁸⁸ At the first Christmas celebration, in 1930, which was attended by a Muslim descendant of the last *raja* of the Batu Islands, the first fruits

⁸⁷⁵ Cf. *EVB*, 46/1 (1928), p. 11.

⁸⁷⁶ Cf. *EVB*, 49/3 (1931), pp. 71-72.

⁸⁷⁷ Cf. *EVB*, 50/3 (1932), p. 61.

⁸⁷⁸ *EVB*, 56/1-4 (1938), p. 33.

⁸⁷⁹ Cf. *EVB*, 58/1-4 (1940), p. 54.

⁸⁸⁰ Cf. W. Gulö, *Benih yang Tumbuh XIII*, 1983, p. 56.

⁸⁸¹ Cf. *EVB*, 58/1-4 (1940), p. 50.

⁸⁸² Cf. *EVB*, 56/1-4 (1938), pp. 39-40. For the crocodile-*adu*, cf. Ch. 2.4.2.1 (Image of the Sinner).

⁸⁸³ Cf. J. Hallewas, *Lutherse Wereldzending NU*, 1955, p. 7.

⁸⁸⁴ Cf. *EVB*, 51/2 (1933), p. 46.

⁸⁸⁵ Cf. letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 11 March 1917 (GAA 552/35).

⁸⁸⁶ Cf. *EVB*, 53/2 (1935), p. 38.

⁸⁸⁷ Siberanu had become a branch congregation of Hayo. *Guru Wania* came every Sunday, after the service in Hayo, and twice a week for the school, cf. *EVB*, 56/1-4 (1938), p. 27.

⁸⁸⁸ Cf. *EVB*, 49/1 (1931), pp. 8-9. Nifaeö (sometimes called Nifaö) Gabölata, who originated from Bötua, had no formal training at a seminary, but was trained by missionaries Steinhart and Schröder.

of Lasondre were baptised.⁸⁸⁹ *Guru Nifae'ö Gabölata* impressed the population by organising a collection of five cents per Christian attending a funeral ceremony. This money was then given to the widow of the deceased, in order to lighten her financial burden and as a token of solidarity. Due to the significance of funeral ceremonies for the Ono Niha, the number of catechumens in Lasondre rose rapidly because of this.⁸⁹⁰

The official consecration of the first church building in Lasondre, on 19 December 1937, was reportedly a most impressive social event, beginning with a procession from the house of the chief to the new church.⁸⁹¹ In mid 1939, because *Nifae'ö Gabölata* had become involved in insoluble problems in the local mutual financial-help scheme (*sulösulö*)⁸⁹², he was replaced by Ratja as teacher-preacher. At the end of the 1930s, Lasondre was one of the financially strongest congregations on the Batu Islands.⁸⁹³

Koto Bulu'aro, the residence of the old royal family, had become predominantly Muslim. But in the 1930s there existed close contacts with the Christians of Lasondre.⁸⁹⁴ A small wooden chapel was built in Koto Bulu'aro.⁸⁹⁵ This branch congregation of Lasondre was served by one elder. To the south of Lasondre is the area of Gitö. Christians seem to have migrated there in the late 1920s. A congregation was formed in the 1930s and Gitö became a branch congregation of Balögia on Batu Makele.⁸⁹⁶ For a while the congregation in Gitö was strongly influenced by the Seventh-Day Adventists, who exploited the people's dislike of paying annual church contributions.⁸⁹⁷

South of Gitö on Tanah Masa is Baluta, embracing five (later six) villages. The first teacher-preacher of Baluta was Nikana Eli. In 1929 the first nineteen inhabitants of Baluta were baptised.⁸⁹⁸ For a while, Baluta seemed to be becoming one of the Christian strongholds on Tanah Masa, but in 1932, after the death of Nikana Eli, the congregation went through a crisis which lasted more than a year.⁸⁹⁹ Under *Guru Nisana*, who came in 1934, the nearby villages of Hale, Bawö Ofulua and Baruyu Sikamba were reached by the Gospel.⁹⁰⁰ But *Guru Nisana* did not maintain a high standard of service in Baluta and was transferred to Sifika in 1937. In the early

⁸⁸⁹ Cf. *EVB*, 49/2 (1931), p. 54. By that time, the whole royal family had become Muslim.

⁸⁹⁰ Cf. *EVB*, 50/3 (1932), pp. 62-63. This has not become common practice in other parts of the Batu Islands nor on Nias.

⁸⁹¹ Cf. *EVB*, 56/1-4 (1938), p. 41.

⁸⁹² Cf. *EVB*, 58/1-4 (1940), pp. 47-48. *Sulösulö* (Bahasa Indonesia: *arisan*) is a system of mutual financial help, which sometimes causes quite serious quarrels. It works as follows: if, for instance, somebody needs hundred guilders, he seeks ten people who would each lend him ten guilders. At a meeting with the creditors, the debtor has to slaughter a pig for a meal together. Then a schedule and sequence is determined. Every month one of the others (the original creditors) will receive hundred guilders. If, which often happens, one cannot wait for his turn, he could also get it earlier, on the condition, that he does not receive the full ten guilders from each of the others, but instead nine or eight guilders. A problem arises, if more than one wants his turn earlier, in which case a kind of auction is held. A bigger problem is, if one cannot pay at all.

⁸⁹³ Cf. *EVB*, 56/1-4 (1938), p. 45. Second only to Lumbui on Tanah Bala.

⁸⁹⁴ Cf. *EVB*, 56/1-4 (1938), p. 42; 58/1-4 (1940), p. 47.

⁸⁹⁵ Cf. *EVB*, 58/1-4 (1940), p. 49. In 1940 a big mosque was being built and the Christian chief died.

⁸⁹⁶ Cf. *EVB*, 58/1-4 (1940), p. 47.

⁸⁹⁷ Cf. *EVB*, 58/1-4 (1940), p. 51.

⁸⁹⁸ Cf. J. Hallewas, *Lutherse Wereldzending NU*, 1955, p. 7.

⁸⁹⁹ Cf. *EVB*, 49/2 (1931), p. 51; 51/2 (1933), p. 47.

⁹⁰⁰ Cf. *EVB*, 53/2 (1935), p. 44; 55/4 (1937), pp. 77-83; 56/1-4 (1938), p. 41; letter Steinhart to DLM, Pulau Tello, 14 September 1937 (GAA 552/39).

1940s, the missionaries began to focus on the remaining non-Christian village of Simondo in Baluta.⁹⁰¹

4.7.2.2 Church Planting by Migration

Another important factor for the spread of Christianity was migration. Many Ono Niha from the more densely populated Batu Islands, such as Pulau Telo, Siberanu and Sigata, moved to other, more spacious and less densely populated islands, such as the southern parts of Tanah Masa and Tanah Bala, for planting cash crops. It is remarkable that their Christian identity was so strong that in many cases they influenced the local population to embrace Christianity. It was only in areas where Islam was well established that it was difficult – and often impossible – for Christianity to take root in the local population.

The most southern peninsula of Tanah Masa is Saeru. When Schröder visited this area in 1932⁹⁰², there was already a Christian congregation there, made up primarily of settlers from other Batu Islands. Although the people of Saeru maintained some 'heathen' practices, most of them converted to Christianity in the years 1934 and 1935.

In the 1920s, more than one hundred Christians from Pulau Tello had settled in Sitou (meaning: 'which is far away'), better known as Lumbui, on the southwest coast of Tanah Bala, in order to make use of the possibility of planting large coconut farms.⁹⁰³ By 1930, they had established a Christian congregation. In March 1937, the DLM took an official decision to extend mission activities to Lumbui.⁹⁰⁴ Former teacher-preachers Mandija and Nikana Eli lived there as pensioners⁹⁰⁵, and so did Omböila, a former elder of Tello – a somewhat ambivalent 'lifelong evangelist'⁹⁰⁶ – who energetically propagated the Gospel. In August 1939, Lumbui received its own teacher-preacher (or evangelist) in the person of Ni'ila, who was transferred there from Polele on Pulau Tello.⁹⁰⁷ He managed to reconcile the chiefs of Eho and Hili Sanaere Tanö, who had been at swords' points in a betrothal issue.⁹⁰⁸ This reconciliation was a decisive factor for the Christianisation of Lumbui.

4.7.3 Medical Missions

Under the good management of Schröder, who had followed a course in midwifery in Leiden⁹⁰⁹, the medical work in the hospital on Pulau Tello was improved considerably.⁹¹⁰ Due to the removal of the mission station on Sigata to Pulau Tello in 1916, however, the mission hospital on Sigata had to be closed down. The mission did not establish any medical posts on the other Batu Islands.

⁹⁰¹ Cf. *EVB*, 58/1-4 (1940), p. 53.

⁹⁰² Cf. *EVB*, 51/1 (1933), p. 6.

⁹⁰³ Cf. *EVB*, 49/1 (1931), pp. 4-8; W.L. Steinhart 'Het Zendingswerk op Zuid West Hibala', report to the DLM, 16 September 1936 (GAA 552/39); 'Eén ding weet ik', 1937, *EVB*, 55/4 (1937), pp. 77-83.

⁹⁰⁴ 'Notulen Algemeene Vergadering', Amsterdam, 31 March 1937 (GAA 552/19).

⁹⁰⁵ Cf. *EVB*, 50/3 (1932), pp. 60-61.

⁹⁰⁶ Cf. *EVB*, 56/1-4 (1938), p. 42. He once showed sympathy with Seventh Day Adventism.

⁹⁰⁷ Cf. *EVB*, 58/1-4 (1940), p. 56.

⁹⁰⁸ Cf. *EVB*, 58/1-4 (1940), pp. 57-58.

⁹⁰⁹ Cf. A. Steinhart, *1889-1989. 100 jaar Kerk op de Batu-eilanden*, 1989, pp. 30.

⁹¹⁰ Cf. *EVB*, 49/2 (1931), p. 34.

At first, only the missionaries themselves administered medical treatment and medicine. Gradually, however, they delegated this task to assistants, especially to the Ono Niha paramedics or *mantri*.⁹¹¹ Though not an ecclesiastical functionary in the stricter sense, the *mantri* was treated similarly to a *guru*. He attended the monthly conferences on Pulau Tello.

The pioneer and first *mantri* of the Batu Islands was an Ono Niha by the name of Kajoe Afore Hondrö.⁹¹² He finished the mission school on Pulau Tello, after which he was sent by Frickenschmidt to the mission hospital in Pearaja, Batakland. After having been trained there for two years, he returned to Pulau Tello in August 1919, shortly after Frickenschmidt had rebuilt the hospital.⁹¹³ He was trusted not only by the Christians, but also by Muslims and Buddhist Chinese⁹¹⁴, many even trusting his skills more than they did those of the European governmental physician (see below). The medicines he most frequently administered were quinine, aspirin, castor oil and an herb against worms.⁹¹⁵ By providing good service to both male and female patients, he was able to generate enough revenue to make it possible for his salary to be paid from the hospital's profits.⁹¹⁶ Hondrö later also became a member of the synod board of the Batunese Church.⁹¹⁷

Since the DLM could not position a missionary physician on the Batu Islands, the more serious medical cases had to wait for medical treatment by a government physician who occasionally visited the Batu Islands.⁹¹⁸

4.7.4 Educational Missions

Despite the restrictions in government subsidies for schools in the 1930s, the educational system on the Batu Islands both improved in quality and expanded geographically to remoter regions, such as Tanah Masa and Tanah Bala. Steinhart became the inspector of schools.⁹¹⁹ The locations for new schools were always chosen with the ulterior motive that they could also serve as evangelisation posts. Baluta on Tanah Masa, for instance, was such a strategic location, from which, later, Lumbui on Tanah Bala could be reached. In 1925 a mission school was built in the village of Baruyu, ringing in the Christianisation of Baluta.⁹²⁰ On 4 January 1926, the school lessons commenced with fifty pupils.⁹²¹ Balögia on Batu Makele, where

⁹¹¹ Also called *ziekenverzorger* (carer of the sick). A *mantri* is a male medical aide, male nurse or paramedic.

⁹¹² The *mado* (clan-name) 'Hondrö' is not mentioned in the reports of the missionaries, but is remembered by Leonard Steinhart, the son of Missionary W.L. Steinhart (interview 20 June 2002, St. Michielsgestel). According to G.O. Reitz and Kana Wa'ambö, Kajoe was also called 'Afore' or 'Gafore' ('A report of the Church in the Batu Islands', 1959, p. 3; cf. 'Amachoitia Pulau Tello ba B.N.K.P.', pp. 3ff., Arsip BNKP). An *afore* is a rod with measurements for measuring the size of a pig. It is also a symbol of justice. *Kajoe* (kayu) is the Malay word for wood. Since it is not very likely that an Ono Niha child was named 'wood'; Kajoe Gafore (staff of justice) probably was the complete first name of *Mantri* Hondrö.

⁹¹³ Cf. *EVB*, 51/3 (1933), p. 59. The first hospital had been destroyed by termites.

⁹¹⁴ Cf. *EVB*, 44/2 (1926), p. 40.

⁹¹⁵ Cf. *EVB*, 51/3 (1933), p. 60.

⁹¹⁶ *Ibid.* p. 64.

⁹¹⁷ Cf. Ch. 5.7.1.

⁹¹⁸ Cf. *EVB*, 49/2 (1931), p. 37.

⁹¹⁹ Cf. *EVB*, 49/2 (1931), p. 34.

⁹²⁰ Cf. W.F. Schröder, *De Zending op de Batu-eilanden*, 1927, p. 109. Interview with Haidir Gowasa, Gunungsitoli, 15 May 2001. Gowasa was a member of the BNKP synod board.

⁹²¹ Cf. *EVB*, 44/1 (1926), p. 12.

Steinhart opened a mission school in 1928, was also chosen for its strategic location near the north-western coast of Tanah Masa.⁹²²

Christian schools were also regarded as strategic strongholds in the effort to prevent the spread of Islam. For this reason, as early as 1911, Frickenschmidt had considered building a Christian school and placing a teacher-preacher, *Guru Galitö*, on the remote island of Simuk.⁹²³ Though this plan was supported by the governor of West Sumatra, it was never realized.⁹²⁴ The school project in Talulimo, a good natural harbour on the north-eastern coast of Tanah Masa, was more successful. Muslim traders from Pulau Pini and Hibae had already begun to spread Islam in Talulimo.⁹²⁵ In spite of this, Steinhart considered Talulimo to be a strategic location for a mission school, since from here two other villages, Wawa and Balari, as well as the nearby island of Iadö, could be reached.⁹²⁶ Mainly because of this Christian school, a considerable Christian congregation developed in Talulimo.⁹²⁷

Remarkable progress was made in the field of women's education. According to Schröder, Christian women were 'much more knowledgeable' in matters of faith than were the men.⁹²⁸ Generally, they were much more diligent than their male counterparts. Traditionally, women were not allowed to hold public office, lead public ceremonies or give public auditions. Through Christian education, however, new and liberating opportunities opened up for women. As pupils in school, being treated as the boys' equals, the girls developed a great deal of self-confidence. And so did the women who attended catechism classes as catechumens. Talents, for ages denied the right to be developed, now came to the fore. On Sigata, and later all over the Batu Islands, women discovered the choirs as a means to express themselves in public, a practice which was gradually also discovered by the men.⁹²⁹

The course of women's education on Sigata received a serious setback in 1934, when a schoolgirl, who years before had fallen in love with *Guru Ratja*, but had then been forced into matrimony with another, corresponded with the teacher-preacher. When her husband discovered the letters, there was a scandal. *Guru Ratja* was transferred to Pulau Tello, being replaced by assistant teacher Nikana Eli. As so often, the real victims were the girls, since it was held that without their having been educated, this never would have happened.⁹³⁰

4.8 CHALLENGES TO CHRISTIANITY ON NIAS AND THE BATU ISLANDS (1865-1930)

Protestant Christianity on Nias and the Batu Islands, which was firmly under the supervision of the missionaries, was challenged both by internal factors, i.e., by primal religion and Islam, as well as by external factors, i.e., Seventh-Day Adventism and Communism.

⁹²² Cf. *EVB*, 47/2 (1929), p. 36.

⁹²³ Cf. letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 13 August 1911, 10 November 1911 (GAA 552/35).

⁹²⁴ Cf. letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 23 May 1911 (GAA 552/35).

⁹²⁵ Cf. *EVB*, 49/1 (1931), pp. 11-12.

⁹²⁶ Cf. *EVB*, 49/1 (1931), p. 11.

⁹²⁷ According to the statistic in 1972, the congregation had 139 members, which was considerable in that area (W. Gulö, *Benih yang Tumbuh XIII*, 1983, p. 55). When the author visited Talulimo in 1989, a permanent church building was almost ready for use.

⁹²⁸ *EVB*, 48/4 (1930), pp. 86-87 ('dat de vrouwen over het algemeen veel meer wisten dan de mannen').

⁹²⁹ Cf. *EVB*, 44/4 (1926), p. 73.

⁹³⁰ Cf. *EVB*, 53/2 (1935), pp. 40-41.

4.8.1 Primal Religion

Throughout this period, primal religion remained a major challenge to Christianity on Nias and the Batu Islands. Although the institutions of primal religion, such as the priesthood (*ere*), the rituals and the sacrificial feasts, gradually disappeared from public life, the veneration of the ancestors, inseparably linked to the ancestral images (*adu zatua*), was continued, albeit secretly, by many Christians.⁹³¹

Arguments given by Ono Niha for keeping their ancestral images were often quoted, but seldom taken seriously by the missionaries. The most fundamental problem was that by destroying the ancestral images, the living would be cut off from the dead. Some Christian Ono Niha feared the wrath of the ancestors; others were ashamed that the non-Christians would accuse them of burying their father for the second time⁹³²; and still others would say: 'How could I be happy in heaven if my parents and ancestors are in hell?'⁹³³ Since these ancestral images were collective family property, their destruction could cause quarrels and even schisms in mixed families.⁹³⁴ Understandably, catechumens of the first generation often begged the missionary to allow them to keep their ancestral images.⁹³⁵ *Guru* Jonatha on Nias quoted one of his compatriots, saying: 'We would very much like to follow the new teachings and throw away our idols, if only the missionaries would let us keep our ancestral images.'⁹³⁶

As the first congregations were built up, the issue of the possession or the destruction of *adu* became the decisive confessional issue acquiring the rank of acting as a watershed between Christians and non-Christians. The *adu* were regarded by the missionaries as the major cause of both spiritual and physical misery among the Ono Niha. Mainly on the basis of the Old Testament (i.e., Ex 20: 4-5), *adu* were considered an abomination to God. Furthermore, since the *adu* were a source of income for the traditional priests (*ere*), their destruction would undermine the primal religion and strengthen the economy. The destruction of the *adu* thus became the symbolic prelude to holy baptism, whereas secretly keeping them after having become a Christian (or returning to 'heathen' practices) was sufficient cause for excommunication.⁹³⁷

Occasionally, missionaries would even make raids on houses, confiscating remaining *adu*⁹³⁸, which would then be buried, burned, placed in the mission house as trophies, or sent to private collectors and museums in Europe.⁹³⁹ However, de-

⁹³¹ Cf. Ch. 6.3.3.2.

⁹³² I.e., Christian chief Ama Zimoluo, who did not want to surrender the *adu zatua*, *BRM*, 1886, p. 137.

⁹³³ Cf. *BRM*, 1881, p. 208.

⁹³⁴ Cf. *BRM*, 1886, pp. 139-140; *BRM*, 1887, p. 206. Although among the Ono Niha it was an accepted fact that the chief represented the corporate identity of the village or clan, (cf. *BRM*, 1881, p. 207), and although the ideas of Gustav Warneck on communal conversion had begun to enter missionary circles by the 1890s, sometimes only part of a village or clan, or even only individuals would convert to Christianity (cf. *BRM*, 1879, pp. 350-353).

⁹³⁵ Cf. *BRM*, 1875, pp. 100, 105, 107.

⁹³⁶ Quotation cited by J.A. Fehr in *BRM*, 1886, p. 147.

⁹³⁷ Cf. *BRM*, 1881, p. 200; *BRM*, 1886, p. 137. Kramer excommunicated a Christian from Lölwönu caught practising sacrificial rites. A precondition for being received back was the surrender of *adu* and talismans.

⁹³⁸ Cf. *BRM*, 1880, p. 172.

⁹³⁹ *BRM*, 1884, pp. 23-24; e.g., there are qualitatively highly valuable collections of *adu* in the *Völkerkundemuseum* of the Archiv- und Museumsstiftung in Wuppertal and the *Volkenkundig Museum Nusantara* in Delft.

spite all these efforts, the ancestors continued to play an important role in the lives of the Niasan Christians. When N. Go'e, one of the first fruits of Hilina'a, who had been baptised in 1874 by Denninger and Kramer, addressed the congregation during the founding synod of the BNKP in 1936, he revealed that the first Christians on Nias had secretly continued to venerate the images of the ancestors.⁹⁴⁰

4.8.2 Islam

Through immigrants from Sumatra (Aceh and Minangkabau) and probably from Celebes (Bugis), Islam had entered Nias before Christianity had. However, for cultural and historical reasons (i.e., the prohibition of pork and of slavery⁹⁴¹), it remained unacceptable to the vast majority of Ono Niha, especially to those in the interior. Stronger communities of Muslims were to be found only in certain ports and marketplaces, such as Gunungsitoli, Miga, Olor, Lahewa, Bio'uti, Darodaro Balaikha and Teluk Dalam. On the Hinako Islands, some of the noble families had converted to Islam. Before the Christian missionaries arrived, the question of allegiance to or the rejection of Islam had been largely settled on Nias.

The missionaries occasionally disturbed the balance between the traditional and the Islamic communities on Nias. Especially after the first baptisms of former adherents of the primal religion, there was an occasional and temporary commotion in areas with a stronger Islamic population.⁹⁴² In a single case, in North Nias, the expansion of Christianity was temporarily hampered by the Islamic community, but there was no violence.⁹⁴³ Sometimes, frightening propaganda was initiated by both Muslims and Christians, putting pressure on the traditional chiefs to make a choice, usually in favour of Christianity.⁹⁴⁴

As on Nias, Islam had entered the Batu Islands before Christianity through immigrants from abroad. However, on most of the Batu Islands the situation was less settled than on Nias. Despite the pig-culture of the primal religion, Islam seems to have been not altogether unattractive to the adherents of this primal religion. The royal family on Tanah Masa, which, as some of the chiefs on the Hinako Islands, was of Buginese descent, had very close links with Muslims, though the *raja* of the Batu Islands himself was not a Muslim. He maintained a good relationship with the missionaries and the last ruling king even became a Christian before he died.⁹⁴⁵ However, after the Dutch had ceased to acknowledge the *raja*, replacing him with a *demang* in 1915, the entire royal family converted to Islam, which exercised a strong influence on other chiefs, who were indebted to the family.

The islands of Pini and Hibae off the eastern coast of Tanah Masa were Islamic strongholds. Christianity was also unable to penetrate a few Muslim villages on Pulau Tello, although initially there was no hostility toward the Christians.⁹⁴⁶ One of the Islamic centres on Pulau Tello was Sinuru, where an impressive mosque was built in 1925. An influential, moderate haji by the name of Tuada si Batua lived

⁹⁴⁰ Cf. *Toeria*, 23/12 (1936).

⁹⁴¹ These factors are mentioned by Julius Richter, *Die evangelische Mission in Niederländisch-Indien*, 1931, p. 100. Cf. W. Oehler, *Die große Reue*, 1926, p. 6 (Oehler only mentions pork). Cf. Ch. 2.3.1.

⁹⁴² Cf. A. Lett, *Im Dienst des Evangeliums auf der Westküste von Nias*, vol. IV, 1901, pp. 3-6.

⁹⁴³ Cf. *JBRM*, 1914 (1915), p. 108.

⁹⁴⁴ E.g., *Balugu* Tödölala of Ombölata. Concerning the 'propaganda war', cf. *BRM*, 1878, pp. 72-82.

⁹⁴⁵ Cf. Ch. 4.5.3.6.

⁹⁴⁶ Bayaraja, Rafarafa, Simaluraja, etc..

here. When asked where a Muslim should say his ritual prayers in a Christian village, he answered: 'in the Christian house, because they also believe in the God of the Muslims'.⁹⁴⁷

As the Christians became greater in number and Christianity more powerful because of its privileged relationship with the colonial authorities, however, the Muslims began to challenge its dominance. By the end of the 1920s, there was a 'race' between Christianity and Islam for the remaining 'heathen' areas on the Batu Islands. This 'race' was much more widespread and was carried out more openly than that on Nias had been.

4.8.3 Seventh-Day Adventism

The roots of Seventh-Day Adventism (SDA) can be followed back to William Miller (1782-1849), a Baptist preacher in New York City in the United States of America. The 'Seventh-Day Adventist Church' (1845) propagated a number of specific articles of faith, the most prominent being the imminent second coming of Jesus Christ and the restoration of the holiness of the Sabbath. In 1874, SDA missionaries began to operate abroad, also, reaching Indonesia at the beginning of the twentieth century.⁹⁴⁸

First influences on Ono Niha society are reported in January 1913. Batua, son of Lege Zato, a prominent Christian on Pulau Tello, had joined the SDA in Padang.⁹⁴⁹ During the next fifteen years, the SDA gradually infiltrated the Batu Islands, where it played an earlier and more threatening role in relation both to the Protestant mission and to the colonial authorities than it had on Nias.⁹⁵⁰

The chief protagonist of the SDA on the Batu Islands was Sitefano, an albino from North Nias. He launched his missionary activities from Siberanu, near Pulau Tello. In June 1927 he received support from a Western SDA missionary, called Judge. Even though, in order not to provoke the Dutch Lutheran missionaries, the SDA missionaries claimed to work only among the Muslim population, in fact their propaganda was aimed primarily at Protestants who resented paying the annual church contribution.⁹⁵¹ The Dutch Lutheran missionaries protested, but the SDA appealed to the Governor-General in Batavia.⁹⁵²

Steinhart proposed to counter the challenge through more intensive religious education. More, and not less, mission schools had to be opened as a preventive measure, even if they did not qualify for government subsidies.⁹⁵³ However, mainly due to lack of funds, this proposal was not realised. The SDA managed to gain a few followers and to confuse many others. For some, like Nathanael Ziliwu, a former teacher-preacher and as of 1915 *demang* of the Batu Islands, this new church – not being part of the colonial status quo – was attractive for political reasons. There

⁹⁴⁷ *EVB*, 44/1 (1926), p. 4. (by 'the Christian house' Tuada si Batua meant the church-building).

⁹⁴⁸ Cf. G.R. Knight, 'Adventisten', in: *RGG*³ I (1998), pp. 127-129. Ralph Waldo Munson began SDA activities in Padang on 1 January 1900, cf. Jan S. Aritonang, *Berbagai Aliran di dalam dan di sekitar Gereja*, 1995, p. 288.

⁹⁴⁹ Cf. letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 3 January 1913 (GAA 552/35).

⁹⁵⁰ First activities of the SDA on Nias are recorded in 1932; cf. Ch. 5.8.6.

⁹⁵¹ Cf. *EVB*, 46/2 (1928), p. 39.

⁹⁵² Cf. *EVB*, 46/2 (1928), pp. 38-39; 46/3 (1928), p. 52.

⁹⁵³ Cf. *EVB*, 46/3 (1928), p. 52.

were rumours that the *demang* had secretly supported this sect, since its activities ceased after he had been removed from office in 1928.⁹⁵⁴

4.8.4 Communism

The Communist uprising on the Batu Islands in May 1926 seems to have been a preliminary attempt by the 'Red Unions' (*Sarekat Merah*) in West Sumatra, 'a strange sort of Communism indeed', as Sjahrir commented⁹⁵⁵, to initiate an Indonesia-wide revolution.⁹⁵⁶ Larger rebellions, instigated by the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI), followed in November 1926 in Banten and in January 1927 in Minangkabau.⁹⁵⁷ The instigators of the rebellions defamed Christianity as an instrument of Dutch oppression and sought to arouse dissatisfied Muslims who had fallen victim to the colonial status quo.⁹⁵⁸

Erupting at Labuan Hiu, an Islamic village on the Batu Island of Pini, the uprising soon swept over to Pulau Tello. Schröder and his family had just departed for a vacation in the Bataklands⁹⁵⁹, but Steinhart was on his mission station. He calmed down the congregations, where panic and chaos had broken out⁹⁶⁰, and reorganised the teacher-preachers, who were fleeing from the more remote islands. Two of them, Fae'ö Gamuata and Wania, had been mishandled and were in serious condition, both physically and mentally.⁹⁶¹ Eventually, military from Padang and Gunungsitoli suppressed the rebellion⁹⁶², though on some of the more remote islands the situation remained tense for some time. There were also some Christians among those arrested, but they were later released.

The subjugation of the Communist uprising resulted in a 'run' on the church on the Batu Islands. The worship services were celebrated with great intensity and gratitude.⁹⁶³ Numerous non-Muslims who had supported the Red Unions now turned to Christianity, in order not to be considered communists.⁹⁶⁴ Many of these opportunists later apostatised again, but a considerable number became loyal to the church.⁹⁶⁵ The number of Christians rose from 1002 in 1926 to 1146 in 1927⁹⁶⁶, an increase of approximately 14%. This temporary challenge of Christianity by Communism was confined to the Batu Islands and did not affect Nias.

⁹⁵⁴ Cf. *EVB*, 47/2 (1929), p. 38. Nathanael Ziliwu had to stand trial in Gunungsitoli on charges of corruption.

⁹⁵⁵ Quotation in N. Tarling, *Southeast Asia: a modern history*, 2001, p. 374.

⁹⁵⁶ Cf. B. Schrieke, 'The Development of the Communist Movement on the West Coast of Sumatra', in: W.F. Wertheim et al. (eds.), *Indonesian Sociological Studies*, 1955, pp. 85-94.

⁹⁵⁷ Cf. N. Tarling, *Southeast Asia: a modern history*, 2001, pp. 373-375; cf. R. Cribb, *Historical Dictionary of Indonesia*, 1992, pp. 304, 347. The Red Unions were affiliated with the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) founded in 1920. Initially, they worked under the cover of Islam, but they were expelled by the Islamic Union (*Sarekat Islam*) in October 1921.

⁹⁵⁸ Cf. *EVB*, 45/2 (1927), pp. 59-61.

⁹⁵⁹ Cf. *EVB*, 46/1 (1928), p. 3. Schröder had left Pulau Tello on Friday, 21 May 1926, which was about the beginning of the rebellion on Pulau Pini (Fene), cf. *EVB*, 51/1 (1933), p. 8.

⁹⁶⁰ Cf. *EVB*, 46/1 (1928), pp. 4-5.

⁹⁶¹ Cf. *EVB*, 46/1 (1928), pp. 4-5.

⁹⁶² Cf. letter A. Momeyer to the board of the RM, Gunungsitoli, 4 June 1926 (RMG 2.787). Initially, twenty soldiers from Padang were deployed and then twenty more followed from Nias.

⁹⁶³ Cf. *EVB*, 46/1 (1928), p. 5.

⁹⁶⁴ Cf. *EVB*, 46/1 (1928), p. 5.

⁹⁶⁵ Cf. letter Steinhart to DLM, Pulau Tello, 27 January 1927 (including annual report for 1926), GAA 552/39.

⁹⁶⁶ Cf. *EVB*, 46/2 (1928), p. 34.

4.9 FINAL OBSERVATIONS

In this chapter, the history of the Christianisation of Niasan society under the leadership of the missionaries from the RM and the DLM has been described. Before the arrival of these missionaries, there had already been a few sporadic preliminary attempts to introduce Christianity into Nias, but they had been too short and too superficial to result in any substantial encounter between the Gospel and the indigenous culture.

During the 'difficult beginnings' (1865-1890) on Nias, even as early as Denninger's service in Padang (1861-1865), there were some first continuous interactions between Christian missionaries and Ono Niha, but the impact of Christianity on Niasan society was very limited. The missionaries initially treated the local people as guests, offering them small gifts. If they used traditional means of communication and adjusted themselves to the cultural setting, the missionaries were usually treated with respect. Gradually, as they became more fluent in the Niasan vernacular, and by using Western medicine and education as strategic means of evangelisation, the German missionaries managed to gain a foothold in Niasan communities which had already been subjugated by the Dutch, particularly within the parameters of the *rapatgebiet* on Nias. A few Christian chiefs, such as Ama Mandranga of Sifalaete, as well as some of the teacher-preachers, played a significant role in communicating the teachings and the policies of the mission to their fellow countrymen.

Outside the *rapatgebiet*, however, especially in South Nias, where the intimidating influence of the colonial government was not so strongly felt, the missionaries were not able to stand their ground during this period. The cultural insensibility of many missionaries, especially those who had adopted Fabri's imperialist patterns of thought, as well as the fact that the independent chiefs rightfully feared that Christianity would undermine their position of absolute power over their subjects, constituted major obstacles. Occasionally, after having tolerated the missionaries for some time, chiefs dissociated themselves when they realised that they could not manipulate the missionaries to their own ends.

Characteristic for this period is the intensive cultural learning process, which, although to a certain extent mutual, took place mainly on the part of the missionaries. For them it was an absolute necessity if they were to reach their goals. From the outset, the missionaries learned the Niasan vernacular. During their time as pupils of the Ono Niha, some meaningful relationships, and even friendships, developed. Later, newly arrived missionaries would acquire their basic language skills from their senior colleagues in the field, and sometimes even before their departure from pensioned missionaries who had returned to Europe. This increasing lack of having experienced oneself as a student of language and culture under the guidance of Ono Niha increased the tendency to view the Niasan reality through the spectacles of the dominant mission ideology. As a rule, with some few exceptions, the missionaries on Nias and the Batu Islands and their indigenous protégés felt no need to make use of the possibilities innate in the Ono Niha's spiritual context. Despite their often passionate emphasis on personal sacrifice in the footsteps of Jesus Christ, the missionaries were definitely unwilling to become 'all things to all people' (1 Cor 9:20-22).

Very early on, the missionaries began to train some indigenous men to assist them in school. After the first congregations had been founded, some of the respon-

sibility was delegated to indigenous leaders, at first mainly to the Christian chiefs, but later increasingly to the teacher-preachers and the elders. On Nias, the development of first, rudimentary ecclesiastical structures began.

The years 1890 until 1915 were vital to the expansion of Christianity among the Ono Niha. Whereas at the end of the previous period there had been merely three viable but struggling stations on Nias, all of them within the *rapatgebied* (on the Batu Islands, the work had just begun and no Ono Niha had as yet been baptised), in 1915 there were fourteen rapidly growing stations, encompassing 120 branch congregations⁹⁶⁷, located throughout the island of Nias, as well as two stations, encompassing some fifteen branch congregations, on the Batu Islands.

The year 1890 marked the beginning of a process of the successful penetration of missionary activities into areas beyond the *rapatgebied* on Nias, more or less in close collaboration, and often simultaneously with colonial expansion. Once colonial rule and the presence of Christian missionaries had become an unavoidable factor in their society, most of the chiefs gave in and asked to be baptised. In areas where the chiefs' authority had already been curtailed, the chiefs' embracement of Christianity improved their prospects in their relations with the colonial establishment. By converting to Christianity, some former leaders of rebellions against the Dutch, such as Fadoli, Siwahumola, Balöhalu and Sitambaho, were even able to avoid punishment by the colonial authorities. The act of baptism and the subsequent banquet of pork were accepted as a symbolic treaty of allegiance.

A shift in missionary strategy led to efforts to win whole communities over to Christianity. Inspired by Warneck's vision of the 'Christianization of nations', it had been possible to realise the strategic idea of the triple axis, creating a network of missionary stations all over Nias. There was a move away from individual conversion, which included a total break with the 'heathen' culture, towards the transformation of whole ethnic entities into Christian ones. This increased the acceptability of the Christian religion for some of the Niasan chiefs beyond the boundaries of the *rapatgebied*. Missionaries had followed the rules of the *adat* in order to gain entrance to strongholds of the primal religion such as Lölöwa'u, or to win the sympathy of chiefs such as Ama Gahonoa (Sirombu), Nisaetö (Sogae'adu), and Sirörösihönö (Baŵalia).

At the same time, however, the stronger focus on culture resulted in stricter differentiation. Indigenous culture was divided into three distinct levels, namely the level of eagerly accepted culture, the level of tolerated culture and the level of condemned culture. At the first level, there was a very positive appreciation of the vernacular, which was upgraded not only to the level of a literary language, but to that of a 'Christian' medium, on an equal basis with other 'Christian' languages. The customary law (*adat*) was placed on the second level. Attempts were made to ennoble the *adat* by adjusting it both to colonial and to Christian principles, thereby making of it a useful tool for bringing order to societal life.

The primal religion was placed on the third and lowest level. In accordance with the paradigm of the Enlightenment, it was thought that the primal religion could be eradicated and replaced by Christianity without destroying the rest of the cultural identity. In an a priori manner, all ancestral images were considered to be idols and

⁹⁶⁷ In 1900 there had been eleven stations, including Padang on Sumatra, with 5000 members.

thus an abomination to God. Therefore, they were destroyed relentlessly, quite justifying the accusation of 'cultural vandalism' which was raised.⁹⁶⁸

The eradication of all symbols of the primal religion became a prerequisite set by the church authorities for every household that desired admittance to Christianity. Submission to the missionaries' demand to surrender the images for destruction opened the door to baptism, whereas secretly keeping them constituted a ground for the owner's excommunication if they were later found out. The destruction of the primal religion thus became a matter of confessional status (*status confessionis*), i.e., constituting a watershed between Christians and non-Christians.

In the stead of the primal religion, a particular type of westernised Christianity was superimposed by the missionaries on those Ono Niha who were willing to become Christians. At the same time, the Ono Niha lost their freedom as a people. By 1908, the whole of Nias and the Batu Islands had been subdued and subjected to colonial rule. Eagerly supportive of the Ethical Politics of the Dutch government, the German missionaries willingly cooperated with the colonial authorities. On the one hand, this did bring about many positive developments in the fields of medical service, education and the development of infrastructures, but on the other hand, the missionaries also called on the colonial authorities for the use of force in order to 'pacify' areas not yet under colonial rule and, in addition, they openly supported forced labour (*rodi*).

The yoke of colonialism and the systematic destruction of the primal religion resulted in a spiritual vacuum in the communal psyche of the Ono Niha and paralysed the *adat*. The primal religion had been the central nerve of the cultural identity. Customary law could be neither implemented nor renewed if severed from its religious root. The eradication of this root necessarily resulted in a serious identity crisis. In the midst of this devastation, however, a new national identity, based on the new law of God (*huku Lowalangi*), was already beginning to take shape in some parts of the Niasan population.

The Great Awakening (1915-1930) was the most significant period in the history of Christianity among the Ono Niha, because it rescued the Ono Niha from (cultural) extinction. This revival movement was also an indigenous missionary movement, resulting in the communal metamorphosis of Niasan society. While it may be argued that it was a communal surrender to the new ruling order, it certainly released tremendous energy and the creativity to construct a totally new corporate identity. Religion once again became the dominant factor in Ono Niha society – only that it was now Christianity in the stead of the primal religion.

The eschatological vision of this new religious identity constituted the fundamental distinction between it and the old religious identity. Whereas in the primal religion, the pattern of thinking is cyclical (the spirits of the deceased return to the golden upper world or Teteholi Ana'a; essentially, the *adat* is rooted in this world of the ancestors), Christianity, on the other hand, has a linear conception of time and history, with the golden age (i.e., salvation) in the future. All earthly efforts must be directed towards achieving this eternal state of bliss. During the Great Awakening, this new eschatological vision inspired significant developments among the Christian Ono Niha. Its impact, however, was largely limited to the social realms

⁹⁶⁸ As the head of the museum of the RM in Barmen acknowledged, the statues of the ancestors (*adu zatua*) were an expression of genuine piety among the Ono Niha. ('Mit ihnen ist immer ein gutes Stück Pietät verbunden'), cf. *Globus* 82/17 (1902), pp. 280; cf. Ch. 4.4.1.

of the family, the village (*banua*) and the church. The missionaries anxiously prevented its expressing itself politically and did not encourage economic independence. The dynamism was in no way permitted to express itself in terms of Niasan national independence from Holland. Though the spiritual flight of fancy cooled down after 1930, the maturity gained during the Great Awakening was an important prerequisite for the Niasan Church's achieving ecclesiastical independence in 1936.

A second missionary front was opened by the DLM among the Ono Niha on the Batu Islands in 1889. Since all of the early DLM-missionaries had received their training at the Barmen Seminary, their missionary work greatly resembled that of the RM-missionaries on Nias, except for a few distinctly Lutheran traits in Batunese Christianity. Although, in general, the growth of the church on the Batu Islands and particularly the development of its medical service was more rapid than it had been on Nias, the missionaries here were rather negligent concerning the creation of church structures related to leadership, decision-making and financial self-support.

A new period began in 1919 with the arrival of Dutch missionaries on the Batu Islands, who introduced a less authoritarian, more presbyterial type of organisation. While the main pillars of missionary work, like on Nias, centred very much on the missionary schools and the medical service, the Dutch Lutheran's approach was more pastoral (e.g., 'mission chat') compared to their German predecessors and colleagues. They improved the organisational and financial state of the developing church, and Steinhart, with exceptional intensity and appreciation, studied the traditional culture – including primal religion – as a means of expressing the Gospel.

The major tasks of the missionaries and their Asian co-workers (among them both Batak and Niasan teacher-preachers) included both formal Western education and informal Christian education. A very important role was also played by the wives of the missionaries establishing Sunday schools, which were attended by both boys and girls. While for young Niasan men, Christian education provided the best way to climb the social ladder, for women and girls it was a means of emancipation, which granted the previously unknown freedom to develop potentials long suppressed by traditional culture. Next to the medical service, Christian education was the most effective tool in the process of gradually transforming the Ono Niha society into a Christian one.

The reconstruction of the history of mission during this period would be incomplete without drawing special attention to the serious challenges faced by the Protestant missionaries and their indigenous congregations on Nias and the Batu Islands. The most fundamental and continuous challenge came from the primal religion. Especially the traditional priests (*ere*) and the sovereign chiefs strongly resisted the mission's crusade throughout this time frame. As Christianity spread to the outskirts of the Niasan and Batunese archipelago and became well established (a part of the colonial Dutch status quo, so to speak), those sectors of society, including Islam, which considered themselves to be the victims of colonialism and the Christian mission also challenged the missionary-led church. More sporadic, but no less dangerous, were the challenges by 'opposition-movements', such as the Christian Seventh-Day Adventists and the viciously anti-Christian Communists. All of these challenges, however, eventually augmented the maturing process which prepared the missionary-led church on Nias and the Batu Islands for ecclesiastical independence.

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'.¹ 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 Sumatra², the German Nias-missionaries, too, had the courage to take concrete steps towards the 'autonomy'³ 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.⁴ This encompassed the self-support, self-

¹ 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. Verkuyl, *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).

² 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.

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

⁴ 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 Niha⁵, 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.⁶ 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.⁷ 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*).⁸ But the situation remained 'desperate'.⁹ Nevertheless, the administration remained orderly and a special 'diaspora fund' was built up during these years.¹⁰

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

⁵ 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 Ombölatá 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.

⁶ 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).

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

⁸ 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.

⁹ 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.

¹⁰ 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*.¹¹ In 1921, Fries drafted a synodical order for Nias.¹² 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.¹³

Based on these foundations, some missionaries and indigenous pastors under the leadership of Albert Lück¹⁴ 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.¹⁵

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.¹⁶ From 1933 until 1936, the draft of a church order was discussed, or rather explained, in most congregations on Nias.¹⁷ 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

¹¹ Cf. Ch. 4.4.5.2.

¹² Cf. Ch. 4.6.5.4.

¹³ Cf. Ch. 2.6.2.2 and Ch. 7.5.3.

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

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

¹⁶ 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.

¹⁷ 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.¹⁸ 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.¹⁹ 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*).²⁰ 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.²¹ Missionary Hendrik de Kleine in Sidem-

¹⁸ Cf. *BRM*, 1934, p. 221.

¹⁹ Cf. *JBRM*, 1934 (1935), p. 72.

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

²¹ 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.²² Financially, the work was supported by the above mentioned special diaspora fund from Nias, called *Dana Oe'aloeli Dalifoesögoe*.²³

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.²⁴

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 charity²⁵ (*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.²⁶ There were also clinics in Sogae'adu and Hilisimaetanö. In the early 1930s, Missionary Friedrich Dörmann²⁷ 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 Thomsen²⁸ and his wife, Dr. Margarete Thomsen.²⁹ 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.³⁰ Fortunately, help had been received from the 'Rhenish Society for Medical Mission'³¹, as well as from the Dutch philanthropic society SIMAVI.³²

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

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

²⁴ 'Synodalakten' (RMG 2.804).

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

²⁶ Cf. *JBRM*, 1932 (1933), p. 44.

²⁷ Friedrich Dörmann (25 August 1901 Gelsenkirchen – 30 December 1983 Waldbronn).

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

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

³⁰ 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).

³¹ Cf. P. Kupfermagel, '50 Jahre Rheinischer Verein für Ärztliche Mission', in: *BRM*, 1956, pp. 233-236.

³² '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.³³ 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.³⁴ By the year 1939, the hospital in Gunungsitoli had had 2817 patients.³⁵

5.2.6 Educational Service

On 1 July 1931, a secondary school for girls, headed by mission-sisters Hanna Blindow³⁶ and Emilie Röhm, was opened for 41 pupils, of whom fourteen stayed in the boarding house in Tohia, an outer suburb of Gunungsitoli.³⁷ 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.³⁸ On the other hand, beginning in 1932³⁹, 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.⁴⁰

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.⁴¹ 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 Gunungsitoli⁴², was called an *owasa sinode* (great synod feast).⁴³ At its opening, four thousand people were

³³ Cf. *JBRM*, 1934 (1935), pp. 72-73.

³⁴ Cf. *Toeria*, 22/8 (1935).

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

³⁶ Hanna Blindow (10 February 1896 Görlitz – 9 October 1959 Gunungsitoli).

³⁷ 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.

³⁸ Cf. A. Schneider, *Turia*, 1965, pp. 47-48.

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

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

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

⁴² 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).

⁴³ 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.⁴⁴ 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.⁴⁵

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).⁴⁶ Ephorus Albert Lück preached on Ephesians 2:19-22 and *Pandita* Filemo Gulö on John 15:16.⁴⁷ *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*)⁴⁸, 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.⁴⁹ 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.⁵⁰

Fundamental to the church order⁵¹ 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.⁵²

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.

⁴⁴ Cf. *BRM*, 1937, pp. 208-211.

⁴⁵ 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.

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

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

⁴⁸ 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.

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

⁵⁰ 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').

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

⁵² 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.⁵³ 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.⁵⁴

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 Pietism⁵⁵, 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 implemented⁵⁶, 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.⁵⁷ This became an important point on the agenda of the second synod, held in Sifaoro'asi 7-10 November 1937. *Pandita* Filemo Gulö⁵⁸ 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.⁵⁹

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 announced⁶⁰, 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

sovereign leading body of the church.

⁵³ Cf. Ch. 4.6.5.4 and Ch. 6.5.1.3.

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

⁵⁵ 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).

⁵⁶ Concerning the *Amakhoita*, cf. Ch. 5.2.2.1 and Ch 6.3.3.2.

⁵⁷ Cf. *Toeria*, 23/11 (1936).

⁵⁸ Often referred to as Filemo II.

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

⁶⁰ 'Besluit No. 138', dated 18 March 1938.

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

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?'.⁶² 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.⁶³

The new church discipline⁶⁴ 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.⁶⁵ 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.⁶⁶ 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,

⁶¹ Cf. 'Synodalberichte' (RMG 2.804).

⁶² 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.

⁶³ 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 nihälö*), 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.

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

⁶⁵ 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 muwu* (§ 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).

⁶⁶ 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*, poligamy). 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 dispensable⁶⁷, 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'⁶⁸, 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.⁶⁹

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.⁷⁰ 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.⁷¹ 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).⁷²

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

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

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

⁶⁹ 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.

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

⁷¹ Cf. *EVB*, 44/3 (1926), p. 58.

⁷² Cf. *EVB*, 45/2 (1927), p. 61.

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

When, in 1930, the mission was severely hampered by the world financial crisis, efforts were increased to move swiftly towards financial self-support.⁷⁵ Schröder believed that the annual church contribution should be linked to a 'funeral fund'.⁷⁶ 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.⁷⁷ This somewhat coercive system proved difficult to implement on Pulau Tello and Sigata, but worked well on the islands with only one Christian village.⁷⁸ In addition to the 'funeral fund', on 29 December 1931, the small church council created a 'pension fund' for indigenous church workers.⁷⁹

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.⁸⁰ Gradually, the congregations became more self-sufficient⁸¹, 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:⁸²

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.

⁷³ Cf. *EVB*, 49/4 (1931), p. 81.

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

⁷⁵ 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 gewenscht'.

⁷⁶ Dutch: *Begrafenis fonds*.

⁷⁷ Cf. *EVB*, 50/1 (1932), pp. 6-7.

⁷⁸ Cf. *EVB*, 49/4 (1931), pp. 85-86.

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

⁸⁰ Cf. *EVB*, 56/1-4 (1938), p. 45.

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

⁸² 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)⁸³ and on Sigata the first two were appointed in January 1914.⁸⁴ In 1915, Frickenschmidt set up some general guidelines which can be regarded as an embryonic church order.⁸⁵

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.⁸⁶

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.⁸⁷ 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.⁸⁸ 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.⁸⁹

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.⁹⁰ In addition to their

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

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

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

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

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

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

⁸⁹ Cf. *EVB*, 58/1-4 (1940), p. 32.

⁹⁰ 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.⁹¹ 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.⁹²

Given its representative character, the extended church council was soon regarded as a kind of a 'Batunese synod'⁹³, 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.⁹⁴

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*⁹⁵ 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.⁹⁶

⁹¹ Cf. *EVB*, 50/1 (1932), p. 12.

⁹² 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.

⁹³ 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.

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

⁹⁵ 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.

⁹⁶ 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.⁹⁷
3. Christians using medicine from a traditional priest/priestess (*ere*) or Muslim medicine man or woman (*duku*) are to be expelled from the congregation.⁹⁸
4. Christians committing adultery, including polygamy, are to be expelled from the congregation.⁹⁹

On 29 December 1932 the extended church council passed a church discipline (*amachoita*) for the Batu Islands¹⁰⁰, 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.¹⁰¹ 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

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).

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

⁹⁸ 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.

⁹⁹ 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.

¹⁰⁰ 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).

¹⁰¹ 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*.¹⁰²

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.¹⁰³ 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 1912¹⁰⁴, 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.¹⁰⁵ The next generation of missionaries (Schröder and Steinhart) again saw the need for Batunese pastors, but did not push the matter.¹⁰⁶

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.¹⁰⁷ However, due to the German occupation of the Netherlands in May 1940, the course on Nias did not take place.¹⁰⁸ 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 1902.¹⁰⁹ He completed the mission school on Pulau Tello and learned the crafts of carpentry, iron work, and lamp repair.¹¹⁰ 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 1926¹¹¹, after which he was transferred back to Pulau Tello. There he served the main station, while *Guru Golitö* served the branch congregation in Polele.¹¹² *Wa'ambö* and Steinhart, who valued him for his evangelistic zeal, worked

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

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

¹⁰⁴ 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'.

¹⁰⁵ 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.

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

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

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

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

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

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

¹¹² Cf. *EVB*, 45/2 (1927), p. 62.

well together.¹¹³ 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.¹¹⁴ 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.¹¹⁵ But he did good work even in this difficult situation.¹¹⁶ He was regarded as an excellent preacher and exemplary in his family life.¹¹⁷

For the jubilee of the mission on the Batu Islands in 1939, Wa'ambö wrote an article¹¹⁸ 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 Amsterdam¹¹⁹, was (temporarily) entrusted with the leadership of the Batunese church.¹²⁰

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)¹²¹; 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).¹²² According to Wäösarö Zandroto and Arnold Steinhart, however, this had happened 'just before' Schröder was forced to leave Pulau Tello by the Japanese conquerors on 16 August 1942.¹²³ Strangely, according to yet another source¹²⁴ claiming to go back directly to Wa'ambö, the latter was

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

¹¹⁴ 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.

¹¹⁵ Cf. *EVB*, 58/1-4 (1940), p. 42.

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

¹¹⁷ Cf. *EVB*, 47/3 (1929), p. 49.

¹¹⁸ 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).

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

¹²⁰ 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.

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

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

¹²³ 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.

¹²⁴ 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 1941¹²⁵, 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 Gamuata¹²⁶, 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.¹²⁷
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 Sipoholon¹²⁸ 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

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

¹²⁶ 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.

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

¹²⁸ 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*).¹²⁹ 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'¹³⁰ and largely succeeded in keeping the church together and functioning.¹³¹ 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.¹³²

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.¹³³ 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 evangelist¹³⁴), 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.¹³⁵

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

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

¹³⁰ 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').

¹³¹ 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.

¹³² 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?'.
Cf. Ch. 4.8.2.

¹³³ Cf. Ch. 4.8.2.

¹³⁴ 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.

¹³⁵ *EVB*, 52/4 (1934), pp. 74-76.

difficult, venture.¹³⁶ 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.¹³⁷

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.¹³⁸ It seems to have been very influential and popular, reaching a circulation of 160 copies by 1931 and 180 by 1940.¹³⁹ In 1932, a series of ten articles from 'The Little Book of the Heart'¹⁴⁰ had appeared, having a lasting impact on the spiritual life of the readers of and listeners to *Toeria Hoelo Batoe*.¹⁴¹ 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).¹⁴²

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 Niha¹⁴³, 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.¹⁴⁴

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

¹³⁷ 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.

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

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

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

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

¹⁴² 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).

¹⁴³ 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.

¹⁴⁴ 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.¹⁴⁵ To this end, he studied their culture, neither idealising it nor denying its fundamental differences to Christian teachings¹⁴⁶, 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.'¹⁴⁷

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 Christ¹⁴⁸ 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).¹⁴⁹ 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'.¹⁵⁰

Steinhart's work as a collector and preserver of Niasan poetry and priestly litanies¹⁵¹ is also remarkable.¹⁵² 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.¹⁵³ The mystical experience of 'the holy' becomes the connecting point

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.

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

¹⁴⁶ 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).

¹⁴⁷ 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').

¹⁴⁸ 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).

¹⁴⁹ 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.

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

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

¹⁵² 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.

¹⁵³ 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.¹⁵⁴ 'The old form has to be given a new content'.¹⁵⁵

In another article¹⁵⁶, 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.¹⁵⁷ He holds that this is an authentic expression of faith, documented in parts of the Bible¹⁵⁸, but of a lesser degree of religious development.¹⁵⁹

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.¹⁶⁰

The Batunese paramedic, *Mantri* Kajoe Hondrö¹⁶¹, developed remarkable skills in treating ailments, using medicine provided by the colonial government.¹⁶² 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

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*.

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

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.* p. 53.

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

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.* pp. 369-371.

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

¹⁵⁹ 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.

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

¹⁶¹ Cf. Ch. 4.7.3.

¹⁶² 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.¹⁶³

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*.¹⁶⁴ 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.¹⁶⁵

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.¹⁶⁶

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 health¹⁶⁷, 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 missionary¹⁶⁸), and since he was frequently transferred from one island to another, it was difficult for him to find sources of additional income.¹⁶⁹ 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

¹⁶³ 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).

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

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

¹⁶⁶ 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.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.* p. 11.

¹⁶⁸ 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.

¹⁶⁹ 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 1930s¹⁷⁰, 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 workers¹⁷¹ had to meet with the missionaries on Pulau Tello once a month to receive their salary, discuss disciplinary matters and prepare sermons.¹⁷² Schröder and Steinhart provided a reference library for their use.¹⁷³ 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.¹⁷⁴ 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).¹⁷⁵ 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

¹⁷⁰ 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 subsidized in 1931, but then the subsidies were stopped. Cf. Letter of Steinhart to DLM, Pulau Tello, 10 January 1931 (GAA 552/39).

¹⁷¹ 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.

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

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

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

¹⁷⁵ 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.¹⁷⁶ The leadership of the church was transferred to Niasan office-bearers.¹⁷⁷ One day later, on May 12, the fifth synodal assembly of the 'B.N.K.P.-Nias' began in Gunungsitoli.¹⁷⁸ It was called the 'synod of grief'¹⁷⁹, 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.¹⁸⁰

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.¹⁸¹ 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.¹⁸²

5.5.2 Transfer of Dutch Missionaries

Since a few of the RM-missionaries on Sumatra were Dutch citizens, they had not been detained.¹⁸³ One of them was Hendrik de Kleine.¹⁸⁴ 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'¹⁸⁵ (BNM) was formed to assume responsibility for the assets of the RM on Sumatra, Nias and Mentawai.

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

¹⁷⁷ 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.

¹⁷⁸ Cf. A. Schneider, *Turia*, 1965, p. 64.

¹⁷⁹ '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.

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

¹⁸¹ 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.

¹⁸² 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.

¹⁸³ 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.

¹⁸⁴ Cf. 5.2.4.

¹⁸⁵ Dutch: *Batak-Nias-Zending*.

Thanks to the 'auxiliary board of missions'¹⁸⁶ 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 1940¹⁸⁷, 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.¹⁸⁸ They worked under the auspices of the BNM. On 29 June 1940, Missionaries L.H. Put¹⁸⁹ and Henk Pol¹⁹⁰ arrived in Gunungsitoli.¹⁹¹ 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.¹⁹² 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 Thomsens¹⁹³ 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 Ombölat, as well as assuming responsibility for the mission schools.¹⁹⁴ 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.¹⁹⁵ When Schröder returned to Pulau Tello in the second half of 1941, Missionary Cornelis (Kees) Zwaan from Talaud came to augment the ranks.¹⁹⁶ The Zwaan family was stationed in Hilisimaetanö until the Japanese invasion in April 1942.¹⁹⁷

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.¹⁹⁸

¹⁸⁶ 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.

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

¹⁸⁸ Cf. G. Menzel, *Die Rheinische Mission*, 1978, pp. 349-353.

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

¹⁹⁰ Previously a missionary of the *Gereformeerde Zendingsbond* (GZB) in Torajaland.

¹⁹¹ Cf. *Toeria*, 27/6 (1940), p. 42.

¹⁹² 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).

¹⁹³ Husband and wife were both physicians, cf. Ch. 5.2.5.

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

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

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

¹⁹⁷ Interview with Dick Zwaan, Gouda, 13 September 2001.

¹⁹⁸ 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. Hutauruk, *Die Batakkirche 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 1945.¹⁹⁹

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.²⁰⁰ Only a few traders of Chinese origin could make use of the opportunity for lucrative business with Singapore.²⁰¹ 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.²⁰² 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.²⁰³ 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 analysis²⁰⁴, 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)

¹⁹⁹ Cf. Ch. 2.7.4.

²⁰⁰ 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.

²⁰¹ 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).

²⁰² Cf. Ch. 2.7.5.

²⁰³ 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.

²⁰⁴ 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.²⁰⁵ 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.²⁰⁶ Schröder never returned to the Batu Islands after his release after World War II.²⁰⁷

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.²⁰⁸ 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.²⁰⁹

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 centre²¹⁰ 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.²¹¹

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

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

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

²⁰⁷ 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.

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

²⁰⁹ 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.

²¹⁰ The former residence of the Civil Administrator, then headquarters of the army.

²¹¹ 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 Netherlands²¹², 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.²¹³ Although, the DLM did, until 1963, occasionally provide aid indirectly through the Commission on World Mission (CWM) of the LWF²¹⁴. 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 1950.²¹⁵ 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 Schneider²¹⁶, as well as that of Doctor Thomsen.

In July, 1950, Theodor Müller-Krüger²¹⁷, a lecturer at the theological college in Jakarta and a missionary of the RM, paid a visit to Nias.²¹⁸ 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)²¹⁹ 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.²²⁰ Though German nationals, they were granted the status of Indonesian civil servants.

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

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

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

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

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

²¹⁷ 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).

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

²¹⁹ Cf. 5.2.5.

²²⁰ 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 Jung²²¹, 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*)²²² 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.²²³ He was succeeded in 1958 by Karl-Christoph Töpperwien.²²⁴ Dörmann served as advisor to the synod board of the BNKP in Gunungsitoli. He was succeeded in 1958 by Jürgen Kosack,²²⁵ Helmut Illing²²⁶, who had been serving in Teluk Dalam since 1955, was succeeded there by Wolfgang Schmidt²²⁷ in 1962/63. Herbert Schekatz²²⁸ was stationed in Lahewa in the far north and, in 1963, the RM stationed Rudolf Heering²²⁹ on the Batu Islands. Sister Margarete Kissing²³⁰, who returned to Nias in 1954, was stationed at the auxiliary hospital in Hilisimaetanö. Doctor Gottfried Hartmann²³¹ 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 Germany²³² and directed by Deacon Horst Krank.²³³

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

²²¹ 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.

²²² Cf. A. Schneider, *Turia*, 1965, pp. 70-75.

²²³ 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).

²²⁴ 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).

²²⁵ Cf. Ch. 4.6.5.5.

²²⁶ 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.

²²⁷ Wolfgang Robert Schmidt (15 May 1933 Liebenseid / Westerwald). He joined Illing in Teluk Dalam in 1956.

²²⁸ 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.

²²⁹ 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.

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

²³¹ 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).

²³² 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.

²³³ 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.²³⁴ The male BNKP-leadership claimed that, as a rule, women on Nias were not able to fulfil the minimum school qualifications.²³⁵ Other sources reveal that the ministers (*pandita*) of the BNKP were unwilling to employ females in positions of authority.²³⁶ The RM regretted this attitude, not least, because it jeopardized the renewed deployment of Sister Blindow.²³⁷ 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 women²³⁸ 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 1955²³⁹, 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 Richter²⁴⁰ and Sister Ruth Jödicke²⁴¹ became her successors. Beginning in 1961, in Teluk Dalam in the south, Sister Ruth Sauer²⁴² and Sister Rosemarie Behrens²⁴³ 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.²⁴⁴ 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.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

²⁴⁴ 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*)²⁴⁵ in Ombölatä, 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 1936.²⁴⁶ Dörmann and Schneider played an important advisory role in the process of formulating the ten articles (plus a short preface).²⁴⁷ 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.²⁴⁸

²⁴⁵ Cf. A. Schneider, *Turia*, 1965, p. 76.

²⁴⁶ Cf. Ch. 5.2.2.1.

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

²⁴⁸ *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.²⁴⁹ 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).²⁵⁰ 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.²⁵¹

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 1939.²⁵² The initiative for a new start was taken by four Ono Niha from Lölöwua: H.B. Gantie, Lö'aefa Zebua, Folulu and Fangaro²⁵³, who were not satisfied with the church discipline of the BNKP.²⁵⁴ 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'.²⁵⁵ For two reasons,

²⁴⁹ Cf. Ch. 5.7.2.

²⁵⁰ '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.

²⁵¹ *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.

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

²⁵³ 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.

²⁵⁴ 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).

²⁵⁵ 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.²⁵⁶

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.²⁵⁷ In 1940, another Dutch Capuchin, Ildefonsus van Straalen arrived to assist Van der Weijden. Together, they founded a 'Catholic centre' in Hilisimaetanö.²⁵⁸ In the faith-instruction courses they offered to Ono Niha (June-December 1940 and February-August 1941)²⁵⁹, 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 Dakhi²⁶⁰ (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 1950-1951.²⁶¹ Their ranks were augmented in 1952/1953 by six German Capuchins from Tienshui (Kansu, China), who had fled from the Communists. Among them was Bishop Gratian Grimm.²⁶²

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

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).

²⁵⁶ 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.

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

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

²⁵⁹ 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.

²⁶⁰ 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.

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

²⁶² Cf. M. Booz, 'Bischof Gratian Grimm', in: M. Booz (ed.), *Werft die Netz 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.²⁶³ 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.²⁶⁴

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.²⁶⁵ It has, however, been much disputed, whether this was indeed a 'counter-mission' (Kosack²⁶⁶). 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'.²⁶⁷ Most of the Christians who joined the Roman Catholic Church were said to have come from the Fa'awösa.²⁶⁸ 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.²⁶⁹

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.²⁷⁰ 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.

²⁶³ 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.

²⁶⁴ 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.

²⁶⁵ 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.

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

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

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.* p. 172.

²⁶⁹ 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.

²⁷⁰ 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.²⁷¹

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'²⁷² 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.²⁷³ 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 Omböläta, Singamböwö Zebua²⁷⁴, be transferred to a much more remote

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

²⁷² 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.

²⁷³ 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.

²⁷⁴ 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)²⁷⁵ program. Zebua refused, not agreeing with the viewpoint of the synod board of the BNKP.²⁷⁶ 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 AMIN²⁷⁷, which is the abbreviation of *Angowuloa Masehi Idanoi Nias* (*Idanoi* was later changed to *Indonesia*).²⁷⁸ 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.²⁷⁹

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.²⁸⁰ 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.²⁸¹ 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.²⁸² 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*).

Ombölata.

²⁷⁵ 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.

²⁷⁶ Cf. interview with *Ephorus* Sohahao Mendröfa in *BRM*, 1961, p. 114.

²⁷⁷ 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.

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

²⁷⁹ 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).

²⁸⁰ 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.

²⁸¹ Cf. 'Protokol Rapat Sinode Orahua Niha Keriso Protestan' (RMG 2.815).

²⁸² 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 Haogö²⁸³, 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 Kosack²⁸⁴, 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.²⁸⁵ 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.²⁸⁶ This was the largest foreign-aid action ever in the history of the BNKP.²⁸⁷ As the 'representative of the godfather', *Präses* Joachim Beckmann²⁸⁸, the then head of the Rhenish Church, travelled to Nias to take part in the

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

²⁸⁴ 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.

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

²⁸⁶ Information from Jürgen Kosack, who coordinated the activities in Gunungsitoli.

²⁸⁷ 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.

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

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

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.²⁹⁰ Despite its grandeur²⁹¹, which surpassed that of the fiftieth anniversary, this anniversary had less impact on the development of church life than the fiftieth had had.²⁹² 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 1940.²⁹³

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')²⁹⁴ on the Batu Islands. The synod board (*pengurus besar*) consisted of nine members²⁹⁵, including Assistant-*Pandita* Sokobamböwö Nehe of Sigata as president and *Pandita* Kana Wa'ambö as minister-in-charge (*pandita umum*) - a kind of *pastor*

²⁸⁹ It was an important gesture of the newly elected *Ephorus* Tandromböro 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.

²⁹⁰ Cf. 'Programm-Vorbereitungen Jubiläum' (RMG 3.404).

²⁹¹ 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.

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

²⁹³ 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.

²⁹⁴ Arnold Steinhart, following Wäösarö 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).

²⁹⁵ 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*.²⁹⁶ Altogether, fifteen men were employed as salaried church workers.²⁹⁷ 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*.²⁹⁸ 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 Islands²⁹⁹, the responsibility had allegedly been transferred to the RM in October 1948.³⁰⁰ 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.³⁰¹

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., scholarships³⁰²). 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.³⁰³ A major problem was the fact that the BKP had not been legally recognized, so that there was

²⁹⁶ 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).

²⁹⁷ 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 (Hiligehe, Tanah Masa), Ondröita La'ia (Hiligehe, 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.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.* p. 6.

²⁹⁹ Cf. Ch. 5.5.5.

³⁰⁰ 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).

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

³⁰² *Ibid.* p. 26.

³⁰³ *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 Sumatra³⁰⁴, 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.³⁰⁵

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.³⁰⁶

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.³⁰⁷

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.³⁰⁸ 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*

³⁰⁴ 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.

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

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

³⁰⁷ 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).

³⁰⁸ 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 Ombölatá, resolved that the BKP merge into the BNKP.³⁰⁹ 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.³¹⁰ 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 Mendrófa in Wuppertal in 1961. In answer to this request, from June 1964 until May 1968, Rudolf Heering³¹¹, 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.³¹² 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.³¹³ 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 matters³¹⁴, 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.

³⁰⁹ 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 8.³⁰-10.⁰⁰ on 3 June 1960 (cf. 'Tertip Atjara Rapat Synode ke 25 di Ombölatá', RMG 2.804). W. Gulö, *Benih yang Tumbuh XIII*, 1983, p. 24, incorrectly places the merger in 1961. *Ephorus* S. Mendrófa 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.

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

³¹¹ 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*).

³¹² 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.

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

³¹⁴ 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.³¹⁵ This had been the last major stronghold of the primal religion on Nias.³¹⁶ In Fuge on Sigata, Batu Islands, the last prominent animist priestess was reported to be practising until about 1940.³¹⁷ 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.³¹⁸

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

³¹⁵ 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).

³¹⁶ 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.

³¹⁷ Cf. *EVB*, 58/1-4 (1940), p. 43.

³¹⁸ Cf. Ch. 7.2.1.

propaganda also became more aggressive.³¹⁹ 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.³²⁰ 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.³²¹ 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 discipline³²² – 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 Mari³²³, sometimes causing distressing dissension among the population.

5.8.3 Fa'awösa

The Fa'awösa³²⁴ 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 1930.³²⁵ Wilhelm Müller³²⁶, 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.³²⁷

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

³¹⁹ 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).

³²⁰ Cf. *EVB*, 53/2 (1935), p. 39.

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

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

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

³²⁴ 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.

³²⁵ 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.

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

³²⁷ 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.³²⁸ She became Ama Wohakhi's 'spiritual mother', and he her 'spiritual son'.³²⁹

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').³³⁰ 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 Natanaeli³³¹, the notorious chiefs Hukunidada of Fangedanö and Aseri of Tugala-Oyo, as well as the ambitious assistant-*demang* Jonata supported the *sekola wa'awösa*.³³²

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.³³³ The fact that polygamy was considered by the Fa'awösa to be no problem made the movement popular among some of the chiefs.³³⁴ 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 symbols³³⁵). At a certain stage, the emancipation from the missionaries was propagated, since they were considered to be no longer necessary as spiritual 'stair steps'.³³⁶ 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'.³³⁷ Contributions to the church and government taxes were also rejected.³³⁸ Another slogan was more political: 'separation from Europe'.³³⁹

³²⁸ Cf. *JBRM*, 1934 (1935), p. 71.

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

³³⁰ Cf. *JBRM*, 1932 (1933), p. 40.

³³¹ 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.

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

³³³ Cf. *BRM*, 1932, pp. 289-293.

³³⁴ Cf. *BRM*, 1939, pp. 72-73.

³³⁵ 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.

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

³³⁷ Cf. A. Schneider, *Sekola wa'awösa*, 1941, p. 307.

³³⁸ Cf. *Barmer Missionsblatt*, 1934, p. 82.

³³⁹ 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.³⁴⁰ 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'.³⁴¹

After 1936, the growth of the movement slowed down, partially because it was not successful in gaining government approval.³⁴² 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.³⁴³

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.³⁴⁴ 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'.³⁴⁵ 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.³⁴⁶

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'.³⁴⁷ 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.

³⁴⁰ Cf. A. Schneider, *Sekola wa'awösa*, 1941, p. 309.

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

³⁴² The Fa'awösa as a 'malafide' schismatic movement, cf. *Ver slag van het Zendingsconsulaat*, 1946, p. 69.

³⁴³ Cf. *BRM*, 1934, p. 219, p. 311.

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

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

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

³⁴⁷ W. Freytag, *Randbemerkungen*, 1941, p. 320.

5.8.4 Holiness Movement

Müller-Krüger reported³⁴⁸ 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.³⁴⁹

5.8.6 Seventh-Day Adventism

Activities of SDA on Nias are recorded as of 1932, much later than on the Batu Islands.³⁵⁰ Reportedly, they concentrated on the central and southern areas (i.e., Sifaoro'asi, Hilisimaetanö and Hilisatarö).³⁵¹ 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.³⁵²
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.³⁵³

³⁴⁸ 'Bericht-Nias', July 1950 (RMG 2.956).

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

³⁵⁰ Cf. Ch. 4.8.3.

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

³⁵² 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).

³⁵³ 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 Testament³⁵⁴, 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'.³⁵⁵ 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.³⁵⁶

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.³⁵⁷ Schröder and Steinhart feared the detrimental results of 'dual mission' in this sparsely-populated region, since the government did not intervene.³⁵⁸

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'³⁵⁹ – 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 nationalism³⁶⁰, 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.³⁶¹ 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

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

³⁵⁵ Cf. *BRM*, 1937, p. 13.

³⁵⁶ Cf. Ch. 6.2.2.2.

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

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

³⁵⁹ 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'.

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

³⁶¹ 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.³⁶²

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.³⁶³ 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*).³⁶⁴ He considered the 'cultural revolution' (*revolusi kebudayaan*)³⁶⁵ 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'³⁶⁶), while at the same time building up a genuine Indonesian identity, which had to be protected against the 'remote control'³⁶⁷ of neo-colonialism.³⁶⁸ 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*).³⁶⁹

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 burial³⁷⁰, as well as on whether the traditional *adat*-marriage should be acknowledged by the church. The missionaries,

³⁶² 'Laporan Rapat Anggota lengkap Partai Kristen Indonesia (PARKINDO), Tjabanng Gunungsitoli-Nias, tanggal 1 September 1953' (Arsip BNKP).

³⁶³ Cf. Ch. 6.5.3.2.

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

³⁶⁵ *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.

³⁶⁶ '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

³⁶⁷ '... 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

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

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

³⁷⁰ 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.³⁷¹ 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*)³⁷², 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.³⁷³ After the so-called Communist *coup d'état* (G-30S / PKI), on 30

³⁷¹ 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.

³⁷² 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.

³⁷³ 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.³⁷⁴ During the Soeharto era (1966-1998), former members of the PKI could not hold office in the BNKP.³⁷⁵ 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 churches³⁷⁶ 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

³⁷⁴ W. Lempp, *Benih yang Tumbuh XII*, 1976, p. 32.

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

³⁷⁶ 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 19th and 20th 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.

6 The Encounter between Christianity and Niasan Culture

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The encounter between Christianity and culture is not a new phenomenon. It has occurred from the beginning of the history of Christianity¹, and continued throughout the ages. The churches, and individual theologians, have approached the problem of Gospel and culture in various ways. In his classic study, *Christ and Culture*², Richard Niebuhr elaborates the following five major approaches that occur in this process of encounter:

1. *Christ against culture*, indicating a radical approach of denying the possibility of any existing relationship (co-existence) between faith and culture. Niebuhr describes the Christ against culture view, which encourages opposition, total separation, and hostility toward culture. Faith comes from God and it is pure. Culture, however, comes from human beings and is thus stained by sin. Therefore, culture must be rejected. To repent means to leave culture, which is evil, behind and to welcome salvation, which comes from God. Tertullian, Tolstoy, Menno Simons, and, in our day, Jacques Ellul are exponents of this position.
2. *Christ of culture*, signifying a cooperative approach which acknowledges the values of culture as being compatible with the Christian faith. The Christ of culture perspective is exactly the opposite of the perspective of Christ against culture, since it attempts to reconcile Christianity and culture, regardless of their differences. Therefore, values and elements of the individual cultures were adapted to the various expressions of Christianity.
3. *Christ above culture*, signifying a synthetic approach in the sense that Gospel and culture complement each other. The Christ above culture position attempts to correlate the fundamental questions of a culture with the corresponding answers of Christian revelation. Thomas Aquinas is the most prominent proponent of this view.
4. *Christ and culture as a paradox*, signifying a dualistic attitude which views Gospel and culture as being paradoxical, i.e., as belonging to two different worlds: the reign of God and this earthly existence. Human beings are seen as being members of both realms. They bear full responsibility for the prevailing culture, but at the same time they must be loyal to Jesus Christ. Luther adopted this view.
5. *Christ the transformer of culture*, signifying an attitude which emphasizes Christ's transformative powers. Culture is understood as being contaminated by sins. However, just as Christ has been victorious over sin, it is the task of the church to transform culture so that it may be in accordance with the Word

¹ Cf. N. Lossky (ed.), *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, 1991, p. 257. Cf. Acts 17:15-24.

² Cf. H.R. Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 1956.

of God. Augustine, Calvin, John Wesley, and Jonathan Edwards are the chief proponents of this last view.

Which of these types was used by missionaries to proclaim the Kingdom of God among the Ono Niha? In the encounter between Christianity and Niasan culture, the missionaries developed an increasingly differentiated approach. They completely rejected all rituals of the primal religion, teaching that such 'heathen' practices belonged to the past age of darkness. The *adu* and the *ere* were stigmatised as the symbols of evil. On the other hand, the missionaries tried to use some of the terms from the primal religion to explain Christianity, for instance, the name of God. This approach, however, sometimes led them to adopt a merely superficial meaning of the word, overlooking or not recognizing its deeper religious and cultural significance. As a consequence, even though they used indigenous terms to explain Christian teachings (e.g., *Eheha Ni'amoni'ö* for Holy Spirit, *So'aya* for Lord, *horö* as the term for sin, *fangorifi* as the term for salvation, and *osali* as the term for the church building), the people perceived these terms in the sense of their original meaning in the primal religion. Some few missionaries tried to adapt some elements of the ancient religion and culture to the Christian liturgy and worship service, including preaching.³ The missionaries also tried to use the Niasan language in translating the Bible and preparing teaching materials and also for the church liturgy. As a result, they helped to maintain the Niasan language and to upgrade it to a level equal with that of other languages in the world.

This chapter focuses on the encounter between Christianity and the *Niasan* culture, particularly concerning its effects on language and worship, the primal religion, customary law, and the social, economic and political aspects of life on Nias and the Batu Islands.

6.2 CHRISTIANITY AS COMMUNITY IN THE ONO NIHA SETTING

6.2.1 Christianization of the Niasan Language

Translation is the most common method to communicate the Gospel in a specific context.⁴ Literal translation is not as important as interpreting and expressing the meaning of idioms in accordance with the local language context. This preserves the dynamics and functions of the words.⁵ Especially in translating the Bible, the missionaries used the method of 'equivalent-dynamics', which begins by conceptualizing and understanding the biblical imageries and then trying to find an equivalent in the local language.⁶ The aim is to ensure that the audience or reader will have the same perception and understanding of the meaning as the original recipients of the Bible. Kraft, an anthropologist, notes that a valid theological truth must be translated trans-culturally using words and expressions that can be

³ In our time-span, a more contextual approach was favoured by Lett, Steinhart and Töpperwien.

⁴ L.J. Luzbetak, *The Church and Cultures*, 1988, p. 79. Cf. L. Sanneh, *Translating the Message*, 1989, pp. 51-54.

⁵ C.H. Kraft, *Christianity in culture*, 1981, pp. 269-270.

⁶ R.J. Schreiter, *Rancang Bangun Teologi Lokal*, 1991, p. 15.; cf. W.L. Steinhart, 'Tolken van Christus?', in: *De Opwekker*, 76/4, 1931.

understood by the local audience.⁷ In other words, a person can understand the message (Gospel) only if the messenger (missionary) has a creative relationship with the culture he or she is seeking to reach. In this way, the culture can become a vehicle of the Gospel.⁸

Western missionaries who worked in Indonesia believed that it is important to use either the *lingua franca* (national language Malay) or the local vernacular to preach the Gospel. In accordance with the policy of the missionary society, in some areas, such as Toraja, Poso, Central Java, East Java, Borneo, the Bataklands and also on Nias, the local language was used. In other regions, such as the Moluccas and Minahasa, Malay was preferred.⁹

From the outset, the missionaries on Nias used the *Li Nono Niha*¹⁰ in preaching the Gospel and as a medium in the mission schools. Compared with Adriani, who studied the local vernacular for a long period before he began translating the Bible into the Poso language¹¹, Denninger almost immediately applied his rudimentary Niasan language skills to the translation of the Gospel according to Luke.¹² As was already noticed critically by Neubronner van der Tuuk and some contemporary fellow missionaries on Nias¹³, the language used by Denninger was a mix of various Niasan dialects. Even though Denninger might have had a good intention in trying to create a unitary Niasan language, this failed, not so much because of aesthetics but because the Ono Niha simply could not understand it. Originally, Denninger had used the *Soembawa* dialect spoken by Ono Niha in Padang, but for his translation of Luke he used the North Niasan dialect as his standard, albeit arbitrarily using some terms from the dialect of South Nias. For example: in Luke 1:1 he used *manömanö* (South Niasan for 'story') instead of *waöwaö* (North Niasan), while in Luke 1:5 he used *balugu* (North Niasan for 'nobleman') instead of *si'ulu* (which is understood in South Nias).

Although Denninger's translations were not widely used, his prefatory work was the foundation stone for later translations.¹⁴ It was Sundermann's work that received most recognition.¹⁵ Little acknowledgement has been given, however, to the fact that his success was based significantly on very close interaction with the Ono Niha, especially with his co-worker in Dahana, *Salawa Fali'era*, better known as Ama Mandranga.¹⁶

On the Batu Islands, Frickenschmidt translated some Bible teaching materials into the local Batunese vernacular. Later, Missionary Schröder translated parts of the Bible, but was criticized for that by RM-missionaries who wanted to have only one Niasan Bible as a symbol of unity, namely Sundermann's. The Inspector of the RM

⁷ C.H. Kraft, *Christianity in culture*, 1981, p. 297. Cf. Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, 2002, pp. 37-44.

⁸ E.A. Nida, *Message and Mission*, 1975, pp. 194-195.

⁹ Cf. Th. van den End and J. Weitjens, *Ragi Carita II*, 2002, pp. 306-307. Cf. J. Kruyt, *Kabar Keselamatan di Poso*, 1977, pp. 298-303.

¹⁰ Cf. Cf. 2.3.3.

¹¹ J. Kruyt, *Kabar Keselamatan di Poso*, 1977, pp. 308-314.

¹² Cf. Ch. 4.3.2.3.

¹³ G. Menzel, *Denninger*, 1990, p. 11.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* Cf. F.D. Harefa and R. Heering (eds.), *Waöwaö Duria Somuso Dödö ba Danö Niha*, 1971, p. 3.

¹⁵ Ch. 4.3.2.3.

¹⁶ J.L. Swellengrebel, *In Leijdeckers Voetspoor*, vol. I, pp. 219-230.

in Barmen also demanded that the DLM not support Schröder's work.¹⁷ However, this was rejected by the DLM, as the Batunese Christians had difficulties with the dialect used by Sundermann. Later, Schröder and Steinhart translated and published the Gospels according to Mark and Matthew.¹⁸ These translations were particularly helpful in communicating the Gospel on the Batu Islands. Unfortunately, no one continued this translation project. When the BKP merged with the BNKP in 1960¹⁹, it was decided that the *Soera Ni'amoni'ö* of Sundermann be used as the standard translation for the entire church. Even the Roman Catholic Church on Nias recognizes Sundermann's translation. Nevertheless, the fact is that even until today, many *Ono Niha Keriso* (believers) in South Nias, especially in Teluk Dalam and on the Batu Islands, find it difficult to understand this translation.²⁰

The translation of the Bible into the Nias language was a great contribution to Niasan culture. It was not only important for the propagation of the Gospel, but also helped to preserve the vernacular language, lifting it to the same level with major languages in the world.

How did the *Ono Niha* react to the Bible in their mother tongue? As long as the mission work was restricted to the *rapatgebied*, the Bible was regarded as a magic object, similar to talismans or amulets. During his discussion with Denninger in Iraonogeba, the *ere* of that village was surprised to hear the missionary's explanation of the Gospel. The *ere* came to the conclusion that Denninger had obtained this knowledge from his 'magic book' called *buku Lowalangi*.²¹ Similarly, in South Nias, initially the people took the Bible as the *buku Hia* (the book of Hia). During a meeting between Missionary Borutta and Chief Barani Dakhi, the latter announced:²²

Our ancestors came from Hia and Sirao, the source of life. We are the descendants of Hia. We have placed Hia's heart in the wood (the *adu*, explanation by the author). In the past we have believed that Hia's heart is higher than God, the Lord of the Whites, who is the descendant of Hia's daughter. This is not true, because Hia has given a book to the white people. He did not give us this book because he was afraid we would lose it during hunting. Now, the white people have brought this book to us. This means that the era of Hia's heart has passed and the new era, which is the era of the book of Hia, has come.

After this, Barani Dakhi surrendered his *adu* to the missionary. This deed symbolized that the chief broke his bond with Hia's heart and made a covenant with Hia's Book (i.e., the Bible).

Later, after the Gospel had spread across the whole of Nias and many *Ono Niha* had acquired the skill of reading, the biblical message itself attracted the *Ono Niha* to Christianity. They now regarded the Bible no longer as a magic object, but as the *huku Lowalangi* (the law of God) which was different from the *huku fōna* (the old law of the primal religion). This understanding was built upon the teaching material provided by Thomas and Lagemann, the *Famahaö ba Gamoeata Zoera Ni'amoni'ö*

¹⁷ Letter to DLM, Pulau Tello, 16 June 1924 (GGA 552/41).

¹⁸ Anonymous, *Soere Seboea Dödö nisoera Mareko*, 1934; cf. Anonymous, *Mateo*, 1937.

¹⁹ Cf. Ch. 5.7.3.

²⁰ W. Gulö, *Benih yang Tumbuh XIII*, 1983, pp. 215-216.

²¹ *BRM*, 1869, p. 54.

²² W.R. Schmidt, *Das unbeendete Gespräch*, 1967, pp. 30-31. A similar experience has been recorded concerning *Balö zi'ulu* Saonigeho of Bawömataluo, cf. Anonymous, *Barmen Missionsblatt*, 1912, p. 60.

(Understanding the Character of the Bible). In this book, the authors explained that the Bible is the *huku Lowalangi*, referring to the character of the Lowalangi (God) as the 'One' who determines what is right and what is wrong in accordance with his will.²³ In the light of this teaching the impression was created that the Bible was something similar to the *fondrakö* (the institution for resolving and authorizing the law).²⁴ When the *fangesa dödö sebua* movement swept across Nias, the Ono Niha began to have a sense of ownership of the Bible. They began to read and ponder upon the Word of God.²⁵

Beside the Bible, the missionaries also translated catechism materials such as Bible stories both from the New and Old Testaments, which were published under the title of *manömanö* (stories) as well as other teaching materials.²⁶ The book that attracted the Ono Niha most was *Tödö Niha* (the translated version of *The Little Book of the Heart* by Gossner²⁷). Ndrohugö from Faekhu, for example, was converted to Christianity and discarded his *adu* after his brother showed him the pictures and told him the story of *Tödö Niha*.²⁸ Another example is Solagö from Lölöwa'u. At first, he thought *Tödö Niha* was a 'magic book'. Then he went to Krumm for an explanation which resulted in him being attracted to the Gospel and later in his convincing his brother, Fadoli, the chief of the Iraono Huna²⁹ to convert to Christianity.³⁰

6.2.1.1 Lowalangi as the Name of God

One of the most important terms for communicating the message of the Bible is the name of God (*Elohim*). Denninger translated God as Lowalangi.³¹ Based on Nieuwenhuisen and Von Rosenberg's research³², as well as his own field studies, Denninger concluded that the Ono Niha recognized a supernatural power, Lowalangi, as the Creator of the earth.³³ According to him, Lowalangi was the highest God who administered the affairs of life and death. The Ono Niha also regarded Lowalangi as the Supreme Being to whom the *ere* could offer prayers through their *adu* ceremonies.³⁴ Denninger noticed that even though there were other

²³ J.W. Thomas and H. Lagemann, *Famahaö ba gamoeata zoera Ni'amoni'ö*, 1900.

²⁴ A. Pieper, *Paedagogiek*, 1923, p. 145.

²⁵ A. Pieper, *Die Auswirkung der Erweckung*, 1928, p. 6.

²⁶ Some of the most important books used were: 1. *Famahaö ba Lala Wangorifi*, a translation by Sundermann of C. Ernst, *Die Christliche Heilslehre*. 2. *Fekoli Niha Keriso wanawa Banua si Yawa (The Pilgrim's Progress)* by John Bunyan). 3. *Femanga Gö Ni'amoni'ö* (Holy Communion) by Eduard Friest. 4. *Katechismus Kecil* (the Short Catechism of Martin Luther) and *Katechismus Luther nifo'eluaha dali daromali Lowalangi*, translated by A. Luck, as well as 5. *Fanoetoeroe Lala ba Wamahao Sangandrö Famayagö Idanö ba he Iraoni Ni'a'aro'ö* (instructions for Catechumens preparing for baptism) by A. Luck.

²⁷ Cf. 3.2.1.

²⁸ Anonymous, *Niassische Häuptlinge I*, 1911, p. 9.

²⁹ Cf. Ch. 4.4.3.2 and Ch. 6.3.2.1.

³⁰ *BRM*, 1900, p. 160.

³¹ Cf. Ch. 2.3.2 and Ch. 2.4.1.

³² J.T. Nieuwenhuisen and H.C.B. von Rosenberg, 'Verslag omtrent het eiland Nias en deszelfs bewoners', in: *Verhandelingen van het Koninklijk Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen* 30, 1863.

³³ *BRM*, 1867, p. 144.

³⁴ *BRM*, 1868, p. 142. Cf. J.T. Nieuwenhuisen and H.C.B. von Rosenberg, 'Verslag omtrent het eiland Nias en deszelfs bewoners', 1863, p. 12. Based on the creation myth, Nieuwenhuisen and von Rosenberg said that the most high god in the belief of Ono Niha was called 'Lubulangi' (in South

high gods in Niasan mythology, Lowalangi played the most significant role in the devotion of the Ono Niha since he involved himself actively in their lives.

The Academic Debate

Some anthropologists and missionaries who came after Denninger, however, strongly disagreed with his choice. They believed that Lowalangi was not the Supreme Being, but that Sihai was higher than Lowalangi. Others held that either Uwu Lowalangi or Inada Dao was the highest deity.

At the beginning, Sundermann also objected to Denninger's choice for Lowalangi, because, through his research, he had come to the conclusion that the Ono Niha did not build their religion upon religious feeling (*religiöse Gefühle*)³⁵ and that they had no personal relationship to a supernatural power. They may have in the past; but they had lost this (*abhanden gekommen*). The Ono Niha, according to Sundermann, had no belief in life after death. The primal religion came down to only three basic principles:³⁶

1. The prevention and healing of physical illness;
2. Exorcism of evil spirits;
3. Immunity against curses.

Sundermann held that the meaning of Lowalangi was very ambiguous, originating from *lö* (meaning 'no'), *ba* (meaning 'in' or 'at'), and *langi* (meaning 'horizon' or 'sky'). Therefore, the basic meaning of Lowalangi was 'he who cannot be seen in the sky'.³⁷ Furthermore, Sundermann argued that Lowalangi was popular only because this name was often used in colloquial speech, such as for example: 'it depends on Lowalangi' (*balazi Lowalangi*), 'Lowalangi knows' (*i'ila Lowalangi*), 'Lowalangi hears my cry' (*irongo ligu Lowalangi*), especially also in curses, such as: 'may Lowalangi harm you' (*yamufatörö horö Lowalangi*), 'may Lowalangi crush you', (*yamuhöndrögö'ö Lowalangi*), 'may Lowalangi break you like breaking spinach' (*yamufamatö höwa ndra'ugö Lowalangi*), etc.³⁸ On the contrary, the word Lowalangi was hardly ever being used in a religious setting. People seldom prayed to Lowalangi. Only occasionally, when they needed Lowalangi's help and blessing, would they say: 'may God help you' (*yamutolo'ö Lowalangi*). When facing their enemies, the Ono Niha would say, 'the revenge belongs to you, oh Lowalangi' (*halö mbalögu Lowalangi*).³⁹

Despite these arguments, Sundermann took over the term Lowalangi, as well as most other basic choices for terms from the primal religion made by Denninger. The reason for this was more pastoral than academic. Since the name Lowalangi had been used in the communication of the Gospel for some time, it was unwise to change the practice.⁴⁰

Nias: 'Halowalangi') created from the wind and wood. Lubulangi was described as the source and creator of all good things.

³⁵ W.H. Sundermann, *Der Kultus der Niasser*, 1891 (RMG 1.025), p. 1.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ W.H. Sundermann, 'Der Name Gottes (Lowalangi) im Niassischen', in: *Notulen Bataviaasch Genootschap XL*, 1902, p. 79.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ W.H. Sundermann, *Der Kultus der Niasser*, 1891 p. 2.

⁴⁰ W.H. Sundermann, 'Die Psychologie des Niassers', in: G. Warneck (ed.), *AMZ* 14, 1887, pp. 289-290. In this myth, Lowalangi was said to have come from the *Solambayö nga'eu* tree. This tree grew

Steinhart, on the Batu Islands, was also in favour of the use of Lowalangi, even though he too had not found any evidence to support the theory that Lowalangi was the Creator. According to the mythology of the Batu Islands, the highest deity in the pantheon was Inada Dao and not Lowalangi.⁴¹ Lowalangi played a secondary role in the daily religious life of the people. Nevertheless, Steinhart also continued to use Lowalangi as the name for the God of the Bible because it had become popular on the mission field.

From the point of view of non-missionaries, there was some harsh criticism about the choice of Lowalangi. Elio Modigliani was an Italian who had done research on the primal religion of the Ono Niha in the years 1885 and 1886 and based his theory on genealogies recorded by Thomas and Sundermann. He held that the Ono Niha had no theistic religion, but they were purely idolatrous.⁴² They were neither polytheistic nor monotheistic, but believed only in their ancestors and worshiped only their *adu*.⁴³ Therefore, according to Modigliani, the names in the myths of the Ono Niha did not refer to gods but to ancestors.

E.E.W.Gs. Schröder, a Dutch *controleur* who served on Nias from 1906 to 1910, had gathered a lot of myths, litanies (*hoho*), parables and proverbs (*amaedola*) from different parts of Nias. From his data, as well as that of the missionaries, he concluded that the Ono Niha believed in a high god. This, however, was not Lowalangi, but Uwu Lowalangi, which means the root or the ancestor of Lowalangi. Uwu Lowalangi, who was also called Mahai, was the invisible creator of Lowalangi.⁴⁴ Based on this, Schröder concluded that the reason why Christianity grew so slowly on Nias was because the missionaries had chosen the wrong name for God.⁴⁵

Another Dutch officer who studied the primal religion and culture of the Ono Niha was Agner Møller. He found out that the core of Nias spirituality was the belief in the unification with the ancestors. The union with the *mala'ika zatua* (spirit of the ancestors) gave the Ono Niha strength and was the deeper reason why they observed the traditions. They were eager to observe the *adat* in order to keep the harmony in the cosmos, which included the upper-world of the ancestral spirits.⁴⁶ Just like Schröder, Møller held that Lowalangi was not an appropriate name for the Christian God. Neither was Lowalangi the highest god nor the most active one. According to Møller, Silewe Nazarata played a much more important role in the primal religion. Silewe Nazarata had the power to give life, to kill and to revive. Silewe Nazarata

as the result of the meeting of thirty winds. Lowalangi is a fruit of this tree. From the tree *Solambayö nga'eu*, a human being lived, but then died. However, from the heart (*tödö*) of that human being emerged Tora'a tree. This tree had golden fruit. From this golden tree, a human child was born. It was Lowalangi who had transformed the golden tree into a human being, while the one who gave soul (*noso*) was Baliu, the child of Lowalangi. The name of this newly born human being was Tuha Nilölö nangi. From this human being emerged other human beings, but they still stayed in the upper world. It was their grandchildren who descended to the world, which was Tanö Niha.

⁴¹ W.L. Steinhart, *Niassche Teksten I en II*, 1934, p. 330.

⁴² E. Modigliani, *Un Viaggio a Nias*, 1890, pp. 610-649.

⁴³ *Ibid.* pp. 613-614.

⁴⁴ E.E.W.Gs. Schröder, *Nias*, 1917, pp. 466-471.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* 1917, p. 682.

⁴⁶ A.G. Møller, 'Beitrag zur Beleuchtung des religiösen Lebens der Niasser', *Internationales Archiv für Ethnographie* 32, 1934, pp. 121-122. Møller was a medical doctor who worked in Nias in 1923-1927. He traveled around Nias Island and tried to destroy the source of illness in the community. He married a Nias girl from Bawölowalani village, the younger sister of *Si'ulu* Bawölowalani.

was portrayed as a hermaphrodite god or goddess who could take on different forms and had magic powers. Life and death were in her hands.⁴⁷

Peter Suzuki⁴⁸ pointed out that the problem with the name of Lowalangi was that the Ono Niha believed in a dualism of the upper-world and the under-world. Suzuki holds that Lowalangi was the god of the upper-world, while his brother Laturedanö was the god of the under-world. This, however, did not mean that Lowalangi was good and Laturedanö was bad. They both could bestow either blessings or curses, depending on the sacrifices brought by the *ere*. According to the myth, in the beginning the high god Sihai came forth from a big storm. Sihai, however, died instantly and from his heart grew the tree of life (*tora'a*). This tree later gave birth to Lowalangi, Laturedanö, Afökha, Nadaoya and some evil spirits. Suzuki also held that Silewe Nazarata played a very important role in creating a harmonious cosmos. This hermaphrodite was a bridge between the gods and the humans. We may add that this somewhat resembles the role of Jesus Christ in the New Testament. But, even though Suzuki points to the fact that Silewe Nazarata was identified with Lowalangi⁴⁹, her bisexuality surely made it impossible for the missionaries to use the term Silewe Natarata for God.

Recently, Johannes M. Hämmerle summarized the still on-going debate about the choice for the name for the biblical God as follows: 'Thus, in Lowalangi we have a melodious, but also very ambiguous and overburdened name'.⁵⁰ Given the multitude of Niasan myths, which differ strongly from region to region, the name Lowalangi for 'God', despite all the above mentioned difficulties, still seems to be the most representative to the Ono Niha.

Lowalangi as Transcendent and Immanent God

When Lowalangi was used for the name of God in the Bible, the Ono Niha did not seem to have had a problem with this choice. Lowalangi was not a new name to them. The problem arose only when the missionaries challenged the Ono Niha's understanding of Lowalangi. For the Ono Niha, Lowalangi was linked to the *adu*, while the missionaries condemned the *adu* and taught that Lowalangi reveals himself only in his 'Word'.⁵¹

The role of the *adu* in its relation to Lowalangi did not get the attention of the missionaries. As a matter of fact, had they understood the role of the *adu* correctly, they would have been able to understand its meaning in relation to Lowalangi better, namely that the *adu* represented the god in the upper world on earth. According to Ama Wiliba Sadawa, an anthropologist from Gomo (according to legend the place of origin of all *adu*), when Hia arrived in Gomo, he built an *osali* as a place known as *osali Nadu* where they venerated the *adu* as *Lowalanginia*, which was similar to Teteholi Ana'a.⁵² Ama Wa'ö Telaumbanua, a son of a *tuhenöri* from Gomo,

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* pp. 134-139.

⁴⁸ P. Suzuki, *The Religious System and Culture of Nias, Indonesia*, 1959, pp. 1-24.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* p. 15.

⁵⁰ J.M. Hämmerle, *Nias – eine eigene Welt*, 1999, p. 302; Cf. P. Suzuki, *The Religious System and Culture of Nias, Indonesia*, 1959, pp. 299-307.

⁵¹ *BRM*, 1868, p. 54. Compare to the dialogue of Denninger with the *ere* in Gunungsitoli when the wife of *Salawa* Iraonogeba was sick. Read furthermore section 6.3.1 about Denninger.

⁵² Interview with Ama Wiliba Sadawa on 15 February 2004 in Gomo.

reaffirmed this statement saying that the Ono Niha believed in Lowalangi who reigned in the upper world, but to them this Lowalangi was their ancestral spirit.⁵³

Prior to the coming of the missionaries, the term Lowalangi was also used to refer to parents, uncles, people from noble birth, advisors, or even *ere*. Sometimes the *adu* itself was called Lowalangi.⁵⁴ Later, after Christianity had spread on Nias and the Batu Islands and began to replace the primal religion, people began to know Lowalangi as the God of the Bible who reveals himself in his creation and who has redeemed the world through Jesus Christ.⁵⁵ In his commentary on the explanation of the third commandment by Martin Luther, Lück held that that Lowalangi is 'Yahweh', 'the one who really exists, who is the beginning and the end' (*si ya'iyā'ia manō, si lō bōrōta ba si lō amozua*). He is the Creator, Owner, Ruler and Judge of this world (*Sombōi, Sokhō, Samatōrō, and Sanguhuku*). He is the almighty, living God, the Most High.⁵⁶

Although the church taught that Lowalangi was the God of the Bible, it was not easy to change the old belief of the people. In the primal religion, *Lowalangi Adu* was known as *sangehowu* (the one who blesses) or the one who sends calamities. Therefore, the Ono Niha understood the Lowalangi taught by the missionaries in terms of their old belief as the God who blesses and punishes.⁵⁷ There was a split of belief; while formally observing the Christian teaching they practically prayed to the *mala'ika zatua* (the ancestral spirit), as well as to other spirits. They kept on believing that illness was caused by evil spirits. The missionaries took this phenomenon as an influence of the 'old law' (*si torōi huku fōna*) and, aided by the *guru*, tried to eradicate these 'wrong' beliefs – with little success.

Lowalangi as the Source of the Law

In many cases, the Ono Niha initially received the missionaries as people who had come to make straight the 'Law of Lowalangi' (*khoikhoi Lowalangi*).⁵⁸ This was based on the belief of Lowalangi as the lawgiver. The Ono Niha believed that when their ancestors had come from Teteholi Ana'a they had brought with them a set of laws, as well as measuring instruments such as the *afore, lauru, fali'era* – which are generally held in high esteem as symbols of justice. This law was also related to the *amakhoita*, both the *amakhoita zatua* (the parents' advice) and the *amakhoita mbanua* (the customary law administered through *fondrakō*).

With the use of Lowalangi's name, the Ono Niha began to perceive the Christian God as the Lord of the *fondrakō*. In order to obtain salvation, one had to obey the *huku lowalangi*. This gave to the Christian faith a legalistic character⁵⁹,

⁵³ Interview with Ama Wa'ō Telaumbanua on 14 February 2004 in Gomo. Cf. a letter made from wood from the Batu Islands to the DLM (GGA 552/41) which conveyed that in pre-Christian times people believed in *la'olowalangigō mbekhu* (ancestral spirit), symbolized by the *adu*.

⁵⁴ J. M. Hämmerle, *Ritus Patung Harimau*, 1996, p. 75-78.

⁵⁵ A. Lück, *Fanoetoeroe Lala ba Wamahaō Sangandrō Famayagō Idanō ba he Iraono Ni'a'aro'ō*, 1931.

⁵⁶ A. Lück, *Katechismus Luther: Nifo'eluaha dali daroma li Lowalangi, famokai gera'era ba zangai halōwō*, 1934, p. 27-28.

⁵⁷ *Toeria Hoelo Batoe*, 2/6 (1930). It was said that those who prayed and praised God would receive blessings, but those who mocked God would be punished.

⁵⁸ *BRM*, 1866, p. 370. Cf. *BRM*, 1867, p. 325. One concrete example for this situation was the experience of Ködding in Fagulō. When Ködding told the people of Fagulō of his intention to proclaim the Good News from God, the Almighty and Creator of all things, they called him *sangatulō choi-choi Lowalangi* (a person who elaborates the rules of God).

⁵⁹ *BRM*, 1900, p. 159-163. The term *huku Lowalangi* was popularized during the preaching of the

which eventually led to the formation of the *amakhoita* as church discipline, containing all the rules for daily religious practice that would prevent people to slide back into the *huku fōna*.

Lowalangi as the Source of Power

In dealing with problems, natural disasters, illness, and other kinds of suffering, the Ono Niha would seek Lowalangi's power for help. They called him So'aya or So'aya Göba, names from the primal religion which the missionaries used to translate 'Lord' (Adonai, κύριος). These terms were also often used to describe the power of Lowalangi. *So'aya* literally means 'the one who is immune'. The verb *mo'aya* means 'to be immune' or 'to have an extraordinary power'. Those who had the *mo'aya* would be called as *so'aya gelemu*.⁶⁰ Steinhart said that *so'aya* could also mean 'medicine' or an 'instrument to protect people from magic'.

So'aya was also often used to refer to Jesus Christ as Lord (*Yesu So'aya*), the ruler over all spirits. The Ono Niha believed that Jesus Christ is the Saviour because he releases human beings from all evil powers. Jesus Christ was not so much the suffering Son of God, as he was the hero who possessed supernatural powers. Whoever has a relationship with *so'aya*, will share in his great strength. For this reason, many Ono Niha were attracted to Christianity.⁶¹

Charismatic preachers such as Dalimanö Hia or Ama Haogö⁶² drew the masses in the 1960s exactly because he called on the people to seek 'God's power' (*fa'abölö Lowalangi*) through the sacred names of God used by Israel.⁶³ He considered it his duty to lead his followers to the real 'white magic' (*elemu*) and confessed that he taught the believers to give priority to physical needs because in the past the missionaries only taught about 'the salvation of soul'.


Ama Haogö used the same methods that were used by the primal religion but he built his teaching upon verses from the Bible.⁶⁴ Kosack, who knew Ama Haogö personally, said that he used the name of God and the ancient words of the Bible because those words had something in common with the primal religion in Nias.

missionaries to distinguish it from the *huku fōna*. A person who had become a Christian was called a follower of *huku Lowalangi*, whereas those who still practiced the primal religion were classified as the followers of the *huku fōna*.

⁶⁰ W.L. Steinhart, *Karakteristiek geloof*, 1930, p. 369.

⁶¹ *Ibid.* pp. 369-370. Steinhart said that Christ never agreed to compromise with the world, but to transform it. Nevertheless, Steinhart considered the more magical understanding of the Ono Niha about Christ as authentic, and therefore characteristic.

⁶² Cf. D. Hia, 'Dogmatika', the script was not published (1962), Cf. 5.6.4.3.

⁶³ The minutes of the board meeting, 20 March 1967. The name of God was *El* and only those who knew this name can receive salvation (Rom 8:26). This means the people who knew *El* will be helped by the Holy Spirit to do the will of God. To possess this 'power' there was a need to say the word 'Emanuel', by saying: *Em* - and *U*. According to Dalimanö Hia, *U* was not a letter in the alphabet, therefore there was no need to say it, and *El* means holy, it cannot be written down. *Em* means *hadali so'ia* (till he exists), *an* means *ha dali ia* (it depends on him) and *U* means *Ya'ia zalawa hadia ia fefu* (His is the highest of all).  this drawing was done to explain *El*. Hia elaborated that the left line was Yahwe together with the Ten Commandments. The right line was Jesus and the lower line was the Holy Spirit. While the period in the middle was *El*, based on Jn 1:1, 1:4, 1 Cor 12:4, 16; 15:45).

⁶⁴ Important verses from the Bible in the 'Power Theology' of Ama Haogö were: Ps 84:6, Mt 6:9; Lk 9:1, Jn 1:12, 1:18, 11:12-26, 12:28; 16:23-27, 17:6; 20:31; Acts 1:8, 4:9-12, 17:27; Rom 3:12, 10:13-15; 1 Cor 14:1 and Phil 2:8-11. He was convinced that 'the power' of the Christian God was by far more mighty than the powers of 'black magic' (Mk 16:16-18; Lk 10:19; Rom 10:13-15, 1 Cor 12:4-11; Eph 6:10-17; 1 Jn 5:4-18).

Formerly, the *ere* used mantras to subdue the evil spirits. Ama Haogö also approached the people through their worldview but instead of the *ere*'s mantras, he used the verses of the Bible.⁶⁵ Because his teachings were not in line with the missionaries' teachings, in 1967, Ama Haogö was excommunicated from the BNKP and his teachings condemned as heresy.⁶⁶

The case of Ama Haogö shows that contextualization can not merely be a matter of pouring new wine into old wineskins; or the other way around. Applying the Gospel to the local context has to focus on finding points of contact in the primal religion and using them to transport the liberating message of the Kingdom of God.⁶⁷ Unfortunately, the BNKP had not used the opportunity to enter a creative theological discussion when faced with the teachings of Ama Haogö has lived in the hearts of many *Ono Niha Keriso*.

6.2.1.2 Yesu Keriso as Name of Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ's name had never been translated into the local language. The translators only adjusted it to the local spelling. The last letter 's' in Jesus and 't' in Christ were dropped because the *Li Nono Niha* has no closing consonants. Therefore, the name Yesu Keriso was something absolutely new with no roots in the primal religion. When, however, the missionaries explained Jesus' status and role, they faced problems. When they taught Jesus as the mediator between God and human being, they practically described him as an *adu*.⁶⁸ But when they announced Jesus as the 'Son of God' who came from heaven, they equated him with Hia, the Ono Niha's ancestor who came from Teteholi Ana'a. The Ono Niha thought that if Jesus is the son of Lowalangi, then he must be equal to Hia who also came from Lowalangi. The missionaries, however, rejected this Niasan interpretation, introducing, instead, their rather European – if not Germanic – understanding. As time went by, the Ono Niha learned to distinguish Jesus Christ from *adu* or Hia, but whether they developed a biblical understanding is rather doubtful.

As mentioned before, Jesus Christ was also given the title *So'aya* with its particular, rather problematic original meaning. Another word used by Sundermann to translate John 21:15-25 was *Toea* which means grandfather, ancestor or the most venerable person – the source of all blessings. The word derives from *Toeha*, which Sundermann translated it as idol (German: *Götze*).⁶⁹ *Toea* is the person holding the highest office or position in the community. For this reason, the local people also referred the missionaries as *Toea*.

By using *Toea* or *Toeha* for Jesus Christ the Ono Niha regarded him similar to the highest nobleman (*salawa* or *si'ulu*) in the village (*banua*). This became evident in the songs of the Great Awakening (*sinunö wangesa dödö*), in which Jesus Christ was addressed as *So'aya* and *Toea* in the meaning of the Judge who will come and lead his people out of the sufferings of this world towards salvation and bliss.⁷⁰

⁶⁵ J. Kosack, interview with the authors on 8 June 2002 in Wuppertal. Cf. W. Lempp, *Benih yang Tumbuh XII*, 1976, pp. 19, 31.

⁶⁶ Cf. Ch. 5.6.4.3. Cf. W. Gulö, *Benih yang Tumbuh XIII*, 1983, p. 25.

⁶⁷ E.G. Singgih, *Dari Israel ke Asia*, 1982, p. 31.

⁶⁸ *BRM*, 1868, pp. 54-55, cf. ch. 2.4.2.

⁶⁹ Cf. H. Sundermann, *Niassisch-Deutsches Wörterbuch*, 1905, pp. 210, 212.

⁷⁰ Cf. J. Kosack, *Grundzüge einer Erweckungstheologie in niassischen Erweckungsliedern*, 1964.

The explanation above shows the correlation between the choices of words with the people's worldview. Even though the missionaries tried to appropriate the words with the biblical meaning, they could not abolish the Ono Niha's perception which was linked to the original meaning of the words in the primal religion. On the other hand, the perception of the missionaries was also not 'pure', but coloured by their own, specific Western culture and theology. As times pass by, words and meanings also change. The current generation has a different understanding of the word *Toea*. The problem, however, remains that Jesus Christ is referred to as *Toea* which means grandfather, whereas God the Creator is referred to as Lowalangi which means Father. Is Jesus Christ higher than God the Father?⁷¹

6.2.1.3 Eheha Ni'amoni'ö as Name of the Holy Spirit

The word *eheha* is known all over Nias, except for the Batu Islands. *Eheha* means charisma, strength and wisdom possessed only by some nobles. *Eheha* can be passed down to the eldest son when someone dies, by putting one's mouth on his dying father's mouth before he breathes his last breath.⁷² *Eheha* looks like foam or animal fat. If the son is not strong enough he may fall unconscious while receiving his father's *eheha*. In the case that the son is still a young boy the *eheha* can be kept in a *tokosa* vessel made of gold.⁷³ The Ono Niha believed that *eheha* gives wisdom, skills and charisma and is a very important element in leadership.⁷⁴

Eheha then was used by the missionaries for 'Holy Spirit'. God's Spirit is *Eheha Lowalangi* and the Holy Spirit is *Eheha Ni'amoni'ö*.⁷⁵ Based on some teaching materials, *Eheha Ni'amoni'ö* is the Spirit of God the Father sent by Jesus to all believers (Jn 15:26). *Eheha Ni'amoni'ö* calls people and enables them to respond to and to believe in Jesus. *Eheha Ni'amoni'ö* purifies our hearts, comforts, strengthens, and take care of us.⁷⁶ The translators were convinced that the *eheha* had the same meaning for the local people as the word spirit in the Bible, namely *ruach* in the Old Testament and *pneuma* in the New Testament which means breath or wind (see Jn 20:22).⁷⁷

When the people in the North, East, Central and West of Nias heard about *eheha*, they easily received the teachings about it, especially the nobles. Only in South Nias, particularly on the Batu Islands, where there had been no such word in the Niasan vocabulary, the people found it difficult to understand what was meant.

⁷¹ LAI, *Satu Alkitab Beragam Terjemahan: Kumpulan Makalah Seminar*, 2005, pp. 78-79.

⁷² *Toeria*, 2/10 (1915).

⁷³ H. Sundermann, *Die Psychologie des Niassers*; 1887, pp. 298-299.

⁷⁴ Cf. Ch. 2.5.4.2.

⁷⁵ W.L. Steinhart, *De Christianiseering van het Niassche begrip 'heilig'*, 1929, pp. 47-58. The term used on the Batu Islands was not *Eheha Ni'amoni'ö* but *Eheha Sanamoni'ö*. The reason is that *ni'amoni'ö* is the passive form, which means 'sanctified' or 'the one who is hallowed'. Thus, it is impossible to use the word *ni'amoni'ö* since a human being cannot sanctify God. The word *sanamoni'ö*, however, which is favoured by Steinhart, means 'God sanctifies'. Steinhart said that *Eheha Sanamoni'ö* then has the correct biblical meaning, namely that the Holy Spirit sanctifies. *Ni'amoni'ö* or *sanamoni'ö* is rooted in the word *amonita* which means self-control out of respect for something. *Amonita* also means 'to be afraid of something magical'. Therefore, when this term is combined with the word *eheha* there is a magical understanding and something secretive about *Eheha* who gives power, wisdom, and abilities.

⁷⁶ H. Sundermann, *Lala Wangorifi*, nd, p. 5. Cf. H. Sundermann, *Famahaö ba Lala Wangorifi*, 1892, pp. 32-36.

⁷⁷ H. Sundermann, *Die Psychologie des Niassers*, 1887, pp. 298-299.

They challenged the missionaries about the meaning of *eheha*. In *Toeria Hoelo Batoe*, the mission magazine, Steinhart explained in details the meaning of *eheha* as how it was understood by the people in North, East, Central and West Nias.⁷⁸ He also wrote that Christians ought to know that *eheha* only belongs to Lowalangi. Like *noso Lowalangi* (the soul of God), *eheha* has no beginning and no end. *Eheha* can also be referred to as *söfu Lowalangi* (the sting of God), *hanuhanu Lowalangi* (the breath of God), or *fa'awölö Lowalangi* (the strength of God). According to Genesis 1, the *Eheha* of Lowalangi was moving over the water. The Old Testament shows that the *Eheha* of Lowalangi stays not long in people and that only certain people receive the *Eheha Lowalangi* (Ex 31:1-6; cf. Num 11:25). But the New Testament reveals the work of the *Eheha Lowalangi* in the Incarnation of the Word of God. As has been prophesied in Joel 2:28, 'I will pour out my spirit (*eheha*) on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions'. In the New Testament, *eheha* is not dependent on social hierarchy, gender or social class; instead it was poured out on every one. This became evident on the Day of Pentecost when Jesus Christ poured out his Spirit (*Geheha-Nia*). From that time onwards, the disciples began to understand that even though Jesus had ascended to heaven, his Spirit, *Eheha Keriso*, remained in their midst. This *eheha* served as their advocate and comforter and opened the way for the Gospel.

The heart of the message was that the *Eheha Lowalangi* was being poured out on every one regardless of social status, gender or age. To receive the *Eheha Lowalangi*, we only need to repent from our sins, believe in Jesus and be baptized. This teaching attracted many Ono Niha, especially the marginalized ones, because now *eheha* was available to everyone not only to the firstborn of a noble family.⁷⁹

The *Eheha Lowalangi* subsequently played an essential role during the Great Awakening.⁸⁰ People believed that *Eheha Ni'amoni'ö* worked in their hearts to convince and to lead them to repentance as well as empower them to become the witnesses of Jesus Christ. Through the work of the Holy Spirit many people were being transformed.⁸¹

⁷⁸ *Toeria Hoelo Batoe*, 2/5 (1930). Many people on the Batu Islands often asked about the meaning of *Eheha*. Steinhart explained that the word came from the Gunungsitoli dialect. In the primal religion, the term *solohe adu*, indicating the gap between a *si'ulu* and an ordinary person, was obvious. The influence of a *si'ulu* was greater and more powerful than that of ordinary people. There is a saying: 'One liter of salt from a commoner is still not salty, but only a small handful of salt from a *si'ulu* makes it very salty' (*satu liter garam orang banyak masih tetap tidak asin, tetapi hanya segenggam garam Si'ulu – justru sangat asin*). On the Batu Islands, the decision of a *si'ulu* was very authoritative and had to be followed, while the decisions of ordinary people were just ignored. On Nias, a *salawa* was much respected because of his high position. Therefore, there was a saying: 'the spirit of a *salawa* is hot' (*aukhu Geheha Zalawa*). For people in North Nias, only a *salawa* or *si'ulu* has *eheha*. That was why, when a *salawa* was about to die, his eldest son would hold his hand and put his mouth closer to his father's mouth to suck in the remaining *ga'oila hanuhanu* (the rest of the breath) of his father, so that he would possess his father's *eheha*. Ono Niha assumed that just like the father was a wise man, so will it be with the Son. There was a saying: 'although the leaf is dry, its trunk still lives and from it the *eheha* emerges' (*mate mbulu, auri döla, ba muledo geheha*). In the same way the Ono Niha on the Batu Islands say: 'the *si'ulu* stings, but much better is the last breath of the *si'ulu*' (*söfu zi'ulu, a'oila hanuhanu ji'ulu sedöna mate*).

⁷⁹ Cf. H. Hadiwijono, *Religi Suku Murba*, 2000, pp. 92-93.

⁸⁰ Cf. Ch. 4.6.2.; cf. A. Pieper, *Die Auswirkung der Erweckung auf Nias*, 1928, pp. 21-22.

⁸¹ Cf. R. Wegner, *Die Erweckungsbewegung auf Nias*. 1924, pp. 5-43.

Problems arose in the 1930s and 1950s, when in the aftermath of the Great Awakening some enthusiastic schismatic movements such as the Fa'awösa⁸² and the *fangesa solaya* threatened the unity of the BNKP, as they took a distinctly different line from the missionaries. Instead of entering into a constructive theological dialogue, however, the church condemned these movements as heresy. They were accused of teachings contrary to the missionaries' and of confusing the biblical truth with the primal religion.⁸³

The BNKP considered the Fa'awösa as a work of the spirit of this world (i.e., the devil), and not the work of the *Eheha Ni'amoni'ö*.⁸⁴ It was indeed based on another understanding of the *eheha*. Possessing the *Eheha Ni'amoni'ö*, the leaders of this movement felt themselves as equal with the missionaries. They could possess the same charismata, skills, influence and power in leadership. They separated themselves from the BNKP partly because they yearned for independence. Müller reported that, among other things, the missionaries' dominant position encouraged them to stand on their own and leave the established church.⁸⁵

When the BNKP was being established in 1936, the missionaries gave the *Eheha Ni'amoni'ö* a central role of the church order. The introduction to the church order stated that the *Eheha Ni'amoni'ö* has called the Ono Niha to believe in Jesus Christ and to become God's children. In terms of ministry and leadership, everyone must be submissive to the guidance of the *Eheha Ni'amoni'ö* so that they will serve sincerely and bear much fruit for the glory of God. The church synod is defined as the fellowship of all the Christians on Nias and the participants of church conference are the representative of all *Ono Niha Keriso*. Therefore, all Christians on Nias must fully submit themselves to the leadership of the *Eheha Ni'amoni'ö* so that together they can build the *Banua Niha Keriso Protestant* (BNKP) on Nias.⁸⁶ The final chapter of the church order refers to the *Eheha Ni'amoni'ö* as the source of life which builds the fellowship of all God's people. The *Eheha Yesu Keriso* does not fight for high positions, is tolerant, takes no revenge, knows no conflict, does nothing that is unjust, treats everyone the same, serves as a peacemaker, works to promote friendship and builds mutual trust amongst believers. Therefore, a strong fellowship must stand on the foundation of the *Eheha Ni'amoni'ö*.⁸⁷

During World War II there were some unusual teachings about the *Eheha Ni'amoni'ö* by the so-called 'jumping awakenings' (*fangesa solaya*).⁸⁸ Troubled by fears, confusions and suffering, some believers emphasized the work of the *Eheha Ni'amoni'ö*, especially the gifts of healing, prophesy, and speaking in tongues. The worship services were often coloured by people getting into ecstasy, trembling and shouting uncontrollably. They created a ministry known as *tuka wangesa* or *fakake*, often taken in by young women and widows.⁸⁹ BNKP considered this movement as heresy but they could not stop its influence. This movement was mushrooming especially in West Nias in the 1940s until the 1960s.

⁸² Cf. Ch. 5.8.3.

⁸³ Cf. Th. Müller-Krüger, *Der Protestantismus in Indonesien*, 1968, p. 283.

⁸⁴ T. Hulu, 'Waöwaö Halöwö Fangombacha Turia Somuso Dödö ba Danö Niha irugi tefatörö döi amarahuta ya'ia, BNKP Nias (Banua Niha Keriso Protestan di Nias), in: F.D. Harefa and R. Heering (eds.), *Waöwaö Duria Somuso Dödö ba Danö Niha*, 1971, p. 32-33.

⁸⁵ Annual Report 1937/1938 (RMG 2.772).

⁸⁶ *Lala Nihonogöi (atoeran) ba mbanoea Niha Keriso Protestant ba danö NIAS*. 1938, pp. 1-2, 6, 9.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.* pp. 13-14.

⁸⁸ Cf. Ch. 5.8.5.

⁸⁹ Cf. Th. Müller-Krüger, *Der Protestantismus in Indonesien*, 1968, p. 283.

From these examples we can see the friction in the encounter between Christianity and the local culture. Even though *eheha* is presently only connected to Lowalangi and is no longer known as the spirit of the ancestors or something belonging only to the nobles, the particular understanding of the Ono Niha concerning *eheha*, which resembles the meaning in the primal religion of old, still influences the beliefs and religious rituals of the *Ono Niha Keriso*.⁹⁰

6.2.1.4 *Horö* as Term for Sin

In the Nias-German Dictionary compiled by Sundermann, the word *horö* is translated as sin.⁹¹ Sin and salvation are the two most important theological topics of Christianity on Nias and the Batu Islands. The Ono Niha have been made to believe that before becoming Christians they were terrible heathen who lived in filth, darkness and sin. The missionaries then brought light and peace to their land through the Gospel of Salvation. The word that was used for sin is *horö*, taken from the *adat* where it is usually used in connection with sexual trespasses, including sexual harassments and abuse (*sondra'u baewawö ira alawe*), rape (*mohorö*), to enforce sexual intercourse with a woman outside marital relationship or adultery (*mohorö*). The penalty for a male who attempts to rape or commit adultery was death. Sometimes, the *adat* allowed some compensation or redemption known as *hölihöli döla mbagi* (to redeem one's neck) by paying a certain amount of gold or silver.⁹² In the case when the family had no money to redeem the culprit, the rich were allowed to help (*mangöhöli*). Upon redemption, the condemned would automatically become the redeemer's slave (*höliötö*).⁹³

The other crime that is considered as *horö* is murder, for which – in pre-colonial times would also be applied the death penalty, life for life. Retaliation (*sifalau horö*)⁹⁴ was a common practice. In case the victims were unable to take revenge, the enmity would be passed down from generation to generation (*horö nga'ötö*).

The term *horö* also was closely related to the *adu*, especially the *adu horö*, the greatest *adu* in terms of size. In South Nias this *adu* was also called *adu sebua*.⁹⁵ A judge usually needed an *adu horö*. If the judge became ill after he prosecuted a law case, it was considered that he had not been fair in his judgment.⁹⁶ In this case only the *adu horö* could help him. Furthermore, the *adu horö* was also believed to prevent injustice to take place in administering the law.⁹⁷ From the explanation

⁹⁰ Cf. W.L. Steinhart, *De Christianiseering van het Niassche begrip 'heilig'*, 1929, pp. 47-58.

⁹¹ Cf. H. Sundermann, *Niassisch-Deutsches Wörterbuch*, 1905, pp. 102-103. He translated the word *horö* as 'Sünde, Hurerei, Ehebruch, Krieg, Streit, Feindschaft' (sin, prostitution, adultery, war, strife, animosity).

⁹² Cf. F. Harefa, *Hikayat dan Ceritera Bangsa serta 'Adat Nias'*, 1939, pp. 64-66. The sanction to redeem a man charged for rape was sixty guilders; while for a man charge for adultery was it was 196,59 guilders. For a woman, it was half the amount given for man.

⁹³ The term *höli* was taken over by the missionaries to explain the salvation work done by Jesus Christ. The difference was that to the Ono Niha to redeem somebody implied to save him or her from death punishment and then make him/her a slave. The Christian understand is, however, to redeem somebody from sin and make him / her free.

⁹⁴ Cf. F. Harefa, *Hikayat dan Ceritera Bangsa serta 'Adat Nias'*, 1939, pp. 67-68.

⁹⁵ Cf. E.E.W.Gs. Schröder, Nias, 1917, pp. 600-601.

⁹⁶ W.H. Sundermann, *Der Kultus der Niasser*, 1891 (RMG. 1.02545), pp. 3. Some was in the form of Crocodile who have two heads. This was made if that person made mistakes for two sides.

⁹⁷ Cf. E.E.W.Gs. Schröder, Nias, 1917, p. 601, cf. ch. 2.4.2.1.

above it become clear that *horö* was closely related to the violation of the *adat* (rape, adultery and murder).

The missionaries used *horö* to explain sin in the Christian sense. This included the whole state of total depravity of human beings. In everyday church life, however, it refers mainly to trespassing against the seventh commandment: 'You shall not commit adultery' (*böi ohorö*). Lück explained *horö* as disobedience to God's commandments, the fall of mankind starting from Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.⁹⁸ The beginning of sin is doubt about what God had commanded, the willingness to have a dialog with the devil (*Afökha*), and to follow whatever *Afökha* promises. Sins are committed not because humans forget what God had told them, but because they listened to Satan. The consequence of sin is death, which is the separation from God, physically and spiritually.

As said, *horö* refers mainly to sexual trespasses, i.e., the violation of the seventh commandment. Adultery was considered as *horö* because it violates the dignity of women and destroyed the image of God. The typical Bible stories that were used to explain *horö* were the story of David's adultery with Bathsheba (2 Sam 11: 1-5) and the story where Herod divorced his wife so he could marry Herodias, the wife of Philip (Mk 6:17).⁹⁹ On the Batu Islands, the word *okafö* is occasionally used instead of *horö*.¹⁰⁰

Apart from adultery and murder, and of course idolatry, other kinds of crimes were not really considered as sins.¹⁰¹ For example, *Balö zi'ulu* Barani Dakhi, a convert who had given up his *adu*, still practised polygamy. This was not considered as *horö* because the customary law recognised polygamy and it was not considered as adultery (*mohorö*). With a good conscience Barani thus followed the traditions of his ancestors and held an *owasa* for his second marriage. He and all other citizens of Hilisimaetanö were shocked when Missionary Rabeneck excommunicated him for this from the church, considering him a gentile (*niha baero*).¹⁰²

During the Great Awakening, the awareness of *horö* was broader than idolatry, adultery, and murder, including all trespasses against the Ten Commandments. In the 1920s the missionaries began to compile some stipulations based on the *adat* known as the *amakhoita*. Every church member was required to observe this.

6.2.1.5 *Fangorifi* as Term for Salvation

The stem of the term *fangorifi* (salvation) is *orifi* (bring to life), which is rooted in *auri* (to live; the noun is *aurifa* or *fa'auri*, meaning life).¹⁰³ Therefore, the Ono Niha understand *fangorifi* in a threefold sense:

1. In its connection with health and catastrophes. If they recover from an illness that they consider to have been caused by evil spirits, they believe that life

⁹⁸ Cf. A. Lück, *Fanoetoeroe Lala ba Wamahaö Sangandrö Famajagö Idanö ba he Iraono Ni'a'aro'ö*, 1931, p. 6-7.

⁹⁹ Cf. A. Lück, *Katechismus Luther*, 1934, p. 48.

¹⁰⁰ *Toeria Hoelo Batoe*, 2/9 (1930).

¹⁰¹ H. Schekatz, Interview with the authors on 27 June 2002 in Wuppertal.

¹⁰² Cf. 4.4.4.3 and Ch. 4.6.2. Cf. W.R. Schmidt, *Das unbeeendete Gespräch*, 1967, p. 35.

¹⁰³ B. Mendröfa, *Li Niha ba Li Indonesia*, 1984, pp. 16, 42, 61. Cf. H. Sundermann, *Niassisch-Deutsches Wörterbuch*, 1905, p. 156. Sundermann translates *auri* as *leben* and *aurifa* as *Lebensmittel*.

has been given back to them and that they have received salvation. Surviving natural disaster was (and still is) also considered salvation.

2. In its connection with receiving blessings, either from Lowalangi or from the ancestors, or even from the parents who are considered as 'Lowalangi on earth' (*Lowalangi ba gulidanö*). If the blessings come to a person in the form of material goods, it is said: 'that person is alive' (*auri niha andrö*), in the sense of being saved.
3. In its connection with the liberation of slaves. *Fangorifi* or *aurifa* is used when a slave is manumitted by his or her family or by someone else. The person released is called *hölitö*, while the redeemer is called *sangöhöli*.

The proper way to obtain *fa'auri* (salvation) for Ono Niha was both by religious rituals around the *adu*-images and strict adherence to the *adat*, which also entailed taboo-restrictions (*famoni*). Furthermore, Ono Niha had a deeply rooted conviction that they could never escape from punishment when trespassing against the *adat*. This was true for commoners as well as for chiefs and priests. In order not to be cursed, they would either conduct a reconciliation ceremony (*fangatulö*) or renew the *adat* through a *fondrakö* or *famatö harimao* ceremony.¹⁰⁴

Both the missionaries of the RM on Nias and the DLM on the Batu Islands adopted the term *fangorifi* when translating the Biblical term 'salvation'. This concept was also one of the primary themes of the missionaries' preaching. All their efforts were directed towards proclaiming the Gospel of salvation, in the sense of bringing the 'Good News of the Kingdom of God', to the nations which were considered as 'living in the darkness of heathendom and damnation'. In the early period¹⁰⁵, driven by the spirit of Pietism, they demanded of individual Ono Niha to enter the Kingdom of God, whereas later, under the influence of Gustav Warneck's vision of the Christianisation of nations, their goal was for entire communities to chose for Jesus Christ.¹⁰⁶

In translating the Bible and other literature into the Niasan vernacular, the missionaries used the term *fangorifi* in accordance with their own Christian understanding. Following the Biblical creation narrative, God created 'the heavens and the earth, and all their multitude' (Gen 2:1), including human beings, 'and indeed, it was very good' (Gen 1: 31). The first human beings, Adam and Eve, lived in happiness and peace in the garden of Eden, in close communion with God and with nature. But then sin entered into the world through the rebellion of the Adam and Eve against God's commandments (Gen 3). Sin separated the human beings from God and the result was damnation, because 'death came through sin' (Rom 5:12). The state of human kind was hopeless for 'there is no one who is righteous, not even one' (Rom 3:10).¹⁰⁷ But, by the grace of God in Jesus Christ, who gave his life on the cross as a sacrifice of reconciliation for all humanity and who rose from the dead, all human beings are redeemed and saved. Through Jesus Christ humanity

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Ch. 2.4.3.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Ch. 4.3 'Difficult Beginnings on Nias (1865-1890)'.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Georg F. Vicedom, *The Mission of God*, 1965, pp. 97-108. Cf. G. Warneck, *Evangelische Missionslehre*, vol. III, 1 (1903), p.170. However, for Warneck the kingdom of God is the antiworldly phenomenon that according to the will of God should embrace all men, which of course is not to say that all men allow themselves to be called into the Kingdom. Cf. Ch. 4.4.1.

¹⁰⁷ H. Sundermann, *Famahaö ba Lala Wangorifi: Die Christliche Heilslehre nach Dr. C. Ernst*, 1892, pp. 21-22.

becomes a new creation. In him, all may become God's children; 'Everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life' (Jn 3:16).¹⁰⁸

With this understanding of salvation, the missionaries demanded of the Ono Niha to abstain from everything connected to the primal religion. The Niasan Christians were prohibited to have *adu* or to attend any ceremony connected to these images. All aspects of the *adat* considered to be rooted in the primal religion had to be avoided. Conversely, after having cleansed themselves from all elements of 'sin and darkness', they had to prepare themselves for the sacrament of holy baptism which ordained ministers of the church served in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

At first, it was very difficult for the Ono Niha to follow the call for conversion by the missionaries. But because of the social changes which shattered the primal religion, the willingness to become Christian gradually increased. This was further aided by their recognition that some elements in Christianity seemed to resemble their tribal religious traditions (e.g., the Christmas tree which reminded them of the mythological world tree, the *tora'a*, and the sacred *fösi*-trees). As for new elements introduced by the missionaries, such as freedom and equal rights for the weak and frail, 'Christian medicine'¹⁰⁹, schools for the children, Western clothing donated by friends of the missions, and small gifts of tobacco and money, the Ono Niha saw these as further manifestations of the Christian *fangorifi*.

Unfortunately, the missionaries did not pay enough attention to the traditional values of the Ono Niha. Their severe prejudice limited, and distorted their understanding of what was holy to the Ono Niha. One gets the impression that their zeal and strategy were much more directed at conquering 'heathendom' than at introducing the way of Jesus Christ to the Ono Niha. They turned a blind eye to the soteriological significance of the rites of reconciliation such as *famatö harimao* and *fondrakö*. They had the misconception that the Ono Niha needed individual salvation at the expense of communal salvation. Although the missionaries on Nias and the Batu Islands themselves were definitely unwilling to become 'all things to all people' (1 Cor 9:20-22), they demanded of individual Ono Niha to separate themselves from their communities and live like the missionaries. The new ethical order which they introduced was one centred on the individual and not on the community.¹¹⁰ To establish this new order, and at the same time destroy the traditional order, they willingly cooperated with the colonial authorities. Together they waged a crusade against heathendom.

By 1908, the Ono Niha were subdued both physically and spiritually. This almost brought them to the brink of ethnocide. During the Great Awakening (1915-1930), however, the Ono Niha discovered Christianity for themselves as the means towards communal survival. With Christianity, they adopted a new linear understanding of a future salvation (in heaven or, in accordance with the Pietist idiom, the Kingdom of God), replacing the cyclical understanding of primal religion.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.* pp. 22-24.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Ch. 4.3.5.1, Ch. 6.3.2.4.

¹¹⁰ D. Becker, '„Sie werfen Satans Bande und ihre Götzen fort?“, in: R. Riess (ed.), *Abschied von der Schuld?*, 1996, pp. 190-202.

6.2.1.6 *Osali* as Term for the Church Building

The term *osali* was chosen by the missionaries for 'church': the institution, the fellowship of the believers, and the place of worship. In general, *osali* or *bale* in South Nias means a place for gathering, a place for religious rituals¹¹¹, a speaking corner¹¹², a place for palaver to discuss issues related to *böwö* (dowry *adat*) and all other important events during the entire cycle of life of the Ono Niha. In South Nias, the *bale* also functioned as a place to discuss matters concerning the division of responsibilities, the security system, law suites, etc. In all these activities, *ere* played a central role as the mediators between human beings and the ancestral spirits. Their rituals had to maintain the harmony of the cosmos.¹¹³

In some places, the *osali* was not referred to a particular place or building but was known more by its function. *Osa* means 'throne' and *li* means 'words' or 'summon'. Therefore, *osali* means a place for meeting to discuss village affairs (e.g., building a chief's house).¹¹⁴

During the meeting in an *osali*, the *ere* would sit between the nobles and the commoners. But, the ones who lead the meeting are the *salawa* or *si'ulu*. The *ere* only functioned in religious matters. Based on this fact, the word *osali* on the one hand was a building used for keeping *adu* and for performing religious rituals; on the other hand, it was also a place to discuss, to renew, and to stipulate the *fondrakö* and to resolve various issues in society.¹¹⁵

The missionaries initially used the expression *satua gosali* for the elders¹¹⁶, but later changed this to *satua Niha Keriso*. The word *osali* was patented in the first church order (1936) as the expression for the 'local congregation'.¹¹⁷ The fellowship of all the *osali* was called *Banua Niha Keriso Protestant* (BNKP). In the second church order (1955)¹¹⁸, however, the meaning of *osali* was modified. Henceforth, *osali* was used for 'church building' as well as 'fellowship of the believers'. This modification influences the understanding of people about the church. Firstly, they associate the church only with the building in Western architecture functioning as a place for religious ceremony. Secondly, every *banua* or *öri* can build an *osali* which makes it a symbol of glory for the village.¹¹⁹ As a result of the latter, every congregation and every church-organisation is eager to build its own *osali*, often causing conflicts with the neighbouring village regarding the location of building sites. Thirdly, unlike the teachings of the missionaries that *osali* is a place used only for spiritual matters, the local people believe the *osali* to be a place for *adat*

¹¹¹ Cf. Ch. 2.6.2.3. Cf. Interview with Ama Wiliba Sadawa on 15 February 2004 in Gomo. Cf. J.M. Hämmerle, *Omo Sebua*, 1990, p. 163-165. In the *bale*, there were two statues; Adu ndra Ama and Lawolo ndra Ama. This was to show the relationship with the ancestors. Both statues stand for the founder of the village. Aside from a statue, there was a skull as an offering. Another statue could be found in the front of the *bale* which was devoted to Lowalangi, the upper and back parts were devoted to Latura Danö, the god of the underworld.

¹¹² J.W. Thomas and E.A. Taylor Weber, *Niasch-Maleisch-Nederlandsch Woordenboek*, 1887, p. 155. They translate *osali* as a place to talk or to discuss things (*Gemeentehuis*).

¹¹³ Cf. Ch. 2.4.2.1, 2.4.2.2. Cf. P. Suzuki, *The Religious System and Culture of Nias, Indonesia*, 1959, p. 52-53.

¹¹⁴ Interview with Ama Osara'ö Bu'ulölä on 13 February 2004 in Gomo.

¹¹⁵ Cf. J.M. Hämmerle, *Omo Sebua*, 1990, p. 164-165.

¹¹⁶ Cf. W. Gulö, *Benih yang Tumbuh XIII*, 1983, p. 222.

¹¹⁷ Cf. Anonymous, *Lala Nihohogöi*, 1938, pp. 4-5.

¹¹⁸ Cf. W. Gulö, *Benih yang Tumbuh XIII*, 1983, p. 255.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

ceremonies as well. They bring all cultural issues and family conflicts into the church. Fourthly, the community elders played – and still play – a central role in the *osali* (congregation), not only in terms of decision making but also in terms of status. They decide, for example, the seat arrangements during worship service. They themselves demand to sit in the front pews. Naturally, this sometimes causes nasty conflicts as well.

6.2.2 Christian Worship

Religious rituals and ceremonies are the most obvious elements of a culture. People are bound together by things they consider sacred.¹²⁰ On Nias, the Ono Niha were united by their veneration of the *adu* and all the religious rituals connected to them. Some religious ceremonies, led by *ere*¹²¹, marked important stations in the cycle of life, as well as activities related to every day life.

The missionaries of the RM and the DLM regarded all these rituals as expressions of heathendom, because they were connected to the *adu*. Therefore, these rituals and ceremonies were rejected and destroyed. In developing the church ceremonies, the missionaries and their Niasan protégés adhered to the liturgical forms and the hymns of the Western traditions. Although the words of the liturgy and the lyrics of the hymns were translated into the Niasan vernacular, and some terms of the primal religion were adopted, they still had a Western character. The Ono Niha, however, often had – and still have until now – a different understanding of Christian ceremonies than do the Europeans.

6.2.2.1 Liturgy, Hymns and Sermons

In the beginning of Christianity on Nias, there was no church liturgy. Whenever they went, the missionaries would preach the Word of God and teach people some Christian songs. As the number of believers grew, the missionaries began to develop a liturgy for Sunday worship services and Holy Communion. They translated the liturgy into the Niasan vernacular and called this the *Agendre*.¹²²

The missionaries also introduced the Western hymns, after they had translated the lyrics into the *Li Nono Niha*. Ama Watörö commented that the Ono Niha found it difficult to sing the hymns with its European melodies¹²³, because they usually sang traditional dancing songs (*maena*). The missionaries were not aware of this obstacle and insisted on the use of the European hymns. Later, in 1898, when they had translated those hymns, they published a hymnal in the Niasan vernacular to be used by all the Christians on Nias.¹²⁴ This was augmented with a number of prayers, such as: the prayer at receiving Holy Baptism, opening and closing prayers for school, prayers for bed-ridden ill people, prayers of thanksgiving for being healed, a prayer for someone who has been excommunicated, prayers at the time of planting

¹²⁰ Koentjaraningrat, *Pengantar Ilmu Antropologi*, 1990, pp. 376-377.

¹²¹ Cf. Ch. 2.4.2.2. Cf. W.H. Sundermann, *Der Kultus der Niasser*, 1891 (RMG. 1.025), p. 1-5.

¹²² Cf. T. Hulu, "Waöwaö Halöwö", in F.D. Harefa and R. Heering (eds.), *Waöwaö Duria Somuso Dödö ba Danö Niha*, 1971, p. 6. Cf. Anonymous, *Vademecum Pastorale Niassicum*, 1892.

¹²³ Ama Watörö, "Waöwaö Wa'aniha", in: F.D. Harefa and R. Heering (Eds.), *Waöwaö Duria Somuso Dödö ba Danö Niha*, 1971, pp. 1-2.

¹²⁴ Anonymous, *Zura Zimunö ba Niha (Niassisches Gesang-Buchlein)*, Ernst Siedhoff, Bielefeld, 1898. This hymnal was being amended and expanded in the year 1905.

and harvest, as well as a prayer after the birth of a child.¹²⁵ The aim of formulating such prayers was to provide the Ono Niha with alternatives for the rituals of the primal religion.

The *fangesa dödö* movement inspired the Christians (*Ono Niha Keriso*) not only to sing the hymns taught by the missionaries, but also to compose a number of Christian's songs known as songs of repentance (*sinunö wangesa*). These songs like nothing else were manifestations of the Great Awakening and inspired the Christians to form choirs.¹²⁶ The first choir festival, held in Gunungsitoli in the year 1917, was called 'the grand feast of songs' (*owasa sinunö*).¹²⁷

In response to the singing enthusiasm of the *Ono Niha Keriso*, the missionary agencies published another hymnal in 1923. Although all the melodies again were taken over from the European traditions, some of the lyrics, composed by Ono Niha, showed some influence of the spirit of the Niasan Great Awakening.¹²⁸ When this hymnal was revised in 1931, all elements of the grand feast of songs were again deleted.¹²⁹

The missionaries failed to see the importance and beauty of Niasan culture, even though some tried to learn the local proverbs, parables, and even the dancing songs (*maena*).¹³⁰ Generally, the local culture was considered as part of the old, 'heathen' law which should be rejected completely.¹³¹ Eventually, people began to forget some of the local arts. Kunst¹³², who came to Nias in 1930 to learn some traditional music, was regretful for not having arrived earlier, since nobody was willing to teach him to play the flute (*fondrahi*) used formerly by the *ere* for religious rituals. Even though some elderly men and women possessed the skill, they did not want to teach Kunst because the instrument and the songs were considered paganism. Similarly, due to intimidation by the missionaries, as reported from other parts of Indonesia such as Sumba the people felt shame in disclosing the secrets of the indigenous culture to outsiders.¹³³

With regard to preaching, it has to be noted that the traditional communication pattern of the Ono Niha is the dialogue. It is a courtesy that, when someone talks, the listeners respond with shouting: 'ya'ia ya hö' (yes, that's right) or give a simple responds, such as: 'heeeee...' or 'mmmmm...'. On the other hand, the RM-missionaries communicated in a monologue pattern. It was considered impolite for

¹²⁵ Cf. Anonymus, *Soera Zinoenö ba Niha, Niassisches Gesang-Buchlein*, 1905.

¹²⁶ A. Pieper, *Die Auswirkung der Erweckung auf Nias*, 1928, p. 7.

¹²⁷ *Toeria*, 4/8 (1917). *Owasa* (grand feast) was usually conducted during the big celebration in the community, connected to an effort to improve one's social status in the community. In that celebration, many people would be invited and many pigs would be slaughtered to be served to the guests. So, this was a new development, that the term *owasa* was used for a choir festival without the butchering pigs.

¹²⁸ Anonymous, *Soera zinoenö ba Niha Keriso*, 1923. Some Ono Niha who participated in composing *Buku Zinunö* were *Sinenge Lötebulö*, *Sinenge Ama Gana'a*, *Sinenge Ama Janioli*, *Pandita Ama Masia*, *Sinenge Simoni*, *Pandita Ligi*, *Sinenge Saramböwö*, *Guru Lö'a*, *Sinenge Ta'obini*, *Guru Nga*, *Guru Tawisa*, *Guru Saloesaloe*, *Pandita Ama Wirö*, *Tuhenöri Ama De'ali* and *Guru Ama Matia*.

¹²⁹ Cf. Anonymous, *Soera Zinoenö ba Niha* (Niassisches Gesangbuch), 1931.

¹³⁰ Cf. H. Lagemann, *Ein Heldensang der Niaser*, 1906. Cf. W.H. Sundermann, *Niassische Texte mit Deutscher Übersetzung*, n.d. Cf. W.L. Steinhart, *Niassche Teksten I en II*, 1937.

¹³¹ *Toeria*, 2/11 (1915).

¹³² J. Kunst, *Music in Nias*, Leiden, 1939, pp. 2-8.

¹³³ F.D. Wellem, *Injil dan Marapu: Suatu Studi Historis-Teologis tentang Perjumpaan Injil dengan Masyarakat Sumba pada Periode 1876-1990*, 2004, pp. 272-273.

the listeners to give any comments when the preacher was speaking. Denninger, when he first started his missionary work amongst the Ono Niha, felt that the people did not respect him because each time he spoke, they would respond in the above mentioned manner.¹³⁴ But, after a couple of years on Nias, he began to understand the communication pattern of the local people and began using it.¹³⁵ Krumm also had a similar experience in Lahusa.¹³⁶ When he was preaching the Gospel to the Iraono Huna, people welcomed him with a traditional ceremony and when he preached, they responded by saying: 'Siduhu, ya'ia niwa'ou Tuha' (Amen, yes, you said it rightly, Sir). When he finished his preaching, *Salawa Fadoli* told his people: 'Today we will throw away the laws of the devil (*huku gafökha*), and we will follow the laws of God'. All the people warmly replied, 'Ya'ia hö, fao dödüma ...' (yes, what you have said is correct, we agree).¹³⁷ Even though Krumm did not prohibit them from responding to him, he nevertheless did not want to adopt their style of communication.

A few missionaries, however, did take the local culture of communication seriously and applied a more dialogical method in teaching. Lett in Tugala Lahömi, for instance, sought a point of contact between the Gospel and the local culture. In his sermons, he used the local dialect and Niasan myths as illustrations for explaining the biblical message. He compared Teteholi Ana'a, the golden upper-world in Niasan mythology¹³⁸, to the Garden of Eden as a peaceful and beautiful place. He also used the *tora'a* or *fösi*, the sacred tree of the primal religion, to explain the creation account.¹³⁹

On the Batu Islands, Steinhart, though critical, showed great admiration for the local culture. He interviewed former *ere* to get a deeper understanding of the spiritual roots of the Ono Niha. He proclaimed the Good News not only from the pulpit, but also during frequent home visits. The so called 'mission chat' proved to be an excellent missionary method. Steinhart also applied traditional Niasan rhymes, riddles, poems and proverbs (*amaedola*) when communicating with the Ono Niha.¹⁴⁰ Many people were impressed by his style, yet the local Nias *guru* (teacher) despised this kind of approach as being reminiscent of paganism. The seminary had taught them to reject the primal religion completely. Steinhart, however, was concerned about the loss of local culture as an authentic vehicle for the Gospel.

Even though most of the missionaries and indigenous church workers looked down on local traditions, the lay people in the congregations liked to express their beliefs in the form of *hoho* (litany) and *maena* (dancing songs). For instance, when the people of Lölöwa'u converted to Christianity, after throwing away their *adu*, they asked to celebrate with a traditional *maena* dance. Initially, Missionary Krumm was sceptical, which made the people very sad. Only after Sogalö, the brother of the chief, explained that the lyrics of the accompanying *maena* song were actually

¹³⁴ *BRM*, 1869, p. 51.

¹³⁵ *BRM*, 1873, p. 208.

¹³⁶ Cf. Ch. 4.4.3.2.

¹³⁷ *BRM*, 1900, p. 163.

¹³⁸ Cf. Ch. 2.4.1.

¹³⁹ A. Lett, *Im Dienst des Evangeliums auf der Westküste von Nias*, vol. 1, 1901, pp. 15-21. Cf. Ch. 2.4.

¹⁴⁰ W.L. Steinhart, *De Evangelie-Prediker en zyn Houding ten Opzichte van Inheemsche Cultuur*, 1937, pp. 147-160.

praising God, the missionary realized that this allegedly pagan song was actually related to and an expression of a profound theology of repentance and salvation.¹⁴¹

Also among the *guru* there were some who explained the biblical stories using *hoho* (litany). Gasamböwö from Ombölata, used a *hoho* to tell the story of king David.¹⁴² Another example was the 'Isaac Marriage' in *hoho* form published in the mission magazine, *Toeria*, without any mentioned of the author.¹⁴³ Some elders used local proverbs (*amaedola*) to make their teaching more interesting. Ama Löfania from Madula village, Ombölata station, created proverbs (*amaedola*) which referred to the Word of God. For example, one of the proverbs says: *Faeta raya Zimaliga, ma'iki yöu Wase, me hasara wehede* (in the South Zimaliga clapped his hands and in the North Wase smiled because you and I have united). Ama Löfania applied this to the Bible, by saying: 'Christians clap their hands and are happy because they are one in the body of Jesus Christ'.¹⁴⁴ Despite such rare, yet excellent attempts at inculturation of the Gospel, the missionaries remained sceptical of such methods and later prohibited them again.

6.2.2.2 Sunday

The Ono Niha calendar was based on the lunar system and people did not understand the weekly, Sunday to Saturday system.¹⁴⁵ The missionaries introduced to them Sunday as the day on which they must worship God. The missionaries invited the people to come to the Mission Station or the *salawa's* house for Sunday worship.

The Ono Niha were drawn to Denninger's Sunday worship services because they were offered small gifts such as tobacco, medicine, cake or money.¹⁴⁶ Kramer went a step further: Every Saturday he visited the people at their homes and invited them for the Sunday worship service. Sometimes, on Sunday morning, he would go to the market place to invite people to join the worship service.¹⁴⁷ Another example can be taken from Lett¹⁴⁸: Like Denninger, he would offer tobacco and medicines. This was in accordance with the tradition of the Ono Niha who considered it proper for a chief to treat his guests to some food.

In 1892, Dora Lett came to join her husband in Tugala Lahömi. She took along a church bell, which was always rung for calling the people to attend Sunday worship services. The local people were excited to see and hear this new item which introduced a new paradigm of time in their lives. Later, Dora Lett also introduced the clock, the sewing machine, the harmonica and the mirror to West Nias, using all these objects to attract the people to the Sunday worship services.

Also on the Batu Islands, Schröder taught that Sunday was a holy day of rest and worship to God. He wrote a song to help the believers to remember these teachings.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴¹ *BRM*, 1900, p. 164.

¹⁴² Cf. Gasamböwö, 'Tobali Salawa Dawido', in: A. Pieper (ed.), *Realienboek*, 1923, pp. 113-117. Cf. *Toeria*, 6/8 (1919), pp. 41-42.

¹⁴³ *Toeria*, 2/3 (1915), pp. 41-43; 45-47.

¹⁴⁴ *Toeria*, 7/7-9 (1920), p. 11.

¹⁴⁵ A. Schneider, *Ono Niha*, 1952, p. 6.

¹⁴⁶ G. Menzel, *Denninger*, translation by B.C. Hulu, 1990, p. 8.

¹⁴⁷ *BRM*, 1867, p. 208.

¹⁴⁸ *Toeria*, 23/11 (1936).

¹⁴⁹ 'Aine ga, aine ga. Loeo wanombase mboto. Loeo wanorifi noso. Loeo saefa wamakao'. Cf. *Toeria*

Let's come here, let's come here!
This is the day for our bodies to rest,
This is the day to save our souls,
The day to be freed from suffering.

Fries in Sifaoro'asi would blow the trumpet, an instrument unknown to the Ono Niha, to call the people for Sunday worship services. He would also play a few songs before preaching to the gathered crowd.¹⁵⁰

After Christianity had become a dominant factor on Nias, the demand for Sunday rest was explicitly added to the demand for Sunday worship. Fries instructed all Niasan pastors, teachers, evangelists, chiefs and elders to apply the rule of order for church discipline strictly to people not attending Sunday worship services and working on Sunday.¹⁵¹ In order to underline the importance of these demands, a number of cases of accidents which befell people who dared to skip church and work on Sundays were published in the mission magazine *Toeria*.¹⁵²

During the Great Awakening, the Ono Niha took the prohibition on work on Sundays very seriously and literally.¹⁵³ Many of them refused to work altogether on Sundays. The Dutch soldiers, who patrolled the villages, protested to the missionaries that the *Ono Niha Keriso* did not want to supply them with food and drink, justifying this by referring to the fourth Commandment. To solve this 'problem', Fries tried to reach a compromise between the colonial government and the *Ono Niha Keriso*. The soldiers had to respect the Christian's Sunday day of rest, but, if in emergencies they had to pass through the villages on Sunday, the Christians should not deny them food and drink.¹⁵⁴

The *Ono Niha Keriso* experienced a serious challenge to their belief in Sunday as the day blessed by God, when confronted with Seventh-Day Adventism (SDA) which promoted the Saturday as the 'Sabbath of the LORD'.¹⁵⁵ Under the influence of the SDA, some elders consulted the Bible, but were disappointed that there was no account about Sunday as the day of rest. The missionaries, Niasan pastor, teacher and evangelist tried to give a theological explanation for this. They also published explanatory articles in *Toeria*. Atoföna Harefa¹⁵⁶, who later became *ephorus* of the BNKP, wrote the following: firstly, the intention of the Sabbath according to the

Hoelo Batoe, 2/3 (1930).

¹⁵⁰ E. Fries, *Um eine Menschenseele*, 1937, pp. 2-3.

¹⁵¹ *Toeria*, 4/11 (1917), p. 33.

¹⁵² Cf. *Toeria*, 5/4 (1918), p. 6; Cf. *Toeria*, 6/2-9 (1919). For example, Faigisibai and Löfaehu from Öri No'o'u, wrote about someone who fell from a coconut tree and died on Sunday. The authors comment that the deceased was killed because he neglected God's Word and did not observe Sunday as a holy day. He did not follow the *huku Niha Keriso* whole heartedly. In Sitölubanua, Lahömi, *Guru Fangaro'ö* wrote about Ama Zi'utia who died by accident on Sunday. Fangaro'ö explained that Ama Zi'utia had received the grace of salvation and been baptised, but had only a lukewarm faith which made him fail to observe Sunday as a holy day. Not only did he not come to church, but he went hunting. He had been warned but had paid no attention. Because of the wrath of God, he died during the hunting trip.

¹⁵³ Ama Watörö Lase, 'Waöwaö wa'aniha Keriso ba Danö Niha (Nias) barö zi Otu Fache Wa'ara, Wanuriaigö Turia Somuso Dödö', in: F.D. Harefa and R. Heering (eds.), *Waöwaö Duria Somuso Dödö ba Danö Niha*, 1971, p. 66.

¹⁵⁴ *Toeria*, 4/11 (1917), p. 33.

¹⁵⁵ Cf. Ch. 5.8.6.

¹⁵⁶ *Toeria*, 23/1 (1936).

fourth Commandment is to give rest to the whole creation because God also rested on the seventh day and therefore blessed it. Secondly, because we have been freed, saved and redeemed in Jesus Christ, the Sabbath invites everyone to come to God (Mt 11:28). In fact, Jesus Christ himself is the lord of the Sabbath (Mt 12:8). He who rules over the Sabbath has died for us and was resurrected on Sunday. Therefore, it is Jesus' resurrection which we celebrate on Sundays.¹⁵⁷ This explanation convinced many, but by no means everybody.

The SDA teachings also came to the Batu Islands.¹⁵⁸ Sitefano, one of the Adventist pioneers, was warmly welcomed by the people especially in Siberanu and the island of Pulau Tello. The alternate teachings were a real challenge to some sincere Christians. Even a *guru* and a *satua Niha Keriso*, who truthfully searched the Bible for a proof of the official teaching of the church that Sunday (and not Saturday) was the appropriate day of rest, became doubtful.¹⁵⁹

The missionaries, in need of convincing biblical arguments, told the people not to look too far into the Jewish tradition. Since the beginning of the church, people had observed the Sunday as the Sabbath based on the resurrection of Christ. In 1938, they published a series of articles on the Sunday Sabbath in *Toeria Hoelo Batoe*.¹⁶⁰ Nevertheless, they were unable to clearly explain or contradict and overcome the Adventist teaching, especially when Nathanael Ziliwu, the *demang* and a former *guru* of the DLM, secretly supported the SDA.¹⁶¹

Even though a regular day of rest had been unknown to pre-Christian Ono Niha, once the missionaries had introduced Sunday, the *Ono Niha Keriso* accepted this as a holy day similar to their irregular taboo days in the primal religion. So strong was their zeal to keep the law regarding the Sabbath on Sunday, that the Niasan Christian were called *niha Migu* (Sunday people). This also distinguished them from the *niha Jumaha* (Friday people), the adherents of Islam on Nias.¹⁶²

6.2.2.3 Christian Holidays

After having introduced Sunday as the day for rest and worship, the missionaries also introduced special holidays such as Christmas and Easter. Initially, as of 1874, these were considered as being just additions on to a Sunday worship service, and were connected to the sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion.¹⁶³

In the beginning, from the first Christmas celebration in Gunungsitoli (in 1876) on, the missionaries only taught the people the meaning of Christmas. In 1899, however, they decorated the church with a Christmas tree and some candles. By doing this, they introduced the Ono Niha to a European way of celebrating Christmas which was not backed up by the Bible.¹⁶⁴ Despite this, the Ono Niha were very impressed by the Christmas tree and candles¹⁶⁵, probably for cultural reasons.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁸ Cf. Ch. 4.8.3.

¹⁵⁹ The *guru* doubted whether the church's teaching was biblical, cf. *EVB*, 50/4 (1932), p. 78. The doubting elder, Omböila of Pulau Tello, was known to be a critical thinker, cf. *EVB*, 56/1-4 (1938), p. 42.

¹⁶⁰ Cf. *Toeria Hoelo Batoe*, 10/8 (1938).

¹⁶¹ *EVB*, 47/2 (1929) p. 38.

¹⁶² *BRM*, 1899, p. 281. Cf. *Toeria*, 5/1 (1918), p. 4.

¹⁶³ *Toeria*, 2/4 (1915), p. 34.

¹⁶⁴ *BRM*, 1900, p. 109.

¹⁶⁵ Anonymous, *Der Kleine Missionsfreund*, 1900, p. 67.

The Christmas tree must have reminded them of the sacred *tora'a* or *fösi* tree, while the candle lights symbolized the golden upperworld of Teteholi Ana'a. As vividly reported from Lölöwa'u mission stations and from the island of Pulau Tello, the Christmas celebrations were very joyful occasions.¹⁶⁶ Besides the Christmas trees and candles, beautiful carols were sung and there was music from trumpets and harmoniums. The *guru* told the people that this celebration reflected the joy of the New Jerusalem. In Lahusa, the people reportedly returned home and told everyone that they had seen the beautiful city of God.¹⁶⁷

The missionaries also prepared liturgies for Good Friday and Easter. But these celebrations were much less popular among the Ono Niha. The reason for this was that to the Ono Niha the suffering of Jesus Christ was less important. Even during the Great Awakening (*fangesa dödö sebua*), the emphasis was on Jesus as the coming King and Judge rather than as the Suffering Son of Man.¹⁶⁸ Apart from these two major celebrations, the church did not pay very much attention to the other feasts of the ecclesiastical year. In the 1950s, during the 'jumping awakenings' (*fangesa solaya*¹⁶⁹), some attention was given to the celebrations of Pentecost. But, when this movement subsided, the special Pentecost celebration also abated.

6.2.2.4 Baptism

Baptism was considered the reward for the efforts of the missionaries. It was the symbol of victory over the defeated *adu*. For the believers, however, baptism meant a total change of identity. The liturgy mentioned that through baptism all believers were called to become one new *banua* of Jesus.¹⁷⁰ The candidates would be asked the following question: 'Do you want to be baptised and become a friends of Jesus? If you truly want to be with God, are you willing to leave 'the devil's spirit' (*eheha Gafökha*) and live according to God's guidance? Are you willing to leave all your *adu* (traditional beliefs) including the *adu zatua* (ancestor images), all the requests for blessings (*howuhowu*) from the ancestors, the *fondrakö*, the amulets, the traditional medicines, the superstition of taboos (*famoni*) and all the black magic? Are you willing to stop working on Sundays and come to church to learn God's words?'. If the candidate answered in the affirmative, the ministers then asked the congregation whether the candidate was telling the truth. Baptism would be administered only if the congregation approved.¹⁷¹

A visible mark of identity for a newly baptized Ono Niha was his or her clothing. The missionaries gave to every new convert either European or Malay clothes. Although the missionaries did not always demand it explicitly (and in a single recorded case even tried to discourage the wearing of Western clothes¹⁷²), the

¹⁶⁶ Anonymous, *Niassische Häuplinge*, 1912, p. 13; *Toeria Hoelo Batoe*, 3/6-10 (1931). Cf. Ch. 4.5.3.6; 5.4.4.

¹⁶⁷ *BRM*, 1900, pp. 161-162.

¹⁶⁸ Jürgen Kosack, *Grundzüge einer Erweckungstheologie in Niassischen Erweckungslieder*, 1964.

¹⁶⁹ Cf. Ch. 5.8.5.

¹⁷⁰ Anonymous, *Vademecum Pastorale Niassicum*, 1892, pp. 8. Their citizenship was no longer limited to traditional *banua* (village), but the *banua* in the sense of one universe.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.* Cf. *BRM*, 1875, p. 113. It was reported that for the first Christians, Kramer had not yet conducted children's baptism because he still wanted to counsel the parents to grow in Christian faith. Later, baptism was administered to children whose parents had become Christians with the condition that the parents should teach and guide them in the Christian faith.

¹⁷² I.e., Frickenschmidt on Pulau Tello, cf. Ch. 4.5.1.

Ono Niha Keriso preferred to leave their traditional clothes. The loincloth (*saombö*) became a symbol of heathendom, while the jacket became a symbol of Christianity.¹⁷³

Sometimes, the missionaries preferred also to change the names of Ono Niha converts from traditional to European or Biblical names. For example, Denninger changed the name of his first convert (a girl in Padang) from Ara to Getruida Christina.¹⁷⁴ But, when he and Kramer baptized the twenty-five believers from Hilina'a and Onozitoli, they did not change their names.

Thomas resolved to keep the names of the adult candidates but to name the infants using names from the Bible.¹⁷⁵ Fries in Sifaoro'asi kept some beautiful traditional names, yet he changed names which, according to him, did not have good meanings.¹⁷⁶ For instance, he preserved *salawas'* names such as Ama Dahamböwö, Baho, Tambali, Fataya, etc., while changing the names of two girls, Fakhelö'ö which means 'no rice' and Sa'oilö'ö which means 'none at all'. Fries considered these names to be meaningless, and therefore, at baptism, changed Fakhelö'ö to Fa'omasi (love) and Sa'oilö'ö to Clara.¹⁷⁷ In the same way, Lett in Tugala Lahömi changed many of the names of his converts. He changes, for example, the name of *Salawa* Ama Gahonoa to Fetero, and Kaiduha, an ex-*ere* who was a woman, became Lydia.¹⁷⁸

In the Ono Niha culture, a name or title was important to show a person's social status. To get a name or a title, a person needed to go through a series of rituals which would always culminate in an *adu* ritual. This did not apply to slaves or poor people. In Christianity, however, this was different. Every human being had the same right to get a new name at baptism. The only requirement was to throw away his or her *adu* and to join catechism classes. This caused fundamental social change.

The Ono Niha took baptism as an event to enter a new era with a new identity. They became citizens of the new *banua Yesu* (community of Jesus). Therefore

¹⁷³ A. Lett, *Im Dienst des Evangeliums auf der Westküste von Nias*, vol. 1, 1901, pp. 10-11; Cf. Rm 14:17. Future developments brought out the problem regarding dress. There were many Niasan youth who followed Malay styles and who always bought new dress during Idul Fitri (a Muslim Holy day). Ono Niha imitated this style by wearing new dresses during Christmas. The missionaries were concerned about this development because Ono Niha were willing to borrow much money just to buy a new dress once a year, while they had a hard time earning a daily living. Fries argued that dressing up was very important and kept one from shame. According to him, dressing up was based on Christian principle replacing *saombo* (traditional clothes). Apart from adding beauty, the clothing was believed by the missionaries to be important in helping resist sickness. Therefore, the missionaries strongly encouraged Ono Niha to wear trousers or skirts and blouses. Furthermore Fries explained that: 'I do not prohibit you to wear clothing, I do not prohibit you to have materials or possessions. But let these things be done in goodness, in accordance with God's will. Remember that the Reign of God is not about food, drink and dress, but about joy and righteousness'.

¹⁷⁴ *BRM*, 1864, pp. 122 and 197. Cf. 4.3.4.1.

¹⁷⁵ *BRM*, 1899, p. 104. Cf. J.A. Fehr, *Drei Christenfrauen auf Nias: Ihr Leben und seliger Heimgang*, 1901. The baptismal name given for the three girls were: Jonatan, Safira and Simöna (the winner).

¹⁷⁶ A. Pieper, *Paedagogiek*, 1923, p. 144-164.

¹⁷⁷ Anonymous, *Lichtstrahlen in Herz und Haus. Der Sohn des Hauptlings und andere Missionsgeschichten von Gottlob Mundle*, Im Ave-Verlag zu Möckmühl, n.d, pp. 12-13.

¹⁷⁸ Missionstraktat Nr. 107, *Fetero oder der goldene Faden der vorbereitenden und Berufenden Gnade Gottes*, 1901. Ama Gahonoa, a Salawa who had a high ranking status in the community of Tugala, got the title of Balugu Sihönöbela after having gone through a series of feasts and stages (*bosi*). Name and rank were usually earned through a feast called *Owasa*. However, it was a very extraordinary experience for Ono Niha that after fulfilling all requirements for baptism, they would be baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and would be given a new name.

people would celebrate big feasts after baptism.¹⁷⁹ The missionaries, however, considered this kind of extravagance an influence of the heathen *huku fõna*.¹⁸⁰

6.2.2.5 Holy Communion

Although the first holy baptism was administered on Easter Day 1874, the first Holy Communion was not celebrated until 8 August 1875.¹⁸¹ Denninger taught his catechists that Holy Communion is a covenant between God and his people, who believe in Christ as their Saviour.¹⁸² As the Church grew, the missionaries drew up a liturgy for Holy Communion.¹⁸³ The conference of missionaries decided that only adults were allowed to attend the Lord's Supper. The missionaries excluded everyone from the Lords' Table who failed to observe the rules of order for church discipline.¹⁸⁴

During the Great Awakening, Holy Communion played a central role in the life of the Ono Niha. As mentioned earlier, before the fiftieth anniversary of the RM mission on Nias, some missionaries paid special attention to raising awareness of the meaning of Holy Communion, through Bible study groups and prayer meeting. They challenged the people to exercise self-evaluation before God, pointing them to passages from the Bible such as Matthew 11:37-39 and I Corinthians 11.¹⁸⁵ The Ono Niha were sensitive to this message, since in the primal religion ill fate was always connected to sin, meaning a trespass against the last expressed will of the ancestor (*amakhoita zatua*) and the customary law (*adat* or *amakhoita mbanua*). This tradition is well preserved until today.

6.3 CHRISTIANITY AND PRIMAL RELIGION

The early missionaries did not have a positive view towards the primal religion of Ono Niha.¹⁸⁶ They took it as a heathen belief (*das nackte greuliche Heidenthum*) that needed to be conquered by the light of the Gospel.¹⁸⁷ They tried their best to get rid

¹⁷⁹ *BRM*, 1874, p. 207. Cf. *BRM*, 1886, p. 143. Sundermann reported that the brother of Ama Mandranga was baptized. After baptism, they celebrated with an *owasa* (grand pig feast).

¹⁸⁰ A. Pieper, *Paedagogiek*, 1923, p. 150. This book elaborates 3 aspects of baptism: 1. the precondition for baptism was to leave the *adu zatua* and all other elements of the primal religion opposed to Christian teachings. 2. The reward of baptism was God's Word, an awareness of sin, happiness, God's protection, fellowship, and various gifts of the Holy Spirit. 3. The law for Christians was called the *hoekoe ba mbanoe Niha Keriso* (the law for the community of Christians). It entailed keeping the Sunday rest, going to church, praying, wearing Christian clothing, obeying the marriage laws for Christians, etc.

¹⁸¹ Cf. Ch. 4.3.4.1.

¹⁸² G. Menzel, *Denninger*, 1990, p. 12.

¹⁸³ Anonymous, *Vademecum Pastorale Niassicum*, (R III r 46) 1892, pp. 13-17.

¹⁸⁴ Cf. I.H. Enklaar, *Baptisan Massal dan Pemisahan Sakramen-sakramen*, 2003, pp. 106-107. Enklaar wrote that the missionaries on Nias emphasized that only those who had been baptized and had accepted Christ as saviour were allowed to participate in the Holy Communion.

¹⁸⁵ Cf. Ed. Kriele, 'The Nias Revival: The Story of Spritual Awakening', *The International Review of Missions*, 1927, p. 94. He wrote: 'Some of these meetings were especially devoted to preparation for a celebration of the Lord's Supper, and on these occasions 1 Cor 11 was discussed with its earnest call to self-examination'. See also Anonymous, *Vademecum Pastorale Niassicum*, 1892, pp. 13-17.

¹⁸⁶ *BRM*, 1868, p. 14; cf. J.M. Hämmerle, *Hikaya Nadu*, 1995, p. 7. Cf. Ch. 2.4.

¹⁸⁷ Lothar Schreiner said that the missionaries who worked in Batakland perceived the tradition of Batak tribes as 'gentile' traditions which should be overcome and erased. The same thing also

of the *adu* which was the symbol of the Ono Niha's primal religion. On the other hand, in the beginning, the Ono Niha rejected the missionaries' approach to them with the Gospel. They felt that the missionaries were agents of the evil spirits¹⁸⁸ and were corrupting their culture. They accused the missionaries of being kidnappers who would take their people to be sold as slaves in Europe. Some people also believed that the missionaries kept the *bekhu* (the evil spirits) in their houses – that they reserved a room in their houses for the *bekhu*.¹⁸⁹ For these reasons, the Ono Niha tried to defend and retain the *adu* as the foundation of their system of beliefs. This gradually changed when Christianity became dominant in Nias, and the missionaries were regarded as master or grandfather (*tua*), and their wives as grandmother (*gawe*).

During the first decade of the twentieth century, when the Dutch colonial powers intensified their power all over Nias and caused many changes in the societal system, the Ono Niha were forced to give up their *adu*. Nevertheless, this did not end the conflict between Christianity and the primal religion. They never really rid themselves completely of the influence of their pre-Christian beliefs and value system, even though the *adu* had been eliminated and the Ono Niha had become a Christian community.

6.3.1 Firm Belief in *Adu*

Some scholars¹⁹⁰ of Niasan Church History noted that the first 25 years (1865 - 1890) was the most difficult stage because the Ono Niha were strongly rooted in their primal religion. The mission field was restricted to the *rapatgebied* around Gunungsitoli.¹⁹¹ The missionaries tried to spread their wings beyond the *rapatgebied* but to no avail. To help give a better understanding of this early encounter of the Gospel and the Nias culture, the author will refer to the work of Denninger (Gunungsitoli), Ködding and Mohri (Fagulö), and Thomas (South Nias), as examples.¹⁹²

happened among the Dayak. The missionaries looked down on Dayak culture and considered it as gentile. Furthermore, Fridolin Ukur said that the missionaries described the Dayak tribe as a tribe which was 'cruel, viscious, and uncivilized'. This was different from the attitude of missionaries who worked in Poso, particularly A.C. Kruyt and Adriani. Although they also used the term 'heathen' to note the mission areas, they had a high respect for the local culture. This difference in the attitude and approach of A.C. Kruyt and Adriani was shaped by their background in ethical theology. Those who embraced ethical theology stressed that acceptance of faith could only take place in an atmosphere of freedom, not one of force, or where the basic character and culture of individuals and the community were set aside. In this way the followers of ethical theology gave attention and respect to cultural values. Cf. Lothar Schreiner, *Adat dan Injil*, 1996, p. 17; cf. F. Ukur, *Tantang-Djawab Suku Dajak*, n.d., p. 119; cf. A.C. Kruyt, *Keluar dari Agama suku masuk ke Agama Kristen*, 1976, pp. 21-36. Cf. Th. van den End and J. Weijtens, *Ragi Carita II*, 2002, pp. 13-14.

¹⁸⁸ Cf. W. Gulö, *Benih yang Tumbuh XIII*, 1983, p. 31.

¹⁸⁹ Cf. *Toeria*, 2/10 (1915).

¹⁹⁰ Cf. W. Gulö, *Benih yang Tumbuh XIII*, 1984, p. 6. Cf. Alfred Schneider, *Turia: 100 Jahre Dienst am Evangelium auf Nias*, 1965, p. 7.

¹⁹¹ Cf. Th. van den End and J. Weijtens, *Ragi Carita II*, 2002, p. 211. Cf. Ch. 4.3.1.1.

¹⁹² Cf. Ch. 4.3.1.

Ernst Denninger in Gunungsitoli

Denninger was the first RM-missionary to Nias. Before he arrived on Nias, he had served successfully among the Dayak in Kalimantan¹⁹³ and had prepared himself among the Ono Niha in Padang. Nevertheless, he needed more than eight years to baptize the first fruits in Gunungsitoli.¹⁹⁴

Denninger started his service with home visitations, befriending the *salawa* (chief) and providing free medication for the sick. All these attempts did not bring immediate results because the Ono Niha were very strong in their adherence to primal religion.

Denninger had to face the traditional priests (*ere*).¹⁹⁵ For instance, on Pentecost Day 1868, Denninger visited the home of the *salawa* of Iraonogeba, to see his sick wife. When he arrived, there were three *ere* trying to cure the *salawa*'s wife. They were performing the *adu*-ritual using snake totem sticks for the healing ceremony.¹⁹⁶ Denninger tried to persuade the three *ere* to renounce the *adu* belief and to believe in the living Lowalangi, the Creator of heaven and earth. These three *ere* ignored him because they believed that they were worshipping Lowalangi through the *adu*. Denninger told them that an *adu* was not the right mediator. The real mediator is the *Ono Lowalangi* (the Son of God) who has come into this world, and his name is Jesus. However, he failed to convince the three *ere* and they continued their ritual.

After four years in Nias, by 1869 Denninger had brought no one to Christ. He reported to the mission headquarters that the Ono Niha were very strong in their 'heathen' beliefs, holding firmly to the *adu*.¹⁹⁷ If there were some Ono Niha who came for church services their motives were for 'the gifts', such as money, tobacco or clothes which were distributed after the service. Denninger concluded that the weakest point of the Ono Niha was their greed and this was the root of all evil.¹⁹⁸ But, if we understand the Ono Niha, they would not consider this practice as 'greed'. To them, this is a kind of 'reward'. In Ono Niha tradition, whenever a noble man invites a guest he will give his guest gifts in the form of betel-nut (*afo*), and pork (*bawi*). As a result, they will respect and obey their host.¹⁹⁹

Even though Denninger was not able to fully understand the intricacies of the Ono Niha worldview, which explains his difficulties as a teacher and as a preacher²⁰⁰, he appreciated their language and seriously studied the *adat* and primal religion. He was not as destructive as many of his contemporaries and successors who were influenced by the upcoming colonialist ideology in Germany (Fabri).

¹⁹³ Cf. *JBRM*, 1851, p. 28. Until 1859, Denninger had served in Maratowo and Barito Timur.

¹⁹⁴ Cf. Ch. 4.3.1.1; E. Fries, *Amuata Hoelo Nono Niha*, 1919, p.131. Gunungsitoli was a safe haven, administered by a Dutch *civielgezaghebber*.

¹⁹⁵ Cf. Ch. 2.4.

¹⁹⁶ *BRM*, 1868, pp. 54-55.

¹⁹⁷ *BRM*, 1869, pp. 41-51.

¹⁹⁸ Cf. Gustav Menzel, *Denninger* (translated by B. Chr. Hulu), Gunungsitoli, 1990, p. 8.

¹⁹⁹ Cf. F.C. Kamma, *Ajaib di Mata Kita: Masalah komunikasi antara timur dan Barat dilihat dari sudut pengalaman selama seabad pekabaran Injil di Irian Jaya I; masa J.G. Geissler (1855-1970)*, 1981, pp. 193-194.

²⁰⁰ Cf. *BRM*, 1867, p. 321. In his school, at first there were seven students (six boys, age ten to twelve years old and one who was eighteen years old). Later on, some students got lazy and dropped out, leaving behind three active students. The children would only go to school after receiving some money, or cigarettes and dresses. There were even some children who dared to demand one guilder each day as a precondition to attend school. According to Denninger, Ono Niha thought that Europeans were richer than Malay people. Therefore, they suggested that if their children come to school, the missionaries should pay them a salary.

Wilhelm Ködding and August Mohri in Fagulö

Fagulö is a remote village in South-East Nias. Up to the end of the 1860s, the Dutch had no control over this region. The people of Fagulö did not have much interaction with people outside the village, except for occasional contacts with traders. Therefore, the Ono Niha of Fagulö were firm in their primal religious beliefs and traditions. Ködding and Mohri began their work in 1868.²⁰¹ They tried to share the Good News through visitation and conversation with the local people. They invited the local people to come for worship services, and provided them with free medicines, clothes, tobacco, and money. The people reacted to this by calling them *ere Lowalangi* (priests of God). Their motive, however, was to get the gifts and not the Gospel. The Ono Niha rejected their offering of salvation and chose to adhere to their *adu*.²⁰² The missionaries then tried to open a school, but they could not find any students.²⁰³ The people first promised to send their children, but then went back on their word, because they realized that Western education would undermine their people's loyalty to the traditions of their ancestors.²⁰⁴

On one occasion, Ködding challenged the people asking them what they preferred: death or life? The Fagulö people, including some *salawa*, took his question seriously and finally answered, 'We want life'. Ködding continued: 'If you choose life, you have to throw away the *adu* and receive God's Word'. Of course they refused, because to them the *adu* symbolizes the source of life, which are the ancestors. Afterwards, that same night, the Fagulö people celebrated a ritual for Saho, a deified ancestor who protects the rice fields from rats.²⁰⁵

After one year in Fagulö, the situation of the missionaries had become desperate. Some people cheated them. Others demanded tobacco and clothes, and even their personal belongings. They were also in the middle of skirmishes between villages. *Emali*-head hunters were everywhere. The *salawa* also withdrew their support for the missionaries²⁰⁶, so that they were forced to leave.

Johann Thomas in South Nias

In 1873, Thomas began to preach the Gospel in Ombölata, a *rapatgebied* village. Although he had quite a frank manner, he was able to baptise six local people within two years.²⁰⁷ The key to his success was the support of the *salawa*, who hoped that the missionary, having strong ties to the Colonial authorities, could help him maintain his position of authority.

From Ombölata Thomas tried to reach out to Teluk Dalam, a place beyond the *rapatgebied*. Just as in other parts of Nias, the Ono Niha in Teluk Dalam upheld

²⁰¹ BRM, 1868, p. 275. cf. Ch. 4.3.1.4.

²⁰² BRM, 1868, p. 279.

²⁰³ BRM, 1868, pp. 369-371.

²⁰⁴ BRM, 1868, pp. 369-371

²⁰⁵ BRM, 1870, p. 40.

²⁰⁶ Cf. BRM, 1868, pp. 54-55, cf. BRM, 1868, pp. 369-371; cf. BRM, 1870, p. 40. Missionaries reported to the RM that the people in Fagulö were so solid in adhering to their primal religion. Although they had heard the story about *huku Lowalangi* (God's way or God's law), they had no desire to accept it or live by it; they seemed to prefer even to live with injustices resulting from their beliefs, rather than follow God's way. The Ono Niha assumed that their religion was the correct one and so they had a hard time accepting the salvation message from Jesus Christ, although they were 'greedy' for gifts.

²⁰⁷ BRM, 1886, p. 49. Cf. A. Schneider, *Turia: 100 Jahre Dienst am Evangelium auf Nias*, 1965, p. 13. Cf. Ch. 4.3.4.1.

their traditional beliefs and customs strongly, and resisted any foreign influences. Here too the *adu* was not to be conquered by the Cross, as long as the chiefs held absolute power. The missionary work only lasted for three years and bore no fruit.²⁰⁸

How did Thomas go about spreading the Gospel in Teluk Dalam? First, he established close cooperation with Faösi'aro, the *balö zi'ulu* (paramount chief) of Bawö Lowalani. Initially, the villagers warmly welcomed him; especially when he came with free tobacco and clothes.²⁰⁹ Some of them were curious to see his wife and children or were interested with his harmonica. Thomas faithfully shared with them the Gospel of Jesus Christ, but they refused to leave the *adu*. Only when they were sick and came to Thomas for medicines, would they promise to come and join the worship services. But after they were healed, they would go back to their traditional practices.

Some people, however, thought that he was a spy sent by the Dutch Colonial authorities. After he explained to them that he was not a colonial officer, they allowed him to stay in Bawö Lowalani, and *Balö zi'ulu* Faösi'aro gave him a piece of land to build his house.

Soon, Thomas started facing all kinds of difficulties: the workers he employed to build his house were lazy but demanded high pay. They sold him the building materials for very much money. When he tried to resolve a conflict between two parties, some threatened to kill him.²¹⁰ His house was ransacked. Some youth who pretended to have fallen ill after chewing his tobacco, demanded compensation. Thomas had a quarrel with Faösi'aro because the latter did not like him to befriend the paramount chiefs of other villages. In the end this situation became so critical that the missionaries had to be rescued by a Dutch warship.

These three cases prove that the Ono Niha were very strong in their traditional beliefs and refused to leave the *adu*.²¹¹ The reasons why the Ono Niha, especially beyond the *rapatgebied*, refused to depart from the *adu* are as follows:

1. They believed the *adu* to be a source of blessings;²¹²
2. They did not want to annoy their deities, since they feared to be cut off from their ancestors;
3. On top of this, the Ono Niha were afraid to be cut off from their *adat* community.²¹³

²⁰⁸ *BRM*, 1874, p. 245.

²⁰⁹ Cf. J.W. Thomas, *Drei Jahre in Südnieas*, 1892, p. 17.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.* pp. 18-21.

²¹¹ W. Gulö, *Benih yang Tumbuh XIII*, 1983, p. 6.

²¹² A. Schneider, *Turia: 100 Jahre Dienst am Evangelium auf Nias*, 1965, p. 14. Cf. H. Sundermann, *Die Insel Nias und die Mission Dasselbst*, 1905, pp. 98-99. In the dialogue between *Balugu Oroisa* and Sundermann, Oroisa said that: 'My father has died, and your father is far away, therefore we are now siblings. I will follow all your teaching. However, don't ask me to throw away or to leave my statues, I cannot do that. If I do that, I will die and all my pigs will die, too. If we get sick, we will go to the healer. We will try everything, even if it takes us ten days. And if all these efforts bring no healing, we will give offerings to the gods'.

²¹³ For example: in Batak land when some Batak people in Silindung submitted themselves to be baptized by Nommensen on 27 August 1865, they had to suffer isolation from any traditional gatherings. Thus, Nommensen accommodated them in the village he named as Huta Dame. Cf. Paul B. Pedersen, *Darah Batak dan Jiwa Protestan: Perkembangan Gereja-gereja Batak di Sumatera Utara*, 1975, p. 56. Cf. L. Schreiner, *Adat dan Injil*, 1996, pp. 43-44. Cf. Th. van den End and J. Weijtens, *Ragi Carita II*, 2002, p. 184.

The Ono Niha believed that their religion and their culture, which were inseparable, had to be maintained at all costs.²¹⁴ In brief, it is not easy to leave a religion which is deeply embodied in one's life and culture. The conflict between Cross and *adu* actually began, when the missionaries insisted that the people reject their religion and customs, giving these the stigma of being the work of Satan. This approach of the missionaries not only made the Ono Niha cling more firmly to the *adu*, but also caused them to distrust the missionaries as collaborators of the colonialists.

6.3.2 From Belief in the *Adu* to Christian Belief

Until the 1890s, the Dutch controlled only Gunungsitoli and its surrounding *rapatgebied* on Nias.²¹⁵ Other parts were still under the sovereign rule of the chiefs. The conquest of the whole of Nias was accelerated in 1899 by RM-Director Schreiber's petition to the colonial government. The petition came about after Schreiber had visited the mission on Nias. He had sad feelings because the mission work progressed so slowly, one of the main reasons being the lack of security especially in remote villages. Schreiber requested the Dutch to take full control and to support the spreading of the Gospel. He also proposed working together with the Dutch in the promotion of the welfare of Nias and in the building the infrastructure.²¹⁶ The authorities responded eagerly by sending soldiers to subdue 'the rebels'. The local government was summoned to restructure the whole of Nias. As of 1901, it supported all mission work which was in agreement with the 'Ethical Politics'.²¹⁷

The colonialist conquest caused drastic changes to the society on Nias. In 1908, the Dutch introduced the forced-labour system (*rodi*). People were compelled not only to build the infrastructure, such as roads and bridges, but also to plant coconut trees across the whole of Nias, to remove the pigsties underneath their houses, to grow rice in the plains, to hunt the wild boar, to move from the traditional *banua* (village) on the hills to housing along the new roads, etc.²¹⁸ All these forced changes caused extreme tensions amongst the Ono Niha, challenging their traditions and culture, including the position of the *salawa*.

The acculturation process²¹⁹ smoothed the path for the Gospel but challenged the very existence of the *adu*. In the course of social transformation, the *salawa* and their subjects abandoned their *adu* and began to cling to Christianity as a substitute.

²¹⁴ C. Geertz, *Kebudayaan dan Agama*, 1992, p. 5.

²¹⁵ Th. van den End and J. Weitjens, *Ragi Carita II*, 2002, p. 5. Cf. J. Verkuyl, *Ketegangan antara Imperialisme dan Kolonialisme Barat pada masa 'Politik Kolonial Etis'*, 1990, pp. 14-30.

²¹⁶ *BRM*, 1899, pp. 299-300.

²¹⁷ Cf. J. Verkuyl, *Ketegangan antara Imperialisme dan Kolonialisme Barat pada masa 'Politik Kolonial Etis'*, 1990, pp. 30-57. Cf. Ch. 4.4.

²¹⁸ Guru Jonata, 'Rodi', in: A. Pieper (ed.), *Realienboek*, 1928, pp. 44-48.

²¹⁹ The definition of acculturation is the encounter of the local culture with the foreign culture in which the foreign culture is gradually accepted and modified by the local culture without losing its identity. Cf. Koentjaraningrat, *Pengantar Ilmu Antropologi*, 1990, pp. 248-249. Koentjaraningrat said that cultural contact was wide spread at the end of the nineteenth century and at the beginning of the twentieth century in line with the development of colonization and Christianity in all continents outside Europe.

6.3.2.1 Decline of the *Salawa*'s Influence

In the Ono Niha's societal system, the *salawa* played an important role.²²⁰ They were the builders of the *banua* and implementers of the *fondrakö*. In the Batak culture, the king (*raja*) was considered as the symbol of tradition and as the ruler of the village²²¹, while on Nias the *salawa* was the protector of the traditions. If the people were the string (thread), the *salawa* was the needle. They were the highest in the social hierarchy and people listened to them.²²² This was also the reason why both RM and DLM instructed their missionaries on Nias and the Batu Islands to begin their missionary work by approaching the chiefs.

In most cases, however, the attempt to befriend the *salawa* did not help much, except in the places already occupied by the Dutch. With the coming of the colonialists, the *salawa* on Nias and the Batu Islands began to lose their power. To maintain their position they chose to join Christianity rather than join Islam. Christianity gave them more benefits such as education, health, and security. On top of this, they believed that the relationship between the missionaries and the Dutch administrators would benefit them.²²³ The Dutch not only gave the permits for the missionaries to work on Nias, they also facilitated and guarded them on the mission field in the remote places.

On the other hand, the missionaries also prayed for the Dutch Government and Wilhelmina, Queen of the Netherlands. The missionaries helped the Dutch to calm down the rebels through personal approach.²²⁴ This cooperation between mission and state benefited both sides, but it also made the missionaries reluctant to criticise the colonialist practises. The tenuousness of the *salawa*'s position opened the door for the growth of Christianity. To discuss further this issue, we will look into the life of some *salawa* who converted to Christianity.

Balugu Kara Sebu in Lölöwua

Lölöwua village is located about twenty kilometres from Gunungsitoli in Central Nias. In 1902, Sundermann began his missionary work there. He started by approaching the tribal leader, *Balugu Kara Sebu*. Sundermann was accepted by the local people because they considered him a Dutch agent. Sökhi'aro W. Mendröfa²²⁵ said that when *Balugu Kara Sebu* invited Sundermann to his house, he chopped off the head of one of his slaves (*binu*) and presented it to Sundermann as the symbol of

²²⁰ J.T. Nieuwenhuizen en H.C.B.von Rosenberg, *Het eiland Nias*, 1863, pp. 93-94. Chiefs seldom had absolute power over a vast group of people.

²²¹ L. Schreiner, *Adat dan Injil*, 1996, p. 43.

²²² Cf. F. Harefa, *Hikayat dan Ceritera Bangsa serta 'Adat Nias'*, 1939, p. 77.

²²³ Cf. *BRM*, 1866, p. 193, *BRM*, 1867, pp. 129-131, *BRM*, 1867, p. 321, *BRM*, 1870, p. 40, *BRM*, 1872, p. 166, *BRM*, 1870, pp. 207-208, J.W. Thomas, *Drei Jahre in Südnias*, 1892, pp. 21-30.

²²⁴ If it is compared with the missionaries' activities in Poso we can see that there is similarity in which missionaries try to be mediator or peace keeper in the community which was in conflict, and which practiced slaughtering of human beings as offering, experiencing the use of supernatural powers, sanctions and oppression of Pebato tribe by Tonapu. Unfortunately, the missionaries in Poso were not succeeding. Thus, the missionaries thought that the only power which could put an end to this situation was the Dutch government. However, the Dutch government used violence in conquering tribes who rejected their presence, causing more suffering to the people. Witnessing this, Missionary Kruyt objected to the oppression, viewing it as merciless. Still here was no open conflict between the missionaries and the Dutch government. J. Kruyt, *Kabar Keselamatan di Poso*, 1977, p. 139.

²²⁵ S.W. Mendröfa, 'Terangkum dalam Fondrakö', in: D.P. Lase (ed.), 'Menuju Gereja yang Mandiri', 2005, pp. 42-51.

highest honour for a guest. Sundermann, reacting to this, became very angry. He immediately called the security forces to Lölöwua.

The following day the Dutch soldiers arrived and several shots were fired. The villagers, including *Balugu Kara Sebua*, dispersed, hiding themselves in the jungle. With great anxiety the *balugu* went to see Sundermann at midnight. He apologized and promised that he would not chop off anyone else's head if the soldiers let his people go unpunished. He even promised they would receive Jesus Christ. Sundermann agreed to help them and asked the soldiers to leave. Consequently, in the morning *Balugu Kara Sebua* and his people threw away their *adu* and converted to Christianity.²²⁶

Fadoli, Chief of the Iraono Huna

Fadoli and Solagö were brothers, the sons of Harimao, the chief of the Iraono Huna tribe of Lölöwa'u.²²⁷ Harimao was a fierce man and often attacked the other villages. He and his soldiers would burn and ransack the defeated villages and sell the captives to the traders from Aceh. Fadoli and Solagö joined their father a few times. When the old chief died, Fadoli took over the leadership and became the paramount chief of the Iraono Huna. At his coronation he took the name Batu Ganuwö (The War Stone). He continued his father's policy in providing slaves for the Acehnese traders. He ruled only for a short period because in 1863 the Dutch penetrated into South Nias and took over Lölöwa'u village, burning all houses. The villagers sought refuge in the jungle. Later, they moved to the Lölöhöwa and stayed there for some years.²²⁸

In 1899, the Dutch sent troops led by Lieutenant Baptist to subdue the 'rebels' in South and Central Nias. When the troops passed Lölöwa'u, the Iraono Huna were in fear, traumatized by the past experience. Later, they chose to befriend the whites, as they had heard about a missionary, Krumm, and his wife who worked in neighbouring Lahusa.²²⁹

At first, they were very cautious towards the missionary because they thought he was a Dutch Colonial officer²³⁰ who had come to subdue them. But when they heard that Krumm was friendly and helpful, Solagö, brother of Fadoli, visited him.

Fadoli heard about Krumm from his brother and decided to invite him to Lölöwa'u. Krumm made his first visit to Lölöwa'u on 2 January 1900. On that day, Fadoli announced that he and his family would join Christianity. He said that in the past the Iraono Huna and the white people were enemies, but now they would be brothers and sisters. He called Krumm, who was much younger than him, his grandfather (*tua*), and Krumm's wife his grandmother (*gawe*). The Iraono Huna were convinced that the missionaries loved them very much.²³¹

²²⁶ *Sejarah datangnya berita Injil di Distrik BNKP Lölöwua (Yubileum 100 tahun Berita Injil)*, 1996.

²²⁷ *BRM*, 1900, p. 160.

²²⁸ Anonymous, *Niassische Häuptlinge II: Fadoli, Ama Gahonoa, Afore*, 1912, pp. 1-4.

²²⁹ Cf 4.4.3.2.

²³⁰ *BRM*, 1899, p. 152. In 1899, *Salawa Iraono Huna* together with his soldiers threatened Missionary Krumm. Their reason was the child of the Salawa got sick because he drank water that had been contaminated by Krumm's horse. Therefore, they forced Krumm to give medicine. Missionary Krumm gave the medicine but the Salawa demanded to have all medicine. Hearing that demand, Missionary Krumm got angry and threw him out from his house. Seeing that Krumm was very firm, the *salawa* and his soldiers thought that the missionary must be an agent of Dutch colonialism.

²³¹ *BRM*, 1902, p. 163. Cf. 4.4.3.2.

Ama Dahamböwö in Sifaoro'asi

When Fries began his missionary work in Central Nias, this region was very insecure due to the activities of two notorious 'rebels', Sitambaho and Balöhalu. Before Fries arrived the Dutch soldiers had been trying to seize them, but they managed to hide in the jungle.

A few years later, the Dutch built roads in this region by using forced-labour, thereby establishing better control. Under these circumstances, the *salawa* of Sifaoro'asi, Ama Dahamböwö, invited Fries to his village, even though he still adhered to the *adu*. Soon, under the influence of the teachings of the missionary the chief experienced an identity crisis, which brought him to the point where he gave up adherence to the *adu*, including his *adu zatua* (ancestral images) and *adu siraha*²³², and embraced the 'new law' (i.e., the Christian religion), which he considered far better than the 'old law' (i.e., the primal religion).²³³

Balö zi'ulu Barani Dakhi in Hilisimaetanö

Barani Dakhi was the chief of Hilisimaetanö. At the age of 35, he became the *balö zi'ulu*, the highest in hierarchy of the whole of South Nias recognised by the Dutch. His people respected and obeyed him. When Borutta arrived at Hilisimaetanö in 1911, Barani Dakhi and his people warmly welcomed him because they thought that he represented the Dutch government.²³⁴ When they found out that Borutta was not a Dutch officer, Barani Dakhi's attitude towards him changed. The chief often asked favours from Borutta, but when Borutta needed some labourers, the *balö zi'ulu* refused to help, saying that his people would work for the *rodi* rather than for the missionary. Eventually, all communication between the two of them came to a halt. As a result, the common people were afraid to attend the Christian worship services.²³⁵

Later, when Barani Dakhi realized that the relationship between the missionary and the colonial authorities was indeed of great importance, he showed his willingness to cooperate with the mission. He allowed his people to attend the church services, and in 1914, he renounced his old beliefs and, in a traditional *famatö harimao*²³⁶ ceremony, converted to Christianity. However, both the colonial administration and the RM-missionary did not consider this enough of a change in attitude for becoming a Christian. As a last resort, in 1915, Barani Dakhi threw away his *adu*.²³⁷ Only then, was he received for catechism and admitted for baptism.

Ama De'ali in Hilimaziaya

One of the measures for gaining more control that was undertaken by the Dutch in the years 1902-1908 was expanding the infrastructure, including the road from

²³² See Ch. 2.4. 2.1.

²³³ Anonymous, *Wie die Götzen*, 1910, pp. 1-10. Ama Dahamböwö changed his religion and was baptized on Christmas 1909 in order to maintain his position as the *salawa* and also as a sign of protest for the failure of the *ere*'s medicine to help. The medicine from the missionary was more effective than the offering done for *adu* by *ere*. Fries said that Lowalangi is far stronger than *adu*. This was what motivated Salawa Ama Dahamböwö to leave the *adu* and become Christian.

²³⁴ *Barmen Missionsblatt*, 1912, p. 58.

²³⁵ There is a saying of Ono Niha: '*salawa* or *balö zi'ulu* was like the needle and the people were like the thread'. This meant that the position of noble people or rulers in Nias was dependent on, as well as supported, respected, and obeyed by the people.

²³⁶ Cf. Ch. 2.4.3.

²³⁷ *BRM*, 1915, p. 108.

Gunungsitoli via Hilimaziaya to Lahewa.²³⁸ In anticipation of the great changes caused by the Dutch occupation, some *salawa* sought the support of the missionaries.

In 1910, *Tuhenöri* Ama De'ali and three other *salawa* from Hilimaziaya went to invite the missionaries in Bo'usö to build a mission station in Hilimaziaya.²³⁹ The missionaries gladly responded to their invitation and founded a station in Hilimaziaya.²⁴⁰ This was the beginning of the missionary work in North Nias which later expanded to Lahewa, Afulu and Tuhemberua.

Raja of the Batu Islands

The old *raja* of the Batu Islands, Alam Laut I²⁴¹, was a venerable man, always dressed well – sometimes in a mixture of *adat* and Western clothing – and conspicuously wearing his Cross of Merit from the Dutch government. When Johann Kersten began his work on the Batu Islands, he was greeted warmly by the *raja* who later offered him a place to be used as the missionary station.²⁴²

The cooperation between the Dutch administrator on Pulau Tello and the DLM missionaries helped to propagate the growth of the mission work. The local chiefs received the missionaries in their midst, hoping that the missionary could become a bridge to the Dutch rulers. Alam Laut I would sometimes attend the worship services and he sent his children to the mission school. He would also accompany the missionaries on their visits to remote Batu Islands, personally introducing them to the chiefs.²⁴³ The *raja* also instructed Frickenschmidt (the successor of Kersten) in the Batu dialect and helped him write the first dictionary in the vernacular.²⁴⁴ Notwithstanding his support, the *raja* did not automatically convert to Christianity. By standing firm in his primal religion and tradition, *raja* Alam Laut I was assured of his people's continued support. On the other hand, he also had some relationships with Moslems.

In their turn, the missionaries did not stop their efforts to win the *raja* for Christianity. They provided him with free medical treatment and the Christian congregation prayed for him.²⁴⁵ In the days before he died, in 1902, the *raja* distrusted everyone, except for Agnes Landwehr. Only she was allowed to cook food for him. But when asked about the salvation of his soul, he said that he couldn't embrace Christianity because of his great desire to be united with his ancestors in the hereafter.²⁴⁶

While Alam Laut I thus died as an adherent of primal religion, his son and heir to the throne, Alam Laut II, attended the mission school and church services. After he had finished school, Frickenschmidt trained him and appointed him as an

²³⁸ Faedogo Humendru, 'Lala Seboea ba hoelo Nias', in: A. Pieper (ed.), *Realienboek*, 1923, pp. 30-32.

²³⁹ Cf. 4.4.4.2. Cf. *BRM*, 1914, p. 49. It was said that when Inspector Wegner visited Nias, he together with Sartor and Fries was invited by Tuhenöri Bo'usö to have a meal together. At this time Tuhenöri Bo'usö prepared a great feast for his guests. As a result Wegner was very impressed by the hospitality of the *tuhenöri*.

²⁴⁰ Cf. A. Schneider, *Turia: 100 Jahre Dienst am Evangelium auf Nias*, 1965, p. 32. Cf. 4.4.4.2.

²⁴¹ Cf. Ch. 4.5.3.6.

²⁴² Cf. Ch. 4.5.1, Cf. W.F. Schröder, *De Zending op de Batoe-Eilanden*, 1927, p. 8.

²⁴³ W.F. Schröder, *De Zending op de Batoe-eilanden*, pp. 19-20. E.g., the *raja* introduced Frickenschmidt to the chiefs of Sigata.

²⁴⁴ W.F. Schröder, *De Zending op de Batoe-eilanden*, 1927, p. 19.

²⁴⁵ *EVB*, 19/5 (1901), p. 164.

²⁴⁶ *EVB*, 20/1 (1902), pp. 16-17.

assistant teacher.²⁴⁷ However later, *raja* Alam Laut II gradually began to change his attitude toward Christianity. This was not so much a return to primal religion as corruption by power and position.²⁴⁸ In the end, on his dying bed, Alam Laut II asked the missionaries to visit him in Koto Bulu'aro to examine his beliefs. On one occasion, Alam Laut II quoted from the New Testament, comparing himself to the prodigal son (Lk 15:11-32) and calling the primal religion *fenawa* (coconut crumbs from which the oil has been extracted, used for feeding the pigs). His knowledge of the Bible was very satisfying.²⁴⁹ Eventually, on 7 November 1925 the *raja* was baptised, and died as a Christian. His conversion, however, did not have much impact as the royal family had entered Islam.

6.3.2.2 Demand for Protection against *Emali*

The *emali* were not only head hunters, robbers and kidnappers, but some of them also were freedom fighters. Whenever a chief died, in order to honor him, his sons would send some *emali* to take some heads from neighbouring villages. The skulls would then be used as pillows on which to rest the deceased chief's head and feet.²⁵⁰ Some people believed these skulls had some magic and used them for protection.²⁵¹

These *emali* moved from village to village and created all kinds of crimes. They robbed and kidnapped people selling them as slaves to the traders from Aceh.²⁵² The geographical situation in the interiors of Nias supported these raids, causing many people to leave this region and migrate to areas under the control of the Dutch.²⁵³

Because of the *emali* people also came to the missionaries for patronage²⁵⁴, because they knew that Europeans enjoyed special protection from the Dutch. For example, when Balöhalu attacked the villages in the hills of Humene, the villagers sought refuge in the RM mission station. There they were protected by Dutch soldiers.²⁵⁵ Similarly in Sogae'adu, many people attended church services just to avoid the *emali*.²⁵⁶ Here too, the Dutch soldiers provided security from the *emali*.

In West Nias, Missionary August Lett was welcomed by the *salawa* of Fadoro and Tugala Lahömi because of security reasons. They thought Lett was a Dutch officer because he was accompanied by *Controleur* Palmer van der Broek everywhere he went.²⁵⁷ With his coming, the wars in West Nias subsided. The *emali* disappeared and with the support of *Salawa* Fetero or Ama Gahonoa, Christianity grew rapidly.

²⁴⁷ *EVB*, 16/5 (1898), pp. 186-187; *EVB*, 16/6 (1898), p. 212.

²⁴⁸ Ch. 4.5.3.

²⁴⁹ W.F. Schröder, *De Zending op de Batoe-eilanden*, 1927, pp. 109-110

²⁵⁰ E.E.W.Gs. Schröder, *Nias*, 1917, pp. 441-446. Cf. Interview with Ama Osara'ö Bu'ulölö on 13 January 2004 in Gomo, and the interview with Ama Wa'ö Telaumbanua on 14 February 2004 in Gomo.

²⁵¹ Cf. Ch. 2.7.3. Anonymous, *Niassische Häuptlinge II*, 1912, p. 7.

²⁵² Cf. W. Lempp, *Benih yang Tumbuh XII*, 1976, p. 16.

²⁵³ Th. Müller-Krüger, *Sedjarah Geredja di Indonesia*, 1966, p. 236.

²⁵⁴ A. Schneider, *Turia: 100 Jahre Dienst am Evangelium auf Nias*, 1965, p. 20.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.* p. 22.

²⁵⁶ *BRM*, 1900, p. 183.

²⁵⁷ H. Sundermann, *Missionar August Lett, ein Blutzeuge des Evangeliums*, 1910, pp. 9-12.

6.3.2.3 Impact of Dreams

The Ono Niha believed that dreams were indications of future events or accidents which would befall the community. For example, dreams about fire or flood meant that there would be an epidemic; whereas dreams about fresh water and fish symbolize good fortune.²⁵⁸ They also believed that their ancestors would speak to them through dreams – sending those messages or warnings.

After the mission had entered a certain region, dreams also led people to Christianity. Because of dreams, many people decided to leave their worship of the *adu* and to receive the Gospel. One of them was Kaiduha, an *ere* in Tugala. On one occasion, she met her ancestors in a dream. They told her that Christianity was a good law (*huku si sökhi*) and instructed her to demand the conversion of the people of Tugala. They complied, left their *adu* and turned to Christianity.²⁵⁹

Another incident took place in Lölöwa'u. The nearest mission station, lead by Krumm, was in Lahusa (Sihene'asi). Many people in Lölöwa'u had heard about him, but they had not seen him yet. The vivid dream of the wife of Solagö, however, drew the people of Lölöwa'u to the Gospel even before they had a first contact with the RM-missionary. As the following reconstruction shows, this powerful medium became a vehicle for the Christian mission.²⁶⁰

The first wife of Solagö was sleeping in the garden cottage (*ose*) in the middle of her rice field. In a dream, a very tall man appeared to her, standing off in the distance. Although he was standing with his feet on the earth, his head reached up to heaven. "The more I looked at him", she said, "the more astonished I was. At first, he was standing there quite still. Eventually, he started walking, heading straight for our cottage. I was very afraid. But when I looked closely, I noticed that the man was getting shorter and shorter, and when he arrived at our cottage, his head reached up to the roof ridge. Suddenly there was a sound as if something had fallen from the roof beam onto the village street. I thought it was a snake. But when I climbed up to the roof for a better view through the skylight, I saw a tiny little man, wearing a shining-white robe, sitting on top of a stone. He called to me: "aine ba da'e" (come here). I went down the ladder and said: "ya'ugö!". He answered: "ya'ugö!" (common Niasan greeting). I continued, asking him: "Are you the person I just saw?". He answered: "Yes, I am he". Then I spoke again: "Where do you come from?". He said, "I come from heaven, and I have something to tell you and the people of Lölöwa'u". "I am listening", I said. And he asked me, "Are you going to Lahusa on Sunday?". I answered, "Yes". "That's good", he said. "Do you already know the *Tuan* (missionary) in Lahusa?". I answered, "Yes, we know him, and also the *Gawe* (the wife of the missionary)". He said to me, "That's good. Do you want to follow the *huku Lowalangi* (teaching of God)?" I said, "Yes". And he answered, "Then let us pray". We folded our hands and prayed. After we had said "Amen", I asked him to stay with us. But he said, "no, I must go back. But you must go to the *Tuan* in Lahusa, for he will show you the path of life (*lala wangorifi*²⁶¹)". I asked, "Are you the Son of God?". But then I woke up – alas, it was but a dream.

²⁵⁸ Cf. A. Lück, *Katechismus Luther*, 1934, p. 15.

²⁵⁹ Cf. A. Lett, *Im Dienst des Evangeliums auf der Westküste von Nias*, vol. III, 1901, pp. 42-43.

²⁶⁰ Cf. *BRM* 1900, pp. 349-350; paraphrasing and translation by U. Hummel from the German. See also Ch. 4.4.3.2.

²⁶¹ A possible influence here was the motif of the 'path' from J. Bunyan's, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, 1678/1684. Cf. J. Kosack, *Grundzüge einer Erweckungstheologie in niasischen Erweckungsliedern*, 1964, pp. 18-19.

Because of her dream the people of Lölöwa'u were persuaded to invite Krumm to come to Lölöwa'u to share the Gospel and to heal them from various illnesses.²⁶²

Before 1915, no missionary had any problems considering the dream as a medium leading people to Christ. But when Christianity became stronger, the missionaries considered the dream factor to be a dangerous expression of the primal (tribal, traditional or primitive) religion, not to be followed by Christians and only worship to God. Lück, who interpreted Luther's Catechism in the Niasan context, stated that to believe in dreams was a form of idolatry and against the Lord.²⁶³

6.3.2.4 Impact of Medical Mission

Before the missionaries arrived on Nias, many people died of all kinds of illness especially malaria, diarrhea, dysentery, and whooping cough.²⁶⁴ Since the Ono Niha believed that diseases were caused by evil spirits, the *ere* was called for the sacrificial rituals which meant heavy financial consequences for the family.²⁶⁵ Sometimes they would borrow money for buying pigs needed for payment by pawning their belongings such as gold, land, and houses. All these led them into poverty. To clear their debts they sometimes would sell their children to the creditors.

The missionaries, who had been equipped with some basic medical skills during their training, used the misfortune of the people's diseases as an opportunity for evangelism.²⁶⁶ While giving free medical treatment, they also prayed for the sick. Their obvious success made the Ono Niha leave the *ere* and turn to Christianity.²⁶⁷ The *ere*, however, accused the missionaries of distorting their tradition. During an epidemic in Gunungsitoli, Missionary Kramer helped only the *Ono Niha Keriso* and those applying for catechism, neglecting the non-Christians. As a result many adherents of the primal religion were strongly attracted, first and foremost to the *salawa*, and then to Christianity.²⁶⁸

Another example can be seen in the testimony of a *guru* in West Nias. There was a *salawa* named Laso in Fulölö. Laso was very firm in his primal religion and rejected Christianity. He also refused to give the missionary a piece of land for building a church and a school. When he became ill, his *ere* tried to cure him using *adu* and sacrifices but to no avail. He had no choice but to ask the teacher to get some Western medicines from the missionary. Because of this, a conflict erupted between the *ere* and the teacher. The *ere* insisted Laso continue adhering to the *adu* rituals whereas the teacher believed that only trust in Lowalangi could cure Laso.

²⁶² BRM, 1900, p. 350.

²⁶³ A. Lück, *Katechismus Luther*, 1934, pp. 15-16.

²⁶⁴ J. T. Nieuwenhuizen en H.C.B. von Rosenberg, *Het eiland Nias*, 1863, p. 24, cf. Lagemann, 'Fökhö Waba', in: A. Pieper (ed), *Realienboek*, 1923, pp. 232-239.

²⁶⁵ Ch. 2.4.2.2.

²⁶⁶ Cf. Ch. 4.3.5.1; Ch. 4.4.6.1; Ch. 4.5.4; Ch. 5.2.5.

²⁶⁷ BRM, 1869, p. 54. Denninger was faced with the *ere* when he tried to treat the wife of the *salawa* of Iraonogeba who was ill. The *ere* previously made an *adu*, beat the *tifa* and offered sacrifices, but the wife did not get any better. When Denninger gave medicine and prayed, the wife of the *salawa* was healed. This opened way for the Gospel. The *salawa* of Iraonogeba and villagers accepted the Gospel and left their *adu*.

²⁶⁸ BRM, 1874, pp. 113-118. BRM, 1875, p. 100. One day, Thomas visited the house of the *salawa* of Lölömboli. The *salawa* said: 'Look at these woods, look at these *adu*, they took our pigs and chickens and wasting our money. We now realize that we need to listen more to God's Word, and we gather our *adu* in one place and burn them. We would like to follow you'.

The *ere* accused the *guru* of being a white man's spy. As a result, Laso became confused. He did not want to take the Western medicine and he prayed for by the teacher. As a result, Laso's condition became worse. Finally, Laso asked his eldest son to invite the teacher to pray for him and to cure him with the Western medicine. The teacher came; Laso was cured and converted to Christianity.²⁶⁹ The same thing happened in South Nias to the son of *Si'ulu* Kanölö. When healing took place, Kanölö and all his people turned to Christianity.²⁷⁰

But, it was not easy for the Ono Niha to forget their primal religion. In times of crisis, besides praying to the Christian God, they would continue practicing the *adu* rituals.²⁷¹ Many who turned to Christianity, threw away all of their *adu* except the *adu zatua*, representing the ancestor. They would ask their non Christian relatives to keep this *adu zatua*, because they feared that they would lose their identity if they were cut off from their ancestors.²⁷² Some of them defended keeping the *adu zatua* by arguing that they were no different from the portraits decorating the houses of the missionaries.²⁷³

6.3.2.5 Impact of Education

The mission school²⁷⁴ found its place in Nias and the Batu Islands, playing an important role in the development of Niasan society. As elsewhere in Indonesia, it was a decisive factor in the transformation of culture, the integration of society, and the development of the children's personalities.²⁷⁵

In the first twenty five years, the missionaries had founded a few schools in the *rapatgebied*, especially around the stations in Gunungsitoli, Dahana and Ombölata.

²⁶⁹ *BRM*, 1900, p. 9.

²⁷⁰ *Toeria*, 2/3 (1915), p. 34.

²⁷¹ *BRM*, 1875, pp. 103-105. For example, when the wife of the *balugu* of Ombölata got sick, Missionary Thomas came and gave medicine and prayed. However, the wife did not get healed immediately, so after Thomas left, the *balugu* asked the *ere* to make an offering to the *adu*. When Thomas heard this, he went back to that house, and said to the *balugu*, 'why do you continue to make an offering to the *adu* when you have promised to leave the *adu* behind? The *balugu* explained that he intended just to ask for his wife not to die, not for himself. Thomas got angry and said, 'How could people doing things against God's Word expect him to heal people? The *ere* are the servants of Satan, liars, false prophets, and not afraid of God's truth'. Furthermore he said to the *balugu*, 'I am the servant of God and I have no intention to cooperate with Satan. Therefore, I will take back my prayer for your healing that I prayed a while ago'. Then Thomas left. Confused and afraid, the *balugu* followed Thomas to the mission station. He cried, apologized, and promised not to offer anything anymore to the *adu*. Thomas was touched and as a result he prayed and gave medicine again.

²⁷² Anonymous, *Wie die Götzen*, 1910, p. 11. Cf. E. Fries, *Tropfen aus der Wahrheit*, 1925, pp. 3-10. One example of this is Tambali, a *salawa* as well as the *ere* in Sifaoro'asi. He became a Christian after being healed through the missionary's prayers, while the *ere* failed. His willingness to become Christian was followed by throwing away the *adu zatua*. For this occasion, Missionary Fries came together with the other two missionaries and eighteen youth who joined the choir and played the trumpet. The ceremony in which he threw away the *adu zatua* idols was also attended by many important figures of Tambali's village. Tambali held a great feast for his guests, offering many pigs. Tambali created lyrics about the coming of the Gospel from across the sea. But when he was about to throw his *adu zatua* away, he was filled by fear. He asked: 'What will be my identity after throwing away the *adu zatua*? What will this mean for my relationship with my ancestors?' In his fear, he was strengthened by Fries, so that at last he said: 'I have made a very serious decision which is to throw away the *adu zatua* and I will believe only the living and powerful God'.

²⁷³ *BRM*, 1875, pp. 100-101.

²⁷⁴ Cf. Ch. 4.3.5.2; 4.4.6.2; 4.5.5; 5.2.6.

²⁷⁵ S. Vembriarto, *Sosiologi Pendidikan*, 1993, pp. 74-79.

Schools helped to promote the social status of their students. For example, in Omböläta, Yonata, a son of a poor widow, after some training, managed to gain a higher status in the community.²⁷⁶ In the past, only the nobility (i.e., the *salawa* or *si'ulu*) could attain important positions in the community. To maintain their position, many *salawa* invited the missionaries to start schools in their villages to educate their children.²⁷⁷

As of 1890, the number of schools grew rapidly in Nias. The missionaries would start a school only if the local people agreed to throw away their *adu*.²⁷⁸ The Ono Niha in turn chose Christianity in the place of their primal (traditional) religion.

As Christianity grew stronger, the missionaries became less compromising. In 1915, the missionaries determined ten conditions for those who wanted to join in baptism:

1. The *adu*, including the *adu zatua*, must be destroyed and no longer be worshipped.
2. Requests for blessings from 'evil spirits', the uses of 'heathen medicine' and the practice of 'magic' are strictly prohibited.
3. The observance of certain traditional rules during pregnancy, planting and harvesting at full moon, as well as the belief in dreams or the interpretation of sneezing as a sign from the spirits have to be abandoned for the truth of God's Word and the power of his Spirit.
4. Cursing, envy and harming others with black magic are signs of unbelief and unlawful attempts to test God.
5. Giving false witness, lying, flattering or coercing people for one's own gain are forbidden.
6. Drunkenness wrecks life and leads to damnation. Therefore, the use of liquor is prohibited.
7. The holiness of the Sunday must be kept, worship in church and catechism classes must be attended in order to obtain a better understanding of God's Word.
8. There should be morning and evening prayers. Also before meals, the *Ono Niha Keriso* have to entrust themselves in the hands of Lowalangi.
9. Children of Christians are compelled to attend school.
10. Children of Christians are prohibited to marry non-Christians.

These conditions shook the primal religion at its foundations. The people denounced the worship of *adu* and embraced Christianity. Nevertheless, the basic values of the primal religion were still alive under the cover of Christianity. Some Christians even secretly hid their *adu zatua*.²⁷⁹

²⁷⁶ *BRM*, 1886, p. 147.

²⁷⁷ A. Schneider, *Turia: 100 Jahre Dienst am Evangelium auf Nias*, 1965, p. 20. Schneider notes: 'Kommt auch zu uns und helft uns! Gebt auch uns Medizin! Lehrt auch unsere Söhne das Lesen, Schreiben, Rechnen und Gottes Wort! Laßt euch auch bei uns nieder, damit wir durch eure Gegenwart beschützt werden vor den Kopffägern und anderen Leuten, die uns quälen. Verkündigt auch uns die Botschaft, die das Herz erfreut'. (Come to us and help us also! Give us also medicine! Teach our sons to read, write and count, as well as the Word of God! Come and settle among us, too, so that we will be protected from headhunters and others who make us suffer by their presence. Proclaim to us the Message which brings joy to the heart).

²⁷⁸ *BRM*, 1875, p. 314.

²⁷⁹ *Toeria*, 2/7 (1915), p. 28.

6.3.3 From Worship of the *Adu* to Christian Worship and Christian Life-Style

6.3.3.1 Shattering of the Worship of the *Adu*

As mentioned before, because of social and political changes, some *salawa* and their followers turned to Christianity. Nevertheless, from the 1890s up to 1915 many Christians still combined their new faith with adherence to the ancestral images (*adu zatua*). They refused to cut off the link with their ancestors whom they believed were a source of blessings (*sangehowu*).²⁸⁰ But, from the end of 1915 until 1930, the Great Awakening (*fangesa dödö sebua*) brought about mass conversions.²⁸¹ The Great Awakening, a movement of the Holy Spirit among the people, was caused also partly by societal changes, such as: the prohibition of *fondrakö*, *famatö harimao* and *famatö saambu*. The people were searching for a new identity in the face an existential crisis.²⁸²

It is only in recent times that most Ono Niha voluntarily gave up their ancestral images. Pieper recorded that the Great Awakening helped to purify Christianity on Nias. People not only threw away all idols but also all kinds of heathen symbols and amulets. They literally followed the first and second commandments of the Ten Commandments.²⁸³ P.S. Mendröfa notes:²⁸⁴

It is only when the Holy Spirit began to work in the people's hearts, revealing to them that the consequence of sin is death, that people were frightened. They cried in fear and repented. They reconciled with one another and asked Jesus Christ to forgive them. Many people threw away their *adu zatua*, amulets, witchcraft, and poison which they used to kill their enemies. Their hearts were moved and they decided to give up their idols (*adu*) and began to open their hearts to the Word of God.

The Great Awakening united the Ono Niha as one people. This mass conversion began in Helefanikha-Humene and soon spread to the whole of Nias, including South Nias. Müller-Krüger²⁸⁵ points out that the Great Awakening challenged the traditional religion and turned the Christian community into a people's church (*volkskerk*) as its communal identity.²⁸⁶

The mass conversion was a way to find a new identity to replace the worship of *adu zatua*. But the missionaries could not understand such a communal need. Instead of mass baptism, they insisted on dealing with the converts individually: every

²⁸⁰ W.H. Sundermann, *Der Kultus der Niasser*, 1891, pp. 1-3. Cf. E. Fries, 'Adeo Zatoea', in: A. Pieper, *Soera Wombaso ba Ndraono Seboea (Klas v-vi)*, 1920, pp. 84-85.

²⁸¹ Ch. 4.6.

²⁸² In 1915, the *afdeeling* Nias was divided into four *onderafdeelingen*, and these were Gunungsitoli, Lahewa, Lölöwa'u and Teluk Dalam. Following the division, they also assigned some *demang* and assistant-*demang*, thus the role and power of the *salawa* were decreasing even if the *salawa* was the basis of local autonomy before Dutch colonialism. Cf. *ENI* 1 (1917), p. 286. Cf. *ENI* 3 (1919), p. 30.

²⁸³ A. Pieper, *Die Auswirkung der Erweckung auf Nias*, 1928, pp. 15-16.

²⁸⁴ Ephorus P.S. Mendröfa, 'Huhuo Sanandrösa ba Yubileum 100 Fakhe Duria Somuso Dödö ba BNKP', read during the commemoration of 100 years of the Gospel's arrival in Nias, 27 September 1965 in Gunungsitoli, Nias. Cf. A. Pieper, *Die Auswirkung der Erweckung auf Nias*, 1928, pp. 19-20.

²⁸⁵ Th. Müller-Krüger, *Sedjarah Geredja di Indonesia*, 1966, p. 238; cf. Th. Müller, *Die große Reue auf Nias. Geschichte und Gestalt einer Erweckung auf dem Missionsfelde*, 1931.

²⁸⁶ W. Lempp, *Benih yang Tumbuh XII*, 1976, p. 17. Cf. S. Harita, 'Gerakan Pertobatan Masal Sebagai Hasil Pertemuan Gerakan Pietisme dengan Nilai-nilai Budaya Agama suku Nias', 1990.

catechist had to complete the catechism classes before being baptised.²⁸⁷ This approach of the missionaries was contradictory to the cultural communal approach followed by the Ono Niha in accordance with the *fondrakö* tradition. The missionaries worried about the following of the traditional practices, for fear that the new converts would not grow beyond the influence of their old faith. According to Becker²⁸⁸, the missionaries focused on the holiness of life, while being indifferent to the need of constructing a new identity.

6.3.3.2 Christian Worship and Church Order

By 1930, the number of *Ono Niha Keriso* had more than quadrupled.²⁸⁹ The missionaries came to the conclusion that Christianity had triumphed over the primal religion. The worship of the *adu* and *adu zatua*, the enemy of the Cross, had been defeated. But, was the primal religion really dead? No, while the *adu* seemed to be cut down, like a felled tree, underneath the official cloak of Christianity the buds of the *adu* beliefs sprouted.

As a result, during the following years (1930 until 1965), the missionaries anxiously watched over and protected the *Ono Niha Keriso* from returning to their primal (traditional) religion. Much effort was made to anticipate and prevent a relapse into 'paganism', especially through Christian education and developing of church discipline (*amakhoita*).

Christian Education

The ten requirements for a good Christian mentioned above (see 6.3.2.5) practically formed the guidelines for all Christian education, both formal and informal. The most popular material used for both teaching and preaching were books translated into the Niasan vernacular such as *Fekoli Niha Keriso (The Pilgrim's Progress)* by John Bunyan), *Famahaö ba lala Wangorifi (Die Christliche Heilslehre)* by C. Ernst), and the commentary on the Catechism of Martin Luther (*Katechismus Luther* as translated by A. Lück).²⁹⁰ In his commentary on the first and second commandments, Lück gave a detailed explanation of the Ono Niha's primal religion and firmly condemned all the deities as false gods, which must be rejected. The biblical God requires an exclusive faith.

To help the training process take hold or stick, the missionaries gave priority to the *pandita*, *guru*, *sinenge*, and the elders. The missionaries also encouraged gifted students to study more about the influence of the primal religion in the daily life of the people. The results of the studies were being published in the church magazine, *Toeria*, and applied in the discussions during different kinds of conferences.²⁹¹ The missionaries tried to free the people from the influence of the 'heathen tradition' (*sitoröi huku föna*).²⁹² For example, in his comment on Matthew 9:17, Fries²⁹³ says

²⁸⁷ I.H. Enklaar, *Baptisan Massal dan Pemisahan Sakramen-sakramen*, 2003, pp. 103-107. The approach applied in Nias was the general approach used by missionaries working in Indonesia.

²⁸⁸ D. Becker, '„Sie Werfen Satans Bande und ihre Götzen fort?“, in: Richard Riess (ed.), *Abschied von der Schuld?*, 1996, pp. 198-199.

²⁸⁹ Ch. 4.6. (see footnote for statistics). Cf. A. Schneider, *Turia*, 1965.

²⁹⁰ Cf. A. Lück, *Katechismus Luther*, 1934.

²⁹¹ Ch. 4.4.5.3.

²⁹² *Toeria*, 1916 - 1922. The main ideas of this writing will be discussed under the topic on mission and *adat* of Ono Niha.

²⁹³ *Toeria*, 5/9 (1918), pp. 42-43.

that, firstly, everyone who has decided to follow Jesus must leave his or her old habits – the old has gone and the new has come. Secondly, one should not mix the old law (*huku föna*) with the Law of God (*huku Lowalangi*). Thirdly, the law in Nias has been changed, therefore everyone must let go off the past.

Even after the missionaries had left Nias because of World War II, they were worried that the *Ono Niha Keriso* would return to their old practices. In 1947, when there was little hope that German missionaries would ever return to Nias, Schneider²⁹⁴ published a book by the title of *Folawa Huku Niha Baero ba Gamabu'ula Li si Föföna* (Fighting against the law of the 'heathen' according to the Old Testament). Somehow, this book, which fiercely attacks the primal religions, was sent to Nias and has been used by the BNKP even until today.

Indeed, after World War II, the status quo under the BNKP was challenged by resurgences of elements and patterns of the primal (primitive, tribal, or traditional) religion, such as the jumping awakening (*fangesa solaya*).²⁹⁵ Instead of repentance and spiritual conversion, many converts to these 'new teachings' were looking for spiritual gifts, such as visions, speaking in tongues, and healing. The *fangesa solaya* spread very fast throughout the entire island of Nias and was led by so called 'repentance teachers' (*tuka wangesa*). In times of great social difficulties, the *Ono Niha* unconsciously resorted back to their pre-Christian beliefs and practices. The *tuka wangesa* functioned very much like the *ere* of the primal religion. Müller-Krüger referred to this kind of practice as shamanism.²⁹⁶

The *fangesa solaya* movement was rejected vehemently by the BNKP because it had down-played the conversion element and allegedly violated Christian values and ethics. According to Fahede Mendröfa, *ephorus* of the BNKP during 1951-1955, the *tuka wangesa* were just interested in money and not in the spiritual welfare of the people. They were accused of committing adultery and practicing polygamy.²⁹⁷ On the other hand, it can not be denied that the BNKP did not address or meet the theological challenges presented by the *fangesa solaya*. As a preventative measure, the *sinenge* were given training in traditional pre-World War II theology instead of being helped to cope with the challenges in a creative, contextual manner. In a similar way the BNKP treated Ama Haogö, reportedly a very creative and prophetic *pandita* who was excommunicated and his teachings banned from the BNKP.²⁹⁸

Amakhoita

The missionaries also issued rules to prevent people from going back to their old belief, called *amakhoita*. Traditionally, the *amakhoita* consists of 1. *amakhoita zatua* - the message from the ancestor or parents, which were usually determined during 'the feast to honour the parents' (*fangotome'e*²⁹⁹) and 2. the *amakhoita mbanua*, also called *fondrakö*.³⁰⁰ The term *amakhoita* was adopted by the missionaries for the rules and regulations that every Christian needs to follow. Until 1935, the *amakhoita*

²⁹⁴ A. Schneider, *Folawa Hoekoe Niha Baero ba Gamabu'ula Li si Föföna*, 1947.

²⁹⁵ Cf. Ch. 5.8.5.

²⁹⁶ Th. Müller-Krüger, *Sedjarah Geredja*, 1966, pp. 238-239. See also M.G. Th. Thomsen, *Famareso Ngawalo Huku fona awo Gowe Nifasindro (Megalithkultur) ba Dano Nias*, 1976, p. 1.

²⁹⁷ F. Mendröfa, "Bosi Wangesa", in: F.D. Harefa and R. Heering (eds.), *Waöwaö Duria Somuso Dödö ba Danö Niha*, 1971, p. 55.

²⁹⁸ Cf. Ch. 5.6.6.3.

²⁹⁹ Cf. Ch. 2.5.4.1.

³⁰⁰ Cf. Ch. 2.4.3.1

was discussed at conferences of the *guru*, *sinenge*, elders and *salawa*, and finally decided on by the conference of missionaries in 1923. Since 1936, the synod of the BNKP was responsible for determining the churches rules of order for church discipline, or *amakhoita*.³⁰¹

In the first written *amakhoita* of 1923, called 'The Rules for the Christian on Nias' (*Amakhoita Sogoena ba mbanua Niha Keriso ba Danö Nias*)³⁰², the following topics were dealt with: marriage, social hierarchy, polygamy, education, drinking habits, the martial arts, traditional healing, offerings and the annual Church membership contribution.³⁰³ The *amakhoita* functioned as the discipline of the church.

In the first decade of the Great Awakening, the people followed the church discipline thoroughly.³⁰⁴ But this kind of obedience did not last, as Van den End commented:³⁰⁵

After ten years, the big spiritual awakening began to decline. Many people got back to their old habits. They became passive. There was no more sacrificial life. There was a need to take the church discipline seriously. The traditional customs were now overriding the Christian law.

As time progressed, the missionaries became more firm in administering the *amakhoita*. During the first five years of the Great Awakening, the missionaries would only discipline a small group of people. In 1923, however, there were already 308 Christians being put under the church discipline.³⁰⁶ The most frequent problems were absence from the Sunday worship services, adultery (including pre-marital sexual intercourse), and polygamy.

The missionaries used the same strategy on the Batu Islands. On 29 December 1932, the conference of missionaries announced the rules of order (*amakhoita*) to the local people.³⁰⁷ There were three main points in the rules: firstly, apostasy. Those who converted to Islam would be excommunicated from the church. Secondly, those who worshipped the *adu zatua* (ancestral images) and kept elements of black magic or amulets for healing purposes would not be allowed to take part in the Holy Communion. Thirdly, infants who had not been baptised were not allowed to be buried with Christian ceremony.

To resolve the problems which came up during and after World War II, in 1960, the BNKP synod agreed to re-evaluate these rules of order (*amakhoita*). The result of this evaluation was that in 1965 the BNKP synod affirmed the *amakhoita* with a few amendments to deal with current problems, such as Christians observing the 'old traditional law', marriages of children, high rents for lending money, high dowry, polygamy, quarrels about inheritance, sex-orgies and pre-marital sexual intercourse, grand pork banquets (*owasa*), as well as mixed marriages between members of the BNKP and members of the Roman Catholics, Seventh-Day Adventists, AFY and Pentecostal groups.³⁰⁸

³⁰¹ BNKP, *Amakhoita ba mbanoea Niha Keriso si faoedoe ba Daroma Li Lowalangi, nihonogöi mbanua Niha Keriso Protestan ba danö Nias (Heb 9:1)*, 1939.

³⁰² Cf. Ch. 4.6.5.4.

³⁰³ Anonymus, *Amakhoita Sogoena ba mbanua Niha Keriso ba Danö Nias*, 1923.

³⁰⁴ T. Hulu, "Waöwaö Halöwö", p. 15

³⁰⁵ Th. van den End and J. Weitjens, *Ragi Carita II*, 2002, p. 214.

³⁰⁶ *Toeria*, 11/6 (1924), p. 9.

³⁰⁷ *Toeria Hoelo Batu*, 4/7 (1932).

³⁰⁸ 'Keputusan Sinode ke-27 BNKP tentang Amakhoita ba BNKP Nias'.

The description above shows that after World War II, the BNKP was still very much dependent on the missionaries' teachings. Until now, the BNKP still uses the *amakhoita* when dealing with the 'old law' (*huku fōna*) and the Niasan traditions. Just as the missionaries of old, most ministers of the BNKP despise the local culture and regard it as something belonging to 'paganism' which is not in accordance with the new law of God (*huku Lowalangi*). On the other hand, the common people often fall back into beliefs reminiscent of the primal religion. In times of crisis they were afraid to be cut off from their ancestors, since they believed that they are a source of blessings (*howuhowu*).

6.3.3.3 New Life-Style: Protection for the Weak

Before arriving on Sumatra and Nias, the RM-missionaries had already helped to liberate slaves in the Borneo. They bought the slaves from their owners. However, as Fridolin Ukur notes³⁰⁹, this had only been a change of ownership since the slaves still had to work in order to pay their ransom. Although they needed to work only four days in a week, there was spiritual coercion as they were required to join the Christian worship services.

When the missionaries arrived on Nias, slave trade was still common in the villages.³¹⁰ This caused tremendous suffering to the people. The missionaries tried to free the slaves and promote their well-being. Denninger, for instance, took some children from the poorest families as 'helpers' in his house. According to Niasan tradition, such children were considered as slaves. Denninger and his wife, however, treated them the same as other Ono Niha.

Generally, the missionaries made an important contribution towards bringing about justice and the rights of the poor and the weak. For instance, there was a slave named Fataya in Sifarao'asi. His owner planned to use him as a sacrifice in a ritual to prevent the spread of an epidemic that plagued the neighbouring village. The slave managed to run away, taking refuge at the Sifaoro'asi mission station. Missionary Fries tried to protect this lad. He shaved his head, dressed him in fine clothing so no one could recognise him. Subsequently, the slave was saved and worked for the missionary who trained him to become a carpenter.³¹¹ This attracted many common people, who saw Christianity as promoting human dignity.

6.3.3.4 New Life-Style: Empowerment of Women

The empowerment of women was started from the very beginning of the RM's missionary work among the Ono Niha. By choosing a young Niasan woman in Padang called Ara as the first Ono Niha to be baptised, Denninger did not follow the patriarchal tradition in which a man, and if possible a chief, must always be the one who takes the lead.³¹²

³⁰⁹ F. Ukur, *Tantang-djawab Suku Dayak*, pp. 142-146.

³¹⁰ In 1853, the Dutch government had issued a rule on the prohibition of the slave trade, but it was still practiced even until the end of the nineteenth century because the Dutch government just concentrated on the *rapatgebied* (the area directly under its jurisdiction). It was only at the beginning of the twenty century that the Dutch strengthened this prohibition.

³¹¹ Anonymous, *Lichtstrahlen in Herz und Haus. Der Sohn des Hauptlings und andere Missionsgeschichten von Gottlob Mundle*, n.d, pp. 3-6.

³¹² Ch. 4.3.4.1. Cf. G. Menzel, *Denninger. Ama Halöwö Famatenge ba Danö Niha. Yubileum 125 fakhe*

Thomas, in Ombölata, was also an advocate for women. Fehr³¹³ described the troubles of three women in Ombölata (Ina Yonata, Ina Simona and Ina Safira) who were forced to marry when still teenagers. They became widows at a young age. During the burial ceremonies of their husbands, the *salawa* asked who was willing to marry these widows. It did not matter whether those interested were already married or not; what mattered was only the money. As second or third wives, they experienced violence and abuse from their husbands as well as from the first wife. They were treated as servants, were beaten, had their food rationed, and were neglected when ill. Finally, Fehr wrote that the Gospel set them free. Missionary Thomas instructed the men to value their wives. Thomas also admitted their children for education in the missionary schools. By becoming Christians, their human dignity was raised, because in the community of baptized people, mutual respect and love was practiced.

Fries also used a similar approach in Sifaoro'asi (Central Nias). There was a girl named Sariani, a daughter of *Salawa* Baho. She had followed catechism classes but she could not be baptised because the family wanted her to marry her fiancé, the son of the *salawa* of Holi. The missionaries came to the wedding and requested that the groom allow his bride to be baptised. A few months later, a *guru* was appointed to a village near Holi, Fries again asked Sariani's husband to allow his wife to come for Sunday services in the village where the *guru* lived. The petition was granted. Together with eighty other candidates, Sariani was baptised on the following day.³¹⁴ Sariani became a witness to Christ in Holi. When an epidemic plagued her village, she persuaded the villagers to leave the worship of the *adu*. And she invited Missionary Fries to come, asking him for help.

Another example can be taken from the life of Missionary Schlipkötter in Hilimaziaya, North Nias. Schlipkötter also helped some widows who were to be sold after their husbands died. They, too, attended catechism classes and became Christians.³¹⁵

On the Batu Islands, especially in Sigata, Missionary Landwehr and his wife helped to train the women.³¹⁶ Many women turned to Christianity and even joined the mission work, such as in the case of Fija Wanaetu.³¹⁷ Initially she was prohibited from becoming a Christian by her chief, Faronu who hated Christianity. But, she did not give up, was baptized and became the backbone of a large Christian community on Sigata.³¹⁸

The above-mentioned analysis indicates that in the encounter between Christianity and the primal religion of the Ono Niha there were, on the one hand, possible points of contact, and, on the other hand, irreconcilable differences. Nevertheless, Christianity transformed the lives of the Ono Niha, so that they eventually abandoned their *adu*. The loss of the physical images, however, did sever completely the deep spiritual roots which the Ono Niha have in their ancient religious traditions.

duria Somuso Dödö ba Danö Niha, 1990, p. 4.

³¹³ J.A. Fehr, *Drei Christenfrauen auf Nias*, 1891, pp. 1-22.

³¹⁴ Anonymus, *Lichtstrahlen in Herz und Haus*, 1910, pp. 7-12.

³¹⁵ Otilie Schlipkötter, *Ina Rosini*, n.d.

³¹⁶ Letter of Agnes Landwehr to DLM, Sigata, 17 October 1898, in: *EVB*, 17/1, 1899, pp. 18-21.

³¹⁷ Ch. 4.5.5.

³¹⁸ Letter of Agnes Landwehr to DLM, Sigata, 25 March 1900, in: *EVB*, 18/4, 1900, p. 123.

6.4 CHRISTIANITY AND CUSTOMARY LAW (*ADAT*)

In Ch. 2 it was explained that the Ono Niha, who descended from the first people living in Indonesia, organized their society in a very specific traditional way. Traditional culture can be defined as the moral norms or specific patterns of a society's behaviour, taking into account practical ways of every day living and traditional law with its forms of punishment in the case of *adat* violations. The local people agreed upon these things.³¹⁹ For the Ono Niha, these traditions were not only passed down from generation to generation, but were also decided upon through continued discussion, called *fondrakö*. The people lived and acted according to these traditions (*adat*). Their entire social life was lived according to these patterns.³²⁰ This traditional *adat* is what the missionaries faced when they came to Nias to spread the Gospel.

At first, the attitude of the missionaries towards the primal religion of the Ono Niha was not very hostile. Missionaries to the Batak people took a similar approach. Lothar Schreiner³²¹ explained that according to the missionaries the nature of *adat* could be either pro-Christian, neutral, or anti-Christian. This sort of thinking could also be found among missionaries working on Nias. The missionaries rejected the parts of *adat* that, in their eyes, were contrary to Christianity, for instance the practice of beheading, the killing of twins, and elements of the primal religion that could be found in the *adat*. Those parts of *adat* that were not seen as harmful to the spreading of the Gospel were the ones that were not connected with the primal religions. The missionaries even used some elements of the local culture and *adat* to support the effort to spread the Gospel, for instance the language, building of relationships through the chewing of betel nut, etc.

After the establishment of Christianity on Nias, however, the attitude of the missionaries changed from tolerance to rejection of the *adat*. Not only did they prohibit the practice of tribal religious rites, they also prohibited certain elements of the *adat* that were not, in their view, in accordance with 'Christian faith' or more accurately, not in accordance with Western culture, for instance genital incision and dental straightening. The missionaries worked together with the Dutch colonialists in order to form a new *adat* for the Christian Ono Niha. They erased the *adat* elements that were not in accordance with Western traditions and gave the Ono Niha a new identity, namely a Christian identity, a new set of Western values.

The missionaries' rejection of the *adat* of the Ono Niha created tension. It created an inner tension within the Ono Niha themselves (value clash), it strained relationships among the Ono Niha (between those who had become Christians and those who held on to the primal religion), and it created tension between the Ono Niha and the missionaries. This tension arose because *adat* was a habit³²² or a tra-

³¹⁹ Soerjono Soekanto, *Sosiologi: Suatu Pengantar*, 1990, pp. 219-223. Cf. Koentjaraningrat, *Pengantar Ilmu Antropologi*, 1990, pp. 195-202. Cf. L. Schreiner, *Adat dan Injil*, 2002, p. 1. Schreiner notes 'The focus of *adat* for Westerners is the individual, whereas for ancient peoples, territory or genealogy (the village or clan) is the basis of *adat*. The understanding of the English word *custom*, the German *Sitte*, or the Dutch *zede* is a mutual agreement between individuals, whereas *adat* is the principle which actually founds and determines the entire community life'.

³²⁰ All *adat* activities were an attempt to create cosmological harmony, or to satisfy the gods, so that they would bless the people and not be angered. In other words, *adat* without *adu* had no meaning to the Ono Niha. The *adu* were the core and foundation of the entire cycle of life.

³²¹ L. Schreiner, *Adat dan Injil*, 2002, p. 5.

³²² Cf. L. Schreiner, *Adat dan Injil*, 2002, pp. 18-21. He explains that the origin of the word *adat*, which

dition which had become a vital part of the lives of society. *Adat* formed the norms to regulate society and to bind every individual into the local society. More than that, for the Ono Niha, *adat* was also seen as a demand of the ancestors (*nifakhoi zatusa*) that must be fulfilled in order to maintain cosmological harmony.³²³ The missionaries, on the other hand, rejected certain elements of the *adat* to prevent the Christian Ono Niha from returning to their old beliefs.

To shed more light on the interactions and tensions which occurred in the handling of *adat*, I shall concentrate on four important phases in the life of the Ono Niha, namely birth, adolescence, wedding and death. Other elements of the *adat* such as the social and the labor systems will be discussed separately.

6.4.1 Birth

In the beginning, the missionaries on Nias and the Batu Islands were quite tolerant towards the *adat* surrounding the birth of a child.³²⁴ Only practices that were considered as 'inhumane' were prohibited.

6.4.1.1 Prohibition on the Killing of Twins

One of these 'inhumane' practices was the killing of a twin. The Ono Niha believed that the birth of a set of twins meant that one was cursed by the gods. In order to prevent catastrophes from happening among the people, one of these twins had to be cast out and abandoned in the forest. When the missionaries saw this practice, they prohibited it, as they viewed it as an inhumane action. The author will describe two cases that show the attitude of the missionaries towards the abandonment of twins, shared by Thomas in Ombölata and Seher on the West Coast.

In the beginning of his efforts to spread the Gospel in Ombölata, Thomas experienced an event that moved him deeply. A set of twins had been born in a family and according to the laws of the *adat*, one of the twin siblings had to be abandoned to prevent the wrath of the gods on the villagers. If one of the twins was a boy and the other was a girl, then the girl had to be put in a bag and hung on the branch of a tree in the back yard of the house or in the forest. If both babies were female, one was saved and the other was abandoned. The family obeyed the rules of *adat* and put one of the babies in a bag and hung the bag on a tree behind the house. When Thomas heard of this event, his heart was moved with compassion. He went to the place where this event had taken place to take the baby, but when he arrived there, the crying of the baby had stopped and it was thought to have died.³²⁵ Thomas could not accept this practice and he declared publicly that the act had been an act of murder and threatened to report the villagers to the Dutch authorities. Furthermore, Thomas prohibited Christians from abandoning their twins. He told the story of Isaac's twins and said that those children had not been a curse but a blessing of God.³²⁶ The missionary's prohibition of abandoning twins attracted many people to learn about the Christian faith.

comes from Arabic (*âda*), means 'to return', 'to repeat' or 'habit'. These habits were passed on from generation to generation and had a fixed place within the life of the people.

³²³ F. Harefa, *Hikayat dan Ceritera Bangsa serta 'Adat Nias'*, 1939, p. 24.

³²⁴ Cf. Ch. 2.5.1.

³²⁵ *DKM*, 21/8 (1875), pp. 119-128.

³²⁶ *Ibid.*

Something similar was experienced by Missionary Seher (1892-1909) in Tugala, on the western coast.³²⁷ He witnessed the practice of abandoning twins, which was part of the tradition in West Nias. Once, Seher was visited by Ama Gahonoa, an aristocrat from that area. Ama Gahonoa told Seher about the problem that he and his wife faced, namely that his wife had given birth to two sets of twins consecutively. When the first set of twins was born, the two babies were put into a bag and strung up on a tree in a forest and left to die, according to the *adat* laws. Although this was very painful to them, the parents were forced to do this because in West Nias, 'twins' were also seen as a curse or a sign of the gods' anger.

The problem arose again when the wife of Ama Gahonoa gave birth to another set of twins. The family of Ama Gahonoa was very sad; they felt pity and fear, because besides the fact that the villagers avoided their home, the rules of the *adat* were very strict. It was said that not only did their children have to face the same fate as their older siblings; the parents had to sacrifice pigs, chickens and a human slave to pacify and please the gods and to prevent disaster from happening to the village. After hearing this, Seher proclaimed that the abandonment of babies was against the will of Lowalangi. Twins could not be abandoned, because they were a blessing, not a curse from Lowalangi. Furthermore, the missionary was willing to raise the twins if Ama and Ina Gahonoa were too afraid of the consequences for not adhering to *adat* laws.³²⁸

Ama Gahonoa thought about the missionary's suggestion and decided not to follow the traditions and laws of his village. They gave the twins to the missionary and expressed their interest in becoming Christians. The villagers were very much against the decision of Ama Gahonoa to defy the laws of *adat*. They asked Ama Gahonoa to turn back immediately from Christianity to the *adat* to prevent the wrath of the gods coming upon the entire village. They threatened to expel him from the *adat* community and to rescind his position as one of the aristocracy if he did not fulfil their demands. This was a serious conflict for Ama Gahonoa, but he and his family persisted to become Christians and to leave their old beliefs, although as a consequence, they had to bear being expelled from the *adat* community.³²⁹

From these stories we can see the clash between the Gospel and the *adat* of the Ono Niha. The missionaries saw these practices as inhumane, whereas the Ono Niha saw them as a way to avoid a curse and to please the gods. The mission came to transform the *adat* and to bring freedom (salvation), but the Ono Niha regarded the actions of Ama and Ina Gahonoa as an act of treachery against the *adat* which was an inheritance from the ancestors.

6.4.1.2 Separating *Adu* and Taboo (*Famoni*) from the Rituals of Birth

As was said earlier, in the beginning of the mission in Nias, those who had been baptized and became Christians still were free to perform certain forms of *adat* that they had performed before they had become Christians, including rituals surrounding the birth of a child.³³⁰

³²⁷ Cf. Ch. 4.4.3.2. Anonymous, *Niassische Häuptlinge II*, 1912, pp. 17-20 (RMG 132).

³²⁸ *Ibid.*

³²⁹ *Ibid.*

³³⁰ Cf. Ch. 2.5.1.

The missionaries did not prohibit these rituals, but they requested that these not be performed before the *adu*. However, after Christianity started to become dominant in Nias, the missionaries became more strict about *adat*. In 1915, they issued conditions for those who wanted to be baptized. Not only were the *adu* prohibited, but a husband and his pregnant wife were not allowed to perform *famoni* (taboo).³³¹ Those who still practiced *famoni* were not admitted to holy baptism. The Ono Niha who had become Christians were shocked when they heard this and they had difficulties obeying these orders. For them *famoni* was vital to ensure a birth without complications as well as the health and intelligence of the child. It was necessary to ensure that the life of their child was not stained with bad things.³³² The Ono Niha wanted a healthy and intelligent child, not one that acted like an animal, which was taboo. This created a dilemma within the Ono Niha, between the *amakhöita* (rules and order for church discipline) of the missionaries and the *amakhöita hada* (*adat* laws). This caused many Ono Niha to lead a double life. In front of the missionaries or the indigenous church workers, they stated that they did not perform *famoni*, but in real life they did, because it was a tradition that was important for their daily lives.

Seeing this dualism in the behaviour of the Ono Niha, the missionaries found that there was still some *sitoröi huku föna* (old law) in the lives of the Christians in Nias and therefore they needed guidance. One of the ways the missionaries used to give guidance was to have the *guru* conduct investigations about 'heathen tradition' among the Christian Ono Niha. One of the *guru* who made an investigation was Faogöli. Based on the facts he had gathered, Faogöli stated³³³ that there were still many elements of the primal religion in the *adat* performed surrounding the birth of a child, such as *famoni* (taboo) and *fangariwu* (asked the blessing of the parent). The people were still afraid of Matiana³³⁴, rituals were being performed if the sex of the child was unknown, there were reminders of the primal religion in the rituals for naming a child, and *fangai Bowoa* (*adat* for asking the blessing of the grandparent). All these things were heathen traditions (*huku niha baero*) that had to be left behind by the Christians.³³⁵

The missionaries and the Ono Niha ministers tried to eliminate the elements of traditional religion in the ceremonies surrounding the birth of a child. The purpose was to prevent the Ono Niha who had become Christians from returning to the primal religion which was considered evil.

³³¹ *Toeria*, 2/7 (1915), p. 28.

³³² Interview with Ama Osara'ö Bu'ulölö on 13 February 2004 in Gomo. Cf. W. Gulö, *Benih yang Tumbuh XIII*, 1983, p. 191.

³³³ *Toeria*, 3/1 (1916).

³³⁴ Cf. Ch. 2.4.2.

³³⁵ *Toeria*, 3/2 (1916), p. 6-7. Faogöli explains it in detail: 1. If a couple is childless, they may not accuse each other nor may they perform *famoni*, because God does not want honour to be given to someone else (Ex 20:2). If you have these problems, call on God in prayer (Ps 50:15). 2. Pregnant women may not perform *famoni*, because salvation lies only in Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12) and in no one else. Do not trust in Afökha (Satan), but place your trust in God to save the baby. Only God can cure illness, but we have to bring our problems to him through prayer (Mt 19:13-14). 3. When the sex of the baby is unknown (*si lö otara*), that that is not a curse. Everything created by God is good. The problem is that a man does not know this because of his ignorance. 4. Regarding twins: for Christians, twins are not a curse. Remember Esau and Jacob, they were twins. In truth, this is a great blessing through God's love to humanity. Know that abroad, there are sometimes triplets, not just twins. Christians should be grateful to God because of his mercy and blessing.

6.4.1.3 Rules Concerning Birth

Another approach that was taken by the missionaries and that was later continued by the BNKP to handle the problem of 'heathen tradition' was to invent a set of rules. This was done after the Great Awakening, when the majority of the Ono Niha had become Christians.

During the missionary conference of 1923 the church law was set up and was made valid for the entire mission territory. It was named *Amakhoita*. In this church discipline, there were no prohibitions concerning elements of *adat* surrounding the birth of a child, except for the request for not making *adu*. There were two new things in the *amakhoita* namely the duty of the parents to report the birth of their newborn children to the elders. Those who failed to do so had to pay a fine of 0,50 guilders. The second point was that the parents had to give a baptismal offering (*ame'ela*) of at least one guilder. If the parents did not obey these laws, the child was not admitted to baptism.³³⁶ The setting up of the church discipline in order to confront the problem of 'heathen tradition' was continued by the BNKP after World War II. After long debates in several synod meetings, in 1961 the *amakhoita* was declared valid for the entire BNKP territory.³³⁷ The BNKP rejected the *adat* in a more radical way than the missionaries. In the *amakhoita* of 1923 there was no prohibition of *famoni* (taboo), whereas in the *amakhoita* of 1961, the practice of *famoni* was explicitly prohibited. The theological explanation given was that God hates *famoni* because it reduces his glory and destroys the faith (Ex 23: 24; Lev 19:31; Deut 18:9-14; 1 Cor 10:7-14).³³⁸

This attitude was closely attached to the (theological) understanding that grew among Christians on Nias, founded on certain teachings or sources of teachings that were received. One of the books that had great influence was Luther's Short Catechism, which was interpreted and translated by Missionary Albert G. Lück.³³⁹ In explaining the first and second Commandments, Lück defined other gods to be carved idols that are in heaven above, on earth and beneath the earth, based on the original beliefs of the Ono Niha. Besides several forms of *adu*, he also discussed the *amonita* during pregnancy, namely the prohibition of slaughtering pigs, killing snakes, touching dead people, catching bats, hitting a nail in a wall, piercing a hole into a coconut and eating pigs' ears. All this was seen as *amonita niha baero*, which were 'other gods' and therefore were not in accordance with the first and second Commandments. The influence of this book was great as it was used by the clergy in the church services in the congregations. This catechism is still printed to this day and used in the BNKP.

Apart from the rules for church discipline that were set up by the missionaries, the Dutch colonial government also set up an *adat* for Christian law on Nias.³⁴⁰ These were measures taken by the Dutch colonial government in all the territories

³³⁶ *Amakhoita Sogoena ba Mbanoea Niha Keriso ba Danö Nias*, 1923 (RMG 2.803), Part D § 9.

³³⁷ BNKP, *Lala Nitörö: Ngawalö goigoi soguna ba Mbanua Niha Keriso*, 1971, pp. 39-60.

³³⁸ BNKP, *Amakhoita ba BNKP Nias*, 1961, § 12.

³³⁹ A Lück, *Katekismus Luther: Nifo'eloeaha dali daroma li Lowalangi, famokai gera'era ba zangai halowo*, 1934, pp. 5-19.

³⁴⁰ Commissie voor het Adatrecht, *Adatrechtbundel XII*, 1916, pp. 263-280. Cf. Anonymous, 'Adat-Recht f. Christengemeinden: Beschrijving van het bijzondere adatrecht der Inlandsche Christenen in de afdeeling NIAS, met uitzondering van de onderafdeeling Zuid-Nias, van de residentie Tapanoeli' (RMG 2.800). (The *Adat* Laws of the Christians in the *afdeeling* Nias, except for the *onderafdeeling* South Nias, *residentie* Tapanoeli), 1915.

that they had conquered. In the *adatrecht* of the Dutch colonial government, there were no prohibitions concerning the rituals surrounding the birth of a child. There was only one rule concerning newborn children, namely the 'civil registration' of the child. This meant that the parents had to register their children for the statistical records and for the administration of the government. This registration policy is still carried out to this day by the Indonesian government.

Although the Ono Niha did not have the tradition of 'registering a child's birth', they did not object to it because they did have the tradition of announcing a child's birth. This was usually done during the naming ceremony. Therefore, the rule of 'birth registration' did not cause tension among the Ono Niha, although they did have to get used to this new rule.

6.4.1.4 Response of the Ono Niha

The decision of the Ono Niha to be baptized was a sign that they had left the *adu* and wanted to become Christians. However, it was not easy to leave behind the traditions and the *adat*, which were inherited and internalised by the Ono Niha. When Christianity and the traditional beliefs and rituals surrounding birth interacted, there were things that originated from the traditions and *adat* that were left behind. Nevertheless in the Christian ceremonies that replaced the tribal religious ceremonies, a dualistic character still can be found.

In the matter of abandoning twins, the Ono Niha obeyed the prohibition of the missionaries. It was not because the Dutch colonial government did support this prohibition, but because there was a change in the understanding as a result of the Christian teachings. The new understanding was that those twins were not a curse but a blessing.³⁴¹ Other than that, there were traditional activities which still carried out, but its religious aspects were replaced by Christian ceremonies, for instance:

1. *Fangaruwusi* (to ask the blessing of the parents for the pregnancy). This tradition is still alive among the Christians of Nias. In the third and sixth month of pregnancy, especially during the first pregnancy, the couple visits their parents' houses to show them the pregnancy and to request prayer and blessing so that the pregnancy may go well and the child will be healthy.³⁴² During this ceremony, there is no longer an *adu*, the uncles pray for the mother and child; they give the blessing through *faneſe idanö* (sprinkling of water) onto the pregnant woman and her husband.
2. *Famatörö töi* (naming). As in the old days, the *adat* ceremonies for naming the child are still being performed to this day. The difference is that there are no *adu* and *fo'ere* (rites). Instead of a tribal religious ritual, now, a minister of the church leads a service during the naming ceremony. The naming ceremony is then followed by the sacrament of baptism that takes place in a church.³⁴³ This was a way to replace the *adu* and *fo'ere* in the primal religion.
3. *Famu'a ömö ndraono* (literary: paying of the dowry). To this day, the Ono Niha still bring their children to the uncle for receiving a water-blessing

³⁴¹ A. Pieper, *Die Auswirkung der Erweckung auf Nias*, Report RMG, 1928, p. 20.

³⁴² W. Gulö, *Benih yang Tumbuh XIII*, 1983, p. 191.

³⁴³ W. Gulö, *Benih yang Tumbuh XIII*, 1983, pp. 191-192.

(*fane fe idanö*) from him. This is in accordance with the old *adat*, except for the making of *adu*.³⁴⁴

The matter that continued to be a problem and became a dilemma was *famoni*. *Famoni* is still being performed among the Ono Niha although they have become Christians.³⁴⁵ The Ono Niha have difficulties leaving this tradition behind because they see birth as the 'coming of new life', which is a gift that comes from the supernatural. In order to accept this gift, one must refrain from doing anything that could stain or damage it. Christian theology has not been able to capture this idea and present an alternative, for instance giving *famoni* a new essence, such as prayer, fasting and preservation of health. The chosen approach is prohibition, with the explanation that it does not acknowledge God's omnipotence. This is what creates the tension. It is very difficult for the Ono Niha to leave this behind, because for them, tradition is something that has been passed on from ancient times to the present. Piötr Sztompka³⁴⁶ wrote: 'man cannot live without tradition, even if he is not always satisfied with it'. Even if there is social change because of several factors, people will not be able to leave their traditions behind easily. They will reshape, change or modify their traditions to fit into modern times and the conditions they have to face.

6.4.2 Adolescence

The ceremony for preparing children to enter adulthood is a common trait that can be found in many primal religions, although it differs from tribe to tribe.³⁴⁷ It is based on the understanding that in childhood, the earth is a playground, whereas in adulthood, the earth becomes a working field. In this change of phase, the old stains of life had to be washed away through ceremonies based on the primal religion. Ceremonies that were performed by the Ono Niha were genital incision (*famoto*) and dental filing (*fangöhözi*).³⁴⁸ The purpose was not only to raise the participants' status (to become an adult), but also to preserve the honour (*lakhömi*) of being a descendant of the ancestors (or gods), as a part of the cosmological harmony. Not performing these ceremonies (*famoto* and *fangöhözi*) was considered a great humiliation and shame for the Ono Niha.

³⁴⁴ Ama Da'ö Bu'ulölö, Interview with the author on 16-17 November 1998 in Gunungsitoli. Cf. F. Gulö, Interview with the author on 14 January 1999 in Gunungsitoli.

³⁴⁵ Of the sixty people that filled out the questionnaire, 29 stated that the majority of the members of the congregation still perform *famoni*, 23 stated that it was a minority and only eight answered no. From this questionnaire it can be seen that there are still many Niasan Christians who perform the tradition of *famoni*, especially those who live in the villages. Only a small amount of people do not perform *famoni*. These are probably people living outside of Nias or those with higher education.

³⁴⁶ P. Sztompka, *Sosiologi Perubahan Sosial*, 2004, pp. 69-77.

³⁴⁷ Cf. Ch. 2.5.2.

³⁴⁸ R. Subagya, *Agama Asli Indonesia*, 1981, pp. 152-153.

6.4.2.1 Tolerance

During their first encounter with the traditions of genital incision and dental filing, the missionaries did not question them. The Ono Niha who had become Christians were not prohibited from conducting these ceremonies, as long as these were not accompanied by rites to the *adu*. To replace the function of the *ere* and the rites honouring the *adu*, the missionaries advised the Ono Niha to pray to God and ask a servant of the church to lead the worship. In this case, the Ono Niha saw that Christianity was in agreement with the traditions of *famoto* and *fangöhözi*, which were traditional ceremonies raising one's status in society and releasing them from shame.³⁴⁹

6.4.2.2 Prohibitions and Rules

The tolerant attitude of the missionaries towards the *adat* of *famoto* and *fangöhözi* lasted for half a century on Nias. However, after a great number of Ono Niha had become Christians during the *fangesa dödö sebua*, the missionaries changed their stand. The Ono Niha who had become Christians were not allowed to conduct the *adat* ceremonies of *famoto* and *fangöhözi* because it was seen as a bad habit which was not in accordance with Christian law, or more accurately, not in accordance with the missionaries' traditions. In order to make this new point of view public, the missionaries used the institution of the conference of church elders (*rafe satua Niha Keriso*) to discuss and examine whether or not the traditional ceremonies of *famoto* and *fangöhözi* were in accordance with Christian teachings. This point of discussion was crucial because it concerned the social status and self esteem of an Ono Niha. Tensions arose during this conference of elders, some agreed and others disagreed. However, after this matter was discussed twice during conferences of elders, in 1917 they agreed on a prohibition against conducting ceremonies of *famoto* and *fangöhözi* for those who had become Christians.³⁵⁰ Because this decision was made during a conference of the *satua Niha Keriso*, it created the impression that it was in fact Ono Niha who had decided. If one were to investigate the background on how those conferences were held, however, one would find that the missionaries strongly 'manipulated' them. They taught the pastors and the *guru* in the seminary and gave them the job of teaching concerning 'heathen tradition' in the midst of the lives of the Christians. In those lectures, the pastors and *guru* strongly opposed the *famoto* and *fangöhözi* traditions and categorized the other elements of *adat* as 'heathen tradition'.

The prohibition of *famoto* and *fangöhözi* created a dilemma for the Ono Niha who had become Christians. On the one hand they had become members of the church through baptism, but on the other hand they lived in a society with traditions that were a vital part of their daily lives. In reality, the Ono Niha did not want to leave their tradition, because it was closely tied in with *lakhömi* or their social status. They did not want to suffer humiliation and loss of dignity because of defiance towards the *adat*. They did not want to be rejected from society and suffer

³⁴⁹ F. Gulö, Interview with the author on 14 January 1999 di Gunungsitoli. Cf. Sadamböwö Telaumbanua, Interview with the author on 14 February 2004 in Gomo.

³⁵⁰ *Toeria*, 4/12 (1917); cf. J. Warneck, *Eduard Fries. Das Leben eines deutschen Missionars*, 1949, p. 123.

punishment from their ancestors. The Ono Niha that had become Christians questioned the foundation of this prohibition because in the Bible, the Israelites also had a tradition similar to genital incision (i.e., circumcision).

In reply to those questions raised, the missionaries and native church ministers continued prohibiting and giving reasons as to why the Christians were not allowed to do those things. In a lecture during a joint conference of *satua Niha Keriso* and *guru*, a Niasan pastor, Kolingö, explained the difference between the *famoto* (genital incision) tradition of the Ono Niha and the Israelite tradition of circumcision. He said:³⁵¹

The foundation of *famoto* is the *huku fōna*, which was inherited by the ancestors. The Ono Niha follow this tradition because it is seen as a humiliation if some one has not undergone genital incision. It could become a cause for conflict. This understanding of the Ono Niha was formed in the darkness, when they had not seen the light of the truth. Because of this it is not in accordance with the new laws of Christianity. The *famoto* tradition on Nias may not be compared to the *famoto* of the Israelites. For the Israelites, their *famoto* was an *oroisa* (law) from Lowalangi, which was carried out at the age of 8 days and served to mark the people of God. Whereas the *famoto* for the Ono Niha is carried out when entering adulthood, the purpose being to protect the honour and a person would be humiliated without it. It is also a sign that he may marry. Genital incision on Nias is often an invitation for sin, for there is a saying for those who have just undergone this operation: *Ono nekhe si no aefa ba gambuka, mutandra ba geu sabe'e* (a knife that has just been sharpened has to be tested on hard wood). This saying is an allusion to having intercourse. When the child that has just undergone *famoto* hears such things he is tempted to fornicate and sin. Therefore, *famoto* is not in accordance with the Bible. We would be lying to ourselves if we were to say that we have been released from *huku gafökha* (the law of the devil) when there is still one thing that binds us to it, namely *famoto*. Let us live in the new creation of Jesus Christ and leave all the old things behind (2 Cor 5:17).

From Kolingö's explanation we can see that the theological reasoning in banning genital incision (*famoto*) on Nias was rather 'shallow'. From this explanation, we can see not only the way the missionaries prohibited the traditions that were not in accordance to their own traditions, but also the way they used biblical verses as the foundation of these prohibitions.

When discussing *fangöhözi*, Kolingö said that the practice of *fangöhözi* (straightening, filing of teeth) could not be found in the Bible and therefore was not allowed to be carried out by Christians. Kolingö did not explain the tradition of *fangöhözi* as a rising of the social status of a person, but as a ritual for entering adulthood. Kolingö³⁵² explained the prohibition of *fangöhözi* for Christians by explaining it from the point of view of health, dignity and creation. Kolingö said:³⁵³

It is not good for Christians to carry out *fangöhözi* because besides causing pain and infection, it also takes away something from the perfect creation of God that is man. More than that, it is not in accordance with the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23). Do not be angry if you hear the teasing, "his teeth are so long, he could eat a whole man", or "his teeth are so sharp, he doesn't need a knife to cut his food". Christians must clothe themselves with love and not seek their own glory.

³⁵¹ *Toeria*, 6/4 (1919), pp. 13-14 (the quotation above is a translation by the author from a Niasan text).

³⁵² *Toeria*, 6/5 (1919), p. 19.

³⁵³ *Ibid.* p. 20.

Those were the explanations given by the pastors who had been socialized through the elders and *guru* conference and published in the magazine *Toeria*. The purpose was that the Christians on Nias would obey the rules that were decided upon in the elders' conference of 1917.

More than that, to affirm this decision which was taken at the elders' conference in 1917, the missionaries also included this prohibition into the *amakhoita*.³⁵⁴ In the *amakhoita* of 1923 it is said: *Si söchinia na lö'ö sa'ae famoto ba Niha Keriso, ba si manö göi wangöhözi andrö* (it is better if the Christians do not carry out genital incision as well as filing of teeth). This rule was more of a suggestion and did not carry sanctions for those who disobeyed it. This was different from the other *amakhoita*, that always carried sanctions in the form of fines, special guidance sessions, and even expulsion from the Christian community.³⁵⁵ Not punishing those who disobeyed the prohibition of *famoto* and *fangöhözi* meant that the missionaries handled this matter very carefully, because it was extremely difficult for the Ono Niha to leave these traditions behind. The missionaries offered an alternative for the ceremonies for the transition from adolescence to adulthood, namely 'confirmation'. In the *amakhoita* it was clearly stated that girls at the age of fifteen and boys at the age of sixteen had to attend catechism classes. Those who neglected their classes were fined 2,50 guilders and those who did not pay this fine were expelled from the Christian community.³⁵⁶

6.4.2.3 Response of the Ono Niha

The process of the interaction of Christianity and the rituals of initiation on Nias (*famoto* and *fangöhözi*) lasted very long and resulted in the Ono Niha still practicing *famoto*, but not carrying out the *fangöhözi* anymore. This is because the tradition of *famoto* had deep roots in the lives of the people whereas the tradition of *fangöhözi* was more of a tradition of the nobility. Although there were common people who practiced it, it was not widespread.³⁵⁷ Other than that, it was easier for the Ono Niha to leave the tradition of *fangöhözi* because of frequent infections and the dental health of the people increased after the coming of medicine and tooth brushes through modernisation.

As a result and based on the development and social changes that occurred, the BNKP did not mention or give any further prohibitions concerning *famoto* and *fangöhözi* in the *amakhoita* of 1961. Like the missionaries, the BNKP stated clearly that children aged fourteen to eighteen must attend catechism classes. They linked it to the minimal age for marriage, which was eighteen for men and sixteen for women.³⁵⁸ Through all these dynamics of change, *famoto*, which is still carried out to this day, is no longer a mark of the adolescence transition to adulthood, as this

³⁵⁴ *Amakhoita Sogoena ba Mbanoea Niha Keriso ba Danö Nias*, 1923 (Part E, § 4).

³⁵⁵ *Ibid.* Part D, § 1-3.

³⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁷ Sada'aro Telaumbanua, interview with the author on 9 January 2004, in Gomo. Cf. Interview with Ama Osara'ö Bu'ulölö on 13 January 2004 in Gomo. They were both of the opinion that the tradition of *fangöhözi* was only conducted for the children of *salawa* and *tuhenöri*. It was that which separated them from the commoners. *Fangöhözi* is no longer practiced because of health factors and the prohibition by the missionaries.

³⁵⁸ Cf. *Amakhoita ba BNKP Nias* § 32 in *Lala Nitörö*.

function is now held by confirmation. *Famoto* is now only a tradition with the purpose of retaining one's honour and to prevent being mocked by others. In the old days, genital incision was carried out by the *ere* and there were always *adu* connected to it. Nowadays, paramedics do it without a ceremony.

6.4.3 Wedding

Although there is nothing written about any form of acculturation which might have occurred with other tribes that came to trade on Nias before the time of the colonial government or the missionaries, that does not mean that no such thing happened, since in several coastal areas, people from Aceh and Minangkabau came, settled and married Niassan women. For instance in Lölöwa'u, on the western coast, a daughter of a nobleman, Harimao (chief of the Iraono Huna tribe) married a young man from Aceh.³⁵⁹ There is also a record of a nobleman from Laraga, on the eastern coast named Lafofolatio who married a woman from Pariaman, Minang.³⁶⁰ Through these weddings between tribes, an intense interaction between the cultures was created, which resulted in acculturation or diffusion.³⁶¹ One of the examples was found by Andrea Larosa: 'in the coastal regions of East Nias, Ono Niha were found copying the habits of Acehnese and Malay, namely to read somebody's palm in order to find a partner'.³⁶² Denninger³⁶³ found out that weddings between Ono Niha and Acehnese had led to polygamy in North Nias. This shows that the Ono Niha adopted certain elements from other cultures.

However, the diffusion of culture that occurred in the encounter of the Ono Niha with Malays and people from Aceh and Minangkabau was not planned, nor was it forced. It happened in a peaceful manner (*pénétration pacifique*), through trade and marriage.³⁶⁴ This was different from the encounter of the Ono Niha with Westerners, in this case, missionaries and colonialists. The goal of the missionaries was to spread the Gospel ('to bring light into the darkness'), the Dutch colonialists came to dominate and to govern, in short, to make Nias part of their 'overseas possessions'. These goals influenced their attitude towards local culture. *Pénétration pacifique* seldom occurred in the contact between Niasan and Western culture, because the missionaries saw the Niasan *adat*, especially the elements of primal religion, as paganism, which must be enlightened by the Gospel. On the other side were the Dutch colonialists who tried to create safety, order, and a society obedient to the law.

The missionaries' approach towards marriage traditions can be divided into two kinds: 1. the persuasive approach or acculturation. This means that on the one hand, they allowed the *adat* rituals surrounding a wedding ceremony to take place, in order to win the hearts of the Ono Niha and to inculcate their interest in the Christian faith. However, they did not accept practices that they considered inhumane. On the other

³⁵⁹ Anonymous, *Niassische Häuptlinge II*, 1912, pp. 4-5.

³⁶⁰ F. Zebua, *Kota Gunungsitoli*, 1996, pp. 17-18.

³⁶¹ R. Linton, *The Study of Man: An Introduction*, 1936, pp. 324-346. Linton discusses the spreading of culture through personal contact or contact of a group with one person or another group. In the process of two cultures meeting, there is the possibility that one could dominate the other. The other possibility is that both take over elements from the other, in order to integrate these elements into the culture. This is called diffusion.

³⁶² Guru Andrea, 'Falöwa föna', in: A. Pieper (ed.), *Realienboek*, 1928, pp. 117-118.

³⁶³ *BRM*, 1867, p. 136.

³⁶⁴ Cf. Koentjaraningrat, *Pengantar Ilmu Antropologi*, 1990, p. 245.

hand, they tried to substitute elements of the primal religion with elements of the Christian religion (acculturation) – this was the attitude of most missionaries in the first half century of mission on Nias; 2. the legislative approach means that the elements of the wedding rituals that were seen as causing harm or not being in accordance with the missionaries' values were prohibited by law or by church discipline.

The missionaries introduced new laws or rules concerning the things that had to be followed or those that had to be rejected by the Christians in the *adat* ceremonies regarding a wedding. This approach was taken after the majority of Ono Niha had become Christians, especially after the Great Awakening.

This legislative approach was in accordance with the decisions taken by the Dutch colonial government. They introduced the *adat* laws (*adatrecht*) in their occupied areas. In the beginning of the twentieth century, the Dutch colonial government succeeded in forming Christian *adat* laws on Nias, which included laws regarding marriage ceremonies. The goal was not just to create order and to rule, but also to sustain elements of the *adat* that were seen as positive and which did not collide with Christian belief.

How did the Ono Niha react to the views and attitudes of the missionaries and the colonialists towards marital *adat* ceremonies? In general, the Ono Niha tried to protect and retain the rituals that had been passed down from the ancestors³⁶⁵; also some elements of the *adat* were changed in order to suit the missionaries and the colonialists. However, in truth, the values of the old *adat* were still alive and retained. This happened because the Ono Niha were afraid of leaving the *amakhoita zatua* and because they did not want to be excluded from society. Those who did not obey the *adat* rules were called *si lö böwö* (loveless or lawless), or even worse, *si lö mangila huku* (people who do not know the *adat* laws, uncivilized or impertinent people). The result was that such people were not valued, having no rights in any *adat* ceremonies and being excluded from society.

6.4.3.1 Persuasive Approach and Acculturation

At the beginning of mission on Nias, the missionaries were tolerant towards the ceremonies concerning a wedding. They focused more on how to fight the *adu*.³⁶⁶ They did not forbid the ceremonies and celebrations, they did not question the *böwö* (dowry), and they did not even prohibit polygamy. In the beginning, there were no prohibitions issued to the Ono Niha who had several wives but wanted to become Christians. The missionaries started their mission work with the noblemen and leaders, and did not question those who practiced polygamy and joining catechism classes, baptism classes and be baptized. The paramount principle was the will to reject the *adu*.³⁶⁷ However, the missionaries could not accept practices that in their eyes were inhumane or violating 'human rights', such as forced marriage, under-age marriage, and violence against women.

The missionaries wanted to stop these things and because of that, they voiced their point of view about good and peaceful family-life in their mission work and in their sermons. They also provided guidance for abused women. Missionary Thomas

³⁶⁵ Cf. Ch. 2.5.3.

³⁶⁶ *BRM*, 1868, pp. 280-281.

³⁶⁷ *BRM*, 1874, pp. 243-244; cf. Anonymous, *Niassische Häuptlinge II*, 1912, pp. 5-10.

of the Omböläta station, for instance, advised the men to value their wives. The missionaries also helped women and admitted their children for education in the missionary schools. By becoming Christians, their human dignity was raised, because in the community of baptized people mutual respect and love was practiced.³⁶⁸ The missionaries also helped poor people to get married by involving the members of their congregations to help (loans without interest) poor youngsters, in order for them to get married. Through this, the practice of 'forced marriage' could be overcome by the establishment of love in the congregational community. There was a story told about a girl named Kanombe, who had become a Christian. She had been engaged for a long time to a man named Karongo, but their wedding could not take place because Karongo was a poor man who could not pay the *böwö* (dowry). Because of this, Kanombe's parents wanted to annul the engagement and marry Kanombe to another man, namely Kaduho. In the face of this situation, Kanombe came to Missionary Thomas to ask his help because she did not want to be forced to marry Kaduho. Thomas contacted the parents and asked them not to force their daughter to marry a man whom she did not love. The parents agreed on the condition that Karongo fulfilled the payment of *böwö* immediately for the wedding ceremony. In this situation, Thomas helped Karongo by asking the entire missionary congregation to help Karongo finance his wedding by loaning him money without interest. Through the teachings of love, taught by the missionaries, the members of the congregation agreed to help Karongo. After getting married, they worked hard to earn money and repay the people who had helped them. In this way, the practice of forced marriage was overcome.³⁶⁹

In overcoming violence against women, the wives of the missionaries played an important role. They gave guidance to the young women and girls who joined catechism or baptism classes or those who had become Christians. This training not only covered the teaching about the Christian faith, but also reading, writing, singing, cooking and sewing.³⁷⁰

Acculturation and a persuasive approach were also visible in the attitude of the missionaries towards the *adat* ceremonies concerning a wedding, especially the rites of the primal religion. To fill the absence left by the primal religion, the missionaries tried to implement Christian ceremonies, like prayer, worship and weddings led by servants of the church.³⁷¹

The persuasive approach was a missionary strategy, so that the Ono Niha did not view Christianity as an enemy of the marriage *adat*. The effort to overcome violence against women succeeded very well. On the other hand, certain elements of the primal religion were still present, especially in connection with 'ancestors'; for instance, during the prayer ceremony on the day before a wedding, when the *adat* pig is brought to the house of the bride. In the old days, there were rites before the *adu* but it later on replaced by Christian prayer. When the elders prayed in a Christian manner, they also called upon the spirits of the ancestors to bless the

³⁶⁸ Cf. Ch. 6.3.3.4.

³⁶⁹ *DKM* 51/11 (1905), pp. 173-174.

³⁷⁰ *BRM*, 1889, pp. 120-121. Cf. Anonymous, *Fanörö Tödö 75 Fache Yubileum*, Omböläta, 1940, p. 12.

³⁷¹ Cf. Anonymous, *Vademecum Pastorale Niassicum*, 1892, pp. 18-19 (RMG III r 46). In the service of matrimony, the missionaries did not take part in the *adat* ceremonies that were to unite the couple. The missionaries and their Ono Niha assistants told the couple to hold hands, the missionary would then put his hand on theirs and give them his blessing.

ceremony and to spare their children and grandchildren from the ancestors' wrath.³⁷² What occurred was a form of dualism or, as Fridolin Ukur³⁷³ calls it, the mixture of elements of Christianity and primal religion in Kalimantan was syncretism. In his case, elements of the Kaharingan tradition could be found in the wedding ceremonies of those who had become Christians.

6.4.3.2 The Legislative Approach

Investigating Adat Wedding Ceremonies

When the colonial government had built roads between the areas and villages, Christianity was spread to areas in Central, West, South and North Nias. A few mission stations were built and Christianity began to take root. With this development, the attitude of the missionaries towards the *adat* tradition became stricter. During several conferences, they discussed *adat* wedding ceremonies that were seen to be incompatible with Christianity. The first conference where this matter was discussed was in Bio'uti, 6-9 March 1906. The missionaries agreed that it was the task of the mission to handle matters that were connected to practices of engagement of minors, forced marriage, and polygamy.³⁷⁴ Through sermons and catechism classes, the missionaries taught that the engagement of minors, forced marriage, polygamy, and high bride prices were against the law of God.

Furthermore, the missionaries asked the *guru* and *pandita* to thoroughly investigate the heathen elements in the Ono Niha's *adat* of marriage. The results of those investigations were given to the missionaries to be perfected and were then made into material for lectures at conferences of the *satua Niha Keriso* and the *guru*. What was interesting is that the attitude of the *guru* and the *pandita* who presented these results was identical to the attitude of the missionaries. For instance, Kolingö presented a lecture at the conference of *satua Niha Keriso* with the title: *Amoni'a ba niha baero, ba famaigi tandra na moi ira wamaigi Niha* (the taboo against heathen ways in finding a marriage partner). In his lecture, he explained all the elements of the wedding ceremonies and said that because these ceremonies were connected to the primal religion, those elements were seen as a part of the *huku fõna* (old law) that had to be left behind, because it was not in accordance with the will of Jesus Christ (Jn 6:26 and 14:6).³⁷⁵ The elements referred to *famaigi ba motiko* (viewing of hand-writing), dream interpretation, belief in the meaning of a sneeze in regards to marriage, *famoni* (taboo), etc. What was more, the dances during the ceremonies were classified as part of the *huku fõna*.³⁷⁶ Kolingö said that all that was the work of the 'darkness' which still ruled the lives of the Ono Niha, even though they had become Christians. Those were the 'remains of the Old Law' that had to be left behind.³⁷⁷ This lecture that was presented at the conferences of the *satua Niha Keriso* and the conference of *guru* were materials that had to be taught to the members of the congregations, in order for them to become Christians and able to leave behind these elements of the *adat*.

³⁷² Ama Da'o Bu'ulölö, Interview with the author on 17-18 November 1998.

³⁷³ F. Ukur, *Tuaiannya Sungguh Banyak: Sejarah Gereja Kalimantan Evangelis Sejak Tahun 1835*, 2002, p. 160.

³⁷⁴ RMG 2.778.

³⁷⁵ *Toeria*, 2/11-12 (1915), (R III e 67).

³⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

Prohibitions and Sanctions

The efforts to remove elements of the wedding ceremonies that were seen as contradictory to Christianity became more firm by the forming of prohibitions. In order to do this, the missionaries chose the diplomatic approach by proposing these matters to become points of discussion during the *satua Niha Keriso* conferences, which were held in each district. For instance at the *satua Niha Keriso* conference at Humene in 1914, the delegates agreed on a rule that: 'Christians are not allowed to give their daughters in marriage to 'pagans' (*niha baero*). If this is not obeyed, the entire family will be excluded from the church community and will be required to pay a fine of twenty guilders. Men may also not marry women who are heathen. The sanctions are a fine of fifteen guilders and an obligatory catechism course of six months. This rule does not apply to those who have been engaged before this rule is valid.³⁷⁸

The prohibition against marrying 'pagans' was also implemented in North-Nias. Here not only did the missionaries involve church leaders in helping to socialize the people regarding this prohibition, they also involved a *tuhenöri* (paramount chief). One example is a wedding that was held in Hiligauko, Öri Zowu. The *ephorus* of the Mission, Fries, wrote a letter to *Tuhenöri* Sowu and asked him to attend the wedding and talked about the 'Christian Law'.³⁷⁹ The *tuhenöri* agreed and attended the wedding celebrations. With the influence and power he possessed, he was asked to deliver a speech with advice. In his advice speech, *Tuhenöri* Sowu was very firm in prohibiting marriage with pagans, and other cultural elements involved. He said:³⁸⁰

The celebration that is taking place today, 8 February 1915, is a celebration that may not serve as an example, because the groom is a Christian and the bride is a *Niha Baero* (pagans) and because it still follows cultural artistic traditions (*maena*, *bölihae* and *liwaliwa*). Now, there is a new Law, namely the *Huku ba Wa'aniha Keriso* (Christian Law). Because of this, we have to leave the *huku föna* behind.

This occasion is an example of how the very foundation principles of society were shaken. The *tuhenöri*, whose task is to maintain the *adat* in the area of an Öri, appears as someone who pronounces that a new law has come, the 'Christian Law'. In Nias tradition, a prohibition against a marriage can be issued because of social differences. In the 'New Law' the marriage prohibition was issued on the grounds of one's religious status. More than that, the 'New Law' also prohibited artistic elements of the *adat* (*maena*, *bölihae*, and *liwaliwa*). These artistic elements have the function of showing each side in the marriage ceremony mutual respect, not only as entertainment. At this point, tension arose, because for the Ono Niha, these prohibitions were not in accordance with the *adat* elements which express appreciation and honour, thus enhance the social solidarity.

There was also a prohibition issued against polygamy. A Christian who already had a family was not allowed to take a second wife or more. Those who disobeyed this rule were excommunicated. These expulsions really did take place. As an example, in Gunungsitoli, there was a case of polygamy, where a *salawa* secretly

³⁷⁸ *Toeria*, 3/8 (1916), p. 30.

³⁷⁹ *Toeria*, 2/5 (1915), p. 19. It can be seen that the missionaries used the *guru*, but also the leaders of society (*salawa* or *tuhenöri*) in order to remove elements of the *adat*, although this was not done in the ways that were customary on Nias, namely through *fondrakö* or the feast of *börönadu*.

³⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

married the widow of his brother. According to the *adat* laws, he was required to pay a bride-price in the amount of twenty-five guilders. However, because he had become a Christian, he kept his marriage secret. After a year, the missionaries found out about this and the *salawa* was brought before court in a church meeting for breaking the law prohibiting polygamy. During this meeting, it was declared that the Christian *salawa* had disobeyed the Word of God and had also lied and had to be punished for this. Their punishment was: The man was to pay a fine of 135 guilders (67,50 for disobeying the Word of God and 67,50 for lying), the woman was to pay half of the amount the man was to pay (67,50 guilders). The parents in law were sentenced to a fine of twenty-five guilders for not informing the *salawa* in their home village. The couple was divorced and the woman was married to another man who did not have a wife.³⁸¹

This prohibition caused tension within the Ono Niha, especially among noblemen, because polygamy was not an offence to the *adat* laws that had been established in the *fondrakö*. At the beginning of Christianity on Nias, men who had several wives had not been prohibited from attending church services. A *balö zi'ulu* who was very offended by the policy on polygamy was Barani Dakhi from Hilisimaetanö. Missionary Rabeneck made it very clear that all the elements of the old *adat* had to be cast off, but Barani said that *adat* was still *adat* and that it had nothing to do with the New Religion (Christianity). At the beginning of the year 1921, about seven years after Barani had become a Christian, he married for the second time, with a girl called Lamari. Barani organized a wedding ceremony that was in accordance with the *adat* laws in Hilisimaetanö. This occasion was seen as wrong by the church because it was an offence towards the law prohibiting polygamy. Rabeneck was very strict in his judgment and he expelled Barani Dakhi from the church. Rabeneck announced this decision when he came to preach at Easter 1921.³⁸² Barani Dakhi was also present at this excommunication service. He was shocked to hear of his expulsion from the church and did not understand the reasons given by the missionary, because he knew his marriage with Lamari to be in accordance with the *adat* laws. However, he had no choice and could not defy the church. He was forced to accept the decision. After six years he was welcomed in the church again after his wife Lamari died giving birth to their second child.³⁸³

From this tale we can see that there was tension between the Christian laws and the *adat* law in the matter of polygamy. However, because of developments in society due to the influence of Christianity, *adat* law could not avert change, especially since these developments were backed by another force: the Dutch colonial government.

Legalization of the Prohibitions through Law-Making

As was said before, as of 1914, there were discussions and even some rules made in every mission station about the traditional wedding ceremonies that were seen as incompatible with the Christian spirit. In discussing these rules and regulations, in the year 1923, during a missionaries' conference there was a new set of rules that was decided upon which was valid for all Niasan Christians, named *Amakhoita*

³⁸¹ *Toeria*, 2/6 (1915), pp. 23-24.

³⁸² W.R. Schmidt, *Das unbeeendete Gespräch*, 1967, p. 35.

³⁸³ *Ibid.*

Sogoena ba Mbanoea Niha Keriso ba Danö Nias.³⁸⁴ The choice of this name is very interesting because the term *amakhoita* was known and had taken roots in the context of Niasan culture. This is shown by: 1. *amakhoita zatua* (rules from the ancestors) and 2. *amakhoita mbanua* (*adat* rules) which were agreed upon generally in the *fondrakö*. The Ono Niha feared and obeyed this *amakhoita*, because of the general belief that obeying the *amakhoita zatua* was the way to receive blessing. Disobeying it meant being cursed. Obeying the *amakhoita mbanua* meant following the *adat* rules and disobeying it meant punishment with sanctions written in the *fondrakö*.

Concerning the wedding ceremonies specifically, there were several points in the *amakhoita* that defined what the Christians who want to get married must do, namely:³⁸⁵

1. People have to report to the missionary or a minister of the church when they are engaged. If they fail to do so, they will have to pay a fine of 2.50 guilders. If somebody conducts a wedding ceremony without the blessing of the church, they will be excluded from the church.
2. The minimal age for those who want to marry: for men: at least 18 years old, for woman: at least 16 years old. Those who do not honour this rule will be reprimanded.
3. Christians should not give their daughters in marriage with 'pagans'. Those who do not honour this rule will be excluded from the church, both parents and children. They may return after receiving guidance and truly admitting their fault.
4. If a woman has been engaged before she became a Christian, the engagement must be cancelled, except, if the fiancé is willing to convert to Christianity and pays a deposit of 50 guilders. If the man breaks his promise, the deposit will be forfeited and his wife will be excluded from the church.
5. If a woman wants to get married before being confirmed, she must pay a fine of 10 guilders and she must promise to attend catechism classes and pay a deposit of 20 guilders. The marriage will not be blessed; there will be prayer only.
6. It is strongly forbidden for a man to marry before he receives confirmation. A wedding can only take place if the man and the woman love each other. Those who disobey will be reprimanded.
7. To conduct a wedding if the man or the woman do not approve is not allowed.
8. If servants of the church give their child to a heathen to be engaged, they will be stripped off their church duties.
9. It is forbidden for a father to marry the widow of his son, as it is forbidden for a man to marry his mother-in-law when their father-in-law has died. Those who disobey will be excluded from the church.
10. If a widow is to be married, her permission must be asked first. Siblings, parents and *Salawa* were not allowed to order the widow to marry if she does not wish to. What is important is that the widow maintains good behaviour.

³⁸⁴ Conference of missionaries on Nias, 1923 (RMG 2.7781).

³⁸⁵ *Amakhoita Sogoena ba Mbanoea Niha Keriso ba Danö Nias*, 1923 (RMG 2.803), Part B, § 1-10.

The other rules, on matters of divorce and polygamy, were as follows:³⁸⁶

1. Christians are not allowed to divorce, except if adultery has been committed. Those who divorce will be excluded from the church.
2. If someone does not love his wife because he was forced to marry by his parents when he was a child, the matter can be brought before the meeting of *satua Niha Keriso*, together with the missionaries and Salawa, in order for the couple to be 'separated'. To achieve a 'separation', the one involved must present some sort of a sign.
3. Christians may not practice polygamy. Those who do will be excluded from the church and will not be received again unless they divorce the second wife or the first wife dies.
4. If a heathen, who is attending catechism classes practices polygamy, he will be excluded from catechism classes and has to wait for five years in order to attend again.
5. If a servant of the church supports a marriage that is not in accordance with Christianity (for instance blessing a couple that is pregnant before marrying), that servant will be released from his duties. If the person supporting such a marriage is a Salawa, he has to receive guidance; a regular church member must pay a fine of five guilders.

From the *amakhoita*, one can see the effort of the missionaries to control the weddings and marriages of the Christian Ono Niha and to separate the Ono Niha who had converted to Christianity from the 'pagans'. However, the matter of high dowry, that had been a serious discussion topic since the conference of the missionaries in 1908, was not included in the *amakhoita*. The missionaries viewed the wedding dowry as an ulcer (*Geschwür*) that could be dangerous to the lives of the Ono Niha. However, they were very careful to include this matter into the *amakhoita* because it might create tension in society. The step they did take was to support the decision taken by the Dutch colonial government, which issued the *adatrecht* that also stated a limitation on the amount of dowry. The missionaries also gave guidance and teachings on this matter. The missionaries urged the servants of the church (Niasan pastor, *guru* and *satua Niha Keriso*) to set an example by not demanding a dowry that complicated the lives of those involved. The servants of the church, however, refused, with the explanation that they would be excluded from society if they did as the missionaries demanded. According to the Ono Niha servants of the church, neither the missionaries nor the government could ever change the rules on dowry in the Ono Niha society. Only the *salawa* or the *tuhenöri* were able to do such a thing through the ceremony of *fondrakö*.³⁸⁷

However, during the period of Japanese colonialist government, there was a drastic change regarding dowry on Nias. This happened because the Ono Niha heard rumours that girls that were of age were taken by the Japanese to become their wives and young men would be taken to Tokyo to become soldiers. These rumours frightened the Ono Niha because it was a matter of 'honour'. *Guru L. Lase*³⁸⁸ said

³⁸⁶ *Ibid.* Part C, § 1-5.

³⁸⁷ *Adatrecht für Christengemeinden* (RMG 2.800).

³⁸⁸ *Guru L. Lase*, 'Waöwaö wa'aniha Keriso ba Danö Niha (Nias) barö zi otu fakhe wa'ara, wanuriagö Turia Somuso Dödö', in: Heering-Harefa (eds.), *Waöwaö Duria Somuso Dödö ba Danö Niha*, 1971, p. 68.

that when the Ono Niha heard about this, those with daughters did not demand high dowry at the weddings, but only demanded that a feast would be provided. This change of attitude towards dowry was not only provoked by fear of the Japanese, it was also caused by the economic difficulties of the time, since all pigs and rice had to be given to the occupiers to feed the troops.³⁸⁹

This condition did not last long. After Indonesia became independent, the Ono Niha returned to practicing the tradition of what they called *böwö ndra satua* (the *adat* which was passed down from their parents or the ancestors). Usually, this *adat* was renewed if there was a change of conditions. This renewal took place through palaver and a religious rite, called *fondrakö*.

Execution of Sanctions

The prohibitions that were listed in the *amakhoita* were truly implemented, following the pattern of Nias tradition. Everyone who disobeyed was sanctioned according to the rules in the *amakhoita*. Some sanctions were carried out in the form of reminders, fines and expulsion from the community of the congregation. The magazine *Toeria* lists the number of people who were excommunicated from the church in those years: 142 in 1919, it rose to 308 in 1923, not including the people who suffered other sanctions.³⁹⁰ These figures show that the Ono Niha were not too concerned with abiding by the laws which were set up by the missionaries. They were more obedient to the *adat*, although they had to face being expelled from the congregation.

Although the Ono Niha did not honour the missionaries' *amakhoita* very much, this legislative approach was continued even after the church on Nias became an institution with the name BNKP. Besides setting up church laws, a new *amakhoita* was discussed and released.³⁹¹ In this *amakhoita* it was written that it was forbidden to practice *famoni* when searching for a partner. Other things that were forbidden were adultery, polygamy and marrying a pagan.³⁹² Those who disobeyed these rules were either reprimanded or had their church membership cancelled. However, the violations of the rules continued to take place.

One case which surprised the missionaries was the polygamy case of *Tuhenöri* Dawido from Öri Sowu. He was a Christian who was very supportive of the mission work in northern Nias. He had once been entrusted by the missionaries to socialize the concept of the prohibition for Christians to marry pagans as well as the prohibition of artistic cultural events surrounding a wedding. However, according to the *amakhoita*, after he committed polygamy in the year 1937, Dawido's BNKP membership was annulled. *Tuhenöri* Dawido could not accept this decision because he had not violated the *adat*. He wrote a letter to *Ephorus* Albert Lück and requested to be welcomed again in the church with the explanation that his parents had married him to three girls when he was ten years old. Two of these had died and the only one remaining was ten years his senior. He had also followed the advice given to him by Missionary Rudersdorf and divorced his first wife, which was witnessed by the Assistant-*Demang* De'ali. However, until he wrote that letter (18 January 1939), he

³⁸⁹ Fatolosa Gulö, interview with the author on 21 January 1999 in his house, Tohia-Gunungsitoli.

³⁹⁰ Cf. *Toeria*, 7/4 (1920), *Toeria*, 11/4 (1924).

³⁹¹ BNKP, *Amachoita ba mbanoea Niha Keriso si faoedoe ba Daroma Li Lowalangi, nihonogöi mbanua Niha Keriso Protestan ba danö Nias (Heb 9:1)*, 1939.

³⁹² *Ibid.*

had not received a membership to the BNKP again.³⁹³ Before answering the letter of *Tuhenöri* Dawido, Lück asked the advice of the director of the RM. The answer given by the director of the RM: 'Let not the new laws be disobeyed, but let not the gates of heaven be closed because of rules that are too strict'.³⁹⁴ To implement the advice given by the director of the RM, the case of *Tuhenöri* Dawido was brought before the synod meeting in 1937 to be discussed and decided upon. However, a decision could not be taken during that synod meeting because of tension that arose between the *salawa* and *tuhenöri* who advocated that Christians be allowed to practice polygamy, and the ministers of the church (*pandita*, *guru* and *satua Niha Keriso*) who were against this.³⁹⁵ It was not until 1939 that the synod meeting decided that Dawido could be re-established as a member of the BNKP under the condition that he divorce his first wife and that he pay for her keep. From this tale we can see that the power of the church grew after it became an institution and that not even a *tuhenöri* had the power to change the *amakhoita* that was released by the synod meeting.

Amakhoita after World War II

When Indonesia became independent, almost all Ono Niha had converted to Christianity, although they still held fast to *adat* in their everyday lives. Although the times had changed, the BNKP continued to establish the sort of church discipline which ruled during the mission era. As the situation became more and more complex and the *amakhoita* could not provide solutions to all cases that arose because of *adat*, the synod meeting of the BNKP in 1960 decided to form an *amakhoita* revision team. After only one year the team finished its work and presented a new *amakhoita* that was ratified at the synod meeting in 1961.³⁹⁶

In the new *amakhoita* one can see the effort to overcome the church's difficulties with certain elements of the *adat* and the primal religion of the Ono Niha that still existed by establishing taboos or prohibitions regarding the time when searching for a partner.³⁹⁷ However, the focus was more concentrated on ethical and moral problems, for instance matters of buying and selling women, taking little girls to be one's child (*solaya iraono*), polygamy, high bride-prices, fathers marrying their daughters-in-law (in the case of their sons' deaths), men marrying their mothers-in-law (in case of their fathers' deaths), selling of one's wife, being pregnant though unmarried, premature births and abortion.³⁹⁸ Another matter was the relationship between different religions and between different church denominations in connection to marriage. In the *amakhoita* there was a prohibition that forbade members of the BNKP to marry people of another religion, even those from churches viewed as having different teachings, such as the Roman Catholic Church, AFY, Adventist, Pentecostal and others, unless they agreed to become members of the BNKP through taking classes beforehand.³⁹⁹

³⁹³ RMG 2.803.

³⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁵ *Toeria*, 25/1 (1938).

³⁹⁶ BNKP, 'Hasil keputusan Persidangan Majelis Sinode BNKP tahun 1961 tentang "Amakhoita ba BNKP"'.

³⁹⁷ *Amakhoita*, § 12.

³⁹⁸ *Amakhoita*, § 13-15; 40, 44-47.

³⁹⁹ *Amakhoita*, § 41-42.

In the *amachoita* one could also see the effort of the BNKP to reduce dowry, by not excluding couples that ran away to get married because of a bride-price that was too high, not even excluding women who became pregnant without being married because of dowry. The church only provided guidance after which the children were baptized. The church even blessed couples that were married at the civil registration office, as long as they had not violated the seventh commandment.⁴⁰⁰ Because the advice concerning dowry was not followed, the BNKP decided at the synod meeting on 16 May 1964 that dowry (*böwö wangowalu*) would be restricted to a maximum of *felewitu wa öfa alisi bawi* (meaning seventeen pigs each weighing around fifty kilograms) for Christians on Nias.⁴⁰¹ However, it was difficult for the people, even for ministers of the church, to follow this rule.

6.4.3.3 Governmental Decisions Concerning Weddings

As the Ono Niha became poorer and poorer, and also because of the high bride-prices, the assistant-*resident* of Tapanuli, fearing a social uprising, took the initiative to gather the *salawa* on 1 February 1912 to discuss the matter of dowry (*böwö wangowalu*). The result was a set of 'rules' that were formulated in a decision of the assistant-*resident* and spread to the Christians on Nias, co-signed by Fries, the *ephorus* of the mission, about the amount of dowry allowed to be paid, namely 250 guilders for the *tuhenöri*, 153,33½ guilders for the *salawa* and 106,66½ guilders for the common people.⁴⁰² These rules did not apply to the southern part of Nias, because at the time, not many people there had converted to Christianity. In this set of rules, only the matter of bride-price was seen as a serious matter, while the other topics concerning wedding *adat* elements were not questioned. The Dutch colonial government was more focused on the issues that could destabilize their territory and did not want to meddle with issues that did not affect their government.

However, in the year 1915 the Dutch colonial government published Christian *adat* laws for Nias under the title: 'Explanation of the special *adat*-law of the indigenous Christians in the district of Nias, with the exception of the district of South Nias, in the Regency of Tapanuli'.⁴⁰³

These rules were released not only because of a public decision taken by the Dutch colonial government, which were not unconnected to the conditions of that time. There was rapid social change taking place, achieved by forced labour on the one hand and the success of missionaries on the other, which marked the fall of the *adu* and a trend towards baptism and Christianity. In anticipation and prevention of social uprising because of this rapid change, as well as to preserve elements of the *adat* which were viewed as positive, the Christian *adat* laws for Nias were gathered and published.

In the process of putting together this set of rules, the colonial government consulted with missionaries, because they were the ones with experience in the field. On 9 February 1914 there was a consultation in Omböлата between delegates of the

⁴⁰⁰ *Amachoita*, § 50.

⁴⁰¹ 'Keputusan Sinode BNKP tentang Lala Wangowalu dali Wa'aniha Keriso', 1964 (Arsip BNKP).

⁴⁰² Commissie voor het Adatrecht, *Adatrechtbundel XII*, 1916, pp. 277-280. Cf. Anonymous, 'Adat-Recht f. Christengemeinden: Beschrijving van het bijzondere adatrecht der Inlandsche Christenen in de afdeling NIAS, met uitzondering van de onderafdeeling Zuid-Nias, van de residentie Tapanoeli' (RMG 2.800), 1915.

⁴⁰³ Cf. Commissie voor het Adatrecht, *Adatrechtbundel XII*, 1916, pp 263-280.

government that were led by Dr. Kielstra and the missionaries.⁴⁰⁴ At this meeting, the missionaries made several suggestions concerning the Christian *adat* laws for Nias.⁴⁰⁵ Concerning weddings specifically, the missionaries weighed the factors of justice and ethics.

The missionaries themselves did not mention dowry, nor any *adat* elements for that matter, but talked about blessing, responsibility (offerings), the responsibility of man and woman in the family, marriage based on love, not obligation, the age of bride and groom (men had to be at least eighteen years old, women at least sixteen years old), punishment in the case of rape, rules and protections for runaway couples, protection for women in case of a divorce, protection of widows and the regulations concerning marriages between Christians and those considered pagans.⁴⁰⁶

In regards to marriage, this Christian *adat* law is more focused on matters having to do with human rights, liberty, justice, and elements of an ethical nature, except for the bride price which was known as *böwö wangowalu*. Matters discussed were weddings at the civil registration, engagements on the ground of mutual agreement and not because of force, the prohibition of engagements of minors and the liberty to break off an engagement on the grounds of irreconcilable differences. For Christian marriages, monogamy was underlined; polygamy was prohibited with a fine of 150 guilders for all men who violated this law, the women had to pay 75 guilders. Matters concerning registration of a wedding by a missionary or an elder, matters concerning offerings or matters concerning Christian and non-Christian couples were left to the church to decide on. An important matter that was included was the matter of responsibility within a family. The husband as the head of the family had to try to give his wife and children a prosperous life, the wife had to work together with her husband to support him. Divorces were not to be carried out arbitrarily. The Christian *adat* law included these matters. There were also rules concerning protection of women, including the inheritance in case of her husband's death.⁴⁰⁷

After the Christian *adat* laws were published, it turned out that the matter of dowry was still an issue. The decision concerning dowry from the year 1912 on, was seen as very difficult. Because of this, on 16 June 1917, the *controleur* of Nias, R. Th. Maiman, released a new decision which included a lower amount of dowry and a classification of two hundred guilders for the *tuhönöri*, 120 guilders for those in the ninth strata (level of society), one hundred guilders for those in the eighth strata and eighty guilders for those in the seventh strata (the majority).⁴⁰⁸ With the releasing of the restrictions of dowry, the wedding celebrations on Nias used these categories in the law as a standard, but the *salawa* and *adat* elders added several additional costs, which resulted in wedding dowry becoming even higher than during the period before the Christian *adat* laws were established.

⁴⁰⁴ 'Protokoll der Konferenz Rheinischer Missionare auf Nias', Omböläta, 4-11 Februar 1914 (RMG 2.780).

⁴⁰⁵ 'Bepalingen voor de Inlandsche christenen op het Eiland Nias' (RMG 2.800).

⁴⁰⁶ Specifically on marriage between Christians and non-Christians: 'If a heathen wants to marry a Christian, they must bow to the Christian law and pay a fine of thirty guilders if they disobey this law'.

⁴⁰⁷ 'Beschrijvings van het bijzondere adatrecht der Inlandsche Christenen in de afdeeling Nias, met uitzondering van de onder-afdeeling Zuid-Nias van de residentie Tapanoeli', § 13-66.

⁴⁰⁸ *Toeria*, 4/10 (1917), p. 39.

6.4.3.4 Response of the Ono Niha

The Christian *adat* laws had now been released. It was viewed as a formal legal document in force. Missionary Wagner found the laws very positive, because the Ono Niha had become Christians. He said:⁴⁰⁹

The religion of a people defines its law. The religious and ethical comprehension also defines legal comprehension. The laws of the heathen people are different from the laws of those who have become Christians. It would be incorrect to say that pagans do not possess laws. We can even be fascinated by the laws of the pagans. Especially on Nias, the heathen laws are very far-ranging, but now that heathen people have become Christians. Because of this, the heathen laws no longer apply. There are old regulations that are not in accordance with the Christian spirit. There has to be change. The creation of laws is not only a mission task, but also primarily a task of the government.

In reality, however, these Christian *adat* laws were not valued. The Ono Niha did not obey them truthfully. The Öri No'o'u even boldly conducted a *fondrakö* on 21 May 1936.⁴¹⁰ During this *fondrakö*, they came to the realization that in that area the amount of dowry (*böwö wangowalu*) was rising rapidly because of mixing Öri No'o'u's *böwö* with that of other *öri*, for instance the dowry of Lahömi or Noyo, etc. Because of this, Öri No'o'u conducted a *fondrakö* and decided upon its own *böwö wangowalu*, consisting of 1. dowry for children of the *salawa*: 426 guilders; 2. dowry for children of noblemen: 370 guilders; and 3. dowry for the children of commoners: 325 guilders.⁴¹¹

Seeing that the decision of the *fondrakö* at Öri No'o'u about the dowry was held in high regard, in 1939 the government invited the leaders of the areas (*tuhenöri*) to have another meeting to discuss the subject of wedding dowry.⁴¹² There were two topics: firstly, the problem that the decisions of 1 February 1912 and 1 February 1917 were not valued as they should have been; and secondly that these existing laws were too heavy a burden, so that some decided on their own dowry. The result of this meeting was that a new wedding dowry was established for Nias:

1. Dowry for the seventh strata (the majority of the people): 117 guilders;
2. Dowry for the eighth strata (*salawa* and *adat* leaders): 190 guilders; and
3. Dowry for the ninth strata (*tuhenöri*): 250 guilders. This meeting resulted in the establishment of new dowry rules for Nias.

This legislative approach was then repeated by the local Niasan parliament. It released, in 1982, local laws on dowry for Nias. This was done based on the expression of sorrow voiced by many of the Niasan society regarding the imbalance of income and the financial needs for organizing a wedding, which led to pawning, selling of possessions, or debts which then led to poverty and misery. As a result people would then disregard education, health, the prosperity of their family and other social activities; it even led to disturbances in the safety and order of society.

⁴⁰⁹ Cf. *BRM*, 1915, p. 228.

⁴¹⁰ *Toeria*, 23/3 (1937), pp. 21-22.

⁴¹¹ This dowry (*böwö*) could be paid in two instalments, namely: 1. one payment during the wedding ceremony and 2. the rest paid at several occasions of the parents-in-law, for instance building a house, greath feast, etc.

⁴¹² *Toeria*, 26/2 (1939), pp. 10-16.

In short, the decision of the local parliament reflected that one cause of poverty was the negative impact of the high dowry according to the Niasan wedding traditions. It was decided that 'the material value of the bride-price measured in pigs can amount to a maximum of sixty *alisi* or *olola* (ten pigs each weighing sixty kilograms), plus two pigs weighing at least one hundred kilograms'. This law was valid for all, no matter their social status or economic condition.⁴¹³

The ever-changing decision-making concerning dowry resulted in the people disregarding the rules that were released. This shows that the Ono Niha did not regulate dowry by means of a decree. Changes in *adat* were always carried out through *fondrakö*. The problem was that the government did not choose a cultural approach but an approach of power, even releasing prohibitions towards these feasts. There was also a religious dimension, namely that the rites for the *adu* had been erased by the mission without there being an appropriate institution to serve as a cultural and spiritual substitute.

When we look at the decisions concerning dowry taken without *fondrakö* after 1936, we can see that it was twice as high as that of the government. However, it is important to know that the Ono Niha's understanding of dowry was very different from that of the government and the missionaries. The fact that a part of the dowry was paid and another part of the dowry remained unpaid, was not only a matter of bride-price, but underlined the matter of attitude, and a loving relationship that was to last a life-time between the family of the man and the woman. The Niasan saying *Hönö mböwö no awai, hono mböwö no tosai* (thousands have been paid in dowry, but thousands remain) is very true.⁴¹⁴ This saying implies that the meaning of dowry is not just restricted to the *böwö* (dowry) itself, but also speaks about relationships and includes the importance of love, brotherhood and solidarity in those relationships.

However, all the dynamic interactions resulting from the encounter of Christianity and the Ono Niha's wedding *adat* have led to changes. First of all, it can be said that the Gospel has succeeded in releasing the Ono Niha from the practice of child engagements, forced engagement and forced marriage, and it has provided protection for women in order for them not to be treated with cruelty.⁴¹⁵ Secondly, the Gospel has succeeded in separating the *adu* and the rites of the primal religion from the wedding *adat* and replacing them with Christian elements. Thirdly, marriage on Nias was a single system. There was no separation between *adat*, religion, and government. In the encounter with Christianity, however, a polarisation took place. A wedding was considered valid and perfect when there had been a church ceremony, civil registration by the government, and a traditional celebration.⁴¹⁶ There had also been a renewal process in the wedding celebrations themselves; as the Christian elements replaced elements of the primal religion, although there is still dualism inside the Ono Niha themselves. On the other hand, the matter of high *böwö* (dowry) has not been solved, although the colonial government, the Indonesian government, and the church have determined limits to the *böwö*. The cause of this is that the approach chosen was a legislative approach,

⁴¹³ Decision of the local Parliament (DPRD) of the Regency of Nias, Nr. 05 of the year 1982, on the guidelines of the material value of the bride-price according to the *adat* of the Niasan people.

⁴¹⁴ Cf. Interview with Ama Wiliba Sadawa on 15 February 2004 in Gomo.

⁴¹⁵ Commissie voor het Adatrecht, *Adatrechtbundel XII*, 1916, pp. 266-274.

⁴¹⁶ *Ibid.* pp. 264-266.

done without investigating the meaning and background of the dowry of the Ono Niha.

6.4.4 Death and Burial

The ancient societies viewed death as a return of the spirit to the ancestors. In order to ensure a smooth transition, the ceremonies surrounding the death of a person are very important.⁴¹⁷ The ancestors are seen as protectors who bless living people. Because of this, the living people have to fulfil all the demands of the *adat* tradition.⁴¹⁸ This was true in Niasan society as well. The Ono Niha believe that humans have something which is immortal, namely a spiritual part, called *noso*. This part will return to its origin or to the world of his or her ancestors⁴¹⁹, and become a protector and a source of blessing. For this reason, the Ono Niha tried hard to be able to carry out ceremonies like *fangotome'ö* (last meal)⁴²⁰, *fogo'o* (burial ceremony), *fangasi* (*adat* ceremony after the burial), *fanibo tufo* (placing of a mattress and clothes of the deceased on the grave on the fourth day), and the making of *adu zatua* which is placed in the row of the *adu zatua*, which is a symbol of the return of the deceased to the ancestors.

During the ceremonies surrounding a death, the missionaries not only encountered *adat* activities just as they did during the ceremonies surrounding the birth of a child or a wedding, but also the *adu*, their worst enemy. The making of *adu zatua* was an effort to remain connected to the deceased, in spite of the reality that they were now in another world. This became particularly evident during the ceremony of *fanibo tufo* (placing of a mattress and clothes of the deceased on the grave on the fourth day), the aim of which was to stress the fact that the deceased was now in a world different from the world of the living. Death separates these worlds, but the relationship between the two parties remains the same. The parent who has died remains a parent to his / her children, who will always remember and honour him or her during all the activities of their lives, especially *adat* activities. So, the deceased returns to his origin but the relationship with his family is still alive. The living believe that honouring the spirit of the ancestors through *adu*⁴²¹ will bring blessing, but ignoring them will bring curse.

6.4.4.1 Tolerance towards the *Adat* Traditions

When the missionaries of RM and DLM came to Nias to preach the Gospel, they encountered ceremonies surrounding death and saw them as part of 'heathen darkness'.⁴²² Although they were determined to fight this darkness, at the beginning of their mission they were more tolerant and only tried to separate the religious elements (*adu*) from the *adat* ceremonies. The death of the first Christian from Hilina'a, *Balugu Jawaduha*, provides an interesting example.⁴²³ The missionaries Denninger and Kramer gave permission to the family to conduct the *adat*

⁴¹⁷ Cf. Ch. 2.5.4.

⁴¹⁸ R. Subagya, *Agama Asli Indonesia*, 1981, pp. 193-194.

⁴¹⁹ H. Sundermann, 'Die Psychologie des Niassers', in: Gustav Warneck (ed.), *AMZ* 14, 1887, p. 292.

⁴²⁰ *Toeria*, 11/7-9 (1924), pp. 25-26.

⁴²¹ J.W. Thomas, *Drei Jahre in Südnieas*, 1892, p. 10.

⁴²² *BRM*, 1870, p. 35.

⁴²³ *BRM*, 1875, pp. 311-315.

ceremonies (*Sitte*) for Jawaduha, except for the making of *adu*. With this permission, the family of Jawaduha was able to carry out the rituals of *fangotome'ö*⁴²⁴, *fanema lakhömi*⁴²⁵, *fogo'o* and the ceremony of *fangasi*. The one ceremony that was not allowed was the *fangai mökömökö*, which was the making and worshipping of the *adu zatua*.

This acceptance of these ceremonies was not because the missionaries agreed fully with the elements of the *adat*, but because through this approach they wanted to win the hearts of the Ono Niha who had not converted to Christianity and help them be open and interested in the Gospel. Kramer's opinion was that the missionary effort to force the Ono Niha to follow a 'different tradition' was not right. He thought it important for the missionaries to sanctify these *adat* traditions through the Word of God and prayer (*ihre Sitten und Gebräuche durch das Wort Gottes und Gebet zu heiligen*).⁴²⁶ This effort to sanctify the *adat* traditions was implemented at the funeral of Jawaduha. Besides not allowing the making and worshipping of *adu*, the missionaries also replaced the burial rites with a Christian burial service. Here role of the *ere* was taken over by the missionary. The story goes that for the burial service, the missionaries gathered all the Christians to surround the body of the deceased together with the mourning family. Then Kramer led the liturgy, while Denninger held the sermon. After that, the coffin was carried outside, and in front of the door a golden crown was placed on the coffin. It was then brought to the burial site in Jawaduha's garden. After the funeral, the missionaries placed a cross on the site, as was customary in Germany. By replacing the function of the *ere*, the missionaries hoped to prevent the worshipping of the spirit of the deceased.

Since the missionaries allowed the first Christians on Nias to conduct *adat* traditional ceremonies for the dead, the Ono Niha felt that Christianity did not destroy their culture and tradition, except for the *adu*. However, from the story of Jawaduha's death one can see that the function of the *adu* had not fully disappeared, but had only shifted into another form. Before Christianity, the parents were the protectors and the source of blessing (*sangehowu*); when they died, they were still present through the *adu*. Now, after the *adu* had been removed, the missionaries became the *sangehowu*. This became very clear during the *fangasi* ceremony. Jawaduha said to his children, 'although I will be gone, do not be sad and afraid, your teacher (he meant Missionary Kramer) will protect you and bless you'.⁴²⁷ The missionary replaced the parent, who, in Niasan tradition, was present after his death in the form of the *adu*. In other words, the missionaries were seen as the substitute for the *adu* and the *ere*. However, developments after this event show that the people's continued belief in the spirits of the ancestors turned out to be a serious problem in the history of mission and the church on Nias. The belief of the Ono

⁴²⁴ *BRM*, 1875, p. 312. Two days before Jawaduha died, there was the ceremony of *fangotome'ö*. Kramer compared this ceremony to Jacob blessing his children, because during this *fangotome'e*, the children and relatives of Jawaduha honoured him by giving him food and Jawaduha gave his blessing to everyone who fed him.

⁴²⁵ Just before Jawaduha died, there was the ceremony of *fanema lakhömi*. Jawaduha asked to be given a piece of thread. He placed the middle of this thread in his mouth, one end on his chest and the other end on the chest of his first-born son. Then Jawaduha said, 'May my heart enter your heart'. His son replied, 'Father, I welcome your heart in mine'. After that Jawaduha comforted his children by saying that they needn't be afraid since the missionaries were there to protect them and bless them.

⁴²⁶ *BRM*, 1875, p. 311.

⁴²⁷ *BRM*, 1875, p. 311.

Niha in the spirit of the ancestors was still very strong, because they continued to carry out *adat* traditions. As Lothar Schreiner says, the firmness and power of tradition as a religious implement becomes most clear in the worshipping of the ancestors. In the relationship of the Christians with their dead and their ancestors, the belief in these ancestors defines itself as the origin and motivation of tradition.⁴²⁸ This was the dilemma that occurred in the encounter of *adat* with the Gospel during the process of mission. Forbidding the *adat* tradition would affect tribal people's interest in Christianity. Allowing it, however, provided the opportunity for the old beliefs to remain strong. This was what eventually motivated the missionaries to adopt a more intolerant attitude towards *adat*.

6.4.4.2 Firmer Attitude towards *Adat*

After the mission became more and more successful, the missionaries became less tolerant towards death-*adat*. This reached a peak when they prohibited certain elements of the *adat* that were viewed as being in conflict with Christianity. Kramer's tolerant attitude towards *adat* as explained in the example of the story of Jawaduha's death, changed in the following years when Christianity became stronger. He entered the houses of the people to throw out the *adu*. He also prohibited all *adat* traditions that, according to him, were connected to the primal religion. He began to establish rules with the aim to replace (*vertauschen*) the old *adat* with good Christian customs (*gute christliche Sitten*). When someone died, only one pig was slaughtered, whereas in the old days, three to four were slaughtered. In the old days, when someone died there was an incredible wailing and mourning; now, after becoming Christians, the people had to behave like good Christians. They had to be calm and shed silent tears at the most.⁴²⁹ According to Kramer, this was in accordance with Christianity.

This less tolerant attitude towards burial *adat* traditions could also be seen in other missionaries. For instance, when Ama Mandranga of the Dahana station died on the first day of Pentecost in the year 1895, Sundermann declared that Ama Mandranga was a person who believed in Jesus Christ and his Lord and Saviour. He had rejected heathenism. Because of this, the heathen *adat* traditions could not be carried out for him. Everything that was connected to *adu* had to be removed. The only thing Sundermann allowed at the relative's request was for them to place a photograph of Ama Mandranga on the wall of his house.⁴³⁰ Sundermann agreed to this because it was not in contradiction to European traditions and Christianity. Ama Mandranga was buried by Sundermann who used a burial liturgy which was common in churches in Germany and which he had translated.

Another example was when Fadoli, the *Salawa* Iraono Huna died. He had converted to Christianity and had destroyed all *adu*. When he died, no *adat* traditional ceremonies, as were fitting for a *salawa*, were carried out, but a Christian service was held. He was buried with a Christian liturgy, a cross was placed on his grave and a modest feast was held.⁴³¹ Also Afore, a *salawa* from Hili Hondrö, had become a Christian and destroyed all his *adu*. When he became ill and was about to

⁴²⁸ L. Schreiner, *Adat dan Injil*, 1996, p. 167.

⁴²⁹ *BRM*, 1879, pp. 68-69.

⁴³⁰ *BRM*, 1899, p. 104.

⁴³¹ Anonymous, *Niassische Häuptlinge II*, 1912, pp. 15-16.

die, he did not return to the *adu*. Missionary Hippenstiel came to visit him and asked if there were still any heathen materials in his house. Afore answered no, all were destroyed during his baptism classes. Afore died in October 1905. When he was about to die he asked *guru* Filemo to be with him. He prayed and when he was too weak Filemo continued and Afore then died. The missionary were very glad, for when he arrived at Afore's house, there was no sound of crying, although Afore had just left his loved ones. This is what he had meant by Christian tradition. Afore left a message: 'In a crisis, do not ask your heathen brothers for advice, ask the *guru* and the missionary'.⁴³² A similar occasion took place in Sogae'adu. A former *ere* was the first to be baptized in his village. Missionary Momeyer destroyed all his *adu* and when he died, he was buried with a Christian service.⁴³³

From these examples it becomes evident that the missionaries' attitude towards the burial *adat* had become less tolerant and it also shows their effort to replace the *adat* ceremonies with Christian ceremonies, or to be more precise, with ceremonies that were in accordance with European traditions. This attitude became typical in the areas where Christianity had taken root and developed. We can compare this attitude with the attitude of the missionaries on Sumba. After Christianity had taken root and grown in Sumba, the missionaries began to strictly forbid *adat* elements which were not seen as Christian. For instance, the beating of a gong when somebody had died in order to notify the others, was prohibited, because it was connected to the Marapu belief.⁴³⁴ A rigorous implementation of discipline was also carried out in Nias after Christianity experienced a rapid growth.

6.4.4.3 Prohibitions Regarding *Adat* Traditions Surrounding Death

The attitude of the missionaries towards the *adat* surrounding death was similar to their attitude towards other *adat* traditions. After Christianity had become dominant, the missionaries issued prohibitions concerning *adat* traditions that were classified as 'the old laws'. One of the elements of the burial *adat*, not liked by the missionaries because of its strong links to the primal religion, was *fangasi*.⁴³⁵ According to the missionaries, the tradition of *fangasi* carried with it the danger of Christian Ono Niha remembering and possibly being influenced to return to the belief in the spirits of the ancestors. The costs of a feast such as *fangasi* were quite high and could impoverish the family left behind. Because of this, in 1917, through a conference of *satua Niha Keriso*, a decree was issued forbidding *fangasi*.⁴³⁶ In order for the decree to be heeded, those who had attended the conference were to set an example. The *satua Niha Keriso* who practiced *fangasi* were fired from their positions. There was a suggestion for all churches to have a Christian cemetery and to employ guards for this cemetery if necessary. This suggestion was influenced by European traditions.

⁴³² *Ibid.* p. 28.

⁴³³ *BRM*, 1900, pp. 327-328.

⁴³⁴ F.D. Wellem, *Injil dan Marapu*, 2004, p. 341.

⁴³⁵ Ono Niha believe that if *fangasi* is not carried out, the spirits of the ancestors will be angered and they will come to strangle the family members who are still alive and may also cause bad luck in the field of work/business. *Fangasi* was carried out to declare that no one else wanted to die and that pigs would be sacrificed to die instead of humans. One of the aims of *Fangasi* was also to honour the dead, to show that who died was not a bird, but a human being.

⁴³⁶ *Toeria*, 4/12 (1917). The other decrees included the prohibition of *famoto* (genital incision) and *fangöhözi* (dental filing) for all Christians.

The prohibition against conducting *fangasi* was followed by teachings from the missionaries that were spread through the *guru* and the indigenous ministers as well as published in the monthly magazine *Toeria*. The topic was 'the heathen tradition in the traditions surrounding death'. Here the *guru* and the indigenous ministers explained the *adat* traditions that were carried out before death (*fangotome'ö*) and at the time of death (*fangai eheha* for the noblemen), as well as ceremonies during the funeral (*fangasi*) and four days after the funeral (*fanibo tufo* and *fangai mökömökö*). All these activities were considered 'old law' and had to be left behind because they were not in accordance with Christian teachings. These ceremonies could be replaced by Christian services.⁴³⁷

The Christian Ono Niha often questioned the resurrection of the dead as well. Because of this, *Guru* Filemo and *Guru* Talini wrote an article on the resurrection of the dead, which was published in *Toeria*.⁴³⁸ In this article, three things were underlined, namely:

1. The resurrection: Christians should not fear death because there is resurrection. The power of Jesus Christ's resurrection resurrects the people who believe (Rm 8:1; Phil 3:21; 1 Cor 15:25), because Christ is the owner of life who has called the dead to eternal life (Jn 5:21).⁴³⁹
2. The resurrection of the body: the teaching that the resurrection of the body is the resurrection to a new body, a perfect, unblemished body. The new body does not die (1 Cor 15:42, 49; Lk 20:35), it possesses strength and honour; it is a body of the spirit, like the body of Jesus when he showed himself to his disciples after his resurrection. People who do not believe will also be resurrected, but they will receive a body without strength and honour (Dan 12:2). One's behaviour during life will be revealed at the resurrection.⁴⁴⁰
3. The End of Time. They explained that Jesus has promised to return (Jn 3:3), but nobody knows when this will be (Mk 13:32). The Bible contains writings about the signs that will mark Christ's coming in Matthew 24:29-31, Lk 21:9, 2 Thessalonians 2:3, and Revelations 20-22. Finally, the two *gurus* wrote: 'Therefore, my beloved, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord, because you know that in the Lord your labour is not in vain' (1 Cor 15:58). This article on the resurrection was a product of the missionaries' teachings in the seminaries, which had become a great comfort for the members of the congregations.

⁴³⁷ *Toeria*, 8/1 (1921), pp. 3-4; *Toeria*, 10/6-7 (1923); *Toeria*, 11/6 (1924); *Toeria*, 11/7-8 (1924), pp. 25-26, 30.

⁴³⁸ *Toeria*, 6/2 (1919).

⁴³⁹ How can a man who was burned to death be resurrected? What if he was swallowed by a wild beast? We have to believe that man is different from God. God is the Almighty, 'for he spoke and it came to be' (Ps 33:9). The Lord can create a body and give life to man. In this world, human beings do not understand the eternal things, but later (faced with God) they will understand (Jn 13:7).

⁴⁴⁰ Filemo and Talini explained that based on the teachings of the elders on Nias, later, at the Last Judgment, there will be a path called 'bawa gawuwukha mböröwa' with a bridge made of iron that is red and sharp and only as broad as a hair strand. Evil people will not be able to pass this hair-thin bridge. For instance, a thief will not be able to pass because his body will be beset with the things he stole: pigs, chickens, rice, coconuts and all that is not his. It will be hung from all parts of his body, his shoulders, head, back, etc. This story, probably influenced by Islam, is in accordance with what is written in the Bible, that '... they will come out - those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation' (Jn 5:29).

6.4.4.4 Response of the Ono Niha

Even without *adu* and *ere*, the Ono Niha still carried out *adat* ceremonies surrounding death, like *fangotome'ö* (giving food to someone who is dying), *fange'esi* (crying for the dead), *fangasi* (feast after the funeral), and *fanibo tufo* (disposing of the mattress and belongings of the deceased). The one thing that had been abandoned was *fangai mökömökö* in connection to the making of the *adu*. Other elements were still practiced. As was said before, the roles of the *ere* and *adu* were taken over by the servants of the church who led the prayer and the service. Although there had been prohibitions issued in the conference of the *satua Niha Keriso*, it was very difficult for the Ono Niha to abandon the *adat* ceremonies surrounding death, especially *fangasi*. Because of this, the missionaries, supported by the teacher-preachers and the indigenous ministers, made a set of rules or church discipline (*amakhoita*). In the first *amakhoita* of 1923, there were two rules concerning the *adat* death ceremonies, namely: 1. When someone died, it was to be reported to a servant of the church. If they did not report the deceased's death, those involved would have to receive obligatory guidance for three months. 2. *Fangasi* and *fangai mökömökö* are forbidden. Those who disobey will be excluded from the church.⁴⁴¹ This attitude was continued after the church was constituted in 1936. In the *amakhoita*⁴⁴² it was firmly said that Christians were not allowed to worship the spirits of the ancestors; *fangasi* and *fanibo tufo* were forbidden, as well as attending a worship ceremony of non-Christians. Those who disregarded the *amakhoita* faced punishment in the form of guidance, not being allowed to receive the sacraments, and possible expulsion from the church.

On the Batu Islands, the attitude of the DLM-missionaries was similar to the attitude of the RM-missionaries on Nias. They firmly prohibited the making of *adu* and the worshiping of the spirits of the ancestors. Crying audibly was not allowed at funerals. The missionaries also introduced Christian cemeteries in 1931 and agreed to have grave-cleanings at Easter. The Christians were encouraged to do this in remembrance of the eternal life, although, understandably, they were not allowed to make offerings to the spirits of the deceased. Those who disobeyed this were sanctioned and not allowed to have a Christian burial when they died.⁴⁴³ What is interesting about the Batu Islands is that the family of the deceased received financial help from the church, five guilders when an adult died, two-and-a-half guilders when a child died. Besides that, a special collection was held in each church.⁴⁴⁴ The approach taken by Missionary Schröder was to help each family in need and to encourage the unity of the congregation. There was also an effort made to encourage more participation from the members of the congregations in financing the church. The help given in time of death was connected to the settling of duties that were determined in the congregation.

Once again, *fangasi*, *fanibo tufo* and other elements of the *adat* were forbidden in the *amakhoita*. The Christians found it very difficult to follow these laws, so that many were excluded from the church. This resulted in an agreement during the

⁴⁴¹ Cf. *Amakhoita Sogoena ba Mbanoea Niha Keriso ba Dano Nias*, 1923, pp. 6-8.

⁴⁴² Cf. *Amakhoita ba mbanoea Niha Keriso si faoedoe ba Daroma Li Lowalangi, nihonogöi mbanua Niha Keriso Protestan ba danö Nias (Heb 9:1)*, 1939.

⁴⁴³ *Amakhoita Niha Sarani ba Hole Batoe: Nihonogöi ba gorahua sebua*, 29 December 1931, in: *Toeria Hoelo Batoe*, 4/5 (1932).

⁴⁴⁴ *Toeria Hoelo Batoe*, 4/2 (1932). Cf. Ch. 5.4.1.

second synod meeting in 1937 in which they reviewed and reassessed all the *adat* traditions in connection with Christianity. This task was undertaken by three groups working together, *adat* leaders, church ministers, and delegates of the Dutch colonial government. The *adat* leaders that were chosen to discuss the *adat* traditions were Ama Wirö, Josefo, Adolf, Ama Wele, Tuhe'ö, Faonaso, and Waöndrö. The results of their study were handed in to the missionaries to be discussed at the ministers' meeting in April 1938 and later on at the synod board meeting.⁴⁴⁵ The results of those discussions were not investigated fully before the beginning of World War II.

After World War II, the BNKP once again struggled with the question of *adat* surrounding death. The problem was that the Ono Niha continued to practice *fangasi* and *fanibo tufo*, although it had been prohibited during the mission era. This matter was discussed again during the synod meeting of the BNKP in 1960. There were people who advocated the prohibition of elements of the *adat* that were seen as elements of the traditional laws, namely *fangasi* and *fanibo tufo*. This opinion came from delegates from rural areas who were backed by the RM-missionaries.⁴⁴⁶ But this prohibition against *fangasi* and *fanibo tufo* was firmly opposed by the delegates from Gunungsitoli. According to Jürgen Kosack, the background regarding this opinion of the Gunungsitoli delegates was the nationalist influence. At that time in Indonesia, a process of educating the people regarding the importance of cultural values based on the *Pancasila* was taking place.⁴⁴⁷ The delegates from Gunungsitoli, most of whom had received higher education, were of the opinion that every nation must guard its traditions to enrich the national culture. In order to ensure the Christians would not return to their primal religions, these *adat* traditions needed to be enlightened with the Word of God. One of the measures that were taken in Gunungsitoli was that the term *fangasi* was replaced with the term *fame'e ö zohalöwö* (feeding of the workers) and the term *fanibo tufo* into *fananö bunga* (planting of flowers). The time of *fame'e ö zohalöwö* was switched from after the burial to the time of *fananö bunga*.⁴⁴⁸

The difference in opinion that occurred during the synod meeting of 1960 could not be overcome, because neither party would compromise. So the discussion was postponed until the synod meeting in the next year. At the BNKP synod meeting of 1961, the synod leaders mentioned in their report that the *adat* traditions surrounding death, including all practices of worshipping the spirits of the dead and praying to the spirits of the ancestors, were not in accordance with the Christian faith. It was in contradiction to the Christian faith to place the belongings of the deceased in the grave, as well as to feed the spirits of the dead in or outside the house. The feeding of the workers (*fame'e ö zohalöwö*) was also not in accordance with the Christian faith because essentially, it was a celebration honouring the dead, especially if carried out on the fourth day.⁴⁴⁹ This decision was not accepted by a number of delegates, especially by those from Gunungsitoli. Because of this the synod leaders left the matter open and welcomed discussion.

⁴⁴⁵ *Toeria*, 25/1 (1938).

⁴⁴⁶ Cf. J. Kosack, interview with the author on 8 June 2002 in Wuppertal. Cf. Soekarno, *Dari Proklamasi sampai Takari*, 1965, pp. 484-621.

⁴⁴⁷ Cf. J. Kosack, interview with the author on 8 June 2002 in Wuppertal. Cf. Ch. 5.8.7.

⁴⁴⁸ Ama Watörö Lase, 'Waöwaö wa'aniha Keriso ba Danö Niha (Nias) barö zi otu fache wa'ara, wanuriaigö Turia Somuso Dödö', in: F.D. Harefa and R. Heering (eds.), *Waöwaö Duria Somuso Dödö ba Danö Niha*, 1971, p. 67.

⁴⁴⁹ *Laporan Pengurus Besar pada persidangan Sinode tahun 1961*.

After struggling with the problem for a long time, at the synod meeting of 1965 two things were decided upon: 1. It was declared that it was against the Christian faith to worship spirits of the ancestors and because of this, it was forbidden for the members of the BNKP to undertake *adat* rituals whose purpose was worshipping the spirits of the ancestors, for instance *wame'e ba zi no mate ngawalö gamagamara* (giving things to the dead), *wangaröfi li töi mbekhu zi no mate* (praying to the spirits of the ancestors) or *fame'e gö mbekhu zi no mate* (feeding the spirits of the dead). 2. It is a good thing to plant flowers on the grave, as long as it is not tied to the fourth day, so that Christians will not fall back into the old beliefs.⁴⁵⁰ With this phrase, it was possible to carry out *fananö bunga*.⁴⁵¹ Later on, this phrasing was changed again into 'prayer of thanks and intercession' because God has helped the family during the funeral and is asked to continue to bless the family left behind.

From this entire process of Christianity's encounter with the *adat* traditions of death, it can be seen that the Ono Niha were still steadfast in carrying out their *adat* ceremonies passed on from generation to generation. Although they were undergoing changes of roles played, symbols and terms to name them, the spirit of the ceremonies was still alive. The *amakhoita* did not eliminate the *adat*, although the *adu* were successfully removed. This matter is still vivid in the daily lives of the Niasan Christians today. This becomes evident from the answers given in the survey conducted on the question whether Niasan Christians still believe in and worship the spirits of the ancestors. Of the sixty ministers who answered the question, 34 answered that many still do, 21 said that few still do and only five said that none still do.⁴⁵² From this data it can be seen that many Christian people on Nias still worship the spirits of the ancestors. This is not only the case on Nias. Suh Sung Min's⁴⁵³ investigation in the areas of Minahasa, Sumba, Batak and Korea show that until this day, although these areas have received the Gospel, the worshipping of the ancestors still continues. Because of this, Suh Sung Min proposes that the church undertakes an effort of contextualization.

6.5 CHRISTIANITY AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT

6.5.1 Society

Initially, the primary concern of the RM was to convert individual 'heathen'. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, however, impassioned by the Great Commission (Mt 18:19-20, Rom 11:25ff) and Warneck's vision of the 'Christianization of Nations', the goal was adjusted towards building indigenous churches.⁴⁵⁴

Throughout the process of developing church institutions, the missionaries had to struggle with the societal and the institutional systems of the Ono Niha. Often this

⁴⁵⁰ Decision of the twenty-seventh synod assembly of the BNKP, Ombölata, 29 April 1965. Cf. W. Gulö, *Benih yang Tumbuh XIII*, 1983, p. 207.

⁴⁵¹ Ama Watörö Lase, 'Waöwaö wa'aniha Keriso ba Danö Niha (Nias) barö zi out fache wa'ara, wanuriaigö Turia Somuso Dödö', in: F.D. Harefa and R. Heering (eds.), *Waöwaö Duria Somuso Dödö ba Danö Niha*, 1971, p. 67.

⁴⁵² Cf. T. Telaumbanua and U. Hummel, 'Inquiry', 2000.

⁴⁵³ Suh Sung Min, *Injil dan Penyembahan Nenek Moyang*, 2001, pp. 275-317.

⁴⁵⁴ Cf. Ch. 4.4.1; cf. J.S. Aritonang, *Sejarah Pendidikan Kristen*, 1988, pp. 115-117.

led to the dilemma, how to established churches without destroying the local traditions. Customary laws and structures were very much an integral part of the religious system of the local people. Therefore, the missionaries tried to separate religiosity from the *adat* and to abolish all those traditions which they considered not being in accord with Christianity.

In a previous section of this chapter, the author already dealt with the encounter between the *adat* and Christianity in the life cycle of the Ono Niha; this part focuses on the interaction between Christianity and the societal system and the different roles played by the chiefs and the common people in the whole mission work until the church was established on Nias and the Batu Islands. The author will also explore the struggle of the missionaries and the Niasan churches with the indigenous law and, finally, the author will discuss the church order.

6.5.1.1 The *Salawa* and the Commoners in Mission and Church

The missionaries knew that the society was grouped around the *banua* (village) which was led by a chief who in North Nias was known as *salawa* and in South Nias as *balö zi'ulu*. These *salawa* and *balö zi'ulu* had a big influence on the life of the *banua*. They were the guardians of tradition and customary law. Schreiner calls them 'the customary law itself'.⁴⁵⁵ Knowing this, some missionaries began their work by approaching the *salawa* or *balö zi'ulu*. This strategy was very effective since most commoners eagerly followed their chiefs.⁴⁵⁶

Once the people were converted and had received baptism, the missionaries instructed some church elders or *satua gosali* (later they were called *satua Niha Keriso*) to assist them in nurturing the new believers. Initially, these *satua gosali* came mostly from the noblemen who had turned to Christianity.⁴⁵⁷ However, during the Great Awakening, the missionaries became more selective. They would not only consider the *salawa* or *si'ulu*, but also commoners because of their spirituality and education.⁴⁵⁸

In terms of education, the missionaries made no difference between children who came from noble or from ordinary families. Everyone got the same opportunity to enter school. So when they were selecting people to be trained as *guru* or *sinenge*, they would not limit this only to the *salawa's* children, but rather consider the candidates' character and talents. This practice brought a big change in the societal system. Formerly, the Ono Niha believed that common people could not become leaders because they did not have *eheha* (spirit) or *lakhömi* (glory) – the two qualities that were possessed by children who came from a noble family.⁴⁵⁹ We may compare this with other missions such as the Dutch Missionary Society (NZG) in Poso, where the missionaries gave priority to raising indigenous children. The latter were carefully selected because, after they had received instruction and training,

⁴⁵⁵ Cf. L. Schreiner, *Adat dan Injil*, 1996, p. 43.

⁴⁵⁶ *BRM*, 1899, p. 193.

⁴⁵⁷ Cf. T.D. Telaumbanua, 'Persoalannya: Self Governing', in: D.P. Lase (ed.), 'Menuju Gereja yang Mandiri', 2005, pp. 72-81.

⁴⁵⁸ Ama Watörö Lase, 'Waöwaö wa'aniha Keriso ba Danö Niha (Nias) barö zi' otu fache wa'ara, wanuriaigö Turia Somuso Dödö', in: F.D. Harefa and R. Heering (eds.), *Waöwaö Duria Somuso Dödö ba Danö Niha*, 1971, p. 65.

⁴⁵⁹ P. Suzuki, *The Religious System and Culture of Nias, Indonesia*, 1959, pp. 37-39.

they would be sent out as native missionaries to work on other NZG mission fields in Central Sulawesi.⁴⁶⁰

On Nias and the Batu Islands, to be sent to the teachers' training school surely promoted the candidate's social status. Once they finished their training they would become teachers and leaders, as well as assistants to the missionaries in spreading the Gospel. They would be appointed to work in other villages under the missionaries' supervision and in their own villages they were well respected.⁴⁶¹

In everyday life in a congregation, however, teachers who originated from among the common people had less influence than the chief. The *salawa* would take the first row in the pews. If possible, they had to sit around the pulpit. All decisions had to be approved by the *salawa*. Their great influence in society often played a decisive role in the whole evangelistic enterprise. Even after the BNKP had been established, the *salawa* continued having a big influence in the church. They were called *satua Niha Keriso penghormatan* (honorary elder), which means they were not constrained by a specific task or area of service.⁴⁶²

In the first church order of 1936, the BNKP limited the influence of the chiefs.⁴⁶³ They were not members of the church council. The chiefs had to be invited to attend church council meetings, which usually was the case since the council would often seek their advice.⁴⁶⁴

After the schisms in the BNKP (AMIN in 1946 and ONKP in 1952), the second church order of 1955 clearly stated that the role of the chiefs was to act as advisors or consultants, and also as peacemakers in resolving conflicts in the church. So they would be invited to attend all the conferences on the level of the local congregation, the church circuit, and the synod.⁴⁶⁵

The role of the chiefs in the history of mission on Nias and the Batu Islands was a positive one, as long as they obeyed the church policy. The commoners would follow their chief and everything be in good order. In case, however, the *salawa* or *balö zi'ulu* decided not to follow the line determined by the church council or the synod, this inevitably led to a schism in the church.

6.5.1.2 Societal System and Church Discipline

The Ono Niha had a set of civil laws which was known as *fondrakö* or *famatö harimao*. This set of laws functioned as the foundation for all the customary laws. The *salawa* and the elders had a very important role in the making and implementation of the customary laws or *adat*. The *adat* regulated all the local traditions at every step in the cycle of life of an individual, work ethics, governmental system, inheritance, leadership, and also morals.⁴⁶⁶ *Fondrakö Ono*

⁴⁶⁰ J. Kruyt, *Kabar Keselamatan di Poso*, 1977, pp. 266-271.

⁴⁶¹ Ibid. This was different in Poso. A *guru* left his school because he was not respected in his village. The reason for this was that he originated from the social stratum of the slave, even though slavery had already been abolished decades ago.

⁴⁶² Cf. B. Larosa, 'BNKP tidak mau Memupuk Otonomi Banua', in: D.P. Lase (ed.), 'Menuju Gereja yang Mandiri', 2005, p. 20.

⁴⁶³ Cf. Ch. 5.2.2.1.

⁴⁶⁴ See also 'Lala Nihonogöi (Atoeran) ba Mbanoea Niha Keriso', 1938 (Arsip BNKP).

⁴⁶⁵ 'Aturan dalam Banua Niha Keriso Protestan (BNKP-Gereja Kristen Protestan) di Nias Termasuk yang Ada di Daerah Luar Nias', pasal 9, I-III (Arsip BNKP).

⁴⁶⁶ *Toeria*, 24/1 (1937).

Niha thus functioned as local law regulating the life of the *banua* or *öri*. It listed all the duties and penalties of the law.

Tensions arose when the Ono Niha began entering the new era of the encounter with Christianity. Christian religion challenged the customs and traditions which were very much an integral part of society. This new religion determined what they could continue to practice and what practices they should discard. Mostly this came down to the demand that 'the old laws should be discarded because they were no longer useful' (*huku fōna nirōi furi, lö moguna ö*).

Initially, the Ono Niha tried to adjust their religion and customary laws which had been passed down from generation to generation, by means of the *fondrakö* or *famatö harimao*. For example, in 1912, Barani Dakhi from Hilisimaetanö wanted to celebrate the *famatö harimao* and *famadaya saembu* ceremonies to reform the religion and the customary law in South Nias, as the decisive step towards embracing Christianity. This ceremony, also known as *börö nadu*, was held once every seven years for penitence and reconciliation.⁴⁶⁷ A tiger statue (*harimao*), symbolizing the caste of the *si'ulu*, was thrown over the Sumali Gomo waterfalls of the Gomo River. This would bring blessings and ensure good harvests.⁴⁶⁸ Barani Dakhi, however, wanted to introduce Christianity and its laws through this ceremony. He also intended to announce himself, the *balö zi'ulu*, as the servant of God who was equal to the white people.⁴⁶⁹ The chief's plan, however, failed terribly as the Dutch Colonial government refused to give him permission to hold this ceremony.

The refusal caused a great disappointment among the Ono Niha who were so ready to change their belief to Christianity. Somehow it seemed that both the government and the missionaries were not so keen to accept them into their community of faith. Becker observed that the prohibition of the *börö nadu* (which is equivalent in essence to *famatö harimao*) had hurt Barani Dakhi and the whole people of South Nias deeply and had caused a paralyzing 'religious vacuum'.⁴⁷⁰ It also illustrates that the Western missionaries were blindly insensitive towards using the local culture for planting the Gospel in the hearts of the Ono Niha, because these practices were strongly rooted in the primal religion. These missionaries reckoned that by not using local practices, the new believers would have a purer faith so that later there would be no apostasy.

This approach was applied even more radically during the Great Awakening. The missionaries refused to administer mass baptism because they wanted to know that people were truly converted. Therefore, they required all who applied for baptism to take catechism classes. This does not mean that the missionaries were unaware of the necessity that the 'indigenous church' needed a communal character. But, since they built their theology of salvation on a strongly individualistic eschatology, they had no other choice. The missionaries did not possess a theological paradigm necessary to understand and appreciate the religious system of the Ono Niha and to discover the point of contact between the sacrificial act of Jesus Christ

⁴⁶⁷ The Ono Niha count the years as *döfi fakhe* (rice years). Therefore, one Niasan year was equivalent to six months of the Western calendar.

⁴⁶⁸ J.M. Hämmerle, *Ritus Patung Harimau*, 1996, pp. 5-42. Cf. B. Laia, 'Sendi-sendi Masyarakat Nias', in: *Peninjau* 1/1975, pp. 13-15.

⁴⁶⁹ Cf. W. Smith, *Das unbeeendete Gespräch*, 1967, pp. 28-29.

⁴⁷⁰ Cf. D. Becker, '„Sie werfen Satans Bande und ihre Götzen fort?“, in: R. Riess (ed.), *Abschied von der Schuld?*, 1996, p. 194. Cf. Ch. 4.6.4.2 and Ch. 4.6.5.1.

on the Cross and the reconciliatory significance of *börö nadu* or *famatö harimao* of the primal religion.⁴⁷¹

The same was the case with *fondrakö*. The pre-Christian Ono Niha were already familiar with the principles of 'blessing and curse'. They knew that by observing *fondrakö* there would be peace and harmony in the cosmos. Fries⁴⁷² mentioned that every time after a conference of missionaries or of the *satua Niha Keriso*, people would ask about the *amakhoita si bohou* (the new Christian law). They thought these conferences were similar to the *fondrakö* of old, since many Christians still lived under the influence of the primal religion. To them salvation and happiness were obtained through faithfulness and obedience to the rules and regulations (*amakhoita*). Naturally, they began to take the Gospel as a set of rules. They were confused about the different meaning of 'Gospel' and the 'law' (*Torah*) in the Bible. Many of them would naturally be attracted to the 'law' as the substitute of the rules and regulations in their *adat*. Whereas the missionaries would prefer for them to receive salvation under the light of the Gospel. Kruyt mentioned that this happened because the people understood that obedience to rules and regulations would lead to salvation, whereas disobedience leads to death.⁴⁷³

In matters concerning church discipline, the pattern of the *amakhoita* developed by the missionaries resembled the legal side of the *fondrakö*. However, the *amakhoita* which was issued by the conferences of missionaries and the elders was not as popular as the *adat* constituted by the *fondrakö*. According to Fries, the reason was that the *amakhoita* of the church was not authorised by the *salawa* and *tuhenöri*.⁴⁷⁴ As a result, there was a dichotomy between religion (i.e., Christianity) and the societal system (i.e., *adat*). In matters concerning the *adat*, the Ono Niha would continue to follow the *salawa hada* (the *adat* of the chiefs) and the *salawa fareta* (the governance of the chiefs). In order to overcome this dichotomy, the Ono Niha would have had to accept the *amakhoita* of the church as a complete substitute to the *adat* of the chiefs. For this, however, the mission and church would have had to seriously debate the inclusion of the concept of *fondrakö* in the development of church discipline.

6.5.1.3 Societal System and Church Growth

As mentioned above, the chief functioned as the gate to enter the village community. Knowingly or unknowingly, missionaries would make use of the local societal system in their evangelistic approach and in managing the church. They would choose a *banua* to serve as a station. Then they would group together a number of *banua*, similar to an *öri*. But, whereas traditionally the *banua* was the centre and the *öri* functioned only as an loose association of *banua*, the ecclesiastical system built by the missionaries was organised the other way around: the station (and later the church circuit) would serve as the centre of activities to which the branch congregations were subordinate. The missionary (and later the *pandita resor* or *pandita distrik*) assumed the leadership on the level of the station or circuit,

⁴⁷¹ D. Becker, '„Sie werfen Satans Bande und ihre Götzen fort?“, in: R. Riess (ed.), *Abschied von der Schuld?*, 1996, p. 198.

⁴⁷² *Toeria*, 5/10 (1918).

⁴⁷³ Cf. A.C. Kruyt, *Keluar dari Agama Suku masuk ke Agama Kristen*, 1976, pp. 132-150.

⁴⁷⁴ *Toeria*, 5/10-11 (1918).

overseeing the *guru*, *sinenge* or *pandita* in the local congregations, which were grouped around the centre.⁴⁷⁵

Another fundamental change was that (at least in the beginning) there would be only one place of worship (*osali*), i.e., school or church building, to serve a number of *banua*. This indeed was new to the Ono Niha because in their understanding, every *banua* should have its own *osali*, just as it had its own *fondrakö* and *ere* for the religious ceremonies. The positive thing about this change was that especially during the missionary-led period (until 1940), a harmonious relationship could grow among the different *banua* and wars and conflicts be diminished.⁴⁷⁶

Later, towards the end of the Great Awakening, the missionaries began to prepare the Niasan church for independence from the European missionary societies. Together with some distinguished *Ono Niha Keriso* they drew up a church order which was ratified by the first synod assembly in 1936.⁴⁷⁷ The result was that all congregations on Nias were united under one name: the *Banua Niha Keriso Protestan* or BNKP.

The birth of BNKP indeed was a breakthrough. There had been no single organization before which had united all the Ono Niha on Nias. For hundreds (perhaps thousands) of years, all *banua* had been independent. Through cross-*banua* marriages *öri* had developed, but there were no ties of dependency or fixed hierarchies amongst the *banua* in an *öri*. Sometimes, there would even be wars between the *banua* in one and the same *öri*. The BNKP, however, did not take over this system. Unlike the *banua*, congregations were not granted any autonomy. The congregations were subordinate to circuits, which could be sub-divided into districts. On top of the pyramid was the synod, which again was led by the so called *toea satoea*, who, until 1940, was a missionary and then a Niasan *pandita*.⁴⁷⁸ The church order stated: 'the leader of the synod is the head of the Protestant Christian Church on Nias (*Toea Satoea, si no Högö Mbanoea Niha Keriso Protestant ba Danö Nias*).'⁴⁷⁹ Ultimately, all authority was thus in the hands of the *toea satoea* or *ephorus*. This hierarchical system was not in line with the traditional structures of Niasan society.

Responding to this, *Tuhenöri Sida'o*, speaking on behalf of all the chiefs from all over Nias, said that the organization of the BNKP was like a grown-up youth, but it would not stand firmly without a strong foundation, which were its congregations and church circuits. Later, *Tuhenöri Sida'o* also said that the church needed a sense of belonging and loving one another to nurture this unity lest the BNKP fall into ruins.⁴⁸⁰

What had been said by *Tuhenöri Sida'o* sounds like a prophecy, as the BNKP was later plagued by divisions. In 1946, AMIN was born in the *öri* of Idanoi on the

⁴⁷⁵ Cf. L. Gulö, 'Kepemimpinan Berada di Tangan Mereka', in: D.P. Lase (ed.), 'Menuju Gereja yang Mandiri', 2005, p. 7.

⁴⁷⁶ Cf. T.D. Telaumbanua, 'Pessoalannya: Self Governing', in: D.P. Lase (ed.), 'Menuju Gereja yang Mandiri', 2005, p. 73. T.D. Telaumbanua gives the following example: a Christian village called Hiligara which belongs to the clan (*mado*) of the Telaumbanua always had conflicts with their neighbours from the village of Tanöse'ö. After Christianity had entered this region, the two villages formed a peace alliance.

⁴⁷⁷ Cf. Ch. 5.2.1 and Ch. 5.3.

⁴⁷⁸ *Lala Nihonogöi (Atoeran) ba Mbanoea Niha Keriso*, Pasal 5, bagian I-III.

⁴⁷⁹ *Lala Nihonogöi (Atoeran) ba Mbanoea Niha Keriso*, Pasal 5, bagian IV, ayat 3 d.

⁴⁸⁰ *Toeria*, 23/12 (1936).

East Coast and in 1952 the ONKP was founded in the *öri* of Lahömi in West Nias.⁴⁸¹ One cause of the split certainly was that the church was led by law rather than love⁴⁸², resulting in the abuse of power.⁴⁸³ But further observation reveals that the root of the problem was the organizational system. The much ridged, all-embracing hierarchical structure of the BNKP and the paternalistic culture of leadership left no leeway for local initiative and was – and to a certain extent still is – downright frustrating to the Ono Niha who like their local freedom.⁴⁸⁴

Another reason for the schisms was that the BNKP was in a difficult position during World War II. The top leaders delegated the leadership to the local congregations and asked them to be financially self-supportive. They only needed to submit regular reports to their circuits and to the synod. This state was supposed to be temporary. But, once the Republic of Indonesia acquired independence in 1945, the central leadership of the BNKP again began to govern the church according to the church order of 1936. Therefore, even though the traditional culture would have favoured a Congregationalist model, the BNKP developed into an authoritarian, almost Episcopalian church.

Some places just could not adapt to this ‘foreign’ structure of the church and therefore formed their own, independent synods. The *tuhenöri* of Idanoi, Adolf Gea, one of the founders of AMIN said:⁴⁸⁵

We do not feel guilty to build a new religion (church) in *öri* Idanoi, because we do not split from the BNKP. We only want to have a closer fellowship with the people from the same region, especially those who live in *öri* Idanoi. We still stand on the doctrinal basis of the BNKP. Our purpose is to preserve *öri* Idanoi without having to involve other *öri*.

This shows that the Ono Niha who founded AMIN had been motivated by the autonomous spirit which was an integral part of the societal system of Nias. The same ideas can be found in the history of ONKP. There, the leaders also wanted a closer fellowship with the believers in *öri* Lahömi. According to Fat. Daeli, a descendant of one of the founders of the ONKP, there were four reasons that gave birth to the ONKP:

1. The *ephorus* of the BNKP, who was known to be an authoritarian person, refused to retire from his leadership even though he was very ill and incapable of good leadership.
2. During World War II, despite the decision that all the ministers had to serve in their own *banua*, the BNKP did not send the *pandita* originating from West Nias back to their respective villages, thus causing great suffering both on the side of the *pandita* and the congregations.
3. The BNKP did not include ministers from West Nias in the leadership of church circuits;
4. The congregations in West Nias were not being served properly as the synod board appointed some unqualified elders to become ‘assistant ministers’.

⁴⁸¹ Cf. Ch. 5.7.5 and Ch. 5.9.4. W. Gulö, *Benih yang Tumbuh XIII*, 1983, p. 24. Cf. ‘Notulen Rapat Synode ONKP, di gereja Ombölata Lahusa, Öri Lahömi, 13-16 May 1953’.

⁴⁸² Cf. W. Lempp, *Benih yang Tumbuh XII*, 1976, p. 18.

⁴⁸³ Cf. Th. van den End and J. Weitjens, *Ragi Carita II*, 2002, p. 216.

⁴⁸⁴ Cf. W. Lempp, *Benih yang Tumbuh XII*, 1976, p. 22.

⁴⁸⁵ Helumanö Ndraha, ‘Fabalisa ba BNKP (Fa’awösa, AMIN, ONKP)’, typed script (Arsip BNKP).

Nevertheless, the ONKP continued to maintain the liturgy and teachings of the BNKP. The only change they made was in the leadership system. While the BNKP, in a somewhat Episcopalian manner was headed by an *ephorus* (bishop), the ONKP initially chose the title 'president' for their leader.⁴⁸⁶

Despite the church schisms, there was no attempt to change the church structure in the revision of the BNKP church order in 1955. According to Baziduhu Larosa⁴⁸⁷, the BNKP actually knew very well the influence of the societal system on the church life. But, the BNKP refused to apply this system of the banua because it feared that the spirit of autonomy would tear apart the body of the church with Jesus Christ as its Head. With such a standpoint, the BNKP failed to prevent conflicts and splits within the church, including internal splits in the congregations as can be seen from the table below:⁴⁸⁸

| Year | Number of Congregations | Number of Members |
|------|-------------------------|-------------------|
| 1956 | 278 | 178104 |
| 1959 | 290 | 185137 |
| 1960 | 325 | 199304 |
| 1964 | 345 | 217627 |

These data show that within eight years there were 76 new congregations, not born out of church growth but out of splits. The only exemption was the merger with the BKP on the Batu Islands in 1960. During the BNKP synod assembly in 1960, the sixteen congregations of the BKP with its 7800 members became a church circuit of the BNKP.⁴⁸⁹

During the synod conference in 1961, the BNKP *ephorus* reported that there had been schisms within the church because of population growth, 'heathen traditions', and the insubordination of some previous *salawa* who held powerful positions in the church.⁴⁹⁰ Furthermore, many of the BNKP members also moved to other churches such as Roman Catholics, Pentecostals, Bethel, AMIN, ONKP, and AFY.

The description above shows that the traditional societal system of the Ono Niha played an important role in determining the progress of developing the institutions of the Protestant churches on Nias. It proves that a church which ignores the societal system eventually might have to deal with tensions that lead to division within the church's body. It is therefore necessary that churches on Nias evaluate their church-systems. If they want to have an effective mission and to build a dynamic organization, they need to base this on both a theological (i.e., biblical) foundation and a sociological analysis.

⁴⁸⁶ F. Daeli, 'Hana wa lö La'oguna'ö ndra Fandrita Khöda?', in: D.P. Lase (ed.), 'Menuju Gereja yang Mandiri', 2005, pp. 28-29.

⁴⁸⁷ Cf. B. Larosa, 'BNKP Tidak Mau Memupuk Otonomi Banua', in: *Menuju Gereja Yang Mandiri*, 2005, p. 26.

⁴⁸⁸ This is taken from the following sources: 1. 'Laporan Pengurus Besar BNKP pada Rapat Synode 1956'; 2. 'Laporan Pengurus Besar BNKP pada Rapat Synode 1960'; 3. 'Laporan Pengurus Besar BNKP pada Rapat Synode 1961'; 4. 'Laporan Pengurus Besar BNKP pada Rapat Synode 1964'; 5. W. Gulö, *Benih yang Tumbuh XIII*, 1984, p. 136.

⁴⁸⁹ Cf. Ch. 5.7.3. Cf. W. Zandroto, 'Sejarah Masuknya Injil di Pulau-pulau Batu', 1989, pp. 7, 11-12. (Arsip BNKP).

⁴⁹⁰ 'Ephorus BNKP, Laporan Rapat Synode BNKP Nias, 23-27 August 1961' (typed script, RMG).

6.5.2 Economics

When the missionaries of the RM and the DLM began their service on Nias and the Batu Islands, the people lived in poverty and were far from modern life. Villages were isolated from the outside world. The people were constantly threatened by *emali* (robbers, kidnappers, and head-hunters). They had a very simple way of living. Slavery and money lending with high interests were the common practice during that time. Faced with this reality of life, the missionaries intended to help modernize the islands and to lift the people's lives to a higher level of 'civilization'. At first, the missionaries attempted to do this through different kinds of social activities. They distributed clothes to the local people and tried to improve their economic life by developing the agricultural system and by introducing a better money lending system. They built many schools and provided a better health care system. They also cooperated with the colonial government in building up the infrastructure. However, they tried not to get involved in political matters. Therefore, the missionaries did not develop theological principles for political life on Nias and the Batu Islands.

To understand the role of Christianity in the economic and political life among the Ono Niha, the author will discuss the missionaries' and local ministers' views on the traditional economic system of Nias.

6.5.2.1 Separation of Religious Life from the Activities of Daily Living

Religion was a very integral part of the Ono Niha, touching even the way they made their living. The people believed that rice, pigs, boars and the fish in the sea were owned by the gods.⁴⁹¹ They would sacrifice to show respect to those gods. They hoped their gods would bless their work and would protect them from evil spirits. The sacrifices were given through the *adu* while performing the *famoni* (taboo) and before starting important activities, such as planting, hunting, etc. (*famaigi ba'wa dalu mbanua*).⁴⁹²

Initially, the new believers were not allowed to worship *adu* at all. But there was no mention of *famoni* and *famaigi ba'wa dalu mbanua*. Missionaries tried to replace these rituals with some Christian practices from the traditions of the churches in Germany. Before Christianity came, the ritual for sowing and harvesting would be performed collectively by the whole village led by an *ere* and coordinated by some *salawa*. These rituals were known as *owasa wanaru* (sowing) and *owasa wamasi* (harvesting). As the Ono Niha were converted to Christianity, they were asked to pray together in the church during Sunday worship. Everyone was asked to bring some seeds and grain from their fields for the service. Later, this practice was extended to people from other professions. They were asked to bring their livestock, handicrafts or money. During the service, they would offer a prayer of petition to ask for God's blessings upon the seed, which would be sown, and a prayer of thanksgiving for God's blessing on their work.

⁴⁹¹ E.g., the Ono Niha believed that the rice was owned by Sibaya Wakhe, boars were owned by Sobawi, wild animals were owned by the *bela*, and the fish was owned by Tuha Zangaröfa.

⁴⁹² Cf. Ch. 2.6.

The missionaries also taught the people to pray individually before they started their work. They printed some prayers in the hymnal (*buku zinunö*), both for planting and harvesting. The prayer of petition for planting or sowing was as follows:⁴⁹³

Dear God, there is no *adu* like before, and there is no other source of blessing. We only believe in You and we believe that You are the only source of everything, who will bless everything. We pray that You will bless these seeds so that we can have food from our farms. In Jesus' name, Amen.

There was also a prayer of thanksgiving to be used during harvest. This prayer expressed the people's gratefulness for Lowalangi's blessings, so that people would not be obsessed by their possessions, and so that Lowalangi would bless and provide for their needs throughout the year (until the next harvest).⁴⁹⁴ The new believers gladly accepted these prayers. In the past they would put their trust in *adu* but now they had something better and higher, namely Lowalangi, the Creator of heaven and earth who would constantly bless them.

After banishing the rituals for the *adu*, the missionaries began to abolish the taboo practices and stopped the people from practicing astrology, in which they looked for the 'proper timing' before they started to work. But, they did not introduce anything new to replace these two practices. Therefore, it was difficult for the people to move from those ancient practices even though in 1915 the church required every candidate for baptism to leave the *famoni* and all the practices and beliefs of their primal religion.⁴⁹⁵ The church also instructed all the local workers who had been trained in the seminary to fight against *famoni* and the use of astrology for planting and harvesting because these practices were not in harmony with the Christian faith, and belonged to 'the residue of the old tradition' (*sitoröi huku föna*) that ought to be discarded. They built their teaching upon Genesis 12:1-3, Abraham's response to God's call to leave everything, to leave his country and his father's home and his relatives to move to the promised land. Based on this biblical story, the Bible teachers taught the new converts to leave the old law and to follow only the law of Lowalangi, like Abraham.⁴⁹⁶ The other passage was Galatians 4:9-11 which speaks against worship of the spirits of the world and the observation of certain days. They began to introduce these teachings during the elders' meetings in the mission station so that these elders could teach their church members.⁴⁹⁷

Although the Western missionaries and the local workers tried to teach the Ono Niha that *famoni* and *famaigi bawä dalu mbanua* were heathen practices, they would still practice them during planting and harvesting. Therefore, when the church was institutionalised, the founders included some statements to abolish these two practices in the *amakhoita*.⁴⁹⁸ These statements were reaffirmed again in the revised

⁴⁹³ Anonymous, *Soera Zinoe ba Niha, Niassisches Gesang-Buchlein*, 1905.

⁴⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹⁵ *Toeria*, 2/7 (1915), p. 28.

⁴⁹⁶ *Toeria*, 2/10 (1915), p. 36. Cf. A. Schneider, *Folawa hoekoe niha baero ba gamaboe'oela li si föföna*, 1947, p. 5.

⁴⁹⁷ *Toeria*, 11/8-9 (1924), pp. 25-26, 30. Cf. A. Lück, *Katechismus Luther*, 1934, p. 16.

⁴⁹⁸ BNKP, 'Amakhoita ba mbanoea Niha Keriso si faoedoe ba Daroma Li Lowalangi, nihonogöi mbanua Niha Keriso Protestan ba danö Nias (Heberai'o 9:1)', 1939

amakhoita of 1961.⁴⁹⁹ But the *amakhoita* could not stop people from practising *famoni* and *famaigi baŵa dalu mbanua*, especially in the villages.

The same thing happened in the area of hunting. The Western missionaries forbade people to perform any ritual to *adu* in order to ask the god (*bela*) of the forest to give them the animals in the forest. In this case, too, they did not introduce any Christian practices to replace this ritual; consequently, the people kept this practice alive. It only stopped in 1906 when the Dutch colonial powers instructed the people to kill boars to ease their growth in population. To follow these instructions they worked either individually or as a group.⁵⁰⁰ Those who did not kill boars would be punished. People killed the boars out of duty, in a forced time frame, and so the ritual to the *adu* became unnecessary. However, this practice was revived again after the Dutch left.

The explanation above shows that the Western missionaries had two approaches towards local practices. They replaced the indigenous practices with some Christian practices from their homeland, such as the *owasa wanaru* and *owasa wamasi*. This approach was helpful, as the Ono Niha did not feel the loss of the religious practice so keenly. But people found it difficult to leave traditional rituals that had no Christian practices to substitute for them. Although they did not worship the *adu*, they would continue to worship *bela* for hunting. The church also could not stop people from practicing the *famoni* and *famaigi baŵa narö mbanua* although it had been forbidden in the *amakhoita*.

6.5.2.2 Use of Local Human Resources

Denninger used the analogy of the poor man, Lazarus, in Luke 16:20-21 to describe the poverty and the backwardness of the Niasan people.⁵⁰¹ Denninger was moved with compassion for the Ono Niha, first because they did not know Christ yet and secondly because they were so poor and uncivilized. He asked the RM to send more missionaries to bring the Good News to Nias.

An important part of the RM-missionaries' service was to bring socio-economic development to the people they served. Each missionary was instructed to bring some benefits to the local people, through transfer of skills or knowledge. But, whereas the missionary had to build relationships with the leaders of the society, he had to avoid anything that would slow down the propagation of the Gospel, for instance getting involved in business with local people or getting involved in tribal wars. The primary missionary task was to build a people of God (His Kingdom) among the heathen. Therefore, it was considered imperative to educate the people, especially the candidates for baptism.⁵⁰²

On the Batu Islands, the DLM-missionaries took a similar approach.⁵⁰³ Their aims were to lead the heathen out of darkness, poverty and backwardness. To help overcome poverty, they put a stop to slavery and the money lending business, and established a system of education and health care.

⁴⁹⁹ 'Keputusan persidangan Sinode tahun 1961, Amakhoita pasal 12' (Arsip BNKP).

⁵⁰⁰ Guru Jonata, 'Rodi', in: A. Pieper (ed.), *Realienboek*, 1928, pp. 44-48.

⁵⁰¹ Cf. G. Menzel, *Denninger*, translated by B. Chr. Hulu (Arsip BNKP).

⁵⁰² Cf. Jan S. Aritonang, *Sejarah Pendidikan Kristen di Tanah Batak*, 1988, pp. 130-131.

⁵⁰³ *BRM*, 1872, p. 168-169.

Training Program

The Western missionaries believed that the causes of poverty were the tribal wars, isolation, the expensive traditional weddings, the *owasa*, and other practices that required sacrifices to the *adu*. The missionaries tried to raise the people's awareness so that they would discard those practices. They also trained the new Christians to love one another in their daily lives. The new converts were taught to help one another and not to cheat or bully other people because such behaviour was not pleasing to God.

They also encouraged the Ono Niha to work hard in agriculture to gain a better income. Kramer helped the farmers to improve their agricultural skills. He gave them pitch forks and hoes, and helped them to build irrigation systems and to use buffalo to plow their rice fields.⁵⁰⁴

They also trained the people in writing. The magazine of the mission, *Toeria*, provided some tips and explanations on how to grow rubber, coffee and a variety of crops.⁵⁰⁵ They also taught agricultural knowledge and skills in school. They provided sufficient textbooks for the students to learn farming and rising of cattle.⁵⁰⁶

Liberation

One of the efforts that enabled the missionaries to win people for Christ was the abolition of slavery. The main cause of poverty was the money lending system. The nobles would lend money to the commoners with high interest. During the conference for the *gurus* and *salawa* in 1898, when talking about social problems, money lending became one of the hot issues. The conference agreed to lower the interest charge (*kefe so'ono*) amongst the Christians from 100% to 25%.⁵⁰⁷ Apart from this, missionaries also introduced the Western banking system to protect the poor from borrowing money with high interest.⁵⁰⁸ People were encouraged to save and to borrow money from the bank with lower interest.

Some nobles and rich people who used to lend money to the poor with high interest began to challenge the missionaries. In response, the missionaries tried to use a personal approach to teach these rich people the law of Love in the Christian life. One of the practices of the law of love was to stop charging people a high interest.

Slavery was completely banished after World War II; it had been also partially banned by the Dutch colonial government. But the practice of money lending with high interest remained and the church did not have a clear stipulation regarding this.

Another cause of poverty was the expensive dowry. The BNKP tried to lower the price of the dowry. They stipulated what the standard dowry for Christian marriages should be. But most people did not support this stipulation and people continued to practice the expensive dowry system.

⁵⁰⁴ *BRM*, 1875, p. 115.

⁵⁰⁵ Cf. *Toeria*, 1915-1924.

⁵⁰⁶ A. Pieper, *Realienboek*, 1923, pp. 9, 15-16, 19-21, 33-37, 40-42, 63-67, 90-92, 132-134, 139-147. Cf. A. Pieper, *Soera Wombaso ba Ndraono Seboea (Kelas V-VI)*, 1920, pp. 1-3, 8-9, 11-19, 22-23, 25-26, 66-68, 80-81, 94-96, 116-118.

⁵⁰⁷ *BRM*, 1899, p. 106.

⁵⁰⁸ Th. van den End and J. Weitjens, *Ragi Carita II*, 2002, p. 212.

Empowerment through Education

In the beginning of the mission work in the Nias Island, the local people were not interested in the formal school system. This was partly because they were skeptical of the missionaries. But when they saw the progress of some youths who had been to school, they began to pay attention to the school.⁵⁰⁹ In this way, the school became a very important tool for evangelism.⁵¹⁰

People came to school not only because the missionaries would give them gifts such as clothes, medicine, money and tobacco, but because they began to understand the difference between the formal school and their traditional ways of educating the young. The Ono Niha did not have a formal school system. They also did not have a written script for their language yet. To them, the formal education system was imported. For the Ono Niha, the training of youth was done by parents and through the socio-cultural structure. This conventional training, where the aim was to replicate the next generation, was informal and monotone. The children were trained to replace their parents, to maintain family values and traditions. Parents were responsible to train their sons to become adults and eventually have their own families. As for girls, they were future homemakers so they were trained to work on the farm, to be able to make all kinds of handicraft and also to do the house chores.⁵¹¹ The schools, on the other hand, would teach the youth Christian values, a disciplined life, reading, writing, singing, and other general knowledge.⁵¹²

Education played a very important role in propagating the Gospel to Niasan society. Eventually education also became one of the ways for people to gain social status. In the traditional system, social status could be acquired through certain customary ceremonies known as *owasa*. In the past only certain nobles could afford to have such ceremonies. But now, with education, anyone had an opportunity to increase his or her social status.⁵¹³ This was also one of the reasons why many *salawa* invited the Western missionaries to start schools in their villages. They hoped that through education their children would become respected persons in society.⁵¹⁴ Education soon became a powerful instrument to spread the Gospel. It also played a very important role in building up the local people and at the same time in helping people begin to leave their ancient beliefs and practices. The missionaries taught that the traditional religion was pagan and should be discarded.⁵¹⁵

Nevertheless, in Nias, the Western missionaries and the Dutch colonial government only provided education on a primary level. It was not until the 1930s that they started a school that used the Malay language as its medium.⁵¹⁶ W. Gulö records the conditions of the schools in 1941 as follows: There are 126 mission

⁵⁰⁹ Cf. Ch. 4.3.5.2; 4.4.6.2; 4.5.5; 4.7.4; 5.2.6; 5.4.6.

⁵¹⁰ Cf. W. Gulö, *Benih yang Tumbuh XIII*, 1983, p. 18.

⁵¹¹ Cf. W. Gulö, 'Sejarah pendidikan di Nias', in: *Laporan Seminar Lokakarya Peranan Gereja-gereja di Nias dalam Pembangunan Masyarakat Nias, di Gunungsitoli, Nias, 27 s/d 31 Oktober 2001*, 2001, p. 72.

⁵¹² Cf. U. Hummel, *Sirihpruim en Kruis*, 2002, pp. 24-41.

⁵¹³ *BRM*, 1886, p. 147.

⁵¹⁴ Cf. A. Schneider, *Turia: 100 Jahre Dienst am Evangelium auf Nias*, 1965, p. 20.

⁵¹⁵ A. Pieper, *Realienboek*, 1928. Cf. A. Pieper, *Soera Wombaso ba Ndraono Seboea (Kelas V-VI)*, 1920. Cf. A. Pieper, *Paedagogiek*. (Supplement: F. Methodiek 'Halowo ba mbanoea Niha Keriso', 1923. Cf. A. Lück, *Katechismus Luther*, 1934.

⁵¹⁶ R. Wagner, *Die Mission auf Nias*, 1915, pp. 72-74. Cf. J. Danandjaja, 'Ono Niha: Penduduk Pulau Nias', 1976, p. 112.

schools for standard I - III, and 3 schools for standard IV - V and there is only one Meisjesvervolgsschool. There are 162 teachers who were trained in the Omböлата Seminary and the Depok Seminary. There are three public schools for standard I - III, two for standard IV - V and the total number of teachers for these schools is 16.⁵¹⁷ Compare to those in the Nias Island, the schools in Batakland grew faster and better. In the end of the nineteenth century besides primary schools, there were also some technical schools for girls, schools for carpentry, and also schools for training church elders and some seminaries.⁵¹⁸ In the dawn of the twentieth century schools were mushrooming in Batakland. The Batak had different kinds of primary schools such as Normal Primary, Girls Primary, and Primary school for children from the noble families, and schools with Dutch as its medium. Later there were also technical schools for the secondary level such as Theological Seminaries, Industrial Schools, Nursing and Midwife Schools, Agricultural Schools, and Schools for embroidery. The Dutch colonial government also started other schools: *Hollandsch-Inlandsche School* (HIS), *Meer Uitgebreid Lager Onderwijs* (MULO), and a few *Schakelschool*.⁵¹⁹ The increase and growth in the numbers and kinds of schools resulted in growth in many areas of life in Batakland, not only in spiritual matters but also in the social-economic, political, cultural areas, etc.⁵²⁰

During the World War, the schools were not functioning except for some training schools for Bible Teachers and Ministers to meet the needs of the church. The mission schools were taken over by the Japanese and later by the Republic of Indonesia. But when the BNKP and the RM renewed their relationship in the 1950s, the BNKP was eager to build new schools, such as Junior and Senior High Schools, Kindergartens, Primary Schools, and technical schools.

Empowerment through Health Care Service

As mentioned earlier⁵²¹, health care service was a powerful tool for reaching out to the Ono Niha. The missionaries were often challenged by the *ere* - the medicine men. The Western missionaries helped the people to overcome the various epidemics with prayers and Western medicines.

During the conference from 7 to 10 February 1905 in Omböлата, the Western missionaries mentioned that health care service was not only for evangelism but also helpful in people building. They began to see the need to have medical doctors on the team.⁵²² In 1912, they built some clinics in Sifaoro'asi, Lölöwua, Gunungsitoli and Teluk Dalam. They also sent some young people for medical training to Pearaja Tarutung and at the same time requested the RM to send some doctors to Nias.⁵²³ Through the health care service they were able to save many lives from epidemics and lead them to Jesus Christ. In return, the Ono Niha were required to leave their *adu*.⁵²⁴

⁵¹⁷ Cf. W. Gulö, 'Sejarah pendidikan di Nias', in: *Laporan Seminar Lokakarya Peranan Gereja-gereja di Nias*, 2001, p. 144.

⁵¹⁸ Jan S. Aritonang, *Sejarah Pendidikan Kristen di Tanah Batak*, 1988, pp. 163-187.

⁵¹⁹ *Ibid.* pp. 216-363.

⁵²⁰ *Ibid.* pp. 381-414.

⁵²¹ Cf. Ch. 4.3.5.1; 4.4.6.1; 4.5.4; 4.7.3; 5.2.5; 5.4.5.

⁵²² RMG 2.778.

⁵²³ E. Fries, *Amuata Hoelo Nono Niha*, 1919, p. 166.

⁵²⁴ Ama Watörö, 'Waöwaö Duria Somuso Dödö', in: F.D. Harefa and R. Heering (eds.), *Waöwaö Duria Somuso Dödö ba Danö Niha*, 1971, p. 72.

The same thing also took place in the Batu Islands. Frickenschmidt started to build a hospital, supported by some Dutch and German friends of the mission and by the church members on Tello Island. Initially, it was the missionaries who helped the people but gradually they trained the local people to take over the work. Besides improving their physical health, this medical service also benefited the local people spiritually; as they were healed they also believed that they had been delivered from by a demon possession.⁵²⁵

These hospitals and clinics worked smoothly. After World War II the medical services were taken over by the Indonesian government. The problem was that the service was not as good as before. Those who went to be treated would only be given prescriptions and they had to obtain their medicines from the drug stores run by Chinese.⁵²⁶ The local people requested that the church take over the ownership of the hospitals and polyclinics but, due to lack of human resources and financial inability, the church was unable to fulfill the people's expectations and hopes.

Before World War II, there was a hospital jointly built by the Western missionaries and the Dutch Colonial government in Gunungsitoli. It was run by the Japanese and eventually by the Indonesian government. After World War II and the German missionaries' return to Nias, some of them were doctors, namely Dr. M.G.Th Thomsen and his wife.⁵²⁷ Besides working for the BNKP, they also helped the Public Health Care Service in Gunungsitoli. They played an important role especially when the country was going through a financial crisis and could not provide health care services for the local people.⁵²⁸ The church was not only concerned about the internal problems of the church, but also about the welfare of society at large.

In 1962, the BNKP worked together with *Brot für die Welt* to build a hospital in Hilisimaetanö, which they named *Rumah Sakit Lukas*.⁵²⁹ This hospital had 200 beds. The doctors were sent by the government as well as provided by the BNKP. The RM also continued to send medical doctors to work at Luke Hospital. At first *Brot für die Welt* expected that the RM would help the BNKP in terms of human and financial resources for 25 years until the local church could stand on its own.⁵³⁰ But the RM could not keep this agreement and in the 1970s the church handed over Luke Hospital to the government and it has become a Public Health Clinic.

The health care service saved many lives from deadly diseases but it also helped abolish the practice of the *ere* (medicine men), and replaced it with hospital service. However the Ono Niha did not completely discard their old practices and beliefs. They would pray to God the Creator yet they would also consult the 'shaman' and also request the health service.

Building of the Infrastructure

The missionaries contributed towards a more modern infrastructure on Nias by building some roads between villages. Some missionaries, such as Sundermann, Thomas, Lett and Krum, employed the local people to build these roads.⁵³¹ This

⁵²⁵ *EVB*, 17/1 (1899) p. 4.

⁵²⁶ G.O. Reitz, 'A Report of the Church in the Batu Islands', 1959, p. 11.

⁵²⁷ Cf. Ch. 5.5.6.

⁵²⁸ J. Danandjaja, 'Ono Niha: Penduduk Pulau Nias', 1976, p. 113.

⁵²⁹ 'Laporan Rapat Synode BNKP Nias, tahun 1963' (Arsip BNKP).

⁵³⁰ W. Gulö, *Benih yang Tumbuh XIII*, 1983, pp. 154-155.

⁵³¹ Ama Watörö, "Waöwaö Wa'aniha Keriso" p. 3.

helped significantly to overcome isolation and to support the penetration of the Gospel into the remoter parts of Nias.

The efforts to build up the infrastructure on Nias increased when the Dutch colonial power required all the people to participate in the forced-labour system (*rodi*). The missionaries helped to encourage the people to use this opportunity to make more roads, rice fields and to grow some industrial plants as instructed by the Dutch. The missionaries could foresee that building more roads would improve the communication between villages. But several years after the introduction of forced labour and taxes (*belasting*), although the communication with other villages had increased, the people faced extreme poverty. The reason for this was that due to work on the roads, they did not have much time left to do their own work and produce enough to earn the money they needed to live and to pay their taxes.⁵³²

After World War II, the missionaries did not do much to build the infrastructure. From 1940 to 1955, the BNKP was busy with internal problems - lack of church workers, the challenge from the *fangesa solaya*, etc. There was also the issue of the church schisms (AMIN and ONKP). But when they were related again with the RM (and its later successor, the UEM), the church gradually began to increase its diaconal services. It helped many abandoned children, built schools, and improved the quality of transportation from Nias to the surrounding islands.⁵³³ The naval means of transport opened the opportunity for a considerable number of Ono Niha to become traders or develop small business, a good way of overcoming poverty.

6.5.3 Politics

6.5.3.1 Prohibition on Political Activities during Colonial Times

In Nias and the Batu Islands missionaries had to deal with the Dutch colonial power which occupied the islands. As mentioned earlier⁵³⁴, the western missionaries had a very good relationship with the Dutch colonial government. They seemingly supported each other directly or indirectly. In the early twentieth century, the colonial government enforced a strong social security system. Whereas this challenged the authority of the leaders of the *banua* and *öri*, it also motivated many of them to seek a new identity by turning to Christianity.

In relating to the Dutch colonial powers, the Western missionaries were persuasive and would avoid any direct confrontation. For instance, when the Dutch instructed the local people to move from the mountains to the roadways, which they built through *rodi*, the Western missionaries tried to use a personal approach to persuade the Dutch to change their mind. The local people already lived in poverty and did not have resources neither to move to new places nor build new houses. Moreover they already spent most of their time working on the *rodi* to build roadways and did not make enough income for themselves. Looking at such a situation, the *ephorus*, Eduard Fries, went to see the assistant-*resident*, Meyer, and

⁵³² *BRM*, 1915, pp. 147, 164.

⁵³³ On the occasion of the BNKP Jubilee (1965), the Church of the Rheinland donated a ship to the BNKP.

⁵³⁴ Cf. Ch. 4.4.7.2.

carefully explained to him the effects of forcing people to move down from the mountains (old villages) to the roadways.⁵³⁵

The Western missionaries normally would support the colonial government and would be very careful in bringing up any suggestions or giving input because the Dutch had helped them to improve education in the Nias Island. On the other hand, because of the state-religion political system in Europe, there was mutual understanding between the government and the missionaries.⁵³⁶ This can be seen clearly from Rabeneck's⁵³⁷ exposition on Romans 13. He required the missionaries to submit to the authorities. This was partly because the Dutch would support them in providing education and health care service for the local people. Rabeneck also mentioned that although missionaries might be critical about some Dutch officers who did not support their mission work, they should use a pastoral approach in relating with them. In the administration of law and justice, missionaries should not interfere too much. They should always provide information for the Niasan people in dealing with lawsuits. If needed, they could make appeals to the government to review their case. In dealing with rude and unjust officers, they should not confront them in public but it should be done in private and in a quiet manner. This was a Kingdom value and was useful for the growth of Christianity on Nias.

In the 1920s, the relationship between the Dutch missionaries on the Batu Islands and the colonial power was also excellent. Schröder and Steinhart demanded of the Ono Niha to praise the Dutch monarch. The mission magazine, *Toeria Hoelo Batoe*, recorded an adoration poem to Queen Wilhelmina:⁵³⁸

Wilhelmina lives in Holland
She also reigns in our island
We have no doubt about this
Because she is also a Christian
The Spirit of Jesus guides her
We have confidence in her
Because our queen also believes in Jesus
She reigns with wisdom
If only we follow what she says
That's what Queen Wilhelmina wants.

This poem shows that the Western missionaries not only tried to promote the Dutch colonial government, but also tried to pacify the local people and persuade them to be content with their situation as a colonized nation; because 'our queen' is also a Christian who believes in Jesus.

During the nationalist movement in the 1920s, the Western missionaries stopped teaching people about how to relate faith and politics. In a missionary conference that took place from 19-25 July 1921, in his speech, 'The Effect of the Nationalist Movement in Nias', H. Fischer⁵³⁹ mentions that the *Insulinde* party already existed on Nias, especially in Gunungsitoli, Biouti, Hinako, Hilimaziaya,

⁵³⁵ *Toeria*, 3/2 (1916), p. 6.

⁵³⁶ Cf. Th. van den End and J. Weitjens, *Ragi Carita II*, 2002, p. 39.

⁵³⁷ H. Rabeneck, 'Stellung der Missionare zur Kolonialregierung und ihre Beamten', 1900-1923 (RMG 2.784).

⁵³⁸ *Toeria Hoelo Batoe*, 4/8 (1932).

⁵³⁹ H. Fischer, 'Die Sozialpolitische Volksbewegung in Niederländisch Indien und ihr Einfluss auf Unsere Niassischen Christen', RMG 2.784 (1900-1923).

and Sogae'adu. There was also a communist party, which was against *Insulinde*. There was also *Sarekat Islam* that had strong influences and the Great Aceh Movement amongst the Aceh people who lived in Nias. There were no rebels per se during that time but some conflicts began to erupt in some parts in the Islam region and the interior of Nias.

What did the missionaries do in handling this situation? Fischer, supported by other missionaries, forbade the Niasan Christians to join any political parties except *Christelijke Ethische Partij*.⁵⁴⁰ When a Christian joined a political party, missionaries would persuade them to quit and if needed they would use church discipline.

After the birth of the BNKP, the Western missionaries properly registered the BNKP, in 1938, in order for it to be recognized as a religious institution. After Indonesian independence, the BNKP was also registered as a religious institution (Nr. 38, 14 December 1948 Nr. 1857/18/AK/48). This was concrete evidence of the desire of the Protestant Christians to be submissive to the authorities.

The BNKP continued to have the same outlook regarding political issues as the Western missionaries. The church did not allow its church members to get involved in political matters, especially with the revolutionary movement. Under native people leadership, the church itself had nothing to do at all with politics. When the RM withdrew its missionaries, it accepted the Dutch missionaries sent by the Batak-Nias-Mission (BNM) just the same.⁵⁴¹ There was no talk about independence for Indonesia per se, within the church. The church also never taught its members how to deal with political issues. They only focused on the ministries that had been started by the missionaries.

Even though some young people in Nias were influenced by the Japanese propaganda that taught the slogan 'Asia for the Asians', they did not base their activities on church teachings but were just mindlessly following the nationalist movement of that time. When some Dutch missionaries were taken as prisoners of war by the Japanese, the BNKP assigned some people to protect these BNM-missionaries by guarding their hiding places.⁵⁴² This did not last too long because eventually the Japanese soldiers found out these places.

The church was powerless in the face of the Japanese oppression. The Japanese authorities imposed forced labor on the Ono Niha. They were forced to grow *padi* (rice) and to raise cattle for the soldiers. The church buildings were used as the Japanese headquarters. Sometimes the church would not protect its members or pastors because it was powerless in dealing with the Japanese soldiers. When the Japanese soldiers accused *Pandita* Singamböwö Zebua of not giving them rice from the harvest in Ombölata, the church leader transferred *Pandita* Singamböwö Zebua to Lahusa, Masio.⁵⁴³

6.5.3.2 Participation in Politics after Indonesian Independence

During World War II, the BNKP could only focus on its internal affairs. It tried to have regular worship services and did not take part in the struggle towards independence. Since the islands surrounding Nias were so isolated, the people there

⁵⁴⁰ Cf. Ch. 2.7.3 and Ch. 5.5.2.

⁵⁴¹ Cf. W. Gulö, *Benih yang Tumbuh XIII*, 1983, p. 21; cf. Ch. 5.5.2.

⁵⁴² *Turia Röfa*, 1970, pp. 4-5.

⁵⁴³ W. Gulö, *Benih yang Tumbuh XIII*, 1983, p. 24.; cf. Ch. 5.5.2.

did not hear the news about the independence of the Republic of Indonesia until 6 October 1945. In the administrative centres, such as Gunungsitoli, however, some of the Ono Niha who graduated from mission schools (some from HIS and MULO in Sumatra and some pastors) were involved in the local government of Nias. They were influenced by the spirit of independence that was proclaimed by Soekarno and Mohammad Hatta. They did not, however, necessarily link their political views to their Christian faith.

After independence, the young country was going through a revolutionary period. The BNKP was free from any political affairs. But some church members joined the effort to fight for independence. There were BNKP pastors who were involved deeply in the struggle and became civil servants. They were *Pandita* Ros Telaumbanua (the regent of Nias) and *Pandita* Nehemia Harefa (the head of Religious Affairs). Some BNKP members also joined political parties such as *Parkindo*. They did not, however, act as the BNKP's representatives, but on behalf of their organization and the government.⁵⁴⁴

The descriptions above show that the BNKP had not involved itself in political affairs and they also did not teach their church members to understand the political revolution of that time from the Christian faith. Nevertheless there were some church members and church workers involved in the political movement. This non-involvement of BNKP in politics was the theological stand of the church inherited from German pietism. And this was actually the stand of most churches in Indonesia in those days that refused any political involvement. Tahi B. Simatupang, an expert on Indonesian church history of the twentieth century, on observing the period of political revolution during the early years of independence, did not find any attempts to reflect on the situation theologically. There was no one who tried to develop a theology of war and the political revolution. Young people just followed the movement of the time. The nationalist movement motivated them.⁵⁴⁵

After independence, a branch of the Indonesian Christian Party (*Parkindo*) was opened in Nias. Most of the officials of the *Parkindo* were active members of the BNKP, supported by the synod board. The BNKP leaders allowed *Parkindo* to hold its meetings in church buildings.⁵⁴⁶ Some of the BNKP's members and ministers had a strong awareness of their civil duty to participate in the life of the nation. This was reflected in a speech held by *Pandita* A. Maru'ao's⁵⁴⁷ during the inauguration of the *Parkindo* branch in Gunungsitoli in 1953, where he mentioned that it was the grace of God that granted political freedom for Indonesia. He encouraged the church members who were involved in political parties to be responsible according to their faith in Jesus Christ.

The BNKP also allowed *Parkindo* to distribute the minutes and results of its meetings to all the BNKP's pastors and teacher-preachers (*sinenge*). From the director of the Nias branch of *Parkindo*, there was a letter dated 11 April 1954, approved by the *ephorus* of the BNKP, in which *Parkindo* encouraged all the congregations of the

⁵⁴⁴ N. Gea, 'BNKP Tidak Pernah Melibatkan Diri dalam Politik Praktis', in: D.P. Lase, 'Menuju Gereja yang Mandiri', 2005, pp. 61-62.

⁵⁴⁵ T.B. Simatupang, *Kehadiran Kristen dalam Perang, Revolusi dan Pembangunan: Berjuang Mengamalkan Pancasila dalam Terang Iman*, 1986, p. 11.

⁵⁴⁶ Cf. 'Laporan Rapat Anggota lengkap Partai Kristen Indonesia (*Parkindo*), Tjambang Gunungsitoli-Nias, tanggal 1 September 1953' (Arsip BNKP).

⁵⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

BNKP to establish a *Parkindo* branch.⁵⁴⁸ The BNKP *ephorus* also encouraged all the church activists and members to support *Parkindo*. With this support, *Parkindo* won the General Elections in 1955 with 55 % of the votes and one of the BNKP officers became the deputy chairperson of the local parliament of the Nias Regency.⁵⁴⁹

As the church leaders became more and more involved in political life, the church members became more and more uncritical of what was going on. During the Centenary of the Mission Work in Nias, 27 September 1965, the BNKP fully supported Soekarno in his speech about *Nasakom*.⁵⁵⁰ They also sent a telex to the central government to support the *Nasakom* policy. But after the Communist coup attempt on 30 September 1965, the BNKP fired some of its officers who were involved in the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) as requested by the government.⁵⁵¹

The Sumba Christian Church (GKS) had a different stand from the BNKP. They were critical of the communist movement even before the Communist Movement's action on 30 September 1965. According to F.D. Wellem this kind of attitude was the result of the leadership of some educated people who took part in the nationalist movement. Even though the mission schools did not teach any lessons on politics, the encounter with the GKS helped to stir up their political awareness. In Sumba, awareness of the nationalist movement was influenced by political movements from outside, especially from the Timor Islands. This influence spread even more after Independence in 1945.⁵⁵² The Minahasa Evangelical Church (GMIM) was also critical of the nationalist movement. The chief leader of GMIM from 1945 to 1971 was Reverend A.Z.R. Wenas who taught his church not to take the side of a certain political party. They were also against the domination of the Communist party in the 1950s, and in 1954 the church openly announced that the Communist teachings were against the Bible.⁵⁵³ The church would not support any party which wanted total control over the life of the people or treat them like commodities.

In contrast, after 1965 some elite politicians in Nias treated BNKP as an institution that would help them gain power in Nias. They even said in order to rule Nias, one has to have power over the BNKP and to have power over BNKP one has to have control over its leaders. In brief, BNKP became the tool to acquire political power. This happened because the church did not teach its members about politics. The church also did not have any theological foundation that would help its members think about the 'Christian faith and politics'. This was partly because the church did not have any leaders who had mastered politics and theology. Consequently, no one had taught the church members the relationship between politics and church life.

⁵⁴⁸ Cf. Letter of Dewan Pimpinan Tjabang Parkindo Nias to the members of Parkindo and copy to the BNKP ministers on 11 April 1954 (Arsip BNKP).

⁵⁴⁹ W. Lempp, *Benih yang Tumbuh XII*, 1976, p. 32.

⁵⁵⁰ Cf. T.D. 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).

⁵⁵¹ W. Lempp, *Benih yang Tumbuh XII*, 1976, p. 32.

⁵⁵² F.D. Wellem, *Injil dan Marapu*, 2004, pp. 363-365.

⁵⁵³ Th. van den End and J. Weitjens, *Ragi Carita II*, 2002, p. 98.

6.6 FINAL OBSERVATIONS

The encounter between Christianity and Niasan culture from 1865-1965, as described in this chapter, was closely connected with a number of historical developments causing rapid social change, such as colonialization, Ethical Politics, the total subjugation of the sovereign chiefs, the two World Wars, the struggle for national independence, up to and including the Communist *coup d'etat* (G-30S / PKI).

The interaction between 'Cross and Adu' did not happen on equal levels. The missionaries thought of themselves as pioneers bringing 'Christian civilization', and regarded the Ono Niha as people living in the darkness of heathendom. While at the outset, they used a more persuasive approach, this changed after Christianity had, often with the support of the colonial authorities become the dominant factor in the life of their society. The missionaries of the RM and the DLM, with some rare exceptions, appeared on the scene as the destroyers of paganism and proclaimers of a Kingdom of God which had a great resemblance to European kingdoms.

The attitudes and strategies of the missionaries were influenced by their own cultural backgrounds. Van den End and Aritonang note that the work of the RM had come forth out of the Revival Movement in Germany that took place in the nineteenth century.⁵⁵⁴ The missionary enterprise was supported mainly by churches that were influenced by Pietism. The missionaries who experienced spiritual awakening paid little attention to the distinctions between their denominations back in Europe. For them, spreading the Gospel and extending God's Kingdom to the 'gentiles' was of the most importance.⁵⁵⁵ Motivated in addition by the colonialist vision of their age⁵⁵⁶, they were determined to lead the 'heathen' out of the darkness and condemnation to the light and salvation in Jesus Christ, with the automatic result of their also achieving a higher level of civilization.

Some missionaries were influenced by theories related to evolution and degeneration. Concerning the former, they believed that Western civilization was at a much higher level than were non-Western cultures, including the Indonesian ones. As a result, they used their own culture as the measure with which to judge all other cultures. The theory of degeneration holds that human beings originated from a once higher level of culture, but then progressively regressed and eventually reached a point of degeneration, such as was the case with the Ono Niha. Some missionaries used these theories to introduce certain concepts for different 'heathen' cultures, the one having fallen miserably (*diep gezonken*), the other being almost like animals (*verderlijkt*).⁵⁵⁷ The theory of evolution, on the other hand, which was adhered to by

⁵⁵⁴ Cf. Th. van den End and J. Weitjens, *Ragi Carita 2*, 2002, pp. 38-46. Cf. J.S. Aritonang, *Sejarah Pendidikan Kristen di Tanah Batak*, 1988, pp. 130-131; cf. Cf. J.S. Aritonang, *The Encounter of the Batak people with Rheinische Missions-Gesellschaft in the Field of Education*, 2000, pp. 94-95. Aritonang mentions some of the instructions given to the missionaries when they were sent out: 1. They were to use various means to contribute to or improve the life of the native people. Skills and tools could be used as a way to attract the attention of the natives, but God should not be forgotten; 2. The missionary was instructed to establish a good relationship with the local leaders and not be involved in any kind of activities that could hinder the process of proclaiming the Gospel, such as trading or inter-ethnic wars; 3. Their main task was to build God's Kingdom amidst the 'gentiles', and therefore it was very important that they stress education, particularly for the candidates for baptism.

⁵⁵⁵ Cf. Ch. 3.2.1 and Ch. 3.3.1.

⁵⁵⁶ Cf. F. Fabri, *Die Entstehung des Heidenthums und die Aufgabe der Heidenmission*, 1859.

⁵⁵⁷ Cf. F.C. Kamma, *Ajaib di Mata Kita*, 1981, pp. 10-14. Cf. J.W.M. Bakker, *Filsafat Kebudayaan*, 1990, pp. 57-63.

Albert C. Kruyt (who served in Poso), later influenced many missionaries from Oegstgeest. One of these was Steinhart, who had a high esteem of the culture and primal religion of the Ono Niha. He tried to adjust his mission strategy to the religiosity of the local people and slowly to lead them to a deeper understanding of Christian teachings.⁵⁵⁸

While both the Christian mission and the colonial administration expended much effort on the attempt to bring Nias and the Batu Islands up to Western standards, this caused a deep existential crisis among the Ono Niha. They in turn struggled to maintain their identity, and when (after the complete subjugation of Nias in 1908) this was no longer possible, they constructed a new Niasan identity. Whereas previously, the *adu* had been at the centre of the Niasan identity, during the Great Awakening it was replaced by the cross of Jesus Christ. The interaction between 'Adu and the Cross' on Nias and the Batu Islands can be described in four steps:

1. The strength and power of the *adu*: The history of mission among the Ono Niha has shown that as long as the colonial rule had not yet been very dominant, the chiefs, as the absolute leaders of their communities, had adhered very strongly to the primal religion. Only if they saw an advantage in the presence of a missionary in their *banua*, e.g., for acquiring Western medicine or gaining an ally against their foes, were they willing to invite him to work among them (e.g., Thomas in Teluk Dalam). As long as the missionary adapted himself to the *adat* and respected the will of the chief, the mutual relationship would be harmonious. However, neither was the chief willing to accept any demands made by the missionary, nor would he be interested in surrendering his *adu* and converting to Christianity (Ködding and Mohri in Fagulö).
2. The shaking of the power of the *adu*: In the 1890s, there was an intensification of the missionary penetration beyond the *rapatgebied*, under the protection of or in collaboration with the Dutch colonial administration. After the turn of the century, various factors caused the belief in the *adu* to be shaken at its foundations. Poverty had increased, caused by epidemics, natural disasters and heavy crime (*emali*). The greatest impact, however, came from the colonial administration and the Christian missions that applied a more comprehensive approach towards the indigenous culture. Although Ethical Politics favoured education, medical service and the development of applied *adat* law (*adatrecht*), in which the missionaries were given an important role to play, the prejudice against the indigenous culture – especially against the primal religion – and the lack of possibilities for Niasan participation in the decision-making, undermined the integrity of the Niasan cultural identity.
3. The shattering of *adu*: In addition to the extreme strain caused by taxes, *rodi*, the removal of whole village communities, the destruction of the *adat* and of such religious institutions as the *fondrakö*, as well as of such symbols as the sacred *fösi* tree, it was the disempowerment of the chiefs (*salawa*, *si'ulu* or *raja*) and the interference in the traditional system of leadership by the Dutch administration which shattered the traditional Niasan culture. The loss of absolute power by the *salawa* endangered the position of the *adu*, often causing

⁵⁵⁸ Cf. Th. van den End and J. Weijtens, *Ragi Carita II*, 2002, p. 303.

a spiritual vacuum. The missionaries and their indigenous protégés made use of this weakness of the primal religion, propagating Jesus Christ as the new bringer of peace and blessings (*howuhowu*). It was not the missionaries' intention, however, that the Gospel spark a movement of unprecedented force. Not only were the Christians revived, they also carried the faith to the remotest corners of Nias. This Great Awakening (*fangesa dödö sebua*) was as much an indigenous missionary movement as it was a spiritual revival. The missionaries watched this phenomenon from the side lines, worried that the movement would get out of hand. Their more individualistic approach did not provide for mass baptism, nor did their pietistic theology provide for a contextual expression of faith, let alone for liberation in a socio-political or economic sense.

4. The subduing of the *adu*: After Christianity had triumphed over the primal religion, in the 1930s the missionaries consolidated the Christian status quo on Nias and the Batu Islands. Their main concern now was to suppress any resurgence of the primal religion. However, under the cloak of official Christianity, the buds of the primal religion still sprouted and in times of crisis (especially during and after World War II), the *adu*-belief again emerged (e.g., *fangesa solaya*, Ama Haogö, etc). Although, by means of Christian education and church discipline, the missionaries and the indigenous church workers succeeded in subduing elements of the primal religion, they could not eradicate them completely. Except for minor groups, such as the Fa'awösa and the followers of Ama Haogö, as well as for small churches, such as the AFY and the AFG, the beliefs and ceremonies of the primal religion had no official place in the Protestant churches on Nias. Concealed behind the official teachings, however, elements of the *adu*-religion are still very much alive. The traditional *banua* structure is quite contrary to the centralistic structure of the church, superimposed by the missionaries. This is a constant cause for schisms. Furthermore, the values predominant in every-day church life are rather more traditional than biblical. The church has become the place where people strive for honour (*lakhömi*). This striving preoccupies church leaders more than does caring for the poor and needy.

These four steps clearly indicate that the interaction between Christianity and the indigenous culture had gradually brought about a significant transformation of Niasan society. The missionaries and their indigenous helpers, in close cooperation with the colonial authorities, had succeeded in destroying the primal religion in its institutional, outward form (e.g., priests, images and rituals). Clandestinely, however, under the cover of nominal Christianity (and Islam), the values, worldview, and certain shamanistic practices of the primal religion continue to play a significant role in the lives of the Ono Niha.

7 Towards a Contextual Theology for Nias and the Batu Islands

7.1 INTRODUCTION

The era of Mission and Colonialism is over. The churches of Indonesia now realize the importance of liberating themselves from theological dependency, missionary personnel and the funds of mission boards and foreign churches. At the same time they recognize that they cannot neglect ecumenical ties.⁵⁵⁹ These convictions were formulated in 1980 by the ninth general assembly of the council of churches in Indonesia in Tomohon. The general assembly was aware that the churches, which had grown inside the scaffolding of the tribal context, have to support one another to become mature and self-sufficient. The state of dependency on mission boards or foreign churches had to come to an end, once and for all. Therefore they declared:⁵⁶⁰

In the beginnings of the Indonesian churches, in the age of the missionaries, the 'bridgehead' for theology, personnel, and finances had been with the foreign churches which sent out the missionaries to Indonesia. Now, the 'bridgehead' has to be built inside Indonesia in a contextual manner, while at the same time, as an expression of the universality of the church, the relationships with the foreign churches must be maintained.

This statement makes it clear that to bring about self-sufficiency each church has to develop a theology that is both local and universal. In other words, the Indonesian 'tribal churches', including the Niasan churches, must search for their own identities by developing contextual theologies.

This search for ecclesiastical identity in post-colonial Indonesia is a complex undertaking. On the one hand, these 'tribal churches' are facing a pluralistic Indonesian society. On the other hand, they are confronted with the challenges of modernisation and globalisation. While struggling with these external problems, the 'tribal churches' also wrestle with internal tensions due to the encounter between Gospel and culture. These internal tensions are usually caused by elements of the primal religion and tribal culture that have survived inside the communion of believers. Church officials believe these elements to be the remaining dark elements of paganism, which have to be removed by the light of the Gospel. The BNKP, like other churches, has struggled with these issues throughout its history.

Herbert Schekatz, a former missionary to the BNKP, served on Nias after World War II. Reflecting on the nature of Niasan Christianity, he holds that the essence of the primal religion of the Ono Niha has never changed, and that it seems that it will never change. During the age of the first missionary encounters, the missionaries focused only on rejecting the *adu zatua*, without taking into consideration the totality of the cosmology of the Ono Niha. Because of this limited point of view, until now, the church has focused on matters relating to primal religion and the *adat*

⁵⁵⁹ PGI, *Dalam Kemantapan Kebersamaan Menapaki Dekade Penuh Harapan*, 1991, p. 142.

⁵⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

without ever solving the problems relating to them. The primal religion is rooted in the life of the Ono Niha, and it surely served its purpose of preserving life by solving problems.⁵⁶¹ According to Schekatz, the real problem is that the primal religion is concerned only about the past and not the future, while the challenges facing the Ono Niha today are about finding their way in the face of rapid change.

Schekatz' deliberations seem to be quite true if we consider the discussions inside the BNKP, reiterated year in and year out during the synod assemblies. During the fifty-second synod assembly in 2002, the synod board of the BNKP reported on the weaknesses and the challenges faced by the church, saying.⁵⁶²

1. The mental state of the members of the congregations is still dominated by the values of traditional culture which are not constructive.
2. There is the weakness of an individualistic, materialistic and consumerist mentality.
3. Capacity in the fields of church administration and finances is weak.
4. Many members of the congregations have little regard for involvement in church activities.
5. Remnants of the primal religion of Nias still exercise control over parts of the life of the congregation and its ministers. These remnants include, for example the belief in the spirits of the ancestors (*malaika zatua*), superstition (*takhayul*)⁵⁶³, primordial ties (*fabanuasa*), and the influence of dark forces or occultism (*elemu*).
6. The challenge of proselytising by some other religions which draw away members of the BNKP, as well as the separatist attitude of some members.
7. The challenges to members of the congregations who immigrate from Nias to other areas.
8. The backward agricultural system.
9. The effects of global developments.

This report indicates that the BNKP is aware of the ever-increasing complexity of the conditions and the challenges it faces. Beside the problems concerning the primal religion and the *adat* which are very much alive in the everyday life of the Ono Niha, the BNKP also faces the contemporary challenges of globalisation.

The above-mentioned weaknesses and challenges are deeply rooted in the historical experience of Niasan Christianity. Focussing on the BNKP, there has never been a time without conflict or some kind of schism. The BNKP has also been weak in its struggle to find justice and truth with the government. Instead, it has always been focused on matters concerning the *adat*, especially the problem of dowry (*böwö*), of polygamy, of resurgent paganism, etc.⁵⁶⁴ The BNKP has always been deficient in its efforts to write its own indigenous theology⁵⁶⁵, in formulating its church

⁵⁶¹ Interview with H. Schekatz on 27 June 2002 in Wuppertal.

⁵⁶² 'Himpunan Hasil Persidangan Majelis Sinode ke-52 BNKP, 2 s/d 7 Juli 2002 di Lahewa', p. 11. (Arsip BNKP).

⁵⁶³ 'When the eagles cry, a member of the village community will die; when the rainbow is close to the ground, a chief will pass away' (*na me'e moyo ma sumbila so zimate; na aso ndrumi sadogodogo ba gahé mbanua, mate zalawa*).

⁵⁶⁴ Cf. T. Telaumbanua and U. Hummel, 'Inquiry', 2000.

⁵⁶⁵ In reaction to the teachings of Ama Haogö, the BNKP banned his writings and, in 1967, excommunicated him from the BNKP. In addition, the BNKP distributed a pamphlet with the title 'Haniha Döi-Nia?' (What is His name?), which explained the Biblical teachings about God. Despite

order, in creating contextual liturgies, and in finding diaconal means of overcoming poverty. Year in and year out, from synod assembly to synod assembly, the BNKP has always focused on cultural problems. It is as if the BNKP moved around in a circle without ever having a breakthrough.

In this chapter, while not ignoring the important developments in some of the other Niasan churches, the author will focus on the BNKP's program for carrying out its calling within local, national and international contexts. As a model for Niasan Christianity, the internal and the external challenges of the BNKP will be discussed. A new paradigm for constructing a contextual theology for the BNKP will be developed.

7.2 DOING THEOLOGY IN THE NIASAN CHURCH

The former *ephorus* of the BNKP, Reverend Bazatulö Chr. Hulu, speaking about the necessary effort of the BNKP for constructing its theology in a contextual manner, said the following:⁵⁶⁶

The BNKP resembles a 'foster child' in the sense of being constantly under the care of its 'mother church' and anxiously conserving and transmitting its heritage. Even though there had been some attempts, the BNKP has never engaged in contextual theology in a systematic way.

Hulu's statement was based on the existing approach inside the BNKP. In almost all fields, such as doctrine, liturgy, church order, church discipline, and counselling, the BNKP continues its services in a pre-World War II manner. The problem with this kind of theology, as with the whole heritage of the missionary era, is that it originated in the context of the European churches.⁵⁶⁷ This theological heritage is incapable of answering the contemporary challenges of modernisation or globalisation in the pluralistic Indonesian context.

Nevertheless, as Hulu has pointed out, there have been 'some attempts' towards a contextual theology inside the BNKP, although these have not been 'systematic'. These attempts have been inspired by the theological deliberations in other churches in Asia and Africa. In particular the BNKP has been influenced by the ecumenical work of the World Council of Churches⁵⁶⁸ and the United Evangelical Mission (Barmen), and the ecumenical discussions held at the Indonesian Council / Communion of Churches (DGI / PGI). The BNKP efforts have entailed organisational reforms (church order), developments in worship (liturgies and hymnals), initiatives to overcome poverty, and discussions concerning Gospel and culture.

On the one hand, in its encounters with traditional culture, since 1965 the BNKP has followed the missionaries approach. Starting in the 1980s, there have been attempts of change. However, these followed the old paradigm and they did not

this, until the 1990s, the teachings of Ama Haogö kept on enjoying vast popularity among the Ono Niha and were often discussed in the Pastor's Conventions. Cf. 'Hasil Rapat Kerja Pendeta Jemaat Se-BNKP, tahun 1998 di Gunungsitoli' (Arsip BNKP).

⁵⁶⁶ B.C. Hulu, 'Terlalu lama menjadi piaraan', in: D.P. Lase (ed.), 'Menuju Gereja yang Mandiri', 2005, p. 1.

⁵⁶⁷ Cf. Th. van den End, *Harta Dalam Bejana*, 1982, pp. 345-355.

⁵⁶⁸ Cf. S. Coe, 'Contextualizing Theology', in: G.A. Anderson and T.F. Stransky (eds.), *Mission Trends III*, 1978, p. 20.

succeed. Only in the 1990s has there been a growing awareness of the need for a contextual theology which could stand up to the challenges of globalisation. To understand these developments more thoroughly, some of the most important deliberations and struggles inside the BNKP after 1965 have to be outlined.

7.2.1 Continuing the Old Approach

In Ch. 4 to Ch. 6 we have seen that the missionaries and their indigenous assistants could see nothing good in the primal religion of the Ono Niha. The *amakhoita* prohibited any contact with the ancestral rites. Anyone who broke this regulation was as a minimum reprimanded harshly, or more severely was excluded from receiving the sacraments. This was effectively an excommunication. Although the Ono Niha had embraced Christianity, it was very difficult for them to leave the *adat*. It was and still is part of their lives.

The BNKP continued its legalistic approach to solving the problems that arose from the traditional *adat* and contemporary popular culture. In 1980 the forty-second synod assembly on Pulau Tello, passed a formal amendment called *amakhoita BNKP*. Later it was renamed *Peraturan Penggembalaan BNKP*.⁵⁶⁹ It maintained previous commandments and prohibitions while adding a few more rules. These addressed new challenges to the BNKP, such as:

1. The teachings of Ama Haogö⁵⁷⁰ on the names of God, labeled heretical in 1967, were now prohibited for use by members of the BNKP.
2. Due to the alleged 'sheep stealing' by rival Christian churches such as the Roman Catholic Church, the Fa'awösa, Seventh-Day Adventists, Pentecostals, etc., members of the BNKP were prohibited from marrying members of these organizations⁵⁷¹
3. In addition to the traditional dark practices of the *adat* (e.g., polygamy), modern 'heathen' phenomena such as horoscopes, fortune-telling saying, and the reading of someone's palm were prohibited.

Punishment for breaking these rules was similar to that in the primal religion, i.e., being reprimanded by the *sinenge* or *pandita*, exclusion from the sacraments, withholding consecration of marriage by a minister and denial of a church burial ceremony.

There are three fundamental reasons for this legalistic approach. First, the leaders of the BNKP show great loyalty to the conservative practices and teachings of European missionaries.⁵⁷² The pre-World War II synodal regulations, the Disciplinary Code and educational books are still regarded as the authoritative standard. Secondly, a lack of trained ministries means congregations are often led by *sinenge* and *satua Niha Keriso* who cannot differentiate between the pattern of the Gospel and that of the *adat*. Finally, since the 1980s, there has been a rapid increase in the number of pastors with an Evangelical or Charismatic educational

⁵⁶⁹ 'Himpunan Peraturan BNKP', Gunungsitoli 2005, pp. 157-168 (Arsip BNKP).

⁵⁷⁰ Cf. Ch. 5.6.4.3 and Ch. 6.2.1.1.

⁵⁷¹ Cf. 'Peraturan Penggembalaan di BNKP V, 5', 1981 (Arsip BNKP).

⁵⁷² Cf. 'Laporan Rapat Pengurus Besar BNKP Nias tentang Pertemuan dengan Ds. H.F. de Kleine, Inspektur RMG dari Barmen', 21 Oktober 1954 (Arsip BNKP).

background. These emphasize sanctification and often have a legalistic and moralistic theology similar to that of the old approach.

7.2.2 Need for a New Approach

Since 1970s, the idea of contextual theology had become a regular topic on the agenda of the churches in Asia and Africa. The awareness of the need for renewal of liturgy and church order grew stronger in many of these churches. They are questioning the value of their existing Western heritage, and are considering contextual alternatives.⁵⁷³

In the Indonesian churches, this awareness was manifested in the 1980 PGI-program called 'Towards Self-Sufficiency in Theology, Personnel and Finances'.⁵⁷⁴ How did this affect the churches on Nias? As has been explained previously, the liturgy of the Niasan Protestant churches (BNKP, AMIN and ONKP) was almost an exact copy of the European 'mother churches'. This heritage was never really questioned, except for some technical matters concerning the role of the leader of the liturgy.⁵⁷⁵

As early as 1965, a team was appointed by the synod board of the BNKP to revise the *Agendre*. The synod assembly held in 1970 adopted a new *Agendre*.⁵⁷⁶ There was, however, not a single contextual amendment, not to speak of an overall acculturated approach. The new *Agendre* had the same contents, but a different structure. Whereas formerly it followed the pattern of the circle of life⁵⁷⁷ (ranging from the birth of a child to the death of a member of the church), the same contents was now arranged in three sections: Sunday services in accordance with the ecclesiastical year; forms for the celebration of the Sacraments; services which are not of a sacramental nature, such as confirmation, consecration of marriage, the order of the burial, ordination of the different ministries, orders for excommunicating those who trespassed, and receiving back into the community those who repented. From the point of view of contextualization, it has to be questioned whether this new arrangement was a theological development or a decline.

During the 1980s, the BNKP faced four new challenges in liturgical matters. The first was the problem of the liturgical language. Up until then, the liturgical language had been only in the Niasan vernacular (*Li Nono Niha*). Many young people were no longer fluent in the *Li Nono Niha* but preferred church services in *Bahasa Indonesia* (BI). As well, in the Niasan Diaspora on Sumatra and Java, many spouses of the Ono Niha, who had joined the BNKP, originated from other ethnic backgrounds. They also preferred attending church in the BI. A second problem was related to regional dialects. The church circuits of the Batu Islands and Teluk Dalam in South Nias asked for permission to use their particular dialects. A third problem came as a result

⁵⁷³ Cf. S.W. Ariarajah, *Injil dan Kebudayaan*, 1997, pp. 33-39.

⁵⁷⁴ PGI, *Dalam Kemantapan Kebersamaan Menapaki Dekade Penuh Harapan*, 1991, pp. 142-147.

⁵⁷⁵ In 1952, the synod assembly decided the following: 1. The Votum at the beginning of the Sunday service must be done as a prayer without the leader of the liturgy raising his hands; 2. The benediction is taken from either II Corinthians 13:13 or Numbers 6:24-26. Only an ordained pastor may raise his hands for the benediction. In the early 1960s, the question of pronouncing the Apostolic Creed in the different dialects and styles (i.e., spoken or sung) was discussed. Unfortunately, the BNKP synod decided that the creed should be said in a uniform way.

⁵⁷⁶ *Turia Röfa*, 4/4 (1970).

⁵⁷⁷ *Agendre Banua Niha Keriso Protestan*, 1988 (Arsip BNKP)

of the influence of charismatic groups. Members of the BNKP who had attended charismatic rallies requested that the liturgy of the BNKP be less rigid, shorter and more joyful. Finally, challenges arose due to the ecumenical movement. The national and international ecumenical bodies encouraged the development of contextual liturgies. Representatives of the BNKP, who had attended ecumenical meetings and workshops, brought home these ideas of enculturation.

Confronted with these challenges, each and every synod assembly of the BNKP since the 1980s has discussed liturgical reforms. However, the matter has never been settled satisfactorily. As of 1985, worship services conducted in BI in some towns on Nias and Pulau Tello, and of course in the Diaspora, were translations from the Niasan original and showed no signs of enculturation. There is only one standard liturgy for the regular Indonesian Sunday church service (the liturgy for the Sunday of the Trinity), which is used on every occasion, while for each Niasan Sunday church service there is a specific liturgy in accordance with the ecclesiastical year.

A very important aspect of the liturgy is praising God through music. Looking at the development of the *Soera Zinunö*, one of the two hymnals⁵⁷⁸ of the BNKP, a similar process as in the *Agendre* can be observed. The synod assembly in 1969 appointed a team to revise the hymnal. The reason for this was that some of the lyrics inherited from the European missionaries were considered clumsy and certain words could no longer be understood by the congregations. In 1972, the synod acknowledged the alterations suggested by the team. These, however, as in the case of the *Agendre*, did not touch on the contents, but only referred to linguistic adjustments. The new revised edition, titled *Buku Zinunö*⁵⁷⁹, took into account neither the artistic spirit and the musical traditions, nor the contemporary challenges of the Ono Niha. For the worship services in BI, the BNKP did not create an special hymnal, but took over the *Nyanyian Rohani Mazmur*, the *Kidung Jemaat* and (particularly for the Sunday school) the *Kidung Ceria* from other Protestant churches in Indonesia.

Awareness the need to develop the BNKP hymnal more contextually grew stronger during the 1980s. The reasons were:

1. The limited variety of hymns in the official Niasan hymnal.
2. The musical notation system was no longer understood by the younger generation. There was a demand to change this into a musical notation system in which notes are assigned numbers.
3. The influence of charismatic groups, operating all over Indonesia, including Nias and the Batu Islands, caused some members of the BNKP to criticize the rigidity of the hymns.

In 2000, the synod board of the BNKP asked the music commission of the BNKP to revise the *Buku Zinunö* to take into account the following considerations:

1. Adding the songs of the Great Awakening (*Sinunö Wangesa*).⁵⁸⁰
2. Changing the notation system to one where notes are assigned numbers.⁵⁸¹

⁵⁷⁸ The other hymnal, the Batunese *Soere Nainö*, was not revised, but, in 1996, reprinted under the title of *Buku Nainö* in its original form and contents.

⁵⁷⁹ 'Laporan Komisi Literatur BNKP di Nias Pada Sydang Sinode ke-37 tahun 1972 di Sogae'adu' (Arsip BNKP).

⁵⁸⁰ Cf. Ch. 4.6.5.7.

3. Creatively using elements of Niasan culture. Including traditional musical instruments and traditional dance combined with a Christian message, etc.⁵⁸²

Although these are new developments of a more contextual approach, they are still in an experimental phase and have not yet been accepted as a standard for the worship services of the BNKP. Though music is very important to the Ono Niha, developing a contextual theology would demand a much broader scope.

Since the 1950s, besides the liturgy, renewing the church order has also on the agenda. Mainly due to internal conflicts inside the BNKP, four types of divisions can be differentiated. Firstly, the great schisms of 1946 (AMIN), 1952 (ONKP) and 1992 (BKPN and BNKP-I). Secondly, schisms in individual congregations where groups of members joined other churches (e.g., Roman Catholic Church, Pentecostal Church, AMIN, ONKP). Thirdly, numerous splits in local congregations caused by internal conflicts but not leading to successions from the BNKP. The reasons for the splits and schisms were:

1. Conflicts among the leaders at the synod board level.
2. Resurgences of *adat*-structure, such as the *banua*-model.
3. Conflicts arising from the *adat* which were brought into the church.⁵⁸³
4. Exploitation of the local congregation or the church as a whole by former noblemen, such as *salawa*, for regaining power.
5. Poverty that has caused members of congregations to join other churches for material benefits.
6. Lack of pastoral care by the established churches and the offer of individual counseling offered by others.
7. Interventions by the government in internal church affairs (e.g., during the Soeharto-regime).

As a reaction to these challenges, the church order of the BNKP was repeatedly revised by the synod assemblies at 1955, 1973 and 1990. The changes, however, did not solve the essential problems. In 1955, some of the power of the *ephorus* was transferred to the synod board, of which the *ephorus* is the chairperson.⁵⁸⁴ In 1973, the basic presbyterial-synodal structure of the BNKP was asserted as against congregationalist tendencies. Furthermore, the synod board (now named *Badan Pekerja Harian*, BPH) was clearly defined as the executive body of the church. It became accountable to a controlling board (*Badan Perkerja Sinode*, BPS) which possessed certain legislative powers between synod assemblies. At the synod assembly in 1980, the BNKP confronted two serious challenges: 1. a polarization between the executive synod board (BPH) and the legislative synod board (BKS) threatened to paralyze the decision-making process; 2. some congregations

⁵⁸¹ 'Keputusan dan Ketetapan Persidangan Majelis Sinode ke-51 BNKP', 2000, p. 10. (Arsip BNKP).

⁵⁸² It is advisable that the BNKP uses the elements of Niasan culture in its worship to God and in the proclamation of the Gospel. This could be done by using the traditional *maena* combined with a Christian message, as well as the traditional musical instruments of the Ono Niha, such as the *aramba*, the *göndra*, the *faritia* and the *doli-doli* in the Sunday worship service and in other celebrations', cf. 'Himpunan Hasil Persidangan Sinode ke 51', 2000, p. 10 (Arsip BNKP).

⁵⁸³ Laporan Sidang Sinode BNKP Nias tahun 1969 (Arsip BNKP). Cf. W. Lempp, *Benih yang Tumbuh XII*, 1984, p 23.

⁵⁸⁴ Cf. Ch. 4.6.5.4 and Ch. 5.3.1.

demanding autonomy within the BNKP. In answer to these challenges, the synod assembly in 1990 authorized a revised church order which resolved that all the members of the executive synod board (now named BPHMS) become members of the legislative synod board (now named BPMS) and the *ephorus* becomes the chairperson of both the BPHMS and the BPMS. Concerning the problem of the demand for autonomy, no solution other than changing of names was found.⁵⁸⁵

An altogether new element of the BNKP's revised church order of 1990 was the incorporation of the Indonesian state ideology, the *Pancasila*, as the principle on which the church base its life within Indonesian society and state. This, however, was less the result of contextualization than submission to the Soeharto-regime with its demands for uniformity of every aspect of public life.

The repeated revisions of the church order had thus not answered the above-mentioned seven reasons for the splits and schisms which had occurred in the BNKP. The tensions inside the church did not decrease. This painfully manifested itself in the two major schisms after the synod assembly in 1992, which occurred both in South Nias, in the form of the *Banua Keriso Protestant Nias* (BKPN) and in North Nias where the *Banua Niha Keriso Protestant Indonesia* (BNKP-I) separated itself from the BNKP. In both cases, the mingling of the Soeharto-regime in the internal affairs of the BNKP created an atmosphere conducive to the divisions. Some influential businessmen, chiefs and pastors opposed the legitimate leadership of the BNKP, and, since they were not elected by the synod assembly, formed their own church organizations. The BKPN justified its separation citing the differences in culture between South and North Nias, while the BNKP-I claimed to have restored the principles of the constitution of the BNKP. With all of these tensions and schisms, the BNKP was not able to implement its programs to become a pioneer in the development on Nias and the Batu Islands, nor could it play a significant role in the ecumenical movement on a national and international level.

7.2.3 Community Development and Participation in Politics

In general the reality of the churches in Asia (and in many other parts of the world) is very much determined by poverty, authoritarianism, discrimination, and plurality. From within this context, the Asian churches reflect on the meaning of the Gospel for the poor and oppressed. The result of these reflections brought forth different kinds of liberation theologies, for example, the Theology of the Struggle (Philippines), the Theology of the Powerless People or *Minjung* (Korea), the Theology of the Outcasts or *Dalit* (India), Feminist Theology, etc. On the other hand, the Asian context with its diversity of religions and culture demand a strong emphasis on inter-religious and inter-cultural dialogue.⁵⁸⁶

In the frame of contextualization theology, the seventh general assembly of the Council of Churches in Indonesia Churches (DGI) in 1971 formulated the mandate and task of churches as follows:⁵⁸⁷

We are called to participate in the responsibility to liberate human beings from their sufferings which are caused by underdevelopment, poverty, illness, fear, and the lack of

⁵⁸⁵ I.e., the 'branch congregation' (*filial*) was renamed 'congregation' (*jemaat*), the 'congregation' was renamed 'district' (*distrik*), and the 'district' was renamed 'church circuit' (*resor*).

⁵⁸⁶ Cf. A.A. Yewangoe, *Theologia Crucis di Asia*, Jakarta, 1989.

⁵⁸⁷ Cf. DGI, *Notulen Sidang Raya ke-7 tahun 1971, 1976*, p. 93.

the rule of law. We are called to struggle for justice in the daily life, justice in the fields of economy and politics, justice between individuals and groups, justice in the social structure, as well as international justice. We are called to participate in the defeat of falseness, hypocrisy, corruption, and dishonesty. We are called to raise the level of welfare of all human beings, both in a material and in a spiritual sense.

If this resolution of the DGI is compared to the actual activities of the BNKP concerning its struggle against poverty, it has to be acknowledged that very little has been achieved so far. The BNKP has focused its effort for social development in three ways:

1. Charity. From 1950s until the 1970s, the BNKP mainly focused on charity for neglected children, education (a number of church-owned schools were opened), medical care (one hospital was added in Hilisimaetanö), a training-centre for skills, and operating a ship-service. These charities could only be offered with the support of church-based organizations in Germany. After foreign support ceased, these activities came to an end.
2. Community development. The idea of the Gospel as a power of liberation entered the new church order of 1973. For its implementation, in 1974, the BNKP offered a workshop on the participation of the BNKP in the development of the Regency of Nias (which included the Batu Islands). The results were community development programs, including activities such as: the training of local social workers (*motivator pedesaan*), cooperative or credit unions, agriculture and animal husbandry. These activities continue, but until recently have not contributed substantially to the abolishment of poverty. The reason for this is that on the one hand, this has not become an overall social program – only certain individuals have benefited from it; on the other hand, the concept of the participation in development (*partisipasi dalam pembangunan*) did not imply any original initiatives from the BNKP, but was limited to mere uncritical assistance in the national governmental programs (particularly under the regime of Soeharto). At the fiftieth synod of the BNKP in 1997 in the *Hosiana*-Church in Gunungsitoli, a specific program named *Program Oikonomia* was added to the other major programs. This included the development of the economy in church and society, Legal Aid, Human Rights, and Politics, as well as various other activities summed up under the term *sosial budaya*, which includes tourism, art, etc. A key term in this program is 'transformation' (*transformasi*), indicating that the goal of this policy was to transform the whole of Niasan society. The implementation of the program, however, was much less inspiring than its text. When it was evaluated by the fifty-second synod assembly in 2002 in Lahewa, five reasons for its failure were given: first, the paradigm of the BNKP's service had not changed; second, the qualitative limitations in human resources; third, the lack of funds for realizing the programs; fourth, the Asian monetary crisis (which began in 1997) which hit Indonesia very hard; finally, the *program oikonomia* was not accepted by the whole of Niasan society as a common strategy of combating poverty.
3. Participation in politics. During the long authoritarian rule of Soeharto (1965/67-1998), the attitude of the churches towards politics may be characterized as 'permissive'. The policy of the government was accepted

without criticism. On Nias this became apparent right at the outset, when, in 1967, the social system of Nias was forcefully changed by the abolition of the *öri*-system. The church received this policy, which destroyed the last important traditional social structures, without a word of criticism. Furthermore, the BNKP joined the government in the discrimination against alleged communists (PKI) by dismissing some church elders. In its report to the synod in 1990, the synod board of the BNKP ruled that the BNKP should support the implementation of the state doctrine (the Soeharto-version of *Pancasila*, called P4⁵⁸⁸), the state birth-control program (KB), the program for raising awareness to pay taxes (*Sadar Pajak*), the raising of awareness for tourism, and the so-called *Data Haogö Mbanuada* (the 'Let-us-build-our-village-Program').

During the fiftieth synod assembly in 1997, the BNKP discussed its service in the field of politics, but it did not get any further than finding a definition for the political activity of the church. There was, however, no realistic political program for building a just, democratic and prosperous society. Many *pandita* still maintain a strict separation between religion and politics, not only because of the colonial heritage but also because of Evangelical and/or Charismatic influences. Nevertheless, in the course of the *reformasi*-era, which began in 1997, the synod board gave its permission and support to individual ministers who entered politics, even though the principle that the church does not involve itself in party-politics was still upheld.

7.3 TOWARDS A PARADIGM OF CONTEXTUAL THEOLOGY IN THE NIASAN CHURCH

7.3.1 From Indigenisation to Contextualization

From the description above of 'Doing theology in the BNKP now', we have seen that the BNKP has attempted time and again to find solutions to the challenges arising from the encounter between the Gospel and indigenous culture. On the one hand the method applied, however, has been to guard the heritage of the missionaries, and on the other hand, maintain very strong emphasis on implementing church discipline (*amakhoita*). The church has not been able to transform itself and thus it has also not been able to transform society. Although the majority of Ono Niha are Christians, it is doubtful whether biblical values such as justice, peace, mercy, solidarity and good stewardship have become part and parcel of their every day life. To a large extent, the BNKP has remained dependent on its German partners in matters concerning theology and finances, while its human resources also did not fulfil its needs. Therefore, as a prerequisite for a more general development, it is now important for the Niasan church to transform its theological approach.

What does the author mean by a contextual theology? First of all, contextual theology cannot be limited to 'indigenisation', which is emphasising the relationship between the Gospel and the old traditional culture. This neglects that culture is constantly changing. Contextualization, while not disregarding the influence of traditional culture, also deals with contemporary factors determining the context,

⁵⁸⁸ P4 is the abbreviation for 'Pedoman, Penghayatan dan Pengamalan Pancasila'.

such as secularisation, modern technology and science, human rights awareness, etc.⁵⁸⁹

Contextualization cannot also be limited to an effort of adjusting the Gospel to a specific cultural frame without a critical reflection on both the presentation of the Gospel (e.g., whether a doctrine formulated in a western context indeed clearly conveys the message in an Asian context), and on the nature of the 'frame' (e.g., whether the artistic expressions and traditional symbols really relate to the Good News conveyed). Our understanding is that contextualization has to have a prophetic nature, and always has to be the result of an honest encounter between the Word of God and concrete situations.⁵⁹⁰ The Word of God enters the context and transforms it from within. In different contexts, the programs for contextualization have different priorities. In a certain situation, the demand for justice may overweigh, in another context, it may be the quest for freedom from patriarchal suppression, and in yet other contexts it may be the alleviation from poverty or overcoming conflict through dialogue, etc. The main principle, however, which should never be absent at any time or place, is that the living Word of God enters this world to save it from the bondage of sin, which is both individual rebellion against God and social injustice.⁵⁹¹

7.3.2 Ecumenical and Evangelical Positions

It is not only the task of churches in the 'Third World' to engage in contextual theology, but of churches everywhere. Although Christians believe that the origins of the church do not lie in this world but in the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2), the churches nevertheless have to be rooted in their particular contexts. Each church has its particular contexts. These can vary within one church, from congregation to congregation. Therefore, the local culture has to become the ground on which a local theology is being developed. This, however, does not mean that the Gospel makes compromises. Instead, the truth of the Gospel will transform all those elements of culture that destroy life and hold people in bondage. The communication of the Gospel in a critical and enlightening way calls us to distinguish, compare and reinvent. This can only be learned if a particular church opens itself to the ecumenical movement and to non-theological academic disciplines. Singgih has argued that three contexts have to be taken into consideration by the church when developing its teachings: the Bible, the doctrinal traditions of the churches, and the context of the local cultures.⁵⁹² Contextual theology should not only study history but also, with serious concern for the social changes, develop concepts for the future. The study of traditional culture is important, but just as challenging is the analysis of the contemporary cultural reality that the community is facing.⁵⁹³ Here,

⁵⁸⁹ Cf. S. Coe, 'Contextualizing Theology', in: G.H. Anderson and T.F. Stransky (ed.), *Mission Trends III: Third World Theologies*, 1976, p. 20. Cf. K. Koyama, *Water Buffalo Theology*, 1999, p. 15.

⁵⁹⁰ Cf. E. Darmaputera, 'Menuju teologi Kontekstual di Indonesia', in: E. Darmaputera (ed.), *Konteks Berteologi di Indonesia*, 1988, p. 9. cf. A. Riyanti, 'Sinopsis Konteks dan Kontekstualisasi Iman dalam Rangka "Membangun Gereja dari Konteks"', in: A. Riyanti (ed.), *Membangun Gereja dari Konteks*, Malang, 2004, pp. 2-5. Cf. E.G. Singgih, *Dari Israel ke Asia*, 1982, pp. 17-29.

⁵⁹¹ Yeow Choo Lak, *Saat untuk Bertindak*, 1992, p. 9.

⁵⁹² Cf. E.G. Singgih, *Dari Israel Ke Asia*, 1982, pp. 59-71.

⁵⁹³ *Ibid.*; cf. S. Coe, 'Kontekstualisasi Sebagai Jalan Menuju Pembaruan', in: D.J. Elwood (ed.), *Teologi Kristen Asia*, 1992, p. 10. Cf. E.G. Singgih, *Dari Israel Ke Asia*, 1982, p. 13. Cf. L. Newbigin, *Injil Dalam Masyarakat Majemuk*, 1993, p. 119.

both in the academic institutions and in inter-confessional and inter-religious dialogues, as well as in the individual encounters of people from different backgrounds, ecumenical relations of a church play a vital role.

Unfortunately, the need for contextual theology is not yet felt by many Evangelical and Charismatic churches in Indonesia, nor by the traditional Protestant churches, including the BNKP. According to Richard A. D. Siwu⁵⁹⁴, however, some Evangelicals have begun to develop an Asian contextual theology. They want to rid themselves of the dependency on Western theology. However, pre-Christian religious traditions are not taken into consideration at all. The Biblical truth is considered to be a universal, uniform doctrine that enters a particular culture like a foreigner dressed up in traditional clothing. But, was Jesus Christ a foreigner born in Bethlehem? Was he not a Jew, a genuine member of a particular cultural and religious community? And is Jesus Christ therefore also not an Ono Niha to the Ono Niha, a genuine member – yes the head – of the Banua Niha Keriso?

This Evangelical approach is not much more biblical than the approach of certain Charismatic groups. These are worse than the missionaries of old, rejecting all traditional culture as works of the devil. One such group, which exercises a certain influence on members of the BNKP in the city of Medan on Sumatra, is the 'Zone of Christ's Mission' (*Kawasan Misi Kristus* or KMK). A member of the KMK, Henry J. Silalahi, wrote a book on the 'Adat Ceremonies of the Batak in View of the Gospel'⁵⁹⁵, in which he describes the adat of the Batak as completely contradictory to and un-reconcilable with the Gospel. According to Silalahi, the *adat* is an expression of idolatry (*hasipelebeguan*) that manifests itself only in the dark and is an instrument of Satan used to mislead human beings. Therefore, a disciple of Christ would have to cut all links to the *adat*. Neither the approach of the Evangelicals that excludes the possibility of a holistic transformation of culture, including the roots in the primal religion through the Gospel, nor that of the Charismatic KMK, which downright condemns all traditional culture (and practically replaces it with a kind of North-American culture) answer the challenge of biblical theology. This challenge is to bring together the text (the Word of God) and the context (the world) in the belief that something completely new will grow from this encounter, a *banua* that bears the identity of both.

7.4 CONTEMPORARY CONTEXT OF NIAS AND THE BATU ISLANDS

In contextual theologies, there has to be a good analysis of the context, meaning the time and place in all its dimensions of life, a respect for the living values of the community (both traditional and contemporary), and a creative and critical endeavour to bring together the text and the context, resulting in a dialectical relationship between the universal message of the Gospel (*kerygma*) and the contextual reality of life (culture).

The development of a Niasan contextual theology has to have as its starting point the practice of the BNKP. This practice should take place predominantly on the local level (e.g., BNKP congregations in specific regions on Nias, or in big cities,

⁵⁹⁴ Cf. R.A.D. Siwu, *Misi Dalam Pandangan Ekumenikal dan Evangelikal Asia 1910-1961-1991*, 1996, pp. 283ff.

⁵⁹⁵ Cf. H.J. Silalahi, *Pandangan Injil Terhadap Upacara Adat Batak*, 2000.

such as Jakarta), but increasingly also on the national level (e.g., participation in the PGI), and even, though to a limited extent, on the international level (e.g., UEM and LWF).

7.4.1 Ethnicity

The BNKP was born and bred within a tribal setting, in which the Ono Niha are the absolute majority. This disposition is described in a popular Niasan proverb, saying: 'the religion, the *adat*, and the government, each have their own way' (*sara lala hada, sara lala ugamo, ba sara göi lala fareta*). This proverb indicates that the original integrity of the Niasan culture has been fragmented.⁵⁹⁶

On the other hand, the BNKP is still following in the tracks of the missionaries of old, rejecting everything linked to the primal religion. Nevertheless, remnants of the pre-Christian beliefs still remain strong and sometime even re-germinate under certain conditions. On numerous occasions, the spirits of the ancestors are asked for their blessings. All kinds of taboos (*famoni*) still exist in the *adat* and in times of crises many people prefer medicine men or shamans (*tohu danga* or *duku*) to the physicians and pastors. These 'heathen' beliefs lead a clandestine existence in a dualistic relationship with the formal religion of Christianity. Both deeply influence the life of the Ono Niha, though in a un-conciliatory, sometime even schizophrenic way.

Although there were many changes in social structures during colonial times and as a result of the independence of the Republic of Indonesia, the spirit of the autonomy of the *banua* is still very much alive. It challenges the church in three ways: 1. it is a permanent cause of conflict and schism in the congregations; 2. it maintains xenophobia and an exclusive attitude; and 3. it enhances the aspiration of forming regencies in accordance with *adat*-allegiances, and on a broader level, it gives fuel to the struggle for an autonomous province encompassing Nias and the Batu Islands.

7.4.2 Poverty and Unemployment

As previously indicated⁵⁹⁷, since colonial times that Nias and the Batu Islands have been poorer areas of Indonesia.⁵⁹⁸ Even today, the two Regencies of Nias have a very low per capita income, a very poor standard of educational and medical facilities, a chronic state of unemployment, and an underdeveloped infrastructure for traffic and communication.⁵⁹⁹

Generally, the official reason given for the poverty of the majority of Ono Niha is its isolated geography. Nias and the Batu Islands are situated far away from the economic, educational and political centres of the Indonesia. On the other hand, the national illness of corruption contributes significantly towards perpetuating the poverty on Nias.

⁵⁹⁶ Cf. T. Telaumbanua and U. Hummel, 'Inquiry', 2000.

⁵⁹⁷ Cf. Ch. 6.5.

⁵⁹⁸ Oberlin Batu Bara, 'Tipologi Kemiskinan Desa Ter-tinggal Nias', in: Mubyarto (ed.), *Profil Desa Tertinggal Indonesia*, 1994, p. 9.

⁵⁹⁹ Cf. BPS Kabupaten Nias, *Produk Domestik Regional Bruto Kabupaten Nias 2002*, 2003, pp. 2-12., Cf. Panitia Seminar dan Lokakarya 2001, *Peranan Gereja dalam pembangunan Masyarakat Nias*, 2001, pp. 94-97.

In the Niasan diaspora on Sumatra and Java, a minority of Ono Niha have achieved a relatively good standard of living. Most others are peregrines who labour in plantations and factories, hardly earning enough to make a living.

7.4.3 Pluralistic Society

Eka Darmaputera⁶⁰⁰ points out that any contextual theology in Indonesia has to deal with the pluralistic nature of Indonesian society. Whereas previously every tribe's identity was defined as an independent entity, in the *Pancasila*-state there is a new modern identity, namely the national identity. This national identity consists of a great variety of tribes, races, cultures, and religions.⁶⁰¹ This multitude is united under one principle: *Bhineka Tunggal Ika* (unity in diversity).⁶⁰²

The diversity of Indonesian society is a source of great potential, but it can also cause conflicts. The history of Indonesia has often known phases of tribal and religious strife. Today, perhaps more than ever before, this has become a major challenge to the BNKP, as well as to most other churches in Indonesia.

7.4.4 Impact of Globalisation

Although most Ono Niha still live in a very remote and isolated place, the impact of globalisation is bringing about great changes to their lives. Simply speaking, globalisation means a borderless world. In a more differentiated way, however, it forms a process of interrelations and interdependence between countries and societies in a variety of cross border activities.

There are seven categories of globalization. The first, is the monetary globalisation and the ownership of capital through the deregulation of the capital market, the mobility of international capital, mergers, and acquisitions. The second is the globalisation of the market and the economic strategy through the integration of business on an international scale, cooperated business-alliances in other countries, and in the financial sector. The third is the globalisation of science and technology through research and development. A fourth, category is the globalization of the style of life and the pattern of consumption, as well as culture. A further category is the globalisation of governmental regulations. Sixthly we have the globalisation of international politics. Finally, there is the globalization of the international socio-cultural perception.⁶⁰³

⁶⁰⁰ Cf. E. Darmaputera, *Pancasila, Identitas dan Modernitas*, 1991, cf. Ch. 1.2.

⁶⁰¹ Cf. L. Suryadinata, *Penduduk Indonesia: Etnis dan Agama dalam Era Perubahan Politik*, 2003, pp. 1-138. Cf. H.J.W.M. Boelaars, *Indonesianisasi: Dari Gereja Katolik di Indonesia menjadi Gereja Katolik Indonesia*, 2005, pp 34-25. Boelaars noted that Indonesia consists of 6000 islands inhabited by more than 366 ethnic groups and about 250 vernacular tribes. From the 242 million population of Indonesia, the majority are Muslim (88, 22 %), and than follow by Protestants (6%), Catholics (2, 89 %), Buddhists (0, 84 %), Hindus (1, 81 %), and others (0, 20 %).

⁶⁰² Cf. F.L. Cooley, *Indonesia: Church and Society*, 1968, pp. 9-19. Cooley noted that Indonesia is made up of many diverse ethnic and language groups, which have been relatively isolated from one another until quite recently. This isolation resulted from the country's marked geographic traits: deep straits and wide seas separating islands, high volcanic mountain ranges, heavy tropical rain forest and wide swampy sea coasts. These have led to differences in history, regional development, traditions, customs and religion, which accentuate the difficulty of binding these diverse groups into a unified nation. Indonesia's present condition and her main problem are symbolized by the national motto: *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, Diversity becoming unity.

⁶⁰³ Cf. Carunia M. Firdausy, *Tantangan dan Peluang Globalisasi bagi Perekonomian Nasional*, 2000,

Globalisation thus creates an ambiguity or a so-called 'global paradox' (John Naisbitt).⁶⁰⁴ On the one hand, there is the tendency towards political independency or autonomy, whereas on the other hand there is the growing need for forming alliances. The more universal we get, the more 'tribal' our actions become. This is signified in the slogan: 'think global, act local'. The same is the case with language: while the need for global communication (e.g., by using English) increases, the affinity with the local vernacular becomes stronger as well.⁶⁰⁵

Robert J. Schreiter⁶⁰⁶ points out the negative side of globalisation, particularly the growing gap between the rich and the poor. In a globalised free-market economy, those who have access to capital compete feverishly and try to scoop up as much wealth as possible. This, however, happens to the detriment of those who are not stakeholders in the economy, such as the peasants, the unskilled labourers, the unemployed, etc, who become poorer and poorer. The ugly side effects are also the destruction of the environment and an increase of violence.

Globalisation changes social traditions.⁶⁰⁷ While an individual or a community might succeed in achieving a kind of a balance between universal and tribal values, the loss of a centre in life often leads to an identity crisis.

Facing this condition, some Indonesian theologians have begun to develop new patterns in answering the challenges of globalisation. E.G. Singgih⁶⁰⁸ holds that contextualization forms an antithesis towards globalisation. This, however, does not mean that they are mutually exclusive. They rather have to be placed in a dialectical relation to each other. It is the task of missiology to grapple with the impacts of the global economy, the threats of ecological disasters, and the reality of pluralistic societies to proclaim the Kingdom of God in this very context.

7.5 GOSPEL AND CULTURE ON NIAS AND THE BATU ISLANDS

In 2004, all churches on Nias and the Batu Islands, including the Roman Catholic Church, were invited by the Communion of Churches on Nias (*PGI-Daerah Nias*) for a seminar on the encounter between Gospel and Niasan culture. The three day-long deliberations resulted in three major findings, namely:

1. The missionaries of the RM and the DLM, as well as the indigenous Protestant churches, on the one hand accommodated certain elements of pre-Christian culture (e.g., language and *adat*), while, on the other hand, they rejected and tried to destroy all other elements of culture, particularly those related to the

pp. 3-4. Cf. Mary O'Hara – Devereaux and Robert Johansen, *Global Work: Menjembatani Jarak, Budaya dan Waktu*, 1995, pp. 1-65. Cf. The Group of Lisbon, *Limits to Competition*, 1995, p. 21.

⁶⁰⁴ Cf. J. Naisbitt, *Global Paradox*, 1994, pp. 1-50.

⁶⁰⁵ In countries such as Indonesia, Germany and the Netherlands which have national languages other than the 'international languages', such as English, French, Spanish and Chinese, every modern citizen should be fluent in at least his/her local language (e.g., *Li Nono Niha*, the Bavarian dialect, Friesian), the national language (e.g., BI), and one international language (e.g., English).

⁶⁰⁶ Cf. R.J. Schreiter, 'Epilogue: Mission in the Third Millennium', in: R.J. Schreiter (ed.), *Mission in the Third Millennium*, n.d., pp. 150-152.

⁶⁰⁷ I. Wibowo, 'Globalisasi dan Gereja (Indonesia)', in: J.B. Banawiratman (ed.), *Gereja Indonesia. Quo Vadis, Hidup Menggereja Kontekstual*, 2000, pp. 28-32.

⁶⁰⁸ E.G. Singgih, 'Globalisasi dan Kontekstualisasi', in: N.L. Kana, (ed.), *Jurnal Politik Lokal dan Sosial-Humaniora*, 2002, pp. 38-49.

primal religion. This attitude resulted in a differentiation of the social reality, namely into the three clearly separated spheres of religion, *adat* and government. This paradigm of the fragmentation of reality, which replaced the traditional, holistic worldview, often caused a conflict of norms and values in everyday life.

2. Although the majority of the Ono Niha became Christians, the presence of the churches on Nias and the Batu Islands contributed little towards overcoming poverty. Charity and church programs on community development have not effectively improved the economy of the Ono Niha.
3. After the churches on Nias and the Batu Islands have for so long uncritically clung to the heritage of the missionary era, they now have to take a lead in facilitating research on the transformation of the Niasan culture and the development of contextual theology.⁶⁰⁹ The above-mentioned results of the seminar indicate that the topic of Gospel and culture⁶¹⁰ (in the sense of contextualization), which has been rather neglected by the Niasan churches, has to be given urgent top-priority. The habit of blaming all problems on the 'old law' (*huku fõna*) and applying the church discipline (*amakhoita*) solely for the purpose of maintaining the status quo established in the missionary era, must be seriously questioned in the light of the Gospel. The goal must be that the culture of the Ono Niha be transformed by the Gospel in such a way that it can actually serve as a 'jar' for the 'treasure' of the power of God (2 Cor 4:7). It has to be taken into account, however, that the nature of any culture, including 'Christian culture', is 'infected with godlessness, which is the essence of sin'.⁶¹¹ Therefore, the Christians' duty is not to be 'conformed to this world' (or be it the missionaries' heritage), but to be 'transformed' and 'renewed' in accordance with the will of God (Rom 12:2). Contextualization thus is a constant process of reformation.

In the Niasan churches, there is a growing appreciation for contextual theology. Some experiments have already been made to include elements of traditional Niasan culture in the liturgy. Contextual theology, however, cannot be limited to liturgical adjustments only, but has to enter every aspect or formulation of the faith-experience of the *Ono Niha Keriso*. This includes the understanding about God, salvation, the *banua*, church discipline, the ministries of the church, the role of women, and the problems of the values of the *adat*.

An extended discourse on these points would exceed the scope of the study, so that only three of them, concerning God, salvation, and the *banua*, are lifted out as entry-points towards the development of a contextual theology.

7.5.1 God (Lowalangi)

As we have seen before⁶¹², Denninger chose the Niasan name Lowalangi for God. This has to be seen as an effort to adapt Christian theology to the local context. Although there has been a debate over this issue, until now Niasan Christians refer

⁶⁰⁹ W. Gulö (ed.), 'Injil dan Budaya Nias: Laporan Seminar Lokakarya Perjumpaan Injil dan Budaya Nias di Gunungsitoli, Nias, 6-8 Maret 2004', 2004, pp. 1-19, 198-213.

⁶¹⁰ Cf. S.W. Ariarajah, *Gospel and Culture: An Ongoing within the Ecumenical Movement*, 1994.

⁶¹¹ H.R. Niebuhr, *Christ & Culture*, 2001, p. 154.

⁶¹² Cf. Ch. 2.4 and Ch. 4.3.2.3.

to the God of the Bible as Lowalangi.⁶¹³ However, the use of a term taken from the primal religion of the Ono Niha is not sufficient, if not accompanied by a dialogical process of the encounter of Gospel and culture in the life of the people. The missionaries took the name Lowalangi from the Ono Niha, filled it with their specific, western understanding of God, without taking into consideration that the Ono Niha had different associations concerning this name. For the Ono Niha there always have been and still are three basic patterns concerning the meaning of Lowalangi: Lowalangi as a source of blessings, Lowalangi as the source and custodian of the law (*adat* and *fondrakö*), and Lowalangi as the source of strength (*So'aya*⁶¹⁴).

The BNKP has never discussed the meaning of Lowalangi historically and sociologically in an objective, let alone in an appreciative way. The result of this is that the pattern and the values which Ono Niha associate with Lowalangi, do not seem to be fully in accordance with the Bible. While the official, dogmatic teachings about God are a mere repetition of the version offered by the missionaries of old, the actual understanding of the Ono Niha seems to be very similar to the paradigm of the primal religion, only that it is fragmentised and torn out of its original setting. This seems to explain why the *Ono Niha Keriso* comprehend their Christian faith in a very legalistic way. Also, this may explain why they are enthusiastic about teachings resembling those of Ama Haogö concerning the acquisition of supernatural powers (while at the same time condemning Ama Haogö as a heretic), and why they secretly expect blessings from the spirits of the ancestors. The question has to be answered whether the authoritarian understanding of leadership, in the family, in the church and in society, relate back to the authoritarian understanding of Lowalangi.

In the effort to develop a contextual theology, the BNKP cannot be satisfied with the mere repetition of the inherited doctrine. The first step must be a careful analysis of the Ono Niha's current understanding of God. How does this relate to both the culture of the Ono Niha (including the former primal religion) and to the Bible? From here, in a creative, dialogical and systematic way, an understanding of Lowalangi as witnessed by the Bible can be developed. This method seems to be in accordance with the approach of St. Paul when proclaiming God to the people of Athens (Acts 17: 22-25). The Gospel can have its points of contact with the pre-Christian culture of a people.

Based on a new, both biblical and contextual understanding of God, the BNKP can then undertake the effort of reforming and re-formulating other aspects of its church life, such as its doctrine, liturgy, church order and discipline, and its mission these then can become manifest in its programs of service.⁶¹⁵

⁶¹³ Ono Niha who converted to Islam also used Lowalangi, both in every day language and when referring to their religious teachings. However, in the *khutbah* (Islamic sermon) on Friday, the name *Allah* is used. The leader of the Nahdatul Ulama (a Muslim organisation) on Nias declared that the terms Lowalangi and *Allah* have the same meaning. Cf. Interview with Ali Amran Tanjung on 30 November 2005.

⁶¹⁴ The literal meaning of *soaya* is 'the one using a magic necklace of honour'. This term was taken over by the missionaries as the equivalent for 'LORD'.

⁶¹⁵ The present program of the BNKP, named *Program Umum Pelayanan BNKP* (PUPB), covers all the services such as witness (*marturia*), education (*didaskalia*), fellowship (*koinonia*), charity (*diakonia*), and economy (*oikonomia*).

7.5.2 Salvation (*Fangorifi*)

Besides clearing the understanding about Lowalangi, salvation (*fangorifi*) is a major theme in the discussion about the encounter between Gospel and culture and in developing a contextual theology. The concept of salvation very much determines the essence of a particular religion, the relationship to God and one's neighbours, and the actions of its believers.

What do present-day *Ono Niha Keriso* mean by salvation? According to the *Inquiry 2000*, there are three outstanding answers to this question:

1. Eternal life in heaven.
2. Blessings in the daily life.
3. Liberation from the bonds of sin.

From the investigation of the backgrounds of these answers, it seems obvious that these concepts of salvation are constructed from both Christian and primal religious elements. The theological textbooks, inherited from the missionaries and still in use, emphasize the salvation of the soul in the life hereafter⁶¹⁶, as well as redemption from sin, death and the power of the devil.⁶¹⁷ The influence of the primal religion is evident in the daily life of the *Ono Niha*, both in the hope for earthly blessings (*howuhowu*) and in the fear of being cursed (*fangelifi*).⁶¹⁸

Does this understanding of salvation, explain the present tendency among Niasan Christians towards piety (*praxis pietatis*), which is advocated by the charismatic movement. Do Niasan Christians engage in good works because they love Lowalangi, or because they expect blessings in return? Are they a pattern taken over by Christianity from the *adat*? On the other hand, Niasan Christians may also fear some kind of curse, if they do not fulfill their Christian 'duties', similar to *adat*-duties. These include attending the worship service on Sunday, and the morning and evening devotions with their families. Does this eschatological approach explain why Niasan Christians do not like the religious authorities to speak about politics, let alone demand justice and respect for human rights? Can this paradigm concerning salvation possibly enable Niasan Christians to face the challenges of pluralism and globalization?

These questions and challenges have to be dealt with seriously by the BNKP. There has to be critical dialogue, considering both the Bible as foundation of the Christian faith and the contemporary struggle of the *Ono Niha*. According to the author, is the duty of the Niasan church to re-formulate its concept of salvation by concentrating on four points:

1. Salvation is the work and grace of God revealed in Jesus Christ. This draws on the Biblical teaching that salvation (which includes reconciliation) cannot be obtained through human efforts or through rituals. Only by the love of God can this world be saved (Jn 3:16).
2. Salvation is possible only by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ who died on the cross (Rom 5:8-11; 2 Cor 5:18-21; Eph 2:11-12; Col 1:19-22). This central truth of Christian faith had indeed played an important role in the teachings of

⁶¹⁶ Cf. C. Ernst, *Famahaö ba lala Wangorifi*, 1892/1993, pp. 3-4.

⁶¹⁷ Cf. A. Lück, *Katechismus Luther*, 1934/1984, pp. 121-124.

⁶¹⁸ Cf. Ch. 2.4.2 and Ch. 6.2.1.3.2.

the missionaries of old⁶¹⁹, and right up to the official dogmatics of the *pandita* of the BNKP. This point has, however, not been properly understood by the majority of Niasan Christians because the BNKP failed to use the corresponding categories of the primal religion⁶²⁰, emphasizing that the sacrifice of Christ has no points of contact in 'heathen' culture.

3. Salvation comes through the Good News to the whole creation (Mk 16:15). According to the traditional cosmology of the Ono Niha, reconciliation was not only between humans and between humans and the ancestral spirits, but also between human beings and nature. All reconciliatory rituals and ceremonies were aimed at restoring harmony and integrity to the cosmos. By condemning the whole of the primal religion, and failing to raise awareness of the holistic nature of salvation as expressed in the Bible, it is now very difficult to raise awareness among the Niasan Christians of the need to take responsibility for the integrity of Gods creation.
4. Salvation is the liberation from the powers of evil and oppression in this world (Lk 4:16-21). The primal religion of the Ono Niha had no mercy for the poor and powerless. They were treated as sub-human, used as slaves, killed in sacrifice, and sold to strangers. Strangely, though the missionaries condemned this tradition and accomplished much in their combat against slavery and in their struggle to raise the dignity of women and children, they have failed to build up a viable church service for overcoming poverty and empowering the marginalized in Niasan society. Could it be that the presently weak diaconal structures and services result from a complete lack of the biblical awareness that God cares for and liberates the poor? Can the missing sense of justice for the underprivileged, and the obsession by most ministers and elders to side with the strong and mighty (even if they are corrupt) be explained by the uncritical adoption of the paradigm of the primal religion by Christianity? This is not the place to answer all of these questions. The author is of the opinion that a contextual theology for Nias has to position itself clearly on the side of the less fortunate, 'the hungry, the thirsty, the strangers, the naked and the prisoners' (Mt 25:35-45).

7.5.3 Community and Church (*Banua ba Banua Niha Keriso*)

The term *banua*, which was traditionally used for the village-community, was taken over by both the RM and the DLM for the churches on Nias and the Batu Islands respectively.⁶²¹ Taking over this pre-Christian terminology seems to have been an effort towards indigenisation which can be compared with, for example, the term *tongkonan* in the Toraja Church.⁶²² But, it has to be asked critically, is it enough to use an indigenous term in developing a contextual ecclesiology?

⁶¹⁹ Cf. Ch. 4.3.3.

⁶²⁰ Cf. Ch. 2.4.3.2 (*famatō harimao*); see also Ch. 4.3.2.2 and Ch. 5.4.3 (i.e., the 'Abrahamic sacrifice' of Tanjung Saeru on Tanah Masa).

⁶²¹ The church on Nias was called *Banua Niha Keriso Protestan* (BNKP) and the church on the Batu Islands was called *Banua Keriso Protestan* (BKP), cf. Ch. 5.3.1 and Ch. 5.7.1.

⁶²² The *Gereja Toraja* (GT) on Sulawesi has come forth from the missionary work of the Dutch-Reformed Gereformeerde Zendingsbond (GZB). The meaning of *tongkonan* is 'fellowship', the 'traditional house' and the 'ancestral house', cf. Th. Kobong, *Evangelium und Tongkonan*, 1989, pp. 290-296.

It has been mentioned that in post-colonial times, the BNKP suffered from continuous conflicts and schisms. One of the roots of these problems is that the term *banua* was adopted by the missionaries, severed from its original context, and simply applied to their specific western understanding of the church. There had been no appreciation of the original context, nor had there been a serious dialogue with the Ono Niha. The missionaries built a kind of a 'meta-*banua*' in accordance with the classic presbyterial-synodal model combined with an almost Episcopal, centralistic element (i.e., the *ephorus*). In this structure there was no room for the autonomy of the local community (i.e., the congregation), as is the case in the traditional *banua*. In the church with the new *banua*, there was no more need for the *adat*; on the other hand the original *adat*-community was torn apart by dividing it into Christians (*Niha Keriso*) and outsiders (*Niha baero*). As a result, there had been no transformation of the original concept of the *banua* and no application of it to the Ono Niha's own understanding of the biblical ecclesia.

Nevertheless, the Ono Niha, after embracing Christianity, did not lose their traditional values. What happened was that the Ono Niha associated the spirit, the patterns and the values of the traditional *banua* with the term *Banua Niha Keriso*. Today, the Christians are confronted with yet other values, namely those of modernisation and globalisation. Since their Christianity has the unhealthy, dualistic character of acknowledging the inherited teachings of the missionaries on the one hand and clinging to *adat*-values disguised as Christianity on the other hand, the encounter with modernisation and globalisation either causes staunch conservatism or weakens the values, resulting in careless relativism.

The BNKP, and other Niasan churches, are now called to enter into a discussion about their ecclesiology. The aim should be to form the 'new *banua*' in such a way that it becomes a strong communion of believers and a holy, catholic church which bears witness to Jesus Christ as its head and its sole foundation. The challenge will be to do this without losing the specific cultural identity of the Ono Niha. In fact, the objective should be to transform Niasan culture into becoming a genuine Christian culture. Theodoros Kobong did just that for the Toraja Church. He developed a contextual ecclesiology based on the traditional concept of the clan-house or *tongkonang*. The traditional concept must be transformed to be a contextual model for the church. He called this: 'The church as the new *tongkonan*'.⁶²³ Kobong's model, however, focuses only on the traditional culture and does not deal sufficiently with contemporary social-cultural factors, such as pluralism and globalisation. These therefore have to be further developed to meet the challenges of the present-day.

To conceptualise the 'new *banua*' in a Niasan contextual theology seven principles should be taken into consideration:

1. The *Banua Niha Keriso* does not come into existence because of the efforts of its members to fulfil all the demands of the *adat*, such as is the case in the traditional *banua*. To the contrary, the Christian *banua* is a communion of people who have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ (I Cor 3:11; Eph 2:15-22; Rom 6:1-14; etc.) Therefore, the old paradigm of the *banua*, in which extraordinary efforts were aimed at increasing the honour (*lakhömi*) of

⁶²³ 'Die Kirche als neue Tongkonan', cf. Th. Kobong, *Evangelium und Tongkonan*, 1989, pp. 290-296.

the human being, has to be transformed. Good deeds should come forth as a token of gratitude for God's free grace.

2. The head of the 'new banua' is no longer the chief (*salawa* or *balö si'ulu*), nor the *pandita* or even the *ephorus*. Rather, Christ himself, is the head (Eph 1:22-23). As the head of the church, Christ loves all the members of his body (Jn 10:11 and 15:13). Although he is the head, he did not considerer it beneath his honour to 'empty himself, taking the form of a slave ...' (Phil 2:7). Therefore, all leaders in the 'new banua' should likewise be willing to serve 'like a slave' of God. This is quite a challenge, since, until now, most ministers and elders in the BNKP consider themselves just like the paramount chiefs of the old traditional *banua* and claim the same *lakhömi* from the members of the congregations.
3. The 'new *banua*' is neither restricted to blood relationships nor the land owned by ancestors. Also, there is no stratification between nobility and commoners. In the contrary, the new *banua* is open to every person equally as members of the body of Christ. (I Cor 12:12-31; Gal 3:28). All members of the congregation are sisters and brothers in Christ. Therefore, the BNKP must be liberated from its exclusive, ethnic character. The equality of all its members and the openness to strangers must be a fundamental characteristic of a new contextual Niasan ecclesiology.
4. The 'new *banua*' is sent by God into this world to bring the Good News of reconciliation to all of creation. Wherever the *Banua Niha Keriso* manifests itself, be it on Nias and the Batu Islands, or in the diaspora on Sumatra and Java, the encounter between Gospel and culture takes place. If, however, as so often is the case, the church keeps a clear distance from everything considered worldly, how then can the world know its Saviour? Therefore, the BNKP has to be a missionary church which seeks lost sheep wherever they have strayed. Only by entering those fields which, in accordance with the teachings of the missionaries of old, have been stigmatised as being worldly (e.g., politics, economy), can the church effectively contribute towards the transformation of the world.
5. The *Banua Niha Keriso* is a 'triumphal procession' in this world spreading the word of Christ (2 Cor 2: 14-15; Heb 12:1). This procession is on towards the fulfilled life in the Kingdom of God; the church is the community of the future. The BNKP, however, is often turned backwards. The ideal is the primeval village, the *banua furi*, the dwelling place of the ancestors. The theological challenge should be to develop an understanding of Biblical eschatology which accommodates the ancestors. Could it be the vision of all Ono Niha, including the ancestors, to be re-united in eternity, joined by all other nations at the great *owasa*, a pork-banquet in the Kingdom of God?
6. The *Banua Niha Keriso* meets other faith-based communities in this world. This is especially the case in the urban areas and in the diaspora, where the context is increasingly pluralistic. Therefore, the ecclesiology of the BNKP should be inclusive rather than exclusive. The challenge will be to bring together the concept of the *banua* as a cosmos (an integrated whole) and a multicultural communication and inter-religious dialogue.
7. In a rapidly changing world, it is the churches' duty to give ethical and moral orientation. In pre-Christian times, the mechanism for the renewal of the *adat* was the *fondrakö* (or the *famatö harimao*) enacted by the chiefs and

sanctioned by the priests (*ere*). In modern times, this institution cannot be revived. Reorientation for meeting new challenges, however, is as necessary as ever. Based on the Bible, the churches may not hesitate to seek new perspectives for the community. Without claiming authority in the realms of *adat* and government, the church has to be 'the salt of the earth' and the 'light of the world' (Mt 5:13-14). Therefore, the church has to act as an ambassador of the Kingdom of God, demanding its norms and values to be applied in all spheres of life. This entails matters such as justice, liberation from bondage, peace, integrity of creation and prosperity for all humankind. A Niasan contextual theology therefore may neither be limited to the ethnic parameters of the Ono Niha, nor to the boundaries of church denominations, but has to be truly ecumenical and open itself to interreligious and intercultural encounters.⁶²⁴

7.6 FINAL OBSERVATIONS

The Niasan Churches, similar to other tribal churches in Indonesia, need renewal or transformation. They have to review their concepts about the essence of the church and its mission. The history of the BNKP shows that it is counterproductive to continue the Western theology inherited from the European missionaries and their Niasan protégés. Not only have the needs changed, but also has the disparaging approach of the church towards everything considered worldly, including traditional and contemporary culture, politics and matters relating to the economy, limits the impact of the Gospel on society.

Developing contextual theologies is a necessity for all churches. A church that is not deeply rooted in the culture of the community in which it exists can neither solve its problems nor give guidance amidst rapid change. Only a church that is present in all spheres of life, both public and private, can be an effective witness to God's Kingdom. It is the church's task to save and to renew life. Therefore, since culture is the highest expression of human life, the church should embrace and nurture culture without neglecting its critical analysis and prophetic demand for justice and truth.

Lastly, stimulated by the impact of globalization, a new sense for indigenous culture has arisen in the BNKP. It is important that this does not end up in nostalgia or romanticizing traditional Ono Niha culture. Rather through an intensive learning process the church must redefine and renew its identity, if it is to serve the community more effectively and render a distinctive service within the ecumenical movement. The goal of a contextual theology for Nias should be to proclaim the Gospel to the 'whole creation' (Mk 16:15). The old paradigm, inherited from the missionaries, one-sidedly emphasized the 'salvation of the soul'. The new paradigm should return to a holistic view of salvation including liberation from evil in this world that results in justice, peace, and the integrity of creation.

A heavy but also inspiring task lies ahead for the Niasan Churches. They must work on the transformation of the vision concerning the church's mission and

⁶²⁴ Cf. D. J. Elwood, 'Teologi Kristen Asia dalam Proses Penjadiannya: Pengantar', in: Douglas J. Elwood (ed), *Teologi Kristen Asia: Tema-tema yang Tampil ke Permukaan*, 1993, pp. xx-xl. Cf. V. Küster, *Die vielen Gesichter Jesu Christi*, 1999, pp. 85-147.

ecclesiastical. The BNKP has to enter an intensive process of studying of the Bible, the different doctrinal traditions, and the local contexts in which they operate. This may result in contextual liturgies, hymnals, textbooks, church discipline, and a more relevant church order. The church will then be in a position to play a more significant role in transforming society.

8 Conclusion

After a preliminary missionary attempt by Roman Catholic missionaries in 1832, which had been too short to result in any substantial encounter, Christianity did not again enter the life of the Ono Niha until the second half of the nineteenth century: through the agents of two Protestant missionary societies, the German Rhenish Mission (RM) and the Dutch Lutheran Mission (DLM), who began to work on Nias and on the Batu Islands, respectively.

8.1 TRADITIONAL NIASAN LIFE CHALLENGED BY CHRISTIAN MISSIONS

The original context of the Ono Niha, i.e., Nias and the Batu Islands, had been somewhat isolated until the second half of the nineteenth century. The Niasan worldview, which, as is common to cultures based on primal ('animist') religion, did not fragmentise reality into separate, distinct realms, such as religion, *adat*, and governance, had therefore been subjected to very little foreign influence. The *adat* was rooted in the primal religion and leadership was defined by the *adat*. This holistic pre-Christian Niasan identity was symbolized by the *adu*-images, particularly those of the ancestors (*adu zatua*). To the Europeans (German missionaries and Dutch administrators), however, who were used to separating the religious from the secular, the *adu*, as the visible expression of the primal religion, was synonymous with 'heathendom', and was regarded as the cause of all backwardness and insubordination. Such diametrically opposed views made a clash of cultures unavoidable.

The spiritual background of the missionaries had its roots in Pietism and Revivalism. Their theology was characterised by a personal faith, sanctification, biblicism, a sense of crisis awaiting the Second Coming of Christ, dualism between 'this world' and the coming Kingdom of God, and authoritarian thinking. Devotional books, such as the *Little Book of the Heart* (Gossner) and *The Pilgrim's Progress* (Bunyan), which had been very popular in these circles, as well as the dogmatic-eschatological works of Carl Ernst used in the seminary, were later translated into the Niasan vernacular and had a lasting impact on Ono Niha spirituality. The spiritual coercion experienced in the hinterland of the Rhenish mission sometimes erupted in extreme religious enthusiasm. The organisational structure of both missionary societies was strictly hierarchical, demanding the total obedience of the missionaries and their wives to the boards in Barmen or Amsterdam.

While the RM, which had (since the 1860s) developed rather Reformed tendencies, was careful not to transplant the confessional differences between its Lutheran and Calvinist supporting communities in Germany to its mission fields in Sumatra and Nias, the DLM was intent upon establishing an exclusively Lutheran church, first in the Pasemah Ulu Manna in Bencoolen, and then on the Batu Islands. Despite their disparate strategies, the DLM and the RM cooperated closely with each other. The difference in their confessional bases was less problematic than were the differences in size and national backgrounds. Whereas, until World War I, all the

DLM-missionaries to the Batu Islands had either been recruited from or trained by the Barmen Seminary, in 1917, the DLM began sending its candidates to the Dutch School of Mission of the Cooperating Mission Agencies, in Oegstgeest, The Netherlands. Concerning their respective differences in attitude toward non-Western and non-Christian cultures, 'Oegstgeest' was significantly more knowledgeable and appreciative than was 'Barmen'.

During the 'difficult beginnings' of the Christian mission on Nias (1865-1890), no really radical social changes occurred within the Niasan society. The missionaries invited the Ono Niha to their services as guests, treating them with small gifts. The missionaries provided their medical skills free of charge. Medical aid and Western education were the most effective strategic measures supporting their proclamation of the Gospel.

As long as colonial control extended only as far as the *rapatgebied*, the missionaries were in a fairly weak position. For protection, they were dependent on the colonial authorities, whereas for their communicational skills (especially for learning the vernacular) they were dependent on Ono Niha. The very fact, however, of their being students of culture under the guidance of the Ono Niha, seems to have helped them gain a more positive appreciation of Niasan culture. Later, when the missionaries felt less dependent on the Ono Niha, and were at the same time more strongly supported by the colonial establishment (i.e., Ethical Politics), they often treated the indigenous people and their cultures with disdain. This was particularly the case for those who had come under the influence of the imperialist views of Fabri (inspector of the RM from 1857 until 1884).

Missionary achievements (i.e., gaining a foothold in certain villages and baptizing the first fruits) were largely dependent on the support of influential Ono Niha. Some of the latter, such as Ama Mandranga (in East Nias), Ama Gahonoa (in West Nias), and Fija Wanaetu (on the Batu Islands) even served as missionaries in their own right. Only recently, historians have begun to focus on the key role played by missionaries' wives in establishing Christian congregations among the Ono Niha. While the missionaries, by virtue of their leading positions and close ties with both the colonial and indigenous authorities, usually had not very close relations to the common people, their wives spent much time with the Niasan women and children, often developing close relationships. They also helped develop important services such as the Sunday schools. Despite these missionary efforts, adherence to the primal religion, symbolized by the *adu*, was still very strong during the first 25 years of missionary work on Nias.

In the 1890s, with the intensification and continuing spread of colonisation, the mission spread to areas beyond the *rapatgebied*. Due to a shift in the missionary strategy, the appreciation for the indigenous culture increased. Fabri's emphasis on individual conversion and on a 'total break' with the 'heathen' culture was gradually replaced by Warneck's 'Christianization of nations'. The goal was, through the evangelising and civilizing impact of the missions, to transform entire ethnic entities into Christian ones.

In 1889, a second mission area was opened by the DLM on the Batu Islands. In many ways, the work of the DLM on the Batu Islands resembled that of the RM on Nias during these years. But there were also some distinct differences. The Lutheran character of Christianity on the Batu Islands was (and still is) visible in the decorated interiors of the churches, often including a crucifix, stained glass windows, and an altar situated prominently in the liturgical centre. Of more import,

however, was the significant role played by noble women, such as Fija Wanaetu and Lai Hulandro, in spreading Christianity on the Batu Islands. The medical service of the DLM on the Batu Islands was developed faster than that of the RM on Nias. Concerning the preparation of new converts for baptism and the development of a church organisation, however, particularly during the first phase of missionary work on the Batu Islands (1889-1919), the DLM lagged behind the RM. This was due to the indifference concerning responsible membership and the participation of the laity in church governance common to German Lutherans (from where the DLM recruited its missionaries) at the time.

Around the turn of the century, the cooperation between the mission and the colonial government increased significantly. In 1899, RM Inspector Schneider called on the colonial authorities for the use of force in order to 'pacify' areas on Nias not yet under colonial rule. The introduction of Ethical Politics in 1901 significantly strengthened the position of the missions. The year 1908 marked the beginning of the complete surrender of the Ono Niha to Western dominance, both physically and spiritually. The foundations of the primal religion had by now been seriously shaken. This, in addition to the yoke of colonialism, resulted in a spiritual vacuum in the communal psyche of the Ono Niha and paralysed the *adat*.

The experience of total powerlessness triggered a crisis of identity among the Ono Niha. While not denying its religious factors, the outbreak of the Great Awakening (*fangesa dödö sebua*) at the end of 1915, must also be understood from a sociological perspective as a survival strategy. For the Ono Niha, choosing Christianity was now no longer a step towards modernisation (joining the world of the Western authorities), but much more a substitute for the primal religion as the core of Niasan cultural identity.

As well as being a spiritual revival, the Great Awakening was also an indigenous missionary movement. The Ono Niha ardently carried Christianity to the remotest of villages, while the missionaries anxiously tried to regulate and limit the scope of this dynamic movement. In this context, mention must be made of the key role played by the 'new' Niasan ministries, the *sinenge* and *pandita*, as well as that of women. Both the missionaries and the *guru*, who were paid by the government, were not very supportive of the Great Awakening. The most significant result of the *fangesa dödö sebua* was that the primal religion, as an institutional system of beliefs, was shattered. Many Ono Niha experienced this as the birth of a new eschatological awareness. The conversion from belief in the ancestors (*adu*) to faith in Jesus Christ transformed the view of time and history from the traditional, cyclical world view with its golden era in the past (Teteholi Ana'a), to a linear view, with the Kingdom of God in the future.

8.2 FROM MISSIONS ON NIAS AND THE BATU ISLANDS TO NIASAN CHURCHES

After 1930, by which time the Great Awakening had cooled down, the Protestant church on Nias was taking concrete steps towards ecclesiastical independence. An autonomous synod of the BNKP was established in 1936, but full independence was only reached when, due to World War II, the missionaries left in 1940/1942.

On the Batu Islands, beginning in 1919, a new generation of Dutch Lutheran missionaries had gradually developed a less authoritarian, more presbyterial type of organisation, established church councils, resolved rules and regulations for the

congregations, begun to publish a church magazine and other devotional literature, and, in comparison with their German predecessors and colleagues, introduced a more pastoral approach in their missionary work (e.g., 'mission chat'). Financially, Batunese Christianity became almost self-supporting. Concerning the development of human resources, however, the progress here was slower than that on Nias. A Batunese minister was, albeit without proper prior training, appointed just before the missionaries had to leave due to World War II. On 16 August 1945, a day after the Japanese occupiers had left the Batu Islands, the Batunese church (BKP) was called into being.

8.2.1 Local Developments

While, in the early 1930s, the preparations for ecclesiastical independence were motivated strongly by the financial malaise of the RM, the theological basis was the 'three-self' principle: 'self-governing, self-supporting and self-extending'. The first church order of the BNKP, decided upon by the first synod (1936), was based on presbyterial-synodal principles, combined, however, with a strict top-down structure with the *ephorus* at the pinnacle. This Episcopalian element was first introduced on Nias by Fries (draft 1921), and can be traced back to Fabri, who introduced a similar structure in the Batak church order of 1881. This centralist nature of the church was not in accord with the traditional Niasan social structure of *banua*, which, although hierarchical, was nonetheless decentralist in nature. This structure of the BNKP resembled, to some extent, the organisational structure of the RM and its supporting German churches at the time. It may be argued that a more 'Congregationalist' rather than 'United' type of church order would have been more fitting to the *banua*-centred character of Niasan society.

By the time the BNKP was founded, the vast majority of Ono Niha had become Christian, but the primal religion, although shattered, had not completely disappeared. Vestiges of ancient Niasan beliefs and values, which had either been stigmatised as evil (e.g., venerating the ancestors and traditional medicine), or not been adapted by the church (e.g., traditional music and traditional social structures), continued to play a significant role in everyday life, especially in times of hardship, such as illness and natural disaster. To this day, whenever the quality of Christian devotion declines, the demand for pre-Christian religious practices often tends to increase.

While missionaries' accomplishments (both in the RM and the DLM) in education, medical service, empowerment of women, and even in enhancing economic development cannot be underestimated, they failed to meet the theological challenge prompted by the encounter between Gospel and culture. In principle, the missionaries (including, as of 1904, deaconesses) and, to an even greater extent, their faithful Niasan protégés, disseminated a specifically Western form of Christianity, using the Niasan vernacular. Association with traditional symbols and beliefs considered part of the primal religion were neglected, avoided or even discouraged. Everything that hinted of paganism was considered dark, dirty and devilish.

One rare exception to this general approach was the one taken by Steinhart, missionary for the DLM on the Batu Islands from 1924 until World War II. Steinhart busied himself in an extraordinary manner with traditional Ono Niha culture, including the primal religion, believing that the authentic religious experience of a

people was the best starting point for Christian mission. Through dialogue (e.g., 'mission chat'), points of contact between the primal religion and Christianity had to be established. This method, based on the Bible (Acts 17:22-23), involved the Ono Niha as partners in the process of Christianisation, rather than as objects of a missionary conquest.

Both on Nias and the Batu Islands, Christianity did not die out during World War II, even though the churches became orphaned with the loss of its missionaries and suffered extreme deprivation and persecution under Japanese occupation. When, in 1948, the DLM wanted to resume its missionary work on the Batu Islands, this was, albeit possibly under the pressure of Republican officers, rejected by the BKP. On Nias, the RM-missionaries, who had returned to Nias in the early 1950s, were no longer in positions of leadership, but merely advisors (*penasihat*) to the synod.

During the struggle for independence (1945-1949), most members of the Batunese BKP and of the Niasan BNKP embraced Indonesian nationalism. While the churches, as institutions, cannot be regarded as having actively supported the struggle for liberation, some ministers had become pro-Republican political activists. Gradually, Niasan Christians became involved in political life, a realm considered dangerous and 'dirty' by the missionaries.

In 1955, at the first general elections of the Republic of Indonesia, the Christian Party, *Parkindo*, gained a majority among the Ono Niha with the support of the Niasan churches. Between 1955 and 1965, incited by the anti-imperialist rhetoric of Soekarno, a small elite of the BNKP developed a very critical attitude towards the Western missions. Under the influence of the national ideology of *Pancasila*, and driven by the fear of 'cultural imperialism', some church leaders demonstrated a new appreciation for indigenous local cultures and ancient values.

In the early 1960s, in confrontation with some of the missionaries, who feared a resurgence of paganism, fiery discussions were held at the synod assemblies concerning the acknowledgement of traditional elements of the Niasan culture in the church discipline (*amakhoita*). The missionaries had received their training at the Barmen seminary, which had positioned itself on the side of the anti-Nazi 'Confessing Church' during the Hitler regime. However, the 'dialectical theology' (Barth, Eichholz, and others), prevalent in 'Barmen' at the time, resulted in a general suspicion of any kind of ideology, which did not further the appreciation of Indonesian nationalism in the young churches.

On the part of the Ono Niha, however, some leading members and church workers of the BNKP began to sympathise with the leftist concept of *Nasakom*. It was not until after the so-called Communist *coup d'etat* (G-30S / PKI), on 30 September 1965, that the BNKP dismissed all employees and office-bearers with leftist leanings and distanced itself clearly from the challenge of Communism.

During the 1950s and 1960s, the Roman Catholic mission operated with increasing success on Nias and the Batu Islands, focusing mainly on regions (or remote islands) where Protestantism was not firmly rooted, on minorities such as the Chinese or on former Protestant schismatics (e.g., the Fa'awösa). The rapid growth of Roman Catholicism, however, created fears among the Protestants, not the least among the missionaries. These fears also had a cultural dimension. Even before the second Vatican Council (1962-1965), Catholics were much more permissive in matters relating to traditional Niasan culture, including elements of the primal religion. Whereas this was not unattractive to many Ono Niha, the fact that the Catholic missionaries, just like their counterparts from the RM and the DLM, came

from the Netherlands and Germany, was quite confusing to them. In order to 'explain' the differences, both sides resorted to aggressive propaganda. Nevertheless, for a substantial number of Ono Niha, as well as Chinese, on Nias and the Batu Islands, Roman Catholicism offered either a first opportunity to embrace Christianity, or a welcome alternative to the Protestant churches and sects.

In June 1960, after a visit the previous year by a delegation of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), the Lutheran BKP chose to merge with the BNKP. Although they could have joined the HKBP, which, by then, was a member of the LWF, the *Ono Niha Keriso* of the Batu Islands decided that their cultural ties with Nias were more important than their confessional ties with the HKBP.

During the post-colonial period, the BNKP was faced with serious internal problems, such as schisms and heresy. The church schisms of both the AMIN in 1946 and the ONKP in 1952 indicated an unwillingness to submit to the centralist structure of the BNKP, and must be seen as the resurgence of traditional Niasan social structures. On the other hand, in a situation marked by existential fear and extreme hardship, the BNKP, in its worship services, teaching and pastoral care, failed to serve the needs of many of its members. As a result, new expressions of charismatic enthusiasm appeared, spreading rapidly from West Nias to other parts of the archipelago. These movements accommodated religious practices prohibited by the BNKP, such as prophecy, dream interpretation, speaking in tongues etc.

Unfortunately, the BNKP, as other young churches in Indonesia, did not enter into constructive theological dialogue with these charismatic groups, but, as in the case of Ama Haogö, denounced their teachings as heresy. Instead of dealing with this creatively and from a pastoral perspective, all discussion was stifled through reference to the *amakhoita*. Nevertheless, the BNKP failed to solve the problem of accommodating or modifying traditional practices such as dowry, mixed marriages, the *adat* burial rites, etc. The problem of polygamy also never became a topic for serious theological discourse, even though it was still quite a common practice among Ono Niha in the 1960s and the biblical arguments, for example of the AFY and SDA, could not easily be proven wrong. Instead, in all these matters, the BNKP stuck rigidly to its pre-World War II missionary heritage, namely, the strict rule of the church discipline, or *amakhoita*. Whoever infringed the *amakhoita* was in serious danger of being excommunicated and treated as an alien (*niha baero*), equivalent to being considered a 'heathen'.

Despite its authority, however, the *amakhoita* had (and still has) some limitations stemming from its lack of flexibility and legitimisation. According to ancient Ono Niha culture, renewal of the law could only be guaranteed by the solemn vow-taking *fondrakö* ceremony. In modern times, respecting the division between church, *adat*, and government, an institution such as *fondrakö* can not be revived. But, the church, having a prominent position in Ono Niha society, has the duty, on the basis of the Bible and in constant dialogue with its own cultural context, to develop a theology and practice which offers ethical and moral orientation in times of transformation in all spheres of life.

8.2.2 Participation in National and International Networks

Although the origins of the BNKP are on Nias and the Batu Islands, from the nineteenth century on *Ono Niha Keriso* have also lived outside the region. Alongside the congregations in Padang, the Niasan diaspora expanded to such places

as the Sumatran regencies of Tapanuli, Medan, Padang Sidempuan, Pekanbaru, Palembang, and Java (Jakarta, Bandung, Surabaya, etc). Rather than join other Protestant churches in the diaspora, the *Ono Niha Keriso* prefer to set up their own local tribal church (*gereja suku*). While this contributes greatly towards maintaining tribal identity (e.g., by using the Niasan vernacular), the exclusive nature of the BNKP makes it even less accessible than other Indonesian churches to outsiders.

Despite its tribal character, the BNKP was one of the founding members of the Indonesian Council of Churches (DGI / PGI). Therefore, the BNKP has not only a local but also a national presence. Through its membership in the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA), the United Evangelical Mission (UEM; successor to the RM), the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and the World Council of Churches (WCC), the BNKP is also involved in a range of international ecumenical movements. If asked, however, about the role the BNKP has played in national and international ecumenical organisations, the answer must be: 'quite a passive role'. Also in its relations to other religions, the BNKP has maintained an attitude which, although not provocative, has been rather indifferent. In the political sphere, especially in the Soeharto-era (1966-1998), the BNKP adhered to the policy of participation in development (*partisipasi dalam pembangunan*) set out by the national government. Although the BNKP is easily the largest social organisation on Nias, its political influence up to now has been very limited.

8.3 DOING THEOLOGY IN THE CONTEXT OF NIAS AND THE BATU ISLANDS

Regarding the future of Niasan Christianity, it must be asked, 'What kind of theology do Niasan churches need to meet today's many challenges? How can churches best serve the presence of the Kingdom of God among the Ono Niha, specifically, and in national and international contexts in general?' Presenting a holistic Niasan theology would exceed the scope of this study, but based on the results of the historical and sociological research undertaken by the study's authors, certain co-ordinates must be established if a local Niasan theology is to be constructed.⁶²⁵

8.3.1 Gospel and Traditional Culture

The missionaries' paradigm divided Niasan culture into three distinct levels: eagerly accepted culture (i.e., the Niasan vernacular); tolerated culture (i.e., the *adat*, purged of all elements deemed conflicting with the Gospel and/or Western 'civilization'); and condemned culture (i.e., the primal religion). In sharp contrast to the highly valued Niasan language, the primal religion was considered to be absolutely useless, if not indeed an abomination to God. But the *adat* was also never fully integrated into the Christian status quo.

In 1918, after the annual conference for teacher-preachers held in Omböläta, Fries was asked the following question by an Ono Niha: 'Which new laws (*amakhoita*) have been decided this year?'⁶²⁶ The missionary answered that many old laws (*huku fōna*) remaining on Nias had to be rooted out. Practices such as huge

⁶²⁵ Cf. Ch. 7.3.3 and Ch. 7.4.

⁶²⁶ *Toeria*, 11/4 (1918), pp. 42-43.

pig feasts, manufacturing gold jewellery, burial rites, teeth-filing, genital incision, etc., were prohibited and to be replaced completely by the new Christian law. To illustrate his answer more clearly, Fries referred to the twin parables of 'the piece of unshrunk cloth on an old cloak' and 'The new wine in old wineskins' (Mt 9:16-17, cf. Mk 2:21-22), and used these verses to demand that anyone following Jesus must take the decision to abandon all the old traditions, as the old has passed away, and the new life in Christ had already dawned. Old and new should not be mixed. The old law of the Ono Niha was of no use in the new life in Christ. The *Ono Niha Keriso* now had to walk on the new path: is the path of the new law (*amakhoita si bohou*).

Fries' approach was not only directed against the primal religion of the Ono Niha. It was also a categorical rejection of all aspects of the *adat* that did not conform with western standards of civilization. According to Fries, who, as *ephorus* of the Nias mission, represented the prevalent missionary attitude towards culture at that time, the new wine of the Gospel did not fit the old wineskins of traditional Niasan culture. However, Fries failed to question whether the old wineskins of Rhenish and Westphalian Protestantism were fit to convey the Gospel within the Niasan context. The missionaries also did not question Dutch colonial rule, with its practices of forced labour (*rodi*), heavy taxation, forced removals of whole villages etc. Was this the new wineskin of civilization, in which the Ono Niha could cherish their freedom as Christians? The missionaries did not doubt that Western Christian civilization was the highest possible form of culture, even though it had just brought the most terrible of wars to the world.

In the post-colonial era, the same uncompromising, legalistic approach taken by the missionaries – and their indigenous protégés – towards the ancient culture of the Ono Niha, was also taken by the BNKP towards contemporary cultural expressions, such as youth culture. Even after 1965, and up to the present day, its approach towards culture was legalistic rather than theological. All kinds of cultural phenomena had to pass through the filter of the *amakhoita*, but there was no creative biblical reflection on how to deal constructively with culture. The church cannot, a priori, consider certain cultural expressions taboo or contrary to the Gospel, as this would deprive it of any relevance or influence, as happened, for example, in the case of *famoni* in the primal religion, contemporary youth culture, and politics.

From today's perspective, it is understood that the Gospel is never devoid of culture. In Jesus Christ, the Word of God itself entered a specific human reality (Jn 1:14), i.e., Jewish society in Palestine under Roman occupation in the first half of the first century. Jesus challenged this reality, demanding a change of life, speaking out against injustice and falsehood, wanting people to make peace, forgive, love, and be free. But he neither raised one culture over another, nor did he seek to conquer other cultures; and he definitely did not attempt to destroy the cultures in which he lived.

In principle, the Gospel can enter every culture; but it will certainly also challenge it. The yeast permeates the dough, transforming it from within, so that it becomes bread (cf. Lk 13:20-21, 'Parable of the Yeast'). But the yeast does not destroy the dough. Of course, there are elements or trends in any culture, which cannot be reconciled with the teachings of the Bible. For example: on Nias and the Batu Islands, it was traditionally the rich and prosperous who benefited most from the *adat*. Everything was directed towards their achieving *lakhömi*. For the slaves or indebted commoners, not even the *fondrakö* could bring any relief. For the poor

there was no *lakhömi*. This is incompatible with the Gospel, but, alas, seldom challenged by the church.

8.3.2 Gospel and Modern Culture

In constructing a contextual theology for Nias and the Batu Islands, it is not enough to concentrate only on the traditional Niasan culture, but also contemporary cultural influences must be taken into consideration. The future paradigm of a local Niasan theology must always take into consideration four basic principles that shape the life of the Ono Niha: the strong ethnic identity, the extreme poverty and underdevelopment of the region, the pluralistic nature of Indonesian society and the influences of globalisation.

Within the scope of the above-mentioned new paradigm, the challenge to the BNKP is to become more relevant and more significant for the community it serves. The Niasan church should develop an attitude of humble service, entering the realms of this world (e.g., *adat*, politics, economy), not to destroy but to change them from within; to transform and reconcile reality and to realise justice, peace and the integrity of creation. In doing so, the church must be prepared to suffer. But there is also hope that in the end, God's will be done.

The question is: 'how can the church become a blessing to its own context?' For the Ono Niha, blessing (*howuhowu*) is the goal of life. Only with *howuhowu* is life meaningful. In contrast, poverty, injustice, conflict etc. are a curse or *fangelifi*. Hence, all the activities of the Ono Niha – religious, cultural and political – must be directed towards banishing *fangelifi* and attaining *howuhowu*. For Niasan Christians, keeping the *adat* together with believing in Jesus Christ holds the promise of *howuhowu*. The *adat* is characterised by the constant repetition of unchanging ancient patterns that can be traced back to the ancestors. The Gospel, on the other hand, teaches that the Holy Spirit, while reminding believers of the Word of God, looks to, and opens up, a new future. It is, however, neither constructive nor fair to characterise the *adat* as being backward, while praising Christianity for being progressive. We must remember that, in the past, the *adat* of the Ono Niha also had the potential for renewal through the *fondrakö*, while Christianity has been largely conservative and often lacking the dynamics to respond to social realities.

For the future, faced with extreme hardships and challenges, the Niasan churches will have to develop a 'theology of *howuhowu*', which re-integrates the different dimensions of the fragmented reality of life. Modern society, however, cannot simply return to the holistic worldview of the pre-Christian culture.⁶²⁷ But, at least as far as the Niasan context is concerned, very close co-operation between the institutions of the church, politics and *adat* is required. Study of the primal religion, *adat* and traditional government can make an important contribution to developing a stronger identity for the Niasan churches. But the *adat* also must be modified in certain key areas. The struggle for *lakhömi*, which in the past excluded the poor, must now also be directed towards them. The dignity of every man and woman, of Christians and people of other faiths, must be honoured. A Christian society must acknowledge all human beings as children of God with equal rights. In order to

⁶²⁷ Cf. F. Huber, *Das Christentum in Ost-, Süd- und Südostasien sowie Australien*, 2005, p. 58. Huber refers to the Indian context and the study of Wati A. Longchar, *The Traditional Tribal Worldview and Modernity*, Jorhat, 1995.

ensure this, the BNKP and other churches on Nias and the Batu Islands must improve and coordinate their diaconal services. With a concerted effort, truthful to the Niasan identity but inspired by the vision of the Kingdom of God, Niasan Christianity may then also serve as a *howuhowu* to the whole of creation.

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4 INTERVIEWS

| | | |
|----------------------------|--------------------|--|
| BU'ULÖLÖ, Ama Osara'ö | Gomo | 13.02.2004 ⁶³⁰ |
| BU'ULÖLÖ, Talizonekhe, | Gunungsitoli, Nias | 28.01.1999; 04.02.1999 ⁶³¹ |
| FLENDER, Wilhelm | Wuppertal, Germany | 11.03.1998 ⁶³² |
| GOWASA, Haidir | Gunungsitoli | 15.05.2001 ⁶³³ |
| GULÖ, Fatolasa | Gunungsitoli | 14.01.1999; 21.01.1999 ⁶³⁴ |
| GULÖ, Lala'aro | Gunungsitoli | 12.06.1998 ⁶³⁵ |
| KOSACK, Jürgen | Wuppertal | 08.06.2002 ⁶³⁶ |
| SADAWA, Ama Wiliba | Gomo | 15.02.2004 ⁶³⁷ |
| SCHEKATZ, Herbert | Wuppertal | 27.06.2002 ⁶³⁸ |
| STEINHART, Leonard | St. Michielsgestel | 20.06.2002 ⁶³⁹ |
| TELAUMBANUA, Ama Wa'ö | Gomo | 14.02.2004 ⁶⁴⁰ |
| TEUTSCHER-VALK, Johanna H. | Oosterbeek | 16.12.2003 ⁶⁴¹ |
| ZWAAN, Dick | Gouda | 13.09.2001 ⁶⁴² |

⁶³⁰ By Tuhoni Telaumbanua.

⁶³¹ By Tuhoni Telaumbanua and Uwe Hummel.

⁶³² By Uwe Hummel.

⁶³³ By Uwe Hummel.

⁶³⁴ By Tuhoni Telaumbanua and Uwe Hummel.

⁶³⁵ By Tuhoni Telaumbanua and Uwe Hummel.

⁶³⁶ By Tuhoni Telaumbanua and Uwe Hummel.

⁶³⁷ By Tuhoni Telaumbanua.

⁶³⁸ By Tuhoni Telaumbanua and Uwe Hummel.

⁶³⁹ By Tuhoni Telaumbanua and Uwe Hummel.

⁶⁴⁰ By Tuhoni Telaumbanua.

⁶⁴¹ By Uwe Hummel.

⁶⁴² By Uwe Hummel.

Samenvatting (Dutch Summary)

Kruis en Adu: Een socio-historische studie over de ontmoeting van het Christendom met de inheemse cultuur op Nias en de Batoe-eilanden, Indonesië (1865-1965)

1 INLEIDING

Deze studie is een product van teamwork van Tuhoni Telaumbanua (afkomstig uit Nias, Indonesië) en Uwe Hummel (afkomstig uit Duitsland). Telaumbanua benadert het thema vanuit een godsdienst-sociologische en Hummel tevens vanuit een geschiedkundige invalshoek. De auteurs stellen dat dit de beste methode voor intercultureel, missiologisch onderzoek is. Ieder behandelt zijn eigen deelthema's in afzonderlijke hoofdstukken. Alleen de hoofdstukken 1 (Inleiding) en 8 (Conclusie) werden samen geschreven.

De rode draad door deze studie heen is de ontmoeting tussen het Christendom, zoals het door Europese zendelingen werd gebracht en door de Niasse¹ kerken tot op heden wordt gepropageerd, en de Ono Niha, de oorspronkelijke inwoners van Nias en de Batoe-eilanden voor de Westkust van Sumatra, Indonesië. Bijzondere aandacht wordt besteed aan de wisselwerking tussen de protestantse leer van de zending en de Niasse kerken enerzijds en de inheemse cultuur van Nias en de Batoe-eilanden anderzijds. In het kader van het oecumenische project 'Cultuur en Evangelie', waarvan een beknopt overzicht wordt verschaft, valt de focus op de houding van kerk en zending tegenover de cultuur in het algemeen, en de traditionele, voor-christelijke religie van de Ono Niha in het bijzonder.

Het tijdsbestek van dit onderzoek omvat honderd jaar, vanaf september 1865, het beginpunt van het zendingswerk op Nias, tot en met september 1965, toen het honderdjarig jubileum van de Protestantse kerk op Nias werd gevierd en de veronderstelde Communisten-coup (G-30S / PKI) plaatsvond. Heel kort wordt ook verwezen naar ontwikkelingen in de zendingsgenootschappen en in de Niasse Protestantse Kerk (BNKP) die buiten dit tijdsbestek vallen, maar voor het thema van belang zijn.

Wat de bronnen betreft hebben de schrijvers onder meer de archieven van de Rijnse Zending te Wuppertal, van de Nederlandse Lutherse Zending in Amsterdam, van de BNKP te Gunungsitoli, van de Raad voor de Zending der Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk te Utrecht (vroeger Oegstgeest), alsmede de Bibliotheek van het Hendrik Kraemer Instituut te Utrecht (bibliotheek van de Universiteit Utrecht) geraadpleegd. Verder werden ongepubliceerde en gepubliceerde boeken, artikelen, verslagen, en scripties over Nias en de Batoe-eilanden, en een aantal algemene werken gelezen. Naast de schriftelijke bronnen hebben de auteurs de gegevens van door hen gehouden interviews met getuigen van de geschiedenis (oudere Ono Niha, oud-zendelingen en hun nazaten) en van een door hen gehouden enquête verwerkt.

¹ Wellicht beïnvloed door het Duits, gebruiken sommigen het bijvoeglijk naamwoord 'Niassische'. De auteurs kiezen echter met verwijzing naar zending W.L. Steinhart voor 'Niasse' ('Niassche'), hetgeen ook nog beter klinkt.

2 HET GEBIED EN DE MENSEN VAN NIAS EN DE BATOE-EILANDEN

In hoofdstuk 2 geeft Telaumbanua een algemeen aardrijkskundig, demografisch, religieus en cultureel overzicht van Nias en de Batoe-eilanden. Hij gaat in het bijzonder in op de traditionele kosmologie, de godsdienst met haar *adu*-beelden en priesters, de sociale orde, de feesten, en de *adat* in de cirkel van het leven en sterven van de Ono Niha. De Ono Niha hadden een gesloten, alomvattend wereldbeeld. Ze verstonden hun werkelijkheid als een reflectie van de hogere orde van de opperwereld. Al hun streven was erop gericht de harmonie tussen de kosmos en hun eigen werkelijkheid te bewaren of te herstellen. De stipte navolging van de *adat* garandeerde de zegen (*howuhowu*) van de geesten van de voorouders. Zondigen tegen de *adat* had ongeluk, ziekte, een verlies van eer (*lakhömi*) en armoede tot gevolg. De harmonie moest dan door offers (varkens of kippen), die door priesters of priestersessen (*ere*) gebracht werden, worden hersteld.

Van nature was de *adat* niet alleen maar gericht op het behoud van de overleveringen van de voorouders. Ze kon door de *fondrakö*-ceremonie vernieuwd worden. Pas door het verbod van de *föndrakö* en vergelijkbare ceremonies door de koloniale overheid en de zending, verloor de *adat* ook haar vermogen tot vernieuwing. Ingrepen van overheid en zending om de *adat* aan te passen (bijvoorbeeld het verlagen van de bruidsprijs of de afschaffing van de besnijdenis) hadden weinig nut, omdat ze niet waren gelegitimeerd door de voorouders door middel van religieuze ceremonies.

3 DE ZENDINGSGENOOTSCHAPPEN DIE WERKZAAM WAREN OP NIAS EN DE BATOE-EILANDEN

In hoofdstuk 3 geeft Hummel een overzicht van de twee protestantse zendingsgenootschappen, die op Nias en de Batoe-eilanden werkzaam waren, namelijk de *Rheinische Missionsgesellschaft* (RMG)² en het Nederlands Luthers Genootschap voor In- en Uitwendige Zending (Luthers Genootschap).³ Een zekere geestelijke en organisatorische voorbeeldfunctie voor de RMG hadden de zendingsgenootschappen van Basel, London (LMS), en Rotterdam (NZG). Financieel werd de RMG, die in 1828 door een vereniging van vier kleine zendingsgenootschappen tot stand was gekomen, ondersteund door de zending toegedane kringen en gemeenten, niet door de *Landeskirchen*.

De spirituele context van de RMG is het Piëtisme en het Reveil van de 19e eeuw in het Rijnland en in Westfalen. Twee devotionele boeken die later een grote invloed op het geestelijke leven van de Ono Niha op Nias en de Batoe-eilanden zouden hebben, speelden in deze zendingskringen een belangrijke rol: *The Pilgrim's Progress* door John Bunyan (1678), een eschatologisch-apocalyptisch werk waarin het motief van 'de weg, die ten leven leidt' (Matteüs 7: 13-14) de rode draad is, en *Das Herzensbüchlein* van Johannes E. Gossner (1812), waarin de verschillende staten van het menselijk hart, dat van de zondaar en dat van de in Christus verlost, beschreven worden. Confessioneel was de achterban én Luthers (voornamelijk in het Ravensberger land) én Calvinistisch (voornamelijk in het Siegerland). Door het

² In deze studie wordt doorgaans de Engelse afkorting RM (Rhenish Mission) gebruikt.

³ In deze studie wordt doorgaans de Engelse afkorting DLM (Dutch Lutheran Mission) gebruikt.

gebruik van dogmatisch-stichtelijke werken van de gereformeerd-piëtistische theoloog Carl Ernst (zowel op het seminarie als in vertaalde vorm op het Niasse zendingsterrein), was er vanaf de jaren 1860 een meer gereformeerde tendens, maar de officiële lijn van de RMG was 'uniert', net als de Rijnse en Westfaalse *Landeskirchen*.

Doorgaans hing men in de RMG kringen een theologie van het Koninkrijk Gods aan, die echter in de tweede helft van de 19e en de eerste decennia van de 20e eeuw sterk door koloniale en nationalistische waanidealen overschaduwde werd. Toen in 1933 Hitler in Duitsland aan de macht kwam ging bijna het hele RMG-seminarie over naar de Nazis. Deze afdwaling duurde echter slechts enkele maanden. Onder invloed van de dialectische theologie (Karl Barth) kwam men weer tot bezinning en keerde men terug tot een Bijbelse theologie van het Koninkrijk van God. Het sterke wantrouwen tegenover alle ideologie en cultuur dat de dialectische theologie eigen was, bleek echter niet bevorderlijk voor een kontekstualisatie van de theologie binnen de zendingskerken.

Het Luthers Genootschap (1852/1872) met zijn centrum in Amsterdam begon in 1884 naast het werk in het binnenland ook met zendingswerk onder de heidenen in Nederlands-Indië. In het Luthers Genootschap verzamelden zich leden van beide Lutherse kerken in Nederland, die een piëtistische spiritualiteit toegewijd waren. Ze namen overwegend anti-liberale en conservatief-Lutherse standpunten in, maar onderhielden vaak ook goede contacten met geestverwanten van herrnhutterse en gereformeerde gezindte. Met het Reveil verbond hen de nadruk op het Koninkrijk van God. Zij wilden echter een specifiek Lutherse bijdrage tot de kerstening der volken leveren.

Op twee na (Kersten en Steinhart) werden de zendingen van het Luthers Genootschap opgeleid door het seminarie van de RMG te Barmen. Steinhart, die in 1924 naar de Batoe-eilanden vertrok, had zijn opleiding in de Nederlandse Zendingsschool te Oegstgeest genoten. Qua methode, met name in zijn hoge waardering van de inheemse cultuur en godsdienst van de Ono Niha, onderscheidde hij zich aanzienlijk van de door de RMG gevormde collega's.

Met name tot de Eerste Wereldoorlog, maar in afnemende mate ook daarna, bestond een bilaterale samenwerking tussen het Luthers Genootschap en de RMG. Die kwam echter door de Duitse bezetting van Nederland in mei 1940 tot een abrupt einde.

4 DE KERSTENING VAN NIAS EN DE BATOE-EILANDEN (1865-1930)

In dit hoofdstuk reconstrueert Hummel het proces van kerstening van de autochtone bevolking van Nias en de Batoe-eilanden in de periode 1865 tot en met 1930. Vooraf wordt ook kort verwezen naar een aantal mislukte pogingen van vooral de rooms-katholieke missie om zich op Nias te vestigen, alsmede naar de eerste contacten tussen de Ono Niha en de RMG in Padang op Sumatra.

Het zendings- en kerkewerk stonden gedurende deze tijd volledig onder leiding van de zendingen. RMG-zending Denninger en zijn ega begonnen in september 1865 hun bediening in Gunungsitoli, het administratief centrum van het onder Nederlands beheer staande gouvernementsgebied (*rapatgebied*) op Nias. Denninger vertaalde gedeelten van de Bijbel en een schoolboekje in de Niasse taal. Van meet af aan waren onderwijs en medische zorg belangrijke hulpdiensten van de zending. Op

Pasen 1874 doopte Denninger samen met een collega de eerstelingen van Nias. Vóór Denningers vertrek in 1875 ontstonden er nog verdere zendingsposten in Ombölatá en in Dahana. Sundermann vertaalde de gehele Bijbel in de Niasse taal. De ega's van de zendingen waren de pioniers van het zondagscholenwerk.

Pogingen tot het stichten van zendingsposten buiten het gouvernementengebied, in Fagulö en Teluk Dalam, faalden. De reden daarvoor was dat de Niasse hoofden en de zendingen verschillende motieven hadden. Aanvankelijk meenden de hoofden dat de aanwezigheid van een zending in hun gebied hun prestige zou verhogen. Maar na enige tijd moesten zij vaststellen dat de invloed van de zendingen op hun onderdanen hun eigen gezag ondermijnde en dat zij in geval van oorlog niet op hun loyaliteit konden rekenen. Bovendien schiep de nauwe relatie tussen de zendingen en de koloniale overheid terecht de indruk dat de zendingen wilden helpen de soevereiniteit van de hoofden te beëindigen en op Nias de *pax Neerlandica* te vestigen. Ook was de zeer negatieve houding van vele zendingen ten opzichte van de oude Niasse godsdienst niet bevorderlijk voor het wederzijds vertrouwen. Dat gold vooral voor degenen die door de koloniaal-ideoloog Fabri waren opgeleid.

In 1890, bezield door een nieuwe visie op de Christianisering der volken (Warneck) – die een grotere waardering voor de inheemse cultuur inhield, maar ook een sterkere differentiatie van wat cultureel goed, tolereerbaar, en 'uit den boze' is – en door de vorming van nationale kerken, begon de RMG met een succesvolle expansie over de grenzen van het gouvernementengebied. Heel strategisch werd vanaf 1890 een netwerk van zendingsposten over geheel Nias heen gevestigd. Daarbij werkte men in toenemende mate samen met de koloniale overheid, met name vanaf 1901, toen de Ethische Politiek in Nederlands-Indië werd geïntroduceerd. Anderzijds werd het optreden van de zendingen tegenover de Ono Niha steeds meer autoritair. Van cultureel student zijn aan de voeten van de Ono Niha, zoals dat in het prille begin vaak het geval was, kon geen sprake meer zijn. Er ontstond een streng georganiseerde *top-down* bevelsstructuur in de zendingkerk.

In 1908 was geheel Nias onder het beheer van de Nederlanders en kon ook het dicht bevolkte zuiden door de zending bewerkt worden. Binnen enkele jaren waren de Ono Niha én staatkundig én religieus een afhankelijk volk. De overheid introduceerde dwangmaatregelen, zoals herendiensten (*rodi*), belastingen, geforceerde verhuizingen van hele dorpen, een verbod op varkensstallen onder de woonhuizen, beperkingen van de machtspositie van de inheemse hoofden, enzovoort. Aan de andere kant oefenden de zendingen een regelrecht 'cultuurvandalisme' uit met betrekking tot alle symbolen van de oude godsdienst, met name de *adu*-beelden en de heilige *fösi*-bomen. Wie gedoopt wilde worden moest alles wat met de oude godsdienst te maken had (behalve natuurlijk dat wat de zendingen zelf hadden overgenomen) afzweren. Het overhandigen van de beelden van de voorouders (*adu-zatua*) was een soort *status confessionis*, een absolute vereiste om Christen te worden en te blijven. Deze dubbele pressie van koloniale overheid en zending had een fnuikende uitwerking op het zelfbewustzijn van het Niasse volk.

Tegen deze achtergrond voltrok zich vanaf 1915 tot en met 1930 de grote opwekkingsbeweging (*fangesa dödö sebua*) op Nias. Het initiatief ging uit van de Ono Niha en niet van de zendingen. Ook was het niet alleen een vernieuwing van het geloof bij de Christenen, maar vooral ook een middelpuntvliedende beweging, die zich uitstreekte tot de meest afgelegen dorpen, die op dat moment nog niet gekerstend waren. Alleen de Batoe-eilanden werden door de opwekking niet bereikt.

Op Nias veroorzaakte de opwekking een communale gedaanteverandering. Ze gaf de creatieve kracht om een nieuwe Niasse identiteit te construeren. Waar vroeger de *adu* de kern van de identiteit was, was dat nu Jezus Christus. Voor vele Ono Niha was de opwekking de geboortestond van een nieuw eschatologisch bewustzijn. De visie op tijd en geschiedenis veranderde van het cyclisch wereldbeeld van de oude Niasse religie met haar gouden verleden in Teteholi Ana'a, in een lineair wereldbeeld met het Koninkrijk van God in de toekomst.

Het machtige elan van de opwekking maakte ook sociaal-politieke krachten vrij. Echter waakten de zendelingen en hun inheemse protégés er angstvallig voor dat de dynamiek van het nieuwe zelfbewustzijn zich alleen tot de kerkelijke sfeer beperkte. Desondanks resulteerde de opwekking in een mate van geestelijke volwassenheid.

Inmiddels was een tweede zendingsfront ontstaan op de Batoe-eilanden door het Luthers Genootschap. De eerste zending, gerecrueteerd van de RMG, was Kersten. Hij en zijn ega Christine begonnen hun dienst op Pulau Tello, het administratief centrum, in februari 1889, maar zij bleven daar nog geen twee jaar. Op 27 november 1892 werden de eerste twaalf Christenen gedoopt door zending Frickenschmidt, eveneens een Duitser. De gemeenten droegen een aantal bepaald Lutherse kenmerken. Anders dan op Nias ontstond een wedloop tussen het Christendom en de Islam om de ongeveer twintig bewoonde eilanden, of delen daarvan, te bereiken. Dat kwam vooral doordat de familie van de *raja* belangstelling voor de Islam toonde.

Een nieuwe periode van de zending op de Batoe-eilanden begon in 1919 met de komst van Schröder. Hij, en zijn latere collega Steinhart waren Nederlanders. Ze bouwden consequent aan een presbyteriaal-synodale organisatievorm en een goed functionerend financieel systeem. Naast de zendingsscholen en de medische dienst, legden ze de nadruk op een pastorale werkwijze ('zendingsgesprek'). Steinhart publiceerde uitvoerig over de ethnografika van de Batoe-eilanden. In de jaren 1920 werden het Zevendedags Adventisme en het Communisme grote uitdagingen voor de jonge gemeenten.

Zowel op Nias als op de Batoe-eilanden speelden autochtone christenen in deze periode een doorslaggevende rol bij de kerstening. Mettertijd namen ze in toenemende mate functies van de zendelingen over, met twee belangrijke uitzonderingen: leiding en opleiding.

5 DE ONAFHANKELIJKE KERKEN OP NIAS EN DE BATOE-EILANDEN (1930-1965)

In dit hoofdstuk bespreekt Hummel de geschiedenis van de onafhankelijke protestantse kerken, in het bijzonder de BNKP op Nias en de BKP op de Batoe-eilanden.

Aangezet door de malaise binnen de RMG en aangemoedigd door het tot stand komen van een eigen synode in Batakland (HKBP, 1930), begonnen de zendelingen op Nias begin jaren dertig concrete stappen te zetten in de richting van een zelfstandige kerk. In nauwe samenwerking met de inheemse *pandita* werd binnen enkele jaren een kerkorde opgesteld, die de grondslag van de Niasse kerk moest vormen.

Van 8 tot en met 11 november 1936 werd te Gunungsitoli de eerste synode gehouden. De organisatie van de nieuwe kerk (BNKP) was centralistisch en hiërarchisch en toonde geen traditionele Niasse elementen. Ze leek enigszins op die van de moederkerken in het Rijnland en Westfalen. Het diakonaat ontbrak als

regulier ambt van de gemeente en de leiding bleef in de handen van de zendingen. Financieel en qua opleiding van ambtsdragers was de kerk niet goed voorbereid. Aan de andere kant waren het werk onder de Ono Niha in de verstrooiing op Sumatra en Java, de ontwikkeling van ziekenhuizen en de voortzetting (onder heel moeilijke omstandigheden) van het scholenwerk belangrijke missionair-diaconale diensten en hulpdiensten van de jonge kerk. De verdere ontwikkeling van kerkelijke tuchtmaatregelen (*amakhoita*) vergde een intensieve bestudering van de *adat*.

In mei 1940 werden de Duitse zendingen geïnterneerd. In één klap werd de BNKP ontvoegd, hoewel Nederlandse zendingen van de Batak-Nias-Zending formeel een bepaald toezicht hielden. Toen echter in april 1942 de Japanners Nias en de Batoe-eilanden bezetten, stond de BNKP helemaal alleen. Het feit dat de gemeenten onder Japans bestuur niet wegwijnden is een bewijs dat het christelijk geloof reeds diepe wortels had gekregen.

Op de Batoe-eilanden was geen eigen synode tot stand gekomen, maar ook hier bleven de Ono Niha trouw aan de Christelijke godsdienst. In de oorlog, toen de *guru's* door de Japanners gedwongen werden om zich uitsluitend aan de schooldienst te wijden, heeft zich vooral het ambt van de *sinenge* (een soort hoofdouderling met preekbevoegdheid), dat van de BNKP op Nias werd overgenomen, als bijzonder stabiliserend bewezen.

Nadat de Japanners Pulau Tello hadden verlaten, werd op 16 augustus 1945 een Batoenese kerk, de BKP, uitgenoepen. Men verbrak de relatie met het Luthers Genootschap, maar slaagde er niet in een levensvatbare organisatie op te bouwen. De LWF adviseerde dat men zich óf bij de Lutherse Batakkerk (HKBP) óf bij de Niasse BNKP zou aansluiten. In 1960 koos men bewust voor de BNKP, wegens de cultureel-ethnische band met die kerk.

In de jaren vijftig werd de relatie tussen de BNKP en de RMG weer hersteld. De zendingen zouden echter niet weer de leiding hebben, maar als adviseurs (*penasihat*) bij de ontwikkeling van kerk en maatschappij dienen. Veel aandacht werd besteed aan de opleiding van Niasse ambtsdragers en aan het medische werk. Diakonessen, reeds vanaf 1904 werkzaam op Nias, verrichtten indrukwekkend opbouwwerk onder de vrouwen en meisjes. De adviseurs hadden echter moeite met het nieuwe nationale en culturele bewustzijn, dat met name sinds 1959 door de oproep van President Soekarno tot de strijd tegen het 'culturele imperialisme' en de 'culturele revolutie' bij een kleine elite van Ono Niha opkwam. Er was weinig begrip voor het politiek engagement van sommige kerkleiders, met name als dat van linkse aard was (*Nasakom*). Op grond van hun theologie van het Koninkrijk vreesden de zendingen een wederopleving van de geest van het heidendom in de kerk. Voor creatieve, 'contextuele' Niasse denkers zoals Ama Haogö was er in de BNKP geen plaats.

De rooms-katholieke missie was net voor de tweede wereldoorlog opnieuw begonnen door Nederlandse Kapucijnen. In de jaren vijftig en zestig maakte de missie, onder leiding van een missie-bisschop die uit China was gevlucht, behoorlijke vordering in haar werk op Nias en de Batoe-eilanden. Men missioneerde vooral onder degenen die zich van de BNKP hadden afgekeerd (bijvoorbeeld de *fa'awösa*-beweging), die tot minderheden behoorden (bijvoorbeeld Chinezen) of in gebieden waar het Protestantisme nog geen sterke basis had (bijvoorbeeld Pulau Pini, Batoe-eilanden). Sommige protestanten, met name ook RMG-zendingen, voelden zich door de zogenaamde *Gegenmission* bedreigd, en een tijdlang was er over en weer een scherpe propaganda-strijd. Voor vele Ono Niha was dat enigszins

verwarrend omdat die katholieke missionarissen die in de jaren vijftig waren gekomen (eveneens Kapucijnen), even als de zendelingen van de RMG Duitsers waren. Desondanks leverde de rooms-katholieke missie een belangrijke bijdrage tot de kerstening van Nias en de Batoe-eilanden en, vooral na het tweede Vaticaanse concilie, aanzienlijk cultuurbehoudend werk.

De BNKP had inmiddels met meerdere kerkplitsingen te kampen gehad. De status quo van de kerk werd ook aangevochten door de Islam (vooral op de Batoe-eilanden was er een *race* voor nog 'onbereikte' gebieden), de Zevendedags Adventisten, een aantal charismatisch-sectarische groepen (*fa'awösa*, heiligheidsbeweging, 'springende opwekkingen') en, zoals gezegd, linkse politieke ideologieën. Profeten en zieners rebelleerden tegen de starre westerse theologie van de BNKP. De nieuwe kerkorde van 1955 gaf een mate van stabiliteit, maar de ontevredenheid over bestuurlijk onvermogen en de zware financiële eisen aan de gemeenten kon niet worden weggenomen. Desondanks kon de BNKP na de Indonesische onafhankelijkheid oecumenische banden aanknopen, nationaal met de Raad van Kerken (DGI), internationaal met de RMG, de *Christian Conference of Asia*, en de Wereldraad van Kerken.

6 DE ONTMOETING TUSSEN HET CHRISTENDOM EN DE NIASSE CULTUUR

In dit hoofdstuk richt Telaumbanua de aandacht op de ontmoeting tussen het Christendom en de cultuur van de Ono Niha in haar verschillende contexten. Hij baseert zijn analyse op het schema van Niebuhr, dat bij de ontmoeting tussen Evangelie en cultuur vijf typen onderscheidt (Christus tegen de cultuur, de Christus van de cultuur, Christus boven de cultuur, Christus en de cultuur in paradox, en Christus als de transformator van de cultuur).

Telaumbanua benadert de interactie vanuit vier invalshoeken: 1. het Christendom als gemeenschap in de context van de Ono Niha, waarbij hij onder andere ingaat op de kerstening van de Niasse taal en de ontwikkeling van de eredienst, de zondagsrust en christelijke feestdagen; 2. de verhouding tussen het Christendom en de Niasse religie, waarbij hij aantoont hoe de 'kracht van de *adu*' wegwijnt naarmate de invloed van het Christendom toeneemt; 3. de ontmoeting van het Christendom en de *adat* op de belangrijkste momenten binnen de levenscyclus van de Ono Niha; en 4. het Christendom binnen het kader van de maatschappelijke orde, de sociaal-economische werkelijkheid en de politiek op Nias en de Batoe-eilanden.

Uitvoerig gaat Telaumbanua in op de overname van begrippen uit de oude religie in de Bijbelvertaling en in het kerkelijk leven. De taal werd daardoor bewaard en op een Christelijk niveau gebracht. Ook verleenden de Niasse begrippen (bijvoorbeeld *Eheha Ni'amoni'ö* voor Heilige Geest) aan het Niasse Christendom een bijzonder, vaak als problematisch ondervonden karakter.

Telaumbanua beschrijft hoe de overgang van de rituelen van de oude religie naar de christelijke vieringen verliep. Het was een moeilijk proces, omdat de *unierte* (dat wil zeggen gemengd Luthers-Calvinistische) liturgie zich volkomen van de rituelen van de oude religie onderscheidde. De zendelingen ondernamen geen pogingen om voor de lofprijzing uit de bronnen van Niasse muziek, kunst en ritueel te putten. Maar, gedreven door de geest van de opwekking, gingen Ono Niha zelf geestelijke liederen scheppen. Dit was de geboortestond van de Niasse koren. Helaas

werden deze liederen niet in het gezangboek opgenomen. Ook wat de preek betreft hadden de zendelingen niet uit de grote traditie van de Niasse rhetorica willen putten. In plaats van de traditionele dialoogstijl, moest de preek op Europees monologe wijze gehouden worden. Waar de zending het aanknopingspunt met de oude godsdienst echter wel durfde te zoeken (zoals bijvoorbeeld Lett en Steinhart deden), werd dat door de toehoorders zeer gewaardeerd.

De zending introduceerde een nieuw tijdschema. De zondag als heilige dag werd het kenmerk van de christenen bij uitstek. Christenen golden als 'mensen van de zondag' (*niha migu*). Er ontstonden vele theologische discussies rond de zondagsrust.

De zendelingen hadden bij voorbaat een negatieve houding tegenover de traditionele religie van de Ono Niha en deden alles om haar te vernietigen. Aan de andere kant probeerden de Ono Niha hun geloofsovertuigingen op de een of andere manier te behouden. De eerste 25 jaren van de Nias-zending waren dan ook bijzonder moeilijk. Aan de hand van een drietal casus, Denninger in Gunungsitoli, Ködding en Mohri in Fagulö, en Thomas in Zuid-Nias, beschrijft Telaumbanua de oorzaken van het geringe succes van het zendingswerk in deze periode. Denninger koesterde goede relaties met de hoofden en hielp de zieken met gratis medicamenten. Desondanks kon hij maar weinig invloed uitoefenen. De traditionele priesters (*ere*) stoorden zich in het geheel niet aan zijn polemieken tegen de offerdiensten en de *adu*-beelden. Als er wel eens enkele Ono Niha aan zijn godsdienstige oefeningen deelnamen, dan was dat meer vanwege de cadautjes (tabak, geld, kleren, koek) dan om de preek. Hij interpreteerde dat als gierigheid, maar in werkelijkheid verwachtte men van hem niets anders dan van de Niasse hoofden. Ook dezen waren immers verplicht om hun gasten te tracteren.

In Fagulö en Teluk Dalam, buiten het gouvernementsgebied, konden de zendelingen helemaal geen voet aan de grond krijgen. Het geloof in de *adu* als bron van leven was nog sterk, en de Ono Niha wilden dat niet inruilen voor een godsdienst die ze niet begrepen en meenden niet nodig te hebben. Men wantrouwde de zendelingen en zag in hen agenten van de koloniale macht, die stiekem waren gekomen om die Ono Niha tot slaven te maken.

Van 1890 tot 1915 veranderde de sociaal-politieke situatie ten gunste van de zending. Telaumbanua noemt vijf factoren die het oude wereldbeeld dat zijn middelpunt in de *adu* had op zijn grondvesten deden schudden: 1. het einde van de absolutistische macht van de hoofden; 2. de stijgende criminaliteit en het feit dat de koloniale overheid meer aandacht aan de veiligheid in een district gaf als er een Europeaan was gestationeerd; 3. de invloed van dromen (een zeer belangrijke factor in de oude religie), die in de tijd van transitie door de zending werd benut, maar ná de vestiging van het Christendom als 'heidens' werd verboden; 4. de invloed van de medische zending (een reeks van epidemieën konden door de zendelingen beter bestreden worden dan door de sjamaanse priesters); en 5. de westerse schoolopleiding, die het wereldbeeld van de Ono Niha veranderde. Verder was het Christendom aantrekkelijk voor de traditioneel achtergestelden in de maatschappij. De zending leverde een belangrijke bijdrage tot de daadwerkelijke afschaffing van de slavernij en tot een mate van emancipatie van vrouwen (door onder meer gelijke schoolopleiding voor meisjes en jongens).

Tijdens de grote opwekking (1915-1930) werd het systeem van de oude religie (priesters, *adu*, bepaalde ceremonies, taboe-dagen, enzovoorts) als kern van de Niasse identiteit vervangen door het Christendom. Er ontstond een Niasse volkskerk,

die echter niet geworteld was in de Niasse cultuur. De Niasse kerk werd meer een kopie van de Duitse moederkerken. Onder de oppervlakte leefden dan ook vele denkpatronen van de oude religie voort. Na de Tweede Wereldoorlog, toen het opzicht van de zendelingen ontbrak, staken deze patronen van de oude religie – weliswaar in Christelijke gedaante – weer de kop op. Tot op heden bestaat een discrepantie tussen de ambtelijke leer en het geloof aan de basis.

Met betrekking tot de ontmoeting van het Christendom en de *adat* gaat Telaumbanua de hele levenscyclus van de Niasser langs en beschrijft hij de belangrijke *adat*-gebruiken en feesten in relatie tot het Christendom. Een aantal tegenstrijdigheden bestaan gewoon naast elkaar voort. Door de afschaffing van de *fondrakö*-vernieuwingsceremonie is het moeilijk om de *adat* met de bijbelse waarden en normen in overeenstemming te brengen.

Evenals bij de *adat*-gebruiken en feesten poogden de zendelingen ook bij de maatschappelijke structuren alle elementen die ze niet met hun westers-christelijke begrippen konden verenigen af te schaffen. De meest ingrijpende sociale veranderingen kwamen tot stand in de verhouding tussen de hoofden en het gewone volk. De zendelingen deden grote moeite om de hoofden voor het Christendom te winnen. In het begin waren de ouderlingen dan ook meestal hoofden. Sommige hoofden speelden zelfs een beslissende rol bij het kerstenen van bepaalde gebieden. Gedurende de opwekking werd echter niet meer het hoofdschap, maar de bekering het belangrijkste vereiste om tot ouderling benoemd te worden. Eenvoudige mensen, die vroeger geen rechten hadden, konden via de zendingsschoolopleiding en mits hun karakter de leiding aanstond, tot ouderling worden benoemd. Desondanks bleven de hoofden hun vooraanstaande positie binnen de gemeenten behouden. Hun geprivilegieerde positie werd door de kerkorde van 1955 gehandhaafd.

In de dorpsgemeenschap (*banua*) kwam ondertussen een grote ommekeer. Oorspronkelijk was de *banua* de basis en het centrum van het maatschappelijk leven en het verbond (*ōri*) tussen een aantal *banua* een min of meer los en tijdelijk verband. Bij de zending was dat precies andersom: de gemeente (*jemaat*) was onderhorig aan de kerkprovincie (*resor*). Ook werd niet in iedere *banua* een kerk (*gosali*) gebouwd. Meerdere *banua* moesten samen één gemeente vormen. Dat bracht de mensen bij elkaar, maar kon in een crisis ook aanleiding geven tot kerksplitsingen. Toen in 1936 de BNKP met een eigen synode gesticht werd, ontstond er voor het eerst in de geschiedenis van de Ono Niha een organisatievorm die alle *banua* omvatte. Helaas koos men ook hier tegen de culturele tradities in voor een centralistisch model, dat later (na het vertrek van de zendelingen) voor een reeks van kerksplitsingen zou zorgen.

Ook op het juridische vlak bracht de zending radicale veranderingen. Enerzijds werden *fondrakö* en *famatö harimao* voor de vernieuwing van de *adat* afgeschaft; anderzijds werd het systeem van kerkelijke tuchtmaatregelen (*amakhoita*) ingevoerd. Maar, naast de *amakhoita* bleef de oude, door de *fondrakö* van de hoofden gelegitimeerde *adat* verder haar invloed behouden, hetwelk tot een tweedeling in het juridisch denken leidde. Maar ook theologisch was het een probleem. Omdat traditioneel het houden van de wet de weg tot het leven is, is in de ogen van de christen-Niassers de navolging van de *amakhoita* het vereiste om zalig te worden. Dat is echter in strijd met de protestantse uitleg van de bijbelse leer van de verzoening.

Ten slotte beschrijft Telaumbanua de ingrijpende veranderingen op economisch vlak. Zending en kerk leverden een grote bijdrage door opleidingen, de

gezondheidszorg en de opbouw van infrastructuur om de voorwaarden tot economische ontwikkeling te verbeteren. Aan de andere kant bracht de zending een scheiding tussen de godsdienst en de economie. Oorspronkelijk was arbeid heel sterk verbonden aan de oude religie. De zendelingen schaften de *adu*-offerdiensten af en vervingen ze door christelijke gebedsdiensten, hetwelk een mate van continuïteit betekende. Na 1915 verbood de zending de traditionele taboe-regelingen (*famoni*), zonder er echter iets voor in de plaats te stellen. Aangezien *famoni* van fundamenteel belang voor het werkproces is, leidde dat tot een vervreemding tussen de godsdienst en de werksfeer. In een maatschappij waarin de godsdienst een allesoverheersende rol speelt had dat echter een fnuikende uitwerking op de economie.

Bijna hetzelfde kan gezegd worden voor de relatie tussen kerk en politiek. Het zelfbewustzijn en de emancipatie, die de Ono Niha door het christelijk geloof vonden, mochten zich niet politiek uiten. Politiek en geloof werden als twee volledig van elkaar gescheiden sferen gezien. Dat droeg niet bij tot de ontwikkeling van een politiek, laat staan democratisch, bewustzijn.

7 EEN CONTEXTUELE THEOLOGIE VOOR NIAS EN DE BATOE-EILANDEN

In dit hoofdstuk geeft Telaumbanua een kritisch overzicht van de theologische ontwikkeling binnen de BNKP na 1965 en stelt dan een aantal richtlijnen op voor een contextuele, Niasse theologie. Ondanks meerdere pogingen tot vernieuwing in de jaren seventig en vooral in de jaren negentig van de twintigste eeuw, onderscheidt de officiële lijn van de BNKP zich tot op heden nauwelijks van de zeer wettische en piëtistische theologie van de zendelingen voor de Tweede Wereldoorlog. Alhoewel de oecumenische samenwerking met nationale en internationale partners altijd weer nieuwe impulsen gaf, houden de meeste *pandita* en *sinenge* zich in angstige nauwgezetheid aan de overleverde denkbeelden en structuren. Haast alle theologische reflectie houdt verband met de kerkelijke tucht (*amakhoita*), die zich voornamelijk tegen oude 'heidense' gebruiken richt. Sociaal-critisch engagement voor de armen neemt daarentegen binnen de BNKP een ondergeschikte plaats in.

Voor een contextuele theologie moet enerzijds kritisch naar de overgeleverde christelijke leer worden gekeken, en anderzijds naar de culturele waarden en normen, die het leven van de Ono Niha bestemmen. Zowel de kerkelijke leer als de culturele waarden en normen (niet alleen de traditionele maar ook de huidige) moeten dan op een creatieve, dialectische wijze met de Bijbel in 'gesprek' gebracht worden. Vier factoren bepalen de context van de BNKP:

1. Haar ethnische karakter, die aan de ene kant xenofobie, maar aan de andere kant ook interne verdeeldheid tot gevolg heeft.
2. De armoede van de bevolking.
3. De pluriformiteit van de Indonesische samenleving.
4. De invloed van de globalisering, die een geweldige spanning tussen de traditionele waarden en normen en de wereldwijde, meer individualistisch gerichte trends veroorzaakt.

Aan de hand van drie principes van het christelijk geloof, namelijk de leer aangaande 'God, verlossing en gemeenschap' (Lowalangi, *fangorifi* en *banua*), laat

Telaumbanua exemplarisch zien dat de zendingen hiervoor traditionele begrippen hadden uitgekozen, om door middel daarvan hun eigen, specifiek westers-theologische voorstellingen te communiceren. De Ono Niha hadden bij deze begrippen echter steeds een sterke associatie met de denkbeelden van de oude religie en *adat*, al hebben ze dan officieel inderdaad de voorstellingen van de zendingen overgenomen.

Tegenwoordig moet de BNKP zich kritisch distantiëren van het bepaalde type van westerse theologie dat door de zendingen werd gepropageerd, en op grond van een nieuw lezen van de Bijbel en een herwaardering (re-definitie) van de cultuur een visie van het Koninkrijk Gods ontwikkelen. Het moet een theologie zijn met een kritische waardering van de cultuur, profetisch gericht op gerechtigheid en waarheid, en dienstbaar aan de 'ganse schepping' (Marcus 16:15).

8 CONCLUSIE

In een slothoofdstuk vatten Hummel en Telaumbanua nog eenmaal de belangrijkste resultaten van hun onderzoek samen en richten zij de focus op de drie belangrijkste aspecten die in de constructie van een Niasse theologie een rol zouden moeten spelen:

1. Een veranderde houding ten opzichte van de cultuur. De zendingen hadden van ouds geargumenteed dat de 'jonge wijn' van het Evangelie niet in de 'oude zakken' van de Niasse cultuur mocht worden gedaan (vgl. Matteüs 9:17). Ze begrepen echter niet dat enerzijds hun specifieke theologie en cultuuropvatting net zulke 'oude zakken' waren, en dat anderzijds het Evangelie nooit in 'pure' vorm bestaat. Het wordt altijd middels cultuur doorgegeven (bijvoorbeeld taal, denkbeelden en symbolen). Natuurlijk moet de keuze van culturele elementen altijd kritisch, in het licht van het Evangelie gemaakt worden. Maar dat geldt even goed voor het kolonialisme en de dominante westerse cultuur, als voor de *adat* en de Niasse religie. De kerk mag geen enkele cultuur a priori verheerlijken of verdoemen; alles moet de toets van het Woord van God doorstaan.
2. De contextuele theologie van de Ono Niha moet een ander paradigma volgen dan de oude zendingstheologie. Het autoritair Christendom moet plaats maken voor een dienend geloof, dat ook bereid is om mede te lijden voor de nood van deze wereld. Jezus Christus heeft waarlijk de menselijke gestalte aangenomen (Johannes 1:14). Christus is voor de Ono Niha een Ono Niha en geen Europeaan. Hij roep de Ono Niha binnen hun eigen context tot een vernieuwd leven met God, met elkaar, en met de hele schepping. Iedere gemeenschap wordt door Gods Woord van binnenuit getransformeerd, als de gist die het deeg transformeert (vgl. Lucas 13:20-21). Fanatieke pogingen door de evangeliedienaar om culturelementen uit te roeien die niet met het Evangelie blijken te stroken, kan al snel leiden tot 'cultureel vandalisme'.
3. De rol van de Niasse kerk op nationaal en internationaal vlak: sinds de negentiende eeuw leefden Niasse christenen in de verstrooiing op Sumatra en Java. Ze hebben zich meestal niet bij andere protestantse kerken aangesloten, maar een eigen ethnische gemeente gesticht. Desondanks was de BNKP één van de oprichters van de Raad van Kerken (DGI), is zij lid geworden van de

CCA, de WCC, de UEM en uiteindelijk (in 2001) de LWF. Haar rol in al deze organisaties was echter vrij passief.

Ook op het sociale en politieke vlak was de BNKP lange tijd tamelijk onverschillig en oncritisch. In een cultuur als die van de Ono Niha, waarin de zegen (*howuhowu*) een zo belangrijke rol speelt, bestond er in de kerk weinig besef, dat men ook iets voor anderen kon betekenen. In de toekomst moet de Niasse kerk dan ook een theologie van de zegen (*teologi howuhowu*) ontwikkelen, en bij dat woord ook de daad voegen.

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CURRICULUM VITAE UWE HUMMEL

Youth

Uwe Hummel was born on 31 March 1957 in Hamburg, Germany, to Ellen Röbbing, a dental nurse, who died on 9 November 2006, and Uwe Hummel, a civil engineer, who died on 1 July 1978 after a car accident. On 5 April 1959, he was baptised in the Evangelical Lutheran Church, St. John, in Hamburg. From 1964 to 1968 he attended Primary School in Hamburg-Niendorf and Hamburg-Bramfeld. In 1968, Uwe Hummel moved with his family to the Republic of South Africa where he attended Primary School in Steytlerville, Graaf-Reinet and Port-Elisabeth and High School (1972-1976) in Despatch and East-London. On 1 January 1977 he obtained his High School Senior Certificate in East-London.

Academic Studies

- 1977-1980: University of Natal (Pietermaritzburg) and the Lutheran Seminary.
- 1979: Baccalaureus Artium (B.A. Degree in Divinity); 1980: B.A. Honours course.
- 1977+1979: University of South-Africa: Ecclesiastical History.
- 1979-1980: General Secretary of the Students Representative Council

End 1980: return to Hamburg, Germany

- April 1981-June 1986: Studies in Theology at the University of Hamburg.
- 1983-1984: Member of the Student's Parliament.
- June 1986: Magister Theologiae (Master of Theology Degree).
- February 1987-December 1988: Lutheran Seminary (*kerkelijke opleiding*) in Amsterdam.
- 9 January 1989: Theological Church Examination (*proponentsexamen*) in Woerden.
- 1999-2006: Ph.D candidate at Utrecht University

Ministry

- October 1986-December 1987: Vicariate in the Moluccan Exile Church, The Netherlands.
- 9 October 1988: Admittance as preacher (*preekbevoegdheid*), Lutheran Church.
- January-May 1989: Candidate for the ministry (*proponent*) in the Lutheran Church.
- 21 May 1989: Ordination and installation as Lutheran minister of Groningen.
- 1989-1994: Member of the Dutch Lutheran Missionary Council (1991-1994 Chairman).
- May 1993-October 1994: Member of the synod (ELK and trio-synod *Samen-op-Weg*).
- October 1994-September 2001: UEM-missionary on Nias (BNKP).
- 1 February 2004 until now: Coordinator of the Wuppertal based *West Papua Netzwerk*.
- 1 March until now: Executive Secretary for Asia, UEM.

Publications

- 'De status van de zendeling binnen het Nederlandsch Zendinggenootschap gedurende de eerste decennia van zijn bestaan'. In: Th. Van den End et al. (eds.), *Twee eeuwen Nederlandse zending 1797-1997*, pp. 47-69, Boekencentrum, Zoetermeer, 1997.
- 'Strategi Misi di Indonesia Menyongsong Abad ke-21'. In: Panitia Penerbitan Buku Kenangan Prof. Dr. Olaf H. Schumann, *Agama dalam Dialog*, BPK Gunung Mulia, Jakarta, 1999, pp. 215-229 (Festschrift).
- *Sirihpruim en Kruis: Het Luthers Genootschap en het zendingswerk op Sumatra*, Gedenkboek (1852-2002), SLUB, 's-Gravenhage, 2002.
- 'Sundermann', *RGG*⁴ VII (2004), p. 1903.
- 'Menschenrechte Artikel 9'. In: *Jahrbuch Mission 2005*, pp. 176-177.
- 'Die Zusammenarbeit zwischen der Rheinischen Missionsgesellschaft und der Niederländisch-Lutherischen Missionsgesellschaft in Ausbildung und Verkündigung, Missionsarbeit auf Sumatra, Nias und den Batu Inseln', in: Beate Magen et al. (eds.), *Monatshefte für die Evangelische Kirchengeschichte des Rheinlande* LIV (2005), Rudolf Habelt, pp. 97-116.
- 'Ketabahan dalam Kemelut: Kesaksian Guru Aurelius My, Papua', in: Ati Hildebrandt Rambe et al. (eds.), *Teologi Bencana. Pergumulan Iman dalam Konteks Bencana Alam dan Bencana Social*, Yayasan OASE INTIM / Kanisius, Makassar / Yogyakarta, 2006, pp. 49-57.
- 1990-2006: Author of various articles in magazines, especially on Mission, Nias and West-Papua.

Other Recent Activities

- 2001-now: Frequent participation in international conferences on Mission and Human Rights.
- 2003-now: Chairman of the Dutch Lutheran Missionary Society (DLM).
- 2004-2006: Project leader of an international study on the 'Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in West-Papua', four editions in three languages, Theodor Rathgeber et al., Foedus Verlag / Pustaka Sinar Harapan, Wuppertal / Jakarta, 2005/2006.
- 2005: Member of the Tsunami Response Group of the UEM.
- 30-31 October 2006: Resource Person during the international conference on 'Traditional Architecture and Art on Nias', Museum for Ethnology, Vienna, Austria.

Family

Since 1984, Uwe Hummel is married to Reverend Drs. Sonia Parera from Ambon, Indonesia. They have two children: Thea, born on 22 May 1985 in Hamburg, and Uwe (Brudy), born on 1 May 1988 in Breda, The Netherlands

CURRICULUM VITAE TUHONI TELAUMBANUA

Youth

Tuhoni Telaumbanu was born on 21 July 1963 in Gunungsitoli, Nias, Indonesia, to Talidödö Telaumbanua, a civil servant, and Sarifati Waruwu, a housewife. Both are presently living in Afilaza, Gunungsitoli, Nias. He was baptized in the BNKP congregation of Ononamölö and also went to Primary School (1969-1974) in this remote village on Nias, and then continued with Junior High School and Senior High School in the Niasan capital city of Gunungsitoli (1975-1982).

Academic Studies

- 1983-1988: Theological Seminary of the HKBP in Pematang Siantar, North Sumatra. In 1987: Bachelor of Theology (B.Th) and 1988: Bachelor of Divinity (B.D).
- 1992-1995: Satya Wacana Christian University (UKSW) in Salatiga, Java. Master's Thesis on 'Self Reliance of the BNKP'. 25 March 1995: Master of Theology in the field of Sociology of Religion.
- 1999-2006: Ph.D candidate at Utrecht University.
- July-September 2006: Ecumenical Studies Program at Ecumenical Institute – Chateau De Bossey (WCC).

Ministry

- 1988-1989 : Vicariate in the BNKP congregation of Sibolga, Tapanuli, and as a social worker among fisherman in Sibolga.
- 15 October 1989: Ordained as a Pastor of the Nias Christian Protestant Church (BNKP) in Gunungsitoli.
- 1989-1992: Director of the Community Development Service of the BNKP (PELMAS), Secretary of Bina Desa Foundation, and Secretary of the editorial of the BNKP Magazine *Turia Röfa*.
- 1995-1996: Director of PELMAS BNKP, General Secretary of the Education Foundation, Executive Secretary of Bina Desa Foundation, and BNKP Contact Person for Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation.
- 1997-2001: Minister of the City Congregation of Gunungsitoli.
- 2001-2004: Rector of the Theological Seminary (STT-BNKP Sundermann), and Director of the Formation Centre of the BNKP.
- 2006-2007: Chairperson of the Program and Ecumenical Bureau in the BNKP.
- 2006 until now: Coordinator of the Master of Ministry Program in the STT-BNKP Sundermann.
- 2007 until now: Rector of the Theological Seminary (STT-BNKP Sundermann), and Director of the Formation Centre of the BNKP.
- 2005-2008: Member of the Council of the United Evangelical Mission UEM.

Functions

- 1991: Delegate of the BNKP to the seventh Assembly of the WCC in Canberra.
- 1996: Delegate to the UEM Founding Conference in Singapore.
- 1998: Delegate to the UEM First Regional Assembly of Asia in Hong Kong.
- 2000: Participant of the Asian Christian Leadership Training for Young Theologians in in Tohomon, North Sulawesi.

- 2000: Delegate to the PGI Assembly in Palangkaraya, Kalimantan.
- 2002: Delegate to the UEM Second Regional Assembly of Asia in Solo, Java.
- 2004: Delegate to the UEM General Assembly in Manila.
- 2004: Member of the PGI delegation to the First Synod of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands (PKN).

Other Activities

- 1998-2004: Chairperson of the *Dewan Pengurus Cabang - Partai Demokrasi Kasih Bangsa Kabupaten Nias*.
- 1999-2004: Vice Chairperson of the Local Parliament of the Regency of Nias.
- 2000-2006: Team Coordinator of the Niasan Bible Translation Project: 'Buku Ni'amoni'ö ba Li Nono Niha Sero Ma'ökhö' (Indonesian Bible Society).
- 2005-2006: Translation of *The Lion Children's Bible* into the Niasan language (Project of Indonesian Bible Society).

Family

Since 1993, he is married to Reverend Nurcahaya Gea, S.Th (pastor of the AMIN church and lecturer at STT-BNKP Sundermann). They have a daughter, Chantika Della Kurnia Telaumbanua, born on 23 October 2002 in Gunungsitoli.

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