

## 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 Christianity<sup>1</sup>, 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*<sup>2</sup>, 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

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. N. Lossky (ed.), *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, 1991, p. 257. Cf. Acts 17:15-24.

<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup> 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.<sup>5</sup> 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.<sup>6</sup> 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

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<sup>3</sup> In our time-span, a more contextual approach was favoured by Lett, Steinhart and Töpperwien.

<sup>4</sup> L.J. Luzbetak, *The Church and Cultures*, 1988, p. 79. Cf. L. Sanneh, *Translating the Message*, 1989, pp. 51-54.

<sup>5</sup> C.H. Kraft, *Christianity in culture*, 1981, pp. 269-270.

<sup>6</sup> 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.<sup>7</sup> 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.<sup>8</sup>

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.<sup>9</sup>

From the outset, the missionaries on Nias used the *Li Nono Niha*<sup>10</sup> 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 language<sup>11</sup>, Denninger almost immediately applied his rudimentary Niasan language skills to the translation of the Gospel according to Luke.<sup>12</sup> As was already noticed critically by Neubronner van der Tuuk and some contemporary fellow missionaries on Nias<sup>13</sup>, 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.<sup>14</sup> It was Sundermann's work that received most recognition.<sup>15</sup> 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.<sup>16</sup>

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

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<sup>7</sup> C.H. Kraft, *Christianity in culture*, 1981, p. 297. Cf. Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, 2002, pp. 37-44.

<sup>8</sup> E.A. Nida, *Message and Mission*, 1975, pp. 194-195.

<sup>9</sup> 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.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Cf. 2.3.3.

<sup>11</sup> J. Kruyt, *Kabar Keselamatan di Poso*, 1977, pp. 308-314.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Ch. 4.3.2.3.

<sup>13</sup> G. Menzel, *Denninger*, 1990, p. 11.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* Cf. F.D. Harefa and R. Heering (eds.), *Waöwaö Duria Somuso Dödö ba Danö Niha*, 1971, p. 3.

<sup>15</sup> Ch. 4.3.2.3.

<sup>16</sup> J.L. Swellengrebel, *In Leijdeckers Voetspoor*, vol. I, pp. 219-230.

in Barmen also demanded that the DLM not support Schröder's work.<sup>17</sup> 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.<sup>18</sup> 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 1960<sup>19</sup>, 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.<sup>20</sup>

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*.<sup>21</sup> 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:<sup>22</sup>

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*

<sup>17</sup> Letter to DLM, Pulau Tello, 16 June 1924 (GGA 552/41).

<sup>18</sup> Anonymous, *Soere Seboea Dödö nisoera Mareko*, 1934; cf. Anonymous, *Mateo*, 1937.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Ch. 5.7.3.

<sup>20</sup> W. Gulö, *Benih yang Tumbuh XIII*, 1983, pp. 215-216.

<sup>21</sup> *BRM*, 1869, p. 54.

<sup>22</sup> 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.<sup>23</sup> 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).<sup>24</sup> When the *fangesa döddö 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.<sup>25</sup>

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.<sup>26</sup> The book that attracted the Ono Niha most was *Tödö Niha* (the translated version of *The Little Book of the Heart* by Gossner<sup>27</sup>). 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*.<sup>28</sup> 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 Huna<sup>29</sup> to convert to Christianity.<sup>30</sup>

#### 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.<sup>31</sup> Based on Nieuwenhuisen and Von Rosenberg's research<sup>32</sup>, as well as his own field studies, Denninger concluded that the Ono Niha recognized a supernatural power, Lowalangi, as the Creator of the earth.<sup>33</sup> 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.<sup>34</sup> Denninger noticed that even though there were other

<sup>23</sup> J.W. Thomas and H. Lagemann, *Famahaö ba gamoeata zoera Ni'amoni'ö*, 1900.

<sup>24</sup> A. Pieper, *Paedagogiek*, 1923, p. 145.

<sup>25</sup> A. Pieper, *Die Auswirkung der Erweckung*, 1928, p. 6.

<sup>26</sup> 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.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. 3.2.1.

<sup>28</sup> Anonymous, *Niassische Häuptlinge I*, 1911, p. 9.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Ch. 4.4.3.2 and Ch. 6.3.2.1.

<sup>30</sup> *BRM*, 1900, p. 160.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Ch. 2.3.2 and Ch. 2.4.1.

<sup>32</sup> 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.

<sup>33</sup> *BRM*, 1867, p. 144.

<sup>34</sup> *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*)<sup>35</sup> 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:<sup>36</sup>

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'.<sup>37</sup> 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.<sup>38</sup> 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*).<sup>39</sup>

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.<sup>40</sup>

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Nias: 'Halowalangi') created from the wind and wood. Lubulangi was described as the source and creator of all good things.

<sup>35</sup> W.H. Sundermann, *Der Kultus der Niasser*, 1891 (RMG 1.025), p. 1.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> W.H. Sundermann, 'Der Name Gottes (Lowalangi) im Niassischen', in: *Notulen Bataviaasch Genootschap XL*, 1902, p. 79.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> W.H. Sundermann, *Der Kultus der Niasser*, 1891 p. 2.

<sup>40</sup> 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.<sup>41</sup> 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.<sup>42</sup> They were neither polytheistic nor monotheistic, but believed only in their ancestors and worshiped only their *adu*.<sup>43</sup> 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.<sup>44</sup> 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.<sup>45</sup>

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.<sup>46</sup> 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

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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.

<sup>41</sup> W.L. Steinhart, *Niassche Teksten I en II*, 1934, p. 330.

<sup>42</sup> E. Modigliani, *Un Viaggio a Nias*, 1890, pp. 610-649.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 613-614.

<sup>44</sup> E.E.W.Gs. Schröder, *Nias*, 1917, pp. 466-471.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.* 1917, p. 682.

<sup>46</sup> 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.<sup>47</sup>

Peter Suzuki<sup>48</sup> 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 Lowalangi<sup>49</sup>, 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'.<sup>50</sup> 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'.<sup>51</sup>

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.<sup>52</sup> Ama Wa'ö Telaumbanua, a son of a *tuhenöri* from Gomo,

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<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 134-139.

<sup>48</sup> P. Suzuki, *The Religious System and Culture of Nias, Indonesia*, 1959, pp. 1-24.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.* p. 15.

<sup>50</sup> 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.

<sup>51</sup> *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.

<sup>52</sup> 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.<sup>53</sup>

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.<sup>54</sup> 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.<sup>55</sup> 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.<sup>56</sup>

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.<sup>57</sup> 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*).<sup>58</sup> 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 character<sup>59</sup>,

<sup>53</sup> 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*.

<sup>54</sup> J. M. Hämmerle, *Ritus Patung Harimau*, 1996, p. 75-78.

<sup>55</sup> A. Lück, *Fanoetoeroe Lala ba Wamahaō Sangandrō Famayagō Idanō ba he Iraono Ni'a'aro'ō*, 1931.

<sup>56</sup> A. Lück, *Katechismus Luther: Nifo'eluaha dali daroma li Lowalangi, famokai gera'era ba zangai halōwō*, 1934, p. 27-28.

<sup>57</sup> *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.

<sup>58</sup> *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).

<sup>59</sup> *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*.<sup>60</sup> 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.<sup>61</sup>

Charismatic preachers such as Dalimanö Hia or Ama Haogö<sup>62</sup> 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.<sup>63</sup> 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.<sup>64</sup> 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.


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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*.

<sup>60</sup> W.L. Steinhart, *Karakteristiek geloof*, 1930, p. 369.

<sup>61</sup> *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.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. D. Hia, 'Dogmatika', the script was not published (1962), Cf. 5.6.4.3.

<sup>63</sup> 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).

<sup>64</sup> 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.<sup>65</sup> 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.<sup>66</sup>

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.<sup>67</sup> 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*.<sup>68</sup> 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*).<sup>69</sup> *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.<sup>70</sup>

<sup>65</sup> J. Kosack, interview with the authors on 8 June 2002 in Wuppertal. Cf. W. Lempp, *Benih yang Tumbuh XII*, 1976, pp. 19, 31.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. Ch. 5.6.4.3. Cf. W. Gulö, *Benih yang Tumbuh XIII*, 1983, p. 25.

<sup>67</sup> E.G. Singgih, *Dari Israel ke Asia*, 1982, p. 31.

<sup>68</sup> *BRM*, 1868, pp. 54-55, cf. ch. 2.4.2.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. H. Sundermann, *Niassisch-Deutsches Wörterbuch*, 1905, pp. 210, 212.

<sup>70</sup> 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?<sup>71</sup>

### 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.<sup>72</sup> *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.<sup>73</sup> The Ono Niha believed that *eheha* gives wisdom, skills and charisma and is a very important element in leadership.<sup>74</sup>

*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*.<sup>75</sup> 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.<sup>76</sup> 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).<sup>77</sup>

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.

<sup>71</sup> LAI, *Satu Alkitab Beragam Terjemahan: Kumpulan Makalah Seminar*, 2005, pp. 78-79.

<sup>72</sup> *Toeria*, 2/10 (1915).

<sup>73</sup> H. Sundermann, *Die Psychologie des Niassers*; 1887, pp. 298-299.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. Ch. 2.5.4.2.

<sup>75</sup> 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.

<sup>76</sup> H. Sundermann, *Lala Wangorifi*, nd, p. 5. Cf. H. Sundermann, *Famahaö ba Lala Wangorifi*, 1892, pp. 32-36.

<sup>77</sup> 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.<sup>78</sup> 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.<sup>79</sup>

The *Eheha Lowalangi* subsequently played an essential role during the Great Awakening.<sup>80</sup> 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.<sup>81</sup>

<sup>78</sup> *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*).

<sup>79</sup> Cf. H. Hadiwijono, *Religi Suku Murba*, 2000, pp. 92-93.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. Ch. 4.6.2.; cf. A. Pieper, *Die Auswirkung der Erweckung auf Nias*, 1928, pp. 21-22.

<sup>81</sup> 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'awösa<sup>82</sup> 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.<sup>83</sup>

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*.<sup>84</sup> 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.<sup>85</sup>

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.<sup>86</sup> 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*.<sup>87</sup>

During World War II there were some unusual teachings about the *Eheha Ni'amoni'ö* by the so-called 'jumping awakenings' (*fangesa solaya*).<sup>88</sup> 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.<sup>89</sup> 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.

<sup>82</sup> Cf. Ch. 5.8.3.

<sup>83</sup> Cf. Th. Müller-Krüger, *Der Protestantismus in Indonesien*, 1968, p. 283.

<sup>84</sup> 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.

<sup>85</sup> Annual Report 1937/1938 (RMG 2.772).

<sup>86</sup> *Lala Nihonogöi (atoeran) ba mbanoea Niha Keriso Protestant ba danö NIAS*. 1938, pp. 1-2, 6, 9.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 13-14.

<sup>88</sup> Cf. Ch. 5.8.5.

<sup>89</sup> 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*.<sup>90</sup>

#### 6.2.1.4 *Horö* as Term for Sin

In the Nias-German Dictionary compiled by Sundermann, the word *horö* is translated as sin.<sup>91</sup> 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.<sup>92</sup> 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 (*höliö*).<sup>93</sup>

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*)<sup>94</sup> 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*.<sup>95</sup> 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.<sup>96</sup> 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.<sup>97</sup> From the explanation

<sup>90</sup> Cf. W.L. Steinhart, *De Christianiseering van het Niassche begrip 'heilig'*, 1929, pp. 47-58.

<sup>91</sup> 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).

<sup>92</sup> 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.

<sup>93</sup> 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.

<sup>94</sup> Cf. F. Harefa, *Hikayat dan Ceritera Bangsa serta 'Adat Nias'*, 1939, pp. 67-68.

<sup>95</sup> Cf. E.E.W.Gs. Schröder, Nias, 1917, pp. 600-601.

<sup>96</sup> 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.

<sup>97</sup> 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.<sup>98</sup> 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).<sup>99</sup> On the Batu Islands, the word *okafö* is occasionally used instead of *horö*.<sup>100</sup>

Apart from adultery and murder, and of course idolatry, other kinds of crimes were not really considered as sins.<sup>101</sup> 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*).<sup>102</sup>

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).<sup>103</sup> 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

<sup>98</sup> Cf. A. Lück, *Fanoetoeroe Lala ba Wamahaö Sangandrö Famajagö Idanö ba he Iraono Ni'a'aro'ö*, 1931, p. 6-7.

<sup>99</sup> Cf. A. Lück, *Katechismus Luther*, 1934, p. 48.

<sup>100</sup> *Toeria Hoelo Batoe*, 2/9 (1930).

<sup>101</sup> H. Schekatz, Interview with the authors on 27 June 2002 in Wuppertal.

<sup>102</sup> Cf. 4.4.4.3 and Ch. 4.6.2. Cf. W.R. Schmidt, *Das unbeeendete Gespräch*, 1967, p. 35.

<sup>103</sup> 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.<sup>104</sup>

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 period<sup>105</sup>, 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.<sup>106</sup>

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).<sup>107</sup> 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

<sup>104</sup> Cf. Ch. 2.4.3.

<sup>105</sup> Cf. Ch. 4.3 'Difficult Beginnings on Nias (1865-1890)'.

<sup>106</sup> 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.

<sup>107</sup> 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).<sup>108</sup>

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'<sup>109</sup>, 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.<sup>110</sup> 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.

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<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 22-24.

<sup>109</sup> Cf. Ch. 4.3.5.1, Ch. 6.3.2.4.

<sup>110</sup> 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 rituals<sup>111</sup>, a speaking corner<sup>112</sup>, 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.<sup>113</sup>

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).<sup>114</sup>

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.<sup>115</sup>

The missionaries initially used the expression *satua gosali* for the elders<sup>116</sup>, 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'.<sup>117</sup> The fellowship of all the *osali* was called *Banua Niha Keriso Protestant* (BNKP). In the second church order (1955)<sup>118</sup>, 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.<sup>119</sup> 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*

<sup>111</sup> 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.

<sup>112</sup> 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*).

<sup>113</sup> 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.

<sup>114</sup> Interview with Ama Osara'ö Bu'ulölä on 13 February 2004 in Gomo.

<sup>115</sup> Cf. J.M. Hämmerle, *Omo Sebua*, 1990, p. 164-165.

<sup>116</sup> Cf. W. Gulö, *Benih yang Tumbuh XIII*, 1983, p. 222.

<sup>117</sup> Cf. Anonymous, *Lala Nihohogöi*, 1938, pp. 4-5.

<sup>118</sup> Cf. W. Gulö, *Benih yang Tumbuh XIII*, 1983, p. 255.

<sup>119</sup> *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.<sup>120</sup> 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*<sup>121</sup>, 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*.<sup>122</sup>

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 melodies<sup>123</sup>, 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.<sup>124</sup> 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

<sup>120</sup> Koentjaraningrat, *Pengantar Ilmu Antropologi*, 1990, pp. 376-377.

<sup>121</sup> Cf. Ch. 2.4.2.2. Cf. W.H. Sundermann, *Der Kultus der Niasser*, 1891 (RMG. 1.025), p. 1-5.

<sup>122</sup> 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.

<sup>123</sup> Ama Watörö, "Waöwaö Wa'aniha", in: F.D. Harefa and R. Heering (Eds.), *Waöwaö Duria Somuso Dödö ba Danö Niha*, 1971, pp. 1-2.

<sup>124</sup> 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.<sup>125</sup> 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.<sup>126</sup> The first choir festival, held in Gunungsitoli in the year 1917, was called 'the grand feast of songs' (*owasa sinunö*).<sup>127</sup>

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.<sup>128</sup> When this hymnal was revised in 1931, all elements of the grand feast of songs were again deleted.<sup>129</sup>

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*).<sup>130</sup> Generally, the local culture was considered as part of the old, 'heathen' law which should be rejected completely.<sup>131</sup> Eventually, people began to forget some of the local arts. Kunst<sup>132</sup>, 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.<sup>133</sup>

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

<sup>125</sup> Cf. Anonymus, *Soera Zinoenö ba Niha, Niassisches Gesang-Buchlein*, 1905.

<sup>126</sup> A. Pieper, *Die Auswirkung der Erweckung auf Nias*, 1928, p. 7.

<sup>127</sup> *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.

<sup>128</sup> 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*.

<sup>129</sup> Cf. Anonymous, *Soera Zinoenö ba Niha* (Niassisches Gesangbuch), 1931.

<sup>130</sup> 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.

<sup>131</sup> *Toeria*, 2/11 (1915).

<sup>132</sup> J. Kunst, *Music in Nias*, Leiden, 1939, pp. 2-8.

<sup>133</sup> 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.<sup>134</sup> But, after a couple of years on Nias, he began to understand the communication pattern of the local people and began using it.<sup>135</sup> Krumm also had a similar experience in Lahusa.<sup>136</sup> 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).<sup>137</sup> 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 mythology<sup>138</sup>, 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.<sup>139</sup>

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.<sup>140</sup> 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

<sup>134</sup> *BRM*, 1869, p. 51.

<sup>135</sup> *BRM*, 1873, p. 208.

<sup>136</sup> Cf. Ch. 4.4.3.2.

<sup>137</sup> *BRM*, 1900, p. 163.

<sup>138</sup> Cf. Ch. 2.4.1.

<sup>139</sup> A. Lett, *Im Dienst des Evangeliums auf der Westküste von Nias*, vol. 1, 1901, pp. 15-21. Cf. Ch. 2.4.

<sup>140</sup> 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.<sup>141</sup>

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.<sup>142</sup> Another example was the 'Isaac Marriage' in *hoho* form published in the mission magazine, *Toeria*, without any mentioned of the author.<sup>143</sup> 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'.<sup>144</sup> 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.<sup>145</sup> 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.<sup>146</sup> 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.<sup>147</sup> Another example can be taken from Lett<sup>148</sup>: 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.<sup>149</sup>

<sup>141</sup> *BRM*, 1900, p. 164.

<sup>142</sup> Cf. Gasamböwö, 'Tobali Salawa Dawido', in: A. Pieper (ed.), *Realienboek*, 1923, pp. 113-117. Cf. *Toeria*, 6/8 (1919), pp. 41-42.

<sup>143</sup> *Toeria*, 2/3 (1915), pp. 41-43; 45-47.

<sup>144</sup> *Toeria*, 7/7-9 (1920), p. 11.

<sup>145</sup> A. Schneider, *Ono Niha*, 1952, p. 6.

<sup>146</sup> G. Menzel, *Denninger*, translation by B.C. Hulu, 1990, p. 8.

<sup>147</sup> *BRM*, 1867, p. 208.

<sup>148</sup> *Toeria*, 23/11 (1936).

<sup>149</sup> '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.<sup>150</sup>

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.<sup>151</sup> 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*.<sup>152</sup>

During the Great Awakening, the Ono Niha took the prohibition on work on Sundays very seriously and literally.<sup>153</sup> 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.<sup>154</sup>

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'.<sup>155</sup> 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 Harefa<sup>156</sup>, who later became *ephorus* of the BNKP, wrote the following: firstly, the intention of the Sabbath according to the

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*Hoelo Batoe*, 2/3 (1930).

<sup>150</sup> E. Fries, *Um eine Menschenseele*, 1937, pp. 2-3.

<sup>151</sup> *Toeria*, 4/11 (1917), p. 33.

<sup>152</sup> 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.

<sup>153</sup> 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.

<sup>154</sup> *Toeria*, 4/11 (1917), p. 33.

<sup>155</sup> Cf. Ch. 5.8.6.

<sup>156</sup> *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.<sup>157</sup> This explanation convinced many, but by no means everybody.

The SDA teachings also came to the Batu Islands.<sup>158</sup> 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.<sup>159</sup>

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*.<sup>160</sup> 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.<sup>161</sup>

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.<sup>162</sup>

### 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.<sup>163</sup>

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.<sup>164</sup> Despite this, the Ono Niha were very impressed by the Christmas tree and candles<sup>165</sup>, probably for cultural reasons.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>158</sup> Cf. Ch. 4.8.3.

<sup>159</sup> 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.

<sup>160</sup> Cf. *Toeria Hoelo Batoe*, 10/8 (1938).

<sup>161</sup> *EVB*, 47/2 (1929) p. 38.

<sup>162</sup> *BRM*, 1899, p. 281. Cf. *Toeria*, 5/1 (1918), p. 4.

<sup>163</sup> *Toeria*, 2/4 (1915), p. 34.

<sup>164</sup> *BRM*, 1900, p. 109.

<sup>165</sup> 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.<sup>166</sup> 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.<sup>167</sup>

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.<sup>168</sup> 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*<sup>169</sup>), 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.<sup>170</sup> 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.<sup>171</sup>

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 clothes<sup>172</sup>), the

<sup>166</sup> Anonymous, *Niassische Häuplinge*, 1912, p. 13; *Toeria Hoelo Batoe*, 3/6-10 (1931). Cf. Ch. 4.5.3.6; 5.4.4.

<sup>167</sup> *BRM*, 1900, pp. 161-162.

<sup>168</sup> Jürgen Kosack, *Grundzüge einer Erweckungstheologie in Niassischen Erweckungslieder*, 1964.

<sup>169</sup> Cf. Ch. 5.8.5.

<sup>170</sup> 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.

<sup>171</sup> *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.

<sup>172</sup> 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.<sup>173</sup>

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.<sup>174</sup> 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.<sup>175</sup> Fries in Sifaoro'asi kept some beautiful traditional names, yet he changed names which, according to him, did not have good meanings.<sup>176</sup> 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.<sup>177</sup> 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.<sup>178</sup>

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

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<sup>173</sup> 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'.

<sup>174</sup> *BRM*, 1864, pp. 122 and 197. Cf. 4.3.4.1.

<sup>175</sup> *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).

<sup>176</sup> A. Pieper, *Paedagogiek*, 1923, p. 144-164.

<sup>177</sup> 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.

<sup>178</sup> 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.<sup>179</sup> The missionaries, however, considered this kind of extravagance an influence of the heathen *huku fōna*.<sup>180</sup>

#### 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.<sup>181</sup> Denninger taught his catechists that Holy Communion is a covenant between God and his people, who believe in Christ as their Saviour.<sup>182</sup> As the Church grew, the missionaries drew up a liturgy for Holy Communion.<sup>183</sup> 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.<sup>184</sup>

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.<sup>185</sup> 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.<sup>186</sup> They took it as a heathen belief (*das nackte greuliche Heidenthum*) that needed to be conquered by the light of the Gospel.<sup>187</sup> They tried their best to get rid

<sup>179</sup> *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).

<sup>180</sup> 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.

<sup>181</sup> Cf. Ch. 4.3.4.1.

<sup>182</sup> G. Menzel, *Denninger*, 1990, p. 12.

<sup>183</sup> Anonymous, *Vademecum Pastorale Niassicum*, (R III r 46) 1892, pp. 13-17.

<sup>184</sup> 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.

<sup>185</sup> 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.

<sup>186</sup> *BRM*, 1868, p. 14; cf. J.M. Hämmerle, *Hikaya Nadu*, 1995, p. 7. Cf. Ch. 2.4.

<sup>187</sup> 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 spirits<sup>188</sup> 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*.<sup>189</sup> 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 scholars<sup>190</sup> 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.<sup>191</sup> 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.<sup>192</sup>

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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.

<sup>188</sup> Cf. W. Gulö, *Benih yang Tumbuh XIII*, 1983, p. 31.

<sup>189</sup> Cf. *Toeria*, 2/10 (1915).

<sup>190</sup> Cf. W. Gulö, *Benih yang Tumbuh XIII*, 1984, p. 6. Cf. Alfred Schneider, *Turia: 100 Jahre Dienst am Evangelium auf Nias*, 1965, p. 7.

<sup>191</sup> Cf. Th. van den End and J. Weijtens, *Ragi Carita II*, 2002, p. 211. Cf. Ch. 4.3.1.1.

<sup>192</sup> 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 Kalimantan<sup>193</sup> and had prepared himself among the Ono Niha in Padang. Nevertheless, he needed more than eight years to baptize the first fruits in Gunungsitoli.<sup>194</sup>

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*).<sup>195</sup> 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.<sup>196</sup> 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*.<sup>197</sup> 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.<sup>198</sup> 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.<sup>199</sup>

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 preacher<sup>200</sup>, 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).

<sup>193</sup> Cf. *JBRM*, 1851, p. 28. Until 1859, Denninger had served in Maratowo and Barito Timur.

<sup>194</sup> 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*.

<sup>195</sup> Cf. Ch. 2.4.

<sup>196</sup> *BRM*, 1868, pp. 54-55.

<sup>197</sup> *BRM*, 1869, pp. 41-51.

<sup>198</sup> Cf. Gustav Menzel, *Denninger* (translated by B. Chr. Hulu), Gunungsitoli, 1990, p. 8.

<sup>199</sup> 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.

<sup>200</sup> 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.<sup>201</sup> 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*.<sup>202</sup> The missionaries then tried to open a school, but they could not find any students.<sup>203</sup> 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.<sup>204</sup>

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.<sup>205</sup>

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 missionaries<sup>206</sup>, 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.<sup>207</sup> 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

<sup>201</sup> BRM, 1868, p. 275. cf. Ch. 4.3.1.4.

<sup>202</sup> BRM, 1868, p. 279.

<sup>203</sup> BRM, 1868, pp. 369-371.

<sup>204</sup> BRM, 1868, pp. 369-371

<sup>205</sup> BRM, 1870, p. 40.

<sup>206</sup> 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.

<sup>207</sup> 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.<sup>208</sup>

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.<sup>209</sup> 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.<sup>210</sup> 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*.<sup>211</sup> 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;<sup>212</sup>
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.<sup>213</sup>

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<sup>208</sup> *BRM*, 1874, p. 245.

<sup>209</sup> Cf. J.W. Thomas, *Drei Jahre in Südnieas*, 1892, p. 17.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 18-21.

<sup>211</sup> W. Gulö, *Benih yang Tumbuh XIII*, 1983, p. 6.

<sup>212</sup> 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'.

<sup>213</sup> 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. Weitjens, *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.<sup>214</sup> 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.<sup>215</sup> 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.<sup>216</sup> 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'.<sup>217</sup>

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.<sup>218</sup> All these forced changes caused extreme tensions amongst the Ono Niha, challenging their traditions and culture, including the position of the *salawa*.

The acculturation process<sup>219</sup> 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.

<sup>214</sup> C. Geertz, *Kebudayaan dan Agama*, 1992, p. 5.

<sup>215</sup> 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.

<sup>216</sup> *BRM*, 1899, pp. 299-300.

<sup>217</sup> Cf. J. Verkuyl, *Ketegangan antara Imperialisme dan Kolonialisme Barat pada masa 'Politik Kolonial Etis'*, 1990, pp. 30-57. Cf. Ch. 4.4.

<sup>218</sup> Guru Jonata, 'Rodi', in: A. Pieper (ed.), *Realienboek*, 1928, pp. 44-48.

<sup>219</sup> 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.<sup>220</sup> 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 village<sup>221</sup>, 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.<sup>222</sup> 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.<sup>223</sup> 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.<sup>224</sup> 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. Mendröfa<sup>225</sup> 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

<sup>220</sup> 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.

<sup>221</sup> L. Schreiner, *Adat dan Injil*, 1996, p. 43.

<sup>222</sup> Cf. F. Harefa, *Hikayat dan Ceritera Bangsa serta 'Adat Nias'*, 1939, p. 77.

<sup>223</sup> 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.

<sup>224</sup> 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.

<sup>225</sup> 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.<sup>226</sup>

#### *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.<sup>227</sup> 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.<sup>228</sup>

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.<sup>229</sup>

At first, they were very cautious towards the missionary because they thought he was a Dutch Colonial officer<sup>230</sup> 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.<sup>231</sup>

<sup>226</sup> *Sejarah datangnya berita Injil di Distrik BNKP Lölöwua (Yubileum 100 tahun Berita Injil)*, 1996.

<sup>227</sup> *BRM*, 1900, p. 160.

<sup>228</sup> Anonymous, *Niassische Häuptlinge II: Fadoli, Ama Gahonoa, Afore*, 1912, pp. 1-4.

<sup>229</sup> Cf 4.4.3.2.

<sup>230</sup> *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.

<sup>231</sup> *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*<sup>232</sup>, and embraced the 'new law' (i.e., the Christian religion), which he considered far better than the 'old law' (i.e., the primal religion).<sup>233</sup>

#### *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.<sup>234</sup> 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.<sup>235</sup>

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*<sup>236</sup> 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*.<sup>237</sup> 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

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<sup>232</sup> See Ch. 2.4. 2.1.

<sup>233</sup> 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.

<sup>234</sup> *Barmen Missionsblatt*, 1912, p. 58.

<sup>235</sup> 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.

<sup>236</sup> Cf. Ch. 2.4.3.

<sup>237</sup> *BRM*, 1915, p. 108.



Gunungsitoli via Hilimaziaya to Lahewa.<sup>238</sup> 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.<sup>239</sup> The missionaries gladly responded to their invitation and founded a station in Hilimaziaya.<sup>240</sup> 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 I<sup>241</sup>, 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.<sup>242</sup>

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.<sup>243</sup> The *raja* also instructed Frickenschmidt (the successor of Kersten) in the Batu dialect and helped him write the first dictionary in the vernacular.<sup>244</sup> 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.<sup>245</sup> 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.<sup>246</sup>

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

<sup>238</sup> Faedogo Humendru, 'Lala Seboea ba hoelo Nias', in: A. Pieper (ed.), *Realienboek*, 1923, pp. 30-32.

<sup>239</sup> 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*.

<sup>240</sup> Cf. A. Schneider, *Turia: 100 Jahre Dienst am Evangelium auf Nias*, 1965, p. 32. Cf. 4.4.4.2.

<sup>241</sup> Cf. Ch. 4.5.3.6.

<sup>242</sup> Cf. Ch. 4.5.1, Cf. W.F. Schröder, *De Zending op de Batoe-Eilanden*, 1927, p. 8.

<sup>243</sup> W.F. Schröder, *De Zending op de Batoe-eilanden*, pp. 19-20. E.g., the *raja* introduced Frickenschmidt to the chiefs of Sigata.

<sup>244</sup> W.F. Schröder, *De Zending op de Batoe-eilanden*, 1927, p. 19.

<sup>245</sup> *EVB*, 19/5 (1901), p. 164.

<sup>246</sup> *EVB*, 20/1 (1902), pp. 16-17.

assistant teacher.<sup>247</sup> 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.<sup>248</sup> 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.<sup>249</sup> 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.<sup>250</sup> Some people believed these skulls had some magic and used them for protection.<sup>251</sup>

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.<sup>252</sup> 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.<sup>253</sup>

Because of the *emali* people also came to the missionaries for patronage<sup>254</sup>, 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.<sup>255</sup> Similarly in Sogae'adu, many people attended church services just to avoid the *emali*.<sup>256</sup> 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.<sup>257</sup> 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.

<sup>247</sup> *EVB*, 16/5 (1898), pp. 186-187; *EVB*, 16/6 (1898), p. 212.

<sup>248</sup> Ch. 4.5.3.

<sup>249</sup> W.F. Schröder, *De Zending op de Batoe-eilanden*, 1927, pp. 109-110

<sup>250</sup> 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.

<sup>251</sup> Cf. Ch. 2.7.3. Anonymous, *Niassische Häuptlinge II*, 1912, p. 7.

<sup>252</sup> Cf. W. Lempp, *Benih yang Tumbuh XII*, 1976, p. 16.

<sup>253</sup> Th. Müller-Krüger, *Sedjarah Geredja di Indonesia*, 1966, p. 236.

<sup>254</sup> A. Schneider, *Turia: 100 Jahre Dienst am Evangelium auf Nias*, 1965, p. 20.

<sup>255</sup> *Ibid.* p. 22.

<sup>256</sup> *BRM*, 1900, p. 183.

<sup>257</sup> 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.<sup>258</sup> 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.<sup>259</sup>

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.<sup>260</sup>

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*<sup>261</sup>)". I asked, "Are you the Son of God?". But then I woke up – alas, it was but a dream.

<sup>258</sup> Cf. A. Lück, *Katechismus Luther*, 1934, p. 15.

<sup>259</sup> Cf. A. Lett, *Im Dienst des Evangeliums auf der Westküste von Nias*, vol. III, 1901, pp. 42-43.

<sup>260</sup> Cf. *BRM* 1900, pp. 349-350; paraphrasing and translation by U. Hummel from the German. See also Ch. 4.4.3.2.

<sup>261</sup> 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.<sup>262</sup>

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.<sup>263</sup>

#### 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.<sup>264</sup> 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.<sup>265</sup> 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.<sup>266</sup> 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.<sup>267</sup> 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.<sup>268</sup>

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.

<sup>262</sup> BRM, 1900, p. 350.

<sup>263</sup> A. Lück, *Katechismus Luther*, 1934, pp. 15-16.

<sup>264</sup> 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.

<sup>265</sup> Ch. 2.4.2.2.

<sup>266</sup> Cf. Ch. 4.3.5.1; Ch. 4.4.6.1; Ch. 4.5.4; Ch. 5.2.5.

<sup>267</sup> 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*.

<sup>268</sup> 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.<sup>269</sup> 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.<sup>270</sup>

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.<sup>271</sup> 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.<sup>272</sup> Some of them defended keeping the *adu zatua* by arguing that they were no different from the portraits decorating the houses of the missionaries.<sup>273</sup>

### 6.3.2.5 Impact of Education

The mission school<sup>274</sup> 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.<sup>275</sup>

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.

<sup>269</sup> *BRM*, 1900, p. 9.

<sup>270</sup> *Toeria*, 2/3 (1915), p. 34.

<sup>271</sup> *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.

<sup>272</sup> 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'.

<sup>273</sup> *BRM*, 1875, pp. 100-101.

<sup>274</sup> Cf. Ch. 4.3.5.2; 4.4.6.2; 4.5.5; 5.2.6.

<sup>275</sup> 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.<sup>276</sup> 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.<sup>277</sup>

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*.<sup>278</sup> 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*.<sup>279</sup>

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<sup>276</sup> *BRM*, 1886, p. 147.

<sup>277</sup> 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).

<sup>278</sup> *BRM*, 1875, p. 314.

<sup>279</sup> *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*).<sup>280</sup> But, from the end of 1915 until 1930, the Great Awakening (*fangesa dödö sebua*) brought about mass conversions.<sup>281</sup> 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.<sup>282</sup>

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.<sup>283</sup> P.S. Mendröfa notes:<sup>284</sup>

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-Krüger<sup>285</sup> 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.<sup>286</sup>

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

<sup>280</sup> 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.

<sup>281</sup> Ch. 4.6.

<sup>282</sup> 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.

<sup>283</sup> A. Pieper, *Die Auswirkung der Erweckung auf Nias*, 1928, pp. 15-16.

<sup>284</sup> 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.

<sup>285</sup> 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.

<sup>286</sup> 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.<sup>287</sup> 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 Becker<sup>288</sup>, 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.<sup>289</sup> 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).<sup>290</sup> 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.<sup>291</sup> The missionaries tried to free the people from the influence of the 'heathen tradition' (*sitoröi huku föna*).<sup>292</sup> For example, in his comment on Matthew 9:17, Fries<sup>293</sup> says

<sup>287</sup> 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.

<sup>288</sup> D. Becker, '„Sie Werfen Satans Bande und ihre Götzen fort?“, in: Richard Riess (ed.), *Abschied von der Schuld?*, 1996, pp. 198-199.

<sup>289</sup> Ch. 4.6. (see footnote for statistics). Cf. A. Schneider, *Turia*, 1965.

<sup>290</sup> Cf. A. Lück, *Katechismus Luther*, 1934.

<sup>291</sup> Ch. 4.4.5.3.

<sup>292</sup> *Toeria*, 1916 - 1922. The main ideas of this writing will be discussed under the topic on mission and *adat* of Ono Niha.

<sup>293</sup> *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, Schneider<sup>294</sup> 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*).<sup>295</sup> 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.<sup>296</sup>

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.<sup>297</sup> 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.<sup>298</sup>

#### *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*<sup>299</sup>) and 2. the *amakhoita mbanua*, also called *fondrakö*.<sup>300</sup> The term *amakhoita* was adopted by the missionaries for the rules and regulations that every Christian needs to follow. Until 1935, the *amakhoita*

<sup>294</sup> A. Schneider, *Folawa Hoekoe Niha Baero ba Gamabu'ula Li si Föföna*, 1947.

<sup>295</sup> Cf. Ch. 5.8.5.

<sup>296</sup> 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.

<sup>297</sup> F. Mendröfa, "Bosi Wangesa", in: F.D. Harefa and R. Heering (eds.), *Waöwaö Duria Somuso Dödö ba Danö Niha*, 1971, p. 55.

<sup>298</sup> Cf. Ch. 5.6.6.3.

<sup>299</sup> Cf. Ch. 2.5.4.1.

<sup>300</sup> 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*.<sup>301</sup>

In the first written *amakhoita* of 1923, called 'The Rules for the Christian on Nias' (*Amakhoita Sogoena ba mbanua Niha Keriso ba Danö Nias*)<sup>302</sup>, 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.<sup>303</sup> The *amakhoita* functioned as the discipline of the church.

In the first decade of the Great Awakening, the people followed the church discipline thoroughly.<sup>304</sup> But this kind of obedience did not last, as Van den End commented:<sup>305</sup>

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.<sup>306</sup> 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.<sup>307</sup> 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.<sup>308</sup>

<sup>301</sup> BNKP, *Amakhoita ba mbanoea Niha Keriso si faoedoe ba Daroma Li Lowalangi, nihonogöi mbanua Niha Keriso Protestan ba danö Nias (Heb 9:1)*, 1939.

<sup>302</sup> Cf. Ch. 4.6.5.4.

<sup>303</sup> Anonymus, *Amakhoita Sogoena ba mbanua Niha Keriso ba Danö Nias*, 1923.

<sup>304</sup> T. Hulu, "Waöwaö Halöwö", p. 15

<sup>305</sup> Th. van den End and J. Weitjens, *Ragi Carita II*, 2002, p. 214.

<sup>306</sup> *Toeria*, 11/6 (1924), p. 9.

<sup>307</sup> *Toeria Hoelo Batu*, 4/7 (1932).

<sup>308</sup> '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 notes<sup>309</sup>, 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.<sup>310</sup> 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.<sup>311</sup> 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.<sup>312</sup>

<sup>309</sup> F. Ukur, *Tantang-djawab Suku Dayak*, pp. 142-146.

<sup>310</sup> 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.

<sup>311</sup> Anonymous, *Lichtstrahlen in Herz und Haus. Der Sohn des Hauptlings und andere Missionsgeschichten von Gottlob Mundle*, n.d, pp. 3-6.

<sup>312</sup> 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. Fehr<sup>313</sup> 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.<sup>314</sup> 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.<sup>315</sup>

On the Batu Islands, especially in Sigata, Missionary Landwehr and his wife helped to train the women.<sup>316</sup> Many women turned to Christianity and even joined the mission work, such as in the case of Fija Wanaetu.<sup>317</sup> Initially she was prohibited from becoming a Christian by her chief, Farono who hated Christianity. But, she did not give up, was baptized and became the backbone of a large Christian community on Sigata.<sup>318</sup>

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.

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*duria Somuso Dödö ba Danö Niha*, 1990, p. 4.

<sup>313</sup> J.A. Fehr, *Drei Christenfrauen auf Nias*, 1891, pp. 1-22.

<sup>314</sup> Anonymus, *Lichtstrahlen in Herz und Haus*, 1910, pp. 7-12.

<sup>315</sup> Otilie Schlipkötter, *Ina Rosini*, n.d.

<sup>316</sup> Letter of Agnes Landwehr to DLM, Sigata, 17 October 1898, in: *EVB*, 17/1, 1899, pp. 18-21.

<sup>317</sup> Ch. 4.5.5.

<sup>318</sup> 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.<sup>319</sup> 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.<sup>320</sup> 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 Schreiner<sup>321</sup> 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 habit<sup>322</sup> or a tra-

<sup>319</sup> 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'.

<sup>320</sup> 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.

<sup>321</sup> L. Schreiner, *Adat dan Injil*, 2002, p. 5.

<sup>322</sup> 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.<sup>323</sup> 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.<sup>324</sup> 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.<sup>325</sup> 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.<sup>326</sup> The missionary's prohibition of abandoning twins attracted many people to learn about the Christian faith.

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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.

<sup>323</sup> F. Harefa, *Hikayat dan Ceritera Bangsa serta 'Adat Nias'*, 1939, p. 24.

<sup>324</sup> Cf. Ch. 2.5.1.

<sup>325</sup> *DKM*, 21/8 (1875), pp. 119-128.

<sup>326</sup> *Ibid.*

Something similar was experienced by Missionary Seher (1892-1909) in Tugala, on the western coast.<sup>327</sup> 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.<sup>328</sup>

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.<sup>329</sup>

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.<sup>330</sup>

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<sup>327</sup> Cf. Ch. 4.4.3.2. Anonymous, *Niassische Häuptlinge II*, 1912, pp. 17-20 (RMG 132).

<sup>328</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>329</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>330</sup> 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).<sup>331</sup> 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.<sup>332</sup> 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 stated<sup>333</sup> 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 Matiana<sup>334</sup>, 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.<sup>335</sup>

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.

<sup>331</sup> *Toeria*, 2/7 (1915), p. 28.

<sup>332</sup> Interview with Ama Osara'ö Bu'ulölö on 13 February 2004 in Gomo. Cf. W. Gulö, *Benih yang Tumbuh XIII*, 1983, p. 191.

<sup>333</sup> *Toeria*, 3/1 (1916).

<sup>334</sup> Cf. Ch. 2.4.2.

<sup>335</sup> *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.<sup>336</sup> 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.<sup>337</sup> 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).<sup>338</sup>

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.<sup>339</sup> 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.<sup>340</sup> These were measures taken by the Dutch colonial government in all the territories

<sup>336</sup> *Amakhoita Sogoena ba Mbanoea Niha Keriso ba Danö Nias*, 1923 (RMG 2.803), Part D § 9.

<sup>337</sup> BNKP, *Lala Nitörö: Ngawalö goigoi soguna ba Mbanua Niha Keriso*, 1971, pp. 39-60.

<sup>338</sup> BNKP, *Amakhoita ba BNKP Nias*, 1961, § 12.

<sup>339</sup> A Lück, *Katekismus Luther: Nifo'eloeaha dali daroma li Lowalangi, famokai gera'era ba zangai halowo*, 1934, pp. 5-19.

<sup>340</sup> 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.<sup>341</sup> 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.<sup>342</sup> 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.<sup>343</sup> 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

<sup>341</sup> A. Pieper, *Die Auswirkung der Erweckung auf Nias*, Report RMG, 1928, p. 20.

<sup>342</sup> W. Gulö, *Benih yang Tumbuh XIII*, 1983, p. 191.

<sup>343</sup> 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*.<sup>344</sup>

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.<sup>345</sup> 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 Sztompka<sup>346</sup> 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.<sup>347</sup> 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*).<sup>348</sup> 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.

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<sup>344</sup> 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.

<sup>345</sup> 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.

<sup>346</sup> P. Sztompka, *Sosiologi Perubahan Sosial*, 2004, pp. 69-77.

<sup>347</sup> Cf. Ch. 2.5.2.

<sup>348</sup> 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.<sup>349</sup>

#### 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.<sup>350</sup> 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

<sup>349</sup> 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.

<sup>350</sup> *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:<sup>351</sup>

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. Kolingö<sup>352</sup> explained the prohibition of *fangöhözi* for Christians by explaining it from the point of view of health, dignity and creation. Kolingö said:<sup>353</sup>

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.

<sup>351</sup> *Toeria*, 6/4 (1919), pp. 13-14 (the quotation above is a translation by the author from a Niasan text).

<sup>352</sup> *Toeria*, 6/5 (1919), p. 19.

<sup>353</sup> *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*.<sup>354</sup> 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.<sup>355</sup> 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.<sup>356</sup>

#### 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.<sup>357</sup> 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.<sup>358</sup> 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

<sup>354</sup> *Amakhoita Sogoena ba Mbanoea Niha Keriso ba Danö Nias*, 1923 (Part E, § 4).

<sup>355</sup> *Ibid.* Part D, § 1-3.

<sup>356</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>357</sup> 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.

<sup>358</sup> 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.<sup>359</sup> There is also a record of a nobleman from Laraga, on the eastern coast named Lafofolatio who married a woman from Pariaman, Minang.<sup>360</sup> Through these weddings between tribes, an intense interaction between the cultures was created, which resulted in acculturation or diffusion.<sup>361</sup> 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'.<sup>362</sup> Denninger<sup>363</sup> 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.<sup>364</sup> 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

<sup>359</sup> Anonymous, *Niassische Häuptlinge II*, 1912, pp. 4-5.

<sup>360</sup> F. Zebua, *Kota Gunungsitoli*, 1996, pp. 17-18.

<sup>361</sup> 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.

<sup>362</sup> *Guru Andrea*, 'Falöwa föna', in: A. Pieper (ed.), *Realienboek*, 1928, pp. 117-118.

<sup>363</sup> *BRM*, 1867, p. 136.

<sup>364</sup> 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 ancestors<sup>365</sup>; 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*.<sup>366</sup> 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*.<sup>367</sup> 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

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<sup>365</sup> Cf. Ch. 2.5.3.

<sup>366</sup> *BRM*, 1868, pp. 280-281.

<sup>367</sup> *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.<sup>368</sup> 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.<sup>369</sup>

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.<sup>370</sup>

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.<sup>371</sup>

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

<sup>368</sup> Cf. Ch. 6.3.3.4.

<sup>369</sup> *DKM* 51/11 (1905), pp. 173-174.

<sup>370</sup> *BRM*, 1889, pp. 120-121. Cf. Anonymous, *Fanörö Tödö 75 Fache Yubileum*, Omböläta, 1940, p. 12.

<sup>371</sup> 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.<sup>372</sup> What occurred was a form of dualism or, as Fridolin Ukur<sup>373</sup> 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.<sup>374</sup> 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 föna* (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).<sup>375</sup> 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 föna*.<sup>376</sup> 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.<sup>377</sup> 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*.

<sup>372</sup> Ama Da'o Bu'ulölö, Interview with the author on 17-18 November 1998.

<sup>373</sup> F. Ukur, *Tuaiannya Sungguh Banyak: Sejarah Gereja Kalimantan Evangelis Sejak Tahun 1835*, 2002, p. 160.

<sup>374</sup> RMG 2.778.

<sup>375</sup> *Toeria*, 2/11-12 (1915), (R III e 67).

<sup>376</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>377</sup> *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.<sup>378</sup>

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'.<sup>379</sup> 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:<sup>380</sup>

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

<sup>378</sup> *Toeria*, 3/8 (1916), p. 30.

<sup>379</sup> *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*.

<sup>380</sup> *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.<sup>381</sup>

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.<sup>382</sup> 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.<sup>383</sup>

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*

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<sup>381</sup> *Toeria*, 2/6 (1915), pp. 23-24.

<sup>382</sup> W.R. Schmidt, *Das unbeeendete Gespräch*, 1967, p. 35.

<sup>383</sup> *Ibid.*

*Sogoena ba Mbanoea Niha Keriso ba Danö Nias*.<sup>384</sup> 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:<sup>385</sup>

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.

<sup>384</sup> Conference of missionaries on Nias, 1923 (RMG 2.7781).

<sup>385</sup> *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:<sup>386</sup>

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*.<sup>387</sup>

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*<sup>388</sup> said

<sup>386</sup> *Ibid.* Part C, § 1-5.

<sup>387</sup> *Adatrecht für Christengemeinden* (RMG 2.800).

<sup>388</sup> *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.<sup>389</sup>

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.<sup>390</sup> 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.<sup>391</sup> 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.<sup>392</sup> 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

<sup>389</sup> Fatolosa Gulö, interview with the author on 21 January 1999 in his house, Tohia-Gunungsitoli.

<sup>390</sup> Cf. *Toeria*, 7/4 (1920), *Toeria*, 11/4 (1924).

<sup>391</sup> BNKP, *Amachoita ba mbanoea Niha Keriso si faoedoe ba Daroma Li Lowalangi, nihonogöi mbanua Niha Keriso Protestan ba danö Nias (Heb 9:1)*, 1939.

<sup>392</sup> *Ibid.*

had not received a membership to the BNKP again.<sup>393</sup> 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'.<sup>394</sup> 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.<sup>395</sup> 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.<sup>396</sup>

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.<sup>397</sup> 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.<sup>398</sup> 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.<sup>399</sup>

<sup>393</sup> RMG 2.803.

<sup>394</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>395</sup> *Toeria*, 25/1 (1938).

<sup>396</sup> BNKP, 'Hasil keputusan Persidangan Majelis Sinode BNKP tahun 1961 tentang "Amakhoita ba BNKP"'.

<sup>397</sup> *Amakhoita*, § 12.

<sup>398</sup> *Amakhoita*, § 13-15; 40, 44-47.

<sup>399</sup> *Amakhoita*, § 41-42.



In the *amakhoita* 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.<sup>400</sup> 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.<sup>401</sup> 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.<sup>402</sup> 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'.<sup>403</sup>

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

<sup>400</sup> *Amachoita*, § 50.

<sup>401</sup> 'Keputusan Sinode BNKP tentang Lala Wangowalu dali Wa'aniha Keriso', 1964 (Arsip BNKP).

<sup>402</sup> 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 afdeeling NIAS, met uitzondering van de onderafdeeling Zuid-Nias, van de residentie Tapanoeli' (RMG 2.800), 1915.

<sup>403</sup> Cf. Commissie voor het Adatrecht, *Adatrechtbundel XII*, 1916, pp 263-280.

government that were led by Dr. Kielstra and the missionaries.<sup>404</sup> At this meeting, the missionaries made several suggestions concerning the Christian *adat* laws for Nias.<sup>405</sup> 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.<sup>406</sup>

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.<sup>407</sup>

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).<sup>408</sup> 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.

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<sup>404</sup> 'Protokoll der Konferenz Rheinischer Missionare auf Nias', Omböläta, 4-11 Februar 1914 (RMG 2.780).

<sup>405</sup> 'Bepalingen voor de Inlandsche christenen op het Eiland Nias' (RMG 2.800).

<sup>406</sup> 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'.

<sup>407</sup> '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.

<sup>408</sup> *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:<sup>409</sup>

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.<sup>410</sup> 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.<sup>411</sup>

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.<sup>412</sup> 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.

<sup>409</sup> Cf. *BRM*, 1915, p. 228.

<sup>410</sup> *Toeria*, 23/3 (1937), pp. 21-22.

<sup>411</sup> 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.

<sup>412</sup> *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.<sup>413</sup>

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.<sup>414</sup> 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.<sup>415</sup> 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.<sup>416</sup> 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,

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<sup>413</sup> 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.

<sup>414</sup> Cf. Interview with Ama Wiliba Sadawa on 15 February 2004 in Gomo.

<sup>415</sup> Commissie voor het Adatrecht, *Adatrechtbundel XII*, 1916, pp. 266-274.

<sup>416</sup> *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.<sup>417</sup> 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.<sup>418</sup> 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 ancestors<sup>419</sup>, 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)<sup>420</sup>, *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*<sup>421</sup> 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'.<sup>422</sup> 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.<sup>423</sup> The missionaries Denninger and Kramer gave permission to the family to conduct the *adat*

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<sup>417</sup> Cf. Ch. 2.5.4.

<sup>418</sup> R. Subagya, *Agama Asli Indonesia*, 1981, pp. 193-194.

<sup>419</sup> H. Sundermann, 'Die Psychologie des Niassers', in: Gustav Warneck (ed.), *AMZ* 14, 1887, p. 292.

<sup>420</sup> *Toeria*, 11/7-9 (1924), pp. 25-26.

<sup>421</sup> J.W. Thomas, *Drei Jahre in Südnieas*, 1892, p. 10.

<sup>422</sup> *BRM*, 1870, p. 35.

<sup>423</sup> *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*<sup>424</sup>, *fanema lakhömi*<sup>425</sup>, *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*).<sup>426</sup> 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'.<sup>427</sup> 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

<sup>424</sup> *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.

<sup>425</sup> 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.

<sup>426</sup> *BRM*, 1875, p. 311.

<sup>427</sup> *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.<sup>428</sup> 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.<sup>429</sup> 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.<sup>430</sup> 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.<sup>431</sup> Also Afore, a *salawa* from Hili Hondrö, had become a Christian and destroyed all his *adu*. When he became ill and was about to

<sup>428</sup> L. Schreiner, *Adat dan Injil*, 1996, p. 167.

<sup>429</sup> *BRM*, 1879, pp. 68-69.

<sup>430</sup> *BRM*, 1899, p. 104.

<sup>431</sup> 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'.<sup>432</sup> 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.<sup>433</sup>

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.<sup>434</sup> 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*.<sup>435</sup> 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*.<sup>436</sup> 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.

<sup>432</sup> *Ibid.* p. 28.

<sup>433</sup> *BRM*, 1900, pp. 327-328.

<sup>434</sup> F.D. Wellem, *Injil dan Marapu*, 2004, p. 341.

<sup>435</sup> 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.

<sup>436</sup> *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.<sup>437</sup>

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*.<sup>438</sup> 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).<sup>439</sup>
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.<sup>440</sup>
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.

<sup>437</sup> *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.

<sup>438</sup> *Toeria*, 6/2 (1919).

<sup>439</sup> 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).

<sup>440</sup> 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.<sup>441</sup> This attitude was continued after the church was constituted in 1936. In the *amakhoita*<sup>442</sup> 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.<sup>443</sup> 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.<sup>444</sup> 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

<sup>441</sup> Cf. *Amakhoita Sogoena ba Mbanoea Niha Keriso ba Dano Nias*, 1923, pp. 6-8.

<sup>442</sup> Cf. *Amakhoita ba mbanoea Niha Keriso si faoedoe ba Daroma Li Lowalangi, nihonogöi mbanua Niha Keriso Protestan ba danö Nias (Heb 9:1)*, 1939.

<sup>443</sup> *Amakhoita Niha Sarani ba Hole Batoe: Nihonogöi ba gorahua sebua*, 29 December 1931, in: *Toeria Hoelo Batoe*, 4/5 (1932).

<sup>444</sup> *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.<sup>445</sup> 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.<sup>446</sup> 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.<sup>447</sup> 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*.<sup>448</sup>

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.<sup>449</sup> 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.

<sup>445</sup> *Toeria*, 25/1 (1938).

<sup>446</sup> Cf. J. Kosack, interview with the author on 8 June 2002 in Wuppertal. Cf. Soekarno, *Dari Proklamasi sampai Takari*, 1965, pp. 484-621.

<sup>447</sup> Cf. J. Kosack, interview with the author on 8 June 2002 in Wuppertal. Cf. Ch. 5.8.7.

<sup>448</sup> 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.

<sup>449</sup> *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.<sup>450</sup> With this phrase, it was possible to carry out *fananö bunga*.<sup>451</sup> 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.<sup>452</sup> 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's<sup>453</sup> 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.<sup>454</sup>

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

<sup>450</sup> Decision of the twenty-seventh synod assembly of the BNKP, Ombölata, 29 April 1965. Cf. W. Gulö, *Benih yang Tumbuh XIII*, 1983, p. 207.

<sup>451</sup> 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.

<sup>452</sup> Cf. T. Telaumbanua and U. Hummel, 'Inquiry', 2000.

<sup>453</sup> Suh Sung Min, *Injil dan Penyembahan Nenek Moyang*, 2001, pp. 275-317.

<sup>454</sup> 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'.<sup>455</sup> 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.<sup>456</sup>

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.<sup>457</sup> 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.<sup>458</sup>

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.<sup>459</sup> 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,

<sup>455</sup> Cf. L. Schreiner, *Adat dan Injil*, 1996, p. 43.

<sup>456</sup> *BRM*, 1899, p. 193.

<sup>457</sup> Cf. T.D. Telaumbanua, 'Persoalannya: Self Governing', in: D.P. Lase (ed.), 'Menuju Gereja yang Mandiri', 2005, pp. 72-81.

<sup>458</sup> 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.

<sup>459</sup> 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.<sup>460</sup>

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.<sup>461</sup>

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.<sup>462</sup>

In the first church order of 1936, the BNKP limited the influence of the chiefs.<sup>463</sup> 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.<sup>464</sup>

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.<sup>465</sup>

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.<sup>466</sup> *Fondrakö Ono*

<sup>460</sup> J. Kruyt, *Kabar Keselamatan di Poso*, 1977, pp. 266-271.

<sup>461</sup> 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.

<sup>462</sup> Cf. B. Larosa, 'BNKP tidak mau Memupuk Otonomi Banua', in: D.P. Lase (ed.), 'Menuju Gereja yang Mandiri', 2005, p. 20.

<sup>463</sup> Cf. Ch. 5.2.2.1.

<sup>464</sup> See also 'Lala Nihonogöi (Atoeran) ba Mbanoea Niha Keriso', 1938 (Arsip BNKP).

<sup>465</sup> '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).

<sup>466</sup> *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 niröi 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.<sup>467</sup> 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.<sup>468</sup> 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.<sup>469</sup> 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'.<sup>470</sup> 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

<sup>467</sup> The Ono Niha count the years as *döfi fakhe* (rice years). Therefore, one Niasan year was equivalent to six months of the Western calendar.

<sup>468</sup> J.M. Hämmerle, *Ritus Patung Harimau*, 1996, pp. 5-42. Cf. B. Laia, 'Sendi-sendi Masyarakat Nias', in: *Peninjau* 1/1975, pp. 13-15.

<sup>469</sup> Cf. W. Smith, *Das unbeeendete Gespräch*, 1967, pp. 28-29.

<sup>470</sup> 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.<sup>471</sup>

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. Fries<sup>472</sup> 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.<sup>473</sup>

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*.<sup>474</sup> 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,

<sup>471</sup> D. Becker, '„Sie werfen Satans Bande und ihre Götzen fort?“, in: R. Riess (ed.), *Abschied von der Schuld?*, 1996, p. 198.

<sup>472</sup> *Toeria*, 5/10 (1918).

<sup>473</sup> Cf. A.C. Kruyt, *Keluar dari Agama Suku masuk ke Agama Kristen*, 1976, pp. 132-150.

<sup>474</sup> *Toeria*, 5/10-11 (1918).



overseeing the *guru*, *sinenge* or *pandita* in the local congregations, which were grouped around the centre.<sup>475</sup>

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.<sup>476</sup>

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.<sup>477</sup> 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*.<sup>478</sup> 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*).<sup>479</sup> 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.<sup>480</sup>

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

<sup>475</sup> Cf. L. Gulö, 'Kepemimpinan Berada di Tangan Mereka', in: D.P. Lase (ed.), 'Menuju Gereja yang Mandiri', 2005, p. 7.

<sup>476</sup> 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.

<sup>477</sup> Cf. Ch. 5.2.1 and Ch. 5.3.

<sup>478</sup> *Lala Nihonogöi (Atoeran) ba Mbanoea Niha Keriso*, Pasal 5, bagian I-III.

<sup>479</sup> *Lala Nihonogöi (Atoeran) ba Mbanoea Niha Keriso*, Pasal 5, bagian IV, ayat 3 d.

<sup>480</sup> *Toeria*, 23/12 (1936).

East Coast and in 1952 the ONKP was founded in the *öri* of Lahömi in West Nias.<sup>481</sup> One cause of the split certainly was that the church was led by law rather than love<sup>482</sup>, resulting in the abuse of power.<sup>483</sup> 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.<sup>484</sup>

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:<sup>485</sup>

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'.

<sup>481</sup> 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'.

<sup>482</sup> Cf. W. Lempp, *Benih yang Tumbuh XII*, 1976, p. 18.

<sup>483</sup> Cf. Th. van den End and J. Weitjens, *Ragi Carita II*, 2002, p. 216.

<sup>484</sup> Cf. W. Lempp, *Benih yang Tumbuh XII*, 1976, p. 22.

<sup>485</sup> 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.<sup>486</sup>

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 Larosa<sup>487</sup>, 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:<sup>488</sup>

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.<sup>489</sup>

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.<sup>490</sup> 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.

<sup>486</sup> F. Daeli, 'Hana wa lö La'oguna'ö ndra Fandrita Khöda?', in: D.P. Lase (ed.), 'Menuju Gereja yang Mandiri', 2005, pp. 28-29.

<sup>487</sup> Cf. B. Larosa, 'BNKP Tidak Mau Memupuk Otonomi Banua', in: *Menuju Gereja Yang Mandiri*, 2005, p. 26.

<sup>488</sup> 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.

<sup>489</sup> Cf. Ch. 5.7.3. Cf. W. Zandroto, 'Sejarah Masuknya Injil di Pulau-pulau Batu', 1989, pp. 7, 11-12. (Arsip BNKP).

<sup>490</sup> '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.<sup>491</sup> 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 baŵa dalu mbanua*).<sup>492</sup>

Initially, the new believers were not allowed to worship *adu* at all. But there was no mention of *famoni* and *famaigi baŵa 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.

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<sup>491</sup> 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.

<sup>492</sup> 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:<sup>493</sup>

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).<sup>494</sup> 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.<sup>495</sup> 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.<sup>496</sup> 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.<sup>497</sup>

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*.<sup>498</sup> These statements were reaffirmed again in the revised

<sup>493</sup> Anonymous, *Soera Zinoe ba Niha, Niassisches Gesang-Buchlein*, 1905.

<sup>494</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>495</sup> *Toeria*, 2/7 (1915), p. 28.

<sup>496</sup> *Toeria*, 2/10 (1915), p. 36. Cf. A. Schneider, *Folawa hoekoe niha baero ba gamaboe'oela li si föföna*, 1947, p. 5.

<sup>497</sup> *Toeria*, 11/8-9 (1924), pp. 25-26, 30. Cf. A. Lück, *Katechismus Luther*, 1934, p. 16.

<sup>498</sup> 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.<sup>499</sup> 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.<sup>500</sup> 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.<sup>501</sup> 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.<sup>502</sup>

On the Batu Islands, the DLM-missionaries took a similar approach.<sup>503</sup> 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.

<sup>499</sup> 'Keputusan persidangan Sinode tahun 1961, Amakhoita pasal 12' (Arsip BNKP).

<sup>500</sup> Guru Jonata, 'Rodi', in: A. Pieper (ed.), *Realienboek*, 1928, pp. 44-48.

<sup>501</sup> Cf. G. Menzel, *Denninger*, translated by B. Chr. Hulu (Arsip BNKP).

<sup>502</sup> Cf. Jan S. Aritonang, *Sejarah Pendidikan Kristen di Tanah Batak*, 1988, pp. 130-131.

<sup>503</sup> *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.<sup>504</sup>

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.<sup>505</sup> They also taught agricultural knowledge and skills in school. They provided sufficient textbooks for the students to learn farming and rising of cattle.<sup>506</sup>

### *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%.<sup>507</sup> Apart from this, missionaries also introduced the Western banking system to protect the poor from borrowing money with high interest.<sup>508</sup> 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.

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<sup>504</sup> *BRM*, 1875, p. 115.

<sup>505</sup> Cf. *Toeria*, 1915-1924.

<sup>506</sup> 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.

<sup>507</sup> *BRM*, 1899, p. 106.

<sup>508</sup> 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.<sup>509</sup> In this way, the school became a very important tool for evangelism.<sup>510</sup>

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.<sup>511</sup> The schools, on the other hand, would teach the youth Christian values, a disciplined life, reading, writing, singing, and other general knowledge.<sup>512</sup>

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.<sup>513</sup> 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.<sup>514</sup> 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.<sup>515</sup>

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.<sup>516</sup> W. Gulö records the conditions of the schools in 1941 as follows: There are 126 mission

<sup>509</sup> Cf. Ch. 4.3.5.2; 4.4.6.2; 4.5.5; 4.7.4; 5.2.6; 5.4.6.

<sup>510</sup> Cf. W. Gulö, *Benih yang Tumbuh XIII*, 1983, p. 18.

<sup>511</sup> 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.

<sup>512</sup> Cf. U. Hummel, *Sirihpruim en Kruis*, 2002, pp. 24-41.

<sup>513</sup> *BRM*, 1886, p. 147.

<sup>514</sup> Cf. A. Schneider, *Turia: 100 Jahre Dienst am Evangelium auf Nias*, 1965, p. 20.

<sup>515</sup> 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.

<sup>516</sup> 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.<sup>517</sup> 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.<sup>518</sup> 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*.<sup>519</sup> 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.<sup>520</sup>

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 earlier<sup>521</sup>, 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.<sup>522</sup> 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.<sup>523</sup> 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*.<sup>524</sup>

<sup>517</sup> Cf. W. Gulö, 'Sejarah pendidikan di Nias', in: *Laporan Seminar Lokakarya Peranan Gereja-gereja di Nias*, 2001, p. 144.

<sup>518</sup> Jan S. Aritonang, *Sejarah Pendidikan Kristen di Tanah Batak*, 1988, pp. 163-187.

<sup>519</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 216-363.

<sup>520</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 381-414.

<sup>521</sup> Cf. Ch. 4.3.5.1; 4.4.6.1; 4.5.4; 4.7.3; 5.2.5; 5.4.5.

<sup>522</sup> RMG 2.778.

<sup>523</sup> E. Fries, *Amuata Hoelo Nono Niha*, 1919, p. 166.

<sup>524</sup> 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.<sup>525</sup>

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.<sup>526</sup> 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.<sup>527</sup> 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.<sup>528</sup> 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*.<sup>529</sup> 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.<sup>530</sup> 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.<sup>531</sup> This

<sup>525</sup> *EVB*, 17/1 (1899) p. 4.

<sup>526</sup> G.O. Reitz, 'A Report of the Church in the Batu Islands', 1959, p. 11.

<sup>527</sup> Cf. Ch. 5.5.6.

<sup>528</sup> J. Danandjaja, 'Ono Niha: Penduduk Pulau Nias', 1976, p. 113.

<sup>529</sup> 'Laporan Rapat Synode BNKP Nias, tahun 1963' (Arsip BNKP).

<sup>530</sup> W. Gulö, *Benih yang Tumbuh XIII*, 1983, pp. 154-155.

<sup>531</sup> 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.<sup>532</sup>

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.<sup>533</sup> 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 earlier<sup>534</sup>, 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

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<sup>532</sup> *BRM*, 1915, pp. 147, 164.

<sup>533</sup> On the occasion of the BNKP Jubilee (1965), the Church of the Rheinland donated a ship to the BNKP.

<sup>534</sup> 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.<sup>535</sup>

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.<sup>536</sup> This can be seen clearly from Rabeneck's<sup>537</sup> 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:<sup>538</sup>

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. Fischer<sup>539</sup> mentions that the *Insulinde* party already existed on Nias, especially in Gunungsitoli, Biouti, Hinako, Hilimaziaya,

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<sup>535</sup> *Toeria*, 3/2 (1916), p. 6.

<sup>536</sup> Cf. Th. van den End and J. Weitjens, *Ragi Carita II*, 2002, p. 39.

<sup>537</sup> H. Rabeneck, 'Stellung der Missionare zur Kolonialregierung und ihre Beamten', 1900-1923 (RMG 2.784).

<sup>538</sup> *Toeria Hoelo Batoe*, 4/8 (1932).

<sup>539</sup> 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*.<sup>540</sup> 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.<sup>541</sup> 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.<sup>542</sup> 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.<sup>543</sup>

### 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

<sup>540</sup> Cf. Ch. 2.7.3 and Ch. 5.5.2.

<sup>541</sup> Cf. W. Gulö, *Benih yang Tumbuh XIII*, 1983, p. 21; cf. Ch. 5.5.2.

<sup>542</sup> *Turia Röfa*, 1970, pp. 4-5.

<sup>543</sup> 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.<sup>544</sup>

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.<sup>545</sup>

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.<sup>546</sup> 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's<sup>547</sup> 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

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<sup>544</sup> N. Gea, 'BNKP Tidak Pernah Melibatkan Diri dalam Politik Praktis', in: D.P. Lase, 'Menuju Gereja yang Mandiri', 2005, pp. 61-62.

<sup>545</sup> T.B. Simatupang, *Kehadiran Kristen dalam Perang, Revolusi dan Pembangunan: Berjuang Mengamalkan Pancasila dalam Terang Iman*, 1986, p. 11.

<sup>546</sup> Cf. 'Laporan Rapat Anggota lengkap Partai Kristen Indonesia (*Parkindo*), Tjambang Gunungsitoli-Nias, tanggal 1 September 1953' (Arsip BNKP).

<sup>547</sup> *Ibid.*

BNKP to establish a *Parkindo* branch.<sup>548</sup> 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.<sup>549</sup>

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*.<sup>550</sup> 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.<sup>551</sup>

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.<sup>552</sup> 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.<sup>553</sup> 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.

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<sup>548</sup> 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).

<sup>549</sup> W. Lempp, *Benih yang Tumbuh XII*, 1976, p. 32.

<sup>550</sup> 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).

<sup>551</sup> W. Lempp, *Benih yang Tumbuh XII*, 1976, p. 32.

<sup>552</sup> F.D. Wellem, *Injil dan Marapu*, 2004, pp. 363-365.

<sup>553</sup> 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.<sup>554</sup> 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.<sup>555</sup> Motivated in addition by the colonialist vision of their age<sup>556</sup>, 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*).<sup>557</sup> The theory of evolution, on the other hand, which was adhered to by

<sup>554</sup> 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.

<sup>555</sup> Cf. Ch. 3.2.1 and Ch. 3.3.1.

<sup>556</sup> Cf. F. Fabri, *Die Entstehung des Heidenthums und die Aufgabe der Heidenmission*, 1859.

<sup>557</sup> 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.<sup>558</sup>

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

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<sup>558</sup> 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.