

## 2 Land and People of Nias and the Batu Islands

### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

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

In line with the theme of this study, the missionary area described here is Nias and the Batu Islands. The majority of its inhabitants belongs to the Niasan tribe (Ono Niha). They possess their own unique and ancient culture, with variations in the different geographic regions of North Nias, South Nias, East Nias, and West Nias.<sup>1</sup> Before the colonial period, the Ono Niha had governed themselves, on the basis of their traditions and their customary law (*adat*). Under colonialism, however, the Batu Islands were linked to the province of West Sumatra<sup>2</sup>, while Nias became part of Tapanuli. When Indonesia became independent, Nias and the Batu Islands were combined to constitute a region, named the Nias Regency.

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

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

### 2.2 GEOGRAPHY

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

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

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

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

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

As of 1928, the Batu Islands and Hinako were incorporated into the Nias-district (*afdeeling*). When Indonesia became independent, Nias, Hinako and the Batu Islands were treated as one regency of the Province of North Sumatra. The Nias Regency consisted of 132 islands covering about 5.625 km<sup>2</sup> or 7,8 % of the Province of North Sumatra, situated between 0° 12' and 1° 32' northern latitude and 97° and 98° eastern longitude, with the following boundaries:<sup>6</sup>

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## 2.3 THE PEOPLE

### 2.3.1 Residents

In the regency of Nias<sup>11</sup>, the largest ethnic group consists of native Niasans, or Ono Niha. There are also several smaller ethnic groups living there, such as Acehnese, Minangkabau, Bataks, Buginese, Javanese and Chinese.<sup>12</sup> The Ono Niha believe that their ancestors were the first human beings to arrive on Nias. These ancestors thus thought of themselves as land owners (*sotanö*) or villager dwellers (*sowanua*), while those who came later were called 'stranger' (*sifatewu*). They were not yet bound by the *adat*.<sup>13</sup> For this reason, the members of the Niasan tribe call themselves Ono Niha, which literally means 'the children of the human beings'. Nias and its surrounding islands are called 'the land of people' (*Tanö Niha*).<sup>14</sup>

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

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> BPS Kabupaten Nias, 'Nias dalam Angka 2000', 2002, pp. vii-xii .

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

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

<sup>13</sup> F. Zebua, *Kota Gunungsitoli*, 1996, p. 7.

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

(inhumane brutes).<sup>15</sup> The background of this was that Acehnese treated Ono Niha in an inhumane way (*hulö zi tenga niha*), kidnapping them and selling them into slavery.<sup>16</sup> Long before the slave trade began around the eleventh century<sup>17</sup>, the Acehnese had bartered goods such as gold, brass, bauxite, nickel, and various kinds of silk and wool for the products of the land of Nias, such as coconut, poultry, etc. Commercial trade went hand-in-hand with cultural interaction. Acehnese terms, such as gold (*ana'a*); silk (*sotöra*), tin (*simo*); brass (*laoya*), are used in the oldest Ono Niha poems, aphorisms and proverbs (*amaedola*).<sup>18</sup>

One ethnic group that must not be forgotten in the history of Nias is the Buginese tribe, i.e., the Maru group, which settled on the Hinako and Batu Islands in the seventeenth century. Willem L. Steinhart<sup>19</sup>, said that the Bekhua on the Batu Islands were considered to be the land owners, i.e., the original natives of the land. Their ancestors were called Maru.<sup>20</sup> Until the eighteenth century, these people still used the Buginese vernacular and traditions in daily life. The majority of them were Muslims. However, after a long process of assimilation, they were themselves considered to be Ono Niha and used the Niasan language (*Li Nono Niha*).

### 2.3.2 Origin of the Ono Niha

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

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

Ludwig E. Denninger<sup>22</sup> rejected the theory of Nieuwenhuizen and Von Rosenberg that the Ono Niha were a branch of the Batak.<sup>23</sup> He argued that the physiognomy, the customary law (*adat*) and the language of the Ono Niha are very

<sup>15</sup> *BRM*, 1867, pp. 108-116.

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

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

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

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Ch. 3.5.1 and Ch. 4.7.1.

<sup>20</sup> W.L. Steinhart, *Niassche Priesterlitanieën*, Deel LXXIV, Eerste Stuk, p. 20.

<sup>21</sup> E.E.W.Gs. Schröder, *Nias*. 1917.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Ch. 3.5.1 and Ch. 4.2.

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

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

F.M. Schnitger, on the other hand, found great similarities between the Ono Niha and the Naga of Khassi in Assam in relation to customary law, the use of megalith stones and the grand pig-feasts (*owasa*). This view is supported by the Indonesian ethnologist James Dananjaja, who points out that the feasts held in connection with the erection of big stones on Nias are unique, as the sacrifices brought consisted of pigs instead of buffalos. Martin Thomsen<sup>24</sup> categorized the Ono Niha as ancient tribes (*Altvölker*), which had originated from the southeast Asian realm of China around the year 1000 AD. This theory is verified by the fact that the first settlers on Nias seem to have lived from agriculture, used iron tools and worn golden jewellery, similar to that used in China at that time.

On the basis of physiognomic studies of faces from both the northern and the southern parts of Nias, Elio Modigliani<sup>25</sup> held the view that the ancestors of the Ono Niha had come from the regions of north-eastern India, arriving in several waves of immigration.

On the basis of his studies of the genealogies of various Niasan clans (*mado*), Johannes M. Hämmerle<sup>26</sup> reckons that there have been one hundred generations of Ono Niha from the year five hundred before of Christ until the present. The different *mado* seem to have had more than one ancestor, who would then, in accordance with Modigliani, have arrived on Nias in several waves. Linguistic studies seem to support this theory, although Eduard Fries<sup>27</sup> (1877-1923) was of the opinion that they indicated that the Ono Niha belonged to the Malay race.<sup>28</sup>

Denninger noted that the Niasan myth about the ancestor Tuada Hia and his wife<sup>29</sup> says that they descended from the upper world (from the primeval village, named Teteholi Ana'a). After having given birth to one boy and one girl, they again returned to the upper world. According to the myth, the tenth generation of their progeny then began to settle on the earth. At first, this generation stayed in Gomo on a big rock, under a big tree. Both the rock and the tree, which had originally come from the upper world, continued to exist, but in an invisible form which could be seen only by the priests/priestesses (*ere*). In another myth about the creation of the world, the creator is named Lowalangi. He had four sons, who descended to earth and became the ancestors of the Ono Niha.

Heinrich Sundermann<sup>30</sup> also mentions a creation myth, according to which Lowalangi, like the first human being, was a fruit of the *Solambayö-nga'eu*, the primeval tree, growing where the thirty winds of creation meet. The very first man died, but from his heart grew the 'tree of life' called *tora'a* tree. The golden fruit of the *tora'a* are the actual ancestors of the Ono Niha.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Cf. Ch. 5.2.5.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Elio Modigliani, *Un Viaggio a Nias*, 1890.

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

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Ch. 4.4.1.

<sup>28</sup> E. Fries, *Amuata Hoelo Nono Niha*, 1919, pp. 52-54.

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

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Ch. 4.3.1.3.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. H. Sundermann, *Die Psychologie des Niassers*, 1887, p. 289.

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

Faogöli Harefa<sup>33</sup> also affirmed the origin of the Ono Niha from the upper world (Teteholi Ana'a) as descendants of Sirao. Hia Walangi Sinada and his wife, the first ancestors, had been placed in Gomo. When they had descended to the earth, they had been given certain things to take with them, namely, an temple (*osali*), an house (*omo*), an measuring staff (*afore*), a rice measure (*lauru*), a scales (*fali'era*), as well as seeds for plants, animals, jewellery, and images (*adu*). Hia Walangi Sinada is said to have had in his possession all the rules and laws (*huku*), as well as the standards for measures and weights (*so'aya gafore, lauru, fali'era*).

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

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

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

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

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

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

### 2.3.3 Language

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## 2.4 PRIMAL RELIGION AND COMMUNITY LIFE OF THE ONO NIHA

Before the arrival of Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism<sup>40</sup> to Nias, the Ono Niha had already had their own religion. A number of sources call the Ono Niha 'worshippers of spirits'<sup>41</sup>, 'worshippers of deities'<sup>42</sup> or 'worshippers of idols' (*molohe adu*).<sup>43</sup> In this study, the authors use 'primal religion' to indicate the ancient religion of the Ono Niha. The focus of this chapter is on the description of the primal religion and community life of the Ono Niha, while in Ch. 6 there will be an analysis of the encounter between this primal religion and Christianity.

### 2.4.1 Cosmology

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

According to some of the myths, at the beginning, there existed only chaos and darkness. The first god emerged from the midst of this chaos and darkness. In North Nias, this god was called Sihai<sup>45</sup>, in the south it was called Inada Samihara Luo,<sup>46</sup> while on the Batu Islands it was called Inada Dao.<sup>47</sup> This first god was believed to be the creator of the sky, the earth, the other gods, human beings and all other things.

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

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

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Koentjaraningrat, *Manusia dan Kebudayaan di Indonesia*, 1990, p. 50.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. H. Hadiwijono, *Religi Suku Murba di Indonesia*, 1985, p. 84.

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>52</sup> Cf. E.E.W.Gs. Schröder, *Nias*, 1917, p. 476.

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

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

<sup>55</sup> Cf. E.E.W.Gs Schröder, *Nias*, 1917, p. 476.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 11-16.

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

#### 2.4.2 Deities, Ancestors and Priests

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

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

##### 2.4.2.1 Images (*Adu*)

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

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

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

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

<sup>64</sup> R. Wagner, *Die Mission auf Nias*, 1915, p. 31.

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

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

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

#### *Image of the Forefathers (Adu Zatua)*

*Adu zatua* is the 'image of the forefathers'. For the Ono Niha, parents are the visible manifestation of the gods (*ama*, *Lowalangi ba gulidanö*). They are believed to be protectors in all situations and providers against all needs. A father has the right to bless or to curse. For this reason, the Ono Niha worshipped their parents as gods, obeying their every command. This paternal command is called *amakhoita zatua*. At the earliest four days after the father had died<sup>69</sup>, wealthy people would carve his likeness in wood, calling it *adu zatua* or *adju ndra ama*.<sup>70</sup> They would then hold a feast, to which the *ere* was called.

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

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

<sup>67</sup> R. Wagner, *Die Mission auf Nias*, 1915, p. 32.

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

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

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

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

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

#### *Image of Disease (Adu Wökhö)*

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

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

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

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

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.* p. 3.

<sup>74</sup> E.E.W.Gs. Schröder, *Nias*, 1917, pp. 595-599.

<sup>75</sup> *BRM*, 1868.

#### *Image of the Sinner (Adu Horö)*

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

#### *Image of the House (Adu Siraha Nomo)*

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

#### *Image of the Gates (Adu Lawölö)*

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

#### *Image of the Priest (Adu Bihara)*

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

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

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

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

<sup>77</sup> For the crocodile cult of Balögia on the island of Batu Makele, cf. 4.7.2.1.

<sup>78</sup> E.E.W.Gs. Schröder, *Nias*, 1917, pp. 590-603.

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

#### 2.4.2.2 Priests (*Ere*)

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

Religious activities required no special house of worship. However, in many a village there was a small sacred place called *osali*, where the ancestral spirits dwelt and a multitude of *adu* were kept. Both men and women could learn the will of the ancestors or receive healing through the mediation of an *ere*. During a shaman rite, the *ere* would receive revelations from the realm of the spirits. A person could be healed of any illness if the *ere*, through sacrifices<sup>82</sup>, could succeed in influencing the deity or the evil spirit represented by the *adu*.<sup>83</sup>

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

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

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

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

<sup>81</sup> E.E.W.Gs. Schröder, *Nias*, 1917, p. 609.

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

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

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.* p. 3.

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

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

### 2.4.3 Community Life

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

#### 2.4.3.1 Traditional Ceremonies (*Fondrakö*)

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

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

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

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

<sup>86</sup> W.H. Sundermann, *Der Kultus der Niasser*, 1891, p. 4.

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

<sup>88</sup> S.W. Mendröfa, *Fondrakö*, pp. 10-11.

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>94</sup> J.M. Hämmerle, *Famatö Harimao*, p. 73.

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

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

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

## 2.5 RITES OF PASSAGE IN THE CYCLE OF LIFE

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

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<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 73-74.

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

## 2.5.1 Birth and Name-giving

### 2.5.1.1 Pregnancy and Birth

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>100</sup> *Toeria*, 3/9 (1916), pp. 2-3.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

If there were twins, the Ono Niha would be even more afraid, since this was considered to be a powerful curse. In some *banua*, this could be redeemed by a sacrificial ritual<sup>106</sup>, while in most other villages one – or even both – of the twins were killed by letting them starve while being hung in a sack in a tree.

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

#### 2.5.1.2 Name-giving Ceremony

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

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

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

<sup>105</sup> *Toeria*, 3/2 (1916), pp. 6-7.

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

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

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

<sup>109</sup> The term *guwulo döi* is used in South Nias.

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

<sup>111</sup> Another name for this blessing-visit is *fangai bowoa*.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### 2.5.2 Adolescence

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

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

#### 2.5.2.1 Filing of the Teeth (*Fangöhözi*)

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

The person performing *fangöhözi* or *famofo* was a male *ere*. He made an *adu* and sacrificed a chicken, in order to prevent a swelling of the gums. The *ere* would file the teeth<sup>116</sup> with a kind of file called *farökha*, usually up to the gums (*famofo*). After *famofo*, the teeth were blackened with soot (*jelaga*). Afterwards, the ceremony was finished with a banquet of pork.

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

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<sup>114</sup> Cf. Ch. 6.4.1.3.

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

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

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>118</sup> J. M. Hämmerle, *Asal Usul Masyarakat Nias*, 2001, p. 196.



### 2.5.2.2 Incision of the Foreskin (*Famoto*)

The term used to refer to the incision of the foreskin of the penis is *laboto* or *lakhai*, which means to break, to split or to cut. Technically, the outer skin of the male sexual organ is cut once in length. The origin of *famoto* was not related to Muslim influence, as held by Ama Waomasi<sup>119</sup>, but was an integral part of the primal religion of the Ono Niha.<sup>120</sup> Hämmerle<sup>121</sup> holds that there was no *famoto* in South Nias, but this is denied by Fatosola Gulö<sup>122</sup>, who states that *famoto* was merely abandoned at a later stage in South Nias because of the frequent wars in that area. A warrior would be unable to defend his village for some time after having undergone *famoto*.

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

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

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

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

<sup>119</sup> Cf. S. Zebua, 'Menyelusuri Sejarah Kebudayaan Ono Niha', 1984, p. 12.

<sup>120</sup> Cf. E.E.W.Gs. Schröder, *Nias*, 1917, p. 56.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### 2.5.3 Marriage

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### 2.5.3.1 Looking for a Bride

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

In North Nias, a *si'o* is chosen among men<sup>134</sup>, whereas in South Nias, a *si'o* is chosen among mature women.<sup>135</sup> The *si'o* is responsible for conveying the intention of the man's family to the representative of the woman's family, who is called *Samatörö* (a person who answered)<sup>136</sup>, who will pass the message on to all of the members of the family. The *si'o* is strictly forbidden to speak directly with the bride's parents. Therefore, the *si'o* and the *samatörö* are constantly in communication with each other till the wedding is performed. They never act independently, however, but always under the guidance and supervision of the family members as a whole.

### 2.5.3.3 Engagement

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

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

<sup>133</sup> J.M. Hämmerle, *Hikaya Nadi*, 1995, p. 464.

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

<sup>135</sup> B. Laia, *Solidaritas Kekeluargaan*, 1983, p. 42.

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

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

<sup>138</sup> A. Beatty, *Society and Exchange in Nias*, 1992, p. 121.

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

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

#### 2.5.3.4 Before the Wedding

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*

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

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

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

#### 2.5.3.5 Wedding

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

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

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*

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

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

#### 2.5.3.6 After the Wedding

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

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

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

#### 2.5.4 Death and Funeral

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

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

<sup>148</sup> H. Sundermann, 'Die Psychologie des Niassers', 1887, pp. 291-292.

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

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

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

The rites related to death were of considerable significance to the Ono Niha, since they are related to the end of a person's life<sup>150</sup>, to the continuity of leadership, and to descendants<sup>151</sup>, as well as to the hope of the grieving family to be blessed by the *adu zatua*, the source of blessing (*sangehowu*), especially if the deceased was the father and was a member of the nobility.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 301-302.

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

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

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



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

#### 2.5.4.1 Rites for Dying

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

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

#### 2.5.4.2 Funeral Rites

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>156</sup> W. Gulö, *Benih yang Tumbuh XIII*, 1983, p. 204.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>159</sup> J. Danandjaja, 'Ono Niha: Penduduk Pulau Nias', 1976, p. 101.

<sup>160</sup> J.W. Thomas, *Drei Jahre in Südrias*, 1892, p. 14.

<sup>161</sup> Cf. M. Thomsen, *Ein Totengesang von der Insel Nias*, 1981.

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

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

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

#### 2.5.4.3 After the Funeral

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### 2.6.1 Traditional Economy

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>169</sup> E. Fries, *Amuata Hoelo Nono Niha*, 1919, pp. 13-35.

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

<sup>171</sup> E.E.W.Gs. Schröder, *Nias*, 1917, p. 310.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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<sup>172</sup> E. Fries, *Amuata Hoelo Nono Niha*, 1919, p. 126.

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

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

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

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

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

#### 2.6.1.1 Agriculture

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

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

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<sup>175</sup> BRM, 1867, pp. 114-115.

<sup>176</sup> W. Gulö, *Benih Yang Tumbuh XIII*, 1983, p. 210.

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

<sup>178</sup> W. Gulö, *Benih yang Tumbuh XIII*, 1983, p. 211.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>180</sup> W. Gulö, *Benih yang Tumbuh XIII*, 1983, pp. 210-211.

<sup>181</sup> *Toeria*, 2/10 (1915), p. 36.

<sup>182</sup> *BRM*, 1870, p. 40.

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

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

#### 2.6.1.2 Farm Animals

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

#### 2.6.1.3 Hunting

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

#### 2.6.1.4 Fishing

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>186</sup> J. Danandjaja, 'Ono Niha: Penduduk Pulau Nias', 1976, p. 97.

<sup>187</sup> E.E.W.Gs. Schröder, *Nias*, 1917, p. 141.

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

## 2.6.2 Traditional Society

### 2.6.2.1 Consanguinity System

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

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

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

The village (*banua*) as the basis of the community<sup>190</sup> has two meanings: the village as a location or a group of houses, arranged on the basis of the village ordinances, and the village as a community compare the word *banuama*, which means our village, but can also mean our brothers and sisters.

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

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

<sup>188</sup> J. Danandjaja, 'Ono Niha: Penduduk Pulau Nias', 1976, p. 99.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*

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

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

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

### 2.6.2.3 Housing

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>191</sup> J.M. Hämmerle, *Asal Usul Masyarakat Nias*, p. 55.

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

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

<sup>194</sup> Cf. E.E.W.Gs. Schröder, *Nias*, 1917, pp. 104-114.

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

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

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

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

#### 2.6.2.4 Hierarchy and Leadership

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

<sup>195</sup> Cf. A. Pieper (ed.), *Realienboek*, 1928.

<sup>196</sup> Cf. J.M. Hämmerle, *Omo Sebua*, p. 155.

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

<sup>198</sup> E.E.W.Gs. Schröder, *Nias*, 1917, pp. 118-122.

<sup>199</sup> J.M. Hämmerle, *Omo Sebua*, pp. 163-164.

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>201</sup> J. Danandjaja, 'Ono Niha: Penduduk Pulau Nias', 1976, p. 104.

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

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

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

## 2.7 COLONIALISM AND NATIONALISM

### 2.7.1 United East Indies Company (VOC)

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

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

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

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

<sup>205</sup> N. Madjid, *Indonesia Kita*, 2003, pp. 17-18.

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

<sup>207</sup> E.E.W.Gs. Schröder, *Nias*, 1917, p. 310. Cf. 2.6.1.

<sup>208</sup> F. Zebua, *Kota Gumungsitoli*, 1996, p. 25.

<sup>209</sup> E. Fries, *Amuata Hoelo Nono Niha*, 1919, pp. 126-128.

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

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

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

In some places in Indonesia, there were revolts against the VOC<sup>212</sup>, but none occurred in Nias. The reason for this was that in Nias, the VOC was not involved so much in regular trading, but mostly in the slave market. In other areas of Indonesia, the VOC concentrated on acquiring spices, which was a source of large profits for them.

### 2.7.2 The English

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

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

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

### 2.7.3 Dutch Colonialism and the Niasan Revolt

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

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<sup>212</sup> Cf. R.P. Suyono, *Peperangan Kerajaan di Nusantara*, 2003.

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

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

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

<sup>216</sup> W. Gronert, *Introduction*, in: *Nias Tribal Treasures*, 1990, p. 13.

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>218</sup> F. Zebua, *Kota Gunungsitoli*, 1996, pp. 93-94.

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

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>221</sup> E. Fries, *Nias: Amoeata Hoelo Dano Niha*, 1919, p. 129.



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

Because this first attack had not been successful, in 1856 General Van Swieten sent Lieutenant Heyligers to Nias, where he built a fortress in Lagundri. Lieutenant Heyligers was known to be very kind, patient and gentle with the people in the Lagundri area, and the people liked him. This situation created peace, and the people were willing to follow the rules and policies of the Dutch government.<sup>223</sup> However, this situation did not last long. In 1859, Lieutenant Heyligers was transferred, and his successor did not get along with the people, so that the people were no longer willing to obey the Dutch government. In 1861, the people in Mbotohösi attacked the Dutch fortress, causing the Dutch great losses. In 1863, the Dutch attacked again, with six hundred soldiers led by Major Fritzen, and defeated the people in Mbotohösi, Orahili, Lölöwa'u and Lagundri.<sup>224</sup> Once again, many traditional houses were burned, as well as the whole villages. Although the victory was in the hands of the Dutch, they no longer maintained their fortress there. They only created a Government Protected Area (*rapatgebied*) around Gunungsitoli and placed an administrator there. According to E. Fries, during the years 1864 - 1902, except for the *rapatgebied*, it was as if the Dutch had left the island of Nias.<sup>225</sup> Controlling Nias as one part of the governance was not done until the year 1864, when Nias became part of the *residentie* Tapanuli<sup>226</sup>, while the Batu islands became part of the West Coast of Sumatra.<sup>227</sup>

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

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

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

<sup>223</sup> E. Fries, *Amuata Hoelo Nono Niha*, 1919, p. 130.

<sup>224</sup> Cf. W. R. Schmidt, *Das unbeeendete Gespräch*, pp. 8-9.

<sup>225</sup> E. Fries *Nias: Amoeata Hoelo Dano Niha*, 1919, p. 131.

<sup>226</sup> Bappeda, *Monografi Kabupaten Daerah Tingkat II Nias tahun 1992*, 1992, p. 2.

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

<sup>228</sup> *Ibid.* p. 132.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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<sup>230</sup> *Toeria*, 10/2-5 (1923).

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

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

<sup>233</sup> R. Wagner, *Die Mission auf Nias*, 1915, pp. 72-74.

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

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

In the early twentieth century, some Niasan people who had travelled to Aceh, Tapanuli, Padang and Java had a nationalist movement in those areas. When these people returned home, they tried to establish this movement, called *Insulinde*, on Nias, too. H. Fischer<sup>235</sup>, in his lecture at the missionaries' conference, held 19-25 July 1921 on Nias, reported the foundation of *Insulinde* on Nias. Its members were from Gunungsitoli, Bio'uti, Hinako, Hilimaziaya and Sogae'adu.

This party was a continuation of the *Indische Partij*, which was based on general on ethical principles rather than on religion. Since the missionaries had not involved themselves in trying to lessen the people's suffering caused by forced labor, and had even maintained good relationships with the colonial government<sup>236</sup>, the *Insulinde* party was the only instrument which provided any protection for the people. Fischer explained that in 1916, there had been a revolt as a result of a spirit of nationalism.

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

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

<sup>234</sup> J. Danandjaja, 'Ono Niha: Penduduk Pulau Nias', 1976, p. 143.

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

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

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

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

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

#### 2.7.4 Japanese Colonialism

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

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>240</sup> F. Telaumbanua (ed.), 'Sejarah Perjuangan Masyarakat Nias', p. 84.

<sup>241</sup> S. Zebua, 'Menyelusuri Sejarah Kebudayaan Ono Niha', 1984, p. 460.

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

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

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

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

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

#### 2.7.5 Republic of Indonesia in the Soekarno Period

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

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

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<sup>242</sup> *Ibid.* p. 464.

<sup>243</sup> *Ibid.* p. 464.

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

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

information from the *resident* of Tapanuli, D.Z. Marunduri sent a letter to the government of the Republic of Indonesia, expressing their loyalty to the Indonesian government. Then the Indonesian National Committee (*Komite Nasional Indonesia*) was formed, led by P.R. Telaumbanua<sup>246</sup>, and various political parties emerged again, such as: PNI, *Majelis Islam Tinggi* (MIT), *Parki* (which became *Parkindo*), *Parsi* (which became PSI), PRI (which became *Pesindo*) and *Petwani* (which became *Perwari*).

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

Nias has always been loyal to Indonesia, and did not succumb to Mansyur's attempts at persuasion. He wanted to establish the State of East Sumatra (*Negara Sumatera Timur*) in March, 1949.<sup>249</sup> Nias did not send a representative when Mansyur invited them to attend the conference of the State of East Sumatra in Medan. Nias sent a letter saying that they were loyal to the Indonesian government.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## 2.8 FINAL OBSERVATIONS

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

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

<sup>250</sup> Bappeda, *Monografi. Kabupaten Nias*, pp. 4-5.

<sup>251</sup> S. Widyosiswoyo, *Sejarah Kebudayaan Indonesia*, 2000, pp. 227-228.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

<sup>255</sup> Cf. Serena Nanda, *Cultural Anthropology*, 1991, p. 161.

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



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

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

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

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<sup>257</sup> ENI 3 (1919), pp. 29-30.

<sup>258</sup> W.R. Schmidt, *Das unbeeendete Gespräch*, 1967, pp. 25.