

4 Christian Missions on Nias and the Batu Islands (1865-1930)

4.1 INTRODUCTION

When does the church history of a certain area begin? With the arrival of the first missionaries? With the baptism of the first indigenous Christians? Or even as late as the independence of the young church? From a theological point of view, most Christians will agree that holy baptism is the constituting sacrament of the church. As a matter of fact, however, there is no consensus concerning how the anniversaries of the various churches, including those in Indonesia¹⁷⁰, are to be dated. The BNKP annually commemorates the date of the arrival of the first missionary of the RM, Ernst Denninger, in 1865.¹⁷¹ This year will therefore be taken as the *terminus a quo* for this historical reconstruction, though for the sake of completeness there will be brief mention of a few previous missionary attempts as well.

This chapter will focus on the process of the Christianization of the indigenous societies on Nias and the Batu Islands, though some Niasan communities elsewhere will also be mentioned. The time frame is from 1865 until 1930, the years of missionary pioneering and subsequent expansion, when all the work in the congregations was under the missionaries' leadership and close supervision. The indigenous helpers, though vital for the actual spread of Christianity, were merely fulfilling the tasks entrusted to them by their European superiors. It was not until after 1930, when the tremors of the Great Awakening had subsided and all attention was directed towards building an independent church, that more decision-making power was gradually granted to Niasan officials, who finally assumed full control within their church at the outbreak of World War II.

4.2 PRELIMINARY MISSIONARY ATTEMPTS ON NIAS (1832-1865)

As of 1669, the beginning of commercial cooperation between the United East Indies Company (VOC¹⁷²) and some Niasan chiefdoms around Gunungsitoli¹⁷³, the Ono Niha had occasional contacts with European Christians. However, though functioning as a Christian government in its colonies, the VOC had no interest in

¹⁷⁰ For example: the Batak Church (HKBP), the church in West-Papua (GKI di tanah Papua), and the Nias Churches (BNKP, AMIN and ONKP) celebrate the coming of the first missionaries. The Toraja-Church celebrates the first baptism in 1913, while the Moluccan Church (GPM) celebrates the day of its independence in 1935.

¹⁷¹ Though F.L. Cooley, *The Growing Seed*, 1981, p. 344, mentions the year of first baptism (1874) and also the year of 'autonomy' (1936), these dates are not celebrated annually as the birthday (*hari ulang tahun*) of the BNKP. On the Batu Islands, the arrival of Johannes Kersten in 1889 is also celebrated at jubilees.

¹⁷² Cf. Ch. 2.7.1.

¹⁷³ Cf. *ENI* 3 (1919), pp. 29-30; F. Zebua, *Kota Gunungsitoli*, 1996, pp. 87-90; R. Mittersakschmüller (ed.), *Joachim Freiherr von Brenner-Felsach: Eine Reise nach Nias*, 1998, p. 22.

mission.¹⁷⁴ Nor did the English, who conquered Nias from the Dutch in 1756, engage in any missionary activities.¹⁷⁵

Jean-Pierre Vallòn and a Niasan couple from the island of Penang (*Pulau Pinang*), referred to as the catechist Francisco and his wife Sophie¹⁷⁶, were the first missionaries to Nias. They were in the service of the Paris Foreign Missionary Society (*Société des Missions Étrangères*), which had, since 1662, worked on Penang among the Ono Niha, who were living there either as slaves or as manumitted former slaves. In 1824, thirty Ono Niha had been baptized on Penang.¹⁷⁷

Vallòn, Francisco, his wife Sophie and another priest, Jean-Laurent Bérard, left Penang for Nias on 14 December 1831. Because of illness, they had to spend some time in Tapanuli (Sumatra). From here, Vallòn and Francesco sailed straight for Nias, where they arrived in March 1832.¹⁷⁸ After having visited a few villages, they settled in the village of Lasara, near Gunungsitoli.

It has been supposed that Vallòn learned the local Niasan vernacular and ‘baptized a few children’.¹⁷⁹ The children may have been pupils¹⁸⁰ or house boys (*anak piara*), sons of influential Ono Niha serving the missionaries. But there is no description of the actual state of affairs, nor is there a single authentic report.¹⁸¹

Vallòn died in June 1832, less than three months after his arrival. His colleague Bérard, who had stayed behind ill on Sumatra, came to Nias some time after Vallòn’s death. He died on the third day after his arrival before he could begin any missionary work. Almost sixty years later, an old Ono Niha man from Lasara told Missionary Friedrich Kramer¹⁸² that the Roman Catholic missionaries had been accepted well by the people of Lasara, but were then poisoned by Muslim clerics.¹⁸³ Other sources speak about ‘mysterious circumstances’, but the actual cause of their death might have been malaria.¹⁸⁴ After this, there were no more attempts by Roman Catholic missionaries to work on Nias and the Batu Islands until 1939.¹⁸⁵

¹⁷⁴ Cf. C.W.Th. Baron van Boetzelaer, *De Protestantsche Kerk in Nederlandsch-Indië*, 1947, pp. 4-5, 12. The VOC acted consciously as a ‘Christian authority’ (*Christelijke Overheid*); though mission was not part of their policy, it was not an alien concept to the VOC.

¹⁷⁵ F. Zebua, *Kota Gunungsitoli*, 1996, p. 90.

¹⁷⁶ Their original names and *marga* are unknown.

¹⁷⁷ Cf. A. Reid, *The French in Sumatra and the Malay World, 1760-1890*, 1973, pp. 205-208; J.M. Hämmerle, *Sejarah Gereja Katolik di Pulau Nias*, 1985, pp. 3-9; U.M. Telaumbanua, *Evangelization and Niasan culture*, 1993, pp. 90-96; R. Mittersakschmöller (ed.), *Joachim Freiherr von Brenner-Felsach: Eine Reise nach Nias*, 1998, p.23; K. Steenbrink, *Catholics in Indonesia 1808-1942*, vol. I, 2003, pp. 11, 20; F. Huber, *Das Christentum in Ost-, Süd- und Südostasien sowie Australien*, 2005, p. 178.

¹⁷⁸ The sources mention only that Sophie was very ill upon arrival in Tapanuli. Furthermore, hereafter, her name is not explicitly mentioned (cf. U.M. Telaumbanua, *Evangelization and Niasan culture*, 1993, p. 95; for further sources, cf. *ibid.* p. 95 n. 17).

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.* p. 95.

¹⁸⁰ According to a document by a Protestant missionary, Henry Lyman, quoted by Karel A. Steenbrink, the Vallòne had had a child of a neighbouring chief as his pupil shortly before his own death (cf. K. Steenbrink, *Catholics in Indonesia 1808-1942*, vol. I, 2003, p. 20).

¹⁸¹ Cf. J.M. Hämmerle, *Sejarah Gereja Katolik di Pulau Nias*, 1985, p. 9 (Hämmerle mentions a letter of Bérard to Embrecht dated 15 June 1832. Bérard, however, could not have witnessed a baptism conducted by Vallòne on Nias).

¹⁸² Friedrich Kramer (30 November 1844 Detmold – 24 April 1920 Gütersloh). Cf. Ch. 4.3.1.1, Ch. 6.2 and Ch. 6.4.

¹⁸³ Cf. *De Rijnsche Zending*, 1889, pp. 160-161 (RMG GVI 1b, *Mahomedaansche priesters*).

¹⁸⁴ The same fate had befallen Caspar de Hesselle, a Dutch diocesan priest who came to Gunungsitoli in 1854 to consult the Dutch physician. He too died shortly after his arrival on 31 August 1854. Cf. E.E.W.Gs. Schröder, *Nias*, 1917, p. 755; U.M. Telaumbanua, *Evangelization and Niasan culture*,

Unfortunately, there are no records about what happened to catechist Francisco and his wife Sophie. If they survived and remained on Nias, they, along with the hypothetically baptized children, could be considered to be the 'stem-cell' of the church on Nias. However, there is no evidence at all of a Niasan Christian community until after the RM had begun its work.

In 1834, two years after the unsuccessful attempt by Vallòn and Bérard, two Protestant missionaries from Boston, Massachusetts, United States of America, Samuel Munson and Henry Lyman, came to Nias. They had been sent out by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM). After investigating the eastern coast, travelling northward from the south¹⁸⁶, they returned to Sibolga because they could not get permission from the Dutch authorities to work on Nias. Subsequently, they entered the Bataklands, where they became victims of anthropophagi.¹⁸⁷

It was not until almost thirty years later that another Protestant missionary, the German Ludwig E. Denninger¹⁸⁸ from the RM had contacts with an Ono Niha community, albeit initially in Padang rather than on Nias. In this town on the West Coast of Sumatra, there were numerous Ono Niha, living in close communities in special settlements.¹⁸⁹ Many of them had been brought over from Nias as slaves and were working as servants and dockers.¹⁹⁰ Most were adherents of the primal religion of Nias, though some had come under the influence of Islam, especially those who had attended government schools.¹⁹¹

Denninger is called the 'Father of the Nias Mission'.¹⁹² From 1848 to 1859, he had served among the Dayak in Kalimantan, but in that year he had to flee because of a revolt which turned against all Europeans. After an interim on Java, Denninger and his wife Sophie¹⁹³ arrived in Padang on 21 November 1861. Because of Sophie's poor health¹⁹⁴, Denninger, who had actually been assigned to work among the Batak¹⁹⁵, settled temporarily in Padang. The longer it was necessary for him to

1993, pp. 95-96 (for more sources cf. n. 23 on p. 96); K. Steenbrink, *Catholics in Indonesia 1808-1942*, vol. I, 2003, p. 63.

¹⁸⁵ Cf. Ch. 5.6.3.

¹⁸⁶ R. Mittersakschmöller (ed.), *Joachim Freiherr von Brenner-Felsach: Eine Reise nach Nias*, 1998, p.23.

¹⁸⁷ Cf. Joh. Warneck, *50 Jahre Batakmission in Sumatra*, 1912, pp. 15-16.

¹⁸⁸ Usually called Ernst Denninger. Cf. 3.5.2 and Ch. 6.3.1.

¹⁸⁹ According to W. Gulö, *Benih yang Tumbuh XIII*, 1983, p. 6, there were about 3000 Ono Niha in Padang at that time; other sources mention 5000-6000 (cf. *De Rijnsche Zending*, 1870, pp. 82-83). The Ono Niha constituted the largest non-Malay community in Padang in the nineteenth century.

¹⁹⁰ The Niasan slaves were brought over to Padang by the Dutch and settled there after they had obtained their freedom, cf. *ENI* 3 (1919), p. 29.

¹⁹¹ *BRM*, 1865, p. 34.

¹⁹² 'Vater der Niasmission', phrase used by Kramer, *BRM*, 1877, p. 177.

¹⁹³ Sophie Denninger née Jordan (3 July 1816 Kassel – 18 January 1892 Amsterdam). For her arrival on Nias, cf. *BRM*, 1862, p. 213.

¹⁹⁴ According to A. Bonn, *Ein Jahrhundert Rheinische Mission*, 1928, p. 69, this was caused by an attempt of poisoning.

¹⁹⁵ This was the result of a 'miraculous' inspiration ('ein Wink vom Herrn') of RM Mission Inspector Doctor Friedrich Fabri, which he had in October 1859, during a visit to Holland. When visiting the office of the Dutch Bible Society, Fabri discovered a translation of the Gospel according to St. John in the Batak language, made by the Dutch philologist Dr. Herman Neubronner van der Tuuk. A number of biblical books had already been translated, and a Batak grammar and a dictionary were also available. After Fabri had spoken to Van der Tuuk personally, he was convinced that God wanted the RM to join the few Dutch missionaries (from the missionary congregation of Hermanus W. Witteveen in Ermelo) already working on Sumatra. Fabri ordered former Borneo-missionary,

stay there, the more certain he became that a mission post there would be of strategic importance, both as a bridgehead for Sumatra in general, and, specifically for taking Christianity to Nias. A Nias mission, however, would have to be centred on Nias itself, rather than being treated as a satellite of the Sumatra Mission.¹⁹⁶ Discouragingly, both the Roman Catholic priest and the Dutch Reformed minister in Padang were opposed to this plan, although for different reasons.¹⁹⁷ Denninger left Padang in September 1865 and there was no follow-up until 1881, when Dornsaft¹⁹⁸ founded a permanent mission station there, which, though located on Sumatra, was henceforth listed under the Nias Mission.

These preliminary attempts by both Roman Catholic and Protestant missionaries were the first contacts between Christianity and the Ono Niha in recorded history. They were too short and superficial to result in a substantial encounter. Only Denninger, who had started to do literary work in the vernacular and who had discussed religious issues with some Ono Niha in Padang, might have made some impact on the Niasan community.

4.3 DIFFICULT BEGINNINGS ON NIAS (1865-1890)

The first period in which one could speak of any continuous encounter between Christianity and Niasan culture began in 1865 with Denninger's arrival on Nias. These 'difficult beginnings'¹⁹⁹ were marked by immense hardships and painful setbacks in the attempt to plant Christianity on Niasan soil. Basic instruments of communication, such as the language, first had to be acquired and common trust had to develop before any significant interaction could take place between the counterparts. This period ends in 1890 with the beginning of the successful expansion of the Nias-mission beyond the *rapatgebied*.²⁰⁰

Van Hoefen, to undertake an exploratory trip to Sumatra. In the meeting of the deputation on October 8, and subsequently in the general assembly on 26 October 1860, RM decided to initiate the mission. The colonial government gave its permission in November 1860. One year later, in October 1861, the first RM-missionaries began their work on Sumatra. On 7 October 1861, along with the Witteveen-missionaries Friedrich W. Betz and Gerrit van Asselt, the RM-missionaries Carl J. Klammer and Wilhelm K. Heine held their first conference in Sipirok. This is commonly known as the birth of the mission on Sumatra. Denninger was unable to attend this conference (cf. J. Warneck, *50 Jahre Batakmission in Sumatra*, 1912, pp. 22-24; G. Menzel, *Die Rheinische Mission*, 1978, pp.81-82).

¹⁹⁶ Cf. *BRM*, 1876, p. 296 (Nias mission not as the 'Appendix' of Batak mission).

¹⁹⁷ According to A. Bonn, *Die Sonne geht auf über unseren Bergen*, 1940, pp. 6-7, there had been an agreement between the Dutch Reformed and the Roman Catholics in Padang, that Sumatra should become Protestant, while Nias should become Roman Catholic. The Dutch Reformed minister accused the 'Prussian missionaries' of the RM of being the 'spies of Bismarck'. Cf. A. Töpperwien, *„Und er führte sie an das ersehnte Gestade“*, 2004, pp. 100-101.

¹⁹⁸ Cf. 3.4 and Ch. 4.3.4.4; cf. U. Hummel, *Sirihpruim en Kruis*, 2002, pp. 22- 28.

¹⁹⁹ Cf. A. Schneider, *Turia*, 1965, pp. 7-17. Schneider calls the period 1865-1890 'schwerer Anfang' (difficult beginning), referring mainly to the difficulties of the missionaries. W. Gulö, *Benih yang Tumbuh XIII*, 1983, pp. 5-13, follows Schneider's lead (*masa permulaan yang sulit*).

²⁰⁰ The *rapatgebied* was an area under Dutch Colonial jurisdiction, which extended sixteen kilometres to the north and sixteen kilometres to the south of Gunungsitoli. Cf. *ENI* 3 (1919), p. 28; also F. Zebua, *Kota Gunungsitoli*, 1996, pp. 94-95. Zebua gives a description of the borders of the *rapatgebied*, which is similar to the present sub-district of Gunungsitoli.

4.3.1 Gaining a Foothold

First and foremost, the missionaries had to gain a foothold within the Ono Niha society. This involved obtaining permission and support from various authorities (colonial, ecclesiastical and tribal), as well as obtaining help from the local communities. For reasons of safety, mission work was largely confined to the *rapat-gebied*, which consisted of a radius of sixteen kilometres around and including Gunungsitoli. Three mission stations were successfully established within the *rapat-gebied*, while two attempts outside of it failed.

4.3.1.1 Gunungsitoli

While still in Padang, Denninger applied to the board of the RM in Barmen, as well as to the colonial government (both in Padang and in Batavia) for permission to start a new mission on Nias.²⁰¹ The RM procrastinated in giving its official approval. According to Kriele, a mission to Nias was considered to be only part of the mission among the Batak.²⁰² Fortunately, Denninger received the necessary permission from the colonial authorities on 13 August 1865.²⁰³ Although still lacking an official instruction from Barmen²⁰⁴, he departed for Nias via Sibolga, arriving on 27 September 1865. This date was later acknowledged by the RM as the beginning of a new, independent mission and is celebrated by Protestants as the birthday of the church on Nias.

Denninger, his wife, and their daughter Karolina²⁰⁵ – who had returned from Germany in order to nurse her mother – settled in Gunungsitoli. This was the centre of the colonial administration and military, and therefore quite safe. They moved in with the Government Secretary in the 'European quarter',²⁰⁶ which consisted of four houses adjacent to the fortress. When his host was transferred to Sumatra, Denninger bought the house, which spared him the immense trouble of building a mission station. Conversely, it strengthened the impression that the missionary was part of the colonial establishment. He held church services in Dutch twice a month and participated in the social life in the European quarter.²⁰⁷ As a return favour, the

²⁰¹ The request to the Governor of the West Coast of Sumatra was made on 2 March 1865. Denninger reported this to the RM on 29 March 1865 (cf. letter Denninger to RM, 29 March 1865, RMG 1.793). Denninger had begun requesting a mission to Nias as from 1862, both of the RM and of the Governor-General. The latter supported the assignment of a Protestant missionary to Nias for educational reasons and began suggesting it to the RM in 1862, cf. letter Denninger to RM, 29 March 1865 (RMG 1.793); E.E.W.Gs. Schröder, *Nias*, 1917, p. 755; *Toeria*, 2/3 (1915) and 2/6 (1915).

²⁰² Cf. G. Menzel, *Die Rheinische Mission*, 1978, p. 83.

²⁰³ *BRM*, 1865, p. 378.

²⁰⁴ There had been no formal decision of the deputation, nor had the general assembly given its permission, cf. E. Kriele, *Die Rheinische Mission in der Heimat*, 1928, p. 200.

²⁰⁵ Karolina (called Lina) Denninger was born in Bintang (Borneo) on 24 August 1848. She arrived in Padang in July 1864 and in September 1865 accompanied her parents to Nias. In 1869, she married the Dutch military physician Van der Veen on Nias. Later, they moved to Buitenzorg (now Bogor) on Java, where Doctor van der Veen died on 29 March 1875. Ernst and Sophie Denninger also had a son, Elias, born on 1 January 1851.

²⁰⁶ Cf. *Kom over en help ons!* 8 (1866), pp.113-119; A. Bonn, *Die Sonne geht auf über unseren Bergen*, 1940, p. 15.

²⁰⁷ Cf. Annemarie Töpperwien, *Seine „Gehülfin“*, 2002, pp. 76-77.

controleur occasionally offered him the opportunity to join exploration parties into more remote areas.

From 1872 to 1873, Denninger was assisted by Johann W. Thomas.²⁰⁸ In 1873, Friedrich Kramer arrived. The latter soon built up catechetical classes in Onozitoli (Niasan suburb of Gunungsitoli) and Hilina'a (seven kilometres from Gunungsitoli). Eventually, after Denninger had had to leave Nias on 10 August 1875 for sick leave in Batavia, Kramer assumed the leadership of the station.²⁰⁹ On 21 January 1876, Kramer married Pauline Garschagen²¹⁰, which opened the door for work among the women. By the time of her death in April 1888, the congregation in Gunungsitoli had grown to 167 members.

4.3.1.2 Ombölata

During his first year in Gunungsitoli (1872), Thomas was visited by *Balugu* (nobleman) Tödölala, the paramount chief of Ombölata, who urged him to come and settle in his area. The chiefs of nearby Sihare'ö and Lölömboli also received Thomas well. They offered him about nine square kilometres of land, including twelve coconut palms, plus wood for building the station. Thomas wisely returned a gift of five guilders to the chiefs and then began to build his house about two hundred metres outside the village of Ombölata. The station, which was completed towards the end of 1873, was also called Ombölata.²¹¹

After Thomas and his wife Wilhelmina²¹² had become well settled, opposition arose from some of the chiefs, including Tödölala. The chiefs had realized that their power was slipping away and that they could not manipulate the missionary to serve their own interests. Nevertheless, in the end, the mission gained the upper hand in the struggle for the hearts and minds of the people of Ombölata.²¹³

4.3.1.3 Dahana

Heinrich Sundermann²¹⁴ arrived at the beginning of 1876. Like Thomas, he first spent some time in Gunungsitoli. From there he visited Tugala Oyo on the western coast, where he considered opening a new mission station. However, due to intensified Islamic propaganda activities, provoked by the first baptisms of Ono Niha (1874/75), it became necessary to further strengthen the work inside the *rapatgebiet*.²¹⁵ In 1878, after having obtained the consent of Oroisa, the highest-

²⁰⁸ Johann Wilhelm Thomas (13 June 1843 Eibach, Nassau – 30.12.1900 Humene, Nias).

²⁰⁹ Denninger never returned to Nias, but died in Buitenzorg on 27 March 1876.

²¹⁰ Pauline Kramer née Garschagen (23 May 1849 Radevormwald – 23 April 1888 Gunungsitoli).

²¹¹ Ombölata means 'the place of the rising sun', which is appropriate, given the magnificent view eastwards over the ocean. Sometimes the silhouette of Sumatra can be seen in the far distance. The chiefs gave three-and-a-half *morgan* of land to the RM. It is not sure whether this was measured in Prussian *morgan* (2553,22 m²) or Rhenish Cologne *morgan* (3176,61 m²).

²¹² Wilhelmina Thomas née Müller (30 October 1851 Elberfeld – 17 June 1912 Dillenburg).

²¹³ Cf. A. Schneider, *Turia*, 1965, p. 13. The decisive 'last straw' might have been that in 1887 Missionary Adam Fehr prohibited the Christians of Ombölata to attend all 'heathen feasts', cf. *BRM*, 1888, p. 24.

²¹⁴ Heinrich Wilhelm Sundermann (29 October 1849 Ladbergen - 24 April 1919 Göttingen). Cf. *Zum Gedächtnis: D. Heinrich Sundermann*, in: *BRM*, 1919, pp. 57-59; *BRM*, 1961, pp. 147-155; U. Hummel, 'Sundermann', in: *RGG*⁴ VII (2004), p.1903.

²¹⁵ Cf. A. Bonn, *Die Sonne geht auf über unseren Bergen*, 1940, p. 20.

ranking chief, Sundermann founded a station in Dahana, near Gunungsitoli.²¹⁶ From Dahana, he penetrated the neighbouring districts of Tumöri and Sihare'ö.

Eight days after Sundermann had settled in Dahana, he invited chief Oroisa and other notables for a banquet of pork, rice and palm wine, thus sealing a treaty, the implications of which the chief was unable to fathom. When Oroisa realized that Sundermann would not bend to his authority, he was disappointed and withdrew his support, which obstructed the work quite seriously. In spite of this, however, with the help of Sundermann's wife Luise²¹⁷, and the support of Fali'era, also known as Ama Mandranga²¹⁸, village-chief of Sifalaete, the work was making progress.

At first, border quarrels with Dahana made it difficult for the people of Tumöri to open themselves to Christianity, even though their chief asked to be baptized. After the colonial authorities had settled the issue, Tumöri became an important Christian village.²¹⁹ By the time Sundermann left in 1896 to establish a station in Lölöwu'a, Christianity had become well established in Dahana, Tumöri and Sihare'ö.

4.3.1.4 Painful Failure in Fagulö

In 1866, Denninger received assistance from Wilhelm Ködding.²²⁰ As a pupil of Fabri²²¹, Ködding had no genuine appreciation of the culture and customs of the Ono Niha. In the course of his explorations outside the *rapatgebied*, he came to Fagulö, about forty kilometres south of Gunungsitoli. Here he received a warm welcome from Gaisa, chief of the Iraono Limbu. Encouraged by the cordiality, and despite the lack of any protection in that area by the colonial authorities, Ködding decided to start a mission station there and bought a piece of land from the chief.²²² Despite his insufficient command of the language, he settled in Fagulö on 8 September 1867. That same year, August Mohri²²³, also a novice in the mission business, arrived to assist him. Both were bachelors, which complicated their negotiations with the chiefs, since an unmarried man had a low status and was not supposed to speak at a palaver. Niasan women would keep their distance from unmarried missionaries.²²⁴

Right at the outset, an incident put a heavy strain on the fragile relationship between the missionaries and the people of Fagulö. Reportedly, a Malay servant of Ködding did 'evil things'²²⁵ in the absence of his master. Puritan Ködding did not mention what these 'evil things' were, but it is likely that they had sexual connotations. Customary law (*adat*) is very strict on unauthorized intimacy between men

²¹⁶ Cf. H. Sundermann, *Die Insel Nias und die Mission daselbst*, 1905, pp. 98-99; later, Oroisa strongly opposed him.

²¹⁷ Luise Sundermann née Beyer (14 March 1857 Kalimantan – 4 March 1929 Mülheim). Luise married Sundermann on 30 January 1879.

²¹⁸ According to Niasan custom, a father (*ama*) is called by the name of his first child, be it a boy or a girl. The same is the case with a mother (*ina*). This is also common in other parts of Indonesia (e.g., West-Papua). There is no indication that this custom stems from Arabic influences. Cf. Ch. 2.5.1.2.

²¹⁹ H. Sundermann, *Die Insel Nias und die Mission daselbst*, 1905, p. 121.

²²⁰ Wilhelm Ködding (28 October 1837 Hundshausen – 5 February 1878 Sibolga); he arrived in Gunungsitoli on 27 February 1866.

²²¹ Cf. Ch. 3.5.1.

²²² *BRM*, 1868, p. 274.

²²³ August Mohri (25 August 1835 Allendorf, Nassau – 13 June 1907 Purba).

²²⁴ For the role of missionary wives, cf. Annemarie Töpperwien, *Seine „Gehülfin“*, 2002, pp. 38-58, 109-142.

²²⁵ Cf. W. Ködding, *Aus den Anfängen meiner Arbeit auf Nias*, 1882, p. 11 (*böse Dinge*).

and women, which in certain cases was punishable by death.²²⁶ In any case, the chiefs of the Iraono Limbu demanded the expulsion of the Malay youngster from their area, indicating that it must have been a very serious matter. Ködding complied with the demand, but a breach of trust could not be avoided.

To make things worse, Ködding and Mohri themselves behaved disparagingly towards the local customs. Initially, Ködding was respected for following the local code of conduct by sharing both betel nut (*afo*) and bed with the Iraono Limbu.²²⁷ He was called 'brother' (*talifusö*)²²⁸, and was given the title 'one who makes straight the law of God'.²²⁹ However, since he really had no genuine appreciation of the 'heathen' culture of the Ono Niha, the situation did not last. Once the missionaries had become settled in Fagulö, they no longer showed any respect for the local traditions. Ködding was disgusted by the clothing, or rather the lack of it, worn by the Iraono Limbu and forced them to wear 'decent dresses'²³⁰ in his presence. This had an alienating effect, rendering meaningful communication impossible. On top of this, they got into a conflict with the local high priest of the primal religion, the *böröwösi* of Lawinda. Subsequently, the *böröwösi* forbade all the chiefs of the Iraono Limbu to show hospitality to the missionaries.²³¹

In such an unpleasant atmosphere, even good intentions were likely to backfire. In the attempt to gain acceptance, Ködding and Mohri regularly awarded little gifts, like tobacco, to those who would come and listen to them. This was considered a fair deal. However, when they invited all the chiefs for a meal of pork, with obviously ulterior motives, the situation got out of hand.²³² Just before the meat was to be divided up, the missionaries held a sermon and invited the guests to become Christians. This caused a commotion. The distribution of the meat, traditionally a very joyful part of the feast, became chaotic. Some grabbed the meat, while threatening the others with their swords. In the end, some of the guests got nothing. They had to leave hungry and angry, an unforgivable insult to any Ono Niha, let alone a chief.

While Ködding was of the opinion that this was all due to the wild and uncivilized character of the Ono Niha, it seems more likely that the missionaries were to blame for false pretences. They wanted to convert the Iraono Limbu to Christianity before the latter were ready for it. Among the Ono Niha, a meal of pork is the most sensitive cultural means of making friendship. Held in the usual cordial

²²⁶ Cf. Ch. 6.3.3.4.

²²⁷ Cf. *Kom over en help ons!* 12 (1866), pp. 183-184.

²²⁸ Cf. *Kom over en help ons!* 11 (1867), p. 165.

²²⁹ Cf. *BRM*, 1867, p. 325 (*sangatulö khöi khöi Lowalangi*).

²³⁰ W. Ködding, *Aus den Anfängen meiner Arbeit auf Nias*, 1882, p. 10 (*anständige Kleider*). The clothes issue was linked not only to Christianization; it was a more general trend of modernisation. Muslims and Chinese also looked down on sparsely clothed Ono Niha. Few missionaries separated the clothes issue from Christianity, some, like Ködding, even considering it as a prerequisite for attending church services. Interestingly, however, Frickenschmidt on Pulau Tello did not want the Niasan Christians to wear Western clothes, but they themselves demanded it in order to demonstrate their new Christian identity. For traditional Ono Niha clothing, cf. H.S. Zebua and Y. Zebua, '101 Kumpulan Catatan, Pra Survei Benda-benda Koleksi Kebudayaan Daerah Kabupaten Nias', 1984, pp. 110, 134-136, 185-187.

²³¹ Cf. *BRM*, 1868, p. 277; *BRM*, 1870, pp. 195-197. The *böröwösi* was a direct descendent of Hia, the first ancestor of the Ono Niha. He possessed a mysterious crucifix (*geheimnisvolles Krucifix*), which he kept in a sanctuary. Cf. W. Ködding, *Aus den Anfängen meiner Arbeit auf Nias*, 1882, p. 6, and A. Bonn, *Die Sonne geht auf über unseren Bergen*, 1940, p. 17.

²³² Cf. W. Ködding, *Aus den Anfängen meiner Arbeit auf Nias*, 1882, pp. 21-22.

manner, it has the authority of sealing a treaty. Thus, by creating chaos, the Iraono Limbu showed their rejection of and utter contempt for the missionaries.

Understandably, the venture in Fagulö failed completely. This was due not only to external circumstances (lack of protection by the colonial authorities), but also to a clash of cultures, more extreme than that possible within the *rapatgebiet*. As free people, the Iraono Limbu saw no need to compromise, and the missionaries became subjected to the shameless arbitrariness of the chiefs. Under these intolerable circumstances, Ködding and Mohri terminated their mission in Nias and left the island in order to work among the Batak on Sumatra.

4.3.1.5 Risky Intermezzo in South Nias

Although in some ways similar, the deployment of three RM-missionaries in the densely populated and independent south of Nias from 1883 to 1886 was even more dramatic. In 1880, Thomas, by now an experienced missionary, made an investigative trip to the south, accompanied by Adam Fehr.²³³ Encouraged by the friendly attitude of Faösi'aro, chief of Bawö Lowalani²³⁴, Thomas decided to settle in this territory. On 8 March 1883, Thomas and his wife left their well-organized congregation of 207 members in Ombölata. Along with Heinrich Lagemann²³⁵, they sailed on the *Denninger*, the first mission sailing vessel, down the eastern coast of Nias. The voyage took three days. Thomas took along a portable forge for the purpose of bartering a piece of land from Chief Faösi'aro.²³⁶

From the point of view of this sovereign chief, the missionaries stood under his jurisdiction. But the missionaries did not share this opinion. They had officially obtained permission from the colonial authorities to settle in this area and did not respect the independence of southern Nias. In fact, they expected it to enter the well-ordered realm of the *pax Neerlandica* quite soon. It was this difference in point of view, rather than the more obvious problems of communication²³⁷, health²³⁸ and security²³⁹, which doomed this venture from the outset.

One major problem was to be able to maintain a neutral position between the rival tribes and villages.²⁴⁰ Though living under the protection of Faösi'aro, they also had friendly relationships with Chief Sidöfa of Hili Geho, a serious rival and later enemy of their landlord. This led to grave misunderstandings. Chief Faösi'aro, who had offered the missionaries his help and protection, regarded them as his subjects and considered it to be solely his privilege to benefit from them in every possible way. In times of war, Faösi'aro expected the missionaries to become his

²³³ Johann Adam Fehr (20 September 1851 Herleshausen, Hessen – 17 October 1932 Herleshausen). Before Fehr entered the Seminary in Barmen, he had been a tailor. He left Germany for Nias on 7 November 1880.

²³⁴ Cf. H. Sundermann, *Die Insel Nias und die Mission daselbst*, 1905, p. 109. Bawö Lowalani borders on Teluk Dalam, then called Luaha Wara by the Ono Niha.

²³⁵ Heinrich Lagemann (3 January 1851 Lengerich – 11 October 1933 Düsseldorf). Before Lagemann joined the Barmen Seminary, he had worked as a farmer. He left for Nias on 10 May 1882 and spent a year with Sundermann in Dahana.

²³⁶ J.W. Thomas, *Drei Jahre in Südrias*, 1892, pp. 17-18.

²³⁷ Thomas had to adjust to the dialect of South Nias, cf. J.W. Thomas, *Drei Jahre in Südrias*, 1892, p. 32.

²³⁸ The whole family suffered from serious malaria.

²³⁹ Constant rivalries between the villages and direct threats of murder and arson against the missionaries.

²⁴⁰ Cf. *BRM*, 1886, p. 197, 202-204; J.W. Thomas, *Drei Jahre in Südrias*, 1892, pp. 115-117.

allies. According to Ono Niha custom (and universally so), a ruler expects settlers to be loyal to him. In the opinion of the missionaries, however, the chief was making impossible demands.²⁴¹

Thomas held regular worship services at the station and held devotions when making house visits. In times of threatening war, all such gatherings met inside the village of Bawö Lowalani.²⁴² The chief felt entitled to 'guide' his people by making comments, much to the dismay of the missionaries. They, in turn, cleverly undermined his authority by preaching sermons which encouraged individual emancipation, thus leading to the disintegration of the traditional society.

The second station in southern Nias, Bawö Sa'ua (Mazingö), was founded on 25 July 1885 by Lagemann and Hermann de Weerd²⁴³, who had arrived six months earlier. This step was taken to create an alternative to Bawö Lowalani, where the mission's prospects had become dim due to the circumstances leading to the death of a nobleman (*si'ulu*) from Hili Geho. He drowned while crossing over the bay in a boat from the mission ship 'Denninger' to the mission station. A war between Bawö Lowalani and Hili Geho, both having a special relationship with the missionaries, therewith became unavoidable.

Concerning a station in Bawö Sa'ua, there had been negotiations with Chief Sidöfafaha. The chief had given permission for the missionaries to settle and work in his area, on the condition that they only preach 'the law of God' (*huku Lowalangi*) and not introduce forced labour (*rodi*, for the Ono Niha being the synonym for colonial rule).²⁴⁴ Soon after Lagemann and De Weerd had settled, a grave misunderstanding spoilt the good relationship. The reason for this was that after Sidöfafaha had lent some of his slaves to work on the mission station, the missionaries had paid the wages directly to the slaves. This was unheard of and dangerously threatened the authority of the chief. The missionaries had disturbed the fragile trust by enforcing their own egalitarian norm in a strongly hierarchical society.

When the war between Bawö Lowalani and Hili Geho broke out, it brought Thomas's work practically to a standstill. In mid-1885, shortly after her five-year-old daughter Luise had died of fever, Wilhelmina returned to Germany with her remaining children.²⁴⁵ In Bawö Sa'ua, De Weerd had fallen mentally ill and died shortly afterwards.²⁴⁶ Mission work had become impossible. Early in 1886, Thomas and Lagemann were evacuated by a government ship, provided by the Dutch *resident* of Tapanuli.

This whole strenuous intermezzo in South Nias had lasted less than three years. Since in that area there was no protection and immediate support by the colonial authorities, it could have succeeded only if the missionaries had sided unconditionally with the chiefs, who had offered them residence and protection. Had

²⁴¹ J.W. Thomas, *Drei Jahre in Südrias*, 1892, p. 33 (*unmögliche Forderungen*); cf. *ibid.* pp. 35-36.

²⁴² A. Bonn, *Die Sonne geht auf über unseren Bergen*, 1940, p. 111.

²⁴³ Hermann G. de Weerd (27 August 1857 Ostfriesland – 27 August 1885 Mazingö, Teluk Dalam); he arrived on 19 January 1885 in Teluk Dalam in the middle of an extremely complex and dangerous situation.

²⁴⁴ Cf. H. Sundermann, *Die Insel Nias und die Mission daselbst*, 1905, pp.114-115.

²⁴⁵ Cf. J.W. Thomas, *Drei Jahre in Südrias*, 1892, pp. 25-26.

²⁴⁶ De Weerd could not stand the constant insecurity and tension and died at the end of August 1884. He was buried next to Luise Thomas in Bawö Lowalani, cf. J.W. Thomas, *Drei Jahre in Südrias*, 1892, pp. 112-114.

they done that, however, it would, for both cultural and for ideological reasons, have caused conflicts with the colonial authorities as well as with the RM.

4.3.2 Learning Culture

The missionaries invested much time and energy in learning the various aspects of the culture of their counterparts. The Ono Niha, of course, also scrutinized the behaviour and implements of the intruders. In their role as students of culture, however, the missionaries were more dependent on the Ono Niha than vice-versa. This mode of communication not seldom resulted in friendships.

For the missionaries, cultural learning meant, first and foremost, grappling with the vernacular. Learning about the customs and the primal religion was integrally connected with these linguistic studies. Rudimentary literary activities, such as the compilation of simple dictionaries, grammars, basic educational materials and parts of Holy Scripture, can be categorized as 'learning by doing'. Regular reports and occasional essays on various aspects of life on Nias invited the supporting communities in Europe to join their learning process.

4.3.2.1 Using the Vernacular

In Padang, Denninger had studied the particular *Soembawa* dialect of the Ono Niha.²⁴⁷ He mentions a relationship with a Niasan headman, who owned a Malay New Testament in Arabic transliteration and claimed to be reading it regularly.²⁴⁸ Once in Gunungsitoli, Denninger had to adjust to the local vernacular. He preferred this north-central Niasan idiom, considering it a 'more noble judicial language'.²⁴⁹ Besides this local vernacular, Malay had already become the *lingua franca* in Gunungsitoli.²⁵⁰

Thomas and Kramer developed very good skills in communicating Christian teachings in the vernacular. Though they acknowledged their severe difficulties²⁵¹, the Ono Niha they served appreciated their willingness to learn the *Li Nono Niha*.

4.3.2.2 Selecting Traditional Customs and Beliefs

All of the missionaries looked into both the *adat* and the primal religion of the Ono Niha, because knowledge of them was indispensable for communicating Christian teachings. Denninger, in the paradigm of his teacher Von Rohden²⁵², believed that the Ono Niha had, in a moral and spiritual sense, fallen deeply from a much higher original level in the remote past²⁵³, to its present degenerated reminiscence.²⁵⁴ He felt that now, through Christian refinement, Niasan culture – including the primal religion – had the inherent potential to achieve a higher level of civilization.

²⁴⁷ *BRM*, 1866, p. 193. Soembawa was the traditional slave market on a little island near Balaikha off the East Coast of Nias, supplying slaves for West Sumatra, cf. *BRM*, 1867, p. 112. Cf. Ch. 6.2.1.

²⁴⁸ *BRM*, 1865, p. 34.

²⁴⁹ *BRM*, 1874, p.210 (*vornehmere Gerichtssprache*).

²⁵⁰ *BRM*, 1866, pp. 193-194.

²⁵¹ *BRM*, 1874, p. 245.

²⁵² Cf. Ch. 3.5.1.

²⁵³ Cf. E. Denninger, 'Bilder aus dem Leben eines Missionars auf Nias', in: *BRM*, 1869, p. 41.

²⁵⁴ E. Denninger, 'Der Cultus der Niasser', in: *BRM*, 1868, p. 149 (*verkümmerte Reminiscenz*).

Denninger's younger colleagues did not start from such an affirmative premise. As former students of Fabri, they were influenced by his beliefs in the inferiority of certain races²⁵⁵ and the virtues of colonialism²⁵⁶, which led to the opinion that the missionary should function not only as a pioneer of the Kingdom of God, but also as an agent of German culture. In their opinion, Niasan culture was inherently inferior and the eradication of the primal religion was a 'victory over the dark forces'.²⁵⁷

The missionaries claimed that they did not want to change the customs of the Ono Niha, but only to sanctify them through the word of God.²⁵⁸ But in fact they were very selective, making use of what could aid the introduction of Christian beliefs and institutions and discarding what seemed unfitting. Kramer, for instance, turned the sacrificial ceremony after the birth of a child into a Christian blessing ceremony²⁵⁹ and transformed the traditional name-giving ceremony (fourteen days after birth) into holy baptism.²⁶⁰ In both, he maintained ritualistic elements, including the pork-banquet, while radically changing the spiritual contents.²⁶¹ Upon other occasions, however, he could rejoice that '...among Christians the old customs gradually fade away and are replaced by good, Christian ones'.²⁶² Sundermann, like Denninger before him, studied the primal religion in the search for suitable concepts and terminology for his translation of the Bible. He could, however, also apply his insights to mission methodology, for instance by transforming the traditional significance of dreams into a missionary medium.²⁶³

The biggest bones of contention, which were rejected by the missionaries and thereby caused friction between them and those Ono Niha willing to convert to Christianity, were practising polygamy, filing of teeth (*fangöhözi*), incision of the male genitals (*famoto*)²⁶⁴, the use of 'decent clothing', i.e., avoiding traditional Ono Niha wear, attending sacrificial feasts, consulting traditional priests or medicine men (*ere* or *duku*), attending shaman rituals, using traditional medicine (*daludalu ni fahede*) and wearing talismans, and venerating the sculptured images of the primal religion (*adu*).

The missionaries assumed that the Ono Niha would be 'relieved' to surrender their *adu*²⁶⁵, but this was only partially true. Especially the ancestral images (*adu zatua*)²⁶⁶ were very dear to the Ono Niha. Thomas was aware of their deep religious significance. He acknowledged their power, reporting that many Ono Niha were

²⁵⁵ Cf. F. Fabri, *Die Entstehung des Heidenthums und die Aufgabe der Heidenmission*, 1859, pp. 3-54.

²⁵⁶ Cf. F. Fabri, *Bedarf Deutschland der Colonien?*, 1879. The chance to obtain colonies was seen as 'divine provision', an 'ethical duty' (*ibid.* p. 56), and 'utterly helpful' and 'indispensable' for the mission (*ibid.* p. 98).

²⁵⁷ *BRM*, 1886, p. 137.

²⁵⁸ Cf. *BRM*, 1875, p. 313.

²⁵⁹ *BRM*, 1887, 201; the missionary and the father of the child both raised their hands to bless the child.

²⁶⁰ *BRM*, 1883, pp. 238-239. The term used: *umgestalten* (transform).

²⁶¹ The missionaries realized the importance the Ono Niha placed on formal meals, usually consisting of pork, rice and palm-wine, cf. H. Sundermann, *Die Insel Nias und die Mission daseibst*, 1905, pp. 98-99, 102-103.

²⁶² *BRM*, 1878, p. 69; *BRM*, 1879, p. 115. Kramer refers, a. o., to the decrease of emotional mourning at burials.

²⁶³ *BRM*, 1882, p. 116.

²⁶⁴ Cf. Ch. 2.5.2.2.

²⁶⁵ *BRM*, 1886, p. 138.

²⁶⁶ Cf. Ch. 2.4.2.1. For an excellent description of the *adu zatua*, cf. W. Marschall, *Die Bedeutung eines Kunstwerks*, 1979, pp. 165-169.

more vulnerable to illness after having destroyed them.²⁶⁷ Needless to say, he added that this negative effect was more than compensated for by the much stronger Christian faith. Dornsaft was sure that Ono Niha just could not envisage religious concepts without visible images to guide them. He reports about a man from the Batu Islands, who found a way out of this dilemma by mentally substituting the missionary for his *adu zatua*, an ingenious method of substitution also followed by other Ono Niha.²⁶⁸ More often, however, Christian chiefs and even church elders kept the *adu zatua* for quite some time.²⁶⁹

Thomas showed some leniency in this matter and permitted them to honour but not to venerate their ancestors. They could have their ancestral images as a keepsake on the condition that they did not make requests of them through prayer and sacrifice.²⁷⁰ Generally, however, the missionaries considered the situation to pose less danger to the converts' souls if the ancestral images were removed. The veneration of the ancestors was thus dealt with not in a theological, but rather in a surgical manner: bad tissue which had to be cut out like an aggressive cancer. In 1888, Sundermann reported triumphantly: 'We succeeded in burying a great grand ancestor and a number of other idols of a clan which in its majority is still heathen. They had kept it in the house of one of our Christians'.²⁷¹ Sundermann did not realize that he had just destroyed an important symbol of the identity of that clan.

4.3.2.3 Initiating Literary Activities

Closely intertwined with linguistic and socio-religious studies were rudimentary literary activities. Instead of waiting until they had acquired a thorough knowledge of the language and the local situation, the missionaries began such literary activities right at the beginning, as part of the 'learning by doing' process. From the outset, simple dictionaries²⁷² and grammars were put together. Denninger wrote the first textbook for the school, which was financed by the Dutch Bible Society (NBG).²⁷³ Later Sundermann added more school materials.²⁷⁴ As their knowledge of Ono Niha culture increased, the missionaries wrote basic essays on ethnographical matters.²⁷⁵

In the course of these literary activities, some fundamental decisions were made in choosing Niasan terminology for matters which were quite alien to the local context.²⁷⁶ Most influential was the standard which was set in the Niasan Bible. Denninger had started translating parts of the New Testament²⁷⁷ into the Niasan

²⁶⁷ *BRM*, 1875, pp. 100, 102-105.

²⁶⁸ Cf. *BRM*, 1884, pp. 22-23.

²⁶⁹ I.e., Chief Zimoluo and Elder Fagala, cf. *BRM*, 1886, pp. 136-138.

²⁷⁰ *BRM*, 1875, p. 100.

²⁷¹ *BRM*, 1888, p. 308.

²⁷² Thomas wrote a dictionary of seven thousand words, cf. *BRM*, 1882, p. 114.

²⁷³ *Nowi Huno Lihede Ba Hulo Niha*, 1870.

²⁷⁴ *Soera Zekola Si Föföna chö Nono Niha*, 1883.

²⁷⁵ Cf. E. Denninger, 'Der Cultus der Niasser', in: *BRM*, 1868, pp. 141-149; W. Thomas, 'Niassische Götter und Geisterlehre', in: *BRM*, 1879, pp. 210-216.

²⁷⁶ These problems became a regular point on the agendas of the annual conferences of missionaries, cf. *BRM*, 1881, pp. 209-210.

²⁷⁷ Cf. Ch. 6.2.1. According to W. Gulö, *Benih yang Tumbuh XIII*, 1883, p. 7, Denninger first translated John and then Luke. But, in fact, Denninger had submitted his translation of John to the RM in 1874, two years after he had send his translation of Luke to the publishers in London. Denninger was assisted by Abdul Abib, a Muslim inhabitant of Nias. Cf. A. Töpperwien, „*Und er führte sie an das ersehnte Gestade*“, 2004, 56-57.

tongue in Padang. Later, as his knowledge of the vernacular improved, he had to rewrite and adjust his translation. From 1869 until 1873, Denninger, with financial support of the NBG, prepared the Niasan edition of the Gospel according to Luke. Unfortunately, this project was not approved by the NBG.²⁷⁸ Eventually, however, the Gospel according to Luke was published by The British and Foreign Bible Society.²⁷⁹ Five hundred copies of the first and only edition arrived in 1874, one year before Denninger left Nias.²⁸⁰

A few years later, Sundermann picked up the thread again. Although he did not consider Denninger's translations to be very good²⁸¹, he nevertheless – mostly for practical reasons – took over most of the basic choices of his predecessor, such as, for example, Lowalangi for 'God', Eheha ni amoni'ö for 'Holy Spirit', horö for 'sin', and Afökha for 'devil'.²⁸²

In 1880, the conference of missionaries in Dahana appointed Sundermann to translate the whole New Testament. He agreed to do this after having finished his stories from the Old Testament.²⁸³ Almost ten years later, in 1889, the New Testament was reported to be finished.²⁸⁴ The whole Bible was completed in 1910, after Sundermann's return to Germany.²⁸⁵ In 1912, the University of Halle acknowledged his work by bestowing an honorary degree upon him.

4.3.3 Propagating Christianity

The propagation of Christian teachings began soon after the missionaries had settled on Nias and had learned the most elementary means of communication. For creating trust and obtaining access to the Niasan women, the role of the missionaries' wives was decisive in this course.²⁸⁶

Because there was so much fluctuation in the population, Gunungsitoli was a difficult place to build up a congregation. As the biggest town on Nias, however, its market and government offices attracted many visitors. Therefore, Denninger's

²⁷⁸ Reasons being: 1. very critical statements by Herman Neubronner van der Tuuk, accusing Denninger of creating an artificial unitary language; 2. unsteady cooperation between Denninger and the Dutch Bible Society; and 3. doubts on the part of the Dutch Bible Society, whether the mission on Nias would be successful (cf. J.L. Swellengrebel, *In Leijdeckers voetspoor I*, 1974, pp. 219-220). After the NBG had spent 1.800 Guilders per year for the project, the translation was rejected.

²⁷⁹ *Turia Amusoladödö Gamonita Tesua wa Luka*, 1874. Cf. Ch. 6.2.1.

²⁸⁰ *BRM*, 1875, p. 115; cf. A. Töpperwien, „Und er führte sie an das ersehnte Gestade“, 2004, 58-59.

²⁸¹ Cf. A. Schneider, 'Heinrich Sundermann', in: *BRM*, 1961, pp. 152-155.

²⁸² Cf. Ch. 6.2.1. According to A.G. Möller, *Beitrag zur Beleuchtung des Religiösen Lebens der Niasser*, 1934, p. 162, it would have been better if the missionaries had chosen *Sirao*, the creator of the gods and the first humans. *Sirao*, however, is a passive and remote deity (transcendent in a deistic sense). Lowalangi, on the contrary, is very much involved in all important ceremonies and rites, and even in everyday life. Cf. J.L. Swellengrebel, *In Leijdeckers voetspoor I*, 1974, pp. 219-230; cf. H. Sundermann, 'Die Psychologie des Niassers', in: *AMZ* 14 (1887), p. 289; P. Suzuki, *The Religious System and Culture of Nias, Indonesia*, 1959, pp. 1-10; J.M. Hämmerle, *Nias – eine eigene Welt*, 1999, pp. 299-307; W.L. Steinhart, 'De Christianiseering van het Niassche begrip "heilig"', in: *De Opwekker* 74/2 (1929), pp. 47-58.

²⁸³ *81 Zeritera moroi ba zoera gamaboe' oela li si foföna*, ca. 1885; cf. *BRM*, 1881, p. 212.

²⁸⁴ *BRM*, 1890, p. 102.

²⁸⁵ As of 1905, Sundermann worked in the service of the Dutch Bible Society.

²⁸⁶ Cf. Annemarie Töpperwien, '„Sie hat ihrem Mann zur Seite stehen dürfen"', in: Beate Magen et al. (eds.), *Monatshefte für die Evangelische Kirchengeschichte des Rheinlandes* LIV (2005), pp. 131-144; Annemarie Töpperwien, *Seine „Gehülfin"*, 2002, p. 119-121; from the same author, „Und er führte sie an das ersehnte Gestade', 2004, pp. 23-30, 140-159.

strategy was to make it the bridgehead for the mission on Nias.²⁸⁷ In the early 1870s, regular teaching and preaching activities could take place in the court building, offered to the missionaries by the head of the civil administration. After some time, some Ono Niha were reportedly moved by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and the salvation offered to them.²⁸⁸ By 1872, between one hundred and 150 people were attending these evangelising activities.

In these early beginnings, material benefits were an important factor attracting Ono Niha to attend evangelising activities. During the first years, churchgoers were treated as guests of the missionary²⁸⁹ and offered coffee, tobacco, cake, or given a little money.²⁹⁰ Denninger invited people from the market, offering them coffee and a small amount of money (later also tobacco and medicine) after the sessions. In return, the chiefs often publicly expressed their agreement with the sermon by exclaiming traditional compliments (*fangowai*).²⁹¹ This was an honour to the host, who wisely tolerated the interruptions and respected their habits. Wilhelmina Thomas attracted the women to the Sunday worship services by sewing dresses for them.²⁹² After the community had been Christianised, the missionaries tried to stop this dubious practice, but unfortunately the expectation of receiving material benefits from the church could not always be eradicated.

After his arrival in Gunungsitoli, Kramer put quite a bit of time and energy into gathering groups of Ono Niha in catechetical evening classes²⁹³; soon some of those attending began preparing for holy baptism. The work in Gunungsitoli, unlike that in the more remote areas, focussed not only on the chiefs and priests, but was aimed also at the general population. In the mid-1880s, many poor people and slaves joined the congregation.²⁹⁴

In Ombölata, Thomas regularly gathered people for instruction and simple sermons on the veranda of the mission house. He would beat a hollow tree to call them.²⁹⁵ Twice a week, once in Ombölata and once in Lölömboli, he held open Bible studies, where all aspects of the Christian faith could be discussed freely. Thomas also provided opportunities for the personal confession of sins.²⁹⁶ In his propagation of the Gospel, he made much use of parables and proverbs (*amaedola*)²⁹⁷, which is in accordance with the traditional rhetoric of the Ono Niha. The participants in these sessions were impressed not only by the biblical stories, but even more so by the moralistic admonitions of the missionary, whose prime objective was 'to make them

²⁸⁷ BRM, 1872, p. 166 (*Stützpunkt der Mission*).

²⁸⁸ Cf. BRM, 1872, p. 164, 168; according to Denninger, the Ono Niha had an intuitive understanding of what the Christian worship service was about, since they treated it with more respect than their own assemblies.

²⁸⁹ For a description of Niasan hospitality (*fatomesa*) in these early days, cf. 'Gastfreiheit auf Nias', in: DKM 21/11 (1875), pp. 163-170.

²⁹⁰ For some time, the newly baptized were supplied with second-hand clothing, sent in Christmas boxes by mission-minded Christians in Germany and Holland, cf. *De Rijsche Zending*, 1877, p. 176.

²⁹¹ Cf. BRM, 1874, p. 208; A. Bonn, *Die Sonne geht auf über unseren Bergen*, 1940, p. 16.

²⁹² Cf. Annemarie Töpferwien, *Seine „Gehülfin“*, 2002, p. 120.

²⁹³ BRM, 1875, p. 110.

²⁹⁴ BRM, 1884, pp. 235-237.

²⁹⁵ BRM, 1874, pp. 243-244.

²⁹⁶ BRM, 1877, p. 180.

²⁹⁷ BRM, 1875, p. 99.

into poor sinners²⁹⁸, i.e., to make them recognize their sinful character. The Gospel was presented to them as a strict law (*huku Lowalangi*).

The fact that Thomas attracted an ever-growing audience was also due to his exceptional speaking talent – traditionally one of the most highly esteemed virtues among the Ono Niha. Thomas adopted the gestures and facial expressions of his Ono Niha listeners, which, supported by his thorough knowledge of their customs and by his strong, impulsive personality, had a convincing effect. De Weerd wrote about Thomas: 'He is excellent in speaking to the people, imitating all their gestures and facial expressions; they all respect him very much. He is the great *tua*, as they say, and he knows all of their customs and habits very well.'²⁹⁹

Balugu Tödölala, who regularly attended the worship services, reportedly appreciated this so much that he eagerly passed the new teachings on to others.³⁰⁰ The chief (*salawa*) of Lölömboli even praised Thomas' teachings about the damaging influence of the *adu*.³⁰¹ The fame of the eloquent orator drew individuals and delegations from beyond the boundaries of Ombölata. Once, the *ere* of Hiligara attended the Sunday worship service, along with two hundred of his people.³⁰²

Thanks to the involvement of Wilhelmina Thomas, the women and children³⁰³, traditionally excluded in Niasan society, received attention. Women would come to the station now. In cooperation with *Guru* Jonatha, Wilhelmina built up a Sunday school.³⁰⁴ Ombölata soon developed into the most prosperous mission station.

Sundermann, in Dahana, was fortunate to be able to win the energetic chief Ama Mandranga to Christianity. He attended the Sunday worship, as well as the regular morning devotions held by the missionary for all his workers and pupils³⁰⁵, and soon became one of the first catechumens. Sundermann would teach or preach and Ama Mandranga would explain to the people what the missionary actually meant.³⁰⁶

Lastly, the spiritual motives attracting Ono Niha to the mission stations during these early beginnings should be mentioned: according to Ama Mandranga, his people had the impression that the Christians were good and honest people and that their faith purified the heart. The fact that Jesus Christ had lived earlier than Mohammad, and was therefore the older prophet, was also attractive to the Ono Niha.³⁰⁷

4.3.4 Establishing Christian Congregations

The formation of a Christian congregation begins when the first Christian believers from a local community are baptized. Naturally, this also entails preparatory instruction for the catechumens. Holy baptism was always preceded, and sometimes also followed up, by catechetical instruction given by the missionary. After the first

²⁹⁸ *BRM*, 1875, p. 101.

²⁹⁹ *BRM*, 1885, p. 181.

³⁰⁰ *BRM*, 1874, p. 244.

³⁰¹ *BRM*, 1875, p. 100.

³⁰² *BRM*, 1875, p. 99.

³⁰³ Cf. 'Mädchen und Frauen auf Nias', in: *DKM* 21/8 (1875), pp. 118-128. Cf. Ch. 6.3.3.4.

³⁰⁴ *BRM*, 1879, p. 111.

³⁰⁵ *BRM*, 1879, pp. 102-103.

³⁰⁶ Cf. H. Sundermann, *Die Insel Nias und die Mission daselbst*, 1905, pp. 99-108.

³⁰⁷ *BRM*, 1880, p. 170.

teacher-preachers had been trained in the 1880s, these would assist in teaching the catechumens and the young Christians.

4.3.4.1 First Fruits of Nias

The missionaries used the term 'first fruits' from the New Testament (Rom 16:5 and 1 Cor 16:15, *NRSV*) to refer to the first converts baptized in a certain area. Initially, these were groups of interested individuals and families gathered from different villages around the mission station. Later, the focus was more on families within one specific village.³⁰⁸

The first Ono Niha to become a Protestant Christian was a young woman in Padang, Sumatra, by the name of Ara, who had grown up in a Christian atmosphere in a Dutch home.³⁰⁹ She was baptized in 1862 by Denninger and given the name Gertruida Christina. She is now known by her Niasan name (*ara*, meaning 'how long?'), which symbolizes the yearning of the missionary to see the Ono Niha turn to Jesus Christ.

In Gunungsitoli, Kramer began to teach catechism classes in 1873 with a group of Ono Niha from Onozitoli and from Hilina'a. Among them was also the chief of Hilina'a, Jawaduha Zebua. Denninger's evangelizing activities had evidently been making an impression on them for quite some time.³¹⁰ Before holy baptism was administered during an impressive church service, the aspirant family had to surrender its sculptured images. This was a token that they had completely severed their bonds with the primal religion. Individuals from non-Christian families had to promise not to participate in any ceremonies or veneration offered to the *adu* in their house. On Easter Sunday, 1874, eight-and-a-half years after the Nias mission had begun, the first 25 men and women from Hilina'a and Onozitoli were ready to be baptized. During the ceremony³¹¹, which was held in Gunungsitoli and attended by the Dutch officials, the candidates made a free confession of faith. Then Denninger baptized the first twelve candidates and Kramer the other thirteen. A short sermon was held after the sacrament had been administered, emphasising God's love and the wish that all the newly baptized Christians, would help spread the Gospel on Nias.

After the church service, all people present were invited to a banquet. Seen from the cultural angle of the Ono Niha, such a meal, consisting mainly of boiled pork and rice, is, as had been mentioned above, the formal confirmation of a treaty. This explains why the young congregation, especially in Hilina'a, was soon subject to tremendous pressure from the outside, threatening both the property and the lives of the Christians.³¹² They were considered to be traitors, who had turned against the traditions of the ancestors and collaborated with the intruders. In a society which did not distinguish sharply between religion and government, conversion to Christianity was considered to be treason.

³⁰⁸ The concept of Gustav Warneck recommending the 'Christianization of Nations' (*Volkschristianisierung*) was implemented only during the immediately following period, cf. *AMZ* 10 (1883), pp. 318-320 (ed. G. Warneck); also G. Warneck, *Evangelische Missionslehre*, vol. III-1, 1902, pp. 243-286.

³⁰⁹ *BRM*, 1874, p. 208.

³¹⁰ Cf. A. Schneider, *Turia*, 1965, pp. 10-12.

³¹¹ Cf. *BRM*, 1874, pp. 207-208.

³¹² Cf. *BRM*, 1875, p. 107; cf. A. Schneider, *Turia*, 1965, p. 11.

Kramer and Denninger did thorough follow-up work. Three to four times a week, in an evening-school, the Christians were instructed in the Short Catechism of Martin Luther.³¹³ Later in 1874, another nineteen Ono Niha, two complete families, among them noblemen and former priests of the primal religion, were baptized. But then the first real set-back cooled down the enthusiasm: the sudden death of chief Jawaduha Zebua in 1875. However, the cynical criticism by the foes of Christianity was countered with an impressive Christian burial for the chief of Hilina'a.³¹⁴ The missionaries permitted the traditional form for funerals, minus sacrifices and prayers to the ancestors, thereby giving it a Christian aspect and thus shutting the mouths of the critics. The climax of planting the church in Gunungsitoli was the celebration of the first Lord's Supper, on 8 August 1875. Two days later, Denninger left Nias for ever. Like Moses on Mount Nebo (Deut 34), he was granted only a glimpse of the promise fulfilled.

In October 1875, Thomas baptized the six first fruits of Ombölata. As this mission station developed, he founded branch congregations in Lölömboli, Fodo and Faekhu-Madula. At this last location, he built a chapel. The first large church building on Nias, with a tower and a bell and seating three hundred worshippers, was consecrated in 1877 in Ombölata.³¹⁵ When, in 1883, Thomas turned Ombölata over to Adam Fehr, there were 207 Christians in the congregation (altogether, he had baptized 244), as well as a fund for social aid, a vegetable garden belonging to the congregation, and a cemetery.

As has been shown above, the growth of the church in Dahana cannot be separated from the work of Sundermann and Ama Mandranga. The latter, the gifted village-chief of Sifalaete, was among the first fruits baptized on 25 May 1879. He became an influential lay preacher in his own right³¹⁶ and was the driving force behind the Christianization of Dahana. Due to this chief's influence, Sundermann was able to baptize the first two families in the neighbouring village of Sihare'ö. A number of families from Tumöri who had become Christians settled near the mission station, but on the Dahana side of the border.³¹⁷ In Tumöri itself, Chief Kadaögö requested holy baptism on his deathbed.³¹⁸ Though no one else in the village converted to Christianity at that time, Sundermann nevertheless administered the sacrament, foreseeing that this request was more than just a visible crack on the surface of the primal religion. Just before Sundermann went on furlough at the beginning of 1890, he baptized another sixty persons. Christianity had thus by then developed good roots in Dahana. Chief Oroisa, who had held himself aloof from Sundermann for some time, was baptized at the end of 1893, a year after the missionary's return to Nias.

³¹³ Denninger had already made a translation of the catechism before Sundermann did, cf. *BRM*, 1875, p. 113. Sundermann's revised edition, in use since approximately 1880, is entitled: *Amahao ba lala Wangorifi*.

³¹⁴ Cf. *BRM*, 1875, pp. 313-314.

³¹⁵ *BRM*, 1877, p. 179.

³¹⁶ Cf. A. Bonn, *Ein Jahrhundert Rheinische Mission*, 1928, p. 72 (Bonn calls Ama Mandranga an *Evangelist*).

³¹⁷ Cf. H. Sundermann, *Die Insel Nias und die Mission daselbst*, 1905, pp. 121-122.

³¹⁸ *Ibid.* pp. 104-106.

4.3.4.2 Niasan Assistant Teachers, Teacher-Preachers and Elders

From the beginning, gifted Ono Niha - usually from influential families - were trained as assistant school teachers. The first was Kanoma, son of a nobleman, who stayed with Denninger for some time.³¹⁹ When Kanoma began his service as a government employee under the supervision of Denninger, he was not yet a Christian. Later, when Christians were entrusted with such tasks, they received a blessing in the Sunday service.³²⁰ Assistant teachers were beneficial to the Christianization of Nias, though to a lesser degree than either active elders, such as Ama Mandranga, or the much better qualified teacher-preachers (*guru*). The thesis of Menzel and Hulu³²¹, that Denninger had laid the foundation for the training of indigenous human resources in the Niasan church, is questionable, since Kanoma was not a church worker. The first Niasan teacher-preacher and the first elder were appointed at the conference of missionaries in 1880.

The first plans for a training-school for teacher-preachers were made by Sundermann in 1879.³²² In 1881, Sundermann received instructions to train teacher-preachers. From 1882 until 1890, he held two courses in his 'seminary' in Dahana³²³, which brought forth nine qualified teacher-preachers³²⁴, who would henceforth assist the missionary both as government-approved teachers in school and as preachers, catechists and counsellors in the congregation.

These teacher-preachers were to a certain extent copies of the missionaries, but they were more effective in reaching their own people. Towards the end of the 1880s, the teacher-preachers increasingly joined the campaign against the primal religion, successfully evangelising even priests and priestesses (*ere*).³²⁵

4.3.4.3 Rudimentary Ecclesiastical Structures

After the first fruits had been baptized, the new local Christian community had to organise itself in terms of leadership, service and discipline. Initially, the missionary and his wife carried the main burden. By and by, tasks were delegated. Baptized chiefs and former priests assumed leading roles in the congregation.³²⁶ In some areas, especially in southern Nias, from then onwards the traditional chiefs had a great deal of influence in the everyday business of running church life.

The following basic structures were developed: In every Christian family, the oldest man (in rare cases the oldest woman) would lead simple devotions in the morning and in the evening. He (or she) would remind the younger members of the family of their religious duties, such as attending Sunday service. Ten to fifteen (or

³¹⁹ *BRM*, 1866, p. 194; cf. *Kom over en help ons!* 8 (1866), p. 114.

³²⁰ Cf. *BRM*, 1876, p. 221; *BRM*, 1880, p. 168. Among them were Andrea and Jonatha from Ombölatä.

³²¹ G. Menzel and B. Chr. Hulu, 'Denninger', 1990. According to this unpublished essay, Denninger had developed three characteristics of the Niasan church: 1. the centres of mission (strategy); 2. indigenous human resources; 3. financial self-support of the congregations.

³²² *BRM*, 1879, p. 218.

³²³ Cf. A. Bonn, *Die Sonne geht auf über unseren Bergen*, 1940, p. 21 (*Gehilfenseminar*). The Niasan assistants were called 'Gehülften' or 'Gehilfen' (helpers).

³²⁴ Cf. A. Schneider, *Turia*, 1965, p. 45. (They were tested by a government commission).

³²⁵ *BRM*, 1888, pp. 311-312.

³²⁶ *BRM*, 1875, p. 312. After chief Jawaduha Zebua of Hilina'a died, the small, persecuted congregation faced a leadership crisis. In this situation, Kramer was temporarily acknowledged as 'chief'. Missionaries were identified with the nobility (*si'ulu*), cf. *BRM*, 1884, p. 345.

more) families would be led by an elder, who was usually a Christian chief or nobleman. Christian school-teachers would have the status of elders.

The first teacher-preachers each led a local congregation under the overseeing eye of the missionary, who was the undisputed master of his extended mission station. The missionary's wife would usually lead the Sunday school, often along with an assistant teacher or teacher-preacher. During this period, church discipline remained largely in the hands of the missionary.

The first ecclesiastical structure on Nias at a level above that of the mission station or the local congregation was the annual conference of missionaries on Nias. The participants, however, included neither indigenous Ono Niha nor laity. The first conference to be attended by all the missionaries on Nias was held on 21 March 1877 in Gunungsitoli.³²⁷ This meeting was a rather informal one, without a chairman. The first official conference of missionaries was convened in 1880 in Dahana and chaired by Sundermann. From 1882 until 1902, the latter was officially acknowledged as 'president' (German: *Präses*). He thus became the predecessor of the later bishop (*ephorus*) of the Niasan church.

4.3.4.4 Strategic Post in Padang

After Denninger left Padang for Nias in September 1865, no RM-missionary worked in Padang until 1881, when Dornsaft³²⁸ was stationed there. Dornsaft had previously served on Nias (1879-1880). Though Denninger had, in 1862, baptized the first Ono Niha women, Gertruida Christina called Ara in Padang, she had subsequently joined the Roman Catholic Church³²⁹ and Dornsaft had had to start from scratch in building up a congregation there. He succeeded in doing so. For many years, Dornsaft played an essential role in Padang, ministering not only to the Ono Niha, but also to the Dutch military. Of strategic importance was his logistic support of the missionaries in more remote regions, including Nias and the Batu Islands.³³⁰

4.3.5 Being Present in Society

From the very first day the missionaries arrived in Niasan communities, they had an influence, even if they were considered to be only a curious attraction. In Padang and Gunungsitoli, there had already been European residents before the missionaries' arrival. The latter thus strengthened that component. Part of any social impact made by the missionaries was therefore linked to the fact that the missionary, his wife and his children were Europeans. Besides that, there were specific factors directly connected to the missionary task, such as medical care, education and community development, which had some impact on the everyday life of the Ono Niha.

³²⁷ Before that, there had been occasional 'conferences' of two or three colleagues, but the one in 1877 was the first attended by all of them. Present were Kramer, Thomas, Sundermann and Israel, cf. *Konferenzprotokolle Nias, 1876-1899* (RMG 2.777); also *BRM*, 1877, p. 212. Johann Chr. Heinrich Israel served on Nias from 1877 until 1879, and then in the Bataklands until 1882, after which he left the RM.

³²⁸ Cf. Ch. 3.4. and Ch. 4.2.; cf. *BRM*, 1881, pp. 196-197, 214-216.

³²⁹ Cf. *De Rijnsche Zending*, 1874, p. 123; A. Bonn, *Die Sonne geht auf über unseren Bergen*, 1940, p. 7.

³³⁰ Cf. U. Hummel, *Sirihpruim en Kruis*, 2002, pp. 22-28, 41.

4.3.5.1 Medical Missions

From the very beginning, medical aid had been one of the most important 'auxiliary services' of the RM's missionary work. During the nineteenth century, however, neither physicians nor nurses were sent out to Nias. In compensation, the missionaries had, however, received some general medical training in Barmen.³³¹ Although these were only very basic medical skills, their application on the mission field was usually the initial 'point of contact'³³² with the local people. The effectiveness of Western, so-called 'Christian medicine'³³³, was interpreted by both sides as a token of the superiority of Christianity to the primal religion.³³⁴

This can be illustrated, for example, by a report of Missionary Thomas in Ombölata. Along with his wife, Wilhelmina, he often visited the sick. Chief Tödölala praised Thomas for his service to the people and the village priest advised the people to accept the 'strong medicine' of the missionary.³³⁵ On one occasion, however, Thomas' intimidating, somewhat fiery temperament flared up when the *ere* of Mazingö, a small hamlet near Ombölata, tried to practice a traditional *aduritual* at the mission station.³³⁶ Thomas intervened, casting away the priest's 'medicine' and reprimanding him harshly. Then, before the chief and twelve witnesses, he accused the priest of intrusion, and won his case. A short while later, when the child of the *balugu* became deathly ill, Thomas faced his first major crisis. If the child died, the blame would be placed on him to the detriment of the Christian cause; if the child was cured, he would have proven the power of Christ over the angry spirits. Fortunately, his 'strong medicine' (a Western remedy combined with prayer) healed the child: a 'victory of the Gospel' over the primal religion, effectively shaking the foundations of the old order.³³⁷

4.3.5.2 Educational Missions

In the field of primary education, the missionaries cooperated closely with the colonial government. The motive of the government was to introduce Western culture to the Ono Niha; that of the mission was to introduce the Gospel.³³⁸ Denninger was asked by the authorities to become the supervisor³³⁹ of a government-sponsored school, which was subsequently opened on 21 March 1867 with six boys, all but one of them between the ages of ten and twelve.³⁴⁰ Some (if not all) of the pupils were sons of local chiefs.³⁴¹ Denninger was assisted by a

³³¹ Cf. Ch. 3.5.1.

³³² Cf. *BRM*, 1900, p. 8 (*Anknüpfungspunkt*). Cf. Ch. 6.3.2.4.

³³³ *BRM*, 1886, p. 146.

³³⁴ In the paradigm of the primal religion, disease is always caused by metaphysical powers (cf. J.P. Kleiweg de Zwaan, *Die Heilkunde der Niasser*, 1913, p. 7). For the mission, medical care was an aid in spreading the Kingdom of God and to help destroy the primal religion (cf. Petra Krömer, *Heilen für das Reich Gottes*, 1998, pp. 187, 195).

³³⁵ *BRM*, 1874, p. 244.

³³⁶ *BRM*, 1874, pp. 244-245.

³³⁷ Cf. *BRM*, 1875, p. 98. Reportedly, 'heathendom' was undermined in Ombölata and Lölömboli.

³³⁸ H. Kayser, *Aspekte des sozio-kulturellen Wandels auf Nias*, 1976, pp. 103, 105.

³³⁹ Cf. *BRM*, 1866, p. 193.

³⁴⁰ This was the first Western-type school on Nias. The earlier school of the Malay Muslim community in Gunungsitoli may have been a Koranic school, cf. *BRM*, 1867, p. 113; H. Kayser, *Aspekte des sozio-kulturellen Wandels auf Nias*, 1976, p. 100.

³⁴¹ Cf. *BRM*, 1867, p. 129; *BRM*, 1867, p. 321.

Niasan schoolmaster, as well as by his younger colleagues Ködding (temporarily), Thomas (for a few months) and Kramer. The latter continued to serve as overseer after Denninger had left. The missionaries and the Niasan schoolmasters taught the pupils reading, writing, mathematics, drawing and geography.³⁴² Daily, there was one hour of Bible study, for which Denninger's translation of the Gospel of Luke was used.

A second school was opened by Thomas in Ombölata and a third by Sundermann in Dahana. Generally, the Ono Niha pupils were reluctant to attend, because they saw no purpose or advantage in Western education.³⁴³ Usually, the chiefs sent their boys in order to please the Europeans, who were urging them to do so. Sending a boy to school was a gesture of submission to the new authorities. Thus it is no wonder that the boys demanded a reward for coming.³⁴⁴ This attitude changed gradually after the first Ono Niha had been baptized in 1874.³⁴⁵

In addition to the mission school, Kramer, who came to assist Denninger in 1873, initiated catechism classes preceding baptism.³⁴⁶ Naturally, most of those attending were adults. The first Sunday school for children was started by Wilhelmina Thomas and *Guru* Jonatha in Ombölata. Both formal and informal education in the hands of the missionaries gradually undermined the traditional worldview of the Ono Niha by introducing Europe-centred, Christian principles.

4.3.5.3 Community Development

From the beginning, Denninger attempted to improve the standard of living by suggesting better methods of farming, such as introducing buffalos for ploughing in the rice fields, manufacturing, commerce (i.e., cigars), and even mining (coal, perhaps even gold).³⁴⁷ Kramer was concerned to help overcome poverty through improving gardening and farming methods. Thomas was eager to set an example in agriculture.³⁴⁸

Missionaries improved the infrastructure (roads and bridges) in order to reach their posts more easily. All of these efforts were supported by the Dutch *controleur*. There were praiseworthy cases of medical care³⁴⁹ and missionary wives would acquaint the women and girls with modern methods of housekeeping.³⁵⁰ Notwithstanding the limited and rudimentary nature of these attempts, during this period the missionaries nevertheless did more to improve the material conditions in their local communities than did the colonial authorities.

³⁴² The first schoolbook was the Reading Lessons, *Nowi Huno Lihede ba Hulo Niha*, 1870, by E. Denninger.

³⁴³ Cf. H. Kayser, *Aspekte des sozio-kulturellen Wandels auf Nias*, pp. 100-103. This changed during the next period (1891-1915), when the Ono Niha were more eager to attain Western education (*ibid.* pp. 104-113).

³⁴⁴ Thomas had to pay his pupils money (*Duiten*), cf. *De Rijnsche Zending*, 1874, p. 133. The school began operating on 1 October 1874 with seven boys.

³⁴⁵ Cf. H. Kayser, *Aspekte des sozio-kulturellen Wandels auf Nias*, 1976, p. 102.

³⁴⁶ *BRM*, 1875, p. 113. Denninger's translation of the Short Catechism of Martin Luther was used.

³⁴⁷ *BRM*, 1872, pp. 167-169.

³⁴⁸ *BRM*, 1881, pp. 203-205.

³⁴⁹ Cf. H. Kayser, *Aspekte des sozio-kulturellen Wandels auf Nias*, 1976, pp. 126-128. The efforts of the missionaries to fight disease were impressive, whereas the colonial authorities did little to improve the health situation.

³⁵⁰ Cf. *BRM*, 1875, p. 99; cf. Annemarie Töpperwien, *Seine „Gehülfin“*, 2002, pp. 119-121.

4.4 EXPANSION OF THE MISSIONARY WORK ON NIAS (1890-1915)

The most prominent characteristic of this second period of Christianity on Nias is the expansion of the mission beyond the *rapatgebied*.³⁵¹ The year 1890 marks the beginning of a continuous process of successful penetration of missionary activities into areas beyond the direct control of, though under some degree of protection by the colonial authorities. After 1908, when the whole of Nias was subjugated by the Dutch³⁵², RM-missionaries established themselves permanently in South Nias. Parallel to this geographical expansion, there was a rapid numerical increase in church membership.³⁵³ The increase in the number of stations and branch congregations necessitated a further consolidation of the ecclesiastical structures. The support of the mission among the local population, as well as its strategic network of mission stations and its increasing emphasis on community development strengthened its position vis-à-vis the colonial government. Cooperation between the mission and the state was further enhanced by the 'Ethical Politics', implemented by the Dutch as of 1901.³⁵⁴

4.4.1 New Missionary Vision

The expansion of missionary activities was to some extent inspired by a new understanding of mission. There was a shift of focus from individual to communal conversion, with the ultimate goal of developing national churches. At the same time, the missionaries began to differentiate more sharply between the various aspects of the local culture and gained an appreciation of some of these aspects.

While Fabri³⁵⁵ had held that only through an individual conversion could a person free himself of his inferior non-Western and non-Christian culture, the post-Fabri era in the RM was characterized by the slogan 'Christianisation of nations'.³⁵⁶ This missionary vision, formulated elaborately by Gustav Warneck, was strongly

³⁵¹ Cf. W. Gulö, *Benih yang Tumbuh XIII*, 1983, pp. 10-13, calls this period 'The Period of Expansion' (*Masa Penyebaran*).

³⁵² Cf. Tim Penyusun, *Sejarah Perjuangan Rakyat Nias*, 1989, pp. 25-50. In 1908 Nias became a section or *afdeeling* under its first assistant-resident, Van Vuuren (1908-1913).

³⁵³ Between 1894 and 1899 the number of members increased by 104%, from 2106 to 4334 (*BRM*, 1900, p.181).

³⁵⁴ As of the end-1870s, the anti-revolutionary policy of 'ethically responsible politics' was pioneered in the Netherlands by Abraham Kuyper, a leader in the church (*Gereformeerde Kerken*) and in politics (Anti-Revolutionary Party). Similar demands for a more humane policy concerning the colonies had sprung up in the United Kingdom. When Kuyper became Prime Minister in 1901, the Head of State announced in her Queen's Speech that it was the duty of the Netherlands as a Christian country to improve the situation of the indigenous population in the colonies and for the government to support the Christian mission. By providing humanitarian development aid, the mission would be able to repay some of the debt which the state owed its exploited subjects (*eereschuld*). Major roles in the implementation of this policy were played by A.W.F. Idenburg, minister of colonies in 1902-1905, 1908-1909 and subsequently Governor-General of the Dutch East Indies (1909-1916), and J.B. Heutz, Governor-General 1904-1909 (cf. S.C. Graaf van Randwijck, *Handelen en Denken in dienst der zending*, vol. I, 1981, pp. 217-251; G. van Klinken, *Minorities, modernity and the emerging nation*, 2003, pp. 18-24).

³⁵⁵ Cf. Ch. 3.5.1 and Ch. 4.3.2.2.

³⁵⁶ Cf. G. Warneck, 'Volkschristianisierung als Missionsaufgabe', in: *AMZ* 10 (1883), pp. 318-320; G. Warneck, *Evangelische Missionslehre* vol. III-1, 1902, pp. 243-286.

propagated by RM-director August Schreiber.³⁵⁷ Henceforth, the objective was to transform, or better to ennoble, an entire ethnic entity towards Christian standards.

Though the whole concept of the 'Christianisation of nations' was based on a 'bourgeois myth' (Johannes C. Hoekendijk), rather than on Biblical exegesis, and therefore served more the interests of colonialism than those of the Kingdom of God, it undeniably led to an increased appreciation of non-Western indigenous cultures. In its turn, this interest in other cultures resulted in a sharper differentiation between what was considered compatible with Christianity and what was not. Generally, a three-level approach was followed. Certain elements, especially the vernacular, were held in very high esteem. Others, such as customary law, were considered to be tolerable if cleansed of 'heathen' remnants. And yet others, such as the primal religion, were considered to be an abomination to God which had to be eradicated completely. One and the same missionary would praise the one aspect of Niasan culture while condemning the other. Sundermann, for instance, who had studied under Warneck³⁵⁸, developed a great admiration for the Niasan language.³⁵⁹ Through his translation of the Bible into the Niasan vernacular (*Li Nono Niha*), he up-graded an essential element of Niasan culture by transforming it into a Christian medium.³⁶⁰ Similarly, Eduard Fries³⁶¹, an academic theologian of a like mind with Warneck and Schreiber, advocated the in-depth study of traditional songs and poetry in order to gain an understanding of the rhythm, idioms and hidden symbolism of the Niasan language, which would then make a better communication of Christian teachings possible.³⁶²

Simultaneously, however, these missionaries had an aversion towards pre-Christian Niasan religiosity. They saw the primal religion as a degenerated piece, rather than as the central nerve, of the Niasan cultural identity. They believed that they could cut it out and replace it with Christianity, thereby ennobling the whole of Niasan culture.³⁶³ In actual fact, however, by eradicating the central nerve, they paralysed the whole body. By destroying that which was most dear to the Ono Niha, they committed 'cultural vandalism'.³⁶⁴ However, despite all radical efforts to prune

³⁵⁷ Cf. Ch. 3.4. and Ch. 3.5.1. Schreiber rejected any form of racism and held that all nations are capable of developing culture and civilization. The term 'refinement' or 'ennoblement' (*Veredelung*) occurs quite often in Schreiber's writings; cf. A.W. Schreiber, *Cultur und Mission in ihrem Einfluß auf die Naturvölker*, 1882. Schreiber was a former Sumatra missionary of the RM.

³⁵⁸ Sundermann attended the Barmen Seminary from 1870 until 1875.

³⁵⁹ Sundermann considered the Niasan language to be, in a certain sense, the most highly developed among all Malayo-Polynesian (*malaiischen*) languages, cf. H. Sundermann, *Niassisch-Deutsches Wörterbuch*, 1905, p. 269.

³⁶⁰ Cf. Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message*, 1989, pp. 1-3, 47. Although Sanneh refers to African contexts, among others, rather than to the Indonesian one, his theory of the 'translatability' of the Christian message into all cultures and languages, effecting the development, rather than the destruction, of indigenous cultures, applies to Nias as well.

³⁶¹ Eduard Fries (6 March 1877 Barmen – 10 May 1923 Barmen). On Nias from 1904 until 1920. Then, until his death in 1923, director of the RM in Barmen. Cf. M. Humburg, '„... die Sehnsucht nach Nias hat ihn nie verlassen"', in: Beate Magen et al. (eds.), *Monatshefte für die Evangelische Kirchengeschichte des Rheinlandes*, vol. LIV, 2005, pp. 117-130.

³⁶² Cf. E. Fries, 'Niassische Gesänge', in: M. Humburg et al. (eds.), *Im „Land der Menschen'*, 2003, pp. 95-101.

³⁶³ Cf. 'Die Umgestaltung der heidnischen Sitte in eine christliche', in: *BRM*, 1892, pp. 133-139.

³⁶⁴ Cf. *Globus* 82/11 (1902), pp. 179; *Globus* 82/17 (1902), pp. 280. (*Missionsvandalismus auf Nias*). The ethnographic magazine *Globus*, reacting to an article in *BRM*, 1902, pp. 139-140, criticised the 'wild zealotism' of some missionaries, who destroyed cultural treasures of immeasurable value. *Globus* regretted that the missionaries did not receive even a minimal training in Ethnology. Cf. also

out all aspects of 'heathendom' from Niasan culture, fundamental religious patterns continued to exist in the hearts and minds of Ono Niha.³⁶⁵

While on the one hand, the missionaries' greater sensitivity towards certain cultural issues increased the Ono Niha's acceptance of Christianity during this period, on the other hand, the taboo on indigenous religiosity caused a certain amount of inhibition and reluctance among many Ono Niha, especially in South Nias, joyfully to embrace the new faith.

4.4.2 Successful Missionary Advance Southwards

The first attempt, during the years 1883-1886, to gain a foothold in the south of Nias, had been a failure. In 1890, Thomas again crossed the southern boundaries of the *rapatgebied*, though this time not going as far as South Nias. According to Sundermann³⁶⁶, this second advance southwards initiated the new period of missionary expansion. In Humene³⁶⁷, Thomas obtained a plot of land for a mission station and settled there in January 1891. At Easter in 1892, he baptized the 63 first fruits, reporting a 'very strong movement towards Christianity'.³⁶⁸ Humene became the fastest developing missionary area on Nias. It was here, too, that the Great Awakening later began.

4.4.3 Penetration into the Western Regions of Nias

A few months after Thomas had begun his southward advance, Lagemann and August Lett undertook an exploratory journey to the West Coast of Nias.³⁶⁹ Encouraged by the friendly attitude of some of the chiefs, Lett paid a second visit to the area. This time he came by boat from the south and was accompanied by the *controleur* of Gunungsitoli.³⁷⁰ After the *controleur* had left again, Lett stayed for three weeks as the guest of the chief of Tugala-Lahömi while searching for a good plot of land to set up a mission station.

4.4.3.1 Fadoro / Sirombu

Between the villages of Tugala-Lahömi and Fadoro, he found a plot with a good location on a hill with an adequate supply of water. Subsequently, the station Fadoro – later named Sirombu³⁷¹ – was founded on 31 May 1892 by Lett and Reitze.³⁷² The

BRM, 1903, p. 50.

³⁶⁵ One example is the burial ceremony, which, in actual practice, was transformed into a Christian funeral service. The prohibition of excessive mourning and banqueting was simply ignored, and the traditional beliefs in the spirits of the deceased were secretly maintained.

³⁶⁶ Cf. H. Sundermann, *Die Insel Nias und die Mission daselbst*, 1905, p. 124.

³⁶⁷ The station was located in the vicinity of the village Bawö Dezolo and initially called Gumbu Humene, cf. *JBRM*, 1891 (1892), p. 54. The name was changed to Humene at the conference of missionaries in 1899.

³⁶⁸ Cf. *JBRM*, 1892 (1893), p. 62.

³⁶⁹ August Lett (4 September 1861 Strasbourg – 20 August 1909 Mentawai). Lett was accompanied by Lagemann, Ama Mandranga and six porters, cf. A. Lett, *Im Dienst des Evangeliums auf der Westküste von Nias*, vol. I, 1901, p. 31; H. Sundermann, *Missionar August Lett*, 1910, pp. 10-11.

³⁷⁰ The *controleur* introduced Lett, saying that the place where the missionary settled was to be considered the property of the colonial administration, cf. A. Lett, *Im Dienst des Evangeliums auf der Westküste von Nias*, vol. I, 1901, p. 71.

³⁷¹ The station was called Fadoro until 1899; at the Conference on 13-15 February 1899, the name was

population was eager to receive the missionaries for two reasons: Firstly, during their first visit, Lagemann and Lett had proven to be good arbitrators³⁷³, and secondly, the presence of Europeans protected the region from attacks by head-hunters (*emali*).³⁷⁴

Chief Sihönöbela, or Ama Gahonoa, had befriended Lett. Their close relationship was of great importance for the Christianisation of the West Coast. Lett's wife, Dora³⁷⁵, who arrived in December 1892, attracted the women to the mission station. Lett made an effort to adjust to Ono Niha customs. He ate with his fingers³⁷⁶ and allowed the churchgoers to chew betel nuts (*afö*) during the worship service.³⁷⁷ In addition, he also cleverly used mechanical instruments, such as a chiming clock, a sewing machine, a harmonium or a mirror, as 'bait'³⁷⁸ to attract the people.

The pro-Christian prophetic activities of the priestess (*ere*) of the primal religion located in Tugala, Kaiduha³⁷⁹, her baptism on her supposed deathbed and her subsequent miraculous recovery, was one of the decisive factors leading to a growing interest in Christianity. The baptism of the 43 first fruits of the West Coast was officially celebrated on 5 November 1893. Unfortunately, Lett had to leave Nias soon afterwards for reasons of health. After his recovery, he worked among the Batak on Sumatra and later among the people of Sikakap on Mentawai, where he was murdered on 20 August 1909.

By the turn of the century, the western expansion had reached the Hinako Islands, off the Sirombu coast.³⁸⁰ In 1899, Wilhelm Hoffmann³⁸¹ had begun the work in this affluent area of the Nias regency, and soon the non-Muslim population began attending church activities.³⁸²

4.4.3.2 Lahusa / Lölöwa'u

Further south on the West Coast, Ewald Krumm³⁸³, a real son of the Siegerland³⁸⁴, began missionary work in 1897 in an area bordering on the hunting grounds of the

changed to Sirombu.

³⁷² Heinrich Reitze (15 August 1862 Homburg – 1 October 1938 Bergheim). He served on Nias from 1891 until 1893.

³⁷³ In a dispute between Tugala-Lahömi and Fadoro in 1891, cf. A. Lett, *Im Dienst des Evangeliums auf der Westküste von Nias*, vol. I, 1901, p. 37.

³⁷⁴ Ama Gahonoa threatened to move to Hinako for fear of head-hunters (A. Lett, *Im Dienst des Evangeliums auf der Westküste von Nias*, vol. II, 1901, p. 3). Later, when the notorious head-hunter Siwahumola tried to enter this area, he was indeed scared off by Reitze and Lett (*ibid.* p. 44; M. Koch, *Wie aus einem Tiger ein Lamm wurde*, 1908, pp. 9-10).

³⁷⁵ Dora Lett née Meuret (19 May 1866 Buoth – 3 January 1946 Gütersloh). They were married on 7 December 1892 in Gunungsitoli.

³⁷⁶ Cf. A. Lett, *Im Dienst des Evangeliums auf der Westküste von Nias*, vol. III, 1901, p. 35.

³⁷⁷ *Ibid.* p. 58.

³⁷⁸ *Ibid.* pp. 22-23 (*Lockmittel*).

³⁷⁹ *Ibid.* pp. 43-48.

³⁸⁰ The initiative for the Christianisation of Hinako originated with the indigenous, non-Muslim Ono Niha. The missionaries preferred to evangelise Hinako from Lahusa, because the climate on Hinako is quite unbearable for the average European, cf. *JBRM*, 1896 (1897), p. 68; *BRM*, 1898, p. 26; *BRM*, 1898, p. 121; Hoffmann arrived in the middle of 1899, cf. *JBRM*, 1899 (1900), p. 59.

³⁸¹ Wilhelm Hoffmann (8 April 1868 Elberfeld – 27 November 1920 Hinako); he served on Hinako 1899-1908 and 1911-1920.

³⁸² Cf. *BRM*, 1900, pp. 191-192.

³⁸³ Ewald F. Krumm (1 January 1866 Zeppenfeld / Siegen – 6 May 1903 Lahusa). Cf. 6.2.2.1 and Ch. 6.3.2.1.

³⁸⁴ Cf. P. Witteborg, *Ein frühvollendetes Missionarsleben*, 1905, pp. 20-28.

clans of the Iraono Huna. Although there was a constant threat of raids from Lölöwa'u, the bulwark of headhunting and the slave trade, in mid-1898 the mission station was nevertheless opened in Sihene'asi.³⁸⁵ It was subsequently called Tögimbogi, and a year later renamed Lahusa.³⁸⁶ In 1899, 61 inhabitants were baptized.³⁸⁷

Through the assistance of the nobleman Solagö Bawabawa, Krumm managed to penetrate the lands of the Iraono Huna as far as Lölöwa'u. During his first visit, he followed the advice of a teacher-preacher to honour the litany (*hoho*) sung to his praise. In return for Krumm's having acknowledged the traditional way of honouring a guest, his message was received.³⁸⁸ Solagö's brother, Fadoli Badusanuwö, the notorious chief of Lölöwa'u, also became a supporter of the mission. This may also have had a political motive: 37 years earlier, in 1863, Lölöwa'u had been subjected to a purge by a Dutch punitive action. Fadoli had managed to escape. Now that it had become obvious that the Dutch would soon control the whole of Nias, becoming a Christian was a prudent way of evading punishment. There was even the prospect of forming an alliance with this new superpower in the region, expecting some kind of material gain from an alliance with the Europeans.³⁸⁹

Solagö Bawabawa, however, had spiritual motives for embracing the Christian creed: he was influenced by a dream of his wife³⁹⁰ and Gossner's *Little Book of the Heart* (1812). Though illiterate, he had come across the book by chance, was touched by its impressive illustrations, and, after having received some explanation from a Niasan Christian, began to talk about it to his compatriots in Lölöwa'u.³⁹¹ It was his wife's vivid dream about Christ inviting the people of Lölöwa'u to receive the *huku Lowalangi*, however, which had brought about the breakthrough.³⁹²

Solagö called all the people of the village together to tell them about the dream and all listened spellbound. Afterwards, they decided to follow the *huku Lowalangi* and throw away their *adu*. The impressive illustrations in the *Book of the Heart*, the powerful symbolism of the dream of Solagö's wife, the enthusiasm of Solagö for the new teachings, and last but not least the patient service of Krumm, paved the way for Christianity's entrance into Lölöwa'u, once a staunch bastion of traditional beliefs. After they had followed catechism classes for two years, Fadoli and hundreds of his people were baptised on the last Sunday of 1901.³⁹³

Unfortunately, Krumm's family was struck by fever at the end of 1902, of which first his wife, Emilie³⁹⁴, then his son Paul and eventually he himself died at

³⁸⁵ Krumm thought this to be the name of the village, but it actually means 'those villages at the sea-site'.

³⁸⁶ The name Tögimbogi was changed to Lahusa at the Conference in 1899, cf. *JBRM*, 1899 (1900), p. 58.

³⁸⁷ Cf. 'Nias. Ein Hallelujah auf der Westküste', in *BRM*, 1900, pp. 107-109.

³⁸⁸ Cf. H.v.L., *De Zending op Nias*, part 1, 1931, p. 7-8.

³⁸⁹ Cf. R. Wegner, 'Die Mitarbeit der eingeborenen Gehilfen in der Rheinischen Mission', in: *BRM*, 1899, p. 103.

³⁹⁰ Cf. A Lett, *Im Dienst des Evangeliums auf der Westküste von Nias*, vol. IV, 1901, p. 100; *JBRM*, 1900 (1901), pp. 347-352.

³⁹¹ Cf. *BRM*, 1900, pp. 160-166.

³⁹² For 'The Dream Factor' in Niasan religion and a reconstruction of Solagö's wife's dream, cf. Ch. 6.3.2.3.

³⁹³ Cf. *BRM*, 1902, p. 163.

³⁹⁴ Emilie Krumm née Siebel (25 August 1871 Siegen – 27 July 1902 Lahusa).

the station Lahusa.³⁹⁵ The work on the west coast was continued and further expanded by Missionary Heinrich Seher³⁹⁶ and his wife Auguste.³⁹⁷

4.4.4 Overall Network

After the southward advance and the penetration of the western coastal regions, the 'joyful growth'³⁹⁸ of Christianity in the 1890s and early 1900s was further strengthened by a gradual but strategically planned extension of the network of mission stations. After additional stations had been built in the south 1908, a number of stations in Central Nias united, some of them becoming branch congregations within a larger circuit.

4.4.4.1 East-West Axis

As a 'link' between the eastern and western missionary stations, in 1893 Heinrich Lagemann founded a post in Lahagu, on the banks of the Oyo River in Central Nias.³⁹⁹ Sofu, the son of the local chief, was willing to become his assistant teacher.⁴⁰⁰ On the Sunday after Christmas of 1894, Lagemann baptized the 45 first fruits of Sisobahili-Lahagu.⁴⁰¹

Sundermann, who had turned Dahana over to Karl Probst⁴⁰² in 1895, subsequently founded Lölöwu'a (not to be confused with Lölöwa'u), which became the halfway-station between Gunungsitoli and Lahagu. He actually settled in Lölöwu'a in January 1896, bringing with him seventeen Ono Niha Christians from Dahana. In practice, these Ono Niha had the function of 'colonist-missionaries'.⁴⁰³ In the mission school, Sundermann was assisted by Kornelio Lakhömi⁴⁰⁴, an Ono Niha trained in Depok. Sundermann's wife, Luise⁴⁰⁵, started a Sunday school.

Lölömboli in Moro'ö, halfway between Lahagu and Sirombu was founded by Julius Sporket⁴⁰⁶ in 1899.⁴⁰⁷ In 1900, Hoffmann could baptize the 128 first fruits of the island of Hinako on Christmas day. The congregation continued to grow steadily, even though the Islamic community under the leadership of the Malay

³⁹⁵ Emilie died on 27 July 1902, Paul on 2 January 1903 and Edwald on 6 May 1903, A. Bonn, *Ein Jahrhundert Rheinische Mission*, 1928, p.73.

³⁹⁶ Heinrich Seher (18 January 1864 Elberfeld – 7 November 1925 Essen); he served in Sirombu from 1892 until 1907.

³⁹⁷ Auguste Seher née Schmidt (11 December 1867 Erdbach – 11 June 1940 Essen); she arrived in Sirombo in 1894.

³⁹⁸ Cf. *BRM*, 1899, pp. 211-216. The phrase *fröhliches Wachstum* is also used in *JBRM*, 1894 (1895), p. 78 and *BRM*, 1899, pp. 211-216.

³⁹⁹ (*Bindeglied*), cf. *BRM*, 1893, pp. 187-188; 1894, p. 40; 1894, pp. 202-206; 1895 pp. 16-20.

⁴⁰⁰ Cf. *JBRM*, 1893 (1894), p. 73.

⁴⁰¹ Cf. *BRM*, 1895, p.206; *JBRM*, 1894 (1895), pp. 78-82.

⁴⁰² Karl Probst (23 January 1865 Cologne – 9 November 1918 Brazil). After two years on Sumatra (Pansurnapitu; Balige), he worked on Nias (1894-1906), cf. *JBRM*, 1895 (1896), p. 61.

⁴⁰³ A rare contextual application of a missionary method advocated by Ludwig Harms (1808-1865) and Wilhelm Löhe (1808-1872), cf. J.C. Hoekendijk, *Kerk en Volk in de Duitse Zendingswetenschap*, 1948, pp. 68-75. Though unparalleled on Nias, RM practiced this concept in Namibia.

⁴⁰⁴ Cf. *JBRM*, 1896 (1897), p. 67.

⁴⁰⁵ Luise Sundermann née Beyer (14 March 1857 Kalimantan – 4 March 1929 Mülheim).

⁴⁰⁶ Julius Sporket (2 February 1868 Barmen – 19 June 1955 Brazil); Sporket had assisted Lagemann in Lahagu before settling in Lölömboli-Moro'ö. He left Nias in 1908 and later served as a pastor in South America.

⁴⁰⁷ Cf. *JBRM*, 1899 (1900), pp. 57-58.

headman (*kepala Malayu*), Mara'ali, threatened the missionary.⁴⁰⁸ The establishment of stations in Sifaoro'asi⁴⁰⁹ to the south of Lahagu by Eduard Fries and Lölömoyo by Dietrich Bassfeld⁴¹⁰ in 1905, as well as Tugala Oyo by Adolf Pilgenröder⁴¹¹ in 1907, completed the most important coordinates on the east-west axis.⁴¹²

4.4.4.2 East-North Axis

Bo'usö, founded on 23 March 1903 by Johannes Noll⁴¹³ and considered part of the eastern region, soon became the stronghold from which the sparsely populated areas of the north could be reached. In certain parts there were Islamic communities (e.g., Oloro), hampering the progress of the Christian mission. Nevertheless, the missionaries managed to cut Christian breaches by setting up a network of branch congregations in Awa'ai, Hiligeo-Afia, Sowu and as far north as Helera.⁴¹⁴

The first independent northern mission station was Hilimaziaya, named after the four hundred-metre high mountain in that vicinity. Here Emil Schlipkötter⁴¹⁵ settled on 21 June 1911 and soon had 195 catechumens. In September of the same year, he founded a branch congregation in Lawira⁴¹⁶ and in November 1912 another in Namöhalu. The first Ono Niha to be converted in Hilimaziaya, Ama Sawili, an artist and a carpenter, was baptized on his deathbed in 1912.⁴¹⁷

In 1913, there was a unique, and locally restricted, 'penitence movement' in Hilimaziaya, which was a forerunner of the Great Awakening a few years later.⁴¹⁸ After 1915, Christianity also entered Afulu and Lahewa, slowly but surely closing the gap in the northern region of Nias.⁴¹⁹

4.4.4.3 East-South Axis

Around the turn of the century, the densely populated regions of South Nias became the explicit goal of missionary efforts.⁴²⁰ After Thomas's initial, successful advance into Humene, August Momeyer⁴²¹ moved further south to Sogae'adu on 26 April

⁴⁰⁸ Cf. *JBRM*, 1901 (1902), p. 68; 1907 (1908), p. 74; 1913 (1914), p. 121. When, by 1913, the chiefs of the main clan of the Maru'undruri had received Christianity, the 'transformation' (*Umwälzung*) of Ono Niha society on Hinako had become an irreversible fact.

⁴⁰⁹ Cf. E. Fries, *Aus den Bergen von Sifaoro'asi*, 1938.

⁴¹⁰ Dietrich Bassfeld (16 June 1877 Dinslaken – 25 December 1940 Düsseldorf)

⁴¹¹ Adolf Pilgenröder (23 December 1869 Barmen – 7 March 1949 Elberfeld); he baptized the first fruits of Tugala Oyo on the third Sunday in Advent of the year 1908. In 1911 Lahagu merged with Tugala Oyo.

⁴¹² In missionary-circles at that time, this east-west axis was called 'die Missionsstraße' (the mission trail), cf. E. Kriele, 'Der Siegeslauf des Evangeliums auf Nias', in: W. Fries (ed.), *Geschichten und Bilder aus der Mission* 24 (1906), p. 31; cf. Anonymous, *Eine alte Priesterin, die erste Christin auf der Westküste von Nias*, 1901.

⁴¹³ Johannes Noll (3 April 1869 – 28 October 1954); Bo'usö 1903-1913; cf. *JBRM*, 1903 (1904), p. 49.

⁴¹⁴ Cf. *JBRM*, 1908 (1909), p. 79.

⁴¹⁵ Emil Schlipkötter (31 January 1879 Neviges – 13 August 1965 Düsseldorf).

⁴¹⁶ Cf. *JBRM*, 1911 (1912), p. 100.

⁴¹⁷ Cf. E. Fries, *Tropfen aus der Wahrheit*, 1925, p. 14.

⁴¹⁸ Cf. *BRM*, 1936, p. 17.

⁴¹⁹ Cf. *JBRM*, 1915 (1916), p. 35. The station of Lahewa was founded by Skubinna in 1921 (cf. A. Schneider, *Turia*, 1965, p. 19. Cf. W. Gulö, *Benih yang Tumbuh* XIII, 1983, p. 13 (he dates it 1922)).

⁴²⁰ Cf. *JBRM*, 1902 (1903), p. 52 (*Ziel unserer Arbeit*).

⁴²¹ August E.C. Momeyer (28 July 1868 Rengershausen – 3 April 1941 Barmen); Momeyer served in Sogae'adu until 1908, then in Gunungsitoli.

1899⁴²², reportedly invited by Ono Niha from Sogae'adu and Bozihöna.⁴²³ Subsequently, Christianity was received 'surprisingly well'⁴²⁴ and the first convert (a former *ere*) was baptized on 29 April 1900.⁴²⁵ In 1903, Heinrich Rabeneck⁴²⁶ went a step further south to Bio'uti and in 1905 Johannes Bieger⁴²⁷ entered Baŵalia, a bastion of the primal religion. Since South Nias had not yet been subjugated, the expansion temporarily came to a halt here.

In anticipation of better conditions in South Nias, a reorganisation of the central and eastern stations was begun in 1906.⁴²⁸ How intense the focus on the south was, becomes evident from the moving description by Rottschäfer⁴²⁹ of the destruction and subsequent closing down of Rabeneck's station in Bio'uti after it had been completely consumed by fire on 23 July 1907, less than half a year after the first fruits had been baptized and the first church consecrated. It was an accident, not arson. Though Rabeneck was eager to rebuild the station, the conference of missionaries and the board in Barmen decided against it.⁴³⁰ Bio'uti became a branch congregation linked to Baŵalia⁴³¹, while Rabeneck was given instructions to be ready to push through to Teluk Dalam. In 1909, he settled in Bawö Sa'ua, reinstating the station once pioneered and lost by Lagemann in 1885. Chief Tanönibasi, who disliked Rabeneck, tolerated him only because of the Dutch military presence in Teluk Dalam.⁴³²

Bieger, too, had to leave Baŵalia and move on to Teluk Dalam. Temporarily, this major southern port was regarded as the second station of South Nias⁴³³, after Bawö Sa'ua. The strategic aim, however, was to reach the two fortified centres of power in the south: Bawömataluo and Hilisimaetanö. In both places, schools were opened in 1910, run by assistant teachers.⁴³⁴ The next year, Borutta started a mission station in Hilisimaetanö⁴³⁵, which now assumed from Teluk Dalam's role as the second mission station of the south, with Bawö Sa'ua remaining the first. The choice of Hilisimaetanö as a mission centre, while passing over Bawömataluo, destroyed the delicate age-old balance of power between the two.⁴³⁶

⁴²² Cf. *BRM*, 1900, pp. 10-13.

⁴²³ Cf. *JBRM*, 1898 (1899), pp. 54-55. This step was taken in accordance with the decision of the conference of missionaries (13-15 February 1899), attended by Schreiber. Besides Sogae'adu, the foundation of stations on the Hinako Islands and Moro'ö was decided during this conference.

⁴²⁴ *JBRM*, 1899 (1900), p. 57 ('geradezu überraschend guten Eingang'). During the first year, Momeyer already had eight hundred Ono Niha attending church and six hundred catechumens, cf. *BRM*, 1900, p. 279.

⁴²⁵ Cf. *BRM*, 1900, pp. 327-328.

⁴²⁶ Heinrich J. Rabeneck (26 June 1875 Hiddenhausen, Herford – 14 August 1939 Oberbeck, Löhne).

⁴²⁷ Johannes N. Bieger (17 January 1877 Tegal, Java – 8 July 1967 Utrecht), son of a Dutch missionary. Cf. 4.4.7.2.

⁴²⁸ From 1906 until 1914 eight stations were able to become congregations, cf. E. Fries, *Niassische Pandita*, 1922, pp. 6-7.

⁴²⁹ Cf. U. Rottschäfer, *Heinrich Rabeneck 1875-1939*, 1989, pp. 18-21; cf. *JBRM*, 1908 (1909), p. 76

⁴³⁰ 'Protokolle der Nias-Konferenz 1908-1913', Ombölata 27.10.1908 (RMG 2.779); 'Protokoll der Vorstandstagung der Rheinischen Missionsgesellschaft', June 1908, p. 251. Rabeneck was in Lölömoyo for one year (1908-1909), then in Sa'ua (1909-1914).

⁴³¹ Cf. *JBRM*, 1908 (1909), pp. 82-83.

⁴³² Cf. *BRM*, 1936, p. 200.

⁴³³ Cf. *JBRM*, 1909 (1910), p. 99.

⁴³⁴ Cf. *JBRM*, 1910 (1911), p. 103. The assistant teacher in Bawömataluo was a Christian from Pulau Tello.

⁴³⁵ Cf. *JBRM*, 1911 (1912), p.108.

⁴³⁶ Cf. W.R. Schmidt, *Das unbeeendete Gespräch*, 1967, pp. 27-42. Much later, in 1995, this led to a major schism in South Nias, burdening the Niasan church even today.

A decisive beneficial factor determining Christianity's success in the whole of South Nias was the attitude of Barani Dakhi, as of 1908 paramount chief of Hilisimaetanö, towards the missionaries. According to Schmidt⁴³⁷, the reason Barani was much less vicious towards white intruders than his late father Solagö had been, was that he wanted to learn the secrets of the Europeans in order to understand their success. From the very beginning, Missionary Borutta received all the support he needed to build his station and Chief Barani attended both the worship services and the evening school.⁴³⁸ However, since Borutta trespassed against some important customs and collaborated with a rival chief, Barani was in no hurry to convert to Christianity and the relationship between the chief and the missionary was less than cordial.⁴³⁹ Nevertheless, in 1914, before a council of chiefs (*rafe zi'ulu*), Barani surrendered to the missionary the *adu* and the skulls of his ancestors, symbols of the primal religion.⁴⁴⁰ Thereafter, he became a catechumen and began to build a church. Though he was not baptized until 21 January 1917, and was later excommunicated for several years because of bigamy, the *rafe* of 1914 may be considered to be a decisive turning point in the history of the mission in South Nias.⁴⁴¹

4.4.5 Consolidation of the Ecclesiastical Infrastructure

Although, initially, it was the missionaries who sowed the seeds of the Gospel, Christianity could grow only if Ono Niha themselves were involved in the missionary venture and subsequently assumed leadership in the congregations. The liturgy for the worship services, church discipline and church order, as well as a seminary for training church workers constituted the most basic infrastructure needed by the congregations.

4.4.5.1 Niasan Co-workers

Mutual support and friendship between missionaries and influential Ono Niha leaders were often decisive for the spread of Christianity. During the previous period, the good cooperation between Sundermann and Ama Mandranga had led to the Christianisation of Dahana. Now, as mutual trust and understanding between the missionaries and the people further increased, more such working relationships developed. One of the most vivid personalities in this period was Chief Fetero Sihönöbela or Ama Gahonoa, who had made a 'covenant of the grave'⁴⁴² with Missionary Lett. After his baptism on 5 November 1893, Ama Gahonoa became the 'Evangelist of the West Coast'.⁴⁴³ The fact that Christianity was able to enter

⁴³⁷ *Ibid.* p. 27. Cf. Ch. 6.2.1.4 and 6.3.2.1.

⁴³⁸ Cf. *JBRM*, 1912 (1913), p. 113.

⁴³⁹ Cf. *Barmer Missionsblatt* 1912, p. 58; W.R. Schmidt, *Das unbeendete Gespräch*, 1967, pp. 28-29.

⁴⁴⁰ Cf. *JBRM*, 1914 (1915), p. 108.

⁴⁴¹ 'Doch in dieser Stunde beginnt die neue Zeit in Südnias. Das Schweigen der Ahnen und Götter zum Tun Baranis war zu eindeutig!', W.R. Schmidt, *Das unbeendete Gespräch*, 1967, p. 31.

⁴⁴² Cf. A. Lett, *Im Dienst des Evangeliums*, vol. I, 1901, p. 84 (*Grabesbund*); H. Sundermann, *Missionar August Lett*, 1910, p. 13. The covenant demanded complete mutual loyalty between the two men and their families, including providing a worthy burial for each other. Cf. Anonymous, *Fetero oder der goldene Faden der vorbereitenden und berufenden Gnade Gottes*, 1901.

⁴⁴³ A. Bonn, *Ein Jahrhundert Rheinische Mission*, 1928, pp. 73, 278-283 (*Evangelist der Westküste*); cf. H. Sundermann, *Missionar August Lett*, 1910, pp. 20-22.

Lahusa, Lölömboli, and even the Hinako Islands was, to a great part, due to his convincing propagation of the Gospel.⁴⁴⁴

Other decisive joint ventures were the cooperation between Krumm and the nobleman Solagö Bawabawa in Lölöwa'u⁴⁴⁵, that between Momeyer and Chief Nisaetö of Buasi in Sogae'adu⁴⁴⁶, and that between Bieger and Chief Sirörösihönö of Baŵalia – the latter led to the destruction of the 'sacred tree of life' (*fösi*) in Baŵalia.⁴⁴⁷ The friendship between Fries and Ama Dahamböwö led to the first baptisms in Sifaoro'asi on 26 December 1909 and to the spread of Christianity to the surrounding areas⁴⁴⁸, whereas the 'brotherhood' between Paul von Erlen and *Balugu* Laso decisively furthered the work of the mission in Sirombu.⁴⁴⁹ These Christian leaders also set the standard for the emerging ministry of the elder (*satua Niha Keriso*) as overseer and assistant catechist.⁴⁵⁰ Following the example of the Batak church⁴⁵¹, the top positions of leadership in the numerous branch congregations were, as far as possible, to be delegated to teacher-preachers (*guru*), or to indigenous pastors (*pandita*). Wegner⁴⁵² lists a number of cultural, practical, and financial advantages of having such indigenous co-workers.

4.4.5.2 The First Niasan Minister

In 1906, a year before a disaster struck Bio'uti, this station had hosted the annual conference of missionaries (6-9 March 1906), which had taken the far-reaching decision to ordain the first Ono Niha to the Ministry of Word and Sacrament.⁴⁵³ The fortunate one, who was talented and experienced but had very little additional training, was *Guru* Sitefano from Humene. He had been a long-time assistant of the late Missionary Thomas. Sitefano was ordained on 25 March 1906 by the chairman (*Präses*) of the conference of missionaries, Kramer, while the past-chairman, Sundermann, held the sermon, on 1 Peter 2. Altogether, twelve missionaries attended the ceremony.

⁴⁴⁴ He often accompanied the missionaries on their tours, but also acted independently.

⁴⁴⁵ Cf. A Lett, *Im Dienst des Evangeliums auf der Westküste von Nias*, vol. IV, 1901, p. 100; *JBRM*, 1900 (1901), pp. 347-352.

⁴⁴⁶ Cf. *BRM*, 1900, p. 141.

⁴⁴⁷ Cf. J.N. Bieger, *Erlebnisse eines Missionars in 12jähriger Arbeit auf Nias und Sumatra*, vol. I, 1916, pp. 39-48. Cf. Ch. 2.4.1.

⁴⁴⁸ *Ibid.* pp. 5-10; E. Fries, *Aus den Bergen von Sifaoro'asi*, 1938, pp. 11-15; J. Warneck, *Eduard Fries*, 1949, pp. 59-72. Instead of 'Dahamböwö', some sources use the alternative spelling 'Dahömböwö'. Both names are possible, but 'Dahamböwö' ('two-branched wealth', meaning that he had held more than one *adat*-feast) seems more likely.

⁴⁴⁹ Paul von Erlen (21 April 1877 Barmen – 12 September 1914 Lölöwua); cf. Anonymus, *Wie die Götzen fallen*, 1910, pp. 20-21; also Personalakte RMG 1.866.

⁴⁵⁰ For the development of these ministries, cf. A. Bonn, *Die Sonne geht auf über unseren Bergen*, 1940, pp. 33-35.

⁴⁵¹ Cf. A. Bonn, *Ein Jahrhundert Rheinische Mission*, 1928, p. 74 ('nach dem Muster der Batakirche').

⁴⁵² Cf. R. Wegner, *Die Mitwirkung der eingeborenen Gehilfen in der Rheinischen Mission*, in: *BRM*, 1899, pp. 36-49. Wegner mentions the following advantages: close cultural relationship; mutual trust; shared thought patterns, feeling and colour of skin; common language and customs; setting an example that Christianity is not the religion of the whites only; better physical adaptation to the tropical climate; fewer material needs than the missionaries, who come from a more developed culture – a fact which justifies lower wages for the indigenous co-workers; a step for the indigenous churches towards greater financial self-support; the possibility of gradually reducing the number of European missionaries.

⁴⁵³ Cf. 'Konferenzprotokolle Nias', 1876-1899 (RMG 2.778).

Sitefano was wearing a Prussian clergyman's gown at his ordination, a gift from the missionaries. According to Fries⁴⁵⁴, this was 'stupid' because the robe could cause the *pandita Niha* to become haughty. Seen in retrospect, this did not happen. Reverend Sitefano remained a humble and diligent pastor for more than ten years. However, the Prussian gown does signify that the Niasan minister was expected to be an exact copy of the missionary, albeit on a smaller scale. His function was to be that of the missionary's right hand, his faithful 'deacon' or 'vicar'.⁴⁵⁵ The fact that among the Ono Niha, the gown's colour, black, traditionally signified common, earthly things, was not taken into account.

In 1906, Sitefano was installed as the *pastor loci* of Dahana, which thereby ceased to be a mission station, becoming instead the first indigenous congregation within the circuit of Gunungsitoli.⁴⁵⁶ In 1911, Sitefano was transferred to Baŵalia, and in 1916, when a new generation of Niasan ministers was ready to be ordained⁴⁵⁷, he was pensioned. He continued to serve even in retirement, so that the institution of the Niasan minister was able to convince even the staunchest of critics.

4.4.5.3 Conferences

In the 1890s, in conjunction with the annual conference of missionaries (officially held since 1880), Christian elders and chiefs irregularly held parallel conferences of their own.⁴⁵⁸ These conferences were sometimes attended by more than two hundred leaders from all over the island, thus constituting the most representative gatherings on Nias. Beginning in 1898, an annual conference for teacher-preachers was convened regularly. Important decisions for the conference of missionaries were prepared in all of these conferences of the indigenous church leaders.

4.4.5.4 Liturgy

Whereas during the first decades there had not been a fixed liturgy, in 1892 the missionaries introduced a regular agenda for the Sunday worship service, called the *Agendre*.⁴⁵⁹ This was an almost exact copy of the agenda of the Evangelical Church in the Rhineland translated into the Niasan vernacular.⁴⁶⁰ In 1898, the first hymnal, the *Zoera Zinunö ba Niha*, was printed.⁴⁶¹ It contained only German hymns translated into the Niasan vernacular, without any original Niasan elements. This hymnal was amended in the year 1905 and included some prayers⁴⁶², which enriched the worship services in the homes during the week and in church on Sundays.

⁴⁵⁴ Cf. E. Fries, *Niassische Pandita*, 1922, p. 5 (*törichterweise*).

⁴⁵⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 35-36.

⁴⁵⁶ Contradictive term 'independent branch' (*selbständiges Filial*) used at the Conference in 1906 (RMG 2.778).

⁴⁵⁷ On 23 July 1916, four *pandita*, who had graduated from the first theological course in Omböläta, were ordained. They were: Filemo, Kolingö and Faogöli from Omböläta and Josefo from Soga'e'adu.

⁴⁵⁸ Cf. 'Konferenzprotokolle Nias', 1876-1899 (RMG 2.777); cf. *BRM*, 1899, p. 106.

⁴⁵⁹ Cf. Anonymus, *Zoera Zinunö ba Niha* (Niassisches Gesang-Büchlein), 1898.

⁴⁶⁰ Cf. Anonymus, *Vademecum Pastorale Niassicum*, 1892. Cf. Ch. 6.2.2 and Ch. 6.2.2.1.

⁴⁶¹ Cf. Anonymus, *Zura Zinunö ba Niha* (Niassisches Gesang-Büchlein), 1898.

⁴⁶² Cf. Anonymus, *Soera Zinoenö ba Niha*, *Niassisches Gesang-Büchlein*, 1905.

4.4.5.5 Discipline and Order

At the above-mentioned conference of missionaries in Bio'uti in 1906, the need was felt to develop a uniform 'church discipline and church order'.⁴⁶³ Previously, each missionary had been responsible for the order in his own area of operation. After a general discussion on 'nurture and discipline in the congregations'⁴⁶⁴ in 1907, from 1908 until 1910 the focus was mainly on 'Christian marriage and worship'.⁴⁶⁵ In 1911, a decision was taken on polygamy: All polygamists (usually chiefs) were to be excommunicated and could not return until after the second wife had died. In 1912, the consul of missions in Batavia, D. Crommelin, asked the conference of missionaries on Nias to discuss the regulations for Christian families with the chiefs and then forward the results to the government official (*resident*) of Tapanuli.⁴⁶⁶ These regulations became the basis for a Christian *adat*, implemented in 1915.

4.4.5.6 Seminary

An urgent need in the course of missionary expansion was the availability of more well-trained Niasan assistants. During the 1880s, Sundermann had trained nine teacher-preachers (*guru*) in his so-called seminary in Dahana. A few others had graduated from the seminary in Depok in Batavia. After Sundermann had moved to Lölöwu'a in 1895, Thomas started similar vocational training in Humene. An attractive side-effect was that each seminarian helped the missionary with the work in his circuit. The first five aspirant *guru*, who attended the course led by Thomas, graduated in March, 1897. Five more followed two years later. After Thomas' sudden death at the end of the year 1900, the 'seminary' moved to Ombölata in 1901, where Thomas' son-in-law, Conrad Ufer⁴⁶⁷, continued the task along with the gifted Niasan *Guru* Andrea. In the course of time, the seminary grew and the standard of teaching improved.

Fries, the first truly academic theologian in the service of the RM on Nias⁴⁶⁸, was elected to the office of chairman of the conference of missionaries in 1913 and moved from his mission station in Sifaoro'asi to the seminary in Ombölata. In 1914, he initiated the first two-year course for up-grading *guru* to become Niasan ministers (*pandita Niha*).⁴⁶⁹ The graduates of this course were to play an important role in the following period of the Great Awakening.

⁴⁶³ Cf. 'Kirchenzucht und Kirchenordnung', in: 'Konferenzprotokoll Nias', Bio'uti, 6-9 March 1906 (RMG 2.778).

⁴⁶⁴ Cf. 'Konferenzprotokoll Nias', 1900-1907 (RMG 2.778).

⁴⁶⁵ Cf. 'Konferenzprotokoll Nias', 1908-1913 (RMG 2.779).

⁴⁶⁶ Cf. E. Fries, 'Gemeindeerziehung und Kirchenzucht', in: *AMZ* 40/6-40/11 (1913).

⁴⁶⁷ Conrad Ufer (17 Augsut 1871 Barmen – 12 March 1953 Kaiserswerth).

⁴⁶⁸ Around the turn of the century 1800s-1900s, an academic theologian as a missionary was still a rare phenomenon in most missionary societies. An exception was the orthodox Reformed Mission League (*Gereformeerde Zendingsbond*, GZB, founded in 1901), which regarded mission to be one of the principle tasks of the church and wanted to send out ordained ministers as missionaries, but could not find ministers willing to go. So she had to adopt the general system. Cf. Th. Van den End, *Transfer of Reformed Identity on the Missionfield in Indonesia*, 1995. Fries came from an academic middle-class family and had studied theology in Halle, Greifswald and Tübingen. He had been greatly influenced by the theology of Martin Kähler (1835-1912), who combined revivalist piety with dogmatic biblicism, as well as by the missiology of Gustav Warneck.

⁴⁶⁹ Cf. E. Fries, *Niassische Pandita*, 1922; A. Pieper, 'Gewinnung und Ausbildung der Führer', in: *Evangelisches Missionsmagazin Neue Folge* 72 (1928), pp. 100-107.

4.4.6 Expansion of Activities in Society

4.4.6.1 Medical Missions

After the missionaries had successfully expanded the range of their work beyond the limits of the *rapatgebied*, a more general medical service had the potential of becoming a major instrument with which to reach the masses.⁴⁷⁰ Sundermann wanted to build a hospital on his new station Lölöwu'a, where he had begun work in 1895. This was in line with the policy of Schreiber, who – inspired by the English – strongly encouraged the development of the development of a German medical mission.⁴⁷¹ At the time, unfortunately, the RM could supply neither the funds nor the doctor.

The first RM physician in Indonesia was Julius Schreiber⁴⁷², who worked in Pearaja, Sumatra, as of mid-1900. The second one, Dr. Johannes Winkler, was intended to go to Nias. But, to the regret of the Nias-mission, he, too, was placed in Pearaja.⁴⁷³ By now, however, the prospects for a synergy between mission and government had become better. Missionaries were involved in the development of the public health service.⁴⁷⁴

During the epidemics on Nias in the years 1908 until 1911 (dysentery and smallpox), the infrastructure of the mission proved to be indispensable. The missionaries distributed medicine effectively and inexpensively. As a return favour, the government gave its full support to a regular 'auxiliary hospital'⁴⁷⁵, begun by Fries in 1912/1913 in Sifaoro'asi.⁴⁷⁶ In the absence of a physician, auxiliary hospitals usually had an European nurse in a full-time capacity. In Sifaoro'asi, not even this was possible. Sister Maria Fischdick⁴⁷⁷, a deaconess on Nias at that time, could work there only periodically⁴⁷⁸, since she had to visit the other stations all over the island as well. It was not until 1934 that the first missionary physicians⁴⁷⁹ were permanently stationed on Nias. Nevertheless, the auxiliary hospital in Sifaoro'asi

⁴⁷⁰ Concerning the role of the medical service in the mission, cf. C.H. Grundmann, *Gesandt zu heilen*, 1992, pp. 290-294.

⁴⁷¹ Cf. J. Winkler, *Im Dienst der Liebe: Das Missionshospital in Pearaja 1900-1928*, 1928, p. 5.

⁴⁷² Cf. J. Warneck, *50 Jahre Batakmission in Sumatra*, 1912, pp. 245-254. Before Schreiber and Winkler, RM physicians had been sent to China and New Guinea. A mayor problem was that all German doctors had to pass the Dutch state medical examination before they were allowed to practice in the Netherlands Indies.

⁴⁷³ Cf. letters Winkler to RM, Pearaja 6 June 1907 and 19 September 1907. He visited Nias in 1907 and suggested sending two physicians, one for the north and one for the south. Winkler preferred Dahana to Ombölata, because in the absence of a missionary in Dahana, the mission doctor would be able to work with a Niasan pastor (*pandita Niha*).

⁴⁷⁴ A subsidy arrangement for private hospitals, including mission hospitals and dispensaries, was established by ordinance in the Government Gazette (*Staatsblad* 1906 no 276), cf. S.C. Graaf van Randwijck, *Handelen en denken in dienst der zending*, vol. II, 1981, pp. 547-575.

⁴⁷⁵ Auxiliary hospital (*Hilfskrankenhaus*), in use by 1912; the building activities were completed in 1913, cf. *JBRM*, 1912 (1913), p. 110. Cf. H. Kayser, *Aspekte des sozio-kulturellen Wandels auf Nias*, 1976, p. 128-132.

⁴⁷⁶ Fries served in Sifaoro'asi from 1905 until 1913.

⁴⁷⁷ Maria Fischdick (24 September 1885 Dümpten – 30 November 1958 Honnef). Cf. *Aus vergangenen Tagen: Erinnerungen einer Missionsschwester*, 1959.

⁴⁷⁸ Cf. *Des Meisters Ruf* 5/4 (1913), pp. 60-62.

⁴⁷⁹ The couple M.G. Thomsen and his wife G. Thomsen née Kühn. Cf. 5.2.5.

was extremely well-frequented by Ono Niha. As expected, it was a successful tool for Christianisation, soon discrediting traditional medicine and the primal religion.⁴⁸⁰

4.4.6.2 Educational Missions

Winning the people's trust and gradually implementing a type of 'social discipline' similar to that in Europe⁴⁸¹ was achieved first and foremost through Western education, a field in which mission and government had cooperated since the very beginning. The atmosphere for mutual assistance in this field was considerably improved through the 'Ethical Politics'. Around the turn of the century, but especially after 1908, when the entire island had come under colonial rule, the number of pupils in schools rose rapidly.⁴⁸² This might indicate that to the Ono Niha attending school was a token of both political and religious allegiance to the new status quo.

4.4.6.3 Literature

It is fortunate that from the beginning the missionaries used the vernacular (*Li Nono Niha*) as the means of communicating the Gospel.⁴⁸³ Malay was only the second language in the schools. Quite in line with the thesis of African scholar Lamin Sanneh⁴⁸⁴, the use of the vernacular not only 'translated' the message into the Niasan idiom, causing a sense of identification, it also up-graded the Niasan culture to which the vernacular is essential, thereby removing the stigma of backwardness from this culture, preserving and eventually renewing it.

As the number of Ono Niha with Western education increased, the ministerial and teacher training in Niasan seminaries developed, and the congregations grew in size and maturity, the need for more literature in the vernacular grew correspondingly. Sundermann's translation of the New Testament was available in 1895, and his Niasan Bible (*Soera Niamoni'ö*) was published in 1912.

In addition to the Bible, the missionaries also produced other literature, which subsequently shaped the general theology of Niasan Christianity. A printing press at the seminary in Ombölatata made a wider distribution possible. The most popular and influential publications were translations or interpretations into the Niasan vernacular of the *Little Book of the Heart*⁴⁸⁵, *The Pilgrim's Progress*⁴⁸⁶, and the *Christian Guide to Salvation*⁴⁸⁷, all translations having been done by Sundermann.

⁴⁸⁰ During its first year of operation, 287 people made use of the hospital ('Es ist offenbar, wie die Leute dadurch von der Ohnmacht ihrer Götzen und von der Macht des lebendigen Gottes überzeugt werden'), cf. *JBRM*, 1913 (1914), p. 119.

⁴⁸¹ Nurturing a European work-ethos in the population, so they could function well in the modern capitalist labour process, cf. C. Veltmann, '„Es geht „vooruit“ auf Nias', in: M. Humburg et al. (eds.), *Im „Land der Menschen“*, 2003, pp. 82-83.

⁴⁸² Cf. Helga Kayser, *Aspekte des sozio-kulturellen Wandels auf Nias*, 1976, pp. 144, 196 (*sprunghafter Anstieg*).

⁴⁸³ Cf. J.L. Swellengrebel, *In Leijdeckers Voetspoor I*, 1974, pp. 219-230.

⁴⁸⁴ Cf. L. Sanneh, *Translating the Message*, 1989, pp. 1-3, 47, 88-125; by the same author, *Encountering the West*, 1993, pp. 152-171.

⁴⁸⁵ A translation of Gossner's 'Herzensbüchlein', *Tödö Niha*, was available in 1890. Chief Ndrohugö of Faekhu converted to Christianity when the book was read to him by his Christian brother (Anonymous, *Niassische Häuptlinge I. Ndrohugö, Siwahumola, Golajama*, 1911, p. 9).

⁴⁸⁶ J. Bunyan, 1678. Full title: *Fekoli Niha Keriso wanawa Banoea si jawa*, 1905.

⁴⁸⁷ C. Ernst, *Die Christliche Heilslehre*. The Niasan translation, *Famahaö ba lala Wangorifi*, was

Beginning in 1904, the Niasan church magazine *Toeria* was printed at the mission press in Laguboti, Batakland, appearing at irregular intervals. After the Nias mission had received its own printing machine in Ombölata at the end of 1914, the magazine appeared monthly until 1940. The impact of *Toeria* as a news carrier (including international news) and a spiritual guide cannot be overestimated. The frequent articles on the progress of Christianity on Nias and elsewhere, on other religions (i.e., Islam), international news (for instance, the progress of World War I), and on cultural matters significantly helped to shape the new Christian identity of the Ono Niha.

Here the first Niasan hymnal must also be mentioned: *Sura Zinunö ba Niha*, which appeared in 1898, containing 115 songs, words of consecration for appointing Niasan assistants and a sung blessing (*fangandrö howuhowu*). Though all of the hymns were copies or interpretations of German church or folk music, having no resemblance with the traditional Niasan chants, they were soon enjoyed and sung by Ono Niha Christians.⁴⁸⁸

4.4.7 Relationship between Mission and State

According to Julius Richter⁴⁸⁹, the imposition of colonial rule was the turning-point for the expansion of the mission in Indonesia. The colonial state needed the missionaries to win the hearts and minds of the people for the *pax Neerlandica*. The implementation of 'Ethical Politics' in 1901 caused a remarkable change in the atmosphere. Now the government became 'very kind' towards the mission, seeking its cooperation and supporting its activities in a variety of ways. However, the attitude of many colonial civil servants remained 'unfriendly' and suspicious towards the missionaries⁴⁹⁰, while the missionaries, on their part, were sometimes quite critical of the means of implementation of colonial rule.⁴⁹¹

4.4.7.1 Suspicions between the Germans and the Dutch

The close cooperation between the German missionaries and the Dutch colonial state was not always free of tension. After Germany had joined the 'club' of colonial powers in 1884, there was suspicion on the part of Dutch government officials that RM-missionaries working in the Dutch East Indies could become a Fifth Column. This suspicion was not completely unfounded, since Fabri was a strong advocate of the colonial expansion of the German Empire and wanted the RM to play an active role in it.

finished in 1892.

⁴⁸⁸ Westerners can recognize these hymns, but they are sung more slowly than in the original and with different intonations.

⁴⁸⁹ Cf. J. Richter, *Die evangelische Mission in Niederländisch-Indien*, 1931, p. 31 (*Wendepunkt*).

⁴⁹⁰ Cf. H. Rabeneck, 'Die Stellung der Missionare zur Kolonialregierung und ihren Beamten', 2 April 1912, in: *Referate Nias I, 1900-1923* (RMG 2.784).

⁴⁹¹ Cf. Ch. 4.4. Jan S. Aritonang, following J. Verkuyl, points to the ambivalence of the Ethical Politics. On the one hand it attempted raising the standard of living of Indonesians mainly through education, but, on the other hand, it intensified the Dutch colonial rule by supporting the policy of 'pacification' by force (cf. J.S. Aritonang, 'Pengantar', in: J. Verkuyl, *Ketegangan antara Imperialisme dan Kolonialisme Barat dan Zending pada Masa 'Politik Kolonial Etis'*, 1990, p. 5).

According to Claus Veltmann⁴⁹², however, suspicion against RM-missionaries was unnecessary. He is of the opinion that they were loyal to the Dutch state and that their German identity was secondary to their identity as labourers of the Kingdom of God. Indeed, there is no indication that any of the missionaries had subversive political ambitions. They acknowledged the Dutch as the legitimate authority and willingly, albeit sometimes critically, collaborated with them.

4.4.7.2 Cooperation in Pacification

The colonial government needed the missionaries to appease the Ono Niha, to nurture in them a sense of duty and to build a Western type of order.⁴⁹³ The missionaries, on their part, sharing the same fundamental ideology as the colonizers (i.e., European superiority⁴⁹⁴), also looked for assistance from the colonial authorities. For building the Kingdom of God, the mission needed protection of its stations and the 'pacification' of insecure areas.⁴⁹⁵

The conference of missionaries in 1898 demanded that Sifaoro'asi (a mission station in Central Nias) be taken by force. Fries writes: 'Since European culture first came to Sifaoro'asi with gunpowder and soldiers, with betrayal and arson, it was no wonder that the consequences were not the desired ones'.⁴⁹⁶ RM-Inspector Schreiber, too, visiting Nias in early 1899, directed a letter to the Governor-General⁴⁹⁷, appealing that the remaining areas, especially around the mission stations, be brought 'under the authority of the government'. He wrote that the missionaries wished to work 'hand in hand' with the authorities and that, since permission had been given for the establishment of eight stations across the whole width of Nias from east to west, it was the duty of the government to protect them, as well as the surrounding population, from 'robbers and head-hunters'.⁴⁹⁸

The sometimes destructive character of working 'hand in hand' can be illustrated by the enforced changes in the Niasan traditional house (*omo hada*).⁴⁹⁹ The *omo hada* had three levels, which were of cosmological significance: the ground level between the supporting poles, where the pigs used to be kept, symbolized the underworld. The highest part under the roof was the realm of the spirits of the ancestors. In between lived the humans. The colonial administration, for hygienic reasons, prohibited having the pigsty underneath the house; the missionaries cleared the houses of all carved images (*adu*) and declared the part under the roof to be free of spirits. As a result, the traditional worldview of the Ono Niha was shattered.

⁴⁹² Cf. C. Veltmann, '„Es geht „vooruit“ auf Nias"', in: M. Humburg et al. (eds.), *Im „Land der Menschen“*, 2003, pp. 76, 84. Fries supported and cooperated with the Dutch but was opposed to the punitive actions they undertook on Nias, *ibid.* p. 77.

⁴⁹³ Especially after 1903, when the Sultanate of Aceh had fallen to the Dutch after thirty years of war, the last peripheries of Sumatra, including Nias, had to be 'pacified'. Cf. Ch. 6.3.2.1.

⁴⁹⁴ Cf. Th. van den End, *Tweehonderd jaar Nederlandse zending: een overzicht*, 1997, p. 18.

⁴⁹⁵ Cf. H. Rabeneck, *Stellung der Missionare zur Kolonial-Regierung und Ihren Beamten, 1900-1923*, n.d. (RMG 2.784); M. Fries, *Kolonisierung und Mission*, 2003, pp. 66-72; F. Huber, *Das Christentum in Ost-, Süd- und Südostasien sowie Australien*, 2005, pp. 30-38.

⁴⁹⁶ E. Fries, *Aus den Bergen von Sifaoro'asi*, 1938, p. 5 ('Die europäische Kultur kam nach Sifaoro'asi also zuerst mit Pulver und Soldaten, mit Verrat und Brandstiftung, so war es kein Wunder, dass die Folgen andere waren, als man erhofft hatte').

⁴⁹⁷ Cf. A. Schreiber, 'Memorandum aan Zijne Excellentie den Gouverneur Generaal van Nederlandsch-Indië', Gunungsitoli 13 February 1898 (RMG 2.947).

⁴⁹⁸ *Ibid.*; cf. A. Schreiber, *Eine Missionsreise in den fernen Osten*, 1899; cf. *JBRM*, 1899 (1900), p. 53.

⁴⁹⁹ Cf. A. Viaro, *The traditional architectures of Nias*, 1990, pp. 45-76. Cf. 2.6.2.3.

Another example is the felling of the holy *fösi*-tree by Missionary Johannes Bieger, known as the 'Boniface of Nias', in 1908 in Baŵalia. The destruction of this religious symbol and the subsequent 'religious vacuum'⁵⁰⁰ occurred precisely in the year of the physical subordination of all Ono Niha under Dutch colonial rule.

The missionaries supported the colonial government's forced-labour system (*rodi*)⁵⁰¹, compulsory passes and the taxation of the Ono Niha.⁵⁰² They enthusiastically supervised government-financed road-building projects connecting the eastern, western, northern and southern areas. To many Ono Niha, mission and government were therefore the two sides of the same coin.⁵⁰³ However, due to their knowledge of the indigenous culture, their language skills and their closer relationship with the primal people, the missionaries played an important mediating role.⁵⁰⁴ Contrary to the colonial officials, the Ono Niha trusted the missionaries. Famous Niasan rebels (or notorious 'head-hunters' and terrorists, depending on the point of view), such as Fadoli Badusanuwö⁵⁰⁵, Siwahumola⁵⁰⁶, Balöhalu⁵⁰⁷ and Sitambaho⁵⁰⁸, submitted themselves to the missionaries and eagerly attended church activities, rather than to surrender to the colonial authorities.⁵⁰⁹ A missionary could at times achieve amnesty for former 'criminals' who converted to Christianity; but he also could condemn an obstinate man to forced labour (*rodi*). Generally, as Jan Aritonang had argued convincingly, the mission had had some critical reservations against the injustices of colonial rule and occasionally even sided with the indigenous people against the colonizers.⁵¹⁰

4.4.7.3 Cooperation in Establishing a Code of Law for the Christians

In February 1914, a delegation of government officials met with the leadership of the Nias-conference in Ombölata⁵¹¹, in order to discuss a code of law for Christian

⁵⁰⁰ Cf. D. Becker, '„Sie werfen Satans Bande und ihre Götzen fort?“, in: R. Riess (ed.), *Abschied von der Schuld?*, 1996, pp. 191-194; J.N. Bieger, 'Eine Donnars-Eiche auf Nias', in: *Barmer Missionsblatt* 83/10 (1908), pp. 76-77.

⁵⁰¹ Cf. Ch. 2.7.3.

⁵⁰² Cf. E. Fries, *Niassische Pandita*, 1922, p. 6.

⁵⁰³ In a statement of Ama Gahonoa, made around 1893 to adherents of the primal religion, he said that if they did not receive the good law of God and leave their old ways, they would get in trouble with the Dutch *controleur* (cf. A. Lett, *Im Dienst des Evangeliums auf der Westküste von Nias*, vol. III, 1901, p. 79).

⁵⁰⁴ Cf. C. Veltmann, '„Es geht „vooruit“ auf Nias', in: M. Humburg et al. (eds.), *Im „Land der Menschen“*, 2003, p. 83.

⁵⁰⁵ Cf. Ch. 6.3.2.1.

⁵⁰⁶ Siwahumola, sometimes called Siwahumongo, submitted himself to Ewald Krumm; cf. *BRM*, 1902, pp. 140, 203; *BRM* 1904, pp. 266-269; *JBRM*, 1904 (1905), p. 52; Anonymous, *Niassische Häuptlinge I*, 1911, p. 24. Cf. Ch. 6.3.2.1 and Ch. 6.3.2.2.

⁵⁰⁷ Balöhalu from Ma'u submitted himself to Missionary Heinrich Sundermann in Lölöwua. Cf. Ch. 6.3.2.1 and Ch. 6.3.2.2.

⁵⁰⁸ Sitambaho from Sifaoro'asi submitted himself to Missionary Momeyer in Sogae'adu.

⁵⁰⁹ Cf. Ch. 2.7.3. Cf. Anonymus, *Niassische Häuptlinge I*, 1911, pp. 10-27; M. Koch, *Wie aus einem Tiger ein Lamm wurde*, 1908, pp. 12-16. Another well-known Niasan rebel around the turn of the century was Söröharimau.

⁵¹⁰ Cf. J.S. Aritonang, *The Encounter of the Batak people with Rheinische Missions-Gesellschaft in the Field of Education (1861-1940): a historical-theological inquiry*, 2000.

⁵¹¹ Cf. 'Christliche Weiterbildung der Niassischen Adat' (9 February 1914), in: 'Protokoll Nias-Konferenz', Ombölata, 4-11 February 1914 (RMG 2.780). This was supported by the board in Barmen (letter of 11 May 1914). Cf. Ch. 6.4.3 until Ch. 6.4.4.4.

Ono Niha. The suggestions of the missionaries⁵¹² were partially taken into account, so that a special codex of *adat*-law for Christians of the Nias-district (*afdeeling*), with the exception of the sub-district of South Nias, could be implemented by the *resident* of Tapanuli in 1915.⁵¹³ Attached to this codex were regulations for the dowry (*böwö*), agreed on by the Christian chiefs in 1912. Though the government effectively strengthened the status of Christians by implementing this special customary law (*adat-recht*), it did not solve the problem of a 'dual system'⁵¹⁴ of values – the spirit of the *adat* continued to determine many aspects of everyday life.

4.5 BEGINNINGS ON THE BATU ISLANDS (1889-1919)

After the DLM had had to leave its former missionary area in the Pasemah Ulu Manna, it turned its attention to the Ono Niha on the Batu Islands. The indigenous inhabitants of this archipelago between Nias and Mentawai, off the West Coast of Sumatra, have close cultural relations to Nias. The initial pioneering work, which began in 1889, was done by German missionaries recruited from the RM, and their wives. The arrival, in 1919, of the first Dutch missionary marked the beginning of a new period.⁵¹⁵

4.5.1 Pioneers of Pulau Tello

Johannes Kersten was the first DLM-missionary on the Batu Islands. His theological inclination was neo-orthodox Lutheran pietism, emphasizing sanctification, conversion (as a process of growth), the struggle with the devil, self-constraint, discipline (like a soldier's), accountability on the Day of Judgment, and the importance of the teachings of Martin Luther.⁵¹⁶ He wanted to spread the Kingdom of God among the heathen 'in the spirit of our Lutheran church'⁵¹⁷, in order to pre-empt the further expansion of Islam in this region.⁵¹⁸

The original intention of Kersten was to continue the work of Festersen and his wife Christine in Tanjung Sakti.⁵¹⁹ When this venture proved to be unrealistic⁵²⁰,

⁵¹² Cf. 'Bepalingen voor de Inlandsche Christenen op het Eiland Nias', in: Anonymous, 'Adat-Recht f. Christengemeinden' (RMG 2.800). Not taken into account were the paragraphs concerning Sunday rest and the progressive suggestions concerning inheritances for widows and orphaned daughters.

⁵¹³ Cf. Anonymous, 'Adat-Recht f. Christengemeinden: Beschrijving van het bijzondere adatrecht der Inlandsche Christenen in de afdeeling NIAS, met uitzondering van de onderafdeeling Zuid-Nias, van de residentie Tapanoeli' (RMG 2.800).

⁵¹⁴ Term used by Robert J. Schreier in *Constructing Local Theologies*, 1985, pp. 144-158.

⁵¹⁵ Cf. A. Steinhart (1889-1989. *100 jaar Kerk op de Batu-eilanden*, 1989, p. 6) dates the first phase from 1889 until 1909, suggesting that the year 1909 (consecration of the first church building on Pulau Tello) marks the beginning of a new era. This dating cannot be accepted, considering both the dates of the first baptisms (1892 Pulau Tello; 1900 Sigata) and the fundamental change in missionary approach brought about by the Dutch missionary, W.F. Schröder, as of 1919.

⁵¹⁶ Taken from a sermon on John 17:17, held in Amsterdam before his departure, cf. *EVV*, 5/2 (1887), pp. 38-42, and a lecture 'Gedachten over het ontstaan van het heidendom' (Thoughts on the origin of heathendom), cf. *EVV*, 5/3 (1887), p. 68.

⁵¹⁷ Cf. *EVV*, 5/3 (1887), p. 63 ('medehelpen Zijne Kerk in Lutherschen geest op te richten').

⁵¹⁸ Cf. letter *Resident* of Bencoolen to DLM, 30 September 1885; he quotes a certain Bettink, who had visited the area and held that, due to Muslim influence, it was no longer 'heathen' ('Ambtelijke Correspondentie', GAA 552/32).

⁵¹⁹ Cf. Ch. 3.4, Ch. 3.5.3 and Ch. 3.5.4.

⁵²⁰ When Kersten arrived, he found that Festersen's station was destroyed and a Roman Catholic priest,

Kersten returned to Padang in July 1888, where he stayed with the Missionary Dornsafft. In the meantime, another DLM-missionary, Christian W. Frickenschmidt⁵²¹, had also arrived in Padang. As a new mission area had to be found, a number of different options were considered, especially the islands of Enggano and Mentawai off the South-West Coast of Sumatra. Eventually, following the advice of RM-Inspector Schreiber, the DLM decided on the Batu Islands⁵²², in part because a Dutch administrative officer on Pulau Tello would be able to provide protection for the missionary.⁵²³

Frickenschmidt went over to Nias to learn the vernacular from Sundermann, while Kersten made a first orientation trip to Pulau Tello from 10 to 14 October 1888. He went there by government boat, which took two days. The Dutch official on Pulau Tello introduced him to the regent of the Batu Islands, *Raja* Alam Laut. Back in Padang, Kersten had to wait for the permission from the colonial government. But even before it was issued, he was able to make use of another chance to go to Pulau Tello on a government steamer in January 1889.

On 11 February 1889, the permission to start a mission on the Batu Islands was granted.⁵²⁴ On February 20, Kersten, his wife and a Batak *guru* by the name of Johannes Lumbantobing⁵²⁵ sailed for Pulau Tello. They arrived on 25 February 1889, the official beginning of the Batu-mission.

When the house which Kersten had rented in the Moslem quarter of the main village proved to be unsuitable, he built a new house on another plot, which he had obtained from the *raja*. On 17 August 1889, the couple moved in, just before the birth of their daughter Amanda two days later.

Due to the hard physical work in the extreme tropical climate, Kersten fell seriously ill. Frickenschmidt, who had arrived on Pulau Tello on 31 December 1889, accompanied him to Padang in May 1890. The doctor advised Kersten to return to Europe as soon as possible⁵²⁶, which he did on 21 June 1890. Back in Germany, he soon died.⁵²⁷ Though Kersten and his wife had served only about fifteen months on Pulau Tello, with no baptisms to their record, they are remembered by the Ono Niha – and especially by the Batunese Christians⁵²⁸ – as the pioneers of the Batu Islands.

Jan P.N. van Meurs, had just arrived. Although they eventually received permission for missionary work in Tanjung Sakti, the Lutherans decided to abandon this area, cf. *EVB*, 5/4 (1887) p. 98; cf. W.F. Schröder, *De Zending op de Batoe-Eilanden*, 1927, pp. 6-7.

⁵²¹ Cf. Ch. 3.4.; for Frickenschmidt's bio-data, cf. Wilhelm Frickenschmidt Junior, 'In Memoriam', in: *EVB*, 53/3 (1935), pp. 57-60. Frickenschmidt arrived in Padang in May, 1888.

⁵²² Three large islands (Tanah Bala, Tanah Masa and Pulau Pini) and 48 smaller islands situated to the south of Nias off the West Coast of Sumatra, between 0° 10' Northern Latitude and 0° 45' Southern Latitude and between 97° 50' and 98° 35' eastern longitude. Cf. *ENI* 1 (1917), p. 207.

⁵²³ This reason is explicitly mentioned in *EVB*, 19/3 (1901), p. 66. The Dutch official was a *controleur*.

⁵²⁴ Cf. 'Notulen Hoofdbestuur', Amsterdam, 2 May 1889 (GAA 552/2).

⁵²⁵ Cf. G.O. Reitz, 'A report of the Church in the Batu Islands', 1959, p. 2; W.F. Schröder, *De Zending op de Batoe-eilanden*, 1927, p. 14. Lumbantobing had previously served the Mennonite mission in Pakantan, Sumatra.

⁵²⁶ 'Aerztliches Attest', Dr. Elogner, Padang, 12 June 1890 (GAA 552/30).

⁵²⁷ Cf. C.W. Frickenschmidt, *Erinnerungen aus Pulu Tello*, 1895, p. 13. On 27 July 1890, J. Kersten arrived in Amsterdam. On 30 August 1890, he died in Leverkusen (Lennep), Germany. His widow later took upon herself the education of her daughter and the two daughters of Frickenschmidt. On 18 April 1918, she died of a stroke in the mission-house in Barmen.

⁵²⁸ For the centennial of the mission to the Batu Islands on 25 February 1989, which was attended by the author, the pastor of Pulau Tello, Waõsaro Zandroto, commemorated the beginnings of the mission in a jubilee-lecture with special reference to Johannes Kersten, cf. U. Hummel, *Reis naar Indonesië*, 1989.

Frickenschmidt, who carried on Kersten's work, was a man of the solid but simple spirituality of Ludwig Harms.⁵²⁹ He is said to have 'studied Latin behind the plough'.⁵³⁰ On 22 July 1890, he married Katharine Ostermeier⁵³¹ in Padang and on 7 August 1890 they arrived together on Pulau Tello. Katharine played a significant role as a liaison between the missionary and both the Ono Niha and the Chinese⁵³² women on Pulau Tello.

After giving birth to a third child, Katharine Frickenschmidt died on 2 June 1894 on Pulau Tello.⁵³³ Leaving the work in the hands of his new colleague, August Landwehr⁵³⁴, Frickenschmidt left for Europe with his three children on 3 April 1895. Eight months later, he married Pauline Teudt⁵³⁵ from Bückeburg-Lippe, daughter of the later Superintendent. He left his three sons behind in Elberfeld, where their grandfather Ostermeier was a teacher. On 28 November 1895, the newly wedded couple left Holland and arrived on Pulau Tello on 16 January 1896. Pauline Frickenschmidt adjusted well, wearing the traditional Malay clothing worn by many Ono Niha women. She was lovingly called: 'Gawe' (grandmother).⁵³⁶

During Frickenschmidt's second furlough (March 1905 - May 1906), the RM offered Missionary Heinrich Kienlein⁵³⁷ to assist Landwehr. Kienlein served on Pulau Tello and Sigata⁵³⁸ from 22 November 1903 until 1 July 1908, after which he moved to Nias. After returning, Frickenschmidt continued his service on the Batu Islands without another furlough until 1922. He extended the work to other villages and islands, built a hospital, wrote a simple church order and did some literary work (see below). His views on indigenous Niasan culture were not disparaging. He even insisted that the first fruits of Pulau Tello, who wished to adopt a new identity by dressing up in Western-style clothing, should wear traditional clothing instead.

Frickenschmidt seems to have been a bit stubborn. There were tensions between him and some of his colleagues, both Europeans and Ono Niha. Landwehr accused Frickenschmidt of acting like a bishop.⁵³⁹ Willem Schröder held that Frickenschmidt was not 'democratic' in his way of dealing with the teacher-preachers⁵⁴⁰, that he

⁵²⁹ Ludwig G. Harms (5 May 1808 Walsrode - 14 November 1865 Hermannsburg). Leader of the Awakening and founder of the Hermannsburg Mission.

⁵³⁰ Cf. *EVB*, 53/3 (1935), p. 58. Cf. 'Notulen Hoofdbestuur', Amsterdam 8 June 1887, GAA 552/2.

⁵³¹ Katharine Ostermeier, sometimes 'Ostermeyer' (27 June 1867 Lindau - 2 June 1894 Pulau Tello).

⁵³² The term 'Tello-Chinese' was often used for people of Chinese descent who settled on Pulau Tello as merchants in the nineteenth century; cf. C.W. Frickenschmidt, *Unter den Palmen von Pulu Tello: Ein Gruß aus der Heidenwelt für die heimatliche Missionsgemeinde*, 1929, 9ff. For Chinese in Gunungsitoli, cf. F. Zebua, *Kota Gunungsitoli*, 1996, pp. 98-99.

⁵³³ Cf. obituary by C.W. Frickenschmidt, *Gottes Lob an dem Grabe einer armen Magd im stillen Heimgarten auf dem Batu-Eilande Tello*, ca. 1895.

⁵³⁴ August Landwehr (6 May 1864 Werther - 9 October 1912 Mühlhausen). Cf. Ch. 4.5.2.

⁵³⁵ Pauline Teudt (1863 Frille / Minden - 1945 Bünde).

⁵³⁶ Cf. A. Steinhart, *1889-1989. 100 jaar Kerk op de Batu-eilanden*, 1989, p. 19.

⁵³⁷ Heinrich Wilhelm Ludwig Kienlein (14 April 1876 Hahlen / Minden - 7 June 1929 Gunungsitoli). In the service of the DLM 1903-1908; 1908-1929 he served with the RM on Nias (Lölöwa'u and Hilimaziaya). Kienlein arrived on Pulau Tello on 22 November 1903. On 1 April 1906 he moved to Sigata.

⁵³⁸ Sigata, founded by A. Landwehr, was the second mission post on the Batu Islands.

⁵³⁹ Cf. letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 23 October 1906 (GAA 552/35), ('als of ik eene aard ephorale plaats heb willen innemen'). Both Mandija and Nathanael Ziliwu clashed with Frickenschmidt, cf. 'Notulen Hoofdbestuur', Amsterdam, 29 November 1912 and 14 March 1918, letter Pulau Tello, 7 October 1913, GAA 552/7 ('bittere vyandschap tusschen Mandia en Frickenschmidt').

⁵⁴⁰ Cf. letter W.F. Schröder to DLM, Pulau Tello, 4 February 1920 (GAA 552/38).

practised an 'inefficient' missionary method⁵⁴¹ and did not work systematically.⁵⁴² On the other hand, it cannot be denied that Frickenschmidt was a steady, headstrong worker, who managed to establish a considerable position for the young church in a traditional and complex society. He constantly manoeuvred cleverly between a less than consistent colonial government, often hostile traditional chiefs and priests, and a population suffering under the immense changes of the times.

On 8 March 1922, Frickenschmidt left the Batu Islands on board the 'Bellatrix'. Temporarily, Ludwig Borutta took over the work. This experienced former missionary to Nias arrived four days before Frickenschmidt's departure. Even in retirement, Frickenschmidt continued to render services to the DLM, such as teaching the vernacular to his later successor, Willem L. Steinhart⁵⁴³, and writing articles about the Batu Islands. In November 1932, he wrote a last letter to the Christians on the Batu Islands, commemorating the first baptisms forty years earlier.⁵⁴⁴ In 1935, Frickenschmidt died in Bückeburg, Germany.

4.5.2 Pioneers of Sigata

In 1896, a second mission station was started on Sigata by Landwehr. He arrived on Pulau Tello on 15 June 1894, a few days after Katharine Frickenschmidt had died. Before Frickenschmidt went on furlough in 1895, he and Landwehr visited Sigata, a neighbouring Batu Island, together.

Landwehr helped Frickenschmidt to introduce the practice of taking up a collection in the church services on Pulau Tello.⁵⁴⁵ Then, on 16 January 1896, he started his own mission post on Sigata. His fiancé, Agnes Kämpfer⁵⁴⁶, arrived in Padang on 5 April 1897 and, after their marriage had been consecrated by Frickenschmidt on Pulau Tello (21 April 1897), they moved to Sigata. For about one year, they stayed in a small room in the school building. Landwehr was busy teaching and building the mission house and Agnes Landwehr dedicated herself to the service of women and children⁵⁴⁷, teaching them skills such as handicrafts, child nursing, and the treatment of simple illnesses.⁵⁴⁸ At every meeting, she explained something about Christianity. Her simple but effective method was to tell stories by making use of Sunday-school pictures⁵⁴⁹, have her pupils learn some verses from the

⁵⁴¹ Cf. letter W.F. Schröder to DLM, Pulau Tello, 3 March 1920 (GAA 552/38). Frickenschmidt is accused of not being effective in catechetical instructions and of having chosen morally unqualified men for the position of elder. Schröder held that Frickenschmidt was dishonest and had lost his idealism. Also the consul of missions, C.W.Th. Baron van Boetzelaer, noticed Frickenschmidt's 'inefficient' missionary methods when he visited Pulau Tello in October 1917, cf. 'Notulen Hoofdbestuur', Amsterdam, 14 March 1918 (GAA 552/7). Frickenschmidt himself evaluated the consul's visit positively (postcard to DLM, Pulau Tello, 11 October 1917).

⁵⁴² Cf. W.F. Schröder, *De Zending op de Batoe-eilanden*, 1927, p. 18.

⁵⁴³ Cf. A. Steinhart, *1889-1989. 100 jaar Kerk op de Batu-eilanden*, 1989, p. 19. It was at Frickenschmidt's house in Bückeburg that Steinhart met his wife-to-be, Margarethe Teudt.

⁵⁴⁴ Published in the church magazine *Toeria Hoelo Batoe*, 4/11 (1932).

⁵⁴⁵ Cf. W.F. Schröder, *De Zending op de Batoe-eilanden*, 1927, p. 25. A first step towards self-support. Agnes Kämpfer (1873 Barmen – 13 November 1905 Sigata).

⁵⁴⁶ Cf. A. Landwehr, *Dem Andenken der Frau Missionar Landwehr geb. Agnes Kämpfer*, 1906, pp. 5-13.

⁵⁴⁷ Cf. *EVB*, 16/3 (1898), pp. 120-121.

⁵⁴⁸ Cf. letter Agnes Landwehr née Kämpfer to DLM, Sigata, 17 October 1898, in: *EVB*, 17/1 (1899), pp. 18-21 (*plaatjes*).

Bible, and sing hymns with them. The Sunday-school became so popular that four years later 81 children were attending regularly.⁵⁵⁰

Unfortunately, Landwehr often suffered from fever. In addition to his suffering from the unhealthy climate, it was difficult for them to get a variety of healthy food.⁵⁵¹ On 12 July 1898, their first child, Johannes Bernhard, was born, but it died a day later. During the second quarter of 1899, they had to go on vacation to the much cooler and healthier Fort de Kock (later Bukit Tinggi) on Sumatra. Here, Agnes attended a course in midwifery. Three months later, they were back on the Batu Islands. On 17 January 1900, their daughter Elisabeth was born. Besides attending to her chores in the household, Agnes continued to teach, evangelise and nurse the Ono Niha.

In 1905, Landwehr contracted pneumonia and scurvy. Thanks to excellent nursing by his wife, his condition improved after six weeks. At about the same time, an epidemic, which lasted approximately six months, broke out on Sigata and a few neighbouring islands. Agnes often went to the villages to care for the sick. In the end, Agnes Landwehr got ill herself.⁵⁵² On 13 November 1905, this first female pioneer of Sigata suddenly died, probably of typhoid.⁵⁵³ Landwehr and his three children were cared for and comforted by the small group of Christians, especially Fija Wanaetu (see below). On 1 April 1906, Kienlein moved to Sigata, so Landwehr could leave on furlough three days later.⁵⁵⁴ In May 1908, Landwehr became engaged to Paula Simoneit.⁵⁵⁵

On 1 July 1908, Landwehr was back on Sigata and took over the work from Kienlein, who moved to Nias. Landwehr immediately began to build a church, for which Frickenschmidt had already collected money during his furlough (1905-1906)⁵⁵⁶ – as Landwehr had done for Pulau Tello.⁵⁵⁷ On November 15, Paula Simoneit arrived on the Batu Islands and Frickenschmidt consecrated their marriage on 3 December 1908.

Paula Landwehr, like Agnes before her, dedicated herself to Sunday-school work⁵⁵⁸ and nursing, while Landwehr spent much of his time and energy building the church, which was dedicated that same year. The congregations on Sigata developed well and Landwehr even managed to expand his work to the islands of Bötua and Hayo. In 1912, Landwehr suffered a very serious attack of malaria.⁵⁵⁹ His wife took him to Padang for medical examination. The doctor decided that he had to return to Europe as soon as possible.⁵⁶⁰ Paula and her little son, Siegfried, returned

⁵⁵⁰ Cf. A. Landwehr, *Dem Andenken der Frau Missionar Landwehr geb. Agnes Kämpfer*, 1906, p. 19.

⁵⁵¹ *Ibid.* p. 9 (*die Ernährungsfrage*).

⁵⁵² Cf. A. Landwehr, *Dem Andenken der Frau Missionar Landwehr geb. Agnes Kämpfer*, 1906, pp. 20-30.

⁵⁵³ Cf. letter Landwehr to DLM, Sigata, 16 November 1905 (GAA 552/36).

⁵⁵⁴ Cf. A. Steinhart, *1889-1989. 100 jaar Kerk op de Batu-eilanden*, 1989, p. 10. Despite his sorrow, Landwehr visited many mission-minded congregations in the Netherlands. Once he spoke at a meeting in Amsterdam. In the audience was W.F. Schröder, who was later to become a missionary on the Batu Islands himself.

⁵⁵⁵ Paula Simoneit (1883 Sumatra – 1957 Freiburg).

⁵⁵⁶ Cf. letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 20 January 1904 (GAA 552/35).

⁵⁵⁷ Cf. W.F. Schröder, *De Zending op de Batoe-eilanden*, 1927, p. 72.

⁵⁵⁸ Cf. Paula Landwehr née Simoneit, 'Zondagschoolwerk op Sigata', 20 August 1909, in: *EVB*, 28/1 (1910); GAA 552/36.

⁵⁵⁹ Cf. Letter Paula Landwehr née Simoneit to DLM, Padang, 16 August 1912 (GAA 552/36).

⁵⁶⁰ Cf. Medical Attest, Doctor A. Rivai, Padang, 15 August 1912 (GAA 552/36). 'Return for at least one year'.

to Sigata to arrange the removal, while Landwehr was nursed by Missionary Dornsafft and his wife.⁵⁶¹ The Landwehrs left Sumatra on 14 September 1912 and were back in Europe three weeks later. On their way home, in a hotel in Mühlhausen, Germany, Landwehr passed away on 9 October 1912.⁵⁶² *Guru Göba* (see below) took over as head of the station but he, too, soon died.

The last missionary to reside on Sigata was Julius Ziegler.⁵⁶³ In 1916, the mission post (the missionary's place of residence) was officially moved to Pulau Tello and the mission work became centralized⁵⁶⁴, the main reason being that Sigata was too unhealthy a place.⁵⁶⁵

4.5.3 Forming Christian Congregations

The first Christian congregations were established after the baptism of a number of Ono Niha in a particular local community had taken place as a result of the evangelising activities of the European missionaries and their indigenous co-workers. At this early stage, the success of the Christian mission was quite dependent on the support of chiefs or other influential personalities within the Niasan society.

4.5.3.1 First Fruits of the Batu Islands

In 1891, there was a first breakthrough in the missionary work on Pulau Tello. Mandija Ladjira⁵⁶⁶, a young man born in Bawö Norahili (Pulau Tello) in 1875⁵⁶⁷ as the eldest son of the village chief, Defaö, had followed his aunt – the concubine of the Dutch *controleur* – to the Bataklands. There, in Sipirok, he had come under the influence of the RM-missionary, Ludwig Hanstein⁵⁶⁸. The following letter, written by Mandija in 1890, changed the history of the Batu Islands:⁵⁶⁹

⁵⁶¹ Cf. letter Dornsafft to DLM, Padang, 16 August 1912 (GAA 552/36).

⁵⁶² Cf. letter Paula Landwehr née Simoneit to DLM, Mühlhausen 8 October 1912 (GAA 552/36). On the back of this letter is a handwritten note from C.F. Westermann (Chairman of the DLM), saying that Landwehr had passed away at 11 a.m on Wednesday, 9 October 1912. Cf. Telegram Paula Landwehr née Simoneit to DLM, Mühlhausen 9 October 1912 (GAA 552/36). The text reads: 'Landwehr heimgegangen. Leiche morgen Missionshaus Barmen' (Landwehr gone home. Body tomorrow Mission House Barmen).

⁵⁶³ Julius Ziegler (24 March 1885 Hirschlanden / Baden – 13 July 1959 Gramads). On Sigata from 1913 until 1916.

⁵⁶⁴ By August 1916, when the re-centralisation was accomplished, there were eleven mission posts on the Batu Islands; cf. letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 7 August 1916 (GAA 552/35).

⁵⁶⁵ Cf. *EVB*, 43/1 (1925), p. 9. Frickenschmidt always denied that Sigata was more unhealthy than Pulau Tello.

⁵⁶⁶ In his correspondence with the board of the DLM, he signs as 'Mandija' (cf. GAA 552/40). In the secondary literature we also come across other spellings, such as 'Mandia' and 'Mandria', cf. W.F. Schröder, *De Zending op de Batoe-eilanden*, 1927, p. 21; T. Hulu, *Waöwaö halöwö fangombacha turia somuso dödö ba danö niha irugi tefatörö döi amarahuta ya 'ita BNKP di Nias*, 1971, p. 23.

⁵⁶⁷ According to Frickenschmidt, Mandija was about 22 or 23 years old in 1898, cf. *EVB*, 16/2 (1898), p. 60.

⁵⁶⁸ On Hanstein's struggle against Islam, cf. J. Warneck, *50 Jahre Batakmission in Sumatra*, 1912, pp. 186-190.

⁵⁶⁹ Quotation from W.L. Steinhart, 'Van ons zendingsveld, 1889 - 25 Februari - 1939', 1939 (GAA 552/39).

Dear parents,

Recently I heard that now there also is a missionary on Tello. Here in the Bataklands, I have had ample opportunity to see the good influence of Christianity. If I may advise you, don't become Mohammedans. Seek contact with the missionary and ask him to teach you.

The result was that in 1891 the chief and some other Ono Niha from Bawö Norahili joined Frickenschmidt's catechumen classes. In due time, holy baptism was administered on the first Sunday of Advent, 27 November 1892, to the twelve first fruits of Pulau Tello.⁵⁷⁰ Among them was Mandija, who had returned from Sipirok. The DLM considered this date to be the 'founding day'⁵⁷¹ of the Batunese church. The first Lord's Supper with local Ono Niha communicants was held on Good Friday, 1893.⁵⁷²

On Easter, 16 April 1900, the fifteen first fruits of Sigata, from the village of Bawö Sitöra, were baptised by Landwehr. On Christmas of the same year, another eight persons followed. The first Lord's Supper on Sigata was celebrated on Pentecost 1903. With the exception of two women, all adults took part.⁵⁷³

4.5.3.2 Church Order and Discipline

In the early instructions for the missionaries of the DLM, the development of an overall church order for the young congregations was not considered to be particularly urgent, the opinion being that this could be done at a later stage.⁵⁷⁴ Though in 1915 Frickenschmidt had made a first simple set of regulations⁵⁷⁵, during the first thirty years the rules and regulations were largely decided upon arbitrarily by the missionaries. Occasionally, there was also a directive from the board in Amsterdam. Some more contextually relevant orientation was received from the annual conferences of missionaries of the RM on Nias, which as of 1909 was attended also by the DLM-missionaries. The Christian community needed directives for social stratification to replace the traditional ones (*bosi*).

Some decisions of the conference of missionaries on Nias were also adopted on the Batu Islands. They deal with the following topics:⁵⁷⁶

1. The baptism of children when one parent is not a Christian who may be baptised only if the non-Christian parent gives his or her consent;

⁵⁷⁰ Cf. 'Notulen Hoofdbestuur', Amsterdam, 30 January 1893 (GAA 552/2). The names of the first fruits of Pulau Tello are mentioned by Frickenschmidt in *Toeria Hoelo Batoe*, 4/11 (1932). They were: Defaö (the chief of Bawö Norahili; father of Mandija), Saronatola, Dawa (a former Muslim), Mandija (who later became the first *guru*), Sombuyu Li (brother of Mandija), Tjadi (brother of Mandija), Sowuagere, Utia, Kamao, Safusi Uli, Mani and Falaete Ambö.

⁵⁷¹ Cf. *EVB*, 51/2 (1933), p. 36 (*stichtingsdag*). The BNKP does not celebrate this day.

⁵⁷² Cf. 'Notulen Hoofdbestuur', Amsterdam, 19 November 1891 (GAA 552/2). The very first Lord's Supper on Pulau Tello had already been celebrated on Good Friday, 1892, but in this ceremony only European government officials, Batak Christians and *Guru* Josefo from Nias had taken part.

⁵⁷³ Cf. annual report by Landwehr to DLM, Sigata, 14 January 1904 (GAA 552/36).

⁵⁷⁴ Cf. 'Instructies voor de Zendelingen', 1882-1924 (GAA 552/48). The instruction for Frickenschmidt is missing in the archives.

⁵⁷⁵ Cf. letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 19 August 1915 (GAA 552/35). He calls it a church order (*Kerkorde*).

⁵⁷⁶ Letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 25 February 1909 (GAA 552/35).

2. The conditions for Confirmation which should not take place before the age of fourteen and only after thorough catechumenal instruction; and
3. The condition for Christian marriage which should not take place before both partners have been confirmed (in order to avoid traditional child-marriages).

As were most missionaries of his generation, Landwehr was very strict on discipline. During his time on Pulau Tello, he had already excommunicated a Chinese woman, 'Nonah Ketjil', because she had become the concubine of a European.⁵⁷⁷ On Sigata, Landwehr disciplined Christians who dared to attend non-Christian funeral feasts, got involved in gambling, used talismans or traditional medicine, or practiced polygamy.⁵⁷⁸ Landwehr was particularly eager to eradicate all symbols of the primal religion, especially the so-called idols (*adu*). Before administering holy baptism, he (like most other missionaries) would visit the houses of the catechumens. The objective of the visit was to determine whether all *adu* had been removed. Sometimes this was a very difficult step for the Ono Niha to take. But occasionally, the *adu* were handed over quite willingly to the missionary, since the new believer wished to make a total break with the past. This, for instance, happened in the case of the former priest of the primal religion, Sa'ukhu.⁵⁷⁹

4.5.3.3 Administration

The early missionaries were rather negligent in the matter of creating structures in the congregations related to leadership and decision-making. The first elders (*satua Niha Keriso*) on Pulau Tello were not installed until October 1912 (twenty years after the first baptisms) and on Sigata in January 1914 (fourteen years after the first baptisms). However, no real church boards were developed during this period. Frickenschmidt and Landwehr, Lutherans with authoritarian leanings, did not think in terms of presbyterial-synodal structures.⁵⁸⁰

Even though Landwehr himself had been a deacon before he became a missionary, the office of deacon was not created. With the exception of the medical service, there was no organised service for the poor. The only regular consultative body during this period was the monthly conference of teacher-preachers, convened on Pulau Tello as of 1916. Its purpose was to coordinate the work, discuss reports, prepare sermons, distribute medicine, take decisions on disciplinary matters and plan the finances (salaries, loans, subsidies for buildings, accumulation of contributions).⁵⁸¹

Attempts to create a certain measure of financial self-support had already been made in the 1890s. During the time that Frickenschmidt and Landwehr worked together on Pulau Tello (June 1894 - April 1895), they introduced the regulation of

⁵⁷⁷ Cf. W.F. Schröder, *De Zending op de Batoe-eilanden*, 1927, p. 27.

⁵⁷⁸ *Ibid.* pp. 44-69.

⁵⁷⁹ Cf. annual report Landwehr to DLM, Sigata, 14 January 1904 (GAA 552/36).

⁵⁸⁰ This was no different from the situation in other parts of Indonesia. Only the missionaries of the orthodox Dutch Calvinist Church-Missions in Southern Central Java and on Sumba (GKN), Mamasa (CGK) and Toraja (GZB) created presbyterial church councils soon after the first congregations had been established.

⁵⁸¹ *Guru*-conference on Pulau Tello, 20-27 August 1916, where urgent matters concerning church discipline were discussed, cf. letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 5 September 1916 (GAA 552/35).

taking up collections during the church services.⁵⁸² Although Frickenschmidt also managed to motivate the Christians to donate quite a lot of money for special projects (i.e., the church buildings), he did not build up a regular system of church finances.

4.5.3.4 First Church Building

After returning from his second furlough (1905-1906), Frickenschmidt's most important new project was to build a church. The school had already become too small for the worship services in 1903 and plans had then been made to build a church vis-à-vis the school.⁵⁸³ Landwehr collected money in Germany and the Netherlands for the church on Pulau Tello, as Frickenschmidt did for the church on Sigata.⁵⁸⁴ By 1908, about half of the amount needed for Pulau Tello had been accumulated by selling large shells and *adu* to Europeans, and through gifts received from friends of the mission in Germany, Holland and Switzerland.⁵⁸⁵ The collections among the Ono Niha for this purpose were also exceptionally large.⁵⁸⁶ This first church was consecrated on 10 November 1910 (the birthday of Martin Luther). It had some specifically Lutheran characteristics, such as an altar with a picture of the blessing Christ and two colourful stained glass windows, one depicting the baptism of Christ and the other the crucifixion, with Mary and John.⁵⁸⁷

4.5.3.5 Christian Witness of Traditional Leaders

As had been the case on Nias, the witness of some influential former adherents of the primal religion (i.e., nobility and traditional priests/priestesses) who had converted to Christianity was also essential to the interpretation and expansion of the Christian message on the Batu Islands. They also provided leadership for the congregation during this early period. Many church elders were recruited from their ranks. They usually worked closely with the missionaries and their wives.

According to Frickenschmidt, the conversion of a noble couple, Lugu and Lai Hulandro⁵⁸⁸, had been 'an important step in the Christianisation'⁵⁸⁹ of Pulau Tello. Lai was the daughter of a mighty chief and a priestess in her own right. Lai Hulandro was baptised in 1908, the year of the total subjugation of the Ono Niha on Nias. It is unclear whether she took this step for opportunistic reasons or for more authentic ones. In either case, it was a powerful witness and significantly furthered the cause of Christianisation. Lai and Lugu Hulando had a close relationship with

⁵⁸² Cf. W.F. Schröder, *De Zending op de Batoe-eilanden*, 1927, p. 25.

⁵⁸³ Cf. letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 27 August 1903 (GAA 552/35).

⁵⁸⁴ Cf. letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 20 January 1904 (GAA 552/35).

⁵⁸⁵ Cf. letters Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 11 February 1907, 1 February 1908, 15 August 1909 (GAA 552/35). For the fundraising and building, cf. special report by C.W. Frickenschmidt, 'Kerkgeschiedenis van Poeloe Tello' (unpublished manuscript, added to the annual report of 1910, GAA 552/35).

⁵⁸⁶ *Ibid.* more than eight hundred guilders in six years.

⁵⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸⁸ The meaning of this family name is 'Dutch ear of wheat'. While there is no indication that this family was of (mixed) Dutch origin, it is likely that they were descendents of former immigrants.

⁵⁸⁹ Cf. annual report of Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, January 1909 (GAA 552/35).

Guru Nathanael – himself a chief. One of their sons, Fae'ö Gamuata⁵⁹⁰, became a successful evangelist on the Batu Islands.

Another aristocratic women, Fija Wanaetu of Sigata⁵⁹¹, may be called the catalyst behind the Christianisation of this second centre of missionary activities. She became a functionary in the women's work begun by Agnes Landwehr in the village of Bawö Sitöra. Although already an elderly women at the time, Fija Wanaetu was impressed by the teachings of Agnes Landwehr, particularly by the stories from the Old Testament, and was deeply moved by Jesus' spiritual struggle in Gethsemane.⁵⁹² Though she became a believer, due to family ties she could not be baptised for some time. Her son was engaged to the granddaughter of the paramount chief of Sigata, Faronö. The latter, strongly rooted in primal religion, did not approve of Christianity for his people. He was afraid that allegiance to the missionaries would make the people less loyal to him. Loyalty was demonstrated, first and foremost, at grand sacrificial feasts (e.g., funerals), where large masses would come to honour the deceased and his or her family. Faronö had heard that Christians were not allowed to attend such feasts. He regarded this as an insult to the spirit of the deceased and could not allow it to be tolerated.⁵⁹³ Subsequently, anyone showing an interest in the teachings of the missionaries was treated with intolerance. This included such a noblewoman as Fija Wanaetu. Despite the scorn of the paramount chief, however, she dared to oppose him in many ways. Finally, Faronö threatened to annul the engagement of his granddaughter to her son if she were to get baptised.⁵⁹⁴ For eight days, she resisted, but then gave in for the sake of her son and to end the immense pressure on her family.

As a next step, Landwehr intervened, successfully negotiating with Faronö some guarantees for the few Christians on the island. As a result, Fija Wanaetu and some twenty others continued to attend the religious services and the school for catechumens. Although she herself was not among the fifteen first fruits of Sigata baptised in April 1900, one of them, He'ugö Taögö, had become a Christian because of her witness.⁵⁹⁵ Eight months later, she stood up to Faronö by receiving the sacrament herself.⁵⁹⁶ In September / October 1901, Nawu'a Ziliwu, the wife of Faronö, and then Faronö himself died. This was a blow to the primal religion and an advantage for Christianity.

Soon after Fija Wanaetu started her 'missionary work'⁵⁹⁷, her area was struck by an epidemic, especially among the younger children. A number of them died, in-

⁵⁹⁰ Cf. letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 14 August 1910 (GAA 552/35). Fae'ö Gamuata had been a pupil of Nathanael Ziliwu.

⁵⁹¹ Her clan-name (*mado*) is often referred to as 'Wanaoetoe' (i.e., W.F. Schröder, *De Zending op de Batoe-eilanden*, 1927, p. 45). This seems to be a wrong spelling, since such a name is unheard of in Ono Niha society.

⁵⁹² Cf. letter Agnes Landwehr née Kämpfer to DLM, Sigata, 25 March 1900, in: *EVB*, 18/4 (1900), pp. 123-124.

⁵⁹³ Cf. *EVB*, 18/5 (1900), p. 166.

⁵⁹⁴ Cf. letter Landwehr to DLM, Sigata, 25 April 1900, in: *EVB*, 18/5 (1900), p. 165; cf. W.F. Schröder, *De Zending op de Batoe-eilanden*, 1927, p. 45.

⁵⁹⁵ Letter Landwehr to DLM, Sigata, 25 April 1900, in: *EVB*, 18/5 (1900), pp. 170-171.

⁵⁹⁶ Cf. W.F. Schröder, *De Zending op de Batoe-eilanden*, 1927, pp. 50-51. Four men and four women were baptised.

⁵⁹⁷ The term 'zendingsarbeid' (missionary work) was used by Agnes Landwehr. It demonstrates a great deal of respect for the endeavours of Fija Wanaetu, cf. letter Agnes Landwehr née Kämpfer to DLM, Sigata, 25 March 1900, printed in: *EVB*, 18/4 (1900), p. 123.

cluding three of her own grandchildren.⁵⁹⁸ Naturally, this was a great trial of her faith and it gave her critics an opportunity to discredit Christianity as a religion which was not suitable for the people of Sigata. Despite of her dreadful loss and the defamations, Fija Wanaetu remained strong in her faith. Just as one of her sick grandchildren was shaken by a convulsion, she removed the *adu* of her non-Christian husband. The next morning the little one was dead. A traditional priest threatened that the spirits of the ancestors would never protect her anymore. But she declared her faith: 'Even if they cut off both of my arms, I will still remain with Jesus'.⁵⁹⁹

A year later, in 1902, the situation again changed. A dysentery-epidemic swept over the island. Among many other people, three of the four traditional priests in Bawö Sitöra fell victim to it. The trust in 'Christian medicine' began to grow, and by-and-by more people from Bawö Sitöra, Sigese, Talulala, and eventually even from Fuge flocked to the Christian worship services. Fija Wanaetu extended her missionary work as far as Pulau Tello, convincing her sister Tawö Watema and brother-in-law Satarö Zimane from Hilinitaya to embrace the Christian faith.⁶⁰⁰

When Agnes Landwehr died in 1906, Fija Wanaetu and other Christian women of Sigata gave the missionary spiritual comfort. Fija held intercessory prayers for the deceased.⁶⁰¹ As of 1907, she reportedly assisted in the instruction of catechumens on Sigata.⁶⁰² She was a critical and independent personality. She held that the way Landwehr brought up his daughter Elisabeth was much too strict.⁶⁰³ Her judgement concerning the work of Missionary Kienlein was harsh. He had shocked his listeners by cursing a man, by saying: 'Jahumukumi Lowalani' (may God punish you), which in the ears of the people of Sigata was an expression of blatant hatred. Fija later revealed her disappointment about this incident, saying 'How could Kienlein have said something like that? How could he curse us? A Christian may not do that!'.⁶⁰⁴ 'Old Fija'⁶⁰⁵ was the backbone of the congregation on Sigata for more than twenty years and a missionary of Jesus Christ in her own right. She died in 1924.⁶⁰⁶

4.5.3.6 *Raja* between Tradition, Christianity and Islam

The royal family of the Batu Islands was not of Ono Niha, but of Buginese or Minangkabau descent. They called themselves *Orang Bulu'aro* (those from Bulu'aro) or *Behku'a* (those who deal with the spirits).⁶⁰⁷ Their actual residence was a traditional house (*omo hada sebua*) in Koto Bulu'aro on Tanah Masa. On Pulau

⁵⁹⁸ Cf. W.F. Schröder, *De Zending op de Batoe-eilanden*, 1927, pp. 59-64.

⁵⁹⁹ Quotation in W.F. Schröder, *De Zending op de Batoe-eilanden*, 1927, p. 64. For the struggle with the primal religion on Sigata, cf. *EVB*, 21/3 (1903), pp. 106-107. Christianity was considered a 'white man's religion' (*ibid.* p. 107).

⁶⁰⁰ Cf. *EVB*, 21/2 (1903), pp. 54-55. She, three of her children and thirteen others were baptized on Christmas, 1902.

⁶⁰¹ Cf. letter Elizabeth Kienlein née Kleine to DLM, Sigata, 4 May 1906 (GAA 552/31).

⁶⁰² Cf. annual report Kienlein to DLM, Sigata, 27 January 1908, in: *EVB*, 26/3 (1908), p. 141.

⁶⁰³ Cf. *EVB*, 18/4 (1900), p. 124.

⁶⁰⁴ Cf. letter Landwehr to DLM, Sigata, 24 July 1908 (GAA 552/36).

⁶⁰⁵ Term used in a letter of W.F. Schröder to DLM, Pulau Tello, 8 November 1920 (GAA 552/38).

⁶⁰⁶ Cf. letter W.F. Schröder to DLM, Pulau Tello, 9 April 1924 (GAA 552/38).

⁶⁰⁷ Cf. L. Horner, *Batoe-eilanden, ten westen van Sumatra gelegen*, 1840, pp. 368-370. At the time of Horner's visit in 1938, the *raja* of Koto Bulu'aro was not as powerful and rich as some other chiefs, e.g., the chiefs of Pulau Tello, Lorang and Sigata; cf. also W.L. Steinhart, *Niassche Teksten III-XXVI*, 1937, pp. 79-80.

Tello – where the *raja* stayed most of the time – he had a colonial-style house.⁶⁰⁸ Until 1915, the *raja* was the highest traditional ruler over all the Batu Islands and treated as a government official, accountable to the Dutch *controleur* of the Batu Islands. He received a government allowance of 75 guilders per month and presided over the monthly meetings of chiefs (*hari rapat*).⁶⁰⁹

Since the beginnings of their mission work, the pioneer missionaries had tried to win the *raja* to Christianity.⁶¹⁰ The two regents who played a significant role in the history of the mission on the Batu Islands both held the titles of *Alam Laut* (lord of the seas) and *Siwa Farono* (the one who is listened to nine times).⁶¹¹ Although Alam Laut I never became a Christian, he supported the work of the DLM and even attended the baptism of the first fruits in 1892.

On 7 January 1902, the old Alam Laut passed away in Koto Bulu'aro. Frickenschmidt had once again visited him three days earlier, hoping in vain that the king would convert to Christianity.⁶¹² At the burial, held on 27 May 1902, about three hundred pigs were slaughtered and 150 *pikul* of rice was prepared for the guests, costing almost as much as the annual salary of a missionary.⁶¹³

'Si Alam' (later also called Alam Laut⁶¹⁴), was borne approximately 1880. His mother, who died early, was the First Wife of the *raja*. He attend mission school and the church services. After he had finished school, Frickenschmidt trained him and in 1898 he appointed him as assistant teacher.⁶¹⁵ In December 1898, he accompanied Frickenschmidt to the Bataklands, in order to see for himself what a Christianised indigenous people could be like.⁶¹⁶

In mid-1899, the old *raja* withdrew Si Alam from the mission school, so that the boy could render his services to the *controleur*.⁶¹⁷ Even so, according to Ms. Reiche, who visited Pulau Tello in the first half of 1899, he was well on his way to becoming a Christian.⁶¹⁸ After he had succeeded his father to the throne in 1902 and had been approved as regent by the colonial government, he continued to maintain a positive attitude towards the mission.

Beginning in 1904, Alam Laut's attitude gradually changed. According to Frickenschmidt, the cause of this was his smoking opium in the Chinese suburb of Pulau Tello.⁶¹⁹ Landwehr affirms this and adds that the *raja* was in the process of becoming corrupt. He organised cock fighting, involving very high bidding, to the

⁶⁰⁸ Cf. *EVB*, 19/4 (1901), p. 117.

⁶⁰⁹ Cf. *EVB*, 19/3 (1901), p. 71.

⁶¹⁰ Cf. Ch. 6.3.2.1 and Ch. 6.5.1.1.

⁶¹¹ Not to be confused with the paramount chief of Sigata, Farono (the one who is listened to), the greatest enemy of the mission. Frickenschmidt also used the name 'Sitipu' for the old *raja* (*Unter den Palmen von Pulu Tello*, 1929, p. 135). While his father was alive, Alam Laut Junior was referred to as *Si Alam* (little lord).

⁶¹² Cf. *EVB*, 20/2 (1902), p. 38.

⁶¹³ Estimated costs of the burial: at least 1500 guilders; 1 *pikul* = 137 pounds, cf. *EVB*, 20/5 (1902), p. 130. The annual salary of a missionary of the DLM amounted to approximately 1.600 guilders at that time, cf. 'Rekening der Uitwendige Zending over 1902', in: *EVB*, 21/3 (1903), p. 98.

⁶¹⁴ W.F. Schröder also calls him by his title Siwa Farono (*De Zending op de Batoe-eilanden*, 1927, p. 31).

⁶¹⁵ Cf. *EVB*, 16/5 (1898), pp. 186-187; *EVB*, 16/6 (1898), p. 212.

⁶¹⁶ Cf. *EVB*, 19/3 (1901), p. 71.

⁶¹⁷ Cf. *EVB*, 17/6 (1899), p. 214; *EVB*, 18/1 (1900), p. 12

⁶¹⁸ *EVB*, 17/6 (1899), p. 219.

⁶¹⁹ Cf. letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 1 July 1904 (GAA 552/35).

detriment of his people.⁶²⁰ In 1907 Frickenschmidt wrote: 'Our relationship with the *raja* is friendly. We do not flatter him, but we render him the respect to which he is entitled as a king. We also still hope that he will become a Christian some day'.⁶²¹ Occasionally, Alam Laut still attended Christmas celebrations. Like other non-Christians, he was impressed by the illuminated Christmas tree.⁶²² When the church of Pulau Tello was consecrated on 10 November 1910, he held a speech, praising the missionary's efforts.⁶²³

Having lost all formal power in 1915, when Nathanael Ziliwu became *demang*⁶²⁴, the *raja*, who by the Dutch was considered 'not altogether trustworthy' and prone to exploit his people⁶²⁵, nevertheless retained considerable moral authority inside the Ono Niha community. The fact that he became opposed to Christianity and took a second wife, from Sigata⁶²⁶, was a heavy blow to the developing church. Polygamy was usually punished with excommunication, so that the chance of winning the *raja* over to Christianity had become virtually null and void. Since a part of the royal family had already converted to Islam, the fear was that Alam Laut would follow suit. But he did not convert to Islam. Instead, as he grew older, the Christian education he had received in his youth came back to him again. He came back to the church and asked for holy baptism. Missionaries Schröder and Steinhart visited him to examine his beliefs. His knowledge of the Bible was astounding.⁶²⁷ Eventually, the *raja* was baptised, on 7 November 1925, in Koto Bulu'aro, the old royal village. Only a few weeks later, on 8 January 1926, Alam Laut died. He received a Christian burial.

Contrary to the hopes of the missionaries, the conversion of Alam Laut had come too late and did not have any effect on the Christianisation of Tanah Masa.⁶²⁸ Despite the *raja*'s conversion, the whole royal family became Muslim, begrudging the 'Christian' colonial government. They continued to exercise a strong influence.⁶²⁹ Koto Bulu'aro became a Muslim stronghold, dividing the Batu island of Tanah Masa into a strongly Islamic part and a mainly Christian part (Lasondre).⁶³⁰

4.5.4 Medical Missions

Similar to Nias, the Batu Islands are notorious for their extremely unhealthy living conditions and numerous diseases. The missionaries wrote regularly about diseases and even about devastating epidemics on the Batu Islands, such as, for example, a dysentery epidemic on Pulau Tello in 1903⁶³¹ and a smallpox epidemic on all the

⁶²⁰ Cf. letter Landwehr to DLM, Sigata, 1 July 1904 (GAA 552/36).

⁶²¹ Letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 4 January 1907 (GAA 552/35).

⁶²² Cf. letter Pauline Frickenschmidt to 'Friends of the mission' in Germany, Pulau Tello, 29 December 1908 (GAA 552/35).

⁶²³ W.F. Schröder, *De zending op de Batoe-eilanden*, 1927, p. 79.

⁶²⁴ Cf. Ch. 2.7.3 and Ch. 4.5.5.3.

⁶²⁵ W.F. Schröder, 'Schetsen uit Tello', in: *EVB*, 43/1 (1925), pp. 6-7.

⁶²⁶ Cf. letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 29 June 1915 (GAA 552/35).

⁶²⁷ Cf. W.F. Schröder, *De Zending op de Batoe-eilanden*, 1927, pp. 109-110; cf. Ch. 6.3.2.1.

⁶²⁸ Cf. *EVB*, 44/2 (1926), p. 38.

⁶²⁹ This happened, for example, when one of the sons of the late *raja* married with the daughter of the Christian district chief Nihela of Pulau Pulau Tello. She had to convert to Islam, cf. *EVB*, 50/3 (1932), pp. 63-64.

⁶³⁰ Cf. *EVB*, 44/1 (1926), p. 12; *EVB*, 53/2 (1935), pp. 45-47.

⁶³¹ Report Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 15 January 1904 (GAA 552/35).

Batu Islands in 1908 until 1909.⁶³² *Guru Göba* died of beri-beri, Agnes Landwehr died of typhoid and August Landwehr died of malaria. Also cholera was very common in those days.

4.5.4.1 Western Medicine Versus Traditional Medicines

From the beginning, medical care was considered to be one of the major missionary tasks.⁶³³ The prototypical ideal was the example of the Good Samaritan in the New Testament.⁶³⁴ Medical care was considered to be a very effective tool in the competition with the primal religion. Treating both physical and mental illnesses was in accordance with the holistic worldview of the *Ono Niha*.⁶³⁵ The fact that the medical treatment was always combined with Christian prayer and worship made it impossible for the indigenous people to differentiate between Christianity and Western medicine.

4.5.4.2 Hospitals

One of the goals Frickenschmidt had set for himself was to build a hospital on Pulau Tello. Although the DLM did not finance it, because a hospital was seen as an instrument of evangelisation it did give permission for the solicitation of funds from friends of the mission.⁶³⁶ The hospital was ready for use in 1896. Frickenschmidt himself served as a medical practitioner and the first unskilled nurses were a man, 'Dawa'⁶³⁷, and the latter's wife, Sirögi. The goal was: 'to heal the soul via the healing of the body, in order to tear that soul from the grip of Satan and to add it to the number of Christians'.⁶³⁸

The medical services offered by Landwehr, who was a qualified male nurse (a former deacon of the Von Bodelschwingh Institution in Bethel, Bielefeld⁶³⁹), was impressive. The mission hospital on Sigata was completed in August 1903. It had two wards, one for women and one for men. The following rules were drawn up by Landwehr:⁶⁴⁰

1. Any person who is ill and desires admittance is to be admitted. The patient must be accompanied by someone who will prepare food and clean the ward.
2. Medical treatment and medicine are free of charge. The patient may not meet or deal with animist priests or use indigenous medicine (*inlandsche geneesmiddelen*) while using mission medicine (*zendingsmedicijnen*).

⁶³² Letters Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 12 November 1908 and 1 April 1909 (GAA 552/35).

⁶³³ Cf. article by W.F. Schröder, 'Onze Luthersche Medische Zending', in: *EVB*, 51/3 (1933), pp. 57-67.

⁶³⁴ *Ibid.* p. 57 (Luke 10: 29 - 37).

⁶³⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 65-66. Cf. Ch. 2.4.1.

⁶³⁶ Cf. W.F. Schröder, *De Zending op de Batoe-eilanden*, 1927, pp. 28-29.

⁶³⁷ The meaning of 'Dawa' is stranger. It is unlikely that this was the real name of the nurse. The *mado* (clan-name) of Dawa has also not been recorded.

⁶³⁸ Cf. *EVB*, 17/1 (1899), p. 4.

⁶³⁹ Cf. *EVB*, 51/3 (1933), p. 58. Landwehr had been recruited by the DLM after he had finished his training at the Barmen seminary in 1893.

⁶⁴⁰ Letter Landwehr to DLM, Sigata, 26 September 1903 (GAA 552/36). The size of each ward was 6.30 metres long, 4.30 metres wide and 5 metres high.

3. The patient will receive two tins of rice every day. Side dishes must be provided by the patient himself or herself.
4. Every patient is required to take part in the religious services held in the hospital.
5. After the patient's recovery, the missionary will determine when he or she may go home. If he or she wants to leave earlier, that is at his or her own risk.

Agnes Landwehr was also involved in this medical service. In addition to distributing the regular medicine provided by the government, she also produced homeopathic medicine.⁶⁴¹ She formulated an evening prayer for the devotions and occasionally substituted for her husband in leading the worship service in the hospital.⁶⁴²

4.5.5 Educational Missions

Like most other Protestant missionary societies, during this period, the DLM considered basic education to be the first step toward Christianising the people. At the beginning of every Christian congregation stood a mission school. Temporarily, school buildings were used as places of worship and as homes for the missionaries or teacher-preachers.

4.5.5.1 First Schools

The governor of West Sumatra had already urged Kersten to build a mission school on Pulau Tello upon Kersten's second preliminary visit there in January 1889.⁶⁴³ Soon after having become settled, Kersten and *Guru* Lumbantobing thus began with the building activities. On 1 August 1889, the first school building on Pulau Tello was inaugurated. *Guru* Josefo made an unsuccessful attempt to build another school in one of the neighbouring villages.⁶⁴⁴

Since the instruction in the mission school was Christian-oriented, soon all Muslims and some Chinese withdrew their children.⁶⁴⁵ The instruction was, nevertheless, continued.⁶⁴⁶ Years later, the Chinese component would still be a majority, and there would again be some Muslim pupils.⁶⁴⁷

4.5.5.2 First Teacher-Preachers (*Guru*)

Both Kersten and Frickenschmidt had, at their arrival on Pulau Tello, been accompanied by teacher-preachers (*guru*), i.e., Johannes Lumbantobing and Josefo. These qualified teachers and preachers received a salary from the DLM. In November 1890, Johannes Lumbantobing returned home and was replaced by another Batak,

⁶⁴¹ Cf. A. Landwehr, *Dem Andenken der Frau Missionar Landwehr geb. Agnes Kämpfer*, 1906, pp. 13-14.

⁶⁴² Cf. Report Agnes Landwehr née Kämpfer, Sigata, 11 January 1904, in: report of Landwehr to DLM, Sigata, 14 January 1904 (GAA 552/36).

⁶⁴³ 'Notulen Hoofdbestuur', Amsterdam, 2 May 1889 (GAA 552/2).

⁶⁴⁴ Cf. W.F. Schröder, *De Zending op de Batoe-eilanden*, 1927, pp. 17-18.

⁶⁴⁵ Cf. 'Notulen Hoofdbestuur', Amsterdam, 16 January 1891 (GAA 552/2).

⁶⁴⁶ Cf. 'Notulen Hoofdbestuur', Amsterdam, 12 March 1891 (GAA 552/2).

⁶⁴⁷ Cf. Letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 15 January 1904 (GAA 552/35).

Christiaan Lumbantobing.⁶⁴⁸ *Guru* Josefo returned to Nias in 1891. Since the training of indigenous teacher-preachers was considered by the DLM to be of high methodological significance⁶⁴⁹, the missionaries chose some men from among the first Batunese Christians to attend the four-year study program at Depok seminary.⁶⁵⁰

The first teacher-preacher originating from the Batu Islands was the above-mentioned Mandija Ladjira. He left Pulau Tello for Batavia on 12 June 1893.⁶⁵¹ He was an excellent student, fluent in Malay, Batak, Dutch⁶⁵² and the Niasan vernacular. In October 1897, he received his diploma with good marks.⁶⁵³ After his return to Pulau Tello, he was also examined, with good results, by the local school commission, consisting of the *controleur*, the *raja* and the chief of the Muslim Malay minority, the *panghoeloe Malaja*.⁶⁵⁴

Guru Mandija, as he was called, was a talented teacher.⁶⁵⁵ The number of pupils more than doubled after he began teaching there, which could partially be explained by the fact that the Tello-Chinese and the Muslim Malay trusted an Ono Niha teacher more than a Batak one.⁶⁵⁶ After the number of pupils had risen to 69, he was given an assistant, the gifted Chinese assistant teacher Siakhi.⁶⁵⁷ Frickenschmidt praises Mandija for his school choir, which could sing harmony.⁶⁵⁸

Due to the lack of Christian matches, finding suitable spouses was a problem for early Niasan Christians on the Batu Islands. Mandija took his wife, Rasia, from the Niasan community in Padang. According to Frickenschmidt, this was a good choice,

⁶⁴⁸ Cf. W.F. Schröder, *De Zending op de Batoe-eilanden*, 1927, p. 18. According to Wäösarö Zandroto, BNKP minister on Pulau Tello, the *mado* (clan-name) of Christiaan was Lumbantobing; cf. also A. Steinhart, *1889-1989. 100 jaar Kerk op de Batu-eilanden*, 1989, p. 10. *Guru* Christiaan was replaced by the Niasan *guru* Mandija and returned to Batakland in 1898, cf. *Toeria*, 10/2 (1923).

⁶⁴⁹ Cf. *EVB*, 16/1 (1898), p. 1. DLM Chairman K. Scharthen said: 'Het behoort tot de zendingmethode en het is een eisch onzer zending om in alle landen en onder alle volken van de Christenen uit de heidenen mannen in de Evangeliewaarheid nader in te leiden en ook voor het zendingswerk op te leiden, opdat zij als hulppredikers en schoolonderwijzers de blijde boodschap der zaligheid kunnen brengen aan oud en jong in hunne eigene taal, op de wijze van hun eigen volk, waardoor zij te gereeder ingang vinden in het hart van menigen stamgenoot'.

⁶⁵⁰ Cf. S.C. Graaf van Randwijck, *Handelen en denken in dienst der zending*, vol. II, 1981, pp. 473-475; Th. van den End and J. Weitjens, *Ragi Carita II*, 2002, pp. 220-221. This school, originally planned for training indigenous assistant-missionaries (*School voor Inlandsche hulpzendingelingen*), was founded by J.A. Schuurman (a minister of the Protestant Church) and opened on 21 August 1878. Depok Seminary closed down on 1 July 1926.

⁶⁵¹ Cf. *EVB*, 16/1 (1898), p. 1.

⁶⁵² In his letter to C.F. Westermann, chairman of the DLM (Pulau Tello, 7 October 1913), Mandija uses Malay (GAA 552/40). Frickenschmidt mentions that Mandija functioned as translator between Bataks and Ono Niha (letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 27 August 1903, GAA 552/35). Besides the missionaries and the *controleur*, only Mandija and Nathanael could write Dutch (letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 2 October 1912, GAA 552/35).

⁶⁵³ Cf. W.F. Schröder, *De zending op de Batoe-eilanden*, 1927, p. 30.

⁶⁵⁴ Cf. *EVB*, 16/2 (1898), p. 60.

⁶⁵⁵ Cf. letters Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 15 January 1904, 13 January 1905. Mandija was praised by the inspector of schools (GAA 552/35). According to L.H.L. Reiche, 'Een bezoek aan de Batoe-eilanden', in: *EVB*, 19/6 (1901), p. 176, Mandija was more suitable and successful than the previous Batak teacher had been.

⁶⁵⁶ Cf. W.F. Schröder, *De Zending op de Batoe-eilanden*, 1927, p. 30; cf. *EVB*, 16/3 (1898), p. 60; *EVB*, 16/4 (1898), p. 153. There were fifteen Ono Niha, seventeen Chinese and eighteen Malay-Muslim boys and no girls at this stage. At the end of 1898, the number of pupils rose to sixty, since the competing Chinese and Malay schools had closed, cf. *EVB*, 16/6 (1898), p. 211.

⁶⁵⁷ Cf. *EVB*, 19/2 (1901), p. 52.

⁶⁵⁸ Cf. Letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 6 February 1910 (GAA 552/35) (*meerstemmig*).

not only because she was 'healthy and strong, fit and ready for work', but also because there were fewer 'strings attached'. Once Mandija had paid the dowry of three hundred guilders, he was not subject to any additional claims from her family.⁶⁵⁹ Rasia died on 8 October 1900, after having given birth to a daughter.⁶⁶⁰ Mandija married again in 1903, his new wife being Bunoate, one of his nieces.⁶⁶¹

In his spiritual life, Mandija seems to have been intense and cheerful.⁶⁶² One of his published sermons on Mark 16:15⁶⁶³, displays an orderly structure⁶⁶⁴, following the pattern of revival sermons and calling on the listeners to follow the command of Jesus Christ. The commission of Christ is applied to the concrete situation, identifying the disciples with the *Ono Niha Keriso*, whom he addresses. For Mandija, 'Gospel' means salvation in Christ, whose teachings are the truth for this life and for the life hereafter.

After fifteen years in the service of the DLM, Mandija resigned in September 1912. According to Frickenschmidt, the reason was that he wanted more money⁶⁶⁵, which seems a groundless, if not prejudicial explanation. Mandija did not complain about his wages. It seems more likely that the poor personal relationship between him and *Guru* Nathanael, exacerbated by the role Frickenschmidt played in this conflict, was the primary cause for his resignation. The relationship between Mandija and Nathanael had been deteriorating for five years.

It all started in 1906, when Frickenschmidt promised Nathanael a visit to Europe, comforting Mandija that next time he would also get a chance. This was an insult to Mandija's seniority.⁶⁶⁶ The second time Mandija 'lost face' (*aila*) was when Nathanael married to Wuti, daughter of Siwabadan⁶⁶⁷ – the richest chief after the raja – which raised Nathanael's social status and aroused Mandija's jealousy.⁶⁶⁸ A third factor was that Nathanael had published two schoolbooks, which he had translated into the Batunese dialect, without consulting Mandija (his senior), nor involving him in this project. When these books came from the press, Mandija was disappointed and his pride was hurt.⁶⁶⁹ The last straw, however, was a 'very ugly' anonymous letter, which was addressed to Nathanael in Dutch. Mandija was

⁶⁵⁹ Cf. Letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 19 October 1899, published in *EVB*, 18/1 (1900), pp. 11-12.

⁶⁶⁰ Cf. *EVB*, 19/1 (1901), p. 21.

⁶⁶¹ Cf. *EVB*, 21/2 (1903), p. 59.

⁶⁶² Cf. quotation from the letter of Mandija to Mozes, seminarian at Depok, in: letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 12 November 1908 (GAA 552/35).

⁶⁶³ 'Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation', *EVB*, 16/1 (1898), pp. 3-8. This sermon was read at the mission-day in Den Helder on 23 January 1898, cf. *EVB*, 16/2 (1898), p. 67.

⁶⁶⁴ Four parts: 1. Who gives the command to proclaim the Gospel? 2. To whom is it to be preached? 3. To whom are the disciples sent? 4. What is preached to all humanity?

⁶⁶⁵ Cf. letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 2 October 1912 (GAA 552/35). There are three letters with this date.

⁶⁶⁶ Cf. Letter Frickenschmidt to Nathanael, Gütersloh, 24 January 1906 (GAA 552/35). Cf. letter Nathanael to DLM, Baroemadooe 29 March 1906 (GAA 552/40). The board of the DLM did not agree with this invitation.

⁶⁶⁷ Cf. *EVB*, 26/3 (1908), p. 82. Cf. letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 24 June 1907 (GAA 552/35).

⁶⁶⁸ Frickenschmidt mentions jealousy and hatred, cf. letter to DLM, Pulau Tello, 3 January 1913, (GAA 552/35). The letter of Mandija to DLM / Westermann (7 October 1913, GAA 552/40) smacks of enmity.

⁶⁶⁹ Cf. letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 2 October 1912, letter 2 (GAA 552/35).

suspected of being the author. Though this might have been true⁶⁷⁰, the problem was blown up unnecessarily by Frickenschmidt. He revealed the contents of the letter in a church service, hinting at Mandija as the author, and calling him a 'servant of the devil' (*enoni Gaföcha*).⁶⁷¹ Mandija had no choice but to quit his service with the DLM. For an Ono Niha, losing face (*aila*) is worse than death. He could no longer have any peace of mind (*ahono dödö*).⁶⁷² On 22 September 1912, Mandija was honourably dismissed. Galitö, who had just finished his training at Depok, assumed his tasks.⁶⁷³

After this, Mandija changed to coconut farming in Lumbui, the extreme south of the remote island of Tanah Bala. He stopped attending church services.⁶⁷⁴ For ten to fifteen years, he kept his distance from the mission. Later, he had a good relationship with the missionaries Schröder and Steinhart, who visited him.⁶⁷⁵ Steinhart, who appreciated Mandija's bright intellect, wrote about the tragic seclusion of this extraordinary first *guru* of the Batu Islands:⁶⁷⁶

It's a pity that, to a large extent, he has not remained a Niasan. For years he has lived in his neat and beautifully situated home outside the village community. He told me honestly that he could no longer stay in a Niasan village with his Niasan countrymen ... In my opinion, his education as a missionary-teacher has, to a certain extent, been the cause of this.

On Sigata, the first qualified teacher-preacher was Göba, born around 1880. At the age of seventeen, he joined Landwehr's catechism school. This was a brave thing to do, since catechumens were mocked and discriminated against. Temporarily, Göba fell back into his old habit of gambling and he had to repeat the course.⁶⁷⁷ At Christmas of 1899, Landwehr still hesitated to baptise him.⁶⁷⁸ However, since he was precise in his duties, the best in his class and openly confessed Christianity⁶⁷⁹, he, along with fourteen others, received the sacrament on Easter Monday, 16 April 1900.⁶⁸⁰

⁶⁷⁰ Considering another slanderous letter, written by Mandija to the board (Pulau Tello, 7 October 1913, GAA 552/40).

⁶⁷¹ Cf. letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 2 October 1912, letter 2 (GAA 552/35).

⁶⁷² Cf. letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 2 October 1912, letter 2 (GAA 552/35).

⁶⁷³ Cf. letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 2 October 1912, letter 1 (GAA 552/35). In November 1912, the DLM board invited Paula Landwehr née Simoneit (the widow of the former missionary of Sigata) to come for a consultation, in order to ask her advice on the whole matter. She held that Mandija was absolutely trustworthy (*absoluut geloofwaardig*) and had written the truth to the board. Mandija's behaviour had been blameless (*onberispelijk*), cf. 'Notulen Hoofdbestuur', Amsterdam, 29 November 1912 (GAA 552/7). But the board was not convinced, cf. letter of C.F. Westermann to Mandija, Amsterdam, May 1913 (552/40).

⁶⁷⁴ Cf. letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 15 April 1916 (GAA 552/35).

⁶⁷⁵ Cf. *EVB*, 49/1 (1931), pp. 3-4; *EVB*, 53/3 (1935), pp. 62-65.

⁶⁷⁶ Cf. *EVB*, 53/3 (1935), pp. 63-64.

⁶⁷⁷ Cf. Annual Report of Landwehr to DLM, Sigata, 2 January 1899, in: *EVB*, 17/3 (1899), pp. 131-132.

⁶⁷⁸ Cf. *EVB*, 17/6 (1899), p. 216.

⁶⁷⁹ Cf. *EVB*, 18/5 (1900), p. 169.

⁶⁸⁰ Cf. letter Landwehr to DLM, Sigata, 25 April 1900, in: *EVB*, 18/5 (1900), pp. 168-171. Besides Göba, the other first Sigatan Christians were: Laowö Wanaetu (a forty-year-old goldsmith), Rane (a forty-year-old handyman, husband of a priestess), Kogö Lamböri and his two sons, Heugö Manaögö and his wife Rasia Laowö, Defaö Omböila and his wife Fija Zifugi, together with their three children, Omböila Manaögö and He'ugö Taögö.

Landwehr recognized Göba's gifts⁶⁸¹ and prepared him for the seminary in Depok. However, he had to wait for Lawö – another Sigatan, who had already been attending the seminary since 1897 – to return first. When Lawö came home in 1901, he did not have a diploma.⁶⁸² Before departing for Batavia, Göba first went to Pulau Tello for four months, to learn Malay from *Guru Mandija*.⁶⁸³ Five letters, all written by Göba from Depok to his family and friends, were translated by Missionary Landwehr into Dutch. They provide insight into Göba's inner life:⁶⁸⁴

1. To his mother he reveals his struggles in coping with his studies, his fear of failing, but also his trust that God will strengthen him.
2. To his aunt, Lagasi, he expresses his joy that if she became a Christian they could share in the joy of the glory of the Kingdom of God.
3. To his 'dear father Lawö' (possibly the *guru*, who had had to return to the Batu Islands in 1901) he marvels about the Christians in Depok, who are just like the Dutch, with tidy homes with window panes, much better than the Malay and Chinese. In comparison, he finds the Tello-Chinese arrogant, exploiting the Ono Niha like buffalos. He writes that the only way out of this bondage is Christian education.
4. To his friend, Tofati Dödö, he explains different aspects of life in the seminary. Then he describes his dream for Sigata: 'Every Sunday, I think about Sigata. Here in Depok there are so many Christians, but over there there are so few. But that is no obstacle. God will still bless you on Sigata if only we all seek the salvation of our souls. Now it is still possible, but on the Last Day it will be too late'.
5. He urges another friend, Dofana, to continue school. He writes enthusiastically about the high level of instruction at Depok and is impressed that the Christians are 'higher' than the Chinese, whereas on Pulau Tello the latter act like lords.

It thus appears that both the soteriological or salvatory aspect, promising bliss in the afterlife, and the civilising aspect, guaranteeing a better and more honourable life in this world, were of great importance to Göba.

At the end of 1903, Depok Director Johann P. Hennemann⁶⁸⁵ reported that Göba had caught up with his studies, being an excellent student, just like his fellow Ono Niha, Nathanael Ziliwu.⁶⁸⁶ However, when he received his diploma in 1906, he received the mark 'just sufficient'.⁶⁸⁷

Göba returned to Pulau Tello on 25 September 1906 and was subsequently examined by the local school commission.⁶⁸⁸ After a short time on Pulau Tello⁶⁸⁹, he returned to Sigata and started his own school with up to forty pupils. After a while it

⁶⁸¹ Cf. *EVB*, 19/2 (1901), p. 46.

⁶⁸² Cf. W.F. Schröder, *De Zending op de Batoe-eilanden*, 1927, p. 31.

⁶⁸³ Cf. *EVB*, 20/5 (1902), p. 132.

⁶⁸⁴ Cf. *EVB*, 21/4 (1903), pp. 131-134 (all of the letters are dated 18 August 1902).

⁶⁸⁵ Johann Philip Hennemann (1835 Horhausen / Hessen – 1912 Salatiga), a German, was the director of Depok Seminary until 1905.

⁶⁸⁶ Cf. *EVB*, 21/6 (1903), p. 189.

⁶⁸⁷ Cf. letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 27 April 1907 (GAA 552/35); cf. *EVB*, 26/3 (1908), p. 83 (*even voldoende*).

⁶⁸⁸ Cf. *EVB*, 26/3 (1908), p. 103.

⁶⁸⁹ Cf. *EVB*, 26/3 (1908), p. 83.

dwindled to fifteen, which he took very personally.⁶⁹⁰ He had more success in his pastoral tasks, assisting and often substituting for the missionary.⁶⁹¹ No hardship or animosity could dampen his enthusiasm.⁶⁹² In August/September 1912, Göba assumed the full responsibility for the church circuit of Sigata, but soon fell ill.⁶⁹³ On 9 November 1912, Göba, the 'beloved and faithful co-worker'⁶⁹⁴, passed away – allegedly to the hour exactly one month after Landwehr.⁶⁹⁵ The result was that all the work on Sigata stopped for some time.

4.5.5.3 A Special *Guru* and Politician

Probably the most flamboyant teacher-preacher ever on the Batu Islands was Nathanael Ziliwu⁶⁹⁶, son of Bötua Geho and Kōba Ziliwu, a wealthy non-Christian chief of Baromado'u on Pulau Tello.⁶⁹⁷ He was born around 1878. According to Reiche⁶⁹⁸, Nathanael had come to the Christian faith through Missionary Kersten. If this is true, it is remarkable, since he must have been only eleven or twelve years old at the time. When Landwehr worked on Pulau Tello during the absence of Frickenschmidt (3 April 1895 - 16 January 1896), he reported about an eighteen-year-old, called Nathanael, who was eager to go to school and church, having an inquisitive mind.⁶⁹⁹

Nathanael realised that the mission offered him and his people the opportunity to develop.⁷⁰⁰ Subsequently, he became involved in church activities. After the son of the *raja* withdrew as assistant-teacher in 1899, Nathanael assumed this position temporarily.⁷⁰¹ He also took the initiative to build a chapel just outside Baromado'u, in the direction of Hilinitaya. Four hundred guilders were donated by a female mission friend in Germany, but one hundred guilders came out of his own pocket.⁷⁰² The consecration of the chapel took place on 1 May 1900. Frickenschmidt sponsored the feast with two pigs and enough rice for both villages (Baromado'u and Hilinitaya).⁷⁰³

Nathanael was granted the opportunity to become a student at Depok, but he withdrew himself in mid-1900, because of the sudden death of his father.⁷⁰⁴ Soon

⁶⁹⁰ Cf. letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 20 October 1906 (GAA 552/35); *EVB*, 26/3 (1908), p. 139.

⁶⁹¹ Cf. letter Paula Landwehr née Simoneit to DLM, Sigata, 6 October 1910 (GAA 552/36). He was an excellent co-worker of both missionaries Kienlein and Landwehr. His sermons were fresh and practical.

⁶⁹² Cf. *EVB*, 26/3 (1908), p. 83.

⁶⁹³ Cf. letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 12 October 1912, 6 November 1912 (GAA 552/35). Göba suffered from Beri-Beri.

⁶⁹⁴ Cf. letter Paula Landwehr née Simoneit to DLM, Padang, 16 August 1912 (GAA 552/36).

⁶⁹⁵ Landwehr died on 9 October 1912, at 6 a.m., cf. Letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 2 December 1912 (GAA 552/35).

⁶⁹⁶ How he could have been baptised while both his parents were still non-Christians is unsure.

⁶⁹⁷ The district of Polele on western Pulau Tello consists of three villages: Hilinitaya, Eho and Baromadou.

⁶⁹⁸ L.H.I. Reiche, 'Een bezoek aan de Batoe-eilanden', part IV, in: *EVB*, 19/4 (1901), p. 119.

⁶⁹⁹ Cf. W.F. Schröder, *De Zending op de Batoe-eilanden*, 1927, p. 27.

⁷⁰⁰ Cf. *EVB*, 19/6 (1901), p. 181.

⁷⁰¹ Cf. *EVB*, 18/1 (1900), p. 12.

⁷⁰² Cf. *EVB*, 17/4 (1899), p. 154; *EVB*, 18/5 (1900), p. 162; *EVB*, 18/2 (1900), p. 36.

⁷⁰³ Cf. *EVB*, 18/5 (1900), p. 163.

⁷⁰⁴ Before dying, Kōba Ziliwu had wanted to be baptised. However, Frickenschmidt had arrived too late, which caused uncertainty in the heart of Nathanael. Bötua Geho, Nathanael's mother, had been

after the burial, he was chosen as his father's successor as village chief. Notwithstanding this chieftainship, he left for Batavia, temporarily delegating his civil duties to a representative and handing over his task as assistant teacher to Siahki, a gifted Tello-Chinese.⁷⁰⁵ In January 1902, Frickenschmidt received good tidings about Nathanael's progress.⁷⁰⁶ Being an excellent student⁷⁰⁷, he graduated in due time and returned home on 27 September 1904.

Nathanael began holding evangelisation services in 'his' chapel on Wednesday evenings. In 1906, Omböila became the first convert as a result of Nathanael's work. Others soon followed.⁷⁰⁸ Nathanael was considered 'equal to even the most excellent of European missionaries'⁷⁰⁹, so that occasionally he filled in for them.⁷¹⁰

A problem came up when Frickenschmidt raised doubts about the *guru's* preaching freely on Sundays (i.e., not using a pre-prepared sermon which had been acknowledged by the missionary). As a Lutheran with strict confessional standards, he wanted to preserve this right solely to the missionary as *pastor loci*. However, when he was on furlough (1905-1906), Nathanael contacted the DLM-board directly, asking for permission to preach on Sundays.⁷¹¹ The board was indignant, considering Frickenschmidt's standpoint to be incompatible with the more lenient view current in Dutch Lutheran circles⁷¹², and issued a direct permission for Nathanael to preach on Sundays.⁷¹³ This decision was implemented against Frickenschmidt's will, and later he blamed Nathanael's lack of subordination on the board's direct mingling. He was of the opinion that the authority of the missionary had to be acknowledged undisputedly by all indigenous helpers.⁷¹⁴ The only compromise offered by the board was that on every fourth Sunday Nathanael and his congregation had to attend the service held by Frickenschmidt.⁷¹⁵

On 25 April 1907, Nathanael married Wuti, granddaughter of Siwabadanö, the 'owner of the golden parasol' and the most powerful chief after the *raja*.⁷¹⁶ The dowry amounted to 1389 guilders⁷¹⁷, a horrendous sum (more than the annual salary of the missionary). This marriage was considered supportive of the progress of the mission, attracting other members of the nobility.

baptised the previous year, cf. *EVV*, 18/2 (1900), pp. 34-35; *EVV*, 18/5 (1900), p. 172; *EVV*, 19/2 (1901), pp. 49-50; *EVV*, 19/4 (1901), p. 119.

⁷⁰⁵ Cf. *EVV*, 19/6 (1901), p. 189; *EVV*, 20/2 (1902), p. 37. Siahki held this position until the end of 1901.

⁷⁰⁶ Cf. *EVV*, 20/2 (1902), p. 37.

⁷⁰⁷ Cf. *EVV*, 20/6 (1903), p. 189.

⁷⁰⁸ Cf. *EVV*, 26/3 (1908), p. 82. In 1907, five young men and Omböila's wife, Sanifi Manaögö, were baptized.

⁷⁰⁹ Cf. *EVV*, 26/3 (1908), p. 103 ('evenaart ... zelfs een uitstekenden Europeeschen zendeling').

⁷¹⁰ Cf. letter H.W.L. Kienlein to DLM, Pulau Tello, 3 June 1905 (GAA 552/31). Landwehr requested to be replaced either by Kienlein or by Nathanael, cf. 'Notulen Hoofdbestuur', Amsterdam, 25 January 1906 (GAA 552/5).

⁷¹¹ Letter Nathanael to DLM, Baroemadooe, 29 March 1906 (GAA 552/40); Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 22 July 1907 (GAA 552/35).

⁷¹² Cf. 'Notulen Hoofdbestuur', Amsterdam, 21 June 1906 (GAA 552/5).

⁷¹³ 'Notulen Hoofdbestuur', Amsterdam, 6 September 1906 (GAA 552/5); cf. letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 2 October 1912 (second letter), GAA 552/35.

⁷¹⁴ Cf. letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 2 October 1912, letter 2 (GAA 552/35).

⁷¹⁵ Cf. letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 2 January 1907 (GAA 552/35).

⁷¹⁶ Cf. *EVV*, 26/3 (1908), p. 82. In his letter to the DLM, Pulau Tello, 24 June 1907, Frickenschmidt gives 24 April as the date. The *adat* ceremony lasted three days, at the end of which the church blessing took place (GAA 552/35).

⁷¹⁷ Cf. letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 24 June 1907 (GAA 552/35).

By 1910, Nathanael's attitude had begun to change.⁷¹⁸ He neglected his schoolwork.⁷¹⁹ Mandija wrote that Nathanael had taken to using misleading 'poems' (*sadjak*) in his teaching, leading the Christian congregation astray.⁷²⁰ His spiritual life declined, while his political activities increased.

In 1915, the Dutch colonial government appointed a district chief or *demang*⁷²¹ as the highest indigenous authority of the Batu Islands, accountable to the Dutch *controleur*. The hereditary ruler, the *raja* (see below), was passed over in favour of the village chief, Nathanael Ziliwu. Though the missionaries considered the former *guru*, now in quite an influential political position, to be an advisor for the mission, he distanced himself more and more from them. One important reason seems to have been that he was secretly supportive of the encroaching Seventh-Day Adventists.⁷²²

In February 1928, Nathanael was accused of adultery and other shameful practices. Since some Christian Dutch officials were living with concubines without being disciplined, it proved to be difficult to discipline an indigenous Christian ruler.⁷²³ But after Nathanael had openly become the enemy of the missionaries, he was, eventually, placed under church discipline.⁷²⁴ In 1928, he was transferred to Gunungsitoli, to face charges on corruption.⁷²⁵ The question remains whether Nathanael Ziliwu, the gifted first Christian politician of the Batu Islands, had failed in the end because he had not submitted himself totally to the demands of the colonial status quo (including the mission), or because he had succumbed to the temptations of power.

4.5.6 Literature

In 1895, Frickenschmidt published 75 biblical stories in the North-Niasan vernacular, which was not appreciated by the Batunese Christians. They would rather have read a book in Malay, which they could understand, than in a Niasan dialect which was not all that familiar to them.⁷²⁶

Frickenschmidt used his second furlough (March 1905 - May 1906) to have his Batunese translations of the Gospel and Epistle pericopes printed. This was sponsored by the Dutch Bible Society (NBG) and the pericopes had already been printed by the time he returned to Pulau Tello on 27 June 1906.⁷²⁷ A few years later,

⁷¹⁸ Cf. letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 12 October 1912 (GAA 552/35). According to Paula Landwehr, the change in Nathanael's attitude had started with his marriage with aristocratic Wuti ('Notulen Hoofdbestuur', Amsterdam, 29 November 1912, GAA 552/7).

⁷¹⁹ Cf. letters Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 24 November 1910, 19 May 1912 (GAA 552/35).

⁷²⁰ 'Chabarnja diseloeroeh Poelau Batu, maka sadjak itoelah sampai sekarang ini iman orang² Christen disini djadi lemah dan tawar. Mereka itoe tidak maloe dan tidak semboenji lagi berboeat dosa', cf. letter Mandija to DLM, Pulau Tello, 7 October 1913 (GAA 552/40).

⁷²¹ Beginning in 1914, the position of *demang* was gradually introduced into West-Sumatra, cf. *ENI* 1 (1917), p. 286.

⁷²² Cf. *EVB*, 47/2 (1929), p. 38; letters Steinhart to DLM, Pulau Tello, 10 October 1928, 19 January 1929 (GAA 522/39).

⁷²³ Cf. letter Steinhart to DLM, Pulau Tello, 3 February 1928 (GAA 552/39).

⁷²⁴ He reportedly incited people against the missionaries, cf. letter Steinhart to DLM, Pulau Tello, 10 October 1928 (GAA 552/39).

⁷²⁵ Cf. *EVB*, 47/2 (1929), p. 38. He had reportedly misused his office in various ways.

⁷²⁶ Cf. W.F. Schröder, *De Zending op de Batoe-eilanden*, 1927, pp. 27-28.

⁷²⁷ *Ibid.* p. 72; letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 25 July 1906 (GAA 552/35). Cf. J.L. Swellengrebel, *In Leijdeckers voetspoor I*, 1974, p. 225.

Frickenschmidt distributed a Batunese hymnal (*Buku Nainö*).⁷²⁸ Two schoolbooks were also printed, which were translations by Nathanael Ziliwu from Malay into the Batunese vernacular.⁷²⁹

4.5.7 Comparison of the Work on Nias and the Batu Islands

In many ways, the work of the DLM on the Batu Islands resembled that of the RM on Nias during these years. But there were also some distinct differences. Some of these can be explained by the particular contexts, but some were also due to the confessional leanings of the individual missionaries.

Both on Nias and on the Batu Islands, the missionaries invested much time in efforts to win the nobility over to Christianity. The corporate character of the societies provided a good possibility that once a chief had converted to Christianity, his subjects would follow suit. Whereas on Nias, the missionaries' success usually depended on the support of converted chiefs, on the Batu Islands, the spread of the Gospel often either succeeded against the will of the paramount chiefs (as in the case of Farono of Sigata), or failed despite his support (as in the cases of Alam Laut in Koto Bulu'aro and Lasondre on Tanah Masa). Quite a unique feature in comparison with Nias was the conspicuous role played by aristocratic women, such as Fija Wanaetu and Lai Hulandro, in spreading Christianity on the Batu Islands.

Although the general pietistic spirituality shared by both moderated the theological distinctions between the Lutheran DLM and the 'United' RM, there nevertheless remained some specific differences. The DLM recruited its missionaries from a Lutheran background and was determined to build a Lutheran church on the Batu Islands. The missionaries on Nias, however, though not following any particular confessional model, came largely from a Reformed background (e.g., the Siegerland), which to a certain extent determined their views concerning the preparation of new converts for the sacraments and also concerning church organisation. Due to an indifference concerning responsible membership common to the Lutheran churches in Germany at that time, for instance, the preparation for holy baptism on the Batu Islands was less intensive than on Nias. Whereas on Nias it had taken almost nine years before the first fruits were baptised, on the Batu Islands it took little more than three years.

The DLM-missionaries were also less seriously focused on matters concerning the development of a church order, church discipline and leadership structures (in 1916 centralized on Pulau Tello) than were the RM-missionaries. While on Nias, various forms of councils and conferences, as well as the ministries of the indigenous pastors (*pandita*), the elders (*satua Niha Keriso*) and the evangelists (*sinenge*) ensured a certain (though still very limited) degree of participation of the Ono Niha in the governance of the congregations and in the propagation of the Gospel, on the Batu Islands, all of these institutions were still underdeveloped or non-existent during this period. Church councils did not come into existence at all, an annual *guru*-conference was not established until as late as 1916 (on Nias in 1898).

On the Batu Islands, the establishment of the financial self-support of the Christian congregations was quite neglected during this period. Although, through

⁷²⁸ Cf. letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 19 August 1915 (GAA 552/35).

⁷²⁹ Cf. W.F. Schröder, *De Zending op de Batoe-eilanden*, 1927, p. 84.

the initiative of Landwehr, a regular collection was introduced in the church services, this did not prove to be a substantial means of income. On the contrary, project-orientated fundraising, especially for church buildings, was favoured by the Christians on the Batu Islands.

The distinctly Lutheran character of Christianity on the Batu Islands was manifested in the interior of the churches, which were decorated with symbols (including a crucifix) and stained glass windows. The altar was situated prominently in the liturgical centre, characteristic of Lutheran churches and quite different from the situation in most churches on Nias, with their more sober, Reformed, interiors.

In addition to education, in which the mission on the Batu Islands cooperated with the colonial government in the same way as did the RM on Nias, medical service was the second instrument of Christianisation. As on Nias, 'Christian medicine' was used on the Batu Islands quite intentionally to discredit and destroy the influence of the primal religion and its traditional medicine. However, though the mission on the Batu Islands had begun almost 25 years later than had the mission on Nias, it began building hospitals sooner than did the latter.

4.6 THE GREAT AWAKENING ON NIAS (1915-1930)

The most powerful and vivid phase in the ecclesiastical history of Nias is the so-called Great Awakening⁷³⁰, a revival movement which spread over the whole island in several 'waves'⁷³¹ from 1915 until 1930.⁷³² It was the time of a victorious, conquering Christianity, voluntarily borne by the Ono Niha themselves, but significantly influenced by the attending political and economic circumstances. The number of Christians more than quadrupled during this period.⁷³³

⁷³⁰ The term 'Awakening' is the translation of the German *Erweckung* (Dutch: *opwekking*), first used by the Pietists of Halle, Germany, in the eighteenth century. Subsequently, 'Great Awakening' was used to refer to the awakening in Northern America in the eighteenth century, cf. F.W. Graf et al., 'Erweckung/Erweckungsbewegungen', in: *RGG*⁴ II (1999), pp. 1490-1499.

⁷³¹ The term 'waves' of awakenings is used, among others, by A. Pieper, *Die Auswirkungen der Erweckung auf Nias*, 1928, p. 3 (*wellenartige Weiterbewegung*) and A. Schneider, *Turia*, 1965, p. 37 (*in verschiedenen Wellen*).

⁷³² Usually, the Great Awakening on Nias (*fangesa dödö sebua*) is dated roughly from 1916 until 1930. Fahede Mendröfa, quoted by W. Gulö (*Benih yang Tumbuh XIII*, 1983, p. 16), divides the awakening into four phases, 1916-1919, 1920-1921, 1922-1924 and 1928-1930, without giving any further specifications. T. Müller, *Die „große Reue“ auf Nias*, 1931, pp. 25-52, also has four phases, but dates and titles them differently, as follows: 1916/17 (*Die große Erweckung*), 1917-1922 (*Die Zeit der „kleinen Dinge“*), 1922/23 (*Die Erweckung im Jahre 1922/23*), 1923-1930 (*Letzte Regungen*).

⁷³³ 1914: 17 795 baptised Christians, 9000 catechumens, 120 congregations;
1922: ca. 52 000 baptised Christians (alternative counting: 49 877), 30 000 catechumens;
1926: 65 000 baptised Christians (alternative counting: 70 000), 23 000 catechumens;
1929/30: ca. 84 000 baptised Christians, ca. 13 300 catechumens, 164 congregations.
These statistics do not include the Batu Islands. Cf. *Toeria*, 2/2 (1915), *Toeria*, 10/4 (1923), *Toeria*, 11/3 (1924); R. Wegner, *Die Erweckungsbewegung auf Nias*, 1924, p. 54; J. Warneck, *Die Volkskirchen auf Sumatra und Nias*, 1927, p. 29; A. Pieper, *Die Auswirkung der Erweckung auf Nias*, 1928, pp. 22-23; A. Schneider, *Turia*, 1965, p. 34; W. Gulö, *Benih yang Tumbuh XIII*, 1983, pp. 16-21.

4.6.1 Awakenings in Protestantism since the Eighteenth Century

Awakening means 'to be woken up' from religious lethargy to active spiritual life.⁷³⁴ As of the first half of the eighteenth century there were a number of awakenings in Christian congregations in England⁷³⁵, Scotland⁷³⁶, Northern America⁷³⁷, The Netherlands⁷³⁸, Switzerland⁷³⁹, Germany⁷⁴⁰, and in missionary areas abroad.⁷⁴¹ They usually came about in pietistic or revivalist settings as a response to both the Protestant Orthodoxy and the Enlightenment.

General characteristics of an awakening are the intense awareness of individual sin and unworthiness before God, the fear of hell and of the loss of the kingdom of heaven, public confession of sin and the experience of salvation in Christ, a public pledge to become a proper Christian, as well as strict social control, excessively long spiritual exercises (praying all night, evangelisations every evening, fasting) and the creation of religious songs and hymns. There are almost always charismatic manifestations, such as visionary dreams, hearing voices, prophecy, and speaking in tongues (*glossolia*). The devotions are often marked by strong expressions of emotionality (crying, screaming, making weird sounds), fainting or trance. Whereas in some cases this results in psychological instability, delusions, fanaticism and insanity (religious craze), the awakening often leads to a deepening of spiritual life and a change in ethical behaviour. Sometimes, as in the case of the Madagascan revival of 1905, it brought about reconciliation between archenemies.⁷⁴²

⁷³⁴ There have been revival movements in Islam as well, such as the revival under Imam Bonjol (1821-1838) in Minangkabau, West Sumatra. This Wahhabite movement, called Paderi (*Pidari*), was opposed to the traditional Minangkabau rulers, who collaborated with the Dutch. The Paderi also attacked the Bataklands and killed the Priest-King, Sisingamangaraja X.

⁷³⁵ I.e., the rise of Methodism (John and Charles Wesley, George Whitefield) as an awakening in the Anglican Church in the eighteenth century.

⁷³⁶ I.e., Tabernacles Movement (Robert and James A. Haldane) and the Evangelical Alliance (Thomas Chalmers).

⁷³⁷ I.e., the Great Awakening from the 1730s until the 1750s. The Second Great Awakening in Northern America started in the 1790s and reached well into the nineteenth century (cf. C.E. Hambrick-Stowe, 'Erweckungsbewegungen in Nordamerika', in: *RGG*⁴ II (1999), pp. 1495-1498).

⁷³⁸ I.e., the Nijkerk Movement (*Nijkerksche beweging*), which first began in 1745 in Amsterdam and, as of 1749, continued in Nijkerk as a result of the preaching of Gerardus Kuypers (cf. H. Kluin, *De Opwekkings-Beweging op Nias*, 1927, pp. 36-38). The awakenings in England and Switzerland had great influence on the founders of the Dutch Missionary Society (cf. J. Boneschansker, *Het Nederlandsch Zendeling Genootschap in zijn eerste periode*, 1987, pp. 185-187), and other famous personalities of the Dutch Reveil, such as Isaïc da Costa, Abraham Cappadose, and Guillaume Groen van Prinsterer.

⁷³⁹ I.e., the circles of the *Deutsche Christentumsgesellschaft* in Basel, founded in 1780.

⁷⁴⁰ Cf. Ch. 3.2.1.

⁷⁴¹ I.e., on the Samoan Islands (1840), Fiji (1845-1846, 1854), New Hebrides / Vanuatu (around 1850) and Madagascar (1869, 1905, etc.). In Indonesia there were smaller awakenings in Northern Java (Semarang and Salatiga) in the nineteenth century. In the twentieth century, there were awakenings in Timor in 1921, 1943 and in the 1960s, cf. Th. van den End and J. Weitjens, *Ragi Carita II*, 2002, pp. 110-111, 115-116. By far the most well-known awakening in Indonesia took place on Nias. (cf. Th. Müller-Krüger, *Der Protestantismus in Indonesien*, 1968, pp. 130-131, 214-215, 279-284).

⁷⁴² Cf. H. Kluin, *De Opwekkings-Beweging op Nias*, 1927, p. 41.

4.6.2 Outbreak and Spread of the Great Awakening on Nias

The Great Awakening on Nias, or 'the great repentance' (*fangesa dödö sebua*)⁷⁴³, was not only a revival within Christianity, but also a campaign of a rapidly growing Christian minority in their efforts to evangelise the vast majority of adherents of the primal religion.⁷⁴⁴ The symptoms were similar to the general characteristics mentioned above. Additional unique phenomena can be explained largely by socio-political circumstances and cultural factors. One fundamental experience, often mentioned in the reports of the missionaries, is existential community fear⁷⁴⁵, which was a matter of the collective, rather than the individual conscience, and therefore led to changes in the communal identity.

The first reference to an 'awakening', which was said to have happened in Sihareö and Fadoro as early as 1881, was made by Johann W. Thomas.⁷⁴⁶ But this was either an isolated incidence, or perhaps an overenthusiastic interpretation on the part of the missionary, who was speaking to the annual festival of the RM in Barmen.

The actual movement of the *fangesa dödö sebua* began at the end of 1915 in Helefanikha, a branch congregation of Humene. Missionary Otto Rudersdorf⁷⁴⁷ was concerned about the lack of an awareness of sin⁷⁴⁸ among the members of his congregations, especially in their preparation for the Lord's Supper.⁷⁴⁹ He therefore held special services during the seven weeks before Christmas in 1915, both in the church on Sunday afternoons and in the branch congregations on weekdays. These meetings were frequented by an increasing number of Niasan Christians. On one of these occasions, a Niasan assistant teacher by the name of Filemo⁷⁵⁰ experienced an unusual awareness of his sins and subsequently a strong conviction that his sins had been forgiven by the crucified Christ. This changed his life convincingly, affecting others.⁷⁵¹

The special services were continued in February 1916. On Friday evenings, there were, in addition, Bible-study groups at the mission station. In March and April of the same year, there were numerous conversions in Humene. Through the preaching of born-again *sinenge* and some church elders, the awakening rapidly spread to other villages in the vicinity. At the seminary in Ombölata, there was some

⁷⁴³ This is a unique term for an awakening. It is not certain whether it originates from Christian Ono Niha or from the missionaries. Cf. Felix Meier-Hedde, *Die „Große Reue“ auf Nias*, 2003, pp. 13-14.

⁷⁴⁴ Cf. *A Dictionary of Asian Christianity*, 2001, pp. 695-696, where five particular revivals in Indonesian Christianity are mentioned, including the Niasan awakening. Cf. W.L. Steinhart, 'Missionaris Dr. Keyzer over de opwekking op Nias', in: *De Opwekker*, 78/2, 1933.

⁷⁴⁵ The missionaries observed a fundamental 'fear of God', a sudden frightening of the conscience, a burdened conscience (*Gewissensforderung; Gewissensurteil*), and a crisis of conscience (*Gewissensnot*). This took place within the community setting, predominantly in larger assemblies (R. Wegner, *Die Erweckungsbewegung auf Nias*, 1924, pp. 12-14; E. Fries, 'Die Erweckungsbewegung in Nias', in *BRM*, 1931, p. 73.

⁷⁴⁶ *BRM*, 1888, p. 275.

⁷⁴⁷ Otto Rudersdorf (9 September 1869 Haiger – 29 May 1952 Kaiserswerth) originated from the Siegerland. He served in Lahusa (1900-1901), Humene (1901-1919) and Hilimaziaya (1930-1933).

⁷⁴⁸ Cf. H. Kluin, *De Opwekkings-Beweging*, 1927, pp. 26, 29-30 (*zondebesef*).

⁷⁴⁹ Rudersdorf demanded that his listeners practice introspection (*Selbstüberprüfung*) and even threatened them with expulsion from the Lord's Supper, should they not repent and change their lives, cf. W. Oehler, *Die große Reue*, 1926, p. 22.

⁷⁵⁰ According to A. Bonn, *Die Sonne geht auf über unseren Bergen*, 1940, p.42, the name was Filimöñö.

⁷⁵¹ Cf. W. Gulö, *Benih yang Tumbuh XIII*, 1983, pp. 14-15.

scepticism. This changed after Niasan seminarians had visited Humene and had personally been moved by the awakening. They henceforth joined in as agents of the awakening.⁷⁵²

From Humene the awakening spread south-eastwards to Sogae'adu and westwards to Sifaoro'asi and as far as the Hinako Islands. In the absence of missionaries, the awakening in Sogae'adu assumed an eschatological character. The doomsday atmosphere caused some to destroy their property and others to commit suicide. Two women stood out as charismatic leaders: one as a prophetess and another as the incarnation of the Holy Spirit.⁷⁵³

Eventually, the enthusiasts of Sogae'adu carried the awakening westwards to the mission station Sifaoro'asi, wanting to convert the German Missionary Wilhelm Skubinna⁷⁵⁴ there. In Holi, one of the branch congregations of Sifaoro'asi, the awakening took on tumultuous and violent dimensions. Skubinna managed to suppress the movement, declaring a number of its adherents as being mentally ill and putting them in hospital and sending one of its leaders, the 'pseudo-Christ', to Missionary Fries in Ombölata. On the following Sunday, the enthusiasts had to appear before the congregation in the church of Sifaoro'asi, confessing their heresy and their spiritual arrogance.⁷⁵⁵ Henceforth, the Ono Niha of Sifaoro'asi held themselves aloof from the awakening.

A similarly repressive attitude towards the enthusiasts operating in Lölöwua⁷⁵⁶ was taken by Ludwig Borutta.⁷⁵⁷ A *guru* from the mission school, who followed a prophetess from Humene who was evangelising along with a large group of young women in this area, was threatened by the missionary with expulsion from his teaching post and subsequent forced labour (*rodi*).⁷⁵⁸ This not only intimidated the *guru*, but also hampered the spread of the awakening in this area.

By 1917 the initial élan of the movement had calmed down a bit; but it did not stop. It moved beyond Humene and Ombölata to Gunungsitoli, where first signs were registered in 1918, and reached its peak a few months later in several prayer groups (*sekola wangandrö*). *Pandita* Josefo, who served in Gunungsitoli at the time, was at first surprised (*ahölihöli dödü*), but then judged these outbursts of enthusiasm

⁷⁵² Though the first Niasan minister (Sitefano) had been ordained in 1906, the first two-year's course in advanced theology as preparation for the ministry did not begin until 1914. In 1916, four graduates from this course were ordained as *pandita*. They were Filemo I. Harefa, Kolingö Lase, Josefo Lawölö and Faogöli Lase. In Lölöwua, Missionary Paul von Erlen trained specially chosen church elders in two-month courses to become teacher-preachers (*sinenge*). The first *sinenge* were installed in 1914.

⁷⁵³ Cf. R. Wegner, *Die Erweckungsbewegung auf Nias*, 1924, pp. 26-27.

⁷⁵⁴ Wilhelm Skubinna (1 Februar 1885 Düsseldorf – 10 October 1965 Gummersbach). In Sifaoro'asi until 1920 (RMG 446).

⁷⁵⁵ Cf. R. Wegner, *Die Erweckungsbewegung auf Nias*, 1924, p.27.

⁷⁵⁶ About seventeen kilometres southwest of Gunungsitoli in the interior; the event occurred in Gada, a village in this area.

⁷⁵⁷ Ludwig Borutta (7 September 1879 Georgenthal – 1 August 1959 Detmold). Before entering seminary in 1901, he had worked as a clerk. From 1907-1910, he was missionary in Bawalia, then in Hilisimaetanö and Lölöwua (until 1919). After his furlough, he worked for the DLM on the Batu Islands (1922-1924), then as a clerk in Padang. From 1926-1932 he returned to Nias as missionary of Lölöwua and Sogae'adu (RMG 392).

⁷⁵⁸ Cf. R. Wegner, *Die Erweckungsbewegung auf Nias*, 1924, p. 29 ('er könne keine Minute länger mehr in der Arbeit bleiben, überhaupt nicht mehr Lehrer sein; es sei für ihn nur gut, wenn er wieder Rodidienste (Regierungswegearbeit) täte. Da gewann er doch wieder Teilnahme für das irdische und kehrte aus den himmlischen Regionen zurück').

to be the work of the Holy Ghost.⁷⁵⁹ Around this time (1917-1918), the Great Awakening also reached Hilimaziaya in the north⁷⁶⁰, where the ground had already been prepared some years before by a local 'penitence movement'.⁷⁶¹ Even in South Nias there were numerous conversions in Sa'ua⁷⁶² and Hilisimaetanö.⁷⁶³

In 1922 the Great Awakening flared up again in full force, this time beginning in Gunungsitoli. It strengthened Christianity in Hilimaziaya and reached out as far north as Lahewa. Sifaoro'asi and Lölöwua also succumbed to the strength of the awakening. Many who had been suspicious in 1916, were now moved by it.⁷⁶⁴ This time the constructive influence of the *pandita* was felt, in addition to the continuing strong witness of the *sinenge* and some women.⁷⁶⁵

Unfortunately, 1922 was a very troublesome year for the people of southern Nias, including the missionaries. An epidemic claimed many lives.⁷⁶⁶ But this hardship was not the main obstacle hampering the spread of the awakening in some areas and causing a number of villages to return to the primal religion or to fall into religious indifference.⁷⁶⁷ A more serious obstacle was the uncompromising attitude of certain missionaries, who rejected the *adat*.

The case of Heinrich Rabeneck⁷⁶⁸ and Barani Dakhi, paramount chief of Hilisimaetanö, can illustrate how such an attitude actually stalled the dynamics caused by the Great Awakening. Missionary Rabeneck was not satisfied that the Ono Niha had abandoned merely the primal religion. He insisted that they abandon ancient custom as well. Barani, who was baptised but wished to maintain the *adat* for the sake of keeping the community stable, took a second wife. For this reason, he was excommunicated by Rabeneck in 1921. Consequently, many other chiefs also distanced themselves from Christianity. Only after Barani had confessed sin and been received back in 1928 was the work of the mission in Hilisimaetanö again able to make good progress.⁷⁶⁹

In 1923, some *sinenge*, inspired by the Great Awakening, reached Börö Nadu Sifalagö Gomo, an ancient centre of the primal religion in southern Nias.⁷⁷⁰ After

⁷⁵⁹ Cf. *Toeria*, 6/10 (1919), the first official mention of the Great Awakening in Gunungsitoli. In 1920, Momeyer reports a revival in Hiliduho, effecting both Christians and 'heathen' (*BRM*, 1920, pp. 61-62).

⁷⁶⁰ Cf. *Toeria*, 8/11 (1921); the first village in Hilimaziaya to be affected by the Great Awakening – through the activities of teacher-preachers – was Lawina in 1918.

⁷⁶¹ This had been a unique penitence movement (*Bußbewegung*), which had begun in 1913, cf. *BRM*, 1936, p. 17.

⁷⁶² Missionary Sartor reported at the end of 1919 that the Great Awakening had reached all branch congregations of his area up to and including Teluk Dalam. A significant role had been played by a *sinenge* from Bo'usö. There was a strong but incidental awakening in Hiligehe. In Hilisatörö the primal religion was wiped out completely and all the inhabitants began attending church (*ein wahrer Gottesstaat*), cf. E. Sartor, 'Jahresbericht 1919', RMG 1.872. Edmund Sartor (15 April 1883 Wahlbach/Siegen – 26 June 1941 Wahlbach).

⁷⁶³ In 1919, Lück in Hilisimaetanö had to go on sick leave to Sumatra. Sartor helped out. He asked the *guru* and *sinenge* of Hilisimaetanö to come over to Sa'ua for the preparation of sermons, etc. Here they came under the influence of the Great Awakening (cf. Edmund Sartor, 'Jahresbericht 1919', RMG 1.872).

⁷⁶⁴ Cf. H. Kluin, *De Opwekkings-Beweging*, 1927, p. 61.

⁷⁶⁵ Cf. R. Wegner, *Die Erweckungsbewegung auf Nias*, 1924, pp. 49-53.

⁷⁶⁶ Cf. E. Sartor, 'Stationsbericht von Sa'oea über die zweite Hälfte von 1922' (RMG 1.872).

⁷⁶⁷ Cf. R. Wegner, *Die Erweckungsbewegung auf Nias*, 1924, p. 35.

⁷⁶⁸ H. Rabeneck (26 June 1875 Hiddenhausen – 14 August 1939 Oberbeck / Löhne). Cf. U. Rottschäfer, *Heinrich Rabeneck*, 1989.

⁷⁶⁹ Cf. W.R. Schmidt, *Das unbeendete Gespräch*, 1967, pp. 34-37.

⁷⁷⁰ In 1927, Missionary Johannes Nol baptized the 145 first fruits and in 1929 the remaining 119

1925, however, the strength of the Great Awakening decreased continuously until it had disappeared by 1930. But by then, Christianity had become the strongest religion and the primal religion had almost disappeared from public life.

4.6.3 Aftermath of the Great Awakening on Nias

The Great Awakening faded away, like first love. A point of mature saturation had been reached. Apart from the mainstream, however, the 1930s also brought some remarkable outbursts of religious enthusiasm, especially in Sogae'adu. These were incidental and limited in character. While phenomena such as trance, glossolalia (*li bö'ö*) and faith healing, characteristic during the Great Awakening, were also prominent in these later minor awakenings, they were now practiced by so-called Masters of Awakening (*tuka fangesa dödö*).⁷⁷¹ According to the synod of the BNKP, these minor awakenings, including the so-called 'jumping awakenings' (*fangesa solaya*) in the 1940s and 1950s (see below), were different in nature to the Great Awakening, since they included a resurgence of pre-Christian magic (*ilmu sihir*) and resulted in schisms.⁷⁷²

4.6.4 Causes of the Niasan Awakening

A great deal has been written about the causes of the Great Awakening.⁷⁷³ Although it has been stated time and time again that the Awakening was the work of the Holy Spirit, it also needs to be stated that a number of psychological, socio-economic and ecclesiastical factors determined the conditions in which this awakening made its appearance and developed. Three general factors and three more ecclesiastical ones must be distinguished.

4.6.4.1 General Factors

Psychological Strains

In the opinion of Theodor Müller-Krüger⁷⁷⁴, the psychological disposition of the Ono Niha was the prime factor causing the awakening, i.e., the importance of

inhabitants of this place of descent of the ancestor Hija; cf. M. Thomsen, 'Die Sage vom Stammvater Hija: Ein Gesang aus Mittelnias', in: *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, 104/2 (1979), p. 210.

⁷⁷¹ Cf. T. Müller-Krüger, *Der Protestantismus in Indonesien*, 1968, p. 283 (*Erweckungsmeister*).

⁷⁷² Cf. Th. Müller-Krüger, 'Neue Erweckungsbewegungen in der Nias- und Batakirche', in: *EMZ* (1950), pp. 161-170; cf. Ch. 5.8.3 and Ch. 6.2.1.3.

⁷⁷³ Cf. Th. Müller, *Die „große Reue“ auf Nias*, 1931. He explicitly mentions three causes: 1. the unconscious psychological; 2. the witness of other Christians; 3. the effect of missionary preaching. No sociological explanation is given. R. Wegner, *Die Erweckungsbewegung auf Nias*, 1924, pp. 8-9, emphasises the role of the Niasan preachers, especially the *pandita Niha*, the pastoral care of the missionaries, the jubilee in 1915 and the psychology of the Ono Niha. A. Schneider, *Turia*, 1965, pp. 35-42, quotes Niasan *Ephorus* Fahede Mendröfa, who made a study of the awakenings after 1915 and those after 1942. W. Gulö, *Benih yang Tumbuh XIII*, 1983, pp. 13-18 also takes his data from Fahede Mendröfa, ('Waöwaö Halöwö Fangombacha Turia Somuso Dödö ba Danö Niha').

⁷⁷⁴ Th. Müller, *Die „große Reue“ auf Nias*, pp. 131-134 ('Die auslösenden Kräfte'); in the 1970s, Wolfgang M. Pfeiffer, a Medical Psychologist from the University of Westphalia, Münster, did research on the psychological disposition of the Ono Niha. He argued that the Great Awakening was an emancipation from the culture of fear, caused by the ridged authoritarian structures of the *adat*. Pfeiffer, however, did not take into consideration the socio-political strain caused by Colonialism and Mission, cf. W.M. Pfeiffer, 'Konflikte, psychoreaktive und psychosomatische Störungen in einer traditionsbestimmten Kultur (Nias/Indonesien)', 1974, pp. 24-30 (manuscript, archive RMG).

dreams, visions and trance in the primal religion, combined with an individual awakening of conscience, determined the outbreaks of enthusiasm and the willingness to change. However, since this analysis ignores politico-economic factors, it is far too limited and superficial.

Psychological strains there were, indeed, both communally and individually. But it was caused by intense social hardship and a lack of orientation in a rapidly changing situation. Due to the subjugation of the whole region under colonial rule, pass laws, various kinds of taxation, forced labour (*rodi*)⁷⁷⁵, changes in tribal government, resettlement of whole villages, and the economic instability caused by World War I (drop in the prices for cash crops), there was a nearly total collapse of the social order. Intense frustration needed an outlet. Venting it through political parties with a revolutionary character was not an option for Niasan Christians during this period⁷⁷⁶, so they poured their frustration into religious enthusiasm.

The missionaries, too, suffered an increase of psychological stress caused by war news from Germany and the economic decline. The connections between Barmen and Nias were almost completely severed. There was no fresh missionary personnel⁷⁷⁷; there were no prospects of furlough and hardly any wages. This affected the tone and emphasis of the preaching and explains the somewhat gloomy stress on sin, sanctification and eschatology. There is a somewhat morbid romanticism of sin in the reports of the missionaries. Kluin⁷⁷⁸ explains their mood in terms of a dissatisfaction with the complacency of nominal Christianity in the second or third generation of Ono Niha. Be that as it may, the overall severe psychological strain provided fertile ground for a charismatic awakening.

Socio-political Strains

As of 1908 the Dutch colonial administration had control over the whole of Nias, including the South.⁷⁷⁹ By 1915 the impact of this occupation was felt increasingly in everyday life.⁷⁸⁰ A system of educated, non-hereditary district officials was introduced into Tapanuli, including Nias, in 1916.⁷⁸¹ This was a significant challenge to the position of the traditional chiefs.⁷⁸² The *demang* and assistant-*demang*, as well as other chiefs acknowledged by the government, were usually

⁷⁷⁵ Men had to do fifty-two days of communal labour per year. The Mission defended the *rodi* system, cf. *Toeria*, 4/4 (1917).

⁷⁷⁶ Cf. H. Fischer, 'Die sozialpolitische Volksbewegung in Niederländisch Indien und ihr Einfluss auf unsere niassischen Christen', paper held during the Conference of Missionaries, Ombölatá 19-25 July 1921 ('Konferenzreferate I', 1900-1923, RMG 2.784). *Sarikat Islam* was popular among the Muslims, but among Niasan Christians only the moderate *Insulinde* seems to have had any following during this period.

⁷⁷⁷ In 1915 there were fifteen RM-missionaries on Nias and by 1920 only twelve.

⁷⁷⁸ Cf. H. Kluin, *De Opwekkings-Beweging*, 1927, pp. 22-24.

⁷⁷⁹ The 'turning point' (*keerpunt*) in the history of Nias was 29 January 1908, when the *controleur* of Nias was attacked at the Upper Soesoewa Valley when he wanted to pass through this area. The Dutch reacted with military force. They subsequently entered the interior of Nias and conquered the entire island that same year, cf. Cf. *ENI* 3 (1919), p. 30.

⁷⁸⁰ Cf. Wilhelm Oehler, *Die große Reue*, 1926, p. 17, mentions the helplessness the Ono Niha experienced in the face of the colonial subjugation ('Die Leute fühlten sich hilflos den Forderungen der Regierung gegenüber').

⁷⁸¹ One to two years later than in West Sumatra, including the Batu Islands, cf. *ENI* 1 (1917), p. 286. Cf. Ch. 2.7.3 and Ch. 4.5.5.3.

⁷⁸² Cf. J.R. Hutauruk, *Die Batakirche vor ihrer Unabhängigkeit*, 1980, pp.91-92; the same author, *Kemandirian Gereja*, 1992, pp. 26-29. Hutauruk analyses the effect of the *demang*-system on the status and influence of traditional chiefs in the Bataklands.

chosen from among noblemen educated in mission schools and adhering to Christianity. Conversely, Christian elders, often chosen from among the chiefs, were exempted from *rodi*-labour.⁷⁸³

According to Maren Fuhrmann⁷⁸⁴, the prospect of being acknowledged by the colonial government was a reason for many chiefs to become Christians. Opting for a new role as 'Christian chief' was a way to maintain some of their traditional power. Since they brought along all of their communities, this was indeed a major factor in mass conversion after 1915.

Christian chiefs abolished traditional ceremonies, such as *fondrakö*.⁷⁸⁵ This was a very serious blow to their absolute authority as lawgivers. In the eyes of the Ono Niha, the new supreme masters were the Europeans. The missionary used to be addressed as lord (*tua*) and his wife, or the white deaconesses, as grandmother (*gawe*). Even paramount chiefs called themselves 'children' of the missionary.⁷⁸⁶ They submitted themselves to the leaders of the new order (*huku si bohou*). A common gesture during the awakening was that 'sinners' threw themselves onto the ground at the feet of the missionaries.⁷⁸⁷ If surrender to the new order was inevitable, it seemed more honourable to surrender to the missionary than to the government official. Therefore, the awakening can be seen as the capitulation of a subjugated community to the new power structures, both religious and civil.

Communal Ties

Since the different villages (*banua*) and clans (*mado*) throughout Nias are related by family ties, the next of kin became the most effective bearers of the Christian message. Various *adat*-feasts and ceremonies provided ample opportunity for the newly inspired Christians to bear the message to the most remote places. This was facilitated by the new roads and bridges, built by means of forced labour (*rodi*), often in cooperation with the missionaries.⁷⁸⁸

Concerning the *banua*, the innovations in village- and regional government, the removal of villages from the hills to the roads for economic reasons, and the subsequent new infra-structure, initiated by the colonial authorities also upset the Niasan worldview, in which every major village is not only an independent republic, but in fact signifies an autarchic cosmos.

⁷⁸³ Cf. *BRM*, 1914, pp. 48-51.

⁷⁸⁴ Cf. Maren Fuhrmann, *Der historisch-ethnographische Aussagewert deutschsprachiger Missionsliteratur über die Batak auf Sumatra und die indigene Bevölkerung von Nias*, 1989, pp. 14, 61.

⁷⁸⁵ Cf. Ch. 2.4.3.1; cf. W. Gulö, *Benih yang Tumbuh XIII*, 1983, pp. 27-28.

⁷⁸⁶ Cf. Maria Fischdick, *Gottes Walten auf der Insel Nias*, 1935, p. 4

⁷⁸⁷ *Ibid.* p. 2 ('Es war ganz ergreifend, wenn die Leute tief gebeugt kamen und nichts als Sünde und Verderben vor sich sahen. Aber es war auch eine wunderbare Segenszeit. Wie manche Frau hat ein, zwei Stunden vor mir auf dem Boden gelegen und mit Tränen und Schluchzen ihre Sünden bekannt!').

⁷⁸⁸ Cf. R. Wegner, *Die Erweckungsbewegung auf Nias*, 1924, p. 9; W. Gulö, *Benih yang Tumbuh XIII*, 1983, pp. 15-16.

4.6.4.2 Ecclesiastical Factors

The Jubilee as Mass Rally

Fries⁷⁸⁹ sees the outbreak in close relation to the celebrations for the fiftieth anniversary of the mission in Gunungsitoli on 27 September 1915. The missionaries and indigenous co-workers had used this mass celebration as an opportunity for intense exhortatory preaching ('hellfire-and-brimstone').

The jubilee brought hundreds of leaders (elders and chiefs) from the Christian congregations together at the central celebration in Gunungsitoli.⁷⁹⁰ It was therefore seen as a Christian version of the 'grand feast' (*owasa*).⁷⁹¹ Special services were also held in all of the congregations all over Nias. The experience of unity at the mass gatherings, the challenge to self-examination (questioning everything old as being non-Christian and as the cause of all suffering), and the vision of a new, better age dawning with the rise of Christianity, created the atmosphere which sparked off the awakening. The missionaries, at first flabbergasted, soon tried to subdue the outbreaks of enthusiasm, to prevent their assuming anarchic or revolutionary forms.

Religious Vacuum

It cannot be denied that both the colonial government and the missionaries had contributed to the disintegration of the Niasan culture.⁷⁹² Dieter Becker⁷⁹³ convincingly argues that the Ono Niha experienced a 'religious vacuum' as a result of the destruction of the core of the primal religion. This made them to seek a new religious frame of reference, which they found in Christianity. The Great Awakening functioned as a substitute for the lost 'feast of reconciliation' (*börö nadu*)⁷⁹⁴, formerly celebrated every seven or fourteen years, but in 1908 prohibited by the colonial government. The year 1915 was thus about the time a 'feast of reconciliation' was due to be celebrated.

The Ono Niha expressed their aspiration through the Christian alternative: Jesus Christ as the substitute for the sacred pig, which was formerly killed during the reconciliation ceremony as the atonement for the sins of the community. Another substitute was the Christmas tree, which, to a certain extent, replaced the sacred tree (*fösi; tora'a*) of the primal religion.⁷⁹⁵

It was important to the Ono Niha that the missionaries permitted the consumption of pork at regular church feasts and on special occasions. Therefore, Christian feasts at Christmas, around birth, baptism, confirmation, marriage and funerals, as well as during jubilee-celebrations soon replaced all the festivals of the primal religion.⁷⁹⁶

⁷⁸⁹ Cf. *BRM*, 1916, pp. 250-251; E. Fries, 'Die Erweckungsbewegung in Nias', in *BRM*, 1931/3-4, pp. 70, 72-73.

⁷⁹⁰ For the preparations for and the program of the anniversary, cf. RMG 2.799.

⁷⁹¹ Cf. *Toeria*, 2/2 (1915).

⁷⁹² Cf. W. Marschall, *Der Berg des Herrn der Erde*, 1976, pp. 195-202.

⁷⁹³ D. Becker, '„Sie werfen Satans Bande und ihre Götzen fort?“, in: R. Riess (ed.), *Abschied von der Schuld?*, 1996, pp. 196-200.

⁷⁹⁴ Cf. Ch. 2.4.3.2.

⁷⁹⁵ Cf. W.L. Steinhart, 'De Evangelie-prediker en zijn houding ten opzichte van de Inheemsche cultuur', in: *De Opwekker* 82/4 (1937), p. 158 n. 1.

⁷⁹⁶ Cf. Arlette Ziegler, 'Festive Space, Territories and Feasts in the South of Nias', in: *Nias Tribal Treasures*, 1990, pp. 79-104. Cf. Ch. 6.4.1 until Ch. 6.4.4.4.

The religious vacuum found compensation in the new faith. But there remained some open issues for which no parallel was to be found in westernised Christianity. This caused a certain dualism between Christianity and *adat*, while remnants of the primal religion 'germinated' again and remained alive as an undercurrent. This would remain fertile ground for sectarianism and occasional resurgences of the pre-Christian traditional identity.

Contextualization of the Message

'But he did not know that the LORD had left him' (Judges 16:20c). This verse from the story of Samson, the Judge of Israel, who lost his extraordinary strength in the treacherous arms of his beloved Delilah, became one of the central texts of the Great Awakening on Nias.⁷⁹⁷ This Biblical text impressed the Ono Niha in an unusual way. Though the missionaries of the time liked to explain this in terms of 'a new awareness of sin' or 'fear of God', as a first step towards a living faith, the contextual cultural background may not be overlooked. Three essential aspects of the *adat*, including the primal religion, come to the fore:

1. The story touches the prime concern of the primal religion, which is the attainment of glory (*lakhömi*) through strength (*fa'abölö*).
2. The failure of Samson, the holy man of God, was caused by unauthorized sexual intercourse. Adultery is punishable by death by the *adat*.
3. The biblical story has some similarities with an old mythological tale of the Ono Niha: 'Laowömaru'.⁷⁹⁸ Laowömaru was a giant of extraordinary strength who, with his hair, pulled the island of Nias towards Sumatra, but was not able to join the two islands together.

Some missionaries had adapted their sermons to the ancient mythology of the Ono Niha, which had an astonishing effect on the listeners.⁷⁹⁹ The Niasan preachers usually hesitated to quote directly from the primal religion, but they nevertheless gave an interpretation and application of the Gospel which was understood by the common people. The use of the aphorism (*amaedola*), the pearl of traditional Ono Niha rhetoric, was a mark of their sermons. Christianity was presented as the new, progressive law (*huku si bohou*), replacing the old, backward law (*huku föna*) of 'heathendom'. More intuitively than intellectually, they managed to strike a cord in the souls of their countrymen by referring to paradigms familiar to the primal religion. This contextualization of the biblical message was both an underlying stimulus and a strength of the Great Awakening.

4.6.5 Lasting Impact of the Great Awakening

The lasting value of the Great Awakening, or the so-called 'fruits of the awakening', have been discussed controversially by Müller-Krüger and others.⁸⁰⁰ However, their

⁷⁹⁷ Cf. Maria Fischdick, *Gottes Walten auf der Insel Nias*, 1935, (cf. Foreword).

⁷⁹⁸ Cf. H. Sundermann, 'Laowömaroe', in: A. Pieper (ed.), *Realienboek*, 1928, pp. 28-30.

⁷⁹⁹ Cf. W.L. Steinhart, 'De Evangelie-prediker en zijn houding ten opzichte van de Inheemsche cultuur', in: *De Opwekker* 82/4 (1937), pp. 147-160. Cf. Ch. 6.2.2.1.

⁸⁰⁰ Cf. T. Müller-Krüger, *Der Protestantismus in Indonesien*, 1968, pp. 281-282 is of the opinion that the awakening did not bring about any positive changes, since the Church had not reached lasting financial self-support and the customary law, especially concerning the dowry, had not been

main focus is on the spiritual life of the Ono Niha and the growth of Christianity, rather than on society and culture. They deal with the latter only in relation to the Christian ideals of the missionaries. In the following, we shall attempt to focus more on the significance of the Great Awakening for the transformation of Niasan culture and society at large during this period.

4.6.5.1 Decline of Primal Religion

The curb on headhunting and the prohibition of the 'feast of reconciliation' (*börö nadu*) by the colonial government, the chopping down of the sacred tree (*fösi*) by Missionary Bieger⁸⁰¹, as well as various governmental prohibitions and missionary crusades against everything 'heathen', had been external factors suffocating the primal religion and causing a religious vacuum (see above). The Great Awakening had become the turning point in the hearts of the majority of Ono Niha, so that Christians increasingly scorned the primal religion and called for a radical conversion to Christianity. It became customary for catechumens to make a general confession, renouncing all darkness of the heart (*fa'ogömigömi dödü*), and surrendering all kinds of *adu*, amulets, traditional medicine, poison, and instruments of so-called witchcraft to the minister before confirmation. Later, however, they would often secretly return to certain 'dark practices'.

One token of the old way of life, the filing of teeth (*fangöhözi*), disappeared completely. But another, incision of the male genitals (*famoto*), managed to survive in many regions, having an undefined significance.⁸⁰² Other remnants of the primal religion, such as revelations, dreams, mediation (trance-medium), representation (*adu zatua*), holistic healing, fortune-telling (reading of intestines), the invocation and exorcism of spirits, submerged from public life and were given the stigma of being old-fashioned, evil and subversive. But clandestinely, it remained part of everyday life, up to and including the present. The term 'heathendom' was gradually replaced by 'black magic' (*elemu*).

The vacuum left by the destruction of the primal religion was filled with a new spiritual reality, called Christianity. However, since the new religion did not offer substitutes for each and everything formerly provided by the primal religion (e.g., dream interpretation, dealing with the spirits – both good and evil ones – and obtaining invulnerability), the latter soon clandestinely germinated again.

The new paradigm of fragmentising reality into different, strictly separated realms, gradually replaced the holistic, traditional way of thinking. Though this was an unavoidable change towards modernity, it undermined the integrity of primal religion.

changed. A whole sequence of consequences for the spiritual life of the Ono Niha is given by A. Pieper, himself a missionary on Nias during the Great Awakening, in: *Die Auswirkung der Erweckung auf Nias*, 1928, pp. 6-22.

⁸⁰¹ Cf. J.N. Bieger, *Erlebnisse eines Missionars in 12jähriger Arbeit auf Nias und Sumatra*, vol. I, 1916, pp. 39-48; by the same author, 'Eine Donnars-Eiche auf Nias', in: *Barmer Missionsblatt* 83/10 (1908), pp. 76-77. Note that this was only one of a number of sacred *fösi*-trees on Nias at that time.

⁸⁰² Cf. Ch. 2.5.2.2; Ch. 6.4.2. Pandita Kolingö compared it with circumcision in Judaism, where it is the sign of the covenant. This was fulfilled in the New Testament in Jesus Christ. The new sign is holy baptism. Only the circumcision of the heart is demanded of a Christian (1 Cor 7:19), cf. *Toeria*, 6/4 (1919). For recent thinking about Israel-theology on Nias, cf. J. van Slageren, *Missiologie in Joods perspectief. De plaats van Israël in de zending*, 1996, pp. 88-90.

4.6.5.2 Birth of an Eschatological Awareness

A fundamental impact of the Great Awakening was the birth of an awareness among the Ono Niha that the destiny of this world, and of every individual soul, is prepared by God at the beginning of time. Keeping God's commandments, or ignoring them, will determine whether a person will enter heaven or hell. Christian faith thus persuaded the Ono Niha to move from a cyclical view of time and history, inherent to primal religion with its golden era in the past (Teteholi Ana'a), to a linear view, with the golden era in the future (*sorugo*).

Eschatological awareness, i.e., the fear of not becoming part of God's future, often caused whole communities to convert to Christianity within a very short time. An example of this was given by Ludwig Borutta, the missionary of Lölöwua as of 1914. Using the example of the developments in Hilihambawa⁸⁰³, a village about eight kilometres from Lölöwua, which in 1914 was still determined 'not to become Christian', he demonstrates how the total conversion of an entire village – initiated and led by the chief – took place within a month or two. Even before the villagers started catechumen classes, they destroyed their *adu*. Both a school and a house for the teacher-preacher were built. Young and old, who would not even have greeted the missionary before, now eagerly attended school and worship services. Moved by the question: 'How can I attain eternal life?', the elderly chief even took part in the activities related to building the church, which was completed without any financial help from the RM.

4.6.5.3 Christianity as a New Identity

The Great Awakening has been the crucial moment (*kairos*) in the modern history of Nias. It brought about a metamorphosis of Niasan society. As the traditional identity declined, gradually there was the rise of a Christian identity.⁸⁰⁴ After fifty years of missionary work, major coordinates of the message of the Christian religion had entered the frame of understanding of many Ono Niha, both within and outside of the church. Christian rituals, symbols, songs and stories were no longer considered alien. A significantly new impulse in this respect came from the above-mentioned Niasan pastors (*pandita Niha*) and teacher-preachers (*sinenge*).

Shortly before the outbreak of the Great Awakening, a Niasan Christian leader, such as Chief Ama Ga'uzi of Tumöri, was developing a vision of a pan-Niasan Christian unity. In his jubilee address held in September 1915, he spoke of the advantages of becoming Christian and asked the rhetorical question: 'Has there ever been a time when Ono Niha from all areas could come together like this?'. He then explained what the new alliance with Christianity demanded of the Ono Niha: they had to go out and preach the Gospel as the spears in the hands of the missionaries (*tohu dangara*), in order to overcome the chaos of darkness (i.e., to replace the primal religion with Christianity).⁸⁰⁵

Another token of a growing new identity was the speech held by the paramount chief of Zowu, *Tuhenöri* Dawido, at the wedding ceremony of a mixed couple in Hiliga'uko. He stated frankly that such a wedding between a Christian and an ad-

⁸⁰³ Cf. *BRM*, 1934, pp. 106-108.

⁸⁰⁴ Cf. Ch. 6.2.2.4.

⁸⁰⁵ Cf. *Toeria*, 3/2 (1916).

herent of the primal religion should not be allowed, because it was against the law of God, who wanted the two to be as one.⁸⁰⁶ This speech was extraordinary, not only in its tenor (weddings are very sensitive occasions, where one should avoid insulting one of the parties), but also as a criticism of the missionary, who had given his permission for the wedding.

In the course of the Great Awakening, in the wake of a mass-relocation in religious affiliation, the church became the new symbol of Niasan communal identity. It effectively functioned as a new village community, the *banua* of the Christian people (*banua Niha Keriso*), as opposed to the 'non-Christians', who were labelled aliens (*Niha baero*). The fact that Christianity had managed to replace the essential rites and feasts of the primal religion with its own was not the least reason that this had occurred.⁸⁰⁷ Whereas previously these rites and feasts continuously reinforced the social relations and strengthened the common identity, it was now Christianity which did just that – even though the community of the Church was much larger and more inclusive.

The traditional feasts of merit had aimed at attaining a higher social status (*bosi*); now holy baptism, confirmation (and subsequently holy communion), matrimony, ordination (of pastors), appointment (of teacher-preachers and elders) and Christian funerals replaced the feasts of merit. Old symbols (*adu*-images, *gowe*-megaliths and *fösi*-trees) had been replaced by new ones (photographs, radios and Christmas trees). Pigs, however, remained just as important for Christian feasts as they had been for the traditional ones, except for its religious significance.

Whereas much of the basic pattern of thought had changed little, the Christian feasts naturally had a different mythological background and meaning. Gradually, this brought about fundamental changes in the perception. It is significant that, as a lasting consequence, the Great Awakening had both 'rescued' the communal identity of the Ono Niha as a people, and reshaped it by surpassing the traditionally very limited geographic realm of the *banua*, in principle – though not always in praxis – opening it to people of other races, such as Europeans, Chinese and Malay.⁸⁰⁸

4.6.5.4 Christian Law Versus Customary Law (*adat*)

Originally, customary law (*adat*) had its metaphysical anchor in the primal religion and could not be separated from it. *Adat* was 'order' in a holistic, cosmic sense. The spirits of the ancestors consecrated and sanctioned *adat*, giving *adat* the image of holiness.⁸⁰⁹

The missionaries feverishly weeded out everything considered to be part of the primal religion, yet permitted what were considered to be legal aspects of the customary law. Factually, this resulted in a distinction between a religious realm (i.e., Christianity) and a social realm (i.e., *adat*), though attempts were made in cooperation with the government, especially during the years 1912 until 1915, to Christianise certain aspects of the customary law. This was not very successful in praxis, however, because the authority of the chiefs, the traditional custodians of the *adat*, was already weakened and the rites for renewing the *adat*, namely *fondrakö*

⁸⁰⁶ Cf. *Toeria*, 2/6 (1915).

⁸⁰⁷ Cf. Arlette Ziegler, 'Festive Space', in: *Nias Tribal Treasures*, 1990, pp. 78-104.

⁸⁰⁸ Cf. R. Wegner, *Die Erweckungsbewegung auf Nias*, 1924, p. 17 (a Malay *dukun* converted to Christianity).

⁸⁰⁹ Ch. Ch. 2.4 and Ch. 6.4.

and *börö nadu*, had been prohibited. Without these cultural mechanisms, the traditional *adat* could not be renewed, and was thus doomed to become static, while, on the other hand, the new Christianised *adat* could not be effectively implemented.

Meanwhile, the often chaotic situations created by the Great Awakening raised the awareness of the need for order. The general regulations of the government on moral matters (i.e., included in the 'Christian *adat*') were often quite indifferent in character and dissatisfying to the missionaries.⁸¹⁰ Only a uniform church order and a clear code of discipline could help out. In 1921, Eduard Fries presented a draft of a synod order for Nias.⁸¹¹ This order opted for a more authoritarian structure, centring on the overseer or *ephorus*, rather than a strict 'presbyterial-synodal' structure.⁸¹² This was indeed congruent to the existing social structure of Nias, which traditionally centres around the chiefs. Strong ecclesiastical leadership had to provide order in a rapidly changing situation.

By 1922, most aspects of a Christian code of discipline had been discussed, so that a commission was formed to draft a 'church discipline for use in the Christian fellowship on Nias' or *amachoita*.⁸¹³ This church discipline was subsequently passed by a vote (nine for and four against) in the conference of missionaries in 1923, printed and distributed. This provided important standards for orientation for church members, though it did not effect the customary law (*adat*) other than to divorce it totally from the church. On issues that affected both church and *adat*, the intensity of a person's religious conviction determined whether that person would give priority to Christian values or to the traditional customs.⁸¹⁴

4.6.5.5 Improvement of the Rights of Women and Children

In the realm of social life there were important developments, such as the acceptance of monogamy and greater freedom and more chances for women and children.⁸¹⁵ Fries⁸¹⁶ demonstrates that the victory of Christianity during the Great Awakening transformed family life, especially by improving the position of girls and women. The great importance of liberating females from oppressive traditional structures and giving them access to education had already become a major concern of the RM

⁸¹⁰ Cf. 'Protokoll 1919', in: 'Konferenzprotokoll Nias', 1914-1921 (RMG 2.780). Cf. L. Schreiner, *Adat und Evangelium*, 1972, pp. 135-151. Referring to the encounter between Gospel and culture among the Batak, Schreiner argues that the introduction both of 'Christian laws' (as well as the development of a 'Christian *adat*') by the colonial government, and of a church discipline by the mission had brought about a dual order (*doppelte Ordnung*, *ibid.* p. 138), since the traditional worldview of the Batak (and, to a certain extent, also the theology of the missionaries) did not differentiate absolutely between a secular and a spiritual realm.

⁸¹¹ 'Entwurf einer Synodalordnung für das Arbeitsgebiet der Rheinischen Mission auf Nias', 1921 (RMG 2.804).

⁸¹² The ministry of the *ephorus*, the overseer or bishop of the church, was first introduced in 1881 by RM Inspector F. Fabri in the church order of the Batak church. On Nias, too, the fundamental structure of the new church order was to be 'synodal-presbyterial', with an Episcopal element in the position of the *ephorus*. Until the internment of the RM-missionaries by the Dutch in May 1940, the *ephorus* (a European missionary) did indeed function like the local governor of the board of the RM. Cf. W.R. Schmidt, *Mission, Kirche und Reich Gottes bei Friedrich Fabri*, 1965, p. 53.

⁸¹³ 'Amachoita sogoena ba mbanoea Niha Keriso ba danö Nias', 1923 (cf. RMG 2.803).

⁸¹⁴ This became evident in matters such as polygamy, traditional medicine and shamanism (*daludalu nijahede*), the willingness to send children to school, Sunday rest, marriage (regarding age and dowry), and funerals (cf. R. Wegner, *Die Erweckungsbewegung auf Nias*, 1924, pp. 23-24).

⁸¹⁵ Cf. Ch. 6.3.3.3 and Ch. 6.3.3.4.

⁸¹⁶ Cf. E. Fries, 'Die Erweckungsbewegung in Nias', in *BRM*, 1931/3-4, p. 115.

during the first decade of the twentieth century.⁸¹⁷ Deaconesses joined the male missionaries. During the Great Awakening, one of the positive developments reported was the fact that the conditions for women and girls had amazingly improved.⁸¹⁸

Temporarily, indeed, the awakening had resulted in the lowering of the dowry (*böwö*). A more lasting improvement was that the number of girls attending mission schools increased considerably, and not only among the daughters of nobility.⁸¹⁹ Among the more educated, women would also be consulted before the marriage was arranged.

The biblical teaching that man and woman had been created as equals in the image of God (Gen 1:27) sometimes led to a more humane status for women in the Christian congregations. Interestingly, there are certain old myths of the Ono Niha which, like the biblical witness, stand in sharp contrast to the extremely patriarchal attitude towards women which had been practiced in everyday life.

To a certain extent, the Great Awakening had revived an ancient root in Ono Niha culture. Jürgen Kosack⁸²⁰, a former missionary on Nias, reported that in former times, old women would take the final decision if the leading men were not able to come to a compromise.⁸²¹ Thus, a certain respect for women had not been alien to Ono Niha culture, but it had degenerated, and not revived again until the Great Awakening. Christian widows, though they could not inherit anything, would now at least be cared for. A Christian woman who died in childbirth would henceforth no longer be cast away like a dog, but would receive a decent burial.

Similar improvements can be seen in the attitudes towards children. The Great Awakening resulted in the overall cessation of killings of twins⁸²², or of children whose mother had died in childbirth.⁸²³ Whereas in the past, a female child would have a much lower status than a male child, the new Christian awareness at least challenged the conscience of the men to regard a girl-child as a blessing, rather than as a curse.

4.6.5.6 Dawn of Literacy

One aspect of traditional Niasan identity which was neither condemned by the missionaries (as was the primal religion), nor merely tolerated (as was customary law), but held instead in great esteem, was the Niasan language, the *Li Nono Niha*.⁸²⁴

⁸¹⁷ Cf. 'Die Frauenarbeit der Rheinischen Mission', in: *Des Meisters Ruf* 1/1 (1909), pp. 3-5. The first deaconess of the RM on Sumatra was Hester Needham, who went out in 1890. The first deaconess on Nias was Magda Reineke, who served in Gunungsitoli from 1904 until 1908.

⁸¹⁸ Cf. Maria Fischdick, *Jafusi und andere niassische Geschichten*, 1950

⁸¹⁹ In 1914, some 1562 girls had attended school. By 1930 this had risen to more than three thousand; cf. A. Schneider, *Turia*, 1965, p. 34; Helga Kayser, *Aspekte des socio-kulturellen Wandels auf Nias*, 1976, p. 195.

⁸²⁰ Jürgen Kurt Theodor Kosack (9 June 1929 Weißensee / Thüringen). Together with his wife Ruth Kosack née Otten (20 November 1930 Dinslaken) he worked from 1958 until 1969 in Gunungsitoli (RMG 1.893). This information he obtained in the 1960s from the elderly Solawa Dakhi of Hilisimaetanö.

⁸²¹ Interview in Wuppertal on 8 June 2002.

⁸²² A common practice in pre-Christian Nias, cf. *BRM*, 6 (1883), p. 166; *BRM*, 5 (1889), p. 151.

⁸²³ Cf. J.P. Kleiweg de Zwaan, 'De „Pontianak“ op Nias', 1912, p. 26. He mentions that children whose mother had died while giving birth were killed for fear of the evil Matiana spirit or in order to appease Matiana through this sacrifice.

⁸²⁴ Ch. Ch. 6.2.1.

In contrast to the Batak and the Javanese, the Ono Niha had had no literary tradition before the arrival of the missionaries. Through the schools, a gradually increasing number could read and write, but it had not yet become a popular need. Now, however, the Great Awakening had opened new regions for a Western type of education and motivated larger numbers of people to spend money for the acquisition of literature. Thousands of Bibles, hymnals and other publications written in the Niasan vernacular, were bought from the mission press in Ombölatä.⁸²⁵ Those who could not read became eager to listen to the readings in church, at meetings or at home. Ono Niha developed a way of identifying themselves with the biblical stories (e.g., with the Judge Samson) or with the path of the seeker of truth (Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*). The Bible became a source of inspiration and to a certain degree a standard for justice. Through the mission magazine *Toeria*, perspectives were opened for development beyond the village, and even beyond the island. Literature provided significant help in overcoming the intellectual isolation of the Ono Niha.

4.6.5.7 Music and Songs

Initially, the missionaries held the prejudice that non-Christian Ono Niha were very bad singers and that the art of singing had actually been introduced through the Sunday school.⁸²⁶ The traditional way of singing was considered improper for Christian use and the first generation of *Ono Niha Keriso* were obviously unable to adapt immediately to the European melodies. But the second and third generations were then able to sing the Niasan versions of European hymns.

A new and contextual development in Christian music since the beginning of the Great Awakening were the so-called songs of awakening (*sinunö wangesa*). Kosack⁸²⁷ has made a thorough study of a collection of 55 of these original songs from Central Nias. There had been many more in other areas. A central theme in these spiritual songs is the 'way' (*lala*) to salvation, leading through the temptations and afflictions of this world to heavenly peace. A translated version of Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*⁸²⁸ had exerted a strong influence.

The songs of awakening were often sung in choir competitions, which performed a crucial service by bringing together Christians from different villages and areas.⁸²⁹ Though the songs of awakening have often been frowned upon (and sometimes forbidden) by theologically correct pastors, they have become one of the most important elements of Christian culture on Nias and are sung at all kinds of occasions, including at work.

At the beginning of the Great Awakening, there were extensive discussions related to the traditional synchronized group dance with singing (*maena*)⁸³⁰, concerning whether this could be continued by Christians or not. Eventually, the

⁸²⁵ Concerning the foundation of the mission-press in Ombölatä, cf. E. Fries, *Niassische Pandita*, 1922, p.13.

⁸²⁶ Cf. Pauline Kramer née Garschagen, 'Sonntagsschulfest in Gunong Sitoli', in: *DKM* 26/7 (1880), p. 99. Cf. Ch. 6.2.2.1.

⁸²⁷ Cf. J. Kosack, 'Grundzüge einer Erweckungstheologie in niassischen Erweckungsliedern', 1964.

⁸²⁸ *Jalan Musafir*, translation by Heinrich Sundermann in 1905. Cf. 3.2.1.

⁸²⁹ Choirs from Hilisatarö, Balaecha and Hilisimaetanö competed in singing songs of awakening at the beginning of the Great Awakening in South Nias (E. Sartor, 'Jahresbericht 1920 über die Station Sa'ua', *RMG* 2.769).

⁸³⁰ Cf. *Toeria*, 2/11-12 (1915).

compromise was reached that *maena* could be performed at feasts (but not in Church), as long as the lyrics followed the Christian idiom.

Traditional instruments were either frowned upon or prohibited. The hand-drum (*fondrahi*), beaten by the priest (*ere*) in his shaman rituals, in which he called upon the spirits of the ancestors in cases of illness or other crises, was not adopted by Christianity. Similarly, the missionaries and indigenous church workers did not integrate the gongs (*aramba*), xylophones (*doli-doli*) and other traditional instruments into the worship services, although they were allowed to be used at feasts. Instead, church bells, brass trumpets, and harmoniums were imported by the mission.

4.6.5.8 Ecclesiastical Self-Consciousness

A significant, though not altogether lasting achievement of the Great Awakening was a certain degree of ecclesiastical self-consciousness. Three developments stand out clearly in this respect: An increase in and better quality of human resources, additional conferences and financial independence.

Many traditional chiefs and even office-bearers in the congregations were against the Great Awakening for fear of losing their status, which was challenged by charismatic laity and women.⁸³¹ According to the missionaries, the teacher-preachers with government diplomas actually failed completely during the first phase of the Great Awakening. Since they had a good income and status, they showed little or no interest at all.⁸³² Fortunately, new strengths were generated by the congregations, namely a new generation of indigenous pastors (*pandita*) from the seminary in Omböläta and the newly trained *sinenge*. They supported the Great Awakening and managed to control it. Being 'on top of the wave' of the renewal strengthened the self-confidence of and the strong grass-roots support for these men. They became accepted leaders of the Christians and in society in general⁸³³, though the missionaries still functioned as overseers.

In addition to already existing conferences⁸³⁴, the first conference for assistant teachers was convened in May 1920.⁸³⁵ The conferences played an important coordinating role during this period. Christian leaders from all over Nias met in more or less regular intervals. Such continuous unifying activity was unique in the history of the Ono Niha. The conferences dealt with difficult issues, especially disciplinary matters. They coordinated the work and were a good exercise in the basics of presbyterial-synodal church governance.

The reports of the missionaries are full of praise that the Great Awakening had increased the willingness of Christians to bring sacrifices in the material sense. The church collections were higher than before, there were voluntary gifts, and families would pay their annual church contribution willingly. Even the Muslim and Chinese merchants were amazed that born-again Christians were seriously paying back their debts. Unfortunately, this financial self-support did not surpass the ecclesiastical

⁸³¹ Cf. R. Wegner, *Die Erweckungsbewegung auf Nias*, 1924, p. 74.

⁸³² Cf. E. Fries, *Niassische Pandita*, 1922, p. 19.

⁸³³ Cf. W. Gulö, *Benih yang Tumbuh XIII*, 1983, p. 17; R. Wegner, *Die Erweckungsbewegung auf Nias*, 1924, pp. 32-38. E. Fries, 'Die Erweckungsbewegung in Nias', in *BRM*, 1931/3-4, pp. 114-115.

⁸³⁴ I.e., the annual conference of missionaries (officially since 1880), the annual conference of the teacher-preachers (since 1898), irregular conferences for Christian elders and chiefs (since 1895).

⁸³⁵ Cf. 'Protokolle Nias-Konferenz', 1920-1921 (RMG 2.780).

boundaries. The missionaries did not encourage Niasan entrepreneurship, or any other modern form of economic progress in the hands of the people. When the awakening cooled down, the church again experienced want and the society as a whole remained poor. The economy remained largely in the hands of the Chinese, Muslims and (until World War II) Europeans.

4.7 GROWTH OF CHRISTIANITY ON THE BATU ISLANDS (1919-1930)

4.7.1 New Generation of Missionaries

Whereas formerly the DLM had recruited all its missionaries for the Batu Islands from the RM, Schröder and Steinhart⁸³⁶ were the first Dutchmen to be stationed there. Schröder arrived on Pulau Tello on 6 November 1919 and Steinhart on 31 December 1924.⁸³⁷ As native Dutch, they received relatively more attention and support from Lutherans in the Netherlands than had their German predecessors. At intervals, Schröder worked alongside German missionaries in the service of the DLM, such as Frickenschmidt (who left on 8 March 1922) and Borutta (1922-1924).

Schröder and Steinhart both originated from Amsterdam, but they came from different ecclesiastical and educational backgrounds. Schröder was a member of the Restored Evangelical-Lutheran Church and the last student of the DLM in Barmen; Steinhart was from the Evangelical Lutheran Church and the first to be educated in the Dutch School of Mission of the Cooperating Mission Agencies in Oegstgeest.⁸³⁸ This difference in background partially explains their diverging theological inclinations. Schröder represented pietistic orthodox Lutheranism, at the time still dominant in the DLM, while Steinhart had a more cultural, less dogmatic manner. This became particularly clear in matters concerning the indigenous culture of the Ono Niha. Using Richard Niebuhr's vocabulary, Schröder's position could best be described as 'Christ against culture', and Steinhart's approach as 'Christ and culture in paradox'.⁸³⁹ Despite these differences, however, they represented a new generation of missionaries and both brought some renewal to Christianity on the Batu Islands. In contrast to their German predecessors (and temporary colleagues), they placed an emphasis on pastoral counselling by making home visits, not only to Christians but also to non-Christians, feeling that the best method of reaching people was not only through the missionary sermon, but also through the 'mission-chat'

⁸³⁶ Cf. Ch. 3.5.1.

⁸³⁷ Steinhart first arrived on Pulau Tello on 5 June 1924, but left again two days later for Nias. Under the guidance of H. Rabeneck in Hilisimaetanō he studied the Niasan language until December 1924.

⁸³⁸ Cf. Ch. 3.5.1.

⁸³⁹ H.R. Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 1951/2001, pp. 45-82, 149-189. The positive side of the 'Christ against culture' position is that it 'resolutely rejects culture's claims to loyalty' (*ibid.* p. 45), is radically loyal to Jesus Christ as Lord, and critical towards spiritual laxity. On the other hand, it denies the fact that there is no human being without culture. Therefore, the danger of this position is that, while rejecting the cultures of others, it enthrones one's own supposedly true Christian culture as the only valid measure of all things. The 'both-and' position ('dualist', though not 'dualistic') of the 'Christ and culture in paradox' position tries to hold together as well as to distinguish between 'loyalty to Christ and responsibility for culture' (*ibid.* p. 149). In the heritage of Paul and Luther, culture is acknowledged as an authentic expression of humanity corrupted by sin, as against the miracle of God's grace. Unchristian cultures are therefore not per se more sinful than Christian cultures. The problem about the 'Christ and culture in paradox' is that it tends towards cultural conservatism and often lacks the dynamics of cultural transformation. Cf. Ch. 6.1.

(*zendingsgesprek*) during a house visit.⁸⁴⁰ Among their other virtues were efficient church management and intensive study of the indigenous culture. Schröder, who was the administrator, invested much energy in developing more democratic (i.e., presbyterial-synodal)⁸⁴¹ church structures, while Steinhart excelled in thorough, internationally acknowledged studies of the indigenous culture of the Ono Niha on the Batu Islands.

4.7.2 Geographic Expansion of the Missionary Work

The different approach of this new generation of Dutch missionaries represented by Schröder and Steinhart brought about a steady spread of Protestant Christianity from the original main stations (Pulau Tello and Sigata) to the other villages in the vicinity, as well as to neighbouring islands. Around 1930, the focus of the mission had shifted mainly to the larger Batu Islands of Tanah Masa (*Tanö Hamasa*) and Tanah Bala (*Tanö Hibala*), which fell into Steinhart's realm of responsibility due to an agreement between Schröder and Steinhart outlining a clear division of tasks between the two of them.⁸⁴²

4.7.2.1 First Fruits

Remaining villages on Pulau Tello, where the conversion to Christianity was more an individual decision in comparison with the tendency to group conversions on the more remote islands⁸⁴³, were evangelized by Ono Niha.⁸⁴⁴ Hili Amaedula was completely Christianised by 1925, as was Polele, the area of Nathanael Ziliwu.⁸⁴⁵ Only the Islamic villages on Pulau Tello remained closed to Christianity, as did a part of the Chinese-Buddhist community. Later, Roman Catholicism became a more viable option for many Chinese on Pulau Tello.

On Sigata, where the first fruits had been baptised in Bawö Sitöra in 1900, the major shift towards Christianity had not come until Sa'ukhu, the last influential priest (*ere*), had converted to Christianity in 1903⁸⁴⁶, and the people of Sigese, the

⁸⁴⁰ Cf. *EVB*, 44/4 (1926), p. 66 ('huisbezoek de enige methode om de menschen te bereiken').

⁸⁴¹ The Lutheran churches in the Netherlands never had a hierarchical, let alone an Episcopal, structure like many other Lutheran churches. The church councils show similarities to the Reformed tradition (i.e., elected elders and deacons, who work together with and not under the supervision of the ministers).

⁸⁴² Since 1930. The congregations on Pulau Tello were served together. Sigata, Hayo, Mari, Fono and Sifika formed the church-circuit of Schröder. Bötua, Lorang, Balögia, Baluta and Lasondre formed the church-circuit of Steinhart. Schröder was the manager of the hospital; Steinhart the inspector of schools, cf. *EVB*, 49/2 (1931), p. 34.

⁸⁴³ Cf. *EVB*, 49/2 (1931), p. 46.

⁸⁴⁴ Cf. *EVB*, 44/1 (1926), pp. 2-7: Ikhu Mbatu (Ujung Batu) was evangelized by *Guru* Fae'ö Gamuata. Though he did not succeed with his school, the village was opened for Christianity in the early 1920s. *Guru* Omböila knew very much about the ceremonies and secrets of the animist priests. He also had knowledge about the practices of the Islamic *dukun*. He became a powerful witness of Jesus Christ, so that most of the people of Hili Analita and vicinity converted to Christianity. Borutta baptized the chief Hili Tawere in 1923, but the *Ono Niha Keriso* themselves developed the congregation. By 1925 Hili Tawere had become a mainly Christian village.

⁸⁴⁵ Cf. *EVB*, 44/1 (1926), p. 7. The villages of Eho, Barumado'u and Hilinitaya belonged to the district of Polele.

⁸⁴⁶ Cf. Agnes Landwehr née Kämpfer, 'Aan hollandsche Zondagschoolkinderen over Afgodenpriesters op Sigata', 27 October 1903, in: annual report of Landwehr to DLM, Sigata, 14 January 1904 (GAA 552/36). Here, the *ere*'s name is spelled as 'Sauhu'.

largest and richest village, began to open up for the Gospel in 1905.⁸⁴⁷ Nevertheless, it was not until the time of Schröder and Steinhart that the people of Sigese as a whole were ready to identify themselves with Christianity.⁸⁴⁸ In addition to Bawö Sitöra and Sigese, a third strong congregation on Sigata was Fuge, which had been difficult to reach until Landwehr and Kienlein had taken the initiative to build a road across the island in 1908.⁸⁴⁹ In 1931, the congregation of Fuge finally managed to open a regular mission school under *Guru Kahonoa*.⁸⁵⁰ By 1937, there were almost no rituals of the primal religion on Sigata, the traditional initiation rites having been replaced by confirmation.⁸⁵¹

On Bötua (near Sigata), the first 23 believers were baptised on Christmas 1917, but the actual breakthrough for Christianity came when Chief Faodo Gamuri was baptised on 18 March 1927.⁸⁵² His good example did much to further the course of Christianity. Due to a political division between two villages, Kampung Lama and Kampung Baru, as well as to the interference of the colonial authorities, Kampung Baru closed itself to the Christian mission and opened its gates to Islam.⁸⁵³ Quite a few Christians from Bötua emigrated to other Batu Islands, carrying Christianity with them.⁸⁵⁴

The 27 first fruits on Hayo were baptised by Schröder in 1921.⁸⁵⁵ The growth of the congregation was slow. During the Communist uprising in May 1926⁸⁵⁶, Hayo was considered a centre of the rebels. After the rebellion had been suppressed, Chief Januwö Ziliwu⁸⁵⁷ feared that the Dutch military would invade Hayo. Steinhart visited the island to comfort the people and organized some food for them.⁸⁵⁸ This led to the Christianisation of Hayo.⁸⁵⁹ By 1934, only three families had not yet been baptised, though two of them were attending catechism classes. One of the men was Fawunu Zörömi, an elderly man, whose wife was a well-known animist medium (*kataruna*), strongly opposed to Christianity. Fawunu Zörömi was baptised on his sickbed a week before he died, after having confessed his faith with the words: 'my heart is steady in our faith' (*aro dödögu ba wanerönuda*).⁸⁶⁰ One year later, in 1935, *Guru Wania* of Hayo reported that the whole population of the island had become Christian⁸⁶¹, even though the chief wished to conserve some remnants of the primal

⁸⁴⁷ Cf. *EVB*, 22/6 (1904), p. 181.

⁸⁴⁸ Cf. *EVB*, 47/2 (1929), pp. 39-42 (Steinhart's annual report of 1928).

⁸⁴⁹ Cf. *EVB*, 26/3 (1908), p. 84.

⁸⁵⁰ Cf. *EVB*, 49/4 (1931), p. 91.

⁸⁵¹ Cf. *EVB*, 56/1-4 (1938), pp. 29-31.

⁸⁵² A mission post on Bötua was opened in April 1914. Cf. letter Julius Ziegler to DLM, Sigata, 4 April 1914 (GAA 552/34); *EVB*, 49/2 (1931), pp. 48-50; J. Hallewas, *Lutherse Wereldzending NU*, 1955, p. 7.

⁸⁵³ The colonial authorities did not acknowledge the chief of Kampung Baru, cf. *EVB*, 56/1-4 (1938), p. 35; *EVB*, 58/1-4 (1940), pp. 39-41.

⁸⁵⁴ Cf. *EVB*, 53/2 (1935), p. 42.

⁸⁵⁵ Ziegler had started the work on Hayo in 1914, cf. *EVB*, 43/3 (1925), p. 64; *EVB*, 43/4 (1925), p. 70; cf. G.O. Reitz, 'A report of the Church in the Batu Islands', 1959, p. 2.

⁸⁵⁶ Cf. Ch. 4.8.4.

⁸⁵⁷ Reportedly, the chief was uncompromising towards colonialists and mission, cf. *EVB*, 43/4 (1925), p. 69.

⁸⁵⁸ Cf. *EVB*, 46/1 (1928), pp. 5-8.

⁸⁵⁹ Cf. *EVB*, 50/3 (1932), pp. 66-68; 55/4 (1937), p. 75. In 1932 a quarrel between an elder, Lugu Jamoföfö, and the teacher-preacher, Wae'ö, almost split the congregation. Fortunately, Schröder managed to reconcile the two. Lugu Jamoföfö, one of the first fruits, died in 1937.

⁸⁶⁰ *EVB*, 52/4 (1934), pp. 77-78.

⁸⁶¹ Cf. *EVB*, 53/2 (1935), p. 39; 56/1-4 (1938) p. 28. Three years later this changed due to frequent

religion in the Christian ceremonies, especially in the context of funerals. When the coffin was carried through the village gate, the people would shout: 'sweep it clean, beat it!', in order to drive away the evil spirits. The missionaries tried to prohibit this, but the chief did everything in his power to hold this particular *adat* rite in honour⁸⁶² – and he succeeded.

In February 1924, Kana Wa'ambö, just back from seminary, became teacher-preacher of Lorang and the mission work now began in earnest.⁸⁶³ Soon he had gathered some catechumens and on 3 January 1926 the eight first fruits were baptised by Steinhart.⁸⁶⁴ In the 1930s, influences from Islam caused division in Lorang.⁸⁶⁵ In 1940, Schröder reported that Lorang was the most difficult missionary area in the Batu Islands, because Islam was so strong there.⁸⁶⁶ Despite the challenge, the Christian congregation of Lorang later became one of the larger ones on the Batu Islands.⁸⁶⁷

Mari is an island very close to Lorang. Göba, the first teacher-preacher of Sigata, originated from one of the four villages on Mari. The first baptism in Sawolohela on Mari was performed on 9 March 1926, by Schröder.⁸⁶⁸ By 1938, there were 51 Christians in Sawolohela and Gobö, including the family of the chief of Sawolohela.⁸⁶⁹ The people of Sasua were also preparing to become Christians. Only the Islamic village of Luaha-Idanö withstood Christian penetration.⁸⁷⁰

Howia is another island close to Lorang and Mari. In the 1930s, the *guru* of Lorang went there once a week to preach and hold catechism classes. Soon the majority of the women were attending the catechism classes.⁸⁷¹ Despite a strong Islamic influence, a congregation about the size of that on Mari could be established there.

The island of Sifika (about the size of Pulau Tello, but very sparsely populated) and the islet of Fono are within sight of each other. A mission school on Sifika was opened in 1913.⁸⁷² The first assistant-teacher was the Muslim Elias.⁸⁷³ In June 1915, when Elias was transferred to Lorang, he was replaced by *Guru Fae'ö Gamuata*.⁸⁷⁴

migration.

⁸⁶² Cf. *EVB*, 55/1 (1937), pp. 2-5 (cf. n. 1).

⁸⁶³ The school building of Lorang was inaugurated on 24 June 1915, with 33 pupils and Elias (a Muslim) as the teacher; cf. letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 29 June 1915; cf. 'Jaarverslag', 11 January 1916 (GAA 552/35); cf. W.F. Schröder, *De Zending op de Batoe-eilanden*, 1927, p. 84.

⁸⁶⁴ Cf. G.O. Reitz, 'A report of the Church in the Batu Islands', 1959, p. 3. Information: Kana Wa'ambö, *guru* of Lorang.

⁸⁶⁵ Cf. *EVB*, 49/2 (1931), p. 51; 53/2 (1935), p. 43.

⁸⁶⁶ Cf. *EVB*, 58/1-4 (1940), p. 44.

⁸⁶⁷ Cf. W. Gulö, *Benih yang Tumbuh XIII*, 1983, p. 55 (in 1972, Lorang had 416 members, compared to 436 in Bawö Sitöra and 2482 in Pulau Tello).

⁸⁶⁸ A mission school was opened in 1913, cf. post card Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 21 June 1913 (GAA 552/35); letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 3 July 1913 (GAA 552/35); report Pauline Frickenschmidt to DLM, 'Die Einweihung der Schule auf Mari', Pulau Tello, 1 November 1913 (GAA 552/35). About the seven first fruits in 1926, cf. *EVB*, 44/4 (1926), pp. 84-85; W.F. Schröder, *De zending op de Batoe-eilanden*, 1927, p. 81.

⁸⁶⁹ Cf. *EVB*, 56/1-4 (1938), p. 31 (W.F. Schröder writes: 'Sawolohene').

⁸⁷⁰ Cf. *EVB*, 56/1-4 (1938), p. 31; 58/1-4 (1940), p. 46.

⁸⁷¹ Cf. *EVB*, 53/2 (1935), p. 44.

⁸⁷² Cf. W.F. Schröder, *De Zending op de Batoe-eilanden*, 1927, p. 83.

⁸⁷³ *Ibid.* pp. 83-84.

⁸⁷⁴ Cf. letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 29 June 1915; cf. 'Jaarverslag', 11 January 1916 (GAA 552/35).

The mission school on Sifika could now finally serve its second purpose, that of becoming an instrument of Christianisation. The five first fruits on Sifika were baptised in 1929 and the people requested an evangelist, who would then be able to serve the congregation along with the congregation of nearby Fono.⁸⁷⁵ In 1930, the first believers on Fono, the branch congregation of Sifika, were baptised. Among them were the chief and his wife.⁸⁷⁶ Two years later, it was reported that the majority of Ono Niha on Fono had embraced Christianity.⁸⁷⁷ By 1938, there remained 'a handful of heathen' on Fono⁸⁷⁸ and the congregation had become quite an active one, even holding regular evangelisation services in the early 1940s.⁸⁷⁹ This might explain why later the BNKP congregation on Fono was able to become almost twice the size of its former mother church on Sifika.⁸⁸⁰

Balögia on the island of Batu Makele, which belonged to the district of Sifika, was one of the least developed areas on the Batu Islands.⁸⁸¹ The people there had a mystic belief related to crocodiles.⁸⁸² In 1929, the first 27 inhabitants of Balögia to have become Christians were baptised.⁸⁸³ The district chief Sinuyu, who had formerly worked as warden of the jail on Pulau Tello and had been baptised in the congregation of Pulau Tello, was very active in furthering the cause of Christianity on Balögia.⁸⁸⁴ The congregation grew so rapidly that in 1940 the majority of the population had become Christian and Balögia was considered a main congregation, even having a branch congregation in Gitö on Tanah Masa. The first teacher-preacher of Balögia was Laowö, who also served on Sifika (Hili Satulö) and in Gitö.

Between Fono and Hayo, just south of Pulau Tello, lies the tiny islet of Siberanu. In 1917, Frickenschmidt applied for a school to be built in the village of Hoioia on Siberanu, since there were enough children there to qualify for a government subsidy.⁸⁸⁵ Due to the fact that many inhabitants left Siberanu to settle on other Batu Islands, the spread of Christianity was sluggish, despite the presence of the school.⁸⁸⁶ It was not until 1935 that Christianity began to penetrate the hearts and minds of the people. On 14 December 1937, the sixteen first fruits of Siberanu were baptised.⁸⁸⁷

The chief of Lasondre (northern Tanah Masa), though not a Christian, supported the mission. In March 1930, a small mission school was opened in Lasondre and on 3 August 1930 it was upgraded to become an evangelisation post, served by teacher-preacher Nifae'ö Gabölata.⁸⁸⁸ At the first Christmas celebration, in 1930, which was attended by a Muslim descendant of the last *raja* of the Batu Islands, the first fruits

⁸⁷⁵ Cf. *EVB*, 46/1 (1928), p. 11.

⁸⁷⁶ Cf. *EVB*, 49/3 (1931), pp. 71-72.

⁸⁷⁷ Cf. *EVB*, 50/3 (1932), p. 61.

⁸⁷⁸ *EVB*, 56/1-4 (1938), p. 33.

⁸⁷⁹ Cf. *EVB*, 58/1-4 (1940), p. 54.

⁸⁸⁰ Cf. W. Gulö, *Benih yang Tumbuh XIII*, 1983, p. 56.

⁸⁸¹ Cf. *EVB*, 58/1-4 (1940), p. 50.

⁸⁸² Cf. *EVB*, 56/1-4 (1938), pp. 39-40. For the crocodile-*adu*, cf. Ch. 2.4.2.1 (Image of the Sinner).

⁸⁸³ Cf. J. Hallewas, *Lutherse Wereldzending NU*, 1955, p. 7.

⁸⁸⁴ Cf. *EVB*, 51/2 (1933), p. 46.

⁸⁸⁵ Cf. letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 11 March 1917 (GAA 552/35).

⁸⁸⁶ Cf. *EVB*, 53/2 (1935), p. 38.

⁸⁸⁷ Siberanu had become a branch congregation of Hayo. *Guru Wania* came every Sunday, after the service in Hayo, and twice a week for the school, cf. *EVB*, 56/1-4 (1938), p. 27.

⁸⁸⁸ Cf. *EVB*, 49/1 (1931), pp. 8-9. Nifaeö (sometimes called Nifaö) Gabölata, who originated from Bötua, had no formal training at a seminary, but was trained by missionaries Steinhart and Schröder.

of Lasondre were baptised.⁸⁸⁹ *Guru Nifae'ö Gabölata* impressed the population by organising a collection of five cents per Christian attending a funeral ceremony. This money was then given to the widow of the deceased, in order to lighten her financial burden and as a token of solidarity. Due to the significance of funeral ceremonies for the Ono Niha, the number of catechumens in Lasondre rose rapidly because of this.⁸⁹⁰

The official consecration of the first church building in Lasondre, on 19 December 1937, was reportedly a most impressive social event, beginning with a procession from the house of the chief to the new church.⁸⁹¹ In mid 1939, because *Nifae'ö Gabölata* had become involved in insoluble problems in the local mutual financial-help scheme (*sulösulö*)⁸⁹², he was replaced by Ratja as teacher-preacher. At the end of the 1930s, Lasondre was one of the financially strongest congregations on the Batu Islands.⁸⁹³

Koto Bulu'aro, the residence of the old royal family, had become predominantly Muslim. But in the 1930s there existed close contacts with the Christians of Lasondre.⁸⁹⁴ A small wooden chapel was built in Koto Bulu'aro.⁸⁹⁵ This branch congregation of Lasondre was served by one elder. To the south of Lasondre is the area of Gitö. Christians seem to have migrated there in the late 1920s. A congregation was formed in the 1930s and Gitö became a branch congregation of Balögia on Batu Makele.⁸⁹⁶ For a while the congregation in Gitö was strongly influenced by the Seventh-Day Adventists, who exploited the people's dislike of paying annual church contributions.⁸⁹⁷

South of Gitö on Tanah Masa is Baluta, embracing five (later six) villages. The first teacher-preacher of Baluta was Nikana Eli. In 1929 the first nineteen inhabitants of Baluta were baptised.⁸⁹⁸ For a while, Baluta seemed to be becoming one of the Christian strongholds on Tanah Masa, but in 1932, after the death of Nikana Eli, the congregation went through a crisis which lasted more than a year.⁸⁹⁹ Under *Guru Nisana*, who came in 1934, the nearby villages of Hale, Bawö Ofulua and Baruyu Sikamba were reached by the Gospel.⁹⁰⁰ But *Guru Nisana* did not maintain a high standard of service in Baluta and was transferred to Sifika in 1937. In the early

⁸⁸⁹ Cf. *EVB*, 49/2 (1931), p. 54. By that time, the whole royal family had become Muslim.

⁸⁹⁰ Cf. *EVB*, 50/3 (1932), pp. 62-63. This has not become common practice in other parts of the Batu Islands nor on Nias.

⁸⁹¹ Cf. *EVB*, 56/1-4 (1938), p. 41.

⁸⁹² Cf. *EVB*, 58/1-4 (1940), pp. 47-48. *Sulösulö* (Bahasa Indonesia: *arisan*) is a system of mutual financial help, which sometimes causes quite serious quarrels. It works as follows: if, for instance, somebody needs hundred guilders, he seeks ten people who would each lend him ten guilders. At a meeting with the creditors, the debtor has to slaughter a pig for a meal together. Then a schedule and sequence is determined. Every month one of the others (the original creditors) will receive hundred guilders. If, which often happens, one cannot wait for his turn, he could also get it earlier, on the condition, that he does not receive the full ten guilders from each of the others, but instead nine or eight guilders. A problem arises, if more than one wants his turn earlier, in which case a kind of auction is held. A bigger problem is, if one cannot pay at all.

⁸⁹³ Cf. *EVB*, 56/1-4 (1938), p. 45. Second only to Lumbui on Tanah Bala.

⁸⁹⁴ Cf. *EVB*, 56/1-4 (1938), p. 42; 58/1-4 (1940), p. 47.

⁸⁹⁵ Cf. *EVB*, 58/1-4 (1940), p. 49. In 1940 a big mosque was being built and the Christian chief died.

⁸⁹⁶ Cf. *EVB*, 58/1-4 (1940), p. 47.

⁸⁹⁷ Cf. *EVB*, 58/1-4 (1940), p. 51.

⁸⁹⁸ Cf. J. Hallewas, *Lutherse Wereldzending NU*, 1955, p. 7.

⁸⁹⁹ Cf. *EVB*, 49/2 (1931), p. 51; 51/2 (1933), p. 47.

⁹⁰⁰ Cf. *EVB*, 53/2 (1935), p. 44; 55/4 (1937), pp. 77-83; 56/1-4 (1938), p. 41; letter Steinhart to DLM, Pulau Tello, 14 September 1937 (GAA 552/39).

1940s, the missionaries began to focus on the remaining non-Christian village of Simondo in Baluta.⁹⁰¹

4.7.2.2 Church Planting by Migration

Another important factor for the spread of Christianity was migration. Many Ono Niha from the more densely populated Batu Islands, such as Pulau Telo, Siberanu and Sigata, moved to other, more spacious and less densely populated islands, such as the southern parts of Tanah Masa and Tanah Bala, for planting cash crops. It is remarkable that their Christian identity was so strong that in many cases they influenced the local population to embrace Christianity. It was only in areas where Islam was well established that it was difficult – and often impossible – for Christianity to take root in the local population.

The most southern peninsula of Tanah Masa is Saeru. When Schröder visited this area in 1932⁹⁰², there was already a Christian congregation there, made up primarily of settlers from other Batu Islands. Although the people of Saeru maintained some 'heathen' practices, most of them converted to Christianity in the years 1934 and 1935.

In the 1920s, more than one hundred Christians from Pulau Tello had settled in Sitou (meaning: 'which is far away'), better known as Lumbui, on the southwest coast of Tanah Bala, in order to make use of the possibility of planting large coconut farms.⁹⁰³ By 1930, they had established a Christian congregation. In March 1937, the DLM took an official decision to extend mission activities to Lumbui.⁹⁰⁴ Former teacher-preachers Mandija and Nikana Eli lived there as pensioners⁹⁰⁵, and so did Omböila, a former elder of Tello – a somewhat ambivalent 'lifelong evangelist'⁹⁰⁶ – who energetically propagated the Gospel. In August 1939, Lumbui received its own teacher-preacher (or evangelist) in the person of Ni'ila, who was transferred there from Polele on Pulau Tello.⁹⁰⁷ He managed to reconcile the chiefs of Eho and Hili Sanaere Tanö, who had been at swords' points in a betrothal issue.⁹⁰⁸ This reconciliation was a decisive factor for the Christianisation of Lumbui.

4.7.3 Medical Missions

Under the good management of Schröder, who had followed a course in midwifery in Leiden⁹⁰⁹, the medical work in the hospital on Pulau Tello was improved considerably.⁹¹⁰ Due to the removal of the mission station on Sigata to Pulau Tello in 1916, however, the mission hospital on Sigata had to be closed down. The mission did not establish any medical posts on the other Batu Islands.

⁹⁰¹ Cf. *EVB*, 58/1-4 (1940), p. 53.

⁹⁰² Cf. *EVB*, 51/1 (1933), p. 6.

⁹⁰³ Cf. *EVB*, 49/1 (1931), pp. 4-8; W.L. Steinhart 'Het Zendingswerk op Zuid West Hibala', report to the DLM, 16 September 1936 (GAA 552/39); 'Eén ding weet ik', 1937, *EVB*, 55/4 (1937), pp. 77-83.

⁹⁰⁴ 'Notulen Algemeene Vergadering', Amsterdam, 31 March 1937 (GAA 552/19).

⁹⁰⁵ Cf. *EVB*, 50/3 (1932), pp. 60-61.

⁹⁰⁶ Cf. *EVB*, 56/1-4 (1938), p. 42. He once showed sympathy with Seventh Day Adventism.

⁹⁰⁷ Cf. *EVB*, 58/1-4 (1940), p. 56.

⁹⁰⁸ Cf. *EVB*, 58/1-4 (1940), pp. 57-58.

⁹⁰⁹ Cf. A. Steinhart, *1889-1989. 100 jaar Kerk op de Batu-eilanden*, 1989, pp. 30.

⁹¹⁰ Cf. *EVB*, 49/2 (1931), p. 34.

At first, only the missionaries themselves administered medical treatment and medicine. Gradually, however, they delegated this task to assistants, especially to the Ono Niha paramedics or *mantri*.⁹¹¹ Though not an ecclesiastical functionary in the stricter sense, the *mantri* was treated similarly to a *guru*. He attended the monthly conferences on Pulau Tello.

The pioneer and first *mantri* of the Batu Islands was an Ono Niha by the name of Kajoe Afore Hondrö.⁹¹² He finished the mission school on Pulau Tello, after which he was sent by Frickenschmidt to the mission hospital in Pearaja, Batakland. After having been trained there for two years, he returned to Pulau Tello in August 1919, shortly after Frickenschmidt had rebuilt the hospital.⁹¹³ He was trusted not only by the Christians, but also by Muslims and Buddhist Chinese⁹¹⁴, many even trusting his skills more than they did those of the European governmental physician (see below). The medicines he most frequently administered were quinine, aspirin, castor oil and an herb against worms.⁹¹⁵ By providing good service to both male and female patients, he was able to generate enough revenue to make it possible for his salary to be paid from the hospital's profits.⁹¹⁶ Hondrö later also became a member of the synod board of the Batunese Church.⁹¹⁷

Since the DLM could not position a missionary physician on the Batu Islands, the more serious medical cases had to wait for medical treatment by a government physician who occasionally visited the Batu Islands.⁹¹⁸

4.7.4 Educational Missions

Despite the restrictions in government subsidies for schools in the 1930s, the educational system on the Batu Islands both improved in quality and expanded geographically to remoter regions, such as Tanah Masa and Tanah Bala. Steinhart became the inspector of schools.⁹¹⁹ The locations for new schools were always chosen with the ulterior motive that they could also serve as evangelisation posts. Baluta on Tanah Masa, for instance, was such a strategic location, from which, later, Lumbui on Tanah Bala could be reached. In 1925 a mission school was built in the village of Baruyu, ringing in the Christianisation of Baluta.⁹²⁰ On 4 January 1926, the school lessons commenced with fifty pupils.⁹²¹ Balögia on Batu Makele, where

⁹¹¹ Also called *ziekenverzorger* (carer of the sick). A *mantri* is a male medical aide, male nurse or paramedic.

⁹¹² The *mado* (clan-name) 'Hondrö' is not mentioned in the reports of the missionaries, but is remembered by Leonard Steinhart, the son of Missionary W.L. Steinhart (interview 20 June 2002, St. Michielsgestel). According to G.O. Reitz and Kana Wa'ambö, Kajoe was also called 'Afore' or 'Gafore' ('A report of the Church in the Batu Islands', 1959, p. 3; cf. 'Amachoitia Pulau Tello ba B.N.K.P.', pp. 3ff., Arsip BNKP). An *afore* is a rod with measurements for measuring the size of a pig. It is also a symbol of justice. *Kajoe* (kayu) is the Malay word for wood. Since it is not very likely that an Ono Niha child was named 'wood'; Kajoe Gafore (staff of justice) probably was the complete first name of *Mantri* Hondrö.

⁹¹³ Cf. *EVB*, 51/3 (1933), p. 59. The first hospital had been destroyed by termites.

⁹¹⁴ Cf. *EVB*, 44/2 (1926), p. 40.

⁹¹⁵ Cf. *EVB*, 51/3 (1933), p. 60.

⁹¹⁶ *Ibid.* p. 64.

⁹¹⁷ Cf. Ch. 5.7.1.

⁹¹⁸ Cf. *EVB*, 49/2 (1931), p. 37.

⁹¹⁹ Cf. *EVB*, 49/2 (1931), p. 34.

⁹²⁰ Cf. W.F. Schröder, *De Zending op de Batu-eilanden*, 1927, p. 109. Interview with Haidir Gowasa, Gunungsitoli, 15 May 2001. Gowasa was a member of the BNKP synod board.

⁹²¹ Cf. *EVB*, 44/1 (1926), p. 12.

Steinhart opened a mission school in 1928, was also chosen for its strategic location near the north-western coast of Tanah Masa.⁹²²

Christian schools were also regarded as strategic strongholds in the effort to prevent the spread of Islam. For this reason, as early as 1911, Frickenschmidt had considered building a Christian school and placing a teacher-preacher, *Guru Galitö*, on the remote island of Simuk.⁹²³ Though this plan was supported by the governor of West Sumatra, it was never realized.⁹²⁴ The school project in Talulimo, a good natural harbour on the north-eastern coast of Tanah Masa, was more successful. Muslim traders from Pulau Pini and Hibae had already begun to spread Islam in Talulimo.⁹²⁵ In spite of this, Steinhart considered Talulimo to be a strategic location for a mission school, since from here two other villages, Wawa and Balari, as well as the nearby island of Iadö, could be reached.⁹²⁶ Mainly because of this Christian school, a considerable Christian congregation developed in Talulimo.⁹²⁷

Remarkable progress was made in the field of women's education. According to Schröder, Christian women were 'much more knowledgeable' in matters of faith than were the men.⁹²⁸ Generally, they were much more diligent than their male counterparts. Traditionally, women were not allowed to hold public office, lead public ceremonies or give public auditions. Through Christian education, however, new and liberating opportunities opened up for women. As pupils in school, being treated as the boys' equals, the girls developed a great deal of self-confidence. And so did the women who attended catechism classes as catechumens. Talents, for ages denied the right to be developed, now came to the fore. On Sigata, and later all over the Batu Islands, women discovered the choirs as a means to express themselves in public, a practice which was gradually also discovered by the men.⁹²⁹

The course of women's education on Sigata received a serious setback in 1934, when a schoolgirl, who years before had fallen in love with *Guru Ratja*, but had then been forced into matrimony with another, corresponded with the teacher-preacher. When her husband discovered the letters, there was a scandal. *Guru Ratja* was transferred to Pulau Tello, being replaced by assistant teacher Nikana Eli. As so often, the real victims were the girls, since it was held that without their having been educated, this never would have happened.⁹³⁰

4.8 CHALLENGES TO CHRISTIANITY ON NIAS AND THE BATU ISLANDS (1865-1930)

Protestant Christianity on Nias and the Batu Islands, which was firmly under the supervision of the missionaries, was challenged both by internal factors, i.e., by primal religion and Islam, as well as by external factors, i.e., Seventh-Day Adventism and Communism.

⁹²² Cf. *EVB*, 47/2 (1929), p. 36.

⁹²³ Cf. letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 13 August 1911, 10 November 1911 (GAA 552/35).

⁹²⁴ Cf. letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 23 May 1911 (GAA 552/35).

⁹²⁵ Cf. *EVB*, 49/1 (1931), pp. 11-12.

⁹²⁶ Cf. *EVB*, 49/1 (1931), p. 11.

⁹²⁷ According to the statistic in 1972, the congregation had 139 members, which was considerable in that area (W. Gulö, *Benih yang Tumbuh XIII*, 1983, p. 55). When the author visited Talulimo in 1989, a permanent church building was almost ready for use.

⁹²⁸ *EVB*, 48/4 (1930), pp. 86-87 ('dat de vrouwen over het algemeen veel meer wisten dan de mannen').

⁹²⁹ Cf. *EVB*, 44/4 (1926), p. 73.

⁹³⁰ Cf. *EVB*, 53/2 (1935), pp. 40-41.

4.8.1 Primal Religion

Throughout this period, primal religion remained a major challenge to Christianity on Nias and the Batu Islands. Although the institutions of primal religion, such as the priesthood (*ere*), the rituals and the sacrificial feasts, gradually disappeared from public life, the veneration of the ancestors, inseparably linked to the ancestral images (*adu zatua*), was continued, albeit secretly, by many Christians.⁹³¹

Arguments given by Ono Niha for keeping their ancestral images were often quoted, but seldom taken seriously by the missionaries. The most fundamental problem was that by destroying the ancestral images, the living would be cut off from the dead. Some Christian Ono Niha feared the wrath of the ancestors; others were ashamed that the non-Christians would accuse them of burying their father for the second time⁹³²; and still others would say: 'How could I be happy in heaven if my parents and ancestors are in hell?'⁹³³ Since these ancestral images were collective family property, their destruction could cause quarrels and even schisms in mixed families.⁹³⁴ Understandably, catechumens of the first generation often begged the missionary to allow them to keep their ancestral images.⁹³⁵ *Guru* Jonatha on Nias quoted one of his compatriots, saying: 'We would very much like to follow the new teachings and throw away our idols, if only the missionaries would let us keep our ancestral images.'⁹³⁶

As the first congregations were built up, the issue of the possession or the destruction of *adu* became the decisive confessional issue acquiring the rank of acting as a watershed between Christians and non-Christians. The *adu* were regarded by the missionaries as the major cause of both spiritual and physical misery among the Ono Niha. Mainly on the basis of the Old Testament (i.e., Ex 20: 4-5), *adu* were considered an abomination to God. Furthermore, since the *adu* were a source of income for the traditional priests (*ere*), their destruction would undermine the primal religion and strengthen the economy. The destruction of the *adu* thus became the symbolic prelude to holy baptism, whereas secretly keeping them after having become a Christian (or returning to 'heathen' practices) was sufficient cause for excommunication.⁹³⁷

Occasionally, missionaries would even make raids on houses, confiscating remaining *adu*⁹³⁸, which would then be buried, burned, placed in the mission house as trophies, or sent to private collectors and museums in Europe.⁹³⁹ However, de-

⁹³¹ Cf. Ch. 6.3.3.2.

⁹³² I.e., Christian chief Ama Zimoluo, who did not want to surrender the *adu zatua*, *BRM*, 1886, p. 137.

⁹³³ Cf. *BRM*, 1881, p. 208.

⁹³⁴ Cf. *BRM*, 1886, pp. 139-140; *BRM*, 1887, p. 206. Although among the Ono Niha it was an accepted fact that the chief represented the corporate identity of the village or clan, (cf. *BRM*, 1881, p. 207), and although the ideas of Gustav Warneck on communal conversion had begun to enter missionary circles by the 1890s, sometimes only part of a village or clan, or even only individuals would convert to Christianity (cf. *BRM*, 1879, pp. 350-353).

⁹³⁵ Cf. *BRM*, 1875, pp. 100, 105, 107.

⁹³⁶ Quotation cited by J.A. Fehr in *BRM*, 1886, p. 147.

⁹³⁷ Cf. *BRM*, 1881, p. 200; *BRM*, 1886, p. 137. Kramer excommunicated a Christian from Lölwönu caught practising sacrificial rites. A precondition for being received back was the surrender of *adu* and talismans.

⁹³⁸ Cf. *BRM*, 1880, p. 172.

⁹³⁹ *BRM*, 1884, pp. 23-24; e.g., there are qualitatively highly valuable collections of *adu* in the *Völkerkundemuseum* of the Archiv- und Museumsstiftung in Wuppertal and the *Volkenkundig Museum Nusantara* in Delft.

spite all these efforts, the ancestors continued to play an important role in the lives of the Niasan Christians. When N. Go'e, one of the first fruits of Hilina'a, who had been baptised in 1874 by Denninger and Kramer, addressed the congregation during the founding synod of the BNKP in 1936, he revealed that the first Christians on Nias had secretly continued to venerate the images of the ancestors.⁹⁴⁰

4.8.2 Islam

Through immigrants from Sumatra (Aceh and Minangkabau) and probably from Celebes (Bugis), Islam had entered Nias before Christianity had. However, for cultural and historical reasons (i.e., the prohibition of pork and of slavery⁹⁴¹), it remained unacceptable to the vast majority of Ono Niha, especially to those in the interior. Stronger communities of Muslims were to be found only in certain ports and marketplaces, such as Gunungsitoli, Miga, Olor, Lahewa, Bio'uti, Darodaro Balaikha and Teluk Dalam. On the Hinako Islands, some of the noble families had converted to Islam. Before the Christian missionaries arrived, the question of allegiance to or the rejection of Islam had been largely settled on Nias.

The missionaries occasionally disturbed the balance between the traditional and the Islamic communities on Nias. Especially after the first baptisms of former adherents of the primal religion, there was an occasional and temporary commotion in areas with a stronger Islamic population.⁹⁴² In a single case, in North Nias, the expansion of Christianity was temporarily hampered by the Islamic community, but there was no violence.⁹⁴³ Sometimes, frightening propaganda was initiated by both Muslims and Christians, putting pressure on the traditional chiefs to make a choice, usually in favour of Christianity.⁹⁴⁴

As on Nias, Islam had entered the Batu Islands before Christianity through immigrants from abroad. However, on most of the Batu Islands the situation was less settled than on Nias. Despite the pig-culture of the primal religion, Islam seems to have been not altogether unattractive to the adherents of this primal religion. The royal family on Tanah Masa, which, as some of the chiefs on the Hinako Islands, was of Buginese descent, had very close links with Muslims, though the *raja* of the Batu Islands himself was not a Muslim. He maintained a good relationship with the missionaries and the last ruling king even became a Christian before he died.⁹⁴⁵ However, after the Dutch had ceased to acknowledge the *raja*, replacing him with a *demang* in 1915, the entire royal family converted to Islam, which exercised a strong influence on other chiefs, who were indebted to the family.

The islands of Pini and Hibae off the eastern coast of Tanah Masa were Islamic strongholds. Christianity was also unable to penetrate a few Muslim villages on Pulau Tello, although initially there was no hostility toward the Christians.⁹⁴⁶ One of the Islamic centres on Pulau Tello was Sinuru, where an impressive mosque was built in 1925. An influential, moderate haji by the name of Tuada si Batua lived

⁹⁴⁰ Cf. *Toeria*, 23/12 (1936).

⁹⁴¹ These factors are mentioned by Julius Richter, *Die evangelische Mission in Niederländisch-Indien*, 1931, p. 100. Cf. W. Oehler, *Die große Reue*, 1926, p. 6 (Oehler only mentions pork). Cf. Ch. 2.3.1.

⁹⁴² Cf. A. Lett, *Im Dienst des Evangeliums auf der Westküste von Nias*, vol. IV, 1901, pp. 3-6.

⁹⁴³ Cf. *JBRM*, 1914 (1915), p. 108.

⁹⁴⁴ E.g., *Balugu* Tödölala of Ombölata. Concerning the 'propaganda war', cf. *BRM*, 1878, pp. 72-82.

⁹⁴⁵ Cf. Ch. 4.5.3.6.

⁹⁴⁶ Bayaraja, Rafarafa, Simaluraja, etc..

here. When asked where a Muslim should say his ritual prayers in a Christian village, he answered: 'in the Christian house, because they also believe in the God of the Muslims'.⁹⁴⁷

As the Christians became greater in number and Christianity more powerful because of its privileged relationship with the colonial authorities, however, the Muslims began to challenge its dominance. By the end of the 1920s, there was a 'race' between Christianity and Islam for the remaining 'heathen' areas on the Batu Islands. This 'race' was much more widespread and was carried out more openly than that on Nias had been.

4.8.3 Seventh-Day Adventism

The roots of Seventh-Day Adventism (SDA) can be followed back to William Miller (1782-1849), a Baptist preacher in New York City in the United States of America. The 'Seventh-Day Adventist Church' (1845) propagated a number of specific articles of faith, the most prominent being the imminent second coming of Jesus Christ and the restoration of the holiness of the Sabbath. In 1874, SDA missionaries began to operate abroad, also, reaching Indonesia at the beginning of the twentieth century.⁹⁴⁸

First influences on Ono Niha society are reported in January 1913. Batua, son of Lege Zato, a prominent Christian on Pulau Tello, had joined the SDA in Padang.⁹⁴⁹ During the next fifteen years, the SDA gradually infiltrated the Batu Islands, where it played an earlier and more threatening role in relation both to the Protestant mission and to the colonial authorities than it had on Nias.⁹⁵⁰

The chief protagonist of the SDA on the Batu Islands was Sitefano, an albino from North Nias. He launched his missionary activities from Siberanu, near Pulau Tello. In June 1927 he received support from a Western SDA missionary, called Judge. Even though, in order not to provoke the Dutch Lutheran missionaries, the SDA missionaries claimed to work only among the Muslim population, in fact their propaganda was aimed primarily at Protestants who resented paying the annual church contribution.⁹⁵¹ The Dutch Lutheran missionaries protested, but the SDA appealed to the Governor-General in Batavia.⁹⁵²

Steinhart proposed to counter the challenge through more intensive religious education. More, and not less, mission schools had to be opened as a preventive measure, even if they did not qualify for government subsidies.⁹⁵³ However, mainly due to lack of funds, this proposal was not realised. The SDA managed to gain a few followers and to confuse many others. For some, like Nathanael Ziliwu, a former teacher-preacher and as of 1915 *demang* of the Batu Islands, this new church – not being part of the colonial status quo – was attractive for political reasons. There

⁹⁴⁷ *EVB*, 44/1 (1926), p. 4. (by 'the Christian house' Tuada si Batua meant the church-building).

⁹⁴⁸ Cf. G.R. Knight, 'Adventisten', in: *RGG*³ I (1998), pp. 127-129. Ralph Waldo Munson began SDA activities in Padang on 1 January 1900, cf. Jan S. Aritonang, *Berbagai Aliran di dalam dan di sekitar Gereja*, 1995, p. 288.

⁹⁴⁹ Cf. letter Frickenschmidt to DLM, Pulau Tello, 3 January 1913 (GAA 552/35).

⁹⁵⁰ First activities of the SDA on Nias are recorded in 1932; cf. Ch. 5.8.6.

⁹⁵¹ Cf. *EVB*, 46/2 (1928), p. 39.

⁹⁵² Cf. *EVB*, 46/2 (1928), pp. 38-39; 46/3 (1928), p. 52.

⁹⁵³ Cf. *EVB*, 46/3 (1928), p. 52.

were rumours that the *demang* had secretly supported this sect, since its activities ceased after he had been removed from office in 1928.⁹⁵⁴

4.8.4 Communism

The Communist uprising on the Batu Islands in May 1926 seems to have been a preliminary attempt by the 'Red Unions' (*Sarekat Merah*) in West Sumatra, 'a strange sort of Communism indeed', as Sjahrir commented⁹⁵⁵, to initiate an Indonesia-wide revolution.⁹⁵⁶ Larger rebellions, instigated by the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI), followed in November 1926 in Banten and in January 1927 in Minangkabau.⁹⁵⁷ The instigators of the rebellions defamed Christianity as an instrument of Dutch oppression and sought to arouse dissatisfied Muslims who had fallen victim to the colonial status quo.⁹⁵⁸

Erupting at Labuan Hiu, an Islamic village on the Batu Island of Pini, the uprising soon swept over to Pulau Tello. Schröder and his family had just departed for a vacation in the Bataklands⁹⁵⁹, but Steinhart was on his mission station. He calmed down the congregations, where panic and chaos had broken out⁹⁶⁰, and reorganised the teacher-preachers, who were fleeing from the more remote islands. Two of them, Fae'ö Gamuata and Wania, had been mishandled and were in serious condition, both physically and mentally.⁹⁶¹ Eventually, military from Padang and Gunungsitoli suppressed the rebellion⁹⁶², though on some of the more remote islands the situation remained tense for some time. There were also some Christians among those arrested, but they were later released.

The subjugation of the Communist uprising resulted in a 'run' on the church on the Batu Islands. The worship services were celebrated with great intensity and gratitude.⁹⁶³ Numerous non-Muslims who had supported the Red Unions now turned to Christianity, in order not to be considered communists.⁹⁶⁴ Many of these opportunists later apostatised again, but a considerable number became loyal to the church.⁹⁶⁵ The number of Christians rose from 1002 in 1926 to 1146 in 1927⁹⁶⁶, an increase of approximately 14%. This temporary challenge of Christianity by Communism was confined to the Batu Islands and did not affect Nias.

⁹⁵⁴ Cf. *EVB*, 47/2 (1929), p. 38. Nathanael Ziliwu had to stand trial in Gunungsitoli on charges of corruption.

⁹⁵⁵ Quotation in N. Tarling, *Southeast Asia: a modern history*, 2001, p. 374.

⁹⁵⁶ Cf. B. Schrieke, 'The Development of the Communist Movement on the West Coast of Sumatra', in: W.F. Wertheim et al. (eds.), *Indonesian Sociological Studies*, 1955, pp. 85-94.

⁹⁵⁷ Cf. N. Tarling, *Southeast Asia: a modern history*, 2001, pp. 373-375; cf. R. Cribb, *Historical Dictionary of Indonesia*, 1992, pp. 304, 347. The Red Unions were affiliated with the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) founded in 1920. Initially, they worked under the cover of Islam, but they were expelled by the Islamic Union (*Sarekat Islam*) in October 1921.

⁹⁵⁸ Cf. *EVB*, 45/2 (1927), pp. 59-61.

⁹⁵⁹ Cf. *EVB*, 46/1 (1928), p. 3. Schröder had left Pulau Tello on Friday, 21 May 1926, which was about the beginning of the rebellion on Pulau Pini (Fene), cf. *EVB*, 51/1 (1933), p. 8.

⁹⁶⁰ Cf. *EVB*, 46/1 (1928), pp. 4-5.

⁹⁶¹ Cf. *EVB*, 46/1 (1928), pp. 4-5.

⁹⁶² Cf. letter A. Momeyer to the board of the RM, Gunungsitoli, 4 June 1926 (RMG 2.787). Initially, twenty soldiers from Padang were deployed and then twenty more followed from Nias.

⁹⁶³ Cf. *EVB*, 46/1 (1928), p. 5.

⁹⁶⁴ Cf. *EVB*, 46/1 (1928), p. 5.

⁹⁶⁵ Cf. letter Steinhart to DLM, Pulau Tello, 27 January 1927 (including annual report for 1926), GAA 552/39.

⁹⁶⁶ Cf. *EVB*, 46/2 (1928), p. 34.

4.9 FINAL OBSERVATIONS

In this chapter, the history of the Christianisation of Niasan society under the leadership of the missionaries from the RM and the DLM has been described. Before the arrival of these missionaries, there had already been a few sporadic preliminary attempts to introduce Christianity into Nias, but they had been too short and too superficial to result in any substantial encounter between the Gospel and the indigenous culture.

During the 'difficult beginnings' (1865-1890) on Nias, even as early as Denninger's service in Padang (1861-1865), there were some first continuous interactions between Christian missionaries and Ono Niha, but the impact of Christianity on Niasan society was very limited. The missionaries initially treated the local people as guests, offering them small gifts. If they used traditional means of communication and adjusted themselves to the cultural setting, the missionaries were usually treated with respect. Gradually, as they became more fluent in the Niasan vernacular, and by using Western medicine and education as strategic means of evangelisation, the German missionaries managed to gain a foothold in Niasan communities which had already been subjugated by the Dutch, particularly within the parameters of the *rapatgebiet* on Nias. A few Christian chiefs, such as Ama Mandranga of Sifalaete, as well as some of the teacher-preachers, played a significant role in communicating the teachings and the policies of the mission to their fellow countrymen.

Outside the *rapatgebiet*, however, especially in South Nias, where the intimidating influence of the colonial government was not so strongly felt, the missionaries were not able to stand their ground during this period. The cultural insensibility of many missionaries, especially those who had adopted Fabri's imperialist patterns of thought, as well as the fact that the independent chiefs rightfully feared that Christianity would undermine their position of absolute power over their subjects, constituted major obstacles. Occasionally, after having tolerated the missionaries for some time, chiefs dissociated themselves when they realised that they could not manipulate the missionaries to their own ends.

Characteristic for this period is the intensive cultural learning process, which, although to a certain extent mutual, took place mainly on the part of the missionaries. For them it was an absolute necessity if they were to reach their goals. From the outset, the missionaries learned the Niasan vernacular. During their time as pupils of the Ono Niha, some meaningful relationships, and even friendships, developed. Later, newly arrived missionaries would acquire their basic language skills from their senior colleagues in the field, and sometimes even before their departure from pensioned missionaries who had returned to Europe. This increasing lack of having experienced oneself as a student of language and culture under the guidance of Ono Niha increased the tendency to view the Niasan reality through the spectacles of the dominant mission ideology. As a rule, with some few exceptions, the missionaries on Nias and the Batu Islands and their indigenous protégés felt no need to make use of the possibilities innate in the Ono Niha's spiritual context. Despite their often passionate emphasis on personal sacrifice in the footsteps of Jesus Christ, the missionaries were definitely unwilling to become 'all things to all people' (1 Cor 9:20-22).

Very early on, the missionaries began to train some indigenous men to assist them in school. After the first congregations had been founded, some of the respon-

sibility was delegated to indigenous leaders, at first mainly to the Christian chiefs, but later increasingly to the teacher-preachers and the elders. On Nias, the development of first, rudimentary ecclesiastical structures began.

The years 1890 until 1915 were vital to the expansion of Christianity among the Ono Niha. Whereas at the end of the previous period there had been merely three viable but struggling stations on Nias, all of them within the *rapatgebied* (on the Batu Islands, the work had just begun and no Ono Niha had as yet been baptised), in 1915 there were fourteen rapidly growing stations, encompassing 120 branch congregations⁹⁶⁷, located throughout the island of Nias, as well as two stations, encompassing some fifteen branch congregations, on the Batu Islands.

The year 1890 marked the beginning of a process of the successful penetration of missionary activities into areas beyond the *rapatgebied* on Nias, more or less in close collaboration, and often simultaneously with colonial expansion. Once colonial rule and the presence of Christian missionaries had become an unavoidable factor in their society, most of the chiefs gave in and asked to be baptised. In areas where the chiefs' authority had already been curtailed, the chiefs' embracement of Christianity improved their prospects in their relations with the colonial establishment. By converting to Christianity, some former leaders of rebellions against the Dutch, such as Fadoli, Siwahumola, Balöhalu and Sitambaho, were even able to avoid punishment by the colonial authorities. The act of baptism and the subsequent banquet of pork were accepted as a symbolic treaty of allegiance.

A shift in missionary strategy led to efforts to win whole communities over to Christianity. Inspired by Warneck's vision of the 'Christianization of nations', it had been possible to realise the strategic idea of the triple axis, creating a network of missionary stations all over Nias. There was a move away from individual conversion, which included a total break with the 'heathen' culture, towards the transformation of whole ethnic entities into Christian ones. This increased the acceptability of the Christian religion for some of the Niasan chiefs beyond the boundaries of the *rapatgebied*. Missionaries had followed the rules of the *adat* in order to gain entrance to strongholds of the primal religion such as Lölöwa'u, or to win the sympathy of chiefs such as Ama Gahonoa (Sirombu), Nisaetö (Sogae'adu), and Sirörösihönö (Baŵalia).

At the same time, however, the stronger focus on culture resulted in stricter differentiation. Indigenous culture was divided into three distinct levels, namely the level of eagerly accepted culture, the level of tolerated culture and the level of condemned culture. At the first level, there was a very positive appreciation of the vernacular, which was upgraded not only to the level of a literary language, but to that of a 'Christian' medium, on an equal basis with other 'Christian' languages. The customary law (*adat*) was placed on the second level. Attempts were made to ennoble the *adat* by adjusting it both to colonial and to Christian principles, thereby making of it a useful tool for bringing order to societal life.

The primal religion was placed on the third and lowest level. In accordance with the paradigm of the Enlightenment, it was thought that the primal religion could be eradicated and replaced by Christianity without destroying the rest of the cultural identity. In an a priori manner, all ancestral images were considered to be idols and

⁹⁶⁷ In 1900 there had been eleven stations, including Padang on Sumatra, with 5000 members.

thus an abomination to God. Therefore, they were destroyed relentlessly, quite justifying the accusation of 'cultural vandalism' which was raised.⁹⁶⁸

The eradication of all symbols of the primal religion became a prerequisite set by the church authorities for every household that desired admittance to Christianity. Submission to the missionaries' demand to surrender the images for destruction opened the door to baptism, whereas secretly keeping them constituted a ground for the owner's excommunication if they were later found out. The destruction of the primal religion thus became a matter of confessional status (*status confessionis*), i.e., constituting a watershed between Christians and non-Christians.

In the stead of the primal religion, a particular type of westernised Christianity was superimposed by the missionaries on those Ono Niha who were willing to become Christians. At the same time, the Ono Niha lost their freedom as a people. By 1908, the whole of Nias and the Batu Islands had been subdued and subjected to colonial rule. Eagerly supportive of the Ethical Politics of the Dutch government, the German missionaries willingly cooperated with the colonial authorities. On the one hand, this did bring about many positive developments in the fields of medical service, education and the development of infrastructures, but on the other hand, the missionaries also called on the colonial authorities for the use of force in order to 'pacify' areas not yet under colonial rule and, in addition, they openly supported forced labour (*rodi*).

The yoke of colonialism and the systematic destruction of the primal religion resulted in a spiritual vacuum in the communal psyche of the Ono Niha and paralysed the *adat*. The primal religion had been the central nerve of the cultural identity. Customary law could be neither implemented nor renewed if severed from its religious root. The eradication of this root necessarily resulted in a serious identity crisis. In the midst of this devastation, however, a new national identity, based on the new law of God (*huku Lowalangi*), was already beginning to take shape in some parts of the Niasan population.

The Great Awakening (1915-1930) was the most significant period in the history of Christianity among the Ono Niha, because it rescued the Ono Niha from (cultural) extinction. This revival movement was also an indigenous missionary movement, resulting in the communal metamorphosis of Niasan society. While it may be argued that it was a communal surrender to the new ruling order, it certainly released tremendous energy and the creativity to construct a totally new corporate identity. Religion once again became the dominant factor in Ono Niha society – only that it was now Christianity in the stead of the primal religion.

The eschatological vision of this new religious identity constituted the fundamental distinction between it and the old religious identity. Whereas in the primal religion, the pattern of thinking is cyclical (the spirits of the deceased return to the golden upper world or Teteholi Ana'a; essentially, the *adat* is rooted in this world of the ancestors), Christianity, on the other hand, has a linear conception of time and history, with the golden age (i.e., salvation) in the future. All earthly efforts must be directed towards achieving this eternal state of bliss. During the Great Awakening, this new eschatological vision inspired significant developments among the Christian Ono Niha. Its impact, however, was largely limited to the social realms

⁹⁶⁸ As the head of the museum of the RM in Barmen acknowledged, the statues of the ancestors (*adu zatua*) were an expression of genuine piety among the Ono Niha. ('Mit ihnen ist immer ein gutes Stück Pietät verbunden'), cf. *Globus* 82/17 (1902), pp. 280; cf. Ch. 4.4.1.

of the family, the village (*banua*) and the church. The missionaries anxiously prevented its expressing itself politically and did not encourage economic independence. The dynamism was in no way permitted to express itself in terms of Niasan national independence from Holland. Though the spiritual flight of fancy cooled down after 1930, the maturity gained during the Great Awakening was an important prerequisite for the Niasan Church's achieving ecclesiastical independence in 1936.

A second missionary front was opened by the DLM among the Ono Niha on the Batu Islands in 1889. Since all of the early DLM-missionaries had received their training at the Barmen Seminary, their missionary work greatly resembled that of the RM-missionaries on Nias, except for a few distinctly Lutheran traits in Batunese Christianity. Although, in general, the growth of the church on the Batu Islands and particularly the development of its medical service was more rapid than it had been on Nias, the missionaries here were rather negligent concerning the creation of church structures related to leadership, decision-making and financial self-support.

A new period began in 1919 with the arrival of Dutch missionaries on the Batu Islands, who introduced a less authoritarian, more presbyterial type of organisation. While the main pillars of missionary work, like on Nias, centred very much on the missionary schools and the medical service, the Dutch Lutheran's approach was more pastoral (e.g., 'mission chat') compared to their German predecessors and colleagues. They improved the organisational and financial state of the developing church, and Steinhart, with exceptional intensity and appreciation, studied the traditional culture – including primal religion – as a means of expressing the Gospel.

The major tasks of the missionaries and their Asian co-workers (among them both Batak and Niasan teacher-preachers) included both formal Western education and informal Christian education. A very important role was also played by the wives of the missionaries establishing Sunday schools, which were attended by both boys and girls. While for young Niasan men, Christian education provided the best way to climb the social ladder, for women and girls it was a means of emancipation, which granted the previously unknown freedom to develop potentials long suppressed by traditional culture. Next to the medical service, Christian education was the most effective tool in the process of gradually transforming the Ono Niha society into a Christian one.

The reconstruction of the history of mission during this period would be incomplete without drawing special attention to the serious challenges faced by the Protestant missionaries and their indigenous congregations on Nias and the Batu Islands. The most fundamental and continuous challenge came from the primal religion. Especially the traditional priests (*ere*) and the sovereign chiefs strongly resisted the mission's crusade throughout this time frame. As Christianity spread to the outskirts of the Niasan and Batunese archipelago and became well established (a part of the colonial Dutch status quo, so to speak), those sectors of society, including Islam, which considered themselves to be the victims of colonialism and the Christian mission also challenged the missionary-led church. More sporadic, but no less dangerous, were the challenges by 'opposition-movements', such as the Christian Seventh-Day Adventists and the viciously anti-Christian Communists. All of these challenges, however, eventually augmented the maturing process which prepared the missionary-led church on Nias and the Batu Islands for ecclesiastical independence.