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Christianity in Indonesia: An Overview

Introduction

Indonesia is a multicultural and multireligious nation whose heterogeneity is codified in the state doctrine, the Pancasila[1]. Yet the relations between the various social, ethnic, and religious groups have been problematic down to the present day, and national unity has remained fragile. In several respects, Christians have a precarious role in the struggle for shaping the nation. They are a small minority (about 9% of the population) in a country predominantly inhabited by Muslims; in the past they were interconnected in manifold ways with the Dutch colonial government; they exert great influence in economy and the military, and constitute the majority of the population in some parts of the so-called Outer Islands (such as Flores, Sumba, and Timor), which are characterized by an attitude fraught with ambivalence towards the state apparatus perceived as 'Javanese' and 'Muslim'. In the aftermath of the former president Suharto's resignation and in the course of the ensuing political changes – in particular the independence of East Timor – Christians were repeatedly discredited for allegedly posing a threat to Indonesian unity, and have been involved both as victims and perpetrators in violent regional clashes with Muslims that claimed thousands of lives.[2] Since the beginning of the new millennium the violent conflicts have lessened, yet the pressure exerted on Christians by Islamic fundamentalists still continues undiminished in the Muslim-majority regions. The future of the Christians in Indonesia remains uncertain, and pluralist society is still on trial. For this reason the situation of Christians in Indonesia is an important issue that goes far beyond research on a minority, touching on general issues relating to the formation of the nation-state.

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[1] Pancasila is a Pali term that relates to five (*panca*) principles, or rules (*sila*). It goes back to the Buddhist moral teachings that demand the avoidance of five offences: killing, stealing, lying, immorality, and the consumption of drugs. In the Indonesian context the following principles were established: the belief in one God, democracy, social justice, humanitarianism, and national unity.

[2] Compare Searle (2002); Sidel (2006); Wessel and Wimhöfer (2001).

Christianity and Colonialism

Archeological evidences of the existence of Christian communities in Southeast Asia, probably Nestorians, in the Malay Peninsula, Sumatra and Java can be traced back to the seventh century[3]. During Portuguese colonization in the sixteenth century, and also at the beginning of Dutch rule in the seventeenth century, the majority of those who later were to become Indonesians practised their traditional religions. Hinduism prevailed on Bali and in many parts of Java; the modern, trade-oriented princedoms – primarily those in the coastal regions – had adapted Islam as an adequate social and religious system of rules. Dominicans, Jesuits, and various Protestant missionary societies began to spread the Christian faith among the adherers of the autochthonous religions. This explicitly also served the purpose of stemming the influence of Islam. East Flores and its offshore islands became Catholic,[4] the greater part of the Moluccas, the Minahasa, and the Batak region turned Protestant. In the twentieth century Christianity expanded to the hitherto unproselytized part of Flores, as well as to Timor, Roti and Sawu, Central Sulawesi, and among the Chinese minority.

Both the colonial and the modern Indonesian state are intertwined with the developments undergone by Christianity. It is hardly possible to draw a dividing line between proselytization and colonialism, even though missionaries and colonial officials did not always pursue the same interests.[5] On the one hand, it is indisputable that Protestant and Catholic ideologies had a significant share in the implementation and acceptance of foreign rule. On the other hand, it was scarcely possible to reconcile the colonizers' project of subduing and profitably exploiting the indigenous population with the idea of establishing a Christian non-European civilization. The diverging objectives resulted in diverging strategies of dealing with the indigenous peoples. While the colonial administrators played off the local customs against Islam, the missionaries tried to replace indigenous structures, ideas, and most notably religions with Christianity and European

[3] Compare Goh (2005:1); Van Klinken (2003:7).
[4] Histories of Catholicism in Indonesia have been published by Muskens (1970, 1973, 1974, 1979) and Steenbrink (2003); Müller-Krüger (1957, 1966) and Hoekema (1994, 2001) wrote on Protestantism. A general history of Christianity and Islam has been written by Waver (1974); regional studies have been provides by several authors. To mention just a few of them Aritonang (1988) wrote on the process of proselytization among the Batak, Dietrich (1989, 1994) on Flores, Henley (1996) on Minahasa, Witschi (1942) on the Dajak of Borneo and Smith-Kipp (1990, 1995) on the Karo (-Batak).
[5] This is particularly true for Catholicism which arrived with the Portuguese in the sixteenth century.

concepts of community. Colonial decision makers knew that Muslim leaders were hostile towards them, and they were aware of the powerful anti-colonial potential of Islam.[6] From their point of view, it was only natural to forge alliances with local rulers against the religious leaders. In many cases, such as the so-called Padri wars in West-Sumatra, they intervened in local conflicts on behalf of local elite and became, as Michael Laffan stated, "de facto partisans of *adat*[7] against the *shari'a*" (Laffan 2003:110). In order to strengthen traditional non-religious local leadership the colonial government commissioned ethnographic studies of *adat* as well as of social and political structures, and legalized these local traditions.[8]

The missionaries, who felt committed to a specific form of European civilization and associated the Christian faith with a package of community-building measures, were not only suspicious about *adat* but often tried to eradicate it altogether, particularly those elements they defined as religious. The anthropologist Webb Keane has pointed out that the efforts of the missionaries basically aimed at correcting a supposed 'illicit conflation of words, things, and persons' (Keane 1996:138). However, the extent to which the missionaries succeeded in destroying local cultures still needs to be ascertained by in-depth research, because these cultures turned out to be resilient, creatively striving to appropriate and transform the powerful 'Other'. Local belief systems and ritual practices were forcibly crushed in some regions of Indonesia; in others the complete wipe-out of cultures was probably intended but could not be put into practice. Just as in other parts of the globe, local actors responded creatively to the confrontation with the powerful world religions. They created indigenous forms of Christianity, and in many cases convincingly succeeded in combining and interweaving the own and the foreign in such a way that essential elements of their

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[6] Anti-colonial Islamic movements even used the metaphor of a Holy War. For Aceh see Teuku Ibrahim Alfian (2006), for West-Sumatra see Taufik Abdulla (1989) and Young (1994). Alfian (1994) has written about the Islamic movement Muhammadiyah under colonial rule and Steenbrink (1993) focuses on the relationship between Dutch colonialism and Islam.

[7] The term *adat* derives from the Arabic word *adat* (sing. *adah*) and can be translated as local customs. *Adat* includes the local belief system, the symbolic order, architecture, the kinship order and a bunch of daily practises such as agrarian practises, handicraft techniques and rituals. It is a point of reference for jurisprudence and the administration of justice and legitimizes political and religious authority.

[8] The gifted scholar of Islamic Studies, Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje, gained particular prominence as a researcher on Indonesian *adat* and as an adviser of the colonial government. He played a crucial role in the conquest and colonization of Aceh. Regarding the use of *adat* against Islam see also: Mahadi (1987:212).

cultures survived, even though sometimes in a modified form. In other cases cultures were indeed largely destroyed or became transformed; yet in these instances the actors were not helpless victims either, but rather found ways to take advantage of the new situation. Yet in order to convert them to Christianity, missionaries indisputably exerted considerable pressure on ethnic groups that avowed themselves to autochthonous religions.

The relationship between the colonial government and the missionary societies was characterized both by divergences and convergences of interests. In order to avoid problems with the Indonesian Muslims, evangelical activities were strictly controlled and regulated. The societies needed a special missionary permit that in each case was only valid for a specific, designated region.[9] Muskens (1974:92) has pointed out that due to these restrictions the churches could not gain a foothold in many regions until after Indonesian independence. These problems notwithstanding, occasional dissonances between colonial officials and missionaries should not be overestimated. Both, missionaries and members of the colonial administration were strictly against a further expansion of Islam.[10] Furthermore, despite the colonialist's sympathy with local *adat* they took advantage of those who converted to Christianity and, thus, functionalized religion for political purposes.[11] The colonial administration entrusted the missionary societies with important tasks in terms of development policy, putting them in charge of the educational and health care sectors. On the island of Flores, for example, the entire build-up of the school and education system was put in the hands of the Societas Verbi Divini, a missionary society that still today plays a dominant role in the development of that region. Due to the missionary activities, a pronounced regional identity[12] that transcends ethnic identities emerged in many places, as well as indigenous Christian elite. The latter was viewed as a natural ally by many colonial officials, and benefitted from a school system, patterned on Western educational standards.[13] Well educated Christians were preferentially recruited for civil service by the colonial government, and

[9] This is why Flores, for example, became a purely Catholic mission area, whereas the Batak region on Sumatra was exclusively assigned to Protestant missionaries.
[10] Regarding the containment of Islam in Flores compare Steenbrink (2007:85-109).
[11] Compare Muskens (1979); Steenbrink (1993); Waver (1974).
[12] For the Minahasa, compare Henley (1993); for the Moluccas, see Kreuzer (2000).
[13] According to a census conducted in the 1930s, the highest literacy rate of the entire colony was found in the Christianized Minahasa. It amounted to almost 40%, whereas it was only 12% in Jakarta and Surabaya, and lower than 10% in the rural Muslim areas. Compare Buchholt (1994:314-315).

got high positions in administration and the military. Generally, indigenous Christians exerted considerable influence in the course of Indonesian history[14] and were able to leave their mark most notably in the spheres of education and health care. The economically affluent Chinese minority largely avows itself to the Christian faith as well. To this day, the resentments on the part of Indonesian Muslims are a result of that privileged status of the Christians and the concomitant identification of Christians with the colonial regime.

Christianity in Postcolonial Indonesia

When Indonesia had become independent, Christians initially feared that the conditions for their missionary activities might worsen, particularly because there had been repeated calls for a ban on Christian proselytization. Yet, this situation did not change after the colonial rule had ended. Wendelin Waver (1974:211) has pointed out that the Indonesian constitution actually created conditions that were much more favorable for Christian missionary societies than in colonial times. Affiliation with a monotheistic world religion is laid down in the Indonesian state philosophy and mandatory for any Indonesian citizen. Whoever does not adhere to one of these religions will likely be suspected of being an atheist. However, as atheism is viewed as synonymous with communism, which has been public enemy number one ever since a communist coup d'état was attempted in 1965, it is well-nigh suicidal not to adhere to any of the large, officially recognized religions.[15] As a matter of fact there was an expansion of Christian missionary activities, and in many spheres (such as the educational and health care systems) Christians were able to establish a monopoly position. In numerous writings they moreover expressed the hope of winning all of Indonesia over to their faith. Islamic opposition against that dominance began in 1967, when Christians were accused in a surge of pamphlets and inflammatory

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[14] Compare Steenbrink (1995).

[15] Besides Islam, the officially recognized religions are Catholicism, Protestantism, Confucianism, Hinduism, and Buddhism. Judaism is not recognized. Hinduism appears in a localized Balinese variant. During the first years following independence the Balinese were subject to discrimination by Muslim and Christian politicians who denounced them as heathens and devoid of religion. Only when Hindu leaders defined their pantheon of deities as the manifestation of one single god and became recognized by Sukarno (among others) were they able to get rid of that blemish. Compare Blakker (1993).

speeches[16] of having lured Muslims into converting to their faith by distributing material aid. These demagogic pamphlets immediately triggered several anti-Christian riots, which began on 1 October 1967 with the demolition of churches in Makassar and subsequently spread to Java where Christian schools, churches, and cemeteries were vandalized.

The state furthermore supported the ideal of modernization advanced by the missionaries, which characterized local societies as deficient and in need of development. State officials urged the indigenous peoples to bid farewell to their cultural ways, to abandon their rituals, to build modern houses, and to adopt modern techniques of farming. Local cultures were to be reduced to those aspects that could be marketed as folklore. This policy has changed after the enactment of regional autonomy laws since 1998. Spurred by an understandable self-interest, local and regional politicians in particular call for the revitalization of local cultures.[17] Primordial sentiments and feelings of exclusive belonging are fostered by members of the local elites, mainly in times of elections. Ethnic and religious categories now undisguisedly serve as markers of collective identity, and amalgamate into criteria of social affiliation. Further conflicts thus seem almost inevitable, which may also complicate the coexistence of Christians with adherers of other faiths (Aspinall and Fealy 2003; Van Klinken 2000, 2003).

Christians are still accused of having collaborated with the former colonial government, and in the discourses of radical Muslim organizations they are portrayed as an extended arm of the 'West'. Still today there exists the rhetoric of an allegedly disadvantaged Muslim majority, associating Christians with economic exploitation and a lack of morals, and stylizing itself as a majority with a minority status (Schreiner 2001). While there is some legitimacy to this generalizing rhetoric it nevertheless misses the mark, because it ignores local causes of conflicts (such as strained relations between migrants and locals, transmigration projects, and the allocation of positions in local administrations) and does not realize that only few Christians are affluent. Moreover, the lack of identification of some groups with the Indonesian state is first and foremost due to tensions between center and periphery rather than to their adherence to the Christian faith. Muslim radicals who accuse Christianity of being anti-Indonesian ignore the fact that Christianity, just as Islam, has become transformed from a foreign

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[16] Another effective means employed were fake pamphlets in which Christians called for the proselytization of Indonesian Muslims.

[17] See Davidson and Henley (2007); Erb, Priyambudi and Faucher (2005).

into an indigenous Indonesian belief system in the course of the past centuries. Undergoing a process of indigenization and adaptation to local traditions, it became a very multi-faceted, syncretistically oriented indigenous religion that still reveals the cultural heritage of the individual ethnic groups. Representatives of church and state have ambivalent feelings in the face of this appropriation and specific utilization of the foreign. Missionaries and indigenous priests appreciate the emancipatory facet of 'enculturation', yet they would like to restrict the latter to certain folkloristic aspects. Political representatives, on the other hand, honour the avowal to a high religion (*agama*) yet fear the potential of opposition inherent in syncretism.

On many islands Christianity has contributed to overcoming ethnic boundaries and has become an integral component of modern regional identities. In regions where exploitation, ecological damages, military repression, and large-scale relocation programs (*transmigrasi*) are threatening to deprive people of their means of existence, Christian organizations have become institutions of resistance (such as in Papua and former East Timor). In other regions (Central Sulawesi, Moluccas) the Christian faith functions as a mobilization strategy when it comes to standing up for economic or political scopes of action, or to legitimizing xenophobia rooted in rural thinking (Flores).

In spite of some mutual resentment the everyday relations between Christians and Muslims have been largely peaceful in the past,[18] and sometimes were even embedded in the autochthonous ritual system whose recent erosion was caused in equal measure by the activities of Islamic and Christian fundamentalists.[19]

Local Conflicts and Religious Rhetoric in the Post-Suharto Era

In the course of the new formation of local, regional, and national power structures following the fall of Suharto, it became apparent that the national unity based on religious acceptance was fiction rather than reality. On many islands there was an outbreak of civil-war like hostilities between Christians and Mus-

[18] See Beck (2002).
[19] Compare Bartels (this volume); Kreuzer (2000).

lims.[20] Anti-Christian militias proclaimed the complete elimination of the Indonesian Christians[21], and the danger that a 'Balcanization' might occur was suddenly in the realm of possibility.[22] The collapse of firmly established power structures did not only pave the way for a profound process of democratization but also sparked power struggles among local and national elites, violence against minorities defined in religious and ethnic terms,[23] and a revival of secession movements on islands – particularly Papua, East Timor, and Aceh[24] – that had already been striving to break away from the Indonesian nation-state for many years. These struggles for political and economic resources were religiously charged in many cases, that is, actors used a religious rhetoric to mobilize their followers, thus not only creating a closed collective of their own, but also a collective of hostile 'others'. The imagined communities (Anderson 1985) became reality in violent practice. This becomes very obvious from the conflicts that befell the Moluccas at the turn of the millennium. These conflicts also demonstrate the potency of historical reconstructions, of genealogies of conflict that have their origins way back in colonial times.

This is particularly true for the conflicts between Muslims and Christians on the South Moluccas, whose main and at the same time central island is Ambon. In colonial times Christianized South Moluccans had privileged access to governmental positions and constituted part of the colonial armed forces. In the latter function they repeatedly put down rebellions, and were feared in the archipelago. According to Peter Kreuzer (2000:14), from a Muslim point of view the colonial powers had initiated a socioeconomic stratification of society on the basis of religious boundaries. Due to their loyalty to the Netherlands and their fear to lose their privileges, the Southern Moluccan Christians became a welcome instrument of Dutch power strategies following Indonesian independence, and in 1960 a secessionist movement supported by the former colonial govern-

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[20] Compare Aditjondro (2000a, 2000b); Aldahar (2000); Aragon (2001, 2002); Van Klinken (1999, 2000, 2001).

[21] Compare Fealy (2001a, 2001b); Noorhaidi (this volume).

[22] Compare Bertrand (2004); Booth (1999); Crouch (2000); Huxley (2002); Lanti (2002); Rohde (2001); Schreiner (1999, 2000); Schröter (2001).

[23] While acts of violence targeted in particular the Chinese minority and Christians, yet it had specifically local connotations as well. On Kalimantan, for example, an alliance of Dayak and Malays rose up against Madurese migrants, who were perceived as intruders, in 1999, massacring and expelling thousands of them. The so-called Ninja murders in East Java, where masked gangs executed people who had been denounced as witches, were among the most unsettling incidents of that time.

[24] Compare Schreiner (2000); Schröter (2001).

ment demanded independence from Indonesia and the proclamation of a South Moluccan Republic (Republik Maluku Selatan).[25] In the course of the uprising there were repeated outbreaks of anti-Muslim violence.[26]

Even so, the islands were for years considered as exemplary for a peaceful coexistence of indigenous Muslims and Christians.[27] Due to a massive influx of Muslims from Sulawesi in the 1970s and 1980s the delicate balance between the adherers of the two faiths shifted, and thus the economic equilibrium toppled as well (Jones 2002). The newcomers were viewed as aggressive businesspeople who in particular tried to get hold of positions in the local administration. These were traditionally in the hands of Christians. According to an estimate by van Klinken, 25% of the Ambonese population lived on government salaries in 1999;[28] such shifts in the clientele structure thus inevitably caused extreme tensions.

In their struggle for governmental sinecure, both Christian and Muslim groups availed themselves of networks that extended all the way to Jakarta. In 1992 the Muslim Akib Latuconsina was appointed governor. His opponent was Freddy Latuhamina, a Christian who was a member of the then still ruling Golkar Party. Latuconsina filled several important positions in the local administration with fellow Muslims. When the rumor was spread that he had replaced all Christians in leading administrative positions with Muslims, bloody conflicts between Christians and Muslims erupted in Ambon in 1999 (Van Klinken 1999).

The potential for violence structurally inherent in that situation was intensified by the fact that both the Christian and the Muslim networks were infiltrated by criminal organizations. The latter's members controlled shopping malls and gambling halls on Java but were also used as hard-hitting security units by various political factions. Armed conflicts between these groups were nothing unusual. In 1999 this type of gang fights was exported, so to speak, to the Moluccas: Christian and Muslim groups barricaded themselves in their respective sanctuaries – the Christians in the Maranatha Church, the Muslims in the Al-

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[25] Compare Decker (1957).

[26] Waver (1974:148-149) reports that there were executions by shooting, and that one imam was publicly cut in two with a sword in Ambon.

[27] However, there have always been considerable tensions between indigenous Moluccans avowing themselves to Christianity or Islam on the one side and Muslim migrants on the other.

[28] Compare van Klinken (1999). The incipient war fought in the media is discussed in the contribution by Birgit Bräuchler (this volume).

Fatah Mosque – and prepared for the clash with their adversaries. It took merely some catalyst to spark the actual fight. In 2000 the conflict was further fuelled by a mobilization of radical Muslims who took across to the Moluccas from Java and other islands. A prominent part in this was played by the Laskar Jihad, a violence-prone fundamentalist organization that was counteracted on the Christian side by the so-called Laskar Kristus.

The second conflict that got the Moluccas worldwide attention occurred in mid-August 1999, involving migrants from Makian and the local population of the Kao subdistrict. The violence was unleashed by news that there were plans to establish a new subdistrict (*kecamatan*) named Makian Daratan in the southern half of the Kao district. The new subdistrict was to include all villages of Makian migrants who had been resettled in 1975 following the announcement of an imminent volcanic eruption in their homeland. Yet there were also some villages of the indigenous Pagu and Jaiolo in that region, who were not willing to let Makians govern them. A quarrel over resources was smouldering anyway between the Muslim migrants and the Christian Kao following the discovery of a gold mine in Malifut. The migrants, who according to Alhadar (2000:15) had developed a strong work ethic due to the circumstances of their displacement, were very successful as miners and thus aroused the envy of their indigenous neighbours.[29] In October 1999 the violence escalated to such an extent that about 15,000 Makians fled to Ternate and Tidore. What had basically started out as an ethnic conflict (even though the religious aspect had always been present because the majority of the Makians were Muslims and the Kao were Christians) now emerged into an explicit conflict between Muslims and Christians. When it was rumored that Christians planned to launch attacks,[30] the Makians chased about 13,000 Christians away to North Halmahera and North Sulawesi, where Christian militias murdered hundreds of Muslims in December 1999. Thereupon tens of thousands of Muslims demonstrated in Jakarta on 7 January 2000, calling for jihad on the Moluccas. The organizers of these protests included Amien Rais – the leader of the Muslim mass organization Muhammadiya, who is considered moderate – and the current Vice President, Hamzah Haz. Ja'far Umar Thalib, a preacher who had formerly fought in Afghanistan, was among the more radical participants, and advocated the implementation of the *shari'a*. Thalib recruited a group of men to battle the infidels on the Moluccas. Unhindered by the police

[29] Compare Bubandt (2001).
[30] A fake flyer was in circulation, calling for holy war against the Muslims and for forced baptism.

and the military, about 3,000 members of the Laskar Jihad travelled to the Moluccas. It was not until May 2002 that Security Minister Susilo Bambang Yodhoyono announced a governmental initiative aiming at the expulsion of the militias from the Moluccas.

During the conflict on the Moluccas, both Christians and Muslims used a religious rhetoric that put their struggle into a larger national context. While Christians viewed the activities of the Laskar Jihad as an attempt to Islamize Indonesian society, Muslims argued that there was a Christian conspiracy to weaken the nation. The separation of East Timor was thereby interpreted as the beginning of a potential chain reaction of secessions, and the Christian uprising on the Moluccas as a continuation of the 'South Moluccan Republic'. As is pointed out by Dieter Bartels in his contribution to this volume, one of the reasons for the success of the religious rhetoric was the erosion of traditional alliance systems and ritual practices that once had united Christians and Muslims.

Revitalization of Indonesian Islam, and Interreligious Tensions

The conflict on the Moluccas outlined above was not the only of its kind. A similar, religiously charged spiral of violence was simultaneously set in motion in Central Sulawesi[31], a civil war that had already lasted for thirty years escalated in Aceh[32], and in Papua attempts at secession were suppressed by means of state terror[33]. On Borneo, bloody conflicts erupted between the local Dayak population and immigrants from Madura Island[34], and smaller-scale uprisings flared up all over the archipelago. All of a sudden, neighbours who had been living side by side peacefully for decades began to massacre each other, and militias were formed. Experts worried that the nation was about to break apart, and that there would be a 'Balcanization' just like in former Yugoslavia.[35] However, these scenarios did not become reality, and most of the abovementioned conflicts calmed down within a couple of years. The religious rhetoric did not dominate all of them anyway. The uprising of the Dayak against the Madurese, for

[31] See Aragon (this volume).
[32] Compare Aspinall and Crouch (2003).
[33] Bertrand (2004); Chauvel 2006; King (2004).
[34] Compare Davidson (2008); Peluso and Harwell (2001).
[35] Compare, among others, Almonte (2001); Bandoro (2002); Biddle (2002); Fealy (2002); Sukma (2002).

example, was viewed as having a primarily ethnic connotation, even though the Madurese are Muslims and many Dayak are Christians. The war of the Aceh guerrilla against the Indonesian state likewise had first and foremost an ethnic-nationalist connotation, even though historically it was definitely spurred by religious motives as well, and the independence movement called for the implementation of the *shari'a*. The Papuans fought against political discrimination and the governmental immigration programs that had turned them into minorities in many districts of their own homelands. Still, it was not without significance that the migrants were Muslims while the Papuans are members of Christian churches, and were supported in their struggle by national and international Christian organizations.

Religion has always been, and still is, a constituent factor of collective identities in Indonesia. While Christianity was ideologically associated with the Dutch colonial masters, Islam established itself as an anti-colonial liberation force as early as in the beginning of the nineteenth century. This became obvious when the so-called Padri war broke out in 1821.[36] A radical Islamic movement, inspired by pilgrims who had come in touch with the teachings of Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab in Mecca, aimed for an Islamic renewal in West Sumatra, and started out a revolt against the local nobility. When the latter sought the assistance of the Dutch military after most members of the royal family had been murdered, did the revolt turn into an anti-colonial uprising.[37] From those days on, anti-colonial resistance had repeatedly been justified by using the metaphor of a holy war, one case in point being Aceh where the population fought against the Dutch occupation of its homeland for forty years[38]; this struggle continued after World War II when the Dutch, who had before been expelled by the Japanese army, tried to reconquer their former colonial possessions by force of arms. The Islamic mass organization Nahdlatul Ulama issued a fatwa against the Dutch and the Council of Indonesian Muslim Associations (Majelis

[36] The war lasted from 1821 to 1837 and ended after the Padri leader Tuanku Imam Bonjol had been detained and exiled.
[37] Taufik Abdulla (1989) and Young (1994) have written on Islam and anti-colonial struggle in West Sumatra, Dobbin (1983) provides a detailed analysis on the course of the Padri war.
[38] The war against the Acehnese lasted from 1873 to 1904. It was the longest in the history of Dutch colonialism. Anti-colonial Islamic movements even used the metaphor of a Holy War. The Acehnese resistance fighters declared a *prang sabil*, a holy war against the Dutch and mobilized in the name of Islam against the occupation of their homeland. See Teuku Ibrahim Alfian (2006). For an overview over Acehnese history see Reid 2005, 2006; for a general discussion of Islam and collective identity in Aceh compare also Aspinall 2009.

Syuro Muslimin Indonesia) declared the anti-colonial struggle as a religious duty. Several Islamic organizations, such as the Sarekat Islam (1911) and the Muhammadiyah (1912), were founded at the beginning of the twentieth century and became the think tanks of those striving for an independent Indonesian nation.[39] Many Muslim leaders held the opinion that the special contribution of the Muslims to independence, but also the fact that they constituted the majority of the population, was to be reflected by the structure of the new nation. They envisioned Indonesia as an Islamic state, or at least as a nation that should grant Muslims a privileged status. Sukarno, the first president of the republic, realized that such a form of government, by assigning the status of second-class citizens to Christians and Hindus, would doom the fragile budding nation to destruction from the very beginning. As a means to solve that problem, he favored the Pancasila model of a pluralist and multi-religious nation, and he came out successful.

Quite a few Muslim leaders felt betrayed by Sukarno's policy, and defied it. They aimed for a Negara Islam Indonesia, an Islamic Republic of Indonesia, and refused to pay allegiance to the new government. In West Java the militiaman Sekarmadji Maridjan Kartosowirjo declared a region occupied by his partisans as Darul Islam (that is, the house or territory of Islam), and local warlords followed his example in South Sulawesi and Aceh. Up to the mid-1960s there were fights between government troops and the three regional wings of the Islamic Army of Indonesia (Tentara Islam Indonesia), and three sizeable regions of Indonesia were under the control and administration of the Islamists. One of the results of the Islamist uprising was an increasing repression of political Islam. The state apparatus became tightened, and in 1959 Sukarno proclaimed his concept of 'guided democracy' (*demokrasi terpimpim*), which vested him with powers that took the principles of democratic decision making ad absurdum. In 1960 the oppositional Council of Indonesian Muslim Associations (Majelis Syuro Muslimin Indonesia, Masjumi) was prohibited. Under the second president, Suharto, who came to power due to a failed coup d'état attempted by communist organizations in 1965, the anti-Islamic course was maintained. A turnaround did not occur until 1990, when the foundations of the dictator's power in the military became increasingly brittle and he went in search for new allies. Suharto tried to curry favor with the Muslim organizations, and from 1990 furthered a

[39] Alfian (1994) hat written about the Islamic movement Muhammadiyah under colonial rule and Steenbrink (1993) focuses on the relationship between Dutch colonialism and Islam.

revival of Islam at all levels of society. However, these concessions did not help him to remain in power, as the Islamic organizations were among those who forced Suharto to resign in 1998.

Since that time, orthodox and fundamentalist Islamic tendencies have increasingly gained ground in Indonesia. New political parties were founded, and one of these, the Prosperous Justice Party (Partai Keadilan Sejahtera, PKS) was able to achieve undreamt-of success in elections.[40] New organizations formed as well; some of them, such as the Islamic Defender Front (Front Pembela Islam) and the abovementioned Holy War Warriors (Laskar Jihad) mobilized the fight against both 'infidels' and Muslims suspected of living a non-Islamic way of life. Since the introduction of democracy, Islamist groups have attacked numerous Western institutions and Christian churches; the bloodiest of these assaults were the bombings in Kuta on Bali, claiming 202 lives. In 2005 the powerful Council of Indonesian Ulema (Majelis Ulema Indonesia, MUI) issued eleven *fatwas* in which they explicitly condemned liberalism, secularism, and pluralism as being un-Islamic. Moreover, Muslims were forbidden to pray jointly with members of other faiths, and to intermarry with Christians. These decrees issued by the MUI resulted in the closing of numerous small churches. According to Indonesian law, religious centers need to be accepted by the respective neighbourhoods surrounding them; if they are not, permission to build and maintain such buildings will not be granted. This is why many Christian churches are semi-legal, merely tolerated institutions. After the *fatwas* had been proclaimed, Muslims mobilized against these small houses of worship, and within a short time forced dozens of them to close.[41] Violence against individual Christians is increasing as well, most notably in hot spots. On 16 October 2006, for example, the secretary general of the Protestant Church of Central Sulawesi, the Reverend Irianto Kongkoli, was killed by a shot in the head in broad daylight in the town of Palu. The resurgence of an orthodox or neo-orthodox Islam is highly visible in public life. Islamic clothing is dominating the streetscapes outside Jakarta, and a so-called anti-pornography law issued in 2008 criminalizes everything that does not conform to the moral ideas of Islamic hardliners; at its own request the

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[40] The party was founded as Justice Party in 1998 and changed its name into Prosperous Justice Party in 2002. During the 2004 elections the PKS won 7,3 % of the votes; 2009 they gained 7,9 %.

[41] In response to the increasing threats to small churches, large houses of worship are built that accommodate hundreds or even thousands of believers. One of these is the Reformed Millennium Cathedral in the center of Jakarta, which opened in September 2008 and has room for 8,000 people.

province of Aceh was granted the right to make the *shari'a* the basis of its criminal law, and *shari'a* bylaws were passed in many districts and communities. As a consequence, students in the city of Padang (West Sumatra) are now required to furnish proof that they are familiar with the Koran, female students and government employees have to wear the Islamic headscarf (*jilbab*), and the population has to participate in Islamic training courses. Since these measures were introduced there have been repeated assaults on women who were out in the public without a male escort, or whose clothing was not in conformity with Islam.

All these developments make Christianity in Indonesia a topic of immediate interest in political and cultural terms. Nothing less is at stake than the governance of the Indonesian state as a pluralist nation, where adherers of many religions all share the same rights and duties. This is reason enough to look into this phenomenon in depth in a collection of essays.

The Scope of This Book

Yet unlike the introduction may suggest, this book is not a work of political science. It rather aims at elucidating the phenomenon of Christianity in Indonesia from the perspectives of various disciplines in order to grasp its diversity and to gain a deeper understanding. Some of the contributors to this volume were participants of a conference convened by Edwin Wieringa and myself at the Goethe-University of Frankfurt in 2003; others agreed at a later time to write articles. The authors represent various scholarly disciplines that in my opinion can contribute significant insights to the topic under discussion: history, social anthropology, philosophy, theology, and political science.

Generally, the authors' search for insights into the phenomenon of Christianity in Indonesia was guided by the following questions: How did the Christian minority, which consists of various different churches and organizations, constitute itself historically? How was Christianity absorbed by the indigenous population, and how was it indigenized? How can we trace the process in the course of which adherers of local traditions became Christians? What impacts did Christianization have on those regions that were inhabited by Muslims? What were the neighbourly relations in these regions like? Did people create common rituals or forge alliances that were effective in maintaining peace?

What historical roots can be identified with regard to contemporary conflicts? What insights can be gained by viewing violent conflicts between Christians and Muslims from the inside perspective of the local actors? And, last but not least, there was always the issue of new approaches to peace-keeping, of possibilities to continue the project of a pluralist Indonesia in the new millennium as well.

The volume begins with an overview by Olaf Schumann of the intertwined histories of colonization and proselytization in Southeast Asia since the Portuguese conquest of Malacca in the sixteenth century. The scope of his discussion reaches far beyond the borderlines of contemporary Indonesia, as he puts an emphasis on the mutual relationships and interconnections found in a region that encompasses the postcolonial states of Indonesia, Malaysia, and Brunei. In order to present a broader picture of Christianity during colonial times, I have included a contribution that focuses specifically on British Malaya: Holger Warnk presents an in-depth discussion of an essential aspect of Christian missionary strategies, namely the establishment of an educational system intended to teach the subdued population virtues such as punctuality and obedience. He presents a detailed picture of the practices employed between 1890 and 1928 by colonial officials and missionaries of the American Mission Press with regard to educational policy, where the writing of school books in the Malay language played an important role. Karel Steenbrink puts Christian educational activities into the context of development aid programs, analyzing the commitment of the Catholic Church to such projects in Indonesia in the time between 1965 and 1980. The priests were masters in the art of raising funds for their endeavours, and did by no means exclusively draw on governmental and churchly sources of capital. Up to the 1980s Muslim organizations were unable to compete against the financial power of the churches, even in Muslim heartlands such as Java.

These historical contributions are followed by case studies dealing with Christianity in various regions of Indonesia. In a comparative approach, Raymond Corbey takes a critical look at the culturally destructive aspects of proselytization. His essay focuses on iconoclasm and the missionaries' hostility towards indigenous material culture. He identifies the shattering or burning of masks, stones, ritual huts, and spirit figures as strategies successfully employed to expose the impotence of local beliefs, and to firmly establish Christianity as a powerful alternative. Yet iconoclastical practices were not always performed under duress. According to Corbey, in some cases the local actors were more

than willing to give up their old sacred objects in favor of the new, powerful protective force.

However, such radical changes did not take place in all regions of the Indonesian archipelago. In fact, there are significant differences between Protestant and Catholic mission areas. On the island of Flores, which has been within the sphere of influence of the Catholic Societas Verbi Divini since 1913, there was much less pressure on local traditions than in regions where Protestant missionary societies had established themselves. I shall examine the complex relationships between missionaries and local actors who from various motives weighed the 'Foreign' against the 'Own'. In that process, they created an indigenized form of Catholicism while at the same time sufficiently allowing for non-Christian religious practices.

The articles of Susanne Rodemeier, Dieter Bartels, and Lorraine Aragon focus on the specific challenges emerging in multi-religious settlement environments. Susanne Rodemeier has conducted empirical research in the eastern Indonesian Alor Archipelago where Muslims, Protestants, and Catholics are living together in narrow confines. She elucidates the integrative dimensions of shared myths and rituals, yet also points out that governmental interventions such as transmigration programs can destroy that fragile equilibrium within a short time. The consequences of such a collapse of indigenous models regulating religious coexistence become apparent in the contribution by Dieter Bartels. Bartels describes how indigenized versions of Protestantism and Islam that existed on the Moluccan island of Ambon were gradually purified, both by ambitious agents of the Protestant Church and the Islamic Muhammadiyah and by governmental decrees against *adat*; in that process, the integrative elements disappeared. Many Ambonese actors believe that the abovementioned violent conflicts between Christians and Muslims in the wake of the fall of Suharto were a result of these developments, and call for a reactivation of local religious structures. Lorraine Aragon revisits the history of religious rivalry between Christians and Muslims, competitive Indonesian nationalism, and the unfolding of violent conflict in Central Sulawesi in the late 1990s. The competition between Protestants and Muslims for resources turned violent at transitional moments in politics, the most recent example being the post-Suharto Poso violence that erupted in late 1998 within the context of migration processes, global export markets, and land alienation pressures. Having started as a communal street fight in the midst of an unsavoury political campaign that went on in the district,

the Poso conflict turned into a religiously polarized civil war where calls for retaliation attracted non-local militias; later, that conflict aroused international attention in the wake of 11 September 2001.

Birgit Bräuchler, Sven Kosel, and Noorhaidi Hasan address rhetorics and strategies of action employed by actors in interreligious conflicts. Birgit Bräuchler analyses the role played by the Internet in the Moluccan conflict, using the example of the most important groups of actors: the Crisis Center of the Diocese of Ambon (CCDA) and the Masariku network on the Christian side, and the Forum Komunikasi Ahlus Sunnah wal Jama'ah (FKAWJ) on the Muslim side. Both sides employed the Internet as a means of self-representation and for mobilizing support, vied with each other for victimhood, and justified their own violent outrages by portraying them as acts of self-defence against an unscrupulous aggressor. Militant Christians in North Sulawesi felt justified to take action as well; that region, just as the South Moluccas, was characterized by a particular closeness to the Dutch colonial power in colonial times. Sven Kosel elaborates upon the interconnections between politics and paramilitary organizations, which have always played an important role in Indonesian history. Even though many of the militiamen enter service as mercenaries with the highest bidder, they all share a romantic ideology, viewing themselves as the defenders of a Christian Minahasa against Muslim dominance in Indonesia, which is perceived as threatening. The historical point of reference of these political-religious actors are events – most notably the struggle for the representation of Christian minorities – that occurred when the independent Indonesian nation was born. The militiamen think of themselves as fighters of the Indonesian Pancasila nation against the Islamization of the state. Hasan Noorhaidi recounts a concurrent Islamic narrative justifying any kind of violence. Here, too, contemporary discourses can be linked to connecting factors in history. While Christian actors will turn to foreign supporters when it comes to mobilizing financial resources, their political arguments are rooted in an Indonesian context. Islamist actors, on the other hand, operate on an international level in terms of discourse and practices. Noorhaidi refers to the phrase of a supposed global Jewish-Christian co-conspiracy, which is used by Indonesian Islamist groups such as the Laskar Jihad or Laskar Mujahidin to justify their intervention in local conflicts. The combination of global, national, and local rhetoric became particularly apparent during the Moluccan conflict. It comes as no surprise that the political discourse tends to manifest totalitarian traits during crisis situations. Stereotyping, exagge-

ration, and a demonization of the other side in the conflict are convenient means of political propaganda employed by agitators to mobilize their followers, persuade waverers, and to establish the ability to act. Religion in particular is excellently suited as a strategy of mobilization. However, there is no consensus about the question of whether this is due to an inherent problem associated with religion, that is, whether religion per se is a polarizing force and thus a threat to any multireligious society. This very issue is addressed by Franz Magnis-Suseno in his contribution. He has a critical look at the exclusive claims to truth inherent in the Abrahamite religions, and the difficulties of reconciling such claims with the prerequisites for pluralism. His pivotal question is: How can tolerance be achieved without abandoning one's own claim to truth? According to Magnis-Suseno, the answer to this philosophical and theological question, as well as political and economic dynamics, will be crucial in setting the future course of Indonesian society. On the one hand, he notes alarming tendencies towards 'Arabization' and an intolerant, dogmatic Islam. On the other hand, however, he points out that Indonesia looks back on a long tradition of intercultural and interreligious coexistence.

Christianity in the Social and Cultural Sciences

Until very recently, Christianity was a marginal topic in the social and cultural sciences. While anthropologists would occasionally produce articles dealing with conversion or processes involving the indigenization of Christianity observed within the context of their research on local cultures, they rarely put these issues at the center of their publications. Indeed, the authors of many anthropological monographs carefully avoid to mention that the societies described are Christian at all. Instead, they focus on tradition and thus convey a picture of culture that is, so to speak, detached from the present. The reason for this is probably that Christianity was, and is, too strongly associated with the 'Own'. Sociologists and political scientists, on the other hand, shunned the topic because they attributed little relevance to religion, and even historians – at least those studying the non-European world – only sporadically explored processes of Christianization or of the establishment of Christianity. However, this attitude apparently has changed in the past couple of years. Christianity is becoming a topic whose relevance for issues of social development is recognized. In 2006,

Fenella Canell attempted to initiate the establishment of an 'Anthropology of Christianity', and since the mid-1990s several other authors (Hefner 1993b; Veer 1996) have been discussing Christianity with regard to processes of modernization and modern nation building. As to Indonesia, there are a number of historical studies, with the works of Karel Steenbrink (1995, 1998, 2000, 2001, 2003, 2007) and Aritonang and Steenbrink (2008) deserving particular mention.

The present volume contributes to these new approaches but goes beyond the scope of a single discipline. It offers an interdisciplinary perspective on the topic, instead, intertwining political science, theological, anthropological, philosophical, and historical dimensions. Such an approach is suitable in particular for discussing the phenomenon of Christianity in the Indonesian archipelago, which is characterized by a well-nigh confusing cultural diversity.

Susanne Schröter

The Indigenization of Catholicism on Flores

Introduction

From the very outset of European expansion, scholars have been preoccupied with the impact of proselytization and colonization on non-European societies. Anthropologists such as Margaret Mead and Bronislaw Malinowski, who witnessed these processes at the beginning of the twentieth century while at the same time benefitting from the colonial structure, were convinced that the autochthonous societies could not possibly withstand the onslaught of the dominant European cultures, and thus were doomed to vanish in the near future.[1] The fear of losing their object of research, which had just recently been discovered, hung above the heads of the scholars like a sword of Damocles ever since the establishment of anthropology as a discipline. They felt hurried to document what seemed to be crumbling away.[2]

Behind these fears there was the notion that the indigenous cultures were comparatively static entities that had existed untouched by any external influences for many centuries, or even millennia, and were unable to change. This idea was shared by proponents of other disciplines; in religious studies, for example, up to the late 1980s the view prevailed that the contact between the great world religions and the belief systems of small, autochthonous societies doomed the latter to extinction.[3] However, more recent studies have shown that this assumption, according to which indigenous peoples have not undergone any changes in the course of history, is untenable. It became apparent that groups supposedly living in isolation have extensive contact networks, and that migration, trade, and conquest are not privileges of modern times. Myths and oral traditions bore witness of journeys to faraway regions, new settlements founded in

[1] Anthropologists faced the dilemma that the subject matter of their discipline disintegrated before their very eyes at the moment when contact was established, and that they themselves were immediately involved in that process of destruction. On the nineteenth century, compare Bastian (1881); on the twentieth, Lévi-Strauss (1955, 1985:23); Malinowski (1922:XV); Mead (1972:294).
[2] See Kohl 1988: 252-253.
[3] This view was primarily due to an evolutionist theory of religion, which made a distinction between primitive and modern religions.

unknown territories, or the arrival of victorious foreigners who introduced new ways and customs and laid claim to a place of their own within society.[4]

Indigenization and Resistance

Many non-European societies responded to the confrontation with colonial administrations and missions with the same flexibility they had already displayed in their reactions to pre-colonial challenges resulting from contacts between different cultures. Today, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, indigenous cultures have by no means disappeared or faded away in a uniform global culture dominated by the West. Quite to the contrary: They creatively adopted and integrated the foreign influences, moulding them into new, indigenous forms.[5] Wherever proselytizing world religions established themselves during the past centuries, they adapted to the local conditions, and thus also underwent changes.[6] In that dynamical process, syncretistic and hybrid forms of rituals evolved, as well as creative combinations of various elements from both belief systems, reinterpretations of history, novel definitions of symbols, and new myths in which oral traditions became intertwined with the written texts recorded by the religions of the book. Frequently, parallel systems were developed that allow the local actors to make use of both the traditional and the new religion, according to the advantages each of these has to offer. Christian systems of thinking and acting became indigenized in the course of each particular proselytization process, and made compatible with local conditions and world views;[7] in a similar manner, this also happened with Islamic ideas.[8] The combination of own and foreign elements, as well as deconstructions and reconstruc-

[4] Compare Graham (1996); Lewis (1988:45-69); Sahlins (1981); Traube (1986:51ff.).
[5] Social science theories reflect this phenomenon since the 1990s and focus on hybridization and 'glocalization' instead of homogenization and Westernization. See: Appadurai (1996); Robertson (1995).
[6] Compare Comaroff and Comaroff (1991, 1993, 1997); Kohl (1986, 1988, 1995); Ranger (1994); Schoffeleers (1994).
[7] Compare Bediako (1996) and Byarnhanga-Akiki (1993) for African religions, Jebens (2004) for so-called cargo cults in Oceania, Houk (2004), Segato (2003) and Weingärtner (1969) for Caribbean religions. See also: Kaplan (1995); Kohl (1996, 1998:61-68).
[8] The example of the matrilineal Minangkabau in West Sumatra shows that even such social structures were accepted in the course of this process that are in diametrical contradiction to Arab models (compare Benda-Beckmann 1988; Kahn 1976; Sanday 2002).

tions of things pertaining to the 'Self' and the 'Other', finally resulted in the development of a multitude of modern indigenous cultures.[9]

On the one hand, this resilience on the part of the neophytes was not what the missionaries had hoped for, as they viewed proselytization as a civilatory mandate aiming at the eradication of all heathen traditions. Yet on the other hand it came as no surprise. Far-sighted missionaries had uttered some doubts regarding the lastingness of their endeavours anyway, and contented themselves with counting formal adherence to Christianity as a success.[10]

Proselytization is an activity that is fundamentally associated with constructions of a subject reflecting itself in the 'Other'. This is a bilateral process based on ideas of the Self and the Other that mutually influence each other.[11] The mirroring of these images in each case determines the actors' options for action, as well as the possibilities or impossibilities of communication. In the past, this process was basically an interaction between unequal parties. The missionaries had a multitude of means at their disposal when it came to implementing their image of humanity, and enforcing compliance with that ideal among the local population. In cooperation with the colonial armies and administrations, objectionable social or religious practices could be prohibited and religious leaders be arrested. The introduction of compulsory education ensured that the missionaries had control over the socialization of the adolescent generation, and the noble intentions and commitment underlying the missionary endeavour could be demonstrated by means of special benefits, such as development aid projects or medical services. The proselytized, who were less interested in a complete absorption of the European model than in a selective integration of the Foreign into their own culture, had much fewer means at their disposal, yet these were not necessarily ineffective. This applies particularly to their skill in combining their passed-down traditions with the newly received Christian messages, and in confronting the missionaries with a convincing reinterpretation of Christianity. Within the history of appropriating and transforming the dominant Other, the balance of power was not once and for all predetermined by the social,

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[9] Towards the end of the 1980s, there was a turning point in anthropology, which became less culture-pessimistic. Instead, the focus shifted to newly emerging cultural phenomena that sometimes are also referred to as hybrid cultures (compare Comaroff and Comaroff 1993).
[10] See Dietrich 1989:224-225.
[11] Compare Friedman 1994:12.

military, and economic structures of dominance, but allowed for clever interaction on the part of those who were structurally weaker.

This was facilitated by the circumstance that the missionaries, while being interlinked with the colonial administration and sharing the latter's attitude of cultural superiority, could not adopt the strategies of the colonial masters. If their missionary work was to be successful, they needed to gain the trust of the indigenous population, which could only be achieved on the basis of a certain measure of acceptance towards local culture.[12] Yet such openness for the foreign was inevitably in conflict with the theological reasoning that served to justify Christianization itself – namely, the construction of a dualism between the dismal world of heathendom and the bright world of the neophytes.[13] Thus, a balance had to be found between missionary ideology and acceptance of the indigenous culture, as well as between the will to change and the desire to preserve. This ambivalence was more than a strategic device; the written sources from everyday missionary life reveal that it also expressed an inner attitude that oscillated between fascination and disgust, and thus is very akin to the ambiguity we encounter in anthropological texts.[14]

This process of rapprochement was no less complex on the part of the indigenous populations. Arguments in favor of an adoption of Christianity were both of an instrumental-rational and affective nature. In postcolonial historical missiology, it has repeatedly been pointed out that by adopting the Christian faith the colonized developed a modern identity that offered them the option of upward mobility.[15] Other incentives for embracing a new, powerful religion were access to resources (schools, developmental aid, health care), which was facilitated by the missions, or the intention to integrate into the corpus of indigenous protective forces such new spiritual powers as were considered efficient. Karl-Heinz Kohl (Kohl 1998:177) has pointed to ritual voids among the Lamaholot-speaking groups in eastern Flores, such as a lack of youth initiation rites. Among the Ngada of Central Flores the fear of witches and evil spirits believed to be omnipresent has given rise to a need for additional spiritual protection.[16]

[12] Compare Bade 1984:18.
[13] Comaroff and Comaroff 1991:7; Hoffmann 1984:34f.
[14] Karl-Heinz Kohl (1987) once characterized this relationship between researchers and researched, which is an ever-recurrent theme in the texts of early ethnographers, as torn between 'defence and desire'.
[15] Gründer 1982, 1994; Thomas 1994.
[16] Schröter 1998, 2000b

The equality of all believers, which is an inherent feature of Christianity, needs to be mentioned as a convincing argument because it was crucial in overcoming rigid caste boundaries and putting an end to local slavery.[17] The integration of Christianity may also have been furthered by the manifold convergences of interests between missionaries and certain groups of influential locals, such as village elders, who held a sceptical view of modern influences, regarding them as potential dangers for the social order and the maintenance of morals. In individual cases, anthropologists observed that each of the two parties used the other's structures to lend weight to its concerns. The inhabitants of eastern Flores, for example, reactivate their woman giver/woman taker relationships[18] within the context of the local Catholic First Communion. Another example are the joined ranks of village elders and missionaries against efforts of the younger people to abolish bridewealth, since the missionaries view that institution as crucial for ensuring compliance with existing sexual morals.

Between Fascination and the Will to Change: Catholic Missionaries of the Societas Verbi Divini on Flores

The island of Flores, where I repeatedly conducted ethnographic fieldwork between 1994 and 2004, will serve as an example to illustrate the complex relationship between a Catholic missionary society and local cultures, and the

[17] Both Christianity and the colonial apparatus of power have triggered processes of de-hierarchization in the local cultures through pacification and the prohibition of slavery (Schröter 2005). Among the Ngada, rigid hierarchies existed in the form of endogamous castes. In former times, sexual relations of women with lower-ranking men were punished with death; a symbolic execution is considered sufficient today (Schröter 1997).

[18] Compare Kohl (1998:177). Each defined kin group maintains clearly specified relationships with other groups, from which the men either obtain their wives (wife giver), or into which they marry off women belonging to their own group (wife taker). Such relationships are ranked hierarchically, with the wife givers enjoying higher status than the wife takers. Next to blood relationship, these marriage alliances are the most important social networks. They are always well established, and are renewed and perpetuated by a continuous exchange of goods (fabrics, animals, gold, rice, and the like). The exchange of gifts usually took place in the context of traditional ceremonies (birth, initiation, wedding, death), and swallowed the entire economic resources of a group. A large part of the gifts is immediately consumed during sumptuous feasts. These rites are criticized by missionaries and government officials alike as destroying economical resources; yet all efforts to abolish them have hitherto failed.

course taken by processes of integration and indigenization in practice.[19] Flores is today the largest coherent settlement area of Christians in Indonesia, with more than ninety percent of the population avowing themselves to Catholicism. While first contacts between the indigenous peoples and Western missionaries occurred as early as in the sixteenth century in the course of Portuguese colonization, the influence of Catholicism remained limited to a few centers until the region was taken over by members of the order Societas Verbi Divini (SVD, 'Society of the Divine Word') in 1913. The SVD was assigned Flores as its proselytizing area by the Dutch colonial administration, and immediately began to unfold extensive activities, which included not only the missionization of the local population but also the establishment of a primary educational system, medical stations, pharmacies, and model farms.[20] As the Dutch colonial government had ruled that a school system should be established on the entire island, the priests were able proselytize children even if the latter's parents refused to adopt the Catholic faith. That process is today remembered as a compulsory measure. The eldest among the people I talked to in the 1990s told me how they hid from the foreign whites, who wanted to forcefully drag them to school, in the forest or in storage huts. In the longer term, however, these actions of resistance were not crowned with success, and the children all over the island were compelled to attend schools and churches, where they were instructed in the foreign faith and eventually adopted the new religion. The employment of indigenous *guru agama* (religious teachers) in spreading the Catholic doctrine additionally contributed to the implementation of Catholic faith. The efforts to change the indigenous societies according to Christian ideas were backed by measures taken by the colonial government, which made unwanted social or ritual practices punishable offenses subject to military sanctions. Yet it would be wrong to assume that proselytization was a mere act of cultural rape committed on the indigenous people. Many of the new achievements were welcomed. If the indigenous healers could not help in case of sickness, people would turn to the missionaries and sisters for treatment, making use of the foreign medicines and the care given them in the medical stations maintained by the order. They also appreciated the missionaries' commitment to agriculture, such as their attempts to

[19] Two of these research projects (1995-1998, 2001-2004) were generously funded by the German Science Foundation, to which I wish to express my most cordial thanks. Without that support, my anthropological work in East Indonesia would not have been possible.
[20] Compare Piskaty 1964; Steenbrink 2007:77-152; Stegmaier 1974.

work against soil erosion and to cultivate new products that brought revenues as export goods (Brinkmann 2003; Prior 1988:24). By and large, the missionaries were – and still are – admired for being individuals who selflessly commit themselves to the wellbeing of others. As far as the SVD was concerned, its combined strategy of coercion and convincing altruism turned out to be an absolute formula for success, and within just a few decades of the twentieth century Flores became a 'Catholic island'.

During the first phase of missionization, which lasted until the Second Vatican Council, Evangelization first and foremost meant a battle against the indigenous cultures, and particularly against the native religions. This endeavour was justified as serving the purposes of both 'civilization' and 'humanization'. Thus, the local societies on Flores were constructed as being deficient, inhumane, and barbaric. The propagandistic movie 'Ria Rago' by Father Simon Buis, which was completed in 1930 during the climax of the first wave of proselytization, is one of the testimonies that make us realize how the media took up the stigmatization of local culture. The unhappy heroine of the movie is a young woman who refuses to comply with a forced marriage, the groom being a rich old man. She gets support from Catholic sisters and priests, and finally dies from exhaustion and the constant physical abuse inflicted on her by her parents and the inhabitants of her village. The story gets an additional air of explosiveness by the fact that the brutish, repulsive creep whom she is to be given as a wife is a Muslim while she converts to the Catholic faith.[21]

'Ria Rago' portrays a prototype of Catholic world view that does not only promote conversion to the Catholic faith but also a fundamental reform of the local indigenous societies. The opponents of that radical overthrow dictated from outside were clan leaders and religious experts, that is, individuals who suffered a considerable loss of power under the new order and vied with the missionaries for the prerogative of interpretation in social and religious matters. If missionary work had not been accompanied by the colonial subjugation of the region, these individuals would doubtlessly have frustrated the endeavour of proselytizing the entire island, which is inhabited by linguistically and culturally heterogenous groups. With the exception of the eastern part of the island and some coastal strips, all attempts by missionaries to gain ground failed for a long time because of the resistance offered by local warlords. This changed only

[21] Such films were well suited for collecting donations for the mission in Germany and the Netherlands; however, they were also screened in the proselytizing areas.

when the Dutch government decided to militarily conquer and occupy the region. It thus needs to be stressed that military subjugation and proselytization went hand in hand on Flores. Yet in spite of the fundamental discreditation of indigenous societies and the unconditional will to subdue the native peoples and transform their cultures, the latter did not become extinct.

On the one hand, this was due to the undaunted resilience of the population, which even after conversion did not renounce its old beliefs, but instead cognitively added Catholicism and local religions, and integrated both into a religious parallel system; in other cases, people intertwined symbols and meanings, thus developing a Catholicism of their own that itself became an environment where indigenous knowledge and practices survived. However, the survival of local traditions was also a result of the specific attitude of the SVD towards autochthonous societies, which was characterized by a certain ambivalence facilitating liberalism and tolerance.

The order was founded in 1875 by Arnold Janssen in the Dutch village of Steyl. From the very beginning, the SVD was distinguished by a certain anthropological openness, and has brought forth a number of prominent ethnologists, an anthropological school of thought, as well as several ethnological institutions that are still influential today. Since the end of the nineteenth century, ethnology and linguistics were taught at the Austrian mission house St. Gabriel, and an international journal of ethnology and linguistics named *Anthropos* was launched in 1906. The 'Anthropos-Institut' in St. Augustin, Germany, is a recognized institution of ethnological research, and the museum associated with it, the 'Haus der Völker und Kulturen' ('House of Peoples and Cultures'), has set itself the goal to 'make foreign cultures and religions accessible to people of our own cultural sphere' (SVD 2009). The founder of *Anthropos*, Father Wilhelm Schmidt, began to teach as a lecturer in physical anthropology and ethnology in Vienna in 1921, and in 1929 planted the Wiener Institut für Völkerkunde ('Vienna Institute of Ethnology'). In cooperation with Father Wilhelm Koppers, he established the 'Wiener Schule der Kulturkreislehre' ('Vienna Culture-Circle School'). The 'Vienna School' has left its imprint on the missionaries of the SVD all over the world, and can rightfully be considered as one of the intellectual predecessor of the Second Vatican Council. In contrast to anthropological evolutionism, which in the nineteenth and early twentieth century defined the societies of the colonizers as civilized and those of the colonized as barbarian, the Viennese ethnologists rejected such a linear evolutionary model. Indeed, they turned it upside

down by postulating a primordial stage of humankind that was simple in technological terms, yet characterized by a monotheistic religion, and thus morally superior to later stages of human development. Other religions were referred to by Schmidt as 'degenerate'. Empirically, the search for the 'origin of the idea of God' ('Ursprung der Gottesidee'; compare Schmidt 1926:55) turned into a search for the idealized 'monotheistic primitive people' ('monotheistische Urvölker') – an agenda that exerted great influence on German ethnology in general and the missionary activities of the order in particular. It inspired missionaries to discover evidence of the supposedly primordial monotheism among those to be proselytized; frequently, they would selectively study and interpret the local religions until the latter fit into the desired pattern. Among the Ngada, for example, missionaries exalted the male sky deity Déva to the status of a sole high God, regardless of the fact that people also venerated an earth goddess who was of equal rank with the sky god. It can be shown that there were similar attempts to discover a primeval indigenous monotheism among other peoples of Flores as well.[22] Whenever missionaries thought that they had discovered evidence of this primordial monotheism, they felt a profound sympathy for their potential neophytes. An elderly missionary once confessed to me that he was joyously surprised when he encountered people 'who were already Christians without being aware of it' in the proselytizing area assigned to him.

Ethnological and linguistic training in their home country had a formative influence on the missionaries, many of whom continued to work as anthropologists and linguists throughout their lives.[23] According to the policy of the order, the missionaries were expected to collect and record indigenous knowledge, and to become experts in the indigenous cultures. In order to gain such an expert status, they could not just go ahead and destroy these cultures root and branch, but first had to come to know and understand them. The descriptions of anthropologists such as Father Paul Arndt or Father Herrmann Bader attest that the missionaries were present at many ceremonies as participant observers, and that they listened to their local consultants. In perfect accordance with an ethical principle that was not to become popular until the late 1980s, they allowed their informants to have their say, and created ethnographies that are literally polyphonic,

[22] Compare Arndt 1939; Verheijen 1951.
[23] In particular, the priests Paul Arndt, Herrmann Bader, Willem van Bekkum, and Jilis Verheijlen were noted scholars. Their journal articles and monographs are considered to be basic works up to this day, and are used as class readings in Florinese schools.

elucidating one and the same topic from the most diverse perspectives. Yet the policy of the order did not only stipulate an ethnological conservation of the foreign cultures, but also the preservation of traits that were viewed as positive. While the missionaries wanted to proselytize, they did not want to be destructive in that process. They appreciated the community spirit encountered in the foreign cultures, the respect accorded the elders, the honour paid to the deceased, and they were full of admiration for most of the material culture. Given this attitude, they sympathized with certain customs, an example being the ancestor cult, which they viewed as imbued with an ethical principle that they did not want to fall victim to modernity. However, there was much less tolerance towards customs and beliefs that were regarded as negative, with the result that many of the rites and practices described by Arndt, Bader, Ettel, Rozing, and others[24] have ceased to exist. Thus, we also need to note that unwelcome elements of culture were deliberately eradicated.

In spite of its contradictory attitudes towards the local cultures, the Societas Verbi Divini offered a favorable environment for a type of missionary who was very akin to an anthropologist, and often made no secret of his fascination with the local cultures. In some cases, this openness and acceptance even reached an intensity that was considered scandalous in Rome. Willem van Bekkum, for example, the former bishop of the city of Ruteng in West Flores, already questioned the appropriateness of Latin rites at the first international congress on pastoral liturgy held in 1956, and decidedly voted for an attitude of appreciation and respect towards autochthonous cultures.[25] Van Bekkum was notorious for his indigenizations of mass, particularly his practice of celebrating *misa kerbau* ('buffalo mass') that brought him harsh criticism from among the clergy.

At the Second Vatican Council, priests of van Beckum's stamp came out successful all along the line, and the Catholic Church underwent a programmatic change towards 'inculturation', cross-cultural dialogue, and an acceptance of the 'Other'. This inspired missionaries to introduce further integrative approaches. Indigenous languages have found their way into liturgy in many places on Flores; adaptations of local dances are performed during mass, and bold experiments are undertaken in the construction and furnishing of churches: German and Dutch missionaries began to build pulpits from sacred megaliths. They put

[24] Compare Arndt (1929/30, 1929/31, 1932, 1933, 1936/37, 1939, 1944, 1954, 1956a, 1958, 19591/b, 1960a/b, 1963); Bader (1954, 1968); Ettel (1966); Rozing (1961).
[25] Compare Bekkum (1957a, 1957b, 1958).

up ancestor figures next to the altar, or modelled the place of worship after sacred clan houses. In all Florinese communities, the ordination of new priests is a ritual that has been reinvented and now combines Christian and local elements, including sacrifices of pigs and divinations from the intestines of the animals killed. One missionary who was venerated beyond measure by his parishioners used to draw crosses on the foreheads of his patients during curing ceremonies, with the blood of sacrificed animals serving as paint. Before speaking a Catholic blessing on his private native-style residence, he had it consecrated by an indigenous priest according to the traditional local ritual. This old priest often discussed his proclivity to (partial) cultural defection with the business manager of a foundation he had established, a young woman who coordinated his numerous social projects. She originates from one of the local ethnic groups, and was just as fascinated by the European Catholic rites as the missionary was by the local traditions. And thus the woman from Flores argued fervently in favor of Latin mass and Gregorian chants, while the German priest praised the beauty of the indigenous language and the musical performances of the Florinese.

These winsome gestures and culturally sensitive attitudes notwithstanding, there are also moments when foreign and indigenous clerics repressively encroach on local customs. Above all, they lack understanding of the local marriage practices. Marriages are often preceded by years of negotiation between the bride givers and the bride takers. Often will couples already have several children before an agreement is reached, and in many cases they separate without any agreement, despite of having mutual children. The church will then punish the young women, who cannot hide their 'sin' of non-marital motherhood, by excluding them from communion. Matrifocal structures, as found among the Ngada, are also a bone of contention time and again because they are not in accordance with the missionaries' patriarchal image of the family.

The Ngada of Central Flores: Traditionalists and Catholics

How did, and do, the indigenous peoples make use of these conditions, which on the one hand imposed foreign customs and beliefs upon them, yet on the other hand offered them a multitude of opportunities to preserve their own customs, or to at least keep to them in a modified form? In the following, I will change perspectives from the proselytizers to those who were proselytized, and

explain how the latter integrated the foreign faith into their systems of thinking and acting, how they took advantage of the advent of a religion that was dominant in political and military terms, and how they were forced to play 'hide-and-seek' games, to retreat, or to abandon rituals and traditions altogether. The Ngada will serve as an example; they are an ethnic group living in the mountains and on a small coastal strip of Central Flores, and I have become acquainted with them during several long-term and short-term field research trips undertaken over the course of many years.

The Ngada count among those ethnic groups in Indonesia that are most conscious of tradition. They keep to many things that have long fallen into oblivion in other places, and they have developed a number of strategies that enabled them to hold on to their customs. Since the late 1990s, they have also been manifesting a very obvious re-traditionalization. In spite of an awareness and appreciation of their own *adat*, it goes without saying that their culture is not the same that it was one hundred years ago. Many ceremonies are irretrievably lost, and novel ideas reach even the most remote villages, carried by television and radio, returning migrants, tourists, government officials, and priests. Yet as compared to other parts of Indonesia these influences of modernity and globalization are slight, because the rainy, cool highlands of middle Flores are geographically marginal and economically unattractive. For lack of 'modern' jobs, the majority of the population subsists on what they cultivate on the steep mountain slopes and the few existing plateaus: Corn, beans, and sweet potatoes, as well as yams, vegetables, spices, and occasionally also mountain rice. Bananas and coconut palms grow in the coastal regions, while bamboo, which is needed in the building of huts and stables, thrives in the mountains. Whatever people do not consume themselves, is sold on regional markets, or bartered for other goods. The need for animal protein is satisfied by eating fish, dogs, chicken, goats, and pork; this diet is sometimes supplemented by the meat of horses and water buffaloes. Meat is too precious to be consumed daily, and thus is only served on exceptional occasions. Pigs and water buffaloes are only killed within ritual contexts.

The Ngada live in ritual villages, so-called *nua*, which are associated with the ancestors of individual clans. Each parental couple of clan ancestors is represented by two wooden shrines: The female ancestress is venerated in the form of a miniature hut, which is a diminutive copy of a descent group's ceremonial house, or rather of the sacred center (*oné sa'o*) of the latter. Vis-à-vis the

uterine shrine of the woman stands the phallic personification of the male ancestor, an anthropomorphic pole that threateningly brandishes a sword and a spear.[26] The shrines of the clan ancestors are the centers of the *nua* and testify, in combination with the megalithic burial places, to the vibrancy of an autochthonous culture[27] that long was oppressed by the Indonesian central government for being barbarian and backward. Nowadays settlement groups that each consist of several *nua* have become concentrated in a new admi-nistrative unit, the *desa* (village). In these large settlements, which sometimes are inhabited by up to 1,000 people, new centers have developed, replacing the old ones in some respects. The center of the *desa* Langa where I conducted my fieldwork is marked by the Catholic Church – a magnificent white, rotund building located next to the local soccer field, the primary school, and a large kiosk that sells candies to the children and cigarettes to the men. Every Sunday people will wander to this new hub of rural life, the men dressed up in ironed shirts, the women wearing colorful barrettes made of plastic; before and after Mass they linger on the forecourt of the church, exchange the latest gossip and chit-chat, and then watch a game of football or volleyball in the afternoon.

The Ngada are good Christians who fulfil their obligations as members of the Catholic Church with a great deal of enthusiasm. Yet at the same time they are good traditionalists whose greatest fear is to be punished by the ancestors – a punishment that is inevitably meted out if the ancient rules are transgressed. Just as the Church mandatorily prescribes the performance of certain ceremonies, the ancestors demand that certain specific rituals be performed. In order to satisfy both powers, the Ngada have developed a religious parallel system by means of which they try to combine the advantages of the Christian faith with those of their traditional belief system.[28] They have their children baptized, celebrate Catholic communion, and have accepted Christmas and Easter as new ritual complexes; they weep during the Passion Week, meet every evening during the Marian months, and speak Christian prayers at funerals. Yet they also perform their local rituals that both structure the course of the year and accompany the passages occurring within the individual's life. Weddings and funerals each consist of two separate ceremonial complexes: a Catholic and a local one. The an-

[26] On the gender symbolism in architecture, compare Schröter (1997b).
[27] On the social structure of the Ngada, compare Schröter (2000, 2007).
[28] On this subject, compare also Schröter (1998a, 1999).

cient initiation rites have been completely replaced by a Catholic celebration, which, however, has been perfectly adapted to indigenous concepts.

While not always being without conflicts, the process of integration is successful; it is affected by means of de- and reconstructions of cultural elements, reinvention of rituals and symbols, as well as camouflage and additions. In the following, this process will be illustrated using the example of the annual ritual cycle.

The Ngada Ritual Cycle

Both the annual ritual cycle and its climax, the so-called *reba* ceremonies,[29] are associated with the myth relating to the cultural hero Sili Ana Wunga, who is considered to be the 'inventor' of the ritual and whose story is told in songs and recitations during the festivities. Other texts focus on other heroes and heroines, some of whom are venerated as the progenitors and progenitrices of all Ngada, while others are merely revered as local ancestors. The clan membership of certain heroes is used by local groups to justify not only ritual claims, but also such regarding land rights and status. All things that are still of importance today came into being with the settlement of the land by the ancestors, whose names and deeds are recalled during the *reba*. The myths tell that the ancestors once came from across the sea in large canoes; upon having arrived at the coast, they gradually took possession of the land. The *reba* cycle reconstructs their migrations and mimetically re-enacts the events that took place in those ancient times. The villages located south of Langa begin to perform the *reba* ceremonies as early as in November. Langa opens its cycle season at the end of December, and it is not until February that *reba* reaches the last villages in the highlands.[30] *Reba* is a ceremonial complex of the rainy season and besides many other functions originally was also a ritual that served to manipulate the weathers. Nowadays, scientific findings on rain and storm clash with the views held by the elders, yet people believe that by faithfully keeping to the rites they are 'on the safe side'.

[29] A more detailed analysis of the *reba* complex is found in Schröter (2002a).

[30] In addition to the *reba*, which is characterized by a great uniformity of its ritual corpus, the communities also have specific, individual local rites, such as a ceremony aimed at the destruction of yams pests that is held during the dry season.

The *reba* does not only illustrate how people deal with Catholicism, but also how they cope with the challenges posed by the modern Indonesian state.

While the first part of the *reba* is opened by Catholic prayers, it subsequently conforms to an indigenous procedure: It consists of two opening ceremonies that each last one day, and are held outside the villages at a site associated with the ancestors of the ruling clan of the region. The members of that clan celebrate the rites on behalf of all others, and thus reaffirm their ritual leadership position. In return for these services, the community has to supply them with chickens that are then sacrificed and consumed during the festivities. The poultry is not just handed over, but hunted down by the young men who are dressed as traditional warriors; armed with sticks, they prowl through the villages and finish off any chicken they catch sight of. Once they have bagged enough chickens, they move on into the forest. The rituals practiced there include offerings to the ancestors, blessings, dances, and songs invoking the growth of yams, which formerly was the most important crop. There is also a common meal that the spirits of the ancestors are invited to join. The first ritual is concluded by the proclamation of a taboo that will be in force during the entire rainy season: the prohibition on consuming fish, coconuts, and all other fresh produce coming from the coast. 'Coast' in this context refers exclusively to the southern coast of Flores, the direction whence come the monsoon storms that may carry fructifying rain, but also devastating tempests. Whenever wind and water are raging excessively, trees will fall over and crush people, earth slopes will slide, and corn, the most important crop of the Ngada and already grown to half its final height by that time, will be destroyed completely. By going without all produce coming from that direction, people hope to pacify the forces of nature.

These rites, and others that are performed in the forest, are followed by ceremonies that center on the *nua*, or clan house. Each kin group has fattened pigs, bought rice, and purchased sufficient quantities of palm liquor for these events that last three days. All members assemble at the ancestral house of the group, which simultaneously functions as a place of emotional reference, materialized genealogy, and temple. The Ngada are a so-called house society as defined by Claude Lévi-Strauss (1975); such societies are common in the Austronesian culture area[31], and the *sa'o méze*, the ancestral house, embodies a multitude of social, political, psychological, and cosmological attributions and mean-

[31] Compare Carsten and Hugh-Jones (1995), Fox (1993), Waterson (1989).

ings. *Reba* is a festivity of the house. It ensures cohesion among those group members who have temporarily or permanently migrated to other islands or foreign countries. Whoever can arrange it will come from Java, Bali, or Timor, where there are migrant communities, to the ancestral house of his or her kin group. Those who cannot attend are integrated into the community by the recitation of their names and a 'spit' blessing. Besides the living, the dead are remembered. People present offerings to the megaliths of the fields, the wooden shrines in the center of each village, and certain places inside the houses where spirits like to alight. Candles are lighted on the tombs of those deceased who have received a Christian burial. As in all rituals of the Ngada, the inclusion of the ancestors goes beyond a formalized remembrance: The doors are opened, and the ancestors are invited to join the festivities of their descendants. They are viewed as being definitely present, and only on the last day will they bid farewell to the living again.

Yet the *reba* does not only facilitate the cohesion of the house community; its communitarian aspect extends to the clan, the village, and the entire system of villages. During the *reba* members of the individual houses visit each other and consume communal meals. Affinal relatives are visited as well. Because of the numerous family relationships that thus need to be reaffirmed and strengthened in the course of three days, the ritual actions largely consist of constant eating, a veritable gluttony. On a broader level, cohesion is affected by communal dances that once again evoke the growth of yams and recount the story of the culture hero.

So far, the *reba* rites are in accordance with *adat*, that is, the local tradition. Unlike in other rituals, particularly curing ceremonies, no one speaks Christian prayers or crosses himself. Yet it would be surprising if a ritual like the *reba*, with its pronounced focus on the establishment of community, did completely negate the Catholic priests and the mythical ancestors of Christianity. In order to integrate these important new ancestors and to pay tribute to the ties with the church representatives, people have devised a new rite: *reba umum* ('public *reba*'), which meanwhile has become an institution within the indigenous ceremonial complex. *Reba umum* is celebrated each year in a different *nua*'s village square, which as a visible expression of modernity is decorated in the style of Indonesian mega events. A bamboo platform is built on the front end of the square, adorned with colorful paper banderols and banners, and roofed with plastic tarps as a protection against the frequent rains. The long sides are cov-

ered as well, and in addition – if possible – furnished with chairs. Illustrious guests are invited to the festivities: uniformed officials and stylishly dressed inhabitants of the district capital form an odd contrast to the villagers who are wearing well-worn wrap skirts. This event, which attracts a large crowd, is a mixture of Catholic mass, traditional ritual, governmental event, and folkloristic performance. Lay priests will speak Christian prayers in Indonesian, recite verses from Ngada rituals in the Ngada language, and a chorus assembled in front of the platform sings Christian hymns in Ngada. It is interesting to note here that the Christian-Indonesian lyrics are composed in a parallel-verse technique (compare Fox 1988) commonly used for ritual verses in all of eastern Indonesia and thus exhibit a traditional syntax, whereas the traditional Ngada lyrics borrow from Christian ritual and refer to Christ as a yams hero, that is, a modern twin of the culture hero Sili Ana Wunga.

The remembrance of the time when yams was consumed is a reconstruction of people's own history. When the female dancers sing 'yams of Sili Ana Wunga', they evoke both remembrance and a presence of the past. People strive to transpose the time of the ancestors performatively into the present. They wear the clothes of the ancestors, put aside chairs and modern furniture, sit on woven mats, and eat with their fingers from basketry bowls. By means of these enactments a ritual space is created where the boundaries between the living and the dead, between the present and the past, are lifted. The Ngada know different types of times and different ways to create these. Cyclical time is in accordance with the seasons, biographical time corresponds to the life of the individuals, intergenerational time mirrors genealogy, linear time reflects the modern calendar, and last but not least there is the cosmic time of the myths. Each of these times only exists through and within social practices that establish them. Cosmic time, which alone can answer questions relating to origins and basic collective identity, is created through ritual and the recitation of conceptualizations that in turn evoke myths and stories. One of these conceptualizations is the yams of the *reba*, the yams of Sili Ana Wunga. It is detached from the present in a very immediate manner, and functions as an intermediary connecting people with a mythical past. Yet this past is not constructed as contradicting the Catholic present. In the *reba umum*, the most progressive part of the *reba*, yams is not only associated with Sili Ana Wunga, but also with Jesus Christ. Here a second, modern genealogy has emerged, which consigns Christ to the ranks of the myth-

ical ancestors of the Ngada, and links their story with that of the Bible in a very basic manner.

The chorus, consisting of women and men in complete ritual attire, underscores its hymns with meticulously orchestrated dance movements that have been rehearsed for weeks prior to the event. This rather rigid choreography differs strikingly from the improvised dances performed by the Ngada during other *reba* rituals, and the lyrics lack the ribald improvisations of the women, their sung provocations and innuendoes. The *reba umum* is very perfect, very decent, and – as is impressively evidenced by the large audiences it attracts – obviously very entertaining. The climax of the whole event is communion; this is the only time when the local missionary, who has hitherto kept in the background, becomes active. After some concluding prayers the crowd scatters again, and everyone retires to his ancestral house to have a meal there in the midst of his family.

The conclusion of the *reba* cycle is marked by collecting the bones of the animals that have been killed, and taking them to the forest. They are an offering to ill-humoured spirits, souls of the dead that buzz in the air, and other creatures of the spiritual world that lie in wait in lonesome places and skulk around the houses of the people, eager to bring sickness and death.

Christian/modern and local ritual traditions are associated with different concepts of time: while the Christian rituals conform to the Gregorian calendar, the rituals of the Ngada go by the lunar year and the appearance of certain celestial bodies. It is not always possible to add the different manners of counting cumulatively, particularly when the local calendar is variable. The *reba* ceremonies usually begin in December, and the exact date for this was traditionally determined by the positions of Sirius and Antares. Both heavenly bodies were regarded as mythical ancestors of the Ngada, and their appearance is connected with a remembrance of people's own roots and the passing down of history. In the past, astrologists every year anew determined the date when the ceremony was to begin, because the position of the celestial bodies varied from one year to the next. In the course of Christianization, the temporal proximity between these rites and Christmas became a problem; it was feared that the *reba* might interfere with the Christian holiday. The search for a solution of this problem ended in a fixation of the hitherto variable calendar regulating the traditional ritual complex. Thus, it is nowadays possible to name a definite date for the beginning of the rites, irrespective of the journeys of Sirius and Antares, which conse-

quently fall more and more into oblivion. Only the old people still have knowledge of the story relating to the two heavenly bodies that are imagined as incestuous siblings; as it seems to make no sense to hand it down any longer, this story is gradually getting lost.

The *reba* briefly sketched above is merely one element of a fulminate ritual system used by the Ngada to integrate the 'Foreign' into the 'Own'. As is well known, community is established and renewed by means of rituals (Turner 1989). In that process, the dramatical performances help to act out smouldering conflicts, or even to settle them. This aspect plays an important role in the *reba* as well. All members of a kin group are ideally expected to assemble in the ancestral house during the festivities, and to jointly celebrate the rituals. All disputes should be resolved, and harmony restored. Those who cannot participate in person due to temporary migration are remembered by calling out their names. The deceased are invited to join the feast, and the neighbours are visited. People sacrifice pigs and chickens and indulge in gluttonous banquets that last for days, where plenty of meat and palm liquor are served. Those who are more affluent contribute more, and those who are poor get what they lack. People celebrate *communitas*, the common bond shared within the community. At the same time they reassure themselves of their own culture, renew ritual and mythological knowledge, and offer the younger generation the opportunity to learn the complicated verses and to become acquainted with the old stories. According to the Ngada, the *reba* is an essential element of their culture, and it is the ritual they miss most when they are living abroad. In order to also integrate their new culture, Catholicism, they have developed the *reba umum* and thus demonstrated their efforts towards such an act of integration, as well as their willingness to compromise. Yet all these well-meant endeavors might have come to naught if the missionaries had not met the Ngada half way. The *reba* unquestionably is a ritual pertaining to the ancestor cult. The deceased and the spirits are presented with offerings, they are invited to join the festivities, and people firmly believe in their presence. This may be condemned as being unchristian, and indeed Islamic and Protestant missionary societies have crusaded against such alleged 'superstitions' with ardent zeal in other parts of Indonesia. The priests of the Societas Verbi Divini were more circumspect. They grasped the importance of the ancestor cult as a factor that strengthened family and relational bonds, and they realized that to preserve that cult also meant to maintain a moral authority that watches over people's compliance with useful rules. They deliberately ignored

the magical practices employed during the *reba* to propitiate the weather, to stimulate the growth of the plants, and the like, and let the magician priests have their way. This, too, was a wise decision that did not dampen the deep Catholic religiosity of the people, because the magicians and masters of rituals are often the most fervent catechists who delight in telling biblical stories and the ancient myths alike.

Conclusions

On the island of Flores, and particularly among the Ngada, the priests of the SVD allowed a religious parallel system to develop, which they even supported by arguing in its favor. Missionaries repeatedly explained to me that at the core of the ancestor cult there is nothing other but the Catholic veneration of saints, and thus this cult is of high moral value. Yet not all religious practices are compatible with Catholicism, and thus some evade a rhetorical reinterpretation. These are not performed right in front of the missonaries; the latter regard as non-existent what they do not see, and manifest little interest in disclosing the last hidden secrets of the local cultures. In our conversations, many priests purported that they did not know anything about those rituals that are being performed outside a churchly context. A third group of rituals and doctrines is characterized by amalgamations and syncretisms, combinations of indigenous and Christian symbols, decontextualizations of matters of faith, and reinterpretations of stories, myths, and historical genealogies.[32]

This model includes a partial separation of worlds that is facilitated by the Indonesian language, which can terminologically distinguish between *agama* and *adat*.[33] In the context under discussion here, *agama*, 'religion', means Catholicism, and upon being asked about his religious affiliation every Ngada will fervently avow himself to be a Catholic. This affiliation does by no means conflict with his tradition, with the rural practices, the belief in spirits, particular concepts relating to the ancestors, and with the obligation to perform

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[32] One example of such reinterpretative attempts is the establishment of links between of biblical and local genealogies in order to substantiate the descent of one's own mythical heroes from Abraham.

[33] In line with the indigenous parallelism of *agama* and *adat*, there existed (and still exists) a division of labor between priests and anthropologists. Some of the latter focussed exclusively on non-Christian aspects, and thus some monographs (compare, for example, Barnes 1974; Lewis 1988) conjure up the image of a supposedly pre-Christian timelessness that has little to do with reality.

an infinite multitude of rituals and sacrifices in order to maintain balance within the world. All that is *adat*, and thus the indigenous population holds the view that it has absolutely nothing to do with *agama*. As long as the priests and sisters accept this differentiation, the system continues to exist – and the members of the order are well advised not to undermine it, as the Catholic identity is important on Flores. This identity helps people to stand out against both the Muslim majority of the population and Protestant groups. Catholicism is the bond that unites members of the diverse language groups living on the island, who up to this day distrust each other because of their differing cultural practices. Those who do not belong to one's own group are still considered to be witches and to practice black magic, and bizarre rumors still circulate about their secret rituals. While the ethnic groups on Flores are divided by their respective local customs and traditions – that is, by *adat* –, they are united by *agama*. Catholicism has meanwhile become a regional identity that interconnects the inhabitants of the island; it has established a common ground that helps to overcome differences.

All local Florinese societies have tried to incorporate Christianity into their cultures in a comparable manner, and to combine it with their autochthonous religion. They try to benefit from both belief systems, and strive to avert damages that might result from any potential neglect of ritual duties towards the ancestors and spirit beings.[34] They are performing a balancing act that requires considerable creative potential. Florinese religion is a living religion with a multitude of local variations, and it undergoes a constant process of development. New dances, songs, and stories are emerging all the time. In contrast to the assertions of Frits Staal (1979, 1989), Caroline Humphrey, and James Laidlaw (1994) with regard to India, neither the Ngada nor any other ethnic groups on Flores are practising meaningless archaic rituals that long have ceased to make any sense, as the challenge posed by Catholicism does not allow them to be that rigid. They modernize rituals, recontextualize ritual symbols, and create new meanings whenever changed social structures require it.

At least in this respect they are not passive victims of world history but actors who manage to participate in modernity without losing their roots.

[34] Compare, for example, Erb (1987, 1991, 1993, 1996); Forth (1989, 1991, 1993, 1994, 1996, 1998); Graham (1994); Kohl (1986, 1988, 1990, 1995, 1998); Tule (2001); Wackers (1997). On the complex involving black magic and the ritual manner of coping with spiritual threats among the Ngada, compare Schröter (1998a, 2000b).