CHAPTER TEN

HOW CHRISTIANITY OBTAINED A CENTRAL POSITION IN MINAHASA CULTURE AND SOCIETY

In 2000 only four out of the (then) 32 provinces of Indonesia had a majority of Christians. These provinces were all located in the eastern regions of the vast archipelago. In number of total population they are somewhat comparable: the smallest being the Moluccas (1.1 million), middle ranking were North Sulawesi and Papua (2 and 2.2 million respectively) and the largest number was for East Nusa Tenggara (total population of 3.8 million). The highest percentage of Christians was in East Nusa Tenggara with 87.67%. It was followed by Papua with 75.51%. Third was North Sulawesi with 69.27%. Finally, a meagre majority was established for the Moluccas (not including the North Moluccas) with 50.19%. The province of North Sulawesi is the subject of this chapter.

Four provinces of Indonesia with a majority of Christians

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Christians</th>
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<tr>
<td>East Nusa Tenggara</td>
<td>3,823,154</td>
<td>87.67%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Papua</td>
<td>2,213,831</td>
<td>75.51%</td>
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<tr>
<td>North Sulawesi</td>
<td>2,000,871</td>
<td>69.27%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maluku</td>
<td>1,163,122</td>
<td>50.19%</td>
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For many people Minahasa (the largest part of North Sulawesi) and Christianity are inseparable, similar to the Muslim identity of Aceh and Minangkabau. There is probably no other region in Indonesia where so many people emphasise the close relationship between local or ethnic identity and Christianity. This strong identity was not yet present in the first period of encounter with Christianity (1570s–1820s) when only a few coastal villages, partly inhabited by traders and former slaves from outside regions, fostered the new religion. The Christian character of Minahasa was the result of the drastic changes in social, economic and religious life during the period of the first inland missionary activities by the German NZG workers J.G. Schwarz and J.F. Riedel (1831 until the early 1860s). This was the period when the government introduced the compulsory cultivation of coffee (and some other products like cacao), starting in 1822 and

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1 Suryadinata 2003:3 and 115–117.
continuing longer than in other regions of the archipelago, until 1899. This chapter will describe the various and very different episodes of Christianity in Minahasa and adjacent islands after the period 1570–1820 that has been described in chapters three and five.

Minahasa is a volcanic region. Distances are about 30–50 km from the east to the west coast and 120 km from the southwest to the northeast. Most of its territory is fertile and provides a healthy climate. The region is at three sides surrounded by the sea while in the south the rough and sparsely populated highlands of Bolaang Mongondow constitute a natural boundary. Besides West Sumatra, it was the only region in the outer islands where the Cultuurstelsel was implemented in the nineteenth century. This system of compulsory agriculture functioned through the mediation of the 27 chiefs of the Minahasa who ruled over what the Dutch called districts. They were liable for the quality and quantity of the delivered goods, but they also earned themselves much money and prestige from this economic system. In the absence of any traditional central power, the visit of Governor General G. van der Capellen in 1824 had increased the sense of belonging to the colonial framework. “Minahasan chiefs had by then become properly aware of how much their fate had come to be dependent on the Dutch colonialism.”2 This was strengthened by the participation of 1,400 soldiers from Minahasa (out of a total population of some 80,000 in the late 1820s) in the last phase of the Java War (1825–1830). The great reliability of the Minahasan population to the Dutch is also shown by the creation of the Kampung Jawa in Tondano, where Javanese Muslims, taken captive during the Java war, were sent in exile. Besides Muslim settlements in the border regions with Bolaang Mongondow, this settlement was one of the few Muslim centres of the region.

The effective rule carried out by the colonial power since the early 1820s expressed itself also in the extinction of headhunting (the last raid took place somewhere between the 1860s and the 1890s, depending on the written or oral sources used).3 Another drastic change in social life was the disappearance of the huge traditional long-houses where people could cherish the memory of founding ancestors, living together with many related families. The population was often, under compulsion, re-established in small houses for one nuclear family, under arguments of hygiene and safety. This also destroyed the religious-emotional relationship to the ancestors and discouraged the continuation of traditional rituals. Already in 1905 two German anthropologists, Paul and Fritz Sarasin, criticised the modern society:

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2 Schouten 1998:76.
If one has seen one village in Minahasa, one has seen them all, because they are generally larger or smaller, impressive or poor examples of the same model, which was introduced by the Dutch administration during the last century. The Minahasa village of an earlier period with its irregular structure and its huge and gloomy houses, supplying living-quarters for several families, has completely disappeared.\footnote{4}

1827–1881: The creation of a Christian Minahasan identity

In the first decades of the nineteenth century there were only four coastal villages that continued their Christian identity, served by schoolmasters. In 1817 Joseph Kam made an inspection tour from Ambon, and again in 1819. In 1821 he sent two missionaries who died soon after arrival. In 1827 missionary G.J. Hellendoorn was sent by Kam to Manado. His first duty was the care of the small European congregation. He was as a missionary sent to this region for lack of a proper Reformed minister. Hellendoorn also gave much attention to the small communities of native Christians along the coast. Much of his time was spent attending to the education of a small group of indigenous youngsters, who were to become founders of schools, such as those established by Kam and Roskott in Ambon and other Moluccan islands. These were schools where education was nearly totally orientated towards religious activities. There was much singing, music lessons (playing the flute), while reading was practically restricted to the Bible, sermons, hymns and prayers. Like Kam in Ambon, Hellendoorn, and also later missionaries like Riedel and Schwarz, took the pupils into their house, where they became accustomed to the daily routine of a pious half-European family (some of these missionaries were married to local women). After they had been long enough at the school and in the household of the missionary they were sent to establish schools for themselves. In 1832 Hellendoorn had already twenty rather well-organised schools under his supervision with some 700 pupils, nearly double the 400 in the poorly functioning schools five years before. When Hellendoorn died in 1839, the Minahasa mission counted 56 schools and 4,000 pupils. The success of the mission was counted in pupils rather than in baptisms!

Although Hellendoorn himself remained concentrated on Manado and environs, he insisted with Joseph Kam that future missionaries should extend their activities to inland Minahasa. For several reasons there were very few native Ambonese available for the Minahasa mission. But in 1831 Joseph Kam could send two German missionaries, Johann Friedrich Riedel who started work in the central town of Tondano, on the northern shore of the lake of

\footnote{4 Quoted after Buchholt 1994:15.}
the same name, and Johann Gottlob Schwarz who was placed in Langowan, a few miles southeast of this lake. Five more mission stations were opened in the 1830s (Amurang, Tomohon, Kema, Tanangwangko and Kumelembuai), and three more (Sonder, Ratahan, Talawaán) in the 1840s. The eleven mission stations (the capital of Manado included) were all centres for minor outer stations where the teachers of the schools also took care of the further introduction to Christianity.

Letters by missionaries of this period are full of complaints about the harsh life of the common people under the strict regime of the compulsory cultivation of coffee (up to 100 days per year) and corvée work for the roads (up to 30 days per year for all adults), with much profit for the chiefs but leaving the common people often in poverty and distress. Nevertheless, the Pax Neerlandica worked very positively for promoting religious conversions. It was estimated that about 1880 some 80,000 or 80% of the population was baptised and had embraced Christianity. Schouten interprets this change as “a strategy to overcome their cultural disorientation and social distress…. Much in the spirit of: if you can't beat them, join them. Embracing what Minahasans called agama kompeni, or the religion of Dutch government, was part of such a strategy.”

In many respects the new religion differed much from traditional Minahasan religion. The latter put high value on power, pride and prestigious liberalty. Wearing the colour red was the exclusive prerogative of successful headhunters. Only they and their wives could wear tattoos with depictions of human heads. They were given sumptuous funerals and large waruga or grave tombs. Posso, great festivals with many pigs and the traditional drink of sager, were important for the reinforcement of the authority and prestige of social leaders. Religious functionaries and specialists, the walian and the tonaá who could make contact with the ancestors and had the knowledge of the sacred language and rituals, were found among male and female alike. The missionaries, however, rejected higher religious positions for women and thus in fact introduced an inferior position for women, although they claimed that they had reduced or even abolished the bride price and thus stated that they had promoted the position of women. The missionaries also preached an ethos of frugality, tried to ban alcoholic drinks, dancing, and protested against traditional ceremonies attached to the cycle of personal life and the yearly round of nature. They held no great baptism festivals and only introduced Christmas as a new festival, besides allowing ceremonies and feasts for occasions like harvest or moving into a newly built house. There were many conversions of the religious specialists

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who apparently followed the majority of the population instead of leading a strong opposition against the new faith. In many cases they were the first to take this decision. There was a remarkably high number of former male walian and tonâa among the local leadership of the new Christianity.\(^6\)

Most conversions in this period were individual decisions, notwithstanding the increasing collective pressure to convert. The whole process lasted also for nearly two generations, or some 50 years. Only in a few cases was there a collective conversion or at least a sudden massive movement towards the new religion. Such a case was the revival in Tonsea and Likupang (north of Kema) where missionary F.G. Linemann could baptise 8,518 adults in the period 1856–1859.\(^7\)

In the strategy of the NZG there was a strong separation between baptism and admission to the Holy Supper’s. The missionaries were quite severe in the administration of baptism and asked for a thorough preparation. But even after baptism they required further training and good discipline in church attendance before their flock could be admitted to the Lord’s Supper. Riedel baptised between 1831 and 1860, 9,341 people but only accepted 3,851 as full member of the church who were allowed to receive the Lord’s Supper. His colleague N.P. Wilken baptised in the period 1843–1868 not less than 8,584 people but only admitted 1,452 to the Lord’s Supper. Missionary S.D. van der Velde van Cappellen who worked in the station of Amurang took a more lenient position. In the mid-1850s he urged school pupils to receive baptism before leaving the three years of basic schooling, because he was afraid that they could turn to Islam. Somewhat later he had to conclude that this method was no guarantee at all: only 1/5 of these ‘baptised pagans’ came to church, and most of them only at Christmas and New Year.\(^8\) The jubilant statements about the magnificent increase of Christians in this period have also their dark side!

1881–1934 Minahasan Christianity under the administration of the
Indische Kerk

The great success of the Minahasa mission also caused problems for the NZG. The missionary organisation came into financial troubles in the 1870s due to internal problems in the Netherlands and the increase of its missionary fields. In 1873 the NZG paid the salaries for 9 European missionaries, 14


\(^7\) Coolsma 1901:579–580.

\(^8\) Enklaar 1947:77–79.
native assistant missionaries, 3 helpers and 123 teachers who in small villages also served as religious leaders of the Christians. Although salaries were quite modest, they were up to 36,000 guilders per year. There was no strategy to ask the new converts to begin contributions for the organisation of their belief. It was all planned and financed top-down. This situation created the need for drastic measures. For the next 50 years the solution of this problem was found in the surrender of the mission field to the established Protestant Church of the East Indies, a body financed and regulated by the colonial state. The process took some time. Between 1876 and 1881 one mission post after another was brought under supervision of the Indische Kerk. In daily practise this meant that regulations for salaries, the pension plans of church staff, provision of material and buildings, were carried out by the officials of the resident of Manado. These colonial personnel could be religion-minded but in many cases they were indifferent or even uncooperative. Later observers all considered this as a great mistake, because a golden opportunity to create an indigenous church at an early stage was lost. Hendrik Kraemer wrote in 1926:

I am firmly convinced that it is far more correct to call the Minahasa one of the most pitiable regions of the Archipelago, not a pet child but a tortured animal. . . . The curse (I cannot put it less forcefully in this connection) of the Dutch rage for religious neutrality swept over the Minahasa. A people with primitive notions and in the middle of a Christianising process, experienced cool indifference towards the new religion from the side of the civil servants of a government which in their eyes is identical with this Christian religion.\(^9\)

Was it so bad? Was it really so negative for a blossoming Christianity with its many schools, that now received generous subsidies from a colonial government? The German historian of the Indonesian mission, Theodor Müller-Krüger, also wrote in a very negative way about this organisational move. For him one of the great failures of this move was the break with the language policy of the NZG. Until 1880 Malay was used in the schools and for the Bible no Minahasan translation was prepared (partly due to the fact that there were great differences between the various districts, with five distinct languages in this small area). The missionaries, however, learned the local languages and much of their work was carried out in these languages. They were moving towards the creation of a new Minahasan standard language, quite different from the Malay of the coastal regions. However, after the transfer of the mission to the Indische Kerk, this policy was abandoned in favour of a total application of Malay not only in schools but also in the church. Another negative effect of the transfer was the creation of a ‘pyramid

of ministries’ (Ämterpyramide) because work in the Minahasa was directed by a fully ordained European minister who served the Dutch-speaking congregation of Manado. Under this minister there were some 10–12 assistant ministers (nearly all of European origin) who in normal condition were not entitled to administer Baptism or Eucharist. Under these were the (native) assistant teachers (hulpleeraar) of religion (growing from a dozen in 1881 to 89 in 1934) and some 125 school teachers who were responsible for the local congregations in the villages. In their turn they were assisted by elders. This was really a top-down organisation controlled by white colonial officials, without much perspective for growth towards an independent and indigenous church structure. Only the fully ordained minister, the score of (European) assistant ministers and the growing group of native assistant teachers were entitled to receive government salaries.10

In his well-researched and meticulous study of Sam (Gerungan Saul Samuel Jacob) Ratu Langie (1890–1949), Van Klinken suggests that this Minahasa educator, journalist and first of all nationalist politician, was already part of a “post-Christian,” not post-animist or post-Muslim” society. He states that, “the intellectual upper layer of Minahasan society into which Ratu Langie was born, was by the early twentieth century almost completely un-churchd.”11 This is again a very strong statement, only reinforced with a quote from the report by Hendrik Kraemer that regular church attendance was only ten percent in the towns in the early 1920s.12 On the other side, there was the statement in 1902 by Resident E.J. Jellesma, himself the son of a Protestant missionary, who wrote that, “Minahasa can be called a Protestant land.” But this latter judgment was also made in order to prevent Catholics from working in the same region and perhaps should not be taken too seriously.13 Whatever may be true of this quick ‘secularisation,’ to be blamed on the freemason colonial officials and the very liberal Dutch ministers of the nineteenth century Indische Kerk, or on a poor inculturation of Christianity in Minahasan society, there was definitely not a golden age of full and obedient Christianity in this period, but still quite a vehement struggle for a new identity.

12 Kraemer 1958:11–42.
The pyramid of the hierarchy of the *Indische Kerk* in its bi-lingual expressions. In 1934, when the GMIM was constituted, there were 2 fully ordained ministers, 6 Dutch and three Indonesian (Rev. Wenas, Moendoeng and F.W. Lumanow) *hulppredikers*, 89 *inlands leraar* and 374 *guru jemaat*.15

The school system of the NZG, mostly concentrated on religious teaching, remained outside the subsidies, also after the mission was taken over by the *Indische Kerk* in the 1870s. Simultaneous with the transfer of the church personnel from NZG to the *Indische Kerk* there was an increase in government schools, that were religiously neutral. This involved a provision that no religious classes were allowed in these schools, but their secular education was at a much higher level than was the case in the NZG schools. It was a serious setback for the missionaries who saw their major instrument for influence in society threatened. NZG decided therefore to continue the religious schools, although they could not compete with the government schools. Some 20–30 NZG teachers accepted a position within the government system that provided much higher salaries than the mission could give. They were put under the supervision of some 60 teachers who were trained at the government’s teacher training school of Tondano. The mission continued for a long period with its

<table>
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<th>Dutch names</th>
<th>Indonesian</th>
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| **Predikant** | Pendeta | Fully ordained minister  
|             |           | Only Dutch men, with academic training in Europe  
| **Hulpprediker** | Pendeta penolong | Assistant minister. Most of them Dutch, in the early 20th century  
| After 1937: | Or just Penolong | also several Indonesians who studied in Oegstgeest, Netherlands. No academic training, only theological college immediately after junior high school.  
| **Indisch Predikant** | Also: Pendeta pembantu |  
|             |           |  
| **Inlandsch leeraar** | Pendeta pribumi | Native teacher, Indonesian working under the supervision of the Hulpprediker.  
| **Goeroe** | Guru jemaat | Catechists, teachers in village schools that were concentrated on religious classes  
|             | Tua agama or Penatua | Elders; not specially trained people who took some local responsibilities in a congregation  
| **Diaken** | Shamash or Deacon | Service to the poor

own teachers’ training programme, at home with the missionaries, which was also the traditional system where the walian also used adoption to pass on their knowledge and spirit power to the following generations.\textsuperscript{16} Besides this, a more formal mission school was erected in Tanawangko that, between 1854 and 1895, was led by qualified teacher and assistant minister Nicolaas Graafland. The government schools were first considered as places where people were prepared for a position as government officials or employees of a European firm (for pangkat or a position with social status) while mission schools (still 2/3 of all schools in the region) were seen as places to learn religion.\textsuperscript{17}

The transfer of the mission to the Indische Kerk was not always executed in a smooth way. Several missionaries rejected the idea, because they felt not free to preach as they wanted within the framework of the Indische Kerk, considered as a bastion of liberal Christianity where even the doctrine of the Trinity and of the divinity of Jesus as son of God was not maintained. S. Ulfers (ca 1819–1885) who had worked in Amurang since 1847 and from 1849 in Kumelembuai, asked in 1874 for permission to stay under the NZG because of his age. This was granted to him. The same was asked by missionary J. Wiersma who strongly opposed the transfer from mission to Indische Kerk because he considered his congregation not yet ripe for this process. In 1878 the directors of the NZG ordered him to accept the transfer to the governmental position under threat of dismissal. Only in July 1881 did he accept this move and he was formally nominated for his station of Ratahan. Soon afterwards the resident of Manado took revenge for anti-government articles he had written in the journal Indische Gids, and Wiersma was moved to the far-away, isolated and tiny village of Waai in Ambon. He managed to declare himself sick, left for Europe on sick-leave and two years later he was dismissed from his government position ‘with honour’. He was one of the most vocal protesters against the whole process. In his writings in newspapers and magazines he protested against the harsh measures of Resident A.H. Swaving (1876–1878), his successor, P.A. Matthes, and the lower staff of the residency of that time who put too heavy obligations on the population. In a comment on the murder of Controleur H. Haga, killed by someone who was unwilling to do corvée labour in September 1879, he wrote about this colonial official and his colleagues, “They were sent for coffee and roads.” As a missionary Wiersma did not like to serve the same employer and thus to become identified with these people. He saw no other way out than dismissal from the mission and return to Europe.\textsuperscript{18}

\textsuperscript{16} Buchholt 1994:19.
\textsuperscript{18} “Gezonden werden zij voor de koffie en de wegen…” in: [J. Wiersma], “Brieven uit de Minahassa,” Indische Gids 1880–II:820–832, quote from p. 824. In this article he strongly
The deep impact of colonialism on Minahasan society was still reinforced by the condition that since 1881 even the new religion was formally a state affair. This probably increased the Minahasan tendency to accept many things European as part of their own culture. Especially European education became a favourite issue. In 1926 Hendrik Kraemer noticed two more or less contradictory aspects of Minahasan society. He considered “their natural desire to feast” to be a continuation of the pre-Christian society. But the new need was the education of their children, “The Minahasans live on their capital and not on its interest. The money they make from their plantations is spent on feasts or the education of their children…. As in Amboina, indigenous people as well as Europeans in the Minahasa stated that the country is gluttoned with Dutch education and that the cultural and economic development does not keep pace with it.”

*Catholics, Adventists, Pentecostals, KGPM: fragmentation of Minahasan Christianity in the first decades of the twentieth century*

As already mentioned above, large numbers of Minahasan men entered since the later 1820s the colonial army. Most of those who were not yet converted to Christianity asked for baptism during their period of military service, often for the sake of the special financial gift on the occasion of baptism and the higher salary for Christian soldiers. There are reports that some even wanted a Catholic baptism after a Protestant in order to receive this baptismal allowance once again. In the early 1850s there were already several scores of Minahasan Catholic soldiers, baptised in Semarang or Surabaya. Catholic priest Caspar de Hesselle was in the Minahasa between 6 January and 8 April 1853, but he met only some 120 Catholics from the Philippines. From the military garrison of Ambarawa 56 Minahasan baptisms were mentioned for the period 1859–1861; in 1861 from Semarang 48. One of these early baptisms was Daniel Mandagi who entered military service about 1845 and for some time stayed in Java. In early 1868 he sent a letter from Manado to the Semarang parish priest Jozef Lijnen asking for a residing priest in his region. After a permit from the colonial authorities was obtained, the Jesuit priest Johannes de Vries travelled to Minahasa. He concentrated, outside the capital of Manado, on the south-eastern district of Ratahan where he baptised...

opposed the government supervision of any missionary work. About the killing of Haga, see *Indische Gids* 1880–I:592–601, probably also by J. Wiersma. The articles bear no name. See also Schouten 1998:74.

19 Kraemer 1958:27.
20 Steenbrink 2003–I:14
21 Van Aernsbergen 1934:108.
more than 140 people during the absence of their missionary Rev. J. Wiersma. People may have taken him for an itinerant (Protestant or at least Christian) missionary. At least two chiefs who were in conflict with the Protestant minister took advantage of this presence to change their affiliation to Catholicism. The Catholics were inclined to recognise under certain conditions a marriage formalised without a minister. The Protestants were rather hesitant to baptise the children of such couples, but in some cases De Vries did. All this increased the Catholic flock little by little.

The two-month tour by De Vries in 1868 was the beginning of much debate and protests. Governor General P. Mijer, (a rather active promoter of Protestant mission) rebuked Vicar Apostolic Vrancken for “this most stupid and rash action by Mr De Vries, of all things a Jesuit!”22 The Lutheran Rev. J.A. Schuurman, minister of the Indische Kerk in Batavia (1868–1880), had a more nuanced opinion about the case. He blamed the Protestant missionaries in Minahasa for uncompromising and blatantly strict rules, which led to De Vries’s success in baptising.23 For the next decades an internal struggle between the two Christian denominations continued. Bishop Vrancken was afraid of a new conflict with the colonial authorities (after the Grooff affair of 1844–1847) and only in 1873 did his successor A. Claessens send the calm and diplomatic Larantuka priest Gregorius Metz to Minahasa. After a continuation of these trips during the following decade, in 1886 a first priest, Bernardus Mutsaers, settled permanently in Manado. The number of Catholics was estimated at somewhat more than 2,500 at the time, a small number compared to more than 90,000 Protestants. In order to prevent easy change of denomination, in 1883 the so-called briefjesbesluit or Decision of Letters was issued by Governor General F.s’ Jacob. It stipulated that:

All native Christians in the residencies of Manado, Ambon and Ternate who want to leave their denomination and embrace another, must give notice of their wish to the minister of their first denomination in the presence of two witnesses. They have to declare that they freely want to change their denomination without any solicitation of another church.24

This awkward decision, issued by the colonial state, was a strategy to make change of denomination more difficult. It was just one step in a long chain of conflicts between the denominations. The next Governor General, Van Rees, withdrew this regulation. New conflicts, however, rose again. The longest was about the arrival of Dutch Catholic nuns in 1898, who were only allowed to open a school in 1907 and even then only for indigenous Catholic girls.

23 Van der Velden 1908:179.
As with the Protestants, also in the Catholic endeavour education was a major instrument to attain influence and prestige in this majority Protestant region. This was also possible thanks to the sharp increase in foreign personnel with the Catholics. For the period 1900–1940 we can notice a very quick increase in Dutch priests, nuns and brothers, much faster than the increase in number of the faithful. In 1902 the nearly 7,000 Catholics were served by three Jesuit priests and about 8 nuns. In 1940 for a number of 25,304 Catholics there were 25 priests, 26 brothers and 80 sisters. By that time there were already 25 native Indonesians working as sisters in the Minahasa, but all the priests, religious brothers and 55 of the sisters were European (mostly Dutch with some German priests).\textsuperscript{25} This is quite different from the relatively small number of expatriate Protestant mission personnel in the region, never exceeding ten people. The Protestant mission leader Baron van Boetzelaer, after regretting that the Catholics had started their mission in Minahasa, rightly stated “the results of this activity were not compatible to the effort exerted by the mission”.\textsuperscript{26}

The statistics for Catholic education show a strong emphasis on Dutch language education, the most prestigious (and most expensive) type of school. This resulted for the year 1939 in three Dutch language Kindergarten, three HIS and two HCS (Dutch language school for Chinese), two high schools (MULO), one teachers training college, two Dutch language vocational schools and a minor seminary. There were at that time 85 Catholic ‘Malay schools,’ where only three years’ education were given in Indonesian, with the exception of 9 of these schools that offered a five-years course (Vervolgscholen). The Dutch Catholic religious teachers concentrated on the Dutch language schools. Only six out of the 71 European sisters and brothers worked in Malay schools.\textsuperscript{27} On the whole the study and practice of the Dutch language was very popular in the Minahasa, also nicknamed “the twelfth province of the Netherlands.” This was notwithstanding the strategy of the Protestant and Catholic missions that used Malay as their common language. It could partly be attributed to the special privilege of children of Minahasan soldiers who could be accepted in the most prestigious Dutch language school, the ELS, Europese Lagere School. But also the HIS was very popular in the region.\textsuperscript{28} The Catholic institutes attracted also many Protestants. It is not exceptional that a Protestant figure like Wilhelm Johanis Rumambi (1916–1984), son and grand-son of a

\textsuperscript{25} *Jaarboek* 1940:205–207.
\textsuperscript{26} Baron van Boetzelaer 1947:453.
\textsuperscript{27} *Jaarboek* 1940:207.
\textsuperscript{28} Kees Groeneboer 1993:307, 366, 369, 387. Groeneboer mentions that the city of Manado had a 9.3\% Dutch speaking population, only second to Ambon where 13\% could speak and read Dutch.
Protestant minister and teacher was in the 1920s sent to a Catholic primary school, run by Dutch brothers in Manado, before he enrolled in a Protestant boarding school in Java, Surakarta in the period 1930–1934. 29 This exactly fitted the image described by Hendrik Kraemer of a people, spending so much money to secure the best education of their children. Although the impact of education decreased after independence, it remained an important aspect of Catholic life. In 2000 it was reported that the Catholic schools still largely outnumbered the percentage of Catholics in this region. In that year 15% of the teachers at Catholic primary schools were not Catholic, and even 30% of the teaching staff at high schools, although in all cases religious classes were taught by Catholic teachers. As to pupils the percentage was even less than that: not much more than half of the (about 30,000) pupils in 140 primary and 63 secondary schools were Catholic. Was this purely a heritage from the past, continued without much deliberation? At that time the official strategy of the diocese had become that faith education was more a family than a school affair. Therefore it wanted to develop a new mission for its schools. 30

The Catholics also spent much money and energy on health care. In Tomohon a Catholic hospital was founded by the JMJ sisters in 1916. It received government subsidies in 1917. This support was given under the Governor General Idenburg, an outspoken defender of balanced subsidies for all Christian denominations. The Mariënheuvel (Mary’s Hill, Gunung Maria) hospital remained the only major medical institution organised by the Catholics in the Minahasa during the colonial period. After independence this hospital generated several hospitals and clinics. The influence of medical care on the spread of Catholicism was much less than that of the schools. In 1923 a cooperative union was established, the POB, Perserikatan Orang Berkeboen, an association of people working in plantations, mostly in coffee. The German MSC priest A.M. Domsdorff was the advisor to this union. 31 In the 1970s, the time of the rise of development cooperations, this developed into credit unions. But still, most important socio-economic cooperation remained based on the small-scale lending between families and neighbourhoods, the arisan. Even a review of the role of Catholic doctrine in Minahasan society, as formulated in 2000 by Bishop Yosef Suwatan, must be understood as a rehabilitation of the importance of feasts (posso) repudiated and rejected so vehemently by Protestant preachers from the first missionaries until Hendrik Kraemer in 1926. This analysis glorifies the Minahasan fondness of big celebrations as the fulfilment of community, as the realisation of communal togetherness and harmony. “Although we should not forget that religion also preaches about the

life of the hereafter, we should take seriously this life that is in progress and moving towards fulfilment. Therefore we must enjoy what we have reached already thus far.”

In 2000 there were 102,536 Catholics in North Sulawesi or 3.28% of the total population, a modest percentage that had not risen substantially since 1900. Catholics remained the largest single Christian denomination besides the majority GMIM Protestants and some 50 other denominations in this region. Catholics were over-represented in the capital of Manado where they counted 18.3% (22,692) out of a population of some 110,000 in 2000. In the district of Tondano they were 14.6% and in neighbouring Tontena 11.1%. This was already 2/3 of the Catholics in the broad region of North Sulawesi and Gorontalo, including Sangir-Talaud and the Banggai archipelago or Central Sulawesi.

The Catholic community had grown partly through what its adversaries had called sheep-stealing or proselytising. Many of its members had come from baptised Protestant families. The same can be said for all later denominations that gradually arrived in this region in the twentieth century. We can only give attention to a few of them.

A quite peculiar Protestant church was the Adventists who arrived in the Dutch colony in 1900, in Padang, and from there spread to the Batak area. In 1911 a young Minahasan man, Samuel Rantung, embraced Adventism in Batavia. In the 1910s he went for some time to an Adventist seminary in Singapore and in 1920, while sick, he took a period of leave in his home area of Ratahan, Minahasa. Here he made several other Minahasan converts. After some time he was joint in this mission by a young Sundanese M.E. Diredja, at that time working at the Advent mission press in Singapore: religious mission is a business of adventurous and travelling people! The two first evangelists were strengthened by the arrival of Singapore-born Joseph Phang, a dentist who had received his education in Los Angeles at UCLA. Phang settled in Manado where he worked as a dentist, but also tried to gain followers. He was quite successful and preached Adventism in the whole of Minahasa. In 1922 an American ordained minister, Albert Munson, arrived who settled in Manado. From Ratahan and Manado the Adventist church slowly spread through the whole of Minahasa. Also for this denomination the school was an important institution for gaining followers. Manado was in 1930 already established as an independent centre (a Union) for the Adventist Church. In the 1990s there were two Unions in Indonesia: one in Jakarta (also connected

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32 Rosariyanto 2000:421.
to the Batak region) and one in Manado for East Indonesia. Both counted some 70,000 faithful among their flock.  

Social scientists wondered how the Adventists, in most places an extremely small community, could find a relatively large response in Minahasa. They have a quite ascetic life-style, refrain from alcohol and coffee, do not indulge in luxuries like jewellery and cosmetics. On the whole this is quite in contrast to the usually extroverted life-style of the Minahasans. Erika Lünnemann noticed that quite a few Adventists were among the well-to-do, even the *nouveaux riches*, while the Pentecostal movement is above all, a religion of the socially disadvantaged.  

Denominational fragmentation saw a further step with the establishment on 21 April 1933 of the KGPM. Basically the origin of the KGPM can be traced back to the unlucky transition of the missionary society to the *Indische Kerk*. In order to train native ministers for the congregations a theological school was established in 1885 in Tomohon. The output of this theological school (under the supervision of the *Indische Kerk*) was not sufficient. Moreover, its graduates were not fully ordained ministers, but only served as assistant ministers who could not, under normal conditions, administer the basic sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist. Their formal name was *inlandsch leeraar* or ‘native teacher’. Because their number was not sufficient the missionary society NZG continued to train schoolteachers to serve the congregations also. This resulted in the awkward situation that one part of the (assistant) ministers was paid by the *Indische Kerk*, and thus directly by the colonial state, whereas another group still received its salary from the missionary society for their function as teacher of a mission school and leader of the local congregation. In 1910 the NZG teachers established a union *Pangkal Setia*.  

Within this union the antipathy against the *inlandsch leeraar* was enforced by nationalist sentiments. The *inlandsch leeraar* was characterised as a tool of the colonial government serving one of its major instruments, the *Indische Kerk* that gave first of all attention to the European members and considered the native Christians as only second class. This idea was strengthened by the discussion of the separation of the church (in fact for them the *Indische Kerk*) and the colonial state. During his visit to Minahasa in 1926 Hendrik Kraemer could still appease these emotions, but not for long. The only fully ordained minister was the Dutch E. de Vreede who was not popular among the indigenous population. Still, he was nominated to be the negotiator and initiator for a more independent

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34 Buchholt 1994:42–47.  
35 There is some debate about the year of origin of *Pangkal Setia*. Many sources give the date of 1917. See Henley 1996:108.
Minahasan section within the *Indische Kerk*. This was a breaking point and the KGPM or *Kerapatan Gereja Protestan Minahasa* or Union of Protestant Churches in Minahasa, was established by proclamation of its existence by the group of teachers. They expanded rapidly and in 1941 counted 61 congregations, about 10% of the total number of Minahasan Christians.

KGPM continued to have close relations with secular nationalists who were active in the preparation for a regional council, the *Minahasaraad*. B.W. Lapian who had been a member of this democratic body, as well as vice-chairman of *Pangkal Setia*, became the first chairman of the KGPM. In 1938 Lapian was elected to become a member of the *Volksraad*, the embryonic national parliament. He spoke in that body as a fervent nationalist. This same national or rather regional pride was also apparent in the official KGPM hymn of 1934:

- Atas goenoeng dan di lembah
- Tanahkoe Minahasa
- Tidak koerang lontjing gentah
- M’warta Indjil berdjasa:
- Hai saudara, insaflah,
- KGPM kaumasoeklah!
- Kauinsaf, Kaumasoek
- Kaumasoeklah KGPM

| In the mountains and the valleys | Of my land, Minahasa, |
| —— | —— |
| There are many church bells singing | Of the Holy Gospel’s goodness |
| —— | —— |
| Awaken now, my brother, | —— |
| —— | —— |
| Come and join KGPM | Awaken now and join us |
| —— | —— |
| Come and join KGPM | —— |

The KGPM was not the first independent Protestant church in the Indies. The Batak and the Churches of East Java and (Central) Java (1931) had taken the lead. In Java the independence had been established more in harmony with the missionary leadership, but in Batakland already in 1927 an independent church had started before the foreign missionaries consented in the institution of the HKBP in 1930. In the Minahasa the KGPM was founded as a revolutionary institution, not against missionary organisations but in conflict with a state-dominated Protestant church. Its initiators were not the real elite of the region. It was a second ranking minister, *Inlandsch leraar* H. Sinaulan, and a retired judge, J. Jacobus who took the lead. It was clearly the expression of the wish to be Minahasan, Christian, and independent. In 2000 the KGPM had 50,017 members in 176 parishes, about 100 ministers, and 1,697 lay workers. It ran several schools and was involved in some community development works, especially in the area of home industry, credit union, agriculture and fishery.

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36 Quoted after Henley 1996:111.
In the 1920s there was a growing desire among the lower rank and file of Minahasan Christian leaders to be given independence. This desire did not meet much response with the leadership of the Indische Kerk. In 1927 Hendrik Kraemer was asked to make a second visit to Minahasa and he proposed that a mixed commission of six European and six Minahasan Protestants would discuss matters in more concrete ways. Chair of this committee was Dr. E. de Vreede, director of the training school and minister in Tomohon. In this committee the Europeans tried to make the Minahasa region a section within the Indische Kerk. Their formula would be that a partly autonomous branch of the major church would be recognised in Minahasa, while the Minahasan members tried to emphasise the ethnic identity of the church and asked for full independence. What came out of this debate was a somewhat meagre result. Due to the unexpected revolutionary secession of the KGPM, it was formulated that the name would be GMIM, Gereja Masehi Injili Minahasa or Minahasa Christian Evangelical Church, but leadership of the synod for the time being would be in the hands of Dutch ministers, while the Church Board in Batavia had the right to control the work of the synod and to annul some of its decisions. On 30 September 1934 the GMIM was formally erected.

Ideally the GMIM was no longer a top-down church: its lower ranking ministers (also the guru jemaat) were after ten years of practical service entitled to administer the sacraments. At the local level the congregation could hold elections for functionaries such as deacon or elder. They constituted the council of the classis, who again elected members for the synod. Initially, however, there were still some remnants of the top-down structure of the Indische Kerk: The president of the synod was still a Dutch minister, nominated by the church council of the Indische Kerk in Batavia and this council was still entitled to cancel some decisions of the Minahasa synod. This Batavia body also had the right to nominate the presidents of the GMIM districts (classis). Quite crucial was the regulation that the Batavia council could still control and administer the finances.

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37 Ernst Anton de Vreede worked during the 1920s for six years in Tondano. He used his European furlough to write a doctoral dissertation, defended on 5 January 1932 in Groningen, entitled Het Nationalisme als Zedelijk Vraagstuk (Nationalism as an ethical problem). It is a quite abstract philosophical writing. There are no direct references to Minahasa. The Dutch nationalism (against Spain, 1570–1650) and modern Chinese nationalism are much more important. It is full of Western superiority. Just to quote from the last page, 163, in relation with the ‘transcendent solidarity in Christ’: “Western society will, as the strongest party within the Eastern context, still have to carry the burden of the weak.”
On 2 February 1942 the majority of the Minahasa synod took the decision that no longer a Dutch minister would be its chairman. The synod chose the experienced Minahasan minister A.Z.R. Wenas, since 1927 director of the theological college in Tomohon. By then the Japanese army had already entered the region, but the Dutch ministers were not yet interned. The decision was not really relevant, because soon afterwards the Japanese army put all Dutch citizens in prison, including the Protestant ministers. It was, however a symbolic act, showing the nationalist fervour within the church.

In 1933 the *Indische Kerk* had accepted a short formula as the basis of its faith. It was only a quotation from 1 Cor. 3:11, “Its foundation is Jesus Christ.” This was formulated as a consequence of the twentieth century tendency towards a stricter orthodoxy within this church. In 1970, as part of a new church order for GMIM, more doctrinal elements were formulated,

6.2 The statement of belief of the Church. 1° In obedience to the witness of Scripture, Old and New Testament and through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the GMIM confesses in all appearances and expressions of her life, that Jesus Christ is the Lord of the Church and Lord of the world. 2° this statement of belief is made in communion with the confession of the church in all centuries, summarised in the ecumenical confessions: the Apostolic Creed, the Creed of Nicea and the Confession of Athanasius, according to the interpretation of the Reformation and of the common statement of belief of the Indonesian Churches. 3° The GMIM fulfils this statement of belief in daily practice through preaching, liturgy, hymns, prayers, announcements from the pulpit, messages, pastoral communications, letters and formulas, and in the words and deeds of its members; 4° the service and the meetings of the church must be obedient to this ruling, in thought, speech and deeds. 5° The GMIM rejects everything that contradicts its confession.38

It is quite striking that in these solemn expressions of a church that defined itself ethnically as a Minahasan church, nothing specific for this ethnicity and local culture can be found. Instead, during the post-1942 period an official rejection of paganism continued, where religious elements of traditional religion and culture could not be accepted. The confessional character was not newly defined, but as such simply a continuation of the basic formulations of classical Christianity, redefined in a strictly Reformed, i.e. Calvinistic sense. GMIM liturgy also resembled the traditional Dutch Reformed church order, with the Holy Supper celebrated while the congregation was seated at long tables. GMIM indeed continued a number of mainstream Dutch Reformed features, but in its daily piety it showed more and more sympathy for pietism and even for modern Evangelical thought. This may have been the reason why since the 1920s a significant minority of GMIM members felt attracted to the warmer and livelier Adventist and Pentecostal spirituality and joined these

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38 After Van den End 1986:69–70.
denominations. Otherwise it has to be stated that Pentecostals in Minahasa are rather close to GMIM in spirituality and liturgical practice and much less excited in their worship than in other regions.39

1942–1965 GMIM as the largest Minahasan Church in a turbulent period: Japanese occupation, revolution and Permesta

Japanese oppression of Christian churches in the Minahasa was not as severe as in other regions of the archipelago. Still, the new ruler interfered in religious life by ordering all the Christian churches to form one body, under the supervision of a Japanese Protestant minister, Hamazaki. The Japanese army even offered to pay the salaries for ministers, as they had been paid by the Dutch colonial government until that time. GMIM leadership, however, declined this offer, fearing too much dependency on their new masters. Synod president Wenas also rejected the request by the Japanese to hold services on 8 December 1942 in memory of the members of the Japanese army who had died during the war. Within PAKSOE (Madjelis Persatuan Agama Kristen Selebes Oetara, United Christian Council of North Sulawesi) GMIM, Catholics, Pentecostals, Adventists and the Salvation Army were united. It was a rare opportunity for leaders of the various denominations to meet each other, because before 1942 there were seldom meetings between rival Christian groups. Immediately after the Japanese capitulation of 15th August 1945 most denominations withdraw from PAKSOE. Although this body was never formally abolished, it was soon only a GMIM affair and remained sleeping until in the 1970s a new ecumenical body, the Provincial Council of Churches, was established.40

In the revolutionary period 1945–1949 GMIM defended strongly its independence. There were passionate protests when the Indische Kerk from Batavia again wanted to nominate a Dutch minister as president of the GMIM synod. In 1948 GMIM participated at the Federal Synod of the Indische Kerk in Bogor, but it did not wish to be considered as just a regional section of this larger church. President of GMIM synod A. Wenas was very outspoken in this sense:

We must not foster a monolithic church. Not too much power should be given to the top. We clearly oppose the centralistic character of a church. That would be in contradiction to the fact of the local congregation as the kernel of the church. At this moment also in Minahasa, too much attention is given to individual persons. We even hear people saying, that GMIM is 'the Wenas-church'.41

41 Notulen van de Derde Algemene Synode van de Protestantse Kerk in Indonesië, Buitenzorg, 1948:134–135. See also Müller-Krüger 1968:119. A member of the synod rejected the organic example of the mango fruit because it is centred on one stone alone; better is the comparison
During the period 1945–1949 GMIM could not make a choice between the possibility of a strong unified state or a loose federal state where East Indonesia could be rather independent, with a strong Christian section of the population. The church took no firm position in this matter, as it also avoided political decisions later. When in 1950 the majority of Indonesia opted for the strong unified state, GMIM again did not take an outspoken political position. The population was much divided; part of the people supporting Soekarno and his ideal of a strong centralised Indonesian state, but others favouring a continuation of some relationship with the Dutch in one way or another within a nearly autonomous State of East Indonesia. In 1950 the financial bonds between the Protestant Church (in this case also GMIM) and the government ended. The Indonesian government never took over the generous role of the Dutch colonial government, providing salaries for Protestant ministers and Catholic priests. In this period, too, ecumenical cooperation was initiated with churches in the region, especially through the Conference of Malino (in South Sulawesi), later resulting in the foundation of regional ecumenical councils, as well as the establishment of the Theological Seminary of Makassar. On the national level GMIM participated in the institution of the Indonesian Council of Churches in 1950, especially through the Minahasan minister Wilhelm Rumambi who became the first general secretary.

Later in the 1950s this church opposed the Muslim separatism of *Darul Islam* that was very strong in South and even in Central Sulawesi. In the difficult period of 1958–1961 when Minahasa was one of the centres of another separatist revolt, PERMESTA/PRRI, GMIM again took no political position because its membership was deeply divided between the promoters of the central state and those regional separatists who maintained that the government in Jakarta was exploiting the rich resources of some outer provinces. The PERMESTA/PRRI rebellion was a rare cooperation between the strongly Muslim province of Minangkabau (and some other parts of Sumatra) and the equally partisan Christian province of North Sulawesi, with many Christian and Muslim members of the army from both regions. A declaration issued by the GMIM synod in 1958 firmly rejected the use of violence, both by the forces of the government and by the rebel forces, and advocated a peaceful solution of the conflict through talks, leading to the restoration of national unity. During the civil war, the church tried to organise help for the victims on both sides, by sending food and medicines to those who fled their homes and by giving material assistance to those whose villages and houses were destroyed. Rev. Wenas participated in the reconciliation talks seeking to re-

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*with grapes, which more resemble a loose federation. Best is the example of the orange fruit where many individual particles are hold together by an outward peel.*

establish peace (1959–1961). After the end of the war GMIM tried to seek further reconciliation between its members and to alleviate their suffering.

Despite these efforts the region only slowly recovered from the civil war. In the early 1960s many Minahasans lived in poverty. In this situation of social and economic crisis many church members proved susceptible to the propaganda of the PKI, the Communist Party of Indonesia. Hence, after the abortive communist coup of 1965 and the more successful counter-coup by the right wing military, the church initiated lay training programs to provide spiritual guidance not to say a reverse indoctrination of those affected by communism.

During this whole period the GMIM actively participated in regional and national (Protestant) ecumenical initiatives. A regional council of churches in Northern Sulawesi was founded in 1951, which was later enlarged with churches in Central Sulawesi. About 1990 the Council of Churches of Northern and Central Sulawesi merged with the southern churches to become the Common Synod of Churches in Sulawesi (Sinode Am Gereja-gereja Sulawesi), where 12 churches are brought together. This process, however, did not lead towards a permanent cooperation, let alone a union of churches.

The GMIM remained very active in the field of education. In 1965 the Christian University of Indonesia in Tomohon was established, uniting the former theological seminary and a teacher training school. The new theological faculty received students from all over North and Central Sulawesi.

1965–2000 GMIM amidst the booming cloves trade and the search for a purer Christianity

Rev. A. Wenas who had begun his church career as director of the theological college of Tomohon in 1927, and was elected president of the synod in 1942, was the undisputed leader of the GMIM until 1967. The new situation after the coup of 1965 urged the GMIM to give much attention to the spiritual guidance of its members. Its leadership was well aware of the influence of the church in all fields of life, since about 75% of the Minahasa population belonged to its membership. Through its primary and secondary schools, vocational schools and university, the church provided for the education of many children. Through its hospitals and clinics it gave medical care for many Minahasans. Church services and other meetings, organised by the church, usually were well attended.

But there was a feeling that many GMIM members still had a very superficial knowledge of the Bible and of Christian faith in general. In daily life many remnants of the old religion were still continued, hidden under the surface of a formal membership of a Christian church. Traditional healers were still consulted and small offerings were brought to the ancestors and spirits on
special occasions in life. Even when new churches were built, or old ones were renovated and enlarged, as was the case in the period of the booming clove business in the 1970s and 1980s, such offerings were given before church construction truly could start. Therefore the church, through a special department of the synod, organised an extensive lay programme in all villages. By making the traditional religion subject of theological reflection (especially in the theological faculty of Tomohon, but also at meetings of ministers), the church tried to make its members more aware of the meaning of Christian faith for daily life. In the 1980s efforts were even made to use elements from the pre-Christian tradition which the church considered positive. This was done especially for the promotion of social awareness and mutual help. Also some theological treatises from the 1990s can be mentioned which gave a more positive evaluation of the traditional religion. A quite prominent figure in this field is Johny Sumampow who in 1995 defended a MA thesis on the traditional Minahasan rituals based on belief in ancestors. He gave a quite sympathetic description of this tradition and defended the interpretation of the name Minahasa as meaning ‘unity’, also between the living beings and their ancestors.\(^{43}\)

The GMIM also extended its activities to social work outside the traditional field of education and health care. Training programmes were set up to improve farming methods or to start cooperatives. In various ways the church also started participating in national and international development cooperation programmes. After the 1965 change of national politics the economy in the Minahasa improved rapidly. Cloves became the new commodity to gain wealth quickly and rather easily. Hence woods were cut and clove trees were planted on a large scale, causing environmental problems through erosion. The economic gap between the rich and the poor widened, causing social tensions, especially in clove growing areas. The church tried to counter these developments by warning its members of the dangers of increased wealth (besides erosion the common words were consumerism and social injustice), but at the same time it applauded the government policy that aimed to improve the national economy through development (pembangunan was the new key word) of the country. Criticism of the military government that implemented its policy in an authoritarian and often rather manipulative, oppressive and corrupt way was only expressed by individual church members and small NGOs that were affiliated with the church. The leadership of the church generally supported the government and its ruling party (Golkar), even allowing church ministers to run for seats in the regional parliament, for this party. This was a general tendency among Indonesian Christians, caused by the fear

\(^{43}\) Sumampow 1995:44.
of the return of Communism or of the spread of Islam. Here the New Order of General Soeharto was considered the guardian of religious freedom. Even in Minahasa, though firmly Christian or even outspokenly Protestant, people were afraid that their region would be taken over by Muslims.

This period showed an immense growth of Protestant denominations. The main reason for this fragmentation of the Christian community was not the direct increase of missionary activities by other churches among members of the majority church, the GMIM, although this certainly played a role too. But usually the foundation of a church was the result of conflicts within families or between villagers that tended to lead to schisms within the dominating church.

Because of the increasing prosperity in this period many new churches were built. Every village took pride in building a new and more magnificent church to replace the former building. The leadership of the synod did little to discourage this development that caused a noticeable decrease of funds available for the work of the synod’s departments. Should we consider this as the love of the local population for its own church and some negligence with respect to broader superstructures? Perhaps this can be related also to Hendrik Kraemer’s complaint about the “natural desire to feast” among the Minahans and as such it should give a sign of continuity in Minahasan culture. In the 1980s anthropologist Mieke Schouten⁴⁴ observed how church festivals dominated village life for most of the year. People bought new clothes to go to church and some weeks later there were more active churchgoers, because they wanted to show off their new clothes.

In 1979–1980 GMIM experienced a series of three extraordinary activities: in 1979 it was the turn of the Province of North Sumatra to organise the national contest for Qur’an recitation, an event that was followed in the whole country with much interest because one of its most “Christian provinces” was the host for this festival that is seen as a special opportunity for a province to make itself known to the whole country. The festival was a great success as a demonstration of an ecumenical attitude and a sign of the nation’s unity notwithstanding religious differences. Later that year GMIM held a synod that was followed in 1980 by the organisation of the Assembly of the Indonesian Council of Churches. There was a hot debate at this meeting between the proponents of those who wanted to proclaim the union or even unity of all (Protestant) Christian churches in Indonesia, while the more realistic and pragmatic wing wanted to postpone this proclamation. The latter party won the debate. It was quite exceptional that the Muslims of Minahasa also gave

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generous contributions for the great auditorium that was built in Tomohon
for this national meeting of the Indonesian Churches.

The Presbyterian structure of GMIM and its sense of responsibility was
expressed for the first time at the 1980 synod by the attendance of representa-
tives of all local congregations at this grand meeting. Their travel and lodging
expenses were no longer paid by the central office of the church, but by their
local congregations.

The Minahasa word *mapalus* is used for a traditional system of coopera-
tion among groups of farmers who share their costs, work and profit. But this
system was no longer effective in the late 1970s and early 1980s for the boom-
ing business of coconut and clove plantations. Most of this work was done
by individual farmers who hired workers for cash money. With the growing
richness that mostly came from the clove trees, the individual people could live
in a more luxurious way. This created some kind of excessive consumerism by
some people. But one could also notice an increase in qualified members of
the congregations who became active in the church and wanted to raise the
quality of the life of their community. This was recognised by the governor of
Minahasa in his address to the 1982 Synod. The greater participation within
the church and its democratic structures were mentioned by this official as
stimulating factors for the success of the 1982 national elections. He took the
elections for positions within the church and the competition that was involved
in that structure as a good example for the national system of elections. But
the reverse also took place: political figures took their religious position as a
starting point for a political career.

The negative aspects of Indonesian political life, like corruption, buying
votes and abuse of power also crept into church structures. The 1983 synod
therefore analysed a crisis in six fields: 1° an environmental and economic
crisis, related to the clove boom, the deforestation and also the more and more
aggressive ways of fishing where all kinds of explosives were used to catch as
many fish as possible in a short period of time; 2° a moral crisis, in the field
of looser sexual relations and the growing corruption in church and society;
3° a crisis of community or solidarity related to the growing individualism of
people only longing for wealth; 4° a financial crisis because people only wanted
to show their richness, had become fond of parties and celebrations, but had
no interested in a sound and solid economic situation; 5° a leadership crisis
related to growth of bureaucracy in state and church, strong formalism with
disregard for the poor and true service to the congregations; 6° a faith crisis,
because of the growing power play and corruption within the church and the
loss of its prophetic function. In order to cure the weaknesses of the church,
its appeal was called: "A Programme for a Healing Church."45 During the jubi-

lee of 1984, when GMIM celebrated its 50th anniversary as an autonomous church, it was the hospitals and care for the sick rather than the schools that were the most important subject of debates. ‘Holistic ministry’ was the most important watchword at the occasion.

The issue of a prophetic versus a bureaucratic church remained an important one. A decade later it even dominated the report for the period 1990–1995 presented to the synod of 1995. GMIM leadership asked openly: “Is it still the power of the Holy Spirit which liberates us and others from all our boundaries, or is it the power and authority of the organisation and the position of the personnel within the church, the institution and its material basis that is found more important than the Holy Spirit?” The leadership of the GMIM Synod openly acknowledged that it had not been a true witness of Christ in the struggle against poverty. It had interpreted poverty too much as a pure spiritual entity and not seen its visible and concrete realisations.

In the 1990s there was a debate within the church about the issue of the corpses of those who were killed during the tragic years of civil war, the *Permesta* of 1957–1961. Many of those killed during the brutal conflicts had been buried in the forest. In order to find these bodies magicians and witches (*dukun*) were consulted who used practices that should be considered as magic. Quite a few people questioned these practices: “Is it allowed for church officials or ministers to work with this kind of people to find the burial place of dead bodies? Can we believe that people can speak to the spirit of the deceased?”

Another related issue was the official garment for church ministers. Until the late 1980s they used the black robes of Reformed ministers from the Netherlands. In order to promote the introduction of Minahasan cultural elements in GMIM, there were proposals that ministers should wear the dress of traditional leaders, including the small sword (*keris*) that is a sign of spiritual power. This kind of traditional dress and the use of that sword are also related to faith in the spirits of the ancestors. This was all part of a theology of inculturation that became quite popular in the early 1990s. It was an effort to do away with habits that were considered to be too western and not suited to this Indonesian culture. The debate, however, was soon concentrated on this specific issue of the dress of the minister. Many common people in the congregation already considered the black cassock to be part of the sacred dress of a proper Reformed minister within the GMIM church. Unfortunately, the first candidate to use the local dress as a sign of inculturation, and who used the *keris*, was a young minister who was inaugurated in his function while wearing this dress, but who died very soon after he had taken office. This fact harmed the reputation of the whole theology of inculturation and since then it has become more and more difficult to give concrete proposals for this kind of practice.

Although Minahasa remained a strong majority Christian region, the long series of attacks on churches that started as inter-religious conflicts in Java
in 1996, also made the Minahasa Christians concerned. Quite a few faithful asked for a more militant position, related to the relative power of their church in their own region. If GMIM could not stand up to defend the Christians of Indonesia, who else would dare to do it? The church hesitated, as it did with previous political conflicts, because there was no unanimity among its members. There were various strategic and political considerations that prevented the church from taking a strong position in this affair. For these reasons, the show of force that was requested by quite a few members was not given, although its supporters considered it important in order to give clear signs to those people who wanted to infiltrate in Minahasa and to disturb the peace in that region. The Synod of February 1997 asked attention for the social unrest that had caused the destruction of so many places of worship and centres of service in many regions of the country. The government was urgently requested to arrest the actors without any discrimination of religion and race. The synod expressed its gratitude that GMIM members had taken their responsibility and had not followed the agitations of some parties (i.e. that they had not tried to destroy mosques in the Minahasa in revenge for the churches that were burnt in Java and other regions of the country, thus following the actions of the agitators who only wanted to incite a nation-wide civil strife amongst the religions). They asked the members to act in a positive way and not to follow the invitations to hatred and destruction.

The economic and monetary crisis that struck the country after August 1997 was relatively manageable for people in Minahasa because while the value of the Indonesian currency fell in a dramatic way the farmers who sold their cloves, corn and vegetables for foreign currency could earn much more money than before. The people of Minahasa in this period behaved very generously and sent from their affluence to other areas. In this period the story of Joseph in Egypt who took good stock in periods of prosperity, became a popular text for sermons. Many common small farmers could not really understand the talk by politicians about a monetary crisis, because traders from the Philippines directly approached them in order to buy cloves and corn. Some even expressed their hope that the krismon (krisis moneter the expression for the monetary crisis) would last a very long time, because they earned much more cash than ever before! But the events of unrest, killings and fires that took place in Jakarta in May 1998, related to the fall of General Soeharto, were again a warning that the world was not yet really peaceful.

The movement of reformasi that was started immediately after the fall of General Soeharto on 22 May 1998 created an atmosphere of freedom of speech and liberty among the common people. They started to criticise the bureaucracy. This was also extended to the church leadership that was considered as committing the same crimes as the corrupt regime, like corruption and undemocratic decision-making. As an institution GMIM had for long
been a bottom-up democratic structure with a free election of its leadership by members of local congregations. But the general euphoria in the country was also extended to thinking about church leadership. In the circles of the common people there arose an atmosphere as if it was now time to deal with autocratic aspects also within the churches, notwithstanding its formal democratic church order. Therefore there was a quite strong movement that no longer obeyed the formal rules of the church order and established free congregations, independent from the main church body. This was again, as had already happened frequently in the history of GMIM, a reason to cause schism, in fact often on the basis of rather small complaints that could have been settled quite easily.

The political process of *reformasi* was also quite complicated. There were already elections in 1999. Many politicians were very generous in their promises, but not always cautious in mixing administrative measures with their political campaign. Many funds for agricultural credit unions were used to attract votes in the political campaign and were spent in large amounts. Many common people and government officials claimed that they were farmers in order to receive loans. There were rumours that these loans as agricultural credits should not be paid back. Also names of deceased persons were put on the lists in order to receive more loans. Several church ministers were involved in these cases that were a public secret. The easy way to get money had attracted them and had destroyed their moral sense. They applied for agricultural credit themselves, but the money was used for luxury articles like hand-phones, cars and parties. They were openly rebuked by some government officials for these acts.

A typical reaction occurred in late November 2000 when the GMIM Synod gathered in the Emmanuel Congregation of Aertembaga. During heavy rains a landslide destroyed much of that place and even cemeteries were struck. Graves were moved and bodies displaced and some even could not be recovered. This catastrophe was considered to be a punishment from God for the bad deeds of some church leaders.

In January 1999 a complicated social and religious conflict started in the Moluccas (see chapter nine). In November 1999 this wave of terror also arrived in Ternate and Tidore. Houses of Christians were burned down and many people were expelled from the North Moluccas. Many therefore fled to Minahasa. One month later the conflict escalated in Northern Halmahera and even in all districts of the North Moluccas. Tens of thousands of refugees came to Manado. They were later followed by another group of Christians from Poso, Central Sulawesi. GMIM Leadership coordinated help in food and clothes and they found a generous response among the congregations. Many church buildings were used as shelters for these refugees. The local government reacted somewhat later also with permission to use their facilities.
The reason behind these conflicts was not restricted to the Moluccas only but was a national problem, and it was also felt in the Minahasa that the relationship between the religions had worsened, as a reaction to the fact that there were radical groups of local militias, like the Laskar Rakyat (litt. 'the People’s Militia') who were in fact former members of Permesta and their sympathisers. Other groups were Brigade Manguni, Militia Waraney and even several more with outspoken Christian names like Militia Christi and Front Solidaritas Bangsa Israel, the Solidarity Front with the People of Israel. These radical groups tried to occupy positions in Minahasa and to be active in some kind of pre-emptive strikes under the slogan “better kill before being beaten.” They stated that there was a serious threat of infiltration in the region by outsider Muslim gangs and that therefore people should be mobilised. They attacked some areas where many Muslims were trading. GMIM took this threat very serious and these issues were at the heart of the debates in the synod. The church took the initiative for calling meetings of reconciliation and the establishment of inter-religious councils. Television programmes were quite important and effective in order to calm the situation. These initiatives were quite effective and in this period Minahasa remained relatively stable and calm, and could remain a safe haven for many refugees from various places in East Indonesia.

Over the course of time the relations between GMIM and local government usually were very warm and open. This created a specific Minahasan atmosphere in the life of the church and government. Some even said that the association was too close. This was caused by the fact that many elders and deacons of local congregations were also government officials. Even several church ministers were at the same time government officials. This occurred at all levels, from the small villages up to the government of districts and the province. GMIM leadership inaugurated a special church service for members of its church or from churches in different regions of Indonesia who received an official position in the bureaucracy of North Sulawesi, whether they were governor, district officer, mayor, or were placed in lower positions. In this service they were seen as sent by the church into the secular government with the responsibility as members of the church to serve all people in an honest and noble way. This relationship was seen by some as too close, because it was mostly the church that was subservient to the political leaders, both in the New Order period of General Soeharto and in the years that followed. Again and again church leaders called for somewhat more distance between the bureaucracy and the church. The latter should be faithful to its prophetic function as well as serving society.

This close relation, however, did not include an absolute harmony between government and church. When in 2000 the central government of President Abdurrahman Wahid wanted to withdraw decision no 25 of the National
Congress of 1966, about the ban on Communist and Marxist teachings, GMIM took the position that these doctrines were still in conflict with religion and not in line with the basis of Christianity and should remain forbidden. Therefore the 72nd Synod of 24–29 April 2000 took the double decision of a protest against the proposal but also of a programme for the full rehabilitation of former Communists.

In 2000 ATM not only had become the common term for a money machine (*automated teller machine*) but also for Ambon-Ternate-Manado, the chain of violence and refugees, the ethnic and inter-religious violence in the region that caused the arrival of many refugees in Minahasa. There were in 2002 some 35,000 refugees, nearly all of them Christians from the Moluccas and some from Central Sulawesi. As we saw above, these tensions also caused the rise of Christian militias, small groups of GMIM members who wanted to answer the Muslim violence in the neighbouring regions. Some of them tried to get the help of angry refugees who were full of hatred towards the Muslim attackers in their region, in order to start some actions in the Minahasa itself. In an effort to create more inter-religious cooperation, there was a common plan accepted by leaders of all major religious organisations that the year 2002 should be called the Year of the Lord’s Grace for Minahasa. This was followed with 2003 as a “Year of Love without Violence” and 2004 as a “Year of Love and Hope.” This religious qualification was also supported by the provincial parliament and the provincial bureaucracy. In this manner the GMIM retained the features of the dominant religion in Minahasa: not only the market leader because of its majority position, but also as the more or less ‘natural’ religion for Minahasan people. There is probably no other Christian group in present-day Indonesia that could realise such a strong identification between regional and even ethnic pride and a Protestant identity.

*Sangir and Talaud archipelagos in the nineteenth and twentieth century*

Why was the Minahasa a Christian region, while nearly all other parts of Sulawesi, at least its coastal regions, sooner or later accepted Islam? Why are the majority of the Northern Sangir and Talaud islands, forming a bridge between Indonesia and the Philippines, mostly Christian, while the southern islands of the Philippines are in majority Muslim? Were they, between 1520 and 1680 politically dominated by the Spanish, later by the VOC, spared from the great movement of Islamisation that was carried out in the region, before and together with the first major expansion of Christianity? Whatever may have been the case, during the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries not much attention was given to these territories. In the first half of the nineteenth century Joseph Kam several times made a short visit to the region,
but only in 1857 did four Gossner missionaries arrive in Sangir, followed by five more for Talaud in 1859 as the re-commencement of earlier efforts for evangelisation.

The Sangir-Talaud archipelago comprises 47 inhabited islands, with some 260,000 inhabitants in the late 1990s. Sangir Besar is slightly bigger than Ambon (798 km² versus 761 km² for Ambon) but had only 24,000 inhabitants in the late 1990s, just 10% of the population of the capital of the Moluccas. Siau is the second largest island of the Sangir archipelago. All these islands are quite mountainous with the volcano Karangetang of Siau as the highest. The Talaud Islands, at 100 km distance from the Sangir islands, are not volcanic and therefore much less fertile than the Sangir islands and may well be seen as under-populated. The island of Karakelong is, with 846 km², its largest island.

About the fate of Christianity in this region during the first half of the nineteenth century very little is known. What is reported about the Christian life here is extremely contradictory. From one side the few visitors mention that the state of Christianity was a disaster, no religious books were available and there was very little knowledge of Christianity. Other reports, however, mention a strong affection for Christianity. Due to economic problems the strong Dutch Governor General Daendels (1807–1810) had stopped the payments to teachers in the first decade of the nineteenth century. The British wanted to reinstate these payments but they were not long enough in the Indies to effect their plans. Joseph Kam who visited the Sangir island in the second half of 1817 reported that the raja of Tagulandang received him in a friendly manner. Kam heard that the whole village, including its church, was destroyed during the last volcanic eruption, but saw also that it had already been rebuilt. The ruler was happy that Kam was willing to teach there during a full week. Kam made a notice that "people here have a very poor knowledge of religion, but express a firm belief in Christ as the Redeemer of sins."46 The raja of Siau was a pious and obedient member of the church, who could read the Malay Bible and asked Kam for the interpretation of some sections of scripture. On many islands the teachers had to work in their fields because the salaries were halted, but the raja of Siau paid them himself. He had ordered teachers to give instruction in the Christian faith to many of his slaves and they could now be baptised by Reverend Kam, after due examination. On the main island of Sangir most teachers had no books and even no copies of the New Testament. In some hamlets where there were no teachers some youngsters led the Sunday service. Kam distributed copies of the New Testament but

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46 En klaar 1963:83.
could not do much more. A visit by missionary Hellendoorn from Minahasa in 1832, again produced mixed information about “gross ignorance, superstition and immoral life” alongside many churches and simple schools where Christianity was taught. Of the native school masters, about half were now paid by the government.47

The next somewhat more detailed report is from the year 1854. It was written after the inspection by the Batavia minister, Rev. S.A. Buddingh. He told a moving story of parents who urged him to baptise their children. After baptism of their children, some mothers who probably never had received baptism bowed before him and prayed: “Me too!” Buddingh should have given these adults catechism lessons for a long period before he could baptise such ignorant people, but he was not able to reject their request and in nine days baptised 1658 people. In 1855 the Minahasa missionary S.D. van de Velde van der Capellen reported that there were 24 church buildings in Sangir and Talaud, most of these also used as schools by Ambonese teachers. He estimated the number of Christians at about 20,000. From these he had himself baptised 5033 people although their knowledge was still very poor and polygamy nearly as common as among the Muslim population in other regions.48

After the report by Buddingh was made known in the Netherlands, the Dutch propagator of foreign missions Ottho Heldring took initiatives to send more European personnel. Facing a lack of Dutch candidates he was able, with the help of J. Gossner, to attract four willing men from Berlin. They were simple manual workers, one was a common soldier another a trader and the third a coachbuilder. They were simple, industrious and pious men who were sent to continue their jobs in foreign countries and to earn their own money in what is now called a tent-making ministry. They had to stay for nearly two years in Java before they were given a ‘certificate’ as missionaries, a yearly allowance by the colonial government and the permit to start work in the Sangir islands. In late 1859 five more of these ‘tent-making missionaries’ arrived for the Talaud Islands, two of German, three of Dutch citizenship: one was a shoemaker, two had more than 20 years’ experience as common soldiers in the Indies.

The ‘tent-making’ missionaries in the Sangir islands were very strict in ecclesiastical discipline: they fought against cock-fighting, heavy drinking (especially at traditional parties, which they called ‘devil’s ceremonies’), gambling and polygamy. They were hesitant in administration of baptism and extremely strict in admission to the Holy Supper. They considered it an enormous step forward when they could allow, in 1872, one thousand out of 17,000 to receive the Lord’s Supper. They were also quite successful in the

47 Coolsma 1901:628.
improvement of religious education. Former coach-maker Friedrich Kelling translated the Heidelberg catechism and the New Testament in the Sangirese dialect of Siau.49

Work on the even more remote Talaud Islands was much more difficult and less successful. One of the missionaries rather soon entered the much better paid government service. Two married local women and were severely criticised by the other missionaries for this. But they continued their work until the late 1880s. There never was a hierarchical pyramid like that in the Minahasa: the European workers who gave a new impulse to Christianity in the Sangir and Talaud archipelago in the period 1855–1890 remained strongly related to the somewhat odd and syncretic, but definitely inculturated Christianity that had grown there since the last decades of the seventeenth century. A later scholar like the Dutch historian Hommo Reenders50 may have had his reasons for considering this mission, especially in Talaud, as “a badly prepared and ultimately ill-considered mission,” but the mentality of these European missionaries was probably much closer to that of their Indonesian flock than the well-educated development workers who arrived in the 1960s and 1970s in the same region. The most successful of these ‘tent-making’ missionaries certainly was E.T. Steller, who worked in Sangir between 1857 and 1897. He started plantations in the mountainous regions of Manganitu in Sangir-Besar. Some orphanages and hospitals were established. In Kaliwatu a teacher training college and school for ministers was established. A more or less theocratic society was built, under strong leadership of this European missionary and his colleagues, who had up to some 90 pupils in their house. They worked in the plantations and received, during a period of five to ten years, a thorough puritan Christian education. The ‘graduates’ of these plantation schools became the teachers and preachers for the new Sangir Christianity. They were severe in their control of public morality. E.T. Steller was for the main island of Sangir-Besar the leading figure. He was succeeded by his son K.G.F. Steller, who had obtained a law degree in Utrecht, the Netherlands, but returned to Manganitu in 1897. Two other sons of missionaries also continued the work of their fathers and founded in this way theocratic missionary dynasties.51

In 1885 the Sangir and Talaud Committee was established in the Netherlands as the successor to the rather uncertain financial support provided by Heldring (1804–1876) and his successors. The financial backbone of the mission since the 1850s had been the salaries provided by the colonial government. The missionaries therefore suggested a solution like that in the Minahasa, a coalition or even an association with the ‘national’, state-supported and state-directed

Indische Kerk. The new Dutch committee strongly supported a different solution. The government declared its willingness to pay yearly 75% of the amount estimated necessary for a full take-over of the mission (including provision for its church buildings, schools, school material, missionaries as ‘assistant ministers’ and native teachers) without an effective and direct administration over their activities and personnel. It was willing to accept an independent mission and to pay for it.

In the first decades of the twentieth century the Sangir and Talaud congregations could develop quietly. Education was put at a higher, but also more secularised, level. In the few major villages even Dutch-language schools were set up as the summit of the educational development. The number of Christians increased from 20,000 in 1855 to 121,000 in 1936. In the early decades of the twentieth century the missionaries abandoned gradually the paternalism that had been dominant until then. By 1921 they had already ordained 16 indigenous ministers. In the beginning these ministers still functioned as a link in a hierarchical chain, but then the missionaries started discussing the building of a Presbyterian structure. The process took much time, and it was not yet finished when the Japanese occupied many of the islands in the period 1942–5. Only in 1947 was the first Synod of the GMIST, Gereja Masehi Injil Sangir Talaud convened. The first president of the Synod was Yahya Salawati (ca 1890–1964). Problems that the new church had to face were the relationships between the two island groups and with the Sangirese emigrants in Western Indonesia and in the Philippines. Like its sister church the Minahasan GMIM, the GMIST made an experiment in granting more autonomy to the local congregations (1961). By 1970 this experiment had matured even more radically than in the GMIM, but in 1978 the presbytery, as a district body supervising the local congregations, had to be restored. Today 90% of the inhabitants of the Sangir-Talaud Islands belong to the GMIST.

As in the Minahasa, also in Sangir-Talaud there were indigenous ministers who found this process towards independence too long. In 1926 therefore two small groups seceded from the mission led by foreign personnel and erected independent churches. The Talaud congregations did not join the GMIST in 1947, but when in 1955 Yahya Salawati was succeeded by a minister from Talaud as president of the synod of the church, they also joined that church. Since 1965 some GMIST ministers started work in the south of the Philippines among migrants from this region and also to make new converts.

The church suffered much from the political tensions accompanying the rise and fall of the Indonesian Communist Party. Around 1984 a younger generation took over and the rising self-assurance of the Indonesian nation made it felt in the church. In the 1990s, the church had to cope with a new secession movement on the northern islands, the Talaud archipelago. The Synod held in December 1996 agreed to the founding of an independent church in that
region. The church has a large number of elementary and vocational schools and some clinics. It publishes a magazine, *Marimba*. The GMIST considers 15 May 1947 as its birth date.

There are small Catholic and Pentecostal minorities in the archipelago. Major challenges for the GMIST, however, are the difficult connections between the islands and the great differences in this remote area.

**The ‘Diaspora’: some notes about other islands, especially the Banggai Archipelago**

In the region of Bolaang Mongondow, southwest of Minahasa, some coastal villages had accepted Christianity during the eighteenth century. Since then they were seldom visited by the VOC. Also in the nineteenth century it was a peripheral, underdeveloped and under-populated territory for colonial imperialism. In the first decades after 1850 the most powerful raja accepted Islam and with him most of his people. This was part of a stream of Islamisation that had started from Gorontalo. There are old traditions that the ruler of the harbour town of Balaang could ask for tribute from the whole of Minahasa as well, but this overlordship had ended about 1800. From Minahasa some missionaries visited the region after the 1830s. They met some Minahasan migrants, but the colonial government did not allow a permanent mission station in this region. One of the Muslim chiefs, Cornelis Manoppo, asked in 1904, for the Minahasa missionaries to send teachers in order to found schools in his region. Only after this request could the NZG send various teachers, who even opened a Dutch-language HIS in Kotamobagu. They also took care of the small flock of migrant Christians from Minahasa and Singair who had settled there. There was no direct and well-structured mission to the majority of Muslims there. Not only the teachers, but also the assistant ministers who lead the congregation, were from Minahasa. Most prominent among them was J. Pandegirot who was a teacher since 1906 and a native minister after 1930. In the long run also some native people from Bolaang Mongondow embraced Christianity and in 1970 they were about 20% of the major Protestant church in this region, totalling 30,000 baptised or about 15–20% of the population. In the late 1930s already efforts were made to start an independent church. This could only be accomplished in 1950 when the *Gereja Masehi Injili Bolaang Mongondow* was instituted. Like the GMIM it also suffered much from the civil war during the Permesta period. For many matters (like the education of ministers) it is more or less considered a ‘diaspora church,’ dependent upon the much larger GMIM. In the 1990s it was also formally connected through a common synod with the other major Protestant churches of Sulawesi.
In much more outspoken Muslim Gorontalo—another region even more to the west of Minahasa—there were similar developments. Several times missionaries were sent from Manado who could only serve a small flock. In 1965 an independent sister church, the _Gereja Protestan Indonesia Gorontalo_, was established, with some 6,000 members. In 1965 a _Gereja Protestan Indonesia Buol Toli-Toli_ was established for the next more western region, with some 5000 members.

Christianity was much more successful in the Banggai archipelago, off the east coast of Central Sulawesi, but long considered as part of the Manado regency. In this region there were the last pockets where people had not yet decided in favour of Islam or Christianity. In these poor regions the Christians were the first. From Manado and even more from Ambon some teachers were sent by the _Indische Kerk_ who established schools. They worked in a quite dominating way, neglected the local languages and used only Malay, and rejected anything of the local customs. They were quite successful in creating new congregations: in 1937 there were already 25,000 Protestants in this region. At that time they were put under the responsibility of the Minahasa GMIM church. After 1945 the congregations in this archipelago were put under the synod of the Sangir and Talaud archipelago. But the connections proved to be very difficult in this region and therefore in 1966 an independent _Gereja Kristen Luwuk-Banggai_ was established. Also, after 1900, the Catholics started some missionary work in these islands, beginning with a number of Philippine migrants who worked as pearl fishers. In 1925 a Protestant teacher in a small island not far from Sambiut had accepted Catholicism, probably after some internal Protestant conflicts. Thereupon a few hundred people from that island also applied for Catholic baptism and were already prepared to come to a ceremony in Sambiut. But the ceremony was cancelled after the intervention of their village head, who suggested that they should not follow this teacher, but rather ask for baptism from the Protestant minister of Luwuk. There was another rivalry between Catholics and Protestants here. But the Catholics remained far behind the Protestants and counted less than 1,000 baptised in the late 1930s. The rivalry with Islam again rose during the turbulent period of 1999–2003 when the whole region was full of stories of Muslim-Christian conflicts. In some of the Banggai islands Christians had the choice between death and acceptance of Islam, including immediate circumcision. Hundreds opted for the latter possibility and thus caused traumatic reactions all over the country.

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