Tribal cultures of Indonesia often have no specific word for religion. The Arab word adat (for ‘tradition, local customs’) is often used for the common rituals, mythology, and code of conduct. In the Indonesian constitution it is said that the Indonesian state is ‘based on the belief in the One Supreme Deity’, but religion is in fact much more than that. Art, politics, economy, hygiene and food preparation, marriage, health: these aspects and many other things may show religious aspects. Education definitely is an important activity of modern organised religion. Muslim religious leaders in Indonesia are called ulama, or scholars, people who know. When Hindu and Buddhist influence were superseded by Muslim traditions, the old alphabet (based on Sanskrit writing) changed to the Arab script. Colonial education became dominant from the start of the twentieth century and the Latin script became the standard, and secular education the norm. The traditional system of Muslim education in the monastery-like boarding-schools of the pesantren had to adjust to the modern style of education. The use of the blackboard, a division in classes, examinations and formal grades became the standard. This renewed Muslim system of education was called madrasah and it became divided according to the standard Western system, primary, junior and senior high school: ibtidaiyah, tsanawiyah, aliyah. After 1950 this private system was included in the administration of the Ministry of Religion. The general formula was that these madrasah schools provided 50% religious and 50% secular teaching, but their final result for general education should be equivalent to that of the teaching of the Ministry of Education. Overall it was estimated that 15% of all Indonesian children followed the Islamic religious madrasah system. Since the 1960s this has been completed with the academic training at IAIN, Institut Agama Islam Negeri, the State Academy of Islamic Studies, where a teacher training was included for secular topics, from mathematics to English, as well as a law faculty for general and Islamic law.\footnote{Rahim 2006; Bruinessen 2006.}

There is still an ongoing debate about the origins and initial spread of Islam in Indonesia. Was it the profit of trade, the participation in an international and fast growing Muslim network of commerce in the Indian Ocean, that
brought so many people of the Malay Archipelago to the new religion? Or was it rather the powerful knowledge of new rituals in a religion that knew no difference of race, no difference of caste and class and apparently had no fear from other mighty powers besides the One and Almighty Divinity? What one may finally think about this set of motivations, from the beginning of the rise of Islam in the archipelago, it was the spread of Islamic knowledge through a group of specialists that characterised the religion of Islam. Since this early beginning of Islam in the period 1200–1600, knowledge of the Arab script and language and of its religious codes and obligations has remained a thorough instrument for the continuation of this world religion.\(^2\)

Education was also very instrumental for the spread of Christianity, although in a somewhat different way in the various regions. As we have seen in volume II it was the backbone or most fundamental institution for the immense social influence of the Catholic leadership in South Papua and NTT, the South-Eastern Islands. Through special contracts with the colonial government of Governor-General Alexander van Idenburg (1906–1916) ‘the first Christian on the Throne of Buitenzorg/Bogor’ and his successor Johan Paul van Limburg Stirum (1916–1921), the Catholic mission received responsibility and the necessary funds for the commencement of general education in Flores, Central Timor and Papua. This was not only a contract for the management of schools. It was part of a broad programme for a total restructuring of these societies, including the resettlement of the population in new villages where the house of the teacher and the local church or chapel became the centre of a new society. In these regions the number of foreign missionaries was much higher than that of the western colonial officials. Besides, the missionaries had much more intense contact with the society through their network of teachers who were trained in the Kai and Tanimbar islands (for Papua) and in East Flores (Larantuka and the Maumere region for the other region of Flores). In Minahasa, Kalimantan and the Batak regions of Sumatra the Catholic mission could never reach this status of sole supplier of education, but also here it was the schools that created the first group of loyal members of the Catholic community. The same can be said for the modest but very solid start of Catholic

\(^2\) Bosch 1961:11–12 defends the prominent role of religious experts or scholars in the process of transmitting religion: ‘again and again, in Hindu-Indonesian civilisation, we meet with elements of a theoretical and scholastic character, elements which remind us of the manuscript, the code of law, the recluse’s cell, the monastery, and which are just as incompatible with the environment of warriors and traders as they are with an intellectual sphere’. Also for Islam and Christianity it must be accepted that out the the three M: Merchants, Military, Missionaries, the latter were decisive in the religious process. Steenbrink 1988:129–130.