Christianity in Indonesia: An Overview

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Introduction

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

Christianity and Colonialism

Archeological evidences of the existence of Christian communities in Southeast Asia, probably Nestorians, in the Malay Peninsula, Sumatra and Java can be traced back to the seventh century[3]. During Portuguese colonization in the sixteenth century, and also at the beginning of Dutch rule in the seventeenth century, the majority of those who later were to become Indonesians practised their traditional religions. Hinduism prevailed on Bali and in many parts of Java; the modern, trade-

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

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

[3] Compare Goh (2005:1); Van Klinken (2003:7).

oriented princedoms – primarily those in the coastal regions – had adapted Islam as an adequate social and religious system of rules. Dominicans, Jesuits, and various Protestant missionary societies began to spread the Christian faith among the adherers of the autochthonous religions. This explicitly also served the purpose of stemming the influence of Islam. East Flores and its offshore islands became Catholic,[4] the greater part of the Moluccas, the Minahasa, and the Batak region turned Protestant. In the twentieth century Christianity expanded to the hitherto unproselytized part of Flores, as well as to Timor, Roti and Sawu, Central Sulawesi, and among the Chinese minority.

Both the colonial and the modern Indonesian state are intertwined with the developments undergone by Christianity. It is hardly possible to draw a dividing line between proselytization and colonialism, even though missionaries and colonial officials did not always pursue the same interests.[5] On the one hand, it is indisputable that Protestant and Catholic ideologies had a significant share in the implementation and acceptance of foreign rule. On the other hand, it was scarcely possible to reconcile the colonizers' project of subduing and profitably exploiting the indigenous population with the idea of establishing a Christian non-European civilization. The diverging objectives resulted in diverging strategies of dealing with the indigenous peoples. While the colonial administrators played off the local customs against Islam, the missionaries tried to replace indigenous structures, ideas, and most notably religions with Christianity and European concepts of community. Colonial decision makers knew that Muslim leaders were hostile towards them, and they were aware of the powerful anti-colonial potential of Islam.[6] From their point of view, it was only natural to forge alliances with local rulers against the religious leaders. In many cases, such as the so-called Padri wars in West-Sumatra, they intervened in local conflicts on behalf of local elite and became, as Michael Laffan stated, "de facto partisans of *adat*[7] against the *shari'a*" (Laffan 2003:110). In order to strengthen traditional non-religious local leadership the colonial government

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[4] Histories of Catholicism in Indonesia have been published by Muskens (1970, 1973, 1974, 1979) and Steenbrink (2003); Müller-Krüger (1957, 1966) and Hoekema (1994, 2001) wrote on Protestantism. A general history of Christianity and Islam has been written by Waver (1974); regional studies have been provides by several authors. To mention just a few of them Aritonang (1988) wrote on the process of proselytization among the Batak, Dietrich (1989, 1994) on Flores, Henley (1996) on Minahasa, Witschi (1942) on the Dajak of Borneo and Smith-Kipp (1990, 1995) on the Karo (-Batak).

[5] This is particularly true for Catholicism which arrived with the Portuguese in the sixteenth century.

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

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

commissioned ethnographic studies of *adat* as well as of social and political structures, and legalized these local traditions.[8]

The missionaries, who felt committed to a specific form of European civilization and associated the Christian faith with a package of community-building measures, were not only suspicious about *adat* but often tried to eradicate it altogether, particularly those elements they defined as religious. The anthropologist Webb Keane has pointed out that the efforts of the missionaries basically aimed at correcting a supposed 'illicit conflation of words, things, and persons' (Keane 1996:138). However, the extent to which the missionaries succeeded in destroying local cultures still needs to be ascertained by in-depth research, because these cultures turned out to be resilient, creatively striving to appropriate and transform the powerful 'Other'. Local belief systems and ritual practices were forcibly crushed in some regions of Indonesia; in others the complete wipe-out of cultures was probably intended but could not be put into practice. Just as in other parts of the globe, local actors responded creatively to the confrontation with the powerful world religions. They created indigenous forms of Christianity, and in many cases convincingly succeeded in combining and interweaving the own and the foreign in such a way that essential elements of their cultures survived, even though sometimes in a modified form. In other cases cultures were indeed largely destroyed or became transformed; yet in these instances the actors were not helpless victims either, but rather found ways to take advantage of the new situation. Yet in order to convert them to Christianity, missionaries indisputably exerted considerable pressure on ethnic groups that avowed themselves to autochthonous religions.

The relationship between the colonial government and the missionary societies was characterized both by divergences and convergences of interests. In order to avoid problems with the Indonesian Muslims, evangelical activities were strictly controlled and regulated. The societies needed a special missionary permit that in each case was only valid for a specific, designated region.[9] Muskens (1974:92) has pointed out that due to these restrictions the churches could not gain a foothold in many regions until after Indonesian independence. These problems notwithstanding, occasional dissonances between colonial officials and missionaries should not be overestimated. Both, missionaries and members of the colonial administration were strictly against a further expansion of Islam.[10] Furthermore, despite the colonialist's sympathy with local *adat* they took advantage of those who converted to Christianity and, thus, functionalized religion for political purposes.[11] The colonial administration entrusted the missionary societies with important tasks in terms of development policy, putting them in charge of the educational and health

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

[9] This is why Flores, for example, became a purely Catholic mission area, whereas the Batak region on Sumatra was exclusively assigned to Protestant missionaries.

[10] Regarding the containment of Islam in Flores compare Steenbrink (2007:85-109).

[11] Compare Muskens (1979); Steenbrink (1993); Waver (1974).

care sectors. On the island of Flores, for example, the entire build-up of the school and education system was put in the hands of the Societas Verbi Divini, a missionary society that still today plays a dominant role in the development of that region. Due to the missionary activities, a pronounced regional identity[12] that transcends ethnic identities emerged in many places, as well as indigenous Christian elite. The latter was viewed as a natural ally by many colonial officials, and benefitted from a school system, patterned on Western educational standards.[13] Well educated Christians were preferentially recruited for civil service by the colonial government, and got high positions in administration and the military. Generally, indigenous Christians exerted considerable influence in the course of Indonesian history[14] and were able to leave their mark most notably in the spheres of education and health care. The economically affluent Chinese minority largely avows itself to the Christian faith as well. To this day, the resentments on the part of Indonesian Muslims are a result of that privileged status of the Christians and the concomitant identification of Christians with the colonial regime.

Christianity in Postcolonial Indonesia

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

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[12] For the Minahasa, compare Henley (1993); for the Moluccas, see Kreuzer (2000).

[13] According to a census conducted in the 1930s, the highest literacy rate of the entire colony was found in the Christianized Minahasa. It amounted to almost 40%, whereas it was only 12% in Jakarta and Surabaya, and lower than 10% in the rural Muslim areas. Compare Buchholt (1994:314-315).

[14] Compare Steenbrink (1995).

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

winning all of Indonesia over to their faith. Islamic opposition against that dominance began in 1967, when Christians were accused in a surge of pamphlets and inflammatory speeches[16] of having lured Muslims into converting to their faith by distributing material aid. These demagogic pamphlets immediately triggered several anti-Christian riots, which began on 1 October 1967 with the demolition of churches in Makassar and subsequently spread to Java where Christian schools, churches, and cemeteries were vandalized.

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

Christians are still accused of having collaborated with the former colonial government, and in the discourses of radical Muslim organizations they are portrayed as an extended arm of the 'West'. Still today there exists the rhetoric of an allegedly disadvantaged Muslim majority, associating Christians with economic exploitation and a lack of morals, and stylizing itself as a majority with a minority status (Schreiner 2001). While there is some legitimacy to this generalizing rhetoric it nevertheless misses the mark, because it ignores local causes of conflicts (such as strained relations between migrants and locals, transmigration projects, and the allocation of positions in local administrations) and does not realize that only few Christians are affluent. Moreover, the lack of identification of some groups with the Indonesian state is first and foremost due to tensions between center and periphery rather than to their adherence to the Christian faith. Muslim radicals who accuse Christianity of being anti-Indonesian ignore the fact that Christianity, just as Islam, has become transformed from a foreign into an indigenous Indonesian belief system in the course of the past centuries. Undergoing a process of indigenization and adaptation to local traditions, it became a very multi-faceted, syncretistically oriented indigenous religion that still reveals the cultural heritage of the individual ethnic groups. Representatives of church and state have ambivalent feelings in the face of this appropriation and specific utilization of the foreign. Missionaries and indigenous priests appreciate the emancipatory facet of 'enculturation', yet they would like to restrict the latter to certain

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[16] Another effective means employed were fake pamphlets in which Christians called for the proselytization of Indonesian Muslims.
[17] See Davidson and Henley (2007); Erb, Priyambudi and Faucher (2005).

folkloristic aspects. Political representatives, on the other hand, honour the avowal to a high religion (*agama*) yet fear the potential of opposition inherent in syncretism.

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

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

Local Conflicts and Religious Rhetoric in the Post-Suharto Era

In the course of the new formation of local, regional, and national power structures following the fall of Suharto, it became apparent that the national unity based on religious acceptance was fiction rather than reality. On many islands there was an outbreak of civil-war like hostilities between Christians and Muslims.[20] Anti-Christian militias proclaimed the complete elimination of the Indonesian Christians[21], and the danger that a 'Balcanization' might occur was suddenly in the realm of possibility.[22] The collapse of firmly established power structures did not only pave the way for a profound process of democratization but also sparked power struggles among local and national elites, violence against minorities defined in religious and ethnic terms,[23] and a revival of secession movements on islands – particularly Papua, East Timor, and Aceh[24] – that had already been striving to break away from the Indonesian nation-state for many years. These struggles for political and economic resources were religiously charged in many cases, that is, actors used a religious rhetoric to mobilize their followers, thus not only creating a closed collective

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[18] See Beck (2002).

[19] Compare Bartels (this volume); Kreuzer (2000).

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

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

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

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

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

of their own, but also a collective of hostile 'others'. The imagined communities (Anderson 1985) became reality in violent practice. This becomes very obvious from the conflicts that befell the Moluccas at the turn of the millennium. These conflicts also demonstrate the potency of historical reconstructions, of genealogies of conflict that have their origins way back in colonial times.

This is particularly true for the conflicts between Muslims and Christians on the South Moluccas, whose main and at the same time central island is Ambon. In colonial times Christianized South Moluccans had privileged access to governmental positions and constituted part of the colonial armed forces. In the latter function they repeatedly put down rebellions, and were feared in the archipelago. According to Peter Kreuzer (2000:14), from a Muslim point of view the colonial powers had initiated a socioeconomic stratification of society on the basis of religious boundaries. Due to their loyalty to the Netherlands and their fear to lose their privileges, the Southern Moluccan Christians became a welcome instrument of Dutch power strategies following Indonesian independence, and in 1960 a secessionist movement supported by the former colonial government demanded independence from Indonesia and the proclamation of a South Moluccan Republic (Republik Maluku Selatan).[25] In the course of the uprising there were repeated outbreaks of anti-Muslim violence.[26]

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

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

The potential for violence structurally inherent in that situation was intensified by the fact that both the Christian and the Muslim networks were infiltrated by

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[25] Compare Decker (1957).

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

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

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

criminal organizations. The latter's members controlled shopping malls and gambling halls on Java but were also used as hard-hitting security units by various political factions. Armed conflicts between these groups were nothing unusual. In 1999 this type of gang fights was exported, so to speak, to the Moluccas: Christian and Muslim groups barricaded themselves in their respective sanctuaries – the Christians in the Maranatha Church, the Muslims in the Al-Fatah Mosque – and prepared for the clash with their adversaries. It took merely some catalyst to spark the actual fight. In 2000 the conflict was further fuelled by a mobilization of radical Muslims who took across to the Moluccas from Java and other islands. A prominent part in this was played by the Laskar Jihad, a violence-prone fundamentalist organization that was counteracted on the Christian side by the so-called Laskar Kristus.

The second conflict that got the Moluccas worldwide attention occurred in mid-August 1999, involving migrants from Makian and the local population of the Kao subdistrict. The violence was unleashed by news that there were plans to establish a new subdistrict (*kecamatan*) named Makian Daratan in the southern half of the Kao district. The new subdistrict was to include all villages of Makian migrants who had been resettled in 1975 following the announcement of an imminent volcanic eruption in their homeland. Yet there were also some villages of the indigenous Pagu and Jaiolo in that region, who were not willing to let Makians govern them. A quarrel over resources was smouldering anyway between the Muslim migrants and the Christian Kao following the discovery of a gold mine in Malifut. The migrants, who according to Alhadar (2000:15) had developed a strong work ethic due to the circumstances of their displacement, were very successful as miners and thus aroused the envy of their indigenous neighbours.[29] In October 1999 the violence escalated to such an extent that about 15,000 Makians fled to Ternate and Tidore. What had basically started out as an ethnic conflict (even though the religious aspect had always been present because the majority of the Makians were Muslims and the Kao were Christians) now emerged into an explicit conflict between Muslims and Christians. When it was rumored that Christians planned to launch attacks,[30] the Makians chased about 13,000 Christians away to North Halmahera and North Sulawesi, where Christian militias murdered hundreds of Muslims in December 1999. Thereupon tens of thousands of Muslims demonstrated in Jakarta on 7 January 2000, calling for jihad on the Moluccas. The organizers of these protests included Amien Rais – the leader of the Muslim mass organization Muhammadiya, who is considered moderate – and the current Vice President, Hamzah Haz. Ja'far Umar Thalib, a preacher who had formerly fought in Afghanistan, was among the more radical participants, and advocated the implementation of the *shari'a*. Thalib recruited a group of men to battle the infidels on the Moluccas. Unhindered by the police and the military, about 3,000 members of the Laskar Jihad travelled to the Moluccas. It was not until May 2002 that Security Minister Susilo Bambang Yodhoyono announced a governmental initiative aiming at the expulsion of the militias from the Moluccas.

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[29] Compare Bubandt (2001).

[30] A fake flyer was in circulation, calling for holy war against the Muslims and for forced baptism.

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

Revitalization of Indonesian Islam, and Interreligious Tensions

The conflict on the Moluccas outlined above was not the only of its kind. A similar, religiously charged spiral of violence was simultaneously set in motion in Central Sulawesi[31], a civil war that had already lasted for thirty years escalated in Aceh[32], and in Papua attempts at secession were suppressed by means of state terror[33]. On Borneo, bloody conflicts erupted between the local Dayak population and immigrants from Madura Island[34], and smaller-scale uprisings flared up all over the archipelago. All of a sudden, neighbours who had been living side by side peacefully for decades began to massacre each other, and militias were formed. Experts worried that the nation was about to break apart, and that there would be a 'Balcanization' just like in former Yugoslavia.[35] However, these scenarios did not become reality, and most of the abovementioned conflicts calmed down within a couple of years. The religious rhetoric did not dominate all of them anyway. The uprising of the Dayak against the Madurese, for example, was viewed as having a primarily ethnic connotation, even though the Madurese are Muslims and many Dayak are Christians. The war of the Aceh guerrilla against the Indonesian state likewise had first and foremost an ethnic-nationalist connotation, even though historically it was definitely spurred by religious motives as well, and the independence movement called for the implementation of the *shari'a*. The Papuans fought against political discrimination and the governmental immigration programs that had turned them into minorities in many districts of their own homelands. Still, it was not without significance that the migrants were Muslims while the Papuans are members of Christian churches, and were supported in their struggle by national and international Christian organizations.

Religion has always been, and still is, a constituent factor of collective identities in Indonesia. While Christianity was ideologically associated with the Dutch

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[31] See Aragon (this volume).

[32] Compare Aspinall and Crouch (2003).

[33] Bertrand (2004); Chauvel 2006; King (2004).

[34] Compare Davidson (2008); Peluso and Harwell (2001).

[35] Compare, among others, Almonte (2001); Bandoro (2002); Biddle (2002); Fealy (2002); Sukma (2002).

colonial masters, Islam established itself as an anti-colonial liberation force as early as in the beginning of the nineteenth century. This became obvious when the so-called Padri war broke out in 1821.[36] A radical Islamic movement, inspired by pilgrims who had come in touch with the teachings of Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab in Mecca, aimed for an Islamic renewal in West Sumatra, and started out a revolt against the local nobility. When the latter sought the assistance of the Dutch military after most members of the royal family had been murdered, did the revolt turn into an anti-colonial uprising.[37] From those days on, anti-colonial resistance had repeatedly been justified by using the metaphor of a holy war, one case in point being Aceh where the population fought against the Dutch occupation of its homeland for forty years[38]; this struggle continued after World War II when the Dutch, who had before been expelled by the Japanese army, tried to reconquer their former colonial possessions by force of arms. The Islamic mass organization Nahdlatul Ulama issued a fatwa against the Dutch and the Council of Indonesian Muslim Associations (Majelis Syuro Muslimin Indonesia) declared the anti-colonial struggle as a religious duty. Several Islamic organizations, such as the Sarekat Islam (1911) and the Muhammadiyah (1912), were founded at the beginning of the twentieth century and became the think tanks of those striving for an independent Indonesian nation.[39] Many Muslim leaders held the opinion that the special contribution of the Muslims to independence, but also the fact that they constituted the majority of the population, was to be reflected by the structure of the new nation. They envisioned Indonesia as an Islamic state, or at least as a nation that should grant Muslims a privileged status. Sukarno, the first president of the republic, realized that such a form of government, by assigning the status of second-class citizens to Christians and Hindus, would doom the fragile budding nation to destruction from the very beginning. As a means to solve that problem, he favored the Pancasila model of a pluralist and multi-religious nation, and he came out successful.

Quite a few Muslim leaders felt betrayed by Sukarno's policy, and defied it. They aimed for a Negara Islam Indonesia, an Islamic Republic of Indonesia, and refused to pay allegiance to the new government. In West Java the militiaman Sekarmadji Maridjan Kartosowirjo declared a region occupied by his partisans as Darul Islam (that is, the house or territory of Islam), and local warlords followed his example in South Sulawesi and Aceh. Up to the mid-1960s there were fights between government troops and the three regional wings of the Islamic Army of Indonesia

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[36] The war lasted from 1821 to 1837 and ended after the Padri leader Tuanku Imam Bonjol had been detained and exiled.

[37] Taufik Abdulla (1989) and Young (1994) have written on Islam and anti-colonial struggle in West Sumatra, Dobbin (1983) provides a detailed analysis on the course of the Padri war.

[38] The war against the Acehnese lasted from 1873 to 1904. It was the longest in the history of Dutch colonialism. Anti-colonial Islamic movements even used the metaphor of a Holy War. The Acehnese resistance fighters declared a *prang sabil*, a holy war against the Dutch and mobilized in the name of Islam against the occupation of their homeland. See Teuku Ibrahim Alfian (2006). For an overview over Acehnese history see Reid 2005, 2006; for a general discussion of Islam and collective identity in Aceh compare also Aspinall 2009.

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

(Tentara Islam Indonesia), and three sizeable regions of Indonesia were under the control and administration of the Islamists. One of the results of the Islamist uprising was an increasing repression of political Islam. The state apparatus became tightened, and in 1959 Sukarno proclaimed his concept of 'guided democracy' (*demokrasi terpimpim*), which vested him with powers that took the principles of democratic decision making ad absurdum. In 1960 the oppositional Council of Indonesian Muslim Associations (Majelis Syuro Muslimin Indonesia, Masjumi) was prohibited. Under the second president, Suharto, who came to power due to a failed coup d'état attempted by communist organizations in 1965, the anti-Islamic course was maintained. A turnaround did not occur until 1990, when the foundations of the dictator's power in the military became increasingly brittle and he went in search for new allies. Suharto tried to curry favor with the Muslim organizations, and from 1990 furthered a revival of Islam at all levels of society. However, these concessions did not help him to remain in power, as the Islamic organizations were among those who forced Suharto to resign in 1998.

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

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

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

public life. Islamic clothing is dominating the streetscapes outside Jakarta, and a so-called anti-pornography law issued in 2008 criminalizes everything that does not conform to the moral ideas of Islamic hardliners; at its own request the province of Aceh was granted the right to make the *shari'a* the basis of its criminal law, and *shari'a* bylaws were passed in many districts and communities. As a consequence, students in the city of Padang (West Sumatra) are now required to furnish proof that they are familiar with the Koran, female students and government employees have to wear the Islamic headscarf (*jilbab*), and the population has to participate in Islamic training courses. Since these measures were introduced there have been repeated assaults on women who were out in the public without a male escort, or whose clothing was not in conformity with Islam.

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

The Scope of This Book

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

Generally, the authors' search for insights into the phenomenon of Christianity in Indonesia was guided by the following questions: How did the Christian minority, which consists of various different churches and organizations, constitute itself historically? How was Christianity absorbed by the indigenous population, and how was it indigenized? How can we trace the process in the course of which adherers of local traditions became Christians? What impacts did Christianization have on those regions that were inhabited by Muslims? What were the neighbourly relations in these regions like? Did people create common rituals or forge alliances that were effective in maintaining peace? What historical roots can be identified with regard to contemporary conflicts? What insights can be gained by viewing violent conflicts between Christians and Muslims from the inside perspective of the local actors? And, last but not least, there was always the issue of new approaches to peace-keeping, of possibilities to continue the project of a pluralist Indonesia in the new millennium as well.

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

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

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

The articles of Susanne Rodemeier, Dieter Bartels, and Lorraine Aragon focus on the specific challenges emerging in multi-religious settlement environments. Susanne Rodemeier has conducted empirical research in the eastern Indonesian

Alor Archipelago where Muslims, Protestants, and Catholics are living together in narrow confines. She elucidates the integrative dimensions of shared myths and rituals, yet also points out that governmental interventions such as transmigration programs can destroy that fragile equilibrium within a short time. The consequences of such a collapse of indigenous models regulating religious coexistence become apparent in the contribution by Dieter Bartels. Bartels describes how indigenized versions of Protestantism and Islam that existed on the Moluccan island of Ambon were gradually purified, both by ambitious agents of the Protestant Church and the Islamic Muhammadiyah and by governmental decrees against *adat*; in that process, the integrative elements disappeared. Many Ambonese actors believe that the abovementioned violent conflicts between Christians and Muslims in the wake of the fall of Suharto were a result of these developments, and call for a reactivation of local religious structures. Lorraine Aragon revisits the history of religious rivalry between Christians and Muslims, competitive Indonesian nationalism, and the unfolding of violent conflict in Central Sulawesi in the late 1990s. The competition between Protestants and Muslims for resources turned violent at transitional moments in politics, the most recent example being the post-Suharto Poso violence that erupted in late 1998 within the context of migration processes, global export markets, and land alienation pressures. Having started as a communal street fight in the midst of an unsavoury political campaign that went on in the district, the Poso conflict turned into a religiously polarized civil war where calls for retaliation attracted non-local militias; later, that conflict aroused international attention in the wake of 11 September 2001.

Birgit Bräuchler, Sven Kosel, and Noorhaidi Hasan address rhetorics and strategies of action employed by actors in interreligious conflicts. Birgit Bräuchler analyses the role played by the Internet in the Moluccan conflict, using the example of the most important groups of actors: the Crisis Center of the Diocese of Ambon (CCDA) and the Masariku network on the Christian side, and the Forum Komunikasi Ahlus Sunnah wal Jama'ah (FKAWJ) on the Muslim side. Both sides employed the Internet as a means of self-representation and for mobilizing support, vied with each other for victimhood, and justified their own violent outrages by portraying them as acts of self-defence against an unscrupulous aggressor. Militant Christians in North Sulawesi felt justified to take action as well; that region, just as the South Moluccas, was characterized by a particular closeness to the Dutch colonial power in colonial times. Sven Kosel elaborates upon the interconnections between politics and paramilitary organizations, which have always played an important role in Indonesian history. Even though many of the militiamen enter service as mercenaries with the highest bidder, they all share a romantic ideology, viewing themselves as the defenders of a Christian Minahasa against Muslim dominance in Indonesia, which is perceived as threatening. The historical point of reference of these political-religious actors are events – most notably the struggle for the representation of Christian minorities – that occurred when the independent Indonesian nation was born. The militiamen think of themselves as fighters of the Indonesian Pancasila nation against the Islamization of the state. Hasan Noorhaidi recounts a concurrent Islamic narrative

justifying any kind of violence. Here, too, contemporary discourses can be linked to connecting factors in history. While Christian actors will turn to foreign supporters when it comes to mobilizing financial resources, their political arguments are rooted in an Indonesian context. Islamist actors, on the other hand, operate on an international level in terms of discourse and practices. Noorhaidi refers to the phrase of a supposed global Jewish-Christian co-conspiracy, which is used by Indonesian Islamist groups such as the Laskar Jihad or Laskar Mujahidin to justify their intervention in local conflicts. The combination of global, national, and local rhetoric became particularly apparent during the Moluccan conflict. It comes as no surprise that the political discourse tends to manifest totalitarian traits during crisis situations. Stereotyping, exaggeration, and a demonization of the other side in the conflict are convenient means of political propaganda employed by agitators to mobilize their followers, persuade waverers, and to establish the ability to act. Religion in particular is excellently suited as a strategy of mobilization. However, there is no consensus about the question of whether this is due to an inherent problem associated with religion, that is, whether religion per se is a polarizing force and thus a threat to any multireligious society. This very issue is addressed by Franz Magnis-Suseno in his contribution. He has a critical look at the exclusive claims to truth inherent in the Abrahamite religions, and the difficulties of reconciling such claims with the prerequisites for pluralism. His pivotal question is: How can tolerance be achieved without abandoning one's own claim to truth? According to Magnis-Suseno, the answer to this philosophical and theological question, as well as political and economic dynamics, will be crucial in setting the future course of Indonesian society. On the one hand, he notes alarming tendencies towards 'Arabization' and an intolerant, dogmatic Islam. On the other hand, however, he points out that Indonesia looks back on a long tradition of intercultural and interreligious coexistence.

Christianity in the Social and Cultural Sciences

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

recognized. In 2006, Fenella Canell attempted to initiate the establishment of an 'Anthropology of Christianity', and since the mid-1990s several other authors (Hefner 1993b; Veer 1996) have been discussing Christianity with regard to processes of modernization and modern nation building. As to Indonesia, there are a number of historical studies, with the works of Karel Steenbrink (1995, 1998, 2000, 2001, 2003, 2007) and Aritonang and Steenbrink (2008) deserving particular mention.

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