

CHAPTER THREE

CATHOLIC CONVERTS IN THE MOLUCCAS, MINAHASA AND SANGIHE-TALAUD, 1512–1680

A world of its own: the Moluccas

We do not know much about the early history of the Moluccas. There are no written records, only a few prehistoric relics. But two spices growing only on five tiny islands west of Halmahera (cloves) and on the small islands of the Banda Archipelago (nutmeg and mace),¹ were known in the East and West before the first century CE. In China cloves had been used since the Han Dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE) as ingredients in perfumes or medicines and as flavourings for food. The Indian *Ramayana* epic mentions cloves about 200 BCE. In 314 CE one hundred and fifty pounds of cloves were presented to the pope. Nutmegs are recorded for the first time in Constantinople in the year 540. Although until the sixteenth century both spices were almost exclusively collected from wild growing trees, a considerable quantity must have been harvested and traded for sago and rice. This staple food was much in demand in the Spice Islands but did not grow on any of the small islands. Sago was brought by traders from Halmahera, Seram, Kai, and Aru. Rice came from Java in Javanese or Bandanese junks which also exported the cloves, because the islanders themselves had no seaworthy cargo ships.

The Moluccas comprise several groups of islands in eastern Indonesia, but especially the so-called Spice Islands. In the narrow sense of the word, *Maluku* is used for the islands of Tidore, Ternate, Motir, Makian, Bacan, and for a few tiny islets close to them, or for the four ancient kingdoms of Jailolo, Tidore, Ternate, and Bacan. In the wider sense, however, the Moluccas comprise all the islands between Celebes (Sulawesi) and Papua (West New-Guinea), and between Moro Island north of Halmahera, and the Banda Islands in the south. This wider sense is always used in this chapter.²

¹ Mace, made from the bright red and waxy aril that covers the nut, is actually more valuable than the nut itself.

² In modern Indonesia the name Moluccas has been extended to even more southern archipelagoes like the Kai, Tanimbar and Aru islands. These will be discussed in chapter four. We will, however, not use this broadest meaning of Moluccas. In this book we will consider the region from Banda to Ambon as the Southern Moluccas, Halmahera and surrounding islands like Ternate and Tidore as the Northern Moluccas.

The Moluccas have a very mixed population, which belongs to different language families. The people of northern Halmahera, of Ternate and Tidore seem to belong to the Papuan language group. Thus they speak a non-Austronesian language, the origin of which is not known up to the present. South Halmahera, Makian and Bacan belong to the South Halmahera West-Guinea group of languages, whereas Ambon and the South Moluccas belong to the Central-Malayo-Polynesian group, an Austronesian subgroup, which differs considerably from the pure, or Western, Malay languages. All this points to a mixed population of Papuan-Malay-Polynesian stock. To communicate among the different groups—sometimes even among neighbouring villages—the islanders had to use the Malay of Malacca, which was introduced by traders and used also by Francis Xavier.

From Ambonese sources we know that migration among the Moluccan islands was still in full swing in the fifteenth century. Groups from the northern islands and from Java settled on the shores of Hitu (Ambon). Larger confederations of various clans rose and quickly became rival parties. Even the four (or five when Loloda is included) Moluccan kingdoms are traced by local myths and legends to migrants arriving in the fourteenth and fifteenth century from Halmahera.

The harvesting and storing of the spices, and the selling them when ships arrived, required at least a minimally structured society. But again, there are no records from the time before the fifteenth century. Varthema was the first writer who described the Spice Islands and the clove tree (1510). Shortly before that time social structures that transcended federations of clans and groups of villages came into being in the northern and central Moluccas, and at a lower level on Ambon. Clove harvest and food trade created a social system largely based on the distribution of wealth deriving from them.

Between Tidore and Ternate and between the *ulis* (clans) on the islands around Ambon a deep-rooted dualism seems to have been the basis of the structure of these societies. Rivalry between Ternate and Tidore, between the *uli-lima* and the *uli-siwa* on Ambon, and similarly arranged groups on Seram, pervade the whole area. Complementary dualism and rivalry, war and antagonism were regarded as necessary to create stability and coherence and keep things going! It is not clear if this social pattern corresponded to certain beliefs in the indigenous religion or had other roots. Indigenous myths about the earliest times seem to be told in order to legitimise the structures that had evolved. The dualism between Tidore and Ternate was always regarded as necessary for the survival and prosperity of the central Moluccas, a region in which there was no ethnic, political, racial, or religious unity. Unity was a legend, created and upheld by myths about the origin of 'the family of its four (or five) always quarrelling members'. The appearance of Islam and Christianity added to the fighting, endemic in the whole archipelago.

The religion of the Moluccas was an ethnic religion, a kind of animism, without a centre and with no codified creed, and with very different local beliefs. The people worshipped the sun, the moon and the stars, the sky and the earth, but also objects as presented in their ghost huts (*ureu*) and *pemalis*, (sacred stones). From the middle of the fifteenth century Islam was introduced from recently Islamised North Javanese harbour princedoms, especially from Giri-Gresik and Tuban. It was the members of the merchant class of the spice islands, who were in close contact with their partners in Javanese harbour towns, which one by one had converted from Hinduism to Islam during the late fifteenth century, who purchased the spices and provided necessary food supplies to the islanders. Some merchants were asked to stay for some time on the islands and functioned as Islamic teachers. These (Arab-) Javanese merchants were real ‘peddler missionaries’ of Islam in the Moluccan archipelago. The Moluccas would have remained a far out-of-the-way forgotten archipelago, if they had not been the only place in the world producing cloves, nutmegs and mace. Though the *cora-cora* boats of the native inhabitants travelled fast between the islands, they did not cross the sea to Java. Chinese junks, Javanese and Buginese sailing boats provided connections with the outside world. Nonetheless the nobility of the Spice Islands was aware of what was going on in Malacca and even in India. They had heard of a strong newcomer from the far West, the Portuguese. They were keen to trade with them also.

Actually the Portuguese were not traders in the real sense of the word, people who expected profit by doing business. Their extended network of ports was administered by *fidalgos*, who certainly looked for money, but quite often more by exacting tribute and engaging in a kind of plundering and piracy, than by performing calculations and bargaining. In their feudal mentality they were dealing with rulers for their king; they were not agents of trading houses.

First encounters and clashes between Moluccans and Portuguese: the political context as seen from the major Muslim Sultanate of Ternate, 1511–1663

In November 1511 three ships under the command of António de Abreu left Malacca and were guided by Javanese pilots to Banda, by way of Gresik. After loading nutmeg and mace, the ships were separated by a storm. The junk of Francesco Serrão with eight sailors ran aground on *Pulau Penyu* and pirates brought the shipwrecked crew to the coast of Ambon. They were well received by the local people, whom they supported in a skirmish with a neighbouring village. The sultans of Ternate and Tidore were already informed about the changes at Malacca and immediately sent after the Portuguese in order to become friends with so powerful a nation. Their alliance was regarded as important for the improvement of trade and their respective position among

the Moluccan rival kingdoms. Sultan Abu Lais of Ternate succeeded in bringing Serrão to Ternate, the long searched-for homeland of cloves. This little shipwrecked batch of sailors had finally (1512) come to the end of a long search prepared by Prince Henry the Navigator from the 1440s.

Abu Lais immediately promised to deliver cloves on condition that the Portuguese would build a fortress on Ternate and on no other island, send more armed men and arms, and establish a trading post. The sultan hoped that an exclusive agreement with Portugal would bring him wealth and power, as he had heard had happened to the ruler of Cochin (India). Apparently the Portuguese paid higher prices than the Asian traders.

The offer of Ternate to monopolise the clove trade, and its acceptance by the Portuguese, may have been a big mistake for both parties. A monopoly on spices would have meant for the Portuguese that other buyers could not force up the prices. But they would have certainly avoided many wars and much trouble if they had started real business on one of the many islands still inhabited by pagans. They would have avoided most of the troubles involving religion, and Ternate would have avoided the shake-up of its whole society and perhaps saved its independence for a much longer period. But in the beginning cooperation with the Portuguese brought prestige, wealth and power to Ternate in its endemic warfare and power struggles against the other Moluccan kingdoms, especially Tidore and Jailolo.

Only ten years later the trouble started. Magellan's two remaining ships under the command of Elcano arrived in Tidore via South America and the Philippines (1521). There the Spaniards were heartily welcomed as rivals of the Portuguese, who had just started to build a fort on Ternate (1522–1523). Throughout the whole Portuguese domination in the Moluccas (till 1575) Tidore, Jailolo, and other rulers sought the friendship of the Spaniards against the Portuguese. When Abu Lais, the friend of the Portuguese, died (1522) quarrels broke out among his relatives. His brother Darwis gained the upper hand with the help of the Portuguese garrison in the fort, but when Captain J. de Menese arrived in 1527 the situation changed dramatically. He was weak, but arrogant and utterly cruel. He ordered the uncle of the sultan to be gravely offended by smearing pig's fat on his face. The *sangaji* of Tobano, who had defended his people's property against marauding Portuguese soldiers, was cruelly killed by cutting of his hands, after which he was attacked by two fierce dogs. The *sangaji* retreated into the sea pursued by the dogs. He seized them with his teeth, because his arms were tied behind his back, and drowned them, and then himself.

Menese went on terrorising and killing Ternate's nobility, even the old friend and mainstay of the Portuguese, the regent Darwis. The queen mother, a most respected lady, moved away from the fort. When Menese took the young sultan hostage in his fort the queen imposed a strict ban on all food supplies to

the Portuguese fortress. Menese was forcibly replaced by a new captain, but later pardoned in Goa. The Ternateans no longer expected to receive justice from the Portuguese.

A few years later the next Portuguese captain behaved so badly that the queen together with the sultans of Tidore and Bacan boycotted all supplies. Captain G. Pereira was murdered in a conspiracy headed by the chaplain of the garrison. A short time afterwards the new captain plotted with a *pati* (the highest court functionary after the sultan) to attack Tidore, which had given protection to the queen mother and the ousted sultan of Ternate. Both had to flee to Jailolo on Halmahera. The Portuguese raised the sultan's younger half-brother Tabarija (1523–1535) to the throne and the traitorous *pati* became regent.

The next captain, Tristão de Ataide (1533–1536), was especially vicious. This confirms the saying that, “from all the four quarters of the winds murderers come to India, and from there they are degraded to Malacca, and for monstrous cases they are transferred further on to Malucco, which is the hotbed of all the evils of the world, whereas it could be turned into a place good for souls, lives, and trade.” (Galvão) Barros summarizes, “Evil and strife are endemic to the Moluccas, for the clove, though a creation of God, is actually an apple of discord and responsible for more affliction than gold.”³ Ataide deposed Tabarija and sent him with his mother and her husband to Goa to be tried by the Portuguese governor general. Hairun, Tabarija's half-brother was made sultan (1535–1570). With the support of the new sultan, Ataide attacked Jailolo, because it had sided with the Spaniards, who had provided cannons and instructions on how to build a fortress. Jailolo was conquered (1534), the old sultan taken prisoner and replaced by a collaborator. During this time of turmoil, the *sangajis* of Mamuya and Tolo in the area of Moro on Halmahera asked the Portuguese through the intervention of Baltasar Veloso, a brother in law of Sultan Hairun, to protect them against inroads from Ternate. But as the Portuguese could only protect Christians he advised them to be baptised together with their people. These Christians became the first Catholic community in Indonesia.

Luckily in 1536 the best Portuguese captain, Antonio Galvão, took command. Galvão wanted peace in order to promote trade and a native Christian community as numerous as possible. After futile negotiations he attacked Tidore, which had sheltered the former Sultan Dayalo of Ternate, who was killed in action. “He was the first king in the Moluccas to die by the sword. They (the natives) considered this a great dishonour and disgrace, because

³ For the quotation from Galvão, see Jacobs 1971:171–173; for the quote from Barros see Lach 1994:606.

in these countries custom does not permit them to wound a king, still less to kill him.”

Galvão strengthened the fortress and surrounded the Portuguese city with a wall. He fought against private trade in order to acquire all cloves for the crown. Some high class Ternateans converted to Christianity, among others Kolano Sabia, ‘an important member of the court and the household of the sultan of Ternate’, and an Arab who was said to be a descendent of the Prophet. Sultan Hairun himself seemed to have thought about embracing Christianity and sending one of his sons to the Jesuit college in Goa. According to the letters of the Jesuits, Hairun was loyal to the Portuguese crown and cooperative in trade dealings. But, because he saw no way to establish close links with the most important families in his vast island kingdom other than by following the old Moluccan custom through marriages, he could hardly become a Christian having many wives. Living with several women was regarded as no obstacle for many European kings to be regarded as ‘outstanding’ Christian princes. Nor did the Portuguese in Ternate give a better example. The remark of a Jesuit that Hairun refused to convert because of his ‘carnal vices’, is unjust.⁴ Hairun strengthened his position against a possible return from Goa of his half-brother Tabarija, who in 1544 was rehabilitated and became a Christian. Tabarija’s friend Jordao de Freitas became captain of Ternate, arrested Hairun and sent him in chains to Malacca to make place for his friend. Francisco Palha, the *feitor* of Ternate, a nobleman and a friend of Hairun, protested in vain and was put in prison himself by Freitas. The captain planned to make peace with the Spaniards, install a Christian indigenous king and convert all the islands. This was wishful thinking. Tabarija died, probably being poisoned, in Malacca on his way home from India. Hairun was cleared from all accusations and reinstalled as sultan (1546). From that time he never trusted the Portuguese again, though Captain Freitas was recalled.

At this crucial moment, Francis Xavier arrived in Ternate from Ambon, where he had instructed and strengthened the native Christians in their villages. Xavier converted many islanders in Moro and some nobles of Ternate, but Hairun could not be convinced. He answered Xavier, “Muslims and Christians venerate the same God. There will be a time when both become one religion.” A few months later Xavier returned to Malacca and Goa. He sent Jesuits to Ambon, Ternate and Moro. This was the beginning of an organised evangelisation that continued for a few decades.

In 1555 Captain Duarte de Sá took command and behaved as badly as most of his predecessors, if not worse. He stole cloves that belonged to the sultan, and because Hairun protested, he was thrown into a dirty prison together with

⁴ Andaya 1993:125.

his brother and his old mother (1557). The missionaries and the merchants protested, but in vain. The combined forces of Ternate-Tidore arose and nearly defeated the Portuguese, who were now supported by Jailolo and the Christian sultan of Bacan. The Christians of Mamuya sent provisions to the besieged fort. At this critical moment the Portuguese inhabitants of Ternate seized their captain while attending mass, and imprisoned him. Hairun together with the other hostages were released immediately.

The rivalry between the Portuguese and the Spaniards (and five decades later between them and the Dutch) harmed the prestige of the Portuguese, which had already suffered much by the misconduct, tyranny, and corruption of nearly all their officials. This did enormous damage to the spread of Christianity and strengthened the influence of Islam as an opposition to ‘the Christians’. Some Portuguese officials supported Hairun after 1560 and quite often sacrificed the interests of the native Christians in order to gain greater profit in their private business. Hairun himself became increasingly anti-Christian.

A clever ruler and a brave warrior, Hairun was reportedly correct in the exercise of law. According to oral sources from the early seventeenth century, “he was a strong defender of Islamic faith”, and he regarded himself as a loyal vassal of the king of Portugal. At the same time Hairun tried hard to restrict the Christians and their priests, who were protected by this same Portuguese king. But the Portuguese captains often acted against the interests of their king too. In 1570 the sultan was treacherously murdered on premeditated orders of Captain D.L. de Mesquita. Dying he cried, “O you *fidalgos*, why do you kill the most loyal vassal of my lord, the King of Portugal?”⁵ This peak of Portuguese stupidity and treason marked the beginning of the rapid downfall of their power and fortune in the Moluccas.

Hairun’s son and successor Baabullah (1570–1583) vowed to revenge his father by throwing all Portuguese and native Christians out of the Moluccas. He was supported by most Muslim leaders when he gathered support from all the neighbouring islands to weaken the Portuguese and to kill or (re) convert all the Christians. Their villages in Morotai and in Moro were destroyed, though Tolo on Mamuya resisted successfully. The Christian king of Bacan was attacked, because he and the sultan of Tidore continued to supply food to the Portuguese. Bacan was defeated and forced into apostasy (1571). Almost the entire Jesuit mission was in a shambles in 1573.

⁵ In 1560 Hairun and Baabullah had acknowledged the overlordship of the Portuguese king. It seems that both were loyal. When Philip II of Spain became also king of Portugal in 1580, Baabullah sent a delegation to Lisbon to congratulate Philip and declare himself his loyal vassal (1583). His ambassador Naik was informed that the murderer of his father was killed by the Javanese when his ship was boarded in 1579 in Japara (Jacobs *Docu. Maluc.* II:70–75). The Ternatean mission to Lisbon was back in Ternate in 1585, after Baabullah’s death.

After five years of siege, the Portuguese fortress on Ternate had to surrender. Weakened by illness and with no hope of being relieved the defenders were allowed to leave for Ambon or Malacca (1575). When Baabullah wrote to the king of Portugal seeking the punishment of the murderers of his father, he mentioned astonishingly that he would maintain the fortress for him by keeping a Portuguese captain, a *feitore*, and twelve soldiers chosen by himself. But these men too eventually departed of their own will and the fort became Baabullah's residence. It was conquered by the Spaniards in 1606.

From 1576 Baabullah's *cora-coras* (rowing boats used for warfare) re-established Ternatean control in many parts of the Moluccas and subdued new islands and ports even in northern Sulawesi and the Lesser Sunda Islands. In all these areas his fighters persecuted the Christians and revived or introduced Islam. Quite a number of Muslim teachers were now active in the Moluccas. Many Christians died for their faith, more became Muslims. The Church survived only on Ambon and on the Sangihe Islands.

Baabullah welcomed the English privateer Francis Drake (1579), who was much impressed by the wealth of this 'Lord of a hundred islands' and his extensive trade overseen by some Turks and two Italians. Because Ternate became very powerful, the frightened rulers of Bacan and Tidore took sides with the Portuguese, who were allowed to build a fort on Tidore in 1578. Formally the sultan of Tidore even acknowledged the king of Portugal as his overlord. Baabullah took revenge, poisoned the sultan of Bacan and devastated his island.

Shortly after Baabullah's death (1583) the Portuguese and Spanish forces, united since 1580, supported by Tidore and Bacan, tried in vain to re-conquer the former fortress on Ternate. The attackers were repulsed by the forces of Ternate supported by twenty Turkish gunners and the crews of Javanese junks riding at anchor. This victory created an even stronger unity among the Muslims as opposed to the two Western powers. But a few years later this 'Muslim unity' was abandoned and replaced by a close cooperation with the Dutch, who arrived on the scene in 1599. Sultan Said (1584–1606), Baabullah's successor, eagerly offered every advantage to these newcomers as long as they would help him to expel the Portuguese and Spaniards from the Moluccas. Unknowingly he tried 'to cast out the devil through Beelzebub'. The native rulers learned by hard experience that the Dutch were at least twice as rapacious as the much weaker Portuguese.

The whole political scene began to change quickly and drastically. In 1605 the Dutch seized the Portuguese fort on Ambon without a fight. It was a sudden and unexpected ending for the Catholic mission and the beginning of the transition to another denomination, the Reformed tradition of Protestantism as will be sketched in chapter five. Also the southern Moluccas, from Banda

to Ambon, were lost completely to the Dutch, and in the northern islands the fall of the fort on Tidore (1605) marked the end of Portuguese power in this region forever. A short revival of the Catholic mission was made possible by the recapture of the old fort on Ternate and some other islands by a Spanish fleet that appeared from Manila in 1606. Sultan Said had to surrender all his fortresses and to promise not to prevent anybody from becoming a Christian. Tidore, which had for long sided with the Spaniards, took advantage of the weakness of its neighbour, as did Bacan, which had kept a Christian population around the town of Labuha.

While the position of the Dutch VOC became stronger, the Spanish garrison managed to defend itself, though they often felt neglected by Manila. Sultan Hamzah of Ternate (1627–1648), a nephew of Baabullah, was raised in Manila and baptised. He kept on good terms with the Spanish and the Dutch, strengthened the grip on his vassals in the periphery and showed a liberal attitude towards all religions.

All of the Moluccas suffered in the middle of the seventeenth century because of constant wars between Ternate and Tidore, between the VOC and Spain, and especially because of the terrible *hongi tochten* (expeditions of warships) that destroyed all clove trees outside Ambon for the sake of a Dutch monopoly. Batavia was interested in keeping the war between the local rulers alive and forced Hamzah to revoke his treaties with Tidore and Manila. The sultans became more and more dependent on the VOC, the compensation money paid to them, and on Dutch arms to quell insurrections of their peoples impoverished by Dutch policy. Roughly three quarters of the population perished in the wars, especially young men who were pressed to man the *cora-cora* for the VOC expeditions. People from peripheral islands were forced to repopulate the centre.

The Spaniards kept their position in Ternate till 1663, when they withdrew the garrison out of fear of a Chinese attack on the Philippines. All these years were difficult for the native Christians and their few priests.

The events in Ternate and Tidore strongly influenced the Moluccas in general and the small Christian communities on the two islands of Ambon and Banda in particular. Of special interest is the development on Ambon, which did not recognize the overlordship claimed by Ternate, though the people of Hitu regarded themselves as its allies. The Christians of Ambon and the neighbouring Lease Islands are the only Christian communities in the Moluccas that have survived without interruption to the present day. Therefore we will give a short overview of the socio-political situation of Ambon until the arrival of the Dutch in 1605 and then concentrate on the Christian communities of Ambon and the other islands.

*Ambon and the Lease Islands:
political structures as background for religious choices*

The history of Ambon since the arrival of the Portuguese in 1512 is well documented by several Portuguese sources, by the local *Hikayat Tanah Hitu* written by Rijali and preserved in Malay and Dutch, and also by short remarks in Rumphius' *Ambonsche Historie* (composed in 1679 on Ambon).

Ambon was populated by so-called *Alfuros*, a name which actually means 'wild people who live in the mountain forests'. They probably have some affinity with the Papuans. In the coastal areas of the Moluccan islands people from different islands of the Malay archipelago, including Java, are said to have settled and formed clans. At the end of the fifteenth century these clans organised themselves in so-called *ulis* of different degrees.

These *ulis* formed groups of five or nine sub-groups each comprising a certain number of villages originating from common ancestors. The members (called *aman* or *hena*), formed a kind of clan composed of several *rumataus* or families. The *uli-lima* formed a group of five and was opposed to the *uli-siwa* or group of nine. On the island of Ambon, the *uli-lima* settled mostly on Hitu and embraced Islam from the early sixteenth century, whereas the *uli-siwa* kept to their old traditions and lived mostly on the peninsula of Leitimor. According to Ambonese cosmology the opposites have always to be brought into a unity by man, the centre of the world. This dualism, for example, made one *uli* choose to side with the opponents of Ternate, because the neighbouring *uli* was allied with that sultanate. If one *uli* became Muslim the other was inclined to choose Christianity. Friendship with the Portuguese on the part of one group automatically created opposition to them in the other group. Such a pattern was quite often displayed by Ternate and Tidore in their relations with different European powers, who were utterly confused by this Moluccan way of acting. This social structure should be kept in mind when conversions of whole villages are reported. Around 1500 three events changed the whole history of Ambon:

Firstly, Islam came to Hitu from Giri (Gresik) on Java or (also) from the north via Ternate and Wai Putih. Pati Tuban, a headman from Hitu, around 1510, met in Giri with the ruler of Ternate, Tidore Vogue, who had changed his name into Zainul Abidin (about 1470) and was married to a Javanese woman. With Giri, which was the residence of one of the *Wali Sanga*, the first preachers of Islam in Java, Ternate and Hitu kept trade and religious connections alive till the seventeenth century. Though Hitu was regarded as Muslim, in fact smaller places dependent on Hitu remained pagan until the beginning of the seventeenth century.

Secondly, cloves did not grow on Ambon before 1500, when they were brought from Hoamoal, the western peninsula of Seram. When the Portuguese

arrived on the coast of Hitu (1512), they could not yet buy any cloves. By the 1530s however Hitu had become an exporter of cloves. In the time of the VOC Ambon became the main clove producing island, especially after the Dutch destroyed all trees outside Ambon and the so-called Lease Islands: Haruku, Saparua and Nusa Laut.

Thirdly, one day fishermen from Nusatelo off the coast of Hitu brought the news that they had met white men with cat's eyes, whose language they could not understand. When they were brought to the village head, they explained that they came from Portugal to buy spices, but their ship had run on cliffs and broken apart. Though the *Hikayat Tanah Hitu* (Story XII) changed the pirates into fishermen, the story is confirmed by Portuguese reports. They were the first Europeans on Ambon (1512).

For many years the Portuguese called on Hitu to obtain drinking water and provisions or to wait for the right monsoon. Because the west coast of Hitu had no good harbours the Portuguese were shown the Bay of Ambon. Here the pagan villages of Hative and Tawiri, which were subject to the Hitunese, were ordered to assist them as far as possible. The relations of the Portuguese with the northern Hitunese were good until merchants from Java, Makassar and Banda started to accuse the Portuguese of preventing them from buying cloves. Seen from the Portuguese perspective, several buyers would force the prices up and infringe on the intended Portuguese monopoly. Besides foodstuffs the Javanese sold weapons. Against the Javanese, who used their religious ties with the more or less Muslim Hitunese, the Portuguese looked for support from the pagan Ambonese and tried to make them Christians. All this stirred up old antagonisms among the parties concerned. The old hostilities between the *uli-lima* and *uli-siwa* continued as the rivalry among the Hitunese who became Muslims and the inhabitants on both sides of the bay who looked for protection and therefore were inclined to side with the Portuguese and become Christians.

The Portuguese had built a little fort near Hitu Lama in the early 1520s. Once they supported their hosts in a war against the wild Alfuros of Seram. After the common victory a party was held. A drunken Portuguese soldier molested the pretty daughter of the headman Jamilu and slapped her father in the face when he reproached him. This was the end of the friendship between Hitunese and Portuguese. The Portuguese had to leave the north coast of Hitu permanently. Luckily they were guided by the headman of Hukunalo to the inner bay of Ambon. Here they built a protected village among heathen villages that now refused to obey their former Muslim overlords. Some Portuguese married local women. From other sources it seems that the Portuguese stayed on Hitu until 1536 and had a garrison in a fort at Hila. In that year (or in 1539) they moved via Hukunalo to Rumah Tiga near Hative on the west coast of the bay.

In 1538 a fleet of 25 *cora-cora* with 400 people from Tidore and Ternate and forty Portuguese suddenly appeared on the coast of Hitu. They came to maintain Portuguese-Ternatean control of all spice producing islands. On the coast of Hitu they met a large fleet of boats from several ports of Java, from Banda and from Makassar that were supported by the people of Hitu. Five ships full of goods were taken by the Portuguese. After this victory the Portuguese joined some compatriots living among the Ambonese on the bay. They concluded a contract with the *negeri* (independent villages) Hative, Amentelo (present-day the town of Ambon) and Nusanive (present-day Latuhalat), which asked for help and baptism. A priest remained for some time to instruct them. After these events the Portuguese enjoyed a quiet time on Leitimor and the Lease Islands. In 1546 Francis Xavier arrived from Malacca and stayed for some months among them. He cared for the Portuguese and Spanish seamen, but most of the time he visited seven Christian villages in order to give instruction. When he passed through Ambon for a second time, after visiting Ternate and Moro (1547), he promised to send priests from Goa who would stay on the island.

Later, in 1562, the situation on Ambon became so critical that a special captain was appointed for the island. Several attacks from the sultan of Ternate, who regarded the whole island of Ambon his territory, harmed the Christians very much. In 1564, an invasion of 600 Javanese and 2,000 north Hitunese from the *uli-lima* was repulsed from the bay. But in 1570 the new Sultan Baabullah sent Kaicil Liliato to Ambon in order to expel the Portuguese and to intimidate the Hative Christians. In 1572 the Portuguese fort in Hative (and Hila) was transferred to Leitimor on the eastern side of the bay. This wooden fort was surrounded by Christian villages but, because its field of fire was impeded by hills, the energetic Captain Sanches de Vasconcellos (1571–1599) replaced it in 1576 with a stone fort a few hundred metres away. Another attack by 3,000 men from Hitu followed in 1590 and created great havoc among the Christian villages.

During the time of Captain Vasconcellos (1572–1591) an almost uninterrupted war raged on Ambon between the *uli-lima* from Hitu supported by Ternate, Banda (1590 and 1592), and sometimes by Gresik on Java on one side, and the handful of Portuguese supported by the *uli-siwa* of Leitimor and the Lease Islanders on the other side. They received little help from Malacca. The alliance with Tidore caused the Ambonese to take part in numerous war expeditions all over the Moluccas. In these troubled times many Christian communities suffered large losses. At the end of the sixteenth century the Portuguese position on Ambon was very precarious and they had not much hope even of keeping their fort. In 1599 Dutch ships under the command of W. van Warwyk and J. van Heemskerck dropped anchor on the north coast of Hitu and were well received as an enemy of the hated Portuguese. But an

attack on the fort on Leitimor with Dutch support was repulsed in 1600. A small Dutch fort was built on Hitu, the *Kasteel van Verre*, which was deserted shortly afterwards because of fear of a large Portuguese fleet on its way from Goa. In 1602 Andreas Furtado arrived with 1,500 soldiers and subdued the whole of Hitu. Many of its inhabitants fled to Seram. Leitimor and the Lease Islands enjoyed a few more quiet years.

During the last decades of the 16th century the Portuguese gained lasting influence over the inhabitants of Southeast Ambon or Leitimor and its neighbouring eastern islands. Many Portuguese words were accepted into the local language. The *orang Mardijker* formed a special group of emancipated Asian-born slaves, who spoke Portuguese and lived close to the fort. Deeper and longer-lasting Portuguese influence only occurred on East Flores and Timor.

In 1604 three emissaries from Hitu asked the Dutch at Banten to throw the Portuguese out of Ambon. On 23 February 1605 the Portuguese captain surrendered the fort without a fight to the Dutch Admiral Steven van der Haghen. Actually the Jesuits together with the Christian Ambonese wanted to defend themselves, but the Portuguese had lost hope and wanted to leave. Van der Haghen who was not anti-Catholic at all, allowed the two Jesuits and the married Portuguese to stay on the island and to exercise their Catholic faith together with their Ambonese co-religionists. Though this permission was given in writing it was revoked quickly, because undisciplined Dutch soldiers destroyed the churches and village crosses and molested the two priests. This was the end of the Catholic community of Ambon and the Lease Islands, though the faithful hoped for a long time that the Portuguese would come back. Had they not been that bad after all?

After the Portuguese had surrendered their forts on Ambon and Tidore (1605) and the Spanish abandoned their fort on Ternate (1666), the Catholics in the Moluccas had lost all protection against the VOC and its Muslim allies. Have the Moluccan Catholic communities only been a temporary event with no consequences for the future? An answer will be given after the history of the whole Jesuit mission has been told.

Ambonese Catholics: Francis Xavier 1546–1547

The largest number of Christians in the sixteenth century lived on the Ambonese peninsula of Leitimor and on the small Lease Islands of Haruku, Saparua, and Nusa Laut. Therefore we begin our history of the fate of the various Moluccan Christian communities there, and then move to the central and northern Moluccas. When Francis Xavier landed at Hative, on the western shore of the Bay of Ambon on 14 February 1546, he was welcomed

by Ambonese Christians from a few villages. Around Hative and in six other villages there lived some eight thousand 'Christians'. They had asked for baptism a few years earlier (1538), when Portuguese had settled among them. They all belonged to the *uli-siwa* and were on bad terms with the largely Muslim *uli-lima* villages on the Hitu peninsula. How and why had these people become Christians?

Valentijn reports that the heathen people of Leitimor had sent emissaries to Malacca (and Goa) to ask the Portuguese to help them against their (Muslim) enemies on Hitu. These messengers came into contact with Catholicism and made the *orang kaya* of Hative ask for protection and baptism. By responding to their wishes the Portuguese on Ambon became involved in insular politics and old rivalries. When the Portuguese had to leave Hitu, they moved to the western coast of the bay. This happened around 1523 or a little later. After the victory of the above-mentioned fleet of 400 men from Ternate (1538) many *kampongs* on both sides of the bay became Christian. They may have regarded baptism more as a sign of an alliance with the Portuguese than as a sacrament based on faith.

Because of good news about many new Christians on Moro and the possibilities on Ambon, which had been given by Tabarija, sultan of Ternate, to Freitas, a friend of Xavier, he took the Banda Ship from Malacca and sailed to Ambon. Had Xavier gone to Makassar and converted the king of Gowa who was very open to Christianity, the history of Christianity in Indonesia might have been quite different. Makassar became much more important and stronger than all the petty principalities in the Moluccans. But, there grew no spices in Makassar.

Francis Xavier's visit to the Moluccas did not last long, and much time was spent travelling on foot or by *cora-cora*. He worked on Ambon from February until the end of June 1546. After being sick with exhaustion for more than a month he took a *cora-cora* to Ternate, where he arrived in July 1546 and left in April the following year, after Easter. At the end of April he was back on Ambon, where he met his friends again for a few weeks. The Banda Ship departed on the 15th May and reached Malacca in July 1547. This short visit of the 'Apostle of India' started an organised, as far as that was possible, evangelisation in the Moluccas. We will follow his apostolic journey from island to island.

In Ambon Francis Xavier probably stayed in a bamboo hut at Hative, which served also as chapel. At that time Hative was still situated on the western shore of the Bay of Ambon. He started his apostolic work immediately after his arrival, visiting the few Portuguese and the houses of the Christians in the neighbouring villages of Tawiri and Hukunalo. He travelled together with a boy, who carried a cross before him and served as his interpreter, and with a group of youthful companions. If there were any sick people in a house or children

to be baptised, he entered the house and lifted his hands to heaven. The boys travelling with him recited the Creed and the Commandments in Malay. He then read a few verses of the Gospel over the sick and baptised the children who had been born since the death of their former priest. With the help of his interpreter he assembled children and adults to teach them the prayers and the basic truths of the faith, which he had translated into Malay at Malacca. We may not be too sure that the villagers really understood Malay, as to this day older people in remote places hardly understand Standard Indonesian. St. Francis wrote himself from Ambon to his friends in Goa:

There are more pagans than Moors in these regions of Maluco. The pagans and the Moors hate each other. The Moors want the pagans to become Moor or their slaves, but the pagans do not want to be Moors, and even less to be their slaves. If there were someone to preach the truth to them, they would all become Christians, since the pagans would rather become Christians than Moors. Some seventy years ago the people here became Moors, though earlier they had all been pagans. Two or three *cacizes*⁶ came here from Mecca, a house in which, according to the Moors, there is the body of Mohammed. They converted a great number of pagans to the sect of Mohammed. The best thing about these Moors is that they know nothing about their erroneous sect. For want of one to preach the truth to them, these Moors have not become Christians. I am giving you such a detailed account as this in order that you may be seriously concerned and keep in mind the numerous souls that are being lost for want of spiritual assistance. Those who may not have the learning or talent to be of the Society will still have more than enough knowledge and talent for these regions if they have the desire to come to live and die with these people. If a dozen of them came each year, this evil sect of Mohammed would be destroyed in a short time.⁷

Xavier crossed the bay and visited the Christians on the other side, probably using more or less the same route as described by the Protestant minister François Valentijn 150 years later. A tour to the villages of (southern) Leitimor, could be done in a day or two. From his hut in Hative Xavier reached Hukunalo in a few hours, crossed the bay at its narrowest point to the partly Muslim, partly Christian village of Halong on Leitimor.

Xavier used the opportunity offered to him to sail with a *cora-cora* in three days to Tamilau on the island of Seram. Already close to its southern coast—Rodrigues tells us—high waves and a reef endangered their boat. Xavier took off the crucifix hanging round his neck and dipped it into the raging water while asking God to protect them. But his crucifix slipped from his hand into the sea. After twenty-four hours of struggling against the storm and the mighty waves they finally reached Seram. Walking on the beach in the direction of

⁶ From Arab *qādi* for a Muslim judge or, more general, religious leader.

⁷ Costelloe 1993:140–143; letter from Ambon 10-05-1546.

Tamilau, Xavier and Rodrigues saw a large crab holding the lost crucifix in its claws. Xavier full of joy thanked God, but never talked about it.

Although Xavier stayed eight days in Tamilau, he could not win anybody for the Gospel, neither of the Malay speaking town's people nor of the wild Alfuros visiting the market. With another ship Rodrigues and Xavier returned to Hative. He paid a short visit to the island of Nusa Laut, inhabited by Alfuro head-hunters and pirates. Though Xavier received a friendly reception from the villagers he only baptised one young man with the name of Francisco and predicted that he would die with the name of Jesus on his lips. Francisco of Nusa Laut was killed in action in 1575 in an attack on the Saparua fortress of Hiamao (Ihamahu). Because the Gospel was not accepted on Nusa Laut, Xavier removed his shoes and shook the dust from them as he had done on Seram. He did not want to carry such 'evil earth along with him upon his shoes'.

When Francis Xavier returned to the Bay of Ambon, he saw eight ships riding at anchor. They had arrived from Ternate. Among the three hundred people were one hundred and thirty Spaniards, all that remained of Ruy Lopez de Villalobos' expedition of 370 men on six ships. It had been dispatched from Manila in 1542 to secure a foothold on the 'Spanish side' of the Line of Tordesillas. Because of adverse winds they could not sail to the north and were forced to stay in 'Portuguese' territory and finally had to surrender in 1545, though Tidore was willing to cooperate with the Spaniards and had given them shelter. Now they were on their way to India. Xavier met four Augustinian friars and two secular priests among his Spanish countrymen. From the Portuguese and Spanish merchants and officers Xavier received much information on the Philippines, on China and on the northern Moluccas, especially on Moro. When the fleet left Ambon in May, St. Francis was completely exhausted and fell ill himself for more than a month. From Ambon he wrote:

On this island of Moro a great number became Christians many years ago; but because of the death of the clerics who baptised them, they have been left abandoned and without instructions. Since the land of Moro is very dangerous, for the people there are extremely treacherous and mix a large amount of poison in the food and drink which they give to others, those who could take care of the Christians on Moro have refused to go there. Because of the need which these Christians of the island of Moro have for instructions in the faith and for someone to baptise them for the salvation of their souls, and also because of the obligation which I have of loosing my temporal life to assist the spiritual life of my neighbour, I have decided to go to Moro to assist the Christians in spiritual matters, exposing myself to every danger of death, placing all my hope and confidence in God our Lord.⁸

⁸ Costelloe 1993:139 Letter 55, (10-5-1546).

Xavier took the opportunity of the big fleet sailing to India, to despatch several letters to Goa and Rome. He urged his confreres in Goa to send some of their number to the Moluccas by describing the situation there. In a supplement to one of his letters Xavier added general information widely circulated in the Moluccas:

These islands have a temperate climate and large, dense forests. They have an abundance of rain. These islands of Maluco are so high and so difficult to traverse that in time of war they defend themselves by climbing to higher grounds and using these as their fortresses. They have no horses, nor would it be possible to ride on horseback across the islands. The earth frequently quakes, and also the sea, so much so that those who are sailing when the sea quakes gain the impression that they are striking rocks. It is a frightful thing to feel the earth tremble, and even more so the sea. Many of these islands spew forth fire with such a roar that there is no barrage of artillery, however loud it may be, that makes so great a noise; and the fire rushes forth with such violence from its place of origin that it carries huge rocks along with it. For want of one to preach the torments of hell to the infidels on these islands, God lets the lower regions open up for the confusion of these pagans and their abominable sins.⁹

As a superior Xavier ordered other Jesuits to come to Ambon and to establish a mission: “I am giving you this account so that you may know the need that these regions have for your presence. Even though I know full well that you are needed there, but since you are needed even more in these regions, I earnestly ask for the love of Christ our Lord that you, Father Francisco de Mansilhas, and you, Juan de Beira, come to these regions. And so that you may have more merit through your coming, I am ordering you to come in virtue of holy obedience.”¹⁰ At the end of June 1546 Xavier boarded a *coracora* and sailed for Ternate.

The Jesuits told by Francis Xavier to depart to Ambon, Fr. Juan de Beira, Fr. Nuno Ribeiro and Brother Nicolau Nunez, met Xavier when he disembarked in Malacca in July 1547. They exchanged news on India and the Society of Jesus in Europe and handed letters to him from his early companions in Rome. After sharing their spiritual experiences, and listening to their advice about the situation in their new mission field the three companions boarded the clove ship departing to the east.

The Protestant missionary on Ceylon Philippus Baldeus (d. 1672) wrote about Xavier:

The gifts Xavier had been given to work as an apostle of Jesus Christ were so exceptional, that I feel unable to judge. If I contemplate how patiently and gently he offered the holy and life-giving waters of the Gospel to the great and simple,

⁹ Costelloe 1993:142.

¹⁰ Costelloe 1993:146.

if I take into account how bravely he endured derision and insults, then I feel moved to say with the Apostle, 'Who equals him in such astonishing things?'¹¹

The difficult continuation of Xavier's work: 1547–1564

At the end of 1547 the first missionary for Ambon arrived: the young Jesuit priest Nuno Ribeiro. He baptised about five hundred people and destroyed some idols of animism. He was poisoned shortly after he escaped from his hut that was set on fire by his adversaries. Knowing that he would not live much longer he asked to be carried from *kampong* to *kampong* encouraging his congregation. After a week he died painfully on 23rd August 1549. His murderer repented and was baptised a year later.

Because the scattered Christians of the Moluccas were much in need of regular catechisation Fr. de Beira SJ travelled all the way from Ternate to Goa to get more missionaries (1552). Thanks to the support of Xavier, whom he met again in Malacca preparing his voyage to China, he succeeded in getting three young seminarians. When they passed through Malacca on their way to the Moluccas a year later (1553), the tomb of St. Francis in Malacca was secretly opened for De Beira and his companions to take leave from the founder of the Moluccan mission. They asked his blessings for the apostolate he had entrusted to them just a few years ago. The body of the saint showed no signs of decay.

When the young Jesuit Antonio Fernandez arrived in Ambon (1554) the situation had become worse: The Christians were chased away by the Hitunese and many of them were made slaves. Fernandez was called to visit the Christians on other islands too. He preached, taught and prayed with his flock and thought about preparing catechists selected from the local Christians. Not yet one month in the field he drowned when his boat was hit by a big wave.

Twelve months later Fr. Alfonso de Castro SJ arrived from Ternate with the Brothers Manuel de Tavora and Fransisco Godhindo. From his letters we learn that the few thousand Christians on Ambon and the Lease Islands (with about 43 Christian villages) did not know much about their Christian faith and easily returned to pagan customs of old. This was mainly due to the lack of instructors and because many were baptised too early. They regarded baptism as a way to obtain protection from the Portuguese. For the same reason they apostatised easily later, when the situation changed. Castro speaks of thirty Christian villages on Leitimor. He had to leave Ambon after 18 months of hard work in order to sail to Moro. He died as a martyr three years later.

¹¹ Quoted after De Graaf 1977:36.

In 1556 Fr. de Beira and the young scholastic N. Nunez travelled again via Ambon to Goa in order to get support. When these two left, no missionary remained on Ambon until Fr. Nunez returned in October 1557 and acquired a house near Hative on the Hitunese coast of the bay. The situation worsened when Captain Duarte de Sá in his greed mistreated Hairun. The sultan increasingly mistrusted the Portuguese and suppressed the Christians in his realm, regarding them as friends of his Portuguese adversaries through close business partners.

In 1558 a Ternatean fleet under the command of Kaicil Liliato sailed to Buru and forced many Christians there to apostatise. On Leitimor the Hitunese supported by forces from Liliato spread destruction and fear over the whole peninsula. Only in the mountains were the Christians able to defend themselves bravely, especially in Kilang. But the fortified village of Hative at the coast resisted too. The resistance was stirred up by Manuel, who as a small boy had accompanied St. Francis Xavier and now was the village chief of Hative. Because of the fierce resistance he organised, his brother-in-law with the help of two Portuguese tried to murder him in order to get a better bargaining position with Liliato, who wanted to consolidate Hairun's grip on Ambon. In this dangerous position when two Portuguese traitors and his brother-in-law Antonio pointed their guns at him, Manuel embraced the cross of the village and shouted, "A good Christian must die upon the cross!"¹²

For some time Manuel had encouraged the Christians on Leitimor and instructed them according to what he had learned from Xavier. He suffered many hardships. He even went to Goa to ask for missionaries. He said, "I am an Amboinese of the forest and I am not able to say what it means to be a Christian and what kind of a being God is, but I know what Father Master Francis told me, that it is good to die for the love of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and that alone gave me the courage and the strength to fight to death."¹³

During the time of these persecutions mission work was impossible, many of the faithful apostatised, for example in the area of Urimesen and Nusanive. But for the first time the Christians stood together to defend themselves. Finally in 1562 the new captain of Ternate, Henrique de Sá, came with a fleet and chased the marauding ships away from the bay, conquered Nusanive and sent its chief Ratiputi to Goa. He had bribed Portuguese officials to neglect their duties in favour of his dealings which made him quite rich.

De Sá was accompanied by six Jesuits who had just arrived from Goa: five priests and one brother. Fr. N. Viera and P. Magelhaes stayed on Ambon, and together with Manuel they rebuilt the destroyed villages and the scattered

¹² Jacobs *Docu. Maluc.* I:310 and 349.

¹³ See report of Br. Osorio SJ and letter of Fr. P. Mascarcuhas SJ (1562) in Jacobs *Docu. Maluc.* I:310–312 and 347–350. Schurhammer 1980:93 and 284–286.

congregations. Many who had apostatised out of fear repented and were received again into the Church. Hative, Manuel's village, became the centre of the mission and a new church was built. Two hundred Catholic families from other villages moved to Hative. The church was officially consecrated when young Father Magelhaes celebrated his first Mass in it. On certain occasions processions were organised, music and catechism chants learned. In Nusanive Fr. Viera tried to re-convert the neighbouring *kampongs*.

After de Sá left for Ternate security became a problem again. This time the priests organised a self-defence service. They visited Oma on Haruku (1562), which also had bravely defended itself against Liliato's bands and their Muslim neighbours from the north, who obstructed the building of a church on that island. Eight hundred persons from surrounding kampongs were baptised in 1562. In 1563 more or less ten thousand Catholics lived on Ambon and the Lease Islands. But dark clouds appeared again from the north.

*Unfulfilled hope: political support, but slow and even stagnant growth,
1564–1605*

In 1564 the Hitunese Tahalele with the help of Javanese from Gresik and with protection from Hairun gained control over the whole of Ambon. The Portuguese governor of Ternate refused to send help, because he wanted to be on good business terms with Hairun who supported the Hitunese. The captain of the fort on Ambon was poisoned and the sultan of Bacan gave up protecting the Christians. Many faithful in Nusanive and Hative, who had not fled to the mountains, died as martyrs for their faith. Their villages were burnt down. The two Jesuits moved to the smaller islands, but even there they were not safe and had to flee to Ternate. The *pati* of Ulat on the island of Saparua gave an example of his faith, when he was cruelly killed by the villagers of Siri-Sori, who later converted and became Christians (1570). In 1565 the whole mission was in a shambles.

Because the Portuguese on Ternate remained inactive two Christian Ambonese sailed together with a missionary to Goa in order to ask for better protection, because the local captains neglected their duties in order to enrich themselves. When the Ambonese arrived in Goa, the king of Portugal had already sent a letter to the governor concerning the complaints of the Jesuits about the failure of the secular arm to protect the native Christians in the Spice Islands. The king ordered the governor to build a fort on Ambon in order to support the garrison of Ternate with food in case of siege, to prevent the Javanese from buying cloves on Ambon and to protect the growing Christian community there.

The new fort showed everybody that the Portuguese would settle permanently on Ambon. Immediately a few neighbouring villages asked for priests.

Four priests and one brother were kept very busy on Leitimor, South Hitu and Saparua. Fr. Mascarenhas reported the baptism of eight thousand adults, some of whom had waited for years. But Fr. de Gois added: “We are worried about so many baptisms, because the number of missionaries is insufficient to instruct even a fifth of them.” After a village had become Christian some Christian prayers were practiced and prescribed and a great cross was erected in order to remind the neophytes of their new faith.

1570 was a fatal year for the mission. After Sultan Hairun was treacherously murdered in Ternate his son and successor Baabullah (1570–1583) took revenge. Under the command of his uncle, Kalasineo, five big *cora-cora* sailed to Ambon to chase the Portuguese away and convert the Christians to Islam. Another seven *cora-cora* from Buru joined this fleet. Change of religion seemed necessary in those days to guarantee loyalty. Suddenly the Ternateans together with the Hitunese attacked the Portuguese ships in the bay of Ambon and tried to burn the fort. Thanks to a few brave soldiers the unexpected attack could be repulsed. But the scattered Christian villages were attacked by Baabullah’s forces strengthened by people from Hitu and the islands of Buru and Seram. The village head of Hatuaha, recently baptised, refused to apostatise and was cruelly murdered by a *prahu* (boat) which was dragged over him. Ulat on Saparua proved strong enough to defend itself and ‘welcomed’ the Portuguese sent to support them with several baskets full of heads of slain attackers.

When the wooden fort took fire and nearly burned down the Portuguese commander thought to retreat from Ambon. But a certain Sancho de Vasconcellos opposed him and told him that he would not abandon the native Christians. Vasconcellos succeeded in establishing a small fort on the Leitimor side, where most of the Christian villages were situated (1571). About this restless time the Jesuit superior of Malacca wrote to Rome (1574), “In the Moluccas and on Ambon there is always warfare and the whole Christianity is destroyed. The support sent from here and from India is so little that according to my opinion, the whole Moluccas will be lost.”¹⁴ Vasconcellos thought the (second) wooden fort not safe enough and too close to two hills. A little further to the east he built a larger fort of stone, today the *Kampong Batu Merah* in the city of Ambon.

After the fort of Ternate had capitulated to Baabullah (1575), two priests and two brothers from there arrived in Ambon, but three of them left again shortly afterwards. Fr. Mascarenhas and Br. A. Gonçalves stayed alone in the whole mission because the other *confrère* sailed to Tidore to care for the Portuguese and their native wives who had moved there from Ternate. The next thirty years, until the fall of the fort of Ambon to the Dutch in 1605,

¹⁴ Letter of J. de Mesquita SJ to the Jesuit general in Rome, 30-12-1573 in Jacobs *Docu. Maluc.* I:648.

were a continuous fight against all hope without support and success, a way of the cross for the faithful and their pastors.

In the late 1570s about 3,000 Christians lived around the new fort and another 8,000 on the rest of Leitimor and the Lease Islands. Among them were quite a number of faithful from Ternate, even relatives of Sultan Baabullah, and also a group of so-called *Mardijkers* or freed slaves, mostly imported from India. The kampong where they lived still bears the name *Mardika*. In March 1581 the first Jesuit Visitor arrived on Ambon: the Italian Father Bernadino Ferrari. Immediately he built two small churches outside the fort, which made it much easier for the local people to attend Mass and instruction. He reported after a few months:

The Christians of Ambon are partly persecuted, partly cheated by the Ternateans, (and) rebelled against the Portuguese. And because they are much cruder than the people of the Moluccas [= around Ternate]—they live in the woods and speak another language,—they kept of their religion not more than its name. Except a few, they easily give up their religion and Christian names, so that a great part of this area has relapsed into Mohammedism. There are enough Muslims to instruct and circumcise them, though they do not offer their service for nothing but ask good money for it. Only a few villages remain Christian.¹⁵

To improve the mission in the seven Christian villages Fr. Ferrari urged that they should be visited regularly. Boys should be instructed in several places and the best among them should be sent to the colleges at Malacca or Goa to study Latin. “In not too long a time we will be able to serve these peoples much easier with native priests.” The missionaries should not live alone too long in order to be able to go to confession. Too much work makes them sick and weak. After twenty years in the Moluccan mission Fr. Magelhaes, for example, was completely exhausted. He had worked in Ambon (1561–1563) and in Morotai, brought the gospel to Manado and the Sangihe Islands. Fr. Ferrari came a second time to Ambon (1583) and visited 22 villages on the Lease Islands and on Seram, baptising children and catechising adults who were Christians only in name. When Fr. Ferrari returned from a visit to the Lease Islands’ Christians (1583) he had caught malaria and was undernourished having for a long time lacked food. Though very sick he sailed to Ternate, expecting new missionaries. But in vain. Broken hearted he returned to Ambon and died in September 1584 only 47 years old, leaving the sick Fr. Rodrigues alone on the island to take care of the faithful.

After the murder of Hairun (1570) the Portuguese were unable to protect the scattered Christian villages in the Moluccas and even in Ambon, their last stronghold. When the news of the ascension of Philip II to the

¹⁵ Jacobs *Docu. Maluc.* II:100.

Portuguese throne arrived in Manila and Tidore hope and fear spread among the Portuguese merchants. Spain had long been a rival and was regarded as an enemy. The aversion between the two Iberian peoples prevented even the Portuguese and Spanish Jesuits from combining their resources, as did the jealousy between the Jesuits and the Franciscans. The faithful were left without an adequate number of priests and without protection against attacks from Ternate. The few missionaries worked hard to visit the widely dispersed communities, but they could not do more than encourage them, administer the sacraments, and give some instruction every now and then. There was no time and not enough personnel to deepen the new faith and organise normal parish life.

The General Superior of the Jesuits in Rome ordered Goa to send another visitor to the Moluccas: Fr. Antonio Marta, an Italian who arrived on Ambon in 1587. After having collected information for a few months he was shocked by the situation of the Moluccan mission and wrote to Goa and Rome:

There are seventy villages here, only thirty-four are controlled by the Portuguese. According to information from experts there had been 4,000 Christians who have apostatised and became Muslims. About 25,000 people are still Christians though in name only, cared for by just one father... The people are good and do not reject Christianity, as the inhabitants of the Philippines do. They really ask us to build churches in their villages and are willing to do everything we want. All bad things and the whole unrest in this region is created by the prince of Ternate, who is the most powerful ruler in the Moluccas. There will be a great harvest as soon as the power of the sultan of Ternate has been destroyed. According to my opinion, even fifty fathers would not be enough then to serve all the people.¹⁶

In Fr. Marta's report of 1588 we read that daily mass was celebrated in the churches or in the houses of the natives where there was no church. Instruction was given in Malaccan Malay, which was also used in confessions. Funerals were simple. The mission needed a new strategy or it would just drag on, showing no increase of manpower through all the years. Fr. Marta sailed to Goa to get more help from his regional superior and also to Malacca to discuss the future with the bishop there. He pushed the governor in Goa to provide better protection. Indeed Ambon was much in need of it.

Just when Fr. Marta entered the Bay of Ambon again in late 1590 a big fleet from Banda and Hoamoal (Seram) also entered the bay, took some Portuguese ships and blockaded the fort for one month. Fr. Marta rushed to Tidore and asked the Jesuits in Manila to push the government there to send four hundred soldiers for urgent protection, "because the Portuguese are too weak". But Manila was not at all in a hurry to help the Portuguese. Fr. Marta

¹⁶ Original in Italian, Jacobs *Docu. Maluc.* II:192–194.

was convinced that without protection, Christianity could never survive in the archipelago. When he was in Ambon in April 1592, only Fr. L. Masonio from Naples was still working on the island.

His Jesuit superior in Goa did not at all agree with Fr. Marta's involvement in politics, perhaps because he was a Portuguese and Fr. Marta in his misery had looked to Spanish Manila to obtain some support. It seems that some rulers in the Moluccas at that time formed a coalition to oust the Portuguese permanently. Fr. Marta mentions Banda, Hoamoal, Buru, and Ternate. Their action took the form of *jihad* or a 'Holy War' and the Muslims became much more resolute and brave. Only the sultan of Tidore protected the Portuguese at the end of the 16th century.

In 1593 Fr. Marta asked all six missionaries in writing to answer his questions about a continuation of the Moluccan mission. Of the three missionaries on Ambon, Fr. João Rebello replied most extensively. In his opinion the Portuguese were too few and had lost all their spirit and bravery. Things would even deteriorate steadily. The commanders of both forts in Tidore and in Ambon seemed to think of nothing else than quickly making a fortune. They neglected the service of their king and of God completely:

I think we should not desert these Christians; not even in these circumstances! One priest does not achieve less in the service of the Lord here than in a college. The mission has been difficult for many years and left without help, who now dares to abandon it? All the more as there are no priests who know the language of this country and are able to take over the pastoral care. Therefore everybody should devote himself completely to his work without thinking about leaving.¹⁷

Lorenzo Masonio, the only priest in Ambon in the early 1590s, also advised not to go away though the number of Christians decreased everywhere. The withdrawal of the Jesuits would make the rest loose hope altogether. He stopped baptising because many Christians apostatised easily. The other Jesuits stationed in Tidore and Labuha on Bacan, also advised to stay. In his despair Fr. Marta wrote in December 1593 to Rome from Cebu, where he had asked in vain for help from the Spaniards, "The mission will be lost! Half of the seven Jesuit priests and two brothers must leave, for there is no more work to do; new missionaries are unnecessary." His Jesuit superior, Fr. A. Pereira, felt bitter and discouraged because the mission was neglected by all sides. In 1595 nobody in India volunteered to work in the Moluccas. The whole archipelago was unsafe. Even on Leitimor the missionaries dared no longer visit the villages. Everywhere whole villages apostatised. In 1597 it was reported that individual villagers travelled with their children in groups to the fort in order to receive instruction there, though some missionaries now and then still dared

¹⁷ Jacobs *Docu. Maluc.* II:365–371.

to visit the villages close to the fort. In 1598, the new Jesuit superior, Fr. Luiz Fernandez, regarded the mission as lost, but none of the fathers wanted to leave Ambon. Many Christians left their faith because of fear of the growing Muslim power, even on 'Christian' Leitimor. The sultan of Tidore, who was still an ally of the Portuguese, became old; the collaboration between Goa and Manila did not work, though both represented the same king. The promised financial support of the crown was so small that the Jesuits in the Moluccas had to plant clove trees and take part in the spice business.

In several letters of 1600 Fr. Luiz Fernandez reported the arrival of four Dutch ships in Hitu-Lama. They had announced an intention to be back within three years. This created great unrest, because the Hitunese had asked the Dutch Admiral van Warwijk to assist them in their attacks on the Portuguese fort. But in these early years the Dutch were more interested to get their ships loaded with spices than to be involved in local wars.

In 1600 the Hitunese together with four hundred Javanese and three Dutch ships attacked the fort of Ambon, but retreated when the Leitimor Christians and the Portuguese overpowered a great *cora-cora* and killed more than a hundred of the attackers. In a second attack a Portuguese round shot hit the ammunition depot of the main Dutch ship. The crew lost six men and was busy to extinguish the fire.

The final blow to Portuguese influence and the Catholic mission was given by Dutch Admiral Steven van der Haghen in 1605. His ten ships, together with twenty Hitunese *cora-cora*, entered the Bay of Ambon and on the 23rd of February drew up in battle array and fired some shots at the fort. After brief negotiations the Portuguese commander capitulated. The Dutch allowed the Portuguese garrison to withdraw with all its weapons. Those who remained had to swear allegiance to the Dutch and were allowed to stay.

The Ambonese Christians, who lived around the fort, panicked and feared to be left to the mercy of the hated Hitunese. They fled into the mountains. Fr. Masonio visited Van der Haghen on board his ship and promised to get the Ambonese back to their quarters if the Dutch would provide protection. The Dutch admiral promised that all Catholics would be received "under the protection and safeguard of the States and their Prince." He confirmed "that the 16,000 Christians are allowed to live according to the Christian way of living, to visit their churches and celebrate there the Holy Mysteries. Nobody, neither Portuguese nor native Ambonese, will be molested, and it is not forbidden to them to live according to their former Christian customs and faith."¹⁸

¹⁸ Jesuit letters, see Jacobs *Docu. Maluc.* II:679–693. The Dutch version runs, "Ten anderen sall een yder leven in syn gelooff, gelyck hem Godt in 't herte stiert ofte meent saligh te worden; dogh dat niemand den anderen sall molestie noch overlast doen." See Tiele 1886-I:281–292.

The next day Fr. Masonio brought twenty-two elders of Christian villages to swear loyalty and accept the *seguros* or letters of security. The same promises were given to the Christian villages on the Lease Islands a few days later. Van der Haghen succeeded also in establishing “a general peace, which united the Muslims and Christians on Ambon and the neighbouring islands with each other. Copies in Malay and Portuguese were made thereof.”¹⁹ On the 16th of March 1605 the Portuguese garrison left the island after so many decades and sailed for Malacca or to the island of Solor.

Some 35 Portuguese who were married to Ambonese women stayed with the local Christians. Everything seemed well till Van der Haghen had to leave for Banda, though before leaving he dismantled two churches and took their wooden beams to use on Banda. In spite of that the Jesuits thanked him twice for letting them stay among their flock.

After the admiral had left, the Dutch garrison became angry that the Jesuits according to the agreements were allowed to preach in Portuguese and administer the sacraments to their parishioners. The soldiers started to loot the churches, to destroy the statues, to steal the bells, to remove the crosses in the villages and to tear the cassocks from the body of the priests. Not only did the commander Frederik de Houtman not protect the Catholics, but also he gave orders that the Jesuits, all mestizos, and Portuguese had to leave Ambon within three days (on 12 May 1605). The Jesuits together with one hundred and fifty people, men, women and children, were put on a small ship and sent away without anyone who knew how to navigate. The ship drifted to the Sangihe Islands, north of Celebes (Sulawesi). After thirty-nine days it reached the harbour of Cebu, north of Mindanao in the Philippines in June 1605.

When the people of Hative on Hitu asked Van der Haghen, who in August 1605 had regained control of the unruly garrison, to be allowed to keep their weapons in order to protect themselves, they were refused. They could not defend themselves any more and Governor De Houtman did not care to protect them either. They lost nearly everything except their faith, which the Dutch regarded as a superstition and which had to be eradicated as soon as possible. The Catholic mission in Ambon and in the Lease Islands was dead. Had it all been in vain?

Dutch documents tell us that nearly all inhabitants of the city of Ambon were Catholics. They had four fine churches and a small hospital, La Misericordia. The Jesuit church of St. James was from mid-1605 used for Protestant services and in 1630 it was replaced by a stone building called St. Paul's Church. Most Lease Islanders were Christians too, but some villages were Muslim. The whole Catholic community in these islands consisted of about 16,000 faithful. How

¹⁹ Tiele 1886-I:288, 361.

did the VOC act after it had conquered the first Christian country in Asia? The Protestant minister François Valentijn wrote nearly a century later, “In order to let the popish superstition slowly die by itself, it was enough in the beginning, that they were deprived of their priests and had no opportunity at all to exercise it anymore. The crosses established here and there were taken away and everything wiped out with tenderness (*zagtigheid*) and without making them feel it.” According to the spirit of this *zagtigheid* all statues and crosses in the villages had to be removed. In 1607 the heads of the villages complained that they had received no instruction at all after the Jesuit fathers had to leave the island and that they ‘lived like beasts’. Admiral Matelief told the physician of the fort to instruct the children, to teach them how to pray, and to read and to write in Dutch. There was no Dutch minister available yet. The *ziekentroosters* (comforters of the sick) of the fort were uneducated men, did not care about the islanders and refused to learn Malay. The first Protestant service for the people was held in 1612 by the Protestant minister Paludanus van den Broek who knew some Malay.

When van der Haghen was appointed governor of Ambon in 1616, he contradicted the first Dutch minister on Ambon, Caspar Wiltens, who regarded the Ambonese as ‘dull-witted and lazy’. Van der Haghen wrote:

The Ambonese are always boasting of the Portuguese fathers, who were such devout men, so solicitous and industrious about instructing the Ambonese and the islanders, and who did not spare themselves to go from one island to the other and from one village to the next; who were always sober and never to be found at banquets and dances; who were never engaged in other things than in attending to their church service, in teaching the people, in visiting and consoling the sick, and in assisting the poor in their wants, supporting them with their own resources. They do tell this in such a vivid way as if they see them still before their eyes.²⁰

Catholics in the Northern Moluccas: Ternate, Tidore, Bacan and Moro

The two volcanic islands of Tidore and Ternate off the west coast of the long island of Halmahera became the power centre of the Moluccas. It was the cloves that only grew here and on the tiny islands of Motir and Makian, that brought money and power to the upper class of these two islands, and connected them with the trade system of Southeast Asia. The rulers of Tidore and Ternate were at odds with each other most of time, but rivalry was regarded as a necessary factor for keeping the Moluccas in harmony as we discussed

²⁰ Letter of St. van der Haghen, 14-08-1617, in Tiele 1886-I:220–222; Jacobs *Docu. Maluc.* III:372.

above. The Portuguese in 1523 established a small fort on Ternate and opened it with the celebration of a mass.

Since around 1470 Ternate had slowly accepted Islam. Because of the bad behaviour of the Portuguese and especially their captains, and also because of the lack of priests, evangelisation among the Ternateans hardly ever took place, though some of them, even highly placed persons, asked for baptism.

There was a church and a chapel on Ternate and a short-lived school established by Captain A. Galvão. The secular priests on the island cared only for the Portuguese, except Fr. Simon Vaz, who went to Moro on northern Halmahera, where at the initiative of the merchant Gonçalo Veloso the first Christian native community in the Moluccas had been established. Their conversion and fate will be told in the next section.

Though Galvão wrote that “Maluco is a breeding place of all the evils in the world”, there were a few excellent men among them, like the former pirate Balthasar Veloso. He had come to Ternate in 1524 and had married the daughter of Sultan Bayan Sirullah, a half-sister of Hairun. Veloso was one of the most influential persons in Ternate, respected by the Ternateans and the Portuguese alike.

Balthasar Veloso welcomed Francis Xavier, when he arrived from Ambon in July 1546, accepted him as an honoured guest in his house and fully supported his apostolic endeavour. In this house Xavier met the queen mother Pokaraga, who was well versed in the Qur’an, and Xavier often conversed with her on religious matters. She had got some knowledge of Christianity in Goa, where she and her son, Sultan Tabarija, had met Xavier already. Finally she was baptised by St. Francis and chose the name (Dona) Isabel. Her conversion made a great impression on the nobility of Ternate. Her second husband, Patih Serang, later became a Christian too.

Francis Xavier was very busy during his three months’ stay on Ternate. The native wives of the Portuguese, their children and slaves knew hardly anything about Christianity. Therefore he gave simple catechism instruction twice a day for children and adults. Although Xavier spent much of his time with the Portuguese he took care of the native Christians as well. A number of Ternateans had been baptised during the time of Captain Galvão; for example a cousin of the raja of Jailolo, Kolano Sabia, a royal counsellor of Hairun, and an Arab who claimed to be a *said*, a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad.

When Xavier returned from his three months’ journey to Moro he found a new captain and a new sultan in Ternate. Captain Freitas had been deposed and Hairun reinstalled as sultan; Niachil Pokaraga, the regent for her son Tabarija, had been robbed of her property, and was not allowed to go to Goa to complain about the way Hairun treated her.

During the following months Xavier gave instruction in Malay, which he now spoke quite fluently. He converted many Portuguese from their sinful

lives. Even Hairun who at that time was not anti-Christian, told Xavier he would like to send one of his many sons to the Jesuit college of Goa. He also gave permission to convert his pagan subjects. He regarded himself as Xavier's friend and was thinking about Christianity also. But the bad behaviour of the Portuguese and the many women he had married to keep his widespread island kingdom together by family ties prevented him from conversion.

When Baabullah had succeeded in expelling the Portuguese from his island (1575), any mission work on and from Ternate became impossible. But thirty years later the Spaniards from the Philippines supported by Tidore took the former Portuguese fort in Gamalama (1606) and exiled the sultan of Ternate to Manila. Franciscans and Dominicans arrived from the north and some Jesuits who had stayed on Tidore (1578–1605) returned too. They hoped to revive the mission at least in the northern Moluccas in close cooperation with Manila: "We will rebuild our old mission from the ruins!" wrote the veteran missionary Fr. Fernandez SJ too optimistically. His Jesuit brethren still worked on Labuha (Bacan) and Siau (Sangihe Islands). But the situation was not at all that rosy. The Dutch joined with the Ternate nobility that had fled to Halmahera. They brought them back and built a fort on the island (1607), in exchange for a monopoly on cloves. In Ternate, religion was no topic for the Dutch VOC: If natives of Ternate became Christians its officials handed them over to the sultan to be punished.

In 1610 two more Franciscans arrived and built a church and a convent outside the walls of Gamalama, in the island of Ternate. There were about sixty native and as many Chinese Catholics, besides thirty mestizo families and the Spanish garrison. A small group of *cazados* on Tidore and the Spanish garrison there were visited regularly by a priest from Ternate. The situation was far from good: the Spaniards showed little sympathy for the 'Portuguese' mission of the Jesuits though half of them were Italians. They preferred the Spanish Franciscans whose convent was sponsored by the Spanish crown. The Franciscans had established a good hospital on Ternate with a very competent brother looking after the sick. The assigned subsidy to the Jesuits was cut in half; which was still more than what they were supposed to receive from Goa.

Fr. Masonio reported that the native Christians lost their spirit and still stuck to their old heathen or Muslim way of life. He blamed the 'Spanish' government, which had forbidden the punishment of public moral offences committed by the Spanish soldiers and native Christians. The governor would like the 'Portuguese' Jesuits to transfer their mission to the Spanish Franciscans. The old dualism of the Moluccas generated new scions: the rivalries between the bishops of Malacca and Manila, between the Jesuits and the Franciscans. It seems that tribal feelings pervaded everything in this part of the world: Being an ally of Ternate meant being an enemy of Tidore; Catholic Ambonese

of *uli-siwa*, friends of the Portuguese, were regarded as enemies of changing coalitions of the Hitunese *uli-lima* with Javanese and Ternate Muslims and Dutch Calvinists. An enemy of the Portuguese was a friend of the Spaniards and (later) of the Dutch; royal jurisdiction in Portuguese *padroado* was set against the Spanish *patronato* of the same king though of different governments.

After the mission in Moro had been lost (1613/14), the Spanish part of Ternate was nearly the only place where a Catholic community survived. Because of the superior power of the Ternatean—Dutch coalition nearly all the faithful around the Spanish forts on Ternate and Tidore were without priests for years.

The eight Christian villages on Ternate were no longer looked after properly from the 1640s; consequently many remained Christian in name only. In 1648 peace between Spain and the Netherlands was signed in Münster, Westphalia, and the two garrisons on Ternate ceased to harass each other. We know hardly anything about the next twenty years, before the Spanish garrison was withdrawn in 1663. The soldiers were needed in the Philippines to protect the country against the Chinese warlord Tcheng-Tchen Koung or Coxinga who threatened the Spaniards from Taiwan. The last Spaniards left the Moluccas in 1677. Many native Christians and *Merdicas* followed them after they had destroyed their houses and churches, and started a new life in Maragondong and other places in the island of Luzon.

The Christians of Moro

Though the most powerful sultans of the Moluccas resided on Tidore and Ternate, they depended on the much bigger island of Halmahera nearby for one of their main staple food: sago. On its coast only a few miles away from Ternate reigned the sultan of Jailolo. With the help of the crews of Spanish ships that had drifted off their course when looking for a home passage to Mexico (in 1529) the sultan of Jailolo had seized some Ternate territory. Therefore the sultan of Ternate with the help of the Portuguese Captain I. de Ataide attacked Jailolo in 1533. Two paramount chiefs of Moro (north-eastern of Halmahera), who had supported their overlord of Ternate, complained to the Portuguese merchant Gonçalo Veloso about difficulties with the people from Ternate. Besides the provisions for the sultan they also took private property of the heathen villagers for themselves. The Moro people were treated like slaves by Ternate and had to flee to the forest after their houses had been sacked.

Veloso advised them to become Christians and then ask the Portuguese for protection. When Veloso sailed home the two chiefs sent a few of their men with him to tell the Portuguese captain that if they were protected against the marauding Ternateans they would become Christians. Ataide gladly received

their request and the visitors from Moro were instructed and baptised before they sailed home. Their chiefs, the *sangajis* of Mamuya and Tolo, were so delighted that they themselves went to the fort of Ternate and were baptised together with seven companions.

When these neophytes returned to their villages nearly all inhabitants wanted to become Christians and the chiefs of neighbouring villages asked to be baptised too. The Vicar, Simon Vaz, was sent to Mamuya and Fr. Francisco Alvares followed later. A small detachment of soldiers erected a modest fort to protect the Christian villages as promised. Two simple churches were built and the villagers catechised. Then Captain Ataide took such unpopular measures that the kings of Jailolo, Tidore and Bacan united against him and the new Christians. They were asked to leave their new religion and to acknowledge the former sultan of Ternate as their lord. The feared warriors of the Tabaru tribe from the mountains were incited by the sultan of Jailolo against the Christian villages and so frightened them that many of the new Christians apostatised, because the few Portuguese soldiers were too weak to protect them.

Fr. Simon Vaz stayed with a few Portuguese at Sao, a large village on the south-western coast of the island of Morotai, only twenty miles away from the Moro area on northern Halmahera. In 1535 the priest and all his followers were killed by the people of that village who, just a short time before, had been baptised by him. They are the first martyrs of Indonesia.

The Christian villages became the object of a bargain between the new sultan of Jailolo and a former ruler of Ternate, who gave these villages away for Jailolo's support to regain his throne. In 1536, when Jailolo sent a large fleet to the coast of Moro Fr. Alvarez fled from the village of Sugala, but his *cora-cora* was attacked by Jailolo ships. The priest received seventeen wounds, but escaped because his greedy foes were more interested in the vestments he had thrown into the sea.

João, the chief of Mamuya refused to apostatise and for seven days resisted the attacks of the Jailolo forces. When the enemy threatened to burn the rice fields and cut the palm groves of his village, the people surrendered. João and his warriors, however, withdrew into the small redoubt. The two Portuguese soldiers fled into the woods and were slain. The Mamuya men fought for a whole day against the superior forces of the sultan. When further resistance was impossible, João slew his wife and his little children during the night, so that they would not fall into the hands of his foes and be sold as slaves in the market. He burnt his treasures and wanted to hang himself, but was restrained by his friends. The besieged surrendered the next morning. When João was brought before the ruler of Jailolo he defended his action and refused to deny his faith. At the request of his relatives the sultan spared his life.

After the resistance of Mamuya had been broken the other places surrendered as well. The people were still weak in their new faith. Native people later

told a story: “After the former Christians had burnt the church in Chiaoa near the town of Tolo, one of the leaders of the village broke away an altarpiece with a picture of the Blessed Virgin on it in order to turn it into a handle for his sword. He did not escape the wrath of God! His hands became crippled, and within a year he and all members of his family had died. The last of his relatives was pierced in the eye and run through by a swordfish as he was fishing.”²¹

The new Captain, A. Galvão, succeeded in establishing peace after Fr. Vinagre had repelled Jailolo’s forces, won back many apostates and even baptised pagan villagers (1538/39). In 1543 joint Ternate-Portuguese forces went to Moro to prevent the Spaniards from settling there. But when the Spanish Admiral Villalobos arrived he was well received by villages subject to Jailolo. The Augustinian chaplains of the fleet opened a kind of temporary convent on the beach and initiated a more systematic evangelisation. After their departure no priest dared to visit the area for some years, because war raged there and the Christian villages never enjoyed peace. They were often attacked by savage Tabaru tribesmen from the interior.

Francis Xavier told his friends in Ternate that he wanted to visit and strengthen the abandoned Christians of Moro. They tried hard to dissuade him and told him to stay away from that place, because the savage people would tear him to pieces. He replied with a smile: ‘Senhor! Because of many sins my merits with God are not so great that he would allow me to suffer such a martyrdom and tortures and death for the salvation of my soul.’²² When he was denied a ship for his voyage Xavier said in a sermon, that he did not fear the dangers nor the cruelty of his foes, nor the tortures with which he was threatened. Finally he set off at night in a *cora-cora* to sail to nearby Halmahera (1546). He followed its coast to the north. Later, in Cochin, Xavier wrote about his work in Moro:

After three months had passed, I left the city of Maluco [= Ternate] for some islands known as the Islands of Moro, which are sixty leagues from Maluco, because there are many Christian villages on them. Since they are very far from India and the natives had killed a priest who went there, many days had passed since they had been visited. On those islands I baptised many infants who had not been baptised. I remained on the islands for three months, and during this time I visited all the Christian villages. I was much consoled by them, and they by me.²³

²¹ Schurhammer 1980-III:164.

²² J.L. Rebelo according to Schurhammer 1980-III:165.

²³ Letter 59, written by Xavier on 20-1-1548 in Cochin; see Costelloe 1993:171; See Schurhammer 1980-III:187–189, who adds in a footnote, that Xavier could have baptised at most 3,000 children “but more likely much fewer.”

When Xavier came to Moro the Christians had been left alone for seven years, and numbered a few thousands in and around the bigger villages of Mamuya, Puni, Tolo, Chiaoa and Samafo. He strengthened the new converts in their faith, using an interpreter, and baptised their children. He had to walk in the heat of the day, because at night everybody feared the mountain tribe of the Tabaru. The new converts were experts in poisoning too and sometimes joined the stronger forces to save their own lives. Xavier could not stay long, because he had to go further to the islands of Morotai and Rau, where many Christians lived.

Xavier's *cora-cora* sailed to the north, visiting the Christians of many places, as in Pilea and Muravanghi before turning to the island of Rau with its three Christian communities. From Rau the boat circled the thirty-five leagues long coast of Morotai stopping at the villages that harboured Christians, till it came to Saqita, the largest town on the island in the midst of a fertile plain. From there the journey continued south until they had to turn west at Cape Dena. After a few more stops they crossed the strait between Morotai and Halmahera; and after taking leave from the brave faithful of Mamuya they set sail to return to Ternate, where they arrived in January 1547.

Fr. J. de Beira SJ was asked by Xavier to go to Ternate and arrived there in late 1547. During the following years the situation in Moro was far from good. The sultan of Jailolo tried hard to force the Christians to apostatise. The strength of the sultan of Jailolo made the Portuguese suspicious because he often sided with the Spaniards. Also the Sultan of Ternate, Hairun, became envious. The unlikely Portuguese-Ternatean alliance brought Jailolo down in 1551 and its sultan was reduced to a vassal of Ternate. A joint Ternatean-Portuguese expedition tried to recapture the town of Tolo, but could not take it because of the trenches made by the Tolonese. When the priests asked for God's support an eruption of the nearby volcano destroyed them at night. In the morning the apostate town of Tolo was recaptured. These events promoted a kind of mass conversion. Fr. Beira and three other missionaries were kept busy with instruction and baptisms. Fr. Beira called his apostolic journeys together with Br. N. Nunez 'a prolonged martyrdom.'²⁴

Frater Frois, who preserved Beira's information, tells us that the Jesuits concerned themselves considerably with the natural phenomena and environment of the Moluccas. They blessed the rice seeds of their converts before each planting and held elaborate funeral services for native Christians. They observed the practices and beliefs of these primitive agriculturists, and wrote about the islands' production of rice, ginger, and other foodstuffs.

²⁴ Schurhammer 1980-III:180–181 for sources on his life. De Beira's letters in Jacobs *Docu. Maluc.* I:105–131.

In the early 1550s there were seven Christian villages in Moro and another eleven on the two islands of Morotai and Rau. Fr. de Beira worked on Rau till 1556, when he went back to Goa completely worn out by his sufferings and nearly out of his mind. Fr. de Castro arranged with Hairun that the Christians and Muslims of the town of Samafo on northeast Halmahera were to be separated, even though this caused some tragedies for mixed marriages. Hairun himself dismissed one of his many wives who was a Christian, giving her a generous gift. When in 1557 the Portuguese captain imprisoned Hairun without any reason Baabullah, his crown-prince, sent a *cora-cora* to fetch Fr. Castro in order to bring him to Ternate, perhaps to use him as a hostage in exchange for his father. But the crew of the boat was so upset by the imprisonment of their lord, that they regarded the priest as their own prisoner, tied him, stripped him of his clothes and gave him no food. When he was brought to Baabullah's residence, the prince gave him new clothes and food, and tried to make him his own prisoner. But his capturers refused to hand him over to the prince. They tortured him for a month before they killed him with two strokes in January 1558, on the islet of Hiri.

After the murder of Fr. de Castro the Moro Christians were abandoned for four years and many apostatised out of fear and because of pressure. When in 1562 four Jesuits visited Moro and Morotai, the lapsed, asked for forgiveness and many children were brought from all villages to be baptised. Some sources mention more than a thousand children below three years being baptised that year. Whole villages returned to Christianity or embraced it for the first time. The most frequent obstacle was the marriages of people who had divorced their first partner, which happened quite easily. When the former Catholics around the town of Galela wanted to be reconciled the priests asked their separation from their non-Christian neighbours. But the ruler of the place, Tioliza, did not like this idea, because he did not want to loose so many of his subjects and a lot of income and power. After a long discussion with Tioliza's advisers, the whole area asked to be accepted into the Church in 1661.

After Hairun was murdered in 1570 by the Portuguese captain, his son Sultan Baabullah besieged the fort of Ternate. The few Portuguese soldiers in Mamuya were recalled and many Christians were massacred there. The mission was practically abandoned for more than thirty years (1572–1606). In 1588 Fr. Marta SJ, the Italian visitor of the Moluccan mission, reported that there had been about sixty to eighty thousand Christians in twenty-nine *kampongs* before the outbreak of the persecution in 1568. There was a short revival (1606–1613) when Spaniards from the Philippines had established themselves in the northern Moluccas. Fourteen Christian villages were fused into three with a reduced population of 1,700 inhabitants. Fr. da Cruz SJ, who had just been expelled by the Dutch from Ambon (1605), went to Tolo, where he reconciled hundreds and baptised many others. The faith of the

simple islanders had not died and revived as soon as a priest stayed among them. A report of 1612 mentions that, “all Moro is Christian again.” But when the Dutch VOC pushed the Spaniards out of Halmahera, and the Spanish governor evacuated the island too early, the Christians were left at the mercy of their mortal enemies, the Ternateans. Through constant persecution they were decimated, enslaved or carried off to other places like the people of Sao, Sopi, Mira and Saquita by Sultan Muzaffar of Ternate in 1628. Morotai and Rau were practically depopulated and much later repopulated by other people from Halmahera. In Moro the last Christians concentrated around Galela and Tolo, and defended themselves under the leadership of Kibo, the legendary last Christian ruler of Tolo, whose grave was still revered in the 1920s.

A Christian sultanate in Bacan, 1557–1609

“The island Bacan produces cloves, the others do not.”²⁵ Tomé Pires wrote this first news about the islands of Bacan in 1515, four years after the Portuguese sailed these waters for the first time. Bacan was the most southern sultanate of the Moluccas. It comprised the relatively large island of Bacan and the island of Kasiruta, where the sultan lived. In the late 1550s the young ruler of Bacan, a nephew of the sultan of Ternate, eloped with one of Hairun’s daughters without asking permission from her father. Shortly afterwards this woman died giving birth to her first baby. Hairun became very angry and the young man very afraid. How to confront the strongest man in the Moluccas? The sultan decided to ask for help from the Portuguese by converting to Christianity. He was baptised with his family and his nobles after short instruction given to them in 1557. He chose the name João.

This is a very eminent case of a ‘conversion’ for worldly reasons. But such motives too can result in something more permanent. Dom João, the young Christian sultan, accompanied Fr. Vaz on his tours through his realm; a big cross was erected on the shore and eight hundred people were baptised in 1562.

For ten years, from 1564 to 1574, the young priest Fernando Alvares stayed on the island and many heathen and nominal Muslims became Christian. When the sultan sent provisions to the beleaguered fort of the Portuguese on Ternate Sultan Baabullah attacked his island. After the fort had surrendered to him in 1575, the sultan of Bacan was poisoned by emissaries from Ternate (1577) and his family was captured, but his son Henrique escaped. He organised resistance, allied with Tidore and the Portuguese on Ambon. In 1581 he was killed in action. His eighteen-year-old son, Kaichil Raxa Laudin,

²⁵ Cortesão 1990:218–220.

had been converted to Islam when in custody on Ternate. He intended to revive his father's alliance against Ternate, but the Portuguese were too weak to offer him any support. Bacan's Christian period came to an early end, but not yet completely.

In 1582 another ruler on the island of Bacan, a *sengaji*, who resided in Labuha and was the son-in-law of sultan of Bacan on Kasiruta, asked for a priest. He and his people no longer acknowledged Ternate and wanted to become Christians again. Fr. Ferrari arrived and stayed on the island. Four hundred people converted in the first year and built quite a large church. With great hopes the priest wrote in 1583, "Now we have again a base of our own in the Moluccas! Here we can live and work according to our own desire. On Tidore we are only guests."

In 1583 the Belgian Jesuit Rogier Berwouts arrived in the Moluccas and went straight to Labuha, where he stayed for two years. From this place he visited the *kampongs* in the neighbourhood. From a report of A. Marta, who visited the island in 1588, we learn among other things,

The *sengaji* who governs the island, is a Christian and his name is Ruy Pereira. He was baptised in 1582 together with his wife and all the islanders, about four hundred people. Because they are afraid of being persecuted by the soldiers of Ternate, they hide in the forest. The *sengaji* stays in a big kampong, where the church is and the missionary lives together with about two hundred people. The father cares for the religious life of all the people. On their own initiative the islanders do not attend the services or go to confession, but when the father visits them, they always follow his advice. Together with the people who live in the forest, the Christians on Bacan were about five hundred.²⁶

When Father Marta asked the opinion of his confreres about handing over the Moluccan mission Father Berwout, who worked for a second term on the island, said he would like to stay, though not much progress could be expected on Bacan. Another missionary adds that if the Jesuits would leave Labuha, all the islanders would become Muslims. Because of the second wife of the *sengaji*, a former Catholic turned Muslim, her husband no longer supported the Christians. In 1594 there were only one hundred Christians left. Three years later a report states, "The state of the mission can be formulated very shortly: totally collapsed! More and more difficulties and the rising pressure from the Muslims make many Christian leave their new faith. On Tidore are a few faithful as also in Labuha."²⁷

When in 1601 the *sengaji* repented and settled his marriage, many of his subjects became more fervent Christians again. When the Spaniards had reconquered the old fort of Gamalama on Ternate (1606), the sultan and the

²⁶ For Marta's original report see Jacobs *Docu. Maluc.* II:257–259.

²⁷ Jacobs *Docu. Maluc.* II:398 (Letter of Fr. A. Pereira).

sengaji immediately sided with them against their old enemy the sultan of Ternate. However, because of lack of missionaries, Labuha received no more resident priest and was visited from Ternate only a few times a year.

When in 1609 Dutch ships appeared all the people confessed their sins, some received communion and fifteen adults were baptised, on the feast of St. Andrew (30 November). Then they all took to the forest, but when two hundred Ternateans came on shore to help the Dutch a big fight took place and many people were killed. After this battle the sultan of Ternate, the Dutch VOC, and the sultan of Bacan signed a treaty giving the Company the right to build a fort on Bacan and to monopolise all its cloves.

Makassar: a chance lost

The many small kingdoms on the great island of Celebes (Sulawesi) had not much to offer. But in 1545 a merchant of sandalwood from Malacca, Antonio de Paiva, met St. Francis Xavier in Cochin, South India. He told the priest that three ‘mighty rulers’ in a land very far away ‘maybe five thousand miles’, had recently been baptised and urgently asked for missionaries to instruct their peoples. A little later Xavier writes from Negapatnam, “Should it be that God requires me to serve him by proceeding to Makassar, I shall send a messenger overland to Goa.”²⁸ What did de Paiva tell Xavier that he so much desired to go to Makassar?

Paiva had gone to the area of present-day Makassar in February 1544 to load sandalwood. When he went ashore in Bacukiki, the harbour of Supa,²⁹ the old king asked him why the Portuguese had such strained relations with most Muslims. Paiva used this chance to explain the main teachings of the Gospel to the ruler. When he had sailed on to the neighbouring kingdom of Sian he had a chance to speak to the king, and his council too, about the gospel. When they still were pondering it the king of Supa arrived and asked to be baptised immediately. With great solemnity he was baptised and later his colleague of Sian together with thirty of his followers. Paiva explained the central mysteries of the Christian faith and promised to do his best to persuade a priest from Malacca to continue and deepen his instructions. Xavier had waited for months in Malacca for further news from Makassar.³⁰

In the beginning of 1545, Father Viegas had sailed to Makassar in order to assist the new converts made by Paiva. It seems that the warlike king of Supa

²⁸ Costelloe 1993-I:124.

²⁹ Supa, Sian (or Siang, today part of Pangkajene), and Sidenreng on the Pare-Pare Bay of Sulawesi, about 130 km north of present-day Makassar.

³⁰ Costelloe 1993-I:129.

and his neighbouring Christian friends of Sian and Sidenreng had become Christians not only because their hearts were deeply touched by de Paivas instructions. They harboured also more worldly interests: Portuguese firearms. In Supa Fr. Viegas was very busy instructing different members of the ruling families for baptism. After more than a year, he and the other Portuguese had to sail back to Malacca. The priest had just boarded the ship to depart when an uproar occurred on the beach: Helena Vesiva, the daughter of the king of Supa, was missing. It was quickly discovered that the girl had secretly gone on board with her Portuguese lover, João de Eredia, against the will of her parents. As dawn was breaking, all her relatives had assembled on the beach to bring her back by force of arms. To avoid bloodshed, Fr. Viegas ordered the anchor to be weighed and the ship to sail away. In Malacca Eredia and Helena were married in church, but relations between Malacca and Supa had been broken off. This was the bad, though romantic, news that prevented Xavier from going to Makassar. History took another course.

What happened to the abandoned Christians of South Sulawesi? In 1559 Fr. B. Dias SJ wrote from Malacca, "I obtained important information about Makassar and learned that Mohammed has not yet made an entrance there because of pork, since they eat no other meat... A number of kings who became Christians are still alive there. And I induced the captain of Malacca to write to them with a ship that was sailing there."³¹ Five years later Fr. B. Dias wrote to the superior general of the Jesuits in Rome:

I have just written to our provincial superior (in Goa) to send fathers to Makassar, which borders on Ambon where they already go. The Muslim doctrines quite often are preached here, but are not yet accepted. Therefore, there is still good hope to gain some fruits... A merchant, who this year arrived in Malacca from those regions, told us that some of the nobles of this people had asked him for a picture of Our Lady in order to honour her. This shows that their conversion should be easy.³²

In spite of their repeated requests the Christians of southern Sulawesi were not visited by another missionary during the sixteenth century. Merchants from Johore, enemies of the Portuguese, tried to win Makassar over to Islam, but the rulers pursued a wait-and-see policy, with a preference for Christianity, for about sixty years. In 1605 Makassar became a Muslim sultanate: first Gowa-Tallo and then nearly all the rulers of the area followed suit.

There are several reports about the acceptance of Islam, which show that Christianity lost because there were in the sixteenth century no missionaries

³¹ Jacobs *Docu. Maluc.* I:304–306; English translation from Schurhammer 1980:252.

³² Jacobs *Docu. Maluc.* I:456–459.

ready to sail to Makassar. All the reports tell us that the raja of Gowa³³ was disappointed by Malacca not responding to his requests. The rulers wanted all their people to confess the same religion. Therefore Muslim and Christian teachers were invited to provide more information about both religions. Finally the king chose Islam because the teachers from Johore arrived earlier. He took the name Alaudin, but left his people freedom to choose. Later Makassar always showed a high degree of tolerance towards the Catholics, even after the VOC pressed hard to have the Catholics sent away. Sultan Alaudin told the Dutch in 1607, “My country is open for all nations, and what I have is available for your people as well as for the Portuguese.” Because of its liberal politics in commerce and religion Makassar became an important centre for many Asian and European traders in the early seventeenth century. The Christians who lived in Makassar were free to exercise their religion. In the seventeenth century several priests stayed quite a long time in the city of Makassar and had their convents and churches. The Dominicans tried twice to establish a bishop there (1625 and 1633) for the region of Makassar (where they still hoped to gain some converts), the Moluccas and their Solor-Mission. But the fall of Malacca to the Dutch in 1641 spoiled all hopes.

After the fall of Malacca there was an exodus of the Catholic population, who did not trust the Dutch administration. Many sailed to Makassar, the open trading centre that welcomed merchants of all nationalities. Among these 20,000 refugees were 45 priests, though most of them stayed only for a short time. They looked after the one to three thousand Catholics, mostly Goanese, Portuguese, and a few Spaniards, who made up the international community. Their presence benefited the Makassar people, but annoyed Batavia very much. Because many missionaries travelled through Makassar to East Asia, the Franciscans opened an *hospitium* for guests in 1649, the Dominicans a convent with a church attached to it (1641–1650), and the canons of the former Cathedral of Malacca served the main church. Two Jesuits who had to leave Malacca in 1646, arrived with another two hundred refugees at Makassar.

Karaeng Pattingalloang (1600–1654), the acting head of the government, often attended mass on holidays although he was a Muslim. He presented a house to the Jesuits. This prince was highly educated, spoke and read Portuguese fluently and often ordered books from Batavia for his good library, especially on mathematics. In spite of this missionary work in Makassar itself was impossible. In 1644 a young man was stabbed to death in the house of a prince, because he had become a Christian. Pattingalloang made the king,

³³ The reader should know that Goa stands for the Portuguese town in West-India, while Gowa is the capital of the Makassarese, near to present-day Makassar in Indonesia.

who was involved in this affair, offer satisfaction to the Portuguese vicar of the diocese of Malacca, who for years had stayed in the town.

In 1660 the VOC was strong enough to force the sultan to sign an agreement which stipulated among other things that within a year's time all Portuguese had to be expelled from the whole sultanate. Some priests succeeded in staying a little longer, but by 1669 Catholicism in Makassar was extinct. Many people who were expelled sailed for Macao and Larantuka on eastern Flores.

Northern Sulawesi and the Sangihe and Talaud Archipelago

The Sangihe and Talaud Archipelagos form a natural bridge to the islands of the Philippines. In 1563 Sultan Hairun prepared a fleet to send his son Baabullah to northern Sulawesi in order to strengthen his influence there and to spread Islam. The Portuguese captain of Ternate tried to forestall this intention by sending Fr. Diego de Magelhaes to make contact with the people. For some years they had expressed their wish to be instructed in the teachings of Christ, and maybe in this way to keep their independence from Ternate. The Jesuit was received well by the ruler of Manado whom he could baptise together with one thousand five hundred of his people. The rest had to wait in order to be prepared later. The priest was asked also by the raja of Siau Island, who was on a visit in Manado, to baptise him together with his colleague. He asked Magelhaes to visit his people as soon as possible. But the father sailed first to the west, to the neighbouring area of Bolaang Mongondow, whose ruler was a son of the raja of Manado and received him well. But before he baptised anybody he sailed on to Toli-Toli, where nobody was interested in listening to him. On his way back two thousand adults were baptised in Kaidipan. Fr. Magelhaes stayed again for some time in Manado in order to instruct the people he had just baptised. He could not visit Gorontalo and the island of Siau, because his ship had to sail back to Ternate.³⁴

Fr. Magelhaes visited Manado a few times during the following years from his base on Ternate. In 1568 Fr. Pero Mascarenhas SJ, visited Siau and other islands and Manado, Kaidipan, and Bolaang Mongondow too. Though thousands of people wanted to be baptised, he only accepted a few heads of villages and used his time to instruct those people already baptised earlier by his predecessor. He promised to send another missionary, who would stay longer. Fr. N. Nunez, one of the first missionaries sent by Francis Xavier, wrote in 1569 that three rajas had already become Christians and the raja of Gorontalo wanted to follow suit. But after 1570, when the murder of Hairun shook the Portuguese power in the Moluccas, this mission seems to have been

³⁴ Jacobs *Docu. Maluc.* I:415–417.

abandoned. In spite of that the people of northern Sulawesi refused to join Ternate and become Muslims. In 1588 Fr. Marta regarded Christianity extinct in Sulawesi and its people relapsed into paganism. But several times rulers of northern Sulawesi and Siau sent messengers to Tidore asking the priests to visit them again. Finally in 1604 a priest stayed for some years. In the 1610s Franciscan missionaries from Manila arrived also.

After three unsuccessful attempts (1606, 1610, 1611) to consolidate the Catholic communities in northern Sulawesi and after two Franciscans had been murdered by Muslims from Tagulandang in 1614, a new effort was made to answer the repeated requests for missionaries. Two Franciscan priests built a church in Buhol on the north coast of Minahasa, but their visit was very short. A visit to Manado in 1617 by two Jesuits showed that the Christians baptised by Fr. Magelhaes in the 1560s had meanwhile become pagan again or turned Muslim. The two priests felt exhausted, fell ill and died within three years. Their superior regarded Minahasa as too difficult to be evangelised, the people lacking understanding and being too crude. Protection of the missionaries was impossible and the climate was regarded as unbearable. Muslim neighbours obstructed the work, especially marauding *cora-cora* from Ternate made work impossible. The Jesuits were joined by three Franciscans in 1619. Their effort to evangelise the so-called Alfuros, or the animistic people of the forest, failed. One of them, Fr. Blas Palomino OFM, was murdered in 1622.

In 1637 the young 'crown princes' of Manado and Siau went to the fort on Ternate, to be taught by the Jesuits. Manado was visited from Siau in that year too and its queen and her children were baptised. Finally in the 1640s the Franciscans succeeded in converting some Alfuros, but Fr. Lorenzo Garralda OFM was murdered in 1644 at the instigation of some *dukuns* (traditional healers), and Fr. J. Iranzo had to hide himself for eight months. Because of fear of retaliation the Alfuros, who had also killed forty Spaniards, looked for Dutch protection which they received from 1655.

In 1651 the Spaniards came to Minahasa to buy provisions for their fort on Ternate. Four years later the Dutch erected a fort close to the Spanish fortification. This and a Dutch fleet controlling the coast of northern Sulawesi since 1660 made further increase of the Catholic population very difficult. A short visit of a Franciscan and a Jesuit priest from Siau did not change the situation. The building of the stone fort 'Amsterdam' in Manado by the Dutch (1666) marked the end of Catholic influence on northern Celebes (Sulawesi). Since 1663 Protestant pastors visited some villages in Minahasa and on the islands to the north. From Siau Fr. Turcotti's last efforts and good success in Bolaang Hitam and Kaidipan in 1676 were thwarted by the Dutch governor. All Catholic activities were strictly forbidden by the VOC now in control.

The Sangihe and Talaud archipelagos, between northern Sulawesi and the Philippine island of Mindanao, are populated by people closely related to

Philippine language groups. Because the raja of Siau was baptised in Manado (1563) evangelisation began on that island, which is situated in the Sangihe archipelago. Though Christian practice seems to have always been quite superficial on Siau the islanders never lost or gave up their faith. The Kingdom of Siau comprised Siau-Island, southern Sangihe Besar, two southern islands of the Talaud Archipelago and the Kaidipan and Bolaang Hitam area on northern Sulawesi. Siau remained the centre of the mission between Sulawesi and Mindanao. Its raja, who chose the name of Jeronimo I, with great enthusiasm tried to change many pagan customs on his island, but his people, who were not yet ready, revolted and expelled him. For three years he had to live in exile with the Jesuits of Ternate.

In 1568 a Portuguese fleet set sail from Ternate to harass the Spaniards in the Philippines. Raja Jeronimo and Fr. Pero Mascarenhas boarded a ship that sailed via Manado, where emissaries from Siau asked him to visit them too. Accompanied by the former raja, the priest went on shore on the west coast of Sangihe Besar and was well received. After he had explained the Christian faith and way of living, the local ruler was baptised with many of his nobles, a great feast was organised, and a huge cross, made from the finest wood of the forest, was erected in the place where a church should be built later. The two rulers themselves assisted in erecting this sign of Christianity on Sangihe. Next year King Jeronimo succeeded with the help of a few Portuguese in subduing all the places on Siau that had once rebelled against him.

From 1570 the mission suffered everywhere from the aftermath of the perfidious murder of the old sultan of Ternate. The Belgian Fr. Roger Berwouts paid short visits to Siau between 1585 and 1588. His report speaks about several Christian villages on Siau and Sangihe Besar and stresses the need for resident pastors on these islands. Otherwise the people would become pagans again like those in northern Sulawesi. Fr. Antonio Pereira who several times had sailed to the islands (1588; 1596; 1604–1605) and stayed there for some months composed the first list of words of the Siau dialect.

Because the Christians were often attacked by Ternate and its allies on the neighbouring islands, Raja Jeronimo II and Fr. Pereira sailed to Manila in 1593 to ask for more effective protection. The raja even signed a treaty with Spain against Ternate's imperialism. After the Spaniards got a foothold on Ternate (1606) new requests from Siau poured in. But the few Portuguese Jesuits left on these islands had already been assigned to apparently more promising Moro.

It proved difficult to implant Christianity on the Sangihe archipelago. The priests could not stay long enough in one place to make the islanders grasp what Christianity meant in everyday life. The knowledge of the local dialects by the missionaries sent to this 'end the world' was very poor and several died quickly of exhaustion or shipwreck. In spite of the good will of the local rul-

ers and their repeated calls for more missionaries and for protection against the sultan of Ternate, his Dutch ally, and neighbouring Muslim rulers, the Jesuits could never provide enough skilled people for the time necessary to plant a local church. They never succeeded in educating catechists or creating Christian customs as the Dominicans had in the Solor-Mission. The local rajas, who sometimes were most interested in protection by Spanish soldiers, did not always give a good example. The Jesuits and Franciscans who visited the Christian kampongs on the islands never developed a plan for systematic evangelisation over a space of time long enough for the new faith to take strong roots.

In 1613 a Dutch-Ternatean fleet plundered the islands, and burnt the villages that refused to acknowledge the unfounded claims of the sultan. The Dutch did not care about the native Christians, they wanted to weaken the Spaniards. In 1615 they cheated hundreds of Siau islanders who were invited to board their ships. When on board they were forced to repopulate far away Pulau Ay of the Banda Islands, where the Dutch had murdered or taken away the indigenous population. In Banda the Siau people were forced to accept Circumcision (and to become Muslim), but most of them fled and later came back to Siau. This action made the people of Siau hate Ternate and the Dutch and look to Manila for help.

During the 1620s a few Franciscans from Manila worked on Siau. The Jesuits were back in 1629. In the 1630s Christian life was reported to be fine and a few more pagan villages asked for instruction. About 1631 the Jesuit Fr. M. de Faria, who just had visited Siau wrote:

The Dutch conquered the island for some time, but because it did not produce anything, they left it after taking away its inhabitants. But in a short time many people came from the surrounding islands. The number of people is large again, but does not exceed seven thousands. . . . The indigenous people remember some of our fathers. One of them who had worked on this island, as far as I know, was Fr. A. Pereira. I found the book for baptisms, left by this father which proves that he had baptised more than a thousand people. Ten years later Fr. P. Gomes arrived. His baptismal book is lost. So we don't know the fruits of his labour. He did not stay for long. . . . After his time till 1628 no missionary lived here though some of our fathers and also Franciscans passed through and baptised some people.³⁵

Fr. de Faria regarded the islanders as Christians by name only. Their raja lived in polygamy, but when he dreamed that his deceased father visited and reproached him he repented and sent his second wife home. Three churches

³⁵ Excerpt from Fr. de Faria's report to Rome, written in Manila (1631) and incorporated into the yearly report of 1632 of the Jesuit Malabar Province; see Jacobs *Docu. Maluc.* III:475–482.

were built and eight hundred people baptised. During the 1640s and 1650s alliances changed all the time and with them quite often religion. From 1653 regular parish life could be established on Siau. Thanks to cautious negotiations with the Dutch after the Spaniards had evacuated Ternate (1663), the Catholic communities could live in some peace until 1676. Sometimes even large groups asked for baptism and a priest to instruct them.

The Catholic community had dropped from 11,700 faithful in 1656 to only 4,000 in 1665: more than fifty percent in less than ten years. The Dutch governor in Ternate sent a Spaniard, who had changed sides and became Protestant, to incite the Catholics of northern Sulawesi and the Sangihe archipelago to send the Jesuits away and put themselves under the protection of the VOC. Instead, the raja of Siau wrote to Manila in 1669 to get more Jesuits and Spanish troops, but Manila was unable to send any support. Only the Jesuit provincial did send one priest. Three years later fifteen Spanish soldiers arrived. The missionaries did not always follow the flag; they followed the call of the people much earlier than the flag arrived. There was a kind of 'double mission' by Catholics and Protestants alike in the 1670s. The borders between Spanish and Dutch territory were blurred. Protestant ministers on Sangihe are mentioned from 1674 onward.

In the early 1670s there was always one and sometimes even three Jesuits on Siau, from where they tried also to look after the few Catholic villages on northern Sulawesi and on the other islands of the archipelago. From 1674 to 1677 the Italian Fr. Carlo Turcotti, who stayed on Siau, reported to his superior in Manila about the poor and hard life of the missionaries among such a crude people, who continuously waged war on all sides. In 1675 a big church was built in Ulu (Siau), and the church in Pehe had to be broadened and a house for the priest was added to the church on Kaburuang Island (South Talaud). At Tahuna on Sangihe about a thousand islanders were baptised; the raja, his brother and many people who recently had become Protestant returned to the Catholic Church. Even in the last year of the mission, in 1676, hundreds of people were baptised by the three priests still working in the archipelago.

In the Talaud archipelago two small princedoms depended on the king of Siau. In these places evangelisation was commenced only in the early 1670s. After a few prosperous years it had to be given up again (1677), when the Spanish garrison capitulated because of Ternatean-Dutch attacks.

The viable mission on the most northern island group of present day Indonesia came to a sudden end for economical reasons: the Dutch wanted by all means to establish a watertight monopoly on all cloves and nutmeg. A few years previously Fr. de Esquivel had introduced clove trees on Tagulandang Island, south of Siau. The Dutch governor tried to have these trees cut down in 1663, but in vain, because the priests had organised a strong resistance by the people. In contradiction to the stipulations of the Peace Treaty of Münster

(1648), the highest council of the VOC in the Netherlands gave orders to occupy the Sangihe Islands in 1671, though they were regarded as Spanish territory. The Dutch Governor, Padtbrugge, instigated and supported the sultan of Ternate in an attack on Siau and Tabukan (on Sangihe).

In an action instigated by his Dutch overlord, the VOC, the sultan of Ternate attacked Siau in October 1677 and conquered the Spanish Fort St. Rosa. The church and the mission house were plundered and burnt down and the three Jesuits were arrested and brought to Ternate. By manipulating Ternate to attack Spanish territory the VOC appeared not to be involved and achieved its real aim: the sultan transferred the islands to the VOC, the clove trees were cut down, the Dutch monopoly was saved, and the Christians were left for a long time without their pastors. The change of political power brought about a religious change too. Both spheres were intertwined.

The raja of Siau, Franciscus Xaverius Batahi had to sign a contract, by force of which Siau became a fief of the VOC and his Catholic subjects incorporated into the *Nederlandse Kerk* (Dutch Church). “All crosses, statues and other signs of idolatry had to be burnt” (Article 4). The raja was forbidden to allow ‘Roman papists’ to visit his islands. Until 1691 emissaries of the people of Siau went to Mindanao to ask for Jesuit missionaries, but the Spaniards were too weak to help anymore.

After Ambon (1605) and the Moro-Mission (1613), another Catholic area became the victim of political and economic changes. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries religion was very closely connected with political power and business interests all over Asia. Religious tolerance was still far away. Today the people of the Sangihe-Talaud Islands are ninety percent Protestant Christians.

Conclusion: A mission impossible?

Francis Xavier rushed through the Moluccas from Ambon to Morotai fulfilling his duty as papal legate to visit *quanto citius*, as soon as possible, all places in Asia where Christians were living. Moved by pity he sent Jesuits to look after these scattered groups of believers and to spread the Gospel at this “far end the world.” The Jesuits never numbered more than twelve at a time, mostly much less. They were sent from Goa to this “hotbed of all evils of the world”³⁶ and worked hard in a field that hardly had any prospects of achieving lasting results. The half-century of the Portuguese mission (1546–1605) was from the beginning full of disappointments and frustrations; and the Spanish

³⁶ Jacobs 1971:73, quoting Galvão; see also his footnotes about the Moluccas as a kind of Portuguese penal colony.

period (1605–1680) was overshadowed by growing Dutch obstruction. Amid never-ending fighting and wars between all the parties concerned continuous evangelisation never developed.

The existence and well being of the young communities was left to the mercy of their Portuguese protectors and the native leaders. Since Xavier's time the sultans of Ternate mostly obstructed Christianity and favoured Islam in order to build up strength against their business partners. In their shrewd policy they sometimes simulated interest and even support for the spread of the gospel. But this never prevented them from obstructing the mission, burning Christian villages and selling or killing their inhabitants. The Portuguese captains fundamentally favoured Christianity, but personal ambition and greed made them easily sacrifice their fellow Christians.

The local Christians loved their priests and protested when the Jesuits deliberated about withdrawal. Though without a prospect for basic improvement, the missionaries did not dare to forsake them, partly because of piety for the founder St. Francis Xavier, partly because of pity for their flock. Though efforts to educate indigenous catechists never progressed further than a primitive 'school', faith did take roots as is proved by the readiness of some simple people to die for Christ.

Success is no criterion for evangelisation, and human efforts alone are never sufficient to plant a church. Humanly speaking it was an impossible mission, or as an old missionary, Fr. L. Masonio, put it, "a protracted martyrdom of patience in bearing such a hard cross."³⁷ But have there been no remaining 'results'? The Dutch VOC protestantised the Ambonese, Minahasan, and Sangirese Christians, and in this way prevented them from being islamized. In the main centres Protestant ministers were placed; minor establishments were served by assistant-ministers ('comforters of the sick'). Each local congregation got a church building and a school; indigenous Christians were trained as schoolteachers and put in charge of the local congregations. In this way the continuity of Christianity in Eastern Indonesia was assured. The Catholic mission laid the foundation; the Protestants built upon that foundation. In the twentieth century the building was completed by the foundation of independent Protestant churches besides a local Catholic Church refounded by renewed mission activity.

Adolf Heuken SJ

³⁷ Jacobs *Docu. Maluc.* III:407.

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The history of the seventeenth century Jesuit mission in the Moluccas area was studied at first hand from Jesuit documents in Rome and put in writing by C. Wessels SJ in many articles and in his major book of 1935. The books by B. Visser written at the same time as the work of Wessels and not depending on it, are not founded on unpublished sources and cover the whole of Indonesia. The three volumes of *Documenta Malucensia*, Rome 1974–1984, by H. Jacobs (quoted as *Docu. Maluc.*), contain the best primary sources on the Jesuit Moluccan mission and give ample references to other archival and printed sources up to the 1970's. Full references for this chapter are in Adolf Heuken SJ, *'Be my witness on the ends of the earth!': the Catholic Church in Indonesia before the 19th century*. Jakarta: Cipta Loka Caraka 2002.

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