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Negotiating Islamisation and resistance : a study of religions, politics and social change in West Java from the early 20th Century to the present

Bamualim, C.S.

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Author: Bamualim, Chaider S.
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CHAPTER SIX

CHRISTIANISATION IN BEKASI: RECENT TRENDS AND OPPONENTS AMIDST ISLAMISATION (1970-2011)

In its report of November 2010, the Brussels-based International Crisis Group (ICG) reported an intense Christianisation process in West Java and indicated that the region had become the place where missionaries had gained ground fastest. [1] The district of Bekasi in West Java is one of the most important Christian strongholds.[2] It saw a significant growth in its Christian population and institutions, especially due to the influx of migrants from Sumatera and other parts of Indonesia since the 1970s. Although Christianity had already gained ground in various parts of West Java like Sukabumi, Cianjur, Bogor and Bekasi since the nineteenth century, in terms of actors and institutions, the recent development of the Christian community in Bekasi constituted a new trend.

In terms of actors, the recent Christian development does not seem to be primarily the result of the leadership of local leaders and activists. Readers should note that in the past, the Christianisation in West Java and in Bekasi in particular depended very much on local leaders and activists who were mostly of Sundanese, Betawi and Javanese origins. They shared a keen sense of identity cohesiveness because of their religious bonds. Nowadays, the role in Christian development and leadership in Bekasi is primarily played by new actors

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1 ICG, 'Indonesia: 'Christianization' and Tolerance', *Asia Briefing* No. 114, 24 Nov 2010, p. 2.

2 Bekasi statistics show that the Christian population has seen a significant growth as does the number of churches. According to the 2009 statistics, Bekasi has currently 413 out of a total of 2135 churches in 17 districts and 9 cities across West Java. Its appeal to the evangelist mission lies in its strategic position, situated right between the capital Jakarta and heavily industrialised West Java.

of Batak and Chinese origins whose social and cultural identification differs from those of the Sundanese majority.

This development provides the context for the rise of anti-Christian sentiments with heavy ethno-religious undertones. In other words, the anti-Christianisation reaction contains strong anti-Batak and anti-Chinese sentiments. These sentiments are not a surprise. The Christian Chinese played important roles in the Christianity's upsurge in this growing city, especially in its leadership and in the building of Pentecostal churches. Batak Christians have lived in Bekasi for some decades where they earn their living while preserving their identity. They came, stayed, worked and built churches where and when they could afford it. Thus, in Bekasi, their existence contributed in making Christian culture and institutions increasingly apparent in the public sphere.

The reaction against Christianity that contains ethno-religious sentiments is novel and evidences the new dynamics in Christianisation and Islamisation dialectics in West Java. It involves new actors, leadership and institutions even if it shows a consistent effort by the Christians to promote their religion in order to oppose and neutralise Islam's hegemonic influence across the region. This chapter seeks to discern how these dynamics work out and tries to explain their impact among Bekasi grassroots society.

The Development of Religions in West Java

Throughout Indonesia's history, the development of religions has been inextricably connected with the power game of the prevailing regime. Soeharto's welcoming politics towards religions saw churches, mosques, schools and other social institutions with religious affiliations proliferate. This steady increase indexes a rise in religious devotion among Christians and Muslims on the one hand, and sustained competition between these two communities, on the other. This religious development is linked to economic and industrial development resulting from the national economic transformation during the New Order era. During the first half of the New Order liberal economy (1967-85), the country received huge foreign loans and direct investment with the 1970s oil boom which boosted national economy and

industrialisation.[3] Recession in the early to mid-1980s, however, changed the regime's economic policy, with industry reoriented towards exports and with the promotion of trade liberalisation and deregulation.[4] Due to this change, from 1986 to 1996, the country recorded more than 7 per cent growth per annum, which saw unprecedented industrialisation and urbanisation.[5] As centres of industrialisation, Jakarta and West Java experienced much economic growth that facilitated urbanisation along with increased economic migration.

Table 1
Numbers of Immigrant Flow into West Java, 2006[6]
(by thousands)

Migrant Destination						
Migrant origins	**West Java**		**Bogor & Bekasi**		**Bandung**	
	1995	2000	1995	2000	1995	2000
DKI Jakarta[7]	48,82	48,22	65,27	64,10	16,62	26,33
Central Java	21,57	19,55	16,21	15,92	34,94	29,28
DIY[8]	1,46	3,61	1,04	2,56	2,82	7,54
East Java	7,46	6,38	7,36	5,54	4,97	10,90
Sumatra	14,36	14,84	7,91	9,42	23,23	22,50
Bali, NTB[9]& NTT[10]	0,38	3,08	5,31	0,03	1,28	1,87
Sulawesi	1,98	1,23	0,84	0,00	5,46	1,85
Maluku & Irian (currently Papua)	1,10	0,13	0,78	0,00	0,00	0,00

3 Hal Hill, *The Indonesian Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).
4 *Idem*.
5 *Idem.*
6 *Profil Kependudukan Provinsi Jawa Barat Tahun 2000* (Jakarta: Badan Pusat Statistik, 2000), p. 7.
7 DKI is the acronym for Daerah Khusus Ibukota (the Capital Special Region).
8 DIY is the acronym for Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta (Yogyakarta Special Region).
9 NTB is the acronym for Nusa Tenggara Barat.
10 NTT is Nusa Tenggara Timur.

From a socio-cultural perspective, the influx of people of various social and religious backgrounds introduced new symbols, cultures and institutions. Likewise, from the socio-political and socio-economic angles, the migratory flow entailed demographic shifts with significant repercussions in Jakarta and West Java. Known as majority-Muslim regions they were now being slowly coloured with new Christian churches along with increased Christian activities.

Trends in Christianity's Upsurge in Bekasi

In what follows below we shall look at the most recent trends in Christianisation which are a continuation of those in the past in terms of cause, actors and leadership. In terms of cause, the Christian population and the increase in numbers of Christian institutions born out of migration and urbanisation seem to have become the major factors that changed the social demography and the identity of the Bekasi community's make-up. The Christian population and the number of Christian institutions increased significantly during the past few decades.[11] In general in West Java, the Christian population's annual growth rate exceeded 4.0 per cent per annum from 1970 to 2000, the highest percentage experienced by Christians in majority-Muslim areas across Indonesia. Christian leaders, however, rejected the speculation that this growth was the result of conversions from Islam. They acknowledged that conversions took place but claimed their number was insignificant and instead stated that the population growth was caused by migration from majority-Christian regions including North Sumatra, North Sulawesi, and NTT.[12] From the 1970s to the 1990s, Christians flooded into West Java. Among them were Batak Protestants.[13] In their new majority-Muslim community, it was difficult to find a church or to build one in which to conduct Sunday services and therefore they held services in private residences and in other venues such as shop-houses (*ruko*), malls and hotels. Eventually they sought to

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11 Suryadinata, Nurvidya Arifin, and Ananta, *Indonesia's Population*, pp. 104-110.

12 Interview, Fabianus, Bandung, 15 June 2009. While we do not have census or survey materials to gauge the reality of Muslim conversion to Christianity, my observation in a Christian village in Cianjur confirms that there was no significant conversion from Islam to Christianity.

13 Interview, pastor Pieterson, Jakarta, 9 March 2011.

construct churches. Over the years the number of churches would seem to have multiplied in tandem with the Christian population growth and their increasing frequent attendance at services although the impact of the problem of church construction constraints needs to be studied before this correlation can be established with any certainty.[14]

Readers should keep in mind that in the early New Order period, Christians entered high positions in society because they were highly educated and held excellent academic qualifications.[15] Because later the national education system improved in general, also Muslims became better trained. Soeharto helped modernizing Islamic schools (*madrasah*) by standardizing its system.[16] Nevertheless, the initial advantage of the Christians remains to be felt to this day. With better education and having more political opportunities the Christian minority thus enjoyed considerable political and economic advantages that, together with their own efforts, boosted them to "unprecedented social and political prominence."[17] Sidel observes:

> From parish schools scattered throughout the archipelago to seminaries to the Protestant and Catholic students' organisations at the most prestigious universities in the country, some Indonesian Christians enjoyed a clear head start in the multitiered hierarchy of education that fed into the New Order bureaucratic elite, even as their church coffers and business connections were enhanced by growing numbers of wealthy Chinese Protestants and Catholics. University lecturers and student activists affiliated with the Partai Katolik and other Christian groups had joined the rallies against the PKI and Soekarno in the critical first months of the New Order and enjoyed something of a hegemonic position as the regime's leading political operatives for years thereafter.[18]

In this context, the Christians grabbed their opportunity and converged on civilian and military posts in the cabinet, parties, media and business sectors. Until the late 1980s, Protestants and Catholics

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14 *Idem*.

15 A useful analyses of this hypothesis may be found in Gavin Jones' 'Religion and Education in Indonesia', *Indonesia,* 22 (Oct. 1976), pp. 19-56.

16 Noorhaidi Hasan, 'Education, Young Islamists and Integrated Islamic Schools in Indonesia', *Studia Islamika*, Volume 19, Number 1, 2012, pp. 84-85.

17 John T. Sidel, *Riots, Pogroms, Jihad: Religious Violence in Indonesia* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2006), p. 45.

18 *Idem*, p. 48-49.

secured the Soeharto cabinet's top economic and security portfolios.[19] The crucial role the Christian elites played for the nation's development demonstrates the significance of Christian education and the importance of their institutions at the grassroots even if the regime withdrew its political support from them.

From the 1990s, Christian representation in the civil bureaucracy and military ranks started to wane, much to their chagrin. This was caused by the vast improvement of the national and particularly Islamic educational system[20] but also an important contributing factor was Soeharto's embrace of Islam. A leading political observer, William R. Liddle, observes that the Catholics and Protestants "have long been wary of *santri* intentions toward them."[21] They were unhappy with a campaign in 1992-93 "to replace Christian members of the cabinet with Muslims."[22] Christians kept struggling to preserve their socio-political and economic interests at the level of the state while keeping up competition with Muslims at the grassroots. From 1997 to 2000 the Protestant church kept growing, despite the violence perpetrated against it under the political volatility of the years surrounding the New Order's downfall in 1998. In this shifting political constellation, protests against church construction and Sunday services conducted in private residences in Jakarta and West Java emerged.[23] The mid-1990s saw such protests increase and turn destructive. In 1995-96, waves of violent protests swept over Rengasdengklok in West Java, leaving behind the charred remains of several churches. Muslim hostility nonetheless failed to slow down the construction of churches. During the transitional years (1997-99) the number of churches rose significantly and this trend was sustained in the following years, with the rate of increase almost doubling from 1999 to 2005.

Since 1998, democratisation induced fundamental social and political changes that provided the political setting for the Christianisation more than ever. In the meantime, Muslim activists of various persuasions, including Modernists, Islamists, Revivalists and

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19 Liddle, 'The Islamic Turn in Indonesia', pp. 616-617.

20 For a detailed and relevant discussion of this particular point, see Ricklefs *Islamisation and its Opponents in Java*, pp. 206-210.

21 Liddle, 'The Islamic Turn in Indonesia', p. 617.

22 *Idem*.

23 Sidel, *Riots, Pogroms, Jihad*, pp. 7-74.

Dakwahists, were busy struggling to consolidate their political forces. The Christians largely continued to focus on their socio-religious and cultural agenda, which sustained development and kept it on track. During these years of transition, the Christian revival was strengthened, and church attendance soared. Perhaps the denomination that best exemplifies the reality of the Christian growth rate is the Pentecostals, to be discussed later in this chapter. The number of its adherents mounted sky-high during the time of reform.[24] Recent statistics show the distribution of the Christians across West Java in terms of population and numbers of churches. The Christian/Catholic population-to-church ratios were thus: Catholics 4,651: 1, Protestants, 994:1.[25]

Table 2[26]

Numbers of Christian and Catholic Population (by thousands) &
Numbers of Christian and Catholic Churches & their Distribution across West Java 2009

	Protestants	**Protestant Church**	**Catholics**	**Catholic Church**	**Total Church**
Kabupaten/Regency					
1. Bogor	141,352	232	55,880	7	239
2. Sukabumi	39,061	39	9,228	6	45
3. Cianjur	33,930	46	8,658	3	49
4. Bandung	163,799	196	13,111	6	202
5. Garut	2,622	19	1,098	2	21
6. Tasikmalaya	19,669	17	3,400	4	21
7. Ciamis	25,718	38	1,466	3	41
8. Kuningan	17,344	11	6,997	2	13
9. Cirebon	61,935	41	11,433	9	50
10. Majalengka	65,125	22	1,078	1	23
11. Sumedang	21,994	21	1,893	2	23
12. Indramayu	18,131	36	2,589	8	44

[24] Andaya, 'Contextualizing the Global', p. 4.

[25] The Christian population-Church ratio is as follows: 1. Protestants 844.5: 1 (districts) and 1148: 1 (cities). The ratio in West Java in total is 999.4: 1. The ratio for Catholics is 2357: 1 (districts) and 9.175: 1 (cities) while being 4654: 1 in West Java in total.

[26] *Jawa Barat Dalam Angka* (BPS Statistics of West Java Province, 2010), p. 141.

13. Subang	1,996	34	3,341	5	39
14. Purwakarta	21,598	153	33.435	1	24
15. Karawang	52,071	62	6,084	3	65
16. Bekasi	134,589	153	33,435	1	154
17. West Bandung	13,544	4	4,321	8	12
Su b-Total	839,488	994	167,413	71	1,065
City/Kota					
1. Bogor	87,422	88	45,032	2	90
2. Sukabumi	83,364	37	13,663	1	38
3. Bandung	556,422	396	68,707	17	413
4. Cirebon	85,232	51	14,276	2	53
5. Bekasi	248,442	253	21,072	6	259
6. Depok	65,075	150	54,230	5	155
7. Cimahi	25,095	16	9,376	1	17
8. Tasikmalaya	20,256	29	3,044	1	30
9. Banjar	15,984	14	924	1	15
Sub-Total	1,187,372	1,034	330,324	36	1,070
TOTAL	2,026,860	2,028	497,737	107	2,135

During the 1980s, the Christian population in Indonesia including East Timor which had been incorporated into the nation since 1975 increased at an average rate of 5.2 per cent; about double the national population growth rate of 2.5 per cent. From 1980 to 1985, the numbers of followers of Protestantism, Roman Catholicism and Buddhism increased while those of Islam and Hinduism decreased. From 1980 to 1987, there was significant growth in the number of churches across all 27 provinces. East Java and Jambi saw 200 per cent growth, Central Java 150 per cent growth and North Sumatra 90 per cent, for instance.[27] The rise of Christianity, in terms of numbers of churches, is likewise reflected at the national level, from 1977 to 2004.

[27] F. Ukur, 'Pertumbuhan Gereja: Suatu Telaah Historis-Misiologis', in *Buku Makalah Seminar Pertumbuhan Gereja 1989* (Jakarta: Panitia Seminar Pertumbuhan Gereja 1989, 1990), p. 11.

Table 3[28]
National Growth
Houses of Worship 1977 – 2004

Religions	1977	2004	Growth Rate (%)
Islam	392,044	643,834	64.22
Protestant	18,977	43,909	131.38
Catholics	4,934	12,473	152.79

Pentecostal Revival and Chinese Leadership

The Christian population growth rate in West Java trumps that of all other provinces inhabited by majority Muslims. From 1970 to 2000, it stood at 4.5 per cent.[29] In 1980, the Christian population was 599,049.[30] This number increased to 763,363 in 2005.[31] The evangelical Christianisation campaign, especially that of Pentecostal and Charismatic movements, is active in Muslim-majority provinces recording a pronounced Christian population growth. After Soeharto's downfall in 1998, Christianity enjoyed more room to propagate its mission across West Java. In November 1999, one prominent Pentecostal leader, Rachel Indriati Tjipto Purnomo Wenas, known as Iin Tjipto, established the Mahanaim foundation in Bekasi with the help of the Ecclesia foundation. Nani Susanti from Cirebon is Iin's aunt and Yusak Tjipto's younger sister. Yusak, Nani, and Iin, together with Petrus Agung Purnomo, Petrus Hadi Susanto and Daniel Alexander are known as the '6 Hamba Tuhan' (God's 6 Servants), and claimed a divine mandate for their 'prophethood'. Petrus Agung Purnomo is a successful businessman in Semarang.[32] Petrus Hadi Susanto is an important charismatic leader in Temanggung. They all joined the Jemaat Kristus

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28 See *Naskah Sosialisasi Peraturan Bersama Menteri Agama dan Menteri Dalam Negeri No. 9 and 8 Tahun 2006 tentang Pedoman Pelaksanaan Tugas Kepala Daerah/Wakil Kepala Daerah dalam Pemeliharaan Kerukunan Umat Beragama, Pemberdayaan Forum Kerukunan Umat Beragama, dan Pendirian Rumah Ibadat*.

29 Leo Suryadinata, Evi Nurvidya Arifin, Aris Ananta (eds.), *Indonesia's Population*, pp. 104-110.

30 *Penduduk Indonesia Menurut Propinsi Seri L. No. 3. Hasil Pencecahan Lengkap Sensus Penduduk 1980* (Jakarta: Biro Pusat Statistik, 1980), pp. 26-27.

31 *Penduduk Indonesia Seri S 1. Hasil Survei Penduduk Antar Sensus 2005*.

32 Andaya, 'Contextualizing the Global', p. 19.

Indonesia Sangkakala in Semarang.[33] The ICG report alleged the Mahanaim of being involved in evangelical action.[34] Since the early stage of the Pentecostal's presence in Indonesia, Bandung was selected as one of the evangelicals' major centres, along with Temanggung and Cepu in Central Java. In the following decades, Pentecostal-Charismaticism consolidated its hold in West Java.

There are several factors behind its growth. *First*, as the ICG report noted, was the cultural crisis mostly experienced by workers in the region's industrial centres. The evangelical community was attractive to industrial workers who sought new cohesive communities after having been "uprooted from their traditional social networks."[35] *Second*, according to Juliette Koning, through Pentecostal religious activities, persons can conceptualise themselves as global citizens. For the Chinese, who constituted a significant number of adherents to this denomination, to be a Pentecostal means the affirmation and reaffirmation of their ethnic identity.[36] *Third,* another motive that led the Chinese and other Christians to join the Pentecostal church was political. During 1990-2000, the Pentecostals and their churches became the targets of attacks that left them in a state of crisis, psychologically, religiously, politically and culturally. Juliette Koning, who recently conducted research on the Pentecostal-Charismatic movement in Indonesia, argues that these evangelist Christians provide theological and spiritual experiences to those who cannot derive such experiences from modernisation. This movement is mostly concerned with supernatural experiences, a sort of divine communication with God or meeting Jesus 'face to face'.[37]

Aside from spiritual experiences, this religious movement is attractive for its simple practices. It shares Bible teachings about everyday life, holds religious gatherings with vibrant singing and testimonies, and also tries to recruit as many members as possible, emphasising a sense of belonging.[38] In fact, evangelists "claim a divine

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33 Interview, Jeremy Wijaya, Bandung, 22 March 2011. Petrus Hadi Susanto's school in Temanggung became the target of an uprising on 8 February 2011.

34 ICG, 'Indonesia: "Christianization" and Tolerance', p. 3.

35 *Idem*, p. 2.

36 Juliette Koning's unpublished presentation in Singapore Management University (SMU) on Understanding the rapid rise of Charismatic Christianity in Southeast Asia Singapore**,** 2010.

37 *Idem*.

38 *Idem*.

mandate to urgently save as many souls as possible before Christ's Second Coming, believed to be imminent."[39] Currently, the number of evangelist Christians worldwide is estimated at 647.8 million, 523.7 million comprise of Pentecostals in addition to Revivalist Protestants and charismatic Catholics.[40]

The Pentecostal revival is in fact an essential part of the Christianisation process in Indonesia. Christian activists I interviewed did not deny Christianisation efforts. However, they believed it to be simply the consequence of the more visual performance of Christian religious duties across the country.[41] In West Java, Christian evangelical activists acknowledged this reality but were convinced that each Christian is obliged to serve God by means of converting non-Christians, whose salvation is thus guaranteed. One Protestant activist argued specifically that converting Muslims is a positive religious duty for Christians. He admits that converting Muslims has become almost intuitive especially in the course of providing social services within Muslim communities. This mission for salvation translated into a powerful call for them to salvage Muslims, in which conversion is logically unavoidable.[42]

Under these circumstances, the Christians felt more confident to assert and express their identity in the public sphere. The advent of democracy in the late 1990s, together with its concomitant guarantee for the freedom of expression, has seen Christians demand their freedom of expression from the national state alongside other social and political aspirations. Christian leaders no longer shy away from the public spotlight, and now unabashedly declare that Indonesia is not an exclusively Muslim country. Muslims can no longer ignore the fact of the presence of Christianity in Indonesia. Obviously, Christianity has been part of Indonesia since colonial times, but their adoption of this high profile is something rather new. This confidence in expressing their identity and their faith is attested to, for instance, by the following

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[39] Katharina Hofer, 'The Role of Evangelical NGOs in International Development: A Comparative Case Study of Kenya and Uganda', *Africa Spectrum*, Vol. 38, No. 3 (2003), (Hamburg/Germany: Institute of African Affairs at GIGA), p. 376.

[40] *Idem*, p. 378.

[41] Interview, John Simon Timorason, Bandung, 9 July 2008.

[42] *Idem*.

statements. My Christian respondents acknowledged the revival of Christianity across West Java since the 1990s. Pastor Putu Suwintana of the Pasundan Christian Church in Cianjur, said that this revival is witnessed by the following phenomena: (1) increased levels of Christian observance and devotion as reflected by church attendance; (2) increased attendance caused greater identification and heightened engagement with church affairs – consequently Church activity has also risen. These interlinked phenomena spurred the growth of Christianity and its institutions across the region. Pastor Putu Suwintana stated that this revival has become apparent since the 1990s.[43]

Of Chinese background, Stephen Tong, a popular Indonesian pastor known throughout Southeast Asia for his services and oratory talent provided the following testimony. Tong has 15,000 members in his congregation in the region which has grown in just two decades.[44] Tong is extremely confident. For Jakarta, for instance, Hannah Beech of *Time* Magazine reports: "When Tong, 69, raised a crucifix onto the church's massive steeple, worshippers at a nearby mosque complained. Tong didn't back down. "Jakarta has 1.2 million Christians, so a church for 4,000 people is nothing," he says. We did this legally, so why can't we put a cross on our church, just likes mosques have their symbol?"[45]

Such confident assertions were buttressed because of increased Christian revival. Similarly, nowadays it is not rare to witness other cultural expressions of Christianisation, such as car stickers with slogans such as 'Jesus inside' or 'We love Jesus', reminiscent of similar expressions among Muslims in the 1990s. Indeed, according to the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, the number of Asian adherents to various Christian denominations exploded to 351 million in 2005, up from 101 million in 1970.[46] This spiritual blossoming, in turn, influences Muslims' religious conservatism. Hanna Beech observed that "a religious revolution is transforming Indonesia."[47] With increasing confidence in propagating their mission, along with demographic change and democracy, Christian leaders, especially the evangelicals, rose to prominence. With Chinese leaders playing an important role – such as

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43 Interview, pastor Putu Suwintana, Cianjur, 11 May 2010.
44 Hannah Beech, 'Christianity's surge in Indonesia', *Time*, 26 April 2010.
45 *Idem*.
46 This citation is quoted from Beech, 'Christianity's Surge in Indonesia'.
47 *Idem*.

Tong mentioned above – Muslims saw these developments as threatening and began to organise resistance to defend Islam. While their defensiveness is understandable it is more important to note that the anti-Christianisation rhetoric seems to be an expression of panic caused by the growth of Christianity in the region mixed with anti-Chinese sentiment.

Since 1970s, Chinese Christians played leadership roles and courageously ran activities across West Java. Due to its history, leadership and membership, the Pentecostal-Charismatic church may be considered as a largely Chinese religious movement, although in reality it is not exclusively so. Historically, the Chinese were associated with Christianity since the nineteenth century. In West Java and especially in Jakarta, they played a significant role in missionary work. A Chinese missionary known to have served the Chinese community in Batavia (1899-1901) was Gan Kwee from China, who had links to the most prominent Apostolic missionary, F.L. Anthing.

In 1938, the Christian Chinese *Classis*[48] of West Java established a Chinese Christian Church named THKTKH-KHD (Tiong Hoa Kie Tok Kauw Hwee Khoe Hwee Djawa). In 1958, this communion of Chinese-Christians changed its name to GKI-Jabar, Indonesian Christian Church in West Java. The Chinese-Christians were led by John Sung, their most prominent pastor and spiritual leader.[49] Pastor Sung was renowned for his extraordinary oratorical talent. Many Chinese-Christians very much enjoyed his sermons, which they commonly described as 'spiritualising.' His talent and charisma increased the church membership from 1,681 persons in 1941 to 6,000 in 1951. The number of its members mounted to 45,000 in 1994 and in 1988, GKI became a member of the Communion of Indonesian Churches (Persekutuan Gereja-Gereja Indonesia, PGI).[50]

The GKI church has thus largely been the home for Chinese-Christians. They kept a low profile during the New Order for political reasons. During that time, there were no reports about their active involvement in proselytising missions. In what follows, however, we will see how the vision and the stance of the Chinese-Christians towards

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48 *Classis* is a group of local churches centered in a district and directed by a church body.

49 Van den End and Weitjens, *Ragi Carita 2*, p. 225.

50 *Idem*, p. 225.

missionary work have changed. Although no accurate numbers are available, more and more have joined the Pentecostal-Charismatic Church since the New Order. Of late, not only have they become active members but some of them also play significant roles in its missionary activities.

While this leadership role is not a relatively new phenomenon, the association between the Chinese and the evangelist Christian denomination is 'heavily freighted.'[51] A scholar on Pentecostals in Malaysia and Indonesia, Barbara Watson Andaya, observes that "not only does Christianity carry the baggage of European colonialism, but resentment towards Chinese economic dominance has at times resulted in violence."[52] The ICG report observes:

> In fact, evangelical Protestantism has seen significant growth in recent years. According to the 2000 census, Indonesian Christians officially constitute about 8.8 per cent of the population, of whom 5.8 per cent are Protestant and 3 per cent Catholic. Muslims are 88.2 per cent, Hindu (mostly on Bali) 1.8 per cent, and Buddhists, Confucians and others make up the rest. Many Protestant evangelists believe the true percentage of Christians is closer to 12 to 15 per cent, and some put the figure even higher, although this is dismissed as wishful thinking by many objective sources. Some said the converts to Christianity are often afraid or unwilling to change the religious designation on their identity card, so they are counted as Muslims in the census. One pastor said the fastest growing segment of converts on Java was the thirteen to eighteen year old age group, young people travelling into the cities for work or school and becoming exposed to Christian proselytisation.[53]

While in demographic terms urban teens represent the group most likely to be successfully proselytised in Java, the report has identified West Java as the home of the fastest growing evangelism, with Banten next in line. While the extent of evangelist success, especially in attracting Muslim converts, remains unclear, the report suggests that the 'conquest' of West Java and Banten would serve as an important foothold towards the further Christianisation of the capital, Jakarta. As claimed by the report:

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51 Andaya, 'Contextualizing the Global', p. 2.

52 *Idem*.

53 ICG, 'Indonesia: "Christianization" and Tolerance', p. 2.

> The Sundanese people have been identified as having among them "the least followers of Christ," and so the evangelists have geared up projects, like the Joshua Project and Lampstand, to the challenge of converting them. These projects are overseas initiatives launched with the help of locally-based foundations. Towards this end, the Joshua Project set up a database of unreached people while Lampstand focuses on planting churches and proselytising to the Sundanese people.[54]

The ICG report observes that another active evangelical organisation is Partners International based in Washington, USA. This foundation emphasises the importance of local culture in realising its mission so its leaders work with local partners in promoting community development projects in support of 'Vision Indonesia 1:1:1'.[55] The latter is a missionary initiative which encourages missionaries to build "one church in one village in one generation."[56] To achieve this ambitious goal, the foundation established the Evangelical Theological Seminary of Indonesia (ESTI) with some 30 branches across Indonesia and it launched an initiative called the Sundanese Christian Fellowship, which has a dozen groups active around West Java.[57]

As the report above notes, ethnic Chinese have for a long time been playing clear leadership roles. Some figures involved, with names indicating ethnic Chinese origin,[58] include Pastor Rachel Indriati Tjipto Purnomo Wenas, the head of Mahanaim foundation; Wong Christopher Cahyadi,[59] allegedly responsible for the 'human cross' in front of Al-Barakah mosque in downtown Bekasi on 2 May 2010; and Hendry Leonardi Sutanto, whose house in the elite Bekasi Kemang Pratama Regency complex was allegedly used for a mass baptism on 23 June

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54 *Idem*.

55 *Idem*, p. 3.

56 *Idem*.

57 *Idem*.

58 For Indonesians, these Javanese sounding names clearly indicate Chinese origins because they may sound Javanese but no Javanese would be named like this.

59 See '*Christofer Jadi Tersangka Formasi Pedang-Salib di Masjid Agung Bekasi*', Voice of Al-Islam, Monday 14 June 2010, p. 1. www.voa-Islam.com/news/print/2010/06/147089/christofer-jadi-tersangka-formasi-pedang-dsalib-di-masjid-agung-bekasi. Accessed 20 November 2010.

2010.[60] Such active involvement of ethnic Chinese as evangelical leaders suggests a new trend in the Christian mission in the country which deserves an in-depth study in the future.[61]

The Huria Kristen Batak Protestan (HKBP) Church and Batak Christians in Bekasi

From the early twentieth century to the 1960s, the Bekasi regency was home to an overwhelmingly Muslim population.[62] The rest of the population adhered to Protestantism, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism. A tiny minority adhered to *Aliran Kebatinan.* In the early half of the twentieth century, the break-down of all believers totalling 2,457,585 persons, was as follows: Islam 2,145,447 (87.30 per cent); Protestantism 198,000 (8.05 per cent); Catholicism 73,224 (2.98 per cent); Hinduism 73,224 (2.98 per cent), Buddhism 5,615 (0.23 per cent); Confucianism 201 (0.008 per cent); and the rest, mostly followers of *Aliran Kebatinan,* make up 8,816 (0.35 per cent).[63] While this highlights the diversity of Bekasi's population, it has to be noted that the demographic composition of religious believers was distributed disproportionally throughout 12 sub-districts.

The villages Kampung Sawah and Pondok Melati, for instance, stood out for their Christian majorities and therefore were known as the 'Christian villages' in the regency. Currently, Kampung Sawah and Pondok Melati are under the administration of the Pondok Melati sub-district office. Recent statistics show that there are nearly 25,000 Christians living in this administrative sub-district alongside 130,000 Muslims and several hundred Hindus and Buddhists, among others. There are 23 Protestant and Catholic churches and 65 mosques in this 'Christian' village.[64] For decades, a culture of tolerance prevailed

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60 ICG, 'Indonesia: "Christianization" and Tolerance', p. 10.

61 Muslim activists living in Bekasi claimed to have observed a series of probably unrelated but highly offensive events against Muslims from May 2008 onwards in Bekasi. These include an offensive blog, the Sculpture Saga, and a human cross formation in front of Bekasi's *Al-Barakah* mosque. See ICG, 'Indonesia: "Christianization" and Tolerance', pp. 6-9.

62 Badruzzman Busyairi, *Rumah Ibadat di Kota Bekasi* (Bekasi: Forum Kerukunan Umat Beragama [FKUB] Kota Bekasi, 2009), p. 21.

63 *Idem*, p. 21.

64 *Idem,* pp. 22 and 28.

enabling the Bekasi people to live in harmony irrespective of religious background. Christians and Muslims kept cordial relationships. This harmony endured well because, despite their religious differences, these people shared identities anchored in their ethnic bonds as most of them are of Betawi, Sundanese and Javanese origin, sharing the same languages and values. It was thus not surprising that until the 1960s Muslims and Christians enjoyed freedom in constructing houses of worship or in performing religious and cultural activities. Muslims respected the existence of Sundanese and Javanese churches, which they saw as tolerant and polite.[65] The Christian population and institutions grew in an atmosphere of respect of their Muslim neighbours and it sent no messages of threat or intolerance.[66]

The situation in Bekasi evolved in correspondence to rapid social change in the capital Jakarta. Since the 1970s, Soeharto had developed Jakarta and its surrounding areas as economic, trade and industrial centres. The Bekasi District has several sub-districts, one of which is also named Bekasi. Due to its economic link with Jakarta, the Bekasi Sub-district grew rapidly. In April 1982, the Minister of Home Affairs upgraded it to a so-called *kota administratif* (administrative city). In several years' time, the city saw a rapid growth in population and the development of infrastructure, transportation, and many educational and socio-religious institutions. In response to this growth, the Minister elevated Bekasi's status of administrative city to that of a municipality. It has an area of 210,49 km2 and includes 12 sub-districts and 56 villages. The number of sub-districts had increased from an initial four in its infancy stage in the 1980s as a result of expansion (*pemekaran*) over the last three decades. The municipality is surrounded by Jakarta to the West, Bekasi District to the East, and Bogor District to the South.

Having become the centre of economic development, Bekasi attracted economic migration from outside the municipality, especially from Java and Sumatra. Migration figures from 1995 to 2000 show that of all people arriving in West Java, those arriving in the Bekasi and Bogor districts from Java comprised 24.61 per cent in 1995 and 23.22

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65 'Kasus HKBP, Warga Bekasi Justru Akrab dengan Gereja Jawa-Pasundan', *www.republika.co.id*. Jumat, 17 September 2010. See also 'Jangan Sudutkan Masyarakat Bekasi', *www.kompas.com*, Kamis, 16 September 2010. Accessed 16 September 2010.

66 Interview, Koernia Atje Soejana, Bekasi, 11 May, 2010.

per cent in 2000, and 7.91 per cent and 9.42 per cent from Sumatra in the same years.[67] The total migration into Bekasi in 1995 was 1,081,228 persons or 35.03 per cent of the total migration in West Java.[68] Probably due to the economic crisis this figure fell to 66,977 in 2000. This migration contributed to the municipality's population surge. According to statistics, in 2000, the total population of Bekasi municipality was 1,663,802 with a population density of 8,255 per square kilometre, which is higher than any other district and municipality across West Java except Bandung with 12,711 per square kilometre.[69] This migration also contributed to the municipality's population diversity; Bekasi is overwhelmingly inhabited by Betawi along with significant numbers of Sundanese and Javanese. In addition to these major ethnic groups, Bekasi has many migrants from north Sumatra, mostly comprising of Batak people from Tapanuli.[70]

Table 5[71]

2000 Census Bekasi Population according to Ethnic Origin

Bekasi Regency				
Sundanese	Javanese	Betawi	Batak, Tapanuli	Chinese
599,762	206,906	717,863	25,401	2,692
Bekasi Municipality				
Sundanese	Javanese	Betawi	Batak, Tapanuli	Chinese
331,117	523,740	473,309	78,149	13,476

67 *Profil Kependudukan Provinsi Jawa Barat Tahun 2000* (Jakarta: Badan Pusat Statistik, 2000), p. 39.

68 *Idem* , p. 37.

69 *Idem*, pp. 12 and 15.

70 I failed to find accounts of the initial arrival of Bataks and Chinese into Bekasi. However, it is possible that the Bataks migrated to Bekasi through Batavia since the late 19th century for missionary reasons. In 1880, it was *zendeling* Nommensen who sent the first group of seven Batak youths from Selindung to Batavia to attend Seminari Depok, the oldest missionaries' training centre across the archipelago. Before the suspension of the seminary in 1926, 67 persons had been sent to be trained at this Christian missionary school. Some of the Christian Bataks did not return home after they had been trained but preferred to stay in Batavia.

71 See *Profil Kependudukan Provinsi Jawa Barat Tahun 2000* (Jakarta: Badan Pusat Statistik, 2000).

In their new settlements, the Bataks would seek churches or congregations where they could meet other Bataks:

> Many observers note the great enthusiasm the Bataks have to build churches in their new settlements inspired by their desire to replicate their place of origin, their culture and their life and the circumstances in their villages. It is therefore no surprise that after a short while one can see the presence of HKBP congregations and churches everywhere.[72]

HKBP churches existed across West Java and Jakarta. In these regions (including Banten), the HKBP conducted services in various places.[73] During the 1930s-1950s, the HKBP provided services in Kernolong (where the first HKBP church was built in 1931-32), Tanjung Priok, Menteng Taman Suropati 2 (Adhuc Stat Building), Petojo Tanah Abang II, Jalan Sindoro South Jakarta, and Pademangan.[74] It is worth noting that from the 1960s to the 1980s the number of HKBP members kept increasing. The growth in number of HKBP churches and adherents was determined by Batak migration into the area and mortality and birth rates. They did not settle in the expensive central Jakarta areas but rather in less affluent areas like peripheral Jabodetabek[75] neighbourhood mainly because of their low-income professions. Since ordinary Batak people are employed as low-income labourers such as drivers and conductors, construction labourers, roadside tire repair men, small-time traders and the like, they can only afford to live in the peripheral areas of Jakarta. This helped the spread of HKBP to these areas.[76]

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72 Gomar Gultom (ed.), *Keyakinan Dalam Percobaan: Studi Kasus Gereja HKBP* (Jakarta: Pustaka Sopo Metmet, 1993), p. 37.

73 This includes Menteng Central Jakarta, Sudirman Avenue, Slipi, Tanjung Priok, Tanah Tinggi, Ancol Podomoro, Kapuk, Kelapa Gading, Arabika Road West Jakarta, Pos Pengumben, Srengseng Road, Pademangan Barat, Sukapura, Pasar Minggu, Cijantung, Serang, Cengkareng, Tangerang, Merak, Duren Jaya Bekasi, Setia Mekar Bekasi, Cimahi, and Bandung. See Mika P.L. Tobing (et al.), *Profile Huria Kristen Batak Protestan (HKBP) Distrik I Jakarta – 3* (Jakarta: HKBP Distrik XXI Jakarta-3, 2008), pp. 333-342.

74 Tobing (et al.), *Profile*, pp. 333-342.

75 Jabodetabek stands for Jakarta, Bogor, Depok, Bekasi and Tangerang.

76 Tim Bidang Sejarah, *Sejarah Perkembangan HKBP Distrik VIII Jawa Kalimantan* (Jakarta, 2006), p. 26.

According to Pieterson, a pastor serving in the so-called Taman Mini Resort, the Batak Christians are known to be devout individuals.[77] They maintain their religious practices even after having lived in majority Muslim regions for a long period of time.[78] Since the early days of the arrival of Protestant Bataks into Jakarta and West Java, they would always seek out fellow Bataks with whom they could share their language and culture, [79] and they congregate for Sunday Church services wherever they went. The fact that the services were conducted in their shared Batak language contributed significantly to their attendance. The association between Batak identity and Christianity increased the demand for building churches which aided the expansion of Batak churches in Jakarta and West Java.

However, building houses of worship is not easy. Government regulations stipulate many terms and conditions that have to be met in order to be able to build a house of worship.[80] These requirements in many cases prove to be quite prohibitive, especially when it comes to obtaining the 'approval' of people living in the neighbourhood. Muslims are generally reluctant to allow Christians to build churches in their neighbourhood especially when there are few Christians. Failure to gain approval for the building of churches cause much frustration to immigrant Christians and leads to tension with local Muslims forcing them to carry out services at their private homes. Muslim activists accused Christians of sometimes having been able to procure the support for church construction projects by donations of money or other gifts. This tactic could backfire, however, in the event of an objection at any point afterwards, even when construction was already underway and pursuant to Joint Decrees No. 8 and 9/2006 or Joint decree No.1/1969.

The cases of the HKBP church in Cinere Depok, GKI church in Bogor Yasmin residence, and Santa Maria Catholic Church in Purwakarta best exemplify how objections put forth even after construction had

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77 Interview, pastor Pieterson, Jakarta, 10 March 2011.

78 *Idem*.

79 *Idem*.

80 *Peraturan Bersama Menteri Agama dan Menteri Dalam Negeri Nomor: 9 Tahun 2006 dan Nomor: 8 Tahun 2006 tentang Pedoman Pelaksanaan Tugas Kepala Daerah/Wakil Kepala Daerah Dalam Pemeliharaan Kerukunan Umat Beragama, Pemberdayaan Forum Kerukunan Umat Beragama, dan Pendirian Rumah Ibadat*, articles no. 13-20.

begun could hold up the project or even nullify its authorisation. These cases have created a complex mix of legal and political problems as well as inter-religious tension and intolerance.[81] In her study entitled 'Implementing the Regulation on Places of Worship in Indonesia', Melissa Crouch portrays how court action taken by the church with regards to its permit for the construction of a place of worship has on occasion successfully challenged objections that were largely influenced by local politics. The Cinere HKBP's church first attempt at court action, for example, was successful and the Bandung State Administrative Court ruled that the mayor of Depok's cancellation of the HKBP church permit could not be upheld.[82] However, it did not help. Depok officials ignored the Bandung State Administrative Court's decision to enforce the law and to ensure the construction of the church.

A Christian leader I interviewed claimed to be committed to fulfilling all the legal requirements necessary but found it difficult to accept that objections raised by residents in the vicinity of the construction site might veto constructions, let alone those already underway.[83] There is, however, in the spirit of the joint decree number 1/1969, an emphasis on social order in matters pertaining to the propagation of religion and the construction of houses of worship. The mix of legal terms and conditions required in such efforts, on one hand, and the need to ensure order, on the other, have facilitated political intervention in the construction of houses of worship in particular and in the propagation of religion in general.

A Case of Tension in Mustika Jaya

Since the 1970s, the Mustika Jaya sub-district of East Bekasi has been inhabited largely by Protestant Bataks. Some of them live in Pondok Timur Indah (PTI). At one point in the 1990s, Samosir, a Christian Batak in the PTI estate, used his house for Sunday services. In the first few

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81 Melissa Crouch of Melbourne University has written a very interesting study of this kind of legal cases in her 'Implementing the Regulation on Places of Worship in Indonesia: New Problems, Local Politics and Court Action', *Asian Studies Review*, December 2010, Vol. 34, pp. 403–419. See 'Bogor Church congregation defies threats, authorities', *The Jakarta Post*, Monday, 6 September, 2010, p. 2.

82 Crouch, 'Implementing the Regulation', pp. 403-404.

83 Interview, pastor Esron Tampubolon, Jakarta, 25 March 2011.

years the use of his house for congregations drew no protests. Over time attendance increased forcing the Protestant Bataks in the mid-2000s to purchase another house next door owned by a Javanese Muslim. By that time, there was a real need for a place of worship and this need became more pressing as the local Batak population grew. Meanwhile, Bataks from Tapanuli, North Sumatra, kept arriving. The Sunday congregation continued to grow, and the Christian Bataks used the private residence to celebrate Christmas.

A local Muslim leader, ustadz Sahid Tajuddin, expressed Muslims' displeasure with this situation.[84] He expressed his discontent over the fact that most attendants came from outside the village.[85] Over time, he said, more HKBP Christians attended the Sunday services, during which a public road was closed in part to make more parking space for those attending. There were many vehicles coming from outside the village and this worsened traffic conditions and caused noise pollution. The local community felt that the visitors showed neither respect nor care for the neighbourhood. Over time the congregation grew even further, with new members arriving from various places across Bekasi and Karawang.[86] Muslims began to seriously worry about this development, not really because the residence was being used for Sunday worship and Christmas services, but about the prospect of it being permanently used as a church in the neighbourhood. Interestingly, they feared that this would most likely alter the socio-religious and cultural character of their society[87] whereas the actual use of the property as a 'church' was not seen as a problem. The fear of the establishment of a real church underpinned the Muslims' reluctance to agree to the construction of a permanent one in their neighbourhood. Within this atmosphere, tension slowly mounted.

Muslims began to protest by expressing their objections over simple administrative and technical issues, such as regarding the permission to conduct services and celebrations or over traffic congestion caused by the meetings.[88] The private residence happened to

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84 Interview, ustadz Sahid Tajuddin, Bekasi, 1 November 2010.

85 *Idem*.

86 *Idem*.

87 *Idem*.

88 The objection of the people can be seen in *'Berkas Kasus Alih Fungsi Rumah Jl. Puyuh Raya No. 14. RT.01 RW.15 Kelurahan/Kecamatan Mustika Jaya dari*

be at the side of the road, causing many commuters to complain about the heavy traffic and the inconvenience caused by the use of the house. In the meantime, Muslims saw this as a showcase of the Christian Batak faith.[89] Muslim leaders in the village perceived it as an expression of arrogance. The issue soon escalated from the technical matter of the use of a private residence causing congestion on the public road into a religious and cultural problem.

Local Muslims wanted to keep the village as it was and resented the arrival of the Bataks. In an effort to maintain the local status quo, the community mobilised and presented its complaints to the local village administration. On 15 January 2009, a leader of the administration unit at the local level (RW),[90] Nyaman, mediated the tension.[91] He invited the HKBP leaders to discuss the objections of the Muslims and to question the use of a private residence for mass religious services.[92] Nyaman said that the HKBP had been using the house for 18 years without prior permission from the local village administration. Pastors Luspida Simanjuntak and Asian Lumbontaruan acknowledged this situation but wondered why the objections arose only recently.[93]

While no appropriate solution was given to the objections, in December 2009 the HKBP held another Christmas service in the same place, which drew a large crowd. Protests repeated and Nyaman re-invited the HKBP and local leaders to sit together to talk on 3 January 2010. The HKBP apologised, promising to look for a new place for their services, and appealed to be given time for that. However, local leaders demanded the HKBP stick to a timeframe. Aware that this situation could escalate into unrest, on 16 January 2010, the PTI village head took over the handling of the problem and held a meeting. In addition to village officials, local leaders and HKBP leaders, the meeting was also attended by the Forum for Inter-Religious Harmony (Forum Kerukunan antar-Umat Beragama, FKUB). In this meeting potential solutions were

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Januari 2009-Juni 2010' (Pemerintah Kota Bekasi, Kecamatan Mustika Jaya, Kelurahan Mustika Jaya. Rukun Warga (RW) 15., 2010)'.

89 Interview, Suwito, Jakarta, 5 January 2011.

90 Rukun Warga or RW is a small administration unit that operates under the village office and is tasked to manage the coordination of Rukun Tetangga (RT).

91 See '*Berkas Kasus Alih Fungsi Rumah Jl. Puyuh Raya*'.

92 Interview, Nyaman, by Muchtadlirin, Bekasi, 16 January 2011.

93 *Idem*.

discussed with the HKBP leaders, with the FKUB proposing the Muslim community to allow the HKBP to temporarily conduct their Sunday services for a period of time to be agreed upon. The HKBP leader Luspida Simanjuntak argued that the HKBP had been there for 18 years and wondered why they should now have to go. She, however, pointed out that HKBP would do its best towards a workable compromise provided a new building or land could be found.

Luspida claimed that since 2004 the HKBP sought to build a church on their own empty land one to two kilometres from *Puyuh Raya* road in Ciketing but the people there warned them not to do that in order not to cause problems.[94] In this complicated situation, HKBP leaders sought understanding from the Muslims, who said they could not wait too long. In the end, they demanded the HKBP leave the house on the 31st of January 2010. The HKBP could not accept this ultimatum and continued to worship there because they felt that their religious freedom should always be protected by the state.[95]

Meeting failure at village and district levels, the problem was then pushed up to the Bekasi municipal authority. On 2 February 2010, the Bekasi mayor held a meeting with all civil, police and military authorities under his jurisdiction. The meeting decided that the P2P office[96] would issue an order to seal the house on 10 February as it violated its building function. The sealing was scheduled for 12 February; however, it was postponed after a Member of Parliament from the PDI-P party intervened by making a call to the mayor.[97] This call helped postpone the sealing for two weeks. However, due to Muslim pressure, the P2B office issued another order to close the house to any religious services on 25 February 2010. On the 1st of March, the house that was used as venue for Sunday and Christmas services of the HKBP congregation was officially sealed.

The sealing of the house outraged HKBP members. Some female HKBP members came to the houses of Nyaman, the RW head, and Suwito, the Muslim's spokesperson, who was also the *imam* of the local

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94 Meeting notes written by Abd Jabbar named *'Berkas Kasus Alih Fungsi Rumah'.*

95 *Idem*.

96 P2B is Dinas Pengawasan dan Penertiban Bangunan (Office for Building Control and Order).

97 Interview, Nyaman, by Muchtadlirin, Bekasi, 16 January 2011.

mosque, to express their anger. These Muslims sought police assistance as they felt they felt intimidated. The HKBP found the sealing unacceptable. They removed the cordon, accusing the government officials of being unfair. They maintained that the 1945 Constitution guaranteed their right to worship and continued to oppose the government decision. In the name of religious freedom they resumed their services in the house. On 20 March 2010, however, the municipal authority sealed the house again and warned the HKBP not to oppose the law.

In the meantime, Muslim activists argued that articles of the 1945 Constitution should provide practical guidelines on the implementation of Joint Decree Number 8/9 2006, which authorised the construction of all houses of worship at the district level and required that it be based on a real need. The joint decree requires proof of 90 members of the religious community seeking to construct a house of worship, with verified names and identity card numbers along with support from 60 residents living in the neighbourhood.[98] Due to the fact that the Mustika Jaya district is overwhelmingly Muslim, it seems unlikely that any Bataks seeking a church would be able to fulfil this requirement. The Decree also requires recommendations from the head of the office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the FKUB at the district level.

In order to be fair to the Batak Christians, the Bekasi municipality promised to provide a location for them to perform their Sunday services. The HKBP, however, said that the government did not keep its word. Since then, the issue became so politically-charged that their search for other places for their Sunday services became very difficult. In July 2010, they moved their services to an empty plot of land about 2.5 kilometres to Ciketing Asem, Mustika Jaya, East Bekasi. Although they claimed to have obtained the permission of the local authorities in this new location, their arrival was challenged by the people in the neighbourhood with the support of members of Muslim organisations from outside the village. Every Sunday morning they organised protests. For the Christians, the reason behind their objection was not really clear. What was stated was that they did not want the HKBP Christians to hold their Sunday services in their village, let alone build a church.

[98] See Joint Decree issued by the Minister of Religious Affairs and Minister of Home Affairs Numbers 9 and 8 Tahun 2006, article 14.

They considered the performance of Sunday services in their village an intrusive imposition. The general complaint was that the Sunday services would disturb those residing in the area.[99]

However, the HKBP rejected these protests as they were convinced of their right to conduct services on their own land. Especially after their experience in their old location, this new challenge encouraged them to continue to defend their religious rights. The Bataks, especially those from North Tapanuli, are strongly attached to the Christian faith which has become enmeshed with their culture. They left home with their parents' prayer that they would maintain their culture and keep faithful to their church.[100] This religious element in the Batak culture lends great fervour in the defence of their religion. It seems that this commitment, at once cultural and religious, is what drove the HKBP congregation to keep performing their weekly Sunday services while ignoring the protest from all sides.

This was an expression of resistance. The Batak Christians acknowledged the prohibition of using a private residence for public religious services. Nonetheless, they were unhappy with the government's sealing of the house because they felt that they were impeded in performing their Sunday services and were denied their freedom of religion. They knew they had violated a government regulation, but also felt that the government was complicit in denying their fundamental human right to worship as guaranteed by Law No. 39/1999 on Human Rights. Recognising their marginalised position and banking on the sympathies of various electronic and print media, they accentuated their discontent. Towards this end, they kept gathering at the sealed house every Sunday morning before walking the few kilometres to the empty plot of land in Ciketing where they performed their service. My respondents, whose house is next to the plot the Bataks use complained of the inconvenience they faced. One of them said:

> You know... upon the sealing of the house they used for Sunday services, the HKBP Christians kept coming to the place and used it as their meeting point. From there, they walked in lines to perform their Sunday service on an empty piece of land owned by a member of HKBP congregation. On their way to the land they kept walking in lines together, singing Christian songs in the Batak language at the top of

[99] Interview, ustadz Sahid Tajuddin and Siti Hafsah, Bekasi, 1 November 2010.
[100] Interview, pastor Erson Tampubolon, Jakarta, 25 March 2011.

> their voices, even louder than the Quranic recitation usually heard from the village mosque minaret. It sounds strange to us as Muslims.[101]

Local Muslims were unhappy with what my respondent suggests is a 'theatrical performance.'[102] She pointed out that before the clash on 12 September 2010 erupted the Bataks did this without fail every Sunday. She complained: "Their voices were loud and their language was strange to us."[103] She then compared the gospel choir on the Ciketing Street every Sunday morning with the Quranic recitation from the minaret and reiterated her discontent because the gospel choir drowned the Quranic recitation. Religious and ethnic identity were thus involved as the bases of tension, which in the end escalated into violence.

The clash also indirectly resulted from the failure of the local authorities to step in timely to mediate the situation. Outside intervention on behalf of both groups also contributed to the clash. Local Muslims sought the help of their brethren outside the village.[104] The Christians sought the political intervention from a PDI-P member of parliament.[105] The former succeeded in applying more pressure on the HKBP members in the village, while the latter demanded that the Bekasi municipality, having gained office with the support of the party, act as fairly as possible. This situation, left unresolved, culminated in the small-scale attack on 12 September against the Batak Protestants of HKBP that left their pastors injured. Many Christian and Muslim leaders were shocked over the sudden eruption of this inter-religious tension in Bekasi.

The Bekasi Islamic Community Congress (Kongres Umat Islam Bekasi, KUIB) accused the HKBP of violating the law as well as having transgressed local norms and cultures. The latter was demonstrated in their disrespect for the local people and their environment. It was said that the way in which they had obtained permission from the local people was illegitimate because the Muslims claimed the Batak

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101 Interview, Siti Hafsah, Ciketing, Bekasi, 1 November 2010.
102 *Idem*.
103 *Idem*.
104 Interview, Suwito, Jakarta, 5 January 2011**.** Also Interview with Nyaman, by Muchtadlirin, Bekasi, 16 January 2011.
105 Interview, Suwito, Jakarta, 5 January 2011.

Christians had misused people's identity cards.[106] HKBP leader, Erson Tampubolon, rejected this accusation, claiming that they had obtained the consent from the local people without any tricks.[107]

The conflict was actually there because the Muslims thought that the Protestant Bataks were trying to proselytise and the Muslim wrongly thought that the Batak Christians were intolerant.[108] Muslim leaders in Mustika Jaya sub-district said that they have been living with the Javanese and Sundanese churches since the nineteenth century in tolerance and mutual respect. There never had been any misunderstanding or clash.[109] They felt the tension with the Bataks was rooted in the cultural gap between Muslims mostly of Betawi, Sundanese and Javanese origins and the HKBP Christians of Batak origin.

The introduction of Christianity in Mustika Jaya failed to garner the reception it enjoyed in Pondok Melati in the late nineteenth to early twentieth century. Aside from the fact that the Protestant Bataks did not use the same approach as deployed by missionaries in Pondok Melati, today's context has also changed. What we see in this case is the refusal of the local community to accept the HKBP Christians in their neighbourhood. There were too many irreconcilable differences.

Christianisation and its Opponents

The Pentecostal and HKBP growth in Bekasi caused deep concern among Muslim activists leading them to oppose Christianisation and establish anti-apostasy organisations. They hoped to maintain their monopoly of the public sphere by taking anti-apostasy actions to put pressure on missionaries. However, it seems clear that the establishment of these organisations is symptomatic of Muslim anxieties about Christianisation. Interestingly, Muslim activists have been paying much attention to Christianisation in a situation of the deepening Islamisation across the region. A 2000 census indicated Muslims constitute the largest population in West Java (34,884,417 million/97.65

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106 Jeje Zainuddin, 'Solusi Konflik Ciketing', *Republika,* 20 September 2010, p. 4; see also a report in the same edition on p. 5. See also 'Klarifikasi FPI Bekasi Raya Atas Insiden HKBP', www.fpi.or.id 16 September 2010.

107 Interview, pastor Erson Tampubolon, Jakarta, 25 March 2011.

108 Interview, ustadz Sahid Tajuddin, Bekasi, 1 November 2010.

109 *Idem*.

per cent), where Islam is a thriving aspect of identity.[110] Despite being lower than the annual Christian growth rate of over 4.5 per cent, the annual Muslim growth rate in this region (2.42 per cent) is higher than that nation-wide (1.86 per cent). In terms of numbers and percentage, the national Muslim population totals 177,528,772 or 88.22 per cent, which percentage is much lower than that of the total West Javanese Muslim population of around 97.65 per cent.[111]

The Christian demand for new houses of worship increased in this context as an expression of growth, but Muslim activists saw the surge in church construction as an expression of evangelist Christianisation efforts instead of an honest need for houses of worship. The Muslims' conviction that evangelism is a threat means that this issue is difficult to resolve. In countering the evangelist mission, Muslim activists established anti-apostasy organisations in places across West Java and Jakarta which staged strong protests against church construction. They also protested against conducting Sunday services in private residences. Counter-actions culminated in 2004 and 2005, causing continuous tension in Muslim-Christian relations.

Muslims accused Christians of implementing an insidious Christianisation agenda, while Christians kept denouncing Muslims for the violence they perpetrated against them. Sustained mutual suspicion meant they were hyper-sensitive towards each other's religious activities. The perceived threat of Christianisation has affected the Muslim community psychologically, inciting fear, anger and suspicion towards Christians. There was the potential that the Muslims would become paranoid. This might cause the danger that they would over-generalise and consider all Christian denominations hostile and ambitious, while aggressive proselytisation was in fact mainly carried out by evangelicals. How irrationality turns into violence is well-exemplified by the build-up of tension between the Muslims and the Christians of the HKBP denomination in Bekasi, which erupted into the attack on two HKBP pastors on 12 November 2010. The violence also

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[110] Aris Ananta, Evi Nurvidya Arifin, Leo Suryadinata (eds.), *Indonesian Electoral Behaviours: A Statistical Perspective* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2004), p. 203.

[111] Suryadinata, Nurvidya Arifin, Ananta (eds.), *Indonesia's Population*, pp. 104-110.

speaks to the latent tension between these two different faith communities.

Muslim activists responded through the formation of a coalition of *Dakwahist*s, Modernists and Islamists to challenge evangelical Christianisation. The ICG report mentioned above claims that Salafi jihadists seem to have become involved in this movement and warns that they may use the Christianisation issue as their "recruitment theme" for a new generation of jihadists.[112] While this particular claim needs to be investigated, it is obvious that Christianisation represents a threat considered serious enough to induce Muslim leaders and activists to mobilise into a coalition cutting across diverse ideological persuasions. Most of the groups involved have no history of violence, but some have frequently been responsible for the sealing of churches across Jakarta and West Java.

For many anti-apostasy activists, the ICG report's claims came as no surprise because most facts presented in the report were already known. The ICG, long viewed with suspicion by Muslim activists, now acknowledged the reality of Christianisation. An Islamist website, *Voice of Islam*,[113] which was a major source used in the report, used it to convey to its readers the message of the reality of Christianisation. On 29 December 2010, it published a report entitled "These are cases of Christianisation behind the Bekasi Incident."[114] Quoting the ICG report, it maintained that one major reason for the disharmony between Muslims and Christians was the "aggressive evangelical Christian proselytisation in Muslim strongholds."[115] A coalition of Bekasi *dakwah* activists claimed the report as plain evidence of their complaints about Christianisation.

Although the report did not invoke a collective response from mainstream Muslim organisations such as Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah, it did draw the attention of intellectuals like Azyumardi

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112 ICG, 'Indonesia: "Christianization" and Tolerance', pp. 15-16.

113 www.voa-islam.com.

114 See 'Inilah Kasus-kasus Kristenisasi di Balik Insiden Ciketing Bekasi' (These are cases of Christianisation behind the Ciketing Bekasi Incident), in http://www.voa-Islam.com/news/indonesia/2010/12/29/12549/inilak-kasuskasus-kristenisasi-di-balik-insiden-ciketing-bekasi/ dated 29 December 2010.

115 http://www.voa-islam.com/news/indonesia/2010/12/29/12549/inilah-kasuskasus-kristenisasi-di-balik-insiden-ciketing-bekasi (accessed 13 March 2011).

Azra who authored an article in the national daily, *Republika,* entitled "Christianisation and tolerance"[116] criticising evangelist intolerance.[117] Arguing for respectful tolerance in spreading religion, Azra warned of the danger to inter-faith harmony posed by aggressive proselytising, the more so when deception or other illegitimate means are employed. He reiterated that to avoid tension and disharmony within society, the government had actually barred missionary activities from targeting those people who already embraced a recognised faith.[118] Anti-Christianisation activists subsequently tapped Azra's critique as intellectually legitimising their protests. They made numerous copies and distributed them on the 6th of January 2011 to activists involved in the rally on the streets in front of the Bekasi Court.[119] From Bandung, prominent Muslim leader K.H. Athian Ali praised Azra's article for his critical comments about the intolerance of the evangelist approach.[120]

In fact, the outpour of Muslim resentment toward Christians had been on-going since mid-2010. By that time Muslim groups established the Bekasi Islamic Congress and used every mosque in the city to create an anti-apostasy movement.[121] The coalition of Muslim groups convened at the Al-Azhar mosque to address the so-called 'Christianisation problem.' One of the group's leaders, Murhali Barda, head of the Bekasi chapter of the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI), who later allegedly assaulted the two church leaders in Ciketing, East Bekasi,[122] proclaimed that all Muslims should "unite and be on guard because the Christians

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116 Azyumardi Azra, 'Kristenisasi dan Toleransi' (Christianisation and Tolerance), *Republika,* 02 December, 2010.

117 *Idem*.

118 *Idem*. Azra was probably referring to Joint Decree of the Ministers of Home Affair and Minister of Religious Affairs No. 1/1969 dated 13 September 1969 over the Implementation of the Government Officials' Task in Guaranteeing Order and Smooth Operation of Development and Religious Worship amongst Believers.

119 My own observation on-site in Bekasi, on the 6th of January 2011. The rally itself aimed to influence the outcome of the trial while showing support for those accused of incitement against the Protestant Bataks of Ciketing, East Bekasi.

120 Interview, Hedi Muhammad, Bandung, 13 January 2011.

121 http://www.thejakartaglobe.com/city/muslim-groups-talk-war-over-christianization/382952, accessed 13 March 2010.

122 'Two Church Leaders Assaulted', *The Jakarta Post*, 1 September 2010.

are up to something."[123] An activist from the Forum for Ulama-Ummat of Indonesia (Forum Ulama-Ummat Indonesia, FUUI) in Bandung, Hedi Muhammad, characterised Christianisation as illegitimate missionary activity. He argued that the methods employed by the evangelicals have no basis in Christ's teachings and he questioned whether Christianisation more accurately involved the commodification of religion.[124] Some initiatives to proselytise Muslims obviously contradict Christianity itself, he said**.** Instead of deceptively baiting destitute Muslims with financial carrots in such un-Christian fashion, Hedi held up the personification of genuine compassion that was Mother Theresa. He felt that her sincere dedication to humanity earned her a place in heaven.[125]

It was under these circumstances that the anti-apostasy activists organised their resistance. In May 2010**,** they held two religious rallies (*tabligh akbar)* that brought together a coalition of Muslim activists of various organisations from around Jakarta, Bekasi and Bandung. Unlike ordinary religious rallies that served as forums for addressing ritual, spiritual and social issues, the latter rallies addressed sensitive issues surrounding apostasy or *pemurtadan*.[126] The first rally was held in South Bekasi on 8 May and was led by K.H. Athian Ali, the head of the FUUI in Bandung. The following day, another mass rally was held at the Barokah Mosque in downtown Bekasi. Represented at the meeting were Muslim organisations from all over Bekasi, including the Indonesian Islamic Propagation Council (DDII), Indonesian Islamic Scholars' Council (MUI), Reformist Islamic Movement (GARIS), Islamic Defender Front (FPI), Muhammadiyah, PERSIS, Indonesian Islamic Youth Organisation (GPII), and many others. The meeting was hosted by the Bekasi Anti-apostasy Front (FAPB) which had put Christianisation on the agenda for discussion.[127]

The gathering produced the Bekasi Muslims Declaration which included: (1) the rejection of the construction of churches that do not

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[123] http://www.thejakartaglobe.com/city/muslim-groups-talk-war-over-christianization/382952 (13 March 2010).

[124] Interview, Hedi Muhammad, Bandung, 13 January 2011.

[125] *Idem*.

[126] Interview, Abu Al-Iz, Bekasi, 2 November 2010. See also ICG, 'Indonesia: "Christianization" and Tolerance'.

[127] Interview, Abu Al-Iz, Bekasi, 2 November 2010.

meet genuine needs and follow legal procedures as this may cause disquiet among the people and lead to unrest; (2) the strong condemnation of any attempts by evangelist Christians to convert Muslims; (3) the expression that Muslims were offended by affronts towards Islam and its symbols; (4) the demand that local authorities and the police take action and sentence the perpetrators.[128] The declaration conveys that Muslims were angry with the attempts to Christianisation. Their defensive mind-set is also evident in their much-heightened sensitivity towards criticism of their religious symbols in a situation where they are growing themselves through increased Islamisation.

Increasing Assaults Targeting Churches

Anti-apostasy actions involving the use of violence provoked tension between Christians and Muslims with socially-polarising potential. From 1998 to 2010, numerous churches and other Christian properties across West Java were the targets of frequent attacks by Muslim mobs and many churches were forced to close. During this time, militant Muslim activists often protested the use for Sunday services of private properties such as shop-houses (*ruko*) or private residences. They also regularly mobilised to protest the construction of churches in a number of places, even where the government had issued construction permits. There was also an increase in the number of church construction disputes brought before the courts.[129] Among these disputes are those involving the HKBP church in Depok and one Christian church in Taman Yasmin, Bogor. Church closures increasingly occurred across West Java with 45 instances reported in 2004-05.[130] A Christian pastor, Chrisman Hutabarat, acknowledged that many of the churches that were forcibly closed indeed did not have construction permits (IMB). Most of the churches closed or destroyed, however, had been there for decades and had been constructed in the 1960s to the 1990s with the support of the residents in their surroundings. The *Jakarta Post*, for instance, stated

[128] 'Deklarasi Ummat Islam Bekasi', a pamphlet issued by Bekasi Anti-Proselytising Front (Front Anti-Pemurtadan Bekasi, FAPB) of Bekasi, Pekayon Jaya, Bekasi, West Java.

[129] Melissa Crouch, 'Implementing the Regulation', pp. 403-419.

[130] Interview, pastor Chrisman Hutabarat, the Secretary of the Associaton of Indonesan Pentacostal Churches (Persekutuan Gereja-Gereja Pentakosta Indonesia, PGPI, West Java), 7 July 2008.

that from September 2004 to July 2007 there were more than 30 cases of churches being attacked or forcibly closed.[131] This number would seem to be rather too low in view of other findings. What is significant here is the fact that the number does not seem to have reduced in the past few years. Moreover, anti-Christianisation activists have continued to pursue their agenda and to consolidate their position at the grassroots.[132] Their concerns over the intensified proselytising actions appeared in the early days of post-1998 Indonesian democracy even though the establishment of formal anti-apostasy organisations is a more recent development that started in 2005.

The Ministers' Joint Decree Numbers 8 and 9/2006

Due to increasing tension and intensified clashes between people of different faiths, the need for a solution to the problem became ever more urgent. Believers, however, could not see eye to eye about the causes of disharmony within their society. The tension revolved especially around the expansive presence and the construction of houses of worship, especially churches. Muslim activists accused Christians of having a Christianisation agenda focusing on Muslims while attacks on churches were becoming more frequent. In this context, various religious leaders opined that Joint Degree No. 1/1969 should be suspended while others said that it should be upheld or even revised. The former generally represents the voices of Christian leaders, while the latter, those of Muslim ones.

A prominent pastor, Ismartono, noted that the forced church closings shared a common pattern. In his words:

> Muslim residents were mobilised to complain about the "unrest" caused by activities in the churches or in other Christian buildings. Then, Christians living near the churches were intimidated, he said. Finally, government officials declared the churches closed, based on the Joint Ministerial Decree No. 1 of 1969, and especially its article 4 on the construction of worship houses.[133]

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131 'Another Christian church attacked in Bandung', *The Jakarta Post*, 4 June 2007.

132 Interview, Abu Al-Iz (FAPB's chairman), Bekasi, 2 November 2010.

133 'Indonesia Christians Intimidated to "Voluntarily" Close Down Churches', *UCAN*, May 13, 1999.

The Christians had been disappointed that the Ministerial Decree had even been issued in 1969. Now, with churches increasingly forced to close, Christian leaders felt compelled to demand a review of the Decree. On May 1999, members of the Communication Forum of Jakarta Christians (Forum Komunikasi Kristiani Jakarta, FKKJ) held a seminar discussing and reviewing the Decree. An adviser to the Justice minister, Cecilia F.G. Sunaryati, who was on the seminar panel, agreed with the idea to review the Decree in order to imbue it with the spirit of reform as well as to strengthen its legal basis.[134] Sunaryati, a Catholic and former director of the national board for the development of laws at the Ministry of Law and Human Rights, pointed out that the need to review the Decree also stemmed from its failure to concur with the spirit of religious freedom which informed the 1945 Constitution.[135] The forum was also concerned with the human rights perspectives regarding the Decree. The FKKJ chairman, Bonar Simangunsong, promised to continue studying the decree from both legal and human rights aspects and to submit his findings to the government. He argued that the Decree had been extensively misused to "deny Christians religious freedom by halting church construction."[136]

Under these circumstances the chairman of the Communion of Indonesian Churches (PGI), Andreas A. Yewangoe, put this controversial issue to the attention of President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono in their meeting on 23 August 2005.[137] In response, the President asked the Minister of Religious Affairs and the Minister of Home Affairs to undertake an assessment of the existing legal foundations which regulate the socio-religious life of people of different faiths.[138] The main question concerned the joint decree of the Minister of Home Affairs and the Minister of Religious Affairs No. 1/1969. The joint decree, passed in 1969 by the New Order regime, stipulated the general guidelines for the

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134 *Idem*.

135 *Idem*.

136 *Idem*.

137 'Hard-Liners confirm church closure in Bandung', *The Jakarta Post*, 8/25/2005.

138 '*Naskah Sosialisasi Peraturan Bersama Menteri Agama dan Menteri dalam Negeri No. 9 and 8 year 2006 tentang Pedoman Pelaksanaan Tugas Kepala Daerah/Wakil Kepala Daerah dalam Pemeliharaan Kerukunan Umat Beragama, Pemberdayaan Forum Kerukunan Umat Beragama, dan Pendirian Rumah Ibadat*.' p. 2.

implementation of the tasks of the government apparatus in keeping order and the regulation of sustainable development and religious observance by believers.[139] The decree contained regulations on religious propagation and the construction of houses of worship, inspired by the fact that the construction of houses of worship created much inter-religious tension.[140]

The aim of joint decree no 1/1969 was to give full protection towards religious freedom while upholding social order. The regime guaranteed the freedom of religious observance but insisted that this be conditional on social order. After more than forty years, many view the joint decree as inadequate, because ambiguous, and having lost relevance to address specific practical aspects of religious life.[141] This appraisal was made in September 2005 in a joint meeting of high-ranking state officials including the Ministers of Home Affairs, Religious Affairs, Law and Human Rights and the Attorney-General. The officials concluded that various aspects of joint decree no 1/1969 were no longer relevant and needed to be revised.[142] The weaknesses included, *first*, the ambiguous wording it contained, with many sentences amenable to multiple interpretations. *Second*, it lacked detailed provisions regarding the construction of houses of worship. These were the roots of more recent social discord.

Upon the instruction of the President, the Minister of Religious Affairs, in cooperation with the Minister of Home Affairs, made drafts of joint decrees number 8 and 9 on the guidelines for local authorities in the maintenance of religious harmony, the empowerment of the Forum for Inter-religious Harmony (FKUB), and the construction of houses of

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[139] '*Sambutan Menteri Agama R.I Pada Sosialisasi Peraturan Bersama Menteri Agama dan Menteri Dalam Negeri Nomor 9 Tahun 2006/Nomor 8 Tahun 2006'*, in http://www.depdagri.go.id/news/2006/04/17, accessed 14 May 2009

[140] '*Naskah Sosialisasi Peraturan Bersama Menteri Agama dan Menteri dalam Negeri No. 9 and 8 year 2006 regarding Pedoman Pelaksanaan Tugas Kepala Daerah/Wakil Kepala Daerah dalam Pemeliharaan Kerukunan Umat Beragama, Pemberdayaan Forum Kerukunan Umat Beragama, dan Pendirian Rumah Ibadat*.' p. 7.

[141] '*Sambutan Menteri Agama RI Pada Sosialisasi Peraturan Bersama Menteri Agama dan Menteri Dalam Negeri Nomor 9 Tahun 2006/Nomor 8 Tahun 2006'*, in http://www.depdagri.go.id/news/2006/04/17, accessed 14 May 2009.

[142] *Idem*.

worship. The joint degree No 9 and 8 contains ten chapters and 31 articles. The regulations about the construction of houses of worship are stipulated in articles 13-17 of chapter IV. Article 14 stipulates the procedures to obtain permission to build houses of worship. Article 14 (1) says: "the construction of houses of worship must meet administrative and technical requirements." The following point, article 14 (2), states:

> In addition to the requirements referred to in article 14 (1), the construction of house of worship must meet specific requirements that include: (a) a list of names and identity card numbers of the house of worship's users of at least 90 (ninety) persons authorised by local authorities, according to the boundaries referred to in article 13 (3); (b) local support of at least 60 (sixty) persons authorised by the headman/village head; (c) a written recommendation from the head of the Department of Religious Affairs at the district/city office, and (d) written recommendation from FKUB of district/city office.

These requirements look conservative, weak and prone to incite conflict in society. It has proved difficult for believers who want to build a house of worship to meet these requirements especially those required by points (b) and (c). In many cases, it is not easy to get support from the local people of a different faith. Under this situation, or when there is an urgent demand to build a house of worship, local support of at least 60 (sixty) persons can become a matter of manipulation by conflicting parties; either local support is indeed manipulated or accused of being manipulated. Conflict and tension often occur after a house of worship has started construction and generally after accusations that local support had been manipulated.

However, leaders of different religions do not seem to have an alternative to these conservative requirements and they approved the arrangement. Upon the completion of the draft by the two Ministers, religious leaders of various religions were invited to offer their insights and comments. After the decree had been discussed eleven times all parties involved in the discussion finally decided to agree to a final draft on 21 March 2006. Subsequently, the Ministers of Religious and Home Affairs both signed it into law.

Conclusion

In chapter three we have seen how the changing context, the regime's politics and the state's ideology exterminated the Communist party and its followers, which slowly undermined the significance of *Aliran Kebatinan* and provided the context for the increased insistence of the significance of religions. Christianity was among the official religions that benefited from the changing context and increasingly appeared to be a strong opponent against Islam. As the importance of the PKI and the *Aliran Kebatinan* had disappeared, Christianity's significance increased and seemed to have replaced them in neutralising deepening Islamisation in the region. Christian leaders saw that the regime's change provided the context to pave the way for Christianisation *pari passu* with Islamisation.

As said in the beginning of this chapter, Christianity had been present in West Java, especially, since the nineteenth century and continued to gain ground in various parts of the region including Sukabumi, Cianjur, Bogor, and Bekasi. Thousands of Sundanese embraced Christianity at the end of the nineteenth century and more Sundanese chose Christianity in the 20th century. The conversion continued after independence and grew rapidly from the mid-1960s onward. Although Muslim Sundanese denounced their fellow Sundanese for converting to Christianity, their opposition to Christianisation did not seem to be very strong and therefore did not cause polarisation along the lines of strict-religious sentiments, or create conflict of identity between people of different faith. Recently, in the past few decades, Christianisation in the region, especially in Bekasi, had different consequences after society had changed due to economic development.

As stated from the outset, since the 1970s, economic growth and industrial development in Bekasi as promoted by the New Order has changed society, especially after the influx over several decades of hundreds of thousands of migrants from Sumatra and other parts of the country. As said, among the migrants were Christians of Batak and Chinese origins who entered Bekasi along with their social institutions and cultural identity. Living among a majority Muslim population, the Chinese and Batak Christians secured their ethnic distinctiveness and religious identity through a Christian way of life, and by displaying their desire to promote Christian values among non-Christians. Leading experts on Christianity in Indonesia, Jan Sihar Aritonang and Karel

Steenbrink, observe a 'spectacular growth' of Christianity, especially of Pentecostals and Evangelicals.[143] This Christianisation is done by new Christian actors under non-Sundanese leadership and this marked a new trend in the Christianisation of West Java. Some Christian elites took note of Muslims' fears about the recent development of Christianity,[144] as witnessed by Muslim activists' creation of anti-Christianisation organisations tasked to neutralise Christianity's upsurge. Now, in this context, Muslim activists acted as the opponents who caused the tension between Bekasi Muslims and Batak Christians to emerge to the surface.

This opposition trend is novel, especially in terms of organisation. The anti-Christianisation organisations now came to be organised under new banners including those of the Front Pembela Islam (FPI), Jamaat Ansarut Tauhid (JAT), Gerakan Reformis Islam (GARIS), and Aliansi Gerakan Anti Pemurtadan (AGAP), et cetera, displacing old banners like those of Muhammadiyah, PERSIS, NU, and others. In terms of approach, these new anti-Christianisation organisations did not seem to be well-organised nor endowed with the right direction and goal: they even tended to be violent. They were different from anti-Christianisation organisations in the early days of the New Order, which had a clear *dakwah* vision and had programs with access to proper intellectual resources. At that time, the *Dakwahists* struggled to win over the regime's policies on the management of religion and *dakwah*. On the contrary, the most recent anti-Christianisation organisations do not seem to adopt a proper strategy in their demands for legislation in their favour. They are weak and reactionary. While the New Order politics on religion were losing relevance in the face of the Reform era, it is unfortunate that since the early days of the Reform era, after four regimes in power, no proper religious policy has been issued to cope with radicalism inspired by anti-Christianisation reactions caused by continued rivalry between Islam and Christianity, two world religions whose institutions keep developing and whose influence are deepening

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[143] Aritonang and Steenbrink, *A History of Christianity in Indonesia*, pp. 867-902.

[144] "There is a real fear that Christianity is on the march," says Mike Hilliard, a Scottish minister who with his Indonesian wife runs an orphanage outside Jakarta that has been targeted by militant Muslims. Because of this fear, emotions are easily stirred up and mobs can form quickly. See Hannah Beech, 'Christianity's surge in Indonesia'.

in Indonesia. What is worth noting is that Christianity, which in the past failed to become deeply rooted in West Java, is now becoming more apparent and more significant in the urban areas of Bekasi.