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Conversion and Colonialism: Islam and Christianity in North Sulawesi, c. 1700-1900

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Citation

Lopez, A. C. (2018, September 18). *Conversion and Colonialism: Islam and Christianity in North Sulawesi, c. 1700-1900*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/65631>

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Issue Date: 2018-09-18

CHAPTER 5

Christianization in Sangir-Talaud

This chapter explains the phenomenon of Christian conversions in Sangir-Talaud. It illustrates the centrality of colonial centralization as the ultimate driving force for the massive conversions of the Sangirese-speaking peoples to Protestant Christianity. It identifies the last decade of the nineteenth century as a major turning point when colonial policy induced deep political and economic shifts in the traditional society of Sangir-Talaud. It shows that despite earlier attempts to convert the Sangirese in the preceding decades, success remained rather limited.

This chapter argues that large-scale conversions came as a result of the political and economic policies that weakened the authority of the traditional chiefs (*rajas*) and strengthened and centralized the power of the colonial government. Centralization came in the form of monetary taxation, obligatory monetarization of the copra trade, abolition of slavery, and the appointment of a resident colonial functionary for the main Sangirese islands. Colonial centralization freed many of the Sangirese from the traditional bonds that tied them to their chiefs. However, it crucially widened, if not opened, the political space for Christian missionaries—with explicit support from the colonial government—to penetrate Sangir-Talaud's traditional society hitherto guarded by local chiefs.

Before the colonial reforms of the 1890s, the Sangirese archipelago had been ruled indirectly from Manado by five *rajas* and their respective councils who possessed varying degrees of political, economic, and religious autonomy and monopoly. Their wealth lay mostly in their control of manpower (slaves) and resources (for example, edible bird's nests) as well as generating profits for themselves through their control of trade and goods redistribution. They forbade their subjects to trade with Europeans (*borgo*) and Chinese from Manado and Makassar. Moreover, through agreements with visiting traders, the chiefs also resisted shifting from barter to monetary exchange in the interest of greater profit. As a result, the political and economic power that underpinned the authority of the *raja* and maintained traditional society was preserved even though a small network of mission schools and western missionaries had had a permanent presence since the mid-nineteenth century.

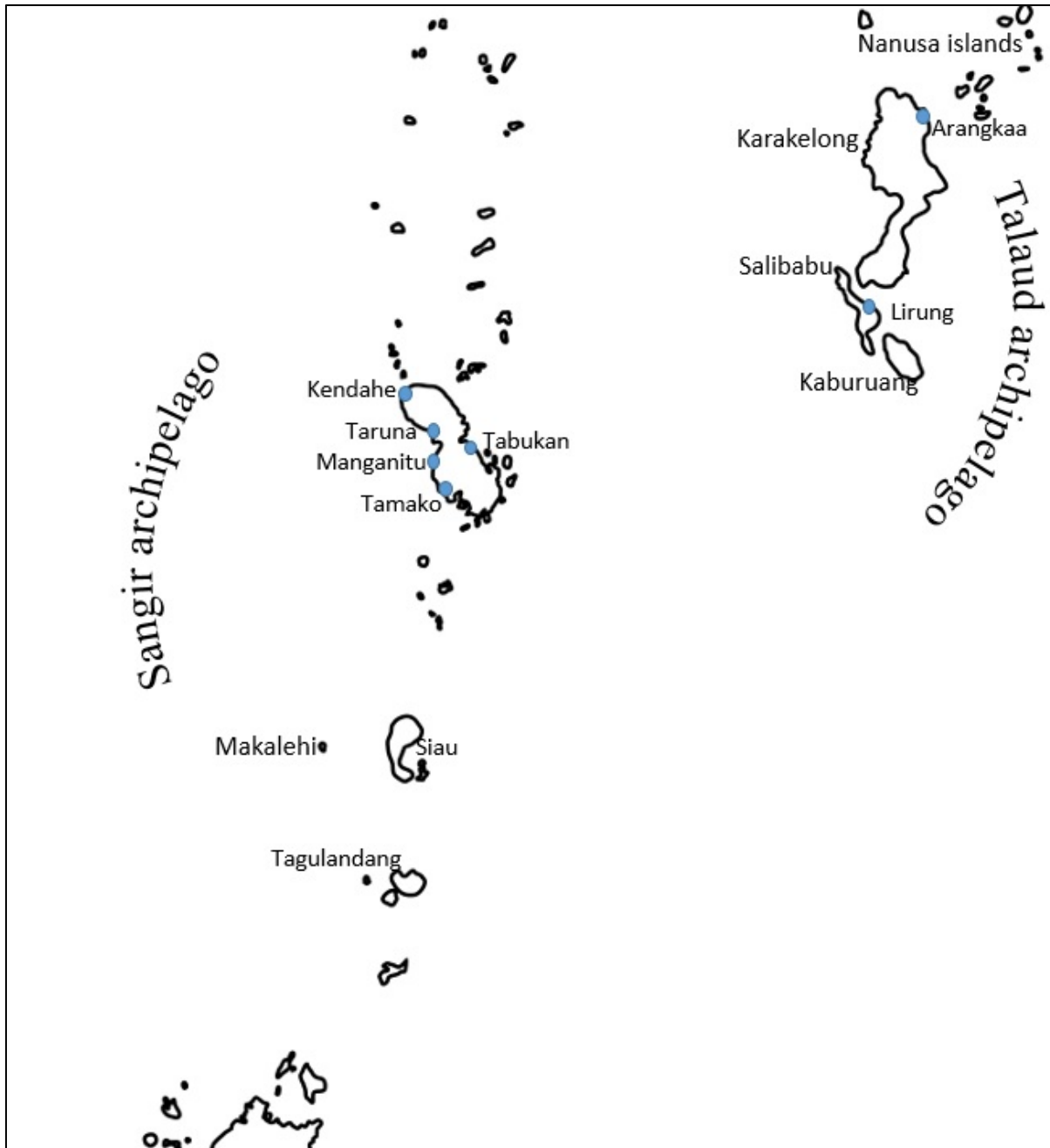
However, colonial reforms forcibly opened the economy and politics of Sangir. Monetary taxation was introduced and monetary exchanges instead of barter were required. For instance, the influential raja of Siau, Jacob Ponto, who ruled Siau for around 40 years, lost his claim to his slaves in the resource-rich island of Makalehi, which was previously closed to outsiders, missionaries especially. The promotion of Christian conversion and education came alongside the presence of reforming colonial functionaries. These changes occurred in the main Sangirese islands in the 1890s and in the Talaud archipelago in the first decades of the next century.

The case of Sangir-Talaud mirrors that of Minahasa and even that of Bolaang-Mongondow in that conversions were a direct result of colonial centralization. The twin policies of monetarization of economic exchange and imposition of monetary taxes seem to reflect what had occurred in Mongondow and Minahasa in the 1850s. In all the three cases, the colonial policy of bringing more people closer to the market and thus away from the monopoly of local chiefs was a crucial element in the conversion to world religions. Moreover, in all three cases the centralizing authority seemed to have justified the circumvention of local rule by promoting religious conversion and thus an affiliation with a supra-local identity.

This explanation to Sangirese conversions deviates from the oft-cited “social crisis” explanation in that it is less about the prohibition of traditional religious rituals leading to the search for new religious meanings,¹ and more about a colonial policy circumventing local rule and expanding the social, political, and economic horizons of ordinary individuals.

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section describes Sangirese society and politics before the late nineteenth century. It points out that the profession of Christianity had long been limited to the aristocratic few. The second section focuses on the challenge posed by the missionaries who came to Sangir in the 1850s and the local Sangirese elite’s reaction to the missionaries’ presence. It focuses on the life and career of Jacob Ponto, raja of Siau, and how he succeeded in resisting the missionaries through his close association with the colonial officials in the regional center at Manado. The third section presents the colonial centralizing reforms from the late 1880s onwards and how they likely effected the conversions in the archipelago.

¹ Bigalke, “Government and Mission in the Torajan World of Makale-Rantepao”; Tauchmann, “Die Religion der Minahasa-Stämme (Nordost-Celebes/Sulawesi).”



Map 5.1
Map of the Sangir and Talaud archipelagos
(Map by author)

1. Sangirese Christians and the Dutch East India Company

Christianity has had a long history in the Sangir archipelago, yet there is little knowledge of how early modern Christianity intersected in Sangirese political and social life. Drawing from

historical accounts of various incidents, this section highlights three themes through which Christianity can be understood in Sangirese society. First, Christianity became an incontrovertible mark of regional political affiliation. Second, it became embedded within the long-standing status-based politics of the Sangirese. Finally, it provided a basis for a nascent moral ethos, especially among the Sangirese political elite. Therefore, one can argue that as a political and cultural force, Christianity or its attendant institutions played an increasingly important role for the political elite, but it played a much less important role in the lives of the majority of the Sangirese. Before proceeding to these points, a brief introduction to the region is in order.

Sangir's importance in the region's broader history is ultimately linked to its proximity to the famed Spice Islands.² Members of Ferdinand Magellan's celebrated expedition in search for spices noted in 1521 that Sangir had "four kings" (that is, chiefs)—two of whom certainly referred to those from Siau and Tagulandang.³ With the support of the Spanish crown, Catholic missions were established in Sangir between 1639-1656 as part of the larger plan to wrest control of the Moluccas.⁴ A chief named Jeronimo II Winsulangi was eventually installed in Manila as "king" of Siau by the Spanish. Winsulangi's children also attended Manila's Jesuit school.⁵

However, the Spanish defeat by the Dutch in 1677 effectively ended any Catholic presence, which was later supplanted by Protestant missions. The Dutch for their part, pursued a policy of Christianization that matched and even exceeded earlier Spanish efforts,⁶ which was likely motivated by the Dutch contention that the Sangir archipelago was the "extrememost corner of the Spice Islands."⁷ The policy to Christianize—at least its local elite—was likely

² See Bartolome Leonardo de Argensola, *Conquista de las Islas Malucas* (Madrid: Miraguano/ Polifemo, 1992).

³ Shinzo Hayase, "Historico-Geographical World of Sangir: An Ethno-history of East Maritime Southeast Asia," *Kinaadman* 27, (2005): 3-4. See also H. Jacobs, "The Insular Kingdom of Siau under Portuguese and Spanish Impact, 16th and 17th Centuries," in *Regions and Regional Developments in the Malay-Indonesian World*, ed. Bernhard Dahm, 33-43 (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1992).

⁴ Achilles Meersman, *The Franciscans in the Indonesian Archipelago* (Louvain: Nauwelaerts, 1967), 7. See also C. Wessels, *De Katholieke Missie in de Molukken, Noord-Celebes en de Sangihe-Eilanden gedurende de Spaansche Bestuursperiode, 1606-1677* (Tilburg: Henri Bergmans and Cie. , 1935).

⁵ Jean-Nöel Sánchez Pons, "Misión y dimisión: Las Molucas en el siglo XVII entre Jesuitas Portugueses y Españoles," in *Jesuitas e Imperios de Ultramar Siglos XVI-XX*, ed. Alexander Coello, Javier Burrieza, and Doris Moreno (Madrid Silex, 2012), 102.

⁶ See Hendrik E. Niemeijer, "Political Rivalry and Early Dutch Reformed Missions in Seventeenth-Century North-Sulawesi (Celebes)," in *Missions and Missionaries*, ed. Pieter N. Holtrop and Hugh McLeod, 32-49 (Rochester, NY The Boydell Press, 2000).

⁷ NA VOC inv. 1.04.02, no. 3652 (Ternate), 8.

deemed as a barrier, not only against any Spanish designs but also against the surrounding Muslim polities.

Under the Dutch East India Company almost all Sangirese chiefs (rajas) professed Christianity and became vassals of the Company, regularly contributing coconut oil and when necessary, manpower and sea-craft. These rajas, essentially *primus inter pares* chiefs and leading members of the upper-class families who claimed authority over a number of other villages (*negeri*), were intermittently engaged in petty conflicts. However, through frequent inter-marriages between the ruling families, political frictions were lessened,⁸ thereby broadening horizontal connections among families—a process which likely created (or reinforced) a distinct ruling class.⁹ Meanwhile the Company acted not only as an overarching political power which adjudicated intra-Sangirese conflicts, but it also served as a political ally against raids from neighbors—notably Maguindanao—in the late eighteenth century.¹⁰ The Sangirese elites, therefore, had long experienced the political benefits of allying with a militarily superior foreign power. One could argue that the most important manifestation of such an alliance was the conversion to Christianity by the ruling chiefs.

1.1. Christianity as political affiliation

Christianity was closely interpreted as a sign of political alignment with the Dutch in Manado. As such, outward adherence to Christian practices was readily interpreted as a possible indication of the political sentiment of the Sangirese chiefs. That the Company favored Christianity is evident from several attested eighteenth century incidents which are described below.

⁸ ANRI Manado inv. 46, no. 2, Bundle: Van Delden, 27-28.

⁹ Some families monopolized the top positions. In Tabukan for example, the Dalero family of Moade (Salurang, south of Tabukan) was understood as the source of the rajas, while the lesser nobles (*rijksbestierders*) were to be chosen from the Pandialang family of Sahabe (north of Tabukan). K. G. F. Steller and W. E. Aebersold, *Sangirees-Nederlands Woordenboek met Nederlands-Sangirees Register* ('s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1959), 161.

¹⁰ See reports relating to this phenomenon in the following: ANRI Ternate inv. 1; NA VOC inv. 1.04.02, no. 8141 Ternate, Generale Missive from Amsterdam to Batavia (1780).

In October 1779, the junior merchant of the Ternate *comptoir* of the Company, F. B. Hemmekam,¹¹ visited the majority-Muslim village of Talawid in the petty chiefdom of Kendahe. His visit to Talawid was part of a mission to require the Christian chiefs of the various Sangirese polities to deliver *kora-kora* (large vessels) with accompanying crews in preparation for an expedition against the Maguindanao pirates.¹² Hemmekam's objective was to ascertain the loyalty of the various coastal Sangirese villages. While most of the Sangirese polities were under the influence of the Christian chief of Siau, Talawid was distinct because of its subordination to "obstinate Muslim chiefs."¹³

The initial reception of the Muslim inhabitants of Talawid to Hemmekam's arrival reveals a sentiment of a people excluded by the Company's patchy Christian conversion of the Sangirese. Everyone in the village was armed and fearful. As one Muslim religious leader stated, they were afraid because they were Muslims while Hemmekam was Christian and because "the Dutch consider the people of Talawid not as favorably as the Christian Sangirese." In an attempt to reassure the Muslim Sangirese, Hemmekam replied, "the Dutch Company does not impose upon anyone, but allows freedom of religion." However, he also qualified his statement: "those who had converted to Christianity could not change religion" and Muslims were prohibited to proselytize among Christians.¹⁴

The Talawid Muslim chief's compounding of Christianity with Dutch political support could not be more precise. In the year of Hemmekam's visit to Sangir, the entire archipelago had 15 local Christian schoolteachers, six *kerkmaringos* (helpers) and 696 schoolchildren scattered among the major settlements,¹⁵ all of whom were likely relatives of the ruling chiefs. Since the late seventeenth century, when the Sangirese rajas agreed to acknowledge the Company as their supreme patron,¹⁶ the Company almost unfailingly appointed Christian rulers. That the Company favored Christian over Muslim chiefs is apparent in the case of the supra-village political entity of Kendahe.

¹¹ Francois Bartholomeus Hemmekam, who was born in Middelburg and served as *Onderkoopman* and *fiscal*, entered the service of the Company in 1751 as a *hooploper* (young sailor), NA VOC 8161 Ternate, Kopie-resoluties van de Raad van Politie van Ternate, Monster roll, 30 June 1780, 684-685.

¹² NA VOC inv. 1.04.02, no. 8141 Ternate, *Generale Missive* from Batavia to Amsterdam (1780).

¹³ NA VOC inv. 1.04.02, no. 8141 Ternate, 69.

¹⁴ NA VOC inv. 1.04.02, no. 8141 Ternate, 89.

¹⁵ NA VOC inv. 1.04.02, no. 8141 Ternate, 61-62.

¹⁶ David Henley, "A Superabundance of Centers: Ternate and the Contest for North Sulawesi," *Cakalele* 4, (1993): 46.

In the early eighteenth century, the Company appointed the Muslim apostate and recent Christian convert, Johannes Karambutu, as chief of Kendahe.¹⁷ After the eruption of Awu volcano in 1711, the old Kendahe main settlement at Maselihe was destroyed,¹⁸ forcing many to flee to Sarangani (southern Philippines). By appointing Karambutu, the Company hoped that Kendahe—previously ruled by a Muslim chief who died in the eruption¹⁹—would become Christian and make all of Sangir an entirely Christian domain.²⁰ To the Company, however, the Kendahe inhabitants who were not Christians were free to transfer their residence to Muslim Sarangani, where many had already emigrated following the disaster.

Favoring the Christians is also apparent in the case of slaves sold to the Company by Sulu traders in Ternate. In 1769, 38 individuals forcibly taken from the Philippines,²¹ were brought to Ternate, some of whom were hesitantly redeemed by the Company out of “compassion.”²² The sold captives were to be allowed to return to the Philippines after paying around 30-40 *rijksdaalders*, the price of their acquisition by the Company.²³ The Ternate officials emphasized to their superiors in Batavia that no other slaves would be freed unless they were Christians.²⁴

¹⁷ ANRI Ternate inv. 62, “Positive Ordres: Ternate, 20 November 1637- 27 Februarij 1739,” “Sangir,” 555.

¹⁸ Maselihe was also known as Makiwulaeng or Makiburaeng (literally, “place of gold”). Interview with Ridion Sasiang (Opo Lao, Kendahe 1), Kendahe, 19 December 2013. Shinzo Hayase, Domingo M. Non, and Alex J. Ulaen (comp.), *Silsilas/Tarsilas (Genealogies) and Historical Narratives in Sarangani Bay and Davao Gulf Regions, South Mindanao, Philippines, and Sangihe-Talaud Islands, North Sulawesi, Indonesia* (Kyoto: Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University, 1999), 208.

¹⁹ Prince Siamisallam, ruler of Kendahe died in the eruption of Awu in 1711. In earlier Company sources, he was also referred to as prince of the upland (Muslim) Maguindanao polity of Buayan. *Generale Missiven*, vol. 5 (1692), 449; NA VOC inv. 1.04.02, no. 1637 Ternate, 113.

²⁰ ANRI Ternate inv. 62, “Positive Ordres: Ternate, 20 November 1637- 27 Februarij 1739,” “Sangir,” 555. Karambutu and his people settled in one of the southernmost villages of Sangir (Ngalipaeng), far from the previous Kendahe settlement at the foot of Awu. Hayase, *Silsilas/Tarsilas (Genealogies) and Historical Narratives in Sarangani Bay and Davao Gulf Regions, South Mindanao, Philippines, and Sangihe-Talaud Islands, North Sulawesi, Indonesia*, 144.

²¹ Their names immediately reveal their provenance: Isko (Filipino for Francisco), Agustino, Claas (most likely, Kulas, a Filipino pet name for Nicolas), Salvador, Fernando, Pedro, Mariano, Martin, Oesep (Jose?), Domingo, and Andres. NA VOC inv. 1.04.02, no. 8137 Ternate, Letter of the Governor Hermanus Munnik and Council of Ternate to Governor-General Petrus Albertus van der Parra, September 1769, 2.

²² Moreover, refusal to purchase these slaves would have discouraged the Sulu to visit Ternate. The Company struggled to keep Sulu under its umbrella by promoting trade in its ports as a measure to curb “illicit trade” elsewhere. NA VOC 1.04.02, no. 8137 Ternate, Letter of the Governor Hermanus Munnik and Council of Ternate to Governor-General Petrus Albertus van der Parra, September 1769, 82.

²³ NA VOC inv. 1.04.02, no. 8137 Ternate, 82.

²⁴ *Ibid.* This incident was likely one of the last (documented) purchases of raided individuals from the Philippines. An earlier regulation (1762) forbade Company servants to trade Filipino slaves after requests from the Spanish authorities in Manila. See *Plakkaat* 1762.

1.2. Relative status, slavery, and Christianity

However, despite the obvious political advantages offered by an alliance with the Company and professing Christianity as one's religion, access to the trappings of Christianity seems to have been confined to the Sangirese elite. One later missionary remarked that even though one-fourth of the Sangirese "call themselves Christians," only 1/100 could be considered "real" Christians, that is, those who attended school and church.²⁵ Nineteenth century missionaries and colonial officials observed that slaves were not allowed by the chiefly class to attend church and school.²⁶ One could argue that these nineteenth century observations were true in previous periods. If so, then Christianity could be said to have coincided with or perhaps even subsumed within the "deep structure" of Sangirese society.

Relative status had long been an important feature of Sangirese society. By the nineteenth century, three broad social stratifications were widely recognized: *bangsa* (Sangirese: *papuëng* "aristocratic class"), *bala-bala* (commoners), and *budak* (Sangirese: *ëllang* "slaves").²⁷ The *bangsa* class was further distinguished into: *papun tuha* (pure-blood nobles), *papun beka* (nobles with only one parent from the *bangsa*), and *papun timbang* (nobles whose parents were only partly *bangsa*).²⁸

The chiefs (*bebato*)²⁹ who were almost exclusively from the *bangsa* class were themselves categorized into *bebatom bale* and *bebaton dellahe*.³⁰ The *bebatom bale* consisted of the higher-ranked chiefs up to *kapitan-laut* while the rest were categorized as *bebaton dellahe*.³¹

²⁵ HUA ARvdZ inv. 1102-1, no. 2821, F. Kelling, Tagulandang, 17 September 1867, fo. 1

²⁶ HUA ARvdZ inv. 1102-1, no. 2859, E. Steller, 12 May 1866, 2; NA MvK inv. 2.10.02, no. 5063, Besluit 13 July 1896, no. 22, Letter of Res. Stakman to the GG, Taruna, 14 Ag 1889.

²⁷ E. Steller, *De Sangi-archipel* (Amsterdam: De Hoogh, 1866), 39.

²⁸ ANRI Manado inv. 46, no. 2 Bundle: Van Delden, 59.

²⁹ A North Malukan title, sometimes spelled *bobato*, meaning "those who give orders." It had long been adopted in Sangir. Muridan Satrio Widjojo, "Cross-Cultural Alliance-Making and Local Resistance in Maluku during the Revolt of Prince Nuku, c. 1780-1810" (PhD Dissertation, Leiden University, 2007), xii.

³⁰ Steller and Aebersold, *Sangirees-Nederlands Woordenboek met Nederlands-Sangirees Register*, 43.

³¹ The titles (from highest to lowest) are: (after the raja), *president-raja*, *jogugu*, *president-jogugu*, *kapitan-laut*, *hukum-majoor*, *hukum*, *sadaha-negeri*, *kapitan bicara*, *sangaje*, *kumelaha*, *sawohi*, *sadaha kecil*, *syabandar*, *jurubahasa*, *marinjo-bicara*, *marinjo-balla*, and *marinjo*. ANRI Manado inv. 46, no. 2, Bundle: Van Delden, 53. *Kapitan-laut* (*kapten laut*, *kapitalaung*, and *opo lao* in Sangir) "village or supra-village chief" has been replaced by *kepala desa/lurah* in contemporary Sangir; the term for the position below the *kapitan-laut*. *Hukum-majoor* literally, "chief of the house/shelter" has been replaced *kepala lindungan*. *Masalah-masalah hukum perdata di kecamatan*

These names are illustrative of the importance given to the large family houses (*bale*) as a focus of power. Thus, *bebatom bale* referred to the multi-family houses of upper-rank chiefs who lived the core settlement, while *bebatom dellahe* referred to the multi-family houses of lower-rank chiefs who came from and lived in areas outside the core settlement.³² Slaves were further categorized into three subclasses: hereditary, purchased, and plundered. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, slaves were thought to constitute around one-third of the entire population (see Table 5.1). Many Sangirese slaves traditionally originated from the Talaud archipelago, which is a subject further discussed below.³³

Table 5.1
Population Data of Sangir
[collected December 1807–January 1808]³⁴

Name of Settlement	Free People ³⁵	Slaves ³⁶	Total
Tagulandang			
Tagulandang	356	224	1051
Minangan	136	102	
Haas	113	120	
Subtotal	605	446	
Siau			
Siau [Ondong]	449	209	1949
Ulu	723	148	
Tamako	350	70	

Manganitu, Kabupaten Kepulauan Sangihe dan Talaud, Daerah Hukum Pengadilan Negeri Tahuna, Wilayah Hukum Pengadilan Tinggi Manado, (Direktorat Kehakiman, 1977), 17.

³² Steller and Aebersold, *Sangirees-Nederlands Woordenboek met Nederlands-Sangirees Register*, 94.

³³ NA MvK inv. 2.10.02, no. 5063, 13 Juli 1896, no. 22, Letter of Resident Stakman to the GG, Taruna, 14 August 1889.

³⁴ From a more detailed table: ANRI Manado inv. 68. no. 3, Ingekoomen stukken zoo voor als tegen den koning van Manganitoe Philip David Catjandaho, 1805.

³⁵ Including young and old men and women.

³⁶ Including young and old men and women.

Subtotal	1522	427	
Tabukan			
Tabukan	1052	502	3245
Salurang	326	255	
Manalu	164	227	
Kuluw [Kuluhe?]	294	71	
Kuma	108	146	
Tariang	81	19	
Subtotal	2025	1220	
Kandhar	269	7	276
Taruna			
Taruna	1815	128	2776
Kolongan	774	59	
Subtotal	2589	187	
Manganitu			
Manganitu	509	87	810
Negeri Baru	190	24	
Subtotal	699	111	
GRAND TOTAL	7709	2309	10107

1.2.1. Talaud's subservience to Sangir

Although Sangir and Talaud are often treated as a single entity, these two island-groups have their own distinct environments and social structures.³⁷ Whereas the Sangir islands³⁸ are adjacent to underwater volcanic formations and are themselves sitting on active volcanoes,³⁹ the Talaud islands⁴⁰ are not volcanic and, therefore, less fertile.⁴¹ Talaud is also located farther away

³⁷ See Henley, *Fertility, Food and Fever: Population, Economy and Environment in North and Central Sulawesi, 1600-1930*, 76.

³⁸ Sangir Besar, Siau and Tagulandang island group.

³⁹ Most prominently: Gunung Awu in Sangir Besar, Gunung Api or Karangetang in Siau and Ruang, nearby Tagulandang.

⁴⁰ Composed of the three large islands of Karakelong, Salibabu, Kabaruang, and the islets of Nanusa.

from the main trading centers (Manado and Ternate). Talaud's unfavorable geographic position and general poverty were likely crucial factors which contributed to the Sangirese's domination of the Talaud islands.

Each petty Talaud chiefdom came to recognize an overlord in Sangir (see Map 5.2). For instance, Salibabu Island and vast swathes of Karakelong were domains of Tabukan. Kabaruang Island was under Siau while the densely populated Nanusa islands were under Taruna.⁴² This political arrangement probably existed even before the Company was likely reinforced through Company's patronage of the various Sangirese kings. It also mirrored to a great degree the nature of the relationship between Halmaheran villages and their more powerful Tidorese and Ternatan neighbors who had better access to superior arms and commercial opportunities.⁴³

⁴¹ See NA MvO, 1852-1962, inv. 2.10.39, no. 304, *Memorie van Overgave van Manado* (1922), Resident Logeman, 10-11.

⁴² Manganitu and Tagulandang respectively shared equally small parts of the west and east coasts of south Karakelong with Tabukan. However, Kendahe, the smallest of all Sangirese polities, did not possess any right in Talaud because its people were believed to have been relatively recent migrants from Mindanao. NA MvK, 1850-1900, inv. 2.10.02, no. 5063, 13 Juli 1896, no. 22, *Staat aantonnende het aantal Districten en Djogoegoeschappen en daartoe behoorende kampongs op de Talauer eilanden, ressorterende onder de verschillende rijken op de Sangir-eilanden*; *Arsip Manado* inv. 166, no. 2, *Bundle: Rapport betreffende het oppergezag over- en den toestand van de Talaud eilanden*, 12 August 1857, RM [Jansen]; NA MvO, 1852-1962, inv. 2.10.39, no. 305, *Memorie van Overgave van het Bestuur van den Res van M, J. Tideman* (1926), 38.

⁴³ R. Z. Leirissa, "Factors conducive to the Raja Jailolo Movement in North Maluku (1790-1832)," in *Papers of the Fourth Indonesian-Dutch History Conference*, ed. Sartono Kartodirdjo, 96-114 (Yogyakarta: Gadjah Mada University Press, 1986).



Map 5.2

Map of the main Talaud islands showing the domains claimed by the various Sangirese polities (1896)⁴⁴

A Talaud chief was obliged to deliver 10 slaves in order to be recognized as such by his corresponding Sangirese overlord.⁴⁵ This tributary relationship of Talaud to Sangir was probably

⁴⁴ Note: The Nanusa Islands to the northeast (claimed by Taruna) are not shown. NA MvK, 1850-1900, inv. 2.10.02, no. 5063, 13 Juli 1896, no. 22.

⁴⁵ In 1866, it was reported that a Talaud chief gave ten slaves to his Sangirese chief. HUA ARvdZ 1102-1, 2859, 12 May 1866, E. Steller to Mev. Gravin van Hogendorp; NA MvK, 1850-1900, 2.10.02, 5063, 13 Juli 1896, no. 22, Letter of RM Stakman to the GG, Taruna, 14 August 1889.

a consequence of earlier raids that consequently established Sangirese power.⁴⁶ One could argue that the (seasonal) regularity of such slave tributes was partly beneficial to the Talaud villages, which did not have to fear intermittent Sangirese raiding expeditions. It also helped the Talaud chiefs increase influence among their subjects and chiefly peers by associating with the more powerful Sangirese overlord. On the part of the Sangirese chiefs, the slave tributes simplified what would have been an opportunistic, not to mention risky, acquisition of slaves through opportunistic raiding.

The Sangirese chiefs were known to have prevented direct contacts between their Talaud wards and their Dutch patrons in Manado in order to preserve their dominant status.⁴⁷ The raja of Tabukan was known to spend several months annually visiting his dependencies in Talaud,⁴⁸ probably to assert his authority and to extract further economic surplus (for example, slaves). In 1855, the centralizing colonial, Resident Jansen, declared that the Sangirese rajas had “no right to install chiefs in Talaud.”⁴⁹ However, such pronouncements were at best admonitions since no actual punishment or regulation was forthcoming from the colonial government. One of the first permanent European missionaries in Sangir continually appealed for the colonial government to disentangle the tributary relationship of Talaud to Sangir.⁵⁰ However, as late as 1884, a Sangirese raja still carried out an “armed action”—a maritime raid—in Talaud.⁵¹ It was only in 1912 that the Sangirese rajas formally relinquished their claims to Talaud after pressure from colonial authorities.⁵²

However, despite these political and economic ties with Sangir, Talaud remained fragmented with intermittent warring villages. A Catholic priest and maritime adventurer (Carlos

⁴⁶ According to Sangirese oral tradition, links between Sangir and Talaud can be traced to the hero, Makaampo, son of a Tabukan prince and Talaud princess. Makaampo launched raids against Talaud and was notoriously feared and remembered for his brutal ways in enslaving people. He was believed to have thrown a golden necklace in water and those who attempted to search for it ended up as slaves. In another occasion, he threw his fishing net over two *bangsa* women who immediately became his slaves and concubines. Walter E. Aebersold, "Het Verhaal van Makaampo," *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land-en Volkenkunde*, (1957). NA MvK, 1850-1900, 2.10.02, 5063, 13 Juli 1896, no. 22, Letter of Res. Stakman to the GG, Taruna, 14 August 1889.

⁴⁷ ANRI Manado inv. 48, no. 4, Bundle: Politiek Verslag der Residentie Menado over het jaar 1855; Henley, *Fertility, Food and Fever: Population, Economy and Environment in North and Central Sulawesi, 1600-1930*, 47.

⁴⁸ HUA ARvdZ inv. 1102-1, no. 2859, E. Steller to Mev. Gravin van Hogendorp, 12 May 1866.

⁴⁹ ANRI Manado inv. 48, no. 4, Bundle: Politiek Verslag der Residentie Menado over het jaar 1855.

⁵⁰ ANRI Manado inv. 49, no. 2, Letter of the four European missionaries in Sangir to RM, 24 July 1862.

⁵¹ NA MvO, 1852-1962, inv. 2.10.39, no. 305, Memorie van Overgave van het Bestuur van den Res van M, J. Tideman (1926), 38.

⁵² Ibid.

Cuarteron) who made a sojourn to Talaud in 1845⁵³ counted 50 “rajas” (versus six in Sangir).⁵⁴ One missionary attributed such fragmentation to the Sangirese rajas’ division of Talaud.⁵⁵ However, the political fragmentation was likely due to the tenuous authority of the Sangirese chiefs who themselves were mutually competing for influence and who generally lacked sufficient power to consolidate whatever authority they did have. Some of the Sangirese rajas even convinced the late nineteenth century colonial government to strengthen their respective positions vis-à-vis the Talaud chiefs.⁵⁶

1.2.2. Relative status in Sangir

However, not all slaves came from chiefly rituals of recognition alone. Some were exchanged by their Talaud chiefs for rice or other articles of trade.⁵⁷ Others originated from within the Sangirese polities themselves. Within these polities, one’s residence seems to have served as an important marker of slave status.

The farther away one lived from the core coastal *negeri*, the less likely they were to be members of the ruling *bangsa* class and, therefore, the more possibility of being taken as slaves by those from the center. This may have held true unless a new center was founded and whose new rulers intermarried with the ruling group of the old core settlement. H. Th. Chabot’s reconstruction of pre-twentieth century Siau refers to the hierarchical distinction between the inhabitants of the large houses along the coast (*balé*) and the scattered smaller garden houses (*daseng*).⁵⁸ Affiliation with a *balé*, housing 10 to 20 matrilocally-connected nuclear families, was more prestigious than living in the *daseng*.⁵⁹

From the numerous cases forwarded by the Sangire elite to the Dutch East India Company during the early colonial period for adjudication, it appears that political life was

⁵³ Mike Gibby, "The 'Pirate Priest'—A Reappraisal," *Sabah Society Journal* 22, (2005): 39.

⁵⁴ Carlos Cuarteron, *Spiegazione e Traduzione dei XIV Quadri relativi alle isole di Salibaboo, Talaor, Sanguay, Nanuse, Mindanao, Celebes, Borneo, Bahalatolis, Tambisan, Sulu, Toolyan, e Labuan* (Roma: Tipografia della S.C. di Propaganda Fide, 1855), 8.

⁵⁵ "Uit een brief van J. Ottow, zendeling op de Talau-eilanden," 13.

⁵⁶ Mailrapport 1913, No. 683/2013, Letter of the Res. of Manado van Marle to GG, 6 September 1912.

⁵⁷ NA MvK inv. 2.10.02, no. 5063, Besluit 13 July 1896, no. 22, Letter of Res. Stakman to the GG, Taruna, 14 Ag 1889. On the nature of and commodities exchanged during Sangirese recognition of Talaurese chiefs, see Henley, *Fertility, Food and Fever: Population, Economy and Environment in North and Central Sulawesi, 1600-1930*, 76.

⁵⁸ H. Th. Chabot, "Processes of Change in Siau 1890-1950," *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 125, (1969).

⁵⁹ Ibid.

dominated by the contest for slave-ownership and control.⁶⁰ As late as 1853, Resident A. L. Andriessen adjudicated on a slave dispute between the raja of Tagulandang and his subjects. The raja captured a woman named Akumina whom he claimed to be a slave. However, her husband and relatives denied her slave status with the help of the testimony from the local (most likely Ambonese) schoolmaster.⁶¹ In other instances, slaves defied the authority of the coastal raja by escaping to the hinterland or seeking patronage and protection from another supposedly less oppressive chief. In the 1830s, a conflict between the rajas of Siau and Tagulandang ensued after some hereditary slaves of Tagulandang fled to Siau. The slaves had previously built a fortification in the hills of Tagulandang to escape the control of the coastal raja. However, after the attack initiated by the raja against the *benteng*, which resulted in the death of four slaves, the remaining slaves left the island and sought refuge with the raja of Siau, who then claimed ownership over them.⁶²

These frequent conflicts may have been symptomatic of the lack of hegemonic control of the chiefs over their subjects, as well as of other factors. Sangirese slavery provided ample room for achieving freedom and higher status to slaves⁶³ seemingly consistent with the general pattern of the “open-system” of slavery in the region.⁶⁴ For example, the rajas of Siau and Manganitu

⁶⁰ There are numerous cases of slave-related conflicts documented by the Company. In 1780 for instance, the raja of Manganitu, Salomon Katiandaho, was accused by the closely allied chiefs of Siau and Taruna of keeping their slaves. NA VOC inv. 1.04.02, no. 8141 Ternate, Generale Missive from Amsterdam to Batavia (1780), Report of Onderkoopman Francois Bartholomeus Hemmekam on his visit to Sangir (26 May 1780), 107. In the 1760s, the raja of Kandhar [Kendahe], Andries Manabon, complained to the Company that the raja of Tabukan David Johannes Philip and a certain Iman Parena wanted to have his slaves and properties. The Tabukan raja sent his own mission to Ternate and claimed that the slaves living in Kendahe were his inheritance from his grandmother, Princess Johanna Lekubulam. NA VOC inv. 1.04.02, no. 11253, Memorie wegens den presenten staat der Moluccos opgesteld door Jacob van Schoonderwoert afgaande Gouverneur en Directeur van Ternaten tot narigt van zijnen succeseur Hendrik Breton, 24 July 1766, 18. The previously dismissed raja of Tagulandang was ordered by the Company sergeant at Tabukan to return the slaves he acquired “unlawfully” from a fellow chief. The raja of Tagulandang was said to have “gifted” 20 slaves to his brother-in-law, the raja of Tabukan. NA VOC inv. 1.04.02, no. 8100, Letter of the Gov of Ternate to Dirk Roos, Segt. at Tabukan, 11 December 1732, 414-415.

⁶¹ The Resident postponed his decision because neither of the parties could provide legal proof of her ownership, assuming (quite naively) that keeping such “proof” was a widespread practice in this region. ANRI Manado inv. 12, no. 1, Bundle: Diverse Correspondentie, 1853, Besluit of the Resident of Manado for 1853.

⁶² KITLV H 91, Bundel contracten van de Residentie Menado, no. 3: Korte Aantekeningen op de bestaande Kontracten in de Residentie Menado.

⁶³ Laura Lee Junker, *Raiding, Trading and Feasting: The Political Economy of Philippine Chiefdoms* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1999), see chapter 5.

⁶⁴ See Anthony Reid and Jennifer Brewster, *Slavery, Bondage, and Dependency in Southeast Asia* (St. Lucia and New York: University of Queensland Press, 1983).

were known to have granted freedom to a man slave after a successful headhunt for “service” to the raja.⁶⁵ The raja bestowed honorable titles to former slaves for showing loyalty. Such titles included *sadaha-majoor*, *sadaha*, *sawohi*, and *marinyo*⁶⁶—all of which were many degrees below the status of the raja himself.⁶⁷ As a colonial official observed, “there were [lower] chiefs claimed to be of slave origin by other slaves.”⁶⁸

However, despite, or perhaps because of, the fluidity of relative status, distinctions between slave, freeman, and aristocrat were continually emphasized and reinforced, especially when disruptions to social order arose. This was true during the death of a chief, possibly a time for political transitions and, therefore, of social opportunism. During the long mourning season for a departed chief, whose body could remain unburied for a hundred days, various prohibitions were imposed. If violated, the transgressor could be enslaved. The use of status markers, such as a parasol, was also prohibited, as well as playing musical instruments and firing arms. Those from the aristocratic class who disobeyed these rules lost their status while those from the class of free men became slaves.⁶⁹

The same assertion of tradition amidst probable social mobility arose when European missionaries arrived in the mid-nineteenth century. A girl who wanted to attend Christian catechism in the 1860s was forbidden to do so because she was the first child of a marriage between a slave woman and a free man.⁷⁰ According to the tradition at the time, the first-born was owned by the mother—thus, the girl inherited her mother’s slave status—while the second-born belonged to the father.⁷¹

⁶⁵ HUA ARvdZ inv. 1102-1, no. 2861, E. Steller, Manganitu, 16 April 1861, 8.

⁶⁶ HUA ARvdZ inv. 1102-1, 2860, E. Steller, 12 May 1866, 6.

⁶⁷ ANRI Manado inv. 46, no. 2 Bundle: Van Delden, 53. The titles after that of raja from highest to lowest were the following: *president-raja*, *jogugu*, *president-jogugu*, *kapitan-laut* (in Sangir, *kapitalaung*), *hukum-majoor*, *hukum*, *sadaha-negeri*, *kapitan bicara*, *sangaje*, *kumelaha*, *sawohi*, *sadaha kecil*, *syabandar*, *jurubahasa*, *marinjo-bicara*, *marinjo-balla*, and *marinjo*.

⁶⁸ ANRI Manado inv. 51, no. 3, Politiek Verslag, 1853.

⁶⁹ NA MvK, 1850-1900, 2.10.02, 5063, 13 Juli 1896, no. 22, Letter of Res. Stakman to the GG, Taruna, 14 August 1889.

⁷⁰ HUA ARvdZ inv. 1102-1, no. 2860, E. Steller, 12 May 1866, 8.

⁷¹ NA VOC inv. 1.04.02, no. 8156 Ternate, 231.

1.3. Christianity as elite ethos

It is clear that Christianity functioned to maintain status-based politics in Sangir. However, the extent to which Christianity pervaded the actual social life of Sangir's Christian elite is less known. The story of the raja of Manganitu in the early nineteenth century provides a brief glimpse into this aspect. His case reveals that at the elite level, Christianity already provided a sort of ethos or, at the very least, a language to regulate behavior among and by the elite.

In the early nineteenth century, the raja of Manganitu named Barunas⁷² (also known as Bagenda⁷³ or Philip David Katiandaho) became embroiled in a raging political conflict with his chiefly competitors who remained loyal to the Company and Christianity even at the time of regime change.⁷⁴ Raja Barunas, who was ready to exploit any advantageous option to enhance his authority and challenge the local status quo, threatened to seek patronage from neighboring Maguindanao and abandon his allegiance to the Company. He welcomed the Chinese traders, and he sought the assistance of Islamic and pagan religious figures.

When a Company envoy visited the raja to collect his outstanding debts, the raja was said to have declared his preference for, and allegiance to, the Chinese traders over the “greedy Company.”⁷⁵ He also planned to sail to Maguindanao to “request assistance” if ever his chiefly competitor, the raja of Siau, was installed by the Company as the apical ruler of Sangir. Barunas' father had died in Mindanao fighting alongside the Maguindanaos against the Spaniards.⁷⁶ His grandfather had previously served in 1765 as the envoy of Siau and Tabukan when members of their ruling elites were captured and held hostage by Maguindanao.⁷⁷

⁷² ANRI Manado inv. 68, no. 3, Ingekoomen stukken zoo voor als tegen den koning van Manganitoe Philip David Catjandaho, 1805, Translaat eener Maleidsche brief geschreven door den door de negorij Manganitoes volkeren verworpen koning Manuel Macadompis door de wandeling Lokum [Lokumbanua] genaamt, 7 January 1805, 19.

⁷³ Hayase, *Silsilas/Tarsilas (Genealogies) and Historical Narratives in Sarangani Bay and Davao Gulf Regions, South Mindanao, Philippines, and Sangihe-Talaud Islands, North Sulawesi, Indonesia*, 200.

⁷⁴ Although the British occupied Dutch posts after 1803, the Moluccas remained under Dutch hands. Herman Burgers, *De garoeda en de ooievaar: Indonesië van kolonie tot nationale staat* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2010), 70.

⁷⁵ ANRI Manado inv. 68, no. 3, Ingekoomen stukken zoo voor als tegen den koning van Manganitoe Philip David Catjandaho, 1805.

⁷⁶ Hayase, *Silsilas/Tarsilas (Genealogies) and Historical Narratives in Sarangani Bay and Davao Gulf Regions, South Mindanao, Philippines, and Sangihe-Talaud Islands, North Sulawesi, Indonesia*, 200.

⁷⁷ NA VOC inv. 1.04.02, no. 8134 Ternate (1766), 31 July 1766, 55.

Barunas' chiefly competitors complained to the Company about his "un-Christian" behavior. When Barunas' daughter fell ill, he summoned two female pagan healers named Likuhiab and Likumati, instead of calling upon the schoolmaster *cum* medical practitioner who "follow[ed] the way of the Christians."⁷⁸ The indigenous (likely Ambonese) schoolmaster, who resided in what was called revealingly by the Sangirese as *baleng kumpania* (Company house),⁷⁹ also served as the de facto Christian religious leader of the community. In addition, the chiefs complained that when Barunas' daughter died, he summoned an *imam* and *hatibi* (in Islam, the person who provides the sermon) from the neighboring Muslim settlement of Kendahe to officiate at her burial "according to the manner of the Muslims."⁸⁰

The Christian chiefs likewise denounced their raja's "immorality." They complained to the Company that Barunas had clandestine extra-marital sexual relations with a woman named Bililawah.⁸¹ They complained of Barunas' blasphemy during a Christian religious service attended by aristocratic women and children. Having forced his way to the pulpit, the raja sexually insulted the women, most likely to insult his chiefly rivals.⁸²

The dossier on Barunas lacks the final verdict of the Dutch authorities in Manado on his actions. Nonetheless, it provides important evidence that Christianity pervaded not only the political sphere and the social hierarchies of the Sangirese, but also and perhaps increasingly, the social ethos of its elite stratum. However, despite these broad social meanings attached to Christianity, mass conversions did not occur. This raises the following question: to what extent was the renewal of Dutch political and missionary interest in the region in the mid-nineteenth century critical to the mass conversions of the Sangirese?

2. Stalemate: government, chiefs, and missionaries, c. 1850-1890

The unprecedented government intervention in the mid-nineteenth century in the domestic affairs of north Sulawesi, including Sangir-Talaud, is a novel development. Propelled by Christian missionary zeal in Europe and actively endorsed by local colonial authorities, a

⁷⁸ ANRI Manado inv. 68, no. 3, Ingekoomen stukken zoo voor als tegen den koning van Manganitoe Philip David Catjandaho, 1805, 30b.

⁷⁹ Steller and Aebersold, *Sangirees-Nederlands Woordenboek met Nederlands-Sangirees Register*, 26.

⁸⁰ ANRI Manado inv. 68, no. 3, Ingekoomen stukken zoo voor als tegen den koning van Manganitoe Philip David Catjandaho, 1805, 7.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid., 10-11.

pioneering batch of European missionaries settled permanently in select villages in Sangir-Talaud beginning in 1856. However, unlike the contemporaneous Christianization in Minahasa and Islamization in Bolaang-Mongondow, the missionization of Sangir-Talaud occurred without the benefit of colonial reforms. There was no streamlining of local political authority nor government-induced opening of markets. Instead, there was a continuity of the system where economy, politics, and religion converged under the chiefly elite. The chiefs—seeing no political nor economic incentive to promote Christian conversions—remained conveniently ensconced in power. The missionaries themselves, despite an initial clash of authority with local chiefs, eventually carved their own virtual fiefdoms. These so-called missionary-artisans (*zendeling-werklieden*) seem to have acceded to a *modus vivendi* with the chiefs while pursuing their own parochial economic interests. Consequently, Christian conversions were at best patchy and intermittent despite the vaunted discourse on the salvation of the Sangirese Christians from the supposed inroads of Islam and revival of paganism.

2.1. Resident Jansen and the missionary-artisans

The reformist colonial resident, A. J. F. Jansen, is crucial to understanding the story of Christianity in Sangir as elsewhere in the region. He was the most instrumental figure in sending permanent European missionaries to both Sangir and Talaud archipelagos.⁸³ He was a foremost believer in the notion of the Sangirese people as “abandoned Christians.”⁸⁴ However, he believed that Sangirese Christian praxis was “better left imagined than described.”⁸⁵ He, therefore, actively incited the government, among others, to “devote more attention [to Sangir] by providing Christian schools.”⁸⁶ However, his enthusiasm for Christian schools was not shared by many of his colonial peers.

Jansen was likely intimately aware of Batavia’s aversion to funding Christian missions as he himself had served its General Secretariat (*Algemene Secretarie*) as early as 1844.⁸⁷ He knew

⁸³ “Correspondentie En Berigten,” *De Vereeniging: Christelijke Stemmen* 14, (1860): 563.

⁸⁴ ANRI Manado inv. 12, no. 2, Afgaande Brieven Resident Manado 1ste Kwartal 1854, RM Jansen, Manado 21 Feb 1854, no. 267 Aan het bestuur over de Protestantsche Kerk in Nederlandsch Indie.

⁸⁵ ANRI Manado inv. 12, no. 2, Afgaande Brieven Resident Manado 1ste Kwartal 1854, RM Jansen, 20 February 1854, no. 264 to the Kerkenraad der Protestantsche Gemeente in Manado.

⁸⁶ ANRI Manado inv. 51, no. 3, Politiek Verslag 1853.

⁸⁷ He rose from second *commies* in the General Secretariat (*Algemene Secretarie*) in 1844 to chief *commies* in 1847. See *Regeeringsalmanak*, 1844, 1845, 1846, 1847.

that the economic insignificance of Sangir was a major downside. At that time, the Sangirese polities, in stark contrast with neighboring regions, did not deliver any local produce as tribute, and they did not pay monetary tax to the colonial government.⁸⁸ Moreover, Sangir's exports, primarily coconut oil and some cotton,⁸⁹ were not particularly prized in the market as Minahasan coffee and, to a lesser extent, Gorontaloese gold.

To convince the higher authorities of the need for greater government interference and support for Christian missions, Jansen emphasized the following. First, the costs for the planned missionary schools would have to be shouldered by the Sangirese themselves.⁹⁰ Second, even though unprofitable, greater government presence was needed given the potential threat arising from the frequent visits of American whalers in Talaud.⁹¹ Finally, the mission in Sangir was not to convert but to "maintain" the already existing, but "abandoned, Christians."⁹²

The last point was a recurrent trope in missionary discourse,⁹³ but it became more so after Jansen's visit to Sangir in 1854 along with the Inspector for the Protestant Church of the Indies (*Indische Kerk*), S. A. Buddingh.⁹⁴ The Sangir islands had been a "Christian archipelago since the fifteenth century" but whose "thousand nominal Christians and twenty schools" had been "forgotten," as one later popular missionary magazine lamented.⁹⁵ This Christian irredentist trope of saving "lost" Christians was further emphasized by the missionary, S. D. van de Velde van Capellen, who visited Sangir in 1855 and whose report was published as the leading article in the maiden issue of the journal of the Dutch Missionary Society (*Mededeelingen van het Nederlandsch Zendelinggenootschap*).⁹⁶ It became widely believed that around 20,000

⁸⁸ ANRI Manado inv. 51, no. 3, Politiek Verslag 1853.

⁸⁹ See HUA ARvdZ inv. 1102-1, no. 2738, F. Kelling, "Het eiland Tagulandang en zijne bewoners."

⁹⁰ ANRI Manado inv. 51, no. 3, Politiek Verslag, 1854.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² See Mailrapport 1893, no. 572, Toezicht op de zendingsarbeid op de Sangi en Talauer eilanden in de res. Manado, Letter from the Director of Onderwijs, Eeredienst and Nijverheid, to GG, 17 October 1893.

⁹³ It is important to note, however, that such a trope had existed in the region before the mid-nineteenth century. See Niemeijer, "Agama Kumpeni? Ternate en de protestantesering van de Noord-Molukken en Norod-Sulawesi 1626-1795," *Het Indisch Sion: De Gereformeerde kerk onder de Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie*, 171-173.

⁹⁴ Reenders, *Alternatieve Zending: Ottho Gerhard Heldring (1804-1876) en de verbreiding van het christendom in Nederlands-Indie*, 253. The last visit by a European pastor had been in 1828. Cuarteron, *Spiegazione e Traduzione dei XIV Quadri relativi alle isole di Salibaboo, Talaor, Sanguey, Nanuse, Mindanao, Celebes, Borneo, Bahalatolis, Tambisan, Sulu, Toolyan, e Labuan*, 13.

⁹⁵ "Correspondentie en Berigten," *De Vereeniging: Christelijke Stemmen* 16, (1861): 125. See also, HUA ARvdZ inv. 1102-1, no 2738, Letter of [C. W. J. (Clara) Steller], [1908], 3.

⁹⁶ S. D. van de Velde van Cappellen, "Verslag eener bezoekreis naar de Sangi-eilanden," *Mededeelingen van het Nederlandsch Zendelinggenootschap* 1, (1857).

“abandoned” Sangirese Christians had been “found” by visiting colonial visitors and missionaries in the 1850s.⁹⁷

The trope ultimately hinted at the moral—and by extension financial—responsibility of the Christian Dutch towards their Sangirese brethren.⁹⁸ It likely served as a missionary hedge against the emergent policy of religious abstention, which came to be enshrined in the *Regeringsreglement* of 1855.⁹⁹ It, therefore, aimed to make the missionary activities in Sangir more palatable to the officially religiously neutral colonial government.¹⁰⁰

However, while Jansen’s advice for direct colonial control over Sangir was denied, his proposal to send missionaries was approved. One could surmise that the favorable decision was influenced, at least partly, by high government functionaries in the metropole sympathetic to the missions.¹⁰¹ Nonetheless, there was a seeming compromise: the government committed only to a small subsidy instead of a fixed salary like that given to the missionaries in Minahasa.

The so-called missionary-artisans (*zendeling-werklieden*) were most suitable to Jansen’s christianization agenda given the government’s paltry support. They formed part of a broader evangelical renewal within the various European Protestant churches¹⁰² exactly at a time when secularist ideas of governance in colonizing countries¹⁰³ began to spill out into the colonies. These missionary-artisans were young men who were supposed to be economically self-sustaining once they were in their respective mission fields.¹⁰⁴ Many were originally carpenters

⁹⁷ W. B. de Weerd, *Blijvende opdracht : een blik op het zendingswerk op de Talaud-eilanden* (Hilversum: Classicale Zendingscommissie, [1948]), 6.

⁹⁸ This trope seems to have been instrumentalized for the missionization of Minahasa as well. See HUA ARvdZ inv. 1102-1, no. 2738, [T. Kelling?], ‘De Minahassa onder Nederlandsch Gezag en de aanvang der nieuwere zending’, 14.

⁹⁹ Pijper, “De Islampolitiek der Nederlandse Regering,” *Balans van Beleid: Terugblik op de laatste halve eeuw van Nederlandsch-Indië*.

¹⁰⁰ See HUA ARvdZ inv. 1102-1, no. 2767, Letter to the Minister of Colonies by the Sangi Talaud Comite, 30 June 1902.

¹⁰¹ See for instance, the letter of the high-ranking officials of the *Staatscommissie* to the Dutch King pleading for the active promotion of missions, NA MvK inv. 2.10.02, no. 9141, Geheime Oost-Indische Besluiten, 27 August 1860 C 2.

¹⁰² M. Verhoeff et al., *Inventaris van de Archieven van de Rechtsvoorgangers van de Raad voor de Zending, 1797-1950* (Het Utrechts Archief, 2009), 13-14.

¹⁰³ Vincent Houben, “Adat en Agama: Dayaks en montfortanen in West-Kalimantan,” in *Woord en Schrift in de Oost: De Betekenis van Zending en Missie voor de Studie van Taal en Literatuur in Zuidoost-Azië* (Leiden: Opleiding Talen en Culturen van Zuidoost-Azië en Oceanië, 2000), 33-34.

¹⁰⁴ Thomas van den End, “General Introduction to the History of the Mission of the Netherlands Reformed Church and its Predecessors (1797-1951),” in *Mission History and Mission Archives*, ed. Huub Lems (Utrecht: Stichting de Zending der Protestantse Kerk in Nederland, 2011), 187.

who received little, if any, formal education.¹⁰⁵ Some were sent to Java, New Guinea, Makassar, Flores, and Cape Town.¹⁰⁶ Those who came to Sangir-Talaud were recruited specifically from the *Berliner Mission*, which trained these would-be missionaries.¹⁰⁷

In 1855, four of these German missionary-artisans—C. Schroder, E. Steller, A. Grohe, and F. Kelling—arrived in Batavia to study Malay.¹⁰⁸ They stayed for sometime in Manado, familiarizing themselves with the methods of the more established missionaries of the Dutch Missionary Society (NZG) in Minahasa¹⁰⁹ before continuing the journey to their respective stations in Greater Sangir, Siau, and Tagulandang in 1857.¹¹⁰ They were joined in 1859 by another four missionary-artisans destined for Talaud—A. C. van Essen, P. Gunther, W. Richter, and C. E. W. Tauffmann.¹¹¹

The addition of the latter four and the choice of their respective mission posts were likely a consequence of Jansen's personal inspection of the Talaud archipelago in 1857.¹¹² In addition to providing these missionary-artisans with bibles and catechism books,¹¹³ Jansen also gave them cacao seeds to cultivate in the hope of stimulating economic self-sufficiency.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁵ A. van der Hoeven, *Otto Gerhard Heldring* (Amsterdam: H. J. Paris, 1942), 124.

¹⁰⁶ Hoeven, *Otto Gerhard Heldring*, 135.

¹⁰⁷ Reenders, *Alternatieve Zending: Ottho Gerhard Heldring (1804-1876) en de verbreiding van het christendom in Nederlands-Indie*, 250..

¹⁰⁸ Reenders, *Alternatieve Zending: Ottho Gerhard Heldring (1804-1876) en de verbreiding van het christendom in Nederlands-Indie*, 250.

¹⁰⁹ From these missionaries, the missionary-artisans learned the system of *anak piara* or the employ of young boys and girls as household help in return for "education." HUA ARvdZ inv. 1102-1, no. 2738, Letter of [C. W. J. (Clara) Steller], [1908], 3.

¹¹⁰ Schroder was assigned in Tabukan and Steller in Manganitu, on opposite sides of Sangir Besar. Grohe was assigned to Siau while Kelling, was assigned to Tagulandang.

¹¹¹ A. C. van Essen was stationed in Lirung and was responsible for the entire island of Salibabu; P. Gunther was assigned to Mengarang and the entire area of Kabaruang; W. Richter was assigned to Rainis and the villages along the east coast of Karakelong; and C. E. W. Tauffmann was assigned to Beo and the western half of Karakelong. Reenders, *Alternatieve Zending: Ottho Gerhard Heldring (1804-1876) en de verbreiding van het christendom in Nederlands-Indie, bijlage 1*. These missionary-workmen all came from Germany, except for Gunther who came from Wageningen. NA Mailrapporten, 1869-1900, inv. 2.10.02, Rapport van de Resident van Menado [Matthes] over de werkzaamheden van zendelingen op de Sangir Talauteilanden, Letter of RM Matthes to the Governor-General, Manado, 26 May 1881.

¹¹² ANRI Manado inv. 23, no. 3, Afgaande Brieven Manado 3de kwartaal, 13 Aug 1857, no. 812 to the GG.

¹¹³ HUA ARvdZ inv. 1102-1, no. 2738, Letter of [C. W. J. (Clara) Steller], [1908], 3.

¹¹⁴ NA Mailrapport 1869-1900, inv. 2.10.02, Rapport van de resident van Menado over de werkzaamheden van zendelingen op de Sangir Talauteilanden, 624+ Letter of RM Matthes to GG, Manado, 26 May 1881. Some sources say Jansen also handed nutmeg for cultivation. HUA ARvdZ inv. 1102-1, no. 2738, Letter of [C.W. J. (Clara) Steller], [1908], 3.

However, to what extent were the missionary-artisans successful in converting the Sangirese?

2.2. Chiefly intransigence: Jacob Ponto, raja of Siau

The local political environment which the missionary-artisans encountered (and intruded upon) is best exemplified by the case of Siau under the rule of the young Jacob Ponto. His case illustrates that successful chiefly resistance to the Christian missions was possible because of the lack of economic and political support for the missions from the colonial state. Jacob Ponto's intransigence bore fruit in that the pioneer missionary-artisan, August Grohe, eventually retreated from Siau, where no permanent missions could be established until Ponto's forced exile 35 years later.

2.2.1. Christianizing a Muslim chief

Jacob Ponto, despite his relatively young age,¹¹⁵ already typified the quintessential "man of prowess"¹¹⁶ who was respected and feared by his Sangirese subjects. He strived to instill fear by sponsoring headhunting expeditions as well as awe by acting as an efficacious mediator of nature (volcanoes and rains). While he showed public deference to Dutch authorities who had sought to mold him as a "true Christian" in Manado, he discredited his patrons to consolidate his political interests in Siau.¹¹⁷ Because of Ponto's political cunning and sharp sense of survival, Siau came to be known in missionary circles as the "worst station" in Sangir.¹¹⁸

However, one could also argue that Siau's political and economic circumstances were decisive factors in Ponto's ability to retain his position. Siau was a well-populated and fertile island-polity that had been the most influential among the Sangirese chiefdoms. It had traditionally claimed influence over geographically disparate settlements—from its neighboring

¹¹⁵ He was approximately 21 when the missionaries arrived in 1857.

¹¹⁶ See Wolters, *History, Culture and Region in Southeast Asian Perspectives*.

¹¹⁷ NA Mailrapporten, 1869-1900, 2.10.02, 1889, Ontslag van de radja van Siauwegens wanbestuur, 715, Nota omtrent het bestuur en de handelingen van den vorst van Siauwegens, Jacob Ponto, Taruna, 24 Ag 1889, JFD Lux, written on the order of and under the supervision of RM Stakman.

¹¹⁸ S. Coolsma, "De Zending op de Sangir- en Talaut-Eilanden," *Nederlandsch Zendingstijdschrift* 5, (1893): 244.

Tagulandang,¹¹⁹ Bolaang-Itang in mainland north Sulawesi, Tamako in Greater Sangir, and the entire island of Kabaruang in Talaud.¹²⁰ Jacob Ponto himself is a testament to these regional interconnections.

Ponto was born and raised in neighboring Bolaang-Itang. He was only 15 years old and was supposedly still literally “playing when he was ‘captured’ by the chiefs of Siau”¹²¹ to become their raja. He was elected virtually as a “stranger-king”¹²² after a political deadlock on the question of succession between two competing Siaurese families.¹²³ He later cemented his position as the undisputed apical ruler of Siau and the most important Sangirese raja when he married Inontat, the sister of the first Muslim ruler of Bolaang-Mongondow, Jacobus Manuel Manoppo, in the mid-1860s (see Chart 4.1).¹²⁴

His family name, Ponto, is said to have originated from one of Mongondow’s legendary chiefs named Mamonto—believed to have been the ancestor of the ruling families of Kaidipang and Bolaang-Itang.¹²⁵ However, a more plausible version points to a more modest origin—the first “Ponto” was a mere village chief (*sengadi*) who married the daughter of the raja of Kaidipang.¹²⁶ Whatever the origin of his name, it is clear that Jacob Ponto was agnatically and enatically well connected to the various ruling families of north Sulawesi. This connection not only made Siau distinct but also likely prestigious among the Sangirese polities.¹²⁷

¹¹⁹ See the pretension of the son of the *jogugu* of Siau to the position of raja in Tagulandang. ANRI Manado inv. 51, no. 3, Politiek Verslag 1854.

¹²⁰ NA MvK, 1850-1900, 2.10.02, 5063, 13 Juli 1896, no. 22, Staat aantonnende het aantal Districten en Djogoegoeschappen en daartoe behoorende kampongs op de Talauer eilanden, ressorterende onder de verschillende rijken op de Sangir-eilanden.

¹²¹ Usup, *Sejarah Singkat Kerajaan Kaidipang Besar (Kaidipang dan Bolaang-Itang)*, 37.

¹²² See David Henley, "Conflict, Justice, and the Stranger-King Indigenous Roots of Colonial Rule in Indonesia and Elsewhere," *Modern Asian Studies* 38, (2004).

¹²³ NA Mailrapporten, 1869-1900, 2.10.02, 1889, Ontslag van de radja van Siauwegens wanbestuur, 715, Nota omtrent het bestuur en de handelingen van den vorst van Siauwegens, Jacob Ponto, Taruna, 24 Ag 1889, JFD Lux, written on the order of and under the supervision of RM Stakman.

¹²⁴ HUA ARvdZ inv. 1102-1, no. 1221, JAT Schwarz, 22 March 1867, Sonder, 1.

¹²⁵ A. C. Veenhuijzen, "Aanteekeningen omtrent Bolaang-Mongondo, ontleend aan het verslag over eene reis van 8 April tot en met 20 Mei 1900, tot onderzoek naar de gemeenschappelijke grenzen van de Minahassa en het landschap Bolaang-Mongondo," *Tijdschrift van het Koninklijk Nederlandsch Aardrijkskundig Genootschap*, (1903): 67.

¹²⁶ Usup, *Sejarah Singkat Kerajaan Kaidipang Besar (Kaidipang dan Bolaang-Itang)*, 30-31.

¹²⁷ The only comparable connection is perhaps that of the Tabukan and Kendahe's familial relations with Maguindanao in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Through the course of the eighteenth century however, the connection was lost as the Sangirese polities were directed into the political orbit of the VOC.

It is also probable that through these elite familial connections, Islamization took its path. In the 1830s, the chiefs of Bolaang-Itang, led by Jacob Ponto's father, Raja Daud Ponto (r. 1823-1863),¹²⁸ requested permission from the colonial Resident to officially convert to Islam.¹²⁹ However, they withdrew their request after the Resident placed the condition that Bolaang-Itang, a demographically small polity, be merged with the adjacent Kaidipang, whose chiefs had become Muslims during the English *interregnum* earlier in the century.¹³⁰ By 1846, Bolaang-Itang along with Bolaang-Mongondow were the only two polities with "nominal Christian" rulers.¹³¹ One could surmise that Daud Ponto openly professed and sponsored Islam in 1848 around the same time as his counterpart, Jacobus Manoppo of Mongondow, announced his official conversion to Islam to his Dutch overlords (see Chapter 4).

Jacob Ponto's close familial association with Islam compelled Resident Scherius (r. 1849-1851) to verbally ask Raja Daud to have his son baptized as a Christian in Manado.¹³² His aim was "to prevent any future conflict between Ponto and his [Christian] subjects."¹³³ Scherius had earlier urged the Christian chiefs of Siau, the three most important chiefs especially,¹³⁴ to choose the next raja from among themselves. However, the mutually competing chiefs affirmed that "they could not find any among them [suitable] to be a raja," so they chose Ponto, who was descended from Siau's ruling family (*katuronan deri hakh bangsa radja Siau*).¹³⁵ Their choice of Ponto seems to suggest that at this juncture in Sangirese history familial descent outweighed religious affiliation.

However, for the colonial officials who possessed a keen sense of religious differences, if not rivalry,¹³⁶ affiliation with Christianity was important. Thus, Scherius had Ponto baptized in 1850, and when Jansen assumed office in 1853, he soon required the young Jacob Ponto to be

¹²⁸ See Usup, *Sejarah Singkat Kerajaan Kaidipang Besar (Kaidipang dan Bolaang-Itang)*.

¹²⁹ ANRI Manado inv. 48, no. 4, Bundle: Verslag van de rijkjes en negorijen ten westen van Manado gelegen, Pietermaat, Resident van Manado, 31 December 1833, 13.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ ANRI Manado inv. 50, no. 2, Register der aantekeningen van den Kommissaris voor Menado, 1846, 22r.

¹³² ANRI Manado inv. 15, no. 1, Letter of the the chiefs of Siau to RM, 8 November 1849.

¹³³ ANRI Manado inv. 15, no. 1, Letter of the chiefs of Siau to RM, 13 January 1850.

¹³⁴ These were the chiefs (*President Raja*) of Ulu, Ondong, and Tamako Dagho. ANRI Manado inv. 15, no. 1, Letter of the the chiefs of Siau to RM, 8 November 1849.

¹³⁵ ANRI Manado inv. 15, no. 1, Letter of the chiefs of Siau to RM, 13 January 1850.

¹³⁶ Lorraine V. Aragon, "Relatives and Rivals in Central Sulawesi: Grounded Protestants, Mobile Muslims, and the Labile State," in *Christianity in Indonesia: Perspectives of Power*, ed. Susanne Schroter (Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2010), 265.

“educated and civilized.”¹³⁷ Jansen arranged for Ponto to attend Manado’s European primary school for three years. There he joined the children of Minahasan chiefs and European functionaries and settlers.¹³⁸

2.2.2. Ponto and the missionaries

It is against this backdrop of deeply rooted traditional chiefly rule alongside an erratic, personality driven, and certainly not full-fledged colonial policy of Christianization that the lone missionary, August Grohe, arrived at his mission station. Grohe has been described as a “simple, pleasant man with a simple wife”¹³⁹ who experienced an unfortunate and unceremonious commencement of his missionary career. On the way to Siau for the first time, his vessel ran aground. He survived, but all his personal effects, including the handful of bibles and catechism books provided by Jansen, were lost at sea.¹⁴⁰

Jacob Ponto, who was not pleased by the missionary’s presence, refused to support the construction of a residence for Grohe. When Ponto finally decided to build one, he predicted that Grohe would “only last in Siau for two or three years.”¹⁴¹ Not long after this incident, Ponto masterminded—missionaries claimed—several poisoning attempts against the Grohe couple and the neighboring missionary in Tagulandang, F. Kelling.¹⁴²

These incidents were very likely related to the missionaries’ increasingly direct interference in local affairs. Grohe sought to enforce missionary Christian morality that ran counter to long-standing local practices. He dismissed a local schoolteacher for the “immorality” of marrying his first cousin.¹⁴³ This incestuous practice (*sumbang*), however, had long been

¹³⁷ ANRI Manado inv. 51, no. 3, Politiek Verslag 1853.

¹³⁸ NA MvK 1850-1900, inv. 2.10.02, no. 701 (1858), ‘Toestand van het Schoolwezen in de Residentie Manado in 1853’, 1.

¹³⁹ NA Mailrapporten, 1869-1900, inv. 2.10.02, 1878, Rapport van de resident van Menado over de werkzaamheden van de zendelingen op de Talaut- en Sangi-eilanden, 345+, Report of the commissie for the Sangir-Talaud, 15 Oct 1877.

¹⁴⁰ Reenders, *Alternatieve Zending: Ottho Gerhard Heldring (1804-1876) en de verbreiding van het christendom in Nederlands-Indie*, 252.

¹⁴¹ HUA ARvdZ inv. 1102-1, no. 2817, A. Grohe, Ulu, undated letter.

¹⁴² NA Mailrapporten, 1869-1900, inv. 2.10.02, 1889, Ontslag van de radja van Siauwegens wanbestuur, 715, Nota omtrent het bestuur en de handelingen van den vorst van Siauwegens, Jacob Ponto, Taruna, 24 Ag 1889, JFD Lux, written on the order of and under the supervision of RM Stakman.

¹⁴³ ANRI Manado inv. 30, no. 2, Besluiten RM 1860, 11 February, 1860.

common in the broader region, especially among the inter-marrying local elite.¹⁴⁴ Ponto himself later in life was believed to have practiced incest.¹⁴⁵

However, more threatening to Ponto's authority was Grohe's direct opposition to pagan rituals of which Ponto was the main sponsor. The missionary required the destruction of a pagan "offering place" (Sang.: *pangkunang*),¹⁴⁶ which was built primarily to appease the Karangetang volcano that towers over Siau. Ponto brought the case to the Resident of Menado. To suggest political loyalty, Ponto and his subordinate chiefs affirmed that they were Christians and declared that Siau had been a Christian island for 200 years.¹⁴⁷ Ponto himself agreed that the pagan offerings were indeed "unreasonable to the Christian religion"¹⁴⁸ but contended that these had been done since time immemorial.

Ponto further asserted that such offerings were essential to Siau's overall well-being. He drew attention to the tragic eruption of the nearby Awu volcano in 1856 and warned that Karangetang was higher and larger than Awu and, therefore, more destructive.¹⁴⁹ By doing so, he was likely drawing from the widespread local belief that the volcanoes of Awu and Karangetang were mutually connected.¹⁵⁰ With a portentous tone, he warned that the shape of Karangetang's summit had changed and that climbing to the top—supposedly to perform offerings and sacrifices—was impossible as the path had been covered with darkness suggesting an imminent eruption.¹⁵¹

However, the destruction of pagan structures was not only supposedly connected to volcanic activity but also to Siau's public health. Ponto attributed a recent smallpox epidemic to

¹⁴⁴ Shelly Errington, "Incestuous Twins and the House Societies in Insular Southeast Asia," *Cultural Anthropology*; Manuel R. Tawagon, "Maranao Oral Literature: In Search of Historical Sources" (paper presented at the International Conference on Philippine Muslim Historiography After Majul, Manila, Philippines, 2013), 11.

¹⁴⁵ NA Mailrapporten, 1869-1900, 2.10.02, 1889, Ontslag van de radja van Siauwegens wanbestuur, 715, Nota omtrent het bestuur en de handelingen van den vorst van Siauwegens, Jacob Ponto, Taruna, 24 Ag 1889, JFD Lux, written on the order of and under the supervision of RM Stakman. Throughout, the missionaries had been the primary opponents of this *adat* and openly encouraged its penalization. NA MvO, 1852-1962, 2.10.39, 1180, Nota betreffende bij de acte van verband dd. 13 September 1930 van den Heer A. A. Bastiaan [an indigenous raja], optredend als bestuurder van het landschap Kendahe-Taroena, 11.

¹⁴⁶ Steller and Aebersold, *Sangirees-Nederlands Woordenboek met Nederlands-Sangirees Register*, 341.

¹⁴⁷ See reference to this letter, HUA ARvdZ inv. 1102-1, no. 2817, A. Grohe, Ulu, quoting the letter of the Resident, undated [1859?].

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ HUA ARvdZ inv. 1102-1, no. 2817, A. Grohe, Ulu, citing Jacob Ponto's letter to the Resident, undated [1859?].

¹⁵⁰ NA MvO, 1852-1962, inv. 2.10.39, no. 305, Memorie van Overgave van het Bestuur van den Res van M, J. Tideman (1926), 5.

¹⁵¹ HUA ARvdZ inv. 1102-1, no. 2817, A. Grohe, Ulu, citing Jacob Ponto's letter to the Resident, undated [1859?].

Grohe's interference in pagan rituals.¹⁵² He, therefore, pleaded that the Resident allow the construction of another pagan structure, although conceding that such a structure be built away from the core settlement (*negeri*) where the majority of the (elite) Christian population and the missionary resided.

Ponto's gambit of invoking Christian identity resembles the long-standing notion of Christianity as a marker of political affiliation and loyalty to the Dutch. However, while doing so had traditionally been expedient for local chiefs, Grohe's arrival emphasized a hitherto latent feature of Christianity—as a moral and theological force. By ordering the destruction of a pagan structure, Grohe challenged chiefly authority founded, as it were, upon the ruler's efficacious mediation between the immanent and transcendental aspects of reality. One might surmise that in the traditional Sangirese setting, as in comparable societies in the region, one of the ways of establishing political authority was through shamanic rituals in which chiefs played the initiatory role.¹⁵³

Fortunately for Ponto, the over-arching colonial climate favored the continuity of traditional authority. The incumbent Resident C. Bosscher (1859-1861) was not keen in advancing the missionary project at the expense of unsettling the political status quo. While he reprimanded Ponto for not acting like a Christian, he was very critical of Grohe for his “disturbance of religious rituals and destruction of structures and images.”¹⁵⁴ He considered Grohe's actions as a transgression of authority, reminding him that religious conversions should be “voluntary and not imposed.”¹⁵⁵ He likewise threatened to withdraw Grohe's permission to remain in Sangir.

Following Ponto's proposition, the Resident permitted the continuation of pagan practices on the conditions that these were performed two miles away from the *negeri* and that no Christians could participate in these practices, especially the raja and the chiefs.¹⁵⁶ His decision supposedly emboldened the chiefly elite. For instance, the performance of a ritual and communal gathering (*tulude*) to appease the incessant rains and strong winds that had been preventing rice-

¹⁵² ANRI Manado inv. 48, no. 4, Politiek Verslag 1860.

¹⁵³ Atkinson, *The Art and Politics of Wana Shamanship*, Preface.

¹⁵⁴ ANRI Manado inv. 48, no. 4, Politiek Verslag 1860.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ HUA ARvdZ inv. 1102-1, no. 2817, A. Grohe, Ulu, quoting the letter of the Resident, undated [1859?]; ANRI Manado inv. 48, no. 4, Politiek Verslag 1860.

planting, a practice vehemently opposed by Grohe, was simply transferred from the core settlement to the hinterland.¹⁵⁷

The government's firm support of traditional authority—founded on the broader policy of “colonial abstention”—ultimately spelled failure for the missionaries. Nevertheless, the missionaries achieved small gains. Through Grohe's instigation, the government endorsed the rebuilding of churches and schoolbuildings in Siau. The church collection, formerly under the control of the chiefs who supposedly misappropriated the funds if only to purchase *arak* (alcoholic drink) and gunpowder, were placed under Grohe's hands, and although the right to nominate local schoolmasters remained within the purview of the chiefs, Grohe's recommendation was necessary for their appointment.

Despite these measures, however, Grohe became resigned to the fact that after ten years, he had baptized only 59 people and admitted only 19 of them into the church as confirmed members (*lidmaten*). He requested transfer to the remoter Aru archipelago,¹⁵⁸ which had earlier been planned as a destination for these missionary-artisans.¹⁵⁹ Although he was eventually assigned to the nearby Sangir Besar, he was also tasked to intermittently visit—but not settle in—the main Siau island.¹⁶⁰ Grohe attributed his failure to the hindrances posed by the intransigent Muslim and pagan Ponto.¹⁶¹

Ponto's political aspirations, however, did not end within the confines of Siau island. He sponsored an annual headhunting expedition in Tamako, an important Siaurese exclave known as the “most fertile district in Sangir.”¹⁶² It was widely believed by the locals that Ponto's headhunting missions were meant to cure an unspecified type of “head sickness”¹⁶³—a seemingly recurrent problem that even led him to undergo a pagan healing ritual bath

¹⁵⁷ HUA ARvdZ inv. 1102-1, no. 2817, A. Grohe, Ulu, undated [1859?].

¹⁵⁸ HUA ARvdZ inv. 1102-1, no. 2817, A. Grohe, Ulu, 6 Dec 1861.

¹⁵⁹ Reenders, *Alternatieve Zending: Ottho Gerhard Heldring (1804-1876) en de verbreiding van het christendom in Nederlands-Indie*, 250.

¹⁶⁰ NA Mailrapporten, 1869-1900, inv. 2.10.02, Uitgebreid verslag van een kontroleur over de situatie op de Talaut- en Sangireilanden, 330+, Verslag van eene reis naar de Talauer en Sangirelanden door den kontroleur H. van Heuckelum in de maanden October, November en December 1873 following the commission from the Resident of Menado, 5 October 1873 [van der Crab], 5.

¹⁶¹ HUA ARvdZ inv. 1102-1, no. 2817, A. Grohe, Ulu, 20 March 1865, 4.

¹⁶² See NA VOC inv. 1.04.02, no. 8163, Memorie wegens den presenten staat van saaken in de Moluccos, opgesteld door Jan Elias van Mijlendonk, afgaande Gouverneur en Directeur van Tematen, 20 Julij 1756.

¹⁶³ HUA ARvdZ inv. 1102-1, no. 2861, E. T. Steller, 16 April 1861, 8.

(*monayuk*)¹⁶⁴ in Mongondow.¹⁶⁵ Ponto's sponsorship of headhunting could, therefore, be interpreted as a show of strength despite his apparent physical weakness.¹⁶⁶

However, the more convincing reason is a more explicitly political one. Ponto likely aimed to sow fear and force submission instead of attempting to directly rule the exclave. He financially rewarded the headhunters or promoted them in the Sangirese status hierarchy. Headhunters hailing from the slave class were freed and accorded a distinguishing title (*hukum*, *sadaha*, *sawohi*, etc.), and those from the free class were supposed to receive the goodly sum of 300. One of the lesser chiefs of Manganitu, a former slave, was accorded the distinguishing title *hukum* after providing a severed head to the raja of Siau.¹⁶⁷ Ponto's last headhunting sponsorship occurred in 1885 when a permanent colonial functionary was stationed in Sangir.¹⁶⁸

Not long after settling into his assignment in Manganitu, adjacent to Tamako, E. T. Steller became embroiled in the headhunting issue. Steller reported the supposed heightened audacity of headhunters after Bosscher's decision allowing pagan feasts in Siau.¹⁶⁹ Steller had been regularly informed that in the rice harvest season a so-called *orang jahat* (wicked person) would snatch the head of an unsuspecting farmer or fisherman. Steller believed that those fishermen who had ventured into sea and failed to return could not have fallen victims to the Maguindanao slave-raiders as there had been no reported sightings of the Maguindanaos for the previous eight to ten years.¹⁷⁰ While Steller was convinced that these disappearances were caused by the raja of Siau, information was difficult to collect as many feared retribution by Ponto and other lesser chiefs. That the headhunters originated from Siau was, however, established by the fact that they spoke the Siau dialect of Sangirese.

Steller personally complained against headhunting to the Resident of Manado in the presence of Ponto himself. Ponto lodged a counter-complaint denouncing Steller's "denigration

¹⁶⁴ See a brief description in: Lily E. N. Saud, "Kearifan lokal dalam legenda Pulaugogabola (kajian tentang pembentukan budi pekerti)," *Esagenang: Jurnal Hasil Penelitian Jarahnitra* 11, no. 19 (2012): 16.

¹⁶⁵ HUA ARvdZ inv. 1102-1, no. 1221, JAT Schwarz, Sonder, 22 March 1867, Sonder, 4.

¹⁶⁶ This practice was also noted among the prehispanic Philippine datus. See Zeus A Salazar, "Faith healing in the Philippines: A historical perspective," *Asian Studies* 18, (1980).

¹⁶⁷ HUA ARvdZ inv. 1102-1, no. 2861, E. T. Steller, 16 April 1861, 8.

¹⁶⁸ NA Mailrapporten, 1869-1900, inv. 2.10.02, 1889, Ontslag van de radja van Siauwegens wanbestuur, 715, Nota omtrent het bestuur en de handelingen van den vorst van Siau, Jacob Ponto, Taruna, 24 Ag 1889, JFD Lux, written on the order of and under the supervision of RM Stakman.

¹⁶⁹ HUA ARvdZ inv. 1102-1, no. 2861, E. T. Steller, 16 April 1861, 2.

¹⁷⁰ HUA ARvdZ inv. 1102-1, no. 2861, E. T. Steller, 16 April 1861, 8.

of his status as a Dutch-recognized raja in front of other Europeans and his own subjects.”¹⁷¹ However, like Grohe’s case, the colonial government sided in favor of Ponto. The Governor-General withdrew Steller’s permission to stay in the Indies (a decision later reversed by The Hague—see below). He also promised to provide a steamship to the Resident ostensibly to improve colonial governance in Sangir.¹⁷²

Jacob Ponto, the undisputed authority in Sangir, continued to consolidate his position by repeatedly proving his worth to the colonial authorities in Manado. He was referred to as a “trustworthy follower” by the Resident in the context of the deadly attack of the colonial fort by Islamic radicals led by Syarif Mansur of Buol in 1875 (see Chapter 4).¹⁷³ Ponto supplied invaluable intelligence report on his birthplace, Bolaang-Itang, where Syarif Mansur and his followers stopped before launching their suicidal assault. It was in Bolaang-Itang—ruled by Ponto’s uncle (Tagupat)—that Syarif Mansur and his followers were noted to have “made a procession to the masjid” while “chanting jihad.”¹⁷⁴ Ponto succeeded in catching two fugitives—so-called *bajak* (pirate)—who participated in what colonial officials suspected, and indeed was, a brewing “Islamic revolt.”¹⁷⁵

Additionally, Ponto participated enthusiastically in the colonial government’s anti-piracy campaign. He proudly reported to the Resident his own encounter and subsequent triumph over five Maguindanao *prahu* manned by 50 raiders in 1864. He was supposed to have personally led the Siaurese in a bloody though successful battle in Biaro Island against the invading raiders.¹⁷⁶ The sailing raids of the Maguindanao in 1864 were likely counter-attacks in reprisal for the 1862 destruction of Maguindanao vessels in Sangir by the Dutch steamship, *Reteh*.¹⁷⁷ The Resident,

¹⁷¹ ANRI Manado inv. 49, no. 2, Politiek Verslag 1861.

¹⁷² ANRI Manado inv. 49, no. 2, Politiek Verslag 1861.

¹⁷³ NA MvK, 1850-1900, inv. 2.10.02, no. 6078, 26 April 1876 L10 no. 38 [Kabinetssverbaal] Letter of RM to GG, 12 September 1875. See also, Adrian B. Lapien, “Holy warriors from the sea : (the raid on Manado of 1875)” (paper presented at the Indonesian-Dutch Historical Congress, Noordwijkerhout, May 19-22, 1976).

¹⁷⁴ NA MvK, 1850-1900, inv. 2.10.02, no. 6078, 26 April 1876 L10 no. 38 [Kabinetssverbaal], Asst Resident Riedel, Gorontalo, Letter to the RM, 30 Sep 1875.

¹⁷⁵ See the reference to Ponto’s participation in a popular *pantun* (literary verse) composition, *Boek panton deri waktu Bwool masok di Menado pada tahoen 1876*, 13.

¹⁷⁶ ANRI Manado inv. 15a, Stukken Zeeroovers 1864, Letter of Raja Jacob Ponto to RM, 30 March 1864.

¹⁷⁷ It is symbolic that the steamship used for counter-piracy missions was named after *Reteh* (eastern Sumatra), a former stronghold of the Iranuns destroyed by forces led by the Dutch in 1858. See E. Netscher, *De Nederlanders in Djohor en Siak, 1602 tot 1865*, Verhandelingen van het Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunst en Wetenschappen, Deel XXXV (Batavia: Bruining en Wijt, 1870).

for his part, was encouraged by Ponto's actions and promised to deliver additional gunpowder for Ponto's own use.¹⁷⁸

In sum, Jacob Ponto personified the quintessential traditional “strong man” when his chiefly counterparts in nearby Minahasa had effectively become salaried bureaucrats. He mirrored the earlier Minahasan chiefs, such as H. W. Dotulong (see Chapter 3), in that he saw the European missionary-led Christianization as a threat to his own position. As such, no missionary-artisan was able to fully penetrate Siau until Ponto's forced removal from office in 1889. However, to what extent were the rest of the missionary-artisans successful in their respective mission fields?

2.3. The missionary-artisans and the missionary “familial regime”

More than 20 years after the sending of the missionary-artisans to the Sangir and Talaud archipelagos, a government review concluded that “the fruits of their labor remain limited.”¹⁷⁹ Without appropriate financial and political support or even basic linguistic competency, the missionary-artisans embedded themselves in native society in ways that inherently contradicted their missionary purpose—and as a consequence—carried out their missionary activities inefficiently.

Like their Minahasan counterparts, the missionary-artisans struggled to understand and be understood by the Sangirese. While they had received rudimentary lessons in Malay before their arrival,¹⁸⁰ their utterances were likely incomprehensible since Malay was not widely spoken in Sangir. Grohe was even known to have “preached gibberish [Malay] for two or three hours” that “men began to bring their *sirih* (betel) boxes to the church” and the “women and children start to search for lice in each other's head.”¹⁸¹

Because Malay, especially the variety used by the missionaries, was learned only in school and church settings and because schooling had long been exclusive to the Sangirese elite, missionaries still deemed it necessary to learn the Sangirese language to be able to communicate

¹⁷⁸ ANRI Manado inv. 15a, Stukken Zeeroovers 1864, Letter of the RM to the Raja of Siau [Jacob Ponto], 31 March 1864.

¹⁷⁹ NA Mailrapporten, 1869-1900, inv. 2.10.02, 1878, Rapport van de resident van Menado over de werkzaamheden van de zendelingen op de Talaut- en Sangi-eilanden, 345+.

¹⁸⁰ Reenders, *Alternatieve Zending: Otho Gerhard Heldring (1804-1876) en de verbreiding van het christendom in Nederlands-Indie*, 250.

¹⁸¹ HUA ARvdZ inv. 1102-1, no. 2738, Letter of [C. W. J. (Clara) Steller], [1908], 4.

effectively to the larger public up until the early 1900s.¹⁸² Despite that need, the translation of relevant religious texts into Sangirese was too late and too little.¹⁸³

However, more critical than any linguistic shortcoming was the absence of a palpable colonial governance. In Siau the apical chief, Jacob Ponto, succeeded in forestalling the missionaries. However, in the more politically acephalous Talaud, the missionary-artisans almost immediately became chiefs in their own right. One missionary-artisan, P. Gunther, even “took the liberty of appointing [Talaud] chiefs.”¹⁸⁴ Notwithstanding, such actions did not result in Christian missionary successes because of the highly fragmented nature of Talaud polities. The colonial government nonetheless viewed such activities as essentially incongruent with the missionaries’ role. In the case of Gunther, the government sought the missionary’s dismissal.

However, the most striking evidence and legacy of the missionary-artisans’ infringements on colonial governance was the formation of what came to be known in colonial circles as the “familial regime” (*familie-regering*).¹⁸⁵ Figure 5.1 shows that the four pioneer missionaries (in yellow) became inter-related through their siblings and offsprings.

The marriages of the sisters of Schroder and Grohe to the missionaries, Steller and Kelling, appear to have been pre-arranged through missionary channels in Germany. The sisters eventually followed their brothers—and future husbands—to Sangir between the late 1850s and early 1860s or just a few years after the missionary-artisans were sent to their mission stations.¹⁸⁶ They travelled to the Indies free-of-charge under the auspices of the Dutch colonial government.¹⁸⁷ Although not stated explicitly at the time, Dutch colonial and missionary establishments seemed to prefer sending missionaries who were married to European wives. One

¹⁸² HUA ARvdZ inv. 1102-1, no. 2866, A. J. Swanborn (zendeling in Ondong, 1901-1904?), Jaarverslag omtrent den zendingsarbeid in het Ressort Ondong Anno 1902.

¹⁸³ The first of these texts were: F. Kelling, *Tentiro manimbu bou hal hikajet u elkitab ko susi, nisalun su bahasang Sangihe* (Pertaraan N. Z. G. di Tanawangko: H. Bettink, 1873). F. Kelling, *Katechismus, atou manga kakiwalo dingangu sasimbahe bou tatintirongu agama mesehi ko susi, nisalin su bahasang Sangie* (Batavia: Albrecht & Rusche, 1890); F. Kelling, *Katechismus atou manga kakiwalo dingangu sasimbahe bou tatintirongu agama mesehi ko susi, nisalin su bahasang Sangie* (Batavia: Albrecht & Co., 1898).

¹⁸⁴ NA Mailrapporten, 1869-1900, inv. 2.10.02, 1878, Rapport van de resident van Menado over de werkzaamheden van de zendelingen op de Talaut- en Sangi-eilanden, 345+Report of the commissie for the ST, 15 October 1877.

¹⁸⁵ HUA ARvdZ inv. 1102-1, no. 2768, RM Manado, EJ Jellesma, 14 March 1903 to Directeur van Onderwijs, Eeredienst en Nijverheid.

¹⁸⁶ See references on the arrival, HUA ARvdZ inv. 1102-1, no. 2817, A. Grohe, 2 March 1862; HUA ARvdZ inv. 1102-1, no. 2838, C. W. L. M. Schroder.

¹⁸⁷ NA MvK 2.10.02, inv. 700, 10 April 1858, no. 11, “Eeredienst in O. Indie.”

of the original missionary-artisans in Talaud, W. Richter, was prevented from fulfilling his role likely because of his marriage to the daughter of a Talaurese chief,¹⁸⁸ among other reasons.

However, as the familial regime became entrenched in Sangir, its members became less concerned with missionary activities and more concerned with perpetuating the political and especially the economic interests of the family.

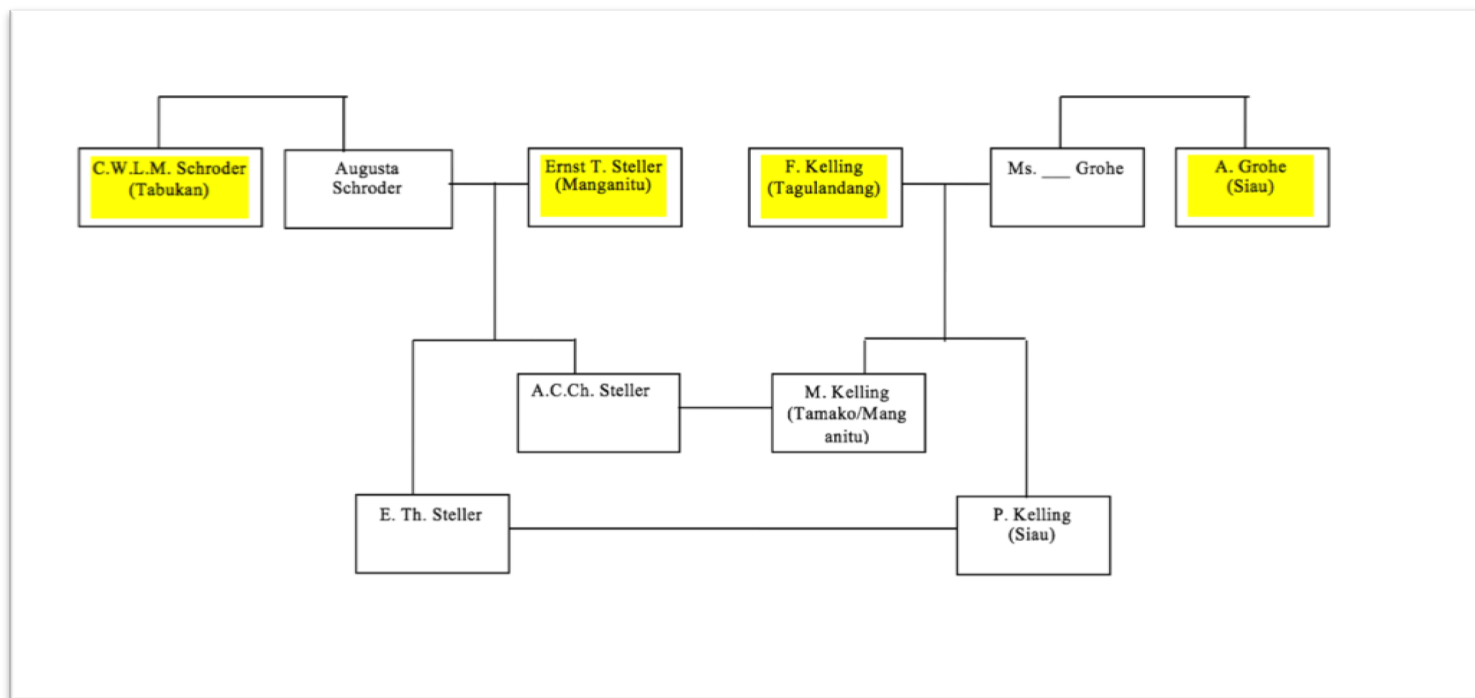


Figure 5.1¹⁸⁹
Intermarrying missionary families in Sangir (19th century)

E. T. Steller, a leading member of the family, was an early advocate of social and political reforms in the Sangir archipelago. He had not only opposed Ponto's headhunting forays but also the slave system present in all Sangirese polities. Steller—like Grohe in Siau¹⁹⁰—

¹⁸⁸ NA Mailrapporten, 1869-1900, inv. 2.10.02, 1878, Rapport van de resident van Menado over de werkzaamheden van de zendelingen op de Talaut- en Sangi-eilanden, 345+Report of the commissie for the ST, 15 October 1877. It has been observed that "unlike many foreign missionary societies, the Dutch societies prefer that their missionaries should be married before going out to the mission field." A. M. Brouwer, "The Preparation of Missionaries in Holland," *The International Review of Missions* 1, no. 1 (1912): 233.

¹⁸⁹ HUA ARvdZ inv. 1102-1, no. 2821, Obituary of F. Kelling, 13 August 1902.

¹⁹⁰ HUA ARvdZ inv. 1102-1, no. 2817, A. Grohe, 20 March 1865, Siau, fo. 4.

protested the exclusion of slaves from church and school by the local elite.¹⁹¹ While recognizing that slavery in Sangir was “light,” he declared that “many slaves would like to be declared free.”¹⁹² He cited the case of a daughter of a slave-woman in Manganitu who attended Christian religious instruction but later suffered intimidation and physical assault from gangs (most likely aristocrats) who were resistant to her attendance and to the changing social order.¹⁹³

The traditional function of schooling and Christianity as status-markers remained entrenched well into Steller’s time. Pupils attended school “only for social distinction” for a while and would later drop out.¹⁹⁴ Even the locally hired schoolmaster supposedly considered his position as a fixed status and devoted most of his time to agriculture, palm wine production, or commercial fishing with his pupils. Many of these adolescent pupils supposedly continued to attend school only to escape *corvée* obligations imposed by their local chief.¹⁹⁵

Successive colonial officials ignored Steller’s complaints. Resident Jansen forbade the missionary-artisans from interfering with the slave issue in Sangir. Jansen perhaps thought that such a measure was premature, given the almost complete political reliance of the colonial state on the rajas to maintain a modicum of rule in Sangir.¹⁹⁶ Resident van Deinse (1864-1871) was adamant on the need to reprimand the chiefs not supportive of schools.¹⁹⁷ The Governor-General, upon the recommendation of the secularist Resident Bosch (1861-1862),¹⁹⁸ even recommended Steller’s dismissal¹⁹⁹ for “acting like a raja.”²⁰⁰ However, the Minister of Colonies in The Hague, likely due to missionary lobby, reversed the decision. The Minister justified Steller’s “discourteousness” towards the chiefs by invoking Steller’s being a mere “craftsman” whose utterances offended the “Oriental ear accustomed to elegant metaphors and slavish subjection.”²⁰¹

¹⁹¹ HUA ARvdZ inv. 1102-1, no. 2859, E. Steller, 12 May, 1866, E Steller to Mev. Gravin van Hogendorp, 2; “Correspondentie en Berigten,” 678-680.

¹⁹² HUA ARvdZ inv. 1102-1, no. 2859, E. Steller, 12 May, 1866, E Steller to Mev. Gravin van Hogendorp, 7-8.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ HUA ARvdZ inv. 1102-1, no. 2738, Letter of [C. W. J. (Clara) Steller], [1908], 4.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ HUA ARvdZ inv. 1102-1, no. 2859, E. Steller, 12 May, 1866, E. Steller to Mev. Gravin van Hogendorp, 2.

¹⁹⁷ HUA ARvdZ inv. 1102-1, no. 2860, E. Steller, 14 June 1868.

¹⁹⁸ See also his stance towards the missions in Minahasa in Chapter 2.

¹⁹⁹ ANRI Manado inv. 49, no. 2, Politiek Verslag 1861.

²⁰⁰ NA MvK inv. 2.10.02, no. 1257, Besluit 3 November 1862 no. 25, Letter of Steller, Manganitu, 22 April 1862.

²⁰¹ NA MvK inv. 2.10.02, no. 1257, Besluit 3 November 1862 no. 25.



Figure 5.2²⁰²

Remains of the Stellers' house in the former coconut and nutmeg plantation “Gunung” (left); School in Manganitu proper where the Stellers taught (right)

However, while Steller’s early years were distinguished by a seemingly socially progressive albeit politically inexpedient stance, his later career was characterized by accusations of corruption and neglect of duty. In his early years, Steller taught in the morning and “directed public works” (constructing sewerage and streets) in the afternoon with his pupils “as a payment for school supplies and clothing.”²⁰³ This ostensibly innocent use of free labor graduated into juvenile exploitation, especially after Steller “purchased” land for nutmeg and coconut plantation in 1874.²⁰⁴ By 1890, his land possession had grown into a full-blown plantation estate—named Gunung (mountain) (see Figure 5.2)—likely acquired under duress from a local church assistant (*penulung*)²⁰⁵ His plantation, adjacent to that of another pioneer missionary-artisan (Schroder), would eventually have 80 so-called *murids* (students) working in its fields.²⁰⁶ Steller’s program of combining schooling with labor was the reason why he was “detested” by the “more civilized”

²⁰² Photos taken 17 December 2013.

²⁰³ HUA ARvdZ inv. 1102-1, no. 2738, Letter of [C. W. J. (Clara) Steller], [1908], 4.

²⁰⁴ NA Mailrapporten, 1869-1900, inv. 2.10.02, 1878, Rapport van de resident van Menado over de werkzaamheden van de zendelingen op de Talaut- en Sangi-eilanden, 345+Report of the commissie for the ST, 15 October 1877.

²⁰⁵ NA Mailrapporten, 1869-1900, inv. 2.10.02, 1891 Onderzoek naar de gang van zaken bij de zending op de Sangi- en Talauer eilanden res. Menado, 836+, Letter of the Res. of Menado, written in Tabukan, 26 october 1890 to the GG.

²⁰⁶ HUA ARvdZ inv. 1102-1, no. 2778, Confidential [Report], Sangi-Taloud Comité, 4.

stratum of Sangirese society who, consequently, sought to transfer their children to the school of a missionary who did not have a plantation.²⁰⁷

Indeed, from the viewpoint of missionary authorities and patrons in Batavia and The Hague, the missionary-artisans' administrative autonomy coupled with unrestrained access to commerce was detrimental to the Christian missionary project.²⁰⁸ Steller, in particular, was so deeply motivated by economic gains that his church services were reportedly only held to "earn money from the community."²⁰⁹ In addition, Steller and the missionary-artisans came to be regarded as "lenient" in carrying out the core missionary goal of instituting "Christian morality" because of their economic dependence on the Sangirese.²¹⁰ For instance, Steller was seen as too permissive for allowing the Sangirese "pagan dances"²¹¹ that were especially shunned by Protestant Christianity.

If the missionary-artisans were unsuccessful, concerned as they were in their own economic agenda, then what accounts for the Christian conversions of the majority of the Sangirese?

3. Religious conversion, political reforms, and commercial expansion

This section shows that the mass conversion of the Sangirese was closely related to the colonial political reforms and commercial expansion of the late nineteenth century. It illustrates a causal nexus between conversion, centralization, and commercialization. It argues that colonial centralization—propelled by the prospects of profit from the Sangirese's own "primitive accumulation"²¹² or the nascent accumulation of capital—had the net effect of liberating the natives from their traditional economic and political subservience to local chiefly authority. Key

²⁰⁷ NA Mailrapporten, 1869-1900, inv. 2.10.02, 1891 Onderzoek naar de gang van zaken bij de zending op de Sangi-en Talauer eilanden res. Menado, 836+, Letter of the Res. of Menado, written in Tabukan, 26 October 1890 to the GG.

²⁰⁸ HUA ARvdZ inv. 1102-1, no. 2737, Copie van een brief van Mevrouw Esser [to Mvrv. Bassecour Caan], Buitenzorg, 2 September [1903?].

²⁰⁹ NA Mailrapporten, 1869-1900, inv. 2.10.02, 1891 Onderzoek naar de gang van zaken bij de zending op de Sangi-en Talauer eilanden res. Menado, 836+, Letter of the Res. of Menado, written in Tabukan, 26 October 1890 to the GG.

²¹⁰ HUA ARvdZ inv. 1102-1, no. 2778, Confidential [Report], Sangi-Taloud Comité, 3.

²¹¹ HUA ARvdZ inv. 1102-1, no. 2737, 'Uit mijn dagboek' [E. Steller, undated].

²¹² Mathew Forstater, "Taxation and Primitive Accumulation: The Case of Colonial Africa," in *The Capitalist State and its Economy: Democracy in Socialism*, ed. Paul Zarembka, 51-64 (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2005).

to this colonial offensive was the incipient bureaucratization of local chiefly offices and the imposition of an obligatory census-based taxation that aimed to monetarize and commercialize the economy. Freed from the traditional chiefly bondage, the Sangirese could now access the prestigious trappings of Christianity, which had been actively promoted by the state but had remained exclusive to the local elite. In addition (and perhaps equally fundamental), Christianity meant access to the emergent and rapidly expanding economy.

3.1. Persistence of the old order

Two waves of colonial centralization were crucial to the story of conversions in Sangir—the reforms implemented by Residents M. C. E. Stakman (1889-1892) and E. J. Jellesma (1892-1903), respectively. However, in order to better contextualize these reforms, a brief review of Sangir's political and economic condition is in order.

There had been attempts, halfhearted at best, from the government to impose modern colonial governance in Sangir. In 1882 A. C. Uljee, an Assistant Resident, was placed in Taruna (Greater Sangir), likely as part of a colony-wide attempt to divest the “economic basis of the chiefs” and centralize authority in the hands of professional European bureaucrats.²¹³ Uljee attempted reforms, but his tenure was cut short.

The political costs of implementing Uljee's reforms were apparently too high for the government after Jacob Ponto, who was “supported unanimously” by the Sangirese upper chiefs, complained to the Resident of Manado. Uljee was consequently removed.²¹⁴ Six successive colonial functionaries were stationed in Sangir following Uljee, but they also failed because their tenures were too short to initiate any meaningful change (either due to regular rotation or health reasons). This was a boon for Ponto and the old order. The regular transfer of posts by these functionaries to other regions away from Sangir was “interpreted by many Sangirese as a consequence of their opposing Ponto.”²¹⁵

Underneath Ponto's prodigious defense of the traditional political order were his avowed economic interests. He strived to protect his economic monopolies and preserve other traditional

²¹³ See *Staatsblad* 1881, nos. 18, 19 and 47; Schouten, “Myth and Reality in Minahasan History: The Waworuntu-Gallois Confrontation,” 124; note 19.

²¹⁴ NA Mailrapporten, 1869-1900 inv. 2.10.02, 1889, Ontslag van de radja van Siau wewgens wanbestuur, 715, Nota omtrent het bestuur en de handelingen van den vorst van Siau w, Jacob Ponto, Taruna, 24 Ag 1889, JFD Lux.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

chiefly privileges in commerce. His efforts resembled those of one of his predecessors in Siau (Raja Paparang), and indeed like many other rajas in the “traditional world” who were known to have “managed to achieve a monopoly on trade, and strictly forbade anybody to buy or sell anything except from and to himself.”²¹⁶ Ponto notably sought to maintain control of the natural and human resources in the islets surrounding Siau. On the island of Makalehi, Ponto ordered his subjects—slaves in fact—to cultivate nutmeg exclusively for his own economic profit.²¹⁷ In the islands of Kalama and Karakitang, Ponto claimed as his personal appanage the profitable edible bird’s nests.²¹⁸ He was known to have used unremunerated labor for the construction of his own house in Manado and in the building of his large sea-going vessel (*kora-kora*). However, it was not only Ponto who benefitted. He and his followers were known to have unduly appropriated lands. Ponto himself was known to have planned to usurp the profitable nutmeg and coconut plantation of one of the missionary-artisans (Schroder) in Talengen.²¹⁹

The renewed interest of the government in Sangir in the 1880s can also be ascribed to the commercial boom. Although nutmeg was supposed to have been cultivated since the mid-nineteenth century,²²⁰ vigorous trade of this commodity seems to have commenced only in the 1880s.²²¹ However, the most important commodity, “the product which really began to shake the regional economy loose”²²², was copra.

From the late 1870s Chinese and European traders based in Makassar and Manado actively participated in the Sangirese copra trade.²²³ By 1881, two companies (Dutch and German, respectively) already had their representatives in Taruna.²²⁴ The process of making copra itself was supposed to have been introduced by the Ternate-based Dutch trader, M. D. van

²¹⁶ Delden, “De Sangir-eilanden in 1825,” cited in Henley, *Fertility, Food and Fever: Population, Economy and Environment in North and Central Sulawesi, 1600-1930*, 76.

²¹⁷ NA Mailrapporten, 1869-1900, inv. 2.10.02, 1889, Ontslag van de radja van Siauwegens wanbestuur, 715, Nota omtrent het bestuur en de handelingen van den vorst van Siau, Jacob Ponto, Taruna, 24 Ag 1889, JFD Lux, written on the order of and under the supervision of RM Stakman.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ UB-KITLV H 1220, no. 56, “De Biologische achtergrond van het Bevolkingsvraagstuk op Noord-Celebes en de Sangihe- en Talaud-Archipel,” Dr. PML Tammes, Manado 1940, 21.

²²¹ UB-KITLV (Archives H. Th. Chabot) H 1251 inv. 66, no. 22, Penduduk, bahasa, asal bangsa dan adat istiadat, A. B. Dauhan, ca. 1950.

²²² Henley, *Fertility, Food and Fever: Population, Economy and Environment in North and Central Sulawesi, 1600-1930*, 84.

²²³ ANRI Missive Gouvernements Secretaris (MGS), 1890-1942, inv. 3754, Letter of RM 11 Jan 1890 to GG.

²²⁴ NA MvO, 1852-1962, inv. 2.10.39, no. 300, RM Matthes (1881).

Renesse van Duivenbode, in 1862.²²⁵ By around 1870, most of the coconut for export was processed into copra and not into coconut oil, as had been traditionally done.²²⁶

However, despite increased economic activity, the majority of the Sangirese languished in poverty, as real profits were realized by the chiefly elite and the outsider-merchants (European *borgo* and Chinese). Historical sources are insufficient to reconstruct a detailed political economy of the pre-reform copra trade in Sangir. However, one can surmise that the outsider-merchants directly or more likely indirectly acquired copra from the ordinary Sangirese by trading textiles and other goods for copra. These merchants probably made cash payments to the Sangirese chiefly elite who claimed control over the means of production (primarily land and labor) as a commercial concession of sorts. This barter trade was so profitable for the merchants that it probably yielded a profit margin ranging from 100 to 300 percent.²²⁷

This system hindered the monetarization and the dynamism of the economy. Money (copper and silver coins) was scarce despite significant exports. It was estimated that Sangir only had f40,000 despite a population of between 80,000 to 90,000 around 1890.²²⁸ The limited money available was almost certainly in the hands of the elite who used it to buy goods and services that they could not provide for themselves or procure through barter, for example, to import rice for themselves²²⁹ in times of food scarcity, like “the great famine of 1877.”²³⁰ Ordinary Sangirese were flooded with *arak* (palm wine) and especially “worthless [textile] goods,” such as blue cotton (*salemporis*), twilled cotton (*kain keper*), and cloth for sarongs that “just rot in their homes.”²³¹

²²⁵ B. C. A. J. van Dinter, “Eenige geographische en ethnographische aantekeningen betreffende het eiland Siaoë,” *TBG* 41, (1899): 334.

²²⁶ UB-KITLV (Archives H. Th. Chabot) H 1251 inv. 66, no. 22, Penduduk, bahasa, asal bangsa dan adat istiadat, A. B. Dauhan, ca. 1950.

²²⁷ ANRI Missive Gouvernements Secretaris (MGS), 1890-1942, inv. 3754, Letter of RM 11 Jan 1890 to GG.

²²⁸ Ibid. In contrast, the Philippines was even less monetarized. In the same period, the monetary system in the Philippines amounted to six cents per capita while the monetary system in Sangir amounted to 50 cents per capita (if the population of Sangir was 80,000). Willem G. Wolters, “How Were Labourers Paid in the Philippine Islands During the Nineteenth Century?,” in *Wages and Currency: Global Comparisons from Antiquity to the Twentieth Century*, ed. Jan Lucassen (Bern: Peter Lang, 2007), 152.

²²⁹ Rice was consumed primarily by the elites. G. L. L. Kemmerling, *De Vulkanen van den Sangi-Archipel en van de Minahassa* (Wetevreden: Landsdrukkerij, 1923), 6.

²³⁰ UB-KITLV H 1220, no. 56, “De Biologische achtergrond van het Bevolkingsvraagstuk op Noord-Celebes en de Sangihe- en Talaud-Archipel,” Dr. PML Tammes, Manado 1940, 16.

²³¹ NA MvK inv. 2.10.02, inv. 5063, Besluit 13 Juli 1896, no. 22, Verslag van een reis naar de Sangir en Talauer eilanden van den 22 Juli tot 27 Aug 1889, Res. Stakman, Manado.

To sum up, the regular presence of a colonial official beginning in 1882 did not spell the end for the old order, since their respective appointments were not tied to broader and more sweeping colonial reforms, nor did increasing trade bring significant social transformations. The economic benefits brought about by the copra boom certainly did not trickle down to the rest of the Sangirese. Instead, it brought prosperity to outsider-merchants. Most importantly, it reinforced the political-economic dominance of the Sangirese elite over their claimed subjects.

3.2. Stakman's and Jellesma's reforms (1889-1903)

The years of tenure of Residents Stakman and his successor, Jellesma, witnessed a “final burst of pacification”²³² and consequent expansion of modern colonial governance in the broader north Sulawesi region. It saw the imposition of colonial bureaucratic apparatus in residual regions that hitherto had escaped formal control, namely, Bolaang-Mongondow and Talaud. However, it also signalled the beginning of mass conversions to Christianity in Sangir and especially Talaud.

Resident Stakman, over-stating the situation in what James Scott refers to as “state simplification”²³³ wrote in 1890 that “two-thirds of the Sangirese population are now Protestants and the rest, even though not yet baptized, call themselves Christians.”²³⁴ However, a more reliable assessment comes from F. Kelling, one of the pioneer missionary-artisans. He lamented a year before that “two-thirds of the Sangirese remains unbaptized” notwithstanding decades, indeed centuries, of Christian missionary presence.²³⁵ At any rate, in a little more than a decade (1889-1901) the island of Siau—Ponto's stronghold—came to have 32 established Christian communities with 9,235 baptized Christians constituting one-third of its population.²³⁶ More

²³² From Klinken, *The Making of Middle Indonesia: The Middle Classes in Kupang Town, 1930s-1908s*, 7.

²³³ James C. Scott, “Freedom and Freehold: Space, People and State Simplification in Southeast Asia,” in *Asian Freedoms: The Idea of Freedom in East and Southeast Asia*, ed. David Kelly and Anthony Reid, 37-64 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

²³⁴ ANRI Missive Gouvernements Secretaris (MGS), 1890-1942, inv. 3754, Letter of RM 11 Jan 1890 to GG.

²³⁵ “Zending op de Sangi- en Talau-eilanden,” *Geïllustreerd Zendingsblad voor het Huisgezin*, (1889): 62.

²³⁶ HUA ArvdZ inv. 1102-1, no. 2866, A. J. Swanborn (zendeling in Ondong, [1901-1904?]), Jaarverslag omtrent den zendingsarbeid in het Ressort Ondong Anno 1902.

remarkably, where virtually no Christian communities existed before the 1890s, Talaud saw its population becoming completely Christianized within two decades.²³⁷

Stakman's rhetoric resonates closely with that of Jansen in the 1850s. His insistence that all the Sangirese were already Christians "even though not yet baptized" reflects Jansen's influential trope of the Sangirese as "lost Christians." The phrase likely functioned as a defense against secularist critics to facilitate the conversion of the yet pagan Sangirese.

However, more fundamental perhaps was Stakman's deep-seated belief, like Jansen before him, that Christianity was a prerequisite to modernity, prosperity, and civilization,²³⁸ which he stated explicitly in a provocative speech before all the Talaud chiefs in 1889.

Many of you are still pagans and less developed; everyone who has been to Minahasa and Sangir islands, have seen the beneficial impact of religion and education on the development and prosperity [of people]. The government has appointed a missionary to instruct and Christianize you. The government will establish more schools to provide education for your children. I request that you help him [the missionary]. Your people will point to the great benefit that they enjoy once they have become Christians. I hope to hear when I return that many have converted and many follow the education given by the missionaries.²³⁹

Stakman's successor, E. J. Jellesma, was also known as a "friend of the missionaries," as he himself was a son of a pioneer missionary in Java.²⁴⁰ He was a supporter of the Protestant missions in Poso (Central Sulawesi) under the leadership of Albert C. Kruyt. Jellesma personally introduced Kruyt to his future missionary territory and with the same devotion to the missionary project as Stakman, was supposed to have declared to the people of Poso that "all help that you render to this man [Kruyt], you render to me."²⁴¹

Although one might simply ascribe the conversion of the mass of the Sangirese to the desire of the colonial residents to Christianize the peoples of the Dutch East Indies, such an

²³⁷ B. Roep, "Hygiene op de Talaud-eilanden," *Tijdschrift voor het Binnenlandsch Bestuur* 53, (1917). See also NA MvO, 1852-1962, inv. 2.10.39, no. 1183, Tamawiwu, M.S. (bestuurder), "Nota behorende bij acte van verband landschap Talaud-eilanden," 1934.

²³⁸ ANRI Missive Gouvernements Secretaris (MGS), 1890-1942, inv. 3754, Letter of RM 11 Jan 1890 to GG.

²³⁹ NA MvK inv. 2.10.02, inv. 5063, Besluit 13 Juli 1896, no. 22, Notulen van de algemeene vergadering, gehouden te Liroeng op den 15 September 1889, 21-22.

²⁴⁰ Aritonang and Steenbrink, *A History of Christianity in Indonesia*, 425; Maryse Kruithof, "Shouting in a Desert: Dutch Missionary Encounters with Javanese Islam, 1850-1910" (Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam, 2014).

²⁴¹ Gerrit Noort, "De weg van magie tot geloof: leven en werk van Albert C. Kruyt (1869-1949), zendeling-leraar in Midden-Celebes, Indonesië" (Universiteit Utrecht, 2006), 42.

argument can easily be negated by the failure of the missionary project in Sangir in the 1850s at the time of the indefatigably pro-missionary, Resident Jansen.

The crucial element seems to lie not only peripherally in the promotion of Christianity by enthusiastic colonial officials, but mainly in the political and fiscal reforms that were embedded in the rhetoric of Christianization. Underpinning the discourse linking progress and Christianity was the effective opening of the Sangirese economy and transformation of the chiefs into salaried officials. This paved the way for the economic and political liberation of the Sangirese from the yoke of the traditional order—an important precondition for subsequent Christian conversions.

Census-based (monetary) poll taxation (*hasil*) was a key instrument in realizing these ends. One popular justification for taxation was to provide “progress and development” to the natives.²⁴² However, a substantial amount of cash went to government coffers. Only one-tenth of the total collected taxes was left for the local chiefly hierarchy as salary.²⁴³

In Sangir, the plan to impose a poll tax of *f* 1 for each household had long been considered since 1863,²⁴⁴ but it came to fruition only in 1886.²⁴⁵ The chiefs, under Ponto’s leadership,²⁴⁶ withheld actual demographic data to further their own political and economic interests. However, Stakman’s tax reform in 1889 was based on a corrected census, which led to the dramatic increase of the *hasil* from *f* 1,350 to *f* 17,000 in the Sangir islands.²⁴⁷ Resident Jellesma later increased the poll tax to *f* 2.50 per Sangirese household and instituted an *f* 1 poll tax in Talaud²⁴⁸ that in its initial year yielded around *f* 30,000 for Sangir and *f* 5,800 for Talaud, respectively.²⁴⁹

²⁴² See, for instance, NA MvK inv. 2.10.02, no. 4554, Verbaal 10 March 1892, Stakman, to the GG Manado 27 September 1891.

²⁴³ NA MvK inv. 2.10.02, no. 5462, Letter of the Controleur in Taruna, FC Vorstman, 26 May 1897.

²⁴⁴ ANRI Manado inv. 49, no. 2, Bundle: Politiek Verslag der Residentie Manado van het jaar 1863.

²⁴⁵ NA Mailrapporten, 1869-1900 inv. 2.10.02, 1891, Verhoging van de schatting die het landschap Siauw aan het Gouvernement moet betalen, 493+, Extract uit het Register der Besluiten van den Gouverneur-Generaal van Nederlandsch-Indie, Batavia, 13 Juni 1891.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁷ NA MvK inv. 2.10.02, no. 5063, Besluit 13 Juli 1896, no. 22, Batavia 13 Nov 1889 [Letter of the Director of Binnenlands Bestuur, H. Kuneman].

²⁴⁸ NA MvK inv. 2.10.02, no. 5545, Verbaal 10 December 1900, Contract between the Resident of Manado and local Sangirese chiefs.

²⁴⁹ NA MvK inv. 2.10.02, no. 5063, Besluit 13 Juli 1896, no. 22.

However, in order to provide avenues for the Sangirese to acquire cash for broader market-based exchanges and, especially to fulfill periodic tax obligations, the government sought to open the economy and create markets.

Stakman prohibited barter trade and required that cash be used in economic transactions. His regulation naturally elicited opposition from the merchants and the chiefly elite. Chiefs forbade their subjects to trade in a last-ditch attempt to control commerce.²⁵⁰ As a result of obligatory monetary exchange, prices of copra saw a sudden (but temporary) spike as merchants switched from distributing cheap goods to paying hard cash.²⁵¹

Stakman ordered the establishment of markets in Tabukan, Taruna, and Siau. He designated specific areas as “Chinese quarters” in Siau, Taruna, and Lirung.²⁵² He decreed the building of roads within and between villages.²⁵³ Stakman also distributed large amounts of coffee and nutmeg seeds, brown beans, seeds of various trees, and seeds of various trees, including coconut trees for Talaud villagers to cultivate.²⁵⁴ He prohibited the trade in *arak* that not only contributed to the habitual drunkenness of many Sangirese men but was also exchanged at unreasonably high prices by “unscrupulous European and Chinese traders.”²⁵⁵

In addition, reforms that would alter traditional social and political structures were implemented. Stakman declared a blanket abolition of slavery and provisioned lands for former slaves to cultivate.²⁵⁶ He also ordered the breaking down of multiple family houses in favor of single family ones, thus increasing the number of taxable population.²⁵⁷ The compulsory building of single-family houses was particularly damaging to the authority of the *raja rumah*—leader of

²⁵⁰ ANRI Missive Gouvernements Secretaris (MGS), 1890-1942, inv. 3754, Besluit 26 April 1890.

²⁵¹ ANRI Missive Gouvernements Secretaris (MGS), 1890-1942, inv. 3754, Kommissorial van den 13 Maart no. 4789.

²⁵² NA MvK inv. 2.10.02, inv. 5063, Besluit 13 Juli 1896, no. 22, Vergadering van den Resident van Menado met den Kontroleur der Sangi en Talauereilanden en de Radja's en mantri's van de rijken Taroena, Kandahr, Taboekan, Manganitoe, Siau en Tagoelandang, gehouden te Taroena op den 29 Juli 1889.

²⁵³ NA MvK inv. 2.10.02, no. 5063, Besluit 13 Juli 1896, no. 22, Batavia 13 Nov 1889 [Letter of the Director of Binnenlands Bestuur, H. Kuneman]. For instance, a road between the most important settlements of Siau (Ulu to Ondong) as well as of Tagulandang (Haas to Tagulandang) were built. "De zelfbesturende landschappen van de residentie Menado, gelegen op den vasten wal van Celebes," *Mededeelingen van het Bureau voor Bestuurszaken der Buitenbezittingen, bewerkt door Het Encyclopaedisch Bureau* 2, (1912): 20.

²⁵⁴ NA MvK inv. 2.10.02, no. 5063, Besluit 13 Juli 1896, no. 22, Verslag van de reis van de resident naar de Sangi en Talauer eilanden van 4 October tot 12 November 1890, 20+ [Resident Stakman].

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

²⁵⁶ Chabot, "Processes of change in Siau 1890-1950," 98.

²⁵⁷ NA MvK inv. 2.10.02, no. 5063, Besluit 13 Juli 1896, no. 22, Verslag van de reis van de resident naar de Sangi en Talauer eilanden van 4 October tot 12 November 1890, 20+ [Resident Stakman]

the (aristocratic) matrilocally structured kinship that occupied large family houses in Sangir's core settlements.²⁵⁸ In his turn, Jellesma pushed for the abolition of obligatory *pinontol* (corvée) for the raja by allowing the ordinary Sangirese to extricate themselves from the arrangement by paying *f* 1.²⁵⁹

On the political front, colonial reforms were aimed at streamlining indigenous political offices and centralizing authority in the hands of colonial functionaries. This involved the reorganization of political boundaries for efficient taxation and administration.²⁶⁰ It, therefore, meant the nullification of exclaves and territorial claims based on historical growth and genealogical continuity of original settlements.²⁶¹ The European *controleur* expanded his powers by assuming roles formerly performed by the chiefs. A *majelis* (council) headed by a European functionary and composed of the most important chiefs was formed to decide on criminal justice²⁶² and on various personal affairs (for instance, divorce), which were previously under the purview of the chiefs alone.²⁶³ In addition, the European bureaucratic hierarchy allowed the ascendancy of commoners who were capable individuals to become chiefs.²⁶⁴

As a whole, these reforms tended to limit chiefly authority and control over the Sangirese social life. They restricted the political and economic power of the chiefly elite by providing market- and state-induced pathways for the ordinary Sangirese to relate with the outside world. However, these radical reforms naturally met resistance from chiefly quarters.

3.3. Hostility and attraction

In different parts of the Menado Residency, the elite resisted government reforms to varying degrees. In Minahasa, for instance, the further bureaucratization of native offices and the

²⁵⁸ Chabot, "Processes of change in Siau 1890-1950," 99.

²⁵⁹ NA MvK inv. 2.10.02, no. 5545, Verbaal 10 December 1900.

²⁶⁰ "De zelfbesturende landschappen van de residentie Menado, gelegen op den vasten wal van Celebes," 39.

²⁶¹ See, for instance, the merger of Kendahé and Taruna. NA MvK inv. 2.10.02, no. 5462, Besluit 15 February 1900, no. 48, Letter of the Controleur in Taruna, Vorstman, 20 May 1897. Also on the removal of Sangirese exclaves, see NA MvK inv. 2.10.02, no. 5545, Verbaal 10 December 1900, Letter of the GG to the Res of Menado, 8 February 1899.

²⁶² NA MvK inv. 2.10.02, no. 5063, Besluit 13 Juli 1896, no. 22, Plakaat-rechtswezen, 12 September 1889.

²⁶³ NA MvK inv. 2.10.02, no. 2768, RM Manado, E. J. Jellesma, 14 march 1903 to Directeur van Onderwijs, Eeredienst en Nijverheid.

²⁶⁴ "De zelfbesturende landschappen van de residentie Menado, gelegen op den vasten wal van Celebes," 41.

abolition of the oft-abused *pinontol* (corvée) led to the disconcertion of the chiefs.²⁶⁵ It occasioned an unprecedented direct appeal of a Minahasan chief (A. L. Waworuntu) to the Governor-General in Batavia and a consequent widely publicized government inquiry (Gallois Commission).²⁶⁶ Meanwhile in Bolaang-Mongondow, the establishment of a permanent colonial presence in the core highland settlement gave rise to the intermittent armed incursions of gangs led by aristocratic sons (*abo-abo*) who felt threatened by the impending colonial order.²⁶⁷

In Sangir, these reforms marked the *dénouement* for Jacob Ponto's long career. He was formally dismissed and exiled to a village near Cirebon due to his opposition to the abolition of slavery.²⁶⁸ However, while it was the immediate trigger, Ponto's long history of defiance was likely the deeper reason. He had been accused of numerous offenses including insubordination, slavery, incest, refusal to conduct a census, and "disparaging" colonial rule by "talking continuously about Aceh" where the Dutch was engaged in a protracted war.²⁶⁹ Ponto's close familial ties with the Islamized polities of Sulawesi and his relatively late compulsory Christian conversion and education were fodders to the long-standing rumor of him being a "crypto-Muslim."²⁷⁰ Whatever his personal theological convictions might have been, if he had any, he was buried with an Islamic tombstone (see Figure 5.3). Moreover, despite his fall from power, the continued prominence of his (matrilaterally structured) kinship group well into the next century was already secured in Siau and other Sangirese polities through prudent chiefly intermarriages.²⁷¹

²⁶⁵ P. J. Drooglever, "Vernandel versus Sahelangi: Macht en moraal in de Minahassa omstreeks 1890," in *Excursies in Celebes: Een bundel bijdragen bij het afscheid van J. Noorduyn als directeur-secretaris van het Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land-, en Volkenkunde*, ed. Harry A. Poeze en Pim Schoorl, 115-142 (Leiden: KITLV Uitgeverij, 1991); M. C. E. Stakman, *De Minahassa; Bezwaarschrift, opgemaakt naar aanleiding van het rapport nopens den staat van zaken in de Minahassa uitgebracht door W. O. Gallois, lid van den Raad van Nederlandsch-Indie* (Amsterdam: Van Holkema en Warendorf, 1893); J. K. W. Quarles van Ufford, "Koloniale Kroniek," *De Economist* 42, no. 1 (1893).

²⁶⁶ Schouten, "Myth and Reality in Minahasan History: The Waworuntu-Gallois Confrontation."

²⁶⁷ NA MvK Politiek Verslagen Buitengewesten, 1898-1940 inv. 210.52, Mailrapport 1902, 836 Kwaadwillige doen een aanval op de gevangenis te Popo (Mongondow), 19 Augustus, Letter of the Resident of Manado, E. J. Jellesma, 31 August 1902 to the Gov. General.

²⁶⁸ NA MvK inv. 2.10.02, no. 5063, Besluit 13 Juli 1896, no. 22, Batavia 31 March 1890 Director of Justitie, L. A. Buijn.

²⁶⁹ NA Mailrapporten, 1869-1900 inv. 2.10.02, 1889, Ontslag van de radja van Siauwegens wanbestuur, 715, Nota omtrent het bestuur en de handelingen van den vorst van Siauwegens, Jacob Ponto, Taruna, 24 Ag 1889, JFD Lux.

²⁷⁰ HUA ARvdZ inv. 1102-1, no. 2825, P. Kelling, Ulu Siau, 6 July 1892, fo. 3.

²⁷¹ See the family tree of Ponto in H. B. Elias, *Sejarah pergerakan kebangsaan Indonesia di Pulau Siau* (Manado: Markas cabang Legiun Veteran R. I. Kotamadya Manado, 1973), 116.



Figure 5.3²⁷²

Tomb of Jacob Ponto in Sangkanhurip, near Cirebon (left); Details of his tombstone (center); A street in present-day Sangkanhurip, Kecamatan Cilimus, Kabupaten Kuningan, Central Java (right)

The most dramatic episode of political centralization of the period, however, occurred in Talaud. In one of its islands (Karakelang), Resident Jellesma supervised the bombardment of the village of Arangkaa aboard the steamship *Zeeduif* in 1893.²⁷³ This last stage of pacification in Talaud saw dozens of knife-wielding, euphorically war-dancing (*cakalele*) men attempting to resist a steamship alongside auxilliary native boats. Since the late seventeenth century, an internecine conflict—closely resembling the *rido* (clan feuding) of contemporary southern Philippines—had existed between Arangkaa on one side, and Kiama, Lirung and other allied villages, on the other.²⁷⁴ The show of superior brute force effectively ended the low-intensity but

²⁷² Photos taken June 2014.

²⁷³ NA Mailrapporten, 1869-1900 inv. 2.10.02, 1893, Tuchtiging van de kampong Arangkaa op de Talauer eilanden, 1136+, 1138+, Letter of Jellesma to the Gov Gen, 29 Ag 1893. Verslag van den Controleur der Sangi- en Talaut eilanden, betreffende de tuchtiging van Arangkaa, noorkust van Karakelang, 23 juli 1893.

²⁷⁴ NA Mailrapporten, 1869-1900 inv. 2.10.02, 1893, Tuchtiging van de kampong Arangkaa op de Talauer eilanden, 1136+, 1138+, Verslag van den Controleur der Sangi- en Talaut eilanden, betreffende de tuchtiging van Arangkaa, noorkust van Karakelang, 23 juli 1893.

frequent clashes over territory and resources. It also established the raja of Lirung as the apical Talaurese chief, since the Dutch chose his village as the seat of the Postholder in 1895.²⁷⁵

Taken as a whole, these direct colonial interferences and deep reforms slackened the ties between the ruling elite and their claimed subjects. They challenged the existing social hierarchy based on various elite strategies of dominance—descent-based status differentiation, wealth, and (threats of) violence. The reforms provided a pathway for the formerly exclusive religious affiliation to be accessed by the ordinary Sangirese.

In Tabukan, recently freed slaves were immediately noted to have attended schools.²⁷⁶ In Siau, the islet of Makalehi, long cordoned-off by Ponto from outsiders (especially missionaries) because of its fertile fishing grounds, was finally “opened.”²⁷⁷ In a space of several years, many of its islanders were eventually baptized.²⁷⁸ In Talaud, where the presence of the missions and government was relatively recent, accounts of mass conversions were more common. It is said that “entire villages convert to Christianity” in Karakelong (Beo) in 1898.²⁷⁹ Numerous men who sought conversion originated from northern Karakelong,²⁸⁰ whose chiefs had traditionally opposed Dutch rule which had been effectively confined to the southern part of the island.²⁸¹

However, such chiefly intransigence was apparently not shared by the majority of the population. As colonial officials observed, conversion to Christianity was also a way to avoid oppressive chiefly authority.²⁸² Many wanted to be baptized in order to be considered for

²⁷⁵ NA MvK inv. 2.10.02, no. 5063, Besluit 13 Juli 1896, no. 22, Decision of the GG, 29 Mar 1896; “De Zelfbesturende landschappen Tahoelandang, Siaoë, Taboekan (ten rechte: Tawoekan), Kandhar-Taroëna (ten rechte: Kendahe-Tahoëna) en Manganitoe (Afdeeling Sangi- en Talaud-eilanden, Residentie Manado),” 43.

²⁷⁶ NA MvK inv. 2.10.02, no. 5063, Besluit 13 Juli 1896, no. 22, Verslag van eene reis naar de Sangi- en Talaut eilanden, ondernomen door de Resident van Manado Stakman, September 1889.

²⁷⁷ HUA ARvdZ inv. 1102-1, no. 2825, P. Kelling, Ulu Siau, 6 July 1892, fo. 3.

²⁷⁸ See HUA ARvdZ inv. 1102-1, no. 2866, A. J. Swanborn (zendeling in Ondong, 1901-1904?), Table: Statistiek van het Zendingswerk Anno 1902, Ressort Ondong, Eiland Siauw.

²⁷⁹ HUA ARvdZ inv. 1102-1, no. 2828, Zending op de Talaud-eilanden [1898], Den Houter.

²⁸⁰ HUA ARvdZ inv. 1102-1, no. 2840, GJ Schroder, Beo, 26 June 1895.

²⁸¹ On the opposition of northern Karakelong chiefs to foreign intrusion, see NA MvK inv. 2.10.02, no. 5063, Besluit 13 Juli 1896, no. 22, Verslag van de reis van de resident naar de Sangi en Talauer eilanden van 4 October tot 12 November 1890, 20+ [Resident Stakman]; ANRI Manado inv. 48, no. 4, Politiek Verslag 1859.

²⁸² “De Zelfbesturende landschappen Tahoelandang, Siaoë, Taboekan (ten rechte: Tawoekan), Kandhar-Taroëna (ten rechte: Kendahe-Tahoëna) en Manganitoe (Afdeeling Sangi- en Talaud-eilanden, Residentie Manado),” 43.

employment in the colonial navy,²⁸³ perhaps not only to be able to pay the obligatory *hasil* but also to escape the restrictive local social relationships.²⁸⁴

4. Concluding remarks

This chapter has traced the long history of Christianization (or the absence of it) in the Sangir-Talaud archipelago. It shows that up until the radical colonial reforms of the late nineteenth century, Christianity as a form of social affiliation was denied to the lower classes by the Sangirese chiefly elite. It illustrates that in the intervening years, attempts to Christianize the mass of the Sangirese had been unsuccessful because of the continued economic and political dominance of the traditional elite, personified most vividly by Jacob Ponto, raja of Siau. The chapter has argued that the economic and political reforms of Residents Stakman and Jellesma were decisive in breaking the dominance of the chiefly authority. Through these reforms, the restrictive economic, political, and social bonds that tied many Sangirese to their locality were slackened, thus providing an avenue for conversion.

²⁸³ HUA ARvdZ inv. 1102-1, no. 2840, GJ Schroder, Beo, 26 June 1895.

²⁸⁴ See Henley, *Fertility, Food and Fever: Population, Economy and Environment in North and Central Sulawesi, 1600-1930*, 161.