

CHAPTER FIVE - The Challenge of "Islamisasikan"

The second major challenge the Dani church is facing is Islamisation. In the survey I conducted, Islamisation actually rated as the number one problem mentioned by Dani people at present. Unlike modernisation it is not just tempting certain members of the church with a modern lifestyle. This can be combated with guidance from the church body. Rather Islam is directly challenging the Dani church and its belief in Jesus Christ, both as an organisation and as individual Christians. According to the Danis this process of Islamising Irian Jaya does not only involve individual attempts to convert the local Irianese to Islam but is also closely linked to and assisted by the *transmigrasi* programme implemented by the Indonesian government. As well, it involves the Indonesianising of the region through the establishment of various government regulations that are seen to be aimed directly against the Christian church while assisting the Muslims. The discussion of Islamisation in Irian Jaya will be divided into four sections, namely direct conversion attempts, use of ridicule, threats and the use of bribery, under which we will be covering the issues of nominal beliefs, materialism, the pattern of marriage and also the position of foreign missionaries within Irian Jaya.

Islam is a relatively new, but increasing challenge for the Dani church. The Danis, having previously been only marginally aware of Islam are just beginning to learn about the Muslim beliefs and so are learning what they are going to have to resist in order to maintain the church. Apparently many Danis still have very little idea of the actual essence of the Islamic religion, probably because their contact with it has been minimal. On the coast and in the cities Islam is more prominent³²² with the result that those Danis who have studied or worked on the coast have had more exposure. Yet even those on the coast remain a little unsure of how they are to respond to Islam. Initially this put them in an uncomfortable and difficult position when confronted by Muslims taunting them about their Christian beliefs and claiming that Islam was the only true religion. According to a couple of Dani youths the lack

³²² J.McBeth "At Loggerheads" in *Far Eastern Economic Review* March 10, 1994, p.50 Also corroborated by those Danis who were interviewed

of knowledge Dani Christians have of Islam does not allow them the opportunity to take the offensive and challenge the Muslims over any particular aspect of their belief.

Direct Conversion Attempts

Native Irianese who do not yet lay claim to a world religion, are being targeted by both Muslims and Christians as potential converts. Those who do not profess a formal religion, unlike those who do, are open to the direct or overt attempts of others to convert them. At present the attempt to convert Irianese to Christianity is being made by the people of the Dani church itself, as the church sends out missionaries to other tribes and also as church members witness to others about their faith. Meanwhile the Islamic attempts at conversion have been undertaken by Muslims, both trained Muslim teachers and adherents to Islam, who originate from other islands throughout the Indonesian archipelago. We have already related the incident of how an entire tribe, formerly resistant to Christianity, were converted after having been approached by Muslims attempting to proselytise them. The rejection of Islam and the way the chief of the tribe reached out to the Dani people to teach him and his tribe more about Christianity may have been influenced by a number of issues. The first possible reason for this response to Christianity and the move away from Islam is found in the claim made by the chief. He claimed that while he had remained resistant to the Christian message, having been approached with the Islamic message and comparing it with his basic knowledge of Christianity gained from former missionaries, he came to believe that the Christian doctrine held the truth while Islam was false. While this was the accepted view amongst those I spoke to, it is also possible that the rejection of Islam was based on the issue of ethnicity. Those who were approaching this tribe were Muslim Austronesians and as such represented a potential threat not only to the religious beliefs of the people but also to their culture, tradition and ethnic identity. The Irianese are aware of the increasing numbers of Austronesians coming to Irian Jaya and the attempts of the Indonesian government to Indonesianise the region. Fear of losing their identity may have led this particular tribe to turn to Christianity, a religion that their neighbours, the Danis have embraced. They reached out to the Dani Christians to deepen their knowledge of the Christian doctrine. They may not have accepted Christianity if it had been brought to them, as before, simply on the initiative of a foreign missionary.

According to a young married man in Makki, direct attempts to convert to Islam non-Christian Danis and other highland people, who do not yet profess one of the world religions named under the *Pancasila*, are also undertaken by school teachers. They come to the highlands in the hope of finding locals who do not believe in Christianity and converting them to Islam. Children who have not yet made a decision on what they believe are a prime target.³²³

Apart from these direct attempts made by Austronesians, a new angle is being taken in Wamena. One of my respondents from Pyramid, which is relatively close to Wamena, informed me of a recent development of attempts at proselytising by Muslim communities. Several hundred youths, Wamena locals or Central Danis, who have converted to Islam themselves "...have been trained to return [to the Wamena/Jayawijaya area] to spread Islam. They will then enter their villages..."³²⁴ with the intent of finding, and proselytising, potential converts. While there are Muslims actively proselytising, the Christians are doing likewise as they continue to see the urgency of presenting the others around them with the Christian gospel which they believe to be the truth and the only way to salvation. This sense of urgency while apparently having been heightened by the presence of Islam, has been an essential part of the Dani faith since they accepted Christianity as they expected, and continue to expect, the second coming of Jesus Christ to occur in the near future.³²⁵

Use of Ridicule

Another level of Islamic influence is that of ridicule which involves not so much attempts to convert the Danis, but rather an attempt to discredit the belief individual Danis have in Christianity. It would seem to be the less devout Muslims, with more syncretic beliefs who approach the Dani people in this way. A few of the Dani students in Jayapura who have Muslim friends, remarked on the way a large number of the Javanese and Macassarese combine many cultural and traditional belief systems with their Islamic beliefs and were not as devout as some.³²⁶ Their less devout standing as Muslims seems to be

³²³ Interview, Makki 3/8/1994

³²⁴ Interview, Pyramid 13/8/1994

³²⁵ D.Hayward "Time and Society in Dani Culture" in *Irian Bulletin of Irian Jaya Development*, UNCEN, 1983, Vol.XI, No.2-3, p.52

³²⁶ Interview, Jayapura 30/7/1994

fairly obvious to others in the community, but this is not to say that the Christians are not challenged by them. While they may not be trying covertly to influence them to convert to Islam, they are ridiculing the Christians and their beliefs. Again this may result, not primarily from their varying religious beliefs but rather from a mixture of religious and ethnic intolerance. Religion is a particularly noticeable difference between the Irianese and the Austronesian migrants and could be considered a badge of identity for syncretic Muslims, not a deeply felt belief. As such this ridicule of Christianity may reflect ethnic fear as much as religious antagonism.

Such accounts of ridicule were reported to have occurred in places such as Wamena and Jayapura, and as has already been suggested, are probably an attempt by the *pendatang* to maintain their identity and withstand the possible Christian influence from the people living around them, whilst stirring up support from a group of people with similar backgrounds and beliefs who are in a similar position. To explain it more clearly, a contrasting situation can be found in the villages of the North Baliem Valley where the number of Christians far outweighs the few Muslim officials or school teachers. In this position the Muslims, while they may feel the need to maintain their identity, do not feel they have a strong or large enough support system to ridicule the beliefs of any of the members of the community they are living in.

An example used in the previous chapter which is also relevant here is the situation of a young Dani man, now studying in Jayapura, who was ridiculed by the Muslims among whom he worked in Wamena. This was because he attended church on Sunday and despite their initial ridicule of his actions, continued to attend church on Sundays and remained committed to his faith. Attempts were made by his Muslim work colleagues to rid his worship of any meaning and challenge his personal faith by continually telling him that his time spent worshipping was useless anyway because Jesus is dead.³²⁷

According to those Danis who have studied in both Wamena and Jayapura, Christians are frequently accused of having not one God as they claim but rather three gods, namely the Father, Son and Holy Spirit,³²⁸ what the Christians refer to as the Holy

³²⁷ Interview, Jayapura 28/7/1994

³²⁸ Interview, Jayapura 30/7/1994

Trinity or *Tritunggal*. The Dani Christians, meanwhile, maintain that there is only one God who is manifested in these three different ways. It is this difficult theological issue that the Christians are confronted with constantly as the Muslims attempt to invalidate their belief system. Yet the Danis tend to feel that this accusation expresses the lack of understanding the Muslims have of Christianity. The taunt that Jesus Christ is dead is likewise a common one.³²⁹

Despite this ridicule which is apparently quite wearing for the recipients, they are generally able to withstand the challenge and maintain their own faith in Christ although they may not have a ready answer for their opponents. The Danis claimed that these kind of situations will strengthen those members of the Dani church who have made a true commitment to Christ while those whose commitment is superficial will either collapse under the threats of their Muslim peers or make a firm decision to accept Jesus as the Messiah and to believe in Him.

Threats

Threats from Islam present themselves in various ways, some being more overt than others. Four examples will be given including transmigration, the building of mosques, government rulings and the supposed activities of Muslim youths. While some of these threats are obviously anti-Christian others are pro-Islamic. The Dani students on the coast are most aware of the challenges the church is facing with regard to Islam as they are living in the cities where there is a majority Muslim population because of the *transmigrasi* programme.

Transmigration

The transmigration programme, which was discussed in chapter two, is posing problems for the Dani church over issues other than land ownership. The programme has not yet directly affected the Dani people through the presence of transmigrants in the North Baliem Valley, with the one exception of the township of Wamena. Rather the problem is over religious issues of Christianity versus Islam. Each month the number of transmigrants and spontaneous migrants making their way to Jayapura on one of the two passenger ships

³²⁹ *Ibid.*

that make regular trips, can apparently reach five thousand.³³⁰ The ships continue to come and go, return to Jayapura full and leave empty and apparently the majority, if not all, of the passengers profess to be Muslims. At this rate the local inhabitants of the sparsely populated province of Irian Jaya will be swamped and overcome by the sheer numbers of "foreign" Muslims, ultimately with the possibility of Irian Jaya becoming a majority Muslim region. These Muslim transmigrants are seen by the Danis to be the government's means of achieving the goal of Islamising Irian Jaya. This is rather an alarming prospect for not only the Dani Church, but the Christian Church of Irian Jaya as a whole. Yet the movement of transmigrants into the highlands of Irian Jaya is limited, largely because few of the transmigrants wish to establish themselves in what they perceive to be the inhospitable and primitive mountainous areas of Irian Jaya. By contrast the cities are growing rapidly and becoming predominantly Muslim.³³¹ The number of mosques being built in the cities is quite phenomenal, they seem to be sprouting continuously. There are small makeshift mosques and huge stone mosques that have been decoratively carved or painted. On Fridays, the Muslims who are noticeably "straight hairs" or non-Irianese can be seen in their shawls or with their *pici* hats and prayer mats making their way to the mosques for worship. Jayapura comes to a standstill on Friday afternoon as the Irianese have a free afternoon while the *pendatang* fulfil their worship requirements. The Danis fear that the transmigrants being sent to Irian Jaya will transform this Christian region into a Muslim one by their sheer numbers, even if there are no, or few, converts to Islam within Irian Jaya. The Irianese fondly remember when Barnabas Suebu, the former governor of Irian Jaya was in office because of the role he played in slowing down the transmigration programme.³³² According to those Danis who were interviewed, Suebu, unlike his predecessor, saw transmigration as an unnecessary threat to Irian Jaya and its people. During his time as Governor "transmigration from Jakarta to here could not take place. He [Suebu] forbade it".³³³ His successor Governor Jacob Pattipi is, at least officially, convinced of the positive role transmigration is playing and will continue to play in the development of Irian Jaya.³³⁴

³³⁰ Interview, Pyramid 13/8/1994

³³¹ McBeth "At Loggerheads", p.50

³³² *Ibid.* Corroborated by Danis while discussing transmigration

³³³ Interview, Jayapura 28/7/1994

³³⁴ McBeth "At Loggerheads", p.50 & Interview, Jayapura 28/7/1994

Not surprisingly this has resulted in local Irianese feeling betrayed, as well as rumours being spread that Pattipi is actually a Muslim despite his claims of being a Christian. The church is feeling threatened by the overwhelming numbers of Muslims in the city areas, and sees the need to strengthen itself and its members in the face of this threat.

Mosques in the North Baliem Valley

The threat posed by Islam seems to be progressing further inland. During the last couple of years attempts have been made by Muslims to establish Islam in the North Baliem Valley, initially by building mosques at the government stations of Makki and Tiom. Yet due to the conviction and determination of the Dani people, the Muslim efforts have failed. In Makki inquiries were made about building a mosque but permission was denied by members of the Dani community who could not agree to the building of a mosque in their midst. The Danis apparently had the right and authority to do so as they represent the majority group in the area. A number of my respondents related what took place in Makki. The reason that the mosque was not permitted was that the North Baliem Valley is a Baptist area, from Makki all the way up to Kwiyawagi. The Baptist church is not only dominant but it is the only denomination in the area with the exception of the single Catholic church established at Tiom. As the majority religious group in the area, the Dani Baptist church has a strong position in determining the foothold that other religions are going to be given in the area. Their opposition to the establishment of Islam in the district seems likely to ensure that it will be a while before mosques are established there, and even then it may be under the orders of the government rather than with the consent of the locals. The future position of Islam in the North Baliem Valley may be assisted however by an increase in the number of *pendatang* to the area who profess to be Muslims, or by the conversion of nominal Dani Christians from the area who may have been converted in Wamena or Jayapura, or by locals who have already become Muslims and have been trained to convert their own people. While this situation represents a potential threat, if the Christians in the area remain strong in their faith, which the Danis consider to be fairly certain, then, unless the government steps in, the Dani church will maintain the upper hand in the North Baliem Valley. The story continues that once the land was denied by the community, a few Muslims in the area reported to government officials the presence of hundreds of Muslims

in the area and as such a great need for a *mesjid*, a mosque. Fortunately for the Danis who had firmly forbidden this, the officials did not simply make a decision from their office. Rather they came and investigated the situation, discovering that the number of Muslims was in fact no more than ten, which included a couple of teachers, their families and a number of policemen. With these statistics and the reality of the situation in Makki, the officials had little choice but to agree with the decision of the local Dani community. As a result the Muslims working in Makki, either as teachers or policemen, worship at a family service held in one of the government buildings.³³⁵ Meanwhile other *pendatang* have involved themselves in the Indonesian speaking Baptist church there.

There was also a report of an incident at Tiom that involved the issue of building a mosque. As had taken place in Makki, the Dani community denied the right for the establishment of a mosque in the area for the same reasons that the Dani community had in Makki. Tiom is also a Baptist area, falling within the Baptist district of the North Baliem Valley. Unlike the situation in Makki however, where the Muslims handled their defeat fairly well, while at the same time trying to achieve a more desirable answer by going over the heads of the Dani community, in Tiom a Muslim policeman decided to take the matter into his own hands. The policeman threatened the minister of the Tiom church. Disregarding any form of religious tolerance, he also physically beat the minister in an attempt to change his mind regarding the mosque, but he was unsuccessful. The Government, once it heard of this disturbance in Tiom from students in Jayapura, dealt responsibly with the situation, keeping the well-being of the Dani community in mind. The policeman was reprimanded and rapidly removed from his post in Tiom.

Government versus Church

Another threat that the church perceives is that of Indonesian government rulings against, or to the detriment of, the Dani church. There have been a number of direct government actions detrimental to the Christian church though not necessarily pro-Islamic. Yet the decisions made by the government have led the Dani Christians to deduce that it is indeed pro-Islamic. A couple of Danis discussed the situation surrounding KKR - *Kebaktian Kebangunan Rohani* or Revival Meetings that were staged in 1988 when a

³³⁵ Interview, Makki 8/8/1994 an older, married couple

large number of evangelists gathered together in "Jayapura at Trikora Park and Mandala Park"³³⁶ and commenced to present and explain the gospel to those who attended the open evangelistic rally. "The government became angry because many followers of Islam and many Catholics became members of the Baptist church...".³³⁷ When attempts were made to organise another KKR with a letter of permission being applied for once again, this time permission was denied by the government. The stance taken by the government has been interpreted by the Dani Christians as evidence that the Indonesian Government is against the presence of the Christian message or its messengers, especially in the cities.

This attitude of the Government has also been perceived in the legislation which will apparently rid not only Irian Jaya, but the whole of Indonesia, of a Christian missionary presence by the year 2000 A.D.³³⁸ While the missionaries themselves are not particularly pleased with this situation and are aware of their rapidly diminishing ranks in Irian Jaya, they also realise that there is little they can do to counter the Indonesian ruling. The Danis are aware of this also and are foreseeing the problems it will cause for the church. According to the interviews that were conducted as part of the research on this topic, the Danis feel that while they are stronger both as an organisation and spiritually than they have been previously, they do not yet consider the Dani church to be mature enough to be left on its own, without practical missionary guidance. They regard the Government's ruling as a threatening attempt to weaken the church and a ploy in its unwavering determination to win Irian Jaya to Islam. It should also be noted here that the government being referred to in this instance is the central Jakarta Government. The local Jayapura Government regrets this ruling concerning the position of the missionaries who they believe have played a valuable role in Irian Jaya.³³⁹ They are also worried that as the "social development" missionaries lose their visas so too may the "transport" missionaries who form MAF, Missionary Aviation Fellowship.³⁴⁰ It is MAF that has supplied, and continues to supply, the main form of contact between various areas not only within the North Baliem Valley but throughout the highlands of Irian Jaya, and without them it is feared by the local government that

³³⁶ Interview, Makki 3/8/1994 A young lady who had been present in Jayapura at the time.

³³⁷ *Ibid.*

³³⁸ W.Goodlet *Indonesian Field Report ABMS*, (Unpublished, 1994), p.2

³³⁹ J.McBeth "Mission Impossible" in *FEER* February 17, 1994, p.25

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

contact will be lost with many areas.³⁴¹ Yet as the MAF pilots come under the heading of transport rather than social development, there has been assurance, at least for the present, that their position in Irian Jaya is stable.³⁴²

Muslim Youths

One potential Islamic threat emerged with a supposedly official document drawn up early this year by a Muslim Youth organisation and apparently spread to Muslim youth groups throughout Indonesia following a meeting held in East Java on the 4-5 February 1994.³⁴³ While the document appears to be on official paper and claims to be supported by a number of Islamic youth organisations,³⁴⁴ it carries no signature or any apparent authorisation to validate the document. Also it is debateable whether the attitudes reflected in this document are characteristically Islamic. The topic for discussion was the maintenance of Islam as the majority religion in Indonesia and ways in which the Muslims youths can stem or repress the escalation in the number of Christians which according to this document has increased from 8% in the 1970s to 12% at the beginning of 1994.³⁴⁵ The document goes on to list ways in which Islam can be strengthened and the expansion of Christianity brought to a halt.

The most effective avenue of action that could be taken to stifle the growth of Christianity was claimed to be that of "love".³⁴⁶ The Muslim youths are informed that it is their duty to take Christian girlfriends and act in such a caring way that the girls will truly fall in love with them. They are then told to put on a front of being responsible young men so that the girls will, on comparing their attitudes with the not so fine attitudes of Christian youths, will find the Islamic youth more attractive and so become more sympathetic to Islam. Once having a Christian girlfriend they are then told to "*berbuatlah apa saja*" or 'do what ever' with the girl and when she becomes pregnant force her to change her religion and marry according to Islamic law.³⁴⁷ If she refuses to do so, then they are ordered to just

³⁴¹ J.McBeth "God's Little Airline" in *FEER* February 17, 1994, p.26

³⁴² J.McBeth "Mission Impossible", p.25

³⁴³ Peserta Pertemuan *Perhimpunan Pemuda Islam Indonesia Untuk Jumlah Umat Mayoritas (PPII)*, Jombang 1994, paragraph 1

³⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, final paragraph

³⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, paragraph 1

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, item 3

³⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, items 4, 5 & 6

leave her as she may not be the type of girl who aspires to marriage. The youths are also told not to be afraid or regret their actions as Islamic teaching allows them to take more than one wife. The document states that what is most important is not the means, but the end result of getting the girl to convert to Islam which is the one true religion.³⁴⁸ The author goes on to claim that this is the heavy but noble responsibility of each Muslim youth. The need to find ways of preventing the growth of Christians in Indonesia is deemed, by this document, to be the main responsibility of the Muslim youths.³⁴⁹

The final statement made is that this document is not to fall in to the hands of the Christian youths. The Dani Christians in Irian Jaya however are well aware of this document and its contents. They see it as a potential threat but are not reacting to it yet for a number of reasons. Firstly, there has been no action taken by the Muslims yet. Secondly, it apparently did fall into Christian hands fairly easily and as a result they are unsure of its authenticity and feel that it may be an attempt to draw the Christian church into a trap or into conflict with the Muslims. The Danis are aware of this potential threat to the church and are attempting to protect themselves from this type of Muslim offensive. If the Muslims fight them actively and openly they claim that the Dani church will not retreat but will stand firm which could possibly result in a confrontation. Should this take place they state that they will pray and read the Bible as they depend on God as their source of strength and empowerment.³⁵⁰

Use of Lures/Bribery

Lures and bribery form another level of Islamic influence which attempts to win people to the side of Islam using non-religious methods. One such method that is proving to be a major challenge for the Dani people both in Wamena and on the coast, is the construction of *asrama* or residences and schools by Muslim organisations, seemingly with the support of the government. It is another area in which the strength of each Christian's faith is being tested. The Danis are being offered free education or housing in the urban centres. Initially there was confusion over this matter as they were not informed that the offer was for accommodation or education in a Muslim *asrama* (hostel) or school. Several

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, item 6

³⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, second & third last paragraphs

³⁵⁰ Interview, Jayapura 27/7/1994 & Makki 3/8/1994

years ago a leading member of the Dani community and church was offered free education for his son in Java, and assuming it to be a government programme agreed to it. It was not until his son arrived in Java that he found the school to be a Muslim, not a government one and as such suspected to be a ploy to influence the son of this leading Dani man with Islam. Apparently the son notified his father of the position he was in and was immediately withdrawn from the school and returned to Irian Jaya.³⁵¹

While offers of free education in Java are fairly rare, such offers within the cities of Irian Jaya are quite common. According to one Dani youth whose relatives have been involved in these situations, those who accept an offer of housing or schooling are then asked to consider accepting the Islamic faith as their own and leaving Christianity behind, in order to maintain the privileges that they have accepted. As the naivety of many Danis has vanished, the number of Danis accepting these offers has decreased, as the majority do not want to convert to Islam or to feel obligated to. In some areas, including Wamena and certain transmigrant areas around Jayapura such as Arso, money, clothing and food are also included as ways of enticing people to Islam. This form of bribery works best with those nominal Christians who value material things more highly than spiritual ones.

Nominalism

"Certainly there are people in the church who are Christians on their residence cards only. I admit that."³⁵² Nominalism is an issue not only within the Dani church but in any Christian church or other religious group throughout the world. The Dani Christians also claim that the majority of church members are sincere in their worship so that nominalism is not a large problem, although the hypocritical actions of nominal members may be cause for concern in some instances. Yet they acknowledge that nominalism is a problem, particularly as it has certain connections to the process of Islamisation. Nominal Christians are also a prime target for the incoming Muslims attempting to convert locals. Their lack of spiritual commitment to Christianity leaves them open to the social influence of Muslims and their material incentives.

³⁵¹ Personal communication

³⁵² Interview, Pyramid 13/8/1994

Nominal believers are known as KTP because their belief in their professed religion is limited to the stamp on their KTP or identification card. There are a few varieties of KTP Christians amongst the Danis. Firstly there are those who have stamped on their identification card that they are Christians and yet they have never entered a church. This form of nominalism would be most likely to have resulted from the requirement of the profession of a formal religion. Others may claim to be Christians not so much to fulfil official requirements but in order to fit in to the mainly Christian Dani community, which includes their family and friends.

The title of KTP Christian is also used of those 'Christians' who go to church on Sundays and act in a Christian manner and yet live a totally different life with totally different values throughout the rest of the week. This form of nominalism also includes those who attend church merely to be seen by others especially their Christian friends, to be in attendance, but who have no desire to actually be involved in the church as a member, or to publicly profess that they believe in God and Jesus Christ.

Finally there are those who have been baptised members of the church, but who have given up on their commitment and drifted away from the church. Their attendance is intermittent and, according to Dani sources they are becoming involved in the practice of *kawin dua*, of having two wives, a practice which is inconsistent with the Christian idea of marriage,³⁵³ and believed to be a social influence of Islam. They also become involved in activities such as gambling, smoking and extra-marital relations.

A number of Danis have claimed that those whose Christian belief is nominal have not yet been fully freed from their belief in the spirits and so continue to appease the spirits and their ancestors. They also fear the spirits and thus according to a Dani woman, "remain in the darkness"³⁵⁴ as they do not allow Jesus Christ to rid them of this fear.

Nominalism was claimed by numerous respondents to be particularly rare amongst the young Christians. Yet there are a number of second generation Christians who could be considered nominal in the sense that they claim to be Christians because their parents are professing Christians. They appear to regard faith as hereditary rather than a personal

³⁵³ W.Wenda *Suatu Tinjauan Alkitabiah Terhadap Tradisi Pemilihan Pasangan Hidup Dalam Kebudayaan Suku Lani*, (Unpublished paper, 1993), pp.21, 27

³⁵⁴ Interview, Makki 8/8/1994

commitment. While nominalism may cause a few problems for the church it is believed it can be overcome by the example of the other church members and also by teaching from the Bible which will challenge the nominal member to make a final decision. Regardless of the various forms of nominalism amongst members of the Dani church community, the main problem lies in the potential of these nominal Christians to be influenced by Islam.

Nominalism challenges the Dani church as members succumb to the offers made by Muslim organisations and are converted in the process. Having had a nominal Christian background it is possible that these Danis will either convert but live as nominal Muslims or believe that they have found the true religion and make a commitment to Islam. The former view is more widely accepted by the Dani community merely because of the way in which "conversion" to Islam has taken place, through economic enticements.

Many Dani Christians are convinced that the motivation behind the conversions to Islam has been the desire for promised material goods rather than a conviction that Islam holds the truth. That material goods should have such power over people, even leading them to conversion, may indicate either materialistic values or poverty, a problem for the Danis in the cities because of the higher cost of living compared to their villages. Conversion has also allowed parents to provide their children with the opportunity of obtaining a higher level of education than they would otherwise have been able to afford. Rumour has it that while these converts claim to be Muslims, they continue to eat pork in secrecy. Those who involve themselves in these programmes from purely materialistic attitudes would likewise scarcely be interested in the religious or spiritual aspects of the conversion. In some situations, while the potential converts are obligated to join Islam, they are also involved in certain aspects of Islamic worship before being asked to profess their new faith.

While it has been claimed that most of those Danis who convert to Islam do so superficially, their children may potentially have a stronger belief in Islam as they are brought up in an Islamic community and attend a Muslim school. Living with a nominal Muslim family may mean that they themselves remain nominal Muslims yet they have been placed in a situation where they are free to be fully influenced by Islam. This increases the urgency for the Dani Christians to evangelise the areas in which the Muslims have been, or

are, active as well as the areas they have not yet entered. These first generation Muslim converts, although they may not be sincere in their profession of faith, may at least provide Islam with the numbers it needs to be able to implement Islamic programmes such as the building of mosques. This in turn will strengthen the threat Islam poses to the Dani church which has so far been able to stem the progress of Islam into the North Baliem Valley.

Marriage

The church is also facing the issue of *kawin dua*³⁵⁵ which was mentioned previously. Apparently, nominal Christians or those who have a faith that is weakened by the temptation of marrying another woman, become involved in *kawin dua*. Those who have come under the most scrutiny in the Dani community have been the few church leaders who have given in to temptation and taken more than one wife. Their position of leadership has led to greater questioning of the acceptability of their actions. While those involved in multiple marriages are either considered to be nominal Christians or to have a weak faith, the emergence of *kawin dua* is apparently due to the influence of either Islam and Catholicism or modernisation, rather than the influence of the former Dani tradition that placed no official limit on the number of wives a man could have. The influence of Islam and Catholicism is considered to play a big part in the re-emergence of *kawin dua* amongst the Dani people, which has brought with it the issue of divorce. The few Danis in the community who are involved in *kawin dua*, amongst other things marry and divorce women as they want. This in itself goes against the Christian belief that marriage should be taken seriously and ideally last a lifetime.³⁵⁶ The influence of Islam lies in its condoning men having more than one wife. Meanwhile Catholicism is considered to be a syncretistic religion that has combined traditional Dani beliefs, including the acceptability of polygamy, with Christian beliefs, which the Protestant Danis consider to be totally inconsistent with the monogamous marriage system of Christianity.³⁵⁷ When the Danis were converted to Christianity it was decided by the church that those who had multiple wives before they turned to Christianity could be baptised and become members of the church while

³⁵⁵ K.Wakerkwa *Pertumbuhan Gereja Baptis di Wilayah Pirime*, (Unpublished paper, 1992), p.9
Corroborated by interviews and questionnaires that Dani Christians took part in.

³⁵⁶ W.Wenda *Suatu Tinjauan*, p.21

³⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

maintaining their wives. Yet only those men with one wife could take positions of leadership.³⁵⁸ Those who accepted Jesus Christ were taught of the Christian view of marriage with the result that monogamy became the accepted law of marriage within the church.³⁵⁹ This is probably another factor that has assisted in the more loving and caring relationships between husbands and wives.

Additionally, behavioural models from the "modernised" sector of society also contribute to the popularity of multiple marriages. Dani students who go to the coast observe government officials who are living a modern life and yet have more than one wife, and the students then return to their village with this idea in mind. While this issue is challenging the church through the involvement of some of its leaders and its presence within their community, the Dani Christians do not consider the church to be in any real danger at present.

While the Islamisation of Irian Jaya generally is considered by the Danis to be a threat, the Dani church and its members seem to be handling the challenge fairly well. They see the need to remain strong spiritually through prayer and reading the Bible, yet also consider the increasing number of Muslims in Irian Jaya as an opportunity to evangelise, presenting the Muslims with the Christian message in the hope of converting them. One young Dani stated that the problem with the Muslims is that they do not understand the gospel of Christianity which claims that Jesus Christ is God's son and the Saviour of the world. So they feel that it is the responsibility of the Dani Christians who have contact with Muslims to help them by teaching them about Jesus Christ and giving them the opportunity to accept Him as their "personal saviour".³⁶⁰ It may seem incredible that the highland inhabitants feel that they can win to Christianity those who have come from more highly developed islands in the Indonesian archipelago, particularly when many of these "foreigners" consider the Danis to be black, primitive and possibly dangerous people. Yet a Dani man presently studying in Jayapura, claimed that there was cause for the Dani church to praise God with regard to the issue of Islam in Irian Jaya because he had already witnessed the conversion of a few Muslims in the highlands who turned to Christianity after

³⁵⁸ D.Hayward *The Dani of Irian Jaya Before and After Conversion*, (Regions Press, 1980), p.182

³⁵⁹ *Ibid.* & W.Wenda *Suatu Tinjauan*, p.24

³⁶⁰ Interview, Jayapura 28/7/1994

having been reached by the message of the Christian gospel and repenting. He saw this being evidenced by the fact that those newly converted Christians were now eating pork which was forbidden under the law of their previous beliefs.³⁶¹ There was a particular excitement that also surrounded the issue of the presence of the Muslims in Irian Jaya as it gave the Danis the opportunity to be missionaries within their home area. They do not have to go to the Muslims, the Muslims have come to them. As a result an understanding of Islam is seen to be necessary if the Danis are to know how to deal with and evangelise Muslims, challenging them in their faith.³⁶² In the interviews conducted the excitement turned to expressions of uncertainty when the issue of the Muslims remaining steadfast in their beliefs arose. This was felt to be a difficult issue, as it is believed the Muslims whose hearts are not open to Christianity will attempt to destroy Christianity and its followers, but the church will fight against this taking place. There was actually mention of the possibility of the confrontation between the two faiths resulting in war.³⁶³ The survey revealed that in the view of the Dani Christians, even if many Muslims remain unshakeable in their beliefs, so too will the Dani church and the Dani Christians. They believe that the prayers of the adherents to Christianity will strengthen the church and maintain their faith, which in turn will protect them from the plans to *Islamisasikan* Irian Jaya, as a targeted Christian region.

³⁶¹ *Ibid.*

³⁶² Interview, Jayapura 30/7/1994

³⁶³ Interview, Jayapura 28/7/1994

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