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CHAPTER FOUR

THE SOLOR-TIMOR MISSION OF THE DOMINICANS, 1562–1800

The Indonesian Province of *Nusa Tenggara Timur*, or the 'Southeastern Islands', had been reached by Austronesian migrants about 2000 BCE, travelling from the north through the Moluccas. Here they mixed with people of Papuan descent, who had arrived about a thousand years earlier from New Guinea. Up to the present Papuan elements (dark skin, fuzzy hair) show themselves ever stronger in the more eastern parts of Flores, Timor and especially on the smaller islands of Alor and Pantar.

Long before Chinese junks sailed to Timor to fetch the valuable white sandalwood (*Santalum album*), the islanders brought it in small boats to the harbours of eastern Java. Sandalwood was in great demand for preparing perfumes, incense and medicine. Locally it was called *aikamenil* or by its Sanskrit name *candana*. Contact with Majapahit is indicated by Chinese sources that describe *Ti-wun* (Timor) as a vassal region of this Hindu kingdom. A Hindu temple is shown on the earliest panoramic drawings of Flores, called *Samademga*, made by F. Rodrigues in 1513.

The original religion of all the islands was a kind of animism. The village was protected by ancestral spirits, the living-dead. This ordered world of the village and its fields was surrounded by forests, the abode of unpredictable spirits which had to be placated by all kinds of offerings. Only in dire need was *dewa*, the God of the Sky, called upon. In the whole area he was regarded as the principal male deity with Mother Earth as his female complementary opposite. Moon and stars were of a lesser dignity. All kinds of evils and diseases were attributed to spirits. Ancestor worship was spread throughout the islands. It seems that the immortality of a kind of human soul was a firm belief.

Social organisation hardly exceeded small 'kingdoms' of one or several *kampongs* (villages), which were governed by headmen or *atalaki*. Some rajas enjoyed a kind of vague, regional, supremacy, for example Larantuka on East Flores, or the Behale (Wehale) in Central Timor. In general all these petty kings and *sengajis* were eagerly defending their 'independence'. Ternate and Makassar now and then tried to exert a kind of overlordship, which according to circumstances was accepted by certain coastal rajas. From the late seventeenth century some of them acknowledged, at least pro forma, the overlordship of the Portuguese crown or of the Dutch VOC.

When the Portuguese conquered Malacca (1511) they quickly became aware of the sandalwood trade, because many of the experienced Gujarati,

Bengali and Arab merchants remained in the town. They were not closely tied to the Malay ruling elite. When the sultan fled very few accompanied him, and most of them came back quickly, as soon as they realised that those who stayed behind did reasonably well under Portuguese rule. Tomé Pires wrote three years later:

The island of Solor is very large. It has a heathen king. It has many ports and many foodstuffs in great plenty. It has countless tamarinds; it has a great deal of sulphur, and it is better known for this product than for any other. They take a large quantity of foodstuffs from these islands to Malacca. . . . Between the islands of Bima and Solor there is a wide channel along which they go to the sandalwood islands. All the islands from Java are called Timor, for *timor* means 'east' in the language of the country, as if they were saying the islands of the east. As they are the most important, these two from which the sandalwood comes are called the islands of Timor. The island of Timor has heathen kings. There is a great deal of white sandalwood in these two. It is very cheap because there is no other wood in the forests. The Malay merchants say that God made Timor for sandalwood and Banda for mace and the Moluccas for cloves, and that this merchandise is not known anywhere else in the world except in these places; and I asked and enquired very diligently whether they had this merchandise anywhere else and everyone said no. With a good wind you can sail from this channel to the islands of the Moluccas in six or seven days. These islands are unhealthy; the people are not very truthful. They go to these island(s) every year from Malacca and from Java, and the sandalwood comes to Malacca.¹

Nearly fifty years passed, before the Portuguese made their first proper settlement in this archipelago. Among these visiting traders had been pious men, who talked about their faith in Christ with the indigenous providers of wood. In this way the Gospel was made known for the first time in this most south-eastern part of Asia.

A mission initiated without a worldly protector (1562–1614)

The newly appointed first bishop of Malacca (1561), the Dominican Friar Jorge de S. Luzia OP, learned from Portuguese sandalwood traders that there were quite a number of Christians on Timor who were in need of priests. The bishop told his confreres, the friars of the newly established Dominican convent at Malacca (1554), to look after these new converts in his diocese that covered all of Asia east of Malacca.

How did the people of the islands of Solor and Timor come to hear the Good News? Portuguese ships from Malacca often had to wait for weeks on

¹ Cortesão 1990-I:203. 'Solor' here means the Solor-Archipelago and (parts of) Flores, which is not yet mentioned by this name by Pires.

the shores of Solor, before the monsoon would allow them to sail home. Solor offered much better harbours than Timor, where they fetched their cargos. During these days a supposed chaplain to a merchant vessel, Fr. A. Taveira OP, is said to have baptised five thousand people on Timor (or Solor?) and on Pulau Ende which is Ende Island. There are no reliable sources about Fr. Taveira's activities. But a layman, João Soares, converted about two hundred people in Lewonama on neighbouring Flores. Before that time some Muslim teachers from India and Bengal were already active among the islanders.

In 1562 the *primeiros missionarios a Solor*, three Dominicans from Malacca, opened the first period in the long Christian history of Nusa Tenggara, which continues uninterrupted to the present day. Their superior, Fr. da Cruz, realised that living on a far away island, outside the Portuguese sphere of influence, called for some measures of protection. After the ship's crew had erected a simple convent and a small church made from wood and palm leaves, he surrounded it with a fence of palisades.

The three friars had just made contact with the people of Solor and the surrounding islands when raiders or business rivals from Java attacked their convent, but a few cannon shots from a Portuguese ship just arriving from the Moluccas made the attackers disperse quickly. This victory enhanced the prestige of the mission and some leading people of Solor were baptised. But Fr. da Cruz looked ahead. In 1566 he started to build a real fortification of five bulwarks made of limestone to protect the missionaries and the local Christians against further raids. People of Goa and Malacca gave alms to build this 'Dominican fort' and the Church of Our Lady of Mercy (*Piedade*). A small minor seminary was opened for fifty boys (1596), but later transferred to Larantuka (1613). In an adjacent village another church was built for the local community living outside the walls of the fort.

The captain of the fort on Solor was chosen by the Dominican prior at Malacca and had to be confirmed by the captain of that place (1576) for the first twenty years of its existence. After that time the appointment was transferred to the viceroy of India (1595). In 1575 a captain with twenty soldiers was sent to Solor for protection, but the Dominicans had to provide the soldiers' pay. About two thousand Portuguese traders and their families, often mestizos, lived in a *kampong* west of the fort and roughly a thousand Christian Solorese in another. Both had their own churches.

The Portuguese government in Goa granted the mission a subsidy of fifty *xerafim* a year for every missionary working in the Solor archipelago, and a *fusta* for travelling between the islands (1577/8). The few missionaries worked hard and spread to different islands around Solor. During the time of Fr. da Cruz's leadership (d. 1590) eight stations were established on Flores, three on Solor and one on Pulau Ende (1595).

Witnessing the progress, the bishop of Malacca wrote to the provincial superior of the Dominicans in Portugal to send more friars (1585). When this letter was read in the Dominican convent of Lisbon, five priests volunteered immediately and left the next day, Christmas Eve, in the Galleon *Reis Magos* to Goa. After fighting off an English pirate ship they all arrived safely on Solor to strengthen their brethren (1587), who in 1581 had already lost two members: Fr. Antonio Pestana OP was murdered by enemies of the mission from Java. He is the first of many priests and lay-people associated with the mission who died for their faith in Christ. Fr. Simão das Montanhas could not be protected by the few Christians of Lamahala on Adonara in a skirmish with the Muslims attackers from neighbouring Terong. He was killed by several lances.

Quite often we read about Javanese attacking Christian villages at this time. We are not sure about their reasons. They could have been annoyed about their losses in the sandalwood trade or they may have been plain raiders or slave hunters, a lucrative 'business' in eastern Indonesia in those days. But it may be that the upper class in some harbours on Solor had family ties with Javanese coastal cities that had become Muslim during the fifteenth and sixteenth century.

The missionaries were not afraid to travel in the archipelago, to stay for months in a kampong, or visit areas they did not know. The important thing was to baptise people in order to bind them to the church and—which at that time was regarded the same thing—to the Portuguese. We do not know much about instruction before baptism or about change of life afterwards. Some missionaries thought sufficient instruction could be given after baptism, as long as a few basic teachings had been given and accepted. But further instruction often was not realised. There were no indigenous catechists. The old people were unable to learn and remember anything 'difficult,' even how to make a sign of the cross. Another difficulty concerned the language. There were many local tongues, sometimes several on one island. Malaccan Malay was not much used outside the coastal areas. It seems that the Dominicans used Portuguese and employed interpreters. Perhaps this was one reason why the missionaries used crosses, statues, processions and songs as visual aids. The evangelisation of the uneducated people was done in a very simple way.

Until Fr. Chagas reorganised the mission (1616), most of the Dominicans worked on their own without a central agency coordinating them. The missionaries lived poorly and often in situations that were unsafe. Their lives may have been a more convincing sermon than their words, difficult to grasp by the simple villagers. Their converts' faithfulness during persecutions proved that their new Christian conviction was already well rooted.

After more than thirty years of relatively quiet development a big blow shocked the whole Christian community in the area, in 1598. Antonio Andria, the commander of the Solor fort, had pressed the natives—Christians and

non-Christians alike—to do compulsory labour supervised by his soldiers, to work on the ships or to toil on building sites without any compensation. The islanders were not yet used to working hard without any compensation. Sometimes he ‘punished’ Christians who turned Muslim again. Many people became unfavourably disposed towards the fort, regarding it more of a burden than a protection. The commander made terrible mistakes by imprisoning Dom Diogo, a *sengaji* of Solor and giving Dom Gonçalo, the *sengaji* of Lamakera, a heavy beating. Both were headmen of villages and important men of the *Paji*-group, the adversaries of the *Demon*-group. The *Paji* lived on the coast and were inclined to Islam and never friendly towards the Portuguese and later they sided quickly with the Dutch. They had close contacts with Java, and some Muslim preachers had lived among them from the early sixteenth century. The *Demon* people lived in the interior of the islands and were open to Christianity. The old antagonism between them was sharpened by their different religious choices in the sixteenth century. Both groups not only wore different clothes, but they also followed different customs. When Diogo was released, he planned to take revenge not only on Andria, but also on all Portuguese and Christians on Solor.

Diogo and Gonçalo, both enemies of Andria, concocted a plan to murder all the Portuguese, especially the commander and the Dominicans. During the high mass on the feast of S. Laurentius, the patron of the church of Lewonama on Flores, all were to be killed in the church (1598). But before taking action the plotters tried to get the support of the headman of Lewonama. This man refused and informed the priest of Lamakera. The commander was warned too, but only reprimanded Diogo. Knowing that his plans were no longer secret, Diogo acted immediately.

On the next day three groups planned to get control of Solor. Firstly, Gonçalo and his group succeeded in entering the fort by pretending to visit the church and the friary. They rushed to the house and murdered Br. Melchior, the janitor. The priests jumped from the high walls of the fort and were saved by the villagers outside the fort. The second group, the people of the *sengaji* of Lamakera, had arrived by boat, rushed to the fort, and tried to destroy everything. Andria, who had neglected his duties, had fallen asleep in his house outside the fort. The murderers did not find him and being awakened, he entered the fort by a secret door with a few soldiers and killed most of the intruders. But it was too late. All the buildings inside the walls were in flames, and because of a heavy wind many houses of the Lohayong village next to the fort caught fire also. When the third group, having arrived by boat from Lamakera, heard the signal they rushed to the villages and destroyed whatever they could. All the churches were desecrated, but the fort did not surrender, although it was besieged for some time.

Diogo's rebellion lasted for months and spread to Timor and Flores: The church of S. Maria (Gunung) on Solor was burnt down and its parish priest, Fr. J. Travasso OP, was beaten to death. Even the missionaries at Larantuka and Lewonama had to take refuge. Finally, in March 1599 ships from Malacca arrived and together with many faithful and what was left of the garrison they attacked Lamakera and razed it to the ground. The rebellion was crushed, but the mission was badly damaged. Two thousand Christians of Lamakera became Muslims (again). Diogo and his followers sided with the villages of the *Paji*-group who never again accepted Christianity. Only the village near the fort on Solor and Karmaing on Adonara remained Christian.

The end of the unrest caused by Diogo did not bring peace. On the small Pulau Ende south of Flores Fr. Simão Pacheco OP had gathered a group of Christians (1595). He had convinced the islanders who in previous years had to flee to Flores (about 1570), that they could protect themselves against the terrible Javanese raiders only by building a fort for a small Portuguese garrison. But this would only be possible if they became Christians. The three villages of Numba, Saraboro and Curolallas consented and settled around the new fort. They are said to have numbered about seven thousand people.

Next year the ambitious *atalaki* (headman) Amakera of Mari, a village in Flores opposite Pulau Ende, went to Gowa to gain support for his plans to subdue all of Flores by promising a tribute in gold and a hundred slaves yearly. The pagan king of Tallo (Gowa, Southwest Sulawesi) sent a fleet of 40 ships with 3,000 men under the command of the renegade Christian João Juang (1602). He dared not attack the fort of Solor, but while attacking the village of Sikka on Flores, which refused to hand over its priest, one hundred attackers were killed in a skirmish. The village of Paga paid a ransom. When Fr. Jeronimo Mascarenhas had warned the Christians on Ende and negotiated with João, news arrived that two ships from Solor had taken four of João's ships. He immediately had the friar killed, attacked Ende without success and then crossed over to Timor where he snatched four thousand slaves and sailed home.

Though the attack from Makassar had not reached Ende, thanks to the warnings of Fr. Mascarenhas who lost his life, the people on Ende—Christians and former-Christians—expelled all Portuguese from the island in 1605. We do not know why. In 1616, when Fr. João das Chagas visited Pulau Ende after a nine years absence of any priest, only Numba and Saraboro had remained Christian. All other villages had become again animist or Muslim. The visitor from Goa was received with great joy by two thousand faithful. He learned that three village chiefs were taken by the Dutch Captain A. van der Velde in 1614 on board his yacht, but were handed over to the people of Wolowona on Flores, who murdered them after terrible torture.

In 1614 Dom Cosma, *atalaki* from Sikka, took possession of the fort on Pulau Ende, which had been in Muslim hands since 1605, though the Dutch wanted to destroy it. The Protestant minister Justus Heurnius at the request of the governor general in Batavia visited Ende in 1638, in order to find out if a Protestant mission would be advisable. He advised that a teacher should be posted to the island and reported that roughly a year previously all Portuguese had been killed during a service in the church, because a man serving as translator had molested a local girl.

From the beginning of the seventeenth century there were several complaints about the state of the Solor mission. The king of Portugal wrote in 1604 to the viceroy in Goa instructing him to send more missionaries to Solor, and a year later he complained about the drop in conversions on Solor and Timor. It was claimed that the Dominicans were dealing with material rather than spiritual affairs. Therefore the superiors should send more pious, educated, virtuous, and apostolic workers. In 1607 the bishop of Malacca complained, that the Solor mission was declining because among the missionaries were too many *filhos da India e mestiços* (of Indian or mixed descent) who showed little enthusiasm. Three years later the mission was regarded as nearly extinct. Missionaries were lacking everywhere. Nearly all mission posts on the south coast of Flores had been abandoned between 1606 and 1613.

There are three main reasons for the sad decline. First and foremost was the lack of missionaries. Though between 1562 and 1606 there were some 64 Dominicans in this field, it seems that some of them did not stay long enough to obtain the skills and knowledge necessary in so remote an area. They were allowed to return to their convent in Malacca or Goa after only a four-year term. This regulation (1580) may have been regarded as necessary to maintain the religious standards of the friars, but it made continuous pastoral work very difficult. It prevented forming a paternal relation between the pastors and their flock, which in those days was normal and very necessary. There are no reports on how many stayed for this short term only. In 1613, for example, all seven Dominicans stayed in the Solor convent and from that place visited the different stations. They no longer lived for an extended period in the villages. Certainly only a few Dominicans had a chance to learn the native languages. A kind of Portuguese patois must have been used by many people, because it was kept long after the missionaries had left. Some of them stayed all their life and moved to different places, often difficult and dangerous to reach. The high number of martyrs and casualties prove there was an apostolic and brave spirit among many of them notwithstanding some negative reports.

The second reason is the deep involvement of some friars in worldly, even military, affairs. Because the Solor-Timor missionfield was not regarded as a Portuguese territory until 1702, the administration of finances, support,

transport, soldiers, protection, relation with native rulers and so on were regarded as the church's responsibility and not that of the government. Goa did not want to overextend its responsibility and create a new area of conflict with the Dutch. Though the viceroys of Goa (India) sometimes promised financial support and small military units, both were very unreliable and not of much value. It seems that this military involvement of the friars turned some converted villages into enemies of the mission.

The third reason is an animosity between missionaries born in Portugal and those born in India, who often were mestizos. The question of a local clergy was solved in Vietnam by Fr. A. de Rhodes SJ and by establishing major seminaries of the *Missions Etrangères de Paris* in Asia in the late seventeenth century. In India mestizos quite early became secular priests and were accepted in some orders. But it was difficult for them to achieve higher positions, as was also the case among the Protestant ministers of mixed descent in Batavia and in the Dutch civil service until the nineteenth century.

The mission was already in bad shape in the early years of the seventeenth century, when a major blow was dealt by a new and powerful enemy of the Portuguese and of the Catholics in general, the Dutch VOC. In January 1613 two Dutch ships made their appearance in the Solor archipelago. Muslims and relapsed Christians had asked the Dutch to help them chase away the Portuguese. The garrison of the fort had sailed to Timor to buy sandalwood. The Dutch commander, A. Schotte, threatened to kill everybody if the few defenders would not capitulate quickly. In April a thousand people, among them many women and children, gave up, after all houses had been destroyed by cannon balls or fire. The thirty Portuguese defenders capitulated a little too early; only two days later the garrison returned from Timor, but the fort had already been handed over to the Dutch.

The Portuguese and six Dominicans were allowed to sail with their weapons to Malacca. Only Fr. Agostinho da Magdalena and a few mestizos received permission to cross over to Larantuka, after they had promised not to oppose the Dutch. Fr. Agostinho remained the only missionary in the field for a whole year and his transfer made Larantuka the new centre of the mission, and the oldest Catholic parish still existing in Indonesia today. A small fort was built there in order to offer safety from the Dutch on nearby Solor.

Schotte wrote a report on his successful conquest of the fort on Solor and added a note about the mission.² There were three stations on Solor (Karawatun, Pamakayo, Lewolein) with 150 Catholic families, four mission posts on Adonara (Karmaing, Lewoko, Lewoingo, and Lewonama which actually is on Flores) with about 1,700 families, and on Flores another three

² Tiele 1886-I:12–15.

stations (Sikka, Larantuka, Numba) with 600 Catholic families. This made a total of about 2,450 families or more or less 12,250 Catholics.

Schotte's report is certainly not complete. Calculations were made by Rouffaer who adds, "niet te veel voor een 50-jarige missie" (not too much, even somewhat meagre for fifty years of mission). This may be true for the period of decline. But a few years later (1617), after the visitation carried out by Fr. João das Chagas, about 100,000 Catholics were reported. Though this enormous increase seems to be too high, and may have been intended to move the viceroy in Goa to grant better protection, there must have been a considerable improvement. Collecting all available sources, especially from Antonio de Sá, we may conclude that the following places were Catholic: 1° In Flores (from East to the West, and mostly on the south coast): Tropobelle, Lewonama, Lebao, Gegeh, Larantuka, Waibalun, Mulawato (Bama), Sikka, Paga, Kewa, Lena, Laka, Mari, Tongga and Lambo. On the north coast of Flores: Dondo, Maumere and Krowe. 2° In Adonara: Lamahala, Karmaing, Lewoko, and Lewoingo. 3° In Solor: Lohayong, Karawatun, Lewolein and Pakamayo. 4° On Lembata (Lomblen): Lewoleba and Lewotolo. 4° In the Ende region: Numba, Saraboro and Curolallas.³

The hope of the Dutch to gain an important place for trade did not materialise. In 1614 the commander of the fort of Solor, now renamed *Henricus*, A. van der Velde, attacked the Catholic village of Karmaing on Adonara, because it had sided with Larantuka, which under the leadership of Fr. Augustinho had been fortified (Posto) and refused all Dutch calls to surrender. Van der Velde failed and was killed in action. An attack on the fort by the Tupasses of Larantuka under the command of Francisco Fernandez did not succeed either.

A coalition of the Dutch and the 'five shores' (*lima pantai*) of Lohayong, Lamakera, Lamahala (all former 'Christian' villages), Trong and Serbiti—all belonging to the *Paji*-group—did great harm to the mission. But a year later the Dutch did not consider it worthwhile to keep the fort of Solor occupied; they destroyed it and left in December 1615. The first or Solor period of the mission was finished. The second or Larantuka period started in 1614.

Lasting Foundations amidst Great Turmoil, 1614–1660

In 1614 the newly appointed Vicar-General of the Goanese Dominicans, Miguel Rangel OP, learned about the sad situation of the Solor mission. He sent Fr. João das Chagas as inspector, who in 1617 arrived with three young missionaries in Larantuka bringing the number of Dominicans in the field

³ List of names according to Lame Uran 1985:31–32.

up to seven. Das Chagas was 'a man of great virtue, wisdom and activity.' In only seven months he visited all the stations and realised that pastoral care had collapsed and that superstition and polygamy had widely spread even among the faithful of Larantuka.

Chagas cut down a 'holy tree' and introduced penitential processions on all Fridays of Lent. A heavy cross was carried by the leading men through the village. Holy Week was solemnly celebrated with sermons that appealed to deep feelings of penance and strong resolutions to live up to Christian standards. On Maundy Thursday the *mandatum* (ceremonial washing of feet) and the veneration of a 'holy sepulchre' attracted great crowds and many asked for baptism.

Fr. Chagas visited Sikka, Paga, and Pulau Ende where he installed parish priests. Fr. Andrada, who had arrived with him, tells us that he himself had built two churches and baptised or reconciled about three thousand people. The whole mission is said to have increased by thirty seven thousand in these years. There were eleven Christian villages in the whole mission. Andrada recommended that the Dominicans in India should form their own province in order to stop the discrimination against the mestizos. He also stressed the independence of the minor kings of these islands, perhaps to prevent an application of the Portuguese *padroado*, which would have limited the freedom of the Dominicans. Though the people could easily be converted Andrada feared the church would not grow because there was no bishop and too few missionaries to visit all villages regularly. During his time as superior he himself had to take care of twenty-five soldiers, a ship and the necessary ammunition. Several times he led his people to fight the Dutch and their allies.

In 1618 eighteen posts could be filled because more missionaries had arrived. The Dutch reoccupied the fort of Solor (1618–1629) and harassed the Catholic villages, regarding them as 'Portuguese', though politically their kings were independent. Even the sultan of Makassar had renounced his weak overlordship. In general the VOC cooperated closely with Muslim groups who were opposed to the Catholics. In 1620 Larantuka was attacked and the church, seminary, and many of its houses burnt down. But the Dutch were pushed back with heavy losses by Fernandez' local militia. This victory made the people of Larantuka aware that the Dutch had not only political aims but also religious ones: to make them throw off their Catholic faith. The Portuguese viceroys and the captains of Malacca did not care much, and even cautioned them not to harass the Dutch too much. But the Dutch forces were weakened by the desertion of their commander J. Th. Dayman (1624) and his successor Jan d'Hornay (1629) who had left Dutch service. Both men had witnessed the martyrdom of two Dominicans in Lamakera. D'Hornay had made a one year's truce with Larantuka a year before, but later he created much havoc and became a headache for all parties concerned.

In the 1620s Karmaing on Adonara with about a thousand Catholic families moved to the Dutch side and became Muslim (1623). The Goanese Dominicans accused their Portuguese confreres of not taking care of about fifteen mission stations, that had as a result relapsed more or less into paganism. Three Dominicans, Fr. Agostinho da Magdalena, João Bautista and Simão de Madre Dos were tortured by the people of Lamakera and finally decapitated in the presence of Dutch officers, who honourably buried their mutilated bodies (1621).

A new spirit revived the whole church of this isolated area, when Fr. Miguel Rangel OP worked for three years at Larantuka. He had come to India in 1614, but returned to Portugal and Rome in order to attract more missionaries (1619). From 1625 to 1629 he was vicar-general of the province and prior of the convent in Goa. With ten new missionaries he arrived in Larantuka in April 1630. He brought also nine pieces of artillery, just taken as booty in Aceh by the Portuguese. From merchants in Macau, which had good trading relations with Solor and Timor, he collected six more cannons, and he employed five Chinese masons and a gunsmith. Immediately he set out to restore the empty fort on Solor. Too many Dominicans had been killed in those years by the enemies of the mission. They needed a safe resort. Fr. Miguel expected great results for the mission from a strong fort, but may have put too much hope in it. He also opened a school on Solor.

Fr. Rangel said that the people of Solor are normally *candida, e simple ou ruda*. He wrote “a glowing account of Solor, its climate, products and attractions, which he represented as an earthly Eden where only man was vile. The island was famed for its upland rice which did not need the laborious cultivation of the paddy, its prolific sheep, goats and buffalos, its tasty fruits and vegetables, excellent drinking water and healthy air.”⁴ Fr. Rangel certainly had a reason for this song of praise. He wanted people to volunteer for his mission and wipe out its bad reputation. Other contemporary authors extol the prosperity of Solor too. Was its healthiness not proven by Captain Fernandez? This local leader of the native militia was a veteran of over eighty years service! He is believed to have fathered a child at the ripe age of one hundred and thirty years. Fr. M. Rangel, however, had to leave the mission after only three years, because he was appointed bishop of Cochin in India (1633–1646).

In 1630 only two stations had been provided with a resident missionary, the others were only visited occasionally from Larantuka. The Dominicans who had arrived with Rangel were posted on Adonara, in Lewoleba, Lewotolo and Queidao (all on Lomblen), on the small islands of Pantar and Alor, in a place

⁴ Rangel's report was written in 1633 Malacca, published in Lisbon, 1635 and reprinted by De Sá 1959-V:323.

near Kupang and on Rote and Sawu. Six other priests were posted in Larantuka, Sikka, Waibalun (on Flores) and in Numba and Saraboro (on Ende).

Besides Solor, Adonara, eastern Flores and Timor, there were other islands visited by the Dominican missionaries. Fr. Andrada, for example, said in his report about the island of Rote:

The people are good, friendly, and easy to get along with. They can be converted to the Law of God easily, (because) they do not pray to anything and are not superstitious. According to my opinion they are the best people on all these islands. Eight years ago (i.e. in 1621) they came to Larantuka asking for a religious. I went there with Fr. João de Anunciação and many became good Christians. . . . If there only would be more religious, they all would be Christians within six years.⁵

Fr. Anunciação worked for ten years on Rote (till 1631) and was replaced in 1633 by two other Dominicans. One of them, Fr. Viega stayed only for a short time on Rote, because he could not stand the ‘immoral behaviour’ of these islanders. He stepped into a boat with a young fellow and let the waves decide where to go. He drifted to Amabi on Timor and was well received by the local king and built a church and a school there. He also visited Amarase (south Timor), and then died in Batupute (1640). Though the people of Sawu Island also asked for a priest in 1624, they were only visited by passing missionaries.

These new activities and the vitality inspired by Rangel annoyed the Dutch. With six sails carrying two thousand men, they appeared off the new Solor fort (1636). The Dominican friar in charge answered the demand for surrender by shouting that they would hold as long as possible *tanto mais que so uma morte devo a Deus*: the more so since we owe to God only one death. The Dutch had to sail away without success, but—for unknown reasons—the Dominicans a few weeks later abandoned Solor too. It may have been for lack of money to support the garrison. All weapons and most Christians were moved to nearby Larantuka. The empty fort was repopulated by the Dutch ten years later, in 1646.

Another attack on Larantuka had been beaten off in 1641. A big fleet from Tallo (Makassar) appeared to reinforce Makassarese claim to overlordship on Larantuka which had been weakened by the fall of Malacca. Larantuka refused this claim flatly. During the operation all houses of the small town and the church were burnt down, and the religious images in it desecrated. The people who had fled for the woods suddenly and furiously attacked the Makassarese to revenge the profanation perpetrated by them. The parish priest had revived the spirit of his flock by promising heavenly reward. After having lost three

⁵ Biermann 1959–3:183–185.

hundred people the enemy sailed away. The people of Larantuka attributed their victory to the intervention of their *Renha Rosari* (Queen of the Rosary, patron of Larantuka).

After the raid of 1641, Fr. Jacinto was back again in Mena (Timor) accompanied by two confreres and seventy musketeers, to help the queen. He had visited this harbour a few months earlier without much success. Now, after her villages had just been destroyed by slave hunters from Makassar, the queen of Mena and the nearby kings of Lifao and Amanubau readily accepted baptism. The baptism of the three ‘royals’ and many of their followers around Lifao can be regarded as the beginning of an established church in Timor (1641).

With the help of these new Christians and the musketeers from Larantuka, Fr. Lucas defeated two kings, the one of Servião and that of *Behale* (or *Wehale*), a kind of ‘High-King’ in central Timor. Fr. Jacinto built a simple bulwark in Kupang, whose king was also baptised (1645). When the Dutch heard of this ‘fortification’ they visited the place and reported that the alleged fort was merely a house with three or four persons inside. The friar was blamed by traders from Larantuka for his military initiative because it interfered with their business. He was called back by Goa and had to leave Timor in 1649.

The military expeditions from Larantuka against Wehale, Servião and other petty kingdoms mark the beginning of the temporal ‘Portuguese’ conquest of Timor and the rejection of a domination by Tallo/Makassar, which would have led to an Islamisation of all the islands. The driving forces were the Black Portuguese of Larantuka and later of Lifao on Timor. Most of the Dominicans were Goanese Eurasians and only a few ‘white Portuguese’. Most villages or ‘kingdoms’ were pushed by Larantuka to become Christian. Examples of these are Luka, Amanence, Accao and Amabara.⁶ About twenty-two churches were reported around 1640; ample work for a big group of missionaries that had arrived from Goa. Nearly all kings on Timor were baptised, but instruction did not keep pace. Baptism often meant only to side with Larantuka against Dutch Kupang. About this time the *payao* or Great King of Larantuka, who held a superior position in the whole area, was baptised and named Dom Constantino. Since those days Larantuka became ‘Catholic’ in the sense that being a man of Larantuka meant also being a Catholic, though daily life was quite often not much affected by the new faith. Finally a truce with the Dutch was agreed and stipulated in 1661, “In the Solor Islands the Portuguese own the small fortification and the village of Larantuka, while the Dutch have the right to keep the Fort Henricus. The island of Timor is visited by both nations.”⁷

⁶ Visser 1934:156.

⁷ Visser 1934:157, “Op d'eijlanden van Solor besitten de Portugiesen 't fortgen en vleecke Larentucque en de Nederlanders behouden 't recht van possessie van 't fort Henricus. 't Eijlandt Timor wert van beijde natien gefrequentteert.”

At this time the Portuguese did not yet have a settlement in Timor, but their favourite port of call was Lifao (in the enclave of modern Oikussi) on the northern coast. Its native queen was one of Fr. Jacinto's most enthusiastic converts (1641). Larantuka in Flores was still the headquarters and its priest, Fr. A. Cabral OP, was very much respected. Even the head of the Dutch fort in Solor was astonished and wrote, "It is strange that the Portuguese allow their priests to rule in this way."⁸

In 1651 a new mission post was established in Maumere though the people poisoned their first priest. Sometimes it is difficult to find out who was really in control at Larantuka. Around 1650 Lifao became the new centre after the Black Portuguese of Larantuka had arrived there with Fr. Jacinto. They married Timorese women and stayed permanently. Larantuka had lost some of its importance.

During the 1650s the Portuguese from Larantuka and the Dutch from Batavia tried to regain and increase control over 'their' parts of Timor. Both of them used the respective religious leaders to maintain and extend their sphere of influence. After having built the Fort Concordia at Kupang (1653) A. de Vlaming van Oudtshoorn, who in the Moluccas had cruelly and brutally murdered thousands of people in order to defend the VOC's monopoly of spices (1650), attacked the Black Portuguese, but was beaten in an ambush by the old Ambonese Balthasar Gonçalves (1656).

After the truce of 1662 the Dutch tried to get 'their' kings to fight a proxy war against the Larantuka 'Portuguese', to provide slaves (according to a treaty with the Solorese headmen) and to throw out all the Dominicans. Fr. Jordão, for example, was warned and fled to Suai (Senovai) with all the Catholic natives from Amarase who did not follow their king who had switched to the Dutch side. They recuperated and staged a counter-attack themselves. The king had to surrender to his people and their priest. Then the Dutch interfered directly, but were defeated too by the Larantuka musketeers. Finally a great Dutch fleet passed the Straits of Larantuka on its way to Makassar (1660). The people of Larantuka felt threatened, but the Dutch did not attack, though nearly all Larantuqueiros had left for Pulau Ende.

The Solor-Timor mission of the Dominican fathers is rich in priests and laymen, who gave their lives for Christ. There are twenty-seven Dominicans and six indigenous laymen known to us by reliable reports, who were murdered by Muslim villagers or Christians who had resigned their faith. The Dutch killed about five Dominicans because they were religious.⁹

⁸ Visser 1934:158. "tis vreemt dat de Portugesen soodanich hun papen laten regeren."

⁹ A full list in Heuken 2002:156–157. Most of these martyrs are mentioned in the *Agiologio Dominicano*, the book of Dominican saints.

*'Yellow Sandalwood, White Dominicans, Black Portuguese' (1660–1800)*¹⁰

The decades following the show of force by a Dutch fleet in the Solor archipelago were marked not only by the arrival of many Portuguese in Larantuka in the early 1660s, but also by the Luso-Dutch Treaty of 1662, and by the rise of the Black Portuguese to power around Lifao on the north coast of western Timor.

The Catholic community of eastern Flores was reinforced and renewed by the arrival of many Catholic families expelled from Makassar after 1660. Fr. Lucas da Cruz who accompanied them carried the treasures of the Church of 'S. Domingu de Surian' to Flores. Some of these families who had fled from Malacca twenty years earlier (1641) settled down at Larantuka, at Konga, and at Wureh, a village on Adonara facing Larantuka. Even today these settlements are known as Kampong Malaio. These people brought with them many statues, pictures and other church appliances, which they had taken with them from Malacca to Makassar.

Because of a storm two Spanish Franciscans had to go ashore in Larantuka (1670). Later they visited other places on Flores and Timor and wrote a report about their experience to the bishop of Macau. They deplored among other things that the Christians living among heathen no longer knew the commandments of God, except those who lived in a few 'Christian' villages. The priests in Larantuka were not honoured by the Portuguese who were a rough and unruly crowd. If the priests reprimanded public sinners they were humiliated and molested, as for example in Lewonama and Gege by a band of thugs led by A. d'Hornay. During an evening procession in Larantuka in 1670 a well-known person tried to kill the priest because of false rumours. When this person died a few days later his family tried again to kill the parish priest and burn the church. Luckily other villagers succeeded in preventing this emotional reaction.

The two Franciscans had to leave Larantuka secretly, because their Lenten sermons denounced the morals of the local 'Portuguese' too frankly. They visited eastern Timor and worked among the native people there. In areas with a resident missionary the people behaved much better, even though a priest who reproached the attendants at a funeral at Lifao, because they performed heathen rituals, was killed. As late as 1752 an Episcopal letter condemned the heathen practice of human sacrifices in so called Christianised tribes on the occasion of the burial of a *datu*.

In 1679 sixteen Dominicans worked in the Lesser Sunda Islands. Though the friars were too few in number to cover the whole area they refused to

¹⁰ Quotation from Boxer 1948:VIII.

allow the Jesuits or the Franciscans to help them, even though the *Junta das Missoes* in Goa and the bishop of Malacca proposed the assistance of other religious orders (1703, 1707, 1708, 1715). In fact the Dominicans themselves had great difficulties because many of their friars had died. At the end of the seventeenth century their numbers in Asia had dropped to 130 from 310 in 1610. Finally between 1708 and 1722 some Franciscans appeared in the field and supported them. Because the Dominicans were unable to provide enough personnel, the Jesuits and the Oratorians were again invited (1722–1723, 1726). But both orders refused to step in, because the Dominicans actually did not like to share ‘their’ territory. Ecclesiastically the Solor mission came under the jurisdiction of the *padroado*-diocese of Malacca. After the fall of this stronghold to the Dutch (1641), its ‘curia’ moved to Makassar and twenty years later to Lifao.

At the same time in the area of Lifao, a new powerful group had begun to establish itself: the Tupasses also called the Black Portuguese or the Larantuqueiros. Their existence had an indirect influence on the whole Christian population of Timor and on some of the surrounding islands. Two new rival centres had emerged: Lifao and Kupang. The Dutch at Kupang relied on troops from villages in Solor and Adonara belonging to the *Paji*-group. Thus loyalties were divided as in the Moluccas; old regional lines, religious differences and Portuguese-Dutch opposition became mixed.

After the VOC had established itself firmly in Kupang (1653) the Dutch tried to attract many kings to their side. But this process sometimes caused heavy Portuguese sanctions. Dutch soldiers and sailors not seldom deserted to the Portuguese at Lifao. This place on the northern coast of Timor was largely populated by cutthroats. “Not that the Dutch garrison of Kupang were a much more edifying lot, if we are to judge from a visiting official’s description of them in 1665, leading from the highest to the lowest, a very vile and irregular life, both in drunkenness and in whoring, wherein their commander, Culenberg, sets them an example like a true captain!”¹¹

Since 1641 the Dominicans with the help of the Larantuqueiros had begun what may be called the temporal conquest of ‘their’ territory on Timor. The missionaries regarded themselves not only responsible for the spiritual affairs of their flock, but also in a certain way they represented the temporal power. Villages that had become Catholic were often attacked by the Dutch and Muslim powers who regarded them as Portuguese. Not only local kings but also strong raiders from Java and Sulawesi were called to attack the Catholic villages. Though the temporal power of the Solor Mission was not subject to the Portuguese *Estado da India*, it was regarded as part of it. In fact the Portuguese

¹¹ Boxer 1948:190 based on the *Daghregister* van Batavia, 1665:283–287.

government in Goa neglected Timor, because its empire was too extended, and since the beginning of the seventeenth century they were weakened by the Dutch and English who had appeared in these eastern waters too.

Until 1702 the temporal administration of the 'Portuguese' part of the Solor Archipelago was more or less in the hands of the Dominicans or of some mestizos they favoured. These people have been among the most successful opponents of the Dutch in Indonesia. They also felt no obligation to obey the Portuguese government in Goa. On at least two occasions they expelled the king's representatives in a most summary fashion. When William Dampier visited Lifao on a pirate ship in 1699, the place consisted of:

about forty or fifty houses and one church. The houses are mean and low, the walls generally made of mud and wattle, and thatched with palmetto leaves.... They (i.e. the inhabitants) speak Portuguese, and are of the Romish religion, but they take the liberty to eat flesh when they please. They value themselves on the account of their religion and descent from the Portuguese; and would be very angry if a man should say they are not Portuguese. Yet I saw but three white men here, two of which were Padres.¹²

The situation had become muddled after Captain Fernandez had died at Larantuka (1653) and that place got a bad reputation. "Portuguese soldiers, Macaunese traders, Dutch deserters, and Chinese smugglers who made up the male part of Larantuka's lay community"¹³ rivalled each other all the time. These Luso-Asians were all 'loyal' to the Portuguese crown, but strongly resented any interference from its representatives in Macau or Goa.

In 1655 A. d'Hornay had become the captain of a company of militiamen in Larantuka and later was appointed *Capitao-mor de Timor*, which made him the uncrowned king of Timor. But he refused to welcome any official sent by the viceroy in Goa. The monopoly on the sandalwood trade had made him very rich. At his death (1693), the first nominee of the Portuguese government, A. de Mesquita Pimentel, for a short while seized power (1696), but when he exploited the people and murdered two bastard sons of A. d'Hornay, he was expelled. Then the Da Costa clan came to power, with the support of some Dominicans, over all the islands (before 1700) except in Dutch Kupang. About this time Lifao had outstripped Larantuka as the military, political and finally also as the ecclesiastical centre.

Guerreiro, the next governor, was straight away challenged by Domingo da Costa and was not allowed to go on shore at Larantuka. Therefore he transferred the 'government' from Larantuka to Lifao, thereby founding the first official Portuguese settlement on Timor, in 1702. Later Captain da

¹² Boxer 1969:143.

¹³ Boxer 1948:181.

Costa besieged him for four years in the earthen fort of Lifao. Da Costa's Larantuqueiros were supported by Chinese sandalwood smugglers, who enjoyed also the benevolence of the Dutch in nearby Kupang. The governor finally left the island in disgust.

Captain Hamilton, a Calvinist Scots interloper, passing through Kupang, wrote in 1727:

The Portuguese of Macao drove a very advantageous trade to Timor for many years, and finding the natives to be passive Catholics, tried by fair means to get the whole government of the country into the Church's hands, but could not beguile them that way, therefore they tried force, and commenced a war, but to their cost they found that the Timoreans would not lose their liberty for fear of the loss of blood. They chose one Gonsales Gomez their general.¹⁴ He was a native of Timor and had travelled to Macao and Goa. He allowed the king of Portugal to be the sovereign and protector of their country, and they would be his loyal subjects, providing their laws and liberties might be secured to them.¹⁵

There was an atmosphere of violence everywhere. The inhabitants of the island of Kisar, for example, were cruelly made slaves by the Larantuqueiros, who killed two hundred women and children as well as taking away about four hundred people as slaves. The murder of five hundred Rotinese villagers by the Dutch happened also about the same time. The wars on Timor produced large numbers of slaves for the Batavian market, with Kupang as the nearest port of embarkation. Fighting between Dutch and Portuguese native clients was more or less endemic.

In this sad situation the Goanese Dominican Frei Manuel de Santo Antonio worked as an exemplary missionary in eastern Timor. In 1701 he was appointed bishop of Malacca. Because the VOC did not allow a Catholic bishop to reside at Malacca after 1641 the bishop had to move to Timor. After his appointment he incurred heavy criticism from Goa and was accused of being "forgetful of his duties as a prelate, only interested in those of a general or a politician,—a temptation to which many of the clergy succumb." The bishop's trouble started with the excommunication of the rebellious Domingos da Costa. But when Da Costa had made his peace with the next representative of the crown in 1705, the bishop still refused the ex-rebel the sacraments. In 1715 Da Costa even functioned as *governor interinamenta*. However, the bishop still refused the ex-rebel the sacraments and therefore was accused of fomenting fresh rebellion on the island.

When in 1722 the matter came to a head, the bishop was arrested, because of his alleged support of the 'rebel' Tupasses of Francisco d'Hornay. He was deported to Macau, and from there to Goa, where he quarrelled with the

¹⁴ This must be a mistake for Da Costa or d'Hornay.

¹⁵ Boxer 1948:186–187.

archbishop-patriarch until his death in 1733. The strong action taken by the governor in deporting the bishop did not change the situation. F. d'Hornay plotted with some native chiefs and they sealed their conspiracy with the sacrificial slaughter of a black and a white dog, symbol of the black-white habit of the Dominicans. After drinking the dog's blood mixed with their own, they murdered two missionaries in the interior and burned down several churches.

The successor of Mgr. Manuel died in Lifao in 1743, only thirty-eight years old. In 1748 the missionary Gerardo de St. José OP was appointed and ordained in Macau, and the church of Lifao was declared the (pro-)cathedral of the Diocese of Malacca. In the early 1760s Fr. Jacinto da Conceição OP arrested the governor of Timor and sent him to Goa. Mgr. Gerardo was appointed his successor, but died within a few days. It seems that he was poisoned by Fr. Jacinto. From the succession letters, which he had unlawfully opened, he had learned that he was chosen to replace the governor if he died. Fr. Jacinto ruled so tyrannically that the people rebelled and he was killed by a white Portuguese. No bishops of Malacca were appointed after this, but Episcopal vicars sometimes took over the office of acting-governor of Timor. Most of them died after a short time in office. At that time most of the church buildings were in a deplorable state: without doors, dirty, empty, and inhabited by chickens, pigs, and goats. Another governor legalised the 'revolutionaries' in order to establish some kind of peace, but in vain. Local wars and raids amongst the turbulent chieftains of Timor could hardly be stopped, because of the decentralised and tribal state of society. No strong regional authority had yet developed among the more than sixty petty kings and chiefs of the Bellos and Servião regions.

The Dutch at Kupang, who originally controlled little more territory than what was within the range of the cannons of Fort Concordia, gradually extended their influence over the neighbouring chieftains. On western Timor the claims of the Portuguese receded. Between 1729 and 1731 a coalition of Black-Portuguese and tribal warriors fought openly against the Dutch governor and his Chinese and European soldiers. The most powerful men in the island were the Black Portuguese families of d'Hornay and Da Costa. A mass attack of their Larantuqueiros on Kupang not only failed completely in 1749, but they were totally beaten at Penfui on the ninth of November that year by a small Dutch detachment and a crowd of allied tribesmen. Since that victory the Dutch gained more and more influence in western Timor and Catholic mission work became impossible in that part of the island.

A viceroy in Goa remarked sarcastically about the Timorese, "They are model subjects because they recognise the sovereignty of their legitimate monarch, as long as they are governed by men who oppress them in every possible way although without means to enforce their authority; model Christians because

they still acknowledge evangelical truths, without having pastors who guide them.”¹⁶

How did the church manage in this turbulent time? No reports tell us about the ordinary faithful. The Dutch historian P. van Dam states (1701) in his official account on the VOC, that the successes of the Portuguese were due “to their priests and clergy having got most of the natives on their side; and having thus secured a great advantage over us, they have then been able to reap the full benefits.” A request of the heads of households assembled in Larantuka (1667) sounded even more positive about the Dominican fathers, “These are they who taught our grandparents and ancestors, and who now teach us and our children; we were brought up by them; it is not right that we should abandon them and take others in their place, since they have fulfilled the duties of their office with due satisfaction.” The situation could not have been too bad, because, for example, in 1747 a second minor seminary was opened in Manatuto, the one at Lifao not being sufficient anymore.

These positive evaluations contrast with the general decline in numbers of all friars in Asia. This quantitative decline went along with a decrease in obedience, religious life and missionary spirit in the 18th century. Another viceroy commented (about 1750) that the fruit of the labours of the Dominicans “was not so much that which they gathered in the vineyard of the Lord, as that which they begat in the freedom and licence in which they lived.” And the bishop of Malacca admonished the clergy, “not to maintain women of dubious character under the common pretence that they were housekeepers,” a complaint of long standing. In the early eighteenth century the Dominican superior at Goa could only reply that “the native women were exceedingly lascivious and they all came to the vicars’ houses, principally the young ones, both by night and day, leaving the clergy with no other remedy but flight from their own homes.”¹⁷

The whole archipelago had become a hotbed of endless quarrels, expeditions, raids and even cruel wars not so different from what had been common in the Moluccas a century earlier. The missionaries had not only to protect their own lives, because there was no public authority acknowledged in the whole area, but had also to guard their faithful. Because the natives often did not dare to fight against Europeans on the Dutch side, some friars had to walk at the head of ‘their’ troops in order to instil them with bravery. This necessity certainly did not benefit their clerical state, but there was no other choice if they were to survive. Boxer’s severe judgment on the Dominicans in this respect may be too hard and influenced by the pronouncements of the governors in Goa

¹⁶ Boxer 1948:193–194.

¹⁷ Boxer 1948:197. See the very severe remarks of P. de Rego Barreto about abuses, quoted by Biermann 1924:271.

and later at Dili, who often had an aversion to the Dominicans. They had to defend themselves from the charge of covering up the use of mission funds for their own purposes and for never paying their debts. Some governors had a bad reputation and the missionaries, who supported the people and not the government officials, opposed their politics.

In the last decades of the eighteenth century the white Portuguese administration was more or less in the hands of crooks and practically did not function. Therefore the administration of Lifao and the surrounding area was left again to the Dominicans. The rival d'Hornay and da Costa clans had reached a 'truce' by rotating the headship of the Larantukero forces among representatives of the two clans. An attempt by A. von Pluskow, Dutch *Opperhoofd* at Kupang, to get a hold on Lifao failed and he himself was killed in 1761. In 1769 the white Portuguese Governor A.J. Telles de Meneses foolishly murdered twenty-three emissaries of the Black Portuguese. He was besieged in the Lifao fort for a year and finally destroyed it and sailed away to the east. He chose the unhealthy village of Dili as his new residence (1771–1772), at least far enough away from Lifao and Larantuka, the centres of his 'loyal' black brethren.

During the second half of the eighteenth century the situation of the mission on Timor and Flores deteriorated. The growth had stopped. There were only eight missionaries in the whole area between 1754 and 1804. But only one priest was left about 1811 to look after all of Timor and eastern Flores until he died in 1817. Some priests appeared for a short time, but could not do much to stop the re-paganisation. After 1800 there was no parish priest anymore in Larantuka. In 1818 the archives of Larantuka were destroyed by fire in Dili. In 1834 the Dominicans were expelled from Timor as well as from all other Portuguese territories. For some years no priest worked in the whole Solor-Timor mission. Later the archbishop of Goa sent secular priests because the Diocese of Malacca had been suppressed by Rome (1838)¹⁸ and united with Goa. A travelling missionary, who resided on eastern Timor, periodically visited only Larantuka, Lela/Sikka, and some other places.

In 1856 Fr. Gregorio M. Baretto, who was born on Timor, wrote a report and stated among other things that around former Lifao, now Oikussi, and Noimuti about five hundred Catholics were left, who for years had been visited only now and then. In Larantuka the old *Confreria Reinha Rosari* and the raja tried hard to keep the faith alive. The local king regarded himself as the worldly representative of the heavenly *Reinha*, the real 'Queen' of Larantuka. When the Dutch Fr. C. de Hesselle visited Larantuka in 1853, from Batavia,

¹⁸ The so-called Goanese Schism (1831–1886) made Rome suppress the non-functioning Malacca Diocese (1558–1834) and Timor was placed directly under Goa (1834) and later under Macau (1874–1940).

he still met about three thousand Catholics there and some thousands more in other places in eastern Flores.

Crosses that often had been erected by the Dominicans to show that a village had become Christian were still kept in some villages till the 1920s. Many natives still vaguely remembered the explanation of the cross as a sign of salvation and protection against evil given by the friars. During the period of decline in the 19th century these crosses may have been regarded also as magic symbols against illness, bad harvest, war and other calamities. Baptismal rituals and processions during Holy Week (including decoration of a cross) were still held by villagers near Mena and Noimuti (central western Timor). During the long period without catechetical instruction some abuses crept into the ceremonies even in Larantuka, because they were no longer understood till intensive evangelisation was begun again after the 1860 by Dutch diocesan clergy and Jesuits.

Amidst all these sad tidings there is something remarkable about the people of *Nusa Tenggara Timur*: Although nearly always in rebellion against the representative of the Portuguese crown, and left for decades without a missionary visiting them, let alone living among them, they never thought of throwing off their allegiance to Portugal and the Catholic Church.

Finally Portugal had become so weak that it resigned its claims on all islands except East Timor (and the enclaves of Oikussi and Noimuti). Uncertain boundaries made it desirable for the Netherlands and Portugal to define 'their' territories. After long discussions (from 1851) a treaty was prepared. Fr. Gregorio from Dili reminded the Catholics on Flores, "You may change the flag, but absolutely not your faith!" This reminder made them suspicious even towards the first Dutch Catholic priests, fearing that they did not belong to the 'old faith'.

The question of freedom of religion for the native Catholics on Flores and Timor led to the first Luso-Dutch Treaty (1854) that was rejected by the Dutch parliament because it only guaranteed freedom of Catholic worship. It asked for the same formulation concerning the Reformed Church members in the Dutch enclave of Mancatar, which became a Portuguese area, though there was not a single Protestant resident. A new treaty was signed in Lisbon in 1859, which promised freedom of religion in all parts exchanged between the two countries.

The missionaries of the sixteenth century had not yet developed a theory or method of missionary work. Nobody had experience and the people they encountered were completely unknown to them. The different languages, their customs, another mentality and above all their beliefs were not only unknown but also often incomprehensible. They had to proceed by trial and error. In general, they tried to win the headmen and the petty 'kings', who actually were heads of several kampongs. Then their people would follow. Preparation for

baptism was often quite short and summarily given. Instruction was always given, but there was no extended catechumenate to grow in faith and Christian living. Baptisms of the nobility were celebrated with great solemnity to impress the people. They received Portuguese names that they passed on proudly in their families until today. The missionaries travelled from place to place, but did not stay permanently in a village. They were too few and felt a need for community life in a convent on Solor or later at Larantuka.

Children were given better instruction so that they might pass on what they had learned to the older generation. In some places a school was established, for example in Solor, in West Timor and a minor seminary in Larantuka and later in Lifao, which did not produce an indigenous clergy but convinced laymen. A few young men were sent to a kind of Jesuit college at Malacca (e.g. Dom Cosma of Sikka).

As has been told above, the visitor Fr. João das Chagas introduced solemn celebrations, processions and devotions, which appealed to the people and were honoured through long priestless times. During these periods the confraternities of the Rosary in several places, but above all the *Confreria Renha Rosari* of Larantuka, played an eminent role in keeping the faithful together and their faith alive, though sometimes under the ashes of animistic notions.

An unavoidable burden of the Solor mission was the exercise of worldly power by the friars, because until 1702 Portugal did not want to be responsible for the archipelago as part of its vast sea-borne empire. This attitude saved a lot of trouble and finances for the crown, but overburdened the mission and blurred its religious aims. The friars were often involved in direct fighting and were therefore regarded as enemies by the Muslims and the Dutch. The Dominicans had to build a defence system against the raiders from inside and outside the archipelago. In this they had taken too heavy a responsibility, which in the long run spoiled their apostolic work and even some of the Dominicans themselves.

There is no place in Asia where a religion prospered without the support of a worldly power. When protection was withdrawn from the young churches of China, Japan, Vietnam and Eastern Indonesia, they suffered tremendously and nearly all were destroyed in bloody persecutions. The Catholics of the Moluccas and the Lesser Sunda Islands during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries paid a heavy tribute too. But this little plant proved viable even under severe conditions, and after decades of renewed 'incubation' since the 1860s it grew quickly into a majority religion in the twentieth century in Flores and Timor, now sending 'domestic' missionaries to many parts of Indonesia and abroad, but this later period will be subject of discussion in later chapters.

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