

P. G. H. Scheurs MSC. 1992. *Terug in het Erfgoed van Franciscus Xaverius: Het herstel van de katholieke missie in Maluku, 1886–1960*. Tilburg: Missiehuis MSC. 328 pp. Paper.

Reviewed by PATRICIA SPYER, University of Amsterdam

A self-proclaimed “attempt to portray the *process* of the restoration, foundation, and growth of a missionary endeavor in the light of certain historical and missiological perspectives” (iv), this book is a welcome contribution to the sparse literature on missionization in Maluku. Drawing on a wide range of mission sources, archival material from the Catholic Documentation Center in Nijmegen, the Netherlands, and interviews with some of this history’s main protagonists, the author—himself a former missionary in the Philippines—details the trials, tribulations, and triumphs of Catholic missionization in Maluku. Although written “without shame and excuses” (ii), the author does not shy away from issues like the mission’s complicity with the Dutch colonial project while at times an effort to tone down some of the excesses of conventional mission historiography is also apparent.

In view of the latter, Scheurs took the decision (or so he told me) to position the photo of a statue of Francis Xavier on the back rather than the front cover of his book. Francis Xavier is, of course, the famous Jesuit who is said to have converted hundreds of Malukans to Catholicism in the mid-16th century and who, as such, figures as the eponymous ancestor of the Catholic mission in Maluku as well as in the title of Scheur’s book, since it is the restoration of Xavier’s initial work that is at issue here. Yet the impression left by the photo of this mission hero so discretely placed on the back of the book is somewhat schizophrenic. The rear of the book shows a monumental Xavier whose statue—shot from below—is framed against Ambon’s blue sky and the tower of the city’s cathedral. Standing firmly astride a weatherworn rock, the Jesuit raises in his right hand a cross to the heavens; on his left side he shoulders a massive Bible. At his feet a crab mimics his move, comically raising in one claw a miniature cross. (This same crab plays an important part as cross-bearer in a story about Francis Xavier caught out in rough weather on one of Maluku’s seas.)

Since the restoration of this earlier period of missionization needs to be settled from the start, the book opens with a brief overview of the

European exploration voyages of the 15th and 16th centuries, that time when a Papal Bull—according to one contemporary of this document—“divided the world up like an orange” (1). Chapter 1 also tells of the first Catholic conversions in Maluku, when several inhabitants of the village Mamula on Halmahera were baptized by a Portuguese trader in 1534. Subsequently, it deals with the arrival of the Dutch East India Company, which brought an abrupt end to Catholic missionization until it was resumed again toward the end of the 19th century, the heyday of missionization in the Netherlands East Indies, as elsewhere.

Having established the genealogy of Catholic missionization in Maluku, chapters 2, 3, and 4 pick up after a hiatus of more than 300 years to tell the story of the return of the Catholics to the eastern outreaches of the Netherlands East Indies and of their founding of mission stations in these far-flung parts. Roughly, the Catholic mission dates its own beginnings as follows: Kei in 1888, Irian Jaya in 1904, and Tanimbar in 1910. If chapters 2 and 3 detail the complicated, fascinating, and ultimately successful “return” of the Jesuit Fathers Kusters and Booms to “the heritage of Francis Xavier”—which in this case happened to be Kei—chapter 4 describes the thwarted attempts of the Catholics to establish a mission station in Seram.

This is where the book is at its best—in following through the twists and turns of the local politics within which the missionaries inevitably become ensnared and through which one gets a glimpse of the much larger colonial landscape on which this particular mission history gets played out. There is, for instance, much to learn in this book along the way about the odd assortment of figures who abet, obstruct, or otherwise become implicated in this history. Thus, in the Kei islands, local dignitaries like the *hajis* of Tual, the *raja* of Faan, and the *orang kaya* of Langgur are critical—although in very different ways—to the foundation of a mission station here. Or take Adolf Langen, the German owner of a sawmill in Tual, Kei, who in September 1886 writes a letter to the Vicar in Batavia pressing him to begin missionization in these islands. The fact that Langen had already approached the Protestant minister in Ambon with the same request and that his own interest in the matter had more to do with the opposition he found in local Islam to his business plans than with any religious persuasion does not really matter, although it does explain why Kei—of all places—became the first Catholic station in Maluku. Much space in chapter 3 is also devoted to documenting the first

(post-restoration) Malukan conversions during those “critical days of June and July 1889” when 23 persons in all were baptized, and another 300 mentioned as “desiring to become Christian” (59). With names like Wilhelmus and Maria, or others taken from Europeans either resident in or passing through Kei—like Justinus (after a man from the Firm Langen), Henricus (after the Posthouder), and Hermanus (after Planten from the 1889–90 scientific expedition to Kei), these “first Christians of Langgur” are commemorated in a special list in Scheurs’s book, complete with their parents’ names and the years of their births.

Chapter 4 tells a similar tale, although one with a very different outcome. Again, a German and a self-styled “industrialist and planter” named Wassmer writes a letter to the vicar, this time from Seram but also in September 1886 asking for Catholic missionaries to be sent to this island. (Indeed, the author suspects that the convergence between the two events involving German entrepreneurs is more than a coincidence.) A series of letters concerning the prospects for a mission station in Seram go back and forth between the vicar and the “industrialist.” Scheurs reproduces some of the conditions posed by the Catholics: that the [Alfoeren] live together and in one place, that they do not live among the Muslims, and especially, that their *rajas* are not yet muslims. Other questions include (90): How many persons ask for a priest and what are their names? Is the country liveable for a European? Is there sufficient potable water, good land, and is communication with the outside world possible?

The subsequent four chapters describe different aspects of the growth of the Catholic mission in Maluku from the beginning of this century up until the Second World War. Chapter 5 focuses on the two missionaries of the Sacred Heart (i.e., the Missionarissen van het Heilig Hart who form the Dutch province of the MSC or Société des Missionnaires du Sacré Coeur, which was founded in France in 1854 and extended to the Netherlands in 1894): Pater Geurtjens, whose writings on Kei and Tanimbar will be familiar to most Malukanists; and Maluku’s first prefect, Pater Neyens. In 1903 these two men take over the missionary work begun by the Jesuits in Kei. This and the following chapters detail each step in the expansion of the Catholic mission—from Langgur to Kei Besar, and on to Tanimbar and Ambon. Each step is further supported by the “statistics” of the critical years in this trajectory—especially of the baptisms performed in different places but also of the numbers of

Christians versus heathens and Muslims within a given population. Importantly, these were the kinds of figures sent periodically by the different mission stations to the Propaganda Fide in Rome, the church body charged with the direction of Catholic missionization across the globe. The challenges and problems faced by the MSC as a consequence of the outbreak of World War I and of the mismanagement of mission funds in Langgur, Kei, are the topic of chapter 6. Chapter 7 describes the changing role of the mission in the context of growing concerns about what we today would call eurocentrism, together with the feeling on the part of some members of the MSC that a more culturally sensitive approach to missionization was needed. Here, again, Scheurs cites extensively from mission correspondence to convey the flavor of these debates—for instance, a document “Concerning the manner of christianization of the Keiese: Advantage or disadvantage of our western terms” (179) is especially informative. Chapter 8 reviews the kinds of practices that formed part and parcel of mission proselytization and, as such, were often instrumental in bringing people into the church (as, indeed, they continue to be in some parts of Maluku)—schooling, health care, and, as Scheurs points out, the fact that by 1920 Maluku could boast its own vicar and, subsequently, no one less than a bishop.

Chapter 9, the penultimate of the book, deals with World War II and, specifically, the events surrounding the execution by the Japanese of Maluku’s first bishop, together with a score of priests and brothers. The length of this chapter and its place in the organization of the book suggest the central importance of this event for the mission’s representation of its place in Malukan history. Although tentatively phrased, from Scheurs’s perspective the Japanese executions seem to touch on martyrdom, which would make them the culminating and authorizing element of the themes of self-sacrifice, the pioneer spirit, and heroism that crop up in this book, as in most mission historiography. This interpretation is further supported by the dedication with which the author concludes the preface to his book: “Tilburg, 30 July 1992, on the fiftieth anniversary of the Japanese murder of Mgr. J. Aerts MSC and companions in Langgur, Kei.”

To those readers of this journal who travel regularly to Maluku and who would know more about Catholic missionization in this region, it may also be of interest to know that a more graphic rendition of MSC history is laid out in Langgur, Kei, on the beachside site where the kill-

ings of these same missionaries took place. Well worth a visit, this history unfolds across a succession of dated scenes—beginning with the arrival of Francis Xavier and then, after a gap of more than 300 years, working its way through the highpoints of 100 years of Catholic missionization in Maluku—detailed in relief on a cement wall bordering the mission park that contains the immense tomb shared by the bishop, the priests, and the lay brothers.

Given the place of Chapter 9 in the book—and indeed the traumatic happenings it relates—the final chapter entitled “the second restoration” seems to occur almost as an afterthought. After the detail of the previous chapters, this last one treats only briefly—although perhaps wisely—issues like the “new loyalty” owed by the missionaries to postcolonial Indonesia and the struggles in Ambon and the surrounding area of the RMS. And, unfortunately, for those of us who have worked more recently in Maluku, Scheurs’s history of the mission only takes us up until 1960.

In conclusion, this detailed, carefully researched, and anecdotally rich account of Catholic missionization in Maluku makes for a readable and interesting book. If, not surprisingly, many of its concerns and tropes place it well within the genre of conventional mission historiography, the knowledge and particular insights this perspective brings with it should themselves be of interest to those inquiring into the workings and consequences of missionization in Maluku.

Gerrit J. Knaap, W. Manuhutu, and H. Smeets. 1992. *Sedjarah Maluku: Molukse geschiedenis in Nederlandse bronnen*. Amsterdam: Van Soeren & Co. with De Bataafsche Leeuw.

Reviewed by TESSEL POLLMANN

Many people in the Netherlands believe that Ambon and the surrounding isles have always been completely loyal to the Dutch colonial regime. This belief is widespread because the Malukan population in the Netherlands, comprising former members of the colonial army (the Koninklijk Nederlands Indisch Leger) and their descendants, has had many opportunities in the media to proclaim this myth. This mythology helped to justify their claims for Dutch support for their rebellious RMS, which since the early 1950s has wanted an independent Malukan republic, free from Sukarno, Suharto, and the ideology of the Indonesian nation-state.

It is a good thing that the Moluks Historisch Museum in Utrecht organized a symposium where this mythology was gently debunked. The papers of this symposium are published in the book under review.

In 108 pages, the book gives us an overview of the history of Maluku since 1500. Knaap's contribution is titled "Tjengkeh, kompeni, agama: Hoofdlijnen uit de geschiedenis van de Ambonse eilanden 1500–1800." He and his coauthors call Ternate, Buru, and Ceram Ambonese but not Malukan—without explanation, although it does not matter very much. Knaap concentrates on the issue of Islam vs. Christianity and on economic identity, which shifts from self-reliance to the monoculture of *tjengkeh*. In both cases, the mobility of people is the dominating influence: the Javanese preach Islam, the Portuguese and the Dutch preach Christianity. The colonials introduced the culture of *tjengkeh*, an enforced monoculture that shook the Malukan world. Mobility, says Knaap, is the key principle that transforms Maluku from a "primitive" society to a colonial "state" and gives the Malukans access to the world economy. Chris F. van Fraassen's article "Maluku en de Ambonse eilanden tot het midden van de 17e eeuw: Socio-kosmische ordening en politieke verhoudingen" gives an overview of the original kingdoms of Maluku and their mythology and cosmology. He writes about the underlying principles of the ulisiwa/ulilima and the patisiwa/patilima moiety system. The colonial dominance destroys the political principles of order and aggression in Maluku. Van Fraassen's conclusion is that colonialism strangled dynamics in Maluku; the new order concentrated on an artificial peace and an immobile economy. R. R. F. Habiboe's article "Ambonese belangen en koloniale politiek" deals mainly with the movement for independence and nationalism in the 1930s called Sarekat Ambon, whose leader A. J. Patty was interned because of his radical influence. Habiboe makes an important contribution toward a more moderate image of Malukan political thinking in the colonial period. Likewise, Piet J. Drooglever's "De vrijheid vanuit Ambons perspectief" makes an important contribution toward moderating the image of postcolonial Maluku as the stronghold of anti-Sukarno politics. He explains that the Partai Indonesi Merdeka (PIM) formed an influential nationalist force that was unfortunately overthrown after a short time by the RMS leaders. He emphasizes that the RMS was a Java-centered idea that was nourished by the presence of many Malukan ex-soldiers of the colonial

army in garrisons on Java. He thus impugns the myth of the RMS as an authentic Maluku-centered ideology.

*Sedjarah Maluku* is a good collection of articles that can be understood by every person who is versed in reading academic or learned prose. It is a good thing that the Moluks Historisch Museum in Utrecht, which has always had the image of being very pro-RMS, is open to the results of new research and the ideas of erudite historians.