

The Cross under the Shadow of the Sun: Zending Mission during the Japanese Occupation (1942-1945) In South-East Sulawesi

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In 2015, adherents of Christianity in Southeast Sulawesi constituted only 2.16% of the province's total population. Of this percentage, about 1.41% were Protestant Christians and 0.76% were Catholics. Although Christians are a minority group in Southeast Sulawesi, it is interesting to discuss the history of Christianity in the province. The spread of Christianity reached its peak during the Dutch colonial era. Dutch missionaries were able to convert a great number of Southern Sulawesi people to Christianity, Kolaka and Konawe being the strongest Christian bases in the region. During the Japanese occupation, however, missionary activities declined due to a policy of the Japanese military administration toward Christians and their activities in Southeast Sulawesi. Historically, this particular policy of the Japanese Military administration is an interesting topic to study because of its significant long-lasting effect on Christian in Southeast Sulawesi. The key question here is how the policy was implemented and how it caused a decline in the number of Christians in Southeast Sulawesi. To address the question, this study was conducted by using a four-step historical methodology, involving heuristics, criticism, interpretation, and historiography. Based on the results, it can be concluded that the Japanese Military administration's policy to limit the activities of Christians resulted in the discontinuation of worshipping activities and services, closing of zending-run educational facilities, killing of priests, and destruction of church congregation service posts. Altogether, these were the cause of the drastic decline in the population of Christians in Southeast Sulawesi during the Japanese occupation.

Key words: *Gospel Preaching, Japanese Military Administration Policy, Kolaka, Konawe.*

Introduction

During the Dutch East Indies colonial era, Kolaka became a basis of the *Nederlandsche Zendings Vereeniging* (NZV) for gospel preaching in Eastern Indonesia, particularly Sulawesi. NZV was able to convert most of the people in the interior areas of Southeast Sulawesi, who had previously been Muslims or adherence of traditional beliefs. It was in this era that missionary work reached its peak in Southeast Sulawesi. In the mid-1930s, the total Christian population was 2,609. The number rose to 2,806 at the end of 1937 and 3,270 at the end of 1940. In 1942, the number of Christians who had been baptized was approximately 7,000 and about 1,000 others were soon to be baptized (Boonde, 1984; Boonde, 2016; Jongeling, 1976). NZV's success could not be separated from the policy of the Dutch Indies colonial administration, which gave full support to the missionary work in Southeast Sulawesi.

Japan's conquest over Southeast Sulawesi meant not only a change of the ruling power, it also caused a lot of social and cultural changes. The Japanese military administration adopted a policy that treated Muslims and Christians differently. Muslims were considered "brothers" who could support Japan in its ambition to win the Pacific War. Muslims were allowed to worship according to the teachings of Islam. They were also given the freedom to build religious education facilities provided that they remained loyal to Japan as the "older brother". Obviously, the Japanese military administration was trying to gain the Muslim leaders' sympathy. The policy was strongly based on the fact that Islam was the religion of the majority and on the conviction that the Muslims were not pro-Dutch.

As for the Christian population, Japan viewed them as enemies because their conversion to Christianity was the result of the Dutch *zending* mission. This was the reason that Japan adopted the policy to limit the activities of the Christian people despite their insistence to develop their religion. The repressive policy of the Japanese administration toward the Christians in Southeast Sulawesi resulted in the decline in their population. Toward 1957, when the first Synod Convention was held, the population of Christians in Southeast Sulawesi was only 3,000 (Boonde, 1984; Boonde, 2016; Jongeling, 1976). The Japanese occupation was the most difficult time for missionary work. In other words, Christians were facing a new colonial era ruled under an anti-church regime (Muller, 1955: 27). The fact that some Christians remained steadfast in their beliefs despite the declining population is an interesting topic of study in history.

A number of studies have been conducted on Christian missions during the Japanese occupation era. In 2011, Endrayanto wrote a book *Melintasi Gelombang: Gereja Katolik di Sumatera Selatan Krisis dan Pemulihan (Through Tempests: Catholic Church in South Sumatera, Crisis and Recovery, 1942-1945)*. In his book, Endrayanto discusses the situation during the Japanese occupation and the independence war as a very challenging time for the Catholic Church in the Apostolic Vicariate of Palembang. A study on Japanese occupation in Southeast Sulawesi, *Revolusi fisik daerah Sulawesi Tenggara (The Physical Revolution in Southeast Sulawesi)* was also conducted by Bhurhanuddin, et al., (1979/1980). In 1991, Muh. A. Rachman Djami, et al., additionally wrote a study entitled *Pendudukan Jepang di Kendari (Japanese Occupation in Kendari)*. In their study they described the historical dynamics related to the Japanese occupation in Southeast Sulawesi. They do not, however, give any special focus to the development of churches or Christianity itself. Specifically, the issues of the situation and experiences of Protestant people in Southeast Sulawesi during the Japanese occupation have not been discussed in detail. This study, therefore, attempts to complement the discussions raised by previous studies.

Discussion

Southeast Sulawesi under Japanese Occupation

From their military base in Davao (The Philippines), the Japanese forces landed successfully in the island of Sulawesi. On 11 January 1942, the Japanese seized and took over Manado (North Sulawesi). On 24 January, the Japanese also landed at Kendari Airport (Southeast Sulawesi). Within a relatively short time, the city of Kendari and its vicinities were conquered. In only two days, the Japanese forces were able to seize Kolaka, Poleang-Rumbia, Buton, Wawonii and Muna. In February 1942, the entire Southeast Sulawesi had fallen under the control of the Japanese (Bhurhanuddin, et al., 1978/1979: 112-113; Bhurhanuddin, et al., 1979/1980: 1-2; Chalik, et al., 1977/1978: 46; Djami, et al., 1991: 25-26; Harvey, 1989: 92; Jongeling, 1976: 9).

After conquering the entire Southeast Sulawesi, the Japanese began to undertake some administrative reform, though not significantly changing the previous hierarchical structure created by the Dutch Indies administration. The administrative division of the region was simplified and the names of administrative structures were changed. For example, the terms *resident*, *afdeeling*, and *onderafdeling* were changed into *menseibu*, *ken* and *bunken* respectively. Accordingly, the names of administrative positions were also changed: *Resident Celebes en Onderhoorigheden* into *Celebes Menseifutyookan*; *Assisten Resident Boeton en Laiwoei* into *Kendari Ken Kanrikan*; and *Controleur Buton, Kolaka, Muna, and Controleur Kendari* into *Buton Bunken Kanrikan*, *Muna Bunken Kanrikan*, and *Kendari Bunken Kanrikan*. The Japanese did not even dissolve the existing *swapraja* (autonomous) regions. However, the Head of Buton Autonomous Region and Head of Laiwui Autonomous Region

were now called Buton *Syuutyoo* and Laiwui *Syuutyoo*. In addition, the terms Head of District and Head of Village were called *guutyoo* and *sontyoo* (Bhurhanuddin et al., 1982; Chalik et al., 1977/1978: 49; Konggoasa, t.t.; Thalha, 1982: 42). In early 1945, the Japanese military administration established Kendari *Bunken Kanriken*, which comprised Boepinang *Syuutyoosho* and Puunggaluku *Syuutyoosho*. Boepinang *Syuutyoosho* coordinated some district-level administrative units, namely Poleang Bugis, Poleang Moronene, and Rumbia districts. Puunggaluku *Syuutyoosho* was subdivided into several districts in South Laiwui (Thalha, 1982: 43). This administrative structure remained in place until 15 August 1945 when Japan surrendered unconditionally to the Allies.

Japanese Policy and the Church's Response

The Japanese Military administration's policy toward Christians in Southeast Sulawesi could not be separated from the situation in Japan itself. The Japanese Empire, with Shinto as its official religion, had a negative view toward Christian minorities. This policy was also caused by the rejection of the Christians, who refused to include *sikerei* (bow to the emperor) in their ritual. As a result, the Japanese Empire government imposed an anti-church policy and was very hostile toward churches during the Pacific War (Aritonang and Steenbrink, 2008: 180). The policy was then also brought to other lands under the Japanese occupation, including Southeast Sulawesi. The policy put the Christian people in Southeast Sulawesi under immense pressure, but many of them remained steadfast and became religiously more mature (Anonymous, 1987: 419). They were able to maintain their existence because they believed that their enemies were neither the Japanese nor Muslim leaders, but their fellow Christians. Many Christians left their faith and converted to Islam in particular. Many could not stand being terrorized by unknown people (de Jong, 1997: 28; Pingak, 1977: 16). This theory, however, cannot be easily accepted because it cannot be denied that the Japanese policy to limit the activities of Christians also contributed significantly to the creation of such a situation. The arrests of Dutch priests and those from other European countries by the *Kenpeitai* in mid-1943, and the discontinuation of financial support for church operations, lessened the quality of worship services performed by the existing churches. In fact, until 1942, no churches could exist and operate independently because they still heavily relied on government support (Niemeijer, 2010: 40).

Indonesian priests were not yet ready to lead religious rituals because the ritual objects that had previously been used by *zending* missionaries were not handed down to any organization with Indonesian members. They all fell to the hand of the Japanese and were destroyed (van den End, 1989: 172). Although Dutch priests were aware a bloody war was soon to break between the Dutch and the Japanese, the *zending* never prepared the native priests or trained them to lead religious rituals. The *zending* missionaries were convinced that Japanese would not be able to take over their *zending* territory and therefore did not see any need to train local

priests to lead liturgies. Consequently, local priests had no access to items needed in church rituals. The Japanese seized and destroyed them all. Priests' houses in the interior areas were torn down and priests were relocated to Kendari and Kolaka so that they could be monitored more easily (Anonymous, 1986; de Jong, 1976).

The financial difficulties faced by churches and the widespread issue that Christians were allies of the Dutch, created even more difficult situations for the Christian people of Southeast Sulawesi. Communication among Christian communities was difficult because they lived apart from one another. Many natives who had converted to Christianity had to hide in forests because their life was threatened. Those who did not have an opportunity or sufficient time to find a hiding place were caught and had to do *romusha* forced labor together with those caught from Bugis, Luwu, Timor, Bali, and Java. Because of *romusha*, the Christian population fell to almost 50% of that of 1942. However, the faith of the surviving Christians' remained unshaken. They were finally able to perform a service in a forest and sang the hymn "Angkat Panji Kristus" (Lift the Christian Banner) (Anonymous, 1986, Anonymous, 2016, Jongeling, 1976).

Faced with such a situation, in March 1942, three Christian congregation leaders, Ferdinand Sonaru, Benyamin Rere, and Ndae Nicolaas Boonde took an initiative to convene a meeting in Lambuya. The meeting resulted in the agreement of several points: (1) visits were to be made to the still existing congregations; (2) there should be regional division of congregations; and (3) work resorts should be established. In January 1943, the three leaders on the division into three service regions, namely (a) East Kendari region, based in Pondidaha and served by Ferdinan Sonaru; (b) South Kendari region (including Uepai, Lambuya, Roraraya, and Andolo) served by Benyamin Rere, and (c) Kolaka region, based in Rate-Rate and served by Ndae Nicolaas Boonde (Anonymous, 1986; Boonde, 2016; Paulus, 1989: 11-25).

In October 1943, a second meeting was held in Uepai village at Pieter Abada's house and a third meeting in Rate-rate, attended by Ferdinand Sonaru, Luther Indabio, D. N. Boonde, B. Rere, and Ferdinand Bawea Powatu. In the third meeting, they agreed to send Ndae Nikolas Boonde and Luther Indabio to meet Susho Miyahira (*Selebes Kristokjo Rengokai* staff member responsible for Christian affairs) in Makassar (Anonymous, 1986; Jongeling, 1976). On 27 December 1943, the two envoys left Kendari and arrived in Bone (South Sulawesi) on 2 January 1944. Two days later, they met Miyahira in Makassar and the meeting produced a satisfactory result. **First**, Miyahira recognized that the Gospel Ministry in Southeast Sulawesi was legitimate under *Selebes Kristokjo Rengokai*. **Second**, to follow up this legitimacy, Miyahara was to issue a letter recommending the Japanese Military administration to give some space for Christians to worship and perform their rituals (Anonymous, 1986; Boonde, 2016; Jong, 2010; Jongeling, 1976; Jacob Schuurmans' Report 1947; van den End, 1989).

Unfortunately, Miyahara's recommendation was ignored and the Japanese Military administration continued its policy to not allow any form of Christian worship or ritual activities. In mid-1945, the Japanese Military ruler put Christian under an even more repressive policy. The Japanese Military threatened to kill Christian priests and congregation members who refused to stop worshipping. Following Japan's surrender to the Allied forces, the discriminatory policy toward Christian believers and priests ended and NZV assigned their priests back to Southeast Sulawesi. The NZV priests, however, were unable to perform their duties in Southeast Sulawesi because the people there were taking up arms fighting against NICA forces, who intended to regain and reoccupy Indonesia. Eventually, Christian missions in Southeast Sulawesi were continued by *Nederlandsch Hervormde Kerk* (NHK) (Anonymous, 1986; Anonymous, 2016; Boonde, 2016; Jongeling, 1976: 12).

The Impact of the Japanese Policy on Christians The Killing of Priests and Destruction of Churches

The most apparent impacts of the Japanese anti-Christian policy were the killings of priests, pastors, and other clerics, and the demolition and looting of Christian service posts (churches and other *zending* buildings and facilities). When the Japanese attacked an airport in Kendari, Assistant Resident Mendelaar and Reverend Gouweloos, accompanied by his assistant Jakobus, a law teacher, and the Captain of Laiwui, immediately left Kendari. In Punggolaka, about nine kilometers from Kendari, they were encountered by an army of Japanese soldiers who forced them to get out of their vehicle with their hands up as a sign of surrender. Reverend Gouweloos, who was sitting beside the driver, left the car from the other door. Upon seeing this, Japanese soldiers mistakenly thought that he was trying to escape and shot him to death (Jongeling, 1976: 9). The Japanese continued to kill more priests and their assistants. For example, B. K. Tumakaka, Reverend Gouweloos' Language Assistant (*Taal Assistant*), was also captured and detained and was finally killed in Ameroro on 26 January 1942 because he refused to cooperate. The priests and clerics who were murdered, including van der Staar (a forestry overseer), Poturunu (an Ambonese customs officer), Nangian (a Menadonese road overseer), Sakaria (an administration official), and Ramala (a road construction foreman from Tolaki), were buried together in one place (Jongeling, 1976; a letter from Klift to Hervormd Church *Zending* dated January 1946, Oegstgeest Archive).

This situation caused priests, gospel preachers, and other clerics to do their missionary work underground. They continued to spread Christianity by educating local cadres and ordaining parish teachers as priests. In addition, they also sent Christian youths to a theological school in Soe and opened a school for future parish teachers (Sinaga, et al., 1993: 26). The situation also internally weakened the local Christian organization. The death of some teachers, including Victor Bolo, worsened the situation. Moreover, some priests also chose to leave Southeast Sulawesi for safety reasons. Pither J. Rumono, to name one, decided to go to

Central Sulawesi, however, when he believed that the threat against Christian priests had been considerably lifted, he returned to Southeast Sulawesi and became a parish teacher in Ueesi village. In 1945 he moved to Simbune village, where he then opened a *zending* school (Jong, 2010a).

As part of their oppression against Christians, the Japanese military administration closed and even demolished churches in places like Mowewe, Sanggona, Kasupute (Nohu-nohu), and Konawe villages, for instance. During the Japanese occupation, the following seventeen churches were torn down: Ko'eono, Tetengguluri, Pu'u Duria, Watumokala, Roraya, Lalosongi, and Buke Churches in South Kendari; Asao, Lalonggowuna (Para'una), Lamokuni, Wawo'one, and Tanggobu Churches in Konawe; Wiau (North Asera), Belalo, and Toreo Churches in North Konawe; Woi'iha and Tirawuta (near Poni-Poniki) Churches in Kolaka. In Moronene area, namely in Wububangka, Gambere, Pusu'ea, Tari-tari, Laloa, Rarongke'u Rompu-rompu, Liano, Bamba'ea, and Matabundu, were also destroyed. Besides churches, the Japanese also tore down missionaries' houses and put everyone who lived there into prison (Boonde, 2016; Jongeling, 1976; Limba et al., 2014; Vonk, 1937).

Zending Education

In the early days of the Japanese occupation in Southeast Sulawesi, education did not run as it should because the Japanese were still focusing their military campaign on driving away the Dutch in order to take total control of Southeast Sulawesi. Until 1942, there were 27 *sekolah rakyat* (people's schools) and 3 middle schools in Kendari, Southeast Sulawesi. The schools were taught by 40 teachers in total. These schools were closed and most of the teachers, many of whom were Dutch, were arrested. After they had taken control of the entire Southeast Sulawesi, the Japanese military administration began their education program for native people. The Japanese education policy covered three main points: (1) all *zending* and public schools previously run by the Dutch Indies were to be taken over by the Japanese; (2) teachers were to be paid and strictly controlled by the Japanese administration; and, (3) Christian priests had to choose either to teach in school or perform services in church (interview with Emeritus Reverend F. N. Boonde on 15 October 2017). Under this policy, former Dutch-run schools were reopened and the Japanese education program began. In addition, the Japanese also opened 38 new people's schools, 3 more middle schools, and 1 teacher education school. The Japanese, however, did not impose any significant changes on former Dutch-run schools. Only their names were changed. *Volksschool* (People's School) became *Futsu U Kogakko* (length of study: three years) and *Vervolgschool* (Preparatory School) became *Jokyu Kogakko* (length of study: six years). As for the *Cursus Volks Onderwijzer* (Teacher Education School) in Bau-Bau (Buton), it was renamed *Kiyoin Yoseiso*. When the Japanese opened this school in 1944 in Wawotobi, 75 students (about 30

of them were female) were enrolled and educated to become school teachers. In the meantime, all *zending* schools had been closed and taken over by the Japanese military.

The Japanese school curricula did not differ much from the former Dutch curricula, except for the inclusion of Japanese language subject, which started to be taught in people's schools. Japanese became the language of instruction at school and school teachers were therefore required to have a certain level of Japanese language proficiency. To measure teacher's Japanese language proficiency, they had to take a regular test, of which, the level depended on the grade they taught. Teachers who qualified would receive an additional benefit added to their monthly salary.

Another characteristic of the Japanese schools was the introduction of art and physical education. Every morning before school started students had to perform *taiso* (morning gymnastics exercise), a dance, or songs to spark a fighting spirit in them. The basic principle of the Japanese educational style was the concept of *kinrohosi*, or doing things together. As a result of the Japanese school curricula, school children became gradually uprooted from their native culture. Only Tolaki traditional *molulo* dance and Muna *kantola* song were allowed to be performed on various occasions (Bhurhanuddin et al., 1979; Tamburaka, 2004).

On the one hand, the number of people's schools increased. On the one hand, however, their quality was no better than that of the former Dutch schools. Quality of education during the Japanese occupation was very poor because for the Japanese ruler, the goal of the education system they imposed was to promote the values and spirit of Japaneseness and make the students physically healthy and strong so that they could be mobilized for the purpose of the Pacific War. In order for the students to better internalize this spirit of Japaneseness, they were prohibited to speak in their mother tongue during the learning process at school. No school taught the subject of religion because it was prohibited by the Japanese military administration. Only Shinto teachings were allowed at schools. Despite the increasing number of schools, people were not really educated. As part of their propaganda, the Japanese required every school to have a garden to improve students' skill, but the actual reason behind this requirement was that the Japanese needed school gardens as a source of logistics for their military personnel (Konggosa, t.t.: 120; Jong, 2010: 107). To ensure that education served the Japanese authority's goals, every facility or equipment that did not contribute to the attainment of these goals, including religious books, documents or archives related to Tolaki traditional customs, and copies of local translation of the Bible, were all burnt (Jongeling, 1976: 9; Paulus, 1988: 10).

For Christians, the taking over of former *zending* schools by the Japanese was already a hard blow. *Zending* schools were established to spread Christianity and strengthen the faith of newly converted Christians. With all *zending* schools closed, students could not learn religion

at school because anything that had to do with religion was now not allowed. Even if there was a *zending* school still operating, the Japanese administration would not extend subsidy to it. Therefore, a *zending* school had to be fully independent to survive. In reality, no surviving *zending* school was able to run independently and consequently, learning process could not proceed ideally as expected. Many gospel teachers quit their job because members of their congregation could not collect money to cover the teachers' costs of living. The lack of weekly and monthly donations from the congregation also contributed to the deterioration of their worship values. *Zending* schools failed in their mission. Fewer and fewer people were baptized. Between 1943 and 1949, only 328 people were baptized in the entire service area of Southeast Sulawesi (Anonymous, 1986; Jong, 2010; Jongeling, 1976).

Decline in Christian Population

The adoption of the Japanese military administration policy to shut down *zending* schools correlated with the decline in Christian population. However, this decline could not entirely be attributed to the discontinuation of *zending* schools. It could be proposed that there was also an internal problem among young Christians in Southeast Sulawesi that contributed to the decline. The issue surfaced when in October 1946 a meeting was held in Lambuia. In the meeting, the parish teachers who were present complained that other church leaders were too yielding toward the Japanese and local customary leaders. As a result, churches lost their identity and sense of direction and were eventually unable to develop the way they did during the Dutch colonial era. Another internal problem was the rejection of Christian youths against Boonde's and Ndabio's leadership, which according to many, was irreplaceable. The situation culminated when all parish teachers and other church clerics refused to do any service to their congregation members if they were not paid.

The decline in Christian population during the Japanese occupation was very significant compared to the total Christian population during the Dutch era. Between 1916 and 1942, NZV was able to convert about 10% of the total population in Tolaki and Moronene. This was an achievement in its own way, for Southeast Sulawesi was then both a political border zone and a site of competition among different religious groups. Adherents of different religions ventured to spread their religion in Southeast Sulawesi because there were many indigenous people in the deeper interior areas who still adhered to ancestral animistic/dynamistic beliefs. What the *zending* organization NZV achieved in Southeast Sulawesi was therefore an extraordinary accomplishment considering that they had failed in their missionary venture in West Java (Velthoen, 2003: 207). Christian population in Southeast Sulawesi exceeded 10% of the total population because Catholic missionaries were also targeting the people in this peninsula. Until the end of 1942, about 7,000 people had been converted to Christianity (Aritonang, 2006; Jongeling, 1976).

The success of Christian missions in Southeast Sulawesi was also indicated by the opening of several facilities in the region. Until 1940 this included, 4 polyclinics, 23 sub-polyclinics, 28 people's schools, 1 HIS (Hollandsch-Inlandsche School, Dutch Elementary School for Indigenous Indonesians), 3 normal schools (*normaalschool*), 2 theological schools, and 104 gospel service posts. These *zending* educational institutions created a pool of human resources. In total, 8,089 people finished elementary school education, 37 people became elementary school teachers, and 65 people became parish/gospel teachers who then baptized 6,015 people while 3,235 more people were pending for baptism. In addition, the *zending* mission had extended its reach to almost the entire interior of Southeast Sulawesi, including over one hundred villages inhabited by indigenous people. During the period, Protestantism achieved considerably good growth and development (Gepsultra, 1986: 3-4).

The success of the *zending* organization, especially during the Dutch colonial era, to Christianize the people in the interior Southeast Sulawesi was an outstanding achievement. It was a historical fact that the mission was met with a lot of obstacles, particularly from Muslims, whose missionary work also targeted the same people in the same interior areas. The interior areas of Southeast Sulawesi were contested by Christian and Muslim missionaries because the indigenous Tolaki people who inhabited the areas were still adhering to their ancestral traditional belief, worshipping deities called *Sangia* (Jong, 2010; Jongeling, 1976; Treffers, 1914: 17). One of the factors that determined the success of Christianization was that the social, educational, and health work of the missionary organization were considered so successful that the local people eventually accepted most of the *zending* missionaries assigned there. Their acceptance among the indigenous people was the main key to the success of the *zending* missionary work in the interior of Southeast Sulawesi (Anonymous, 1959: 11).

The Japanese occupation period saw the gradual decline of the Christian mission. This was due to the Japanese military administration's policy, which did not support the *zending* mission and even considered the mission organization an enemy, a surviving legacy of the Dutch. No valid quantitative data could be found concerning the number of Christian populations during the Japanese occupation. However, it is valid to say that the *zending* mission did not work as well as it had during the Dutch colonial era. It was only in 1957, during the 1st Synod Convention, that the statistics of the Christian population in Southeast Sulawesi were made public. As reported in the Convention, the population of Christians at that time was 3,000 (Boonde, 2016). Thus, considering that in 1942 there were in total 8,000 Christians, baptized and otherwise, then within 13 years, there was a decline of 62.7% in the Christian population in Southeast Sulawesi.

The repressive policy caused a drastic fall in the population of Christians in Southeast Sulawesi, which was a stark contrast compared the golden era of the Dutch *zending* mission. Many Christians were killed, had to leave Southeast Sulawesi, or converted back to Islam.

Conclusion

The Japanese occupation in Southeast Sulawesi brought significant impacts on the Christian population. The Japanese occupation lasted for only a short period, yet, the Japanese policy and attitude toward the *zending* mission caused local Christians a lot of sufferings. Killings, destruction of churches, and other forms of terror put the Christian population under a very difficult pressure. The Japanese military administration strictly banned Christian worship because any form of ritual was considered a Dutch legacy and therefore should be prohibited. The Japanese considered themselves collectively as a “big brother” for Muslims and adherents of other religions, but the same attitude was not extended to Christians.

As a result of the Japanese policy, the development of Protestantism in Southeast Sulawesi came to a stagnation and even decline. All assets and facilities belonging to the *zending* organization, including polyclinics and schools, were confiscated or taken over by the Japanese. When the Japanese took over *zending* schools, the local Christians lost their foothold. The *zending* schools, which had for some time served as an institution of Christian mission, were closed down, taken over by the Japanese military and no religious subject was allowed. These former *zending* schools could no longer serve the function for which they had originally been established. The repressive Japanese policy toward Christians caused Christian population in Southeast Sulawesi to drastically decline in number. This was a stark contrast compare to the situation during the Dutch colonial period. Many Christians were killed, had to leave Southeast Sulawesi, or converted back to Islam.

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- Pendeta Emeritus Simon Karel. Born in 1939. Address: Kelurahan Doule Kecamatan Rumbia Kabupaten Bombana. Interviewed on 17 January 2017.