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Idols and Art: Missionary Attitudes toward Indigenous Worship and the Material Culture on Nias, Indonesia, 1904–1920

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Missionary efforts on the Indonesian island of Nias began in the early nineteenth century. The French Catholic Church had attempted to establish a mission station there in 1832, but failed. In 1865, the German Rhenish Missionary Society initiated Protestant missionary activities on the island, but made very slow progress in its efforts until the end of the nineteenth century. In the first decades of the twentieth century the Christianization of Nias' people, which was supported by the Dutch colonial government, intensified, resulting in a mass-conversion from 1916 to 1930 what became known as the "Great Repentance" movement.¹ Today, more than 90 percent of Nias' population are Christian, mainly Protestant.

The conversion to Christianity was linked to a reinterpretation of indigenous worship practices and cultural norms by the missionaries. The key question to be explored in this paper is how the missionaries dealt with the rich world of artifacts on Nias during the period of early evangelization. Their approach to the material culture, in particular wooden and stone statuary, is marked by points of conflict and difference but also by points of convergence and appraisal. Indigenous figures connected to what they identified as "idolatry"—as a focus of the monotheistic polemic—were destroyed and violated by the missionaries, as a means to eradicate spirit worship and to disparage ancestral beliefs. Other images, however, were divested of religious significance or given a new Christian one. These became works of art worthy of safeguarding as collectors' items or were relabelled as profane monuments. Cult images were placed in museums, which became new "sanctuaries." The most obvious interreligious encounter happened when native megalithic sites were matched with Christian graves and the death rituals were transformed to become acceptable to Christian doctrines. Following David Morgan, I argue that as a subject matter, the study of visual culture is a means to analyze social relations, acts of seeing and perceptions by using all imagery regarded as evidence for explanation.² In fact, from the

1970s theoretical reflections of art historians have advanced the question of how images participate in the social construction of reality. This visual field was discovered by other disciplines dealing with a broader range of artifacts moving beyond artistic and stylistic questions. The study of images and visual practice in recent years has substantially contributed to the understanding of religion and missionary history, as well as the imagery of Orientalism.³

One perspective from which to explore the initial period on Nias, when the new religion continued to be accepted, is provided by mainly unpublished sources of the German missionary Eduard Fries, who spent nearly 16 years on the island, from 1904 until 1920. Fries was a prolific author, having written more than five hundred private letters and 65 circulars which were published as circulars from 1903 to 1914 for a rising audience of nearly three hundred subscribers. He also left a legacy of 140 drawings and 20 maps of Nias and a few of Sumatra.⁴ His biography is a valuable case study of the ambiguous role in which he, as an actor, is confronted with the otherness of an alien culture, while at the same time he is part of the self-initiated transformation process. In the course of his work, the conversion experience provided him with a deeper, though ambivalent understanding of the local culture.

Eduard Fries' life

Eduard Fries was born in 1877 in Barmen, northwest Germany. His motivation in becoming a missionary was molded by his upbringing. His father had been a teacher, and later the director of the August Hermann Francke Foundation in Halle. Later heading the East Indian Missionary Society also had founded the oldest showroom of ethnography and natural science in Germany, which Fries often visited.⁵ Unlike many of his missionary contemporaries, Fries gained an academic education extended by a missionary training program. From 1895–1899, he studied theology at four different German universities. In 1902, he then became a member of the Rhenish Missionary Society. Fries left one year later to travel to the Netherlands' East Indies where he stayed with his missionary relatives on Sumatra. In 1904, he arrived on Nias, where he remained for the next 16 years, during which time he also married and fathered eight children. After starting the first mission station in the interior of Nias in Sifaoro'asi, Fries then moved east in 1913 to Ombölata where he started educating local priests. Elected as the head of the Protestant mission on Nias he coordinated the missionary work on the island. In 1913, the Protestants maintained 13 missionary stations with 118 branches and 135 schools.⁶ Fries also engaged in teaching new skills, educating illiterates, providing medical treatment, recording ethnographic observations, and conducting translations. In 1920, Fries returned to Germany for the first time after 17 years. Despite his intention to return to Nias, he accepted an appointment to become the director of the Rhenish Missionary Society in Barmen. Fries passed away two years later in 1923.

Expanded meanings of Christianity

There were many ways of conceiving the encounter between white missionaries and natives.⁷ The European imagination was illustrated on the cover of a posthumous account of Fries' life published in 1925. In this picture, the missionary is dressed in a white suit and is facing a local chief with his son, both of whom are wearing traditional clothes. The golden headgear, the dagger and the *kalabubu* (necklace) characterize the latter as a headhunter and chief. The choice of contrasting colors alludes to an unequal relationship. Though the German painter Georg Röder (1867–1958) had some ethnographical knowledge of Nias, details like the facial features, the curly hair, and the dark skin recall general stereotypes of the exotic native. The lack of cultural understanding is also obvious in his portrayal of the missionary standing with his hands on his hips, a gesture which is regarded as highly offensive in Indonesia (see Figure 5.1).

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For Fries, Christian mission and the benefits of superior European civilization were one and the same. In this sense, Christianization involved creating a religious identity connected to a distinctive set of dispositions like habits or outer appearance. For men, being “tidily dressed and clean” meant not chewing betel nut, having short hair, and wearing either a *sarong* (Javanese wraparound skirt) or Western clothes and shoes.⁸ From Fries' perspective, physical appearance connoted mental and moral constitution. This moral constitution was itself inseparable from culture, of which European civilization was considered by most missionaries to be the pinnacle. Fries was charged with guiding the underdeveloped to a higher cultural level. His work on Nias, however, was two-fold. First, Fries spread Christianity as a means to civilize the so-called primitive. Secondly, impelled by a sense of moral obligation, he also strove to reduce poverty and backwardness. The missionaries set up the first primary schools and other educational programs on Nias. Through his missionary and development work, Fries aimed to strategically “twist the ‘savage’ around his small finger” as he put it.⁹ Again, the asymmetrical relationship between the knowledgeable Westerner and the naive non-Westerner becomes obvious in this statement. In Fries' usage of group labels such as natives, the Asian, and the Oriental lies the danger in generalizing specific phenomenon from Nias, which further emphasizes stereotypes of the typical Asian or the typical European. Such binary oppositions are based on assumptions of inequality. As such, he was convinced that the “serious and rational” European character sharply contrasts to the “unplanned and unstable” one of the Nias people due to their lack of ambition, diligence, and steadiness.¹⁰ These rather Germanic and bourgeois values illustrate Fries' moral outlook on life (see Figure 5.2).

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Beside the transmission of a Western cultural ideal, the Christianity spread by Fries' mission also included a material side. The missionaries distributed material bait in the form of Western goods, a common practice used by the clergy in other regions as well. Fries generously distributed tobacco, Western clothes, money and, most importantly medicine, which he obtained for free from



Figure 5.1 How the encounter of Eduard Fries and the Nias people was imagined. (Source: Gottfried Simon, *Eduard Fries*, Barmen: Missionshaus, 1925).

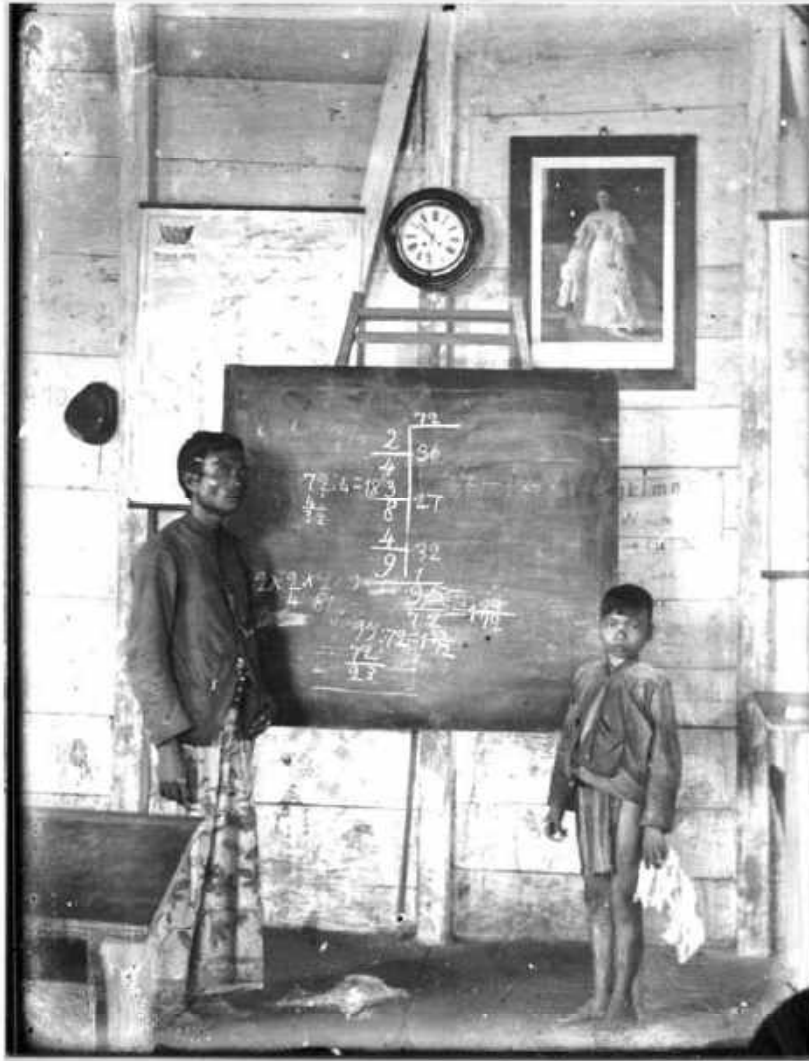


Figure 5.2 Missionary school on Nias. The picture of Queen Wilhelmina points to the fact that the Dutch government funded the education. Newly introduced are the clock on the wall and the Javanese *sarong* worn by the Nias teacher (©VEM 000908-0326).

the Dutch colonial office. The people of Nias were not only eager to gain material profit, but from their perspective, the gifts from the missionary also established a reciprocal transaction. Fries gives an example of this economy of exchange: For their starting friendship the local expected a bond to be returned by Fries who gave him an image of a church in return. This present allowed the local to enter into a relationship with the missionary.¹¹ Indeed, the exchange of goods has been recognized since the 1920s by anthropologists in Southeast Asia as an important custom demonstrating mutual interest and creating a foundation for reciprocal and long-binding obligations.¹²

The medical treatment provided by Fries and his fellow missionaries attracted large numbers of people. The ability to heal was itself interpreted as an indicator of Fries' personal power. He soon became regarded as a charismatic authority with extraordinary abilities, elevated to a status similar to that of the traditional healers, whom he would eventually replace. Quoting a local, Fries reported that some thought that he could decide matters of life and death because of a "death medicine" (an anaesthetic), which allows one "to ascend peacefully to heaven."¹³ They also, however, feared him. On one occasion, Fries was asked to leave a traditional ceremony—even though this request seriously offended hospitality—because the power of his God was believed to harm the old ghosts.¹⁴ Locals also ascribed a talismanic value to Western knowledge, specifically the written word. As the great majority of Nias people were illiterate, many focused on the "enigmatic writing of the white people" or the bible, his "omniscient book" to decide about wrong and right in order to find crime or to use it for condemnation reveal their belief of power in the written word shortly before the shift from a society of oral traditions to fixed scripture begun.¹⁵

In his 16-year stay on Nias, Fries went through a number of phases in which he changed views. Initially driven by a sense of adventure, he explored the island with a Dutch official. The travel accounts and maps he created during these first two years passionately depict the new environment and reveal his admiration of an exotic world. The most important objective for his start was to get closer to the indigenous population and gain greater insights into their culture. In this regard, he admitted with self-irony that some of his approaches (such as participation in ritual feasts) were, strictly speaking, counter to Protestant notions of decency.¹⁶ Half a year passed and Fries entered a period of self-doubt as a missionary. His self-confidence seemed to fade during this stage as he searched for his own way of proselytizing. These doubts become clear when he was puzzled by the Nias people who stared or laughed at him like a beast in the zoo, or when villagers fell asleep, chatted, or had a look of lethargy or ignorance on their faces during prayer.¹⁷ He questioned his own competence and strived to find out what locals expected from him.¹⁸ After the arrival of his wife on Nias in September 1905, Fries began a period of acculturation. At this point, Fries and his wife moved to a new mission house in Sifaoro'asi, and his numerous pictures of this new setting reflect Fries' desire to achieve continuity and security. He also started gaining personal authority in his conversion experience. After more

than four years in the tropics, Fries finally began to describe Nias as his new home, a place in which he felt integrated into the community.¹⁹ During this phase, Fries took a rather progressive and self-critical direction, going so far as to review his Christian mission.

After spending an extended period of time in Nias, Fries came to develop an appreciation for local culture, and to view his original goal of Christian mission, with all its cultural aspects, with a degree of ambivalence. In 1907, Christianization of the local population has already gained 10,224 followers, a substantial increase from 8,360 in 1904.²⁰ Fries, however, remarked critically that contact with the Western world had also eroded unique traditional expressions of culture. As such, he began to call for an acknowledgment of the local heritage, even to defend traditional culture against Christian criticism:

Anyhow, it [indigenous music] concerns their songs, their joy, their property—people’s common heritage! Sure we should not half-heartedly compromise with paganism, but neither should one confuse customs and morality and with a misguided Puritanism steal a people’s spiritual property!²¹

In 1912, he expressed with regret that once warrior dances and recitals were performed at traditional feasts:

The primitive and wild Nias of the mountains, is—I dare to say—unfortunately quickly vanishing. I can not show the old “glory” of Nias to the young missionaries, who I will currently introduce into their work in Sifaoro’asi.²²

This nostalgic view alludes to the cliché of the “noble savage,” an image that mourns the culture that has been transformed or destroyed.²³ This perspective connects the process of acculturation with a melancholy aura. Fries’ enthusiasm for the unspoilt natives living in an island paradise is associated with the formerly highly regarded, proud and powerful Nias warriors. This romantic retrospect reflects well his own perception of the intercultural encounter as a process of “disenchanted” the exotic alien.²⁴

Iconoclasm: The power of wooden figures

Since the nineteenth century, the island of Nias was known for its headhunters and its material culture, both megaliths and wooden artifacts. Especially the skilfully made stone and wooden sculptures were (and remain) highly esteemed among collectors and museums in Europe or North America. The travel book of Paul Wirtz holds the enigmatic title “Nias, the island of idols.”²⁵ It is no small irony that this very combination of admiration and condemnation among missionaries contributed to the destruction of these artifacts. By the 1930s, most of these traditional sculptures had vanished from the island.²⁶

Wooden figures (*adu*) were important to native worship and were found in large numbers in all houses. The anthropomorphic figures varying in size from less than ten centimeters to more than two meters are seated, squatting or standing, as single images or vertically tied together. As part of the domestic space, the images were displayed in the interior or in front of the dwelling.²⁷ They represent two basic types, either protection against disease and harm or ancestor images to secure fertility and good fortune. Depending on their specific ritual function, the wooden images employed a certain iconography and different species of wood. Additionally, regional variations in style can be discerned.²⁸ The Nias pantheon consisted of a large and constantly increasing number of these wooden icons. In 1901, 127 different protecting deities were counted, while nearly 30 years later the number increased to 135.²⁹ Similarly, the variety of wooden ancestor figures also increased to several hundreds in the early twentieth century (see Figure 5.3).³⁰

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The missionaries recognized the importance of these icons to indigenous ancestral worship, and condemned all wooden figures as an embodiment of superstition and idolatry. They believed in purifying houses by removing the images. Since the last quarter of the nineteenth-century missionaries were energetic in the destruction of these images, either personally or by persuading the Nias people to destroy them as proof of their obedient conversion or as precondition for the development of a cooperative relationship between the local aristocrats and the missionaries.³¹ Initially, the rejection of the wooden images was a form of theatre that accompanied conversion. The missionary Heinrich Sundermann (1849–1919) performed baptisms by praising God and kneeling in front of the piled wooden sculptures which would later be set alight.³² Over time, this theatrical aspect became more important and elaborate. Along with the removal of the sculptures, processions, and feasts were organized to enforce the missionaries' authority.³³ In a manner similar to local feasting practices, this spectacle included the distribution and consumption of pork, which has great ritual significance on Nias and elsewhere in Southeast Asia.³⁴ In 1901, a missionary described passionately:

We started with chants, recitation of the Ten Commandments and prayers. With hatches and knives, bigger and smaller idols were chopped off. Then I threw the first idol down the deep slope in front of the house with the words: "The Lord is God and not the idols." And then others followed, numberless, more than thousand pieces followed.³⁵

The iconoclasm of missionaries was both an act of purification and a ceremonial ritual, a dramatic spectacle accompanied by litanies and hymns. It also was a measure of missionary success; in 1930, the missionary Johannes Noll (1869–1954) proudly claimed that he had cleared a house of 2000 "idols."³⁶ In fact, the power of the images had direct influence on the missionaries that they not only banned the figures, but also fiercely damaged and destroyed them. Yet,



Figure 5.3 Wooden protecting and ancestor images displayed in a Nias house of the early twentieth century (©VEM 000908-0210).

by the ceremonial element involved in their destruction also illustrates that for the missionaries themselves, these were more than material objects. In their enthusiasm to erase irrational image worshipping practices, the missionaries performed an image cult of their own. The same trial of power to persuade converts of the superiority of the Christian faith was exemplified in 1908, when the missionary Johannes Bieger (1877–1967) cut down the sacred tree in Central Nias, which marked the place of origin for the Nias people where founder cult rituals were performed. By taking the first swing with an axe, the missionary not only proved his physical strength, but also the powers of his God over nature spirits which did not harm him.³⁷ Bieger himself believed that knocking down the magic tree could eradicate animist beliefs superstitious fear of the spirits.

A soft iconoclasm happened in the case of certain ancestor figures because the population was not easily convinced to destroy them.³⁸ David Morgan has used this rather poetic term when images were not physically destroyed but redeployed. Ancestor rituals were of fundamental importance to Nias society.³⁹ Ancestors were regularly honored by their descendants in ritual feasts because these spirits were believed to be able not only to contact but also to harm the living. Both the continuity of kinship beyond death, and the notion of exchange between the living and the dead were connected to the images. The images themselves were addressed by name and represented their family history. Some dated back to nine generations, meaning that they were at least 200 years old.⁴⁰ Recognizing the importance of these figures, some missionaries employed an alternate strategy of offering to bury ancestor images decently.⁴¹ This compromise behind this attempt to overcome the local resistance is significant, because by acknowledging notions of piety and obligation toward the images, the missionaries took their materiality seriously.

In addition to destruction by missionaries, the disappearance of traditional images was also advanced by the introduction of new Christian icons. Missionaries aimed to preach primarily through the study and teaching of the Bible, and as was common practice among other congregations, the Protestants on Nias used illustrated editions, which heightened the influence of instruction. Biblical images, of which the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus were most popular, entered the visual art of the island.⁴² These images visualized the Christian doctrine of eternal reward and punishment. The concept of a predictable moral world was a major motif for conversion, as it was regarded to overcome disorder and provide more security than the traditional religion.⁴³ The Nias missionaries believed that the ubiquitous fear of death, the threat of dark forces and terrifying ghosts created anxiety, uncertainty, and pressure on the locals. They may have been correct, that as the old images and their increasing number became signs of terror when their old significance faded, seen in the Christian idiom not as ancestors but as demonic. An alternative to the old affiliation became available with the Christian icons.

Furthermore, there was an economic factor: the wooden objects were expensive to keep. Due to the complexity of this image cult, the Nias people had no

direct access to these spirits but needed a specialist, the traditional priest and shaman, who served as a transmitter to the transcend world. These *ere*, as they were known locally, would choose the appropriate image for each ceremony. They also carved wooden images themselves and performed the ritual.⁴⁴ The ceremonies themselves were costly, requiring gold offerings and/or animal sacrifice, in addition to a regular payment of rice to the *ere* from each family. These costs were one main reason why the traditional priests began to lose authority as they competed with the Christian clergy who offered their services nearly for free.⁴⁵ The destruction of the demanding wooden gods was sometimes not even connected to conversion, although missionaries were still happy to claim it as a success.⁴⁶ When more and more people converted, social pressure finally, in the late 1920s, put the production of traditional wooden images to an end.⁴⁷

Cult objects become art

The so-called Ethical Policy of the Dutch colonies during the early twentieth century introduced a higher evaluation of indigenous cultures. The colonial administration in the Indonesian archipelago aimed to develop education, medical services, and other infrastructural improvements for the natives while justifying a reinforcement of imperialism.⁴⁸ As part of this new moral vision, an order was issued in 1904 to safeguard culture and monuments in the Netherlands' East Indies. In 1906, the Dutch government entrusted the education on Nias to the Rhenish Missionary Society. These changes were portended already in 1902, when a controversy arose in Germany concerning the active role of missionaries in destroying traditional artifacts on Nias.⁴⁹ The critique addressed two points. First, valuable *ethnographica* for museums were being lost. Second, a profound ethnological knowledge for missionaries was urgently needed in order to raise more awareness toward indigenous cultures. In this interdenominational discussion about conflicting claims to cultural property, it becomes obvious that ritual objects were now being regarded, at least by some, as works of art. The categories about what of native material culture is worth preserving were redrawn along values like antiquity, craftsmanship, and rarity. Later, starting in the 1920s, artists and researchers openly criticized Protestant missionaries for systematically destroying the culture of Nias "in order to then sow the seeds of Christianity upon properly prepared soil."⁵⁰ Eventually, Nias artifacts would be recognized not merely as remnants of a disappearing culture, but as artistic objects in their own right, as sculptors like Jacque Lipchitz (1891–1973) or Isamu Nohuchi (1904–1988) sought in them their own new artistic solutions.⁵¹

Unlike other missionaries, Fries changed his perception toward the indigenous objects during his stay on Nias by discerning artistic qualities in the sculptures.⁵² Initially, he described the wooden images as simple, "dreadfully ugly" and crudely carved.⁵³ Wooden figures or smaller ritual objects were removed by Fries himself or at his bidding by the Nias people, as a proof of their conversion.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, he would still depict an ancestor figure of stone as an art object

placed in a decorative frame. Writing in 1910, he even esteemed the wooden sculptures and discerned their powerful appeal, the artistic skill and realism.⁵⁵ Although writing in a missionary journal, Fries here explicitly refers to criteria esteemed by the contemporary German art movement in Berlin. Indicative of his newly gained interest in the local sculpture is his drawing of the same year showing a tall *adu horö*, a forked wooden figure, from Börönadu which was intended to protect against murder or to give success in head hunting (see Figure 5.4).⁵⁶

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Fries' creative role as a painter certainly raised his sensitivity to local material culture, but not all of its manifestations were considered worth saving. Fries perceived art categories from what had already become a rather conservative perspective by making the distinction between highly esteemed true art and lower craft, meaning folk art. He did not have a great interest in the latter, the local objects mainly intended for everyday use like pottery, weaving, or reed-plaiting, although these were also disappearing. In the course of the early twentieth century, these handmade domestic goods, which were mainly produced by women, were replaced by manufactured products from the West. Fries and his wife raised girls' education by providing schooling, but they did not promote the retention of traditional skills and local handicrafts. Instead, they offered courses in bible study, as well as typically "womanly" tasks such

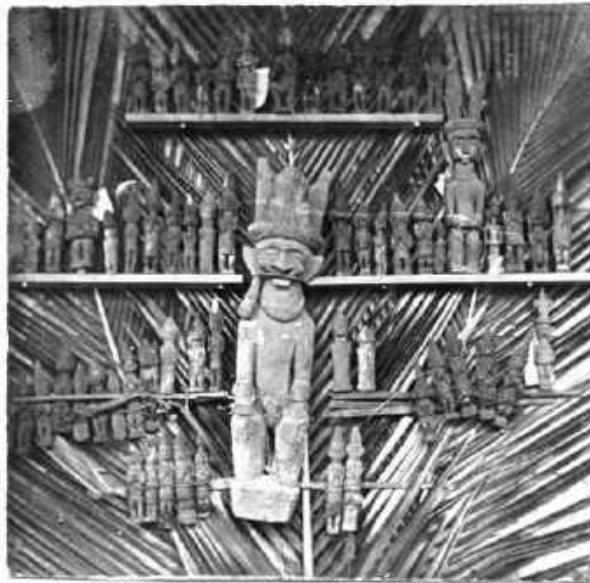


Figure 5.4 An ancestor figure of stone exemplifies Nias art drawn by Eduard Fries in 1906 (Humburg et al., 2003: fig. 29).

as nursing, and sewing.⁵⁷ Overall, neither Fries nor his fellow missionaries did object to the loss of native craft traditions.⁵⁸

At this same time, other clergymen encountered the material culture of Nias by collecting and selling tribal artifacts. With the exception of a few clergymen collectors like Dutch missionaries L. Borutta (1907–1920 on Nias) and W. L. Steinhart (from the early 1920s on the Batu Islands South of Nias), most of these collectors remained anonymous. The Ethnological Museum of Berlin has got various objects from the Rhenish Missionary Society donated by Friedrich Kramer (1873–1908 on Nias). Government officials, ethnographers, adventurous travelers also supported the export of artifacts and supplied to the international art market. As a result, the cult objects were re-evaluated in monetary terms as art and collector's pride.⁵⁹ Despite his interest in these objects, Fries himself was not a very passionate collector. Back to Germany in 1920, he only took a few souvenirs or presents with him—some small-sized ancestral figures, a few weapons, and some household items.⁶⁰

Fries did, however, support the export of Nias objects by providing them to collectors. He was often asked from Europe to send not only rare objects, but also weapons, botanical and geological specimens.⁶¹ Items from Nias were collected not only for scholarly reasons, but also because of their rarity and cultural value. The diversity of goods which were considered collectible items indicated an increasing interest in the non-Western world. Fries realized the price gap of two or three times the purchase price of *ethnographica* when sold to European collectors.⁶² Museums like the Prince Hendrik Maritime Museum in Rotterdam directly contacted missionary societies to collect ritual objects on their behalf and send them to Europe. For such an institution, the missionaries were ideal providers of first-hand material, as they had a distinct knowledge of the field. The museum reimbursed the package and transport costs only. Fries, however, supported the museums by asking his fellow missionaries on the island to search for representative artifacts:

Rare objects from Nias: As there will be opportunity enough in the coming year to convey with us a crate of adoe [wooden figures] etc., I would request that Brothers be of assistance to us so that the Museum Prins[e] Hendrik has no reason to complain of shortage of Nias idols. I am willing to collect the objects, which really have to represent a *true value*.⁶³

By emphasizing the “true value” of the requested wooden figures in this note Fries, head of the Nias mission at that time, is challenged by the idea of preserving worthy and rare objects from his island for posterity in museums. In this particular case it is not clear whether they gained a profit, but regardless of whether they did or not, the missionaries now had a further directive to obtain traditional images for museums.

Objects sent back to Europe by missionaries became the basis for ethnographic collections, and a tangible form of illustrative education. Cultural

artifacts were used to prepare future generations of missionaries for their field-work and to familiarize them with their new environment, documenting daily life in the working fields and demonstrating the efforts of their mission. Indigenous items were displayed in public as a form of advertisement and to encourage continued support and monetary funds from congregations. With the rise of mass media and mass consumerism in the early twentieth century, the exhibitionary quality of these ethnographic displays had a distinctly imperial quality, a point also raised in this volume by Nancy Stalker.⁶⁴

Fries' congregation, the Rhenish Missionary Society, in Barmen had been collecting *ethnographica* since 1832. The objects came from its missionary fields in Namibia, Tansania, Ruanda, China, and in Indonesia, namely from the Batak region on Sumatra, from Mentawai, Enggano, and Borneo, as well as Nias. The absence of a systematic museum policy resulted in an amalgamous collection of which today about 4,200 objects are left. Many of the pieces were originally souvenirs brought back by missionaries and later donated to the museum, and not surprisingly, the range of the collection is broad and the quality of the pieces is rather diverse. The Missionary Society's ambition was not simply "to show the superstitions of the peoples" in their mission fields.⁶⁵ In 1832, the director Ludwig van Rohden stated that the intention of the museum was to proudly display its "trophies over heathendom" as well as "curiosities" and "interesting objects from the pagan world" such as idol images which were seen as "defeated enemies" a frankly imperial endeavor, complete with military rhetoric of evangelical conquest.⁶⁶ The military rhetoric of their mission highlights their ambitious claim. In 1912 and in 1914, the institution presented its objects as a propagandistic spectacle. As part of their agenda ethnographic exhibitions in the town hall or art museums were shown including numerous Nias pieces. Up to 3,000 daily visitors were recorded, an indication of the rising interest in ethnographic collections for which the missionary museum was also competing.⁶⁷ These exhibitions targeted the youth (and their parents) for moral and religious instruction. At the same time, this event gave a central place to the representations of their work abroad in order to encourage continued public support. The exhibition catalogue of 1913 distinguished eight different types of cultural objects from Nias, of which many are lost today:

- a) a big furnished room of a house with ancestral figures and arms.
- b) an *osale nadu* [highlighted by the author], a small temple of the gods.
- c) model of a sacred chair for sacrifices.
- d) model of two burials also serving as place for sacrifices.
- e) music instruments: (gong, *aramba* [big gong, highlighted by the author] and priest's drums of different sizes)
- f) arms (shields, spears, swords, helmets)
- g) clothes for men and women (for warrior, chiefs, women of the chief, priests).
- h) work of pupils from the missionary schools.⁶⁸

The categorization and the items displayed lend insight to what of the material culture was of interest to the clergymen. Apart from their primary focus

on objects connected to traditional worship, other objects of daily life were selected to depict a fuller ethnographic setting. These were arranged according to the European gaze: Nias was presented as a place of ancestor and spirit worship and fierce warriors tempered by a growing Christian presence.⁶⁹ The ritual sculptures kept in the collection include some very fine pieces of Nias art, allowing the missionaries to preserve what they had enthusiastically destroyed in the country of origin. The museum for tribal art had become a sanctuary of Orientalism. To use the words of Edward Said, the museum was a “simulacrum of the Orient,” reproducing knowledge and the materiality of the Orient but according to Western perceptions.⁷⁰

Stone monuments connect the living and the dead

In addition to wooden icons, Nias was also covered in stone objects, ranging from figurative statues and pillars to the oversized chairs which were erected in public spaces. Regardless of their type, all these stone monuments had an important ritual function as a medium of memorialization. In central and southern Nias, a stone chair or pillar (*dare-dare*) would be erected during the secondary burial of a chief, as a memorial above the reburied skull.⁷¹ They served as testimony of the social worth of the deceased as well as the family.

Of special interest in this context are the anthropomorphic sculptures, monolithic pillars of up to three meters, which were omnipresent in the villages. These were commonly erected on two occasions. First, a figurative stone was placed whenever a village was founded or a new chief house was built. Its placement symbolized the founding of village community. Secondly, stones were erected as part of an *owasa*, a feast of merit, for a person of considerable reputation who was honored by the granting of a new name. The stone displayed the social and cosmic order of the Nias society, in particular the perpetuation of the family lineage of the erector and their political power. The carving and erecting of each type of stone required a full set of ceremonies: several hundred slaughtered pigs, offerings like gold, and, in South Nias, even a headhunt was requested.⁷² These events involved material resources, manpower, and social support in the community. The stones were the visual manifestation of ritual order and social identity (see Figure 5.5).⁷³

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Unlike the wooden images, which for missionaries had obvious connotations of idolatry, stone monuments were not seen to be intrinsically in conflict with Christianity. Stone objects were rarely buried or removed when the chief converted.⁷⁴ The missionaries, including Fries, regarded these stones as primarily socio-political, therefore secular, monuments.⁷⁵ The fundamental difference between the wooden statues and the stone objects lies in their display; the first were part of the domestic, private space whereas the second erected at open squares or in front of the houses were part of the public or semi-public realm. In line with the modernist concept of religion, which confines it to the private space, the stone artifacts were not on the iconoclastic agenda of the mission. In



Eduard Fries: Ahnerfiguren vor einem Haus in Zeridhnia

Figure 5.5 Stone figure in front of a house in Hoeroena drawn by Eduard Fries in 1904.

(Source: Mai Lin Tjoa-Bonatz, „Der Maler. Der Blick auf das Fremde—Asienikonographie als Weg der Annäherung,“ in Martin Humberg, Dominik Bonatz and Claus Veltmann (eds): *Im „Land der Menschen.“ Der Missionar und Maler Eduard Fries und die Insel Nias* (Bielefeld: Verlag für Regionalgeschichte, 2003: 23-29): fig. 5.

1915, a missionary explained to young people in Germany that a stone figure on Nias demonstrates the richness and influence of the donor:

First, a lesson in idol appreciation. There is a large heavy one in front of the house, an ugly stone fellow. He is already visible from a long way off. And he is not even particularly large member of his type. There are even larger and even uglier ones. What is he doing in front of the house? Is he a guard, so that his haunting ghost is not entering the house? Actually he is only sitting there to show off. With what is he showing off? With the wealth and prestige of the owner of the house. To make such a stone figure is very costly. A person who can afford it must be very rich and gets more prestige among the people. When a stone is erected, a big feast is performed and many pigs are slaughtered.⁷⁶

Though called an “idol,” the missionary clearly does not consider it to have a religious function, and his primary concern is with the wasteful costs involved.

However, the stone figures were substantially religious. The material itself is highly symbolic, stone transmitting arguably sacred qualities of power,

hardness, persistence or irrevocability.⁷⁷ The real significance was the ritual function, especially its connection to ancestor worship in a hierarchical society with fierce competition among descent groups.⁷⁸ The ancestors provided protection, fertility and prosperity, good fortune, peace, welfare and blessings for the living, and the veneration of ancestors was the obligation of the whole family or clan.⁷⁹ For the Nias people, the erected stones offered a multitude of contexts, also serving as religious symbols in a way that answers both an individual emotional attachment and socio-political aspirations.

The apparent inconsistency in the Nias clergy's attitude of accepting the political-social act around the stone statuary, while ignoring the aspects related to ancestor worship was not always the case, and in some cases similar stone objects were condemned as idols. Among the Batak on Sumatra and the Toraja on Sulawesi, "pagan" funerary images made of stone were accepted in the Christian era because they were primarily seen as a means to emphasize bonds of an ethnic identity.⁸⁰ However, on Sumba, which is also famous for traditional stone-dragging ceremonies, the Church objected to the erection of megalithic tombs.⁸¹ The Catholics on Central Flores demolished ancestral stones but had to stop their activities thereafter.⁸²

On Nias, it was burial practices, rather than the stone objects themselves, which became the focus of controversy. Describing traditional funerary rituals, the pietistic missionaries criticized the wasteful costs of the opulent feasting during death ceremonies, which included recitations of laments and dancing.⁸³ They were bewildered by the highly emotional and the loud mourning, a habit which underlines the importance of visible social and ritual conduct of many Southeast Asian mortuary ceremonies, and contradicts the more silent death watch familiar to the Protestants. In fact, this perception draws attention to different ways of dealing with mortuary remains and the soul after death. According to the person's social strata, the corpse was either placed in a wooden coffin, tied to a wooden plank, or simply wrapped. Due to regional differences in mortuary traditions, in north and central Nias, the dead were buried in cemeteries, whereas in south Nias the corpses were placed on wooden substructures which were raised on stilts and covered by a roof.⁸⁴ The fact that the corpses were left to decay and the graves were not regularly visited contradicts the Christian significance of "eternal resting places" to be visited as places of contemplation and commemoration, and kept sacred in preparation for second coming of Christ. On Nias, the actual disposal of the physical remains of the deceased was not as significant as the transfer of the soul from the deceased to the wooden statues, which if interpreted as the physical abode of the spirit, could not be permitted by the Protestants. In contrast, the stone figures were understood simply as tomb stones, as memorials of the dead, and were completely acceptable.

A change in burial practice happened as well: The tomb with the deceased was placed close to the megalith in front of the house of the descendants. Following the argument of Dominik Bonatz the proximity of the stones to the family who had erected them was the major reason why among Christian converts also the

gravestone served to enhance public recognition by increasing prestige and status to the house owner.⁸⁵ He even goes further to assume that this closeness to the deceased could replace the disappearance of the wooden *adu*. As commemorative symbols, the erected stones were easily integrated into the Christian ritual system. Although the placement of stones originally had its own social significance, with the proximity to the family being a sign of status, when figurative stone sculptures were rewritten as grave markers, they came to delineate a Christian sepulchral space.⁸⁶ Although moving the burial site to inside the village contradicted public health policy rejecting graveyards in areas of human habitation, the colonial government did not object to this practice, prohibiting instead secondary mortuary rites and the usage of wooden substructures.

The form and iconography of the Christian gravestone or seat—both of which are made of stone or cement decorated with colorful tiles—visually recall earlier megalithic remains, and funerary iconography combines Christian and traditional Nias symbols. In the course of the twentieth century their image becomes more individualized. The graves get a more portrait-like accomplishment including the name and date of the deceased. The burial place became an important link to overcome the distance when a person has passed away. The place which is addressed—formerly the ancestor’s stone, nowadays the tomb—connects the living and the dead. In Christian households, portraits of the deceased are placed on the former ancestor’s altar, symbolizing the search for a continuous communication between the dead and the living (see Figure 5.6).

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Figure 5.6 A Christian grave next to the megalith in front of a house in Soganwunasi, Central Nias (Dominik Bonatz/Mai Lin Tjoa-Bonatz, 2000).

Concluding remarks

When they encountered the visual culture on Nias, missionaries created new meanings, while redirecting or subverting others. In the mission history of Nias, visuality seems to have been an important key medium of interaction. The role and function of the images mentioned in the paper are diverse. There are the attitudes and illustrations which missionaries took abroad. These images contradict with those used by indigenous believers. Traditional wooden sculptures were forbidden and denounced, as opposed to the stone monuments, which were permitted and redirected so as to have a Christian meaning. The iconoclastic practices of the Protestant missionaries from the beginning of their activities until the Second World War resulted in the destruction of much of the cultural heritage of Nias. The destruction of images was also fostered by sending indigenous objects back to the missionary societies where they were exhibited as counter-images in museums.

Notes

1. There are no figures available from 1916. The number of converts increased remarkably from 19,897 in 1915 to 87,780 in 1930 according to Fries' private notes in 1922. See the figures in Helga Kayser, *Aspekte des sozio-kulturellen Wandels auf Nias. Schul- und Gesundheitswesen der Rheinischen Mission 1865–1940* (Munich: Kommissionsverlag Klaus Renner, 1976): 195.
2. David Morgan, *The Sacred Gaze. Religious Visual Culture in Theory and Practice* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 2003): 33–34.
3. Timothy Mitchell, "Orientalism and the exhibitionary order," in Nicholas B. Dirks (ed.) *Colonialism and Culture* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1992): 289–318; Frances Gouda, *Dutch Culture Overseas: Colonial Practice in the Netherlands Indies, 1900–1942* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1995): 194–236; Morgan, *The Sacred Gaze*, 115–190; William B. Taylor, "Two shrines of the Cristo Renovado: Religion and peasant politics in late Colonial Mexico," *The American Historical Review* 110/4 (2006) <http://www.historycooperative.org/journals/ahr/110.4/taylor.html> (accessed May 1, 2006).
4. Mai Lin Tjoa-Bonatz, „Der Maler. Der Blick auf das Fremde – Asienikonographie als Weg der Annäherung,“ in Martin Humburg, Dominik Bonatz and Claus Veltmann (eds) *Im „Land der Menschen.“ Der Missionar und Maler Eduard Fries und die Insel Nias* (Bielefeld: Verlag für Regionalgeschichte, 2003): 23–29.
5. Martin Humburg, Dominik Bonatz and Claus Veltmann (eds) *Im „Land der Menschen.“ Der Missionar und Maler Eduard Fries und die Insel Nias* (Bielefeld: Verlag für Regionalgeschichte, 2003): n. 14.
6. Rudolf Wegner, „Fünfzig Jahre Missionsarbeit auf Nias.“ *Allgemeine Missionszeitschrift* May (1915): 476, 478.
7. Reimar Schefold, "Amiable savages at the doors of paradise: missionary narratives about the Mentawai Islands (Indonesia)," in Peter Kloos (ed.) *True Fiction. Artistic and scientific Representations of Reality* (Amsterdam: Free University Press, 1990): 21–34 and other postcolonial writers like John Comaroff and Jean Comaroff

- (*Of Revelation and Revolution. Christianity, Colonialism, and Consciousness in South Africa*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997, 63–165).
8. Eduard Fries, Selected papers in the circulars of the Rheinische Mission 23/1906, 17; Fries, circulars, 15/1910, 39.
 9. Fries, circulars, 1/1911, 10.
 10. Fries, circulars, 18/1905, 27; Fries, circulars, 1/1907–1908, 1; Fries, circulars, 3/1912, 18.
 11. Fries, circulars, 19/1905, 36.
 12. Marcel Mauss, „Die Gabe. Form und Funktion des Austausches in archaischen Gesellschaften,“ in Marcel Mauss (ed.) *Soziologie und Anthropologie*, vol. 1 (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1989 [1925]).
 13. Fries, circulars, 26/1906, 40–41.
 14. Fries, circulars, 29/1907, 21.
 15. Quotations are from Fries, circulars, 19/1905, 36; Fries, circulars, 26/1906, 39. Today the Bible is called *buku taroma li*, meaning “the book in which the spoken word has found its seat/place” (communication with J. M. Hämmerle, 2006).
 16. Fries (circulars, 32/1907, 44) describes his first visit to Central Nias of May 9, 1904.
 17. Fries, circulars, 19/1905, 33; Fries, circulars, 22/1905, 10.
 18. Fries, circulars, 17/1904, 22–23.
 19. Fries, circulars, 3/1908, 21.
 20. Kayser, *Aspekte*, 1976, 194.
 21. Fries’ passage from 1907, which implies that Fries was one of the less dogmatic figures on Nias, was cited by musicologist Jaap Kunst (*Indonesian Music and Dance. Traditional Music and its Interaction with the West. A Compilation of Articles* (1934–1952) originally published in Dutch, with biographical Essays by Ernst Heins, Elisabeth den Otter, Felix van Lamsweerde (Amsterdam: Royal Tropical Institute, 1994, 62)) in his lecture held at a Dutch missionary school in 1946 (Humburg et al., *Im „Land der Menschen,“* 2003, 100).
 22. Fries, circulars, 1/1912, 2.
 23. Gouda, *Dutch Culture*, 131.
 24. Max Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1980 [1921]): 308.
 25. Otto Wirz, *Nias, die Insel der Götzen* (Zürich/Leipzig: Orell Füssli, 1929).
 26. Jerome Feldman, “The adaptation of indigenous forms to western taste. The case of Nias,” in Paul Michael Taylor (ed.) *Fragile Traditions. Indonesian Art in Jeopardy* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994): 43 and Laurens Bakker, “At Nias or from Nias? Museum displays, national images and locality in a West Indonesian Island,” in *Performing Objects. Museums, Material Culture and Performance in Southeast Asia* (London: The Horniman Museum, 2004): 56 assume that most of the wooden images were already destroyed in the 1920s. Referring to the missionaries’ statements in this article this date seems too early.
 27. Wooden figures were placed only in public places for certain occasions e.g., in the case of an epidemic illness or for certain ancestor worshipping ceremonies (Fries, circulars, 4/1909, 30; Anonymous, “Von einem goldenen Jubiläum. Warum die Mission auf Nias den Boden so hart fand.“ *Der kleine Missionsfreund* 9/61 (1915): 134).
 28. Jerome Feldman, “Nias and its traditional sculptures,” in Jerome Feldman et al. (eds) *Volkenkundig Museum Nusantara Delft: Nias. Tribal Treasures. Cosmic Reflections in Stone, Wood and Gold* (Delft: Volkenkundig Museum Nusantara, 1990): 21–44.

29. A. Fehr, *Der Niasser im Leben und Sterben* (Barmen: Missionshaus, 1901): 49; Johannes Noll, „Die ersten Heidentaufen an der ehemaligen Stätte der Entstehung des niassischen Götzendienstes.“ *Berichte der Rheinischen Missionsgesellschaft* (1930): 303.
30. Ag. Møller, *Beitrag zur Beleuchtung des religiösen Lebens der Niasser* (Internationales Archiv für Ethnographie 32, 1934): 127.
31. Friedrich Kramer, „Der Götzendienst der Niasser.“ *Tijdschrift voor Indische Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 33 (1890): 473, 500; Fehr, *Der Niasser*, 14, 33, 48; Ulrich Rottschäfer, *Heinrich Rabeneck 1875–1939: Die Lebensgeschichte des Missionars aus Hiddenhausen* (Bielefeld: Verlag für Regionalgeschichte, 1989): 25.
32. Heinrich Sundermann, „Die Insel Nias und die Mission daselbst.“ *Allgemeine Missionszeitschrift* 12 (1885): 287.
33. August Lett, „Die falschen Götzen macht zu Spott.“ *Der kleine Missionsfreund* 1 (1892): 28–30.
34. Arlette Ziegler, „Festive areas. Territories and feasts in the South of Nias,” in Jerome Feldman et al. (eds) *Nias. Tribal Treasures. Cosmic Reflections in Stone, Wood and Gold* (Delft: Volkenkundig Museum Nusantara, 1990): 79–106.
35. O. Rudersdorf, *Berichte der Rheinischen Missionsgesellschaft* 59/5 (1902): 139–140.
36. Noll, „Die ersten Heidentaufen,“ 303.
37. Johannes N. Bieger, *Erlebnisse eines Missionars in 12jähriger Arbeit auf Nias und Sumatra* (Barmen: Missionshaus, 1916): 45–48.
38. The rejection of ancestor worship was a highly problematic field of practical importance for many other missionaries. Conflicts arose, for example, with the Toraja on Sulawesi (T. A. Volkman, „Mortuary Tourism in Tana Toraja,” in Rita Smith Kipp (ed.) *Indonesian Religions in Transition, Papers from the 10th Annual Indonesian Studies Conference, held at Ohio University in August 1982* (Tucson, Ariz.: The University of Arizona Press, 1987, 163), among the Jesuits in China (Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1993, n. 24), and the missionaries in Central Flores.
39. Morgan, *The sacred Gaze*, 129.
40. Kramer, „Der Götzendienst,“ 74.
41. Kramer, „Der Götzendienst,“ 72; August Lett, *Im Dienst des Evangeliums auf der Westküste von Nias*, vol. b: Aus den Tagen der Anfänge, 1901, 55–57.
42. According to Heinrich Sundermann (‐Die Insel,“ 283). See further investigations on the influence of the Catholics on visual arts after 1939 (Thomas M. Manhart, ‐A song for Lowalangi. The Interculturation of Catholic; Mission and Nias Traditional Arts with special Respect to Music.‑ Ph.D. thesis, National University of Singapore, 2004: ch. 4.2).
43. Religion as a means to overcome disorder, as mentioned by Clifford Geertz, was recently recaptured (Asad, *Genealogies*, 65; Clifford Geertz, ‐Religion als kulturelles System,“ in Clifford Geertz (ed.) *Dichte Beschreibung. Beiträge zum Verstehen kultureller Systeme* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1995 [1966]): 61–63; Karel A. Steenbrink, *Catholics in Indonesia. A documented History 1808–1900* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2003): 221–222.
44. August Lett, *Im Dienst des Evangeliums auf der Westküste von Nias*, vol. c: Ernste und heitere Erlebnisse. (Barmen: Missionshaus, 1901): 37–42; Fehr, *Die Niasser*, 48–51; Møller, ‐Beitrag,“ 122–123.
45. Each Christian family was required to pay only one Gulden annually, an amount that was estimated to be nominal and could be redeemed (Eduard Fries, ‐Gemeinderziehung und Kirchenzucht.‑ *Allgemeine Missionszeitschrift* 11 (1913): 495).

46. Sundermann ("Die Insel," 180, n. 2; Kramer, „Der Götzendienst," 500; Rudolf Wegner, *Die Erweckungsbewegung auf Nias* (Barmen: Missionshaus, 1924): 35.
47. Reinhold Mittersackschmöller (Zum Problem der Souvenir- und Touristenkunst aus ethnologischer Sicht. Fallbeispiel Nias/Indonesien. Ph.D. thesis, Universität Wien, 1988, 248) cites a passage from 1928 during which traditional figures became a symbol of shame.
48. Gouda, *Dutch Culture*.
49. H. S. "Missionsvandalismus auf Nias." *Globus. Illustrierte Zeitschrift für Länder- und Völkerkunde* 11 (1902): 179; Mundle, G. „Zur Nachricht „Missionsvandalismus auf Nias.“" *Globus. Illustrierte Zeitschrift für Länder- und Völkerkunde LXXXII/1* (1902): 280. The abbreviations H. S. may belong to the missionary Heinrich Sundermann who worked from 1876 to 1910 on Nias.
50. Citation from Jaap Kunst (Indonesian Music, 1994: 62). See also statements in the public press by the Dutch artist Rudolf Bonnet in 1931 (Raymond Corbey, "Iconoclasm and conversion. Ritual riddance on the Christian frontier in framing Indonesian realities," in Peter J. N. Nas, Gerard A. Persoon and Rivke Jaffe (eds) *Essays in Symbolic Anthropology in Honour of Reimar Schefold* (Leiden: KITLV Press, 2003, 119) or Jaap Kunst in 1939 (Music in Nias. *Internationales Archiv für Ethnographie* 38 (1939): 2, n. 9) and Peter Suzuki in 1959 and 1973 (The Religious System and Culture of Nias, Indonesia. Ph.D. thesis, University of Leiden. S'Gravenhagen: Excelsior, 1959, iii; "Autochthonous states of Nias, Indonesia, extinct or extant." *Bulletin of the International Committee on urgent anthropological ethnological Research* 15 (1973): 29). More generally: Gouda, *Dutch Culture*, 258, n.159.
51. Yoshiko Yamamoto provided these useful references (personal communication, 2005).
52. The early German missionaries rarely saw an aesthetic appeal of the local material culture. The exceptions were Heinrich Sundermann or August Lett (Sundermann 1891, 371; August Lett, *Im Dienst des Evangeliums auf der Westküste von Nias*, vol. a: Ein Vorbereitungs- und Reisejahr, 1901, 65, 73–74).
53. Fries, circulars, 1904, 389; Fries, circulars, 18/1906, 29.
54. Fries, circulars, 29/1907, 18–19; Fries, circulars, 1938, 11, 13; Johannes Warneck, *Eduard Fries. Das Leben eines deutschen Missionars* (Barmen: Missionshaus, 1949): 53; Johannes Maria Hämmerle, *Nias – eine eigene Welt, Sagen, Mythen, Überlieferungen* (Sankt Augustin: Academia, 1999): 330.
55. Referring to an account of the late 1910, which was published in the circular 1/Feb. (8) in 1911 (no page number).
56. Dominik Bonatz, „Niassisches Leben (damals und heute),“ in Humburg Martin, Dominik Bonatz and Claus Veltmann (eds) *Im „Land der Menschen.“ er Missionar und Maler Eduard Fries und die Insel Nias*. (Bielefeld: Verlag für Regionalgeschichte, 2003): fig. 6.
57. Fries, circulars, 23/1906, 16.
58. At the same time, other socio-political trends such as the loss of traditional feasting, the fading of former aristocratic prestige symbols or changing economic activities reinforced the decline of traditional handicrafts as has been described for South Nias. Yoshiko Yamamoto, "Craftsmanship amidst change in Southern Nias," in Tan Chee-Beng (ed.) *Sociocultural Change, Development and indigenous Peoples* (Suva, Fiji: University of the South Pacific, Institute of Pacific Studies, 1997): 115–144.
59. Reimar Schefold and Han F. Vermeulen (eds), *Treasure Hunting? Collectors and Collections of Indonesian Artefacts* (Leiden: Universiteit Leiden, 2002).

60. These objects are still kept in his family, to whom, in particular Dr. Martin Humburg, I owe him special thanks for providing me with unpublished material and information.
61. Humburg et al., *Im „Land der Menschen,”* 2003, 22, n. 14.
62. Fries, circulars, 2/1912, 7.
63. Fries, circulars, 18, 8.10.1919, RMG 1.408 (filed at the Vereinigte Mission Wuppertal-Barmen).
64. Mitchell, *Orientalism*, 1992; Bakker, At Nias.
65. Hetty Nooy-Palm, “Treasure hunters in the field. Collecting ethnographic artefacts in the Netherlands East Indies (1750–1940),” in Reimar Schefold and Han F. Vermeulen (eds) *Treasure Hunting? Collectors and Collections of Indonesian Artefacts* (Leiden: Universiteit Leiden, 2002): 53.
66. Reprinted in L. von Rohden, *Geschichte der Rheinischen Missionsgesellschaft* (Barmen: J.F. Steinhaus, 1856): 30; *Missions-Blatt* (21/Nov. 1860: no page number). I appreciate the assistance of Wolfgang Apelt, Julia Besten, and Folke Obermark-Stiller of the Vereinigte Evangelische Mission who gave me access to unpublished sources. The collection history of the museum is not yet written.
67. G. Mundle, *Wie es in Düsseldorf auf der Missionsausstellung war. Der kleine Missionsfreund* 7 (1914): 99.
68. 1913, RMG 1.212.
69. The explanation of a “temple” is misleading as it can be a place or a seat either made of wood or stone on which ancestor figures were placed, prayer, and sacrifices were performed (personal communication with J. M. Hämmerle, 2006).
70. Edward W. Said, *Orientalism. Western Conceptions of the Orient* (London: Penguin, 1995): 166.
71. Hämmerle, *Nias*, 379.
72. Ziegler, „Festive areas,” 84–85; Hämmerle, *Nias*, 350.
73. Dominik Bonatz, „Wandel einer Megalithkultur im 20. Jahrhundert (Nias/Indonesien).“ *Anthropos* 96 (2001): 1–14; Dominik Bonatz, “Megaliths on Nias: The retention of identity.” *Indonesia and the Malay World* 30/88 (2002): 253–276.
74. A stone was removed when the chief of Dahana/Tumöri converted (Heinrich Sundermann, „Die Mission auf der Insel Nias von 1884–1897.“ *Allgemeine Missionszeitschrift* 25 (1898): 457). A flat stone which was used during a tiger ritual was removed in Onohondrö (personal communication with J. M. Hämmerle, 2005).
75. Heinrich Sundermann, „Der Kultus der Niasser.” *Globus. Illustrierte Zeitschrift für Länder- und Völkerkunde* 24 (1891): 371; Thomas (1892, 4–5); See Fries’ note to his drawing (Bonatz, “Niassisches Leben,” 2003: fig. 10).
76. Anonymous, “Von einem goldenen Jubiläum. Warum die Mission auf Nias den Boden so hart fand.“ *Der kleine Missionsfreund* 9/61 (1915): 131–132.
77. Mircea Eliade, *Das Heilige und das Profane. Vom Wesen des Religiösen* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1990 [1957]): 137.
78. There is controversy over whether ancestral cults were connected to the stone monuments or whether they were erected only for the living. Arlette Ziegler and Alain Viaro deny any connection between ancestral cults and the stones. Arlette Ziegler and Alain Viaro, “Stones of power: Statuary and Megalithism in Nias,” in Jean Paul Barbier (ed.) *Messages in Stone. Statues and Sculptures from tribal Indonesia in the Collections of the Barbier-Mueller Museum* (Geneva/Milan: SKIRA, 1998, 44–48, 70–72). Others (Johannes Pieter Kleiweg de Zwaan, *Die Insel Nias bei Sumatra. Untersuchungen derselben*. Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 2 vols, 1913, 23; Hämmerle, *Nias*, 323–332; Bonatz, 259–263) clearly connect ancestor

- rituals with stone monuments. This is also supported by the missionaries (Bieger, *Erlebnisse*, 27).
79. Fehr, *Die Niasser*, 14; Fries, circulars, 1908, 78–79; Hämmerle, *Nias*, 323–332.
 80. Edward M. Bruner, “Megaliths, migration and the segmented self,” in Rainer Carle (ed.) *Cultures and Societies of North Sumatra* (Berlin/Hamburg: Reimer, 1987): 133–150; Reimar Schefold, “Hearthless house and painted concrete: Aspects of ethnicity among Sa’dan Toraja and Toba Batak (Indonesia),” in Philip Quarles Van Ufford and Matthew Schoffeleers (eds) *Religion & Development towards an Integrated Approach* (Amsterdam: Free University Press, 1988): 231–246.
 81. J. A. Hoskins, “Entering the bitter house: Spirit worship and conversion in West Sumba,” in Rita Smith Kipp (ed.) *Indonesian Religions in Transition, Papers from the 10th Annual Indonesian Studies Conference, held at Ohio University in August 1982* (Tucson, Ariz.: The University of Arizona Press, 1987): 147–148.
 82. Steenbrink, *Catholics*, 222–223.
 83. Heinrich Sundermann, “Verderbliche Sitten auf Nias.“ *Allgemeine Missionszeitschrift* 25 (1898, 177–178; Sundermann, „Die Mission,“ 1898, 470); Fries, circulars, 1/1907–1908, 1–4.
 84. During the first four days of mortuary ceremonies, the burial place was visited to leave food for the dead. Burial places, which were most often located outside of the villages, were avoided by the locals who feared the haunting soul of the deceased. Different kinds of soul-transfer ceremonies have been recorded (Feldman, *Nias*, 32–33). The preparation of a wooden coffin well before death was considered as a symbol of status, see, Carl Benjamin Hermann Baron von Rosenberg, *Der Malayische Archipel. Land und Leute in Schilderungen gesammelt während eines dreissigjährigen Aufenthalts in den Kolonien* (Leipzig): fig. 157; J. W. Thomas, „Drei Jahre in Südnias – Erlebnisse. Barmen: Missionshaus, 1892.“ *Rheinische Missions-Traktate* 46: 13; Fehr, *Die Niasser*, 49, 53–56; Eduard Fries, „Das „Kopensnellen“ auf Nias.“ *Allgemeine Missionszeitschrift* 2 (1908): 78, 87; Mittersackschmöller, „Zum Problem,“ 136–138; Kleiweg de Zwaan, *Die Insel*, 18–23; Møller, „Beitrag,“ 165).
 85. Bonatz, „Wandel,“ 116; Bonatz, „Megaliths,“ 264, figs. 6, 11).
 86. In the same way certain plants which symbolized the dead person were formerly not connected to the burial site but to any piece of land to remember the deceased (Kleiweg de Zwaan, *Die Insel*, 22; Hämmerle, *Nias*, 329). Later they specifically mark the Christian graves.