



150 Years of Ethnological Interpretation and Misinterpretation on the Example of Nias, Indonesia

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Abstract. – The Hoa Binh culture of the cavemen has already been existing 12,000 years ago on Nias. However, the provenance of the Niassian people and their language is not clarified until today. DNA tests yielded surprising results. The present population obviously goes back to a recent extremely small founder population and an almost complete replacement of the ancestral population. The Niassian people had no script, but an all the richer oral tradition. Almost 150 years have passed since the arrival of the Dutch in 1845 and the Christian missionaries in 1865. Numerous valuable ethnological articles have been published during this period as well as a lot of misinterpretations. Reportedly many tin gods, deities, High Gods, and a large system of gods existed on Nias. The old symbolic language and the meaning of the 9 Heavens and 8 Earths for our earth we are walking on were no longer understood. Outside interpretations were full of contradictions. Literate Niassians, on the other hand, adopted misinterpretations of the wise men or tried to reconcile their tradition with the Christian doctrine. The present article construes the Nias myths in an accessible way by drawing on copious field research, furnishing simple and conclusive answers to many pending questions as yet. [*Indonesia, Nias, myth, creation, genealogy, concepts of God*]

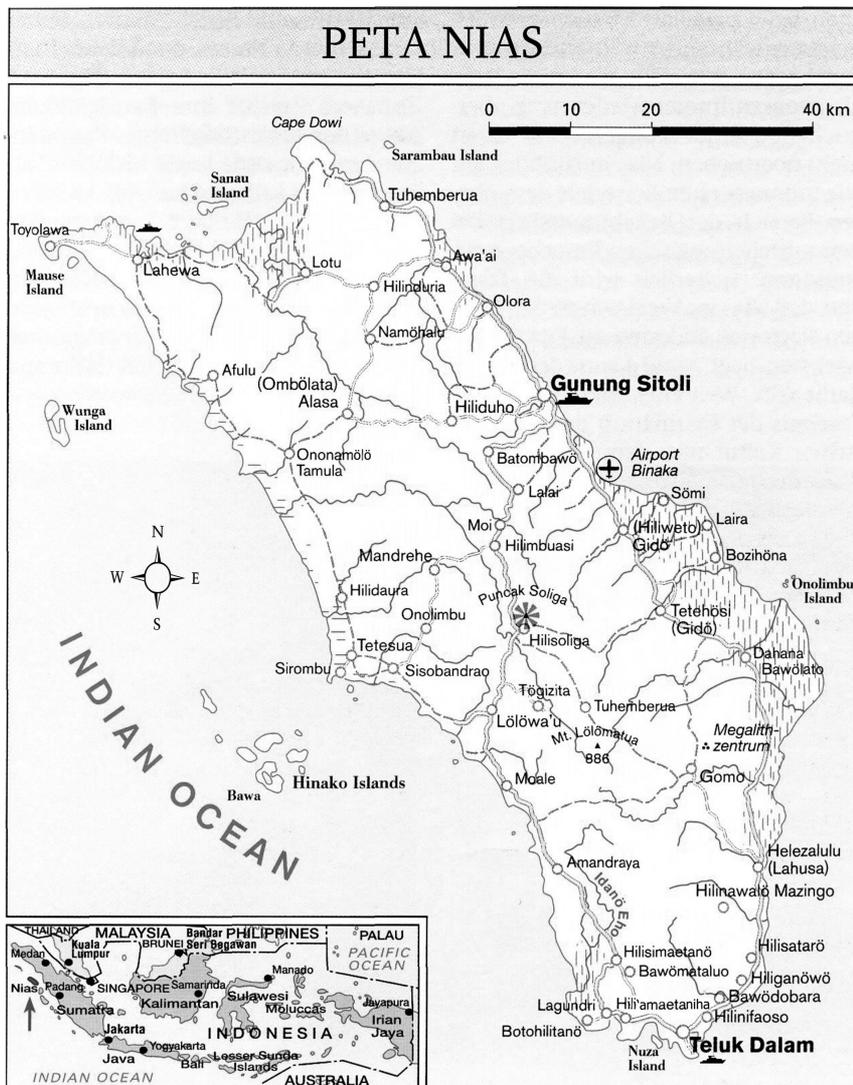
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The Indigenous People of North Sumatra

In a newspaper article from 1997, Serius Lase, a reverend of the Protestant Church of Nias (BNKP) ac-

centuated the supremacy of the indigenous people, with whom, owing to the genealogical tree of the Batak, the people of Nias may be classed in the first place. Furthermore, he cites O. H. Sihite (1941) and his genealogical tree of Si Raja Batak. Here Sijau Nias is mentioned as the oldest son of Ompu Raja Ijolma, meaning that Sijau Nias is the progenitor of the Nias people. Ujung Aceh (2), Sigajo (3), and Sialas (4), other sons of Ompu Raja Ijolma, rank after Sijau Nias. Only then the ancestors of the Batak clans rank 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th. With this Serius Lase grants clear precedence to the original peoples Nias, Aceh, Gajo, and Ala.

It is not surprising to find a wide range of linguistic and cultural diversities in the large island state of Indonesia. But also on a small archipelago like Nias one finds a large cultural diversity. In my book “Asal usul masyarakat Nias” (The Origin of the Nias Society; 2001) I wanted to illustrate, that the population of Nias is not a homogenous people but composed of various ethnic groups. Often it was simply assumed, that Nias is inhabited by one tribe only, with one language and one culture. This led to internal tension when the question came up which of the different traditions might claim the truth for themselves. Consequently, the explorers of the Nias culture faced considerable difficulties with the understanding of culture and tradition. These suggestions have to be partially corrected: Interestingly, our DNA data are compatible with a recent immigration of very few forefathers with consecutive expansion and obviously almost complete replacement of the ancestral population. In other words,



Map 1: The 9th Earth, the earth on which we live here.

despite their cultural diversity the Niassian people are at least from a genetic point of view a very homogenous population.¹

I have been living on Nias forty years by now, and in the course of those forty years I have learned to understand the country and its inhabitants step by step, in particular the mountainous center of the island. Barely any explorer has stayed there for a longer time, except Andrew Beatty (1992) in Sifalagö Susua and Edward Peake (2000; no further information) in Hilinawalö Fau. The village of Bawögö-sali, however, where Wolfgang Marschall (1976) lived for a longer period of time, is only 3 km away from the former center of the Protestant mission of South Nias. But in the mountainous and hard-to-

reach center of the island the ancient tradition could be preserved longest from external influences. All my findings are based on the reports of these last living experts on the ancient tradition. This led to a completely new interpretation. Now Lature Danö was no longer the god of the underworld, as previous researchers proposed, but he was quite simply the progenitor of the cave men, more than 12,000 years ago. And Lowalangi was no longer the god of the upperworld, but simply an ancestor of a group of new immigrants about 600 years ago.

Because of this new interpretation the Nias Heritage Museum in 1999 undertook the first archaeological excavation on Nias under the expert guidance of Dr. Yusuf Ernawan from the University of Airlangga, Surabaya. Thereafter, first DNA tests were initiated and performed on Nias in 2002 and 2003 under the direction of Prof. Dr. Ingo Ken-

¹ Kennerknecht (2009); Van Oven et al. (2011); Kennerknecht et al. (in press).

nerknecht from the Institute of Human Genetics, Münster, Germany. My new interpretation was in accordance with the archaeological and molecular genetic findings.

The End of a Once Lively Tradition on Nias

Prior to the arrival of the Dutch colonial power (1846) and the missionaries (1865) Nias treasured a lively tradition. The oral tradition usually took place between grandparents and their grandchildren while the parents worked in the field. In front of the house to the right and left on a long window ledge sat the grandparents telling stories or singing songs to their grandchildren who sat between them listening.

Then a new period began. Some Dutch colonial civil servants and some German missionaries started with written records of the tradition. They also began to interpret the Nias tradition from their point of view. But misconceptions on the part of the Whites (*niha safusi uli*) resulted in a partial falsification of the Nias tradition.

A further move was the acceptance of the interpretation of the Whites by the *intelligentsia* of the Niassians. They were particularly fond of narratives such as the Creation in the Bibel, or lineage and genealogy. Simple Niassian terms were revalued and words as *momböi* (verb) and *fomböi* (subst.), which were primarily used for pottery or the carving of figures, were from now on adjusted to the biblical vocabulary in Indonesian translations: *generation*, *creation*, etc.

Cultured Niassians were also impressed by the interpretation of their own religion. Reportedly they could now exhibit a system of deities as well as a trias of gods, a creation of nine heavens (*langi, lani*) and eight earths (*tanö, danö*) above our earth, the ninth earth. And owing to exogenous interpretation the galaxy and the tree of heaven (*tora'a langi*) found access to the Nias myths as well. Nobody dared to raise any objections. The supremacy of the white man had become evident in many cases.

Mendröfa, alias Ama Rozaman, a noted Nias author got into difficulties with that. When I visited him in his home in Gunungsitoli in 1984 he asked me how the different interpretations could be harmonized. According to his published Nias myth, the earth is created repeatedly, starting with the first earth up to the eighth. Ama Rozaman Mendröfa said: "From the Bible we know that God has created the earth only once." The difficulties Ama Rozaman Mendröfa was facing were, for one thing, that he tried to bring the Nias tradition in line with the Holy Scripture, and, for the other thing, that he did no

longer understand the ancient symbolic language of the eight or nine earths. He had grown up in the village of Lölöwua, 16 km from Gunungsitoli, where one of the first missions of the Rheinische Evangelische Mission has been established (see Hämmerle 1988 on the carved panel by Mendröfa).

Influenced by the Islam, in the book "Umanö" (Zebua et al. 1982), Arabia is mentioned as the country of provenance of the Niassians. In an interview with Fadoma Bu'ulölö, a Si'ulu from the village of Hilinawalö Fau in south Nias, he mentioned (1985) that he derives the origin of his tribe from Kain, brother of Abel. When I replied: "Well, then you are descendants of a murderer," he responded: "Yes, but Kain also has his good points." And F. Matias Zebua, alias Ama Aslina, from the Moro'ö region in west Nias, claims in his still unpublished manuscript (1996), that their tribe descends from the Israelites. When the Israelites were sent into exile to Babylon and were scattered to the four winds, a small group of Israelites got to Nias.

The First Written Reports on Nias

The first written reports on Nias were translated by Ferrand (1913–14) from Arabic into French. They were adopted by Schröder (1917/I: 697–702; §§ 1428–1433) in this French version, then translated from French into Indonesian and published in Hämmerle (2001: 13–18). For a better understanding it would be helpful if the Arabic written texts could be translated directly from Arab into English, with special attention for Nias. Therefore, here we are only reporting in short the content of these first documents.

Sulayman, A.D. 851

There is gold in abundance on the islands. They are dependent on coconuts. Among other goods also wine is made from palm trees. They are surrounded by enemies. The men may marry only after they have captured the head of an enemy. As many heads a man has captured, as many women he can take.

Bozorg van Ramhormoz, A.D. 950 "Kitab al-Hind adjajib"

There is cannibalism (anthropophagy) on Nias. They boast about the number of captured heads. For countertrade there is a demand for valuable objects. They deem brass as worthy and expensive as gold. *Barawa* (anthropophagy) also exists on three other islands.

Edrisi, A.D. 1154

An extensive geographical point.

The island of Nias has a high population density. There is also a large city and a large number of different ethnic groups. They live on coconuts. The population is bold and very brave. Anyone who has caught a head, is honored and glorified as a war hero. Men are not allowed to marry if they have not captured a head. As many people one has captured, as many women one can take.

Kazwini, A.D. 1260 (1203–1283)

He described the wonderful things of this world:

They live in the heart of the island and on the mountains. They are afraid to be discovered. They are man eaters. They hide because of their light skin color. They live naked and are very beautiful. They have no clothes except the loincloth or a skirt to hide their nakedness.

Rashid ad-Din, a Jew, A.D. 1310

He was a medical physician and a historian. He does not write very clearly about Darband, opposite Nias, which is said to be a *dépendance* of Djawa. [Surely not the main island Jawa can be meant here.] Furthermore he comments on the dark skin of the Batak and on Barus, the port of export of camphor.

Ibn Al-Wardi, a Syrian, 1340

Report on the islands of Sumatra, Al-Binaman and Al-Banan. They live withdrawn on trees, hunt for humans and eat them. As many heads a man has captured as many women he can take. The island is fertile and prosperous; there is a large city. The population is resolute and bold, and whoever wants to marry must cut off a human head. A bride-price in gold is not required. The island has an abundance of Brazil wood, bamboo, and sugar cane. The water of streams and rivers tastes good. There are various fruits. The people are naked, of light complexion and have graceful bodies.

What Is Not Said in the First Written Sources?

Many things which were often emphasized during the Dutch colonial time are apparently not mentioned in these reports, e.g., idolatry, belief in gods and idols, the enormous amount of gods and idols, the diversity of megaliths, and the monster heads (*lasara*).

Why Is Nothing of All This Mentioned in the First Reports?

My simple explanation is that at that time these things were not yet on Nias. In the Gomo area it was reported to me that the first two figures in Sifalagö Gomo Börönadu were made of iron (sic). When they got lost the people began to make figures out of wood (about A.D. 1500)² Ama Rafisa Giawa from the village of Balöhili, at the headwaters of the River Gomo, told me that initially only 12 different figures were known. Later the number of figures increased considerably (Hämmerle 1995: 189–191, 213).

As for the megaliths, in his study Thomsen (1976) comes to the conclusion that the ancient megaliths do not date back more than 500 years, and that most of them are only around 200 years old.

In his treatise of 1890 the missionary Kramer noted:

Nach der Aussage der Niasser sollen es in früheren Zeiten nur eine geringe Anzahl Götzen, denen sie bei Krankheiten oder sonstigen Gelegenheiten Opfer brachten, gegeben haben. Gegenwärtig giebt es schon mehr als Hundert verschiedener Götzen, und wie es scheint so kommen immer noch mehr hinzu (1890: 473).

According to Niassian reports there were allegedly only very few *adu* in former times to whom they offered sacrifices in case of diseases or at other occasions. Presently there are more than a hundred different species, and it seems that the number is increasing steadily.

***Bela* and *ono mbela*: The Tree Dwellers**

The first written reports about the tree dwellers are supported by the oral tradition on the island of Nias. Until recently sacrifices were still offered to the *invisible* tree dwellers, when one went hunting. Yet this tradition came to an end, because there is hardly any game left. But the belief, that *bela* spirits still live in the trees is frequently met even today. It is simply explained, that they were invisible now. Various village names confirm this tradition: Tetegewo, Teteholi, Sisobamböwö a. o. *Tete* means surface, the atop, and Ewo (Gewo), Holi, and Böwö are tree names.

The lesson is clear: The tradition of the *bela* or *ono mbela* cannot any longer be thought of as a fairy tale or myth. The light complexion of the Niassians derives its origin from the *bela*. These first reports

2 Hämmerle (1995: 66); Report of the Sinenge Ama Wa'omasi Ndruru from the village of Baruzö.

were not sufficiently or not at all minded by the authors of the modern era.

The genealogical trees from south Nias count 20 to 25 generations and go back to the one famous ancestress, who came across the sea from Asia and settled in Sifalagö Gomo. These new immigrants brought with them progress and technological advances to Nias. Subsequently the cave dwellers (*laturadanö*) left their caves. The tree dwellers (*onombela*) came down from the trees. Huts and houses were built. The replacement theory, saying that the indigenous people were slain by the later immigrants, remains to be proved still.

Later Reports on Nias

A) Nieuwenhuisen 1863

J. T. Nieuwenhuisen worked in service of the Dutch colonial government and in 1846 he undertook an exploration trip across Nias. A key finding of Nieuwenhuisen which was payed little attention to by later researchers was the wind (Nieuwenhuisen en Rosenberg 1863: 112 f., 118):

From iets onstoffelijks in zich, van een geest of ziel hebben de Niassians geen begrip; het eenige wat zij hebben opgemerkt dat werking doet, dat zij zelve voelen en toch onzichtbaar blijft, is de wind. God Loeboelangi (in de zuid Halowalangi) is dan ook afkomstig van den wind, or is er eene concentratie van. Zij stellen zich hem voor als een boom staande in den hooge; vruchten die daarvan, krachtens zijn eigen wil, losraakten werden geesten; andere, evenzeer op zijn gebod op de aarde gedaald, zijn menschen geworden en stamvaders van volken. Hij is de oorsprong en schepper van alles; van hem komt alles goeds. De stamvaders blijven met hem in gemeenschap en kunnen met hem spreken. Tot dezen wendt men zich als middelaars om het goede te verkrijgen en het kwade afteweren. Ti het aanhooren van de gebeden die van de aarde tot hem worden opgezonden moet Loeboelangi zich neigen, en zou dus te zwaar op haar drukken, waardoor zij kunnen verzinken. Om hierin te voorzien bevindt zich aan de benedenzijde de aarde een ondergod Batoebeana, in de Zuid Latoerafano, die haar tegenhoudt; beiden worden daarom bij het aanroepen zoo wel in het gebed als bij eedzweren altijd te zamen genoemd; Loeboelangi evenwel 't eerst, want deze is de voornaamste en schepper van de anderen.

The Niassian have no idea of something immaterial, a spirit or soul. The only thing they have noticed that is acting [causes some thing] and what they can feel themselves, yet remains invisible, is the wind. The origin of god Lubulangi (Halowalangi as named in the south) thus comes from the wind, or is a condensation of it.

After this key finding Nieuwenhuisen continues:

They picture it as a tree, which stands aloft; fruits, which due to the trees own willpower fall to the ground become ghosts; others, which also fall down to the ground at its command, become human beings and progenitors of peoples. It is the origin and creator of everything; all good things come from it. The progenitors live in companionship with it and can communicate with it. Acting as intermediaries to whom one turns to, they maintain the good and fight off the evil. In order to listen to the prayers which are sent up to him from the earth, Lubulangi must bend downwards, but by doing so Lubulangi bears too heavily down on the earth whereby it may sink. In order to prevent this there lives an undergod, Batoebeana, at the bottom side of the earth. In the South it is Laturafano who supports the earth; therefore both of them are always mentioned together when they are called during prayers as well as during swearing an oath; Lubulangi is always called first however, because he is the most noble and the creator of all the others.

In the south nobody says Lowalangi. It must be corrected to Lowalani. And the name Halowalangi (Halowalangi) does not exist. *Halowalangi* means: only (*ha*)*Lowalangi*. Maybe Nieuwenhuisen asked the people if there was another god besides Lubulangi (Lowalangi?), if there was another, a higher God, whereupon the people in the south answered him: “No, *ha Lowalani*,” which means: No, only Lowalani. But Nieuwenhuisen correctly reports, that in prayers or when swearing an oat always Lowalani and Latura Danö are called together.

To me the following has been reported: One who takes an oath, stands stooped, stretches his right hand up and says: “Listen to me Lowalani,” and when touching the earth with his left hand he says: “and you, Latura Danö, down there!” (*Fondrongo ligu Lowalani, ba ya'ugö Latura Danö tou*). In the Nias literature Latura Danö is always called God of the Underworld. But for us he is only the ancestor of the cave dwellers. According to the myths he is expected to sustain the earth since he lives under the earth.

By virtue of a quotation by Nieuwenhuisen, the assumption of a potential theism or polytheism (Sundermann 1884) on Nias is deprived of its basis. Therefore, the basis of the Nias religion is simply the ancestral worship. On Nias there is no term for god or divinity. There exist certain paraphrases only, which should first be scrutinized for their contents. Paraphrases are still being used today, for example:

So'aya	the one who owns jewelry
Soroi ya'wa	the one from above
Sochö ya'itathe	one who possesses us (holds us in his fist)

But such paraphrases can also be applied for forebears, ancestors, and chiefs. On Nias often three *lowalani* are mentioned: the parents (*satua*), the uncle, i.e., mother's brother (*sibaya*), and "the one above" (*si so si yaŵa*). All three of them range on the same level. One locution preeminently used in the south is: "Lowalani is above us, only the width of a finger away" (*ha sadan(g)a yaŵa Lowalan(g)i*). This could mean either the ancestor Lowalani or our own late parents or, for believing Christians, the true God. We wish to stress that the expression *ha sadana* does not mean "a hand's width," but "a finger's width."

B) Misunderstandings by Missionaries since Denninger in 1865

First we want to emphasize that the missionaries of the United Evangelical Mission (UEM) have collected many valuable reports on the culture and tradition of Nias. And all books they edited in the language of the north of Nias, especially schoolbooks, the Holy Bible, and the books used in the church, thus contributing very much to the preservation of this language. But as children of their time, the missionaries unfortunately showed only little appreciation of the local culture. Reportedly, there were gods and idols everywhere including Lowalangi as the highest deity of the upper world, whereas in the worship of ancestors they saw idolatry.

The first Protestant missionary, Denninger (1865) interpreted the name Lowalangi as God's name in the belief that he would be the supreme deity of the upper world. But actually this is only the glorious name of father Hia: Hia Walangi Adu, Hia Walangi Luo. And all later missionaries successively maintained this name. The missionary Sundermann assumed, that there was "a practical theism" on Nias, and that "polytheism" was also of relevance. Regarding Lowalangi he says: "He has created men and their present relationship with him could possibly be looked at as a practical deism [sic] acknowledging polytheism at the same time" (1884: 448 f.).

On his expedition to Nias (1886) the Italian anthropologist, zoologist, and plant collector Modigliani came to the conclusion: "For me they are just admirers of their ancestors" (*Per me i Nias sono puramente idolatri*). As to the different versions of the two genealogical trees, which Modigliani had taken over from the two missionaries Sundermann and Thomas, he noticed: "Although the information of these proficient researchers rather remain in the dark, but when comparing them they contain good information on the religious faith of the Niassians nevertheless" (... *che fino ad oggi, erano assai con-*

fuse, anche per me che avevo attinto informazioni sul posto). But he cannot accept Sundermann's view postulating "a practical theism" on Nias, and acknowledging "polytheism" at the same time (Modigliani 1890: 612–614; Deismo e idolatria).

The medical missionary Thomsen worked for 35 years on Nias. He believed that Luluö and Bakaulu were different Niassian gods. As a matter of fact Luluö is only the personification of the placenta (1979: 272, endnote 43), and Bakaulu is just the Niassian parody of the name of the seaport Bengkulu on Sumatra. "Sahó is another name for the god Lowalangi to whom the Sun and the Moon are assigned. Bakaulu is another name for him" (1981: 454, endnote 64).

"*Itali zinali Bakaulu*" means: he entwisted the hemp rope, as it was common to do in the seaport of Bengkulu. Saho was one of the ancestors in Gomo, whose special way of revering the ancestors was widely disseminated. It consisted in interconnecting everything with chains made of palm leaves. They equally formed a ladder (*ora*), on which the spirits of the ancestors could get into the house and to their descendants. That is why these garlands are called *ora Zaho*. They were fastened to the stone pillars or stone figures (*behu*) in front of the house, where the skulls of the late fathers were stored. From there they ran through the window screen at the front face of the house up to the dividing wall in the middle of the house where the ancestral figures were fastened. And chains made of single palm leaves ran down from these ancestral figures to the residents of the house, who were sitting on the floor, holding garlands in their hands to worship their ancestors and to call them on for help. In their midst a large plate was placed with a small tree standing on it, its base held by a lump of clay. "Saho does it that way," sounded the stereotype wording for it (*simanö Zaho*). We now understand why it got so quiet in Sifaoro'asi Huruna, when missionary Eduard Fries set up a christmas tree in his chapel for his first Christmas party. He proclaimed the incarnation of Christ, while the people thought of their ancestors though.

C) Misunderstandings in E. E. W. G. Schröder 1904–1909

Schröder, a Dutchman and an official of the colonial government, worked almost 5 years as controller on Nias. The misunderstandings by Schröder count the more as his voluminous work (1917) was regarded as the standard work for Nias. Jani Kuhnt-Saptodewo, manageress of the collection "Insularer Südostasien" at the Museum of Ethnology, Vienna, wrote:

According to E. M. Loeb (1928) it can be regarded as one of the most complete studies of a people ever made in Indonesia or elsewhere. The study, made by an official of the Netherlands government during his term of office, in main part from 1904 to 1909 covers all aspects of Nias culture in detail with references to the then available literature. As an administrator Schröder travelled through the whole island. Although not a trained anthropologist his knowledge of Nias language enabled him to collect important ethnological data. Schröder's work has stood the test of time and therefore remains the standard work for traditional Nias culture until the present.³

Schröder adopted the world of the Nias gods as described by the missionaries. He left nothing but adds his astral interpretation. He established the Milky Way in the Nias myths. The nine sky layers and the eight earths in the myths of the Niassians were interpreted by him as 8 globes, as their objective view of the cosmos. The Niassian symbolism was taken by Schröder as reality. To him the myths are myths of creation *ex nihilo*, although a creation is unknown to the Niassians; from their point of view the earth was always there.

Quotes by Schröder

Als belangrijkste opvatting ... beschouw ik de hemelrivier r... Zea. ... Von belang is dat die rivier gezegd wordt den "banuwa", kampong, ... te omringen. ... De oorsprong ervan werd ooch gezocht bij den Tora'a. ... Verder wordt het zand in het rivierbed gezegd uit goud te bestaan ... Hana Zea wa mòènè m'balaki, Hana Zea wa mòènè gànà'a, ... Zij stroomde in Tètè-Holi, haar mond lag in het oosten en daar zeide man ook dat eene andere naam was: Tora'a lani ... dus rivier en wereldboom aan elkander gelijk stellende (1917/I: 490, §§ 1165, 1166).

I regard the heavenly river ... Zea ... as the most important concept. The statement, that this river (*banua*) surrounds the village, is of significance. The source for that is also looked for at the *Tora'a*. ... Furthermore it is said, that the sand of the riverbed would consist of gold. *Hana Zea wa mòènè m'balaki, Hana Zea wa mòènè gànà'a* ... The river ran through Tètè-Holi, its outfall was in the east. At the same time it was mentioned, that its other name was *Tora'a lani*, ... meaning that river and world tree are put on the same level.

The True Facts Based on Recent Research

The Niassian author S. Zebua, alias Ama Wa'omasi, from the village of Humene, 11 km south of Gu-

³ E-mail in 2008, when The Museum of Ethnology, Vienna, had planned to republish this most influential scientific work on Nias on CD-ROM.

nungsitoli, felt that Teteholi Ana'a had to be situated in the western part of Nias, because there is a very small river, called *Idanö Zea*, which empties into the *Siwalaŵa River* (Zebua et al. 1982: 3). But this explanation is not well-founded, because there are small streams or rivulets of the same name also in other places, e.g., in the subdistrict *Gidö*. Others believed that the village was located in *Gomo*. Again others imagined the village somewhere on the far side of the sea. Yet one should also heed the popular phrases. For example, if a man and a woman climbed a bamboo ladder up to the attic of their simple hut, and then pulled up the ladder behind them in order not to be disturbed, then, in the vernacular it is said: Now they are in Teteholi Ana'a.

Besides Teteholi Ana'a further expressions are: Teteholi hamo and Teteholi balaki. *Balaki* means the pure, high-carat gold, *hamo* means gold dust. And *ana'a* is the common 14 carat gold. It always concerns decorative epithets for Teteholi. As far as I know there is no real village of the name Teteholi Ana'a. But there exists a village which is called *Holi*, and which is situated at the headwaters of the *Idanögawo River*. The word *holi* resonates the meaning of "overhead" and "glorious." There is also the *Siholi tree*, its trunk is for the most part used for the building of beds in the stilt houses. *Tete (dete)* means "on top." To give an example: *ba dete meja*, "on the table." Teteholi could, therefore, be translated as "up on Holi," "up in the village of Holi."

But Teteholi is thought of as a very particular place. Teteholi or Teteholi Ana'a is not really the founder village but the famous term of origin for all men, that is the womb of the mother where the embryo is living in paradise. The baby is on the eighth earth before it falls down to the earth on which we are living now.

The birth of man normally begins with the rupture of the amniotic sac of which the amniotic fluid flows out. In the Nias language it says that the waters of the sky overflow resulting in high water of the River *Zea (molö)*. *Tora'a Lani* is *Idanö Zea*, not the world tree, but the symbolic name for pregnancy.

Quotes by Schröder

Scheppings-trias. Het zuiverst komt deze uit in § 1148, waar aan den eenen Tora'a zich ontwikkelden de goden: Lowalangi, Ture Luluwö en Si Barasija Noso.

The Triad of Creation. It becomes most clear in § 1148, where it says that from one *Tora'a-tree* the gods develop: Lowalangi, Ture Luluwö, and Si Barasija Noso.

According to Schröder, Luluö (Luluwö) is a deity who works for the gifts of the spirit throughout life. *Lowalangi* determines the later mode of death for the yet unborn. It is easy to see how the triad of creation developed at tora'a tree (1917: Section XIV, 495 f., § 1174, endnote 43).

The True Facts Based on Recent Research

According to the understanding of the experts of the ancient Nias myths, there are no myths about creation or a divine triad, but there are:

1. Stemfather Hia Walangi (*Lowalangi*), the progenitor of the paternal line.
2. *Luluö*, the placenta, which forms the people (*somböi niha*). He or she is the older sibling of the newborn child (*ga'a nono*). It is not quite clear to me, why Schröder here added the word *ture*. In normal speech *ture* means cape or promontory, in Indonesian *tanjung*.
3. *Noso*, the substance of life, comparable with the breath as described in the story of the Creation of the Old Testament: "Then the Lord formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being" (May and Metzger 1965: Genesis 2, 7). In the Christian language it is often translated as *soul*. The word *barasia* (*barasija*, *barasi*) is a parody of the Indonesian word *bersih* (clean, clear).

Luluö accompanies individuals throughout live as a guardian angel. As much of the substance of life (*noso*) the unborn child has requested, as much it will receive. This also leads to the fatalistic saying of the Niassians: "*Aetu noso*" (The substance of life is used up, this is the end, this is death).

Quotes by Schröder

In Saiwahili wordt der wereldboom, daar Tori'i-Tora'a m'mba'wa genoemd, hem dus met de maan samenbrengende, voorgesteld negen takken te krijgen, met variant negen bloeikolven. Mogen wij den melkweg aannemen als den stam van den wereldboom, dan worden derhalve de opeenvolgende dagelijks wisselende maanfasen opgevat als de daaraan zich ontwikkelende bloemen, vruchten, bloeikolven ...

In Saiwahili the world tree is called Tori'i-Tora'a m'mba'wa. Thus the tree gets linked with the Moon. One visualizes the tree growing nine twigs with nine buds accordingly. Now if we want to see the trunk of the world tree in the galaxy, then the daily changing lunar phases succeeding each other are, therefore, conceived of as forming blossoms, fruits, buds ...

Van dat kind wordt nu gezegd, dat het Tora'a Tora'i ba'wa, derhalve Maan-Tora'a genoemd wordt, met variant: sibaja, dus Zonne-Tora'a.

It is said about the child that it is called Tora'a Tora'i ba'wa, that is Moon-Tora'a. A variant is: Sibaja, that is Sun-Tora'a (Schröder 1917: 479 f.).

Tora'a Tora'i Mbawa (bei Schröder *Tora'a Tora'i ba'wa*): the Tora'a here and in other texts is compared with the Moon (*ba'wa*), and the nine branches of the Tora'a are interpreted as phases of the Moon.

The True Facts Based on Recent Research

No, on Nias there is no moon tree nor a sun tree. Certainly, Sibaya (old spelling: Sibaja) is also used as an embellishment for the Sun, in fact with the epithet Luo (Sun): Sibaya Luo. But it usually means uncle, mother's brother, who exerts wide influence. He must be expressly worshiped and must get his share when a child is born. Hence the Nias tradition does not have Tora'a Tora'i ba'wa (Moon), but Tora'a Tora'i bawa (mouth), which will be explained later.

At this point, a quotation by Suzuki (1959: 21) shall be anticipated⁴:

On Nias the tree is called Tora'a (variations: Tora'i, Tara'a, Tarawa, Tarawa). It is the source of good and evil, for from it are derived such important cultural items as the pig, gold weights and measures for measuring pigs and gold, the sun and moon, and the deities. ... [In] one version, in which the people call the Tora'a the "Sun Tora'a" and at the same time, the "Moon Tora'a" ... since the moon is the nocturnal or underworld aspect of the sun.

It becomes evident that not only good but also evil things come from this tree.

Here we are not dealing with two different Tora'a trees but aspects of the same tree, the good and evil aspect, the sun and moon aspect, the upper- and underworld aspect – or ambivalence. The tree moreover, is not only found in the upperworld but extends down into the underworld, ... and in this monistic aspect, is reminiscent of Silewe Nazarata.

But here Suzuki is wrong again. It is not about one and the same tree Tora'a with variations in spelling, but here two symbolic trees must be kept apart. The Tora'a Lani stands for pregnancy, for anthropogenesis. See our interpretation of the myth

⁴ Suzuki consistently writes all Nias names with capital letters: TORAA, SILEWE etc. In the following, citing Suzuki we use the simple spelling: Tora'a, Silewe etc. Further, other than in Suzuki's text we choose to omit the numbers of bibliographical references.

Ama Waogö Waruwu at the end of this article. Here it becomes obvious, that there are good and bad human beings. They are all progeny of anthropogenesis. Yet neither the Sun and Moon, nor the world of the living, the underworld or Silewe have a place here. The tree Tariawa Adu (Hämmerle 1995: 491–495) or Tariawa Luo (Hämmerle 1995: 496–499; 1999: 251–256) by its other name differs from it. These two songs we were also told by Ama Waogö Waruwu. In this case, however, it is not about anthropogenesis, but we are now at one of the big benefit festivities (*owasa*). The host has achieved a lot, he succeeded in everything. And it is told about him, that he planted the tree Tariawa Luo or Tariawa Adu for himself.

In the wordplay of the Niassians it is the same whether the tree is called Tora'a-Tora'i or Tori'i-Tora'a. Anyhow, the root is *tora'a*, the name of a plant, as we will see shortly. However, the M'mba-wa, as Schröder has named it, needs to be corrected. Schröder has put an accent incorrectly. It should not be Ba-wa (Mba-wa), meaning the Moon, but *bawa* (*mbawa*), the mouth. Tori'i-Tora'a *mbawa* is the Tora'a-tree of the mouth.

In all of Nias, there is no tree named Tora'a. But there are several plants which bear this name:

1. Tora'a si matua, the male tora'a plant (*Emilia sonchifolia* L. DC.).



Fig. 1: Tora'a si matua, the male tora'a (*Emilia sonchifolia* L. DC.).



Fig. 2: Tora'a si alawe, the female tora'a (*Sonchus arvensis* L.), also called Höwa-höwa or Höwa höwa safusi: "white höwa," "höwa spinach."

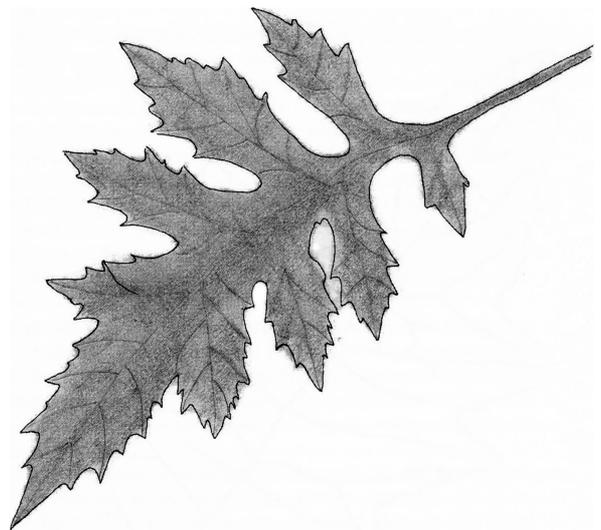


Fig. 3: Tora'a Langi, sky-tora'a or Höwa – Höwa Langi, sky-höwa höwa (*Artemisia vulgaris* L.).

2. Tora'a si alawe, the female tora'a plant (*Sonchus arvensis* L.), also called Höwa-höwa or Höwa höwa safusi, "white spinach."
3. Tora'a Langi, sky-tora'a or Höwa – Höwa Langi, sky-höwa höwa (*Artemisia vulgaris* L.).

These plants grow without human intervention on any forest clearing. The leaves of the female Tora'a are edible. The white seed vessel is comparable to that of the dandelion, only that it is smaller. And the wind carries the seeds everywhere. It is their wishful thinking that the prevalence of the

own clan with numerous descendants develops as rapidly as the rapid dissemination of those seeds takes place.

Well, if the mythical Tora‘a-tree illustrates the human reproduction, it is now easy to accept that all good and bad human beings (and their spirits after their death) descend from this tree. The spirits (*bekhu*) of deceased people who were bad people are feared, because they want to do harm to the living people. Naturally even Suzuki’s “deities” as ancestors must now line up with this ancestry: Silewe, Lature Danö, Hia Walangi Adu, and many others. This becomes obvious also in the two genealogical trees of the Niassians recorded by Sundermann and Thomas and adopted by Modigliani.

These plants are growing on the earth (*tanö*) and have nothing to do with the Milky Way. Now, on Nias, earth (*tanö*) is the symbolic name for a woman. When pregnancy begins, Tori‘i-Tora‘a is growing in the womb of a woman.

In comparison to the symbolic language in the Holy Scriptures of the Old Testament it says, for example, in the Book of Jesus Sirach: “Seek a fertile field within the whole plain, sow it with your own seed and trust in your fine stock. So your offspring will survive, and having confidence in their good descent, they will grow great” (May and Metzger 1965: Ecclesiasticus, 26, 20). The same symbolic language is found in the Book of Ruth: “Then Bo‘az said [to Elim‘elech]: The day you are going to buy the field from the hand of Na‘omi, you are also buying the Moabitess Ruth, widow of the dead, in order to have his name continue to exist in his hereditary possession” (May and Metzger 1965: Ruth 4, 5).

The Nias expression: “He cultivated the soft field” (*Itanö ba danö sombuyu*), is symbolic language for sexual intercourse. Likewise, “the man cultivates the field” and then *tora‘a* is visible on the body of the woman: pregnancy, Tora‘a tree (*eu tora‘a; eu-tori‘ tora‘a*).

D) Misconceptions of Agner Møller 1923–1927

Agner Møller from Denmark worked from 1923 to 1927 as a medical doctor on Nias in the service of the Dutch colonial government. He got married to Suri Sarumaha, a daughter of the chief of the village of Bawölowalani in South Nias. The essential element of his collection, which can be seen in the National Museum of Copenhagen, also comes from Nias, more precisely from close to the village of Hilimondregeraya. Møller’s contribution is entitled “Beitrag zur Beleuchtung des religiösen Lebens der Niasser” (A Contribution to the Illumination of the Religious Life of the Niassians – 1934). (Cf. table below.)

Møller verbatim (1934: 125, fn. 4):

Walani bedeutet wahrscheinlich “im Himmel”, so dass *Hia Walani Azu* ..., Unser Vorvater der Himmlische *Hia*, Gegensatz und Supplement bildet zu dem neulich erwähnten *Hia Mbanua*, welcher letzte Begriff in dieser Verbindung wahrscheinlich bedeutet Unser Wohnort *Hia*, Unser Irdische *Hia*. *Hia* ist also nicht alleine realer Stammvater, sondern zugleich ein “religiöses Prinzip”, mit einem geistigen und einem materiellen Aspekt.

Møller presents the following Nias text (1934: 125–127)

[H]e *Sahö* ... *törö döla Wösi eu*
törö döla Hia Mbanua
törö Delögu ba luaha
törö Ziraso baulua
törö Hia Walani Azu
Hia Walani Luo Sambua
ma so ba guri töla zaga
ma so ba guri sanulua

Møller’s German translation translated in English

He Saho ... Past the Fösi-tree,
past **the bones of Hia Mbanua**,
past Telögu at the mouth of the river,
past Siraso at the source of the river,
past Hia Walani Azu,
the Hia Walani Sambua Luo,
in the bottle is an ivory ring,
then the bottle is a liquid thing.

The German translation from Møller

Höre, *Sahö* ... längs des Fösi-Stammes gehe,
vorbei an **den Gebeinen des Hia Mbanua**,
vorbei *Telögu*, an des Flusses Mündung,
vorbei *Sirasö*, an des Flusses Quelle,
vorbei *Hia Walani Azu* gehe,
der *Hia Walani Luo Sambua*,
in der Flasche ist ein Elfenbeinring,
in der Flasche ist ein flüssig Ding.

Møller’s translation must be corrected as follows

He Saho ... Past the Fösi-tree,
past the **Hia Mbanua-tree**,
past Telögu on the estuary,
past Siraso on the source,
past Hia Walani Azu,
past Hia Walani Sambua Luo,
he is in the ivory bottle,
he is liquid in the bottle.

Walani presumably means “in heaven,” so that *Hia Walani Azu* ..., our progenitor, the heavenly *Hia*, forms a contrast and supplement to the lately mentioned *Hia Mbanua*. In this connection the latter term probably means our domicile *Hia*. So *Hia* is not the sole real progenitor, but at the same time a “religious concept,” with both a spiritual and a material aspect.

Møller (134: 125) in the footnote 4:

“*Hia* ist der vornehmste, zuerst auf die Erde herabgesenkte, der Vorväter.”

Hia is regarded as the most noble of the ancestors, who descended first down to the earth.

Møller continues (1934: 125 f., fn. 7):

“Vermutlich ist Öl gemeint, das bei magischen Zeremonien angewendet wird. Die zwei letzten eingeschobenen Linien sollen wohl *Sahô* darauf aufmerksam machen, dass auch die bei der Anrufung notwendigen Flaschen mit köstlichem Inhalt vorhanden sind ...”

It is probably thought of oil, which is applied in magic ceremonies. The last two inserted lines shall probably draw *Sahô*'s attention, that bottles with delicate content which are necessary during invocation are also available ...

Today's Situation and Facts on Nias by Comparison

This verse is addressed to *Sahô*. He should pass by *Hia*, i.e., visit him. In other words, *Sahô* is mentioned here as visiting his ancestral line going from one to the other. These are especially those ancestors who are closely related to the own family, whose statues (*adu*) are in the house. They offered him sacrifices and asked him for communication services, “Go up to ... Visit him ... This is our favour we have to ask him.”

Møller suggested “*hia mbanua*” erroneously as one of the forefathers or as a religious principle with a spiritual and a material aspect. Instead only a tree species is meant: *Hia Mbanua*. The wood is not evenly tinted; it is comparable with the color and hardness of oak. Møller properly recognized that *Fösi* (*Wösi*) is the tree planted by *Hia*. But regarding the *Fösi* tree, now in the parallel verse a different kind of tree is mentioned: *Hia Mbanua*. Møller thought it would be one of the forefathers.

Telögu and Siraso

In the next two verses Møller refers to *Telögu* and *Sirasö* (1934: 125, Fn. 3): “... das wenige, das ich selbst von ihnen gehört habe, stimmt mit SCHRÖDERS Darstellungen überein” (the little I have heard from them myself is conform to the descriptions by Schröder). Therefore, Møller calls these two: “die ersten Menschen” (the first human beings) and “Geschwister” (siblings), and he continues: “... ursprünglich ein ‘rundes Kind’ des *Lowalani*, der es in zwei Teile teilte, die zu Mann und Weib wurden” (originally a *chubby child* of *Lowalani*, who divided it into two, which became man and wife).

Ama Zaro C. S. Baene from Hililaora in southeastern central Nias reported:⁵

*Sirasö*⁶, the unmarried daughter of a king (?) from over there (*moroi siyefo*) or from Asia (*moroi ba danö Asia*), got pregnant. In order to save her from death sentence, she was abandoned in a boat provided with all indispensables. Even a dog was on board. The boat landed or ran ashore at the eastern coast of Nias. There *Sirasö* gave birth to her son whom she called *Telögu*, because there she had pulled her boat off and had “turned it inside out,” meaning *telögu* in the Niassian language. After her son had become nubile, he wandered throughout Nias in order to look for a wife. But since there were no human beings yet on Nias, he lastly turned back to his mother without recognizing her. Mother and son got married, lived in an incestuous relationship and so became the first human beings or the ancestors of the *Niha*.

In accordance with that version is the one by Mesozochö Bu'ulölö, the most noted singer of the *Hoho* from the village of Hilinawalö Fau in South Nias (Hämmerle 1990: 6).

Saho Luomewöna

In the text cited by Møller we meet *Saho*. As we have already learned before, Thomsen regarded *Saho* as a god of the Niassians. At this point it is appropriate to say something about *Saho*. In conjunction with *Saho* we can better understand the religiousness of the Niassians. Thereby we resort to detailed narratives and songs about *Saho*, which we were told by old Niassians. The original texts in the Nias language are found in our publication about the *adu*,

⁵ See the remarks in Hämmerle (1982: 13–20).

⁶ On Sumatra, the island opposite Nias, *Raso* (*Sirasö*) describes a genus of *Pandanus*, which is called *bagoa* on Nias. The prefix *si* roughly fits our article.

the figures and the reverence for the ancestors.⁷ Now let us give the narrators themselves a chance to speak:

1. Faustinus Fatihuku Giawa, alias Ama Rafisa
Ama Rafisa was born in 1932 in the village of Orabili at the headwaters of the River Gomo. According to Ama Rafisa, the extended family gathered inside the house for nine days. In order to worship Saho, hoping that he would beseech for them fortune and prosperity, one abstained from any kind of work (verb: *mamoni*, subst.: *famoni*) for nine days: Saho *si felezara*, Saho *si felendrua* (Saho the eleven, Saho the twelve). The words eleven and twelve symbolize the long row of ancestors. In each and every house there was a figure of Saho, because it was the image of their great-grandfather, possibly nine generations back. A big pig (*sazilo*, 6 *alisi*⁸) was slaughtered. Saho was revered each month. The large ancestor figure (Lawölö) was carried to the site. Inside the house, up front in the center of the great living room, the Saho figure was leaned against the pillar called *taru gazi*. A large Chinese plate filled with sand from the river and into which a small tree was planted, was placed on the floor in front of the Saho figure. Saho has full length of a human being. A long garland is made of a white/young palm leaf and its end fastened at the neck of the figure. This garland connects everything that is in the house and all the rest of the ancestor figures along the boarding of the house to a large unified whole. It further runs through the skylight up to the roof ridge and back down to the site in front of the house to the megaliths and to Lawölö. Here the people kneel on the ground in front of the house, bow down and ask Saho to come in their house. The garlands of palm leaves is called ladder of Saho: *ora Zaho*. Saho shall go across this ladder into the house and bring his descendants fortune and bliss. The priest has brought to Lawölö's mouth a peeled egg as an offering. He also knows when Saho has come and says: "It is enough. He has already heard it" (*awai*, *no ifondrondrongo*). "Come, let us go eat." Thereupon they carry the Lawölö figure back into the house and put them next to the figure of Saho. The priest once again brings the egg to the mouth of the Lawölö? or Saho? figure.

Then the people sit on the floor for a common meal, the large plate and the two figures standing in front of them. Thereafter they take a rest, and finally go down to the river to take a bath and adorn themselves for the festivities with lance, sword,

and shield. They take three baths altogether: in the morning, in the early afternoon, and at nightfall. It seems that there was no time for sleep. People pray, eat, dance, and tell their stories beginning with their progenitor until today. Also wordy speeches (*gego*), allegories (*amaedola*) and *Hoho* songs alternate all night long.

2. Tandra'aro La'ia, alias Ama Wa'azomasi
Ama Wa'azomasi (Hämmerle 1995: 239–244) comes from the village of Hiliwaebu at the middle reaches of the River Susua. He was born in 1910.⁹ "Mane Zaho," like Saho, as Saho did it, was the specialist term for this kind of ancestral worship.¹⁰ Another saying is: "*mananö Zaho*," to plant the Saho or "*fananö Zaho*," the planting of Saho. Here the planting means the putting up of the Saho figure and the whole ritual linked with it.

3. Samueli Ndruru, alias Ama Zeki
Ama Zeki (Hämmerle 1995: 317–396) was born in 1930 in the village of Lölö'ana'a at the headwaters of the River Oyo in the subdistrict Lölömatua. According to Ama Zeki, Luo Mewöna is a son of Hia Walani Adu. Luo Mewöna and Saho are identical. In the song titled *Teteholi Ana'a* (1995: 320), the two names are used for one and the same person in three parallel verses.

In the double verses 36 and 37 of the ensuing song *Tuada Hia* counting 169 verses altogether (1995: 321–328), Luo Mewöna or Saho is mentioned first from all of his sons, because only he was able to sit on the spear head. Thereafter, nine other sons of Hia are mentioned. It seems that in doing so it was tried to accommodate all of the various ancestors and pass them off as Hias' sons. According to Ama Zeki, the figure of Saho stood in front of the house to the right on the long window ledge (*lawa-lawa*), as if it leaned against the exterior wall of the house. It was made from wood of the Manawa Mbanua tree and then inaugurated by slaughtering a pig of four *alisi*. The worship of Saho is mainly about the following matter (see Hämmerle 1995: 366):

- Calming of people; peace of the heart for Saho
- Call our brothers (allies?)
- Take care of the children of the village
- May the people of the village be good
- May they be like-minded (the same at heart).

7 Hämmerle (1995: 143–238 [Oral tradition of Ama Rafisa Giawa]; 191–194 [according to Saho, Azu Zaho]).

8 *Alisi* = lit. "shoulder"; the circle measure of a pig is named *alisi*; 6 *alisi* is a pig of about 80 kg. 4 *alisi* is a pig of about 50 kg.

9 See the drawings in Hämmerle (1995: 273), which I made based on his information.

10 See picture no. 132 in Schröder (1917/II), taken in the village of Amandraya (Kampong Amadraya, Eho), in which the garland from palm leaves runs up to the roof.

Contributing to the subject matter Saho, Ama Zeki sang or told another long song of 678 verses (Hämmerle 1995: 386–389) and said: Whatever happened in the village was communicated to Saho by prayers, while a pig was slaughtered and offered to him as a dish. He was the god (Lowalangi) of our ancestors. He brought about peace, he saw the obscure things and could predict the future. He also had the power to fulfill all our wishes. For them the figure was the living form of Lowalangi (*boto Lowalangira me föna ni'ila höröra*; the incarnation of their Lowalangi, at that time seen with their eyes). They prayed to him: “Wherever we go, accompany us!” They also expressed this figuratively while setting up a small Manawa Mbanua tree for the invisible Saho, whereupon the priest started his long chant:

Hey, you Mali with white hair at your wrist,
you, Mali with white hair on your arms ...

Who or what is *mali*? It sounds, as if the priest addresses the little tree with the word *mali*. It goes on to say:

Call forth the glory of the fathers,
call forth the glory of the elderly,
put down [in our middle] Saho, the deliberate,
put down [in our middle] Saho, the pensive,
who calls forth the nine achievements,
who calls forth the ninefold growth.

It is as if here Saho is understood as the spirit of the glorious and long deceased Luo Mewöna. He was revered as a supernatural being. He was called forth by prayers and offerings in order to receive his help and blessing.

We now get back to Møller. Møller acknowledges the above stated as correct, saying (1934: 121):

Der tragende Gedanke im Seelenleben der Niasser ist das Gefühl, eins zu sein mit den Vorfahren. Selbst der einfachste Niasser fühlt sich von der magischen Kraft durchdrungen, die von Urbeginn der Welt durch zahllose Zwischenglieder in die Reihen seiner Vorfahren hineinfließt und in solcher Weise auch ihn erreichte.

The sensation to be at one with the ancestors is the sustaining concept of the spiritual life of the Niassians. Even the most humble Niassian feels pervaded by the magical power, which from the primal beginning of the world entered the ancestral line through countless interlinks and reached him as well in the same way.

Møller goes on (1934: 129):

Diese sekundären Kraftsymbole sind vor allem der Phallus und die weiblichen Brüste ..., deren reichliches Vor-

handensein die erste Bedingung dazu ist, dass der Geist fortfahren kann durch die Natur zu wirken.

Secondary power symbols are first and foremost phallus and female breasts ..., and their abundant existence is the primary prerequisite for the spirit to continue his acting through nature.

We are completely in line with Møller's above made. Had Møller put the “magical power” on a level with the wind (*angi*), i.e., with sexual strength, he would have achieved his goal. But Møller followed previous Nias interpreters, who have found only gods and demigods on Nias.

SiRao – Sirao

In the following there is an additional quotation by Møller (1934: 161 f.):

Bemerkenswert, und nicht von anderer Stelle bekannt, ist, dass SiRao als Stammvater des Lowalangi angegeben wird. Nach dem Wortlaut des Textes ist es am wahrscheinlichsten, dass Lowalangi in Wirklichkeit mit Luo Sahô und also auch mit Luo Mewöna identisch ist ...

Es spricht alles dafür, dass SiRao der “Alte Gott” ist, der von den Missionären zum obersten Gott erwählt hätte werden sollen. SiRao wird, so weit mir bekannt, nicht als aus einem andern geboren genannt. Hingegen lässt SUNDERMANN'S Umanö ba zi mate ihn sterben, doch muss dies, glaube ich, so aufgefasst werden, dass SiRao, der Beherrscher von Tete Holi Ana'a bei der “Herabsenkung” (Sintflut?) so weit fort von den Menschen kam, dass er für sie “tot” war und Luo Mewöna oder Lowalani der nächste “Gott” wurde, der die Menschen noch erreichen konnte.

It is notable that SiRao is named as progenitor of Lowalangi. This is not stated elsewhere. Going by the text, it is most probable that Lowalangi is actually identical with Luo Sahô and also with Luo Mewöna ...

There is every indication, that SiRao is the “ancient God,” who should have been elected the supreme god by the missionaries. As far as I know SiRao is not mentioned as being born out of another [god?]. On the contrary, SUNDERMANN'S Umanö ba zi mate has him die, yet I believe, this must be understood in such a way, that SiRao, the master of Tete Holi Ana'a got so far carried away from men during the “lowering” (the Flood?), that they considered him as “dead” and Luo Mewöna or Lowalani became his “successor,” who still could reach men.

I wish to make a brief comment on Møller's remark: As for SiRao or Sirao, there are many different versions. In my opinion, that requires it's own study. But we can hold on to the following:

In case that Telögu should be identical with Hia, then this Hia (Hia Walani Adu, Hia Walani Luo, or Lowalangi) must be the son of Siraso, the primor-

dial mother. Lowalangi, however, is distinct from Luo Saho while Luo Mewöna is identical with Saho or Luo Saho. If we then assume that Tete Holi Ana'a is a symbolic word for womb, and if Sirao, according to Møller, shall be the master of Tete Holi Ana'a, then a close relation between Sirao and anthropogenesis can be presumed. Furthermore, if Sundermann has Sirao die in his chant *Umanö ba zi mate*, then this could point to the placenta, which would correspond with the genealogical tree of the Giawa clan (Hämmerle 1995: 145, 151). At different times, Giawa (Ama Rafisa) has told us about the genealogical tree of his clan in three slightly different versions:

Nr.	Version I	Version II	Version III
01	Mandraulu Ani	Ani	Ani
02	Siraulu Zihönö	Mandraulu Angi	Mandraulu Ani
03	Haomögia	Siraulu Zihönö	Hao Mögia
04	Langi Sagörö	Haomögia	1. Lani Sagörö 2. Siliwu Ani
05	Hia Walani Azu	Langi Sagörö	Ama Sirao
06	Sadaŵa	Hia Walani Azu	1. Hia Walani Azu 2. Hulumbörödanö
07	Giawa	1. Mölö 2. Sadaŵa 3. Sihite 4. Silai Hörö Ndrawa	

It becomes obvious that the wind *ani* or *angi* stands at the beginning of anthropogenesis. If *fagia nangi*, *fawude nangi* in North-Nias means: the winds are playing or joking, in Gomo one would say *mandraulu* (verb) or *siraulu* (subst). The question remains, if *sirao* and *sirau* go back to the same language root, or if the same word was perhaps differently written down, since the tradition was oral only.

Lowalani – Hia Walani Adu: A More Detailed Description

The text says that Hia is already in the ivory bottle (*ma so ba guri töla zaga*), in the bottle for liquid (*sanulua*). But what was flowing into the bottle? In brief: Hia died because of a dispute with his son-in-law, who refused to return the loom he had borrowed from him. Then there was a military conflict. A sword blow hit Hia in his midsection (*la'ewa dalunia*). Hia told his children to take his heart after his death. The heart of Hia flowed (*manulu*) from

his body into the ivory bottle. The bottle was placed in the house on a beam from where the heart of Hia talks to his children (Hämmerle 1982: 13–20). The heart of Hia was stored at the ceiling (*lani*) in a bottle placed on a ceiling beam. (For comparison: the heart of the clergyman Saint John Vianney in the village of Ars, French, was taken and inserted in his statue.)

Therefore, the glorifying epithet *walani* means *aloft*. Originally it was said of Hia that he was on the ceiling: *laŵa lani* (*laŵa*: above; *lani*: sky, ceiling). It later became the now common phrase or name: Lowalani. A second nickname, *azu* (*adu*) figure, was given to Hia, because the worship of a figurative ancestor dates back to him. Thus he is like a sun (*luo sambua*), who appears in his descendants. Hence, this is a common event.

In the above mentioned song, cited by Møller, Hia is the ancestor of the Niassians. A quotation from Steinhart (1934: 371, n. 207) is remarkable – until now I could not find any message stating that Lowalani is considered as the Creator God:

Tot nog toe heb ik geen verhalen gevonden waaruit gebleken is, dat men zich *Lowalāni* als “Schepper” denkt.

Møller's observation is corresponding to this (1934: 162):

THOMAS schreibt ... auch weiter, dass es charakteristisch für die Niasser sei, den geringeren vor dem grösseren, den gottähnlichen Ahnen vor dem Gott selbst anzurufen. Die Konsequenz daraus, die jedoch THOMAS nicht zieht, muss dann sein, dass auch Lowalangi nicht der oberste Gott ist, sondern nur ein gottähnlicher Ahne, der oberste Ahne.

Thomas writes further, that it is characteristic for the Niassians to call on the inferior, the god-like ancestor prior to the superior, God himself. The consequence from this, yet which Thomas does not realize, must be that also Lowalangi is not the supreme god, but a god-like ancestor only, the supreme ancestor.

Until to date the Niassians view and respect their own parents and the uncle as Lowalangi here on earth, and with great naturalness they pass their view on. The uncle is only mother's brother. Besides these *lowalangi* here on earth it is stated that the other *lowalangi* are superior to them. The glorious ancestors are superior. The transfer of this name to God in Christian churches delayed for Christianisation.

Silewe

Das grosse mythologische Vorbild für einen niassischen ere ist SiLewe ..., die Mondgöttin (1934: 134).

The great mythical example for a Niassian *ere* is SiLewe, the moon goddess.

Møller knows of one Silewe only, who he believes has three names: Fase, Nazarata and Mazauwu. And there is also a daughter.

In fact, besides the daughter of Silewe there are at least two different persons carrying the same name Silewe: Silewe Amozua and Silewe Fase. They are sisters, Silewe Amozua is the older one. The word *amozua* comes from *a'ozu*: fulfilled, complete; *amozua*, therefore, does not mean transiency as Møller writes, but fulfillment, completion. Additional names are: Maduwu (crocodile) and Mazauwu (dragon fly). But she also was simply called Gilewe. Her younger sister Silewe Fase has other co-names, too: Maha and Göi. The meaning of *maha* is not known to me. But in the south of Nias there is the clan of the Sarumaha whose progenitor was Maha. The other name she got because of her jealousy of her sister whose deeds she wanted to emulate, saying: "Also I am Silewe" (*göi*: also).

In the mountainous region Bawölölö the tradition is different. There it is a man called Siliwi Mazauwu. The same story as the one about Silewe Amozua is told about him. Instead of his daughter he gave the men courting his daughter a wooden copy of her instead of his daughter.

Møllers praise of Silewe

SiLewe ist wie gesagt das Vorbild für alle eren, die grosse Zauberin, die alles kann, die Leben und Tod beherrscht, die über alle Kräfte in der Natur gebietet. Sie ist, wenn man will, die Natur selbst, die durch den ewigen Kreislauf, Leben, Tod und wieder neues Leben, alles nach ihrem Willen gestaltet und umgestaltet. SiLewe ist das Leben optimistisch gesehen, durch den stets wechselnden Mond symbolisiert (1934: 138).

SiLewe is the paragon for all *ere*, the great magician, who can do everything, who rules over live and death, and commands all forces of nature. She is, so to speak, nature itself, who creates and recreates at her own will the perpetual cycle of live and death. SiLewe is the optimistic view of life symbolized by the continually changing moon.

In Sifalagö Gomo the Silewe tradition is less mystical but more historical (Hämmerle 1986: 197–200). Silewe Amozua, or Silewe Nazaria by her dou-

ble name, is here the wife of the progenitor Hia.¹¹ Hia and his wife let their three sons down to Sifalagö Gomo Börönadu (*idada*: he lets down; *ladada*: they let down).

It is not correct if Møller says, that Luo Mewöna (the "sun in times past") was her husband. Her husband is definitely Hia Walani Adu, and he is different from Luo Mewöna. Furthermore, Møller translates the participle *sanofi* (*si hofi*) as: "she (Silewe) animates, she makes alive." But here it rather says that she consecrates. Silewe performs the consecration of the figures. In former times there was the belief that through the consecration the ancestor for whom the figure was made was actually present in the figure (Møller 1934: 135, verses 4, 5 ff.). Silewe sings and at the same time beats the Fondrahi drum. In the verses 67 and 68 the poetic word for drum is *aya-nia* (*n-aya-nia*), which is translated by Møller as "her magic charm." But the word only means "her ornament." The Fondrahi drum is her ornament (*aya-nia*).

Verses 65, 66, 75, and 76:
Balazinia ba wa'a'ere

Translation Møller (1934: 137):
Solchermassen ist die Macht ihres Priestertums (such is the power of her priesthood)

balazinia ba wo'adu

solchermassen die Kraft der Zaubermittel (such is the power of the magic charm)

In fact, in the Nias verses there is no talk of the power and strength of her magic charm. It must be translated:

Due to her work as a priest due to her function for figures. Sundermann (1892) translated *balazi* as "that what counts."

Verse 19
ifoli zambuzambua

Translation Møller (1934: 135):
sie gab Stimme, eines nach dem andern (she gave voice, one after the other)

In fact it must be translated: "she addressed each limb of the figure, one after the other."

11 *Ba lania si sa wenaita*: at (or: in) the sky, the one stratum. The poetic *lania* is used for *lani*, *langi*.

Verses 83 and 84:	Translation Møller (1934: 137):
<i>balazinia ba guli danö</i>	ein Zeichen ihrer Macht auf Erden (a sign of her influence on earth)
<i>balazinia ba zambulua</i>	ihrer Macht im Kreis des Weltalls (her influence in the universe)
	Furthermore, it must be translated:
<i>balazinia ba guli danö</i>	on earth all depends on her
<i>balazinia ba zambulua</i>	in the lowlands all depends on her

Only in central Nias does a concrete idea about Silewe exist. Here she belongs to the ancestors of the Niassians. With her the *adu*-phenomenon (*fo'adua*) on Nias started approximately 500 years ago.

E) Münsterberger – Cultural Analysis of Southeast Asia 1939

Most important for Münsterberger (1939) was his first chapter which deals with the alleged creation myths of Nias and Batu. Münsterberger (1939: 3, 6f.) says:

“Wer sich mit Sumatra befasst, sollte sich über Nias, Batu und Mentawai schon unterrichtet haben, da manches in den Mythen der Randinsel-Völker als Voraussetzung für das Verständnis der Sumatra- und Borneo-Erzählungen in Betracht kommt.”

Those concerned with Sumatra should already have informed themselves about Nias, Batu and Mentawai, as some of the myths of the neighboring islands are a prerequisite for the understanding of the narratives of Sumatra and Borneo.

“Wir betrachten zuerst den berühmten, von SUNDERMANN entdeckten Totengesang ... dieses seltene Dokument, das nur noch in den Gesängen von Batu ein Gegenstück hat.”

We first look at the famous death song discovered by Sundermann ... his rare document which finds its equivalent only in Batu songs.

The True Facts Based on Recent Research

The famous song, discovered by Sundermann, is basically not a death song but a song from the beginning of life, even if it could be sung at the death of a chief. Sundermann has most likely recorded this

song in the village of Lölöwua, 16 km from the capital Gunungsitoli. There he had lived in the missionary station since 1896. The home of the Lölöwua-clan is Mendröfa.

To me three different versions of this song were reported in 1995 and 1996 in the villages Hilizia, Lalai, and Fadoro Lauru (Hämmerle 1995: 431–457). Oddly enough these three villages are also home of the Mendröfa clan. These three versions did not only differ from the version recorded by Sundermann, but also among one another. Mendröfa, alias Ama Rozaman from the village of Lölöwua also published a different version under the title: “What Is the Cause of the Descent?” (*Börö Gotari Gotara*; in Mendröfa 1969).

Yet all versions have one thing in common: at the beginning it is about the becoming of the human being, i.e., anthropogenesis. And only after the clan had been told the nativity of the progenitor, the story of the genealogy of the clan up to the still living descendants was told, also mentioning the just deceased descendant. Although this song was sung in honor of a departed, it is no death song, however, but a song about the patrilinear progeny of the clan's ancestor.

Münsterberger (1939: 5)

“Durch eine komplizierte Götterhierarchie und verwickelte Abstammungslehre unterscheidet sich Nias merkwürdig vom übrigen Indonesien.”

Nias is remarkably different from the rest of Indonesia due to a complex hierarchy of gods and intricate theory of descent.

The True Facts Based on Recent Research

There is no hierarchy of gods! But there is a different descent of different tribes in different regions.

Münsterberger (1939: 16, 18)

“Aus der Windseele entstand ... Tuha Aloloâ-nangi mit der zweiten Erde, aus dessen Herzen wuchs der Baum Tora'a, vermutlich mit der dritten Erde.”

Tuha Aloloâ-nangi with the second earth arose from the soul of the wind. Out of this heart grew the tree Tora'a, presumably with the third earth.

“Der Gottesgedanke tritt völlig zurück, Löwalängis Aufgabe ist noch ganz unausgeprägt. So steht nicht die Wirksamkeit eines höheren Wesens, sondern die Naturkraft im Anfang.”

The idea of a God is completely pushed to the background. Löwalangi's task is still not specified. Hence not the virtue of a higher entity, but the force of nature is in its beginning.

The True Facts Based on Recent Research

Münsterberger understands correctly, that here not a higher being is concerned or the idea of God, but a fundamental force at the beginning of it all. He calls this force "soul of the wind" out of which comes Tuha Alölöa Nangi.

Alölöa Nangi is the extract of the wind. By melting gold, the sediment (*lölö*) or the pure gold is named *alölöa*. In modern times, the word *lölö* is mostly known in its rather negative meaning, namely as the chewed rest of the betel nut (*lölö nafa*), which is spit out or thrown away. In old times, the word *lölö* had a quite positive meaning, however. *Lölö moyo* means nest of the buzzard and is used as a village name as well. *Lölö'ana'a* (sediment of gold) also is often used as a village name. The positive meaning also comes to light in the Holy Scripture where it says that Mother Mary wrapped her child in swaddling clothes, meaning *i-lölö* in the Nias language.

The precious fruit of the womb following sexual intercourse (*angi, ani*) is the embryo, which means *alölöa nangi* in the symbolic Nias language. When the embryo grows and eventually becomes an ancestor, he is called Sir (*tuha*).

Münsterberger (1939: 15 f.)

"Man denkt also an eine hier ungenannte Gottheit oder möglicherweise an den Wind, d. h. eine Windgottheit" So here you think of an unnamed deity or perhaps of the wind, i.e., a god of the wind

The True Facts Based on Recent Research

Lowalangi is not the supreme god or even a god at all. The goal is not to equate the wind with a deity, but to equate the wind with the human sexuality. The numerous plastic phalluses seen on Nias are suggestive of this conclusion. Münsterberger is missing the point. Like the missionaries he makes the mistake of prematurely thinking about deities or "an unnamed deity," or a "god of the wind," or about "real entities." It is amazing, how Münsterberger later turns things upside down by saying (1939: 27 f.):

"Die Erzähler haben diese uralte, rätselhaft gewordene Legende nicht mehr begriffen, und die anderen Vorstellungen gewannen Oberhand."

The narrators of this ancient, mysterious legend did not understand it any longer, and the other ideas gained the upper hand.

It is an unfortunate reversal of things, because most obviously the researchers who are coming from outside are the one who did not understand the legends.

Together with Münsterberger we now turn to the myths of the south of Nias. The symbolic language of southern Nias differs from the one in the north. Therefore, we also find different metaphors in the description of anthropogenesis. In summary, the myths E, F, and H mentioned by Münsterberger give us the following picture.

Münsterberger about Batu and South Nias

Our mother Samihara Luo was sick for nine days. She scratched (*isa'a*) the dirt (*dra'i*) off her body and formed from it a figure as round (*owulo-wulo*) as a pea. She did this repeatedly and the figure became always bigger. She so created the earth.

As Samihara Luo was sick for nine days, the sequence of events is reversed in the song: Sick (pregnant) – scratching – the increasing plumpness of the body.

The True Facts Based on Recent Research in Baru and South Nias

Ama Yafe Hondrö, from the village of Onohondrö, who was the narrator of nearly all stories and songs in our book edited in 2008, made an objective statement: *Fanasa'a*, or scratching is the technical term for the bond of marriage. When in northern Nias the myths say that the winds are joking and play their games, sexual intercourse is meant. In southern Nias this is described with the symbolic term *fanasa'a* (scratching). The result of *fanasa'a* is the pregnancy of Samihara Luo. The ongoing pregnancy is described as the steady growth of the earth (in her womb).

Both in the north and in the south the growing womb in pregnancy is expressed with the same symbolic word: *tanö* (earth). Yet the cause for the growth of the earth is viewed differently. In the north, it is the man who time and again beats the earth: *i-bago danö*. This conveys the impression that repeated coitus makes the earth grow, as if the man is the cause for that, as if the man would create the earth. In the south, however, the cause for the growth of the earth lies in the lap of the woman,

who over and over scrapes the filth off her body and then kneads it with her fingers. So here it is the woman who creates the earth.

To create (to form, to produce) is the corresponding verb for *momböi*. In the Nias language she or he creates means *iwöwöi*. This word is, for example, also used for making pottery or for the carving of figures. So the misapprehension lays in the fact, that this word was equated with the biblical creation. For that reason, the “creating” ancestors of the Niasians had to be elevated to gods as well.

Various symbols are also used for the description of birth. In the symbolic language of the north birth is described by splitting a tree, whereas in the south a rock or stone (*batu, mbatu*) is splitted (*asila mbatu*): birth arising from stone.

Münsterberger about Batu and South Nias

In the myth our mother Samihara Luo has a second name, Inada Simadulo Hösi and Inada Simadulo Rao Watua, respectively (Münsterberger 1939: 35–50).

The True Facts on Nias

This second name is to describe the beauty of Samihara Luo. It means: our mother is like an egg (*adulo, si-m-adulo*) or like a white pebble in *hösi*-rock. Our mother is like an egg in the middle of hard and grey earth (*rao, ndrao*) (Hämmerle 1995: 520 f.). In northern Nias the word *hara* characterizes the evil. Ama Waogö from the village of So'i'iwa gave me a list of the names of forty different evils (Hämmerle 1995: 520 f.). In southern Nias, however, the word *hara* has always a positive meaning.

Summary

An explanation of the symbolic language shall be given in the following: The unnamed and unseen is that, which is occupied by fear and taboo, of which we speak only in pictures. Behind the “narrow strait” (*ba zalözö*: the vagina), which offers not even room for a sewing needle (*falölöwa cina*; needle Chinese) there is the dark, the darkness (*sogö-mi-gömi*). Thus, how to become a human is covered by mystery. The dead *sihai* or *luluö* is the placenta, the older sibling (*ga'a nono*) of a newborn. When a girl is born, the placenta is the girl's older sister, and when a boy is born, the placenta is his older brother. The placenta is carefully packaged and buried in prayer. The placenta allows nutrient uptake

and stands synonymous for the fertile soil on which plants can grow well.

The thesis of the first mother on the Batu Islands is adopted by Münsterberger for all of Nias, and even for the western regions of Indonesia as a whole. This must be corrected as follows: The original story of Siraso or from the first mother is related to the Gomo area, where tradition is more original and realistic. Then migration took place from Gomo to the south. The oral tradition experienced some changes in the south due to the ignorance of the geography of the source area, the old home in Gomo. Afterwards, when people migrated from the south of Nias to the Batu Islands, the difficulties are doubled. Again, neither the geography of southern Nias nor even of Gomo in the middle of Nias was known. *Fama crescit eundo*. Oral tradition changes by migration. Here on the Batu Islands, the local color penetrates into the myths: the abundance of fish and sea turtles, of whose shell all kinds of embellishment is made. So our primordial mother becomes the “turtle-alike.”

Münsterberger's intention fails, when trying to explain the myths and culture of all of Nias, Sumatra, and even the western regions of Indonesia by starting from the Batu Islands. This is like putting the cart before the horse. The further we move away from the center of the Nias culture, i.e., from the Gomo area in central Nias, the harder it is to understand the whole. It should be kept in mind that, at around the year 1500, people from the Gomo area in central Nias emigrated to the south of Nias. And in turn, at around the year 1760, people from the south of Nias migrated to the Batu Islands.

The Batu Islands and northern Nias are not the core area but the outer limits of the Nias culture. Gomo and central Nias are the cradle of the Nias civilization. In precolonial time, central and southern Nias were the culturally most significant areas on the island. The culture of Gomo had an enormous influence throughout Nias. In this particular area, oral tradition was very rich, but the literary sources are extremely sparse.

F) Misunderstandings in Suzuki's Work 1959

Suzuki verbatim: “Two Adu Horös, bisexual images, representing Silewe Nazarata (after Kleiweg de Zwaan 1922: 343). Figure on the left with male organs and feminine breasts was originally deposited in the National Museum of Ethnology, Leyden (no. 1895/4), but was destroyed in a fire in Paris, June, 1931. Figure on the right with female anatomy but with a face of a male (beard, mustache) depos-

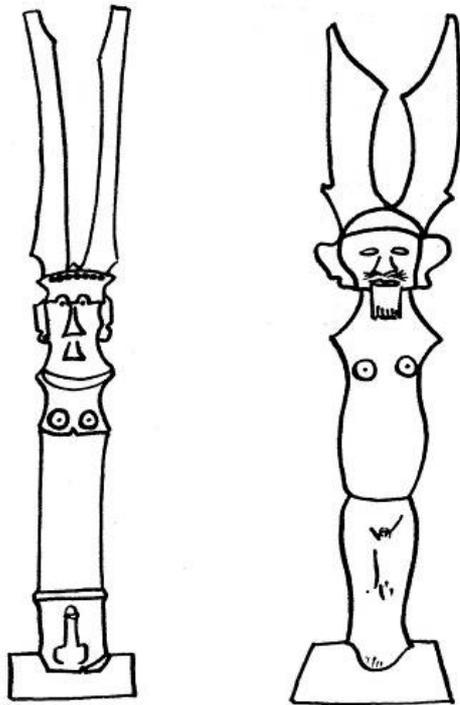


Fig. 4: “Frontispiece” (Suzuki 1959).

ited in the Tropical Museum, Amsterdam. For further descriptions of these figures see J. Kleiweg de Zwaan, 1922, 1930”.

The following was commented by Ama Yudiba Ndruru, an expert of old traditions from the village of Tögizita:

A female figure was adorned with a beard and moustache, because this looked much more sublime or “glorious” (*abölö molakhömi*), and in order to show that she was “the oldest” (*me ya’ia sia’a*) or the most brilliant of the clan. A broader mouth was also a distinguishing mark. Often a male figure was adorned with female breasts as well, e.g., on the stilts at the front of the house or as seen in the stilt figures [menhirs]. This was to demonstrate that the man was wealthy, that he could entertain guests, and that he provided for the entire village or clan at festivals. He supports the people the same as a mother provides for her children. A big name is: Balugu Samaeri (Balugu the provider).

One of the two old stilt figures (*behu*) in the village of Tögizita in the district Lölöwa’u was set up by the clan chief La’imba Tuha (the boar, the master). He was also called *tuha so’ota*, “the master, who has an udder,” since he was very portly and had large breasts. Otherwise the expression *ota* (udder) is not used but for pigs.

The four female breasts at the front of house of the former chief of Tögizita meant the following: I, the chief, got all my four sons married already. For each of them I have paid the bride-price, for each of them and for the entire village I have given a big celebration, and I now have four young women in the house (Hämmerle 1999: 377 f.). Nowhere on Nias is the oral tradition indicative of bisexuality.

The Most Cited Authors in the Thesis (1959) by Suzuki

Suzuki did not do his own research on Nias. He had access only to written and oral information from Europeans. The following table gives an overview of the authors mostly cited by Suzuki. If several authors were cited under the same footnote, then only the first named author of the citations counted.

Table: The most cited authors in the thesis of Suzuki (1959).

Year	Author	Quotes
1904–1909	E. E. W. G. Schröder (colonial official, controller)	342
1924–1939	Missionary Steinhart, Batu Islands, Lutheran Mission Society, NL	325
1865–1939	Heinrich Sundermann, 41 times cited Other missionaries of the Rheinisch Missionary Society (UEM) 142 times cited: Denninger, Kramer, Thomas, Lage-mann, Fehr, Fries, Lett, Ködding, Fric-henschmidt, Borutta, Fischer, Schlip-kötter, Reiche, Fischdick	183
1846–1942	Several Dutch colonial officials and academics: Nieuwenhuizen, Rosenberg, Rappard, Chatelin	109
1923–1927	Møller, the Danish physician in Dutch Services	31
1910	Kleiweg de Zwaan (scientist)	27
1939	Schnitger, F. M. (researcher)	18
1886	Modigliani (expedition of 6 months)	15

The Onesidedness in Literature

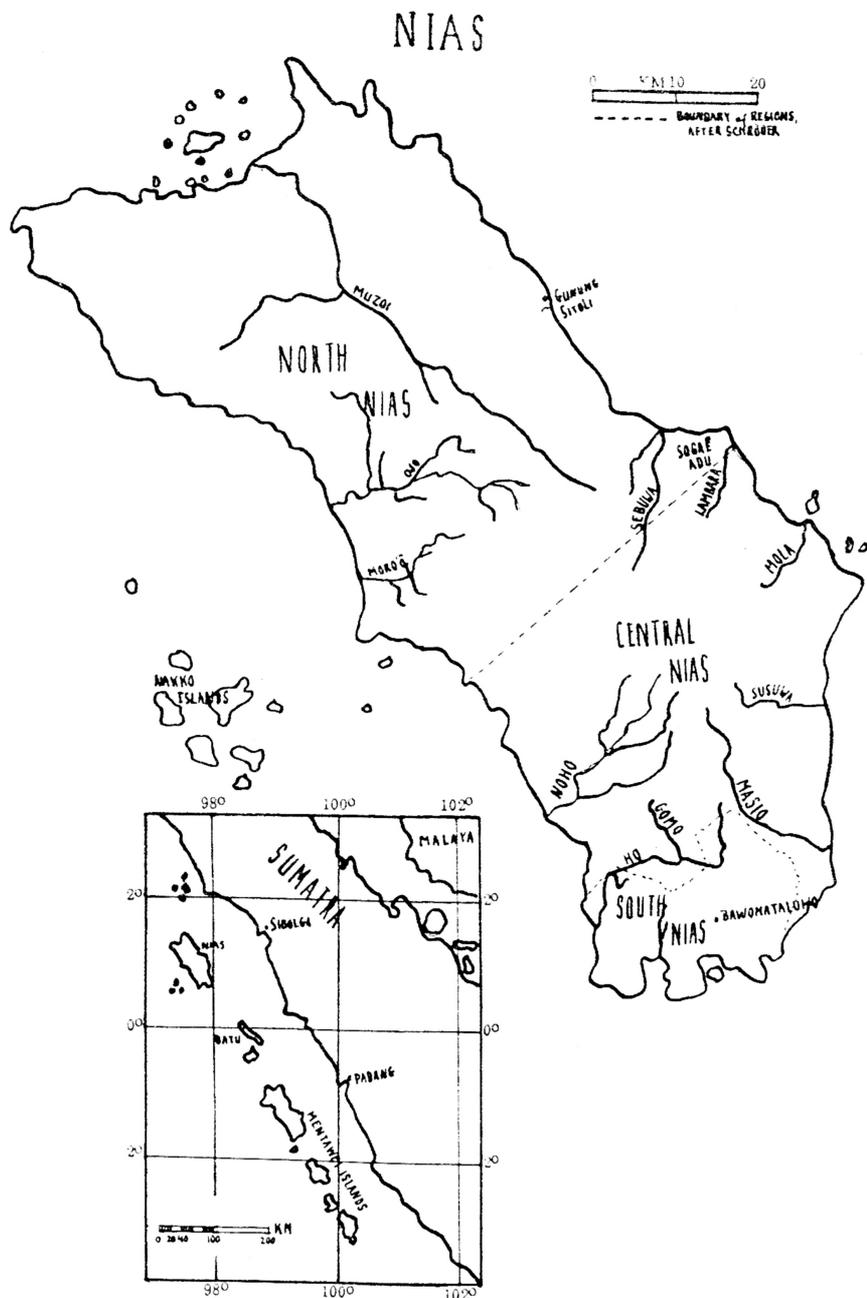
The literature available to Suzuki was primarily found in two regions. On the one hand, it was in the proximity or in the more distant environment of the capital Gunungsitoli where the Dutch government

and the Christian mission had their centers, and, on the other hand, on the Batu Islands, the best documented region on Nias. Here the direct contact with missionary Steinhart in Utrecht was of particular importance. Resources about the south and central parts of Nias are only found sporadically.

In precolonial times, however, southern and central Nias were the most important regions. On the Batu Islands we encounter the cradle of culture. According to Suzuki, the ancestors of most of the inhabitants of the Batu Islands had emigrated from the south of Nias around the year 1760, while the inhab-

itants of southern Nias long before had emigrated from the Gomo region in central Nias. The culture of Gomo had an enormous influence throughout Nias. But particularly in this region literary sources are very scarce. Therefore, only literature from two regions, the Batu Islands and the environs of Gunungsitoli, was actually available to Suzuki.

However, that does not take us to the core region of the Nias culture but to its periphery. This becomes also obvious on the map of Nias by Schröder where we can find an extraordinary concentration of topographic information especially in central



Map 2: Map of Nias (after Suzuki 1959).

Nias and in Gomo. According to the numerous place names the largest population density of the ancient Nias is assumed in those regions. This, on the other hand, justifies the conclusion for this region's cultural significance.

The focus of Suzuki's dissertation is on the 1st chapter: "Nias Deities and Cosmology. The term LOWALANGI – Myths from N., C. and S. Nias – SILEWE NAZARATA – The Divine Trickster – ADU HORÖ – The Cock – The Serpent – The World-Tree."

Thesis of Suzuki

The Nias cosmology is conceived of consisting of nine layers. Silewe Nazarata is in the uppermost layer in the sky where also Lowalangi also resides. Only she was able to restore the cosmic order and unity after disturbances were brought into that order. Between Lowalangi in the upperworld and Lature Danö in the underworld, her followers (the priestesses and priests) occupy the various rungs, as she is the high priestess. She is the mediator between the people and Lowalangi as well as between Lowalangi and Lature. ... it is said of her that she created the world and man, forming the earth into shape from the dirt collected from her body then created humans whom she gave wisdom and understanding (Suzuki 1959: 11).

The True Facts on Nias

Silewe Nazarata is the wife of Hia. These immigrants brought the progress to Nias at around A.D. 1450. Her other names are Silewe Ana'a (gold) and Silewe Barasi (clean; from the Indonesian word *bersih*). The nine layers do not affect cosmology but anthropogenesis, the nine months of pregnancy. The "disturbances" must be seen as the disputes between the indigenous people (Laturadanö, Ono Mbela, etc.), who have been living on Nias at least since 12,000 years, and the incomers (Hia Walangi Adu/Lowalangi).

The Niassian expression *fomböi* simply means the creating of something, e.g., to make pottery (*somböi*: he makes; *momböi*: to make, to form). Silewe Nazarata inaugurated the first ancestor figures. This should not be interpreted as an act of creation. Accordingly, Lowalangi is not the creator of everything, but by his sexual career he became the progenitor of the tribe of Niha.

Suzuki (1959: 14):

Still another name for her is Fase; Fase is a flag in the form of a cock found on top of every coffin of a chieftain or member of the nobility level. This corresponds to

Steinhart's supposition, when he asks, "Did one originally imagine Silewe to be a spirit hovering and fluttering around in the air ...?"

Today's Situation and Facts on Nias by Comparison

Fase is not another name for Silewe. Fase is the nickname for Silewe's younger sister. In the south of Nias, this younger sister is given three different nicknames: Silewe Fase, Silewe Maha, and Silewe Göi. The nickname Göi was given to her, because she was jealous of her older sister and said so to speak: "What she can do, I can do all the same (*göi*)." As for the nickname Maha, I did not yet hear of an explanation. But one of the five progenitors in the area around Maenamölö in southern Nias was called Maha by his proper name. Suzuki actually was only interested in the nickname Fase: "FASE is a flag in the form of a cock ...". But Ama Yafe Hondrö, an authority in the field of morals in the village of Onohondrö in the south of Nias explained to me this expression as follows: *fase* and *faze* are different. *Faze* is the high headdress (*rai Salawa*) of men. This is called jewelry (*faze-waze*), sometimes also spoken like *fazi*. It indicates that the wearer of this jewelry is a very brave man. The headdress of a chief is usually adorned with the head of the hornbill. The small flags do not have the form of a rooster, but are red and white strips of cloth hanging down, which are attached to two towering sticks of Rotan.

Only once did I hear that *fase* could perhaps be associated with *afasi*, fine cotton, which was used for the weaving of delicate fabrics. But it has nothing to do with *faze*.

The actual Silewe, the older sister, bears the poetic name Nazaria Nazarata. In Gomo she is known by this name as the wife of Hia and also shows more realistic features, whereas southern Nias is home of the more fairytale-like stories of the two Silewe sisters or of the daughter of the older Silewe.

In the mountainous region of Lölömatua we find again another version. Here an ancestor by the name of Siliwi Mazauwu is known to have given a wooden doll in exchange for his daughter to the men who had courtshipped his daughter. When war was made against him, he transformed the hostile man at arms to stone. In the south of Nias, the same story is told about the older Silewe, where she is also called Silewe Mazauwu.

Suzuki (1959: 11 f.):

One day Silewe cut off the head of a child and kept its body and the blood. When the mother returned, Silewe

poured the blood back into the body, placed its head in the proper place and revived the child. ... In this respect she manifests the typical features characteristic of the “divine trickster” in primitive culture.

Today’s Situation and Facts on Nias by Comparison

Suzuki has not taken into consideration that the Niassians differentiate between fairy tale (*amaedola*), symbolic language, and chronicle (parentage). The story about the foundation of the village, stories about warriors, genealogies, etc. run under chronicle. The symbolic language can be applied everywhere. Yet where it is used, for example, for explaining anthropogenesis it outlines real facts. Fairy tales (*amaedola*), on the other hand, can be told in order to teach, to admonish, and to give advice. It is important to conceive the intention, but not to take the narrative at face value. The Niassians say: “*Ha amaedola*” – Only a fairy tale.

Suzuki (1959: 11, 12, 15):

Besides this she [Silewe] is thought to be a sister to both, Lowalangi and Lature Danö. ... she is also married to Lowalangi. One myth tells us that it was she who was placed at the source of the river and her brother, Lowalangi, at the mouth. Thus they would correspond with the first human pair.

[Silewe] substituted a life-size wooden image of her daughter whose lifelike movements were indistinguishable from those of a living person.

Her association with the upperworld is clear: gold, cock, marriage to Lowalangi, residence in the upperworld. Her association with the opposite world is just as clear: crocodile, serpent, fish, residence by the mouth of the river. She is also a deity to be feared, for the Niassians call her Silewe, “the feared” [she] is also the Moon Goddess, and moreover is thought to be the cause of all evil.

Today’s Situation and Facts on Nias by Comparison

Lowalangi and Lature Danö are two very different progenitors. Silewe is not their sister or a divine sorcerer. Neither is she married to a god by the name of Lowalangi but to the earthly Hia, whose embellishing co-names are: Hia Walangi Adu, Hia Walangi Luo, and Lowalangi. Lowalangi, i.e., Hia was conceived during sexual intercourse. As to the symbolic language of sexuality, Hia is an extraction of the wind, “a densification of the wind” (*alölöa nangi*).

The Niassian term *ulu nidanö* does not only signify spring of a river but the entire headwaters. Silewe had not settled down at the spring of the River Gomo but in Sifalagö Börönadu at the headwaters of the River Gomo. After she had twins, which was regarded a violation of a taboo, the newborn twins were separated to avoid incest. The boy was taken to the mouth of the river, the girl remained at the headwaters. There is no upper and lower world.

The myth, that Silewe has cheated the men who courtshiped her daughter by giving them a wooden figure in place of her, belongs to the fairy tale realm. It probably had a real cause prompting this fairy tale. The assertions by Suzuki that Silewe is “the feared” and “the cause of all evil,” relate to the fairy tale-like stories about the two sisters in the south of Nias, who both are called Silewe.

Silewe Fase, the younger sister, presumed that also she could cut off the childrens head and thereafter revive them. When she failed she had to flee from being killed.

Suzuki (1959: 15):

These contrasting features however should not be too strongly emphasized for she not only represents the bipolar antithesis and dualism, but above all unity and monism.

Zarata is connected with the term Lasara = dragon or snake, and Lasara is “... the representation of the world-snake”.

Results of Recent Research

The fact is that the word *zarata* does not exist but the two nicknames of Silewe which are Nazaria, Nazarata. It is impossible to equate Zarata or Nazarata with Lasara. The old Niassian word for boat is *lasara*. Therefore, to commemorate the immigration of the ancestors of the Niassians, who had arrived on the island by boat, many villages were named Lasara. The word for dragon is *naga* and the word for python is *sawa* or *ulö zawa*. Also this word has nothing to do with Lasara and Nazarata. By unsustainable word constructions and identifications of various words Suzuki reached abstruse results.

The Bisexuality of Silewe

Suzuki (1959: 15):

This ambivalence is climaxed by her bisexual nature. This may be shown in various ways. As Fase she is a cock; ... It would not be exaggerating to say that in her up-

perworld role she shows the “male principle.” ... But a further proof of her masculine aspect is that she is also called Lowalangi.

Results of Recent Research

As already explained above, the rooster has nothing to do with Silewe. Consequently there is no masculine aspect. Even if on Nias the parents and the uncle are named Lowalangi, meaning that the mother as a parental unit is also named Lowalangi, it does not prove the masculine aspect of Silewe.

Suzuki (1959: 15, 16):

Yet nothing is more convincing of her [Silewe] bisexuality than an examination of the most important sacred image, among the hundreds in Nias, called Adu Horö.

... from Schröder we learn that the Adu Horö is very often placed along side another such Adu called the Tabalina (or Tambalina) to the Adu Horö. Now Tabalina is the term used to designate Silewe as the wife of Lowalangi. The Tabalina image is also described as Dona N'ija = his [the Adu Horö's] wife.

The True Facts Based on Recent Research

Suzuki did not understand the difference between the words *tambali* (*tambali-nia*) and *tambalina*. Both words have the same root: *tambai*, the side; *ba zi tambai-nia*, at his side. Based on that the word *tambali*, the half, is derived. This word also expresses: side by side. But here *tambali* is always referred to a oneness, one thing at the side of the other thing. For example, one of the things can be the ancient Dutch guilder, and *tambali* is the 50 cent coin, one half of the whole thing, so to speak. Suzuki confused the following words:

tambalina: the representative of the chief, the second man to the chief
tambali-nia: his half, his better half, i.e., his wife.

Also the word *tambalina* has the same root. It is solely used for that man who stands by the chief's side. The above facts have been correctly recognized by Kleiweg de Zwaan. At one point he reports on a figure which was called “tendrö-m-bēlā,” and then says: “The second adu, ‘the guy’ (tambalina) of the former, is situated inside the house near the bank” (1913: 57).

After Ama Waigi Hondrö, the main informant of the two books “Famatö Harimao” (Hämmerle 1986) and “Omo Sebua” (Hämmerle 1990), Adu Horö is

a nonbisexual male figure. In southern Nias there were only two Adu Horö figures, one in the meeting house (*omo bale*), the other in the house of the chief (*omo sebua*). In the chief's house this figure was standing on the stairs next to the door in the large guest room.

When the chief had imposed a death sentence and then returned to his house, he laid his hands on the Adu Horö, saying: “You take this crime on you!” (*Ya'ugö zangokhögö horö hö'ö!*) The Adu Horö had to save the chief from bloodshed and thus free him from the evil consequences (*fameta gesuanö*). In the public meeting house he also put his hands on the head of the Adu Horö to unload his offenses on him. There he left his guilt (*gaö toroi horö-nia*). Would he not do so, it would affect his pigs, or his children would fall sick and evil would take him.

Suzuki (1959: 16):

Furthermore Schröder found the Adu Horö to be called the Föfo (lit. = “one of them” ... “that which corresponds to ...) of Lasara, the serpent.

The True Facts Based on Recent Research

The word *föfo* does not exist. Only *föfö* (the other end) or *fofo* (bird). “Bird of Lasara” (*fofo* of Lasara) does not make sense. In Sundermann's dictionary (1892) it says: “*si föfö*, the other end, fig. genitalia.” *Föfönia* means “the other end, its corresponding part.” If, for example, a man says *föfönia*, the additional wife is meant; and vice versa, the corresponding part of the woman is the man. The right version is *föfö* Lasara and means the other complementary part or the partner of Lasara.

Now, if the Adu Horö in the house is called *föfö* Lasara, it would mean: This Adu Horö here is the relevant part, the companion or partner to the Lasara head at the front of the house. The representations of crocodiles at the entrance of a village are not mentioned *lasara*, but *lawölö* such as in the village Bawömataluo.

The Rooster

Suzuki (1959: 18 f.) says:

The Cock (La'ija or La'ia) was already introduced as an uperworld figure and Lowalangi was said to take the form of the cock perched upon a spear point. ... the cock (Lowalangi or Silewe) holds the balance of life and death over man.

The True Facts Based on Recent Research

For Suzuki, Lowalangi (Hia) and Luo Mewöna are identical. But that is wrong. Lowalangi (Hia) and Luo Mewöna are very different. According to the myths, Luo Mewöna is the youngest of nine sons of Sirao. He fell to the legacy of Teteholi Ana'a because only he was able to climb on the lance and could sit on the spearhead like a rooster. But he did not take the shape of a rooster. For the Niassians this is only a parabel to teach modesty. The eight older sons of Sirao failed in the contest because they had been very egoistic.

The Serpent

Suzuki (1959: 20) wrote:

The Serpent (Sawa Nagara, Dsawa N., Lasara, Haria) was likewise encountered earlier as an underworld figure represented by Latue Danö, not to mention Silewe ... the coffin itself is termed a Lasara as well, as is a boat.

The ambivalence of the serpent-bird and the dualism between them is expressed in much of Nias art and shows the fusion of the bird-serpent figure in various combinations (e.g. hornbill-serpent, cock-crocodile, etc.) but which always represent one thing: the underlying unity of the upper- and underworld, or the society as a whole. The bird and serpent are the totemic emblems of the cosmos and represent the dualism/ambivalence but also its fusion, i.e. the underlying monism or totality. These two principles are carried out with rigorous "logical consistency."

The True Facts Based on Recent Research

Lasara is the old term for boat. It is not linked to snake. Moreover, *lasara* is never used for coffin. Yet common are expressions which would mean for coffin that "it is made like a *lasara*" (*ni'o-lasara*), or that it has "a face like a *lasara*" (*ni'o-bawa lasara*). The official term for the chief's coffin is *hasi nifolasara* (coffin made like a *lasara*). Consequently, in this case it is not about the head of a rooster, but about the familiar head of the monster which combines several animal symbols: a deer's big eyes, antlers and ears, a hornbill's big nose, a tiger's set of teeth, a duck's big and wide opened bill, and sometimes a monkey on top of it. But we cannot find "ambivalence of the serpent-bird and the dualism between them ... expressed in ... the bird-serpent figure ... (e.g. hornbill-serpent, cock-crocodile, etc.)" The whole point of the oneness is that all of these symbols are to symbolize the authority of the

chief: he hears, sees, and smells everything, he has punch, he can live up to his expectations, he reaches up high, etc. These symbols "are carried out with rigorous "logical consistency." *Lasara* has no place in the paragraph on the snake.

And as far as the coffin is concerned, it was only reserved for chiefs. In central and southern Nias, dead persons were always put on a cot and abandoned to the ground or they were put in a bast bag or on a primitive bamboo rack and hung up on a tree. In the year 1908, the Dutch colonial government imposed a prohibition that the dead had to be buried instead of being layed out on the ground.

Sawa Nagara is one species of a python snake. It is also called snake of the rice field (*ulö sawa*: snake ricefield). The borrowed word *sawa* stems from the Indonesian *sawah*. This is the largest snake species on Nias. According to a myth it rests under the ground coiled up like a wreath, comparable to a wreath-like drip mat, on which one places the round bottom of a pot. If the snake starts moving, her movement causes an earthquake.

According to another myth it is the task of Lature Danö, who lives under the ground (*arö danö*), to sustain the earth. The dispute with Lowalangi was to prove who is stronger. When Lature Danö thereupon had the earth shake, Lowalangi said acknowledgingly: "You are the stronger." Therefore, at an earthquake the Niassians shout: "You are strong" (*abölö ndra'ugö*). For them it feels as if he wishes to shift off the burden of the earth. And, therefore, people call out to him during an earthquake that he should calm himself down, because he was still strong enough to carry the earth. Thereby they acknowledge the power of Lature Danö to keep him from having the earth shake any longer. These myths vary depending on the region.

There are other snake species still on Nias: *manu bawa*, *matio*, *sita* a. o. For the *sita* snake also refer to the pertaining paragraph in the book "Nias – eine eigene Welt" (Hämmerle 1999: 382). The village of Tögizita, in the district Lölöwa'u, is named after this snake: hole (*tögi*) of the *sita* snake. The basic color of this snake is black. Head and tail of the male *sita*, however, are red. In southern Nias this snake is called *faulo simatua*. Its bite can be fatal.

Suzuki calls only the *haria* a very poisonous serpent on Nias. In the myth the term for this snake is used for a giant sea serpent which devours men. But the *haria* is a land snake just as the python. In the myth, however, its name is translated into the dangers of the sea, where it is the *haria* which devours men. In the myth the serpent is outwitted and killed by a dauntless man. This man goes out to sea with a bag full of betel nuts to offer to the *haria*. Repeat-

edly he asks the *haria* to stretch out her neck so that he could pour in the betel nuts. As a result the stretched neck of the *haria* became thinner and thinner. Finally the courageous man could smash it with one sword thrust.

The remaining question is, why Suzuki does not mention the other iconic animals of the Niassians? Why is there no mentioning of the deer, whose antlers can be found in houses everywhere, or of the boar, whose mandibles we find in many houses. Also monkey and shark are missing, although they are found in many sculptures, and equally the dwarf deer whom we encounter in several animal stories.

Suzuki (1959) writes:

In all, we are dealing not with three distinct gods but aspects of the two important principles of the Nias religion: dualism/ambivalence and monism or totality. Lowalangi represents the upperworld aspect and all its ramifications; Lature Danö, the underworld aspect with all its attendant features. Yet despite this dualism they form a unity and totality best expressed by Silewe Nazarata who embraces the bi-polar contrasts of upperworld-underworld" (17) ... "Silewe Nazarata as the total tree-bird-serpent, upper-and underworld aspect and thus of the cosmos itself, is imperative ..." (24).

That the figure of [the] creator, benefactor and trickster is represented in Silewe Nazarata is clear; in the role of [the] creator, she represents the monistic aspect, as benefactor she is closely associated with Lowalangi ... [In this sense] the three gods, Lowalangi, Lature Danö and Silewe Nazarata [must be seen] and the seemingly interchangeable roles they take" (17).

... in Nias one is confronted with a triad which came into being as a result of the religious forms losing their connection with the social system and forming a system of their own. [It appears that] this movement towards the formation of an independent system, ..., was arrested where the missionaries wielded the most influence" (18).

To make a brief statement: Suzuki's arguments for a bisexual Silewe, for the trias of gods, and the religious system of the Niassians fail all along the line. The system of the Niassians is merely and simply that: conception, anthropogenesis, birth, and the genealogy of the patrilinear clan.

Suzuki's first chapter concludes with a quotation by Steinhart (1959: 24): "Deep in the heart of the Niasans lives the belief in an existence of the world-tree, a kind of 'tree of knowledge of good and evil' ... the giver of all costly gifts and all perfect gifts"¹². This tree is nowhere to be looked for

or to be found other than in the anthropogenesis of the Nias myths. This will be explained more fully at the end of this article.

"Closing Remarks"

On the pages 137–138 Suzuki closes his book (1959) with "Closing Remarks." With his results of the first chapter he thinks to have revealed the system of the Nias religion and culture, and that the following chapters can only be understood thanks to these results. Hence we can immediately proceed to these "Closing Remarks." The studies of the Nias deities served him as a basis for "The Religious System and Culture of the Nias" and he goes on:

It has been shown that contrary to the views of the missionaries, the most important deity is not Lowalangi, but Silewe Nazarata, for she is the total deity, which is to say, this deity is the divine trickster and is the goddess of the total cosmos, representing the monistic aspect of the Nias cosmos. Lowalangi, deity of the upperworld, and Lature Danö, of the underworld, manifest the dualistic aspects of the cosmos and in turn are aspects of Silewe Nazarata. ... The analysis of the divine trickster made by Prof. de Josselin de Jong was of basic importance in the study of this system, since it provided a clue for a better understanding of the deities of the triad just mentioned ... (137).

"Ancestor worship" is in the final analysis, nothing less than the belief in the incarnation of totems and deities. ... The same may be said of the Nias "soul-complex." By the same token, any projected studies of Nias personality or cultural change would do well to take this religious system and its workings into account.

Finally I believe the orthodox standpoint which divides Nias into three distinct cultural regions, will have to be reviewed and revised since the cultural differences between the regions of North, Central and South Nias are more apparent than real (138).

In the above interpretations we could, in part, approve Suzuki's lastly expressed view, albeit in a way undreamt of for Suzuki. Because throughout Nias it is about one and the same at first glance, namely: conception, anthropogenesis, and genealogy. It is about the people and their future. Yet in order to arrive at this result, the traditions of the individual regions must separately be heeded and evaluated, otherwise one is easily misguided. In the south, for example, *sarambia* is the carved figure of a chief's wife in all her finery. A few kilometers north, however, in the administrative regions Lahusa

¹² Suzuki (1959: 147, fn. 217): "Steinhart 1940; also see ibid. 1936: 429 nl.; Schröder 490. Steinhart thinks this is why the

Christmas tree has been easily and joyfully accepted by the Christian Niasans ...".

and Gomo, *sarambia* means the chair on which the deceased chief is seated.

Therefore, Suzuki's recommendation to consider the religious system as illustrated by him for possible studies on Nias involves a great danger. Most of the Nias bibliography is written in Dutch and German. But unlike English, the first foreign language in modern Indonesia, these languages are not relevant in this country. Therefore, just from the language alone does Suzuki's dissertation written in English exercise great influence on Indonesian students, and the scientific guise of this work certainly contributes to gain a convincing entry to universities in Indonesia.

On the other hand, the Niassians lack competent people critically examining Suzuki's dissertation and then authentically demonstrate their own, original culture and religious faith. And most of the old Niassians who could tell authentically about their culture and religion have died already. Therefore, we were talking about danger before. It lies in the fact that if Indonesian students in general and the university students from Nias in particular defer any longer doing something, they will not be capable anymore to verify the original culture and religion on site. It becomes more and more difficult to find reliable informants on Nias, who still know about the old culture and religious faith. In addition, for a non-Niassian the language barrier will become a massive obstacle. One could easily imagine that, following the line of the least resistance, Suzuki's dissertation could make the winning run in the immediate future. Because as soon as the elderly will be dead, and as soon as the elite of Nias at the dawn of the third millennium will replace the own cultural void by the results of Suzuki, nothing will any longer be a stumbling block to this winning run. It is, therefore, the goal of this work in hand to beware the Nias people of an estrangement of its own past history. Apart from that, a realistic view of the own past will much more contribute to the search of identity than all of the nicest ethnological theories and systems if they pass by the truth.

Two Nias experts, Jerome Allen Feldman (1977; 1990) and Alain M. Viaro, have long expressed their dissatisfaction over the results of Suzuki in personal discussion with the author. As for the topographical site of the installation of Nias villages, so Alain M. Viaro (and Arlette Ziegler) refuted the results of Suzuki in a very precise field study of architecture (Viaro 1980).

Our Statement

A small group entered Nias, around 600 to 800 years ago, coming, e.g., from the opposite Chinese harbour and settlement of Singkuang in Sumatra, only 110 km away. The most important representative of this group was Hia. The wife of Hia was Silewe Nazarata in the village of Sifalagö Gomo. This group brought the development to Nias. Famous names were given to Hia: Hia Walangi Adu, Hia Walangi Luo. And after his death he was named Laŵa Laní, which changed into Lowalani or Lowalangi. He is the most famous ancestor in the South of Nias.

Lature Danö is the ancestor of an indigenous tribe who lived in caves (Hoa Binh Culture) more than 12,000 years ago. There were also earlier tribes like the descendants of Bela, the Ono Mbela, who lived on the top of trees. There was no dualism or "bi-polar contrasts of upperworld-underworld," but tension and controversy between the indigenous people and the new immigrants.

This is in accordance with our recent molecular genetic data, supporting that the population of Nias goes back to a few forefathers (founders) who almost completely replaced the ancestral tribes. However, we have no idea of what nature the selective pressure was. One reason might be that the native population had been affected by diseases brought by the invaders for which they had not built up internal immunities.¹³

The Term Lowalangi in Christian Religion

First of all, we realized that Lowalangi, whom Deninger believed to be the Supreme God of the Niassians, was only a notable ancestor, namely Hia. Consistent with Suzuki we can say that the missionaries have acted incorrectly by choosing the name Lowalangi for God in the Christian church on Nias. But it was perhaps lucky under the circumstances (blessing in disguise), because the proper name of that ancestor was not Lowalangi, but Hia. Lowalan(g)i was the glorious name bestowed to him posthumously. It simply revealed something about the event at that time, namely that Hia's heart was retained in a bottle on a beam "above the ceiling" (*laŵa lani/langi*). In the course of time this statement *laŵa lani* turned to *lowalani*. To give an example, in the village of Lahemo, 6 km away from the subdistrict Gidö, there is a stone with the alleged "foot print of Ho," in the Nias language *lahe Ho*.

13 Kennerknecht (2009); Van Oven et al. (2011); Kennerknecht et al. (in press).



Fig. 5: The fruit of Sigaru Dora'a: A new born child.

But this pronunciation sounded clipped. Therefore, the second *h* was changed to *m*, smoothing down the sound of the word. So the easily pronounceable name for the village of Lahemo came up.

Luckily the loanword *lani/langi*, taken on from the Indonesian *langit*, could mean the ceiling as well as the sky. It only takes the second version in order to find a suitable solution. Hence the Lowalan(g)i of the Christian religion is the god who is beyond the visible sky.

Interpretation of the Myths

Before we will get to the interpretation of the myths it should be pointed out, that the author not only resorts to the three myths published before his own collection, but in addition has collected, documented, translated into German, and illustrated 13 other myths (Hämmerle 1999)¹⁴.

14 In Hämmerle "Nias – eine eigene Welt" there are 16 Nias myths about the origin of men: 1 myth collected by Sundermann "Bei einem Toten" (At a Dead Person) [misguiding title] (41–46), 1 myth by Thomsen "Die Sage vom Stammvater Hija. Ein Gesang aus Mittelnias" (The Legend of the Progenitor Hija. A Song from Central Nias) (236–250), 1 myth by Mendröfa "Böröta Gotari-gotara" (The Beginning of Ancestry) (47–66), and 13 myths by Hämmerle (149–221).



Fig. 6: To become coconut fruits, Sigaru Nohi must be opened.

From all of these myths one shall be singled out. By means of an excerpt of this myth the new interpretation shall be demonstrated. All these myths relate to the same subject. At first, the conception and the development of a human being is depicted in a symbolic language, followed by the enumeration of the patrilinear ancestry which continues to the living descendants of this one ancestor. (See table below.)

The Anthropogenesis

Usually a genealogical tree starts with an essay about the development of humans in the mother's womb, which we will call here anthropogenesis (Hämmerle 1999: 58). The symbolic language differs depending on the region. In the north of Nias sexual intercourse is described as winds that joke and palter with someone. The symbols can also be aggressive: He (the man) hits the other (the woman) with a spear or a sword. *Gari* is the name of a war sword. When a young man has reached puberty, they say about him: His *gari* is already there (*no tohare garinia*). *Gari* is symbolizing the penis.

Or: He (the man) strikes the earth (the woman) several times, so that the earth is successively increasing. The incarnation begins at the top, i.e., ninth layer (*fenaita*). There a woman created the first earth. The process in the womb of the woman continues from the top (first) earth down to the eighth earth which is close to the ninth earth on which we

The Time of the Birth of the Example of the Myth of Fati'aro Waruwu from the Village So'i'iwa¹⁵

The Visual Language of Myth	The Figurative Meaning
27. There is a seed that I do not know.	The seed means the human sperm.
28. It is as little as the hōwa seed.	As little as the spinach seed.
29. First he put it on the earth.	The "earth" means the "woman." When the man put his seed on the earth, that is coitus.
30. He dig it in beside the entrance of the Lord's village.	The "entrance of the village" (<i>bawa göli</i>) is the "vagina."
31. It takes twice four days,	After fertilization, the pregnancy becomes visible.
32. then red filaments appear.	This is compared with the red filaments of the corn ¹⁶ .
33. A new sprout comes, smooth as oil.	
34. This is the tori'i tora'a tree.	Not the tori'i tora'a tree of the moon (<i>bawa</i>), as Schröder said, but the tori'i
35. The tori'i tora'a tree of the mouth.	tori'a tree of the mouth (<i>bawa</i>), the vagina.
36. One day, not too long thereafter,	The contractions of the pregnant
37. a strong wind comes,	women are like a strong wind.
38. driving through the tori'i tora'a tree,	The great earth, the body of the preg-
39. The tori'i tora'a tree of the mouth.	nant woman is in labor.
40. It shakes the surface of the great earth.	The wind or labor shake the woman.
41. Below, the sea runs over, the surface of the water (in other myths: <i>molö idanö Zea, molö idanö Langi</i>)	The amniotic sac ruptures, the amniotic fluid flows out. Below, the water of the sky flows over.
42. The trunk gapes open, because it is split,	The River Zea has high water. The birth begins. In this case the woman
43. something happens that makes us wonder,	is kneeling in a right position on the floor and holds with her hands a rope that is attached to a ceiling beam.
44. it becomes a body like a baby.	The anthropogenesis is amazing.

live. This was the anthropogenesis of the progenitor from the first to the ninth earth, from conception to birth. When the kneeling woman gives birth, then her child is let down (*nidada*) to the ninth earth. In reverse order, the layers (*fenaita*) or the skys (*langit*) are counted. In the beginning there are nine layers that separate the embryo from his birth. Here the countdown begins. From the ninth layer down to the bottom layer the number of layers is getting less and less. The last separating layer corresponds with the eighth earth. Here the humans in the Teteholi Ana'a are like in the heaven above. This is the mysterious founder village of all Niassian people (*tete*: above, *holi*: on; *teteholi*: on the sky's layer). The ornamental epithet can change (*ana'a*: ordinary gold; *hamo*: gold dust; *balaki*: pure gold). From here man comes

down to the earth entering in it. A woman was reported to me who has tried for three days to give birth by holding the rope hanging from the ceiling beams: *tölu ngaluo ba dauge*.

S. Welther Mendröfa (1981) describes in a picturesque language the size of the eight earth. The difficult counting of layers and earths is not systematically done by Mendröfa. By listing the different balance weights the strong Dutch influence is seen, e.g., by the use of the silver florins. The different balance weights are listed according to a table by Modigliani (1890: 152, Fig. 8). The original Nias weights are plant seeds.

15 The Origin of Man – Böröta Niha (Hämmerle 1999: 141–148).

16 To the question, "how is our corn prepared?" the answer might be: "It has already red filaments" (*no morumi lakha*).



Fig. 7: The size of the 1st Earth: 1 *hita* (0,03 gr.). Its size is like *bulu faliera*, a “weighing of the gold.”

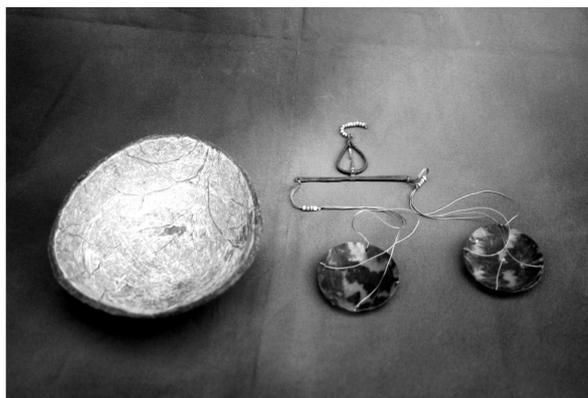


Fig. 8: The size of the 2nd Earth: 1 *lahare* (0,25 gr.). Its size is like *gadi (gazi)*, a segment of coconut shell, which is used as a flywheel on the spindle (*gadi*).



Fig. 9: The size of the 3rd Earth: 5 *lahare* (1,37 gr.). Its size is like *bola nafa*, the sack of Betelnut.



Fig. 10: The size of the 4th Earth: 10 *saga*. Its size is like a *niru*, a winnowing shofel. [*saga* is a shrub 2–3 m high; the cods are in a pod, are red with a black dot].

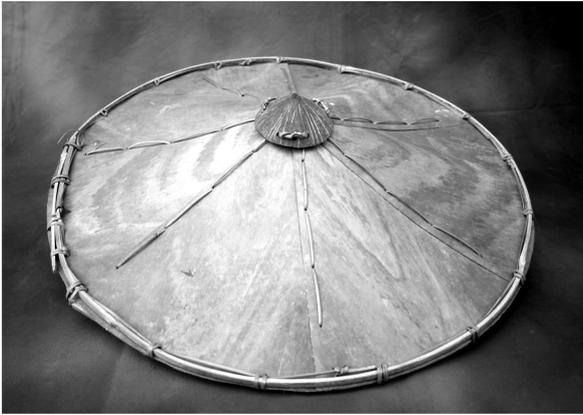


Fig. 11: The size of the 5th Earth: 1 *lahare* (0,25 gr.). Its size is as big as a hat *Bihara* (*sōu bihara*).



Fig. 12: The size of the 6th Earth: 1 *fl.* (10 gr.). Its size is as big as a woven strip (*naoma*).



Fig. 13: The size of the 7th Earth: 2 *fl.* (20 gr.). Its size is like *tetegafora* (*oloso, si'e*), the large mat for drying rice. Three pieces of woven fabrics are joined to become a mat.



Fig. 14: The size of the 8th Earth: 3 fl. (30 gr.). Its size is like *osali ndra ama* or “the place of a village.” Above is Teteholi Ana’a, the mysterious village of the ancestors.



Fig. 15: Sigaru Dora’a – Visualization of the old myth. New wood carvings from (Ama Rozaman) Mendröfa according to a photograph of an old panel. The carved clouds at the base of the panel are expressing the wind. (For further explanations see Hämmerle 1988.)

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