

**THE ALLIANCE TO “CIVILIZE”  
THE EAST INDIES GOVERNMENT AND CATHOLIC  
MISSIONARIES IN MANGGARAI-FLORES**

**ALIANSI UNTUK “BERADAB” PEMERINTAH HINDIA TIMUR DAN  
MISIONARIS KATOLIK DI MANGGARAI-FLORES**

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**ABSTRAK**

Makalah ini membahas tentang pembangunan kembali aktivitas misionaris Katolik di Hindia Belanda selama abad ke-19 dan dekade pertama abad ke-20. Ini memberi perhatian khusus pada kedatangan misionaris di Flores barat pada abad kedua puluh, ketika konversi ke Katolik melihat pertumbuhan spektakuler di wilayah Manggarai. Ini menggali interaksi kompleks pejabat pemerintah, misionaris dan para pemimpin lokal dan bagaimana praktik sosial tertentu dan mode produksi ekonomi dimajukan. Ini bertujuan untuk memahami bagaimana seperangkat wacana peradaban tertentu yang ditegakkan oleh para misionaris pada waktu itu sesuai dengan tujuan-tujuan pemerintah kolonial Belanda. Itu bertumpu pada Analisis Wacana Kritis untuk menganalisis isi artikel Peran Ilmiah Misionaris oleh Monseigneur Alexander Le Roy, pemimpin umum Kongregasi Roh Kudus, yang muncul dalam publikasi terkemuka di sidang utama Katolik yang bekerja di Flores selama abad kedua puluh, Society of the Divine Word (SVD). Akan tetapi, itu menunjukkan bahwa ideologi missiologi Katolik waktu itu, seperti Monseigneur Le Roy, melampaui wacana peradaban tentang pembangunan. Lebih lanjut, ia berpendapat bahwa banyak pendirian progresif yang menjadi ciri gereja di Flores saat ini dapat dilacak kembali ke ide-ide yang dianut oleh para leluhur misionaris mereka.

**Kata Kunci:** *Analisis Wacana Kritis; Alexandre Le Roy; Kolonialisme; Manggarai; Misi Katolik.*

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## **ABSTRACT**

The present paper deals with the reestablishment of Catholic missionary activity in the Dutch East Indies during the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth. It pays particular attention to the arrival of missionaries in western Flores in the twentieth century, when conversion to Catholicism saw a spectacular growth in the Manggarai region. It delves into the complex interaction of government officials, missionaries and local leaders and how particular social practices and economic modes of production were advanced. My aim is to understand how the particular set of civilizing discourses that the missionaries upheld at the time dovetailed with the objectives of the Dutch colonial government. I rely on Critical Discourse Analysis to analyze the contents of the article *The Scientific Role of the Missionary*, by Monseigneur Alexander Le Roy, superior general of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit, which appeared in prominent publications of the main Catholic congregation working in Flores during the twentieth century, the Society of the Divine Word (SVD). I argue that the ideologues of Catholic missiology, such as Monseigneur Le Roy, went beyond the civilizing discourses that were common at the time. Furthermore, I venture that many of the progressive stances that characterize the Catholic Church in Flores today can be traced back to the ideas espoused by its missionary forefathers.

**Keywords:** *Alexandre Le Roy; Catholic Mission; Critical Discourse Analysis; Colonialism; Manggarai.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Catholic Church played an important role in instilling western values and capitalist modes of production in the Dutch East Indies during the twentieth century. Particularly in the island of Flores, in the Eastern part of the archipelago, where the Portuguese had introduced Christian Catholicism in the sixteenth century, government officials and Catholic missionaries usually worked in tandem. The Dutch began to take full control of the island in 1907 and relied mostly on the well-established Catholic missions in the eastern and central parts of the island to advance their interests. At the time, it proved to be a strategic relationship: the Indies gov-

ernment relied on Catholic missionaries to strengthen direct rule in an island that had only marginal economic interest for them. At the same time, the Catholic Church secured its foothold south of the Philippines, where their presence had diminished in previous centuries and where most neighboring islands were increasingly becoming either Protestant or Muslim.

The Dominicans had worked in the eastern and central parts of the island during the seventeenth century. Jesuits arrived in the nineteenth century and partially left when their missionary activity focused on the island of Java at the beginning of the twentieth. SVD missionaries arrived in 1915 and made significant advances on the western part of the island, a region previously untouched by evangelization. With time, their missionary enterprise managed to convert most of the Manggarai and Ngada people to the Catholic faith, and slowly incorporated the whole island to the State grid. The present paper explores the ways through which Catholic missionaries undertook their civilizational strategies after their arrival in the Manggarai region, and how their strategic partnership with the colonial government reshaped people's landscapes and values. It also pays attention to how missionary discourses of the time went beyond civilizational discourses and imbued the mission with progressive stances that continue to have an impact to this day. It contributes to nuance our understanding of the complex relations that Catholic missionary congregations had with Dutch colonial authorities at the beginning of the twentieth century in the island of Flores.

The first section provides a brief description of the changing balance of power between the Dutch colonial government and the Catholic Church and how both came to work together in the particular context of Flores at the beginning of the twentieth century. It delves deeper into the strategies of government officials and Catholic missionaries to inculcate particular social practices and economic modes of production among local populations. The second section explores a

particular text by Monseigneur Alexandre Le Roy, Superior general of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit, and himself a former missionary in India and Africa, who wrote extensively on missiology. I argue that *Le rôle scientifique des Missionnaires* (The Scientific role of missionaries), was of significant importance in shaping how SVD missionaries understood their undertakings at the time. The text received wide attention by the congregation. Not only was it the opening article in the first number of the academic journal *Anthropos*, edited by Wilhelm Schmidt SVD in 1906, but seven years later, parts of it also appeared in the *Katholieke Missiën*, an SVD publication that promoted their mission among a Dutch Catholic readership.

I use the tools provided by Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), as proposed by Norman Fairclough, to interrogate what this particular text says about the ideologies that grounded the social practices that SVD missionaries advanced at the time. I question in which ways these practices produced changes in people's worldviews, and how such transformations intersect with Dutch legitimizing interests. However, even if Catholic missionary endeavours were usually in line with those of the Dutch state, I dissect Le Roy's article to inquire if the progressive counter hegemonic practices that have characterized the work of the Catholic Church in Flores in recent decades can be traced back to his writings. My aim is to nuance one-sided understandings of the complex role that the Catholic mission has played in Flores by providing previously unacknowledged sources for interpretation.

### **The Dutch Crown and Catholic Missionary Orders**

On December 31, 1799 the Dutch East India Company (VOC) was declared bankrupt and the Dutch government assumed direct control of their interests in Southeast Asia. Traditionally, the VOC had suppressed Catholicism in its spheres of influence since it was perceived as the religion of the Portuguese, its direct contender in the Archipela-

go during the seventeenth century. The few Dutch Catholic clergy that were allowed in the colonies tended to be seen with suspicion by VOC's Governor-Generals, who doubted their loyalty and regarded them as pawns of the Vatican. This changed when the Dutch Crown took over the administration of the VOC's zones of influence. In 1808, the East Indies colonial government lifted the former ban on Catholic priests that had been in place until then. In 1842, the *Netherlands Indies Apostolic Vicariate* in Batavia (Jakarta) was established to shepherd a still small but steady growing number of adherents. The agreement between the Vatican and The Hague in 1847 established clear boundaries between their spheres of influence. While the East Indies government kept political and administrative control over Catholic clergy, the Catholic Church secured State funding for its work in the colony, and retained a substantial degree of independence on internal affairs (Aritonang and Steenbrink, 2008).

Dutch policy on its colonies underwent significant changes during the first decades of the twentieth century. The economic surplus brought by the industrial revolution as well as technological advances in steamship allowed the Dutch to expand its inherence in the East Indies, while British advances in the region were putting pressure on the need to reaffirm Dutch ascendancy in the archipelago. At the same time, alarming news were arriving from the East Indies about the cruel treatment of the colonial authorities, especially in Java, where famines were rampant and the living conditions of most of the local population had reach unbearable proportions. The centrality that liberal ideas were gaining in Europe and the increased sense of moral responsibility among the Dutch public over their colonial subjects led to the implementation of the *Ethische Politiek* (Ethical Policy), in 1901. These novel regulations were aimed at improving the material conditions and to guarantee prosperity for the people in the East Indies (Vickers, 2013). Thus, the Dutch government fully embraced the civilizational discourse and its core concept of

development. Catholic missionaries became strategic partners on this venture, cooperating closely on social issues, such as health and educational infrastructure, especially the Eastern islands, where Dutch authority was still marginal (Steenbrink, 2003).

### Dutch Colonial Control in Flores

The Nusa Tenggara Archipelago is located on the Eastern part of the Indonesian archipelago. It comprises 111 islands and around thirty indigenous groups. West Timor, Flores, Sumba, and Sumbawa are the largest and most populous islands. With a little more than two million inhabitants, and a total land mass of 5,464 square miles, Flores is the third largest, after Timor and Sumbawa. Its population is divided in as many as ten ethnic groups, each with its own distinctive language and culture (Prior, 2006). Numbers vary greatly according to the regency, but the ones with the lowest number of Catholics are Ende with 71.3% and Eastern Flores with 77.9%. The regencies with the highest numbers of Catholics are Eastern Manggarai with 92.6% and Manggarai with 94.6%. 54.1% of the population in Nusa Tenggara Timur are Catholic, the largest religious group in the province, which amounts to a third of the total number of Catholics in Indonesia (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2010).

Catholicism was first introduced in Eastern part of Flores in the sixteenth century by the Portuguese. In 1502, the Dominicans arrived from Malacca and built a fortress in Solor, an island not far from Eastern Flores. The Portuguese Crown only took effective control of the port in 1702, so most of the time Dominican friars were in charge of administering the faraway region. They expanded mostly around eastern Flores, as well as in Sikka and Ende districts (Webb, 1986).

In 1859, as Portuguese power was dwindling in the region, an agreement was reached with the Dutch, who from then on assumed nominal control over Flores and West Timor. In exchange, it was agreed that Catholicism was to be respected as the largest religion in the eastern and central regions

of the island and that no restrictions should be put on its followers to practice it (Barnes, 2009). Throughout the nineteenth century, the usual Dutch colonial policy towards the outer islands was that of "no interference". Indirect rule had been the norm in the region, due to the absence of any other western colonial power to threaten Dutch suzerainty and because of the marginal place that the Timor residency played in the East Indies' economy. Direct military action and permanent presence was costly, so hard power was only used in special circumstances, most of the time as a deterrent tool. The only Dutch official in Larantuka was a civil commissioner, whose job was making sure that the agreements signed by the Dutch government with both the rajas of Larantuka and Sikka were kept (Dietrich, 1983).

Catholic missionaries had already been working in the region since the arrival of the Portuguese and a few Dominicans kept the mission going despite VOC's prohibition of Catholicism. Jesuits arrived in 1849 and began a timid expansion. However, the centrality of foreign Catholic clergy in this period should not be overstressed. As it happened in other places in the archipelago, local churches were vibrant due to the work of indigenous catechists, rather than of priests. These local Catholics played central roles in the evangelization of the peoples in the eastern part of Flores and managed to gain significant ascendancy over many local leaders and their communities, some of whom embraced the Catholic faith. In particular, it was the *Confreria Rehna Rosario* (Brotherhood of the Holy Rosary), the one responsible for keeping Catholicism alive along the coasts of Eastern Flores. Brotherhood members were the upholders of Larantuka's Catholicism, a local Church that had incorporated indigenous religious practices to the Catholic rituals of the Portuguese tradition. Its members were chosen from among Larantuka's elite and the raja was the Brotherhood's president (Steenbrink, 2003). Conflicts arose often, after the arrival of Dutch missionaries in the second half of the nineteenth century,

who seriously objected the innovative rituals of the rajas of Larantuka and Sikka. With time, however, they were forced to tolerate Rosary's idiosyncratic religious practices as these proved useful to get the rajas and other prominent families on board on the evangelizing plans of the Catholic missionaries.

Don Lorenzo II, raja of Larantuka and a staunch promoter of Catholicism was deposed and exiled to Yogyakarta in 1904, at the time when the Dutch began their campaign to enforce full control over the Eastern Islands. Dutch military contingents expanded to the western part of Flores and violently crushed a popular rebellion in 1907-8, known as *Perang Pasifikasi* (Pacification war), and which killed at least one thousand people (Widyawati, 2018). Until then, Manggarai, and most of the western part of Flores had experience little or no direct interference from the Dutch. From then on, their destiny was to be decided from Batavia and it would inevitably be linked with Catholicism as a spearhead of the colonial "civilizing" enterprise.

At the time, Catholic missionaries actively partnered with the raja Lorenzo II and the *Confreria* to spread the Christian faith, often even countering the expanding influence of the Dutch colonial government. After some hesitation, the new power dynamic forced them to shift sides and joined the East Indies government in its implementation of the Ethical Policy. This alliance proved to be a win-win situation for both sides. Under the new scenario of direct Dutch control, the East Indies government offered the Catholic Church a more suitable way to root itself in Flores. For the colonial authorities, on the other hand, Catholicism proved to be the most effective way to break away from the magico-religious arena of previous power configurations, and to instill in the local populations new codes of values and behavior (Van Klinken, 2003).

### **SVD Mission among The Manggarai**

Up until the nineteenth century, the Manggarai region in western Flores fell under the influence of the Sultanates of Bima

and Goa (Makassar), who fought over control of the region and profited from cinnamon, sandalwood, wax, horses and the slave trade. As Islamic sultanates, they promoted Islam along their zones of influence by proselytization (*dakwah*) and intermarriage. Muslim enclaves were scattered around the coasts, and seldom made lasting presence among the peoples in the interior, who retained their own traditions and social practices. Goanese influence was severely thwarted after the treaty of Bongaya that signed the capitulation of the Makassarese to the Dutch in 1667. Henceforth, Bima became the main power broker in Flores and remained so until the twentieth century. The eruption of mount Tambora (1815), which killed a large number of Bima's population and significantly reduced the regional influence of the Sultanate, diminished its influence in western Flores. Still, Bima retained its predominance over the Manggarai region until the Dutch secured full political and economic control around 1928 (Erb, 1997).

There had been no previous Catholic missionary efforts in the western part of Flores as it was perceived as an area of strong Muslim presence. Right after the Pacification war, Controleur A.J.L Couverur (a Catholic himself), sent a secret letter to the Catholic mission in Larantuka, urging them to go. He talked about the economic prospects of the fertile Ngada region and asked them to establish a mission post there. He reassured the missionaries that the government was planning to build a road from Aimere that would make feasible the communication along the western part of the island. He mentioned Islam's growing presence in the region and the need to secure it for Christianity. He even threatened to offer the area to protestant missionaries if Catholics failed to establish a mission post there. The struggle for souls kept going for decades. More than ten years later, the prefect of the Flores mission, Piet Noyan, still complained about the lack of priests in the region and the continual conversion of people to Islam (Steenbrink, 2013).

The Jesuits had decided to center their missionary efforts in Central Java and, in 1912, the *Society of the Divine Word* (SVD) was assigned to Flores. The congregation had been founded in 1875 by Arnoldus Janssen, a German diocesan priest, in the city of Steyl, in the Netherlands. The congregation grew fast and was soon able to send missionaries to China, Togo and New Guinea. Only after the end of the Great War in Europe (1914-1918), more SVD priests could finally start to arrive in Flores. In the following years the Kupang Regency (Lesser Sunda Islands) experienced a sustained increase of both Dutch colonial authorities and Catholic missionaries (Dietrich, 1983).

SVD played a crucial role in advancing the expansion of the Dutch colonial rule over the western part of the island, and helped to ingrain novel social practices, mainly through their educational endeavours. In 1914, the first mission school was opened in Ruteng. By 1921 there were already nine higher primary schools (Webb, 1994). More than anywhere else in the archipelago, the colonial authorities supported (with few exceptions) the spread of Catholicism in Flores. The Dutch were concerned with the growing numbers of converts to Islam and tried to block their ascendancy over the region by focusing on strengthening the ties with local elites. European type of schooling was perhaps the most decisive tool to transform Manggaraian morality and social practices. Hence, the first target of SVD educators became the children of village leaders, who eventually ended up working as teachers in the mission schools. These academic credentials increased the influence and prestige of young local leaders, who became skillful interlocutors between local communities and their foreign overlords, between traditional social structures and a novel system of beliefs and practices brought by the State and the Church (Prior, 2006).

Dutch colonization brought drastic changes in traditional social structures at all levels. Its impact was more strongly felt in the transformation of notions of space and how

people related to it. The modern concept of nation-state that was beginning to take root in the European political context, and which understands citizenship as placed based, disrupted traditional notions in the Manggarai context, where belonging was based more on personal alliances. Dutch government officials needed to rely on traditional patterns of loyalty, but at the same time, needed to reshape them. Notions of nationalism were introduced mainly through the use of the Malay language in education and a sense of shared identity through colonial reconstructions of the history of the archipelago (Tarling, 2008).

Changes on the local level were also significant. The village of Todo, for instance, had been for centuries the seat of the highest authority among the Manggarai. By transferring their headquarters to Ruteng, the East Indies government undermined Todo's centrality and imposed a new center of its own. Today, Ruteng is the most important town in Manggarai while Todo remains a little village. Moreover, the Dutch government forced many villages to relocate along the recently built Flores highway (1927), altering the traditional bonds with place and the spirits that inhabited it, which are central to Manggaraian spirituality. Also, Dutch physicians, based on hygiene concerns, encouraged people to move out of the traditional communal houses. Such changes weakened traditional Manggarai social structures (Widyawati, 2018).

Finally, Dutch occupation also brought economic transformations to the people in western Flores. New wet rice plantation techniques were introduced, as well as new crops, such as coffee and coconut plants, mainly for export. Taxes were collected on a regular basis and they had to be given in money, forcing upon people a new economic system (Steenbrink, 2007).

Until the beginning of the twentieth century, religion was not conceived as a separate domain from daily life, nor was there a schism between spiritual and material values for the people in Manggarai. With the arrival

of Catholicism, a slow transformation of indigenous practices began, which intensified with time. Village elders wrote down their rituals and moral codes, thus transforming local culture in accordance with what was understood by colonial authorities as "religion" (Prior, 2006).

### The Scientific Role of The Missionary

Until now I have mainly dealt with the context in which Catholic missionary activity began to be enacted as part of a larger civilizing enterprise led by the East Indies government. In this section I will focus on the discourses that supported missionary activity and how they relate to the political and economic situation of Flores at the beginning of the twentieth century. For this, I will analyze *The Scientific Role of the Missionary*, an article written by Monseigneur Alexander Le Roy, a former missionary in East Africa and Superior General of the congregation of the Holy Spirit for thirty years. Le Roy was born in France in 1854 and ordained as priest in 1876. He worked briefly in India, before going to Zanzibar, where he remained, with the exception of an extended trip to France to recover from illness, for ten years. A passionate traveler, he wrote extensively on geography, natural sciences, ethnography and linguistics. His texts, published in the periodicals of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, were highly regarded at the time (Ducol, 2007).

The goal of the current section is to use Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as formulated by Norman Fairclough, to trace how the civilizing ideology that was prevalent in missionary projects worldwide is articulated in *The Scientific Role of the Missionary*. Since an important segment of the legitimation process of ideologies is textual, special attention needs to be given to textual analysis. Critical discourse analysis is an inter-disciplinary approach that focuses on language use in order to understand how discourse relates to social processes, social structures and social change (Flowerdew and Richardson, 2018). It studies how power and ideology are enacted in dis-

course by providing analytic tools to evaluate hegemonic historical narratives from a critical perspective. It focuses on the dynamics of power and on the ideology that is embedded on semantic articulations and how the changing nature of discourses affects the structuring of orders of discourse (Fairclough, 2003).

Among the many analytical tools proposed by CDA I focus on three that particularly dovetail with my goals: Genres, discourse and style, as they are helpful to evaluate how action, representation and identification can be traced in Monseigneur Le Roy's article. The text opens a window to understand not only to how missionary activity was performed at the time, but also for dissecting the intricacies of meaning production, as well as hegemonic and counterhegemonic strategies that underpin it.

### Genre

Genres are understood here as forms of language interaction in the particular network of social practices in which they emerge. They can be of extraordinary help to evaluate how social hierarchies and power distribution is constructed. Monseigneur Le Roy's article *The Scientific Role of the Missionary* appeared in 1906 in the first number of *Anthropos*, a new journal edited by Father Wilhelm Schmidt SVD, that would become one of the most respected academic publications on anthropology and ethnology worldwide, still published today. Sections of the same article appeared in the April 1913 issue of the *Katholieke Missiën*, a magazine of the SVD that informed Dutch Catholic readers of the different missionary enterprises in which the congregation was involved.

Le Roy's text starts as follows:

*The first duty of the Catholic Missionary is to fulfill his mission: to spread the Gospel, to teach the catechism, to put the truths necessary for salvation at the reach of as many souls as possible. This is his reason for being, that is the purpose of his life. For that, and for that alone, he left his family and his country, he renounced all that enchanted his youth, he has condemned himself to an ignored work, he has gone to confront sickness, deception,*

barbarism, treason, abandonment, and death. All his life he will be able to remember this vocation and, to remain always worthy of it, he will carefully maintain in his soul the sacred fire of enthusiasm, which God ignited and that no sacrilegious invasion should extinguish. In the eyes of one who has faith, no role can be more beautiful. (Le Roy, 1906, p. 3).

Le Roy's text belongs to the narrative genre, and can be classified as a journal article intended to promote the Catholic mission among a broad audience. First to an educated elite that read *Anthropos*, and second, to the general public that read the *Katholieke Missiën*. This later periodical, which promoted missionary activity among Dutch Catholics in order to encourage vocations and secure funds for the mission, enjoyed a large readership in the Netherlands. The cited section, full of the romantic imagery that characterized European travel writing in the nineteenth century, aims to attract all those idle youngsters eager for adventure and for a purpose in life. The European, Catholic teenager is invited to renounce a life of commodity in his homeland to spread the tenets of his faith among the "heathens". He will be faced with illness, treachery, loneliness, and even death, in a sacred struggle to take the light of the Gospel to the farthest corners of the earth. Le Roy deploys a highly emotional language as a rhetorical device, no doubt successful at a time when accounts of voyages of discovery, and descriptions of exotic peoples in faraway places were in vogue. Whereas the vital urge to explore or the moral obligation to join the triumphant march of Christianity at a time of widespread religious revival around Europe, Le Roy's article must have helped to convince many young people to dedicate their lives to the mission. For those without the courage to join, there was always the possibility of providing financial assistance which allowed SVD missionaries to expand their activities to faraway countries in all continents. Thus, Le Roy's text can be seen as one among many elements on a chain of social events (promotion of missionary activity) that was aimed at influencing Dutch Catholic readers on the

legitimacy of the mission and the urgency to support it.

## DISCUSSION

Monseigneur Le Roy's article continues:

*Others, who are preoccupied, above all, with the social progress of humanity, will easily recognize the civilizing value of Christianity, and will be interested in the work of its missionary. The Gospel has placed before the world an ideal. So far, all the peoples who have accepted it have visibly marched towards a higher moral state; why should it not be the same with those still barbarous to whom it will be proposed? The missionary can also, in his way, serve his country. Not that he must never be a political agent: thus, forgetting his principal role, he would compromise both the causes he intends to serve. But in the colonies of its own nation, it is necessarily an element of moralization, of education, of moral and material progress, which cannot be replaced by any other.* (Le Roy, 1906, p. 3).

There is no doubt that for Monseigneur Le Roy, the spread of Christianity and of the Catholic Church in particular was to bring moral and material benefits to the peoples to whom it was brought. He even talks about the "civilizing value of Christianity", one that leads peoples "towards a higher moral state". Missionary activity is here understood as a social practice that is grounded on a particular ideology that prevailed at the height of European imperialism, one which introduced a specific articulation of social relations based on European Christianity and developmental models based on liberal capitalism and scientific positivism. Le Roy's statement that the missionary can also benefit his country underpins the extant nexus between European states and Christian missionaries, which many assumed as two sides of the same civilizing enterprise. The convergence of both Church and state were embodied in the so called "burden of the white man", which intended to inoculate among the so called "primitive peoples" of the world a civilizing project that would bring material and spiritual improvement by following western ideas and moral values.



For decades, many anthropological studies of the historical impact of mission on traditional societies have challenged such simplifying assumptions that emphasize the nexus between State and Church in engineering hegemonic discourses (Comaroff, 1985; Hefner, 1993; Kipp, 1995). Problematizing long held perceptions that reduce Christianity to an equivalent of European ideology has triggered novel and more textured understandings of the complex relation between colonialism and the Christian mission. They have also helped to bring new light to missionary literature, of which my reading of Le Roy's article is a case in point.

The author continues:

*It must be borne in mind, in fact, that every people has its civilization, that is to say, its way of understanding life, of conducting it as it sees fit, of making the most of it, the best, to direct oneself, to govern oneself. That is why there are not on the earth, strictly speaking, savages, that is groups of men who know no law, no family, no social bond. The "savages" are only found in our civilized societies, and it is the "civilization that produces it!" (Le Roy, 1906, p. 6).*

At a time when racism was the norm, and condescension pervaded the colonial gaze towards the colonized, such statement from one of the leading members of the Catholic Church, a former missionary and an widely read and discussed writer, urges us to reconsider long held ideas of an ethnocentric Catholic Church incapable of seeing beyond the framework of its European values. Le Roy's opinion is not the official stance of the Church on the worth of indigenous cultures, but it is still significant that his opinion, which underscores the intrinsic value of their civilizations, is contemporary with Leo XII's encyclical *Orientalium Dignitas*, in which the Pope expressed his respect to the Eastern Churches and the diversity of rites within the Catholic Church (Leo XIII 1894). My intention here is neither to deny the perceived superiority of Christianity that permeates Le Roy's article, nor is it to ignore the strategic synergy that was enacted between colonial states and religious missionaries at

the height of European expansion. By paying close attention to what is said in a widely distributed text by a Catholic authority in misology like Alexandre Le Roy's, our aim is to look beyond essentializing narratives on the relation between the mission and the colonial State. *The Scientific Role of the Missionary* provides meaningful clues to understand the grounding rationale of progressive, counterhegemonic stances that missionaries and local churches have constructed during the twentieth century and which have provided tools for indigenous empowerment in different parts of the world until today.

## Style

According to Fairclough, what authors commit themselves to in the texts they write plays an important role in how they identify themselves. Two textual features that help to understand how the authors commit to their texts are modality and evaluation. Modality deals with what is true or necessary, whereas evaluation focuses on what is good or bad, desirable or undesirable (Fairclough, 2003).

Let us see how these two features work in a fragment of Monseigneur Le Roy's article:

*Better prepared than many others to study the indigenous religions, the missionaries, if they understand their vocation, also bring to this study a more sympathetic and serious attention. To do good to men, the first condition is the same everywhere: it is to love them. The missionaries must understand this in their dealings with the natives, and it is in this spirit that they study their religious beliefs. And if the examination is intelligently conducted, there are always discovered, even among the most backward peoples, a background that can help support the dogmas and the morals of Christianity. (Le Roy, 1906, p. 8).*

The way an author makes a statement determines not only his commitment to what is said in the text, but even provides clues to better grasp how the author shapes his identity. The different ways in which a statement can be said is what is understood as modality. In this case, the social identity of Monseigneur Le Roy is that of a former mis-

sionary and general superior of an important Catholic missionary congregation. Therefore, his social position and the publicity that was given to his article are ideal to understand how missionaries perceived themselves at the time and how they assumed their role in society. The first sentence is presented as an assertive statement that affirms missionaries are "better prepared than many others to study the indigenous religions". This is a controversial affirmation and the author knows it. That is why, later in the text, Le Roy explains at length why missionaries are better equipped to understand local "religions" and cultural traditions. Regardless if we share Le Roy's opinion or not, what matters here is the stature he assigns to the missionary as the "better prepared" mediator between local religions and Catholicism.

Then comes the second assertion: "To do good to men, the first condition is the same everywhere: it is to love them". This statement highlights the need (on the part of the missionary) to show empathy towards the evangelized other. We will not deal here with the problematic assumption that to evangelize is to do good to people, because that was common sense for a missionary at the beginning of the twentieth century, even if might prove highly problematic today. Love towards the other must, in Le Roy's opinion, ground all valid missionary activity. This seemingly innocuous statement has had profound implications in the development of missiology in the twentieth century. If, as we have seen in a previous paragraph, each people have their own civilization and the missionary needs to approach them with empathy and love, a different approach seems to be emerging in the Le Roy's understanding of what missionary activity is or requires. Love towards the other and respect for his culture can arguably lead to a more sincere and deep commitment to intercultural dialogue, one that truly pays attention to how the other understands the world and how that understanding impacts the missionary himself, as well as how he interprets his own values and culture.

Finally, the last part of the section is composed of an evaluative statement. What the missionary will find if the examination of local cultures is conducted "intelligently", is the similarity between what grounds local beliefs with what grounds Christianity. What we are reading here might be among the earlier expressions of what later Catholic theologians have called "inculturation".

It may be relevant here to stress the connection that exists between the ideas expressed by Monseigneur Le Roy in his article with those of father Wilhelm Schmidt SVD. It is no coincidence that *The Scientific Role of the Missionary* was the opening article of the first issue of the journal *Anthropos*, founded and edited by Schmidt. Both thinkers shared a conviction on the importance that anthropology had for missiology and Schmidt is even credited with being the beginner of modern mission anthropology (Luzbetak, 1988). Their views on the inherent value of indigenous cultures and the need to engage them seriously and respectfully predate by decades the official position of the Catholic Church. To look in indigenous cultures for the "seeds of the Gospel", was not new in the long history in the Christian mission. However, it started to receive renewed attention with Pío XII's encyclical *Evangelii Praecones*, when he praised the beauty and truth of indigenous traditions. Only slowly and hesitantly did it gained sustained attention throughout the twentieth century, until it finally assumed a central position after the Second Vatican Council and the documents emanated by it (Paul VI, 1965a, para.2; Paul VI, 1965b, para.11).

## CONCLUSION

The current paper explored the complex relation established between the Dutch colonial authorities and the Catholic Church in the island of Flores, eastern Indonesia at the beginning of the twentieth century. First I discussed the power struggle between the Catholic Church and the Dutch Indies government as well as the strategic realignment that took place after the Ethical Policy was issued. I paid particular attention to how such

relationship was enacted in the specific context of Flores and provided a historical background of the workings of the Church since its arrival in the island in the sixteenth century. I focused on how the colonial government and Catholic missionaries came to work together in the region of Manggarai, western Flores, advancing civilizing discourses that brought significant changes on traditional social structures and ways of living.

The last part of the paper analyzed the article *The Scientific Role of the Missionary*, written by Monseigneur Alexandre Le Roy, a former missionary and leading Catholic figure of the time. The text appears to have had a significant impact on SVD missionaries, as they gave ample diffusion to it. The article appeared in two of their main publications: in the first issue of the journal *Anthropos* (1906), and sections of it the magazine *Katholieke Missiën*, seven years later. However, the text has not received enough attention from scholars. I relied on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), as proposed by Norman Fairclough, in order to dissect the grounding discourses that underpin Le Roy's text. My purpose was to go beyond essentializing notions of the Catholic missionary enterprise that tend to present it as a mere instrument of the colonial administration. I have shown that, even if Le Roy's article adheres to the civilizing mission, there is also much material in his text that invite a more nuanced reading of how Catholic missionaries perceived indigenous traditions. I argued that the ideas espoused in *The Scientific Role of the Missionary* go well beyond civilizing narratives by inviting evangelizers to engage in a respectful dialogue with local knowledge and traditions. Perhaps, unintentionally, Le Roy's ideas paved the way for the emergence of the progressive stances that have characterized local churches in Flores in recent decades, and which have not only proven empowering for local communities but have also helped to reinvigorate local traditions.

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