



Mission and Violence

Healing the
Lasting Damage

Edited by Patrick F. Gesch, SVD

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CONTENTS

Introduction	7
The Papua New Guinea Experience	
<i>My Experience of Violence</i> Paul Liwun, SVD	11
<i>Rascal Gangs in PNG</i> Victor Roche, SVD	21
Looking Back Historically	
<i>Christian Mission and Violence in India. An Interpretative Understanding of Hindu Fundamentalist Violence against Christian Missionaries in India Today</i> Augustine Kanjamala, SVD	29
<i>Meeting as Outrage in the History of Mission in the South Pacific</i> Patrick F. Gesch, SVD	49
Violence in the Community	
<i>Violence in Gumas: Violent Conflict and its Resolution in a Periurban Community of Western Highlands of Papua New Guinea</i> Douglas W. Young, SVD and Paul Kaipa Petrus	63
<i>Domestic Violence and Reconciliation</i> Antonysamy Sagayaraj, SVD	87
<i>Mission, Violence and Reconciliation in Papua New Guinea</i> Zenon Szablowinski, SVD	95
<i>Witchcraft and Mission in Simbu Province</i> Franco Zocca, SVD	109
<i>Violence and Living Prophetic Dialogue</i> Philip Gibbs, SVD	137
Institutionalised Violence	
<i>Industrial Violence in the Sundargarh District of Orissa, India, and the Struggle of the Tribal People for Survival</i> Ignatius Soreng, SVD	145
<i>Religion and Violence: A Missiological Approach to the Naxalite Movement in Andhra Pradesh—India</i> Gnanapragasam Lazar, SVD	167

<i>From Violence to Sanctuaries of Peace. The Philippine Case</i> Leonardo N. Mercado, SVD	185
<i>Mission in East Timor: Building a Culture of Peace</i> Fr. Yulius Yasinto, SVD	201
<i>Violence in and amongst Migration and Mission: Case Studies of Vietnamese Migrants in South Korea</i> Peter Sam Nguyen, SVD	213
<i>Inter-Religious Dialogue and Ecumenism as Our Mission: Gujarat - A Case Study</i> Pushpa Anbu, SVD	219
<i>Cultural Violence in the Era of Reformation and the Policy of the Catholic Church in Indonesia</i> Donatus Sermada, SVD	229
Dimensions of Violence	
<i>The Pitfalls in the Logistics of Globalization Leading to Mass Poverty and Violence in Developing Countries</i> Cletus Colaco, SVD	245
<i>The Culture of Violence and the Culture of Peace. Search in the Context of Postmodernism</i> L. Stanislaus, SVD	265
<i>The Ideal of Peace and the Reality of Violence in the Bible</i> Ennio Mantovani, SVD	281
Working for an Understanding World	
<i>Dialogue with Cultures: An On-going Research Project on the Methods of Study of Ethnic Minorities in India</i> S. Lourdusamy, SVD	291
<i>The New Ways of Being Church in Indonesia. A Study of Base Ecclesial Communities in Larantuka and Ende Dioceses, 2005</i> Robert Mirsal, SVD	301
<i>Tracing Origins. The Path to an Appropriate Development of Dispute Resolution. (A case study among the Biboki people of West Timor-Indonesia)</i> Gregor Neonbasu, SVD	343
<i>Interreligious Dialogue Discourse among Indonesian University Students: Prospect and Challenges</i> Philippus Tule, SVD & Bernard Raho, SVD	361

Interreligious Dialogue Discourse Among Indonesian University Students: Prospect and Challenges

Philipus Tule, SVD & Bernard Raho, SVD

Abstract

Indonesia is the home of 192 million Muslims, the biggest concentration of Muslims in the world.

This paper illustrates recent developments and challenges for interreligious dialogue in Indonesia, in the midst of escalating conflicts and the emergence of fanatic groups calling for religious war (*jihad*). Moreover it also depicts the prospective development of interreligious discourse at the University level, based on the religious knowledge and affinal / consanguinal relationships, as they were encountered in the recent research.

Introduction

Indonesia is among the most populated countries in the world, with 231,328,000 inhabitants. Out of this total number, Muslims form 88%, Protestants 5%, Roman Catholics 3%, Hindus 2%, Buddhists 1%,¹ and others 1%. That makes Indonesia the home of 192 million Muslims, the biggest concentration of Muslims in the world.

On the basis of its national philosophy and ideology (Pancasila or the five principles), Indonesia is also known as a very tolerant nation though it is composed of many and various ethnic, cultural and religious groups. However, in recent years, conflicts based on ethnic and religious issues have been widespread all over the country, from Jakarta to Ambon, from Poso (Sulawesi) to Kupang (Timor). These conflicts have claimed the lives of thousands and led to the internal migration of a huge number of its population, who carry with them a long enduring sense of psychological trauma. Religious and ethnic symbols and flags have often been raised by certain groups to extend and maintain the conflicts, which to some extent challenges the culture of tolerance and harmony as promoted by Pancasila, religions and other local cultural values.

This essay illustrates recent developments, prospects and challenges for interreligious dialogue in Indonesia, in the midst of escalating conflicts and the emergence of fanatic groups calling for religious war (*jihad*). Moreover it depicts the recently prospective development of interreligious discourse at the University level. It will be commence with a discussion of

1| Data according to electronic database BPS: July 2002.

the phenomenon of the resurgence of radical Islam in Indonesia, such as Jama'ah Islamiyah and Al Qaeda networks with their terrorist agendas which threaten the tolerant culture of Indonesia.