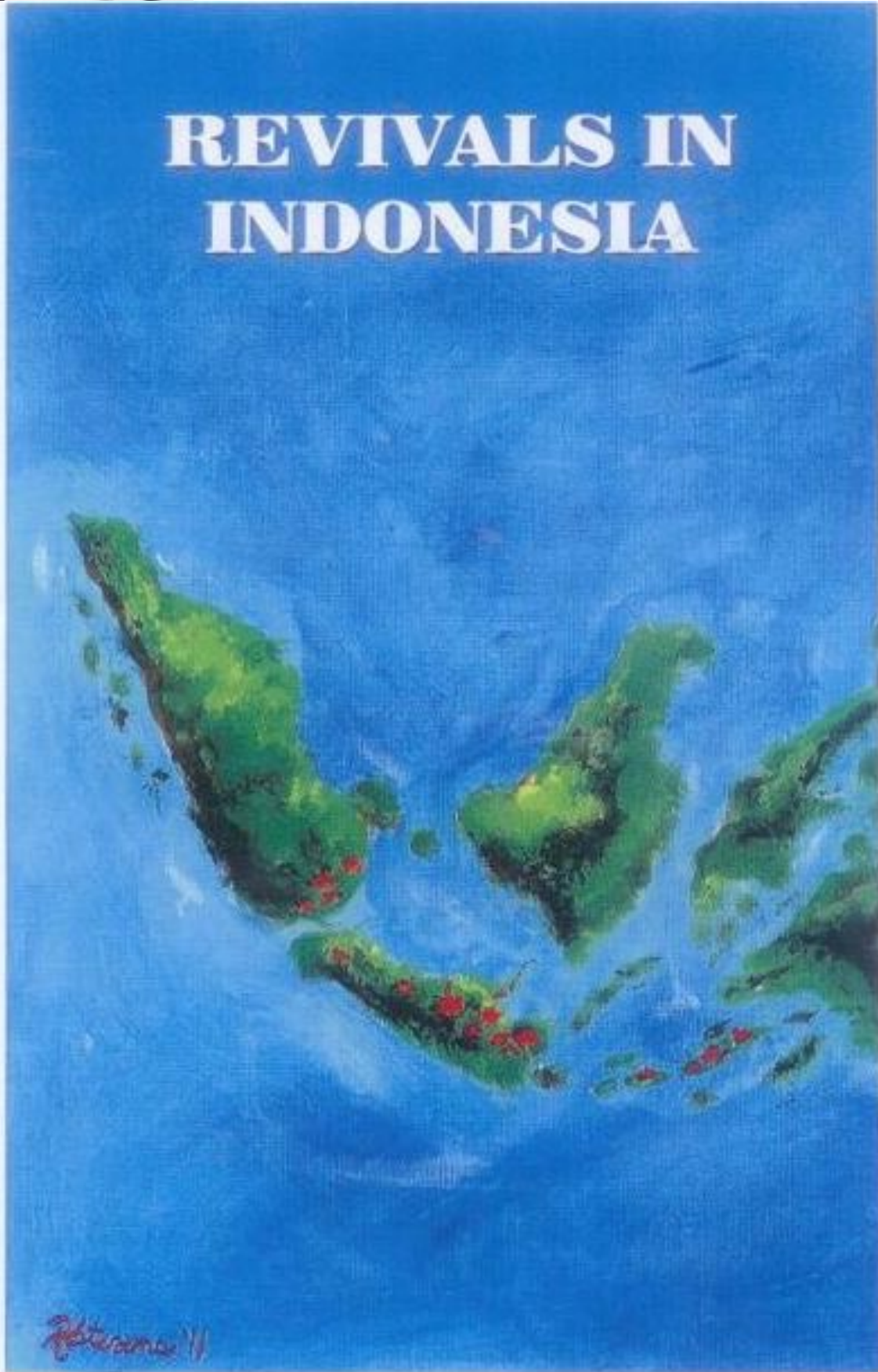


THE SOUNDING MEGAPHONE



ISSUE 25, APRIL 2020

REVIVALS IN INDONESIA



Revivals in Indonesia

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THE SOUNDING MEGAPHONE



Hello and welcome. This issue reflects on great Christian revivals in the country of Indonesia. I trust that you will be inspired. Keep believing for revivals in our day. God bless you.

Shawn Stevens

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THE SOUNDING MEGAPHONE ISSUE 25

Revivals in Indonesia

ART BY RAMONA STEVENS

Indonesia is a tropical land with truly mysterious beginnings. The earliest knowledge that we have of Indonesians comes from the Chinese. Chinese travellers visited the Indonesian islands and Indonesians came to the courts of Chinese emperors to pay tribute. From these early sources, it is believed that there were several kingdoms in Indonesia, sometime shortly before 600 A.D. These kingdoms are believed to have been situated on the islands of Sumatra and Java. 1

Not only does Indonesia have a mysterious and interesting natural history, it has an interesting religious history as well. It is believed that in the 1st and 2nd centuries, Hinduism was brought there by

East Indian traders. Between the 6th and 14th centuries, a powerful Hindu kingdom developed, promoting both Hindu religion and culture. In fact, the Indonesian language traces its roots to Hindu culture. In the 6th, 7th and 8th centuries, Buddhism came to Indonesia and had significant influence. In the 12th and 13th centuries, Islam established itself in Indonesia and, in 1205 A. D., an Islamic kingdom was formed under Sultan John Sjah. His kingdom lasted until 1903. 2

Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam were not the only religions to come to Indonesia. Christianity would come and would hold influence in this land. Christians may have come to Indonesia as far back as in the era of the early Christian fathers. Some believe that even the Apostle Thomas came here. Historical accounts confirm that believers from Persia came to

Indonesia with the gospel between the years 671 and 679 A. D., but the Church of the Middle Ages paid very little attention to these distant islands. However, with Columbus' discovery of North America, Europeans became greatly interested in discovering foreign lands. In 1511, the Portuguese claimed some territory in Indonesia causing many Muslims to withdraw to the south. The first Catholic church was erected in Moluccas in 1522. A missionary, named Francis Xevarius, came in 1546 and, although he was only there for one year, his influence became great and he became known as the Apostle to the Indonesians. In the 16th century, the Dutch colonized Indonesia and set up a Protestant church. 3

Centuries later, in 1921, another Dutch missionary, Dr. Pieter Middelkoop, came to Batavia (Jakarta), Java. He was assigned to Kupang and Timor. During World War II, under

Japanese rule, he spent three years in concentration camps. After being released in 1945, he went to Soe, where he ministered for another twelve years (1945-1957). He also completed a translation of the New Testament which was printed in 1948. 4

A closer look at Dutch missionary activity reveals the influence of a spiritual awakening. Dutch Mennonites were active in mission work but their overseas work remained modest and for years it was carried out in a traditional manner. However, in 1920, a spiritual awakening was sparked amongst them, partly through the influence of Quakers in Woodbrooke, England. A movement of church renewal, known as Gemeentedagbeweging, broke out and one feature of the awakening was a revival of missionary zeal. 5

There would be other spiritual awakenings and other missionaries from varying church backgrounds actively used by God in Indonesia. Although many Christian movements set up an institutional form of Christianity, the real spread of Christian faith would come through mighty revivals in the 20th century. One of China's greatest revivalists was Dr. John Sung (1901-1944). He is known for leading thousands of fellow Chinese to faith in Christ. Not everyone knows that Sung also worked in Indonesia. In 1936, he came to Sarawak, which is a part of Malaysia but shares the Indonesian island of Borneo. There is a large Chinese population there and, in a ten-day campaign, 1,600 Chinese committed their lives to Christ and over a hundred Chinese Christians committed their lives to active service. In 1939, Sung came to the Indonesian island of Java. In Surabaya, he addressed an audience telling

them that he had twenty-two messages to give them that week, that he would speak three messages per day, and that everyone must be present if they wanted to discover God's message to them. A revival broke out and some shopkeepers even closed their shops to come and listen to Sung. Even schools shut down to allow children and teachers to attend the meetings. Sung's meetings would fill between six and eight hours of the day. He preached and also prayed for the sick. Sung promised to return to Indonesia and did so, again coming to Java that same year. Daily, five thousand Indonesians came to hear him. Crowds arrived at 8:00 A. M. and many remained until 11:00 P. M. The week-long campaign saw nine hundred commit their lives to Christ. During the campaign, Sung fought exhaustion and contended with a severe pain in his hip. This condition made it unbearable for him to stand so

he knelt down and preached on his knees. 6 He said, “The pains only ceased while I preached or prayed. As soon as I had finished they returned.” 7 Sung prophesied while in Java, “Wars and times of persecution will come upon you.” 8

Wars did come to Indonesia and the church within its boundaries would know painful persecution. During World War II, the Japanese occupied Indonesia. One Indonesian who was given an administrative position by the Japanese was Sukarno. World War II ended in 1945 and with it, so did the Japanese occupation. On August 17 of that year, Sukarno issued a declaration of independence. 9 In 1965, communists in Indonesia attempted a coup to secure control of the country. Six senior military officers were arrested and executed and a forty-five man cabinet assumed political control. However, one military general, A. H. Nasution, escaped being

captured, organized a force and overthrew the new government. This was followed by a huge revolt against the communists. There were many arrests and even mass executions. 10

In this reversal, it was discovered that communists had made lists of their political opponents and that these lists included the names of all Muslim priests, Catholic priests and Protestant missionaries. There was a great uprising among the Muslim population, firstly, against communists and also partly against Christians, who were said to be in league with the communists. In the uprising, as many as one million lives are believed to have been lost during the months of October, November and December of 1965. 11

During these painful years God was preparing his Church for revival. In 1959, a small Bible College had been set up

in East Java. Within a year, it had seventeen students. Over the next eight years its enrolment would grow to almost a hundred and with many on a waiting list. Teachers and students, alike, were experiencing a deep spiritual hunger which erupted into revival. In 1967, the school held a prayer meeting which lasted deep into the night. Both students and teachers were confessing sin and asking each other for forgiveness. 12 A revival was breaking forth.

In the revival, a new zeal for missions was kindled in the hearts of students and teachers. Seventeen teams, involving ninety-five students, were organized in 1967 and sent throughout Indonesia. While the teams conducted ministry, the revival in the school on Java continued to flourish. One writer comments:

During the past few months we have had at times a foretaste of heaven. There has never been so much

praise and thanksgiving, so much singing at the school before. Never before have the teachers and the students been united by such a bond of love. The Lord has poured forth the early and the latter rain. Great things have happened among us and on nine other islands through the ministry of seventeen teams. 14

One student from the school whom God used was Reuben. When he initially applied to attend the school, he was told to wait for a year. After making three applications, he was accepted. Reuben did not find school easy and a tutor told him that he was not getting anywhere. He considered giving up but, instead, continued with his studies. When time came for him to launch out in ministry, he was sent to a Muslim village in East Java. There

was only one Christian family in that village and they were nominal in their faith. They did not receive Rueben. He would preach in the streets of the village by day and sleep in the open by night. Before long, Muslim villagers began inviting him to eat with them and stay in their homes. After one year of ministry, a hundred Muslims had come to Christ and a church had been set up. Not everyone in the village welcomed this development and, in his second year of ministry, sixty armed villagers marched to Rueben's residence. The Christian community prayed and a police car quickly showed up, scaring off those who had come to do Rueben harm. In the following weeks, another sixty Muslims came to Christ. By the close of his second year of ministry, Rueben's church had two hundred converted Muslims. 15

Converts not only came from this village in East Java but from other villages as well. In 1963, a tribal chief, named

Abram, was given the opportunity to study communism. Having completed the course, he was journeying back to his tribe when, on the way, he saw a parked car with the word "Indjil" written on it. This word means "gospel" and it interested him enough for him to approach the car to examine it more closely. On doing so, he heard preaching coming through an open window of a Christian meeting house. Much of the message that he heard stayed with him and, when he returned to his tribe, he began telling them the Christmas story instead of telling them about communism. His tribespeople wanted to hear more. Not knowing the mailing address of the Christian meeting house, Abram mailed out a request addressed only as "Indjil, Bengkulen." Amazingly, the letter was delivered and word that Abram's tribe wanted to know more about Christianity

spread. A Christian official from Bengkulen came to the tribe and was followed by a student from the Bible College in Java and also by a minister, Pak Elias. A revival broke out in the tribe and several hundred converted to Christian faith. Surprisingly, Abram himself was one of the last to convert.
16

Another interesting conversion is that of a radical Muslim youth who participated in acts of terrorism. One day, he smashed the windows of a church as well as the windows of its minister's house. When the minister did nothing to retaliate, the youth asked the minister why. The pastor answered, "God loves you and therefore we love you too. Christians don't repay evil with evil!" 17 The youth was stunned by the response and, sometime afterwards, purchased a Bible. He wanted to be able to refute both the Bible and Christian faith. However, instead of refuting

Christian faith, he converted to it. He changed his name to Timothy and began telling his friends about his new faith. He enrolled in the Bible College in East Java and, upon completion, left to do missionary work on the island of Sumatra. On one occasion, Timothy was witnessing to a Muslim priest. He told the priest that the Bible spoke of being called children of God but the Koran did not show how to become one. Timothy told him that the Bible shows how to find assurance of forgiveness and that the Koran does not. In the end, the Muslim priest converted and even tore off his Muslim robe and left it at the entrance of a mosque. This now ex-Muslim priest went on to become an elder in a Christian church. 18

Not only Muslims were experiencing conversion but also many who already professed to believe in Christ. The island of Rote is situated immediately south of the

island of Timor. It was home to a Pastor Gideon who oversaw the care of thirty congregations. In 1966, Pak Elias held meetings on the island. Gideon had reservations concerning Elias and advised his congregation not to attend. The two men met and Elias asked Gideon, "Do you belong to Jesus?"¹⁹ Gideon responded, "I studied theology and passed my exams."¹⁹ Over the following days, Gideon became more and more uncomfortable as he reflected upon his answer and as he learned of the way that God was moving in Elias' meetings. God was moving in a beautiful way as people were finding Christ, being healed of sicknesses and experiencing deliverance.¹⁹ The two men met again but, this time, Gideon admitted to Elias:

I've been in the ministry for seven years and yet I've never seen a single person converted as a result of my work. Yet during one campaign

under your ministry hundreds are converted. I think I know why. I've never really repented for myself and received the forgiveness of my sins, and I've certainly never been born again in the way that you describe. I'm going to resign. I can't go on like this!
20

Elias responded by telling Gideon that he didn't have to discontinue his ministry but, rather, start again, this time with Jesus beside him. Elias invited Gideon to come to the Bible School in East Java. Gideon did come, stayed for a year, and in that time his life was transformed by the Lord.

Now a changed man, Gideon returned to the preaching ministry. This time, his preaching was alive and had an immediate effect. He returned to Rote and its

churches and resumed ministry. In his first year back, a thousand people came to Christ. As well, prayer groups were springing up with large numbers praying daily for the island. A revival broke out on Rote. Gideon found that the churches could not hold the crowds and many persons would listen to him from the outside of the church through open windows. In some cases, his hearers would not allow him to stop and he would continue preaching late, even to 12:00 P. M. 21

Rote was not the only island to be touched by God's hand. The island of Timor is on the easternmost edge of Indonesia. In 1964, Jephthah, a teacher from the island of Rote, received a vision instructing him to go to Timor and hold healing meetings. He did so, and experienced tremendous success. It was reported that several thousand people were healed. Physical healings were followed by a deep spiritual

hunger for God's word. 22

God's servants would continue to come to Timor. In 1965, a David Simeon, together with a team from the Bible College in East Java, came to the island. They held evangelistic meetings and there was a great outpouring of God's Spirit. Many natives brought out fetishes¹ and had them burned. Many went out from the meetings, spreading the message further. One woman who was deeply affected in the revival was Tamar. She sensed that God wanted her to attend the Bible College in East Java. She was burdened to preach and asked her pastor for the opportunity. A service was arranged and Tamar preached for five hours, starting at 8:00 and ending at 1:00 A. M. She asked her audience if any there were ready to start serving the Lord. Over a hundred young people answered affirmatively and special classes were set up to

help them in this endeavour. 23
In Tamar's audience was a young man who was known for his rough and Godless life. He had come to hear what all the "fuss" was about. He found himself sitting in a room at the church when, suddenly, he went blind. Next, a white figure, in a long robe, appeared to him and he knew that it was Jesus. He fell to the ground, took fetishes out his cape and, eventually, handed them to the pastor. He relates that he was told by the Lord that he would preach the gospel and pray for the sick. After this experience he was a changed man. He asked the pastor of the church if he could have an opportunity to speak. The opportunity was granted and, upon hearing him share, a great conviction fell on the audience. People began confessing sin and ridding themselves of fetishes. This would happen again as he spoke in a school and students began ridding themselves of ungodly belongings. This created a stir and the police

actually arrested him for causing a "serious incitement." 24

Multitudes of souls were saved in the Indonesian revivals. Within the first year, 80,000 converted to Christ and 15,000 were healed. Churches filled up and were not large enough to house the number of hungry souls. By the end of the third year of revival, 200,000 had been converted. 25

We have already mentioned Pak Elias, who was born in 1928. He attended school on both Rote and Timor and, by age twenty-nine, was a university lecturer, the director of an academy and the headmaster of a high school. He was also a leader in church circles, being an elder in his church and preaching weekly to his students. However, in 1957, his life would take an eventful turn. That year Dr. Roland

Brown, from the Moody Bible Institute, held a mission in East Java. Elias felt convicted that he was to respond to the evangelistic invitation. He fought this urging and tried to rationalize why a good person, like himself, would have to humble himself in this way. With this inner struggle raging, Elias returned to the next day's meeting. This time he responded to Brown's evangelistic appeal, walked to the front of the church, accepted Christ and surrendered his life to the Lord. Many ministers and church elders were offended over what Elias had done and it was not long before his office, as elder, was taken from him. He was forbidden to preach and, yet, this could not quench his newfound joy. Elias was on fire for God. In 1960, he began studying in the East Java Bible School. By 1961, he was involved in evangelistic tours throughout the islands of Celebes, Java and Timor. 26 Elias would continue serving

God, even in difficult situations. In 1963, crisis struck. In April 17 of that year, the Agung volcano, on the island of Bali, erupted and some villages were buried. Elias was holding a mission there and immediately began helping victims of the eruption. In the process of doing so, he breathed in much hot ash and his lungs were inflamed. Hospital doctors began fighting for Elias' life but, before long, concluded that Elias would die in a matter of days. His temperature had risen to 106 degrees and the inflammation had spread to his liver. One night, during this ordeal, he was heard singing. 27 He spoke to his wife these words:

*This isn't my last
night on earth. I have
to glorify the Lord
Jesus. God has given
me two verses
confirming His will,
'...we went through
fire and through
water: but thou*

broughtest us out into a wealthy place.’ (Psalm 66:12), and, ‘...when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.’ (Is. 43:2). I have gone through fire, but the Lord will deliver me. 28

That very night Elias’ condition began to improve as the Lord healed him of his injuries.

A restored Elias entered back into ministry and, in 1964, he was busy preaching throughout Java. Many churches were still closed to his ministry. One night, he was awoken from sleep by the Lord and shown that he would preach to thousands. The following day he received an invitation to minister in Bandung, Java. The invitation said that every church in the area would be participating in this meeting. Elias accepted the invitation and found himself in Bandung,

preaching to crowds of between 8,000 and 15,000. In the eighteen days of meetings, 3,000 persons made the decision for Christ. 29

Elias would continue to be greatly used by the Lord in the Indonesian revivals. On one occasion, a deaf Muslim came to Elias seeking healing. Elias prayed for him and the man was healed. The man responded by giving his life to Christ. On another island, Elias was forbidden to preach. Although the door for a public meeting was closed, this did not stop Elias from testifying of his faith. He boarded a taxi and began telling its passengers the gospel. He learned a few months later that the taxi driver came to Christ as a result of what Elias had shared. In 1969, he was holding a missionary campaign in West Irian (New Guinea). As he preached to an open-air audience, rain began to fall in torrents. Elias prayed that the Lord would keep the meeting free of rain and the

rain stopped. This was one meeting during an eighteen-day campaign which saw almost 3,000 commit their lives to Christ and 250 men commit themselves to full-time ministry. 30

Twentieth-century Indonesia had known revival. The fires of it were kindled in a small Bible school in East Java and in the hearts of men and women like John Sung, Reuben, Pastor Gideon, Jephthah, Tamar, Pak Elias and a multitude of other

nameless Indonesian Christians. Twenty-first century Indonesia waits for the courageous company of committed believers who will take the baton which has been passed down to them and run with it across the finishing line. It waits for faith-filled friends to carry the light of the gospel to its every corner and to love its millions of citizens into God's eternal kingdom.

END NOTES

1. E. J. C. Kiewiet De Jonge, Benjamin Higgins, et al, “Indonesia, Republic of” *Collier’s Encyclopedia, Vol. 12*, Ed. Bernard Johnston (New York: Macmillan Educational Co., 1992), 711.
2. Kurt Koch, *The Revival in Indonesia* (Kregel Publications, 1972), 12.
3. *Ibid.*, 13, 14.
4. George W. Peters, *Indonesia Revival : Focus on Timor* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973), 40-41.
5. Alle Hoekema, *Dutch Mennonite Mission in Indonesia* (Alkhart: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 2001), 4.
6. Kurt Koch, *The Revival in Indonesia*, 54-61.
7. John Sung, quoted in Kurt Koch, *The Revival in Indonesia*, 62. Taken from *The Revival in Indonesia* © Copyright 1992 by Kurt Koch. Published by Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, MI. Used by permission of the publisher. All rights reserved.
8. *Ibid.*, 63. Taken from *The Revival in Indonesia* © Copyright 1992 by Kurt Koch. Published by Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, MI. Used by permission of the publisher. All rights reserved.
9. E. J. C. Kiewiet De Jonge, Benjamin Higgins, et al, “Indonesia, Republic of” *Collier’s Encyclopedia, Vol. 12*, Ed. Bernard Johnston, 719.
10. George W. Peters, *Indonesia Revival : Focus on Timor*, 54.
11. Kurt Koch, *The Revival in Indonesia*, 16-19.
12. *Ibid.*, 82–84.
- 13
14. Anonymous quote in Kurt Koch, *The Revival in Indonesia*,

88. Taken from *The Revival in Indonesia* © Copyright 1992 by Kurt Koch. Published by Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, MI. Used by permission of the publisher. All rights reserved.

15. Kurt Koch, *The Revival in Indonesia*, 94 – 95.

16. Ibid., 103–104. Taken from *The Revival in Indonesia* © Copyright 1992 by Kurt Koch. Published by Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, MI. Used by permission of the publisher. All rights reserved.

17. Ibid., 104. Taken from *The Revival in Indonesia* © Copyright 1992 by Kurt Koch. Published by Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, MI. Used by permission of the publisher. All rights reserved.

18. Ibid., 104-106.

19. Ibid., 117-118. Taken from *The Revival in Indonesia* © Copyright 1992 by Kurt Koch. Published by Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, MI. Used by permission of the publisher. All rights reserved.

20. Gideon, quoted in Kurt Koch, *The Revival in Indonesia*, 118. Taken from *The Revival in Indonesia* © Copyright 1992 by Kurt Koch. Published by Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, MI. Used by permission of the publisher. All rights reserved.

21. Kurt Koch, *The Revival in Indonesia*, 117-120.

22. Ibid., 122-123.

23. Ibid., 124-125.

24. Ibid., 127-128. Taken from *The Revival in Indonesia* © Copyright 1992 by Kurt Koch. Published by Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, MI. Used by permission of the publisher. All rights reserved.

25. Ibid., 159.

26. Ibid., 168-171.

27. Ibid., 171-172.

28. Ibid., 172. I have changed his Scripture quotes of Psalm 66:12 and Isaiah 43:2 to King James Version. He had either misquoted or was using a translation that I could not identify. Taken from *The Revival in Indonesia* © Copyright 1992 by Kurt Koch. Published by Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, MI. Used by permission of the publisher. All rights reserved.

29. Ibid., 172-173.

30. Ibid., 256-258.

FOOTNOTE

1. Fetish – Religious charms, statues or other artifacts that are associated with sorcery or spiritualistic religion.

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