IIUM Journal of Religion and Civilisational Studies

Volume 5 Issue 1 2022

International Islamic University Malaysia

IIUM JOURNAL OF RELIGION AND CIVILISATIONAL STUDIES
(E-ISSN: 2637-112X)

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E-ISSN: 2637-112X

Published by:
IIUM Press, International Islamic University Malaysia
P.O. Box 10, 50728 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Phone (+603) 6421-5018/5014, Fax: (+603) 6421-6298
Website: https://www.iium.edu.my/office/iiumpress

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IIUM Journal of Religion and Civilisational Studies (IJRCS) 5:1 (2022); 45-65.

Colonial Civilisation: Consolation and Iron Fist within the Dutch Ethical Policy in Aceh

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Abstract: There has been persisting debate among scholars of colonial and postcolonial studies on whether colonial civilisation laid the foundational influences inherited by developed former colonised nations. Although many postcolonial critics have debunked this idea, there is an inadequate narrative from the Dutch experience in Indonesia. Numerous scholars have agreed that the Dutch Ethical Policy was not rooted in a purely humanitarian civilising mission, but instead was the result of another prolonged inefficient government strategy or experiment based on the Dutch occupation of Aceh, which was colonised from 1873 to 1942. Since Aceh was the basis for the decision to implement the Dutch Ethical Policy, this paper intends to examine the extent of efficiency, role and implications of this policy towards the Acehnese society. Based on ethnological studies in the area and political advice authored and minted by Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje (1857-1936), ethical policy is defined as a form of consolation and "iron fist", a clear-cut policy deemed to ensure the authoritarian power of a colonial regime. This study finds that, as a result of this policy, Acehnese influential figures who swore allegiance to the Dutch were targeted for propagating enlightenment mission, while those who chose to rebel were subjected to scrutiny and violence through military measure. The modern education system and infrastructure that were manifested from

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this ethical policy created new classes in society, where access to numerous privileges and networks continuously differed. Through qualitative research methodology, numerous colonial newspapers, reports and correspondence were used as analysing tools. It is expected that this paper will provide an additional view on studies of modern civilisation in Aceh and Indonesia.

Keywords: Ethical policy, colonial civilisation, colonialism, Aceh, new class.

Introduction

In 2017, the social sciences academia was surprised by Bruce Gilley's argument on the 'good side' of colonialism and his criticisms against anti-colonial narratives. Both academicians and common readers displayed a swayed position between support and condemnation, which led to hundreds of thousands of them to sign a petition to the journal, *Third World Quarterly*, and its publisher, Taylor & Francis. Although retraction was in effect, the contentious ideas lingered through magazine interviews with the author, besides persisting heated debates within academia circles (Flaherty, 2017).

Despite being largely condemned, the good side of colonialism—which refers to the establishment of modern civilisational standards that include science and technology, educational institutions and economic welfare—has received subtle yet tremendous support from segments of society in former colonised countries, particularly those who were colonial beneficiaries of heritable networks of politics, economy and social class. In Indonesia, for instance, the good side of colonialism received enough applause from members of the middle and upper class who received Western higher education and became part of the academia and bureaucrats. This particularly occurred in Java, which was formerly under the Dutch East India Company and government control since 1619, marking the establishment of Batavia as the key port and capital until the end of colonial period (Ricklefs, 2001). Recent studies have shown that the colonial industry, such as sugar plantations, contributed to the thriving economy of Indonesia and is heritably continued by the current local conglomerates of Indonesia (Dell & Olken, 2020). This is an example of how anti-colonial sentiments were put to rest, at least in Java.

The increasing native participation in knowledge and sciences, the establishment of educational and welfare institutions as well as mass printing and commodities production are what defined the Dutch Ethical Policy. It was a formal Dutch colonial policy that was aimed to benefit both the native population and the Dutch regime. By focusing on an ethical treatment of native affairs, this ethical policy lasted between 1901 and 1942, albeit with numerous waves of financial turbulence, handicap administrative policies and native oppositions (Cribb, 1993).

Being at odds with the colonial power, many Acehnese rejected the Dutch Ethical Policy and conflicted with the governmental organ mass of its continuity. The case of Gampong Pande, which has been unsettled since 2015 ("Proyek Ipal," 2021), where provincial development projects transgressed historical heritage, for instance, has been understood as the continuity of colonial ethical policy in the once most problematic region.

Despite the burden of colonial history in diverse regions of Indonesia, an adequate attempt to bridge the gap of knowledge is yet to take place. This paper intends to explain the efficiency and role of the Dutch Ethical Policy as a colonial civilising mission and its implication on the Acehnese society. By compiling several relevant colonial publications and official documents, as well as cross-reading available scholarly works, the analysis and narrative of this paper is constructed under qualitative research methodology. This paper provides an additional narrative in the study of colonial civilisation and aims to enhance the understanding of the relevant approach towards historical developmental projects that are foundationally relatable to the Acehnese people's marginalised thoughts and identity in Indonesia.

Establishment of Ethical Policy

The Dutch historian, Ulbe Bosma, argued that definitions of the Dutch Ethical Policy are intertwined with two problematic points - military subjugation on one hand, and White Man's civilisation on the other. He equalises it with European superiority in India (Bosma, 2008).

The prolonged Acehnese rebellion implicated the establishment of the Dutch Ethical Policy (*Ethische Politiek*). Numerous scholars have agreed that this ethical policy was the result of the Dutch experience

with Aceh. Sidel (2003) argued that the Dutch Ethical Policy was intertwined with Acehnese anti-colonial resistance, while Siapno (2002) mentioned that ethical policy experiments were rooted in the colonial ruling experience in Aceh.

There has been an increasing "ethical calling" since the 1870s towards the natives. The "enlightened" man, Pier Broshooft, was committed to proposing and criticising government policy towards the natives, as revealed in numerous editions of his prominent newspaper, *De Locomotief*. The call towards producing prosperous East Indies natives took a significant turn after the investigation report of Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje on Acehnese resistance and the local essence of Islam, followed by heightened programmes of liberal ideas in the centre. These encouraged the Netherlands' then-royal ruler, Queen Wilhelmina, to finally announce the implementation of the Dutch Ethical Policy in 1901 throughout the colonies (Furnivall, 1976; Benda, 1958).

To implement the policy, the Netherlands had to firmly grip hold of each of their colonies, especially in the Aceh region. Thus, when Hurgronje and J. B. van Heutsz managed to suppress the rebellions in Aceh, followed by the submission of the Sultan in the early part of the 20th century, the enforcement of the Dutch Ethical Policy on the natives did not face further delay (Vickers, 2005). Hurgronje was positioned as the Advisor for Native Affairs from 1889 to 1906 since he saw that Islam and the *ulama* (learned scholars of Islam) had been the only major force that spurred the natives to be rebellious and "backward". Thus, the Dutch Ethical Policy, which was shrouded in imperialism, was seen as the only equipment that could emancipate and relieve the Acehnese Muslims from "illiteracy and being uncivilized" (Siapno, 2002).

Another trigger for the implementation of the Dutch Ethical Policy was the fact that the Dutch were sinking in financial disruption. After numerous failures to implement this policy that the Acehnese were expected to submit, the Dutch finally had to face a financial crisis as a result of the prolonged colonisation through violence. A Dutch report (Vissering, 1920) stated the following:

> The Aceh War had devoured treasures of money since 1873, and the conditions of unrest in that northern part of Sumatra were increasingly gnawing at our authority in the

> whole colony; there was no fixed line in the actions of the government. (p. 6)

The resistance that the Dutch encountered in Aceh was the costliest and bloodiest in the history of the Dutch East Indies. Within seven years of the first expedition, the Dutch had spent 115 million guilders on the occupation of only 50 square kilometres. In 1884, the expense increased to 150 million guilders (Pusat Dokumentasi dan Informasi Aceh, 1977: 37). In 1886, the Dutch plantation in Aceh seemed to come in huge losses of about 200 million guilders after having spent money on over 15,000 acres of occupied land in which 13 guilders were applied to each acre ("Nederlands India News," 1886). Moreover, in 1891, the increase in deaths, which numbered at 1,280, and the injury of 5,287 soldiers meant that the expenditure of 200 million guilders was unavoidable.

The war against Aceh caused every system that had been implemented since the 1830s to be abolished in 1873, including the delivery of revenue to home finances from the East Indies, besides other reasons, such as the rise of expenditure of the administration for communication among European industries, improved security for better justice and education that was conducted to buy the power of the natives. As a replacement of the cultivation system, the Dutch implemented a free market liberal economy, with a major role given to private enterprises that started in 1874. The system of "credit balance" from this policy was implemented by the Dutch to fund educational institutions, public works, police, transmigration and hospitals, among others. However, the renewal of the revenue system was ineffective since the majority of taxes gained from various productions were directed towards the heavy expenses of the Aceh War (Middendorp, 1929).

This costliest war compelled Batavia and the Hague to decide on which policy best suited the Acehnese people. Indeed, since the effect of the Enlightenment period had become stronger, the liberal circles pushed for a more civilised manner of administration as a way to create full submission of the natives. However, the superiority of the Christian-led parliaments dominated in their major disagreement (Van den Doel, 1994).

While the initiated government policy continued to fail and expenses continued to increase, the Dutch decided to retreat into

the second civilian administration that was integrated through *geconcentraate linie* (concentration line), which covered 53 kilometres of area in Aceh, including the capital city of Kutaraja and Aceh Proper. Each fortified post was connected with tramways, telephone lines and mobile columns. The fact that the concentration line was meant to halt the pacification agenda in Aceh that had optimised the minds of the Acehnese people even further but, unavoidably, the resistance reached inside the concentration line (Furnivall, 1976).

In 1891, the Dutch applied a new method of finance, in which domestic and colonial finances were separated. At this point, the expenses for suppressing the Acehnese rebels were budgeted specifically. In 1896, the trade or the export-import business was in a bad condition whereby some products, such as sugar and coffee, experienced a massive attack of disease and the price of tin dropped. The situation was made worse by the fact that the obstinacy of the Acehnese guerrillas exhausted the Dutch administration like a contagious disease. It caused a rise of expenses, fall of revenue and unsuccessful new revenue policy. In 1908, the expenditure for government administration alone was about 40 million guilders, which covered not only communication and increase in security fee, but also education that was aimed to obtain the power of the distinguished natives (Furnivall, 1976).

The Dutch then decided to reinvestigate matters that would please the Acehnese people to be ruled under the Netherlands. The vocal opposition of Snouck Hurgronje on political Islam and East Indies Muslims for the past few years since his visit to Mecca in 1885 had now gained wider attention. In 1891, the central colonial government decided to send the Arabist to Aceh. Hurgronje stayed in Aceh's concentration line for about nine months under a disguised character named Haji Abdul Ghaffar. He managed to impress the "soft" Acehnese people with his Arabic language skills and rich knowledge of Islamic teachings and international Muslim regions, especially Mecca. His investigation on the social and political situation in Aceh was helped by the Acehnese *uleebalang* (ruler of customary law) and *ulama*. His reports and advice pertaining to native affairs, especially Aceh's affairs, led to the birth of total combat with the Acehnese rebels, with the support of General van Heutz, who was the civil and military governor of Aceh from 1898 to 1904. At the same time, the Dutch Ethical Policy was implemented,

marking the so-called new beginning of Dutch colonisation of the East Indies (Ricklefs, 2001).

The war between the Netherlands and Aceh since 1873 had always been driven by economic interests. For centuries, Aceh had independently acted as the sole producers and sellers of pepper, betel-nut and other forest products. In the 1820s, this region became the major supplier for pepper, providing half of its global demand (Reid, 2005).

Between 1811 and 1871, as political elites grappled with agreements and breach of treaties, the Dutch managed to take control of pepper machinery key ports that were under the Sultanate of Aceh. Kuala Batu, Susoh and Singkel fell to the Dutch immediately after the cities were wrecked for a second time by the American navy in a disputed case of piracy in 1839. In the 1850s, Siak, another independent and long-time vassal of Aceh, was subdued through a trade contract that demanded the natives to recognise Dutch control.

The Aceh Darussalam Sultanate under the rule of Sultan Mansur Syah reflected bonds with the leaders of other Muslim states in Indonesia, where the latter appointed the Aceh Sultan as the leader to deliver pleas of aid from the Ottoman Empire. Through Acehnese envoys such as Muhammad Ghauth and Sidi Muhammad, the Sultan's letter revealed initiatives to revive prolonged political relation with the Ottoman Empire and requested a relevant measure of aid against the incurring disturbances by the Dutch (BOA. I.H.R. 00066/3208/006). Anthony Reid (2005) revealed that another similar attempt was made in 1872, pushing forward greater support by the Ottoman elites to receive an agreement from Sultan Abdul Azis. These attempts by Aceh and the Ottoman elites resulted in the absence of fulfilling answers.

When the battle occurred in 1873, the political lines led by the Acehnese people were revealed through the activity of the Council of Eight in Penang. The Council was established for the purpose of diplomacy on the issues of military aid and peace negotiations, and was led by one of the Sultan's nephews, Tuanku Ibrahim, and assisted by numerous influential merchants and commanders. Among the members of the Council were Arab and Keling long-term commercial partners who garnered support from the metropolis societies of Penang, the Straits Settlement and beyond. Due to the shift of leadership, severe Dutch blockade and death of key figures, the Council of Eight was

naturally disbanded in 1878 (Deliana, 2018). After this period, there was an absence of information on the attempt of allying with the international circles. However, numerous parties became involved in empowering the battle of the Acehnese through an allegedly illegal supply of arms by numerous circles, including Chinese merchants and the British (Tagliacozzo, 2005). In fact, within the first five years of the war, there was an increasing outcry against the trade disturbance with Aceh and damage to mercantile networks, voiced by diverse global merchants and anti-war personnel, such as J. J. Rochemont, calling for a halt of occupation and resolution moderated by European neutral powers unless the Acehnese people were given their right for compensation ("London and Achin," 1875).

The penetration of European achievements in the 19th century was intensified after the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, which enabled new inventions in maritime navigation and weaponry, such as the steamship, followed by the flow of natural scientists and medics. Before 1869, at least in the realm of the elite class, colonised societies witnessed and found access to mass printing of travellers' accounts and colonial capitalist thinkers on their observation, judgment and imagination of the natives, which became crucially influential in the case of Sumatra. These developments enchanted the visions of the colonised elite societies in the region who were keener to adopt it as a new fashion of thinking that, in some aspect, allowed the justification for the need to "introduce" colonial civilisation into the colonised societies, which were being portrayed as barbaric, savage, illiterate and cannibalistic. Due to the imagining of the uncivilised character of native societies that were driven from 19th-century pseudo-scientific travelogues books (Noor, 2017), submissions through military means by European powers were seen as appraisable, either openly or by masquerading as civilising agents, such as the case of the Dutch in the East Indies.

While the British and French were fashioning their respective civilising agenda through institutionalisation, pseudoscience and racial segregation, the Dutch seemed to possess an increased interest in mimicking the trend known as ethical policy and apparently used this as a disguise behind economic exploitation, as appointed by postcolonial critics. The trend of civilising uncivilised natives in the aspect of new inventions and methods of communication, transportation and science and technology came not solely or majorly for the benefit of the natives,

but for pushing forward colonial and imperialistic interests (Scholten, 1994). This perhaps stayed true for regions such as Sumatra, where economic exploitation (1890s-1945) was prioritised in the development of military confrontation. A newspaper excerpt below from this period reflected such an interest:

> Netherland India. The Acheen war drew nearer to its conclusion by the surrender of the titular Sultan followed afterwards by the submission of Panglima Polem, the principal leader of the war party. The District of Kerinchi which produces gold and that of Jambi which abounds with Petroleum were brought under. Mining enterprise flagged. A line of steamers began to ply between Java and Holland by way of Singapore and Sabang. Troubled with coolies on estates in Deli arose about the middle of the year. ("Neighbouring Countries," 1903, p. 1)

The above text shows that after the Acehnese were defeated in war, Kerinci and Jambi were presumed to be paralysed as strong allies and protectorates of Aceh. This highlighted the leisure thought of economic prospects, in which the Dutch and mining enterprises were believed to be able to capitalise from the natural resources of gold and petroleum, in addition to the enforcement of forced labourers, for whom the steamers lined up and were ready to profit from the exploited lands. This newspaper excerpt represented the fashion of viewing the end of a war. It contrasted against the idea of civilising the natives where the end of war should had meant recovery and hospitality.

Consolation, Iron Fist and the Changes of Social Fabrics

Ethical policy, as a civilising policy, suited the Dutch rule, not because of a heartfelt desire for humanistic treatment for every colonial citizen, but rather as a form of support towards intensifying imperialism that was brewed on the idea of civilising the backward rebellious natives. Defaming the image of the Acehnese people had swirled around decades before 1873. The Acehnese people were made popular through depictions of negative characters, such as pirates, slave traders, opium addicts and savages, before the war announcement was made official ("Items from the Java Papers," 1873). Furthermore, during the occupation, they were depicted as either being different or appreciative

based on the stereotype of being "fanatic" and "patriotic", each for their resistance and loyalty to the Dutch. The fanatic Acehnese people who obstinately resisted the Dutch created weariness for their struggle, which escalated anti-colonial support in other colonised regions ("Items from the Java Papers," 1874b; "Items from the Java Papers," 1874c).

Such colonial views were closely related to the ideas of economic and political monopolies. Natural resources, port networks and the massive industrial development in Java and Sumatra over tobacco, opium, coffee, sugar, rubber and textiles were accompanied with the intense role of steamships and improved communication methods that were sustained by the Dutch's high performance in international competition. This led to their ambition to have a total grip over the East Indies, and that could only be fulfilled with the submission of the Aceh Darussalam Sultanate, which remained the only uncooperative independent political entity in the third phase of the 19th century.

It was with the establishment of the Sumatran Treaty in 1871 that the Dutch and British discussed sharing their slices of the colonies in Asia and Africa. The British agreed to hand off its protectorate status over to Aceh, which triggered the Dutch to launch its strike.

Since then, it took only two years of conspiracy and brainwashing for the Dutch's European counterparts to justify launching an open war against the weak Sultanate through indictment of slave-trade, piracy and opium addiction, all of which were assisted with the spreading fuel of Pan-Islamic fear. In other words, the Dutch decided to play its moral enlightenment card, namely civilising the uncivilised and using unsavoury depictions of the non-Western world, both imagined and reconstructed. To view the natives as inferior was indeed a trending topic of its time, as stated by Farish A. Noor (2017) in the following excerpt:

> Again, it is worth reminding the modern reader that the writings that were produced then-in books, newspapers and magazines-reflected the common sensibilities that were at work at that time; nineteenth century Europe was a world that was defined and shaped by nationalism, capitalism and pseudo-scientific racism, and the prejudices of men like Raffles were typical of the time and the institutions they served. (p. 101)

The military means as a method to instil civilisation into the natives was clarified by a general commander who led the second war expedition in Aceh in 1874. Jan van Swieten (1879) stated the following:

> *De moraal hier uit te putten, is dat het niet opgaat, dat een volk, al is het ook zoo onbeschaafd als de atjehers, on vatbaar zoude zijn voor goede procedes, en allen door geweld brandstichting en verwoesting zijner bezittingen tot onderwerping te brengen is.* (p. 86)
>
> The moral to be exhausted here is that it is not true that a nation, even if it is as uncivilised as the Acehnese, would be incapable of good litigation, and all by arson and destruction of its possessions can be brought into submission. (p. 86)

Jan van Swieten's remark above gained appraisal from a renowned French acrobat performer, Charles Blondin (1824–1897), who invited the former and his hundreds of troops who returned from Aceh to witness his performance in Batavia before he continued to Australia (http://www.hat-archive.com/blondin.htm). Blondin said in his excerpts:

> …a token of deep respect... for the bravery of the General, the officers, and the privates who in such a glorious manner, have waged a difficult war with an uncivilized but courageous people and who has vigorously maintained the honour of civilization, in which the whole of mankind have an interest… ("Items from the Java Papers," 1874a)

While newspapers and travellers' accounts continued to indulge its global readers on defaming the images of colonised societies, the Dutch promoted ethical policy as a similar representation of the White Man's Burden, an honour that trended among the British citizens, or what is nowadays simply connected to the controversial idea of white supremacy. Supported with approval of funding for exploitation had indeed created a turn of fate that lasted beyond the colonial period. Its intensity from 1910 onwards involved numerous developments, and infrastructure for economic and social purposes were built for the colonisers as well as for the natives. Bridges, railways and trams were first built as early as 1896, connecting Aceh Proper, Sigli, Mereudu, Bireun, Idie and the western areas of Aceh. The lighthouse also found its place in almost every key port, such as Ulee Lheu, Sabang and the northern ports.

Industrial factories were concentrated in Sigli, Lhokseumawe, Gayo and Meulaboh. Numerous factories were established to facilitate the flow of tobacco, coffee, rubber, kopra and palm oil (Cribb, 1993). This development was not intended for the welfare of the native citizens, but for industrial and enterprise capitalism.

Besides extracting natural resources and constructing infrastructure, education scholarships perhaps became the most influential agent that managed to reflect the continuous beneficiaries of the Dutch Ethical Policy. It was provided solely to console the privileged local chiefs, nobles and families who swore allegiance to the Dutch. Their education did not involve religious studies and, instead, they were given pride to learn natural sciences and the Dutch administration system through the medium of Dutch and English languages. They also sang the Dutch national anthem and prayed for the blessing of the Dutch monarch. Textbooks in these schools found its first Latin script, both written in Acehnese and Dutch, replacing the Arabic Malay script known as Jawi. Meanwhile, the native schools that were taught specifically by local "neutral" ulama concentrating in mostly religious studies were heavily taxed and restricted in certain curriculum and activities, in addition to limited access to accommodation and low wages. Such schools were compared heavily to their Dutch counterparts, in which the former were deemed as backward. Education remains as the most important medium of preserving Eurocentrism in the colonies of Indonesia up to this day.

In addition to privileged education scholarships, these nobles or *uleebalang* (autonomous chief) were also given lands to cultivate, which implied the right to revenue, mimicking the European feudalistic system that was previously absent in the indigenous culture (Siegel, 1999).

From the 1920s onwards, the Dutch started to send forth its doctors, the Red Cross and other medics, though extremely few in number. These mostly Dutch-trained Javanese medics were sent to every civilian's door in the relatively conducive Aceh for free treatment as well as remedies for their illness and immunisation (Kuitenbrouwer, 2014).

The Dutch Ethical Policy also played a role in the religious sphere. The construction of the Bait al-Rahman grand mosque helped to restrict the flow of anti-colonial narratives, controlled by the measured standard of colonial masters delivered through their local right hand *ulama*. This

Mosque was intended to neither function diversely nor become the centre for political discussion definitively. The Dutch separated religion and customary law, which served as the umbrella of secular education progress and also to allow the further stagnation of traditional education and religious authority (Alfian, 1985).

The Dutch Ethical Policy indeed produced greater insecurity and divisions among the Acehnese people. It covered attempts in the exploitation of natural resources, extensions of agriculture and the development of infrastructure. It also compromised education, health and religious administrative policies that met the needs of the natives.

Unlike its implementation in other parts of the East Indies, the strategy to gain optimal results from the Dutch Ethical Policy in Aceh was upheld by separating the two traditional socio-religious groups, namely the *uleebalang* and the *ulama*, even though such an action was indirectly seen during the second military expedition. In 1900, it reached a new level whereby the *uleebalang* who initially were asked to sign a *korte verklaring* (short declaration) were now demanded to sign more articles of restrictions, in which the modification involved not only the recognition of Dutch sovereignty, but also the imposition of enemies of the Dutch as *uleebalang* enemies. Automatically, it created a situation in which the *uleebalang* acted as the government's spies. However, in minor cases, they were, at the same time, material providers for the rebellious groups (Alfian, 1985).

The situation worsened when the Dutch applied both the direct and indirect rule as their administration strategy. The areas under the direct rule of the Dutch included Great Aceh Kabupaten (regency), Singkel District and most coastal towns, such as Sigli, Bireuen, Lhokseumawe, Lhoksukon, Idi, Langsa, Kuala Simpang, Calang, Meulaboh and Tapaktuan. Meanwhile, 93 *nanggroe* out of these areas were under indirect rule, in which the local *uleebalang* played the role of leaders. The *uleebalang* were demanded to follow each movement of the guerillas' development. Besides, they were paid a higher salary of 10 guilders per month and were also equipped with a significant number of soldiers and ammunition to protect themselves in governing activities. Occasionally, when problems escalated, the soldiers moved to defend their independence against the Dutch government in Kuta Raja

(Sjamsuddin, 1982). Most of the Dutch's associates were extremely wealthy up to the 1930s (Ismail, 1994).

The evidence has shown that Aceh possessed a high amount of agricultural and natural resources during this time. By 1914, the Dutch had built roads that connected the east and west coast, from Bireuen to Takengon. Railway systems were constructed from Kuta Raja to eastern Sumatra. Modern administered plantation sectors alongside the traditional system were adopted, as seen in coconut plantations that were developed in Weh Island and, later, the opening of a free port in Sabang. Among the agricultural plantations were rubber and palm oil, both of which were established in 1910 (Sjamsuddin, 1982).

In the meantime, mass education for the natives began in 1905. By 1911, the colonial government had established 125 various schools with 6,000 pupils. In 1918, the number increased to 242 schools, 15 of which were schools for girls. The total number of natives receiving education was 25,000 in 1921. The schools continued to develop in late 1939, by which time the total number of pupils reached 36,000 (Sjamsuddin, 1982). However, the students who enrolled in such schools were from the *uleebalang* group and their relatives. A small number of the Acehnese people were indeed compelled to attend these schools in the effort to separate them from the influence of the *ulama*. Those who refused were forced into labour (Reid, 2005).

As a strategy in gaining the natives' sympathy, the Great Mosque of Bait al-Rahman was restored, hospitals were built, city planning were architected and secular schools were advocated. As a result, not only was there an increase in the number of *uleebalang*, but also of pilgrim *ulama* who sided with the Dutch, while the "hard" ones and their followers were isolated in the hinterlands (Gobbe & Adriaanse, 1990).

The face of the Dutch Ethical Policy had melted the anger of many more tired warriors. An increasing number of *uleebalang*, *ulama* and key leaders of rebellions eventually also submitted. However, at the grassroots level, the resistance was still productive, so the ethical policy came to implementation with unfortunate limitations.

Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje and the Politics of Favouritism

The architect behind this progress of transforming the social fabric of the East Indies and establishing a new order was Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje. Hurgronje believed that the *ulama* competed with the *uleebalang* for power. Thus, playing the politics of favouritism was key to a secure Dutch rule. Departing from such belief, Hurgronje encouraged an ethical policy that heavily favoured the *uleebalang*. The Dutch Ethical Policy permitted the *uleebalang* to claim and rule lands that were previously independently owned by common villagers (Alfian, 1985). This led to the rejection of power that the *uleebalang* possessed. In addition, the fact that there was no common ground between the *uleebalang* and the common villagers led to more rapacious attitudes, which increased the anger of the latter. The Dutch Ethical Policy indeed benefitted only the self-interested uleebalang, rather than the common villagers.

Furthermore, Hurgronje was convinced that *jihad* (holy war) was more deeply rooted in Aceh than in any other place. Thus, the implementation of the Dutch Ethical Policy, which included the modernisation of the *ulama*, was intended to separate them from their political role and was done for the purpose of vanishing ideas of *jihad* in Aceh societies (Hurgronje, 1906).

Furthermore, the real enemy that Hurgronje fought was the external ideology attached to the caliphate known as Pan-Islamism. Any sort of international Muslim alliance threatened the colonial regime. The holy war that had been waged in numerous rebellious East Indies areas included Aceh, so the Dutch were extremely guarded about any expression of Pan-Islamic sentiment (Benda, 1958).

Pan-Islamism was in reality revealed through the intercepted letters belonging to the last Sultan. Although he surrendered in 1903, his intercepted letters informed of his persuasion on re-establishing a lobby with the Ottoman Empire via the Ottoman Consulate in Batavia. Hurgronje later established the Short Declaration Policy, which bore a point on the prohibition of international contact with the colonies. This article was purely driven from the Acehnese Sultan's realities. Hurgronje assured that the implementation of this policy throughout the foreign consulates in Batavia, including the Ottoman Consulate, was bound to take immediate effect (Gobee & Adriaanse, 1990).

On the same note, Hurgronje's ethnographic studies led him to understand that the Acehnese social system was confined within the union between customary law and religion. He stated that the Acehnese life was grounded in the indissoluble union and indispensable cooperation of *hukom* (Islamic law) and *adat* (customary law). He also mentioned that *adat* is the mistress, while *hukom* is the obedient slave (Roff, 1985). Regardless of whether he misinterpreted this union or not, the fact that he included a more friendly policy on the *uleebalang* proved that he, indeed, saw an opportunity to create conflict between both groups. Whenever the two groups were in disagreement, the Dutch sided with the *uleebalang* and protected them simply by strengthening the latter's power in their territory without losing control over them (Sjamsuddin, 1985).

Finally, upon facing their reality, the rulers and *ulama*—who were in the coastal areas where most of them were subdued—conducted political war by accepting the Dutch Ethical Policy, especially with regard to education. At this point, the Dutch created separate laws of education for the *uleebalang* and the *ulama*. Most of the *uleebalang* were prioritised in receiving secular education in most Dutch-based schools, since they preferred to be employed in government offices, while only a few from the *ulama* group encouraged pursuing such an education. Instead, the latter were given the suggestion to conduct activities inside religious academies rather than politics. Therefore, in reaction to this, most of the *ulama*, religiously devout *uleebalang* and Sultan's relatives initiated rebuilding traditional religious educational centres called *dayah* as the medium for the grassroots to attain proper education. In the next decade, the number of *dayah* multiplied, and every region in Aceh was permeated with *dayah* education (Hasjmy, 1969). However, due to many significant *ulama* and distinguished youths being killed in the war, the popularity of *dayah* stagnated.

The fear of the Dutch over the possibility of *dayah* to function as another core of struggle, led to the issuance of more restrictions. The restriction policy of *dayah* schools caused the Acehnese people to seek other alternatives.

The Dutch Ethical Policy was not seen as a just policy, considering another *prang sabi* (holy resistance) movement called Perang Bakongan that occurred from 1925 to 1937, followed with another fierce rebellion

centred in Lhoong in 1933. Right before the coming of the Japanese occupiers in 1942, Acehnese warriors under the leadership of the youth of Persatuan Ulama Seluruh Aceh PUSA had already managed to expel the Dutch from the main capital. Furthermore, the *ulama*, civilians and cooperative *uleebalang* collaborated with the Japanese to stop the return of the Dutch to the region. The only success of the Dutch Ethical Policy was the omission of the fact that religion was indispensable with *adat* and both were two sides of the same coin. The internal conflict between the surrendered Western-educated *uleebalang* and the *ulama* led to a long-awaited fierce vengeance that later burst into social revolution, or *perang cumbok*, in 1942, where the *uleebalang* battled against the *ulama* and their followers. This resulted in the expulsion of most of the *uleebalang* in Aceh, and they were forced to seek refuge instead.

Conclusion

This study has shown that the Dutch Ethical Policy that was intended to civilise East Indies natives debunks the notion that the 'good side' of colonialism play a crucial role in shaping the wellbeing of former colonised societies and developed nations. From the experiences of the Dutch Ethical Policy in Aceh, it has emerged that the Acehnese society went through the process of consolation and iron fist policy, defaming images, economic exploitation, damaged social fabric and social structural bifurcation. Colonial civilisation that was shaped by the measure of submission towards the colonial regime was key to the problem. It was pre-conditioned with technical and military ascendancy, which later on somehow transformed through non-violence policy, an improved communication and an increased interest among non-Western countries over scientific development, which was the core medium in accepting the colonial standard of civilisation. The full embrace of civilisation, in this case being the Dutch Ethical Policy, was continuously challenging. Those who pledged loyalty to the Dutch inherited a wider access to the economy, political network and even social hierarchy for many generations after the Dutch's withdrawal from the East Indies. The resistance group, on the other hand, inherited the dispersing traditional economy and religious educational network, and was bound to live in post-colonial trauma that contributed to their reluctance towards progress, as evident in the case of Gampong Pande. In addition,

as a result of this ethical policy, the Acehnese society faced social divisions that comprised common civilians, the privileged *uleebalang* and resistance groups. The common civilians were left with nothing but to be neutral, since they were neither active rebels nor active colonial officers. With the development of this non-violence policy—assisted with the increasing loving portrayal of Western images through radio and the small screen—colonial civilisation was embraced and found acceptance among the privileged groups, who once collectively opposed it in blood bath, but eventually decided to live in the culture and ideas that come with it. The third group subscribed to traditional originality and were religiously compromised to progress. They consisted of the nobles, royals and highly educated men who were forced to face their eventual fate of being criminalised and dehumanised, and stripped of all their rights to their titles, lands and honour.

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