

# Ethical Politics and Educated Elites In Indonesian National Movement

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**Abstract**—Ethical Politics is an interesting policy to study, because the policy is actually in practice as a new form of the Dutch colonial era over Indonesia with the slogan of educational development policies, irrigation, and emigration. But in practice it remained a new form of colonialism over the people of the Dutch East Indies.

This study wants to analyze the background and implementation of ethical politics by using historical research methods; heuristics, critics, interpretation, and historiography. The background of ethical politics is a change in the way of looking at dealing with colonial countries. In practice, the policies provided were solely for the benefit of the Dutch Colonial. For the Indonesian people as a result of ethical politics is the birth of Indonesian intellectuals as a result of western education which raises the awareness of fighting for the motherland through national movements.

**Keywords** – Ethical Politics, education, and national movement

## I. INTRODUCTION

Ethical Politics is an interesting policy to study, because the policy is actually a fundamental policy in its history, in practice actually as a new form of the era of Dutch colonialism over Indonesia. That era as a form of colonialism under the pretext of promising the welfare of the people of the Dutch East Indies with the slogans of educational development, irrigation, and emigration. In fact, in political policies Ethics are more promising than implementation, and important facts about exploitation and conquest have not changed. Ethical Politics is rooted in human and economic issues.[1] That is why in practice Ethical politics remained a new form of colonialism over the Dutch East Indies. One of the highlights of ethical politics is the emergence of Indonesian intellectuals as a result of western education which has generated awareness of fighting for the motherland through national movements.

This study aims to analyze how the background of ethical political policies, how they are implemented, and the impact of ethical politics on the Indonesian people. Viewed

from the aspect of ethical political policy is a change in the colonial system of colonial lands. That view is the impact of political developments - as well as the conditions in Southeast Asia where European colonialism has intensified its power, such as Britain, Spain and America. This condition brings its own concerns for the Dutch about their colony in Indonesia. The strategy taken is to put in confidence the kindness of the colonies through education, irrigation and emigration.

## II. RESEARCH METHODS

The research method on Ethical Politics uses the Historical Research method which includes 1) Heuristics, the main source used as a reference in this research is the work in the form of references produced by experts or historical works. 2) Criticism, which is testing the credibility of the source that has been obtained by examining the credibility of the source content that has been obtained to be a fact. 3) Interpretation (analyzing facts), looking for relationships between facts from various sources so that it becomes a series of facts that are arranged coherently. 4) Historiography (writing the results of research) in a scientific journal which is arranged logically and systematically according to academic rules.

## III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### A. Background of Ethical Political Policy

At the end of the nineteenth century the "Law of History" seemed to apply again, in which the process of Dutch colonial rule in Indonesia made quite striking policy changes, namely the implementation of an "Ethical Politic" policy.[2] Ethical Policy to replace the principles of "laissez-faire" of previous liberalism, in a new way, namely government interference in economic matters and welfare matters. The policy emerged as a result of the defeat of the liberal group in the Parliament in the Netherlands in the 1901 Elections. Religious groups and right groups eventually formed a "coalition" government. Religious neutrality was replaced by plans for the inclusion of Christian principles in government politics and it was in the first year of the 20th century that the policy of Ethical Politics was launched.

Ethical politics appear to be an interesting policy when heard, which makes the sympathy of the indigenous people towards the colonial government if it just swallows the terms literally out of the socio-political context. Whereas ethical policy is actually an effort formulated by Dutch scholars in the context of continuing the exploitation of Indonesian wealth, thus this ethical policy cannot be separated from colonial interests, which are in fact an intensification and exploitation of the colony. The emergence was not a coincidence, but along with the peak of Western imperialism as a manifestation of the politics of modern capitalism.[3]

Along with the development of modern political imperialism, where the colony as a producer of raw materials, Indonesia has become important in world competition, so it needs to be maintained.[4] Therefore Ethical Politics actually only changes the paradigm of the Indonesian colony which was originally as advantageous place into an area that needs to be developed. On the other hand, the Ethical Politics policy is also closely related to the increasingly intense development of world power in Southeast Asia since the end of the 19th century, as has also happened throughout the world. As Britain has strengthened its position in Singapore, the Malay Peninsula and Burma; France expanded its dominance over Cambodia and Laos, while Thailand became a buffer and the only independent country in Southeast Asia for the following decades. While the Spanish-American war of 1898 was the cause of the independence of the Philippines from the clutches of the Spanish people, but led them to fall under US rule. The condition brought the Southeast Asian region to a new arrangement when the influence of various world powers became more certain. In that context, policies are needed that are in harmony with the times, so the policy needs to "exploit" the colony in accordance with the times that are not identical with exploitation.[5]

Conditions in Indonesia since the implementation of open door politics (the era of liberal politics) have brought the destruction of indigenous companies as a result of losing competition and decreasing agricultural land due to being used in the interests of "onderneming-onderneming" causing people to become poor, the danger of famine threatens the people. This situation led to strong criticism of the Colonial government. If the suffering of the people due to forced cultivation has moved Multatuli's ink with his criticism through an article titled "Max Havellar" and Van de Putte's "Suiker Contracten", then at the peak of people's suffering due to open door politics emerged the figure of Conrad Thomas van Deventer through his work entitled " Een Eereschuld " (debt of gratitude) published in the journal *de Gide "de Gide"* in 1899 in the Netherlands.[6] Besides that, van Deventer's speech in the general meeting organized by the liberal association of Democracy in Amsterdam on June 5, 1901, was published as a brochure.

C.Th. van Deventer was a former attorney and colonial justice official, who later became a member of the Dutch Parliament which had a great influence in declaring

colonial political change. Before van Deventer there was indeed a figure who criticized open-door political policy namely van Dedem (1891) as a member of parliament expressing an opinion on the necessity to separate Indonesia's finances from the Netherlands.

Van Deventer's proposal in principle is that the Dutch Government has been indebted to Indonesia a lot of the results during the politics of the balance or cash surplus, because it has become the obligation of the Dutch government to return the debts. The call of van Deventer's favor, which proposes to carry out politics of revenge, commonly referred to as "Ethische politiek", is carried out in principle. But behind that as well as the realization of the Christian state of the Netherlands at that time, which was obliged to improve the legal position of indigenous Christians in the Dutch East Indies, lent strong support to the Christian mission and instilled in the entire government system with the realization that the Netherlands had a moral obligation towards the Indies population Netherlands.

van Deventer's proposal was realized since Queen Willhelmina's speech in September 1901 when he opened the Staten General session which, among other things, contained an idea of political renewal for the Colonial Land. The ethical policy was ultimately carried out with the issuance of the Decentralization Law on December 20, 1904.

The issuance of the Decentralization Act is indeed an implementation of ethical politics with reference to two main objectives, namely: 1) improving the welfare of the indigenous population; and 2) gradually growing political autonomy and decentralization in the Dutch East Indies. However, in practice it is only merely pleasing to the indigenous people that welfare will be realized as a debt for excess cash (balance) obtained during liberal politics. Therefore the prosperity political slogan was created. While autonomy and decentralization as a means of strengthening policies that would not give political independence rights in the Dutch East Indies.

### *B. Principles of Ethical Politics Implementation*

The ethical policy officially replaced liberal colonial politics, with state interference in economic matters and an ambitious welfare legalization program. However, the main function of ethical politics is none other than to create socio-economic conditions that are directly in the colonial system. van Deventer's concept of the need to advance and improve the fate of the Indonesian people is just a suggestion of ways to be taken in the form of recommendations for conducting "educations", "Irrigation", and "Emigration", which is related to van Deventer's "trilogy" concept.

When viewed by van Deventer's proposal it seems that it is indeed an effort to build the welfare of the people of the colony. But what needs to be remembered is that what was spoken of was the colonial government that had interests in opposition to the colonized nation. Because the organizer of

the idea was the colonial government, of course the implementation was adjusted to colonial interests.

In relation to colonial politics at the time, the figure that could not be forgotten was Christian Snouck Hurgronje.

He is one of the main figures in laying out an outline of colonial politics in Indonesia. Snouck Hurgronje was indeed educated as a scientist and Orientalist who was expected to play a role in the Dutch East Indies, besides his desire to devote his life to the knowledge and greatness of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.[7] When Snouck Hurgronje received an assignment in the Dutch East Indies, the first question was how to deal with the problem of Islam. This can be understood, because Islam has shown the spirit of its struggle in Indonesia in the form of rebellion and resistance to Western penetration.

For all that, the proposals put forward by the advisors of the Governor-General in the field of affairs with Muslims were also very influential in colonial political policy. Snouck's proposal was essentially about the obligation of the Dutch colonial government to carry out the politics of association, westernization and Western education.[8] In this case the van Deventer concept and the Snouck Hurgronje concept have a meeting point and are indeed implemented. But the implementation was certainly adjusted to the interests of the Colonial.

### *1. Education*

In the field of education held to carry out colonial exploitation, the aim is not to educate the people, but rather is based on getting educated workers to meet the needs of low-ranking employees with low salaries. In this period of ethical politics, the education system did experience some changes in accordance with needs. Kelas Satu School (ongko siji), which is a school for priyayi children from 5 years old, changed to 6 years old and given Dutch lessons. Whereas the Second Class school (ongko loro) which is a school for ordinary children without being taught Dutch language, this school was established in the village and for 3 years studying only wrote, read and count.

The importance of the educated class needed is related to the rise of international conjuncture, the expansion of the world not only in the economic field, but also in government, it takes the teaching field to bring employees to a wider level at the local level. Besides that, efforts to provide education for the natives as an effort to counter education with the western model, to fight Pan-Islam which is considered dangerous to the colonial government.

Education policy is also a means to produce educated workers up to the local level under the Regent while at the same time aiming at creating a new priyayi group that will surely submit to the colonial government as a realization of the political results of the association.[9] Education policy is also related to the growth of the news media in Indonesia in that period, which required many educated people.

The policy in the field of education in the end brought a counter-productive impact on the Dutch colonial government, because with the emergence of educated groups in Indonesia turned out to be a factor driving the growth of Indonesian nationalism. The emergence of educated groups gave birth to groups of people who were able to separate what was good and what was not good, which gave birth to the Indonesian national movement led by educated people. Seeing the suffering of peasants and increasing political awareness of the educated people finally raised hopes that an Indonesian elite would emerge to lead the movement. Although education was initially given as an integrated Dutch political association, to counter the anti-Dutch forces it was feared to be masters of political objectives in the colony.

Ethical politics as colonial propaganda in the context of intensification and extensification of the implementation of colonial exploitation, while parties are seen as a new attempt at subtle and evil cultural imperialism through the "association" program, which is a colonial policy to eliminate the gap between colonialists and colonizers by eliminating the original culture of the colony to be replaced with a culture of invaders. A significant barrier to this lies in the resolution of the Islamic problem, because of the different basic concepts of religion. Therefore, according to Snouck Hurgronje, the defeat of Islam in Indonesia in the sense of discussing its adherents from the narrow limits of the Islamic religious system would be achieved by way of associating Indonesians into Dutch culture.

It is clear that the efforts undertaken by Snouck Hurgronje were attempts to Westernize the indigenous population, especially Muslims. To achieve this goal, the main focus is on the nobles (priyayi) who are generally the first social class, the clearest and which must be drawn towards westernization. The idea here was that the priyayi elite was indeed closer to the colonial government due to intensive contact, so that it was hoped that it would eventually be separated from Islam. In this era in Indonesia two new elites were indeed formed, namely the elite with western education and the Islam-oriented elite. The emergence of the two elites actually actually threatened the basis of the Dutch colonial government itself. Therefore the path taken is to expand new elite groups oriented to Western culture through education and employment. In graduate education the equivalent of the final exam "hoofdenscholen" parts A and B as well as those studying in Dutch schools until the second grade are already classified as priyayi. While in the field of clerical level occupations in the offices of European and Javanese officials and in the domestic government as well as clerks in various agencies up to the sub-district level and the native coolie foremen, warders and "opas" in the control office are also included in the priyayi group.

More than just recruiting elite priyayi groups, it is hoped that indigenous people rooted in custom will be able to adjust to the footsteps set by their traditional leaders.

Whereas efforts through the lower classes are pursued by the westernization of the education system.

In Snouck Hurgronje's opinion only the Western education system was the surest tool to reduce and ultimately defeat the influence of Islam in Indonesia. Also at the same time to stem and fortify the Dutch from Islamic "Volcano". Because if competing with the appeal of Western education and Western cultural allies, then Islam can certainly be a losing party. Therefore according to him Western education is a means for colonial survival in Indonesia only as a first step, which must be followed by the giving of definite parts and increasingly growing in political and administrative issues of the Colony to Indonesian heirs who Western educated.

The westernization effort also seemed to be based more on the assumption that the majority of the people of the Dutch East Indies were Islam, while those who ruled were a Christian minority. They accepted the Christian government because of coercion that could not be guaranteed to coexist in the future. In this period also the Christian Zending and Mission increased their activities more in the fields of teaching, health and social fields, which became one side of the attempt to conquer Islam. Therefore Snouck Hurgronje has developed a further concept of trying to separate religion from politics among Muslims.

In this case, actually it was not even more successful what was desired by the colonial parties through ethical political programs, because in the first decade of the 20th century it turned out that the Indonesian people, especially the scholars, entered the "Age of Progress" and at the same time the era of "National Awakening" with the educated pioneers earth son, who has been aware of the pride and honor of his people. Thus Western-style education has been able to weaken the prestige of traditional priyayi, but has given rise to a new class of Indonesians who have political awareness who have used a new plate form prepared for political reform, taking a leading role in radical agitation, both in cities and in villages. .

In view of the emergence of the National Movement, it was not only people's awareness that would peak but activities to achieve progress were carried out by the indigenous people themselves. An ethical political program which, among others, seeks to develop Western education for the son of the earth, but in reality the program has instilled popular awareness, to take over the system to be developed in accordance with the system that has long been in effect in the indigenous education system. On the other hand, this reality has aroused the desire to raise the dignity of the nation sought by modern organizations.

## 2. Irrigation

Irrigation was held by the government, but what was important was to irrigate sugar cane plantations owned by the Dutch. Whereas indigenous lands are unnoticed, and if they are able to enjoy progress in irrigation, then only those who have rice fields in the plantations.[10] The motivation

of the irrigation program is actually very much related to crop failure due to a lot of crop diseases and breeder diseases. This condition was certainly not favorable for the colonial government, especially for the mother country of the Netherlands as a reservoir of wealth from the Dutch East Indies. Other conditions are also confronted with the rampant poverty in Indonesia as a result of exploitation during the liberal economic politics that has produced surplus cash (batig slod) in the Netherlands as a result of excessive tax collection which reaches 25% of the income and money that is taxed. As an illustration of the indigenous population with an income of £ 39, the tax is £ 16, while the wealth of money is £ 39, the tax is £ 9. The concept applied is poverty must be overcome first in the framework of making the colony a joyous market.

## 3. Emigration

Emigration or transmigration is also held, but its implementation is limited. The resettlement of residents is prioritized for Javanese residents who want to become coolie contracts in plantations owned by European masses outside Java, especially in East Sumatra. Besides that it also emigrated out of Indonesia such as to Suriname, New Caledonia, and others. While proper emigration is very limited, this is because the government does not want to spend a large amount of money.

The motive for emigration policy is also related to conditions in Java which are already densely populated, all land was rented out during the liberal economic political system, blasting of the population in Java and Madura was very high, and saw population development faster than expansion of agricultural land. This condition resulted in an increase in the welfare of the Javanese population far from being able to improve their welfare because of the half-hearted efforts of the colonial government.

Factors also related to emigration policies are the development of the powers of the major Western imperialist powers in Asia and Africa, as well as the lack of attention from regions outside Java, which has raised concerns about imperialism/other foreign powers.

Thus the emigration is based on the motive for the existence of lands outside Java that have not been processed into plantation land, so that they can be used as income enhancers. Besides to reduce the population density of Java. That's because in 1865 the population of Java and Madura was 14 million, then by 1900 it had doubled. At the beginning of the 19th century there was a migration of people from Central Java to East Java related to the expansion of sugar cane and tobacco plantations. Population migration from Java to North Sumatra due to the large demand for plantation workers in North Sumatra, especially for Deli, while to Lampung has the purpose of settling down.

## IV. CONCLUSION

Ethical Politics as a political policy applied in the Dutch East Indies (Indonesia) is a concept proposed by C. Th. Van Deventer and proclaimed by the Kingdom of the Netherlands through Queen Wilhelmina's speech in September 1901 when opening the Staten General session which included an idea of political renewal for the Colonial Land.

Van Deventer's concept of the need to advance and improve the fate of the Indonesian people is just a suggestion of ways that must be taken in the form of recommendations to conduct "education", "Irrigation", and "Emigration", which is related to van Deventer's "trilogy" concept.

In practice the policy was carried out in accordance with the interests of the Dutch East Indies government, namely policies related to humanity and economic benefits. Education was provided in terms of cheap labor, irrigation for Dutch private plantations, and emigration was applied to coolies and contracts for the need to expand Dutch company plantations outside Java.

The result that brought the progress of the Indonesian people from ethical political policy was the birth of an educated group who initiated the birth of the Indonesian national movement in the early 20th century.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I would like to thank to my institution, the Faculty of Social Sciences and Law, Surabaya State University, for providing the opportunity and funding for research and writing this article.

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