

Propaganda “Kolonisatie” of The Dutch Colonial Government: The Migration Program for The Population Out of Java in The Early 20th Century

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ABSTRACT

This study will discuss various propaganda efforts to succeed colonization as one of the programs of the Dutch colonial government in the early 20th century in the context of moving some of the population of Java to other islands. The propaganda of colonization was the impact of ethical political policies that were implemented from 1905 to 1942. This research uses a historical approach by exploring related archives and secondary Dutch colonial literature. The results showed that the Dutch East Indies government at that time was very focused on implementing several information strategies that were adapted to the conditions and culture of the community in order to motivate and grow the interest of the Javanese community as much as possible to participate in the colonization program. There are at least two main strategies that are fully described in this study, namely propaganda by applying a direct information strategy and an indirect information strategy. Other findings also explain that in general the information strategy implemented by the Dutch East Indies government at that time also included various innovations that were proven to be successful in achieving program objectives. Even with a very large financing burden, because they also have to face the condition of the people of the island of Java, most of whom do not have the ability to read and write.

Keywords: Information Policy, Propaganda, Colonization

1. INTRODUCTION

Patrice Levang, a French agronomist who holds a doctorate at the cole Nationale Supérieure de Agronomie in Montpellier, was once assigned as an expert for the Transmigration program in various parts of Indonesia. [1] His years of experience in the field were later translated into a book about transmigration entitled, *Come to the Tanah Sabrang: Transmigration in Indonesia*. This book describes in detail the results of his observations on various transmigration projects, one of which discusses colonization propaganda during the Dutch Colonial Government with the problems that arose. [2] The problem of colonization is solved not only with a technical approach, but also involves other aspects, such as economic, social, cultural and even political. One of them is also a propaganda effort.

Colonization popularized by the Dutch colonial government in the early 20th century. The word was used as a designation for the government's program to

move some of the population of the island of Java to other islands in the Dutch East Indies. Because the target of colonization was *echte tani's* or true farmers, but landless, the program was also called *landbouw kolonisatie* or agricultural colonization.

The first time the population moved from densely populated areas to 'quiet' areas was in November 1905. The Dutch colonial government, which still controlled Indonesia at that time, named it colonization. The opportunity to participate in the initial colonization was given to 155 heads of families who came from Bagelen is an area within the Kedu Residency (now a sub-district in Temanggung Regency, Central Java). [3] Meanwhile, the location for colonization is the Lampung Residency. [4]

The Dutch East Indies government chose to move residents from the Kedu Residency because the area was the most densely populated area. Until the early 20th century, the island of Java, which is divided into 21

residencies, had an average population density of 231 people per square kilometer. Meanwhile, the average population density of Kedu has reached 425 people per square kilometer. On this basis, the Dutch East Indies Government made a policy of relocating residents within the Kedu Residency in November 1905. The initial colonization was led directly by Assistant Resident of Banyumas HG Heyting who was an official of the Dutch East Indies Government from Kedu to Lampung. [5]

The idea of relocating the Javanese population was first expressed by Thomas Stamford Raffles in 1814. Raffles, who was then ruling under British rule, has noted that the population of Java at that time was 4.6 million people. That number is predicted to double in three to four decades. The same thing was also conveyed by Leonard Pierre Joseph du Bus de Gisignies when he became the ruler of the Dutch East Indies in 1827. Based on the observations of these two people, this condition was triggered by the application of a liberal system that provided opportunities for increasing welfare for indigenous people. The Javanese people get better food than ever before. This assumption is proven, in the mid-19th century, the population of Java has numbered around 8.9 million people.

Raffles and Gisignies' estimate that the population of Java is increasing is correct. However, it is not because of the liberal system that provides wider opportunities to improve the welfare of the indigenous population. This condition became even worse when Gisignies' successor, Johannes van den Bosch, implemented a system of forced cultivation. The system of forced cultivation has drained energy without providing welfare to the Javanese population. However, why does the population of Java keep growing? Logically, this is illogical. Welfare decreased, but population increased.

The increase in population turned out to be to cover the large workload, as well as the high tax rate. The head of the family is not able to face the entire workload alone. So many children are born. The hope is that the burden of the head of the family can be shared.

The decline in the welfare of the Javanese population during the colonial period was caused by three factors, namely rapid population growth that was not matched by an increase in food production, a system of forced cultivation and compulsory labor whose results were not enjoyed by the population, and the responsibility of Java which had become a financial support for the Dutch East Indies government's political interests in outside Java, as well as to increase the prosperity of the mother country during the 19th century.

As a result of the conditions that occurred to the Javanese population, the Dutch East Indies government received sharp criticism from their own nation. The

criticisms were conveyed by humanist figures, including Conrad Theodore van Deventer, van Koll, and Pieter Brooshoff who ran the *de Lokomotief* newspaper in Semarang. Van Deventer and van Koll criticized the Dutch parliament. Meanwhile, Brooshoff always reviews through written criticisms submitted by both of them in the Dutch parliament.

The criticism conveyed was an insistence on the government to carry out a policy of revenge against the indigenous population. This was because the indigenous population had played a major role in providing benefits to the Dutch from the colonial lands in the Dutch East Indies. As a result of this pressure, the Dutch East Indies government finally carried out an ethical policy to deal with improving the welfare of the Javanese population. Ethical politics through three programs, namely irrigation, education, and colonization. That was the beginning of the colonization program in the Dutch East Indies which required various propaganda strategies to succeed.

2. DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

The propaganda of agricultural colonization received great attention in the 1930s, in addition to the opening of colonial territories, becoming an important spearhead of the policy of the Central Commission (Centrale Commissie-Dutch East Indies). [6] After all, the land had to be filled with a sufficient number of settlers. The Dutch East Indies government tried to influence it by systematically intervening, although the Dutch East Indies government realized that it could not really convince the Javanese to immigrate so an intensive propaganda effort was needed. According to the Central Commission, the difficulty in persuading Javanese to move from their homeland is their 'homogeneity', namely their attachment to their birthplace in Java.

There were several efforts made by the Dutch Colonial Government in order to launch the colonization program, for example publishing the *Kolonisastie Bulletin* in Dutch. With the aim of providing information, or more accurately propaganda about colonization, a number of books in Javanese language—and some in letters—are published for Javanese readers, such as (in the original spelling) *Bojong njang Sabrang* (1938), *Ajo, Menjang Colonization* (1940), and *Tanah Babojongan ing Selebes* (1940). The government had also ordered a propaganda film entitled *Tanah Sabrang* (1938). The black-and-white film with clown figures in wayang and using the Javanese language was produced by the Dutch filmmaker, Mannus Franken (1899–1953). [7]

A. Jonkers, a Dutch East Indies official who already understood the culture and customs of the Javanese people, became an advisor as well as a film scriptwriter. The film "*Tanah Sabrang*", the work of which was

entrusted to Mannus Franken, a filmmaker of Dutch citizenship who is well known for his experience and brilliant career in the Dutch East Indies. [8] In addition, his works are seen as reflecting his concern and love for the colony and its inhabitants.

2.1. Propaganda Strategy Against Colonies

According to Karl J. Pelzer (1945), there are 2 types of propaganda, namely direct propaganda and indirect propaganda. He also said that one of the most difficult tasks of the commission was to increase the number of Javanese willing to move outside Java. Every year the number of families who can help the new colony continues to increase. But as long as the number of Javanese migrating did not change as absorption capacity increased, the commission had to work relentlessly to recruit new members. Candidates to be recruited are systematically approached through "direct" and "indirect" propaganda.

It was a huge drain on the Dutch Colonial Government's budget that a large amount of money had to be spent on propaganda. In 1940, for example, spending on propaganda accounted for 4.2 percent of the total budget, bringing an average of 7.40 guilders per family. As long as most Javanese are still illiterate, so that propaganda cannot be carried out through the printed word, which is relatively cheaper as a form of propaganda, it is difficult to know how to reduce this cost.

It is hoped, however, that the booklets and visual aids depicting "Tanah Sabrang" will greatly familiarize the village youth with the idea of migration, that they are ready to build their own household, so that they will be more enthusiastic about migrating. [9] In order to persuade Javanese peasants who were still conservative and anxious to leave their home islands, they had to be approached psychologically and in a convincing way. To serve this purpose, some of the colonies that were successful, well-dressed, and contented were brought back to their home districts with soil samples, abundant agricultural produce and photographs of colony life.

With such concrete evidence, they often conveyed their fears and grievances towards their former villagers, thus becoming settled. Farmers who are embarrassed to ask questions in the grand assembly are given the opportunity to speak in secret while smoking a cigarette and drinking a cup of coffee in a relaxed manner. Farmers who are tasked with carrying out propaganda are mostly accompanied by their wives, who will also discuss their experiences with village women. Colonists who were chosen as propagandists by the competent authorities were given the freedom to set their own methods.

Recruiting in this way is done near the scheduled departure date; because if done too far before departure,

potential colonists could change their minds. Another thing that is also important in recruiting is choosing the patcheck period, which is the annual period of food scarcity in Java, namely in the last weeks before harvest. Another direct method of propaganda was to send Javanese villagers to visit colonies outside Java at government expense.

2.2. Indirect Method Propaganda Strategy

Indirect methods or propaganda include presentation of slides by professional teachers and Javanese theatrical performances. There is hardly a train station, pawn shop, or public building in Java that does not feature colorful posters inviting Javanese to "Tanah Sabrang." The commission's ongoing work was to distribute to Dutch as well as Indonesian officials beautifully illustrated wall calendars featuring photographs of the colony's typical landscapes and books of memorabilia full of slogans and facts about colonization. Two editions, in Malay and Dutch, also issue quarterly bulletins on colonization.

Particular attention was directed to acquainting the young generation of Javanese villages with the idea of migration, bearing in mind that "young people have a future." The Commission provided village secondary school students (fourth and fifth grade) with textbooks on Tanah Sabrang. [10] Each village school in Central and East Java received reproductions of three paintings depicting the location of colonization, forest clearing, and market views in Gedong-tataan. [11]

Settlers are constantly urged to keep in touch with their family and friends, with postcards, picture postcards, postage stamps, and, if they are illiterate, with clerks, free of charge; During harvest time they are urged to send envelopes with rice samples. Every month thousands of these messages are sent to villages in Java. According to commission records, in 1939 colonists in Lampoeng District sent 8,019 postcards, 1,842 letters, 428 envelopes containing rice, and 12,246 photographs to Java. [12]

The large number of money orders that settlers sent to their relatives in Java also had propaganda value, as evidence that conditions were better outside Java than in Java. Records show that the Javanese colony in Lampoeng District sent 165,000 guilders to Java during 1935 and 15,000 guilders during the first eight months of 1936.

2.3. Modern Propaganda Strategy Using Film

The most powerful modern propaganda weapon, the motion picture, plays an important role in this program. The practice of information indirectly and is expected to have a tremendous propaganda effect when it is through

films. Then came the initiative to work on the film "Tanah Sabrang".

A strategy for disseminating information through moving images. The way of envy is predicted to attract public interest in large numbers and a wide scope. Through the ideas of C.J.J. Maassen, an adviser to the colonial government on agricultural matters, suggested that the Dutch East Indies government initiate the production of a colonization propaganda film. This optimism arose because at that time, film was something very new for the villagers and therefore it was hoped that it would become a medium for disseminating information and attracting the attention of many people. A. Jonkers, an official on the basis of Javanese customs and ideas, provided the script for a film, "Tanah Sabrang," directed by Mannus Franken. Since most Javanese villagers have never seen a film, the movements are slow and very detailed. The picture shows all the steps of migration, from the place where it was founded, where each settler has his own house, gardens, and fertile rice fields [13].

The film is set in a 'wayang game', as traditional Javanese entertainment. The three figures are the ancient figure Semar and his two sons Petruk and Gareng, who have been familiar with Javanese since childhood. [14] A special point is made in the film about the fact that Javanese can feel more at home in a new country. Other characters are modern Javanese villagers and officials who travel from Java to Lampoeng.

Three trucks with film projectors and sound systems traveled around Central Java and East Java, displaying images of a new village. The show is held in an open field and is attended by thousands of Javanese or all ages from the surrounding villages. Many have watched it many times, and it is for free. In this way, the persuasive power of the film has the opportunity to stimulate the imagination of the villagers.

3. CONCLUSION

During the colonization process which for the first time took place. It is known that the Dutch East Indies Government was very serious in running it. One of them is evidenced by the various colonization strategies and propaganda that were worked out very seriously, well planned and at a very large cost. They even went directly to make sure the process went well. This was also evidenced by the presence of Assistant Resident of Banyumas, HG Heyting, who directly led the group of Bagelen residents.

The strategy and propaganda media of the Dutch East Indies Government in the context of the successful implementation of the colonization program were carried out directly by utilizing colonization agents. Another way that was also taken was by utilizing various printed facilities such as brochures, pamphlets

and even films that were placed and played in public spaces that existed at that time. Of the various strategies and media for disseminating information provided at that time, the momentum of the delivery time was also very significant in its success. The closer or intensive repetition of information delivery that is close to the schedule for the departure of prospective colonists is proven to be more effective in increasing the motivation and interest of the community to participate in the colonization program.

The practice of information and propaganda carried out by the Dutch East Indies government was carried out in order to support the colonization program. The colonization policy could run optimally because in the implementation of this policy it had been planned and handled by a special party, namely the Central Commission (Centrale Commissie-Dutch East Indies) which was formed and authorized by the Dutch East Indies government in carrying out the information and propaganda policy. [15] The only thing that was quite burdensome was the need for a large enough cost and draining the cash reserves of the Dutch East Indies government. In practice, the results obtained from the implementation of strategy and information propaganda in terms of quantity and quality can be said to be quite successful, there are innovations that have surpassed their time.

Propaganda using films is very influential, even propaganda information through films is allegedly giving the greatest results, more than other forms of propaganda information. The form of direct information dissemination by pioneer colonists was also effective and proven successful, but its reach was limited. While the strategy through newspapers, is still very difficult because there are still many people who are illiterate. Dissemination of information via radio is also limited because many villages or communities in the mountains cannot afford radios. Through posters, pamphlets and other media, not many people saw it. Films with complete tools that can be summarized in one car with very free mobility, starting from cities, villages and even on the slopes of mountains.

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