

The Dutch Colonial Policies on Religion and Education in the Dutch Indies (1889-1942)

Ading Kusdiana^{1*}

¹UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, Indonesia

*Corresponding Author E-mail: adingkusdiana@uinsgd.ac.id

Abstract

This study aims to examine the inlandsch politiek (indigenous politics) implemented by the Dutch Colonial Government during the colonial period in the Dutch East Indies in the 19th century. This study focuses on analyzing the religious and educational practices conducted by the Dutch Colonial Government throughout its rule. Utilizing historical research methods, this study found that the Colonial-Dutch Government adopted a fluctuating political strategy between neutrality and security to maintain its power. In the religious context, the Colonial Government tended to support Islam in its pure religious aspect, yet strived to prevent Islamic intervention in state administration affairs. Islamic education was compelled to follow an independent path, free from political influences. This conclusion is supported by the Besluit dated March 5, 1860, No. 10 f issued by the Dutch Colonial Government, and an analysis of Aqib Suminto's book, "Islamic Politics in the Dutch East Indies," which illustrates efforts to diminish the influence of Islam. Consequently, Islamic education received less attention and was forced to conform to the educational framework established by the Colonial Government.

Keywords: Dutch Colonial Government; Dutch East Indies; Inlandsch Politiek; Islamic Education; Religious Policies.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji politik pribumi (inlandsch politiek) yang diterapkan oleh Pemerintahan Kolonial Belanda selama periode penjajahan di Hindia Timur Belanda pada abad ke-19. Studi ini berfokus pada analisis praktik keagamaan dan pendidikan yang dijalankan oleh Pemerintah Kolonial Belanda sepanjang masa pemerintahannya. Dengan menggunakan metode penelitian historis, studi ini menemukan bahwa Pemerintah Kolonial-Belanda mengadopsi strategi politik yang berubah-ubah antara netralitas dan keamanan untuk mempertahankan kekuasaannya. Dalam konteks keagamaan, Pemerintah Kolonial cenderung mendukung Islam dalam aspek keagamaan murni, namun berupaya keras untuk menghindari intervensi umat Islam dalam urusan administrasi negara. Pendidikan Islam terpaksa mengikuti jalur yang mandiri, terlepas dari pengaruh politik. Kesimpulan ini didukung oleh Besluit tanggal 5 Maret 1860 No. 10 f yang dikeluarkan oleh Pemerintah Kolonial Belanda, serta analisis terhadap buku Aqib Suminto, "Politik Islam Hindia Timur Belanda", yang menunjukkan usaha pengecilan pengaruh Islam. Akibatnya, pendidikan Islam kurang mendapat perhatian dan terpaksa menyesuaikan diri dengan kerangka pendidikan yang telah ditetapkan oleh Pemerintah Kolonial.

Kata Kunci: Pemerintah Kolonial Belanda; Hindia Timur Belanda; Inlandsch Politiek; Pendidikan Islam; Kebijakan Keagamaan.

INTRODUCTION

In the context of the Dutch colonial era in the 19th century, the Dutch East Indies, now known as Indonesia, witnessed a series of significant uprisings and rebellions, deeply rooted in the region's predominant Islamic faith. Key events such as the Kedondong War (1802-1818), the Paderi War (1821-1827), the Diponegoro War (1825-1830), the prolonged Aceh War (1873-1903), and the Banten Rebellion (1888) highlight the tense relationship between the Dutch colonial government and the Islamic

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Received: March 24, 2023; In Revised: September 01, 2023; Accepted: December 01, 2023

communities. These conflicts were not only pivotal in shaping the political landscape of the time but also played a crucial role in the spread and entrenchment of Islam, which continues to be the dominant religion in Indonesia. Understanding these historical events is essential for comprehending the complex interplay between colonial policies and religious dynamics, and forms a critical backdrop for this research into the Dutch colonial government's approach towards Islamic education and religious practices in the Dutch East Indies.

The Dutch colonial government in the 19th century adopted a strategy of non-interference in Islamic religious matters as a means to prevent the rise of opposition movements. This approach was a response to the increasing number of rebellions that were often fueled by religious sentiments. The government's reluctance to directly engage with Islamic affairs was clearly reflected in the legislative framework of the Dutch East Indies up until 1865. During this period, the colonial authorities maintained a policy of abstaining from any form of religious assistance or involvement in Islamic practices. This policy was part of a broader strategy to maintain political stability and control over the region, attempting to avoid exacerbating tensions by meddling in religious affairs, which were deeply rooted in the social and cultural fabric of the local communities. Understanding this policy of non-interference is crucial to comprehending the Dutch colonial approach to governance and its long-term effects on the religious landscape of the region.

The Dutch colonial government's approach to Islamic matters in the Dutch East Indies was marked by a complex interplay of fear and aspiration, as highlighted in the seminal works of Snouck Hurgronje's "Islam in the Dutch East Indies" and Aqib Suminto's "The Islamic Politics of the Dutch Indies". This dual perspective is evident in their policies: on one hand, there was a profound concern regarding the uprisings and dissent from the Muslim communities; on the other, there was an optimistic belief in the potential success of Christianization efforts, which were seen as a solution to the colonial challenges. These contradictory views underpinned the Dutch colonial policies in the realms of religion and education, as the government sought to navigate the complexities of understanding and managing the indigenous Muslim community while simultaneously advancing its imperialistic ambitions. This intricate balance of fear and hope played a crucial role in shaping the strategies and decisions of the Dutch colonial administration, and thus forms a critical aspect of understanding their overall impact on the socio-cultural landscape of the Dutch East Indies.

This study aims to thoroughly examine and elucidate the Dutch colonial policies in the fields of religion and education within the Dutch East Indies. It seeks to understand the underlying belief of the Dutch colonial government that the implementation of these policies would enable a deeper comprehension of the indigenous Muslim community while concurrently facilitating the continuation of their imperialistic endeavors. The research intends to dissect the nuances of these policies, exploring how they were designed to balance the dual objectives of cultural assimilation and political control. By analyzing the interplay between religious tolerance and educational strategies, the study aims to shed light on the colonial government's approach towards managing the diverse and often complex socio-religious landscape of the region. This investigation is crucial for understanding the long-term impacts of these policies on the religious and educational dynamics in the post-colonial era.

RESEARCH METHOD

The study is done using historical methods, as they are undertaken through heuristic stages, criticisms, interpretations, and historiography. In the heuristic stage, research was carried out by searching for sources at the National Archives of the Republic of Indonesia and the National Library of the

Republic of Indonesia. Next, the sources obtained are verified through the stages of external criticism and internal criticism so that from this step appropriate and credible sources are obtained to be used. Then, as an implementation of the interpretation stage, sources that have passed the criticism stage are subjected to analysis and synthesis until they become harmonious and logical historical facts. As the final stage, the next step is to write history (historiography).

The research also involved a critical examination of the context in which these policies were formed and implemented. This included an analysis of the socio-political environment of the Dutch East Indies during the colonial era, the status of Islamic education prior to and during colonial rule, and the broader objectives of the Dutch colonial government in the region. By situating the policies within their historical context, the study aimed to uncover the underlying motivations and implications of the Dutch colonial strategy. This methodological approach helped to construct a nuanced narrative of the colonial government's policies and their impact on the local Muslim population, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of the colonial legacy in the region.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Dutch Indies Policies in Religion: Weakening the Role and Authority of Islam

Since 1889 the Dutch colonial government began to adopt an *Inlandsch Politiek* or the indigenous politics. Since the success of Snouck Hurgronje's Islamist political ideas, the Dutch colonial government has started to adopt its policies in the Dutch East Indies (Benda, 1958, p. 21; Ricklefs, 1991, p. 221). In the view of Snouck Hurgronje, the Dutch colonial government could not work without a pearl of Islamic wisdom, for Islam not only included the relationship between man and God but also included the rules regarding the relationship between the Mukmin and the rulers of the world. In the face of such terrain, the Dutch colonial government would need to find the art of understanding anyway and dominating predominantly Muslim Dutch people (Hurgronje, 1915, p. 54; Hurgronje, 1916, p. 135-145; Vredenberg, 1997, p. 10).

To weaken the role and influence of Islam, since 1889, the Dutch colonial government began to apply its policy by dividing the issue of Islam into three aspects, namely: first, as a pure religion or religion; Second, Islam as a society; And third, the politics. In order to realize its practice of pure religion or worship, the Dutch colonial government began to grant Muslims "freedom" to practice its religious teachings, so long as it did not interfere with the Dutch government's rule. For example, in matters of daily ritual prayer carried out by Muslim communities, because it was seen as a pure teaching of the Islamic religion, the Dutch colonial government tended to ignore it and not disturb it (Hurgronje, 1915, pp.134-136; Hurgronje, 1973, pp. 13-51; Suminto, 1996: , p. 12; Vredenberg, 1997, pp. 10-11).

Further, on matters relating to the realm of pure religion, the Dutch colonial government could not offend dogma or pure worship of Islam, as it was harmless to the government. The Dutch colonial government should allow Islamic dogma and teachings, for within Islam, there will be a gradual change from this religion. Any government intervention in the matter would only slow the evolutionary process, and such action would go directly against the principle of religious freedom (Hurgronje, 1973, pp. 13-51; Koningsveld, 1989, pp. 144-145; Suminto, 1996, p. 13; Vredenberg, 1997, p. 11.)

The Dutch colonial government then applied the policy of the *Pax Neerlandica*, which is the political concept of the association between the indigenous peoples and the Dutch (Suminto, 1996, p. 14) in order to solidify the existence of colonization by means of the cultural approach to it, especially in the aspect of education as its main domain. By granting the wishes of indigenous people to obtain education in schools

established by the Dutch Colonial Government, such as by entering *Hollandsch-Inlandsche School* (HIS), *Meer Uitgebreid Lager Onderwijs* (MULO) and *Algemeene Middelbare School* (AMS), the loyalty of indigenous people will be guaranteed. With this association, the indigenous people could take advantage of Dutch culture without abandoning their own. In this way, the Dutch royal foundation will remain firmly established (Niel, 1984, p. 46; Suminto, 1996, p. 41).

Finally, in politics, the Dutch East Indies government cannot tolerate the rise of the fanatical Islamic movements it perpetuates its authority. Both Pan-Islam and Tarekat are viewed as potentially dangerous movements and must be met with caution. The emergence of the Padri War (1803-1838) in West Sumatra, the Diponegoro War (1825-1830) which spread widely in Central Java, the Ki Bagus Rangin Rebellion (1802-1818) in the Cirebon, Indramayu, Majalengka and Kuningan regions, among the Dutch ruling elite is an example of an Islamic fanaticism movement that cannot be tolerated because it can be seen as an Islamic political movement in which the tarekat has become an instrument of struggle used by its leaders to carry out a rebellion movement (Hurgronje, 1910, p. 374; Hurgronje, 1915, pp. 112-114 & pp. 134-136; Suminto, 1996, p. 64).

Associated with this, Snouck Hurgronje (1915, pp. 112-113), in his "speeches" given to the Dutch colonial government, stated:

Het panislamisme kan nu eenmaal niet met een ander program werkern dan met het versletene, voor verwezenlijking onvatbaar geblekene der wereldverovering door den Islam, en dit heeft op de verstandige belijders van den Islam geen vat meer, terwijl het onder de domme menigte, die nog voor de bekoring van den strijd tegen alle kafirs vatbaar is, allen verwarring en onrust stichten kan. Het kan hoogstens plaaselijke stoornis verweken, nooit in eenigen opbouwend werken

[the Pan-Islamism we face cannot work with any other program but as an obsolete thing to bring about the conquest and purity of the world through Islam, and it is no longer possessed by the educated of Islam, but only among the masses, who still appeal to war against all who are deemed infidels, can create chaos and unease. It can weaken the terrific local chaos, never in constructive work.]

Snouck Hurgronje is judged to be reckless if the government does not intervene in the spread of pan-Islamism. He, therefore, emphasized that the surveillance of the hajj, where the practice of hajj holds a very important position under surveillance because pilgrims are viewed as a factor of pan-Islamic influence from outside, so they are often suspected and watched by the government (Hurgronje, 1909, pp. 175-180; Consul general J.A. Kruyt letter in Jeddah in Koningsveld van, 1989, pp. 68-69; Suminto, 1996, p. 14; Ricklefs, 1991, p. 198; Vredenberg, 1997, pp. 10-11; Wiltox, 1997, pp. 65-67)

The effect of hajj on the spiritual lives of pilgrims exists, but it is really small. Nevertheless, the Dutch colonial government's concern about the hajj was its influence that had directly brought significant consequences to the religious life of the Indian Muslims. Each year among those who traveled to Mecca was several young men who settled long in the holy city to demand Islamic science. In Mecca, they were widely acquainted with pan-Islam's message, thus affecting their attitude toward the colonial powers. Later, many of the students returned to Indonesia to become scholars. They converted to teachers, and their Madrasah were centers for the spread of the influence of the lessons of Islamic law in its whole into education (Hurgronje, 1907, pp. 5-6; Hurgronje, 1909, pp. 180-185; Hurgronje, 1922, pp. 10-11; Hurgronje, 1973, p. 32; Hurgronje, 1994, pp. 159-182; Hall, 1988, p. 553; Hurgronje, 1989, pp. 7-12; Hurgronje, 1996, pp. 171-186; Vredenberg, 1997, pp. 11-12).

In matters of religion or not, Dutch colonial rule moved between two points of neutrality and security. However, the weight point remains in order of security. We have seen in the 1867 instructions

given to residency heads, regent and sub-regent administration throughout Java and Madura (Statsblaaud van Nederlandch-indie 1867 no. 114, Batavia, 1868, pp. 1-21).

The Dutch Indies Policies in Education: Implementing Western Education Model to Preserve Imperialism and Marginalize Islamic Education

Prior to the colonization of the Dutch Indies region, there had been a powerful educational system that focused on reading the Qur'an, prayer, and lessons on fundamental religious duties. The most basic form of this education is called the Koran distribution. The education takes place in the mosque's imam's house or with other Islamic community members. For advanced education, the island of Java has a boarding school system. In this way, a boarding school under the leadership of a prophet can grow into a great school with thousands of Santri (Steenbrink, 1995, p.116).

According to Holle, the Arabic script has been used more widely in the Dutch Indies region in Muslim communities. Allowing the further spread of Arabic would only strengthen the influence of religious zealots. According to him, colonial education within the boundaries of religion should be concerned with the resurgence of superstition and the influence of Islam (Besluit March 5, 1860 no. 10 f; Steenbrink, 1995, pp. 107-108. That approach in 1819, governor-general Van der Capellen ordered a study of the state of education, with the central purpose of determining ways in which all existing laws and regulations could be more effective through the spread of literature and writing among the indigenous population (Steenbrink, 1995, pp. 116-117).

J.A Van der Chijs, as an inspector of indigenous education who was the first government official to devote his time to education for non-Europeans, has taken decisive action. In his 1865 report on indigenous education, he explained that he wanted to see native schools be transfixed on indigenous traditions. However, the teaching of Islam could have been more suitable for such projects. He pointed out this incompatibility by pointing primarily to the mechanical elimination of Arabic texts, which is incomprehensible (Steenbrink, 1995, p. 118).

At the end of the 19th century the Dutch colonial government was so optimistic that Islam would not be able to compete with western education. The reason for this religion is frozen and hinders progress (Suminto, 1996, p. 49). Though, in the Dutch Indies, there was a boarding school until 1850 that had been regarded only as the birthplace of foolish and deranged beliefs. He said Santri was wasting time tracking moral science, sometimes leading to intolerance (Brugman, 1938, pp. 7-9).

The Dutch colonial government had no desire to further Islamic education in the Dutch Indies. This is evident from the measures made by Keuchenius, as minister for the first colony of the Christian political party, which in 1888 rejected the idea of subsidizing Islamic schools and wrote that he was concerned about the involvement of the Dutch East Indies government and the financial contributions required for the benefit of these schools (Steenbrink, 1995, pp. 119).

The Dutch colonial government's unwillingness to further the people's education was understandable since it still clung to its continuity. The continuity of colonization, however, is still a political dream of the Dutch colonial government. Consistent with this pattern, education policies have always placed Islam as a rival to deal with. Western education was formulated as a factor that would destroy the power of Islam (Preanger Bode Cultuur en Handelsbl, 1912; Suminto, 1996, p. 49).

The images of unmasking the Dutch colonial government in advancing public education and they still yearn for continued adherence to its role in the newspaper's *Bintang Priangan*:

Kaloe seandenja orang hanja memikirkan tentang moedahnja dan kesenangannja, tentu ada tjoetjok dengan perboetan mereka jang mempergoenakan kitab dari bangsa lain dipake oentoek

kebangsaannya, sebab terang hanya tinggal memakenja sadja. Seoempama orang melihat telur itik jang dierami oleh aja, kaloe menetas, ja... mengetoek ajam kemana-mana (jang mengerami), sekalipun ia berupa itik, karena tidak diseboetkan disini pengadjaran itoe dapat mengoebah idoeng pesek mendjadi mantjoeng, atau koelit itam mendjadi koening atau poetih, akan tetapi kita berani bertaroeh bahoea djika disekolahan jang diadjarkan ilmoe boemi teroetama kebbaikannya Europa sadja, ja...anak2 itoe semoea djika mapoe, merot tjita2nya hendak ke Europa, zonder ada satoe dari seratoes anak sekolah ke Baratan jang meneroeskan sekolahnja ke Japan, itoepoen tjoekeop mendjadi boekti jang terang. Soedah diketahoei bahoea tadi jang dikatakan baik keadaan Europa tetapi boektinja ada berlawanan dan takoet diketahoei kebohongannya itoe, ja bagi di Indonesia didirikan sadja lagi sekolah jang tinggi, karena sesoenggoehnja pemerintah disini (Indonesia) ada memikirkan keberatan ongkos ke Europa sedeng memadjoekan raiat Indonesia ini ada mendjadi factor dari azasnja (Bintang Priangan, Saptoe, 24 Januari 1931/5 Ramadan 1349. No. 1. Tahoen Ka I. Garoet).

[If people are concerned with their pleasure and leisure, it is most suitable for them to use books of foreign people as they are ready to use. When eggs are hatched, the chicks would follow the incubating mother everywhere, even though the chicks are chicken and the mother is a duck. It is mentioned here that the education will not make [indigenous] people become long-nosed or white or yellow-skinned. However, we bet that when pupils learn the good things about natural science, they would aspire to advance their education to Europe. Let's say there is one out a hundred students from a Western school to continue schooling to Japan. It will prove our point. We are told about the goodness of Europe and it will be known as a lie. Hence, they prefer to build their schools here and they will say that the main reason behind that is that they will advance the indigenous people education but they are concerned about the high cost that the indigenous people should pay if they send their children to Europe] (Bintang Priangan, Saturday, January 24 1931/5 Ramadan 1349. No. 1. 1st year. Garoet).

The colonial government of the Netherlands realized that Islamic education, like boarding schools, would be nothing more than dynamite for the current Dutch Indies system of government. His educational policies were not independent of his ethical and political patterns. The reason for the teaching education administration was to emphasize the interests of the Dutch colonial government more than those of its colony (Suminto, 1996, p. 49).

Therefore, Islamic education was forced to travel by itself, with no relation to the Dutch colonial government that could therefore sustain its tradition but at the same time was open to change. In the long run, it is intended that traditional Islamic education should conform to the west, a system of education adopted by the Dutch colonial government (Steenbrink, 1986, pp. 33-78).

In 1905 the Dutch colonial government issued a policy that teachers felt put tremendous strain on Muslims in the Dutch Indies. It is known that in the first ordinance issued in 1905, the Dutch colonial government made it compulsory for each Islamic teacher to seek a permit and obtain a permit first before performing his duties as a religious teacher. As for the second Ordonantie, issued in 1925, the Dutch colonial government compelled religious teachers to report themselves. These services were intended as controlling media for the Dutch Indies government to oversee the activities of Islamic teachers and teachers in this country (Suminto, 1996, p. 52; Noer, 1990, pp. 25-31.)

Looking in the light of the 1888 incident of the Cilegon, K. Holle 1890 suggested that Islamic religious education be supervised (the letter from K.F. Holle to the governor-general, September 20, 1890, in the secret of October 18, 1890 no. 1); this was because the farmers' uprising in the Banten was judged to be significantly encouraged by pilgrims and religious teachers, and by the presence of their religious guards, then K.F. Holle suggests that the regent report a yearly list of teachers in his area. Then in 1904, Snouck Hurgronje recommended that the supervision include specific permission from the regent, a list of

teachers and disciples, and regent supervision only by a committee (Dhofier, 1985, pp. 11-13; Noer, 1990, pp. 25-31.)

In 1905 was born a law on Islamic religious education called *Ordonansi Guru*. For a school that has a regular organization, these demands of Ordonantie do not present a problem, but for religious teachers in general who do not have sufficient administration to manage their teachers, these regulations are overwhelming. After all, the institute of boarding school had no regular administration, a list of students and teachers, or subjects. Many of the religious teachers of the time could not read Latin hurdle, while very few could have had a writing machine to fill out a report list (Suminto, 1996, p. 53).

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study reveal a nuanced approach by the Dutch colonial government in managing religious policies in the Dutch East Indies. It oscillated between neutrality and security, striking a balance that allowed for a degree of religious freedom while ensuring the supremacy of its authority. Specifically, in the realm of pure religion and worship, the Dutch colonial administration permitted Muslims a certain level of autonomy in practicing their religious teachings, provided these practices did not challenge the state's authority. In matters of statecraft, however, there was a deliberate effort to curb any tendencies towards fanaticism or Pan-Islamism among the populace.

Furthermore, the Dutch colonial government's stance towards Islamic education was characterized by a policy of detachment, insisting that Islamic education should progress independently of colonial influence. This approach aimed at aligning traditional Islamic education with the Western educational system prevalent under Dutch rule. This strategy was not merely an educational reform but a calculated move to safeguard the colonial government's interests, facilitating a gradual shift within the Muslim community towards a paradigm more aligned with Western ideologies. Such a strategy underscores the colonial government's intent to maintain control and influence over the societal and cultural dimensions of the Dutch East Indies.

This study provides valuable insights into the religious and educational policies of the Dutch colonial government in the Dutch East Indies, yet it is important to recognize its limitations, primarily its reliance on historical documents which may not fully encapsulate the societal impact of these policies, potentially overlooking the grassroots responses of local Muslim communities. Future research should aim to broaden the scope by including diverse sources like oral histories and personal accounts for a more comprehensive understanding of the real-life impacts of these policies, and comparative studies with other colonial contexts could enrich the understanding of the interaction between colonial powers and religious education. Additionally, exploring the long-term effects of these policies on current educational and religious practices in the region would provide deeper insights into the lasting legacy of colonial rule, thereby enhancing our understanding of the socio-cultural dynamics in post-colonial societies.

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