

## Aceh's Multicultural Society in the Dutch Colonial Era: A Historical Study of Modernization, Diversity and Inter-Ethnic Relations

Een Syaputra <sup>1</sup>, Ririn Selvianti <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 1 Lebong, Bengkulu, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup> The Islamic Institute of Makrifatul Ilmi, South Bengkulu, Indonesia

<sup>1</sup>eensyaputra23@gmail.com

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**Abstract** This article aims to explain the modernization that occurred in Aceh during the Dutch colonial era and the diversity that emerged as a result of modernization, as well as to explain the relations between ethnic groups in Aceh during the Dutch colonial era, especially between the Acehnese and Minangkabau ethnic groups. This research is a library research with a descriptive analysis type. Modernization in Aceh during the Dutch colonial era occurred in at least three aspects, namely infrastructure modernization, especially highways and railways, economic modernization marked by the opening of large-scale plantations and educational modernization. The modernization of infrastructure, economy and education carried out by the Dutch in Aceh has caused a wave of migration from outside Aceh, thus having an impact on increasing ethnic diversity in Aceh. Relations between ethnic groups, especially between Acehnese and Minangkabau, have not been good, where there is negative prejudice from Acehnese people towards Minangkabau people due to historical prejudice factors, discrimination and excessive feelings of superiority.

**Keywords:** multicultural society, Aceh, Dutch colonialism, modernization, diversity, inter-ethnic relations

**Abstrak** Artikel ini bertujuan untuk menjelaskan modernisasi yang terjadi di Aceh zaman kolonial Belanda dan keberagaman yang muncul akibat modernisasi, serta menjelaskan relasi antar etnis di Aceh zaman kolonial Belanda, khususnya antara etnis Aceh dan Minangkabau. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian kepustakaan dengan tipe deskriptif analisis. Modernisasi di Aceh pada zaman kolonial Belanda terjadi paling tidak dalam tiga aspek, yakni modernisasi infrastruktur, terutama jalan raya dan rel kereta api, modernisasi ekonomi ditandai dengan dibukanya perkebunan dalam skala luas dan modernisasi pendidikan. Modernisasi infrastruktur, ekonomi dan pendidikan yang dilakukan oleh Belanda di Aceh telah menyebabkan terjadinya gelombang migrasi dari luar Aceh, sehingga berdampak pada meningkatnya keberagaman etnis di Aceh. Relasi antar etnis, terutama antara Aceh dan Minangkabau berlangsung kurang baik, dimana terdapat prasangka negatif dari orang Aceh kepada orang Minangkabau karena faktor prasangka historis, diskriminasi dan perasaan superiotor yang berlebihan.

**Kata kunci** : multicultural community, Aceh, the Dutch colonial era, modernization, diversity, inter-ethnic relations



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## INTRODUCTION

Aceh is one of the regions in the archipelago that has long been a meeting place for many nations in the world, especially for trade activities. These meetings between nations took place over a long period of time and eventually gave birth to various forms of cultural exchange. Aceh's position became increasingly important during the Islamic sultanate, especially with the establishment of the Samudra Pasai Sultanate at the end of the 13th century and Aceh Darussalam at the beginning of the 16th century (Ricklefs, 2008; Soekmono, 1973). During this period, Aceh grew into a trading center that was visited by traders from various parts of the world such as Arabia, India, China, Siam, Persia, and others.

The wave of arrival of Western nations to the archipelago in the 16th century dragged Aceh into many upheavals, both with the Portuguese in the early phase and with the Dutch in the later phases. Against the Portuguese, Aceh is recorded as having carried out several large-scale attacks, namely in 1564/65, 1570, 1582, 1613, 1618, and 1623 (Kartodirdjo, 2014, pp. 49-50). Likewise with the Dutch later on, Aceh was involved in a war which very long and tiring. Both from Aceh and the Netherlands, Not a few lives were lost and costs were incurred. This war ultimately had to end with victory for the Dutch colonial side, namely after the surrender of important Acehnese fighters in early 1905. (Reid, 2011, p. 337) .

The Dutch victory over Aceh then had an extraordinary impact, not only the political status of the country changed to a colonized territory, but have an impact on changes in various areas of life, both economic and socio-cultural. One of these aspects (impacts) is the issue of modernization. The arrival of western nations, especially the Dutch, on fields certain of course No Can denied has bring updates. Although of course, for public most modernization the No something Which bring welfare. In Java for example, Dutch colonialism has made Javanese society acquainted with railways, new types of plants, factories, western education, etc. and so on (Wasino, 2014).

Similar modernization also occurred in Aceh after the Dutch occupation. The railway network and highways are open, large scale plantation and western-style education was also established (Sjamsuddin, 1998, pp. 20-28). Modernization in various fields Then impact on plurality ethnicity in Aceh, Good That Which with on purpose brought in by the colonial government such as Javanese, Ambonese, Madurese, Manadonese, West Africans (as soldiers/soldiers and workers) or those who came of their own accord for reasons of work and others (Taylor, 2011, pp. 222-227). The increasing ethnic plurality in turn also influenced existing inter-ethnic relations, both in harmonious conditions or otherwise.

Based on these reasons, the writing This mean to For explain several things regarding the dynamics of multicultural society Aceh during the Dutch occupation. *First*, explain the form

of modernization that occurred in Aceh during the Dutch colonial period. *Second*, explain the diversity of Acehnese society during the Dutch colonial period and its relationship to the modernization that occurred. *Third*, explain the inter-ethnic communication that occurred during that period. Concerning with this, the author will then focus on communication inter-ethnic between ethnic Acehnese with immigrant ethnicity Minangkabau.

## **METHOD**

This research is a library research *with* a descriptive analysis approach, a series of activities related to library data collection methods, reading and recording and managing research data (Zed, 2008). Therefore, in this study, researchers only limit research data sources from library collection materials (without observation and interviews), especially in the form of books, journal articles, scientific magazines, mass media, research reports. Some steps taken in this research are: 1) preparing tools and equipment; 2) compiling a working bibliography; 3) arranging research time; 4) reading and making research notes; and 5) concluding and analyzing research results (Zed, 2008).

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Modernization and Diversity**

Simply modernization means making become modern. In things become modern, the progress that occurs in the west is often become reference, especially For countries develop And moreover Again colonial countries. The modernization referred to in this article also will refer to the above concept, namely modernization in western perspective. Furthermore, modernization Which will explained is in case public Aceh during the Dutch colonial period and its relationship with diversity. Such as which has been explained previously, that on the Dutch occupation period, in Aceh happen modernization on a number of field. For more clear about modernization.

### **Modernization Infrastructure**

Some things are very It seems like the development after arrival The Netherlands is an infrastructure in the transportation sector, especially the railway network. and highways. Since the war began to rage, especially during the second invasion on In 1874, one of the efforts made by the Dutch was to build a network railways, roads and bridges to facilitate the launch of attacks. Before resistance military can stopped, Dutch has finish construction of highways along the east and west coasts, and then inland year 1914 finish road raya other Which connect Bireuen with Takengon. In addition, the Dutch also built a railway network from Kutaraja arrived to the border Aceh-Sumatra East (Sjamsuddin, 1998, p. 20).

In matter development infrastructure the, the relationship with diversity is very close because those who work later are people from outside Aceh who were brought or brought in by the colonial government. As Taylor explained that colonial troops also brought labor to Aceh, one thousand people in the first invasion and 3,280 in the second invasion. They This Then employed as porter or worker building (Tarlor, 2011, p. 223) . Information For example, Brau also said something similar about the Rante people, namely the convict native of Java and the island other. They employed in many things, porter, basket tailor, gardener, cook, driver, waiter soldier, And etc. According to Bro, amount they very Lots, namely almost 2,000 people (Brau, 2014, p. 165) ..

Based on the description above, it can be concluded that infrastructure modernization, especially on the transportation sector has increased diversity in Aceh, especially ethnic diversity. This diversity then it will be very important to see how multicultural communication that happened later, whether walk normal or even on the contrary.

### **Modernization Economy**

Modernization on field economy Also No let go from policy the Dutch colonial government and is also very closely related to modernization in the infrastructure sector as previously discussed. Immediately after Dutch in power on Aceh, so Lots plantation And mining then opened. In the agricultural sector, the first step was taken by the Netherlands is open plantations coconut in Island Wow And Regency Aceh Big. In year 1910 government Dutch centralize location plantation rubber And coconut palm oil in area Which Now known with East Aceh district (Sjamsuddin, 1998, p. 21) . Meanwhile in the mining sector, where there are several types of mines, such as oil mines from East Aceh, and gold from Aceh West (Depdikbud, 1982, p. 28) .

Simultaneously with various activity development That seen also progress in trading activities. A number of foreign traders, such as people Chinese, Indian, Arab, Minangkabau, and Batak are increasingly interested in running his efforts in Aceh (Depdikbud, 1982, p. 28) . Finally, Then appear various type the village that based on atnis. There is a Chinese village, Europe, Yuanni, Wallachia, Armenia, Persia, Rivet, village person Ambon, Aceh village, etc. Their numbers are not small, for example more than 15,000 for Chinese and 1,000 for Europeans, 2,000 for Rante people clear the more add plurality in Aceh when That (Brau, 2014).

### **Modernization Education**

Modernization Which Also No lost its vastness Also happen on field education. If before arrival Dutch education in Aceh very oriented on education religion I slam, so now by Dutch Western education was introduced with various types and levels Lots. In general general,

besides school religion Which Also still develop, There are two types of new faces in education in Aceh in colonial period, namely school government And school national.

In 1901, it was founded *Volkschool* (Primary School) the number of which is almost evenly distributed in every village. In 1917, *Inlandsche was also established Vervolgschool* and also *Vervolgschool met Nederlandsche*. In that time Also almost at the same time, *the Hoolandsche Inlandsche School* was also established in Aceh (*HIS* ), *European Legere School (ELS)*, And *MULO* on year 1922 . Besides school government, develop Also school national like *HIS Muhammadiyah*, *Taman Siswa*, *Vereniging Aceh School (VAS)*, Higher Education Institutions Heirloom Peureulak, House College We, And Home of Education College Students (Depdikbud, 1982, pp. 39-54). Although thus, No means schools religion become lost enthusiasts. Still very Lots public Aceh Study on Meunasah, Dayah, or Madrasah, because western schools only limited For people certain just or of course Because characteristic anti public to school west the.

Development on field education the Then bring a significant change in the dynamics of Aceh's multicultural society that time. *First* , education has contributed to increasing plurality, both ethnicity and religion. This is at least it looks from the many teachers or experts from outside the Aceh region who act as teacher at schools that there is in Aceh, especially in *government* schools and national schools . This is as stated by Sjamsuddin (1982) that for teachers in schools government And school National, especially for the initial stages of its establishment, the teachers were people from outside Aceh, especially Minangkabau, Toba Batak, and Mandailing. It is said that their numbers are quite large and No only limited on area urban just, However Also in villages .

*Second* , the development of education also has an impact on changes in perspective, where interaction with society occurs other become more open . (Wertheim, 1999, p. 6). This openness and change in perspective can be seen, for example, from the increasing number of Acehnese who send their children to study outside Aceh, such as in Bukittinggi and Batavia, which at that time were centers of education in the Dutch East Indies (Aceh Documentation and Information Center, 1999, pp. 194).

### **Diversity in Aceh**

As explained in the previous section, that modernization in various fields during the Dutch occupation had an influence on plurality in region Aceh. Data total population in Aceh on 1930, which is based on ethnicity at least provides evidence of ethnic diversity the. As for amount the as stated in the following table:

**Table 1. Population Composition of Aceh Based on Ethnic Groups in 1930**

Ethnic group Nation	Man	Woman	Total	%
Aceh	390 279	385 481	775 760	74.49
Simeulu	9 249	8 748	17 997	1.84
Singkil	7 665	7 783	15 448	1.58
Tamiang	5 792	5 678	11 470	1.18
Gayo	25 347	27 072	52 419	5.37
Alas	6 474	7 147	13 621	1.40
Batak	4 131	3 237	7 368	0.75
Minangkabau	4 855	3 677	8 532	0.87
Jawa	34 148	28 088	60 236	6.17
Etc	7 900	5 194	13 094	1.35
<b>Total</b>	<b>495 840</b>	<b>480 105</b>	<b>975 945</b>	<b>100.00</b>

**Source: The Influence of Population Migration on the Development of Regional Culture Special Aceh. Jakarta: Ministry of Education and Culture. (1982). pp. 29-30**

Although it is not explained in detail what the profession is and how people- people from outside Aceh come to Aceh, but the data above can at least proves that in the 1930s in the Aceh region there were already Enough Lots public ethnicity other from outside Aceh.

### **Relation Interethnic: Aceh-Minangkabau**

Exposure previous has explain that population Dutch, with modernization in various fields has brought Aceh becomes a region which is increasingly diverse. Various ethnicities, especially ethnicities from the region Indonesia then stayed in Aceh. Modernization in various fields This has also brought the Acehnese people to a more interactive relationship. wide to world outside, especially between fellow resident Indies Dutch. Diversity has consequence, especially in matter communication.

Like Which has explained previously that on time colonial Netherlands, Aceh is a multi-ethnic area. Some ethnic groups from outside Aceh even have quite a large number. In this section, the author will trying to explain how relationship between the ethnic group with take example or case between resident local Aceh with ethnicity Minangkabau.

As shown in the previous table, in 1930 the ethnic Minangkabau is Wrong One ethnicity from outside Aceh Which Enough Lots the amount, namely 8. 532 people or 0.87% of the total population. From that's all Lots amount person Minangkabau the, most among them are as traders and teachers. For that reason, the interaction between the two ethnic groups mainly occurs through trade, education, and also organization. Which What is interesting is that Minangkabau and Aceh are two centers of Islam in Sumatra. It means, both of them at least have two similarities, namely You're welcome religious Islam And You're welcome on island the same one, namely Sumatra.



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However, between these two ethnic groups, especially the Acehnese and Minangkabau ethnic groups, there is a prejudice negative. Notarized that person Aceh very hate the Minangkabau people and this hatred is parallel to the hatred person Aceh to person Dutch. Even until there is proverb, "**cap "bunthok cang beuhabeh, baje puteh cang beurata**" which means: chopped all the one wearing a helmet (Dutch) and the one wearing a shirt white (Minangkabau). Not only that, the Minangkabau people are even referred to by the Acehnese as *Padang*, or person caper from Padang (Sjamsuddin, 1982, p. 29). This hatred is not only limited to feelings, but also it appears on behavior public. Matter the for example seen clear from development organization Muhammadiyah in area that. It is said that: Muhammadiyah finds it difficult to develop itself in Aceh. Acehnese people do not like Muhammadiyah, especially because its core management consists of people Minangkabau (Sjamsuddin, 1982, p. 29).

Why matter the can happen? In communication interethnic, according to Purwasito (2003:144-156) group ethnicity minority anywhere always just have difficulty communicating with the majority group. More carry on explained that existence the difficulties at least caused by three things, namely: 1) historical prejudice, 2) discrimination, 3) feelings of *in-group superiority feeling* Which excessive with consider inferior Which others (Purwasito, 2003, p. 147).

In case Aceh Minangkabau, feeling hate the at least can explained Because several reasons. *Firstly*, in terms of religion, Acehnese people are very fanatical and proud of their title. Veranda of Mecca, and looked down on the Minangkabau people. Acehnese people consider self they more tall than person Minangkabau (Sjamsudin, 1982, p. 29). On time Sultanate, Aceh is the center the development of Islam in Southeast Asia at that time. In fact, the bringer of Islam to Minangkabau, Burhan Al-Din or better known as Tuanku Ulakan was a student from cleric leading from Aceh, Al-Singkili (Azra, 1994, p. 209). *Second*, Aceh also looks down on the Minangkabau people because of the glory factor. past. During the Aceh Sultanate, Aceh was a kingdom big. Aceh even considers itself equal to other countries. big like Türkiye, England, France, because in the past they were partners.

However, such hatred certainly does not exist among all Acehnese people. Such hatred is especially present among religious groups or young people. who studied at a religious school. Meanwhile, young people who attend school government and non-national schools are not like that. The young people who going to school in a modern school is much more open, even many of the youth Aceh which continue school to Bukittinggi, Sumatra West.

## CONCLUSION

Change system political from Sultanate to occupation Dutch has had a tremendous impact on the Acehnese people. Of the many impacts of which the positive ones are modernization in various fields, especially on field education Which Then giving birth to the elite modern.

Modernization the, Then Also impact on plurality public. Lots people from outside ethnic groups Acehnese who are in Aceh, either as traders, Teacher, or coolie garden And other and so on.

Besides That, modernity Also impact on dynamics public. Communication public Aceh with world outside become the more open, Many Acehnese youths go to Minangkabau to study or even Java Island, as well as many Acehnese people who were involved in movement organizations such as Sarekat Islam, Muhammadiyah, or even the Communists. Finally, what by Robert Dahl (1985, p. 25) is called MDP (modern, dynamic, pluralist) at least can be found in Aceh at that time. Although there are indeed elements that exist at that time, and for some reasons, there has not been any communication like that Good. Especially for Aceh, their past glory is one of them factors that influence why the Acehnese nature that they have, and that even in progress continue until post-independence.

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