

## **CORRUPTION AS THE PERENIAL COLONIZER**

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### **Abstrak**

Penjajahan di dunia harus dihapuskan. Inilah pernyataan tegas dalam pembukaan Undang-undang Dasar negara kita. Berdasarkan pengalaman bangsa kita, kita benci penjajahan. Namun jika persoalan penjajahan ini dilihat dari teologi post-kolonial, maka rupanya ada jenis baru penjajah yang selalu berusaha menguasai hati banyak orang sebenarnya membenci apa itu yang namanya penjajah. Dalam tulisan ini akan dijelaskan bahwa ternyata mentalitas koruptif juga masih menguasai banyak orang di zaman kita ini. Refleksi ini akan didasarkan pada kesaksian biblis tentang praktek korupsi yang juga merasuk dalam praktek-praktek keagamaan.

Keywords: Corruption, the perenial colonizer

It is recorded very well in the preamble of the constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, 1945, that colonization in the world must be abolished since it is incompatible with humanity and justice.<sup>1</sup> This statement is very important for Indonesian people because Indonesian had undergone the colonization by the Netherland for more than 350 years and more than three years by Japanese. Indonesian people really felt that they were enslaved by the colonizer. Everything must be done for the sake of the colonizer. In the time of colonization, everyone felt distress and afflicted because there was no freedom. People did something without free will. Everything was done under pressure. The Netherland people took so much profit and advantage from Indonesian country.

Since 1945, Indonesia has become an independent country. It means Indonesia as an independent country has been free from colonization for more than 67 years but one can notice that not all of Indonesian people feel really free from colonization. European colonizer has gone; Japanese colonization has been defeated, but some times after their independent day, on August 17<sup>th</sup> 1945, some Indonesian people feel that they are still under colonization by their own

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<sup>1</sup> See Undang-undang Dasar Negara Republik Indonesia 1945.

countrymen. Many people feel that the situation in the time of colonization is recurring now. Not only the Netherlands got everything from Indonesia but also Indonesian countrymen get everything from their people through corruption. Corruption lately has become a dangerous power which can destroy whole nation. In this paper it is highlighted the new force that colonizes many Indonesian people that is corruption.

### **Consideration of corruption**

Transparency International, an international non-governmental organization to combat corruption, noted that from 146 countries, Indonesia is the fifth top corrupt country in the world. This organization defines corruption as “abuse of public office (including police) for private gain (e.g., bribe taking).”<sup>2</sup> Moreover Joycelyn M. Pollock added, “Corruption, graft, theft, and accepting bribes and gratuities are all examples of unethical law enforcement practices. Cohen refers to these behaviors as exploitation, defined as “acting on opportunities, created by virtue of one’s authority, for personal gain at expense of public one is authorized to serve” (1986;23).<sup>3</sup>

### **The fact**

The problem of corruption in Indonesia has become more severe. Corruption is no longer understood merely as a practice of abuse of those who have authority to enrich themselves. Corruption has been executed with a systematic and structured pattern involving many parties with many interests, ranging from government officials, military, employers, business men and people from society itself.

"Corruption, which is happening recently, has evolved into political corruption and corruption politic. Corruption is not limited to theft of money to enrich oneself, but it has involved a pattern of corruption which chained and greed. In order to achieve

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<sup>2</sup> Joycelyn M. Pollock, *Ethical Dilemmas And Decisions in Criminal Justice*, Fifth Edition, Thomson, United States, 2007, p. 262.

<sup>3</sup> Joycelyn M. Pollock, *Ethical Dilemmas And Decisions in Criminal Justice*, Fifth Edition, Thomson, United States, 2007, p. 235.

a particular political position, for example, a candidate must first spend a lot of money. When the position is reached, he will first look for any way to get back the money that was spent before, including through public means, preparation of regulations and even through legislation itself."<sup>4</sup>

The truth of the statement above, which is taken from The Indonesian Bishops Conference in 2004, can be seen clearly in the corruption case of Gayus Tambunan, an employee of the Indonesian central office of taxes. Gayus Tambunan had been employed for just seven years but he had collected at least 3,500,000 US dollars. How can he get that money? The answer is corruption. One must remember that Gayus was only an employee in that office. He was not a high official or top manager. His salary did not reach two thousand dollars every month. If this amount must be reduced for his family expenses, then, how much can he save so that his account can reach 3,500,000 US dollars? The only way is corruption.

#### **Many parties entangled.**

Gayus Tambunan was not alone in doing corruption. There are many parties partake in that case. As a tax official, he came into contact with many parties, especially the taxpayers involving the company's leaders. In order to get much more money he colluded with the taxpayers. Both of them came to an agreement about the amount of payment. For example SAT Company had to pay 700.000,- US dollars every year but in fact the Company only paid 400.000 US dollars each year before the case was opened to the public. Therefore the country had been lost 300.000 US Dollars every year since seven years before. From the amount, how much had been gotten by Gayus and how much had been saved by the SAT company official? Both Gayus and the official of the company had entangled in the case of corruption, bribe and theft.<sup>5</sup>

In connection with this case the police had seized Gayus Tambunan's save the deposit 40 million dollars. However, its development did not clear until now.

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<sup>4</sup> Nota Pastoral KWI 2004 no. 6.1.

<sup>5</sup> Hindra Liu, *Inilah 10 Kejanggalan Kasus Gayus*, Kompas, Minggu, 21 November 2010.

"Till the present time, sustainability examination of Gaius's other accounts with nominal reach 40 million US dollars became unclear. Police seemed to close the account which impressed so much greater."<sup>6</sup>

Until now, the police still have not processed legally the three companies suspected as bribe to Gayus, such as KPC, Arutmin, and Earth Resource. In fact, Gayus has admitted to having received money three million dollars from these companies. Coming to this stage one can see that the case was very complicated and entangled many parties.

### **Small case**

Reflecting this case, one can say that the corruption case of Gayus Tambunan is only small case. We must admit that the amount of money which was taken by Gayus is big enough but if one reflects from the life of the people in Indonesia, one can agree with me that the case is a small case, because there are too many cases which are still covered. How much money is taken by officials and authorities in our daily life? How much profit is gained by bribers who only pay a little tax from the amount should be paid? How much money is gained by the contractors who spend only 60 % from their budget to build buildings? How much money is gained by politicians after they successfully occupy their position because before they had spent a lot of money for their campaigns? If all corruption cases in Indonesia, from central offices until rural villages, how much money can be saved? What a rich the country is. This situation illustrates that corruption in Indonesia is very alarming. Therefore it is true what had been stated by The Indonesian Bishop Conference, "Corruption, which is happening recently, has evolved into political corruption and corruption politic. Corruption is not limited to theft of money to enrich oneself, but it has involved a pattern of corruption which chained and greed."<sup>7</sup> Corruption is so rampant in Indonesia. Therefore, it is true what has been stated by the Transparency International

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Nota Pastoral KWI 2004 no. 6.1.

Organization that Indonesia is one of the most corrupt countries in the world.<sup>8</sup> Many people have misused their position to gain much profit for their own sake. To secure their position, they collude with other person or agencies particularly law enforcement agencies. With neat cooperation, their activity is difficult to be detected.

### **Learning from the Bible.**

Mark 11:15-18

<sup>15</sup> On reaching Jerusalem, Jesus entered the temple area and began driving out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves, <sup>16</sup> and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts. <sup>17</sup> And as he taught them, he said, "Is it not written: 'My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations'? But you have made it 'a den of robbers.'" <sup>18</sup> The chief priests and the teachers of the law heard this and began looking for a way to kill him, for they feared him, because the whole crowd was amazed at his teaching.

On entering the temple Jesus found that the temple has been made as “market place,” therefore Jesus made a whip and drove all those who selling and buying in the temple along with their cattle, sheep and pigeons. He overturned the tables of the moneychangers and spent all the money to the ground. Jesus cleaned the temple that had become a den of robbers (Matt 21:12-13, Luke 19:45-46, John 2:14-15). From this scan one can see that Jesus was so angry that he acted roughly. Did Jesus angry because there was merely the selling and buying action in the temple?

### **The Temple misused**

Jesus was so angry because in the house of God there was deprivation of money by the temple officials. By their activity, these comprador class (the chief

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<sup>8</sup> Joycelyn M. Pollock, *Ethical Dilemmas And Decisions in Criminal Justice*, Fifth Edition, Thomson, United States, 2007, p. 262.

priests and the elders) brought about the suffering to Israelites, the people of God.<sup>9</sup> Joseph Ratzinger asserted that the cleansing of the temple constituted an attack on the temple's misuse. "The traders were licensed by the Jewish authorities, who made a large profit from their activities."<sup>10</sup> The deprivation was not so apparent because it was hidden in the religious rules about temple tax payment obligations and the offering of burnt offerings.<sup>11</sup>

Every Jew, who has been twenty years old or more, had to attend the Passover celebration and pay the annual temple tribute of half a shekel<sup>12</sup> (cfr. Ex. 30:13-14). The half shekel was equal to 1½ days wage. It must be noticed that only Shekel, the Jewish coin, was allowed to be paid as temple tax. Because of this, every one must change his money to Shekel. Other money could no be allowed because they were no lawful.

On Passover, Jews came from all over the world with their money. Therefore, in the courts of the temple there are a lot of money changers. The problem is, for getting every half Shekel exchange everyone was charged a certain fee<sup>13</sup> which equal to one fourth work day wage. Therefore without hard working, the temple official could get great amount of money only in some minutes. And this practice had taken place for many years. How great the profit was earned by the money changers, because so many people who come to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover and pay their taxes. Easter celebrations in the temple that is required for all the Jews who lived around Jerusalem. Jewish people in the overseas regions always found time to come to Jerusalem to worship God and meet their relatives. The amount of benefits gained by the temple official depended on the amount of the people gathered at the time.

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<sup>9</sup> Stephen D. Moore, *Mark and Empire, "Zealot" and "Postcolonial" Readings*, in Catherine Keller, cs., (Editor), *Postcolonial Theologies, Divinity and Empire*, Chalice Press, St. Louis, Missouri, 2004, p. 138.

<sup>10</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth, Part Two, Holy Week, From the Entrance into Jerusalem to the Resurrection*, Ignatius Press, San Fransisco, 2011, p. 12.

<sup>11</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, *idem*.

<sup>12</sup> Bob Deffinbaugh, *The Cleansing of the Temple (John 2:12-22)*.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

This Profit-making takes place every year but people do not realize the practice of raiding the money, because it was neatly wrapped in religious regulations for tax payment obligations of the Temple.<sup>14</sup> In other words, the temple officials have abused their authority by establishing religious regulations in order to get much more money from the worshiper. They had committed fraud by manipulating the religious rules for seizing the money and make profits without hard work. They have treated the people who come to the temple rather than as the pilgrims who want to worship, but like a "squeezed cow" that must be squeezed to their advantage. This is the reason why Jesus was so angry. Jesus was so angry because the religious rules were created as such by the temple officials (which were the chief priests) that Jews did not realize that their money was stolen and taken away by the chief priest's accomplice.

The practice of burnt offering was worse than the money exchanging. The burnt offering was offered once a year on the Passover day. The Offerings were held to beg the forgiveness of sins. The sacrificed animal was depended on the income of the families. The rich families can offer a cow or a sheep but for the poor it was enough to offer a couple of pigeons. Therefore there was selling buying activity in the temple.

Actually, the sale of sacrificial animals was helpful for the pilgrims who want to offer burnt offerings, especially for Jews who came from overseas because it was no need to bring the animal from the distance place. The problem, however, is laid on the sacrificial rule. The offering of each sacrificed animal must be perfect, without blemish. For the sake of the perfection of the animal sacrifices, the Temple officials established a committee to sensor the sacrificed animal. The chief priest colluded with the animal sensor committee to get more money. Therefore almost every animal which has been brought from their own could not be allowed to be offered as sacrifice. So, everyone had to buy the animal which had been prepared by the chief priest's committee with a high cost, twenty times more expensive than if they bought out side the temple court yard. Many people

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<sup>14</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, *Ibid.* p. 12.

were forced to buy the animal.<sup>15</sup> In this action one can see that there was a money deprivation practice from the pilgrims. That was a real corruption<sup>16</sup> in the temple of God by the temple authority.

Yet people did not realize that their money was robbed because the offering of sacrifice associated with the remission of sins. To offer a blemish animal would not effect to the remission of sin. That is the theological idea behind the policy of unblemished sacrificed animal. Therefore the pilgrims were compelled to buy the expensive animal for the sake of sin remission. The temple official had practiced theft, bribery and deprivation in the temple. The temple officials, who were the chief priests, had exploited the worshiper.<sup>17</sup> The house of God had been made as 'a den of robbers' (Mark 11:17).

By attacking the existing practice of the temple aristocracy, Jesus implemented the true law in opposition to a custom that had become deeply corrupt and had become "law."<sup>18</sup> Jesus Justified His action by using a quotation from Isaiah, "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations. But, you have made it a den of robbers" (Mark 11:17).

Jesus reaction for the bribery situation in the temple was very clear. He expelled them from the temple. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves, and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts (Mark 11:16). Jesus risked his life to free his people from slavery and from the "holy" corruptor and robbers. Jesus dared to take this step with the risk of losing his life in the "Postcolonial cross," because he is independent of any power in the world. Jesus made a cultural revolution. He wants to overhaul the culture of corruption that is veiled in religious rules. Many times Jesus told his disciples, "Who wants to be a leader, let him be a servant"

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<sup>15</sup> Bob Deffinbaugh explain, "Each worshipper was allowed to bring to the temple an animal of his own selection. But let him try it. In all likelihood it would not be approved by the judges, the privileged venders who filled the money-chest of Annas!" Crf. Bob Deffinbaugh, *The Cleansing of the Temple (John 2:12-22)*.

<sup>16</sup> Cfr. Joycelyn M. Pollock, *Ibid.* p. 262.

<sup>17</sup> Bob Deffinbaugh, *The Cleansing of the Temple (John 2:12-22)*.

<sup>18</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, *Ibid.* p. 12.



(Matt 20:26). Applying Jesus statement in this case, one can say, “Who wants to be a leader must be willing to serve rather than seek one’s own advantage.”

Indeed Jesus reaction brought about counter reaction from the temple official. They were really offended and angry with Jesus because Jesus had disturbed their program to gain more money for themselves. Jesus action incurred deep hostility from the Judean elite. Therefore they planed to kill him. And their plan really took place when Jesus underwent the crucifixion on the cross (Mark 15:21-27, Matt 27:32-38, Luke 23:26, 33-43, John 16:27).

## **Reflection**

What had happened 2000 years ago in Judea in Jesus lifetime happens also in Indonesia in now days. Because Jesus dared to demolish the syndicated corruption which was established by the Judean elites, Jesus eventually had to receive his tragic fate on the postcolonial cross even if he had no wrong.

Antasari Ashar, the chief manager of KPK (Corruption Eradication Commission) received his same fate in Jail, because he dared to demolish the syndicated corruption among the politic elites and the chief managers of many factories including members of the senate, businessmen and bureaucrats. He was despised by many of the ruling party. They became uneasy. Therefore they attempt to find various ways to destroy him. Antasari finally was put in jail on charges of planning the murder of Nasrudin Sulkarnaen. Even if Antasari was innocent, he must be guilty and received prison sentences of 18 years because he had tried to reveal the corrupt practice.

But the time will come when Jesus come in glory and judge all who do evil. He will put them to the eternal punishment where there will be everlasting suffering. The fate of the evil doer will be like the rich man who sees Lazarus from the distance (Luke 16:19-30). At the time Abraham will say to the corruptors, “Son, remember that in your lifetime you have taken many things that were not your own and you were happy with those things. Now you have to undergo this punishment.” At the time of trial, Jesus will say to the evil doer,

“Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matt 25:41).

Corruption in Indonesia can only be overcome if government is "clean." Clean government means the government does not depend on the political party or tribe or religion or various other bonds. Corruption can only be solved if the leaders of nations rid themselves of greed and selfishness. This is only possible if they see God in others.

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