

NOTES ON THE ISLAMIC SCHOOL AT GONTOR(1)

In 1926, three brothers from an old family of Kjai in the Ponorogo district, urged by a sense of "responsibility to continue and improve the work of their predecessors in spreading Islamic science and culture"(2), reorganized a decaying pesantren at Gontor(3) and made of it a new type of Islamic school in Java. Though they called the place "Daarussalaam" (Abode of Peace), it was soon popularly labeled "Pondok-Modèren." Of the three founders, K. H. Imam Zarkasji is still the intellectual director of the school, while K. H. Ahmad Sahal is called pengasuh (guardian) and apparently devotes himself mainly to the moral education of the boys. The other brother, K. H. Zainuddin Fanani, now works in the Department of Social Affairs in Djakarta. The village head (lurah) is another relative.

At present Gontor is a secondary school providing a 6-year course to about 1,000 boys (1,100 in 1958). Some come there directly from primary school, some from S.M.P. - junior secondary school - provision being made for the latter to complete the course in a shorter period. The condition for admission is an examination set by the pondok itself in Indonesian, arithmetic and the ability to read the Qur'an in Arabic.(4) There is no attempt to conform closely to the government school system or to prepare the boys for the government examinations. Gontor sets its own examinations (2 per year). A university, called Universitas Daarussalaam, is being set up and a first-year class is already operating, with 40 students, most of whom are teachers in the secondary school. Later years will be added as students and teaching staff become available.

The objective of the school is above all to provide "cadres" for the Moslem community in Indonesia, by combining the virtues of the old pondok system of education with those of modern educational theory and practice. As models which have influenced them, they mention Al-Azhar, Aligarh, Santiniketan and the

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- (1) This account is based on a visit of four days in August 1964 and conversations with five recent "old boys" at Kudus and Padangan. It was written in early 1965 and has not been altered to take account of events since October 1965. Gontor is 12 kilometers south of Ponorogo in East Java.
 - (2) As explained in a pamphlet printed at Gontor a few years ago.
 - (3) The brothers had some family connection with a pesantren at nearby Tegalsari, which is reported, no doubt unreliably, to have had 10,000 santri (pupils) in its 18th century heyday.
 - (4) i.e. pronounce, but not necessarily understand it.

Taman Siswa schools. Zarkasji strongly criticizes the public school system as being colonial in origin and spirit, providing inadequate moral training and being oriented too much to the production of pegawai negeri (government officials) and, as such, overemphasizing the formal attainment of a certain level of training without inculcating a love of learning. He urges boys not to make "public service" their objective, and becomes angry if they still want to be pegawai. The reason he gives is that the pegawai is not free. In the Dutch time, officials, through taking orders from the Dutch all the time, eventually came to think like the Dutch. However, since he still tries to prevent boys becoming pegawai negeri, it is possible that he regards the present regime as still objectionable, though less so, from a strict Moslem point of view. Another reason for his attitude is probably that the effectiveness of the Moslem as teacher and missionary is reduced by his acceptance of a government job. He wants to produce teachers for Islamic schools and people who, while pursuing some trade, are able to devote time to serving Moslem organizations as office-holders, muballigh and so on. But the salary of a public servant is so low that he is obliged to spend his spare time in trading and other supplementary means of seeking a livelihood.

He also criticizes the government vocational schools on the ground of impracticality. Of hundreds of batik enterprises in Ponorogo, he pointed out, not one was founded by a graduate of a government commercial school (S.M.E.P. or S.M.E.A.).⁽⁵⁾ The ex-S.M.E.A. boy nearly always becomes a salaried employee of the government or a Chinese firm. He lacks the risk-taking courage (keberanian menanggung resiko) of the typical Indonesian small businessman whose education is likely to be limited, and often confined to the pesantren. The government vocational schools are also too specialized. For instance after a three-year course at a fisheries school one has been wasting one's time unless one becomes an employee of the Fisheries Service; thus one's freedom is circumscribed. Ex-Gontor boys however have received a moral training which cannot have been wasted, and are able to turn their hands to anything - trade, teaching, politics, agriculture, etc. I am afraid he is claiming too much here, but the criticisms of the state system are certainly valid. Mohammad Said of the Taman Siswa also complains of the fixation on the public service which results in a fear to speak and act honestly if this may lead to dismissal. Gontor has three medicines for this - a strong, religiously based sense of right and wrong

(5) This is an exaggeration, however. According to Mr. Subardi, formerly of Ponorogo, several businessmen of that city went to Dutch Commercial Secondary Schools. This is also true at the national level of such businessmen as B. R. Motik and A. M. Dasaad.

(an "inner-directed" ethic in contrast to an "other-directed" ethic inculcated in the state schools?); a confidence in one's ability to earn one's living in other ways and without loss of status (as Gontor sees it, the honest trader is more honourable than the ambtenaar); and an ability to live frugally (again without humiliation - Mohammad Said also emphasizes this).

Gontor differs from the old-style pesantrèn in that it is more systematic and disciplined, it devotes considerable time to secular learning,⁽⁶⁾ and has a more comfortable, urbane atmosphere that is sometimes, very distantly,⁽⁷⁾ reminiscent of an Australian "public" (private) school. It differs from an Indonesian state school in that the children live on the premises and are subject to the discipline of a full day's activities and the unobtrusive but nevertheless continuous supervision of a strong-minded individual. There is a religious element in all the activities. And the emphasis on Arabic and English and the direct method of teaching them is probably unique in Indonesia. This emphasis is said to date from the time in the 1920's when an Islamic congress was to be held and it was found impossible to find an Indonesian delegate fluent in English and Arabic, the two languages of the congress. Consequently, instead of the teacher reading Arabic passages and then translating and explaining them in Indonesian and Javanese, an active command of Arabic is insisted upon, and from the second year Arabic is the sole language of instruction for religious subjects. After six months in the pondok, boys are forbidden to use Indonesian languages for conversation. They must speak Arabic or English among themselves.

(6) About half the time seems to be devoted to religious subjects, including Arabic. Though many pondok were slow to introduce general or secular subjects, practically all have now done so. But the proportion of time devoted to them is not a sure index of a school's modernity. One school in Kudus that confined itself entirely to religious subjects was nevertheless condemned by the kolot for its newfangled doctrines. The teachers there explained that they would like to teach other subjects as well, but did not have the resources and thought that the religious indoctrination of the young was too urgent to neglect. Many, but not all, of their pupils had already been to the state primary schools. In the Djombang pondok, which were relatively quick to introduce secular subjects, the time devoted to them has recently been reduced. This is a response to the growth of the state educational system. Moslems, even modernists, now feel that the most urgent thing is to concentrate on the gap left by the state - intensive religious education.

(7) As mentioned below, Gontor does not cater to the elite, but there is some consciousness of constituting a select group within the Moslem community.

An attempt was even made to teach general subjects like geography and algebra in Arabic, but for practical reasons Indonesian is now used. In English too the direct method is used, and it did seem to me that the elder boys spoke English better, or at least were less shy about using it, than senior secondary school children usually are in Indonesia. They have English conversation clubs at each level and practice public speaking three evenings a week (one session each for English, Arabic and Indonesian). Inevitably it is mainly Arabic which is used for conversation. The facility in Arabic which they so acquire makes Gontor boys acceptable at I.A.I.N. (the State Islamic Institute) and at Al-Azhar in Cairo.(8) Some go to other Islamic universities in Indonesia and some to state universities where they are apparently accepted if K. H. Zarkasji certifies that they are up to standard, even though they have not sat for the state examination. In other secular subjects than English, I suspect that Gontor is a year or two behind the equivalent government school level.(9)

Is the emphasis on Arabic excessive? Not if one remembers that in the priestless world of Islam Gontor is acting as a seminary or theological school. A thorough knowledge of Islam undoubtedly requires facility in Arabic, and if Indonesia is to be a leader in the Moslem world (an ambition to which many Indonesians now give expression), a more active command of it will be needed than is usual at present.

There is nothing grotesquely ke-arab-arab-an about Gontor. The atmosphere is quite genuinely Indonesian, but at the same time both modern and Islamic; simple, but not harshly austere; clean, but not antiseptically so; serious and religious but not morbid or fanatical; progressive and forward-looking, but without the word "revolutionary" - which covers so much and means so little in Indonesia(10) today - constantly on its tongue. To

(8) Some have gone to Medina, where the scholarships are more generous, but which is less attractive academically, especially since, during a recent inter-Arab dispute, the U.A.R. teachers went home. On the other hand some who wanted to go to Cairo were prevented by foreign exchange shortages. Fearing contamination by reformist ideas, NU parents do not like their children to study in Cairo or Medina, and a batch were recently summoned home. The (NU-dominated) Ministry of Religion also exercises some censorship over books imported from Egypt.

(9) This was the opinion of a trainee teacher visiting Gontor at the same time.

(10) Cf. Dr. Subandrio's deathless "revolution is continuity." Presenting the cup at the Magelang races, the Central Java panglima (territorial commander) said that horse-racing was a tool for completing the revolution. An employee of the Department of Agriculture, at an exhibition in Semarang, explaining to crowds the government's methods of seed breeding (used no doubt in most OLDEFOS countries too), said that after they had selected the best plants they eliminated the others setjara revolusioner (in a revolutionary way)! No one laughed except myself.

anyone fresh from Djakarta, with its cultural confusion, hypocritical slogans, paralyzed intelligentsia, corruption, cynicism, conspicuous consumption and uncollected garbage, Gontor seems indeed an abode of peace, and an earnest of the promise that Islamic reformism at its best may once, if no more, have held for Indonesian society. Of course for a school, especially an elite school, to isolate itself from the larger community is no virtue, unless it be a preparation for the transformation of society. (Menjerbu - assault, is what they say at Gontor. But I doubt if the preparation is really adequate).

The school is built on several acres of ground, surrounded by village and garden (pekarangan) land. Several of its buildings are new and solidly built, including a large assembly hall. Other buildings are older, with walls mainly of woven bamboo. (11) The Mosque is old and too small and a major object now is the construction of a large new one, already begun. The dormitories are extremely crowded. Each boy has a small table for study and holding his personal possessions; he sleeps on the strip of floor between the table and the wall, hardly bigger than his outstretched body, on a thin mattress that is rolled up in the mornings. In the evenings, as they squat around reciting and learning by rote, the noise is deafening. Classrooms too are somewhat overcrowded. Library facilities are inadequate, especially for an aspirant university, and so are the bathroom facilities, though these will be good when a pump already installed begins to work. There is a diesel generator providing electric light at night - something which of course the surrounding villages do not have. Sport is encouraged, but the facilities are meagre by Australian standards - one football ground, one volleyball court and several places for badminton and table tennis.

The boys do some work like sweeping and about half do their own cooking, the rest paying to have it done (some of my informants seemed embarrassed by the unegalitarian implications of this). They do no agricultural work. (12) In general, life is simple and facilities inadequate - but better than any old-style pondok, and no worse than most state schools, so far as they are comparable.

(11) One boy pointed out jokingly, but perhaps significantly, that the handsome new buildings had Indonesian names or nicknames, the older ones Arabic (Mesir, Irak, etc.)

(12) I was told that this is hardly found in Java now, except in the regencies of Djember and Banjuwangi where the man-land ratio still favours it. On the significance of the old association of pondok with agriculture, see C. Geertz, "Religious Belief and Economic Behaviour in a Javanese Town: Some Preliminary Considerations," in Economic Development and Cultural Change, Vol. IV, No. 2, 1956.

The extreme freedom of the old pondok has gone. Rolls are taken in all classes. Boys are not allowed out at night. Collective evening prayers are compulsory. Breaking rules such as the ban on Indonesian conversation may be punished by having to sweep or by having one's hair shaved off. To defy a teacher means expulsion. In fact it seemed to be pretty easy to get expelled - nearly the whole fifth form was expelled early in 1964 for organized protests about the food. On the other hand, when I was there, a week after the vacation ended, boys were still arriving back in dribs and drabs. And in the pondok spirit, the rules are administered by the boys themselves. All boys must be members of P.I.I., a Moslem secondary school students' organization, whose branch there administers such things as sport, punishment, permission to leave the school, reception of visitors, a co-operative shop, a wall "newspaper," and so on. Election is on the basis of consulat, consisting of boys from a particular district.⁽¹³⁾

All boys must also be scouts, and one afternoon a week is devoted to scouting.⁽¹⁴⁾ The Kjai see that no time is left idle. Chess and cards are forbidden. One is reminded of the modernist santri who told Geertz "tijd is geld."⁽¹⁵⁾ However his remarks about the santri neglect of art would not entirely apply. Gontor has four musical ensembles including a gambusan, an orkès Melaju and a western-style dance band. Traditional dances are not taught but are sometimes performed at concerts. Boys practice both pentjak and judo among themselves. Sometimes wajang and récg performances are held by outside artists. Modern plays have also been staged, but the Kjai forbid the appearance of boys and girls on the stage together.

Still the passion for art which one often finds in prijaji circles is absent. Here it is just for fun, except for chanting of the Qur'an in which they really excel. A question about the value of sport produced just the answer Geertz might have predicted: "We need healthy bodies so that our struggle will not be interrupted."

(13) These consulat have some other functions, but the boys do not room together according to their regional origin as they generally do in old-style pondok and Zarkasji mentioned as one of his beneficial innovations the breaking down of the old system, under which fights between districts were common.

(14) Now the government-sponsored pramuka, formerly Hizbul Wathon. In this case the replacement of the scouts, fragmented according to aliran, by "national" pramuka does not seem to have made any significant difference. At Kudus I was told that the main result was a decline in competitiveness and hence in enthusiasm.

(15) "Time is money." Religion of Java, p. 155.

Gontor boys speak constantly of struggle, for instance in the comments they write in each other's autograph books. They see life as a struggle - an economic struggle and a struggle to spread Islam in a hostile environment - and the two aspects bound up together seem to mark them off from most of the Indonesian community. (16)

Most of the teachers at Gontor are ex-students who have just completed the course. As the school is intended largely to train teachers, teaching method is taught in the final three years, and the better students are asked to stay on and teach. They get no pay, only board and lodging. This system no doubt has its virtues - it enables teachers to learn the Gontor methods and then when they leave a couple of years later they introduce them in their own schools. However, the disadvantage is that a body of experienced teachers is not built up. The personal ascendancy of the Kjai is thus preserved - a point of resemblance to the traditional pesantrèn. The upheaval following Kjai Zarkasji's death will therefore probably be severe, but it will certainly not lead to the dissolution of the pesantrèn, as often happens in more traditional places. (17)

Not only teachers are obtained cheaply in this way. The school office is run voluntarily, by ex-pupils who may also be studying or teaching. When the pondok obtained a diesel generator it first sent an ex-pupil to Surabaya to study electricity. He returned, installed it, taught some senior boys to run it and they now pass on the skill from year to year. Similarly, to build up the university, students have been sent to various universities, including one who went to Al-Azhar and then on to study philosophy at Bonn. The school's property (wakaf land) is administered in the same way - part time, by teachers, ex-pupils and the Kjai family. The family property has been dedicated to the pondok and Zarkasji's heirs have no claim to it.

For some years the school has possessed 25 hectares of rice-field, but this has recently been greatly increased by

(16) Admittedly the government also talks a lot about struggle, but it means either the physical revolution fifteen years ago, in which few enough took part anyway, or the struggles waged by mythical entities like NASAKOM or NEKOLIM, which are remote from daily life. Either way, as with the struggle of the Kurawa and Pendawa in the shadow-play, most people just sit and watch. If the santri struggle recalls Bunyan, the official, prijaji struggle seems closer to Hegel.

(17) It may lead to a new step forward in techniques - the English teachers, for instance, wanted to use records in teaching, but the old man vetoed it.

about 240 hectares, which was dedicated (diwakafkan) by land-owners in the Ngawi district who were to lose it under the land-reform law. In late 1964 the communist peasant organization B.T.I. was trying to prevent the Pondok-Modèren from getting any benefit from the land while the Pondok-Modèren was having a struggle to hold on to it. But apparently it is legal to dedicate land in excess of the legal maximum for religious purposes in this way.

Zarkasji claims the school has no budget - they just spend the money as it comes in. Boys were paying about Rp. 3,400 a month for their food and Rp. 200 a month for fees. The other sources of income were the wakaf land and gifts (especially for new buildings). Government aid was so tiny that Zarkasji said they only accepted it so that they would not be accused of being anti-government.(18) Only a few boys (4 or 5) were provided for free.

What kind of boys go to Gontor? My main source here is a list of the names and addresses of the 1040 pupils attending in 1963. In the first place it shows them to be extremely widely dispersed geographically. There were 339 from East Java, 337 from Central Java, 231 from West Java, 66 from Sumatra, 28 from Kalimantan and 39 from East Indonesia. Before konfrontasi there were a few from Malaya. Every residency in Java, except Madura, had at least 15 representatives. Outside Java, representation was spottier, but still remarkably large considering the difficulties of transport. Neither Atjeh nor West Sumatra, Islamic strongholds, sent any. Perhaps they thought their own schools more up-to-date. Sumatrans were mainly from a few local clusters (especially Baturadja in South Sumatra and Tembilahan in Riau). South Sulawesi also sent none, but Nusa Tenggara sent quite a few, including 8 from Ende (Flores) and 10 from Lombok.

Big cities were represented in about the same proportion as the country at large (Djakarta 39, Bandung 16, Surabaya 15, Semarang 8, Medan 2). These rather low figures make it clear that big-city elites do not patronize Gontor. The nearest thing I could find to a member of the national elite among the parents was an NU leader, K. H. Sjukri. I was told there were some army officers' sons, but I am sure very few. Some big-city boys, especially from West Java, had been sent to Gontor in the hope that a stern religious education would cure them of "cross-boy" tendencies. This expedient is naturally often unsuccessful and Gontor produces its fair share of "bad boys."

(18) The government also assisted by placing at Gontor an Egyptian teacher (earlier two), paid for by the U.A.R.

It appears that most of the pupils come from a fairly narrow and homogeneous stratum of the population which could be defined as including well-off peasants, (19) small traders or manufacturers, and religious functionaries (teachers, ulama, muballigh, modin, and employees of the Department of Religion), who often have family connections with the other groups just mentioned. I cannot fully demonstrate this, but there is some evidence for it, and none of those to whom I put it contradicted me.

It is clear from the address list that many were from villages, (not 85% though, the proportion of villagers in the nation's population). Now as it is clear that the average villager could not afford the Rp. 5,000 a month, approximately, which it cost to send a boy there in mid-1964 (board, fees and transport), these boys must have come from richer village families. Zarkasji said that lots of his ex-pupils were farmers and many too had more than the statutory maximum of land. If we classify the addresses according to kabupatèn, those with most, apart from Ponorogo (20) (with 42), were Djember (also 42) and Klatèn (40). Now both Djember and Klatèn are districts with many rich peasants, growing in both cases the rather "capitalist" crop of tobacco. In both areas agrarian social conflicts have developed during 1964 and 1965. (21) On the other hand there were no pupils from some poor rural kabupatèn like Gunung Kidul, Wonogiri and Grobogan.

(19) Many of these would be, according to PKI definitions, landlords, and others rich peasants. The distinction depends solely on whether one actually works the land, and possession of only 2-3 hectares of rice-field would get one into either category.

(20) In which Gontor is situated. Though the immediate neighbourhood may have been influenced by the pondok, the general area is one of abangan syncretism. During the Madiun affair the Kjai and their, at that time, small flock fled south and their library was destroyed.

(21) Actually, the situation in the two kabupatèn is rather different. Klatèn is more densely populated, with a probable PKI majority among the voters, but a Masjumi majority among the santri, whereas Djember is an NU stronghold. The conflict in Klatèn was over the BTI's efforts to implement land-reform unilaterally. At Djember the occasion was the attempt of Prof. Utrecht at Brawidjaja University to ban the Moslem student organization HMI from the campus, but as the conflict developed agrarian issues were also raised. The tobacco-growing area of Magelang-Temanggung is also well represented at Gontor.

In many cases the small business occupation of the parent was apparent in the address ("Toko Subur, Bumiaju," or "N. V. Kalbu, Pontianak"). Many boys, too, came from districts noted for small trading or handicrafts (Djepara, Sedaju, Gresik, Bawéah, Padangan-Tjepu). On the other hand, some of the main clusters of Moslem businessmen (Lawéan-Solo, Kudus, Madjalaja-Bandung, Surabaja, Djakarta) were not very well represented. This may be fortuitous, but it does appear that the really wealthy never send their children to Moslem institutions. Many parents had the address "Kauman" - which makes it likely that they were small businessmen or religious functionaries - and quite a few, K.U.A. (local office of the Department of Religion). About a quarter of the fathers were hadji.

The occupation of muballigh is unpaid, and Moslem teachers and officials of the Department of Religion are very poorly paid. It may therefore be asked how they can afford to send their sons to this distant school. It is noticeable that such people generally live, if not comfortably, at least decently. Their houses and dress are usually neat, their children healthy and attending school. It seems clear, then, that they are supported directly or indirectly by the social class from which they spring, namely the small traders and rich peasants, and that they form, along with these, that single stratum of society which is the most heavily Islamic, and which supports the educational, devotional and charitable institutions of Islam. The teacher or preacher of Islam is either supported by the comfortably-off family into which he is born, or by his wife's inheritance (a learned but penurious teacher being considered a suitable match for the daughter of a wealthy and pious family), or by gifts from other wealthy patrons. These may be supplemented by small trading, craft-work or small salaries or fees, depending on the nature of the religious work.(22) Gontor's clientele is middle class. The old aristocracy, the political elite, the wealthy businessmen, the bureaucracy, the officers and the Westernized intellectuals hold aloof, while the mass of peasants, wage-earners and

(22) Some examples among my acquaintances - 1. An active Muhammadiyah leader in Kudus and teacher of religion in the government S.M.A. was brother-in-law of one of the wealthiest cigarette manufacturers. 2. A muballigh, whose son was at Gontor, was the brother of a batik manufacturer and had himself a small batik business. 3. An ex-Gontor boy, who taught Arabic in two Islamic schools, was the son of a tahu manufacturer and in association with other teachers ran a small shop in the evenings, which I think his father capitalized. 4. A Gontor teacher was going back to his village near Djember where his father, a rich farmer, was building him a school. 5. The son of a Kudus muballigh, after years at Gontor and other pondok and a few years teaching in a Moslem village school near Malang, was going into business (the Kudus-Malang clothing trade) to get enough money to marry.

the petty traders whose trade is virtually disguised unemployment are excluded by financial incapacity. Culturally too, Gontor occupies the middle ground between the traditional Islamic school and the government education system. It seemed to be common that one brother attend Gontor and another the state secondary school, and at the same time not unusual for a boy to spend some time at Gontor and some time at other, more traditional pesantrèn. However, there were some indications that Gontor was falling between the two stools, and this may be why there are not many more schools of the same type.⁽²³⁾ Gontor was not good enough for anyone who wanted to get anywhere professionally - except in the profession of religious scholar. Two boys with brothers at Gontor told me they were going to state schools instead because they wanted to go into the army (via the Military Academy). At the same time, some ex-Gontor boys from about the middle of the kolot-modèren continuum seemed to take it for granted that there would be less piety at Gontor than at an ordinary pondok. They spoke of people who were real "gentlemen"⁽²⁴⁾ at Gontor who later became chusuk (devout, surrendered utterly to God) when they went to another pondok.

Gontor's clientele is being eroded culturally at the top as higher education becomes increasingly necessary to social status, and perhaps also economically at the bottom as Indonesia's economy runs downhill. This latter reason was given for the decline in numbers at Gontor in recent years. However, though there may be fewer in exporting districts of the Outer Islands who can afford to patronize the school, and though small businessmen may be suffering increasingly from inflation and Chinese competition, it is probable that well-to-do peasants of Java are so far at least holding their own. What will be the effect if land-reform is thoroughly implemented? Ironically the immediate effect of the law has been the sudden giving of large areas of land to the school. But it may also reduce, in time, the number of people well enough off to send their children away to school yet at the same time traditional enough and individualistic enough to prefer a pesantrèn to a government school.

Where does Gontor stand ideologically? Zarkasji says "Modèren" refers only to teaching methods, not what is taught, which is pure Islam, as it always was. No doubt he rejects many kolot practices and suffered opposition earlier from the kolot. But whereas some modernists, especially in the Muhammadijāh, seem to devote themselves mainly to the struggle against conservatism,

(23) There are some - one near Djember was founded by ex-Gontor boys.

(24) Using the English word, apparently signifying sophistication in dress and general worldliness. At Gontor, Western dress is worn in classrooms, but sarung in the evenings, and to pray.

Zarkasji belongs to the rather numerous group who try to smooth over the distinction and avoid antagonizing old-fashioned people, confident that pristine Islam as they understand it will in time triumph over local deviations and conscious that secularism, communism and perhaps Christianity are the real enemies.

Since the war, the founders of Gontor have kept out of organizations. Zarkasji turned down a Masjumi candidature in 1955, and has managed to keep on good terms with the government, though the school has not entirely escaped some unwelcome police attentions. He was a member of Depernas (the National Planning Council) and his brother is a high official in the Department of Social Affairs. Zarkasji takes the view that politics should be kept out of education and science.(25) "If I am a member of Muhammadiyah," he said, "a boy may ask me after I have explained a point, 'supposing you were a member of NU, what would you say?'. Thus confidence in the teacher is destroyed."

Certainly there are many NU people at Gontor, and the "star" old boy is Idham Chalid.(26) But one would still put Gontor on the reformist side of the fence. The compulsory students' organization P.I.I., belongs in effect to the Masjumi aliran, since an NU counterpart, I.P.N.U., now exists. The former scout organization, Hizbul Wathon, was Muhammadiyah-affiliated.

During 1964 and 1965 there were indications that Islam in Java was approaching a point of political regrouping or re-orientation, but several conflicting tendencies were present and the outcome is not yet clear. The modernist or reformist stream, represented in the social and religious spheres by the Muhammadiyah organization and in the political sphere by the Masjumi (until its dissolution in 1961), has been in bitter conflict with the traditional or conservative stream organized in the Nahdatul Ulama (NU).

The Nahdatul Ulama, by allying itself with President Sukarno and other elements supporting him, has reaped the fruits of office, (it has been represented in every cabinet since 1953), and packed the Department of Religion with its nominees. But it has also earned the contempt of allies and opponents alike. Its reputation for corruption is unenviable. Whenever it has been unhappy about the policies pursued by its secularist allies, be

(25) This view seems inconsistent with the government's repeatedly emphasized line that every sphere of activity must be subordinated to the politics of the revolution, and in particular the view which critics of the "Cultural Manifesto," including President Sukarno, were expressing at that time.

(26) At present Coordinating Minister (ex officio) and head of the N.U. Interestingly he had formerly led the pro-Masjumi wing of the NU. Another ex-pupil was Col. Hasan Basry of Kalimantan.

it on the question of the Islamic state, communism, cultural policy or land-reform, its protests have so far been largely ineffectual. In spite of its strong position to demand patronage, its share in the more important offices of state remains less than commensurate with its popular following, owing primarily to the fact that it has little attraction for educated and technically qualified people. It is difficult to see what its policy of collaboration with the least Islamic elements in Indonesian politics has achieved for Islamic interests beyond maintaining the flow of subsidies for such purposes as the pilgrimage to Mecca and Moslem schools. This NU policy is sometimes attributed to the "penghulu mentality."(27)

Meanwhile the reformist policy of opposition to secularism and especially to communism has been no more successful. After 1953, the Masjumi was either excluded from the cabinet or included in a more or less weak position. The effect of its opposition to Guided Democracy, and the involvement of many of its leaders in the PRRI revolt, was its own dissolution, the suppression of its newspapers, the imprisonment of its top leaders and the removal of many of its supporters from positions of power in the army or civil administration. This does not mean that Islamic reformism as such has suffered suppression. The Muhammadiyah is still flourishing - its schools receive government subsidies and it even has some representation in the Cabinet. Other organizations of the reformist Islamic aliran, like the students' organization HMI or the labour organization Gasbiindo, remain legal, but the threat of dissolution hangs over their heads and reduces their political effectiveness.

Islam in Indonesia seems at a low ebb of political power. Most of its more progressive and capable leaders suffer political

(27) In Dutch-controlled Java, political power and social prestige among the Javanese themselves was centred in the aristocratic administrative corps (pangreh pradja), whose religious orientation was syncretistic. Religious orthodoxy was associated with lower social status and non-participation in government. The penghulu, appointed by the syncretist bupati to perform such duties as the supervision of marriage, divorce and inheritance, were thus in a marginal position, not much respected either by their elite patrons or their pious clients. The suggestion is that the NU leaders see themselves as in much the same position as the pre-war penghulu, while the President is the old bupati writ large. They therefore have no expectation that the national leadership in general shall be orthodox Moslems or rule in accordance with Islamic principles, but merely ask that in exchange for acquiescing in all the other policies of the government, they should be allowed to order strictly religious affairs and receive subsidies for their special needs.

ostracism or worse, while the reformist bourgeoisie who stand behind them are resentful and paralyzed. Meanwhile the Islamic faction which is still in political favour lacks the will or ability to advance Islamic interests in the government or combat the steady rise of the power of the PKI. How will this situation develop? If alternation between unity and schism has characterized Indonesian Islam in the present century, will a reassertion of unity now occur?

There are some reasons for supposing that it will. On the one hand, the spread of popular education and the passing away of the older generation are transforming the outlook of the Nahdatul Ulama constituency. No longer is there opposition to Western-type dress, schools and organizational methods. On the other hand, for decades Islamic reformism has had few new ideas; it is thus becoming easier for the conservatives to catch up. It is certainly not true that there are no bones of theological contention left - disputes can still be very bitter in local congregations. But the young people of Muhammadiyah and NU background, often going to the same schools, are growing up with much more in common than their fathers. In this growing together process, Gontor has probably played, over the years, quite a significant role. Moreover, as the power of the PKI grows, the incentive for the two camps to bury the hatchet becomes stronger. The land-reform law, in particular, strikes at the interests of many NU supporters, and tempts them to think in terms of a united Moslem counterstroke. And the ex-Masjumi supporters, as their hopes of an early collapse of the Sukarno regime fade, become more willing to accept an alliance on NU terms. The assertive, and as it appears at home, successful, foreign policy of the Sukarno government does a lot to reconcile the Masjumi constituency to the regime. Young people, in particular, subjected to a barrage of nationalistic propaganda and denied the information needed for an independent assessment, tend to compensate with an enthusiasm to crush Malaysia for their qualms about the government's other policies.

But the obstacles to such a reconciliation are still great. The reformists resent the NU's opportunism and smart from the injuries they have sustained. The NU fears a restoration of its better qualified rivals, and remembers with bitterness the intellectual and spiritual arrogance of the reformists, their impatient defiance of Javanese customs and, most unforgivable of all, their "cleverness." Already feeling themselves in a dangerously exposed right-wing position, they are afraid to associate with people still under the condemnation of the official ideology. And even among the young, the kolot-modèren division has not disappeared. Boys of NU background with more than average intellectual curiosity become impatient with the paternalism of their teachers, who expect to be taken on trust. Not a few of them quarrel and go over to the Muhammadiyah, which encourages freer discussion. The more tradition-bound, familistic,

opportunistic and, to be frank, the less intelligent, stay in the Nahdatul Ulama constituency. Thus selective recruiting tends to perpetuate the division.(28)

Attempts to bring the Islamic factions together under Army leadership have been made, but without much success, especially in the recent years when the army has been declining as a cohesive anti-communist force. An attempt by the PNI, or a faction within it, to utilize the old Masjumi constituency in the PNI interest by setting up an Islamic affiliate, Djamiatul Muslimin (DMI), had little success because in the recent period of close PNI-PKI collaboration, it cannot go far enough to attract the main body of reformist Moslems. Perhaps more significant, but harder to detect, is the growth of a new tendency among young Moslems which rejects both the NU (on account of its opportunism and religious traditionalism) and the Masjumi (on account of its excessively Westernized leadership). Their main concern is not politics, but da'wah (propagation of the faith). They eschew formal organization, which in the present circumstances means submitting to government surveillance and leadership. They may be found in a variety of organizations. These intense young men, whose narrow rejection of all compromise is very likely a reaction to the corresponding glorification of extremism in the government ideology, probably stand behind some at least of the various outbreaks (not yet general) of united Islamic sentiment against the left in the past two years.

Where Gontor stands in the midst of this fluid situation I am unable to say and did not like to raise the question too openly. Some of the opinions I heard there, on land-reform, communism and political interference in education, for instance, certainly bordered on the oppositionist. The boys received some official political education (the subject Civics, or Haluan Negara) as in state schools. But there seemed to be far less talk on Malaysia, Manipol-Usdek, revolution and the like. The anti-communist prejudices that the boys bring from home are certainly strengthened - the library contained a lot of anti-communist literature of Masjumi, American or U.A.R. provenance, as well as other writings on Islam and government which would be inconsistent with the state ideology. But I doubt if this is tied up into a coherent, non-official political education, providing guides for action and means of interpreting government propaganda. The result is an uneasy paralysis of politics and concentration on religious concerns, providing potential recruits nevertheless for future anomic and probably futile outbursts against "communism" or "atheism."

(28) Young reformists in Kudus claimed that, though young NU men now wore trousers instead of sarung, their trousers were always either too narrow or too wide!

However, this impression may be quite wrong. There may be a lot of secret political discussion which would be quite important, considering the wide geographical dispersion of the students. Recently an organization called Ikatan Keluarga Pondok Modèren has been formed in Djakarta, not so much as a source of funds apparently, but as a kind of trustee of the property of the pondok, with the right to appoint the Kjai's successor when he dies. But it would also be a bridge organization, bringing together old boys who are still persona grata politically with those tainted with Masjumi backgrounds. Such organizations could play an important role in a restoration of Islamic unity in Indonesia.

Ultimately, one's judgement of Gontor depends on whether such a restoration is likely or not. If one assumes that no group other than the PKI will now be able to grapple effectively with the ills of Indonesian society, and that the PKI will eventually get its chance, then the fine old Kjai become black reactionaries and their engaging youngsters lambs being bred for the slaughter. But if political Islam still has a major role to play, then Gontor, producing modern men who are still in close touch with the santri masses, can make an important contribution.

Lance Castles
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