

INDONESIAN AND MALAY STUDENTS IN CAIRO IN THE 1920's*

William R. Roff

Introducing the first issue of the third volume of the monthly *Seruan Azhar* (Call of Azhar) in October 1927, the then editor, Mahmud Junus, wrote that the journal "is for our homeland, because we recognize Indonesia and the Peninsula as one community, one people, with one *adat*, one way of life, and what is more, virtually one religion. . . ." Urging the two territories to unite for the common good of their peoples, he went on, ". . . With this 'call,' students at present in Egypt can associate themselves with their homeland while at the same time making known their ideas for the betterment of their people and their birthplace. . . ." ¹

Seruan Azhar had been started by Indonesian and Malay students in Cairo in October 1925, as the journal of the Djama'ah al-Chairiah al-Talabijja al-Azhariah al-Djawiah, or Welfare Association of "Jawa" Students at the University of al-Azhar-- "Jawa" in this context signifying, as it did throughout the Middle East, all Muslims indigenous to Southeast Asia. There had, of course, been Indonesian and Malay students in Cairo for many years prior to 1925, but it was apparently not until 1922 that they became sufficiently numerous, or sufficiently conscious of themselves as a group, to organize an association. Some time during that year the Djama'ah al-Chairiah was formed, with Djanan Thaib as first president. Djanan, from Minangkabau, had enrolled as a student at the University of al-Azhar in 1919, and later (in 1924) gained the distinction of being the first Indonesian or Malay student to graduate with the *Alamiah* degree. ²

* The material on which this article is based was derived from the available written sources and from interviews conducted in Djakarta in November 1968, in Cairo in December 1965, and in Malaysia. For much helpful information and discussion, I wish to thank especially (while retaining responsibility for my own errors and opinions) Taufik Abdullah, of Cornell University, who is at present preparing a major study of modern Minangkabau social and intellectual history.

1. *Seruan Azhar*, III, 25 (October 1927), p. 402 [sic for 486].
2. On this last point, see *ibid.*, I, 1 (October 1925), p. 1. Born at Sarik, near Bukittinggi, about 1891, Djanan went to Mecca in 1911 and then to Cairo in 1919. After active participation in the affairs of the Djama'ah al-Chairiah and *Seruan Azhar*, of which he became first editor-in-chief (see

Though exact figures are unobtainable, Djanan was in 1919 one of fifty or sixty students in Cairo from Indonesia (mostly West Sumatra), with perhaps an additional twenty from Peninsular Malaya and Southern Thailand. Numbers rose steadily in the early 1920's, especially with the improvement in rubber prices and parental cash incomes towards the middle of the decade.³ We know with reasonable certainty that, by 1925, there were at least two hundred Southeast Asian students in the city.

The early 1920's in the Middle East were filled with the increasing nationalist fervor that followed the First World War, and were marked in particular by the conquest of the Hejaz in 1924 by the Wahabi ruler Ibn Saud and the subsequent attempts to resurrect the Caliphate and reunite the Islamic world. In Egypt itself, constitutional change and rising anticolonial sentiment caused continual political ferment. Though most students from Asia had come to Cairo to further their religious education, one could hardly say that their political education was being neglected. As one of the Malay students of the time later remarked, "In Mecca one could study religion only; in Cairo, politics as well."⁴ The effect of residence in Egypt on young minds was indeed a perennial source of concern to the authorities at home--particularly in Indonesia, but to some extent also in Malaya. At the Durbar of Rulers held in Kuala Kangsar in 1927, for example, the Sultan of Selangor proposed setting up a local college of higher Islamic education; he said he disapproved of sending boys to study in Egypt, not merely because of the expense, but also "because it introduces them to undesirable matters"; and he added, "These young men see and are taught about things that can do them no good."⁵

below), he left Cairo in 1927 to live in Mecca and thereafter made only occasional visits to Egypt. In 1931, he was offered the post of first Director of the Islamic College started in Padang by the Persatuan Muslimin Indonesia [PERMI], but declined. He died in Mecca in the late 1930's.

3. The cost of maintaining a student in Cairo at this time was estimated at about \$500 (Malayan) a year, with travel expenses additional.
4. William R. Roff, "The Life and Times of Haji Othman Abdullah," Peninjau Sejarah (Kuala Lumpur), I, 2 (December 1966), p. 63.
5. Typescript "Minutes of Durbar," encl. in File 90/1927, Pejabat Sultan, Pahang (permission to use this is gratefully acknowledged). At the November 1935 Meeting of Rulers in Kuala Lumpur (not styled a Durbar), the issue was raised again by the Sultan, who said: "The pupils in Egypt undergoing religious education are not Malays only. There are many other nationalities, such as Javanese, Sumatrans and others, and I fear that this mixture of races will lead to

Among the young men who came to Cairo around this time were two West Sumatrans who were to be particularly influential in the affairs of the Djama'ah al-Chairiah. The first of these was Muchtar Lutfi, a nephew of Sjech Daud Rasjidi, one of the leading Minangkabau religious reformists. A speaker and writer of ability, Muchtar was forced to flee Sumatra in 1924, at the age of 23, after publishing an attack on Dutch colonial rule entitled *al-Hikmatu-l-Mukhtar* (The Chosen Wisdom).⁶ In Cairo, he joined, among others, another young man from Minangkabau, Iljas Ja'kub, also a writer and an activist in student politics.⁷ Among the Malays of note in Cairo at this time was the young Othman Abdullah, who had arrived there in 1925 after several years at high school in Mecca. Othman was the son of a well-to-do Kuala Lumpur property-owner and was shortly to do much to give financial support to the new journal *Seruan Azhar*.⁸

undesirable behaviour." The Sultan of Perak added, ". . . And [they] bring back views which are not desirable from the point of view of the Government." Meeting of Rulers held at King's House, Kuala Lumpur, on Saturday the 16th of November, 1935 (Kuala Lumpur: Government Printer, 1935), p. 9.

6. Muchtar Lutfi was born in 1901 at Balingka, near Bukittinggi. On his return to Sumatra in 1931, he was instrumental in forming the political party PERMI (see below). Exiled by the Dutch to Boven Digul (Irian Barat) in 1934, he was taken to Australia in 1942 before the Japanese arrived. After the war, he was repatriated to Makassar, where, before long, he became a popular Muslim leader. He was shot and killed during the Andi Aziz rebellion in 1950. See: Hamka, Ajahku (Djakarta: Djajamurni, 1967), pp. 262-263.
7. Iljas Ja'kub was born at Painan, on the west coast of Sumatra, about 1900 and went to Cairo in the early 1920's. In addition to his important journalistic role in Seruan Azhar, he was the author of two books published at this time: Bahtera Kesedjahteraan (Cairo, 1926), a religious primer; and Pedoman Dunia dan Agama (Cairo, 1928), a homiletic work written for the benefit of "the youth of my beloved people in Indonesia and the Peninsula." Returning to Sumatra in 1929, he played a leading part in the formation of PERMI and was interned by the Dutch in Boven Digul. Evacuated to Australia, he later returned to Padang, where he died about 1958.
8. Othman Abdullah was born in Kuala Lumpur in 1905 and educated at Malay school. In 1919, he was taken to Batu Sangkar in West Sumatra to visit members of his family and, in 1920, went to Mecca, taking up residence in Cairo in 1925. After visiting Europe, he returned to Malaya in 1929 and while running the family business became manager of the newspaper Majlis. He was a prominent member of both the Persatuan Melayu Selangor (Selangor Malay Association) and the Kesatuan Melayu

By 1925, the Djama'ah al-Chairiah had come under the presidency of Raden Fathu-l-Rahman Kafrawi, a Javanese.⁹ The association continued to be active in looking after the general and social interests of Indonesian and Malay students, but was in addition becoming increasingly radical in its politics, under the influence of men like Muchtar Lutfi and Iljas Ja'kub. Exactly when the decision was made to start a journal for the Djama'ah is not known, but the first issue of *Seruan Azhar* appeared early in October 1925. The "Responsible Editor" (so described in English on the cover) was Djanan Thaib, with an editorial board consisting of Iljas Ja'kub, Muhammad Idris Marbawi,¹⁰ Abdul Wahab Abdullah,¹¹ and Mahmud Junus.¹² The

Muda (Young Malay Union), two of the earliest Malay political organizations. For further details, see "The Life and Times of Haji Othman," pp. 62-68.

9. After the Second World War, he became a leading figure in the Masjumi party in Java and became Minister of the Department of Religion in 1946.
10. Idris Marbawi was born in Mecca in 1895, of Malay parents from Kampong Lubok Merbau, Kuala Kangsar, Perak. He lived in Mecca until the age of 15, returned to Malaya to attend Malay school and later an "Arab school" in Kuala Kangsar, and subsequently studied under other teachers in the Peninsula, including the famous To' Kenali in Kelantan. He went to Cairo in 1924 and remained there until 1967, when he returned to live in Perak. He is well known for his Malay-Arabic dictionaries, the first of which, Kamus Marbawi, was published in Cairo in 1927, and for a number of religious works (kitab), particularly his Bahru-l-Mazi (Cairo, 1933).
11. Abdul Wahab was born in Chemor, Perak, in the late 1890's, and went to Cairo in the early 1920's. He returned to Malaya about 1930 and, after working as assistant editor of Saudara for some time, went to Perlis, where he was with the Co-operative Societies Department and later became Inspector of Schools and a member of the Zakat and Fitrah Committee. He died some time in the late 1940's.
12. Mahmud Junus was born at Batu Sangkar, West Sumatra, in the 1890's, and had taught religion at the Diniyah School (previously known as the Madras School) in Sungajang from 1918, and edited its journal al-Basjir from 1920, before going to Cairo in 1925. Returning to Sumatra in 1930, he was made principal of the Normal Islam, started by the Persatuan Guru-Guru Agama Islam (Islamic Teachers' Association) in Padang in 1931 to train religious teachers, and in addition he himself started and ran the Djamiah Islamiah school in Sungajang which later merged with the Normal Islam. The author of a large number of religious works and of the useful

director of the journal was Raden Fathu-l-Rahman, and its manager Othman Abdullah. The first issue of *Seruan Azhar* proclaimed its motto to be "In Loyalty Victory, in Divisiveness Danger," and the front cover was embellished with a drawing of a globe with Southeast Asia in the center and the territories of "Dutch" Indonesia and "British" Malaya shaded in black; alongside them was written: "The united world of our beloved people." In an introductory editorial, Mahmud Junus wrote: "All our people . . . whether in Java, or in Sumatra, or in Borneo, or the Malay Peninsula, must unite and share a common purpose and agreement to strive for advancement, seek the best ways of doing this, and on no account allow ourselves to split into separate parties. . . ." ¹³

Though Djanan Thaib was described as editor-in-chief, he was in fact in Paris during the first six months of *Seruan Azhar's* life and could have had little to do with its production. Most of the tasks of editorship, it is clear, fell to Iljas Ja'kub, as a brief article by Djanan Thaib in the sixth issue (March 1926) indicates, and it was Iljas Ja'kub who from this time forward took over full responsibility with Djanan Thaib's departure again to live in Mecca. At least for the remainder of its first two years, the journal rapidly came to assume a more radical, and in particular a more anticolonial, complexion. It was still in the first instance devoted to religious education and improvement, but a series of outspoken articles by Muchtar Lutfi, Iljas Ja'kub and others make it evident where the principal interest lay. ¹⁴ For instance, in Volume II, Number 15, which appeared in December 1926, a long article by Iljas entitled "Persiapan Indonesia Semenanjung" (pp. 282-284) attacked the system of colonial rule, though not without some passing remarks critical also of the passivity of the people so ruled. Other articles increasingly outspoken on the subject of colonialism included two by Muchtar Lutfi, "Suara Buat" (II, 18, March 1927, pp. 344-346) and "Memeriksa darihal bumiputera dengan bangsa asing" (II, 21, June 1927,

compendium Sedjarah Pendidikan Islam di Indonesia [History of Islamic Education in Indonesia] (Djakarta: Pustaka Mahmudiah, 1960), which has provided much incidental information for this article, he served after independence in the Department of Religion, later becoming head of the Islamic Education Division. He is at present Rector of the Institut Agama Islam Negeri in Padang.

13. Seruan Azhar, I, 1 (October 1925), p. 5.

14. It may be noted that from Volume II, Number 13 (October 1926) onward, Iljas Ja'kub was the only editor listed, the others on the board receding into the background, though Raden Fathu-l-Rahman was still director and Othman Abdullah manager.

pp. 406-410), and two unsigned, but probably by Iljas, entitled respectively "Kalau tidak karena itu berubah-lah Indonesia-Semenanjung" (II, 20, May 1927, pp. 383-385) and "Harapan kepada ketua Indonesia dan penganjur pergerakan" (II, 21, June 1927, pp. 403-406). It is perhaps not surprising that the colonial authorities should have been upset by this flow of propaganda, and, in Indonesia at least, *Seruan Azhar* achieved the dignity of being banned.¹⁵ It will be recalled that at precisely this time--late 1926 and early 1927--the abortive communist risings in Java and Sumatra were taking place, and in West Sumatra, there was a recent history of close association between the communist movement and revolutionary Islam.¹⁶ *Seruan Azhar* did not let these events pass without direct as well as implicit comment; it remarked, concerning the risings, that, "If their aims cannot be achieved openly, they will be pursued in secret and with stealth, and if the government cannot gently exterminate what it so hates, then it will take it round the neck with force and violence. . . ." ¹⁷

With the approach of the world-wide Mu'tamar Islam (Islamic Congress) called by Ibn Saud to meet in Mecca in 1926, the Djama'ah al-Chairiah decided to seek representation. Accordingly, a special subcommittee, calling itself al-Difa' al-Watani (National Guard), was established under the chairmanship of Muchtar Lutfi; it elected to send Muchtar himself.¹⁸ Besides

-
15. It appears to have circulated freely in the Straits Settlements and Malay States and was widely read in religious schools and similar institutions. The journal Pengasoh (organ of the Majlis Ugama Islam dan Adat 'Istiadat Melayu, Council of Religion and Malay Custom, Kelantan), noting that there had been a previous but short-lived attempt to run a Malay-language journal in Cairo, al-Ittihad (of which nothing is now known), welcomed Seruan Azhar warmly in 1925, and published a long poem in praise of it. Pengasoh, VIII, 182 (November 1, 1925), pp. 7-8.
 16. See B. Schrieke, "The Causes and Effects of Communism on the West Coast of Sumatra," in his Indonesian Sociological Studies (The Hague/Bandung: van Hoeve, 1955), I, esp. pp. 153-158; and "Political Section of the West Coast of Sumatra Report," in Harry J. Benda and Ruth McVey (eds.), The Communist Uprisings of 1926-27 in Indonesia: Key Documents (Ithaca: Cornell Modern Indonesia Project, 1960), esp. pp. 100-103.
 17. Seruan Azhar, II, 16 (January 1927), p. 302.
 18. The congress at Mecca was also attended by H. O. S. Tjokroaminoto for Sarekat Islam and K. H. Mas Mansur for Muhammadiyah. Prior to the Mecca congress, another Islamic Congress was held in Cairo itself and was attended by Hadji

the Difa' al-Watani, the Djama'ah set up a number of other committees to look after matters of interest to the association. Through *Seruan Azhar*, it maintained contact with movements elsewhere, including that of fellow Indonesian students in Holland, organized in the Perhimpunan Indonesia (Indonesian Union). Raden Fathu-l-Rahman, as president of the Djama'ah and director of the journal, said, in October 1926, that with *Seruan Azhar*, "The first steps of the indigenous movement of Indonesia and the Peninsula have been taken. . . . Young Indonesians and Malays have given thought to action both within and without by mingling with other peoples. In short, we can say that we have joined hands with the rest of the Islamic world. . . ."19

As the second anniversary of the founding of *Seruan Azhar* approached, it was decided to celebrate the occasion. On August 14, 1927, therefore, a large proportion of the Indonesian and Malay students in Cairo met at *Seruan Azhar's* office, near the al-Azhar Mosque, to honor those of their fellows who had been active in producing the journal. Minutes of this meeting were kept, in Arabic, by Abdul Kahar Muzakhar.²⁰ These minutes now follow.²¹

Abdullah Ahmad and Abdulkarim Amrullah representing the Persatuan Guru-Guru Agama Islam of Minangkabau. Muchtar had acted as secretary to Hadji Abdullah Ahmad at the Cairo meeting. See Hamka, Ajahku, pp. 142-143.

19. Seruan Azhar, II, 13 (October 1926), p. 254. For contacts between the students in Cairo and other Islamic revolutionary movements, see A. K. Pringgodigdo, Sedjarah Pergerakan Rakjat Indonesia [History of the Indonesian People's Movement] (Djakarta: Pustaka Rakjat, 1960), p. 136; and G. McT. Kahin, Nationalism and Revolution in Indonesia (Ithaca: Cornell, 1952), p. 92.
20. A Javanese, from Kota Gede near Jogjakarta, Abdul Kahar Muzakhar, after a distinguished academic career, became Rector of the Islamic University of Indonesia (Universitas Islam Indonesia) in Jogjakarta.
21. The minutes were originally in the possession of Othman Abdullah, who kindly made them available to me; since his death in 1968, they have been deposited in the National Archives, Kuala Lumpur. First translated into Malay by Ali Taib of the Department of Islamic Studies, University of Malaya, the subsequent translation into English has been checked against the Arabic by Muhammad Kamal Hassan of the Department of Middle East Languages and Cultures, Columbia University.

Commemorative Celebration to Honor the Organizers of
the Journal *Seruan Azhar* on the Occasion of its
Second Anniversary, Friday Evening, 7 Safar
1346, being 14 August 1927

As eight o'clock approached, the guests arrived in force, until the place prepared for them was full of students from Indonesia and the Malay Peninsula, with a fair number from Siam. A member of the secret police, together with three ordinary policemen, was in attendance to represent the authorities.

The proceedings began at eight with a reading from the Holy Quran by Ustaz Shaykh Husain Sa'id, Perak.²²

Then the chairman of the preparatory committee for the celebration (*ra'is lajnat al-haflat al-tahdiriyya*), Muhammad Nasir, Johore,²³ made an opening speech welcoming the guests and thanking them for coming.

On a raised platform specially prepared for the guests of honor sat Raden Fathu-l-Kafrawi, director of the journal; Iljas Ja'kub Afandi, editor-in-chief; Muchtar Lutfi Afandi, assistant editor; and Othman Abdullah Afandi, treasurer. Seated with them were Sjech Ismail Muttalib (the Shaykh Ruwak Jawa),²⁴ Mahmud Junus, Abdul Wahab, and the representative of the police.

Sherbet and halva were then served.

1. After refreshments, the editor-in-chief of the journal rose and gave an account of its history, from its beginnings to the present, and spoke of the places where they had met to talk it over and exchange ideas--in his own house, then in the *wakaf*

22. Born at Kampong Lalang, near Padang Rengas, Perak, in 1910, Husain Said went to Cairo in 1922 and remained there until 1933. Returning to Perak, he opened an "Arab school" in Kampong Lalang, where he taught until his recent retirement.

23. Muhammad Nasir b. Ali, on returning from Cairo, probably in the early 1930's, became a kathi in Johore and died only recently.

24. Ismail arrived in Cairo in the 1890's. He died in 1930. The office of Shaykh Ruwak implied the guardianship of the students from the "Jawa" quarter, or ruwak, which was associated with the al-Azhar. The Shaykh Ruwak was appointed by the al-Azhar authorities.

house,²⁵ and finally in the office from which the journal had subsequently been conducted.

He said that it was he who had first suggested having the journal, and throughout he had worked hard on its behalf. Then he referred to the efforts of Ustaz Djanan Thaib in promoting its growth and continued existence. He appealed to everyone to support it, so that it would prosper and enjoy a long life. For the journal, he said, is for all our young people, not for one special group. In short, it is our voice.

2. Then Ustaz Abu Bakar al-Ash'ari rose to speak.²⁶

Thanking the guests, he praised the journal and its staff. He regretted that the treasurer was shortly to leave the journal and its readers.²⁷ He went on to speak of the virtues and benefits of knowledge and learning, citing illustrations from the history of Islam of how Islam had filled the world with its light, and he referred to his sorrow at the backwardness of Muslims as seen at the present time. He spoke of the valuable things of life, and of how, for a certainty, the true life was one filled with endeavor, and in illustration of this, he quoted verses from the Quran and *hadith*.

3. Muhammad Farid Ma'ruf.²⁸

25. This was the Wakaf Hasan al-Attas, a residential hostel for Indonesian and Malay students near the al-Azhar Mosque founded by Sayyid Hasan al-Attas in 1925. It was under the care of Muhammad Idris Marbawi.

26. Born in 1904, in Penang, Abu Bakar was educated at the Chow-rasta Malay School, then, for a year, at the Anglo-Chinese (English) School, and finally at the Madrasah al-Mashhur. He went to Cairo in 1925 and stayed there until 1932. He became president of the Djama'ah al-Chairiah in 1930, and, in that year, he and Abdul Kahar Muzakhar represented the Djama'ah at the Mu'tamar Islam in Jerusalem. Returning to Malaya, he became assistant editor of the newspapers Bahtera and Saudara for a time, before going to Perlis, where he taught and became Imam of the State Mosque, an office he still holds today.

27. In mid-1927, Othman Abdullah received a letter from his father saying that he had heard Othman was "getting mixed up in politics," and asking him to return home. Othman asked permission to visit Europe first and left Cairo for Paris at the end of August.

28. Muhammad Farid Ma'ruf, from Java, is now a leading member of Muhammadiyah, of whose Educational Section he was head in the early 1950's, Director-General of the "Hadji Affairs"

Following Abu Bakar al-Ash'ari, Muhammad Farid Ma'ruf rose. He thanked everyone for coming and praised the journal and those who ran it, saying that it was indeed the voice of the Indonesian students and could in all truth be regarded as a victory for Indonesia, for it had spread light to the world of Indonesia and Malaya.

Then he wished *bon voyage* to the treasurer on his journey to France, that land of modern civilization. He spoke also about freedom of the press in Egypt and regretted that the same freedom did not exist in his own country. He likened the spirit of *Seruan Azhar* to that of 'Antara,²⁹ in that it called for greatness, honor and freedom. Throughout his speech, he was greeted with continual applause as a result of the excellent impression he made.

4. Then Iljas Muhammad Ali al-Hajj arose.³⁰

He began, like others before him, by praising the journal and those who ran it. He said that the principles of Islam called for greatness and the pursuit of perfection and referred to the efforts of *Seruan Azhar* and the good effect it had had on people at home. He spoke of the benefits of the press, among them that newspapers and journals were the handmaidens of the homeland. Defense of the homeland and an appeal for unity and cooperation were among the first principles of *Seruan Azhar*. And he went on to describe the impression the journal had made.

5. Muhammad Rusli Abdul Wahid.³¹

He began his speech with the words, "Gentlemen, my brothers from abroad." Then he thanked the journal and its staff, praising the editor-in-chief and others. After talking about the struggles of the journal, he appealed to all sons of his country, calling them to the duty of defending the homeland and sacri-

section of the Department of Religion, and a professor at the Institut Agama Islam Negeri, Djakarta.

29. 'Antara b. 'Amr b. Shaddad al-'Absi was a pre-Islamic poet whose verse is noted for its vigor and devotion to liberty; he was also the hero of a famous romance of chivalry, the "Romance of 'Antar."

30. From Pajakumbuh in Minangkabau, Iljas went to Cairo in the mid-1920's. He now lives and teaches in Djakarta.

31. Also from Pajakumbuh, where he was born in 1909. When he returned from Egypt in the early 1930's, he became an active member of PERMI. After the war, he taught for some years at a madrasah in Singapore and then returned to Pajakumbuh, where he still lives and teaches.

ficing themselves for it. He took as an example the Americans, who had attained to civilization as a result of their own efforts to uplift their country and were now highly advanced in industrial development. He said that we too had no shortage of knowledge or intellect, but we did not put in real effort. He urged all present to get together and cooperate, for unity was the only weapon for every success. He criticized those sons of his own race who had played traitor to their homeland and sold it to foreigners--truly, they were lackeys of imperialism.

At this point the chairman announced an interval of ten minutes.

6. When the proceedings were resumed, Muchtar Jahja rose.³²

He began his speech by apologizing for any mistakes he might make in his address, for he was not an expert in Arabic, having spent a very brief time in studying it.

He praised the journal and those who ran it, using many learned examples to illustrate its progress and its good influence on the homeland and the people there, and the way in which the journal had called for freedom from the foreign yoke. The speaker appealed for unity. His discourse was greeted with applause.

7. Then Rifa'ie Junus rose.³³

He read a poem in Malay praising the journal and its staff one by one, and praising also the journal's efforts in and influence on the homeland. It was a journal of the highest standing. The poem was first-rate and delighted its hearers so much that it had to be repeated several times, to great applause.

8. After this, Muhammad Kasim Bakri rose.³⁴

32. Muchtar Jahja was from Bukittinggi, West Sumatra. After returning from Egypt in the mid-1930's, he took over the directorship of the PERMI Islamic College in Padang. He is now Dean of the Faculty of Law (Usuluddin) at the Institut Agama Islam Negeri in Jogjakarta.

33. Rifa'ie was probably from Padang. When he returned from Cairo in 1931, he became deputy director of the PERMI Islamic College in Padang. In 1940, he was director of music (pemimpin muzik) in the Istana of the Sultan of Siak, but his later career is unknown.

34. Kasim Bakri, from Padang, was a close friend of Mahmud Junus, with whom he published a Malay-Arabic dictionary (Kamus Keemasan), about 1926. After returning from Cairo, he taught at the Normal Islam and the Islamic College in Padang in the 1930's. He died about 1965.

He began by saying: "I am neither a great literary artist where this journal is concerned, nor a financial backer. I am not much use as a politician or in dealing with questions about learning and culture. But I am a fighter for my country, and I serve it by speaking up. All I want is to be of use to my homeland. From my early years right up to the present, I have never swerved in my love of country. Since I came here to Egypt, I have not stopped writing articles for each and every issue of *Seruan Azhar*. I have written for our newspapers and journals, and what I have written has had the best possible impact on the nationalist movement."

9. After this, Nasaruddin Thaha rose.³⁵

The burden of his speech was in keeping with the purpose of the gathering and similar to what had been said by those who preceded him. He spoke of the benefits of unity, said it was a strong force, and referred to the virtues of action. Truly, he said, the Indonesia now arising will be rich in her sons. Then he spoke of the necessity of the nationalist movement for liberation from colonialism. He quoted a saying of Shakespeare concerning the need for action.

10. After him, Muchtar Afandi Lutfi rose.

He repeated praises already sung of Indonesia and the Peninsula. In all truth, he said, these two countries are one, like Egypt and the Sudan. He thanked the Egyptian government for giving us the opportunity to study and to live here. He did not feel like a foreigner, he said, because Egypt is an eastern country and we are easterners, and as long as we are in the east, we are not strangers.

Then he spoke of his life in the realm of politics. He came to Egypt because he was forced to by the Dutch government, because he was not allowed to live in their colonial empire. He had gone to the Malay Peninsula, where he had received treatment similar to that accorded to him in Indonesia, and for that reason, he had had to flee to Egypt and seek shelter there. He had worked as editor of *Seruan Azhar* for more than a year. He urged those present to unite and work together.

11. Then the writer of these lines, Abdul Kahar Muzakhar, rose.

He thanked everyone for coming. He said that it was not necessary for him to heap loud praise or elaborate flattery upon

35. From Pajakumbuh; after he returned to Sumatra in the mid-1930's, he founded the Training College for religious teachers in Pajakumbuh in 1934. After the war, he became a senior official of the Department of Religion in Djakarta, but has since returned to teach in Pajakumbuh.

the journal or on those who ran it, for everyone present could see the proofs for themselves. *Seruan Azhar* had consistently striven for unity and for the creation of a strong association. In his opinion, the greatest value of *Seruan Azhar* was its call for Indonesian unity. Indonesian unity meant the union of all the Indonesian peoples under the shelter of one flag, to make a single state, as in those distant times when it had such a glorious and powerful history. He called for the creation of one Indonesian bond and association and urged his friends the students from Siam to participate in this association and in the journal. They are here with us, he said, and we must invite them to join us in creating a single Indonesian association. He regretted that there were no Filipino students here.

12. Then Husin Jahja rose.³⁶

He spoke of the excellence and distinction of the journal and of its achievements, at the same time praising those who ran it, quoting several examples and calling for unity and cooperation.

13. Then Ustaz Mahmud Junus rose.

He said how good the evening had been, because the meeting had embraced everyone. A gathering such as this had not previously taken place in all the history of our life in Egypt. He thanked the audience.

14. After this, Ustaz Ahmad 'Ata Allah, as chairman of the organizing committee for the celebrations (*ra'is lajnat al-haflat al-tanzimiyya*), rose.³⁷

He thanked everyone for coming and apologized lest the sherbet had not been to everyone's taste. He recited several Malay *pantun* and other poems by way of encouraging the further progress and success of the journal.

He ended his speech with a *pantun* which had everyone applauding enthusiastically. At this juncture, the proceedings were brought to a close, at 11.00 p.m., with a reading from the Holy Quran.

These are the minutes of what was said
at the aforementioned celebration.
Secretary of the Arabic Section
Abdul Kahar Muzakhar
14 August 1927

36. Probably from Padang; when he returned to Sumatra in the early 1930's, he taught at the Normal Islam in Padang.

37. Ahmad 'Ata Allah was Javanese, and a younger brother of the well-known alim Fadlullah Suhaimi, who lived and taught in Singapore and Malaya for many years.

Not long after the anniversary celebrations (and despite the repeated appeals for unity), a dispute of some kind, the details of which are not clear, split the editorial staff of *Seruan Azhar* into two factions. Though there is some suggestion that one of these groups was largely Malay and the other (the break-away group, led by Muchtar Lutfi and Iljas Ja'kub) largely Indonesian, it is likely that the underlying cause of the rift was not territorial but ideological, concerning the extent to which the journal should openly promote radical political causes. Whatever the nature of the argument, Iljas Ja'kub ceased to be editor of *Seruan Azhar* in September 1927, and the following month started a rival monthly called *Pilihan Timur* (Choice of the East). Iljas' place as editor of *Seruan Azhar* was taken by Mahmud Junus, and that of Othman Abdullah (who was now in France, and whose departure had considerably weakened the journal financially) by someone called Salamuddin, about whom nothing is known. *Seruan Azhar* continued to appear until May 1928 (III, 32), with Muhammad Idris Marbawi as editor for the final two issues (assisted by Abdul Kahar Muzakhar, Abu Bakar al-Ash'ari and Ahmad 'Ata Allah). *Pilihan Timur* continued for a few months after *Seruan Azhar* had stopped, but after a rather shaky existence it too finally ceased publication, in October 1928 (I, 8).³⁸

So ended Indonesian-Malay journalistic enterprise in Cairo.³⁹ But *Seruan Azhar* and the Djama'ah al-Chairiah had played an important politicizing role in the lives of a large number of young Indonesian and Malay students in the mid-1920's. Prior to this time, West Sumatra had had no political party of its own, though two bodies--the Sumatra Thawalib founded in Padang Pandjang in 1918 and the Persatuan Guru-Guru Agama Islam started in Padang during 1920 (most of the Cairo students had belonged to one or both of them)--had done much to initiate and channel Muslim revolutionary activities. The Sumatra Thawalib, in particular, had been strongly infiltrated by the Partai

38. There were no issues of Pilihan Timur for March 1928 or for the months of May, June, July and September.

39. It is perhaps worth noting that in addition to al-Ittihad, referred to in footnote 15 above, there appear to have been two other short-lived Malay language journals in Cairo. Ibnu Haniffah, "Majallah yang di-kelolakan oleh pelajar-pelajar kita di Sungei Nil," and "Soal hukum sembahyang sunat sebelum Juma'at," Berita Minggu (Kuala Lumpur), June 17 and 24, 1962, citing Tengku Yafizaham, Studenten Indonesia di Mesir (no place or date of publication given), refers to a monthly journal Usaha Pemuda (edited by Abdullah Aidid and Ahmad Azhari), which appeared for four issues only at a date not specified, and also to a journal Merdeka (published by the "International Student Club of Cairo," and edited by Zainuddin Tahir), which appeared only once, in May 1927.

Komunis Indonesia, which in the years leading up to the risings of 1926-1927 had striven hard to effect a reconciliation between Marxism-Leninism and progressive Islam.⁴⁰ After the failure of the rebellion and in the last years of the 1920's, the reformist organization Muhammadiyah, which had previously not been strongly represented in Sumatra, began to gain ground there--and, as important, to become much more active politically than the generally non-political Muhammadiyah of Java.⁴¹ In May 1930, the 19th National Congress of Muhammadiyah was held for the first time in Sumatra, at Bukittinggi. Later known as the Minangkabau Congress, this meeting was important in a number of ways,⁴² but not least because it saw the birth of West Sumatra's first indigenous political party. As a result of efforts by radical elements among the Sarekat Islam and Sumatra Thawalib groups attending the Congress--chief among them students who had just returned from Cairo--Sumatra Thawalib was reorganized to become the Persatuan Muslimin Indonesia, or PERMI. Prominent among the founders and leaders of PERMI were Muchtar Lutfi and Iljas Ja'kub, and most of the returned students became active members. PERMI openly avowed political activism in 1931, and, in the following year, declared itself to be "a radical, non-cooperative, political organization for the freedom of Indonesia."⁴³ As a result of Dutch repression, PERMI did not have a very long active political life--Muchtar Lutfi was arrested in July 1933, followed shortly after by Iljas Ja'kub and others--but it continued to be active educationally and culturally, and it formed yet another stepping stone, and an important one for Sumatra and for Indonesian Islam, on the long road to independence.

The influence of *Seruan Azhar* and the Djama'ah al-Chairiah al-Talabijja al-Azhariah al-Djawiah was much less in peninsular Malaya than in Indonesia for reasons that do not need elaboration but which relate most obviously to the quite different political climates in the two territories and to the relative smallness of the Malay group in Cairo. Even in the Peninsula, however, *Seruan Azhar* was not without effect, and several of the Malays connected with it played (and in some cases still play) a formative role in the nationalist movement and in the life of their society. *Seruan Azhar*, it may be said, was a call that was heeded.

40. For an account of this, see Schrieke, "Causes and Effects of Communism," pp. 157-158, and "Political Section of the West Coast Report," pp. 100-103.

41. See, Pringgodigdo, Sedjarah Pergerakan, p. 106.

42. See, Hamka, Ajahku, pp. 165 ff.

43. J. M. Pluvier, Overzicht van de Ontwikkeling der Nationalistische Beweging in Indonesië in de jaren 1930 tot 1942 (The Hague/Bandung: van Hoeve, 1953), p. 76.