

The Reconstruction of Aligarh and Santiniketan Educational Philosophy The Creative *Ijtihâd* of Trimurti in Developing Islamic Education in Indonesia

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Abstract

The development of modern Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia cannot be separated from the model built by the Gontor Islamic Boarding School. Gontor's education system is constructed to accommodate the continuity of Islamic religious traditions by adapting educational principles developed by exemplary institutions called *sintesa*. There are four specific inspirations of Gontor education: Al-Azhar in Egypt, Syanggit in Mauritania, Aligarh, and Santiniketan in India. This study aims to discuss Gontor education which is constructed from the educational philosophy of Aligarh and Santiniketan. The method used is autoethnography with the use of Giddens structuration as a theoretical framework. This study found that, in general, the influence of Aligarh and Santiniketan embodied in two aspects: symbolic and substantial. The symbolic aspect presents in the form of the nominalization of physical and non-physical infrastructure in Gontor. Substantial aspects are manifested in the modernization of the learning system and institutional governance, language skills, and the design of a holistic educational paradigm. This influence is manifested in Gontor education through a dialectical-structural step that involves the creative process of Trimurti, the founder of Gontor, to reconstruct the Aligarh and Santiniketan educational philosophies that are useful in developing and in line with Islamic education traditions.

Keywords: Reconstruction, Islamic Education, Gontor, Aligarh, Santiniketan.

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Abstrak

Perkembangan pendidikan pesantren modern di Indonesia tidak dapat dipisahkan dari model yang dibangun Pesantren Gontor. Sistem pendidikan Gontor dikonstruksi untuk mewadahi keberlangsungan tradisi keagamaan Islam dengan mengadaptasi prinsip-prinsip pendidikan yang dikembangkan oleh institusi percontohan yang disebut sintesa. Terdapat empat sintesa pendidikan Gontor yaitu Al-Azhar di Mesir, Syanggit di Mauritania, Aligarh dan Santiniketan di India. Penelitian ini bertujuan membahas pendidikan Gontor yang dikonstruksi dari filosofi pendidikan Aligarh dan Santiniketan. Metode yang digunakan adalah autoetnografi dengan menggunakan strukturasi Giddens sebagai kerangka teori. Penelitian ini menemukan bahwa secara umum pengaruh Aligarh dan Santiniketan terwujud dalam dua aspek: simbolik dan substansial. Aspek simbolik berwujud penamaan infrastruktur fisik dan non-fisik di Gontor. Aspek substansial terwujud dalam modernisasi sistem pembelajaran dan tata kelola lembaga, keterampilan berbahasa dan desain paradigma pendidikan yang holistik. Pengaruh tersebut terejawantah dalam pendidikan Gontor melalui tahapan dialektik-strukturasi yang melibatkan proses kreatif Trimurti, para pendiri Gontor, untuk merekonstruksi filosofi pendidikan Aligarh dan Santiniketan yang berguna dalam pengembangan dan selaras dengan tradisi pendidikan Islam.

Kata Kunci: Rekonstruksi, Pendidikan Islam, Gontor, Aligarh, Santiniketan.

Introduction

Gontor is one of the most successful Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia. Its educational model has been used as a reference by hundreds of other modern Islamic boarding schools. In the Minister of Religion Regulation No. 13 of 2014 No. 18 of 2014, which is designed to accommodate Islamic *pesantren* education into the Indonesian national education system, the education model applied in Gontor is considered as one of the *pesantren* curriculum standards, besides the *salaafiyah* education model.¹ In addition, Gontor has also produced notable figures contributing at the national and international level in various fields, mainly in education and Islamic issues, such as Hasyim Muzadi, Din Syamsuddin, and Hidayat Nur Wahid.

¹ Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, "Peraturan Menteri Agama Republik Indonesia No. 13 Tahun 2014 Tentang Pendidikan Keagamaan Islam" (2014).

Gontor's success stemmed from a new approach to Islamic education. The new approach was formulated by its founders, The *Trimurti* (Ahmad Sahal, Zainuddin Fanani, and Imam Zarkasyi) from many models of Islamic and non-Islamic education institutions that developed as periodical epoch back then. Among the educational models that become the references are what Gontor calls "*sintesa*" (synthesis), the exemplary models of education that are adapted to inspire the philosophical basis and education practice at the Gontor Islamic Boarding School. The *sintesa* consisted of four educational institutions: the Al-Azhar University of Egypt, Aligarh of India, Syanggit of Mauritania, and Santiniketan of India.

The formulation of modern educational system as a new model for Islamic education emerges out of some critical considerations towards traditional *pesantren*. According to Imam Zarkasyi, there are disadvantages of learning in traditional *pesantren* related to study period, limitation in Arabic speaking skill, and the religious oriented curriculum that neglect the learning of non-religious sciences.² From these concerns, along with criticism towards colonial education, Gontor was built with some inspirations of its *sintesa*. Related to this *sintesa*, Gontor explains the influential aspects in general and brief way.³ However, the detail elaboration about this influence is still obscure.

This study tries to explain the extent to which Gontor education gets influenced by Aligarh and Santiniketan, both in the realm of values and educational praxis. However, the author limits this research to focus on Aligarh and Santiniketan, for it will thickly discuss the education and teaching system. The aspects of institutional management inspired by Al-Azhar and Syanggit are excluded in this study.

In general, the previous researches conducted on this theme is divided into two groups. *First*, researches discussing, in general, the educational thoughts of Sayyid Ahmad Khan or the Aligarh and Rabindranath Tagore or Santiniketan movements and their influences on Indonesian Education. For example, the work of Yecki Bus, which

² Hamid Fahmy Zarkasyi, "Imam Zarkasyi's Modernization of Pesantren in Indonesia (A Case Study of Darussalam Gontor)," in *QIJIS (Qudus International Journal of Islamic Studies)*, Vol. 8, No. 1, (June 30, 2020), 177.

³ Al-Azhar University for its waqf (endowment), Aligarh for its concern towards teaching and learning system development, Syanggit for their educator generosity, and Santiniketan for its serenity and simplicity. "*Sintesa*," accessed October 10, 2021, <https://www.gontor.ac.id/sintesa>.

elaborates this in the context of secularism issue in Islamic education.⁴ *Second*, researches reveal the forms of modernization of pesantren as we could see in the works of Hamid Fahmy Zarkasyi.⁵ Both of those two groups have not yet looked at, in detail, the process in which Gontor reconstructs the educational principles of Aligarh and Santiniketan.

The discussion about this issue gain in its importance amidst the effort of Indonesian government to promote the peaceful spirits of Islam in Indonesia to the global world through education, as it is stated in the Presiden Regulation No. 23 of 2019 about the statutes of UIII (Universitas Islam Internasional Indonesia).⁶ Hence, if we are to promote Indonesian Islam through education, it is important to understand thoroughly the dynamics of Islamic education in Indonesia beforehand, and the reconstruction of Islamic education in Gontor is one of the most notable development.

This research used autoethnography as its method, intending to give meaning to Gontor's educational philosophy as a cultural creation that has innovative values. Data collected through observation and interviews. The selection of informants is based on a purposive technique, selecting those who are considered to represent the cultural experience. The author also performs a dialectic triple counterbalance between authoritative texts, participatory observation experiences, and information from the informants.

Aligarh and Santiniketan Educational Basis

If Al-Azhar and Shanggitan were established Islamic institutions (or systems) that have stood as traditional references of Islamic learning, Aligarh and Santiniketan can be said to be modern inspirations for Gontor education. Aligarh was founded in 1875⁷ and Santiniketan

⁴ Yecki Bus, "Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan dan Rekonstruksisme Pendidikan Islam Ala India," in *Turast : Jurnal Penelitian Dan Pengabdian*, Vol. 3, No. 1, (2015), 57–71, <https://ejournal.uinib.ac.id/jurnal/index.php/turast/article/view/375>.

⁵ Hamid Fahmy Zarkasyi, "Modern Pondok Pesantren: Maintaining Tradition in Modern System," in *Tsaqafah*, Vol. 11, No. 2, (November 30, 2015), 223–48, <https://ejournal.unida.gontor.ac.id/index.php/tsaqafah/article/view/267>. Zarkasyi, "Imam Zarkasyi's Modernization..."

⁶ Presiden Republik Indonesia, "Peraturan Pemerintah No 23 Tahun 2019 Tentang Statuta UIII" (2019).

⁷ Shahid Jaleel, "The Aligarh Movement: A Chapter in The History of Indian Education" (2004), 198.

in 1901.⁸ These late 19th century dynamics becomes the horizon of inspiration for the founders of Gontor. Gontor itself was founded in 1926.⁹ Indeed, during the time of Muhammad Abduh, Al-Azhar underwent modernization in several aspects.¹⁰ However, as a *sintesa*, Al-Azhar was mentioned in many aspects of its *waqf* (endowment).

Aligarh, as an educational movement, is a symbol of the more comprehensive efforts by Sayyid Ahmad Khan to reform the social system of Indian Muslim society. For Ahmad Khan, education has a central role in social engineering. We can conclude this idea from how he defines the purpose of education as “an effort that allows humans to fully develop their intellectual potentials so that they can master every situation that arises (in life).”¹¹

In the context of India, the 19th century was an era where many multidimensional changes occurred in Muslim society. The dominant cause was a political shift from the disappearance of Mughal Sultanate authority to the emergence of the British reign. For this reason, Sayyid Ahmad Khan views that Indian Muslims need to adjust themselves to face the challenges of this turbulent era.¹² Among the ways of adaptations are the improvement of the education system, the reinterpretation of religious teachings to be in harmony with science and rationality, and the promotion of Urdu, along with English, as the language of knowledge. According to Ahmad Khan, Indian Muslims are a long way behind the British in knowledge and technology and can only improve it through modern education and a change in their traditional mindset.¹³

If we look closely, Aligarh’s establishment is Ahmad Khan’s answer to the educational problems faced by Indian Muslims during the British colonial period. This problem was identified through an essay competition initiated by Ahmad Khan through the Committee for The Better Diffusion and Advancement of Learning

⁸ Kathleen M O’connell, “Education at Santiniketan: 1902-1920,” in *Quarterly*, Vol. 38, No. 1, (2011), 21.

⁹ Misbach et al., *Zarkasyi Dari Gontor Merintis Pesantren Modern*, 1st ed. (Ponorogo: Trimurti Press, 1996), 41.

¹⁰ Eman Taha Mohamed, “Islamic Education And Modernity In The Middle East: Egypt Case Study,” in *International Journal of Science and Society*, Vol. 1, No. 2, (September 11, 2019), 44, <https://doi.org/10.54783/IJSOC.V1I2.12>.

¹¹ Shahid Jaleel, *The Aligarh Movement...*, 331.

¹² *Ibid.*, 155.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 156.

among The Mohammedan in India.¹⁴ The competition resulted in the recommendation that Muslims should organize their own education independent of the Indian British government's education system.

At that time, very few Muslim students studied in government-owned schools. The causes vary, from the reluctance of the Muslim community itself to send their children because they consider it dangerous towards Islamic beliefs, to a more objective reason; the fact that the government education system does not meet the authentic needs of Muslims.¹⁵ To solve this matter, institutional solutions are needed. On the one hand, to overcome the traditional view of Indian Muslims that learning must use Arabic and Persian, and regard English as the language of the colonizers. On the other hand, to help the Muslims learn western science and technology without being separated from their spiritual roots. On that basis, Ahmad Khan founded Aligarh as an effort to provide modern education in an Islamic environment for Indian Muslims.¹⁶

Besides the effort by Ahmad Khan to improve the education of Muslims in India, the Aligarh movement as Ahmad Khan's concept of modern Islamic education is questioned by fellow Indian Muslims. The most important criticism was from Abu Hasan al-Nadwi which highlighted Ahmad Khan's prioritizing the humanities subject and overlooking the natural sciences.¹⁷ Al-Nadwi's criticism, which was based on Ahmad Khan's statement and the practice in Aligarh, raised doubts about Aligarh graduates who were less proficient in science and technology but had western thinking due to their humanities subject more intensive training.¹⁸

However, Ahmad Khan's role in improving the education system for the Muslim community cannot be denied. From the Aligarh movement, we find the revitalization of education role in society, curriculum development, learning methods, and media, as well as a more organized education administration.¹⁹ These mentioned aspects affect the very dynamics of modern Islamic education, including in Indonesia.

¹⁴ Rahmani Begum Mohammad Ruknuddin Hassan, "The Educational Movement of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan 1858-1898" (1959), 286.

¹⁵ Shahid Jaleel, "The Aligarh Movement...", 162-63.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 168.

¹⁷ Yecky Bus, Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan..., 64.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 65.

¹⁹ Shahid Jaleel, The Aligarh Movement..., 410.

Just as the Aligarh movement is the manifestation of Ahmad Khan's effort to modernize Muslim education, Santiniketan represents Rabindranath Tagore's attempt to flourish education for Hindus. Founded in 1901, Tagore, as its initiator, describes it as an effort to adapt modern educational methods in the context of Indian culture.²⁰ This idea is essentially derived from the same worry that upsets Ahmad Khan and Indian Muslim clerics regarding the problem of education in the midst of colonialism. What Tagore means by Indian context, in particular, is the intrusion of spiritual values into the education system.²¹ This was stated by Tagore when discussing that the purpose of his education was to provide a deep spiritual dimension. This is important, because, according to Tagore, the British-oriented education model in India, at that time, would cause psychological dislocations to students who grew up with local Indian culture.²²

In practical basis, this goal is articulated by Tagore in the concept of a holistic school which also functions as a house and temple.²³ To realize such a school concept, Tagore established his school in a location far from the hustle and bustle of the city. Here, we can understand Tagore's position on modernity. On the one hand, Tagore, accommodates the modern system as a good approach for the development of education. However, on the other hand, he criticizes urban life as the representation of modernity's mode, especially for children's education.

Tagore's position on modernity will be clearer if we look at the educational structure he designed. According to Huxley, Tagore realized that modern education puts a great emphasis on conceptual teaching.²⁴ He cared about this so much that Tagore even wrote a science learning module for his students.²⁵ However, Tagore also designed Santiniketan to pay attention to the aspects that are neglected by modern education: the emotional, psychological, imagination, non-rational aspects which are summarized in spiritual education.²⁶

²⁰ Uma Das Gupta, "In Pursuit of a Different Freedom: Tagore's World University at Santiniketan," in *India International Center Quarterly*, Vol. 29, No. 4, (2003), 33.

²¹ Rabindranath Tagore, "Tagore on Education," in *Indian Literature*, Vol. 4, No. 1/2 (September 1961), 140, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23329367>.

²² O'connell, "Education at Santiniketan: 1902-1920," 20.

²³ Rabindranath Tagore, Tagore on Education..., 140.

²⁴ Aldous Huxley, "Reflections on Tagore," in *Indian Literature*, Vol. 4, No. 1, (1960), 129, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23329365>.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 129.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 129.

From the explanation above, we can understand the disposition of art within the framework of Tagore's education in Santiniketan. For Tagore, the logic of art is the description of the working mechanisms of nature that are harmoniously interconnected.²⁷ Tagore's thinking reflects his onto-theological view of the universe which is influenced by the Vedic philosophy which sees everything permeated by the same spiritual force.²⁸ Based on that principle, all forms of dichotomy are illusions that arise from ignorance. Therefore, students need to learn to live in harmony with all existing nature through the teaching of art. The best medium to practice it is with music.

"The first help that our boys get here on this path is from the cultivation of love of nature and sympathy with all living creatures. Music is of very great assistance to them—the songs being not of the ordinary hymn type, dry and didactic, but as full of lyric joy as the author could put in them. You can understand how these songs affect the boys when you know that singing them is the best enjoyment they choose for themselves in their leisure time, in the evening when the moon is up, in the rainy days when their classes are closed."²⁹

For Tagore, education itself is an art, so that only those with artistic spirit can become true teachers.³⁰ Art is a creative force that bridges the individual with the universe. According to Tagore, in education, the human mind is filled with truth, just as imagination is nourished by art and the interconnected world is watered with sympathy.³¹ The integration of these three things becomes a synthetic principle for the development of holistic learning.

Gontor Education *Sintesa*: Symbolic and Substantial Aspects

The inspiration to establish Gontor as a modern *pesantren* institution came from the deadlock during the Indonesian Muslim Congress in mid-1926. The participants in the event, who are Indonesian Muslim leaders, had difficulty in finding figures who

²⁷ Swati Lal, "Rabindranāth Tagore's Ideals of Aesthetic Education," in *The Journal of Aesthetic Education*, Summer, Vol. 18, No. 2, (1984), 33.

²⁸ Salamattullah, "Tagore as Educationist" In *Indian Literature*, Vol. 4, No. 1, (1960), 134, <https://about.jstor.org/terms>.

²⁹ Rabindranath Tagore, Tagore on Education, 140.

³⁰ Alex Aronson, "Tagore's Educational Ideals," in *Education*, Vol. 7, No. 4, (1961), 137.

³¹ Swati Lal, Rabindranāth Tagore's Ideals..., 33.

mastered both Arabic and English to be sent as delegates to the World Islamic Congress in Mecca.³²

Without overlooking this important event, yet, the intention to establish a quality Islamic educational institution has been aspired by *Trimurti* (Kyai Ahmad Sahal, Kyai Zainuddin Fanani, and Kyai Imam Zarkasyi) long before.³³ They set this purpose because genetically, *Trimurti* comes from a family that once built large Islamic boarding schools in Ponorogo: Tegalsari and old Gontor. Officially, the establishment of Gontor was proclaimed in the opening of the *Tarbiyatu al-Athfal* program during the commemoration of the Prophet Muhammad birthday (*maulid*) on October 9, 1926.³⁴

Openly, Gontor mentions Aligarh and Santiniketan as inspiration which is called *sintesa* (synthesis). It is stated that the *sintesa* is an exemplar for Gontor in its efforts to become a quality educational institution.³⁵ In short, it was mentioned that from Aligarh, Gontor learned how the education and teaching system was developed in accordance with the context of modern times. From Santiniketan, it is said that Gontor is inspired by its simplicity, serenity, and peace.

It is intriguing to figure out the more detailed explanation about those open and brief information about Aligarh and Santiniketan influence on Gontor. In general, the influences are categorized into two different aspects: the symbolic and the substantial aspect.

From Aligarh, Gontor adapted the construction of the modern Islamic education system into very symbolic details. The Gontor flag has the same color as the Aligarh's. Moreover, those who have visited Aligarh and Gontor will find similarities in the layout of the campus landscape. In these two institutions, particularly on the main campus and prior to much later developments, the mosque is situated between the main dormitory building and the meeting hall with a wide-open space in between being the striking landmark.

The arrangement is not without purpose. Based on information from Ahmad Hidayatullah Zarkasyi, one of Trimurtri's sons, the open space around the meeting hall, the dormitory and the mosque is deliberately designed to facilitate many mass and competitive

³² Andi Rahmat Arifianto, "Disiplin Yang Produktif (Studi Etnografi Disiplin Di Pesantren Gontor)" (Universitas Indonesia, 2009), 27.

³³ Misbach et al., *K.H. Zarkasyi Dari Gontor...*, 40.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 41.

³⁵ "Sintesa."

activities.³⁶ That way, it is hoped that students' spirit to compete and winning mentality are trained there.

Attention to the development of competitive spirit is essentially in line with the spirit of modernity, as it is explicitly stated in the declaration of human rights, "that education must be aimed at the broadest personal development and to strengthen respect for human rights..."³⁷ This modern approach is quite in contrast with the tradition of Islamic education where respect and courtesy expressed too formally (as *unggah-ungguh*) sometimes even hinder the development of competitive characters that are important in the education of students.

From the history of Gontor, we learn that the starting point for Gontor's establishment stems from the same worry as Indian Muslims concern that inspired the birth of Aligarh; that Muslims need to take care of their education because Western education developed by the colonial cannot meet the needs of Muslim students. Just like what happened in India, where discrimination in education access for Muslims, caused by British repression due to the failed rebellion, in Indonesia, both the VOC and the Dutch colonial government also restrained *ulama* and educational institutions on suspicion of bringing the potential riots.³⁸ The education system provided by the Dutch does not open up fair access to all people with the majority of whom are Muslims. It was also this worry about the partial and reductive colonial education that led Tagore to initiate Santiniketan.

However, while criticizing colonial education, Ahmad Khan saw the need for learning English, in addition to Urdu, as the language of science.³⁹ In Gontor, the mastery of English, in addition to Arabic, is also emphasized as an effort to produce cosmopolitan students, because English is an international language.

From a systematic basis, the aspects of Islamic education reform to which the Aligarh movement pays attention to are affirmed by Gontor. The implementation of Islamic education in a modern system means improving institutional management, aligning the curriculum with modern designs, and updating learning methods and instructions.⁴⁰

³⁶ Ahmad Hidayatullah Zarkasyi, "Interview."

³⁷ United Nations, *Universal Declaration of Human Right* (United Nations, 2015), https://www.un.org/en/udhrbook/pdf/udhr_booklet_en_web.pdf.

³⁸ Herman, "SEJARAH PESANTREN DI INDONESIA," in *Al-TA'DIB: Jurnal Kajian Ilmu Kependidikan*, Vol. 6, No. 2, (July 1, 2013) 149, <https://doi.org/10.31332/ATDB.V6I2.311>.

³⁹ Shahid Jaleel, *The Aligarh Movement...*, 156.

⁴⁰ Hamid Fahmi Zarkasyi, *Modern Pondok Pesantren...*, 234.

On the other hand, Santiniketan's influence on Gontor education was also manifested in symbolically and substantially. From the symbolic aspect, the official name of *Pesantren* Gontor, Darussalam, besides referring to one of the heaven names in Islamic eschatology, is also inspired by Tagore's concept of school as peaceful place. Literally, *darussalam* means a house of safety or peace, it can also be interpreted as the abode of peace. This meaning is also in line with the meaning of Santiniketan, which is "a peaceful place to live".⁴¹ Referring to this meaning, in Gontor, *darussalam* is interpreted as *kampung damai* (peaceful village). This is obvious, for example, in the lyrics of Gontor song, Darussalam, which is often chanted by students as follows:

"Darussalam, Pondokku
Kampung damai, kampung damai"⁴²

This very interpretation is related to Santiniketan as the model that reflects serenity and peace. If Aligarh is located in the city, Tagore prefers a more remote location for Santiniketan. For Tagore, schools must provide the air of serenity that we breathe in homes and temples.⁴³ Based on this reason, he chooses a location far from the distractions of the city.

"Having this ideal of a school in my mind which should be a home and a temple in one, where teaching should be a part of worshipful life I selected this spot, away from all distractions of town, hallowed with the memory of a pious life whose days were passed here in communion with God."⁴⁴

This peaceful spirit is an important element of Gontor's education. Gontor also chooses the campus location in remote rural areas away from the city's crowds. For example, the first male campus is located in Gontor Village, Mlarak District, located approximately 12 Km from the city of Ponorogo. Moreover, this remote location is typically a common feature of Indonesian *pesantren* as a result of the colonial government's policy that views Islamic education with suspicion.⁴⁵ However, although both emphasize the importance of peace and spirituality, Tagore's stand who views peace as an individual

⁴¹ Indira Chowdhury, "Santiniketan: The Making of a New Indian Pilgrimage," in *Source: The Public Historian*, Vol. 35, No. 2, (2013), 100, <https://doi.org/10.1525/tph.2013.35.2.99>.

⁴² Literally: "Darussalam, O my boarding school. Peaceful village, peaceful village."

⁴³ Rabindranath Tagore, *Tagore on Education...*, 140.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 140.

⁴⁵ Herman, *Sejarah Pesantren di Indonesia...*, 149.

mystical achievement obtained from a harmonious manner towards nature differs from Gontor's way. In Gontor, peace is interpreted with a communal framework in the form of conflict management training for the students.⁴⁶

The management of conflict in Gontor is applied in dealing with students with various backgrounds: ethnicities, languages, civil organizations, social strata, etc. In handling potential clashes that lie within that diversity, Gontor does not blend the existing differences, but nurtures them in the competitive mechanism. For example, the diversity of ethnicities and regional languages is contested in annual cultural performances and marching competitions.⁴⁷ With these kinds of activities, the *ashabiyah* instinct which Ibn Khaldun views as essential part of human nature can be transformed into positive outcomes. The basis of this social engineering is Quranic message which suggests muslims to know each other as stated in the QS. al-Hujurat [49]: 13; and to vie with one another in good works which is the message of QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 148. Here, we can see different emphasis in the concept of peace between Santiniketan and Gontor. In Santiniketan, Tagore constructs peace through personal piety, while in Gontor peace is built through social piety.

Regardless of this difference, both Santiniketan and Gontor were founded to complement an element of education that was neglected in the colonial system: the mental and spiritual elements. Santiniketan's establishment departed from Tagore's concern about the construction of colonial education which caused a psychological dislocation towards Indians because they were alienated from their cultural nuances. Gontor was also founded to carry on Islamic cultural values by creating *mundzir al-qaum* or society leader.⁴⁸ The concern about mental and spiritual problems was also taken into account by the founders of Gontor, for example, it was visible in Kyai Imam Zarkasyi's reflection when comparing education in madrasa and traditional *pesantren*. According to Imam Zarkasyi, the education in madrasa is better from the aspect of curriculum and learning system, however, *pesantren* living environment is better in educating the mentality and spirituality of students.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Ahmad Hidayatullah Zarkasyi, "Interview."

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Lance Castle, "Notes on the Islamic Education at Gontor," 1965, 30. Dan Ahmad Hidayatullah Zarkasyi, "Interview."

⁴⁹ Misbach et al., K.H. Imam Zarkasyi Dari Gontor..., 44.

The effort to merge spirituality into education was actualized by Tagore through functioning schools as homes and temples, as well as integrating learning as part of worship activities.⁵⁰ In Santiniketan, this is manifested in the students' meditation during their spare time, in the morning and evening.⁵¹ The naming of Santiniketan itself is due to Tagore's view that it is very conducive to meditation. Even though there are practical differences in the form of rituals, Gontor also affirms schools as places of worship. For example, it appeared symbolically in the lyrics of the Gontor hymn as follows:

"Tiap pagi dan petang
Kita beramai sembahyang
Mengabdikan pada Allah Ta'ala
Di dalam kalbu kita"⁵²

While in Santiniketan, spirituality is exercised in individual rituals, in Gontor, partly because of Islamic teaching itself, spirituality is more practiced in association with others. However, training to worship communally is not merely habituating students to worship in the congregation but also teaches them the skills to perform congregational worship, for example how to be an *imâm*, preacher, *mu'adzin*, etc. In the dormitory, the students are trained through the rotating schedule to practice these skills. The students are also habituated to congregational dhikr as a form of learning.⁵³

The atmosphere of Gontor dormitory also reflects the concept of a school that is more than a site for teaching materials. This, more or less, is Tagore's school-house-temple concept. Moreover, in Gontor, dormitories are not only designed to create home and mosque peaceful atmosphere, but also to create conditions that represent the dynamics of community life. The atmosphere of competition and conflict is directed to train students' character and leadership.⁵⁴ In addition to the competition, Gontor also nurtures leadership talent with organizational training in the form of the student association and the scout movement. Through these activities, students practice the arts of leadership such as communication, coordination, negotiation, and public speaking and

⁵⁰ Rabindranath Tagore, *Tagore on Education...*, 140.

⁵¹ Indira Chowdhury, *Santiniketan: The Making of...*, 100.

⁵² Literally: Every dawn and dusk, we pray together. Serving The Mighty Allah, from the bottom of our heart.

⁵³ Ahmad Hidayatullah Zarkasyi, "Interview."

⁵⁴ Ahmad Hidayatullah Zarkasyi, "Interview."

responsibility. These leadership skills training reflect the construction of Gontor peace concept, which is educating future leaders who are able to manage conflicts in their community. This is the meaning of one of Gontor's important slogans: Gontor stands above and for all.

In addition, one of the important things from Tagore's educational concept is the spirituality embodied in the teacher. For Tagore, it is important to emphasize that education should not be obsessed with achieving certain quantitative measures, but what is more important is how to grow spiritual maturity in the teacher.⁵⁵ In Gontor, this meaning is also emphasized as it is obvious in one of the Gontor proverbs: *al-tharîqah ahammu min al-mâddah, al-mudarris ahammu min al-tharîqah, wa ruh al-mudarris ahammu min mudarris nafsihi* (The method is more important than the material, the teacher is more important than the method, and the soul of a teacher is more important than the figure of the teacher himself).

This issue relates to the concept of the teacher itself. For Tagore, education is not a profession but an art.⁵⁶ In Gontor, there is also instruction towards students not to make teaching as merely a profession after the education degree is over, especially not to become government officials.⁵⁷ Within Gontor's philosophy, teaching is the task of *da'wah* to preach and implement knowledge that needs to be done sincerely.⁵⁸ In Gontor, *Kyai* and teachers don't get the salary. Payments from the students are used for students' needs and education utilities.⁵⁹ Around this issue, there is famous advice from Kyai Imam Zarkasyi which is often repeated by the leaders of Gontor: "great men is not those who possess important government positions, lots of wealth, or extensive knowledge, but those who are sincere in teaching the Holy Qur'an in the small *surau* in remote areas."⁶⁰

The intrusion of spirituality into the ideal concept of teacher is also related to criticism about colonial education. While, in Aligarh elaboration above, complaints about the inadequacy of colonial education are all too general, in Tagore's thinking, the criticism is more clearly articulated. According to Tagore, colonial education was only directed towards the administrative purposes of the British

⁵⁵ Rabindranath Tagore, *Tagore on Education...*, 140.

⁵⁶ Alex Aronson, *Tagore's Educational Ideals...*, 385.

⁵⁷ Lance Castle, *Notes on the Islamic...*, 31.

⁵⁸ Misbach et al., *K.H. Imam Zarkasyi Dari Gontor...*, 59.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 59.

⁶⁰ Ahmad Hidayatullah Zarkasyi, "Interview."

government. The system is interested only in graduating students with Western culture minds who help the government's administrative mechanisms. This criticism also echoes in Imam Zarkasyi's thoughts that view colonial education as a molding machine for employees who do not receive moral education and do not possess the love of knowledge.⁶¹

To be more sophisticated, according to Tagore, the spiritual aspect of education is intertwined with the arts. For Tagore, the educational process is an effort to facilitate each individual to express the internal power within him in the form of creating works.⁶² So, education is an art that aims to produce works of art. Here, artworks include all creative products that go beyond human material needs. Moreover, for Tagore, art is also an instrument for this process and goal. This argument is visible from how he emphasizes the importance of songs and music for student education.⁶³

In Gontor, the students' internal potentials are also nourished through arts and craft skills training. There are many art clubs, such as calligraphy, painting, handicrafts, acting, and music clubs. In addition to being trained in these clubs, the students also improve their skills either through competitions or voluntary activities to decorate dormitories and classrooms. Moreover, just like in Santiniketan where students often listen to music and sing in their spare time, in Gontor, music is also played at certain times in the morning and evening.

To implement the integration of nature with education, Tagore applies open-space learning at Santiniketan. For Tagore, complete education for life must include a combination of various forms of learning and experience.⁶⁴ Therefore, outdoor classes should be integrated into education along with book reading, as well as the integration of music and drama. Practically, Gontor does not apply outdoor learning for curricular activities. All learning activities are carried out in the classroom or on several occasions in the mosque. However, the principle that education cover not only what is taught in the classroom is also fundamental philosophy of Gontor education. Gontor teaches important principle that whatever we see, hear and feel

⁶¹ Lance Castle, *Notes on the Islamic...*, 31.

⁶² Swati Lal, *Rabindranāth Tagore's Ideals...*, 33.

⁶³ Rabindranath Tagore, *Tagore on Education...*, 140.

⁶⁴ Alex Aronson, *Tagore's Educational Ideals...*, 388.

is an inseparable part of education.⁶⁵ In addition, in scouting activities, the students also experience open spaces learning and in direct contact with nature.

Inspiration	Symbolic influence	Substantive influence
Aligarh	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Flag color 2. Landscape and architectural designs, building names. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Modern learning system (administrative and institutional management, learning method, media and curriculum). 2. English language and modern science teaching.
Santiniketan	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The name of Darusalam which means abode of peace. 2. Hymn and institutional song lyric. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Learning as spiritual enterprise. 2. Education as art. 3. Education as harmonious approach to nature.

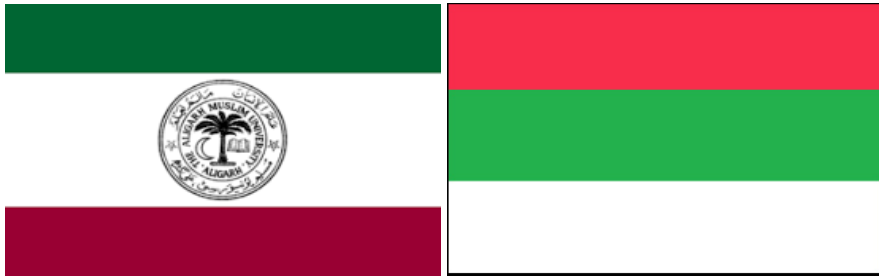
Table 1. Symbolic and Substantive Influence of Aligarh and Santiniketan on Gontor Education.

Sintesa and Creative *Ijtihâd*

The extent to which Aligarh and Santiniketan influence Gontor can be identified through the symbolic and substantial aspects of its education. However, it is important to notice that the influence of Ahmad Khan with Aligarh and Tagore with Santiniketan, on the philosophical and practical basis of Gontor education, has passed through a creative process (*ijtihad*) of its founders.⁶⁶ This creativity can be seen symbolically, for example, in the color arrangement of the Gontor flag. Although it consists of the same color as the Aligarh flag: green, white, and red, in the Gontor flag, the colors are arranged in a different order: red, green, and white.

⁶⁵ Ahmad Hidayatullah Zarkasyi, "Interview."

⁶⁶ Zarkasyi. "Interview."



Picture 1. Aligarh flag (left) dan Gontor flag (right)

Choosing the term *shintesa* to call exemplary institutions, instead of, inspiration or model, for example, shows the dialectical nature of the creative process. Gontor does not take these inspirations for granted but is adapted to locality and basic values that form the fundamental of Gontor's education. In the Hegelian philosophy tradition, the synthesis is a reciprocal relation of the existence of thesis and its adversary, or what Zizek calls the process of sublation; a kind of organic mechanism of an independent body for recreating something in a new form.⁶⁷

In Giddens' theory of structuration, creativity is one aspect of the structure possessed by individuals to carry out intentional actions to fulfill certain goals. In this case, the *ijtihad* of Gontor founders is a cultural outcome resulted from a synthetic process: a structuration mechanism exercised by concrete individual actors (agency). The founders, which Giddens describes as agents, are able to play with their limited choice of positions in a historical period and social conditions, by creating supportive conditions of their actions, which are maintained through the trajectory of space and time. Their creative works are based on conscious motive and awareness, both discursively and practically, in the form of rationalized actions to monitor the repercussion of activities involving the structure itself.⁶⁸

Citing Goffman, Giddens regards every agent as a knowledgeable agent, where knowledge becomes a possessed character to monitor various rationalized social processes and actions, and continuously direct other actors to do in an equal manner.⁶⁹ In this

⁶⁷ Slavoj Zizek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, 13th ed. (London: Verso, 2008), viii.

⁶⁸ Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society: Teori Strukturasi Untuk Analisis Sosial* (Yogyakarta: Pedati, 2011), 6–9.

⁶⁹ Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Polity Press, 1984), xxiv–xxv.

context, *Trimurti* emerges as knowledgeable agents who get the point of educational discourses development, embodied in the establishment of Aligarh and Santiniketan, as well as other *sintesa* and inspirations, as a direction for engineering a new system of the educational institution.

Here, the agent acts as a mediator for the formation of a new social structure and also the result of the structure. Meanwhile, the social structure is a medium that enables, and at the same time produces social actions through recursive patterns carried out in a certain space and time. At the same time, social action itself also manifests in the form of structure, because according to Giddens, the structure is not merely external existence outside the agent but also within the agent's internal memory and social traces.⁷⁰

According to Giddens, the relationship between agents and structures is formed in reciprocal duality that cannot be separated, influencing each other, creating a condition of dialectical relationship with each other which will eventually give birth to social action.⁷¹ In this context, Giddens suggests that the structure which contains a set of expectations, rules, values, moral codes, traditions, and institutions is a modality that involves human action, at any time, can be changed, modified, and replaced by the agent in a different way to produce a new social structure. The *ijtihad* of Gontor founders appears as autonomous choice by expanding their role to navigate and synthesize discursive practices, language, aesthetics and moral order consisting of social standards, values, and norms that existed in Aligarh and Santiniketan, through a process of interpretation and innovation of structured language, as an effort to create a new social structure. This duality of structuration can be seen in Gontor modern education model where there exist some extents of Aligarh and Santiniketan symbolic and substantial influences that mingle with the values and praxis of Islamic traditionalism that become the fundamental basis of *pesantren*. The memory traces as social actions producer as identified by Giddens in the form of significance, legitimacy, and dominance⁷² may be used as key indicators to further analyze the influence of Aligarh and Santiniketan on Gontor education model.

The first indicator is signification. It is related to the use of languages such as symbolic and interpretive schemes, semantic codes,

⁷⁰ Antony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society* (a), 56.

⁷¹ Antony Giddens, *The Constitution* (b) 19.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 30–31.

meaning, mention, and discourse.⁷³ The naming of Darussalam which is Gontor official name, the color of the flag, the layout of the architecture and the name of the building, for example, is a sign system and an interpretation framework resulting from the process of interaction and communication through this indicator. Here, the founders of Gontor who are social agents actively give new meanings, where at the same time, these meanings are produced through the dialectical process they build.

The second indicator is legitimacy. It is normative schemata that include regulations, social standards, customs, values and norms, so that the legitimacy of agents' actions in the social structure is largely determined by this indicator.⁷⁴ In this context, agents are strongly influenced by a set of rules which are usually contained in the form of official policies in the form of guidelines and directives that restrict them from carrying out social actions.⁷⁵ Although in some aspects there may be similarities or influences with Aligarh and Santiniketan both symbolically and substantially, Gontor's education model is still stands strong upon values that apply in specific society (traditional *pasantren*).

The third indicator is domination which is a modality of power focusing on economic and political resource facilities. The authorization of social structures and the underlying social relations by the agent gives rise to an attitude of social obedience and acceptance which gradually becomes action that is driven by practical and reflective awareness.⁷⁶ In this context, what was done by the founders of Gontor through their transformative capacity, is directed to exert influence in providing an educational model which is partly adopted from the education model of Aligarh and Santiniketan.

From the elaboration above, it is important to note Trimurti's role in the dialectical creative process. While adopting some principles from Aligarh and Santiniketan education, they adapted them to conform to the fundamentals of Islamic education. This attitude provides us with the heuristical (if not ideal) strategy in facing various challenges in

⁷³ Antony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society* (a) 29–32.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 29–32.

⁷⁵ Asmoni and Iwan Kuswandi, "Ustadz Madrasah Diniyah Di Masa Pandemi Covid 19 Dalam Perspektif Teori Strukturasi Anthony Giddens," in *Prosiding Seminar Nasional Pendidikan Biologi*, September (2020), 77.

⁷⁶ Nirzalin, "Mendamaikan Aktor Dan Struktur Dalam Analisis Sosial Perspektif Teori Strukturasi Anthony Giddens," in *Jurnal Sosiologi USK (Media Pemikiran & Aplikasi)*, Vol. 3, No. 1, (2013), 21, <https://doi.org/10.24815/jsu>.

Islamic education, from the ever-discussed secularism to the emergence of digital disruption.

Conclusion

The existence of Gontor as a modern Islamic educational institution is a product of the creative process of Islamic civilization dynamics in Indonesia. The vision of Gontor founders, Trimurti, to establish ideal Islamic educational institutions was finally manifested with inspiration from institutional models in countries that are in contact with Western colonialism. The term *sintesa* used by Gontor to refer to these exemplary institutions, implicitly, indicates a dialectical process and the role of Trimurti as agents who carry out interpretative processes among existing structures.

The dialectical process of Trimurti takes the form of adopting the educational principles of Aligarh and Santiniketan and adapting them to conform the fundamentals of Islamic traditional education. It comes out with the recreation of those principal in the new and unique symbolical and substantial manner. Beside those notable products that influence heavily the development of Islamic education in Indonesia, it is Trimurti attitude to creatively engage, adapt and recreate any epochal progress that become their most valuable legacy. []

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