

Modern Pondok Pesantren: Maintaining Tradition in Modern System

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Abstract

Pondok pesantren is a renown Islamic education system that generally categorized as traditional system. However, there were tendencies of certain *pondok pesantren* that developed their system from traditional into modern system of education. Here, it may be classified that *pondok pesantren* have two systems of education: traditional and modern. Traditional *pesantren*, tend to implement the curriculum based on certain classical books called *kitab kuning* while maintaining unique traditional method of instruction such as *sorogan*, *bandongan*, *halaqah*, and *mudhakarab*. In the other hand, modern *pesantren* have their the curriculum modified in order to be fitted with school curriculum emphasizing the subject of Islamic studies and employing full modern method of instruction. It is attractively to known then, that it there were tendencies of certain *pondok pesantren* that developed their system from traditional into modern system of education. By this development a new model of *pondok pesantren* emerged that characteristically can be identified as an Islamic education system using modern system Curriculum, applying modern system and methodology of instruction and employing modern institutional system, yet it maintain traditional value system for their daily life in the campus. The writer found in this research that modern system of *pesantren* initiated with Wahid Hasyim and Jamiah Khair, then ultimately on the hand of Imam Zarkasyi. This paper will try to elaborate history of *pesantren* in Indonesia, improved later several aspects of modernization of *pesantren* system.

Keywords: Pondok Pesantren, Values System, Curriculum, Teaching, Modern System

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Abstrak

Pondok pesantren adalah sistem pendidikan Islam yang terklasifikasi sebagai sistem tradisional. Meskipun begitu, ada kecenderungan dari beberapa pondok pesantren yang mengembangkan sistem mereka dari tradisional menjadi sistem pendidikan modern. Di sini, dapat diklasifikasikan bahwa pondok pesantren memiliki dua sistem pendidikan, tradisional dan modern. Pesantren tradisional berupaya untuk mengimplementasikan kurikulum berdasarkan kitab-kitab klasik yang disebut sebagai kitab kuning, sekaligus memelihara metode pengajaran tradisional yang unik seperti *sorogan*, *bandongan*, *balaqah*, dan *mudhakarab*. Di sisi lain, pesantren modern mempunyai kurikulum yang dimodifikasi agar sesuai dengan kurikulum sekolah dengan menekankan subjek-subjek studi islam dan menggunakan metode pengajaran modern secara keseluruhan. Maka menarik untuk mengetahui bahwa ada kecenderungan dari beberapa pondok pesantren tradisional untuk mengembangkan sistem mereka dari tradisional menjadi sistem pendidikan modern. Dengan adanya pengembangan model baru dari sistem pondok pesantren yang digabungkan itu, secara karakteristik kemudian dapat didefinisikan sebagai sistem pendidikan Islam yang menggunakan sistem kurikulum, sistem dan metodologi modern, sekaligus sistem institusional modern sambil tetap menjalankan nilai-nilai dari sistem tradisional untuk kehidupan sehari-hari mereka di sekolah. Penulis menemukan di penelitian ini bahwa sistem pesantren modern diinisiasi oleh Wahid Hasyim and Jamiah Khair, sebelum kemudian mencapai puncaknya oleh Imam Zarkasyi. Penelitian ini akan mencoba mengelaborasi sejarah pesantren di Indonesia, dikembangkan kemudian dengan beberapa aspek dari modernisasi sistem pesantren.

Kata Kunci: Pondok Pesantren, Sistem Nilai, Kurikulum, Pengajaran, Sistem Modern

Introduction

In Indonesia the term Islamic education refers to at least three educational institutions: *pondok pesantren* (traditional Islamic education), *madrasah* (Islamic school system), and Islamic school (secular school owned by Muslim). From those three institutions, *pondok pesantren* is the most dominant system and existed long before the Independence of Indonesia. *Pondok pesantren* has two models or systems of education: traditional and modern one. The two are severely different in system and method, yet in certain aspects they

have similarities. The traditional system employs the curriculum based on certain classical books called *kitab kuning* (yellow book) while maintaining unique traditional method of instruction such as *sorogan*, *bandongan*, *halaqah*, and *mudhakarrah*. Since the traditional system were regarded as ineffective in responding the challenge of modernity there are tendencies of Indonesian Muslims to prefer the modern system rather than the traditional one. In this modern system the curriculum is modified in order to be fitted with school curriculum emphasizing the subject of Islamic studies and employing full modern method of instruction. However, despite of its modern system the modern *pondok pesantren* still employs traditional boarding system while maintaining traditional system of value and sprit of Islam. This quasi-traditional system of *pondok pesantren* with their own system of education (independent from government system) is exceedingly conducive for the inculcation of Islamic values, traditions and cultures but in modern environment colored with the spirit of sincerity, simplicity, tolerance or brotherhood, self-reliance, and freedom. This paper is intended to explore the tendency to modernize *pondok pesantren* that maintain the traditional values and adopt modern school system by modifying both *pondok* and *madrasah* curriculum organization.

The Pondok System

The term *pondok* is of Arabic word *fundûq* that means dormitory or a place for stay and in this regard dormitory for students. The term *pesantren* is derived from the term *santri* (student), which is given prefix “pe” and suffix “an” and become *pe-santri-an* or *pesantren*,¹ and hence it denotes the place where students (*santri*) stay at dormitory (*pondok*) for the purpose of education. In Java the term *pondok* or *pesantren* are commonly used, but in Sumatera Island especially in Aceh, *pesantren* is known as *dayah* and *rangkang*, while in West Sumatera is called *surau*.² There is no ample evidence when the first *pondok pesantren* was established, many assumed that it was established by Sunan Ampel, one of the Nine Saint (*Walisongo*) of

¹ Zamakhsyari Dhofier, *Tradisi Pesantren: Studi tentang Pandangan Hidup Kiai*, (Jakarta: LP3ES, 1985), 18.

² Azyumardi Azra, *Pendidikan Islam: Tradisi dan Modernisasi Menuju Milenium Baru*, (Jakarta: Penerbit Kalimah, 2001), 70.

Java. Other assumed that it was founded by Muhammad Besari at Tegalsari, Ponorogo, East Java in 1870th.

However, by the passage of time the *pondok* system of education flourished naturally throughout Indonesian archipelago. The graduates of this system subsequently established some other *pondok* systems and so on. During the Dutch occupation the *pondok* system was challenged by the emergence of secular school system. Not only has the Dutch founded many schools but also restricted the education system of *pondok*. In 1882, for example, Dutch government established *Priesterreden* (Religious Court) to look after Muslim religious life including *pondok* education institution. Later in 1905 the government issued rule and regulation for religious teacher (*ordonansi*) implying that all religious teachers should have permission from local government. More strict regulation was issued in 1925 that select and limit the one who are permitted to teach religion from those who are not. Finally in 1932 new regulation was issued to abolish and close any madrasah and school that hold no permit to operate or institution that teach objectionable subjects.³

The challenge from secular education system continued after the era of Indonesian independence in 1945. The Government of the Republic of Indonesia built more secular schools to provide more government servants. The impact of this policy is the deterioration of the number of people who attend the *pondok* education institution.⁴ Be that as it may, the number of Islamic education institution especially the *pondok* system flourished after the independence of Indonesia. Comparison of a survey held by the Office of Religious Affair, during the Japanese Military Government in Java 1942 and the survey held by Ministry of Religious Affairs Republic of Indonesia in 1978 suggested that there is significant increase of the number of *pondok pesantren* institution. (see table 1 and 2)

³ Zamakhsyari Dhofier, *Tradisi Pesantren...*, 41; Zuhairini, et al., *Sejarah Pendidikan Islam*, (Jakarta: Bumi Aksara, 1997), 149.

⁴ Zamakhsyari Dhofier, *Tradisi Pesantren...*, 41.

Table 1: Number of *pondok pesantren*, *madrasah*, and student in Jawa and Madura in 1942 (Survey of the Office of Religious Affairs, Japanese Administration)⁵

| Provinces | Number of Pesantren and Madrasah | Number of Students |
|---------------|----------------------------------|--------------------|
| Jakarta | 167 | 14 513 |
| West Java | 1 046 | 69 954 |
| Central Java | 351 | 21 957 |
| East Java | 307 | 32 931 |
| Total: | 1 871 | 139 415 |

Table 2: Number of *pesantren* and student at Jawa in 1978. (Report of Ministry of Religious Affairs, Republic of Indonesia)⁶

| Provinces | Total Number of Pondok | Total Number of Students |
|---------------|------------------------|--------------------------|
| Jakarta | 27 | 15 767 |
| West Java | 2 237 | 305 747 |
| Central Java | 430 | 65 070 |
| East Java | 1 051 | 290 790 |
| Total: | 3 745 | 675 364 |

In almost four decades the number of *pondok* at Jawa increased almost four times. This number skyrocketed in 1981 with total number of 5,661 *pondok* and 938,397 students. In 1985, this number increased to 6,239 *pondok* with 1,084,801 students. In 1997, the Department reported 9,388 *pesantren* a total of 1,770,768 students, and in 2003-04, the number of *pesantren* reached 14,647. A similar trend is also evident with *madrasah*. In 2008 the number of *pesantren* and *madrasah* reached 21.521, with three classifications of *pesantren*: traditional *Pesantren (Salafiyah)* is 8.001 or 37,2%, modern *pesantren (khalafiyah)* is 3.881 or 18,0%, and *pesantren-madrasah* combination is 9.639 or 44,8%. The total number of *pesantren* students are

⁵ *Ibid.*, 40.

⁶ Hasbullah, *Sejarah Pendidikan Islam di Indonesia: Lintasan Sejarah Pertumbuhan dan Perkembangan*, (Jakarta: Raja Grafindo Persada, 1999), 140.

3.818.469, consist of 2.063.954 (54, 1%) boys and 1.754.515 (45, 9%) girls.⁷

The increase of the number of *pondok* institution is due to various factors such as the traditional motives, expenditures, and the most important one is the emergence of modern system of *pondok* or *pesantren*. As we have seen above data the increases of *pesantren-madrasah* combination is higher than that of traditional system, namely 44%, while the increase of modern system is 18%, the total percentage of the increase of new system of *pondok* is 62%.

The Traditional System

Historically, the centre of Islamic education was prayer places, mosques or the house of a scholar where students could sit on the floor facing their master and learn religious subjects. Since there were not certain time of study, the teaching-learning activities were conducted at night in order to allow the daily activities of the parent. In short, this informal education activities were subsequently "became the embryo of *pondok pesantren* education system".⁸ By the passage of time the institution of *pondok* developed its own tradition constituting a specific structure that consist generally of five elements. The renowned five elements are 1) scholar (*kiai*), 2) mosque (*masjid*), 3) student (*santri*), 4) *pondok* (dormintory), and 5) classical books named *kitab kuning* (yellow books).⁹

The present of *kiai* as a central figure is considerably important in *pondok pesantren* system who has significant authority in certain discipline of religious knowledge and in handling so many problems concerning the *pondok* affairs as well as the possessor of charisma to whom all inhabitant of *pondok* highly respect him.¹⁰ The mosques that exist in all *pondok pesantren* are the centre for all activities. The centrality of mosques in the history of Islamic education is manifest, since it existed long before the *madrasah* institutions were established. In the process of the establishment of *pondok pesantren* the first

⁷ <http://pendis.depag.go.id/file/dokumen/5-gab-pontren-madin.pdf>, seen on 8th November, 2010.

⁸ Zuhairini, *Sejarah Pendidikan Islam*, 212.

⁹ Farid Hasyim, "Visi Pondok Pesantren dalam Pengembangan SDM: Studi Kasus di Pondok Pesantren Mahasiswa al-Hikam", *Tesis*, (Malang: Program Pascasarjana Universitas Muhammadiyah, 1998), 39.

¹⁰ Hasbullah, *Sejarah Pendidikan ...*, 144.

building after the resident of the scholar was the mosque. Therefore it used to be placed adjacent to the house of the scholar (*kiai*). The student is another important factor or element in the *pondok pesantren* system. The number of the student who study at *pondok pesantren* depend on the authority of scholar (*kiai*). The more authoritative the scholar is the more students will come. The growing number of student is followed by the need of dormitory. Historically, the student built their own dormitory within the complex of the *pondok*, but later the institution provides dormitories for their students as well as for their teachers who substitute the *kiai* (scholar) when he is absent for some reasons. In some traditional system of *pondok pesantren* the students stay in their own dormitories and doing their domestic works such as cooking, washing cloth, ironing, cleaning the room and the likes. The most substantive element of *pondok pesantren* is its educational activities. For the traditional system of *pondok pesantren* the main curricular activities is reading the classical texts. The classical textbooks consist generally of Islamic sciences and Arabic language.¹¹ Dhofier assert that in the past, the teaching of classical books of Islam is the only formal teaching imparted in milieu of *pondok pesantren*. However, at present most of *pesantrens* take general sciences as an important part of *pesantren* education curriculum, yet the teaching of classical books is highly recognized.¹²

Along with its institutional development the *pondok pesantren* system also arranged its curriculum. The well-known traditional curriculum is divided into three levels: the *basic* level consists of theology, Islamic jurisprudence, ethic, and method of reading Qur'an. The *secondary* level consists of theology, Islamic jurisprudence, ethic of learning, Arabic grammar, and method of reading the Qur'an. The *third* level contains theology, jurisprudence, ethic and Sufism, Islamic legal philosophy, Qur'anic interpretation, science of *hadîts*, Arabic grammar, and logic (only at certain *pondok pesantren*).¹³

The systems of education were marked by the method of teaching that generally consisted of two major method of teaching: the individual method usually called *bandongan* or collective method

¹¹ Zamakhsyari Dhofier, *Tradisi Pesantren...*, 50.

¹² Hasbullah, *Sejarah Pendidikan ...*, 144.

¹³ Martin van Bruinessen, "Kitab Kuning: Books in Arabic Script Used in the *Pesantren* Milieu", *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 146 (1990), 226-269. See also http://www.let.uu.nl/~martin.vanbruinessen/personal/publications/kitab_kuning.htm.

usually named *wetonan*. In the former method every student has the opportunity to learn directly from the master teacher or his assistance, but the method is employed usually for those who already master reading the Qur'an.¹⁴ Another method is called *sorogan*, a method usually employed for new students who need individual assistance. In all those methods, the master teacher or his assistance takes important and dominant role in the teaching learning process. The method of teaching is quite simple where a number of students listen to a teacher who read and translate the old Arabic books into local languages such as Java, Sunda, Madura, and the likes.¹⁵

The emergence of madrasah systems in Indonesia become a challenge of traditional system *pondok pesantren*, since the traditional *pondok pesantren* system appeared ineffectiveness when it is compared to madrasah systems. One of the modernist figures who identified the ineffectiveness of the method of teaching-learning process at the traditional system of *pondok pesantren* was Imam Zarkasyi, one of the founders of Modern *Pondok* of Darussalam Gontor. He criticised the ineffectiveness of the method teaching Arabic language, because the students were to learn Arabic grammar (*Nahw* and *Sharf*) before they knew how to speak. They memorized grammatical rules but did not understand the meaning of the words and were unable to put the words in a complete sentence. Moreover, in that method the teachers usually translate the Arabic texts into native language,¹⁶ and as a result students thought not in Arabic but in his native language and understood religious texts through translation. Expressing his experience Imam Zarkasyi stated:

“.... I have finished reading *Fath al-Qarib* and *Fath al-Mu'in* using the method employed by my teacher, but I did not understand what I have read since I was not allowed to raise any question. If I asked, I could be deemed immoral (*sû' al-adab*). At last, I thought it is better for me to understand Arabic language first than to read the book. So, why didn't I learn Arabic language first?”¹⁷

This criticism and contemplative thought grew into a stronger conviction when Imam Zarkasyi heard the Arabic proverb that *Nahw*

¹⁴ Zamakhsyari Dhofier, *Tradisi Pesantren...*, 28.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Tim Penulis, *Biografi Kiai Imam Zarkasyi*, (Ponorogo: Darussalam Press, 1996), 44-45.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* see also Imam Zarkasyi, *Transkrip Pengarahan dalam Acara Fathul Kutub Siswa kelas VI KMI Pondok Modern Gontor*, (Gontor: Darussalam Press, 1983).

and *Şarf* to the spoken Arabic language is like salt to the food. One can eat food without salt, but cannot eat salt without food.¹⁸ So he believed that in studying any language students should not be taught grammar before they are able to speak.

The other aspects of the traditional system criticized by Imam Zarkasyi are the period of study, the curriculum and its evaluation system. In fact, in the old *pesantren* system there was no specified period of time to finish the study. This is related closely to the curriculum of the *pesantren*. According to Imam Zarkasyi, in the traditional *pesantren* the curriculum is arranged into three levels of studies. The *first* level is focused on studying Arabic grammar (*naḥw* and *şarf*) and *fiqh* by using these textbooks: *al-Ajrumiyyah*, *Matan Bina*, *Fatḥ al-Qarīb*, etc. The *second* is concentrated on *al-Sanusi*, *al-Kailâni*, and *Fatḥ al-Mu'în*. The *third* level is focused *Kifâyat al-'Awwâm*, *Umm al-Barâhîn*, *Ibnu Aqîl*, and other textbooks.¹⁹ However, the levels are not the same as classes in the modern school system, since there was no formal examination that bound the students to pass from one to another level, except reading the text in front of the *kiai*. Once the *kiai* regards a student as being capable of reading and translating the book correctly, he will allow the student to read another book or books of another level.

Another weak point of the *pesantren* curriculum is that all those subjects or books are within the category of religious sciences and no subjects of the so-called '*ulûm farḍ kifâyah* such as mathematics, physics, biology, and the likes were taught. The distribution of subjects taught at the *pesantren* based on the available texts can be categorized into: jurisprudence (*fiqh*) 20%; doctrine (*aqîdah uşûl al-dîn*) 17%; traditional Arabic grammar (*naḥw*, *şarf*, *balâghah*) 12%; *ḥadîts* collections 8%; mysticism (*tasawwuf*, *ṭarîqah*) 7%; morality (*akhlâq*) 6%; collections of prayers and invocations, Islamic catechism (*du`â'*, *wird*, *mujarrabât*) 5%; and texts in praise of the Prophets and saints (*qişaş al-anbiyâ'*, *mawlid*, *manâqib*, etc.) 6%.²⁰ The methods of teaching employed for studying those books are also traditional. The most dominant method was the translation method. This method is ineffective, since in the *pesantren* the memorization was preferred than rational understanding.

¹⁸ Tim Penulis, *Biografi Kiai...*, 53.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 46.

²⁰ Martin van Bruinessen, "Kitab Kuning:...", 226-269.

Despite the fact that the traditional *pesantren* system of Islamic education had some weaknesses, Imam Zarkasyi conceded that *pesantren* was a good place to inculcate morality and certain fundamental spirits of Islam such as simplicity (*al-basîṭah*), sincerity (*al-ikhhlâṣ*), self-reliance (*al-i'timâd 'alâ al-nafs*), Islamic brotherhood (*ukhuwwah Islâmiyyah*) and freedom (*al-ḥurriyyah*).²¹ These spirits could only be inculcated through the boarding system of the *pesantren*. These advantages of the *pesantren* system were not available in *madrasah* system. On the contrary, the positive things about the *madrasah*, especially its curriculum and method of teaching Arabic language and Islamic sciences could not be found in the *pesantren* system. In the *madrasah*, for example, students were able to speak, read and write in both English and Dutch within two years, whereas in the *pesantren* students cannot speak and write in Arabic during their study.²² However, *madrasah* system at that time was rarely using full boarding system and having spiritual leaders as *pesantren*.

The Rise of Modern System

Along with the increase of the number of *pondok pesantren* institution there were trends in some *pondoks* to adopt modern system of education. This trend is evident from the increase of the number of modern *pondok pesantren* system in 2008 alluded above (62%). However, the modernization in this sense does not necessarily imply Westernization or secularization. Modernization here is meant adoption of new method of teaching learning in holistic fashion. There were at least two types of modernization of *pondok pesantren* system; one was the adoption of school system separately from *pondok pesantren* system, like what was introduced by Wahid Hasyim at his *Pondok* of Tebuireng, Jombang. The other model of modernization was initiated by Indonesia's Hadrami community that broke away from an earlier, more conservative Arab educational association, the Jamiat Khair (*al-Jam'iyyat al-Khayriyyah*). Al-Irsyad's *madrasah* in Jakarta, established in 1913, taught a curriculum of religious and general subjects exclusively in Arabic, for which it employed mostly teachers from the Arab Middle East. The school was oriented towards

²¹ Imam Zarkasyi, "Panca Jiwa Pondok Pesantren", Paper Presented at *Kongress Umat Islam*, Yogyakarta, 1965.

²² Tim Penulis, *Biografi Kiai...*, 47.

Egyptian reformism; instead of classical *fiqh* texts it placed emphasis on the Qur'an and *ḥadīths*, *uṣūl al-fiqh*, and the works of Abduh and other modern authors. The general subjects (at the secondary school level) included mathematics, Arab history and modern European history. Many graduates of this *madrasah* spread the reformist message as teachers and preachers beyond Hadrami circles in Indonesia.²³

The other *pesantren* that also oriented towards reform movements is Persatuan Islam (Islamic Union) or Persis. It was established in Bandung in 1923, with the concentration in its efforts on 'correcting' religious belief and practice. Its jargon "back to Qur'an and Sunnah" is reflected in the *fatwa* of its founders, A. Hassan that referred exclusively to the Qur'an and *ḥadīths* but reflected a rational spirit. Its *pesantren* in Bandung run with a stronger emphasis on Qur'an and Sunnah in the religious classes. Towards the end of the colonial period, A. Hassan moved to Bangil in East Java, where he established a *pesantren* (of secondary school level) that was to teach only religious subjects. For a long time, this was the only *pesantren* in Indonesia that was deliberately oriented towards non-sectarian (non-*madhhab*) and focused very strongly on the study of *ḥadīths*.²⁴ This *pesantren* became an important training centre for religious teachers of a strict and puritan stripe.

However, among those concepts of modernizations, the most surviving model that is now even flourishing into hundreds of *pondok pesantren* is the integration of the system of *pondok pesantren* with that of *madrasah* in all their aspects. The basic consideration to adopt *madrasah* system is that it is a good system for formal education but not for non-formal and informal education. Students may learn well in the class but what happen outside the class was beyond the system. The *madrasah* is precisely like the modern school system but its system is not adequate for the inculcation of other Islamic teachings. The positive aspect of the *pesantren* was to be found in its boarding system

²³ Mahmud Yunus, *Sejarah Pendidikan Islam di Indonesia [The History of Islamic education in Indonesia]*, (Jakarta: Mutiara, 1979), 307-314. Al-Irsyad's opting for Arabic as the medium of instruction made it dependent on textbooks from Egypt, so that for several decades its students read about the geography of the Arab world and nothing or little about Indonesia. After Indonesian independence, some subjects were taught in Indonesian.

²⁴ Martin van Bruinessen, "Traditionalist and Islamist Pesantrens in Contemporary Indonesia", In Farish A. Noor, Yoginder Sikand & Martin van Bruinessen (Eds.), *The Madrasa Political Activism and Transnational Linkages*, (Netherlands: Amsterdam University Press, 2008), 224.

where non-formal and informal education or activities can be carried out within the spirit of Islam. Imam Zarkasyi, who could be deemed as the pioneer of the modernization of *pondok pesantren* tried to integrate both of them in one system. In other words, Imam Zarkasyi adopted the positive aspects of both the *madrasah* and the *pesantren* system and assimilated them within his own system. The nature of the new system is discernable from his statement below:

“This *pondok (pesantren)* is an Islamic educational institution like any other institution. The difference is only in its teaching method. We use modern teaching method but do not teach something new in religion. This *pondok (pesantren)* is a *waqf* for the Muslim *ummah* and is not the property of the *kiai* (headmaster of *pesantren*) anymore. This *pondok pesantren* has no inclination to any political parties; therefore its motto is ‘*Berdiri di atas dan untuk semua golongan*’ (Stand above and for all groups). Its educational goal is to produce a Muslim who has noble character, sound body, broad knowledge, and independent mind.”²⁵

From the foregoing statement we may infer that Imam Zarkasyi modernized at least three aspects of *pesantren* system, the three are 1) curriculum 2) education and methodology and 3) institution.²⁶ The detailed explications of those reforms are the following.

1. Modernization of Curriculum

With regard to the curriculum, the subject taught in modern system is almost the same as in the traditional system. Since majority of Indonesia Muslims are the follower of Syafi’i school of jurisprudence the modern *pondok* teaches the subject of Fiqh Syafi’ie; For theology it teaches basic compendia of Asy’ari doctrine. However, there are slightly different between modern *pesantren* and traditional *pesantren* in organizing their curriculum. In the modern *pesantren*, the subject matter of the curriculum is almost the same but they are more concise to fit with the requirement of school (*madrasah*) system for the period six years. Unlike the traditional *pesantren*, the modern *pesantren* teach general sciences additional to religious subjects.²⁷

²⁵ Imam Zarkasyi, “Pidato pada Resepsi Kesyukuran Setengah Abad Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor dan Peresmian Masjid Jami’ Gontor”, (Gontor: Unpublished Text of Speech, 1976).

²⁶ Abdullah Syukri Zarkasyi, *Gontor & Pembaharuan Pendidikan Pesantren*, (Jakarta: RajaGrafindo Persada, 2005), 12-14.

²⁷ Tim Penulis, *Biografi Kiai...*, 46.

The advantages of the *madrasah* system were its curriculum and methods of instruction, which was considerably better than that of the *pesantren*. Imam Zarkasyi adopted the curriculum of two modern *madrasah*: *Madrasah 'Arabiyah Adabiyah*, Surakarta, Central Java, and the Normal Islam (*Kulliyat al-Mu'allimin al-Islamiyyah*), West Sumatera.²⁸ Even though the two had the same advantages, Imam Zarkasyi named his integrated model *Kulliyat al-Mu'allimin al-Islamiyyah*, following the name of the *madrasah* founded by Professor Mahmud Yunus.

The adoption of modern model of *madrasah* method of teaching and curriculum organization was relevant to the situation of Muslim education system in early 20th century. It was because Muslim had separated their education systems of into two one was religious and the other secular. As a result, students who studied religious sciences know nothing about the social-natural sciences, whereas those who studied social-natural sciences had inadequate knowledge of religion. In the modern *madrasah*, the balance in the curriculum between the religious sciences and the social-natural sciences is manifest. In this new model of *pondok pesantren* the religious knowledge (*al-'ulûm al-syar'iyah*) are integrated with rational knowledge (*al-'ulûm al-'aqliyyah*). All subjects of sciences are related to religious subjects. The subject such as arithmetic and mathematic, for example, are used to support the science of inheritance (*farâid*), economic or organization. The subject of cosmography is used for understanding *'ilm al-falaq* etc. In short, there is no dualism in curriculum yet the mission of the students is to study Islam.

In addition, the integration is also followed by the application of modern methods of instruction in which some tools of teaching like the blackboard, textbooks, chalk, and other teaching materials, which were never be utilized in traditional *pondok pesantren* system, were used in modern system of *pondok*. Examinations as well as grading systems were applied and the period of study was limited to 5 to 6 years for both lower and higher secondary levels, a period of study that was never be applied in the traditional *pesantren* system.

²⁸ In fact, before the Independence there was no standard curriculum for the *madrasah*. Each *madrasah* constructed and used its own curriculum. However, the National Conference of *Madrasah* at Padang in 1936, decided for *madrasah* in the region of Minangkabau to have a standard curriculum. See Mahmud Yunus, *Sejarah Pendidikan Islam*, (Jakarta: Hidakarya Agung, 1985), 104.

Following *madrasah* system the subjects in the modern *pondok pesantren* system are classified into two categories: religious sciences and social-natural sciences. In this curriculum the students learn religious subjects such as *al-Qur'an*, *Tafsîr*, *al-Hadîts*, *Mustalah al-Hadîst*, *al-'Aqâ'id*, *Fiqh*, *Uşûl Fiqh*, *Tajwîd*, etc. as if they were learning at the traditional *pesantren*.²⁹ For the subject of Tafsir the book used was *Tafsîr Madrasi* and the summary of *al-Manâr*. For *al-Hadîts* he recommended *Bulûgh al-Marâm* and *Subul al-Salâm*, the very books used at traditional *pesantren*. In order to understand the science of Hadits (*Mustalah al-Hadîst*), the students read *Taysîr Mustalah al-Hadîst*. For the subjects of *Fiqh*, Imam Zarkasyi composed a book for the lower secondary level, but used a textbook from Egypt *al-Fiqh al-Wâdîh*, for class two until four. To teach the students to be broad-minded in legal issues, Imam Zarkasyi taught the students of class five using *Bidâyah al-Mujtahid* written by Ibnu Rusyd. This was the subject that would open the students' minds to the fact that differences among the schools of jurisprudence were mostly concern about the matter of the branches (*furû'*) and not of the fundamental (*uşûl*) one. In addition, this subject was designed to encourage the students to have broad knowledge so as to become *mujtahid*³⁰ rather than *muqallid*, or at least to improve the status of one from being *muqallid* (imitator) to the status of *Muttabi'* (follower).³¹ This subject was also related to the spirit of Islamic brotherhood which has been disrupted by Muslim disputes in legal issues on the matters that are categorized as non-fundamental that is branches or subsidiaries. Those books were taught in Arabic language, especially for class two, after the students had mastered Arabic language. This was perhaps the reason why graduates of this modern *pondok* system, write and speak fluent Arabic language in a relatively short time.³²

Besides learning the religious sciences, students also learn the social-natural sciences such as method of teaching, Mathematics,

²⁹ Tim Penulis, *Biografi Kiai...*, 50.

³⁰ *Mujtahid* is a legist formulating independent decision in legal or theological matters based on the interpretation and application of the four *uşûl* i.e. *al-Qur'ân*, *al-hadîts*, *ijmâ'*, and *qiyâs*.

³¹ Imam Zarkasyi, *Pedoman & Arah Tiap-Tiap Pelajaran pada Tiap-Tiap Kelas, Guide Book for teachers of Kulliyat al-Mu'allimin al-Islamiyyah (KMI)*. Pondok Modern Gontor, (Gontor: Darussalam Press, T.Th.), 24.

³² Tim Penulis, *Biografi Kiai...*, 378. Imam Zarkasyi, *Diktat Pekan Perkenalan*, (Gontor: Darussalam Press, T.Th.), 24-26.

Biology, Physics, Algebra, and Cosmography, as if they were learning at secular schools. In this new model of curriculum students learn religious subjects with modern teaching method, and study social-natural sciences with religious approaches. The fact was that the teaching of mathematic and arithmetic in this *pesantren* for example is oriented for the religious purposes. Even in the early period of *Kulliyat al-Mu'allimin al-Islamiyyah* all subjects of natural-social sciences were taught using Arabic as medium of instruction. Imam Zarkasyi is in the opinion that there is no dichotomy of knowledge in Islam and he used to state that: "Here the curriculum consists of 100% religious subjects and 100% subjects on social-natural sciences". It seemed that he has already aware of the necessity of reading social-natural sciences from Islamic perspectives. If this is the case, this could be deemed as in line with the present notion of Islamization of contemporary knowledge proposed by SMN. al-Attas.

To support the study of religious and social-natural sciences, Arabic and English is taught in this modern system of *pondok*. The former is the language of Islam, while the latter is the language of science. In this regard, Imam Zarkasyi introduced a new method of teaching Arabic language with the awareness of ineffective method of traditional *pondok*. That is by teaching the students to speak before reading the religious textbooks in Arabic. For this purpose he composed *Durûs al-Lughah al-'Arabiyyah*, a text for learning Arabic for beginners. He hoped that the students would be able to speak and write Arabic upon the completion of this book which was expected to finish within one year. For the next level he also composed workbook for exercises entitled *Tamrînât* and *Amtsilah al-I'râb* for Arabic Grammar.

2. Modernization of System and Methodology

With new curriculum system adopted from modern *madrrasah*, Imam Zarkasyi also applied new instructional methods. The principle he maintained was that the method of teaching is more important than the subject taught, however the teacher is more important than the method (*al-ṭarîqah ahammu min al-mâddah wa al-mudarris ahammu min al-ṭarîqah*).³³ To simplify this maxim Imam Zarkasyi used to draw the parable of the knife and the apple. The skill of cutting the apple is more important than the knife, yet knowledge

³³ Imam Zarkasyi, *Pedoman & Arah...*, 5; Tim Penulis, *Biografi Kiai...*, 119.

about the skill is not important for someone who is already skillful. So, the personal factor of a teacher is the most important one, and that is the spirit of the teacher (*rûḥ al-mudarris*). To improve the spirit of teachers at Darussalam Gontor, Imam Zarkasyi did not use the modern method, since this was beyond the capacity of the *madrasah* system. For this he employed the religious approach by enforcing the spirit of the *pesantren*, that a teacher should have, for example the spirit of sincerity (*ikhhlâṣ*) when he teaches his students. So, in spite of its advantages, *madrasah* system had certain shortage that *pesantren* could compensate.

However, according to Imam Zarkasyi, curriculum is not only the arrangement of a number of subjects to be taught in the class, but also the whole students activities within the domain of informal and non-formal education. Such an understanding of curriculum was to be found neither in the *madrasah* nor in the *pesantren* system, but in the integration of both systems. This is possible since all students stay in dormitories situated in the very place of the *madrasah*. In this integrated system, students not only have class activities, but also activities outside the class under the organized system of the *pesantren*.

It was alluded in the introduction that the salient features of the *pesantren* as a religious educational institution is the presence of a learned Muslim scholar, who plays the role of a central figure in the system, usually called *kiai*, the availability of dormitories, the presence of students, the existence of a mosque as the centre of activities and religious education. It is within those pillars along with its spirits that *pesantren* education was very effective in developing the morality and mentality of the students. Therefore, there are at least three important points that are prevalent in the *pesantren* education system: first, the spirits of *pesantren*, second, mental-skill education, and third, moral education, but due to the limit of space we will discuss the first two.

a. Inculcating the Traditional Spirit

The whole activities of this education system are guided by the spirits of *pesantren*, which according to Imam Zarkasyi can be simplified into five spirits, they are: Simplicity, Sincerity, Self-Reliance, Islamic Brotherhood, and Freedom. *Simplicity* is a way of behaving that is applicable to an individual conduct in his or her daily life. This implies that one should live based

on his or her basic needs and not on demand, in other words one should not live in a life of luxury, but a simple one. *Sincerity* is a principle for work. Imam Zarkasyi in several occasions' states that sincerity is the spirit of work (*al-ikhhlâṣ rūḥ al-'amal*) and quoting the Holy Qur'an suggests that we should follow those who does not ask for salary and they are among the guided people.³⁴ *Self-Reliance* is an important spirit applicable for both individual and institutional principle. This means the students of *pesantren* do not depend on others. Therefore in this new system individual students manage their extramural activities independently, while students as a whole are given total responsibility to manage all their students' activities in the boarding system. The *pesantren* itself as an education institution is managed to be self-reliance, which means it does not depend on the help of others. People may give financial support but *pesantren* develops not because of financial support of others. The motto that Imam Zarkasyi always reiterated was that, *pesantren* is given the support because it progresses, and not, because of the support of others, that it progresses (*Pesantren dibantu karena maju dan bukan maju karena dibantu*).

Islamic Brotherhood is a principle that Imam Zarkasyi reiterated on several occasions and implemented in the system of *pesantren* education. To inculcate this spirit, students who came from all parts of Indonesia and abroad are obliged to learn how to respect each other. Arguments, fights, quarrel, or other types of dispute among students are regarded as a crime and they could be expelled from the *pesantren*. Another step in promoting the spirit of brotherhood is through discouraging the use of vernacular and encouraging the use of Bahasa Indonesia in the first year of study. In short, all activities should support the inculcation the spirit of Islamic brotherhood. The last spirit inculcated in the *pesantren* system is *freedom*. For individuals, it is a mental attitude in which one should be free of group fanaticism, and for the *pesantren* as a private institution it implies the freedom from colonialism or oppression by a group or religious organization and the like.

There were, in fact, more than those five spirits taught to the students in this boarding system. These were reiterated in

³⁴ QS. Yasin [36]: 21.

various occasion outside the class, pasted in walls of the campus, and written in books, brochure and guide-book of the *pesantren*. The Arab maxim *man jadda wajada* (Whoever work hard will get), for example is the famous spirit of work that inculcated in the modern *pondok pesantren* system. Other maxims like “Hidup sekali, hiduplah yang berarti” (You live once live meaningfully)”, “The best man is one who is the most advantageous for others” are learned by heart. So, in the *pesantren* system the enforcement of the spirits of Islam like that of works, of morality, of social service, of brotherhood, of life, of study and the likes can be easily done.

b. Inculcating Character education

Apart from the enforcement of Islamic spirits by utterance or verbal and written words, Imam Zarkasyi designed student activities with the objectives of inculcating character education known usually as mental skill. He asserted that mental skill is more important than job skill.³⁵ The learning strategy for inculcating mental skill, according to Imam Zarkasyi is “learning by doing”. In the *pesantren* system such a strategy can be carried out by involving all students in the extramural activities or in other words, by teaching them through informal and non-formal education. In this system student are given the responsibility to manage their own activities under the umbrella of Student Organizations. The organizations which are under the guidance of senior teachers, now has 21 departments involving 312 staffs with 4000 members.³⁶ The chairman of each student organization is elected by the students through the process of *syûrû*, where students city-based club³⁷ chose one representative. Subsequently, the chosen representatives deliberate among themselves to elect five candidates for chairman, two of which will be decided by the headmaster (*kiai*) as the chairman and its deputy. The guiding principle in this organization is that

³⁵ Tim Penulis, *Biografi Kiai...*, 62.

³⁶ Tim Redaksi, *Wardun, Warta Dunia Pondok Modern Darussalam*, Tahun Ajaran 2008-2009, Vol. 62, (Gontor: Darussalam Press, 1430), 9.

³⁷ Students City-based Club is a student organization based on the city of origin of students which is intended to help the students of the same city of origin in dealing with their various problems. This club is called *Konsulat*.

everyone should be “ready to lead and ready to be led” sincerely based on the spirits of the *pesantren*. Therefore, in the election of its chairman we would not find political nuance, vested interest, political campaign and an ambitious individual.

Beyond the structure of the student organization and apart from the 21 departments, there are dormitories organizations involving many staffs such as the scout movement, sport club, public speaking club, English/Arabic club and city-based club. In these optional activities each student can chose according to his talent and preference. This implies that those who are not involved in student organizations still have opportunities in other organization. As a result, from early morning of *subuh* prayer until ten a clock at night, all students are preoccupied with activities. Imam Zarkasyi is of the opinion that young men should be kept busy and should not be free from any meaningful activities (*farâgh*). “Break or rest is no other than shifting from one activity to another”. All these organizations and clubs are quite instrumental for inculcating the mental skill to students such as the spirit of work, leadership, entrepreneurship, and management.

3. Modernization of Institutional system.

Another practice of modernization is the change of the status of the institution form personal property of the founders into the status of endowment (*waqf*). As a matter of fact, the traditional *pesantrens* were plagued with stagnancy and ineffective educational management. The central figure (*kiai*) and his family were so dominant that when he died, he would be substituted by his son or son-in-law, otherwise the *pesantren* would cease to operate. This indicates that the weak point of the *pesantren* system was its regeneration process and the structure of its organization.

To reform such weaknesses of traditional *pondok* or *pesantren* the founders of Darussalam Gontor endowed almost all the land inherited from their parents for the sake of the *pesantren*. They started in 1926 with a small step in educating the illiterate villagers, but they have in their minds big aspirations, great idealism of building a world class education institution. The new, real institutional system began three decades after the establishment of the *pesantren*, that was in 1958, when the founders declared that they endowed in writing all their inheritance to the Muslim *ummah*. From that

moment the *pesantren* was no longer the property of the founders or their descendents. It is now the property of *ummah* and all Muslims are responsible for its existence and development. The declaration also mentioned that the survival of the *pesantren* should be the responsibility of the 15 appointed members of *Waqf* Board. Another point of the declaration asserted that the *pesantren* should be developed further to qualify as an Islamic university that offers its service to the *ummah*.³⁸

With this status, the highest body at Darussalam is *Waqf* Board, whose duty *inter alia*, is to elect the Grand Headmaster of Darussalam and give a mandate to be responsible in running day to day activities. Five tasks to be carried out the Grand Headmaster are 1) running education and instruction, 2) providing infrastructures and education facilities, 3) developing *waqf* property and raising fund, 4) preparing re-generation, and 5) maintaining the welfare of teachers.³⁹

Presently, after the death of Imam Zarkasyi in 1985, the *pesantren* has survived well and has been properly maintained, and its property had been successfully developed. The *pesantren* has no less than 27 business enterprises in various sectors such as bookshop, pharmacy, food industry, rice field, mini market, radio station, magazine, restaurant, forest and the likes. The *pesantren* has about 15 branches throughout Indonesia and its system had been developed and modeled by its graduate in about 200 *pesantren* employing the same integrative system.

The modern system of *pondok pesantren* combined the study of classical texts with modern concepts of education and a reformist spirit; it became the example on which a range of other reformist-oriented schools later modeled themselves. The founders of Gontor was inspired not only by the reformist trend in Egypt (the Dar al-'Ulum, where Abduh and Rashid Rida were active) but also at more modernist experiments in India, the Anglo-Muslim college of Aligarh and even Rabindranath Tagore's philosophy of education and his Santiniketan experiment. Unlike *salafi pesantren*, at this modern *pesantren* the didactic methods were those of the modern school, and students were obliged to communicate in either Arabic or English, in order to train them in active mastery of these languages.

³⁸ *Piagam Penyerahan Wakaf Pondok Modern Gontor*, Ponorogo, 1958.

³⁹ Abdullah Syukri Zarkasyi, *Gontor & Pembaharuan...*, 11.

The spirit of reform is manifest in its curriculum, where religious subjects are studied in balance with secular subjects. Logic, mathematic, physic, biology and other subjects are learned along with religious subjects. To inculcate the open-mindedness of the student in legal matter student learn comparative law using the work of Ibnu Rusyd, *Bidâyah al-Mujtahid*. Looking at curriculum and tradition within *pesantren* of Gontor, Martin van Bruinessen noted that *pesantren* of Gontor positioned itself ideologically between the NU and Muhammadiyah; some of its graduates became teachers in the NU *pesantrens*, others in Muhammadiyah schools. Several went on to establish their own *pesantrens* on the Gontor model, or to reform an existing one, with their Gontor experience guiding them.⁴⁰

The above model and curriculum of *pesantren* has been practiced for long time ago with some modifications and improvements. Many *pesantrens* nowadays even teach a government-approved curriculum consisting of 70% general subjects and 30% religious subjects and are similar to the government-run religious schools known as *madrasah*. The outputs of this indigenous Islamic education institution played pivotal role on the development of human resource and building Indonesian nation prior to and after its independence. They are spread over diverse field of works not necessarily in religious activities or institutions. It goes without saying that student of *pondok pesantren* and its graduates had been and are one of the most important groups in Indonesia. In fact, numbers of Indonesian political leaders are graduated from *pesantren*. The national figures such as Hasyim Muzadi, Din Syamsuddin, Hidayat Nur Wahid, or Saleh al-Jufri, are reputed with their moderate stance.

To get clear picture of the *pondok pesantren*, it is interesting to quote some comments of Western researchers and observers of *pondok pesantren* system. Harry J. Benda asserted that "The history of Indonesian Islam is, then, the history of this expanding *santri* civilization and its impact upon the religious, social, and economic life of Indonesia."⁴¹ Another scholar noted that the significant role played by *pondok pesantren* is in its being the centre of Sufism and child education.⁴² Anderson has depicted that "...it was perhaps the

⁴⁰ Martin van Bruinessen, "Traditionalist and Islamist...", 223.

⁴¹ Harry J. Benda, *The Crescent and the Rising Sun*, (The Hague and Bandung: Van Houve, 1958), 14.

⁴² Julia Day Howell, "Sufism and the Indonesian Islamic Revival", in *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 60, No. 3 (August 2001), 701-729, especially, 33, 50, 54.

pondok pesantren that best reflected traditional society's conception of the appropriate institution to prepare its youth for re-emergence into society."⁴³ In addition, he also noted *pondok pesantren* student had played pivotal role in defending the country from colonialism. Sidney Jones noted the role of *pondok pesantren* in bridging the gap not only between the elites and the poor farmers, but also between the divine and mundane things, between worldly affairs and the hereafter.⁴⁴ In short, Jone emphasized the crucial role played by *pondok pesantren* in maintaining social stability by building and keeping the balance of difference social status. The unique system of *pondok pesantren* is incomparable with secular education system, especially in inculcating the spirit of life. Lance Castles' notes after his three months research at *Pondok pesantren* Gontor suggested that students of *pesantren* are different from those who do not study at *pondok pesantren* is in their spirit of life as they conceive that life is struggle, either in economic or in preaching their religion.⁴⁵ Harry J. Benda asserted that "The history of Indonesian Islam is, then, the history of this expanding *santri* civilization and its impact upon the religious, social and economic life of Indonesia."⁴⁶ Another scholar noted that the significant role played by *pondok pesantren* is in its being the centre of Sufism and child education.⁴⁷ Anderson has rightly depicted that "...it was perhaps the *pondok pesantren* that best reflected traditional society's conception of the appropriate institution to prepare its youth for re-emergence into society."⁴⁸ In addition, he also noted *pondok pesantren* student had played pivotal role in defending the country from colonialism. Sidney Jones noted the role of *pondok pesantren* in bridging the gap not only between the elites and the poor farmers, but also between the divine and mundane things, between worldly affairs and the hereafter.⁴⁹ In short, Jone

⁴³ Benedict R. O'G. Anderson, *Java in a Time of Revolution: Occupation and Resistance, 1944-1946*, (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1972), 5.

⁴⁴ Sidney Jones, *The Javanese Pesantren: Between Elite and Peasantry*, in *Reshaping Local Worlds: Formal Education and Cultural Change in Rural South-East Asia*, (New Haven, Conn: Yale Center for International and Area Studies, 1991), 25.

⁴⁵ Castles, "Notes on the Islamic School at Gontor", *Indonesia*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1966, 30-45.

⁴⁶ Harry J. Benda, *The Crescent and the Rising Sun*, (The Hague and Bandung: Van Houve, 1958), 14.

⁴⁷ Julia Day Howell, "Sufism and the Indonesian...", 701-729, especially 33, 50, 54.

⁴⁸ Benedict R. O'G. Anderson, *Java in a Time...*, 5.

⁴⁹ Sidney Jones, *The Javanese Pesantren...*, 25.

emphasized the crucial role played by *pondok pesantren* in maintaining social stability by building and keeping the balance of difference social status. The unique system of *pondok pesantren* is incomparable with secular education system, especially in inculcating the spirit of life. Lance Castles' notes after his three months research at *Pesantren Gontor* suggested that students of *pondok pesantren* are different from those who do not study at *pondok pesantren* is in their spirit of life as they conceive that life is struggle, either in economic or in preaching their religion.⁵⁰ George Quinn, lecturer at Australian National University, depicts the experience of *pondok pesantren* student (*santri*) as follows:

“...studying Islam at a *pesantren* school was a mind- expanding experience. Far from narrowing their view of the world, it brought them into contact with the diversity of their own country and opened a window on the world far beyond Indonesia ...they were not ignorant of that “other” global order. Many students had acquired a passable command of English. They were knowledgeable and even enthusiastic about the sports and popular culture of the West. They knew far more about the secular and “Christian” worlds of Europe and America, than the average Australian student knows about the world of Islam.”⁵¹

The above comments are ample evidences that *pondok pesantren* system is comprehensive system of education that involved formal, informal and non-formal education. Compared to secular education system it could be more progressive and effective especially in educating mentality and morality of young generation.

Conclusion

With reference to the trend to modernize *pondok pesantren* system of education the point that worth mentioning here is that the *pondok pesantren* education system in Indonesia is no longer portrayed as backwards, poor, narrow mindedness, orthodox, and away from the life of modern society. It is not only similar to those who study at secular schools, but also could compete them in academic achievement and even in national leadership. Be that as it

⁵⁰ Castles, “Notes on the Islamic...”, 30-45.

⁵¹ George Quinn, “A wrong view of Islamic Schools”, *The Canberra Times*, 19 July 2004.

may, the modernized system of *pondok pesantren* still maintains the traditional values that had been practiced from very long time ago. The authority of *Kiai* as central figure of traditional *pondok pesantren* system is maintained in modern *pondok pesantren* system; the spirit of life in the traditional *pondok pesantren* environment such as sincerity, simplicity, self-reliance, Islamic Brotherhood, and independence mind are also practiced in the modern *pondok pesantren* system. The added value of this integrated system of formal, informal, and non-formal education are the effectiveness of moral and mental inculcation towards the students.[]

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