



The Moderation of Islam In The Modern Islamic Boarding School of Gontor

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Abstract: *Gontor Modern Darussalam Islamic Boarding School is one of the Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia. this research will uncover the moderate Islamic model that is superior to Trimurti (three Darussalam Darussalam leaders) and will explain the factors that cause it to be moderate in responding to the issues of Islam, nationality and education. research classified as qualitative research and uses descriptive analysis method. In this study the researchers concluded that the Gontor Islamic Boarding School had significantly contributed the moderate Islamic model. In the aspect of Islam, this educational institution applies the principle of Standing above and for all groups. Gontor's moderation of Islam with the theological model of Ahlus Sunnah wal Jama'ah, is not fanatical about the flow of certain Islamic thought, so that it becomes a bridge and mediator for all groups. In political matters, Gontor's policy is to accept Pancasila as the basis of the Indonesian State and support the Unity of the Republic of Indonesia. In the field of education, Gontor's education implements the*

modernization of the education system to create many broad-minded Muslim scholars.

Abstrak: *Pondok Pesantren Modern Darussalam Gontor adalah salah satu lembaga pendidikan Islam yang ada di Indonesia. penelitian ini akan mengungkap model Islam moderat yang diunggulkan oleh Trimurti (tiga pemimpin pondok Darussalam,) dan akan menjelaskan faktor-faktor yang menyebabkannya moderat dalam menanggapi isu-isu Islam, kebangsaan dan pendidikan. penelitian tergolong dalam penelitian lapangan bersifat kualitatif dan menggunakan metode diskriptif analisis. Dalam penelitian ini peneliti menyimpulkan bahwa Pondok Pesantren Gontor telah memberikan kontribusi model Islam moderat secara signifikan. Dalam aspek Islam, lembaga pendidikan ini menerapkan prinsip Berdiri diatas dan untuk semua golongan. Moderasi Islam Gontor dengan model teologi Ahlus Sunnah wal Jama'ah, tidak fanatik pada aliran pemikiran Islam tertentu, sehingga menjadi jembatan dan mediator bagi semua golongan. Dalam masalah politik, kebijakan Gontor adalah menerima Pancasila sebagai dasar Negara Indonesia dan mendukung Kesatuan Republik Indonesia. Dibidang pendidikan, pendidikan Gontor mengimplementasikan modernisasi sistem pendidikan untuk menciptakan banyak sarjana Muslim yang berpikiran luas.*

Kata kunci: *Gontor; Moderasi; Sistem Pendidikan.*

A. Introduction

The history of the Islamic thought of the leaders of Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor related to their *wasathiyah* of Islam (moderate Islam) in responding to Islamic dynamics, nationality, and education in Indonesia has not been studied in depth. In the terminology of Islamic studies in the international world, the moderate Islam is often translated as justly-balanced Islam or a middle path of Islam. The tradition of Indonesian Muslims as *ummatan wasathan* has been formed through a very-long historical journey. With the paradigm of *wasathiyah*, Indonesian Muslims are far from religious sectarianism, ethnic and socio-political conflict.¹ Therefore Islam of Indonesia is called as a religion with smiling face.²

¹Azyumardi Azra, "Kembali ke Jati Diri" in *Republika*, 17 November 2016 and <https://profazra.wordpress.com/tag/islam-moderat>.

²Azyumardi Azra, "Islam in South Aisa: Tolerance and Radicalisme", paper of Miegunyah Public Lecture, The University of Melbourne, 6 April 2005 and www.bgu.edu.

This research is very significant to reveal the model of moderate Islam that was seeded by Trimurti (the three leaders of Darussalam, Gontor) and explain the factors that cause its moderation in responding the issues of Islam, nationality and education.

Many previous works have taken more emphasis on the managerial aspects of Gontor education, such as *Kepemimpinan K.H. Imam Zarkasyi di Pondok Modern Darussalam Gontor 1977-1985 Perspektif Teori Kepemimpinan Situasional*, written by Annas Thohir Syamsudin from the State University of Malang in 2010. Then, there was a journal article entitled *Ta'thir al-Harakah al-Salafiyyah bi Mishr 'ala al-Mujaddidin bi Indunisiya fi Tathwir al-Tarbiyah al-Islamiyyah*, written by Amal Fathullah Zarkasyi (the son of K.H. Imam Zarkasyi, one of Trimurti who established the Modern Islamic Boarding School of Gontor) at *Studia Islamika* Journal in 2013, that explains about this Islamic boarding school as a modern Islamic education institution with its *mu'asharah* (modernity) and Islamic character (*ashalah*).³

In this qualitative research, the steps of writing history (or historical method) are used as a guide to give an analysis.⁴ The primary data used as the main reference in this study are the works of the leaders of the Darussalam, Gontor, relevant documents, interviews with related informants, and observation of learning activities. The secondary data to support primary data are other relevant books that have conformity with the main focus of the discussion in this study. The data analysis uses content analysis,⁵ and it is assisted by hermeneutics for interpreting various symbols and values contained in language expressions⁶ to find main factor behind action or event.

³A. F. Zarkasyi, "Ta'thir al-Harakah al-Salafiyyah bi Mishr 'ala al-Mujaddidin bi Indunisiya fi Tathwir al-Tarbiyah al-Islamiyyah." *Studia Islamika*, (2013), p. 275-324.

⁴Louis Gottschalk, *Mengerti Sejarah*, trans. Nugroho Notosusanto (Jakarta: Universitas Indonesia Press, 1985), p. 39.

⁵Noeng Muhadjir, *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif* (Yogyakarta: Rake Sarasin, 2000), p. 68.

⁶Kaelan, *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif Bidang Filsafat* (Yogyakarta: Paradigma, 2005), p. 81.

The meaning of moderation (*i'tidal*) is an attitude that tends to avoid extremism and radicalism.⁷ The moderation is similar to *wasathiyah* way, means "to be in the middle" or "moderate".⁸ The Antonym of moderation is extremism (*tatharruf*) that exaggerates and exceeds appropriate limits, a rejection of differences of opinions and beliefs, and an intolerance.⁹ Therefore, the inherent indicators for moderation are avoidance of extremity and radical actions, respect to plurality of opinions and differences in beliefs, and tolerant behaviour. This moderation concept is used in analyzing the characteristics of Islamic *wasathiyah* in the Modern Islamic Boarding School of Darussalam, Gontor, Ponorogo.

In the context of Islam, the term of *wasathiyah* is usually associated with the *Ahlu Sunnah wal Jama'ah* theology with its position as moderate theology. In the history of Islamic theology, it is often mentioned that the fraction that occur within the Muslims have been predicted by the Prophet through his tradition. It was narrated from Abu Hurayrah, that the Prophet said: "The Jews have been divided into 71 groups, Christians have been divided into 72 groups, while my followers will be divided into 73 groups." It was narrated from 'Abd Allah bin 'Amr bin al-Ash, that the Prophet said: "Surely it will happen to my followers of what happened to Banu Isra'il. Banu Isra'il had been divided into 72 groups, and my followers will be divided into 73 groups. All of them will be in hell, except one group. They ask; "O my prophet, who is the one excluded? He answered: My followers and my companions. "It was narrated from Anas bin Malik, that the Messenger of Allah said: " Banu Isra'il had been divided into 71 groups, and my followers will be divided into 72 groups. All are in hell, except one group, namely *al-Jama'ah*. "¹⁰

⁷David Bernard Guralnik and Victoria Neufeldt, (eds.), *Webster's New World College Dictionary* (New York: A Simon & Schuster Macmillan Company, 1996), p. 871.

⁸Hans Wehr, *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic* (Beirut: Librarie du Liban, 1980), p.1066.

⁹Khalil 'Ali Haidar, *I'tidal am Tatharruf: Ta'ammulat Naqdiyyah fi Tayyar al-Wasathiyah al-Islamiyyah* (Kuwait: Dar Qirthas li al-Nasyr, 1988), p. 27-28.

¹⁰Abd al-Qahir al-Baghdadi, *al-Farq Bayn al-Firaq* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, nd.), p. 5-7.

Al-Maturidi is a theologian and an interpreter who prioritized the middle way in responding to differences of opinions among theological schools. The attitude of *Tawassuth* (taking the middle way) is putting *Ahlus Sunnah wal Jama'ah* of Maturidite school in a moderate position which is not extreme. Such an attitude is apparently also taken by the Ash'arite school, although they had small differences which were not principle, because those differences only related to *furu'iyah* (minor branch issues).¹¹

B. The History of Gontor Modern Islamic Boarding School

The first founders of Modern Islamic Boarding School Darussalam, Gontor were three brothers called the Trimurti. They were K.H. Ahmad Sahal (1901-1977), K.H. Zainudin Fananie (1905-1967), and K.H. Imam Zarkasyi (1910-1985) who had been educated by their mother, Raden Ajeng Sudarmi since their childhood (because their father, Raden Santoso Anom Besari, died when they were child) to be great figures, open minded persons, and not to be fanatic towards one group.

Ahmad Sahal -from his childhood to adolescence- pursued education at the Salafiah (or traditional) Islamic Boarding School in Ponorogo, such as in Joresan, Kauman, and Durisawo. Sahal then continued his education to the Tremas Islamic Boarding School, Pacitan. Sahal was estimated to have graduated from the Tremas Islamic Boarding School in 1920. Sahal continued his education at the Islamic Boarding School of Siwalan Panji, Sidoarjo. The Siwalan Panji Islamic Boarding School in Sidoarjo was famous for its *tasawuf*. Therefore, many national figures, such as Syaikhona Kholil Bangkalan, K.H. Hasyim Asy'ari, K.H. As'ad Syamsul Arifin Situbondo and K.H. Ridwan Abdullah (the creator of the NU logo), graduated from the Siwalan Panji. In the Siwalan Panji Islamic boarding school, Sahal studied Islamic studies such as theology, fiqh, Islamic history, nahwu, and sharaf. In fact, he learned to know and explore Sufism. K.H. Ahmad Sahal is expert in islamic Salafiah books (*kitab kuning*), scouting and organization management. The Islamic education at Pondok Siwalan Panji was very influential on Ahmad Sahal's soul. After exploring some Islamic boarding schools,

¹¹Al-Maturidi, *Kitab al-Tawhid* (Istanbul: Al-Maktabah al-Islamiyyah, 1979), p. 11-13.

he returned to Gontor in 1925 and was eager to develop Islamic education in his residence.¹²

As an activist in the Islamic movement, Sahal had never missed attending the Muslim congress. He was active in various activities of the Sarekat Islam, especially after returning from Siwalan Panji Islamic boarding school. In each congress, Ahmad Sahal was not bound by any sect, even though he was sent by the Sarekat Islam Branch of Madiun. After the fourth Congress of Al-Islam on August 21-27th, 1925 in Yogyakarta, the fifth Congress of Al-Islam was held in Bandung on February 6th, 1926. One of the agendas was to chose the delegation from Indonesia, even though it failed to make an agreement. In both congresses, the reformists increasingly dominated the congress, so that this problem found its goal at the Cianjur meeting which decided to send HOS Cokroaminoto and K.H. Mas Mansur as an Indonesian envoy to Makkah to attend the worldwide Islamic Congress held on June 1st, 1926 in the initiative of King Ibn Saud.

In Sahal's view, the decision to send HOS Cokroaminoto and K.H. Mas Mansur was not just a political matter. At that time, there was still rarely a cleric who mastered Arabic and English at once. These two figures were not mastering the two languages. K.H. Mas Mansur is fluent in Arabic, while HOS Cokroaminoto is fluent in English. This fact inspired Sahal to create an institution with the strength of two languages, namely Arabic and English, and to create a potential international-scale Islamic leader who was able to integrate the two languages and to be a spokesman for Islam on the world forum.

In addition, the diversity of thoughts from various organizations participating in the Congress of Al-Islam led to the big idea that Gontor must educate and create Muslim scholars (*ulama* who were intellectuals on religious and non-religious sciences), and Gontor must stand above and for all groups to avoid the domination of certain groups. Various Muslim events increasingly expanded Ahmad Sahal's intellectual network. For example, he met HOS Cokroaminoto, K.H. Mas Mansur, Haji Agus Salim, K.H. Hasyim As'ari, and other figures.

¹²M. H. Sanusi, *Trimurti: Menelusuri Jejak, Sintesa, dan Genealogi Berdirinya Pondok Modern Gontor* (Bantul: Etifaq, 2016), p. 68-73.

Meanwhile, at the same time, there was a decision of Muslims meeting in Surabaya led by K.H. Hasyim Asy'ari and attended by K.H. Wahab Hasbullah and other figures regarding the formation of the Hijaz Committee representing Muslims facing the King of Saudi Arabia in conveying the Hijaz issue. This meeting on January 31th 1926 resulted the formation of the Nahdlatul Ulama organization with K.H. Hasyim Asy'ari as the leader. Thus, the establishment of Modern Islamic Boarding School Darussalam Gontor on September 19, 1926 was realized after the birth of the Nahdlatul Ulama on January 31, 1926. This implies that the revival of the *ulama* was expected to start from Gontor.¹³

K.H. Zainuddin Fanani was the younger brother of K.H. Ahmad Sahal. Zainudin Fanani began studying in the Islamic boarding school of Josari, Jetis. After completing elementary and secondary schools of the colonial Dutch, he continued studying at the Islamic boarding school of Tremas, Pacitan, and then continued to the Siwalan Panji Islamic boarding school in Sidoarjo. After finishing his study, he continued his education in Solo. His movement to Solo accidentally coincided with the establishment of Muhamadiyah organization in 1912. The Muhamadiyah encouraged him to be active in the Islamic movement. He had attended the Muhamadiyah Kweekschool school in Yogyakarta. This school was a school to prepare prospective teachers, therefore most of the students were able to write Arabic and read Arabic books. The school then became the school of *Muallimat* and *Muallimin* in the next years.

When Fanani's brother, Kyai Sahal, founded the new Islamic boarding school of Gontor in 1926, Fanani was assigned by K.H. Ibrahim, the Muhamadiyah leader, to expand the Muhamadiyah network in South Sumatera. He was ranked as the consul of the Muhammadiyah in South Sumatra by occupying an office in Palembang. He also had a brilliant career in both mass organization and government. He was then assisted by his younger brother, Imam Zarkasyi, to write his ideas concerning the modern education system in their book entitled *Pedoman Pendidikan Modern* (The Handbook of Modern Education).

The youngest Trimurti figure was K.H. Imam Zarkasyi who applied education reform significantly to the Gontor Islamic Boarding

¹³*Ibid.*, p. 78-93.

School.¹⁴ Imam Zarkasyi studied in the village located in Nglumpang. In addition to attending school, he also studied at the Joresan Islamic Boarding School (about one kilometer from Gontor) in the afternoon until the evening with his elder two brothers. After completing his study at the Ongko Loro School and at the Josari Islamic Boarding School in 1925, he continued his education in Solo (Central Java).

The Jamsaren Islamic Boarding School was famous for its graduates' ability to memorize *Alfiyah* in Arabic grammar and its pioneering in the teaching of the Qur'an and hadith. Madrasah Arabiyah Islamiyah (MAI), known as Arabische School, had students who were predominantly of Arab descent. The learning duration was six years and all lessons were presented in Arabic. Its subject matter included religious and non-religious subject matters with a ratio of 50:50. Imam Zarkasyi, who studied in the Jamsaren Islamic Boarding School for about three years, was known to be active in discussions, scouting, sports, and marching. His discussion group was independent and open to all groups or parties. At that time, he chose to be open-minded, mediator, and unifier person because of his tendency towards Muslim unity.

The experience of studying in the Islamic Arabiyah School for three years was very memorable for him, especially when he was studying with Mohammad Oemar al-Hasyimi (alumnus of the University of Zaitun, Tunis). For him, this teacher was a great figure and teacher who was very exemplary, especially in the method of teaching his students. Subsequently Ustadz al-Hasyimi suggested Imam Zarkasyi to continue his study to Padang Panjang, West Sumatra, where many Egyptian-graduated scholars taught there. Besides, it was the gateway for the renewal of Islamic thought to Indonesia in the late 19th century and the pioneer of various advanced educational institutions, such as the Madrasah Adabiyah, the Madrasah Diniyah al-Yunusiyah, the Sumatra Thawalib, and the Normal Islam. Imam Zarkasyi was urged by his strong intention to study and full support from his brothers, the he departed to Padang Panjang in 1930.

In Padang Panjang, the first school entered by Imam Zarkasyi was the Sumatra Thawalib School. Imam Zarkasyi immediately sat in the sixth class (the second class of Islamic junior high school), and

¹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 181.

finished his study well in two years. After graduating from the Sumatra Thawalib School, he continued his education at the Normal Islam School or Kulliyatul Mu'allimin al-Islamiyah founded by the Association of Islamic Religious Teachers (PGAI or *Persatuan Guru-guru Agama Islam*) in Padang on April 1, 1931 and headed by Ustadz Mahmud Yunus. He found good ways to teach correct Arabic and English, as well as insights on modern education from Ustadz Mahmud Yunus. Here, he deepened his knowledge of the theory of language teaching through direct method, in addition to educational sciences. After completing his education in 1935, he was appointed as Director of the Muhammadiyah Kweekschool in Padang Sidempuan with an assignment letter directly from Ustadz Mahmud Yunus. After one year of carrying out his duties, Imam Zarkasyi returned to Gontor in 1936.

The first step to revive Islamic Boarding School of Gontor was by opening the *Tarbiyatul Athfal*, a children's education program for the Gontor people. The opening of the *Tarbiyatul Athfal* was conducted on September 19, 1926 by K.H. Ahmad Sahal.¹⁵ The students of *Tarbiyatul Athfal* were educated directly by K.H. Ahmad Sahal. Because of his effort and tenacity, the students who studied at the Gontor Islamic boarding school had reached 300 in the first three years. They studied without being charged anything. In 1932 Gontor's caregiver opened an advanced program from *Tarbiyatul Athfal*, namely *Sullamul Muta'allimin*. At this level the students were taught more depth about fiqh lessons, hadith, interpretation, the translation of the Qur'an, speech, and discussion. Apart from that, there was also a little provision to be a teacher. The students studied psychology and pedagogy. In addition, they were also taught about soft skills, arts, sport, scouting, and so on. By ten years of Gontor re-opening, the *Tarbiyatul Athfal* had more than a thousand students.

This enhancement satisfied the Gontor Islamic boarding school which had been just re-opened. At the 10th anniversary ceremony, Gontor opened a level education program, junior high school and senior high school called *Kulliyatul Mu'allimin al-Islamiyyah* (KMI). This new education program is handled by K.H. Imam Zarkasyi, who had previously led a similar school (but for women), namely *Mu'allimat Muhammadiyah* in Padang Sidempuan, North Sumatra. In

¹⁵Team of writers, *Biografi K.H. Imam Zarkasyi: Dari Gontor Merintis Pesantren Modern* (Ponorogo: Gontor Press, 1996), p. 28-34 and 79-83.

this anniversary, there was also a new name for this revived Gontor Islamic boarding school, i.e. *Pondok Modern Darussalam, Gontor* (the Modern Islamic Boarding School of Darussalam, Gontor). This name was given by the Gontor society, although its real name was Darussalam (*Kampung Damai*).

In the beginning of its establishment, the curriculum applied at the *Kulliyatul Mu'allimin al-Islamiyyah* was similar to another Islamic school curriculum with various modifications to balance between Islamic boarding school and *madrasah*, religious and non-religious subjects, and supplemented with specific subjects prepared by K.H. Imam Zarkasyi himself. To maintain the characteristic of Islamic boarding school education, K.H. Imam Zarkasyi determined the *Panca Jiwa* (Five Spirits) of Gontor Modern Islamic boarding school. The *Panca Jiwa* consisted of *keikhlasan* (sincerity) *kesederhanaan* (simplicity), *kemandirian* (independence), *ukhuwwah Islamiyah* (Islamic brotherhood), and *kebebasan* (freedom). It was a reference for the implementation of education in the *Kulliyatul Mu'allimin al-Islamiyyah*. Sincerity in the Gontor Islamic boarding school colored the lives of all teachers and students at Gontor. Simplicity is instilled in the students through daily living. Independence was taught to the students by conditioning them to organize their own lives under the guidance and supervision of the *Kiai* (the leader of Gontor Islamic boarding school) and the teachers. For this reason, the *Organisasi Pelajar Pondok Modern* (OPPM) or the Organization of Modern Islamic Boarding Students was formed. The spirit of Islamic brotherhood was fostered in order to eliminate tribal or regional fanaticism and to foster a sense of nationality. Nevertheless, regional art festival was able to be performed in certain events to broaden the insights of students about the diversity of Indonesian culture.¹⁶

On November 17, 1963 the Gontor Modern Islamic Boarding School began to launch an Islamic university by establishing the university. The ideal form of higher education to be achieved by the Gontor is the synthesis of al-Azhar University in Egypt with its strong endowments, Aligarh University in India with its modernity and revival of Islam, Shantiniketan in India with its peace, and Syanggit in Mauritania (Africa) with its sincerity of caregivers. In accordance with the state regulations, the name of the Darussalam University was

¹⁶*Ibid.*, p. 49-54 and 58-65.

changed to the *Institut Pendidikan Darussalam* (IPD) or the Educational Institute of Darussalam which graduated *Sarjana Muda* (Bachelor's degree) in 1966 with an Arabic or English language thesis which was recognized as the same as the Bachelor of State Islamic Institute.¹⁷

C. The Gontor's Moderation on Islamic Affairs

The founders of Modern Islamic Boarding School Darussalam Gontor had the same idea in setting up an Islamic boarding school that gave priority to the unity of Muslims so that the *ukhuwah Islamiyah* was put into one pillar of *Panca Jiwa* at the Gontor Modern Islamic Boarding School. For this reason, they encouraged Muslims to unite and not to be divided. K.H. Imam Zarkasyi asserted that Muslims should not quarrel about the *khilafiyah* (disputed problems). Hence there is no need for hostility among Muslims because the *khilafiyah* problem is in the *furu'iyah* (branches matter) only.¹⁸

According to K.H. Imam Zarkasyi, the problems of *khilafiyah* are the problems that are disputed by the Islamic law and included in the affairs of Islamic jurisprudence. These *furu'iyah* problems are called *al-masa'il al-ijtihadiyah* (ijtihadiyah problems). Examples of *khilafiyah* problems with all their thousands of explanations are found in Ibn Rusyd's *Bidayah al-Mujtahid*, while the causes of the emergence of the *khilafiyah* problem has been recorded in the book of *Asbab al-Khilaf* written by Abdul Muhin al-Turki. In this book, the Gontor's teachers explain the basic points of disputes about the branches of problems. Regarding how to unite Muslims and not be disturbed by *khilafiyah* problems, it can be read from the book of *al-Wihdah al-Islamiyyah* by Muhammad Rashid Ridha and *al-Inshaf fi Bayan Asbab al-Khilaf* by al-Dahlawi. Finally, Muslims must have *tasamuh* (tolerant behavior) about various *khilafiyah* problems.

The Gontor Modern Islamic Boarding School teaches and applies the attitude of *tasamuh* to all its students. The students were given the freedom to discuss the *khilafiyah* problems and chose appropriate opinions with their proper arguments. Among the steps of

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 79-82.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 40, 63, 452-455, and 740.

guiding tolerance in differences of opinion or *khilafiyah* is through the teaching of the book of *Bidayatul Mujtahid* which explains a lot of religious *khilafiyah* problems. Moreover the director of the Gontor Modern Islamic boarding school is assertive and decisive to the students who do not follow the direction of Islamic boarding school caregivers on *khilafiyah* issues. The planting of *ukhuwwah Islamiyah* is very important to raise a sense of nationality in the soul of the students because Indonesia is a country with pluralistic people.¹⁹

The Trimurti's policy of Gontor Modern Islamic Boarding School to avoid contention of the *khilafiyah* problems was driven by the condition of Muslims that were fragmented in many schools of thought and organizations. The Islamic history shows that the pioneers of Islamic renewal movement and modernization of Islam, including Muhammad ibn Abdul Wahhab (1703-1787), Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905), and Rashid Ridha (1865-1935), strongly emphasized their thoughts on returning to the Qur'an revealed by Allah and the hadith said by the Prophet Muhammad in order to resolve the problems of Muslims who were experiencing backwardness and setbacks in various aspects of life in general. Their thoughts were understood and followed by Islamic reformers in Indonesia, such as K.H. Ahmad Dahlan (the leader of Muhammadiyah organization) and Ahmad Hasan (the leader of Persis or Persatuan Islam organization), who were passionate about spreading the idea of "returning to the Qur'an and hadith" and try to do monotheism purification by cleansing the religious traditions of Muslims in Indonesia that are still colored by the practices of superstition, heresy, and *khurafat*.²⁰

The development of Islamic renewal movement caused a reaction from Muslims who deeply held the religious traditions that had been entrenched in some Muslims in Indonesia. Because of that fact, the Nahdlatul Ulama was established, an Islamic organization that acts as a defender of religious traditions and faces "attacks" from Islamic reform groups. The contact between the renewal support group (which was referred to the modernist group) and the tradition defender group (which was related to the traditionalist group) then

¹⁹*Ibid.*, p. 63-64, 461-466 and interview with Ustadz Syarif Abadi at Gontor Modern Islamic Boarding School on 30 August 2018.

²⁰Deliar Noer, *Gerakan Modern Islam di Indonesia 1900-1942* (Jakarta: LP3ES, 1982), p. 84-103.

caused disputes within the Muslim people in Indonesia. The religious sectarian conflict was increasingly tapering with blaming others so that it was disturbing and detrimental to the unity of Muslims.²¹

This condition inspired Trimurti, the founders of the Gontor Modern Islamic Boarding School, to get rid of the divisions and conflicts of Indonesian Muslims due to sharp disputes between the modernist and traditionalist groups. The Gontor Modern Islamic Boarding School is an Islamic education institution that accommodates all students from various backgrounds of diverse Islamic organizations. The principle held firmly by Trimurti is *Berdiri di Atas dan Untuk Semua Golongan* (Standing above and for all groups). Therefore the Gontor Modern Islamic Boarding School accommodates all Muslims who want to study in this educational institution without discrimination the different religious circumstances of students.

The accommodative policy of the Gontor Modern Islamic Boarding School does not mean that this institution does not take control the differences of religious practices in the society. The Gontor Modern Islamic Boarding School actually applies disciplined supervision of the students so that they become tolerant towards sectarian differences or religious *khilafiyah*. This policy is accompanied by learning about the importance of religious tolerance or *tasamuh* to the students through teaching book of *Bidayah al-Mujtahid*. Therefore they are able to be modern Muslims with tolerant soul, forward thought, and as well as to make priority on *ukhuwwah Islamiyah*.²² Thus, the characteristics of Islam at the Gontor Modern Islamic Boarding School are moderate and accommodative because this educational institution places its position in the middle, prioritizes tolerance, and accepts all students of various Islamic backgrounds.

D. The Gontor's Moderation on Political Affairs

The three Trimurti figures are very tolerant and not fanatical in one school of thought. They have a commitment to advance the

²¹*Ibid.*, p. 103, 241-243, 247, and 259.

²²*Ibid.*, p. 46, 740, 461-463 and interview with Ustadz Syarif Abadi at Gontor Modern Islamic Boarding School on 30 August 2018.

Islamic society, especially through education. They play a role in giving thought to the world of the Islamic movement and they are also active in the national movement. The Trimurti's policy towards the Jakarta Charter is to accept the *Pancasila* (Five pillars of Indonesia) with the first precept of *Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa* (the One Godhead) that understood as monotheism. This Gontor's policy was formed after the independence period related with the Masyumi's attitude as a forum of united Indonesian Muslims. The Gontor always continues to keep the unity of Muslims and the Indonesian people through education. Therefore, as soon as the *Nahdlatul Ulama* left the *Masyumi* in 1952, the Modern Islamic boarding school of Gontor preferred to maintain its neutrality and cling its principle to stand above all groups (*Berdiri Di Atas dan Untuk Semua Golongan*). The Gontor also abandoned PII (*Pelajar Islam Indonesia*) or Indonesian Islamic Students, the only student organization under the *Masyumi* which had long been made into the students of Gontor Islamic boarding school. Nevertheless Trimurti expressed deep sadness when the *Masyumi* was dissolved by Soekarno. The dissolution of the *Masyumi* was seen as a serious challenge for Indonesian Muslims, because the condition of Muslims was divided and disunited. At that time the *Nahdlatul Ulama* was more likely to support Sukarno with the PKI (*Partai Komunis Indonesia*) or Indonesian Communist Party, known as the *NASAKOM* (*Nasionalis, Agama, Komunis*) or Nationalist, Religious, Communist parties. The modernist Islamic parties tended to oppose Soekarno who is united with the Indonesian Communist Party so that the modernist Islam was in opposition to the *Nahdlatul Ulama*. In such a situation Gontor Islamic boarding school affirmed its neutral standpoint and chose the principle of *Berdiri Di Atas dan Untuk Semua Golongan* with a focus on education.²³

According to K.H. Misbah, after the *Masyumi* was unstable and the *Nahdlatul Ulama* left the *Masyumi* in 1952, K.H. Imam Zarkasyi was inactive in the *Majlis Syuro Masyumi* because his principle stance was the unity of Indonesian Muslims. Indeed K.H. Imam Zarkasyi was not a member of the *Nahdlatul Ulama* and neither the *Muhammadiyah*. His main purpose was the unity of Islamic movement to create a political climate colored by Islam in the Indonesian state. He determined his steps to prioritize Islamic

²³Interview with Ustadz Ahmad Hidayatullah Zarkasyi (the son of KH Imam Zarkasyi) at Gontor Modern Islamic Boarding School on 16 August 2018.

education. Many people acknowledged that Islamic education established and fostered by the Modern Islamic Boarding School of Darussalam, Gontor, is a well-organized and well-known Islamic boarding school. Moreover the quality of Gontor alumni is recognized by foreign countries. Although K.H. Imam Zarkasyi had stopped his activities in the *Masyumi* Party, but his ideal standpoint to spread a solid Islamic faith in Indonesia was unchanged.

The commitment of Gontor Islamic Boarding School to *Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia* (the United Nation of Indonesian Republic) is undoubtable. This educational institution has been involved in keeping Indonesian unity by accepting its students from various islands and archipelagos of Indonesia with their different backgrounds. Nevertheless, this nationalism is built together with the soul of *ukhuwah Islamiyah* as determined in the *Panca Jiwa* of Gontor. Hence this modern Islamic boarding received the recognition from Indonesian government when Harmoko, the Soeharto-era Information Minister, visited Gontor several times.

For the sake of maintaining a nationalism commitment, the Gontor Islamic Boarding School is not affiliated with any group or party, both in religion aspect and in its policy towards the government. This educational institution is also always trusted because of its neutral attitude as a moderator and mediator among all groups of Muslims. K.H. Imam Zarkasi often advised his students who came from various backgrounds, "If you are men of the *Nahdlatul Ulama*, you must be the right men of the *Nahdlatul Ulama*. If you are men of the *Muhammadiyah*, you must be the right men of the *Muhammadiyah*". K.H. Idham Cholid (the *Nahdlatul Ulama* chairman and deputy of prime minister at the Muhammad Natsir's government) said, "We are from the *Nahdlatul Ulama* family, but we are still the *Nahdlatul Ulama* people after studying at Gontor. We are expected by Kyai of Gontor and its teacher to be good members of the *Nahdlatul Ulama* and not to be blind fanatics".

The Gontor's neutral attitude was recognized by all persons including President Soekarno at that time. As told by K.H. Muslich, in the biography of K.H. Imam Zarkasyi that in 1956 Soekarno was urged by parliament to form two national institutions, one of them was *Dewan Perancang Nasional* or *Deppernas* (the National Designing Council). When drafting the National Ministry, Soekarno wanted a representative from Islam, but with a note that the

representative must be a religious figure and not a fanatic person of one party. When the name of K.H. Imam Zarkasyi from Gontor was proposed, President Soekarno agreed with that name and sent his envoys to meet K.H. Imam Zarkasyi. After the members of *Dewan Perancang Nasional* were announced, it was seen that those neutral Muslims were K.H. Imam Zarkasyi and K.H. Muslich.²⁴

In the New Order era, the relationship between Muslims and Soeharto deteriorated because Soeharto abandoned and even harmed the interests of Muslims. Even though Soeharto could rise to become President because of the great services of Muslims together with the *TNI (Tentara Nasional Indonesia)* or National Indonesian Military to eradicate the Indonesian Communist Party. At this circumstance, the Modern Islamic Boarding School of Darussalam, Gontor, received sharp critique from some Muslims when Gontor accepted Soeharto's presence in inaugurating the Gontor mosque building. K.H. Zarkasyi was reluctant to comment that critique because he had the principle that next time it will be noted in history that the President of Indonesia visited the Modern Islamic Boarding School of Darussalam, Gontor. This fact means that the Gontor's relationship as an educational institution remains good with the Indonesia government.

However the relationship between Muslims and Soeharto heated up again in the 1980s which reached its peak, namely after the issuance of a law known as the *Asas Tunggal* (the Single Principle) that required all organizations to follow the *Pancasila* as their main principle. The *Nahdlatul Ulama* organization was the first one to accept the principle of *Pancasila*. The modernist *Muhamadiyah* organization and others were still having long debates even though they finally received the *Pancasila* with various notes. The Modern Islamic Boarding School of Darussalam, Gontor looked at the issuance of *Asas Tunggal* as a part of history that could weaken and discredit Islam in Indonesia. Then this educational institution remained with its principle of Islam, although accepted the *Pancasila* as the basis of Indonesian Nation. This Modern Islamic Boarding School taught the *Pancasila* as the foundation of Indonesian State and the principle of Indonesian citizenship. Besides it still concerned with

²⁴Team of writers, *Biografi K.H. Imam Zarkasyi*, p. 626, 673-674, 719-720, and Interview with Ustadz Ahmad Hidayatullah Zarkasyi at Gontor Modern Islamic Boarding School on 16 August 2018.

the education of Islamic teachings. Therefore it did not require all of its students to attend the upgrading of P4 (*Pedoman Penghayatan dan Pengamalan Pancasila* or the Guidelines, Appreciation, and Practicing Pancasila) as followed generally by many students during the Soeharto era. But the upgrading of P4 was allowed to be followed by students of *Institut Pendidikan Darussalam* and Gontor's teachers who were mature in Islamic religion.

The Gontor's acceptance of *Pancasila* which is understood as an embodiment of the spirit of Islam, especially the teaching of *tawhid*, can be understood as an objectification of religious teachings. According to Kuntowijoyo, the concept of objectivity is the translation of internal values into objective categories. One deed is called objective if the act is felt by Muslims as natural thing, not as a religious act, even though it may be still considered as a religious act, such as charity. Objectification of Islam still regards the Qur'an as a source of law.²⁵

Theoretically, the *Pancasila* which is seen as a consensus will make all people who are originally segmented in their groups can be integrated into various social units. If this happens, it will be a step forward to reduce various conflicts because every conflict that occurs among social units will soon be neutralized by the existence of loyalty from society members to various social units.²⁶ The concept of objectification above can explain the Gontor's policy related to the *Pancasila* and Indonesian Nation in general. The Gontor's commitment to the full Islamic faith and acceptance of *Pancasila* made this educational institution not half-hearted in developing the concept of citizenship. When the Muslims society views the *Pancasila* as the embodiment of Islamic values, it is legitimate and disrupts the principle of accepting it as the basis of a nation that covers the plural citizens of Indonesia. Islamic values internalized into the Gontor's students will automatically not violate the values of *Pancasila* which are the basis of Indonesian citizens. As stated by Harmoko in his testimony that social values, frugal life, simplicity, togetherness, and mutual cooperation taught at the Modern Islamic

²⁵Kuntowijoyo, *Identitas Politik Umat Islam* (Bandung: Mizan, 1997), p. 67-69.

²⁶Nasikun, *Sistem Sosial Indonesia* (Jakarta: Raja Grafindo Persada, 1995), p. 63.

Boarding School of Gontor are true Indonesian values. In other words, the values of *Pancasila* have been practiced at Gontor.²⁷

E. The Gontor's Moderation on Educational Affairs

The Trimurti seriously can restore the glory of the old Gontor Islamic Boarding School (which had reached its golden age at the time of Kyai Sulaiman Djamaluddin and Kyai Arham Anom Besari). The renewal of the education system is implemented by opening the *Kulliyatul Mu'allimin al-Islamiyyah*. In its initial stage, the curriculum applied at the *Kulliyatul Mu'allimin al-Islamiyyah* was similar to the *Normal Islam School* curriculum with various modifications to balance between *pesantren* (Islamic Boarding School) and *madrasah*, religious and non-religious materials, and equipped with additional books prepared by K.H. Imam Zarkasyi himself. Moreover the *Kulliyatul Mu'allimin al-Islamiyyah* applied a curriculum consisting of religious subjects and non-religious subjects because science (or non-religious subject) is actually part of religious subject and has a position as important as religious subject. Besides the language teaching was more considered because Arabic and English are the key points of science. The students (after studying six months) were required to speak Arabic and English in daily conversation using the direct method. According to K.H. Imam Zarkasyi, the method was more important than the subject matter, while the teacher was more important than the method.²⁸

The philosophical foundation reflected in the *Panca Jiwa* of Gontor is implemented in its curriculum. Because the system applied in this Islamic boarding school is an integrated system, the components contained in the teaching process are indeed quite difficult to separate, both the intra and extra curriculum. The curriculum integration -which includes the internalization of values in the *Panca Jiwa*, motto, and the *Panca Jangka* (Five Phases)- becomes the foundation to formulate the vision and mission carried out by this educational institution. The strategy to implement Islamic education in Gontor is pursued through learning activities carried out in the atmosphere of high discipline. But apart from the learning activities in the classes there are various activities designed using the hidden

²⁷Team of writers, *Biografi K.H. Imam Zarkasyi*, p. 623.

²⁸*Ibid.*, p. 40-42, 49-54, and 58-65.

curriculum approach. This curriculum model was chosen as an effort to shape the character of students holistically and to achieve the main purpose of *Panca Jiwa*.

Therefore, the design of its curriculum was not fully affected by the dynamics and development of curriculum policies that were rolled out by the Indonesian government, both the Ministry of Religion and the Ministry of Education. The independence of Gontor in developing the curriculum, can be seen from its educational strategies. Therefore it can be said that Gontor is independent in its curriculum. This is in line with the general institutional objectives of the curriculum in the *Kulliyatul Mu'allimin al-Islamiyyah*, namely to graduate Muslim students who are obedient in carrying out and upholding Islamic Shari'ah, virtuous, healthy, knowledgeable, free minded, and devout to the Indonesia Nation. Because the Gontor's policy is independent in carrying out education and teaching, the curriculum is arranged independently. Its curriculum is adjusted to the overall Islamic boarding school program. Skills, arts, and sports material are not included in the curriculum, but they are included into extracurricular activities so that the students are free to choose and develop their talents in accordance with existing activities.²⁹

The explanation about the application of learning and the curriculum used in the Gontor institution above confirms that this Islamic education institution strongly adheres to the vision and mission and guidelines outlined by the founders of Gontor while constantly harmonizing it with dynamics of times and future demands so that the existence of Gontor can be maintained and finally the Gontor's graduates have high-quality to make the progress of Muslims and the Indonesian people. Based on the implementation of Islamic education, the Gontor education gets success in producing graduates with Islamic characteristics, adequate competence, good morality and intellectual qualities that are very important to deal with the problems of Indonesian Nation. Hence the Gontor's model of education has realized the essential goal of Islamic education as stated

²⁹Abdullah Syukri Zarkasyi, *Manajemen Pesantren Pengalaman Pondok Modern Gontor* (Ponorogo: Trimurti Press, 2005), p. 141-142.

in Indonesian Law, number 20, 2003, concerning the National Education System.³⁰

The educational modernization carried out by the founders of Gontor Islamic Boarding School was influenced by the situation of that time. The politics of Dutch education applied dualism system. The colonial Dutch distinguished between schools for Dutch children and schools for indigenous children in order to maintain differences in social status. The preferred aim of the Netherlands was to provide administrative staff by emphasizing the teaching of Dutch language and non-religious subjects so that they tended to be secular graduates.³¹ In addition, the Dutch government was very discriminatory towards Islamic education institutions. The arrival of the Netherlands and the implementation of schools by the Dutch in Indonesia had an influence on Islamic education institutions.³² Then awareness of education reform encouraged the establishment of more advanced Islamic educational institutions. On July 17th, 1905 the *Jami'at Khair Madrasah* was established in Jakarta by the Arab community.³³ In 1909 the Adabiah School was founded by Syaikh Abdullah Ahmad in Minangkabau and in 1915 the Diniyah School was founded by Zainuddin Labai al-Junusi in Padangpanjang. In 1912 the Muhammadiyah School was founded by K.H. Ahmad Dahlan in Yogyakarta. In 1913 the *Al-Irsyad Al-Islamiyah Madrasah* was founded by the Al-Irsyad Association in Jakarta. In 1915 the *Syarikat Islam* established the *Madrasah 'Aliyatus Saniyyah Mu'awanatul Muslimin* in Kudus, Central Java. Likewise was done by the Tebuireng Islamic Boarding School that taught non-religious subjects at the *Madrasah Salafiyah* in 1929³⁴ and the Modern Islamic Boarding School of Gontor that established the *Kulliyatul Mu'allimin al-Islamiyyah* in 1936.

³⁰M. Saekan, "Islamic Education Unifying Nation", *QIJIS (Qudus International Journal of Islamic Studies)*, 2017, p. 101–116.

³¹S Nasution, *Sejarah Pendidikan Indonesia* (Bandung: Jemmars, 1983), p. 24-25, 132, 145-146, and 152.

³²Haidar Putra Daulay, *Sejarah Pertumbuhan dan Pembaruan Pendidikan Islam di Indonesia* (Jakarta: Kencana, 2009), p. 34-35 and 72.

³³Ahmad Mansur Suryanegara, *Api Sejarah* (Bandung: Salamadani Pustaka Semesta, 2009), p. 344.

³⁴Mahmud Yunus, *Sejarah Pendidikan Islam di Indonesia* (Jakarta: PT. Hidakarya Agung, 1996), p. 65-66, 235-236, 253, 268-269, and 307.

In addition, the fifth Congress of Al-Islam on February 6th, 1926 in Bandung decided to send HOS Cokroaminoto and K.H. Mas Mansur as Indonesian envoys to Makkah to attend the worldwide Islamic Congress held on June 1st, 1926 at the initiative of King Ibn Saud. This important decision was seen by K.H. Ahmad Sahal is not just a political matter. However there was still rarely a cleric who mastered Arabic and English at that time. This fact inspired him to establish an Islamic educational institution with the high quality on Arabic and English language and to have many remarkable Muslim cadres and international-scale scholars who were intellectual, both on religious and non-religious matters.³⁵

F. Conclusion

Moderate Islam is prominently applied by Trimurti Gontor Islamic Boarding School as reflected in the boarding school system with the motto *Ukhuwah Islamiyah* and the principle "Stand on and for all groups". This Islamic educational institution prioritizes the unity of Muslims and includes *Ukhuwah Islamiyah* in the Five Souls of Gontor. In addition, the Gontor Islamic Boarding School acts as a mediator for all groups, develops tolerance for differences, and accommodatively accepts all students from different Islamic backgrounds. Gontor moderate Islam was motivated by the phenomenon of sectarian conflict in Indonesia. In political and national affairs, Gontor Islamic Boarding School accepts Pancasila as the basis of the Indonesian Nation and teaches Pancasila as the basis of the Indonesian State. Gontor nationalism is implemented with the spirit of *Ukhuwah Islamiyah*, because it is independent and is not affiliated with any group. In addition he accepted the leadership of the Indonesian president from any background. Islam and nationalism are considered mutually supportive because Islamic beliefs will encourage attitudes to maintain the integrity of the Indonesian Nation. *Ukhuwah Islamiyah* is the basis of the value of nationalism which maintains the integrity and unity of the pluralistic Indonesian society. In the aspect of education, Gontor Modern Islamic Boarding School established *Kulliyatul Mu'allimin al-Islamiyyah* with a curriculum consisting of religious and non-religious subjects, because science (or

³⁵Sanusi, *Trimurti*, p. 79–83.

non-religious subjects) is actually part of religious subjects and has a position as important as religion.

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