

THE DEMISE OF ISLAMIC EDUCATION INSTITUTION IN INDONESIA : A CASE STUDY OF JAZIROTUL *MUNIR* ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOL IN RIAU

Imron Rosidi, Yasril Yazid, Rafdeadi

This paper aims to examine the extent to which an Islamic education institution in Indonesia is being managed to survive until its demise. By using an Islamic Boarding School in Riau as a case study, this article argues that the Islamic education institution observed has a unique characteristic which may differ from other Islamic education institutions in Indonesia. It proposes that, in this Islamic education institution, the negotiation of many actors shapes its demise. In fact, the negotiation caused the conflict within Islamic education institution. This is actually corrosive as the tradition of the *Pesantren* (Islamic Boarding School) refuses visible conflict. This can be seen from the Jaziroatul Munir Islamic boarding school. This Islamic education institution is private, the founders and administrators are indigenous people representing the community. This community has relatively homogenous ethnic background. However, it has different and diverse educational background, *Pesantren* and University graduates, making diverse ideas regarding the policy, vision and program of the institution. It also faces modernization effects such as television influencing the survival of the institution. This case study will also provide a historical overview of the institution, its educational dynamics, conflicts, and its demise.

INTRODUCTION

With the progress of time, the advancement of technology has put Islam in a problematic locus. Islam as a majority religion in Indonesia cannot escape from the challenge of modernization in this century. In this case, there are, at least, two groups of Muslims responding modernization. The first group regards that modernization has negative impacts for Muslim life. They accuse modernization as same as westernization. They assume that modernization causes the separation between secular and religious which creates the position of religion, Islam, is not important anymore. They are suspicious to Modern terms- progress, power, science, reason- since they think that these violate their well-establish identities.¹ The second group is those who believe that modernization could be adopted in Islamic discourse. In Islamic education context, according to Jamhari, this can be seen from the Muslim tendency which accommodates or adopts dual system of education by integrating secular and religious subjects.²

The *Pondok Pesantren* traditional character is sometimes put in opposition with modernity. The coming of modernization may cause some problems for the survival of the *Pondok Pesantren* in Indonesia. This paper looks at the phenomenon of *Pondok Pesantren Jaziroatul Munir* which was founded in 1965. It will consider the survival of this Islamic Boarding School under internal conflicts and modernization challenges.

Azra mentions that *Pondok Pesantren* had its origin before the coming of Islam in Indonesia. At that time, it had been used for Hindu-Buddhist religious trainings. However when Islam came to Indonesia, it was blended with Islamic values so now the Pondok Pesantren has been adapted for Islamic education and training.³

Nowadays, the great attention has been given to Islamic Boarding School since it has played an important role in disseminating Islamic teachings. Some researchers however do not pay a great attention to Islamic Boarding Schools outside Javanese Island. This is because the *Pesantren* itself is close to Javanese culture. In fact, Javanese societies also live outside Javanese Island. In Riau for instance, there is a Javanese society living in rural areas which is categorized as a minority society. This society established an Islamic Boarding School or *Pesantren, Jazirotul Munir*, in 1965 in which it has a close connection with *Pesantren* tradition and culture in Java. In this study, therefore, the topic is related to the survival of the *Pesantren* in modern era in a Javanese society in Pulau Kijang; how the development of Islamic Boarding School in this society until its demise is, how it survives, and how it faces modernization. Using participant observation and in-depth interview, I will divide the discussion into two parts. The first part is the development of *Jazirotul Munir* Islamic Boarding School before 1990s. And the second part is the survival of *Pesantren Jazirotul Munir* after 1990s.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF JAZIROTUL MUNIR ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOL BEFORE 1990S

In 1965, some people in a small area of Pulau Kijang Village, Riau, decided to establish a *Pesantren* called *Jazirotul Munir*. It was unfortunate that their spirit was not supported by the fact when there was no Islamic scholar or expert in this community. Therefore, they determined to look for a *Kiyai* in Java by sending two people as their representatives.⁴

This society also forced their children to study in some *Pesantrens* in Java such as Lirboyo Kediri and Tremas. This is a part of preparation for the future leader of the *Pesantren* established. It was hoped that when their children graduated from *Pesantren* in Java they could go back to their village to develop *Pesantren Jazirotul Munir*.

The first *Kiyai* was successfully brought from Java to Pulau Kijang. He was provided a house and garden. The society believed that this *Kiyai* was able to develop *Pesantren Jazirotul Munir* to provide moral guidance for the youth to anticipate negative impacts of modernization. Since this society was a Javanese society so that *Pesantren's* students were also Javanese.

However, this *Kiyai* did not feel uncomfortable living in this society. There were some reasons behind this. The first reason was that the condition of this society was different from his previous environment in Java. He could not adapt

with his new environment. The second reason was that he did not receive money for his contribution for the *Pesantren*. Because Javanese people living in Pulau Kijang regarded his contribution as 'jihad', they did not pay money for him. In fact, besides he was given a coconut garden and house for his living, he was also given some packets of paddy every six months. The Javanese society in Pulau Kijang is often called as PujaKesuma (Putra Jawa kelahiran Sumatera or Javanese people who were born in Sumatera). Their culture basically is slightly different from Javanese culture in Java. Other cultures, such as Malay influences the development of Javanese society in Pulau Kijang. Because of this then some Javanese people who live or stay in Pulau Kijang spend much time to adapt with social and cultural environment in Pulau Kijang.

Years ago, Javanese people regarded Pulau Kijang as 'new hope' since their life, particularly economy, did not improve in Java. They moved to Pulau Kijang to improve their living. However, this new hope disappeared when they saw the condition of Pulau Kijang. There was no electricity. The infrastructures did not support their new life. Sometimes, they saw Pulau Kijang as 'forest'. It was not strange that many Javanese people who came from Java did not stay more than three months in Pulau Kijang. They went back to Java.⁵

Therefore, he left to Java by selling his house and garden given previously. He left a negative image. This negative image was caused by two factors. The first factor was theological aspect. In Islam, the spirit of Jihad is urgent. People regard *Kiyai* as a person who should have a high spirit for 'Jihad'. This is because *Kiyai* has a high position in social ranks of Muslim society. Referring to Islamic tradition, a *Kiyai* should have 'ikhlas' feeling. This means that what he did should not ask payment. Therefore, in some areas in Java, a *Kiyai* often spends much contribution for the development of Muslim society but he was not given any payment from the society.

The second factor was sociological aspect. The social bond of the society in Pulau Kijang is based on Javanese culture. Its people tended to keep Javanese culture which respect hard workers. They forced their children to help them digging the ditch or planting paddy in the farm. They emphasized the importance of hard work. They regarded that time is work rather than money. They spent five to seven hours a day to work without borrowing money to their home. They planted paddy and vegetables for their food. When they wanted to buy something, they waited for three months since their coconuts were still not picked yet. This *Kiyai* then did not have the spirit of hard work. Therefore, they could not stand from hard living in Pulau Kijang.

Because their *Kiyai* left to Java, students of *Jaziroatul Munir* Islamic Boarding School needed new *Kiyai*. People then discussed the urgency to look for a new *Kiyai* in Java. This was important since their sons and daughters who previously were sent to some *Pesantrens* in Java did not graduate yet. They thought that this

Pesantren must be kept to survive. It is known that for *Pesantren*, the existence of *Kiyai* is chief for its development.⁶

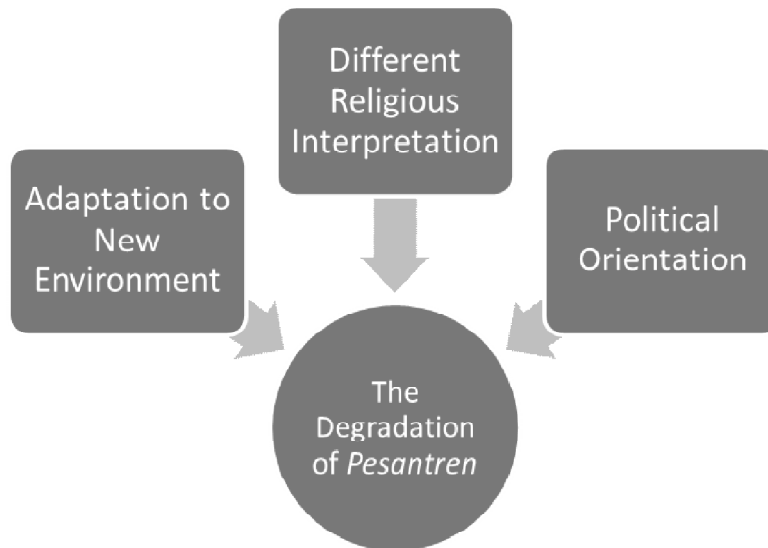
A person went to Java to look for a *Kiyai*. He brought a fresh graduate from *Pesantren* Tremas. He was an unmarried *Kiyai*. People in Pulau Kijang hoped that this *Kiyai* could stay longer than previous *Kiyai*. They offered a girl to be married by him. He accepted. He married with a daughter of indigenous person in Pulau Kijang. He was given a coconut garden, a house for living and packets of paddy. It was unfortunate that his thought was not suitable with the thought of majority people in Pulau Kijang. He brought Muhammadiyah's thought which was opposed by some teachers in *Pesantren Jazirotul Munir*. People in Pulau Kijang followed Nahdatul Ulama. The elevated tension between this *Kiyai* and some teachers in Pulau Kijang forced him to move from Pulau Kijang. However, he did not go back to Java. He moved to a village which was still in Riau.

The tension between Muhammadiyah and Nahdatul Ulama was not a new case. For some Javanese people in Pulau Kijang who followed Nahdatul Ulama, they could not tolerate Muhammadiyah's followers since they did not use 'qunut' in their dawn (Subuh) prayer. Muhammadiyah followers also did not allow 'yasinan' or 'Kenduri' which has the similarity with 'Selamatan' in Java. This provoked a high tension causing his move to another village.⁷

Another *Kiyai* then was invited to lead *Pesantren Jazirotul Munir*. This *Kiyai* graduated from Lirboyo, Kediri, East Java. As previous *Kiyais*, he was given some facilities such as a house and garden. He made the development of *Pesantren Jazirotul Munir* bigger. Seventy to hundred students studied in this *Pesantren*. He was famous. This popularity brought him into politics. He participated as a candidate for local house of representative (DPRD Kabupaten) in Tembilahan. He succeeded in his political road. He became a member of local house of representative. Because he was busy in politics, he could not manage *Pesantren Jazirotul Munir* well.

When his duty in local house of representative finished, people still hoped that he could manage the *Pesantren*. However, he did not want. He sold his house and garden and went back to Java. The students of *Pesantren Jazirotul Munir* then lost their *Kiyai*. In fact, when he nominated himself as a candidate of local house of representative, they were conscious that they would lose their *Kiyai*.

The previous description indicated that the development of *Pesantren Jazirotui Munir* faced some problems. For the first *Kiyai*, adaptation became a problem. The second *Kiyai* faced classical tension, namely the tension between traditionalists (Nahdatul Ulama) versus modernist (Muhammadiyah). The third *Kiyai* left *Pesantren* to choose politics. This phenomenon has occurred in some *Pesantrens* in Java particularly after the fall of Soeharto. The great chance for a *Kiyai* to be a member of local or national house of representative supported this phenomenon. A *Kiyai* has a high popularity among Muslim society. This benefits him. Many



Kiyais then easily succeeded in getting votes to be members of local house representative. They use their religious status for political agenda.

THE SURVIVAL OF *PESANTREN JAZIROTUL MUNIR* AFTER 1990s : ITS PRESENT CONFLICT AND CONDITION

Since 1995, in *Pesantren Jazirotul Munir*, there has been a new *Kiyai* who came from Tulung Agung, East Java. This *Kiyai* had two different characteristics with the previous three *Kiyais*. Firstly, from the perspective of his migration from Java to Pulau Kijang, this *Kiyai* was different from the previous *Kiyais* who were invited by people of the society. In the above description, it could be seen that they were brought from Java to Pulau Kijang by the representatives of people in Pulau Kijang. He, however, came to Pulau Kijang by himself since he followed his wife who was an indigenous woman of Pulau Kijang. Secondly, it is different from the previous *Kiyais* who were given a coconut garden and house. This *Kiyai* was only given some packets of paddy each month. This is because he had already given a house and coconut garden by his parents-in law.

Together with the election of new *Kiyai*, some students who were sent to some *Pesantrens* and universities in Java graduated and went back to Pulau Kijang. These fresh graduates and new *Kiyai* brought a new hope for the development of *Pesantren Jazirotul Munir*. It is not strange that, in 1997, *Pesantren Jazirotul Munir* grew rapidly. There were 150 students learning in the *Pesantren*. It was the highest students' population since its establishment. Sociologically, it indicated the success of *Pesantren* since this *Pesantren* was located in a minority community,

namely Javanese society. It is normal that although at its peak of success this Islamic Boarding School had only 150 students. This is because this *Pesantren* was intended to Javanese community. It is not strange that there were no other students from different ethnics such as Malay students.

The teaching and learning process was divided into four sessions. The first session was done in the early morning, after *shubuh* (dawn prayer). The second was after *duhur* prayer. The third was after *maghrib* prayer. And the fourth session was done after *Isya'* prayer. After *subuh* prayer, the teaching and learning was done about one to two hours. It meant that, from 08.00 am to *duhur* prayer (01.00 pm), the students were free from the *Pesantren's* activities. During this period of time, they were sent to *Hidayatul Mubtadiin* Islamic schools to study both secular and religious subjects. Basically, this school had a close connection with *Pesantren Jaziroatul Munir*. Usually, its head of organizational board was a *Kiyai* of *Pesantren Jaziroatul Munir*. All students of *Pesantren Jaziroatul Munir* studied in this school. However, some students of *Hidayatul Mubtadiin* normally did not study in *Pesantren Jaziroatul Munir*. *Hidayatul Mubtadiin* basically has four levels of education. They were Islamic Kindergarten (Raudatul Athfal), Islamic Basic School (Madrasah Ibtidaiyah), Islamic Junior High School (Madrasah Tsanawiyah), and Islamic Senior High School (Madrasah Aliyah). Its curriculum was based on government's curriculum.

In the early morning, after dawn (*subuh*) prayer, and at night, after *Isya'* prayer, a *Kiyai* used 'bandongan' to teach some classical texts. Bandongan is a system of education known in *Pesantren* in which a *Kiyai* teaches his students in the class. The main text taught was *ta'lim muta'alim* written by Al-Jarnuzi. After Maghrib Prayer, the *Kiyai* taught al-Qur'an. He used 'sorogan'. *Sorogan* is used by a *Kiyai* to teach his students one by one. He checked his students' reading one by one whether he reads correctly or not.

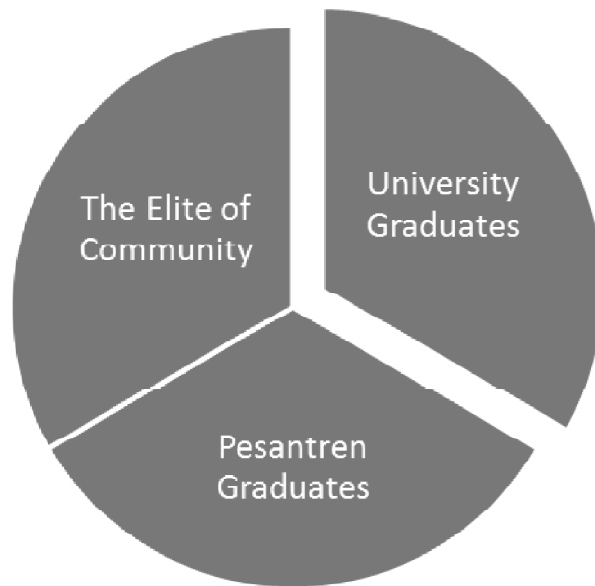
After *duhur* prayer, there were some teachers who taught the students of *Pesantren Jaziroatul Munir*. In this time, there was a schedule for teachers describing the detailed information about teaching and learning processes. The *Kiyai*, in this case, was helped by some selected teachers graduated from some *Pesantrens* and universities. These new graduates made plurality in the *Pesantren*. This was because they graduated from some *Pesantrens* and universities. This plurality, however, challenged the survival of *Jaziroatul Munir* Islamic Boarding School in a Javanese society in Pulau Kijang. *Pesantren's* graduates were identified as religious scholars having a good understanding in reading 'yellow texts' or classical Islamic texts. Universities' graduates then were characterized as secular scholars who could not read classical texts.

THE DIVERSE EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

In fact, there has been an intense discussion on the role and influence of western graduates and Middle Eastern graduates in Indonesia.⁸ The western graduates have

been assumed spreading ‘secular’ thought which contradicts the religious values of Indonesian community. They have been even suspected as the agent of the West. The suspicious judgement to the western graduates sometimes occurs in some Islamic education institutions in Indonesia.

In *Pesantren Jaziroatul Munir*, the tension was not between western and Middle Eastern graduates but between university and *Pesantren* graduates. The tension between university and *Pesantren* graduates can be analyzed as follows:



Among the elites of Javanese community in Pulau Kijang, they tended to make a close relationship with *Pesantren* graduates rather than university graduates. Also, they respected *Pesantren* graduates. These elites basically represented the opinion of the majority people in Javanese society of Pulau Kijang. They valued *Pesantren* graduates since *Pesantren* graduates had some abilities. The first was they could lead ‘the selamatan or kenduri’ held by the community. As it can be seen from some Javanese societies in Java, there are also some religious activities conducted. One of the most regular activities done by the Javanese community in Pulau Kijang is ‘yasinan’. This religious activity is slightly different from ‘selamatan’ in Java. This religious tradition is conducted weekly, i.e. every Thursday night. The menu given is not rice but cake. The ritual is started by reciting ‘tahlil’ led by a respected person who usually graduated from *Pesantren* in Java. This ritual then is continued by reading a verse in the Qur’an, namely *Surah* (verse) in the Qur’an called *yasin*.

The second ability is that they could read classical texts. This was crucial since the majority people in Pulau Kijang respected those who were able to read

classical texts (Kitab Kuning or yellow book). They often asked the youths who graduated from *Pesantren* and universities whether they are able to read classical texts or not.

These two abilities owned by most of *Pesantren* graduates contributed to their charisma and authority among Javanese people in Pulau Kijang. This was of course rational because the only vacancy provided by the society was a teacher or *Kiyai* for *Pesantren*. And the requirements which must be fulfilled by 'the jobseekers' were mainly; able to read 'yellow books' and lead 'yasinan' activities.

THE DIVERSE IDEAS

The diverse educational background of teachers in *Pesantren Jazirotul Munir* created the diverse ideas regarding the policy, vision and mission of the *Pesantren*. The *Pesantren* graduates led by the *Kiyai* emphasized the importance of autonomy for the *Kiyai* to lead the *Pesantren*. This meant that all learning and teaching processes in the *Pesantren* should be free from intervention of teachers and people in the society. However, this was opposed by some people organized by university graduates. On the contrary, university graduates proposed that management of *Pesantren* should be modernized under a good organizational board or *yayasan*.

Another idea was whether those who taught students in the *Pesantren* should be paid or not. At that time, salary was only paid for those who taught in Madrasah *Hidayatul Mubtadiin*. In fact, *Pesantren* graduates had limited session in Madrasah compared to in *Pesantren*. University graduates taught more classes than that of *Pesantren* graduates in Madrasah. Some university graduates did not teach in the *Pesantren* although they taught in Madrasah. Of course, this idea was rejected by the university graduates.

The reasons why the ideas from *Pesantren* graduates could not win the debate were mainly because there was no support from Javanese society in Pulau Kijang. It was true that *Pesantren* graduates were more highly respected. However, their ideas were irrational for Javanese society in Pulau Kijang. Regarding to their first idea, for instance, when the *Kiyai* was given a great autonomy, it indicated that Javanese society gave the *Pesantren* to the *Kiyai*. This also meant that they were not allowed to control the *Pesantren*. Related to the second idea, Javanese society did not support the idea since it needed much money to pay the teachers. People did not want to invest more grants to pay them.

THE EMERGENCE OF TELEVISION

In 1995, modern electronics came to Javanese society in Pulau Kijang. One of them was television. Some wealthy people in Pulau Kijang then purchased it. This carried negative impact for development of the *Pesantren* in this society. During teaching and learning process, particularly at night, many students did not take

part in this activity since they watched television owned by a wealthy family. In fact, there were some attempts to solve this problem.

The first endeavour was made by a youth organization in this society. This organization organized its members to prevent students watching television. They usually caught the students to give punishment. Nevertheless, this punishment did not make them give up. They still went to watch television silently.

The second attempt was by asking the owner of television to close his door when there was a student wanted to watch television in his house. For the first time, it was effective enough. However, in its further progress, this was useless. The owner of television did not desire to produce a serious risk because some students even waited in front of his or her door until it was opened.

The failure of the above attempts was supported by the fact that the *kiyai* kept silent to this problem. He remained teaching in the classroom or mosque although his students were only two. It can be assumed that there were two reasons why he kept silent. The first reason was he wanted to make a distance with the problem since he believed that it was hard to resolve the problem. Television was a new trend in the society at that time. Preventing students from watching television could boost their anxiety.

The second reason why this *kiyai* kept silent was that he wanted to defend his charisma and authority in the society. Since he thought that it was difficult to prevent them from watching television, he believed that he could not stop them watching television. Therefore, he did not involve in solving the problem. When he involved, and the problem was not resolved, his authority and charisma decreased.

FROM PESANTREN TO THARIQAT

The occurrence of internal conflicts among Pesantren and university graduates and the emergence of television provoked the *Kiyai* to stop teaching from *Pesantren Jaziroatul Munir*. This happened in 2003. At present, he is active in *Thariqat Naqshabandiyah*. He has a lot of followers. He at least gets 200 followers. These followers even are not only from Javanese society but also from Malay and other ethnics.

Compared to his involvement in the pesantren, in this religious activity, he enjoys his status. This is because he has a great authority in which he could manage and lead *Thariqat* without intervention both from the teachers and people of Javanese society in Pulau Kijang. His character is basically common among *kiyais* in Javanese society. A *kiyai* tends to lead a *pesantren* independently. Therefore, in some cases, there are some *pesantrens* which collapse when their *kiyais* died.

In *Pesantren Jaziroatul Munir*'s case, the *kiyai* left it. In fact, he is still alive and lives about 200 metres from the pesantren. However, since he decided to stop teaching and leading the pesantren, it 'died'. It is true that at present there is Pesantren's building but there are no teaching and learning activities there.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The survival of *Pesantren Jazirotul Munir* could be divided into two periods. The first period was before 1990s when there were three religious scholars graduated from *Pesantren* in Java chosen as *kiyai*. These three *kiyai*s, however, could not manage the *Pesantren* well since they faced three complex problems; adaptation, different religious interpretations, and political orientation. The second period was after 1990s. This period was identified by internal conflicts and the emergence of television which caused the demise of the *Pondok Pesantren of Jazirotul Munir*. This period was also recognized by the *kiyai*'s decision to stop teaching in the *pesantren*. He prefers leading his *Thariqat* to teaching in the *pesantren*. The demise of the *Pondok Pesantren of Jazirotul Munir* has been caused by two main factors. The first is the fragmentation of authority within the *Pesantren Jazirotul Munir*. In Javanese Island, the *Pesantren* has been central in the hand of a *Ulama* or a leader of the *Pesantren*. He is the owner of the *Pesantren* so that his authority has been resilient. It is different from this *Pesantren* in which the *Kiyai* did not have such authority. This is because he did not own the *Pesantren*. The *pesantren* of *Jazirotul Munir* was owned by the society. The second is that the *Kiyai* of the *Pesantren of Jazirotul Munir* was not an indigenous person. The *kiyai* felt reluctant to manage the *Pesantren* fully. The *Kiyai* might think that some members of the society would suspect him as bringing different agenda.

Notes

1. Nasr Abu Zayd, *Reformation of Islamic Thought*, Amsterdam:Amsterdam University Press, 2006, p.11
2. <http://miftah19.wordpress.com/2011/02/18/new-trend-of-islamic-education-in-indonesia/> accessed at 15.40, 15 June 2011.
3. Azyumardi Azra, *Islam in Indonesian World*, (Jakarta: Mizan, 2006), pp. 69-70.
4. An interview was done with indigenous people in Pulau Kijang from May- June 2011. Since I was born in Pulau Kijang, it is not difficult to contact them. In this paper, all informants are anonymous since I want to respect them. Some of them are my teachers, brothers, and even my parents. Therefore, some information such as related to *Kiyai*'s names is protected.
5. In fact, this condition slightly changes. There is electricity but it is on only at night starting from 06.00 pm to 11.00 pm. However, the road is still crummy.
6. Komaruddin Hidayat & Putut Widjanarko, *Reinventing Indonesia:Menemukan Kembali Masa Depan Bangsa*,Bandung : PT.Mizan Publika, 2008, p. 345.
7. The same phenomenon also occurred in West Sumatera where Ahmad Syafii Maarif lived. However, the tension was between Perti and Muhammadiyah followers. See, Ahmad Syafii Maarif, *Titik-Titik Kisar di Perjalananku:Autobiografi Ahmad Syafii Maarif*, Bandung:Mizan, 2009, p.77.
8. Azyumardi Azra, "Melacak Pengaruh dan Pergeseran Orientasi Tamatan Kairo" in Mona Abaza, *Pendidikan Islam dan Pergeseran Orientasi:Studi Kasus Alumni Al-Azhar*, Jakarta:LP3ES, 1999, p.xii.

References

- Abu Zayd, Nasr (2006). *Reformation of Islamic Thought*, Amsterdam:Amsterdam University Press.
- Azra, Azyumardi (2006). *Islam in Indonesian World*, Jakarta: Mizan.
- Azra, Azyumardi (1999). “Melacak Pengaruh dan Pergeseran Orientasi Tamatan Kairo” in Mona Abaza, *Pendidikan Islam dan Pergeseran Orientasi:Studi Kasus Alumni Al-Azhar*, Jakarta: LP3ES.
- Hidayat, Komaruddin & Widjanarko, Putut (2008). *Reinventing Indonesia:Menemukan Kembali Masa Depan Bangsa*, Bandung : PT.Mizan Publika.
- <http://miftah19.wordpress.com/2011/02/18/new-trend-of-islamic-education-in-indonesia/>
accessed at 15.40, 15 June 2011.
- Maarif, Ahmad Syafii (2009). *Titik-Titik Kisar di Perjalananku:Autobiografi Ahmad Syafii Maarif*, Bandung:Mizan.