

## THE ROLE OF CLASSICAL ISLAMIC EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS BEFORE THE EMEREGENCE OF MADRASAH

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### Abstract

*The purpose of this research is to investigate the role of Islamic educational institutions before the emergence of madrasahs in the intellectual and social development of Muslims. The main issue addressed is the contribution of institutions such as al-dars, ribaths, mosques, kuttabs, and scholars' houses in shaping Islamic intellectuality during that time. This study employs a qualitative approach through historical and social analysis. The findings of the research indicate that these institutions were crucial in shaping Islamic intellectuality. They not only served as places to study religious teachings but also helped disseminate knowledge, share ideas, and build the social identity of Muslims. These institutions supported the exchange of ideas, research, and the teaching of knowledge, which were essential for the education of Muslim generations. In conclusion, this research emphasizes the importance of classical Islamic educational institutions in shaping Islamic civilization. These institutions fostered a holistic educational approach that integrated knowledge, religion, and spirituality. They reflect various forms of Islamic education, allowing for comprehensive and integrated learning and continuous knowledge enhancement. The legacy of Islamic educational institutions before madrasahs historically continues to influence how we understand and approach Islamic education today.*

*Keywords: Islamic educational institutions; Pre-madrasah; Social analysis.*

### INTRODUCTION

Islamic education had a strong foundation in classical Islamic history before the emergence of madrasahs. Islamic educational institutions play a vital role in the creation and dissemination of Islam. Before madrasahs, Islamic education methods were based on informal approaches, mainly conducted in the homes of companions or in mosques as centers of learning. Topics such as interpretation, the Qur'an, Hadith, jurisprudence, and other Islamic sciences were the main focus of education (Ghifari, 2022). Scholars served as sources of knowledge and directly imparted it to students. This generation was educated with Islamic values, religious knowledge, and practical skills.

Moreover, Islamic educational institutions also functioned as centers for social, cultural, and political activities during the early Islamic era, not just places to learn about religion but also venues for discussions on various issues facing the Muslim community. Scholars were not only educators but also community leaders, providing guidance in daily life. Therefore, Islamic educational institutions before the emergence of madrasahs played a significant role in shaping the identity and character of Muslims and influencing the social, cultural, and political development in classical Islamic society (Harun, 2019a).

Islamic educational institutions at that time also served as places for the formation of close social relationships between students and educators. Beyond mere learning, these relationships encompassed guidance and mentorship in spiritual and practical daily life, enhancing solidarity and camaraderie among Muslim community members. Additionally, older Islamic educational institutions also focused on fostering morals and ethics, teaching moral values that served as a

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strong foundation for life. Therefore, Islamic educational institutions before the madrasah era functioned as intellectual centers as well as shaping the character and spiritual life of the Muslim community (Tantowi, 2022). A deep understanding of the role and function of Islamic educational institutions at that time helps to comprehend the richness of the Islamic educational tradition, which remains relevant today.

This study investigates the development of Islamic educational institutions before the emergence of madrasahs. It began in early Islam—since the time of Prophet Muhammad's residence in Mecca and Medina—and continued to evolve during the early caliphates into regions such as Basra, Kufa, Damascus (Syria), and Fustat (Egypt). The research will focus on the roles and structures of educational institutions in these various cities, as well as how these institutions developed and adapted to their social, political, and cultural contexts. The study will also identify the characteristics, curriculum, and teaching methods used in these institutions and how they impacted their development. Therefore, this research is expected to provide deeper insights into the history of Islamic educational institutions before the madrasah era and how they evolved.

To understand the development of Islamic educational institutions before the madrasah era, this research will employ a theoretical framework encompassing historical, educational sociology, Islamic education, and learning theories. Examining the progression of Islamic educational institutions from the time of Prophet Muhammad to the Abbasid era would benefit from a historical approach considering political, social, economic, and cultural factors that influenced the process (Ali, 2022).

Educational sociology will be utilized to investigate the role of Islamic educational institutions in shaping identity and social values within Muslim society. Conversely, Islamic education theory will aid in understanding the goals, methods, and curriculum of Islamic education. Learning theories will also assist the research in comprehending the teaching methods employed. By integrating these theoretical frameworks, it is expected to gain a comprehensive understanding of the early development of Islamic educational institutions and their implications for contemporary Islamic education contexts (Ira. M. Lapidus, 1999).

This study will examine the development of Islamic educational institutions from the time of Prophet Muhammad to the Abbasid era, before the emergence of the madrasah. The main question to be answered is how these institutions evolved over time, as well as the factors influencing their development throughout history. The research will also investigate the objectives of classical Islamic education, teaching methods, curriculum, and instructional strategies, and how these roles were reflected in the development of these institutions before the emergence of the madrasah. It will also explore how these roles are related to the values of Islamic education and the social, political, and cultural changes occurring in Muslim society .

## RESEARCH METHOD

This research employs a qualitative methodology through historical and social analysis (I. Arifin, 1996). The first stage of data collection involves gathering information from various sources, such as historical literature, classical documents, and sources related to the development of Islamic educational institutions before the emergence of the madrasah.

The research hypothesis is that Islamic educational institutions in the past played a significant role in shaping the social identity and values of Muslim society. Furthermore, it is assumed that social, political, and cultural changes during that time influenced the development of Islamic educational institutions, both in terms of structure and learning approaches. This hypothesis will be tested by analyzing the collected data. It will examine how these variables correlate with the development of Islamic educational institutions (Sugiyono, 2013).

The collected data will be reduced by analyzing texts and integrating relevant information related to the research subject. Subsequently, the data will be thematically analyzed to identify patterns and trends emerging in the development of Islamic educational institutions. The conclusions will be based on the findings of the analysis (P et al., 2023). This will highlight the roles,

advancements, and impacts of Islamic educational institutions before the emergence of the madrasah, as well as their influence on contemporary Islamic education contexts.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Early Islamic Educational Institutions

The first and most renowned Islamic educational institution in the world was Darul Arqam. For three years, the Prophet taught at the house of Arqam bin Abi Arqam, his companion. There, the companions not only memorized verses of the Quran but also gained a better understanding of Islamic teachings and how to apply them in daily life. This method not only produced believers but also educators who would aid in the future development of Islam.

Prophet Muhammad utilized social networks and clandestine methods in the early prophethood. Secret preaching, also known as covert da'wah, was directed to his companions and family members, such as Khadijah, Ali ibn Abi Talib, and Abu Bakr (Surya & Mawasti, 2018). Initially, Darul Arqam was not a fully-fledged Islamic educational institution. In line with the command of the Quran in Surah Al-Hijr verse 94, when Prophet Muhammad openly preached, formal educational institutions had not fully developed.

More precisely, Darul Arqam is referred to as an unofficial meeting place where the Prophet and his companions gathered to learn about religion and strengthen their beliefs. However, teaching methods and schedules were already established. After the Prophet migrated to Medina, Islamic educational institutions began to evolve into semi-formal ones. It had a fixed schedule and a more structured teaching framework. Thus, Darul Arqam marked the beginning of the journey towards a more organized and formal Islamic education system that would develop over time.

The process of education and teaching became more systematic with the emergence of more organized and structured educational institutions. This allowed Islamic teachings to be conveyed more widely and successfully to the next generation. In the future, Islamic educational institutions will play a crucial role in preserving and disseminating Islamic teachings. Zaid bin Harithah, Usman bin Affan, Zubair bin Awwam, Sa'ad bin Abi Waqqas, Abdurrahman bin Auf, Talhah bin Ubaidillah, Arqam bin Abi Arqam, Abu Ubaidah bin Jarrah, Fatimah bin Khattab, and her husband Sa'id bin Zaid were some significant figures who embraced Islam after Khadijah, Ali ibn Abi Talib, and Abu Bakr. They all studied at Darul Arqam. They were among the first teachers in Islamic history after the Prophet, imparting their knowledge to others (Harun, 2019b).

Before the emergence of madrasahs, Islamic educational institutions consisted of various forms, such as mosques, kuttabs, houses of scholars, and halaqah al-dars. Mosques served as centers for religious learning, while kuttabs functioned as Islamic elementary schools. Houses of scholars were places where scholars provided personal instruction to their students. Halaqah al-dars were informal study groups where students gathered to listen to lectures and religious lessons from scholars. Despite having different structures, these institutions complemented each other to form a solid foundation of Islamic education in the classical Islamic era.

**Mosque.** The word "mosque" literally means "a place of prostration," derived from the Arabic word "sajada," which means "to prostrate." Mosques have a much broader function in Islamic history than just being a place for prayer and i'tikaf. Mosques can also be used as places for religious learning (Syarif, 2015).

Building mosques was crucial when Prophet Muhammad migrated from Mecca to Medina. The Quba Mosque was the first mosque built with the aim of forming a society with noble morals and manners, besides being a place of worship. It became a center for social, educational, and religious activities among the Muslims in Medina and served as the starting point for building a strong and united Islamic community (Rosadi, 2014).

The Prophet's Mosque (Masjid Nabawi) is an important Islamic landmark, used for worship and various activities related to different aspects of human life. Here, Prophet Muhammad

conducted his duties, such as teaching, training troops, diplomacy, and consultation. He engaged in many activities and acted as the leader of the Islamic community overseeing various social, political, and religious activities (M. Yakub, 2017; Muhammad Yakub, 2019).

Educational activities became prominent with the spread of Islam. Two groups of people attended education in the Prophet's Mosque. The first group, "mustami," attended lectures without being bound to a curriculum, and the second group consisted of enrolled students who completed courses and received diplomas (Hasibuan, 2020).

The Prophet's Mosque has significant ties to modern Islamic educational institutions in several ways. First, as one of the largest mosques in the world and a center of Islamic religion, the Prophet's Mosque became an important center of Islamic education for Muslims worldwide, and many modern Islamic educational institutions, such as universities and religious schools, are based around the Prophet's Mosque offering various courses on Islamic religion. Second, the tradition of Islamic education continues worldwide. Therefore, the Prophet's Mosque serves not only as a place of worship but also as an educational center that inspires the current generation to better understand Islam (Asari, 2018).

**Kuttab.** The Arabic root word "kataba," meaning "to write," is the origin of the term "kuttab." In the Islamic world, kuttab refers to elementary educational institutions focused on teaching reading, writing, and understanding the Quran (As-Tsauri, 2020). Students in kuttab are educated to master basic writing and reading skills in Arabic and to understand the content of the Quran. Kuttab learning is typically oral, allowing teachers to demonstrate and instruct their students. By helping Muslim children strengthen their literacy skills and deepen their religious understanding, kuttab becomes a crucial pillar in their education during the classical Islamic period (Basir, 2022).

Initially, kuttab education was conducted in the teacher's home. However, kuttab began to be established around mosques after Prophet Muhammad and his companions built them. Students had more opportunities to learn about Islam as kuttab was located adjacent to the mosque, allowing them to attend lessons after or even before prayers. The mosque became a significant place for education and worship for the Muslim community (Fathurrahman, 2018). This step underscores the importance of religious education as part of the daily life of Muslims at that time.

By the end of the first century of the Hijri calendar, kuttab educational institutions developed with the aim of teaching students to write, read the Quran, and understand the core teachings of the religion. Kuttab instructed both children and adults (Basyit, 2020). This illustrates the importance of religious education in forming a strong understanding of Islam for everyone, regardless of their age. Kuttab enabled communities to learn more about religion and strengthen their faith. Religious education became a strong foundation for shaping the character and spiritual life of the Muslim community at that time.

The kuttab Islamic educational institutions spread further into the second century of the Hijri calendar. This indicates the characteristics of kuttab as open educational institutions that allow everyone to learn. The increasing number of kuttab made Islamic religious education more accessible to the wider community. Kuttab served as centers of learning and provided opportunities for students from various social and economic backgrounds to learn the Quran, fiqh, hadith, and other fields related to Islam (Moh Toriqul Chaer, 2015). Therefore, kuttab institutions were responsible for disseminating Islamic knowledge across the regions they targeted, besides participating in formal education.

In Islamic history, kuttab educational institutions acknowledged the role of the tradition of literacy in the development of various fields of knowledge. This tradition provided the next generations of Islam with a strong foundation to master various fields of knowledge. In addition to teaching them to read the Quran, kuttab teachers taught them mathematics, astronomy, medicine, and history. Knowledge could spread and develop throughout the Islamic world thanks to innovations in kuttab learning. This significantly contributed to the advancement of Islamic

civilization at that time (Bahri, 2021). The tradition of literacy in kuttab educational institutions served as a strong foundation for the intellectual success of the Muslim community in the future.

As an ancient Islamic educational institution, the kuttab has several intriguing connections with modern Islamic educational institutions. The fundamental principles of kuttab learning, including direct instruction from teachers, emphasis on Quranic reading, and focus on religious values, remain relevant and utilized by some modern Islamic educational institutions. Secondly, kuttab concepts of inclusivity and accessibility are also reflected in efforts to enhance educator access.

**House of scholars.** Originally, the house of scholars referred to the homes of the companions where Prophet Muhammad saw. often taught Islam. However, to determine whether the homes of the companions can be considered educational institutions, several factors need to be considered. Although not formally institutionalized, the houses of scholars often functioned as a viable alternative to Islamic educational institutions. While not officially recognized as educational institutions, these houses often served as places where students directly learned about Islam. These houses played a crucial role in imparting knowledge and understanding of Islam to the Muslim generation at that time (Andriani, 2016).

The houses of scholars became educational venues for several important reasons. Firstly, they provided a safe space for spreading the teachings of Islam during the time of Prophet Muhammad saw. as there was no danger outside the homes of the companions. Secondly, they remained places where students could learn without external pressure. For instance, even when institutions teaching philosophy and sciences were closed, the houses of scholars remained alternative venues for learning about Islam. Thirdly, when rulers intervened in educational institutions, the houses of scholars continued to serve as alternative places for learning about Islam. This underscores that the houses of scholars have become significant Islamic educational institutions, despite some limitations (Harahap, 2019).

Contemporary Islamic educational institutions have many connections with the houses of scholars. Firstly, modern Islamic educational institutions trace their roots back to the houses of scholars, which were the first places where formal teachings of Islam were imparted. Secondly, the traditional values inherited from the houses of scholars, such as scholarship, integrity, and dedication to religion, still serve as the foundation for modern Islamic educational institutions. Thirdly, although modern Islamic educational institutions employ more organized structures and teaching methods, they still struggle to provide high-quality education to students. As a result, the houses of scholars can be considered as centers for the development of modern Islamic educational institutions.

**Halaqah al-Dars.** Halaqah al-Dars is a highly renowned educational institution in Islamic tradition. It is a study circle where students gather to receive direct lessons from a teacher or scholar on various aspects of Islam, such as the Quran, Hadith, Fiqh, and Islamic history (Muhajir, 2003). These study circles provide an intimate and interactive environment where students can ask questions, engage in discussions, and gain a deeper understanding of what they are learning. Halaqah al-Dars is typically held in mosques or scholars' houses and serves as an essential tool for teaching Islam to people.

As a representative educational institution, halaqah al-Dars becomes a discussion forum where scholars, writers, logicians, doctors, and government officials gather. Within it, individuals from various disciplines exchange ideas and knowledge. Scholars provide religious insights, writers share literary wisdom, logicians offer logical perspectives, doctors discuss health, and government officials talk about governance. In such conditions, interdisciplinary collaboration occurs, enhancing the understanding of religion and the world (Rostitawati, 2017). Therefore, halaqah al-Dars functions as a place showcasing the intellectual and cultural diversity of the Islamic society and serves as a source of inspiration and renewal for Islamic civilization.

There are several significant differences between Halaqah al-Dars and the houses of scholars. Firstly, Halaqah al-Dars is held in public places like mosques or madrasas, whereas the

houses of scholars are a private space of a scholar. Secondly, in Halaqah al-Dars, students from various backgrounds gather to receive direct teachings and discuss Islam, whereas in the houses of scholars, students exclusively learn from one scholar. Thirdly, learning in the houses of scholars is more flexible and can be tailored to the needs of students, whereas halaqah al-Dars may have a more structured approach to learning.

In the context of Islamic education, Kuttab and Halaqah al-Dars can be associated with various levels of education. Kuttab serves as a basic level educational institution, equivalent to elementary schools in the contemporary education system. Students in Kuttab learn to read the Quran and understand the basic teachings of Islam. On the other hand, Halaqah al-Dars can be considered as an advanced education equivalent to college-level education in the context of Islamic education. There, students who have learned the fundamentals of Islam can deepen their understanding of the Quran, Hadith, Fiqh, and other topics with higher levels of complexity (Bahri, 2021). Therefore, Kuttab and Halaqah al-Dars are two distinct stages of Islamic education, comparable to elementary and advanced education levels in the contemporary education system.

Renowned scholars from the companions, *Tabi'in*, and *Tabi'ut Tabi'in* were born in the four educational institutions mentioned above. These institutions produced remarkable Islamic intellectuals in the history of Islamic education. Their outstanding works influenced the development of religion and culture in Islam in the subsequent periods. As a result, educational institutions not only functioned as places where people learned but also as places where transformative ideas in Islam emerged. They were the early figures of famous Islamic thought. Brilliant thoughts on education stemmed from the educational processes and religious discussions that took place in significant Islamic cities like Mecca, Medina, Basrah, Kufah, Damascus, and Fustat.

In the year 16 Hijriah (634 CE), Abdullah ibn Abbas, assisted by Mu'az ibn Jabal, initiated education in Mecca. Tafsir, Hadith, the critical study of Hadith, and literature were the educational topics provided in the kuttab, the homes of the Prophet's companions, and the mosque. Notable figures like Mujahid ibn Jabbar, who interpreted the Quran; Atha' ibn Abi Rabah, who developed religious knowledge through fiqh texts; and Thawus ibn Kaisan, a renowned mufti in Mecca, all emerged from this education (Lukman, Nasution, & Bakhtiar, 2019). This marked the beginning of religious thought and knowledge in Mecca.

Islamic intellectuals were cultivated through education in Mecca during that time. Students not only gained a better understanding of the Quran and Hadith but also acquired the ability to analyze texts deeply. Following this education, scholars became leaders in religious thought and knowledge. Atha' ibn Abi Rabah enhanced religious knowledge through his fiqh works, while Mujahid ibn Jabbar was renowned for his profound Quranic exegesis. As a mufti, Thawus ibn Kaisan provided significant legal perspectives to the Meccan community. This demonstrates that the traditional education system was superior in enhancing the intelligence of Muslims.

The second-generation scholars who developed Islamic education in Mecca were Mujahid ibn Jabbar, Atha' ibn Abi Rabah, and Thawus ibn Kaisan. Third-generation scholars, including Sufyan ibn Uyainah, Muslim ibn Khalid al-Zanji, and Imam Shafi'i, expanded upon this educational legacy. Before pursuing studies in Medina, Imam Shafi'i studied in Mecca. His major works, such as "al-Umm," and the formation of the Shafi'i school of thought, demonstrate his contribution to Islamic thought and knowledge. This underscores the importance of education in Mecca as a foundation for the intellectual advancement of the Muslim community.

Since the migration of Prophet Muhammad and his companions to Medina, Islamic educational institutions have existed there. While kuttab and the homes of the companions remained active, the mosque became the main center of learning. Companions such as Abu Bakr, Umar ibn al-Khattab, Ali ibn Abi Talib, Zaid ibn Thabit, and Abdullah ibn Umar helped perpetuate this educational tradition. Teaching and interpretation of the Quran flourished, especially after the compilation of the handwritten Quran under the leadership of Zaid ibn Thabit. This underscores

the significance of Medina as a center of Islamic education that nurtured Islamic knowledge and thought (Hidayat, 2020).

After the first-generation companions and scholars passed away in Medina, Islamic educational institutions focused on jurisprudence (fiqh) and Hadith, with Abdullah ibn Umar leading teaching in these areas. Later, Sa'ad bin Musayyab and Urwah bin al-Zubair bin al-Awwam were responsible for preserving and developing Medina's scholarly heritage. The next generations, like Ibn Shihab al-Zuhri, continued to strengthen the scholarly foundation in Medina. Al-Zuhri, renowned as a hadith and fiqh scholar, upheld this scholarly tradition. Before the establishment of madrasahs, Islamic educational institutions in Medina continued to play a crucial role in the dissemination and development of Islamic religious knowledge (F. Nasution, 2020b).

Similar to the time of Prophet Muhammad, Islamic education in Medina continued in mosques, kuttab, and the homes of the companions. The mosque remained a center of learning, and kuttab and the homes of the companions were also active as learning places. This tradition demonstrates the continuity of Islamic educational institutions in Medina, which have preserved the scholarly and spiritual heritage from generation to generation. Medina continues to be an important center for enhancing knowledge and understanding of Islam due to the various educational centers available there.

In Basra, similar to Makkah and Medina, Islamic education began in mosques and the homes of scholars. Ali ibn Abi Talib requested Abu Musa al-Asy'ari and Anas bin Malik to support this initiative. They were from the early generations renowned for their expertise in jurisprudence, hadith, and Quranic studies. With their assistance, Islamic education was established in Basra and became a significant scholarly center in Islamic history. Islamic thought and knowledge flourished in Basra due to teachings grounded in the Quran and Sunnah.

In Basra, Hasan al-Basri and Ibn Sirin emerged as famous scholars in the early second century of the Hijri calendar. Hasan al-Basri initiated the Ahlus Sunnah school of thought in theological studies and made significant contributions to religious thought. Additionally, Ibn Sirin was considered a renowned expert in jurisprudence and hadith. He gained better understanding through direct teachings from prominent figures like Zaid bin Thabit and Anas bin Malik. These two scholars enriched Basra's scholarly tradition and played vital roles in the development of Islamic religious thought at that time (Mujab, 2012).

Before the establishment of madrasahs, the Islamic education system in Basra was heavily influenced by teaching practices in mosques and the homes of scholars. Famous scholars like Hasan al-Basri and Ibn Sirin provided significant assistance in spreading religious knowledge. They taught directly to their students in an informal yet highly productive environment. Kuttab also served as primary learning centers where adults and children were educated about religion. With direct guidance from scholars, this system helped sustain and disseminate Islamic scholarship in Basra at that time.

Kufa emerged as a significant center for Islamic education during the reign of Umar ibn Khattab. Abdullah ibn Mas'ud, a renowned companion of the Prophet known for his expertise in jurisprudence and Quranic exegesis, was the primary and foremost teacher assigned there. He played a pivotal role in disseminating Islamic knowledge in Kufa. Ibn Mas'ud taught his followers how to understand the Quran and practice religion correctly. He created a supportive environment for learning and discourse by establishing teaching assemblies in the homes of companions and in mosques. Islamic scholarship in Kufa flourished with the assistance of Ibn Mas'ud.

Islamic educational institutions in Kufa played a crucial role in the dissemination and preservation of religious knowledge even before the emergence of madrasahs. Six prominent scholars: Alqamah, Al-Aswad, Masruq, 'Ubaidah, Al-Harith bin Qais, and 'Amr bin Shurahbil were active in teaching and upholding the tradition of Islamic education under the guidance of Abdullah ibn Mas'ud. To enhance their understanding of religion, they even conducted comparative studies in Mecca and Medina. Additionally, Abu Musa al-Asy'ari, Shurayh, Nakhai, Sa'id bin Zubair,

Nu'man, and Abu Hanifah helped strengthen Kufa's position as an important center of Islamic religious knowledge at that time (Y. Arifin, 2018).

Three renowned teachers from Medina, Mu'adh bin Jabal, Ubadah, and Abu Darda', were dispatched to Damascus (Syria) to establish Islamic educational institutions during the time of Umar ibn al-Khattab. This institution initiated the dissemination of religious knowledge to Palestine, the Maghreb, and Andalusia. With the increasing role of the Umayyad dynasty in Islamic politics, this role became more significant. They not only strengthened the scholarly foundation in the region but also shaped Islamic thought and educational traditions across the territories they were associated with (Juwari, 2022).

Islamic educational institutions in Damascus were established by the first generation, consisting of Mu'adh bin Jabal, Ubadah, and Abu Darda'. Abu Idris al-Khalaini, Makhul al-Dimashqi, Umar bin Abd al-'Aziz, and Razak bin Haiwah are mentioned as the second generation. They maintained the practice of teaching Islamic religion and expanded their knowledge to neighboring areas.

Abdurrahman al-Awza'i emerged from the Islamic education process in Damascus. He is considered one of the contemporary scholars with knowledge equivalent to Imam Malik and Abu Hanifah. Al-Awza'i contributed to the scholarly heritage of Islamic Damascus. Their harmony demonstrates the importance of a strong and continuous Islamic educational tradition in fostering intellectual and scholarly excellence.

Abdullah bin 'Amr bin al-'As, a prominent figure in Islam who conquered Egypt during the reign of Umar bin al-Khattab, was the first to initiate the process of Islamic education in Fustat, or Ancient Egypt. The Islamization process and rapid establishment of mosques in the area greatly contributed to strengthening the foundation of Islamic education. The process of teaching and learning evolved around religious and educational activities in mosques. The more organized and widespread development of Islamic education in the region of Ancient Egypt began with the initiative of Abdullah bin 'Amr bin al-'As (Pramono, 2021).

Scholars such as Yazid bin Abi Habib al-Nubai, who was knowledgeable in jurisprudence, and Abdullah bin Abi Ja'far bin Rabi'ah, who taught literary and social sciences, emerged after Abdullah bin 'Amr bin al-'As. Their presence improved Islamic education in Ancient Egypt. They also helped establish early educational institutions such as kuttab and halaqah in the region. Halaqat served as places to study various aspects of religious and social sciences, while kuttab served as places for basic education. Therefore, the role of these scholars was crucial in building Islamic education in Egypt at that time.

The Islamic University of al-Azhar was founded in Cairo in 970 CE from a mosque built by Jauhar al-Katib al-Siqilli, the general of the Fatimid Dynasty. Al-Azhar University evolved from that mosque into a center of Islamic education. Al-Azhar has been a leading educational institution since its inception, offering various courses in Islamic studies and other fields. Al-Azhar University has been a center of Islamic learning and thought that has influenced many aspects of life in the Muslim world. With its long history and strong reputation, it remains one of the leading Islamic educational institutions in the world.

### **Institutions of Education in Pre-Madrasah Abbasid Era**

Before the emergence of madrasahs, institutions such as mosques, kuttab (elementary schools), houses of scholars, and halaqah al-dars (study circles) played significant roles in disseminating religious knowledge and scholarship. This process illustrates that Islamic education could adapt to the times and demands of society. Four types of early Islamic educational institutions had developed since the era of the Rightly Guided Caliphs and the Umayyad period. Along with the progress of civilization and education, various Islamic educational institutions emerged during the Abbasid era.

Islamic educational institutions experienced significant advancements during the Abbasid rule. In addition to traditional institutions such as mosques, kuttab, and halaqah, new innovations such as daur al-kutub (libraries), observatories, hospitals, masjid khans (hostels), and ribats emerged. Daur al-kutub played a crucial role in the collection, storage, and dissemination of Islamic knowledge, while observatories facilitated scientific research and studies in Greek philosophy and astronomy. Hospitals provided healthcare and medical treatment to the people. Masjid Khans served as lodging places for travelers. Ribats were social and military institutions that provided religious training and protection to Islamic soldiers. This demonstrates the Abbasid commitment to enhancing education, knowledge, and the well-being of the Muslim community.

*First*, Dar al-Kutub (libraries). Dar al-Kutub/ libraries, also known as daur al-kutub, served as places of learning that allowed people to study, converse, and exchange ideas. Daur al-kutub was established by various individuals, communities, and governments, including caliphs, governors, and local rulers in classical Islamic history. Its primary focus was to provide access to various religious literature and sources of knowledge for educational and research purposes. This venue provided opportunities for students, scholars, and researchers to learn, converse, and deepen their understanding of various topics. It made a significant contribution to the advancement of science and intellectuality in Islamic society at that time.

During the Abbasid era, buildings known as bait al-hikmah, khiza'nah al-hikmah, or shawawin al-hikmah were established in an effort to enhance Islamic thought and education. These buildings served as centers of intellectual and educational activities. There, scientists, philosophers, and scholars from various fields of knowledge gathered to converse, exchange ideas, and develop new concepts. Bait al-hikmah became a symbol of diversity and intellectual progress in Islamic society at that time, making a significant contribution to the development of science, philosophy, and culture during that period (Rahman, 2020).

Abu Ja'far al-Mansur established the first Bait al-Hikmah during the Abbasid era (135-157 H/752-774 CE). Until the reigns of Harun al-Rashid and Al-Mamun, activities in this institution continued to flourish. Bait al-Hikmah served as a center for academic and educational activities. There, scientists, philosophers, and scholars gathered to learn and converse with one another. Its main functions were as a place of teaching, cultural exchange, and the development of science and philosophy. Additionally, discussions and interactions among scholars from various disciplines led to various discoveries and scholarly works (Riyadi, 2014).

Bait al-Hikmah was established in Kairouan by Ziadatullah III al-Aghlabi, the Abbasid governor in North Africa (290-296 H). Translation, writing, and teaching took place here in fields such as medicine, pharmacy, mathematics, astronomy, metrology, botany, and music. Bait al-Hikmah in Kairouan functioned as a center of intellectual activity where people from diverse cultures and knowledge backgrounds from around the world met and interacted, enriching the scientific and cultural heritage of humanity.

Al-Fath bin Khaqan, a minister under the Abbasid caliph al-Mutawakkil (232-247 H/846-861 CE), established Khizanah al-Hikmah. This institution served as a center of intellectual activity, storing and disseminating knowledge, including translations and writings of important works. Khizanah al-Hikmah was depicted as a symbol of intellectual advancement at that time and made many significant contributions to the advancement of science and culture in the Islamic world.

In addition to libraries, mahal al-warqah—literally meaning "the place of paper"—served as a center of knowledge and civilization, with its main activities being manuscript writing and the art of calligraphy. Mahal al-Warqah also served as a place where scholarly works were written and copied, aiding in the preservation and dissemination of culture and knowledge. Furthermore, it was a hub for the development of calligraphy.

The period of disintegration began after the end of the first Abbasid period. The Umayyads in Spain and the Fatimid Dynasty in Egypt emerged as major rivals. Other smaller dynasties contributed to the development of science, education, and teaching. At that time, Islamic civilization was referred to as the "civilization of the book," which referred to the use of books as

the primary source of knowledge. High-quality books were widely used to expand knowledge, disseminate new ideas, and broaden the intellectual horizons of Islamic society.

The house of Ali ibn Yahya, Khizanah al-Hikmah in Karkar, near Baghdad, attracted many tourists from various countries. This place, with its dormitories and accommodation facilities, became an important hub for cultural and knowledge exchange. Additionally, the Darul al-Ilm library, founded by Abu al-Qasim ibn Muhammad ibn Hamdan al-Maushili in Mosul, became one of the intellectual centers influencing the advancement of science and education in the region. Both of these institutions greatly contributed to the intellectual development and civilization in the Islamic world at that time.

Libraries, also known as Daur al-Kutub, inherited their crucial role in classical Islamic educational institutions and served as the foundation for modern Islamic educational institutions. Libraries, as intellectual centers, not only stored books and manuscripts but also allowed people to enter, converse, and exchange ideas. This created a lasting learning environment, enabling both the current and future generations to engage in ongoing research. By providing access to various sources of information, libraries also safeguarded and passed on the cultural and intellectual heritage of humanity, ensuring that the principles and knowledge of Islam remain alive and evolving in the present era.

*Second*, Observatories and Hospital. Bait al-Hikmah was equipped with an observatory during the reign of Caliph al-Mamun. Al-Khwarizmi, a renowned mathematician, was born here. He often conducted research at the observatory to create an accurate calendar. Therefore, this observatory became a vital center for the advancement of science and technology, as well as played a significant role in fostering thought and knowledge in the Islamic world. Scientific and philosophical discussions about Greek knowledge were also held here, indicating the importance of observatories in disseminating knowledge during that time.

In Cairo, Egypt, during the rule of the Fatimid Caliphate, Al-Hakim established Dar al-Hikmah, which included a space for an observatory. Ibn Sina led the observatory built by the Hamdan Dynasty. Umar Khayyam also led an observatory in Baghdad during the Seljuk Dynasty in 1100 AD. Although Baghdad was plundered by Mongol armies in 1264 AD, the observatory remained standing. Muslim rulers in Medina also constructed similar facilities, highlighting the importance of observatories for the advancement of science in the Islamic world.

In classical literature, hospitals, also known as bimaristans, aided students and aspiring physicians in practicing the theories they learned. Hospitals were established in many cities, such as Cairo (Egypt), Kairouan (Tunisia), and Seville (Spain). Here, medical practitioners not only treated patients but also shared knowledge and experiences with medical students, enhancing their understanding of medical practices. Therefore, hospitals were crucial for the development of medical science and maintaining public health in the Islamic world (Fauziah, 2018; F. Nasution, 2020a).

Both observatories and hospitals are integral parts of classical and modern Islamic educational institutions. Observatories are used for studying science and astronomy, while hospitals serve as practice grounds for medical students. Observatories aided research and knowledge dissemination in the past. Both are now essential components of contemporary Islamic education, facilitating scientific research, medical training, and improving healthcare services, in line with the increasing complexity of technology and science.

*Third*, Khan Mosques. Mosques are the primary locations where education in Islam commences. Students reside in khan mosques, buildings in their vicinity. By staying in Khan Mosques, students can focus on studying and worshipping. Additionally, this creates an environment conducive to sustained social interaction and student learning. Khan Mosques are not just places of worship; they also serve as educational centers teaching Islamic values to people (Lannuria, Karinah, Yusuf, Dhuha, & Wismanto, 2023).

Khan Mosques experienced rapid growth in the 10th century AD due to the efforts of Badr bin Hasanawaih al-Kurdi, a governor under the rule of Adud al-Daulah. Around 3,000 Khan Mosques were established by Badr, creating an extensive network of Islamic educational institutions. Renowned teachers such as Abu Ishaq from the Nizhamiyyah Madrasah in Baghdad were actively involved in teaching at Khan Mosques, fostering a dynamic and diverse learning environment. In addition to expanding access to Islamic education for the community, this initiative also strengthened the role of mosques as significant intellectual and spiritual centers in Islamic society.

*Fifth*, Ribath and Zawiyah. In English, "Ribath" translates to "fortress." However, in the context of education, its meaning has evolved over time. Ribath is a place where Sufis concentrate on worship and avoid worldly activities. It serves as a center for Islamic spirituality learning and where Sufis learn about religious practices and mysticism. By providing an ideal environment for introspection, meditation, and self-development, ribath plays a significant role in the development of Islamic thought and spirituality (Harahap, 2019).

Ribath is often inhabited by the poor who study religion and Sufi practices. In most cases, each ribath is led by a sheikh renowned for his knowledge and esteemed for his friendly demeanor. These sheikhs are responsible for the spiritual guidance of those living in ribath. They are also responsible for teaching them religion and guiding them in Sufi practices.

Ribath becomes a place where seekers of wisdom and spiritual knowledge can gather, learn, and grow personally and spiritually thanks to the presence of wise and intelligent sheikhs. Zawiyah is an Islamic religious institution that serves as a center for spirituality, education, and self-development. Zawiyah, usually consisting of simple buildings, students learn about Islamic teachings, spirituality, and worship practices directly from a sheikh. Zawiyah also serves as a place for students to gather to deepen their religious knowledge and expand their spiritual understanding (S. Nasution, 2020).

Before the emergence of madrasahs, ribath and zawiyah were the primary educational institutions in the Islamic world. They served as centers for education and teaching, especially in the fields of Sufism and Islamic spirituality. However, their functions began to change after the establishment of madrasahs. Ribath became more of a home for scholars and their students. Conversely, ribath and zawiyah remained centers of spiritual and educational activities for Muslims, although their functions evolved over time.

Ribath and zawiyah continue to play a significant role as places for spiritual learning and participating in religious activities, even though madrasahs are now the official centers of education. Ribath and zawiyah remain relevant as centers of spirituality and learning in the Islamic tradition because they provide an environment conducive to the spiritual and intellectual growth of Muslims, promote religious values, and preserve scholarly traditions.

## CONCLUSION

Islamic educational institutions, prior to the emergence of madrasahs, played a vital role in disseminating and developing knowledge and spirituality in the Islamic world, particularly during the classical era up to the Abbasid dynasty. Through institutions such as mosques, kuttab, houses of scholars, halaqah al-dars, ribath, and zawiyah, Muslims gained understanding of religious teachings, scientific knowledge, and spiritual practices. These institutions facilitated the exchange of ideas, research, and teaching of science, making them crucial for the education of Muslim generations. They evolved into centers of knowledge and religion that preserved the traditions of Islamic scholarship. The legacy of classical Islamic educational institutions before the emergence of madrasahs promoted a holistic educational approach that integrated science, religion, and spirituality. This reflected various forms of Islamic education, allowing for broad and integrated learning as well as continuous knowledge enhancement. The legacy of Islamic educational institutions before madrasahs historically continues to influence how we understand and approach Islamic education.

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