

Learning Institutes of Pre-Islam and Early Islamic Century and their Transformation into Formal Madrasah in 11th Century

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ABSTRACT:

The learning institutes and centers in the Pre-Islam and Early Islamic era were really remarkable and might be countless. This study shows the development of Madrasah in the 11th century from various learning institutes and centers in the past. The historical methodology was used in this study, where, the researcher studied the documents related to the evolution of Madrasah. This paper is an analytical study, in which the historical documents, journals, articles and publications related to this subject area were studied to develop this research paper. The current study analyses the official construction of Nizamiyyah in Baghdad and its Influence and scholarship that it provided for scholars, researchers, educationists, readers and policy makers. The main objective of this paper is to show how the various learning centers and institutes of pre-islam and early Islamic century were transformed into the formal official Madrasah on the basis of historical stand point. The result of this effort shows the growth of a formal Madrasah in the 11th century of Muslim civilization. In this regard, this paper presents different types of learning institutes and centers which later on evolved into prestigious Madrasah. Kuttab, Maktab, Halaqah, Suffah, Majlis, Jami'ah, Jami Masjid and Khan Complex are among the examples. A brief important study on the formation of Madrasah provides a solid research to inform the nations about the original history on the formation of Madrasah in 11th century. The Study demonstrated various public education centers like Maktab, Kuttab, Halaqah, Suffah, Jami (Friday Mosque), Jami'ah (University) and libraries were the main sources of Madrasah. Hence, An instance of growing the number of students in these centers was the main reason to establish the independent institution named Madrasah outside the mosque.

Keywords: Learning institute, Madrasah, Transformation, Madrasah Nizamiyah, 11th century

1. INTRODUCTION

Madrasah is one of the formal education institutions in the Muslim world. It plays a significant role to protect Islam and impart the ideas, ethics and values among the Muslim students from the very beginning of its establishment. Madrasah is considered as the bastion of the Muslim believers. Madrasah education usually supplies the Islamic religious education including modern knowledge to their future citizens [1].

To [2] Currently, Madrasah not only provides the religious knowledge but also modern western knowledge to prepare them as complete human beings from every angle.

Madrasah is an Arabic word derived from the verb 'Darsun', means teaching or tutoring. So, Madrasah refers to a school where Islamic religious knowledge is taught [3]. But to the west it is a school focuses on Islamic education [4].

This Madrasah was not seen at the beginning of the arrival of Islam. Only Nizam-ul-Mulk first introduced official system of Madrasah at Baghdad in 11th century [5]. The formation of this Madrasah in the history of Islam is inherited from the various education institutions and centers in Pre-Islam and early Islam.

Education institutions were kept in pace with the arrival of Islam, advent of Islam and education institutions went parallel in every place. Most of the important places had establishments of education institutions for instance Mecca, Madinah, Kufa, Yamen, Damascus, Basra, Maro, Mosul, Heart, Balkh, Cairo, Nishapur, Baghdad, Khurasan and some other places. However, the Muslims did not leave the West behind in terms of education and therefore they built schools in Cordova, Granada, Toledo, Seville and elsewhere. In the eleventh century, the quality of education of these places was standard while the Christian schools' education level of the East and West was low. Arithmetic, geometry, trigonometry, physics, chemistry, biology, astronomy, medicine, surgery, logic and other modern subjects were taught in these Muslim prestigious institutions [6]. Literature review demonstrates Islamic Learning Institutes as having many advantages in assimilation, application and discussions on Islamic knowledge and edicts. In the early Islamic period, these institutions including Madrasah played a prestigious role through producing the Muslim scholars all over the world. The Madrasah School during that time developed the field of revealed knowledge and acquired knowledge as well.

Through developing various field of knowledge and producing the Muslim scholars, Madrasah al-Nizamiyyah and Madrasah al-Mustansiriyyah in Baghdad, Madrasah al-Sulemaniyyah in Istanbul, Madrasah al-Nuriyah Kubra in Damascus, Jamiah al-Azhar in Cairo, Jamiah al-Cordoba in Spain, Madrasah al-Qarawiyyah in Tunis and Madrasah al-Qarabiwin in Fez became the center of Islamic civilization [7]. This civilization has also drawn the attention of the Europe and whole Asia with profound impression on the Indian-subcontinent. The Madrasah education provides young Muslim students Islamic religious education with Qur'anic values. Madrasah became a part of main stream education system of many Muslim countries in the world. During the early Islamic period there was no institution named 'Madrasah.' An institute named 'Madrasah' was established in the eleventh century in Baghdad by the name of "Madrasah Nizamiyyah" by Nizam-ul-Mulk [4]. During the time of medieval Islam, kuttub, Maktab, writing schools, Libraries, Darut Tadris, Baital Hikmah and many other learning centers were built by the great Muslims in Baghdad, Cordoba, and Cairo. Most of these learning centers were close to the large Mosque. They established the Unique learning centers for children and advanced institutes for continuing education. These advanced leading institutes prepared students according to their needs, adjusted the students for the academic work and pushed the students into the intellectual realm. These institutes advanced the level of knowledge and produced numerous scholars in various field by incredible research activities, turning up into today's established picture of Madrasah.

2. METHODOLOGY

This paper is a qualitative study. This study used historical methodology to collect the information on transformation of Madrasah in 11th century. Historical methodology is the process by which the researcher gathers evidence and formulates ideas about the past research documents and studies related to the evolution of Madrasah. Historical documents, books, journals, articles and publication related to this subject area were studied to develop this research paper. This paper focuses on the formation of Madrasah Institute. Thus, historical data showed how the various learning centers and institutes of pre-Islam and early Islamic century were transformed into the formal Madrasah on the basis of historical stand point.

3. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

3. 1 Maktab and Kuttub in Pre-Islam and Early Islam

The learning Institutes of Maktab or Kuttub (writing school) were not only established in the early Muslim education system but it was also present before Islam. It was the existing means of basic education in almost every place in the pre-Islamic era. The practice of reading and writing and the establishment of the educational institutions have started from the period of Jahiliyyah (age of ignorance) with limited scope. Regarding this issue, from the historical background, a lot of evidences have been established by various writers and researchers about the development of education and the establishment of educational institution from time to time and from place to place. According to [8] a teaching place namely 'Bait-ul-

Madaris' was founded by a Jew in Madinah. This 'Bait-ul-Madaris' was also known as Kuttab elementary school in the period of Jahiliyyah (age of ignorance). Non-Muslims, Jews and Christians were the teachers of that school. It also had been used as a court and a Higher Learning Institution. Out of that, in Mecca, there was also an institute of learning, from which Zulma acquired education in her early childhood.

However, after the arrival of Islam, the practice of reading and writing and educational institution started to increase progressively. In fact, this was limited before Islam. In the early period of Islam after the battle of Badr, all the prisoners from the battle of Badr were given the condition by Prophet Muhammad (swa) of obtaining freedom from the prison after they had taught the newly converted Muslims at Kuttab [9]. In the early period of Islam, educational institutions were also increased similarly with the advantage of practice of reading and writing. As reported by Khan [10], Kuttab was managed by two fighters of Badr namely Abu Usaid and Abu Huraira Ibn Omar and they also observed the activities of the students of that Kuttab. According to Mirza [11], during the early period of Islam, Maktabah- E- Bani Ammar in Tripoli was a famous school for the practice of reading and writing. Nearly every mosque in Madinah had this kind of school for the practice of teaching and learning for the boys and girls. Children usually would learn how to read al-Qur'an and write the ninety-nine most beautiful names of Allah. Also, Lauh (Takhti / board) was used to carry out the reading and writing activities in the Kuttab [12]. Kuttab and Maktab were used for Elementary education which was the first phase of the two phases of Muslim education during the pre-Madrasah period. Later on, these Maktabas (Elementary school) were transformed into a Madrasah also known as Higher Learning Schools [10].

3. 2 Suffah

The School of Suffah took place in the Mosque (Masjid). During the time of holy prophet, the mosque organized the school of Suffah in Madinah. Prophet appointed the teachers for Suffah to teach the illiterate Muslims how to read and write. For example, Ubaid ibn al-Samit, a teacher of the School of Suffah in Madinah, was appointed by holy prophet [13]. Abu Ubaidah-al-Jarrah and Abdullah bin Raw'ahah also taught different skills and knowledge in the Masjid Al-Nabawih and Masjid Al-Qubah respectively [14]. During the time of prophet, there were 9 mosques and each of them was used in the teaching of writing and reading the holy Qur'an [13]. The education system of Madinas' people started from the 'Suffa Nabavi' which was the first residential institute during the time of Holy Prophet (saw) [8]. The Prophet (saw) himself taught them the Qur'an and Sunnah while other persons were appointed in order to teach how to read and write. According to [15], after the migration of holy the prophet to Madinah, there was a Madrasah established named 'Madrasah Ahli Suffah' near the mosque of the holy prophet in Madinah. As stated by Iqbal [16: p 15], 'Suffa' was considered as "the first Muslim School established in Madinah in the Holy Mosque for the purpose of school during the day, and a boarding house at night". Further, [17] revealed that the Masjid of holy Prophet in Madina conducted Suffa for teaching Islamic sciences. As well, there were many other Masjids such as Masjid al-shafi, Masjid of Abu Bakr as- Shami, Masjid of Qadi Abul Hassan and many more which conducted this Suffah system of teaching and learning. It is noted that, most of these Masjids were known by their renowned professor's name.

3. 3 Halaqah (Study Circle)

Another way of teaching and learning was Halaqah or circle. This system was a popular and unique way of Muslim's basic education in early Islam. Halaqah means a circle or gathering, literally, a gathering place for the students and learners to get the knowledge. In the early Islam century, Halaqah or study circle was considered as Kulliyah (faculty) and Jami'ah as University, where practice of knowledge took place. This Halaqah was conducted inside the Mosque. It was also called the Mosque school. In this system, the teacher would be seated in a place and students would be seated around the teacher [18].

According to Khan [8], during the early period of Islam, it was also called 'Halaka-i-Dars' which means teaching and learning circle. Before the pre-Madrasah period, it was a formal schooling system in Islam. Inside the Mosque, the teacher would seat near the wall and the students would circle him to pursue the knowledge. This Halaqah provided Advanced Studies which was the second stage of Muslim pre-

Madrasah education. Meanwhile, the first stage was elementary education, which was took place inside the Mosque-Madrasah. Mosque was considered as the first learning institution in the early century of Islam [17]. Debate, discussion, teaching and learning activities were carried out inside the Mosque-Madrasah through several Majlis, Halaqah and Circle. In Halaqah or study circle, students would learn Islamic religious subjects from various Sheikhs and scholars. Stanton [19] found that leader of Halaqah or study Circle not only emphasized on religious subjects but sciences and secular subjects were taught as well. Ould Bah [20] revealed that during the time of Fatimiyah reign, inside the mosque teachers would give lecture to their target students' circle on various fields of knowledge. As reported, more than sixty learning circles were conducted by the scholars in a mosque within same time. This Halaqah system of teaching and learning was not only introduced among the Arab Muslim society but was also practiced outside of Arab continent.

In Malaysia, this Halaqah (study circle) was known as 'Usrah' in the early Muslim society. It was a collective teaching and learning system among the Muslim Malaysians. There were three characteristics of Halaqah (study circle): it was more collaborative, it focused on spiritual development with practical implementation in daily activities and the study circle involved both modern secular and religious setting. Thus, the study circle succeeded in combining the learning system of the traditional people and the modern people [18].

Meanwhile, the number of students kept on increasing day by day and it became very difficult to accommodate the students inside the mosque. In addition, during the time of teaching and learning, intellectual conflict between teacher and students, argument between religious and secular issues had created noisy environment inside the mosque. This disturbed other Muslims during their worshipping activities. In order to solve these issues, a constructive idea emerged and a new type of school outside the mosque called 'Madrasah' was established [21].

3. 4 Majlis

Majlis is an Arabic word derived from the Arabic verve 'jalasa' which means to sit, sitting or meeting in a place either inside or outside of the Mosque which offered Advanced Studies similar to Halaqah. According to [14], in the early period of Islam, *majlis* (occasion) or *halqah* (learning circle) was the place where, Islamic doctrine was taught by Holey Prophet (swa) inside the Masjid Al-Nabawih and Masjid Al-Qubah. In the early century of Islam, Majlis took place inside the Mosque to teach Hadith. It was a class for teaching, like 'Majlis al-Tadris' an example of class for teaching the Islamic principles [8]. Majlis, however, the term refers to a place occupied by a professor inside the mosque after regular prayers. This Majlis was also different according to its session of lectures. Majlis-al-ilm and Majlis al-Tadris discussed the Hadith and Islamic sciences and apart from these, medical science was also discussed in Majlis-al-ilm. One of the famous physicians of Damascus, Abd al-Aziz as-Sulami, used to come and give lecture for the medical students [19]. Meanwhile, Majlis-al-munazara was a place where debates occurred among the scholars; Majlis-al-hukum was a place for judgment; Majlis-al-fatwa was a place of Islamic verdict; Majlis-al-waaj was a place for religious talk; Majlis-al-shura was a meeting place for administrators, Qazi, Hakim, poets and other people. Majlises were took place inside the Mosque during that time [17]. Hence, for conducting educational activities, the Mosque was known as Mosque Madrasah [22], and for serving the knowledge, the Mosque was known as an Ideal Institution of Learning [17].

3. 5 Jami (Friday Mosque)

Jami is referred to a Mosque for Friday prayer and another one was known as every day or ordinary Mosque or Masjid. Only for Friday congregational prayer that it's called Jami Mosque or Jami Masjid [23]. Jami was also used as an institution where Muslims practiced teaching and learning in various disciplines of knowledge in the early Islam. Jami also served many Halaqas. The Halaqas of Jami Mosque were conducted to serve the various Islamic knowledge, sciences and to teach the holy Qur'an. Various Halaqas could be found in the Jami Masjid (Friday Mosque) of Cairo, Baghdad, and Damascus. In Damascus alone, there were many Jami' Masjids attached to the Madrasah for providing Islamic sciences lectures, and in Baghdad, there were six Jamis (Friday Masjid / Mosque) from hundred Mosques during

the middle of 5th to 11th century [24]. These Jami Masjids were also known as Mosque School [22] and Madrasah-Jami [17]. In some early references the terms for mosque and *Madrasah* appear to have been used interchangeably, as teaching took place in both. The mosque was among the earliest institutions of Islam and unalterably public in character, originally the site of government and justice, as well as of prayer and religious learning. From the point of view of the teachers and students, however, there was no difference in curriculum or procedure between mosque and *Madrasah*.

3. 6 Jami'ah (University)

Jami'ah (University) was another important center for teaching-learning and doing research activities. Those days it was considered as a university. Jami'ah or Jama'ah refers to the university. In English, the perception of jama'ah stands for the meaning of collaboration that means sharing. Teaching and learning activities were conducted in the mosque through collaborative way of study circle to unite the learners in the groups and make it practical [18]. Due to these collaborations of study circle inside the mosque, some mosques became well-known as Jami'ah (University) and mosque was considered as the universe of knowledge in the early period of Islam. Madrasah-Jami like Jamiah al-Qarawiyyah of 859 AD attached to the Mosque al-Qarawiyyan is considered as the oldest Madrasah in the world. This institution was established in the city Fez of Morocco [25]. Meanwhile, Madrasah Jamih al-Azhar (al-Azhar University) in 959 AD of Cairo, Jamih al-Hakim, Jami'ah al-Malik, Jami'ah al-Ma'mur, Jami'ah al-Atiq, Jami'ah Amr bin al-Ass of Egypt, Jam'ih al-Umayyad of Damascus [26] and Jami'ah al-Cordoba [19] in Spain were the renowned Jami'ah all around the world. According to [27], Madrasah and Mosque are the same according to their function. Many Mosques in Cairo and Jami Mosque or Madrasah Jami conducted the same activities. Therefore, the Mosque was a primary learning institution while, Jami Mosque or Madrasah Jami was a secondary learning institution.

3. 7 Khan Complex

The term Khan referred to an inn, which was built to accommodate students from outside of the town or city. According to the finding of [14], Khan Complex was evolved from Masjid. Masjid included some residential halls (Khans) with free food for the teachers and staff. Due to attachment of residential halls (Khan), it was known as *Masjid-khan* (Masjid-inn) complex. It was mainly for Law students to board and give tutor on legal studies [19]. The khan served many purposes in medieval Islam like as hotel or Inn in the town and in the desert places as well. Khan was also the source of income as it has commercial center with many small shops. It provided Waqaf, Charity and stipend for the students of Law College. Students were bound to stay in that complex for around four years because of the duration of law courses in the mosque. However, around 10th century, the Khan Complex was going to develop dramatically due to its importance. Once it was very famous and important in early Islam then it became Masjid Khan Complex. And later on, this Complex was transformed into a Madrasah and removed all students from the Mosque and left the mosque to its status as a mosque, as it is a worship place for Muslims [17].

4. FINDINGS

4. 1 Transformation into Madrasah

Building of Separate Madrasah was a gradual process. After a systematic study, it gave a new historical experience on how learning centers gradually transformed into organized formal Madrasah in 11th Century. The initial process of separate Madrasah began to be built next to Masjid from the ninth century A.D. [28]. However, Scholars, historians and researchers presented a lot of documents on this subject. The experiences of renowned Professor George Makdisi [17], ascending researchers Rahimah Embong, Fadzli Adam & Anis Abdullah [14] and prominent historian Shalaby Ahmad [9] are the most suitable finding for this research.

Professor George Makdisi [17] stated that transformation into formal Madrasah, it had to cross through three dimensions; the first one is Masjid, the second one is from Masjid to Masjid Khan Complex and the

third one is the final conversion into Madrasah. The Masjid Khan Complex comprised the building of Masjid to conduct the study of law which was known as a Law college while the Khan Complex nearby the mosque was built for accommodating the law students specially those who come from far places outside of the town. Finding of Rahimah Embong, Fadzli Adam & Anis Abdullah [14: P 161] is similar to Makdisi "In sum, the early Islamic learning institutions evolved from the mosque (*masjid*), to the mosque-khan (*masjid-inn*) and eventually they became madrasahs." Furthermore, they pointed out that, in order to teach students the texts interpretation for administrative and legal purpose, *mosque-khan* was transformed into Madrasah in 10th century. And a remarkable comment of Shalaby [9: p 55] "the progress and diffusion of knowledge created a body of men who found it difficult to make a decent living through their abstract learning. It was to promote future study and to provide sufficient stipends for such men that the Madrasah were really established".

Therefore, regarding the formation of Madrasah, the first structural and official Madrasah was established by Nizam al-Mulk Tosi in AD 1067 in Baghdad called Madrasah Nizamiyyah [24]. As explained by [22], Nizamiyyah School in Baghdad was not the first school in Islam but the first in terms of structure which gave Madrasah an institutionalized picture and geared to that period among the Sunni Muslims. Nizamiyyah was a model institution to the Muslim kings, Muslim women and caliphs who wanted to establish Madrasah [29]. Muslim Sultans (Kings) established many famous Madrasahs according to the model of Nizamiyyah. Thus, Madrasah Nuriah al-Qubrah, Madrasah al-Mustansariah and Madrasah Nafari are the best example [30]. In addition to the influence of Nizamiyyah, there were no villages somewhere around Baghdad without school in those times.

The famous Nizamiyyah was considered among the religious classes and scholars as the center of learning for the next several centuries. Regarding the school establishment, Nizam al-Mulk was the first founder and Madrasah Nizamiyyah was the model of the schools all over the world. Madrasah Nizamiyah carried out an important responsibility to spread out the religious message all over the Muslim states of Iraq, Iran, Khurasan and Persia [21]. The contribution of Nizam al-Mulk to the education sector through Eastern Islam was stupendous. To [4] Madrasah Nizamiyyah of Nizam al-Mulk at Baghdad was a state organization, which was open in AD1066 to teach the Sunni Islam. According to [31] Madrasah Nizamiyyah provided two types of education; one was Scholastic Theology which produces spiritual leaders and the other one is common education which produces an individual to work in the various administrative positions in the private and public sectors of the government.

Madrasah al-Mustansariah of Baghdad was founded by the sultan Mustansir the Caliph of the house of Abbas and the father of Mustasim. Madrasah al-Mustansariah was founded with a view to succeed and conceal the renowned Madrasah Nizamiyyah. It was a research Centre and a medical Madrasah as well [22]. There was a medical school called Bimaristan medical Madrasah located at the current western Iran in the 9th century. In the medieval Islamic world, students were awarded medical diplomas in Islamic medicine based on the student's qualification for practicing Doctor of Medicine [32]. Finally, there were up 44 Madrasahs in Aleppo, 51 Madrasahs in Damascus and 75 Madrasahs in Cairo found around the 11th Century, and in the Muslim Spain alone, more than a hundred Madrasahs were found at that time [33].

By the influence of Nizam al-Mulk Tosi, many kings, rulers, Caliphs, education patrons and merchants gave support and provided enough funds to develop education institutions and Muslim scholarships. Two followers of Nizam al-Mulk named Nur al-Din and Salah al-Din founded school in various places of Damascus, Jerusalem and Syria. One of the famous schools founded by Nur al-Din is called 'Madrasah Nuriah al-Kubrah' [34]. Salah al-Din opened a school for the first time in Egypt. One of his famous schools founded in Jerusalem was named 'Al-Salahiyyah' and by the same name, he opened another one in Damascus [9].

Thus, the development of Madrasah in the 11th century was a shifting system of public education centers like Maktab, Kuttah, Halaqah, Suffah, Jami (Friday Mosque) and Jami'ah (University). All these learning centers were attached to the Mosque. Schooling system of early Islam was started from this Mosque. The first stage of schooling system in early Islam was memorization of the Qur'an. Thus, [28] affirmed, memorization of the Koran, the first stage of Islamic religious education was always studied inside the

mosques and sometimes in the private house or houses of the "mudarris" (teachers) together with religious and literary sciences in the early Islamic centuries in accordance with medieval traditions.

Mosque became a part of the learning center, people started to come from all around. The learning process looked organized but when the number of students started to increase, it became hard to accommodate all students inside the Mosque. There were many Halaqas (circles) inside the Mosque and the accommodation demand by the students urged the necessity of new classroom outside the Mosque. So, new houses had been attached to the Mosque for the new outside students. However, the number of houses provided was not enough compared to the number of students. This proliferation of numbers led to the emergency of self-governing institution for teaching and learning. Due to increase the students in these centers, establishment of the Madrasah was looked as the urgent matter. People started to give charity to build houses for new, poor and outside students and that was the shift from Mosque to Madrasah. Madrasah is the final picture of sequence of higher learning institution in the Islamic society of 11th century.

In sum, to date, there are many research works have been done on Madrasah education, Madrasah in India, Bangladesh and Pakistan, Capacity Development for Madrasah Education, education system of Madrasah and so on. All these research and studies on the Madrasah that grown special thanks to Nizamiyyah. However, no research found there in history that could show official and organized establishment of Madrasah Nizamiyyah and its influence on formation other new Madrasahs in Baghdad. While, this current research provides historical information on how a Madrasah was grown gradually from the various educational centers in the early Islam. To [2] every religion has developed its own education system. To this regard, Madrasah is the best and oldest system of Islamic educations, which was developed on its own particular way.

Research shows that, Nizamiyyah developed and introduced first organizing and official system of Madrasah education in the history and as a model institution to the Muslims all over the world. So, the finding of the research will help the readers, researchers, knowledge seekers especially, Muslim citizen will know the real information about how a famous and oldest education institution was grown up through crossing the various education systems in the history of the arrival of Islam, particularly in Baghdad.

5. CONCLUSION

The history of the arrival of Madrasah in Islamic education system and its gifts in the field of knowledge, education and Muslim culture, are well recognized, which develops its traditional and religious diversity, for which Madrasah Nizamiyyah was well known in the Muslim world. In a real sense this Madrasah on the various Muslim lands provided education for all classes of people including the deprived society. It could be averred based on findings emanated from an exhaustive literature review that the Madrasah be viewed as an institution of knowledge assimilation, knowledge dissemination and a discussion of Islamic Shariah Law and jurisprudence. Madrasah influenced not only Muslims but Europe too and later on rest of the world through its academic systems, universality, granting the certificate and diplomas. Madrasah was the only one center where practice of knowledge and science took place and that is why those days were known as golden age of Muslim civilization.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that there is no competing interests exist in this paper.

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