

## Islamic Traditional Education: A Comparative Perspectives from Nigeria's *Makarantar Allo* to Indonesia's *Pesantren*

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**ABSTRACT:** *This study examines the historical evolution of Makarantar Allo in northern Nigeria and Pesantren in Indonesia, comparing their structures and operations across colonial, post-colonial, and contemporary periods. The focus on these institutions is driven by their similarities and the potential application of Indonesia's Islamic educational standards to enhance Nigeria's existing system. Incorporating a mixed-methods approach, this study collected primary data through interviews, focus group discussions and participant observations in Indonesia while engaging in the Makarantar Allo setting in Nigeria. Secondary data, consisting of historical facts, were gathered through document analysis. The analysis involved qualitative methods, verified through triangulation and cross-referencing with historical records. The research provides insights into the efficacy of Islamic education in Indonesia and Nigeria, highlighting differences and similarities. Pesantren in Indonesia operates centrally regulated, while Nigeria's Makarantar Allo is decentralized and unfunded. The comparative analysis suggests potential lessons for Nigeria's policymakers to improve the structure of Makarantar Allo based on the centralized Indonesian model, offering valuable standards for similar institutions with similar objectives in other Muslim countries. This research addresses a gap in the existing literature by comparing two traditional institutes, Makarantar Allo and Pesantren. The study explores their evolution, analysing their histories, curricula, teaching methods, structures, and challenges. This comparative pattern contributes to the novelty of the research, providing valuable insights into the unique characteristics and shared aspects of these traditional Islamic education systems.*

Penelitian ini mengkaji evolusi historis *Makarantar Allo* di Nigeria bagian utara dan *Pesantren* di Indonesia, membandingkan struktur dan operasionalnya pada masa kolonial, pascakolonial, dan kontemporer. Fokus pada kedua lembaga ini didorong oleh kesamaan mereka dan potensi penerapan standar pendidikan Islam Indonesia untuk meningkatkan sistem yang ada di Nigeria. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan metode campuran, penelitian ini mengumpulkan data primer melalui diskusi kelompok terfokus dan observasi partisipan di Indonesia, sambil terlibat dalam pengaturan *Makarantar Allo* di Nigeria. Data sekunder, yang terdiri dari fakta-fakta historis, dikumpulkan melalui analisis dokumen. Analisis melibatkan metode

kualitatif, diverifikasi melalui triangulasi, dan referensi silang dengan catatan sejarah. Penelitian ini memberikan wawasan tentang keberhasilan pendidikan Islam di Indonesia dan Nigeria, dengan menyoroti perbedaan dan persamaan. *Pesantren* di Indonesia beroperasi secara terpusat dan diatur oleh pemerintah pusat, sementara *Makarantar Allo* di Nigeria terdesentralisasi dan tidak didanai. Analisis komparatif ini memberikan pelajaran potensial bagi para pembuat kebijakan di Nigeria untuk memperbaiki struktur *Makarantar Allo* berdasarkan model Indonesia yang tersentralisasi, dan memberikan standar yang berharga bagi lembaga-lembaga serupa dengan tujuan yang sama di negara-negara Muslim lainnya. Penelitian ini membahas kesenjangan dalam literatur yang ada dengan menawarkan analisis komparatif dari dua lembaga tradisional, *Makarantar Allo* dan *Pesantren*. Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi evolusi keduanya, menyajikan analisis sejarah, kurikulum, metode pengajaran, struktur, dan tantangan mereka. Pola komparatif ini berkontribusi pada kebaruan penelitian ini, memberikan wawasan yang berharga tentang karakteristik unik dan aspek-aspek yang sama dari sistem pendidikan Islam tradisional ini.

**Keywords:** *Makarantar Allo, Pesantren, Traditional Islamic Education.*

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Islamic traditional education is a vital aspect of Muslim culture that began with the emergence of Islam. The prophet Muhammad was its first instructor, imparting and interpreting the revelation he received from Allah to his companions. The prophet gathers his companions in his *Masjid*, where he sits with them to respond to their questions or illustrate Islam's inherent injunctions. Following the aftermath of the demise of the prophet Muhammad and his companions, Islam, as a religion of the divine word, religious study has long been seen as a kind of worship itself (Hefner, 2009). This makes traditional Islamic education any teaching or learning method founded on Islam's ideals and principles (Riley, 2014).

In the history of the Muslim world, traditional Islamic education has been transmitted from one generation to another in different times and places. It has always been an inseparable component of the Islamic faith. The historical genealogy of traditional Islamic education goes back as early as the time of the advent of Islam. The study and transmission of God's revealed word, the sayings of His prophet, and the system of law to which the revelation pointed out are the primary services God demands of his creatures (Riley, 2014). Islamic traditional education has been shaped by the teachings of the prophet Muhammad, the Quran, and the traditions of the Muslim world, as well as by the diverse cultures and histories of the many Islamic societies that have existed throughout the world. It continues to be an essential part of Muslim culture and is often passed down through educational institutions, religious instructions, and cultural practices.

Educational institutions in the Islamic world have a long and rich history. The early Muslims were mainly nomads and helped spread Islam as they moved around the globe. They focused on teaching Islam anywhere they set up their camps. In the early 10th century, the Islamic world increasingly witnessed the rise of formal and organised

educational institutions. These institutions are claimed to have evolved from the *Masjid's* oldest Islamic education system, the *Madrassa* system of education, which at first developed from the *Masjid* form, and "*Masjid* existed as colleges early in Islam. Makdisi opines that the *Masjid* form of education, which has existed since Muhammad's time, is the source of what is today known as *Madrassah* (Makdisi, 1981).

It cannot be disputed that different Islamic societies employ distinct ways when it comes to the traditional Islamic schools in almost all Muslim-majority countries. Yet, the similarities between them cannot be denied because there are some features that these institutions all share. The traditional educational model is integral to every Muslim culture and the foundation for all Muslim societies. The framework of Islamic education expanded divergently along with Islam's growth, with *ulama* as its custodians.

Due to their responsibility for interpreting religious texts, the *ulama* holds a position of significant moral influence in Muslim societies. Accordingly, there has been a close interaction between traditional *ulama* and the state in Muslim societies since immemorial. From the eleventh-century Seljuq in Iraq to the Mughal empire in India, where conventional institutions of learning served as the primary training grounds for the elite and governing officials before the arrival of colonial rule, we can see examples of state support for traditional Islamic institutions (Bano, 2009). Even as early as 762 A.D., until the Golden Age of Islam, there has been prevailing support for institutions of learning from the state (Makdisi, 1981).

Following the overview above, traditional Islamic education has a history of the prophet's lifetime. But how these institutions operate differs significantly. A clear example of this distinction will be seen in the case of *Makarantar Allo* in Nigeria and *Pesantren* in Indonesia. Gaining a more transparent comprehension of the cultural and societal impacts of creating these educational systems is one significant step in investigating the historical evolution, approaches, and methods of Islamic education in Nigeria and Indonesia. Additionally, this research can provide insights into the efficacy of various techniques and methods employed in Islamic education in these nations, which can help enhance educational procedures in institutions with similar objectives in other countries. Moreover, it can significantly contribute to *Makarantar Allo* in Nigeria by assisting educators and decision-makers in these institutions to better comprehend the historical and cultural context of the traditional Islamic educational systems and identify development opportunities.

Here, I avoid generalizing the *Madrassa* education system in various Islamic nations, acknowledging the diverse structures and patterns across countries. Specifically, the focus lies on traditional schools in Nigeria, collectively known as *Makarantar Allo*. Emphasizing the historical evolution, the study delves into pre-colonial *Makarantar Allo*, with a notable spotlight on changes during and after the colonial period. The contemporary "Tsangaya System of education" in Nigeria has become a focal point for comparative analysis, aiming to enhance the quality of education. In Indonesia, the study centres on traditional *Pesantren*, particularly those affiliated with Sufi groups or N.U. (Nahdlatul Ulama), a prominent traditionalist Islamic organization (Arifin, 2013). This nuanced approach recognizes the shared characteristics of traditional Islamic education in Nigeria and Indonesia while highlighting the historical evolution and current state of *Makarantar Allo* and *Pesantren* in their distinct contexts.

Traditional Islamic education, deeply rooted in the fabric of Muslim societies, has been pivotal in shaping cultural and religious perspectives for centuries (Arjmand, 2018). In

Nigeria, the *Makarantar Allo* system, with its origins tracing back to the eleventh century, has been a crucial institution in imparting Islamic teachings, mainly focusing on Quranic study. However, existing literature underscores the challenging conditions, inadequate facilities, and limited government support facing *Makarantar Allo* in northern Nigeria (Sulaiman, 2013). Criticisms have been directed towards these institutions, highlighting a perceived emphasis on memorization and rote learning over critical thinking and problem-solving skills (Loimeier, 1997). Nigeria's dynamic socio-economic and political landscape has further complicated the path of *Makarantar Allo*, necessitating a closer examination of its evolution and challenges.

While previous studies have touched on the broader comparison of traditional Islamic education in different countries in Southeast Asia and Africa in their distinctive contexts, e.g. (Boyle, 2018), This research addresses a gap in existing literature by offering a comparative analysis of two traditional institutes, *Makarantar Allo* in Nigeria and *Pesantren* in Indonesia. The study explores their evolution, analysing their histories, curricula, teaching methods, structures, and challenges. This comparative pattern contributes to the novelty of the research, providing valuable insights into the unique characteristics and shared aspects of these traditional Islamic education systems. By undertaking this comparative approach, the study seeks to contribute to understanding how these institutions have evolved within the Nigerian and Indonesian contexts. The findings are expected to offer insights into the parallels and disparities between *Makarantar Allo* and *Pesantren*, guiding future developments and improvements in Islamic education practices. Thus, The study employed a mixed-methods approach, utilising a retrospective observation, gathering primary data through interviews, focus group discussions, and participant observations in both Indonesia and the *Makarantar Allo* setting in Nigeria. Secondary data, comprising historical facts, were obtained through document analysis. The qualitative analysis underwent validation through triangulation and cross-referencing with historical records.

## II. METHOD

Employing an unstructured method for this qualitative study aligns with Creswell's understanding of research as an inquiry process that explores social or human problems based on distinct methodological traditions (Creswell, 2015). This approach is particularly fitting for delving into the historical evolution of *Makarantar Allo* in Northern Nigeria and traditional *Pesantren* in Indonesia. Primary and secondary data sources are integral to this study, with secondary data aiding in background construction and guiding the article's design for a thorough interpretation of results. The significance of primary data comes to the forefront during field interviews and participant observations, facilitating in-depth exploration and allowing for additional probing and questioning based on respondents' responses.

Purposeful participant selection was employed, using a retrospective perspective about *Makarantar Allo* in Nigeria while navigating challenges and limitations in gaining insights into *Pesantren* in Indonesia. Supplementary knowledge from the literature on *Pesantren* facilitated the research process. Again, interviews, observations, and focus group discussions were conducted. These methods provided a platform for open discussions, allowing for vital assessments. The study engaged alums of *Pesantren*, with 3-6 respondents per group, in the Indonesian International Islamic University and other interlocutors in *Pesantren* located in South Jakarta, Bogor and Jatinangor in Sumedang.

In the case of *Makarantar Allo*, a telephone interview was conducted with a few teachers and alumni of such schools. The analysis involved qualitative methods, verified through triangulation and cross-referencing with historical records.

### III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

#### **The Role of Islamization in the Evolution of Traditional Educational Systems in West Africa and Southeast Asia**

The reason for using the geographical terms West Africa and Southeast Asia in this study is that when Islam first spread in the regions, the nation-states of Nigeria and Indonesia did not exist. The area in West Africa, which came to be known as Nigeria today, was part of the 'Sudan' meaning the land of blacks (Ibrahim & Idris, 2014). Similarly, Indonesia was part of the area known as the Malay world in Southeast Asia.

Islam's expansion coincides with expanding knowledge in all times and places. Islamic traditional education spread wherever Islam spread. I.e., Islamization and the advancement of Islamic education go hand in hand. Nigeria in West Africa and Indonesia in Southeast Asia received similar traditional Islamic education. What is more essential is that Islam and conventional Islamic education existed in both the regions of Nigeria and Indonesia hundreds of years before the colonial period, despite differing perspectives regarding their origin.

The *Makarantar Allo*, in terms of the evolutionary development of the education system in Nigeria, is the first. Initially mobile, they revolve around the *Alaramma* or *Malam*, the teacher who frequently travels with the students and sets up camp outside the city to create a collegiate system for thoroughly studying the Quran (Adamu, 2018). This system was intended to instil in young minds the Islamic principles taught in the Quran. It was primarily designed to teach children fundamental spiritual, moral, and social principles to strengthen their feeling of responsibility. They were therefore forced to rely on the generosity of strangers who gave freely to maintain them while living a long way from their homes (Odumosu et al., 2013). Before colonial times, this educational system was in northern Nigeria for hundreds of years. It continued to flourish even during the colonial era, and the Muslim community at the time considered it a fantastic substitute for Western education. Furthermore, a few Muslims in northern Nigeria still maintain this viewpoint today.

Traditional Islamic education in Indonesia can be found in various institutional settings. Traditionalist institutions such as the *Pesantren* (Java, South Kalimantan), the *Pondok* (Kalimantan, South Sulawesi, Malay, portions of Sumatra), the *Surau* (West Sumatra), and the *Dayah* (Aceh), amongst others, were among the oldest schools. These schools varied in the terminology and social organisations they used, but they were all traditionalist in nature. This study would focus on the traditional *Pesantrens*, not because they are the only institution of Muslim religious education but because of their long history (Sabila et al., 2023). Java in Indonesia had evidence of small *Pesantren* as early as the sixteenth century, if not earlier, particularly in the coastal regions that were among the first to convert to Islam hundreds of years before the colonial period (Sanni, 2015). It is significant to note that *Pesantren* is now frequently referred to as "*Pondok Pesantren*" in formal language. *Pesantren* is where a *Santri* lives, whereas *Pondok* means a "Hut." *Santri* is also used to describe "religiously oriented Muslims" as opposed to "nominal Muslims" in a more significant meaning (Isbah, 2020).

*Pesantren* is traditional in that it is governed mainly by ulama in terms of the teaching and learning process and the educational content, which is essentially religious. In the Muslim community, *Pesantren* plays at least three critical roles: Where religious knowledge is passed on, where Islamic tradition is kept safe, and where ulama are made (Dacholfany et al., 2023; Pribadi, 2014). Thus, *Pesantren* is a residential school dedicated to transmitting the classical Islamic sciences, such as studying the Quran and Hadith, law, Arabic language, and mysticism (Assa'idi, 2021). Learning in *Pesantren* usually takes place under the care of the Kyai, the teacher, who is often assisted by the senior students or family members who are also learning.

### **Education and Islam in Nigeria and Indonesia**

Bugaje asserts that the history of education in northern Nigeria began with the arrival of Islam in the region in the 14th century or earlier. Islam introduced its converts to literacy to practice Islam; a Muslim must be familiar with certain verses of Islam's holy scripture, the Qur'an, to practice his religion (Adamu, 2017). This encouraged Muslims to learn to read and write and to adapt the Arabic script known as *Ajami*, An Arabic-derived African writing system commonly used in the 19th century Hausa Land (author's translation). Its presence is still seen in the Nigerian currency. This writing system was used for communication between teachers and students in traditional Islamic education institutes known as '*Makarantar Allo.*' Or '*Tsangaya.*' The term *Makarantar Allo* describes the wooden slates utilised for studies in northern Nigeria's traditional school system. (author's translation).

Another assertion concerning the origin of the *Makarantar Allo* education system in Nigeria is that the system has existed since the 11th century due to the involvement of Kanem-Borno rulers in Quranic literacy. The Sokoto Caliphate was established more than 700 years later, primarily due to an Islamic revolution. Both empires ran the *Makarantar Allo* system, which became the *Tsangaya* system (Teke et al., 2020). The word '*Almajiri*' describes the students of *Makarantar Allo*. Its conceptual root is the Arabic word *Muhajirun*, which denotes an emigrant (Tiliouine & J.Estes, 2016). As a result, it is frequently used to refer to children or young people who left their families searching for Islamic education.

*Makarantar Allo* intended to instill in young minds the Islamic principles taught in the Quran. The main goal was to instil in children fundamental spiritual, moral, and social values that would heighten their sense of accountability. Because of this, they were forced to rely on the generosity of those who gave to keep them up. The primary objective of these institutions is to teach the *Almajirai* (the students) the Quran. Teaching them how to read and write remained essential as well. Adamu explained that when youngsters acquire the ability to read and write, they begin learning the Quran until they can memorise it and write it by rote. Once a pupil can do so in front of his teacher, he is certified as '*Alaramma.*' After that, a student would continue his study by focusing on any discipline of Islamic learning of his choice (Aghdassi & Hughes, 2022).

In Southeast Asia, just like in West Africa, the question of how and when Islam came to the region remains a subject of much scholarly debate. According to Aljunied, one of the most widely held beliefs regarding the presence of Islam in Southeast Asia is that Islamization began in the early seventh century due to the roles of itinerant scholars and Muslim traders. "Local oral stories have it that the earliest Muslim encounters in Southeast Asia began in the 7th century. Muslims worldwide travelled to Southeast Asia and encountered a highly connected group of people adept in trade and commerce".

Islam spread quickly in the Malay-speaking world after a Muslim kingdom was set up in *Perlak* (or *Peureulak* in 840) (Aljunied, 2019).

In addition, Muhammad Ali emphasized the trend of Islamization in Southeast Asia by setting examples of factors that impacted the Islamization process. Among the factors was the presence of independent teachers or traders who preached, settled, and built mosques during the 15th and 16th centuries. Subsequently, in the 19th century, *Pondok*, *Surau*, *Pesantren*, or *Madrasah* were established (Ali, 2014). The celebrated anthropologist of Indonesian Islam, Clifford Geertz, observed, "There have been *Pesantren*-like institutions in Java since the Hindu-Buddhist period (i.e., from the second to about the 15th centuries). In South and Southeast Asia, it is typical for a group of students and followers to gather around a holy man. This was the case before (Lewis & Geertz, 1969).

Despite those mentioned above, for historians, tracing the historical roots of the *Pesantren* is a challenging process that is made more difficult by the absence of historical evidence such as structures, monuments, or written records. Just as the contentious debate over the spread of Islam in the region, there still needs to be an agreement between the scholars on the origin of *Pesantren* in the area. Except for some hypothetical claims based on stories contained in *Babad* and *Serat* Javanese chronicles and literature, little information regarding *Pesantren* as an Islamic educational institution as we know it existed before the nineteenth century (Hefner & Zaman, 2010). Some scholars have asserted that it is acceptable to assume that the *Pesantren* was founded as soon as Islam was established in Java, perhaps in its partial sense as an educational institution. For example, Atjeh (1955) and Graaf (1970) claim that Sunan Giri, one of the *Walisongo* members, founded the first *Pesantren* in Java at Giri Kedaton, East Java (Arifin, 2013).

Generally, the *Pesantren* began as a further expansion of the Islamic study group located in mosques or houses of the *Kyais* (Assa'idi, 2021). In Java, the *Kyais*, translated as *Ulamas* or teachers, are the *Pesantren* custodians. These *Ulamas* themselves are graduates of traditional schools. In this system, learning often takes place under the supervision of a *Kyai*, typically aided by a number of his senior students or other family members. The *Santri* are the students who study under the *Kyai*. The term *Pesantren* is derived from the word '*Santri*,' which refers to practising Muslim pupils and signifies a traditional Islamic boarding school. Even though some modest *Pesantren* existed in Muslim Java as early as the 16th century, it was not until returning hajjis and students from Mecca and Medina constructed *Pesantren* in several places of Indonesia that *Pesantren* acquired peace (Ma'Arif, 2018). Subsequently, *Pesantren* became the only educational institution for Indonesian Muslims.

### **Parallels: Nigerian *Makarantar Allo* and Indonesian *Pesantren***

Historically, *Makarantar Allo* and *Pesantren*, originating as traditional Islamic schools, shared a common goal of providing Islamic education, especially to underprivileged children. These institutions needed a proper formal structure in their initial stages, operating as transformative forces for low-income people and children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. The primary mission was to facilitate access to Islamic education, fostering an understanding of the principles outlined in the Qur'an. Notably, *Pesantren* emerged as an educational institution and a place providing care for children from economically disadvantaged and socially unstable families. Similarly, *Makarantar*

*Allo* serves as an educational platform primarily catering to the needs of poor and underprivileged children, particularly those from rural areas.

Nonetheless, the *Makarantar Allo* and *Pesantren* may have slightly different structures. Although the locations, methods, and organisational structures of the classes at the two institutions are similar. These schools typically adhere to a traditional educational philosophy that emphasises the study of Islam and the Qur'an. In this study, it is crucial to provide an overview of each school's structure and curriculum before comparing the two institutions. However, the Nigerian school curriculum described here was widely used before colonial times. This is because Nigeria's traditional Islamic educational institution is now being corrupted by beggarly and other trivial practices that were never part of the tradition. This brings us to one of the aims for a comparative analysis of the two institutions: Indonesia has a majority of Muslims and a well-established traditional education system that the government acknowledges. This can help to improve the conventional system that operates in Nigeria.

### ***The Structure of Makarantar Allo***

Depending on where it is located, *Makarantar Allo* can have a variety of structures. Some might be found in rural areas, while others in urban settings. The ones in urban settings take place in more modern premises, frequently incomplete buildings temporarily given to them by community members. The more traditional ones are typically held in an open place or under a tree in rural areas. Alternatively, in more traditional structures made of mud brick. Even so, because many of these schools are not controlled by the government but rather by local communities or religious authorities, their organisational structures may differ substantially from place to place.

In the *Makarantar Allo*, students typically study the Quran, Islamic law, Islamic history, and Arabic. The curriculum is primarily designed for memorising the Quran; pupils must recite and memorise a significant portion of the sacred scripture. Abubakar outlined the structure of these schools as follows: From childhood to adulthood, the traditional educational phases are well-established in northern Nigeria. At a young age, children are initially sent to *Allo* schools, meaning wooden slate schools, (author's translation) where they learn to read and write the Arabic script of the Qur'an. However, the vocabulary is foreign to them, so they gradually learn to recite and memorize some portions of the Quran in Arabic without the ability to read the text.

In some cases, they memorize a significant part of the Quran in that way. In traditional Islamic schools, only one teacher conducts the class and directs the students through their studies. Students study while sitting on the ground, on mats, in open-air classrooms, or beneath trees (Aghdassi & Hughes, 2022).

The initial level is 'Kolo' or 'Kotso': nursery pupil. In this first stage, the age range is between four and six years old. The students then proceed to the elementary level '*Titibiri; masomin gardi*'. Children acquire the Arabic alphabet and vowel letters (*babbaku*) at this stage, followed by Arabic words (*farfaru*). The following stage, "*tattashiya* and *hajartu*," signifies the recognition of the beginning syllable and accurate reading. Later, individuals learn to compose Quranic verses using hardwood slates (*Allo*) and quill pens (*Tawada da Alkalami*) (Sani & Anwar, 2020). The student will constantly be supervised by a teacher or a senior student at school. The student continues until the next level of studentship, 'Gardi,' culminates in graduation. At this point, the student must read the Quran fluently, followed by its memorisation to achieve the title of '*Alaramma*' or '*Hafiz*.' The student can advance to the next level, '*Gangaran*' if he has

acquired sufficient experience and the ability to memorise and write the Qur'an from memory. This is between the age of twenty-two and the predicted age of marriage for the student. The learner can then progress to '*Zaure*,' where he will obtain knowledge from specialists in Islamic knowledge. Due to its strict procedures, this is the final step of the in-depth study of Islamic science, when a student examines a book from the first to the last page, and so on with other readers. No topic selection is allowed at this level. This makes the process exhaustive and demanding. Consequently, this concludes traditional Islamic education (Aghdassi & Hughes, 2022).



**Figure 1.** *Makarantar Allo setting*

The image depicts students seated on mats in a *Makarantar Allo*. The students each hold a set of two wooden slates, frequently used in the school to practice reading Quranic verses after the students have written them. They concentrated on reciting the Quran for their teacher, who was sitting nearby and paying close attention to what he was reciting. The other kid, probably the student's senior standing nearest to the teacher, can also be seen in the background waiting for his time to recite to the teacher. Source: Facebook page "*Dandalin Tarihin Magabata*".

### ***The Structure of Pesantren***

A typical *Pesantren* complex includes dorms, the kyai's home, a mosque, and a study room. Most students in this system of traditional Islamic education entered *Pesantrens* at the age of eleven or twelve, where they stayed for three to four years. It was believed that this time was sufficient for them to acquire the fundamental knowledge required to work as a mosque leader or local religious instructor. A small percentage of students continued to study in one or more *Pesantren* for eight, ten, or even more years. Initially housed in the kyai's household but now typically in a separate classroom complex (Dacholfany et al., 2023).

The structure of *Pesantren* changed in the post-twentieth century to what is now primarily recognised as a building in one package, consisting of at least four buildings:

the kyai's residence, the mosque, student housing, and study space. In some instances, the *Pesantren* began simply with a kyai who taught regular Islamic classes at his home before progressively constructing additional structures close by to meet the demands of his expanding student body.

The study of the Quran is often a significant component of the curriculum in a traditional *Pesantren*. Given that the Quran is written in Arabic and an in-depth understanding of the language is required to comprehend the text, this may involve studying Arabic. Both traditional techniques, like memorising and recitation, and more contemporary ones, such as analysis and interpretation, are available to *Pesantren* students to study the Quran. To fully comprehend the Quran's messages and meanings, they may study its commentaries and other relevant books. *Pesantren* students may also study Islamic law, theology, and ethics in addition to the Quran, as these are frequently intimately related to the Quran and its teachings.

The *Kitab Kuning*, also known as the "Yellow Scripture" due to the colour of the paper on which it was written, is an essential component of the curricula in *Pesantren*. The phrase designates traditional or classical Islamic texts taught in *Pesantren* for many years. These classical commentaries were the primary research topic conducted by traditionalists (Hefner & Zaman, 2010). Although the material studied consists exclusively of written texts, their oral transmission is essential (Bruinessen, 1994).

The kyai reads aloud from these texts to the students, who can take notes on the correct pronunciations and the kyai's explanations of grammar points or the definitions of specific terminology while having their copies of the texts in front of them. While students may ask questions, these typically stay within the text's specific setting; attempts to connect them to actual, current events are rarely made. The kyai seldom assesses the students' comprehension of the texts at any language level. Texts that are simple to grasp are memorised, while texts that are more difficult to understand are read through. However, there is now much discussion among a small group of *Pesantren* graduates about comprehending the *Kitab* in its historical and cultural context and seeking its applicability to contemporary life. Today, most *Pesantren* may operate similarly to madrasas, with graded classes, predetermined curricula, and degrees (Nilan, 2009).

Nevertheless, many significant *Pesantren* continues to employ the more conventional approach, in which the students study a few particular books with the assistance of the kyai. (In addition to other students of various ages.) He receives an *Ijaza* (a certificate) after reading a text. He might then visit another *Pesantren* to read different materials after that. Many kyai are considered authorities in various *Kitab* (Bruinessen, 1994).



**Figure 2.** *Traditional Pesantren settings*

The image depicts a group of students in a *Pesantren* during Dutch colonial rule. The students focus on listening to a senior *santri* (student), who is reciting from a *Kitab Kuning* (a traditional Islamic text). The senior *santri* is seated before the students, leading the recitation. The students follow along, reciting the verses after him in unison. The overall scene conveys the traditional and disciplined setting of the *Pesantren*, where the study of Islamic texts and Quranic studies is the main focus, with senior students acting as guides and examples for their juniors. Source: “Wikipedia.”

### **Shared Foundations *Pesantren* and *Makarantar Allo***

Unquestionably, traditional Islamic education has various forms in various contexts. However, it is also indisputable that parallels will always exist. This section highlights the similarities between *Pesantren* and *Makarantar Allo* and suggests ways the two institutions can complement one another for the better. What works in Nigeria can be improved by incorporating some patterns, ideas, and strategies from what works in Indonesia and vice versa.

Initially, the two institutions were established as typical Islamic traditional schools, where most students reside in states other than their own in pursuit of knowledge. The majority of these students come from poor and disadvantaged backgrounds. Thus, the schools transform these children from a lower social class to one with sufficient literacy abilities in Nigerian and Indonesian society. A commonality between the Nigerian *Makarantar Allo* and the Indonesian *Pesantren* is that they are mostly traditional and affiliated with Sufi groups. As mentioned earlier, they followed a conventional model of education the main focus was on studying the Quran. The students typically live on campus and study various subjects, including Islamic theology. The *Makarantar Allo* is sphere-headed by a teacher known as ‘*alamma*,’ who leads the lessons. In *Pesantren*, the *Kyai*, the teacher, lives at the school and studies with the students. The building wherein the students live in *Makarantar Allo* is called ‘*Tsangaya*’; earlier, it used to be a hut, but in the modern day, it is a modest building or, at times, an uncompleted one. The *Pesantren* itself means a building where the students stay with their teacher.

*Makarantar Allo* and *Pesantren* highly prioritise religious instruction and the study of Islamic texts. Both institutions have a residential component where students board or live in dorms. Also, in terms of structure, both schools have a headmaster or principal at the top, followed by teachers often senior students and other staff members. They are typically structured around a hierarchical framework. Both institutions may have governing boards made up of local elders of the community or local religious scholars.

In terms of curricula, both *Makarantar Allo* and *Pesantren* often contain the study of the Quran and other classical books. Compared to *Makarantar Allo*, the *Pesantren* curriculum tends to be better organised and implemented. In addition, other Islamic disciplines like law, theology, and ethics are studied in *Pesantren*. One possible distinction between the two schools is that *Makarantar Allo* might give more weight to classical texts and traditional Islamic learning. *Pesantren* Today might give more weight to contemporary disciplines like science and more modern subjects. However, the individual school and its mission will determine how this varies. When it comes to emphasising contemporary issues, for instance, *Pesantren*, linked with the Muhammadiyah group, tends to be more modernised than those affiliated with Nahdhatul Ulama, which is still viewed as more traditional.

This comparative study highlights the transforming influence of *Makarantar Allo* and *Pesantren* on students from lower socioeconomic levels in Nigerian and Indonesian societies. Both schools, which are commonly affiliated with Sufi groups, follow a conventional curriculum with a significant concentration on Quranic studies, emphasizing the fundamental value of religious education. The discovered parallels are consistent with assumptions founded in the historical background of Islamic education and correspond to more significant tendencies reported in previous research. These collaborations strengthen the idea that *Makarantar Allo* and *Pesantren* are part of a broader pattern in Islamic education, enhancing our knowledge of the historical and cultural influences affecting their forms.

While there are obvious parallels and contrasts, such as the emphasis on contemporary disciplines in *Pesantren* (especially in the modern *Pondok pesantren*), highlight the multifaceted character of Islamic education. These discrepancies can be ascribed to particular school missions, underlining the need to understand each institution's specific setting. Delving into the implications of these findings reveals the importance of understanding the dynamic nature of Islamic education structures. The observed differences between *Makarantar Allo* and *Pesantren* necessitate nuanced policy considerations. While the decentralized nature of *Makarantar Allo* allows for flexibility, the centralized regulation of *Pesantren* presents a more standardized approach. Policymakers in Nigeria could draw valuable insights from Indonesia's system, considering its government acknowledgement and potential applicability to the Nigerian context.

Furthermore, the comparative analysis prompts a broader discussion on the adaptability of successful practices across diverse Islamic educational settings. This becomes particularly relevant in a global context where the sharing of effective educational methodologies can contribute to improving Islamic education systems worldwide. As educational systems evolve, understanding and embracing the strengths of different approaches can inform future developments and foster collaboration between nations with shared educational objectives.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study delved into the historical development of Makarantar Allo and Pesantren, traditional Islamic boarding schools in Nigeria and Indonesia, respectively. Despite uncertainties about their exact origins, both institutions have evolved significantly over time, influenced by colonialism and modernization. Notably, they have retained their traditional characteristics. The study highlights parallels and distinctions, particularly in organizational structures and instructional methods. The findings underscore the potential for improving conventional Islamic education in Nigeria and other Muslim-majority nations by drawing inspiration from Indonesia's best practices. Again, based on the study's findings, recommendations centre on using Indonesia's successful model to improve traditional Islamic education in Nigeria. The Indonesian government's support has positively impacted the quality and accessibility of such education. Thus, I recommend increased government involvement in Nigeria, encompassing enhanced school financing, teacher training initiatives, and community engagement programs. This assistance can preserve cultural heritage, maintain traditional methods, and address issues of educational accessibility. Specific areas for consideration include curriculum development, incorporating contemporary subjects, teacher training programs modelled after Indonesia's success, and improving infrastructure and resources in traditional Islamic schools to create a conducive learning environment.

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