From Itinerant Preaching to Religious Infrastructure: Kyai Muhammad Otong and the Institutionalization of Islam in Cibogo, 1968–1992

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Abstract

This article examines how Kyai Muhammad Otong developed locally grounded religious authority into an Islamic institutional infrastructure in Cibogo, Lembang, between 1968 and 1992. Existing histories of Islam in West Java have explained regional Islamization, pesantren networks, or the relationship between Islam and local belief, but the studies reviewed here do not reconstruct the institutional work of a village kyai across the connected domains of worship, education, preaching, and communal mediation. Using the historical method, the study draws on family and institutional archives, photographs, administrative records, contemporary foundation documents, and retrospective oral testimony from relatives, pupils, fellow preachers, and community figures. Documentary milestones are distinguished from activities reconstructed through memory. The evidence was subjected to external and internal criticism before chronological and thematic interpretation. The reconstruction suggests that Otong's influence did not rest principally on preaching from the pulpit. It emerged through a sequence of linked interventions: establishing teaching at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Al Islam Nyalindung, dated to 1968 in local accounts, expanding Nurul Huda from a modest *tajug* into a congregational mosque, organizing rotating study circles, using Sundanese *nadham* as vernacular pedagogy, formalizing education through the Nurul Huda Islamic Education Foundation in 1990, and encouraging the development of teachers, preachers, and *khatib*. Witnesses describe his relations with adherents of local belief as gradual and cooperative. The article argues that Islamization in Cibogo is best understood as negotiated institutionalization. The evidence links personal authority, kinship, state employment, and communal labor to arrangements for continuing religious education and leadership. It does not establish uniform community acceptance or independently date every stage of succession. This microhistorical perspective adds local agency, intercommunal cooperation, and institutional continuity to the historiography of Islam in West Java.

Keywords: Cibogo, Kyai Muhammad Otong, local Islamization, religious authority, Islamic education, West Java

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Introduction

The history of Islam in West Java has often been written at the scale of kingdoms, regional networks, major pesantren, and prominent ulama. That scale is indispensable, but it can obscure the slower work through which Islamic practice became embedded in a village. The spread of Islam in Bandung, for example, has been reconstructed across broad geographical zones and long chronological spans, while regional surveys have emphasized major institutions and widely recognized scholars.[1] Such studies explain routes of transmission and the formation of an Islamic landscape. Their broader scope leaves room to examine how a village acquired regular teachers, places of worship, study circles, schools, legal organizations, and a generation capable of maintaining them.

Cibogo offers a productive site for examining that process. Located in the Lembang highlands north of Bandung, the village belonged to an agrarian social world marked by kinship, communal labor, and strong local traditions. A source published in 1941 recorded Tjibogo within the administrative orbit of Lembang.[2] Oral testimony and later village records describe a religiously heterogeneous population in which Muslims lived alongside adherents of Sunda-derived belief and the Aliran Kebatinan Perjalanan. These later accounts provide context without measuring the historical composition of the population. They depict a social environment where inherited ritual practices, local authority, and neighborhood solidarity retained considerable force.

Chaider S. Bamualim's study of Islamization and resistance in West Java provides the closest regional framework for understanding this setting. His analysis of Lembang emphasizes that Islamization was contested, negotiated, and shaped by changing relations among Islam, *aliran kebatinan*, Christianity, and the state. His Lembang chapter, however, concentrates mainly on developments from 1998 to 2011 and uses local figures as elements within a wider transformation.[3] A regional history by Nina H. Lubis and colleagues similarly establishes the larger importance of ulama and pesantren networks, while Usman Supendi, Zahra Nur Azizah, and Shaleh Afif Januri trace the emergence and spread of Islam across Bandung at a macrohistorical level.[4] Resa Nuranisa's biographical study of K. H. Ishak Burhanuddin in Baleendah demonstrates the value of periodizing a local preacher's activities, yet its subject and social setting differ from

[1] Usman Supendi, Zahra Nur Azizah, and Shaleh Afif Januri, "Sejarah Muncul dan Berkembangnya Islam di Bandung," *Priangan: Journal of Islamic Sundanese Culture* 2, no. 2 (2023): 32–44, https://doi.org/10.15575/priangan.v2i2.32687. See also Nina H. Lubis et al., *Sejarah Perkembangan Islam di Jawa Barat* (Bandung: Yayasan Masyarakat Sejarawan Indonesia, 2011), 13.

[2] Tio Biauw Sing, "De Syphilis in het Regentschap Bandoeng" (PhD diss., Geneeskundige Hoogeschool te Batavia, 1941), 34.

[3] Chaider S. Bamualim, "Negotiating Islamisation and Resistance: A Study of Religions, Politics and Social Change in West Java from the Early 20th Century to the Present" (PhD diss., Leiden University, 2015), 183, https://scholarlypublications.universiteitleiden.nl/handle/1887/35119.

[4] Nina H. Lubis et al., *Sejarah Perkembangan Islam di Jawa Barat* (Bandung: Yayasan Masyarakat Sejarawan Indonesia, 2011), 13. See also Usman Supendi, Zahra Nur Azizah, and Shaleh Afif Januri, "Sejarah Muncul dan Berkembangnya Islam di Bandung," *Priangan: Journal of Islamic Sundanese Culture* 2, no. 2 (2023): 32–44, https://doi.org/10.15575/priangan.v2i2.32687.

Cibogo.[5] The literature reviewed contains no dedicated historical study tracing Kyai Muhammad Otong's activities from the madrasah's reported establishment in 1968 until his death in 1992.

That absence matters because the category of "religious role" can become too broad to explain historical change. A kyai may preach, teach, lead prayer, advise families, and hold office, but the analytical question is how those practices alter the social capacity of a community. In Cibogo, the central problem was not simply whether Islamic teachings were communicated. It was whether intermittent religious instruction could become regular, whether personal authority could generate collective participation, and whether activities centered on one individual could be converted into institutions capable of survival. The chronological boundaries of 1968 and 1992 capture that transformation. Local accounts place the beginning of teaching at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Al Islam Nyalindung in the first year. The second is associated in the sources with the opening phase of the Nurul Huda lower-secondary school and Otong's death on 20 November.

Kyai Muhammad Otong's earlier life provides necessary context. Born in Singaparna, Tasikmalaya, in 1924, he entered the religious networks of Priangan before migrating to Lembang around 1940. He initially traded woven mats and built relationships through daily movement between settlements. His encounter with Mama Moch. Toyib in Nyalindung brought him into a local circle of Islamic learning and eventually into Toyib's family through marriage. By the 1950s, Otong was teaching religion in public elementary schools under the Ministry of Religious Affairs. These experiences joined pesantren formation, economic mobility, kinship, and state employment. They provide a basis for interpreting his work across boundaries that are too often studied separately: household and school, mosque and bureaucracy, oral teaching and legal organization.

This article asks how Kyai Muhammad Otong institutionalized Islamic preaching and education in Cibogo from 1968 to 1992, and how his methods interacted with the village's plural social structure. It argues that his principal historical contribution was the conversion of personal religious authority into a connected infrastructure of mosque, madrasah, study circle, foundation, and cadre. This was neither a straightforward story of doctrinal replacement nor the achievement of a solitary charismatic leader. The sources associate this process with reciprocal relations involving pupils, fellow preachers, family members, village officials, state religious institutions, Muslim congregants, and adherents of local belief. The novelty of the study lies in reconstructing that sequence at village scale and interpreting Islamization as negotiated institutionalization. In this formulation, institutionalization refers to the development of shared routines, buildings, documents, and roles through which religious practice could be sustained beyond the founder's direct instruction.

[5] Resa Nuranisa, "Peran K.H. Ishak Burhanuddin dalam Dakwah Islam di Kecamatan Baleendah Kabupaten Bandung Tahun 1960–2011" (UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, 2017), 25.

The argument also clarifies the place of agency in local Islamic history. Christopher Lloyd's methodological structurism distinguishes the causal power of persons from the conditioning power of structures while treating them as mutually dependent.[6] This perspective is useful in Cibogo because Otong acted within prior structures, including pesantren traditions, agrarian mutual aid, village administration, New Order religious policy, and a field of multiple beliefs. The reconstruction examines how his initiatives worked within and altered those conditions. A *tajug* became a congregational mosque. Informal lessons developed into a madrasah, although the chronology of official recognition remains uncertain. A circle of helpers became a legally constituted foundation. Pupils became teachers, preachers, and institutional managers. The article treats these changes as historical outcomes produced by interaction rather than as automatic effects of either charisma or state policy.

Method

The research follows four stages of historical method: heuristics, source criticism, interpretation, and historiography.[7] Heuristics began with the collection of written, oral, visual, and material traces. The documentary corpus includes Muhammad Otong's civil-service personnel card, issued on 1 November 1974 and recording entry into service in 1955, his identity card, a 1959 religious-court confirmation of his marriage, notes associated with his study of *Kifayat al-Awwam*, photographs of Otong and the institutions connected to him, records concerning the mosque and madrasah, and the deed establishing the Nurul Huda Islamic Education Foundation before notary Antje Mariana Ma'moen on 23 May 1990. Later institutional profiles supply retrospective accounts of origins and subsequent development. Their statements about earlier events require corroboration; the issue dates of the profiles labeled 2025 are not specified.[8]

Oral history plays a crucial role in this research because religious activities at the village level are not fully documented in written sources. The study draws upon accounts from members of Otong's family, former students, associates in *dakwah* (religious outreach) activities, institution administrators, and community figures. Key witnesses providing information include Tajuddin, Otong's son, who later became involved in educational management; former students Daha Asikin and Atun Sutisna; associates in *dakwah* activities Ata Koswara and Ishak; local MUI figure Uus Sutarman; and Ali Kurniawan and Asep Supriatna, who provided insights regarding relationships with adherents of local belief systems. Oral historical accounts cannot be treated as direct representations of the past. Such testimonies are shaped by memory, reverence for

[6] Christopher Lloyd, *The Structures of History* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1993), 93.

[7] Sulasman, *Metodologi Penelitian Sejarah* (Bandung: Pustaka Setia, 2014), 74. See also Gilbert J. Garraghan, *A Guide to Historical Method* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1946), 325.

[8] *Akta Pendirian Yayasan Pendidikan Islam (Y.P.I.) "Nurul Huda,"* no. 107, executed before Antje Mariana Ma'moen, S.H., Bandung, May 23, 1990. Kyai Muhammad Otong family archive, civil-service personnel card issued by Badan Administrasi Kepegawaian Negara on November 1, 1974, recording entry into service in 1955. Kyai Muhammad Otong family archive, identity card of Kyai Muhammad Otong, valid through March 10, 1981.

specific figures, family experiences, and institutional interests—factors that can influence how events are understood and recounted. Nevertheless, these sources are invaluable for reconstructing religious practices, patterns of movement within social spaces, teaching activities, and interpersonal relationships—details often absent from administrative records. The research reconstruction relies on historical events and documentary evidence that can be verified against the evidentiary standards established for the analysis. Meanwhile, interview findings and online research serve as interpretive sources, helping to elucidate contexts and dynamics that written documentation alone cannot fully capture.

External criticism considered the reported provenance and visible features of documentary and photographic reproductions. The foundation deed was checked for notarial form, names, signatures, stamps, and dates visible in the reproduced pages. Identity and personnel records were compared for names, dates, photographs, and institutional markings. A date inscribed on a photographed object was distinguished from the date of the photograph itself. Captions and family custody helped identify sources but did not independently establish when an image or an undated item was created. Examination of reproductions cannot substitute for authentication of the originals.

Internal criticism tested credibility by comparing the content of different source types. Statements about the foundation's legal status were checked against the notarial deed. Accounts of Otong's work as a religious teacher were compared with the personnel card issued in 1974 and the recollections of former pupils. The chronology of the Nurul Huda complex was reconstructed by reading interviews alongside photographs, inscriptions, and institutional records. Accounts of the lower-secondary school associate 1991 with the founders' initiative and 1992 with teaching. These may refer to different stages, but the surviving evidence does not establish their relationship or the date of administrative recognition. Accounts of intercommunal cooperation were compared across witnesses with different roles. Agreement among recollections was distinguished from independent documentary corroboration and did not establish acceptance throughout the community.

Interpretation proceeded chronologically and thematically. The chronology identifies the movement from itinerant instruction to institutional consolidation. The thematic analysis distinguishes four connected practices: building religious space, organizing education, reproducing knowledge through vernacular forms, and preparing successors. Lloyd's concept of the mutual dependence of agents and structures guides the explanation, but it is not used to force the evidence into a predetermined model.[9] Historical writing connects this chronology to the interpretation of local Islamic

[9] Christopher Lloyd, *The Structures of History* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1993), 93. See also Kuntowijoyo, *Pengantar Ilmu Sejarah* (Yogyakarta: Tiara Wacana, 2018), 78, and Nina Herlina, *Metode Sejarah* (Bandung: Satya Historika, 2020), 23.

institutionalization. Post-1992 developments provide context for succession and do not establish conditions during Otong's lifetime.

Results

Formation of a Local Religious Authority

Family testimony dates Muhammad Otong's birth to 25 March 1924 and identifies Cibeureum, Singaparna, Tasikmalaya, as his birthplace. He was the fifth child of Ajengan Nawari and Enot. His personnel card gives 26 March 1924; the one-day discrepancy remains unresolved. Family testimony depicts a household in which Qur'anic recitation, prayer, moral discipline, and respect for religious teachers formed part of ordinary childhood.[10] This family setting was reinforced by the wider pesantren environment of Tasikmalaya. Interview accounts indicate that Otong pursued his religious studies at the Kudang, Cintawana, and Sempur pesantren. These institutions belonged to overlapping Priangan networks that transmitted jurisprudence, theology, Arabic grammar, and Sufi ethics through named teachers and classical texts.[11] The precise duration of his residence at each pesantren is not preserved, so the evidence supports a network of formation more securely than a complete educational itinerary.

Around 1940, at approximately sixteen years of age, local accounts place Otong's move with his elder brother Ahmad Sadeli to the Lembang area. He supported himself by selling Tasikmalaya mats, traveling by bicycle through settlements around Cibogo. The trade mattered historically because it placed him in repeated contact with households beyond a fixed religious institution. Ali Kurniawan and Ishak recounted this mobility in local memory as the social route through which Otong learned the local terrain and reached Nyalindung.[12] There he met Mama Moch. Toyib, known locally as Mama Guru, and studied theology, jurisprudence, worship, and ethical discipline under him. Their relationship became a kinship alliance through Otong's marriage to Toyib's daughter Maryam, dated to 4 June 1943 in the family account and recorded in a marriage confirmation produced in 1959. Such alliances were common mechanisms for joining intellectual succession to family continuity in the social world of the kyai.[13]

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[10] Tajuddin, interview, Lembang, December 23, 2024, 2:51 p.m. Kyai Muhammad Otong family archive, civil-service personnel card issued by Badan Administrasi Kepegawaian Negara on November 1, 1974, recording entry into service in 1955.

[11] Ading Kusdiana, *Sejarah Pesantren: Jejak, Penyebaran, dan Jaringannya di Wilayah Priangan (1800–1945)* (Bandung: Humaniora, 2014), 99, 139. See also Tajuddin, interview, Lembang, December 23, 2024, 2:51 p.m.

[12] Ali Kurniawan, interview, Lembang, October 13, 2024, 3:00 p.m. See also Ishak, interview, Lembang, December 9, 2024, 4:41 p.m.

[13] Tajuddin, interview, Lembang, December 23, 2024, 2:51 p.m. See also Zamakhsyari Dhofier, *Tradisi Pesantren: Studi Pandangan Hidup Kyai dan Visinya Mengenai Masa Depan Indonesia* (Jakarta: LP3ES, 2011), 102. Kyai Muhammad Otong family archive, Religious Court of Bandung, marriage confirmation no. 64/TG/59, 1959, recording the reported marriage of June 4, 1943.

The personnel card issued in 1974 records Otong's entry into service in 1955. It is a later administrative record of employment, not an appointment document created in 1955. Family testimony associates his work as a religion teacher with the Ministry of Religious Affairs. He taught religion at Sekolah Rakyat Tjibogo II and, according to the institutional narrative, also served other elementary schools in the Cibogo area.[14] Daha Asikin remembered him as the sole religion teacher responsible for pupils across six grades. Asikin estimated that one incoming class included about sixty-two children, with marked differences in age, and that about twenty reached the final grade. Without enrollment registers, these recollections cannot establish a cohort completion rate. Otong's instruction combined oral memorization, writing, and bodily practice. Pupils first learned prayer formulas by repetition, then enacted the movements, and only afterward wrote the material. Asikin regarded prayer and Qur'anic reading as the lessons that remained most durable in later life.[15]

This school experience supplied more than professional standing. The recalled teaching practices suggest that Otong learned to adapt religious material to learners with uneven literacy and limited access to formal education. It also connected him to the administrative resources of the Ministry of Religious Affairs while bringing him into contact with families whose children attended public school. By the late 1960s, he therefore occupied a distinctive position. He was a pesantren-trained teacher, a son-in-law within a respected local religious family, a state religious employee, and a figure already known through neighborhood preaching. The beginning of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Al Islam Nyalindung, placed in 1968 by local accounts, marked the point at which these resources were directed toward an institution of his own community.



Figure 1 Portrait of Kyai Muhammad Otong

[14] Kyai Muhammad Otong family archive, civil-service personnel card issued by Badan Administrasi Kepegawaian Negara on November 1, 1974, recording entry into service in 1955. See also Tajuddin, interview, Lembang, December 23, 2024, 2:51 p.m.

[15] Daha Asikin, interview, Lembang, January 8, 2025, 2:22 p.m.

Mosque, Madrasah, and Foundation, 1968–1992

Witnesses describe the religious field in which the madrasah appeared as plural. Ata Koswara recalled that when he settled in the area in 1975, Islamic knowledge remained limited among many residents and practices inherited from parents continued to shape everyday life.[16] Atun Sutisna and Uus Sutarman likewise described Cibedug and neighboring settlements as important centers of adherents of local belief.[17] These accounts can be read alongside Bamualim's broader argument that Lembang's Islamization involved negotiation with *aliran kebatinan* rather than a single linear process. They also require caution. Retrospective expressions such as "limited understanding" reflect the normative language of Muslim witnesses. They cannot be used as a neutral measurement of an entire population's religiosity.

Otong's first institutional response was education. Local accounts date the beginning of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Al Islam Nyalindung to 1968, describing lessons near the *tajug* on a simple bamboo floor with limited equipment. Daha Asikin remembered a curriculum beginning with Arabic letters, Qur'anic reading, prayer, basic jurisprudence, and conduct.[18] Early enrollment is recalled as approximately sixteen to twenty-two pupils, without surviving registers to confirm the estimate. The modest size is significant. The madrasah did not begin as a large reform project imposed on the village. Witnesses associate its growth with existing lessons and parents' confidence in the teacher's knowledge and character. Accounts place the first graduating class and Ministry of Religious Affairs recognition in 1975. The institutional profile cited in the supporting research also lists an establishment decision dated 1 August 1986. The relationship between the reported recognition and this later decision cannot be established without the relevant original records.

The educational project developed beside a changing place of worship. Family and local accounts place the construction of a small *tajug* in Nyalindung in 1956 on land associated with Mama Moch. Toyib. Residents contributed labor and locally available materials, including bamboo flooring. In 1975, community deliberation gave the building the name Nurul Huda, "the light of guidance." As attendance and activities increased, the structure was expanded. By 1980 it measured approximately seventeen by seventeen meters and hosted Friday prayer, a change in congregational use associated with the name Masjid Jami Nurul Huda. The accounts do not establish the date of formal designation. Another rehabilitation in 1983 enlarged the complex and added separate washing and sanitation facilities for women and men.[19]

[16] Ata Koswara, interview, Lembang, January 22, 2025, 2:15 p.m.

[17] Atun Sutisna, interview, Lembang, January 23, 2025, 10:33 a.m. See also Uus Sutarman, interview, Lembang, January 24, 2025, 9:48 a.m.

[18] Daha Asikin, interview, Lembang, January 8, 2025, 2:22 p.m.

[19] Tajuddin, interview, Lembang, December 23, 2024, 2:51 p.m. See also Ata Koswara, interview, Lembang, January 22, 2025, 2:15 p.m.

The mosque's importance cannot be reduced to architectural enlargement. Friday prayer drew people from surrounding settlements at a time when only a small number of local mosques offered it. Regular Qur'anic lessons, study circles for women and men, children's instruction, communal deliberation, and commemorations of Islamic holy days gave the building a dense weekly and annual rhythm. The same compound could support worship, schooling, and public coordination. A photographed inscription identifies Yayasan Amalbakti Muslim Pancasila support and an inauguration in March 1989. This marks a development phase, not the beginning of Friday prayer recalled for 1980; the photograph's capture date is unspecified. This episode inserted a local project into the religious-development network of the New Order without erasing the decades of village labor that preceded it.[20]

Majelis taklim extended this infrastructure beyond the central mosque. Uus Sutarman places this activity in the 1970s and 1980s and recounts Otong's work with figures including Haji Abdullah, Ata Koswara, Uus Sutarman, and other local teachers. They rotated between mosques and settlements on fixed days, often traveling on foot because, in his account, transport was limited. Uus Sutarman recalled a schedule in which different mosques received instruction on Friday, Wednesday, or Saturday. The preachers bore their own transport costs and did not expect payment from congregations.[21] Rotating instruction converted geographical difficulty into an organized network. It also reduced dependence on a single venue and distributed responsibility among multiple teachers.

Women's study circles were a notable part of this expansion. Ata Koswara recalled that separate groups for women were established in neighborhood units during the early 1980s, followed by children's Qur'anic teaching in local mosques and prayer houses.[22] The content concentrated on practical jurisprudence, creed, and ethics. This sequence widened the social location of religious learning. The account suggests that learning reached households through women and schoolchildren, while participating mosques acquired an educational function in addition to congregational prayer.

Oral accounts identify Otong as the first chair of the MUI organization in the undivided Cibogo area around 1978, providing a coordinating point for the network. The national Majelis Ulama Indonesia had been founded in Jakarta in July 1975 as a forum for ulama, leaders, and Muslim intellectuals.[23] In Cibogo, however, the local body functioned

[20] Tajuddin, interview, Lembang, December 23, 2024, 2:51 p.m. See also the photographic inscription and inauguration photographs in the personal and family documentation of the research archive. The photographed plaque identifies an inauguration in March 1989; the date of photographic capture is not specified.

[21] Uus Sutarman, interview, Lembang, January 24, 2025, 9:48 a.m.

[22] Ata Koswara, interview, Lembang, January 22, 2025, 2:15 p.m.

[23] Majelis Ulama Indonesia, "Profil MUI," accessed March 11, 2025, https://mui.or.id/profil-mui. See also Majelis Ulama Indonesia, *Himpunan Keputusan Musyawarah Nasional Majelis Ulama Indonesia Sejak Tahun 1975* (Jakarta: Sekretariat Majelis Ulama Indonesia, 2015), 1. The website was consulted after the evidentiary boundary; the 2015 printed source provides the earlier reference for the national organization's founding.

less as a producer of formal fatwas than as a mechanism for organizing Friday preachers, teachers, sermons, commemorations, and cooperation among religious figures. The supporting accounts place administrative subdivision in 1982–1983 and distinguish later MUI leadership in Cikole from the earlier undivided Cibogo area. Appointment records and boundary decisions are needed to establish the precise transition. Oral evidence associates his Cikole leadership with the period through 1992 and describes a collegial style based on consultation rather than rigid command.

The most decisive act of institutional consolidation came on 23 May 1990. The notarial deed of the Yayasan Pendidikan Islam Nurul Huda constituted the foundation in Nyalindung, separated an initial endowment of Rp100,000, and named Otong as chair. Its first management included Yaya Rusmana, Tajuddin, Tamami, Ade Hati Setiawati, Kokom Komara, Kosasih, Ai Kuraesin, and Mohamad Subarwa. The articles authorized formal and nonformal education and social activities.[24] A work-meeting invitation dated 15 July 1990, scheduling a meeting for 16 July, provides contemporary evidence of coordination with MI Nyalindung. The deed supplied a formal arrangement for managing education and assets; it does not by itself establish every subsequent activity or uninterrupted continuity.



Figure 2 Ceremony associated with the Nurul Huda Islamic Education Foundation. The sign records its notarial status and educational units

The foundation quickly became the platform for a higher level of schooling. Retrospective interviews and the later institutional profile associate planning for Madrasah Tsanawiyah Nurul Huda with an initiative in 1991, recalling Otong's approval

[24] *Akta Pendirian Yayasan Pendidikan Islam (Y.P.I.) "Nurul Huda,"* no. 107, executed before Antje Mariana Ma'moen, S.H., Bandung, May 23, 1990. Nurul Huda institutional archive, work-meeting invitation no. 04/akb/YPI-NH/VII/1990, Nyalindung, July 15, 1990, scheduling a meeting at MI Nyalindung on July 16, 1990.

and an organizing initiative among graduates. Atun Sutisna dates the start of teaching to 1992, initially in the MI classrooms after the primary school day. These accounts may describe different stages; neither resolves the date of administrative establishment, and their chronology remains provisional. The new school began with scarce staff, shared rooms, and direct recruitment of families. Witnesses relate this initiative to Otong's view that religious education should not end at the elementary level. His death in November 1992 meant that his role belonged to the founding transition rather than to the school's later administration.

Table 1 summarizes the sequence. Its analytical value lies in the relation among the events. The sequence suggests connections among educational and organizational initiatives, although chronology alone does not prove that each caused the next. The madrasah organized teaching and is remembered as building public trust. The congregational mosque created a central space. Rotating study circles created a wider network. MUI leadership coordinated religious roles. The foundation provided a formal arrangement for continuity. The lower-secondary school extended the educational pathway.

Table 1. Institutional sequence of Kyai Muhammad Otong's work in Cibogo

Year	Development	Historical significance
1968	MI teaching began, according to local accounts	Converted informal lessons into regular primary Islamic education
1975	First MI graduation and naming of Nurul Huda recalled	Increased recognition and linked education to a named religious center
c. 1978	Local accounts place Otong's early MUI leadership here	Coordinated teachers, preachers, and community religious activities
1980	Nurul Huda expanded and began hosting Friday prayer	Established a congregational center serving several settlements
1982–1983	Village subdivision and further mosque rehabilitation	Subdivision changed jurisdictions; mosque rehabilitation is recalled
1989	Mosque inaugurated after further development with Yayasan Amalbakti Muslim Pancasila support	Connected community initiative with New Order religious-development resources
1990	Nurul Huda foundation constituted by notarial deed	Provided a formal arrangement for educational management
1991–1992	Reported MTs initiative and start of teaching; training-photo dating unresolved	Suggests expansion beyond primary schooling; succession chronology remains uncertain
20 Nov. 1992	Kyai Muhammad Otong died	Marks the transition to leadership by successors

Vernacular Pedagogy, Cadre Formation, and Intercommunal Practice

Institutional growth was accompanied by a distinctive mode of instruction. Otong used Sundanese *nadham*, short metrical verses sung or recited collectively, to teach the pillars of faith, the pillars of Islam, a concise life of the Prophet Muhammad, and obligations toward parents. Tajuddin remembered these verses as a central feature of Otong's teaching.[25] Their vocabulary was elementary and their sequence deliberate. Creed preceded ritual obligations, the Prophet's biography supplied an ethical model,

[25] Tajuddin, interview, Lembang, December 23, 2024, 2:51 p.m.

and respect for parents translated doctrine into social conduct. Pupils first memorized an ordered framework, then received explanation and practice.

The use of Sundanese did more than simplify content. It placed Islamic instruction inside the language of domestic and village life. Otong's adaptation of material associated with texts such as *Kifayat al-Awwam* also moved knowledge between written and oral forms. Undated notes attributed to Otong and Tajuddin's recollections describe the copying or reformulation of basic discussions of theology and worship into accessible notes, used in recitation and explanation. The notes cannot independently date this practice within the study period. The forms of religious outreach described as *da'wa bil-lisan, da'wa bil-kitabah*, and *da'wa bil-hal* functioned not as independent programs but as interconnected dimensions of a unified pedagogical practice, integrating speech, writing, and exemplary conduct.[26]

Accounts of cadre formation connect Otong's teaching with former pupils who became teachers, mosque functionaries, and organizational leaders. Witnesses describe the training of imams and *khatib*. The archive labels a training photograph as Penetapan *Dai* dan *Khatib* and attributes it to 17 June 1991. The reproduced item is a photograph, not a written appointment act. Its exact dating and Otong's participation have not been independently established.[27] Another training photograph bears 27 August 1995, after his death, and cannot document activity he personally conducted. The photographs therefore do not establish a formal succession program during his lifetime.

The social credibility needed for this work was sustained through conduct as well as instruction. Witnesses consistently described Otong as gentle in speech, firm in religious principle, materially modest, and willing to walk long distances to teach. Atun Sutisna emphasized the combination of affection and discipline in the classroom. Ata Koswara portrayed him as committed to Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah while avoiding coercive behavior. These memories are hagiographic in tone and indicate a remembered teaching reputation. Their convergence does not independently establish parents' motives or the extent of residents' acceptance.

His relations with adherents of local belief are especially significant. Tajuddin and Atun Sutisna stated that Otong did not treat the *penghayat* community as an enemy. He maintained communication with its figures and approached religious difference through social relations.[28] Asep Supriatna recalled that *penghayat* residents contributed labor and timber to the construction of the madrasah and also assisted mosque building. Muslim residents, in turn, participated in community work associated with the *pasewakan* and

[26] Abdillah, *Ilmu Dakwah: Kajian Ontologi, Epistemologi, Aksiologi dan Aplikasi Dakwah* (Depok: Rajawali Pers, 2019), 30.

[27] Nurul Huda institutional archive, *Penetapan Dai dan Khatib*, Lembang, June 17, 1991. The supplied item is a training photograph, not a written appointment act; June 17, 1991, is its attributed date. Another training photograph in the supporting archive bears August 27, 1995, after Otong's death.

[28] Tajuddin, interview, Lembang, December 23, 2024, 2:51 p.m. See also Atun Sutisna, interview, Lembang, January 23, 2025, 10:33 a.m.

village ceremonies.[29] Ata Koswara remembered Otong attending customary events as an expression of respect while retaining his own doctrinal boundaries.[30]

These relations complicate any account in which Islamization simply displaced local culture. The accounts describe *ruwatan lembur* and Muslim thanksgiving through Islamic prayer and *tawasul*, but do not independently date each change. These recollections suggest accommodation and selective reinterpretation rather than comprehensive preservation or immediate prohibition. They also describe intercommunal cooperation in building Islamic institutions. The reported cooperation does not establish the absence of exclusion or conflict throughout the community.

Interviews describe annual and weekly religious activities associated with the institutions. Maulid celebrations, Isra Mi'raj, Muharram observances, Rajaban, Nuzulul Qur'an, Qur'anic competitions, *Barzanji* recitation, *marhaban*, *manaqib*, thanksgiving meals, and *tahlilan* appear in the recalled calendar.[31] These gatherings joined religious instruction to voluntary food sharing, youth participation, women's work, and neighborhood coordination. Some witnesses associate expanded activity with the 1980s, but the sources do not fix the start or frequency of every listed practice. The accounts suggest a cumulative relationship between regular study and commemorations without establishing a complete calendar for 1968–1992.

Discussion

The results support an interpretation of Cibogo's Islamization as institutionalization rather than a simple increase in religious adherence. Otong's historical agency was visible in founding, teaching, coordinating, and persuading. The interpretation links these activities to social forms that others could reproduce. Lloyd writes that persons possess agential power while structures possess conditioning power.[32] In Cibogo, a teacher's choices created new structures, but those structures then organized the choices of pupils, parents, worshippers, and successors. A weekly schedule required assigned teachers. Friday prayer required an imam and *khatib*. A recognized madrasah required classrooms, records, staff, and a curriculum. A legal foundation required offices, rules, assets, and collective decision-making. Each institution constrained practice at the same time that it enabled expansion.

This interpretation revises a heroic biography without diminishing individual contribution. Otong did not build a religious field from nothing. His authority drew on a Tasikmalaya pesantren network, marriage into Mama Moch. Toyib's family, employment under the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the labor of Maryam and other family members, the work of fellow preachers, and the Sundanese practice of *rereongan*. Zamakhsyari

[29] Asep Supriatna, interview, Lembang, January 22, 2025, 12:55 p.m.

[30] Ata Koswara, interview, Lembang, January 22, 2025, 2:15 p.m.

[31] Ata Koswara, interview, Lembang, January 22, 2025, 2:15 p.m. Uus Sutarman, interview, Lembang, January 24, 2025, 9:48 a.m. Asep Supriatna, interview, Lembang, January 22, 2025, 12:55 p.m. The accounts do not independently establish the dates or frequency of every listed ritual during 1968–1992.

[32] Christopher Lloyd, *The Structures of History* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1993), 93.

Dhofier's analysis of kinship among kyai helps explain the union of intellectual and familial succession.[33] The Cibogo evidence adds another dimension. Kinship could supply trust and continuity, but public institutions also required cooperation beyond the family. The 1990 foundation included relatives and associates, while interviewees describe cooperation across belief communities in mosque construction and education.

The New Order context likewise appears as an enabling and conditioning structure, not as a complete explanation. Otong's state employment, recorded as beginning in 1955 before the New Order, gave him recognized status and access to the formal educational sphere. Local MUI leadership placed village preaching within a national organization founded during the early New Order. The foundation deed identified Pancasila as its organizational principle, and the 1989 mosque development connected Nurul Huda to Yayasan Amalbakti Muslim Pancasila. At the same time, the sequence began before those later interventions. The *tajug*, school, study circles, and communal labor were locally generated. The reconstruction suggests that later state-connected resources complemented local teaching and cooperation, rather than explaining the origins of all his activities.

Vernacular pedagogy was another mechanism of institutionalization. The Sundanese *nadham* condensed doctrine into forms that children could repeat, remember, and carry outside the classroom. It was culturally adaptive without being doctrinally indeterminate. Otong selected a clear sequence of creed, worship, prophetic example, and filial ethics. The use of a local language did not merely translate Arabic or Indonesian material. It organized memory through rhythm and linked Islamic norms to familiar speech. This helps explain why former pupils recalled the lessons decades later. The undated notes and recollections of recitation suggest that "traditional" teaching was not purely oral. It is described as moving between manuscript, voice, performance, and daily conduct.

The relationship with *penghayat* residents provides the article's most important qualification to linear narratives of Islamization. Bamualim emphasizes contestation and negotiation in West Java.[34] The Cibogo accounts describe negotiation in ordinary practice. It included dialogue with community figures, mutual labor, attendance at social events, and the gradual Islamic reframing of selected customs. Such accommodation did not erase asymmetry. Otong explicitly sought to deepen Islamic belief and practice, and the growth of mosques and madrasah increased Muslim institutional visibility. Nevertheless, the available evidence does not support a narrative of forced displacement. The recollections associate religious consolidation with civic cooperation, without establishing the absence of coercion or conflict in every setting.

[33] Zamakhsyari Dhofier, *Tradisi Pesantren: Studi Pandangan Hidup Kyai dan Visinya Mengenai Masa Depan Indonesia* (Jakarta: LP3ES, 2011), 102.

[34] Chaider S. Bamualim, "Negotiating Islamisation and Resistance: A Study of Religions, Politics and Social Change in West Java from the Early 20th Century to the Present" (PhD diss., Leiden University, 2015), 183, https://scholarlypublications.universiteitleiden.nl/handle/1887/35119.

These limitations also affect the assessment of the institution's developmental success in subsequent stages. The village profile contains information regarding religious study sessions and the activities of preachers, whereas the institutional profile outlines the development of the educational complex in the ensuing phase. Both sources offer a snapshot of conditions that evolved later, rather than a comprehensive record of the institution's continuous operations. Furthermore, the institutional profile lacks a clear publication date, making it impossible to definitively place it within the research's evidentiary timeframe. This later information details the contributions of Tajuddin, Atun Sutisna, Kokom Komara, the teachers, administrators, and family members, as well as shifts in government policy regarding the continuation and expansion of the institution's activities.

Consequently, the interpretation of Otong's role requires a balanced perspective. Otong can be understood as a key figure who laid the organizational and pedagogical groundwork for the educational and religious activities subsequently carried on by later generations. The significance of his role lies in the establishment of a foundation that enabled continuity in leadership, instruction, and institutional operations—not in the assumption that all subsequent developments were the direct result of his actions.

The source base imposes further limits. All interviews cited here were conducted after the evidentiary boundary, more than three decades after 1992. Documentary survival is strongest for formal milestones such as employment and the foundation deed, while informal practice is known mainly through memory. The archive also records men's public leadership more fully than women's labor, although the accounts identify Maryam, women teachers, and women's study circles as contributors. These asymmetries should guide future research toward household archives, women's oral histories, and mosque or school registers that may clarify participation and chronology. The unresolved birth-date discrepancy, recognition dates, undated teaching notes, and uncertain training-photo chronology prevent a fully verified timeline. The dates of observation, photographic reproduction, and access to institutional profiles are not specified.

Historiographically, the Cibogo case connects regional Islamization to the institutional labor of a local kyai. It complements histories centered on major ulama and pesantren by interpreting village religious change through an interdependent chain of modest interventions. A bamboo-floored class, a rotating walking route, a memorized Sundanese verse, a Friday congregation, a notarial deed, and the preparation of a new *khatib* belonged to the same process. Read together, the documents and recollections suggest arrangements for making Islamic practice more regular, visible, teachable, and transferable. That is the specific contribution of local microhistory to the history of Islam in West Java.

Conclusion

Between 1968 and 1992, Kyai Muhammad Otong developed personal teaching and itinerant preaching into an institutional infrastructure in Cibogo. The reconstruction links his work to the establishment of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Al Islam Nyalindung, the

expansion and active use of Masjid Jami Nurul Huda, the organization of rotating majelis taklim, the employment of Sundanese *nadham* and accessible written notes, the notarial formation of the Nurul Huda Islamic Education Foundation, and the development of teachers, preachers, imams, and *khatib* recalled by witnesses. The formal milestones have stronger documentary support than the chronology of informal teaching and succession.

These achievements were neither exclusively personal nor mechanically produced by state policy. They arose from the interaction of Otong's agency with pesantren learning, kinship, communal labor, Ministry of Religious Affairs employment, MUI organization, New Order development resources, and a religiously plural village. Witnesses describe cooperative relations with adherents of local belief and selective cultural reinterpretation alongside institutional expansion. These accounts support the interpretation of Islamization in Cibogo as negotiated institutionalization, without establishing uniform acceptance or an absence of conflict across the village.

The article contributes a village-scale explanation to the historiography of Islam in West Java. Its novelty lies in examining arrangements through which a local kyai's work could continue: personal trust, teaching routines, and formal organization provided resources for successors. Otong's legacy was not only a collection of buildings or remembered sermons. The sources associate his work with a capacity for continuing education and leadership, although the extent and continuity of that legacy require more complete dated institutional records.

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