RESEARCH ARTICLE

Historical Perspectives on Education in Medieval Azerbaijan (10th–16th Centuries): Curriculum, Methodology, and Student Mobility

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Abstract

In contemporary local and international historiography, aspects of the history of education in medieval Azerbaijan have been studied in general terms. Existing research primarily focuses on educational institutions (madrasas and Sufi lodges) and certain cultural fields such as science, literature, and architecture. This article examines previously under-researched topics in Azerbaijani cultural history, including the duration and level of education, teaching methods, textbooks, libraries, academic calendars, scholarships for students, salaries for teachers, and the education and upbringing of orphans.

The rich cultural heritage of the Middle Ages has often been studied mainly through the lens of political and social events, leaving issues closely related to daily life in the background. However, material, religious, legal, and moral culture often preceded political developments. Historical rulers relied on defining and supporting their material and cultural resources. The fact that many medieval Azerbaijani rulers were also recognized as scholars or poets reflects the significance and level of education during that period.

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1. Introduction

Sources indicate that cities in medieval Azerbaijan often contained multiple secondary and higher education institutions, large waqfs (e.g., Rabi-Rashidi), and even entire waqf cities (e.g., Qazaniyya). Madrasas employed numerous scholars and instructors and maintained large, well-known libraries, reflecting a relatively high public literacy level. Certain fields, particularly literature, political science (court and administrative schools), and medicine, were widely studied and developed.

Specialized schools existed to train state officials, civil servants, and even military personnel. Consequently, the Middle Ages saw a strong societal interest in education, countering modern historiographical assumptions that medieval populations were largely uneducated.

2. Diversity of Educational Fields

The medieval Azerbaijani education system was part of the broader Eastern Islamic educational framework, extending far beyond madrasas. Several characteristics stand out:

1. Education influenced all political and social sectors.

2. Educational opportunities and institutions were diverse.

3. Literacy and scholarly achievement conferred a special status in society.

4. State personnel policies relied on educated individuals in administrative and governance structures.

Mazahiri (1972) notes that from the 10th century onward, a significant transformation occurred in Islamic education:

"Until then, in the medieval Middle East, schools were limited to basic instruction in religious doctrines at mosques or in institutions such as the 'Dar al-Hikmat' (House of Wisdom), established by Muslim philosophers or Mu'tazilite scholars, which could be considered academies. No intermediate level of education existed between these two. Therefore, we must acknowledge that no organized general education system existed before the 10th century. The general population learned only religious doctrines, practical aspects of religion, and basic literacy and numeracy, while elite social strata—mostly theologians aligned with Mu'tazilite thought, rulers, and politicians—studied philosophy and exact sciences" (Mazahiri, 1972, p. 159).

3. Educational Institutions in Medieval Azerbaijan

From the 10th century onward, madrasa education coexisted with other forms of schooling. Key educational centers included:

- Schools and kuttabs
- Suffa
- Mosques and jamiʿ mosques
- Palaces and court schools
- Libraries and bookshops
- Houses of scholars (ʿulama)
- Literary centers
- Badia (desert education)
- Harem schools (for palace women)
- Madrasas
- Ribats and Sufi lodges

Among these, madrasas, palaces, and mosque-jamiʿ complexes were the primary institutions (Çelebi, 2013, p. 23). All were commonly referred to as *schools*. Since religious study centered on books, schooling initially meant reading-based learning. Over time, the term *school* expanded to include primary education (Makdisi, 2007, p. 58).

4. Specialized Forms of Education: Badia

A notable educational practice was *badia*, or desert education. Students seeking mastery of a language lived among nomadic tribes to gain immersive practical experience. For example, the 10th-century poet Sayyiduk, after completing his literary studies in Basra, spent ten uninterrupted years among Bedouin tribes to perfect classical Arabic. Contemporary sources described him as "the most renowned poet, lexicographer, and linguist" (Çelebi, 2013, p. 23).

Similar practices existed among Turkic peoples. Mahmud al-Kashgari, in his *Divanü Lügati't-Türk* (1072–1074), collected many words from nomadic Turkic tribes, illustrating the practical and immersive approach to education in the medieval period.

5. Education Duration and Level

The concept of schooling in medieval Azerbaijani schools was not limited to providing basic education, as commonly assumed. A student receiving instruction at a school or kuttab often attained literacy sufficient to author works. For instance, Muhammad, the son of Dawud ibn Ali al-Zahiri, founder of the Zahiri school of thought, received kuttab

education yet produced the renowned work *Kitab al-Zahra* at the age of 15. Similarly, in the 11th century, a poet from Wasit began serving in a governmental secretariat after completing his school education.

Yaqut al-Hamawi, of Roman origin, authored the encyclopedic work *Kitab al-Buldan* despite being born into slavery. He learned reading and writing from his merchant master, who subsequently sent him to school. Initially working for his master and later as a merchant and bookseller (sahaf) after the master's death, Yaqut produced a multivolume work containing significant information about Azerbaijan, testifying to the high quality of primary education (Brockelmann, 1942, pp. 249–250). These examples highlight the **advanced educational standards** maintained in schools and kuttabs.

Students were primarily guided by a master scholar regarded as an expert in the literary sciences, effectively preparing them for higher education. Education in these institutions rarely lasted less than ten years. Considering that Ahmad ibn Ali al-Zawwal (1115–1190), a descendant of Caliph Ma'mun, left school at age 14 after ten years of study, it can be inferred that primary education for Muslim children typically began at 4–5 years of age and rarely exceeded 7–8 years (Makdisi, p. 59). However, individuals who could not pursue literacy during childhood could enroll in schools at any age, as Yaqut al-Hamawi did.

To ascertain the duration and level of education in the Eastern Islamic world, including Azerbaijan, references can be made to Yaqut al-Hamawi's accounts of the Ghaznavid Sultanate (962–1187) and the autobiography of the famous historian Beyhaqi. According to Hamawi, Abu'l-Fazl Beyhaqi had received instruction in **grammar, lexicography, and literature-poetry** by the age of 15, studying 11 books that included fiqh (Islamic law), natural sciences, astronomy, and an Arabic-Persian dictionary covering earthly beings (Makdisi, p. 59). This indicates that schools imparted **foundational scientific terminology and knowledge**.

Graduates could continue with **10–11 years of higher education**, primarily necessary for professional fields requiring advanced expertise, such as fiqh (law) and medicine (tibb). The 12th-century Central Asian historian, muhaddith, theologian, and philologist Abu Sa'ad Abd al-Karim ibn Muhammad al-Samani al-Marwazi (1113–1167) provides valuable insights into the excellence of Islamic education. His work *Kitab al-Ansab* (Book of Lineages) documents over a hundred Azerbaijani scholars, reporting that after ten years of school and 10–11 years of madrasa study, hundreds of scholars from cities including Urmia, Khoy, Ardabil, Maku, Nakhchivan, Shamakhi, Ganja, and Beylagan served across regions from Cairo to Shash in roles such as secretaries, physicians, judges, and madrasa instructors (N. Aliyeva, 2010, pp. 91–133).

The **quality and level of education** in Azerbaijani schools and madrasas, as well as in waqfs and palace institutions, matched those in other major Islamic cities. Evidence from the prominent Arab scholar Ibn Makulan (1030–1082), who visited Ganja, highlights the mosque, madrasa, and library, listing 55 Azerbaijani scholars and shedding light on the intellectual environment (N. Aliyeva, 2014, p. 20).

High-level educational institutions in Azerbaijani cities were already established by the 7th–8th centuries, as reflected in *al-Ikmal fi Asma' al-Rijal* by the Tabrizi scholar Waliuddin Abu Abdullah Muhammad ibn Abdullah al-Amri, which covers the biographies of 8th-century Azerbaijani thinkers. Additionally, *Kitab al-Mushtarak* documents 21 Azerbaijani localities and mentions their educational centers (N. Aliyeva, p. 62).

From the 11th century onward, during the Seljuk and later Atabeg periods, Azerbaijan hosted schools, madrasas, and palace institutions recognized throughout the Eastern Islamic world. Researcher Nargiz Aliyeva has compiled a list of higher education institutions from this period, including madrasas in Ganja, Shamakhi, Beylagan, Maragha (Atabegs, Qazi, Ahmadaga), Zanjan, Nakhchivan, Marand, and Khoy (N. Aliyeva, 2015, pp. 67–74, 78, 84–86).

During the periods of the Jalairids, Qara Qoyunlu, Aq Qoyunlu, and Safavids, a significant number of madrasas operated in Azerbaijan. Examples include the Taj al-Din Shah Alishah Madrasa, the Qiyasiyya Madrasa founded by Rashid al-Din's son Qiyas al-Din Muhammad, the Amir Shaykh Hasan Jalairi Madrasa, the Shaykh Uways Madrasa, the Sultan Ahmad Jalairi Madrasa, as well as the Muzaffariyya and Bayim Madrasas constructed by Khadijah Bayim, the wife of Shahanshah. Each of these madrasas trained specialists in various fields of knowledge. For instance, the *Madrasa-i-Tibb* established in the village of Malham in Shamakhi, which operated for many years, served both as a high-level medical education center and a hospital. This center was founded by Qafiyaddin Umar ibn Osman, the uncle of the renowned poet Khaghani. Considering Qafiyaddin's connections with the Shamakhi madrasa, it can be inferred that there was a form of student exchange among madrasas at the time (N. Aliyeva, 2015, p. 86).

Research indicates that the **duration of primary education** for those desiring to study did not exceed 10–11 years. However, it cannot be claimed that all students completed the full course. The majority, as noted by Ali Mazaheri, likely left after acquiring fundamental knowledge in religious sciences. After completing school and kuttab education, higher education commenced, typically lasting a minimum of 10–11 years. Those who obtained an *ijazah* (diploma) following this period were employed in hospitals, madrasas, or the legal system. This suggests that the **average educational trajectory of a specialist** lasted no less than 20 years. Thus, a child starting school at 4–5 years old could potentially graduate from a higher education institution by age 25. Some scholars, however, extended their studies beyond this period; for example, Beyhaqi completed his education at the age of 37, implying over 30 years of study (Makdisi, p. 60).

Differences in higher education duration also depended on the **rank and significance of the school**. Divan schools, for instance, functioned akin to universities specializing in political administration, training personnel who would serve in roles ranging from secretaries to viziers. Sultans also trained officials acquired as *qulam* (slaves) for military, political, and security services in these schools. Nizam al-Mulk notes in *Siyasatnama* that these *qulam* rarely assumed official positions before the age of 30 (Nizam al-Mulk, 1999, p. 74; N. Akbar, 2017, p. 160). Divan schools emphasized mathematical sciences. Abu Ja'far ibn Shirzad, who lived in the 10th century, reports continuing his divan school education until age 20, noting that his older brother studied there as well (Makdisi, p. 76).

Education at a palace or divan school was a primary means of entering and advancing within the state system. For example, during the Fatimid period, it was customary for officials to send their sons, who had received basic literary education, to divan schools to learn secretarial skills. Here, students engaged with literature and developed intellectual interests. This account, recorded by Qazi Fazil al-Baysani—who later became a vizier in the Ayyubid state after serving as a high-ranking official under the Fatimids—is significant, as he himself had been admitted to the divan school by Ibn al-Khallal during the Fatimid period through a rigorous examination (Ibn Khallikan, 1948–1949, pp. 219–220). Admission exams were highly demanding, requiring sophisticated analytical reasoning. Baysani's examination included analyzing two incidents from *Hamasa*, converting selected poetry into prose, and, if necessary, performing similar exercises for an entire book (Ibn Khallikan, 1948–1949, p. 220). It is noteworthy that Baysani's father held a high-ranking position as the Qadi of Palestine, emphasizing the meritocratic nature of these examinations (Ibn Khallikan, 1948–1949, p. 224).

These observations suggest that the **medieval education system** was structured in two main tiers:

- **First tier (Talim):** Foundational education, comparable to contemporary secondary and undergraduate schooling. Graduates could serve as low-level officials, secretaries, hold religious positions, or work in various scientific disciplines.

- **Second tier (Suhba):** Advanced education, equivalent to modern master's and doctoral studies. Graduates of suhbha, considered highly qualified, could occupy top-level positions in state and religious institutions, including vizierates, judiciary, divan leadership, teaching, medicine, jurisprudence, librarianship, and diplomacy.

6. Academic Year Opening

The academic year in schools and madrasas was **formalized by the 11th century**, often marked by ceremonial events. This practice was partly motivated by ruling elites viewing such ceremonies as a symbol of prestige. Opening lectures were important not only for instructors but also for local qadis, judiciary officials, and scholars. Newly appointed teachers would deliver their **first lessons before large audiences**, often attended by representatives from all social strata (Makdisi, p. 235).

Scholars appointed to schools or madrasas could address **various topics or multiple issues within a single topic** during their inaugural lecture. Accordingly, the instructor had the authority to select the subject and deliver a lecture on it. Since the opening of the academic year was a ceremonial event, **various types of sweets were prepared in the courtyards of madrasas, mosques, and jami's**, which were then distributed to all educational institutions and charitable organizations in the city. The **number of attendees at the opening lecture** was simultaneously considered an indicator of the scholar's reputation and intellectual standing. A large audience signified the scholar's high scientific literacy and prestige, whereas a small audience suggested public indifference toward the instructor's expertise. If attendance was insufficient, it indicated that the teacher's professional activity might be ending; the

scholar could be reassigned, temporarily relieved of teaching, or granted additional time for self-improvement (Makdisi, p. 238).

Opening lectures also served as an **evaluation of instructors' skills**, teaching levels, approach to questions, and analytical abilities. The primary focus was to determine whether the scholar could express original ideas and introduce innovative approaches before the public. A hallmark of the educational system was the **critical engagement with texts**, emphasizing that teachers should not merely recite or propagate previous works (Makdisi, p. 247). In this system, students and their families effectively tested whether a scholar's knowledge was endorsed by the community. Considering that **all local scholars, jurists, state officials, and secretaries** attended these lectures, the evaluations were highly demanding. Some instructors attracted such attention that scholars and teachers from other regions also attended. The **most favorable periods for mass attendance** were during the Hajj season, suggesting that the academic year often began in months coinciding with Hajj (Keleş Mahmud Resep, 2016, 4(8), pp. 158–159).

Prominent scholars were sometimes **invited by administrators to teach at their madrasas**, and acceptance of such invitations could enhance the city's intellectual reputation. For example, in 1273, the vizier Parvana of the Anatolian Seljuk state invited the eminent Ilkhanid scholar Qutb al-Din Shirazi to the madrasa he had established in Kayseri, having witnessed his intellectual talent and moral stature in Sadr al-Din Qunawi's *Jami' al-Usul* lectures (Kaymaz N., Pervane Muinüddin Süleyman, 1970, p. 185).

This competition among madrasas, cities, and administrators meant that the arrival of a celebrated scholar could transform a city into a **major intellectual hub**, with far-reaching social, cultural, and economic implications. It could influence trade and pilgrimage routes, as caravans would redirect through the city. Ceremonial events provided both the instructor and the city's administration an opportunity to **promote their prestige**, and administrators often provided additional material and moral incentives to retain prominent scholars.

Medieval authors, particularly those writing autobiographies, often **planned travels** to witness the lectures of renowned scholars. If Ibn Maqkul, al-Samani, or Yaqut al-Hamawi visited Azerbaijan, their attendance reflected the influence of prominent instructors on their scholarly preparation. By the 11th century, there is evidence of increasing numbers of visiting scholars in Ganja, as reported by N. Aliyeva: "Some Arab-language authors traveled to the city, providing information about its mosque, library, educational institutions, hadith assemblies, and scholarly discussions" (N. Aliyeva, p. 31). Similar patterns can be observed in Tabriz, Shamakhi, Ardabil, and other cities.

7. Teachers and Students

In the medieval educational system, **hierarchies among teachers and students** varied according to their associated madrasas, schools, or kuttabs. Teacher rankings included:

- **Muid**
- **Mufid**
- **Mudarris or Darsiyam**

Student rankings included:

- **Talib-i 'Ulum (Sukhta, Softa)**
- **Danishmand**
- **Mulazim**

In addition to these ranks, both teachers and students could hold specific titles, such as **molla, 'allamah, qari, muhaddith, and faqih**. With the expansion of madrasa personnel and the improvement of the educational system, teacher rankings evolved. Each madrasa typically designated three instructors with ranks: **Ula (first), Saniyya (second), and Salisa (third)**.

As previously noted, **student education began around 14–15 years of age**. Children under this age were considered pupils attending basic schools. Students entering madrasa education at 14–15 typically attained a level of scholarly competence by 20–21, enabling them to debate, analyze topics independently, and lead student discussions (Anameriç Hakan, Rukancı Fatih, 2008, p. 40).

Educational Methodology

Education in madrasas relied primarily on a **deductive approach**, which was based on the teachings of scholars who had written works on specific subjects or expressed opinions on particular issues. This methodology involved **memorization (hifz), repetition, comprehension, discussion, and note-taking (daftar)**.

Memorization (Hifz) in Education

Memorization, or *hifz*, formed the foundation of the educational methodology. According to G. Makdisi, hifz "relied on the memorization of large amounts of material, its comprehension, and repeated review with intervals" (Makdisi, p. 241). Lessons in the Quran, lexicography, narration, jurisprudence (*fiqh*), and poetry were especially dependent on the student's memory. However, students with such exceptional memorization abilities were rare. For this reason, the scholar Shabi remarked, "If someone merely memorized what I have forgotten, they would be a scholar," highlighting the practical limits of memorization. Nonetheless, some students and scholars possessed extraordinary memory capacities; for instance, Makdisi reports that Khalaf al-Ahmar had memorized 40,000 couplets (Makdisi, p. 241).

Memorization was crucial in education. Al-Ghazali, after having his books looted during a journey, recalled having memorized all previously read works. Ziya al-Din Ibn al-Asir, who lived in the 12th–13th centuries, emphasized the importance of memorization, noting its necessity in particular contexts or times of need (Makdisi, p. 243).

Memory played a critical role in medieval education, especially in **jurisprudential rulings, hadith transmission**, and the dissemination of information in periods of limited written documentation. Linguist and historian Qazi Waki (d. 918) highlighted the importance of memorization in education:

"Students rise early in pursuit of knowledge,
This one day is immortalized in books,
I advance with enthusiasm and diligence,
The notebook is the heart, the ear a vessel" (Makdisi, p. 244).

Alongside memorization, **comprehension and discussion** were equally vital. These methods supported memorization by aiding retention of terms, words, and meanings. Discussion (*munazara*) was a primary technique, allowing students to interact with the instructor, who also evaluated students through questioning. On certain days, instructors held **public lectures**, during which students referenced memorized authorities to substantiate their arguments (Anameriç & Rukancı, 2008, p. 41).

Another essential tool in the educational methodology was **note-taking**. The *daftar*, a notebook, functioned as a repository of knowledge, assisting the reconstruction of memory. Note-taking was considered key to scholarly development (Makdisi, pp. 255–256). However, some scholars, such as Ibn al-Allaf (9th–10th century), expressed skepticism about relying on written knowledge, arguing in a lamentation:

"He entrusted knowledge to paper, and it was lost;Paper is a very poor place to preserve it" (Makdisi, p. 256).

While such criticisms existed, they do not diminish the fact that **millions of medieval literary works** were produced and preserved. A systematic approach to note-taking, called *fihrist*, provided concise summaries of sources and content. Al-Nadim's famous *Fihrist* exemplifies this methodology (En-Nedim Muhammad ibn Ishaq, 2017, p. 67).

8. Lessons and Textbooks

The establishment of the **Nizamiyya madrasa in 1067** as the de facto university of the Great Seljuks (1038–1157) marked a shift in education toward **transmitted (oral) sciences**. The emphasis on oral sciences aimed to reduce sectarian disputes in the Eastern Islamic world by channeling religious debates into educational institutions, leaving

scientific disagreements to scholars' judgment, and minimizing social unrest. Soon after, **rational sciences** were incorporated into madrasa curricula, broadening the academic foundation to include mathematics, medicine, astronomy, philosophy, rhetoric, arithmetic, geometry, lexicography, history, geography, grammar (*nahv*), and morphology (*sarf*) (Bilge Mustafa, 1984, pp. 41–43).

The Seljuks allowed each school of jurisprudence to develop its own curriculum and textbooks while also enabling graduates to serve in the state system. This educational reform helped **eliminate sectarian conflicts** that had fragmented the Eastern Islamic world during the 9th–10th centuries.

In the 11th–16th centuries, sufficient information exists regarding the **courses and textbooks** used in madrasas. In Azerbaijan, where Shafi'i, Hanafi, and Shia communities predominated, educational systems were adapted accordingly. Primary subjects included **Quran, Tafsir, Hadith, Fiqh, Usul al-Fiqh, Aqidah, Kalam, Rhetoric, Syntax and Morphology, Astronomy, Geometry, Arithmetic, and Philosophy**. Key textbooks included:

- Tafsirs: *Al-Kashshaf,* Qadi Bayzavi's Tafsir
- Sunni Hadith collections: *Kutubi Sitta*; Shia Hadith texts
- Fiqh: Abu Bakr al-Marginani, *Bidayat al-Mubtadi*
- Aqidah: Safar al-Hanafi, *Aqaid al-Tahawi*
- Usul al-Fiqh: Sadr al-Din Taftazani, *Talwih*
- Kalam: Nasir al-Din Tusi, *Tajrid al-Kalam*
- Rhetoric: Omar al-Abhari, *Isaqi*
- Astronomy: Muhammad al-Jaghmini al-Khwarazmi, *al-Mulakhkhas*
- Geometry: Shams al-Din Muhammad Samarqandi, *Ashkal al-Tasis*; Euclid, *Geometria*
- Arithmetic: Author unknown, *Risalat al-Bahaiyya*

Over time, both the **scope and academic depth** of subjects and textbooks expanded. During the Seljuk period, **Sufi studies** were incorporated into the curriculum. Works on Sufism by Shihab al-Din Umar Suhrawardi and 16th-century scholar Nematullah Nakhchivani, including mystical interpretations of the Quran, were also included among the textbooks.

9. Specialization and Curriculum in Madrasas

It should not be assumed that all madrasas offered identical courses or used the same textbooks. Similar to modern universities with multiple faculties and specialties, madrasas provided tailored curricula. Students in transmitted (oral) sciences were not taught natural sciences, and medical students did not study jurisprudence. For instance, the standard duration of study in medical madrasas was three years, during which students primarily studied the theoretical foundations of medicine.

In the **first year**, students studied:

- Hunayn ibn Ishaq, *al-Masail fi al-Tibb* and *Madhal fi al-Tibb*;
- Hippocrates, *Fusul al-Buqrāt* and *Ma 'ush-sha'ir*;
- Medical treatises of Nili Nishaburi.

These texts introduced students to the basics of medical science and shaped the identity of a practitioner.

In the **second year**, students studied:

- Al-Razi, *Kitab al-Tibb al-Mansuri*;
- Galen, *Sumeria Alexandrionorum* (16 articles) and *Tashrih-i Bozorg*;
- Sabit ibn Qurrah, *Zahira*;
- Abu Bakr Aswi, *Hidaya*;
- Ahmad Faraj, *Kifaya* or *Ahliya*;
- Sayyid Ismail ibn Hasan al-Jurjani, *Zahira-i Kharimshahi*;
- Sahli al-Masihi, *Sad Bab*.

In the **third year**, students studied:

- Al-Razi, *Kitab al-Khawi*;
- Ali ibn Abbas al-Majusi, *al-Kitab al-Malaki*;
- Ibn Sina, *al-Qanun fi al-Tibb* (Keykavus, Kabusname, 2003, pp. 178–179).

In addition to these, there were sixteen essential reference works frequently consulted by both students and physicians, including: *Kitab al-Firaq*, *Kitab al-Sina'a*, *Kitab ila Tusren fi al-Nabz*, *Kitab ila Aqlukan fi al-Ta'nni li Shifa'i-Amraz*, *Kitab al-Maqalat al-Khums fi al-Tashrih*, *Kitab al-Astukussat*, *Kitab al-Mizaj*, *Kitab al-Kuwa al-Tabiyya*, *Kitab al-Ilal wal-Amraz*, *Kitab Tuarrifu ilal al-Aza al-Batina*, *Kitab al-Nabz al-Kabir*, *Kitab al-Humeyyat*, *Kitab Ayyum al-Buhran*, *Kitab al-Buhran*, *Kitab Hilat al-Bar*, *Kitab Tadbir al-Asihha* (Kifti, 1903, p. 129).

The **practical phase of medical education** occurred in hospitals (*bimaristan*), where students applied theoretical knowledge and gained experience to qualify as physicians. During practical training, students acquired knowledge on patient psychology, hospital organization, hygiene, drug preparation, and the use of medicinal plants and minerals. A competent physician needed detailed knowledge of twelve categories of medicines, including syrups, jams, ointments, plasters, tablets, pastes, essences, decoctions, poultices, powders, opiates (panzahr), and pills (Mehmed, 2014, pp. 73–78).

From the Ilkhanid (1258–1359) and Timurid (1370–1507) periods, madrasas emphasized **astronomy, medicine, and mathematics** (Eshenkulova, 2001, pp. 99–148). The establishment of the world's largest observatory in Maragha during the Ilkhanid era demonstrates this commitment (Köprülü, 1942, pp. 208–227). Additionally, construction of the Shamb-i-Qazan and Rabi-Rashidi complexes in Tabriz during Qazan Khan's rule (1296–1304) further confirms this focus (Özgüdenli, 2003, I, pp. 105–126).

Orphanages and Education of Destitute Children

Destructive invasions and wars in the medieval period often caused humanitarian crises, including children orphaned by the loss of family heads. States took measures to care for these children, frequently entrusting them to **waqfs** or establishing orphanages. In medieval Azerbaijan, two state-supported orphanages are documented, both founded during the reign of Ilkhanid ruler Qazan Khan (1294/5–1304) within the Shamb-i-Qazan and Rabi-Rashidi complexes in Tabriz.

One orphanage within the Shamb-i-Qazan complex initially accommodated 100 children, later expanded to house street-found children. Annual expenses for care, clothing, food, and education were funded by the Shamb-i-Qazan waqf. Qazan Khan's decree also provided for children's festival allowances (*eydi*) and the salaries of caretakers. Children, beginning education around 4–5 years of age, were taught skills to secure employment later (Rashid al-Din, p. 212–213).

The Shamb-i-Qazan orphanage had a substantial financial foundation, with all expenses covered by revenues from Qazan Khan's lands (*incu*). A dedicated divan managed these resources, supervised by prominent Ilkhanid officials, including Kur Taymur and Taramtaza (Özgüdenli, p. 167). The orphanage continued to operate beyond Qazan Khan's reign, surviving into the Jalayirid period. Sheikh Uways (1356–1375) was honored in *Qazanname*, authored by Khaja Nur al-Din ibn Shams al-Din Muhammad al-Ajdari, for maintaining the institution.

The second orphanage, within the Rabi-Rashidi complex, officially housed ten orphans but served many more destitute children. Sources note residential quarters for officials, poor and indigent families (*dar al-masakin*), a kitchen, food storage, a mosque (*Masjid-i Jami-yi Shahristan*), market, mint, and garden. Similar to Shamb-i-Qazan, all expenses for care, clothing, food, education, and festival allowances were financed by the Rabi-Rashidi waqf (Özgüdenli, p. 176).

10. Scholarship System

The historical sources do not provide complete information on whether students in schools received a fixed monthly stipend. However, it is incorrect to generalize this assumption for all students, as the expenses of the madrasa system were primarily covered by **waqfs** (charitable endowments).

It is likely that students studying in schools and *kuttab* (elementary Quranic schools) had their expenses funded by waqfs. Nevertheless, it is incorrect to assume that the influence of waqfs extended to all settlements. In many villages and towns, educational expenses were covered through donations, gifts, and especially annual contributions from **zakat** and **khums** collections. During the medieval period (11th–16th centuries), despite occasional economic crises, 1 **dinar** per month was sufficient to cover a child's education. This is confirmed by records from Tabriz orphanage waqf documents (*Waqf-nama-yi Rabi-Rashidi*, 1350 AH, pp. 139, 163, 214).

In these records, 1 *Tabriz ra'ic-i dinar* weighed 3 **miskals** (12.96 g) of silver. Its purchasing power corresponded to 7.5 **mann** (6.2 kg) of meat, 36 **mann** (29.9 kg) of refined wheat, or 12 **mann** (9.9 kg) of chickpeas. In contemporary terms, the monthly stipend for a child would range between approximately **$30–33** (*Waqf-nama-yi Rabi-Rashidi*, 1350 AH, pp. 141–142, 165, 168, 230).

Children in orphanages also received stipends. In the 13th century, this stipend equaled one-third of a sheep's price; 15 months of stipend could purchase a cow. Additionally, daily allowances of 10 **mann** (8.3 kg) and annual 2,650 **mann** (3,041 kg) of wheat bread were allocated (*Waqf-nama-yi Rabi-Rashidi*, 1350 AH, pp. 135, 158). It is probable that these funds were provided to the child upon leaving the orphanage.

In madrasas, stipends were ten times higher. Abu Ja'far ibn Shirzad, who lived in the 10th century, reported receiving a monthly stipend of 10 dinars, while his elder brother received 20 dinars while studying at a divan school (*Makdisi*, p. 76). During the Seljuk and Ilkhanid periods, 10 dinars per month sufficed for a student's expenses, as evidenced by the salary of a low-level madrasa teacher (*mullah*) of the time (Najaf Akbar, 2010, p. 381).

Before the formal stipend system existed, students sometimes earned money through manuscript copying. For example, a student copied three copies of Ibn Sina's *Kitab al-Shifa* and received 100 dinars for each copy, using the total of 300 dinars to complete his education (Zakariya Qazvini, 1370, p. 287). Sübki, a medieval scholar and teacher, recounted a case in which a student, lacking money, was taken by his teacher to a merchant to borrow 50 dinars. During this episode, the student fell in love with the merchant's servant girl. Eventually, the student's father sent him 600 dinars, which covered the borrowed sum, the bride price, and possibly household expenses with his future wife (Sübki, 1323–1324, vol. III, p. 163).

This example illustrates that in the Seljuk period, a student could cover debts, education, and marital expenses with 600 dinars. In addition to monthly stipends, daily funds for bread and meat were allocated. During the Ilkhanid and Jalayirid periods, a student's monthly stipend in Tabriz ranged from 25 to 30 dinars (Özgüdenli, 2006, p. 231).

11. Teachers' Salaries

By the late 9th and early 10th centuries, the historian and jurist Abu Ja'far ibn Jarir al-Tabari reportedly earned a monthly salary of 10 dinars for teaching (Fayda Mustafa, 2010, vol. 39, p. 315). During the Seljuk and Ilkhanid periods, ordinary teachers without significant scholarly reputation earned similar amounts. During Sultan Tughrul

Bey's reign (1038–1063), Ali Tanukhi, a teacher in the madrasa, received 60 dinars per month (d. 1055). In the Ayyubid period, chief madrasa teachers (*mudarris*) received 30 dinars per month, while other teachers (*mullahs*) earned 10 dinars. During the Ilkhanid era, salaries in Tabriz madrasas ranged from 150 to 360 dinars, with some *mudarris* earning up to 500 dinars (*Waqif-nama*, p. 166).

In the Rabi-Rashidi complex, salaries of selected scholars and teachers were as follows (Özgüdenli, p. 217):

Position	Monthly Salary (dinars)
Instructor of Rational Sciences	500
Physician	300
Hadith Instructor	150
Librarian	150
Teacher	120
Surgeon	100
Ophthalmologist	100
Muid (Hadith commentator)	100
Atabek (teacher for orphans)	60
Medical Assistant	30
Library Assistant	30

12. Student Numbers in Madrasas and Classes

On average, a school had no fewer than 10 students, though the number of students in madrasas varied depending on the institution. For instance, the Nizamiyya madrasa had approximately 6,000 graduates (Najaf Akbar, p. 381).

Interest in the lectures of prominent scholars was consistently high. The medieval madrasa system did not have a class structure comparable to modern institutions. Teachers would sit at the center of the lecture room, with students and attendees arranged in a circular formation around them. For example, 300 students reportedly attended the lectures of the renowned scholar Juwayni daily, increasing to 400 near the end of his life. Not all attendees were students; some were fellow scholars (Subki, vol. III, pp. 252, 255, 259).

It is also recorded that students traveled from Andalusia (Spain) to attend the Maragha observatory, which at the time was considered the largest scientific center in the world. The Atabek and Qazi madrasas in Maragha attracted both scholars and students, supplemented by another madrasa built by Fazlullah Rashid al-Din, which accommodated students from various regions of the Islamic world (Kazimi, 2008, p. 13).

13. Libraries

Libraries with tens of thousands of volumes existed both independently and within madrasas or observatories. By the 9th century, a private library had been established in Hamadan, used by Abu Tamman, who noted that it belonged to Abu al-Wafa and included works such as *al-Hamasah* by Khatib Tabrizi, covering the works of 300 Arab poets (Kazimi, 2008, p. 13).

Yaqut al-Hamawi mentions the famous library in Ganja, Azerbaijan, which contained a rich collection of books in Arabic and Persian. These libraries were generally open to visitors, who could read, copy, or study the texts. Visiting

scholars received ink and pens, while resident scholars were salaried. Libraries also hosted scholarly debates and discussions (Aliyeva, p. 68). Similar libraries existed in Shamakhi, Tabriz, and other cities.

During the Seljuk period, Hamadan's *Tughruliyya* madrasa maintained a large library. According to Kazimi, the Seljuks and Arab caliphs built higher education institutions and mosques in Hamadan. Scholars working in these schools were highly respected, and the *Tughruliyya* madrasa was constructed with a substantial library (Kazimi, p. 17).

For the Maragha observatory, approximately 400,000 books were collected from Baghdad, Damascus, and al-Jazira (northern Iraq). Nasir al-Din Tusi personally traveled twice to Iraq and Baghdad to gather books (Köprülü, pp. 222–223).

During the Ilkhanid period, a dedicated library called *Bayt al-Kutub* was established within the Rabi-Rashidi complex, located near the administrators' residence and directly managed by the waqf officials. A librarian and a *munavil* oversaw its operations. Books could be borrowed for one month by depositing their value, or visitors could copy the texts on site. Many of Fazlullah Rashid al-Din's works were preserved in this library. The waqf records indicate that the library had a special catalog and books were sealed to prevent theft. The Rabi-Rashidi library reportedly contained 60,000 volumes (Richard, 1361, pp. 343–346; Özgüdenli, p. 231).

During the Seljuk era, Sultan Sanjar's vizier, Aziz al-Din Abu Bakr al-Zanjani, established the *Aziziya* library, which housed 12,000 volumes (Erünsal, 2003, vol. 27, p. 19). Large libraries continued to exist during the Kara-Koyunlu, Aq-Qoyunlu, and Safavid periods. According to Kazimi, rulers in the 14th–15th centuries established royal libraries, including the libraries of Jahanshah, Uzun Hasan, Sultan Khalil, and Sultan Yaqub. Other libraries in Tabriz included the Nasriya School and the Hamza Bey Aq-Qoyunlu School (Kazimi, p. 31).

During the reigns of Shah Ismail and Shah Tahmasib, the *Muzaffariyya* library operated, initially headed by the poet Ismail Kamal and later by Amir Fasih (Kazimi, p. 32). It is also recorded that the Sheikh Safi tomb complex in Ardabil had a library, which was later looted by the Russians (Özgüdenli, 2006, pp. 275–288).

14. Permissions and Diplomas

The term *ijazah*, literally meaning "permission," was used to denote a diploma or certificate of higher education. In the medieval education system, graduates of institutions received diplomas indicating their academic level, degree, and specialization. Diplomas typically included the student's name and *kunya* (patronymic), along with the names of their principal and secondary instructors.

Ijazahs emphasized the value of knowledge, often citing Qur'anic verses and Hadiths to illustrate the significance of learning. For example, many diplomas quoted Qur'an 2:31: *"Allah taught Adam all the names"*.

The general structure of an ijazah included:

- Praise of God;
- Praise of the Prophet Muhammad and his companions;
- Definition and value of knowledge;
- Significance of the ijazah;
- Names of students and teachers;
- List of studied books and learned disciplines;
- Scholarly lineage tracing back to Adam;
- Request for the student to remember the teachers and mention them in prayers (*wafa*);
- Recommendation for the graduate to teach;
- Signature, date, and seal.

15. The Educational Sphere of Medieval Azerbaijan: Traveling Students

From the 8th century onward, scholarly travel in the Muslim world created significant mobility across a vast geography, from Turkestan to Andalusia. Groups of knowledge seekers, sometimes forming caravans extending up

to 25 kilometers, included scholars, students, dervishes, and narrators. Numbering in the thousands or even tens of thousands, these individuals traveled from city to city, madrasa to madrasa, seeking books and teachers.

A central question in the intellectual world of this period was: *"Does knowledge reside in books, or in teachers?"* Interestingly, those devoted to the book whose first revealed verse was "Read!" concluded that teachers held the primary role. Contemporary scholars argued that since books cannot speak for themselves, human intermediaries—teachers—were essential to transmit knowledge, establishing the superiority of teachers. However, finding an accomplished scholar and learning directly from them was not the ultimate solution. Why was this the case?

By the 9th century, prominent urban centers distinguished themselves economically and politically while hosting diverse populations of different ethnicities and nationalities. The long *nisbahs* (attributive titles) attached to names—such as *al-Bardai*, *al-Nakhchivani*, *al-Arrani*, *al-Shirvani*, *al-Khorasani*, and *al-Bitlisi*—reflected these diverse origins. Many spent half their lives traveling for the pursuit of knowledge.

This article seeks to explore the motivations and structures underlying this phenomenon.

16. The Student

The term *student* derives from the Arabic word *talab* (seeking). From the 9th century onward, it became the general designation for knowledge seekers (*talib al-ilm*) in the Muslim East. Medieval Islamic pedagogy was fundamentally based on the dynamic interaction between teacher and student. Learning often required *rihla* (travel).

An illustrative example is the life of Khatib Tabrizi. Upon acquiring the three-volume work *Kitab al-Tazhib fi al-Lugha* by al-Azhari, Khatib consulted surrounding scholars to understand the intricacies of the language and concepts. To gain full mastery of his queries, he was advised to study with al-Abul-Ala, residing near Ma'arra in Aleppo. Due to financial constraints, Khatib could not afford to hire transport, so he packed his books, pen, and paper into a bag and traveled on foot to Ma'arra (Ay, 1998, p. 66).

Khatib Tabrizi (1028–1109) lived 81 years, and his dedication and perseverance in pursuit of knowledge earned him recognition as one of the greatest literary figures of his era. With numerous works on linguistics and grammar, he is considered the foremost literary scholar of the East (Nesirov, 2011, pp. 262–263). Medieval sources mention hundreds of scholars who, like Khatib, devoted their lives to learning.

The pursuit of knowledge was considered humanity's highest aspiration. By nature, humans develop through learning, and unlike other creatures, they possess both existential and societal needs. Human virtues are expressed through fulfilling these needs, and value is measured by cultivated manners and intellectual refinement. Islam opened the doors of knowledge, ethics, and education to all people. Prior to Islam, knowledge was often restricted to the elite; Prophet Muhammad democratized learning, establishing it as a common heritage, thereby dramatically stimulating intellectual activity.

17. Azerbaijan's Role in the Golden Age of the 9th Century

The 9th century is often regarded as the golden age of Islamic scholarship. With urban development in Muslim cities, scientific and literary networks expanded across the Islamic world. Azerbaijan played a significant role in this cultural flourishing. Cities such as Barda, Tabriz, Ganja, Ardabil, Maragha, Ani, Divin, Derbent, Shirvan, Nakhchivan, and Varsan not only participated actively in intellectual and literary activities but also produced hundreds of scholars and thinkers.

For example, Abu Sa'ad 'Abdulkarim ibn Muhammad al-Samani (1113–1167), a 12th-century scholar, recorded in his biographical work *Kitab al-Ansab* the names of 120 prominent Azerbaijani scholars of his era, reflecting the region's rich intellectual legacy (Aliyeva, 2010, pp. 91–133).

18. Classification of Knowledge

In light of these circumstances, Muslim scholars began to categorize knowledge into two main types:
a) **Imitative knowledge** (*taqlidi 'ilm*)
b) **Conservative knowledge** (*muhafizkari 'ilm*)

In the first category, the most accurate knowledge was attributed to the Prophet, and therefore, emulating him was considered the measure of correctness. Since the Prophet was regarded as the ultimate source of knowledge, his words and actions represented the highest standards for education. Consequently, his statements and practices were to be imitated faithfully.

In the second category, the knowledge acquired through imitation had to be preserved without alteration; otherwise, deviation from the correct path would be inevitable. Accordingly, the foundational activity of Muslim scholars in the pursuit of knowledge was the quest for the Prophet's teachings. Since direct physical contact with the Prophet was impossible, obtaining reliable reports (*akhbar*) and verifying their accuracy became the primary motivation for scholarly travel. Ata ibn Abi-Rabah (d. 733), the foremost teacher of the Hijaz legal school, defined knowledge for his students in these terms: what he called *'ilm* consisted of the *hadith* (reports concerning the Prophet), while what he termed *ra'y* consisted of the interpretations and explanations derived from these reports (Ibn Sad, 1909, V:345).

19. Scholarly Travel

Travel in the medieval period, as today, imposed substantial financial burdens. The pursuit of knowledge could double or even triple ordinary travel expenses, as students had to cover food, clothing, transportation, and the costs of books, writing materials, and animals for riding. Despite these challenges, medieval students were undeterred. They included children of wealthy families, those who sold inherited property to fund their education, individuals like Xatib Tabrizi who carried all his belongings on his back to travel on foot, and young adolescents like Sahl ibn Abdullah who set out on a journey upon encountering a question they could not answer. Similarly, Yahya ibn Yahya al-Lays traveled across Eastern lands at age 28 to study *al-Muwatta*, a branch of fiqh.

Not all aspiring students came from urban centers or attended prestigious madrasas. Al-Samani, while listing Azerbaijani scholars, mentions individuals such as *Ushnui*, *Barzandi*, *Zanjuni*, and *Sabehi*, whose places of origin ranged from villages to uncultivated regions, demonstrating that financial and geographical constraints did not prevent the pursuit of knowledge (Aliyeva, 2010:96, 115–116).

From the 9th century onward, traveling scholars adopted distinctive clothing styles, most notably garments with wide sleeves. These sleeves contained large pockets lined with fabric, which students used to carry books, writing tools, and notes (Houari, 2016:75, note 7).

Students traveled without restriction, following the teachers who could provide the knowledge they sought. For example, the renowned 12th-century jurist Taj al-Din Abu al-Hasan Ali, though born and raised in Ardabil, traveled extensively to study under Qutb al-Din Mahmud Shirazi and Shams al-Din ibn al-Mu'izz for hadith, Rukn al-Din al-Hadisi for language and fiqh, Nizam al-Din al-Tusi for rhetoric, Sayyid Burhan al-Din Ubaydullah for philosophy and logic, Ala al-Din Numan al-Kharazmi for khilaf, Kamal al-Din Hasan Isfarahi for arithmetic, geometry, and astronomy, Salah al-Din Mus for algebra, and Shaykh al-Islam Siraj al-Din Hamza for specific fiqh matters (Nesirov, 2011:119).

Similarly, Abu al-Abbas Ahmad ibn Muhammad of Duveyn (10th century), a prominent scholar of his time, traveled as a student as far as Egypt. Abu Ishaq Ibrahim ibn Ahmad, another notable scholar, visited cities across Iran, Iraq, the Hijaz, and Khorasan in pursuit of knowledge (Nesirov, 2011:171). In some cases, students studied at multiple madrasas within a single country. For instance, Kamal al-Din Masud from Shabran, a court physician under the Timurids, attended numerous madrasas in Herat such as Ikhlasiyya, Govharshad, and Qiyasiyya, eventually becoming a teacher himself (Nesirov, 2011:250).

20. Educational Costs and Student Life

The cost of scholarly travel varied depending on a student's financial resources, destinations, and the fields of knowledge pursued. Among eminent scholars, Abdullah ibn al-Mubarak (d. 797) reportedly spent 50,000 gold coins inherited from his father on education. Kharija ibn Musab, a student of Abu Hanifa, spent 100,000 silver coins on his studies (Houari, 2016:76).

Educational expenses included tuition, travel, accommodation, and other necessities. For example, a student who began primary studies in Barda and wished to specialize in fiqh would identify the best teacher in Baghdad and undertake the journey to study there. If dissatisfied with instruction or discovering a superior teacher elsewhere, the

student would relocate, often incurring significant costs. Ali ibn Asim (d. 816) spent 1,000 dinars traveling from Wasit to Kufa for his education (Houari, 2016:77).

For many students, financial hardship meant traveling on foot. Abu Khatef al-Razi (d. 890) recounted:

"My first journey lasted seven years. I walked over 1,000 farsakhs. From Bahrain, I reached Egypt, then on foot to Syria. From Ramallah to Sham, from Sham to Antioch, from Antioch to Tarsus. Returning to Homs, I took the road to Raqqa, then a boat to Iraq. I had not yet turned twenty. In Basra, I stayed for eight months in 829. To feed myself, I began selling my garments. With nothing left, I continued with my companion to seek a teacher... Only water remained, yet we persisted in study... At day's end, I was so weak from hunger that I could barely stand" (al-Razi, I:363–364).

Hunger was perhaps the greatest trial. Some students sold their possessions, including clothing, to continue their studies. The renowned hadith scholar al-Bukhari nearly died of starvation in his lodging after selling everything, and Ahmad ibn Hanbal recalled being unable to travel to Rey for education due to a lack of 50 dirhams (Houari, 2016:81). Similarly, al-Zahabi recounts a student in Egypt who, for seven months of study, never tasted warm food and endured extreme deprivation, illustrating the harsh realities of medieval scholarship (Zahabi, XIII:265).

Eye disease was also common due to late-night study, as noted by Khawari Tuati: "Eye illnesses were a shared affliction of medieval scholars" (Houari, 2016:85). Dissatisfaction with teachers was frequent, and students sometimes criticized instruction for being too brief or limited. In *Maqamat*, Hamadani recounts a student describing the hardships endured in pursuit of knowledge:"– How did you reach knowledge? – I began searching and realized it was difficult. To attain it, I slept on the ground, used a stone as a pillow, stayed awake at night, and traveled continuously" (Hamadani, 1957:109).

21. The Azerbaijani Educational Sphere in the Medieval Period

These accounts demonstrate the vast educational network of medieval Azerbaijan, which encompassed the broader Eastern Islamic world. From the 8th century, and peaking in the 9th century, this region cultivated a class of scholars known as *adibs*, whose literacy and expertise permeated all aspects of life, including trade.

The Adibs *Class*

Professional Category	Practitioners / Enthusiasts
Envoys	Astrologers
Entertainers	Printers / Copyists
Divan Secretaries	Calligraphers
Court Preachers	Physicians
Court Poets	Jurists / Scholars
Viziers	Merchants
Official Historians	Archivists / Record Keepers
Tutors	Teachers

Source: Makdisi, G. (2009). Human Sciences in the Classical Islamic Era and Christian West, translated by Hasan Tuncay Besoglu, Istanbul: Klasik Yayınları, p. 280.

The integration of scholarly foundations into society led to the emergence of the *udeba*, a new societal model shaped by knowledge and cultural refinement. From the 10th century onward, Azerbaijani and wider Muslim societies

developed guilds, fraternities, and artisan associations under names such as *sinaat al-adab* and *khirfat al-adab*, reflecting the influence of exemplary *adib* figures (Makdisi, 2009:280).

The link between travel and knowledge fostered the development of new scientific disciplines. Muslim geography and historical sciences (*akhbar*) emerged as direct outcomes of scholarly journeys. The *rihla* (travel) literature became a primary source for geographic knowledge, with numerous works composed in this period. Observation-based scholarship, exemplified by al-Jahiz (d. 868), contributed to the recognition of empirical observation as a means of acquiring positive knowledge (Houari, 2016:98).

The pedagogical approach of travel, observation, and compilation encouraged scholars to disseminate their accumulated knowledge. Frederick S. Starr describes this process in *Lost Enlightenment*:

"The concept of a traveling scholar took deep root in medieval Europe, yet scholars were generally expected to remain in their hometowns or monastic institutions. In Asia, the situation was different. Following Greek philosophers after 300 BCE, the influx of Indian scholars, Jewish astrologers, Manichean sages, and Nestorian monks prompted reciprocal journeys. Centuries before Caliph al-Ma'mun established his library and research center, physical mobility, underpinned by idealism and opportunism, was integral to the life and thought of Central Asian peoples" (Starr, 2017:189).

By the 9th century, Azerbaijan's central location within a vast educational network positioned it as a bridge of knowledge. With the rise of the caliphate system, the region became a focal point for scholarly activity from the 11th century onward. From the 12th century, cities such as Tabriz, Nakhchivan, Ganja, and Shamakhi emerged as cultural and intellectual centers, laying the groundwork for Azerbaijan's continued responsiveness to modern scientific and cultural influences relative

22. Conclusion

In the medieval period, the Azerbaijani education system functioned as an integral part of a broad socio-cultural and commercial network. As examined in the preceding sections, each aspect of education was closely linked to economic and social spheres. The education system stimulated the development of various trades, including book production, binding, leatherworking, ink and inkwell manufacturing, pen-making, and paper trade. Additionally, the emergence and growth of crafts such as bookbinding, printing, calligraphy, and pen-making were closely tied to educational practices and standards.

Moreover, medieval Azerbaijani education was not limited to local contexts but formed a vital component of an extensive educational network spanning a wide geographic area. From the 11th to the 17th centuries, Azerbaijan served as a central hub within this system, playing a key role in shaping scholarly, cultural, and intellectual life in the region. The historical interplay between education, craftsmanship, commerce, and social development highlights the profound and multifaceted impact of education on medieval Azerbaijani society.

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24. **Conflict of Interest.** The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. All opinions expressed in this work are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of any affiliated institutions.

Endnotes

1. *Kitab al-Zahra*, or *The Book of Flowers*, is a type of poetry anthology. Muhammad ibn Dawud compiled the selected poems in prose form.

2. This work, together with *Mushkat al-Musahib*, was published in Russian in Saint Petersburg in 1898–1899.

3. Individuals participating in discussions at madrasas, at the level of the instructors' assistants, were given a specific title. In some madrasas, it was also used for those supervising a specific class without having the full authority to teach. A *Muid* acted as an intermediary between the instructor and the student. This role is roughly equivalent to a modern-day "assistant."

4. Generally used starting in the 15th–16th centuries, this term referred to teachers ranked one level above a *Muid* and one level below a *Mudarris*, equivalent today to an "associate professor." *Mufids* analyzed and explained lessons at madrasas that the instructor had taught but that students had not fully mastered.

5. *Mudarris* or *Dersiam* referred to a teacher with the full right to give lessons at a madrasa. *Mudarris* were fully knowledgeable scholars, holding the highest academic rank within the education system.

6. *Softa* was a term used among the public for madrasa students. According to madrasa teachers, children passionately pursuing knowledge were mockingly referred to as "suxtə" by the people, which later evolved into *softa*.

7. *Danishmand* is an adjective for individuals who have completed madrasa education. Derived from Persian, the term spread rapidly after the Ilkhanid period. Students called *danishmand* were considered "knowledgeable" or "scholars."

8. A student who completed madrasa education and received *ijazah* (diploma) was given a specific title.

9. For information on the religious composition of the people living in Azerbaijan during the Seljuk period, see: Nəcəf, *Aran Atabəyləri*, pp. 287–294.

10. This work is very important as the first book covering all fields of logic taught in madrasas. Due to its original approaches to topics and events, it attracted attention in Europe and was even translated into Latin at an early date.

11. For extensive information on lessons and textbooks, see: İzgi, C. (1997). *Osmanlı Medreselerinde İlim II.* Istanbul: İz Yayınları.

12. During this period, children being abandoned in the streets of Tabriz is confirmed by Rashid al-Din: "*afil ki, bərāh mi-azdāzəd, işān rā bərgirənd.*" See: Raşideddin Fadlullah-i Hemedani, *Tarikh-i-Mubarak-i-Ghazani* (transl. & ed. K. Jahn, London, 1940), p. 213.

13. *Inju*—during the Ilkhanid period, a special property (land, estate, etc.) allocated to the ruler and the ruler's family. See: Özgedenli, O. G., *İncu*, in *DİA* (Diyanet İşleri Bakanlığı İslam Ansiklopedisi), Vol. XXII, p. 281.

14. For more on this work, see: Browne, E. G., *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Oriental Manuscripts Belonging to the Late E.G. Browne* (ed. R. A. Nicholson, Cambridge, 1932), pp. 231–236.

15. According to Özgedenli, a child leaving an orphanage had to master a trade. See: *Two Orphanages in Tabriz*, p. 178.

16. Unfortunately, only *ijazah* (diploma) documents from the late Ottoman period are available. One such document is preserved at the Manisa Provincial Library, Republic of Turkey, No: 1004-8b.

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