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From the School of Naser al-Haqq to the Nizamiyya of Amol: Schools of Amol in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries CE

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ABSTRACT

The rise of the Alid dynasty in Tabaristan influenced the scientific and religious structure of the region not only politically and socially, but also culturally. Before religious schools were established in Khurasan during the first half of the tenth century CE, Naser al-Haqq, the leader of the Alids, founded a school in Amol in the late ninth century CE, where he taught Islamic sciences and Zaydi jurisprudence. Following this initiative, centers of religious learning expanded throughout Tabaristan and laid the groundwork for the development of Shiʿi studies and education in Iran. The present study, conducted using a descriptive-analytical method and based on library research, examines the process of establishment and development of educational centers in Amol during the tenth and eleventh centuries CE. The findings indicate that the Zaydi Alids established the Amol center of religious learning with the aim of consolidating the foundations of the political and social order in Tabaristan and preventing the influence of Sunni denominations and Ismaʿilism. Subsequently, however, this institution contributed to the development of the educational system and scientific and cultural institutions in Tabaristan. This process culminated in the establishment of the Nizamiyya of Amol and the growing interest of scholars, through which the hadith scholarly tradition of Tabaristan reached its zenith in the eleventh century CE.

Keywords: *schools, Amol, Naser al-Haqq, Shiʿism, centers of religious learning*

Introduction

The city of Amol, regarded as the "Umm al-Qura" of Islamic-era Tabaristan, was in fact an ancient, prosperous, and well-developed city whose geographical position and long history of settlement provided favorable conditions for growth and advancement. (1, 2) Works concerning historical geography, particularly texts dating from the tenth and eleventh centuries CE, refer to the prestige and significance of Amol. *Hudud al-ʿAlam* states: "Amol is a great city and the capital of Tabaristan and ... the seat of the kings of Tabaristan; it is a place of merchants and possesses great wealth, and within it there are many scholars in every branch of knowledge...." (3) Likewise, *Ahsan al-Taqasim* describes it as a city that stood among other cities like the pupil of the eye, where knowledge was abundant and which was never devoid of imams, disputants, litterateurs, and jurists. (3) Such descriptions demonstrate that during the flourishing period of Islamic civilization, particularly in the tenth and eleventh centuries CE, Amol was a center

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in which prominent jurists, litterateurs, hadith scholars, Qurʾanic exegetes, and other learned figures emerged and were active, naturally within the scholarly and educational institutions of this cultural center.

A noteworthy point is that, with the arrival of the Alids in Tabaristan during the ninth century CE, prominent figures from among Zaydi scholars and learned Alid sayyids became active in the region. Because their activities were geographically dispersed and often conducted in remote areas, their names and activities are largely absent from historical sources. Gradually, however, a number of these scholars, particularly those who possessed expertise in hadith studies, moved toward urban centers in order to guide local populations and educate students. It was perhaps for this reason that the establishment of a religious school in Amol by the Alid rulers created an opportunity to bring Shiʿi hadith scholars and learned men together in a concentrated scholarly setting.

Naser al-Haqq and the Establishment of the First School

One of the prominent figures in the history of education in Iran and the Islamic world was Hasan ibn Ali ibn Hasan ibn Ali ibn Umar ibn Ali al-Sajjad, known as Naser al-Haqq and Naser al-Kabir (845–917 CE), who occupied a distinguished position among the Alids of Tabaristan because of his scholarly and cultural activities. Following the killing of al-Daʿi al-Saghir and the establishment of Tahirid control over Tabaristan, he launched an uprising with the assistance of the people of Gilan and Daylam. In 903 CE, he attempted to seize the city of Amol but was unsuccessful. (4) Consequently, he returned to Daylam, where he spent thirteen years propagating Shiʿi teachings and guiding the population. Ultimately, in 913 CE, he succeeded in restoring Alid rule over Tabaristan.

Most authors have written about Naser al-Kabir's scholarly and moral standing. Ibn Isfandiyar, for example, writes: "... his excellence, knowledge, asceticism, piety, and the signs of his miraculous virtues remain evident in Gilan and Daylam; the people of Gilan and Daylam adhere to his school and path, and in Amol there are his shrine, school, library, and endowed properties, all flourishing and maintained; his grave is a blessed pilgrimage site, and attendants reside beside his tomb...." (5) Awliya Allah Amoli likewise describes him as "proficient in all sciences, possessed of independent judgment, and the author of numerous works." (4) Another historical account states that people from different parts of the world came to him in order to benefit from his knowledge. (5) It is therefore evident that Naser al-Haqq possessed, above all, a distinguished educational and scholarly status.

In addition to restoring Alid rule in Tabaristan, Naser al-Haqq became renowned for training learned disciples and for providing architectural and cultural services. During his residence in Gilan and Daylam, he trained many students in the Zaydi intellectual tradition, including Ibn Mahdi Mamatiri, Abu al-ʿAla al-Sarawi, and several other Mazandarani hadith scholars and jurists. Through the propagation of religious teachings among the general population, he also contributed to the institutionalization of Islamic customs and traditions among the people of Tabaristan. Furthermore, he established mosques, libraries, endowments, and other institutions. (6) Accordingly, what made Naser al-Haqq's name enduring was his foundation of a scholarly and jurisprudential movement, his pioneering role in the establishment of scholarly centers, and his construction of schools and mosques.

It should be noted that the first organized educational institutions, namely schools, were established during the ninth century CE. Some researchers have regarded the school of Bust as the earliest example of such institutions. (7) This conclusion is based primarily on Yaqut al-Hamawi's account of Abu Hatim Muhammad ibn Hibban al-Busti (d. 965 CE), who converted his house in Bust into a school, established a library within it, endowed his books to the institution, and allocated stipends for its students. (8) In addition, a school had been founded in Nishapur by Abu al-Hasan Muhammad ibn Shuʿayb al-Bayhaqi (d. 936 CE), the Shafiʿi mufti. (1) It has been regarded as one of the

oldest religious schools in Islamic Iran. Nevertheless, it may be argued that the school established by Naser al-Haqq al-Alawi in Amol can be considered the oldest well-organized and flourishing school and educational institution of its kind, after which dozens of schools were established in cities of Khurasan such as Nishapur and Bayhaq and subsequently in other regions. (9)

In principle, it should be noted that because of the particular geography of Tabaristan, Gilan, and Daylam, which delayed the penetration of Islam and Islamic religious culture into these regions by several decades, no major transformation occurred in the cultural and social fabric of these areas until the arrival and growing influence of the Alid sayyids from the early ninth century CE onward. With the establishment of Alid rule, however, the teaching of religious sciences began to take shape through the formation of scholarly circles in congregational mosques and governmental residences. (10)

During the period of Zaydi leadership, Amol, as the political capital, became the principal center for the gathering of Zaydi scholars and jurists. Naser al-Haqq, himself one of the leading jurists and theologians of the period, organized teaching sessions in the mosques of Amol and thereby created the conditions for the consolidation of Zaydi jurisprudence and theology. These instructional assemblies, which attracted students from distant regions, formed the initial nucleus of the religious scholarly center of Tabaristan. (11)

It is noteworthy that education during this period was not limited to jurisprudence. Because of the theological and political nature of the Alid movement, theological studies (*ʿilm al-kalam*) and Qurʾanic exegesis also occupied a prominent place in teaching circles. By encouraging scholars to write and teach, the Alids sought to establish an independent educational system in opposition to earlier religious structures that had largely been influenced by Shafiʿi and Hanafi jurisprudence. Thus, during the Alid period, the mosques of Tabaristan functioned not merely as places of worship but also as dynamic centers for the transmission of knowledge, the training of students, and the dissemination of the intellectual foundations of Zaydi Shiʿism. These institutions subsequently provided the foundations for the more organized religious schools established in later centuries. This transformation resulted in the emergence of a stable and dynamic educational system for training religious scholars and missionaries, a development pursued by the Alids of Tabaristan with the aim of disseminating the teachings of the Ahl al-Bayt and consolidating Shiʿi rule in Tabaristan.

Naser al-Kabir's decision in the final years of his life to relinquish governmental authority and establish a religious school in Amol was consistent with the mission that the Zaydi sayyids regarded themselves as having toward the guidance and education of the inhabitants of Tabaristan. Naser al-Haqq, who firmly believed in broad public education, therefore organized hadith dictation sessions in Amol and participated in debates and scholarly discussions with scholars belonging to other religious schools. (7)

The School-Building Movement

Naser al-Haqq's initiative prepared the ground for the establishment and development of schools, educational centers, and scholarly circles in Amol and subsequently in other cities of Tabaristan. (12) Amol was among the most remarkable Iranian cities of its time in terms of magnificence, prosperity, and scientific, cultural, and economic flourishing. In addition to the schools established by the Alid rulers of Tabaristan, including Naser al-Haqq and al-Daʿi al-Saghir, other educational institutions, centers, and schools emerged in the city, where scholars, learned men, and students of Islamic and religious sciences were engaged in teaching and learning. Nevertheless, because

of the extensive influence of the sayyids and Alids throughout the cities of Tabaristan, Shiʿi schools and institutions enjoyed greater prosperity.

Historical reports indicate that Shiʿi and Zaydi hadith scholars held teaching sessions in several cities, including Amol. Such activities appear to have possessed greater organization and prestige particularly in Amol and at the Nasiriyya School, the teaching institution associated with Naser al-Kabir. According to the limited surviving evidence, Naser al-Kabir's instructional sessions were organized in both public and private forms: hadith dictation assemblies were open to the general public, while private sessions devoted to theology were attended by scholars and advanced students. Consequently, large numbers of seekers of knowledge traveled to Amol. (11) It was therefore not without reason that it was claimed that the city of Amol alone contained more than seventy religious schools, a claim indicating the significance and scale of religious education in the region. (5)

The Nasiriyya School of Amol enjoyed such prestige and popularity that it continued to function for many years after Naser al-Haqq's death. Ibn Isfandiyar refers to its flourishing condition during his own lifetime. (5) His account of the punishment of an intoxicated man by the jurists of the Nasiriyya School demonstrates that a considerable body of scholars was present at the institution. (5) Benefiting from a library, prosperous endowments, and the scholarly, jurisprudential, ethical, and doctrinal reputation of Naser al-Utrush, the school attracted numerous students of Islamic sciences from different parts of the Islamic world to Amol so that they could benefit from his knowledge of jurisprudence, hadith, intellectual inquiry, poetry, and literature. (4, 5)

In addition, other scholars of hadith and theology in Amol established instructional assemblies and scholarly circles for debate and intellectual exchange. These included the educational circle of Abu al-Abbas al-Hasani or Abu al-Husayn al-Haruni, Abu al-Qasim al-Busti, as well as small rural religious schools established by Naser al-Haqq's disciples and Zaydi hadith scholars. (11)

Among the most prominent hadith scholars associated with the jurisprudential school of Amol were Abu al-Abbas al-Hasani, a tenth-century jurist of Amol; Ali ibn Mahdi Mamatiri (d. 970 CE), author of *Nuzhat al-Absar wa Mahasin al-Athar*; Abu al-Husayn al-Haruni (944–1021 CE), a jurist and hadith scholar who also served as the *naqib* of the Alids of Tabaristan; Abu Talib al-Haruni (951–1033 CE), a Zaydi theologian and jurist; Abu al-Qasim al-Busti (d. 1029 CE), a hadith scholar and author of *al-Maratib*, a work on the virtues of the Ahl al-Bayt; Abu al-Husayn al-Tabari, a hadith scholar and author of the theological treatise *al-Munir*; and several other prominent authorities in jurisprudence, hadith, and theology. One of the particularly significant aspects of the flourishing hadith tradition in Tabaristan was therefore the production of several works on Zaydi jurisprudence by Tabari hadith scholars and jurists, some of which have survived to the present day. These include *al-Amali* of Naser al-Kabir, *al-Masabih* of al-Hasani, *al-Nubuwwat* and *al-Amali al-Sughra* of al-Haruni, *al-Maratib* of al-Busti, *Taysir al-Matalib* and *al-Ifada* of Abu Talib al-Haruni, and several other jurisprudential, theological, and hadith works.

Educational institutions and schools belonging to other religious schools also prospered. Particularly from the middle of the tenth century CE onward, as the political authority of the Alid sayyids weakened, educational circles associated with other religious traditions, including the Shafiʿi and Ismaʿili schools, increasingly flourished. The emergence of major Sunni scholars in Amol testifies to the city's continuing scholarly and educational vitality. One example was Abu al-Tayyib Tahir ibn Abd Allah ibn Umar al-Tabari (959–1058 CE), a distinguished Shafiʿi jurist and scholar from Amol. (13, 14) He began his studies in the schools of Amol under Abu Ali al-Zajjaji, a pupil of the Shafiʿi jurist Ibn al-Qass al-Tabari (d. 946 CE), and subsequently traveled to other regions to complete his education. (14)

The presence and emergence of distinguished Shafiʿi scholars such as Ibn al-Qass al-Tabari, Abu al-Tayyib al-Tabari, Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn al-Hasan ibn Furak, Abu al-Mahasin al-Ruyani, and others demonstrate the prosperity and significance of scholarly and educational institutions belonging to Sunni schools, particularly the Shafiʿi school, in Amol. These scholars taught and trained students in mosques, schools, and other scholarly and educational institutions throughout the city.

The Establishment of the Nizamiyya of Amol

There is no doubt that one of the most significant achievements of Khwaja Nizam al-Mulk al-Tusi (1018–1092 CE), the capable vizier of the Seljuk sultans, was the establishment of scholarly and educational institutions that became known after him as the Nizamiyya schools. In pursuit of the consolidation of Sunni orthodoxy and the integration of religious law with political authority, and because of his attachment to the Shafiʿi school, Nizam al-Mulk sought to establish schools in major cities of the Seljuk Empire and to allocate endowed revenues to them in order to strengthen the influence of Sunni Islam. (7) In establishing the Nizamiyya schools, Nizam al-Mulk pursued not only religious, doctrinal, and scholarly objectives but also political aims. Following the precedent of his predecessor Amid al-Mulk al-Kunduri, vizier of Tughril Beg, who ruled from 1038 to 1063 CE, he supported and promoted the four Sunni schools and treated Shiʿis as *Rafidis*. Such policies, however, contributed to an atmosphere of sectarian intolerance and hostility among Islamic religious groups.

Accordingly, he established schools in eleven major cities of the extensive Seljuk realm: Nishapur, Baghdad, Isfahan, Basra, Balkh, Jazirat Ibn Umar, Khargird of Khaf, Merv, Mosul, Herat, and Amol in Tabaristan. (15) These schools occupied a highly distinguished position in scholarly and jurisprudential terms because the leading teachers of the period taught and trained students in them. (15)

Precise and comprehensive information concerning the date of establishment of the Nizamiyya of Amol is unavailable. More specifically, except for the Nizamiyyas of Nishapur and Baghdad, whose dates of foundation are known, there is little reliable information concerning the establishment dates of the other schools. What can be established is that Khwaja Nizam al-Mulk al-Tusi undertook the establishment of these schools during the first decade of his vizierate, namely during the reign of Alp Arslan from 1063 to 1072 CE. (16)

Considering the earlier presence of the Alids in Tabaristan and Nizam al-Mulk's hostility toward Shiʿis, (17) the construction of a Nizamiyya school in Amol or elsewhere in Tabaristan may at first appear inconsistent. It should be noted, however, that Ismaʿili missionary activity in mountainous and difficult-to-access regions, particularly throughout the Alborz range, compelled the Seljuk state to devise measures to prevent the cultural and missionary expansion of the Ismaʿili *Rafidis*. It was within this context that the Nizamiyya of Amol was established. The principal conditions and factors that contributed to its establishment may therefore be summarized as follows:

1. The presence of distinguished Shafiʿi scholars and jurists in Amol, such as Abu al-Mahasin al-Ruyani al-Tabari, known as "the Second al-Shafiʿi."
2. Amol's geographical proximity to centers of Nizari Ismaʿili missionary activity.
3. The strengthening, dissemination, and expansion of the Shafiʿi school, the defense of Shafiʿi jurisprudence against other schools, including the Hanafi school, and the promotion of Ashʿari theological thought.
4. Opposition to and confrontation with the extensive and organized missionary activities of Nizari Ismaʿili propagandists and *daʿis*.
5. The training of educated, learned, committed, and strongly Shafiʿi-oriented individuals.

6. The attention of the Seljuk sultans to the development and expansion of religious sciences and Islamic learning.
7. The scholarly background of Amol and the pre-existing presence of schools and other scholarly and educational institutions in the city.

On this basis, Khwaja Nizam al-Mulk sought to confront the ideas of rival religious movements, particularly Nizari Ismaʿilism, through the establishment of educational and scholarly institutions grounded in Shafiʿi jurisprudence and Ashʿari theology. In this endeavor he enjoyed the support of the Seljuk sultans, rulers who exerted considerable effort "in reviving the symbols of religion, strengthening the foundations of Islam, constructing mosques, establishing schools, hospices, bridges, stipends, charitable provisions, and endowments for scholars, sayyids, ascetics, and the righteous...." (18)

Abu al-Mahasin al-Ruyani, Professor at the Nizamiyya of Amol

Because confrontation with Ismaʿilism in regions neighboring Ismaʿili strongholds, including Tabaristan, was of vital importance to the Seljuk government and to Khwaja Nizam al-Mulk personally, concern over the movement of Ismaʿili *daʿis* into mountainous regions and dense forests and their potential alignment with Zaydi Shiʿis encouraged the authorities to establish cultural and missionary institutions. These institutions were intended to train elites loyal to the political order and the Sunni caliphate and to neutralize Ismaʿili missionary activity. Missionaries such as Abu Hatim al-Razi had succeeded to some extent in spreading Ismaʿilism in Tabaristan. (19) Particularly after Hasan-i Sabbah's seizure of Alamut, the danger of the penetration of Ismaʿili beliefs into these regions increased and could potentially contribute to the separation of Tabaristan from the Seljuk Empire. Within this context, and with Nizam al-Mulk's encouragement, Imam Abu al-Mahasin al-Ruyani assumed a teaching chair at the Nizamiyya of Amol.

Abd al-Wahid Ismaʿil ibn Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Ruyani al-Tabari, titled Fakhr al-Islam and known as "the Second al-Shafiʿi," was a distinguished Shafiʿi jurist, chief judge, and renowned scholar. He was born in Amol in January 1025 CE. (20) He received his elementary education in Amol from his father, grandfather, and the city's Shafiʿi scholars, and subsequently traveled to other cities, including Sari, Nishapur, Merv, Bukhara, Ghazna, and even Mayyafariqin in Diyar Bakr, in order to complete his studies and expand his knowledge. He later returned to Amol, where he devoted himself to training students and seekers of knowledge and to writing books. For a considerable period, he held a teaching position at the Nizamiyya. Among his many students was Abu al-Fawaris Hibat Allah ibn Saʿd al-Tabari (d. 1152 CE), a memorizer of the Qurʾan and a scholar renowned for frequent recitation and remembrance, who taught at the Nizamiyya of Amol after al-Ruyani. (21)

Abu al-Mahasin was an outstanding jurist. He was regarded as an exceptional scholar of his age and, in addition to his religious and jurisprudential knowledge, was considered among the leading authorities in jurisprudence and legal theory. He enjoyed immense prestige and elevated social standing among the people of Tabaristan and therefore held judicial office in the region. Because of his scholarly and jurisprudential abilities and the breadth of his learning, Khwaja Nizam al-Mulk held him in great esteem. (14) A school was constructed for him in Amol, and students of religious sciences gathered around him from different regions to benefit from his knowledge and scholarship.

It has also been claimed that Abu al-Mahasin had previously possessed his own school, where he received and honored students of knowledge. (22) Apparently, after his growing public recognition, and upon Nizam al-Mulk's recommendation, he transferred his educational activities to the Nizamiyya of Amol. Through al-Ruyani's efforts,

the Nizamiyya became one of the principal centers of scholarship and learning in Tabaristan, attracting large numbers of students.

As an institution of higher education, the Nizamiyya of Amol employed personnel who may broadly be divided into academic and administrative groups. Revenues from the school's endowments were used to pay salaries and stipends to administrators, endowment inspectors and scribes, gatekeepers, school servants, deputies and teaching assistants, preachers, religious leaders and muftis, librarians, and students. (15)

Al-Ruyani himself occupied a distinguished position in Shafiʿi jurisprudence and became widely known as "the Shafiʿi of his age" and "the Second al-Shafiʿi." He is reported to have stated that if all books of Shafiʿi jurisprudence were burned or destroyed, he could dictate them again from memory. In addition to training students, he authored works such as *Bahr al-Madhhab* on Shafiʿi jurisprudence, *Jamʿ al-Jawamiʿ*, *Hilyat al-Muʾmin*, *al-Shafi*, *al-Kafi*, and *Takmilat al-ʿAda fi Takmilat al-ʿIbadat*. (23) Al-Ruyani's scholarly reputation and status were so considerable that some Shiʿi authors believed that he was inwardly a Shiʿi who practiced *taqiyya*. (24) Al-Ruyani was among the first jurists to issue a legal opinion declaring the Batini and Nizari groups heretical and irreligious. (2, 24)

Ultimately, this eminent scholar and distinguished professor of the Nizamiyya of Amol was assassinated on a Friday in August 1108 CE in the congregational mosque of Amol, while engaged in teaching and scholarly discussion, by one of the Ismaʿili *fidaʾis*. (13, 14, 20, 22) Apparently, the Nizari Ismaʿilis had requested a legal opinion from Abu al-Mahasin al-Ruyani, as they had from other major scholarly and jurisprudential figures of the period such as Imam al-Ghazali and al-Juwayni. Because al-Ruyani became aware of the malicious intent of the person who delivered the letter and of his affiliation with the Nizaris, and because he had actively opposed the Nizari Ismaʿilis in his speeches, statements, and writings and had even issued a legal opinion declaring them heretical and irreligious, the Nizaris targeted him and "martyred that blessed imam with knife blows in the enclosure of the congregational mosque of Amol, where the minaret stands." (5)

Nevertheless, the prestige of the Nizamiyya of Amol remained sufficiently strong that, according to Ibn Isfandiyar, the educational institution continued to function for approximately a century after al-Ruyani's death, with teaching circles and scholarly debates still being held there. Ibn Isfandiyar's statement that "Khwaja Nizam al-Mulk ordered that a school be built for him in Amol, and it still remains and is flourishing" (5) indicates that the Nizamiyya of Amol remained active into the opening decades of the thirteenth century CE.

In any case, after al-Ruyani's death, his descendant Abu al-Fawaris Hibat Allah (d. 1152 CE) continued teaching at the Nizamiyya of Amol. (15) During the period extending approximately from the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries CE, however, the educational activities, vitality, and development of religious schools in Amol and elsewhere in Tabaristan experienced stagnation and decline for several reasons. With the increasing influence of Twelver Shiʿism in Tabaristan, for example, Amol's religious schools gradually shifted from a Zaydi orientation toward Imami jurisprudence. Likewise, the emergence of philosophical and mystical schools contributed to the intermingling of jurisprudence with philosophy and mysticism, as was common among Shiʿi scholars. Furthermore, intensified sectarian conflicts, religious antagonisms, and widespread insecurity during the post-Seljuk period and continuing through the Mongol invasions exposed Tabaristan's scholarly schools to destruction and attacks by hostile forces. During internal conflicts among local dynasties, including the ispahbads of Tabaristan, many mosques and schools in which books and endowed properties were kept were plundered. Such destruction occurred not necessarily because of hostility toward learning, but because schools were centralized complexes that often possessed a fortress-like character. (5) Consequently, historical evidence suggests that many schools were closed because of

insecurity and fear of assassination or were converted into military shelters. Finally, the devastating Mongol invasion led to the destruction of cultural infrastructure, including schools, libraries, and mosques. Among the institutions affected were the scholarly schools of Amol, whose destruction interrupted the continuity of the educational tradition in Tabaristan. This transformation caused the scholarly and educational tradition of Tabaristan from the thirteenth century CE onward to shift from a centralized, "school-centered" system such as the Nizamiyyas toward a dispersed, "teacher-centered" system operating in small mosques and private houses, thereby reducing exposure to military and sectarian attacks.

Conclusion

Amol, one of the most important cities of the province of Tabaristan, occupied a prominent and distinctive position in the scientific and cultural history of Islamic Iran, although this position has not received the scholarly attention it deserves. The movement for the teaching of the sciences in this region began with the establishment of a school by Naser al-Haqq, one of the Alid rulers of Tabaristan, after which additional schools and instructional and educational circles were progressively founded throughout the region. Eventually, with the establishment of a large and prestigious institution such as the Nizamiyya of Amol, higher education became closely connected with politics and political authority. At this educational institution, through the efforts of the Shafiʿi jurist Abu al-Mahasin al-Ruyani, the continuity of scholarly instruction and student training was maintained, Shafiʿi theology and jurisprudence were expanded, and efforts were made to counter Nizari Ismaʿili missionary activities in order to prevent further cultural fragmentation within Tabaristani society.

Accordingly, the historical trajectory of religious-scholarly and educational activity in Amol across this several-century period may be assessed as follows:

1. During the ninth and tenth centuries CE, corresponding to the period in which educational institutions were first established and consolidated under the rule of the Alid sayyids, Amol served as the principal center of Alid government. Although religious schools in the modern institutional sense—that is, consisting of endowed buildings with organized administrative and educational hierarchies—had not yet become fully established, congregational mosques functioned as the principal active and flourishing centers of teaching. During this period, religious instruction focused primarily on Zaydi jurisprudence; however, because of the extensive presence of scholars, theological debates and Qurʾanic exegesis were also common in the mosques of Amol. This development was largely attributable to Naser al-Kabir's commitment to holding regular and frequent teaching sessions and to expanding knowledge among the general population, which ultimately led to the formation of the initial nucleus of the city's religious scholarly center.
2. During the eleventh and twelfth centuries CE, corresponding to the flourishing period of the educational movement, Tabaristan witnessed the height of Amol's scholarly prominence as a center for educating students and concentrating learned scholars. The Nizamiyya of Amol, as the most prominent scholarly development of this period, transformed the city into one of the most prestigious centers of learning in northern Iran, attracting students from distant regions who traveled to this renowned and climatically favorable city for study. Moreover, despite Seljuk state support for the dissemination of Shafiʿi jurisprudence and Ashʿari theology, scholars from Amol exercised independent jurisprudential reasoning in the fields of jurisprudence and legal theory and possessed considerable theological influence.

3. During the thirteenth to sixteenth centuries CE, corresponding to a period of stagnation and decline in educational institutions, the Mongol and Timurid invasions, together with insecurity and declining prosperity, transformed Iran's educational structures. Although Amol, because of its distance from the principal centers of devastation and because of the continued presence of distinguished local scholarly figures, managed to preserve part of its intellectual tradition, it never fully regained the level of prosperity and scholarly flourishing that had characterized the earlier period.

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Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contributed to this study.

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The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

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All ethical principles were adhered in conducting and writing this article.

Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

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