

## **Institutional Resilience and Cultural Capital: A Systematic Literature Review of Islamic Education Under Mongol Rule**

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Article History: Received on January 16, 2026, Revised on March 2, 2026, Published on March 6, 2026

**Abstract:** The Mongol expansion in the thirteenth century, culminating in the fall of Baghdad in 1258 under Hulagu Khan, is often associated with the destruction of Islamic intellectual institutions. However, developments during the Ilkhanid period in Persia (1256–1335) reveal a more complex process in which Islamic education was reorganized rather than eliminated. This study examines how Islamic educational institutions adapted and sustained their authority under Mongol rule by analyzing patterns of institutional reconstruction, scholarly agency, and curriculum continuity. Using a narrative literature review approach, this research synthesizes historical and sociological studies, organizing them around themes of political transformation, madrasa development, and cultural capital reproduction. The findings show that although early conquests dismantled major centers such as Bayt al-Hikmah, later Ilkhanid patronage especially after the Islamization of Mongol rulers encouraged the reestablishment of madrasas, strengthened waqf-based funding, and supported scientific inquiry. Figures such as Nasir al-Din al-Tusi illustrate how ulama negotiated political authority while maintaining intellectual production. Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital, this study argues that madrasas functioned as sites of cultural reproduction, ensuring epistemic continuity amid political rupture.

**Keywords:** *Islamic Education; Mongol Civilization; Madrasah and Ulama; Cultural Capital; Educational Resilience.*

### **A. Introduction**

The Mongol expansion in the thirteenth century under the leadership of Genghis Khan and his successors reshaped the political and cultural landscape of Eurasia. While the Mongol conquests are often portrayed primarily as episodes of large-scale destruction recent scholarship suggests a more complex historical dynamic, particularly in regions formerly under Abbasid authority such as Persia and Mesopotamia. The establishment of Mongol rule in these areas especially under the Ilkhanid dynasty did not simply terminate Islamic intellectual life but reconfigured its institutional foundations. However, existing studies tend to describe this transformation narratively rather than analytically, leaving insufficient theoretical engagement with how Islamic educational institutions sustained themselves under foreign domination (Lestari et al., 2022; Rosani et al., 2025; Surmana et al., 2022).

The Mongol invasion initially destroyed many educational institutions, such as libraries and madrasas in Baghdad in 1258 CE, marking the end of the Abbasid Caliphate (Pratama et al, 2025). Nevertheless, Mongol rulers, particularly under the Ilkhanid dynasty, gradually adopted Islam and supported Muslim intellectual activities (MAHENDRA, 2025). This created an environment in which Islamic education could develop, albeit facing challenges such as the dominance of nomadic culture and political competition

Genghis Khan (1162–1227 CE) unified the nomadic tribes of Mongolia through brutal military campaigns, forming the Mongol Empire that stretched from the Black Sea to the Yellow Sea (Sugeng, 2022). This expansion resulted not only in physical conquest but also in complex cultural exchanges. In Islamic regions such as Persia and Mesopotamia, the Mongols encountered strong intellectual traditions shaped by Greek, Persian, and Arab legacies. Islamic education, which had developed since the 7th century CE through institutions such as mosques and madrasas, became a key point of interaction (Dawolo et al., 2024).

The fall of Baghdad in 1258 under Hulagu Khan, grandson of Genghis Khan, marked the collapse of the Abbasid political center and symbolized a profound rupture in Islamic scholarly networks (Basri et al., 2024). The conquest of Baghdad by Hulagu Khan in 1258 CE destroyed the Bayt al-Hikmah, the largest library in the world at that time, and resulted in the deaths of thousands of scholars (Ibrahim, 2023). The destruction of institutions such as Bayt al-Hikmah has frequently been interpreted as evidence of civilizational decline. Yet such interpretations risk overstating discontinuity. Subsequent developments during the Ilkhanid period demonstrate processes of institutional reconstruction, adaptation, and patronage, particularly after the gradual Islamization of Ilkhanid rulers in the late thirteenth century (MAHENDRA, 2025). What remains underexplored is not whether Islamic education survived, but *how* its institutional structures reorganized to maintain legitimacy and authority within a new political order.

This article deliberately confines its historical scope to the Mongol Ilkhanate in Persia (1256–1335), thereby avoiding common historiographical conflation with the Mughal Empire in India or the later Timurid polity. Such conflation has generated serious periodization errors in prior literature. Studies focusing on Mughal India, for example, operate within a different socio-political and chronological framework and therefore cannot be used to explain Mongol–Ilkhanid educational dynamics. By narrowing the scope, this study ensures conceptual and historical precision.

Madrasas functioned as the central institutional form of Islamic higher learning prior to the Mongol conquest. The Nizamiyya model, associated with the eleventh-century vizier Nizam al-Mulk, had established a durable framework for transmitting jurisprudence, theology, and rational sciences (Ikbal et al., 2025). Following the Mongol conquest, evidence suggests not a simple disappearance of madrasas but their gradual reconfiguration under Ilkhanid patronage, including new foundations in urban centers such as Tabriz (Rahman, H. A., Pd, M., Nelson, H., & Pd, 2025). Rather than treating these developments as isolated historical facts, this study conceptualizes them as indicators of *institutional resilience*—the capacity of educational structures to reorganize while preserving normative continuity.

Moreover, the role of Islamic scholars in this process cannot be overlooked. Scholars such as Nasir al-Din al-Tusi (1201–1274 CE) played a crucial role as a bridge between Mongol and Islamic cultures (Srivastava, D. K., et.al, 2025). Al-Tusi, who worked under Hulagu Khan, established the Maragha Observatory, which became a major center for the study of astronomy and mathematics. This demonstrates that Islamic education not only survived but also contributed to the advancement of scientific knowledge, even under foreign domination. Such contributions challenge the traditional narrative of the Mongols as mere destroyers of culture, showing that they also acted as patrons of culture (Shablovskaia, 2025).

From a sociological perspective, Islamic education during the Mongol period can be viewed as a form of passive resistance. Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital helps explain how ulama used education to maintain their social status. Madrasah became spaces where Islamic values were reproduced, enabling Muslim communities to survive Mongol cultural assimilation. This is parallel to studies of ethnic minorities in the colonial era, in which education functioned as a tool for identity resilience (Ikbal et al., 2025).

However, challenges remained. The dominance of Mongol nomadic culture, which emphasized gender equality and religious tolerance, sometimes conflicted with traditional Islamic norms (Rauf, A., Wahyuni, A. D., & Umam, 2025). For example, Mongol women were often involved in education, influencing Islamic practices in the region. This created a hybrid dynamic in which Islamic education underwent transformation to accommodate new cultural elements. This study shows that Islamic education is not a static entity but is responsive to social contexts.

From a theoretical standpoint, this article draws on Pierre Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital to explain how ulama maintained symbolic power during regime transition. Madrasas functioned as sites of cultural reproduction, enabling the preservation of Islamic epistemic authority even under non-Muslim rule. However, prior research has rarely synthesized historical evidence systematically to examine how institutional resilience and cultural capital interacted during the Ilkhanid period. Most works remain descriptive, focusing either on military history or biographical accounts of rulers and scholars.

Therefore, the central research gap addressed in this systematic literature review is the absence of an integrated analytical framework that connects (1) political transformation under Mongol–Ilkhanid rule, (2) institutional adaptation of Islamic education, and (3) the reproduction of cultural capital among scholarly elites. Existing studies discuss these elements separately but do not synthesize them into a cohesive explanatory model. By conducting a structured review of relevant historical and sociological scholarship, this article seeks to clarify patterns of continuity, transformation, and resilience within Islamic educational institutions.

Beyond correcting oversimplified narratives of destruction, this study contributes theoretically by operationalizing institutional resilience not merely as survival, but as strategic adaptation embedded in social power structures. In doing so, it moves beyond a purely historical essay toward a theoretically grounded scholarly analysis. The Ilkhanid

case thus becomes a lens through which broader questions of educational continuity under political rupture may be examined.

In sum, this article reframes Islamic education under Mongol rule as a dynamic field shaped by contestation, negotiation, and cultural reproduction. Through systematic literature analysis, it aims to demonstrate that the endurance of Islamic educational institutions in Ilkhanid Persia was not accidental, but structurally linked to the mobilization of cultural capital and adaptive institutional strategies.

## **B. Methods**

This study employs a narrative literature review to critically examine scholarly discussions concerning Islamic education under Mongol rule, particularly within the Ilkhanid context in Persia. Rather than applying a rigid systematic protocol, the narrative approach allows for interpretative synthesis and theoretical integration across historical and sociological scholarship. This method is especially suitable for studies that seek not merely to aggregate findings but to construct conceptual linkages in this case, between institutional resilience, cultural capital, and the transformation of Islamic education during political rupture.

The review begins by identifying major historiographical trends related to the Mongol conquest of Islamic territories, especially the fall of Baghdad in 1258 and the subsequent establishment of Ilkhanid authority. Literature addressing the destruction of educational institutions, the restructuring of scholarly networks, and the Islamization of Mongol rulers forms the first analytical cluster. These works provide the historical foundation for understanding the structural disruptions that confronted Islamic educational institutions.

The second body of literature examined concerns the institutional dimension of Islamic education, particularly the evolution of madrasas, patterns of patronage, waqf systems, and curriculum continuity. Studies discussing educational centers in Persia, including Tabriz and Maragha, are analyzed to identify patterns of adaptation rather than decline. This thematic focus enables the review to move beyond descriptive accounts of destruction and toward a discussion of institutional transformation.

The third thematic cluster centers on scholarly agency and intellectual production. Biographical and intellectual studies on figures such as Nasir al-Din al-Tusi are examined not merely as historical narratives but as illustrations of how scholars negotiated authority within Mongol political structures. This body of literature provides insight into the mechanisms through which Islamic cultural capital was reproduced, preserved, and strategically mobilized under Ilkhanid patronage.

Sources for this review were identified through academic databases including Publish or Perish, Semantic Scholar, and Google Scholar. The literature surveyed primarily consists of peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, and reputable proceedings discussing Islamic intellectual life during the Mongol–Ilkhanid period. While priority is given to recent scholarship to ensure contemporary historiographical relevance, foundational historical studies are also included where necessary to establish context. The selection emphasizes works employing historical, qualitative, and conceptual approaches that

address educational institutions, intellectual networks, or sociocultural transformation under Mongol rule.

Through interpretative comparison and thematic synthesis, this narrative review seeks to identify convergences and tensions within the literature. Rather than treating prior studies as isolated contributions, the analysis reorganizes them into a conceptual framework centered on two key analytical questions:

1. How did Islamic educational institutions adapt and transform under Mongol Ilkhanid rule within shifting political and cultural configurations, and what roles did Mongol rulers and Muslim scholars play in these processes?
2. How did institutional continuity in curriculum, pedagogy, and scholarly authority contribute to the reproduction of Islamic cultural capital and broader intellectual development?

By structuring the literature around these questions, this study moves beyond chronological narration toward analytical synthesis. The narrative review thus functions not only as a summary of existing research but as a theoretical reconstruction of how Islamic education demonstrated institutional resilience amid political upheaval.

## **C. Results and Discussion**

### **1. Thematic Mapping of the Literature**

The narrative review identified five major scholarly works that explicitly discuss Islamic education within territories influenced by Mongol political authority (Mozaffari et al., 2020; Galiakberova, 2020; Momen & Hossain, 2022; Hoseini, 2024; Paewai & Makassar, 2024). Rather than treating these studies as homogeneous evidence, the analysis reorganizes them into thematic clusters reflecting institutional reconstruction, scholarly agency, curriculum transformation, and sociocultural adaptation.

A first cluster of literature emphasizes the destructive rupture caused by the Mongol invasion while simultaneously acknowledging subsequent reconstruction. Mozaffari et al. (2020) demonstrate that although the Mongol conquest dismantled many scientific institutions, the post-conquest period witnessed deliberate institutional rebuilding, most notably through the establishment of Rab<sup>c</sup>-i Rashidi in Tabriz by Rashid al-Din. This institution represents a structured transformation of Islamic education, including formalized administration, curriculum development, and cross-cultural scientific integration (Adeoye & Baharun, 2025). Rather than indicating decline, the study suggests institutional reorganization under new political patronage.

A second cluster highlights continuity amid political transformation. Galiakberova (2020), examining education in the Golden Horde, argues that Islamic pedagogical traditions did not experience rupture but rather adaptive continuity shaped by interaction between religious and secular elements. Although geographically distinct from Ilkhanid Persia, this finding reinforces the broader pattern that Mongol rule did not automatically eliminate Islamic educational structures. Instead, educational dualism and cultural negotiation characterized the period.

Meanwhile, Paewai & Makassar (2024) frame Mongol-era education within broader civilizational interaction, pointing to shifts in scientific centers and the emergence of new intellectual formations. Although their categorization of Mongol polities requires careful historical distinction, their analysis contributes to understanding how educational geography shifted following political realignment.

Importantly, the study by Momen & Hossain (2022), which discusses Mughal India, illustrates a historiographical problem frequently encountered in the literature: conflation between Mongol and Mughal contexts. While their findings regarding maktab and madrasah development are relevant to Islamic education more broadly, they operate within a distinct chronological and political framework. This reinforces the necessity of periodization clarity in examining Ilkhanid Persia.

Focusing on the Timurid period, highlights educational revival through institutional construction and symbolic integration of scholarship and spirituality. Although Timurid developments postdate Ilkhanid rule, they demonstrate long-term educational continuity following Mongol-era transformations Hoseini (2024). Taken together, these studies indicate that the dominant historiographical narrative of collapse is insufficient to explain the trajectory of Islamic education under Mongol influence.

**Table 1. Data Thematic Mapping Of The Literature**

Researcher	Journal	Result
(Paewai & Makassar, 2024)	Attractive: Innovative Education Journal	The results obtained in this research are that the education system during the Mongol era consisted of three civilizations, namely the Changhari dynasty, the Golden Horde and the Khan Dynasty. Meanwhile, the condition of Islamic education consists of several categories, including: The movement of science centers, the growth of new sciences, the lack of Politikul Khanah, the number of schools and Mausū'at.
(Mozaffari et al., 2020)	Authorea Preprints	This study concludes that although the Mongol invasion destroyed many Islamic scientific institutions, education in the post-Mongol period underwent reconstruction through the establishment of Rabe Rashidi University in Tabriz by Rashid al-Din Fazlullah Hamadani. This institution demonstrates a systematic transformation of Islamic education, encompassing the institutionalization of educational organizations, the development of curricula and teaching methods, and the integration of Chinese and Mongolian sciences into the Islamic intellectual tradition, while also serving as a channel for the transmission of Islamic knowledge to Europe.
(Momen & Hossain, 2022)	<i>Jagannath University Journal of Arts</i>	The findings of this study indicate that education under the Mongol (Mughal) rulers developed significantly and played a central role in shaping religious and intellectual life. Education was organized through institutions such as maktab and madrasah, closely associated with mosques and focused primarily on Islamic theology, Qur'anic studies, and law. Teaching methods relied on oral instruction and memorization, using Arabic and Persian as the main languages of learning. Strong support from the rulers, including financial patronage

		and high respect for teachers, enabled education to be freely accessible and well regulated, contributing to the consolidation and continuity of Muslim education during the Mughal period.
(Hoseini, 2024)	<i>Journal of Modern Researches in Islam and Iran History Studies</i>	This study demonstrates that following the Mongol invasion, which destroyed many symbols of Islamic civilization, the establishment of schools during the Timurid Dynasty became a key factor in the revival of Islamic education. Timurid schools functioned not only as institutions for teaching religious and intellectual sciences but also as social and cultural centers that played an important role in the reconstruction and further development of Islamic culture and civilization. The construction of schools adjacent to the tombs of religious figures created an integration of spirituality and scholarship, thereby strengthening the legitimacy of Islamic education and fostering the continuity of intellectual traditions. Consequently, education in the Timurid era significantly contributed to the restoration, preservation, and advancement of Islamic civilization after the devastation caused by the Mongol invasion.
(Galiakberova, 2020)	<i>European Journal of Science and Theology</i>	The study finds that during the Mongol period, particularly under the Golden Horde (13th–mid-15th centuries), Tatar education developed in a dynamic and adaptive manner, marked by continuity rather than rupture with earlier traditions. Despite significant political, social, and cultural transformations under Mongol rule, the educational system preserved a sustained development of national pedagogy through the interaction and tension between religious (Islamic) and secular elements. This dualism, shaped by external geopolitical influences and internal ethno-cultural changes, did not weaken education but instead enriched Tatar pedagogical thought and practice, allowing it to maintain cultural identity and intellectual continuity in a period of profound historical change

## 2. Institutional Resilience of Madrasas

The literature collectively suggests that Islamic educational institutions exhibited structural resilience rather than disappearance. Prior to the Mongol conquest, madrasas modeled after the Nizamiyya system served as centers for the transmission of jurisprudence, theology, and rational sciences. The destruction of Baghdad in 1258 under Hulagu Khan symbolized institutional rupture, including the fall of Bayt al-Hikmah (Mughni, 2023). However, this rupture did not result in systemic collapse.

Under the Ilkhanid dynasty, particularly during the reign of Ghazan Khan, Islamization policies facilitated renewed patronage for madrasas (Abdurrohman, A. Y., & Nursikin, 2023). Financial support through waqf endowments allowed institutions in Tabriz and other Persian cities to function as intellectual hubs. Mozaffari et al. (2020) show that Rab<sup>c</sup>-i Rashidi institutionalized educational administration in ways that suggest strategic state involvement in knowledge production.

From a sociological perspective, this pattern reflects institutional resilience: the capacity of madrasas to reorganize structurally while preserving epistemic authority. Rather than functioning solely as religious schools, these institutions operated as mechanisms of cultural stabilization within a shifting political order.

### **3. Scholarly Agency and Cultural Capital**

The narrative review also reveals the centrality of scholarly actors in mediating Mongol Islamic interaction. Figures such as Nasir al-Din al-Tusi exemplify how ulama navigated new political hierarchies. Working under Hulagu Khan, al-Tusi contributed to the establishment of the Maragha Observatory, advancing astronomy and mathematics while sustaining Islamic intellectual traditions.

Rather than interpreting such collaboration as mere political accommodation, it may be understood through Pierre Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital. Ulama possessed symbolic authority derived from mastery of religious and rational sciences. By mobilizing this authority within Ilkhanid structures, they reproduced Islamic epistemic legitimacy. Elvan, N. A., Samad, D., & Zulheldi, (2024) similarly argue that scholars functioned as mediators of cultural integration, reinforcing continuity amid transformation. This dynamic indicates that Islamic education was not passively preserved but actively negotiated through scholarly agency.

### **4. Curriculum and Pedagogical Adaptation**

Across the reviewed literature, curricular continuity is consistently emphasized. Core subjects Qur'anic exegesis, hadith, fiqh, and rational sciences remained central (Stai et al., 2022; Waston, 2020). Pedagogical methods such as halaqah (study circles) and ijazah (certification chains) ensured controlled transmission of knowledge. However, adaptation occurred through intellectual expansion. Under Ilkhanid patronage, rational sciences including astronomy and mathematics received increased institutional support. The scientific works of al-Tusi, including *Al-Tadhkirah fi 'Ilm al-Hay'ah*, illustrate curricular responsiveness to political and scientific interests.

This demonstrates that resilience did not imply rigidity. Islamic education maintained doctrinal foundations while integrating new scientific and administrative elements shaped by Mongol governance.

### **5. Challenges, Adaptation, and Sociocultural Negotiation**

The literature acknowledges persistent challenges, including political instability and tensions between nomadic Mongol norms and established Islamic traditions. Mongol emphasis on religious tolerance and broader gender participation occasionally intersected with Islamic educational structures. While evidence of systemic gender transformation remains limited, some studies suggest greater visibility of elite women in patronage contexts (Khan 2022).

Adaptation occurred primarily through Islamization of rulers and strategic alignment between educational elites and political authority. Rather than representing subordination, this alignment functioned as mutual legitimation: Mongol rulers gained religious credibility, while Islamic institutions secured material sustainability. Quantitative claims regarding increases in the number of madrasas remain estimative and

require cautious interpretation. Nonetheless, the overall pattern in the literature suggests expansion or at least reconstruction rather than contraction.

## 6. Intellectual Contribution and Cross-Civilizational Impact

The reviewed scholarship challenges the conventional portrayal of Mongol rule as purely destructive. Educational institutions under Ilkhanid authority contributed to scientific production and knowledge transmission beyond Persia. Mozaffari et al. (2020) suggest that institutional developments in Tabriz facilitated intellectual exchange extending toward Europe. Madrasas thus functioned not only as centers of preservation but also as nodes of innovation. Islamic education under Mongol rule participated in broader intellectual currents that shaped fourteenth-century scientific development.

## D. Conclusions

This study concludes that Islamic education not only survived the destruction caused by the Mongol invasions but also transformed in ways that sustained and advanced Islamic civilization. Despite the collapse of major intellectual centers following the fall of Baghdad in 1258 CE, the Islamization of Mongol rulers particularly under the Ilkhanid Dynasty enabled the reconstruction of educational institutions. Madrasahs regained their role as centers of knowledge transmission and Islamic value reproduction, supported by political authority and *waqf* endowments, indicating a strategic interaction between education and power.

Furthermore, Islamic education during the Mongol period demonstrate significant flexibility and resilience. While remaining rooted in classical Islamic sciences, madrasah curricula incorporated rational sciences and adapted to new cultural contexts. Scholars such as Nasir al-Din al-Tusi played a key role as cultural mediators, facilitating intellectual exchange across civilizations. Overall, Islamic education under Mongol rule functioned as a resilient and adaptive system that preserved Islamic identity while contributing to broader intellectual development.

## E. Acknowledgement

Author should present list of acknowledgement at the end. Any financial or nonfinancial support for the study should be acknowledged.

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