

THE CONCEPT OF MADRASAH EDUCATION DURING THE ABBASID PERIOD

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Abstract

This study aims to explore and understand in depth the concept of education that developed during the reign of the Abbasid Caliphate, a period known as the golden age in the history of Islamic civilization. During this period, education and science experienced very rapid progress, marked by the development of various branches of science, both Islamic and general. This study uses a library study approach with a descriptive method, namely an approach that focuses on the review of various relevant literature, documents, and historical references to obtain a comprehensive picture of the education system during that period. The results show that the concept of education during the Abbasid era strongly emphasized the balance between religious knowledge and general knowledge. Islamic knowledge remained the main foundation, but did not close itself off from the development of other sciences such as philosophy, medicine, mathematics, and astronomy. The Abbasid government paid great attention to the world of education, including in terms of funding, the construction of educational institutions, and appreciation for scientists. Strong state support and openness to receiving knowledge from various civilizations were important factors in making this era a milestone in educational progress in Islamic history.

Keywords: Education, Islam, Abbasid

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menggali dan memahami secara mendalam konsep pendidikan yang berkembang pada masa pemerintahan Daulah Abbasiyah, sebuah periode yang dikenal sebagai masa keemasan dalam sejarah peradaban Islam. Pada masa ini, pendidikan dan ilmu pengetahuan mengalami kemajuan yang sangat pesat, ditandai dengan berkembangnya berbagai cabang ilmu, baik keislaman maupun umum. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan studi pustaka dengan metode deskriptif, yaitu pendekatan yang berfokus pada penelaahan berbagai literatur, dokumen, dan referensi historis yang relevan guna memperoleh gambaran yang komprehensif tentang sistem pendidikan pada masa tersebut. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa konsep pendidikan pada masa Abbasiyah sangat menekankan keseimbangan antara ilmu agama dan ilmu umum. Ilmu keislaman tetap menjadi fondasi utama, namun tidak menutup diri terhadap perkembangan ilmu pengetahuan lain seperti filsafat, kedokteran, matematika, dan astronomi. Pemerintah Abbasiyah memberikan perhatian besar terhadap dunia pendidikan, termasuk dalam hal pendanaan, pembangunan institusi pendidikan, dan penghargaan terhadap para ilmuwan. Dukungan negara yang kuat serta keterbukaan dalam menerima ilmu dari berbagai peradaban menjadi faktor penting dalam menjadikan era ini sebagai tonggak kemajuan pendidikan dalam sejarah Islam.

Kata Kunci: Pendidikan, Islam, Abbasiyah



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INTRODUCTION

One of the most important periods in the development of Islam was the reign of the Abbasid Caliphate. The Abbasid period was the golden age of Islamic civilization.¹ During this period, the Abbasid Empire achieved many successes, particularly in education and science. This is important to understand as a source of encouragement for the next generation of Muslims, as it demonstrates that Islamic civilization once enjoyed a golden age that surpassed the success of European nations. Knowing that Islamic civilization was once recognized worldwide will both instill confidence and provide a foundation for knowledge about the history of Islamic civilization, motivating Muslims to strive to replicate and even surpass the achievements of that golden age.

The Abbasid Caliphate was founded in 132 H/750 AD by Abdullah al-Shaffah, who was also the first caliph and achieved its glory during the reign of Harun al-Rashid and his son Ma'mun al-Rashid. Abbasid or Bani Abbas itself is taken from the name of the family of the founder of this caliphate, namely the descendants of the Prophet's uncle Abbas bin Abdul Muttalib bin Hashim, often known as Bani Abbas and still classified as Bani Hashim. The Bani Abbas overthrew the Umayyad rule and placed the Bani Abbas in power in a revolution that not only replaced one dynasty with another, but also significantly achieved political, religious and social consequences.²

The establishment of the Abbasid Caliphate was inextricably linked to the collapse of the previous caliphate, the Umayyad Caliphate. The establishment of this government was seen as a triumph of the ideology advocated by the Hashimites after the Prophet Muhammad's death, stating that the Prophet's family and children were the ones entitled to rule. The Shia and Abbasid opposition movements and propaganda against the Umayyad government played a crucial role in this overthrow.³ This propaganda was later called by experts as the greatest propaganda in Islamic history, as said by Huzaifa Aliyu Jangebe: "The Abbasid propaganda was the first major revolution in the Muslim world, which resulted in the destruction of the Umayyad dynasty and its replacement by the Abbasid caliphate 750 CE"⁴ In line with Huzaifa Aliyu Jangebe, Bernard in Aftab Hussain Gillani and Mohammad Tahir also said:

"The replacement of the Umayyads by the Abbasids in the headship of the Islamic community was more than a mere change of dynasty. It was a revolution in the history of Islam as an important turning point as the French and Russian revolution in the history of the west. It came about not as the result of a palace conspiracy or a coup d'etat, but by the

¹ Renima, Ahmed, Habib Tiliouine, and Richard J. Estes. "The Islamic golden age: A story of the triumph of the Islamic civilization." *The State of Social Progress of Islamic Societies*. Springer, Cham, 2016. 25-52.

² Omar, Farouk. *The Abbasid Caliphate, 132/750-170/786*. Diss. SOAS University of London, 1967.

³ Lathif, Abdussyafi Muhammad Abdul. *The Rise and Fall of the Umayyad Caliphate*. Al-Kautsar Library, 2008. Pp. 656.

⁴ Jangebe, Huzaifa Aliyu. "Abu Muslim Al-Khurasani: the legendary hero of Abbasid propaganda." *IOSR Journal of Humanities And Social Science* 19.1 (2014): 5-13.

action of an extensive and successful revolutionary propaganda and its organization expressing the dissatisfaction of important elements of the Muslim population."⁵

The Abbasid Caliphate was established after they successfully defeated the last Umayyad caliph, Marwan ibn Muhammad. The Abbasid forces, led by Abdullah ibn Ali al-Abbasi, were victorious at the Battle of Azzab. Marwan fled to Syria, then to Egypt, where he hid his movements for eight months, before being assassinated.⁶

Wikipedia informs us that the Abbasid Caliphate had five cities that were once used as capitals, namely: Kufa, Baghdad (the oldest capital), al-Rarrah, Samarra, and Cairo.⁷ Throughout its history, the Abbasid Caliphate was ruled by a total of 37 caliphs, beginning with Caliph Abdullah al-Shaffah and finally by Caliph Abdullah al-Musta'shim Billah. The Abbasid Caliphate's rule ended in the month of Safar 656 AH/February 1258 AD.⁸ During its long journey, the Abbasid Caliphate experienced much progress in various fields so that it could make Islam the center of world civilization at that time, especially in the fields of science and education.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a qualitative method with a literature study approach. Literature study is a research approach that focuses on in-depth analysis and understanding of a particular phenomenon through a review of various relevant literature sources and documents.⁹ The data in this study was obtained from various literature sources, such as books, scientific journals, articles, research reports, and other sources relevant to the research topic. Data analysis was conducted by collecting and reviewing relevant literature. The researcher sought data related to the research objectives and conducted a thorough analysis to understand the topic.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Abbasid Caliphate was the peak of Islamic civilization's progress, particularly in education and science. This progress was inextricably linked to the concept and management of the education system itself. It would be beneficial for Muslims to re-examine education during the

⁵ Gillani, Aftab Hussain, and Mohammad Tahir. "The administration of the Abbasid caliphate: A fateful change in the Muslim history." *Pakistan Journal of Commerce and Social Sciences (PJCSS)* 8.2 (2014): 565-571.

⁶ عمار حسنون عبو. اعلان الخلافة العباسية ونهاية مروان بن محمد سنة (132هـ/750م) من خلال كتاب تاريخ

⁷ https://id.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abbasid_Khalifah, accessed on 04/28/2025, 07.39 WITA

⁸ AYalon, David. "Studies on the transfer of the Abbasid Caliphate from Baghdad to Cairo." *Arabica* 7.1 (1960): 41-59.

⁹ Hardani et al., *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif & Kuantitatif*, ed. Husnu Abadi, 1st ed. (Yogyakarta: CV. Pustaka Ilmu Group Yogyakarta, 2020)

Abbasid era as a model of success in the world of education. Quoting from the Iraqi Academic Scientific Journal, a brief description of the progress during that period:

ولدا جاء العصر العباسي سنة (231هـ/757م) وأصبحت بغداد عاصمة العالم الاسلامي، توجهت الأنظار الى نشر الدعرفة وترجمة كتب الطب والنجوم والذندسة والدنطق وألفت كتب في الحديث والتاريخ. ولذا خص الدنصور (ت258هـ) خزانة للمتجمات وغيرها من الدخطوطات النادرة وفي عصر هارون الرشيد (ت293هـ) أسس بيت الحكمة ليكون مكتبة عامة مفتوحة أبوابها للدارسين وطلاب العلم. فهي مؤسسة ثقافية كى تطورت زمن الدأمون (ت128هـ) حتى أصبحت مؤسسة علمية للدرس والبحث والتأليف والترجمة¹⁰.

There is no debate that the Abbasid era was an era of scientific prosperity, due to the abundance of Islamic cultural heritage whose foundation and reference is the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet, in addition to the contact of Arabs with other nations and the mixing of cultures, as well as the encouragement of the Abbasid caliphs for science and learning, which greatly contributed to progress.¹¹

According to Serli Mahroes, Islamic educational institutions during the Abbasid period can be categorized into two, namely:

1. Educational institutions before madrasah

First, maktab/kuttab. These are basic educational institutions. The subjects taught are khat (Islamic text), calligraphy, the Quran, faith, and poetry. Kuttab can be classified into two categories: those closed to general knowledge and those open to general knowledge.

Second, halaqah means circle. This system is a typical depiction of students gathering to study at that time. The teacher typically sat on the floor while explaining, reading his own writings, or commenting on a work of thought. The students would listen to the teacher's explanations while sitting on the floor, surrounding the teacher.

Third, the council is an educational institution used for the transmission of knowledge from various disciplines, so there are many varieties of councils.

Fourth, mosques are Islamic educational institutions that have existed since the time of the Prophet. Mosques built by rulers were generally equipped with various educational facilities, such as study areas, libraries, and books on various scientific disciplines that were developing at the time.

Fifth, the khan functions as a student dormitory and a place for holding religious instruction, including jurisprudence.

Sixth, ribath is a place of activity for Sufis who want to get away from worldly life to

هادي عبد النبي التميمي. "بيت الحكمة البغدادي في الحضارة الإسلامية." مجلة الكلية الإسلامية الجامعة 1.54 and منذر إبراهيم حسين الحلي,¹⁰ (2019): 35-49.

عبيزي فائزة". المجالس التعليمية في الدولة العباسية 132-500/750-1107م (2016). and اوجاني صفاء¹¹

concentrate solely on worship. Ribath is usually inhabited by ascetic people who have no desire to take up worldly interests.

Seventh, the homes of scholars were used for the transmission of religious and general knowledge, as well as for other possible scholarly debates. Scholars who were not given the opportunity to teach in formal educational institutions would teach in their homes.

Eighth, bookstores and libraries act as places for transmitting knowledge and Islam.¹² The large number of educational institutions indicates the government's great attention to the world of education at that time.

2. Madrasah

During the Abbasid era, madrasas consisted of several levels, namely:

The first level of elementary school, called the Kuttab, served as a place of learning for children. Besides the Kuttab, children also studied at home, in palaces, in shops, and on the outskirts of markets. The subjects taught included: reading and memorizing the Quran, the basic tenets of Islam, writing, stories of great Muslims, reading and memorizing poetry or prose, arithmetic, and rudimentary grammar.

Both levels of secondary school, namely in the mosque and the literary and scientific assembly, serve as a continuation of the lessons at the kuttab. The subjects taught include the Quran, Arabic, Islamic jurisprudence, tafsir, hadith, grammar, morphology, rhetoric, rhetoric, astronomy, history, natural sciences, medicine, and music.

The third level of higher education, such as the Baitul Hikmah in Baghdad and Darul Ilmu in Egypt (Cairo), in mosques, etc. At this level, universities generally consist of two departments:

- a. The department of religious sciences, Arabic language, and literature. Ibn Khaldun called this science Ilmu Naqliyah (Naqliyah Science). The subjects taught in this department include: Quranic exegesis, hadith, fiqh, grammar, morphology, rhetoric, and Arabic language.
- b. Ibn Khaldun named the department of wisdom (philosophy) the Aqliyah Science. The subjects taught in this department included logic, natural sciences and chemistry, music, exact sciences, geometry, astronomy, divine science (divinity), zoology, and medicine.¹³

The goals of education during the Abbasid period were inseparable from the general goals of Islamic education, namely, enabling humans to recognize, acknowledge, and perfectly fulfill their ideal position and role in the system of creation. However, in its derivative forms, these

¹² Mahroes, Serli. "Kebangkitan Pendidikan Bani Abbasiyah Perspektif Sejarah Pendidikan Islam." *TARBIYA: Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan Islam* 1.1 (2015): 77-108.

¹³ Musyrifah Sunanto, *Sejarah Islam Klasik Perkembangan Ilmu Pengetahuan Islam*, (Jakarta: Prenada Media, 2004), hlm. 57.

goals have varied due to the influence of society at that time. These goals can be summarized as follows:

a. Religious and moral goals

As in previous times, children were educated and taught to read or memorize the Koran, this was a religious obligation, so that they followed religious teachings and had morals according to religion.

b. Societal goals

The youth of that era studied and sought knowledge so they could transform and improve society, transforming it from one filled with ignorance to one brimming with knowledge, from a backward society to one that was advanced and prosperous. To achieve this goal, the subjects taught in the Madrasah included not only religious knowledge and Arabic, but also worldly knowledge beneficial to the advancement of society.

c. Love of knowledge

People at that time studied with no expectations other than to deepen their knowledge. They traveled throughout Islamic lands to seek knowledge, regardless of the hardships of the journey, which was usually undertaken on foot or by donkey. Their goal was simply to satisfy their thirst for knowledge.

d. Worldly goals

At that time they studied in order to get a decent living and a high rank, even if allows to gain splendor and power in this world, as is the goal of some people today.¹⁴

The Abbasid Caliphate placed great emphasis on the development of education. Numerous educational institutions existed throughout the Abbasid empire, spread across both urban and rural areas. The spirit of education resonated strongly at that time. Students competed to study at these institutions, visiting these centers and leaving their hometowns. The progress of Abbasid educational institutions was inextricably linked to a well-developed curriculum.

Quoting from the Education Journal, it is explained that the educational curriculum during the Abbasid Caliphate was as follows:

"The Islamic education curriculum during the Abbasid Caliphate was dominated by religious studies, particularly the Qur'an as the focus of its teaching. Besides the Qur'an, hadith was also the most important subject because it is the second most important source of religion after the Qur'an. Studying hadith was highly sought after

¹⁴ Khairuddin, K. " Pendidikan pada Masa Dinasti Abbasiyah (Studi Analisis tentang Metode, Sistem, Kurikulum dan Tujuan Pendidikan)." *ITTIHAD* 2.1 (2018).

by students, as evidenced by the numerous hadith classes. In addition to hadith, the science of tafsir (interpretation) was also a crucial component of the Islamic education curriculum at that time, even though the Companions generally forbade interpreting the Qur'an. Tafsir became crucial because it was essential for answering questions from apostates. The most popular and sought-after curriculum material among students was fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence). They were attracted to fiqh because they wanted to obtain positions in the courts or because they saw the high incomes of fiqh experts. Therefore, they had to study fiqh in depth. In addition to the three sciences mentioned above, there were also kalam (theology), da'wah (preaching), and philosophy, which were also important curriculum materials. These sciences made the caliphate The Abbasids became famous and reached the peak of their glory because they were supported by rulers who loved knowledge.”¹⁵

Mohammad Muchlis Solichin said that:

"In addition, the madrasa curriculum is also influenced by government politics. In madrasas, teaching focuses on one school of jurisprudence (fiqh) within the Sunni school. By teaching Sunni fiqh, madrasas have become a bulwark for the growing development of Sunni teachings. Resistance against Shi'ism becomes even more apparent when madrasas also emphasize the importance of teaching hadith. The hadith chosen are those that revitalize Sunni teachings as a countermeasure to the Shi'a school, which only accepts hadith from the Ahl al-Bayt..”¹⁶

From the two pieces of information above, it can be concluded that the educational curriculum during the Abbasid era still prioritized religious knowledge even though They also teach general knowledge. The curriculum is also tailored to the needs of the community. Furthermore, the curriculum implemented is sometimes influenced by specific interests.

Momjunya education and science in this era also caused by the emergence of a translation movement that greatly influenced the development of Islamic civilization. Hayrettin Yücesoy explains that One of the biggest causes of the progress of the Caliphate's civilization was support for the translation of philosophical and scientific books from Ancient Greek, Persian, and Indian into Arabic.¹⁷ According to Katherine Sproul Goodin described this period as a golden age of

¹⁵ Wahyuningsih, Sri. "Implementasi Sistem Pendidikan Islam Pada Masa Daulah Abbasiyah Dan Pada Masa Sekarang." *Jurnal Kependidikan* 2.2 (2014): 109-126.

¹⁶ Solichin, Mohammad Muchlis. "Pendidikan Islam Klasik (Telaah Sosio-Historis Pengembangan Kurikulum Pendidikan Islam Masa Awal Sampai Masa Pertengahan)." *TADRIS: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 3.2 (2008).

¹⁷ Yücesoy, Hayrettin. "Translation as Self-Consciousness: Ancient Sciences, Antediluvian Wisdom, and the Abbāsid Translation Movement." *Journal of World history* (2009): 523-557.

translation. It was a highly productive period, with translators translating almost the entire corpus of available Greek manuscripts into Arabic.¹⁸

The translation movement was the effort to translate books from foreign languages into Arabic. Generally speaking, the translation movement during the Abbasid Dynasty can be divided into three periods:

The first period was the reign of the caliphs al-Mansyur and Harun al-Rashid. During this period, works on astronomy and logic were widely translated. The translators of this first period were mostly from the Barmakids, Zoroastrians, and Nestorian Christian scholars.

The second period lasted from the reign of Caliph Al-Ma'mun until 300 AH. During this period, the most widely translated works were books on philosophy and medicine. During this period, the most active translators at the House of Wisdom were Abu Sahl Fadl bin Nawabakht, Allan ash-Syu'ubi, Yuhana bin Masawaih, and Hunain bin Ishaq al-Ibad and Qustha bin Luqa.

The third period, during which the translation movement began to decline following the death of Caliph Al-Ma'mun, coincided with a shift in theological understanding, from initially supporting the Mu'tazilah to opposing it.¹⁹

One of the pillars of the advancement of Islamic civilization during the Abbasid era was the establishment of the House of Wisdom. The House of Wisdom library was first established by the seventh Abbasid caliph, Caliph Al-Ma'mun, around 200 AH/815 CE in Baghdad.²⁰ Quoting from Middle-East Journal of Scientific Research:

"The House of Wisdom was a collective institutional and imperial expression of early Abbasid intellectual ambition and official state policy. Over time, the house of wisdom came to include a translation bureau, a library and repository and academic scholars and intellectuals from across the empire."²¹

Bait al-Hikmah has a very organized management system especially in collecting and cataloging books, this library has a great interest in debate and scientific circles in various topics and subjects.²² Not only Muslims, non-Muslims such as Christians, Jews and

¹⁸ Goodin, Katherine Sproul. Translation theory and practice in the Abbasid era. Diss. 2014.

¹⁹ Ahmad Syalabi, *Sejarah dan Kebudayaan Islam* (Jakarta: Pustaka Al Husna Baru, 2003), hlm 160

²⁰ Kaviani, Rahim, et al. "The Significance of the Bayt Al-Hikma (House of Wisdom) in the Early Abbasid Caliphate (132A. H-218A. H)." Middle-East Journal of Scientific Research 11.9 (2012): 1272-1277.

²¹ Anjum, Saba. "A significance of Bait Al-Hikmah in the development of scientific work in the Abbasids period and the downfall of this revolutionary institute." International Proceedings of Economics Development and Research 73 (2014): 45.

²² Algeriani, Adel Abdul-Aziz, and Mawloud Mohadi. "The house of wisdom (bayt al-hikmah) and its civilizational impact on Islamic libraries: a historical perspective." Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences 8.5 (2017): 179-179.

Zoroastrians also played a role in utilizing Bait al-Hikmah.²³ Bait al-Hikmah consists of several parts, including: 1) Translation Department (for medical and philosophical books, political pictures and literature, astronomy, stars and observation, agronomy, engineering, mechanics, mathematics, and music); 2) Place for research and translation, and other stones for the establishment of scholars and students' spaces for study, research and writing; 3) Place for binding and copying; 4) Place for storing stationery from paper, ink, pens, and others.²⁴

The Abbasid reign was truly a golden age in the world of Islamic education and science. Many great scholars and leading scholars emerged in this era. During this period, famous scholars emerged such as Imam Abu Hanifah, Imam Malik, Imam Syafi'i, Imam Hambali, Imam Bukhari, Imam Muslim, Hasan Al Basri, Abu Bakar Ar Razy, and others.²⁵

In the field of philosophy, among others, there are al-Kindi, al-Farabi, Ibn Sina (Avicenna), and Ibn Rushd (Averroes). In the field of science, there are al-Farghani, al-Biruni, al-Khawarizmi, Umar Khayyam, and al-Tusi. In the field of medicine, there are the names of al-Tabari, al-Razi (Rhazes), Ibn Sina, and Ibn Rushd (Averroes). In the field of chemistry, the name Ibn Hayyan is well-known. In the field of optics, there is Ibn Haytham. In the field of geography, there are al-Khawarizmi, al-Ya'qubi, and al-Mu'izzi. In the field of veterinary medicine, there are al-Jahiz, Ibn al-Nadim, and the Ikhwan al-Safaa, Ibn Sina, and others. In the field of jurisprudence, the names Abu Hanifah, Malik bin Anas, al-Shafi'i, and Ahmad bin Hanbal are famous. In kalam science there are Washil bin Atha, Ibn Huzail, Al-Asy'ari, and Maturidi. In the science of Tafsir there are al-Thabari and Zamakhshari. In hadith science, the most popular are Bukhari and Muslim. In Sufism there are Rabi'ah al-Adawiyah, Ibn 'Arabi, al-Hallaj, Hasan al-Bashri, and Abu Yazid al-Bustami.²⁶

Based on the description above, we can at least take several educational concepts that encouraged the advancement of education and science during the Abbasid Caliphate, namely:

1. Prioritizing religious knowledge and developing general knowledge. Despite the rapid development of general knowledge, religious knowledge remains a priority. This is inseparable from its importance, as religious knowledge is the primary guide for human life. Religious knowledge is a fundamental asset that everyone must possess.
2. The government provides optimal support for education. Government support is crucial to the success of a nation's education system. Without it, education struggles to advance. During the

²³ Al-Tekreeti, Hanan AbdulRahman Taha, and Mohammed Ibrahim Abed AL-Janabi. "الحكمة بيت". *Journal of the University of Babylon for Humanities* 28.3 (2020): 76-89.

²⁴ 1-23.2 المجلة العراقية للمعلومات 1722. "النتاج الفكري الصادر من بيت الحكمة العراقي للفترة 1722-1721". *مائدة Al جاسم* 1721: 277-82.

²⁵ Zuhairini, Moh. Kasiran. dkk. 1985. *Sejarah Pendidikan Islam*. Jakarta: DEPAG. Hlm. 88

²⁶ Hasan Basri, M.Nur, Peran Islam dalam Kemajuan Eropa, *Serambi Indonesia*, edisi 19 Maret 2001

Abbasid Caliphate, the government exerted significant efforts in developing and advancing education and science. This was evidenced by government policies such as initiating translation movements, granting scholars the freedom to express their thoughts, and establishing libraries.

3. A well-organized education system and institutions. With a good education system, education can be optimally implemented to achieve its goals. During the Abbasid era, education was well-organized in accordance with its goals.
4. Open to receiving knowledge from any source. In this era, knowledge is drawn from everywhere. The translation movement makes it easy for students to read and acquire knowledge from sources in various languages.

CONCLUSION

Islamic education reached its golden age during the Abbasid period. This was inextricably linked to the educational management concept of the time. The educational concept implemented prioritized Islamic knowledge while balancing it with advances in general science. The government at that time provided optimal support for educational aspects, ensuring a well-organized system and institutions. Furthermore, openness to learning from all sources also contributed to the advancement of education during the Abbasid period.

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