



Isbijab – a new centre for the development of Islamic law (XI-XII)

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Abstract

The relevance of this article covers historical, religious, local and diplomatic factors, which reflect the importance of research and the multifaceted nature of Isbijab. The purpose is to study the Isbijab School of fiqh law in the Middle Ages in the context of Islamic law and the history of Kazakhstan. In this work, standard historiographical methods are used: historical-systemic method, historical-comparative method, method of historical periodization and others. The main result is to clarify the role of the fiqh school of Isbijab in the context of studying the history of Islamic law on the territory of modern Kazakhstan and in the region as a whole. The authors also found that Isbijab was one of the centres of Islamic studies and law not only in Kazakhstan but also in the whole of Central Asia in the XI to XII centuries. It was the time when Isbijab developed its legal concept and school of fiqh, the Hanafi madhhab. This school of Islamic law introduced a new generation of legal scholars and their pupils, whose major works and academic degrees paved their way in the historiography. Their experience helped the researchers to study the manuscript works of medieval Isbijab jurists from a historical-legal and theological point of view. The paper shows the findings of an ongoing study of Isbijab legal practitioners in the framework of the "Mukhtasar al-Tahawi" book. Work has practical relevance not only in the context of Islamic studies and Islamic law but also in history, international relations, country knowledge and in other disciplines.

Keywords: fiqh, Hanafi madhhab, history of law, history of Kazakhstan, philosophy.

Introduction

The topic of studying regional centres of Islamic law will always remain relevant. Each of the regional centres of Islamic legislation is specifically remarkable. The city of Isbijab in Ma Wara an-Nahr had its school of fiqh in the Middle Ages along with other schools in Samarkand, Bukhara and



Nasaf as mentioned by the American Islamic scholar M. Biran (2019). Fiqh is the set of rules and norms of behaviour and morality based on the Muslim faith and Holy Scriptures. The fiqh school of Isbijab had an evident influence on the development of the Samarqand Fiqh School between the first half of the XI century and the second half of the XII century. However, it remained unstudied to date as a regional centre for Islamic law (Dzhansarayeva et al., 2014). Therefore, finding evidence of the existence of the fiqh school of Isbijab and identifying its history and stages of development, as well as representatives and differences from other schools of fiqh emphasises the relevance of investigation. The relevance of the study resonates with the trends in contemporary Kazakhstani historiography, which stipulates a growing demand for wider coverage and research of the region's ancient history including the medieval period. The study of this topic unveils Kazakhstan as one of the historical cradles of Islamic law, which may strengthen the country's status among other Muslim-majority states. Its relevance can expand on international relations within the region in the context of historical and legal significance.

The Arab dominance in Central Asia was not enduring and ended after a while. However, the religion of Islam brought by the Arabs won over Zoroastrianism in the spiritual struggle then took its place as the main faith and became the basis of Central Asian civilisation. Zoroastrianism is one of the world's oldest religions, founded in ancient Persia (modern-day Iran) by the prophet Zoroaster (or Zarathustra) around the VI century BCE. According to British historian M. Biran (2019), the process of Islamisation of the Turks in the Zhetysu and East Turkestan regions of Central Asia started in the late VIII century and fully concluded in the second half of the X century (Baipakov, 2000; 2007). The name Isbijab originated in a historical drawing by Xuanzang in 629 with a location set along the Aksu River in present-day South Kazakhstan. Numerous variants of the city name later emerged in medieval sources, for example, "Sapijab, Aspijab or Ispijab". This research paper uses the popular form "Isbijab". The archaeologists estimated that the city and its associated settlements had a population of about 40,000 in the IX to XII centuries. The expansion of the city and the growth of its agglomeration occurred under intensive settlement of nomadic Turkic tribes.

The comparative analysis of written data and archaeological monuments helps to determine the boundaries of the Isbijab territory (Boiko and Kuleshov, 2023). The city borders the town of Chach to the west and southwest, being northbound of the town of Kenjid, located in the middle course of the Arys River. The mountains surround the city to the south and east. The settlement of Isbijab itself was located at the site of the modern Kazakh town of Sayram. These and many other details about the structure of the city are available thanks to the work of the famous Soviet and Kazakh archaeologist K.M. Baipakov (2000). One of the main factors in the city's development was its location on the Silk Road, the trade overland route from China to Europe. According to the author, the total area of Isbijab in the XI-XII centuries was up to 30 hectares. Therefore, the history of Isbijab, the development of this city as well and the growth of urban culture, schools, trade and other aspects of city life led to the expansion of Islamic studies and philosophy and notably to the birth of its school of fiqh, which is the subject of this study (Krymsky, 1928; Skaff, 2012).

The purpose of this research paper is:

1. The objective is to examine the historical progression and transformation of the Isbijab School of fiqh, encompassing its establishment, prominent individuals involved, and its impact on Islamic jurisprudence.
2. To examine the ideological and doctrinal elements of the Isbijab School, encompassing its interpretations of Islamic law and its contributions to Islamic legal philosophy.
3. The objective is to ascertain the distinct attributes and notable qualities of the Isbijab School of fiqh, specifically when compared to other present-day schools of Islamic jurisprudence.
4. To emphasise the significance of the Isbijab School of fiqh in the present-day context, taking into account its potential consequences for the examination of Islamic law, history, international relations, and other associated fields.



Materials and Methods

This research employs a diverse range of scientific-theoretical methods and historical methodology tools to conduct a thorough analysis. The authors commenced their investigation by employing the systematic analysis methodology, which allowed them to thoroughly scrutinise a diverse range of sources, including scientific, historical, journalistic, documentary, and other relevant materials. This methodological approach played a crucial role in laying the groundwork for future scientific investigations. Furthermore, the researchers utilised the periodization method to organise the chronological framework that encompasses the evolution of Islam, Islamic law, and the wider regional history. The chronological arrangement of events provided a clear and logical storyline that allowed for a better understanding of the development of the Isbijab School in the region. In addition, the utilisation of the historical and systematic approach was crucial in emphasising the unique position of the Isbijab School in relation to other schools in the area. The researchers were able to identify the distinctive features that distinguish the Isbijab School from other schools of thought by making comparisons and contrasts.

Subsequently, the historical-comparative method was utilised to examine the evolution of Islamic law in different geographical areas, facilitating the recognition of significant parallels and distinctions. This comparative analysis provided insights into how Islamic law influenced state policies and daily life in various regions during the specified historical period. The research paper derived its theoretical foundation from scientific and journalistic publications authored by multiple researchers, thereby augmenting the academic rigour of the study. Furthermore, the inclusion of historical documents and writings pertaining to religion and law proved to be crucial resources that enhanced the research.

The research progressed through three clearly defined phases. The initial phase involved a systematic analysis of existing materials, sources, literature, and previous research conducted by scholars, historians, publicists, and journalists, in order to establish the theoretical foundation for the study. This phase constituted the fundamental basis upon which the subsequent research was constructed. The second stage of the research entailed a meticulous examination that concentrated on periodization, delving into the genesis of Islamic law within the region. This phase utilised a scientific-historical and socio-political perspective to elucidate the historical circumstances. Additionally, it encompassed a comparative examination incorporating discoveries from other scholars, which enhanced and broadened the research's scientific foundation. In the second phase, a thorough analysis was conducted on a wide range of historical, documentary, and journalistic sources, which formed the basis of evidence for the study.

Ultimately, during the third and final stage, the researchers consolidated their findings. This phase involved conducting a thorough examination and comparison of different historical studies, publications, and literature. This enabled the authors to develop their own conclusions and either support or question existing scholarly perspectives. The comprehensive and well-informed exploration of the Isbijab School and its significance within the context of Islamic law and regional history was ensured through this holistic approach.

Results

Isbijab (located on the site of the modern town of Sayram in Kazakhstan) was one of the largest centres of trade and culture in Central Asia during almost all Middle Ages. The city flourished thanks to its favourable geographical position. It opened the Kazakh section of the Silk Road and many merchants from various cities (Bukhara, Merv, Samarqand, Baghdad, etc.) had their trade missions (caravanserais) there. The first mention of the city occurred in the geographical writings of the Chinese author Xuanzang in 629 (Findli, 2020). Isbijab became part of the Samanid state in 893 when the first mint appeared (919-920) with the introduction of Samanid and Mani dirhams.



Isbijab came under the rule of the Kara-Khanid dynasty in 990, a period the researchers associated with the rapid development and growth of this medieval city. Madinat al-Baydan (literally translated as "The White City" because of the architecture) was another name, which appeared nearly at the same time (Khogendeyk and Sabra, 2019).

The famous Arab traveller and geographer M. Ibn Hawqal (1931) mentions a visit to Isbijab in his notes. This source tells us that Isbijab was quite a large town by then standards with its citadel, shahristan and rabad. There were bazaars, the governor's palace, the prison and the cathedral mosque in the shahristan. Most of the city buildings were made of stone or clay. Ibn Hawqal does not clarify the exact dimensions of Isbijab but the author writes that the city is about three times larger than Binqet (one of the largest towns in Turkestan at the time), indicating its impressive size, and uses the phrase "Isbijab is a blooming the city and abundant in crops". The historian affirms his recalling that city features gardens and a system of irrigation canals. According to Ibn Hawqal, Isbijab is a large and developed city, a prominent regional centre as well as the cultural and educational mecca (Doszhan, 2022; Tymoshenko et al., 2023).

Owing to rapid development and advantageous position, not only trade and artisanship but also science began to blossom in Isbijab. In addition to philosophy and law, other scientific disciplines specific to the Islamic world of the time marked development here: mathematics, astronomy, physics and medicine (Galston, 2003). On the initiative of Ibrahim I Tamghach Khan in 1040 (432) (The date "1040 (432)" in this context represents a dual system of chronology, where "1040" is the Christian numbering and "432" is the Islamic year.), the capital of the Kara-Khanid dynasty went from Uzgen to the city of Samarqand. Several new historical sources became available for the study of this period: Muslim historical and biographical literature; epigraphic monuments and essays by the Ulemas. Here one can learn about the new policy of the local rulers, which was to attract theologians and scholars from Turkestan including Isbijab to appoint them to official positions (Skaff, 2012).

The Isbijab jurists made a major contribution to the development of the Hanafi madhhab in Central Asia between the second half of the XI century and the first half of the XII century. They created seminal works as "Mabsut, Al-Jami' al-Kabir, Al-Jami' as-Saghir" by Muhammad al-Shaybani (749-805), while Abu Ja'far Ahmad al-Tahawi (853-933), Abu'l-Hasan al-Karkhi (?-951) and Abu'l-Husayn al-Quduri (973-1037) left commentaries on the scholar works written in the "mutun" genre for the first time in Turkestan. Their list included the following: Umar ibn Burhan al-Isbijabi (?-XII century) and "Mukhtasar fi'l-hilafiyat fi'l-mabsut", a work by Ahmad ibn Mansur al-Isbijabi (?-1087) as well as the works "Sharh Mukhtasar al-Tahawi" and "Sharh Mukhtasar Al-Karkhi". It should be also mentioned Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Isbijabi (?-1106) with writings "Sharh al-Jami' al-Saghir", "The Book of Baha al-Din al-Isbijabi (?-1106)" and "Zad al-Fuqaha" and the works of Ali ibn Muhammad al-Isbijabi (1062-1141): "Sharh al-Jami' al-Kabir" and "Sharh Mukhtasar al-Tahawi". These scholars' works are still in manuscript form in libraries around the world: Mecca, Jeddah, Cairo, Damascus, Baghdad, Istanbul, Mumbai and Princeton. Among these works of the Isbijab scholars, the "Sharh Mukhtasar al-Tahawi" occupies a special place in the Hanafi school of thought (Sharif, 1963).

Abu Nasr Muhammad ibn Muhammad Ibn Tarkhan Ibn Uzlag Al-Farabi is one of the most prominent figures of the Isbijab School from this period and one of the most famous philosophers of Islam who also practised other Islamic sciences. Al-Farabi introduced the first complete Arabic classification of the sciences. As one of the most famous Islamic philosophers, Al-Farabi based his philosophical views on the ancient Greek scholars Aristotle and Plato, mentioned many times in his works, who strongly influenced the philosophy of Islam. Al-Farabi is also famous for being an outstanding musician and one of the main musical theorists of the Middle Ages (Khyu, 2020). Without denying the divine truths of religion, Al-Farabi was convinced that philosophical matters were the highest form of wisdom available to man. The author felt that they were most evident in the natural and mathematical sciences of the Greeks. Consequently, the scholar defended the use



of reason and sought to establish the primacy of natural philosophy within Islamic society (Makinnis and Raisman, 2020).

In his work "Catalogue of the Sciences" ("Kitab al-ibsa al Ulum"), Al-Farabi describes the nature, meanings and purposes of the various Islamic sciences that were relevant in the Middle Ages. The scholar prioritises philosophy as the foremost discipline among all sciences, as other fields contribute to and are shaped by philosophy itself (Ziak et al., 2022). Al-Farabi was the first prominent Muslim scholar who referred to Aristotle's works in his writings and inherited some of Aristotle's classification of the sciences (Potts, 2020). The author studied many disciplines including those now considered irrelevant (astrology and alchemy), which was nevertheless normal for the Middle Ages. In his work "The Attainment of Happiness", the scholar reflects on the correct order of studying the sciences and thinks whether it is possible to master all of them. Another work "Ara Ahl al-Madina al-Fadila" similarly investigates the connection between Plato's reflections on an ideal society and Islamic philosophy. The scientist reflects on a possible "utopian" society in a particular place (city), suggesting that happiness could be achieved through politics (Barnes, 1995).

Another famous Islamic scholar from Isbijab was Abu Nasr Isma'il ibn Hammad al-Jawhari who lived in a X century Kazakhstan. His most known contribution is a huge 40,000-article Arabic dictionary called "The Crown of Language and the Correct Arabic" (Baipakov, 2007). However, Ahmad ibn Mansur al-Isbijabi's work "Sharh Mukhtasar al-Tahawi" is among the most significant papers of all those mentioned above. The author explains Imam Tahawi's "Mukhtasar" and gives details from the Quran, hadiths (records or accounts of Prophet Muhammad's words, deeds and approvals) and atharis (literal interpretation of Islamic law (sharia) based on the Qur'an and hadith) of the sahabis in each chapter. This book has a reputation as very authentic in the Hanafi madhhab. Mukhtasar, in Islamic law, refers to a concise handbook of legal treatises, characterized by neatness and clarity (Kelman & Kelman, 2022).

"Mukhtasar al-Tahawi" was part of the study and explanatory work. Abu Ja'far Ahmad al-Tahawi is a scientist who attained the rank of "ijtihad fi'l masail" among scholars of the Hanafi madhhab. "Ijtihad fi'l Masail" is a term used in Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh) to refer to the individual or collective efforts of Islamic scholars in interpreting and analysing Islamic law and addressing legal questions that have no explicit answer in the Qur'an or the hadiths of the Prophet Muhammad. This work of the scholar is the first written in the "mutun" genre (a genre of literary texts intended for the teaching and study of Islamic theology, jurisprudence, and other religious sciences) and plays a major role in the Hanafi madhhab, prompting many madhhab scholars to leave commentaries on the "Mukhtasar al-Tahawi". The process of interpreting the "Mukhtasar al-Tahawi" has begun for the first time in Ma Wara an-Nahr district of Isbijab. The Isbijab scholars have been particularly active in commenting on the text of the "Mukhtasar al-Tahawi", showing the artistic result of the ongoing research process. The unceasing scholarly research and expository work within the "Mukhtasar al-Tahawi" continued from the second half of the XI century to the first half of the XII century. This case can be appropriately referred to as an "ongoing study" conducted by Isbijab scientists (Galston, 2003). This is because Ali ibn Bakr initially imparted the teachings of "Mukhtasar al-Tahawi" in Isbijab, providing a comprehensive elucidation for his students. However, the scholar was unable to write down the comments on the "Mukhtasar al-Tahawi" text in paper form and compile them into a book and later passed away. Then came Ahmad al-Mansur who wrote down his teacher's spoken explanations for the text of "Mukhtasar al-Tahawi" in large-format paper. After Ahmad ibn Mansur came Ali ibn Mohammed who summarised and systematised the voluminous work of Ahmad ibn Mansur to facilitate Islamic law study to the readers. Therefore, the "Sharh Mukhtasar al-Tahawi", which had been studied and polished for a century, reached its proper destination at the hands of Ali ibn Muhammad (Jassas, 2019). The above-mentioned works have survived today in manuscript form.

The papers of Ahmad ibn Mansur "Sharh Mukhtasar al-Tahawi" and Ali ibn Muhammad's "Sharh Mukhtasar al-Tahawi" have a very close connection (we will mark these writings as work "A" and



work "B" for convenience). It can be assumed that Ali ibn Muhammad's work can be a historical continuation of Ahmad ibn Mansur's teachings. Although both works are similar in object and purpose, they differ in content, interpretation and methodology. There are also several differences in the methods and techniques of writing interpretations of both scholars. For example, Ahmad al-Mansur first agrees with the words of Abu Ja'far al-Tahawi at the beginning of the "Taharah" section: "Taharah shall go by water alone" and then systematically divides the types of purity into parts, explaining each of them piece by piece and giving details in a form readable for the mind. Before starting an explanation after the text and before introducing a new or key point in the explanation, the scholar places the following section: "Know!" This is an order directed to the other party in the singular form, which uses the word in the imperative mood. This statement by the author emphasises the importance of the problem, which the student is about to solve, summarising the reader's thoughts in one place. In addition, the author asks in the course of the explanation: "Figure it out?" The speaker always uses a questioning phrase addressed to the other party personally. Although the word appeared to the author as a question, it was mainly used to excite the reader's thought, to clarify and to confirm the question that arose (Khozha, 2019).

Ali ibn Muhammad not only wrote a short work on Ahmad ibn Mansur but also added new information and commentary where necessary. The authors established differences between these two works in this research. For example, when Ali ibn Muhammad condensed Ahmad ibn Mansur's work "A" about the fatwas in work "A", it can be seen that if he disagreed with his fatwa, he did not comment on it as right or wrong but instead he wrote his fatwa. In Islam, a fatwa is a legal or religious opinion given by a Muslim scholar or mufti upon request or in response to a specific question. The study found quantitative differences between the works of Ahmad ibn Mansur "A" and those of Ali ibn Muhammad "B" in terms of the use of seven Sharia sources of Hanafi madhhab: Quran, Sunna, ijma, qiyas and istihsan. The work of Ali ibn Muhammad, "A" was condensed and reworked in the process of the rewriting with some passages withdrawn: about 51 ayahs (verses) of the Quran, 299 hadiths (ambiguous verses) of the Prophet, 60 proofs of ijma (consensus) and 71 proofs of qiyas (analogy).

Thus, to sum up, it can be stated that Isbijab was not just a regional but also a worldwide centre for the development of Islamic law during the Middle Ages. It was not just the place for legal and philosophical debates but full-fledged academic studies aimed at finding and proving the true essence of Islamic legal teachings, by interpreting the Islamic law of that period to the primary sources (Holy Scriptures) as closely as possible. Isbijab's most prominent figures in the field of science were Ahmad ibn Mansura al-Isbijabi, Abu Nasr Muhammad ibn Muhammad Ibn Tarkhan Ibn Uzlag Al-Farabi and Ismail ibn Hammad al-Jawhari among others.

Discussion

The issue of the Isbijab School of fiqh and the writings of local scholars of Islamic law is a complex debate that lies at the intersection of several directions. The discussions on this topic have an impact on contemporary political and historical problems. The scholars from different countries particularly disagree not only on the affiliation of certain Arab figures (as Ahmad ibn Mansur generated dispute by Kazakh and Uzbek scholars) but also on the geographic location of Isbijab itself. Certain scientists (Baipakov, 2000) were convinced that ancient Isbijab corresponded to the site of the modern town of Sayram in Kazakhstan, while other researchers (Baytanayev, 2002) attributed Isbijab to different locations. The adherents of the alternative version most often refer to Isbijab as the village of the same name in the Sayram district but there are more hypotheses, which also attribute Isbijab to other territories of southern Kazakhstan or even Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, etc. (Baipakov and Erzakovich, 1971).

The latest excavations by Kazakhstani archaeologists led by the Director of the Archaeological Institute of Kazakhstan B.A. Baytanayev (2002) showed that the settlement of Sayram matches Isbijab the most. According to the results of stratigraphic research, the territory of the medieval town had a length of about 10 km in the geographical direction and fully corresponded to the modern territory of the Sayram fortress. Here scholars and researchers split into two conditional



"camps": some believe that the Isbijab School of fiqh is some autonomous form, when all the authors classify it as a separate "school" of fiqh. Others dismiss it as an individual "school" even though Isbijab hosted and released a large number of various scholarly theologians and regard it exclusively as part of the Hanafi madhhab. For example, the Kazakh scholar B.A. Baytanayev (2002) wrote in his work "Ancient Isbijab (Medieval cities of South Kazakhstan on the Great Silk Road)" that the papers of most of the jurists associated with Isbijab have similar and different features of interpretation of the scriptures, compared to other scholar works of that region and period. Although the author's writings do not consider Isbijab to be the birthplace of a truly separate direction of Islamic law interpretation, the researcher nevertheless singles out this city from the rest.

At the same time, the Ukrainian scholar A.Yu. Krymsky (1928) raised this issue in his work "History of Muslims" as early as 1904. Although Krymsky does not indicate Isbijab directly, his works mention the territory of modern Kazakhstan as one of the regions where the Hanafi madhhab was notable without mentioning any autonomy or offshoot. According to the researcher, every city in that region had sometimes not one but several philosophical and legal schools and directions within the Hanafi madhhab, which were different from each other to some extent. There is logical support for this view. Based on the results of various studies it can be found different directions and interpretations of Islamic law operated even in Isbijab itself. This is an argument against talking about a separate doctrine.

However, several scholars regard Isbijab as a separate school in the legal interpretation of Islam but within the framework of the Hanafi madhhab. The American Orientalist and Islamic scholar B. Uiller (2019) is the most famous among the researchers who promote this view. Here it can be concluded that quantitative and qualitative indicators obtained from studying the manuscripts and works of the authors mentioned in this research show the difference between the Isbijab School of Law and other schools of fiqh. Undoubtedly, one of the arguments that confirms the affiliation of the Isbijab School of fiqh with the Hanafi School is the great importance of analogies in the works of the most significant figures of this school (including Ahmad ibn Mansur al-Isbijabi). Aside from using the Quran and the Life of the Prophet Muhammad as sources of legal guidance and regulation, this scholarly group also relied heavily on the use of logical arguments to find answers to social problems, which were also consistent with their understanding of Islam (Khyu, 2020).

The Kazakh researcher A.K. Muminov (2018) makes a point about a synthesis of Hanafi and Shafi madhhab traditions in the field of legal theory (usul al-fiqh). The scholar believes that the merging of these two medieval legal concepts took place under a specific pattern. When most of the jurists of the Hanafi school of thought in Central Asia adhered to the legal method, the methodology of the new Iraqi Hanafi took a fresh start. The Iraqi concept of law became a model for other schools of fiqh for years, despite its separate development from theology in Central Asia until the XII century. This method had tight connections with practical jurisprudence, where the main advantage was taking legal science as the basis for law practice under which the lawyers pay particular attention to legal incidents and precedents by putting them at the heart of their jurisdiction. In contrast, the Shafi adhered more to theological law practices. The adherents of the theological method paid more attention to interpreting scripture and studying terminology than to solving legal problems.

It can be concluded that the views of various scholars on the Isbijab School of fiqh and Isbijab, in general, are widely divergent. The difficulty of finding a unified view lies in the fact that Western scholars have not extensively researched this topic and they do mention the subject of the Isbijab only "tangentially" as part of other studies. There are quite a few scientific articles or even full-fledged monographs devoted to this phenomenon. Mainly written by Kazakh researchers, they represent a part of the history of Kazakhstan, which prevents researchers from other countries from learning another opinion. The scholars of the fiqh school of Isbijab can roughly split into those who distinguish the Isbijab School of Islamic law and those who see it as part of the Hanafi madhhab without any special features. This study neither confirms nor disproves any of these assertions so authors cannot eventually deny that the medieval scholars of Isbijab belong to the



Hanafi madhhab but authors do not ignore the features that distinguish them from scholars of other schools (by example of Samarqand or other cities of Turkestan). Nevertheless, all researchers agree that Isbijab was an important centre for the development of medieval Islamic law and other Islamic sciences and was one of the scientific centres of the Turkestan region, a statement that authors confirmed in the course of this research. Moreover, this paper emphasises the importance of the history of Isbijab and the formation of Islamic law not only within the history of Kazakhstan but also in other sectors: political science, law, theology, international relations, etc.

In conclusion, the scholarly discourse surrounding the Isbijab School of fiqh and the writings of local scholars of Islamic law presents a multifaceted debate that intersects various domains of research. This discourse holds relevance not only for historical and academic pursuits but also for contemporary political and historical inquiries. Scholars from different countries have contributed divergent perspectives, leading to debates over the affiliation of certain Arab figures and even the geographic location of Isbijab itself. While some assert the autonomy of the Isbijab School as a distinct form of Islamic jurisprudence, others view it primarily as part of the Hanafi madhhab. The geographical attribution of Isbijab has also been a point of contention, with varying opinions on its exact location. Nevertheless, what remains undeniable is the significant role played by Isbijab as a centre for the development of medieval Islamic law and other Islamic sciences. It emerges as a pivotal intellectual hub in the Turkestan region, with its scholars making notable contributions to the field of Islamic jurisprudence. While there is a divergence of views on the nature of the Isbijab School, this research underscores the importance of understanding the history of Isbijab and the formation of Islamic law within the broader context of Kazakhstan and the region, with implications for multiple disciplines such as political science, law, theology, international relations, and more. Ultimately, the study of the Isbijab School sheds light on a crucial aspect of Islamic intellectual history and its enduring impact.

Conclusions

In conclusion, it can be said that Isbijab was the most important political, cultural and scientific centre of Central Asia in the Middle Ages. The city's position benefited from its convenient location at the crossroads of trade routes, which consequently contributed to its rapid growth and development. Isbijab was one of the centres of development of sciences in Central Asia in the Middle Ages, including Islamic law. The city had its school of fiqh (according to some researchers even more than one). The people called "faqih" were able to interpret the scriptures by bringing what they said under a legal standard. There were several faqihs and their disciples active in Isbijab who often had different views on the norms of Islam and the interpretation of the scriptures about their use for legal purposes, which led to several discussions among medieval scholars. Researchers made an analysis of the scientific activities in Isbijab based on the information that has survived to the present day. Many of the written sources from this period became museum pieces in various countries around the world and this paper contains an analysis of these manuscripts by contemporary medieval authors who had direct access to them.

It can be individually mentioned the personalities of scholars who are associated with Isbijab in one way or another. These figures were not limited to the study and interpretation of Islamic law. There were scientists of a much wider spectrum: mathematicians, astronomers, alchemists, philosophers, geographers and so on. The development of sciences and the large number of scholars in the city can also be explained by the scale of trade that passed through it. Among the scholars of Isbijab were those who often referred to the works of ancient philosophers and scientists. Some researchers have also noted the influence of Chinese culture and science on the Isbijab. Therefore, both strategic geographic position at the crossroads of trade routes and frequent contact with representatives of different cultures, peoples and religions have left their marks on the history of Isbijab science. It can be tried to predict future directions and paths for research on this topic. Speaking of current historical, political and cultural trends and indicating the development of multiculturalism in the world, it can be concluded that the studies on Islamic law are an important factor in unifying Kazakhstan with the Central Asian region and Muslims in general. The trend



towards the development of Islam as a consolidating factor for many nations, especially Turkic peoples, will only increase in the future. The cooperation in the scientific field and joint research by Kazakh scientists with colleagues from Turkey, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and other culturally related nations on the commonality of Turkic history and the history of Islam set bright prospects for the future.

The practical importance for future research in the field of Islamic law, specifically in relation to Isbijab's historical and cultural significance, is significant. Considering Isbijab's significant role as a crucial political, cultural, and scientific hub in Central Asia during the Middle Ages, conducting additional research can provide valuable knowledge about the evolution of Islamic jurisprudence and its connection with different fields of study. Further investigation is warranted to thoroughly examine the biographies and accomplishments of the scholars affiliated with Isbijab, encompassing their impact on Islamic law as well as their significant contributions to mathematics, astronomy, alchemy, philosophy, geography, and related disciplines. Moreover, conducting inquiries into the impact of Chinese culture and science on Isbijab's intellectual environment could potentially uncover captivating discoveries. In an era of increasing multiculturalism, it is crucial to recognise the historical interconnections and common legacies among Kazakhstan, Central Asia, and the wider Muslim world. The collaboration between scholars from Kazakhstan and culturally affiliated nations for joint research on Turkic history and the history of Islam shows potential for promoting international cooperation and enhancing our understanding of this diverse and intricate heritage. Further investigation in this field has the potential to enhance not just scholarly comprehension, but also foster cultural interchange, intercultural discourse, and regional cooperation in Central Asia and other regions.

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