

Fatimah Al-Fihri's Contribution to Islamic Educational Civilization as the Founder of the First University in the World

Research Article

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Abstract. The lack of studies on female figures means that their contributions to the history of education are rarely highlighted. One important figure who has been forgotten is Fatimah Al-Fihri, a Muslim woman who played a major role in the early development of the world of education. Only a handful of people know that Al-Qarawiyyin University was established before Al-Azhar University and the University of Bologna. Interestingly, its founder was a Muslim woman, Fatimah Al-Fihri. This university later became an important means of spreading Islamic education to Europe. This research was conducted in 2024 to early 2025 and aims to reveal the significant role of Fatimah Al-Fihri in the world of education who succeeded in driving the progress of Islamic educational civilization. The research did not involve individual subjects directly, but instead focused on analyzing the historical figure of Fatimah Al-Fihri as the main object of study. Data were collected through literature studies by reading, reviewing, and examining various literature and documents on the history of Islamic education conducted by researchers at the State Islamic University of North Sumatra (UIN SU), Medan, Indonesia. With a qualitative approach based on literature review, the results of the study show that Fatimah Al-Fihri was a pioneer in establishing the first university in the world, which succeeded in creating innovation in the Islamic education system. She contributed ideas about the concept of education, lecture system, curriculum, academic degrees, and toga and graduation robes. Through Al-Qarawiyyin University, Fatimah also participated in the large-scale distribution of translated books, producing world-class scientists, and providing inspiration for the birth of early universities in Europe.

Keywords:

Fatimah Al-Fihri, Peradaban, Pendidikan Islam, Universitas Al-Qarawiyyin Tokoh Islam

Introduction

Science plays an important role for mankind. Without knowledge, humans cannot live better. Higher education is one of the efforts to increase the potential of each individual. Humans can gain previously unknown insights. The Islamic perspective views that priority is given to those who seek knowledge. Every individual Muslim has an obligation to seek knowledge. This statement is supported by the hadith (Muslem M. d., 2024).

حَدَّثَنَا هِشَامُ بْنُ عَمَّارٍ حَدَّثَنَا حَفْصُ بْنُ سُلَيْمَانَ حَدَّثَنَا كَثِيرُ بْنُ شَنْظِيرٍ عَنْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ سِيرِينَ عَنْ أَنَسِ بْنِ مَالِكٍ قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ طَلِبَ الْعِلْمَ فَرِيضَةٌ عَلَى كُلِّ مُسْلِمٍ وَوَاضِعَ الْعِلْمِ عِنْدَ غَيْرِ أَهْلِهِ كَمَقْلَدِ الْخَنَازِيرِ الْجَوْهَرِ وَاللُّؤْلُؤِ وَالذَّهَبِ

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Meaning: "It has been told to us Hisyam bin Ammar said, it has been told to us Hafsh bin Sulaiman said, it has been told to us Katsir bin Syinzhir from Muhammad bin Sirin from Anas bin Malik he said; Rasulullah shallallahu 'alaihi wasallam said: "Seeking knowledge is an obligation for every Muslim. And a person who places knowledge not in the hands of experts (people who are reluctant to accept it and people who ridicule religious knowledge) is like someone who puts pearls, diamonds and gold around a pig's neck" (HR. Ibnu Majah No. 220).

Education is a must for every Muslim. Starting from elementary education to higher education. University as one of the educational institutions that can play an active role in all members of society. As the most important institutional media in society to preserve, understand, expand and pass on intellectual, scientific heritage from generation to generation. This system is identical to the development of civilization (Chang, 2015) . During the process of the emergence of the nation state, universities were seen as a symbol of national pride, especially functioning to demonstrate the intellectual and innovative abilities of the nation.

Higher education provides significant benefits in developing individual academic and vocational potential (Dzirusydi, 2022) . Completing higher education allows people to gain a deeper understanding of the academic field of interest, broaden their horizons, and develop life skills. The perspective of universities for society can produce intellectuals for the advancement of civilization. A small part of society still believes that women do not need higher education and that secondary education is sufficient (Rahmayani, 2021) . The Islamic perspective on women is highly valued without discrimination by carrying out different responsibilities between men and women.

Fatimah Al-Fihri, her name seems to be forgotten by historical traces as evidenced by the small number or almost no Muslim figure Fatimah Al-Fihri found in a large encyclopedia of knowledge about the world of education (Sarah, 2021) . The small number of traces of Fatimah Al-Fihri recorded in large encyclopedias and learning books shows the lack of public perspective on the figure of the Muslim woman who founded the first university in the world.

When many historical facts are covered up, there are also many historical facts that are unknown to the general public. One of these facts is about Al-Qarawiyyin University as the oldest and first university in the world that still stands strong and operates today. So far, many people think that the oldest university is Al-Azhar University (Miraniatman, 2020) which is located in Egypt or universities in Europe such as the University of Oxford which is considered the oldest university in the English-speaking community and the University of Bologna . Meanwhile, the fact shows that the oldest and first educational institution in the world is Al-Qarawiyyin University located in Morocco, especially in the city of Fez. as a form of Islamic and universal education. Of course, this fact is one of the interesting things to learn for the general public, especially for Muslims in various parts of the world.

Starting with the Al-Qarawiyyin mosque which later developed into an educational center in the form of Al-Qarawiyyin University in Morocco. Another university that started from a mosque is Al-Azhar University as a center of higher

learning in Egypt. One of the places in the northeast of Timbuktu District, there is Sankore University in Tinibektu, this university developed from the Sankore Mosque. This fact shows that some Islamic mosques are the oldest universities. In addition to mosques that developed into universities, there are also several universities that were originally churches which later developed into universities. Oxford University, at first was a small church which later developed into a university in the 12th century (Abdul, 2023). This fact shows Al-Qarawiyyin University as an insight for the establishment of early universities in the world. This is interesting to study as a new insight.

The establishment of the first university in the world was included in the golden age of Islam around 650-1258 AD (Abdul, 2023). History shows the development of Islamic education very rapidly, even exceeding the progress of Western education during the golden age of Islam. However, there was a decline that was in contrast to the progress of Western education which has continued to increase until now. Therefore, it is very important for us to reflect on the brilliant history of Islamic education during this era of progress. Through analysis and understanding of the elements that support the progress of Islamic education during the golden age of Islam, it can be the basis for creating a better Islamic education system in the future.

This study aims to be one of the sources of new educational knowledge for readers. Before entering the main discussion, first invite readers to see how important education is for community life, how interesting facts about Al-Qarawiyyin University. So that they can understand first how university education can exist and be valuable to study. After that, it begins to examine and explain further about the active contribution of Fatimah Al-Fihri through Al-Qarawiyyin University. Starting from Islamic education in Morocco which then continued to develop to several regions. Until the birth of early universities in various parts of the region.

This research is valuable for educational personnel involved in the world of Islamic education. The presence of an understanding related to Fatimah Al-Fihri who contributed to the advancement of Islamic educational civilization as the founder of the university. In-depth study can make educators and prospective educators as material for understanding and motivation to carve out quality and more advanced Islamic education (Shafwan, 2019). A person's in-depth understanding of the development of Islamic educational civilization is able to think ahead for education. Like Fatimah Al-Fihri who brought the golden age of Al-Qarawiyyin University as a center of world science. It is still operating today. Through this research, it is hoped that it will be able to improve the quality Islamic education system. Dealing with the possibilities of a decline in Islamic education.

In the historiography of Islamic education, the contribution of female figures still tends to be marginalized. In fact, history records that Fatimah Al-Fihri, a Muslim woman from the 9th century, has made great history by establishing Al-Qarawiyyin University in Fez, Morocco—the first higher education institution in the world that is still active today. Unfortunately, although it sounds very monumental, the name Fatimah Al-Fihri is almost unknown, both in Islamic education literature and in the narrative of global education history. This fact shows the imbalance in historical documentation and minimal recognition of the role of women in Islamic civilization.

Furthermore, there is a common mistake in the perception of society and teachers regarding the oldest universities in the world. Many assume that Al-Azhar University in Egypt or the University of Bologna in Italy are the oldest educational institutions, while Al-Qarawiyyin University, which was founded earlier by a woman, has escaped attention. This reflects the low literacy of Islamic history from a gender perspective, as well as the dominance of the unbalanced Western education narrative. In addition, although Al-Qarawiyyin University has made major contributions such as curriculum concepts, lecture systems, academic degrees, and graduation cultures that are still embraced globally, these contributions have not been widely studied as a legacy of Islamic scholarship that inspired the formation of a modern higher education system.

This inequality is exacerbated by the lack of contemporary academic research that specifically examines female Muslim educators and their impact on the advancement of science. Thus, the understanding of the community, including educators and students, regarding the contribution of Islamic civilization to global education is limited and distorted. Based on these facts, this research is important to, Reveal the role of Fatimah Al-Fihri in the history of Islamic education, Trace how her contributions influenced the development of the world education system, Affirm that women in Islam have a large and honorable space in building civilization, Respond to challenges to the dominance of Western history and strengthen the narrative of Islamic scholarship from a gender and civilization perspective.

In the history of Islamic education, the contribution of female figures is often overlooked or does not receive the attention it deserves. One real example is the figure of Fatimah Al-Fihri, a Muslim woman who actually became a pioneer in establishing the first university in the world—Al-Qarawiyyin University in Fez, Morocco. Despite having a major influence on the development of Islamic education and global civilization, the existence and role of Fatimah Al-Fihri are still minimally recorded in educational encyclopedias or in mainstream academic narratives.

In addition, many people still misunderstand the history of the oldest educational institutions in the world, being more familiar with European universities such as Bologna and Oxford, compared to Al-Qarawiyyin which has been established since the 9th century. This phenomenon reflects the imbalance in the distribution of historical information, as well as the lack of study of female Islamic figures in educational literature.

Starting from this problem, this study was conducted to explore more deeply the contribution of Fatimah Al-Fihri in establishing and developing Al-Qarawiyyin University as a center of Islamic knowledge that has a major influence on global education, as well as to reaffirm the important position of women in the history of Islamic civilization, especially in the field of education.

Method

The approach used in this study is a qualitative method that focuses on a literature review (Library Research) ([Adlini, Qualitative Research Methods of Library Studies, 2022](#)). Through qualitative methods, this study will prioritize descriptive analysis ([Luthfiyah, 2017](#)) of various texts, documents, and relevant literature to gain

a deep understanding of the issues being studied. The research will focus on the analysis of books, scientific articles, previous research related to gaining a deep understanding of the topic being studied. Therefore, this study will investigate and analyze related written references to answer research questions regarding the contribution of Fatimah Al-Fihri to the development of Islamic education as the founder of the first university in the world. This approach provides an opportunity for researchers to build a substantial understanding of the topic without having to go into the field.

The method of collecting information is done through document review. The researcher collects documents relevant to the research, such as classic works of Islamic education, historical records of universities, and references related to Fatimah Al-Fihri and Al-Qarawiyyin University. The purpose of this collection is to find information about Fatimah Al-Fihri's contribution. Furthermore, the researcher conducts an analysis with the following steps: 1) Literature Selection. In this step, the researcher determines the relevant literature and documents that have been collected during library research. Of course, the literature is certain to have a strong relationship with Fatimah Al-Fihri's contribution to the development of Islamic education as the founder of the first university in the world. 2) Data Compilation. The researcher organizes and divides the literature based on themes and issues. 3) Content Coding. The researcher labels or codes important information in the literature. These codes may include important moments from Fatimah Al-Fihri's struggle at Al-Qarawiyyin University, or other categories of analysis. 4) Drawing Conclusions and Findings. The researcher attempts to draw conclusions based on qualitative data analysis. This is done by explaining the main findings, patterns, and relationships that emerge from the literature.

Results and Discussion

Fatima Al-Fihri

Fatimah binti Muhammad Al-Fihriya is usually referred to as Fatimah Al-Fihri as an influential Muslim figure in Islamic education who was born in Qairouan in 800 AD (Smart, 2020) now known as the city of Tunisia. Fatimah Al-Fihri was born into an educated family who studied fiqh and hadith-traditions of the prophet (El-Shorbagy, 2020). Around 820 AD the Al-Fihri family migrated from Tunisia to Morocco (Muffisany, 2021) with their father, Muhammad bin Abdullah Al-Fihri and their sister Maryam Al-Fihri. Fatimah Al-Fihri's father was a prosperous merchant who then moved with his family.

The migration of the Al-Fihri family was not without reason. Fatimah Al-Fihri's father was forced to move his family more than 1,000 miles overland which took the road from Qairouan to the city of Fez in Morocco. Precisely in the year 818, a rebellion broke out in Qairouan by the local ruler of Qouiruan, namely Aghlabid, who was placed by the Abbasid Caliph, from the center of Baghdad government. All efforts to eliminate the Aghlabid family failed and the Aghlabids responded by expelling around 2,000 families, one of which was the Al-Fihri family, from their territory, this is in line with (Gearon, 2016) then many of these exiles were welcomed in the city of Fez, Morocco.

It took place some time after the Al-Fihri family made their hijrah journey. Gradually, Fatimah Al-Fihri lost her father, husband and brother before the divine, of course this made Fatimah Al-Fihri experience a sad time. Al-Fihri's family is just Fatimah Al-Fihri and her sister Maryam Al-Fihri. After the death of Fatimah Al-Fihri's father and Maryam Al-Fihri inherited abundant wealth. The two sisters, Fatimah Al-Fihri and Maryam Al-Fihri, decided to use their inheritance by building a mosque for the benefit of the community to worship and gain knowledge.

Mosque as a place of worship and a center of education. The provision of mosques as centers of education is considered ineffective in the city of Fez. This happened due to the large-scale immigration of Muslims from Qayrawan to Fes and Cordoba (Southern Spain) to Fes. The enthusiasm of the Muslims in Fes to worship made the mosque inadequate to accommodate the congregation. Fatimah Al-Fihri while walking came across a mosque in Fes that was no longer able to accommodate all the congregation. Through a strong will for education, Fatimah Al-Fihri wanted to spread religion in a more effective way. She then thought of a way to integrate the mosque and the madrasah. After some time, Fatimah-Al-Fihri, based on her own will, bought a large area of land to build a place of worship as well as a place to gain knowledge (Ghifari, 2021) .

Kaiauan " people is taken from the city where they lived in Tunisia (Ghifari, 2021) . Even Fatimah Al-Fihri united Muslim migrants by creating a community in the Al-Qarawiyyin Mosque as a religious center in Fes.

Fatimah al-Fihri was the one who determined the location for the establishment of the mosque. Fatimah Al-Fihri was very happy when she found that the selected land was also a source of yellow stone and high-quality soil, which are ideal materials for construction. In her efforts to carry out this task in accordance with the principles of sharia. Fatimah Al-Fihri was very careful that the source of funds for the mosque was fully in accordance with sharia law. It was also reported that the laying of the first stone began on the first day of the month of Ramadan (245 AH / 859 AD) and fasting (Semesta, 2020) during construction as a symbol of asking for blessings from Allah (Merah, 2017). Fatimah al-Fihri not only supervised the mosque construction project, but also planned its sustainability in the future. Fatimah Al-Fihri allocated a plot of land on the north side of the mosque to be a waqf that aims to serve water needs, as well as equipping the mosque with carpets and lighting. Furthermore, Al-Qarawiyyin was expanded during the reign of Ahmad bin Abi Bakr al-Zanati (345 H/956 AD).

Al-Qarawiyyin Mosque gradually developed into Al-Qarawiyyin University as a form of Fatimah Al-Fihri's love for Islamic education. Fatimah Al-Fihri added several buildings for learning places which later developed into universities and centers of Moroccan science. While Maryam founded the Al-Andalus Mosque. The important concept of the mosque as a center of education is not only teaching religious knowledge but other sciences in a broad scope such as medicine, economics, philosophy, law, astronomy and so on.

After Morocco gained independence in 1956, Al-Qarawiyyin University was located in several Moroccan cities, including Fez, Titwan, Marrakech, and Agadir. Al-Qarawiyyin University once faced a difficult period where it was almost closed

due to the implementation of traditional teaching methods. However, in 1988 King Hasan II decided to reactivate this university. Until now, Al-Qarawiyyin University is still active and continues to provide knowledge to anyone.

The medieval Fatimah Al-Fihri popularized the model of higher education that has been adopted throughout the world, showing the university as a place of knowledge and values of the development of educational civilization. She was a woman, challenging common assumptions about the contribution of women to Muslim civilization and Islamic education. Fatimah Al-Fihri died in 224 AH or 880 AD (Basyaiban, 2022). While Al-Qarawiyyin University is still operating today which is precisely located on Jalan Abi Al Hassan Al Marini - Kasbah Al Shararda - Fez, Morocco.

Fatimah Al-Fihri built additional buildings containing a university and library. Mosque, Library, University became part of Qarawiyyin. Fatimah Al-Fihri provided opportunities for students without exception from various circles and there was no discrimination. So that many scholars, intellectuals, and from various nationalities, cultures, professions, and different religions came to study and teach. This made Al-Qarawiyyin University a center of civilization for the development of Islamic education and intellectuals.

Al-Qarawiyyin University

University is considered to meet the requirements as the first university in the world. This is certainly in line with UNESCO and The Guinness Book of Records on a site "Guinness World Records" which records Al-Qarawiyyin as the oldest educational institution and the first in the world to offer academic degrees. in the world, precisely in 1998 (Syuthi, 2019). More clearly, Guinness World Records 2015 states:

"The oldest existing, and continuously operating educational institution in the world is the University of Karueein, founded in 859 AD in Fez, Morocco. The University of Bologna, Italy, was founded in 1088 and is the oldest one in Europe"

University in Arabic is called "*jami'ah* ", which is a small scope of the Arabic word for mosque, namely *Jami'*. Arabic means a place of worship and a place of further learning are completely interrelated with each other. The important concept of a mosque as a center of education not only teaches religious knowledge but includes other sciences in a broad scope such as medicine and astronomy, economics and so on. The provision of a mosque as a center of education is considered less effective. The large number of seekers of knowledge makes the learning carried out in the mosque insufficient to accommodate the congregation and is considered less effective. Al-Qarawiyyin Mosque developed into Al-Qarawiyyin University by making 859 AD as the year of the founding of Al-Qarawiyyin Mosque and Al-Qarawiyyin University.

According to (Suyatno, 2024), a university is an institution of higher education that offers various academic study programs. Despite the debate between Islamic historians who support Al-Qarawiyyin as the first university built in the history of mankind and the skeptical narrative of the West, there is no doubt that this institution

is one of the oldest and most prominent universities working in the tradition of Islamic madrasah colleges.

Al-Qarawiyyin experienced expansion during the reign of Ahmad bin Abi Bakr al-Zanati (345 H/956 M). Historians believe that al-Qarawiyyin began the teaching process immediately after its construction was completed, due to the many scholars who lived in Fes at that time, which became a place for people to seek knowledge. Such as al Imam Yahya al-Awal (296 H), Abu Abd al-Rahman Bakr bin Hamad al-Tahirti (296 H), and Yahya al-Rabi' (307 H). (Merah, 2017)

Islamic education according to (Mappasiara: 2018) in 2018 is understood as a process that aims to provide teaching and guidance to students to develop the quality of their faith, intellect, character, and skills as preparation for facing the future based on Islamic principles. According to Law No. 12 of 2012 concerning Higher Education, the purpose of higher education is to support the development of students' potential so that they can become individuals who believe in and obey God Almighty and have good morals, are healthy, knowledgeable, competent, creative, independent, skilled, and cultured for the benefit of the country. This aims to produce graduates who master various fields of science who are expected to be able to make positive contributions to society, the nation, and the state, as stated by the Ministry of Religion in 2012. The purpose of education to have faith and piety to Allah SWT is stated in QS. Ali-Imran verses 137-138.

قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ سُنَنٌ فَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَانظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُكَذِّبِينَ ﴿١٣٧﴾ هَذَا بَيَانٌ لِلنَّاسِ وَهُدًى وَمَوْعِظَةٌ لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿١٣٨﴾

Meaning: " Indeed, there have passed before you the sunnahs of Allah, therefore travel to (all corners of the earth and see the end of those who lied (the messengers). This is the Qur'an, a clear explanation for all mankind, and a guide and lesson for the pious ." QS. Ali-Imran [3]: 137-138.

This verse describes the history of people who previously did not believe in God and how His rules were applied to them. Humans are required to learn God's rules through historical records. The explanations in the Qur'an regarding history and natural events contained in these verses constitute knowledge for mankind, and through this knowledge, it is hoped that humans can receive guidance, lessons, and become individuals who believe and do good deeds, as well as being pious figures.

Al-Qarawiyyin University by Fatimah Al-Fihri focuses on Arabic as used in everyday language. Currently on the website of " Alqarawiyyen University " it states that the educational goal of Al-Qarawiyyin University is dedicated to reviving Islamic education through Arabic. Rooted in the tradition of Muslim scholars, the university views Arabic language proficiency as a religious obligation and a practical means to unlock the fruits of Islamic knowledge. Offering courses carefully designed by experts, the university provides a high-quality learning environment for diverse learners, including those interested in Arabic, poetry, Islamic studies, and literature. In-depth programs ensure that students not only advance in their studies but also contribute to the strengthening and growth of their knowledge.

The objectives of education at Al-Qarawiyyin University are in line with the mission of Al-Qarawiyyin University on the official website " *Alqarawiyyen Uinversity* " which states:

" Empowering individuals to embrace the core of Islam through a transformative educational experience that is firmly grounded in tradition. Through comprehensive study of Arabic language and Islamic sciences, we aim to make original texts, cultural nuances, and spiritual depth accessible to all ."

Graduates of Al-Qarawiyyin University will have strong abilities and skills to listen, speak, and write in classical and modern Arabic. Through similar experiences, students will bond together and become lifelong friends.

Fatimah Al-Fihri as the founder of the first university opened opportunities for all people in the world without discrimination. Offering a rich multicultural environment. Multinational, multicultural, and accepting students from all nationalities, cultures, professions, and religions. Al-Qarawiyyin University as an innovative and systematic education not only offers Islamic education but also general education such as mathematics, medicine, astronomy, law, theology, rhetoric, geography. There are also courses on grammar, Islamic history, Islamic culture and elements of chemistry and mathematics.

In 1963, the university was integrated into the modern Moroccan university system under the supervision of the Ministry of Education. A new campus was established in another part of Fez while the mosque and library remained. Today, Al-Qarawiyyin University offers undergraduate, master's, and doctoral programs, and produces five journals: *Revue al-Qaraouiyyine* , *Revue d'ach-charia-Fez* , *Revue d'Ossouliddin-Tetouan* , *Revue d'al-logha al-arabia-Marrakech* , and *Revue d'ach-charia-Agadir* .

Historical Manuscripts

Al-Qarawiyyin University is not only labeled as the first university in the world. More than that, Fatima Al-Fihri founded a library as part of the Al-Qarawiyyin mosque. The oldest Al-Qarawiyyin library in the world was built in the 14th century AD ([Sari, 2018](#)) . Storing various historical manuscripts that are considered very valuable and are still well preserved in the Al-Qarawiyyin library with more than 10,000 manuscripts 30,000 volumes ([Todorova, 2023](#)) . Fatimah-Al-Fihri provides opportunities for students around the world to study without discrimination. Rich in Islamic educational resources attracts the interest of people around the world to study at Al-Qarawiyyin University.

Not a few European scholars study at this university. One of the media for studying is the library. Various kinds of books in the Al-Qarawiyyin library are translated into European languages. The famous scholar, Leo Africanus as one who used the library. Its notes and manuscripts have been one of Europe's main sources of information about Islam for more than 400 years ([Oswald, 2017](#)) . Even the Middle Ages had an important role in transmitting knowledge between European society and Muslim society. This indirectly shows the transfer of education to the European world

The original 14th-century work of Ibn Khaldun's "*Muqaddimah* " is housed in the Al-Qarawiyyin University Library. The library has over 4,000 rare books and ancient Arabic manuscripts dating back to the 9th century. There are a number of famous books in the library that are considered to have strong Islamic values, such as The Muwatta by Imam Malik , The Seerrah by Ibn Ishaq, and The Premier Transcript of Al-'Ibar by Ibn Khaldun. The Muwatta by Imam Malik is an original manuscript by Ibn Rochd on Maliki law written in Andalusian calligraphy and is housed in the Al-Qarawiyyin Library. Also included is a 9th-century Quran given by Sultan Ahmed Al-Mansur in 1602, written in Kufic script (the oldest style of Arabic calligraphy) on camel skin.

The university library underwent a new restoration in 2016 by Morocco's Minister of Culture. Prompted by the centuries-old knowledge contained in many ancient documents that were in danger of being lost forever, its official opening was announced in the headlines, drawing new attention to Fatimah's story. It's worth noting that the architect who designed the library is also a Muslim. Aziza Chaouni, a Fez-born, Toronto-based architect, has set up a new laboratory to process, preserve and digitize some of the oldest documents at Al-Qarawiyyin University.

Producing Leading Scientists

Fatimah Al-Fihri is not only present as the founder of the first university. More than that, through Al-Qarawiyyin University, Fatimah Al-Fihri is able to produce leading scientists and intellectual figures in the world. Fatimah Al-Fihri opens opportunities for all students from various circles without discrimination to gain knowledge at Al-Qarawiyyin University. This attracts many students to study.

Many scholars studied at this university, and graduated from there. They excel and are experts in the jurisprudence of new problems and fatwas. Excellent in responding to various new fiqh events. Proving their ability to strive and find answers and solutions to issues that arise in their time .Many of its graduates became famous scholars who greatly influenced Islamic history ([Younes, 2016](#)) .

Maimonides (1135-1204) was a Jewish philosopher. Ibn Arabi (1165-1240) was a Sufi philosopher. Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406) was a philosopher and historian. Ibn Rushayd al-Sabti (1259–1321) a hadith scholar. Leo Africanus (1496-1554) a writer. Ahmed Mohammed Al-Maqqari (1577-1632) was a historian and theologian who was later appointed imam and mufti by sultan Saadi Zaydan. Imam Al-Bannani (1727-1780) was a jurist. Ahmad Ibn Idris (1760-1780) was a Sufi scholar. Muhammad Al-Katani (1873-1909) was a writer and political leader. Abdul Karim Al-Kattabi (1882-1963) was a Moroccan political and military leader. Allal Al-Fassi (1910-1974) was a Moroccan politician. Muhammad Taqiuddin Al-Hilali (1893-1987) was a language translator. Abdullah Al-Ghumari (1910-1993) was a legal scholar. Fatima Al-Kabbaj (1932) a member of the higher education council (Islamic council) who was recorded as one of the first few women to be accepted into Al-Qarawiyyin University.

One of the famous alumni of Al-Qarawiyyin University is Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406) was a jurist and historian whose work, "*Muqaddimah* " (or Prolegomena in Greek). Made significant contributions in the fields of philosophy of history, social

science or sociology, demography, historiography or cultural history, and economics. Ibn Rushayd al-Sabti (1259-1321) was a hadith scholar and traveler who is famous for his work, *rihla*, a historically valuable book containing cultural and biographical data. Several Muslim scholars played an important role in the spread of Islamic education to the West.

Gerbert of Aurillac (999-1003), known as Pope Sylvester II, a scholar and scientist, popularized Arabic numerals in Europe after studying at the University of Al-Qarawiyyin. Moses Maimonides (1135-1204), a Jewish philosopher who influenced the environment outside the Jewish community. Although his writings on Jewish law and ethics were initially rejected during his lifetime, after his death he was recognized as one of the leading theological sources (rabbinic arbiter) and an important philosopher in the history of the Jewish people. Today, his works and thoughts are valued as a guide to thinking and learning for the Orthodox Jewish community. Leo Africanus (1494-1554), a writer and adventurer whose works have survived for approximately 400 years as one of Europe's main references on Islam.

Not a few alumni of Al-Qarawiyyin University have studied and are able to bring development to world civilization. As the first university in the world, Al-Qarawiyyin University has produced brilliant intellectual figures who then spread their wings according to their respective fields of knowledge. Scholars who studied at Al-Qarawiyyin University brought back the knowledge they learned at Al-Qarawiyyin University to Europe, which was then reintegrated into the curriculum of universities in Europe.

Contribution to Education

The main focus of Al-Qarawiyyin University's lessons is religion. The curriculum of Al-Qarawiyyin University consists of three streams, namely religious studies, arts and pure sciences (Merah, 2017). Al-Qarawiyyin University presents various Islamic studies, Islamic theology courses that include interpretation or interpretation of the Qur'an or interpretation of holy books, studies of hadith or the sayings of Muhammad SAW, fiqh, and Islamic law. Other educational lessons are also available in the form of astronomy, elements of chemistry and mathematics, literature and poetry, logic, arithmetic, geography, and medicine to enrich students' knowledge.

The concept of Al-Qarawiyyin University education involves deep interaction between educators and students or students with students with a discussion and debate system. Al-Qarawiyyin University uses the method of delivering knowledge, *halaqāt al-dars* (Merah, 2017) is a common way. Learning is done by creating an open learning circle visually. Involving interaction between educators and students by discussing or debating the knowledge being discussed.

Having intellectual freedom and a spirit of brotherhood at Al-Qarawiyyin University. Scholars and students were free to choose what they wanted to study, how to study, and from which books or sources they wanted to study. This academic freedom continued to be a major feature of learning at Al-Qarawiyyin until 1789 during the reign of Sultan Mohammed III, who ordered scholars to identify precisely the subjects to be taught and the books to be used in teaching. Despite the changes that have occurred in Al-Qarawiyyin throughout its history. It is evident that the glory

of Al Qarawiyyin was able to attract a large number of students from all over the region (Merah, 2017). Students were eager to learn and challenge their ideological and sectarian divisions in a unique atmosphere adorned with tolerance, peace, and intellectual freedom that prevailed under the roof of Al-Qarawiyyin University.

The variety of topics and the high quality of its teaching attracted scholars and students from all over the world. The large number of scholars and students from all over the world who studied at Al-Qarawiyyin University resulted in the transfer of Islamic education to the West. Islamic education for Western society became increasingly visible when early universities in Europe, such as the University of Bologna and the University of Paris, began to adopt educational models similar to Islamic madrasas (Abidin, 2024). The teaching style that included open discussion, direct guidance from experts, and a text-oriented learning approach and critical analysis were key elements taken from the Islamic education system. European academics who had studied at Al-Qarawiyyin University brought these ideas home and integrated them into the educational structure in Europe.

The contribution of Islamic education is not only limited to technical scientific achievements, but also plays a role in forming the basis of a modern education system that emphasizes rationality, exploration of knowledge from various disciplines, and appreciation for the continuous learning process. This legacy is one of the main factors that drove the intellectual revival in Europe, which then changed the dark ages of Europe to the golden age. This shows the progress of Islamic educational civilization beyond Europe during the golden age of Islam.

Fatimah Al-Fihri succeeded in creating the first university education in the world. Universities developed as a manifestation of the progress of Islamic educational civilization. Even today, modern universities that still stand have adopted the education system of Al-Qarawiyyin University by integrating science and religion. Fatimah Al-Fihri popularized the model of higher education that has been adopted throughout the world, showing universities as a place of knowledge and community values. Fatimah Al-Fihri was a woman, challenging common assumptions about the contribution of women to Islamic educational civilization.

Unwittingly, universities spread across the world adopted the Al-Qarawiyyin University education system. Contributing educational reforms in the form of educational concepts, lecture systems, curricula, academic degrees, robes and graduation gowns is certainly the result of the ideas of the pioneer of the first university in the world. Al-Qarawiyyin University sent the first large volume of translated books, scientific discoveries, and insights for the establishment of early universities in Europe such as the Sorbonne, Bologna, Padua from Tunisia, Morocco, Africa (Fejzić-Čengić, 2020). Few know the fact that even now student graduation gowns and gowns are still actively used by universities in various parts of the world. The meaning of Fatimah Al-Fihri's idea behind the rectangular gown wrapped in black is a symbol that symbolizes and is inspired by the shape of the Kaaba in Mecca as the direction of Muslims. (Meilinda, 2023)

Discussion

Education as an important thing in life. Fatimah Al-Fihri is an important figure in Islamic education. The development of Islamic education civilization cannot be

separated from the contribution of Fatimah Al-Fihri who succeeded in becoming the pioneer of the first university in the world. Through Al-Qarawiyyin University, Fatimah Al-Fihri introduced the concept of university education to the world. Introducing Islamic education without discrimination and studying knowledge without limits. It is proven that Fatimah Al-Fihri's contribution gave birth to a civilization rich in knowledge throughout the world. Al-Qarawiyyin University, as a beacon of knowledge and enlightenment, envisions a world where Islamic science experts play an important role in fostering global harmony. By embracing the cultural and spiritual dimensions of Islam, this university seeks to build bridges between cultures and enrich society with knowledge. Graduates bring the results of their education and apply them back into the education system at European universities. This illustrates the exchange of knowledge from the Islamic world to Europe. Fatimah Al-Fihri's contribution is very significant and should be remembered as a role model for Muslim women, showing that the responsibility for education applies to all genders, both men and women.

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