



The Civilizational and Intellectual Legacy of Fatimah al-Fihri in the History of Islamic Education in Fez since 859 CE

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Abstract:

Fatimah al-Fihri was a prominent female figure who played a key role in the development of Islamic education and intellectual tradition through the founding of al-Qarawiyyin in Fez, in 859 CE. A study of this figure is important for understanding women contributions to the establishment of educational institutions and the development of the Islamic scholarly tradition. This study aims to examine the social, cultural, and spiritual background of Fatimah al-Fihri, explain her role and contributions to the founding of al-Qarawiyyin, and analyze her influence and intellectual legacy in the history of Islamic education. This study employs historical methodology with a library research approach, following the stages of heuristics, source criticism, interpretation, and historiography. Research sources include historical books, biographical literature, scholarly journals, research articles, and other relevant written sources. The results of the study indicate that the social and intellectual environment of Fez, spiritual values, and the use of inherited wealth for the benefit of the community served as a crucial context for Fatimah al-Fihri contributions. The founding of al-Qarawiyyin in 859 CE initially involved the construction of a mosque, but it later evolved into a space for learning and a center for intellectual activity through the tradition of *halaqah* and the support of *waqf*. Fatimah al-Fihri legacy lies primarily in laying the institutional foundations that enabled the sustained development of education and the transmission of knowledge, while also highlighting women involvement in the development of Islamic educational institutions.

Keywords: Fatimah al-Fihri, Islamic education, civilization, intellectual.

Abstrak:

Fatimah al-Fihri merupakan salah satu tokoh perempuan yang memiliki peran dalam perkembangan pendidikan dan tradisi intelektual Islam melalui pendirian al-Qarawiyyin di Fez, pada tahun 859 M. Kajian terhadap tokoh ini penting untuk melihat kontribusi perempuan dalam pembentukan lembaga pendidikan dan perkembangan tradisi keilmuan Islam. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji latar belakang sosial, budaya, dan spiritual Fatimah al-Fihri, menjelaskan peran dan kontribusinya dalam pendirian al-Qarawiyyin, serta menganalisis pengaruh dan warisan intelektualnya dalam sejarah pendidikan Islam. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode sejarah dengan pendekatan kepastakaan melalui tahapan heuristik, kritik sumber, interpretasi, dan historiografi. Sumber penelitian berupa buku sejarah, literatur biografi, jurnal ilmiah, artikel penelitian. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa lingkungan sosial dan intelektual Fez, nilai spiritual, serta pemanfaatan harta warisan untuk kepentingan masyarakat menjadi konteks penting bagi kontribusi Fatimah al-Fihri. Pendirian al-Qarawiyyin pada tahun 859 M pada awalnya merupakan pembangunan masjid, tetapi kemudian berkembang menjadi ruang pembelajaran dan pusat kegiatan intelektual melalui tradisi halaqah dan dukungan wakaf. Warisan Fatimah al-Fihri terutama terletak pada peletakan fondasi kelembagaan yang memungkinkan berkembangnya pendidikan dan transmisi ilmu secara berkelanjutan, sekaligus memperlihatkan keterlibatan perempuan dalam pembangunan institusi pendidikan Islam.

Kata kunci: Fatimah al-Fihri, pendidikan Islam, peradaban, intelektual.

INTRODUCTION

Education has been one of the primary instruments in the formation and development of Islamic civilization. Since the early period of Islam, educational activities have functioned not only as a means of transmitting religious knowledge but have also developed into spaces

for intellectual production encompassing various disciplines, including Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh), hadith, Arabic language, astronomy, medicine, mathematics, philosophy, and the social sciences. These developments gave rise to various educational institutions that subsequently played an important role in establishing and sustaining Islamic intellectual traditions. In this context, Fez, Morocco,¹ occupies a strategic position in the history of Islamic education. The city developed into one of the major intellectual centers in the Maghrib and maintained strong connections with broader scholarly networks across the Islamic world.²

Within this context, Fatimah al-Fihri occupies a particularly significant position in the history of Islamic education. In 859 CE, Fatimah al-Fihri is traditionally associated with the establishment of the al-Qarawiyyin Mosque and institution in Fez, which, over the course of its historical development, became one of the most influential centers of Islamic learning in North Africa. The establishment of al-Qarawiyyin should not be understood merely as the construction of a place of worship, but rather as part of the process through which an intellectual space was formed, enabling teaching, scholarly discussion, manuscript transmission, and the development of networks of scholars. Therefore, Fatimah al-Fihri legacy is highly relevant to understanding the relationship between women, religious institutions, and the development of education in Islamic civilization.

The significance of al-Qarawiyyin became increasingly evident as the institution developed into a major center of learning that attracted scholars and students from various regions. Fez gradually established an intellectual ecosystem that facilitated the exchange of ideas among different parts of the Islamic world. The scholarly traditions that developed at al-Qarawiyyin contributed to strengthening Fez position as one of the important centers of knowledge transmission in the Maghrib.³ Over the course of its long history, the institution underwent various transformations in terms of its organizational structure, curriculum, scholarly authority, and relationship with political power. Therefore, Fatimah al-Fihri legacy extends beyond the act of founding an institution; it can also be examined as part of the long historical process through which educational traditions and intellectual culture developed in Fez.

This perspective becomes increasingly important when the history of Islamic education is examined not only through the contributions of rulers, male scholars, or political institutions, but also through the contributions of civil society and women. The historiography of Islamic education has generally placed greater emphasis on male figures as the primary actors in the establishment of institutions and scholarly traditions. However, the case of Fatimah al-Fihri demonstrates that Muslim women also possessed the capacity to contribute to the development of educational infrastructure and intellectual life. Studying her legacy can therefore broaden our understanding of the position of women in the history of

¹ Yosi Huzna Nidia Ningrum, Muhammad Aulia Rahman, and Sugiyono, "Cahaya Dari Fez : Kontribusi Fatimah Al-Fihri," *Basataka (JBT)* 8, no. 2 (2025): 1536–43.

² Rudeina Bsharat, "The Contribution of Women Scholars to the Flourishing of Educational Institutions in Al- Maghrib Al-Aqsa during the Ldrisid Era :Fatima Al-Fihri as a Model," *Journal of Social Sciences* 09, no. 37 (2025): 219–38, <https://orcid.org/0009-0008-1767-5692>.

³ Haya Taqiyah and Sapri, "Fatimah Al-Fihri ' s Contribution to Islamic Educational Civilization as the Founder of the First University in the World," *Fokus, Jurnal Kajian Keislaman Dan Kemasyarakatan* 10, no. 1 (2025): 67–81.

Islamic civilization while demonstrating that the development of education was shaped by the interaction of religious, social, economic, and cultural factors.

Nevertheless, studies of Fatimah al-Fihri often remain limited to popular narratives that portray her as the “founder of the first university in the world,” without critically examining how her legacy relates to the historical development of Islamic education in Fez. Such simplification may obscure the complexity of al-Qarawiyyin development as an institution that underwent significant changes over the course of several centuries. Furthermore, a distinction needs to be made between the early context of the establishment of a mosque and center of learning in the ninth century and the concept of a “university” as understood in the modern sense. Therefore, the study of Fatimah al-Fihri needs to be situated within a broader historical context so that her contribution can be understood in a balanced and academically appropriate manner.

Several previous studies have examined Fatimah al-Fihri and al-Qarawiyyin from various perspectives. One of these studies was conducted by Rudeina Bsharat, entitled “The Contribution of Female Scholars to the Prosperity of Educational Institutions in Al-Maghrib Al-Aqsa during the Idrisid Era: Fatima al-Fihri as a Role Model.”⁴ The study situates Fatimah al-Fihri within the social and intellectual context of North Africa in the ninth century. The establishment of al-Qarawiyyin, which was based on the *waqf* system, is regarded as one of the primary factors that supported the sustainability of the Islamic educational institution. The study also demonstrates that women at that time were not merely participants in educational activities but could also occupy strategic positions as founders and administrators of educational institutions. Another study is entitled “Light from Fez: Fatimah al-Fihri Contribution to the Evolution of Global Education,” written by Yosi Huzna Nidia Ningrum and colleagues.⁵ This study examines Fatimah al-Fihri from social, cultural, and gender perspectives. The successful establishment of al-Qarawiyyin is associated with the social conditions of Fez during the Idrisid Dynasty, which encouraged the development of knowledge and scholarship. The study also positions Fatimah al-Fihri as an important representation of women participation in Islamic civilization while highlighting the limited recognition of women contributions in the historiography of Islamic education.

Based on these studies, discussions regarding Fatimah al-Fihri have focused on her social context, the *waqf* system that supported al-Qarawiyyin, and the role of women in the development of Islamic education. However, the relationship between Fatimah al-Fihri life story, the process of establishing al-Qarawiyyin, and the formation of her intellectual legacy remains an area ripe for more comprehensive study. The uniqueness of this article lies in its effort to connect these three aspects within a single framework of discussion. Fatimah al-Fihri is not merely understood as a female figure who founded an educational institution, but is also situated within the social, cultural, and spiritual contexts that shaped her ideas and actions. Thus, the founding of al-Qarawiyyin is understood as part of a broader process in the formation and continuity of the Islamic educational tradition, rather than merely as the event of establishing an institution.

⁴ Bsharat, “The Contribution of Women Scholars to the Flourishing of Educational Institutions in Al-Maghrib Al-Aqsa during the Idrisid Era :Fatima Al-Fihri as a Model.”

⁵ Huzna et al., “Cahaya Dari Fez : Kontribusi Fatimah Al-Fihri.”

The study of Fatimah al-Fihri legacy is also relevant to understanding how an individual initiative can generate long-term institutional and civilizational impacts. The establishment of al-Qarawiyyin in 859 CE marked the beginning of a tradition that subsequently contributed to the formation of Fez intellectual identity. The relationship between institutional establishment, the development of scholarly networks, knowledge transmission, and the formation of intellectual culture demonstrates that an individual legacy does not necessarily take the form of written ideas. Such a legacy may instead take the form of institutions, scholarly traditions, intellectual networks, and educational values that continue to be reproduced and transformed across generations.

Based on the foregoing discussion, research on “The Civilizational and Intellectual Legacy of Fatimah al-Fihri in the History of Islamic Education in Fez since 859 CE” is important in order to examine Fatimah al-Fihri legacy in a more comprehensive manner. This research aims not only to reconstruct her contribution to the establishment of al-Qarawiyyin but also to analyze how the institution developed into an integral part of the Islamic educational tradition and intellectual culture of Fez. Through a historical approach, this study is expected to provide a deeper understanding of the continuity between Muslim women philanthropic initiatives, the development of educational institutions, the transmission of knowledge, and the formation of Islamic civilization. At the same time, this research may contribute to the historiography of Islamic education by positioning women not merely as objects of history, but also as active agents in the formation of Islamic institutions and intellectual traditions.

METHOD

This study employs a historical research method using a library research approach. According to Dudung Abdurahman, historical research is conducted through several stages: heuristics, source criticism, interpretation, and historiography. This method was chosen because the study examines the intellectual legacy of Fatimah al-Fihri based on written sources related to her life, the founding of al-Qarawiyyin, and the development of Islamic education. Research sources were obtained from history books, biographical literature, scholarly journals, research articles, and other written sources relevant to the subject of the study.⁶

The heuristic phase involved gathering various sources related to Fatimah al-Fihri and al-Qarawiyyin. The collected sources then underwent a source criticism phase to assess their authenticity, credibility, and relevance to the research focus. Next, the interpretation phase involved interpreting the facts obtained and relating them to the social, cultural, religious, and educational conditions during Fatimah al-Fihri time. The final phase was historiography, which involved systematically compiling the research findings into a historical narrative based on the facts that had been critically evaluated and interpreted.

Through these stages, this study aims to gain an understanding of the background of Fatimah al-Fihri life, her contributions to the development of al-Qarawiyyin, and her intellectual legacy in the history of Islamic education. Thus, the historical method is used not only to gather information about Fatimah al-Fihri but also to examine sources and interpret

⁶ Dudung Abdurahman, *Metodologi Penelitian Sejarah Islam*, Penerbit Ombak (Yogyakarta: Penerbit Ombak, 2011). 67.

historical facts so that the research findings can be presented in a scientific and accountable manner.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Social, Cultural, and Spiritual Background of Fatimah al-Fihri

Fatimah bint Muhammad al-Fihri al-Qurashiyyah, known as Fatimah al-Fihri, was a prominent Muslim woman from Kairouan, Tunisia, who is believed to have been born around 800 CE. She was the daughter of Muhammad ibn Abdullah al-Fihri, a merchant who later settled in Fez, Morocco, with his family.⁷ Fatimah had a sister named Maryam and grew up in a family that enjoyed a comfortable standard of living and a strong religious life. After settling in Fez, Fatimah received an inheritance from her family, which she later used to fund the construction of the Al-Qarawiyyin Mosque in 859 CE. Historical sources provide limited information regarding the end of her life, but Fatimah is generally believed to have died around 878-880 CE in Fez. The lack of sources that definitively confirm her exact dates of birth and death means that Fatimah's life story must be understood based on the available historical accounts.⁸

Fatimah al-Fihri was a prominent female figure who played a significant role in the development of Islamic civilization, particularly in the fields of education and scholarship. Her life was inextricably linked to the social, cultural, and religious conditions of the Muslim community in the 9th century CE. This environment provided the context for her contribution to the establishment of an institution that served not only as a place of worship but also evolved into a space for learning and the advancement of knowledge. Socially, the al-Fihri family had Arab roots and later settled in the Maghreb region. The family's relatively comfortable lifestyle and emphasis on religious values provided an environment that fostered the character development of Fatimah and Maryam. These circumstances later became a key factor in understanding Fatimah's involvement in the social and religious activities of the Fez community.

As a financially well-off family, the al-Fihri family had the opportunity to contribute to community life. After receiving an inheritance from her family, Fatimah chose to allocate those funds toward the construction of mosques and educational institutions. This choice demonstrates that, in the view of the Muslim community, wealth serves not only a material purpose but can also be a means of attaining blessings and leaving a lasting benefit for society.⁹

The social conditions in the city of Fez were also a key factor in understanding the origins of Fatimah al-Fihri's idea. At that time, Fez was emerging as one of the most important cities in the Maghreb region and had become a meeting place for various social groups,

⁷ Monien El Monien Shorbagiy, "Women in Islamic Architecture : Towards Acknowledging Their Role in the Development of Islamic Civilization," *El Shorbagiy, Cogent Art & Humanities* 7 (2020), doi:10.1080/23311983.2020.1741984.

⁸ Hanane Guoddar and Abdelghanie Ennam, "The Role of Early Female Muslim Scholars in the Development of World Knowledge," *Journal of Education in Muslim Societies* 6, no. 2 (2025): 109–22, doi:10.2979/jems.00032.

⁹ Sharifah Nurulhuda S Ab Latif et al., "Filantropi Islam: Instrumen Wakaf Menurut Perspektif Şaḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī," *Global Journal Al-Thaqafah (GJAT)* 14, no. 2 (2024): 218–37, doi:https://doi.org/10.7187/GJAT122024-15.

including local residents, immigrants from Andalusia, and groups from North Africa.¹⁰ Population growth and commercial activity have made Fez a city that is thriving economically while also serving as a space where various traditions and cultures interact. This situation has created a need for religious and educational institutions that can serve as gathering places for the community and foster the development of knowledge.¹¹

In a cultural context, the development of Fez reflects the convergence of Arab-Islamic traditions with the culture of the Maghreb people. Islam not only flourished as a religious system but also shaped the social and intellectual life of the community. Mosques held a significant position because, in addition to being places of worship, they also served as spaces for learning, discussion, and the transmission of knowledge. Scholarly traditions such as the study of the Qur'an, hadith, fiqh, the Arabic language, and various other branches of knowledge flourished within the mosque environment. It is in this context that the founding of al-Qarawiyyin can be understood as part of the development of the Islamic educational tradition that established the mosque as the center of the community's intellectual life.¹²

The founding of al-Qarawiyyin also demonstrates that women in Islamic society have opportunities to play a role in social and intellectual development. Fatimah al-Fihri chose not to spend her wealth solely for her own benefit, but instead directed it toward the construction of facilities that could be used by the wider community.¹³ Her actions demonstrate that women can play an active role in shaping public spaces and advancing education. Although historical sources regarding Fatimah personal life are relatively limited, the historical tradition surrounding al-Qarawiyyin reflects an appreciation for women roles in the development of religious institutions.¹⁴

From a spiritual perspective, Fatimah al-Fihri actions are closely tied to the religious values that have developed within Muslim society. The construction of the al-Qarawiyyin Mosque in 859 CE was not merely a physical construction project, but also reflected a religious orientation and concern for the well-being of the community. The traditions that have developed regarding Fatimah portray her as a devout figure who used the wealth she inherited as a means to bring about broader benefits. This spirituality can be understood through the concept of *sadaqah jariyah* a charitable act whose benefits continue even after a person has passed away.¹⁵

¹⁰ Said Edaich, "The City of Fas and the University of Al-Qarawiyyin: A Common Destiny," *The Opole Studies in Administration and Law* 1, no. 16 (2018), doi:<https://doi.org/10.25167/osap.1214>.

¹¹ Ibtisam Hammoud Mohamed and Thamer Azzam Hamad, "Journal of Tikrit University for Humanities Al-Qarawiyyin University, the Most Prominent Intellectual Landmark Establishment, Naming, Importance," *Journal of Tikrit University for Humanities* 29 (2022): 162–75, doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.25130/jtuh.29.1.3.2022.08>.

¹² Rachid El Hour, "Teaching and Learning in the Islamic West: Some Ideas Regarding the Almohad, Marinid, and Naşrid Educational Systems," *Religions* 16, no. 2 (2025), doi:10.3390/rel16020139.

¹³ Maidah Wihdatul Muna, Firdaus Khusein Alchays, and Kholid Mawardi, "From Aisha to Fatima Al-Fihri: Deconstructing Masculine Narratives in Classical Islamic Historiography," *Edu Global: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 6, no. 1 (2025): 20–27, doi:<https://doi.org/10.56874/eduglobal.v6i1.2140>.

¹⁴ Najoua Ghani et al., "From Fatima Al-Fihriya to the First Documented Medical Degree in the World," *Cureus* 18, no. 3 (2026): 4–11, doi:10.7759/cureus.105954.

¹⁵ Anisa Rahmaati, Arya Farlan Ananda, and Yogi Oktaviana, "Kajian Tentang Hukum Wakaf Dalam Islam," *Sujud: Jurnal Agama, Sosial Dan Budaya* 1, no. 3 (2025): 366–75, doi:<https://doi.org/10.63822/2dpx6t77>.

These spiritual values are closely linked to the development of education. In Islamic tradition, the pursuit of knowledge holds a high status, so the establishment of educational institutions can be viewed as a form of service to religion and society.¹⁶ Over time, Al-Qarawiyyin became a center for various scholarly activities. Religious studies were an important part of its educational activities, but the intellectual tradition within that environment later expanded into various fields of knowledge, including language, philosophy, mathematics, astronomy, and medicine. This development demonstrates that Islamic spirituality is not always separate from intellectual activity but can, in fact, serve as a foundation for the development of scholarly traditions.¹⁷

Fatimah al-Fihri social, cultural, and spiritual background is thus a crucial element in understanding her contribution to Islamic civilization. The thriving social environment of Fez, a scholarly culture that made the mosque the center of community life, and spiritual values emphasizing the importance of good deeds and knowledge formed the context that enabled the emergence of al-Qarawiyyin as a significant institution. Fatimah contribution lay not only in the construction of a mosque but also in the creation of a social space that enabled the community to access education and develop intellectual traditions.¹⁸

Thus, Fatimah al-Fihri can be regarded as one of the female figures in Islamic history who exemplifies the interconnection between faith, philanthropy, education, and community development. The legacy of al-Qarawiyyin demonstrates that women contributions to Islamic civilization do not always take the form of political leadership but can also be realized through the development of social and educational institutions. From this perspective, the life of Fatimah al-Fihri is worth examining within the context of the history of Islamic civilization, particularly in understanding the role of women in the development of education and intellectual traditions in the Islamic world.¹⁹

The Role and Contribution of Fatimah al-Fihri in the Founding of al-Qarawiyyin University

The founding of al-Qarawiyyin is inextricably linked to the role of Fatimah al-Fihri, one of the women who made significant contributions to the development of Islamic education and Islam civilization. This institution began with the construction of a mosque in Fez, Morocco, in 859 CE, initiated by Fatimah al-Fihri, a woman from the al-Fihri family who had migrated from Qayrawan. After her father death, Fatimah received an inheritance, which she then used to establish the al-Qarawiyyin Mosque. In its early stages, the building could not yet be understood as a university in the modern sense, as its primary function was as a place of worship. However, as educational activities within it increased, al-Qarawiyyin gradually evolved into an educational institution and a center of intellectual activity. This development is crucial to understanding Fatimah al-Fihri intellectual legacy, as the

¹⁶ Hasbi Siddik and Muhammad Satir, "Pendidikan Islam Dalam Perspektif Hadis," *Transformasi : Jurnal Kepemimpinan & Pendidikan Islam* 3, no. 1 (2019): 1–26, doi:<https://doi.org/10.24252/lp.2016v19n2a7>.

¹⁷ Akhlatal Fadilla Putri, Anita Susi, and Maya Inayati Sari, "Peran Fatimah Al-Fihri Dalam Pengembangan Pendidikan Agama Islam Dan Pemberdayaan Perempuan Di Dunia Islam," *Journal of Islamic Educational Development* 2, no. 1 (2025): 12–21, <https://jurnalstaiibnusina.ac.id/index.php/jppip>.

¹⁸ Aisha Rashid Alshamsi and Khiredine Youssef, "Arabic and Foreign Sources Describing the Cultural Heritage of the Historic City of Fez," *Al-Adab Journal* 149, no. 149 (2021), doi:<https://doi.org/10.31973/rjvysr58>.

¹⁹ Guoddar and Ennam, "The Role of Early Female Muslim Scholars in the Development of World Knowledge."

establishment of the mosque not only resulted in a religious building but also provided a space that facilitated the transmission and advancement of knowledge. Thus, Fatimah initial contribution can be understood as laying the material and institutional foundations for the formation of a thriving intellectual environment at al-Qarawiyyin.²⁰

Fatimah al-Fihri contribution to this process was not limited to providing funds for construction, it also reflected a leadership approach that linked religious interests with the social and intellectual needs of the community. The wealth she inherited was not used solely for personal gain but was instead channeled toward building facilities that would benefit the community both as places of worship and as spaces for acquiring and advancing knowledge. This decision demonstrates that the founding of al-Qarawiyyin had social and intellectual dimensions from the very beginning. Fatimah role as a key figure in the establishment of this institution highlights her concern for the needs of the people of Fez while also demonstrating the use of personal resources for the public good. In the context of intellectual heritage, the significance of this action lies in the creation of a space that enables scholarly activities to take place on an ongoing basis. Therefore, Fatimah al-Fihri not only contributed to the physical construction of al-Qarawiyyin but also laid the foundation for the development of intellectual life within the surrounding community.²¹

In providing educational facilities, the Al-Qarawiyyin Mosque served as the foundation for the gradual development of a learning environment. In addition to fulfilling its religious functions, the mosque became a venue for educational activities through *halaqah* gatherings of scholars. As academic activity increased, various educational support facilities were developed to facilitate the teaching process and intellectual pursuits. This development prompted al-Qarawiyyin to expand the scope of its studies from religious fields to various academic disciplines. These disciplines eventually came to include theology, mathematics, astronomy, medicine, and other fields of knowledge. Al-Qarawiyyin also adopted the tradition of the *ijazah* as a form of recognition of an individual mastery of a particular field of knowledge, awarded by a teacher upon fulfillment of certain requirements. The development of these facilities and the learning system demonstrates that the space established through Fatimah initiative later evolved into an environment for the transmission of knowledge. The intellectual value of her contribution can be seen in the creation of a space that allowed for a continuous relationship between teachers, students, knowledge, and scholarly traditions.²²

The continuity of educational activities at al-Qarawiyyin is also inextricably linked to the funding system that developed through the *waqf* mechanism. The institution funding sources came not only from individuals but also included collective *waqf*, support from the sultanate, and donations from *alumni*. The assets used by Fatimah al-Fihri in the early days served as one of the foundations for financing the construction of the mosque, while in subsequent periods the *waqf* system played a role in ensuring the institution sustainability. These funds were used for various needs, including the construction and maintenance of facilities, the provision of scholarships, the waiver of tuition fees, research activities, the acquisition of manuscripts, and funding for teaching and religious staff. These conditions

²⁰ Ghani et al., "From Fatima Al-Fihriya to the First Documented Medical Degree in the World."

²¹ Hiba Abdouni, "The First University in the World: Al-Qarawiyyine University 1," *MAS Journal of Applied Sciences* 6, no. 3 (2021): 789–95, doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.52520/masjaps.108>.

²² Ghani et al., "From Fatima Al-Fihriya to the First Documented Medical Degree in the World."

demonstrate that *waqf* serves a broader function than merely financing infrastructure development. *Waqf* became a social mechanism that enabled educational and scholarly activities to continue sustainably. In relation to Fatimah al-Fihri intellectual legacy, this system is significant because it illustrates how the initial idea of utilizing wealth for the benefit of society could evolve into an institutional mechanism that supports the continuity of educational and scholarly activities.²³

The development of al-Qarawiyyin is also evident in the changes and expansion of the fields of study taught there. In its early days, instruction focused primarily on Islamic studies, such as the Qur'an, hadith, fiqh, and the Arabic language. As the Islamic intellectual tradition evolved, the scope of instruction expanded to include mathematics, astronomy, medicine, philosophy, and various other disciplines. This expansion reflects al-Qarawiyyin transformation from an institution oriented toward religious education into an educational center with a broader academic scope. This development is significant in the discussion of Fatimah al-Fihri contributions because it shows how the institution she founded subsequently provided a space for the development, preservation, and transmission of various types of knowledge. Thus, Fatimah intellectual legacy can be seen not only in the establishment of the institution but also in the continuity of its educational function, which enabled knowledge to be developed and passed on to subsequent generations.²⁴

These developments subsequently established al-Qarawiyyin as one of the intellectual centers that played a significant role in the history of Islamic education. Its existence contributed to the development of scientific and intellectual life in the Islamic world and became part of a scholarly network connecting various regions, including North Africa and Al-Andalus. This position demonstrates that Fatimah al-Fihri initial contribution had consequences that extended far beyond the construction of a mosque. The space established through her initiative subsequently became a venue for interaction among scholars, students, and various traditions of knowledge. From the perspective of intellectual heritage, this development indicates that the primary value of Fatimah contribution lies in her ability to lay the foundation for an environment that enabled knowledge to be studied, developed, and transmitted. Therefore, the connection between Fatimah al-Fihri and the intellectual development of al-Qarawiyyin lies not only in her status as the founder but also in the continuity of the institutional functions that emerged from that founding.²⁵

Furthermore, Fatimah al-Fihri role can be understood as laying the institutional foundation for the development of Islamic higher education. Although the development of the curriculum, the teaching system, the awarding of degrees, and endowment-based funding took place gradually after its founding, the foundation established through the founding of al-Qarawiyyin paved the way for the formation of an increasingly complex educational system. It is important to distinguish between Fatimah al-Fihri direct contributions and the subsequent development of al-Qarawiyyin in later periods. Fatimah cannot be directly linked to the entire educational system, curriculum, or scholarly traditions that emerged later, but the

²³ Muhammad Nazmul Hoque and Md. Faruk Abdullah, "The World's Oldest University And Its Financing Experience: A Study On Al-Qarawiyyin University (859-990)," *Journal of Nusantara Studies* 6, no. 1 (2021): 24–41, doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.24200/jonus.vol6iss1pp24-41> ISSN.

²⁴ Ghani et al., "From Fatima Al-Fihriya to the First Documented Medical Degree in the World."

²⁵ Mohamed and Hamad, "Journal of Tikrit University for Humanities Al-Qarawiyyin University , the Most Prominent Intellectual Landmark Establishment , Naming , Importance." 78.

establishment of the institution served as the initial foundation for that developmental process. Thus, the intellectual value of Fatimah al-Fihri contribution lies in the creation of an institutional foundation that enabled educational activities and the transmission of knowledge to flourish over the long term. The transformation of al-Qarawiyyin from a mosque into a center of education and scholarship demonstrates that Fatimah legacy consists not only of a physical building but also of the creation of a social and institutional space for the continuity of Islamic intellectual traditions.²⁶

The Influence Civilizational and Intellectual Legacy of Fatimah al-Fihri in the Education of the Muslim Community

Fatimah al-Fihri role in the history of Islamic education is significant because it demonstrates that the development of the Islamic scholarly tradition was not built solely by male rulers or scholars, but also involved contributions from women. Fatimah al-Fihri is known as the founder of the al-Qarawiyyin Mosque in Fez, Morocco, in the 9th century CE. The institution, which initially functioned as a mosque, later evolved into one of the most important centers of education and scholarship in the Islamic world. This development transformed al-Qarawiyyin into not only a place of worship but also a space for studying various fields of Islamic scholarship and other disciplines. This legacy demonstrates that *waqf*, mosques, and educational institutions are closely intertwined in shaping the Islamic intellectual tradition.

Fatimah al-Fihri Civilizational and intellectual legacy is evident in the continued existence of al-Qarawiyyin as a center for the transmission of knowledge to the people of Fez and to Muslims who come to study there. Through the development of this institution, Islamic knowledge and various fields of study have been learned, taught, and passed down from one generation to the next. Thus, the influence stemming from Fatimah legacy extends not only to the educational institution itself but also to the teachers, students, and the community who have benefited from the existence of al-Qarawiyyin. The educational system practiced there was not limited to a single field of study but encompassed the study of the Qur'an, hadith, fiqh, the Arabic language, and various other disciplines that were developing at that time. The continued existence of these activities demonstrates that the establishment of al-Qarawiyyin created a space that allowed Islamic scholarly traditions to continue to flourish and be passed down to subsequent generations²⁷

In the context of the development of universities, al-Qarawiyyin is often cited as one of the oldest institutions of higher education still in existence today. Although the concept of a "university" in the Middle Ages was certainly different from that of a modern university, the existence of al-Qarawiyyin demonstrates that the Islamic world had a tradition of organized higher education long before the modern university system emerged in Europe. What is significant about this legacy is not merely the institution age, but how a mosque could evolve into a center for the transmission of knowledge. These developments had an impact on the people of Fez and on students, who came to view al-Qarawiyyin as a place to acquire and

²⁶ Mohamed and Hamad, "Journal of Tikrit University for Humanities Al-Qarawiyyin University , the Most Prominent Intellectual Landmark Establishment , Naming , Importance." 80.

²⁷ Souad Merah, Ramdane Tahraoui, and Mariya Seemin Khan, "Fātimah Al-Fihri and Religious Fraternity in Al-Qarawiyy in University: A Case Study," *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 7, no. 10 (2017): 177–83, <http://irep.iium.edu.my/60386/>.

expand their knowledge. This process demonstrates the continuity between religious activities, education, and the advancement of knowledge within Islamic society.²⁸

Another impact was evident in the development of science. Al-Qarawiyyin became a major center of intellectual activity that brought together various scholarly traditions. Islamic education at that time did not focus solely on mastering religious sciences, but also provided opportunities for the study of language, philosophy, mathematics, astronomy, medicine, and other fields of knowledge.²⁹ The scholarly traditions that developed in various centers of Islamic education subsequently contributed to the formation of a vast intellectual network spanning North Africa, Al-Andalus, the Middle East, and other Islamic regions. In this context, Fatimah al-Fihri legacy lies in the creation of an institutional framework that enabled the continuous transmission of knowledge. Her influence is evident in the existence of an academic community comprising teachers and students, as well as the broader public who benefited from the educational and scholarly activities at al-Qarawiyyin.³⁰

Fatimah al-Fihri legacy is also significant in understanding the role of women in the history of Islamic education. Her role as the founder of an institution that later became a center of learning demonstrates that women had the opportunity to contribute to the development of scholarly institutions. Her role should not be understood merely as that of a woman who built a structure or place of worship, but as an individual deeply committed to the continuity of knowledge and education. This is particularly important because the history of education often highlights male figures, while women contributions to the development of intellectual traditions have not always received commensurate attention.³¹

The story of Fatimah al-Fihri also demonstrates that women in Islamic society have the opportunity to serve as social actors in the field of education. Through the establishment of al-Qarawiyyin, women can be understood not only as recipients of education, but also as active participants in creating educational spaces.³² This legacy has shaped our understanding of the role of women in the history of Islamic education namely, that women can serve as supporters, driving forces, and providers of spaces for the development of education. Thus, Fatimah influence is not only tied to the existence of al-Qarawiyyin but also to the emergence of a historical narrative regarding women involvement in the social and intellectual life of society.³³

In addition to issues of institutions and women, Fatimah al-Fihri legacy can also be linked to the tradition of waqf in Islam. The founding of al-Qarawiyyin demonstrates how

²⁸ MD Mahmud and Shibly Sadik, "Relevance Of Islamic Traditional Pedagogical Strategies In 21st Century Education: A Case Study Of Al-Qarawiyyin University" 7, no. 1 (2023): 64–82, doi:<https://doi.org/10.70771/Jocw.V7i1.76> Relevance.

²⁹ Huzna et al., "Cahaya Dari Fez : Kontribusi Fatimah Al-Fihri."

³⁰ Otoman, Imron, and Furi Azhira, "Fathima Al-Fihri and the Tradition of Knowledge: Connecting the Past with the Future," *Ampera: A Research Journal on Politics and Islamic Civilization* 6, no. 1 (2024): 306–12, doi:<https://doi.org/10.19109/ampere.v6i01.30162>.

³¹ Otoman, Imron, and Furi Azhira, "Fathima Al-Fihri and the Tradition of Knowledge: Connecting the Past with the Future," 308.

³² Handoko Ja'far and Taufik Rigo, "Empirical Facts of Educational Chances for Women in Islamic World: Past and Present," *Walisongo: Jurnal Penelitian Sosial Keagamaan* 25, no. 2 (2017): 401, doi:[10.21580/ws.25.2.1250](https://doi.org/10.21580/ws.25.2.1250).

³³ Siti Rahayu NM and Defi Fefdianti, "The Role of Women in the History of Islamic Education (Examining Educational Concepts from a Montessori Perspective)," *Edu-Kata* 11, no. 1 (2025): 87–93, doi:[10.52166/kata.v11i1.9387](https://doi.org/10.52166/kata.v11i1.9387).

ownership and economic resources can be directed toward social and educational purposes. Throughout Islamic history, *waqf* has played a vital role in funding mosques, madrasas, libraries, and various educational activities. This model demonstrates that education is not solely the responsibility of the state but can also flourish through community participation. In this context, Fatimah legacy illustrates the importance of individual and community participation in providing educational resources. The benefits are felt not only by students and teachers, but also by the communities surrounding these institutions.³⁴

From the perspective of modern education, Fatimah al-Fihri legacy remains highly relevant. First, her story highlights the importance of establishing educational institutions that are not only focused on the transfer of knowledge but also on fostering a society with a culture of learning. Education should serve as a space for developing students' intellectual, moral, and social abilities. This principle aligns with the needs of modern education, which requires not only producing individuals who master knowledge but also those who are capable of using that knowledge to benefit society.³⁵

Second, al-Fihri legacy is relevant to the idea of community involvement in the development of education. Modern education requires support from various parties, ranging from the government, educational institutions, and the community to individuals. The spirit demonstrated through the founding of al-Qarawiyyin shows that individual commitment to education can result in institutions that benefit society in the long term. Thus, education can be viewed as a shared responsibility, not merely the concern of formal institutions.³⁶

Third, Fatimah al-Fihri legacy is relevant to strengthening equal access and opportunities for women in education. The development of modern education has increasingly positioned women as an important part of the academic world. Women are not only students but can also become teachers, researchers, leaders of educational institutions, and founders of institutions. In this context, the story of Fatimah al-Fihri serves as a historical example demonstrating that women contributions to education have deep roots in the history of Islamic civilization.³⁷

However, it is important to view the figure of Fatimah al-Fihri critically and not merely treat her as a symbol. Information about Fatimah al-Fihri personal life is relatively limited, and some of the stories that have emerged about her stem from later historiographical traditions. Therefore, any discussion of her must distinguish between the historical facts regarding the founding of al-Qarawiyyin and the various popular narratives that have developed about her life. This critical approach is necessary to ensure that Fatimah al-Fihri legacy remains situated within its proper historical context.

³⁴ Trisno Wardy Putra, Hasaruddin, and Susmihara, "Kontribusi Wakaf Dalam Membangun Peradaban Dunia Islam Dan Barat (Studi Pada Lembaga Pendidikan Tinggi)," *Studia Economica : Jurnal Ekonomi Islam* 10, no. 1 (2024): 77–89, doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.30821/se.v10i1.20303>.

³⁵ Nia Kurnianingsih, Wildan Fauzi, and Hafifah Rahmi Puspitaningsih, "Holistic Education in the Perspective of Islamic Education: Integration of Spiritual, Intellectual, and Social Values," *ATIKAN: Journal of Islamic Education* 1, no. 1 (2025): 1–8, <https://journal.iaipibandung.ac.id/index.php/atikan/article/view/351>.

³⁶ Alwy Ahmed Mohamed et al., "Decolonising the Origins of the University : Fatima Al-Fihri and the Islamic Foundations of Higher Education," *Journal of World Thinkers* 2, no. 3 (2025): 161–76, doi:<https://doi.org/10.61455/jwt.v2i03.591>.

³⁷ M Maksad Ridhahani Fidzi, "Islamic Education in Gender Perspective (Historical, Sociological, Political, Economic and Management Review)," *Intiqad: Jurnal Agama Dan Pendidikan Islam* 16, no. 1 (2024): 88–101, <http://jurnal.umsu.ac.id/index.php/intiqad>.

Thus, Fatimah al-Fihri influence on the history of Islamic education lies not only in the founding of al-Qarawiyyin but also in the institutional legacy and ideas that developed thereafter. Al-Qarawiyyin became part of the tradition of Islamic higher education, while the story of its founder offers insight into women involvement in the development of intellectual life. This legacy also highlights the connection between mosques, *waqf*, education, and the advancement of knowledge within Islamic civilization. From a contemporary perspective, Fatimah al-Fihri can be understood as a historical figure who reminds us that educational progress requires a long-term vision, social concern, and the involvement of various segments of society, including women. Therefore, her intellectual legacy remains relevant to discussions on the development of Islamic education, the history of universities, women empowerment, and the establishment of educational institutions in the modern era.³⁸

Thus, Fatimah al-Fihri Civilization and intellectual legacy can be seen primarily through the continued existence of al-Qarawiyyin as a space for education, the transmission of knowledge, and the intellectual life of the community. Her influence extends to the students and teachers engaged in scholarly activities, the people of Fez who benefited from the institution existence, and women who can be recognized as part of the history of the development of Islamic educational institutions. This legacy also illustrates the relationship between mosques, *waqf*, education, and social life in the development of Islamic civilization. Therefore, Fatimah al-Fihri is significant not only as a figure associated with the founding of al-Qarawiyyin but also as part of the history of the development of educational spaces and community involvement in building the tradition of Islamic scholarship.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, Fatimah al-Fihri intellectual legacy in the history of Islamic education is particularly evident in her ability to transform personal resources, spiritual values, and social concern into the foundation for the establishment of a sustainable educational space. The social, cultural, and religious context that flourished in Fez served as a supportive backdrop for her contributions, while her use of inherited wealth to establish the Al-Qarawiyyin Mosque in 859 CE became a tangible expression of her involvement in social and scholarly life. Although initially built as a place of worship, the mosque later provided the institutional foundation for the development of learning activities, *halaqah*, and the transmission of knowledge. Thus, Fatimah al-Fihri primary contribution lay not in the development of the entire al-Qarawiyyin educational system that emerged in subsequent eras, but rather in laying the initial foundation that enabled the institution to evolve into a center of education and intellectual life.

Fatimah al-Fihri legacy can further be understood through the continued existence of al-Qarawiyyin as a space for education and the transmission of knowledge, as well as through the new perspectives it has opened regarding women involvement in the development of Islamic educational institutions. The development of al-Qarawiyyin demonstrates the interconnection between mosques, *waqf*, education, and intellectual life in building a sustainable scholarly tradition. Therefore, Fatimah al-Fihri intellectual legacy is significant

³⁸ Muhammad Aiman Awalluddin, "Exploring the Role of Waqf Instrument in Supporting Educational Development: A Qualitative Content Analysis," *Fitrah: Jurnal Kajian Ilmu-Ilmu Keislaman* 9, no. 1 (2023): 1–18, doi:10.24952/fitrah.v9i1.7381.

not only as the history of an institution founding but also as an example that women contributions, and social concern can be integral to the formation of Islamic educational civilization. However, this interpretation must still be viewed critically, as sources regarding Fatimah al-Fihri personal life are relatively limited, and some narratives about her have developed through later historiographical traditions.

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