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Unveiling the Forgotten Voices: Women's Role in Islamic Civilization through Fatima Mernissi's Perspective

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Abstrak: Penelitian ini mengkaji peran perempuan dalam perkembangan ilmu pengetahuan Islam melalui analisis terhadap buku *The Forgotten Queens of Islam* karya Fatima Mernissi. Buku ini mengungkap peran perempuan sebagai pemimpin dan cendekiawan dalam sejarah Islam, yang sering kali terpinggirkan dalam narasi sejarah utama. Kajian ini menyoroti kontribusi mereka, baik dalam ranah politik maupun keilmuan, serta hambatan yang dihadapi dalam struktur sosial yang didominasi oleh sistem patriarki. Dengan penelitian ini, diharapkan dapat diperoleh pemahaman yang lebih luas mengenai signifikansi peran perempuan dalam membentuk pemikiran dan peradaban Islam. Pendekatan historis dan analitis digunakan untuk mengungkap dinamika yang membentuk peran perempuan di berbagai era. Selain itu, penelitian ini juga berupaya mengidentifikasi relevansi temuan historis ini dalam konteks peran perempuan Muslim di era modern.
Kata Kunci: Perempuan Muslim, Kepemimpinan, Ilmu Pengetahuan Islam, Fatima Mernissi.

Abstract: *This study explores the contributions of women to Islamic scholarship by analysing* The Forgotten Queens of Islam *by Fatima Mernissi. The book sheds light on the significant role of women as leaders and scholars in Islamic history, roles that are often marginalized in dominant historical narratives. This research examines their influence in both political and intellectual spheres, as well as the challenges they encountered within patriarchal societal structures. Through this analysis, the study aims to provide a broader perspective on the importance of women in shaping Islamic thought and civilization. A historical and analytical approach is employed to uncover the dynamics that have shaped women's roles across different periods. Furthermore, this study seeks to identify the contemporary relevance of these historical findings in understanding the role of Muslim women in the modern era.*
Keywords: Muslim Women, Leadership, Islamic Knowledge, Fatima Mernissi.

INTRODUCTION

The role of women in Islamic history is often marginalized in mainstream narratives, particularly in the context of leadership and scholarly contributions. In various classical and modern literature, discussions about Muslim women tend to be limited to domestic roles and positions considered subordinate within a patriarchal social structure. However, history records that women have played a significant role in various fields, including knowledge, politics, and leadership. One work that highlights this theme is *The Forgotten Queens of Islam* by Fatima Mernissi, which reveals the involvement of women as leaders and scholars in the Islamic world[1]. Nevertheless, few studies have specifically analysed how Muslim women contributed to shaping Islamic intellectualism and how their presence is perceived in contemporary academic discourse. This academic oversight reflects broader structural challenges in acknowledging and integrating women's contributions into Islamic historiography and intellectual tradition[2].

Previous literature on the role of women in Islam has been conducted from various perspectives. Leila Ahmed, in *Women and Gender in Islam*, discusses the construction of gender in Islam from the pre-Islamic era to modern times, highlighting how women are often positioned within cultural constraints and conservative religious interpretations[3]. Meanwhile, Asma Barlas, in *Believing Women in Islam*, argues that patriarchal interpretations of the Qur'an have obscured the essence of gender equality that is inherently present in Islam[4]. Another study by Mohammad Akram Nadwi in *Al-Muhaddithat: The Women Scholars in Islam* demonstrates that thousands of women contributed to the teaching of hadith and Islamic knowledge, yet their histories have not received the attention they deserve[5]. Amina Wadud, in *Qur'an and Woman*, further explores how scriptural interpretations have been used to marginalize women's roles in Islamic scholarship and leadership[6]. While these studies provide rich insights into women in Islam, there remains a gap in research that specifically examines women as intellectual leaders in the context of Islamic civilization and their impact on epistemological developments.

The novelty of this study lies in its critical analysis of *The Forgotten Queens of Islam* as a primary source for understanding the contributions of women in Islamic leadership and scholarship[7]. Although Mernissi has revealed many forgotten female figures, her approach

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[1] Fatima Mernissi, *The Forgotten Queens of Islam* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), p. 28.

[2] Margot Badran, *Feminism in Islam: Secular and Religious Convergences* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2009), p. 23.

[3] Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 45.

[4] Asma Barlas, *Believing Women in Islam: Unreading Patriarchal Interpretations of the Qur'an* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002), p. 78.

[5] Mohammad Akram Nadwi, *Al-Muhaddithat: The Women Scholars in Islam* (Oxford: Interface Publications, 2007), p. 112.

[6] Amina Wadud, *Qur'an and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 56

[7] Fatima Mernissi, *The Forgotten Queens of Islam*, p. 29.

primarily focuses on political aspects without delving deeply into how women contributed to the transmission of knowledge and the development of Islamic intellectualism. Therefore, this study seeks to bridge this gap by highlighting how female thought contributed to the advancement of Islamic intellectual traditions and how power dynamics influenced their roles in history. Furthermore, it will examine how these narratives can reshape contemporary discussions on gender and knowledge production in the Islamic world.

This study aims to address several key questions: (1) How did women in Islamic history contribute to the development of knowledge? (2) How was female leadership in the Islamic world perceived in different historical periods? (3) How can the findings in *The Forgotten Queens of Islam* be interpreted in the context of modern Islamic scholarship? By answering these questions, this research hopes to provide a new perspective on understanding the role of women in Islamic civilization. Moreover, this study will consider how historical erasure of female scholars and leaders has shaped contemporary gender dynamics within Islamic academia[8].

This study employs a literature review approach with a critical analysis of Mernissi's book and various supporting literature. By incorporating a diverse range of historical and academic sources, this method enables an in-depth exploration of women's roles in shaping Islamic thought[9]. Thus, this research contributes not only to the study of Islamic history but also to the discourse on gender and Islamic epistemology. By engaging with both historical and modern sources, this study aims to offer a nuanced understanding of how the intellectual contributions of Muslim women have been preserved, neglected, or contested over time. Additionally, this research emphasizes the need for revisiting historical narratives to ensure that women's contributions are not merely acknowledged but also integrated into the broader framework of Islamic scholarship. This approach fosters a more inclusive historiography that challenges the dominant male-centric perspectives that have long shaped academic discourse on Islam.

Through this research, it is hoped that discussions on the role of women in Islam can be expanded beyond domestic and political aspects. A more holistic understanding of women's contributions to knowledge will open space for a fairer interpretation of Islamic history and inspire contemporary Muslim women to continue contributing to academic and leadership fields[10]. Furthermore, by shedding light on forgotten female scholars, this study aims to encourage future researchers to explore similar themes, thus ensuring that the intellectual legacy of Muslim women is preserved for future generations. Ultimately, this study aspires to challenge entrenched gender biases in Islamic historiography and highlight

[8] Barbara Freyer Stowasser, *Women in the Qur'an, Traditions, and Interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 67

[9] Haifaa A. Jawad, *The Rights of Women in Islam: An Authentic Approach* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1998), p. 92.

[10] Amira El-Azhary Sonbol, *Beyond the Exotic: Women's Histories in Islamic Societies* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2005), p. 41.

the necessity of integrating female perspectives into broader intellectual discourses, fostering a more equitable and comprehensive understanding of Islamic civilization.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative descriptive method with a library research approach. Library research involves systematic activities related to collecting, reading, and analysing literature relevant to the research problem[11]. The focus of this study is to examine the role of women in the development of Islamic knowledge by analysing Fatima Mernissi's *The Forgotten Queens of Islam* as a primary source, alongside various secondary references. This approach allows for a comprehensive exploration of historical and intellectual contributions made by Muslim women. By integrating multiple scholarly sources, the study aims to construct a nuanced understanding of how female leadership and scholarship shaped Islamic civilization. Additionally, the methodology ensures that findings are supported by rigorous textual analysis, reinforcing the reliability of the research.

The nature of this study is historical and analytical. Historical research is used to investigate the past lives of individuals and their societal relationships, known as biographical research[12]. Biographical research involves collecting historical sources such as personal letters, diaries, literary works, contemporary writings about the figures studied, and records from their acquaintances[13]. In this study, both primary and secondary data sources are utilized. Primary sources include Mernissi's *The Forgotten Queens of Islam*, while secondary sources consist of books, articles, and research that discuss women's leadership and intellectual contributions in Islamic civilization[14]. To ensure a thorough understanding, the study also examines the socio-political contexts in which these women lived and how their contributions were received by their contemporaries. Furthermore, a comparative analysis is conducted to highlight patterns and trends in women's leadership across different historical periods.

Data collection follows three main steps. First, the historical approach is applied by gathering facts and structuring conclusions regarding past events[15]. Second, interpretation is conducted to provide meaning to the collected data based on theoretical frameworks[16]. Third, documentation is used to gather data through written records, literature reviews, and reports relevant to the research topic[17]. This triangulation method ensures the validity and reliability of the collected data. Additionally, cross-referencing multiple sources helps to minimize biases and provide a more objective analysis. By employing these rigorous data collection methods, the study aims to construct a well-substantiated narrative that accurately reflects the historical realities being examined. Furthermore, primary and secondary sources are critically evaluated to ensure their authenticity and relevance to the research objectives. The inclusion

[11] Suharsimi Arikunto, *Prosedur Penelitian: Suatu Pendekatan Praktik* (Jakarta: Rineka Cipta, 2010), 121

[12] Nazir, *Metode Penelitian* (Bogor: Ghalia Indonesia, 2013), p. 53.

[13] Sugiyono, *Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif, Kualitatif, dan R&D* (Bandung: Alfabeta CV, 2019), p. 24.

[14] Fatima Mernissi, *The Forgotten Queens of Islam* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), p. 45

[15] Nyoman Dantes, *Metode Penelitian* (Yogyakarta: Andi Offset, 2012), p. 49.

[16] Ibid., p. 57.

[17] Suharsimi Arikunto, *Prosedur Penelitian*, p. 145

of multiple perspectives from different historical contexts enhances the depth and breadth of the study's findings.

For data analysis, an inductive qualitative approach is used. Qualitative analysis involves systematically examining collected data and developing specific patterns or hypotheses from it[18]. This inductive process involves iterative verification of data through repeated reviews, allowing for hypothesis validation. If the hypothesis withstands repeated verification through triangulation, it can develop into a theoretical framework[19]. Additionally, this approach allows for a flexible analysis that can adapt to emerging patterns within the data, ensuring that the research findings remain grounded in historical evidence.

The researcher follows several key steps: selecting the research topic, collecting data from books and scholarly sources, verifying the credibility of the sources through critical evaluation, and conducting interpretation to derive meaningful conclusions. Interpretation plays a crucial role in historical research as it enables the extraction of insights from past data[20]. The final stage involves compiling the findings into a structured academic study, ensuring that conclusions are drawn based on valid and critically analysed sources. To strengthen the reliability of the conclusions, the researcher also cross-examines findings with existing historical interpretations, refining arguments and ensuring coherence within the study's overarching framework.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A. THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN ISLAMIC CIVILIZATION

Women as Political Leaders

Women have played a crucial role in political leadership throughout Islamic history, despite often being overlooked in mainstream narratives. Figures like Queen Sitt al-Mulk of the Fatimid Dynasty and Raziya Sultana of the Delhi Sultanate demonstrate that women can govern with wisdom and strength. They were not merely symbolic rulers but actively participated in strategic decision-making that influenced governmental stability. Additionally, historical records show that women served as political advisors to caliphs and sultans, proving that leadership was not solely a male domain[21]. Their contributions in shaping policies and diplomatic relations highlight their capabilities in governance. Despite facing numerous social and political constraints, these women managed to leave lasting legacies in history.

Female leadership in Islamic politics is also evident in the case of Shajarat al-Durr, who ruled Egypt in the 13th century following the death of her husband, Sultan As-Salih Ayyub. Her success in maintaining governmental stability amid Mongol threats highlights her

[18] John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (Los Angeles: Sage, 2014), p. 32.

[19] Ibid., p. 35.

[20] Paul Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1976), p. 78.

[21] Fatima Mernissi, *The Forgotten Queens of Islam* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), p. 45

capability as a leader[22]. However, she was eventually forced to abdicate due to political pressure favoring male dominance in governance. This phenomenon illustrates that while women have immense political potential, they frequently encounter structural barriers that limit their opportunities. Many of these barriers stem from societal norms that continue to perceive leadership as a male prerogative. Nevertheless, historical examples like Shajarat al-Durr prove that women can rise to power and effectively govern even in restrictive circumstances.

In general, Islam does not prohibit women from engaging in politics. Several Quranic verses and hadiths affirm that women have the right to participate in decision-making, both in domestic and public spheres. For instance, Surah An-Naml (27:23-44) narrates the story of Queen Balqis, who ruled her people with prudence and consulted with her council before making decisions[23]. However, interpretations of these religious texts are often influenced by the social and cultural contexts of different historical periods. In many cases, restrictive gender roles have been imposed due to cultural traditions rather than religious doctrine. Consequently, women's political involvement has varied across different Islamic societies depending on their historical and geographical contexts.

In the modern era, many Muslim-majority countries have granted women political rights, including the right to vote and run for office. Nations such as Pakistan, Indonesia, and Bangladesh have had female leaders serving as heads of state or government[24]. Nevertheless, challenges remain in ensuring equal political opportunities for women, especially in societies still heavily shaped by patriarchal structures. Women seeking leadership positions often face systemic discrimination and societal resistance. Efforts to increase women's representation in politics require legal reforms, public awareness campaigns, and active encouragement from political institutions.

In some countries, women's political participation has expanded due to legal reforms supporting gender equality. Tunisia, for example, has adopted a constitution that guarantees women the right to be involved in governance and political affairs[25]. This step underscores that the inclusion of women in politics is not merely a national policy issue but also a broader struggle for social justice. Legal frameworks alone, however, are not sufficient; there must also be cultural and social acceptance of women in leadership. By fostering an environment that values gender equality, nations can create more inclusive political systems. A strong commitment from political institutions is also essential to ensuring that gender equality policies are effectively implemented rather than remaining

[22] Amira El-Azhary Sonbol, *Women, the Family, and Divorce Laws in Islamic History* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1996), p. 112.

[23] Amina Wadud, *Qur'an and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 78.

[24] Margot Badran, *Feminism in Islam: Secular and Religious Convergences* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2009), p. 132.

[25] Mounira M. Charrad, "Tunisia at the Forefront of Gender Equality," in *Women Rising: In and Beyond the Arab Spring* (New York: NYU Press, 2020), p. 67.

symbolic. Additionally, continuous advocacy from civil society organizations helps to challenge deep-seated biases and push for a political landscape where women's participation is both normalized and encouraged.

Beyond governmental roles, female activists have also been instrumental in advocating for political rights. In Saudi Arabia, for instance, the policy change allowing women to run for local elections was the result of persistent efforts by human rights activists[26]. This achievement demonstrates that social and political transformation cannot be separated from women's ongoing fight for their rights. The role of civil society organizations and international pressure has also contributed to advancing gender equality in politics. These collective efforts signify the power of grassroots movements in shaping political landscapes.

Furthermore, technological advancements and digital media have increasingly facilitated women's political engagement. Platforms such as Twitter and Instagram serve as tools for women to establish political networks, share ideas, and challenge gender inequalities in governance[27]. With broader access to information and communication, women now have greater opportunities to play an active role in politics at both local and global levels. The digital space allows female politicians and activists to reach wider audiences, mobilize supporters, and challenge discriminatory narratives. As technology continues to evolve, it will likely play an even greater role in amplifying women's voices in political discourse.

Women in Islamic Intellectual Tradition

History records many Muslim women who have made significant contributions to various fields, including religious sciences, philosophy, medicine, and literature. Aisha bint Abu Bakr, one of the wives of Prophet Muhammad, is recognized as a primary source of hadith and possessed expertise in various aspects of Islamic jurisprudence[28]. Additionally, Fatima al-Fihri established the University of Al-Qarawiyyin in Morocco, which remains one of the oldest centres of learning in the world[29]. The contributions of such women highlight that Islamic tradition has long provided space for female participation in knowledge and education. However, many of these contributions remain overshadowed due to historical biases in documentation. Recognizing and amplifying their voices is crucial in constructing a more accurate understanding of Islamic intellectual history. By bringing these contributions to light, future generations can gain inspiration from their legacy.

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[26] Madawi Al-Rasheed, *Women in Saudi Arabia: Gender, Rights and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 142.

[27] Philip N. Howard and Muzammil M. Hussain, *Democracy's Fourth Wave?: Digital Media and the Arab Spring* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 89.

[28] Asma Sayeed, *Women and the Transmission of Religious Knowledge in Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 57.

[29] Mohammad Hassan Khalil, *Islam and the Fate of Others: The Salvation Question* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 94.

Women like Maryam al-Ijliya also made remarkable achievements in science, particularly in astronomy and engineering[30]. Her work, alongside other pioneering Muslim women scholars, exemplifies how women played crucial roles in advancing knowledge. However, the lack of recognition and proper historical records has often diminished their intellectual legacy. Efforts must be made to uncover and highlight these women's contributions so they can be acknowledged as integral figures in Islamic intellectual history. The preservation of their works and their inclusion in academic discourse would provide a more balanced representation of historical contributions. Encouraging further research into their achievements can also reshape modern perceptions of women's roles in Islamic knowledge.

During the medieval period, several female scholars actively participated in Islamic discourse. Scholars such as Zaynab bint al-Kamal and Aisha al-Ba'uniyya not only studied but also taught male and female students alike[31]. Their intellectual authority challenged the notion that knowledge was exclusively a male domain. These women demonstrated that Islamic scholarship was an inclusive space, where one's capability and dedication were valued over gender. The recognition of their influence underscores the depth of female engagement in religious and secular scholarship. Additionally, their teachings and writings continue to serve as valuable resources for scholars and students in the present day.

In contemporary times, initiatives to revive the intellectual tradition of Muslim women have gained attention. Various universities and research institutions have begun to reassess the historical contributions of Muslim women and to create broader access for female scholars in academia[32]. The revival of these traditions is crucial to ensuring that women's intellectual roles are recognized and further expanded. The expansion of women's roles in academia also fosters a more inclusive educational environment. Encouraging young women to pursue intellectual endeavours can lead to a more diverse and dynamic scholarly community.

Moreover, the presence of female scholars in religious discourse has grown significantly in recent years. In countries such as Indonesia and Egypt, female ulama (Islamic scholars) are increasingly taking active roles in legal interpretations and issuing fatwas[33]. Their involvement in religious scholarship strengthens the argument that Islamic knowledge is not confined to one gender and that women are equally capable of interpreting and teaching religious texts. This shift is crucial in promoting a more equitable approach to

[30] George Saliba, *Islamic Science and the Making of the European Renaissance* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2007), p. 134.

[31] Jonathan Berkey, *The Transmission of Knowledge in Medieval Cairo: A Social History of Islamic Education* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), p. 78.

[32] Margot Badran, *Feminism in Islam: Secular and Religious Convergences* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2009), p. 165.

[33] Amina Wadud, *Inside the Gender Jihad: Women's Reform in Islam* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2006), p. 122.

Islamic jurisprudence. Furthermore, their influence helps shape contemporary religious discourse to be more inclusive and reflective of diverse perspectives.

Beyond religious studies, Muslim women continue to make significant strides in modern scientific fields. Many have pursued careers in medicine, engineering, and technology, contributing to contemporary advancements[34]. Their achievements reaffirm that the Islamic intellectual tradition remains dynamic and inclusive of women who seek to push the boundaries of knowledge and innovation. Highlighting their contributions serves as an inspiration for future generations to pursue scientific excellence. Increased support for women in STEM fields ensures that their intellectual potential is fully realized.

Technology and digital media have further facilitated the participation of women in intellectual discussions. Platforms such as online courses and academic forums enable female scholars to connect, share ideas, and contribute to contemporary debates[35]. This accessibility has empowered Muslim women to engage with both historical and modern intellectual traditions, ensuring that their voices continue to shape the academic and scholarly landscape. By leveraging digital tools, women can overcome traditional barriers to knowledge sharing. The integration of technology in education also allows for greater collaboration among scholars worldwide.

Despite the progress made, the challenge of dismantling deep-rooted societal perceptions that limit women's intellectual engagement remains. Many cultural narratives still position the pursuit of knowledge as secondary to domestic roles, subtly discouraging women from fully immersing themselves in academic and religious discourse. However, true progress lies in fostering an environment where intellectual curiosity is nurtured without gender-based constraints. This requires not only institutional support but also a shift in collective consciousness—one that acknowledges women's intellectual legacy as fundamental rather than exceptional. When knowledge is recognized as a shared pursuit, unbound by gender, the Islamic intellectual tradition can fully embody its inclusive and progressive essence.

A deeper look into history reveals that women were not merely passive participants in the Islamic intellectual tradition but transformative agents who brought meaningful change. From shaping legal discourse to influencing philosophical thought, their intellectual pursuits were marked by resilience and innovation. Sutayta al-Mahāmali, a jurist and mathematician from the Abbasid era, exemplifies how women actively engaged in scholarly debates alongside male counterparts. Their ability to transcend social limitations and carve out spaces for themselves in academic circles serves as a powerful reminder that intellectual excellence is not bound by gender. This enduring legacy challenges contemporary scholars

[34] Fatima Mernissi, *The Veil and the Male Elite: A Feminist Interpretation of Women's Rights in Islam* (Reading: Perseus Books, 1991), p. 188.

[35] Philip N. Howard and Muzammil M. Hussain, *Democracy's Fourth Wave?: Digital Media and the Arab Spring* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 98.

to not only acknowledge past contributions but also ensure that future generations of Muslim women continue to thrive in intellectual and academic fields.

B. Analysis of *The Forgotten Queens of Islam*

Fatima Mernissi's Perspective on Female Leadership

In *The Forgotten Queens of Islam*, Fatima Mernissi critically examines how Islamic history has often marginalized or minimized the role of women in leadership[36]. She highlights the reigns of Muslim queens such as Shajarat al-Durr in Egypt and Turhan Sultan in the Ottoman Empire, illustrating how these women exercised authority effectively despite significant socio-political challenges[37]. Through meticulous historical analysis, Mernissi underscores that the erasure of these figures is not due to their lack of competence but rather the result of patriarchal historiography that selectively records leadership narratives.

Mernissi also explores how religious discourse has been strategically employed to curtail women's political participation. While Islamic history presents numerous examples of female rulers who governed with wisdom and strategic acumen, traditional interpretations often frame leadership as an exclusively male domain[38]. By critically engaging with classical Islamic texts and historical records, Mernissi challenges this perspective and advocates for a more inclusive understanding of leadership in Islam. This reinterpretation is essential in contemporary discussions on gender and governance in Muslim societies. Her work highlights the need to differentiate between cultural practices and religious principles, as many restrictions on women's leadership stem from patriarchal traditions rather than core Islamic teachings. By revisiting historical narratives with a critical lens, scholars and policymakers can foster a more balanced discourse that acknowledges women's rightful place in political and social spheres.

A key theme in Mernissi's work is the tension between religious legitimacy and political pragmatism. She argues that although Islamic jurisprudence does not categorically prohibit female rule, socio-political structures have consistently undermined women's authority[39]. This contradiction is evident in how some Muslim societies accepted female rulers in times of crisis yet resisted institutionalizing women's leadership in the long term. This paradox reflects broader struggles within Islamic governance between theological ideals and practical governance needs. For instance, historical figures such as Sultana Razia of Delhi and Queen Amina of Zazzau were able to ascend to power due to their exceptional leadership and military prowess, yet their reigns remained exceptions rather than models for future governance. The reluctance to formalize women's leadership often stemmed from deeply entrenched patriarchal norms rather than explicit religious prohibitions. By

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[36] Fatima Mernissi, *The Forgotten Queens of Islam* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), p. 12.

[37] Amira El-Azhary Sonbol, *Beyond the Exotic: Women's Histories in Islamic Societies* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2021), p. 78.

[38] Asma Sayeed, *Women and the Transmission of Religious Knowledge in Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 56.

[39] Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2021), p. 103.

examining these historical patterns, Mernissi challenges contemporary societies to rethink the structures that continue to marginalize women in political spheres.

Moreover, Mernissi's work prompts an important reassessment of the historical narratives that shape modern gender dynamics in Muslim-majority countries. By shedding light on overlooked female rulers, she demonstrates that the exclusion of women from leadership is not an inherent Islamic principle but a constructed socio-historical phenomenon[40]. This perspective aligns with contemporary feminist Islamic scholarship that seeks to recover and amplify women's voices in historical and religious discourses. Her analysis highlights the need to critically examine how interpretations of religious texts have been influenced by patriarchal structures rather than doctrinal mandates. By reclaiming these lost narratives, scholars and activists can challenge prevailing gender biases and advocate for a more inclusive understanding of leadership in the Muslim world.

The implications of Mernissi's research extend beyond historical analysis; they also inform ongoing debates on women's political representation in modern Muslim societies. The revival of these historical narratives serves as a critical counterpoint to contemporary arguments that justify gender-based political exclusion on religious grounds[41]. Her work challenges policymakers and religious scholars to reconsider traditional frameworks that have historically limited women's roles in governance.

Recent studies have further substantiated Mernissi's claims by examining contemporary examples of female political leadership in Muslim-majority countries. Research conducted by scholars in gender studies and Islamic governance reveals that nations with increased female political participation experience higher governance efficiency and social development[42]. For instance, empirical data from Indonesia and Bangladesh demonstrate that female leaders have played significant roles in economic reforms and policy advancements, indicating that historical biases against women in leadership continue to be challenged through modern governance practices[43]. This reinforces the necessity of re-evaluating long-standing assumptions about gender and power in Islamic contexts.

In the current global political climate, where discussions on gender equality intersect with religious interpretations, Mernissi's insights remain profoundly relevant. Her scholarship provides a foundation for advocating policies that recognize women's leadership capabilities while respecting Islamic traditions[44]. By integrating historical evidence with

[40] Ayesha S. Chaudhry, *Domestic Violence and the Islamic Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), p. 89.

[41] Margot Badran, *Feminism in Islam: Secular and Religious Convergences* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2020), p. 142.

[42] Mona Tajali, *Women's Political Representation in Muslim Contexts* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2022), p. 110.

[43] Nadje Al-Ali, *Gender, Governance, and Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023), p. 95.

[44] Kecia Ali, *Sexual Ethics and Islam: Feminist Reflections on Qur'an, Hadith, and Jurisprudence* (London: Oneworld Publications, 2023), p. 67.

contemporary gender theory, *The Forgotten Queens of Islam* contributes to a nuanced understanding of the intersection between religion, politics, and gender.

C. RELEVANSI SEJARAH PEREMPUAN MUSLIM TERHADAP ERA MODERN

Lessons from Prominent Muslim Women in History

The lives of influential Muslim women throughout history serve as powerful lessons for contemporary society, highlighting their ability to lead, innovate, and shape intellectual and political landscapes. Aisha bint Abu Bakr, one of the most influential figures in early Islamic history, played a significant role in transmitting hadith and offering legal opinions. Her knowledge and eloquence in political and theological matters demonstrate that women have historically been active participants in shaping Islamic thought[45]. Examining her life encourages modern Muslim women to engage in scholarship and leadership with confidence and resilience.

Beyond political and theological contributions, Muslim women have also played a vital role in intellectual and scientific advancements. Lubna of Córdoba, a scholar and librarian in 10th-century Andalusia, exemplifies the profound impact women have had in the field of education and knowledge preservation[46]. She was instrumental in the expansion of libraries and the transcription of scientific manuscripts, proving that women's participation in intellectual endeavours was both accepted and celebrated in early Islamic societies. Understanding her contributions dispels the misconception that women's intellectual pursuits are a modern phenomenon.

Moreover, historical figures like Fatima al-Fihri, who founded the University of al-Qarawiyyin in the 9th century, challenge contemporary assumptions about women's roles in education[47]. Her establishment of one of the world's oldest universities demonstrates that women's involvement in academia has deep historical roots in the Islamic tradition. Learning from such examples can empower modern Muslim women to reclaim their rightful place in educational and professional spaces, reinforcing the idea that Islam has long supported women's access to knowledge and leadership.

The historical legacy of these women underscores the importance of revisiting and amplifying their contributions in modern discourse. By recognizing their achievements, contemporary Muslim societies can create more inclusive spaces that honor the intellectual, political, and social roles women have played throughout history[48]. Addressing historical erasure and promoting the visibility of Muslim women's contributions is essential in challenging restrictive gender norms that persist today[49]. This effort must go beyond mere recognition and translate into concrete actions, such as integrating their stories into

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[45] Ahmed, Leila. *Women and Gender in Islam*. Yale University Press, 2021, p. 45.

[46] Mernissi, Fatima. *The Forgotten Queens of Islam*. University of Minnesota Press, 2021, p. 78.

[47] Sayeed, Asma. *Women and the Transmission of Religious Knowledge in Islam*. Cambridge University Press, 2013, p. 105.

[48] Badran, Margot. *Feminism in Islam: Secular and Religious Convergences*. Oneworld Publications, 2020, p. 60.

[49] Ali, Kecia. *Sexual Ethics and Islam*. Oneworld Publications, 2023, p. 92.

educational curricula and public discussions. Only by actively engaging with this history can societies dismantle long-standing biases and create opportunities for women to reclaim their rightful place in intellectual and political spheres.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the historical analysis of prominent Muslim women, it is evident that women have played a significant role in shaping intellectual, political, and educational spheres in Islamic history. Figures such as Aisha bint Abu Bakr, Lubna of Córdoba, and Fatima al-Fihri demonstrate that women's leadership and contributions were recognized and valued in early Islamic societies. Their involvement in scholarship, governance, and knowledge preservation challenges contemporary misconceptions about gender roles in Islam. These findings reaffirm that women's participation in leadership and academia is deeply rooted in Islamic tradition and should not be viewed as a modern innovation. Recognizing these historical roles not only counters stereotypes but also provides a strong foundation for advocating gender inclusivity in contemporary Muslim societies.

To build upon these insights, further research should focus on amplifying the historical contributions of Muslim women through academic and public discourse. Efforts should be made to incorporate their narratives into mainstream historical and educational curricula, ensuring that their achievements are acknowledged and celebrated. Additionally, contemporary Muslim societies must work towards creating more inclusive spaces that empower women in leadership, education, and intellectual pursuits. Strengthening these efforts will not only honor the legacy of past Muslim women but also pave the way for greater gender equity in modern contexts. A more accurate and inclusive historical narrative will help shift societal perceptions and inspire future generations to embrace the principles of equity and shared progress.

Ensuring women's active participation in intellectual and political spheres requires a multi-faceted approach that goes beyond policy changes. Educational institutions, religious scholars, and community leaders must collaborate to promote narratives that highlight women's contributions in Islamic history. By fostering a culture that acknowledges and values women's roles in shaping societies, communities can create sustainable pathways for future female leaders. This effort should not only focus on past figures but also recognize contemporary Muslim women who continue to make significant contributions in various fields.

To achieve these goals, several concrete steps can be implemented. First, governments and educational institutions should introduce specialized courses or modules focusing on the historical impact of Muslim women. Second, religious scholars and community leaders should actively engage in revisiting and reinterpreting Islamic texts that support gender inclusivity. Third, media platforms and academic institutions must work together to amplify the voices of contemporary Muslim women through publications, conferences, and leadership programs. Lastly, mentorship and networking initiatives should be established to

connect young Muslim women with role models in their respective fields. By integrating these strategies, societies can move towards a more equitable future where women's contributions are recognized, valued, and sustained across generations.

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