



The Intellectual Traces of Women in the Golden Age of Islam: From Science to Cosmopolitan Culture

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Abstract

Studies of classical Islamic historiography have been biased in placing men at the center of intellectual narratives. At the same time, women's contributions have been less systematically explored, resulting in a partial understanding of the dynamics of scholarship during the Islamic Golden Age from the 8th to 14th centuries CE. This study aims to comprehensively reconstruct the role and contribution of women in the fields of science and cosmopolitan culture, focusing on intellectual centers such as Baghdad, Cairo, Andalusia, and Damascus. Using qualitative-historical methods with thematic analysis, this study examines primary manuscripts such as biographies of scholars, scientific treatises, records of hadith transmissions, and relevant secondary literature to uncover concrete traces of women in scientific networks. The findings show that women not only played roles as teachers, hadith transmitters, and interpreters of religious texts, but also contributed to medicine, philosophy, mathematics, and the arts, even gaining recognition on par with male scholars through evidence of attribution of works, participation in scientific assemblies, and cultural patronage. Furthermore, their involvement in discussions across languages and ethnicities strengthened a pluralistic and open intellectual tradition. However, limited access to some manuscripts and attribution issues hinder more quantitative data collection. In conclusion, women's contributions during this period are an integral part of Islamic intellectual history and require further reconstruction through prosopographic studies and scholarly network mapping to enrich contemporary academic discourse and inspire the strengthening of the role of modern Muslim women.

Keywords: Female Intellectuals; The Golden Age of Islam; Cosmopolitan Culture; Transmission of Knowledge; Islamic Historiography

Abstrak

Kajian historiografi Islam klasik selama ini masih bias dalam menempatkan laki-laki sebagai pusat narasi intelektual, sementara kontribusi perempuan kurang digali secara sistematis, sehingga menghasilkan pemahaman yang parsial tentang dinamika keilmuan pada Zaman Keemasan Islam abad ke-8 hingga ke-14 M. Penelitian ini bertujuan merekonstruksi secara komprehensif peran dan kontribusi perempuan dalam bidang ilmu pengetahuan dan budaya kosmopolit, dengan fokus pada pusat-pusat intelektual seperti Baghdad, Kairo, Andalusia, dan Damaskus. Menggunakan metode kualitatif-historis dengan analisis tematik, penelitian ini menelaah naskah primer seperti kitab biografi ulama, risalah ilmiah, catatan periwayatan hadis, serta literatur sekunder yang relevan untuk mengungkap jejak konkret perempuan dalam jaringan keilmuan. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa perempuan tidak hanya berperan sebagai pengajar, periwayat hadis, dan penafsir teks keagamaan, tetapi juga berkontribusi dalam kedokteran, filsafat, matematika, dan seni, bahkan memperoleh pengakuan sejajar dengan sarjana laki-laki melalui bukti atribusi karya, partisipasi majelis ilmiah, serta patronase budaya. Selain itu, keterlibatan mereka dalam diskusi lintas bahasa dan etnis memperkuat tradisi intelektual yang plural dan terbuka. Meski demikian, akses terbatas terhadap sebagian manuskrip dan problem atribusi menjadi kendala dalam penelusuran data secara lebih kuantitatif. Kesimpulannya, kontribusi perempuan pada masa tersebut merupakan bagian integral dari sejarah intelektual Islam dan perlu direkonstruksi lebih lanjut melalui studi prosopografi dan pemetaan jaringan ilmiah agar mampu memperkaya wacana akademik kontemporer dan menginspirasi penguatan peran perempuan Muslim modern.

Kata Kunci: Intelektual Perempuan; Keemasan Islam; Budaya Kosmopolit; Transmisi Ilmu; Historiografi Islam

Introduction

Despite their proven significant contributions to science, art, and social life, women are often positioned as secondary actors in historical narratives of civilization, including Islamic history (Akhmetova, 2025). The dominance of patriarchal perspectives in historical writing has obscured women's roles and participation, resulting in only a few names appearing in mainstream literature (Siregar & Harahap, 2024). This indicates a gap in representation between historical facts and historiographical constructions. The relevance of this issue is further strengthened because contemporary discourse on women in Islam is often detached from its historical roots, even though understanding the past is a crucial foundation for constructing a more just and scientific narrative (Harahap, Is, & Julaiha P, 2025).

The Islamic Golden Age (8th to 14th centuries CE) was when women's intellectual activity flourished in a tangible and documented way. However, the mainstream narrative did not always highlight it (Al-Marakebi, 2018). Women during this period were present as hadith teachers, founders of educational institutions, poets, and part of a cosmopolitan network of scholars connecting Baghdad, Cairo, Damascus, and Andalusia (Nadwi, 2022). Historical facts such as the scholarship of 'Āisha bint Abū Bakr, who became a reference for the companions and *tābi'īn*, and the role of Fāṭima al-Fihri in establishing the University of al-Qarawiyyin in Fez, show that women's involvement in the Islamic intellectual tradition was not

a sporadic phenomenon (Nurlatifah, Kosasih, & Mardi, 2025). In Andalusia, Wallāda bint al-Mustakfi emerged as a prominent poet, while in Mecca, Karīma al-Marwaziyya became a hadith scholar with influential male and female students (Batu, 2024; Omran, 2022). These facts indicate that women's contributions have been part of the construction of Islamic civilization, not a historical exception.

However, the marginalization of women in modern Islamic historiography stems from the reduction of historical writing, which tends to focus more on male scholars (Houmine, 2024). Epistemological bias has overlooked manuscripts, biographies, and chains of transmission that mention women, rendering their involvement peripheral or merely supplementary (Fadel & Al-Hendy, 2024). Historical records indicate that they were not only active in the fields of religious studies but also in medicine, astronomy, philosophy, art, and culture (Abdullah et al., 2024). This confirms that the distribution of women's intellectual heritage is indeed broad and structured, but has yet to receive adequate academic attention it deserves.

Several previous studies have focused on the role of women in Islamic tradition, but this still leaves a gap in comprehensive research. Erwani and Siregar (2025) highlight the gender dimension of Islamic religious discourse, but have not yet addressed women's contributions to science and cosmopolitan culture. Mehfooz (2021) presents biographies of female hadith scholars, but these are descriptive in nature and do not connect them to cross-civilizational networks. Roggema (2024) examines the representation of women in early Islamic-Christian political discourse, but focuses more on the legitimacy of power than on intellectual traditions. Karoui (2020) offers a feminist reinterpretation of classical texts, but her approach is normative and lacks a focus on factual historical context. Hannan and Syaie (2024) discuss female figures in the Abbasid dynasty and their involvement in politics and court culture, but fail to link these to multidisciplinary contributions and transregional knowledge networks. This mapping clearly demonstrates the lack of systematic studies linking women's contributions to the cosmopolitan culture that developed in centers of Islamic scholarship such as Baghdad, Andalusia, Cairo, and Damascus. This gap provides academic space for this research.

Based on this background, this study formulates three main questions: how did women play a role in the classical Islamic scholarly tradition? How did they contribute to the realms of science and art? And how did their involvement strengthen cosmopolitan values in Islamic civilization? To address these questions, this study aims to explore the historical and conceptual contributions of women to the Islamic intellectual tradition and examine their relationship to the cosmopolitan character of Islamic civilization. The initial argument underlying the importance of this study is that women's involvement in the scientific and cultural fields during that period was not a marginal phenomenon, but rather an integral part of the dynamics of Islamic civilization that has received little emphasis in both classical and modern historiography. Thus, the expected contribution of this study is to provide a

new perspective in the study of Islamic intellectual history, broaden understanding of the position of women in building a cosmopolitan civilization, and enrich contemporary discourse on the role of women in Islamic culture with a strong historical basis.

Method

This study employs a qualitative method based on library research, emphasizing a historical-analytical approach through an interdisciplinary perspective. The temporal focus of the study is limited to the 8th to 14th centuries CE, as the period of the Islamic Golden Age. Primary sources include classical biographies such as *Siyar A'lam al-Nubalā'*, hadith works, historical manuscripts, and intellectual travelogues of women in the Islamic tradition. Secondary sources include reputable journal articles, dissertations, modern research, and contemporary academic works published in the last two decades. Data collection techniques are carried out through documentation that includes manuscript identification, selection of references based on scientific authority and topical relevance, external and internal criticism of the text, cross-verification between sources, and restrictions based on strict inclusion and exclusion criteria. Data analysis uses a historical thematic analysis model structured through four stages: first, data reduction by sorting women's contributions based on scientific fields and areas of influence; second, categorization of social roles, culture, and cosmopolitan networks across ethnicities, languages, and regions such as Baghdad, Andalusia, Cairo and Damascus; Third, contextual interpretation by linking classical texts and modern studies through a hermeneutic approach and discourse criticism; fourth, a comprehensive historical synthesis to reconstruct the intellectual narrative of women within the global Islamic scholarly network. Data validity is maintained through source triangulation, philological criticism, and contextual linking between historical facts and contemporary readings.

Results and Discussion

Women in the Classical Islamic Scientific Tradition

Classical Islamic intellectual history cannot be fully understood without recognizing the contributions of women as part of the network of scholars active in the transmission, legitimacy, and production of knowledge. Historiographic narratives, often biased toward masculinity, have relegated women to a hidden space (Harahap et al., 2025), even though biographical sources (*ṭabaqāt*) and scholarly lexicons such as *al-Mu'jam al-Mukhannaṣīn* and *Siyar A'lam al-Nubalā'* actually record their roles in scientific assemblies, scholarly *riḥlah* (religious gatherings), and the awarding of *ijāzah* (certificates) (Harahap & Wahyuni, 2024). Women were not only present as students, but were also recorded as bearers of epistemological authority through strong *sanad* (chains of transmission) and analytical capacity (Stefaniw, 2020). This recovery of historical memory is crucial to correcting the

perception that the Islamic scholarly tradition has been hierarchical and exclusive from its inception, particularly in relation to a particular gender, rather than sex (Houmine, 2024).

In the realm of hadith, 'Āisha bint Abū Bakr is a central figure demonstrating the full legitimacy of women's hermeneutic competence within the scholarly community. She not only narrated over two thousand hadith, but also actively participated in verifying their meanings and correcting their *sanad* through *ijtihād riwāyah* and understanding *dirāyah* (Al-'Asqalānī, 1994). In several cases, she contradicted the understandings of male companions, such as when correcting the narrations about ritual bathing (Al-Naysābūrī, 1955) and the prohibition of mourning over the dead (Al-Bukhārī, 1993). Her epistemic position rested not on her family status but on her scholarly authority, proven through scholarly dialogue. In this context, 'Āisha emerged not merely as a witness to the history of prophecy but as an authority on hadith interpretation that influenced the construction of Islamic law and ethics.

Women's contributions are also evident in the discipline of *tafsīr* and interregional scholarly travel (*riḥlah*). Fāṭima bint Sa'd al-Khayr, a 6th-century Hijri scholar, was widely recognized as a teacher of *tafsīr* and hadith, teaching in Damascus and Baghdad (Nadwi, 2022). The recognition of her scholarly authority is evidenced by the *ijāzah* (certificates) awarded to male and female students from various cities, demonstrating that the legitimacy of the *sanad* (transmitted Islamic chain) transcends gender boundaries. She organized a structured scholarly assembly, similar to major mosques' formal *ḥalaqah* (scientific forum) system (Kalmbach & Bano, 2012). Her scholarly mobility illustrates women's integration into transregional scholarly networks and their ability to articulate knowledge in the public sphere. Fāṭima served not only as a conduit for the transmission of knowledge but also as an actor who shaped the authority of *tafsīr* through reasoning and authentic *isnād*.

In *fiqh* and hadith, Karīma al-Marwaziyya is known as the primary custodian of the text of *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, possessing the *isnād 'ālī* (chain of hadith transmission with the fewest narrators) sought by many great scholars. Male scholars from Khurasan, Baghdad, and the Hijaz attended *samā'* (hearing) directly with Karīma to obtain a continuous chain of transmission without intermediaries (Al-Ya'qūbī, 2019). She provided *taṣḥīḥ* (corrections) to the manuscript. She explained problems with *matn* that had legal implications, demonstrating the capacity of women in the fields of *istinbāt* (ruling determination) and *naqd riwāyah* (criticism of transmission) (Al-Žahabī, 1993). The existence of Karīma proves that the tradition of *fiqh* was not born as a patriarchal construction, but rather as an epistemic collaboration between male and female scholars.

Equally important are women's contributions to philology and textual criticism (*naqd al-Nusūṣ*), which underpin the authority of written knowledge in

Islam. Sitt al-Wuzarā' bint 'Umar was known for her meticulous copying, correcting, and teaching of classical manuscripts. She did more than perform mechanical copying, but was also involved in verifying textual variants, ensuring the authenticity of manuscripts, and maintaining the continuity of *'ilm al-Khaṭṭ* to subsequent generations (Al-'Asqalānī, 2005). Through her role in centers of knowledge, she became the guardian of Islamic literate civilization, bridging the transition of knowledge from oral to written forms (Al-'Asqalānī, 1984). Her role demonstrates that philology in Islam was an intellectual field that involved women in epistemic work, not merely administrative roles.

All these female figures demonstrate that the classical Islamic scholarly tradition was built through collaboration that transcended gender categories. Their participation in hadith, *tafsīr*, *fiqh*, and philology simultaneously deconstructs historiographical narratives that often position women as peripheral objects. The restoration of their legacy is not merely a romanticization of history, but rather part of a reconstruction of Islamic epistemology that is more just toward intellectual facts. This historical awareness needs to be reactivated so that contemporary scholarly discourse does not continue to reproduce the "textual silence" regarding female figures. Thus, acknowledging the role of women in the classical tradition lays the foundation for developing a more inclusive, argumentative, and *sanad*-based Islamic epistemology.

Women in Rational Science and Science

The involvement of women in science during the Islamic Golden Age cannot be understood solely as symbolic or biographical figures. Still, it must be placed within the epistemological framework of Islamic civilization, which combines rationality, spirituality, and scientific praxis. Figures such as Fāṭima bint al-Muṣannā, Umm al-Ḥasan bint Abū Ja'far, Sutayta al-Maḥāmlī, and Maryam al-Aṣṭurlābī were not merely complements to traditional historiography but integral parts of the intellectual architecture that shaped the dynamics of philosophy, medicine, mathematics, and astronomy.

The figure of Fāṭima bint al-Muṣannā, for example, demonstrates that women's involvement in Islamic philosophy did not stop at the acquisition of knowledge, but continued to shape the intellectual horizons of prominent male students such as Ibn al-'Arabī (Ḍayf, 1995). Within the Sufi tradition, Fāṭima presented a synthesis between spiritual intuition (*kashf*) and rational reflection. This epistemic foundation later influenced Ibn al-'Arabī's metaphysical constructions, particularly regarding the concepts of *'ilm al-Ladunnī* and *ma'rifah* (Al-Munāwī, 1994). This approach demonstrates that women played a significant role in shaping the dialectic between reason and intuition in Islamic philosophy, thereby expanding the boundaries of rationality toward a more holistic dimension in knowledge. Their presence not only transcended social boundaries but also

offered an alternative epistemological model that impacted the development of the theory of being and spiritual cosmology in the corpus of Islamic philosophy.

While Fāṭima emerged within the realm of philosophical reflection, Umm al-Ḥasan bint Abū Ja'far demonstrates women's involvement in the scientific practice of medicine. She operated within the context of the development of medical science influenced by the works of al-Rāzī and Ibn Sīnā, as well as institutionalized clinical practice through the Bīmāristān in Damascus and Baghdad (Al-Khaṭīb, 2003). Her participation was not only in the practice of healing, but also in the transmission of medical knowledge through teaching, demonstrating institutional recognition of women's scientific authority (ʿĪsā, 1981). Biographical accounts in classical medical literature, such as the *Ṭabaqāt al-Aṭibbā' wa al-Ḥukamā'*, confirm that she became a reference in clinical diagnosis, an achievement impossible without intellectual legitimacy in a male-dominated scientific environment (Uṣaybi'ah, 1996). Thus, her presence challenges the historiographical assumption that medicine was exclusively male and opens up space for a re-reading of the role of women in Islamic medical history.

In the field of exact sciences, Sutayta al-Maḥāmlī is a significant representative of women's involvement in mathematics, a discipline often seen as the pinnacle of Islamic scientific rationality. Living in Baghdad during the Bayt al-Ḥikmah period, Sutayta was known not only as a mathematical student, but as a problem solver consulted by contemporary hisabists (Al-'Asqalānī, 1979). Classical sources such as Ibn al-Nadīm's (1997) *al-Fihrist* and the narrations in *Siyar A'lām al-Nubalā'* record her participation in solving algebraic problems, particularly in the calculation of inheritance and linear equations, indicating that her logical and abstract capacities were recognized in formal scientific circles (Al-Ẓahabī, 1985). Her contribution cannot be reduced to a mere historical exception, but rather is part of an epistemic transformation that demonstrates women's role in shaping the tradition of scientific rationality that became the foundation for the development of Islamic mathematics.

Women's technological contributions to astronomy are evident in the figure of Maryam al-Aṣṭurlābī, an astrolabe maker with a high level of technical precision. She worked within a scientific tradition connected to Andalusian astronomy and the research center in Aleppo, where celestial observation served as a foundation for navigation, the determination of the *Qibla*, and the Islamic calendar (Saliba, 1995). Maryam's technical work demonstrates mechanical skill, a mastery of spherical geometry, and an understanding of Ptolemaic cosmology, which formed the basis for astrolabe construction (King, 2024). Her success in perfecting astronomical instruments demonstrates that women were not simply users of scientific technology but also producers of instruments that contributed to the transmission of knowledge to Europe through Latin translation centers in Toledo and Palermo

(Garg, 2022). Thus, her role affirms women's participation in the material medium of global scientific dissemination.

These four figures showcase the spectrum of women's involvement in the epistemic landscape of Islam: from philosophy and metaphysics, to medicine and applied science, to mathematics and astronomical technology. This involvement was not merely individual, but reflected women's integration into the cosmopolitan network of Islamic science, built through scientific assemblies, educational institutions, and the exchange of manuscripts. Therefore, the historiography of the development of Islamic science must transcend the masculine-centric paradigm by recognizing women's epistemological contributions to the formation of a universal scientific tradition. By rereading their intellectual footprints within the framework of the history of science, not merely social history, it can be seen that women were rational actors who played an active role in building the intellectual foundations of Islamic civilization and its influence on the global world of knowledge.

Women in the Production of Literary and Artistic Works

Women's involvement in literary production during the classical Islamic era was a form of knowledge articulation that transcended domestic boundaries and entered the public sphere of discourse. One of the most representative figures in this landscape is Wallāda bint al-Mustakfī, an Andalusian poet who used language as a medium for identity affirmation and intellectual courage. Her poetry transcended personal lyricism but also contained a rejection of social norms that restricted women's agency (Omran, 2022). Through literary assemblies in Córdoba, Wallāda positioned herself as a conveyor of feelings and a cultural critic, employing sharp diction and symbolic metaphors to assert women's epistemic capacity (Monteiro, 2018). Her poetic aesthetic, grounded in the Arab-Andalusian linguistic tradition but driven by subjective autonomy, demonstrates that women's literary works not only present beauty but also intervene in the social discourse that defines women's boundaries in Islamic civilization (Darwish, 2015).

The musical dimension presented by 'Arīb al-Ma'mūniyya adds an important layer to understanding the role of women in Islamic intellectual culture. As a musician and composer during the Abbasid period, 'Arīb presented music not merely as entertainment, but as a cultural product involving creativity, aesthetic interpretation, and intellectual sensibility (Grau & Colton, 2022). Her presence within Baghdad's intellectual elite demonstrates that women's expression was not isolated from cosmopolitan discourse, despite frequent theological debates (Caswell, 2011). She made the musical stage an arena for the articulation of values, processing melodies and lyrics into collective emotional narratives (Nielson, 2021). Thus, 'Arīb's music became part of *adabīyāt* (the intersection of art, morality, and knowledge), positioning women as active subjects in the formation of aesthetic taste and cultural dialogue in the Islamic world.

Distinct from literature and music, Zaynab Shahdā articulated women's agency through calligraphy, a visual art of spiritual symbolism. Her title as *faqīhā al-Khaṭṭāṭīn* (master of calligraphy) signified not only technical expertise but also institutional recognition of her authority within the visual tradition of revelation. The calligraphy she developed was not merely ornamental but a manifestation of Islamic visual epistemology, where the beauty of writing reflects a transcendent order (Mahmud, 2008). Zaynab did not stop at individual achievement; she built a network of male and female students, making her knowledge a collective heritage (Ezokanzo, 2018). Within this framework, women appear not as complements to cultural aesthetics, but as guardians and producers of civilization's visual standards. Zaynab demonstrated that spirituality and rationality are never separate from aesthetics, and that women have a role in formulating *‘ilm al-Kitābah* as an intellectual tradition.

When compared, the contributions of Wallāda, ‘Arīb, and Zaynab demonstrate that women's involvement in classical Islamic art encompassed more than just personal expression; they entered the realm of cosmopolitan cultural formation. Islamic cosmopolitanism at that time was not simply a meeting of ethnicities and languages but aesthetic sensibilities and intellectual horizons that transcended patriarchal structures (Hasanah, 2022). Poetry became a space for critical articulation, music a medium for public emotion, and calligraphy a symbol of spiritual order. All three demonstrate that women were not only present in the history of Islamic civilization but also helped construct mechanisms for transmitting values through their works.

The concept of cosmopolitan culture in classical Islam, therefore, cannot be separated from the participation of women who transformed art into a means of constructing shared meaning. The intellectual courage of Wallāda, the emotional depth of ‘Arīb, and the visual spirituality of Zaynab demonstrate that women were an integral part of the epistemic network that underpinned civilization, not merely an accessory to historical narratives. Through their art, they demonstrated that Islamic civilization rested not only on power structures and theological debates, but also on the ability to embrace the plurality of human expression. The art they produced became a cosmopolitan language—a language that unites individuals, communities, and values—while affirming that classical Islamic identity was dialogical, reflective, and open to women's role as cultural subjects.

Women and Cosmopolitan Culture in the Islamic Golden Age

In the context of classical Islamic cosmopolitanism, women hold a unique position as agents of cultural interaction that extends beyond mere social participation, also to shape the intellectual and cultural landscape of civilization. Andalusia, as a space of convivencia between Muslims, Jews, and Latinos, demonstrates that women were not only present in the domestic sphere but also took an active role in cultural negotiations (Shahidan & Majlan, 2024). Figures such

as Wallāda bint al-Mustakfi represent aristocratic women who entered the public sphere through literary assemblies, bringing together poets from diverse ethnicities and languages (Omran, 2022). These historical references demonstrate that women's involvement in cross-cultural conversations was not merely descriptive but functioned as a conscious cosmopolitan practice, negotiating Islamic identity with universal humanism (Arsuaga, 2020). From Appiah's (2006) cosmopolitan perspective, Andalusian women embody rooted cosmopolitanism—cultural openness without losing Islamic roots.

Baghdad presented a distinct face of cosmopolitanism through intellectual expansion and global urbanization under the Abbasid rule. Women not only established social interactions with foreign diplomats and merchants but also entered the intellectual arena through scholarly assemblies and patronage (Hannan & Syaie, 2024). Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī's (2015) account includes biographies of female hadith narrators and literati, such as Zubayda, wife of Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd, who funded infrastructure projects and scholarly discussions. By utilizing the domestic space as an intellectual salon, Baghdadi women became a link between academic networks and urban society (Rasul, 2024). From a Habermasian public sphere perspective, they expanded the boundaries of the public sphere to be gender-inclusive, emphasizing that Islamic cosmopolitanism was not solely constructed by state institutions, but by domestic-intellectual networks managed by women (Habermas, 1989).

In contrast to Baghdad, Cairo during the Fatimid and Mamluk dynasties demonstrated the institutional dimension of women's agency. As a hub of international trade, the city provided women with the space to participate in forming multicultural communities (Homerin, 2019). Figures like Shajar al-Durr established schools and established social networks that integrated residents with African and Levantine immigrants (Berkey, 1992). Women's activities took place not only in markets or social forums, but also in educational and religious institutions, demonstrating their capacity as intercultural agents negotiating Islamic identity within a framework of urban plurality (Moustafa, Mahmoud, & Abdelrazik, 2023).

Damascus offers a spiritual cosmopolitanism, where women play a role in Sufi networks and the transmission of knowledge across religions. Ibn 'Asākir (1995), in his *Tārīkh Madīnah Dimashq*, notes women such as Fāṭima bint Sa'd al-Khayr and 'Āisha al-Bā'ūniyya who taught hadith and Sufism to students from various regions and religious backgrounds. In a city that served as a transit point for pilgrims on the Hajj and other pilgrimages, women played a crucial role in creating shared sacred spaces, thereby bridging Muslim, Christian, and Jewish communities through practices of hospitality and spiritual networks (Mermier, 2021). Unlike the political space of Andalusia or the intellectual space of Baghdad, Damascus demonstrates that Islamic cosmopolitanism is also rooted in a Sufi ethos that glorifies diversity as a path to understanding God.

The involvement of women in cosmopolitan networks in these four cities demonstrates that male elites did not solely shape classical Islamic civilization, but rather through the participation of women who transformed diversity into cultural capital. They were not merely receptive to foreign cultures but also curated values, filtering and assembling external ideas within an Islamic moral framework. Thus, Islamic cosmopolitanism cannot be understood simply as passive tolerance, but rather as an active process of identity negotiation, in which women played an epistemic role. A gender perspective in the study of cosmopolitanism avoids historical idealization, recognizing that cultural openness coexists with challenges of access and patriarchal structures that need to be negotiated (Rosamond, 2020).

The historiographical implications of women's involvement in Islamic cosmopolitanism demand a reconstruction of the historical narrative of civilization. Suppose traditional historiography places women on the margins. In that case, the evidence of their roles in Andalusia, Baghdad, Cairo, and Damascus confirms the need for an interdisciplinary rereading that combines social history, cultural studies, and gender theory. Islamic cosmopolitanism did not emerge from a monologue of power, but rather from a dialogue of civilizations facilitated by women. Therefore, recognizing them is not merely an addition to the narrative, but a fundamental step toward understanding classical Islam as an open civilization—built not only by the sword and the pen, but also by the diplomacy, hospitality, and wisdom of women.

Conclusion

The intellectual heritage of classical Islam demonstrates that women were not only recipients of knowledge but also active actors in the production and transmission of knowledge, as evidenced by their involvement in the fields of hadith, fiqh, philosophy, science, medicine, astronomy, literature, art, and cosmopolitan culture in centers of learning such as Baghdad, Andalusia, Cairo, and Damascus. These findings underscore the importance of reconstructing Islamic historiography, which has historically been biased toward masculinity, and encourage the placement of women as an integral part of global scientific networks. Theoretically, this research contributes to the deconstruction of patriarchal narratives in Islamic intellectual history, opening up space for strengthening gender studies based on classical sources. Practically, the results can serve as a historical foundation for enhancing the role of contemporary Muslim women in education, research, and cultural diplomacy. However, limitations remain in the discontinuity of documentation, unequal access to primary sources, and patriarchal bias in historical records. Therefore, further studies need to be directed at exploring less-revealed female figures, comparative studies across regions and eras, and the use of interdisciplinary approaches such as prosopography, historical anthropology, and digital humanities so that the reconstruction of women's roles in the Islamic scientific tradition can be more comprehensive, accurate, and representative.

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