Women in Islamic architecture: towards acknowledging their role in the development of Islamic civilization

Abdel-Moniem El-Shorbagy

Cogent Arts & Humanities (2020), 7: 1741984
Women in Islamic architecture: towards acknowledging their role in the development of Islamic civilization

Abstract: Throughout Islamic history, some prominent women significantly contributed to the progress and enhancement of their societies as well as expressed a sincere concern for the welfare of people. Many influencing studies examined women's contribution to many fields of the Islamic civilization, such as the spread of the hadith (sayings) of the prophet Mohamed, education, literature, philosophy, poetry, mathematics, and medicine. Also, Muslim women were involved in a wide variety of roles in the media of visual arts, textiles, and weaving carpets. In the field of architecture, many notable women supported and initiated the construction of many remarkable buildings, which changed the image of Muslim cities. They commissioned a range of building types that enriched Islamic architecture and the urban landscape, including mosques, madrassah (theological schools), tombs, caravansaries, and hospitals. The main objective of this study is to conduct a comprehensive review of the literature on the outstanding role of women in the progress of Islamic architecture during the early centuries of Islam. The primary aim of this research is to provide an overview of women's interaction with these varied categories of buildings, which represented an essential factor in their representation as visible members in their societies.

Subjects: Architecture; Art & Gender; Visual Culture; History; Religion; Cultural Studies

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Abdel-Moniem El-Shorbagy is a practicing architect, an assistant professor of architecture and design, and a researcher. He received his Ph.D. in Art History from the University of Canterbury, New Zealand. El-Shorbagy established his Cairo-based architectural practice “SITE” in 1982 and he is currently teaching architecture and design at Effat University in Saudi Arabia. His main concern is to help his students throughout their university years to understand the real meaning of architecture and its essential role in society. El-Shorbagy's research extends to diverse issues in architecture, including sustainability, culture, traditions and contemporary architecture. He has publications in many journals, presented in reputed conferences, authored a number of books, and published many articles and e-books for the public.

PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT
This article highlights the significant role of women as patrons of many of the outstanding buildings and projects during the early centuries of Islam. You will be surprised by the range of building types that enriched Islamic architecture and the urban landscape, including mosques, schools, tombs, caravansaries, and hospitals. You will also realize that women became more acknowledged and publicly visible on a large scale through their charity and architectural patronage. While reading, you will enjoy their different life circumstances and events that might be a source of inspiration to you.
Keywords: Islamic architecture; women; patrons; mosque; madrasa; caravanserai; tomb; hospital

1. Introduction

The Islamic law, traditions, and culture of the society defined, to a certain extent, the borders of women’s presence and activity. In general, their power related to their social status and place in their communities. It seems that women’s powerful identities and responsibilities were significantly influenced by the status of their families and by the environment where they were brought up. Their background as members of royal families helped them to participate actively in many life areas, including social, political, and economical. In recent scholarship, the unique role of women in Islamic civilization began to be uncovered and acknowledged. Aisha Bewley (2004) extensively examined the role of Muslim women throughout Islamic history and demonstrated that they were successful as scholars in many scientific areas, and their endless efforts had played a significant role in promoting civilization in the Islamic world (Bewley, 2004). For example, Ayesha, daughter of Prince Ahmed in al-Andalus (Muslim Spain), was talented in rhyme and oratory, and Wallada, a princess of the Almohads dynasty, excelled in poetry and rhetoric. In addition, Lubana of Cordoba, secretary of the Caliph of Córdoba, Al-Hakam II, excelled in solving complex geometrical and algebraic problems, and finally, Mariam al-Asturlabiyy, a 10th-century female astronomer, was renowned for the making of astrolabes, a branch of applied science (Charis, 1980).

Another important publication, which deals with issues of women’s patronage within the Islamic world, is the “Women, Patronage, and Self-Representation in Islamic Societies” by Fairchild Ruggles. The author combined the study of representation, gender theory, and Muslim women from a historical and geographical perspective. He also examined where women have represented themselves in art, architecture, and the written word in the Muslim world (Ruggles, 2000). Furthermore, in her master thesis “Female Patronage in Classical Ottoman Architecture”, Firuzan Sumertas discussed and illustrated the visibility of women in relation to their contribution to the architecture and cityscape. Unlike Ruggles, Sumertas focused her research on the spatial presence of the Ottoman imperial women patronage in the sixteenth and seventeenth-century Istanbul (Sümertaş, 2006).

Throughout the Islamic dynasties, women were also active in the artistic and cultural sphere as patrons of architecture and showed evidence of a concern to propagate the faith of Islam through their contribution to the construction of religious and civic buildings. The majority of the women under this study enjoyed high social status by being part of the imperial power as a mother, wife, or daughter of the ruler or sultan. For example, the challenging Dayfa Khatun, regent of Aleppo, provided the city with one of its famous monuments, the Madrasa al-Firdaws, the Seljuk princess Safwat al-Mulk, widow of the conqueror of Syria Taj al-Dawla Tutush (1078–95) ordered the construction of an impressive funerary cupola for her son and herself, and Zumurrud Khatun built the Madrasa Khatuniyya in Damascus (Humphreys, 1994). Other eminent women such as Rabi’a Khatun, sister of Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi, was known for her patronage of architecture in Damascus, and Nafisa al-Bayda, the wife of Murad Bey, the Ottoman viceroy of Egypt in the late 18th century, employed her vast wealth for building monumental architecture, such as a public water fountain in Cairo (Behrens-Abouseif, 1989).

This study will focus on women’s power and their architectural representation, which became the most visible and appealing form of their wealth, social status, and philanthropy. Also, the study intends to record and document women’s ambitious and longstanding contribution to architecture and cityscape to verify their authoritative presence in their societies. There will be no discussion of women’s position from the perspective of gender as it is not within the scope of this work. The study aims to represent a theoretical framework of the broader concerns of women’s patronage and self-representation in architecture and aspires to illustrate and recognize their visibility within the context of the Islamic world. It will also include analysis of some buildings in terms of their location, plan, architectural vocabulary, and their impact on urban regeneration.
The methodology of the study included extensive archival and library literature review and examination and documentation of several buildings and projects in various regions of the Islamic world, in terms of their physical manifestation. The structure of this research included the classification of the different buildings into four categories: religious, civic, funerary, and urban landscape.

2. Women contribution to religious buildings

Religious buildings play an essential role in Islam and Muslim life as well as express their presence and identity. They function as spaces for performing Islamic rituals, education, and community service. However, Women endowed and pioneered many important and outstanding religious buildings that have a crucial impact on the cityscape of Muslim cities. These buildings include Sabil-kuttab, mosque-university, mosque, and madrasa.

2.1. Sabil-kuttab, by Nafisa al-Bayda

Nafisa al-Bayda (d. 1816) was one of the wealthiest women of her time, but nothing is known about her origin (Fay, 2012). It is argued that she came from Circassia or Georgia because her name was al-Bayda (the white). In the 18th century, the elite women were wives of powerful Mamluks (slave-soldiers), who dominated Egypt in both politics and military. Nafisa al-Bayda was married first to “Ali Bey al-Kabir”, one of the powerful people in Egypt, in the mid-18th century. After the death of Ali Bey, Nafisa was married to Murad Bey Mohammed (ca. 1750–1801), a Mamluk of the Qazdughli faction, who assumed power at the end of the 18th century (Williams, 2002). Nafisa might be the only woman among the Mamluks known to have played an active and evident political role in her period. During the French occupation of Egypt (1798–1801), Nafisa and her husband Murad Bey acted as intermediaries between the French community of merchants and the Mamluks, who imposed big levies on them. In addition to her political role and as a powerful and wealthy woman, Nafisa created a patronage network of female slaves to help them marry Mamluks. Nafisa owned many properties, including houses, gardens, and commercial buildings. One of her famous buildings is the sabil-Kuttab, which is located inside Bab Zuwayla gate on the old Fatimid Cairo (Figure 1). The sabil-kuttab was built in 1796.
and was a popular place for the wealthy to provide charitable services to the community. The sabil (fountain) is located on the ground floor to provide free drinking water to the public, while the first floor contained the free Qur’anic school. The building is also characterized by an imposing rounded facade decorated by an impressive mashrabiya (oriel window) (Fay, 2012).

2.2. Mosque-university, by Fatima al-Fihri

Fatima bint Muhammad Al-Fihriya Al-Qurashiya (800–880), daughter of a wealthy Qayrawani merchant, immigrated with her father, Mohamed al-Fihriyya, from Qayrawan in Tunisia, to Fez in Morocco (DESK, 2018). Fatima al-Fihri, along with her sister, Mariam al-Fihri were born to an educated family, where they were taught Fiqh and Hadith (Islam instructions and tradition). After the death of her father, Fatima inherited considerable wealth, which she employed in projects that serve her community. Al-Fihri bought a mosque, which was built in c.845 by King Yahya ibn Muhammad. In 859, she rebuilt the mosque and extended its area by adding more facilities, and it was known as the “Mosque of al-Qarawiyyin” (Figure 2). Although the architecture design of the mosque was extravagant, Fatima insisted on giving it a modest look, and the construction of the mosque took 18 years to complete (Merah et al., 2017).

The mosque of al-Qarawiyyin’ became a major intellectual center in the medieval Mediterranean as it included several religious madrasas (schools) (Michell, 1996). Fez city was associated with Islamic Spain politically, economically, and culturally. However, detailed visual references to the religious architecture of Islamic Spain can be traced in the hypostyle plan of the mosque, the carved stucco, wood, and glazed tile, and the decorating style derived from the Alhambra palace in Spain (Figure 3). Between 1134 and 1143, Almoravid ruler, Sultan Ali ben Yusuf, renovated the mosque and increased its size. Between 1606 and 1623, Sa'did Sultan ‘Abdallah ibn al-Shaikh, added more architectural features such as the blue and white tile floor of the courtyard, marble ablutions fountain, and fountain pavilions, which express the influence of the Court of the Lions at the Alhambra palace (Michell, 1996). Some historians believe that Arabic numbers became known and used in Europe through this university. Nevertheless, this outstanding example, which is considered as one of the oldest universities in the world now, is a testimony of the important role of women in the progress of education in the Islamic world (Kahera et al., 2009).
2.3. Mosque, by Mariam al-Fihri

The sovereign Idris Al-Azhar Ben Idris Ben Abdellah Al-Kamel (791–828), known as Idris II founded the town of Fez in 789 and encouraged the Muslim Andalusian community to move and settle in the new settlement (Mezzine, 2001). Thus, on the right bank of the river, a neighborhood was founded and has taken the same name of the community, the “Andalusian Quarter”. Mariam bint Muhammad Al-Fihriya Al-Qurashiya, a devout woman and sister of Fatima al-Fihri, initiated and built the Andalusian Mosque in 859 to celebrate their existence in the area and to balance out the Qarawiyyin mosque, which was built on the left bank of the river (Figure 4). The mosque is a modest building, which consisted of seven rows of benches and a small patio planted with trees and irrigated from a nearby canal called the valley of Masmuda. In the tenth century, many impressive features were added to the mosque by the Umayyad of Cordoba, which turned the mosque into the second most important religious buildings in Fez (Mezzine, 2001). Undoubtedly, the Andalusian Mosque and the Qarawiyyin University remain the living evidence of the important role of women in shaping the image of Fez city.

2.4. Madrasa, by Dhayfa Khatun

Dhayfa Khatun was a powerful woman and an Ayyubid princess during the Ayyubid dynasty in Syria (Ruggles, 2000). She was born in Aleppo in 1185 and died in 1242 at the age of 57 and was buried in the citadel of Aleppo. Khatun’s father was al-Malik al-Adil Sayf ad-Din Abu-Bakr Ahmed ibn Najm ad-Din Ayyub, the brother of Salah al-Din Al-Ayyubi, and her brother was al-Malik al-Kamil Naser ad-Din Abu al-Ma’ali Muhammad (ca. 1177–1238) (Humphreys, 1977). In 1212, Khatun was married to the Ayyubid ruler of Aleppo Al-Malik az-Zahir Ghazi ibn Yusuf ibn Ayyub (1172–1216) and became the Queen of Aleppo for six years (1236–1242). During her rule, Khatun helped her people by removing discrimination and unfair taxes throughout Aleppo. She was well known for her charitable foundations to support the poor. Dhayfa was also a prominent architectural patron, where she established many outstanding buildings, including two schools, to support and promote learning in Aleppo (Tabbaa, 1997). The first of her charitable projects was al-Firdaus madrasa (paradise school), which was built in 1236 and was specialized in Islamic studies and Islamic law. The other school was the Khankah School, specialized mainly in Sharia (Islam legal system).

The most important and famous one was Al-Firdaus School, which was located close to Bab al-Makam in Aleppo (Figure 5, Tabbaa, 2000). Based on the structure of the educational system at
that time, the school accommodated a teacher, an Imam (leader), and twenty scholars. The school consisted of several buildings, including the school, a mosque, and a residential quarter.

The layout of the madrasa was a rectangle with a square courtyard in the middle and four entrances. The building featured eleven domes, distributed around its perimeter, which added a tremendous and monumental visual impact. The main portal leads to the courtyard, which is paved with beautiful black-and-white stone patterns and has an octagonal basin at its center. Three sides of the courtyard are surrounded by covered aisles, which are supported by arcades. The forth north side of the courtyard featured a massive large iwan (sitting area), which was used as a classroom (Tabbaa, 2000).

### 3. Women contribution to civic buildings

Although women's contribution to the establishment of religious buildings was immense, they also supported the construction of many different civic buildings, which shaped the identity of Muslim cities, and contributed to the progress of Islamic societies. However, women were patrons of...
various types of civic buildings that served diverse societal functions, including Hamami (Bath), Caravanserai (inn), and Darussifa (hospital).

### 3.1. Hamam (Bath), by Hurrem Sultan

Hurrem Sultan (1500–1558) was the official wife of the Ottoman Sultan Suleyman the Magnificent (Suleyman I) (1494–1566), and mother of Mihrimah and Selim II (Yermolenko, 2010). It is argued that she was Russian or Polish in origin, and she was nicknamed as Hurrem, but she was known in the West as Roxelana. Hurrem attained a significant role in Ottoman political history and became the most powerful woman in the palace, especially after the death of Suleyman’s mother. Hurrem Sultan died in 1558 and was buried in the Suleymaniye complex (Sümertaş, 2006). Hurrem was known for her passion for sponsoring and commissioning buildings and complexes. She was the first royal woman in the Ottoman court to patronage charitable structure not only in Anatolia but also in all around the empire. These buildings included a mosque complex in Istanbul, the Haseki Kulliye complex, two schools, and a women’s hospital. Also, she ordered the building of four schools in Mecca and a mosque in Jerusalem. (Prymak, 1995). One of Hurrem Sultan’s impressive commissioned buildings is the Hurrem Sultan Hamami (Bath), established in 1557 in Istanbul by the great Ottoman court architect Sinan (Figure 6). The bath was intended to be a facility serving the nearby Aya Sofya Mosque (Hagia Sophia). The bath is a rectangular building, which included two back-to-back sections for men and women with two separate entrances (Figure 7). The bath is well integrated within its context and still represents a living evidence of Hurrem Sultan’s contribution to the welfare of her community.

### 3.2. Caravanserai, by Mama Hatun

Melike Mama Hatun was the ruler of the Saltukid dynasty from 1191 to 1200 (Sinclair, 1989). During her reign, Mama Hatun commissioned many significant buildings that affected the image of the city of Tercan, located midway between Erzincan and the capital Erzurum in Turkey. These buildings included a caravanserai, a mosque, a bridge, and a hammam, which are still existing and named after her. One of her impressive work is a caravanserai (a roadside inn), which was intended to serve the travelers to have rest and recover from their journeys (Figure 8, Sinclair, 1989). The typical caravanserai comprises an open rectangular courtyard surrounded by a two-story building. It has one wide and high portal to allow camels and horses to enter. There are also many identical animal stalls, and rooms to accommodate merchants and their servants, and stores for their merchandise (Sims, 1978).
3.3. Hospital of Divrigi, by Turan Melek Sultan

Turan Melek Sultan’s father was the Menguejek ruler of Erzincan, Fahreddin Behram Shah (1162–1225), and her mother was Ismeti Hatun, who was known for her charitable foundations (Aslanapa, 1971). She was married to Emir Ahmed Shah, son of Suleyman Shah II and Fatima Hatun, the ruler of the Divrigi branch of Mengucekogulları. Turan Melek Sultan and her husband are the grandchildren of Emir Mengucek Gazi, the fifth generation of one of the four commanders whom Sultan Alparslan was assigned to conquer Anatolia. Turan Melek Sultan was famous for her generosity and philanthropy. She used all her wealth in the construction of the masterpiece darussifa (hospital), which is part of the complex of the Great Mosque and Hospital of Divrigi (Figure 9). The construction of the mosque began first by her husband Ahmet Shah in 1228, while Turhan Melek followed him and commissioned the hospital almost at the same time (Aslanapa, 1971).

In Ottoman times, the hospital at Divriği was used as a madrasa, where religious knowledge and instruction were taught. The hospital adjoined the mosque to the south, and it has a rectangular plan with an east-west orientation, a manner of the Central Asian Turks (Figure 10). It was built of stone blocks and featured an enclosed courtyard, which is divided into nine sections by ornamented columns and double vaults. The west wing has two-story and three iwans (sitting areas), while the central section is emphasized by an octagonal spire of wrought iron and glass with vaults on either side. The central entrance of the hospital is a small door placed within an impressive arched.
portal, which dominates the western façade. The portal is projecting from the wall of the hospital and adorned by intricate decorative details.

The complex is a unique masterpiece in Anatolia in terms of its architecture, art, and medical history. It exceeded the outstanding and complicated stonework of this period with its exceptional decorations and distinctive architectural style. Also, it represents strong evidence of the social prosperity level, which the Anatolian Turkish civilization has reached. The complex was included in the UNESCO Cultural Heritage List in 1985 as it represents the most original examples of Anatolian Seljuk mosques and hospitals (Ertürk & Karakul, 2016).

4. Women contribution to funerary architecture
According to the Islamic worldview, death is not considered a negative thing, but it is seen as the path to the Hereafter and the way to go back to God. Although Islam firmly forbids building edifices over graves to prevent Muslims from using them as places for worship, many outstanding tombs and mausoleums were built, almost in the entire Islamic world. Women contributed many significant tombs to honor the death of their relatives. For example, the Greek mother of Abbasid
Caliph al-Muntasir bi-llah (837–862) built a mausoleum for him in Iraq in 862, Sah Selime Hatun, wife of Emir (prince) Bayindir ibn Rustem, built a tomb for him in Ahlat, Turkey in 1491. Nur Jahan, the wife of Emperor Jahangir, commissioned a mausoleum for her father, I’timad al-Daula, in 1622 in Agra, India.

Bega Begum (ca. 1511–1582) the wife of the second Mughal Emperor Nasir-ud-Din Muhammad, known as Humayun (1508–1556), was a charitable and a devout Muslim (Murshed, 2004). Between 1565 and 1572, Begum commissioned and built a remarkable tomb for her husband, Humayun in Delhi, nine years after his death. The tomb is considered one of the best and well-preserved monuments of the Mughal dynasty and the first garden-tomb on the Indian subcontinent (Figure 11). Also, it can be considered an early masterpiece that influenced the design of the Taj Mahal, the epitome of Mughal architecture (Bandarin, 2004).

The landscape of the tomb is influenced by the Persian garden style, which is reflected in the Chahar bagh (four parts) garden with quadrilateral form. The garden consists of four parts, which are divided by walkways and provided with flowing water fountains to resemble the garden of paradise mentioned in the Quran (Figure 12). The tomb is constructed from red sandstone and crowned with one white Persian style marble dome. Bega Begum died in 1582 and was buried at Humayun’s Tomb in Agra, after the death of Humayun, and the tomb remained a powerful testimony to her authority as an imperial woman. (Findly, 1993).

5. Women contribution to urban landscape
Women’s contribution to Islamic architecture was not limited to commissioning all these different types of architectural buildings but also extended to include various public projects in the urban context. They were involved in many urban and landscape projects, which became an essential means of expressing their power and underlining their presence in society.

5.1. Darb Zubaydah by Zubaydah bint Abu Ja’far al-Mansur (766–831)
Zubaydah bint Abu Ja’far al-Mansur was born in 766 and died in 831 in Baghdad, Iraq (Verde, 2016). Her grandfather was the Abbasid caliph Abu Ja’far al-Mansur (the second Abbasid Caliph), and her husband was the caliph Harun al-Rashid (the fifth Abbasid Caliph). Zubaydah’s name was Amatul Aziz, and it was her grandfather, al-Mansur, who gave her the nickname
“Zubaydah”, which means “Little Butter Ball” “on account of her plumpness” as a child, according to the 13th-century biographer Ibn Khalikhan (Verde, 2016). Zubaydah was the wealthiest and most influential woman worldwide in her time. She was a noblewoman of great philanthropy and was a patron of arts and poetry. Although she developed many significant buildings in different cities, Zubaydah was well known to have initiated a massive project to build service stations with multiple water wells all along the Pilgrimage route from Baghdad to Mecca. The origin of the pilgrimage route dates back to the pre-Islamic era, but its importance significantly increased with the dawn of Islam. During the time of the early caliphates, the route flourished and reached its zenith and prosperity during the Abbasid Caliphate (750–1258). It was initiated and constructed by Abdallah Abul’Abbas, the first Abbasid Caliph in 751, and was known at that time as “Darb Heerah”. He ordered the establishment of milestones, flags, and lighthouses along the trail from Kufa to Makkah in order to facilitate the trip of pilgrims and merchants (Rashid, 1980). Darb Zubayda was developed to include 27 stations, wells, pools, dams, palaces, houses, and pavement. Certainly, the enormous efforts of Zubaydah to undertake this massive upgrading project to ease the dangerous trip to Makkah were remembered, and the road was renamed from Darb Heerah to Darb Zubaydah (Figure 13(a,b)) and still carries her name until today. (UNESCO, 2015).

5.2. Gardens, by Nur Jahan
The Mughal Empire was one of the remarkable central states in the history of the world. By the late 16th century, their empire encompassed most of the Indian subcontinent. The Mughal Empire demonstrated highly management skills, visionary strategies, and a centralized system that affected the social life of people in all their regions and unified the Indian subcontinent. The Mughal rulers were known for their talents and artistic and architectural achievements (Richards, 1995). During the reign of the Mughal dynasties, noblewomen invested their wealth in many different areas, including art and architecture, and carried out their projects. Of these women was Empress Nur Jahn (1577–1645), wife of the third Mughal Emperors Nur-ud-din Muhammad Salim, known as Jahangir (1569–1627), and daughter of “Wazir” (minister) Mirza Ghiyas Beg,
Nur Jahn was renowned for her passion for art, making jewelry, and fashion design. She also showed a great interest in architecture and landscape, where she and her husband had undertaken the construction of many impressive and breathtaking buildings and royal gardens. The Mughal gardens were not only places of private pleasure, but also provided the public access to the Emperor to mediate issues of local concern. There is no doubt that Nur Jahan’s vision and energy had an outstanding impact on the imperial aesthetical taste in general (Findly, 1993).

Nur Jahan shared in the creation of almost eleven imperial gardens, which featured running water, palaces, pavilions for shade and rest, orchards of fruiting trees and brightly colored flowers. For example, the Zanana garden for the women of the harem, which was characterized by its black marble pavilion and the elaborate waterworks; the gardens of the Ram Bagh (Garden of Repose) overlooking the Yamuna River in Agra; and the Moti Bagh that also lies on the eastern bank of the Yamuna River. An outstanding example of the work of Nur Jahan is the royal garden of Achabal in Kashmir (Figure 14). This garden dates back to the 15th century at the time of the Sultans of Kashmir. It was built around a powerful mountain spring at the base of a forested mountain. In 1620, Nur Jahan laid out new gardens on the same site.
The Achabal gardens consisted of four ascending terraces in the Charbagh style, which was a Parisian garden style (Figure 15). The Charbagh is a garden divided into four parts by two water channels, which intersect in the middle to form a pool or a fountain. The Achabal included a spring, pavilions, pools with fountains, and many walks shaded by fruit trees. In 1627, Emperor Jahangir died, and Nur Jahan lost her power in the next reign. She was exiled to Lahore, where she lived in isolation with her daughter until her death in 1645. Nur Jahan still remembered for her wide range of unparalleled contributions to the Mughal heritage and the Indian culture (Findly, 1993).

6. Conclusion
After the introduction of Islam, the Islamic codes were integrated into the traditions of the different Muslim regions and societies and played a significant role in presenting the Islamic world as a unified entity. Islam also allowed women to be visible, deal with public issues, and exercise power in many different societal aspects. The study has shown that women became more acknowledged and publicly visible through their charity and architectural patronage. In addition, the previous discussion of the architectural work and urban regeneration projects are evident manifestations of female power and significant means that made Muslim female identity visible on a large scale.

Over the last few decades, arts and architectural historians began to be aware of the vital role of women in developing the architecture and urban landscape of the Islamic world. Women had a significant role in the history of Islam in general and in the history of Islamic architecture in specific, where they commissioned buildings that are ambitious and influential. What made the contribution of women patronage to Islamic architecture significant was the massive scale of some of the buildings. These buildings, which were named and remembered after women, established their power, identity as well as their image in the city. Although this study could be somehow problematic because of the limited available resources about the essential role of women in Islamic societies, it succeeded at showing that women were actively involved in patronage throughout the periods and regions discussed.

Although the presence of women in terms of architecture can be traced all over the Islamic world, the relationship between them and the architect is still a debated issue in Islamic architecture. There is no evidence in the available literature review whether, the female patrons were involved in the choice of the architectural style of their buildings, had any recognizable consequences on architecture, or had any impact on the building process. It seems that the main role of the wealthy patrons might be focusing on providing social services for the society as well as consolidating their presence and power.
Nevertheless, the study represented a piece of strong evidence that women held a significant position as patrons of art and architecture and history should acknowledge them in the manner they deserve. Now by the beginning of the 21st century, the role of women in Islamic architecture should receive more attention that is more scholarly, and their contribution should have more publicity.

Acknowledgements
The author would like to express his appreciation for the Graduate Studies and Research at Effat University for its continuous support to realize this research.

Funding
This research received no external funding.

Author details
Abdel-Moniem El-Shorbagy1
E-mail: el-shorbagy@effatuniversity.edu.sa
ORCID ID: http://orcid.org/0000-0002-4761-7118
1 College of Architecture and Design, Architecture Department, Effat University, Jeddah 21478, Saudi Arabia.

Author Contributions
categorization, investigation, writing—review, and editing.

Conflicts of Interest
The author declares no conflict of interest.

Cover Image
Source: Author

Citation information
Cite this article as: Women in Islamic architecture: towards acknowledging their role in the development of Islamic civilization, Abdel-Moniem El-Shorbagy, Cogent Arts & Humanities (2020), 7: 1741984.

References
Aslanapa, O. (1971). Turkish art and architecture. Praeger Publishers.
Bandarin, F. (2004). Humayun’s Tomb, Delhi (India). World Heritage Properties© UNESCO.
Behrens-Abouseif, D. (1999). Doris Behrens-Abouseif. Islamic architecture in Cairo: An introduction. Leiden.
Bewley, A. A. (2009). Muslim women: A biographical dictionary. University of Michigan: Ta-Ha Publishers.
Charis, W. (1980). Women in Muslim history. London.
DESK, S. (2013). World’s first University was founded by a Muslim Woman. The Islamic Information. Retrieved September 2019, from https://thesislamicinformation.com/worlds-first-university-founded-muslim-woman/.
Ertürk, N., & Karakul, Ö. (2016). UNESCO world heritage in Turkey 2016. Grafliker.
Fay, M. A. (2011). Unveiling the hareem: Elite women and the paradox of seclusion in Eighteenth-century Cairo. Syracuse Syracuse University Press.
Findly, E. B. (1993). Nur Jahan, empress of Mughal India. Oxford University Press.
Humphreys, R. S. (1994). Women as patrons of religious architecture in ayyubid damascus. Mqarnas, Brill, vol. 11, 35–54. https://doi.org/10.2307/1523208
Kahera, A., Abdulmalik, L., & Anz, C. (2009). Design criteria for mosques and Islamic centres. Routledge.
Merah, S., Ramdane, T., Khan, M. S., & Al-Fihri Hart, F. (2017). Religious Fraternity in Al-Qarawiyyin university: A case study. International Journal of Humanities and Social Science, 7(10), 177–183. Retrieved August 2019, from http://irep.iium.edu.my/60386
Mezzine, M. (2001). A day in the Life of a Toleb in Fez, in Andalusian Morocco: A discovery in living art. Ministry of Cultural Affairs of the Kingdom of Morocco.
Michell, G. (1996). Architecture of the Islamic world. London.
Murshed, Y. (2004). The Humayun Nama: Gulbadan Begum’s forgotten chronicle. The Daily Star, 5(31), pp. 1. Retrieved August 2019, from archive.the-dailystar.net/2004/06/27/d406271502101.htm
Prymak, T. M. (1995). Roxolana: wife of Suleiman the magnificent. Nashe zhyttia/Our Life, LII(10), 15–20.
Rashid, S. (1980). Darb Zubayda: The pilgrim road from Kufa to Mecca. Riyadh University Libraries.
Richards, J. F. (1995). The Mughal Empire. Cambridge University Press.
Ruggles, F. (2000). Women, patronage, and self-representation in Islamic Societies. SUNY Press.
Sims, E. (1978). Trade and travel: Markets and caravanserai. In G. Michell (Ed.), Architecture of the Islamic World–Its History and social meaning. Thames and Hudson Ltd.
Sinclair, T. A. (1989). Eastern Turkey: An architectural & archaeological survey. II. Pindar Press.
Sümertaş, F. M. (2006). Female patronage in classical ottoman architecture: Five case studies in Istanbul complex. Middle East Technical University.
Tabbaa, Y. (1997). Constructions of Power and Piety in Medieval Aleppo. The Pennsylvania State University Press.
Tabbaa, Y. (2000). Dayża Khatun: Fairchild regent Queen and architectural patron in nuggles, women, patronage, and self-representation. State University of New York Press.
UNESCO. (2015). Darb Zubayda (Pilgrim Road from Kufa to Makkah). World Heritage Review. Retrieved September 25 2019, from https://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/6025/.
Verde, T. (2016). Malik I: Khayzuran & Zubayda. Saudi Arama World, 67(1), 44–45. Retrieved August 2019, from https://www.aramcoworld.com/articles/January-2016/Malik-I-Khayzuran-Zubayda.
Williams, C. (2002). Islamic monuments of Cairo: The practical guide. American University of Cairo Press.
Yerimolenko, G. I. (2010). Roxolana in European literature, history and culture. Ashgate Publishing, Ltd.
