

Academic Essay, Subject overview

Subject **Karaouine Mosque**

The World's Oldest Educational Institution

Situated in Fez, Morocco, the Karaouine Mosque has a fascinating history that dates back to the ninth century. One of the significant facts about this mosque is that it was founded by a woman named Fatma Al Fihri in 859. She was the daughter of a wealthy man from Tunisia and greatly valued religion, education and the pursuit of knowledge.

The building was originally established as a mosque, with a madrasa to provide a place for religious practice and teaching, and Quran memorization. The madrasa soon developed to become a place for learning Arabic grammar, mathematics, music, chemistry, Islamic legislation, medicines, and astronomy, as well as the natural sciences.

The mosque was expanded over the centuries to include a university and is now one of the most important educational centers of the Muslim World. The University of Al Karaouine reached its peak during the 14th century when it attracted historians, mathematicians, physicians, poets and other scholars from all over the world. The mosque played a significant role in spreading the teachings of Maliki School, one of four Sunni Islamic sects. Its university is older than Azhar University in Egypt and even some European institutions such as Oxford University in England and the University of Bologna in Italy.

The University complex has a mosque, a university and a library. Over the years, the library fell into disrepair and suffered major problems such as broken tiles, cracked doors and exposed electric wires. For this reason, it underwent many changes. The restored library, which has an air-conditioned book room, a lab and a coffee shop, is now open not only to scholars and researchers but also to the general public.

Source: Arbaoui, L. (2012, October 2). Al Karawiyyin of Fez: The oldest university in the world. *Morocco World News*. Retrieved from <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2012/10/59056/>

NEW VOCABULARY:

Found: to build and start

Madrasa: a place where students learn to memorize the Qur'an with a mutawa'a.

Expand: to make something larger

Scholar: a person who is highly educated and is a specialist in a particular branch of study.

Fall into disrepair: to be in a broken or damaged state

Restore: to bring back to an original or good condition