Women | Muslim Women as Professionals, Artisans and Performing Artists

‘Some women became writers or poets, others physicians, or some experts in religious law and jurisprudence.’

Through the ages there is evidence of Muslim women participating in professional life such as Zayn al-Khuzan, the female manager of the Fatimid Caliph’s wardrobe and its 30-strong female staff. Some women became writers or poets, others physicians, or some experts in religious law and jurisprudence, teaching and interpreting religious doctrines. Several women are recorded as famous calligraphers, including Hafsa, a wife of the Prophet Muhammad and the daughter of Caliph ‘Umar Bin al-Khattab. Fatima al-Baghdadia is another female calligrapher whose style was of such a high standard that it was compared to that of Ibn Hilal, a highly acclaimed calligrapher. In the case of the Prophet’s first wife, Sayyida al-Khadija, some of her calligraphic work still survives, attesting to her great skill.



Name:
Section from a Qur'an

Dynasty:
Hegira 731 / AD 1330 Mamluk

Details:
Museum of Islamic Art
Cairo, Egypt

Justification:
Zaynab, a female calligrapher from Jerusalem inscribes on the final page of the Qur'an she copied: 'The humble servant of God, Zaynab bint [daughter of] Ahmad al-Maqdisiyya in the month of Sha'ban in the year 731 [1330] wrote this.'