

Behind every
powerful man, a
woman dictates:
women's influence in
mongol, qing an...

[History](#), [Empires](#)



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

According to Oxford Dictionary, feminism means, “ the advocacy of women’s rights on the grounds of political, social, and economic equality to men”.

Many believe the start of feminism began right around the time of women’s suffrage. However, there is evidence to suggest that feminism has been around for centuries, but many of the women had mostly this “ silent” power and influence. This “ silent” power is very prominent in many of the Asian Empires such as the Mongol, Ottoman, Mughal, and Qing Empires. There are several roles that women played in order to have more liberties. The women that had the most power generally were able to influence the emperor of the time. Emperors like Genghis Khan, Suleiman, Babur, Akbar, Kangxi, Yongzheng, and Qianlong all had specific women that rose up in this “ silent” power to influence a change in society.

The Mongol Empire was extremely patriarchal in that which men had all of the power and dominance. However, that did not prevent Mongolian women from having a powerful influence in society. For women in the empire, adulthood was achieved once a woman was married. Women in the Mongolian Empire were given more freedoms than that of neighboring lands. They were allowed to roam in public, and women in headdresses signified being married, which garnered more respect. When married, women were given their own yurts. Yurts were a type of tent that is easy to transport to different locations. It is where these women would sleep and live. Men could then choose which yurt they wanted to sleep in. Also, women in the empire were protected under the Yassa. The Yassa was a code of laws created by Genghis Kahn, which helped the overall compliance in the empire.

Often times, men would turn to the women in their lives to ask for guidance and advice. One of the greatest emperors of the Mongol Empire, if not of all-time, Genghis Kahn, confided in the women in his life. Genghis Khan had groups of women he considered to be friends called nokoger. However, many of them were referred to as his wives towards the end of his rule. One of the most influential women that aided Genghis Kahn during his development of various organizations throughout the empire was that of his mother, Hoelun. This is just one of the many examples of how women in the Mongol Empire influenced the structure of society.

Genghis Kahn was also extremely respectful of his wives. He often encouraged them to speak their opinions and ideas for the betterment and future of the empire. He would honor them by allowing them to sit at the same level as one of his most respected and influential comrades. As a woman during this time in the Mongol Empire, speaking out of turn or disrespecting the Emperor in any way could easily get her killed. This is why when Genghis Kahn allowed his wives to speak, it was an honor, and allowed women to gain some power in the empire. The Yassa was also created with women in mind, which is why they had so much more freedom.

Another woman that was extremely influential in Genghis Kahn's life was his first wife, Börte. Before Genghis Kahn received this name, he was known as Temüjin, he was married at the age of sixteen to Börte in order to solidify as allies between Genghis Kahn's and Börte's tribes. This was just the beginning of the importance Börte had in Genghis Kahn's life. Soon after their marriage, Börte was kidnapped by the Merits after the women were left

behind by the men in order to retaliate to the recent attack at their home camp. Genghis Kahn's mother was member of the tribe that just recently rampaged his tribe, and this was rampage was to avenge the kidnapping of Hoelun, Genghis Kahn's mother, by his father. This is another prime example of how women influence society and the formation of the empire. The kidnapping and revenge for kidnappings are a common occurrence. After eight long months, Genghis Kahn had finally caught up to Börte's kidnappers and safely retrieved his wife. The journey to take back Börte is one of the many key events that influence Genghis Kahn to begin conquering lands and create the Mongol Empire. This is also considered one of the major influences for the Yassa law that prohibits the abduction of women.

Shortly after Genghis Kahn became the Great Kahn, the Mongol people graciously accepted her as one of their own, and they even granted her the title of Grand Empress. Genghis Kahn respected the decisions and opinions of Börte, especially while he was away in battle to expanding his empire. Although she was honored greatly, she ruled the Mongol Empire homeland by assisting behind his brother, Temuge. Genghis Kahn brought his other wives with him in battle, but Börte was allowed to manage her own territory and court. For example, the Kherlen River was under her rule. Her influence in Genghis Khan's life was well-known throughout the empire, and it was made obvious that only the sons she bore would be taken into consideration for future Khans.

Another powerful woman in the Mongol Empire was Töregene Khatun. Soon after her husband's, Orgedei death, Töregene Khatun became the Great

Khatun. She quickly made decisions, such as fire many of her husband's officials with that of her own. She knew that if her son had a chance at being Khan one day, she would have to make a quick move into power. However, she knew that keeping some of the same relationships were just as equaling important. One of these relationships that remained friendly after Orgedei's death was with that of commanders in China. Another impressive decision by Töregene Khatun was to send envoys to the rival Song troop to negotiate and promote peace between the Mongols and Song. However, her men were captured by the Songs. This left her with no choice but to send her strongest men to pillage and attack the Song Dynasty. When the Songs surrendered, they agreed to negotiate peace, and the Mongols retreated when Töregene Khatun was satisfied with the negotiation. Her five short years in power, truly showed how women can rule an empire, but ultimately she did this so her son could eventually rise to power.

The Ottoman Empire was primarily an Islamic empire, and protected and established a way of life for the Ottoman women via the laws in the Sharia. The Sharia was created from the influence of the Quran and Hadith to created secular law. Many of the laws addressed issues of economics, crime, politics, and personal issues such as hygiene, prayer, diet, fasting, and sexual intercourse. The Sharia laid out the exact way of life for women. This is vastly different from that of the Mongol women, who had much more freedom throughout the empire. When there were discrepancies on certain aspects of life not addressed in the Sharia, the Muslim community would decide whether a particularly lifestyle was allowed by discussing with

religious scholars that had the prophet Muhammad in mind when making decisions.

Although it may seem as if the Ottoman women are more restricted therefore less respected than in the Mongol Empire, women in the Ottoman Empire were allowed to own property. They were even allowed to maintain ownership of their property after they were married. Women were also granted the opportunity to be represented in the justice system, and they could see a judge. They could also take themselves to court without some form of premonition. These privileges greatly depicting the social influence and respect women had within the Ottoman Empire. For example, women in even the European territories did not have this privilege of owning property or being granted justice in a justice system until the late nineteenth early twentieth centuries. However, the Ottoman women were granted these in the early fourteenth century. Although there were many privileges granted to the Ottoman women, restrictions in the laws prohibited the women to testify for their justice. This was unfortunate a great disadvantage, but better than no opportunity at all. Many accounts of women's influence in society were recorded in court records due to the fact that Ottoman women were granted access to the Ottoman Empire's legal system.

The Ottoman Empire was considered to be an early modern empire due to its respect for some allowable women's rights. Often times, the Muslim women in the empire, "bought and sold property, inherited and bequeathed wealth, established waqfs, borrowed and lent money, and at times even served as holders of timar and usufruct rights on miri land, as tax farmers and in

business partnerships.” The Sharia granted Muslim women these rights, which compelled other non-Muslim women to convert to Islam in order to be granted these rights in the empire. This allowed Muslim women to live a more autonomous lifestyle because of the privilege to own property. This aspect was extremely appealing to non-Muslim women in the Ottoman Empire.

The social aspect of life in the Ottoman Empire was different from that of the Mongol Empire. Since women in the Mongol Empire were protected under the Yassa, women could therefore walk in public and congregate there. This is vastly different from that of the lifestyle of the Ottoman Empire women. The Sharia had strict regulations on how women were allowed to live, especially in public. This often caused women to congregate at each other’s homes for long periods of time. This was especially true of women a part of high society but not necessarily living in the palace. Women in the palace had much stricter regulations on socializing due to the strict guidelines of etiquette for a palace woman. Baths were a very common place for women to meet and socialize, especially because of the ritualistic values baths had.

During the nineteenth century, the Ottoman Empire began reforms to modernize the Ottoman Empire, and spread of Ottomanism, which was to promote the acceptance of diversity in the Empire. This reformation was referred to as Tanzimat. One of the areas that was reformed during Tanzimat was education for women. In 1858, the first girls’ school open, and was followed by large increase in schools in 1863. Soon after these schools were opened, elementary education for women became mandatory, and higher

education schools for teaching and learning to be better wives opened. This just truly shows how the Ottoman Empire has progressed forever women over the years.

While women's rights began to improve over the years, one of the greatest periods of time for women to have power was during the sixteenth century. During this time one of the greatest emperors in the Ottoman Empire rose to the throne. This emperor was Suleiman the Magnificent. During this time, women in the imperial harem could rise to have great power in politics. This time period was referred to as the Sultanate of Women. These women had a strong influence in society. They could help with foreign and domestic policies and negotiations, serve as regents, and even concubines took on a large amount of political power. Similar to Genghis Khan, Suleiman deeply took into consideration the opinions and thoughts of the women in his life. Also, Suleiman had a particular woman that out ranked all the other women, which was his wife, Hurrem Sultan.

Hurrem Sultan began her time in the palace as one of the women in the harem at the age of fifteen just a few years before Suleiman rose to power. She had many rivals in the harem due to her ability to charm her masters, one of them including Suleiman. This led her to become one of his most influential and prominent consorts. There were many violations that Suleiman created due to his affection for Hurrem Sultan. For example, she was allowed to give birth to many of Suleiman's children, which strictly went against the rule to only allow harem girls one child. Another prime example of Suleiman's violations when it comes to Hurrem Sultan, he had a large and

beautiful ceremony to marry Hurrem Sultan. This violated one the longest rule regarding women in the harem, which was that a Sultan was not to marry any of his concubines. This had never been done before in the entirety of the Ottoman Empire. It was impressive that a women who was once a slave and concubine to rise to such high of status to be the wife of the Sultan. This was just the beginning of “ firsts” for the role of powerful women in the Ottoman Empire that began with Hurrem Sultan. She soon became known as Haseki Sultan, which means that she is the sole favorite women of the Sultan. She was the first women and wife to ever receive such a high and powerful title. Suleiman paved a way for future Sultans to marry the women in the harem and allow them to have a strong influence and image in the court. She would eventually be the first women to live the remainder of her as a part of the Sultan’s court. This was unusual because the sons of the women in the harem would eventually govern provinces throughout the empire, and the mother would follow. The mothers never came back unless it was their son that was to become the next Sultan. Hurrem did not follow this tradition, even when three out of her five sons had already left to rule different provinces.

Not only did Hurrem become Suleiman’s wife and favorite partner in the household, she also became his partner on many state affairs. Hurrem was a very smart woman, which is how she became the chief advisor on state affairs. She was a very good at inserting her dominance and influence on many of the foreign and international policies and politics. She easily rose to become one of the most powerful and influential women in Ottoman and

world history during this time. This power led her to become somewhat of a controversial figure in the Ottoman Empire. She not only was the first woman to be trusted with so much power, but she was extremely smart and influential that she often got her way. This led to some people to accuse her of manipulations and plots against anyone who was seen as a possible threat to what he wanted.

Many of the accusations were due to the multiple deaths of people in power that Hurrem did not want. One of these included the rightful successor to the throne. Hurrem was not the first woman to bare a son of Suleiman's. One of her longest rivals from before Suleiman was even in power was that of fellow harem girl, Mahidevran. Mahidevran's son, Mustafa, was the eldest and rightful successor for the throne after Suleiman. One of Suleiman's longtime friends and brother-in-law, Pargali Ibrahim Pasha, became the Grand Vizier. He supported Mustafa as the rightful and most talent choice to become the next sultan. Often the next sultan would execute any of his living brothers in order to prevent any of them from attempting to overthrow the throne. Since there was no true way to choose a sultan without any form of executions, Hurrem decided to use her great political power and influence to rid of anyone who supported Mustafa as the next sultan. After military decisions against the Safavid Empire and other conflicts, it is believed that Hurrem helped further influence the execution of his grand Vizier, Ibrahim. After many three different Grand Viziers, this led to the appointment of Damat Rustem Pasha, Hurrem's son-in-law, as the Grand Vizier. It is believed that Rustem and Hurrem were able to influence Suleiman's decision to execute

his son, Mustafa, for causing unrest in the empire and planning to overthrow his father. This caused Mahidevran to be stripped of her status. Rustem was replaced by Kara Ahmed as the new Grand Vizier. However, it was not long that Kara Ahmed was executed by Suleiman. Many believed that this was because Hurrem used her political power and influence to maneuver to get her way, which was to have Rustem as the Grand Vizier. She did eventually get her way, and Rustem was reinstated. It is still not fully known how much Hurrem really had to do with these executions, but they still show how much power she must have had in order to be even accused to influence them. Her son, Selim II, became the Sultan after Suleiman.

Hurrem Sultan paved the way for women to have more power and influence in the Ottoman Empire. She demonstrated how smart and impactful a woman can be when it comes to political policies. While Hurrem had the most power for a woman during her time, she is similar to Genghis Khan's wife, Börte, because they both symbolize how a woman can influence societal changes. Both of these women were very good at supporting while persuading their husbands.

The Mughal Empire was founded by Babur after struggling to hold on to Farghana. Similar to Genghis Khan's relationship with his mother, Babur owes his founding of the Mughal Empire to his grandmother, Aisan Daulat Begum. She helped raise Babur to become a preserving and disciplined ruler after the death of his mother, and she helped guide him during his struggle to gain control of Farghana. Farghana was difficult for Babur because many of his family members wanted to take away his right to Farghana after his

father. Aisan Daulat Begum was there to help him figure out many of his political crises. Since Babur always listened and took her advice, she was able to control and influence much of the administrative control and power of the empires state affairs. She told him to replace all of the old officers in many different areas of the empire with new ones, so that there would be fewer “enemies” of Babur ruling these areas.

Another one of the crises that Babur faced was when he was threatened to be dethroned by Hasan-i-Yaqub. There were many people that supported Hasan-i-Yaqub in his decision to attempt to dethrone Babur. However, word from those loyal to Babur got to Aisan Daulat Begum. Immediately after hearing this, she used her power to devise a plan against the conspirators that wanted to dethrone Babur. When Hasan found out that some of his men were taken captive during an attempt to seize him, he quickly tried to get the help from Sultan Mahmud of Samarkand. However, Aisan Daulat Begum found out of this plan and sent an army to meet Hasan there. Hasan-i-Yaqub was killed that night. Babur was once again saved by his grandmother, and he retained the throne because Hasan did not understand how much influence and power Aisan Daulat Begum had.

Babur’s grandson and future ruler of the Mughal Empire was that of Akbar. Like his grandfather, Akbar treated the women in his life like family. Akbar is well known for changing the dynamic and acceptance of other religious cultures like that of Hinduism. Generally, Hindu women would be forced to convert to Islam after Muslim kings would marry the princesses or take women for their harems. When this happened, these women would never be

reunited with their families again. Akbar changed this way of life, and instead, he would treat the Rajput fathers of the princesses as if they were just like his Muslim father-in-laws. This allowed the women to stay in touch with their families, as well as, allow the Rajputs to serve on Akbar's court. The stigma of being a Hindu bride was no longer degrading.

One of these Rajput princesses that married Akbar was Mariam uz-Zamani. Unlike many other wives of the emperors, she was very good at being a business woman and trading a variety of items internationally. This gave her great wealth that prominently came from that of many European Kings.

Akbar decided to only have a court that included him and three others. One other these people included Mariam uz-Zamani, and she was the only woman to have a cavalry with a rank of 12, 000. She was also allowed privileges that generally only belonged to the emperor such as issue firmans, which were official documents in the Mughal Empire.

Similar to that of Babur, Kangxi of the Qing Empire also owes much of his right to the throne to his grandmother, Bumbutai. She was granted the honorable title of Grand Empress Dowager. This was unusual for a grandmother to receive because it usually is a title given the mother of the emperor; but Kangxi's mother had passed away so Bumbutai took on the responsibility of raising him. Unlike Babur's grandmother, Aisan Daulat Begum, Bumbutai was much more reserved and did not interfere with politics. However, she strongly advised Kangxi to learn from the four regents of the empire until he was old enough to become emperor. Although she

preferred to remain out of politics, she still often helped her grandson make sure he had no worries to be dethroned. One of these instances occurred when Kangxi felt threatened by one of his regents, Oboi. Bumbutai helped her grandson lure Oboi into a trap to be arrested and stripped of his power as regent, so that Kangxi had no worries about losing his throne. She like many of the other powerful women wanted what was best for her kin.

Another influential woman in the Qing Empire was that of Lady Niohuru. Similar to that of Ottoman Emperor Suleiman's wife, Hurrem Sultan, Lady Niohuru started out as a concubine in Yongzheng Emperor's harem. She eventually moved to Consort then to Empress Consort after the death of Lady Ulanara. Yongzheng never married Lady Niohuru, but appointed her to take the place of Empress. This allowed her son to become the next emperor of the Qing Empire, and he became known as Qianlong Emperor.

Qianlong treated his mother with great respect, and honored her by giving her the title of Empress Dowager Chongqing. Qianlong often sought advice from his mother, similar to that of Genghis Khan. She was believed to have influenced him to choose his second empress consort, Lady Ulanara. This just goes to show how impactful mothers can truly be.

Throughout many different historical accounts about the Mongol, Ottoman, Mughal, and Qing Empires, women embraced and used their "silent" power to promote the influence and strength of women throughout their society. Many of them used the power granted to them by their emperors to help with the betterment of their society. The intelligence possessed by these

women just goes to show how women can be just as influential, powerful, and strong as men. These women's legacies helped pave the way for the future of women. They have given the opportunity for future generations to no longer have "silent" power, but rather, to just have power.