

# [A as both the religious and the social](https://assignbuster.com/a-as-both-the-religious-and-the-social/)

A similar perception was adopted when considering the roleof women within the political arena. However, women were allowed a certaindegree of political power, based on some cultural traditions and particularhistorical periods. Abd ar- Raziq says in his book ‘ Women and gender in Mamlouk societies’ thatcertain mothers of prestigious Mumluk sultans in the great Arab peninsula had asubstantial amount of influence over their sons, such as during the rule ofBaraka Khan, and Nasir Muhammad ibn Qalawun. 1 TheOttoman period showcased a more significant role for women, where the mothersof the rulers, actively took in charge of the households. As the mother of thesultan, she gained an official title and became one of the first elevatedpositions for women in the political arena. However, this was not approved ofin the Turkish monarchs.

They disapproved of the eminent role of women inpolitical affairs that took place in the Mamluk and Ottoman dynasties. 2 Theirperception of women followed the belief that they were capable of bringingcorruption through their seduction abilities, and would be able to dominate themen in power, by any means possible, especially black magic. 3Throughout the examples provided, the common ground defining the politicalposition of women, is through their connection with the men in their lives, forinstance, their fathers, husbands, sons and brothers. When considering the main focus of a woman’s role from allthe different levels in society, M. Marin states, that ‘ family was indeed theprivileged space for women’s lives, as both the religious and the social idealconsider women primarily as wives and mothers.’4 A Muslimfamily comprised of relationships that worked on a balanced respect of theobligations each member had to follow, regardless of the fact that they were maleor female, slave, or servant. These rules involved giving each member of thefamily separate rights. Therefore, any questions on divorce, inheritance, economic independency and most importantly the marriage contract came under theMuslim Shariah Law, where different schools of thought dealt with different subjects, accordingly.

Out of all of them, the main right of a woman revolved around hercontribution towards the establishment of the marriage contract. The purposeserved by this contract was to act as a protection against any harm inflictedby the husband that could potentially affect the psychological, social andeconomic wellbeing of the woman in the form of an official document. Themarriage contract drew up clauses that involved the amount of dowry that was tobe given to the wife, the place of residence the couple would be living atalong with the clause where the husband has to inform the wife about hisdecisions to re marry or take in a concubine. 5Furthermore, in 11th/17th century Cairo, the contractsfurther included  clauses that asked forthe permission and allowance for a woman to be able to visit her friends, go topublic baths, and the be able to visit Mecca to perform pilgrimage, after hermarriage. 6 (add something)Another aspect of the public sphere in which women wereinvolved in was to do with their relationship with the estates, or propertiesin their possession. These properties could either be acquired through thedowry the women received when they got married, or through inheritance. Therewas often pressure stemming from the family or their husbands to sell the receivedproperty in the dowry. Similarly, in the 11th/17thcentury, upon the death of their parents, the estates that were either fully orpartly owned by the women were also encouraged to be sold off to theirbrothers.

7 On theother hand, Malik ibn Anas, a jurist of the time, outlined the types ofpossessions that were to be normally be owned by a woman. These were to includemostly, ‘ household wares, cooking utensils, clothing, and house linen andjewels.’8 Eventhough women were often selling their properties, evidence points towards howthey actually did own vineyards, houses and estates.

This depended on regionaldifferences. In the towns of Anatolia, orchids were commonly owned by women andmore so in the 10th/16th century, than they were in thecity of Aleppo. 9One must note, that the ownership of properties by women was often protected bythe law, but often the management of these estates were in the hands of the malefigures of the family. Therefore, women often sought it best to sell them inorder to obtain cash, a commodity they felt was better to manage, and easier toexchange for goods like jewellery, and clothing.

With this possession of moneywomen were also known to be money lenders. For example, money loaning amongstthe wealthier women in places such as Jerusalem, Bursa and Istanbul was quite acommon practise. 10As mentioned before, class played a vital and crucial role in the wealthmaintained and acquired by a woman. Not only were some wealthy women owners oflarge fortunes and custodians of possessions11 butthey also were able to gift or donate parts of their wealth to relatives, orfor the welfare of their community. For example in Damascus, during the Ayyubidperiod, there was an increase in the investments for the openings of ‘ madrasas’, by women only and the records show that out of all of the founders of suchinstitutions, fifteen of the twenty eight were men. 12Furthermore, the Ottoman period saw the largest significant increase in urban landscape thatwas built under the royal women of the time, for example the daughter ofMihrimah Sultan, who build mosques around Istanbul.

13 On theother hand women belonging to the lower classes also worked and managed toparticipate in the economic activity of the region, through nurses, midwives, tailors, servants, teachers, and cooks. 14 AsMuslim women were ‘ economically independent under Muslim law, they were able toestablish awqaf, and in this way charitable endowment presented a non-genderedopportunity for them to take part in social and religious affairs.’15     The definition of medieval times, archival significance.

In conclusion, by taking into account the various examplesin the essay one can understand the dynamics of the role women participated inthe public sphere in the medieval times. Even though in pre-modern Islamictimes, they were considered second class citizens they are seen to essentially createa balance in society.                                  1Abd ar- Raziq, ‘ Women and gender inMamlouk societies’ Insitute Francais d’Archeologie Oreintale du Caire(1873), 27.

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