



Women's role in politics in the medieval Muslim world

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The University of Arizona, 1993

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WOMEN'S ROLE IN POLITICS IN THE MEDIEVAL MUSLIM WORLD

by

Yasmin Hilloowala

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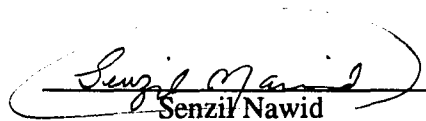
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I would like to thank Dr. Nawid for the help and encouragement that she gave me while I was working on this thesis.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my parents who always encouraged me to do my best and supported me throughout my academic career.

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this paper will be to demonstrate in what ways medieval women (the upper-class women) of the Middle East made themselves visible and wielded influence or power over affairs of the state. Because of the limiting aspect of the thesis, the area that I will discuss will be limited both in geography and time. This paper will concentrate on the eastern area of the Islamic world from approximately the eighth century to the thirteenth century. The main body of the paper will deal with this time period. However, first, I will need to discuss the situation of women before Islam, Islam's rise and the changes it brought to women in the early years of its existence. And then I will cover Islam's spread into other areas, how it changed there, and thus how women were able to exert their influence within the framework of these changes.

I. INTRODUCTION

In recent years there has been an increasing focus in the West on the Middle East because of the high profile this region has received in the news. One of the most dominant topics has been about Islam and its ideology dealing with women. I chose the topic of women in Middle Eastern history because in studying the medieval history of the region, the role of women is scarcely mentioned in an average history class.

Up until recently, little effort was devoted to the women's contribution to Islamic society. In the past few years there has been a growth in the amount of research done on this topic. Much of this research deals with the modern situation of women and the contemporary women's movements in the Islamic world. Very little has been written on the role of Muslim women in the medieval period. This is perhaps due to the lack of information in the primary sources and not to the lack of interest on the subject.

In this paper, I will be relying mostly on secondary sources, such as Nabia Abbott's Two Queens of Baghdad and some primary sources translated into English, such as a translation of Nizam al-Mulk's Siyasat-Nama. The reason that I will be depending mostly on secondary sources is that much of the information available on women of this period has not been translated into English. It remains in its original Persian or Arabic texts, and as of now, I do not have a sufficient knowledge to utilize these sources directly.

In this paper, I would like to counter a couple of misconceptions about women and the Islamic world. The first misconception is the idea of the harem. The prevalent image in the West about the history of the Islamic world was one based on Hollywood's image of the harem and the things that were often associated with it, such as polygamy and the veil (Ahmed, 1982: 523). Accounts of Western men who visited the Islamic

world in the nineteenth century talk about the harem despite the fact that they were forbidden access to it. The narratives related that the confinement of harem life led to such behavior as women having sexual relations with each other and parties of uncontrolled orgies. These are some of the views of the Muslim women's world that spread to the West. However, some scholars argue that men, both Middle Eastern and Western, conceal aspects of the harem that feminists would perceive as a source of strength for women (Ahmed, 1982: 527). The harem is supposed to demarcate men's space and women's space. It indicates that men are forbidden in the women's section. Therefore, the women converse freely and exchange ideas without being bothered by the presence of men. These women feel that a more integrated (between the sexes) society, such as the West, is more oppressive for women because the individual woman is isolated socially in the nuclear family from her fellow women (Ahmed, 1982: 528).

Another common perception of women in Islam deals with the women's character or personality. The West views the Muslim women as docile, obedient and non-aggressive creatures of society. Indeed, many Islamic, medieval treatises on women emphasized certain features that made up ideal women. They should, according to an eleventh-century scholar, be obedient to their husband, make themselves look nice for the husbands, stay secluded, have meals ready on time, do not nag, etc. (al-Ghazali, 1971: 170). The fifteenth-century Egyptian scholar, al-Sakhawi, listed religiosity, piety, chastity, modesty of dress and patience among the ideals for women (Lutfi, 1981: 110). The Sunni sects of Islam saw the Prophet's daughter, Fatima, as a role model for other women because she was reliable domestically and never complained (Naskali, 1983: 245-246). Unfortunately, the West, through the media and popular literature, often perceives these women in this way. However, although this may have been the desired behavior for women, it was not always the case for the upper-class women of the medieval, Muslim world. In reality, there were a number of women who were very

ambitious and who made their mark on the policies of the state and on history as well (Bingham, 1980: 71). I am not trying to prove that the medieval Islamic world was benevolent toward women and that they had complete freedom of movement and expression. Rather, I am trying to show that, despite the oppressive measures, some women were able to transcend their position and become influential in various areas. Thus, in this paper, I will attempt to demonstrate how some royal women wielded power over affairs of the state.

II. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

A. Situation of Women in Pre-Islamic Arabia

Before studying the situation of the medieval, Muslim women, it is important to discuss the situation of women before Islam and the customs of the various areas that affected the situation and status of women in the medieval era.

It is essential to understand the situation of women in the area where Islam originated, the Arabian Peninsula. There is evidence that both matrilineal and patrilineal societies had existed in this area before Islam, which would account for the existence of several types of marriages. In the pre-Muslim Arab society, however, Arabia was changing more and more toward a predominantly patrilineal society (Ahmed, 1992: 43; Watt, 1956: 272-273). Early in the Islamic period 'A'isha had named four types of Jahiliyya* marriages. One was unlimited polygamy (Abu al-Faraj al-Isfahani in Ahmed, 1992: 44; Waddy, 1980: 12). However, the virilocal type of polygamy followed by Muslims did not exist. Instead of a man living with his wives in the same house, the women would remain with their tribes and the husband would visit each wife or sometimes a wife would be visited by several husbands (Ahmed, 1992: 41, 44; Watt, 1956: 272). Divorce during the Jahiliyya was common and it could be initiated by both men and women (Al-Isfahani in Ahmed, 1992: 44; Watt, 1956: 272).

Besides unrestrained polygamy, there were other practices in the Jahiliyya that are commonly seen in Western society as harmful to women, such as a lack of property rights. This means that while the pre-Islamic Arabian women were not forbidden to own property, there were not written law codes protecting the women's right to

* The root Jahl in Arabic means ignorance. Some have translated Jahiliyya to mean the age of ignorance. Ignorance refers to the lack of knowledge of the true path, (during the days before Muhammad's message) the religion of Islam and the worship of one God.

ownership (Waddy, 1980: 12). On the contrary, women themselves were seen as property. Wives could be inherited and married by a son (a son from another wife) upon the death of his father (Zaidi, 1935: 19; Mernissi, 1991: 120; Qur'an 4:19). Another tragic practice of the Jahiliyya was female infanticide. The practice of killing baby girls reflects the Jahiliyya idea that women were inferior, flawed and not useful to society (Ahmed, 1992: 41-42; Qur'an 16:58-59).

Despite these practices, the pre-Islamic women did have certain functions that benefited the tribe. First, women managed the household, were honored for their roles as wives and mothers and expressed themselves freely and forcefully in the home (Abbott, 1941: 259).

Poetry was the only art form among the Jahiliyya Arabs and was honored and prized as a demonstration of one's language skill (Waddy, 1980: 11; Nicholson, 1988: 71). Women also received full recognition for their poetic skills and ability as literary critics. For example, the Kitab al-Aghani includes a legend concerning a rivalry between two poets. Eventually, they asked one of the two wives to determine the superior poet. Though the accuracy of the characters of this story is questioned by historians, there is no doubt about the Arabs' recognition of the women's role in poetry. A number of female literary figures have appeared in the history of the pre-Islamic Arabs. One of these women, al-Khansa', wrote poetry both in the pre-Islamic and early Islamic eras and won the praise of Muhammad (Cheikho Commentaries of le Diwan d'al Hansa' in Abbott, 1941: 259-260).

Another type of occupation for women was the kahina or woman soothsayer. She played an important role in the decisions of the tribe. Some became rabbat al-bayt or temple priestess, while others helped guide the tribes in certain situations. Traditions associate a kahina with almost every major move of the tribe. For example, a kahina is said to have played a role in the Battle of Dhu Qar between the Arabs and the Persians.

At this battle, the tribe of Bakr b. Wa'il caused the other side, which included a number of Persian troops, to flee. This battle showed the Arabs that the Persians were not as invincible as they had thought. Later, this same tribe participated in the first Muslim incursions into Iraq because of their knowledge of the Persians' weakness (Abbott, 1941: 260-261; Vaglieri, 1965: 241). Another kahina allegedly foretold Muhammad's mission twenty years before it happened. There is evidence of a few kahinas at the time of the Prophet, such as Sarra bint Nabhan who supposedly converted to Islam (Abbott, 1941: 260-262; Stern, 1939: 298).

Apparently, the Jahiliyya Arabs did not have a problem with accepting women as authorities (Ahmed, 1992: 47). After the death of Muhammad, a number of tribes revolted from the control of Madina and several of those revolts were led by women (Ahmed, 1992: 58). The rebellion of the women in the Hadramawt may have been against the restrictive laws that Islam had placed on them. The fact that they were supported by their men suggests that they were influential priestesses and not prostitutes as some Islamic sources have stated (Ahmed, 1992: 59-60; Beeston, 1952: 20-22).

Upon the death of Muhammad, another woman, Sajah bint 'Aws, went so far as to claim herself a prophetess. There are disputes as to which tribe she belonged: Tamim, Taghlib or Kinda. But, to whichever tribe she belonged, she must have had some type of authority to get her people to change their beliefs and follow her (Abbott, 1941: 281-282).

And finally, war was the major area in which the women of the Jahiliyya participated. Women had several roles in war. One way that they took part in war was to mourn the dead and create eulogies to honor those who died in battle (Abbott, 1941: 262; Nicholson, 1988: 88; Waddy, 1980: 11). The women also formed a sort of Red Cross for the tribe. They would tend to the warriors' wounds on the battle field, and sometimes club some of the wounded enemy at the same time (Abbott, 1941: 263).

There were even women warriors such as Hind bint 'Utba or Umm 'Umara. Psychologically, women had the greatest effect on the warriors. Their job was to inspire the men with verses of encouragement. For example, the poetess, al-Khansa', was present at the battle of Qadisiyya in 15/636 (Abbott "Women in Early Islam", 1942: 118-119; al-Tabari vol. XII, 1992: 99 no. 338). In addition, since the women accompanied the men into battle, they were at risk of being captured if their tribe lost or retreated. However, the capture and enslavement of the women of the tribe was considered a great dishonor among the Jahiliyya Arabs. Thus, the presence of the women would force the warriors to fight or die in order to avoid this dishonor (Abbott, 1941: 263; al-Isfahani in Nicholson, 1988: 88-89).

Therefore, the evidence from the Jahiliyya seems to indicate what Western standards would call misogynist attitudes, such as infanticide or polygamy. However, it also appears to suggest that women had more freedom and opportunities, and that under the right circumstances they could assert themselves to become a significant members of the tribe.

One woman who exemplifies this freedom was Muhammad's first wife, Khadija. Although inheritance was not guaranteed to women, she managed to retain hers and direct her own business. Her wealth freed Muhammad from financial worries and gave him the free time he needed to discover his mission (Bingham, 1980: 23; Waddy, 1980: 12). And finally, Khadija's marriage to Muhammad reflects the freedom of the Jahiliyya women because she, as an older widow, chose her husband and initiated the marriage without consulting anyone (Stern, 1939: 290; Waddy, 1980: 12). Muhammad took no other wife while Khadija was alive. His practicing of polygamy (a common custom of the Jahiliyya) occurred only after her death. This leads some researchers to believe that Khadija had some sort of contract with him which stipulated that while she was alive, he

would take no other wife. The idea of a marriage contract is a pre-Islamic custom that carried over into the early Islamic period (Maxime Robinson Mohamed in Ahmed, 1992: 49, 76; Abbott A'isha The Beloved, 1942: 3-4).

B. Situation of Women in Pre-Islamic Iran and Mesopotamia

Besides the Arabian Peninsula, pre-Islamic Iran and Mesopotamia are especially important in understanding the situation of the medieval, Muslim women. The Muslim conquerors inherited much of Sassanian Iran's culture, customs and beliefs. Therefore, this area played a major role in shaping Islamic society later (Ahmed, 1992: 19).

The subordinate status of women developed with the rise of the ancient urban centers. One theory states that the need for more population for labor in the new cities left women regarded as prize property for reproduction. Since Mesopotamia was an early urban center, it is likely that this kind of situation appeared here (Ahmed, 1992: 12).^{*} The early Mesopotamian history included several cultures, such as the Sumerian, Babylonian and Assyrian civilizations.

As the ancient Mesopotamian city-states progressed, the laws for women became harsher and more restrictive. Basically, the codes advocated a man's right and power over his wife, children and slaves to an absolute degree, except that he could not kill them without "good reason." That which constitutes "good reason" was determined by the male law makers of the day (Ahmed, 1992: 14; Seibert, 1974: 13). While marriages of everyday people were usually monogamous, the royalty often had harems though not as large as the Sassanian harems later (Ahmed, 1992: 13-14; Seibert, 1974: 51).

^{*} For more information on the idea of patriarchy and subordination of women in ancient civilization, Ahmed suggests:

1. Lerner, Gerda. The Creation of Patriarchy. New York: Oxford University Press, 1986.
2. Briffault, Robert. The Mothers: The Matriarchal Theory of Social Origins. New York: Macmillan, 1931.
3. Engels, Fredrick. The Origins of the Family: Private Property and the State. ed. Eleanor Leacock. New York: International Publications, 1972.

Despite the restrictive laws governing women, they did have some legal rights, (especially upper-class women) such as owning and managing property, bearing witness or entering into contracts (Seibert, 1974: 18-19; Letters from Mesopotamia, 1967: 45). Some of these ancient Mesopotamian laws parallel Hebrew and/or Islamic law. The right of divorce was given almost exclusively to men. And the right of offspring of concubines to their father's property and to freedom was sanctioned by law (Ahmed, 1992: 15-16; Letters From Mesopotamia, 1967: 45).

In 539 BC. the Achaemenians conquered most of Mesopotamia. They were followed by Alexander the Great, the Parthians, and the Sassanians. It appears that during this period, women's status deteriorated even more leading to the loss of a number of rights. One of these rights that women were denied was the right to bear witness (Oppenheim, 1985: 572). Women became seen as biological objects. Their sole use was for sexual desire and producing children. By Alexander's time, veiling had become a common practice among the women of the royal household. When Alexander captured Darius' harem, the top members of the harem were secluded in a closed carriage. Veiling and seclusion soon became a common practice in Mesopotamia and Iran (Ahmed, 1992: 18; Seibert, 1974: 51).

In the Sassanian times many of the previous institutions and customs were continued except on an enlarged scale, such as harems which numbered in the thousands. Zoroastrianism, the official state religion, emphasized the importance of a male heir, leading to the practices of marrying sisters, mothers or daughters in order to achieve this goal. In general, it seems that women under Zoroastrian law were treated more or less as objects. For example, according to Zoroastrian law, a man was permitted to loan his wife to another man without her consent (Ahmed, 1992: 19-21; Perikhanian, 1983: 50).

C. Situation of Women in the Christian Mediterranean Middle East

Finally, the Christian Mediterranean Middle East is important to study because Islam claims its roots from the Judeo-Christian heritage. Indeed, a number of customs had already infiltrated into the Hijaz at the time of the rise of Islam from the Byzantine culture of the Mediterranean area (Ahmed, 1992: 36, 55; Chelhod, 1971: 359).

Early Christianity had an underlying misogynist attitude toward women. It stressed the idea of spiritual qualities over physical qualities, but that somehow women were more implicated in physicality than men (Ahmed, 1992: 24). In the Byzantine Near East, women were not to be seen in public, and when they did go out, they were to be veiled and chaperoned. There was also segregation of the sexes in society that demarcated women's space and men's space (Ahmed, 1992: 26-27; Herrin, 1983: 169, 171).

The Christian Near East had its roots in ancient Greece and in Judaism. Misogynist ideas (in the Western feminists' view) developed during the classical period of Athens (500-323 BC.). Silence and submissiveness were considered desired behavior for women. Aristotle's theory was that women were inferior biologically, both mentally and physically (Ahmed, 1992: 28-29; Pomeroy, 1975: 81). Christianity also inherited the idea of women's inferiority from the Judaic belief of the sin of Eve in the Garden of Eden (Stowasser, 1984: 22). Female infanticide was carried out here, and Christianity adhered to the idea that the female was inferior, evil and a corrupting vice for men (Ahmed, 1992: 34-36; Pomeroy, 1983: 207).

III. ISLAM AND ITS IMPACT ON WOMEN

Having depicted the situation of women in the various areas of the pre-Islamic Middle East, it is necessary to examine Islam and how its laws initially changed the situation of women. Muhammad received his first revelation in 610 AD. In the Makkan years, his messages were basic tenets of the new religion, such as there is only one God or the idea of the day of resurrection. After the hijra (the flight to Madina) in 1/622, Muhammad's revelations related to the problems of everyday life. Many of the Islamic laws can be interpreted as a recognition of the existence of helpless members of society and an attempt to help them (Zaidi, 1935: 27-28; Qur'an 4:127-129). Slaves, women and children were some of the most suppressed members of society during the Jahiliyya period. The Qur'an enjoins the believers to protect the property and the interests of the weak (Zaidi, 1935: 28-29).

One of the major changes brought by Islam regarding the social status of women was the abolition of infanticide. Infanticide of female babies, which had been practiced in Arabia and the Byzantine Near East, was expressly forbidden in the Islamic law. Several suras in the Qur'an forbid the killing of children for fear of poverty because it says that God will provide for you and them. It says that killing one's children is a grave sin and that people who kill their children in stupidity are lost (Qur'an 17:31, 6:141).

Another law which can be seen either as an advancement or a setback for women is the Qur'anic provision allowing for four wives. sura 4:3 states that a man may take up to four wives only on the condition that he treat them with full equality. If he can not fulfill this condition, then he should limit himself to one wife. It has been argued that this arrangement sanctioned polygamy of four wives. On the other hand, it could be seen as an improvement from the unlimited polygamy of the Jahiliyya and the harems of

thousands of the Sassanians. Some scholars believe that it is really a prohibition against polygamy and a call for monogamy. The fact that the sura 4:3 says that a man must treat all wives with total equality and not favor one in any way leads some people to believe that Islam tried to end polygamy. It is stated that a man must show equality of justice and love to all. But, since it is impossible for a man to love all his wives equally in the heart, only one wife is permitted (Qur'an 4:3, 129; Zaidi, 1935: 22-23).

The third major law that Islam sanctioned for women was to guarantee the right to inheritance. Daughters were given the right to their family's or relatives' property just as sons were (Zaidi, 1935: 20). Women were given the right to bequeath this property or to do with it whatever they wished (Qur'an 4:4,7; Stowasser, 1984: 16-17). Although, women only receive half of what men do (Qur'an 4:11; Stowasser, 1984: 19). In addition, the sura of "al-Nisa' " (women in Arabic) in the Qur'an not only guaranteed the right of women to inherit, but also abolished the pre-Islamic practice by which women could be inherited by relatives (Mernissi, 1991: 120; Qur'an 4:19). Women's right to their husbands' property is also mentioned in the Qur'an. Widows may receive part of their husbands' property (Qur'an 4:4; Zaidi, 1935: 38, 54). In addition, a man may not gain inheritance through a wife by forcibly retaining her or by taking back something he gave her (unless she has committed a grave act of immorality). Furthermore, a man may not take anything away from a previous wife in order to give it to another wife (Qur'an 4:19-21).

And finally, Islam provided laws to protect young orphans, especially orphan girls. Not giving fatherless girls their due is among the seven mortal sins (Al-Tabari's Tafsir in Mernissi, 1991: 124). The Qur'an states that one must give orphans their due and not try to take away their property (Qur'an 4:2).

Many Muslim women continue to stress that Islam advocates equality for women. That is because despite the restrictive laws and customs for women in the society or in

the Qur'an, the Qur'an's underlying message is that there is equality among humanity, among races and among men and women (Ahmed, 1992: 66). The Qur'an shows equality between men and women by sanctioning the same punishments for men and women for certain crimes. For example, the punishment for stealing for both men and women is to have a hand cut off. The punishment for adultery for the adulterer and the adulteress is one hundred lashes witnessed by a group of believers (Qur'an 5:38, 24:2).

The Muslim women point to a number of verses in the Qur'an that reveal the message of equality between men and women. God spoke of total equality between believers. What determines passage to paradise is one's belief and willingness to obey God, not one's gender. The Qur'an teaches that men and women are equal in regards to spiritual, and moral obligations and their relationship with God (Stowasser, 1984: 20; Mernissi, 1991: 118-119; Qur'an 33:35).

Another thing to which some Muslim women point proudly is that the Qur'an speaks directly to women. The sura mentioned above (Qur'an 33:35) speaks of men who believe and women who believe, etc. It not only speaks directly to women, but also indicates that the two sexes are of equal status in the eyes of God (Mernissi, 1991: 118). Muhammad always honored and respected mothers. He is quoted as saying that Paradise lies at the feet of mothers (Zaidi, 1935: 37). Muhammad also responded to and addressed the grievances of the women of the community. One such example is sura 33:35. This revelation came as a response to Umm Salama's and 'A'isha's question as to why God only mentions men (Mernissi, 1991: 118). The Prophet also responded to other needs of women. For instance, in the sura, "al-Nisa' ", he addresses the idea of inheritance in which he guarantees women's inheritance but forbids the inheriting of women (Mernissi, 1991: 120; Qur'an 4:11, 19).

Thus, it appears that the women of the early Islamic period lived in a combination of both worlds. They had greater freedom, a characteristic of the Jahiliyya period, but they

were guaranteed certain rights which were protected by Islamic law. The women of this period represent a transition from pre-Islamic times to the medieval Islamic world.

Three women that characterize the union of these two worlds are 'A'isha, Hind bint 'Utba and Sukayna.

'A'isha is the daughter of Abu Bakr (the first caliph and Muhammad's good friend) and the favorite wife of Muhammad. 'A'isha is most remembered for her participation in the Battle of the Camel in 36/656 and her transmission of hadiths.*

'A'isha was one of the leaders of the opposition to 'Ali (the fourth caliph and Muhammad's son-in-law and nephew). She delivered a speech in the mosque against his caliphate and directed some of the battle from a top a camel, hence the name of the battle (Abbott A'isha The Beloved, 1942: 159-165; Ahmed, 1992: 61). Her participation in politics and battle reflects the honor still accorded to her by the Muslim community even after the Prophet's death. This recognition gave her a certain amount of authority and prestige among the populace, enabling her to take a notable position in politics (Spellberg, 1991: 48; Abbott A'isha The Beloved, 1942: 162, 165). 'A'isha's actions indicate the Jahiliyya characteristics of greater freedom for women, such as participation in battle which were continued in the early Islamic period, with the addition of greater respect and honor toward women.

'A'isha is also famous for her transmission of hadiths. The fact that it is a woman to whom many of the hadiths of the Prophet are traced could indicate that the Muslim generations closest to the Jahiliyya period did not have a problem in recognizing a woman as the link of authority (Ahmed, 1992: 60).

* This is a saying or action of the Prophet. The hadiths were recorded by a chain of authority. The recorder goes through the chain until he comes to the companion of the Prophet who says I saw the Prophet do this or I heard the Prophet say this.

Hind bint 'Utba also represents a woman with greater freedom and opportunities. Hind was of the Abd al-Shams branch of the Quraysh and was the wife of Abu Sufyan (Muhammad's greatest enemy) and mother of Mu'awiyya (first Umayyad caliph). Al-Isfahani, in his Kitab al-Aghani, says that early in her life she was accused of infidelity by her husband and divorced. The matter went to trial. Hind defended her innocence and the kahin (a male judge) found her not guilty. Afterwards, she had a number of suitors vying for her hand in marriage, but she chose Abu Sufyan (Abbott, 1941: 269-270). Her ability to choose her own husband reflects a Jahiliyya custom that was carried over into the early Islamic period. Hind is also significant because she was a participant in politics as a supporter of the opposition to Muhammad, and a participant in battle. When Abu Sufyan finally surrendered Makka, (8/629) Hind appeared in opposition to him saying, "kill this old fool, for he has changed his religion" (Waqidi in Abbott, 1941: 275). Hind was forced to accept Islam upon the surrender of Makka. Although she submitted to Islam, she refused to give up her active, energetic lifestyle (Mernissi, 1991: 117).

The other thing for which Hind is famous is her role in battle. She participated in both pre-Islamic (before she became a Muslim) and Islamic battles. In both battles she was not just a supporter of the tribe, but a warrior. At the Battle of Uhud in 4/625 she avenged her father's death and at the Battle of Yarmuk in 16/637, she led the Muslims on with, "strike the uncircumcised with your swords" (Baladhuri in Abbott, 1941: 277; Ahmed, 1992: 70). Hind's participation in both eras indicates that the early Muslims still honored the presence of women in battle.

Another woman, Sukayna, was the great-grand daughter of the Prophet through his grandson Husayn. Her life is most representative of the freedom early Muslim women had in marriage. Al-Isfahani mentions that Sukayna was married five times and initiated contracts with her husbands (Mernissi, 1991: 192). For example, with one husband the

contract stipulated that she was exempt from obeying him and that she could do as she pleased like participating in politics or holding literary salons. She also, at one time or another, forbade her husbands to practice polygamy and gave herself the right to refuse her husbands' advances (Mernissi, 1991: 192-193). At times she even initiated divorce herself (Ahmed, 1992: 77).^{*} Her marriages exemplify the freedom women still had in the area of marriage. The fact that she was married five times suggests that it was not shameful to marry widows or older women as it was in later times when virginity was prized in marriage (Ahmed, 1992: 75).

However, despite the improvements of women's status in the early period of Islam, their political, social and economic equality was not guaranteed. The reason for this is that Muhammad never formulated the ideas of equality between the sexes into a type of formal law code. Instead, the ideas involving equality were left open to the individual. This system was easier to manipulate to one's advantage or disadvantage in the case of women (Stowasser, 1984: 18; Mernissi, 1991: 129). Thus, the benefits of women in the early Islamic period did not last long beyond the age of expansion outside the Arabian Peninsula. The new message of equality was soon forgotten under the interpretation of the Islamic laws based on a very different set of beliefs.

^{*} A few of the sources that Mernissi lists which contain biographical information on Sukayna are: Aghani, vol. 3 p. 361; vol. 16 p. 138; vol. 17 p. 43; and vol. 19 p. 155. Ibn 'Asakir, Tarikh Madinat Dimashq p. 155 (this author died in the eleventh century). For a list of more sources see Mernissi, p. 213 no. 7.

IV. THE SPREAD OF ISLAM

Now that I have discussed Islam and the changes it brought for women, I need to elaborate on the changes that occurred in the interpretation of those laws upon Islam's spread into other parts of the Middle East, specifically into the Sassanian region. The 'Abbasid period (133/750-656/1258) of Islamic history is the beginning of the Persian influence on the government of the caliph. Persian food, clothes, administration and ideology were adopted. The early 'Abbasid period is known as the Golden Age of Islam. However, for women it could be seen as the beginning of the dark ages. The 'Abbasid era, as far as women are concerned, was the beginning of certain restrictive devices, such as the veil and seclusion.

The veil was a custom prevalent in the Byzantine Near East, Sassanian Iran and among some high class women of the Hijazi cities at the rise of Islam due to contact with the former cultures (Zaidi, 1935: 46; Husain, 1929: 331; Chelhod, 1971: 359). The verse by which the hijab (the veil) was initiated was upon the supposed urging of 'Umar (Mernissi, 1991: 96; Chelhod, 1971: 359; Levy, 177 no. 5). It called for the women of the Prophet and women of the believers to draw their veils around them so as to be identified and avoid being molested (Qur'an, 33:59). 'Abbasid 'ulama' (experts on Islamic law) later interpreted this to mean all women. There are those who say that all Muslim men should follow the sunna (sayings and actions of the Prophet) of the Prophet and Muslim women should adhere to the actions of the Prophet's wives. Therefore, the veil applies to all women (Stowasser, 1984: 37; Levy, 176-183). Others say that this verse only applies to the women of the Prophet's family because the contents refer to a certain incident which occurred with Muhammad's wives. After the loss of the Battle of Uhud in 4/625, a number of Madinans called hypocrites (munafiqun) were targeting the

Prophet's wives as a way of attacking Muhammad. The hypocrites started following his wives in the street and harassing them. With the recent military losses and the uncertainty among the believers in Madina, the Prophet was forced to ask his wives to veil in order to protect them against slanderous attacks (Mernissi, 1991: 105-106).

In the 'Abbasid period, the seclusion of women in their houses went along with the idea of veiling. Seclusion of women and separation of the sexes was a Byzantine and Persian practice adopted by the 'Abbasids and sanctioned by a verse from the Qur'an. The reason for the verse of the hijab is that on the night of Muhammad's wedding to his wife, Zaynab, the guests at the dinner lingered. Impatient to be alone with his new wife, Muhammad recited the verse and drew a curtain between him and the few remaining guests (Mernissi, 1991: 87). Muhammad also requested that those citizens who wish to ask requests from his wives do so from behind a curtain (Levy, 177). This verse was to separate Muhammad's personal and public life. It is inconceivable, given his admiration for women, that he meant for women to be locked up and isolated within the house (Zaidi, 1935: 42). Added to the veil and seclusion, was the size of the harems that the 'Abbasid caliphs retained. With the age of expansion came new wealth, including slave girls who caught the eyes of the caliphs with their new type of beauty. Thus, it became the custom that the "respectable women" (wives, daughters) were isolated and secluded behind walls, and the slave girls, as entertainers, were unveiled and present at court for the amusement of the caliph (Mernissi, 1991: 195).

Along with the veil, seclusion and the harem, which in itself debased women to being an object to collect, were the Qur'anic views of women as inferior and incapable. One example which applies to the main theme of this paper is that women were not fit to rule and should stay out of public affairs. The 'Abbasid 'ulama' used the verse which says that "men are a degree above women" to justify this belief (Qur'an, 4:3, 2:228; Stowasser, 1984: 18).

The 'ulama' used other verses from the Qur'an and a number of hadiths to justify the isolation of women from politics. The Qur'an had chided the Queen of Sheba as a ruler. However this was not because she was a woman, but because she was a pagan. The Qur'an does not expressly forbid a woman as a ruler (Qur'an, 27:23-24; Spellberg, 1991: 50). Nonetheless, the 'ulama' interpreted this verse to mean exclusion of women from politics. To back up their claim, they referred to the verse that the Prophet had uttered which said, "those who entrust their affairs to a woman will never know prosperity (Bukhari in Mernissi, 1991: 49). The 'ulama' pointed to 'A'isha's loss in battle to prove that there was always disaster when women participate in politics (Spellberg, 1991: 51).

Unfortunately for women, at the same time that these harmful ideas about women were becoming dominant within the Muslim society, the four Sunni schools of law (Shafi'i, Hanafi, Maliki and Hanbali) were being formulated (Ahmed, 1992: 68, 86). The Sunni 'ulama' did not see their laws as interpretations but as the authentic meaning of the verses, and thus infallible, and not subject to change. Therefore, these laws became engrained in the people's minds as fact (Ahmed 1991: 60-61; Coulson, 1969: 5-6). Defenders of the unity of Islam today state that there are only minor differences between the four schools, and that basically they are the same. However, scholars such as Leila Ahmed, point out that some of these minor differences can have fundamental affects on women (Ahmed, 1991: 61). For example, the Hanafi school of law believes in the right of husbands to four wives. However, if they wished, women were permitted to stipulate terms for their marriages in a contract, such as the agreement of no other wife. Whereas, other schools believe that the allowance of four wives was essential to the Islamic marriage because it was stated in the Qur'an and thus could not be prohibited by a contract (Ahmed, 1992: 91; Coulson, 1969: 25-30).

However, the Sunni interpretation of the laws was not the only one. Fringe groups such as the Kharijis or the Qarmatis * interpreted the laws differently.

The Kharijis rejected concubinage and the marriage of nine-year-old girls (the age 'A'isha was when she married Muhammad) which were both things that were permitted by Muhammad. In the case of nine-year-old girls, the Kharijis felt it was the Prophet's privilege, but no one else's (Salem in Ahmed, 1992: 71). The Kharijis also allowed women in war whereas the Sunni Muslims did not. This may be due to the fact that the Sunnis were largely mawalis (non-Arab converts to Islam) of Persian origin with the ideas of seclusion for women, whereas the Kharijis were at first largely Arabs with the Jahiliyya ideals of war (Ahmed, 1992: 71).*

The writings of the Qarmatis were largely destroyed and all that remains is the Sunni interpretation (Ahmed, 1991: 98). The 'Abbasids record disapprovingly that the women were unveiled, the sexes lived and socialized together and that both sexes practiced monogamy (Ahmed, 1991: 99).* Thus, the interpretation of the Qur'an by the Sunni sects was just that an interpretation and not the infallible truth. This leads to a final point, and that is the way in which the Qur'an was interpreted.

The Sunni 'ulama' chose to concentrate on the laws that had been set down in Makka and Madina. They took them as infallible, the basic message of Islam, and therefore applicable to every age (Ahmed, 1992: 67).

The fringe elements, the Qarmatis, Kharijis and Sufis, believed that the true message of Islam was not the specific laws, but the spiritual message. They believed that

* The Kharijis were the first Muslim sect. They broke away from 'Ali's party because they disagreed with his action of agreeing to negotiate with the opposition, the Umayyads. The Qarmatis were one group of Isma'ilis (severer Shi'is) who were located in the Arabian Gulf area in the ninth and tenth centuries.

+ For more information on the Kharijis' beliefs Ahmed suggests: Salem, E.A. The Political Theory and Institutions of the Khawarij. Johns Hopkins Studies in the Historical and Political Sciences, ser. 74 no. 2. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1956.

For more information on the Qarmatis Ahmed cites: De Goeje, M.J. "Qarmatians" in Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1961.

Muhammad wanted to create a better society where everyone was free of harm (Mernissi, 1991: 187). According to these groups, the individual laws were not really meant to apply to all other periods of history and areas of the world, but were to improve conditions during his particular point in time. They believe that the laws were not applicable to other periods, rather followers of Islam should continue to change the laws in relation to their own specific situation in order to improve the conditions of the society (Ahmed, 1992: 66). For example, the Qarmatis could have interpreted polygamy as a need of Madinan society at that time to protect women from harm. Because of the numerous battles many women lost their husbands and without husbands they were vulnerable in that age. Thus polygamy was sanctioned in order to protect widows. However, in a society and time of peace this situation would no longer apply, and would no longer be justifiable according to the Qarmatis (Ahmed, 1992: 52).

Unfortunately for women, it was the Sunni and not the fringe elements that held power in the 'Abbasid age (Ahmed, 1992: 67). Thus, it was the interpretation of laws over spiritual ideals that prevailed, leading to serious implications for women and their status in the medieval world (Ahmed, 1992: 100-101).

V. SITUATION OF WOMEN UNDER THE 'ABBASIDS (750-1258)

A. Introduction

In the previous section I discussed the laws that were made in the early Islamic community that worked toward the benefit of women, and how these laws were altered in the 'Abbasid age. Now I will give a brief description of the situation of the 'Abbasid women and then describe how the activities of these women affected the 'Abbasid state. After Muhammad, the next four successors were chosen by a committee and supported by most of the Muslim community. However, after the fourth caliph, 'Ali b. Abi Talib, the democratic system gave way to the first Muslim dynasty, the Umayyads. The Umayyads were a branch of Muhammad's clan, the Quraysh. The Umayyad era was the era of Arab (meaning from the Peninsula) aristocratic rule over the rest of the population. This meant that at least in the beginning, the Arab women kept their prominent positions as wives of the caliphs and maintained their freedom to a certain extent. However, the gradual decline of women's status had been started earlier in the time of 'Umar. What freedom women did have was not to last much beyond the Umayyad period. In 133/750, the 'Abbasids (another branch of the Quraysh clan) took over and ruled (in theory) until 656/1258. The wives of the first two 'Abbasid caliphs maintained their rights but with much difficulty and opposition (Ahmed, 1992: 78).

Umm Salama was an Arab aristocratic woman who had been married twice before she proposed to Abu al-'Abbas (the first caliph known as al-Saffah, 132/749-136/754). Abu al-'Abbas agreed to a contract which stated that he would take no other wife or concubines. Umm Musa was the wife of the second caliph, al-Mansur, (136/754-158/775) and also of Arab aristocratic origin. She too made a marriage contract in which she stipulated that there be no other wife or concubine as long as she was alive. Al-Mansur tried several times to take another wife but the courts upheld Umm Musa's

contract because she always managed to learn which judge was hearing the case and offered him a bribe. According to scholars, upon her death, the courtiers sent al-Mansur one hundred virgins (Ahmed, 1992: 78; al-Tabari, vol. 2, 1989: 28). And with the death of Umm Musa, the days of the free born Arab women were over (Abbott, 1946: 67).

Al-Mansur and his descendants were heirs to Persian values and customs such as the concept of kingship and the practice of maintaining large harems (Ahmed, 1992: 77). This style of life was sustained by the booty and riches that the Muslims acquired during their expansion into the other regions of the Middle East. One of the major "acquisitions" was the numerous slave girls. This luxury was one of the factors that led to the decline of the Umayyad dynasty. Many of the later Umayyad caliphs were lacking in leadership and were only concerned with wine, women and song. For example, Walid I (86/705-97/715) had many women in his harem. However, the sources indicate that he preferred slave girls to legal wives owing to the fact that with the exception of his cousin, Umm al-Banin, none of his wives had children (Abbott "Women in Early Islam", 1942: 352). In fact, by the end of the Umayyad period, the caliphs were no longer pure Arabs, but sons of slave mothers. Yazid III (126/744) was the son of a slave mother of Persian origin (a daughter of Yazdagerd, the last Sassanian). The Persian women's dominance was especially marked in the 'Abbasid period because the center of the 'Abbasid empire was located in former Persian territory (Zaydan, 1907: 165; Rahmatallah, 1952: 46).

The assimilation of Persian culture to the 'Abbasid elite was facilitated by the defection of a number of Persian soldiers to the Muslim side, and the conversion of the elite to Islam in order to preserve their land and their positions in society. One such family, as will be mentioned later, was the Persian Barmaki family whose members played an important role in the early 'Abbasid era (Ahmed, 1992: 82).

With the Islamic expansion into these new areas, the abundance of slave girls affected the Arab women's status. Suddenly, there were slaves who captured the fancy of caliphs with their unusual beauty. They became great rivals to the free born women for the rulers' affection and favor (Abbott, "Women in Early Islam", 1942: 351, 368). Not only did their beauty fascinate the caliphs, but their status as slaves was also of interest to them. Why should a caliph enter into a marriage attached with a contract stipulating limiting terms, when he could have as many slave girls as he wanted? A wife had legal rights, but a concubine that fell out of favor or who was no longer of interest could be disposed of with no hassle (Abbott, 1946: 67). Not only did this preference for concubines raise the position of slave girls at court, but it also ended the days that royal women were free to make contracts with their husbands' to curb their sexual interests. Instead, they had to share their husbands' attentions with the numerous women of the harem, and work within the harem system to obtain a position of prominence in the court and in their husbands lives (Ahmed, 1992: 84).

The slave girls became the dominant women of the harem. Being part of a harem was emotionally and psychologically trying for wives of the caliph, but for slave girls it meant material insecurity as well. They were not independently wealthy, and therefore it is understandable that they would devote their time and energy to utilizing every possible opportunity in order to win the favor of the caliph. The most significant event in the slave girls' lives was to bear a male child (Ahmed, 1992: 83-84; Waddy, 1980: 43; Nashat, 1990: 37). A male child would become a possible heir to the throne and thus elevate the slave girls' position in the harem (Ahmed, 1992: 84).

In keeping with the Persian custom of distinguishing between free and slave women, the 'Abbasids' slaves were unveiled at the courts. They entertained the caliphs with poems and songs and at the same time captured the favor of the caliph. Consequently, it was the slave girls who in general, reigned supreme in the 'Abbasid era. In the

meantime, the freeborn women or "respectable women" were usually relegated to the veil and secluded behind the palace, this usually meant an end to their involvement in state affairs (Abbott "Women in Early Islam", 1942: 368).

B. Khayzuran

In this paper it is the early 'Abbasid period which concerns us. After the mid ninth century the 'Abbasids were rulers in name only, having lost their domain to new, incoming peoples.

Consequently, it is the two queens: Khayzuran and Zubayda who stand out most vividly in 'Abbasid history. Khayzuran is best known for her involvement in politics, especially in the succession struggle. Zubayda participated in the succession struggle as well, but is most famous for her philanthropic works for the religious establishments or for the community in general.*

Of the two 'Abbasid women mentioned above, Khayzuran was the more ambitious (Waddy, 1980: 42). Perhaps this is due to the fact that she began her royal career as a slave girl. Her origins are disputed in the sources. Some say she was of Greek or Berber origin but most leave her as a woman of the Jurash Mountains of Yaman (Abbott, 1946: 26; al-Mas'udi, 1989: 51; al-Suyuti, 1970: 286). She started her life as a slave in Yaman and then was brought to the slave market in Makka where the caliph, al-Mansur, questioned her for his son, al-Mahdi. Her name, Khayzuran, ("reed" in Arabic) implied her slender and graceful stature, like a reed, but as for the rest of her appearance nothing is known (Abbott, 1946: 26). She was given to al-Mahdi before his

* Here are a few of the primary sources that Nabia Abbott and other historians of the 'Abbasids use. Al-Tabari's histories (of which I used several volumes of the recent English translations) are one important source. Some other sources are:

1. Ibn al-Athir Al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh
2. Abu al-Faraj al-Isfahani Kitab al-Aghani
3. Abu Bakr Khatib Tarikh Baghdad
4. Ibn 'Abdus al-Jahshiyari Kitab al-Wuzara' wa al-Kuttab
5. Al-Mas'udi Muruj al-Dhahab
6. Yaqubi Tarikh
7. Al-Suyuti Tarikh al-Khulafa'
8. Ibn Qutayba Kitab al-Ma'arif

This is a list of only a few of the primary sources that speak of the 'Abbasid history.

ascension to the throne and found favor with him almost immediately. Before al-Mahdi became caliph he had only one legal wife, Rayta, his cousin. After his ascension he took the four wives permitted in the Qur'an. One of these wives was Khayzuran, whom he freed and married in 159/775 (Abbott, 1946: 26, 38; al-Tabari vol. 2, 1989: 65).

While Khayzuran's name implies her physical attributes, it can be argued that she had intelligence, charm and ambition as well. In order to remain as the favorite of al-Mahdi against continuous rivals, she had to have more to offer than just physical beauty (Abbott, 1946: 40). Both Khayzuran and al-Mahdi were amiable and fun loving, but Khayzuran was ambitious and al-Mahdi was easy going and pleasure loving. Therefore, it is easy to understand how the ambitious Khayzuran was able to manipulate al-Mahdi and exercise so great an influence on him (Abbott, 1946: 43).

From the time Khayzuran reached al-Mahdi's court she had to contend with rivals for his affections, since the first step to power for a member of the royal harem was to secure the position of favorite companion. This rivalry, however, was not a threat from any of his Arab, noble born wives. Al-Mahdi's first wife, Rayta, was married to him in 144/761 and bore him two sons: Ubaydallah and 'Ali. And, though she held the position as senior wife, Rayta was never in competition with Khayzuran for his affections. Her sons received important posts, but they were never considered for the caliphate despite her royal blood (Abbott, 1946: 25). Other noble Arab women became his wives, however, nothing else is heard about them. They were probably all political marriages. The silence of the noble Arab wives at al-Mahdi's court affirms the change that had taken place by the 'Abbasid period. With the emergence of Khayzuran, the days of the free born women were over and it was the concubine who held the highest position in the harem.

Nevertheless, it was not from the other royal concubines that Khayzuran felt her most serious competition, rather it stemmed from the numerous singing girls at al-Mahdi's

court. Al-Mahdi loved music, but did not think it appropriate for noble Arabs.

Likewise, al-Isfahani in his Kitab al-Aghani says that he forbade it to his sons as well (Abbott, 1946: 33, 35). One such singing girl was Maknuna, an early favorite of al-Mahdi's. Al-Mahdi had paid an enormous sum for her and Khayzuran is said to have commented that, "No other woman of his made my position so difficult" (Al-Isfahani in Abbott, 1946: 36). Another singing girl, Hasana, is often grouped with Khayzuran as being al-Mahdi's two favorites (Abbott, 1946: 37).

Khayzuran, realizing her precarious position, sought to please al-Mahdi in any way possible. She was told to model her behavior after the senior 'Abbasid princess, Zaynab. She and Zaynab became friends and Khayzuran always held a place for her at her (Khayzuran's) salon. This could have been simply out of friendship, or perhaps it was to obtain the approval and support of the most honored woman at the 'Abbasid court (Abbott, 1946: 43; al-Mas'udi, 1989: 40). Khayzuran had to, at times, resort to some unusual tactics to maintain the favor of al-Mahdi. Once, as the story goes, she sent a cup to al-Mahdi along with a beautiful slave girl to carry it. He was so pleased with her gift that he spent two full days with her (Khayzuran) (Al-Ibshihi in Abbott, 1946: 42). And finally, an episode told by a court historian, Waqidi, affirms that Khayzuran remained al-Mahdi's favorite despite a steady stream of rivals. She once called him a "picker of leftovers" which infuriated him. However Waqidi was able to calm him down by citing various traditions that elaborated on the perverseness and weakness of the nature of women. With anyone else, her temper would have gotten her into trouble. However, her place in al-Mahdi's heart and her ability to keep his attention allowed the matter to pass without incident (Abbott, 1946: 45-46).

Once obtaining the position as al-Mahdi's favorite, Khayzuran used this position to benefit herself and others. Upon the news of her pregnancy with the future caliph al-Hadi, a doctor named 'Isa predicted that it would be a boy. He did the same with her

other son, Harun. She was so pleased that she informed al-Mahdi of the accuracy of his predictions, and he was retained as a doctor for al-Hadi. With her support he was able to rise to a position of wealth and power even after he had admitted that the predictions had been just lucky guesses (Al-Qifti in Abbott, 1946: 27-28).

Khayzuran also used her position to help her family. In Makka, she had not admitted to al-Mansur the existence of any family members, but after the birth of al-Hadi and Harun she informed al-Mahdi of them and had them brought to court. The fact that she did not mention them before shows her position as a slave. She had probably felt that family ties would hinder her rise to the top, the most important goal of a slave girl. Once Khayzuran brought them to court though, they benefited from her high position in the harem (Abbott, 1946: 29). Her brother, Ghitrif b. 'Ata, obtained the governorship of Yaman, and she and he were given estates in the new residence of Rusafa in Baghdad. Her older sister, Salsal, won the heart of al-Mahdi's half brother, Ja'far, and bore two children. One of these children was Amat al-'Aziz, the future Zubayda of Baghdad (Jahiz in Abbott, 1946: 30-31; Le Strange, 1972: 130, 191-193).

Khayzuran was not only famous for her place in the harem and in al-Mahdi's heart, but for her involvement in politics (Abbott, 1946: 53). As Nabia Abbott states, it is difficult to tell with certainty just how direct Khayzuran's influence on the administration was. There are only general references to her efforts to control the affairs of al-Mahdi and al-Hadi, but very few specific examples. This situation, Abbott points out, could mean one of two things. First, it could mean that she was given free reign and the historians' general statement of this reflects her well known power. For example, al-Mas'udi records that al-Hadi's lenient treatment of her led a member of the court to say, "Gently now Khaizuran! Stop and let your sons govern their subjects" (Al-Mas'udi, 1989: 57). The other possibility is that the historians just pass over women's history with general statements because they did not believe it was worthy of their attention

(Abbott, 1946: 54-55). The historian, Rashid al-Din, apologizes to his readers [in his Jami' al-Tararikh (The Universal History)] for mentioning the women's role in the Mongol period. His justification for this is that it was necessary to discuss them because Mongols accord their women equal treatment (Nashat, 1990: 49-50).

One definitive example of her political activity was her role in the release of Yahya Barmaki from prison. She persuaded al-Mahdi to reinstate him to his position by pleading on behalf of the foster brotherhood that existed between her son, Harun, (one of al-Mahdi's favorites) and Yahya's son, Fadl (Ibn 'Abdus in Abbott, 1946: 55; Ibn 'Abdus in Rahmatallah, 1952: 48). The historian, Ibn 'Abdus al-Jahshiyari, says that Khayzuran is also known to have carried on correspondence dealing with the state of the empire with provincial governors, especially with those in Egypt (Rahmatallah, 1952: 48). Another example concerns her attempt to obstruct the law for her own benefit. She had sent a message to the governor of Kufa informing him that no obstacles delay her cloth manufacturer (of embroidery cloth) in that city. The manufacturer, nevertheless, was brought to justice and flogged for using forced labor at the factory. The story ends there and no mention is made of Khayzuran's reaction. However, later, the judge who ordered the flogging was dismissed in al-Hadi's reign. However, it is not evident whether his removal was due to this incident involving Khayzuran or due to something else (Abbott, 1946: 58-59).

No doubt the single most important political event that Khayzuran was involved in was the struggle for succession of the caliphate. This can be looked upon as a struggle within the harem, but its impact is one of major proportions. The outcome of this struggle would decide the leader of the entire Islamic world.

Al-Mahdi's intent, upon his ascension to the throne, was to free Khayzuran, and make her his legal wife in order to secure the throne for her two sons. Other sons such as Rayta's two sons, who had been born before al-Hadi and Harun, were not even

considered (Abbott, 1946: 25). Al-Hadi received the title as sole heir to al-Mahdi's throne in 160/776 and Harun was sent away on military expeditions (Abbott, 1946: 69; al-Tabari vol. 2, 1989: 70-72). Early in his life, al-Hadi received superior education and training, while Khayzuran made plans for this future caliph's harem. Al-Hadi had many offspring, all by concubines. There were fewer and fewer royal marriages for several reasons. A wife had legal rights, but concubines could be disposed of at will. Also, a wife brought family connections which often had political ramifications especially when the situation involved tribal matters (Abbott, 1946: 66-67). Thus, al-Hadi had only two legal wives, both of whom were his cousins. This situation reflects the continuing trend of the elevation of the slave girl within the harem and the diminishing position of the free wife.

However, not all was well for al-Hadi. He was soon over shadowed by Harun's abilities and exploits in battle. The foster brotherhood between the Barmakis and the 'Abbasid caliphs was extended to Harun and members of the Barmaki family. It is noted that Harun referred to Yahya Barmaki as father (Glubb, 1976: 276; Abbott, 1946: 64; al-Tabari vol. 2, 1989: 137). Al-Mahdi and Khayzuran seemed to encourage this growing relationship, and, as a result, al-Hadi was increasingly left in the care of less able people (Abbott, 1946: 64-65). This was coupled by his childhood insecurities that began when Harun was born and was doted upon as a favorite son (Abbott, 1946: 101). The relationship between al-Hadi and his father grew increasingly strained. There are known incidents which indicate that al-Mahdi did not always approve of al-Hadi's choice of companions, and frequently punished him for these choices (Abbott, 1946: 65). In 166/782 al-Mahdi's selection of a second heir was again one of Khayzuran's sons, Harun. Al-Hadi with his many sons could not help but be unhappy at this new development, especially since it seemed that the court was against him and in favor of Harun. Due to a rift between himself and al-Hadi, al-Mahdi replaced al-Hadi with

Harun as first heir. Al-Hadi refused to yield his position and al-Mahdi went to retrieve him. Al-Hadi had been serving in the field in the province of Jurjan and al-Mahdi died en route to this province (Abbott, 1946: 69-70; al-Tabari vol. 2, 1989: 113, 118). Al-Mahdi's death remains a mystery. Some historians say that he was poisoned, while others say that he died from injuries from a hunting accident (al-Tabari vol. 2, 1989: 118-120). Al-Tabari, in his chronicles of the 'Abbasid caliphs, indicates which historians recorded which version of his death. After al-Mahdi's death, Yahya Barmaki advised Harun to remain in the background for a while. And with the ascension of her son to the throne, Khayzuran left behind her youthful days as favorite of the caliph and entered the period of maturity as the caliph's mother (Abbott, 1946: 76).

During the reign of al-Hadi, Khayzuran entered the height of her power. For in the Islamic world, it was as mother of the caliph that women had the most power (Abbott, 1946: 59). In the status ranking of the harem, the mother of the caliph or sultan held the top ranking position and had power over the caliph and the other members of the harem (Bingham, 1980: 90). In fact, in a fit of anger al-Hadi is supposed to have said to his mother, "When did a caliph ever prosper who had a (living) mother" (Ibn al-Athir in Abbott, 1946: 104; al-Tabari vol. XXX, 1989: 44). This statement in itself attests to the power queen mothers often held over their sons.

And finally, when al-Hadi came to the throne his short temper and suspicious personality had already developed. It is therefore more than likely that a clash would occur with the ambitious Khayzuran, which is exactly what happened (Abbott, 1946: 62).

In the beginning of al-Hadi's reign things went well for Khayzuran. She was allowed all the freedoms and privileges that she had under al-Mahdi (Abbott, 1946: 80; al-Tabari vol. XXX, 1989: 42). According to the sources she exercised powers in administration of the state and imposed excessive demands on al-Hadi. At first al-Hadi

could refuse his mother nothing. Khayzuran's favor was sought by many such as the generals of the army or the Hashimi princesses. They approached her in hopes that she would be able to persuade the caliph to grant them their requests (Abbott, 1946: 87-88; al-Tabari vol. XXX, 1989: 42-43). For example, a leader of al-Hadi's army, Musa b. 'Isa, had put a prisoner to death without al-Hadi's permission. This displeased al-Hadi and when questioned about it, Musa b. 'Isa said that he had thought that Khayzuran would have come to al-Hadi and pleaded on behalf of the prisoner, and therefore he would have been set free. The general's story gives credence to Khayzuran's central role in al-Hadi's caliphate (Abbott, 1946: 88; al-Tabari vol. XXX, 1989: 28).

However, al-Hadi soon began to resist his mother and deny her her requests because of his suspicions about her intentions. His suspicions were kindled at the time he took the throne. Khayzuran had summoned Rabi' b. Yanus and Yahya b. Khalid Barmaki (two wazirs) at al-Mahdi's death, possibly to try to persuade them to alter the succession in favor of Harun. But, Yahya had stayed away fearing that it would appear as if he were working with her (Abbott, 1946: 78-79; al-Tabari vol. 2, 1989: 138-139). Al-Hadi at one point grew tired of seeing people lined up at his mother's gate asking for favors and told her not to overstep her bounds. He said that she should concentrate on womanly duties, such as worship and prayer (Abbott, 1946: 89-90; al-Tabari vol. XXX, 1989: 42). This incident demonstrates the male ideology of the 'Abbasid period which limited women's public activities. Al-Hadi's words are evidence to the fact that Khayzuran was able to overcome these boundaries and establish herself in a position of authority.

The civil war between mother and son was heightened when al-Hadi refused Khayzuran a favor that she had already promised to a particular general. Al-Hadi told her to go home and that if anyone came to her with a favor, he would kill him. She left, deeply hurt at the public humiliation and vowed never to speak to him again (Abbott,

1946: 91-92; al-Mas'udi, 1989: 57; al-Tabari vol. XXX, 1989: 43). There began an open warfare between the two. Al-Hadi was resentful of his mother's preferential treatment of Harun when they were children, and suspicious that she was trying to help him gain the throne (Abbott, 1946: 101). There were even rumors of attempted poisonings on both sides. Once, al-Hadi sent his mother a rice dish and asked her to try it. She gave it to a dog who died, and then wrote back saying that she liked it. Al-Hadi retorted that, "You did not eat it, for had you eaten it, I would certainly have been well rid of you by now" (Ibn al-Athir in Abbott, 1946: 104; al-Tabari vol. XXX, 1989: 43-44).

Khayzuran, due to her resentment of al-Hadi over her public humiliation and confinement, was all the more in favor of Harun. And al-Hadi was determined to put his son, Ja'far, in place of Harun in the succession line. However, his attempt failed and he fell ill (Abbott, 1946: 101, 105-106; al-Tabari vol. 2, 1989: 158-159, 161; al-Mas'udi, 1989: 62). The physicians were unable to help al-Hadi and he sent for his mother. Upon his deathbed, he confessed that all the things he did were out of filial love. He said that he was trying to protect her and to uphold the demands of state policy (Abbott, 1946: 109; al-Mas'udi, 1989: 62-63).

Some sources infer that the whole time al-Hadi was on his deathbed, Khayzuran seemed sure of his death and had Yahya's son, Fadl Barmaki draw up papers to announce the caliphate of Harun al-Rashid. And upon al-Hadi's death, she lost no time in releasing the imprisoned Yahya, (he had been imprisoned on al-Hadi's orders) and getting a message to Harun of the news (Ibn al-Athir in Abbott, 1946: 107, 109; al-Tabari vol. XXX, 1989: 55-56). Khayzuran informed the harem of al-Hadi's death and called for drinks to be served to honor his passing and Harun's succession (Abbott, 1946: 111; al-Tabari vol. XXX, 1989: 57). Thus, the earliest sources imply that Khayzuran had lost all motherly feelings for her first born (al-Hadi) and only awaited

the succession of her favorite, Harun al-Rashid. Things are further complicated by the suggestion of a murder. Some felt that he was poisoned or smothered to death by a member of the harem acting on Khayzuran's orders. Khayzuran's motive for murdering her own son would have been revenge for humiliation and desire for power (Abbott, 1946: 111-112). Other sources speak of the apparent loss of love of Khayzuran for her son, but do not make any mention of a murder. According to their records al-Hadi died of an illness. With the evidence available today, it is impossible to ascertain which story is correct. New evidence would be needed to solve this dilemma (Abbott, 1946: 111-112).

Harun al-Rashid allowed Khayzuran a free hand to do whatever she wished, even if it went against his wishes. She shared power with the Grand Wazir, Yahya Barmaki, and was consulted (by Yahya) on affairs of the state as long as she lived. For example, Khayzuran wanted to kill all those who had previously deserted Harun, but Yahya persuaded her to take care of them by sending them into battle instead (Ibn 'Abdus in Abbott, 1946: 114-115; Ibn 'Abdus in Rahmatallah, 1952: 48). Her death came on Jumada 2, 173/ November 789 on a rainy day. At the cemetery in Rusafa, a humbly dressed Harun went barefoot in the rain as first pall bearer in honor of her memory (Abbott, 1946: 126; al-Mas'udi, 1989: 67; Le Strange, 1972: 192-19). Her name, which meant reed, was not to be used as a common noun out of respect for the living caliph (Abbott, 1946: 128; al-Mas'udi, 1989: 97). However, one of Harun al-Rashid's first acts as caliph was against an expressed wish of hers. He took the signet ring from Ja'far Barmaki and gave it to Fadl b. al-Rabi'. He explained to Fadl that he had not done it earlier out of obedience to his mothers wishes, a testimony to her importance and influence on the caliph and the decisions of the state (Ibn al-Athir in Abbott, 1946: 126-127; al-Tabari vol. XXX, 1989: 162).

C. Zubayda

Amat al-'Aziz (Handmaiden of the Almighty) known as Zubayda (little Butterball) by her grandfather, the second caliph, al-Mansur, was an exception in the 'Abbasid age. She was not a concubine or singing girl. She was a royal 'Abbasid princess and Harun al-Rashid's double cousin. Her father was al-Mahdi's half brother, Ja'far, and her mother was Salsal, Khayzuran's sister. Harun al-Rashid was the son of al-Mahdi and Khayzuran (Rahmatallah, 1952: 24). Most marriages between the 'Abbasid cousins or between the 'Abbasids and royal Arab women were strictly for political purposes or in honor of the family. Rarely did these women ever capture the number one place in their husbands' hearts. That place was reserved for concubines or slave girls. However, Zubayda was an exception to the rule. Harun was so charmed by her that he was willing to give up any claims to the throne in order to enjoy his time with her. Yahya Barmaki persuaded him to put off this denouncement (Abbott, 1946: 138; al-Tabari vol. 2, 1989: 160). Despite other rivals Zubayda maintained a unique position in the harem and in Harun's heart. It seems that Harun spent more time with her than with any other woman of his harem and they genuinely enjoyed each other's company (Abbott, 1946: 150). For example, Harun was once so angry at Zubayda that he pronounced the divorce oath, and later was so grieved that he called for jurists to find a way to nullify the oath. One of those experts was the qadi, (judge) Abu Yusuf, who often appears in the tales of the 1001 Nights and whom Harun al-Rashid often consulted in legal matters (Qazwini in Abbott, 1946: 153). Zubayda held a high position in the harem as well. She was always the first to inquire about Harun's health when he was sick. This is because she had an arrangement with the doorkeeper. He gave her messages top priority in return for a monetary gift from Zubayda. In addition, she often had the support of the 'Abbasid

family members such as her sister-in-law, 'Ulayya, in her arguments with Harun (Al-Isfahani in Abbott, 1946: 153-154; al-Tabari vol. 2, 1989: 303).

As with other women, it was not Harun's royal wives who threatened her position, but his concubines and singing girls. The records speak of approximately two hundred slave girls, two dozen concubines who had children by him and a number of songstresses who caught his eye (Ibn al-Athir in Abbott, 1946: 137-138).^{*} The Kitab al-Aghani includes a story about the rivalry in the harem. Once, Zubayda complained to her uncles that a certain slave girl of Harun's, Dananir Barmaki, was taking too much of his time. When questioned about it, Harun told his uncles to listen to her sing. They were fascinated and rebuked Zubayda for complaining, and told her to stop nagging Harun over her. Zubayda apologized by sending Harun ten slave girls, one of whom bore the future caliph, al-Ma'mun. This episode took place while Harun was still a prince (Al-Isfahani in Abbott, 1946: 139-140; Glubb, 1976: 240-241). This incident and one I mentioned before under the section about Khaizuran (p. 36) may seem unusual to the reader today. However, it shows the position of the royal woman at that time. Royal women could no longer make contracts with their husbands as they had in the early Islamic days. They were no longer equal partners in marriage. In fact, some words for women in the 'Abbasid age were synonymous with slave or object for sexual use, reflecting society's attitude toward them (Ahmed, 1992: 85; Brunschvig, 1960: 24). The scholar, Leila Ahmed, says that the forthrightness for women was over and they now had to resort to manipulation, poison and falsehood to secure themselves. She says that these are the tools of the powerless (Ahmed, 1992: 84). The 'Abbasid women at this time had to endure their husbands' large harems and numerous rivals. While it is true that in this period women were vulnerable in society because of the laws and

^{*} For information on some of the women of his harem and their children see: Al-Tabari The Early 'Abbasid Empire. vol. 2, 311-317.

customs imposed on them, I believe that these tactics show the ambitious women's unwillingness to relinquish their quest for power and prestige. In the royal harem, the women, including Zubayda, had to work within their situation and use the means at their disposal to do what was necessary to maintain a position of influence.

And finally, Zubayda's other problem was her inability to get pregnant and thus have an heir in line for the throne. The story that al-Mas'udi relates is that jealousy finally drove Zubayda to conceive a child. The story goes that Harun had complained to a learned man about Zubayda's lack of a child. The man said you need to make her jealous as Abraham did with Sarah. So Harun brought a slave girl and retired alone with her. This slave girl conceived the future caliph, al-Ma'mun and Zubayda became jealous and conceived the future caliph, al-Amin (Al-Mas'udi, 1989: 137; Glubb, 1976: 240-241). However unlikely this story, it does show the royal women's concern for their positions, which depended upon their ability to bear male heirs to the throne. We have seen with Khayzuran that the mother of the caliph retains the top position in the harem.

Much of Zubayda's time was spent on the cultural affairs of the harem. She used her influence to further her own position or to help others who sought her assistance. Much of her desire for personal recognition was satisfied by the presence of many famous poets at her court. They sought her support hoping to profit handsomely and to advance their careers through her influence. She seldom turned even the least gifted away without a reward (Raghib al-Isfahani in Abbott, 1946: 161). Zubayda, even if it meant bribing or intimidating people, would use her status as the favorite wife to get what she wanted. For example, once her agents refused to pay a merchant his due so the merchant had a judge arrest the agent. Zubayda persuaded the chief of police to release him. The anecdote goes back and forth between Zubayda and the judge and it ends up with Harun finally paying the withheld money (Khatib in Abbott, 1946: 165-166). Zubayda also had her own personal court (which is something we will see more of later

on in the Saljuq period) with her own secretaries who guarded her interests jealously. The historian, Ibn 'Abdus al-Jahshiyari, records an episode in which her interests clashed with the interests of her agents. One of her secretaries, Da'ud, imprisoned one of her agents in charge of her estates for a shortage of 100,000 dirhams. The agent tried to get an appeal from the secretary but the secretary told them that he could not take action without Zubayda's permission. Eventually, Zubayda released the man. This episode indicates that Zubayda was involved with every major event at her court and that her secretaries took no action without her approval (Abbott, 1946: 163-164). Kindi mentions in his Book of Governors and Judges of Egypt that her agents and secretaries were sought after for favors by people hoping to take advantage of Zubayda's influence (Abbott, 1946: 163)

Besides the cultural side of court, Zubayda had political interests as well, the most important being the imperial succession. The two sons of Harun al-Rashid that were most involved in succession were al-Amin and al-Ma'mun. Al-Ma'mun was the elder of the two. The Persian slave girl who gave birth to him died in childbirth. Thus, Zubayda supposedly took him in under her wing so to speak (Rahmatallah, 1952: 24; Glubb, 1976: 162). However, al-Ma'mun was overlooked with the birth of Zubayda's only child, al-Amin in 170/787. Her son was the early favorite of succession due to his mother's special position in the harem and with the caliph (Glubb, 1976: 162). In 175/791, Harun named al-Amin as his sole successor over his elder brother al-Ma'mun (Rahmatallah, 1952: 25; al-Tabari vol. XXX, 1989: 112-113).

However, as the two brothers matured, it became apparent that al-Ma'mun was the superior of the two. Al-Amin was in no way lacking in intelligence, but al-Ma'mun had natural leadership qualities (Abbott, 1946: 185-186; al-Suyuti, 1970: 315, 342). Al-Amin was spoiled and pampered by Zubayda in the harem. When he was disciplined by his tutors Zubayda would plead for leniency on his behalf. Al-Ma'mun on the other

hand, had no one to plead for him and thus took his punishment with dignity (Khatib in Abbott, 1946: 178-179; al-Suyuti, 1970: 328). Harun began to think that al-Amin was not the right choice for first heir. He felt that he was too prone to his passions and whims and consulted too often with the harem as to his plans (Al-Mas'udi, 1989: 84; Glubb, 1976: 255). Harun had always carried a special place in his heart for his elder son, al-Ma'mun. Eventually, he began to see him as the most eligible candidate for the job. He compared al-Ma'mun's energy to al-Mansur's, his piety to al-Mahdi's and his pride to his brother (Harun's) al-Hadi, and then "if God would permit me to make a fourth analogy it would not be far to seek." This phrase implies a fourth comparison to the character of the Prophet (Al-Mas'udi, 1989: 83; Glubb, 1976: 255). A poet, Umani, once praised al-Ma'mun but not al-Amin. When asked about al-Amin he said that he was less capable. Harun smiled because he agreed with this prognosis (Al-Mas'udi, 1989: 83). As the years passed Harun became more and more aware of the rivalry between the two brothers (Al-Mas'udi in Abbott, 1946: 185; Glubb, 1976: 255). Harun felt the need to protect al-Ma'mun from al-Amin's jealousy and antagonism which was backed by his favorite wife, Zubayda and the Hashimis at court (Abbott, 1946: 184; Glubb, 1976: 255).

Al-Amin was Zubayda's only heir to the throne. It is obvious to see why she set about trying to secure his nomination to the throne. She enlisted the help of her family to achieve this goal. Her brother, 'Isa, approached Fadl Barmaki in search of his help. Some had questioned supporting such a young heir but Fadl managed to gain support in Khurasan and after that the rest of the provinces followed suit. (Ibn 'Abdus in Abbott, 1946: 173; al-Tabari vol. XXX, 1989: 112).

However, Zubayda was too intelligent not to see Harun's shifting preference away from her son and toward al-Ma'mun (Abbott, 1946: 186). For example, once when al-Amin was excluded from praise, Zubayda complained and Harun set out to show her al-

Ma'mun's superiority. Harun also told her that he feared for al-Ma'mun's safety at the hands of al-Amin, but that he did not fear for al-Amin's safety at the hands of al-Ma'mun should he (al-Ma'mun) become caliph (Abbott, 1946: 187; al-Mas'udi, 1989: 86).

Harun had been secretly considering giving the position of first heir to al-Ma'mun, but Yahya Barmaki convinced him to uphold this position for al-Amin (Glubb, 1976: 255).

Accordingly, Zubayda doubled her efforts to help her son (Abbott, 1946: 187). She started to amass a fortune for her son for when it came time for him to rule. Al-Amin struck coins in her name in 191/806 at Bajunays affirming her influence and importance in his life (Abbott, 1946: 201-202). She took every opportunity to demand recognition of her son. Once she complained that al-Ma'mun received more troops than her son. Harun rebuked her. He told her that al-Ma'mun needed them to govern a rebellious province like Khurasan, whereas al-Amin had a peaceful one, Iraq, and therefore less need for troops (Al-Mas'udi, 1989: 86).

The rivalry between al-Ma'mun and al-Amin was intensified by their supporters. This rivalry led to a Persian-Arab split at court (Abbott, 1946: 200). Al-Amin and Zubayda were supported by the Arab element at court while al-Ma'mun, being of Persian origin, was favored by the Persian faction. The Barmakis, the Persian wazir family, later threw in their lot with al-Ma'mun. Zubayda disliked the Barmakis because their close ties and influence with Harun often threatened her own interests. However, Zubayda had several reasons to be grateful to the Barmakis. Yahya Barmaki had been responsible for placing her husband on the throne, and Fadl Barmaki was the chief player in obtaining the throne for al-Amin originally (Abbott, 1946: 191). Obviously, later events, which I will discuss below, overshadowed these favors because Zubayda continued to distrust them.

First of all, Yahya Barmaki was in charge of guarding the gates of the harem. Zubayda complained several times to Harun about his oppressive control. Each time

Yahya just increased his control over her which heightened her resentment of the Barmakis (Abbott, 1946: 193; al-Mas'udi, 1989: 117). The second incident occurred during the oath in Makka. Harun had determined that the succession order would be al-Amin first and al-Ma'mun second. He felt that their personal oaths were not enough and that they needed to confirm their oaths in public, hence the trip to Makka for the ceremony. The breaking of the oath was a punishment short of death (Abbott, 1946: 189; al-Tabari vol. XXX, 1989: 183-184; Glubb, 1976: 258). It is said that Ja'far Barmaki (in charge of al-Ma'mun) did not trust al-Amin and forced him to take the oath three more times to be sure that he would not betray his brother. It is for this reason that some historians say that Zubayda bore a grudge and was intent on ruining the Barmakis (Al-Mas'udi, 1989: 87; Ibn 'Abdus in Abbott, 1946: 191).

They say that her opportunity came with an incident involving Harun's sister, 'Abbasa, and his close companion, Ja'far Barmaki. Harun, due to the norms of society, could not enjoy the company of both of them together because women were not permitted to be seen by those other than their relatives. Thus, Harun married them in name only so he could enjoy their company at the same time. He forbid them conjugal visits and ever being alone together. In secret, they extended their marriage bounds and had children (Al-Mas'udi, 1989: 115-117; al-Tabari, vol. XXX, 1989: 214-216).

This is the reason some historians give for Zubayda's participation in the fall of the Barmakis. They say that Zubayda was resentful of the humiliation of her son at the hands of Ja'far in Makka. She informed Harun about 'Abbasa and Ja'far. This of course is the reason they give for Ja'far's execution (Al-Mas'udi, 1989: 117).

The 'Abbasa story is found in some of the earliest Muslim histories. Many later historians continued to advocate this story. Others, such as Ibn Khaldun, tried to prove the story false (Abbott, 1946: 196 no. 67; al-Tabari vol. XXX, 1989: 215 no. 731). More likely reasons for Ja'far's death and the fall of the Barmakis stem from their

increasing wealth and power (Al-Tabari vol. XXX, 1989: 209-210; Glubb, 1976: 264). Other historians link Ja'far's death with his support of an 'Alid who was being persecuted by the 'Abbasids. They trace this version back to key figures in the palace (Abbott, 1946: 197; al-Tabari vol. XXX, 1989: 205-209; Glubb, 1976: 273). There is no evidence linking Zubayda directly with the 'Abbasa story or even that the story itself is true. However, some modern historians continue to believe that it is highly likely that Zubayda, given her influence over Harun and her dislike of the Barmakis, had a hand in Ja'far's execution. One story states that on the eve of his execution, Harun asked Zubayda for her advice on the matter. She strongly encouraged the execution. Harun later regretted the decision to kill Ja'far (Rahmatallah, 1952: 49; Zaydan, 1907: 202).

All Zubayda's efforts paid off, for upon the death of Harun al-Rashid on Jumada 2, 193/ March 24, 809, al-Amin ascended the throne in Baghdad. Al-Ma'mun remained far away in Khurasan and Zubayda was elevated to the status of queen mother.

In the beginning all was well in the royal house. Al-Amin was accepted as caliph, mother and son worked well together, and al-Amin named his brothers al-Ma'mun and Qasim al-Mu'tasim as first and second heirs respectively. Al-Ma'mun took an oath of good will toward al-Amin to complete the wishes of their father (Ibn al-Athir in Abbott, 1946: 205, 207; Glubb, 1976: 340). However, trouble arose between al-Ma'mun and al-Amin when al-Amin carried out his plan of putting his son in line for the caliph's throne. In 194 / 809 his son, Musa, was named heir at the exclusion (and defiance of the oath at Makka) of al-Ma'mun (Ibn al-Athir in Abbott, 1946: 208; Glubb, 1976: 342-344).

Zubayda at this time did not seem to take a very active role in public and state affairs, only asserting her opinion once in a while. For example, it appears that she had some influence in persuading al-Amin to release Fadl Barmaki's brother and other members of his family from prison (Ibn 'Abdus in Abbott, 1946: 206). She also set about securing

Harun's immense treasures for herself and for al-Amin and providing girls for his harem (Abbott, 1946: 210; al-Mas'udi, 1989: 140).

Her lack of involvement with political affairs may have been because as al-Amin's reign progressed, she realized that his time was limited. The night she had conceived al-Amin she had a dream foretelling that disaster would befall him. Court astrologers tried to tell her differently, but she appears to have been convinced of his fate (Al-Mas'udi, 1989: 133-134). Al-Amin grew more and more suspicious and unpopular. He continually occupied himself with frivolous past times instead of the concerns of the state. One story which indicates either his inability or lack of desire to rule took place during the siege of Baghdad (by al-Ma'mun's troops). Ibrahim b. al-Mahdi (the two brothers' uncle) had gone to see him at the palace. Al-Amin was standing near the river and asked his uncle if he had seen his fish with the earrings, (a fish he had caught as a youth and adorned with earrings) which had just gotten out of his tank and escaped into the Tigris River (Al-Mas'udi, 1989: 141; Glubb, 1976: 348).

Zubayda tried to keep al-Amin's actions under control. At one point he got tired of her pleading and threatened to overthrow her as well if she persisted. When Zubayda came to him weeping about her anxieties over his situation, he shouted at her, "Silence! Crowns are not to be firmly secured through women's frets and fears. The caliphate demands statesmanship beyond the ability of a woman whose function is to nurse children. Away! Be gone!" (Abbott, 1946: 215, 218; al-Mas'udi, 1989: 144). This episode demonstrates the male viewpoint on women at that time. Women were not to meddle in affairs that were beyond their ability, in other words, politics. However, both of al-Amin's threats imply that Zubayda had managed to transcend these barriers despite the norms of society, and obtain a noted position at court.

Eventually, Zubayda grew weary of protecting al-Amin and worrying over his frivolity and antagonism toward al-Ma'mun. She must have realized that it was time to

give up support for her son and accept the man who could effectively govern the empire. During the civil war between the two brothers, Zubayda told the general, who was sent out to bring back al-Ma'mun, to show him respect and give him the honor deserved of a brother of the caliph (Ibn al-Athir in Abbott, 1946: 213; Glubb, 1976: 345). However, things were to turn against al-Amin. Al-Tabari says that al-Amin was captured and beheaded by the general Tahir and his head was sent back to al-Ma'mun (Al-Mas'udi, 1989: 169, 172; Glubb, 1976: 352).

After the death of her son, Zubayda appears to have retired from politics altogether. When asked if she would take revenge for her son's death, she cried, "Away, you bastard!" "Is it fitting that women should demand the price of blood and take the place of warriors?" (Al-Mas'udi, 1989: 173). For this, Zubayda is praised by historians, such as al-Tabari, for "knowing her place" in society (Nashat, 1990: 38). She did not challenge al-Ma'mun, rather she wrote him letters lamenting her situation and the fate of her son. Al-Ma'mun responded by honoring her with the address of mother and restoring her property and treasures to her (Abbott, 1946: 221; al-Mas'udi, 1989: 174). The sources are silent on any political activities by her during al-Ma'mun's reign. Thus, it is assumed that since she did not avenge her son's death, she would not participate in the revolt of the countercaliph, Ibrahim b. al-Mahdi (Abbott, 1946: 228). The evidence suggests that al-Ma'mun continued to honor her as an important figure at the 'Abbasid court. For example, he annually sent her some of the newly minted coins of the empire (Abbot, 1946: 229).

Zubayda attended al-Ma'mun's wedding to Buran and gave the bride her own estate in Silh and the jeweled jacket of the Umayyad princess, 'Abda. Scholars such as al-Tabari and Ibn al-Athir say that Buran is also to have requested of al-Ma'mun that Zubayda be allowed to make one last pilgrimage to Makka (Abbott, 1946: 233-234). The last two events indicate that first, Zubayda must have been under some kind of

confinement. And secondly, Zubayda appears to have been relinquishing power so to speak to the new 'Abbasid queen, Buran. Indeed, since the death of al-Amin, she had devoted herself to her other passion, philanthropy.

D. Philanthropy

This brings us to our final topic on the women of the 'Abbasid period, and that is their property and wealth. According to Islamic law, women are supposed to have the right to inherit property and to do with it whatever they wish (Bingham, 1980: 81). Many women donated their wealth to the religious class to show their piety and to keep their property out of the hands of their husbands and other relatives (Baer, 1983: 27).

One excellent example of philanthropy by an 'Abbasid woman is Umm Musa, wife of al-Mansur. She herself was able to control her husband and her rights through contracts, but her donation leaves a forbidding message. She established an endowment for concubines who only bore girls. This seems to indicate that she, early in the 'Abbasid era, was able to read what was to come regarding the status and situation of women in the medieval world (Bingham, 1980: 27; Abbott, 1946: 16).

Later 'Abbasid women turned to philanthropy as another way to make themselves more visible in their already limited world.* Khayzuran was one who decided to use her immense fortune (at her height it was estimated at 160,000,000 dirhams which was half of the entire land tax revenue, the major revenue source of the empire) for public benefit (Abbott, 1946: 124; al-Mas'udi in Glubb, 1976: 160). Early historians record that during one pilgrimage, Khayzuran found the birth place of the Prophet and turned it into a shrine. It became the Mosque of the Nativity located on the Street of the Nativity (Al-Mas'udi in Abbott, 1946: 118-119; Glubb, 1976: 159). She also found and bought the house of Aqram a meeting place for the earliest followers of Muhammad. It became known as the House of Islam and later as Khayzuran's House (Abbott, 1946: 118-119;

* Much of Abbott's information about the philanthropic works comes from the primary sources, such as al-Tabari, al-Mas'udi or Khatib, and also from the German scholar, Ferdinand Wustenfeld, such as his Die Chroniken der Stadt Mekka or Yaqut's Mu'jam al-Buldan edited by Wustenfeld.

Glubb, 1976: 159). She is responsible for other monuments as well, such as a pool in Ramla, Palestine and one in Iraq which required a channel to be dug from the river (Baladhuri in Abbott, 1946: 120).

Zubayda was less ambitious than Khayzuran in politics. She chose to concentrate on the establishment of public works, as a matter of fact, she is best known for this. There are several places in the Islamic world named after her in her honor. She had extensive fiefs in western Baghdad where she established palaces and gardens. Other properties of hers were a Persian district of Jibal and her fief at Wasit al-Iraq where a number of buildings were built for her enjoyment. Later Persian sources credit her with establishing the foundation of the city of Tabriz in northern Iran in 175/791. It is probable that she built in this area, but the establishment of the foundation is probably an exaggeration (Abbott, 1946: 238-239; Le Strange, 1966: 192; Glubb, 1976: 247-248). She is also credited with a wayfarers inn on the Syrian-Byzantine border (Abbott, 1946: 240).

However, her biggest contribution to the Islamic empire was her extensive works in Makka and on the pilgrimage road to this city. The upkeep of the holy places was a tradition of both the men and women of the royal house (Abbott, 1946: 240-241; Glubb, 1976: 284). Besides her efforts to repair or redecorate mosques and other buildings, Zubayda's main projects centered around the problem of the lack of water in this area. Zubayda herself made five or six pilgrimages to Makka.* On the pilgrimage of 190/805 Makka experienced a drought. She and Harun al-Rashid deepened the Well of Zamzam during this pilgrimage. Perhaps it was this experience that inspired her to undertake more extensive projects (Yaqubi in Abbott, 1946: 242). She financed water works around the Spring of Hunayn, located twelve miles east of Makka, and tapped into a

* Among the sources that Abbott lists for this information are: Ibn 'Abdus, p. 252; al-Mas'udi, IX, p. 66-68; Yaqubi, II, p. 521-522; al-Tabari, III, p. 701. See Abbott, 1946: 242 no. 23 for more information.

number of springs and reservoirs in order to bring water to Makka through a subterranean aqueduct. Among these water works was the Spring of Zubayda, situated on the Plain of 'Arafat which was immensely beneficial for the pilgrims (Abbott, 1946: 243; Glubb, 1976: 247). The cost of these projects, which were financed by her own resources, was one and a third million dinars (Khatib in Abbott, 1946: 243).

Along with the improvements of the Makkan water system, she devoted herself to the pilgrims' travel route, the Kufan Road which extended nine hundred miles from Iraq to Makka. Her main concern seems to have been the comfort of the pilgrims. She wanted to give some relief to the poor who had no choice but to walk. She built stations in-between already existing ones which were used by those traveling by caravan. She is associated with nine stations on this road and a tenth one on a back road to Madina. Three of the sites were named for her, and all had a well and shelter for rest or prayer. One of these sites even had a small mosque attached to it. The road henceforth became known as Darb Zubayda or Zubayda Road in honor of her work there (Yaqt in Abbott, 1946: 245-246, 250; Glubb, 1976: 247-248).

A final tribute to her devotion to charity took place during the reign of al-Ma'mun. At the request of the Makkan governor, al-Ma'mun sent aid to Makka for the upkeep of the holy places. When Zubayda learned about this request she was distressed. During her last pilgrimage, she questioned the governor as to why he had not asked for her help directly. She had wanted to finance the projects herself (Wustenfeld in Abbott, 1946: 246-247).

Therefore, while Khayzuran is best known for her involvement in politics, Zubayda is famous for her philanthropic works which she continued throughout her life. Zubayda chose this avenue to make herself more visible in 'Abbasid society, and as we know now to make her mark on history. The historian, Azraqi (d. 219/834) writes in his history of Makka about her contributions there. He says, "for the people of Mecca and the

pilgrims owe their very life to her next to Allah" (Abbott, 1946: 251). Centuries later, an illiterate nineteenth century Makkan guide named Sayyid 'Ali cried out in a prayer of gratitude, "God bless Zubaidah, may her fountain never run dry!" (Abbott, 1946: 259-260; Waddy, 1980: 46).*

* Abbott obtains this quote from a book written by a Persian pilgrim to Makka: Hadji Khan and Wilfrid Sparroy. With the Pilgrims to Mecca. London: 1905. p. 237.

VI. SITUATION OF WOMEN UNDER THE GHAZNAVIDS (977-1186)

A. Introduction

1. History

In the next section, I would like to discuss the ways women exerted their influence under the Turkish dynasties in the eastern Islamic world. The Turkish people are not natives of the Muslim Middle East. They came originally as nomads from the Central Asian Steppes. Turks were known to the Jahiliyya Arabs through their Persian contacts because a "land of the Turks" appears in the pre-Islamic Arabian poetry (Bosworth "Barbarian Incursions", 1977: 4). The Turks who helped the native Indo-European peoples of Central Asia against the first Arab invasions were probably not settled peoples but mercenaries employed by local rulers. The Umayyad conquests of this area brought back some domestic Turkish slaves, but, by the 'Abbasid period there was an influx of Turkish slaves mostly used in the militaries. The Abbasid caliph and governors of border areas like Khurasan used Turkish slaves for the palace guard or their armies (Bosworth "Barbarian Incursions", 1977: 3-4; Barthold, 1977: 186-187). The initial Turkish infiltration into Muslim lands was in the tenth century and culminated in the Ghaznavid dynasty of Afghanistan.* With the establishment of the

* Among the primary sources, both contemporary and later medieval works, that modern historians of Ghaznavid history refer to are:

Bayhaqi, Maqamat-i Abu Nasr-i Mushkani, Mujalladat, Tarikh-i Mas'udi.

al-'Utbi, Kitab al-Yamini.

al-Gardizi, Kitab Zayn al-Akhbar.

al-Mustawfi, Tarikh-i Guzida.

al-Husayni, Akhbar al-Dawla al-Saljuqiyya.

Ibn al-Athir, al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh.

Ibn Baba al-Qashani, Kitab Ra's Mal al-Nadim.

Juzjani, Tabaqat-i Nasiri.

These are just a few of the primary sources for the Saljuq era. For more information on sources see Nazim, 1971 and Bosworth, The Later Ghaznavids, 1977.

Ghaznavids and other Turkish dynasties after them, the age of the native Aryan rulers in this area came to an end (Barthold, 1977: 268).

However, before I discuss the contributions that the women made to politics in the Ghaznavid era, I believe that it is necessary to establish a chronological history of the Ghaznavid rulers and their ideological ideas regarding women in order to place them in the context of the Islamic world, and to facilitate comprehension when I discuss the women of the Ghaznavid era.

The Ghaznavid rulers were the Turkish descendants of a Turkish slave to the Samanids, one of the last native Aryan dynasties in this region. The Samanids considered themselves descendants of the Sassanian hero, Bahram Chubin. They obtained Caliph al-Ma'mun's support and were able to rule in Transoxiana as hereditary rulers (Barthold, 1977: 209-210). It was at this time (ninth century) that this area became firm in its belief of Islam, and defenders of the faith against the pagan nomadic Turks on its borders (Barthold, 1977: 212). Before the Samanids there were some nomadic bands of Turks in the area, but it was in the ninth century that the raids into the Steppes brought back Turkish slaves who were used in the armies of the local rulers (Bosworth, 1963: 35-36). One such slave, Alptigin became a general in the Samanid army. However, when he supported the wrong succession candidate he headed to the periphery of the empire to keep a low profile. In Ghazna he usurped control from the local ruler, Abu Bakr Lawik (Al-Gardizi in Nazim, 1971: 24-25; Bosworth, 1963: 37). The Samanids did not like the independent trend that Alptigin was taking in Ghazna and sent an army after him. Alptigin managed to stave off any attack and was recognized as governor of any territory that he could conquer (Tabaqat-i Nasiri in Nazim, 1971: 25-26; Bosworth, 1963: 38).

Alptigin was succeeded (he died on 352/963) first by a son and then by three of his own slave generals. The second general, Pirtigin, became a tyrant and was deposed by

Sabuktigin in 366/977. Sabuktigin had managed to gain the support and following of the population (Tabaqat-i Nasiri and ibn al-Athir in Nazim, 1971: 27; Bosworth, 1963: 39). He was later declared a descendant of the ancient Persian kings because the Ghaznavids, despite their Turkish ancestry, adopted the Persian culture (Barthold, 1977: 261; Bosworth, 1963: 39). During Sabuktigin's reign he maintained the recognition of the Samanids as an overlord despite their weakened state. Sabuktigin received territories as rewards for assisting the Samanids against fresh Turkish incursions (Barthold, 1977: 261-262). However, by the time of his son's (Mahmud) reign the Qarakhanid Turks had destroyed the last remnants of the Samanid dynasty and the Amu Darya was agreed upon as the boundary between the Qarakhanids and the Ghaznavids (Barthold, 1977: 266; Habib, 1967: 22).

After Sabuktigin's death in 387/997 there was a succession struggle between his two sons: Isma'il and Mahmud. Isma'il ruled for a while, but was soon overthrown by his older brother Mahmud ('Utbi, 1975: 208, 213; Habib, 1967: 17). Mahmud treated Isma'il well and granted him everything he wished until he discovered that Isma'il was plotting to kill him. Therefore, Isma'il was put under house arrest until his death (Nazim, 1971: 41; 'Utbi, 1975: 224, 240). Mahmud ascended the throne in 390/999 as an independent ruler, and was the first Ghaznavid to take the title of sultan (it means the one with power). Throughout his reign he continued to portray himself as a defender of Sunni Islam by undertaking many campaigns against Shi'is, heretics and pagans. For his conquests, he gained many honors and titles from the caliph (Barthold, 1977: 271; Habib, 1967: 22-23). At Mahmud's death (d. 422/1030) another succession struggle ensued between his two sons: Muhammad and Mas'ud (Barthold, 1977: 286, 293).

Again it was the more capable elder brother (in this case Mas'ud) who displaced his younger brother Muhammad. Mas'ud reigned from 422/1030 to 433/1041. Beginning with Mas'ud, the Ghaznavids started to lose ground to other dynasties partly due to

Mas'ud's stubbornness and lack of ability to make a correct decision (Bayhaqi in Barthold, 1977: 293; Habib, 1967: 93). However, the Ghaznavid empire still maintained much of its territory and prestige as compared to later periods. The eventual successor was Mas'ud's son, Mawdud, who dreamed of regaining territory in the west that had been lost to the Saljuqs. But, his efforts were to no avail. From this time on, the Ghaznavid empire was increasingly oriented toward southern Afghanistan and northern India (Al-Husayni and Ibn al-Athir in Bosworth The Later Ghaznavids, 1977: 26, 30).

Mawdud (d. 440/1048) was succeeded by three of his relatives: two sons and an uncle. Then, in 445/1053, one of their Turkish slave commanders usurped the throne for himself. This slave commander, Toghril, exterminated Mas'ud's line except for two of his sons: Farrukh-Zad and Ibrahim (Ibn al-Athir and al-Husayni in Bosworth The Later Ghaznavids, 1977: 45-46). Toghril was eventually assassinated by other slave commanders who did not wish to be subordinate to a fellow slave. The reigns of Farrukh-Zad and Ibrahim are obscure but both were known for their benevolence in governing (Ibn Baba and Bayhaqi in Bosworth The Later Ghaznavids, 1977: 47, 74). It was under Ibrahim's son, Mas'ud III (493/1099-509/1115) that the Ghaznavid Sultan had to recognize the authority of the Great Saljuqs (Bosworth, 1968: 158). Later sultans, such as Bahram Shah, managed to stay on the throne many years by recognizing the suzerainty of the Saljuqs over the Ghaznavids. These sultans continued to rule in northern India until the Ghurids of Afghanistan overthrew them in 582/1186 (Juzjani in Bosworth, 1968: 158-159, 161).

2. Adoption of Persian Culture

Despite their Turkish origins, the Ghaznavids adopted the Persian culture of their predecessors, the Samanids. They adhered to the Persian idea of authoritarianism. The ruler was to rule completely and the subjects were to obey almost religiously as in the Sassanian tradition (Habib, 1967: 75; Bosworth, 1963: 49). The Ghaznavid historian, Bayhaqi, said that a ruler must be kind, but not to the point of becoming ineffective (Bosworth, 1963: 50). The Ghaznavids adopted Persian culture as well. Under the Samanids Persian language and literature had been revitalized (Vambery, 1973: 69; Habib, 1967: 66). The Ghaznavid sultans were educated in classical Islamic studies and Persian works (Bosworth, 1963: 130). In short, the former nomads became civilized people, adopting a settled way of life and the sumptuous luxuries that went along with this way of life (Bosworth, 1963: 67). In addition to the luxury and highly civilized life style, the Ghaznavids assumed the Persian-Islamic ideas involving women. The once free nomadic women were now confined into the harem system guarded by eunuchs. The system became so restrictive that a later sultan, Bahram Shah, refused to let a physician into the harem to treat a sick slave girl (Bosworth, 1963: 139). On the death of a sultan the new sultan "took over" the women of the previous harem. He distributed the unwanted women elsewhere, indicating that women were some kind of property that could be shuffled around from place to place or from person to person (Bosworth, 1963: 138). For example, when Sultan Muhammad was deposed he had to relinquish his harem to his brother, Mas'ud. When Mahmud died, the women of his harem were looked after by his sister, Hurra-i Khuttali, (an influential woman of whom I will speak more later) and those who were no longer wanted were given estates on which to live (Bosworth, 1963: 138). The isolation of women extended into the rulers' idea of how women should behave regarding politics. According to scholar Muhammad Habib,

Sultan Mahmud did not permit "his playthings of idle hours" (women) to meddle in affairs "too high for their understanding" (Habib, 1967: 20). This statement attests to the male perspective of women that was formulated in the 'Abbasid age. Their idea was that women were inferior in intelligence and not fit to be in positions of authority, such as politics.

B. Major Political Marriages

While I have established that the Ghaznavids inherited a number of Persian customs and beliefs, some of the old pre-Islamic Turkish customs survived to a certain extent, enabling women to become influential despite the restrictions placed upon them. For example, the women of the sultan's harem often accompanied him on his military expeditions and campaigns. Their appearance at the scene of battle reflects a pre-Islamic custom of the nomadic Turkish bands (Bosworth, 1963: 118).

The Ghaznavid period is one of frustration for historians. Much of the information on this period is missing. For example, there are few architectural remains from the reigns of the Ghaznavid sultans perhaps due to the destructive movements of various peoples through this area, such as the Ghurids, the Mongols or the Timurids. In the 'Abbasid era and the Saljuq era, there are examples of tombs and other pieces of architecture founded by women. As I mentioned previously, in the area of the Ghaznavid empire there are few remains of architecture, not to mention architecture sponsored by Ghaznavid women. The women's role in politics in Ghaznavid history is another area where the information is slight. The reason for this could be that the male historians of this era have just chosen to pass over women's contributions to history because they did not believe that it was a proper role for women, or that their activities warranted much attention. However, despite the lack of information, we do know that women did have certain functions in society. The main way that the women of the Ghaznavid empire managed to play a part in the policies of the state was through marriage alliances. These marriages affected the empire in various ways, such as the acquisition of new territory or the subduing of hostile enemies.

Sabuktigin became one of Alptigin's most trusted officers in Ghazna. To seal this friendship, Alptigin gave Sabuktigin one of his daughters in marriage. This wife was

the mother of his younger son, Isma'il (Guzida in Nazim, 1971: 28, 38; 'Utbi, 1975: 22). During the reign of the next three successors, Sabuktigin set about gathering support not only from the Turkish soldiery, but local support as well. He married a daughter of the Zabulistan ruler in order to secure his loyalty. This wife gave birth to the famous Mahmud of Ghazna in 362/971 (Bosworth, 1963: 41). Early on, Sabuktigin appears, to have decided that Mahmud would succeed him because he prepared and trained Mahmud for the position. Sabuktigin betrothed him to a princess of the Farighunis, a family connected to the Samanid house, who at that time Sabuktigin still acknowledged as an overlord (Nazim, 1971: 179). Thus, through this woman, Sabuktigin had hoped to connect his son with the ruling house, thereby legitimizing and securing the throne for him. Later, Sabuktigin came into a dispute with Mahmud and replaced him with Isma'il. However, there are those who say that among the reasons that Isma'il was chosen for succession was that his mother was Alptigin's (Sabuktigin's master and founder of the Turkish government at Ghazna) daughter and Sabuktigin wanted to keep the line of the dynasty in his master's family (Bosworth, 1963: 45; Nazim, 1971: 38; 'Utbi, 1975: 202). Thus, the two marriages played significant roles in early Ghaznavid policy. The marriage to the Zabulistan princess gained Sabuktigin local support, enabling him to gain the throne in Ghazna. And, the marriage to Alptigin's daughter had possible repercussions in the struggle for succession.

Marriage between the Farighunid house and the Ghaznavids linked them in a kindred relationship. The Farighunids were hereditary rulers of Juzjanan under the suzerainty of the Samanids (to whom they were linked by a marriage in 365/975). When the Samanids fell, the Farighunids made a marriage alliance with the Ghaznavids. In 385/995 one of the Farighunid princesses was married to Mahmud b. Sabuktigin, which we have already seen influenced Sabuktigin's choice for an heir in Ghazna. At the same time one of Sabuktigin's daughters was married to Abu Nasr Muhammad b. Ahmad (the

Farighunid ruler). During Sabuktigin's reign this Farighunid ruler helped the sultan of Ghazna on one of his campaigns into India due to the kinship bond between them. He furthered this bond with the marriage of one of his daughters to Mahmud's son, Abu Ahmad Muhammad (Nazim, 1971: 177-178; 'Utbi, 1975: 343-344).

Mahmud's sister, Hurra-i Khuttali, wielded her influence over affairs of the state. During the succession struggle that occurred between her two nephews, Mas'ud and Muhammad, Hurra-i Khuttali played a pertinent role in helping Mas'ud against his brother. She was able to secure the support of many high Ghaznavid officials for Mas'ud, enabling him to win the throne for himself (Bosworth, 1963: 97, 229, 235). Another way that she influenced Ghaznavid politics was through her marriage to the Khwarizm-Shah in 406/1015 (Bosworth, 1968: 8). Abu al-Hasan 'Ali, the ruler of Khwarizm, married her. However, he died shortly after and his brother, Abu al-'Abbas Ma'mun b. Ma'mun married his widow, Hurra-i Khuttali ('Utbi, 1975: 444-445; Gardizi and Bayhaqi in Nazim, 1971: 57; Bosworth, 1968: 8). A rebellion in Khwarizm led to the death of Abu al-'Abbas Ma'mun and the intervention of Mahmud of Ghazna to avenge his brother-in-law's death (Habib, 1967: 38; Bayhaqi in Nazim, 1971: 58). The Khwarizm-Shahs had been an ally of the Qarakhanids, a potential enemy of the Ghaznavids. When the Ghaznavids defeated the Qarakhanids, the Khwarizm-Shahs made these alliances with the Ghaznavids (Barthold, 1977: 275). Through his sister's role as a political bride, Mahmud was able to subordinate (he asked them to send money and pronounce his name in the khutba)* the Khwarizm-Shahs. With the death of Abu al-'Abbas Ma'mun, his sister's marriage provided him with the excuse of kinship to march on Khwarizm and annex it, thereby extending the lands that were under Ghaznavid suzerainty (Barthold, 1977: 277-279).

* This is the speech given by the leader of the Friday prayer at the mosque. In this speech the name of the current ruler of the area was recited.

C. Other Political Marriages

Later in the Ghaznavid period, the rulers often had good relations with the Saljuqs. The main purpose of the political marriages to the Saljuq house was not to gain territory, but to make peace with a more powerful enemy. The best example of this is Sultan Mas'ud III's (493/1099-509/1115) marriage to Jawhar Khatun daughter of Saljuq Sultan Malik Shah, who came to be known as the Mahd-i Iraq (the bride from Iraq). This was not the only marriage between the Saljuqs and the Ghaznavids. Mas'ud's father, Ibrahim, had married his daughter to Alp Arslan's son, Arslan Shah, in 457/1064, and Mas'ud III himself had been married to another daughter of Alp Arslan before marrying Jawhar Khatun (Ibn al-Athir and al-Husayni in Bosworth The Later Ghaznavids, 1977: 54-55). As a result of this marriage, Mas'ud III maintained a long and peaceful reign free of interference from the Saljuqs (Bosworth, 1968: 157; Habib, 1967: 108). For the Saljuqs it was a sign of respect toward an older dynasty, the Ghaznavids (Al-Husayni in Bosworth The Later Ghaznavids, 1977: 55). The bride from Iraq had yet another affect on the already weakened Ghaznavid empire. At the death of Mas'ud III in 509/1115, a struggle ensued for the throne. Saljuq sultan, Sanjar invaded Ghazna during the civil war. To justify the invasion, he used the excuse of turmoil and possibly the excuse of kinship. Apparently, the widow of Mas'ud III (Sanjar's sister, Jawhar Khatun) suffered mistreatment at the hands of Mas'ud's successor, Arslan Shah. The Ghaznavids eventually became vassals to the Saljuq state, being forced to pay tribute and to recite the Saljuq sultan's name in the khutba (Bosworth, 1968: 158).

Besides the previously mentioned marriages, the Ghaznavid sultans made alliances with their neighbors, especially the incoming Turkish tribes. Towards the end of the Samanid dynasty in Transoxiana, the Qarakhanids and the Ghaznavids concluded a treaty that named the Amu Darya as the boundary between the two kingdoms. They

sealed this treaty with a marriage between Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna and a daughter of the Ilak Khan of the Qarakhanids. The wedding was celebrated with great pomp and circumstance at Uzgend in 390/999. However, one treaty was not enough to maintain a stable relationship. A continual number of treaties and alliances had to be arranged to maintain the lull in hostilities between the two sides (Nazim, 1971: 47-48, 53; Gardizi in Barthold, 1977: 272; 'Utbi, 1975: 317). The Ghaznavids had to continually renew their relations with the Qadir Khan of Kashghar as well. Mahmud of Ghazna gave his daughter, Zaynab, to the son of the Qadir Khan, Yaghantigin (Bughra Khan) to mark the existence of friendly relations between the two. In return the Qadir Khan gave one of his daughters to Mahmud's son, Prince Muhammad. These marriages were never realized though (Bayhaqi in Nazim, 1971: 55; Bayhaqi in Barthold, 1977: 284). A later ruler of Kashghar was supposed to keep up friendly relations by giving his daughter to Mas'ud b. Mahmud and the daughter of his son and heir to Mawdud, the son and heir of Mas'ud. Mas'ud agreed to these marriages in order to gain the loyalty and support of the ruler of Kashghar for Mawdud in the event of his succession. This alliance was never really sealed though because Mawdud's bride died en route to Ghazna. However, Mas'ud's bride, Shah Khatun, arrived safely and the wedding was celebrated with much splendor (Bayhaqi in Barthold, 1977: 294-295; Bayhaqi in Bosworth The Later Ghaznavids, 1977: 21-22).

The Ghaznavids also used marriage alliances to try to subdue potential threats. For example, the Ziyarid ruler of Tabaristan and Jurjan believed it prudent to submit to the Ghaznavids and recognize the sultan as an overlord in order to secure his position on the throne against possible rivals. He remained loyal and paid tribute. In exchange for this loyalty, Sultan Mahmud gave him one of his (Mahmud's) daughters in marriage, thereby giving him a kindred link to the mighty Ghaznavid dynasty (Bayhaqi in Nazim, 1971: 78; 'Utbi, 1975: 414-415). In the face of a Saljuq threat, the Ghaznavid sultan sought to

divide and conquer the early Saljuq leaders. To gain influence over them, Mas'ud b. Mahmud tried to arrange a series of marriages for Toghril Beg, Chaghri Beg and the Yabghu (leader of the Turks). Only the Yabghu accepted so the plan did not succeed, and the Saljuqs became suspicious and wary of the intent of the Ghaznavid sultan (Bosworth, 1963: 242-243).

Bughra Khan, the Qarakhanid ruler, tried to use the same technique to gain influence in the Ghaznavid empire. He demanded that his bride, the Princess Zaynab of Ghazna, be sent to him at once to complete the former arrangements made with Mahmud (mentioned on p. 69). Sultan Mas'ud was willing until he learned that Bughra Khan intended to use his tie with Zaynab to claim (in her name) part of the inheritance left by Mahmud (Barthold, 1977: 299).

Political marriages were also used to secure one's position with other royal family members. Mas'ud b. Mahmud took his disposed brother, Muhammad, and his (Muhammad's) four sons out of prison and brought them to court. He welcomed each with a gift and the eldest son, Ahmad, was given the princess Hurra-i Jawhar in marriage. By doing this, it is believed that he was trying to conciliate the other members of the family and restore the solidarity of the Ghaznavid dynasty (Gardizi and Bayhaqi in Bosworth The Later Ghaznavids, 1977: 15).

Others used marriages to secure or legitimize their position on the throne. One example is the marriage arrangements between the Qadir Khan and Muhammad b. Mahmud. Mahmud made this alliance in order to gain the support of the Qadir Khan for his younger son, Muhammad, in the succession struggle between Muhammad and his brother Mas'ud (Barthold, 1977: 284). Sabuktigin had the same idea in mind when he married his son Mahmud to a Farighunid princess (Nazim, 1971: 177; 'Utbi, 1975: 343-344). Upon Mawdud b. Mas'ud's death the succeeding sultans were weak in leadership. 'Ali b. Mas'ud was placed on the throne by a general, Aitigin, on 441/1049. 'Ali b.

Mas'ud was married to Mawdud's widow to legitimize his position. Thus, it was a women who transmitted credibility to the new sultan (Bosworth The Later Ghaznavids, 1977: 37-38). An excellent example of using women as brides to secure the throne is the slave general, Toghril, who usurped the throne after the short reigns of Mawdud's successors. Under Mawdud, he was given the hand of one of his (Mawdud's) sisters in honor of his services. After usurping power, he forcibly married one of Mas'ud's daughters. This marriage demonstrates the attempt to legitimize his rule over Ghazna by establishing kinship through marriage with a Ghaznavid princess (Ibn Baba and Ibn al-Athir in Bosworth The Later Ghaznavids, 1977: 43, 45).

VII. SITUATION OF WOMEN UNDER THE SALJUQS (1040-1194)

A. Introduction

The earlier Turkish dynasties, such as the Ghaznavids, helped pave the way (by destroying the local Iranian powers) for the later Turkish dynasties, such as the Saljuqs, which is the dynasty that I will be discussing in the final section of this paper (Bosworth "Barbarian Incursions", 1977: 9). Before I discuss the contributions of women in this era though, I need to give a brief background of the Saljuq people.*

The reign of the Saljuqs was approximately 432/1040 to 591/1194. The Saljuq family of Turks has its origins in the Toguz confederation of Turkish tribes. The Oghuz (to whom the Saljuqs belonged) formed the eastern kingdom of this confederation. Eventually the Oghuz moved west to the Aral Sea and southern Russia. Others moved to the area of the Syr Darya by the tenth century (Bosworth, 1968: 15-16). Duqaq and his son Saljuq served the king of the Turks called Yabghu, ruler of the Oghuz. Some say that the Yabghu had become jealous of Saljuq's power, or that Saljuq and others committed a crime. For which ever reason, they were expelled and headed south to Jand where it is said that they converted to Islam and fought the pagan Turks (Bosworth, 1968: 17-18; Vambery, 1973: 89). The tribe at this time was led by three sons of Saljuq: Musa, Mikha'il, Arslan Isra'il and two of Mikha'il's sons: Toghril Beg

* Among the primary sources, both contemporary and later medieval works, that modern historians of the Saljuq history refer to are:

al-Husayni, Akhbar al-Dawla al-Saljuqiyya.

Ibn al-Athir, al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh.

Nizam al-Mulk, Siyasat-Nama.

Zahir al-Din Nishapuri, Saljuq-Nama ha Dhayl-i Saljuq-Nama Ta'rif-i Abu

Hamid Muhammad b. Ibrahim.

Ibn al-Jawzi, al-Muntazam fi Tarikh al-Muluk wa al-Umam.

Sibt b. Ibn al-Jawzi, Mi'rat al-Zaman fi Tarikh al-A'yan.

Ravandi, Rahat al-Sudur wa Ayat al-Surur.

Bundari, Dawlat al-Saljuq.

These are just a few of the primary sources for this era. For more information of sources see Lambton, 1988.

Muhammad and Chaghri Beg Da'ud (Bosworth, 1968: 18; Vambery, 1973: 89). Later, a split occurred within the Saljuq tribe. Followers of Arslan Isra'il remained nomads on the fringes of northern Khurasan while the rest followed Toghril Beg westward (Bosworth, 1968: 19; Habib, 1967: 101). These Saljuqs first acquired Khurasan, and then took advantage of the Buyids weakness in Iran. They defeated the Buyid sultan and took control over this area. Toghril Beg entered Baghdad in 447/1055, and in 450/1058, the caliph, al-Qa'im bestowed honors upon him for ridding him of the Buyid yoke (Bosworth, 1968: 46-47). However, in reality, the caliph relinquished power from one overlord to another. The Saljuqs realized that their military force was the key to sanctioning their control over the caliph, and thus they became the new rulers of Iran (Bosworth "Barbarian Incursions", 1977: 10).

Having set the background for the Saljuq dynasty, I would now like to focus on the situation of the Turkish women before the Turkish peoples' conversion to Islam. Women in pre-Islamic, nomadic, Turkish society played vital roles in the tribe. They did all types of domestic jobs and were skilled horsemen occasionally participating in battle. Ibn Battuta, (d. 779/1377) upon visiting the non-Muslim Turkish tribes in the fourteenth century, commented that the women's status was high and they were influential in the tribal councils (Nashat, 1990: 47). The Orkhon inscriptions (ancient Turkish inscriptions) indicate that ancient Turkish society showed respect toward women, and gave them an equal place with men and a role in state affairs (Kafesoglu, 1988: 86). An example of the status of the pre-Islamic Turkish woman appears in eighth-century Bukhara. When the ruler Tugh-Shada died, his wife (called Khatun, a term of respect for Turkish women) took over because their son was only a minor. She was seen as a lady of wisdom and all respect and obedience was made toward her. In addition, she conducted affairs of the state and administered justice in public (Vambery, 1973: 3; Narshakhi, 1954: 9-10). At the end of her reign, the dynasty came to an end at

the hands of the Arabs. However, when the Saljuqs immigrated to Iran and established their dynasty there, they received the aid of many local Persian administrators, and therefore adopted Islam and many of the Persian-Islamic traditions. Among the traditions that they adopted were: seclusion and the veil for women (Nashat, 1990: 49). The famous Saljuq wazir, Nizam al-Mulk, tried to seclude women completely. However, the freedom of the nomadic Turkish women was, to an extent, maintained in Iran. The women of the Saljuq dynasty were often seen in public and many accompanied their men on campaigns (just as the pre-Islamic Turkish women had done) (Kafesoglu, 1988: 86).

Thus, despite the adoption of Persian-Islamic culture, the Saljuq women maintained some of their previous freedom and managed to become influential in several areas: succession, marriage alliances and patronage of the arts.

B. Women's Role in the Struggle for Succession

The first area in which the Saljuq women managed to exert the most influence was in the area of the struggle for the throne. In the case of the Saljuq dynasty, however, the problem of succession was slightly more complicated than under previous dynasties. Under the 'Abbasid dynasty, the caliph had nominated his heir. The Saljuqs, however, came from a tribal background. Their system was one of a loose federation of tribes with one branch acting as an overlord, but not to the extent of an absolute ruler that was to be obeyed at all times. Under this system all members of the clan had a right to claim leadership. Thus, after the death of the sultan, there was not a smooth transfer of power from father to son. Elders, such as uncles or other princes vied for the throne with the support of their armies and various atabegs* (Kafesoglu, 1988: 100-101; Lambton, 1968: 219). The wives of sultans also took part in this struggle, sometimes influencing the sultan himself and sometimes gathering followers for their campaigns (Lambton, 1968: 219).

The woman that stands out most prominently in Saljuq history for her participation in politics, specifically in the succession struggle, is Terken Khatun. In 456/1064, after a number of battles, Sultan Alp Arslan returned to Rayy and married his son, Malik Shah, to the Qarakhanid princess, Jalaliyya. She is known as Terken Khatun and came to wield great power at the Saljuq court (Ibn al-Athir in Kafesoglu, 1988: 46; Ibn al-Jawzi in Bosworth, 1968: 76). Terken Khatun's main rival was her husband's powerful wazir, Nizam al-Mulk, who opposed most of her ambitions. Nizam al-Mulk had a dominant position within the administration of government, but could never gain the same

* A part of the Turkish military. They were often sent out to keep an eye on the young Turkish princes while they ruled their provinces. These atabegs were responsible for the princes' training and often through this position they gained control of the province and established themselves as virtually independent rulers.

influence at court (Bosworth, 1968: 76). The wazir's authority lessened toward the end of his life, largely due to Terken Khatun and another wife, Zubayda Khatun and their involvement in the succession struggle (Houtsma, 1924: 155). Terken Khatun took every opportunity to discredit the wazir. At one point she accused Nizam al-Mulk of trying to divide up the empire among his own family because many of his family members held very important positions. The prominence of this family created jealousy among others, such as Terken Khatun who felt threatened by his power (Zahir al-Din Nishapuri in Lambton, 1988: 44). She realized that as long as he was in power, she would never achieve her goals. Therefore, she attempted to obtain a decree from the sultan to remove Nizam al-Mulk from office. He was dismissed eventually, but whether it was because of her influence or not is hard to determine (Houtsma, 1924: 155). Some have even equated Malik Shah's death with her desire to satisfy her lust for power. According to this theory she joined those plotting the death of Malik Shah because he was in support of another heir and not her son. It is said that she conspired with the caliph, al-Musta'fi who had been offended by Malik Shah. Terken Khatun's participation in Malik Shah's death is only a theory and not fact. Malik Shah died in 485/1092 (Houtsma, 1924: 157; Imad al-Din and Ibn al-Athir in Kafesoglu, 1988: 54, 86; Lambton, 1968: 220). The death of Malik Shah and of Nizam al-Mulk earlier that year facilitated Terken Khatun's access to obtaining the throne for her son. In this struggle, Terken Khatun was joined by a rival wazir to Nizam al-Mulk, Taj al-Mulk Abu al-Ghana'im. Taj al-Mulk identified with the interests of Terken Khatun and became her wazir and supported her in her quest for the throne (Klausner, 1973: 47; Lambton, 1988: 44; Bosworth, 1968: 76). Taj al-Mulk's support of Terken Khatun against the powerful Nizam al-Mulk and the sultan, I believe says something about Terken Khatun's influence at court. Taj al-Mulk was willing to support a less likely candidate (her son was only five). I believe that this attests to Terken Khatun's influence and power in the

Saljuq government. It shows that she was able to overcome the social barriers for women (the male attitude that women were not capable of participating in politics) and establish herself as a noted figure in the government. Taj al-Mulk must have had confidence in her ability to succeed in order to endorse her candidate.

In the beginning, it had been Da'ud, a son of Terken Khatun, (Malik Shah's favorite wife) who had been heir apparent. When he died in 474/1081, another of her sons, Abu Shuja' Ahmad was selected. This son also died in 475/1082. Afterward, the succession struggle mainly involved Terken Khatun and her five year old son, Mahmud, and Barkyaruq and his mother, the Saljuq princess Zubayda Khatun (daughter of Yaquti b. Chaghri Beg) (Bosworth, 1968: 77). The two other candidates were Muhammad Tapar and Sanjar both of a slave wife. Nizam al-Mulk and most of the army supported Barkyaruq because he appeared to be the most capable (Bosworth, 1968: 77).

Both Terken Khatun and Taj al-Mulk acted quickly after Malik Shah's death. They had built up a party against Nizam al-Mulk from among his enemies in the bureaucracy and army, and they happened to be in Baghdad at Malik Shah's death. Terken Khatun managed to get the caliph to bestow upon her son the title of sultan and to recite his name in the khutba. Some say she achieved this by handing over her grandson, Abu al-Fadl Ja'far, the son of her daughter, Arslan Khatun and Caliph al-Muqtadi. This was the boy that Malik Shah had tried to put on the throne in place of the caliph. Next, Terken Khatun had to provide the army with subsidy pay in order to guarantee their support (Bosworth, 1968: 103; Lambton, 1968: 220; Kafesoglu, 1988: 56).

Meanwhile, the Nizamiyya [mamluks (slaves) of Nizam al-Mulk] managed to get their candidate, Barkyaruq, out of prison in Isfahan where he had been put on Terken Khatun's orders. They crowned him sultan at Rayy (Lambton, 1968: 221; Bosworth, 1968: 103). In 485/1093 Terken Khatun was defeated by the Nizamiyya, and her partner, Taj al-Mulk, was killed because they blamed him for the murder of their master

(Ibn al-Athir in Bosworth, 1968: 104-105; Houtsma, 1924: 149-150). After her defeat, Terken Khatun tried to persuade Barkyaruq's maternal uncle, Isma'il b. Yaquti (in Adherbayjan) to turn against Barkyaruq (Lambton, 1968: 221). Another source says that she herself married the malik of Adherbayjan, Qutb al-Din Isma'il, and tried to bring him to power but he was defeated (Kafesoglu, 1988: 57). On her death bed, (d. 487/1094) Terken Khatun's last act was to order the army of Isfahan to hold the throne for her son, Mahmud. Unfortunately for her, Mahmud died only a month after his mother (Lambton, 1968: 244; Nishapuri in Bosworth, 1968: 105).

The other woman involved in the succession struggle was Zubayda Khatun. She too died helping her son, Barkyaruq. Barkyaruq gained control at the death of Terken Khatun and Mahmud, but was threatened by revolts from rivals, such as his half brother Muhammad Tapar. With the help of her wazir, Majd al-Mulk Baravistani, she replaced her son's wazir, Mu'ayyid al-Mulk, with a puppet figure, Fakhr al-Mulk. Majd al-Mulk ruled from behind the scenes. Mu'ayyid al-Mulk became Muhammad's wazir and during a revolt, he captured Zubayda in 492/1098 in Rayy and strangled her. Barkyaruq eventually executed him for several reasons, one of which was to avenge his mother's death (Ibn al-Athir in Lambton, 1988: 44-45).

One final note on Terken Khatun's influence over affairs of the state involves Nizam al-Mulk's book, Siyasat-Nama or Book of Government. Nizam al-Mulk started his service with the Ghaznavids and later served Chaghri Beg and Alp Arslan in Khurasan. He eventually became wazir to Malik Shah (Bosworth, 1968: 55-57). His duties as grand wazir ranged from directing the Great Diwan (the central administration) to nominating officers and directing lower departments of the government. He not only granted positions of authority to his family, but to many other followers as well. He became one of the wealthiest men in the empire (Ibn al-Athir and Bundari in Bosworth, 1968: 68-70; Klausner, 1973: 76). His Persian background and service to the

Ghaznavids is reflected in his Book of Government, especially the Persian idea of kingship and the Persian-Islamic idea of woman and politics.

Nizam al-Mulk has a chapter called "On the Subject of Those Who Wear the Veil". In it he discusses the place of women. The basic theme is that women are an internal threat to the state, and that it will end in disaster if women are allowed to make decisions involving affairs of the state. His two major arguments are that women have imperfection of reason and lack complete intelligence, thereby making it impossible for them to make decisions properly. In the chapter, he uses a number of pre-Islamic examples and various Islamic hadiths to prove his point (Spellberg, 1988: 111-112).

Nizam al-Mulk says women do not know the situation of the world, and so when they make decisions they are wrong and trouble befalls men as a result of these decisions. He goes back to Adam in the garden of Eden to show that when Adam listened to Eve disaster occurred and he was expelled from the garden (Nizam al-Mulk, 1978: 179-180). This argument is interesting because in the Islamic version of this story both Adam and Eve are blamed for the sin. Thus, the wazir has to use the Christian version to prove his point. He says that kings who refrain from telling women their dealings, are better off and prosper. When Alexander was offered any woman from Darius' captured harem, he said, "We vanquished their men, let us not be conquered by their women" (Nizam al-Mulk, 1978: 181-182). His strongest argument comes from his example of 'A'isha and the Prophet. He uses the hadith in which 'A'isha goes against Muhammad's wishes and makes her own decision, leading the Prophet to utter "Consult women, but whatever they say, do the opposite and that will be right" (Nizam al-Mulk, 1978: 182). He quotes Caliph al-Ma'mun, as warning men not to allow people to patronize those who wear the veil for they are easily manipulated, which leads to corrupt practices (Nizam al-Mulk, 1978: 185). He sums up his argument by saying that, with all 'A'isha's piety and knowledge, the Prophet did not trust her advice, so what good are the opinions

of other women (Spellberg, 1988: 117; Nizam al-Mulk, 1978: 183). He says that as a matter of fact, women are not to rule and this is proven (in his mind) by the fact that if they could control themselves, God would not have put men over women as it says in the Qur'an (Nizam al-Mulk, 1978: 186; Qur'an 4:34). This chapter is a direct reference to Terken Khatun's efforts to place her son, Mahmud, on the throne instead of the elder Barkyaruq. In the wazir's opinion, she opposed what was right, his opinion, and threatened to influence the sultan against him and place her son and the rival, Taj al-Mulk, in power (Spellberg, 1988: 117).

The chapter on women in Nizam al-Mulk's book reflects two important issues. First, it demonstrates that some women, despite the confining policies of Islamic society, found ways to assert their influence on matters of government. And second, the fact that he devoted an entire chapter to those who wear the veil is a tribute to Terken Khatun's political power. Her power was so important that he found it necessary to expound his "fears" in a written warning to the current and future rulers.

C. Women's Role in Political Marriages

1. Introduction

Women also played a role in the policies of the state through political marriages. The women did not usually initiate these marriages themselves. Therefore, political marriage was an involuntary way that the women affected the affairs of the state.

Marriage for political or strategic reasons was common, even in the ancient days, among the ruling class. It existed in the nomadic desert life of pre-Islamic Arabia. There were usually marriages arranged between two people in order to unite two tribes together against a common enemy. The Prophet continued this type of alliance, but elevated it to a higher scale. His political marriages were not just for the union of two tribes in warfare, but an attempt to unite people under one nation and leadership, that of Islam. For Muhammad, political marriages were a way to gain support of a tribe or group of people without having to conquer them. In other words, it was a peaceful way to bring about his goals (Waddy, 1980: 14). In one example, Muhammad succeeded in pacifying a hostile tribe through a strategic marriage. During a confrontation with the tribe of Banu Musta'liq, this whole tribe was captured by the Muslims. Muhammad married one of the captives, Juwayriya, a daughter of the leader of the tribe. Thus, the entire tribe was set free because they were no longer his enemies, but part of his family. This was Muhammad's diplomatic way of solving the conflict. 'A'isha is to have remarked later on at the episode, "I do not know a woman who was a greater blessing to her people than she" (Waddy, 1980: 20-21).

Muhammad's successors continued this policy of alliance through marriage. In the Umayyad era the best example of alliance through marriage is the numerous marriages made between the Umayyad ruling family and the Kalb tribe of Syria who became the military force behind the throne (Hitti, 1970: 192 no. 3). The 'Abbasid caliphs

continued this practice as well. However, often the 'Abbasids' marriages were to other 'Abbasid family members as a way of honoring a particular member or the family in general. Harun al-Rashid kept his word to his deceased brother, al-Hadi, and gave two of his daughters, Fatima and Hamduna to two of al-Hadi's sons, Isma'il and Ja'far respectively (Abbott, 1946: 157; al-Tabari vol. XXX, 1989: 55). This type of marriage in the 'Abbasid age was common. For example al-Mahdi married his cousin Rayta and al-Ma'mun married his cousin Umm 'Isa. In addition, during al-Ma'mun's reign, a marriage of great strategic importance took place. Al-Ma'mun appointed as his heir, the Shi'i 'Ali al-Rida, (the eighth Shi'i Imam) and furthered this alliance with two marriages. Al-Ma'mun's daughter, Umm Habib, married 'Ali himself and his other daughter Umm al-Fadl was betrothed to 'Ali's young son, Muhammad (Ibn al-Athir in Abbott, 1946: 224-225; al-Mas'udi, 1989: 202-203). This incident caused quite a disturbance among the 'Abbasid family because it meant a transfer of power to the Persian and Shi'i elements of the empire. Fortunately for them, al-Ma'mun's succession plans changed. But, regardless of the results, his plan demonstrates that the women, through the marriages, were the link between the two houses and through which the authority of the caliphate would have passed to the 'Alids.

In the Saljuq era, the practice of political marriages seems to become a more predominant policy or of greater importance to the Saljuqs than to their earlier predecessors. Of the political marriages that the Saljuqs undertook, their relations and marriages with the 'Abbasid caliphate were of the utmost importance. As newcomers and alien rulers in Iran, it was very important to link themselves with the traditional leader of the Muslim world so as to legitimize their rule (Lambton, 1988: 264). Once Toghril Beg had entered Baghdad and driven away the Shi'i Buyids and restored Sunni Islam to the region, he became the secular ruler (Bosworth, 1968: 47-48). The caliph had, at one time, been the supreme authority on legal matters, but once he authorized the

Saljuqs' acquisition of power, he gave up all authority except the spiritual authority (Lambton, 1968: 211). Toghril Beg obtained a number of honorary titles and gifts such as the title of Pillar of the State (Rukn al-Dawla) or King of the East and West (Malik al-Mashriq wa-al-Maghrib). He was given robes in the 'Abbasid color of black and the two crowns signifying rule over both the Arabs and Ajams (non-Arab Muslims) of the region (Bundari and al-Husayni in Bosworth, 1968: 47). Thus, the Saljuq sultans recognized the importance of the connection with the 'Abbasid caliphate. The caliphate, after all, was still the figurehead of the Islamic world. The caliph's were the descendants of the Prophet of God. In order to justify and maintain their usurpation of power, the Saljuqs sought familial relations (through marriages) as a way to gain recognition and strengthen themselves over rival dynasties. Later, when the Saljuqs were stronger, these marriages were attempts to control the caliphs (Lambton, 1968: 207; Lambton, 1988: 264). Two of the Saljuq-caliph marriages which caused the most disturbance were Toghril Beg's marriage to the caliph's (al-Qa'im) daughter and the marriage of Sultan Malik Shah's daughter to the caliph, al-Muqtadi.

2. Marriage of Toghril Beg

The marriage of Toghril Beg to the caliph's daughter occurred late in his life and political career. Some say it was his wife, Altun-Jan, who on her death bed encouraged him to pursue this marriage which she felt could benefit the Saljuq tribe. This wife, according to the historian, al-Jawzi, was wise and Toghril Beg entrusted his affairs to her and asked her advice, a reflection of the pre-Islamic nomadic Turkish practices regarding women (Lambton, 1968: 212, 224). She died in 452/1060, and afterwards Toghril Beg started his plans for the marriage (Lambton, 1968: 212). The arrangement of this marriage was in no way simple. It involved an immense amount of effort and negotiations.

Toghril Beg sent a mission to Baghdad proposing a marriage between himself and the caliph's daughter (Sibt b. al-Jawzi in Makdisi, 1970: 265; Lambton, 1968: 212). The caliph's response suggested that it would be better if this marriage were terminated. However, if Toghril Beg still insisted he should meet certain conditions before the marriage could take place. The caliph knew that Toghril Beg would not accede to those conditions, and thus he would be released from being pressured to accept the proposal. (Ibn al-Jawzi and Bundari in Makdisi, 1970: 265-267). Among the conditions were: the delivery of Wasit and other iqa's (a portion of land which is usually given to officials in return for their loyalty and service) of the Saljuqs to the caliph, the payment of 300,000 dinars for the loss of a daughter and Toghril Beg's promise that he would remain in Baghdad permanently (Ibn Kathir in Makdisi, 1970: 265).

The agent for Toghril was his wazir, Kunduri, who had lost favor with the sultan several times, and thus wanted to achieve the arrangement of this marriage in order to retain his position (Makdisi, 1970: 264). Kunduri, in his eagerness, only told the sultan that the caliph had accepted the proposal and failed to tell him that this acceptance was

based on certain stipulations (that Toghril would never accept). The sultan announced to his notables that he would soon be connected with the dignity of the caliphate through this marriage, and sent Kunduri to Baghdad to arrange it. Kunduri was to obtain the signature from the representative of the caliph as proof of his approval. Toghril Beg's agents were to post a guard outside the door of the caliph's daughter in case the caliph refused, all indicating the importance of this marriage (Ibn al-Jawzi and Sibṭ b. al-Jawzi in Makdisi, 1970: 267-268). However, Kunduri had not gained the acceptance of the caliph. Thus, when they arrived in Baghdad, he concentrated on achieving the mission. The caliph refused the request because the sultan's mission had brought only a third of the money for which he had asked and no response to his conditions (Makdisi, 1970: 268-269).

Negotiations were started and the two sides quarreled continuously. The caliph threatened to desert the city and thus leave it open to anarchy if he did not get his way. Two of the city's chief notables, the merchant Abu Mansur b. Yusuf and the chief qadi, al-Damaghani, were brought in to negotiate between the two sides (Makdisi, 1970: 269). The caliph agreed to the marriage on the condition that Toghril Beg not ask for his daughter for four years. In order to speed up the process, Kunduri resorted to threatening the caliph, and tried to trick him into announcing the marriage in the presence of many people (Sibṭ b. al-Jawzi in Makdisi, 1970: 269, 272).

The aged Toghril Beg used tactics of bribery, coercion and humiliation to get the caliph to change his mind. He told his agents to seize iqta's belonging to caliph and that he was only going to leave him (the caliph) what he had had under the Buyids. He told his governors in the provinces the way the caliph had treated him and told them that they did not have to deal with him (the caliph) respectfully. Toghril Beg asked Damaghani to convince the caliph that this was not a hostile desire which deserved the shameful treatment, especially after he had shown his humility to the caliph in public. He sent a

letter to Arslan Khatun, the daughter of Chaghri Beg and wife of the caliph, telling her to leave the caliph's palace and to go to the sultan's place where a mission would accompany her to Rayy. Finally, after much coercion the caliph agreed to the marriage. The contract was concluded in 454/1062 and the ceremony the next year in 455/1063 (Ibn al-Jawzi in Makdisi, 1970: 273-274; Bundari in Bosworth, 1968: 48). Part of the terms of the contract were that the caliph's daughter would remain in Baghdad where Toghril Beg would visit her. This promise was not honored and she was moved to the Sultan's palace and then out of the city. On the eighth of Ramadan 455/1063 Toghril Beg died. This marriage had lasted only twenty-three days according to chroniclers (Makdisi, 1970: 275; Bosworth, 1968: 49).

It would be pertinent to know the reason for the effort over this marriage. Why would Toghril Beg at the age of seventy and with no need for a wife, go to such lengths [he even killed a favorite general (Khumartakin) who stood in the way] to achieve this marriage? (Makdisi, 1970: 260). And why would the caliph threaten to leave a whole city in total anarchy over a marriage of a woman? Toghril Beg's stated reason for the marriage was that it would elevate him above all other Turkish amirs (local Saljuq rulers) However, he already had that recognition with the title of sultan. According to the modern scholar, Makdisi, one reason for the caliph's opposition to Toghril Beg might be because of the social gap between civilized ruler versus barbarian nomad (Makdisi, 1970: 260-261). However, the historians of this era uncharacteristically devoted much space to this social event, when they were normally only concerned with political events. This indicates that Toghril Beg's marriage to the Caliph's daughter had political repercussions (Makdisi, 1970: 260-261). Thus, the problem of the marriage was not one of civilized versus barbarian, but one with greater fundamental consequences. With the marriage of a Saljuq sultan to an 'Abbasid princess, came the possibility of a Saljuq descendant assuming the caliphate. This possibility is

demonstrated by the fear of the caliph when he said, "leadership will remain in us (caliphs) until the Day of Resurrection" (Bosworth, 1968: 48). A Buyid Sultan, 'Adud al-Dawla, had tried a marriage alliance like this one in 381/991 and failed. Now Toghril Beg attempted it, but without success (Makdisi, 1970: 261; Hitti, 1970: 471-472). Thus, it was the quest for power and authority that led to this conflict between caliph and sultan. And most importantly for our purposes, the authority of the caliph would have been transmitted through a woman of the 'Abbasid family to the Saljuq house. Therefore, we see that women had played a significant role destinies of both the caliphate and the Saljuq sultanate. However, the role they played in this respect was involuntary.

3. Marriage of the Daughter of Malik Shah

Despite the failures of previous Sultans, whether Buyid or Saljuq, the quest for this same power (the caliph's authority) led another Saljuq sultan, Malik Shah, to attempt the same goal. This time it was a Saljuq woman who married the caliph (just as Arslan Khatun, daughter of Toghril Beg's brother, Chaghri Beg, had done). This time the caliph, al-Muqtadi, obtained the hand of Malik Shah's daughter (Mehmelek) in marriage to stabilize relations between the two houses. Terken Khatun, the girl's mother and favorite wife of Malik Shah, agreed as long as the caliph dismiss all other wives and concubines (Houtsma, 1924: 153; Kafesoglu, 1988: 53). The marriage was completed in 480/1087 with much pomp and circumstance and a son named Abu al-Fadl Ja'far was born to the couple (Ibn al-Jawzi and Ibn al-Athir in Bosworth, 1968: 100).

Nonetheless, the marriage did not work. Malik Shah's daughter complained of neglect at the hands of the caliph and the sultan requested that she be sent home. She died soon after returning to the sultan's palace which led to the hatred of the sultan and his wife for the caliph because they blamed him for her death. Thus, relations between the Saljuq house and the caliph's house soured (Houtsma, 1924: 154; Bosworth, 1968: 100-101). For example, when the sultan came to Baghdad he completely ignored the caliph and refused to go to visit him. But the most important event of this conflict was when Malik Shah, following Toghril Beg's objectives, tried to replace the heir (the future caliph al-Mustazhir) with his own grandson, Abu al-Fadl Ja'far, thereby making a Saljuq the next caliph and granting the Saljuqs the caliph's authority (Lambton, 1968: 213). Again it was a woman who was the link to this authority. But this time it was a Saljuq woman who, through her marriage and her son, would have given her people the right to the throne. One last note on this marriage involves Terken Khatun and her succession struggle, which I already discussed in a previous section. Some implement Terken

Khatun in conspiring with the caliph in Malik Shah's death. Some historians relate that she agreed to hand over the grandson Ja'far to the caliph. They say that the caliph desired to have the grandson in his keeping in order to make sure that Malik Shah would never be able to put him on the throne, thereby passing the caliphate to the Saljuqs (Lambton, 1968: 220).

There were other marriage alliances between the caliph and the Saljuqs besides the two already mentioned. All of these alliances were made to control the caliph or strengthen ties with them and to gain their support and recognition. This was especially important in the later days of the Saljuq period when the Saljuq dynasty was breaking up into numerous dynasties of Saljuq princes and Turkish atabegs. Recognition and alliance with the spiritual leader of Islam could help against various Saljuq rivals or other local dynasties vying for power (Lambton, 1968: 207). As mentioned above, Arslan Khatun had been given to the Caliph in marriage in 448/1056 in order to strengthen and seal their friendship. (Bundari in Lambton, 1968: 212). Before Caliph al-Muqtadi had married Malik Shah's daughter, Mehmelek, his father, al-Qa'im, had gotten the hand of Alp Arslan's daughter for him (al-Muqtadi) in 464/1071 while he was still vali 'ahd (heir apparent) (Lambton, 1968: 212). In 502/1109, Muhammad Tapar's and Sanjar's sister married Caliph al-Mustazhir (Kafesoglu, 1988: 59-60). And finally, in 531/1137 Fatima, the sister of Sultan Mas'ud b. Muhammad, was married to Caliph al-Muqtafi (Lambton, 1968: 248).

4. Other Political Marriages

Besides marriage to the caliphs, marriage alliances were an important policy of the Saljuqs in their relations with other people (Lambton, 1988: 258). Marriages were used to strengthen the state and expand it. It was often a tribal custom to exchange brides to mark the end of hostilities between two groups or to consolidate friendships. Thus, women as brides in political marriages played an important role in preserving and building the state (Lambton, 1988: 259-260).

There were several different situations which involved the use of political marriages. The first was a carry over from the Turkish peoples pre-Islamic days. It was a tribal custom in which a man could marry the wife of a dead brother or a young widowed step mother (Ibn al-Athir in Kafesoglu, 1988: 86). The best example of this custom is when Toghril Beg married the widow of his brother, Chaghri Beg ibn Da'ud. By doing this, Toghril Beg gained an heir apparent in this woman's son because he himself had no heirs to his throne (Kafesoglu, 1988: 87 no. 32; Lambton, 1968: 219).

Marriage alliances were also used to bring together rival family members. After the death of Sultan Muhammad b. Malik Shah, the throne in the west was contested. His son Mahmud took over but Sanjar (brother of Muhammad) wrested control from Mahmud. Sanjar married his daughter, Mah-i Mulk, to Mahmud and made him his heir apparent on the condition that he relinquish important territory in northern Iraq (Bosworth, 1968: 120). In this case, Sanjar used a marriage alliance to control a younger member of the family. Marriage alliance with the reigning sultan could be used to quell a possible rival. Sultan Toghril I died in 529/1134 and a race for his throne ensued. Mas'ud I secured it in Baghdad and ruled for nearly twenty years, partly because he was able to diffuse possible rivals. A rival claimant, Da'ud b. Mahmud was silenced by a marriage to one of the Sultan's daughters and the nomination of heir

apparent. He gave up his claim to the throne and settled in Tabriz. However, this man was soon assassinated and his widow (Jawhar, Mas'ud's daughter) was given to Mas'ud's nephew, Muhammad. In addition, Muhammad was given Khuzistan and the title of heir to the throne in return for his loyalty (Bundari and Nishapuri in Bosworth, 19968: 125, 133).

Moreover, the Great Saljuqs used marriage alliances to expand and maintain the area of the Saljuq state. They established friendships and sought alliances with other branches of the Saljuq dynasty or with other local dynasties in the west. For example, there were marriages between the Saljuqs and the Kakuyid dynasty of Yazd. A daughter, 'Ata Khatun, of the ruler of this dynasty (Ala al-Dawla Garchasp b. 'Ali b. Faramarz) was married to the Saljuq Sultan Mahmud b. Muhammad probably to help him (the sultan) consolidate against rival claimants to the throne (Ibn al-Athir in Lambton, 1988: 261). In 459/1067, Alp Arslan gave his sister to a Kurd, Hazarasp b. Banku, and when he died two years later she was given to an Uqaylid ruler to help cement their friendship. Due to marriages such as these, Iraq was able to enjoy a period of stability during Alp Arslan's reign (Bundari and Ibn al-Athir in Bosworth, 1968: 61). Alp Arslan also made alliances with the frontier areas hoping to secure additional territory for his state. For example, in an attempt to consolidate his influence in Georgia he married a niece of the Georgian King, Bograt IV (Bundari and al-Husayni in Bosworth, 1968: 61). During the reign of Mas 'ud b. Muhammad the Mazyadids of Hilla (Iraq) became powerful. Mas' ud gave his daughter to the ruler, Dubays b. Sadaqa, in order to keep a hold over him. According to Ibn al-Athir, this marriage was meant to strengthen and maintain the state and control possible rebellions (Lambton, 1988: 262). And finally, at the time of the collapse of the Great Saljuqs in the west, marriage alliances were made in an attempt to gain recognition of the right to hold the title of sultan or to consolidate their power as sultan. In 557/1161, a claimant to the Saljuq

throne, Arslan b. Toghril was set up in Baghdad by an atabeg, Eldiguz. He (Arslan) married the former sultan's widow, Khatun-i Kirmani. In the meantime, the ruler of Rayy, whose wazir served Arslan, married his daughter to Pahlavan b. Eldiguz. The caliph refused to recognize Arslan as sultan because he feared a Saljuq-Eldiguz alliance in Iran (Nishapuri and Ravandi in Bosworth, 1968: 177).

Besides the relations with the dynasties of the west, (which was where the Saljuqs were centered) the Saljuqs also sought to maintain relations and control over the areas from which they came, Central Asia. For example, it is probable that Toghril Beg's wife, Altun-Jan, was a Turk who had been married to the Khwarizm Shah before she married him (Sibt b. al-Jawzi in Lambton, 1988: 262). Other marriage alliances were made by succeeding Saljuqs to dynasties in Central Asia in order to secure friendships and alliances. Alp Arslan made three strategic marriages in this area. He himself married a daughter of the ruler of Khotan and Kashghar (Qadir Khan Yusuf). She had previously been married to a Gaznavid ruler. Then, he (Alp Arslan) gave his daughter ('A'isha) to Shams al-Mulk Nasr, the son and successor of the Qarakhanid ruler, Tamghach Khan Ibrahim. In 458/1065 he married his son Malik Shah to the daughter of Shams al-Mulk, who became known as Terken Khatun and who, as we know, played a prominent role in Saljuq policies during her husband's reign (Sibt b. al-Jawzi in Lambton, 1988: 263; Ibn al-Athir in Bosworth, 1968: 65).

Later Saljuqs kept up this link with Central Asia. Muhammad Arslan-Khan was the Qarakhanid whom Sultan Sanjar had placed on the throne. He was linked to the Saljuqs by marriage with one of Sanjar's sisters. This alliance was such that the Qarakhanid would receive aid from Sanjar in case of an attack by another claimant to the Qarakhanid throne (Bosworth, 1968: 138).

In addition to alliances made for friendship or mutual support, the Saljuqs also arranged political marriages in order to keep an area under their under control. An amir

of the Qipchap Turks submitted to Chaghri Beg, became a Muslim and married into Chaghri Beg's family (Ibn Funduq and al-Husayni in Bosworth, 1968: 52). Malik Shah received the personal submission of the Khan of Kashghar, Harun b. Sulayman b. Qadir Khan Yusuf (d. 496/1103). This man promised to place Malik Shah's name in the khutba and offered one of his daughters in marriage to one of Malik Shah's sons (Bosworth, 1968: 92).

In short, it was not just the Great Saljuqs of Iraq who used marriage alliances for political reasons. A number of other dynasties in the eastern Islamic world took the initiative themselves in issuing marriage contracts to the Great Saljuqs and other dynasties. The Saljuqs of Kirman made alliances with the local dynasties through marriage, especially to the 'Alids and some to the remaining Buyid princes (Lambton, 1988: 263). The lesser branches of the Saljuq family also made alliances with the Great Saljuqs. Arslan Shah of Kirman married one of Sultan Muhammad b. Malik Shah's daughters so as to keep the link with the dominant branch of the Saljuq tribe. He was also careful not to infringe upon Sanjar's rights in Khurasan (Bosworth, 1968: 118). Upon the breakup of the Great Saljuq empire, the Khwarizm Shahs allied themselves with such local rulers as the Salghurids, the Ghurids or the atabegs of Adharbayjan. Through marriage these brides were used to gain territory for their own dynasties (Lambton, 1988: 263). In the later years of the Great Saljuqs, the northwest provinces of Iran were under control of descendants of Turkish atabegs, especially the Eldiguzids and Ahmadilis. One atabeg, Eldiguz, took Toghril I's widow, Mu'mina Khatun, in marriage so as to give him authority to influence the succession of the sultanate. Therefore, this marriage alliance was not initiated as an act of submission, but as one of aggression (Nishapuri in Bosworth, 1968: 169-170). And finally, a ruler of the Caspian Sea area was defeated by the Saljuqs. The Saljuqs demanded that he send a son as a hostage to the Saljuq court. The ruler agreed but only on the condition that the sultan

accept a marriage between the sultan's daughter and him. Through this marriage the ruler was trying to safeguard his position of his hostage son from the whims of the sultan (Lambton, 1988: 262).

D. Role of Women in War and Administration

Besides political marriages and involvement in succession, the women of the Saljuq era made themselves visible in other ways. One way was in war or battle. In keeping with the pre-Islamic Turkish tradition, the Turkish women during the Saljuq era were sometimes participants in battle. Part of the sultan's harem frequently accompanied him on his expeditions. Sanjar's wife was present at the Battle of Qatvan in 536/1141. She was captured by the Qara-Khitai and was taken prisoner (Ibn al-Athir and Nishapuri in Lambton, 1988: 259). The mother of Arslan b. Toghril b. Muhammad was an active woman. She married an Eldiguzid ruler after Toghril's death. She traveled in the winter season to warn her son of an attack by the ruler of Abkhaz. Arslan fell ill and she went ahead with the army into battle. She died shortly after in 571/1175. The historian, Zahir al-Din Nishapuri writes that "it was as if the good order of the kingdom and the dynasty was dependent upon the existence of that lady " (Lambton, 1988: 270).

Another way the Saljuq women made themselves visible members of society was to establish their own courts or diwans. In a number of political disputes, women often participated by exercising their support for a favorite supporter. There are a number of examples of people who sought the support of a mother of a young prince (possible connections to the heir of the throne) or a wife of the sultan in order to gain political power. These women then used their influence over the sultan on behalf of their employees (Klausner, 1973: 42). An example of this type of patronage was the case of Abu al-Qasim Anasabadi Darguzini. He was the son of a peasant in Anasabad (near Hamadan). He came to Isfahan as a child and entered the service of Kamal al-Mulk Simirumi who was wazir to the wife of Sultan Muhammad b. Malik Shah, Jawhar Khatun. Later, through his contacts, he became wazir to Sultan Sanjar and then Sultan

Toghril b. Muhammad, but was executed by Toghril in 527/1133 (Lambton, 1968: 263-264).

The previously mentioned Kamal al-Mulk al-Simirumi also achieved great status through the support of Jawhar Khatun. He was from Simirum (close to Isfahan) which was part of Jawhar Khatun's pension. His father was a tax collector and because of his father's position he saw Jawhar's wazir, Muhammad al-Juzjani al-Amir al 'Amid, often. He gained the favor of the wazir and was hired to serve in Jawhar's diwan. Due to his efforts, her diwan was revitalized and gained new prestige, thus making him one of her favorites despite the jealous protests of her wazir, al-Juzjani. Jawhar warned al-Juzjani to treat him as an equal partner. As a result, he became close to Jawhar and succeeded to the position of wazir upon al-Juzjani's death. In turn, Jawhar used her influence with the sultan to get him appointed mushrif (head of finance) of the kingdom. He then rose to the position of mustawfi (chief accountant) and then to wazir to Sultan Mahmud b. Muhammad where he was killed three years after taking office (Bundari in Klausner, 1973: 51; Lambton, 1968: 264).

Zubayda Khatun, the mother of Barkyaruq also employed those wishing to advance their careers. Among these people was Majd al-Mulk al-Balasani. Majd al-Mulk was responsible for the arrest of Barkyaruq's (the current sultan) wazir. Afterwards, Majd al-Mulk succeeded to the position of mustawfi and increased his influence with Zubayda. Eventually, a man named Mu'ayyid al-Mulk replaced the existing wazir (to the sultan) and Majd al-Mulk saw this man as an obstacle to his goals. Thus, Majd al-Mulk joined a son of Nizam al-Mulk, Fakhr al-Mulk, who was in opposition to Mu'ayyid al-Mulk. Mu'ayyid al-Mulk had, at one time, accused Zubayda of being of loose character and had advised the sultan to leave her. Fakhr al-Mulk took advantage of the Sultan's displeasure to get Mu'ayyid al-Mulk removed. Fakhr al-Mulk became the wazir, but it was Majd al-Mulk who was the real power behind the position. Thus Majd al-Mulk

used his position and connections with Zubayda and her court to further himself (Bundari in Klausner, 1973: 47). And finally, in the Saljuq empire, an important man would sometimes hold more than one position, indicating that there were not always enough capable men to fill all the positions available. For example, Jawhar Khatun's wazir, al-Juzjani, also held the position of 'amid of Baghdad and tughra'i (chief secretary) to Sultan Muhammad b. Malik Shah (Klausner, 1973: 61).

The examples of women's diwans mentioned above show the importance and influence of the Saljuq women in politics. The fact that an important man, such as al-Juzjani served simultaneously on both the Sultan's staff and the staff of his wife, indicates that working for a woman was not considered an inferior position. Also, there were the number of men who chose to seek the support of women to facilitate their rise to the top. This proves that the royal women and their diwans had a great deal of prestige and leverage within the state machinery.

E. Philanthropy

Another way by which the women of the Saljuq era were able to wield power was through their property and inheritance. There are a number of examples of women owning iqta's or estates. Toghril Beg's chief wife used her estates to try to establish the authority of the caliph for the Saljuqs. She bequeathed her estates to the caliph's daughter whom she wanted Toghril Beg to marry after her death (d. 452/1060) (Lambton, 1988: 259). Many of the wives of sultans were "women of substance" Sultan Sanjar's mother had her own mamluks, (which is interesting because she herself was originally a slave) and the area of Simirum was part of Jawhar Khatun's pension (Lambton, 1968: 224). It was not unusual for the sultan to grant iqta's to Saljuq women or to women who were married into the Saljuq house. For example, after putting down a revolt of Qara-Arslan in Kirman and reinstating him there, Alp Arslan sent his daughters (at the request of their father) 100,000 dinars, iqta's, clothing and money for wedding expenses (Lambton, 1968: 224). These examples help to demonstrate the fact that the Saljuqs adhered to the Islamic provision of granting women their inheritance and acknowledged their right to property .

As women in the dynasties before them had done, the Saljuq women donated their money and land to charitable works such as schools, hospitals or tombs in the hopes that someone would remember them when they were gone. The daughter of the ruler of Yazd, 'Ata Khatun, who had married Sultan Mahmud b. Muhammad built a madrasa (school) after his death in Yazd (Tarikh-i Jadid-i Yazd in Lambton, 1988: 261). Arslan Khatun, the wife of Caliph al-Qa'im and later of a ruler of Yazd, was a charitable woman. Her two daughters followed her example. They were charitable to the poor and occupied their time in furthering agricultural development in Yazd. Maryam Terken, the wife of the atabeg of Yazd, founded a village, Muriabad, in Yazd and built for it a

qanat,* a Friday mosque and a bazaar (Tarikh-i Jadid-i Yazd in Lambton, 1988: 271). Zahida Khatun, ruled Fars for twenty years after the death of her husband, Boz-Aba. She was a woman of substance and spent her wealth on the purchase of waqf⁺ for the madrassa that she had built in Shiraz (Ibn Zarkub Shiraz-Nama in Lambton, 1988: 216).

There are a number of examples of buildings founded by the women of the Saljuqs of Anatolia as well. During the Saljuq era there is an expansion of the range of patronage of art and architecture in Anatolia. Not only the king, but the wazirs and lower officials became patrons of art and architecture. Turkish women also contributed to the various architectural structures of the time. Therefore, it seems that women as patrons of the arts was not limited to the Saljuqs of Iran but extended to other Saljuq women elsewhere. This trend could indicate that the activity of the women was the influence of the more liberal Turkish background of the invader and not the influence of the native Christian culture that had existed in Anatolia before the invasion of the Turks.

Two of the best known monuments built by women in Saljuq Anatolia are the Mosque-Hospital complex at Divrigi and the Khawand Khatun complex at Kayseri.

At Divrigi, the building was founded by a husband and wife of the Mengujukid dynasty. Ahmad Shah, the grandson of Shahanshah, (the Mengujukid ruler) founded the mosque portion in 626/1228. The inscription on the hospital indicates that it was built by Malika Turan Malik, daughter of Bahram Shah of the Erzincan and Kamah Mengujukids, and the wife of Ahmad Shah (Aslanapa, 1971: 105; Unsal, 1959: 17, 19).

The Khawand Khatun at Kayseri is a combination of mosque, madrassa, mausoleum and hammam (bath). It was completed by Mahperi Khatun, wife of Kayqubad I in 636/1238 during the reign of her son Kaykhusraw II (Aslanapa, 1971: 113; Unsal,

* It is a system of canals and ditches, etc. that were used for irrigation.

⁺ This means land that was given to the religious establishments and therefore not subject to taxation by the state. This land then was not to be repossessed by the state and gave the religious class a certain amount of financial freedom.

1959: 46). The mausoleum of the complex is of course her's (Aslanapa, 1971: 143). Tombs of the patrons, including women patrons, were built near mosques so they could benefit from the prayers in the mosque. Patrons often asked to be buried close to a religious scholar or saint so as to reap the benefits of these people. Women especially could benefit from this location. By being buried next to a religious figure, it would associate them with the piety and fame of this figure. Also, patrons often put their tombs on the street facade of the building so as to gain the recognition as the founder of the building by passersby who stop to recite a prayer (Newhall). This was especially important for women, for it was a way to gain recognition for themselves in a society (Islamic) that rarely acknowledged the achievements of women. Mahperi Khatun's tomb is not an isolated incident of women in tomb architecture. There are other examples such as the Cifte (Twin) Madrasa in Kayseri. The building was founded by a brother and sister team. The medical school was founded by the brother, Ghiyath al-Din Kaykhusraw I, and the hospital by his sister, Jawhar Nasiba in 602/1205. Most scholars believe that the mausoleum located in the madrasa section was not that of the brother, but that of the sister (Aslanapa, 1971: 129, 139; Unsal, 1959: 36). Returning to Mahperi Khatun we find that the Khawand Khatun was not the only building she established. She is the founder of the Khatun Khan (Khan means caravansarai, a place for travelers to stop and spend the night) on the Amasya-Toket road completed in 636/1238. She also built four other Khans on the Sivas and Kirsehir roads which are now in ruins (Aslanapa, 1971: 155-156).

The fact that she built more than one building in her life time and the numerous other buildings built by other Turkish women indicates that this was a regular activity for the Turkish women of the medieval, Muslim world, and one which brought honor and recognition to their lives.

One final note on women and patronage deals with women as the inspiration for art and architecture. Besides initiating the building themselves, sometimes women were the reason behind the creation of some piece of architecture. There are a number of examples of tombs built for mothers, wives or sisters. The Great Mosque at Isfahan provides another type of tribute. Two parts of this mosque were rebuilt during Sultan Malik Shah's reign (465/1072-485/1092). The northern dome was built by the sultan's wazir, Nizam al-Mulk, in 473/1080. The second dome known as the Gunbadh-i khaki was built in 481/1088 by the wazir, Taj al-Mulk (Aslanapa, 1971: 65-66). This wazir built it as a secluded retreat for the queen, Terken Khatun, upon her visits to the mosque. The splendid architecture and craftsmanship of the dome is a tribute to the value and honor afforded Terken Khatun by her wazir (Aslanapa, 1971: 67).

VIII. CONCLUSION

The religion of Islam advocated equality for mankind which raised the social status for women from the pre-Islamic era. However, the idea of equality was never officially sanctioned in a written code. A written law code would provide the security that these rights would not be violated. Unfortunately for women, the message of equality was not guaranteed in a written code, rather it was left open to the individual conscience. While Muhammad was alive, he was able to guarantee that these new ideas of equality and the new rights for women were observed. He was recognized as the Prophet of God and was able to keep the loyalty and support of his tiny community. After he died, many tribes would not submit to the successor of the Prophet. Abu Bakr was able to unite the Arabian Peninsula, which allowed for Islam's spread outside the Peninsula. However, the death of the Prophet and the expansion of the Islamic community did have an adverse affect on the situation of women in Islam. While Muhammad was alive, he was able to enforce women's rights by the use of his persuasive personality. Also, the size of the early Islamic community was easy to manage and control. However, with the death of the charismatic leader and the expansion of the community to include a multitude of cultures, the rights of women were lost. The other cultures' values and ideologies infiltrated into Islam at a time when its laws were being codified. The people setting down the laws were influenced by these new customs and values, hence the change in the Muslims' attitude toward women. Without the guidance of Muhammad, the ideology of Islam became influenced by older cultures with older and less amiable ideas toward women. Therefore, it was not really the religion itself that is to blame for the situation of the women, but how and by whom it was interpreted later.

Starting in the 'Abbasid period, the predominant male view about women was that they were an inferior sex and should be isolated from the affairs of men, such as politics. However, within this framework, the royal women of the medieval world managed to find a way to exert their influence in politics and make themselves visible in society. The major ways in which the medieval, Muslim women participated in politics were in the succession struggles and the political marriages. In each of these areas, the women's activities were unofficial. Their actions were not sanctioned by the recognized authority of the caliph or the wazir. Rather, the way that they affected politics was to use manipulation and persuasion over certain individuals to get what they wanted. Thus, women often controlled affairs of the state from behind the scenes through unofficial channels.

The way in which women became involved in the succession struggle was through their sons. The mother of the caliph was often the most important position that women at the caliph's court could attain. In this paper, it has been noted that the height of Khayzuran's power occurred with the ascension of her sons, al-Hadi and Harun al-Rashid. The efforts of other women, such as Terken Khatun attest to the importance of the position of the mother of the caliph or sultan. They went to great lengths to insure that their sons would become the next rulers, even if their sons were not the most capable of the candidates. Slave girls, in particular, had a vested interest in the outcome of this struggle. Slaves and concubines lacked the legal security that legal wives had. The position of queen mother was not just important in the areas that I have discussed in this paper. This position was one of great prestige and power all over the Muslim world. For example, one point in Ottoman history is known as the "Age of Women" because the Ottoman government was ruled by the wives and mothers of the sultans. The affairs of the empire were controlled from behind the walls of the royal harem.

Political marriage is another way in which women affected politics. The women did not initiate these activities as they did with the succession struggles. Therefore, their influence on politics as a result of these marriages was involuntary on their part, but nonetheless important. In this paper, it is seen that the policy of political marriage was especially important during the reigns of the Turkish dynasties. Political brides were used to quell possible rivals within the family or potential enemies. Strategic marriages were also used to obtain extra territory for the state. The rulers of these dynasties found political marriages particularly beneficial during the years of their decline. A strategic marriage with the right person could secure the continuation of the dynasty or legitimize the rule of a particular candidate. The need to sanction their authority was probably the initial reason for the policy of marriage with the caliphs. The extraordinary effort that Toghril Beg went through to marry the caliph's daughter proves this point. The historians of the time included an unusually detailed account of this marriage, demonstrating that this was not just a social occasion, but a very important political event.

In the Saljuq era, the women wielded their power in yet another way, through their own personal diwans. In this paper, I have tried to show that a number of men chose to serve in the women's diwans in hopes of furthering their careers through the women's support and influence. These men often found it beneficial to serve the wife of the sultan or the future mother of the sultan. The numerous examples of these men and their achievements attest to the women's power and prestige within the government. In return for their loyalty, the women used their influence with the sultan or with other officials of the government to obtain positions for their agents, thereby affecting the official machinery of the state.

Philanthropy was not exactly a political activity, but I included it in this paper because it was another way in which the women made themselves visible in society.

There is an abundance of examples in most periods of medieval history of women who commissioned monuments. Most of their architectural contributions were built for the religious establishments. Building a tomb or hospital close to a well known saint or religious figure gave the women the acknowledgments of future patrons of the building for years to come. Donations to waqf was a way to prove their piety, but also the best way to be recognized for their contributions to society.

After looking at the contributions that women made to society, it is necessary to examine how these actions affected other women. Did they affect other women or were they only beneficial to that particular woman? The hijab verse in the Qur'an brought the veil to Muhammad's wives in order to make them distinguishable to the community and to prevent harassment by the "hypocrites". The hijab later became the mark of "respectable women" or those women who were not accessible to men. The hijab reinforced the division of the two classes of women: the slaves and concubines and the respectable women. In the case of the caliph's court, the respectable women were the legal wives.

In the royal courts, the women competed against each other. Most of the activities discussed in this paper only benefited the particular women involved in the activity and not women as a whole. The succession struggle in particular demonstrates this idea. There was no cohesion among the women. The women of the harem did not unite behind one candidate. Instead, they looked out only for their own individual interests, especially the slaves and concubines because they had no legal means of support. One possible reason for this situation was the laws that men created and their attitude toward women. By separating the respectable women from the accessible ones, they pitted these two against each other. They were in competition for the husbands' and rulers' affections. The custom of maintaining large harems may also have contributed to this phenomenon. Because the men of the royal household were permitted to keep such

large harems, the individual woman's position in the harem was not secure. They had to assure themselves a safe position, which meant doing anything they could, including competing against one another. However, there were some signs of the support of women by women. Umm Musa's donation for concubines who only bore girls is a tribute to her awareness of the plight of these women and her attempt to provide for their security. There are other examples of noble women who donated property for the benefit of other women. For example, in Mamluk Egypt, al-Sakhawi mentions a woman who built a school to take care of the poor and widows of Cairo (Lutfi, 1981: 111).

In conclusion, while it is true that most of the activities of the women discussed in this paper were for the benefit of the individual woman only, it is necessary to keep in mind the situation of the times. One needs to understand the differences of values from one culture to another, and from one time period to another. Just as we in the West today can not conceive of life without the modern conveniences for example, the women of the medieval world knew no other way of life. They did not have the knowledge of another ideology, such as the modern day feminist movements, to initiate this type of activity. Therefore, their only means of achievement was to work within their situation and use the means at their disposal to become influential within the state. The succession struggles, political marriages, diwans and philanthropy were the ways in which women managed to wield their power in politics during the medieval era. These are not things that we in the West today normally think of as political activities. However, one must put aside the modern prejudices and look at the period in question. Although these are not traditional political avenues, the women did influence affairs of the state through these unofficial channels and in the process, made their mark on history as well.

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