

**Enriching Knowledge Series for the Secondary History Curriculum:
Rise and Development of the Islamic Civilisation up to the 19th century
Lecture 3: From Family to the Nation: Women in Islam
between the 15th to 19th centuries (由家到國：15 至 19 世紀伊斯蘭的婦女)
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Introduction: Why Women in Islam?

- Western imperialism (帝國主義) → Current perception of Islamic women
- Misunderstandings
- What happened in the 15th to 19th centuries
- ‘Women’ as a case study

1. Western perception of Islam and Muslims

- Women as an oppressed group
- Male dominance and gender inequality
- ‘Orientalism’ (東方主義) : Condescending (帶有優越感的) Western attitudes towards Middle Eastern, African and North African societies. The West depicts these societies as barbaric and undeveloped

2. Family – Women’s rights and roles

- The question of the veil (面紗)

Different styles of a veil

- Such difference has long existed in history
- The Quran (可蘭經) and the hadith (聖訓)
- Women’s perception of the veil

- Women’s status in family

Role of women

- Muhammad’s first wife (Khadija bint Khuwaylid)
 - Helped Muhammad launch his career
- Muhammad’s favourite wife (Aisha bint Abu Bakar)
 - Assumed political leadership after Muhammad’s death
- Muhammad’s youngest daughter (Fatimah bint Muhammad)
 - Cared for Muhammad, her family and produced a male heir

Role model for all Muslim women

- Women’s education and work

Women's education opportunities

- 859: Fatima al-Fihri founded the oldest existing university in the world, the University of Al Quaraouiyine, in Morocco
- 1236-40: Razia Sultan established education centers

The development of education in the Islamic world

- Governments offered education for girls
 - 1832: School of Medicine for women in Egypt
 - 1873: First girls' primary school in Egypt
- Societal acceptance of female education
 - Egypt and Turkey: education was given to girls of all social strata
- British control over Egypt since 1882
 - Lowered the rate of female education

Women's job opportunities

- Women in the textile and agricultural sectors
- Women as doctors for women and children

3. Nation – Women's rights and roles

- How the harem (後宮) worked

The harem as a place of women's imprisonment (監禁) in Western imagination

The harem as a birth place of female rulers

- Harem women transformed from slaves to the most powerful figures in the Ottoman Empire
 - Mother as the 'foundation' in Islamic traditions
 - Hafsa Sultan: Mother of Ottoman Sultan (回教君主) Suleiman the Magnificent

- Outstanding female rulers

The Sultanate of Women (16th to 17th centuries in the Ottoman Empire)

- Women exerted extraordinary political influence over state matters and the male sultan
 - Hurrem Sultan (wife) and Mihrimah Sultan (daughter) during the reign of Suleiman the Magnificent
 - Nurbanu Sultan (mother) and Safiye Sultan (wife) during the reign of Murad III

4. Conclusion

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