Women | The Private Lives of Muslim Women

‘In Islamic culture houses and palaces were designed to ensure privacy for women.’

In Islamic culture, houses and palaces were designed to ensure privacy for women, shielding them from the intrusion and inconvenience of strangers. Within this exclusively private sphere, women were free to go about their domestic business, see to their family commitments, socialise with other female members of the extended household, relatives or friends and look after their own needs and affairs. Women had the right to their own property and the dowry, including jewellery, which they had received from their groom when they married, remained theirs even in the case of a divorce. In the context of the royal court, women lived lavishly with all material comforts provided, within palace quarters exclusive to them.



Name:
Çak#ra#a Mansion

Dynasty:
Hegira 13th century / AD 19th century Ottoman

Details:
Birgi-Ödemi#, #zmir, Turkey

Justification:
The owner of this mansion had each of his wives' rooms decorated with depictions of their hometown so that they might feel less homesick.



Name:
Çak#ra#a Mansion

Dynasty:
Hegira 13th century / AD 19th century Ottoman

Details:
Birgi-Ödemi#, #zmir, Turkey

Justification:
The room for the wife from Istanbul has a painting of Istanbul.



Name:
Çak#ra#a Mansion

Dynasty:
Hegira 13th century / AD 19th century Ottoman

Details:
Birgi-Ödemi#, #zmir, Turkey

Justification:
The room for another wife depicts Izmir, her hometown.



Name:
Ewer

Dynasty:
Hegira 872–901 / AD 1468–96 Mamluk

Details:
Victoria and Albert Museum
London, United Kingdom

Justification:

Affluent women commissioned their own private furniture and utensils. This ewer belonged to the wife of the Mamluk Sultan Qaytbay.



Name:
Gold necklace

Dynasty:
Approximately hegira mid-7th century / AD 13th century Ayyubid

Details:
Museum of Islamic Art
Cairo, Egypt

Justification:
A spectacular necklace that has been ascribed to the Ayyubid Queen Shajar al-Durr; it demonstrates the considerable wealth of some Muslim women.



Name:
Amir Bashtak Palace

Dynasty:
Hegira 740 / AD 1339 Mamluk

Details:
Cairo, Egypt

Justification:
The third storey of this palace housed the women's quarters, which had screened balconies from which the ladies could observe the activities in main hall below without being seen.



Name:
Pendant earring

Dynasty:
Hegira 5th–6th centuries / AD 11th–12th centuries Fatimid

Details:
Museum of Islamic Art
Raqqada, Kairouan, Tunisia

Justification:
The display of adornments was confined to the home and immediate family in line with Islamic conventions.



Name:
Earrings

Dynasty:
Hegira 524–668 / AD 1130–1269 or Hegira 627–982 / AD 1229–1574 Almohad or Hafsid

Details:
National Museum of Setif
Setif, Algeria

Justification:

The display of adornments was confined to the home and immediate family in line with Islamic conventions.



Name:
The Tavira Vase

Dynasty:
Hegira end of 5th or beginning of 6th century / AD end of 11th or beginning of 12th century Almoravid

Details:
Tavira Municipal Museum
Tavira, Faro, Portugal

Justification:
An extraordinary example of popular art probably representing the ceremonial abduction that took place before a wedding ceremony, in which the animals are intended to be an allegory of good fortune for the couple.
