Name of Student

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Day Month Year

Relationship between aristocratic women and power in the early middle age

***Introduction***

A woman has always been an integral part of human society and different roles have been assigned to her. It won’t be wrong to say that the role of early age women was strictly defined. Generally, women were restrained to household works and married to warring tribes for promoting peace. In the medieval age, the image of the women was constructed to serve the men but at the same time social status of aristocratic women changed from an ordinary object to decision taking authority. Aristocratic women were looked upon from a quite different lens. Aristocratic families for long were using the marriage of their daughters for forging their alliance and strength. It is interesting to note that only aristocratic women in early middle age were treated better than the rest of the women. There exist a close relationship between middle age aristocratic women and power.

***Literature Review***

Aristocratic women were not only having the power to exercise but also capable enough to use that power in different ways, depending upon time of their life cycle, aristocratic women were using their power and capabilities differently and a list of scholars is there who shed light upon the relationship that existed between aristocratic women and power in the early middle age. As per the study of Johns, aristocratic women were capable of using their power just because their menfolk accepted that women were an important part of their society and used to support them well in the hours of need (Johns et al). He also traces back the history how the medieval women were getting the power, i.e. medieval age was the time of aristocratic women’s freedom as well as period of their widowhood that points towards how aristocratic women were coming in the limelight by exercising their authorities. There were different ways how the medieval aristocratic women were acquiring and holding lands i.e. they were getting lands as heirs and co-heir. Secondly, it has been claimed that women were getting them power by marrying powerful and strong aristocrats.

According to Tina Copper, feminism and question upon the role of aristocratic women played a crucial role in determining interpretation being made about the aristocratic women and how they see power. She claims that discovering life of women was much difficult than tracing life of man as there are only a few resources and evidences that show how aristocratic women were dealing with legal and official matters (Cooper). In her research, she talks about the transition of aristocratic women, in the handling of power during medieval age. In the beginning, public offices and politics were restricted to men only but with advancement, power of aristocratic women grew, as she started owning land that she was getting in inheritance. With marriage, all her power, status and land used to go to her husband but with widowhood, her power multiples many times. Many of the early middle age aristocratic women used to choose to stay single, so that they could exercise the authority the way, they want.

In her research, Jennifer Ward drags the attention of the reader towards the power and how it was handled by the noble and gentry-women who in the absence of their husbands were taking care of the estate and land (Ward et al.). She also claims that aristocratic women were playing a significant role in their households, families, communities, and estates. Different perceptions are being built by the different researchers but one scholar, Theodore Evergates claims that depicting a well-born woman was unimaginable without power in the early middle age (Evergates). One of the central purposes of this study was to clear the concept of the aristocratic women of middle age that forced to reframe the understanding of readers as they were having surprising power.

Lewis is another researcher who is trying to present a picture of aristocratic women in the early middle age in a little different way than the rest of the authors and scholars (Lewis). This study is spotting a light on the gender difference and contribution made by the aristocratic women. It also challenges the view of the early middle age as authority and power were viewed as a masculine attribute (Lewis). Power that aristocratic women were using helped in bringing positive change in certain areas. These areas are estate management, churches, education and proving care to the weak ones.

One of the appealing factors of all the research works is that every scholar looks at the same topic or subject, differently. All the studies, give a new way for looking into the subject of aristocratic women and power like Mary C. Erler provided various claims (Erler et al). One of her basic claims is, rich born women of the early middle period helped in setting the new dimensions of the economy and gave a new pathway to the economy by giving their suggestions (Erler et al). Reformation also helped them as it provided high born women with many opportunities. Ways aristocratic women were looked upon changed with time.

Research of DeAragon has highlighted a little different perceptive than all the above-mentioned scholars. According to this study, power of aristocratic women declined during the Central Middle Ages and elite women were powered by the land and wealth (DeAragon et al, 19-43.). Power of the women increased with the adoption of the parency but at the same time the rise of the judicial innovations, legal and administrative kingship limited the opportunities, for the elite women. Limitation of power of aristocratic women also helped in protecting rights of others people as well (DeAragon et al, 19-43). This study also argues against absolute royal control and check upon the concept of re-marrying of the high born widows.

***Conclusion***

Taking a look at the above discussion and research conducted by various scholars and experts, it won’t be wrong to say that role and power of the aristocratic women in the early middle age was portrayed in various ways as per the understanding of the scholars. Most of the studies and researchers, believed that aristocratic women were given the right to exercise their power of authority by their family. These high born women used to indulge themselves in several decisions, and then these women used to marry elites so that aristocratic families could increase their power and alliance. Women’s power was transferred to the husbands, but with the death of the husbands, women of high-class used to get their power back that they start using for reforming their society. With the tag of widowhood, they were empowered with political power. They started holding the lands and taking important decisions for state, communities, and courts, etc. Though, at the same time, some scholars claim that during middle age, relationship between aristocratic women and power was stirred and powerful elite women were weakened during this time (middle age). So as a whole, it could be concluded that women of the aristocratic class in the early middle age were credited with more power as they were empowered with both i.e. first inheritance as well as by marriage.

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