

Student's Name

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Course Name and Number

Assignment Due Date

The Role of Women in Medieval Warfare

Women were mainly properties of their nearest male relatives in medieval Europe based on their cultural practices and laws. In such a setting, women's social status was dependent on either their husbands or fathers, meaning that many faced restrictions that hampered them from reaching the highest levels of growth in their lives. Whereas elite women from noble and aristocratic families had access to education from private tutors, they were not given more rights as a result. Few women were wealthy or in the middle-class category. Many were peasants or members of the working class. Exploring their role in warfare is a means of defining their exploits outside the notion that they are nothing but properties. There are a few roles they played in shaping the military, political, and societal spheres during the medieval period.

One role that women played was leading from the back. While men were fighting at the battlefronts, some women took the roles of planning and directing the battle plans and heartening the soldiers to fight for their land and freedoms. An example is Joan of Arc. She is one of the most famous figures of this period. Having been alive between 1412 and 1431, Joan was a peasant girl who rose from oblivion to prominence in an unlikely society (Barnes 44). Her resolve and resilience were critical because she reckoned God was with her. Though she was not part of the men in combat, her ability to hearten the soldiers made her seem like the shrewdest captain in the world, and the victories over the English were proof enough for the doubters. Many marveled at her prowess simply because she was from a humble background and had

minimal training in military warfare. Many overlooked her counter-cultural behavior because they believed God used her to help the army win the battles. Later, the limits of medieval society's tolerance would be her undoing, making it harder to achieve the same reverence she attracted at the beginning. A defeat led to many turning against her, losing support from those in authority (Barnes 45). She was tried and executed in part for the crime of impersonating a male. The planning was short-lived because people needed a change in leadership. Once they realized that women were taking over such roles, they activated patriarchy.

Women were also masterful in negotiating and power brokerage within their societies. Matilda of Tuscany is another warrior of this period. Many referred to her as the soldier of God. Whereas she was a widow, she owned substantial lands that allowed her to make many investments. Her support for Gregory VII's papacy also gave her a huge say in many of the issues happening across the region (Barnes 45). Nonetheless, Matilda was a seasoned negotiator, facilitator, and strategist. She was also wealthy and owned many properties in Italy, allowing her to assemble and command sufficient forces to achieve her ends. Women like her were a critical factor in the community because, unlike Joan, who was from a humble background, Matilda understood the role that money played and used it to gain favors from the papacy. Thus, even if she challenged societal norms, the church rationalized her actions by terming them as *being for Christ* (Barnes 46). She fought for the church, and even in her death, she gave her possessions to the church. Fighting for the church gave many women the motivation they needed to succeed.

Women were at the battlefield as well. Lagertha was an example of this personified warrior group that allowed women to exercise their prowess across the community. While many communities were driven by the male-female praxis, the Scandinavian society seems to classify people based on the strong-weak basis (Barnes 43). Lagertha was a warrior who fought at the

front with the rest of the men, and people admired her for her bravery and steadfastness in ensuring that her land remained free (Barnes 43). Women were not given such chances in many societies, but many defied the odds and made strides in the historical books for remaining honorable in and out of battle.

The queens and consorts during this period played a critical role in improving the political climate within their kingdoms. For instance, Eleanor of Aquitaine was one of the most influential and powerful women of her time, having been queen of France from 1137 to 1152 as wife to King Louis VII (Sullivan 15) and queen of England as wife to King Henry II from 1154 to 1189 (Sullivan 76). Her influence was far-reaching, ensuring that women in Aquitaine had more rights than most parts of medieval Europe. Her leadership was a sign that women could play a significant role in emancipating women from bondage and ensuring that they meet their respective values. Such attributes show that women in power were effective in encouraging equity and encouraging successful review of services across the community.

Works Cited

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