Female Freedoms lost, Freedoms Gained with the Rise of Islam

Before the rise of Islam, the majority of marriages were matriarchal. There were many different situations in which the woman was the head of the relationship. For example, when a woman decided she no longer wished to be married, she draped a veil over the entrance of the tent. The man knew what this meant and did not enter. Also, many times the social father of a family was not the biological father to all of the children. However, there was an abrupt change after the rise of Islam. Women were denied many freedoms they once had. For instance, patriarchal marriages were the only type of marriage allowed. In addition, the social father must be the biological father of all of the children. Furthermore, after the death of Muhammad, many women were happy because they thought their freedoms would return. Case in point, a group of women, two grandmothers, one mother, and seven young girls, were celebrating and painted their hands because Muhammad had died. Once the first Caliph, Abu Bakr, was informed of this, he ordered a group of men to seize the women, that he referred to as “harlots,” and cut off their hands. It is very apparent that women were not treated equally after the rise of Islam. They are subjected to unfair laws as well as harsh punishments. I plan to study female rights in the Arabian Peninsula using Claude Lévi Strauss’s theory of thought. According to Lévi Strauss, culture is founded on the prohibition of incest because it forces people to marry outside of their family group, creating new alliances and a “network of words, goods and services, and women.”

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