

Sultana (Title)

Subjects: Political Science

Contributor: HandWiki Xu

Sultana or sultanah (/sʌlˈtɑːnə/; Arabic: **سلطانة** *sulṭāna*) is a female royal title, and the feminine form of the word sultan. This term has been officially used for female monarchs in some Islamic states, and historically it was also used for sultan's consorts.

Keywords: سلطانة ; /sʌlˈtɑːnə/ ; sultanah

1. Nomenclature

The term *sultana* is the feminine form of the word sultan (Arabic: **سلطان**), an Arabic abstract noun meaning "strength", "authority", "rulership", derived from the verbal noun **سلطة** *sulṭah*, meaning "authority" or "power". Later, sultan came to be used as the title of certain rulers who claimed almost full sovereignty in practical terms, albeit without claiming the overall caliphate, or to refer to a powerful governor of a province within the caliphate.

2. Usage

2.1. Ruling Sultana

Some Muslim female monarchs chose to adopt the title of Sultana/Sultanah when they ascended to the throne.

Africa

In Comoros, there have been several ruling sultanas.

Shajar al-Durr became the ruling sultana of Egypt on May 1250.

South Asia

Razia Sultana (r. 1236–1240) was a ruler of the Delhi Sultanate in the northern part of the Indian subcontinent. She was the first female Muslim ruler of the Indian Subcontinent.

In Maldives, there have been six ruling sultanas:

- Khadijah (1347–1363, 1364–1374, 1376–1380)
- Raadhafathi (1380)
- Dhaain (1383–1388)
- Kuda Kala Kamanafa'anu (1607–1609)
- Amina I (1753–1754)
- Amina II (1757–1759)

Southeast Asia

Nur ul-Azam became the female sultan in Sultanate of Sulu.

In Samudera Pasai Sultanate (now part of Indonesia), Sultana Ratu Nahrasyiyah (r. 1406–1428) became the sole ruler.

In Bone state (now part of Indonesia), there have been three ruling sultanas.

In Aceh Darussalam (now part of Indonesia), there have been four ruling sultanas:

- Sultana Seri Ratu Ta'jul Alam Syafiatuddin Syah of Aceh (1641–1675) was the daughter of Sultan Iskandar Muda, and wife of Sultan Iskandar Tani. She spoke 6 languages, Acehnese, Malay, Spanish, Dutch, Arabic, and Persian.
- Sultana Seri Ratu Nurul Alam Naqiatuddin Syah (1675–1678).
- Sultana Seri Ratu Zakiatuddin Inayat Syah (1678–1688).

- Sultana Seri Ratu Kamalat Syah (1688–1699). Replaced by her husband, under pressure from the Mufti of Mecca.

On 5 May 2015, Sultan Yogyakarta and governor of the Special Region of Yogyakarta in Indonesia Hamengkubuwono X, who only has daughters, appointed his eldest child, Lady Nurmalitasari, as his heiress presumptive, henceforth titled Princess Mangkubumi. If she does succeed her father, she will become the first Javanese woman to become a Sultana in her own right.

2.2. Sultana Consort

Sultana is also used for sultan's wives. Between 1914 and 1922, monarchs of the Muhammad Ali Dynasty used the title of Sultan of Egypt, and their wives were legally styled as sultanas.^[1] Two women held the title of sultana during the short-lived Sultanate of Egypt: Melek Tourhan, the wife of Sultan Hussein Kamel, and Nazli Sabri, the wife of Sultan Fuad I. Nazli Sabri became queen (*malika*) following the establishment of the Kingdom of Egypt in 1922, and it is with the latter title that she is almost always associated. Melek Tourhan, on the other hand, legally retained the title of sultana even after Egypt became a kingdom, and is often referred to simply as Sultana Melek.

Sultana is also title for consort of ruler in some Malaysian states. Some consorts who hold this title are:

- Sultanah Kalsom binti Abdullah, second consort of Ahmad Shah of Pahang. She became Sultanah of Pahang on 30 September 1992 until 15 August 2019.
- Sultanah Nur Zahirah, consort of Mizan Zainal Abidin of Terengganu. She became Sultanah of Terengganu on 5 June 2006.
- Sultanah Haminah Hamidun, second consort of Abdul Halim of Kedah. She became the Sultanah of Kedah after her predecessor's death on 21 November 2003 until 11 September 2017.
- Sultanah Maliha, consort of Sallehuddin of Kedah. She became Sultanah of Kedah on 12 September 2017 after her husband was proclaimed as the Sultan of Kedah.
- Sultanah Nur Diana Petra, consort of Muhammad V of Kelantan. She married with the Sultan of Kelantan on 30 October 2010 and officially became Sultanah of Kelantan on 2 August 2022 after her husband proclaimed her as the new Sultanah of Kelantan.

3. Claim

In the west, the title of sultana is also used to refer to many female Muslim monarchs who don't hold this title officially.

In medieval Egypt, Shajar al-Durr, a former slave of Armenian origin, ascended the throne in 1250.^{[2][3]} Although several sources assert that she took the title of sultana,^[4] *The Cambridge History of Islam* disputes the claim, stating that "a feminine form, sultana, does not exist in Arabic: the title *sulṭān* appears on Shajar al-Durr's only extant coin."^[5]

Raziya al-Din, usually referred to in history as Razia Sultana, was the Sultan of Delhi in *India* from 1236 to May 1240. Like some other princesses of the time, she was trained to lead armies and administer kingdoms if necessary.^[6] She was the first female ruler of the Delhi Sultanate.^[7] She refused to be addressed as Sultana because it meant "wife or consort of a Sultan" and would answer only to the title "Sultan."^[8] Like Shajar al-Durr, Raziya was also often referred as sultana by westerners, very possible to distinguish her from male sultans.

Sultana was also often used to refer to women relatives of a sultan and other Muslim monarch or female members of Muslim dynasties, especially mothers and chief wives. In fact, many sultanates used other title for sultan's chief consort, some of which derived from non-Arabic language.

Permaisuri, a title for a chief wife of a sultan in many sultanates and Muslim kingdoms in southeast Asia, is derived from Tamil பரமேஸ்வரி (*paramēsvari*), from Sanskrit परमेश्वरी (*paramēśvarī*), 'supreme lady'. This title is still used for the consort of Yang di-Pertuan Agong, monarch and head of state of Malaysia. The formal way of addressing her is Raja Permaisuri Agong.

In Brunei, official title for a chief wife of the sultan is *Seri Baginda Raja Isteri*, derived from Sanskrit *raja* (राजा, equivalent with "king") and *isteri* (equivalent with "women" or "lady"). The official title for sultan's mother is *Seri Suri Begawan Raja Isteri*.

Shahbanu, title for the wife of Iran's monarch, is derived from Persian *shah* (شاه, equivalent with "king") and *banu* (بانو, translated as "lady"). Upon assuming the title in 1967, Farah Pahlavi, the third wife of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, was the first *shahbanu* to be crowned in Iran since the Arab conquest of Iran in the 7th century. *Shahbanu* often translated in English as "empress".

Some Muslim monarchs also used the title *malika* (Arabic: ملكة), a feminine form of the word *malik*, for their wives. This title is still used in many Muslim kingdoms, like Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

3.1. Ottoman Royalty

Since 16th century, Ottoman used the title *sultan* for imperial princesses after their given names (e.g. Mihrimah Sultan and Hatice Sultan). They were all non-ruling royalty; in the western sense, princesses, not queens or empresses. The monarch's mother, who had more power, had the title Valide Sultan (e.g. Hafsa Sultan). She was referred to by this title alone, without her given name. Principal consort had the title Haseki Sultan (e.g. Hürrem Sultan). Non-principal consorts had the title *hatun*, equivalent to *lady*. This usage underlines the Ottoman conception of sovereign power as family prerogative.^[9] Nevertheless, westerners often translated their official title, *sultan*, to *sultana*, possibly to distinguish them from the Ottoman ruler.

References

1. Rizk, Yunan Labib (13–19 April 2006). "A palace wedding". Al-Ahram Weekly (790). <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2006/790/chrncls.htm>. Retrieved 2010-02-27. "... Britain granted the rulers among the family the title of sultan, a naming that was also applied to their wives."
2. Marsot, Afaf Lutfi Al-Sayyid (2007-03-29) (in en). A History of Egypt: From the Arab Conquest to the Present. Cambridge University Press. p. 28. ISBN 978-1-139-46327-0. <https://books.google.com/books?id=aRpq4zp3Y3oC&dq=shajar+al-durr+Armenian&pg=PA28>.
3. Hitti, Philip Khuri (2004). "Chapter XLVII: Ayyūbids and Mamlūks". History of Syria: including Lebanon and Palestine (2nd ed.). Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press. p. 629. ISBN 978-1-59333-119-1. OCLC 61240442. <https://books.google.com/books?id=91YymsCw5DIC&pg=PA629>. Retrieved 2010-03-01.
4. Meri, Josef W., ed (2006). Medieval Islamic Civilization: An Encyclopedia. 2: L–Z, index. New York: Routledge. p. 730. ISBN 978-0-415-96692-4. OCLC 314792003. <https://books.google.com/books?id=LaV-IGZ8VKIC&pg=PA730>. Retrieved 2010-03-01. "... Shajar al-Durr was proclaimed sultana (the feminine form of sultan) of the Ayyubid dominions, although this was not recognized by the Syrian Ayyubid princes."
5. Holt, P. M.; Lambton, Ann K. S.; Lewis, Bernard, eds (1977). The Cambridge History of Islam. Cambridge University Press. p. 210. ISBN 978-0-521-29135-4. OCLC 3549123. <https://books.google.com/books?id=4AuJvd2Tyt8C&pg=PA210>. Retrieved 2010-03-01.
6. Gloria Steinem (Introduction), Herstory: Women Who Changed the World, eds. Deborah G. Ohrn and Ruth Ashby, Viking, (1995) p. 34-36. ISBN:978-0670854349 <http://www.crescentlife.com/thisthat/feminist%20muslims/razia.htm>
7. Table of Delhi Kings: Muazzi Slave King The Imperial Gazetteer of India, 1909, v. 2, p. 368.. https://dsal.uchicago.edu/reference/gazetteer/pager.html?objectid=DS405.1.I34_V02_404.gif
8. O'Brien, Derek. Derek Introduces: 100 Iconic Indians. Rupa Publications. ISBN 8129134136.
9. Peirce, Leslie P. (1993). The Imperial Harem: Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire. New York: Oxford University Press. ISBN 0-19-507673-7.

Retrieved from <https://encyclopedia.pub/entry/history/show/79953>