
A Woman's Role in Pernese Society

by Whitney Ware; first printed in the Kindis Weyr Handbook

The role of women on Kadanzer's Pern is much like that at the beginning of Dragonflight. They are considered to have 'their' place, and they should not venture from it. Arranged marriages are the norm. In the case of offspring of people of high rank (Lord Holders, etc.), marriages will very likely be arranged for political considerations. Those of lower station usually have monetary considerations in mind in arranging their childrens' marriages. Outside of the isolated communities of the Weyr, women very seldom are allowed to enter a craft, and even then almost never rise above a journeyman. That a woman is accepted in the craft at all is a mark of the talent and skill she shows, and she must work four times as hard as any man to receive equal recognition.

Hold-bred girls are raised in the belief that it is their duty and purpose to marry, bear children, and look after the household. That's the be all and end all of their training. It is rare, and highly discouraged, that a woman should rule a major or minor Hold. One exception would be under circumstances similar to Lessa's -- she is the only one of that Bloodline remaining. And then, she will resume her traditional role as soon as she marries. While she does rule, however, she is seldom taken seriously by the other Lord Holders -- who quite swiftly send all of their single, marriageable sons to her Hold to propose an alliance, sealed by marriage, between her hold, and his own.

Craft-bred girls are equally limited in their choice of life's work. Women are only rarely accepted into a few of the crafthalls, and many crafthalls don't accept women in any role outside of cooking, cleaning, and other domestic chores. Generally, a woman born at the crafthalls may be given a chance to show any talent there that she may possess, or she may marry, or take a position as part of the serving staff.

Weyr-bred women have a great deal more freedom than hold- or craft-bred women. Even within the Weyr, though, a woman is not allowed the freedom that women once enjoyed on Pern. Unless she is a dragonrider, very few women rise to a station of any importance. Many dragonriders are hold or craft-bred, and their attitudes come with them to the Weyrs. The Weyr-bred have much more relaxed outlooks, but they are more often than not outnumbered.

Goldriders have by far more freedom than other women on Pern, even Lady Holders. They are in a position of power that cannot (unless they lose their queen) be taken away. But even they are surrounded by boundaries that they cannot cross without risking more than they have a right to risk. Greenriders, in some ways, may have more freedom than

goldriders. They need not concern themselves with how their actions might reflect back upon the Weyr, nor with maintaining peaceful and pleasant relations between Weyr, Hold, and Hall. A greenrider's freedom, though, is still limited to within the Weyr.