

#1 – Unveiling

A. Excerpts from: Girgis, Monique. “Women in Pre-Revolutionary, Revolutionary and Post-Revolutionary Iran.” *Iran Chamber Society*. 1996. Web. 23 Oct. 2018.

Reza Shah's biggest accomplishment was his attempt to unveil the women of Iran. In 1929 the Shah issued a law forcing Iranians to wear more Western clothing, which was followed by another law in 1935 requiring European hats. Reza Shah took this law one step further in 1936, banning women from wearing the chadur [veil]. Reza Shah implemented his unveiling plan with caution, taking several steps to prepare the public for it. Although he had been toying with the idea of abolishing the chadur as far back as 1934, he waited until February 1, 1936 to proceed with his plan....

A large segment of professional middle class women hailed the abolishment of the chadur as freedom from oppression. To these women it signified backwardness and subjugation. Several women's magazines invited debate on the topic, including *Women's World* in 1936, receiving an overwhelming response of both pro and con arguments about the unveiling. Generally the response was supportive of the Shah's unveiling policy.[8] It's important to remember, though, that the majority of women writing letters to the editors were generally well-educated, or at the very least, literate. The magazines were only publishing the opinions of one specific group of women.

For many women, however, the chadur was not a sign of oppression, but protection from strange eyes. The unveiling had negative effects for certain groups of Iranian women, especially older women. It was unthinkable for them to go out in public unveiled, and many women became isolated in their homes. Being unveiled, to them, was equal to nudity. They became dependent on their family members to run their errands and do all their tasks that required being in the public eye. The unveiling law was short lived, however, diminishing when the Shah left Iran in 1941.

B. From: Baraheni, Reza. *The Crowned Cannibals: Writings on Repression in Iran*. New York: Vintage Books, 1997, p. 52. Quoted in: Nabavi, Negin. *Modern Iran: A History in Documents*. Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2016, p. 124.

In the mid-thirties, Reza Shah tried to unveil the Iranian women by brute force. Whenever a woman walked outside, his police would tear the veil from her face and figure. Women, not yet ready socially or psychologically for such an action and as a result of their economic, political and legal subservience to a masculine society, were forced to stay home. But difficulties arose. Since there were no showers in Iranian homes, women had to go to a public bath. The husband would put his wife in a large sack and carry her like a bale of cotton to the bath.

I remember from my childhood, when my father would carry his mother in the sack, empty his load in the bath and then come back for his wife, my mother. He once told me that Reza Shah's policeman had asked him what it was that he was carrying. He had improvised an answer: pistachio nuts. The policeman said, “Let me have some,” and started tickling Granny. First she laughed, and then she wiggled her way out of the sack and took to her heels. My father was arrested.