

Women and the Moral Politics of Dress in Twentieth-
Century Tehran

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What Persian politicians dubbed as “the woman question” towards the end of the Qajar Dynasty (1794-1925) became, and still remains, a hotly debated topic in Iran that is undeniably intertwined with Iranian nationalism. Theoretically, it asked what the new role of women should be in society and what should be done to accomplish it, though many of the politicians who used the phrase failed to disclose any specifics. The politicians’ intentional vagueness in coining the phrase leads to the conclusion that they assigned the term “question” to a dilemma. When the Pahlavi monarchs came into power in 1925, and the political mullahs did the same in 1979, each group used the “woman question” as a means to assert their control over Iranian society, especially females, and to symbolize their nationalist progress.¹ More specifically, both governments attempted to assert their authority through establishing themselves as the supreme protector of women through the creation of new sumptuary laws that aimed towards restoring female morality. To accomplish this, they each envisioned a new ideal modern Iranian woman, which they accordingly spread through propaganda.

The rise of the Pahlavis in the 1920s occurred rapidly. Sensing the weak position of the Qajar Dynasty during a competition between Britain and Russia for control over the region after World War I, the commander of the Cossack Brigade based in Qazvin, Reza Khan, led his army into Tehran and deftly maneuvered his way into the political scene in 1921. Four years later, he overthrew the last of the Qajars, established himself as the new Shah, and in 1935 renamed Persia, “Iran.”² In a period of rising Iranian nationalism, Reza Shah Pahlavi the Great (r.1925-

¹ A mullah is an Islamic theology scholar; essentially in Shiite countries a mullah is a cleric of Shi’ism. An ayatollah is a high-ranking title for the most prestigious mullahs.

² Reza Shah renamed the country “Iran” to emphasize the alleged Aryan roots of Persians. *Shah* is the Farsi word for “king,” and according Persian grammar, the title of “*Shah*” follows the first name and

1941) emphasized ancient Persian identity extending back before the Qajars, who he considered non-Persian due to their Turkmen roots, and before even the rise of Islam. After claiming his legitimacy to govern Iran based on this heritage, Reza Shah set out to bring his country in line with Western standards through a period of modernization that, according to the *Iran Tribune* in 1972, saved Iran from “the verge of anarchy.”³

Iranians today credit Reza Shah with modernizing the country, as his main agenda was to restore Iran’s former greatness and ensure its place among first world nations. In order to accomplish this, Reza Shah maintained an authoritative rule, introduced modern technologies such as railroads from the West, and implemented other major reforms in Iran. Reza Shah aimed to counter what he viewed as the “backwardness” of the Qajar Dynasty, and one of the major debates that circulated the political scene since the end of the nineteenth century was what secular Iranians saw as the corrupting influences of the veil. This group viewed the *chador*, a large semi-circular cut cloth draped over the head of a woman down to her feet and held together closed by her hands, as a superficial sense of morality. They believed the *chador* tainted a woman’s true virtue and curbed her abilities to contribute to society because it restricted women’s mobility and individuality [see **Figures 1 & 2**]. While the garment proved extremely conservative because of its all-encompassing and shapeless form, secularists argued that women’s actions did not correspond with the modesty of the garment, as they perhaps felt

precedes the surname. The Pahlavi monarchy was a constitutional monarchy, though both Shahs outmaneuvered the *Majlis* [Congress]. Important note: Reza Shah originally wanted to establish a republic, however at the time the clerics in Qom established their position that Islam is not compatible with a republic and therefore rejected the notion. In order to appease the clerics, Reza Shah maintained monarchy instead.

³ “3rd of Esfand,” *The Iran Tribune*, ed. Yousof A. Mazandi, (Tehran: Kayhan Press, March 1972), 5. Many secularists would agree with this claim, however the article on Reza Shah is a piece of *Shahi* propaganda. It is important to note that actually very little is known about Reza Khan/Shah’s origins.

immune to sin while they adhered to a severe form of Islamic dress code.⁴ Reza Shah saw the potential of using the “woman question” as a means to visually represent Iran’s progress both at home and abroad, so he used women’s dress to support his various modernizing policies.

Reza Shah’s response to “the woman question” upset many Iranians from the traditional and religious classes because he redefined Iranian womanhood based on Western models. The preface of a compilation created by the Islamic government of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini’s interviews and speeches, describes Khomeini’s traditional Islamic point of view during the Revolution era in the 1970s, “[the] modern woman is getting vulgar; love is being replaced with cheap sensuality.”⁵ The women of Iran, especially those who lived in the capital city of Tehran, felt the full brunt of the clash between opposing nationalisms. Meanwhile many Iranians, secularists and Shiite traditionalists alike, opposed the Pahlavis’ close relationship with Western countries and their material extravagance. Mullahs based in Iran’s religious capital of Qom denounced the Pahlavi monarchy, as they believed that it betrayed Iran’s true ideals. These clerics concurred that Iranian nationalism was based on Iran’s unique identity as a predominantly Shiite nation rather than its pre-Islamic heritage. When the Shiite clerics took control after the overthrow of Mohammad Reza Shah (r.1941-1979), they distanced Iran from the West and implemented their own ideologies by forming an Islamic republic.⁶

⁴ Iraj Mirza, “Arefnameh,” cited in Camron Amin, *The Making of the Modern Iranian Woman*, 69.

⁵ Ruhollah Khomeini, *The Position of Women From the Viewpoint of Imam Khomeini (May Allah Grant Him Peace)*, trans. Juliana Shaw & Behrooz Arezoo (Tehran: The Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imam Khomeini’s Works (International Affairs Division), 2001), 10.

⁶ The notion of an Islamic Republic proves interesting as just a few decades before the Islamic Revolution in 1979, the mullahs based in Qom prevented Reza Khan from establishing a republic as he originally planned by stating on March 4, 1924 that the government structure of a republic is conflicts with Islam; Ali M. Ansari, *Modern Iran Since 1921: The Pahlavis and After* (London: Pearson Education Limited, 2003), 67.

Similar to Reza Shah in the 1930s, the Islamic Republic (1979-present) also controlled women's dress to accomplish their nationalist goals. According to scholar Haleh Afshar, women are the most important representations of family honor, and other scholars such as Nahid Yeganeh and Arzoo Osanloo support this statement.⁷ I examine speeches and books by the leading political figures including Reza Shah's son and successor, Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, Ayatollah Motahari, a leading cleric whose writings influenced the Islamic Revolution, and Ayatollah Khomeini, the first supreme leader of the Republic. Based upon my analyses, I take this argument further and say that women as a whole represented the honor of the Iranian nation. Both governments' stances on the "woman question" were based on motherhood; moral women were needed to instill propriety amongst the next generation of Iranians. As Khomeini stated, "The rectitude or immorality of a society stems from the rectitude or immorality of the women in that society."⁸ As Camron Amin concludes, the concept of women as the visualization of national honor heavily influenced the policies of both regimes through strategies such as mandatory dress code. While he and most other scholars focus on multiple aspects of gender politics in either regime, I distinctively focus on both governments' policies of sumptuary law and their vision of the ideal modern Iranian woman.

Situating women as symbols of both the nation's health and honor, I argue that the two governments used women's dress as a method to gauge Iranian state of being, and to provide the population with a visual manifestation of their success. Regardless of their opposing opinions and sumptuary laws, both governments utilized women's dress as a means to implement their

⁷ Haleh Afshar, "Women, State and Ideology in Iran," *Third World Quarterly* 7 (2), (1985): 256; Nahid Yeganeh, "Women, Nationalism and Islam in Contemporary Political Discourse in Iran," *Feminist Review* (44), (1993): 5; Arzoo Osanloo, "Khomeini's Legacy on Women's Rights and Roles in the Islamic Republic of Iran," in *A Critical Introduction to Khomeini*, ed. Arshin Adib-Moghaddam (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 243, 245.

⁸ Khomeini, 39.

nationalist agendas and instill their position as the overarching protector of women, and thus Iranian honor.⁹ Leaders used elements of the Qur'an to support this patriarchal ideology as it states, "Men are the guardians/caretakers of women."¹⁰ I focus the bulk of my essay on government agendas specifically regarding the moral dress politics, and in the last section, I consider the complex relation between government policies in public with what happened in private.

According to historian Parvin Paidar, control of women's clothing under the guise of guardianship, as supported by the Qur'an, affected women's daily lives both in the private and public spheres.¹¹ Based upon the interviews of local Iranian-Americans unique to my research that I conducted, I found that while women dressed more liberally in public during the Pahlavi era, the new dynasty failed to eradicate traditional values that Iranian families maintained in the household.¹² In contrast, after the Republic forced women to adhere to Islamic dress code segregate in social settings, they often rebelled against these public values within the privacy of their homes. It is crucial to realize that most of the men and women I interviewed come from more secular and Westernized backgrounds that affected the experiences these people had in Iran. Unfortunately, I could not interview someone from a *chadori* family [a family whose women wear

⁹ Reza Shah heralded the title of "the Great Father" in the 1930s shortly before he banned the veil. This title emphasizes his role as the overarching protector of women.

¹⁰ Qur'an 4:34. This is the translation provided in Amin's *Propaganda and Remembrance*. Another translation found on quran.com states, "Men are in charge of women by [right of] what Allah has given one over the other." This translation is important later for the Islamic Republic's answer to the "women question."

¹¹ Parvin Paidar, *Women and the Political Process in Twentieth-Century Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 117.

¹² I have assigned first name pseudonyms to everyone I interviewed per their request to respect their privacy. This is reflected in my citations.

the *chador*] for comparison. However I discovered from my interviews, the modern woman in Tehran pushed boundaries forced upon her by both governments.

The amount of existing literature on gender politics in twentieth-century Iran is copious, as both governments focused heavily on women. Scholars such as Amin, Osanloo, Janet Afary, and Haideh Moghissi examine how changes in education and familial legality impacted women's status. Most of these scholars include a brief discussion of sumptuary laws but keep their emphasis primarily on other elements of what is called the "Women's Awakening." I add to the scholars' conversation since I concentrate specifically on the politicization of women's dress and the impact that both governments had on society by using clothing as an instrument to implement their differing ideologies of Iranian nationalism.

Through the use of oral history, I provide a personal view into the experiences of women who lived through the Pahlavi Dynasty and the Islamic Republic of Iran. Other scholars also use oral history methodology, but there is a large age range between the men and women I interview to better reflect the evolution of experience under Reza Shah, Mohammad Reza Shah, and the Islamic Republic. I also use the heuristic device of the Modern Girl to analyze advertisements found in Tehran's leading woman's magazine before the Revolution, *Zan-e Ruz*. While scholarship of the modern girl focuses primarily in between the two world wars, I analyze a different world region and, for the most part, a later time period.¹³ Furthermore, much of the scholarship in this field focuses on either one government or the other, and with my research, which spans women's experiences across both regimes, I compare them to each other. I combine these varying methodologies of oral, textual, and visual analysis with a distinctive wealth of

¹³ Alys Eve Weinbaum, Lynn M. Thomas, Priti Ramamurthy, Uta G. Poiger, Madeleine Y. Dong, and Tani E. Barlow, Eds. *The Modern Girl Around the World: Consumption, Modernity, and Globalization* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 2; *Zan-e Ruz* translated into English means "Today's Woman."

primary sources: interviews, historical photos, personal photo collections, political text and speeches, poetry, magazine advertisements and covers, Miss Iran contest photos and rules, and newspaper articles from both American and Iranian publications. I use the combination of these sources to connect different aspects of moral dress politics to examine the multi-layered nature of the governments' ideologies and their application. The variety of my primary sources provides unique insight through their support of one another.

1930s: Reza Shah's Creation of the Ideal Modern Iranian Woman and the Veil Ban

Towards the end of the Qajar Dynasty, secularists such as the popular poet Iraj Mirza, argued that the veil corrupted Iran's women more than it protected their modesty. Not only were women despoiled, but also due to their lack of education and general seclusion from society they remained idle beings at home [see **Figure 3**]. Mirza's poem, "Arefnameh" (c. 1915-1920), illustrates the critique of the traditional Tehrani woman:

Thus, ignorance, when maintained under wraps,/Make *chador* and *hijab* a woman's traps./Her *kos* [vagina] she casually puts up for sale,/For she was on better terms with her veil,/Yes, shame and virtue are both in the eyes,/When those are shut what remains are lies./If they would teach a woman propriety,/She could parade unveiled in society./Were she to learn what virtue really meant,/Unveiling would induce her betterment.¹⁴

Mirza describes the traditional woman as ignorant; her seclusion from society, partially due to the impractical nature of the *chador*, which the translator emphasizes by choosing the word "wraps," figuratively, and perhaps even literally through inconvenience, "traps" her in this state. He depicts the veil as a barrier to morality since it represents a superficial form of modesty that requires no intention on the part of the woman wearing it.

¹⁴ Mirza, 69.

Secularists at this time claimed that because traditional women were uneducated they did not fully understand right from wrong. Therefore they exhibited loose behavior and even prostituted themselves; Mirza even argues that women “casually” participated in bad behavior simply because they failed to comprehend that what they did was immoral [see **Figure 4**].¹⁵ In addition, the *chador* allowed women a certain degree of anonymity when they did venture into public, which allowed their immoral conduct to occur in the first place [see **Figure 5**].¹⁶ Habibollah, an elderly gentleman from a wealthy Tehrani family, recalled reading the poem in Farsi. He explained that in the first half, the narrator seduces a married woman. While engaging in sexual intercourse, she clung tightly to her *chador* to cover her naked body as if the veil atoned for her sinful act.¹⁷ Secularists like Mirza argued that if a woman obtained an education, she would then gain a deeper knowledge of morality and thus behave accordingly; this group believed that once a woman developed this aspect of character, the need for the veil would be eliminated as true modesty would be instilled in her. In addition to this, once women showed themselves to be respectable, it prevented men from viewing them purely as sexual objects.

During the period of Reza Shah’s nation-building in 1929, the monarch forced men and women to adopt Western dress through sumptuary laws in an effort to modernize Iran and limit the influence and authority of the clerical class. Later, women became the focus of the Pahlavi modernization platform after Reza Shah visited Turkey and saw Mustafa Kemal Atatürk’s

¹⁵ *Ibid*, 69.

¹⁶ Janet Afary, *Sexual Politics in Modern Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 163.

¹⁷ Habibollah, interview by Rhoya Selden, notes and audio recording, Mercer Island, 16 February 2016. Habibollah is the only person whom I interviewed who still considers himself a devout Shi’a Muslim and is the most conservative of my interviewees. However, in his interview, he explained the spectrum of the gravity of sins and his belief that women without *hijab*, including his own wife and daughters, should not be the focus of Muslims when there are much more concerning sins to prevent.

reforms in the new Turkish Republic, which already included a veil-ban.¹⁸ Reza Shah took Mirza's critique of false-modesty and objectification of the traditional woman and utilized it to defend his modernizing platform.

In order to restore Iran's glory after the Qajars, he needed to rid Tehran of the behavior and dress of the traditional women who formed a hindrance to society. Similar to other secularists, Reza Shah believed that the answer to the "woman question" lay in granting women education and removing their veils. His son explained:

Reza Shah never advocated a complete break with the past, for always he assumed that our girls could find their best fulfillment in marriage and in the nurture of superior children. But he was convinced that a wife could be a better wife and mother, as well as a better citizen, if she received an education and perhaps worked outside the home long enough to gain a sense of civic functions and responsibilities.¹⁹

Mohammad Reza Shah's reflection of his father's motives demonstrates that while advocating for progressive policies, Reza Shah held less-than radical motives. Ultimately, Reza Shah still believed that the most important duty a woman held was motherhood. If the *chador* corrupted women, then it prevented their ability to instruct their children in right and wrong. If women exhibited no morals, then the next generation of Iranians would be corrupt regardless of gender and thus endanger the nation's well being. However, if women were educated and contributed to society—either through working professionally or simply by being more productive at home—then they could raise "superior" children who would elevate the nation [see **Figure 6**]. Thus women became the markers with which to measure progress, and this measure focused attention on women's dress. He states further, "When my father assumed the throne, he was determined to

¹⁸ Ansari, 67.

¹⁹ Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, "The Eternal Question of Women," *Mission For My Country* (London: Hutchinson & CO. Publishers LTD, 1961), 231.

emancipate our women from the heavy weight of certain traditions, which fettered both them and, therefore, the nation as a whole. He wanted to help them broaden their outlook, to become better mothers and citizens, and thereby in turn to nurture children of better moral and civic quality.”²⁰ It was the responsibility of the Pahlavi monarchy to protect women, who like the description in the “Arefnameh” were trapped by metaphorical fetters, through reforms and therefore defend the Iranian nation [see **Figure 7**]. These passages reveal the reasoning why the Pahlavis tightly linked modern womanhood with Iranian nationalism.

Mohammad Reza Shah described the strictness of the execution of the new policy in his autobiography *Mission For My Country*. He wrote, “He [Reza Shah] strictly forbade any woman or girl to be seen veiled; if she were, the nearest policeman would request her to remove her veil, and if she refused he would forcibly take it from her.”²¹ In addition to firmly enforcing the ban, Reza Shah spread propaganda through state-sanctioned press depicting the new dynasty as the “Women’s Awakening” that formed a new archetype of modern Iranian womanhood.²² With the bold political maneuver of banning the veil in 1936, modern Iranian women were encouraged to adhere to the Western conceptions of comportment and beauty.

After Reza Shah enacted his sumptuary laws, new magazines circulated in Iran that introduced a new beauty culture to Tehrani women. Through these magazines such as *Kushesh*, the state explained to women what it envisioned as the ideal modern Iranian woman and what balance between Western and Iranian values she should exemplify.²³ Amin points out in his

²⁰ Pahlavi, 229.

²¹ Pahlavi, 231.

²² Camron Michael Amin, “Propaganda and Remembrance: Gender, Education, and ‘The Women’s Awakening’ of 1936,” *Iranian Studies* 32 (3), (1999): 351-2.

²³ *Ibid*, 361.

work the dual, and sometimes self-conflicting nature, of the Pahlavi's approach to the "women question" citing these magazines as evidence.²⁴ He demonstrates that some of the propaganda spouted by these periodicals warned audiences about "dangerous" women as the new dynasty, acting as the ultimate protector of women. While the Pahlavis aimed to redefine womanhood through propaganda, they still feared the prospect of generating loose and immoral women who proved too accepting of the stereotype of the Western modern girl [see **figure 8**].²⁵ The ideal modern Iranian woman was contrasted with the ignorance and immorality of the traditional woman as well as with the over-sexualized Western woman.²⁶ In fact, in an attempt to disassociate the banning of the veil from immorality, the Pahlavi dynasty ensured that prostitutes remained veiled; prostitutes could only unveil once they married and therefore had male guardianship to ensure their honor.²⁷

The reaction to the veil-ban varied; religious families resented the new law, while secular ones welcomed the change.²⁸ Those who came from families wealthy enough to send their children to Europe were already familiar with the common sight of women walking in the streets without their hair covered. The implementation began with the monarchy itself when the first picture of women without the veil portrayed Reza Shah's family [see **Figure 9**]. If the royal women stepped out into public without *hijab*, then the rest of society should follow suit. One of the women whom I interviewed, Afsaneh, was a girl during this significant moment in Iranian history and from a family that worked for the Pahlavis. She stated, "This [the banning of the veil]

²⁴ *Ibid*, 362

²⁵ *Ibid*, 362.

²⁶ Camron Michael Amin, *The Making of the Modern Iranian Woman: Gender, State Policy and Popular Culture, 1865-1946* (Gainesville: The University Press of Florida, 2002), 48.

²⁷ *Ibid*, 99.

²⁸ Nahid, Interview by Rhoya Selden, notes and audio recording, Tacoma, 5 January 2016.

was the best thing Reza Shah did.”²⁹ Her perspective reflected admiration towards the monarch given that her family worked high up in the government, and therefore closely with the Reza Shah. Her reaction greatly contrasted with the viewpoint of women from traditional and lower classes.³⁰

Many traditional women in Tehran, especially the older generation, found it extremely difficult to adjust to the drastic changes in sumptuary law. They had worn the *chador* for decades and felt exposed when the new law compelled them to enter society and leave the *hijab* behind. Many women from religious families rebelled against the veil-ban by refusing to enter society at all. One of the women who I interviewed, Nahid, recounted a story that her father told her about her grandmother:

I remember my dad was telling me that his mom had problems removing her scarf...She didn't want to go out anymore. She imprisoned herself in her house just because she didn't want to go outside and people see her without a headscarf. It was a kind of shame. She was used to wearing it and covering herself, and the people in the neighborhood knew her. So my dad said that women started walking on the roof with their scarves, or *chadors*, in order to go to each other's homes back then. That's the reality. Whatever society is used to, when you change that in the beginning it's always going to be difficult.³¹

While her mother hailed from a secular background, her father came from a religious family in Tehran. When she mentioned that her grandmother felt shame at the prospect of her neighbors seeing her without a headscarf when leaving the house, she brought up an important point. While secularists such as Mirza saw the *chador* as corrupting, many people at the time of the change believed just the opposite. These women felt that they lost their decency if they ventured outside

²⁹ Afsaneh, Interview by Rhoya Selden, notes, Seattle, 13 December, 2015.

³⁰ Nahid, interview.

³¹ Nahid, interview.

without the protection of the *hijab*; accordingly, many men felt helpless, as they believed themselves to be incapable of protecting their women's honor.³²

In order to make up for the loss of the *chador*, most women followed the Western tradition of wearing hats [revisit **Figure 9**]. This fit under the guidelines that Reza Shah set for following Western dress customs, but it also allowed women to cover at least some of their hair.³³ Some women who were used to wearing *chadors* that covered their entire body struggled with the change. One woman whom I interviewed, Forough, narrated what her mother-in-law once told her she used to do. Her mother-in-law said, "I would wear my hat and go in front of the mirror and say, 'Is this me? No, not really. This is not me.'"³⁴ Her mother-in-law's reaction demonstrates that Reza Shah's actions, as the Great Father and ultimate protector and guardian of Iran's women, challenged women's former identities and replaced them with a new ideal to strive after. Through the mixture of propaganda and authoritative rule, the first monarch of the Pahlavi era created the image of the modern Iranian woman to match the other socio-economic reforms that he installed and to visualize national progress.

1970s: The Modern Iranian Woman During the Reign of Mohammad Reza Shah

By the mid-twentieth century, under the reign of Reza Shah's son, Mohammad Reza Shah, Tehrani society had gradually accepted western beauty culture. Most people in society chose to wear Western fashions by the time of Reza Shah's forced abdication in 1941, however some women resumed once again wearing the *hijab*. Unlike his father, Mohammad Reza Shah turned a blind eye towards sumptuary transgressions. The defense provided in *Mission For My*

³² *The Making of the Modern Iranian Woman*, 108.

³³ Zohreh, interview by Rhoya Selden, notes and audio recording of phone interview, Seattle/Montreal, 23 January, 2016.

³⁴ Forough, interview by Rhoya Selden, notes and audio recording, Seattle, 13 December 2015.

Country stated that he, “preferred to see a natural evolution, rather than force the pace...but gradually the practice is dying out.”³⁵ This passage reveals how middle class and secular women had internalized the notion of Reza Shah’s ideal modern Iranian woman.

Many Tehrani women looked westward for information on the latest fashion and beauty trends [see **Figure 10**]. Beginning in the 1930s, boutiques sprang up across the city that carried clothing imported from Europe. When a family was wealthy enough to travel to Europe, they brought back clothes for loved ones, and sometimes extra garments to sell their acquaintances.³⁶ One of the women I interviewed, Zohreh, a teenager from a *Shahi* [Shah supporting] family in Northern Tehran in the late 1960s recalled, “By then, everything was brought from Europe... We had a lot of French in us those days—fashion, makeup, perfume—all these stuff from France.”³⁷ Young women in school took turns exchanging clothes brought back from Europe whenever their family members traveled.³⁸ When Tehrani women were unable to travel to Europe, they ordered clothing overseas through catalogs [see **Figure 11**]. Nahid shared that when she was a small child, her mother regularly ordered clothes for her from the British retailer “Mothercare.”³⁹

If women made clothes themselves, or had garments constructed for them, they based the handiwork on European designs [see **Figure 12**]. Women sewed clothing for themselves and their children from Western pattern catalogs such as Burda Style.⁴⁰ Meanwhile, women wealthy enough to buy their clothes specially made for them by a tailor looked through fashion plates of

³⁵ Pahlavi, 232.

³⁶ Nahid, interview.

³⁷ Zohreh, interview.

³⁸ Zohreh, interview.

³⁹ Nahid, interview.

⁴⁰ Zohreh, interview.

French designs to select from while they waited for their appointment.⁴¹ Regardless of how women acquired their clothing, they cared a lot about their appearance.⁴² Zohreh remembered her years in high school, “Now is mini-jupe time of course. We are all wearing mini, mini, mini skirts and we would walk to the sandwich shop—full of teenagers, guys and girls, and we would look—honestly everybody looked so good, so good.”⁴³ *Jupe* is the French term for “skirt,” and the fact that most of the women I interviewed consistently called mod shift dresses “mini-jupes” emphasizes France’s cultural impact in Iran, especially in regards to fashion. Second, Zohreh’s account demonstrates how the desegregation of sexes became acceptable in Tehrani society. Girls could meet with boys in group settings while wearing revealing European clothing without causing a scandal. Historian Ali M. Ansari states that in the 1930s, the socialization of women with unacquainted men proved just as scandalous as the veil-ban itself.⁴⁴ This different reaction shows that what caused uproar among traditional families in Iran during Reza Shah’s reign began to become ordinary just a few decades later, largely due to the strict enforcement in the beginning.

In Iranian culture, an unmarried woman’s virginity was the epitome of her and her family’s honor, and with the sexual revolution in the West that occurred during the 1960s and 1970s, sexual liberation became a concern for Tehrani society.⁴⁵ As clothing became more revealing during this time, the dilemma of the “dangerous” woman who ventured too far in the adaptation of Euro-American culture continued. Women’s magazines such as *Zan-e Ruz*, warned

⁴¹ Nahid, interview.

⁴² Zohreh, interview.

⁴³ *Ibid*, interview.

⁴⁴ Ansari, 69.

⁴⁵ Afary, 28.

of women who became too obsessed with their looks or promiscuous in their behavior [revisit **Figure 8**; see **Figures 13 & 14**]. In these figures, the women all have large curves and wear tight and revealing clothing, often showing garters that attach their stockings. These “dangerous” women are clad heavily in makeup, and even the silhouettes of their nipples are outlined in this genre of cartoons. As most women wore European clothing, the government still maintained its anxiety of the morality of females who accepted more than just their style from the West.

To combat the prospects of “dangerous” women in the workforce, the Iranian press simultaneously continued the promotion of the image of the ideal woman. Two examples of this strategy are the Shahbanu [Empress] Farah Diba, Mohammad Reza Shah’s wife, and the *Dokhtar-e Bahar* [Spring girl/daughter of the Spring], also known as the Miss Iran competition that *Zan-e Ruz* created in 1965. This competition was originally named *Dokhtar-e Bahar*, but later renamed *Dokhtar-e Iran* [Iranian Girl/Daughter of Iran]. It is also known as *Dokhtar-e Shayesteh* [worthy/chosen girl]. Both *Dokhtar-e Iran* and *Dokhtar-e Shayesteh* exemplify the competition’s nationalist purpose. The latter emphasizes the aim of shaping the concept of the ideal among high school students by bestowing the title “worthy” or “chosen.” Mohammad Reza Shah stated that one of the biggest legacies of the Pahlavi monarchy was the reemergence of women in society, and these two examples provided evidence for this claim.⁴⁶

Farah Diba was beautiful, elegant, athletic, charitable, and well-educated in Europe. Mohammad Reza Shah selected her to be his wife largely due to these qualities because as the Empress of Iran, all of the women in the country would look up to her example. Thus, she

⁴⁶ Pahlavi, 227.

became the ultimate ideal woman, and *Shahi* women viewed her as a role model [See **Figure 15**].⁴⁷ This impact began at an early age as Zohreh recounts:

I remember she [her mother] would take us once a week to the public baths. My God, I was four or five years old, and from that age I remember...Sousan [her sister] and I would play with each other, and I remember we used to make a lot of foam on our head and because of Shahbanu when she came to Iran, she brought the style with her—we would call it “Farah style,” because Farah was her first name—she would pile her hair on top of her head, okay, and Sousan and I would make lots of foam on our hair, and we would make it stay on the top of our head [see **Figure 16**].⁴⁸

Based on this memory, it is clear that Farah Diba’s influence over girls and women proved substantial. Not only were women inspired to exhibit her idealized characteristics, but also her sophisticated appearance [see **Figure 17**]. In **Figure 17**, the woman portrayed, like many photographs of the Shahbanu, wears a fitted and modest form of Western clothing. While fashionable for the mid-1960s, her dress does not have a revealing hemline like many other styles popular at the time. Her arms and neck are covered with a sheer fabric while her cleavage is completely hidden. She wears winged eyeliner as was stylish, but she does so in moderation. Her hairstyle is straightened in a voluminous 1960s style: bobbed, with a side part, and waved on the sides, just like Farah Diba’s hair in **Figure 15**. Through the Empress, women in Tehran had an Iranian style icon that wore clothes bought in France, but who donned sophisticated and tailored pieces that revealed minimal skin.⁴⁹

The contestants for *Zan-e Ruz*’s Miss Iran competition were teenagers who strove to be moral and productive members of their community. The contestants were high school students from across Iran, however the competition itself occurred in Tehran. Beauty was not the only

⁴⁷ Zohreh, interview.

⁴⁸ Zohreh, interview.

⁴⁹ Ziba, interviewed by Rhoya Selden, notes, Seattle, 19 January 2016.

qualification, in fact the girls' accomplishments in art, athletics, and science remained an important factor of which girl won [see **Figure 18**]. **Figure 18** shows two contestants in martial arts uniforms, giving readers more details about the girls' extracurricular interests and achievements. Rather than be judged primarily on their looks, they are evaluated by their athleticism allowed by the removal of the *chador*. Beyond their extracurricular achievements, girls who applied needed to present their moral conduct. The third requirement in the 1968 rules for application stated, "The average of your grades...have to be good and satisfying, and the school's principal has to write a letter of recommendation for you that you are morally-distinguished."⁵⁰ It was important that the winner of Miss Iran was a clever, well-rounded, and "morally-distinguished" girl who exemplified a relatable ideal for other young women and her reward was travel abroad to America.

Since the 1930s, propaganda dictated the importance of how model Iranian women dressed and carried themselves—simple elegance was viewed as essential. Thus, one of the Miss Iran categories was "best dressed" [see **Figure 19**]. In many contest pictures, women are dressed in more conservative styles of Western clothing rather than the "mini, mini, mini skirts" mentioned earlier by Zohreh.⁵¹ Unlike other Miss competitions, the *Dokhtar-e Iran* process did not include an actual pageant; readers of *Zan-e Ruz* sent in their votes to a panel of the magazine's writers based on miniature biographies of each contestant. After tallying the finalists, the panel headed by Homa Ehsan interviewed each contestant until they selected a winner [see **Figure 21**].⁵² In some cases, *Zan-e Ruz* organized the winners of the Miss Iran competitions to meet with

⁵⁰ "Rules for entering Miss Iran competition," *Zan-e Ruz* (Tehran), 1968, found on <http://iranian.com/Nostalgia/2002/November/rules.html>. Zohreh said her friend was a finalist one year.

⁵¹ I found an exception in a photograph with 1973's winner [see **Figure 20**].

⁵² "Miss Iran," *Iranian.com/Nostalgia*, accessed 13 February 2016.

the Empress herself, which stressed the ideal twofold [see **Figure 22**]. Both Farah Diba and the Miss Iran contestants exemplified the benefits of educating women, supported the removal of the veil through modest Western dress, and embodied a sense of nationalist civic duty by showing that they were capable and productive.

With new capacities caused by education and made possible by Western clothing, Mohammad Reza Shah believed that women could obtain the same basic rights as men.⁵³ As such, during his reign, he gave women the right to vote through the White Revolution in 1963, and reformed the labor (1959) and marriage laws (Family Protection Act of 1967). In the “women question” chapter of his autobiography, he clarified that these rights do not include the right to choose to stay unmarried and childless and therefore fail their civic duty. However, he stipulated that there was no law from preventing women for indulging in what he believed to be selfish decisions. Then he alluded to the ideal modern Iranian woman whom his father created and added that “enlightened” women realized their unique civic responsibility, which took priority in their lives.⁵⁴ Mohammad Reza Shah stated that men and women are not equal; in fact, to say so was harmful towards women. He cited the complementary relationship between man and woman in Islam.⁵⁵ Essentially, he meant that despite believing women should have equal opportunity in educational and professional fields, they should also shoulder the responsibility of motherhood. The ideal Iranian woman dressed well but simply, provided “intellectual companion[ship]” for her husband, raised children, and engaged in charity, thus contributing to

⁵³ Pahlavi, 235.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 235, 237.

⁵⁵ Qur'an 4:34.

the modernization of the country.⁵⁶ Interestingly, this matched with the descriptions of most of my interviewees' mothers.

Despite various achievements under the Pahlavis including more rights for women, the authoritarian rule of Mohammad Reza Shah proved increasingly unpopular. Much of Iran's population criticized the Shah for being out of touch with his subjects. His secret police, SAVAK, arrested and even killed thousands of his critics. Both secularists and traditionalists alike, many of whom were women, fought to overthrow the Shah who they viewed as corrupt. Many saw the Shah as a puppet of the West, and in 1978, Jalal Al-i Ahmad, an Iranian intellectual, wrote a collection of influential essays critiquing Iran's relationship with the West called *Gharbzadagi* [translated into English as "Occidentosis"].⁵⁷ In his essays, he described the unbalanced relationship as troubled; Iran's unequal footing poisoned Iranian society as it eagerly adopted all things Western without first thinking of the implications.⁵⁸ Ahmad critiqued the "Women's Awakening" when he stated, "We have contented ourselves with tearing the veil from their faces and opening a number of schools to them. But then what? Nothing."⁵⁹ While the Pahlavis boasted about the revolutionary changes they created to benefit women, some Iranian intellectuals believed these efforts fell short of the ideal because they were still a product of the Shah's patriarchy and enforced by men [see **Figure 23**]. Despite Mohammad Reza Shah's efforts, he failed to reconcile with his subjects. In January of 1979, the Iranian population overthrew the Shah and forced him and his family into exile. Through a rise of religious

⁵⁶ Pahlavi, 236-7.

⁵⁷ *Gharbzadagi* is also sometimes translated as "Weststruckness" and "Westoxification."

⁵⁸ Samad Alavi, "Modern Times," lecture, Seattle, 24 February 2016.

⁵⁹ Jalal Al-i Ahmad, "The War of Contradictions," *Occidentosis: A Plague From the West*, trans. R. Campbell (Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1984), 70.

sentiment in various political parties, revolutionaries placed their trust in the mullahs, specifically Ayatollah Khomeini.

1980s: The Islamic Revolution and the Re-Implementation of the Islamic Dress Code

During the Revolution Era, many conservative mullahs wanted greater distance from the Western world and all of its imports in Iranian society, which they viewed as products of colonialism detrimental to Persian Shi'a culture and Islam. However, there were numerous religious scholars who tried to find common ground between Western concepts and those of Islam in order to find a more moderate compromise. As Ayatollah Khomeini stated in September 1979, "the clergy are not against progress, but they are against Mohammad Reza's kind of progress."⁶⁰ His colleague, Ayatollah Motahari, was a central figure in the religious intellectualist debate over the best course for Iran's wellbeing. As a leader of the reformist movement, he realized the impossibility of turning back the clock to the traditional Shi'a values held before the Pahlavi dynasty, and sought a compromise with various issues including the "women question" within a democratic Islamic state.⁶¹ Women's magazines, such as *Zan-e Ruz* were forced to promote the Republic's standard of feminism.⁶²

Despite his assassination during the establishment of the new republic, Motahari's writings largely influenced the broader shape of the Islamic Republic. In his work, *Woman And Her Rights In Islam*, he provided an outline of how women are revered in Islam. He stated his

⁶⁰ Khomeini, 147.

⁶¹ Maryam Shamsaie, "Two Iranian Intellectuals: Ayatollah Morteza Motahari and Dr. Abdol-Karim Soroush and Islamic Democracy Debate," *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 1 (2), (2012): 30.

⁶² Camron Michael Amin, "Importing 'Beauty Culture' into Iran in the 1920s and 1930s: Mass Marketing Individualism in an Age of Anti-Imperialist Sacrifice," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 24, no. 1. (2004): 89.

main argument: that equal rights should not mean similar rights.⁶³ The book is a compilation of a series of articles he wrote for *Zan-e Ruz* in 1974. He stated that Islam fundamentally believes in the concept of human dignity as a gift from Allah.⁶⁴ It is because of this human dignity that Islam awards women equality with men, as both sexes possess this special allocation; this equality is because the Qur'an's version of the creation story, Adam and Eve give into temptation together.⁶⁵ Motahari emphasized the point that though men and women are equal, they are very different in nature and thus their rights should be reflected differently, yet still equally. This concept is based off of the same Islamic principle that Mohammad Reza Shah described, however Motahari does not specify the difference like the Shah did.⁶⁶

One of the major objections Shiite clerics had against the West is what they viewed as the Western objectification of women. They argued that Westerners, and many Iranians misled by the Shah, forgot the concept of human dignity for both men and women, and therefore neglected God. This led to immorality within urban society. Motahari described Westernized women as:

Her womanly expressions and her skillful sexy postures are put on sale...Do you realize to what an extent a woman has to stoop to earn money? She has to learn for many years the art of provoking sex under the supervision of experienced specialists. She has to place her body, her soul and her personality at the disposal of moneymaking organizations to attract more and more customers...you can see what respect woman has gained, how she has to sell her honor and self-respect for paltry sums of money...⁶⁷

⁶³ *Ibid*, 30; Morteza Motahari, *Woman and Her Rights in Islam*, trans. M.A. Ansari (Islamic Seminary Publications, n.d.), 39-40, 42.

⁶⁴ Motahari, 33.

⁶⁵ Motahari emphasizes that Islam, as opposed to the Judeo-Christian version of the creation story predominant in the West, does not prescribe women as the root of man's evil. The Qur'an states, "Then the Satan made a suggestion to them [both]. Then he led them on with guile. He swore to them: I am a sincere adviser to you [both]." Surah al-A'raf, (7:20-21).

⁶⁶ Motahari, 50.

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, 120.

The founders of the Republic viewed the sexual liberation of modern women as removing the dignity from women as they deteriorate into something less than human. The word “stoop” in Ansari’s translation depicts the sexualization of women in the media as degrading. They believed that *Shahi* women prostituted themselves for what they wrongfully believed to be equal rights.⁶⁸

The mullahs attacked the notion “sex sells” as one of the primary weaknesses in Western society and in Tehran during the Pahlavi dynasty. Khomeini said, “Those who undertook to improve the position of women chose a wrong path: They intended to beautify her eyebrows, but deprived her of her eyesight.”⁶⁹ He means that although the Pahlavis claimed to help women, the Shahs sold female sexuality and led women astray. Motahari argued that in the differences among men and women, women are a “manifestation of attraction and desirability” in which women are meant to be “sought after,” however this concept used in advertisements turns women into sexual objects for men and is therefore unIslamic.⁷⁰ **Figure 24** represents an ad for French perfume. Surrounded by reflective water, the model arches her back—eyes closed and mouth slightly parted—in a sensual position suggesting orgasm. The woman illustrated is clearly the main focus rather than the actual product advertised. This advertisement exemplifies the hypersexualization and objectification of women in Tehrani society that mullahs decried.

⁶⁸ Islam approves of the act of sex within the sanctity of marriage, including a *mut’a/sigheh* in Shi’ism, and recognizes female sexuality. The acceptance of sexuality as non-sinful is due to a hadith [both in an-Nasa’i and Ibn Hanbal] in which the Prophet states his love for women along with perfume and prayer. A *mut’a* or *sigheh* is also called a fixed-time/temporary/pleasure marriage legal according Shi’a law. In the marriage contract a time limit is set and after it expires neither party has any obligation towards the other, but the man must support any resulting offspring. Marriage, both permanent and temporary, is to prevent the exploitation of women by men, as Islam teaches that men are more controlled by their lust than women.

⁶⁹ Khomeini, 11.

⁷⁰ Motahari, 59.

Shiite clerics viewed Iranian women as corrupted by foreign imperialism, which destroyed the modesty that Islam requires of them. Khomeini stated in 1978, “It is the Shah’s regime, which by immersing the women in immoral issues actually strives to prevent their freedom; Islam is strongly opposed to this.”⁷¹ A unifying theme throughout his speeches touches on how the Pahlavi monarchs abused their power as the protector of women to make Iran’s females “beguiling.”⁷² To rectify this problem, the new regime took it as their duty to install their Shi’a ideologies through Islamic dress code.⁷³

With the enforcement of *hijab*, the new Islamic government could implement their values through the very visible form of dress to remind all citizens of who controlled the government. In 1981 Khomeini stated in an interview, “women do not have the right to lower themselves to such a level [as an object], nor do men have the right to think of them as such...Islam opposes anything that tends to lead human beings towards acquiring a frivolous nature or towards self-estrangement.”⁷⁴ Khomeini’s response shows that he believed women should have rights, however losing her dignity was not one of them; the government must protect women from the lust of men as well as from themselves if they preferred to maintain the liberal social order under the Pahlavis. Thus, the Islamic government revealed itself as the missing protector in a woman’s life when Khomeini implied that the government knew better the interests of women than the

⁷¹ Khomeini, 144.

⁷² *Ibid*, 48.

⁷³ Surah 24 verse 31 states, “And tell the believing women to reduce their vision and guard their private parts and not expose their adornment.” The custom of the veiling of woman, also known as the *hijab*, originates from this passage in the Qur’an. The exception of when a woman is allowed to exposure is around her family in the confines of her private residence.

⁷⁴ Khomeini, 37.

women themselves removing their right to make decisions for themselves, just as the Pahlavis in the 1930s.⁷⁵

The policed nature of the compulsory *hijab* proved both frightening and offensive for many women who were born after the veil-ban.⁷⁶ Nahid said, “Sometimes you feel insulted when people tell you what you can or cannot look like. It was insulting our intelligence to be judged solely by what we were wearing. It [enforced *hijab*] was insulting to men too because it told them, ‘you are an animal who cannot control your emotions.’”⁷⁷ Nahid stressed the fact that the psychological effect that the compulsory *hijab* had on society affected not only women, but men as well. This mentality that men are unable to control themselves is supported by Motahari’s list of differences between the sexes since he described the male sexuality as assertive and therefore harder to manage than a woman’s.

The new Islamic government under Khomeini tried unsuccessfully to immediately implement compulsory *hijab* after the overthrow of the Shah. In March 1979, Khomeini implied that all women had to wear the *hijab*. This sparked demonstrations on March 8, International Women’s Day, in which 8,000 women in Tehran protested; two days later, tens of thousands of women were protesting.⁷⁸ Some of these protestors were assaulted with rocks and called “whores” and “American agents” by *chadoris*.⁷⁹ Most of the protesters were educated women;

⁷⁵ In 1985, Khomeini stated in an interview this reasoning behind the implemented Islamic dress code. He said, “You must remember that the veil, which Islam has prescribed for you is to protect your status. Whatever God has decreed for man or for woman is to keep alive the true values they possess, values that may be destroyed by the devil’s insinuations or at the corrupt hands of imperialism and its agents,” Khomeini, 55.

⁷⁶ Nahid, interview.

⁷⁷ Motahari, 57.

⁷⁸ Ray Vicker, “Women in Iran Take To Streets in a Move To Preserve Rights: Many Fear an Islamic State, Balk at Traditional Dress; Effect on the Ayatollah,” *The Wall Street Journal*, March 12, 1979.

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, 1.

many were revolutionaries against the Shah. One revolutionary protestor said, “I only know I don’t want to go back to the *chador*. I don’t want to exchange one dictatorship for another.”⁸⁰ This protestor exemplified the commonly held belief among middle class Tehrani women that control of women’s clothing equated with dictatorship. In an interview in November 1979, Khomeini referred to the protestors as “remnants of former problems” under the Shah’s “backward” government.⁸¹ Contrasting with the anonymous protestor, Khomeini believed that compulsory veiling was not the proof of dictatorship, but rather of freedom.

After Khomeini’s initial attempt, the transition to Islamic dress was gradual and started with women who worked in government positions. In 1979 editions of *Zan-e Ruz*, women still appeared with their hair showing wearing skin-baring Western clothing [revisit **Figure 10**]. Little by little, more women were compelled to wear the *hijab* in the work place, as the government pressured private companies to enact modest dress among its female employees. In fact, local businesses were encouraged to refuse service to any women who did not wear the *hijab*.⁸² In 1981, the fundamentalist ayatollahs outmaneuvered their political opponents and enforced Islamic dress code on all women.⁸³ Once again, there were demonstrations in Tehran, but the Republic quashed them. Women’s permitted clothing consisted of a form of hijab that completely covered their hair, such as a headscarf or a *chador*, a *manteau*, which is a button-down coat, and loose-fitting clothes underneath. These garments had to be in dark or neutral colors and cover all skin aside from faces and hands [see **figure 25**]. Secular women in Tehran

⁸⁰ *Ibid*, 1.

⁸¹ Khomeini, 52.

⁸² Afshar, 264.

⁸³ Nahid, interview; Sciolino, V3.

called this form of dress their uniform.⁸⁴ Khomeini addressed a group of women that year, “one of the biggest achievements of the Islamic Revolution was the return of the veil...If the Islamic Revolution had no other outcome but the veiling of women, this in and of itself is enough for the Revolution.”⁸⁵ This speech demonstrates the importance Khomeini placed on controlling women’s dress.

The Iran-Iraq War (1980-88), when Iraq invaded the Western provinces of Iran, also influenced women’s attire. During the war, the government rationed clothing, and women could no longer afford as many clothes.⁸⁶ Women who had experience sewing often made their own clothes because it became harder to purchase new ones; clothes that women could buy from local boutiques were simpler than before the Revolution as no one had access to esteemed brands.⁸⁷ Women often wore black because of its practicality: it went well with everything and stains camouflaged easier amid the darkness.⁸⁸ Ziba, a hairdresser who, although her father was a congressman for the Shah, was a revolutionary in her youth shared, “Women after the Revolution were not as interested in fashion. We were more interested in politics—we dressed simpler and didn’t wear makeup like we used to. It seemed too superficial.”⁸⁹ Rather than worry about what they wore, many women also worried about the safety of their families during bombing strikes in Tehran. *Zan-e Ruz* reflected this mentality and in a 1982 issue, there were more pictures of casualties rather than women; in fact, the entire issue included only five pictures

⁸⁴ Ziba, interview.

⁸⁵ Masoud Kazemzadeh, *Islamic Fundamentalism, Feminism, and Gender Inequality in Iran Under Khomeini* (Lanham: University Press of America, Inc., 2002), 4.

⁸⁶ Nahid, interview.

⁸⁷ Mitra, interviewed by Rhoya Selden, notes and audio recording, Mercer Island, 22 December 2015.

⁸⁸ Nahid, interview.

⁸⁹ Ziba, interview.

of women, most of which depicted women mourning [see **Figures 26 & 27**]. In a sense, the Iran-Iraq War solidified the practice of Islamic dress as the war placed individual's rights behind the community's security.

1990s: Resuming Fashion Interest and Pushing the Boundaries of Islamic Dress

After the Iran-Iraq War ended with casualties estimated at a million, many women began to take interest in fashion again. President Hashemi Rafsanjani, decreed in November 1990, "Appreciating beauty and seeking embellishment are serious feelings. To fight them is not God's desire."⁹⁰ *Zan-e Ruz* resumed its articles on fashion and homemaking, though rather than containing beauty product advertisements as it had before the Revolution, it focused on sewing patterns. The replacement of female models' faces and limbs with *hijabi* drawn illustrations was a new development to prevent their objectification. In reality, women began to push the boundaries that had become the status quo during the war. While most women respected the regulation of Islamic dress, they started to individualize their clothes while still fitting under the general guidelines set by the Islamic government [see **Figures 28, 29 & 30** for evolution]. Women began to wear *hijabs* with decorations on them, though most women still did not wear bright colors to avoid the *Komiteh*, the police force dedicated to implementing the Islamic dress code and social behavior.⁹¹ Thus, many women began dressing in a way that "tested the system" by adding more color, wearing jeans or mini skirts underneath their *manteaus*, putting on makeup, and revealing hair.⁹²

⁹⁰ Sciolino, V3.

⁹¹ Ziba, interview.

⁹² Elaine, Sciolino, "The Will to Adorn, the Will of Allah. (How to Be Fashionable in Iran and Still Adhere to the Clothing Tenets of Islam)," *The New York Times*, May 24, 1992, V3

While these women complied with the general silhouettes of the Islamic dress code, their subtle transgressions still proved dangerous. Every spring and summer, the *Komiteh* cracked down on women who revealed more skin.⁹³ Arrest was a very realistic possibility and members of the *Komiteh* stopped women on the streets based on what they wore. They kept a checklist of possible infractions and compared it with the women they questioned. If a woman had five or more infractions, the *Komiteh* arrested and sentenced them to a set amount of lashes based on the number of infractions. After their arrest, women had to pay a hefty fine to prevent the sentenced physical punishment.⁹⁴ Nahid shared a memory from the end of her university years in 1996 of one of the times she was arrested by the *Komiteh*:

Another time they wanted to arrest me because of my outfit on the street. I was walking down the street, and I saw that they were standing in the main street; I wanted to go back home. They called me, ‘Hey you! Over there! Yes, we saw you!’ I had to go, and they said, ‘Look at you! This is the look you are coming out? After so many years after the Revolution, you haven’t learned how to come out?’ ...I didn’t have socks; I had my tennis shoes without socks. They said ‘No socks, so we can see your ankle. We can see your hair from the front. That’s another checkmark. We can see your hair from the back of the scarf. That’s another check mark. You have lipstick on, that’s another check mark. We can see your neck. That’s another check mark. And you have nail polish? Oh my god, that’s another check mark. You have six checkmarks; that means that not only are you getting a fine, but we may *shalogh* [whip] you... We are going to take you to jail.’⁹⁵

By telling her that she had not yet learned how to dress, despite it being almost twenty years after the Revolution, the *Komiteh* shamed Nahid for not presenting the qualities of the Republic’s version of the ideal modern woman. She made up an excuse of not wanting to worry her grandmother who was watching over her while her mother was out of town in order to prevent arrest, and in the end they let her go. However, other times she was not so lucky and had to pay

⁹³Sciolino, V3; Nahid, interview.

⁹⁴ Nahid, interview.

⁹⁵ Nahid, interview.

extremely expensive fines or bribes to resist jail time and physical punishment. A few days later, she said the *Komiteh* arrested her friend. Because her friend also had more than five checkmarks, she had to go to court and pay her way out of physical punishment. Nahid likened the government's enforcement policy to a business that used sumptuary laws to make money rather than for their original purpose of protecting women.⁹⁶

The Paradox in Iranian Society in Regards to Women's Dress and Values

Although both the Pahlavi Monarchy and the Islamic Republic of Iran aimed to create either a liberal or conservative atmosphere in the nation's capital through sumptuary laws affecting women's dress, the results of their nationalist platforms failed to eradicate previously existing principles. Nahid's example of her grandmother who would only travel in public after the veil ban by walking on roofs demonstrates how despite the strict enforcement of Reza Shah's new modern social customs, women resisted. Later, her own example of "bad *hijab*," which is when hair shows underneath the headscarf, proved her own post-revolution generation's defiance [see **Figure 31**]. In both cases, these women respected the broader structure of the law while interpreting it differently to accomplish their own agendas that corresponded with their personal values, not the government's.

Most of the women I interviewed had strong memories of instances in which they fought with their parents during Shah times over clothing. Amin attributes these interactions to a generation gap.⁹⁷ In the 1960s when the sexual revolution took place in the West, women's clothing became more and more revealing in Europe, and therefore in Iran who mainly imported its fashions. As the "dangerous woman" warning cartoons and other forms of Pahlavi ideal

⁹⁶ Nahid, interview.

⁹⁷ "Importing Beauty Culture into Iran," 81.

modern woman propaganda demonstrate, the older generation still held onto social anxieties about the prospects of immoral women. Zohreh's mother chastised her for wearing a mini skirt, patterned pantyhose, and makeup to her own *khastegari*. A *khastegari* is an Iranian tradition in which a man and his mother visit the house of a prospective bride. During this meeting, the prospective bride serves her potential husband and mother-in-law tea so they can view her. If the couple and their families approve of each other, they begin marriage negotiations. According to Zohreh's sister, the prospective young man was immediately attracted to Zohreh, however judging by the woman's facial expression, his mother certainly opposed Zohreh's style; needless to say, it did not result in an engagement.⁹⁸ Zohreh also shared a memory of when her brother, Ali, visited from his study abroad in England:

Ali came to Tehran to ask *Baba* [Dad] and *Mommon* [Mom] if he could get married to Sabine, and he brought me beautiful black pants—but with a flare—you know, the 60s pants—and he brought me a nylons [leggings], which were really in fashion in those days that had a wet look...red, red, red!...*Baba* didn't like it, but who cares? And he brought me a long raincoat. A loose, long, maxi raincoat ...I would wear my long raincoat and go to school, and this way my principal wouldn't notice what I was wearing underneath.⁹⁹

Zohreh demonstrates how the older generation, especially males, disapproved of the 1960s mod outfits that teenagers wore inspired by style icons such as the British model Twiggy, whose influence she fondly remembers. In Iran's patriarchal society, Zohreh felt that she had to hide her clothes the most from her father. She clarified that it was not simply out of fear for how he would punish her if he saw, but mainly out of respect for her father. She and her sister wore more

⁹⁸ Zohreh, interview.

⁹⁹ Zohreh, interview.

conservative clothing at home, and then once they left to interact in public with other teenagers, they changed their modest clothing for mini-jupes.¹⁰⁰

While Ziba was a bit too young at the time for the conservative standards held at home to affect her much personally, she recalled how it caused fights between her mother and her older sisters. She said that her mother always critiqued her sisters' clothing by commenting on how much skin was exposed; either their dresses were too short, or too much of their arms showed. She recollected how her sisters always rolled up their skirts when they went out in public and rolled them back down whenever they were in front of their parents.¹⁰¹ This deceitful behavior became a pattern among my interviewees. Despite the liberal fashion displays in public, it is clear that many households in Tehran, including *Shahi* ones, still clung tight to conservative values left over from the Qajar period.

In the Islamic Republic of Iran, the opposite rings true. After the Iran-Iraq War ended, and the Tehrani population adopted a less serious demeanor, many middle-class men and women resented the forced conservatism in society. Contrasting Shah times, even older generations from secular families pushed boundaries, as they were the teenagers who rolled up their skirts in public during the 1960s and 70s; their generation gave up their lives for the Revolution, and were therefore the most disillusioned with how it turned out. As the urban population had to adhere to the Republic's conservative values in public or face arrest and imprisonment—or worse—many secular families became more liberal within the privacy of their homes in order to cope with the various restrictions. Nahid shared how she even spent a night in jail because of a mixed-gendered gathering she attended in the mid-1990s on the anniversary of Imam Hussein, the grandson of the

¹⁰⁰ Zohreh, interview.

¹⁰¹ Ziba, interview.

Prophet, and his family's massacre. She tried to protest to the judge by stating that all of the guests were related. He did not show her sympathy, and told her that the mixing of genders was against Republic's best interests. First, the fact that her family threw a party during 'Ashura, the most important Shiite day of mourning, challenges the depictions of religious zeal among the nation's youth in post-revolution *Zan-e Ruz* [see **Figure 32**]. Traditional ritual among Shi'as usually includes wearing black, wailing, and self-flagellation.¹⁰² Second, the government's anxiety over the mixing of genders emphasized the new nationalist ideology that predated the Pahlavis.

The frequency of mix-gendered parties gradually increased again. Ziba attributes part of her success as a hairstylist in Iran in the 1990s because women wanted to appear extremely attractive at these private parties in order to make up for enforced the *hijab* in public.¹⁰³ This trend has only increased since the 1990s. Nahid conceded that although a woman's virginity was still extremely important then, when she talks with her friends and relatives back in Tehran she learned that "nobody" placed emphasis on it anymore. She added that affairs are now a common occurrence in society, and even many married women have boyfriends.¹⁰⁴ Of course, this is a subjective viewpoint that may not reflect that of most Iranian women, however this exaggeration proves that such relationships have increased in recent years in Tehran. A young man who recently moved to America from the Islamic Republic claimed that nowadays everyone in Tehran constantly thinks about sex [see **Figure 33**].¹⁰⁵ Anthropologist Shirin Abdmolaei argues

¹⁰² According to Zohreh, Reza Shah banned these public acts of mourning, however they were reinstated after the Revolution. In her words, "Reza Shah believed in God—but he did so in a true way. He just tried to get rid of all of that monkey business. After Revolution, they brought it all back."

¹⁰³ Ziba, interview.

¹⁰⁴ Nahid, interview.

¹⁰⁵ Pooya, interview by Rhoya Selden, notes, 20 November, 2015.

that women in Tehran are currently exploring their politicized sexualities; one of her interviewees said she just wanted to feel “sexy,” which was difficult while properly adhering to the Islamic dress code.¹⁰⁶ The perception of a sexual awakening in Tehran suggests that a culture of premarital and extramarital sex exists within the conservative framework in Tehran. As the mullahs aimed to prevent further sexualization of young Iranian women that they felt was occurring during the Pahlavi era, the back and forth nature of sumptuary laws ironically contributed to a sexual liberation among some youths that both governments tried to prevent.

Conclusion

The comparison of a large variety of related primary sources provides rich insight into the culture of propaganda that shaped the nature of the ideal modern Iranian woman during the Pahlavi monarchy and the Islamic Republic of Iran. Using my selection of sources, I juxtaposed each government’s version of Iranian nationalism through the lens of the moral politics of dress. Both regimes share the principle of women as representations of familial and national honor in order to illustrate a broader picture of nationalism: women as the visualization of national purity and reputation. Despite their different ideologies, both governments controlled women’s appearance and social practices through sumptuary laws. Furthermore, both governments enacted their different changes for the same purpose: to prevent further sexualization and immorality among women.

Secularists during the end of the Qajar Dynasty and the beginning of the Pahlavi era believed that the ancient Persian heritage deteriorated to a point of backwardness and corruption, and women proved no exception to corrosion. In an effort to modernize the country and to

¹⁰⁶ Shirin Abdmolaei, “(Re)fashioning Resistance: Women, Dress and Sexuality in Iran,” *Anthropology of the Middle East* 9 (2014): 52, 51.

improve the standards of women, and therefore the nation, Reza Shah banned the veil in 1936 to remove what secularists viewed as a superficial form of modesty. Through education, Reza Shah believed that women would become better mothers by instilling modern and nationalist principles in the next generation of Iranians. By the time of the reign of his son, Mohammad Reza Shah, most of Tehrani society had become used to the sumptuary laws instilled by Reza Shah. Under Mohammad Reza Shah in the 1960s and 70s, the Shahbanu, Farah Diba, and the Miss Iran competitors provided examples of the Pahlavi's vision of the ideal modern woman: well-educated, dressed in European styles, modest, charitable, and contributing citizens.

However, traditional and religious groups remained opposed to the Pahlavis' Westernized policies, which they believed to objectify women through imported hypersexualization. After the mullahs took control of Iran's government after 1979 and formed an Islamic republic, they gradually forced women to dress conservatively, wearing *hijab*, to combat the objectification of women during the Pahlavi era. Despite protests of secular Tehrani women, the Iran-Iraq War in the 1980s necessitated solidarity, and fashion became viewed as an unnecessary luxury. Despite the indifferent atmosphere towards clothing during the war, after its conclusion, women began to push the boundaries of their compulsory dress code in a similar fashion as in the 1930s.

While women wore revealing mini-jupes during the late 1960s and the 1970s, traditional values at home restricted their behavior. In contrast, to combat the strict conservative values displayed in public, many women became more liberal in the private realm, including their attitudes towards sex and virginity. Both governments used the same stratagem for the same reason, however their conflicting laws created a new culture among young Iranians in Tehran that often opposed both of their agendas in private.

Though one government banned the *hijab* while the other enforced it, their reasoning was based on the same principle. Each government had its own vision of the ideal modern woman that corresponded with their different forms of nationalism, but both used the same strategy in attempt to achieve it—and for the same purpose. In fact, much of their rhetoric is extremely similar; it can be difficult to tell them apart at a first glance. For example, both cite the Qur’an to support their guardianship over women. Both claim that guiding moral women was essential for Iran’s well-being, because as mothers they taught the future generations.¹⁰⁷ In an interview in 1978, Khomeini questioned the freedom women had under the Pahlavis since they did not have the choice to wear the *hijab* if they desired. A month before, he criticized the strict policed nature of the veil-ban that went against many women’s wishes during Reza Shah’s reign. Ironically a few years later, the Islamic Republic enforced their sumptuary laws in a similar fashion with the *Komiteh*.¹⁰⁸ This parallel ties in with the protestor’s concern about exchanging one dictatorship with another. When both governments sought to control women’s dress, the women of Tehran pushed boundaries to express their own individuality and beliefs—a movement still current on the streets of Tehran.

¹⁰⁷ Pahlavi, 235-7; Khomeini, 11.

¹⁰⁸ Khomeini, 128.

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“Passports.” Tehran, c. 1983-1999. Personal collection of Shirin Sarikhani.



Figures 1 (left) & 2 (right)- In both photos, a group of five Iranian women wear the *chador* (**1**: modern *chador*. **2**: Qajar-era *chador*). The *chador* exposes only the woman's face, feet, and hands. The three women on the right in **Figure 1**, and on the left in **Figure 2**, hold the *chador* shut with their hands—covering part of their faces. The *chador* is not fastened by any pins, adding to the impractical nature of the garment that secularists during Reza Shah's reign argued was prohibiting women from being productive members of Tehrani society. They argued that a woman could not accomplish much if she has to constantly worry about holding her *chador* shut underneath her chin. In **Figure 2**, the women on the right struggle to hold their children while holding the *chador*. The *chador* is a form of Islamic dress specific to Iran.

1: Nour Azadi, "5-Chadors," 8 March 2013, accessed February 2016, found on mirzaeheshghi.com.

2: "Photo of Women with Chador and Veil and Two Infants," c. early twentieth century, Institute for Iranian Contemporary Historical Studies, accessed February 2016, found on Qajarwomen.org.



Figure 3- A group of Qajar women in Tehran. These women sit idly, confined in their home. The woman on the left is smoking a hookah, while the woman on the right looks at herself in a mirror, admiring herself. All three women wear a form of the *hijab* that is fastened under their chin by a pin called the *khimar*. The woman on the right wears lighter colored garments than the *chadors* she would be expected to wear outside of her home. She also wears a short skirt, inspired by the ballet tutus from France. Qajar king Naser al-Din Shah was the first Persian monarch who visited Europe on multiple occasions, and inspired by the ballerinas, he ordered his wives and the women in his harem to wear short skirts upon his return. Despite their short skirts, he still expected them to remain wearing the veil as demonstrated in this photo. Secularists also argued that women in upper class families across Tehran also proved indolent similarly to the royal women in the harem.

“Photo of Qajar Girls at the Harem Smoking Hookah,”
 1891, The Smithsonian’s Museums of Asian Art, accessed
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http://www.fouman.com/history/Iran_Historical_Photos_Gallery.htm.



Figure 4- Sign on door: “Twenty percent discount to veiled women.” Veiled woman to bazaar merchant: “Dear *Hajji* [honorific title for a Muslim who has completed the *hajj* pilgrimage to Mecca], I will also give you twenty percent discount.” The veiled prostitute in underclothes, platform sandals, and gaudy makeup opens up her *chador* to reveal her body underneath to the overly eager *bazari* [merchant/bazaar worker] who spills from his pitcher as he smiles and clutches his suspended pants in lust. This cartoon is from 1947, just over ten years after the veil-ban. At this time, only prostitutes were allowed to wear the *chador*, and in fact they were forbidden to unveil unless they got married and changed their immoral way of life. This cartoon demonstrates what secularists argued as the corrupting force of the veil. I could not get access to any of the cartoons dated prior the veil-ban, however based on the arguments given during the end of the Qajar dynasty and the beginning of the Pahlavi, one can conclude that this cartoon illustrates similar concepts on the immorality of women who wore the *chador*.

Cartoon from progressive newspaper *Baba Shamal*, 1947, reproduced in Janet Afary, *Sexual Politics in Modern Iran* (New York, Cambridge University Press 2009), 178.



Figure 5- Caption: “Woman to her lover: Do you see? Good thing I wore my *chador* or he would have caught us.” This cartoon is from the 1940s, in the decade after the veil-ban. Again, I could not get access to any of the cartoons dated prior 1936, however based on the arguments given during the end of the Qajar dynasty and the beginning of the Pahlavi, one can conclude that this cartoon illustrates similar concepts on the immorality of women who wore the *chador*.

Cartoon from progressive newspaper *Baba Shamal*, 1948, reproduced in Janet Afary, *Sexual Politics in Modern Iran* (New York, Cambridge University Press 2009), 177.



Figure 6-Pink caption: “When I see Layla...being a mother is creating a masterpiece: a human being!” This article talks about a female Iranian writer. In one of the sections of the article, it focuses on the author’s motherhood. This author represents the ideal modern Iranian woman under the Pahlavis: she is dressed in simple and modest Western clothing, well-educated, professional, but she still honors her civic duty and prioritizes motherhood. This article was published shortly after the Revolution, but before the political mullahs had a firm grip over Iran.

Article photo, *Zan-e Ruz* (Tehran), September/October 1979, 9.



Figure 7- Reza Shah (man in foreground wearing a cape) and his son, Mohammad Reza (young man in foreground wearing a peaked military cap), then the crown prince, visiting a school after the veil ban in 1936. On the left is a group of Iranian girls wearing the new school uniforms with hair ribbons rather than veils. These girls belong to the generation that grew up in Tehran's new modern society, where Reza Shah's new laws created the ideal modern Iranian woman. These girls would later become the next teachers of Iran's children. Reza Shah instilled propaganda that promoted the new ideal female through his secure control of Iran's school curriculums.

Photograph from 1936, Iranian Historical Photographs Gallery, accessed February 2016, found on http://www.fouman.com/history/Iran_Historical_Photos_Gallery.htm.



Figure 8-“Doctor to nurse: ‘The patient’s heart races whenever you are in the room. You should leave to save his life!’” This woman has the potential to be the Pahlavi ideal. She is a professional nurse, and therefore she must be educated. However her behavior is not so “professional.” Her dress is extra tight, falling over her shoulders, and her large breasts pop out, revealing her nipples. She wears sky-high heels, and stands clutching her cleavage. Her face is heavily made up and her hair is slightly messy suggesting that she recently had sex. In this cartoon, this “dangerous” woman was literally dangerous as she was killing her patient—who seems to be dying happily. This woman is a sex object.

Cartoon from satirical magazine *Towfiq*, 1966 reproduced in Janet Afary, *Sexual Politics in Modern Iran* (New York, Cambridge University Press 2009), 224.



Figure 9- Reza Shah's third wife and daughters appear at an important official ceremony unveiled, and wearing European hats, per the Shah's request, on January 8, 1936. According to Mohammad Reza Shah in his autobiography, it was the first instance in which women attended a public function without veils.

Photograph from 1936, Iranian Historical Photographs Gallery, accessed January 2016, found on http://www.fouman.com/history/Iran_Historical_Photos_Gallery.htm.



Figure 10- Caption: “Stilbepan: This famous shampoo from Dagra, Netherlands.” American actress Farrah Fawcett, famous for her iconic thick, blonde, layered hair, sells Dutch shampoo to Tehrani readers. This is one of many examples of Westernization found in *Zan-e Ruz*. This particular ad is in an issue from 1979, the year of the formation of the Islamic Republic. Farrah strikes a pose, shirtless; essentially she exemplifies the objectification of “sex sells” that the mullahs denounced. This ad illustrates the gradual implementation of Islamic regulations on women’s appearance both in life and in the media after Khomeini’s initial attempt.

Shampoo Advertisement, *Zan-e Ruz* (Tehran), October/November 1979, 92.

**با کاتالوگ ما از لندن خرید کنید
بدون اینکه احتیاج به مسافرت کردن داشته باشید.**

فردی مایز لندن اولین فروشگاه پستی انگلستان برای اولین بار در ایران مجموعه‌ای از زیباترین طرحهای تابستان ۱۹۷۸ را در کاتالوگ ۸۸۰ صفحه‌ای فردی مایز به خانها و آقایان شیک پوش ایرانی عرضه میکند.

تی شرت، شلوار، مایو، لباسهای کشاد و سارافون،
لباسهای عصر و شب، پولور، کفش، کیف، پیراهن، کت و شلوار،
لباسهای کنار دریا و پیراهنهای اسبوت بردانه، لباسهای بچه‌ها و
فقط کالیفت کوبین را پر کرده به آدرس ما بفرستید یا شخصا مراجعه فرمایید.
لباسهای مورد علاقه خود را با مناسبترین قیمت و در کمترین زمان در منزل
خود تحویل بگیرید.

فرم درخواست کاتالوگ

نام و نام خانوادگی _____
تلفن _____
نشانی _____

Figure 11- Freeman’s catalog advertisement. Title: “With our catalogs you can order from London without needing to travel.” Text Body: “London’s Freemans, England’s first mail-order store in Iran, offers fashionable Iranian men and women a collection of the most beautiful designs for summer 1978 in a 880 page catalog. T-shirts, pants, swimming suits, dresses, night and evening dresses, sweaters, handbags, shirts, suits, men’s casual wear, kids clothing etc. All you need to do is send this coupon to our address or visit us in person. Receive your favorite clothing with the best prices in your own home.” This mail-order shows Western influence and the easy access women had to Western clothing brands before the Revolution.

Freeman’s Mail-Order Catalog Advertisement, *Zan-e Ruz* (Tehran), April/May 1978, 99.



Figure 12-This is a homemade set of garments made by my grandmother's cousin and sewing expert, Maneejeh Mozaffarian. Made in Tehran, she constructed a coordinated outfit consisting of a velvet vest and pencil skirt. She used fabric imported from Europe.

Homemade garments from Tehran, c. 1970s, personal collection of Maneejeh Mozaffarian, Bellevue.



Figures 13 & 14- Left: “Doctor: ‘Three times I have done a face lift. If I do it one more time, your toes will come out [of your skin].’ Woman: ‘No problem. I will wear shoes.’” Right: “Man: ‘I know that you will change your mind. That’s why I have saved the extra part of your last year’s nose. Big noses are popular this year. Now I can put it back.’” These cartoons warned against shallow Tehrani women who focused entirely on their looks rather than their other responsibilities. Both women wear tight-fitting black mini dresses that show off their cleavage, arms, and legs. The woman on the left [13] even has her garters showing. The woman on the right [14] has the outline of her nipples detailed.

Side-by-side Cartoons, *Zan-e Ruz* (Tehran), September/October 1979, 40-41.



Figure 15- Nahid's aunt kisses the *Shahbanu* on her cheek, c. early-mid 1960s. In this photo, the *Shahbanu* is dressed in Western styles that are more conservative. While chic, she is modest wearing a tailored jacket and a midi-length pencil skirt. She wears a necklace of three strands of pearls and a small rectangular handbag for simplistic elegance. She wears makeup, but it is not overdone, displaying her natural beauty. She bends down and holds onto the girl as she kisses her, showing unpretentiousness. It is customary in Iranian culture for people either related or of the same gender to greet one another with a kiss on each cheek called *ruboosi*. During the act of *ruboosi*, one does not actually kiss the cheek, but rather touches their cheek to the other person's and kisses the air as Farah Diba is doing in this picture. However, the little girl in the picture kisses the *Shahbanu*'s actual cheek emphasizing a deep admiration.

Photograph c. early-mid 1960s, personal collection of Nahid, Tacoma.



Figure 16- The Shahbanu Farah Diba during a state dinner in the “friends and allies” section of her photo gallery. She wears her hair straight and piled high into a very large and voluminous beehive updo. She wears a jeweled tiara that matches her earrings to show of her royal position.

Photograph c. late 1960s, Friends and Allies section of the Royal Photo Gallery of Iran, accessed February 2016, found on <http://www.farahpahlavi.org/media-gallery/photo-album/category/21-friends-allies>.



Figure 17-A photo of my maternal great aunt in the mid-1960s.

Photograph c. early-mid 1960s, personal collection of Shirin Sarikhani, Seattle.



Figure 18-1978 Miss Iran nominees Fereshteh Shirzad (left) and Fereshteh Dashte-Kian (right) displaying their skills in martial arts. The title of the photo found on the nostalgia photo gallery section in Iranian.com

Article photo, *Zan-e Ruz* (Tehran), August 1978.

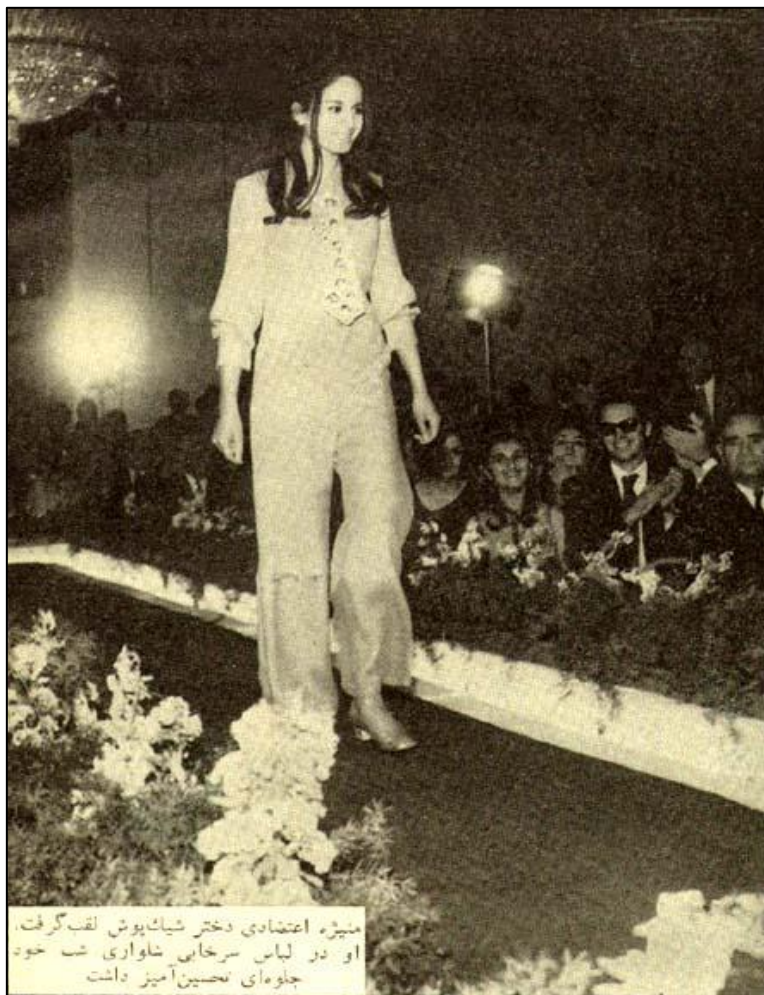


Figure 19-Manijeh Etezadi wins title of “Best Dressed” in *Dokhtar-e Shayesteh* competition in 1968. She wears a flared jumpsuit with a scarf in the front. The outfit, while a bold and fashionable silhouette is conservative covering her cleavage, legs, and most of her arms. This photo is another example of how the ideal modern Iranian woman was expected to wear stylish fashions from the West, while remaining semi-conservative and classy.

Miss Iran contest photo, *Zan-e Ruz* (Tehran), 1968.



Figure 20- Text: “Miss Iran, Soudan Hakima, has flown to Turkey to take part of the Miss World Competition with Homa Airlines [Iran Air]. The picture shows Soudan Hakima, winner of Iran Miss Competition in 1352 [the date given is in the Shamsi calendar; converted, it is 1973 in the Gregorian calendar], taken by *Zan-e Ruz* magazine in cooperation with Iran’s national airline before leaving Tehran.” Here Soudan Hakima proudly wears a mini-jupe dress while advertising Iran Air. While her dress is short and revealing as it displays her thighs, her torso and arms are covered.

Miss Iran sponsorship advertisement for Iran Air, *Zan-e Ruz* (Tehran), 1973.

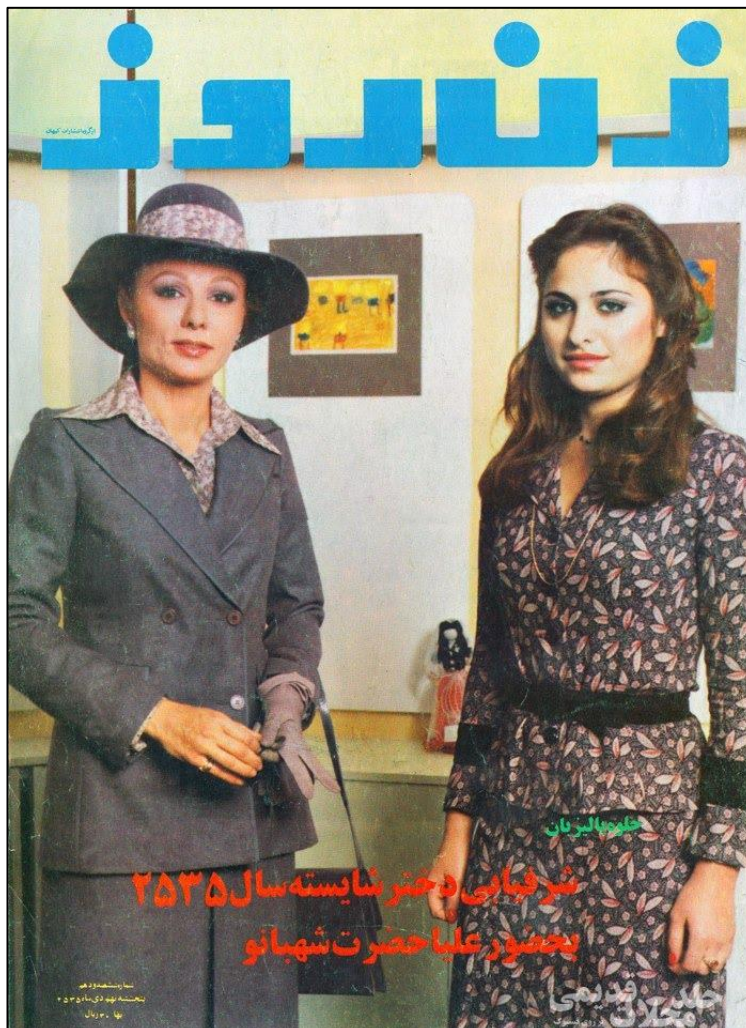


Figure 22- Headline: “Miss Iran of year 2535, visits the Shahbanu Farah Pahlavi.” Here the two women are side by side, dressed in classy silhouettes in corresponding colors. The Empress wears a double-breasted suit, gloves, a small structured handbag, a patterned blouse with the distinct 1970s pointed collar that matches the ribbon in her hat. The Miss Iran, Jelveh Palizban, wears fitted coordinated outfit of the same material with a belt that matches the bands on her sleeve. Both women wear similar makeup fashionable of the 1970s with colored eye shadow, mascara, and coral toned blush and lipstick. They both stand up straight, poised with elegance. A 1978 cartoon in *Zan-e Ruz* said, “Prope body movements are more important than having a beautiful body.” The fact that *Zan-e Ruz* uses the new calendar that was based off of the 2,500 year anniversary of Persian monarchy that Mohammad Reza Shah tried to promote rather than the Shamsi calendar that was standard emphasizes his attempts to reemphasize monarchy as Iranian nationalism during a tumultuous and critical political climate.

Magazine cover, *Zan-e Ruz* (Tehran), December 1976.



Figure 23- Yellow text: “The revolution that removing *hijab* created in Iranian women’s lives.” This caption on the cover of an (unknown) issue of *Zan-e Ruz* demonstrates how *Shahis* promoted the image of women liberated by the Pahlavi monarchs. The image portrays a woman wearing Western clothing, including a mini skirt, in the foreground confidently smiling hand on hips meanwhile an unknown woman stands in the background looking unhappy hidden by her *chador*. Despite various reform laws under the Pahlavis, such as women’s suffrage as part of the White Revolution in 1963, women still had limited opportunities. Only a token number of women achieved highly ranked professional positions or entered male-dominated professions. Jalal Al-i Ahmad wrote “we really have given women only the right to parade themselves in public.”¹⁰⁹ The fact that women were “given” any rights at all is another point of feminist critique in which the Pahlavi monarchy simply granted women a few rights for self-interested agenda. The predominately male government controlled the women’s movement in Iran instead of Iranian women themselves. Scholar Nahid Yeganeh stated, “Pahlavi gender policy did not aim to remove patriarchal relations, simply to modernize them.”¹¹⁰ However in retrospect, most of the women I interviewed believed that Pahlavi gender policy was the lesser of two evils as compared to the Republic’s.

Magazine Cover, *Zan-e Ruz* (Tehran), c. mid 1960s.

¹⁰⁹ Ahmad, 70.

¹¹⁰ Yeganeh, 6.

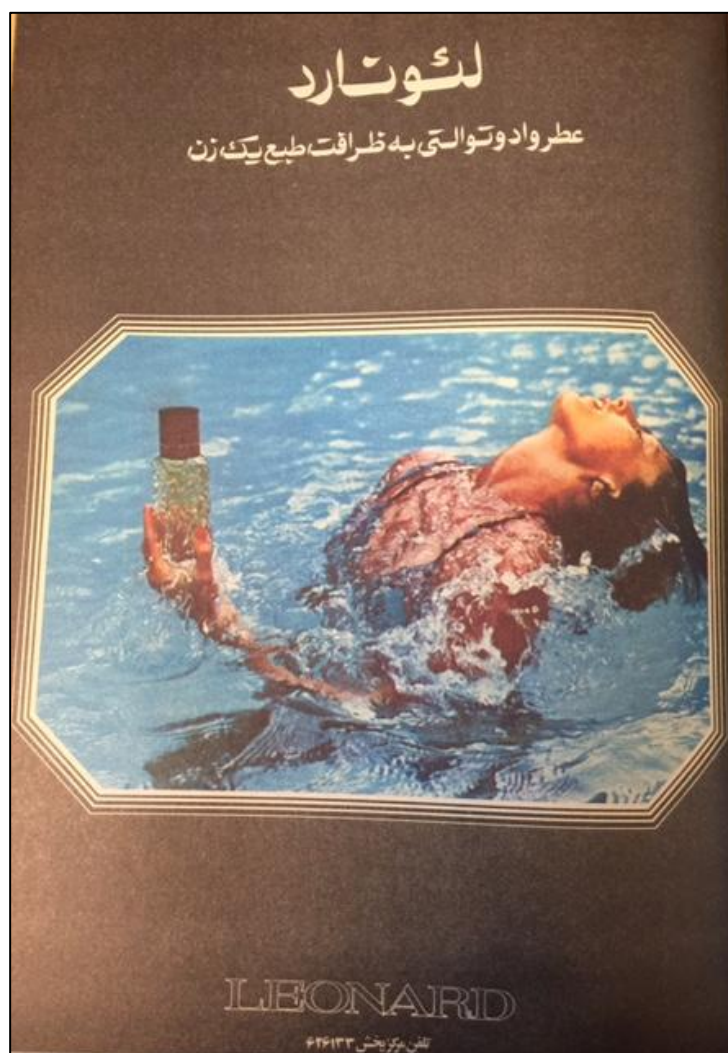


Figure 24- Text: “Leonard. Perfume and eau d’toilet as a woman’s taste.” This advertisement depicts a woman leaning back in ecstasy while holding Leonard’s perfume from France. This advertisement is dated from a year before the Revolution and during the time period Motahari decried against the corruption in Tehrani society.

Leonard Perfume advertisement, *Zan-e Ruz* (Tehran), 1978.

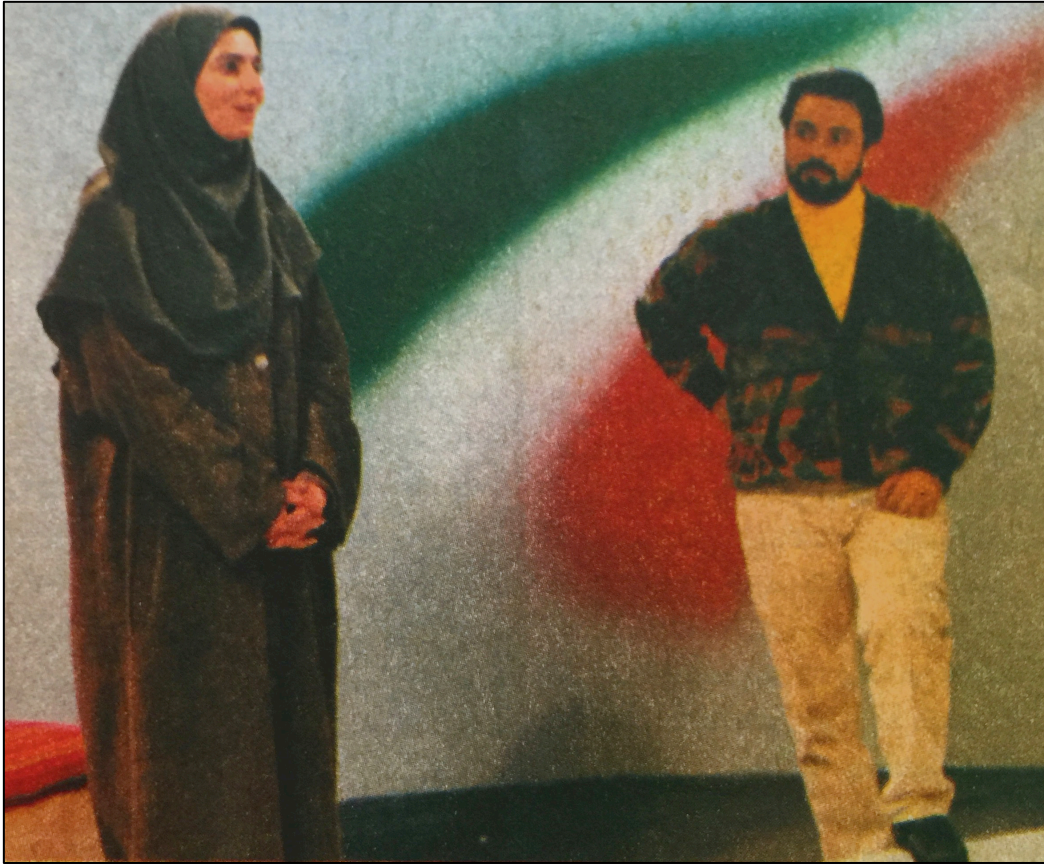


Figure 25- A woman stands holding her hands together wearing a dark gray *Al-Amira* form of the *hijab*. Underneath her veil, she wears a long, loose-fitting and shapeless coat. Next to her, is a man wearing typical 90s clothing that men wore in Western countries. While men could continue wearing Western clothing, women had to adhere to the Islamic dress code regulated by the Republic.

Article photo, *Zan-e Ruz* (Tehran), 1998.



Figure 26- The cover of an issue of *Zan-e Ruz* during the Iran-Iraq War. The picture definitely depicts religious propaganda as citizens raise a martyr, dressed in a soldier's uniform, up to the heavens. Compare this image with other *Zan-e Ruz* covers prior to the Iran-Iraq War. This issue contained no advertisements of beauty products or any discussion of fashion. This issue of Iran's leading women's magazine barely had any images of women; it mostly wrote about Shi'ism, the ayatollahs, and about the war.

Magazine cover, *Zan-e Ruz* (Tehran), 1982.



Figure 27—One of the only images of women in the 1982 issue of *Zan-e Ruz* that I examined. Most of the few pictures of women showed them mourning—presumably over the Iran-Iraq War. This image definitely contrasts the smiling women in the magazine prior to the war.

Illustration, *Zan-e Ruz* (Tehran), 1982, 20.



Figure 28- Passport picture of my grandmother issued in 1983, shortly after the government widely imposed Islamic dress after its gradual introduction, and during the Iran-Iraq War. She wears a black chador that she holds shut with her hands underneath. This chador obscures part of her face, noticeably free from makeup. Her hair is completely covered.

Passport photo, 1983, personal collection of Shirin Sarikhani, Seattle.



Figure 29- Passport picture of my grandmother issued in 1989. By this time, the fighting of the Iran-Iraq War had ceased and peace negotiations were underway. She wears a looser-fitting *Al-Amira hijab* that shows more of her face than **Figure 28**. Her *hijab* is slightly lighter than the black of her chador, though it is still has a dark hue. There are also slight patterns on the scarf.

Passport photo, 1989, personal collection of Shirin Sarikhani, Seattle.



Figure 30- Passport picture of my grandmother issued in 1999. She wears a silken headscarf tied together in the front. The scarf is a light neutral color with designs. A wisp of hair shows underneath her scarf, and part of her neck is revealed. She also wears makeup. It is interesting to note that despite her bending of the Islamic dress code, the government still sanctioned her passport photo, showing a slight lenience that developed over time. However, in most forms of media, the government ensures that it captures women who strictly adhere to the sumptuary laws.

Passport photo, 1999, personal collection of Shirin Sarikhani, Seattle.



Figure 31- An example of “bad *hijab*” from the Instagram account: therichkidsoftehran. This account is full of incriminating images of the upper class youth in Tehran who defy the Republic’s laws on women’s dress and the mixing of genders. These three women all have their hair showing through their scarves and their arms and feet are on display. They also wear skinny jeans and makeup, which is not technically allowed.

Instagram photo found at therichkidsoftehran, c. 2015.



Figure 32- Pictured: four young Iranian girls wearing *chadors* and the color green—symbolic of the Islamic religion. Article excerpt: “These days are Ali’s days, and you my 13-18 year old friends, you are not a stranger to Ali. You both know him and you love him a lot. Have you ever thought why Ali is Ali the way he is? It’s because he chose his path about your age, and he chose wisdom and knowledge and to adhere to Mohammad’s religion and to be his disciple.” This article is a form of religious propaganda in a 1998 issue of *Zan-e Ruz* magazine. Essentially, the government, through *Zan-e Ruz*, guides young women to become their ideal of the model Iranian woman. Contrast this with the Miss Iran competition. In another article in another 1998 issue, it stresses the importance of formal education of women to ensure they contribute to civic society while presenting another image of young women wearing the *chador*. While the Pahlavis argued that women could not receive a proper education or be productive while wearing a *chador*, the Islamic Republic presents the opposite case. However, they both strive for the same nationalist goal: capable and moral women to lead the next generation of Iranians.

Article photo, *Zan-e Ruz* (Tehran), 1998, 37.



Figure 33- A young woman kisses a young man on the cheek while embracing. She wears a loose t-shirt that bares her stomach and daisy duke cut-off shorts. Her face also has a lot of makeup. This shows the mixing of genders and their sexualization among wealthier secular classes in Tehran today. While most women probably do not dress or behave in this manner, this photo is evidence of its existence today.

Instagram photo found at therickidsoftehran, c. 2015.