

Banning the hijab during the 1930s history essay



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To what extent did the banning of the hijab during the 1930s in Iran negatively affect the social perceptions of women in Iranian society?

Iran is the eighteenth largest country in the world. It is located in the Middle East and central Eurasia. Iran is bordered by Turkmenistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Russia to the north, by Afghanistan and Pakistan on the east, the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman on the south, and on the west by Turkey and Iraq. The mountain ranges on the northwestern and western borders of Iran merge into the mountain ranges of Anatolia, Armenia, and Caucasus. Iran has one of the world's oldest civilizations, and throughout its long history, it has seen the rise and fall of great Persian empires, as well as having been invaded and occupied frequently. The country has still managed to retain much of its cultural integrity. During the 1930s, Iran witnessed a female movement. Reza Shah Pahlavi came into power and banned the hijab. The hijab, also referred to as a veil, is a head covering that covers the hair, ears and neck, it is commonly worn by Muslim women, and since Iran was a dominantly Islamic nation, it was often seen on most women. During this time in Iran, women were seen as inferior to men, and were not at all regarded as equals. When Reza Shah Pahlavi came into power, he felt that women should be more involved in the political systems, and seen as equals to men. He felt that the hijab was suppressing women and so he decided that he would ban the hijab altogether. He hoped that banning the hijab would only further Iranian society and the status of women, however there were also many consequences of this action, and it was removed in later years

Iran was ruled under the Qajar Dynasty between 1785 and 1925. The Qajar era marked a milestone in the political history of Iran as Iran was transformed into an independent political state with a central monarch from a primarily tribal country. After the partition of Iran from Alexander the Great, Iran had not returned to a state of unification, causing Iran to be ruled by multiple smaller kingdoms. None of the various leaders were successful in unifying the country until the Qajars, and the country was finally amalgamated under the rule of a central leadership. During the Qajar era, there was an absence of evolution of the political system. The state was ruled by a royal household and governed by imperial fiat and decree. The era was imprinted by a lack of social and political reforms, however the Qajar government still continued to evolve until the 1870s. During the Qajar era, there was a concurrence with the Great Powers and Iran. The contacts between Iran and Britain and Russia progressed out of diplomatic interests, as well as global economic and military structures. European powers believed Iran was a significant role in the arising international balance. In the early nineteenth century, Iran fell victim to a number of international development projects, as it had almost no control over them. The shahs had secured foreign loans to finance their European travels, and a few Qajar politicians who believed the countries advancement could be accelerated by increasing their political and economic ties with Europe. Although the Qajars were successfully able to revolutionize Iran from a tribal nation into a dynastic kingdom, Iran was still lacking respect among the international community, along with economic and political independence.

During the last decade of the 19th century, and the first of the 20th century, the forces in Iran that were opposed to foreign domination, arbitrary rule, and political life corruption made the first advances towards national revival, which were unfortunately reversed and worsened through more humiliations. World War I was desolate period, however it was succeeded by building of the state under the new Pahlavi dynasty. The beginning of Iran's history as a modern state began with the Tobacco Rebellion of 1891-1892. The current ruler, Naser-al Din Shah had a relentless need for money, which led to a negotiation with a British subject, enabling the British subject to form the Imperial Tobacco Corporation. The company would obtain exclusive rights for fifty years to the production, sale, and export of all tobacco in Iran in exchange for an outright payment to the shah as well as a yearly rent and 25% of all profits. Disturbances broke out in Shiraz, which was the center of the tobacco trade. Merchants were closing down the bazaar in protest. This sparked a chain of similar incidents in a large amount of other cities in Iran, resulting in a large boycott of tobacco. Under the pressure of an almost universal boycott and acceleratingly violent demonstrations, the concession was cancelled in January 1892. The Tobacco Rebellion embodied a forming coalition of merchants with reformist scholars in an attempt to stand against corrupt government and foreign domination. Unfortunately, after the failure of the tobacco concession, Iran was in a state of financial need. The current ruler, Amin-al-Soltan turned to Russia for financial assistance and negotiated a loan in January 1900. The various loans and concessions did not aid much in easing the economic crisis in Iran. In 1906, the shah agreed to the creation of the adalat-khaneh which was thought to mean "to carry out the religious law and ensure the security of the subjects". On February 21st, 1921 there

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was a coup when disciples of the Cossack Brigade from Qazvin marched into Tehran, taking control of the government offices, they declared martial law and dethroned the cabinet. This coup resulted in a new prime minister named Sayyed Zia-al-Din Tabatabai, while Reza Khan was commander of the army and later on minister of war. Five days after the coup, a Soviet-Iranian Friendship Treaty was signed, securing peaceful relations and the removal of Soviet forces. This treated aided in Reza Pahlavi's assertion of government control over other areas.

Iran was ruled under the Pahlavi Dynasty from 1921 to 1941 under Reza Shah and continued into the late 1970s under Mohammad Reza after which it died a speedy death. Reza Shah's reign has been argued to be a prolonged revolution because of the fact that he implemented many dramatic changes in Iranian politics and society. Under the Pahlavi, changes did appear in bureaucracy and economic powers, however the political system remained composed of an absolutist monarch supported by military and governmental institutions. The Qajars and Pahlavis both aimed to gain legitimacy for their monarchies through utilizing principles that were embedded in the cultural traditions and heritage of Iran. Instead of portraying themselves as the "Shadow of God" as the Qajar shahs had done, the Pahlavis tried to revive memories and splendors of Iran's pre-Islamic past. Although the Pahlavis successfully established a state that was politically stronger than that of the Qajars, they were less successful in becoming a popular monarchy and their reign was based on force rather than acceptance. The Pahlavis sought to modernize Iran in both its infrastructure and its culture. Reza Shah's goal as a ruler was to make Iran into a modern state. His military background

enabled him to have an understanding of the basic requirements for modernizing Iran. Modernization, for Reza Shah involved creating a state government system, an educational system, economic development, and social reforms, which led to the establishment of new government administrations, as well as restructuring the administrative system, founding of schools and universities, investment in transportation, factories and other elements of the infrastructure.

Reza Shah's greatest achievement, apart from him settling the tribes was his progress towards the emancipation of women. Reza Shah believed that women should be educated, have access to the workplace, and the same basic rights as men. It was due to his insistence that female, along with male students, were admitted to the University of Tehran in 1936. His passion was encouraged by his discussions with Ataturk who had begun an attack on the custom of wearing the veil in public, which was a small but an indicator of social status. Reza Shah had attempted to set an example by having his own wife and daughter appear in public unveiled and in mixed gender company. In 134 a law was passed that prohibited female students and teachers from wearing the chador a traditional full length covering. In 1936 the law was extended to apply to women in many other public facilities.