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Dressing-up the Nation: The Imposition of the Dress Code during the
Cultural Revolutions in the People's Republic of China and the Islamic
Republic of Iran

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ABSTRACT

<u>Dressing-up the Nation: The Imposition of the Dress Code during the Cultural Revolutions in the People's Republic of China and the Islamic Republic of Iran</u>

Shaya Nourai

Clothing is a system of signs which play an important role in conveying state ideology. China and Iran are states which have in recent memory used clothing regulation to achieve specific ends; to project a seemingly unified nation in times when change was creating instability in society, to regulate a nation in order to make it more legible, and to create and to preserve culture in opposition to perceived threat. All the above have systematically taken place over women's bodies and turning their bodies into walking icons for political goals and cultural identity.

Historically dress codes, in many states, were often used as political tools to sever imperialism and a re-enforcement of particular ideologies. More specifically the Chinese and Iranian dress codes were closely tied to politics for many centuries. Both China and Iran have always understood that clothing is a powerful manifestation of political thought and in turn are evidence that the nation adhere to state ideology.

This study looks at the histories of state imposed dress codes during the Cultural Revolutions in the People's Republic of China and the Islamic Republic of Iran. Following a communist ideology in China, a peasant attire called the Mao jacket was enforced on Chinese men and women, eliminating elitism and projecting a unified image of the people of China which also resulted in women looking similar to men. In Islamic Iran dress codes were enforced on both genders as well but it was women's attire which was most restrictive and regulated. The hejab in the form of the black *chador* resulted in

women to be differentiated from men. But what these sates have in common is that in both states dress codes have entailed a de-sexing of a woman's body in public.

But humans are social actors, they make decisions, they choose, they resist. Formal and informal methods of regulation have important social effects on individuals and society at large. Thus clothing laws are not a simple history of regulation, they are also a history of opposition and resistance. This study, based on field and library research, also looks at how the same dress codes imposed by states have the potential to be used by individuals as mechanisms for countering state ideologies.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My thanks also go to my cousins Shabnam and Shahrooze Abghari and Negar Moayed for having accompanied me during my fieldwork in Iran and at times translated words to compensate for my informal Persian.

Finally I am aware of and thankful for the privilege of being born a Canadian of Iranian descent where I was raised and had the opportunity to study freely in the field of my choice, without regards to my gender or ethnicity.

Shaya Nourai

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GLOSSARY

Bad-hejabi: The term refers to women, who according to the Iranian state, do not

comply with Iranian Islamic dress and are improperly veiled. The term is

relevantly new, dating back to the 1990s when revolutionary fervor began to

die down with the death of Ayatollah Khomeini in 1989 and strict implementation

of Islamic rules started to relax under President Ali Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani

(1989-1997).

Chador: A full-length, loose fabric which envelopes the body from head to ankle. It

can be held in place by a hand under the chin or under the eyes. It is often

black and falls under the concept of hejab.

Cultural Revolution (1966-1976): A complex social upheaval some say that began

as a struggle between Mao Zedong and other top party leaders for

dominance of the Chinese Communist Party. It went on to affect the hole

of Chinese society as an assault on counter-revolutionary tendencies.

Dress codes or clothing regulation: Legalized laws applied to civil society

whereby a specific style of clothing is dictated by the state. Non-adherence

usually results in fines or prison time and at times even death.

Dress or clothing: Assemblage of items that cover the body, such as shoes to

trousers to shirts, and accessories such as headgear.

Fagih: A person who is expert in Islamic jurisprudence.

Fatwa: Refers to a religious opinion or order formed and issued by a *mojtahid*

(religious leader) whereupon it becomes binding on his followers.

Fashion: Refers to the cut, form, shape, color, and style of a particular look, garment, jewelry, architecture, and furniture that is in vogue at a particular time and place.

Gharbzadegi: Westoxicated. Refers being influenced by Western culture including the West's ferocious consumerism, materialism, and popular culture. The term "*gharbzadeh*" was coined by the literary figure, Jalal al-Ahmad and is translated as occidentosis.

Hadiths: Refers to tradition; the collected record of actions and sayings attributed to the Prophet Mohammed. The *Hadith* is second only to the Quran in its importance.

Hejab: A concept in Islam which refers to a partition or curtain. In general it has often been referred to as a woman's clothing which protects her body from the eyes of men who are forbidden to her in marriage. A woman's hejab can vary from one Islamic society to another, and from one woman to the next.

Hezbollahi: Partisan of God. Refers to the party of God who are made up of religious fanatics and resort to violence against an individual or group whom they identify as anti-Islamic.

Islamic Cultural Revolution (1979): A religious revolution invoked by Ayatollah Khomeini. It was a move away from Western ideology and life-style advocated by Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi towards an Islamic state.

Maghnae: Refers to a headcovering which extends to cover the shoulders.

Majles: Consultative Assembly or Parliament.

Manteau : A long coat worn with a headscarf. It is a more liberal type of hejab more

often worn in Iran.

Mao suit: Also called the Zhongshan Suit. A blue uniform inspired by the Chinese military and peasant attire which became a national dress in China embracing modern values, communist ideology, equality between genders, and the rejection of Western dress and ideology during the Cultural Revolution.

May Fourth Movement: Term used to describe Chinese student demonstrations that took place in Tiananmen Square on May 4th 1919. Characterized by a blend of nationalism and desire for economic development and political modernization. The movement was above all an intellectual rejection of traditional Chinese social and political institutions, values, and ethics, which were perceived as being responsible for a weak and exploited China.

Pasdarans: Refers to the moral police or the Revolutionary Guards in Iran. Several such units were born as a result of the Islamic Revolution to weed out, among many things, *bad-hejabis*. They included the *Sarollah* (the Blood of God), *Ershad Eslami* (Islamic Guidance), and *Komiteh*.

Qipao: Also known as *cheongsam*. A one piece dress which became the Chinese national dress. The fashion lasted from 1930 to 1950 and outlawed during the Cultural Revolution.

Quran: A holy textbook for all Muslims and God's words revealed to the Prophet Mohammed in six thousand verses.

Red Guards: Groups of university students who claimed allegiance to Mao Zedong and acted as the executors of the Cultural Revolution directives to attack "feudal" and "reactionary" elements of Chinese society.

Sharia: Refers to the totality of religious laws in Islam.

Sun Yat-sen suit: A uniform which borrowed from the Japanese Meiji period student uniform, German military dress, and the Western suit. It was named after the father of the Republican Revolution, Dr. Sun Yat-sen (1866-1925). The Sun Yat-sen uniform was adopted as the official dress by civil servants in 1929 and in the 1940s it was essentially worn by Nationalist Party officials and by public servants.

Uniform : A type of clothing which has been standardized and based on legal sanctions. In this study it refers to the Mao suit and the hejab whereby the state has designated the standards for dress which makes punishable by law if transgressed.

INTRODUCTION

There is no debating that clothing is crucial in the social construction of the self. The simple fact that social meetings are the occasion for wearing our best clothes indicates the social significance of dress. Clothes are social because they speak volumes about a person's identity, point of view, norms, gender, occupation, social class, religion, and often sexual orientation at a particular point in time and yet they are also channels for expression of individual choices and tastes. Clothing further maintains or subverts symbolic boundaries, signaling who belongs and who does not. For instance, during the Middle Ages to further visually demarcate the insane from the rest of society the color green was worn by the insane and marks of infamy were worn by those who transgressed the law (Perrot 1994: 15). In Athens 1200 BC, only the upper classes were allowed to wear dyed clothes (Laver 1979: 26). Clothing is also a tool to transmit messages. In the seventeenth century for example, a code was developed in Europe whereby people used patches on their clothes to reveal secrets to their lovers (Payne 1965: 368). One also recalls the eighteenth century Englishman's hat and the lady's elaborate dresses revealing actual or aspired social status in England. Women wearing a suit jacket in the nineteenth century symbolized their emancipation (Crane 1999: 245). Among the Arabs in Oman, the face cover represents wifely status (Wikan 1982: 41). Today a Muslim woman wearing the headscarf in a non-Muslim society communicates her religious standing (see Hoodfar 2003). All these are examples of how clothing had historically been, and still is, used as a means to reveal information, aspiration, and ideology. Clothes become an extension of our bodies and they are the first indicators of our selves that we introduce to the social world. Visual communication is thus first established even before verbal communication has occurred.

Author Tim Dant argues that "compared to moral, linguistic or political codes, clothing codes are a relatively trivial part of people's lives but for the sociologist the play of the codes provides an indicator of the state of culture" (1999: 93). Indeed clothes are never a frivolity; they are always an expression of the fundamental social, economic, and political pressures of our time. Looking at Middle Eastern societies for example, clothing is often the first visible sign of Western penetration.[1] Iranians adopting the blue jean instead of traditional Persian clothing as depicted in Qajar paintings provides a first good indicator of the state of the culture than anything else.

Considering clothing's potential to transmit messages it is surprising that there is a lack of attention to clothing in general on the part of academia. Perhaps this lack has been because clothes were considered a feminine issue and consequently little to do with serious intellectual pursuit (Tarlo 1996: 4). Only recently have sociologists begun to engage and interpret the power artifacts hold over us. The relationship we have with the material world, in this case clothing, is not simply functional. It is intertwined with the culture and the politics of the particular society we live in. Clothing imposes social identities and politics that we or others have ascribed to it and can influence our attitudes. Wearing cowboy boots for example makes one walk and feel a certain way which is very different when wearing running shoes. Wearing a silk head scarf in Iran with a monogram of Iran's former monarchy would be a bold statement of one's politics. Clothing can be such a powerful commodity that some have gone as far as attaching talismanic properties to them. Tennis player Billie Jean King for instance wore her favorite mini dress for every big match because she believed it brought her luck (Wilson

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[1] If not otherwise stated, the use of the word "West" and "Western" refers to countries belonging to the Occident.

1987: 56).

History has shown that various states have come to understand the significant role clothes play and have promulgated dress codes for social, economic, and political ends (see Fandy 1998, Finnanne 1996, 1999, Hoodfar 1997, Norton 1997, Perrot 1994, Quataert 1997, and Tarlo 1996). But the significance of clothing as a form of state social control tends to be overlooked in academia more often than not despite the fact that clothing has been manipulated as a device for regulation by which many states have used to penetrate society and consolidate their power. Rather, in social and historical discussions much has been paid to clothing as a means of protection, as art (see Boucher 1987, Laver 1979, and Payne 1965), and as a way of signifying social distinctions such as age, status, and gender (see Barnes & Eicher 1992). Art history was a pioneer in treating clothing as a serious area of study but has systematically treated dress as haute couture and has categorized it as elitist (Xiaoping 1998: 72). While detailed studies on the descriptive analysis and aesthetics of dress are much needed and highly fascinating, nevertheless, the field lacks a more in-depth analytical study linking clothing to society at large. Including regulation, resistance, and clothing's relationship to the wider society in which they are produced would benefit the field of art history. My aim henceforth is to reveal state usage of dress using Communist China and Islamic Iran as case studies.

CLOTHING AND THE STATE

Clothing in the form of fashion in its very essence is an exercise of power and to follow it can at times be enslavement. It can be an authoritarian process dictated by the many elite fashion designers who subsequently ordain what we wear. This suggests that we are compelled to choose and wear from amongst a set of "uniforms" of fashion. But

why does a particular society dress as it does? Philippe Perrot suggests that "values and constraints such as custom, cost, taste and propriety prescribe or proscribe certain practices and tolerate or encourage certain behavior" (1994: 6). Thus what one wears is contingent on one's culture. Therefore clothing says something about our social histories. In fact nothing as precise as a man wearing a *fez* (see Norton 1997 and Quataert 1997) or the *kolah-i pahlavi* (see Baker 1997) can situate someone in the time line better as an article of clothing can and a closer look will also reveal the political ideologies of the period.

For many states, such as Afghanistan, China, Egypt, England, France, India, Iran, and Turkey, dress is and was an important instrument in maximizing political and ideological uniformity. Following James C. Scott (1998) it is the argument of this thesis that social engineering requires the simplification and standardization of complex facts. In the process, essential knowledge about facts are lost. The result may be tragic and the unplanned outcomes can be incurred at great expense. Scott contends that the two largest social experiments of the twentieth century, namely urban renewal and rural resettlement of peasant farmers, are examples of high modernists attempt to use the power of the state to impose a rational order on society. The modern state has at least since the Enlightenment and the French Revolution been making the life of society legible in order to make social life comprehensible and, more importantly, politically uniform.

In this study we will be concerned with two states, namely Communist China under Chairman Mao Zedong (1949-1976) and the Islamic Republic of Iran under Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khomeini (1979-1989) who have used sartorial social engineering. This thesis is a theoretical analysis of two forms of clothing-styles, but also

an attempt to describe and understand the reality of Chinese and Iranian women's experience with state imposed dress in the past and present context. It will shed some light on the use of clothing to repress certain sections of society. Based on the lack of academic research on the subject, it becomes evident that many have perhaps not considered clothing as a means of persuasion and regulation, and also alternatively as a means of resistance.

The Mao suit in China and the hejab in Iran are symbols of social standardization and their enforcement by the states are seemingly barometers of a nation's level of commitment and adherence to the ruling powers. We maintain that women have too often been the victims of state imposed dress codes and this has much to do with the fact that women's bodies have been used as metaphors for the nation and have been responsible for maintaining its identity, legitimacy, morality, and honor.

At first glance the seemingly unified nation of China and Iran presents an unrealistic snapshot that misses the most vital aspects of the situation. What these case studies provide is a picture of a society manipulated through dress and the extent both governments viewed clothes as a visible expression of a moral system, of solidarity, identification, and control. It also presents an image of people making decisions, choosing, to an albeit limited extent, their own self-image despite the state. This clash between alternative styles of clothing and those dictated by the state is symbolic of a wider conflict between different social values and norms. Not forgetting China and Iran are not democratic societies. Dress in this context is an easy tool used to demonstrate the nation's will, if not to the political leaders at least to the outsider looking in which in these cases has oftentimes been the Western gaze, adhering to state ideology.

The reasons behind choosing China and Iran are many. Both states have long

narratives of dress regulation and their social histories interestingly parallel each other.

Both states have been the object of the West's gaze and have at one point in their

histories viewed the United States as dens of Devils. In the nineteenth century when

European imperialism and colonialism was in fervor, the Orient was assumed

demonized. China was thought to be a country where rats were devoured and where

people were addicted to opium. Much animosity still prevails in China partly because

following Chinese defeat in the Opium Wars (1840-1842 and 1858-1860), the Chinese

were treated as second class citizens in areas conquered by the English (Jakobson 1998:

6).

For the West, much of the history of Islam has been obscured behind a veil of fear

and misunderstanding. Despite numerous publications (see Alvi, Hoodfar & McDonough

2003, Betteridge 1983, El Guindi 1999, Hoodfar 1997, 2001, Paidar 1995, and Poya

1999), the ideology of female seclusion is still foreign to the West, the average Westerner

has still to grasp the truth behind the veil. Photographs revealing what bodies might look

under the black tent are many and substantiates the Westerner's curiosity and sometimes

lewd imagination (see **Figures 1.A, 1.B & 1.B.a.**).[2] One is prompted to ask, following

Edward Said, "Why the Orient seems still to suggest not only fecundity but sexual

promise (and threat), untiring sensuality, unlimited desire…" (1979: 188).

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[2] For a look at such colonial photographs presenting the French colonial gaze see Alloula (1986).
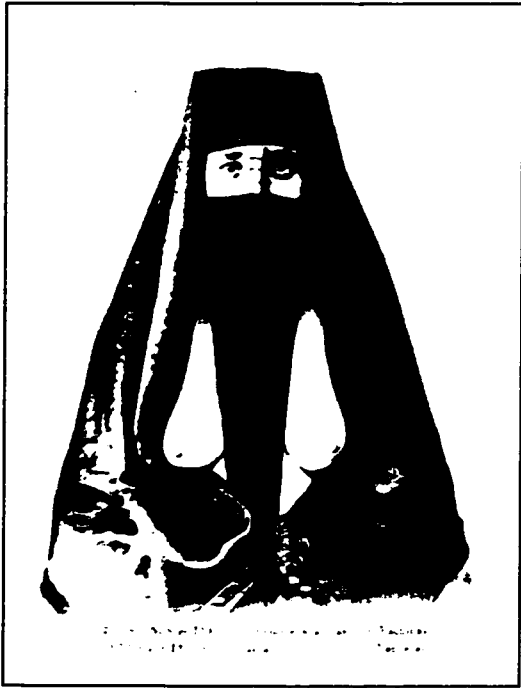
Figure 1.A. *Scenes and Types: Arabian woman with the Yashmak.* This picture is one of many colonial postcards attesting to French imagination taken by French photographers in Algeria (Source: Alloula 1986).

Figure 1.B. Another example of the West's fascination with the hejab. This representation is consistent with the Western view that Muslim women are the exotic other. The woman here is shown revealing her legs and thighs, this gives her a mysterious demeanor that appeal to Western sentiments (Source: Anonymous).
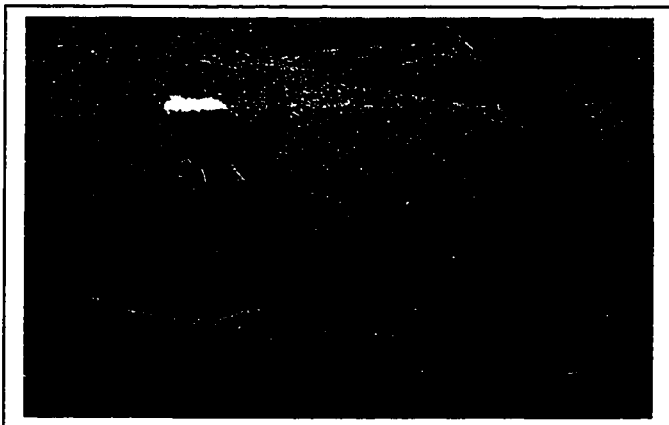
Figure 1.B.a. Painting of a woman on nose of a military British Bomber aircraft during the Gulf War. The banner reads, "Mary Rose". This representation attests to the fact that men view Muslim women as a conquest as if they symbolize emblems of the countries they want to rule (Source: Russell 1991).

Since Orientals, more specifically Islamic societies, were assumed by Westerners to be passive, to lack liberty and progress, and had no conception of democracy, it was up to the Occident to civilize these "barbarians" (see Said 1979). Adding to this the misunderstandings of China's lotus feet and Iran's harems provided even more reasons for the West to want to civilize oriental societies. For centuries Westerners have preoccupied themselves with oriental mysticism, passivity, and mentalities which have been negatively reflected in traveler's reports, novels, paintings, music, and films; between 1800 and 1950 (a span of 150 years) 60,000 books were published on Islam and the Orient (Hoodfar 2001: 7; Said 1979). It was thus quite a challenge to move away from such colonial perspectives and present an unbiased perspective.

Both China and Iran underwent an era of extreme anti-colonialism, building power by denouncing any kind of Western intervention into their affairs, including Western cultural influences. At the height of their revolutions normal diplomatic relations with the rest of the world were all but severed. There was no middle ground for either state; either civil society was with the ruling party or opposed it, which was oftentimes made clear by the clothing which they wore. In that case one was executed or kept conflicting political ideologies as hidden as possible. Both states hired sympathetic sections of civil society such as high school and college students to attack counter-revolutionary elements in society and maintain and enforce the dress code.

But gender ideology, both in policy and dress, to which China and Iran ascribed to is binary and this is perhaps the most intriguing aspect. While in both states no national-level state organ stipulated that people must wear uniforms, nevertheless highly regulated attire pervaded in both China and Iran. This is because state power so

thoroughly permeated ostensibly non-state spaces and practices that there was no need for formal law. Despite the element of force, both states claimed to liberalize women through clothing. China emphasized a "masculinization" of feminine conduct and appearance as part of the attempt to bring women into the public sphere, while for Iran the opposite is true. Achieving gender equality in Iran meant the increasing awareness of difference whereas in China, gender equality meant the destruction of difference in a new ideal of sameness. In both states however, dress codes have meant the denial of the female sexuality.

The clothing laws of Chairman Mao Zedong (1949-1976) and Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini (1979-1989) illustrate their use as a disciplinary mechanism. Both states, as the upholders of public morality and justice, sought legitimacy with the poor and simulated frugally modest public behavior. Both began their reign in times characterized by a want to modernize without Western influence. Both states perceived a woman's physical beauty and fashionable clothing as a threat and moral degeneration, in short evil. In both China and Iran, what men and particularly women wear has not been a matter of purely aesthetic preference. It has been an expression of a conscious political stance. Their history expresses itself in dress. The study of clothing can certainly give us the flavor of the times.

The following discussions hint at the fact that clothes are a controversial issue, in the sense that dress marks the line in the battle between Capitalists and Communists, Islamic radicals and secularists, women and men, West and East. Furthermore, because the state arbitrates according to strategic interests it leads one to ask: what has necessitated the relationship between the state and dress? Why should the state have

strategic interests in dress in the first place? Conversely, what about clothing used as a means to constitute a symbolic challenge to the governing system of a particular state, and what are those forms of resistance? Moreover, how does this contesting manifest itself? To answer these questions Mao's China and the Islamic Republic of Iran will be compared and contrasted and the political ideology underlining the semiotics of dress will be examined.

A final note, it is not my purpose to play the West against the Orient or vice versa. I am aware that public resistance in China and Iran does not manifest in the adoption of Western clothes only. It translates in many other ways as well like wearing bright-colored socks in China and a woman shaving their heads in Iran for example. But such manifestations, which do not involve the use of Western clothes, have, to my knowledge, been few.

CHAPTER BREAKDOWN

The following study opens with an overview (chapter one) which is divided into two sections. The first explores reasons for why many state's have historically used dress codes, and the second section visits how the nation has also used clothing to underline their ethnicity, to blur status lines, to reinforce identity, and to resist. Chapter two explains the methodology used. Chapter three and four introduces how Chinese and Iranian women's dress are understood to have originated and the events which led to their Cultural Revolutions and their subsequent dress codes. Chapter five looks at the complicated relationship, in a comparative and contrasting method between the Chinese and Iranian states and their dress codes, it also discusses how the state and the people, particularly women, have resisted the imposed uniform. Finally chapter six concludes the

study and passes the torch.

CHAPTER 1
DRESSING-UP NATIONS

CLOTHING

Looking at ancient civilization, body adornment seems to have preceded clothing. This suggests that man has always paid attention to appearance weather it was used to beautify, to terrify, or to ward off evil (Payne 1965: 5-3). During the Bronze Age in Denmark, women are said to have been proud of their appearance since combs were found by archeologists (Payne 1965: 60). This suggests that to beautify does not stem from advertising, fashion magazines and television. Rather as anthropologist Franz Boaz argues: "[t]he desire for artistic expression is universal" (Payne 1965: 5) and clothing may be the first accessible form of art and artistic expression.

Therefore the many functions of dress is to promote erotic activity in order to attract the opposite sexes to one another for procreation. This assumption holds that the purpose of clothing is to differentiate woman from man (Lurie 2000: 213). In Iran, only women are required to wear the hejab. However, at the expense of stating the obvious, the veil in Islamic societies is not worn to promote sexual desire. Rather it is to promote modesty which also happens to visually differentiate the genders. The primary function of a woman's dress in Iran is to render her unattractive to others, to conceal her body from other men's eyes. But as Crawley[1], the first anthropologist to give extensive and serious attention to dress suggests, "the fact of dress serving as concealment involved the possibility of attraction by mystery" further arguing that women's fashion "has the double object of concealing and attracting" (1931: 11). But what happens in a society

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[1] Crawley relates clothes to their cross-cultural customs and to a wide range of human behavior.

where gender demarcations were intended to be ambiguous? China is one such state where the revolutionary state tried to purposefully blur gender demarcations, first for the sake of production and second for women's emancipation. We will come back to this in the following chapters.

Another function of clothing has been to manipulate a nation. Many states have managed to control their citizens to fit their specific ideals through dress. There is a wealth of scholarship about how states have regulated their power over women and children, over procreation and same sex behavior. As Foucault has shown, even our sanity has been invaded. Clothing is yet another device by which many states have used to penetrate society and consolidate their power, especially over women's bodies. Likewise, civil society has also used clothing to counter-attack; to resist and challenge the grip of the state, to demonstrate discontent. In what follows, we will look at how particular states have historically used dress codes to achieve various ends and how people have also recognized the language of clothing to communicate their ethnicity, identity, and discontent.

But before immersing ourselves in the discussion, several concepts need to be clarified. The word "dress" as defined by Barnes and Eicher (1992) is visual but also includes touch, smell, sound, and body modification. But for the purposes of this study, we use the words "dress" and "clothing" interchangeably, as a single category restricting it to the assemblage of items that cover the body, such as shoes to trousers to shirts, and accessories such as headgear.

"Sumptuary laws" refer to the regulation of personal consumption, especially the regulation of expenditure on extravagance and luxury. "Dress codes" or "clothing

regulation" refer to legalized laws applied to civil society whereby a specific style of garment is dictated by the state. Non-adherence usually results in fines or prison time and at times even death.

"Socialized dress codes" on the other hand are social norms or standards created and understood by civil society, they are usually unspoken. For example it is generally a rule to wear shoes when visiting the local shopping mall in the West. Not adhering to the rules usually entails ostracism or mockery, and depending on the situation may also entail jail time.

The dress code in this study in the form of the Mao jacket and the hejab necessarily results in a uniform, a type of clothing which has been standardized and based on legal sanctions. In this study the state has designated the standards for dress which makes punishable by law if transgressed.

In addition the concept of dress/clothing in this study refers to assemblage of items covering the body and is differentiated from the concept of fashion since fashion refers to the cut, form, shape, color, and style of a particular look, garment, jewelry, architecture, and furniture that is in vogue at a particular time and place.

HISTORICAL STATE USAGE OF DRESS CODES

Clothing is said to have served as a tool embodying a "magical aura of power" by which Chinese emperors ruled the world (Steele & Major 1999: 16). It came to symbolize opposites in many societies: those who were civilized and those who were not, male and female, the proper from the improper. It was also an instrument of order in societies dedicated to hierarchy, harmony, and moderation. The following sub-sections demonstrate that states have come to recognize clothing as an important political tool as a

way of transmitting and enforcing state ideology.

CLOTHING AND STRATIFICATION

James Laver writes: "It is clothes that make it possible for governments to obtain observance, religious reverence, judiciaries a respect for law, and armies discipline." (sf. in Perrot 1994: 196). Clothing was perhaps initially created to protect the naked body but has through time come to bear social and political meaning. Clothing is a means of classification and serves as an emblem of power. For centuries clothing has revealed one's enforced or aspired social positioning. To legitimize claims to hierarchies many states in the Middle East, Europe, and America have passed sumptuary laws to restrain the wearing of specific styles or items by specific social classes in order to maintain the status quo.

But clothing laws used as a tool for establishing visible hierarchy[2] has been the most telling in the Ottoman empire because no other imperial state has had such a distinctive headgear for every profession, class, rank, and military personnel. Regulated Ottoman attire, especially in the form of headgear, helped to distinguish between Muslims and non-Muslims, rulers and non-rulers. For example in the sixteenth century, Sultan Yavuz Selim (1512-1520) created a headgear specifically for himself since he maintained "the sovereign could not dress in the same manner as others who come into his court" (Quataert 1997: 405). Ottoman clothing laws not only sought to legitimize the claims of Ottoman hierarchy but also symbolized the superiority of Muslims from non-Muslims (Quataert 1997: 407) as well as elite from non-elite by forbidding the latter for example from wearing ermine fur (Quataert 1997: 409) or from using gold thread for

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[2] For other examples see Yamani (1997). For more examples of Ottoman clothing see Wheatcroft (1995)

their saddlecloths. Those who transgressed these laws for whatever reasons were executed (Quataert 1997: 410).

But clothing used as a vehicle for explicit social ends relaxed in Western Europe and America as the ready-to-wear industry developed in mid-eighteenth century (Perrot 1994: 54). Ready-to-wear shops would eventually give rise to the department store and the fast spread of bourgeois fashion. The standardized clothing industry made available copies of custom-made clothing to those who could not otherwise afford it thereby subduing signs such as social roles and status symbols. Communicating such information now had to be more subtle (Perrot 1994: 80-81). Furthermore, the democratization of clothing in Western Europe and America was in line with the French (1789-1799) and American (1776-1783) revolutions whereby the stress on freedom and equality were replacing "the category of subject with the concept of nation and citizen" (Hoodfar 2001: 4). It is ironic then that the egalitarian society of the nineteenth century would later give rise to the servant uniform. In any case the move away from the use of dress codes is not to suggest that dress codes do not exist in Western societies today but rather they are replaced by notions of the etiquette.

But clothing laws continue to exist in developing states such as China and Iran where democracy has not been the preferred rule. Particularly in contexts where individuality has not been a preferred concept, rather collectivity and communal identity has been the worldview of these societies. In these contexts, it appears that these states find it easier to automatically overlook democracy and civil rights of individuals. Such states have favored to unify and inhibit any manifestation of individuality.

CLOTHING AND UNIFICATION

While clothing was manipulated as a stratifying tool it was also used as a means to seemingly unify a diversified nation in face of social and political change. Just as clothing draws boundaries which exclude those dressed differently they also encompass and include those dressed in the same way. A best example of this is again found in the Ottoman empire which Quataert claims is the first state to have used clothing laws as a means to promote homogeneity (1997: 420). As the empire's hold on non-Muslims was challenged by rebel Greeks, Sultan Mahmud II (1808-1839) isolated the powers of both the military and religious classes and replaced them by administrators and scribes. To create a strong monarchy and to legitimize his reign he displaced the centuries-old Ottoman exotic plumaged headgear which demarcated status and rank for a new headgear in 1829 called the *fez* (Quataert 1997: 412; Wheatcroft 1995: 176) for all civilians regardless of status and religion. The law was a radical move in its attempt to eliminate clothing distinctions that had for centuries separated officials from their subjects and Muslims from non-Muslims. Not surprisingly demonstrations erupted against the displacement of Islamic dress for Western costume (Hoodfar 2001: 5; Quataert 1997: 412; Wheatcroft 1995: 39-40).

History provides evidence that when the state has lost control it has also manifested itself in dress codes. In the eighteenth century. European fashion was, according to costume historian Blanche Payne, bizarre partly due to Marie Antoinette's want for diversion and partly due to the chaotic political situation in France (1965: 411). The same is found in the eighteenth century Ottoman empire whereby the state was undergoing military pressure and suffered fiscal crises. Quataert maintains that "[t]hese

were the days of military defeats, territorial withdrawals, and economic contraction",

thus eighteenth century Ottoman clothing laws were created to ensure the Ottoman

subjects "that the world was still an orderly place in which all retained their respective

political and social positions" (1997: 407). With a seemingly unified populace through

clothes all seemed orderly.

Whoever undertakes research on the history of Chinese clothing regulation will

notice that with the fall of the Qing dynasty (1644-1911), chaos reigned on the nation's

sense of clothing style. At one point "the woman of style" fashion was in vogue at the

same time as "the girl-student" (see chapter three in this study), not to mention the

changes that the qipao underwent in a very short period at its inception in 1930 to its

banishment in 1966 (see **Figure 1.1**). Western dressed women were accused of

compromising the cultural identity of the nation at the same time that high heels were

praised for representing "movement and urbanity" (Ko 1999: 145). Having to clearly

identify these trends have been daunting yet are testimony to the overwhelming change

China was undergoing. The changes are partly due to the fact that for the first time in her

history, China was not being ruled by an empire. Even Dr. Sun Yat-sen (1866-1924), the

father of the Chinese Republic, was not decided on what to wear, changing from Western

suit to Chinese robe and then to adopting his own invention the Sun Yat-sen suit

(Finnane 1999: 130).
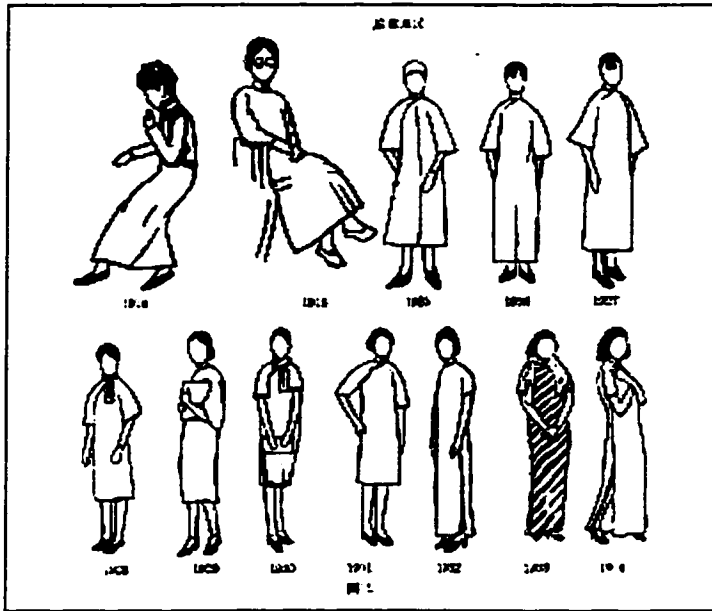
Figure 1.1. The cut of the qipao changed constantly, as Chinese women's dress became much more subject to fashion than it ever had been before. This series shows how women's dress changed from 1914 to 1949 (Source: Zhou 1984)

Similarly, determined to have all Iranians wear the same Westernized-style clothes, Reza Shah Pahlavi (1925-1941) said "... before when all were attired in various garbs, there was no cohesion, no corporate feeling" (Baker 1997: 184). If the appearance seems disorderly, then naturally the interior, the thoughts, the ideologies must be disorderly and incongruent with those of the state. Clothes, in the above societies, became an outward sign of cohesion and unification.

THE UNIFORM

Clothing has historically also been used by states as uniforms for police and military purposes. Such uniforms command instant recognition of the right of the wearer to make decisions and to use force to maintain social order. Here the clothing sets the wearer apart from the rest of society yet at the same time the wearer creates a sense of solidarity in his or her own community. The wearer is at once subject to the power of the state and an agent of power over those who do not wear the prescribed uniform.

During the Chinese Cultural Revolution for example, to the untrained eyes, the

military uniform seemed similar from one person to the next, but a closer look revealed a

person's rank by the quality of the uniform's fabric and the placement of its pockets.

During 1950s China, salaries, for reasons which are unclear, were not distributed and

clothing thus had to be delivered by the government. A low ranking official received a

suit "made from coarse gray cotton cloth; a middle-ranking official one of polyester-

cotton drill; and a top-ranking department or bureau chief one of wool".[3] A soldier's suit

had two upper pockets, whereas an officer's uniform had two upper and two lower

pockets (Mai Chen 2001: 158; Roberts 1997: 22).[4] Mai Chen argues that the Mao

uniform thus had a " 'dual purpose': to produce coherence through sameness but

establish hierarchy through detail" (2001: 156, 158). Many Red Guards had gone back to

wearing old PLA (Party Liberation Army) uniforms worn by their relatives who once

were members. Mai Chen suggests,

> a superficial uniformity of clothing was, in fact marked by difference according to
> whether or not one wore an original uniform, a replica, the partial elements of
> one, or... imitated the style (2001: 152).

NEW ERA VIA NEW STYLE

Dress codes have been promulgated to break away from either tradition or the

previous rule and too often rulers have assumed that by regulating clothing would

inevitably transform social identities automatically. This is reflected in the state of

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[3] To use wool is highly ironic since the Chinese perceived wool for a long time as a barbarian fabric. Wool became a contested fabric in the twentieth century and labeled as a sign of both Westernization and foreignness. When it was used to make the Sun Yat-sen suit however it "came to connote a thoroughly Chinese form of modernity" (Steele & Major 1999: 22-23).

[4] In their discussion, LaDany (1970), Spence (1999), and Wilson (1999) cite 1965 as the year ranks and insignia were abolished in the People's Liberation Army while Michael (1970) cites the year 1960. To what extent this was applied to the people of China is not known, though Mai Chen argues that there were subtle signs of rank, "according to whether or not one wore an original uniform, a replica... or simply imitated the style" (2001: 159).

Turkey when Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (1924-1938), soon after creating a Turkish Republic in 1923, ordered the nation to displace the traditional *fez* that civilians were wearing since 1829 for a Western-style hat. The *fez* was now to be perceived as ignorant, fanatic, and hatred of progress (Norton 1997; Wheatcroft 1995: 208).

Similarly in Iran shortly after Reza Shah Pahlavi took the crown in 1925, ending the Qajar dynasty (1794-1925), he advocated a uniformity in dress for all men which meant adopting Western attire and the *kolah-i pahlavi* (brim-less cap) (Baker 1997: 181). Both Atatürk and Reza Shah believed that discarding national dress in favor of European dress meant modernization and an obvious tool to demonstrate its disassociation from the previous government.

Also, the unification of the state of Saudi Arabia in 1932 led to a change through dress as well. By abolishing ethnic differences and forcing government employ to wear the Najdi Bedouin dress, king Abdul Aziz al-Saud (1932-1953) demonstrated the ruling power of the state over the country (Yamani 1997: 58).

The presumed belief behind the imposition of dress codes is the notion that if a civilian adopts the dress code he is perceived as a presents a law abiding citizen. Undoubtedly this makes it a tempting clothing option for those with little belief in its ideology. As it will be discussed later, the greater the emphasis on dress codes as a moral worth the greater the increase in the use of clothing as a form of disguise for a person's actual beliefs (what Fandy (1998) calls shape-shifting). It seems then that attempts in modernizing a state are often followed by dress reforms. Social laws appear in a context of shifting social values and states changing their subjects outer look symbolizes a change in people's politics, values, and boundaries. Put differently, the nation's

adherence to dress codes means, although superficially, acknowledgement of the regime's will to rule. Ideally these changing politics and values are in concert with those of the nation but this has not often been the case. Whichever path states chose they revealed this through dress codes and, as it will become clear in later chapters, it seems that women are the ones paying a hefty price since traditionally it is their bodies which have been used as a stand in for changing politics and values.

CLOTHING AND NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE

So far we have understood states manipulating clothing as a means to stratify and differentiate civilians, to unify a nation to make it look homogeneous and adhering to their vision, to distinguish between military powers, and clothing used as a tool to disassociate from the erstwhile governing elite perceived backward and unchanging. Now we look at clothing as a tool for contesting national independence and for securing economic prosperity.

The classic example which applies here is the propagation of the *khadi* cloth by Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1949) in India. During British rule, European dress gained popularity in India and although European dress was contested by Indians it gradually came to be viewed as the sign of the wearer's progress. This general acceptance of European dress was not fueled by Indian admiration of the British or for their clothes, but by the belief that India could develop itself further by cooperating with European value systems (Tarlo 1996: 93).

To regain national Indian identity in the face of imperialist attempts to undermine Indian culture, Gandhi encouraged Indians to identify with the poorest classes of society by both adopting their clothing and their labor. Gandhi offered an alternate model to that

of Britain whereby the nation would spin their own thread and produce their own garments regardless of their religion and caste. The idea behind Gandhi's *khadi* cloth was to visually unite all Indians regardless of one's wealth; "dress could act as a blanket covering internal differences with a facade of apparent sameness implying national unity" (Tarlo 1996: 93).

Gandhi's goal was to achieve economic and national independence by boycotting foreign goods and by wearing *khadi* cloth. When he adopted the loincloth it was intended to encourage the poor to discard their foreign cloth without feeling embarrassed of their nakedness (Tarlo 1996: 74). Gandhi had hoped to expose Indian poverty and offered a solution through hand-spinning. In adopting the *khadi* a self-sufficient craft-based society would be re-established. By producing their own cloth Gandhi had hoped to stimulate production and provide additional employment and to push out British rule (Tarlo 1996: 87).

Other examples of promoting prosperity and protecting state economy can be drawn from Iran. Although all Iranians wore Westernized clothing under the rule of Reza Shah the fabric was Iranian-made cloth, a directive issued by the Shah in 1923 due to his awareness that local manufacturers and traders were loosing income and that the poorer classes could not afford foreign-made clothing (Baker 1997: 182).

CLOTHING AND GENDER

Many theories exist for explaining the purpose of clothing. One theory maintains that sexual modesty might have been a prerequisite for wearing clothes. But looking at historical research on clothing, shame does not seem to have played a great part. Lurie notes, the naked body was not viewed as immodest in ancient Egypt, Crete, nor in Greece

since slaves and athletes were not clothed and people of high class wore clothing which "were cut and draped so as to show a good deal when in motion" (2000: 212).

While another theory points out that covering the body was to discourage sexual interest. Others argue that such claim is ironic since the clothed body is much more exciting, especially when clothes simultaneously reveal and conceal the flesh. Clothing can certainly be a tool for seduction but also an obstacle to desire as will be discussed later in chapter four of this study in the case of Iran and the hejab.

In fact one can argue equally strongly that the many functions of dress is to promote erotic activity in order to attract the opposite sexes to each other for procreation. The purpose of clothing implied here is to differentiate woman from man (Lurie 2000: 213). Among the Sohar of Oman for example, only women wear the burqa (Wikan 1982: 88) as is the case in Iran, only women cover their hair. Crawley (1931) relates that among the many social distinctions communicated through dress the most important has been gender.

In 1850s America, progressive Women's Rights activist Amelia Bloomer presented a more rational look for women compared to the full skirts of the period. The reformed garment consisted of a short skirt worn over a pair of Turkish trousers. The ensemble was approached with mockery and social ostracism. (Boucher 1987: 374; Crane 1999: 253; Crane 2000: 112; Laver 1979: 181-182; Lurie 2000: 221) and huge crowds of hostile men gathered around women who dared to wear the outfit (Crane 1999: 254). At this period, the dominant ideology that gender identities should remain rigidly fixed allowed no room for gender ambiguity.

Women wearing pantaloons in both America and Europe were viewed as a "threat

to the ideology of separate spheres on the grounds that it would erase all distinctions between the sexes" (Crane 2000: 112). Women's trousers represented a usurpation of men's rights and "considered an attack on the sanctity of the home and liable to lead to the emancipation of women" and necessarily to the demise of men (Boucher 1987: 374). Victorian clothing, such as the corset and the petticoat, therefore was a form of social control which allowed to further maintain women's dependence and passive roles (Crane 2000: 112). In France permission was necessary from the French police before a French woman could wear trousers in public. This law was a reaction to the behavior and political views of French feminists "whose behavior and opinions were unacceptable to the men who wielded power" (Crane 1999: 256). French revolutionary leaders "considered dress 'a statement of freedom and an expression of individuality' but not for women" (Crane 1999: 256). Interestingly the ban on women's trousers still prevails in Paris meaning that any woman who wears pants today in public does so in violation of French law (Perrot 1994: 20). Eventually trousers for women disappeared due to high levels of public harassment (Crane 1999: 260). But it was not until the 1920s that women started to wear pants and shorts for sports or when relaxing in private and on informal occasions. Still, in early twentieth century, a woman wearing pants on formal occasions risked accusations of being a bohemian or lesbian (Lurie 2000: 225).

Furthermore, in many states women's clothing has also been used to symbolize their kin's wealth. In pre-industrial Western societies for example, scientists speculated that the biological and psychological differences between men and women was reason enough to keep the genders in fixed social roles. Consequently, women were perceived childlike, physically, morally, and intellectually inferior to men (Crane 1999: 250; Crane

2000: 16) and therefore confined to the home. Women's primary function during this

period and well into the nineteenth century was to symbolize the wealth and status of

their husbands, lovers, or fathers and the resulting subservience of women and their

ornate nature was made visible by the extravagant clothes which were in fashion in what

Thorstein Veblen called "vicarious ostentation". Despite the large number of heavy

petticoats that European women had to wear at one single time, which greatly hindered

their mobility[5] (Laver 1979: 171-172; Lurie 2000: 144), the ideology was such that men

fought for wealth and women spent it and displayed it in their clothing (Perrot 1994: 35).

As such, women's clothing and idleness were a form of communication further

symbolizing men's wealth and power.[6]

Jeffrey Weeks argues that power is not manifested into one kind of control, rather

"[i]t operates through complex and overlapping—and often contradictory—mechanisms

which produce domination and oppositions, subordination and resistances" (1986: 37).

As such, it becomes clear that female appearance as a symbol, metaphor, or stand-in for

something else such as the struggles between tradition and modernity, imposition of a

particular identity and morality, has been reoccurring throughout history and clothing as

a tool for power and control to achieve particular ideals has not been reserved only for

the Orient. In many states the female body is often transformed into a symbol

representing the "oppressive" or "progressive" state of the entire nation which in turn has

produced domination and resistance.

The initial visual symbol of the nation's identity and morality has often been

represented on women's clothing. As Yuval-Davis has discussed, one case which has

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[5] In fact the weight of the numerous petticoats were so extensive that they were eventually replaced by the cage crinoline in 1856 (Laver 1979: 177).
[6] For images depicting such dresses see paintings in Boucher (1987) and Payne (1965).

met with great public attention is that of thirty eight year old Duze woman, Ihlas Basam who was killed by her bother, a soldier in the Israeli army, for having worn Western-style clothing in the form of a short skirt, bleached hair, and lipstick on Israeli television (1997: 46). While murder is amongst extreme examples, control of women and use of violence for breaking rank in what a woman wears is rampant. Such acts serve to re-enforce the argument that women represent, through their clothing and behavior, the nation and the state and "the line which signifies the collectivity's boundaries" (1997: 46).

Thus properly wearing the prescribed dress code reveals the honor of the nation and reminds the audience that the wearer is someone not to be fooled with, someone who is true to her convictions. For example, in Middle Eastern societies, women wearing the veil is a means of both maintaining and creating a reputation for a woman and often her family. This suggests that the nation's honor rests on women's shoulders and she is thus held accountable through her dress. Kubena Mercer (1990) calls this "the burden of representation" or better yet what Chhachhi (1991) calls "forced identities" (qtd. in Yuval-Davis 1997: 45). Women are almost always the ones to carry this burden of representation because they "are constructed as the symbolic bearers of the collectivity's identity and honor" (Yuval-Davis 1997: 45). Women have come to embody the nation and because of this, women and their dress are scrutinized.

THE PUBLIC'S USE OF DRESS

Just as states use clothing laws for various purposes, the people have also used clothing to transmit messages. Dress can either be used to communicate ethnicity, to blur one's class, reinforce identity, and more importantly to resist and challenge the state.

DRESS, ETHNIC IDENTITY, AND INDIVIDUALITY

Dress, apart from gender, distinguishes national identities. Dress identifies wearers as belonging to one community or another but it also differentiates. For instance, Korean women wear a skirt and white full trousers underneath (Crawley 1931: 34). North American Indians are distinguished by their beautiful headwear full of colorful feathers. In India, Hindu women wear the petticoat and sari and there are even variations among sari wearers. The typical headdress for Muslim men is a turban made of muslin with white cotton drawers and a shirt or coat (Crawley 1931: 35-36).

From the descriptions above it becomes apparent that each ethnicity has its own particular style, and to trained eyes, ethnicity is clearly communicated. Barnes and Eicher maintain that a "person's identity is defined geographically and historically, and the individual is linked to a specific community". Dress reflects these different communities and "simultaneously differentiates the same individual from all others; it includes and excludes" (1992: 1). It includes when members recognize someone from their own ethnicity and see sameness through dress and it excludes by revealing ethnicity and seeing difference.

William Young (1996), as mentioned in El Guindi, observes in his ethnography that the most distinguished visible signs of cultural identity among the Rashayda are their clothes in general and men's turban in particular. Generally the turban, a common men's headwear in the Arab world, was during the crusades used as a symbol to differentiate Muslims from Christians and the Jewish people (El Guindi 1999: 105-106). Even within a state who attempts to silence distinction, ethnic differences nevertheless remain. With the *khadi*, Gandhi had hoped to abolish religious markers and to unite Hindu, Muslim,

Sikh, Christian, and Jewish people. But differentiation revealed itself when Hindus "who adopted the *khadi* wore the *dhotis*, *kurtas*, and Gandhi caps; Muslims wore *kurta* pajamas with a cap or *fez*, and Sikhs retained their distinctive turbans" (Tarlo 1996: 115). In all these examples, dress is effective as an ethnic marker which differentiates one ethnicity from another.

Dress also serves to reinforce identity. An example can be drawn from Muslim women in diaspora wearing the headscarf. Hoodfar's research conducted in Canadian cities, reveals that women have been voluntarily taking up veiling as a symbol of their religiosity. She says: "[t]hese women are not relinquishing Islamic mores in favor of "Canadienness". Rather they are publicly asserting their Muslim Canadian identity" (2003: 39). Likewise, Muslim women living in secular Muslim states such as Turkey and Egypt are recently wearing the hejab as a symbol of a search for traditional Turkish or Egyptian non-Westernized identity.

Another example can be drawn from older generations of Palestinians who gather at events in Los Angeles often wear their traditional clothing and the younger generation wear the *kufiyya* scarf around their neck to communicate unity as a community (El Guindi 1999: 58).

Recently a new phenomenon has developed whereby some members of a nation use clothing to adhere to the collective yet also subtly express their individuality. One example of this is found in Iranian society whereby women today, although respect the basic requirements of the hejab, manage to reveal their uniqueness by the colorful headscarves they wear much to the chagrin of the clerics. A discussion of this is presented in chapter four of this study.

DRESS TO BLUR STATUS

Throughout societies, people have restricted articles of clothing for a specific group to use in order to achieve superiority or as a means to attest status. In ancient Egypt for example, only people holding high positions could wear sandals (Lurie 2000: 115). During fifteenth century Renaissance Italy, the elite produced sumptuary laws to restrict extravagance in clothes ensuring that the lower classes could in no way compete (Herald 1981: 39).

During the Ancien Régime[7] for example, French sumptuary laws represented political, social, and economic regulation. The laws were a means to protect the aristocracy who sought to keep social rank visible (Perrot 1994: 15). "Aristocratic dress openly performed a sociopolitical function—self-affirmation for some and subordination for the place of everyone" (Perrot 1994: 10). Sumptuary laws such as restricting the use of furs were meant to preserve distinctions in rank that were starting to disappear with the increasing rise of a new class called the bourgeoisie.

The Year of Revolution (1848) resulted in the eventual defeat of the left throughout Europe and in the victory of the bourgeoisie (Laver 1979: 177). Trade and commerce flourished which gave rise to prominent businessmen and merchants but gradually eliminated a way of life tied to feudal organization and the aristocratic class it served. Thus the aristocratic style of dress was no longer emulated (Perrot 1994: 18-19). The emerging classes of Europe and America adopted luxurious lifestyles to express their new wealth. This was blurring class and status boundaries which were for centuries maintained by the aristocracy. The aristocracy pressed to affirm its social dominance by promulgating sumptuary laws which restricted the use of furs and indulgence in clothes.

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[7] Refers to the political and social system of France before the French Revolution of 1789.

But with the birth of democracy and the increasing flood in consumer goods "made it possible for 'middling' ranks to obtain the goods and thus blur the status markers of the elites". Therefore the aristocracy abandoned excessive consumption, which in reality they could no more afford, and turned to "more difficult to acquire refinement of taste and discrimination" such as subtlety in taste and the luxury of leisure time (Quataert 1997: 405).

This same ideology is found in today's business of fashion. Thorstein Veblen explains that fashion is invented and reinvented to prevent the blurring boundaries of the status of the affluent. In other words, fashion cycles exist in "a society where old rules disintegrated and all were free to copy their betters". They are invented by the dominant class to preserve "unity and segregation", to prevent subordinate classes from emulating elite fashion. According to this argument the elite must adopt new fashions so that their superiority and difference are maintained and "[t]his happens periodically so a cyclical process is created, generating the otherwise mysterious mutations we know as fashion" (Partington 1992: 148). But today it is getting increasingly more difficult to distinguish status based on dress since fabric and detail rather than cut separates a middle class person from a upper class person. Sometimes a 50$ jacket is indistinguishable from a 500$ jacket.

DRESS TO RESIST

Michel Foucault once said "[w]here there is power, there is resistance" (qtd. in Weeks 1981: 8). Clothing is not a simple history of power and control, it is also a history of opposition and resistance. Forms of social, political, and moral regulation inevitably give rise to cultures of resistance. However if states have been able to use dress codes to

manipulate their subjects, the latter has also been able to use the same tool to protest state ideology.

Nathan Joseph maintains that if a wearer views the dress code as a means of control only, they may resent external controls as coercive (1986: 80). This induces "conflict between two organizations, each with its distinctive set of symbols, vying for control over the master status" results in dress as a means of contesting authority (1986: 87). The uniform suppresses individuality by standardizing the wearers and creates a homogeneous group deprived of status markers, and sometimes gender markers. This creates a subgroup who wants to assert their distinctiveness through "its own unauthorized symbolism" (1986: 95). People need to be authors of their own social universe.

An example can be drawn from Egypt. The late president Gamal Abdel Nasser (1956-1970) was against Western convictions but approved of Western-style fashion and addressed his Egyptian subjects in a business suit. Mamoun Fandy points out that the Egyptian state had deliberately encouraged Western dress over any other type of dress since state owned factories strategically produced Western-style polo shirts and trousers, which Fandy argues, revealed much about the state's agenda; its hopes for a modernization program (1998: 91, 98). Egyptians who objected this (which consisted of a majority) wore the *jallabia* regardless of its high price. With its wide sleeves and round neckline, this wide garment was preferred by local Egyptians than Western-style attire which the state enforced in public during working hours (1998: 93-98). Likewise, during the Moghul period in India the ruling elite enforced Moghul-styles of dress on all government employ. But most Hindus displaced their Moghul-style dress upon entering

their homes (Tarlo 1996: 24).

Fandy reminds us that clothing can be used as a disguise mechanism since "[c]lothing is far more easily changed than minds" (1998: 91). Conversely just as the state can penetrate society, society can penetrate the state by resisting its control. A more overt sign of resistance is drawn from Gandhi when he wore a loincloth to Bukingham Palace in front of King George V contesting both British rule and values (Tarlo 1996: 318).

Donning any type of uniform is tantamount to giving up free speech and be "forced to repeat dialogue composed by someone else" (Lurie 2000: 20). Applying this analogy of language to the Mao suit and the hejab, both seen as uniforms in this study, suggests that one is silenced in speech when wearing one or the other, and relieved, liberated when discarded.[8] The desire for liberation thus offers the possibility of challenging the oppressive social order through resistance. But unlike the hejab in Iran, the Maoist uniform was not received with great dismay, partly because, as we will see in chapter three, the Chinese Communist Party was seemingly committed to liberating women, therefore the Mao suit was not physically restrictive rather it attempted to turn women into copies of men as a visual sign of equality.

CONCLUSION

To summarize, my aim with this chapter was to inform the reader that dress codes in China and Iran are not an unusual phenomenon typical to the Orient. Dress is a potent tool for many heads of state as a means of stratification, unification, breaking

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[8] Here I am only referring to institutions who forcefully request their subjects to wear a uniform. Empirical data clearly demonstrates that many Muslim women living in non-Muslim societies for example have chosen to wear the hejab because it provides them with additional freedom. For an example of this see Hoodfar (1991, 2003).

away from previous rule, national independence, and regulation. Likewise dress for civil

society is used to define one's ethnicity, class, identity and individuality, and to

challenge the status quo. In this sense China and Iran are not different.

In what follows we will visit the histories of dress codes in China and then in Iran

and look at the reasons why each chose the dress codes they did; what these have implied

for women; and how civil society has struggled for recognition. But before providing

potential answers and conclusions we will look at the methodology used.

CHAPTER 2
METHODOLOGY

THE RESEARCHER'S STORY

The present work is devoted to the phenomenon of dress codes as a political tool in Iran and China which is examined within a sociological and anthropological framework.

As an Iranian born in Québec, my study of clothing codes in Iran is related to an interest in my family's ethnic roots and my own search for identity. I was three years old when the Iranian revolution happened and far away living in Huntsville, Alabama in the United States in 1979. My mother had traveled to Montréal in 1975 to join my father and together they moved to the state of Alabama so that my father could study at the University in hopes of returning to Iran soon after graduation and resuming their lives as newlyweds. But when the revolution erupted and soon after the hostage crisis and the war with Iraq followed, they were advised to stay away and consequently made a life in Montréal, Québec.

I first came across academic issues on the veil at Concordia University when I took an undergraduate course entitled *Peoples and Cultures of the Middle East* with Dr. Homa Hoodfar in the winter of 1999. Before then veiling had not been an issue of interest to me. As a Muslim I was never required to veil, although I was raised in a very traditional Iranian family, growing-up in the south shore of Montréal I never knew a veiled woman and until three years ago the city of Longueuil was a predominantly white middle class society. But I was always intrigued by the black garbed women of Iran occasionally portrayed on the 6 o'clock news and curious by the contrast between the

Iran my parents knew and discussed fondly and the Iran that the world knows today. Following Dr. Hoodfar's course I came out having more questions left unanswered and therefore I registered for a tutorial on the *Sociology of Clothing* in the summer of 1999 and conducted my first anthropological field study as an inexperienced student on the veil in Tehran.

I first went to Iran in 1999 and did not know what to expect. I felt like a stranger in a not so foreign land. I went to discover my roots, to make contact with aunts and cousins whom I had only treasured in photographs and occasional phone calls overseas. Having read numerous articles and books, viewed interviews, documentaries, Iranian-made movies, and photographs (see for example pictures in Inqilab-i nur 1984 and Paris Match 1978, 1979) on Iran's Islamic Revolution had frightened me. I had heard tales of family members, who had been highly ranked in the Shah's military, having been interviewed blindfolded for days by the revolutionary military in the early days of the uprising. I had read about men and women not being allowed to laugh in public (see the Economist 1999: 48), flogged for violating the dress code, I had heard about the prohibition of freedom and about the hypocrisy. Images of Ayatollah Khomeini looked terrifying to me. I thought I was entering a country which would crucify me as soon as I put my foot on its soil. I imagined a country where everything was outdated and depleted. A country where I would stand out like a sore thumb.

Not letting anyone in on my feelings I packed my suitcases and held my breath. I mistakenly flew with Iran Air and unknowingly had to wear the hejab throughout my eight hour flight in addition to the other fourteen I already had accumulated. The flight would be a crash course on the proper observance of the headscarf. I finally arrived in

Tehran at Mehrabad airport on a hot muggy night, already irritated by the hejab, buttoned up by long *manteau*, pulled my black socks up, my black headscarf very tightly knotted under my chin, frowned my eyebrows to suggest that I complied and I was ready for war. After two hours of waiting in line it was my turn to hand the guard my passport for scrutiny. I felt like I had done something wrong and I finally lost my courage when I could not understand the guard's accent. Noticing my tearful eyes he mumbled some words and finally he let me go to greet my anxious family.

With the second year of the Master's program, the time drew near to having to chose a topic for my graduate dissertation, the hejab in Iran was a natural choice. However I did not want to duplicate my previous work and other similar studies on the veil which had come before me. Whereupon Dr. Hoodfar suggested that I look at the political aspects of dress codes and compare and contrast the situation with that of China. In order to shed more light on the general relationship between the state and dress codes. Many forget that China used to have a strict dress code during the 1970s. Discussions of women's issues in Iran resemble and sometimes echo debates about China, and the disparity in the way both states dressed women's bodies appealed to me. Finally, since China has recently opened its doors to Western influence and is under no strict dress code per se it is interesting to predict the same trajectory for Iran one day.

I returned to Tehran in the summer of 2001 and stayed from June to end of August. This time I had more confidence and wore a terracotta colored headscarf loosely knotted under my chin. For the first month I stayed with my grand parents who had since my last trip moved in a new district in upper Tehran. Because I was travelling alone, had a foreign accent, and I am illiterate in the Persian language, I felt my grand parents had

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many reservations about my comings and goings. Despite being accompanied by my cousin when I went to see my interviewees, my grand father would pace the hallways, back and forth, until we came home. Thus I took a drastic decision and moved into my aunt's home and would alternate between my three aunts for the remaining months at the expense of my grand parents' frustration.

Having heard stories about unofficial taxi drivers using tactics to rob and even on occasion rape women, I thought I would not take the chance and made a conscious decision that I would be accompanied at all times by either of my two female cousins when I went to meet with the interviewees. Since all my interviews were conducted informally in informal settings, I doubt that there were any reservations on the part of my interviewees in discussing their clothing habits in front of their own peers.

A large part of my fieldwork consisted of visiting coffee shops across the city of Tehran and two restaurants similar to McDonald's called Behrooze and BOOF. Teenagers and young adults frequently visit these places and made for very interesting observations on how the youth choose to dress and behave, irrespective of the dress code. Another part of my fieldwork consisted in engaging in the everyday and ordinary lives of people, following them to their workplace, the bazaar, the supermarket, the shopping malls, the doctor, the hair salon, the voting poll (Tehran had its presidential elections in June), to family gatherings and formal parties. Often I looked through the summaries of articles and books I had brought with me to remind myself why I was in Tehran. I found it was very easy to forget my purpose and be captured by the scenery and the exoticness of the city. I was also struggling with my topic, not knowing exactly what my next step should be or where I intended this study to lead. I was never formally trained in

anthropology and so I found myself jotting down descriptions and impressions and making mental notes of important and at times mundane comments that I heard. In the hopes of reassuring myself, I would frequently revisit the first three chapters of Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes by Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995) which was referred to me by a co-student before leaving for Iran. Additionally, I attempted to keep contact with Professors through the Internet but during the time of my stay Tehran was undergoing Internet café shut downs thus restricting my contacts and adding to my frustration.

THE MAIN QUESTIONS

My primary question was to understand why the Iranian state imposed the veil on women? Did women accept and agree with the dress code or was this because they wanted to resist the state or because it was simply a sign of modernity? I informally observed women's daily dress inside the home on formal and informal occasions and saw the contrast between the private and public space. I was interested in knowing why women preferred, if they in fact did prefer, foreign-made clothing rather than local dress. I visited local shopping malls and local bazaars to see what variations in dress was available for sale. Were there foreign and/or local goods? I wanted to investigate social spaces and observe how women used various ways of dress to resist the enforced dress code since the revolution. Overall I met with twenty seven ambitious women who, with some reservations, welcomed my questions and dispelled some myths. I started conversing with my immediate family and snowballed from there. I followed Dr. David Howes' advise and did not take notes in front of my informants. I did not want to make them feel under investigation and I thought that this way they would feel more at ease to talk to me. But this method had a drawback since at times I found it difficult to

remember the specifics of my conversations.

I relied on various methodologies such as participant observation, informal conversations, and distributed questionnaires to guide my understanding. The reason why I did not use tape recordings, although it would have been a great help, was because of the unstable political situation in Iran. Most Iranians are reluctant to be taped in fear of governmental persecution. All written work, such as questionnaires, handed to respondents were translated from English to Persian depending on the individual's level of understanding the English language. Interviewees were told that at any time, they could stop the interview and that the research results may be published. Also, all written answers in Persian were subsequently translated into English for my own understanding.

I should also mention a few words about studying one's own. Following anthropologist Seteney Shami's argument, an insider does not necessarily have "intuitive ability to theorize about his society better than an outsider" (1988: 116). Both still have the issue of "getting in". Although I had relatively easy access to local people, I did not have easy access to the information. Unlike Shami's experience however, my interest could have been interpreted as anti-patriotic given my subject matter. The difficulty in tempting people to talk can on some grounds be due to the reluctance of Iranians to discuss political issues with those they do not know well considering decades of social and political repression. I also speculate that the reservations by some to discuss their clothing consumption patterns is because Iranians do not like to hear potential criticisms of their country and living situations, especially from someone of young age and who lives in the Western world.

THE SETTING

The Western world tends to think of Iran as a Middle Eastern country but Iranian's are descendants of the Aryan people who were Indo-European nomads who migrated from Central Asia in the east. Before converting to Islam, Persia was a Zoroastrian country. Iranians are proud of the fact that the Prophet Zoroaster preached monotheism at a time when Greeks and Romans practiced polytheistic religions. The Persian Empire was established in 550 BC by Cyrus the Great and would later be invaded by the Arabs and their newly acquired faith, Islam, under the Sassanian Dynasty in 650. By the ninth century many Iranians had converted to Islam (Nyrop 1978: 34). Iran would witness many dynastic rules and domination until the establishment of its first constitution limiting royal powers in 1905.

"Persian" refers to one of eight ethnic groups in Iran and while Iranians have always referred to their land as "Iran", Shah Reza Pahlavi changed the country's name from Persia to Iran in 1935 as a means to unify a diversified nation. Nevertheless, the change has unfortunately resulted in many Westerners not associating Persia to Iran dispelling centuries of Iranian history.

Iran is situated in south-western Asia and borders Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, the Republics of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Turkmenistan, as well as the Caspian Sea to the north, the breathtaking Persian Gulf and Oman to the south, and the Alborze Mountains (see Figure 2.1). Tehran is a majestic city and the largest city and capital of Iran located in the north. Based on the 1996 estimate, Iran boasts a population of 70 330 000 (État du Monde 2002) and at present, around 57 per cent of the population live in urban centers

(Statistical Profiles 1998: 5). Farsi, or Persian as it is commonly known outside Iran, stems from Indo-European languages and the language itself and its dialects are spoken by a little more than half of the population of Iran.
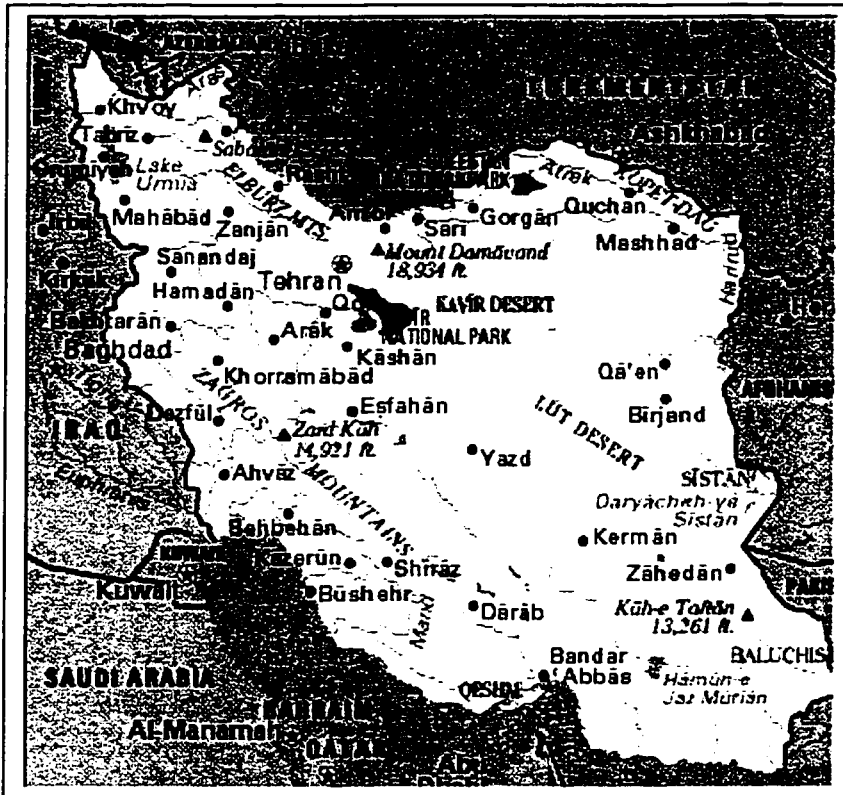
Figure 2.1.
Map of Iran
(Source:
www.oldcarpet.
com).

CHINA

China has too many borders to list here (**see Figure 2.2**). While there are no existing reliable population statistics, a study sets the figure at 1.275 billion (État du Monde 2002). The Chinese language stems from the Sino-Tibetan or Indochinese language family. However it is not the only language spoken in China and the Chinese language comprises scores of dialects among which include Mandarin and Cantonese.

The Chinese people originate in the Hwang Ho valley and the earliest period of

Chinese civilization for which reliable historical evidence exists dates back to the Shang Dynasty (1766-1122 BC or 1523-1027 BC) (Phillips 1979: 36). The ethnic and nationality makeup of the Chinese people is highly diversified; the Manchus, descendents of the people who conquered China in the seventeenth century and established the Qing Dynasty are almost indistinguishable from the Chinese proper who call themselves the Han people after a dynasty that ruled China until the third century (Phillips 1979: 18).

China is a socialist dictatorship of the proletariat led by the Communist Party. But before the Communist grip over China, the dominant influence upon Chinese culture was Confucianism yet under the Communists, Confucian influence was reduced to a minimum.

Like Iran, the Chinese have witnessed many dynastic rule before becoming a Republic in 1912. China is not an easy state to understand for its history is enormously long, close to four thousand years. Furthermore the pinyin system is not used by all studies therefore adding to the reader's confusion who might not know that Canton and Guangzhou are the same or that Chiang Kai-shek is the same as Jiang Jieshi.

While I did not travel to the Republic of China for time and monetary restrictions, I spent a great amount of time searching for academic research on Chinese dress codes. I realized that there was not much written on the dress code during the Cultural Revolution besides for several good studies namely Finnane (1996, 1999), Roberts (1997), and Steele & Major (1999). Whereas a wealth of scholarship existed on Iranian dress codes. My reading of Chinese history was complicated and oftentimes research seemed contradictory from one study to another. I filled in the gaps by questioning a Concordia

student about his views and how his parents, relatives, and friends viewed the dress code.

However the bulk of my information on Chinese history and dress codes rely on

academic publications only.
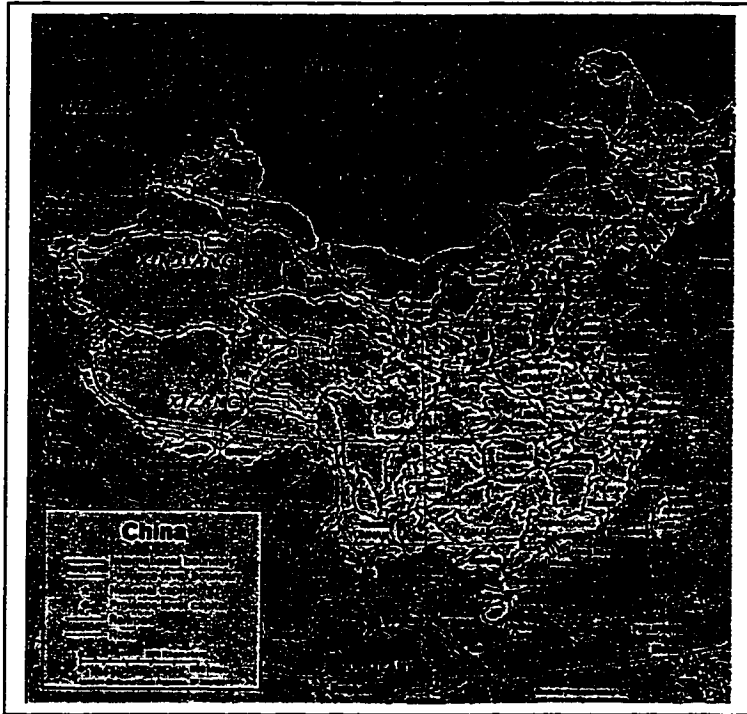
Figure 2.2. Map of China (Source: http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/china_pol96.jpg).

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CHAPTER 3
THE CHINESE STATE AND DRESS

INTRODUCTION

China's ancient civilization stretches back thousands of years, and the

Chinese people are witness to a long history of sartorial politics dating as far back

as the third century BCE. For instance, foot-binding during the Song dynasty (960-

1279) was praised by the Chinese but outlawed with the fall of the Qing dynasty

(1644-1911) (Ko 1999; Steele & Major 1999; Roberts 1997). Han Chinese men

were ordered to shave the front of their heads and keep their hair long and braided

in back, also known as the queue, as symbol of their allegiance to the Qing dynasty

but had to cut it in 1911 when the new regime arrived as a statement of support for

the new republican state (Finnane 1999; Godley 1994; Ko 1999; Lung-Kee 1997;

Roberts 1997; Scott 1958; Steele & Major 1999; Yin-yin Szeto 1997). The loose-

fitting qipao[1], an essentially bourgeois garment worn by women and served as the

national dress of China, was popular after 1911 and then closely fitted qipaos were

favored during the 1930s. Eventually preferring traditional morality during the

New Life Movement[2] in 1936, the qipao had to be lengthened to cover the legs,

arms, and throats (see Figure 3.1). Finally it disappeared during the late 1960s and

1970s when the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution was declared bringing with

[1] The qipao is also known as *cheongsam* in Cantonese meaning "long gown". The fashion lasted from 1930 to 1950 (see Steele & Major 1999). For an in-depth discussion on the qipao see Clark (1999), Finnane (1996), and Roberts (1996).
[2] The New Life Movement called for Confucian revival and obedience to the leader Chiang Kai-shek (Davin 1976: 16). The movement was "promoted to strengthen the nation through purity and high-mindedness in the face of ...threats of Communism and Japanese imperialism (Steele & Major 1999: 57). The movement also "aimed to reinforce male and female roles based on constitutional sexual stereotypes" (Clark 1999: 159). For a complete yet comprehensive history on China since the Ming Dynasty to today see Spence (1999).

it new sets of sartorial regulation (Clark 1999; Finnane 1996; Garrett 1994; Roberts 1997; Scott 1958; Wilson 1999).

In light of the above it is not surprising that the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) would be entrenched in sartorial politics as well.[3] The causes of the revolution are said to be uncertain and the results devastating (White 1989: 3). Many remember the ten years as a period of pure terror, torture, and political persecution (Jakobson 1998: 72). And many agree that the Cultural Revolution was an attack on all things traditional, unequal, and of privilege.

To eradicate the remains of bourgeois ideals and customs, Chairman Mao Zedong (1949-1976) launched the Cultural Revolution, essentially a proletarian class-struggle against the capitalists. If socialism was to prevail then the capitalist class, also labeled as "capitalist roaders", had to be reeducated through hard manual labor. "If poisonous weeds are not removed", Mao said, "scented flowers cannot grow" (Cheng 1988: 21). One research claims that over a short period, fifteen to twenty million people were uprooted from their homes and sent to the fields to be reeducated by poor peasants, whereby the latter would teach them how to work and to study Mao's works (Hsi-en Chen 1970: 197-198). But at the time no one had any idea that the esteemed label "worker-peasant-soldier-student" would one day become a badge of shame (Wong 1996: 182).

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[3] The Cultural Revolution was an assault on counter-revolutionary tendencies within the party leadership (Jakobson 1998: 69; Leys 1977: 51; Steele & Major 1999: 59; Wong 1996: 15) and came under the influence of Mao's wife Jiang Qing who would later be arrested for treason. One of the many accusations brought against her was that she paid too much attention to her looks and wore fashionable Western clothing in private (Steele & Major 1999: 61; Wilson 1999: 173). She spent fifteen years in solitary confinement until she committed suicide in 1991 (Wong 1996: 176). The Cultural Revolution brought the Communist Chinese national economy to near bankruptcy (Xiaoping 1998: 74).
Also, dates are not consistent from one author to the next but we have tried throughout the essay to use dates which resurfaces most often, however Mai Chen (2001) is the only one that we have come across to set the date of the Cultural Revolution between 1966-1969.

Figure 3.1. Coca Cola poster from the 1920s depicting a Chinese woman in a qipao (Source: http://depts.washington.edu/ chinaciv/graph/9posters.htm).

In retrospect, the Cultural Revolution proved to be a violent reformation.

setting the official death count at 34, 800 individuals. According to historian Paul

Johnson, the Cultural Revolution was the "greatest witch-hunt in history" (qtd. in

Jakobson 1998: 307, 69). Red Guards, who were organized students, looted the

homes of the capitalists and arrested or executed people they deemed suspicious,

while others were sent to work camps to be rehabilitated. Foreign broadcasts,

newspapers[4], alcohol, and even foreign religions were banned (Cheng 1988: 453;

Fisher 1979: 48; White 1989: 283; Wong 1996: 73). Churches were "stripped of

crosses, statues, icons, decorations, and all church paraphernalia" (White 1989:

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[4] Wong reveals that during her stay in China during the Cultural Revolution her issues of Newsweek were confiscated "as counter-revolutionary propaganda" (1996: 17).

283). Suspicion arose about anyone with ties to the West[5] and were accused of being part of the bourgeois class (Rofel 1998: 160; Wong 1996: 32). Even private phone lines were banned. China was under a period of total "Cultural Annihilation"; English textbooks disappeared (Cheng 1988: 412, 453); Western music, movies, and plays were deemed decadent[6] (Cheng 1988: 82; Fisher 1979: 248; Wong 1996: 73); traditional architecture was destroyed (Wang 1997: 195); buildings dating from the 1920s and 1930s with foreign language carved on their facades were chiseled off (White 1989: 281); overall aesthetics were said to be crude (Wang 1997: 196); and some museums were torched (Domes 1970: 77). Since Shanghai had used foreign support to develop economically, Red Guards argued that its name should be replaced by "Fandi" meaning anti-imperialism. In this context it is not surprising that dress failed to escape regulation and attacks. Whenever people were caught wearing "Hong Kong clothes"[7], perceived as Western clothing, they would be stopped and criticized. Pointed shoes, elastic laces, jeans, and white collars were assaulted by Red Guards. Chinese men and women with long hair were escorted to barber shops and forced to cut their hair (White 1989: 281). It appears that the culture was literary taken out of the Cultural Revolution.

The following sections will visit the emerging debates about women's position in Chinese society and how it affected their dress. The origins of the

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[5] Both Jakobson (1998) and Wong (1996) argue that even being seen with a foreigner was enough to raise suspicion.

[6] White reveals that a woman was once "overheard, on trolley route no.25, singing a foreign lullaby called 'Darling' to her baby" whereby the passengers started criticizing her for singing in foreign language (1989: 283).

[7] Hong Kong was colonized by the British in 1842 but was returned to China in 1997.

sartorial politics that took place during China's Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution which resulted in both men and women to adopt the Mao suit will be examined. Section two will then turn to the resistance to the state imposed Mao uniform and look at the reasons why the nation outwardly subscribed to the dress code.

THE STRUGGLE BETWEEN TRADITIONALISTS AND MODERNISTS

The battle between conservatives and reformists have been enduring in both China and Iran. This section discusses the importance of clothing in recent Chinese history, and the battle over the woman question between modernizing revolutionaries on one side, and traditionalists on the other manifesting in dress.

Increasing Western influence over China opened doors previously closed for Chinese women in early twentieth century. This was perceived as a threat to traditionalists since the traditional family strictly depended on the sexual division of labor (Andors 1983: 12) and on the strict teachings of Confucian principle, a secular theory based on Confucius's teachings (551- 479 BC). The family in old China was a hierarchical, patrilineal[8], and a dominant institutional locus for Chinese women, and thus women embodied a subordinate role. A woman's role was so much dependent on male authority that her behavior was linked to the "three obediences" in Chinese culture; an unmarried girl had to be obedient to her father, when married to her husband, and when widowed she had to be obedient to her son. Furthermore, a woman's position in the family she was born into was temporary. Time invested in developing her skills and educating her was perceived

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[8] However there is evidence points to the fact that China used to be a matrilineal society (Simson 1995: 144; Sternfeld 1995a: 3; Sternfeld 1995b: 132-133;).

to be time wasted since when married, which would often be arranged, a daughter

would join her husband's family and literally owned by the adoptive family

(Andors 1983: 13; Croll 1978: 26; Davin 1976: 71; Jayawardena 1986: 171;

Schadler 1995: 128; Simson 1995: 144-145). As an old Chinese proverb warns

"[t]o educate a daughter is to water another man's garden" (Rai 1992: 30).

Moreover, female virginity was highly valued and expressed "sexual and

reproductive ownership" (Evans 1992: 5). A woman's initial role in her husband's family

was to take responsibility for giving birth to a male heir, giving strength to the argument

that possibly Chinese women suffered from female infanticide. Other secondary roles

such as child care, cooking, and cleaning followed under the strict supervision of her

mother-in-law who was to socialize the new bride into the adoptive family unit.[9] When

the mother-in-law would pass away, then the role would be taken up by the bride

(Andors 1983: 13).

Foot-binding was an aspect of traditional life which underwent criticism by

modernists and threatened by Western influence. The painful practice, some say

developed during the Song dynasty (960-1279)[10] (Simson 1995: 143), was

considered beautiful, and an ideal to strive for. The practice was initially reserved

for the upper-classes and for the daughters and wives of officials in order to

confine women to their homes and turn them into sexual objects (Davin 1976: 11;

Laver 1979: 175; Steele & Major 1999: 37). Briefly, foot-binding meant many

things, but more importantly it distinguished between Chinese and non-Chinese, man

from woman[11] (Steele & Major 1999: 38-39) and un-crippled feet meant that the woman

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[9] By the 1980s, mothers'-in-law had less power because of their daughters'-in-law increased legal
protection and social independence (Honig & Hershatter 1988: 168).
[10] Steele and Major (1999) trace it back to the Tang dynasty (618-907).

was not marriageable. But by the end of the nineteenth century, its popularity started to die down due to Western influences and subsequently the development of anti-foot-binding societies. Modernists argued that China could become a stronger nation in face of the West only if women would stop binding their feet (Steele & Major 1999: 42). With increasing public pressure, it was finally banned by the Republic in 1912 (Garrett 1994: 93; Steele & Major 1999: 37).

During the Republican era (1912-1949), under China's Nationalist government, which ended the one thousand year old Chinese feudal system, sexual discourse still relied on Confucian ideal, in addition to medical expertise and Western ideology which strongly asserted that the biological differences between the genders were reason enough to support the differentiation between women and men in sexual and social behavior (Evans 1997: 3, 23-24). Moreover, since Chinese women represented social and familial order (Evans 1997: 81) they could not associate with other men in public spaces (Evans 1997: 5) consequently making the idea of working outside the home near impossible (Davin 1976: 4; Park 1994: 139). Furthermore female desire for sex outside marriage was viewed as "a sign of some physical or mental abnormality" (Evans 1997: 49,84) while conversely, men were to have several wives, concubines, including rights to divorce (Jayawardena 1986: 171; Evans 1997: 5) even for reasons as incipient as having a talkative wife (Borchard 1995: 117). Women on the other hand were tied to their vows until their own deaths and if widowed, even at a young age, were forbidden to remarry. Only

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[11] Interestingly, Steele and Major claim that another reason for the invention of foot-binding stems from the anxieties about masculinity: "[b]ecause the ideal upper-class man was by Sung times a relatively subdued and refined figure, he might seem effeminate unless women could be made even more delicate" (1999: 40). For further discussion on foot-binding see Ko (1997, 1999).

when finance necessitated, widows of the urban poor and peasants could remarry but at the expense of leaving their male offspring behind (Croll 1978: 28). Thus sexual discrimination and gender role regulation was at the very heart of the traditional family system in China.

THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT AND THE GIRL STUDENT ATTIRE

All of this changed however with increasing numbers of women encouraged to become educated and participate in the labor market during the May Fourth Movement (1917-1921). [12] Young educated urban Chinese men and women advocated for a change in many traditional aspects of Chinese society and culture. The May Fourth Movement initiated serious intellectual attacks on Confucian thought as once more the principle reason behind China's weakness towards Western imperialism. The movement used women's subordinate role in Confucianism and in the family "as a symbol of everything in Chinese culture that kept the nation weak" (Honig & Hershatter 1988: 2).

May Fourth, a reaction to Japanese imperial influence, stood for a want for economic development and political modernization and placed women's traditional subordination in marriage life into serious question (Andors 1983: 16; Jayawardena 1986: 184). Women fought for law reforms in property and inheritance, they campaigned for their rights to education, to vote, and for the right to choose their future spouse (Davin 1976: 14). A woman's movement sprang from the May Fourth era which brought diverse feminist, nationalist, and socialist forces under

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[12] The May Fourth Movement "was characterized by a blend of nationalism and desire for economic development and political modernization. ...the movement was above all an intellectual rejection of traditional Chinese social and political institutions, values, and ethics, which were perceived as being responsible for a weak and exploited China" (Andors 1983: 16).

one roof. Women's efforts were not in vain since voting rights were granted in 1921 (Jayawardena 1986: 187), the same year the Chinese Communist Party was formed. A document entitled "Proclamation of the Wives and Daughters of Tientsin" was issued in 1924 and demanded particular rights for women,

> Let their legal, financial, and 'educational' situation be equal to that of men... Let all careers be open to girls, for them to choose. Let... (Confucius) be abolished and one created which turns [women] into real human beings... Let very severe penalties be imposed upon those who drown little girls, who mistreat their wives or daughters-in-law, who bind their daughters' feet or pierce their ears... Let the patriarchal family system be replaced by that of the "small family"... Let a man who is contemplating marriage with a young woman or with a widow first be able to enter into a social relationship with her which will allow him to get to know her. Let the right to divorce be granted to women who are unhappy in their marriages... (Jayawardena 1986: 188).

Furthermore, women's involvement in the labor movement strengthened their independence from the traditional family and for the first time in China's history provided women with an alternative to arranged and unhappy marriages. It is important to note that this ideology only spread in areas where the Chinese Communist Party had established itself (Andors 1983: 18-19).

As a result women were being granted more and more freedom as Confucian ideals were put aside and women's fashion subsequently changed. With the encouragement of women's education and their emancipation from the patriarchal home, the "girl student" image became an ideal to approximate for the new woman of China and became "a major icon of the May Fourth imaginary" (Huang 1999: 134). The new style also came to symbolize China's social change and self-liberation. But with the New Life Movement in 1934, started by Chiang Kai-shek, a dichotomous image of a woman came forth; the "woman of style" was generally perceived to be a harlot and had traditional antecedents while the "girl

student" was an entirely new invention and leaned towards Communist ideology. Both threatened the status quo of a society immersed in Confucian ideals, albeit in contrasting ways: the "woman of style" "indulg[ed] in the sybaritic decoration of the demi-monde" whereas the "girl student" was involved in politics and social reform. The "woman of style" was usually portrayed wearing "trouser suits of teahouse entertainers and the delicate skirt and blouse sets of well-to-do women, to the westernized hybrid fashions of the would-be Chinese flapper". Her clothing was tight (Finnane 1999: 127) and perhaps even wore the qipao. She was also often photographed for calendar posters and appeared in Chinese cinema.

The portrait of the modern schoolgirl however, was one of educated and conservative type, yet still shouldered the responsibilities of child rearing and ensuring general health (Huang 1999: 133-134). She sported "a light-colored blouse, collarless or with a mandarin collar and usually with a side closure, and a dark mid-calf skirt of either black or dark blue". Her shoes were modern and in Western-style, emphasizing her unbound feet (Huang 1999: 136). Because she did not doll-up and was politically aware, the modern school girl look appealed to many women (see **Figures 3.2 & 3.3**).

The rhetoric between civilized and barbaric, modern and tradition took place on women's bodies and in their lives. For China to become a modern nation, it was argued, women's feet were unbound whereas barbaric China was "a woman who keeps to her woman's apartment, nursing her beauty..." (qtd. in Finnane 1999: 125).

Figure 3.2. The modern Chinese girl student look (Source: Steele & Major 1999).

Figure 3.3. The Chinese woman of style look in the qipao (Source: http://www.chinavista.com /experience/old/beauty.html).

Gradually, as Chinese patriotism strengthened in the 1920s and with Chiang

Kai-shek's campaigns against anti-social behavior which included sexual relations

and provocative clothing (Spence 1999: 357), the traditional "woman of style" gave way to the modern schoolgirl fashion. In keeping with arguments of female emancipation that had surfaced from the old society[13], modernist intellectuals embarked on a campaign discouraging women's adornment and encouraging equality by drawing contrasts between traditional and modern women. Generally, Chinese intellectuals were suspicious of fashion and rarely wrote about it, but when they did, they attacked it severely giving rise to the anti-adornment sentiment of the 1920s (which would also be revived during the Cultural Revolution). As a result of patriotism, foreign goods were boycotted and the Chinese were left with reinventing their clothes. They reshaped and adopted the high mandarin collar and used cloth fastenings in place of foreign buttons for example (Huang 1999: 134).

Intellectuals took to writing essays advocating the ills of perfume, jewelry, cosmetics, fashionable hats and shoes. "Women must give up adornment" Hu Huaishen, a prominent writer, wrote in 1920 (qtd. in Huang 1999: 137). For women to adorn themselves, Huaishen suggested, wasted time and money, was unhygienic, and made women look cheap. Rather, hair should preferably be short, tied in a bun or braided, and clothing should be plain and in "solid" colors. However this was difficult to maintain in practice since traditional ideals were still very powerful in China and "love of beauty was a natural trait" (Huang 1999: 137). Nevertheless this was laying the foundations upon which the Cultural Revolution would later build on.

It is important to keep in mind that although women were encouraged to dress modestly, they were not encouraged to dress like men. Yet, women

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[13] For a presentation of such arguments see Jayawardena (1986).

attempting to change their appearances to approximate men in their everyday attire were discouraged and few who dared bob their hair[14] were stopped by the Nationalist army and terrorized by having their hair torn out and their breasts cut off as punishment. Although men could keep their hair short, women on the other hand were not (Huang 1999: 135; Lung-kee 1997: 135).

It is not entirely clear why officials would take such draconian actions as to cut women's breasts, evidence does point to the fact that women did bind their breasts and the literature places the practice somewhere between 1900 to 1920s which suggests that some women aspired to look like men. If not in the hopes of approximating men, women for reasons not yet researched, preferred to appear flat-chested. The only assumption we ascribe to for its purpose is one offered by Evans whereby having prominent breasts in the 1950s was viewed corrupt and therefore women binded their breasts with cotton cloth (1997: 69). Since breast-binding was practiced prior to the 1950s, it is safe to argue that women practiced it for the same reason. Yet despite its draconian nature, breast-binding has been the subject of surprisingly little scholarly research. Research does tell us that the practice ended sometime between 1927 and 1937 thanks to the anti-breast-binding movement (see Finnane 1999 and Lung-kee 1997).

Other accounts reveal that women resembling men by having bobbed-hair were executed by the right wing. The argument was such that women who cut their locks were believed to be revolutionary (Honig & Hershatter 1988: 42) and against the boundary between male and female defined in Confucian thought. This practice

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[14] For a discussion on the bob see Lung-kee (1997) and generally on hair in Asia see Hiltebeitel & Miller (1998).

however would later be encouraged and became the preferred hairstyle during the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution where men and women closely resembled each other.

Another writer, Xu Dishan (1920), argued that "if women want to be active in new society [Republican state], they must first reform their clothing" (qtd. in Huang 1999: 137). Xu held that traditional clothes were primitive and that skirts were "pre-evolutionary" and interestingly "remnants from a time when men had not yet learned to sow trousers". Also, jewelry were "slave accessories" and symbols of "eternal servitude", and long hair, he theorized, "evolved as a necessary cushion for carrying things on the head", he wrote,

> the types of hair ornaments are extremely varied, and came about after women became the dependents of men and had nothing to do at home but spend a lot of time adorning themselves. Various forms of tying buns and braids are all result of an unstimulating life. Today many girls who love dressing up spend most of the day on their hair, is this not because they have too much free time? (qtd. Huang 1999: 138).

In addition, Xu argued that "[b]ound feet, corseted waists, bound breasts and pierced ears are naturally unhygienic" and "[s]kirts and long hair inhibit movement ...if girls spend half the day dressing themselves, their work will never be equal to that of men". Finally, Xu stated that women's dress was simply too provocative. His proposed solution was that the dress of both genders should resemble each other so that men and women could do equal work once and for all (Huang 1999: 138). This was laying the foundations of un-gendered clothing for which Mao subscribed to during the Cultural Revolution.

Mao was in agreement with all of the above modernist theories and would later reveal during the Cultural Revolution that "women urgently need revolution"

(Andors 1983: 131) and Confucian tradition, such as family-oriented rather than state-oriented authorities, continued to be perceived as barriers to women's liberation and socialism. The Communist Party was the only entity which was willing to combine nationalism and feminism (Croll 1978: 113) and it is in this light that Mao advocated non-gendered dress, emancipation for women, and encouraged it in the Cultural Revolution by enforcing both men and women to wear the Sun Yat-sen suit.

THE SUN YAT-SEN SUIT

Western influence in China was for a long time perceived "limited, unimportant, and benign". After all, because of its ancient history, to be Chinese, it was assumed, was to be civilized; it was argued that only barbarians lived beyond China's borders. But the nineteenth century, with the ceding of Hong Kong to Great Britain in 1842 coupled with the Second Opium War (1856-1860), brought an ever increasing presence of European missionaries to China and assured an imperialist grip over the country and an insistence on European superior ways (Scott 1958: 62, 78; Steele & Major 1999: 17, 33-34). European influence left its mark on Chinese society including clothing and gradually presented China with the tailored suit. Furthermore, the 1911 revolution entailed the rejection of indigenous Chinese dress for Western garments which, as A C. Scott argues, has led to confusion in Chinese dress ever since. As Scott sees it, the Chinese simply "look wrong in European dress" (1958: 25, 64) and Wong confirms this by arguing that the Chinese had no sense of Western style "because they combined plaid with chintz, chartreuse with burgundy, and wore long underwear under pantyhose"

(1996: 212). During the Republic (1912-1949), the nation and government officials were encouraged to wear Western attire in public, yet in Chinese fabric. To help people revert to the new style, ordinances of the correct way to dress were revealed in newspapers along with various sketches depicting the many items to be worn in the correct manner (see figure 8.3 in Garrett 1994: 99). Thankfully the trend of Victorian corseted dresses, oversized hats, gloves, and parasols were short lived in China (Garrett 1994: 103). If people continued the Western trend in private remains to be researched.

But within this context, eventually a combination of Western and Chinese dress developed. The Sun Yat-sen suit, which borrowed from the "Japanese Meiji period[15] student uniform, German military dress and the Western suit", was named after the father of the republican revolution, Dr. Sun Yat-sen (1866-1925) (Roberts 1997: 18) (see Figure 3.4). The uniform would in fifty years become the blue print of what is known in the West as the Mao suit[16] and become a national dress which would embrace modern values, equality between genders, and the rejection of Western dress and ideology (Finnane 1996; Steele & Major 1999; Roberts 1997; Wen 1981).

The Sun Yat-sen uniform was adopted as the official dress by civil servants in 1929 and in the 1940s it was essentially worn by Nationalist Party (Guomindang) officials and by public servants. Legend has it that the jacket literally spoke volumes since its four stitched pockets symbolized the "Four

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[15] In 1867 emperor Mutsuhito (1852-1912) regained his position of head of government and took the name of Meiji, meaning Enlightened government to designate his reign.
[16] Also called the Zhongshan Suit. Zongshan refers to Dr. Sun Yat-sen's place of birth in Guangdong (Garrett 1994: 128).

Cardinal Principles": propriety, justice, honesty, and shame. These are known to be

the fundamental principles for behavior in Chinese culture. Second, the five

buttons stitched on the front stood for the five power constitution of the Republic

of China which says that government administration comprise of executive,

legislative, judiciary, examination, and supervisory or control powers. The three

buttons on the sleeve cuff represented the "Three Principles of the People":

nationalism, democracy and people's livelihood (Roberts 1997: 20-21).

Figure 3.4. Dr. Sun Yat-sen wearing his invention in 1924 (Source: Wang 1991).

THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC AND THE MAO SUIT

The long bloody struggle between China's Nationalist government, led by

Chiang Kai-shek, and Communism came to a bloody halt in 1949 making

Communism the conqueror. The same year Mao Zedong (1949-1976), the party's

chairman, announced the birth of the People's Republic of China (see Spence

61

1999). The Japanese (1937-1945), the Civil War (1945-1949) coupled with the

Korean (1950-1953) war had seriously ravaged China's economy (Jakobson 1998:

6). Mao and his government promised the tiered Chinese nation freedom of

thought, speech, religion, and equal rights for women but at the expense of

individuality and women's self-expression. In short, Communism in China

promised "to deliver greater good to a greater number of people" (Roberts 1997:

21) but instead, according to many, delivered a dictatorship of Mao only (Cheng

1988: 150; Leys 1977: 21; Michael 1970: 34).

Like other heads of state (see chapter one in this study), to visually aim a

sense of nationalism, ideology, and also to further promulgate his victory on behalf

of workers, peasants, and soldiers, Mao turned to dress to achieve his goal. In a

1949 celebration of the foundation of the People's Republic of China, Mao and his

entourage wore an altered version of the Sun Yat-sen suit. The Mao suit (see **Figure**

3.5) as well as Chinese black cotton shoes or straw sandals emulated peasants and

artisans and became symbols of Communist ideology and were adopted by both

men and women, workers, peasants, soldiers, and intellectuals (Roberts 1997: 22;

Scott 1958). China was indirectly promoting the Mao suit thereby becoming the

first state to blur gender appearances so that men and women looked seemingly

equal (see **Figure 3.6**).
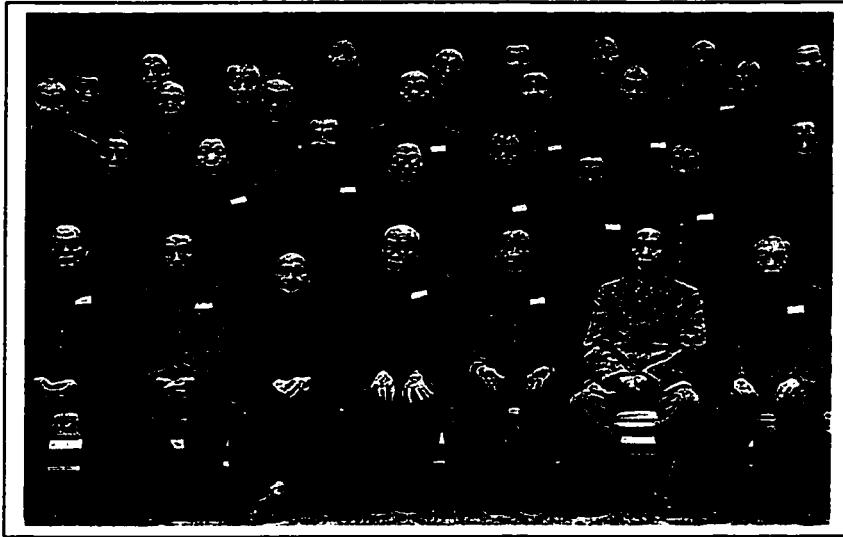
Figure 3.5. Communist Party leaders in the 1950s wearing the Mao suit. This was to become common place throughout China (Source: Deng 1988).

Figure 3.6. *Proletarian revolutionary rebels unite* In this propaganda poster of the Cultural Revolution men and women look quite similar (Source: http://depts.washington.edu/chinaciv/graph/9wenge.htm).

The uniform during Mao's government consisted of a loosely fitted suit,

always buttoned-up, coupled with baggy pants, cloth cap, and canvas shoes. [17] This

outfit was worn throughout the four seasons by adding or removing layers

underneath when cold or hot (Garrett 1994: 101; Roberts 1997: 22; Scott 1958). [18]

Lois Fisher describes the clothing of the time as "cut squarely and shapelessly" and

that most Chinese were primarily concerned with how loosely the garment fitted,

since they traditionally wore other garments underneath (1979: 135). The uniform

was produced in several somber colors of which khaki was adopted by the

Liberation Army, gray by civilians, and dark-blue by workers and peasants (Steele

& Major 1999: 57).

The blue jacket became the most widely adopted uniform in the history of

costume (Free & Tobin 1997) leading Westerners to refer to the Chinese people as

the "blue ants" (Steele & Major 1999: 62). Eventually, during the Cultural

Revolution, khaki came to be the preferred color for many civilians as a symbol of

voicing their revolutionary allegiance to the Party (Roberts 1997: 22).

In addition to the seemingly abolished symbols of rank (see chapter one in

this study), the Communist Party had also attempted to abolish gender differences.

In order to achieve women's emancipation erasing gender differentiation was of

great importance and as far back as 1919, Mao Zedong gave a notice to the Chinese

nation of his politics concerning clothing and gender, he said,

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[17] According to Fisher, women in Chao Yang, Shanghai's first workers residential area, wore closer fitted pants and tailored blouses. Bright prints and stripes were visible and jackets had a particular stitching which would be picked up by Beijing locals two years later. Many wore leather shoes, women's hair was longer and women appeared more attractive (1979: 162-163).
[18] For the Chinese "padded clothing was a cultural preference that has endured for tens of centuries" (Steele & Major 1999: 23).

If a woman's head and a man's head are actually the same, and there is no real difference between a woman's waist and a man's, why must women have their hair piled up in those ostentatious and awkward buns? Why must they wear those messy skirts cinched tightly at the waist? I think women are regarded as criminals to start with, and tall buns and long skirts are the instruments of torture applied to them by men (qtd. in Finnane 1996: 120).

Mao also had rules against makeup and jewelry which for him symbolized women's enslavement and would later severely be regulated during the Cultural Revolution,

> There is also facial makeup, which is the brand of a criminal; the jewelry on their hands, which constitutes shackles; and their pierced ears and bound feet, which represent corporal punishment…If we ask, how can they escape this suffering, my answer is, only by raising a women's revolutionary army (qtd. in Finnane 1996: 120)

Mao believed that women urgently needed a revolution and that women were "a decisive force in the success or failure of the revolution" (Andors 1983: 131). Then it is in this light that Mao wore the Sun Yat-sen suit and gradually encouraged it for both genders in the Cultural Revolution.

THE CHINESE PROLETARIAN CULTURAL REVOLUTION

With the failure of the Great Leap resulting in nation-wide famine, Mao resigned as head of state but remained the Party's chairmanship and launched the Cultural Revolution (see Spence 1999). At the core, the policy of the Communist Party was to ultimately transform China into a socialist society. To achieve this, Marxist-Leninist education and propaganda were used. The youth were instructed to look to the Party and the state rather than their families for leadership and security. Intellectuals were subjected to strict state control and subjected to a program of thought reform intended to eradicate anti-Communist ideas. Moreover,

women were given equal rights and subsequently they were pushed to wear gender-neutral clothing. In its efforts to eliminate all threats to its leadership, the government resorted to terrorism in eliminating all opposition, including opposition to the dress code.

In this context, the Mao suit came to symbolize hard work and proletarian virtue. To monitor the state's enforced ideology, the Red Guards were called upon to force people into adopting proletarian virtues and rejecting bourgeois ideology and the first visual sign of adherence to state ideology was people wearing the Mao uniform. In a collection of Chinese oral histories an eighty-three year old tailor recalls,

> Uniforms were recognized as the mark of state employees; to wear one was to be progressive. If you wore a suit people thought you were a capitalist, an interpreter or somebody who'd returned from overseas (qtd. in Sang Ye 1997: 46).

Hard work, proletarian virtue, and simple life-style became universal and "marked a return to ideas of revolutionary simplicity" (Steele & Major 1999: 57). Dai Qing, an environmentalist and writer recalls,

> We lived simply and modestly, wore patched clothing, cut our hair short and combed it smooth. We believed our intellectual life was rich and pure. Luxury and pleasure were things we despised. After all, we were revolutionaries and how else could you imagine a revolutionary? (1995:79-81).

While androgyny was an ideal to approximate, this is not to say that men and women did not have selections of alternative garments they could choose from. A closer look at an individual's dress could differentiate their gender. For a woman alternate dress-styles existed namely the Lenin outfit and several varying styles of shirts and jackets whereby only the details on the collars would change (Roberts 1997: 23); women's pants were fastened on the side whereas men's fastened on the

66

front (Finnane 1996: 122; Fisher 1979: 136); men could choose from the student uniform, the *qianjin fu*, or the "traditional Chinese-style center-front opening jacket". Furthermore, women's shoes were black cotton "with a strap over the arch" while men wore loafer-style shoes (Fisher 1979: 136). Despite these subtle differences, men and women were usually indistinguishable.

In addition to clothing, lack of overt gender differentiation was further subdued by hair; women's hair was bobbed while men's hair was shaved at the neck (Finnane 1996: 122; Fisher 1979: 24). Permed hair was outlawed and unmarried women generally wore their hair in two long braids (Fisher 1979: 24; Garrett 1994: 107). Additionally, girls whose braids were loose and poorly done "with wisps of hair falling on their faces" coupled with sunglasses were labeled "bad girls". In Fisher's study, if Chinese women wore their hair loose, they would be laughed and Fisher's Chinese friend noted, "No girl should stand out. It is better to look like everyone else, and then you won't be criticized" (qtd. in Fisher 1979: 74). But the purpose of the bobbed hair was to make women feel equal to men (Lung-kee 1997: 356) and simultaneously revealed ones ideological progress as stated by a woman in Wong's biography,

> I used to wear my hair knotted in a bun in the back, but during the Cultural Revolution I made ideological progress. I cut it off, and now it's much more convenient (qtd. in Wong 1996: 97).

The Mao suit and short hair resulted in men and women, according to Fisher, to look quite "bulky, square, and shapeless" with no hint at women's figures (1979: 25) (see **Figures 3.7 & 3.8**). The discourse of the Cultural Revolution thus lied in the ideology that there were no differences between the genders, after all, during this period women

were known to "hold half of the sky" and thus had to look their part. Consequently, this promoted the "iron girls", known as masculinized women (Xiaoping 1998: 81). There is not much written about the iron girls but Wong argues that her master in the commune explained that the reason for why the term came into existence was because no other Chinese woman had ever used a drill before (1996: 100). In other words, iron girls were referred to women who engaged in hard labor previously deemed unsuitable for women.

Figures 3.7. and 3.8. Women wearing the Mao jacket in the late 1960s. The military uniform became a symbol of revolution and the most popular form of dress (Source: http://pro.corbis.com/search/searchFrame.asp;http://www.chinavista.com/experience/old/beauty.html).

PROPAGANDA, NORMALIZING GAZE, AND RED GUARDS

While the state never officially declared a dress code, rather "it was tacitly understood" that a proletarian-style dress was in fashion (Davin 1976: 57; Scott 1958: 96; Wilson 1999: 170) and qipaos, silk stockings, high heeled shoes, cosmetics, and hair

curlers were capitalist items and had to be thrown away (Scott 1958: 96; Wong 1996: 42). This was accomplished by persuasion through propaganda in the form of posters, billboards, close-up photographs of model workers wearing the prescribed uniform and elevated to hero status (Wilson 1999: 178-179).[19] The normalizing gaze, not to mention the coercive nature of the Red Guards also had devastating effects.

The Party used models and billboards to bring about change based on the idea that the nation could be regulated "by merely providing examples of orthopraxy, or sanctioned behavior" (Landsberger 2001: 27). But the subject matter of the propaganda posters seemed to be contradictory to real life because they contained color and advertised happy peasant women wearing flower-patterned jackets. Actual women wearing such outfits on the streets however were reportedly spat on by the Red Guards (see Steele & Major 1999: 62).

An informal conversation with a Concordia University Chinese student revealed however that women wearing flowered-printed fabric as depicted in the propaganda posters were in fact in accordance with the dress code of the day. He pointed to the fact that all fabric imported to the country were pre-approved by the state, and that the fabrics depicted in the posters have traditional roots in Chinese history. He stressed the fact however that people chose the same fabric prints so that uniformity was still kept.

Another attempt to explain the contradicting subject matter of the propaganda posters is offered by Steele and Major. In their influential work China Chic: East Meets West, they argue that perhaps the posters characterized an ideal agrarian utopia "not yet realized" but soon would be, thus making the posters legitimate "as if it already existed

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[19] For a discussion on propaganda and model emulation see Landsberger (1993, 2001) and Sheridan (1968).

in fact". They imagine the posters narrating the following,

> You, the spectator, are now wearing drab blue, or gray, or green; but soon it will be possible for you to dress in brighter colors, colors to match the happiness of your circumstances in a society that is just around the corner... (1999: 62).

Indeed, color returned to China after Mao's death in 1976 and soon after Jiang Qing's arrest (Steele & Major 1999: 62-63).[20] Upon her second visit to Beijing in 1977, Fisher observes that silk patterns were starting to imitate designs made by Pucci and Hermès. Jackets were better cut and stylish and women let their hair grow and wore their hair loose and sometimes wavy (1979: 245, 247).

But if the propaganda posters were ambiguous in their context, the normalizing gaze was quite clear in its message. The Party demanded people to denounce one another and be on the look out for anything counter-revolutionary. An account of the period observes the effects of the normalizing gaze and how people were suspicious of and guarded against one another,

> the practice had a profoundly destructive effect on human relationships. Husbands and wives became guarded with each other, and parents were alienated from their children (Cheng 1988: 285).

Another account, in reminiscence, revealed after twenty years,

> That's what was wrong with the Cultural Revolution. It didn't just ruin the economy and industry or keep us behind in scientific research. Look what it did to personal relationships. We were all reporting on each other and meddling in each other's affairs under the guise of being revolutionary and patriotic (Wong 1996: 108).

Any kind of gossip was tantamount to informing (Wilson 1999: 174). Lynn White maintains that it is surprising that not only did people respond to what the Chairman asked for, but that they seemingly gave blind support (1989: 31). The conviction was to

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[20] Fisher observes: "in the following summers colors and styles changed. Men wore blue shirts and women wore ready-made blouses, produced in prints and bright pinks, greens, and blues. Then dresses appeared in stores" (1979: 66).

"[l]ove your dad and love your mom, but not as much as Chairman Mao" (Wong 1996: 108) and this was strictly followed.

The politics of dress during the Cultural Revolution was said to be an attack on fashionable tendencies that were rekindled in the wake of, what is known to be "the worst man-made famine in history", the Great Leap Forward (1957-1958) (Jakobson 1998: 69; Steele & Major 1999: 59).[21] The state encouraged people to adopt proletarian-style dress and abstain from gender specific and status distinctive clothing (Finnane 1996: 122). Travelers to China, observed women's clothing to be "variously simple, practical, unworldly, androgynous, unfeminine, or downright ugly" (Finnane 1996: 100). This drabness is further reflected in Jan Wong's clothing description. In preparing for her journey to China in 1972, Canadian born journalist Jan Wong, the first Westerner to study in China, bobbed her hair and paid 15$ for a peasant outfit which consisted of two pairs of black cloth shoes, two pairs of baggy gray trousers, and three plaid blouses (Wong 1996: 12).

Additionally, to be concerned with one's appearance was viewed "as an expression of bourgeois tendencies" and "extreme individualism" (Roberts 1997: 23; Steele & Major 1999: 61) so much so that in mid-1970s some brides wore gray pantsuits at their weddings (Wong 1996: 179). Valuing beauty in people or garments was frowned upon "as sentimentality of the worst kind" (Liu 1994: 42). In fact, mirrors are said to have disappeared in public spaces (Wilson 1999: 182); traditional dress, such as the qipao, was regarded feudal because it belonged to the old society. Old ideas, old culture, old customs, and old habits, also referred to as the "Four Olds", were called on to be

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[21] The failure of the Leap is blamed on bad weather and on the decision of the Soviet Union to withdraw aid to China (Wong 1996: 15). It is reported that approximately twenty to forty-three million people starved to death between 1959-1962 (Jakobson 1998: 69).

attacked. But "old" was never clearly defined by the state and the Red Guards had total control over what they perceived was old (Cheng 1988: 62; Spence 1999: 575; Wen 1995: 8). The Red Guards, who were groups of organized students claiming to be the defenders of the revolution, were brutal in their attacks (Xiaoping 1998: 81). They were formed in 1966 and chosen from workers, peasants, revolutionary cadres, the army, and revolutionary martyrs (Michael 1970: 42). Generally they were young and had left school to become members of the Red Guards (Garrett 1994: 129) but were eventually disbanded and ordered to go back to school in October 1966 (Domes 1970: 83).

Red Guards attacked anything capitalist and Western (Jakobson 1998: 67). Boutique owners on Nanjing Road for example "removed 'strange' goods such as Western-style clothing from public sight" (White 1989: 282). Western fashion such as suits and ties were looked down upon because they represented foreignness, and were confiscated[22] "as evidence of their wearer's bourgeois past" (Roberts 1997: 23). "We Chinese have our own customs ...Why should we follow others?", Mao asked (Finnane 1996: 99). Even brassieres were confiscated and regarded decadent of the Western kind (Cheng 1988: 63,129). Silk, velvet, and cosmetics were thrown onto the streets and burned (Cheng 1988: 63, 128). Women left their jewelry at home including their wedding ring[23] when they went out in public (Wong 1996: 18).

The mantra "Modernization Without Westernization" was indeed what Mao had anticipated which meant implementing a "campaign of terrifying repression". Anything

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[22] In December 1966, Beijing's Exhibition Center presented the Capital City Red Guard Rebels' Victory Exhibition. Put on display were two million "outlandish outfits" such as qipaos and Western-style suits (Sang 1997: 43; Wilson 1999: 70). As well as items taken from the homes of the rich; a portrait of Chiang Kai-shek, his book China's Destiny, several U.S. dollars, pearls, gems, fur coats, whiskey, and binoculars (White 1989: 232).
[23] However Fisher observes that while at a trip to the local Woolworth in Beijing, older Chinese female customers wore gold earrings (1979: 25).

un-Chinese or counter-revolutionary was repressed (Steele & Major 1999: 59). In her

fantastic account of life as a capitalist prisoner in Shanghai[24], during the Cultural

Revolution, Cheng explains how the Red Guards attacked a young working woman

wearing fashionable clothes and attracting attention to herself,

> while one Red Guard held her, another removed her shoes and a third one cut the
> legs of her slacks open. The Red Guards were shouting, "Why do you wear shoes
> with pointed toes? Why do you wear slacks with narrow legs?" in the struggle,
> the Red Guards removed her slacks altogether, much to the amusement of the
> crowd that had gathered to watch the scene (1988: 65).

On other occasions "[p]edestrians found wearing bourgeois clothes were waylaid

on the street and had their clothes cut to shreds on the spot" (Sang 1997: 43). In an

account cited in Steele and Major, but reflected in other works as well (see Cheng 1988

and Honig & Hershatter 1988), reveals a former Red Guard recalling being a member of

a "purification team". He remembers walking the streets searching for "women whose

dresses were too long, or too tight, or otherwise fashionable, or who wore long or permed

hair". The women would be detained with a gun to their heads and their hair was

scissored and their clothing "cut to ribbons" (Steele & Major 1999: 60). Furthermore, as

previously mentioned, women in the late 1960s, who wore flower-printed jackets, which

were briefly in style during 1956, were now stripped and spat on by the Red Guards

(Steele & Major 1999: 62).

Other accounts inform how a fashionable woman was scorned for wearing

makeup and "dressing conspicuously" and therefore was labeled immoral (Chen 1978).

Hint of sexuality was all it was needed to arise suspicion of immorality and this ideology

was embedded in the literature of the day. In the essay entitled "Twisted path I once went

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[24] Shanghai was where the Cultural Revolution was most severe. Also, not all cities in China joined the
Cultural Revolution (White 1989: 48, 50) which explains the variation in clothing styles from one city to
the next.

along" portrays a woman who has an affair and suggests that her love of dressing-up is a

first sign of her moral corruption (Evans 1997: 135). Fashionable clothes were used as a

metaphor for moral ideological impurity. In short, a person being fashionable and

attractive was simply asking to be sartorially terrorized for "not being revolutionary

enough" (Wen 1981: 8) which moreover meant being a member of the capitalist society,

or worse yet, a spy (interview with Concordia student).

Despite these testimonies, in her descriptive work Go Gently Through Peking: A

Westerner's Life in China, Fisher offers a glimpse of Beijing streets and its people and

seems to question the homogeneity of the period. Where white and blue colors were

available in the past, Fisher notes that fabric stores such as Baihuadalo sold flower-

pattern fabrics, printed blouses, checkered and plaited woolen scarves. Jackets also were

made of printed fabrics in cotton and silk (1979: 134) (see Figure 3.9).

Figure 3.9. Women wearing flower-printed jackets in public. Although the Red Guards attacked women wearing such jackets, they were often depicted in propaganda posters issued by the Communist Party (Source: Fisher 1979).

It seems that although the Mao suit was the ideal to approximate, variety

nonetheless did exist. "The masses" Mai Chen says, "continued to dress in a variety of

colored tops and trousers, blue Mao jackets, and cotton overalls" (2001: 159). Fisher

adds that by 1975, "army uniforms for women changed, from pants to an A-line khaki-

knee length skirt, jacket, over-blouse, short white socks, and sandals". It was the "new

Chinese-style" in military uniform. Apparently women took to this new style but wore it

with "slightly fuller polyester skirts" (1979: 67). And by 1976, the year of Mao's death,

Fisher reveals women started inventing their own fashions,

> Flat pleats appeared and skirts revealed waists, which overblouses had formerly
> concealed. Lengths wavered around the knee and sometimes even above it. Some
> women put on ten-year-old straight skirts which they had last worn before the CR
> (1979: 67).

Mai Chen suggests that the popularity of the military uniform did not displace

other styles, instead it provided an alternative to be measured against (2001: 156).

Dresses, two-piece outfits, "flat pleated and belted waists, V shaped necks and Tang

collars" were available and placed on display in a famous exhibition-style boutique

(Fisher 1979: 66). In fact Jiang Qing, Mao's wife, introduced a simple dress in the mid-

1970s with a V-shaped collar, loose fitting yet slightly waist revealing, square cut,

inspired by the Tang (618-907) and Ming (1368-1644) dynasties (Xiaoping 1998: 81).

But the sentiment appears to have been one of indifference and as Fisher says, only one

woman was spotted sporting a dress during her stay (Fisher 1979: 67). However what

Fisher fails to mention is that skirts were banned during the Cultural Revolution (see

Garrett 1994: 107), which makes it evermore ironic that Mao's wife would design such a

dress.

Furthermore jolting is that if the Party sent Red Guards to attack people wearing

fashionable clothing, then why would shops carry Jiang Qing's dresses? It seems that

although the Mao suit was the ideal to approximate, alternative clothing did exist as

discussed by Fisher (1979) and Mai Chen (2001). Nevertheless the ideology remained

centered on the fact that to be preoccupied with the self meant being distracted from the

goal of building a strong socialist nation.

RESISTANCE

Considering that China has had a long history of dress codes, Steele and Major

maintain that the nation's lack of resistance to the Mao uniform may be due to a

"drabness and conformity of dress" which already existed in China as "symptomatic of

the absence of personal freedom" for many years (1999). However, to don the military

uniform did not necessarily mean that one adopted the ideology of the revolutionary

proletarian struggle wholeheartedly. Though literature does not provide with ample

evidence of Chinese resistance to the clothing preference of the Communist Party, still

some testimonies exist and reveals their discontent. One such example can be drawn

when a forum was held by Beijing's *New Observer* in 1955. Responding to the many

letters that were sent to discuss clothing, people's discontent was voiced. One participant

revealed that "being progressive" was not "dependent on wearing drab colors", others

wanted a return to the qipao and still some wanted "to clear away the mental resistance to

more varied cut and color" (Steele & Major 1999: 58). This was temporarily achieved in

the following year due to brief political and social liberalization and due to the

"prettyfication campaign" whereby women were encouraged to beautify. Party members

assured the masses that,

> bourgeois people wear handsome clothes to show they have plenty of money. But
> why should they be the only ones to dress nicely? In a socialist society, people
> can dress well too... . It's poor-spirited to dress carelessly (Mai Chen 2001: 148).

The "prettyfication campaign" and its slogan "Let's be pretty" encouraged

women to doll-up, wear flower-printed dress (Davin 1976: 109; Evans 1997: 130-137) and curl their hair(Davin 1976: 108). The media focused its attention on the ideal housewife and less on women's outside work and magazines published articles on love, marriage, family, and dress-making (Davin 1976: 108). It was no more a bourgeois crime to look pretty but a woman's "natural tendency" (Evans 1997: 130-137). Shanghai manufacturers produced flower-printed clothing and Beijing held its first fashion show displaying "short jackets, fur robes, and spring wearing apparel". The trend did not last however, since Chinese women were fearful and avoided anything laced with rightist sentiment (Steele & Major 1999: 58). One should remember that before 1956 women were encouraged to dress plainer, a statement which meant "that women no longer needed to trade sexual attractiveness for economic security" (Honig & Hershatter 1988: 42). But bourgeois fashions receded once more in the wake of the Great Leap.

Following the "prettyfication campaign" in 1956, Mao invited public opinion to win the cooperation of intellectuals with the "Let a Hundred Flowers Bloom and Let a Hundred Schools of Thought Contend" campaign.[25] The movement was sponsored by the government and invited constructive criticism, mostly due to concerns over the party's inability to command the unquestioning loyalty of the influential intellectual class (Cheng 1988: 25; Jakobson 1998: 61; Michael 1970: 34; Shih 1970: 229-230; Steele & Major 1999: 58). It is reported that tens of thousands of intellectuals and more than one million Chinese provided suggestions for the betterment of the Communist Party. But much to the Chairman's surprise, criticisms of the Communist Party poured. It was obvious that the Chinese nation was not content with the state's path. To counter this

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[25] The assumption here was "that the socialist construction of a rich and powerful China could not flourish if only one flower bloomed alone, no matter how beautiful that [flower] might be" (Park 1994: 148).

explosion Mao launched the "Anti-Rightist" campaign whereby those who had offered criticism, the majority of whom were intellectuals (White 1989: 124), were labeled "Rightist" and consequently sent to labor camps (Cheng 1988: 25; Jakobson 1998: 61; Michael 1970: 34; Wong 1996: 15).

Social discontent in China's colorless wardrobe at the time is understandable, but why the state broke away from de-feminization and sameness in clothes is less clear. At the risk of diverging from the present discussion, it is important to stop and consider some of the reasons why. Perhaps the period of tolerance in criticism and free expression in clothes is best understood as "a sinister scheme on the part of the party leaders to smoke out the dissenters in order to mark them for liquidation" (Shih 1970: 229). Other studies (Davin 1976; Evans 1997) suggest that the event should "be seen as part of a general presentation of conservative feminine models" whereby women were encouraged to be good mothers and housewives, and the "prettyfication" campaign further legitimized women's fixed roles as nurturers (Davin 1976: 109) and promoted the image of the housewife. Many authors (Andors 1983; Davin 1976; Evans 1997) offer a further explanation suggesting that the trend coincided with attempts to reduce urban unemployment which meant that women had to be persuaded to leave their jobs to make way for men. Evans summarizes the situation and writes,

> when social and economic need demanded the withdrawal of women from the public sites that offered equal status with men, representations of female gender invoked either the petty-minded and materialistic interests of the feminine, domestic sphere or women's association with the body—by definition inferior to the serious male world of intellectual and political matters (1997: 137).

Many peasants had migrated to urban centers and the industry could not handle such an influx of population which resulted in urban unemployment. Therefore it would

have been unrealistic to ask women to take jobs which were non-existent. Rather it was

better to encourage women to find satisfaction in their traditional roles (Davin 1976: 110-

111). To make available jobs to women in a context where most men were unemployed

would have been disruptive to political support. Then whenever women were no longer

needed in the public sphere, they were encouraged to withdraw to the household and

their bodies encouraged to be feminine (Evans 1997: 137). Nevertheless labor shortages

incurred once more during the Great Leap Forward in 1958 and efforts were made to re-

introduce women in the labor market (Davin 1976: 111) which ultimately meant altering

women's dress yet again.

Mai Chen offers another explanation, yet not convincing, and argues that the

break away from utilitarian dress was not meant to be a challenge to the official dress

discourse but was perhaps "alternatives to be enjoyed in times of leisure such as the

weekend" (2001: 153).

Evidence found in studies on Chinese resistance to the dress code are scanty but

what is available suggests that some people were reluctant to part with their fashionable

garments. Chihua Wen for example explains how some intellectuals hid their Western

clothing and would take them out on occasion to admire them "as a means of escaping

political pressures" and as a means of returning to their neglected selves. This was indeed

dangerous since if caught by Red Guards, who would often raid private homes, they

would be accused of betraying the Party (1995: 9).

In an attempt to make their clothes appear less conspicuous, people removed

shoulder pads from Western suits and dresses and others would cut off the high heels

from their shoes instead of buying Chinese shoes. But the search raids proved so

terrorizing that many threw out their Western clothing altogether (Wen 1995: 9).

Oftentimes hints of bright colored socks symbolized a want for variation and occasionally women who had invested in a refined silk top wore it under their blue Mao jacket to conceal what was viewed as conspicuous consumption (Evans 1997: 134-135; Wen 1981: 8). Another example says that women wore colorful blouses under their Mao jacket and would cut the sleeves short as "to prevent accidental exposure" and sometimes "flowered patches sewn on the lining were 'flashed' at friends' " (Joseph 1986: 55) as a form of communication. Indeed many wanted to look attractive and as one young woman revealed,

> Of course we were constrained in what we could wear, but it was still only natural that young people wanted to look as attractive as possible. Everyone wanted to go to Shanghai, because it was rumored that there one could get uniforms that were not cut like grain sacks (Steele & Major 1999: 66).

Other examples of resistance are found in the novels of the period. Anchee Min, in her autobiographical novel Red Azalea, as discussed in Mai Chen, recalled a beautiful yet daring woman called Little Green who "dared to decorate her beauty. She tied her braids with colorful strings while the rest of us tied our braids with brown rubber bands. Her femininity mocked us" (qtd. in Mai Chen 2001: 148). Little Green rejected utilitarian notions of dress and challenged the dominant ideology of the late 1960s by embroidering pretty underwear (2001: 148).

All these examples suggest that official dress codes and everyday practice were sometimes diverging. Official uniformity was at times threatened by difference. The apparent lack of Chinese protest toward the proletarian attire may suggest that the social pressures to wear the clothes and the random attacks by the Red Guards were more powerful in inducing the Chinese to wear the prescribed uniform than their actual beliefs

in the ideology behind the garment. Wearing the proletarian outfit earned a person a reputation of being frugal and in sync with the accepted ethics of work and society. This undoubtedly made it a tempting clothing option for those with little belief in its ideology. Furthermore, in an informal conversation with a Chinese Canadian interviewee who was a toddler during the Cultural Revolution revealed that whoever did not follow the strict dress code was accused of being a spy. He said,

> Chinese wanted to follow the others. Everybody look and wanted to be the same. If you don't look the same you are accused for being a spy.

By adopting the same as one's neighbor "signaled your engagement with the state" (Wilson 1999: 176). Awry clothing would skew the ideology of the state. But I have wondered why people followed the Cultural Revolution as they did when in Iran resistance occurred everyday. Perhaps this is best understood in Wong's words,

> I understood that you not only weren't free to do what you wanted but you weren't free to think what you wanted either. The Communist Party said black was white and white was black, and everyone agreed with alacrity. There was not a single murmur of dissent (1996: 84).

Part of this lack of resistance is explained by writer Dai Qing who says that since Mao had considered the Chinese people in making political decisions is the reason why Chinese men and women obeyed his every word. This is not to discount however the possibility that many people were perhaps also "mute with fear" (1995: 81).

Another reason for the lack of Chinese protest to don the uniform may be found in the Thought of Mao Zedong itself. During Mao's government, nearly everything was measured against the Thought of Mao Zedong, he was elevated as a person to a near quasi-religious entity. Franz Michael writing in the 1970s summarizes the sentiment,

> Every success in every field of endeavor in Communist China is now ascribed to Mao's thought. Discoveries in physics and chemistry, and any other scientific

advance accomplished by Chinese scholars, are the result of the Thought of Mao Tse-Tung... In medicine, numerous lives have been saved, and miraculous operations performed when doctors, despairing of the hopelessness of their case, were suddenly struck by the Thought of Mao and saved the life of the patient (1970: 27).

The cult of Mao was pervasive, so much so that his person fostered rituals of piety and he was portrayed as a superman. Whatever Mao said, whether truth or false, was taken to be gospel (Shih 1970: 224). In describing the period Dai Qing reveals that "if the people at the top said the Soviet Union was our big brother, then it was our big brother. If they said the Soviets were social imperialists, then they were" (1995: 79). Much like Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran, Mao's picture hanged on the walls of shops, factories, communes, and homes (Fisher 1979: 37; Michael 1970: 27) while others held Mao's portraits in display cases (White 1998: 282). Similar to fundamentalist religions, Michael observes that workers, peasants, and family members would perform a ceremony morning and evening whereby they would read from the red book of Mao's quotations. People sought Mao's advice; he became the guide for all action and people were reminded that all good things come from the Chairman (1970: 27-28). Many people believed in Mao and were willing to compromise their self-expression and abide by Communist discipline in exchange for a better China. The situation can best be described by a Chinese man, "[w]e truly believed in Mao's ability to build a New China. We were excited, we trusted Mao" (qtd. in Jakobson 1998: 7). This perhaps explains why there is little evidence about people resisting the proletarian uniform.

CONCLUSION

Before the Communists took over China in 1949, intellectual debate concentrated on the ills of consumption and advocated simplicity (see Jayawardena 1986). It was

argued that if China was to modernize she had to abandon traditional and Confucian morals and customs. Thus modernist intellectual debates encouraged women to educate themselves and become politically aware, stop binding their feet, abolish arranged marriages, enter the job market, and shun traditional and foreign dress for modern Chinese clothes, preferably androgynous. This same argument echoed during the Cultural Revolution and Western fashion was seen as foreign and traditional Chinese dress was perceived feudal. The qipao which had become the national dress no longer matched the lifestyle of labor and furthermore, to be preoccupied with the self meant being distracted from the goal of building a socialist society and thus the qipao and fashion were outlawed. A new style was invented which symbolized Communist ideology and emulated the peasantry. Men and women adopted the Mao suit and kept their hair short projecting an air of simplicity.

Although many scholars point to the "blind fate" of the Chinese for following Mao's ideologies, it should be understood that Mao drew from the ranks of the dispossessed and classless members of society to rise against those who oppressed them. Consequently intellectuals and the elite were sent to villages to learn from peasants and to enlighten themselves to rural poverty. Society was invited to join the masses of peasants and workers in the struggle for patriotism and a socialist state. The collective was put ahead of the individual which appealed to the poorer masses. Furthermore, in a country where 80 per cent of the people are rural and peasant (Kirby 1970: 159), peasant-inspired attire easily became the rational behind the national dress in China and a political symbol of nationalistic and revolutionary significance. To wear "smart clothes" or bourgeois and extravagant clothing such as the qipao symbolized spiritual corruption.

Consequently wearing garments that were patched up and recycled were highly praised (Roberts 1997: 23) and recycling became a national policy (Fisher 1979: 87). [26] Even the wealthy would say, "[t]hree years new, three years old, patch and wear it three years more" (Chen 1981: 5). Shortages of cotton had resulted in its rationing which encouraged the buying of fabric and clothes only when a garment was beyond repair (Wilson 1999: 177). [27] As Roberts argues, the great majority of the Chinese people had no real choice but to wear patched garments given the economic hardship imposed by the Great Leap Forward (1957-1958) and the Cultural Revolution (1066-1976) (1997: 23). To buy new clothing was meant only to replace garments which were irreparable. Consequently, "shopping was not meant to satisfy an appetite for change" (Wilson 1999: 177), but to satisfy a need.

The Communist move to plain and simple is much reminiscent of Max Weber's the Protestant Ethic whereby people's work is seen as a service to God and the fruits from labor are reinvested, not in jewelry, cars, or flashy objects which are presumed sinful. While China's workers did not receive large amounts of money for their labor, in fact many lived on the brink of poverty, and while many perceived Mao to be a great leader, they embraced land, work, and rejected pleasure and extolled the virtues of frugality. Obsession with simplicity, frugality, and androgyny in dress as a national concern, meant that fashion was vested with political meanings beyond the aesthetic or utilitarian and this usually results in resistance. Evidence, however scanty, exists that some people did resist the dress code by keeping their Western fashionable clothing in their closets at home and would at times wear bright socks or conspicuous clothing under

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[26] Fisher notes that her friend had made a sweater "from five pairs of work gloves she had unraveled" (1979: 87).
[27] Each person could receive six yards of cotton a year (Fisher 1979: 67).

their Mao jackets.

CHAPTER 4
THE IRANIAN STATE AND DRESS

INTRODUCTION

Chinese women during the Cultural Revolution were considered men's equal in theory, if not in practice. Since masculinity and work in the public sector was valued, women were encouraged to look androgynous and be frugal by wearing the Mao jacket and sporting bobbed-hair and engaging in factory or farm work under state employment. During the Islamic Cultural Revolution (1979) in Iran however, women's positions are based on a classic male-oriented interpretation of the Quran which articulates that women are different and a source of evil because they tempted and diverted men's attention from their social responsibilities. As a result, Iranian women have been segregated from men in public and attempt has been made to make their bodies and sexualities invisible by the compulsory wearing of the hejab.

Similarly to China, Iran has witnessed centuries of imposed dress codes. During the early 1900s, the state went from segregating women on the streets of Tehran after 4:00 p.m. (Bamdad 1977: 16-17) to forcibly unveilling[1] women under Reza Shah Pahlavi (1925-1941) (see Hoodfar 1997, Nashat 1983, Paidar 1995, and Sanasarian 1981). Optional veiling at an expense was the mandate under Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi (1941-1979), then compulsory re-veiling under the Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini (1979-1989). Today as a form of challenging the state, women wear fashionable, tight, short *manteaux*, and silky, colorful, Grace Kelly-like headscarves. The hejab was once optional for religious and personal motivation, it has been banned and

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[1] For similar case studies of women unveiling see El Guindi (1999: 169) in Algeria, Macleod (1993) in Egypt, and Norton (1997) in Turkey.

imposed for political purposes, and it has been sexualized by Westerners for Orientalist purposes. It is these vagaries that we are addressing in this chapter.

Once more female bodies are used as the site upon which to compose national and ethical values. While one state attempted at making both genders equal the other attempts in differentiating the two. What is missing in the equation, in both China and Iran, however is women's fundamental right to decide for their own selves.

In Islamic Iran nurture and liberation are two contradictory goals for women. This is because Khomeini has equated social freedom with immorality and as the root of all corruption and blamed the West for attempting to destroy Iran with its ideologies of social "freedom" and its imperialism. Unlike in China under Mao Zedong, the Iranian government under Islamic rule advocates gender complementary rather than equality. The state views women as naturally different from men, hence they must wear the hejab, stay at home, and raise the couple's children. In return, they are praised for being mothers of martyrs. For conservative Muslims and the state the hejab is a way of shielding men from temptation. This follows the argument posited by the first President of the Islamic Republic, Abdolhassan Banisadr, who had publicly declared that women should wear the hejab because of "scientific proof" that women's hair emitted special rays which attracted men (Paidar 1995: 239). Because women are generally seen as the ones tempting men, who are assumed to be, to use author Haleh Afshar's words, "the endangered species" into utter corruption, it is safe to argue that the imposition of the hejab is initially meant to protect men (Afshar 1987: 75; Sanasarian 1981: 134). Therefore, women who are not properly veiled disrupt the moral fabric of Iranian society.

The Islamic revolution attempted to make women invisible by wrapping them up

in dark cloak-like *chadors* and denies that Iran has a "woman question". But women in general have defied this; women have used the hejab as a means of liberation and agree that the hejab protects women from becoming commodified as sex objects and allows them to move more freely in public spaces. In fact, women have used the hejab as a pretence to enter the labor market therefore making it misleading to assume that veiling necessarily entails a complete lack of freedom. Nevertheless, today the only emblem of Islam visible in Iran, aside from the occasional clergy on the streets and in mosques, are women cloaked in a black fabric. Women's dress code is so important in legitimizing the government's position in Iran that women are abused if they transgress it.

Discourse of the Islamic Cultural Revolution lied in the belief that the former Shah had exploited women, that the pro-Western ideology of his regime turned women into sexual objects and into "American agents" (see Paidar 1995). Therefore women's salvation, pro-Islamists argued, depended on the institutionalization of a true Islamic doctrine. But which one? The revolution touched on every aspect of culture. Themes of love and eroticism traditionally used in Persian poetry and painting were replaced by images of religion and revolution. Language was also changed. Farsi Western words were re-instituted by Arabic words. Textbooks erased any emphasis on Persia and underlined any links to Islam and revolution (Mackey 1998: 336).

A detailed and exhaustive investigation of the birth of a theocratic state in Iran is a formidable undertaking which is clearly beyond the scope of one single chapter. Our purpose here is to look at vagaries of dress codes by different states in Iran and women's responses to these changes. We will briefly examine historical circumstances that led to unveiling during the Pahlavi dynasty (1925-1979) and then re-veiling by the Islamic

Republic.

THE ORIGINS OF THE HEJAB

The hejab is a concept in Islam which refers to a partition or curtain. In general it

is a woman's clothing which protects her body from the eyes of men who are forbidden

to her in marriage. The headscarf and *chador* fall under this concept and can vary from

one Islamic society to another, and from one woman to the next. The word "veil" is an

English term used by the West to refer to Middle Eastern and South Asian women's

covering. The "headscarf", as the term implies, is folded into a triangle and then knotted

tightly or loosely under the chin with a long dress which covers the neck, arms, and legs.

Pants may, or not, be worn under it (**see Figure 4.1**).

Figure 4.1. Young woman wearing a headscarf
(Source: Author's archives 2001).

The *chador*, unlike the headscarf, is often black, full-length, loose fabric which

envelopes the body from head to ankle. It can be held in place by a hand under the chin

or under the eyes (**see Figure 4.2**). Note that this style hampers women's movement

because the wearer has only one hand free to carry grocery bags, a briefcase, or to hold

the hand of an offspring. It is perhaps the most debilitating garment for a woman to wear.

Figure 4.2. Woman wearing a *chador* (Source: The Seattle Times 2001).

The hejab was first mentioned in the thirteenth century BC, before the advent of

Islam in 610 CE, in an Assyrian legal text which instructed that women from a high

social strata only should wear the hejab.[2] Unlike popular belief, the tradition of veiling

and seclusion thus originated in non-Arab and Mediterranean societies and was a symbol

of high status (Chatty 1997: 128; El Guindi 1999: 6,11,14; Hoodfar 1997: 251; Hoodfar

2001: 8; Payne 1965: 48). Moreover, lower class women generally had a history of

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[2] However, Bagley dates veiling back to ninth century AD (1977: xiii) while Eshghipour dates it back to the seventh century AD (1997: 2) when Islam was introduced in Iran. Boucher cites that the Assyrian law refers to married and free women to wear the veil when they went out (1987: 46).

working outside the home and in the fields, therefore making it inconvenient to veil; servants could observe the hejab but only when accompanying noble women; and prostitutes were absolutely forbidden to veil (El Guindi 1999: 15; Khan 1999: 29), in fact they would be harshly punished. The thirteenth century Assyrian Laws stated,

> He who sees a veiled harlot shall arrest (?) [sic] her; he shall produce (free) men (as) witnesses (and) bring her to the entrance of the residency. The man who has arrested her shall take her clothing; she shall be beaten 50 stripes with rods (and) pitch shall be poured on her head (El Guindi 1999: 15).

During the Sassanian Empire (224 AD-651 AD), veiling and segregation of upper class women existed and it was believed that veiling and segregation protected women from the unwanted glances and contact of male strangers. These pre-Islamic attitudes toward women were well embedded in society and therefore survived the more liberal teachings of Islam (Nashat 1983: 8-10) which spread in the seventh century AD with the Arab invasion (Keddie 1981: 14).

But it was not until the Safavid (1501-1722) and the Ottoman Empires (1357-1924) that the veil spread as a symbol of status for the Muslim elite (Hoodfar 1997: 251) and it is only since the nineteenth century that Muslims have attributed the practice of veiling to Islam rather than culture (Hoodfar 2001: 9). However author Nikki Keddie claims that there is no evidence to indicate that women were covered from head to toe as far back as the Safavid period since Safavid miniatures testify that women dressed attractively and in colorful fashions (1981: 14).

Debates over what the Quran[3] says in regards to the hejab stirs controversy. Many scholars argue that there are no instances that specifically indicate in the Quran and Hadiths[4] that women are obliged to cover their hair and be secluded. The Quran only

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[3] The Quran is the holly textbook and God's words revealed to the Prophet Mohammed in six thousand verses.

advises, some schools of thought contend, for both women and men to adopt modest dress.[5] The debate lies over two verses in the holly text: first a woman, the Quran says in verse 31 in al-Nur, should guard her private parts and not show her "finery" when she is in public (Ali 1993: 24). Some have taken this to mean that she should cover her hair and body. Second, verse 59 in al-Ahzab advises the wives of Prophet Mohammed to wrap themselves with their cloak so as to be protected from strangers (Ali 1993: 361). This has been interpreted by many, namely the Iranian theocracy, as an act that should be followed by all Muslim women not simply the wives of the Prophet. Therefore a woman can display her hair and figure in front of other women, her husband, and men who are close kin.

Author Dawn Chatty maintains that the propagation of veiling practices and seclusion was first a private choice for a want to emulate the Prophet's wives. But the practice became widespread with the increase in the number of slaves and concubines (1997: 128). Approximately 150 years after the death of the Prophet, veiling and seclusion were accepted as an elite practice and veiling became an extension of seclusion practices. This romantic tradition was observed by the urban rich who could afford to perceive women as property and dispense of their labor (Chatty 1997: 128; Khan 1999: 31; Wikan 1982: 106).

But due to the Quran's interpretative nature, Islam and the *sharia*[6] have been

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[4] Refers to tradition; the collected record of actions and sayings attributed to Mohammed. The *Hadith* is second only to the Quran in its importance.

[5] Ethnographic evidence according to author Fadwa El Guindi has shown that veiling practices had also existed among men in pre-Islamic and post-Islamic Arab East (1999: 4). More specifically among the Tuareg, Bedouin, and Berber men. Modest dress is advised by Islam for men as well, and some tribes observe male veiling today for reasons of symbolic social distance. For a discussion on wrapped facial veil of adult Tuareg males see Murphy (1964).

[6] Refers to the totality of religious laws in Islam.

practiced differently from one society to the next and from one woman to another. In

fact there is no such thing as a uniform Muslim world and this is much reflected in the

way women wear the hejab. For example Jordanian and Syrian women in general wear

headscarves and loose fitting clothes. Women in Cairo wear an ankle-length wide Islamic

dress (Wikan 1996: 38). Whereas in remote parts of Pakistan, women are covered from

head to toe with a lace covering in front of their eyes. In Oman women wear the burqa,

and women under the defunct Taliban rule wore the traditional tent-like Afghan veil.

Clearly the hejab is worn differently by women in different cultural contexts attesting to

the hejab's versatility (see Figure 4.3).

Figure 4.3. Examples of different forms of hejab. The color, decorations, and the way the hejab is worn is indicative of a woman's cultural identity and self-expression http://www.skidmore.edu/academics/arthistory/ah369/finalveil.htm).

A critical question regarding the hejab has been raised by Chatty who asks how

were notions of the hejab and seclusion in Islam used to demand modest dress in the

strictest form such as the burqa in Oman and various head and body coverings such as

the *chador* for women? In her essay Chatty answers this by arguing that in Islamic

doctrines because men and women are regarded as sexual beings and should enjoy each other in marriage only is perhaps the reasoning behind the veil. It is important to keep in mind that being religious and being sexual is not a contradiction in Islam, but sex should be enjoyed in matrimony only, whereas outside marriage the behavior between men and women must be de-sexualized. This is not to suggest that wearing the hejab necessarily de-sexualizes women, but had intended to give women freedom from sexual identification and objectification. However, with time this notion of sexuality has been exaggerated by some local cultural traditions to the point where women are seen as sexual beyond control and therefore corrupt men. In these societies, the belief is that women have to be secluded and veiled or else the entire male populace would be destroyed (1997: 131).

To some degree the hejab conceals beauty, wealth, and segregates the genders, but it is interesting that although the veil is supposed to maintain modesty, we can argue that it also provokes and increases the desire to know what is concealed underneath, "hence effecting a magnification of the erotic" (Warwick & Cavallaro 1998: xxi). Dress in this respect keeps the imagination well at work and this is clearly revealed in Western photographs of veiled women (see **Figures 1.A, 1.B, & 1.B.a**).

In the next section we will look at the Constitutional Revolution in Iran whereby debates about dress codes were raised and consider how it effected women's position and subsequently their lives.

THE CONSTITUTIONAL REVOLUTION: THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

Iran has always been pulled back and forward by two opposing forces: the traditionalists and the modernists. When attempting to modernize, the state has never

completely been able to shake off religious influences especially concerning women and this has often been reflected on their bodies. Discourse around Iranian women's emancipation developed in the nineteenth century and followed the debates against foreign powers occupying Iran at the time. [7] As the Qajar Shahs (1794-1925) were pressured by the rising modern secular middle class, to modernization socially and economically by developing a better army, secular schools and courts based on the European model, the traditional religious middle class on the other hand opposed this. They rightfully felt threatened since they were the principle educators, judges, and guild leaders of the country (Poya 1999: 31) who would eventually be replaced if the state opted for modernity and national prosperity. [8]

The year 1890 brought a tobacco concession given to a British company by Naser al-Din Shah (1848-1896) which allowed British control over the production, export, and sale of tobacco in Iran for the next fifty years. This aroused discontent among many merchants and clergies who were against foreign domination. This led to the anti-tobacco uprising whereby, for the first time, women participated in street demonstrations. Even the Shah's wives and his harem ladies participated by following a *fatwa*[9] , issued by Haj Mirza Hasan Shirazi, which forbade the use of tobacco. Women boycotted smoking and broke their *qalyans* (waterpipes). As a result of the mass demonstrations the tobacco concession was annulled in 1892 (Afshar 1991: 12; Bamdad 1977: 9; Paidar 1995: 51).

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[7] Aside from the Muslim Arab conquest (637-651 AD), Iran was never colonized but was influenced by imperialist powers such as Britain and Tsarist Russia in the nineteenth century (Jayawardena 1986: 57; Poya 1999: 29; Sanasarian 1981: 2).

[8] During the Qajar dynasty, power was in the hands of both religious dissidents and the Shah. "The state needed the support of the religious establishment for legitimacy, and the clergy needed the support of the state to strengthen their social position" (Paidar 1995: 40). Paidar argues that the concern lied over which path toward modernity Iran would adopt, not whether it should modernize at all (1995: 71).

[9] Refers to a religious opinion or order formed and issued by a *mojtahid* whereupon it becomes binding on his followers.

Overall, discontent with the Qajar state resulted in the Constitutional Revolution (1906-1911) which changed women's political lives forever. Women participated in the constitutional movement, veiled women organized sit-ins and played a crucial role in the state's established constitution and the eradication of foreign influence in Iran (Poya 1999: 31-33). In street demonstrations for the implementation of the constitution women hide pistols under their veils and one woman was reported to have shot and murdered an anti-constitutionalist priest in Tehran (Paidar 1995: 58). But the movement as such did not offer much to women. Therefore, they moved to create a women's movement to fight for their rights which aroused an increased consciousness for women and their issues (Paidar 1995: 50-51). Women demanded education, abolishment of both their seclusion and early marriage, higher status, and limits to polygamy (Poya 1999: 33-34).

The first *Majles* (the Consultative Assembly or Parliament) opened in 1906 and the Fundamental Law was ratified in 1906 by Shah Mohammed Ali (Paidar 1995: 55-56). However, despite women's efforts to help defeat the Qajar dynasty and implement Iran's first constitution, women were denied the right to vote along with the insane and criminals (Sanasarian 1981: 19; Poya 1997: 34). Articles 13 and 19 of the constitution stipulated rights to public education and equality for Iranians to the exception of women. It would take ten years until women could use these same laws to create public education for all women (Paidar 1995: 61).

The new parliament (*Majles*) was made up of three political factions and each had their own policies regarding women: the libertarians, moderates, and the royalists. The libertarians advocated for the separation of religion from state and argued for the rejection of women's veil. The moderates implemented caution towards "the woman

question" but supported women's education, while the royalists completely objected to both women's education and societies. They argued that "the spirit of the Constitution was contrary to Islam" since Islam differentiated between the rich and the poor, the sane and the insane, and of course women and men (Paidar 1995: 63-65). Royalists were advocates of the hejab and warned about the evils of modernity such as alcoholism and prostitution (Paidar 1995: 65). However, they failed in the second *Majles* in 1909 which left the *Majles* with two opposing groups: the democrats (former libertarians) and the moderates. Moderates wanted a return to the *sharia* and to exclude women's right to vote along with lunatics and murderers. Their argument rested on a fear of adultery and the loss of female chastity following women's emancipation which would threaten male honor and they blamed "morally corrupt Westernized intellectuals" for wanting to create easy access to female sexuality (Paidar 1995: 66-67). Nevertheless, following the opening of *Saadat* (Prosperity), the first Muslim girls' school established in Bushehr in 1899, schools for women proliferated despite protests and *fatwas* issued against women's education by the clerics (Paidar 1995: 69-70).

During the Constitutional Revolution, it was not the first time women took off their hejab as a sign of discontent. The first woman to have been documented unveiling was one of the leaders of the Babi movement [10] named Tahereh Qorrat al-Ayn (born 1817-1852) in 1848. Qorrat al-Ayn left her husband and children to concentrate on Babism and was the first woman to remove her veil in public at a Babi gathering in a period when women occupied the home and needed their husbands permission to leave

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[10] The Babi movement, founded by Seyyed Ali Mohammed (who was executed in 1850) claimed to be the twelfth *emam*, was a dissident movement of Islamic thinkers who gradually broke with Islam to create a new religion. Followers of the movement believe that men and women are spiritually and intellectually equal. They stand against women's veiling, seclusion, and polygamy. To this day they are persecuted by the Iranian government (Nafisi 1999b: 5; Paidar 1995: 36).

the vicinities of the house. She undoubtedly caused a scandal because a man upon seeing

her "slashed his throat at such an act of sacrilege by a woman". Tahereh Qorrat al-Ayn

was ultimately executed in 1852 by the orders of Naser al-Din Shah (Afshar 1991: 15;

Jayawardena 1986: 61; Nafisi 1999a: 258; Nafisi 1999b: 5-6; Paidar 1995: 37). Up until

this point in Iranian history, there has been little change or, better yet, little information

about Iranian women's clothing prior to the twentieth century.[11] For instance Naser al-

Din Shah upon his 1873 visit to the Paris opera was said to have liked the effect of ballet-

girls' costumes and upon his return required all harem women to wear it (Baker 1997:

179; Hoodfar 2001: 7). Women, in keeping with Islamic values, appropriated the skirt

and wore loosely fitted pants underneath. This costume still prevails today and is often

depicted in Iranian paintings as Iranian folk clothing. Except for scarce examples like

these the absent rhetoric about women's clothing may perhaps be because until the

nineteenth century women were "largely excluded from formal political and public life"

(Hoodfar 2001: 7).

Despite their small numbers, women's participation in the Constitutional

Revolution has marked a new era for Iranian women because it "legitimized the

integration of women and men in the society", created facilities for women's education,

raised the issues of veiling as a potential problem, and created opportunities for women

to gather, organize, and establish a women's movement (Paidar 1995: 76).

THE PAHLAVI ERA: REZA SHAH AND THE CASTING OFF OF THE VEIL

Chaos, disintegration, corruption, and a weak state finally resulted in the fall of

the Qajar dynasty in 1921 brought on by a coup d'état. In 1923 Reza Khan, a military

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[11] See paintings of women's dress under the Qajar in Falk (1972) and Diba & Ekhtiar (1999).

officer, became Iran's prime minister. Reza Khan was a secular leader and favored

military power above all else. Following Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's leadership, who

would influence Reza Khan throughout his reign, Reza Khan wanted Iran to become a

republic but the clergy highly discouraged it. [12] The Qajar dynasty was officially deposed

in 1925 and Reza Khan declared himself the first Shahanshah of the Pahlavi dynasty.

Soon the state became the most powerful entity in Iran gaining control over most of

society such as health, education, transport, and public welfare. Reza Shah unified the

multicultural nation by implementing a single language and religion, in addition to

secularizing and modernizing the state from above. He achieved this unification however

at the expense of tribal differences[13] who were forced to sedentarize but were not

provided employment to sustain a living. The Shah was also an advocate of technological

progress, national sovereignty, economic development, and particularly women's

emancipation. But he was a staunch adversary of democracy, individual rights, and

clericalism (Jayawardena 1986: 60,67: Paidar 1995: 80-82). Tradition was viewed

atavistic for nation-building and national unification. Thus one of the visual aspects the

Shah changed was people's clothing and displaced local costumes with Westernized

uniformity. The government imported massive quantities of Western-style clothes and

sold them to the public at low prices (Paidar 1995: 82).

Just like under the Qajar Shahs, the clergy lost even more powers under the

Pahlavi reign, but this time their losses included the judiciary which had traditionally

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[12] Since Turkey had limited the influence of Islam's traditional aspects on its policies following its declaration of a Turkish republic, the Iranian clergy feared their loss of power if Iran became a republic as well (Jayawardena 1986: 60).

[13] At the start of the century tribes represented 25 per cent of the total population in Iran but was reduced to 8 per cent during the 1930s (Paidar 1995: 86). Accordingly, the constitution did not recognize any national minority in Iran (Afshar 1989: 111). For a discussion on tribes and the Iranian state under Reza Shah see Fazel (1985), Keddie's (1981) chapter "Foundations of nineteenth-century Iran", and Mackey's (1998) chapter "Reza Shah: To the glory of the nation".

been under the clergy's control since the Safavid period (1501-1736). The clergy's

political role was undermined by further reform since the Shah aspired to a pre-Islamic

past and limited the teachings of the Quran and the *sharia* in educational institutions

(Afshar 1985: 222; Mackey 1998: 179; Paidar 1995: 83). Although the Shah believed

that national progress was linked to women's emancipation, he was opposed to "any

independent and spontaneous political and feminist activity" he therefore brought

women's activities under state control. Women's organizations such as The Patriotic

Women's League and The Awakening of Women were banned with the former's

publications burned by fanatics in public (Paidar 1995: 102).[14]

The state had three policies regarding modernity and they were all linked to

women. First, women needed to be integrated into public life. Second, since women were

responsible for the next generation their education had to be improved. Finally, despite

contradicting the two previous policies, women needed to preserve the patriarchal family.

Reza Shah turned to Atatürk's social reforms in Turkey for guidance which included

women's participation in education, in employment, and in local elections. Turkey's

Civil Code had abolished polygamy and gave women the right to divorce. But of

particular interest to the Shah was the proposed ban on veiling (Paidar 1995: 104).

The Shah's ideology for women's social betterment required women to discard

their traditional clothes in favor of European dress. As discussed earlier, reformers had

protested against the hejab earlier in the century but with no success. This time some

female activists were reported to have protested the veil by wearing "untraditional colors

and styles of chador". Women returning from trips abroad refused to wear the hejab and

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[14] The Shah ruled with political repression. All groups such as communists, liberals, clergies, trade unions, and minority nationalists were all repressed (Poya 1999: 39).

walked the streets uncovered and frequently risked abuse at the hands of the opposition

(Paidar 1995: 106) especially in the Qanatabad district (Bamdad 1977: 81), known today

as the conservative south of Tehran. They were attacked with sticks and stones and were

verbally abused. Some were obliged to put on the veil when they went out and took it off

once they reached Tehran's more liberal northern districts and put the veil back on again

when nearing their residences (Bamdad 1977: 95; Sullivan 2001: 76).

In 1928, the Shah officially allowed women to appear unveiled (Chehabi 1993:

214). Campaigns were implemented to convince women to cast off their hejab, in fact,

this seems to have met with success since "[t]here was such a demand for women's coats,

dresses and hats that rules against profiteering by Tehran tailor shops had to be

introduced". Western dress was so popular that newspapers reported on women's proper

etiquette in wearing the new foreign style stating that,

> Ladies in public meetings should not remove their hats; they may or may not take
> off their coats and gloves ... Those who have always put their handkerchiefs,
> cigarette cases and other articles up their sleeves must now use their hand-bags
> for such things ... To take fruit or sweets with gloves on is forbidden
> (Jayawardena 1986: 69).

However the attempt to unveil women was not without resistance. Author Badr

ol-Moluk Bamdad provides such an instance. Mrs. Javaher-e Kalam was sent to inspect

the *Nosratiye-ye Pardegian* (Nosratiyeh School for Veiled Girls) whereby the school's

headmistress said, "any girl who comes to school wearing colored stockings" deserved

the proper punishment of "a good beating" (1977: 82). Another account, cited in

Bamdad, comes from Shams ol-Haya Mansuri and her five colleagues in Shiraz who one

day decided to wear colorful *chadors*. Reasoning that the *chador*'s purpose was to cover

the body, its color was thought trivial. They made and wore dark-colored taffeta *chadors*

and went to the public, but met with horror,

> They had scarcely walked any distance before such a terrific hubbub blew up that they had to run separately for refuge in nearby houses. They suffered injuries to their heads and hands and were obliged to give up their innovation (Bamdad 1977: 85).

A similar incident occurred in Tehran where the wife of a parliamentary deputy wore a dark brown *chador* and entered a *Moharram*[15] ceremony whereby other women attending the gathering reportedly beat her (Bamdad 1977: 85). Changing the color of the *chador* was premised on the general public's fear that it would change the form of the hejab and lead to its eventual breakdown. "The slightest sniff of fresh air, so they thought, would upset the women's obedience and subservience to the men" (1977: 86). All the above examples demonstrate to what extent the challenge to women's dress codes was controversial in Iran.

But the Shah's will to unveil women proved strong. Upon her visit to Iran in 1925, Queen Soraya of Afghanistan appeared unveiled which sparked rumors about the state formally banning the veil. To further fuel the fire, Iran's Queen and her daughters appeared in European clothes and hats at the shrine of Hazrat Masumeh in Qom in 1928. Religious clerics demanded the royal family to put on their veils or else leave. This prompted Reza Shah to storm into the mosque with his boots on and beat the clerics. (Chehabi 1993: 213; Mackey 1998: 181; Paidar 1995: 107). After a visit to Turkey in 1934, Reza Shah formed the *Kanun-e Banovan* (Ladies Centre) and appointed his daughter Princess Shams Pahlavi its president. The center was initially developed to prepare the way for abolishing the veil. Lectures were given on the social harms of veiling, seclusion, ignorance, and emphasis was accorded to the importance of

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[15] *Moharram* is the commemoration of Emam Hoseyn's martyrdom.

subscribing to a simple and non-extravagant life style (Bamdad 1977: 81; Chehabi 1993: 216; Paidar 1995: 104).

It would take however eight years for Reza Shah to officially outlaw the veil in January 1936 after yet another trip to Turkey (Paidar 1995: 106; Sanasarian 1981: 64). Subsequently the Shah's wife and daughters, breaking an ancient tradition of the country, appeared at an educational function at the Normal School in Tehran without their veils, and wearing European dresses. The Shah declared to an audience of five hundred women[16],

> I am extremely delighted to see that women have become aware of their rights and entitlement ... Women of this country not only could not [before unveiling] demonstrate their talents and inherent qualities because of being separated from society, but also could not pay their dues to their homeland and serve and make sacrifices for their country. Now women are on their way to gain other rights in addition to the great privileges of motherhood... Future prosperity is in your hands [because you] train the future generation... My expectation is that you... become accustomed to frugality, and avoid extravagance and overspending. (Paidar 1995: 106-107).

Iran became the first Muslim state to officially forbid women from wearing the veil and it was a welcomed reform for many women (Jayawardena 1986: 68-69). [17] Reza Shah ordered the police to forcibly remove scarves and the *chador* from any woman wearing it. A foreigner at the time recounts how the Tehran police were "tearing scarves from the women's heads and handing them back in ribbons to their owners". Reza Shah further ordered to ban veiled women from entering public spaces like restaurants, theaters, and hotels. This of course infuriated the clergy but remained

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[16] Reza Shah's daughter, Princess Ashraf, would later reveal that her father "felt wretched" when the family appeared in public without their hejab (Afkhami 1994: 14).

[17] The Shah had initially started nation-building by encouraging men to dress in Western-style attire such as hats, ties, coats, jackets, trousers, leather belts, and shoes. As cited in Article 111 of the Uniform Dress Law, a transgression meant paying a fine of one to thirty tomans including prison time of up to seven days (Afshar 1989: 113; Baker 1997; Keddie 1981: 97). For a summarized history of Iranian men's clothing during Reza Shah see Chehabi (1993).

powerless since the Shah's reforms were highly welcomed, especially among the urban

middle and upper classes (Paidar 1995: 107; Sanasarian 1981: 62).

The impact of the dress reform differed from one social status to another. The

elite and the intellectuals had no objections and took advantage of the educational and

job opportunities provided by the state (Paidar 1995: 87). Moreover, they felt liberated

and argued that the reform "gave the women of Iran a chance to live". But these women

represented a small minority (Nashat 1983: 27). The peasants did not feel any change

because the state was mostly absent in rural districts. Finally it was the lower income

middle class and elderly women who suffered the most since they were indoctrinated to

believe that the hejab was the only rightful moral code for dressing as a means of

protecting their bodies from the preying eyes of men. These women equated discarding

the veil tantamount to sin and nudity (Hoodfar 1997: 262; Hoodfar 1999: 15; Sanasarian

1981: 64).

For their male counterparts women unveiling meant dishonoring their manhood

(Haeri 1994: 108). It was a common sight to see girls from a traditional background leave

their homes donning the *chador* and arriving at school without it, and wearing it once

more on their way back home (El Guindi 1999: 175). Women who insisted on the hejab

met up with many repercussions; the police forcibly removed the veil off women's heads,

diplomas were withheld from students who wore the veil, government employ were

threatened with the loss of their jobs if their wives appeared veiled during official

functions (Baker 1997: 185-186; Chehabi 1993: 219; El Guindi 1999: 174), and "taxi and

bus drivers were liable to fines if they accepted veiled women as passengers"

(Jayawardena 1986: 68). Hence to unveil forced pious women to stay secluded in their

homes and ask their husbands, sons, or neighbors to undertake their public duties

(Hoodfar 1999: 15). Worse yet some men used this situation to their own advantage and

often refused to collaborate if their needs were not met (Hoodfar 1997: 263). Since

Iranian houses at the time did not have baths, authors Eliz Sanasarian and Homa Hoodfar

reveal how men would carry their mothers and grandmothers hidden in sacks and taken

to the public baths because they refused to be seen without their hejab (1981: 64; 1997:

262). Still, the veil was discouraged by the government and viewed as uncivilized. The

change in clothing style was seen by the Shah as unduly favorable to public morals

because as he saw it, Iranians would compare themselves with the West and see no

difference and therefore be persuaded that they could achieve as much as the Americans

(Baker 1997: 181). Pious Muslims however were highly critical of the dress code

because now it was harder to distinguish between Muslim and non-Muslim (Baker 1997:

182) (see **Figures 4.4 & 4.5**).

Figure 4.4. *Tehran Emerges Its Medieval Languor: Iran's Modern Capital Thrives under the Enlightened Policy of Reza Shah* This picture was taken approximately one year after the abolition of the veil where a new style symbolized a new era (Source: Graham-Brown).

Figure 4.5. Fashionable elite Iranians in 1940s (Source: Haas 1946).

Along with compulsory unveiling, the government set up the Ministry of Education and expanded the public schooling established in 1911. Tehran University opened in 1935 and welcomed its first twelve female students in 1936. Like Chairman Mao, Reza Shah believed that women's participation outside the home was essential for national progress, therefore women entered the workforce but clustered in positions such as teaching and midwifery (Paidar 1995: 108; Poya 1999: 36-37). The Shah announced, "[w]e must never forget that one-half of the population of our country has not been taken into account, that is to say, one-half of the country's working force has been idle" (Mackey 1998: 182). But despite these positive changes the family continued to be dominated by the *sharia* which allowed temporary (*sigheh*)[18] marriages, viewed divorce as the sole right of men, granted child custody to fathers, and demanded a husband's consent for a wife's travel abroad and for her employment (Paidar 1995: 110-111). Furthermore the criminal code of 1940 excused men for crimes of passion which in

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[18] Refers to temporary marriages which needs no court approval and can be as short as a period of five minutes to years. It is a Shiia practice and is not recognized by Sunnis. Many have compared *sigheh* to concubinage and prostitution. For more on *sigheh* see essays in Tabari & Yeganeh (1982).

practice meant that men were given the right to murder their unfaithful wives, mothers, and sisters (Afshar 1989: 114).

In general, compulsory unveiling gave some women control over their own sexuality while robbed other women of theirs. Both the promotion of desegregation and unveiling encouraged many women to participate in civil society and to take up employment. Thus the Pahlavi regime used unveiling as a visual symbol of women's and the state's progress.

REZA MOHAMMAD SHAH AND VEIL BY CHOICE

Through political and social repression, a seemingly unified nation was finally established. But Reza Shah's reign did not last long as he was forced to abdicate the throne in 1941 by the Allied Forces, namely Britain and Russia, who feared pro-German sentiment.[19] He was replaced by his son, Mohammad Reza Shah (1941-1979).

Modernization policies along the lines of Western states were continued under Mohammad Reza Shah and the era proved great prosperity for Iran, particularly for Iranian women.[20] Veiling was optional and women participated in the Olympic games but still needed their husband's permission to travel abroad (Paidar 1995: 148, 157). Many women's organizations proliferated, among them Iran Women's Council (1944), The New Path Society (1946), The High Council of the Women's Organizations of Iran

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[19] For a complete history of contemporary Iran see Nyrop (1978).

[20] Money was fueled into agriculture, industry, mining, transport, health, education, and welfare. Hospitals and clinics increased in numbers, the standard of health for Iranians increased and infant mortality decreased (Paidar 1995: 135-136). Top of the line holiday resorts, casinos, hotels, palaces, and high-rise buildings were constructed (Paidar 1995: 147-148). "By 1977, Iran had the largest navy in the Persian Gulf, the most up-to-date air force in the Middle East" (Moghadam 1988: 414), and the third largest military in the world (Kapuscinski 1992: 54). Despite prosperity and progress, real life situation of many Iranians was a "daily struggle against high inflation, shortage of basic foodstuffs, a severe housing shortage and high urban and rural unemployment" (Paidar 1995: 151). The state increased control over society, gave rise to alienation and oppression. Fatemeh Moghadam reports that by the mid-1970s more than half of the total population was undernourished (1988: 410).

(1959) whose honorary chair was Princess Ashraf Pahlavi, the Shah's twin sister. As part of the Shah's White Revolution (1962-1963)[21], women were granted the right to vote in 1963 and to be elected to parliament at the dismay of the clergy.[22] It was argued that since women constituted half of the population, the state needed their participation in the workforce or else modernizing policies would fail. Consequently, barriers against women were broken down and women entered "the parliament, the cabinet, the armed forces, the legal profession, and a variety of fields in science and high technology" (Afkhami 1994: 11, 13).[23] Reports indicate that despite positive rhetoric for women's emancipation only a small number of women held jobs (Aghajanian 1994: 58). Many well educated women ended up being housewives because their husbands disproved of them working outside the home or because of lack of employment (Paidar 1995: 166) and this was because the Shah's gender reforms were still embedded in a patriarchal system. Both Pahlavi Shahs saw themselves as fathers of the nation and this included absolute control over the nation's women. Mohammad Reza Shah was against women attempting to mimic men and "respected women as long as they were beautiful, feminine, and moderately clever". He was of the opinion that women's natural abilities required "them to be primarily wives and mothers, but if they needed to take up other roles society should provide the opportunity for them to do so" (Paidar 1995: 149). Unfortunately the Shah was also of

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[21] The White Revolution was a series of reforms aimed at ending the power of landowners. This created unemployment and resulted in massive rural migrations to urban areas (Sullivan 2001: 131).

[22] In an article Ayatollah Kashani, member of the *Mojahedin Eslam* (Society of Warriors of Islam), asked the government to prevent women from the right to vote arguing that women were needed to remain in the home and take on their natural task of raising children. Kashani was an advocate of government based on the *sharia* and a return to the hejab for women (Paidar 1995: 132-133). Ayatollah Khansari argued against "women's interference in social matters since this will involve women in corruption and is against the will of God ..." (Paidar 1995: 143).

[23] Despite innovations "[t]eaching was the number one profession" for women. As well, a report indicates that of 4,438 top jobs surveyed, only 340 (under 8 per cent) were held by women (Paidar 1995: 164-165). Still, by 1978, Iran had thirty-eight female judges, one minister, five deputy ministers, one ambassadress, and four-hundred university lecturers (Afshar 1989: 115).

the opinion that although women were equal in law, they were lacking in ability (Paidar 1995: 160).

Nevertheless dress reform under the new Shah had an immense impact on women's mobility. Women, who against their will, had abandoned the hejab such as traditional *bazaari* women, merchants, and women of the lower classes, were allowed to redone it by choice but at the risk of being denied access to governmental employment (Baker 1997: 188; El Guindi 1999: 175; Hoodfar 1997: 263; Hoodfar 1999: 16). Five star hotels and restaurants were still not open to women wearing the *chador* and educational institutions discouraged Islamic dress but tolerated its more liberal manifestations like the headscarf and the *manteau*. While other women, such as the urban middle classes, adopted exaggerated forms of European-style dress and behavior to almost appear completely foreign (Afkhami 1994: 10; Haeri 1994: 108). Many from a traditional background were seen wearing the *chador* on their way to school but would take it off once they arrived and put it back on to go home (Mir-Hosseini 1996: 153; Poya 1999: 54; Tabari 1982: 10).

Furthermore, the majority of traditional middle classes and rural women had to endure the effects of modernization and saw their role in society weaken.[24] They were labeled backward in schools, universities, and workplaces since they had to respect their families' traditional values and wear the *chador* (Poya 1999: 53-54). The state, it seemed, served the interests of the dominant classes who happened to be from the upper echelons of society and secular.

The veil, despite itself, projects a sexual message. It covers women's sexuality

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[24] The role of the *bazaaris* further reduced when they were replaced by the export of manufactured modern commodities (Poya 1999: 53).

and protects men from its view. Unveiling projects a sexual message as well, and during the Pahlavi reign this issue had to be dealt with considering Iran's Islamic history and culture. Modernization processes did not restrain religion and its practice but restricted the political power of the clergy. A careful balance had to be kept between the nation's need to modernize and the respect of the state's religious beliefs. Thus women had to be "desexualized" and "silence on sexuality itself" was enforced in several ways. To counter accusations or rumors of prostitution from the clergy, unveiled middle class women emphasized their "prudishness, placing great emphasis on chastity and decorous comportment in public". On television, female and male singers avoided looking at each other while performing a duet involving a love song. Female singers were keen on communicating images of chastity, respectability, and disinterest in the opposite sex (Haeri 1994: 109). Through education, boys and girls were taught to exercise restraint and self-control and temporary marriages were not discussed. The silence was further subdued by the clergy who tarnished sexuality and labeled it as an "imported" and "West-toxicated" model of women's emancipation. Gradually, discarding the veil no longer meant promiscuousness and adopting the veil no longer had such a high moral value as previous times (Haeri 1994: 110).

But opposition was soon escalating against Mohammad Reza Shah's policies and the White Revolution later resulted in the Iranian Revolution that took the world by surprise. The Shah had abused the patience of his people and Ayatollah Khomeini emerged as an influential opposition figure during the 1960s and 1970s. He criticized the Shah as an "idiotic dictator" who forced his ideals on Iranians by " 'suppressing the clergy', spreading 'the means of pleasure', and by 'preoccupying people with unveiling,

European clothes, cinema, theatre, music and dance' ". Khomeini was a staunch

opponent of the Shah's policies especially regarding women's emancipation and stepped

up his criticism by arguing that,

> The dishonorable act of unveiling, or better call it, the movement of bayonets, inflicted moral and material damage on our country and is forbidden by the law of God and the Prophet ... The co-educational schools which have destroyed the chastity of girls and the masculine powers of boys are forbidden by God... The wine shops and drug businesses which exhausted the minds of our youth and damaged the health and sanity of the masses are against the *shariat*. ...Music which encourages the spirit of passion and love among the youth is forbidden in the *shariat* and should be taken out of school programmes (Paidar 1995: 121).

By the late 1970s, with Khomeini's encouragement, pious Muslims started to

demand Islamic instead of Pahlavi reforms. Cleric, leftist, and nationalist protests against

the Shah were increasing and soon the black *chador* was becoming a nation-wide symbol

of rebellion against the Pahlavi regime (see Hoodfar 1999 and Paidar 1995).

Shii modernism was in disagreement with the ideology of equality between the

sexes and used Islam to demonstrate its case. They argued that Islam stipulates similarity

between the sexes but not equality (Paidar 1995: 175). Their spokesman was Ayatollah

Motahhari, a prominent clergy, who argued that there are biological and psychological

differences between the genders; man is rational, strong, and zealous. Woman on the

other hand is emotional, weak, and jealous; man needs to love and protect, woman needs

to be loved and be protected. Furthermore, since a woman is responsible for the couple's

offspring, Motahhari rationalized that her natural place is thus in the home (Paidar 1995:

176). The family should remain separated from civil society he argued and women

donning the Islamic hejab are responsible to keep it as such (Paidar 1995: 177).

Out of these debates emerged two conflicting images of woman for pious women

to compare themselves to. First, the images of the unveiled woman was modern, chic,

and Westernized (see Figures 4.6, 4.7, & 4.8). Second, since the social activities of pious

women consisted of going to *rowzeh*, throwing *sofreh*[25], and visiting shrines, which

would be accompanied with stories of the Prophet Mohammed, Islamic virtues, and un-

Islamic behavior (usually pointing to affluent women in north of Tehran), created a

conflicting image of the former (Paidar 1995: 163).

Figure 4.6. An Iranian woman just before the collapse of Shahpur Bakhtiar's government in late 1979 (Source: American Photographer 1979).

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[25] *Rowzeh* refers to religious women's gatherings where prayers are recited. *Sofreh* refers to a ritual dinner given in the name of Abbas, son of Ali.

Figures 4.7. and 4.8. Tehran in the late 1970's. Just before the Islamic Cultural Revolution the majority of Iranians wore Western fashion (Source: Author's archives 1978).

THE ISLAMIC CULTURAL REVOLUTION AND THE RE-VEILING OF WOMEN

Protests against Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi culminated and the Shah was forced into exile in March 1979. Unlike popular belief re-veiling during the protests against the Shah was not necessarily in support of Islamic fundamental doctrines, rather it often symbolized rejection of Pahlavi values and the rejection of the West (Baker 1997: 188; Hoodfar 1999: 23). More specifically its materialism, consumerism, and commercialism. Moreover others were against the deviations from the teachings of Islam and it was under these pretences that women marched and opted for the veil (Nashat 1983: 199). Clearly, the Islamic revitalization was against the corruption of exhibitionism in dress and behavior, and female emancipation as it would be revealed later during the revolution. According to Paidar, approximately one million people rioted in the streets of Tehran for social freedom, independence and an Islamic Republic. Women took part in mass demonstrations and their numbers at times represented more than one third of the demonstrators (1995: 196, 211). Like Mao's Cultural Revolution, the *Enghelabe Farhangi Eslami* (Islamic Cultural Revolution) wanted to elevate the status of the poor, and proclaimed to be working on behalf of the *mostazafeen* (oppressed) who were seen as the "real" victims of the Shah. Thus the black *chador* quickly gained notoriety. But the seemingly unified *chadored* women who marched on the streets were anything but unified in their understanding of the reasons for why they were protesting. Reasons why women protested against the Shah are threefold. Firstly, intellectual women of the middle and upper classes wanted to do away with the images of women as sexual objects and wanted full sexual liberation. Secondly, other protests rested on arguments that Iran

should "shake off the *gharbzadegi*"[26] , West-stricken or Westoxication, its women had been accustomed to and replace it by a "modern-yet-modest" model. Parvin Paidar argues that some women, during the Shah's reign, faced many forms of harassment. They were often sexually harassed in Universities and at work and were generally expected to flirt their way up the social ladder (1995: 165, 168). Thus this framework "rejected 'the painted dolls of the Pahlavi regime and advocated preservation of modesty for modern Iranian women" but it also wanted "to benefit from the West without losing the authenticity of Iranian culture". This eventually was taken up by a religious radical model of Shii modernists (1995: 168) and Ali Shariati was its well known advocate.

And the third reason for women's protests echoes China's situation in the 1960's. The Marxist-Leninist left protested for the "masculinization" of women to counter women being defined as sex objects. They were often seen protesting with their hair cut short, no make-up, and did not wear high-heeled shoes (Paidar 1995: 171).

During the Revolution the hejab, in the form of the *chador*, no longer symbolized seclusion, regression, illiteracy, and submission to male dominance, yet some secularly oriented women refused to wear it. This time adopting the hejab meant enabling and empowering; it allowed for the first time, in a long time, for conservative women to have access to public space without worrying about sexual harassment and humiliation. Women could move freely and participate in gender mixed demonstrations. The hejab "felt... empowering because it portrayed women as free, non-sexual, politically aware,

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[26] The word "*gharbzadegi*" refers to being West-stricken or Westoxicated, and it includes the West's ferocious consumerism, materialism, and popular culture. The term "*gharbzadeh*" was coined by the literary figure, Jalal al-Ahmad and is translated as occidentosis. Al-Ahmad describes a person influenced by the West as "[t]he Occidentotic is effete. He is effeminate. He attends to his grooming a great deal. He spends much time sprucing himself up. Sometimes he even plucks his eyebrows. He attaches a great deal of importance to his shoes and his wardrobe, and to the furnishings of his home" (Farhi 1994: 270).

and in solidarity with the Revolution" (Paidar 1995: 215). Women were addressed as

"sisters" and Paidar argues that verbal and physical harassment had eased almost

overnight. Men, who before would eye a woman from head to toe, now would lower

their gaze at the sight of a "sister" (1995: 218) (see **Figure 4.9**).

Figure 4.9. The uniform. Eight months after the revolution, female students were initially given the choice of wearing either the school uniform on the right, or Islamic hejab on the left. However the hejab soon became mandatory (Source: the Iranian 2002).

In this context, Ayatollah Khomeini[27] was welcomed back in Iran in 1979 after

having been exiled by the Shah in France for some time. Fanatics believed Khomeini was

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[27] Many were under the impression that Khomeini would take up a similar role to that of the Pope and that the city of Qom would be the Vatican of Iran. Thus his skewed politics were assumed irrelevant and his book entitled Resaleh-ye Tozih ol-Masael (Thesis on the Clarification of Dilemmas), which contained negative, degrading, and alarming views toward women was not taken seriously and instead a "blind trust" was given (Paidar 1995: 201; Sullivan 2001: 130-131). However the exact opposite occurred and Khomeini declared himself the *faqih* (Supreme Leader) over society. His government turned out to be neither traditional nor Islamic and dominated Iranians for the next nine years. Author Eliz Sanasarian rightly reveals that according to "many the Islamic Republic will stand out in history as the worst government ever to rule twentieth century Iran" (1981: 124). For a visual presentation of the revolution see Inqilab-i nur.

the Twelfth Imam, the Awaited One who had disappeared in the ninth century and had now returned to deliver the people from misery and persecution.

Based on a referendum, Khomeini declared Iran an Islamic Republic on April 1st 1979, himself as Supreme Leader, meaning he was chosen by God as the guardian of the people and had the right to interpret Islam. He also declared compulsory veiling for all women on March 7th and modest clothing for men (Baker 1997: 188; Nafisi 1999b: 9; Poya 1999: 3). By participating in the revolution women wearing the hejab were demonstrating that they were against the *gharbzadeh*, West-stricken, woman. Khomeini said,

> ...Islam has never been against their [women] freedom. It is, to the contrary, opposed to the idea of woman-as-object and it gives her back her dignity. A woman is man's equal; she and he are both free to choose their lives and their occupations. But the Shah's regime is trying to prevent women from becoming free by plunging them to immortality. It is against this that Islam rears up (Paidar 1995: 214).

Hearing this played into revolutionary women's blind fate. In an interview with Khomeini in 1979, author Maryam Poya attempted to ask Khomeini if the Islamic state would allow women "higher education, to work equally alongside men in paid employment and have equal rights with men in the family and under the law". Khomeini did not answer Poya's questions rather replied " 'Yes, we have said it all. The problem is that you are talking too much, woman. Goodbye.' " (1999: 59). Khomeini's ideology, which became clearer in later years, was such that women and men have equal rights but they do not have the *same* rights.

Compulsory veiling came as a disillusionment to all women since Khomeini had previously stressed in an interview that women could choose their clothing but within a framework of decency (Mir-Hosseini 1996: 153; Paidar 1995: 214). This later resulted in

unconstrained demonstrations on International Women's Day held on March 8th. It was

reported that over fifteen to thirty thousand unveiled women took part in the march

against compulsory veiling in Tehran (Nashat 1983: 119; Sullivan 2000: 254). Scores of

women resisted by wearing thin, colorful scarves, or by wearing flowers behind their ears

to demonstrate their discontent (Nashat 1983: 123) and shouting, "[i]n the dawn of

freedom, we already lack freedom" and "Down with dictatorship" whereby Hezbollahi[28]

men responded "[e]ither you put a scarf on your heads or we hit you on the head" and

"[e]ither hejab or *tisab* [acid]" (Poya 1999: 131). According to a photograph of that

period discussed in her article, Nafisi describes women dressed in different colors such as

vibrant reds and bright blues to express their resistance to "Khomeini's attempt to make

them invisible" (1999a: 8-9). Responding to these protests, the Islamic government stated

that Khomeini's messages were misunderstood; he did not want to impose the hejab but

rather he simply wanted people to adopt modest dress (Nafisi 1999b: 9; Nashat 1983:

119) so that women's dignity would be restored once and for all.

If the Pahalvi Shahs envisioned the path to modernity with women's

emancipation, the Islamic Republic sought to reverse that process. Religious zealots were

determined to build an Islamic Iran and unlike Chairman Mao, this required total

seclusion of the "pillar of the family": woman. The clergy achieved this by segregating

public spaces such as beaches, sports[29], buses[30], and educational institutions except for

universities. Clerics also banned women's voices from radio and from appearing on

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[28] Refers to the party of God. "[T]he group is made up of religious fanatics who resort to violence against an individual or group whom they identify as anti-Islamic" (Sanasarian 1981: 129).
[29] Women's sports were hit hard during much of the 1980s but in the 1990s grounds specifically for women "were created for swimming, tennis, horse riding, skiing, shooting and chess" (Poya 1999: 107).
[30] One-third of the bus seats were allocated to women and two-thirds to men. However in a country of over thirty-million, segregation of buses was a welcomed reform by many women (Poya 1999: 72). Yet men and women must squeeze next to each other in taxis (Poya 1999: 107).

television. Furthermore, a "complete withdrawal of women from the public sphere of

employment" was required (Farhi 2002: 2; Mehran 1991: 44; Poya 1999: 3).

In addition, women had to wear the Islamic hejab regardless of ethnicity, religion,

and class. Islamic dress was made official in 1981 to the dismay of many Iranians

(Hoodfar 1997: 27). When asked by reporter Oriana Fallaci about the *chador*, Khomeini

replied,

> The women who contributed to the revolution were, and are, women with the
> Islamic dress, not elegant women all made up like you, who go around all
> uncovered, dragging behind them a tail of men. The coquette who put on makeup
> and go into the streets showing off their necks, their hair, their shapes, did not
> fight against the Shah. They never did anything good, not those.... And this is so
> because, by uncovering themselves, they distract men, and upset them
> (Sanasarian 1981: 134).

The official Islamic dress code of the early revolutionary period consisted of a

black *chador* that covered from head to toe with trousers underneath, thick socks, and a

maghnae.[31] The female face had no make-up on, no strands of hair showing, and was

forbidden to wear nail-polish. Modest clothing for men included long sleeved shirts with

black trousers and no tie. The face had to be unshaven. Ironically men's attire has never

been implemented with the same fanaticism and ferociousness as for women's. In the

early years of the revolution, dress had become literally of vital importance. Outward

appearance such as style of hair, beards, and moustaches proclaimed the inward political

and religious conviction. Today however, men wearing short sleeved shirts with long

hair, closely shaven faces, and plucked eyebrows are frequently spotted on the streets

of Tehran and the moral police do not seem to be concerned (**see Figure 4.10**).

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[31] Only black, gray, and dark brown colors were allowed at work (Poya 1999: 73).

Figure 4.10. Young men in a fast food restaurant. Notice their casual look (Source: Author's archives 2001).

SOCIAL PROTEST: THE *BAD-HEJABI* LOOK

Secular middle class women were, and still are, not content with the dress reform, but they represent a small minority to overcome any change in Iran. They modified the hejab to resemble European fashion on the streets yet they had to observe the traditional hejab at work (Poya 1999: 73-74). Since the state was mostly absent in the rural district, rural women continued to wear their colorful tribal costumes which had always included a veil. Working class and devout women on the other hand represented over 50 per cent of the female population in urban areas (Sanasarian 1981: 116) and naturally welcomed the policy. The hejab allowed them freedom to participate in society (Poya 1999: 74) and were now recognized and protected under Khomeini. [32] These women argue that the hejab had turned them into "the observers not the observed; that it liberates them from the dictates of the fashion industry" (Afshar 1996: 124).

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[32] Khomeini's orders that husbands have the responsibility to care and feed their wives appealed to the poor lower class women (Sullivan 2000: 255).

But women who resisted the dress code had acid thrown on their faces and were beaten (Nafisi 1999a: 263; Poya 1999: 73). The penalty for violating the dress code was up to seventy four lashes (Mir-Hosseini 1996: 154).[33] Similar to China's Red Guards, to ensure that the government's new dress code was complied to, the Islamic regime hired *pasdarans*[34] to patrol the cities in search for anyone who transgressed the dress code or who committed a moral offence. An account reveals,

> Eye make-up in public is forbidden. The "sisters of Zeinab"[35] scour the streets of Tehran in a 4x4 landcruiser, accosting women whose chadors might be tight enough, abusing women who wear lipstick. They are paid by a branch of the military to forcibly remove eye make-up and nail polish, to clip long or painted fingernails, to verbally and emotionally abuse any "transgressive" woman who fails to follow Islamic code (Larson 1997: 12).

Another anecdote reveals that because one woman's headscarf was not covering her forehead, she was stopped by the *Komiteh* (local Islamic councils) "who pulled her scarf down and pushed a drawing pin into her forehead to hold it there" (Poya 1999: 73). I was reluctant to include this statement due to its disturbing nature but since it reveals the extent of ferocious wrath and savagery of these revolutionary units to implement the dress code on women at any cost, that I decided to include this.

Boutiques were instructed to refuse a clientele who was not appropriately dressed. Women whose hair was not properly covered were accused by the media of being communists or capitalists (Poya 1999: 73). The moral police were allowed and still are today to raid public as well as private spaces in search for alcoholic drinks, decadent music or videos, poker cards, gender mixed parties, and unveiled women (Nafisi 1999a:

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[33] Some say seventy-six lashes (Nafisi 1999a: 263) and others say seventy-nine lashes (Afshar 1989: 123).
[34] *Pasdarans* are the moral police or the Revolutionary Guards. Several such units were born to weed out *bad-hejabis*. They included the *Sarollah* (the Blood of God), *Ershad Eslami* (Islamic Guidance), and *Komiteh* (Poya 1999: 73).
[35] Zeynab was the Prophet's daughter. She represents woman in the political and social sphere, fighting for Islam alongside men in the battlefields.

263). Slogans on walls read *marg bar zan-e bi hejab va shohar bi gheirat-e ou* (death to the woman without hejab, and her cowardly husband) (sf. in Farhi 1994: 252). As author Fadwa El Guindi states: "Just as Reza Shah "unveiled" women before the Islamic Revolution, women resisted by wearing the hejab and protested in the streets. The Islamic Republic "veiled" women after the Revolution and women resisted and still do today in subtle ways" (El Guindi 1999: 175) by wearing thin, colorful scarves and allowing strands of hair to show. In the early years of the revolution, women resisted at the expense of loosing their jobs, one account reveals,

> As Islamisation spread... One could be dismissed for 'unIslamic' behavior, that is for talking to male colleagues or wearing make-up. Finally, when wearing Islamic clothes became compulsory, a large number of women were sacked for being *bad hejabi* (Poya 1999: 66).

Bad-hejabi has become a problem in Iran. The issue no longer lies on whether to wear the hejab or not, but rather to wear it properly or not. The term *bad-hejabi* refers to women who do not comply with Islamic dress and are improperly veiled. The term is relevantly new, dating back to the 1990s when revolutionary fervor began to die down with the death of Khomeini in 1989 and strict implementation of Islamic rules started to relax under President Ali Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani (1989-1997). Colors, patterned stockings, and lipstick started adorning women's bodies (Ramazani 1993: 421) once more.

Based on a random sample of 3,030 women, a research conducted on the issue of *bad-hejabi* found that 48 per cent of those who participated were classified as *bad-hejabi* compared to 23 per cent who wore good hejab. The study concluded that Islamic dress was institutionalized but needed to provide seventeen recommendations (Mir-Hosseini 1996: 155). A conclusion that must be drawn from this study is that "[t]he regime's

obsession with its enforcement has given these women [Westernized middle-class women], now marginalised, the means for making a mockery of one of its most explicit platforms" (Mir-Hosseini 1996: 157). This has empowered women because now women can speak volumes by simply altering their hejab.

Another study reveals that in July 1993, 80 per cent of the 802 men and women detained for violating the dress code in Tehran were under the age of twenty (Nafisi 1999a: 265). This suggests that the idea of enforcing the dress code has perhaps become increasingly outdated. This overwhelming obsession of the government to cover the heads of women constitutes to the world an obvious success for having implemented the Islamic ideology, yet Iranian women are in the position of holding the entire state's future in their hands since the regime visually depends on its veiled women for survival. Its legitimacy lies on the exterior consent of the masses which is manifested by women preferably donning the *chador* in its correct form. This begs the question that if all the women of Iran joined hand in hand and unveiled could they defy the dress code? Could they defy the Islamic regime? Houchang Chehabi in his essay about Iranian dress codes in early twentieth century makes an interesting observation,

> While at an international meeting an Arab leader may wear a jilaba and a Pakistani politician a shiravani, officials of the Islamic Republic of Iran stand out only by their refusal to wear a tie (1993: 229).

Since the revolution the dress code has relaxed somewhat due to occasional Tragedies mentioned earlier. One is reminded of Bahareh Vojdani who was murdered in 1993 by revolutionary guards at the age of seventeen in a telephone booth for being "inadequately attired" (Afshar 1998: 203). One is also reminded of Dr. Homa Darabi, a professor at Tehran's National University, who in 1994 protested against the regime by

soaking her clothes in gasoline, unveiling, and setting herself on fire in public near

Tajrish Square in Tehran. She had been dismissed from her position at a local hospital in

1991 for non-adherence to the Islamic dress code. Her funeral drew 10,000 people and

aroused protests by Iranians in exile (Afshar 1998: 205; Women's Watch 1992). These

tragedies led the nation's spiritual leader, Ayatollah Ali Hoseini-Khamenei (1989-   ), to

state that "the best hejab is the chador but that the sharia is open to interpretation on this

issue" (Afshar 1998: 198-199). He further added that the state "should not 'exaggerate'

its demand concerning the veil" (Afshar 1998: 203), and so women were not bound to

wear the *chador* as the only form of hejab (**see Figure 4.11**). But women still need to be

on their guards despite the reelection of reformist President Mohammad Khatami (1997-

2005) in 2001. While I was in Tehran, local and foreign newspapers occasionally

reported that Iranian forces were coming down on women's attire or that such and such

had been subjected to punishment because they had transgressed the dress code. Arriving

from the more liberal Kish Island my friend was harshly warned by a female guard clad

in heavy black cloth at Tehran airport for wearing her beige capri pants revealing her

tanned calves, and her orange Addidas sneakers. This style had mushroomed all over

Tehran during the summer. Shortly after our arrival, newspapers reported that whoever

wore such outfits would be punished. The local newspaper Iran Daily reported that

Tehran police had issued an order forbidding restaurants from serving food to women

with make-up, stores selling t-shirts with Western movie stars, and men going to work

wearing a tie (2001: 7). This has prompted reformists to argue that the move has no legal

basis and is intended to undermine President Khatami who has led a campaign to ease

strict Islamic interpretation of appropriate public dress and conduct. The prohibition

came less than one week after President Khatami pledged to continue his campaign for greater political and social freedom.
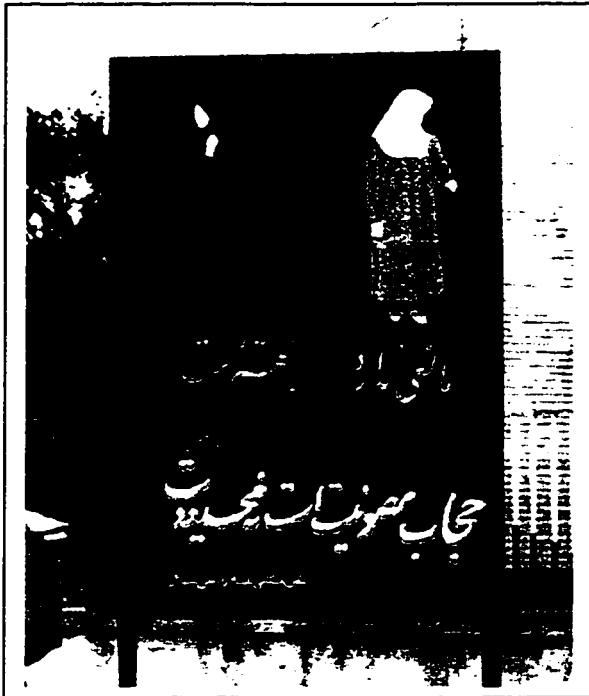
Figure 4.11. Instructions for women's clothing posted on a board at a train station in northern Tehran. The caption reads that the *manteau* on the right is satisfactory but the *chador* on the left is better (Source: The Iranian 2000).

During both my visits to Iran in 1999 and 2001, alternative styles of hejab were adorning Tehran streets. Strands of dyed auburn and chestnut hair were often shown under colorful, loosely fitted slippery silk, or at times crocheted, headscarves and heavy make-up and finger nail polish were frequently used. The overcoat seems to be getting shorter every year and evermore fitted, not to mention polished toe-nails were receiving much overdue exposure, whereas twenty years earlier nail polish and Reebok shoes for example "were treated as lethal weapons" (Nafisi 1999b: 10) (see **Figures 4.12, 4.13, 4.14, 4.15, & 4.16**). Matching bags and shoes, jewelry, and sunglasses complete the outfit. Many women wear makeup especially kohl in the eyes and shades of lipstick.

Some women permanently tattoo their eyes, eyebrows, and lips. Their argument is such that if they are stopped by the *Komiteh*, the *Hezbollahi*, or by the *pasdaran* they can invite them to wipe it off their faces and see that the makeup is "natural". All these manifestations meet the basic requirements of hejab but obviously convey different messages about the wearer. On my first trip to Iran I was surprised when a friend revealed that she used to shave her hair and dress like a boy to avoid wearing the hejab (**see Figure 4.17**). Furthermore, photographs taken at gender mixed parties with unveiled women wearing provocative European fashion and drinking the forbidden drink are openly developed at the local Konica shop while Khomeini's portrait is hanged on the wall (**see Figure 4.18**). Most surprisingly of all is Faezeh Hashemi, daughter of a former president, who campaigned for parliamentary elections in 1996 wearing a colorful headscarf and attending her first parliamentary session in jeans revealed under her *chador*. She is also known to have given interviews in a "red spotted headscarf!" (Afshar 1998: 210).

The streets in Iran are an important element of social life, especially for the youth who represent almost 60 per cent of the population. When walking in the streets one feels on display which makes clothes of central importance in the presentation of self in these public spaces. Women reclaim their selfhood as soon as they are in the private confines of their homes. When at parties women often directly head to the nearest bedroom to change their clothing into something more revealing, paint on nail-polish, and retouch their make-up which has been slightly altered due to intense heat in the summer time.

Figures 4.12 and 4.13. Extreme examples of alternative forms of the hejab. The Islamic government has attempted to weed out these manifestations without success (Source: roozi.com 2000).

Figures 4.14. Even the older generation resort to liberal manifestations of the Islamic dress (Source: Author's archives 2001).

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Figures 4.15. and 4.16. Other examples of alternative manifestations of the Islamic dress. These were taken on my trips to Tehran in 2001 and 1999. In the first photograph notice the girl on the left wearing her capris pants which was the rage in Tehran despite the moral police's attempt to curb its presence (Source: Author's archives 2001, 1999).
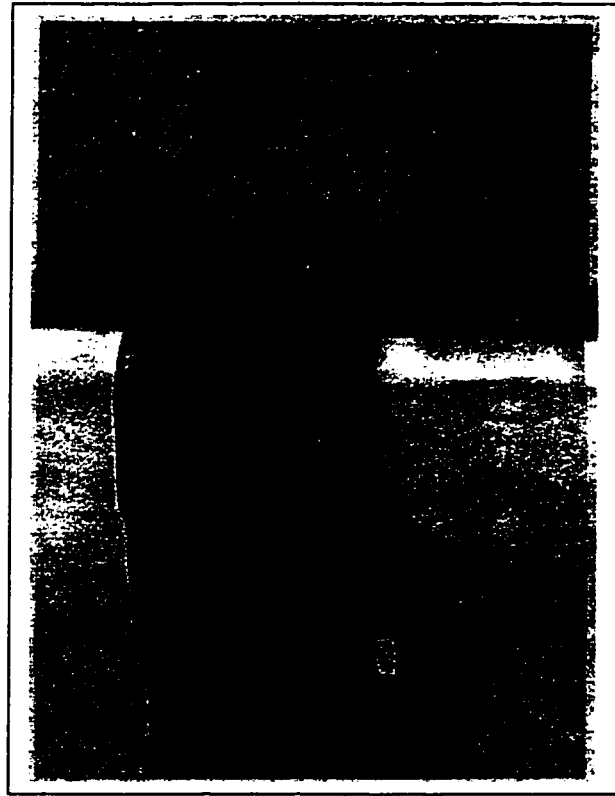
Figure 4.17. Woman with a shaved head. This photograph advertised the upcoming movie *Bacheh-hayeh Bad* (2001). This is the first picture I have come across of a shaved head woman without the headscarf (Tavakolian 2001).

Figure 4.18. Example of photographs commonly developed in Tehran. Notice the revealing clothing Iranian women wear at private parties (Source: Author's archives 1999).

The reasons for wearing one style in public and adopting an entirely new one in private, what Fandy calls "shape-shifting" (1998: 90), are twofold. Women generally can not wear revealing clothes, high heeled shoes, intense colored nail polish, nor heavy make-up on the streets in fear of being stopped by the moral police. Second because of extreme hot weather in the summer, anything worn under the hejab will likely become sweaty and wrinkled. So it is better to bring the garment at the host's house and change there.

To achieve fashionable looks women resort to occasional fashion shows, spread through word of mouth, where Western goods imported by Iranian travelers for this purpose adorn kitchen tables. Others resort to local designers like Parvin or Jilah Mehrjouyei who command great worth from their own creations. Women of all ages come with a picture clipping of the garment they want, often sent from relatives abroad or through the now widely available technology of the Internet.

The casting off of the hejab at parties creating an atmosphere of hypocrisy should raise serious questions for the Islamic government. This switch from public modesty to private expression of individuality has become an inevitable part of daily life for many in Iran. Consequently, women in the daytime wear the veil and their overcoat, but at night, in private parties, they transform into the latest fashion. Thus unlike the public sphere, where homogeneity nevertheless dominates, in private there is diversity and variability in what women wear. Women have found a compelling way to make a statement of some kind and are using dress to hide or at times reveal fashionable attire and diversity from disapproving clergy. A silent revolution may fully be underway. The streets in Iran are an important element of social life, especially for the youth who represent almost 60 per cent of the population. When walking in the streets one feels on display which makes

clothes of central importance in the presentation of self in these public spaces.

Given this context, after two decades of being exposed to such state surveillance over bodily practices it is interesting to see why and particularly how Iranian women resist, why they subject themselves to such dangers knowing that at any time they may be fined, arrested, or perhaps even be subjected to lashes. These are indeed everyday forms of resistance, but to what extent is this plurality of styles conscious to women themselves? Inordinate attention has been paid to the rare occurrences of open revolt, and too little to ordinary, everyday forms of resistance and their symbolic and ideological underpinnings, is suggested by James C. Scott. In his influential work entitled <u>Weapons of the Weak</u>, Scott underwent fourteen months of anthropological fieldwork in the late 1970s in the village of Sedaka and looks at many forms of resistance and power by peasants who went beyond words and turned to alternative methods including theft, killing of animals, and sabotage. These may not initially appear as political protest, but when considered within the context of power relations, Scott argues they become powerful everyday forms of resistance. From this we learn that conformity is calculated. Underneath the surface of symbolic and ritual compliance there is resistance and one's own alternative view of justice is presented against that of the state. Everyday resistance Scott argues is "informal, often covert, and concerned largely with immediate, de facto gains" (1985: 33). Resistance in Iran is becoming a consistent pattern since women are opposing the hegemony with whatever means are available to them; dress seems to be an effective tool.

The existence of such everyday and overt struggles in Iran, conducted by subordinate Iranian women, must be incorporated into our understanding of hegemonic

interactions. Enforcing compulsory dress codes in hopes of maximizing political and ideological uniformity has obviously failed. To suggest that the resistance translates in women wanting to be merely Westernized would be presumptuous. Resistance has nothing to do with Western ideals and, as discussed earlier, where rights have been wrongly and purposefully infringed on women have challenged the state. Besides, Iranian women have used the Islamic dress and altered it as a symbol of resistance. They have changed the colors, the style, and some have even shaved their heads to resist; these are not Western manifestations.

CONCLUSION

Although different Iranian regimes tried to reformulate their society through codifying dress codes particularly women's, it appears that they have only partially succeeded. Iranian women have been manipulating clothing to express their individuality to themselves and to society. The expression of nonverbal symbols through clothing has been a means of challenging a repressive gender ideology in Iran and it appears to be successful.

Despite women's reasons, their level of religiosity, and different social class, women participated in the Islamic Revolution and demanded change. The Revolution, with its symbolic dress code and effective slogans, provided Iranian women with solidarity which has resulted in an "outpouring of 'women's literature' without precedent in Iran's history" (Ramazani 1993: 425). Increasingly however, for some the Islamic dress has become neither a symbol nor a statement but simply something they have to wear, a piece of cloth they can dry their sweat with. Yet for others clothing is a tool to resist and it is increasingly manifesting itself at parties where Western fashion takes

precedence over the hejab and has also during recent years starting to appear in public by way of overt and subtle changes to the hejab.

Women are starting to have an active place in Iranian society through women's magazines, social and civic activism, and public office. Compared to Turkey, which is considered to be more modern than Iran, nine out of 280 members of the *Majles* are women, which is four per cent higher than in Turkey (Sullivan 2000: 257). The Islamic Republic has become a paradox because women have been using Islam as a legitimate tool to gain empowerment. The state's dress code has empowered the section of society which it had hoped to restrain. Iranian women can easily make a mockery out of the theocratic state by either over-conforming or under-conforming and challenging the seeming homogeneity of the nation and state policies through powerful everyday forms of resistance.

For the older generation who witnessed Reza Shah's reform policies the Islamic Revolution brought back memories of the forced de-veiling in the late 1930s. For forty three years the state has forced dress reforms while women revolted against its compulsory nature and demanded choice. This suggests that genders are not maintained entirely through verbal communication; non verbal communication, in the form of clothes, performs an important role.

CHAPTER 5
THE STATE AND DRESS CODES

INTRODUCTION

As previous chapters of this study have attempted to present, dress codes have become an important instrument in maximizing political and ideological uniformity, to maintain the status quo, as a means of breaking away from previous rule, and as an avenue toward national independence and a reconstruction of gender. We have particularly seen this in the discourse of the cultural revolutions in the People's Republic of China and the Islamic Republic of Iran. What these case studies testify to is clothing's important ability to communicate a particular ideology. For China, it was a re-enforcement of a communist state to ultimately achieve a socialist state. For Iran, it was a return to Islamic values. The following is a comparative and contrasting look at what has necessitated the relationship between the Chinese and Iranian states and dress with a particular focus on specific dimensions of the general relation between state and dress codes such as ideology and unification, regulation of individual bodies, creation and preservation of culture, and finally dress and resistance. Interesting is the fact that the above have taken place most severely on women's bodies.

STATE IDEOLOGY

In many political contexts such as China and Iran, the element which unites dress codes is the manipulation of states to enhance or maintain a particular ideal through clothing. Legalized state codes sustain and promote state ideology and as we have seen in chapter one of this study the concept of imposed dress codes is not new. What the

following discussion will attempt to make clear is that both the states of China and Iran searched for means to unify, control, and to reinforce a particular belief by enforcing dress codes on not so willing subjects. As it will become clear, the relationship between dress and the state is a complicated one and in the end, the reasoning for its existence are very closely intertwined and often overlap.

CLOTHING AND UNIFICATION

As we saw in chapters three and four in this study, both China and Iran enforced dress codes as a means toward unifying a nation around a specific ideology. If we look at China and Iran's contemporary histories, it becomes apparent that as both states underwent cultural and political changes, they also underwent a visual change in dress. By enforcing the Mao suit and the hejab in the form of the black *chador* the intent of the change was to homogenize a politically and socially diversified nation to appear as though all were sharing the same values and ideologies in a context that was far from orderly and united.

To expand our understanding of state legislation over dress as a homogenizing tool, it is beneficial to look at James Scott's thesis Seeing Like a State. Scott perceives efforts of uniformity as the "state's attempt to make a society legible, to arrange the population in ways that simplified" for example state functions such as taxation, conscription, and the prevention of rebellion. Uniformity made clear reasons behind the creation of permanent last names, the standardization of weights and measures, the establishment of cadastral surveys and population registers, the standardization of language and legal discourse, and the design of cities which all were attempts at legibility and simplification (1998: 2). But the grand schemes of improving the human condition,

Scott maintains, have been unsuccessful because state's have failed to take into account local human knowledge. Many of Scott's terms and arguments can be extended to the analysis of clothing; the state becomes a homogeneous entity when its citizens wear the same uniform, which in turn makes the nation legible, orderly, and perhaps easier to control. This system of classification through clothes allow for greater control over the lives of citizens, one person out of line would therefore disrupt the whole and easily identified.

Following this argument, clothing laws in China and Iran were seeking to control the nation and assure the outside world that the state was still an orderly place despite the fundamental changes brought to people's lives by revolutions. By unification, the state's goal, Scott argues,

> is to reduce the chaotic, disorderly, constantly changing social reality beneath it to something more closely resembling the administrative grid of its [the state's] observations. [It is] a project of internal colonization, often glossed, as it is in imperial rhetoric as a 'civilizing mission' (1998: 82).

Ultimately the reasoning behind uniformity is to appropriate, control, and manipulate. A society which is illegible "is a hindrance to any effective intervention by the state" whether the intervention is positive or not (Scott 1998: 77-78).

We can furthermore relate dress codes to the example of linguistics offered by Scott where the imposition of a single, official language (dress) has repressed many indigenous minority cultures to the whims of the dominant culture. Scott maintains that it is indeed diversity which makes life interesting and it is with these simplifications where the real trouble begins (1998: 12). In Iran for example, women regardless of ethnicity or religion are required to observe the hejab. Similarly in China, members of the bourgeois capitalist system were forced to relinquish all signs of fashionable dress for frugal

proletarian attire. In the process, almost all signs of one's exterior identity and individuality was subdued.

In China the dress code was enforced to unify a nation towards a proletarian hardworking ideology on behalf of workers and peasants in a context where threats to achieving a socialist state were prominent. The People's Liberation Army, who were the armed forces of China, argued that China,

> was still under the dictatorship of a sinister anti-Party and Anti-Socialist line which is diametrically opposed to Chairman Mao's thought. This sinister line is a combination of bourgeois ideas on literature and art, modern revisionist ideas on literature and art... (Spence 1999: 572).

They claimed that Chinese culture was charged with "anti-socialist poisonous weeds" and encouraged people to dispel "blind faith in Chinese and foreign classical literature" (Spence 1999: 572). The proletarian attire was a means at unifying a nation against old, feudal, and reactionary elements in Chinese culture and towards a new Communist state defined by Chairman Mao Zedong.

In Iran, the promulgation of the Islamic *chador* was a means at unifying a nation but for somewhat different ends. In Iran the *chador* was enforced to maintain religious virtue and a break away from the pro-Western shah's policies, especially "liberal" reforms made to women's position in society. The *chador* was a means with which the nation, in a unified manner, moves against Western cultural infiltration and toward "Islamic values" as defined by the state and its Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khomeini.

In both contexts dress codes were enforced at a time when change was imminent. To put it more clearly, dress codes in China appeared at a time when Mao's leadership was perhaps at its weakest, not forgetting the nation-wide famine Mao's policies had caused during the Great Leap Forward, coupled with the American economic embargo,

and the suspended Russian aids to China, and thus a re-enforcement of Communist values was needed. In Iran, dress codes appeared at a time when a revolution had caused instability on a somewhat previously stable society and thus an enforcement of Islamic values was needed.

THE IMPOSED UNIFORM: MAO SUIT AND THE HEJAB

Other reasons for enforcing dress codes lies in the want to regulate a nation and subdue individuality. Clothing in this study is understood as a system of signs leading to communication, therefore uniforms represent attempts to create a new status and identity for the wearer and at the same time becomes an emblem of membership. According to Joseph and Alex, "the survival of a group [state] rests in its ability to exert some degree of control over its members who must carry out the goals of their organization" (1972: 719). If the survival of the state is contingent on controlling and unifying the nation, then unifying a nation through dress codes automatically turns the nation into the state's subjects. Subsequently it turns wearers into supporters, sometimes unwillingly, and also become an emblem of unification under ideology

Assuming that all uniforms essentially strip individuals from their freedom to choose, it becomes a constant reminder to wearers of their own lack of power. A sixteen year old Iranian girl I had conversed with regarding the hejab described her feelings about its inconveniences and echoes the sentiment of many Iranian youths I interviewed, that the element of force is crucial,

> I hate it! The hejab has to be implemented in a comfortable fashion. Now some are comfortable being naked, some by wearing blouse and pants and others with the *chador*. But I hate the fact that it is by force.

Since uniforms differentiate insiders from outsiders the fundamental relationship read

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into clothing is that of power. Because uniforms are essentially enforced, it becomes clear "who controls whom" (Joseph 1986: 39). Both China and Iran used the elements of force in applying their dress codes. To ensure women's adherence both states hired sympathetic segment of society, namely Red Guards in China and the moral police in Iran, to enforce and monitor the dress code. Women were sartorially terrorized if they skewed the image the state wanted to project; Chinese women were publicly stripped of their "bourgeois" clothes while Iranian women were being arrested, imprisoned, lashed, and even at times acid was thrown at their faces, and finally, on some occasion even killed by state agents if their *chador* was not properly covering their hair.

Furthermore, the uniform assumes that a hierarchy exists whereby "an upper level in the group [state] will control the members and, in turn, that members will conform" (Joseph & Alex 1972: 723). In this sense the Mao jacket and the hejab become symbolic statements that wearers accept state norms and ideologies, and particularly for both Chinese and Iranian women, it symbolizes their conformed and standardized roles towards society: one is praised for being an emancipated woman, a good worker, communist, and for her revolutionary fervor while the other is praised for being a good Muslim and mother as well as for her revolutionary fervor. Indeed the element of force and the violence used in enforcing these uniforms has resulted in the refusal by some Chinese women and many young Iranian women to properly wear the prescribed dress.

Consequently it can be argued that when states enforce uniforms, subjects are surrendering their rights to individuality, for if we agree that dress is a metaphor for language, we can likewise agree that by imposing dress codes would be similar to one being "partially or wholly censored" (Lurie 2000: 18). The Mao suit and the hejab in Iran

suggests that one is silenced in speech when forcefully wearing one or the other, and perhaps relieved and liberated when discarded. The desire for liberation and expression thus offers the possibility of challenging the oppressive social order through resistance.

Chinese and Iranian women have always been denied the freedom to choose their clothing. Ever since the Qing fell in 1911 Chinese women were subjected to ordinances from forcefully un-bidding their feet, to looking feminine, to banning the qipao and looking androgynous. In Iran women were also subjected to many decrees forbidding women to veil or to unveil. But perhaps the main difference between the uniform in China and Iran is their level of comfort and their differentiating characteristic within each society. The Mao suit for women is an attempt to duplicate men's attire whereas the hejab in the form of the *chador* is a female attire which for some may inhibit movement and perhaps even their hearing abilities.

The uniform in both cases marked difference from outsiders mainly from Western societies thus acting as a powerful indicator of seemingly shared values and boundaries. Moreover for both China and Iran, clothing was regulated in a manner in which comfort was emphasized rather than fashion and self-expression thus freeing women from the perceived useless time and energy invested in the consumption of beauty and fashionable goods. Clerics in Iran view the chador as a comfortable garment which allows women to move without having to be concerned about unwanted male contact on buses and streets for example. We should also add that in Iran women are discouraged to beautify in public but in private is another matter.

But as with many uniforms, the Mao suit and the hejab is seen by both communists and capitalists, conservative and liberal Muslims as a token of liberation and

of oppression.

CREATING AND PRESERVING CULTURE THROUGH CLOTHES

Other reasons behind state imposed dress codes in China and Iran lie in the fact

that both states needed to reinforce their culture in opposition to the West. Mao believed

that positive social change would result from class struggle only and not from industrial

expansion and technological innovation (Andors 1983: 101). Influence from the West

was viewed bourgeois and ultimately capitalist and was blamed for the increase in

premarital sex, divorce, the decline of the Chinese household, and for the violence

against women. As such, the Chinese nation was advised to be cautious about the West

(Honig & Hershatter 1988: 339). Furthermore during the Cultural Revolution and for

most of the twentieth century, fashion for the Chinese was viewed as Western

commodity "which made it at once appealing and objectionable" (Ko 1999: 143-144).

Interestingly, although women wearing Western attire were "suspect for having

compromised the cultural identity" of the country, and were at times severely punished

for it, men on the other hand, according to Dorothy Ko, were never scrutinized (1999:

143-144). Instead, women's femininity was exchanged for men's masculinity.

In the case of Iran, during the nineteenth century the veil became the focus of

Western scrutiny. British and French travelers to the Middle East, used the veil and its

negative connotations as a tool to shed new light on Islam. They argued that the veil and

Islam oppressed women and hence a proof of the Middle East's backwardness. As a

result, Islamic societies have been using the veil as an emblem of colonial resistance

(Chatty 1997: 132-133). To wear the veil under these circumstances during the 1979

revolution became a symbol of rejecting Western imperialism (Betteridge 1983: 121).

Today, this overwhelming obsession of the Iranian government to cover the heads of

women constitutes to the world an obvious success of having implemented the Islamic

ideology (Nashat 1983: 123). The veil during the uprising and up to this day symbolized

indigenous tradition and culture in the face of Western materialism, consumerism,

commercialism, and values. It is important to clarify that the veil was imposed as a return

to traditional cultural identity not folkloric identity. Rather, it was put in place as a return

to restraint in sexual behavior, exhibitionism, and body decoration which attracted what

was considered unlawful attention. As a result, it de-sexed women in public but unlike in

China it was not replaced by masculinity.

The Islamic Revolution meant returning to religion and tradition, therefore,

traditional motives were based on respect for custom and acceptance of long-standing

forms of behavior, often backed by religious or superstitious beliefs (Bradley 1996: 132).

Following this ideology, the Iranian theocratic state has perhaps a serious fear of women

who are not willing to be confined to the four walls of their domestic sphere. This has

resulted in implementing oppressive measures on women who have, according to the

state, flooded the labor market and necessarily threaten traditional roles. This fear

presents itself in the general absence of many women in the employment sector. A

country profile commissioned by the United Nations reported in 1998 that "[t]he labor-

force participation rate of Iranian women is among the lowest in the world" (Statistical

Profiles 1998: 4).

The creation of Chinese culture during the Cultural Revolution was based on the

break away from what was believed to be feudal, traditional, and bourgeois content of

much of Chinese culture before the 1960s. Thus drawing on the inspiration from the

ranks of workers and peasants who represented 80 per cent of the population (Kirby 1970: 159) would be a model for the nation to follow because peasants symbolized communist virtue. In Islamic Iran the preservation of culture was based on a return to Islamic values dictated by the state and an almost denial of pre-Islamic Iran. Drawing from the inspiration of poor and devout Muslims was a means toward securing Iranian Islamic tradition as the state saw it. Then as briefly described above, the link between clothes and the creation and the preservation of culture as each state saw it are as strong as using clothes as a means of imposing ideology.

The revolutions in both states required a cultural onslaught whereby all counter-revolutionary aspects of the old society were attacked. Clothing came to play a very important role in demonstrating and maintaining the cultural ideals that both states strived for. But where these states differ is that unlike China, Iran simply revitalized a dress which had already existed, whereby China invented an entirely new national dress. The Mao suit and its androgynous aspect had no previous roots in Chinese culture while Iranian women seem to have always been covered by the veil. But strengthening the preservation of culture through clothing has not been successful for either state.

Indeed, China lost its battle in regulating the nation through dress codes. Societal government gradually relaxed its grip after Mao's death in 1976 which opened an era for free expression in dress. As soon as Mao's wife, Jiang Qing and the Gang of Four were convicted of treason in 1979 for having masterminded the Cultural Revolution, colors like rust and plum started making their appearance (Steele & Major 1999: 63). The policies of the Cultural Revolution were rejected and economic reforms began to flourish, agriculture was de-collectivized, and privatization was permitted. Consumption

and the display of material goods became politically acceptable after years of harsh

regulation (Honig & Hershatter 1988: 4-5). Frugal style of dress was slowly replaced by

fashionable clothing; young urban women began to sport "tailored slacks ... zippered

nylon jackets, skirts ... blouses, and shirtwaist dresses" (Steele & Major 1999: 63). The

same leather shoes with one inch heels which were banned started to reappear and hailed

for symbolizing smartness and modernity (Wen 1981: 8). Fashion magazines and fashion

exhibitions surfaced once more giving advice on how to apply make-up and on how to

keep a permanent to last longer. [1] Even renown designer Pierre Cardin held fashion

shows in China (Steele & Major 1999: 63) and would later in 1995 dress the staff of

China Air (Finnane 1996: 101). Foreign goods were viewed modern and misspelled

English words appeared on t-shirts (Roberts 1997: 98). Dressing-up was now a liberating

act and surprisingly a refocus on beliefs of essentialist sexual differences between

genders reemerged (Evans 1997: 27) (see **Figures 5.1 & 5.2**).

Figure 5.1. People on the streets of Beijing in mid-1990s. By the 1980s and 1990s, dress in China had become extremely diverse, with fashion-consciousness especially pronounced in larger cities (Source: http://depts.washington .edu/chinaciv/clothing/11divers.html).

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[1] This as a result of so many years of state regulation over beauty which has led many women saying, "Before we thought of beauty but did not dare to be beautiful; now we want to be beautiful but don't know how" (Honig & Hershatter 1988: 46).
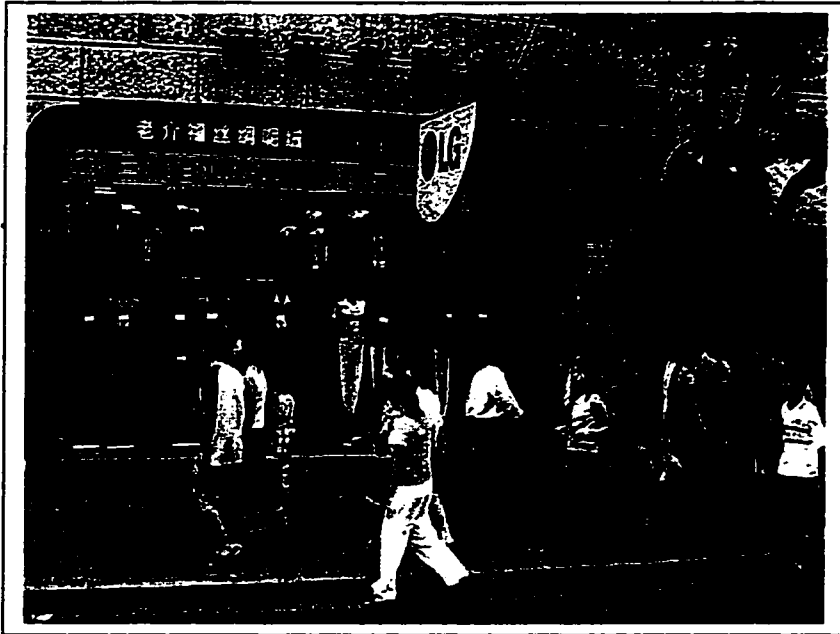
Figure 5.2. Shanghai shopping street in 2001 (Source: http://depts .washington.edu /chinaciv/clothing /11divers.htm#source %203).

However, change was felt at a snails pace but modernization and the new fascination with woman's sexuality was certainly going to be the next step. Yet the new standards of beauty did not come without criticism. Steele and Major reported witnessing in 1982 a hand-painted poster on a state-owned factory "warning young workers against wearing 'hoodlum' styles, such as bell-bottom trousers, tee-shirts, dark sunglasses, and the like" (1999: 64). In early 1980s, female workers and students were sent home for wearing "bizarre clothing". Elders are said to have regularly reminded the youth that "beauty had national character". "It would be inappropriate", one writer commented, "for young Chinese women to follow the custom of the African tribe who found long necks beautiful, and lengthened them by fastening copper rings around them". Copying Western type adornment was still discouraged by the state and viewed as not keeping with the Chinese nation's customs (Honig & Hershatter 1988: 48). The temptation

proved to be too strong for young influential women however and eventually the political

billboards made way for posters of attractive women selling consumer goods, including

cosmetics (Honig & Hershatter 1988: 42-43). Still today, restrictions on the way Chinese

women dress prevails, "short skirts are okay, but short tops with spaghetti straps or no

bra? Unthinkable", one woman revealed. This is in line with China's ideology over

sexuality which still holds that women should inhibit their sexuality (Gunthner 1995:

168) and be modest.

The eventual loosening of governmental dress regulation and China's

phenomenal economic growth during the late 1980s and early 1990s led to its inevitable

entrance into the world of fashion and opened its doors to the West. Western technology,

foreign experts, movies, and books were becoming increasingly available for a thirsty

population who had for decades been closed off from the West (Honig & Hershatter

1988: 5-6; Spence 1999: 591). Soon the pursuit of beauty was regarded as an assertion of

personal identity which had been banned during the Cultural Revolution (Honig &

Hershatter 1988: 47). In December 2001 China joined the World Trade Organization

which will further develop the middle class[2], yet in July 2002, China celebrated the

eightieth anniversary of the Communist Party, and today China has become one of the

world's most stratified states. The world's trendiest boutiques like Hermès and Fendi sell

$5 million worth of goods every year in China and BMW has plans for opening a factory

in the near future. Former president Jiang Zemin stated that to stay in power, China needs

to represent the interests of the "most advanced productive forces in China" which in

other words implies the rich and the middle class (Pomfret 2002: A7).

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[2] The party does not use the term " 'middle class' in its official documents, preferring instead such phrases
as 'those with high incomes'. To recognize such people as a class would turn the ideology of the last 50
years on its head" (The Economist 2002: 33).

Unlike China, Iran has not seen a dramatic change but signs are pointing to the demise of its original project set forth by Khomeini. As discussed earlier in chapter four in this study, since the revolution the hejab has undergone extensive change. Not only to the way it is worn, or to its fabric, but to its ideology as well. Despite wearing a headscarf and long coat, women everyday experience improper comments from male strangers on the streets of Tehran. This is precisely what Islamic revolutionaries had hoped to eradicate with the enforcement ofthe hejab. Youth revel in this flirtation, much like any young teenager does when he or she has caught the eye of another. This at first seems odd considering what the 1979 uprising stood for, but in a society where relationships between boys and girls is forbidden and strictly controlled, people have an excessive tendency to be avid towards each other. Especially since recently the fear of boys and girls caught together by the moral police has intensely reduced. One friend commented that the youth have become accustomed to state regulation and that it occurs so often that it has become almost a normal part of Iranian life. Still, women are constantly reminded in public to properly observe the hejab by the watchful eyes of the moral police carrying unusually big machine guns and stand near every street corner, by signs and stickers on taxi windows and behind window shops. "A woman modestly dressed is as a pearl in its shell", or the "hejab is ladylike" are printed on stickers behind window displays and taxi windows.

Although men are required to dress modestly by wearing long sleeved shirts and loose dress pants, many wear tight jeans, short sleeves, and nice fitting tops, reminiscent of a Ricky Martin style (see **Figure 4.10**). Many men between the ages of eighteen and twenty five sport long curly hair in a ponytail and have plucked eyebrows. This has

struck some women to be an ironic practice since traditionally eyebrow plucking is

reserved for married women. Why these men are not subjected to the same dress code

restrictions as women is not clear. Perhaps since men have historically been more

politically aware than women, pressures on the way they dress have been minimal so that

those in power can be re-elected; perhaps because the belief that the burden of

maintaining Muslim religion rests on women's shoulders restricts the freedom of Muslim

women and provides freedom to men. Men therefore seem to have complete freedom in

sporting different styles of dress and ignoring religious prescriptions to dress. Whatever

the reasoning, women have been the targets of random abuse more often than men.

Nevertheless, the trend in today's Iranian outerwear is increasingly moving

towards choice since many women appear to be wearing whatever pleases them, but still

remaining in the confusing boundaries of modesty. Recently Mahla Zamani's fashion

show (see **Figures 5.3 & 5.4**) held in Tehran received extensive coverage in the West.

The event, not the first of its kind in Iran, was open only to women and attracted sixteen

thousand women to Tehran's exhibition hall. Designer Zamani comments on the need for

alternative styles of dress,

> For more than two decades, the head-to-toe black chador has symbolized the
> restrictions imposed on women by the religious establishment... The time has
> come now for women to choose the dress they like while respecting Islamic
> requirements... We are displaying bright dresses, a mixture of modern and
> traditional designs, to remind visitors of Iran's rich dress designs and also offer
> freshness amid so many social restrictions (qtd. in Dareini 2001: F3).
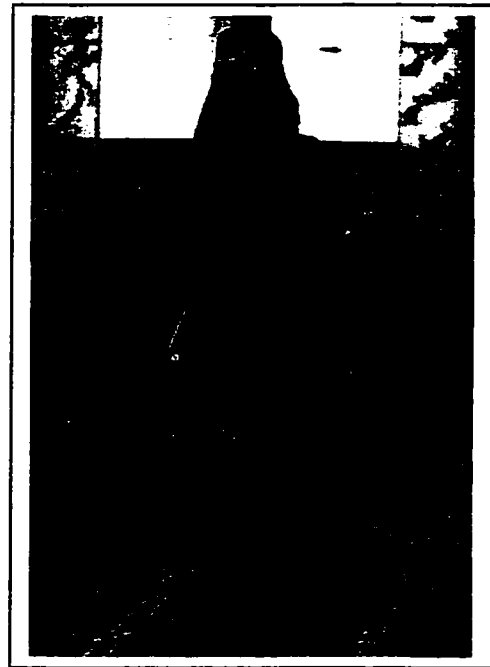
Figures 5.3 and 5.4. Iranian fashion show displaying Mahla Zamani's designs. The event was the first to receive great attention from Western media since the revolution (Source: roozi.com 2001).

The application of said "Islamic law" has often been contradictory in Iran. After

much struggle female singers have regained the right to perform but only for female

audiences. Hair salons are jammed with women wanting the latest haircut, hair color, and

manicure but conceal it under their headscarves. Today there are more women wearing

make-up in public than not, and there are more youth sporting Western fashion in the

form of t-shirts with prints of popular music bands than ever. But the government

periodically bans the sale of so called inappropriate garments. Until August 2001

women's underwear and partially nude mannequins were displayed behind window

shops but recently they have been banned once more. The state also periodically arrests,

fines, and warns women for crossing the boundaries with their improper clothing habits

which in recent times the various manifestations of the hejab have risen many eyebrows.

What was shocking in 1999 was openly worn in 2001. By the look at women's dress it

seems that hard-liners are loosing the struggle for ideological hegemony in Iranian society.

Communist and Islamic dress codes played a very important role in demonstrating and maintaining the cultural ideals that both states strived for as a way of shielding against the West and as a way of underlining what was now considered to be Chinese and Iranian culture.

STATE, DRESS CODES, AND WOMEN'S BODIES

Interesting is the fact that all of the above took place on women's bodies. Oftentimes during times of revolution, periods of state-building, modernization, and times when powers are challenged, women's bodies become fields for political goals and cultural identity (see Moghadam 1999; Yuval-Davis 1997) (see chapter one in this study). Political projects in China and Iran have entailed a complete revitalization in women's clothing habits. For Chinese women this has meant displacing femininity for masculinity. By bobbing their hair, not wearing make-up, and wearing proletarian attire women became indistinguishable from men. Whereas during the early years of the twentieth century women wore make-up and the very feminine Chinese national dress, the qipao. For Iranian women, political projects entailed a covering of the female body and displacing any hints of feminine beauty. By wearing a *chador* women became invisible. Whereas during the previous government women were encouraged to be feminine. Although for both states make-up and women's finery were discouraged, they were replaced by dress codes which would visually de-sex women's bodies in public spaces.

Moreover, in the case of China, since state policies formally gave women almost

equal rights to men, it became necessary to reflect this ideology in state advocated gender-neutral dress. Whereas in Iran, state policies reflected a patriarchal model based on male interpretation of the Quran and Islamic laws, formally impinged on the rights of many women which consequently reflected on women's dress and drew a clear boundary between men's and women's clothing. But in both cases a woman's dress became a symbol of a new society; the Mao suit as symbol of cultural and economic transformation, the veil as symbol of cultural and moral transformation. The underlining difference between both cases was Chinese women's *similar* rights to men as a reflection and reinforcement of egalitarian understandings of gender as opposed to Iranian women's *natural* rights to men as a reflection and reinforcement of patriarchal understandings of gender and this mirrored in women's dress.

CLOTHING, GENDER, AND SEXUALITY

For both China and Iran, the first visual symbol of a nation's identity was revealed on women's clothing and it was women's clothing coupled with formal law concerning women which underwent striking change. The discourse of revolutionary China and Iran openly invited women to participate in the revolution to preserve communist and Islamic values respectively and they were dressed accordingly. Weeks argues that as states are preoccupied with the private and public lives of civil society "for the sake of moral uniformity, [and] economic prosperity" they also become concerned with the regulation of individual bodies (1996: 374). Gender construction in China and the regulation of sexuality in Iran and the state are tightly linked.

Economic prosperity was at the core of Mao's ideology which held that women's emancipation rested on their participation in social labor. He declared that women were

"a decisive force in the success or failure of the revolution", primarily because women provided cheap labor (Andors 1983: 131,136) and secondly because Mao believed that "everyone needed physical labor" (Wong 1996: 93)[3] which is why official state policies encouraged women's participation, collectivization, equal pay for equal work, expansion of women's educational opportunities, support for free-choice marriage, and family planning. Formal equality was central to enhancing the participation of rural women and thus dominated the Cultural Revolution (Andors 1983: 142). Because the communist ideology "created a collectivist political ethic" (Rai 1992: 22), this meant an emphasis was placed on the collective rather than on the individual meaning that any attention paid to the individual self was discouraged. The road to a socialist state was a struggle of the people which allowed no room for individuality, therefore women were invited to emulate androgynous-looking workers depicted in propaganda posters and encouraged by state slogans which called for "[w]hatever men can do, women can do too" (Rai 1992: 31). In addition, during the Cultural Revolution sexual interest was perceived ideologically unsound and taboo (see Evans 1995, 1997) which explains why the sexual sameness based on the de-sexualization of female appearance seemed to be the socialist ideal. For the purposes of state-building "individual energies were to be channeled into working for the collective benefit". Therefore any mention of sex were punished, in fact to talk about sex in public was banned (Evans 1997: 5). Then perhaps women's bodies had to loose their attractiveness for the sake of men so that they could concentrate on state goals. In fact, it was believed that "sexual excess depleted a man's 'life energy early' on in life and destroyed his capacity to engage in 'prolonged labor'" (Evans 1995:

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[3] Many prominent individuals, such as Qing (1995) and Wong (1996), believed that physical labor cleaned the soul.

12).

Furthermore, to achieve successful state-building and enhancing economic expansion, women were assured equality by the new marriage laws put into effect in the 1950s which banned polygamy, concubinage, and equal rights with respect to employment, ownership of property, and divorce (see Michael 1970). This helped women to achieve economic independence and in order to achieve such equality it was also necessary to emancipate women in their clothing. After the devastating effects brought on by the Great Leap there was an urgent need for economic reconstruction in China. This meant that women had to be mobilized for production and women's liberation fit well into the state's plans for reconstruction and modernization. Although the Communist Party did in theory challenge the system of oppressive patriarchal authority, the actual policies set forth by the Communist Party did not, in practice, frequently support female participation outside the family household and outside traditional roles (Andors 1983: 103). Nevertheless women did make significant progress. The Communist Party stressed similarity and complementary in law and dress rather than difference and division. Thus, state clothing preference for women was in support of the project of economic development formulated by the state. According to authors Honig and Hershatter when the reality of women's continued subordinate status conflicted with the goals of major political campaigns did the government promote discussion of gender inequality (1988: 309). "Women of China", Mao said, "constitute a great source of manpower. This source must be tapped in". During the Great Leap and the Cultural Revolution manpower was highly needed and further emphasis was placed on female labor (Andors 1983: 49; Davin 1976: 111).

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The submissive roles of women were indeed challenged by both reforms made to the Marriage and Land laws, in addition to women's increasing visibility in public. In China therefore, since state policies formally gave women more rights, almost in par with men, it made sense to reflect this ideology in state advocated gender-neutral dress. However, according to Andors, real equality not simply the appearance of in clothing, was often not emphasized in labor mobilization directives issued by the Party but, rather, it was only stressed in women's literature, in the state owned Women's Federation (1983: 48), and on women's clothes. The government's approach emphasized political equality above gender equality (Junzuo 1992: 45) and subordinated women's concerns to those of developmental interests. The goals of the Chinese Communist Party was for women to contribute to a rapid modernization and production coupled with achieving equality with men (Andors 1983: 48; Junzuo 1992: 42). It was argued that if women could contribute to the family income they would see their status rise (Davin 1976: 40). To further enhance this goal, the Party masculinized women's conduct and appearance to unleash women out into the public (Evans 1997: 63) which went hand in hand with its emancipatory policies.

Furthermore the Party subscribed to the belief that in order to achieve higher domestic saving and make national investment in what the nation needed most, women had to be de-sexed and came to resemble one another superficially. Reform meant that interest in outer appearance was looked down upon and frugality was praised. After all a true communist should not be concerned about the way she looks.

In Iran however, moral uniformity, sexual repression, and segregation was the basis behind Khomeini's ideology of women in the name of emancipation. In

revolutionary Iran, women's place was in the home, public life was perceived ruthless, polluted, and dangerous. Since women were pure and hence easily led astray they would risk moral corruption and sexual seduction. Rather, women should set a moral example and remain in private and instead attend to the needs of their husbands and children. As such women were encouraged to emulate Fatemeh, the Prophet's daughter who was "simple, pure, shy, chaste and virtuous" (Paidar 1995: 181) and symbolized motherhood and womanhood.

Iran falls under what Weeks identifies as the absolutist approach which perceives sex to be dangerous and disruptive. This model proposes tight authoritarian regulation over sexuality and the body (1996: 388) which assumes that the negativity of sex can only be regulated "by a clear-cut morality that is embedded in social institutions" such as marriage, heterosexuality, family life, and monogamy (1996: 389). This reflects the belief that women are naturally different from men, both biologically and psychologically. Furthermore, state ideology over Iranian women's position clearly reflects their code of dress. For example, the Iranian state perceives women responsible for reproduction and since women's biological differences made them weaker than men meant the home was their natural place in life (Mir-Hosseini 1996: 149; Poya 1999: 9). Motherhood and domesticity were encouraged and the family became the fundamental unit of society (Ramazani 1993: 411). As a result co-education was banned, women's employment was restricted, Western ideals and the Family Protection law previously put forward by the Shah was annulled allowing men exclusive rights to divorce, polygamy, and temporary marriages (see Nafisi 1999b and Poya 1999). The new rules also further reduced the age of marriage for girls from eighteen to nine (Hoodfar 1999: 23) and early

retirement for women was highly encouraged (see Afshar 1989, Hoodfar 1997, and Mir Hosseini 1996). Gender inequalities are consequently deeply embedded within the state which also reflects, creates, and helps perpetuate gender inequalities in civil society. Men are to rule and women are to follow is the ideology in Iran and it is highly reflected in the nature of the dress of both men and women.

Furthermore, the unrealistic ideology of the loss of male honor resulting from women's emancipation is widespread in the Islamic world, particularly among conservative clergy. Because in Islam men and women are perceived as sexual beings, sexuality must be enjoyed in matrimony. But these ideas have over time been exaggerated and women have come to symbolize all that is *fitna* (temptation) (Chatty 1997: 131). Khomeini's views regarding women were grounded in the belief that not only were women sexual objects but they were also obsessed with luring innocent and hapless men. In Iran, women's external beauty has historically been linked to evil and danger which explains why clothing the female body in the Islamic Republic represents sexual pureness. One of the arguments behind advocating the hejab was that it would emancipate women from the degrading notions of beauty such as make-up and Western fashion. It was believed that women were oppressed as sex objects which was a direct result of cultural imperialism. Among the ranks of clerics it was argued that Western conspirators were targeting women and turning them into "Western dolls" (Paidar 1995: 180). Women were believed to be easily susceptible to Western culture in the form of "freedom, ethics, techniques, culture, arts, and pornography" (Paidar 1995: 180). Therefore the revealing contours and voluptuousness of a woman's body in contrast to the plain and somber woman covered by the *chador* marked the boundary between

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bourgeois degeneracy and revolutionary virtue.

In this context, enforcing the hejab and creating gender boundaries was therefore logical. But to force the veil on women's heads and bodies also became a symbol of men's lack of trust in their Muslim sisters. Maryam Poya argues that "[i]t is because men fear female sexuality that they have perceived the need to impose silence and stillness on women". The veil essentially exists to prevent female animal energy from engulfing, burning, and destroying men (1999: 14). Because Iranian women are viewed as seditious, government agents have adopted the rhetoric of protecting women's honor and dignity by emphasizing that women are the single most important symbol of family honor. But this conception only hides men's real fear and concern over their own lack of self control.

Some authors suggest that the submissiveness of women in Iran is partly blamed on a male interpretation of the Quran which places men in charge of women's well-being. This is justification enough for the Islamic theocracy to cage women in their "natural" place. Forcing the cumbersome hejab outside further symbolized the private. By making the hejab mandatory, many women have to think twice, weighing their comfort against their independence. This is another practice designed to control and inhibit women's participation in the public arena. As author Nira Yuval-Davis argues the (re)invention of cultural traditions "are often used as ways of legitimizing the control and oppression of women" (1997: 46).

In summary, looking at the Land and Marriage Laws in China it becomes clear that China used women as a symbol of forced liberation, modernization, and communist ideology whereby women were given similar rights, encouraged to participate in society and consequently were forced to dress accordingly and simulate men. Iran used women

as a metaphor for national Islamic culture and tradition whereby women's natural rights were enforced and were forcefully excluded from formal participation and forced to dress accordingly. These particular ideologies over women's clothes are reflected in the laws by which these states used to achieve these ideals.

DRESS AND RESISTANCE

So far we have seen dress codes promulgated as a means for political and social control is not new (see chapter one in this study). But in a context where individuality is robbed and pervasive sate surveillance over the body exists, resistance is perhaps inevitable. Much attention has been paid to occurrences of open revolt and too little to ordinary everyday forms of resistance. The general relationship between dress codes and resistance involve two dimensions which are at play: states in China and Iran used dress to resist Western imperialism and the public has likewise used dress to resist the state.

STATE RESISTANCE

Fashionable clothing such as high heels and trousers signaling traits of Western decadence was outlawed in China, in fact Red Guards would spit on women who wore anything defined as un-Chinese or counter-revolutionary. Deviations from clothing norms, particularly by women, were strongly sanctioned by crowds in the streets. Western clothing items such as elastic laces, jeans, and pointed shoes were perceived as an insult to the state who firmly stood against Western ideals and towards a new society. Thus the Mao attire was in stark contrast to Western consumerism and ideals. It was plain, drab, and represented Communist ideals and a statement of political resistance in the face of Western and capitalist imperialism.

Likewise the Islamic Cultural Revolution in Iran was a struggle against Western imperialism. For many Iranian revolutionary idealists and fervent mullahs, the hejab represented, and still does today, female Muslim purity and rejection of Western fashion, lifestyle, and ideals. In short, anything besides the hejab represents Western decadence. In fact the education minister forbids students bringing "decadent Western symbols" to school (Nafisi 1999b: 2) such as jeans and English words, signs, or pictures printed on T-shirts.[4]

Since women in revolutionary Iran were seen as "super-consumer[s] of imperialist culture" and "w[ere] ...projector[s] of the corrupt culture of the west", they were therefore "undermining the moral fabric of society" (Paidar 1995: 213). As a result, women had to be covered. Furthermore, the revolution among other things, concentrated heavily on the issue that women were previously presented as "sex objects" and this was blamed on Western cultural imperialism (Paidar 1995: 179). The Chinese and Iranian revolutions are probably the most familiar examples in recent history of the use of women's dress as an overt political signal toward the West.

PUBLIC RESISTANCE

As we have stressed throughout this study, people can use the same dress codes and alter them by way of challenging the state since a state's ideology is often only partially accepted by all its participants. China and Iran are two nations where simplification of women's bodies by way of stripping them of their sexuality in public led to discontent. However dress codes are not damaging to the same magnitude of some high modernist and social engineering examples, such as the compulsory villagization in

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[4] This is based on my own research.

Tanzania and collectivization in Soviet Russia offered in Scott's study. Social engineering manifests itself in less disastrous ways too and Scott has pointed this out by providing examples such as the creation of the city of Brasilia in Brazil whereby residents were supposed to live in uniform housing projects. The plan eventually failed and now the residents live in unintended areas not anticipated by city planners (see Scott 1998). Similarly, the regulation of the body through dress transforms social life deliberately to make it more rational. But it appears that the more radical the project, the more it will fail and the more disastrous the outcome which perhaps will result in people's resistance.

We draw two main reasons for Chinese and Iranian women protesting the uniform. First, nonconformity through dress does not simply communicate individuality or the "sway" of fashion. It states "usually consciously their attitudes toward the organization" (Joseph 1986: 2). It is an expression of discontent toward state ideology. Secondly, resistance occurs when there is a denial of individuality. The Iranian woman I quoted earlier in this chapter is not so much contesting the values behind the hejab but the premise that control is exercised through a uniform which ultimately denies her her identity and self-expression. The same is perhaps true for Chinese women who resisted by wearing colorful socks and kept hidden in their homes their Western clothing. But do Chinese and Iranian resistance express the same statements of discontent? Considering the lack of information on Chinese resistance of dress codes, it is difficult to speculate. Based on available evidence, we would argue that resistance expresses a discontent in state imposed identities and as such it becomes political.

CONCLUSION

The subjective use of dress codes as conveying state ideology took away freedom of expression and creativity. Dress codes, in both China and Iran, were constructed to channel the choices women might make concerning their life-style and outer appearance into one basic uniform model. As a result of imposed uniform women become subjects to the state's power. Dress codes represented a sexual, moral, and social obligation on Chinese and Iranian women to behave in ways that perpetuated their function as agents of social and moral order. All this in the service of the many interests defined by the state rather than their own; primarily production for economic prosperity and creation of a particular culture in China and for patriotic Islam in Iran. In both states clothing the female body in a particular fashion functioned to reinforce a representation of order that depended on the woman's denial of her own interests in favor of those defined by external agencies. The situation in China and Iran testify that subjectivity is indeed colonized by and for politic and economic projects by way of the dress code. Forced social engineering however did not last in China and ostensibly it will not last in Iran either due to increasing public resistance through dress codes. Simplification and the use of violence took away freedom of expression and creativity which led to discontent.

CHAPTER 6
CONCLUSION

China and Iran's manifold codes of regulated dress are rooted in the massive

rationalizing projects of state interests for moral, economic, and political concerns. It

is safe to say that both the Mao suit and the hejab were symbols of social unification,

creation and preservation of culture, and sexual regulation. The latter has included the

promotion of state gender ideology which in China has meant a creation of a new

culture which was not patriarchal; while in Iran this meant the preservation and

nation-wide rejuvenation of a patriarchal version of the Islamic culture.

Uniformed attire makes the individual more standardized. This is a useful

vehicle for states who may utilize dress codes as barometers of an individual's level

of commitment; regulated dress ostensibly expresses one's level of commitment to

the dictates of the state. The body, then using Brian McVeigh's words "is treated as a

politically encoded, meaning-carrying icon" (1997: 198). McVeigh observes that the

activity of putting on the uniform everyday "reinforces a host of associated values

that maintain the rationalizing projects of the state and its economic interests" (1997:

199).

However, one should not confuse donning the uniform with the total

acceptance of the state's ideology. In Iran, many women do not agree with the state

ideology of wearing the hejab and all that it represents. Some consequently resist by

wearing colorful headscarves and have completely transformed the dress code to a

more liberal version arguing that it denies them self-expression, individuality, human

rights, and freedom. Similarly, there is evidence, however scanty, that the Chinese

people were not satisfied with wearing the uniform either and expressed it by wearing bright colored socks and other conspicuous garments under their Mao jackets. There is no doubt that by wearing a uniform one is signaling that the role assigned is played, albeit to varying degrees.

Modernization, for many countries, became the major driving force behind the development of new dress code systems. Programs for modernizing the state such as in Turkey, Afghanistan, India, China, and Iran "were accompanied by new forms of dress regulations; in other words, the New Order... was to be manifested in new forms of dress" (Baker 1997: 179; El Guindi 1999: 175). Sartorial social engineering are often implicated with state modernization programs precisely because they signify change. Yet modernizing projects have resulted in widespread state violence against its citizens (see Scott 1998), as seen in the enforcement of the uniform in Maoist China and in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

One striking contrast between China and Iran lies in the way gender was formulated. In China the semiotics of dress and hair emphasized cutting across gender differentiation for the benefits of work and social stability. This entailed de-sexing women through dress and privileging utility above decoration, and work above leisure. Conversely, the Iranian state separated the genders as inherently different and underlined women's natural rights. This entailed de-sexing women in public through dress and privileging domesticity. When both governments came into power, they declared themselves committed to a program aimed at liberating women. Although each took very different paths in hopes of achieving their objectives, both in the process, re-defined women's bodies in public.

But whose interests does the regulation of women's bodies serve? Scott posits that when citizens, events or the natural environment are not easily standardized and quantifiable, there is an incentive for the state to alter the population to fit its desired measurements (1998: 2). Applying this to Maoist China revealed that gender was blurred for the sake of work, women were de-sexed because outer beauty conflicted with desired productivity. In the Islamic Republic of Iran gender was differentiated, through the hejab, for the sake of Islamic religion. Women's outer beauty in public conflicted with the ideology that women were the upholders of the nation's image which was a return to authenticity and a refusal of all that is associated with Western imperialism. The Cultural Revolution in China opened-up opportunities and favorable situations for women to progress but women increasingly found change to be difficult and past Confucian beliefs remained powerful. In general, the reform of women's position in the traditional family and the subsequent androgynous bodies that were needed to advance China's goals, according to Martha Huang, "in the end it was really men who were to be liberated, and women's sexuality was practically erased (1999: 139). The Islamic revolution closed opportunities for many women to progress and in the end subdued and silenced many women from public spaces. Similarly the Iranian dress code was about "negating female sexuality and thereby protecting men" (Moghadam 1999: 144).

Considering the failure of China's Cultural Revolution and the seeming demise of the Islamic Republic, James C. Scott's argument appears even more convincing that the more radical state projects are the more likely they will fail. The regulation of dress in China dissolved with Mao's death and ever since China has

been breaking through and making headlines in the world of fashion with its own designers like Peter Lau, William Tang, and Chen Xiang. It appears that in Iran change is not far, at least dress codes are not strictly followed as they once were. Furthermore it has led many youth to resist and exaggerate their appearances by applying clown-like make-up, having nose jobs, and wearing ridiculously short and tight overcoats.

Much of twentieth century social engineering has been implemented by progressives and revolutionaries since "it is typically progressives who have come to power with comprehensive critiques of existing society and popular mandate to transform it" (Scott 1998: 89). Idealists who believe they know what is best for all and have the power to implement it have been many throughout our history. Lenin, Le Corbusier, Robert Moses, and Robert McNamare are just a few Scott refers to. Adding to his list would be Mao Zedong and Ayatollah Khomeini. When a nation is not easily standardized there is an incentive for states to alter the population to fit nicely in their desired plans. Land owned collectively is therefore privatized so it can be taxed more easily, villagers are forced to adopt surnames so that they can be easily tracked, clothing is homogenized so subjects could be controlled more easily giving a sense that the state has everything under control and under a uniform ideology because sartorial homogeneity projects, and on the surface creates, national unity. "The builders of the modern nation-state do not merely describe, observe, and map; they strive to shape a people and landscape that will fit their techniques of observation" (1998: 82); and the nation's bodies, particularly that of women, are used as battlegrounds where their own self expression is set against the state's.

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