

An Introduction to the Women's Organization of Iran

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This article is an account of the women's movement in pre-revolutionary Iran. The focus is on the activities of the Women's Organization of Iran (WOI) and its interactions with the government, the court, the clergy, and other conservative forces during the two decades preceding the Islamic revolution. Much of the article, particularly where the story of WOI is concerned, is based on the author's personal knowledge and experience as WOI's secretary general between 1970 and 1978. WOI was a link in a chain of events that began with the first progressive impulses in Iran's recent history. It is important to place it in historical perspective on issues of culture change, political power, socioeconomic development, and institution building.

Introduction

The dynamics and contradictions of social, economic, and political relationships that allowed the Iranian women's movement to go forward despite strong and seemingly immovable historical and traditional obstacles are not only of historical interest but also relevant to the condition of women in other contemporary developing countries. The history of Iranian women's struggle for rights shows that changing cultural nuances differentiate societies and often change the balance of values in the same society over time. The process of differentiation makes language and behavior deceptive when encountered out of context. Words such as freedom, equality, equity, and justice connote differently in different settings. As Iranian society moved through the twentieth century, it became increasingly multi-contextual—different social sets saw the reality through different lenses that often reflected varied and sometimes contradictory images and made it difficult to reach consensus. Varieties of conflicting political forms of modernity such as democracy, socialism, communism, and fascism clashed not only with each other but also with different manifestations of traditionalism, including religious reaction to modernism

regardless of its form or substance. Under these circumstances, for most groups that sought to influence society, options were limited to either using force or seeking a balance among various interests. The story of WOI is best understood if we keep in mind the need for balancing.

In Iran, as in other parts of the world, women have always had to fight for their rights. But different women—and the same women at different times in their personal development—understood the meaning of “rights” variably according to the society and culture of their specific environment at the time. Clearly at any given moment only certain groups of women possessed the opportunity to participate in the political processes we associate with women’s human rights. The activist woman belonged by definition to a minority of her gender, regardless of her social status. The problem she faced was how to reconcile her ideals with the inertia marking the larger patriarchal society and culture that surrounded her. Men were only one component of the patriarchal order; the other, more complex and difficult to bring into the balancing act, were women belonging to the majority who, deeply inundated in the patriarchal society and culture, were at once preservers of the old order and objects as well as subjects of the activists’ political struggle. Thus, depending on the historical moment, the successful woman activist moved carefully within a range of options defining the limits within which she could communicate with the larger society without betraying her ideals.

Because the combined forces of men and women who support the patriarchal order are inordinately strong, women activists have always resorted, consciously or unconsciously, to a variety of devices depending on the society’s place on the scale of change. In Iran, as the short history of the women’s movement will indicate, the device used at the turn of the twentieth century was sporadic demands for educating girls. Seemingly innocuous, the demand nevertheless elicited ferocious opposition. In fact, it did not materialize on any socially meaningful scale until decades later when it was buttressed by the power of the state. But, the state was also patriarchal. It could not accept education for women as a human right. Rather, it saw it as a mechanism to equip women with the intellectual means necessary for bringing up men capable of serving the state. In time, the ideology of development took root, and the state began to eye women as “manpower” for development. Now women assumed value also in their own right, not only as nurturers of sturdy, serviceable boys but also as agents of socioeconomic development. The tempo of women joining the rank of the minority accelerated. As women became active on the socioeconomic scene, they began to affect some men, transforming them into agents of struggle for women’s rights. These men, inside and outside of the government, were critical

for the success of the women's cause. They became bridges that initially connected women to political and economic power.

The state, of course, was never feminist. In Iran, women always had to fight an uphill battle. The converted men in the government were useful; but they rarely occupied positions directly related to women's rights, particularly in the realm of law. Nor would they spearhead change if not spurred by women. The history of WOI's dealing with the state is in part a history of women mobilizing converted men in the government to help convince others, notably Muslim clerics, that women's demands were not only good for modernization and development but also socially and culturally innocuous. In time, women were able to talk directly to the unconverted, but by then WOI had achieved significant power in its own right.

The source of this power was organization. The function of the organization was to interconnect innumerable small groups of women leaders who were scattered across the country working at the grassroots level, usually in poorer districts of cities and small towns. Together these women constituted a mutually empowering system forcing society and government to pay attention at both the center and the periphery. This chapter demonstrates how the process of mutual empowerment among women was begun and developed in Iran.

In modernizing patriarchal societies, international connection and support are particularly relevant in promoting women's human rights. In WOI's case international connection proved critical. Iran played a crucial role in formulating concepts and policies that became the World Plan of Action adopted by the United Nations' First World Conference on Women in 1975 in Mexico City. The WOI then used the World Plan to formulate and implement a National Plan of Action that allowed WOI to become an integral part of the political decision-making process, not only in matters that were traditionally considered women's issues but in all governmental decisions impacting women's lives. This was a feat until then unmatched anywhere else in the world.

The Women's Organization of Iran was established and grew in size, membership, and function during a period of rapid economic and social development. It was said that WOI was an arm of the government and the shah, but women's roles in the revolution belie this statement. We will take up this issue when we discuss the reasons why women, many of

whom were WOI members, participated—more importantly, were able to participate in great numbers in the revolution. Iranian writers and others who write about Iran often mention the shah as if he were omnipotent. This is more imagination than rational discourse. The shah was in many ways—formally and substantively—the point of convergence of decisions about broad policy. The state acted in his name. He gave the commands. Hence, he was assumed to be always the mover. In reality, for the shah to support any social policy proposal, there had to be sufficient social pressure from various power groups within and outside the government to convince him that there existed objectively a manageable convergence of opinion in favor of the move. It was upon the WOI and its allies to lobby the government and other loci of political power to produce the conditions in which the convergence could be perceived. Whenever women failed to elicit this perception, they also failed to mobilize the state's support in favor of their demands.

The women's movement in Iran must also be studied in the perspective of history if it is to be understood at all. We must look at women's place in Iranian society before the modernizing process began, develop a theory of social change in relation to women and modernization, and devise a model that best corresponds to the social facts and events as they existed and occurred in real time and space. Only then can we come close to appreciating differentially the challenges that Iranian women faced and their successes and failures before and after the revolution. I will expand on these points by discussing briefly the evolution of Iranian women's social conditions and their struggle for rights in the first half of the twentieth century; WOI's organization, membership, and activities; and Iranian women's achievements before the revolution.

A Half-Century of Struggle for Rights

The life of the Iranian woman at the turn of the twentieth century was a maze of regulations and limitations meant to keep her cloistered existence beyond the reach of any but her immediate kin. As an infant, her birth brought disappointment to all, even the midwife who lost a gift coin that the birth of a boy would bring her. As a child she was told to move quietly, sit demurely, keep her eyes downcast, and not speak unless spoken to. She was taught—if she belonged to the privileged classes—to read the Qur'an and recite from the

great poets. At the age of nine she was considered mature. Security tightened around her. In more affluent urban settings she resided in the andarun, the inner house, with other women of the family. She would not leave this space or go outside the high walls of the courtyard unless she were to attend the public bath or pay an occasional visit to members of a relative's or friend's family in the andarun of another house.

As soon as possible (sometimes even before her birth), a marriage was arranged for her with a man whom she had never seen but whose female relatives had briefed concerning her physical attributes which they had studied in the women's bath. Following negotiations over her mahrieh (bride price) and jahizieh (dowry), in which she could not participate, the wedding took place.

Sometimes she found herself one of two or more wives whose competitive struggle to retain their place and security within the household would involve elaborate intrigue and intricate maneuvering. She would also have to accept direction and domination by the husband's mother and criticism from his sisters. The in-law behavior pattern would become a model for her to follow in later years when she gained a similar position of power and prestige in the household of her married son. Her public presence was limited to appearances on the streets only to perform necessary missions related to religious or family duties. Bundled in a black shroud, her face covered except for holes in the eye area to permit vision, she was allowed on one side of the street while men walked on the other. If it became necessary to cross the street, she would have to receive permission from a policeman. Horse-drawn doroshkes (coaches), the only means of transportation, were rigidly segregated by sex. Drivers were required to put up their hoods when carrying women.

Despite these circumstances some women demonstrated extraordinary independence, courage, and initiative and, at times, even struggled to assert their will in social and political matters.[1] Women's participation in the revolution of 1905-1909 is on record.[2] Once the constitution was in place and the majlis began the work of governing the nation, however, women's role in the revolution was ignored. Although the original document did not place a limitation on political participation on the basis of sex, the election laws of 1911 specifically barred women from the political process.[3] The first two decades of the new century brought other developments that helped provide the necessary foundation for the eventual participation of women in the sociopolitical affairs of the country. The first girls'

schools opened in Tehran and a few other cities, paving the way for the establishment of the Teacher Training College in 1918, which in turn provided trained teachers for the expansion of secondary education for women. During the same period periodicals were published by women and specifically for women. These early stirrings among women met with extreme antagonism whenever they gained public notice.[4]

Women's situation changed significantly during Reza Shah's reign (1925-1941). More women were admitted to schools and government service, the latter particularly in the fields of education and health. The state policy of unveiling (1936), although resented and opposed by traditional urban men and women and controversial among the rest, proved nevertheless the single most important step toward ending the segregation of women in society. Many educated women wished to unveil, and after Reza Shah's abdication in 1941 these and other women continued to appear unveiled in public and to work in government and private offices.

The 1940s saw a heightened consciousness of the role of women in society. The clash of ideas in a free-for-all political arena led to an effervescence of ideological and utopian thinking. The prevalent ideologies rarely emphasized women's issues, but they did allow women a freedom of expression that enhanced their consciousness. In this process the Tudeh Party played a particularly important role by enlisting young women from student and other social groups at various organizational levels. Tudeh publications pointed to existing prejudices against women and promised a bright future under socialism, but the process was handicapped by the systematic and persistent subordination of women's social, economic, and political rights to the demands and priorities of ideology.

During the 1950s the now much larger group of educated women, increasingly aware of women's progress in other countries, began to form various organizations to improve women's condition in Iran. One of the first of these organizations was the Rah-e Now (New Path) organized by Mehrangiz Dowlatshahi in 1955. Another organization, founded by Safieh Firouz in 1956, later known as Women's League of Supporters of the Declaration of Human Rights, actively sought equal political rights for women. The central committee of this organization had an audience with Mohammad Reza Shah in 1956. "The Shah, who was impressed with their request for political rights, promised three seats in the municipal council. Immediately a delegation of over eighty mullahs warned His Majesty against taking

any favorable action for the women, saying 'if you act, you may not be here to carry out the action.' The Shah did not act.”[5]

After several attempts to unify the women’s movement and various experiments in creating a federation of women’s organizations, women leaders, seeking high-placed support in their efforts to gain the franchise, asked Princess Ashraf Pahlavi, the shah’s twin sister and a powerful personality in her own right, to lend support to the movement. In response, she commissioned a fifty member organizing committee to prepare the articles of association for a new federal body called the High Council of Women’s Organizations of Iran. The High Council came into being formally in 1959 with a membership of seventeen organizations interested in women’s issues. It concentrated its efforts largely on gaining the franchise.[6]

Despite progress made in the preceding three decades, Iranian women in the early 1960s were still deprived of some basic legal, social, and political rights. They could not work or travel without their husband’s written permission. They could not initiate divorce proceedings except in extreme cases of the husband’s illness, insanity, imprisonment, or desertion. They could not become guardians of their children even after the father’s death, when, according to the law, a paternal grandfather or uncle preceded the mother. They could not serve as judges or become career diplomats. They could not transfer their citizenship to their children; indeed their citizenship was in jeopardy if they married a non-Iranian. They inherited from a father’s estate only half of what their brothers received and from a husband’s estate only one-fourth when there were no children and one-eighth if there were children. They could be divorced by their husband with or without their knowledge by a simple, unilateral statement, or they could be faced with the presence of a second, third, or fourth wife in their home at any moment. Forced by economic need and patriarchal fiat, they could be contracted in a mut`a (temporary) marriage for periods ranging from hours to years in lieu of a fee for their sexual services with no enforceable right for themselves or any children resulting from the union.

Iranian women’s ability to control their lives at mid-century was conditioned by the strong, deep-rooted, and systematic opposition of the conservative Muslim clergy and other conservative forces, many within the government, to their efforts to gain rights. The clergy’s attitude to women’s rights was also a key factor in their persistent opposition to the Pahlavi regime’s modernization policies. But women’s objective situation had significantly changed by the 1960s, even though their rights and responsibilities appeared the same in the shari’a

and on the law books. The work of educating and organizing, which had begun before the constitutional revolution of 1906, had accelerated and expanded, producing a larger number of qualified women committed to change. This, in turn, provided the infrastructure without which the rapid transformation of women's role in the following years would have been unlikely.

By the 1960s women had become more organized and politically vocal, capable of lobbying the shah, the government, and the more moderate members of the clergy. The development culture, which included the idea of women's participation in social affairs, had taken stronger root. And the shah, a believer in modernization, had become politically more powerful.

On 26 January 1963 Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi's six-point reform program (later dubbed the White Revolution), which included the revision of the electoral law to grant women the right to vote, was approved in a national referendum. In February the majlis (parliament) formally ratified the revision. This development brought about a violent reaction from some members of the clergy, including Ayatollah Khomeini who led a series of uprisings in Qom and Tehran. The government withstood the pressure against reform, and following bloody clashes between the army and the demonstrators Khomeini was exiled to Turkey. The subsequent election of six women to the majlis and Hajar Tarbiat, one of the earliest leaders of the movement, to the senate brought further encouragement and optimism. Equally important, the reforms were followed by an important change in the composition of the cabinet. With the appointment of Hasan Ali Mansur as prime minister in March 1964, a relatively younger group of men, soon to be joined by a woman, entered the cabinet. Younger, more educated men and women assumed leadership positions in ministries related to social, cultural, and economic development. These changes affected the relationship between women activists and government leaders. Whereas in the past the government's initial reaction to women's demands was invariably negative and cautious, now there evolved a positive, although still cautious, attitude of cooperation. Similar attitudinal changes in the now-expanding modern private sector produced a rudimentary political synergy in favor of women. It had now become easier for women to organize and to communicate their needs and demands.

The rapid expansion of the movement and the growth of the organizational capability of the High Council of Women's various affiliated groups in the next few years led to a

reorganization of the umbrella body. In 1966, the High Council of Women initiated, organized, and supervised the election of a five thousand member assembly of women representatives from all regions of the country. The assembly met in Tehran on 19 November 1966 and eventually approved the charter creating the Women's Organization of Iran.[7] Fifty-five existing women's associations affiliated themselves with the newly created body. Others, including women lawyers and university women whose members were actively involved with WOI, chose to remain autonomous.

The Women's Organization of Iran (WOI):

Organization and Evolution

The Women's Organization of Iran was a non-profit institution working mainly through volunteers. The basic unit of the organization was a branch formally established in any locality where thirty women gathered in a general assembly to elect a seven-member board of directors, who then chose one of their members to act as secretary of the branch. The average branch member was a woman in her late twenties or early thirties, usually a grammar-school teacher or low-level government worker, sometimes a homemaker. Each branch sent elected representatives to the National General Assembly, which met annually to set goals and establish guidelines for the organization's activities. Between meetings of the general assembly, a council of eleven members met weekly in its place to manage the organization's general affairs. Initially five members of the council were elected by the assembly and six, including the secretary general, were appointed by the honorary president. The appointment powers of the president were used to include members of religious minorities as well as academic personalities in the policy-making processes of the organization.[8]

The WOI budget was initially provided by local charitable contributions, national fund raising, and five rials (approximately seven cents) per elementary-school textbook donated by the Offset Printing Press (affiliated with the Imperial Organization for Social Services and producer of school texts for the Ministry of Education). The cadres worked on a voluntary basis, except for some forty women employees at the headquarters who were paid through

funds from the printing company. During my tenure (1970-1978) we developed and implemented the concept of Women's Centers to help women achieve, among other things, economic self-sufficiency. The centers required paid professional staff. The budget for the centers was raised through a variety of means. The actual physical premises were sometimes built using funds donated by individuals, groups, or local councils. Sometimes they were old rented houses in underprivileged neighborhoods. As the educational, legal, family planning, and job-oriented programs of the centers grew, WOI was able to convince relevant government agencies that each specific function performed at the centers satisfied a specific national need. Eventually WOI convinced the government that its services were necessary for national development and that the government was obligated to assist the organization in the best possible manner. Women deserved and had a right to receive their fair share of the common patrimony that the government controlled and appropriated as income from the sale of oil and other nationalized resources. By the late seventies, WOI had some two thousand paid specialists in its legal, childcare, and family-planning sections in 120 centers throughout the country. The budget of the organization had grown tenfold, not counting volunteer services and in-kind and charitable contributions of members. The Plan and Budget Organization suggested and the majlis approved the amount of support provided the centers based on their review of the centers' work in the areas of literacy, general education, and vocational training.

Learning from the Grassroots: The Concept of A Family Welfare Center

Initially, WOI focused on establishing contact among women belonging to different social strata in various geographic areas. Members agreed from the outset that neither Western models nor traditional Iranian concepts about the proper role of women offered a satisfactory ideological framework for the Iranian women's movement. Western concepts presupposed historical conditions as well as sociocultural structures that did not exist in Iran. Traditional Iranian concepts, based on patriarchal structures, established a context too narrow to allow for women's most rudimentary rights, let alone full participation in society. Clearly, we needed to develop concepts and strategies to enable us to build and

successfully cross a bridge linking legal and political conditions largely wedded to local traditions with aspirations evolving mostly as a result of changes related to global history.

Women were drawn together at this stage by a common belief in the unsatisfactory and unfair state of their condition. Women leaders—including WOI secretaries of branches, members of central and provincial councils, heads of organizations and other prominent women associated with WOI—began a dialogue with a wide variety of individuals and groups in order to explore women’s priorities and identify appropriate goals for the movement. They believed that without some sort of consensus among women it would not be possible to establish an efficient national organization with truly effective programs.

The initial contacts and discussions throughout Iran expanded WOI’s organizational network and helped clarify some immediate demands of the majority of women activists. In every forum and discussion the recurring theme was the need for economic self-sufficiency. The primary means to achieve this goal was education, in most cases involving simple literacy skills, followed by vocational training in fields where a scarcity of skilled labor occurred. The organization’s main concern soon became the teaching of literacy and job-oriented skills. The classes, becoming the nucleus of the WOI centers, were designed to meet the requirements of the job market. There were two limiting factors: lack of trained teachers in some fields in parts of the country and the reluctance of some women to participate in classes with an “unfeminine” image. No matter how lucrative the end result and how simple the training, most women hesitated to take part in certain courses on the ground that such training would reduce their chances for marriage. “What man would want a carpenter/ plumber/electrician for a wife,” they asked. Considerable consciousness-raising was necessary before non-traditional courses would meet with any degree of success.

Around the classes grew other subsidiary services required by the exigencies of women’s living conditions. The necessity of providing care for the trainee’s children brought to classes made childcare facilities a standard feature. It soon became apparent that unwanted pregnancies curtailed life planning for women and stopped their training and professional development. Distribution of family-planning information and, where possible, advice and services became a function of the WOI centers. Job counseling and placement services, a needed outgrowth of the training courses, soon grew to include family and legal counseling.

By 1975 WOI had built a network of 349 branches and 120 centers and had reached an understanding of the problems and demands of different groups of women. Experience showed that to gain maximum results the centers must remain an integral part of the community, that neither size nor appearance must differ markedly from the surrounding architecture, and that small centers, each within walking distance of neighboring homes, were more inviting than larger, more elaborate structures. The centers evolved and expanded in number and quality but not in individual size. Twelve centers were located in south Tehran slum areas. WOI's School of Social Work, which trained employees selected from across the nation for work in the centers, was located in Naziabad, south of Tehran, one of the country's poorest communities. Young women chosen for this course were given two years of training before returning to their towns and villages. Schooling was kept at a minimum so that ties between the young women and their home network and lifestyle would not be permanently altered by long stays in Tehran.

Research on Women

While new centers were created locally throughout Iran, the WOI Center for Research on Women was conducting studies on women in various socioeconomic and geographic sectors and identifying ways of finding solutions to their problems. Various studies pointed to the interrelationship of the status of women and general improvements in society as a whole. Although improvements in women's status were shown to improve their situation in the family and society, the reverse was not necessarily true. Improvements and development in various sectors of the economy did not automatically improve the position of women. In some cases, such as the mechanization of agriculture, women's status was lowered and their participation in the family's financial and material affairs was decreased substantially because learning new methods was largely limited to men while women were left consistently with the more menial and unrewarding tasks. Four of the center's studies that significantly affected WOI policy are briefly mentioned below.

A Comparative Study of the Socio-Economic Situation of Working Women in Tehran Qazvin. and Kashan conducted in 1974-5, investigated the working conditions, social awareness, and degree of independence of women workers in these cities.[9] The study showed that

the best means of reaching these women was the radio (41% referred to it as their sole means of gaining information), that lack of efficient WOI contact with these groups was due to the almost exclusive reliance of the organization on printed material (only 25% knew of the organization and its activities), that they perceived themselves as having little freedom of choice (only 30% thought they were the final source of decision making on matters of personal and social concern to them), and that they were religious but their religious attitudes were at best full of ambiguities (83% followed all religious rules and practices, yet only 12% considered a "good" person to be a "religious" person). Additional information was gained regarding attitudes of these women toward family planning, health practices, and social activities. This study helped shift WOI's attention to the use of the radio as the primary means of communication and re-emphasized the provision of childcare services as the prerequisite for women's participation in the work force.

The study of Qashqai tribal women of the Tang-e Chugan and Narehe subgroups conducted in 1974, published under the title *Status of Women in Tribal Society*, supplied information on the role of women in the Qashqai social order, their tasks, assigned roles within the family, differences in attitude and lifestyle in various tribal strata, and customs regarding marriage, childcare, and divorce.[10] The study revealed that in Qashqai society, women's rights were based on tribal customs and tradition rather than on Islamic or state law. The attitude of women toward life was reflected in their stated aspirations regarding the future of their children. Of all the women interviewed in both subgroups no one chose farming, gardening, or shepherding for her child. Nomadism had come to be perceived as an inferior life-style by these women. When women were asked the preferred place of residence for their children, the majority stated cities if appropriate jobs were available.

This study helped WOI to understand better the problems of Qashqai women. It brought greater sensitivity to the preparation of material for an elementary women's studies course at Shiraz's Tribal Teacher Training School. It also helped WOI clarify its position on the question of the settlement of nomads.

Images of Women in Elementary School Textbooks[11] charted out the recurrence of certain concepts and images of men and women in texts that led to the inevitable conclusion that women's roles in society were limited in type and variety. It proved that even when pictured within the home, women's activities and impact were portrayed within traditional areas of nursing and care of household duties and not in supervision,

organization, or decision making. The atmosphere of schoolbooks was completely masculine. The texts under study reflect the male and female roles in a rigid and unexchangeable fashion....the roles assigned to men and women are always and without exception assigned to men and women according to sex and exchange of roles does not occur..., e.g., the role of woman in the family has always been shown to be cleaning, cooking, etc. and the responsibility for men is always financial support. Never does it occur that a man is either cooking or helping his wife in the process of food preparation. The reverse is also true—that is, a woman is never seen as a scientist or a writer. It is as if the social role, like biological roles are unexchangeable. The only role assigned to both sexes is that of teacher. Not only are the roles assigned to women limited, but there is little variety in them, so that the only atmosphere for self expression for a woman is that of the family ... In contrast, the roles assigned to men reflect a considerable variety. Man has a foothold within the family and status and responsibility in society. All scientific, literary, and artistic creation is his and he governs all productive social activity. The number of references to the role of women in the books is negligible compared to the frequency of references to men.[12]

Aside from the unequal treatment of men and women, the general value system imparted to schoolchildren through books was slanted and less than wholesome since relationships based on “expression of power, command, pity, and acts of assistance or generosity have been mentioned or imparted as unilateral and one-sided actions, and concepts such as cooperation, joint effort, mutual trust, and values such as attention to human worth, have been understated.”[13] This study resulted in the creation of a committee composed of representatives of WOI and those of the Ministry of Education to study and revise elementary schoolbooks to eliminate sexist attitudes and images.

Urban Design and Women’s Lives[14] presented specific suggestions to promote community cooperation and community services to assist working mothers through urban planning and community development projects that provide for the needs of working women facing loss of support from the extended family.

A series of legal research projects focused on a comparative study of the laws of Iran and the Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. These provided detailed information on the shortcomings of existing laws and for the preparation of proposals for revision of these laws.[15]

The most significant undertaking of the Center for Research and one with the most impact was the Saveh Functional Literacy Project cosponsored by UNESCO in 1973-1975.[16] Its purpose was to experiment with the best methods to increase the literacy rate among village women in Iran. The project included seventeen villages around the town of Saveh in the Central Province. It viewed the problem of literacy as an aspect of the life experience of rural communities and approached it within the framework of non-formal education and in harmony with the social, cultural, religious, and economic fabric of each community. It involved preparation of teaching material taking into account the general learning needs of the community, including teaching basic literacy and mathematics, agricultural instructing (such as growing nutritionally consequential products), preparing more marketable designs and dyes for carpet weaving, and setting up cooperatives for production and sale of handicrafts.

The inclusion of these activities in the experimental project spurred interest and guaranteed the continued attendance of women participants. The teacher training program taught methodology to thirty-five village women and six supervisors from the WOI Research Center. The project provided the first instance in Iran where the task of literacy training of village women was undertaken with the participation of women in villages. Adjunct activities involved printing the monthly publication Zan-e Dana (wise woman), written and produced with the help of participants in the classes.

The project reconfirmed some basic assumptions with which it had begun. It proved that a successful literacy program for women in rural Iran must be multipurpose and take into consideration: the social context of the village women's lives in each locality, interrelatedness of the program with other existing educational programs, inclusion of classes for men within the literacy project, recognition of religious beliefs of the villagers, concentration on moral and spiritual as well as material benefits of literacy, and exclusive employment of local teachers. Such a program was thought necessary for an all-encompassing nationwide system rather than a series of sporadic, isolated projects.

The project was given over to the National Committee for World Literacy Program which incorporated its findings into the national program and was able to institute similar programs in more than seven thousand villages throughout Iran, administered on a decentralized organizational basis through local groups and committees.

From man's Complement to Complete Woman: Gradual Transformation of WOI Mission

In the 1940s, 1950s, and early 1960s women's groups were for the most part engaged in welfare and charity projects where more privileged women tried to help and comfort the underprivileged. They also emphasized education by arguing it would make women better wives and mothers. As more women were educated and sought employment, the rhetoric also evolved to stress women's ability to carry both the burdens of homemaking and professional responsibility while remaining good mothers, good wives, and pleasant companions for their mates. Women's education and professionalism, it was stressed on every occasion, would in fact allow them at once to help with family finances and raise their children better. Rapid changes in the condition of women, especially entering into the work force of an increasing number of trained and educated professionals, made it apparent that to carry the double burden of home and profession without changes in men's behavior or in society's structures and attitudes would be well nigh impossible for a majority of women. The ideological turning point came at the 1973 General Assembly, which led to the amendment of the WOI constitution.

At the opening session of the assembly some activists spoke about the beneficial effects of women's education and employment for the family and women's proven ability to perform as traditional mothers and wives and simultaneously as modern professionals. A member of the central council argued that the role of woman was complementary to that of man, using the image of an apple—the woman being the half that completes the whole. I walked to the podium after my colleague. I looked at the gathering and wondering whether I had sensed their feelings correctly from conversations and debates we had during exploratory journeys made in preparation for the assembly. I said, "Sisters, it is time to name our problem and its solution. We know that we are not all superwomen. It is unfair to expect us to be superwomen. No one can function in so many different and demanding roles. We ought not to be asked to accept total responsibility for the home while holding a full-time job outside the home. Women should not be asked either to do both jobs or to give up life outside the home. We are each a whole human being, complete in ourselves. We are half of nothing and no one." There was a few seconds of silence, then applause, and then shouts and the loud ululation of our colleagues from the southern part of the country. We had reached a point where we were able and willing to express our thoughts freely and to insist that our condition, roles, and needs had changed. We no longer begged for a chance to do everything under rules that were not of our making. We demanded that the structure of society as well as the relations among members of the family change so that an equitable distribution of rights and responsibilities would occur. We were challenging the

political structure of the family unit as well as the social hierarchy of which it was the nucleus.

After the initial exuberance and enthusiasm, reality set in. We were concerned about how our discussions would be reflected in the press and how the public and the authorities would react. But there was no turning back. The assembly proceeded to take appropriate measures, including the amending of the constitution. The major change involved article 2, section A, which defined the goal of the organization as “assisting women in performing their social responsibilities and also in performing their important role as mother and wife within the changing Iranian family.” The revised constitution made no mention of the role of women in the home and split rights and responsibilities into two separate articles with rights appearing two paragraphs above responsibilities. The goal now was “defending the individual, family, and social rights of women to ensure their complete equality in society and before the law.” The other significant change in the constitution involved the election of members of the central council. In the previous constitution half of the council was elected while the other half was appointed by the honorary president. In the new constitution all members were elected.

International Activities

One of WOI’s instruments of pressuring the government was the relationship it had established with women’s organizations in other countries. Contact with women’s groups in countries with diverse sociopolitical systems such as the People’s Republic of China, France, Iraq, Pakistan, and the Soviet Union had been established through exchange of delegations. These contacts facilitated comparative research and provided information on issues of priority to women, which were used in support of changes sought in Iran. International women’s organizations also provided moral support as well as ammunition in the national struggle. International appeals were particularly effective in countries sensitive to international public opinion and actively interested in improving their image. Thus Iran, whose leadership was highly responsive to international media and opinion, was particularly affected by the interaction of Iranian and international feminist leaders. The Women’s Organization of Iran joined the activities of the International Women’s Year in

1975 with great enthusiasm. With its strong national network, its third-world Muslim society and culture, and potential financial support from the government, WOI was in a highly favorable position to play a leading role in the International Women's Year Conference. The consultative committee producing the draft of the world plan of action for the improvement of the status of women was chaired by Princess Ashraf, the head of Iran's delegation to the conference. During the conference in Mexico City, the main resolutions, which committed member nations, among others, to a Mid-Decade World Conference to monitor national progress and to establish the international Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), were initiated by Iran. Iran was to host the mid-decade conference in 1980 and to provide a permanent home for INSTRAW. The final draft of the World Plan of Action adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1975 reflected many of the ideas researched and tested in Iran and was based essentially on the following concepts: 1) regardless of sociopolitical, cultural, and economic differences among nations, there are similarities in the situation of women throughout the world, 2) problems of development cannot be solved efficiently and in any real sense without a thorough change in the status of women in third-world countries, and 3) involvement and total commitment of governments to initiate, implement, and monitor change are essential in bringing about full participation of women.

The National Plan of Action

Once the World Plan of Action was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations, WOI began preparing the National Plan of Action (NPA) for the improvement of the status of women in Iran. Ostensibly, NPA was a response to the UN call on member states to give priority, over the ten-year period of 1975-1985, to policies and actions designed to achieve the objectives of the UN Decade for Women. WOI used the international decree to pressure the government to allocate necessary resources to improve the status of women in all social sectors. Real change in the status of women, however, involved such drastic alterations in the infrastructure that could not possibly be attained without a convergence of opinion on priorities, values, and needs of the women, a realistic appraisal of available resources, and women's ability to engage governmental organizations in problem solving and policy implementation.

To achieve a consensus among women, more than seven hundred panels, organized and financed locally by the WOI chapters between 1976 and 1977, debated relevant issues. The panels were followed by statewide seminars in each province, providing opportunities for further and more comprehensive discussion and dialogue. Out of hundreds of hours of deliberation by thousands of women across the country, a preliminary draft plan of action was produced.

The next step was to involve the government in the process of planning in order to take advantage of its information resources and, more importantly, to mobilize its machinery in support of WOI's goals. After much lobbying, WOI succeeded in establishing a High Council for Cooperation—composed of eight cabinet ministers; the directors of National Iranian Radio and Television, Civil Service Commission, and National Committee for World Literacy Program; and the Women's Organization—to support women's goals. The special committees charged with preparation of policies and programs of the sixth development plan and the National Council of Provincial Governors General were persuaded to allocate special sessions to the discussion of the plan. Each series of suggestions emanating from these discussions was studied at WOI meetings, and certain adjustments were made in the draft. To test popular reaction at the grassroots level, the final draft was placed on the agenda of each town and village council. The resulting document, more conservative in certain areas but immeasurably more radical in implementation potential, was approved by a national congress of ten thousand women delegates in Tehran in January 1977.

Following lengthy negotiations, the cabinet finally approved the document in May 1978. In its final form, the document stipulated not only the basic goals and broad guidelines for improving the status of women, but also the mechanisms for implementation, evaluation, and monitoring. The momentum achieved through widespread consultation and interaction among the women and between various NGO and governmental participants changed what would have otherwise amounted to no more than a plea of a pressure group to an essential part of the national agenda. As such, it became the most important accomplishment of the women's movement in Iran. If the failure of the political system in Iran had not made it irrelevant, Iran's experiment in the interaction of the women's movement and the national decision-making apparatus could well have provided a model for many developing (and perhaps other) countries.[17]

WOI and the Government

To transform the condition and role of Iranian women, WOI was faced with the task of mobilizing national and international resources on a scale hitherto unknown in Iran. Contrary to revolutionary rhetoric that portrayed the WOI as a propaganda tool used by the shah to support his modernization efforts,[18] Iranian women had to fight for every improvement in their lives. A political leadership committed to modernization helped in that whatever measure was deemed necessary for socioeconomic development, such as full literacy, better health and nutrition practices, and training of skilled workers to make possible rapid industrialization, could be easily tied to the necessity of achieving full participation for women. The presence of a network of active women throughout the country, however, was the most important prerequisite for serious consideration of the arguments of the women activists by the government. WOI's successful project implementation provided it with credibility. The rest involved a blow-by-blow battle in an ongoing struggle that succeeded when national development goals and goals of women activists could be effectively shown to correspond and that often failed when women's goals reflected gender-related concepts and behavior dealing with interpersonal and family ties. Thus, a quota system to encourage women to participate in technical and engineering fields was achieved almost without a struggle, while the effort to eliminate the husband's permission for women to acquire a passport cost the activists one of their two seats in the senate by bringing about the resignation of senator Mehrangiz Manouchehrian and a barrage of conservative propaganda accusing WOI of espousing loose moral standards and policies that would weaken family ties.[19]

The shah was not a supporter of feminism. His role as the king of kings represented the essence and personification of patriarchy. He represented the archetypal father figure for the family and nation. But he, as many other government leaders, was conscious of and fully accepted women's argument that development was impossible without the full integration of women in the developmental process and a complete change in their status: "Women constitute half of the population of the world. They make up a great work force whose effective participation in activities is an essential requirement for all development and progress ... Let us not forget that problems such as human rights, population, family planning, campaign against illiteracy and poverty, on which the fate of the human race depends, cannot be resolved without the complete and effective participation of women.20

The queen, through a process of delicate consciousness-raising, became a feminist in the early 1970s. Her support was sought on issues as diverse as the amendment of the penal code and revision of elementary-school textbooks to eliminate sexist images. She was often under pressure to formulate her role the archetypal “mother” figure for the nation and to serve as an example of a responsible professional woman. On a trip to the edge of the Kavir (desert), she was brought a chador to wear to enter a saint’s burial place. A companion gently reminded her that as a role model she ought not to allow herself to be photographed wearing a chador. The mullas present and the local authorities stood with raised eyebrows. She finally donned the chador but folded it in half to look like a scarf—a sincere attempt at compromise that pleased neither group.[21] Princess Ashraf was a valuable ally whose blunt and straight-forward statement of issues in the occasional high-level meetings with governmental officials was an effective lobbying mechanism that set the tone and pace for actual negotiations later followed by women activists.[22]

Still, suspicion and distrust of any program of organized activity involving women was a great hurdle to overcome. Many men resented any attempt to draw women out of the house and into society. Much work had to be done to convince the people that the goal was indeed to strengthen the family. Changing the name of the centers from Houses of Women to Family Welfare Centers was an aspect of this campaign. In many locations, drawing influential women into the activities of the centers helped in gaining trust and prestige. In Qom, for instance, Ayatollah Shariatmadari’s daughters’ participation was key to the center’s viability. By consciously seeking the participation of female members of the families of the leading clergy in the center’s activities wherever necessary, and by including religious instruction and the reading of the Qur’an in special classes in some areas, the WOI minimized confrontation with the clergy, whose overt opposition would have drastically curtailed the expansion of the network.

Another ongoing task was mobilizing government financial support for projects while controlling government interference. The Plan and Budget Organization had certain preconceived ideas about the size and specification of buildings and personnel qualifications that often did not meet needs and possibilities in distant towns and villages. Clashes occurred between WOI secretaries who were familiar with the needs and priorities of underprivileged communities and the Plan Organization’s rather rigid and sometimes unrealistic standards. For example, WOI insisted on keeping the childcare facility in tune with the atmosphere and lifestyle of the children. WOI suggested a large, multi-functional space where children played, ate, and took naps by stacking cushions in a corner and spreading them on the floor for naps. Most underprivileged children were unfamiliar with

beds, mattresses, and chairs. But standards upheld by the government sometimes became not only costly but also alienating to the users. Another problem with which WOI had to cope was the speedy urbanization of young women who came to Tehran to be trained for work in provincial centers. They often sought to further their education and not infrequently preferred to seek employment in Tehran.[23]

Rapid economic growth and the government's modernization philosophy supplied strong arguments for women leaders to seek government support and assistance for programs related to women's participation in the development process. Other programs were presented to government agencies as specific projects addressing particular national, regional, or provincial problems. WOI's successful project implementation and network expansion gradually elicited cooperation from governmental agencies. The Ministry of Labor, for example, agreed to supply equipment and teachers wherever necessary when it became clear that women could take on jobs that would otherwise go to foreign workers, thereby eliminating problems of linguistic and cultural adjustment created by imported labor. The Ministry of Health agreed to provide nurses, midwives, and medical supplies for birth control when it was shown that women would take advantage of a clinic in a women's center much more readily than one in a governmental institution. Thus, WOI's project by project mobilization of government resources resulted in considerable increase in its capabilities with a minimum negative effect on the autonomy of its volunteer-powered, decentralized organization.

Iranian Women and the Religious Establishment

As WOI became stronger and more influential, opposition to its efforts became stronger and more overt. Leftist opponents of the regime disparaged the movement because, in their strategic thinking, acknowledging its impact would have been tantamount to recognizing the regime's success in an important area of social policy.[24] Religious fundamentalists opposed the WOI because its activities conflicted with their version of Islam and, perhaps even more importantly, because, largely due to WOI efforts, much of their power and authority was lost when a whole set of juridical issues in family interaction was removed from clerical jurisdiction and became a matter for the family courts to decide.

As a matter of routine policy throughout the 1970s WOI did its best to avoid confrontation with religious authorities. It acknowledged Islam's progressive, egalitarian concepts and its underlying motive of justice for all. Quotations from the Qur'an were used in support of women's rights—for example, the lines from Sura Nisa' "Whoso doeth good works, whether male or female, and he (or she) is a believer, such will enter paradise and they will not be wronged the dint of a date stone." Existing role models among the prophet's kin were adopted as heroines of the movement, among them Zainab, whose heroic speech to her family's enemies was an eloquent testimony to the courage of a woman. The prophet's wife, Khadija, who was the first to follow the prophet, was also mentioned often and honored. Where there were direct references in the Qur'an to specific legal arrangements regarding women, care was taken to consult enlightened religious personages so that formulas would be found to skirt direct conflict in legal revisions. For example, the revision of the 1975 Family Protection Law was so worded that the matter of divorce, which is the unilateral and absolute right of the man in the male-defined Islam, was given by him to his wife as part of the marriage contract. Whenever possible, fatwa were sought from religious leaders on various changes in the laws.[25] In cases such as inheritance, where, aside from the impact of formal statements on the subject in the Qur'an, economic interests of the believers were very much at stake, the issue was left in the background until more immediate and readily attainable goals were achieved. This approach to Islam was based on respect for the opinion of the majority of Iranian women, including many leaders of the movement, who deeply wished to remain within the spiritual guidelines of Islam yet also allow themselves possibilities of growth, change, and progress. The movement's spokeswomen often pointed out that other religions' sacred texts also placed severe limitations on the role of women, a fact that can be understood within the context of the historical conditions in which religious ideas were initially formed. An analogy was often made to the institution of slavery for which all great religions of the world originally made legal provisions. These conflicts were seen to be resolvable without placing a woman in a position of having to make a choice between her religious beliefs and her belief in a progressive modern society.

Little support, however, could be expected from conservative religious authorities, who at best would refrain from outright attacks on WOI. The more progressive Islamic figures such as Ali Shariati, whose sermons became popular among certain intellectuals and young university students in Iran, also did not present an egalitarian or, unlike the more conservative clerics, a well thought-out concept of the role of Muslim women in modern society. Shariati praised Islam for its realism in upholding mut'a (temporary marriage) on the ground that "if it [Islam] didn't accept it, it would happen anyway, but out of reach and control. But now having accepted it as a natural and inescapable fact, it makes it a legal

and religious fact,...and frees the conscience of men and women from a feeling of sin..."[26] In his famous treatise on women, *Fatemeh Is Fatemeh*, except for generalities focused on Fatemeh's relationship to her father, little information comes through about Fatemeh herself, who is posited as the appropriate model for modern Muslim womanhood. Of all that could be chosen for emphasis in such a woman, Shariati chooses only one specific act, namely Fatemeh's washing the blood-stained sword of her husband, who, having returned from killing the enemies of Islam, orders her "in a proud and epic voice, 'Fatemeh, wash my sword.'"[27]

WOI always understood that to promote women's human rights in the existing Iranian society, it needed to account for the social disposition of power and influence. The clerical establishment wielded significant influence on various social strata and therefore needed to be counted in any policy calculation. WOI also understood that to achieve human rights for women, it needed to transcend the discourse of the "value of woman in Islam," reaching for some rendition of global feminism that accommodated Iranians' cultural and religious disposition.[28] Given the history of the development of feminist thought in Iran and abroad, WOI concluded that although one could be justifiably and comfortably a Muslim and a feminist striving to achieve full human rights, one could not achieve rights within the context of "Islamic feminism" without either subordinating them to Islamic prescriptions or rendering meaningless the Islamic adjective defining feminism.[29] In 1978, a mere fifteen years since women had left the company of minors, criminals, and the insane in Iranian law, and a little over a decade after the creation of the Women's Organization of Iran, women were working as judges, diplomats, cabinet officers, mayors, governors, policewomen, and health and education corps members. In the area of education, the focus of the literacy campaign had shifted to women. There were 12,403 Literacy Corps women teaching in villages. By 1978, 39% of all females aged six and above were literate. The percentage of girls in primary schools had increased from 34% in 1966 to 42.55% in 1977.[32] At the university level, women comprised 30% of the student population. They were encouraged to take part in technical and scientific fields through the provision of special scholarships. A quota system was established to give preferential treatment to eligible girls who volunteered to enter technical fields or fields traditionally closed to women. More women had been accepted after university entrance examination's for the field of medicine than men.[33] In the area of employment, special programs had been established to prepare women for higher paying jobs through training classes in various areas of semi-skilled and skilled work. All labor and employment laws had been reviewed to ensure equal pay and comparable benefits for comparable work. A package of proposals aimed at ensuring increased and continuous participation of women in the work force was approved by the cabinet. One part of the package made possible part-time work for working mothers up to

the third year of a child's life, the three part-time years to be considered equivalent to full-time work in terms of seniority and retirement benefits. Providing childcare facilities in the vicinity of factories and offices became obligatory by law. A joint effort of WOI and various ministries made possible the establishment of childcare facilities for approximately one third of all the children eligible in a period of less than two years after the passage of the regulation. The centers were subsidized by the government and supervised by a committee of mothers working in each office. Maternity leave was extended to allow a mother up to seven months leave with full pay. All regulations regarding housing, loans, pension, and other job benefits were adjusted to eliminate discrimination.

Women and the Revolution

Women's massive participation in the 1978-79 revolution was in part a result of the mobilization efforts of various women's organizations in the preceding decades, especially WOI's activities in the late sixties and seventies. The recurrent theme in all group sessions, conferences, and discussions was the need for women to assert themselves, to participate, to state their demands, and to make their presence felt. Women, having gained consciousness of their own collective political power, marched not in defense of retreat or regression but in support of a freer, more egalitarian government. The fundamentalist revolutionaries misrepresented the aims of the revolution by avowing their support for "freedom" and "equality" of women and denouncing the treatment of women as sex objects, while carefully avoiding concrete statements on the substance of their agenda for women. Whenever women activists asked for clarification of positions on specific issues of women's rights and status, they were accused of introducing secondary issues and admonished to maintain the unity of rank and purpose against the regime.[30] The mobilization efforts launched by women activists in the preceding decades combined with the revolution's misleading assertions about the status of women was instrumental in drawing women to the demonstrations. A sadly humorous but telling comment in clarification of this point was made by the secretary of the Kerman branch at a pre-revolutionary meeting of WOI's provincial secretaries. When queried about who the veiled women were who had led the demonstration in her city the week before, she responded, "they were our own members. We kept saying 'mobilize the women,' now they're mobilized, and they shout 'down with the regime.'" [31] It was their newly gained

organizational experience added to their political awareness that enabled women to march in hundreds of thousands in the frontlines of the demonstrations.

Conclusion

In the area of women's legal rights within the family, the Family Protection Law, as revised in 1975, gave women the right to ask for divorce on the same grounds and conditions as men, left decisions regarding child custody and alimony up to a special family court, recognized the mother as the legal guardian of her child in case of the father's death, practically eliminated polygyny by stipulating exceptional conditions and, limited legal marriages to a second wife only with the permission of the first, and increased the minimum age of marriage to eighteen for women and twenty-one for men. Abortion was made legal with the consent of the husband. Unmarried women could have abortions on demand up to the eighth week of pregnancy.[34]

In the area of political participation, all local panels reviewing the qualifications of candidates for political office were required to include a member of the WOI. The secretary of WOI in each provincial capital was appointed special advisor for social affairs to the governor of the province.

The Iranian women's experience in the twentieth century, particularly their experience in the two decades prior to the revolution, suggest the following:

First, Iranian women achieved rights primarily through their own hard and persistent efforts. It took them almost a century to move from near total public invisibility to a position of visible political, social, and economic presence.

Second, to achieve widespread effect, women's movements must find ways and means of connecting with the grassroots. In the Iranian case, the family welfare centers played a

pivotal role as a bridge connecting national and provincial women leaders and grassroots women in cities and villages. In 1976, the last year before political tensions altered normal life patterns throughout the country, more than one million women used one or more of the centers' activities. Through challenges and problems involved in the work, the centers provided a framework for general consciousness-raising for all concerned—men and women of each neighborhood as well as workers and volunteers of the branches and committees of the organization. The centers were seen as a means and not as the goal of the organization. They made it possible to organize women throughout the country by providing much needed services. These services, selected through a participatory decision making process, allowed the WOI to receive funds from the government for specific projects according to WOI priorities while avoiding government control. Most important of all, by creating accepted, noncontroversial functions, the centers built legitimacy for the organization at the grassroots level and within communities where problems of illiteracy and strict control of women's movements outside the home made other methods of reaching out to the masses of women impractical.

Third, without the support of the modernizing state and its political organs, which were controlled by men, meaningful progress in women's rights would have been unattainable in Iran's conservative patriarchal society. The law as the expression of the will of the state was indispensable to securing women's rights. The state, however, was a reflection of the patriarchal order. An important function of the women's movement was to utilize the modernizing impulses of the political leadership in favor of women's projects despite the ruling elite's essentially unsympathetic attitude to women's rights.

Fourth, Iranian women achieved rights mainly outside the sphere of traditional Islam and against the will of conservative religious leaders. They strove to transcend the traditional Islamic discourse, which means they had to internalize and implement values that were exogenous to their traditional culture. They had to reconcile these values with Islamic prescriptions if they were to communicate successfully with the masses of women in villages and small towns and to enlist the support of at least a part of the political leadership.

Fifth, consciousness of rights creates new historical conditions that are not easily reversed. This is clearly demonstrated by the way Iranian women have reacted to fundamentalist Islamic injunctions after the revolution and, conversely, by the Islamic Republic's seesaw

politics vis-à-vis women's rights at home and in the work place. The first Iranians who demonstrated in the Islamic Republic in defense of their rights were women. After the revolution, women worked actively to support their families in the fields and factories. They achieved success in the arts, literature, and politics. They were forced into observing the hijab in offices and public places; in turn, they forced the government to backtrack in many areas. They made it impossible for the Islamic Republic to sustain changes in policy and law demanded by its ideology and constitution.[35] Most importantly, they placed the role of women in society at the center of the ongoing debate on the nature of Islamic governance.

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[1] See "Women in Pre-Revolutionary Iran: A Historical Overview," in Guity Nashat, ed., *Women and Revolution in Iran* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1983), 5-35-, Pari Shaykh-ul-Islamzadeh, *Zanan-i ruznameh-negar va andishmand-i iran* (Tehran: Mazgraphic, 1972), pp. 85-86.

[2] Malikzadeh, for example, describes the march of hundreds of women on the majlis, clad in veils and carrying revolvers and threatening to kill their own husbands and brothers if they gave in to the enemies of the constitution. See also Badrol-Moluk Bamdad, *From Darkness into Light: Women's Emancipation in Iran*, edited and translated by F.R.C. Bagley (New York: Exposition Press, 1977), p. 31. See also Mangol Bayat-Philipp, "Women and Revolution in Iran, 1905-1911," in Lois Beck and Nikki Keddie, eds., *Women in the Muslim World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), 295-308.

[3] Janet Afari, *The Iranian Constitutional Revolution, 1906-1911: Grassroots Democracy, Social Democracy, Social Democracy, and the Origins of Feminism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).

[4] Sheykh-ul-Islamzadeh, p. 109. See also the contribution by M. Ettehadieh in this volume.

[5] Ruth Francis Woodsmall, *Women and the New East* (Washington, D.C.: Middle East Institute, 1960), p. 74.

[6] See the oral histories of Farangis Yeganegi and Mehrangiz Dowlatshahi, *The Oral History of Iran Archives*, Foundation for Iranian Studies.

[7] See Elaheh Hasanli, Masudeh Khalifi, and Fereshteh Qaem-maqami, *Tarikhcheh va Fa'aliathayi Sazeman-i Zanan-i Iran* (History and Activities of the Women's Organization of Iran) (Tehran: Daneshkadeh ulum va irtebatat-i ijtimai', n.d.).

[8] During the history of WOI Dr. Mehri Rasekh, a prominent member of the Bahai community, and Ms. Shamsi Hekmat, a Jewish educator, were members of the central council of WOI. Ms. Farangis Shahrokh (Yeganegi), a prominent Zoroastrian feminist, was appointed first secretary of the high council and later deputy secretary general of the WOI. Other appointed members were university professors Parvin Buzari, Fakhri Amin, Vida Behnam, and, another member of the Baha'i faith, Nikchehreh Mohseni.

[9] Cyrus Elahi, *A Comparative Study of the Socioeconomic Situation of Working Women in Tehran, Qazwin- and Kashan* (Tehran: WOI, 1977), pp. 9-15.

[10] Sekandar Amanalahi, *Status of Women in Tribal Society* (Tehran: WOI, 1977).

[11] Nikchehreh Mohseni, *Images of Women in Elementary School Textbooks* (Tehran: WOI, 1976).

[12] *Ibid.*, p. 49.

[13] Ibid., p. 5 1.

[14] Moira Moser-Khalili, *Urban Design and Women's Lives* (Tehran: WOI, 1976).

[15] See Mahnaz Afkhami , ed., *Women and the Law in Iran 1967-1978* (Bethesda, Maryland: Women's Center of the Foundation for Iranian Studies, 1994). In Persian.

[16] Parviz Homayounpour, *The Experimental Functional Literacy Program of the Women's Organization of Iran* (Tehran: WOI, 1975).

[17] Mahnaz Afkhami , *Iran's National Plan of Action: Ideology, Structure, Implementation* (Tehran: Manuscript prepared for publication for the Center for Research, WOI, 1978).

[18] See Afsaneh Najmabadi, "Hazards of Modernity and Morality: Women, State and Ideology in Contemporary Iran," in Denise Kandiyoti, ed., *Women, Islam, and State* (London: Macmillan Press, 1991); Parvin Paydar, *Women and the Political Process in Twentieth-Century Iran* (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 1995).

[19] Mahnaz Afkhami , *Oral History*, op. cit.

[20] Speech by Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, *Proceedings of All-Iran Women's Congress*

(Tehran: WOI, n. d.), p. 11.

[21] The author accompanied the queen on this trip.

[22] Princess Ashraf's interests as head of the Iranian delegation to the United Nations' General Assembly and her brother's emissary to foreign heads of state were mainly in

foreign affairs. Occasionally she agreed to help WOI projects when her presence at meetings was necessary to ensure better attendance by high-level personalities.

[23] For further detail see the oral histories of Mahnaz Afkhami , Maryam Chamlou, Fereshteh Shahrokhi, and Ezzat Aghevli in the Oral History of Iran Archives, Foundation for Iranian Studies.

[24] For a critique of the “left” on women and the 1978 revolution, see Hamed Shahidian, “the Iranian Left and the ‘Woman Question’ in the Revolution of 1978-79,” in *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol.26, no. 2 (1994); Haideh Moghissi, “Feminism-I populisti va ‘feminism- I islami’: naqdi bar girayeshha-yi muhafizikar dar mian i feministha-yi danishgahi,” *Kankash*, no. 13 (1997).

[25] The Ayatollah Kho’i’s advice was sought in particular on the Family Protection Law. The Ayatollah Shariatmadari was regularly consulted on various legal matters pertaining to women and the family.

[26] Ali Shariati, *Fatemeh Is Fatemeh* (Tehran: n.p., n.d.), p.64.

[27] *Ibid.*, p. 202.

[28] See Mahnaz Afkhami , “Towards Global Feminism: A Muslim Perspective,” in Diane Bell and Renate Klein, eds., *Radically Speaking: Feminism Reclaimed* (North Melbourne: Spinifex Press, 1996), pp. 525-527.

[29] For a critique of Islamic feminism, see Hamed Shahidian, “‘Feminism- i islami’ va junbish-i zanan-i iran,” in *Iran Nameh*, vol. 16, no. 4 (Fall 1998), pp. 611-639.

[30] See the Oral History Memoirs of Maryam Chamlou in the Oral History Archives of the Foundation for Iranian Studies, Washington, D.C., p. 26.

[31] The Oral History Memoir of Mahnaz Afkhami in the Oral History Archives of the Foundation for Iranian Studies, Washington, D.C.

[32] Economic Report of the Central Bank of Iran (Tehran: Government Printing Office, 1978).

[33] Report of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education (Tehran: Government Printing Office, 1978).

[34] For the text of these laws, see *Women and the Law in Iran* op, cit., pp. 351-374.

[35] See Mahnaz Afkhami and Erika Friedl, eds., *In the Eye of the Storm: Women in Post-Revolutionary Iran* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1994).