

**#1326 America as Media-Persia, II – Toward the Iran Hostage Crisis: 1925-1979, The Time of the Pahlavi Dynasty, which changed the name of the country from Persia to Iran**

**Key Understanding:** *Westernizing Iran in the image of Cyrus the Great's Media-Persia.* The rise of the Pahlavi Dynasty created an Iran in which the state was attempting to Westernize while simultaneously attempting to mold its image after the great Persian dynasty of Cyrus the Great, which necessitated the attempt to undermine the influence of the religion of Islam in Iran.

Here is an excerpt from the book *The Iranians: Persia, Islam and the Soul of a Nation*, by Sandra Mackey, © 1996, about the dramatic changes that occurred in Iran after Reza Shah came to power:

**In 1935, Reza Shah changed the name of the country from Persia to Iran.** According to the Pahlavi king, Greek and other classical writers assigned to his country the name of Persia and the countries that subjugated the Iranians perpetuated it. **In the illustrious days of Cyrus and Darius, the homeland was called Iran.** And so it would be again in Reza Shah's new era of Iranian glory. Yet no matter how aggressively the Shah redefined history and language, it was not enough to break Shiism's hold on the Iranians. So Reza Shah then conducted war against the power of the clergy. He fought his major battles over law, education, land, religious ceremonies, and women.



**In education, all Islamic schools closed their doors.** All Iranians – male and female – went into free, compulsory education. Within it, students acquired knowledge of the glories of the vanished Persian Empire and learned to be loyal, patriotic citizens of the equally glorious Pahlavi state. The crown of education reform was the University of Tehran. The Shah decreed its mission: turn out the Western-educated Iranians needed to run the new Iranian state. Although the voice of the clergy branded those who studied a foreign language infidels, males and females entered the university seeking a share of the new order in Iran. The Shah also went after the clerical wealth in Iran. With one stroke of the pen, the state appropriated real estate from the clergy and revenues from sanctuaries now helped to finance secular education, build a modern hospital, improve the water supply of the city [Tehran], and underwrite industrial enterprises. As a consequence, the clergy, connected with shrines, lost not only their

independence, but a potent means of influencing the masses. The guardians of the holy sites became government employees.

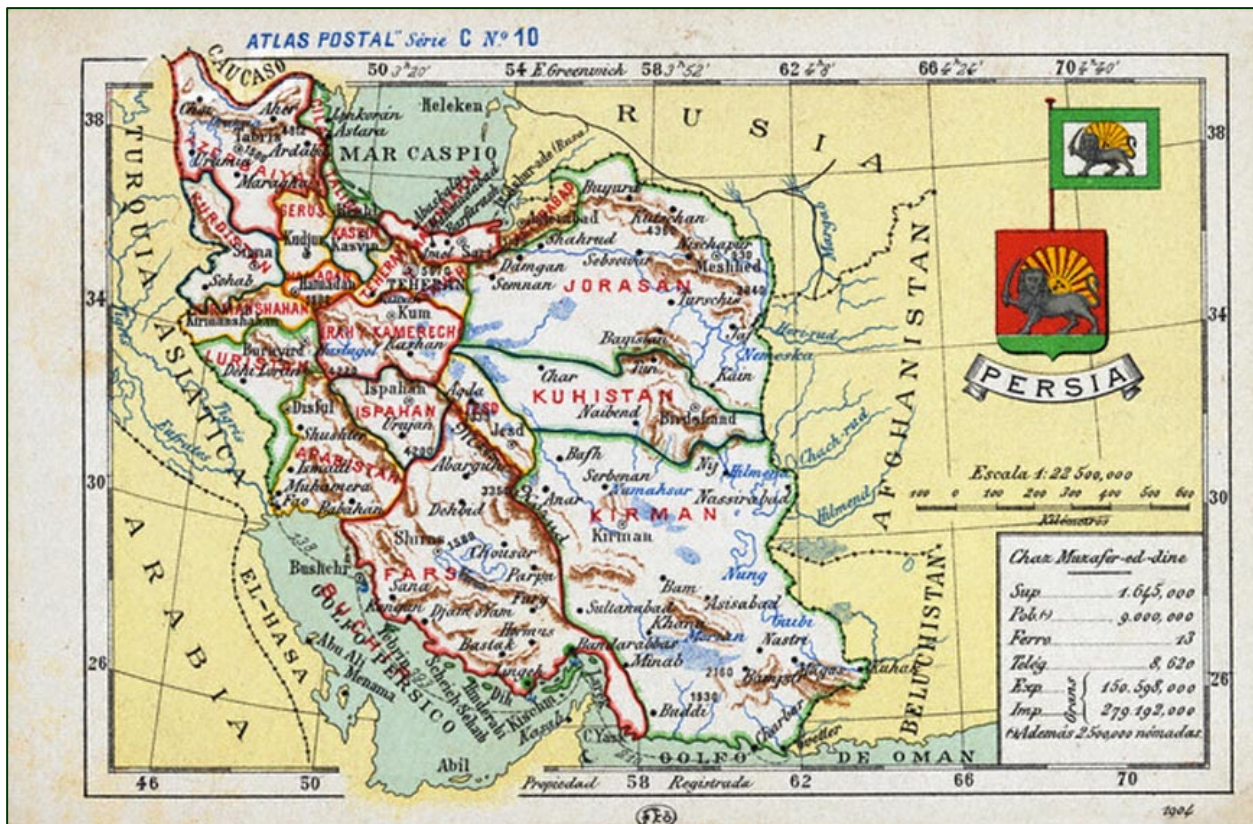
But of all of Reza Shah’s moves against the institutions and practices of Shiism, none elicited the same level of public response as did the changes in the status of women. He put women on the frontline of his social revolution against Islam. He literally tore away the veil that women wore, feeling it represented not just the subordination of females but the subordination of Iran. The unveiling of women enraged the religious establishment.

*Isaiah 44:28 (KJV) [Thus saith the Lord] **THAT SAITH OF CYRUS, HE IS MY SHEPHERD, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid.***

Here is #1326–Doc 1, a map of the alignment of countries on the eve of World War I, illustrating that the Iran of today (situated directly to the east of the Ottoman Empire) was called Persia at the time. Many maps of the World War I time period label modern Iran as Persia.

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A map of Persia (Iran) predating its name change from Persia to Iran in 1935

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