



A History of Women's Seclusion in the Middle East: The Veil in the Looking Glass (Innovations in Feminist Studies)

J Dianne Garner, Linn Prentis

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Learn how the seclusion of women can be used as a feminist defense against exploitation—and as an empowering force

Internationally acclaimed author Ann Chamberlin's book, *A History of Women's Seclusion in the Middle East: The Veil in the Looking Glass* is a critical interdisciplinary examination of the practice of seclusion of women throughout the Middle East from its beginnings. This challenging exploration discusses the reasons that seclusion may not be as oppressive as is presently generally accepted, and, in fact, may be an empowering force for women in both the West and East. Readers are taken on a controversial, belief-bending journey deep into the surprising origins and diverse aspects of female seclusion to find solid evidence of its surprising use as a defense against monolithic cultural exploitation.

The author uses her extensive knowledge of Middle Eastern culture, language, and even archeology to provide a convincing assertion challenging the Western view that seclusion was and is a result of women's oppression. *A History of Women's Seclusion in the Middle East* goes beyond standard feminist rhetoric to put forth shocking notions on the real reasons behind women's seclusion and how it has been used to counteract cultural exploitation. The book reviews written evidence, domestic and sacred architecture, evolution, biology, the clan, the environment for seclusion, trade, capital and land, slavery, honor, and various other aspects in a powerful feminist argument that seclusion is actually a valuable empowering force of protection from the influence of today's society. The text includes thirty black and white figures with useful descriptions to illustrate and enhance reader understanding of concepts.

A History of Women's Seclusion in the Middle East discusses at length:

- prehistoric evidence of seclusion
- the sense of honor in the Middle East
- a balanced look at the Islamic religion
- the true nature of the harem
- the reasons for the oppression by the Taliban
- the positive aspects of 'veiling'
- seclusion as a defense against capitalist exploitation
- *and other challenging perspectives!*

A History of Women's Seclusion in the Middle East is thought-provoking, insightful reading for all interested in women's history, feminism, and the history and culture of the Middle East.

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