

## **A status symbol**

[Dr Amanda Foreman]

In Assyrian culture, it was one article of clothing that symbolised the growing gulf between male and female status.

And it's astonishing how little known this is given the legacy it has left behind.

To explore it, I've come to meet a group of Middle Eastern women from the countries that were once ancient Assyria.

[Mayada Alkhalil, Syria]

*Married women, widows and Assyrian women must not go out on the street with their heads uncovered. Daughters of the upper classes must be veiled either with a veil, an abaya body cloak or a long robe.*

[Payman Abdhalla, Kurdistan]

*A concubine who goes out on the street with her mistress must veil herself. A prostitute must not wear a veil; her head must be uncovered.*

[Dr Amanda Foreman]

The laws divided women into 5 categories: wives and daughters of the upper class, concubines, temple prostitutes, harlots and slave girls... dividing in their eyes the 'respectable' from the 'un-respectable'. The punishments for transgression are pitiless.

[Mayada Alkhalil]

*Any man who sees a veiled prostitute he should arrest her. She is to receive 50 lashes with a bamboo stick.*

[Iqbal Al Briefkani]

*Any man who sees a veiled slave-girl is to arrest her and bring her to be tried. Her ears will be cut off, and the man who arrested her may take her clothes.*