HIJAB IN THE EYES OF LITTLE MUSLIM WOMEN

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ABSTRACT

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Hijab has born many different meanings associated with social, political and cultural changes. During the Iranian revolution, Hijab was used as an important political tool to represent the new character of Iran after the Pahlavi dictatorship. Hijab is often exclusively connected to Islam even though the practice of veiling is as ancient as the Roman Empire where the free women had to veil themselves when walking out in public places. Hijab is frequently discussed outside the borders of Islam, and it is presented from either a Western or an extreme feminist perspective. This results in a misunderstanding of Hijab, obscuring religious, cultural, political and regional differences. The topic of Hijab will be discussed within an Islamic context, through interviews the author conducted with girls between the ages of 8-12, from two different cultures. One group represents the diaspora of the United States, represented by girls from Dearborn, Michigan. The Middle East Muslim culture is represented by girls from Bahrain. The goal of this paper is to provide a counterpoint to the accusations made against Hijab. It is an attempt to initiate a new approach in discussing Hijab as it is practiced in current and previous Islamic cultures, from the perspective of girls who willingly choose to practice. It is also constructs a new methodology for percieving the many alternative meanings for Hijab, rather then reducing it simply to an Islamic garment.
To my husband, my father, my mother and my darling son, Ali.
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This project began as an idea that would not have seen light without some important people. I would like to thank my family, which supported me all the time. I want to send many special thanks to my advisors Dr. Madeline Duntley and Dr. Donald McQuarie, who were so supportive and understanding during these two years at Bowling Green State University. I would also like to express my gratitude to Fulbright, especially to Ms Josephine Griffin, for all their help, care, love and support. Finally, I want to thank all the people who contributed to this project, as well as their families.
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INTRODUCTION

Hijab,¹ or veiling, is an orientalist symbol that is enormously embedded with ambivalence. It is frequently discussed outside the cultural borders of Islam, and is usually presented from either a Western, or a feminist perspective. This has resulted in a misunderstanding of Hijab that increased its vague mysterious meaning. Although it is a women-centered practice, it is usually discerned as a practiced decreed by men, which adds more layers that veil the meaning of Hijab, leading to misunderstanding and false analysis. It is important to mention the indispensable relationship between Hijab, womanhood, culture and post-Iranian revolution women’s rights because these three terms are all a major concern that influence any Muslim woman who wears the Hijab in today’s world.² This thesis is an attempt to study women’s voluntary practice of wearing the Hijab from the Shiite perspective. It aims at studying Shiite “Little Women,” girls aged 9-12, who wear Hijab as a rite of passage of Islamic womanhood. This study looks at little women who choose to wear Hijab in Bahrain and in Dearborn, Michigan.

This paper is based on the Shiite culture of “little women;” I call them little women because in Islam, a girl is regarded as an adult woman, who should wear Hijab, as soon as she

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¹A) Hijab is the Arabic equivalent of the Veil. It is important though to explain that Hijab is not a synonym of the veil. Hijab connotes decency, modesty and piety while the “veil” is ambivalent i.e. it can be a symbol of attraction and beauty as in the case of the western representation of the Harem, and it can be used as Hijab.  
B) Hijab is a noun in Arabic and not a proper noun as it is frequently used in English; hence it is more appropriate to define it with the definite article “the.”

² Hijab is often exclusively related to Islam although its existence is as ancient as the Roman Empire where free women had to veil themselves publicly. Only respected women were allowed to veil themselves. Salves and prostitutes were subject to severe punishment when caught veiled in public. For further reading, see Guindi, Fadwa El. Veil: Modesty, Privacy and Resistance. New York: Berg, 1999.
reaches puberty. The Islamic Shiite Sheikhs agreed that the age of nine is the turning point when the girls should wear Hijab, pray and practice all the other Islamic duties, and hence they enter the world of womanhood. This does not mean that they do not practice all the activities of children. The ancient women of early Islam began wearing Hijab around the age of nine according to the Shiite doctrines and Islamic History. Therefore, all Shiite girls are introduced to Hijab sometime around the age of nine. Some might wear it a couple of years before, but the practice becomes a serious Islamic law at the age of nine.

Interestingly, in the last ten years, young Shiite girls are wearing whole Hijab from Abaya, to the Sheila to even the socks. They practice this as early as the age of even six. In schools today, the picture of little women wearing the latest fashion of the complete Hijab like any adult is very frequent and common. Even the way they wrap their Sheilas is just like the ordinary adult women. You might occasionally find one with a child-designed Hijab; this dress is popularized by Fulla – the Muslim alternative of Barbie. You would also find some child’s Hijab embroidery portraying pictures of Mickey Mouse or other cartoon figures, but the general rule is that the Hijab would simply look like that of an adult woman.

When a woman wears Hijab in a Muslim community, she declares that she respects and treasures her body, and hence she wraps this precious gift of Allah, submitting to His rules and doctrines. By wearing Hijab, she is considered an adult, and hence she receives respect of any grown-up woman at home and in the social world. Moreover, Hijab includes avoiding men’s direct face or eye contact unless necessary i.e. at work for example, and when speaking the woman’s voice should not be too loud unless necessary; and there is no bodily contact with men,

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4 Sheikh is the clergy man who can be a peer of the priest in Christianity.  
5 See the Glossary for more information about the terminologies of Hijab and Islam.  
6 See the Glossary.  
7 Allah is God in Islam.
even when shaking hands. In the Quran, the female is supposed to wear Hijab in certain circles, and Allah has drawn the borders of Hijab in the following Aya: Allah says, 8

And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty; that they should not display their beauty and ornaments except what must ordinarily appear ther[e]of; that they should draw their veils over their bosoms and not display their beauty except to their husbands, their fathers, their husbands' fathers, their sons, their husbands' sons, their brothers, or their brothers' sons or their sisters' sons, or their women or the servants whom their right hands possess, or male servants free of physical needs, or small children who have no sense of the shame of sex, and that they should not strike their feet in order to draw attention to their hidden ornaments. And O you Believers turn you all together towards Allah, that you may attain Bliss. 9

Yet, Scholarly discussions about the Hijab are frequently negative. It has not been analyzed by retrieving the voices and opinions of women who wear it and choose to do so willingly as early as the age of nine. Seldom do we find the voice of the youngest women who wear the full Hijab, and hence this voice is the one that is often silenced by the critics of Hijab and not the so-called patriarchic Islamic society. Hijab is commonly associated with negative implications, especially when represented in the Western media. In the US, First Lady Laura Bush declared just a couple of months after the US tragedy of September 11th, “We are now engaged in a worldwide effort to focus on the brutality against women and children by the Taliban” (Haddad et. al 2006). Similarly, Iranian women during the hostage crisis of 1980 were seen as threatening the security of the US with Hijab while in fact Hijab, for them, was a symbol

that aspires to blur the boundaries of class. Nevertheless, neither Hijab nor the revolution was presented positively in the US media. Thus, Hijab is usually depicted from two perspectives; either as a misogynistic oppressive tool through which patriarchy survives; or as a symbol of backwardness and terrorism. All the other meanings of Hijab are usually cloaked or suppressed, and what remains is a misleading image about the “veil” and not the authentic garment and cultural practice known as the Hijab.

When young Muslim girls would insist on wearing the traditional Hijab, it not only challenges the Western notions of Hijab being imposed tool of Islamic patriarchy, but it also challenges the adult women who do not wear the traditional *Abaya* and consider it outdated or unpractical. These young girls choose to wear Hijab willingly. Sometimes they want to wear it even when their parents feel it is not really appropriate to wear. For example, many mothers do not prefer their little girls wear the full Hijab because the long Abaya might sometimes catch on a nail in their school buses, or they might make them fall if they trip on it unconsciously.

The phenomenon of little girls wearing Hijab does deserve attention. These little girls created their own piety, and many scholars do not understand how unique and strong it is. You will find these little girls playing on the swings, rolling on the slides, running in the playgrounds and even jumping when playing in the parks and entertainment places. They even draw picture of little girls wearing Hijab, playing, dancing, or performing any other activity. Under the Hijab, they wear what all the children in the world wear. For example, they would be wearing the glazy pink slippers, a casual sweater that fits the fashion with beautiful clips and ribbons that tier the hair, but all of this is wrapped and concealed under Hijab.

The paper will discuss the Hijab from the Shiite’s point of view for many reasons. First of all, it seems that most books written about Hijab are from a Sunni perspective, and there is
hardly a source that addresses Hijab from the Shiite’s vantage point of view. This is not to
demean the Sunni Sect or criticize its doctrines and culture; but it is rather showing the world a
culture that is Muslim but different from the more well-known Sunni world.

It is important to mention that in most countries where the Shiite’s doctrines and heritage
are predominant, women arguably enjoy more space of freedom than what would be normally
supposed. The Shiite differ from the Sunni because they - the Shiite – trace their lineage to the
Prophet’s advice and recommendation of Imam Ali – his son-in-law – while the Sunni claim
their religion authority from Abu Bakr, the first Islamic caliph, who was claimed to be more
qualified to be the great leader of the Muslim province. The difference in terms of Islamic
doctrines was that the Shiite believe in Imam Ali and his ascending twelve sons; the last of
whom is the messiah of the Shiite. These twelve sons were all martyred and killed by their
opponents from the Sunni party. All of the Imams are men, but each of them was supported by
strong female figures, without whom the messages of these Imams would not have survived.

As a matter of fact, in the Shiite culture, the myths, stories and history of the labeled as
“sacred” Islamic women is much more prominent than in the Sunni culture. Even when it comes
to the Sunni Hadith, the only one that is associated with his daughter – Fatima – is that which
says, “If Fatima, the daughter of Mohammed stole, her hand would be cut.” The only woman
who is praised in Sunni culture is Aisha, a wife of the Prophet. She is more present because she
is the daughter of Abu Bakr. Yet, since Aisha was not a scholar in Islam, she does not have the
same status as men in the Sunni culture. Therefore, the space of women diverged from
scholarship and independence in this sect. In the Shiite culture, on the other hand, there are many

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10 The Shia believe that their messiah, Imam Mahdi, will come with Jesus Christ to save the world from evil and
corruption.
11 See Glossary for further information.
12 www.Islam4u.com
great women who are endowed with divine characteristics, and they are presented as scholars, teachers, poets, preachers and decision-makers. The Prophet himself always praised women who appeared in the Quran; these are, Asia\(^{13}\) the wife of the Pharaoh of Moses, Mary\(^{14}\) the Virgin, Kalthem the sister of Moses who rescued him, Khadeeja the wife of the Prophet Mohammed, and Fatima the daughter of the Prophet.\(^{15}\) In the Sunni culture, these women are almost ignored and marginalized. The Shiite believe in many great women, who even have shrines; and many Shiite people would go to visit their shrines asking for their wishes to be fulfilled by the help of these great women. For example, in the story of Imam Hussein's Martyrdom, it was his sister Zainab (who is enshrined in Damascus, Syria now) who preserved Islam from corruption by the Sunni regime at that time. The Shiite culture does not forget the little ones either. Many exemplary females were just children when they were martyred. For example, Ruqaya,\(^{16}\) the daughter of Imam Hussein, provides an excellent model for the little girls to follow.

The Shiite have many rituals and spiritual practices that also honor women. They would celebrate annually all the feasts of birth and martyrdom of the Prophet and his whole family on different days of the year. One of the days is dedicated to celebrate the death of the Virgin Mary. In these feasts, the Shiite people go to mosques, or what is called a Matam. The Matam is a big hall or huge room where these rituals are held. The ceremony differs from one culture to another. In the Matams, you would listen to lectures about all the aspects and parts of life, from economics to politics to religion. The orator would support his speech with examples from the Prophet or his family and their stories and biographies. After that, the actual story of the feast’s Imam or the Prophet or any of the relatives, is recited. If the ceremony is about the birth of an

\(^{13}\) Asia pronounced as Aseeya.

\(^{14}\) Mary is called Mariam in Arabic.


Imam or the prophet or any woman from the family, it will be accompanied by clapping and many other songs. If it is about martyrdom, tears and sobs would accompany the ceremony from the audience. After that, food would be served to the attendants. These ceremonies celebrate both men and women in the tradition. Since the Matam is a religious place, it has its special rules. Women attend Matams with conventional conservative dress, and it is almost impossible to find any women or even girl without Hijab. These ritual occasions have a strong influence on the Shiite culture.

Thus, little girls grow up with the influences and teachings that they receive in the Matams. However, one would presume that globalization, the internet, the easy access to television and other media outlets create a strong crucial challenge for raising the little girls, according to Shiite people. After all, it would seem that this rising trend of dressing modestly in full Hijab is quite unique in a world where the religious teachings and the media outlets frequently clash. The question that imposes itself in this context is: what factors persuade or make these little girls so convinced to wear the whole Hijab?

It is a difficult question that is too complicated to receive a definite answer. The Shiite response to Hijab is quite diverse, and it ranges from those who are extremely pious and modest to the extremely open-minded and up-to-date with fashion trends. Some would say that the whole Hijab is imposed on the little girls, and this parallels what the Western Media – in America and Europe – is likely to propagate. Others would say that these little girls wear Hijab because they see their elder sisters or mothers doing it, and they want to act as grown-ups. Therefore, Hijab in this context is a sign of the passage from childhood to womanhood. A third party would believe that this is because the world of globalization motivates people – even children - to create an individual identity that enables a certain culture to face mass globalizing
tendencies. Many would, from another perspective, believe that this is the result of the influential rituals at the *Matam*.

This discussion aims at providing an alternative approach to Hijab from within the borders of Islam. Hijab has been severely criticized from a Western perspective and from a feminist perspective; and it has been reduced to a mere Islamic garment. The argument of this paper tries to trace the multiple meanings of Hijab depending on many factors, such as culture and region, and from a Shiite view of point. In the first chapter, there is an explanation of the importance of the exemplary role in Islam, and its relationship with Hijab. The second chapter will explain the names, types and parts of Hijab within the context of fashion. The position of Hijab and its legislations in Islam will be presented in the third chapter, with a brief presentation of Hijab in history. In the fourth chapter, the meanings of Hijab will be presented from the perspective of the interviewees of this project. The final chapter summarizes and presents my conclusion of Hijab as a feminine practice that has numerous varying meanings.

Finally, I will interview fifteen little girls from Bahrain and another fifteen young Muslim girls from Dearborn, Michigan, who wear Hijab to ask what meaning Hijab carries for them. This paper is an attempt to give a voice to the children who practice wearing Hijab with their own free will, providing the huge variety of the connotations and synonyms of Hijab in Islam and culture.
CHAPTER I: GREAT MODELS IN ISLAM

“My name is Zainab like Sayeda Zainab; therefore I have to be like her. I know it is impossible because I am a human being, but you can always follow their steps.”

Zainab, 8 years old, Bahrain

Zainab Ali comes from a very pious family where the father is a Sheikh and the mother is a very religious preacher and orator. Zainab is eight years old and she is in her third grade, but she wears Hijab and she prays every day. She goes to the Matam in Ashoura (the celebration of mourning Imam Hussein) and nothing would stop her from going. Zainab is very attached to what the Shiite call “great women” in Islamic History. “Sayeda Ruqaya was maltreated with no mercy or consideration of her young age,” says Zainab. She adds that she goes to “visit Syria annually to go to her Shrine because she was a little girl who died of her sorrow on her father, Imam Hussein.” Zainab is just one of the many Shiite little girls who grow up familiar with the characters of Sayeda Zainab, Sayeda Ruqaya and other women from the Shiite historical heritage.

The Matam

In the Shiite, Islamic culture, going to the Matam or the mosque/ Islamic center when living in western cultures, is a common practice performed by both men and women regardless of age, race, class and gender. Parents try to engrave this practice in their children’s hearts from the early stages of their life. The Matam helps establish and shape the usual manners, behavior

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17 Zainab, in discussion with the Author, August 2008.
18 All interviews were conducted in confidentiality, and the names of interviewees are replaced by nickname of their own choice by mutual agreement, following the rules of the HSRB – Human Subject Review Board – of Bowling Green State University. Unless the interviewee insists on revealing her first name, the name is concealed.
19 See Glossary for further information about this mourning feast.
20 Shia or Shiite: a major sect in Islam.
21 See Glossary for details and more information.
and daily practices which shapes the collective memory of the children. Amal, an Arab American from a Lebanese ancestry visits the Matam regularly. She is in her eleventh year of age, and her hobbies are writing and reading poetry about Islamic occasions. She wishes to be a senator one day to represent Muslim women. She reports that “this center is one of the places that I have to go and listen to Islamic lectures; we must learn from Islam very early.” Amal is one of the interviewers who contributed to this discussion of Hijab. She believes that “The Matam is very important but we don’t realize its importance.”

In the Matam, the ceremony follows fixed rules while celebrating the occasion. It begins with a lecture followed by the preacher/orator reciting hymns and songs about the celebration. The final stage is a communal ceremony where all the attendants in the hall take part, and this is usually followed by prayers asking Allah for blessings. Sometimes, food is served, and the food is considered “blessed;” and many people eat from it with the belief that it will cure them from disease or solve problems in their lives. Usually Matams are divided into two places where men and women are separated, introducing the borders of Islam between men and women.

In the speech preceding the ceremony, the orator would talk about stories of the Prophet’s family, grandsons, and the whole family – or what is referred to as the “sacred” descendents. He would also talk about the stories of the Holy Quran, especially stories of the previous prophets and their families. These stories are not limited to men, i.e. the heroes of the stories are both men and women and there is no priority given to any of the sides; it includes both genders and all generations; thus, there are great women like Fatima, and great men like Imam Hussein; great

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22 Amal, in discussion with the Author, August 2008.  
23 The Islamic Center in Dearborn, Michigan.  
24 God of Muslims.  
25 The served food varies from the simple snacks and soft drinks to a grand full meal, and sometimes there might be a buffet depending on the wealth of the Matam.  
26 The daughter of the Prophet in Islam.  
27 The famous martyred grandson of the Prophet.
little girls like Ruqaya\textsuperscript{28} and great little boys like Christ when he spoke from his cradle. It also degenerates the antitypes when presenting malignant women like the wife of Noah\textsuperscript{29} and malignant men like the consultant who suggested slaughtering John the Baptist,\textsuperscript{30} and so on and so forth. The orators link the speeches to current events and contemporary incidents. For example, they link between the honesty and justice of Imam Ali in contrast to a contemporary chief or governor who exploits others. The topics of the speeches might change but the stories and examples, which are used as an evidence and reference to support the speech, are repeated constantly. This repetition produces a generation who is fully aware of all the Islamic historical stories – from the Quran or the Hadith – and who is following the central characters of these stories as the “sacred” exemplary guides and models.

**The Exemplary Role in Shiite Culture**

It is important to mention examples and exemplary Islamic figures play a vital role in Shiite Islamic cultures (Ghaemi 2004). The Holy Quran is full of similes, metaphors and other means of comparison and contrast to convey model and exemplary figures to be followed. These models are the prophets and some of their descendants. In the Quran, Allah says \textsuperscript{31} which is an equivalent to “And that we appointed ‘Mohammed’, the Messenger of Allah as a good model for you” (The Holy Quran). This \textsuperscript{31} shows that Islam encourages and urges Muslims to follow the Prophet in his manners, social life, and other behavior. The models that Islam provides are exemplary figures to be followed and learned from and they serve as the medium, which transcends the Muslim to the degree of “Iman” that is, to be

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\textsuperscript{28} The daughter of Imam Hussein.
\textsuperscript{29} According to Islamic mythology, Noah had a wife who accused him of being insane due to his advanced age, and she told others he is mad. She stands as a symbol of the malignant wife who excels at hurting and destroying the marital life.
\textsuperscript{30} In Arabic, he is called Yahya, and he was slaughtered by Herod. Yahya refused the marriage of the king's daughter to her brother, and he refused to commit adultery in the Muslim tradition.
\textsuperscript{31} See the Glossary for the meaning of this term, and for further information.
a very religious Muslim. *Iman* is a further degree of piety and devotion to God, and hence the term “*Mu'min*” is a Muslim who carries more devotion and practices Islam as it ought to be practiced. In *Fatima: The Paramount Lay [person] in Islam*, Dr. Ali Ghaemi believes that Islam has granted special values for the example, believing that the basic movement towards the goal should be based on the sample. According to *Imam Ali*, Muslims must endeavor to be like the accurate samples or in their samples’ footsteps. Ghaemi says further,

In our school, we have some samples such as Mohammed and Ali (peace be upon him), Fatima (peace be upon her) and Zeineb (peace be upon her), Hasan (a.s), and Hossein (a.s) as well as other infallible Imams. Their children are considered as samples for our children, their daughters the samples for our daughters, and their sons and youth for our sons and youth. Even their disciples are deserved to be our leaders and teach us the lessons of life and honor.

The *Matams* contribute to demonstrating the sample role and they also increase its impact on Muslims culture. They create a kind of bridge that links the ordinary people with their deceased Imams, and other exemplary models. By this, a strong relationship is created between the individual and his Holy model in an early stage of life, and this relationship deepens and develops with time. Since there is no age or gender restrictions required for attending the *Matam* ceremonies, the Shiite individual is likely to be listening to the roles and significance of these religious figures as early as several months old.

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32 (Peace be upon him). Shiites add this phrase after each sacred person from the prophet and his twelve descendents.

33 A.S. is an acronym of *Aleyhi alsalam*, which means “peace be upon him” in English.
Women in Islamic History

Women occupy a large significant space in the Shiite sacred stories. In this chapter, I will try to narrate some stories of the great women who have strong influence on little girls and how they serve as exemplary models. It is important to mention that this does not mean the little girls are fully aware of all the incidents and the importance of each minute and detail of these women’s biographies. However, they fully understand that these women are their exemplary “models” to be followed in terms of dress, decency and ethics.

The young girls who contributed to this research are all between eight and twelve years of age. The girls are of two different cultures. The first group comes from a country where Islam is the major religion, and Hijab is the expected outfit. The other group is from a Muslim community in a larger Diaspora culture, in Dearborn, Michigan. Concerning the topic of this chapter, the girls demonstrated a remarkable relationship between them as individuals and between the great women of Islam. This relationship is a medium that transcends them to a deeper degree of being a Muslim. They want to be “Mu’min” and these figures are the guidance to achieve more perfection in Islamic practices. The girls of this chapter come from different classes and different Islamic cultures – some are very open-minded while some are very conservative and traditional.

Surprisingly, many little American girls stated that they want to be like Fatima, the daughter of the Prophet, because they want to continue her message and “carry the Flag of Islam.” (Ameena 2008) In an open country like the US with a relatively free Islamic diaspora, it is amazing to see these little girls speaking such articulate utterances that are so heavy with a

34 In Islam, these figures are considered divine since they do not err. All what they say and behave is from Allah, and hence it cannot be wrong or fault.
35 Except two reflecting on Hijab when they were children.
36 Amina, in discussion with the Author, August 2008.
missionary perspective of Islam. One of them insisted that she wears the Hijab to be with Sayeda Ruqaya and Fatimatuzahra\(^{37}\) in Heaven. Thus, in order to understand the influence of these great women, who serve as models or mediums transcending the little girls to become little philosophers and scholars, we need to have a brief vision of their lives and how they achieved their positions as Holy women in Islam.

**Fatima, the daughter of the Prophet**

Her full name is Fatimatuzahra, but she is usually referred to as Fatima. Her titles are Al-Zahra (the blooming flower), Ommu-Abeeha (the mother of her father), Zaherah (the bloom), the mistress of the women of the worlds (Ghaemi 2004), and at last, Alhwra (an angel in human form). There are many other titles but these are the most famous of all. She led a very short life, and died at the age of eighteen after being severely wounded. She was born when the prophet was 45 years old, (Almajlisi 1983)\(^{38}\) in the fifth year of Prophetic mission. Her birth is accompanied by a miracle, which foretells the important role of this great woman. Her Mother is Khadeeja Bintu Khuwaylid, who came from a Christian ancestry. Her birth is one of the miracles in Islam. Khadeeja was a wealthy lady but because of her conversion to Islam, all the women of Mecca refused to help her when she went through the birth and labor stages. She was alone in her room thinking about how she will finish the chores and stages of labor alone, when suddenly she saw four women in her room, descending from heaven; and they told her “don’t be terrified, God has sent us to help you.”\(^{39}\) The woman speaking were the Virgin Mary, accompanied by Kaltham – the sister of Moses, Asia – the good wife of the Pharoah of Moses, and Sarah – the

\(^{37}\) The full name of Fatima, the daughter of the Prophet.


wife of Abraham (Almajlisi 1983). They were sent by God to help Khadeeja deliver Fatima. Soon Fatima was born amidst this heavenly atmosphere.

Noor is ten years old, and she is from Bahrain. She comes from an educated family which is very moderate in Islamic practices. Noor did not wear Hijab until she was nine, and her hobbies are painting pictures of the little girls of Ashoura. She wants to become an engineer of interior design or fashion-designer. Noor recalls the story of Fatima’s birth and she knows the full story with all the details, “Fatima is so pure and so heavenly; she came from heaven and we should always remember this fact. I feel that I want to see her one day in my dreams whenever we celebrate her birthday.”

In the story, Fatima speaks with her mother, Khadeeja, while still a fetus in her womb (Mernissi and Lakeland 1993), and the Prophet always told Khadeeja that this is the promised daughter who “will carry my blood.” Fatima lived with her mother for a very short time, and her mother’s death marks the beginning of her eventual sufferings. She was married to Imam Ali when she turned twelve (Thurlkill 2008), as was the custom in the ancient Arab world. She led a busy life as a mother of four children, Zainab, Umukalthum, Imam Hussein, and Imam Hasan. Her life was very humble and full of sacred political speeches, prayers, and charities. Despite her short life, Fatima occupies a revered position in Islamic Shiite traditions. The Prophet says in the Hadith, “Fatima, God is angry, when you are angry” (Mernissi, Fatima and Lakeland, Jo. The Forgotten Queens of Islam. University of Minnesota: August 1993).

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40 Noor, in discussion with the Author, August 2008.
42 Some say she was nine; the age of puberty.
44 فاطمة إن لله يغضب - يغضبك. Moreover, he says that she is the Mistress of all women in the two worlds, this world and
the other world. Fatima is considered one of the perfect women in history according to Muslim Scholars; those are Fatima, Khadeeja – her mother, Asia, and the Virgin Mary (Ghaemi 2004).

Fatima is very much known for her chastity and modesty, and respect and love for her father. One of the many stories that illustrates her decency and chastity was when a blind man came in the prophet’s house, and as he entered the house, Fatima hurried to veil herself from the man. Her father asked her, “Why did you wear the veil while the man is blind?” She answered him that he is blind but I can see, and he is a man after all (Almajlisi 1983). Another story narrates that when she used to go and walk around the Ka’aba in Mecca, even her shadow was not seen. She used to be veiled from top to toe and even her figure as a woman could not be recognized. She used to go there surrounded by her father and husband, one in front of her and the other behind in order to conceal her shadow (Almajlisi 1983).

These and similar stories are repeated in the Matams continuously, highlighting the role of the Hijab and its meaning on the one hand, and enhancing its indispensability to Islam. For Fatima, the daughter of the Prophet, Hijab is not only a cover, as many people believe; it is a means that hide the beauty and sexual identity of the woman. This does not mean that she was excluded from society; this is a common misunderstanding as these women were public figures in their own right. When the Prophet died, and Abu Bakr claimed to be the successor of the Prophet, and Fatima’s inherited lands of Fadak were stolen by the Caliph, Fatima delivered a famous political Islamic speech in front of hundreds of Muslim men and women, reminding them of the Prophet’s will, and she severely criticized the excessive mal-treatment she received by the Caliph.46

45 This is the place where Muslims go for pilgrimage annually in the pilgrimage season. This holy place was built by Abraham and his son Ishmael in what today is called Saudi Arabia.
Noor from Bahrain believes that “We can be modern and modest at the same time. We should go to work and study but in Fatima’s Hijab, not with today’s Hijab of ‘cool style’; and we must follow Fatima in her knowledge.” Although Noor comes from a moderate Islamic family, she has built her own perspective about Hijab. The stories about Fatima have an obvious impact on Noor’s relationship and understanding of Hijab.

Fatima’s veil and modesty inspires little girls to wear Hijab in an early stage, and she serves as a guardian that leads them to the right path of Islam. When they listen to the stories of her life, her high status in Islam, her divine role in heaven, and her marital life, they cannot but follow her out of love, and sometimes sympathy. “I remember my father telling me when I was a little girl that Fatima is the model for your life,” as Zainab\(^\text{47}\) from Bahrain says. This chapter began with a quote from Zainab’s interview. Zainab is a very “active Shiite girl,” as she describe herself. She goes to the Matam on all celebrations at least twice in each ceremony. In Ashoura, she participates in some local plays that present a scene from Ashoura, and she goes to paint pictures about this event as well. Zainab is eight years old, but she began wearing Hijab at least two years before. She wants to become a professor of fine Arts. Zainab believes that “Fatima is the great woman that I follow; she is my guide to becoming a perfect Muslim.”

Fatima, the daughter of the Prophet, is also presented as the divine woman who was raised up in the school of the divine revelation to the Prophet and Quranic School. Although she is sometimes presented in a sentimental context, she exemplifies an outstanding model for educated women. In fact, all her sons and grandsons refer to her as the “knowledgeable teacher” who received her science and wisdom for Allah. When Prophet Mohammed died, she gave a very strong elevated speech among the Muslims – who were mostly Muslim men and warriors;

\(^{47}\) Zainab, in discussion with the Author, August 2008.
and her speech is taught as an instance of the highly strong influential speeches in Arabic linguistics as well as in Islamic heritage. In addition, Fatima narrates the Hadith of the Prophet, and her narrated anecdotes and sayings are on the same level of any other Prophets and Imams. Thus, she is the symbol of chastity, piety and divine knowledge.

It is important to mention that Fatima is always presented as a woman and not a child or teenager, a fact that has a strong impact on the attitude of Muslim girls. Thus, little Muslim girls who speak and follow Fatima usually show an adult character to a high degree. They claim many rights as “women” such as lowering their voice when out of home, and avoiding direct body touch with adult men following the steps of Fatima.

Khadeeja, the Great Wife of the Great Prophet

Khadeeja is the first woman to convert to Islam, believing in the message of Allah and his messenger Mohammed. She was married to the Prophet, and she met him when he was working for her as a tradesman. Prophet Mohammed was popular for his honesty and truthfulness – even before he was known as the Prophet – and she hired him to exchange her goods in the other areas of the Arab world. When he came back, she found that he has turned her still trade to prosperous active merchandise. Being a widow and a woman with no protection in the nomadic Arabia, she sent him a messenger offering him to be his wife. Khadeeja’s original religion was Christianity, and she was descended from a well-known family at that time. Her uncle, Waraqa bin Nawfal, was one of the priests who foretold the emergence of Islam and the Prophet.

49 Khadeeja, the Daughter of Khuwaylid, From the series “Prophet’s Biography series for children.” Muslim Students’ Association of the United States and Canada (1976).
In the orations and speeches at mosques and *Matams*, Khadeeja is always revered for her constant help to the Prophet by providing her enormous wealth, as well as her spiritual and social support. She is called the mother of the Muslim believers, and she is always presented as the ideal wife. She is considered as one of the four perfect women in Muslim history (See Pg. 16 in this chapter). Little girls know very little about Khadeeja directly, but they know her because she is the mother of Fatima. Yet, orators make sure to present Khadeeja as a decent woman who obeyed the doctrines of Islam.

In fact, Khadeeja’s life is often retold as a modern one although her story is very ancient, i.e. it is framed in a modern context. She was much older than the Prophet (Razwy 1989), and she was the one who asked him for marriage. Thus, her presence in Islam is different from the neo-traditional images of the fragile helpless woman. In fact in a *Hadith*, Prophet Mohammed says that “Islam would not have emerged strongly without two bases: the sword of Ali and the wealth of Khadeeja”\(^{50}\) (Razwy 1989). Sana,\(^{51}\) 11 years old from Bahrain, is very traditional in her thoughts. She wants to become a teacher to avoid mixing with men, and she wants to help her mother raise her sisters to be attached to Hijab and Islam just like her. She believes that “Khadeeja teaches us how a woman can be good to her husband and how she can be so important to history.” Sana is from a little town in Bahrain, and she has worn Hijab since she was five, like most of the other girls in this town.

For Muslims, it is very difficult to imagine the success of Islam without Khadeeja as Sana thinks, and “she is the mother of Fatima.” Nawal, nine years old from Dearborn, Michigan, is more modern in her thoughts than Sana. Nawal\(^{52}\) thinks that Islam gives women enough space to

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51 Sana, in discussion with the Author, August 2008.
52 Nawal, in discussion with the Author, August 2008.
express themselves. She thinks, “Many people think that Islam does not allow girls to talk to men, or even love; but they are wrong.” Nawal supports her opinion by presenting Khadeeja; and she believes that “Khadeeja is the most wonderful rich woman in history; she asked the prophet to marry her because she knew how great he is, and to tell us that girls can express love to men in Islam.” Both Nawal and Sana understood the role of Khadeeja in modern terms but each in her own perspective and convenient to her culture.

Thus, Khadeeja is presented to girls today as a symbol of the self-made independent woman who acted on her own decisions without consulting men. She is also a model of the good supportive wife for many Muslim women. She also stands as the strong woman who initiated her own marriage, breaking with the traditional norms of marriage in most Muslim communities (Razwy 1989).

**Zainab, the daughter of Fatima**

She was born in the fifth year after Hijrah,53 around 579 AD and she was raised up in the house of the Prophet and his descendants. Her name is the most popular among women, and not surprisingly among little girls. Jehan is nine years old from Dearborn, Michigan, and she studies in a public school. She54 says that she always “tell my classmates about us in Ashoura,” and she thinks by telling them the events and stories, they will love Islam. Jehan loves poetry, and she wants to write poetry in English and Arabic. She comes from a highly educated family, which is also very well educated in Islam. She recites many verses of the Quran, and she attends the ceremonies in the mosque regularly. Her favorite character and her “life-model” is Sayeda Zainab. She believes that, “without the strength of Zainab in Ashoura,55 Hijab would not have

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53 Hijrah in Arabic means migration. In Islamic terminology, after Hijrah means after the Prophet migrated to Medina from Mecca and it is the basis behind the lunar Arabic Muslim calendar.

54 Jehan, in discussion with the Author, August 2008.

55 See Glossary for further details and definition.
reached us; I think Islam would not have been alive at all.\(^{56}\) Jehan’s words mean that Zainab is one of the Shiite Islamic patrons who passed the correct Islam, part of which is Hijab, to the later generations with her stands and speeches.

Zainab is always referred to as the “mother of sorrows and misfortunes” in the Shiite culture. However, her strength and patience are always highlighted and emphasized since they enabled her to cross the obstacles and hardships in her life. Sayeda\(^{57}\) Zainab was born in the fifth year after Hijra,\(^{58}\) and she is the third child of Imam Ali and Fatima (peace be upon them), after Imam Hassan and Imam Hussein.\(^{59}\) After she reached the age of marriage, she was betrothed to her cousin, Abdullah Binajaffar\(^{60}\) (Rizvi 1985).

The most famous event of her life is her presence on the tenth day of Muharram,\(^{61}\) in Ashoura, with her brother Imam Hussein. Imam Hussein was martyred with his brave advocates in an unjust war, where all of them were killed by the orders of the Umayyad Caliph, Yazeed Bin Ma’awiya. After his martyrdom, Zainab had to take care of the little children and all the others who were taken captive (Rizvi 1985). She had to take care of the sick Imam Alsajjad, who was under the threat of persecution all the time.

In the evening of the tenth day of Muharram, after killing Imam Hussain and his entourage of 73 men (ranging from twelve to eighty years old), the ruthless soldiers of Yazeed burnt the tents and the women and children flew for their life, screaming with fear.\(^{62}\) The soldiers did not care about the children and hence many of them were run down by their horses, and some

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\(^{56}\) I just want to mention that Jehan is a nick-name since her parents did not want to reveal her name or picture.

\(^{57}\) Sayeda is a term used when addressing reverent women in Islam.

\(^{58}\) See footnote 1.


\(^{61}\) Muharram is the first Arabic lunar month.

of them died of thirst since they had not drunk water for three days (Jalal 2005). The soldiers of Yazeed prevented Imam Hussein and his people from drinking water, and after they – the men of Imam Hussein – were killed, the soldiers finally gave the women and children water after the tents were burnt and many children were lost (Rizvi 1985).

All the children were brought and a man began to offer them water in a cup, but they all refused because they had just lost a father or a brother or an uncle or a friend in the battle, and they just could not forget their relatives’ thirst. There was one little girl who took the water to the astonishment of all the mob, and she began to walk towards the battleground. When she went there, the soldier who was serving the water followed her, and finally he asked her, “Where do you want to go?” She answered him, “My father, Imam Hussein, is thirsty and I want to take him some water” (Jalal 2005). The soldier told her that Imam Hussein is dead, and the little girl threw the cup on the ground, breaking it into pieces and told the soldier, “How can I drink if my father died thirsty?”

This story is repeated annually within the narrative of Sayeda Zainab in Ashoura in the Muslim Matams.

Sayeda Zainab took care of the children in the long journey from Karbala in Iraq to Kufa and then Damascus, Syria, where Yazeed was. She many speeches exposing the corrupt nature of the Umayyad state and their history, highlighting the role of her brother Imam Hussein. After that, she lived in Syria, in one the suburbs of Damascus, where she was enshrined after her death. Thousands of Shiite people from all over the world visit her shrine.

Sayeda Zainab is often misunderstood as a traditional Muslim woman while in fact her performance in her time was far beyond the traditional context. For example, since all the men accompanying her died, she and the women with her were subject to captivity; but she protected

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the women from this fate (Rizvi 1985). Moreover, she delivered influential speeches in the
Umayyad capital of Damascus. Her insightful critical speeches caused riots and protests against
the Umayyad Caliph, Yazeed. Her speeches silenced many mobs. Naseema, 64 12 years old from
Bahrain, loves Sayeda Zainab, and she visits her annually in Damascus in her summer holiday.
Naseema loves Disney cartoons and her favorite character is Donald Duck. She wants to become
an orator to deliver speeches that cause change in Muslim society. She sees that “Zainab is the
strongest woman in history; the Sheikh says that she spoke when all men did not; and she was
very brave in her speeches against Yazeed.” According to Naseema, Zainab represents the good
“knight” that stood against evil when all men were scared to die. She is the woman who carried
the mission of “the correct teachings of Islam, in spite of her sufferings.”

In Syria, Sayeda Zainab established a school and began to teach women how to be
active politically and socially. Her school was a source of inspiration to many women who were
victims of wrong religious-patriarchal practices and the correct education. Her school stood as
advocate for basic school education for girls as well as Islamic resource (Rizvi 1985). The school
of Zainab was to teach the correct history and to defend Islam on the first place, but it also
provided an Islamic scholarly school for women.

Until today, women are not very welcomed in Islamic scholarship because the Islamic
clergy is dominated by men who tried to reduce the role of Sayeda Zainab to the traditional
chores of cooking, taking care of the children and showing passive obedience to the patron.
Thus, Sayeda Zainab is being rediscovered as a symbol of women's power in Islam, and she
exposes the fact that the world of politics is not excluded to men and that women can be scholars
and politicians within the norms and legacies of Hijab. This woman indeed refers to the

64 Naseema, in discussion with the Author, August 2008.
important fact that Muslim women can be as active and effective as men in their action as well as speech.

**Ruqaya, the Youngest Female Figure in Islam**

Her original name is Fatima Al-sughra, and Ruqaya is her famous name. This little girl died at the age of three on seeing the severed head of her father Imam Hussein. Her shrine is in Damascus and it is a destination for thousands of Shiites who visit her – usually on an annual basis. Her presence in the *Matams* in the orations of the Islamic preachers is presented in a discrete way that suits young children. Despite her young age, she is always depicted wearing her full Hijab and respecting the boundaries of Islam.

Zainab, nine years old, and from Bahrain, loves Sayeda Ruqaya. This girl illustrated many of her “loved” stories in Islam. She thinks that she will become a “woman Islamic scholar” alongside her original career in the future. She believes that Ruqaya “teaches us that even at war and when everyone is thirsty and hungry, Hijab is the most important thing.” Since Ruqaya is presented in full Hijab, in the *Ashoura* season it is very unlikely to see any young girl above four of age without the “black” Hijab. This imitation shows their empathy with Ruqaya on the one hand, but it is also a time to claim maturity on the other hand.

It is important to mention that Ruqaya is known not only as a symbol of the importance of wearing the Hijab; but she also stands a symbol of the good “daughter.” Both roles are emphasized through the preaching and orations in the Matams.

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66 This girl is the same Zainab who appeared earlier in the chapter.
67 Zainab, in discussion with the Author, August 2008.
Mary, the Virgin, the Teacher

In Islam, Mary is called Miriam, and she is the mother of Jesus, the prophet who was born without a father. Although the Muslim narrative does not agree with Christianity's idea of the trinity, it shows high reverence to Jesus and his mother. The story of Miriam is very impressive as narrated in the Quran. However, she is portrayed as the pristine heaven-taught woman, who is very knowledgeable and highly pious without receiving a regular education at a church or a parish. She is one of the very few women who spoke and communicated with the archangel Gabriel, a fact that puts Miriam (Thurkhill 2008) on the same level as the prophets and messengers. Gabriel is the messenger from Allah to all the prophets, and he is the messenger to Prophet Mohammed as well. Gabriel is presented in the Quran, and he communicates and talks to Miriam, to guide her how to behave. He was the one who told her that she will bear Jesus, the miracle prophet.

In Islam, Miriam is the symbol of virginity, the heavenly pristine, and chastity. She is also portrayed as the teacher and educator whose knowledge was no less than that of her male peers. Besides, Allah privileged Miriam, and she was chosen from among many people. Her relationship with Allah is very unique and strong, to the extent that her place in the Islamic scholarship is similar to that of any prophet. She is also presented as the strong woman who faced the community while Christ was in his cradle. In the Quran, a whole Sura is titled “Miriam,” reflecting the remarkable space she entertains in Islam. Miriam is a woman who gave birth to a child from heaven without any man involvement and this elevates the position of women because there is no prophet that gave birth without the natural involvement of the female body; in the Quran, Allah says, “And (remember) her who guarded her chastity: We breathed into her of Our spirit, and We made her and her son a sign for all peoples.” (Quran 21:91)
Compared to her space in Christianity, Miriam occupies a far stronger role in Islamic texts and contexts as well. Batool is 12 years old, and she comes from Bahrain. Batool is a bright girl who studies in a co-educational school, and she speaks English fluently. She loves to be updated in politics and inventions. Batool is very well educated in her Islamic culture. She gave many resources in the Hadith and the Quran. She believes that “Miriam shows us the capability of women and how the woman can endure many sufferings strongly; Miriam delivered her baby alone in the desert but she did not bother herself because she knew deep in her heart that Allah is with her. She always wore the Hijab and prayed very well.” Miriam is not presented as the fragile weak woman as much as the strong, persevering woman who lived independently and who helped deliver the message of Allah with her son. The Shiite culture dedicates a day where they mourn the death of the Virgin, and they serve food after their ceremony. Many women offer food on this day, asking her to fulfill a wish such as bearing a child or getting married.

**What do these women do in Islam?**

The previous women and many other women exemplify a certain women-centered culture in terms of religion, piety, family and domestic issues as well as in politics. Since their stories are narrated in great detail at least once annually, they have become an indispensable part of the Muslim culture. If you ask any Muslim Shiite woman or girl about these women, she will immediately associate herself with one of these woman or all of them. If her name is the same as one of them, it is a source of pride and happiness; and if it is a secular name, she will try to bend it to fit in with the Islamic context in relationship to the previous women. Rawaa is twelve years old, and she lives in Dearborn. She is originally from Iraq, and her dream is to visit Iraq and see

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68 Batool, in discussion with the Author, August 2008.
the shrines of Imam Ali and his sons there. She wants to become a teacher because she like children, and she likes teaching. Rawa believes that “It is a pity I do not carry one of those great names; I feel inferior to many of my classmates who are named after Fatima and Zainab; but I try to follow Fatima in my heart and my Hijab.”

Batool explains the meaning of her name as “the pure, the chaste and the clean. My name is one of the adjectives that are included as the names of Fatima.” This girl is only twelve years of age but she believes that her name has both “religion and style” connotations. She is glad that her name is so stylish but at the same time, it is embedded with a “beautiful [religious] meaning.” Batool sees that her name reminds her to behave well and stick to the Islamic rules because when “I go to the Matam and hear the stories of Fatima, I feel ashamed of defiling her name with any inconvenient behavior or sin.” These exemplary figures are always portrayed in the best perfect images of Hijab, regardless to the precise accuracy of the narrative. Their stories are narrated to compare and contrast the “good” model that leads to heaven and the “bad” tempting that leads to hell. This creates in the imagination of little girls a vision that demands contemplation from a young age; Hijab means to choose either the way to hell or the way to heaven. Since these women are considered super-human, their performance is taken for granted as the ideal behavior not only in Hijab, but also in life in general.

In fact, the narratives of the so-called “great women of Islam” are far more influential than some would think. They are told as exemplary stories, and they stay in the heart and souls of the listeners. The narrative of these stories has become an important visual and physical performance of the Muslim communities, and this performance is rarely contemplated or questioned, especially in Muslim societies. Naheed lives in the capital of Bahrain, Manama,

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69 Rawa, in discussion with the Author, August 2008.
70 Mentioned earlier in the chapter.
where many nationalities co-exist. Her family is very modern, and her mother drives and does not wear a traditional Hijab. She does not like school because she has to study a different religion and she wants to study “the real religion of Mohammed and Ali.” She says that “I wear Hijab since I was eight, and I do not question it; I do not remember Sayeda Fatima asked her father why she should wear Hijab but her Hijab was so perfect that she is in heaven now.” Naheed is only ten years old, but she understands that Hijab and Islam are her honor and obligation. She loves Hijab because she participated in a show where she took the role of Ruqaya, daughter of Imam Hussein, and since then “I feel Hijab makes me closer to these divine heavenly people.”

In American or other Diaspora cultures, a convincing logical statement should be articulated in order to dispense with the practice of Hijab. Thus, it is very interesting to see how the girls who practice wearing Hijab analyze and justify its legitimacy, presence, and culture in American Islam. Reem, who is nine years old from Dearborn, comes from a Lebanese ancestry. She is a fifth generation of the many Lebanese immigrants who inhabit Dearborn. Reem is the only girl among four brothers, but she is not a “spoiled child; and I love to do everything on my own.” She likes classical music and she wants to visit Lebanon to see her bigger family. Reem associates Hijab with “dignity,” and she thinks that Hijab gives her “identity as a part of all the Muslim women in the world, even with Sayeda Zainab and Fatima.” Reem bridges the spaces of place and time with her practice of Hijab, uniting all Muslim women under the umbrella of this practice.

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71 In Bahrain, the Sunni program is taught in the educational system although the Shiites are the majority.
72 Naheed, in discussion with the Author, August 2008.
73 Reem, in discussion with the Author, August 2008.
CHAPTER II: HIJAB, A CONSTANTLY RENEWED FASHION

In today’s world, Hijab is a term that refers to Muslim women’s veiling. It is worth noting that “veiling” confuses and distorts the concept of Hijab. Before any discussion, a definition of Hijab is worth examining. What does Hijab mean?

In Arabic, Hijab is an abstract word that is derived from the verb *Hajaba(t)*\(^{74}\) which means to cover and block, or prevent from seeing what is beyond or beneath. Therefore, we say the cloud “Hajabat” the sunlight, which means that the cloud has blocked the sunlight and we cannot see or receive it. Thus, Hijab basically means something that is used as a covering that prevents the outsider from seeing what is under or beyond. After Islam came to the world, the term Hijab applies to any Muslim head and body covering of the body so that the body of the women is “concealed.” The body of women, according to Islam, should be presented in a modest way to the public, away from sensuality and seduction. Actually, Hijab has many “names” in different cultures, and it varies in shape from one area to another in the world. However, currently, Hijab has become a synonym of the scarf that women wear on their head. The covering of the rest of the body has many other names and forms.

**Terms and Definitions**

In almost all Islamic cultures, the Hijab, or the woman’s covering, is divided into at least two parts; a head cover and this is divided into many types in terms of fixing around the head, and in terms of fabrics and material. The second part is the covering of the whole body.

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\(^{74}\) In Arabic, we have Gender agreement with verb usages. When masculine, we say “Hajaba;” when feminine, we say, “hajabat.”
The Head Covering

The Square Hijab, or *Isharb*,\(^7\) is first folded into two parts to form a triangle of two layers, and then it is put on the head to be fixed by a pin or by a knot (See Fig.1, 2).\(^6\) This type is more popular in Iran and the Middle East. This Hijab is made of different kinds of materials. It might be cotton, nylon, viscose, satin, silk, and many other materials. It just depends on the fashion and the money. The role of fashion will be discussed later in this paper.

This type of covering changes the presentation of the face to some extent. In figure 2, the reader can see that the Hijab covers parts of the face, and it changes the “shape” of the face. We cannot almost tell whether the woman has a round face or an oval face. The Hijab usually covers a long big part of the back, and some women leave the front part to conceal the presence of the bosom. Both images show a Hijab that is fixed with a plain pin, because there are also several designs of pins.\(^7\) The second type is called “Sheila;” it is a long shall that can wrap the head in a round shape. Unlike the Square Hijab, the Sheila usually shows the shape of the face whether it is round, oval, etc. Moreover, it usually does not need a pin. Women who wear Sheila are likely to be from the Persian Gulf, from the Arab part, i.e. Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Oman, The U.A.E, Kuwait, Iraq and Qatar. The Sheila is part of the heritage of this region. It is

\(^7\) Isharb is the term used in the Middle East, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Palestine to refer the Square Hijab.
\(^7\) The various designs will be presented later.
usually black, and the material is typically Georgette or transparent silk or chiffon. However, as fashion changes, so does the Sheila. In Saudi Arabia and Kuwait (See Fig. 3)\textsuperscript{78}, the Sheila is also used for veiling the face or parts of it; this is true only when the Sheila is black.

In Saudi Arabia, most women cover their faces either wholly or partially. This is a governmental law; anyone who crosses this law is subject to severe punishment. In the other neighboring countries, the Hijab is not enforced by law. It is only Saudi Arabia and Iran that have laws enforcing the Hijab. While Iran leaves the term Hijab “vague” and hence it gives more freedom to people, Saudi Arabia’s law strictly limits women to black veiling exclusively. The covering might be embroidered with other colors and it can be in different materials and shapes; but mainly, it is black from head to toe.

There is a third type of Hijab style that does not have a name, but its form is new. It is simply referred to as Hijab. This type of Hijab is usually worn by little girls because it is easier to wear. It is composed of two parts. The first part is a cylinder shape that covers the head like a wide band, while the second complements the covering to conceal the rest of the head, closing on the neck and chest. (See Figure 4).\textsuperscript{79}

\textsuperscript{78} For more pictures of veiled women, see Daylife. www.daylife.com
The Body Covering

Just like the head covering, the body covering varies from one area to another, with also a variety within the same region. The body coverings will be categorized according to their names, because some of them are more popular in one area than another, but they are worn almost everywhere. The body coverings are of two types. The first type shows the shape of the body and it starts from the shoulders downwards.

The second type almost totally conceals the shape of the body, and it is put from head to toe, one piece of cloth. The Manteau (See fig.6)\textsuperscript{80} is kind of long overcoat or a trench coat, which goes down below the knees. The Manteau is a French word in origin, but the Iranians borrowed it into their language. Manteaus are popular in Iran and the region surrounding Syria (Lebanon, Egypt, etc.), i.e. the Muslim Mediterranean region. They are originally plain in shape and color, tending usually to carry moderate colors such as dark blue, black, smoke-grey, dark green and dark brown – and all dark colors that give the impression of modesty. Manteaus are of two types; some of them come as a pair with pants either of the same color or from any other colors, and some of them are long enough so that women do not have to wear

\textsuperscript{80} For more Iranian Fashion, see www.plateauofiran.wordpress.com
pants to cover their legs (See fig.5). Some women, for example in Syria, do not wear pants but they cover their legs with socks or stockings.

Women always change their clothing according to the latest trends in fashion. Actually, there is a fashion for Manteaus. There are Manteaus that are made of even jeans and silk. The long Manteau has another name, which is “Jilbab.” Jilbab is an Arabic word that refers to any long dress that hides the sensual parts of the woman’s body. It is worth noting that currently Manteaus are of not only various materials, but also of different colors and designs. There are the traditional plain manteaus, but there are also the sexy manteaus with low, long cut of the collar to reveal some tiny area of the chest. The pants are of all kinds. There is the navy, the classic, the tight and the ordinary. It is all a matter of taste. In Iran, in the last decades, there is the emerging phenomenon of the haute couture of Manteaus and other similar clothing. The runway show is for women exclusively; no man is to attend any of these shows. Besides, the designers are exclusively women. However, in the last three years there have been some collections that were designed by men; but the audience is still an exclusively female audience.

The second type of body covering is what covers the whole body from head to toes. Again, there is a regional difference. In Iran, they call it a Chadar, and in the Persian Gulf
countries it is called either Daffa or Abaya. For a person unfamiliar with these images, the two coverings might look the same; but they are so different. Both are black and both are sewed in a certain way. However, the Chadar is structured is differently from the Abaya. (See Fig. 7) The Chadar might have an elastic band so that it does not fall from the head, and the woman must hold it to cover the whole body. In figure 8, the image shows girls at school. They are wearing Chadars and notice that beneath the Chadar is usually pants or manteaus.

The Manteaus are made of different materials, basically crepe with some textual patterns or embroidery from the material itself and they are all black. The material is usually somehow thick to adapt to the cold weather of Iran.

The Abaya or Daffa is a distinctive garment of the Arab side of the Persian Gulf. The Abaya can be closed from the front by a zip or buttons, and it might be left open, yet not revealing what is underneath. The Abaya is typically made of light silk to match the hot weather of the region. However, there are many Abayas that are made of crepe, but still the material is plain with no textual patterns. However, there is a fashion for this type of covering involving some embroidery and sometimes cuts in the shape of the Abaya itself. The Abaya is of two types today; the traditional and the modern.

The traditional Abaya is the one mentioned above. Due to the complexity of its use while working, a new style of Abaya emerged. This type of Abaya is somehow similar to the manteau, but it is always long, black and the material used in its structure is usually soft, unlike the stiff materials of manteaus. Moreover, the Abaya is usually worn with Sheila while the manteau is usually worn with the square Hijab.

81 For more Iranian fashion, see [www.parsmoon.com](http://www.parsmoon.com).
Fashion and Consumer Culture

Since fashion is a phenomenon that entertains all females regardless to age and culture, it is not surprising that Hijab is subject to the whims of the ever-changing fashion world. The material of the head covering is usually made of the softest fabrics such as silk and linen, but even the body coverings are constantly changing, and thus altering the fashion and the “look” of Hijab.

Hanan is a nine-year-old girl from Dearborn. She is very neat and tidy, and she likes to be as clean and neat as possible. She dresses for school differently, because “at school you need something stiff and something that looks neat for a long time.” She loves drawing and reading, but she does not like singing and dancing. She prefers to wear a cotton Hijab because it is the most practical, but “on special occasions, I wear the best I have to look like an elegant woman.” The cuts of the body cover and the way of wrapping vary from one year to another and from a culture to another. In 2007, in Dearborn, most girls preferred to wear a Hijab that matches their other clothes worn that day, while in Bahrain their peers preferred the black silk Sheila, tied loosely around their face, and heavily embroidered with crystals and laces.

Farah is a ten years old from Bahrain. She likes to travel and go to the malls to see “what is new.” She wants to work something in business “where I can be elegant everyday.” She has only one sister, and her family is a moderate Muslim one. Farah says that she prefers to “order her Hijab instead of buying the ready-made. This gives me more uniqueness and individuality.” She adds that she is so keen to look highly “posh” and “style” in her Hijab “even if it means spending so much money.” Jihad is Farah’s best friend. They go to school together, and meet

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82 Hanan, in discussion with the Author, August 2008.
83 Farah, in discussion with the Author, August 2008.
84 Jihad, in discussion with the Author, August 2008.
regularly, and shop together. Jihad’s father studied in London for his Masters degree, and she went with him as part of the family. Jihad began her studies in London’s Muslim schools, and she came back to Bahrain two years ago. Very similar to Farah, Jihad is very careful to buy “Hijab from expensive shops” because she does not want to be below the average of her classmates. Last year, she bought Hijab of Fulla – the Islamic foe to Barbie – and it cost her parents around 30 Bahraini Dinars – around $85. It is very surprising to see Hijab turning into a means of maintaining individuality and attraction, but at the same time, it shows that Hijab is so flexible and elastic that it can be molded to fit many various cultures.
CHAPTER III: HIJAB IN ISLAM AND HISTORY

“I wear Hijab to become a good Muslim and because Allah told us to do so; you have to wear Hijab if you want to follow God and the Quran.”

Nadine, 11 years old.

Nadine is a little girl from Dearborn, Michigan. She looked very smart when I met her for the first time. She loves math and she does not like to skip or miss classes. She wants to become a biologist who works with “genetic engineering” as one of the “smart Muslim women.” Her family is pious and they were keen on raising her to wear Hijab. When Nadine spoke about her Hijab, she linked it to Islam, to Allah and to the Quran. Despite her young age – only eleven years old – Nadine endows Hijab with the divine decrees of Allah; she says, “I do not know the exact verses [in the Quran] but I am sure that wearing Hijab is a free ticket to heaven. The sheikh said that this is a consensus in both the Quran and the Hadith.” Besides, she associates Hijab with Islam, reflecting the fact that Muslim women embrace Hijab as part of their Muslim religion at a very early stage in their life. What Nadine and many other women and little girls do not know is how Hijab is presented in the original resources of the Islamic tradition, namely in the Hadith and the Quran. Their limited knowledge of the Hijab references is not a factor that decreases the importance and practice of Hijab in Muslim communities, but it simply reflects the authority of Islamic clergy in enforcing Islamic laws and doctrines without being questioned – this is simply taken for granted since in Islam, the Quran and the Hadith are not questioned at all; questioning them is a type of blasphemy.

85 Nadine, in discussion with the Author, August 2008.
86 See Glossary for further details.
88 Muslims believe that the Quran and Hadith are free of any errors and they are perfect in all stages and perspectives. The Quran is the word of Allah.
Hijab has its roots in a history that precedes the emergence of Islam. The practice of veiling is as ancient as the Roman Empire, where the free women had to veil themselves when walking out in public places (Guindi 2000). Even in Hellenic and ancient Balkan cultures, veiling was practiced amongst both men and women. In Christianity and Judaism, veiling was practiced, and according to the Bible, in Genesis 24.65: “and Rebecca lifted up her eyes and when she saw Isaac…she took her veil and covered herself.” Another reference to veiling is in Corinthians 1: 3-7: “Any woman who prays with her head unveiled dishonors her head…” Thus, it is clear that the veil is one of the parts that have been relinquished from both Judaism and Christianity throughout history (Guindi 2000).

Islam emerged in a nomadic culture, where many violent and inhumane practices were performed against women. Traditionally, women were considered as property and a part of the wealth that the sons would inherit, including their own mothers and sisters. Besides, women used to go the Kaa’ba in Mecca, and perform the rituals of Hajj totally naked – while this sacred building that was built by Prophet Abraham should be respected and not defiled with any unacceptable behavior according to Muslim doctrines (Naseef 2007). Women were considered as non-free, slave-like property, who could be forced into prostitution when enslaved as servants. Thus, they were subjects of exploitative male masters. Seyedeh Dr. Nahid Angha says,

In that era, in the tribal culture of Arabs, women were not equal to men with respect to many social and personal conditions and systems, such as marriage, inheritance or education, among other areas. Women did not have businesses, own property, or have independent legal rights.

When Islam came, it wanted to secure the women with every possible device to maintain their dignity and respect as human beings in a culture that wronged women in all the aspects of

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89 This is the city where Muslims go for pilgrimage annually. It is located in Saudi Arabia.
their existence as human beings, and from here Hijab came. It was intended to liberate women from the degradation of their societies and to launch a new system of equality; in the Quran, Allah says:

The believing men and the believing women are friends and protectors of one another; they enjoy the doing of what is right and forbid the doing of what is wrong, and they are constant in prayer, and they render dues charity, and pay heed unto Allah and His Apostle. It they upon whom Allah will bestow His Grace.\(^\text{91}\)

(The Quran: 9: 71)

Veiling as a practice was adapted to secure the welfare of the woman as a human being. The first meaning of Hijab was to cover the woman so that the men could more easily see her as a human being since her sexual attractions were covered. Secondly, it came to blur the line of the caste systems in ancient Arabia. Only the wealthy women were allowed to wear veils before Islam, while Islam legitimized it for all women, a sign of creating a new society that is above the caste, racial, and discrimination systems. As Omar Naseef believes, “all of the social and legal policies in Scripture unmistakably demonstrate the Qur’an’s intention to liberate women from the bonds of oppression.”\(^\text{92}\)

It is noteworthy to know that Hijab is a modern term that refers to the so-called veil. In Islamic references, the veil comes in many different names, and not only Hijab; and each of these names has its peculiar associations and connotations. The veil appears in the Quran and the Hadith, on which all Muslims refer to the compulsory practice of veiling. However, it is noteworthy to explore how each contextualization and conception of the “veil” in terms of

\(^\text{91}\) The original verses are as follows in Arabic:

٩١۴۱ The original verses are as follows in Arabic:

والمؤمنون والمؤمنات بعضهم أولاً ببعض، يأمرون بالمعروف وينهون عن المنكر، ويقيمون الصلاة ويؤدون الزكاة ويطمعون الله ورسوله أتgetLast

differences and similarities. A speculation can be made at the beginning that the veil connotes with covering in general, whether the body or the head.

In Surat Al-Noor, Aya 31, in the Holy Quran, Allah says,

And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty; that they should not display their beauty and ornaments except what must ordinarily appear ther[e]of; that they should draw their veils over their bosoms and not display their beauty except to their husbands, their fathers, their husbands' fathers, their sons, their husbands' sons, their brothers, or their brothers' sons or their sisters' sons, or their women or the servants whom their right hands possess, or male servants free of physical needs, or small children who have no sense of the shame of sex, and that they should not strike their feet in order to draw attention to their hidden ornaments. And O you Believers turn you all together towards Allah, that you may attain Bliss. 

In the previous Aya, the word veil appears in the English translation of the Quran, but in its Arabic form Khimar, it has a different impact and connotation. Khimar is a piece of cloth that covers the body in a very loose way so that the figure of the woman is totally concealed according to most Islamic scholars, and in Arabic it is “a woman's muffler, or veil with which she covers her head and the lower part of her face, leaving exposed only the eyes and part or whole of the nose, such is the Khimar worn in the present day.” However, the Khimar can be long, short and of different colors, and it is problematic when it comes to the actual meaning of Khimar in Arabic because it differs from one sect to another, and from one scholar to

93 The previous verse in Arabic is the original verse from the Quran.
95 Aya is a verse from a Sourah. The Quran is divided into 114 sourah and each sourah has a certain number of verses (ayah). The Longest is The Cow Surah (286 verses) and the shortest is the Kawther Surah (3 verses).
96 Boustany, Marwan. The Dresscode of Muslim Women according to Islam. The translation is based on Lisan Alrab, one of the major Arabic dictionaries. For further readings see: http://marwanboustany.googlepages.com
another. Some scholars claim that *Khimar* is only the head covering while *Hijab* is the head and body covering. Imam Abu'l-Fida ibn Kathir: “*Khumur is the plural of khimar which means something that covers, and is what is used to cover the head. This is what is known among the people as a khimar.*”\(^97\) While in the dictionary of classical Arabic, Aqrab al-Mawarid: “[The word *khimar* refers to] all such pieces of cloth which are used to cover the head. *It is a piece of cloth which is used by a woman to cover her head.*”\(^98\) The meaning of *Khimar* is widely disputed and controversial, and the only agreement is that the original word meant simply: “cover.”

In the previous *Aya*, it is said “they should draw their veils over their bosoms and not display their beauty except to their husbands,” and it was not written as introducing a new cover. Thus, it seems that (some) women already wore the *Khimar*, but Islam preaches them to cover their bosoms with it, and hence it should be longer and larger logically, because it needs more cloth to cover more space of the body. The *Aya* goes further to show the men in whose presence Hijab should be worn. Back to the word *Khimar*, it is not clear whether it should cover the whole body, or only the head and bosom; whether it should be of a single color, material, width, etc. yet, it connotes covering the head and bosom, and concealing the beauty from men who are considered as “strangers” to women in Islam. Furthermore, the *Aya* asks women to avoid attracting attention to their beauty when it states that “and that they should not strike their feet in order to draw attention to their hidden ornaments.”\(^99\) Hence Hijab connotes concealing beauty from any outsider and reinforcing modesty of women.

This *Aya* shows the Hijab on two levels: physically, it should conceal the body and the head and, at the same time, it is a tool to prevent men being attracted to women. The image of the woman in Hijab is one where her body is not known and even her presence should not be

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\(^99\) Quran 24:31.
noticed. Feminists often misunderstand this notion as an image that emphasizes the denigration of Muslim women. Yet, this *Aya* refers to women being able to walk freely in the streets or anywhere outside the home or work place. It is important to understand that Muslim culture commands women to speak with men when necessary only, and even while speaking there are certain borders and limits.\(^{100}\) Women are asked by Islamic laws not to behave in any way that would draw sexual attraction to their bodies. However, it is also important to mention in this context that very few women do really follow all the teachings of Islam literally. Just like any other religion, people vary in following the laws of religion from the highly fundamental extremists to the extremely open-minded. There are women who treat Hijab as an extremely sacred pious practice that maintains the purity and straightness of Islam, while others consider it a minor Islamic practice and link it more to culture and tradition. As the latter’s culture changes, their Hijab changes to cope with all the changes in their culture.

In another place in the Quran, Hijab comes in another word, but still carrying the same idea. Allah says in the Holy Quran,\(^{101}\) “O Prophet, tell your wives and your daughters and the women of the believers to draw their cloaks close round them (when they go abroad). That will be better, so that they may be recognised and not annoyed.”\(^{102}\) (Quran 33:59)\(^{103}\)

In the previous *Aya*, *Khimar* has become *Jilbab*, which is a long loose cloak that covers the body only, but not the head. Marwan Alboustany defines it as a “Loose outer covering; Over-garment; Woman’s gown; Smock; Large outer covering worn by women; Outer cloak; Women’s

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\(^{100}\) See the doctrines of Islam according to Ayatulla Shirazi and Mudaressi. See: www.alshirazi.com and www.almodarresi.com.

\(^{101}\) *بِأَيِّهَا الَّذِيا نَذَرُوا أَنْ يَلْفُوا وَلْيُنَذِّرُوا وَلْيَنَذِّرُوا نِسَاءَ الْمُؤْمِنَاتِ نَذَرُوا أَنْ يَلْفُوْنَ فَإِذَا وَجَدُوا فَإِذَا وَجَدُوا رَحْمَةً*.

\(^{102}\) "بابَهَا الَّذِي قَالَ لَزَوَّاجُكَ وَبَنَاتِكَ وَنَسَاءَ الْمُؤْمِنَاتِ نَذَرُوا أَنْ يَلْفُوْنَ فَإِذَا وَجَدُوا فَإِذَا وَجَدُوا رَحْمَةً.*

outer wrapping garment.” Again, the aim of the cover is to conceal the body so that women are not “recognized.” The Jilbab asks women to cover their bodies, but the problem is that it does not address the head cover, and like the Khimar, it is very vague since it has no limitations to color or size. Since the Quran does not specify Hijab and draw the lines of its boundaries, Islamic scholars refer to the Hadith of the Prophet.

In one of the stories that were narrated about Fatima is the blind man incident. Once a blind man visited the Prophet in his house and Fatima wore her Hijab. The Prophet told her: Fatima, my daughter; the man is blind and he cannot see.” She told him: “but I can see.” Thus, Hijab is not only a protector and a means of maintaining the chaste of women; it is also a reminder of the borders between men and women. In this event, Fatima presents Hijab as a measure of protection; it protects men and women equally from falling in the trap of any exposure of desire, which is a sin according to Islam.

It is worth mentioning that Hijab varies in its shape from one culture to another, and what would be a perfect Hijab in Syria for example would be very “free” and “stylish” in another country such as Saudi Arabia. In the following section, the discussion will focus on legislating Hijab and the rules that determine decency and the “correct” Hijab.

The Elasticity of Hijab vs. The Correct Hijab/ Style:

In the Shiite Islamic traditions, Muslims have to follow a contemporary Islamic scholar that is referred to as “Imam.” All Shiite contemporary Imams state that the age at which

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104 Boustany, Marwan. The Dressecode of Muslim Women according to Islam. The translation is based on Lisan Alrab, one of the major Arabic dictionaries. For further readings see: http://marwanboustany.googlepages.com


106 His authority in religion is similar to that of the Pope’s. Imam in this context is not like Imam who descends from the Prophet. The contemporary Imams are highly respected but they are of human nature i.e. they are subjects to error; while the Twelve Imams who descend from the Prophet are considered heavenly inerrable beings, and they are the word of Allah and Islam on earth.
women should wear the Hijab is nine since at this age indicates maturity,\textsuperscript{107} and since Fatima – the Prophet’s daughter – began her woman-life at the age of nine. Hijab is only one part of the many laws that girls should follow, beginning from the five daily prayers and the fasting of Ramadan.\textsuperscript{108}

The Islamic scholars base their rules about Hijab to one of the Prophet’s Hadith. The prophet was asked once whether the woman should cover her body and head, and he answered: “yes: except these – and he pointed to his hands and face.”\textsuperscript{109} This Hadith legislates that women should cover their body and head but it does not go into the details of the size, color, material and other details that specify the concept of “Hijab.” Instead of making use of this advantage and turning the Hijab into a flexible garment, the obsession with the “correct” Hijab was born. Some scholars stated that Hijab is flexible in a manner that suites all societies. For example, Imam M. Shirazi believes that in a Muslim country like Iran, women should be as modest and decent as possible since it is the norm; but in the Western countries, there is no problem in wearing a Hijab that does not cause “embarrassment” to the Muslim women, and that does not cause direct attraction to her as something extraordinary and strange.\textsuperscript{110}

Hijab already existed in the cultures of Arabia and in the Middle East in general before the establishment of Islam. Therefore, the meaning of Hijab is complicated, and its analyses overlap and might sometimes seem contradictory, even within the borders of the Islamic world. Therefore, it is easier and more functional and convenient to look into Hijab practice from many different angels and perspectives without taking stands, i.e. without being with or against Hijab or following the traditional either/or approach. Ironically, the most beautiful thing about Hijab is

\textsuperscript{107} The age of puberty begins at nine for girls.
\textsuperscript{108} For further information about Islamic doctrines, see: www.alshirazi.com.
\textsuperscript{110} For further information about Islamic doctrines, see: www.alshirazi.com.
its constantly “changing meanings.” Rawan comes from a very small town in Bahrain. She is the only child in her family, and she wants to be a journalist working for BBC. Her hobby is collecting news about the US. Her parents are very open-minded and they did not impose Hijab on her. She wears Hijab “since I reached the appropriate age in Islam; and I love to buy all the latest styles of Hijab.” She believes that “Hijab is a word that has no fixed meaning for me; I wear Hijab to the Matam to become more religious and pious, but I wear it to school for show.” Rawan is around twelve years old, which means she has worn Hijab for at least three years, and these three years were enough to allow her understand Hijab in her own modern way. Thus, it would be wrong to exclude the opinions of these youngest practitioners of Hijab.

**Hijab: Exploiting or Defending Islam?**

In 2003, in Bahrain, Sheikh Isa Qasim lectured in his weekly Friday speeches that women should wear “the Hijab of Sayeda Zainab,” in a call to stop introducing a civil law that would regulate marriages and divorce cases. He criticized the contemporary Hijab since it is against the laws of “Islam, Allah and our culture.” After prayers, he encouraged people to go for a protest against applying this new law. Many clergy men met with him, and they declared to all Shiite people that this new law is a “sin” and it is “blasphemy,” depending on propagating questions like “do you want your daughter to elope with a man” do you advocate adultery? If so, go for this law.” Several weeks later, Sheikh Qasim called for the protest on a fixed that, proclaiming that this protest is an “Islamic must.” More than 6,000 women marched in a protest wearing full Hijab - what they called the “correct Hijab.” There were many little girls carrying posters of girls wearing the traditional black Hijab without realizing that the whole call had a political agenda.

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111 Rawan, in discussion with the Author, August 2008.
112 See the Archives of Al- waqt Newspaper: www.alwaqt.com
113 In this new civil law, the girls could leave the house of their parent at the age of eighteen; and the divorce processes are partially Islamic and partially civil to maintain the rights and security of women.
Thus, this huge protest, which seemed to be supporting Islam and Hijab, in reality, was manipulated to serve the ends of the fundamentalist Islamic Shiite clergy. This proposed law had points that would give women more freedom, such as the ability to legally leave the parent’s house after reaching the age of eighteen, and if a man wants to get married for the second time, he must inform his wife or the court will not approve his second marriage. Most of the clergy married more than once and they marry on temporal relationships, something people do not publicly discuss. Most of the clergy who called for this march were traditional, and had at least two wives. In the lectures preparing for the march, there was no reference to the security measures for women and children that this law was to maintain. All the focus was that this is a “Sunni governmental attempt to destroy our Islam and our correct Hijab,” as Qasim said constantly in his preaching.

In another instance in the same country, in 2008 a conference was held to inspire the activity of women in society. The major hot discussions called for accepting “Hijab” as a part of a long ancient tradition because women wearing Hijab are often rejected from many prestigious and sensitive posts – although Hijab is the norm in Bahrain. One of the speakers concluded, “The problem of women’s exclusion from the world of business is the taboo of the traditional Hijab, as if a woman in her full Hijab comes from an alien planet.” Many people wrongly think that the traditional Hijab makes the woman less capable of handling her job. Moreover, some think the women wearing Hijab are not as outgoing and free-spirited as the women without Hijab. This seems ironic in a country where women without Hijab are considered less “Muslim” and less moral than those wearing Hijab do.

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114 Polygamy is legalized in Islam.
115 See the archives of Alwaqt Newspaper: www.alwaqt.com
From another perspective, modern Islamic clergy are giving more space for little girls when it comes to Hijab in an attempt to propagate the Hijab in a child-friendly way. The little girls can feel this, as is shown in the example of Nuha, 12 years old from Bahrain. Nuha’s mother did not wear Hijab until she became thirty because she used to be an “atheist secular woman.” Nuha’s family is rediscovering Islam, and her parents encourage her to attend any program that enriches her Islamic information. She comments, “The short programs of making you love Hijab are increasing in number; I went to three of them and I learnt that Hijab is very flexible and beautiful. Allah sees us beautiful in Hijab.” Islamic Shiite scholars, especially the modernists among them, try to link Hijab to love, chastity and Islam on the one hand; and yet, they also link it to modernity, holding a distinctive identity in contradistinction to the Americanization of the world on the other hand. The girls living in a country where Islam is the norm are seldom asked to discuss Hijab, and they are expected to engage in the process of “embracing” Hijab.

**Islam and Hijab**

As mentioned above, Islamic scholars vary in their opinions about Hijab. Imam Mohammed Shirazi believes that women should conceal their body so that nothing from their feminine figure is exposed to the “strangers” – men. Even her face should be covered if it causes men’s desires to be aroused; and hence many people who follow this Imam are considered highly “pious,” and in the Arabic term, they are “mou’min.” Other Islamic scholars, like Imam Fadlula, believe that it is necessity that determines the limits of Hijab. Thus, in an

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116 Nuha, in discussion with the Author, August 2008.
117 See the [Islamic letter of Imam Shirazi](https://www.Shirazi.org) on: [www.Shirazi.org](http://www.Shirazi.org)
extremely open-minded country like Lebanon, it is very difficult to wear the traditional black Hijab with Abaya\textsuperscript{118}; Hijab is reduced to a piece of cloth that covers the head.

In Iran, during the revolution, Imam Khomeini and his party led a reform of Islam, including the enforcement of the “correct” Hijab. He stated that Iranian women were unfairly excluded from the workplace and education because they were not allowed to wear Hijab during the Shah Pahlavi regime. Thus, Hijab in this political context came as a tool for freeing women and introducing them to the workplace and educational institutions. However, twenty years after the revolution, Hijab has taken another shape in Iran, and it causes limited freedom for many women. Since the Iranian culture is so fashionable, the contemporary Iranian generations have molded Hijab and turned it into a garment that copes with the current Moda.\textsuperscript{119} The traditional conservative clergy do not accept this molding and they perceive fashion as the “tool that enables the west to dominate our youth.”\textsuperscript{120}

Hijab is mentioned in the Quran only twice and in the Hadith in several places, but it is not mentioned in its detailed form. All the scholars in Islam agree that women should cover themselves but most of the rules are regional, and they are designed to be culture-specific. Hijab’s elasticity can be abused by the Islamic clergy. Hijab became a mixture of tradition, culture, decency and Islam, but all these meanings cannot be separated from each other. Therefore, women wearing Hijab endow it with all types of meanings from piety and chastity to fashion and style because each of these women wear the Hijab for a different purpose, or more accurately, for a number of purposes, all of which contribute to defining Hijab.

\textsuperscript{118} See Glossary and the Chapter 5 about the Hijab parts, names and fashions.
\textsuperscript{119} Fashion.
It is impossible to create one meaning for Hijab and generalize it to all countries, cultures, ages and Islamic sects. Hijab tends to have a flexibility in its meanings and connotations, none of which should be seen as contradicting the other as much as viewing Hijab from paradoxical lenses. The meanings and values associated with Hijab change and vary from one generation to another. It should be admitted though, that the Islamic and extremist feminists added much to the literature of Hijab and its values.\footnote{This context will be discussed in the final chapter.}
CHAPTER IV: PIETY IN INNOCENT EYES AND HIJAB TODAY

“Hijab is the crown of Muslim women,” Fatema Yaseen, \(^{122}\) Bahrain.

“I carry the flag of Islam,” Ameena, \(^{123}\) Dearborn.

When it comes to children, there is some slight change in the analysis of the interpretation of Hijab. These children are not aware of the challenges they have on the global scene and how to provide alternatives; but they are subtle enough to present unique understandings of their own experience with the practice of Hijab. Little girls who are just on the threshold of adolescence have their own culture that is derived from the mass media.

From another perspective, the fashion targeting these little girls has changed as a reflection of the changing mass culture. Fashion has been eroticized and made in such a way that a girl in her twelfth year looks like a sixteen-year old teenager. Little girls do not want to be left behind, or be outdated, yet they want to preserve their Islamic identity. Herein lies a big crisis. Thus, they vary in their opinions about Hijab and what it means for them, though there are so many similarities amongst them.

In a Diaspora culture like the United States, they strive to create their unique “look,” and some just imitate their mothers, relative, friends and teachers. In a very traditional Middle-Eastern Arab country like Bahrain, the role of imitation supersedes convictions and insight. This

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\(^{122}\) Fatema Yaseen, in discussion with the Author =, August 2008.

\(^{123}\) Amina, in discussion with the Author (, August 2008.
chapter will discuss the different meanings of Hijab created by little girls in these two countries and try to anticipate the future of Hijab in the world.

The Flag of Islam

Some researchers claim that American Muslim women choose not to wear the Islamic loose garb in the US because most of them simply either are third generation Arab Americans, and hence they did not encounter Hijab like the other Muslim Arab women, or they did not wear Hijab originally in their homelands (Haddad, Smith and Moore 2006). However, a small community that lives in Dearborn, Michigan, has managed to wear even the *Abaya* in town. The city has a majority of Muslim inhabitants, and wherever you go in the streets, you feel as if you were in the streets of Beirut or any other Arab capital. Hijab is the common rule, and interestingly, it is uncommon to see women without Hijab, unless they were non-Arab Americans.

Amina is an Arab American from Dearborn, Michigan, who lives with her brother and mother (Figure 9). Since her parents are divorced, her mother works hard to earn a decent living and raise the two children she bore. Since her education is not so high, she works as a police officer and hence she cannot wear Hijab. Surprisingly, her daughter, Amina, wore Hijab after some long contemplation and thinking. Amina is one of many American girls who wear Hijab after being convinced, and not only imitating other people. “I had my doubt, like being under the sun in summer, not swimming in public; but I decided to wear Hijab,” Amina says. Amina is a Shiite Arab American coming from a Lebanese ancestry. In Shiite Islamic doctrine, the girls

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124 See the previous chapter for a detailed description of the parts and types of Hijab.
125 Amina, in discussion with the Author, August 2008.
should wear Hijab at the age of nine, and the age nine is referred to as the age of *Takleef*. When Amina Wore Hijab, she was ten but she wore it after she contemplated for a while on Hijab, and tore away all her “doubts” concerning practicing the Hijab.

The word “doubts” is one of the strong words Amina uses in her reflections on Hijab. The fact that she realizes that she has some doubts means that she did not embrace Hijab blindly or passively nor it was imposed on her. Her doubts are simple. Will Hijab interfere with summer fun while swimming with other children of her age? Yet, her doubts suggest her profound understanding of Hijab. Amina lives in a hugely diverse culture where the majority does not practice wearing Hijab because in America, Islam is a minority religion. She has many friends who do not wear Hijab, and she even prefers some of them to those who do wear it. She understands Hijab as simply a practice of Islamic devotion that helps her show others she is a Muslim, though this is not the whole understanding of Hijab in Amina’s viewpoint. Most girls who wear Hijab are daughters of mothers who practice it, but Amina is a really special case. Though her mother does not wear Hijab publicly, Amina believes that her mother “wears a Hijab in her heart.” Amina is fully aware that Hijab is not only the surface of Muslim women, but it is the essence as well as the surface. Hijab is something that purifies the heart. It is a form by means of which women can become near to Allah, and at the same time, it shows the society what Muslim women are. She comprehends the fact that if she wears Hijab, she has to avoid touching boys while playing with them, and gradually behave like an adult woman.

Amina says, “I wear the Hijab to carry the flag of Islam.” This is how she justifies her practice of Hijab. Living in a society where you are considered as someone “different” is difficult to cope with, and human beings react to this “difference” in two different ways. They either try to erase their originality and totally mold the character according to the new social

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126 See Glossary.
norms, or they maintain their original character to expose their superiority or in a certain aspect of their social, cultural or religious behavior and practice. This process is in fact only a tool to create one’s identity in a mass of various cultures. People like Amina need so much courage and determination to expose their belief in a country where Christian social norms are still so prevalent. She wears Hijab to become closer to Allah and hence this will move her a step forward to heaven. “Do everything Allah says and you will go straight to heaven,” she says.

Amina feels that those Muslim women are guaranteed respect since they wear Hijab, because it is the gift from Allah to women. Thus, in a diaspora culture, Hijab becomes a means of establishing identity in order to allow a cultural religious phenomenon to survive in the melting pot of the multi-ethnic society.

“Carrying the flag of Islam” shows a strong belief in the role of exposing Islam to others, which in turn imposes many interpretations and connotations. First of all, wearing Hijab means that the wearer is a devoted Muslim. Besides, it tries to speak to the fact that Hijab can be worn everywhere, since it causes no restriction from the practical aspects of life.

**The Crown on Muslim Women’s Head**

In the previous example, Hijab creates identity in the Muslim diaspora, and defines the character of an individual who is proud to be an ideal representative of a whole religion. When compared to another country where the norm is to wear Hijab publically, the meaning of Hijab changes dramatically. In Bahrain, like all the neighboring countries of the Arabian Gulf, wearing Hijab is expected from a very early age, especially in the Shiite communities. Since the Islamic scholars agree that the age of nine is the Takleef age, many Bahraini mothers hold a

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127 I prefer to call it the Arabian Gulf because all Arabs call it so, and I am proud of my Arab-ness. However, on the map it is referred to as the Persian Gulf.
128 See Glossary.
grand birthday party to celebrate the ceremony of wearing Hijab. There are no religious rituals, but it is practiced to create a happy memory in the minds of the little girls.

Usually, Hijab is worn partially, and it is called “Hijabi” dress or style. This means that the girl would wear a scarf and, she should wear long sleeve clothes that are loose to some extent; and they gradually grow to become more modest as she advances in age (See Figure 10).

Codes of modesty are flexible when it comes to children since they are given more space to enjoy their yet-not-eroticized body. They still look like children in their body details, with no obvious breasts for example, and hence they enjoy wearing a variety of clothes in public. The standards of the dress vary from one family to another; so if the family is very conservative, their daughter is more likely to wear the modern or traditional Abaya and if they are more liberal their daughter is more likely to wear the latest fashions found at the stores of Zara and Bhs.¹²⁹

Fatima Yaseen, 12 years old, comes from a very traditional conservative family in a small village in Bahrain. She is in her seventh grade now, and she wears the whole Hijab, the Abaya and the scarf/Sheila everyday when she goes to school or to anywhere outside. Fatima is unique in wearing the Abaya (see Figure 11)¹³⁰ because very few little girls wear what she wears today, and if they do so it is mere imitation. Fatima considers Hijab as a means of protection and respect, and it throws the burden of responsibility on women. She says, “If I wear Hijab to

¹²⁹ These are two of the most popular stores for fashionable children costumes.
¹³⁰ Bani Jamrah Forums: Local Bahraini Traditional Girls. www.banijamrah.org
Protect society from corruption, and of course prevent myself, then I will have a double Thawab, just an easy way to heaven.\textsuperscript{131} Like Amina, Fatima associates Hijab with Allah and heaven. By giving it this sacred feature, Hijab becomes a religious practice on its own rather than just a means of custom, imitation or display. When Fatima wears the whole Hijab, she suggests that she is a pious Muslim who is standing against the invasions of fashion in Bahrain.

In Bahrain, it is the norm to wear Hijab and hence a woman who expects respect from society wears the Hijab. This is not to say that there are no women who do not wear Hijab, but this is the expected case. Little girls would not understand this big implication but they understand that a woman who does not wear Hijab is not a “good” woman. The theme of protection is an engraved connotation of wearing Hijab in Bahrain. Protection is on many levels, and it also has many meanings and interpretations. On the one hand, Hijab protects women in the sense that it creates a border that bans any sexual approach to the body. The Hijab presents the woman with no female marks or features, and hence she looks “like an angel” as Fatima says. When the Hijab is associated with divinity and piety, it turns into a sacred barrier that enshrines the body of the woman. It enshrines it because the body becomes a holy space that is not accessed to any person except the Mahram.\textsuperscript{133} When the body of the woman becomes sacred, it gives her respect as a human being instead of being perceived as a “woman.”

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{figure11.png}
\caption{Balqees, a Bahraini Girl Wearing the Traditional \textit{Abaya}.}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{131} See \textit{Glossary}.
\textsuperscript{132} Fatema Yaseen, in discussion with the Author, August 2008.
\textsuperscript{133} Mahram is a term applied to men in front of whom women can stay without Hijab. For more information, see \textit{Glossary}.
Fatima Yaseen’s father refused to allow Fatima to be photographed or video-recorded, since she would be probably not comfortable to be exposed to men. Fatima’s family is very unusual in Bahrain (Figure 12). She does not go to buy from any shop, in order to avoid contact with men as much as possible. Her mother does not drive because she covers her face. Fatima did not provide any answers against her father’s will, and she kept emphasizing the positive role of Hijab. Fatima believes that Hijab has been distorted in the West as it had been associated with terrorism. “We are not terrorists,” she says defending all the women who wear Hijab in the world. The use of “we” interestingly enables Fatima to associate herself with all little women who wear Hijab in the world, and at the same time she considers herself a spokeswoman for her gender. She believes that Hijab is Allah’s gift to “us,” and therefore we should be “thankful” to this very precious gift.

“Hijab is the crown on the heads of Muslim women,” Fatima says. The image is similar to that of Amina in Michigan, since both the flag and the crown are to be seen by others as a symbol that has a deeper meaning embedded in it. Nevertheless, in a country where Hijab is the usual costume, the flag of Islam is already present; and the crown becomes a symbol of women’s pride of Islamic devotion. Fatima considers wearing Hijab as a means that transforms her to the state of becoming Mou’min. In a culture where all are Muslims, the degree of piety and devotion becomes a crucial factor. By embracing the traditional Hijab, Fatima is preserving the Bahraini traditions, and maintaining a high degree of faith in Allah and

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135 Mou’min is a term that describes a Muslim who has strong faith and reverence to Allah and Islam. For further information, see Glossary.
Islamic instruction at the same time. While living in a country that is experiencing a major culture shift towards secularization, Fatima stands convinced as a “true” Muslim, as she claims. When going to school, she wears the whole Hijab despite the difficulties of wearing the traditional Abaya and carrying her trolley-bag and water-can at the same time. It is even more difficult when it comes to other girls and teachers claiming the outdated-ness of the traditional Hijab. Although many people have discouraged her, Fatima does not care because she believes that the “inside” is what matters. “Even if I look old-fashioned to some, I believe that Allah sees my beautiful heart; and my Hijab shows Allah my loving and pure heart.”

Fatima is aware of the negative global view of Hijab, and she attempts to reflect on the position of girls wearing Hijab. For example, she refers to the fact that she plays with Barbie dolls, and other toys that are common among girls. Thus, she tries to identify herself with all the girls of her age in the world. She says, “I am quite fashionable in my style, but you know I choose my garments, not the market,” and by this she declares her resistance to the passive embrace of fashion.

Grateful to Hijab

Many little girls are aware of the importance of wearing Hijab as a Muslim practice, but it is very difficult for them to embrace it if they do not possess a close relationship with Hijab. Many parents try to encourage their daughters to wear Hijab and look decent at a very young age in order to smoothen the transition of Takleef\textsuperscript{136} age. Most mothers will introduce Hijab as a luxurious accessory on special events and celebrations, and gradually the girls get used to it. Usually, mothers take the responsibility of Hijab. There are two basic approaches they follow, though there are so many others than these. Some mothers believe that they should introduce Hijab as early as six or seven, and gradually increase the degree of modesty. Others believe that

\textsuperscript{136} See Glossary.
Hijab should be worn at the age of nine. Since they believe that it is too early to wear Hijab prior to this age, they prefer to allow their girls the freedom of not wearing Hijab till the last moment. In these two cases, the mothers introduce Hijab but she does not enforce it; and when the girl chooses to wear Hijab from her own part, the mother does not introduce it since she does not have to.

Ruqaya is ten years old and from Bahrain. She is in her fifth grade, and she loves shopping and travelling. She comes from a very open-minded family, and both her father and mother occupy academic posts. She has one sister and one brother, both of which are her dearest “children.” Ruqaya has worn Hijab since she turned nine, after her mother told her about the “rules” of Islam on her birthday night. Ruqaya wears the modern *Abaya* (See figure 13)\(^{137}\) with scarf/Sheila since six months only. She says, “My mother allowed me to wear everything from sleeveless dresses to tight jeans, and all of a sudden I had to wear Hijab on my ninth birthday.”\(^{138}\) Many Islamic scholars tend to encourage wearing Hijab earlier in order to get used to it since the practice has many aspects that need consideration. For example, when wearing Hijab, a girl should not shake hands or touch any male who is above the age of fifteen.\(^{139}\) Wearing Hijab means that the little girl is not allowed to sing in public, for example, or speak very softly and privately with men. In short,

\(^{137}\)Noor Tarish, in discussion with the Author, August 2008.
\(^{138}\)Ruqaya, in discussion with the Author, August 2008.
\(^{139}\)The males’ Takleef age is fifteen unless they reach puberty prior to this age, while females’ age of Takleef is nine according to Islamic Shiite scholars.
measures of decency are to be followed when embracing Hijab. The age of Takleef means that the Muslim becomes an adult in Allah’s view. At this age, he/she should practice all the instructions of Islam; praying five times a day, fasting for Ramadan, wearing Hijab, and other rules.

Ruqaya resisted wearing Hijab at the beginning since she was not used to wearing it, but gradually, she says, “I got used to it just like any new piece of clothing. I like to compare my experience with Hijab to wearing new shoes; the more you wear it, the more comfortable it becomes.” The fact that she considers Hijab comfortable highlights two major facts; first, she is convinced of Hijab is not a means of oppression, and second, the complete absence of her resistance to Hijab. Moreover, she endows Hijab with maturity and sound behavior. She says, “I do not shout at my mother anymore, because now I wear Hijab. Since I wear Hijab, I should behave like a mature woman.” Ruqaya is fully aware of the critical age she has come to, and at the same time, she is proud of her achievements after wearing Hijab. For her, Hijab means establishing maturity and departing from all the “silly behaviors” of little children, as she says. Like all other little girls of her age in this project, she associated Hijab with sacred elements. For example, she sees Hijab as a gift from Allah to whom she is so grateful and thankful. She is grateful to Allah because she wears Hijab now. She found in Hijab maturity and privacy, and “many other things that do not come to my mind.”

Ruqaya believes that wearing Hijab is a mission to reveal Islam to the world post-September 11th as the religion of love, care, equality and forgiveness. “We are not bad people like those who destroyed the towers and building. We are the followers of Mohammed, peace be upon him, who was sent as a mercy to humanity,” she says. She tries to draw the commonality with other little girls in the world by comparing her preferences to theirs in order to tell the world
that Hijab does not change the fact that she and her nation’s peers are just children. “We like Chupa-Chups just like you; we play with dolls just like you; we wear clothes from the same shops that you do; we are children after all, and we will become adult humans very soon.” For Ruqaya, Hijab is a microphone through which she can speak to the whole world about Islam. It is the image that shows her religion without the need to speak or explain when she wonders how other religions express their religion in a similar way.

**Hijab in The Future**

Hijab does not always carry primarily an Islamic religious meaning. For many, it has only a materialistic dimension. Suad is a ten years old girl from Dearborn, who originally comes from an Iraqi family. She is a very active girl, who loves playing soccer and basketball, and going to the movies. Suad boasts of having more than “one hundred and one different Hijab,” which enables her to wear a new Hijab every day. She comments, “I always ask Mama to buy the latest styles of Hijab, and since I am the only girl at home, I get all types of Hijab.” Suad wears Hijab in style without paying so much attention to the details of the connotations of Hijab; therefore, she does not confine herself to the entire rules and she is proud of this. “I do it the American way; in summer, no Hijab; I feel I will die,” she comments.

Fadwa is also ten years old, and is from Bahrain. Fadwa is a very fashionable girl, who is very keen to have her perfume and lip-gloss in her bag. She comes from a well-to-do family, where both parents work. She is very open-minded and practical. Similar to Suad, Fadwa does not see Hijab in religious terms, since her Hijab is full of sparkling bright embroidery and crystals. She believes that Hijab “is the national garment of the Muslim culture but it is not

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140 A famous Spanish candy brand.
141 Suad, in discussion with the Author, August 2008.
Islam. We do not know how the ancient people used to dress.” Fadwa is twelve years old, and she refuses to cover all her hair because her friends at school will consider her “from the past,” and she is “a modern up-to-date woman,” she believes.

It is very difficult to see how Hijab will look like in the future because it is constantly shifting on different levels. Some Muslims perceive Hijab as the most important practice of being a Muslim. Manahil, a teacher at Dearborn, did not practice Hijab until she turned 40 after going on Hajj. Manahil is very fashionable in her Hijab, but she is very strict in her understanding of it. After she wore Hijab, she refused to receive any woman who was not wearing Hijab in her house, even if this would cause some inconvenient and embarrassing situations. “Allah and Islam are more important than any inconveniences,” she comments. For Manahil, Hijab means purity and it creates and maintains the purity of Islam. She believes that Allah curses women without Hijab, and if they enter her house, they will bring their curses with them. “This will stop the blessings of Allah,” she adds. Hijab, in this context, creates a holy divine space that should be preserved, and women without Hijab defile the place when they refuse to submit to Hijab.

Hania is an English lecturer who will work on her doctorate program within a year. She comes from a very religious traditional family. She is twenty-seven years old, and her goal is to work in a bank as a manager. Hania stands as a counterpoint to Manahil, in a very different culture in Bahrain. Hania lived in a highly strict traditional Islamic society, and she had to wear “long dress with pants, the Abaya and Hijab, and a face cover,” since she was in her third grade. “I used to envy the girls who used to wear shorts in the sports class, especially when they

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142 Fadwa, in discussion with the Author, August 2008.
143 Muslim Pilgrimage. It takes around one to two weeks depending on the person him/her-self.
144 Manahil, in discussion with the Author, August 2008.
145 Hanya, in discussion with the Author, August 2008.
were full of Mickey Mouse pictures” she narrates. Hania wear only a loose hair cover – a shawl – to declare her mature feminist understanding of Hijab. She studied in the U.S. for her MA degree, and after sixteen months, she was ready to stop practicing Hijab. Moreover, she sees it as a “preventive factor when it comes to business; we should be practical and brave to admit that Hijab is not accepted well in Bahrain.” Hania believes that Hijab prevented her from many excellent opportunities, and that the Islamic clergy is to blame.

While Hania shows strong feelings of regret and resentment towards Hijab in a Muslim culture where Hijab is the public norm, Manahil totally embraces it, heart and soul; and she embeds it with a heavy meaning of maintaining the correctness and purity of Islam. This suggests that Hijab is a personal practice more than anything else. Practicing Hijab is not necessarily a required code that conveys an Islamic piety. Hijab is often misunderstood, in both Islamic as well as non-Islamic cultures, as a means of evaluating the degree of piety of its practitioners. In reality, Hijab has many meanings in different culture and for different women. It is true that Hijab is a medium through which women can express their Islamic identity. In this project, all the young contributors, especially in the United States, chose to wear Hijab willingly; and they all had the choice to avoid wearing it. However, there are many others who are like Hania, who was forced to wear Hijab due to cultural pressure. Hijab is better understood as an individual cultural-Islamic garb, where each woman or girl has a different meaning associated with Hijab. Thus, Hijab is not a visual cue that a woman or a girl is religious, just as the absence of it is not an indication that she is secular.
CHAPTER V: HIJAB IS NOT ANTI-FEMINIST, HIJAB IS NOT THE EROTIC ORIENT

It would be wrong to suppose that Hijab was not prevalent in the Islamic world before the Islamic revolution in Iran, but this historical event created a turning point in the image of Hijab as presented in the West (Guindi 1999). It was after the Iranian revolution, and the revolutionary Iranian government’s confrontation with the United States, when Hijab began to emerge as a controversial topic in academia. Hijab became a subject of criticism and exploitation in Western scholarship. Hijab has been studied from many lenses, none of which gave Hijab what it means in its original religion and culture. Hijab is a term and a concept that owns many aspect, angles, interpretations, and meanings. It can never be limited and reduced to simply an Islamic garment.

Nimat Hafez Barazangi believes that the current controversy over Hijab and sexism is influenced by the conservative male Islamic scholars who dominate the Islamic world as well as the influence of both Judaism and Christianity, both of which, as discussed in Chapter III above, sanctioned and even mandated that women cover themselves in public. Hijab is the part of Islam that has been most severely criticized and attacked than any other practice. Barazangi believes that when Christian and Jewish stories are used as the basis to interpret Islam, a huge problem is created and Islam is consequently misrepresented. For example, the story of the creation of Adam and Eve – that Eve was created from Adam’s rib – has no place neither in the Quran nor in the Hadith.\(^\text{146}\) Thus, gender in Islam should not be “analyzed from outside the Islamic framework.” (Barazangi, al-Faruqi and Harris)

The precarious political and cultural conditions of many Muslim nations and countries in modern times, has worsened the image of Hijab. Muslim countries, whether intentionally or not, did increase and legitimize the Western exploitation and distortion of Hijab. In her book *The Veil*

\(^\text{146}\) Hadith is the second source for Islamic laws. It is all what the Prophet said and did during his lifetime.
Unveiled, Faeghah Shirazi discusses the misusage of Hijab as a “term” and as a “practice” on the one hand, and as a religious-political symbol on the other hand. She proposes that

The veil has been exploited by advertisers of Western products in the United States and in Saudi Arabia, by publishers of Western erotica, by filmmakers in the East and the West, by Iranian politics and clergy, and by militaries and militias in countries such as the United Arab Emirates, Iran and Iraq.

This exploitation created stereotyped images of women who wear it without asking what these women associate Hijab with. Hijab possesses meanings on various levels, depending on the regional, cultural, historical and political circumstances. For example, in Iran the Hijab is a symbol of the working class women who wanted to break the rules imposed by the Shah, Mohammed Ridha Pahlavi, and claim their natural right of working in their “Islamic respected garment that guarantees their purity and modesty” and “stop any sexual approach and abuse by the men [male] colleague [s] at work” (Guindi 1999). Thus, any woman who wears Hijab in Iran is associated with the working class, while aristocratic women did not wear Hijab because they wanted to maintain their elite prestige. The Iranian woman who does not wear Hijab is associated with either the Pahlavi reign or the arrogant aristocracy. While in Iraq, removing the Hijab was associated with educated women, it was incorrect to label women who wear Hijab as backward and anti-modern. Many highly educated Iraqi women did wear Hijab in the workforce. (Hoodfar, Alvi and McDonough 2003)

It seems that Hijab is negotiated from a political perspective and a feminist perspective, but it is rarely presented from its original cultural and religious connotation. Hijab in the academic field is easy prey to the reckless attacks of feminists who approach Hijab using negative slogans and exaggerated speculations. Western feminists “attack Islam outside the frame of Islam; and this results in an extremely distorted analysis that shows women as passers-
by” as Nimat Al-Hibri says. When Western feminist scholars attack Hijab, they are attacking the object and not the symbol. The so-called secular Muslim feminists distorted the image of Hijab more than their Western peers, as they claim that Islam maintains its patriarchic system by suppressing women through the Hijab. This mistaken perspective often does not distinguish between the religion of Islam and its many regional cultures and traditions. Thus, the image of Hijab is discussed outside of religion, outside its culture and outside specific regions, not to mention the language problem in translating the symbolic meaning of religion and cultural practices.

In his book *Orientalism*, Edward Said discusses how Islam is represented from a prejudiced hegemonic Western perspective, but without including the original Eastern perspective. When the powerful colonial West analyses Islam, the “two fears” of “distortion and inaccuracy, or rather the kind of inaccuracy produced by too dogmatic a generality and too positivistic a localized focus” as Said notes are inevitable. When CNN or CBS show pictures of the War on Iraq, women are not presented in their actual situations. They are depicted as submissive vulnerable traditional women who simply weep and wail over the deaths of their children, husbands and family members. Seldom do we see a veiled Iraqi woman lecturing or debating or even carrying the simple responsibilities of taking care of her children.

In the United States popular culture, Hijab is associated with the exotic charming *Harem*, an image that is very far from the real Islamic meaning of the veil. *Playboy, Hustler* and *Penthouse* use the veil, associating it with the mythical exotic Orient in order to sell sex (Guindi 1999). The myths of the *Arabian Nights*, a fantasy world where sex is easily available to men, are the most popular source that Americans rely on when forming an idea about women of the Orient. This has resulted in a false portrait of the East as a charming fancy land where veiled l
women are young and beautiful, and where sex is fantastically enjoyed. Indeed, most Americans are trapped in the myth of the sexual image of the East; but, when presenting the veil as a sexual escalator, it loses the meanings it holds in the real Orient.

When any academic word is accused of “inaccuracy and distortion” to use Saied’s words, it is useless and pointless. Western feminists disregard Muslim women who wear Hijab, and treat them as silent subjects, and sometimes mute objects, privileging their own arrogant, yet ignorant, speculations and feminist theories. Theoretically, feminism has attacked Islam from outside its borders. All too often, feminists jump to the conclusion that “the veil is an oppressor; the veil is going back to the Middle Ages; the veil is a patriarchic invention to exclude women from the professional world” (Caner 2003). After presuming this thesis, feminists hasten to defend it and prove their opinion, without actually listening to the opinions of Muslim women. When feminists do not listen to or understand the veiled women’s perspective about their “own” veil, their whole history of the modern use of the veil is ignored and curtailed. When Western feminist scholars ignore their “subjects,” they are guilty of patriarchy’s main goal: to silence and control women. The veiled woman in Western and secular feminist discussions have turned into “subalterns” who are neither totally alive nor completely dead.

Gayatri Spivak discusses the double nature of the subaltern who is “othered” from two levels: first, from the hegemonic exploiting power of the colonizer and, second, by the society’s patriarchy. A third level would be the orthodoxy of feminism, and its inflexible female-centered mentality. Both the colonizer and the patriarchic system mute women, and subjugate them, making women a double subaltern. “If in the contest of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow” (Spivak 1999).
If the subaltern is created by marginalizing, muting and subordinating another human being, are not feminists as guilty as patriarchy and colonialism in hushing the veiled women’s voice?

Women in the early years of Islam fought battles, lectured men and debated with the *Khalifa*.147 Barazangi argues that Muslim women have the freedom to occupy whatever post or space they want, and she believes that “Islam does not prevent women from any field. The ancient Muslim woman was a warrior, a mother, a teacher and a poet” (Barazangi, al-Faruqi and Harris 1999). Indeed, Islamic history is full of women leaders such as Zainab, the daughter of Imam Ali and granddaughter of the Prophet, who carried the message of Islam and embarrassed the Umayyad Caliph with her strong, well-articulated speeches and criticism of his inadequacy as a corrupt man who defiled Islam with his advocacy of prostitution and concubines (Ali 1964). Shiite Muslims believe that, without Zainab’s critiques, the Umayyad Caliph Yazeed, since he was blasphemous and a drunkard, would have corrupted Islam.

Failure to see any types of pro-feminist perspectives in Hijab is almost ubiquitous in Western scholarship, and this oversight increased the credibility of the pervasive perspective that argues for the oppressive role of Hijab in particular, and generalizes and trivializes the vast diversity of Islamic cultures. In terms of gender roles, the Shiite sect is arguably the most revolutionary sect in Islamic history. (Ali 1964) In Iran, a Shiite woman can be an athlete, a lecturer, a soldier, a police-woman, etc. while in Sunni-dominated Saudi Arabia, a woman cannot even drive, or go out alone with a male who “protects” her. In Iran, the Hijab is the medium that enables women to work and become active socially and politically, while in Saudi Arabia Hijab is the medium that prevents women from performing regular activates outside the home.

Hijab from the Shiite perspective has a connotation quite different from the oppression and marginalization of women. It is the Hijab of Zainab that gave her the power to lecture, to

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147 Khalifa: Caliph: is the highest authority in the Islamic state from the 1st till the 9th Arabic century.
fight and to preserve Islam. It is the Hijab that gave Fatima, the daughter of the Prophet, the power to silence men when she speaks. Hijab in the Shiite sect creates a halo that maintains the honor and respect for woman. Unfortunately, these contexts and meanings of Hijab are not widely known or propagated in Western feminist writings, resulting in a lack of balance and accuracy about what Hijab actually means.

When a Shiite girl wears Hijab, she is treated like an adult woman, and hence Hijab is the passage from childhood to adulthood. Besides, it endows the female with moral attributes because Shiites believe that wearing Hijab protects the community from falling into the sins of adultery. In this case, women are the gatekeepers who protect the permanence and purity of Islam in society, while the men are the polluters who defile the pristine religion. Hijab is the symbol that unites in solidarity the variety of Muslim women in the world. Hijab, from the perspective of its practitioners, is an identity marker of which they are proud.

In Shiite Islamic doctrine, the girls should wear Hijab at the age of nine, but Amina wore it after she had turned ten - after she had contemplated for a while on Hijab, and had torn away all her “doubts” concerning practicing the Hijab. Amina\(^\text{148}\) is contemplative and critical in her opinions about Muslim women. She says, “we need some more women scholars and journalists to show the world our original Islam, and not Islam behind the black covers of the Sunni countries.”\(^\text{149}\) Amina understands Hijab as simply a practice of Islamic devotion that helps her show others she is a Muslim, though this is not the whole understanding of Hijab in Amina’s view of point. Though her mother does not wear Hijab publicly, Amina believes that her mother “wears a Hijab in her heart.” Amina is fully aware that Hijab is not only the outer surface of Muslim women, but it is the “essence” as well as the surface. Hijab is something that purifies the

\(^{148}\) See Chapter Four.
\(^{149}\) Amina, in discussion with the Author, August 2008
heart before it is a practice of show. It is a form by means of which women can become nearer to Allah and at the same time show the society that they are Muslim women. Amina comprehends the fact that if she wears Hijab, she has to avoid touching boys while playing with them, and gradually behave like an adult woman.

Despite their young age, many of the girls who participated in this research endow Hijab with sacred meanings and impressive metaphors that reflect an articulate notion of Hijab. If a little girl under the pressure of a diverse culture chooses to wear Hijab, she gives an indirect message that refutes the claims of Westerners and feminists who attack Hijab and help propagate its dark image as a silencer and suppressor of woman. Hijab for these girls becomes a ritual practice in its own, rather than just a means of display. When Fatima\textsuperscript{150} wears the whole Hijab, she suggests that she is a pious Muslim who is standing against the invasions of fashion in Bahrain, which reflects her profound comprehension and analysis of Hijab.

The theme of protection is a commonly accepted connotation of wearing Hijab in all Muslim nations and countries. On the one hand, Hijab protects women in the sense that it creates a border that bans any sexual approach to the body. The Hijab presents the woman with no female marks or features, and hence she looks “like an angel”\textsuperscript{151} as Fatima says. Hijab becomes a sacred barrier that enshrines the body of the woman, giving her privilege over men. When the body of the woman becomes sacred, it gives her respect as a human being instead of being perceived as a “woman.”

From another perspective, Hijab protects men from falling in the sin of adultery or other banned sexual practices in Islam. Thus, the woman bears a heavy burden when she protects her

\textsuperscript{150} See interviews and discussion in Chapter IV.
\textsuperscript{151} Fatima Yaseen, in discussion with the Author, August 2008
body and her existence as a woman, and at the same time, she protects men. By this, to these Muslims, it seems that Allah has given women more ethical control and responsibility than men.

Most of the little girls interviewed in this study, discuss Hijab from an Islamic perspective, but some of them give it a materialist dimension, while others give it a cultural conception. The girls’ discussion of Hijab does show a very rich variety of meaning and analysis. Their discussion forms a counterpoint to the feminist and Western stereotypical images and claims about Hijab.

Muslim women who own these views of the meaning of Hijab are unfortunately often muted, oriented, sexualized, exploited or abused in Western culture. To discuss Hijab in a correct neutral context, it should be discussed with reference to the original meanings and viewpoints that form it in its various Islamic regional cultures. This discussion should also be sensitive to the difference between the Sunni and the Shiite when it comes to Hijab – since this is a crucial difference. Sarah is a young girl from Bahrain who is about to practice Hijab with all its other obligation in Islam. She is eight years old, but she believes that she is “more contemplative and deep in her thoughts and opinions”\(^\text{152}\) than her peers in the classroom. She is very intellectual, and her thoughts reflect her love of reading. Sarah dreams of becoming a famous woman like “Margaret Thatcher, Indira Gandhi and Madeline Albright.” She feels very sad that Muslim women do not speak out about Islam, and they just get busy in other fields. “I want to win a global prize,” she says; and she wants all the girls to be like her in her ambition and Islam. Sarah studies in a public school in a traditional town, and most of her ideas are not “well-accepted” by her colleagues and friends. “They think I am too romantic and simple, but you know dreams come true sometime,” she insists. Sarah wants to wear a moderate Hijab because she does not like to overdo Islam ‘because I might get fed up with it.” She thinks that in the current Islamic

\(^{152}\) Sarah, in discussion with the Author, August 2008
world we “lack the model of academic women who support Hijab; we need some women to convey our views and not the media’s opinions about Hijab.” Sarah believes Hijab’s meanings change and even the laws that regulate Hijab will be changing forever. She says, Hijab is “an ever-changing garment with [an] ever-changing concepts; it can never mean one thing only.”

**A Final word**

In order to give voice to the voiceless, the perspective of the little women who wear Hijab has been presented using interviews in this research. This study discusses Hijab in its proper context: in the borders and limits within the cultural language of Islam in both Bahrain and the diaspora in the US. It is important to take into consideration that the element of women-centered choice is crucial when discussing Hijab. In Islam, the doctrines are subject to the individual’s choice “faman sha’a falyu’min waman sha’a falyakfur,”[^153] which means, “Who wants to believe let him so and who wants to blaspheme let him so.”[^154] This study of little women, the females who are on the threshold of adulthood, illuminates the modern meaning of Hijab for girls who wear Hijab by free choice. Girls are wearing Hijab as early as six, both in societies where Hijab is the norm like the Middle East, such as Bahrain; and in vast multi-ethnic Diasporas like Dearborn, Michigan in the US. While feminists and anti-Hijab proponents attack Hijab as oppressive, these little women consider Hijab a symbol of modernity and identity.

[^154]: The translation can be of a different version but the meaning is the same. It is translated by me personally.
GLOSSARY

1. Shiite Imams:

The Shiite – or Shia – believe in Allah, God, the only creator and prayed for. Their prophet is Mohammed, and they believe that he was succeeded by twelve Imams. The first of them is his son-in-law, Imam Ali. All the other eleven Imams descend from him. All of them were martyred and they have shrines in Iraq, Iran, Syria, and Saudi Arabia except the last Imam, Imam Mahdi, who is the messiah of the Shiite and they are waiting for him to fill the earth with justice and peace just as it had been filled with injustice and chaos.

2. Ma'soom:

The term Ma'soom refers to the Prophet and some of his descendents. The word literally means divine and cannot err or make mistakes. The Shiite believe that their Imams are semi-divine beings in the sense that they know the future because Allah reveals to them the knowledge of the unknown. Thus, each Imam knows about his destiny before he is martyred, and he knows what will happen even after his death.¹⁵⁵

It is important to know that the Shiite culture reveres these people and their relatives. It is not a solely men dominated culture where only men can become heroes and be enshrined. Women share in heroism and enshrinement, and this includes little girls as well. For example, in Syria there is the shrine of Sayeda Ruqaya, who was very young when she died. Other shrines for children who were even dead before they were born exist as well. These sacred people are considered incorruptible or sinful, and they are endowed with supernatural knowledge of many things such as the future.

3. The Shiite's Resource in Islam:

The Shiite rely on two resources: the Holy Quran and the Hadith. The Quran is the Holy book of the Muslims, and the Hadith is a record of what the Prophet said and did in his lifetime. While the Sunni take the Hadith from the records of scholars in the fourth generation after the Prophet’s life, The Shiite take it from his son-in-law, Imam Ali, and his descendants directly. Shiite people rely on a contemporary Imam, who is a very well-educated pious man in religion. This Imam is not divine or sacred, but the Shiite would refer to him in answering their modern questions about bioethics such as cloning and other current issues. There are many contemporary Imams, and they should not be confused with the twelve divine Imams of the Prophet Mohammed.

4. Religion:

There are many terms that fall under the motif of religion. When you hear in a Shiite community that this man or woman is religious, this has many connotations. A religious woman would wear a whole Hijab from top to toe, and the Hijab would be very modest and decent. Besides, she would not touch men who are strangers. “Stranger” is a category that would any man who is not her father, brother, grandfather, uncle, step-father or husband. All other men are considered strangers, and thus even shaking hands is problematic. In addition, this woman would be deeply educated in religion, and she would know all the stories in the Shiite culture. The terms “pious, decent, religious, and good” all have the same meaning.

5. The Matam:

The Matam is a term applied to any hall or big room that is dedicated to celebrate the rituals in Shiite Culture. The Matam can be a very big room that can hold hundreds of people, and it can be small to room only around twenty or thirty. The Matam plays a vital role in the life
and culture of the Shiite. It is a place for spirituality but it is also a place for education and knowledge. Undoubtedly, it is an excellent place for social communications. The Matam is dedicated to commemorate the birth or martyrdom of an Imam or the Prophet, or a divine woman like Fatima the Daughter of the Prophet. The attendants of the Matam know by heart the stories and biographies of all these divine people.

The Matam has its rules and attendants respect their presence in the Matam. For example, no dance or indecent behavior would be performed in it. As a sign of respect, people would even take off their shoes when they step into it.

6. Takleef:

This word is a noun that refers to the age of puberty in scientific terms. In Islamic terminology, the age of Takleef is the threshold that transmits the human being from the irresponsible innocence of childhood to the responsible adulthood practices. The age of Takleef differs according to sex as Islamic scholars agree. For boys, the age of Takleef is fifteen or until “his voice changes,” while for girls it is the age of twelve. The difference is not based on gender discrimination; and it is actually the fact that girls reach the age of puberty as early as nine, and some boys would reach it as late as fifteen. After this age, each individual is responsible for all the Islamic doctrines and practices; such is prayers, fasting and other responsibilities, before God – Allah almighty. Girls should wear Hijab at this age, while boys who are above the age of Takleef cannot touch girls or converse with them privately.

7. Thawab:

Thawab means in Islamic terminology the reward of Allah when performing benevolent deeds and worshipping Allah, as Muslim are instructed in the Holy Quran and according to

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Hadith. The opposite of this word is punishment (Iqab in Arabic). The word Thawab appears frequently in the Holy Quran and its number of occurrence is more than double of that of the punishment.  

8. Mahram:

This word refers to the men to whom the marriage of women would be considered as incestuous. They are also the men in front of whom women are allowed to stay without Hijab. When going to Hajj, women are supposed to travel with a Mahram according to Islamic laws. The Mahrams are the father, the brother, the uncle, the son, the grandson, the father-in-law and the grandfather according to the Holy Quran. In the Quran the definition is by women; so the women to whom the man cannot get married to and it is mentioned in Suratunisaa (The Sura of Women):

حُرْمَتْ عَلَيْكُمْ أُمُّهَاتُكُمْ وَأَخْوَاتُكُمْ وَأُمَّهَاتُ أَخْوَاتِكُمْ وَأُمُّهَاتُ الأَخْوَاتِ وَأُمَّهَاتُ اللَّاتِي أَرَضَعْتُمْهُنَّ وَأَخْوَاتُكُمْ مِنَ الرَّضِعَةَ وَأُمَّهَاتُ يَسَابِيكُمْ وَرَوْيَاتُكُمْ الْأَلْتَيْنِ فِي حَجُّ الْغُرُوبِ مَنْ يَسَابِيكُمْ اللَّاتِي دَخَلَتْ بِهِنَّ فَإِنْ لَمْ تَتَكُُولُوا دَخَلَتْ بِهِنَّ فَإِنْ لَمْ تَجََاجَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَحَلاَلَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ الَّذِينَ مِنْ أَصْلَابِكُمْ وَأَنْ تَجََاجُوا بِبَيْنَ الْأَختَيْنِ إِلَّا مَا قَدْ سَلَفَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ غُفْرَانًا رَحِيمًا  

This Aya can be translated to an equivalent of the following in English:

It is prohibited (for men) to get married to their mothers, daughter, maternal aunts, paternal aunts, nieces, mothers who had breastfed you, sisters by breastfeeding, mothers-in-law, and you step-daughters if you have lain with their mothers; but if you have not lain with them there is no guilt; and your daughters-in-law and to have two sisters together unless it is before (this Aya); God is merciful and forgiving.
9. Mou'min:

This word literally means believer in Arabic but the connotations of this word is much more profound than the word believer. If you are a Mou'min you are more pious and you do everything in the Holy Quran. Allah has promised the Mou'mins eternal happiness in Paradise. In the Quran there is a Sura that is dedicated to Mou'mins, showing all the promises of Allah almighty to these people, and how a person can become a Mou'min. To distinguish between the Muslim and the Mou'min is that to become a Muslim you have to just declare the belief in Allah Almighty, and his Messenger (Peace be upon him); while to become Mou'min you have to pray correctly, fast in Ramadhan, evade talking in people's sleeves, etc.

10. The Quran:

The Holy Quran is the holy book for all Muslims. It is composed of thirty chapters. Each chapter is called a “Juza.” It can also be divided into one hundred and four “Suras.” Each Sura is composed of verses, each of which is referred to as an “Aya.”
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APPENDIX A. INTERVIEWEE CONSENT LETTER

Bowling Green State University
Hajar Mahfoodh
American Culture Studies
Dean of Arts

Interviewee Consent Letter

This is an interviewee-consent form that needs your signature. Please note that this is a voluntary work that will be done only after your permission. Please read carefully the following points, and sign if you give your consent to volunteer in this project.

1. I am Hajar Mahfoodh, an M.A student at Bowling Green State University, and my field is American Culture Studies. This interview is conducted to support a research; my thesis that discusses the practice of the Hijab from the perspective of girls aged 8-12. I will use my phone’s camera to record the interview but I will delete all the interviews after I document them on papers; I will use the written interviews to assure your privacy and confidentiality. The interview is conditioned to your consent as well as your parent’s consent (If you are one of the adult participants, you do not need any of your parent’s consent). I want you to know that your parents will not know anything you say in this interview. Your name will be totally concealed to guarantee your privacy and confidentiality. The research aims at providing a bright image that shows the meanings of the Hijab from women who wear it. If you believe that the Hijab you wear means something special, you are more than welcomed to answer the questions and add extra comments. The research aims at giving the voice to the practitioners of the Hijab so that they can convey the meanings of Hijab to the U.S. If the research succeeds, one of my aims is to compose it into a book that will carry the title “Little Women: The Hijab amongst Young Women.”

2. The research will last for a whole year approximately, during which any of your precious suggestion are more than welcomed. The interview is conditioned to your consent as well as your parents’ consent. I will ask you to sign the form, and it is your choice, after your parent’s consent to participate. Your names
will be totally concealed to guarantee your privacy. If you feel any tension or pressure, you do not have to push yourself to anything you do not want to do. I would like to remind you again that this is voluntary work. You will do the interview only if you want to.

3. You will be asked around twenty questions (or less) whose answers vary in length. Thus, the interview will take approximately 15-25 minutes depending on your response. A copy of the questions will be given to each participant. If the participant does not feel good about her interview, she can ask for a second interview by contacting my email or phone number found on this paper, or she can ask to delete it totally and withdraw from the project. You can also contact the HSRB (Human Subjects Review Board) for any further information. The contact is written below. You can also contact my advisors Dr Donald McQuarie and Ms Madeline Duntley – see contact information below. The interviews will not be reported to your parents as a protective measure that protects your confidentiality and privacy.

4. The interviewee’s comfort and security are my utmost concerns; therefore, I will use other Muslim names to conceal their characters and identities. The video records are on the phone and they will be deleted immediately after writing them on papers. I would also like to tell you that your participation will not influence your grades or class work.

5. Purpose of the Project:

This research aims to add better knowledge to the notion of the Hijab in the Western culture; it tries to present an alternative literature that stands as a counterpoint to the post-colonial propaganda on the current media. It also aims at enriching the academic field by discussing the flexibility of the Hijab and Islam in general, since both are still very new to Academia. It will bring new dimension to discuss Islam and the Orient, and it will also draw attention to the culture of children who are on the threshold of adolescence.

6. You may have a copy of the consent form if you wish so.

7. In case you need to contact me, call me on:

Hajar Mahfoodh

Email: hajarm@gmail.com
Phone: (419) 490-5538

For any further information or for any other concerns you might have, please contact

the Chair, Human Subjects Review Board,

Bowling Green State University, (419) 372-7716 (hsrb@bgsu.edu)

My advisors:

Ph. D Donald McQuarie

Bowling Green State University: 419-372-8886 (dmcquar@bgnet.bgsu.edu)

Ph. D Madeline Duntley

Bowling Green State University: 419-372-7012 (dmadeli@bgnet.bgsu.edu)

By signing this form, I give my permission to Hajar Mahfoodh the full right to include my interview in her research, with a different name. Please note that by doing the interview, you are assenting this form as well.

Signature
APPENDIX B. PARENTS’ CONSENT LETTER

Bowling Green State University
Hajar Mahfoodh
American Culture Studies
Dean of Arts

Parent Consent Letter

This is a parent-consent form that needs your signature to proceed to the interview. The interview is voluntary and it is you choice to allow your daughter to participate. Please read carefully the following points, and sign if you give your consent to volunteer in this project.

1. I am Hajar Mahfoodh, an MA student at Bowling Green State University, and my field is American Culture Studies. This interview is conducted to support a research; my thesis that discusses the practice of the Hijab from the perspective of girls aged 8-12. The research aims at providing a bright image that shows the meanings of the Hijab from women who wear it instead of the post-colonial opinions that are presented in the media. The research aims at giving the voice to the practitioners of the Hijab so that they can convey the meanings of Hijab to the U.S. If the research succeeds, one of my aims is to compose it into a book that will carry the title “Little Women: The Hijab amongst Young Women.”

2. The research will last for a whole year approximately, during which any of your precious suggestion are more than welcomed. I will use my phone’s camera to record the interview but I will delete all the interviews after I document them on papers; I will use the written interviews to assure your privacy and confidentiality. The interview is conditioned to your consent as well as your daughter’s consent. Your daughter’s name will be totally concealed to guarantee privacy and confidentiality. If you feel any tension or pressure, you do not have to push yourself to anything you do not want to do. I would like to remind you again that this is voluntary work. I
would encourage you to feel free to contact me at anytime you feel uncomfortable, and do not hesitate to discuss any issue regarding the interview and the research with me on my contact number and email, and you can contact the HSRB Board at my university for any information, which is provided below. You can also contact my advisors Dr Donald McQuarie and MS Madeline Duntley – see contact information below. The interviews will not be reported to the parents as a protective measure that protects the confidentiality and privacy of the young women. The interviewee’s will be chosen according to their voluntary qualities.

3. Each interviewee will be asked around twenty questions whose answers vary in length. A copy of the questions will be given to each participant. If the participant does not feel good about her interview, she can ask for a second interview by contacting my email or phone number found on this paper.

4. The interviewee’s comfort and security are my utmost concerns; therefore, I will use other Muslim names to conceal their characters and identities. The video records are on the phone and they will be deleted immediately after writing them on papers.

5. Purpose of the Project:

a. This research aims to add better knowledge to the notion of the Hijab in the Western culture; it tries to present an alternative literature that stands as a counterpoint to the post-colonial propaganda on the current media. It also aims at enriching the academic field by discussing the flexibility of the Hijab and Islam in general, since both are still very new to Academia. It will bring new dimension to discuss Islam and the Orient, and it will also draw attention to the culture of children who are on the threshold of adolescence.

6. You may have a copy of the consent form if you wish so.

7. In case you need to contact me, call me on:

   Hajar Mahfoodh

   Email: hajarm@gmail.com

   Phone: (419) 490-5538
For any further information or for any other concerns you might have, please contact

The Chair of Human Subjects Review Board (HSRB),

Bowling Green State University, (419) 372-7716 (hsrb@bgsu.edu)

My advisors:

Ph. D Donald McQuarie

Bowling Green State University: 419-372-8886 (dmcquar@bgnet.bgsu.edu)

Ph. D Madeline Duntley

Bowling Green State University: 419-372-7012 (dmadeli@bgnet.bgsu.edu)

By signing, I give my permission to Hajar Mahfoodh the full right to include my daughter’s interview in her research, with a different name.

Parent’s Signature
APPENDIX C. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The possible Questions for the little girls about Hijab.

1. When did you (or will you) first start to wear Hijab?

2. How did you make that decision? Did family members ask you to do it, did your friends start wearing it, or was it your idea or all of the above?

3. If you wear Hijab, is it full i.e. Abaya and Sheila?

4. What kind of fabric is it? How many do you have?

5. [Have several different style veils available to show]: Which of these Hijab would you like to wear? Why?

6. How do you tie it/fix it bring a veil and (have her show you) who taught you how to tie it?

7. How do you think you look when you wear Hijab? Does the Hijab make you Unique, mature, beautiful, etc?

8. Does wearing the Hijab makes you feel more religious/Muslim? Why or why not?

9. Do you have a sister (s)? Does she wear Hijab? When did she first wear Hijab?

10. Does your mother wear Hijab?

11. Do you have brothers? Did they (or other boys) treat you differently once you started wearing Hijab? If so how? Can you give an example?

12. Do you have any other friends who are little girls who also wear Hijab?

13. Do you wear Hijab to be like your mother, sister, friends or you have a different model to follow?

14. Do you choose your friends on the basis of Hijab?

15. Do you play with boys, your cousins for example?

16. Do you play outside with the Hijab?
17. Do you know *Rugaya*, Daughter of Imam Hussein? Did she wear *Hijab*?

18. How many Abaya's and/or *Sheilas* do you have?

19. Do these stories/characters make you proud to wear the Hijab? Why?

20. Do you go to the Matam in Ashoura?

21. Did you paint and draw in the Children Gallery?

22. What did you draw?

23. How do you dress to the Matam?

24. Will you continue dressing like this? Why?