

**Contested Views on Islamic Dress in Contemporary  
Morocco: Balancing Islam, Modernity, and Cultural  
Identity**

**A Thesis**

**Submitted to Master's Study Program of Islamic Studies at the  
Faculty of Islamic Studies in partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
the degree of**

**Master of Arts (M.A.)**



by:

**Oumaima Bouchouk**

**01212220004**

**UNIVERSITAS ISLAM INTERNASIONAL INDONESIA**

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# ABSTRACT

Oumaima Bouchouk

[oumaima.bouchouk@uiii.ac.id](mailto:oumaima.bouchouk@uiii.ac.id)

01212220004

Master in Islamic Studies

Indonesian International Islamic University UIII

This thesis explores the complex interplay between clothing, culture, and religion in Morocco, with an emphasis on the hijab and its evolving role and perception. Throughout history, clothing has served as a key indicator of social status, cultural identity, and personal expression, and its evolution reflects broader societal changes. This study traces the historical development of the hijab from its origins to contemporary manifestations, through analyzing its role as a symbol of identity, empowerment, and political expression. The research highlights the impact of colonialism and globalization on Moroccan dress, leading to a unique Moroccan-European hybrid fashion that mixes traditional and modern styles. The study also examines current debates and media representations surrounding the hijab in Moroccan society, while highlighting the diverse perspectives of supporters and opponents. This thesis is achieved through the use of a qualitative research approach, which includes historical analysis, case studies, and content analysis of media representations. It provides a comprehensive understanding of the hijab's role and significance in Morocco.

*Keywords: culture, identity, colonialism, globalization, hijab, Morocco.*

## المخلص

أميمة بوشوك

01212220004

Oumaima.bouchouk@uiii.ac.id

ماجستير الدراسات الإسلامية

الجامعة الإسلامية العالمية الإندونيسية

### وجهات نظر متضاربة حول اللباس الإسلامي في المغرب المعاصر: الموازنة بين الإسلام والحدائثة والهوية الثقافية

تتناول هذه الأطروحة العلاقة المتداخلة بين اللباس والثقافة والدين في المغرب، حيث تركز على الحجاب وتصوراته المتغيرة. وقد اعتبرت الملابس، عبر التاريخ، مؤشرا رئيسيا دالا على المكانة الاجتماعية والهوية الثقافية والتعبير عن الذات، ويعكس تطورها تغيرات مجتمعية واسعة. تنتبع هذه الدراسة التطور التاريخي للحجاب عبر دراسة أصوله ومظاهره المعاصرة من خلال تحليل دوره كرمز للهوية والتمكين والتعبير السياسي. ويسلط هذا البحث الضوء على تأثير الاستعمار والعولمة على الزي المغربي، مما أدى إلى ظهور أزياء هجينة مغربية أوروبية فريدة من نوعها تمزج بين الأنماط التقليدية والحديثة. كما تعرض هذه الأطروحة المناقشات الحالية والتمثيلات الإعلامية حول الحجاب في المجتمع المغربي، مع تسليط الضوء على وجهات النظر المتنوعة للمؤيدين والمعارضين. استخدمت هذه الأطروحة منهج البحث النوعي، والذي يتضمن التحليل التاريخي ودراسات حالات خاصة وتحليل محتوى التمثيلات الإعلامية، مما يوفر فهماً شاملاً لدور الحجاب وأهميته في المغرب.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** الثقافة، الهوية، الاستعمار، العولمة، الحجاب، المغرب.

## TRANSLITERATION GUIDE

Arabic	Roman	Arabic	Roman	Arabic	Roman
أ	a	س	s	ل	l
ب	b	ش	sh	م	m
ت	t	ص	ṣ	ن	n
ث	th	ذ	ḏ	هـ	h
ج	j	ط	ṭ	و	w
ح	h	ظ	ẓ	ي	y
خ	kh	ع	'		
د	d	غ	gh		
ذ	dh	ف	f		
ر	r	ق	q		
ز	z	ك	k		

### Short vocal

Arabic Alphabet	Roman Alphabet	Arabic Example	Transliteration
أ	a	جلس	<i>Jalasa</i>
إ	i	ركب	<i>Rakina</i>
أ	u	كُتِبَ	<i>kutiba</i>

### Long vocal

Arabic Alphabet	Roman Alphabet	Arabic Example	Transliteration
آ	ā	جری / سافر	<i>Jara / Safar</i>
إي	ī	سليم	<i>Saleem</i>
أو	ū	سجود	<i>Sujud</i>

### Diphthong

Arabic Alphabet	Roman Alphabet	Arabic Example	Transliteration
ؤ	aw	مولی	Mawla
ئي	ay	غيب	ghayb

**Notes:**

1. Consonant with shaddah (◌ّ) for instance, أمة is written as ummah (double letters).
2. The Arabic letter hamzah (ء) at the beginning of a word is transliterated into “a” not into “`a”. For instance, أحمد is written as aḥmad not `aḥmad.
3. The Arabic script of alif-lam qamariyah (ال) is written as “al” at the beginning of words and alif-lam shamsiyah (ا) is written in accordance with the first letter at the beginning of words. For instance:  
المائدة al-māidah  
الرحمان ar-rahmān
4. The Arabic letter ta’ marbutah (ة) is written as “h” when it is located at the end of the words, such as البقرة is written as al-baqarah. When located in the middle of a sentence is written as “t”, such as أمة وسطا is written as ummatan wasaṭan.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

This thesis could not be achieved without the help, guidance and assistance of my supervisor Dr. Bhirawa Anoraga who provided me with references, organized my thesis, and assisted me throughout these two years with all the tools that a student might need in their academic endeavor.

I am also grateful to my family and especially to my father who gave me ideas and insights to include in my thesis. I am also so thankful to my friends and classmates who gave me all the emotional support and ideas, namely Thanaa Shakeer, Maria Ayaz, Shana Jasmin, Nasir Yahya, Mubarak Lawal, Usman Waheed and Adnane Amara.

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the study

Throughout human civilization, clothing has played a basic role as a fundamental means of protection and as a powerful sign of social standing, cultural identity, and personal expression. The objectives, materials, and styles of clothing have changed over time, reflecting the dynamic nature of human society. Clothes have served as a social status and identification signifier historically. Clothing was designed with great care to represent a person's social standing, occupation, and even place of origin in ancient societies like Egypt, Rome, and Greece.<sup>1</sup> For example, linen clothing was widely worn in ancient Egypt, and the fineness and quality of the linen were a good indicator of social level.<sup>2</sup>

The rich tapestry of cultural legacy is reflected in the many variations in traditional clothing that have been found among various ethnic groups and geographical areas. African traditional attire, such as the elaborate beadwork of the Maasai in Kenya or the kente fabric of the Ashanti people in Ghana, is evidence of the creative and cultural diversity of this continent.<sup>3</sup> These clothes have symbolic connotations that are frequently connected to historical events, religious convictions, and societal ideals in addition to being visually beautiful. It's also important to recognize how fashion has changed over time. A major turning point in the fashion business occurred when mass-produced clothes replaced hand-woven materials during the Industrial Revolution, opening up apparel to a wider consumer base. This expansion of fashion accessibility has persisted into the modern day when globalization and technical developments

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<sup>1</sup> B. M. C., "The Dress of the Ancient Egyptians: I. In the Old and Middle Kingdoms," *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 11, no. 8 (1916): 166–71, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3254117>.

<sup>2</sup> Roger S. Bagnall, *Egypt in the Byzantine World, 300-700* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), <https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=bCtxJwWIVW4C&oi=fnd&pg=PA21&dq=Egypt+in+the+Byzantine+and+early+Islamic+periods.&ots=18iuZjyZ9X&sig=hBX2mjql-eoMzwJl3BHJqvlmsGQ>.

<sup>3</sup> Fatou Diop and Dwight Merunka, "African Tradition and Global Consumer Culture: Understanding Attachment to Traditional Dress Style in West Africa," *International Business Research* 6, no. 11 (October 24, 2013): p1, <https://doi.org/10.5539/ibr.v6n11p1>.

have expanded the range of apparel possibilities and made it possible to combine traditional and modern styles.<sup>4</sup>

Clothes are an important component of professional identity in addition to their cultural and social relevance. One can project competence, authority, and professionalism by their job clothes. For example, uniforms are meant to set workers apart from the public while simultaneously encouraging a sense of discipline and unity. But sometimes, enforcing professional clothing requirements can cause "identity dissonance," in which people believe that there is a discrepancy between their identity and their professional clothes. This phenomenon emphasizes how intricately identity, attire, and societal expectations interact.<sup>5</sup>

Many traditional societies use clothes to reinforce gender norms. In Victorian England, ladies wore corsets and elaborate costumes to show their domestic roles and attractiveness, while men wore tailored suits to show their public and economic status. These fashion choices upheld gender norms and cultural expectations. Religious activities also influence gendered apparel. Head coverings and modest clothes are significant in Islam, Orthodox Judaism, and Christianity. The hijab, or veiling, is a mark of humility and religious commitment in Islam. Sikh men also wear turbans to show their faith and devotion to Sikhism. Modesty requires Orthodox Jewish women to cover their hair after marriage. Christian denominations like the Amish and Mennonites have dress regulations that emphasize modesty and seclusion from society.<sup>6</sup>

Religious veiling, especially in Islam, has been debated by scholars and the public. Islamic principles and culture strongly encourage veiling. Scholars and groups interpret Quranic texts about veiling differently, resulting in different practices and beliefs. Some Islamic scholars define veiling strictly as covering the hair and body for modesty and piety. Traditionalist beliefs that value history and culture typically match this viewpoint. Liberal interpretations emphasize human choice and contextual knowledge of religious scriptures to attain modesty without strict dress requirements. History and socio-politics have also shaped

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<sup>4</sup> Saba Safdar, Kimberley Goh, and Melisa Choubak, "Clothing, Identity, and Acculturation: The Significance of Immigrants' Clothing Choices.," *Canadian Journal of Behavioural Science/Revue Canadienne Des Sciences Du Comportement* 52, no. 1 (2020): 36.

<sup>5</sup> Kimberly A. Miller, "Dress: Private and Secret Self-Expression," *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal* 15, no. 4 (October 1997): 223–34, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0887302X9701500404>.

<sup>6</sup> Mehmet Ada Özdil, "The Effect of Clothing as a Marker on Identity," *Motif Akademi Halkbilimi Dergisi* 14, no. 33 (2021): 117–30.

veiling where veiling symbolized opposition to Western cultural influence and cultural preservation during colonialism. Some Muslim women today see the hijab as a symbol of empowerment and autonomy, fighting stereotypes and reclaiming body autonomy.<sup>7</sup>

In the postmodern era, consumerist culture has commodified culture and religion, including dress and veiling. Cultural symbols and religious activities are often offered as commodities in a consumer-driven society, mixing the sacred and secular. Postmodernism, which rejects grand narratives and emphasizes autonomy, has helped commercialize culture. Traditional and religious clothing is often reused and sold in fashion. To attract followers and make money, religious symbols, rituals, and practices are packaged and promoted utilizing modern marketing. In a consumer-driven world, religious commercialization has raised questions about its validity and integrity.<sup>8</sup>

The Islamic fashion industry commodifies religion by blending faith with modernity. Islamic dress is known for blending religious humility with modern design. Muslim women who want modest but attractive clothes are catered to by designers and brands. This trend has created "modest fashion," which appeals to Muslim buyers and those who value modesty's aesthetic and ethical aspects. Islamic fashion has raised questions about the balance between religion and business. Critics say commercializing the hijab and other religious garments dilutes their spiritual meaning and turns them into fashion. However, supporters believe that Islamic design empowers Muslim women and fosters cultural variety.<sup>9</sup>

The monetization of Islamic clothes and veiling has sparked complex arguments and criticism. Religious gown commercialization may violate Islam's essential beliefs, according to scholars and activists. Some believe that aesthetics and materialism detract from religious spirituality and ethics. Islamic fashion in mainstream media and advertising raises concerns about cultural appropriation and stereotyping. The portrayal of veiled women in fashion advertising typically simplifies and homogenizes Muslim lives and opinions. However, the

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<sup>7</sup> Susan B. Kaiser, "The Social Psychology of Clothing: Symbolic Appearances in Context," (*No Title*), 1997, <https://cir.nii.ac.jp/crid/1130000797876517376>.

<sup>8</sup> Islamic Berbers, "The Berbers of the Arabs," accessed July 29, 2024, [https://www.academia.edu/download/31596696/Rouighi\\_\\_Berbers\\_of\\_the\\_Arabs.pdf](https://www.academia.edu/download/31596696/Rouighi__Berbers_of_the_Arabs.pdf).

<sup>9</sup> Jasmine R. Phillips, "The Abaya: A Balancing Act of Fashion and Modesty in the Arab Gulf Region" (Academia, 2013), [https://www.academia.edu/download/38309488/The\\_Abaya\\_A\\_Balancing\\_Act\\_of\\_Fashion\\_and\\_Mo\\_desty\\_in\\_the\\_Arab\\_Gulf\\_Region.pdf](https://www.academia.edu/download/38309488/The_Abaya_A_Balancing_Act_of_Fashion_and_Mo_desty_in_the_Arab_Gulf_Region.pdf).

Islamic fashion business has opened doors to cultural discourse. It has allowed Muslim designers and businesses to promote their work and challenge Islam and Muslim women stereotypes. Islamic fashion can promote cultural and religious tolerance by combining faith and fashion.<sup>10</sup>

Moroccan history, especially under French and Spanish authority, is shaped by colonialism. Moroccan women's dress and lifestyle reflect imperial influence. French and Spanish colonialism shaped Moroccan women's clothes. Before Islam, Berber customs dominated Moroccan attire. Wool and other local materials were used to make simple, utilitarian clothes for women. Men and women wore the “djellaba,” a long, loose-fitting robe with a hood. In the 7th century, Islam brought humility to Moroccan attire. The hijab, which symbolized modesty and piety, was also introduced during this time. Moroccan civilization, particularly women's clothes, was greatly influenced by colonialism from 1912 to 1956.<sup>11</sup> The French colonial authorities promoted Western attire as symbols of progress and modernity to Westernize Moroccan society. Urban Moroccan women, especially elite ones, adopted European trends like fitted dresses, skirts, and blouses. Traditional clothing like the “kaftan” and “djellaba” persisted, especially during religious and cultural festivals. While less pervasive than the French, Spanish influence was felt, especially in the north. The Spanish colonial authorities pushed Moroccan women to wear Spanish attire, combining trends. Traditional Moroccan attire was hybridized with Western fashion during colonialism. For instance, the “kaftan” was given European touches like tighter fits and revealing slashes. This mix of styles developed a unique Moroccan-European fashion identity. Morocco regained national identity and cultural pride after its independence in 1956. Moroccan heritage was reclaimed through traditional attire. Moroccan women's attire continued to integrate traditional and modern aspects due to colonial influences.<sup>12</sup>

The impact of globalization on Moroccan fashion has resulted in a fusion of traditional and contemporary aspects. The incorporation of contemporary accessories and styles into

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<sup>10</sup> Alexandra E. Tuite, “The Cultural Economy of Independent Fashion” (PhD Thesis, Queensland University of Technology, 2019), <https://eprints.qut.edu.au/129093>.

<sup>11</sup> David, Harvey. “The condition of postmodernity: an enquiry into the origins of cultural change.” *Cambridge and Oxford: Blackwell* (1989).

<sup>12</sup> Itzea Goikolea-Amiano, “The Hispano-Moroccan Re-Encounter: Colonialism, Mimesis, and Power in the Spanish War on Tetouan and Its Occupation (1859-62)” (PhD Thesis, 2017), <https://cadmus.eui.eu/handle/1814/49284>.

traditional clothing such as the djellaba and kaftan has given rise to a modern fashion business that maintains a deep appreciation for its cultural origins. The advent of online shopping has broadened the array of fashion options available to Moroccan women, enabling them to seamlessly integrate international trends into their style and propelling the growth of the Moroccan fashion industry. Moroccan designers skillfully combine traditional attire with global fashion influences, creating garments that are attractive to both local and worldwide audiences. This demonstrates their capacity to be inventive while also maintaining their cultural heritage.<sup>13</sup>

The fusion of modern fashion with traditional principles is widely regarded as a beneficial development, as it allows for the incorporation of tradition into the present world. The transformation is facilitated by media, popular culture, and social networks, which enable Moroccan women to investigate and embrace international trends. Conservative regions uphold more stringent clothing regulations, even in the face of modernization, as a means of striking a balance between modesty and contemporary values. The developing fashion scene in Morocco allows women to establish a fashion identity that is deeply entrenched in their culture while also being affected by worldwide trends. This showcases the dynamic and adaptable nature of Moroccan fashion. Moroccan women can follow global trends thanks to media, popular culture, and social media. Conservative regions mix modesty and modernism with tougher dress rules. This changing fashion landscape allows Moroccan women to build a new culturally rooted but globally influenced fashion identity, demonstrating Moroccan fashion's versatility.

## **1.2 Problem statement**

Despite the hijab's deep historical roots and traditional significance in Moroccan culture, its contemporary practice and perception are shaped by a complex interplay of historical evolution, cultural shifts, and current debates. This research seeks to address how the hijab has evolved in Morocco, investigating the impact of historical events, and societal changes on its current form and significance. It also aims to explore how ongoing debates and media representations influence public perceptions and practices related to Islamic clothing.

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<sup>13</sup> Karen Tranberg Hansen, "The World in Dress: Anthropological Perspectives on Clothing, Fashion, and Culture," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 33, no. 1 (October 1, 2004): 369–92, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.anthro.33.070203.143805>.

### **1.3 Objectives of the study:**

1. Trace the historical evolution of the hijab, from its origins to its contemporary manifestations, exploring its changing roles and significance across different eras and cultures.
2. Provide detailed analyses of specific incidents and controversies involving Islamic clothing in Morocco, illustrating the complexities and diverse viewpoints within Moroccan society.
3. Examine and comment on current debates and incidents related to Islamic clothing in Morocco, including issues of fashion, modesty, and cultural expression.

### **1.4 Research Questions**

1. How did historical events and movements influence the adoption and adaptation of the hijab in Morocco?
2. How do media portrayals and public discourse affect perceptions of the hijab and Islamic clothing in Morocco?

### **1.5 Significance of the study:**

1. The research will offer valuable insights into how global influences and cultural exchanges have shaped the hijab, fostering a deeper understanding of its place in the global fashion landscape.
2. The study will provide a nuanced understanding of the current debates and incidents surrounding Islamic clothing in Morocco, shedding light on the multifaceted nature of these issues.
3. The study will contribute to public discourse by providing informed commentary on how Islamic clothing is perceived and discussed in Morocco, potentially influencing future conversations and policies.
4. The research will engage with secularization theory, which posits that religion will diminish with modernization. By analyzing the hijab within this framework, the study highlights a more nuanced relationship between religion and secularism in Morocco and how secularization evolves towards achieving a modern society.

## 1.6 Methods

This study employs a qualitative research design to explore the historical evolution, contemporary development, and societal debates surrounding the hijab in Morocco. By using a combination of historical analysis, case studies, the research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the hijab's role and significance.

### 1.6.1 Data Collection

a. Historical Analysis to trace the historical evolution of the hijab and understand how historical events and cultural shifts have influenced its development.

Sources: Historical texts, academic journals, historical records, and archives related to Moroccan history and Islamic attire.

b. Case Studies to investigate specific incidents and debates surrounding Islamic clothing in Morocco.

Selection: Identify and select notable case studies of incidents or controversies related to the hijab in Morocco (e.g., public debates, media representations).

c. Content Analysis to examine how the hijab is represented and discussed in media and public discourse.

Sources: Online newspapers.

## 1.7 Theoretical framework

The theory of "Islam mondaine"<sup>14</sup> (worldly Islam) by Osella and Soares explores the interplay between Islam and modernity, examining how Muslims navigate their religious identity within the contemporary world. This theory suggests that Muslims can engage with modernity while maintaining their religious values, and that religious practices and beliefs can coexist with and adapt to modern, secular contexts.

Relating this theory to women's hijab dressing and fashion in Morocco involves understanding how Moroccan women balance their religious commitments with modern fashion trends. In Morocco, like in many Muslim-majority countries, the hijab is not just a

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<sup>14</sup> Filippo Osella and Benjamin Soares, *Islam, Politics, Anthropology* (John Wiley & Sons, 2010).

religious symbol but also a cultural one, deeply embedded in societal norms and values. Nevertheless, Moroccan women could still express their individuality and modernity through hijab fashion.

"Islam Mondaine" is used as a theoretical framework in this thesis to explore the evolving expressions of faith and identity amongst Moroccan women through hijab fashion, and to provide a comprehensive understanding of their navigation of modern identities within a globalized world.

Furthermore, the concept of "Public Islam" discussed by Eickelman and Salvatore investigates the diverse actors who contribute to shaping Islamic discourses in the public sphere. According to Eickelman and Salvatore (2004), these actors include "religious scholars, self-ascribed religious authorities, secular intellectuals, Sufi orders, mothers, students, workers, engineers, and many others".<sup>15</sup> This framework enables contextualizing the different voices and perspectives which influence the public interpretation and practice of Islam. In this thesis, "Public Islam" is employed to further understand how Moroccan women's hijab fashion is influenced by and reflects broader public discourses on religion and identity.

## **1.8 Thesis Outline**

The discussion in this thesis can be divided into five chapters in order to provide a comprehensive analysis of the veil and its implications in Morocco. Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the topic, outlining the research objectives, problem statement, and methodology used for this study. Chapter 2 explores the existent literature review that focuses on clothing, examining historical perspectives, theories of fashion, and the commodification of religious and traditional attire. Chapter 3 delves into the specific context of Islam and the veil in Morocco, exploring its historical significance, cultural relevance, religious interpretations, and the influence of Moroccan traditions. Chapter 4 examines the ongoing debates surrounding the hijab as reported in newspapers, highlighting the perspectives of both supporters and opponents, and discussing the impact of media representation on public opinion. Finally, chapter 5 concludes the thesis by providing a summary of the whole thesis. This structure aims

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<sup>15</sup> Armando Salvatore and Dale F. Eickelman, *Public Islam and the Common Good* (BRILL, 2004, XII).

to provide a thorough examination of the veil's role in Moroccan society and contribute to a more nuanced understanding of its complexities.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Clothing has always been an intriguing phenomenon that caught the attention of researchers for so many decades. It is an outlet that enables analysing the cultural, political, as well as the economic aspects within a society, which has resulted in a variety of studies depending of the interest of the researcher. In fact, clothing has various purposes other than merely covering one's body and protecting it from cold and heat, as it can also play the symbolic cultural social and aesthetic roles. It displays the social rank, identity and religious affiliation of the cladded person (Tarlo 1996).<sup>16</sup>

Every community has its special way of dressing according to their cultural practices which are inherited by their older generation. That is why traditional clothes would vary depending on tribal, regional, ethnical or national affiliations. The dress of a certain place does not cease to evolve with time and it continues its transformation in accordance with the changes that a community undergoes. *Dress and Ethnicity: Change Across Space and Time* discusses how dress can be seen as the expressed identity of a certain group of people, and how it can become the embodiment of the cultural heritage of a community. This work is a compilation of studies on dress around the world from Africa, Europe and Asia. Some of the essays examines the way women dress, whereas some others examines men's clothing in special occasions such as marriage ceremonies, funerals and national festivals. The work also depicts how dress can sometimes be a tool to reaffirm a group of people's identity and ethnicity as an act of resistance to a dominant cultural or political power (Eicher 1995).<sup>17</sup> Back in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, an attempt of documenting the diverse styles of garments, worn by people from different social classes, cultures and ethnicities, was made by François Deprez (2022) in his work *Le recueil de la diversité des habits*.<sup>18</sup> This work depicts 121 drawings with short captions showcasing the richness of diversity of traditional attires worldwide and the influence of trade, profession, technological advancements and cultural exchanges on clothing. The work does not

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<sup>16</sup> Emma Tarlo, *Clothing Matters: Dress and Identity in India* (University of Chicago Press, 1996).

<sup>17</sup> Joanne B. Eicher, *Dress and Ethnicity: Change Across Space and Time* (Berg Publishers, 1995).

<sup>18</sup> Jacques Martel, *Le recueil de la diversité des habits: de François Deprez - Édition bilingue, Français - Anglais* (BoD - Books on Demand, 2022).

only explore the fashion of that time but also provides a set of prejudices and morals that were prevalent during that period.

The variety of dress is not strictly related to ethnical groups, but it also depends on the profession and gender of the clad person. The lawyer or judge would wear specific clothes, likewise the nurse or doctor would wear special outfits, and each individual having a professional career would have to respect the dress code and wear a dress which conforms to the formal professional clothing their community adopts and imposes. However, Costello (2004) argues that people might suffer from what she calls 'identity dissonance' which refers to the struggle between expressing one's genuine identity and assuming the expected professional identity required by the demanding working environment. Her study focuses on the way students of different genders and ethnicities would wear their dress; she noted that the ongoing internal battle of identities can be perceived through the alternating wardrobe of the professional students, subject of study.<sup>19</sup>

Throughout human history, and regardless of their geographical place of living, peoples have established that men within a community would dress differently than women. There are a lot of studies that explore this difference, amongst which are *Sex and Suits: The Evolution of Modern Dress*<sup>20</sup> and *Fashion, Culture, and Identity*.<sup>21</sup> The author of the former work, (Hollander 2016), scrutinizes clothing's development historically in the face of modernity, while shedding the light on the distinctiveness of attires of men and women respectively. She relates the historical recurrent changes of the dressing manner of men and women to the evolution of the social norms which govern the people who are living in a certain social setting. The work illustrates the way people dress within different parts of the world at different periods of times, including ancient Rome, Byzantium, medieval France and Germany, 17<sup>th</sup> century Netherlands, 18<sup>th</sup> century England and France and 19<sup>th</sup> century America and Europe. It shows how males clothing evolved generally and how suits specifically became a signal for masculinity and male's power, while females dress were limited and less expressive. However, the work does not deny women's contribution to the fashion industry development and their creation of new styles and designs. As for the latter work by Davis (1994), it is a study

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<sup>19</sup> Cary Costello, "Changing Clothes: Gender Inequality and Professional Socialization," *NWSA Journal* 16 (July 1, 2004): 138–55, <https://doi.org/10.2979/NWS.2004.16.2.138>.

<sup>20</sup> Anne Hollander, *Sex and Suits: The Evolution of Modern Dress* (DIANE Publishing Company, 2006).

<sup>21</sup> Fred Davis, *Fashion, Culture, and Identity* (University of Chicago Press, 2013).

which analyses clothes in the west in relation to different aspects such as fashion, culture and identity. Davis (1994) highlights the symbolic significance of clothes; he argues that clothes and the perceived physical appearances can play an important role into creating social constructs pertaining to categorizing identities, gender identities included, social classes and group membership. He further explains that dress can even be the leading doorway to discover people's cultural, social and professional status, as clothes can signal and express identities, (religious) beliefs and political ideologies. He also notes that clothes and fashion can be a tool to reinforce the existent prevalent identities and values within a society but might as well have the opposite impact, which is challenging and changing those dominant identities and cultures. He gives the example of the unisex dress which blurs the normal distinction of men's and women's clothing with its emergence in the contemporary Western world. Both works ponder on how women and men wear their clothes differently, and how men's clothing expresses masculinity, strength and power while women's clothing express femininity, delicacy and softness.

Nevertheless, there are some societies that have witnessed some women covering their heads as part of the consensual dress code in their communities. The Nandi people who belongs to a tribe called Kalenjin situated in East Africa, is well-known with their initiation tradition, where males and females undergoes a number of rituals to be able to officially transition to adulthood. It is not permissible for men to see women at this phase, and if they (women) are to go out, they should cover their heads (Mbiti 1990).<sup>22</sup> In Sikhism, which is a monotheistic religion that started in the Punjab Region, men and women are required to cover their heads especially when they are worshipping in temples. While men who practice Sikhism wear turbans on their heads, women are urged to wear Chunni, which is a big and long scarf covering their heads and goes down to cover also the shoulders. Sikhism teaches their followers that the act of covering the head is symbol of humility, modesty and respect towards the divine being (Nesbitt 2016)<sup>23</sup>. Orthodox Judaism has also the tradition of women covering their heads when entering Shuls (Jewish temples for prayer), and they avoid wearing revealing types of clothing or tight ones when praying. More than that, women who are married who would mostly cover their hair as they should not show their beauty to any other man beside their husbands, so they

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<sup>22</sup> John S. Mbiti, *African Religions & Philosophy* (Heinemann, 1990).

<sup>23</sup> Eleanor M. Nesbitt, *Sikhism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press, 2016).

would wear scarves or veils whenever they go outside (Greenberg 1985)<sup>24</sup>. In the chapter “A Day in the Life of Two Jewish Women”,<sup>25</sup> Davidman (1991) describes the personal experiences of Jewish women and how they were too self-conscious of their way of dressing, especially when they were attending a class with a Rabbi<sup>26</sup> and how other women, attendants of the same class, reacted to a woman who was, in their judgement, wearing revealing and inappropriate clothes. In Christianity, nuns wear special long and decent dresses while covering their heads as a sign of chastity, devotion to God and humility. This is derived from the New Testament as St. Paul directed in the First Epistle that women have to cover their heads, especially when they are praying. He compared the woman who prays without covering her head to a woman who got her hair shaved, which is a disgrace to a woman (1 Corinthians 11:5-6).<sup>27</sup> Likewise, in Islam women have the tradition to wear headscarves and to wear their clothes in a special manner that was witnessed in different parts of the world where Islam is the widespread religion.<sup>28</sup> This practice is rooted on the Quranic verse in Surah An-Nur which reads: “And tell the believing women to lower their gaze and guard their chastity, and not to reveal their adornments except what normally appears. Let them draw their veils over their chests and not reveal their hidden adornments except to their husbands, fathers, husbands’ fathers, their sons, husbands’ sons, their brothers or their brothers’ sons, their sisters’ sons, their fellow women, those bondspeople in their possession, male attendants with no desire, or children who are still unaware of women’s nakedness. They should not stomp their feet to draw attention to their hidden adornments. Turn to Allah in repentance all together, O believers, so that you may be successful (24:31)”.<sup>29</sup> Another verse which gives insights about Muslim women’s dress is the verse in Surah Al-Ahzab which reads as: "O Prophet, tell your wives and your daughters and the women of the believers to bring down over themselves [part] of their outer garments. That is more suitable that they will be known and not be abused. And ever is Allah Forgiving and Merciful

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<sup>24</sup> Blu Greenberg, *How to Run a Traditional Jewish Household* (Simon and Schuster, 2011).

<sup>25</sup> Lynn Davidman, *Tradition in a Rootless World: Women Turn to Orthodox Judaism* (University of California Press, 1991).

<sup>26</sup> A Jewish scholar or teacher who is studying and/ or teaching Jewish law.

<sup>27</sup> 1 Corinthians 11:5-6 (New International Version).

<sup>28</sup> Suad Joseph and Afsāna Nağmābādī, *Encyclopedia of Women and Islamic Cultures: Family, Law and Politics* (BRILL, 2003).

<sup>29</sup> The Quran, 24:31. Translated by Abdullah Yusuf Ali (Elmhurst, NY: Tahrike Tarsile Quran, 2001).

(33:59)".<sup>30</sup> From these two verses, several instructions that govern women's dress and behavior can be deducted; women are ordered to lower their gaze and preserve their chastity and not to show their beauty except to a number of people as it can be seen in the verse first verse. As for the second verse in Surah Al-Ahzab, it does not only give insight to Muslim women on how to dress, but also gives the purpose of this directive which is to be distinguished and known as Muslim women within their society, so that people would not harass or violate these chaste women in any way. The headscarf and modest way of clothing are signs for modesty, dignity and reverence, and, thus, it protects Muslim women and provide them a safe environment when they are outside their homes on their daily lives.

In addition to the Quranic verses which give insight on how Muslim women should be wearing their gowns, there are also some Ahadith from the prophet Muhammed (PBUH) which describe the dress code that women should follow when choosing their garments. After providing a historical background of Hijab and tracing its existence to a time precedent to Islam, Aziz (2010) discusses those prophetic Ahadith and his recommendations (PBUH) for clothing. She resumes her discussion by examining the different interpretations of scholars to the practice of veiling. Some interpret the verses and Hadis as covering the head and wearing non-transparent loose clothes, some others require covering the face and hands and feet, while some would even claim that women should not go out of their houses except for dire reasons that oblige her to leave. Others believe that the tradition of covering the head served some specific purposes, such as providing protection to Muslim women from harassers which might not be necessary in other societies nowadays. Aziz's (2010) study displays the controversial debate over the tradition of women's veil ranging between strict and literal interpretations of the Quranic verses of Hijab and more liberal socio-cultural interpretations.<sup>31</sup> Therefore, there have been manifold forms of veiling within Muslim communities; Eva Nisa and Anissa Beta's (2022) research on face-veiled women in Indonesia sheds light on the diversity of veiling practices within the Muslim world. Their study explores how different interpretations of modesty and piety shape the choices of women who wear the cadar (full-face veil).<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> The Quran, 33:59. Translated by Abdullah Yusuf Ali (Elmhurst, NY: Tahrike Tarsile Quran, 2001).

<sup>31</sup> Rookhsana Aziz, "Hijab – The Islamic Dress Code: Its Historical Development, Evidence from Sacred Sources and Views of Selected Muslim Scholars" (University of South Africa, 2010).

<sup>32</sup> Eva F. Nisa, *Face-Veiled Women in Contemporary Indonesia* (London: Routledge, 2022), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003246442>.

Following the postmodernist era influenced by late capitalism and characterized by the globalization of markets, Jameson (2016) argues that culture has played a primordial role into the shaping of the economic system. Every aspect of culture has been commodified and reproduced into homogenized almost identical cultural products for the purpose of marketing and consuming these items, blurring the previous classifications of high and popular culture.<sup>33</sup> Nowadays, people are exceedingly driven towards consumerism to the extent that consuming became the lifestyle of the modern society rather than being governed by objective and rational rules of consumption. Bauman (2013) explains the dynamic interplay of consumerist culture which sees individuals as powerful autonomous subjects but at the same time objectifies them and treats them as targets and niches of consumptions. This ongoing oscillation between being an empowered individual who has willingness as well as purchasing power and being a culturally-duped individual who is targeted by different markets and pushed to spend money and consume what is offered to them make people live in a perpetual state of chasing various experiences in the process of the formation of their constantly changing identities. These ephemeral new experiences and identities that products' consumption provides renders individuals addicted to consume while hoping that one day they will satisfy their insatiable desires. Every aspect of life is commodified including education, health, culture, values...etc.<sup>34</sup> Religion is no exception and it has also fallen into the trap of a capitalist society whose ultimate purpose is to make profit and use any opportunity to reap it. Twitchell (2007) discusses the idea of marketing religion by exploring how Christianity became in the contemporary time US. To maintain its followers different churches are resorting to the same strategies of marketing, branding, advertising and multimedia campaigns...etc., which are used in business and economy. As much as companies thrive to attract their clients by trying to provide appealing goods to potential clients, these churches are eagerly seeking to recruit as many people as they can by offering religious products that might go in line with the religious consumers' preferences. These institutions are drifting from their traditional role, which is to create genuine connections with God and worship the Lord, to focus on providing lived religious experiences

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<sup>33</sup> Fredric Jameson, "Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism," in *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Duke University Press, 1992), 62-92.

<sup>34</sup> Zygmunt Bauman, *Consuming Life* (John Wiley & Sons, 2013).

which are typically accommodated to suit their religious fellow followers.<sup>35</sup> Carrette and King (2005) reveal the western markets' attempts to drag religion by using the conception of spirituality as a lucrative tool to earn the trust of people who are, ironically, resolving to religion as a type of remedy from the modern anxious materialist lives.<sup>36</sup> Similarly, Einstein (2008) discusses in her work, *Brands of Faith: Marketing Religion in a Commercial Age*, how religious organizations use branding techniques to cope up with a completely commercialized modern world, she raises in one of her chapter the question 'has religious marketing gone too far?.' She argues that the growth of commodification of religion symbols has blurred the boundaries between the sacred and secular. Faith became shallow and devoid of the spiritual lived experience and replaced by the act of consuming sold brands and products.<sup>37</sup>

In the same context, Islam has also been commodified in various ways. One of the most famous concepts in the modern era is the Halal industry, which was used excessively recently bringing people to question this phenomenon and to reconsider whether it is really serving the religious purposes of Islam or merely used as a tool to flourish small businesses. In "Shaping the Halal in a Brand", Wilson and Liu (2010) discuss the transformation of the term 'Halal', which is a traditional concept in Islam referring to what is permissible in Islamic law to a globalized label within the multiple existent markets to attract Muslim consumers. This term has further developed to signify all the sought-for requirements of good products ranging from being in accordance to Islamic values to being hygienic and having the needed quality for which consumers are searching, and, thus, Halal industry no longer target solely Muslim people but also non-Muslim. Wilson and Liu (2010) argue that the unification of Halal as a brand is a complicated process considering the fact that different perspectives and interpretations regarding Halal matters; however, they point out that this Halal branding strengthens the Islamic cultural identity and stimulates competitiveness to produce more Halal products.<sup>38</sup> Another aspect of the commodification of Islam is the emergence of the veiling-fashion, as the veil is one of the symbols of Islam which women use to express their Muslim identity. In their article, Gökarıksel and Secor (2012) describe the moral ambivalence of practitioner Muslim

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<sup>35</sup> James B. Twitchell, *Shopping for God: How Christianity Went from In Your Heart to In Your Face* (Simon & Schuster, 2007).

<sup>36</sup> Jeremy R. Carrette and Richard King, *Selling Spirituality: The Silent Takeover of Religion* (Psychology Press, 2005).

<sup>37</sup> Mara Einstein, *Brands of Faith: Marketing Religion in a Commercial Age* (Routledge, 2007).

<sup>38</sup> Jonathan A.J. Wilson and Jonathan Liu, "Shaping the Halal into a Brand?," *Journal of Islamic Marketing* 1, no. 2 (January 1, 2010): 107–23, <https://doi.org/10.1108/17590831011055851>.

women in Turkey who are striving to balance between the faithful and spiritual aspect of wearing the Islamic veil and the temptation to wear it in a manner that cope with the modes of fashion and elegance.<sup>39</sup> Veiling styles have developed tremendously providing a variety of colors with different patterns and shapes, and within the fashion industry a new branch was invented, which is called Islamic fashion. This type of fashion refers to every dress which is supposed to be tailored in accordance to the religious Islamic requirements, but at the same time it should be characterized by being in accordance to the modern and fashion tastes.<sup>40</sup> This type of fashion has also been influenced by globalization due to the prevalence of fashion bloggers and online International Islamic stores which provide shipping internationally. Cultural-specific items which used to be typical for one part of the world of a Muslim community became nowadays worldwide and famous amongst Muslims in deferent parts of the world. Islamic fashion is, thus, a diverse 'New World' whose identity is complex because of the duality of local as well as global forces which shape this type of Industry and not to mention the struggle to maintain both the Islamic ethical modesty in clothing and the aesthetic tastes of modernity.<sup>41</sup> However critics has been made about this notion of Islamic fashion and whether its trends really respect the Islamic dress code. Aris and Asliza (2018) discuss the concept of Islamic concept itself and reflect on how different parts of the world interpret the Islamic manner for women's dressing. They also display samples of dresses that were designed for Muslim women and reassess the use of Islamic fashion to refer to these designs for the sake of marketing them. They contend that the criteria which characterize Muslim women's clothing ought to repose on Quran and Sunna rather than personal opinions and the desires of the seller or buyer.<sup>42</sup> The globalization of Islamic fashion and its prevalence would never have occurred had Islam not been increasingly spreading all over the world. Studies have shown that it will not cease of growing, and the global Muslim population was statistically estimated to be around 1.8 to 2.3 billion Muslims worldwide.<sup>43</sup> This has led to major and minor incidents of hatred

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<sup>39</sup> Banu Gökarıksel and Anna Secor, "'Even I Was Tempted': The Moral Ambivalence and Ethical Practice of Veiling-Fashion in Turkey," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 102, no. 4 (July 1, 2012): 847–62, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00045608.2011.601221>.

<sup>40</sup> Reina Lewis, *Muslim Fashion: Contemporary Style Cultures* (Duke University Press, 2015).

<sup>41</sup> Heather Akou, "Building a New 'World Fashion': Islamic Dress in the Twenty-First Century," *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body & Culture* 11 (December 1, 2007): 403–21, <https://doi.org/10.2752/175174107X250226>.

<sup>42</sup> Asliza Aris, Suzlee Ibrahim, and Hasma Ahmad, "The Identity of 'Islamic Fashion' / Asliza Aris, Suzlee Ibrahim and Hasma Ahmad," *International Journal of INTI* 22, no. SI (2018): 8–14.

<sup>43</sup> No Author, "The Future of the Global Muslim Population," Pew Research Center, January 27, 2011, <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2011/01/27/the-future-of-the-global-muslim-population/>.

against Muslims, especially those living in the west. Sheehi (2010) exposes the historical governmental and non-governmental policies in United States which are not in favor of Muslims and which are considered as discriminatory against this group of people. He examines the ideological campaigns which encourage adopting an anti-Muslim discourse and attitude that are embedded in most spectrums whether the cultural, political, educational or media sources.<sup>44</sup> The Islamophobic attitudes towards Muslim women for opting to wear decent garments and a veil in western countries. She explains the frustration that these women undergo since they are subjected to discriminative laws which hinder these women from enjoying their right of freely practicing their religion. The secular limit their visibility in public spaces as they cannot appear in some places with their veil, leading to the marginalization of Muslim women from the social life.<sup>45</sup> In her work, Bullock (2013) brings forth the western narratives that portray the veil in a reality-distorting manner, and she reassesses the past and modern stereotypes about wearing the veil which are articulated with backwardness, oppression and ignorance, unveiling the true essence of Muslim women's practice of covering their heads and bodies which is correlated to the noble notions of modesty, self-respect, devotion to the Creator and self-empowerment.<sup>46</sup> The veil has been the subject of debate, with governments who see it as compulsory and others who see it as a religious symbol that should be banned. Anna-Mari Almila and David Inglis (2017) examine the various veiling practices all over the world. They explore veiling in correlation with religion, culture, sociology, politics and fashion. The edited book explores a variety of topics such as Turkish neo-liberalization, French laicity, the hijab's transition from a compulsory practice of religion in Iran to a trend of fashion ...etc. This work also investigates the regulations regarding wearing the veil in different parts of the world and discusses how these laws affect women's freedoms and rights.<sup>47</sup> Stephanie Cronin's (2016) edited book compiles studies about the political campaigns conducted against veiling in regions which have a Muslim majority during the interwar period, such as Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, Albania and Bulgaria. The studies reveal the purposes behind these

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<sup>44</sup> Stephen Sheehi, *Islamophobia: The Ideological Campaign Against Muslims* (SCB Distributors, 2010).

<sup>45</sup> Kimberley Brayson, "Islamophobia, Islamic Dress and Precarious Bodies," *Journal of Gender Studies* 30, no. 2 (February 17, 2021): 129–35, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09589236.2020.1865737>.

<sup>46</sup> Katherine Bullock, *Repenser la femme musulmane et le port du voile: Défier les stéréotypes historiques et modernes* (Editions L'Harmattan, 2013).

<sup>47</sup> Anna-Mari Almila and David Inglis, eds., *The Routledge International Handbook to Veils and Veiling* (London: Routledge, 2017), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315613734>.

ideological campaigns, the implementation of policies against the veil and the adopted attitudes and opinions towards them.<sup>48</sup>

Seeing all the previous literature which examines some particular cases of going against the veiling practice in Europe is somewhat not unexpected due to the cultural shock this practice might give to the other, the lack of understanding of the other's religion, as well as the lack of tolerance and respect towards minority freedoms. However, surprisingly, these incidents has as well occurred in some Arab Muslim countries where the veil constitutes a part and parcel of their culture, identity and religion. This is due to the spread of secularization which is one of the consequent elements brought by the modern western state. However, José Casanova challenges this deterministic view in his work *Public Religions in the Modern World* (1994)<sup>49</sup>, arguing that secularization is not a universal process but varies across different contexts. Casanova demonstrates that religion can remain influential and adapt to modern contexts, particularly in the public sphere, where religious actors and institutions continue to play significant roles. His analysis shows that while some societies may experience a decline in religious affiliation, others, may see religion thriving and evolving in response to modernization. Tunisia is one of these countries that has witnessed great influence of secularization; in her article "The Constitutionality of Hijab Restrictions in Turkey, Tunisia, and Kosovo", Perkin (2012) discusses restrictions on Hijab in the three countries under the umbrella of the rise of secular and modern thoughts, while stressing that these restrictions violate women's rights and freedoms. She wonders whether the implementation of these laws would promote the sought-for notions of liberation, modernity...etc., or if they would nurture discriminative and marginalizing acts towards veiled women.<sup>50</sup> Moving to Morocco which is, like Tunisia, also an Arab Muslim country situated in north-Africa, Sadiqi (2016) investigates how Islam is perceived through the eyes of Moroccan women. She categorizes women into those who are wearing the veil as a pure expression of their faith, those who are wearing it because of the cultural and social constraints, and those who are not wearing it and would still identify as Muslims, believing that faith is a personal relation with God and it lies within the heart rather than ritual practices. The study reveals women's different motivations behind

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<sup>48</sup> Stephanie Cronin, *Anti-Veiling Campaigns in the Muslim World: Gender, Modernism and the Politics of Dress* (Routledge, 2014).

<sup>49</sup> José Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (University of Chicago Press, 1994).

<sup>50</sup> Theresa Perkins, "UNVEILING MUSLIM WOMEN: THE CONSTITUTIONALITY OF HIJAB RESTRICTIONS IN TURKEY, TUNISIA AND KOSOVO," *Boston University International Law Journal* 30, 2012, 529.

wearing the veil through testimonies of 25 Muslim Moroccan women.<sup>51</sup> A feminist approach to these Moroccan women who are wearing the veil might see these females as oppressed, subordinate to man and deprived from their freedom to express their true self without having to hide themselves; however, Guessous (2020), argues that this feminist condemnation of the life of veiled women is not conform with their lived realities. She describes how Moroccan women can actively participate in all kinds of social life, and how their agency plays an important role into preserving their cultural and religious identity in the face of secularist and feminist over-simplistic view-points.<sup>52</sup>

### **Gap**

As for the gap of this literature, not a single work is focused enough to address the issue of the Hijab within the context of Morocco, as a Muslim-majority country. Most researches concentrates on the Hijab in Western countries or regions in which Islam is not that much widespread. Therefore, it can be noted that there is no extended or detailed investigation of the dynamics and debates surrounding the hijab within Muslim-majority societies like Morocco. This study will examine the specific incidents of hijab bans in Morocco, analyze the contemporary debates and discourses surrounding the hijab, and explore how the intersection of these issues with cultural identity, modernity, and religious expression in the Moroccan community.

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<sup>51</sup> Fatima Sadiqi, "Female Perceptions of Islam in Today's Morocco," *Journal of Feminist Scholarship* 11, no. 11 (January 1, 2016): 48–60.

<sup>52</sup> Nadia Guessous, "Feminist Blind Spots and the Affect of Secularity: Disorienting the Discourse of the Veil in Contemporary Morocco," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 45 (March 1, 2020): 605–28, <https://doi.org/10.1086/706551>.

# **CHAPTER III**

## **ISLAM AND MUSLIM WOMEN’S DRESS IN MOROCCO**

This chapter explores the enduring concern of Muslim women’s dress in Morocco by offering a historical background, religious understanding, and transition of this practice. Under this category, this chapter explores the typical Moroccan clothing and how it has been affected by different eras, particularly colonization. The chapter also reveals the Islamic values of Dresses and ornaments and how Moroccans have taken traditional Islamic dress styles to modern ones. Furthermore, it also encompasses the impression formed within the society and people’s experiences. This general introduction clarifies the purpose of this chapter and explains how Moroccan women’s dress can be distinguished within a timeless Moroccan culture and modern trends.

### **4.1 Islam and Muslim Women's Dress in Morocco: Cultural and Social Dynamics**

In Morocco, Islam is shaped by various historical, cultural, and socio-political factors. To comprehend this multifaceted tradition, one must delve into religious practices, particularly the importance of veiling for Muslim women. Before Western modernity, Muslim women’s clothing styles and visibility in the public sphere were influenced by socio-economic and political factors, offering insights into contemporary challenges within their own history and traditions. This context helps deconstruct debates on “authentic” Islamic dress and women’s visibility in Moroccan society. Western representations of Muslim women as inherently passive and veiled overlook their resistance to patriarchal norms and the diversity of clothing styles throughout history.

Clifford Geertz (1971) and Ernest Gellner’s (1969) insights provide a foundational understanding of Moroccan Islam. Geertz’s interpretive approach emphasizes the deep intertwining of Moroccan Islam with the nation’s historical and social fabric. He highlights the role of Sufi mysticism and the maraboutic tradition. Moroccan Islam, as observed by Geertz (1971), involves the veneration of saints and the centrality of Sufi orders, significantly influencing both religious and social life. This tradition reflects a blend of pre-Islamic customs and Islamic beliefs, resulting in a dynamic religious landscape deeply rooted in local culture.

Geertz (1971) also notes the hierarchical nature of Moroccan society, where religious practices mirror broader social structures—orthodox interpretations for the elite and local traditions for rural and tribal populations.<sup>53</sup> According to Gellner (1969), Moroccan Islam acts as a cohesive force by uniting various tribes and communities through loyalty networks tied to saintly traditions. This integration helps stabilize a society marked by political and social fragmentation. Gellner (1969) also highlights the contrast between urban, orthodox Sunni Islam and rural, maraboutic Islam, which incorporates local customs and beliefs. These differences underscore broader social and economic divisions within Moroccan society.<sup>54</sup>

The act of veiling among Moroccan women highlights the intricate interplay between religion, culture, and identity. According to Fatima Sadiqi (2016), veiling serves as both a religious and cultural expression, representing various social roles and statuses. This cultural artifact is deeply ingrained in Moroccan society, shaping women's roles in both public and private contexts.<sup>55</sup> Stephanie Cronin (2014) also explores the historical and political dimensions of veiling, emphasizing how colonial and nationalist influences have contributed to its practice, making it a symbol of resistance and cultural identity.<sup>56</sup>

Elisha P. Renne's (2013) research delves into the impact of social norms and gender dynamics on veiling, emphasizing how societal pressures influence women's choices. Veiling, according to her findings, either reinforces or challenges traditional gender roles.<sup>57</sup> In a broader context, Anna-Mari Almila and David Inglis (2017) explore the intersection of veiling with global fashion and consumer culture. They contend that contemporary fashion trends transform the veil into both a cultural artifact and a means of self-expression.<sup>58</sup>

Fatima Mernisi (1987) provides a feminist perspective, analyzing how veiling can simultaneously function as a mechanism of social control and a source of empowerment for women navigating their identities within patriarchal contexts.<sup>59</sup> Saba Mahmood (2011) further

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<sup>53</sup> Clifford Geertz, *Islam Observed: Religious Development in Morocco and Indonesia* (University of Chicago Press, 1971).

<sup>54</sup> Ernest Gellner, *Saints of the Atlas* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969).

<sup>55</sup> Sadiqi, "Female Perceptions of Islam in Today's Morocco."

<sup>56</sup> Cronin, *Anti-Veiling Campaigns in the Muslim World*.

<sup>57</sup> Elisha P. Renne, *Veiling in Africa* (Indiana University Press, 2013).

<sup>58</sup> Almila and Inglis, *The Routledge International Handbook to Veils and Veiling*.

<sup>59</sup> Fatima Mernisi, *Beyond the Veil, Revised Edition: Male-Female Dynamics in Modern Muslim Society* (Indiana University Press, 1987).

enriches this discourse by emphasizing that veiling can represent an expression of religious devotion and personal agency, challenging the simplistic dichotomy of oppression versus liberation.<sup>60</sup>

The insights from these scholars emphasize the intricate and varied nature of Islam generally and in Morocco particularly. The interplay between religious practices, cultural identities, and social dynamics underscores the multifaceted aspects of Moroccan Islam and the diverse ways veiling is expressed among Muslim women. To comprehend these dynamics fully, one must consider both historical context and contemporary influences shaping Islam in Morocco.

### **3.2 A Brief History of Morocco**

The history of Morocco is exceptionally interesting as it saw the influences of the indigenous people of Morocco – the Berber, the Arabs, who played a significant role in the Islamic empire, and ultimately the Europeans.<sup>61</sup> There are undated items of the primitive ages, and it is on record that early humans inhabited Morocco. Phoenicians and later the Romans settled via trading ports and small colonies, however, the arrival of the Arab Muslims in the 7th century most influenced the development of Morocco.<sup>62</sup> Islamic expansion by the followers of Prophet Muhammad paved the way to the formation of the Umayyad and sometime later, the Abbasid caliphate brought with it a religious and cultural phase in the region. In the Middle Ages Morocco experienced the reigns of many powerful dynasties of Almoravids, Almohad, and Merinids that shaped the formation of the Moroccan society and state structure.<sup>63</sup> The Almoravids started from the Sahara formed a great empire that also stretched up to Spain; similarly, the Almohads ruling over most of North Africa and parts of Spain tried to impose a puritanical type of Islam. The Merinids came next, they maintained the traditions of the previous dynasties and were the patrons of arts and sciences.

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<sup>60</sup> Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton University Press, 2011).

<sup>61</sup> Spencer D. Segalla, *Moroccan Soul: French Education, Colonial Ethnology, and Muslim Resistance, 1912-1956* (U of Nebraska Press, 2009).

<sup>62</sup> C. R. Pennell, *Morocco: From Empire to Independence* (Simon and Schuster, 2013).

<sup>63</sup> Stephen Cory, "Breaking the Khaldunian Cycle? The Rise of Sharifianism as the Basis for Political Legitimacy in Early Modern Morocco," *The Journal of North African Studies* 13, no. 3 (September 2008): 377–94, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13629380701844706>.

Morocco rose to the position of international trade, mainly with Europeans in the 15th and 16th centuries.<sup>64</sup> The Portuguese and Spanish attempted to have a base along the coast of Morocco but their penetration was checked by local chiefs and the Saadian dynasty that emerged in the 16th century and expelled all foreigners. European colonialism activities in Morocco were observed in the 19th century and early in the 20th century; the Treaty of Fez was signed in 1912, which made the country a French and Spanish protectorate.<sup>65</sup> During the middle of the twentieth century, the fight for liberation became more prominent since people were in a haste to be independent from colonial masters. Morocco was colonized by France and Spain and it gained independence in 1956 with the help of Mohammed V.<sup>66</sup> This chapter creates a historical background of post-independence Morocco about its economic development, political reforms, and social transformation. The country has been in the process of transformation towards post-modernism, and at the same time protecting local cultural identity. Morocco has emerged as a progressive country that has a rich background which it still preserves in the sphere of social, political, and cultural life.

The early history of Morocco is visible and palpable even today. Exploration work indicates a fairly old human existence, at least 400,000 years ago according to fossils of homoserines.<sup>67</sup> These ancient inhabitants roamed a savanna-like terrain, their lives intertwined with the rhythms of nature. Personal adornments, such as 82,000-year-old perforated seashell beads found in the cave of Taforalt<sup>68</sup> in the north-east of Morocco, hint at early artistic expression. The recorded history of Morocco begins with Phoenician colonization along its coast between the 8<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE. However, indigenous Berber tribes had inhabited the region for thousands of years before that<sup>69</sup>. The city-state of Carthage extended its

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<sup>64</sup> James Sater, *Morocco: Challenges to Tradition and Modernity* (London: Routledge, 2009), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203864098>.

<sup>65</sup> Mohammed Kenbib, "The Impact of the French Conquest of Algeria on Morocco (1830–1912)," in *North Africa* (Routledge, 1993).

<sup>66</sup> Ryo Ikeda, "The Paradox of Independence: The Maintenance of Influence and the French Decision to Transfer Power in Morocco," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 35, no. 4 (December 1, 2007): 569–92, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03086530701667526>.

<sup>67</sup> Barham, Lawrence, and Kate Robson-Brown. *Human roots: Africa and Asia in the Middle Pleistocene*. Western Academic and Specialist Press, 2001.

<sup>68</sup> Bouzouggar, Abdeljalil, Nick Barton, Marian Vanhaeren, Francesco D'Errico, Simon Collcutt, Tom Higham, Edward Hodge, et al. "82,000-year-old shell beads from North Africa and implications for the origins of modern human behavior." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 104, no. 24 (June 12, 2007): 9964–69. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.0703877104>.

<sup>69</sup> Fage, J. D., and Roland Anthony Oliver. *The Cambridge History of Africa*. Cambridge University Press, 1975.

hegemony over coastal areas, while hinterlands remained under Berber monarchs' rule. The Berbers' resilience and cultural identity persisted through subsequent Roman and Byzantine periods.

In the early 8<sup>th</sup> century CE, Morocco fell to Muslim conquerors, breaking away from the Umayyad Caliphate after the Berber Revolt of 740<sup>70</sup>. The Idrisid dynasty established the Moroccan state, shaping its early history. The Saadi dynasty (1549–1659) and the Alawis (since 1667) continued to rule, navigating challenges from colonial powers and internal dynamics. France's 1912 forty-four-year dominion left an indelible mark on Morocco. While colonial policies brought modernization, they also disrupted traditional economic practices and heavily affected the culture and religions in Morocco<sup>71</sup>. The nationalist movement gained momentum, culminating in Morocco's independence in 1956.<sup>72</sup> The post-independence era witnessed gradual monarchic consolidation of power and societal shifts. Spanish colonialism in Morocco, particularly in the northern regions, significantly influenced the country's socio-political landscape. The Spanish Protectorate, established in 1912, introduced infrastructural developments and educational reforms, promoting Spanish cultural and economic interests that also affected Morocco's culture<sup>73</sup>. Despite these changes, resistance to Spanish rule persisted, contributing to Morocco's eventual independence in 1956.

The last years of Hassan II's reign marked a sudden and radical opening in Moroccan society. Pragmatism, rather than ideology, shaped the monarchy's response to crises. Post-independence events, such as the "war on terror," détente with Islamists, and the Arab Spring's impact, continue to shape Morocco's trajectory.<sup>74</sup> Moroccan culture is dynamic and not stagnant and therefore, is the marriage of the prehistoric Berber culture and conquest by Islamic Moors followed by contact with Europe through colonization. Morocco continues to hold a commanding place in the Maghreb while its lively culture and a wealthy royal family

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<sup>70</sup> A history of the Maghrib in the Islamic Period. Cambridge University Press eBooks, 1987. <https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9780511608100>.

<sup>71</sup> Miller, Susan Gilson. A history of modern Morocco. Cambridge University Press, 2013.

<sup>72</sup> Stenner, David. Globalizing Morocco: Transnational Activism and the Post-Colonial State, 2019.

<sup>73</sup> Nogué, Joan, and José Luis Villanova. "Spanish Colonialism in Morocco and the Sociedad Geográfica De Madrid, 1876–1956." *Journal of Historical Geography* 28, no. 1 (January 1, 2002): 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.1006/jhge.2001.0371>.

<sup>74</sup> Susan Gilson Miller, *A History of Modern Morocco* (Cambridge University Press, 2013).

supporting it are still important.<sup>75</sup> Although very brief, this overview offers an insight into Morocco's diverse tapestry that characterizes its past up to today's country.

### **3.4 The Impact of Colonialism on the Way of Life and Dress in Morocco**

Every country has not been immune to the effects of colonialism and this also applies to Morocco. The colonial influence of both the French and Spanish is clearly observed in the Moroccan society, culture as well as daily practices.<sup>76</sup> This chapter is an analysis of the historical aspects of Moroccan women's clothes, concentrating on the way that French and Spanish colonialism in particular informed traditional culture in Moroccan society generally, even though the subject in question mostly relates to women's clothes particularly, it also offers some research rooted in historical method. Before the advent of Islam, Moroccan dress was primarily influenced by Berber traditions. Women wore simple, practical garments made from wool and other locally available materials. The "djellaba", a long, loose-fitting robe with a hood, was a common attire for both men and women<sup>77</sup>. With the arrival of Islam in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, Moroccan dress began to reflect Islamic principles of modesty. The "kaftan", a long, flowing robe often made from luxurious fabrics worn by women, became popular among the elite who could afford the high-quality materials from which it is made. This period also saw the introduction of head coverings, such as the hijab, which emphasized modesty and piety<sup>78</sup>.

#### **3.4.1 Colonial Context**

The colonial period, spanning from 1912 to 1956, had a profound impact on Moroccan society, including women's dress. The French Protectorate controlled the central and southern regions, while Spain governed the northern and southern coastal areas.<sup>79</sup> Both colonial powers introduced Western fashion, which coexisted with traditional Moroccan attire. The French colonial administration promoted Western clothing styles as symbols of modernity and

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<sup>75</sup> Abdeslam M. Maghraoui, "Democratization in the Arab World? Depoliticization in Morocco," *Journal of Democracy* 13, no. 4 (2002): 24–32.

<sup>76</sup> *ibid*

<sup>77</sup> Nicholas, Claire. "Enmeshed: The Colonial and Post-Colonial Anthropology of Moroccan Textiles and Dress." *HespéRis, Tamuda*, no. 56 (January 1, 2020): 359–84. <https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=7700814>.

<sup>78</sup> Bachleda, Catherine, Nicolas Hamelin, and Oumaima Benachour. "Does religiosity impact Moroccan Muslim women's clothing choice?" *Journal of Islamic Marketing* 5, no. 2 (June 3, 2014): 210–26. <https://doi.org/10.1108/jima-05-2013-0038>.

<sup>79</sup> Segalla, *Moroccan Soul*, 2009.

progress, trying to modernize, westernize, and turn Moroccan society into a French society. Urban Moroccan women, particularly those from the elite class, began to adopt European fashions such as tailored dresses, skirts, and blouses. However, traditional garments like the “kaftan” and “djellaba” remained prevalent, especially during religious and cultural ceremonies.<sup>80</sup> The French influence also led to the hybridization of Moroccan dress, with elements of Western fashion being incorporated into traditional garments<sup>81</sup>, especially the “kaftan” which became tighter and open at the chest and leg areas.

The adoption of European clothing was often seen as a symbol of modernity and progress, leading to the marginalization of traditional Moroccan attire; yet, many women felt pressured to conform to Western standards of dress, which sometimes conflicted with their cultural and religious values<sup>82</sup>. Spanish Influence In the northern regions under Spanish control, the impact on women’s dress was relatively similar. Spanish colonial authorities encouraged the adoption of European styles, but traditional attire persisted. The “Hayek”, a large white cloth worn by women to cover their entire body, remained a common sight in northern Morocco and stayed a common sight in some areas until the early 2000s because the Spanish authorities did not force people to adopt their Western lifestyle, but rather presented it to them and let them choose. The “Hayek” was often worn with a headscarf, reflecting a blend of Islamic and local customs<sup>83</sup>.

### **3.4.2 Hijab and Religious Clothing Development**

Colonialism brought about apparent changes in the daily lives of Moroccans. The hijab, a traditional Islamic head and body covering, underwent significant changes during the colonial period.<sup>84</sup> As mentioned before, French and Spanish authorities promoted Western

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<sup>80</sup> Nicholas, Claire. “Enmeshed: The Colonial and Post-Colonial Anthropology of Moroccan Textiles and Dress.” *HespéRis, Tamuda*, no. 56 (January 1, 2020): 359–84. <https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=7700814>.

<sup>81</sup> Díaz-Andreu, Margarita. “The Archaeology of the Spanish Protectorate of Morocco: A Short History.” *African Archaeological Review*/~the *æAfrican Archaeological Review* 32, no. 1 (February 20, 2015): 49–69. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10437-014-9179-y>.

<sup>82</sup> Silverstein, Paul A. “Rethinking Moroccan Social Hierarchy and Ritual: from Colonial Ethnology to the Postcolonial Historical Anthropology of Abdellah Hammoudi.” *HespéRis, Tamuda*, no. 55 (January 1, 2020): 41–60. <https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=7698976>.

<sup>83</sup> Bachleda, Catherine, Nicolas Hamelin, and Oumaima Benachour. “Does religiosity impact Moroccan Muslim women’s clothing choice?” *Journal of Islamic Marketing* 5, no. 2 (June 3, 2014): 210–26. <https://doi.org/10.1108/jima-05-2013-0038>.

<sup>84</sup> Jonathan Wyrzten, “Colonial Legacies, National Identity, and Challenges for Multiculturalism in the Contemporary Maghreb,” in *Multiculturalism and Democracy in North Africa* (Routledge, 2014).

dress codes, which often discouraged the wearing of the hijab and other traditional Islamic garments.<sup>85</sup> This led to a decline in the use of the hijab among urban women, who adopted Western styles to align with colonial expectations. However, in rural areas, the hijab and other traditional garments like the “djellaba”, “kaftan”, and “Hayek” remained prevalent, reflecting resistance to colonial influence and a commitment to preserving cultural identity.<sup>86</sup> The colonial period as a result distinguished the difference between the modern city and rural area dress practices, and how the tradition was confronted with modernity.

However, the desire for Western dress also came into play; during the colonial period, attempts to maintain and modernize Moroccan costumes were also being made. Nevertheless, the magnificent “kaftan,” an extended outer garment accompanied by beautiful embroidery, continued to be worn for festive occasions and religious activities.<sup>87</sup> Moroccan fashion designers introduced combined European fashion in their dresses while maintaining the native touch to promote modern Moroccan fashion or custom-made designs.<sup>88</sup> This period of fashion flexibility sowed the seeds of today’s Moroccan fashion industry since it incorporated Moroccan cultural themes with fashionable innovations, applying new technologies from The French and Spanish investors in Morocco during colonization. Clothing style during the colonial period distinguished between the conventional Moroccan clothing style and the European fashion, although a mix between the two was also evident.<sup>89</sup> This fusion generated a clothing style that reminded the difficult cultural relations in colonial Morocco. For instance, Moroccan women could put on a ‘kaftan’ together with European accessories, while others could wear contemporary fashion such as a long gown, trousers, or long skirts accented by a headscarf which aligns them with the new fashion trend.

Such features could be seen in Moroccan society and fashion even after the country got its independence in 1956. The following decades of Morocco’s independence focused on

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<sup>85</sup> Kenbib, “The Impact of the French Conquest of Algeria on Morocco (1830–1912).”

<sup>86</sup> Qwider Larbi and Nouredine Boumediene, “Impact of Globalization on Maghrebi Culture” (Thesis, 2016), <http://dspace1.univ-tlemcen.dz//handle/112/8957>.

<sup>87</sup> Larbi and Boumediene.

<sup>88</sup> Díaz-Andreu, Margarita. “The Archaeology of the Spanish Protectorate of Morocco: A Short History.” *African Archaeological Review* / *the African Archaeological Review* 32, no. 1 (February 20, 2015): 49–69. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10437-014-9179-y>.

<sup>89</sup> M. Angela Jansen, “Defining Moroccaness: The Aesthetics and Politics of Contemporary Moroccan Fashion Design,” *The Journal of North African Studies* 21, no. 1 (January 2016): 132–47, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13629387.2015.1084099>.

the attempts of restoring and reviving the Moroccan traditions within the context of a new globalized world.<sup>90</sup> Thus, many Moroccan women returned to wearing the traditional Moroccan gown and the hijab. The hijab, which became invisible during colonial times in favor of the Western dress codes, was able to return to being the cultural and religious emblem. Moroccan Women started to alter their perception of the Hijab and started to wear it according to their lifestyles and the culture they held. The world started to see a new interpretation of the Hijab through modern fashion by embracing flowing garments that offer the formality of the veil along with the freedom of fashion. An example of these garments is the emergence of the Burkini that combines the modesty of the burqa, a gown that covers most parts of the body while leaving the face exposed. This modernization of the hijab was made possible by the rising trends in international Islamic fashion that encouraged different and elegant perceptions of Islamic wear that is acceptable in the contemporary fashion world and at the same time compliant with the guidelines provided by Islamic teachings.

### **3.5 The Influence of Wahhabism**

The emergence of Wahhabism in Morocco especially starting from the turn of the 20th century has influenced different facets of Moroccan culture and customs, especially about women's mode of dressing. Wahhabism is a branch of Sunni Islam originating from Saudi Arabia that advocates the rigorous practice of what the movement perceives as original Islam, embraced by the prophet Muhammad's companions. This ideology spread in Morocco through religious education media and the Moroccan expatriate population in the Gulf countries.

Recently, the situation has shifted with the rise of Wahhabism, posing a challenge to the Moroccan government, which has traditionally supported a moderate form of Islam.<sup>91</sup> The effects of the Wahhabi influence on Moroccan society are perhaps best visible in the changes in women's dress clothing to more concealing garments. Moroccan garments like the "djellaba" and "kaftan" for women were more conservative apparel in style and colors, yet allowed the use of embroidered symbolic colors on them. However, following the influence of the Wahhabi movement, there has been a resurgence of what can be described as modest dressing and these include the "niqab," a dress that covers the wearer's face and leaves the eyes

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<sup>90</sup> Miller, *A History of Modern Morocco*.

<sup>91</sup> Bayloq, Cédric, and Aziz Hlaoua. "Diffuser Un « Islam Du Juste Milieu » ?" *Afrique Contemporaine* n° 257, no. 1 (January 19, 2017): 113–28. <https://doi.org/10.3917/afco.257.0113>.

open, and “burqa,” clothing that covers the entire body and head, including the face apart from a mesh screen for vision. This is partly because of the increased influence of religious clerics and religious television and radio programs that preach for women to dress in strictly Islamic dressing codes. These garments are worn out of obedience and as a sign of compliance with the Wahhabi views on women’s clothing in Islam.

The influence of Wahhabism has also experienced changes in the social relations of women and their dressing pattern. There is pressure on the women to dress more conservatively in some of the communities, this is regarded as part of showing religious and moral standing. It is equally a pressure from individuals in the society especially from the religious leaders as well as the close friends and relatives now following the Wahhabi teachings. This feature illustrates how Wahhabi ideas influence not only personal decisions but also the standards of people’s behavior within a community. However, this research has witnessed that there is still a high level of variation in the dresses worn by women in Morocco despite the invasion of Wahhabi. Traditionally feminine clothes can still be seen in many Moroccan women; They include the “djellaba” and the “kaftan” which are normally modernized to reflect the current fashion.<sup>92</sup> This kind of Wahhabi ideology in Morocco has strongly affected a few women and their dress codes and encouraged more strict clothing.

### **3.6 Moroccan Women's Contemporary Clothing**

Contemporary Moroccan women’s outfits are a blend of culture, religion, and female social relations that can be seen in in the community. In those territories the population is densely diverse and traditional and modern trends are quite interwoven; females wear Western clothing and Moroccan dress in equal proportion. The effect of religion in clothing preferences also remains relevant up to the present in Moroccan women. Skirts and blouses as well as the “hijab” and “niqab” are worn by some women wear due to the Islamic rules and regulations regarding decency and purity. In the same way, the hijab has adapted and is now more of a piece of clothing and people are free to wear it in any style they want. Studies has shown that

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<sup>92</sup> Jansen, “Defining Moroccaness.”

apart from religion, people's clothing preferences are also shaped by factors including age, marital status, as well as education level.<sup>93</sup>

The range of clothing in Morocco also reflects various levels of decency (or body coverage) which differs from region to region. While in rather traditional areas and especially the elder generations the women prefer to stay covered and wear modest clothing (like hijab or even niqab),<sup>94</sup> in large cities like Casablanca, Rabat and Marrakech, locals openly embrace a more liberal approach to dress, a trend that is even more pronounced in areas frequented by tourists. This variation highlights that Moroccan society is not static but constantly evolving, balancing traditional values with contemporary lifestyles.<sup>95</sup> This evolution is supported by the authorities' stance, which does not force women to adhere to specific dress codes in public spaces.

Overall, while French and Spanish colonizers had negative effects on Moroccan women's dress codes, it is important to recognize that this period also introduced some positive changes.<sup>96</sup> The introduction of Western styles and techniques has indeed enriched the fashion landscape in Morocco; however, it also somewhat marginalized traditional dress forms. The hijab, specifically, underwent significant transformations due to colonial influences and cultural shifts. Moroccan women's dress styles continue to evolve up to now, reflecting both traditional values and contemporary European influences within the framework of Islamic principles.

### **3.7 Islamic Principles of Modesty**

The dress code for Moroccan women continues to evolve significantly today, reflecting a blend of traditional and modern influences that highlight both Oriental and European elements of the country's culture.<sup>97</sup> This ongoing transformation underscores the growing demands placed on women's attire, balancing respect for cultural heritage with contemporary

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<sup>93</sup> Bachleda, Catherine, Nicolas Hamelin, and Oumaima Benachour. "Does religiosity impact Moroccan Muslim women's clothing choice?" *Journal of Islamic Marketing* 5, no. 2 (June 3, 2014): 210–26. <https://doi.org/10.1108/jima-05-2013-0038>.

<sup>94</sup> Annelies Moors, "Fashionable Muslims: Notions of Self, Religion, and Society in Sanà," *Fashion Theory* 11, no. 2–3 (June 1, 2007): 319–46, <https://doi.org/10.2752/136270407X202853>.

<sup>95</sup> Rachel Newcomb, *Everyday Life in Global Morocco* (Indiana University Press, 2017).

<sup>96</sup> Spencer D. Segalla, *Moroccan Soul: French Education, Colonial Ethnology, and Muslim Resistance, 1912-1956* (U of Nebraska Press, 2009).

<sup>97</sup> Sater, *Morocco*.

fashion. The traditions related to the Islamic concept of modesty are deeply ingrained in the Muslim context and have a profound impact on clothing expectations for women. These teachings are based on the teachings of the Qur'an and the traditions of the prophet Muhammad that provide rules and regulations which is intended to maintain decency and respect to all other individuals as well as discouraging clothing that attracts undue attention. In general, these guidelines aim to harmonize the need for adherence to faith-based norms with the freedom of self-expression, ensuring that personal style aligns with religious principles and societal expectations.

The concept of modesty in the Qur'an is apprehended in terms of specific injunctions meant to be followed concerning the way people should behave and dress. The Quran in chapter 24 verse 31 says women should 'draw their veils over their bosoms and reveal only their face,' and 'let not their adornment be known unto men and let not their adornment take the form of apparent impropriety.'<sup>98</sup> Modesty is therefore the disguise of the body so that it does not attract immoral attention. In addition, Qur'anic prescriptions are supplemented with hadiths that provide additional information about the implementation of modesty. It should also be understood that the actual conduct and words of the Prophet of Islam are essential for studying and applying the rules of modesty.<sup>99</sup> It is understood that he used to urge Muslim women to be modest and decent in dressing which has impacted several dressing practices. These teachings emphasize that modesty encompasses not only a physical aspect but also moral and spiritual dimensions. For instance, Hadiths states that modesty is not merely a concept confined to the external dressing codes but also encompasses behaviors and interactions, reflecting a person's ethics and values.<sup>100</sup> Some of the Prophet's own clothing, along with the guidance he provided to his companions, serve as important examples for how modesty should be practiced in both appearance and behavior. These examples not only illustrate the appropriate ways to dress but also highlight the importance of humility and respect in one's actions. By following these

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<sup>98</sup> *The Holy Qur'an* (Wordsworth Editions, 2000).

<sup>99</sup> Dariusch Atighetchi, *Islamic Bioethics: Problems and Perspectives*, vol. 31 (Dordrecht: Springer, 2007).

<sup>100</sup> Ruxandra E Todosi, "Westernized 'Easthetics': Understanding Surface, Depth and Individuality in Contemporary Modest Wear: An Ethnography on Hijab Wearers and Designers in Britain - ProQuest," 2014, <https://www.proquest.com/openview/123d9caf47d6505a40b773a13a86499a/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=18750&diss=y>.

models, Muslims can strive to embody the principles of modesty that are integral to their faith, ensuring that their external presentation and internal values are in harmony.

**Hijab:** The hijab stands as one of the most documented and widely recognized symbols of Islamic modesty for women. In the Islamic tradition, the term "hijab" refers to a curtain or veil, embodying a broader concept of modesty and privacy. Traditionally, the hijab covers the hair, neck, and shoulders while leaving the face exposed, aiming to shift focus from physical appearance to inner qualities such as personality and character. The styling of the hijab varies significantly across cultures and regions, reflecting personal expression while remaining true to Islamic principles. This variation in hijab styles illustrates the dynamic interaction between Islamic traditions and modern fashion, allowing women to express their identities while adhering to religious teachings. For instance, the diverse interpretations of hijab styling can be seen as a means of balancing traditional Islamic practices with contemporary fashion trends, which highlights its role in navigating complex cultural and religious identities.<sup>101</sup> Additionally, this flexibility in hijab styling emphasizes the negotiation between personal autonomy and communal values, underscoring the evolving nature of Islamic modesty in a globalized context.<sup>102</sup>

**Niqab:** As for the difference between the niqab and hijab, it is possible to state that the former is more specific and harder to implement compared to the latter being an element of the Islamic covering that is more extensive and amalgamates the hijab with a veil.<sup>103</sup> It drapes from the hairline down to the chin but reveals the eyes. Displayed in this case is the niqab which is worn by women who strictly adhere to the Islamic doctrine of modesty to a higher level. Again, its application remains subjective based on one's belief as well as the culture within a given society. The wearing of the niqab may be a matter of individual decision due probably to one's perception of what the teachings of the Quran and the practices of the Muslims' forebears

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<sup>101</sup> Giorgia Baldi, "What the Veil Reveals: A Critique of Religious and Secular Debate over the Headscarf" (doctoral, Birkbeck, University of London, 2017), <http://vufind.lib.bbk.ac.uk/vufind/Record/568704>.

<sup>102</sup> Cécile Laborde, "Female Autonomy, Education and the Hijab," *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 9, no. 3 (September 1, 2006): 351–77, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13698230600900909>.

<sup>103</sup> Laborde.

require of them.<sup>104</sup> This component is appreciated in some communities as the prerequisite for covering oneself and may not be as popular in others. Privacy and a conservative dress code which some women apply through the wearing of niqab represent a certain approach to the understanding of the concept of modesty within the Islamic ideas.

Burqa: The burqa is essentially the most comprehensive form of Islamic modesty attire used by women. It protects the whole body along with the face, leaving a thin mesh screen over the face, allowing the wearer to see while remaining covered. The burqa is less common than the hijab or the niqab and can be considered culturally and regionally specific.<sup>105</sup> In some interpretations, the burqa is considered to be even more appropriate for wearing than a veil because it conceals the entire body and the face of a female. Its use can be completely different depending on the local cultures, people's beliefs, and historical aspects of their traditions. Afghanistan is one of the famous countries for the use and spread of the burqa; however, its usage is not exclusive to that country, and its social importance varies from one society to another.<sup>106</sup>

Altogether, it can be concluded that, while Islam has specific guidelines, it fundamentally teaches modesty that precludes any form of nakedness. The Qur'an and Hadith give clear indications on how females' decency should be dealt with and the hijab, niqab, and burqa are the different degrees of the Islamic interpretation.<sup>107</sup> In the same respect, these guidelines can be implemented in different ways according to personal convictions, cultural traditions, and customs, thus receiving the Islamic world as a rich diverse world.

### **3.8 Contemporary Transformations**

The evolution of Moroccan women's dress codes in the 21st century, driven by globalization and modern fashion trends, highlights a dynamic interplay between tradition and

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<sup>104</sup> Anna Piela, "Wearing the Niqab in the UK: Exploring the Embodied 'Shape a Moral Action Can Take,'" *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 87, no. 2 (May 30, 2019): 512–42, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jaarel/lfz002>.

<sup>105</sup> Naima Mohammadi and Ali M. Hazeri, "Two Different Narratives of Hijab in Iran: Burqa and Niqab," *Sexuality & Culture* 25, no. 2 (April 1, 2021): 680–99, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12119-020-09789-3>.

<sup>106</sup> Mohammadi and Hazeri.

<sup>107</sup> Irene Zempi, "'It's a Part of Me, I Feel Naked without It': Choice, Agency and Identity for Muslim Women Who Wear the Niqab," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 39, no. 10 (August 8, 2016): 1738–54, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2016.1159710>.

contemporary style. Moroccan women are increasingly blending global fashion with their traditional attire, infusing modern elements into classic garments to create a unique and evolving fashion scene. This ongoing integration of contemporary styles with authentic Moroccan dress reflects a vibrant and ever-changing fashion landscape.

### **3.8.1 Impact of Global Fashion Trends**

Globalization has affected Moroccan fashion tremendously resulting in a tremendous change in how Moroccan women perceive and even shop for clothes.<sup>108</sup> This influence is highly evident through the adaptation of fashion materials and designs from the global arena and incorporation of these designs in the traditionally conservative Moroccan dressing, to bring out a modern-looking and updated fashion industry that is still in touch with the roots. As for the modern accessories blended into Moroccan fashion, possibly, one of the most evident consequences of globalization is the blending of the classics into modern fashion. Business lines such as statement jewelry, stylish handbags, and contemporary footwear have become adornments to the garments such as the djellaba and the kaftan among others.<sup>109</sup> It also accommodates some accessorizing that refines the conventional outfits besides placing an outlook that captures the modernity of global fashion. For example, while a djellaba of the older generation, which was the basic and loose silhouette of robes, embroideries and accessories can nowadays be sparkling or gorgeously from big names in fashion, for instance, necklaces, handbags, etc.<sup>110</sup> In the same way, modern fashion shoes like pumps or trendy sneakers are still appropriate for Moroccan clothing because there are still traditional Moroccan dressing etiquettes that need to be upheld, at the same time one can wear fashionable attractive stylish shoes with Moroccan clothing as they are not fully traditional or cultural attire.<sup>111</sup>

The cutting and choice of the garment, as well as the choice of the fabric, as adopted today also confirms globalization. It has been observed that traditional wear the djellaba and the kaftan are being depicted in a whole new spirit and style incorporating the present-day trend and style which gives it a new look while still symbolizing tradition.<sup>112</sup> Somewhat similar to the kimono, asymmetrical hems, large geometrical patterns, and other advanced fabrics have

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<sup>108</sup> Newcomb, *Everyday Life in Global Morocco*.

<sup>109</sup> Larbi and Boumediene, "Impact of Globalization on Maghrebi Culture."

<sup>110</sup> Miller, *A History of Modern Morocco*.

<sup>111</sup> Sater, *Morocco*.

<sup>112</sup> Newcomb, *Everyday Life in Global Morocco*.

become typical for more modern incarnations of these garments.<sup>113</sup> Thus, this new aesthetic to conventional formal wear enables Moroccan women to dress chic but at the same time, keep their Islamic-oriented look.<sup>114</sup> For instance, what was once meant to have loose sleeves, a flowing shape, and just lines and curves may contain tailored cuts, beads, and more likely lines and vivid abstract colors. All these updates serve to increase the aesthetic appeal of the garment and portray an integration of the classic with the modern trends in fashion.

The coordinated link between these two sources of style has been made possible through online shopping platforms. Earlier, Moroccan women had limited choices when it came to fashion clothing, but with the online shopping option, they get connected.<sup>115</sup> The freedom and ability to browse through and purchase foreign fashionable wears online has enabled Moroccan ladies to import trendy sets easily. These exposures to world fashion have helped Moroccan fashion to develop very fast, in compliance with new trends in fashion but remains Moroccan in every sense.<sup>116</sup> For example, Moroccan women can now effortlessly combine global brands and cutting-edge fashion items with traditional Moroccan dresses, creating a distinctive style that honors both their cultural heritage and contemporary fashion trends.

However, it is also important to consider the impact of global fashion on various garments and the overall fashion landscape in Morocco. Moroccan fashion designers and brands are increasingly attentive to global trends, as evidenced by new Moroccan collections that blend traditional Moroccan motifs with contemporary styles.<sup>117</sup> This approach reveals how Moroccan fashion shows and exhibitions can blend modern European styles with local Moroccan aesthetics, creating a fashionable synergy between the two. Such cross-cultural exchanges enhance the charm and diversity of Moroccan fashion, demonstrating that Moroccans are adaptable and open to modernity while maintaining their cultural identity. Moroccan fashion is not only influenced by globalization but also reflects broader social and

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<sup>113</sup> Jansen, "Defining Moroccanness."

<sup>114</sup> Mubina Khondkar, "Hijab as a Muslim Attire and a Fashion Trend in Bangladesh," ..*European Journal of Business and Management*, 2021.

<sup>115</sup> Reina Lewis, *Muslim Fashion: Contemporary Style Cultures* (Duke University Press, 2015).

<sup>116</sup> M. Angela Jansen, *Moroccan Fashion: Design, Culture and Tradition* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014).

<sup>117</sup> Jansen.

cultural changes occurring worldwide.<sup>118</sup> Moroccan women, in particular, are embracing globally accepted styles, resulting in a diverse range of looks that express various identities. This evolution makes fashion trends more experimental and individualistic, aligning with the globalized world. Therefore, Moroccan fashion does not merely follow global trends but actively contributes to the fashion discourse and shapes its own distinctive style.

Conclusively, the mixture of international trends with Moroccan original garments portray the ever-changing fashion genre,<sup>119</sup> By incorporating modern accessories, contemporary cuts, and global fashion elements into local attire, a new style emerges that both celebrates Moroccan culture and embraces worldwide fashion trends. This blend has been enhanced by the availability of online shopping facilities, allowing Moroccan women to easily access and incorporate global trends into their wardrobes.<sup>120</sup> This transformation also symbolizes that Moroccan fashion is dynamic and is able to embrace tradition with the modern and new trends that are present all over the world, proving that there is a complete and versatile fashion story associated with the country.

### **3.8.2 Cultural Exchange and Fashion Innovation**

Moroccan haute couture is one of the best examples of those who have emerged in contemporary fashion. Fashion is highly influenced by the classical Moroccan clothing by using the contemporary patterns, cuts, and designs on the djellaba the kaftan, and other traditional clothes and accessories.<sup>121</sup> For example, an original Djellaba can be retouched to fit in a slim, elegant cut or can be embodied in luxurious materials and complex decoration. This adaptation keeps the cultural relevance of the garment while at the same time wrapping it up in a style that modern consumers would appreciate.<sup>122</sup> As for the application of embroidery, it is noted that the older forms of ornament that were characteristic of Morocco for centuries can also be incorporated into today's styles. Many Moroccan designers integrate refined and complex handmade motifs with today's fabrics and cuts, thus capturing the essence of the

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<sup>118</sup> Loubna H. Skalli, *Through a Local Prism: Gender, Globalization, and Identity in Moroccan Women's Magazines* (Lexington Books, 2006).

<sup>119</sup> Newcomb, *Everyday Life in Global Morocco*.

<sup>120</sup> Jansen, *Moroccan Fashion*.

<sup>121</sup> Leah Michalove, "Who Are You Wearing? A Study of Moroccan Fashion Discourse, Identity Performance, and Social Change," *Independent Study Project (ISP) Collection*, October 1, 2014, [https://digitalcollections.sit.edu/isp\\_collection/1935](https://digitalcollections.sit.edu/isp_collection/1935).

<sup>122</sup> Michalove.

tradition in both material and aesthetic senses and the most modern look and feel.<sup>123</sup> These haute couture garments might include beading, sequins, or metal details, which enhance Morocco's fashion scene with a touch of sophisticated design.

The new trend in sustainable fashion can also be defined as a new intersection of global practices and Moroccan traditions. As the awareness of environmental problems rises, designers use environmentally friendly materials and production processes in their collections.<sup>124</sup> This trend is especially pronounced in a country that has long valued the traditions of craftsmanship and artisans. For example, sustainable fabrics could be incorporated into traditional patterns/techniques, like organic cotton/polyester, recycled products, etc. in traditional embroidery.<sup>125</sup> Besides, this approach also corresponds to the same tendencies of fashion cultures of many countries striving for sustainable development. Globalization is also apparent in the incorporation of international fashion into Moroccan trends that are mainly focused on garments and fashion shows and collections that attract global appeal. Modern Moroccan fashion weeks and exhibitions feature clothing items that incorporate motifs reflecting both current trends and Moroccan heritage. Such occasions allow for promenading Moroccan fashion culture to the global market, thus establishing its feasibility in the global fashion market.<sup>126</sup>

Also, Moroccan designers are increasingly working with multinational companies and becoming a part of global fashion shows, which strengthens the links between the customs of the country and fashionable innovations.<sup>127</sup> These collaborations entail come out with new produce reflecting Moroccan aspects in international fashion setting thereby showing that Moroccan fashion is not only dynamic but also respond to fashion from other parts of the world. Morocco is a special example of how modern fashion continues the traditions of ancient clothes but at the same time occupies a worthy place among the developed countries with fashionable trends.<sup>128</sup> That fusion shows the Moroccan designers' ability to persistently innovate within the Morocco culture to fashion clothing that is culturally relevant and fashionable in the global

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<sup>123</sup> Jansen, *Moroccan Fashion*.

<sup>124</sup> Jansen.

<sup>125</sup> Jansen.

<sup>126</sup> Newcomb, *Everyday Life in Global Morocco*.

<sup>127</sup> Jansen, "Defining Moroccanness."

<sup>128</sup> Yedida Stillman, *Arab Dress. A Short History: From the Dawn of Islam to Modern Times* (BRILL, 2003).

society.<sup>129</sup> The concepts that Moroccan fashion still follows and the constant growth of this trend show a realistic picture of cultural interaction and development that can help humanity create unique and attractive views of the world and the future. As a result of globalization Moroccan women's dress is now dynamic and constantly changing. The interaction of international fashion and tribal clothing of Morocco depicts that modern clothes do not abolish original separate garments but use them as a basis for creation. These transformations are facilitated by media and popular culture where Moroccan women establish the basis for change and transformation in fashion without the loss of their culture. This leaves the city with a vibrant and modern fashion, which equally celebrates the traditions and the modern world as living proofs of the versatility and relevance of Moroccan fashion.

### **3.8.3 Societal Views on Modesty and Fashion**

In Morocco, the perspective of dressing and especially the headscarf is linked with a set of cultural, religious, and moral ethical notions of acceptable and appropriate behavior of women in the public sphere.<sup>130</sup> Stillman explains how these attitudes determine Moroccan women's attire revealing both traditional and modern trends. Intercourse and modesty legislation that exists in Morocco are founded on religion as well as conventional customs that are supported by the country's Islamic associations.<sup>131</sup> Islam serves as one of the oriental religion fundamental concepts and it has directly influenced the traditional dress code of Moroccan society.<sup>132</sup> Nonetheless, most of the traditional fabrics like the djellaba and kaftan are not only functional and culturally appropriate but also align with the moral standards of the community on the aspects of dressing. The djellaba, which is a loose-fitting garment that envelops the body including the head part of it, and the kaftan which is a loose flowing gown are seen to represent the cultural dresses that give modesty decently covering the whole body.<sup>133</sup> To many Moroccans, these garments are beyond being apparel because they symbolically signify their root, an account of their belief and religion.

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<sup>129</sup> Larbi and Boumediene, "Impact of Globalization on Maghrebi Culture."

<sup>130</sup> Moha Ennaji, *Multilingualism, Cultural Identity, and Education in Morocco* (Springer Science & Business Media, 2005).

<sup>131</sup> Stillman, *Arab Dress. A Short History*.

<sup>132</sup> Anna Leone, *The End of the Pagan City: Religion, Economy, and Urbanism in Late Antique North Africa* (OUP Oxford, 2013).

<sup>133</sup> Miller, *A History of Modern Morocco*.

The change is rather dynamic and it is facilitated by the aspects of media and popular culture. The popular fashion magazines depicting the current trends, social networks, and regional fashion shows reveal diverse styles which combine the elements of contemporary fashion with traditional ones.<sup>134</sup> More so, social networks have provided Moroccan women with an opportunity to express themselves regarding fashion, and use viral trends. Moroccan female can use applications such as Instagram and Pinterest to watch fashionable icons from other nations and how they match their garments to give them a respectable appearance. They have done this as a result of fashion shows they have seen on TV or in magazines, and as a result, this has made them adopt a modern world fashion which involves trousers being made to fit the Middle Eastern idea of modesty or pants being accessorized with blazers and scarfs. This means that while Moroccan society is adopting the fashion styles in a whole; it is not doing it in equal measures across all the social groups. When it comes to clothing choices, urban Arabs and Generation Y are more open to combining traditional and modern styles, valuing freedom in their fashion choices. In contrast, older generations and more conservative regions maintain stricter dress codes.<sup>135</sup> Here, one sees the continuation of original clothing items in their designs that have meant a return to certain forms of dressing that are more conservative and stay loyal to the cultural and religious antiquity of the communities in question.

Moreover, there is a growing general trend of blending the contemporary fashion with the traditional values. This trend is therefore not perceived in a negative way but rather as a way through which tradition is being brought to the modern world. Thus, the fashion choices allow Moroccan women to conform to the traditional Moroccan dress code and be fashionable with accessories while participating globally.<sup>136</sup> It is evidenced by the foregoing analysis that this approach deems fashion as a constantly changing system of clothes that provides individual freedom and contemplation of the tendencies towards the combination of modesty and contemporariness in the context of cultural and religious norms. Therefore, the attitudes of the Moroccan society concerning dressing and fashion trends are determined by both the traditional societal norms and the cultural changes.<sup>137</sup> Likewise, the aspects of the traditional image

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<sup>134</sup> Joanne Entwistle, *The Fashioned Body: Fashion, Dress and Modern Social Theory* (John Wiley & Sons, 2023).

<sup>135</sup> Stillman, *Arab Dress. A Short History*.

<sup>136</sup> Michalove, "Who Are You Wearing?"

<sup>137</sup> Sater, *Morocco*.

mentioned, such as the djellaba and kaftan are still significant to retain the features of modesty and nationality but there is still a tendency to Westernization of garments.<sup>138</sup> The fashion described above is emerging as a greater understanding of modesty, which is the combination of eras and cultures. Moroccan women find ways to integrate into this new fashion era by combining modern accessories and fashionable styles with traditional garments. This approach allows them to create a fashion identity that respects their cultural heritage while also being responsive to contemporary trends.

### **3.9 Conclusion**

The conclusion of this Chapter underscores the intricate relationship between tradition and modernity in the realm of Muslim women's dress in Morocco. It articulates how, despite the profound influences of globalization and contemporary fashion trends, traditional garments such as the djellaba and kaftan remain deeply rooted in the cultural identity of Moroccan women. These garments not only symbolize modesty but also serve as an outlet for personal expression and style, reflecting the wearer's individuality while adhering to cultural norms. The chapter further illustrates that Islamic teachings on modesty provide a foundational framework for women's dress; however, the interpretation and application of these teachings vary significantly across different Moroccan communities. This diversity highlights the active engagement of Moroccan women with their cultural and religious identities, allowing for a rich tapestry of dressing practices that blend traditional values with modern aesthetics.

Moreover, the incorporation of contemporary accessories and styles into traditional outfits signifies a broader societal negotiation between preserving cultural heritage and embracing the influences of global fashion. This evolution is not merely a trend but a reflection of Moroccan women's agency in redefining their fashion identities within the context of their cultural and religious backgrounds. Ultimately, the transformation of Moroccan women's dress serves as a testament to the resilience of cultural heritage amidst changing social landscapes. It showcases a unique blend of respect for tradition and adaptability to contemporary styles, illustrating how Moroccan women navigate their identities in a globalized world while remaining anchored in their rich cultural history. This ongoing dialogue between the past and

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<sup>138</sup> Jansen, *Moroccan Fashion*.

the present enriches the narrative of Moroccan fashion, making it a vibrant and evolving expression of both individual and collective identity.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **CONTEMPORARY DEBATES ON HIJAB IN MOROCCO**

In Chapter 4, the discussion centers around the controversy surrounding the hijab in Morocco. The chapter explores the historical, cultural, and social contexts that contribute to the ongoing debates about the hijab within Moroccan society. It highlights how the hijab, a deeply rooted religious and cultural tradition, has become a subject of contention due to the influence of European values and modernization, especially since the French occupation of Morocco.

The chapter delves into various perspectives, including those who oppose the hijab, viewing it as an obstacle to women's liberation and professional development, and those who defend it as a fundamental religious and personal right. It also examines the strategies used by critics to invalidate the hijab and the psycho-sociological effects of wearing it. The chapter addresses the impact of feminist movements and state interventions in the acceptance and rejection of the hijab, emphasizing the complexity and multifaceted nature of the debate.

Furthermore, the chapter discusses the religious, cultural, and economic dimensions of the hijab, presenting different interpretations and arguments that shape public opinion and policy. It concludes by highlighting the need for respectful dialogue and understanding of the diverse motivations and beliefs surrounding the hijab in Moroccan society.

#### **4.1 Opponents of Hijab in Morocco**

Controversies often arise around new or unfamiliar phenomena within a social context, especially if these phenomena are seen as a threat to cultural and social values. However, it is surprising to see that what is controversial here is a deeply rooted religious and cultural tradition within our society. Would it not be more appropriate for the controversy to focus on what contradicts Islamic dress, which is authentic in the history of our Islamic societies? This situation shows the extent of external influence in our societies, where the historical characteristics of a Muslim society have begun to seem alien, and elements of religious and cultural identity have become questionable. These elements now need to be defended and re-established as rightful and existent.

In Moroccan society, traditional dress, especially for women, was a manifestation of religiosity until the French occupation of Morocco. Gradually, European values began to penetrate Moroccan culture through education and modernization at multiple levels. This led society to increasingly identify with modern values, particularly because Moroccan thought, sciences, and social structures were culturally backward and weak at that time. Despite this, a part of Moroccan society retained aspects of religiosity and inherited traditions, which persisted alongside emerging ideas and practices or resisted new trends.

Modern Morocco and its institutions were founded on the colonizer's approach, leaving social expressions of religious values outside the institutional framework of schools and state employment. Religion's revival began with religious associations influenced by movements in the Arab East, aiming to restore and resettle manifestations of religion in society. This led to a controversy between those who reject and criticize the hijab and those who adopt and defend it.

Opponents and critics of the hijab have approached in multiple ways, used various strategies, and presented various evidence to invalidate the idea of the hijab and make it appear as something outdated and as a social obstacle for women and society. Below is a group of manifestations of the conflict over the issue as reflected in social media, social and cultural movements, or trends in public opinion in Morocco.

#### **4.1.1 The use of women's liberation to reject Hijab**

Cultural development requires abandoning the hijab: State institutions are a manifestation of the development of the civilization within the state. Therefore, the relationships between individuals working in these institutions and their appearances (or personas) must reflect an atmosphere which is similar to the institutional system in Western institutions, especially since many of the decision-makers in Morocco were raised according to the French (Western) principles and aspire to be copies of those who live the sophisticated developed life. For them, to be like a westerner is the doorway to enjoy living a comfortable modern life. Accordingly, they view women's clothing as inconsistent with the existing and desired development, and hence it should be excluded so as not to be discordant with the aspirations of those in charge of these institutions.

A writer on the *Hespress.com* website published an opinion article under the title which can be translated as “Has the hijab become a barrier that hinders the professional development of Moroccan women?”.<sup>139</sup> The writer stated that Moroccan veiled women were subjected to “exclusion” from the list of new consulates’ appointments, which indicates that veiled women are prevented from participating in diplomacy and other domains despite the absence of any explicit law that prohibits their active engagement. Then she pointed out that a group of female media workers on Moroccan television were no longer able to appear on screen once they decided to wear the Islamic dress, and she explained that the Moroccan television does not allow veiled female media professionals to appear except for some religious programs. She also added that the Mohammedia School of Engineers forced female students to remove their hijab to join it. Finally, the author surveyed the opinions of a group of female activists - their opinions can be summarized as follows:

- One of them was prevented from delivering a speech at an international youth conference, even though she was the head of a youth organization affiliated with a Moroccan party.
- Competence should be the only criterion and nothing else.
- A woman should have the right to choose her clothing of her own will.

Readers on this publication interacted with their comments with a majority of comments who were on the side of those who were wronged. Their opinions were about how Islam became alienated on its land, and how colonialism produced a secular movement in Morocco, and that even when veiled women have proven competence and success in studies, the French mentality is against the veil, unlike the Anglo-Saxon mentality. While a minority expressed tendencies against the hijab, and had criticisms that are irrelevant to the original problem. Amongst the negative comments regarding the Hijab is someone saying that those hijabi women should be selected with caution as these positions are quite sensitive, and hijabi women should stay away from their dark ideas. Others claimed that the real hijab is the hijab of mind not the dress, and that the veiled women have weak and shy personalities and do not like to appear in front of a big audience.

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<sup>139</sup> Majda Ayt Laktaoui, “Hal Tahawwala al-Hijab ’Ila Hajiz Yu’iq al-Tatawwur al-Mihani Li Almaghribiyyat?,” *Hespress* - هسبريس جريدة إلكترونية مغربية - August 18, 2015, <https://www.hespress.com/237898-ال-تحول-الحجاب-إلى-حاجز-يُعيق-التطور-ال.html>.

There is no doubt that these institutions are sensitive state apparatuses, and veiled women can only be banned from such positions because those who are behind them think that the hijab of women is not compatible with their work or the appearance they would like to convey. Hijab for them may disrupt the aspects of development that they intend to establish, even if banning hijabis is enforced indirectly and outside the law. In addition, they are vigilant as to not to allow these women from having any important influential status.

The psycho-sociological effect: Some of those who reject the hijab believe that it restricts women psychologically and sociologically. They believe Hijab imprisons women, restricts their choices in clothing, chains their movement and freedom, and weakens their chances to win in confrontations and competitions, disabling them from proving themselves in work and achievement.

While others see the Hijab in the same way that Azouz Al-Tusi sees it in his article written on *ritajepress.com* with the title “The Hijab between the Doctrinal, the Psychological, and the Sociological”<sup>140</sup>; he perceives the Hijab from other angles than the religious one, which is controversial for him, as it is an outlet to reveal a woman’s interest in her body and her perception of it. It may also be an extension of a woman’s adornment which is somewhat paradoxical since in this case the hijab contradicts its essence and purpose. He also noted that the hijab in small cities and popular neighborhoods is merely a response to what the consensual social environment dictates to women.

Towards liberation from the hijab: Many women’s activists adhere to complete equality between men and women as it is stipulated in international conventions. Some of them believe that the Islamic women’s clothing interferes with their right to equality, and they think it is a form of discrimination against women as well as a form of patriarchal thought that eliminates women from their social interactions.

In an interview with a controversial women’s activist, Asma Lamrabet, broadcast on the website *mominoun.com*, under the title, “Dr. Asmaa Murabit to “Dhawāt” magazine”,<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> Azouz Al Tusi, “Al-Hijab Bayna al-‘Aqīdi, al-Saykoloji wa-al-Susyulūji,” *Ritajepress*, April 3, 2017, <https://ritajepress.com/44676/>.

<sup>141</sup> Mohammed Muad Chahban, “Al-Duktūrāh Asmā’ al-Murābiṭ li-Majallat ‘Dhawāt,’” *Mominoun Without Borders*, accessed July 31, 2024, <https://www.mominoun.com/articles/-/الدكتورة-أسماء-7422-المربط-لمجلة-ذوات>.

this activist claimed that the hijab is not one of the pillars of Islam, but nowadays it has become one of the pillars of Islam in the recent prevalent Islamic discourse.” She says that the veil that the Qur’an talks about is a garment of chastity, and we have the right as believing Muslim women to choose the garment of chastity that belongs to us, and no one has the right to formulate a specific style for the veil. However, she has no objection to a woman who wears the veil with conviction and freedom without being forced to wear it.

Feminist movements on this issue vary between discourses that are harsh and extreme, accusing veiled women of extremism, and between discourses that attempt to defend the right of non-veiled women to choose their clothing without depriving veiled women of that right.

#### **4.1.2 Appealing to the so-called “universal values”**

The universal values in this context refer to the agreed-upon values prevailing in developed countries which are politically, economically and technologically advanced. The term “universal values”, in addition to the term “human rights”, is considered present in the anti-Islamic dress discourse. This discourse would obscure the rights related to “identity,” “cultural norms,” or “Islamic background”.

As an example of referring to the universal values, Akhbarona.com<sup>142</sup> website reported the announcement of an association in the city of Marrakesh expressing its concern about what was happening in one of the high schools. The report pointed out the discriminatory tendencies based on gender carried out by some teachers. These discriminations can be seen in the separation of males and females within the classroom, urging male students to use the front seats and female students the back seats of the classroom, considering that women are ‘awra<sup>143</sup> and should not be looked at. Some discriminatory actions also include prohibiting males from sitting next to females in classrooms at the same table, the thing that reinforces women’s inferiority to men. The announcement also denounced designing specific clothing for students based on criteria bearing hidden political ideologies behind “modest dress.”

The announcement about the incident continued by recommending education curricula to be edited by deleting any expressions or texts which are against human rights, noting that

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<sup>142</sup> Mohammed Ouslim, “Huquqiyun bi-Marrakesh Yahtajjuna ’ala Ustadh Yafrid al-Hijab ’ala al-Talibat wa-al-Taqiya wa-al-Jilbab ’ala al-Talamidh,” *akhbarona.com*, November 23, 2015, sec. مستجدات التعليم, <https://www.akhbarona.com/education/145201.html>.

<sup>143</sup> What is private and should be covered from the eyes of the others.

education aims to develop the student's personality and skills, strengthen their perceptions and knowledge, and inculcate the human values stipulated in the Charter of the United Nations and all conventions and declarations related to human rights.

It is noted that there is no reference here to the Moroccan constitution, which says: "Islam is the religion of the state, and the state guarantees to everyone the freedom to practice his religious affairs," nor to the values and identity of the Moroccan society.

### **4.1.3 The different trends of feminism and its effect on dealing with Islamic manifestations, including dress**

Some feminist movements and branches of secular (secular) parties adopt an anti-Islamic stance as part of their attempt to target the manifestations of religiosity in social, educational, and cultural life. There is no doubt that the conflict between secular feminism and Islamic feminism covers every aspect of cultural and social life, including the idea of Islamic dress and its wearing in mixed-gender settings. Disagreement in thought, social media, or in real everyday life will remain omnipresent as far as intentions and backgrounds have different roots of ideologies, different historical contexts, and different powers that influence them in reality.

It is worth noting that the feminist movements in Morocco are diverse. Some of them include a secular trend, whether liberal or leftist, and some include an Islamic trend. Each of them has diverse trends that may reach extremism. Liberal and left-wing feminist associations do not hide the fact that their approach to defending women is based on what is stipulated in international conventions, the United Nations, and the lifestyle of Western countries. Hence, they are in a constant intense or lenient fight with those whose values are based on religion and identity.

Hemad Alqabbaj published in *Hespress.com* an opinion article entitled "2010; an evaluation of the performance of the secular feminist movement in Morocco,"<sup>144</sup> in which he observed that the most prominent characteristic of this movement is the complete loyalty to the principles of the Western feminist movement, which has been able to extend its influence and

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<sup>144</sup> Hemad Alqabbaj, "2010: Wa-Taqqīm Adā' al-Ḥarakah al-Nisawīyah al-'Ilmānīyah' bi-al-Maghrib," *Hespress*, April 7, 2010, <https://www.hespress.com/2010-واقتييم-أداء-الحركة-النسوية-العلمان-30045.html>.

be in line with the decision-makers ideologies. This can be shown through the recommendations of the United Nations that are dictated to the peoples during international conferences related to women. He gave the example of the position of Nazha Asskali (Minister of Solidarity, Women, Family and Social Development) and her way of managing the cases related to women. The writer emphasized that the secular feminist movement pays allegiance to the West through a set of adopted concepts such as male dominance, poor political participation, and the restriction of monetary expenses to men. After presenting a number of the minister's activities, the writer enumerates the number of problems that this activist neglected, including the spread of prostitution and its causes, the deterioration of morals within the family and educational circles, the increasing percentage of women addicted to smoking and alcohol, marginalization and illiteracy, especially in the rural areas. It is worth noting that Nazha Asskali belongs to the "Party of Progress and Socialism," a leftist party that was previously called the "Moroccan Communist Party."

Ilyas Bouzghaia discussed in his article entitled "Islamists removing their hijab..."<sup>145</sup> the influence of intercultural backgrounds and contemporary issues on the hijab and linked the discussion to the debate around Islam and modernity. The researcher reported a study about "daily Islam" among young people, conducted in 2007, and its results showed that 64% wear the hijab for religious reasons, and 17% for non-religious reasons, such as being modest (decent) and gaining respect within society. The researcher pointed out the emergence of styles of clothing that belong to different Islamic countries or to a certain trend of fashion, with which the hijab became contradictory to its religious purpose. He noted that most of the respondents in the survey revealed a lack of knowledge of the religious texts related to hijab and its conditions. He deduced that this indicates a decline of interest in purely religious appearance due to the impact of globalization and the invasion of Western culture. The writer referred to a study conducted by the researcher Idris Bensaïd in 2007, entitled "Youth and the Hijab in Morocco," which concluded that the hijab is actually so many 'hijabs', and modernity is not just one modernity but many 'modernities', explaining that symbolically the Islamic dress has many justifications for wearing it. The study showed how the hijab became devoid of its

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<sup>145</sup> Ilyas Bouzghaya, "Islāmīyāt Yanzi'na al-Ḥijāb: Tadākhul Marji'iyāt wa-Mulā'amah Mustajiddāt," *Hespress*, April 12, 2019, <https://www.hespress.com/-إسلاميات-ينزعن-الحجاب-تداخل-مرجعيات-و-489602.html>.

religious and moral values and has become a garment intended to be worn for multiple and complex reasons and purposes.

The writer explained the interviewees' lack of knowledge of the religious texts that frame wearing the hijab as a retreat from adhering to religion itself. This interpretation is debatable, as not knowing the legal evidence for any religious practice does not necessarily entail what the researcher concluded. Many Muslim pious people are content with listening to trusted jurists and blindly following their directions, without having to think about the issue themselves. Thus, people are used to committing to what the scholars instructed them to do, yet this does not undermine their level of religiosity or obedience. Just like the case of the majority of people who take a doctor's advice without any knowledge of medicine since they trust the people of specialty. He also stated that 17% of women wore the hijab for non-religious reasons, including modesty (or decency) and respect. However, both of these reasons are characteristics of the Islamic religion, so how can they be considered as choices outside of what is religious? Likewise, the styles of dress belonging to Islamic countries (Turkish, Iranian, Indonesian...) do not constitute a problem, because what is important in Islam is that the dress should not be transparent, too tight, and covering what should be covered. Thus, this diversity is not a sign of social disintegration or chaos as much as it is related to social norms rather than religion. Muslims do not criticize other Muslim peoples for their cultural clothing styles as long as the conditions of Islamic dress are met.

#### **4.1.4 Hijab phobia amongst some small groups in Moroccan society**

It is no secret that a society like Morocco has different, diverse and even conflicting visions about many social ideas and practices; and thus this is reflected in their opinions and positions to the point of paradox sometimes. Moroccan society is open to many ideologies and social trends; therefore some people may respond to Islamic dress with fear lest they lose modernity, or lest the phenomenon will be too prevalent that the society might be drawn towards Islamization and thus the Islamization of culture, politics and other sectors. Therefore, some groups in Moroccan society have consistently warned against this phenomenon arguing that it goes back to a society where women were considered properties and enslaved. This position of rejecting hijab may become even more intense when the form of the hijab is imported from some seemingly very conservative countries, who use the niqab and a totally covered body in a manner that is sometimes not common in the community.

Manifestations of veil phobia may include the prejudicial perception towards the veiled, exclusion of these women whether by not dealing with them or just getting away from them, using hurtful language towards them, writing or expressing opinions against them, and destroying their image. All of these actions can be due to hatred, caution, fear, intimidation or hostility that these hijab phobes feel towards hijabis. The rate of this phenomenon varies between Islamic countries and non-Islamic countries, especially European countries; therefore, this phobia is very rare in Moroccan circles due to the large number of women who wear the hijab compared to non-Muslim countries, and because members of society understand the religious and historical origin of the hijab, and are accustomed to its social presence.

Such studies confirm that the veil is part of society, and most groups consider it an acceptable natural appearance or an appearance indicating religiosity, especially since it is familiar to their relatives, neighbors, or colleagues at school or work. Surely, there is an exception of a few groups, who are often influenced either by values or cultures that are anti-religious or against inherited local customs or people who are exclusively living a semi-European life far from the spirit of religion or conservatism. In this regard, the website "Al-Omq" published an article entitled "Study of 61% of Moroccans with hijab support the veil".<sup>146</sup> The study revealed that 61.2% of the interviewed people who are 1,320 of number expressed their support for covering the female body by wearing a hijab, and this percentage increases among females, reaching 65.3% versus 57.1% among males. The study conducted by the foundation Menassat for Research and Social Studies between 17 May and 17 June, 2021, indicated that about 50% of sample individuals consider the way women dress to be personal freedom.

#### **4.1.5 Interventions by some State officials and some institutions to prevent acceptance of the hijab**

The news comes from time to time about preventing some veiled women from taking some jobs or positions in state institutions or private institutions. This has been happening since the formation of the modern independent Moroccan state, which dates back to the independence of the Kingdom of Morocco. This means that some entities within the state and society are uncomfortable with the hijab among their employees. This can be seen, for example,

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<sup>146</sup> Jamal Amdouri, "Dirāsah: 61% Min al-Maghāribah Ma' al-Ḥijāb Wa 50% Ya'tabirūn al-Jins Qabla al-Zawāj Ḥurriyyah Shakhsiyyah," *Al3omq.Com*, accessed July 31, 2024, <https://al3omk.com/698937.html>.



Alarabiya.net<sup>150</sup> reported that the prison administration prohibited female staff from wearing a headscarf. They justified this by saying that it does not conform to the formal dress code of their department and that the uniform components should not be mixed with any clothes that are inconsistent with their regulations such as “handkerchief over the head” or wearing shoes that are different in shape or color. It is noteworthy that describing the veil in the previous statement as a “handkerchief over the head” is very bizarre, as the veil is not a handkerchief, and the metaphor used in a sarcastic tone is unusual. In addition, talking about shoes, their shape and color is a sly strategy to draw the addressee’s attention away from the main issue. Since these women’s problem is not with the shoes, but the veil.

On the DW.com<sup>151</sup> website one of the writers pointed out the increase in the number of veiled women in the Moroccan labor market, including the media field. In this article, one of the broadcasters pointed out that veiled women are kept away from appearing on television for fear of their appearance’s effect on the viewers. She even pointed out that the ban extends to radio, which does not make sense as the veiled woman does not appear to the listeners, and they do not know what she looks like. The writer of the article believes that there is no law preventing veiled women from working on television, but their non-appearance has become a norm with the exception of some religious programs. The writer highlighted the “secularism” of the media sector in Morocco and cited Mustafa Arramid’s opinion (a leader in the Justice and Development Party at the time of publication). He believes that the reason behind the ban is simply because those in charge of television in Morocco belong to the French secular school, which rejects the appearance of some religious symbols in the media.

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%D8%AD%D8%AC%D8%A7%D8%A8%D9%87%D8%A7.

<sup>150</sup> Hasan Al-Achraf, “idārat al-Sujūn bi-l-Maghrib Taḥzur ‘alā al-Muwazzafāt Irtidā’ al-Ḥijāb l’tabaratuḥu Munāfiyan li-l-Zayy al-Rasmī,” *Alarabiya*, September 8, 2008, <https://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2008%2F09%2F08%2F56219.html>.

<sup>151</sup> Siham Achto, “Muḥajjabāt al-l’lām al-Maghribī: l’lāmīyāt Khalfa al-Sitār,” *dw.com*, accessed July 31, 2024, <https://www.dw.com/ar/%D9%85%D8%AD%D8%AC%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%B9%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%85-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%BA%D8%B1%D8%A8%D9%8A%D8%A5%D8%B9%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%85%D9%8A%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%AE%D9%84%D9%81-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D8%AA%D8%A7%D8%B1/a-15277740>.

According to another news on Al Jazeera.net in Rabat, “Banning the burqa in Morocco...the debate over security and freedoms”<sup>152</sup>, the decision by the Moroccan authorities to ban selling and sewing of the burqa’ (niqab) in a number of shops raised mixed reactions. Some considered the decision a step towards the definite ban of wearing niqab, while others saw it as a necessary security measurement to preserve the country’s cultural identity.

One of the writers, Anas Al-Dahmouni, published an article on the website *howiyapress.com* about “The Hijab in the Security apparatuses between Personal Freedom and official uniform restrictions”<sup>153</sup>, in which he mentioned a picture that had spread on 1/14/2016 of Moroccan policewomen who, wearing their hijab, participated in monitoring a protest by teachers in the city of Inzegane. A security source explained that some women wear the hijab after being hired, and no one prevents them afterward as long as it does not interfere with their duties performance.

This debate about the hijab, for which we have provided several examples, continues in similar forms, all of which fall under the restriction of the freedom of those who commit to it. This debate is part of a broader controversy over Islamic manifestations in the state and society, with Islamists participating in the discussion. In an article written by Ismail Azzam on *DW.com*<sup>154</sup>, he mentioned the incident involving a female member of the parliament from the

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<sup>152</sup> “Man’ al-Burqa’ bi-l-Maghreb: Jadh al-Amn wa-l-Ḥurriyyāt,” *Aljazeera.net*, accessed July 31, 2024, <https://www.aljazeera.net/news/2017/1/12/%d9%85%d9%86%d8%b9-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%a8%d8%b1%d9%82%d8%b9-%d8%a8%d8%a7%d9%84%d9%85%d8%ba%d8%b1%d8%a8-%d8%ac%d8%af%d9%84-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%a3%d9%85%d9%86-%d9%88%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%ad%d8%b1%d9%8a%d8%a7%d8%aa>.

<sup>153</sup> Abdellah Almasmoudi, “Al-Ḥijāb bi-l-Ajhiza al-Amniyya bayn al-Ḥurriyya al-Shakhṣiyya wa-Ḍawābiṭ al-Libās al-Muwaḥḥad al-Rasmī,” *howiyapress*, September 22, 2017, <https://howiyapress.com/%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%ad%d8%ac%d8%a7%d8%a8-%d8%a8%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%a3%d8%ac%d9%87%d8%b2%d8%a9-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%a3%d9%85%d9%86%d9%8a%d8%a9-%d8%a8%d9%8a%d9%86-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%ad%d8%b1%d9%8a%d8%a9-%d8%a7%d9%84/>.

<sup>154</sup> Ismail Azzam, “al-Islāmiyyūn wa al-ḥurriyyāt al-khāṣṣah fī al-Maghrib.. al-ḥijāb yu’amiq al-jadal,” *dw.com*, accessed July 31, 2024, <https://www.dw.com/ar/%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%BA%D8%B1%D8%A8-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D8%AC%D8%A7%D8%A8-%D9%8A%D8%B9%D9%8A%D8%AF-%D8%AC%D8%AF%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D9%8A%D8%A7%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AE%D8%A7%D8%B5%D8%A9-%D9%84%D9%80%D8%A5%D8%B3%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%85%D9%8A%D9%8A%D9%86-%D8%A5%D9%84%D9%89-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%88%D8%A7%D8%AC%D9%87%D8%A9/a-47040842>.

Justice and Development Party (who has an Islamic orientation) whose pictures in Paris were taken without her knowledge, showing her wearing modern clothing without hijab, unlike her usual Islamic attire. This incident sparked a debate between those defending and supporting her under individual freedom rights and those criticizing and attacking her. The writer cited the opinion of a media figure who said that the intensity of the modern-Islamist polarization in Morocco has increased since the Islamists came to power. He thinks that attacks on the private lives of Islamists are part of this conflict that aims primarily to strip them of their credibility by trying to destroy what they have worked on for years in charitable work and preaching Islamic values within poor circles that constitute an electoral reservoir for Islamists. Meanwhile, another Moroccan media figure rejects the appearance of female media figures wearing the hijab because, in his opinion, they look introverted and shy; nevertheless, their appearance without hijab does not make them lose their identity but is a sign of the aspired civilization and modernity.

#### **4.1.6 Deceptive comparison as a strategy to undermine the importance of the Islamic Dress**

One aspect of the debate surrounding the hijab involves using seemingly logical arguments to reject this practice or belittle it by making people perceive it as unnecessary for women. This is achieved by making comparisons and jumping to the conclusion that Islamic dress has no meaning without taking into account other considerations. A common example, often used in anti-hijab discourse, is the claim that a woman wearing Islamic attire might be of poor character and corrupted morals, while a woman who is not covering may be virtuous and morally upright, thus making the latter better than the former. The comparison here is deceptive because the equation is not balanced, as it adds opposing variables or criteria to the different sides of the equation. The comparison here is misleading because the case on this side is not the same on the other side, and falls outside the discussion about wearing the dress itself. The comparison shifts to a contrast between clothing on one hand and ethics on the other. It is similar to discussing the harms of smoking, and someone responds with a deceptive comparison, claiming that a smoker who exercises and follows a healthy diet is better than someone who abstains from smoking but is in poor health. Here, additional factors are introduced into the discussion to favor one opinion over another; or like a doctor who is told to wear a lab coat, responds by saying that the coat is not the criterion, as someone who does

not wear it might be better at practicing medicine than someone who does. In fact, the lab coat symbolizes the profession, which is the subject of debate, not the doctor's skill.

Then, those who wear Islamic dress while they are far from the chastity of Islam are covering up their corruption, so they should not be used as an excuse to generalize their behavior to all righteous believing women. Muslims who argue about the religious symbolism of women's dress do not consider this dress to be the only criterion that makes a woman righteous. Rather, they argue that it is a religious matter first and foremost, and a sign of decency and religious morality that the Shari'ah calls for. It serves purposes related to chastity and a woman's appearance, and these purposes can be achieved through its symbolism.

#### **4.1.7 Controversial Interpretations of the Hijab Phenomenon**

Another misleading comparison is the claim that those who wear Islamic dress resort to it because of the high prices of fashionable clothing, beauty products and accessories, suggesting that it is an escape from the costs of clothing and a cover for poverty. This comparison, which equates a specific appearance with a particular purpose, overlooks the fact that the purpose of the hijab is not limited to this purpose (which might as well be the purpose of some people). Attempting to confine it to this aspect diminishes its value and the value of those who wear it for the sake of religious purposes (which is the normal and original one).

Mohammed Chaquir's article on hespress, titled "Moroccan Women's Hijab: Economic Savings, Religious Commitment, and Various Purposes,"<sup>155</sup> suggests a nuanced perspective on the hijab. By starting the title with economic savings rather than religious commitment, the title implies that the economic aspect is the central aim for veiled women. followed by religious commitment, and then other purposes that hint at political, ideological, moral, cultural, and social dimensions. This prioritization seems intended to shape the reader's understanding of the hijab's significance. Chaquir differentiates between the "muhajjaba" (a woman who wears the hijab as part of Moroccan social heritage) and the "muhtajiba" (a woman who chooses to veil herself based on cultural, political, or ideological reasons). He explores the "muhajjaba" woman from moral, social, and economic viewpoints, linking the traditional practice of wearing the hijab to economic issues like unemployment and the costs of clothing and beauty.

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<sup>155</sup> Mohammed Chaquir, "Ḥijāb al-Maghribiyyāt: Idkhār Iqtisādī wa Itizām Dīnī," *Hespress*, February 1, 2017, <https://www.hespress.com/337801-حجاب-المغربيات-ادخار-اقتصادي-والتزام.html>.

In contrast, he examines the "muhtajiba" woman through the lenses of cultural, ideological, and political motivations.

This is an example of approaching the phenomenon of the hijab in relation to other controversial issues, placing it in different contexts and giving it new dimensions that may divert it from its intended religious purpose and the purpose of pious religious people and even strip it from its original meaning. Discussions of all these dimensions should not deviate into broad debates that discuss everything and overly interpret things, suggesting, for example, that a woman wearing Islamic dress is displaying a political symbol, hiding economic incapacity, or trying to appear pious to mask corruption. This approach removes the hijab from its original religious concept and can introduce other dimensions that obscure the religious and social origins, which involve freedom of choice, under a load of perceptions, appearances, conflicts, and limitless interpretations.

## **4.2 Advocates and defenders of Hijab**

### **4.2.1 The religious purpose of hijab**

The dress of a Muslim woman might be viewed as a social form that started in the past and continued in a way that reflects male dominance over females who use women and enslave them. It is possible that cultural and social dimensions in different historical periods have played a role in shaping the clothing of women and men, and the relationships between genders, to serve societal needs of their times. However, for us Muslims, the clothing of women is guided by Quranic texts and prophetic traditions that frame this matter. The Quran, which Muslims regard as a guiding reference for their faith and daily life, along with the sayings and practices of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), includes etiquettes and guidelines regarding dress. Muslims have adhered to these since the advent of Islam, despite differences among scholars of exegesis, hadith, and jurisprudence over certain details, such as the visibility of a woman's face and hands. These scholars strive to apply the texts to contemporary realities, seeking the most appropriate practical applications. They are inevitably influenced by their existing knowledge and the socio-cultural context, which is a fundamental factor affecting their interpretations. Nevertheless, Islam addresses people's life and knowledge needs, guiding them towards what is most proper for achieving religious and human objectives without causing undue hardship.

## 4.2.2 The gist of the Debate over Hijab

Sometimes, the debate over Islamic dress diverges from its core, which is adherence to Islamic law. Many of the issues that arise in discussions about this phenomenon stem from neglecting this religious purpose. Some opponents of the hijab base their arguments on the idea that the hijab is a historical phenomenon rather than a religious one originating from revelation. Others acknowledge the religious text but interpret it in a way that aligns with Western ideas, while some believe that the understanding of the text is subject to evolution and change just like other aspects of human life. Therefore, the essence of the debate lies in the religious text and how Muslims receive and engage with it.

## 4.2.3 The Emancipatory Dimension of the Hijab

Abdel Halim Abu Shuqqa wrote a significant book that resonated within Islamic cultural circles, titled "The Liberation of Women in the Age of Revelation."<sup>156</sup> In the fourth volume, he dedicated a section to "Women's Dress and Adornment," where he strived to correct many misconceptions and practices that emerged after the time of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). He demonstrated how history and customs contributed to extremist restrictions on women regarding dress. His discussion on the "conditions" for women's clothing can be summarized as follows:

**Covering the Body:** He examined the issue of revealing the face and hands, and supports uncovering them, considering it a practice in line with human life traditions and agreed upon among the madahib. He discussed the issue of the niqab between pre-Islamic and Islamic contexts and its prohibition during ihram (pilgrimage), and he distinguished between the strict adherence required for the Prophet's wives, who are considered "Mothers of the Believers" and have a special status, and the body covering for other women.

**Adornment of the Face, Hands, Feet, and Clothes:** He explained what women should conceal and what they are allowed to reveal.

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<sup>156</sup> Abdel Halim Abu Shuqqa, *Tahrir al-Mar'a fi 'Asr al-Risalah: Dirasah Jam'iyyah li-Nusūs al-Qur'ān al-Karīm wa Ṣaḥīḥī al-Bukhārī wa Muslim*, vol. 4 (Kuwait: Dār al-Qalam wa al-Nashr wa al-Tawzī', 1990).

**Community Standards:** The dress and adornment of women should align with what is customary in the Muslim community.

**Distinctiveness from Men's Clothing:** Women's clothing should be different from typical men's attire.

**Distinctiveness from Non-Muslim Women's Dress:** Women's clothing and adornment should differ from what the clothes that distinguish non-Muslim women.

The title of the aforementioned book reflects the author's aim to present the image of women during the age of revelation, with the goal of liberating women from many constraints that were the result of historical and cultural circumstances, after various peoples and cultures had entered Islam over time.

Far from Islamic societies, it is evident that the exploitation, commercialization, and objectification of women persist under various labels such as "fashion" in clothing and adornment, beauty pageants, provocative dancing, and in fine arts, cinema, advertisements, and the promotion of nudity culture. Therefore, the emancipatory dimension in the dress and covering of Muslim women is about preserving modesty rather than abandoning it in favor of mimicking other cultures.

It is also worth noting that men specifically played an important role into women's liberation in accordance with Western concepts before the feminist movement took hold.

#### **4.2.4 The Advocacy and Struggle for Hijab**

The key aspects of the struggle for the hijab can be outlined in three main areas:

**A – The Hijab as a Religious Right:** The hijab is a fundamental aspect of religious belief and practice. Everyone has the right to practice their religion freely, which includes a Muslim woman's right to wear religious attire according to her faith. Engaging in peaceful and fair dialogue is crucial and can be beneficial as long as it steers clear of injustice and extremism.

**B – The Hijab as a Women's Right:** The hijab symbolizes a woman's right to choose freely, without any form of coercion or oppression. While some may view it as a symbol of Islam, this

perspective should not lead to the denial of a woman's choice or a negative judgment of her decision. Respecting individual choices is essential.

**C – Advocacy for the Hijab:** Advocating for the hijab is a fundamental right of both Muslim men and women. They have the right to invite others to their faith, practice it, and adhere to its teachings. Each person can call others to their own madhab (school of thought) and express their opinions. All of this should be done within a peaceful and non-coercive framework.

**D – Exposing Violations Against Muslim Women in Their Own Communities:** This is a paradoxical situation; while we might understand restrictions on the hijab in non-Muslim countries, where there is a need to bridge the gap between Islamic practices and hostility toward them, it is less comprehensible when such hostility and restrictions occur in Muslim countries that have been accustomed to the hijab for centuries. The invocation of modernity or contemporary values does not justify the use or abuse of authority to enforce actions, laws, or policies against the hijab. This abuse of power was portrayed in a news article from *Bladna24*<sup>157</sup> about a controversy involving a French language textbook for elementary students where a picture of a woman wearing a hijab was replaced with another without a hijab, and many activists on Facebook perceived this as an attempt to distance youth from their religious roots.

Exposing violations can also involve taking legal action. For example, as mentioned earlier, the courts have ruled in favor of a student who was prevented from attending school because of her head covering. Additionally, a report on *Howiyapress*<sup>158</sup> highlighted a restaurant in Rabat that banned hijab-wearing women to avoid offending foreign clients.

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<sup>157</sup> Jamal El-Abid, “Kānat muḥajabā wa lam ta’ud kathālika .. ṣūra bi-kitāb madrāsī tuthīr jadalān wāsi’an,” *Bladna24*, October 17, 2022, <https://bladna24.ma/%d9%83%d8%a7%d9%86%d8%aa-%d9%85%d8%ad%d8%ac%d8%a8%d8%a9-%d9%88%d9%84%d9%85-%d8%aa%d8%b9%d8%af-%d9%83%d8%b0%d9%84%d9%83-%d8%b5%d9%88%d8%b1%d8%a9-%d8%a8%d9%83%d8%aa%d8%a7%d8%a8-%d9%85%d8%af%d8%b1/>.

<sup>158</sup> Abdellah Elmasmoudi, “Maṭ’am bi-al-Rabāṭ Yamna’ al-Muḥajjabāt min al-Dukhūl wa-Aḥad Afrād al-’Ā’ila al-Malakiyya Yatadakhal,” *howiyapress*, July 25, 2024, <https://howiyapress.com/%d9%85%d8%b7%d8%b9%d9%85-%d8%a8%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%b1%d8%a8%d8%a7%d8%b7-%d9%8a%d9%85%d9%86%d8%b9-%d8%a7%d9%84%d9%85%d8%ad%d8%ac%d8%a8%d8%a7%d8%aa-%d9%85%d9%86-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%af%d8%ae%d9%88%d9%84-%d9%88/>.

### 4.3 The Position of a Modern Moroccan Thinker on the Hijab Phenomenon: The Case of Mohammed Abed al-Jabri

The positions of Moroccan intellectuals who advocate for modernizing society and re-evaluating cultural heritage on the "hijab issue" range from those who view it through an Orientalist lens, which interprets Islamic cultures through the historical values and culture of the West within the framework of what is called egocentrism. This perspective is similar to that of Fatima Mernissi, who wrote in French and authored works on the "harem" in Islamic societies. Her works include:

-*Beyond the Veil: Male-Female Dynamics in Modern Muslim Society*.<sup>159</sup>

-*Sexe, Idéologie, Islam* (sex, Ideology and Islam).<sup>160</sup>

- *Le monde n'est pas un harem: Paroles de femmes du Maroc* (the World is not a Harem: Stories of Moroccan Women).<sup>161</sup>

- *Le harem politique: le Prophète et les femmes* (the Political Harem: the prophets and his wives).<sup>162</sup>

Some other view the hijab through the political ideology they adopt, which carries dimensions that contradict the Islamic project and call for the exclusion of what belongs to Islamic history. Others have attempted to reinterpret the tradition from within, following the principle of "and approach homes from their doors"<sup>163</sup>. An example of the latter is Muhammad Abd Al-Jabri, who provided an analysis of the cultural heritage regarding the hijab and offered a renewing perspective that leads to conclusions where the heritage itself is renewed rather than being dismissed.

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<sup>159</sup> Mernissi, *Beyond the Veil, Revised Edition*.

<sup>160</sup> Fatima Mernissi, *Sexe, idéologie, Islam* (Tierce, 1983).

<sup>161</sup> Fatima Mernissi, *Le monde n'est pas un harem: paroles de femmes du Maroc* (Albin Michel, 1991).

<sup>162</sup> Fatima Mernissi, *Le harem politique: le prophète et les femmes* (Albin Michel, 2010).

<sup>163</sup> Talal Itani, *Quran in English - Clear and Easy to Read.*, accessed July 31, 2024, <https://www.clearquran.com>.

The website *aljabriabed.net*<sup>164</sup> features three articles under the main title which can be translated as "The Hijab... A Controversial Issue," each with a specific subtitle

#### **4.3.1 Article 1: “different types of the hijab, but all considered valid (in Islam)”<sup>165</sup>**

He proposed for the French government a solution to overcome the problem of banning the veil in schools, which is imposing a school uniform for girls, and leaving it to the principals and parents of the students to decide on its form, with the condition that it features nothing more on the head than combed hair without adornments or makeup. The proposed uniform would resemble the attire of flight attendants. . He argued that this solution would meet the objectives of the hijab in Islamic law as stipulated in the Quran, rather than the interpretations of jurists. He pointed out that jurists have "regulated" the hijab based on the prevailing realities of their time. Al-Jabri discussed the variety of hijab styles in different communities and regions of Morocco, noting that people have become accustomed to these types, and even jurists have not denied them. He asserted that the hijab is a matter of *ijtihad* that evolves with each era.

#### **4.3.2 Article 2: “a custom of the past...and nowadays circumstance”<sup>166</sup>**

The author argues that the hijab falls under "the customs of the Arabs" (referring to rules, traditions, and linguistic practices from ancient Arab culture), whereas the Quran is a discourse addressed to all people in all times and places, including our own era and location. He suggests to scholars of Islamic jurisprudence the need for "continuous revival." The article reviews various data and behaviors from the pre-Islamic and Islamic periods regarding "females," highlighting their social and moral justifications. Among the notable points is the distinction made between free women (who remain at home veiled) and female slaves (who go out and perform services and thus abandon the hijab). This implies that jurists regulated the hijab based on social circumstances.

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<sup>164</sup> Mohammed Abed-Aljabri, “alā Ṭarīq Tajdīd Al-Fikr al-‘arabī,” accessed July 31, 2024, <https://www.aljabriabed.net/textes.htm>.

<sup>165</sup> Mohammed Abed-Aljabri, “Anwā’ Mukhtalifah... Tu’tabar Kulluhā Shar’iyyah!,” *aljabriabed.net*, accessed July 31, 2024, <https://www.aljabriabed.net/tajdid11.htm>.

<sup>166</sup> Mohammed Abed-Aljabri, “Ma’hūd Al-‘Arab ... Wa Mu’ṭayāt ‘aşrinā,” *aljabriabed.net*, accessed July 31, 2024, <https://www.aljabriabed.net/tajdid12.htm>.

### **4.3.3 Article 3: "The Verses on Hijab... Reasons for Revelation and the Conditions of Our Time"<sup>167</sup>**

In this article, Al-Jabri presents the Quranic verses on hijab, specifically from Surah Al-Ahzab and Surah An-Nur, and places these verses within their historical social context. The objective of the verses is interpreted as a measure to ensure that women are recognized, amongst harassers, and distinguished from female slaves accompanying them. Al-Jabri highlights the differences among exegetes regarding the definitions of “jilbab” and “visible adornments.” He concludes that the principle of “necessities permit the forbidden” might allow for flexibility with working and employed women. He argues that today’s unveiling is closer to the purpose of making a woman known rather than the hijab itself, thus effectively turning the verse into the opposite. Al-Jabri suggests, first, that we should strive to interpret the Qur’anic text by considering social evolution and the objectives of Sharia. Second, he emphasizes that the motivation for discussing the issue of hijab should be a genuine desire to understand the text, rather than any other reasons. He concludes his article by stating that the command to wear the hijab does not carry any threats or punishments.

This represents an example of thought that reinterprets the texts of hijab in a new light, ultimately leading to the dissolution and end of the hijab, and thus the outcome is similar, which is cancelling the hijab yet by means of Islamic Ijtihad. This raises the question: is any real difference between those who reinterpret the verses using ijtihad and those who reject the hijab because it does not align with the contemporary era?

## **4.4 Conclusion**

In conclusion, the debate surrounding the hijab in Morocco is complex and multifaceted, reflecting deeper societal conflicts between tradition and modernity, religious adherence and secularism, and individual rights versus societal norms. This chapter has explored various dimensions of this debate, highlighting the perspectives of both opponents and advocates of the hijab.

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<sup>167</sup> Mohammed Abed-Aljabri, “Āyāt Al-Ḥijāb ... Asbāb al-Nuzūl Wa Muṭayyāt ‘aṣrinā,” aljabriabed.net, accessed July 31, 2024, <https://www.aljabriabed.net/tajdid13.htm>.

Opponents argue that the hijab is incompatible with cultural development and modernization. They believe that it restricts women's psychological and sociological freedom, limits their opportunities, and is a symbol of patriarchal control. These critics often appeal to universal values and human rights, suggesting that the hijab contradicts the principles of gender equality and personal freedom.

On the other hand, advocates for the hijab emphasize its religious significance and the right of women to express their faith through their attire. They argue that the hijab is a fundamental aspect of Islamic practice and a symbol of modesty and religious commitment. They also highlight that the hijab can be a form of empowerment, allowing women to assert their identity and resist cultural assimilation.

The controversy is further complicated by the influence of feminist movements, which are divided between those who view the hijab as a form of oppression and those who defend it as a personal and religious choice. Additionally, the state's stance on the hijab has led to various legal and social challenges, with instances of veiled women being excluded from certain professional roles and educational institutions.

Ultimately, the debate over the hijab in Morocco reflects broader questions about cultural identity, religious freedom, and the role of women in society. It underscores the need for respectful dialogue and mutual understanding to navigate these complex issues and ensure that the rights and freedoms of all individuals are upheld.

As Moroccan society continues to evolve, it is crucial to find a balance that respects religious traditions while embracing modern values and promoting gender equality. Only through inclusive and informed discussions can a harmonious coexistence be achieved, allowing for diverse expressions of identity and belief in a rapidly changing world.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **CONCLUSION**

The debate surrounding the hijab in Morocco reflects broader issues of cultural identity, particularly in relation to religiosity and the influences of globalization and modernity. This thesis has shown that the hijab debate is much more than a mere discussion about the veil; it is a mirror of the dilemma of Moroccan society in determining the appropriate values, norms, and religious orientations in the modern world. It highlights the tension between individual freedom and self-expression versus collective identity and societal norms as well as notions of secularism.

The opponents of the hijab are convinced that it hinders the process of modernization and the representation of women's rights indicating that the hijab is a tool of oppression towards women. This perspective usually relies on the concepts of human rights and gender equality, saying that the hijab is not compliant with the values of contemporary individual freedom and social justice. On the other hand, supporters argue that the hijab is a powerful symbol of faith and is a commandment from the Almighty that serves as a key aspect of a Muslim woman's identity.

For many, it symbolizes a culture of modesty, acting both as a source of strength and a declaration of resistance against cultural penetration. The complexity of this issue is compounded by the influences of feminist movements, state legislation, and the intricate relationship between Moroccan laws and the Qur'an. This broad range of perspectives underscores the need for a thoughtful approach that respects both historical traditions and contemporary realities, thus ensuring women's rights to maintain their authentic identities. The evolution of women's dress codes in Morocco illustrates how the country is navigating the challenges of globalization while still preserving its cultural heritage. The integration of traditional Moroccan garments, such as the jellaba, with modern clothing styles like the kaftan, demonstrates how Moroccan women's fashion remains empowered and adaptable to changing social and economic conditions.

Furthermore, the Islamic fashion industry demonstrates how both religion and fashion have been commodified through the blending of religious beliefs with contemporary fashion trends. This has sparked debates over commercialization and the potential modification of the

purposes of religious doctrines and teachings. Nevertheless, this fosters conditions for cultural exchange and empowers cultural minorities to combat prejudice. The processes of colonization and globalization have significantly impacted Moroccan women's fashion, leading to the creation of the Moroccan-European hybrid fashion system, which continues to evolve. This evolution, driven by colonial influence and integration into the global fashion arena, has blended traditional Moroccan attire with both new and continually evolving fashion trends, contributing to the distinctive character of Moroccan fashion today.

Through the lenses of secularization perspective, the hijab case in Morocco represents a part of a larger conflict the country faces in balancing tradition and modernity. It challenges the simplistic assumption of secularization theory that modernization leads to the decline of religion, as religion continues to play a significant role in public life and identity.

This paper also highlights that there are no straightforward answers to these questions around the hijab and underscores the importance of respect and tolerance in interpersonal interactions. If Morocco and its leaders can cultivate tolerance and appreciation for diverse viewpoints while working to preserve and enhance the nation's cultural identity, Morocco can progress in modern society. This progress would be based on embracing contemporary cultural advancements while honoring its historical and cultural roots. Consequently, the evolution of Moroccan women's dress styles can be seen as a rich reflection of Morocco's cultural flexibility and its ability to integrate various forms of modernity while maintaining the essence of Moroccan tradition and culture.

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