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Article Review 2

“The Post-9/11 Hijab as Icon”

<http://search.proquest.com.jproxy.lib.ecu.edu/docview/216753714/fulltextPDF/EF084A3D63E34D62PQ/1?accountid=10639>

Yvonne Haddad begins with a widespread prediction on the second and third generation of Muslims in the US becoming Americanized by abandoning their parents’ religious and cultural understandings (2007:253). The possibility of a return to a first generation understanding of religion and culture would not happen until the third generation which she terms as “re-Islamization” (Haddad 2007:253). Haddad wrote this article to say that after 9/11, re-Islamization has been accelerated and one of its signs includes the hijab or veil (2007:253). She cites political reasons for wearing the hijab as a sign of unity and a challenge to attempts to eliminate understandings of Islam (Haddad 2007:254). Other reasons for wearing the hijab is more specific to American laws as Muslims feel comfortable embracing the rights afforded to them under freedom of speech and expression of religious beliefs (Haddad 2007:254). Haddad’s research spans over two decades on American Muslim communities, thirty young women, some focus groups of university students, and literature from Islamic organizations in America (2007:254).

Beginning in the 1970’s, voices of American Muslim women began to counter stereotypes with their own arguments and many would join the feminist movement in the 1970’s (Haddad 2007:256). Haddad notes that there were more voices in Algeria in the 1950s, and also in Iran in the 1970s after their revolution (2007:254,256). The counter argument was that the colonial rule of the British and French in predominantly Muslim countries had little to do with gender equality and more to do with a justification of occupation of foreign lands (Haddad 2007:257). Conquering Muslim land according to the British was a fulfillment of the “white man’s burden” and to the French as a “civilizing mission” (Haddad 2007:257). Later on there is the statement of Laura Bush in which she said in 2001, “the fight against terrorism is also a fight for the rights and dignity of women” (Haddad 2007:255). These ideas were interpreted to mean that Muslim women needed to be unveiled in order to modernize and achieve true liberation (Haddad 2007:257). As a result, wearing the veil became a challenge to authority (Haddad 2007:257). The author feels that these ideas begins from the Enlightenment in which Europe thought itself better than the entire world and therefore felt it should impose its hegemony which included the image of the Muslim woman (Haddad 2007:258). The image of an oppressed Muslim woman was portrayed in media and movies as women who needed help from foreign countries especially the West (Haddad 2007:260). Those who were the subject of criticism of Arabs and Muslim feminists are Christian missionaries and secular feminist (Haddad 2007:260). Muslim feminists argue that western feminists have not taught themselves about Islam and thereby have not heard Muslim voices (Haddad 2007:262). After 9/11, some Muslims removed their veil for safety, others received religious verdicts from clerics that permitted the removal of the veil, while others kept the veil on to show their pride and their fearlessness (Haddad 2007:262-263). Also, this feeling of solidarity led to an increase in women’s involvement in mosques as they saw it as a safe haven as a meeting place to exchange ideas about how to present their identity to the general public in America (Haddad 2007:264).

It seems that the more a politically motivated campaign attacks the veil, the more likely that some Muslim women will wear the veil. It becomes a challenge to the resolve of Muslim women who value the veil for religious or political reasons. Rather than convince them that they need to be liberated, Muslim women that advocate wearing the veil see it as a sign of ignorance. Being that most Muslim countries faced colonial rule in the past century, naturally there will be skepticism to why the West sees symbols of the veil as being oppressive. Any western ideas will be seen as hegemonic due to the political history of Muslim countries.

Reference:

Haddad, Yvonne Y. 2007. “The Post-9/11 Hijab as Icon.” *Sociology of Religion* 68 (3): 253-267.