

Pious Fashion: How Muslim Women Dress. By Elizabeth Bucar. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017, 248 pp., \$29.95 (cloth).

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With an ethnographer's eye, and rejecting the tired sensationalism that pits Islam against modernity, Elizabeth Bucar uses a comparative lens to show how the meanings and practices of pious clothing cannot be essentialized across geography and culture. Her analysis brings to this book a panoramic view of *and* detailed ethnographic data from three non-Arab Muslim nations (Iran, Indonesia, and Turkey) with widely divergent sartorial traditions. This book shows how pious fashion simultaneously operates within (multiple forms of) Islam, the state, modernity, capitalism, body politics, and aesthetic culture.

Nor does the book neglect the historical perspective. In the popular imagination, Iran's mandatory dress code tends to occupy disproportionate space; Bucar contextualizes Iranian pious and subversive fashion within a history of forced secularization under the Pahlavis, and one of mandated modest clothing after the 1979 Revolution. With the official dress codes (which may be relaxed soon), a vast variety of pious fashion, subversive as well as conformist, thrive in Iran. As compared to Iran, the Turkish university hijab ban of past decades is juxtaposed with the present-day burgeoning and lucrative hijab fashion world. In Turkey, with its huge international and domestic market in clothing, the commodification of pious clothing and brands appears to be closely related to the growth of a pious Muslim moneyed class. This class of women—apparently internalizing secular attitudes, according to Bucar—shifts blame from stylish pious garb to frumpy, full-body covering modest attire. In Indonesia's distinctive sartorial tradition, since Islamic head-covers have no significant roots in the past, today they have come to signify an Indonesian identity that is concurrently Islamic, modern, and cosmopolitan.

The imaginative experience of possible sequels is, to me, part of the fascination of *Pious Fashion*. A second book (if I might suggest it) could explore rich layers of even thicker description in each individual setting,

with larger research samples, or cross to Pakistan, Malaysia, the Gulf states, or even Muslim minority settings.

“Many Westerners view modest clothing as the ultimate sign of Muslim women’s oppression” (p. 1). Though the book begins with this, as the author draws in her (inevitably mostly Western) readers, it does not remain stuck at that angle, harping endlessly on what Westerners think of Muslim women’s attire. Instead, Bucar breaks free of that hook to connect the narrative directly with Muslim women’s interpretations and innovative constructions of modest garb. The book at its core remains in contention against the elephant in the room—the Orientalist accusation against Islam and Muslims as being uniquely patriarchal and anti-women—but it allows the vibrant voices and style of Muslim women fashion leaders and practitioners to simply bury the stereotype under their sartorial agency.

Central to the book’s narrative is the presentation of pious sartorial diversity as shaped by Muslim women. Woven into these reports are a variety of Muslim women’s reactions, disparaging some fashion exemplars for being immodest and others for being frumpy, in a fashion world where modesty and stylishness are definitely *not* automatically opposed. In the streets of Tehran, Yogyakarta, and Istanbul, pious fashion is both pious and fashionable, and women engage in meticulous critical and aesthetic work to ensure both.

Methodologically, Bucar strikes a rare and elegant balance between ethnographic description and socioeconomic, political, and cultural commentary. This reader does not tire of lengthy narratives about Turkish *tesettur* markets because meticulous “thick description” of vertical hijab chic varies the pace. Descriptive detail is layered with interpretive substance, demonstrating the author’s command of historical, textual, and local cultural politics, for instance, with the religious and aesthetic uses of the colors red and green in Shi’a Iranian street fashion.

The notion of global Muslim pious fashion is there, as a superficial Western observer might perceive it, yet is not *really* there, because the cultural reality, political impact, and religious meaning cannot be summed up in a global statement or even a national description. *Pious Fashion* serves as a bracing contrast to the ways that sweeping attempts to sum up some truth about the “global veil” by Islamophobes and Islamophiles fall spectacularly flat. This book is a pleasurable as well as an instructive read for educated lay readers and for academic readers interested in gender, fashion, religion, politics, and modern markets.

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