

A border of cloth:

**Ecological systems and critical spatial perspectives
on the Islamic *ḥijāb***

by

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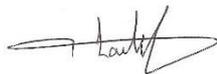
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DEDICATION

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of *Allāh*, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

All abundant good praises are due to *Allāh*, the Lord of the worlds.

Peace and blessings of *Allāh* be perpetually upon Muḥammad (ﷺ) whenever the righteous are engaged much in sending blessings on the Prophet (ﷺ) or the heedless may be careless about it.

A poet says:

*If you crave for the highest of ideals,
You should not approbate for less than the stars.*

It is part of the mercy, help and favour of *Allāh* that I finished this thesis. I ask my Lord to make it plea for me before *Allāh* the day I return to Him.

I thank *Allāh* for His great favours and blessings in helping me finish this thesis and for providing me with some benevolent people who helped me unreservedly. Having finally completed the gruelling yet wonderful work of writing this thesis, I dedicate it to:

1. My supervisor, Professor Gert Prinsloo, for his unceasing assistance and supervision, and for spending so much of his precious time in directing my work. He acted as if he had been a part of the Muslim community, and always expressed his admiration and laudation for Muslims. He tirelessly provided me with the most important references and the most accurate details, showing me that he was always proud of me. That, of course, encouraged me greatly. Therefore, I would like to express my gratitude and my sincere appreciation for his support.

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finishing her PhD degree in the field of serving her religion, but we surrender to the will of the Creator asking him to make the highest Paradise your eternal abode. Therein will you have abundance without measure after gaining full forgiveness and being saved from any blame or anguish. May *Allāh* make your grave one of the meadows of the Garden of Paradise and open a gate of Paradise for you through which the breeze full with the scent of Paradise comes to you, for you had always been loving and good to me and worked hard to bring me up. May *Allāh* give you the best reward in recompense for what you had done!

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*You are the one I cherish and love
A blessing sent from Heaven above
I will love you as a faithful wife should
And do everything for you I could
I would let you know every day
That I love you more than words can say
May Allāh keep our love for each other strong
And may He guide us away from all wrong!*

5. My children (Muhammad, Mshari, Nawaf, AbdulGani, Ibrahim, Saqr), you are a gift from *Allāh* to me. I thank you all for the feelings of love and reverence you always have for me. I also confess that I had been somehow neglectful of your rights, but

now I ask your forgiveness. I ask *Allāh*, the Almighty, to appoint you as leaders, giving guidance to others, so long as you persevere with patience and continue to have faith in *Allāh*. I ask Him to make you sincere and devoted Servants of *Allāh* who are known in the heavens more than on earth.

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7. My sister, the one who invites to *Allāh*, Badria Ismael. I really mean it when I say, “Best friends are the siblings *Allāh* did not give us.” She is my sister who cares for me, supports me, and commands me what is good. She always asks me to be careful about everything, be it big or small. She always enjoins on me what is right. May *Allāh* give her the best reward, amen!

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ABSTRACT

This research argues for a holistic interpretation of female Muslim clothing practices devoid of political, cultural, religious and gender bias, preconceptions, and presuppositions. Current literature on the *ḥijāb* tends to interpret the clothing practice in isolation as a geopolitical, socio-anthropological, fashionable, or religious-cultural phenomenon. The study departs from two theoretical points of view, namely ecological systems theory and critical spatial theory. Both theories are applied to argue that the *ḥijāb* should be interpreted holistically in the light of *al-Islām* as a religious and cultural system. It is a symbol with great personal significance for female Muslims deliberately choosing to wear it.

Ecological systems theory enables the researcher to explain how individuals interact with environmental systems. It creates a framework from which the researcher can study the relationships between individuals, the communities in which they operate, as well as the wider society. The researcher argues that the Muslim female body in *ḥijāb* should be interpreted in the context of *al-Islām* as a religious system. The system profoundly influences each individual Muslim, the Muslim family, the Muslim community, Muslim countries, and the world at large. Each of these levels, in turn, influence the system at large. This theory illustrates that the *ḥijāb* cannot be studied in isolation.

Critical spatial theory argues that there is a constant interaction between physical, mental, and lived space. Viewed from the perspective of conceived or mental space, the *ḥijāb* can be regarded as a compulsory form of dress for Muslim women based upon precepts in the *Qur'ān*, the *Ḥadīth*, and the four *Sunnī* schools of Islamic jurisprudence. Viewed from the perspective of lived or social space, however, the donning of the black *ḥijāb* has metaphoric implications. Each Muslim woman donning the *ḥijāb* becomes the embodiment of the holy *Ka'ba*, demarcating her body as sacred space *in* space in contemporary society.

The combination of two theoretical approaches illustrates that the *ḥijāb* is a complex symbol of many meanings. From a spatial perspective, the *ḥijāb* functions as a border of cloth. It demarcates the female Muslim body as a sacred space and protects her from being profaned. Paradoxically, the border of cloth at the same time allows the individual female Muslim body to move freely *in* and meaningfully engage *with* profane space. The *ḥijāb* at the same time *creates* and *transcends* borders and boundaries.

Viewed from a historical perspective, the *ḥijāb* is a cultural and religious phenomenon with its roots in the pre-Islamic ancient Mediterranean world. Viewed from a social

perspective, however, the practice transcends its historical roots to become a symbol with profound implications in modern society – not only within Islamic tradition and culture, but also in Western societies. Via the concept of *othering*, a central theme in critical spatial theory, the Islamic *ḥijāb*, considered in some sectors to be an ancient and outdated practice, extends and expands into the post-modern world.

By wearing the *ḥijāb*, a Muslim female embodies the holy *Ka'ba* in *Makka*, the single, cosmic focal point of *al-Islām*. The assertion that the female Muslim in *ḥijāb* is a metaphor for, and embodiment of, the *Ka'ba*, has important implications. It creates awareness of *al-Islām* in general, and specifically of Muslim women's presence in the world. In spite of many misconceptions about, and negative stereotyping of, the *ḥijāb*, many Muslim women freely choose to wear it as a visual expression of their identity and as protection against objectification.

Muslim women's choice to wear the *ḥijāb* is at the same time a secondspatial expression of Islamic religious instruction, and a thirdspatial expression of identity. A holistic interpretation of the *ḥijāb* implies that a Muslim woman's choice to adhere to the instructions of Islamic tradition, and her deliberate definition of her body as a sacred space, should be evaluated in the context of *al-Islām* as a religious and cultural ecological system. The *ḥijāb* functions as a border of cloth, which demarcates the female Muslim body as sacred space, and enables her to engage meaningfully and legitimately in profane space.

Key terms:

Ḥijāb (Hijab), border, boundary, ecological systems theory, critical spatial theory, body, embodiment, othering, sacred space, profane space, *Ka'ba*, *Makka*, *al-Islām* (Islam)

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION

Space and place are basic components of the lived world; we take them for granted. When we think about them, however, they may assume unexpected meanings and raise questions we have not thought to ask.

(Tuan, 2008:3)

1.1 INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Few subjects have become so controversial in contemporary society as the wearing of the *ḥijāb* and *niqāb*¹ by Muslim women. El Guindi (2008:143) aptly describes the preoccupation with the *ḥijāb* as a “hysterical obsession” when she says:

The hijab continues to be a hysterical obsession of politics and media and has become increasingly the focus of European politics and controversy.

In the context of this study, *ḥijāb* is used as a broad term to refer to any form of Muslim female modest dress, while *niqāb* refers specifically to the face veil associated in particular with Arab women when they appear in the public sphere.²

The *ḥijāb* is a constant cause for debate, a phenomenon to be explained, investigated, dissected, condemned and defended in both Muslim and non-Muslim countries. Central to the debate is the question whether the act of donning the *ḥijāb* is not an outdated practice suppressing a woman’s dignity and independence and consequently amounting to a violation of her rights. The complexity of the debate is illustrated in the following overview of a number of recent studies.

Ramírez (2015:671-672) states:

I will argue that the regulation of clothing worn by Muslim women, both the restriction of its use (which occurs mainly in non-Muslim countries) and the requirement to wear a particular item, share the same goal: the control of women’s bodies. Usually, questions related to the regulation of Muslim women’s clothing have been examined in the scholarly literature either from the perspective of legislation that imposes it, as in Iran, Afghanistan and Saudi Arabia, or from the perspective of legislation that restricts it, which is the situation in a growing number of European countries with strong Muslim minorities.

¹ The conventional Anglicized forms of the Arabic words حجاب *ḥijāb* and نِقَاب *niqāb* are *hijab* and *niqab*. The researcher will use the transcribed version of the words throughout the study, unless she is quoting directly from another source (for the general conventions followed in this thesis, cf. Section 1.9).

² Cf. Section 1.2 for a brief elucidation of some Arabic words used for various forms of so-called Muslim female modest dress.

Mazumdar and Mazumdar (2001:302) indicate that the debate often has a specific focus:

The emphasis has been on the public-private dichotomy – with the public world of men associated with power, status, control of information and decision making, and the private world of women associated with powerlessness and domestic life... Women are portrayed as helpless, passive victims, whose very identity, status, and existence are dependent on their male kin.

In similar vein, Roald (2001:viii) states that

... the gender issue has been a hot potato in the debate about Islam among non-Muslims as well as in the discussion within the Muslim group. On the one hand, I have experienced constant accusations from non-Muslims that Islam is a religion hostile towards women. On the other hand, Muslims have expressed the belief to me that there was never a gender issue in Islam until 'the West' began to interfere in Muslim matters, suggesting that in their view an ideal gender pattern already exists in Islam and is present in Muslim society.

Examples of analyses of the Islamic *ḥijāb* from a political, social, fashionable or cultural-religious point of view are readily available.³ Very little, however, has been recorded in academic literature from the perspective of Muslim women *themselves*, particularly from Muslim women who consciously choose to wear the Islamic *ḥijāb* without hesitation or the desire to explain and defend their choice continuously to anyone.⁴

The researcher is such a woman. She is a Saudi-Arabian woman who consciously chooses to adhere to the precepts of *al-Islām* regarding modest female clothing practices and who experiences this choice as a deliberate expression of her identity. To her, the *ḥijāb* visually defines her identity as a Muslim woman whenever and wherever she enters the public sphere. The researcher is of the opinion that the voices of such women should be heard and become part of the debate on the *ḥijāb*.

For the voices of such women to be recognised, the *ḥijāb* should be investigated **as a phenomenon** from the perspective of the **experience** of a Muslim woman who consciously decides to wear it. The term **experience** is crucial in the conceptualization and contextualization of this study. The researcher concurs with the

³ Cf. the discussion in Section 1.3.

⁴ Read and Bartkowski (2000:396-417) argue in an empirical study that, in most cases, a Muslim woman makes a conscious decision to wear or not to wear the *ḥijāb*. For Muslim women, this decision impacts on "their social relationships, their perceptions about the significance of veil in their country of origin, and the importance of Islamic beliefs and devotional activities (e.g., prayer, scriptural study)" (2000:402). Such studies are valuable, but do not provide a perspective from "inside" the *ḥijāb*. The current study strives to attain that goal.

Chinese-born American geographer Yi-Fu Tuan (2008:6) who argues that experience “can be direct and intimate, or it can be indirect and conceptual, mediated by symbols.” **Experience** is a complex concept:

Experience is a cover-all term for the various modes through which a person knows and constructs reality. These modes range from the more direct and passive senses of smell, taste and touch, to active visual perception and the indirect mode of symbolization (Tuan, 2008:8).

Experience is also an ambiguous concept, at the same time objective and subjective. It is **objective** in the sense that the word “has a connotation of passivity; the word suggests what a person has undergone or suffered,” thus “(e)xperience is the overcoming of perils” (Tuan, 2008:9). Experience is **subjective** in the sense that “(e)motion tints all human experience, including the high flights of thought” and thus “(e)xperience is directed to the external world. Seeing and thinking clearly reach out beyond the self” (Tuan, 2008:8-9).

The **experience** of the researcher is a case in point. She is Saudi-Arabian, a Muslim country where the wearing of the *ḥijāb* and *niqāb* is compulsory. In this sense, it can be argued that she has been compelled to wear the *ḥijāb*. However, she has spent many years in South Africa, a non-Muslim country. In this context, she willingly and deliberately continued to wear the *ḥijāb* and *niqāb*. In this sense, it can be argued that she consciously and freely decided to wear the *ḥijāb* as a visual expression of her religious and cultural identity as a female Muslim. The researcher concurs with Botz-Bornstein (2013:250): “The question ‘Why do you wear the veil?’ has often been posed, but, today more than ever, the answers ‘I have been forced to wear it’ and ‘It was my free decision to wear it’ should not be perceived as dichotomous.” Botz-Bornstein (2013:251) points to the “active role of consciousness in history,” which implies that in any society an individual “is not merely a passive receiver but at any moment has the ability to influence the existing social reality.”

This study makes an argument for a **holistic** interpretation of the *ḥijāb*. On the one hand, the researcher hopes her deliberate choice to wear the *ḥijāb* for historical, religious and cultural reasons will create awareness of the deep personal meaning the practice holds for her. On the other hand, the researcher expects that the study will illustrate how the deep personal meaning the practice holds for an individual Muslim female reaches out “beyond the self” (Tuan, 2008:8-9) to become a symbol, an “active visual” representation of her body “as a holy space” (Tuan, 2008:6).

The term **culture** is as important in the conceptualization and contextualization of this study as is **experience**. The researcher concurs with the following definition of the term:

Culture is defined as a set of human-made objective and subjective elements that in the past have increased the probability of survival and resulted in satisfaction of the participants in an ecological niche, and thus became shared among those who communicate with each other because they had a common language and lived in the same time and place (Triandis, 1994a:22).

As was the case with experience, **culture** is at the same time objective and subjective. Any culture is objective in the sense that it shares common elements “outside” the individual sphere. For all Muslims, for instance, the *Qur’ān* is the normative book and the *Ka’ba* the most holy place in their shared religious tradition. Culture is subjective in the sense that each individual gives expression to their culture in “unique patterns of beliefs, attitudes, norms (shared expectations of behaviour), and values” (Miller-Spillman, 2012:3). A Muslim female donning the *hijāb* subjectively expresses what Islamic precepts objectively expect of its followers.

A Muslim female’s decision to don the *hijāb* should be evaluated in the context of **her** Arabo-Islamic cultural experience. The Arabo-Islamic culture can be classified as a **high-context** (Triandis, 1994b:169-170) and **tight** culture with “clear norms” where “deviations are met with sanctions” (Miller-Spillmann, 2012:4). Moreover, the culture is predominantly **collectivist**, which implies that it is organised

... in a hierarchical manner with a tendency to be concerned about the results of their actions on members within their close-knit groups, sharing of resources with group members, feeling interdependent with group members, and feeling involved in the lives of group members (Miller-Spillman, 2012:4).

In the heated debate around the *hijāb*, this awareness might create opportunities for dialogue, better understanding of the practice and “increased tolerance for diverse cultural and religious practices in contemporary society” (Bin Nafisah, 2015:159). In the global context, any evaluation of the *hijāb* calls for **pluralism**, i.e., “the acceptance of differences in others while not necessarily wanting to adopt those differences for the self” (Miller-Spillman, 2012:10). Any such evaluation should also take into consideration that “(d)ress is a complex topic because meanings are based on personal **experience** as well as **cultural rules**” (Miller-Spillman, 2012:10).⁵

In a previous study titled ***Muslim female clothing practices: An exploratory study of ancient and modern perceptions***, the researcher investigated the Islamic *hijāb*

⁵ Italics and emphasis added by the researcher.

and *niqāb* as a socio-historical, cultural, and religious phenomenon (Bin Nafisah, 2015). She traced the development of “veiling” as an ancient social practice through millennia and confirmed the importance and relevance of studying ancient cultures for contemporary society. The study contributed towards a better understanding of an ancient cultural practice as it finds expression in a contemporary religious tradition, namely in *al-Islām*. She also related first-hand experiences of Muslim women wearing the *ḥijāb*. As such, the study became “a source of information regarding cultural and religious practices that can also be utilised in future research” (Bin Nafisah, 2015:158). In that study she combined a historical-comparative and social-sciences research approach under the broad umbrella of qualitative research to shed light upon cultural and religious practices in contemporary society and came to the following key findings (Bin Nafisah, 2015:157-158):

- “Veiling” is a cultural practice with a long history. Female clothing practices were closely associated with the core social values of honour and shame and the associative values of humility, modesty, respect, and privacy. No single ideological model can explain the social practice of “veiling,” it had different “meanings” over time and might have had more than one meaning at the same time.
- An existing cultural practice of “veiling” was re-applied and re-interpreted in Islamic tradition as a religious symbol, especially as a marker of sacred space. The *ḥijāb* symbolises gender mutuality, modesty, and respect for sacred privacy. It is confirmed by the primary sources (the *Qu’rān*, *Ḥadīth*, and *Tafsīr*) and the secondary sources (consensus and deductive analogy) as it found expression in the development of the four *Sunnī* schools of jurisprudence.
- The ancient custom of modest female dress, an accepted custom in all three monotheistic religions, became closely associated with *al-Islām* in contemporary society. It is a controversial symbol, for Westerners a symbol of *al-Islām*’s perceived violent nature and thus to be feared, or of Muslim women’s oppression, hence they should be pitied and freed from oppression. Some Muslims want to be emancipated from the ancient practice; others embrace it as a symbol of resistance against the influence of Western culture and of their unique religious identity. To Muslim women who deliberately choose to wear the *ḥijāb*, the act carries deep symbolic meaning as an expression of sanctity, reserve and respect. Continuous dialogue between adherents of different customs and religions can enhance mutual understanding and tolerance of each other’s customs.
- In spite of many misconceptions and negative stereotyping, many Muslim women agree that they freely choose to wear the *ḥijāb* because it gives visual expression to their identity as Muslims and protects them against objectification.

Amongst others, these key findings suggest that there is a close relationship between the cultural and religious practice of “veiling” and the demarcation of the female body as private (El Guindi, 1999:77-78) and sacred (El Guindi, 1999:82) space. El Guindi

relates Muslim female clothing practices to Islamic constructions of space. She argues that in terms of the three monotheistic religions there is something unique in the Islamic construction of space. Every time a Muslim prays, he/she instantly

... turns a public area into private space, without the entry of a stranger. It enables ordinary Muslims temporarily to convert any worldly place (street, shop, aircraft aisle) into a sacred space set apart, simply by marking it and occupying it in a ritually pure state facing Makka (El Guindi, 1999:77-78).

It also happens every time a Muslim woman dons her *ḥijāb* and enters the “outside” world. She is **enshrined** in her sacred space, so to speak. As such, she is the “guardian of the sanctity that is fundamental to the community” (El Guindi, 1999:82).

If this principle is extended to Muslim female clothing practices, there is a “link between dress, women and the sanctity of space” that is also “reflected in the Islamic rituals of ‘dressing’ the *Ka‘ba*, the center of the holy site of pilgrimage in Makka” (El Guindi, 1999:95). The following can then be argued:

The veil, veiling patterns and veiling behaviour are therefore, according to my analysis of Arab culture, about sacred privacy, sanctity and the rhythmic interweaving of patterns of worldly and sacred life, linking women as the guardians of family sanctuaries and the realm of the sacred in this world... Dress in general, but particularly veiling, is privacy’s visual metaphor (El Guindi, 1999:96).

Building upon the previous study, the notions of “sacred privacy, sanctity and the rhythmic interweaving of patterns of worldly and sacred life” (El Guindi, 1999:96) and women “as the guardians of family sanctuaries and the realm of the sacred in this world” (El Guindi, 1999:96) become the focal point of the current research project. In the words of Tuan (2008:3) quoted above, the researcher intends to “think” about the following themes:

- *Al-Islām* as a religious and cultural system;
- a female Muslim’s place within that system;
- Islamic constructions of place and space;
- the place and role of women in *al-Islām*;
- the female Muslim body as space;
- the female Muslim body *in* space.

It is expected that through this exercise current views on the *ḥijāb* and *niqāb* “may assume unexpected meanings and raise questions we have not thought to ask” (Tuan, 2008:3).

It should be noted at the outset that, although this study is concerned with *al-Islām* in general and with Muslim female clothing practices in particular, it is not an

investigation in the field of Islamic Studies *per se*.⁶ Neither the student, nor her supervisors are trained Muslim theologians. The student takes her cue from the following remark by Ahmed (2002a:3):

Islam is a mosaic. Spread over the globe, with its societies speaking different languages, its people living in distinct political cultures, while aware of the unity of faith and vision that binds all Muslims, Islam can only be understood in its diversity.

In the light of this diversity, the study follows an interdisciplinary approach to a single phenomenon in the broad spectrum of *al-Islām* as a religious and cultural system, namely the Islamic *ḥijāb*. The researcher concurs with El Guindi (1999:xiii) when she says:

A holistic understanding of humankind calls for comparative data from all available sources deemed relevant for understanding the meaning people themselves attach to their cultural constructions.

El Guindi (1999:xvii-xviii) argues that “many cultural domains and methodological tools” should be used in the analysis of a religious and cultural phenomenon such as the *ḥijāb*. Such an analysis should include “Islamic textual sources, visual analysis, linguistic analysis, cultural analysis, and the ethnographic analysis of historical materials.” Hence, the researcher will utilise textual, historical, cultural, anthropological, sociological and other fields in the social sciences’ data in her analysis of the *ḥijāb* as a border of cloth.⁷

The context of the study should also be taken into account. It is undertaken in the Department of Ancient and Modern Languages and Cultures at the University of Pretoria. The study is not, in the first instance, concerned with intricate religious issues. It is, rather, a study with a definitive religious and cultural bias. The study is especially concerned with the spatial constructions of a Muslim female deliberately choosing to wear some form of *ḥijāb*. The study makes a case for a **contextual** religious-cultural interpretation of such a female as a **focal individual** and her freedom to **construct her lived space** in the light of her **experience**. The researcher departs from the presupposition that the majority of readers interested in reading this study will not be specialists in Arabic or Islamic studies, but in her research approach and the application of her research methodology to a phenomenon intimately

⁶ Cf. Martin (1985b:10-16) for a critical review of what the field of study entails.

⁷ Arkoun (1994:1) indicates that the growing conflict between the co-called West world and *al-Islām* is “driven by rising emotions and tensions fraught with racist overtones.” Such tensions can be diffused by opening “intellectual, historical, anthropological, theological, and philosophical perspectives on Islamic studies.” The researcher wishes to open such a broad, interdisciplinary perspective in her analysis of the *ḥijāb*.

associated with Muslim female clothing practices. In the light of the expected reading audience, the researcher largely and deliberately refrained from using sources only accessible to researchers familiar with the Arabic language.

1.2 A CLARIFICATION OF TERMINOLOGY USED FOR FEMALE DRESS

The researcher already indicated that she will use the term *ḥijāb* as an umbrella term for any form of modest dress worn by Muslim women. A word of caution is in order here. The researcher avoids using the English term “veil” when she refers to the Muslim female modest dress code as far as possible. The English term is derived from the Latin noun *velum* “curtain, sail, covering” and is generally used “to refer to Middle Eastern and South Asian women’s traditional head, face... or body cover” (El Guindi, 1999:6). However, the term is generally understood in English to denote a length of cloth covering the face. The English term *veil* “has no single equivalent” in Arabic (El Guindi, 1999:6) and cannot encompass the varied and complex nuances of Muslim female modest dress practices.

The researcher’s use of the term *ḥijāb* also expresses these varied and complex nuances inadequately. It is nevertheless preferred above the term *veil* because “the *hijab* has an Islamic significance that distinguishes it from the veil” (Siraj, 2011:716). The term *ḥijāb* “encompasses women’s behaviour/attitude, and studies have found that a vital feature of the *hijab* is modest behaviour” (Siraj, 2011:716). The researcher thus concurs with Siraj (2011:716-717) in her preference for the term *ḥijāb*, “because it denotes the covering of the head as well as being a reference for modesty,” hence the term *ḥijāb* carries undertones of “modesty, virtue and respect” (Hassan & Harun, 2016:478).

The general Arabic term for “dress” is لباس *libās* “clothes, clothing, costume, apparel, garment, robe, dress.”⁸ It is used “in a general, comprehensive, and inclusive way” for what, in anthropological terms, can be called “dress” (El Guindi, 1999:69). “Dress,” in turn, can be defined as “any intentional modifications of the body and/or supplements added to the body.” There is evidence that “dress has powerful effects in situations of human interaction” (Miller-Spilman, 2012:2).

El Guindi (1999:6-7) indicates that “(n)umerous Arabic terms are used to refer to diverse articles of women’s clothing that vary by body part, region, local dialect, and historical era” (El Guindi, 1999:6-7). There are, in fact, “over a hundred terms for dress

⁸ For the meaning of Arabic words, cf. Hans Wehr’s *A dictionary of modern written Arabic* (1976).

parts” (El Guindi, 1999:7). In this brief clarification of terminology, the discussion will focus first on Arabic terms used in the *Qur’ān* and Islamic tradition for female dress items, then on terms for female dress items often used in modern colloquial Arabic for various forms of modest dressing.

1.2.1 *Hijāb*

The term, which is now frequently used in English to refer to any form of Muslim female modest dress, is an Anglicized form of the noun حجاب *hijāb* pl. حجب *hujub*; احجية *ahjibah* “cover, wrap, drape, curtain, woman’s veil, screen, partition, folding screen, barrier, bar.” It is derived from the verb حجب *hajaba* “to veil, cover, screen, shelter, seclude, hide, conceal, make or form a separation.”

In the *Qur’ān*, the word does not refer to an item of female clothing, but to a physical or metaphorical screen or boundary (Tariq-Munir, 2014:6). The root occurs seven times as a noun (*Sūra* 7:46; 17:45; 19:17; 33:53; 38:32; 41:5; 42:51) and once as a passive participle (83:15). It is only used once in the *Qur’ān* in relation to women (*Sūra* 33:53), specifically to the issue of interaction between the Prophet’s (ﷺ) wives and people from outside his household. Aziz (2010:76) indicates that the *āya* is concerned with “a physical separation of the noble ladies from the common folk, by a barrier that could not be seen through. It secludes the Prophet’s (ﷺ) wives by giving them privacy and is simultaneously a symbol of their high status and dignity. The context of this *hijāb* is the separation of two spaces that are not to intermingle.”⁹ Aziz (2010:88) concludes that in the *Qur’ān* in general the term “is used as a visible or invisible barrier between two spaces. The groups in each space are not allowed to mix. There is a definite physical, mystical or psychological reason for this separation.”

The term connotes the modest dress that covers the natural contours and appearance of the body, usually “in solid austere colors made of opaque fabric.” The *hijāb* “consists of *al-jilbāb* (ankle-length, long-sleeved, loose-fitted dress) and *al-khimār*, a head covering that covers the hair and extends low to the forehead, comes under the chin to conceal the neck, and falls down over the chest and back” (El Guindi, 2005:59). However, in Muslim tradition *hijāb* is an ambiguous term. Depending on context, its meaning can range from “the dress that covers the whole body of a woman including her head, face, hands and feet” (Abdullah, 2006:30), to a head scarf covering the hair,

⁹ The relevant phrase in *Sūra* 33:53 reads as follows: وَإِذَا سَأَلْتُمُوهُنَّ مَتَاعًا فَاسْأَلُوهُنَّ مِنْ وَرَاءِ حِجَابٍ ۚ ذَلِكُمْ أَطْهَرُ لِقُلُوبِكُمْ وَقُلُوبِهِنَّ “And when you ask [his wives] for something, ask them from behind a partition. That is purer for your hearts and their hearts.” For a detailed discussion of this verse, cf. Bin Nafisah (2015:63-66).

neck and upper torso of a Muslim woman (Abdullah, 2006:9, 27; Bin Ahmad, 2011:162).

1.2.2 *Niqāb*

The noun نِقَاب *niqāb* pl. نِقَاب *nuqub*; انقبية *anqiba* “veil” is derived from the verb نَقَب *naqaba* V “to examine, study, investigate, veil her face (woman); VIII “to put on a veil, veil one’s face.” The term occurs only once in the *Qur’ān* – as a verb in the sense of “explore” (*Sūra* 50:36).

The *Qur’ān* gives no unambiguous indication whether the wearing of the *niqāb* is obligatory for all women. In Islamic jurisprudence, the term refers to a face veil or garment covering the face and whole body of a Muslim female except the eyes (Solihu, 2009:25-26; Bin Ahmad, 2011:162). The four *Sunnī* schools of jurisprudence are not unanimous in their interpretation of Muslim tradition regarding the question whether wearing the *niqāb* is obligatory for Muslim women.¹⁰ In the *Ḥanafī* and *Mālikī madhāhib*, *ḥijāb* is interpreted as the wearing of a *jilbāb* and a *khimār*, with the face and hands uncovered (El Guindi, 1999:143). This form of *ḥijāb* is common in the Middle East, Turkey, and among European Muslim women (Monkebayeva, Baitenova & Mustafayeva, 2012:1359-1360). In the *Shāfi’ī* and *Ḥanbalī madhāhib*, a *niqāb* is also compulsory, and according to some interpretations, so are gloves and opaque socks to cover the hands and feet (El Guindi, 1999:144). Muslim women following the *Shāfi’ī* and *Ḥanbalī* interpretation wear the *niqāb* in public areas and in the presence of non-*maḥram* (stranger) adult males.¹¹ It is meant to hide the face and hair of a woman, leaving a small slit for the eyes only. It is commonly worn in the Gulf – it is particularly prevalent in Saudi Arabia, in Yemen, and in southern Pakistan (Monkebayeva et al., 2012:1359-1360).

1.2.3 *Jilbāb*

The noun جِلْبَاب *jilbāb* pl. جَلَابِيب *jalābīb* “garment, dress, gown, woman’s dress” is derived from the verb جَلَب *jalaba* II *tajalbaba* “to clothe oneself, be clad.” The term occurs only once in the *Qur’ān* – as a noun in the sense of the “outer garments” of the Prophet’s (ﷺ) wives, daughters and the women of the believers, which they should

¹⁰ Cf. Bin Nafisah (2015:58-59 and 87-98) and Section 3.3.1.2; 4.2.3.

¹¹ In Arabic: محرم *maḥram*; pl. محارم *maḥārim* “something forbidden, inviolable, taboo; someone unmarriageable, being in a degree of consanguinity precluding marriage according to Islamic law.” The noun is derived from the root حرم *ḥrm* “to be forbidden, prohibited, unlawful.”

“bring down” over themselves when they enter the public sphere. They should do it in order that “they will be known and not be abused” (*Sūra* 33:59).¹²

The Prophet’s (ﷺ) wives, due to their special position in the emerging Islamic community, are encouraged in this *āya* to act as models for practising the proper dress code (Ahmed, 1992:55). It is not certain exactly what the term *jilbāb* would have implied in the seventh century AD and exactly what the garment looked like. It is interpreted in general terms as a garment or sheet of cloth that is worn over the head to cover a woman’s hair and draped around the body in such a way that it totally covers the body of the woman. In some cases, apart from the *jilbāb*, Muslim women will cover their faces with the *niqāb* and also the hands with gloves.

In modern Muslim tradition, the term can be used to refer to any long and loose-fit coat or garment that covers the entire body (Aziz, 2010:14). It is, however, a term that is usually associated with *Sūra* 33:59.

1.2.4 *Khimār*

The noun *خمار* *khimār* pl. *خمر* *khumur*, *اخمرة* *akhmira* “cover; veil covering head and face of a woman” is derived from the verb *خمر* *khamara* “to cover, hide, conceal.” The term occurs only once in the *Qur’ān* – as a noun in the sense of “head coverings” which believing women should wear “over their bosoms” in order not to “display their ornaments” (*Sūra* 24:31).¹³

The noun *خمار* *khimār* can be used in general for any “cover,” such as a curtain, or a dress. In the *ḥadīth* on this *āya*, the *khimār* is equated to the *ḥijāb* and interpreted as a head-covering (Bin Nafisah, 2015:79-81). Apparently in pre-Islamic *Al-Madīna* women also wore *khumur*, but used to tuck the two ends behind their heads and bind it there, thus exposing their ears, neck and upper torsos. By urging Muslim women to “place their *khumur* over the bosoms,” God ordered the women to let the two ends of their headgear extend onto their bosoms so that they conceal their ears, the neck, and upper torsos (Abdullah, 2006:10-11). Women should “not display their ornaments

¹² In Arabic يُدْنِينَ عَلَيْهِنَّ مِنْ جَلْبِيهِنَّ “they should draw over themselves of their outer garments.” يُدْنِينَ imperf. 3 fem. pl. of دَنَا “to be near, be close, to draw near, to bring something close to.” In the phrase مِنْ جَلْبِيهِنَّ “of their outer garments” the preposition مِنْ implies that part of the *jalabīb* should be drawn over them in such a way that they are recognised as Muslim women and properly screened so that they will not be inappropriately approached by strangers. For a detailed discussion of this verse, cf. Bin Nafisah (2015:81-82).

¹³ In Arabic وَأَلْبِضْنَ بِخُمْرِهِنَّ عَلَىٰ جُيُوبِهِنَّ وَلَا يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ “and let them wear their head coverings over their bosoms, and not display their ornaments.” *khumur* is the plural of *خمار* *khimār* “veil covering head and face of a woman.” *juyūb* is the plural of *جيب* *jayb* “breast, bosom, heart.” *zīna* “embellishment, adornment, decoration, clothes, attire, finery,” cf. *زين* *zāna* “to decorate, adorn.” For a detailed discussion of this verse, cf. Bin Nafisah (2015:74-81).

except what appears thereof” and then “only to their husbands or their fathers...” The noun زينة *zīna* in this context refers to natural beauty. The principle that can be deduced for a proper dress code from this *āya* is that women should not display in public the parts of their body that might carry any sexual connotations.

In current female modest dress, the term refers to a long cape-like veil with an opening for the face that falls over the bosom, often to the hands (Bin Ahmad, 2011:163). This is commonly worn among women in the Middle East, Turkey, and Europe and is said to be the mildest form of the *ḥijāb* (Monkebayeva et al., 2012:1359).

1.2.5 ‘*Abāya*

The Anglicized term *Abaya* is not a particularly good representation of the Arabic noun from which it is derived. It represents the Arabic noun عباية ‘*abāya* in the modern colloquial Arabic of the Gulf region. In classical and literary Arabic the noun is عبااء ‘*abā*’ pl. اعبائة ‘*abā*’ a pl. عبايات ‘*abāyāt*’; عبااءات ‘*abā’āt*’ “cloak-like woollen wrap.” The noun is derived from the verb عبا ‘*aba*’ a || “to prepare, arrange, array, set up, fill, draw off.” The noun is not present in the *Qur’ān*.

In current female modest dress, the term has much the same meaning that *jilbāb* had in classic *al-Islām*. It refers to a full-length, robe-like outer garment that covers the whole body except the head, feet, and hands. Traditionally, the ‘*abāya* is black (Bin Ahmad, 2011:162; Monkebayeva et al., 2012:1359). In some Muslim countries, it may contain geometrical embroidery or it may even be made of colourful fabric. In essence, it is a large square of fabric draped from the head, usually without sleeves. It can also refer to a long caftan-like robe, then with sleeves. Especially in Saudi Arabia it is a black, undecorated robe, usually worn with a *shaylā*’ (headscarf) and *niqāb* (face veil), sometimes also with gloves.

1.2.6 *Shaylā*’

The Anglicized term *shayla* occurs in Arabic as a noun شَيْلَاءَ *shaylā*’ “headscarf.” It is a long, rectangular scarf, usually black, wrapped around the head and pinned in place at the shoulders. It is similar to the *khimār*, but it is shorter than the *khimār* and thus does not reach the woman’s waist. It is popular in Arab states of the Persian Gulf (Monkebayeva et al., 2012:1360). A Saudi-Arabian woman in *ḥijāb* wears an ‘*abāya* to cover the natural contours of her body, a *shaylā*’ as headscarf and a *niqāb* as face veil, all in black. In addition, some women also wear black gloves.

1.2.7 *Al-Amīra*

The Anglicised term *al-amira* is derived from the Arabic الاميرة *al-amīra*, literally “the princess.” The noun is derived from the verb امر *amara* “to order, command, instruct.”

In modern colloquial Arabic, the term is used for a very specific kind of female head-cover.

The *al-amīra* is a two-piece headscarf consisting of a close-fitting cap, usually made from cotton or polyester, and an accompanying tube-like scarf. It is popular amongst young Muslim females in Western countries. It is easy to wear as it does not require pins and stays in place easily. It comes in a wide variety of colours (Monkebayeva et al., 2012:1360).

1.2.8 *Chādor*

The *chādor* (Persian: چادر) is an over garment worn especially by women in Iran (also in some other countries) when they enter public spaces (Bin Ahmad, 2011:162). It is a Persian loan word also used in Arabic as a noun خدر *khidr* pl. خدور *khudūr*; اخدار *akhdār*; اخادير *akhādīr* “curtain, drape, women’s quarters of a tent, boudoir, private room (of a lady).” The noun is derived from the verb خدر *khadara* “to confine to women’s quarters, keep in seclusion.”

A *chādor* is a full-body-length semicircle of fabric that is usually open down the front. The cloth is tossed over a woman’s head and she holds it closed in front of her body or tucked under her arms. It covers the woman from head to foot, but usually not the face. In contemporary Iran, the *chador* is usually black, but it also comes in other colours, especially blue or white (Monkebayeva et al., 2012:1359).

1.2.9 *Burquʿ*

The Anglicised term *burqa* is derived from the Arabic noun برقع *burquʿ* pl. براقع *barāqiʿ* “veil (worn by women).” It comes from the verb برقع *barqaʿa* “to veil, drape”; II *tabarqaʿa* “to put on a veil.”

The term refers to an outer garment worn by Muslim women, especially in Afghanistan. It covers the entire body with a rectangular piece of semi-transparent cloth. It completely conceals the face and eyes (Bin Ahmad, 2011:162). The *burquʿ* is usually light blue in the Kabul area, white in the north in Mazar-i-Sharif, and brown and green in Kandahar in the south (Monkebayeva et al., 2012:1360).

1.3 A BRIEF LITERATURE REVIEW

Because the wearing of the *hijāb* and *niqāb* is a controversial issue in contemporary society, both in non-Muslim and Muslim countries, it has become a popular point of discussion in social media and academic circles alike. It is impossible to provide a review of everything that has been written on the subject. A Google search of the term *hijāb* provides the breath-taking result of almost 150 million hits! McGoldrick (2006:8)

argues that “the complex relationship between women’s private and public bodies” makes the headscarf-*ḥijāb* debate so controversial. He states:

The range of disciplines that have brought perspectives to bear on it include politics, political science, philosophy, sociology, theology, citizenship, racial and ethnic studies, feminist studies, education, cultural studies, area studies and ethnology (McGoldrick, 2006:8).

The researcher is aware that this brief literature review hardly scratches the surface of the constant stream of publications on the subject.¹⁴ For the sake of convenience, four broad categories of publications on the *ḥijāb* have been identified. The borders between the four categories are not absolute and themes might overlap significantly. The review can claim neither to be complete nor to be representative of the large number of publications in the field.

1.3.1 Looking at the *ḥijāb* from a geopolitical point of view

McGoldrick (2006:12) indicates that in many respects the issue of wearing a *ḥijāb* appears “trivial beside many of the great political issues of the twenty-first century and beside the range of fields where women face grievous problems – education, health, domestic violence, and poverty.” Yet, due to geopolitical developments, it seems that the Western world is obsessed by the *ḥijāb*.

This year is the seventeenth anniversary of the 9/11 attack on the USA by an extremist group who also happened to be Muslims. Ever since then each incident involving extremists enhanced perceptions in the West that *al-Islām* represents a backward, barbaric religion which is a threat to universal human rights and an affront to the secular Western world’s values of democracy, personal security and freedom of movement.¹⁵ Williamson and Khiabany (2010:86) summarise the growing perception about Muslims in Western countries as

... a people obsessed with praying, veiling, intolerance towards others, demands for special treatment, regularly testing the tolerance and goodwill of ‘host’ countries and, increasingly, supporting the most medieval forms of law and punishment.

¹⁴ Salem (2013:77-91) provides a critical review of thirteen books published on the role of women in *al-Islām* and the role of the *ḥijāb* in the debate, all published between 1970 and 2000. Corvid (2011:14-17) reviews four books published on the subject during the first decade of the current century.

¹⁵ The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948. The full text of the Declaration is available online at www.un.org/en/udhrbook/pdf/udhr_booklet_en_web.pdf; 17/09/2017. For a discussion of these principles in the light of the wearing of the *ḥijāb* as a religious and cultural obligation in *al-Islām* and the current negative reaction toward such women in Western society, cf. Bin Ahmad (2011:167-170).

Eid (2014:100) argues as follows:

Muslims are most commonly represented as outsiders in Western societies... Muslims are perceived as lacking the ability to participate as equal citizens. Western political discourses and media portrayals tend to promulgate racialized Orientalist stereotypes, create a Muslim enemy Other, and depict Muslims as irrational, uncivilized, backward, threatening, corrupt, oppressive, deviant, exterior to the dominant culture, and uniquely fundamentalist Others.

Chakraborti and Zempi (2012:269) remark in this regard:

In a post-9/11 climate, the question of 'the veil' has received significant media, political and public scrutiny in the context of the UK and elsewhere in the West. The global political agenda has increasingly become both perturbed by and pre-occupied with the Muslim 'other'.

A typical example of growing Western concern about the very real threat of terrorist attacks and the perceived close relationship between the perpetrators of these acts and *al-Islām* as a religion can be seen in the following quote from the *Evening Standard*, written by columnist David Sexton:

We've all been too deferential, for example, about the veil, the hijab, the niqab. I find such garb, in the context of a London street, first ridiculous and then directly offensive. It says that all men are such brutes that if exposed to any more normally clothed women, they cannot be trusted to behave – and that all women who dress any more scantily like that are indecent. It's abusive, a walking rejection of all our freedoms. And we don't dare say so.¹⁶

The *ḥijāb* has become a symbol of the conflict between the secular Western world and political *al-Islām* (McGoldrick, 2006:11; Scott, 2007:37; Chakraborti & Zempi, 2012:270). It is highly ironic that the prized values of tolerance and respect for diversity seem to be the first victims when Western countries are confronted by a growing Muslim population and, recently, by an ever-increasing influx of Muslim refugees from North Africa and the Middle East. Bin Ahmad (2011:171) argues that "(f)reedom of religion constitutes the core principle of a democratic society. As such, a democratic country that denies this right from being enjoyed by its people could be deemed as undemocratic." Chakraborti and Zempi (2012:270) remark with reference to Britain:

The wearing of the veil, encompassing a variety of garments from the *hijab* (headscarf) or the *niqab* (face veil) to full body garments such as the *jilbab*, is viewed as a signifier of 'Muslimness' and therefore, as a sign of difference. At a more fundamental level, the Muslim veil is rejected on the grounds that it is non-British in inception and adoption.

¹⁶ <http://www.islamophobiawatch.co.uk/all-this-veil-wearing-is-plain-offensive/> (Accessed 16/09/2017).

Thus, the argument goes, veiled women need to unveil themselves in order to integrate and be accepted into Western societies.

The fact that the *hijāb* is regarded as “a visible indicator of religious extremism” and that it is associated with “religious fundamentalism and proselytism” (McGoldrick, 2006:15) played a large role in the intense debate regarding the wearing of the *hijāb* in French public schools, and its eventual banning in 2004 (McGoldrick, 2006:34-106). Subsequently, legislation has been passed in 2011 “which in effect makes it illegal for Muslim women to wear the face veil on the street and in other public places on French soil” (Chakraborti & Zempi, 2012:270). Scott (2007:5) argues that as “an effect of recent geographical and cultural changes that are global in scale,” the *hijāb* is no longer regarded as part of the traditional Muslim female clothing practice. It has become “a screen onto which were projected images of strangeness and fantasies of danger – danger to the fabric of French society and to the future of the republican nation.”

In Western countries, the very act of wearing the *hijāb* has become a political and symbolic one and “(w)omen who wear the *niqāb* or the full-face veil have borne the brunt of oppressive government tactics internationally to limit their choice of clothing” (Bakht, 2015:420). According to McGoldrick (2006:17), the *hijāb*

... is viewed as evidence of Muslim women rejecting western society and its values. That rejection feeds into debates about citizenship, the position of minorities in contemporary western societies and about the continuing efficacy of multicultural and integrationist policies.

Consequently, Muslim women wearing the *hijāb* are often “vulnerable to targeted victimization” (Chakraborti & Zempi, 2012:272). According to Allen (2015:300), “the veiled Muslim woman is therefore *the* symbol of *al-Islām* and Muslims, so she also becomes the physical embodiment” of *al-Islām* and hence a target for victimisation.

These stereotypical views of Muslims in Western countries are inherently flawed in its depiction of *al-Islām*

... as a homogeneous group, failing to acknowledge the vast diversity that exists within this dynamic religion, denying Muslims their heterogeneity, and portraying Islam as one monolithic and undifferentiated cultural identity (Eid, 2014:102).

The fact is that

... Muslims come from various parts of the world, thus facing different religious interpretations and demonstrating a wide variety of cultural practices... Muslims exhibit important cohort differences due to many aspects, one of which is the variety of branches within Islam such as Sunni and Shi'i. A wide range of cultural and religious

behaviors exists among Muslims; therefore, it is misleading to use the term “Islam” as a singular bloc or to present it as a monolith (Eid, 2014:103).

It should be acknowledged that many Muslim women indeed decide to wear the *ḥijāb* as a political statement. Already in the 1950s, Fanon argued that the insistence by Algeria’s French colonial masters that women should unveil caused resistance and women deliberately veiled. These veiled women took an active part in acts of violence against the colonializers (Fanon, 1969:161-185). El Guindi (1999:127-134; 161-168) points to a marked increase in the number of women deliberately choosing to veil all over the Arab world since the mid-seventies of the previous century. It was part of a growing “Islamic movement” (1999:127), a reaction upon the humiliation experienced by the Arab world at the hand of “Imperialist forces” (1999:131). El Guindi (1999:127) notes that dress “has played a pivotal symbolic, ritual and political role in this dynamic phenomenon.” In Iran the “chador, a full-length, typically black garment that covers a woman’s body from head to foot, has become one of the most potent symbols of the Islamic movement, serving as an almost poetic metaphor for the defences that closed around Iran in the wake of the Revolution” against the Pahlavi Dynasty (Begolo, 2008:42).

Ahmed (2011:193-198) indicates that in the post-9/11 political climate in the United States, many Muslim women deliberately chose to don the *ḥijāb* as a backlash against the overt anti-Islamic rhetoric expressed in mainstream media and on social media platforms. Muslim women “wear the *ḥijāb* primarily to create a cultural space for themselves, and to negotiate conflicting values between their Islamic values and those of Christian centered America” (Tariq-Munir, 2014:13). The 9/11 incident altered American *al-Islām* in many ways. Wagner, Sen, Permadadi and Howarth (2012:529) state that

... after 9/11, Muslims felt the need to unite and make their religion more accessible. Markers of Muslim identity become more important and more visible, and consequently identity politics becomes more defiant.

Thus, Muslim women intentionally decided to don the *ḥijāb* as an affirmation of their Muslim identity. The act is seen as an opportunity to educate fellow Americans and to counter stereotypes. At the same time, it expresses solidarity with Muslims suffering under oppression and discrimination in other parts of the world, notably in Palestine. Muslim women increasingly participate in the activities of Islamic organisations, especially in those of the Islamic Society of North America (Ahmed, 2011:233-264). Female members of the Society became prominent as social activists for women’s rights in *al-Islām*. The past decade has seen a distinct and vigorous surge of activism among American Muslim women in relation to issues of women and

gender and strong opposition to androcentric and patriarchal views (Ahmed, 2011:265-306).

The researcher strongly disagrees with the view that wearing a *ḥijāb* in a Western society is offensive and goes against the principles of freedom. Such an observation comes from a dominant Western patriarchal opinion influenced by Western countries' distinct secular point of departure. It ignores the religious, cultural and historical circumstances or environment of female Muslims in general and each individual Muslim woman in particular. Implying that the *ḥijāb* is a mere political symbol reduces Muslim women to pawns of the global political "game." It depicts them as human beings devoid of having a say over matters affecting their collective and individual bodies. They are represented as having no freedom of choice to determine their own boundaries, their religious practices and how they choose to dress.

1.3.2 Looking at the *ḥijāb* from a social point of view

From a social point of view, the *ḥijāb* is often regarded as a symbol of patriarchy and male domination. In her previous study, the researcher noted that "the wearing of what is called the *ḥijāb* and the *niqāb* in *al-Islām* was a progressive evolutionary trend extending from the ancient Sumerian society right through to the Islamic period" (Bin Nafisah, 2015:12). The "veil" had different and often complementary meanings in ancient societies:

The ideological model of Sumerian gender complementarity, the Assyrian/Persian model of class exclusivity, the Hellenic model of gender hierarchy, the Egyptian model of gender equality, and the Byzantine model of seclusion all played a role in ancient Mediterranean societies. Contrary to modern perceptions, one single model cannot "explain" the prevalence of veiling in ancient Mediterranean societies nor its manifestation in contemporary Islam (Bin Nafisah, 2015:46).

It is quite ironic that "veiling" in *al-Islām* is singled out as a symbol of patriarchy, a "problem in need of a solution" (Borneman, 2009:2745), although it "is an established socio-religious custom in all three Religions of the Book, to this day" (Bin Nafisah, 2015:103-104).

The following discussion will focus upon feminist interpretations of the Islamic *ḥijāb* as expressed by Western and Muslim feminists. For the purpose of this study, **feminism** is defined as "the theory of the political, economic, and social equality of the sexes" which naturally leads to "organized activity on behalf of women's rights and interests."¹⁷ When it comes to Muslim women, feminists are concerned with the

¹⁷ The definition is given in the online version of the Merriam-Webster Dictionary; <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/feminism> (Accessed 26/09/2017).

human rights, dignity, independence, freedom of choice, and agency of these women. Ahmed-Ghosh (2008:101) indicates that feminist interpretations of Muslim women's social position broadly speaking belong to two categories, namely **secular feminism** and **Islamic feminism**. According to Badran (2005:6), the "foundational moment of women's "secular feminism" may be traced to the late nineteenth century while the emergence of "Islamic feminism" became evident in the late twentieth century.

Secular feminism(s) approaches the social position of Muslim women from a predominantly Western perspective. "Most of these feminists have come from secular-left intellectual backgrounds" (Ahmed-Ghosh, 2008:102) and argue that Muslim women can only attain real freedom in a secular state free from the constraints of religious precepts and interference. Feminism should "free" Muslim women from male oppression. Juliette Mincés' analysis of the "plight" of women in Arab society, significantly titled *The house of obedience*, is a typical example. She argues:

The Arab and Muslim societies do, however, all have an almost identical vision of women, a vision which is the very root of the status of women in those countries. As we have seen, the tribal or familial structural basis of these societies imposes upon women a role and position such that any modification of their status threatens to bring down the patriarchal, familial or tribal pillars on which those societies rest (Mincés, 1980:23).

Muslim women are depicted as "victims" of the Arab familial system, subjected to "everyday forms of oppression" (Mincés, 1980:29) in a society dominated by men (Mincés, 1980:30). The veil and the circumcision of women are particular symbols of women's oppression (Mincés, 1980:49-51). According to Mohanty (1988:61), such feminist discourses ironically achieve exactly what "patriarchal" societies are accused of – it objectifies non-Western women as a single monolithic group of "oppressed" human beings. It is "problematical to speak of a vision of women shared by Arab and Muslim societies (i.e., more than twenty different countries) without addressing the particular historical, material, and ideological power structures that construct such images." Moreover, "to speak of the patriarchal family or the tribal kinship structure as the origin of the socioeconomic status of women is to again assume that women are sexual-political subjects prior to their entry into the family" (Mohanty, 1988:61).

Western women are depicted as "secular, liberated, and having control over their own lives," while all women in the "third world" are "underdeveloped and economically dependent" human beings who are incapable of representing themselves: hence, they must be represented by their secular feminist saviours (Mohanty, 1988:74; Zimmerman, 2015:148). According to El Guindi (2005:53), such generalist and universalist claims are false and ignore the fact that "feminism itself is grounded in

culture and that feminists from any society or any particular cultural tradition hold and internalise premises and assumptions stemming out of their culture that shape their orientation to feminist issues.”

Islamic feminism manifests itself in different, often contradictory guises. Some adherents of Islamic feminism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries expressed views similar to those of Western secular feminists. An early representative of this trend is the French-educated Egyptian lawyer Qassim Amin. He published two booklets, *Tahrir al Mar'a* (The Liberation of Women; 1899) and *al-Mar'a al-Jadida* (The New Woman; 1900). In both he expressed the view that the veil is a symbol of repression and the embodiment of a “backward” society that needs to be emancipated along the lines of Western society’s “liberation” of women. Both booklets have been published in a single volume in English (Amin, 2001).

A female contemporary of Amin, Huda Sha‘arawi (1879-1947), is regarded as the founder of the early twentieth century Egyptian feminist movement.¹⁸ She was born in a harem and married an older cousin, already in his forties, when she was only 13 years old. These experiences influenced her deeply and she became a leading figure and founder member of the Egyptian Feminist Union.¹⁹ After addressing the International Women’s Conference in Rome in 1923, she vowed to follow in the footsteps of European women so that Egypt can take its rightful place among the advanced nations (El Guindi, 2005:67). Upon her return, she dramatically removed her face veil publically in Cairo’s train station. This act had “far-reaching symbolic significance.” The “gesture has entered the lore on women’s liberation and, as lore, is alive and is continually embellished” (El Guindi, 2005:65). More and more girls appeared unveiled in public spaces. It is nevertheless important to note that Sha‘arawi only removed the face veil, not the head covering. She “lifted the traditional customary veil and wore the *hijāb* in the manner that finds support in Islamic sources” (El Guindi, 2005:65). Sha‘arawi represents an Islamic feminism heavily influenced by Western feminist convictions (El Guindi, 2005:66).

Another contemporary of Amin and Sha‘arawi, Malak Hifni Lasif (1886-1918), represents a more “indigenous” Islamic feminist approach.²⁰ She was an activist for women’s rights, lecturer, and writer. She was acutely aware of Britain’s colonial presence in Egypt and strived to develop “an indigenous feminist agenda” (Yousef,

¹⁸ For a brief overview of her life and work, cf. Jaffer (2016).

¹⁹ These events are described by Sha‘arawi in her memoirs. It has been translated into English by Margot Badran (Sha‘arawi 1987).

²⁰ For an overview of her life and work, cf. Yousef (2011:69-89).

2011:71). She regarded the European “as a useful site of inspiration, competition, comparison, and, when necessary, rejection, of the colonial” (Yousef, 2011:72). Her feminist agenda was aimed against “the ‘patriarchal other’ – whether indigenous or colonial” (Yousef, 2011:72). Unlike Sha‘arawi, she rejected mandatory unveiling and saw the dominant discourse of the veil in her time yet another manifestation of male domination (El Guindi, 2005:66). Her feminism can be classified as “more authentically Egyptian” (El Guindi, 2005:66).

Similar trends are discernible in the writings of influential Islamic feminists of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Fatima Mernissi (1940-2015) represents a more Western-orientated approach.²¹ She was a prolific author and only her *Women and Islam: An historical and theological enquiry* (1991b) will be discussed here. Mernissi was a Moroccan feminist and trained sociologist. She defends accusations that *al-Islām* is inherently patriarchal and therefore discriminates against Muslim women by critically reflecting upon the early history of *al-Islām*. She argues that “(d)uring the whole period of his prophetic mission, whether in Makka (AD 610 to 622) or in Medina (AD 622 to 632), Muḥammad (ﷺ) gave a major place to women in his private life” (Mernissi, 1991b:102). *Sūra* 33:35 grants “total equality as believers, that is, as members of the community” (Mernissi, 1991b:118) between the two sexes. The descent of the *ḥijāb* (*Sūra* 33:53) is concerned with tact and etiquette (Mernissi, 1991b:92) and does not refer to “a barrier between a man and a woman, but between two men” (Mernissi, 1991b:85). Many of Muḥammad’s (ﷺ) Muslim Companions, however, were influenced by pre-Islamic social customs where women were treated as inferior. They tried to “suppress the egalitarian dimension of Islam” (Mernissi, 1991b:126). Lawless men in Medina harassed women in the streets, thus *Sūra* 33:59 was revealed, stating that the Prophet’s (ﷺ) wives should “make themselves recognised by pulling their *jilbab* over themselves” to avoid harassment when they walked the city’s streets (Mernissi, 1991b:180). ‘Umar, one of Muḥammad’s (ﷺ) Companions and friends, insisted that the only way to establish social order in Medina “was to put up barriers and to hide women, who were objects of envy” (Mernissi, 1991b:185). This view prevailed after the Prophet’s (ﷺ) death and became the source of misogynist views expressed in the *Ḥadīth* (Mernissi, 1991b:49-81) and the accepted social practice under the Abassid Dynasty (Mernissi, 1991b:195). Modern Muslim women should put “daily pressure for equality” upon society to bring them into a “fabulous present” (Mernissi, 1991b:195).

²¹ For a brief overview of her life and work, cf. Shepherd (2016).

Leilah Ahmed (born 1940) represents a more “indigenous Islamic” form of feminism. She is Egyptian born, received her university education at the University of Cambridge and in 1999 became the first professor of Women’s Studies in religion at Harvard Divinity School.²² As Mernissi, she is a prolific author. Only her *A quiet revolution: The veil’s resurgence, from the Middle East to America* (2011) will be discussed here. Ahmed confesses that for someone growing up in Cairo in the 1940s and 1950s, the resurgence of the veil in Muslim countries and amongst Muslim minorities in Western countries since the 1970’s was a disconcerting experience. For Ahmed (2011:3), the *ḥijāb* “powerfully evoked the hijab I recalled seeing in childhood worn by the Muslim Brotherhood – and only by the women of the Muslim Brotherhood” (Ahmed, 2011:3). She associated this organization with bombings and assassinations and hence the resurgence of the veil with “Islamism: a particular and very political form of *al-Islām* that had been gaining ground in Muslim societies since the Islamic Resurgence of the 1970s” (Ahmed, 2011:3).

It prompted her to investigate the phenomenon by doing on-the-ground research, particularly amongst Muslim women in Egypt and America wearing clothing generally associated with fundamentalism and radicalism. In the first part of the book (Ahmed, 2011:19-192), she traces the resurgence of the veil in Egypt from its virtual disappearance in the mid-1950s to its astounding resurgence in the 1990s. Contemporary accounts of women helped her to reconstruct the phenomenon of the veil’s re-emergence. By the end of the 1990s the majority of women adopted the practice and displayed the “willingness and even active desire” to wear it (Ahmed, 2011:116). Ahmed traces the complex thinking that goes into decisions about veiling and states that immigrants from Muslim countries took these ideas to the United States.

In the second part of the book (Ahmed, 2011:193-306), Ahmed tracks this reemerging veil to the United States and investigates especially how the phenomenon manifested in the post-9/11 increasingly hostile environment. She conducted interviews with women in leadership positions, particularly with activists in the Islamic Society of North America. She concluded that American Muslim women’s activism through the first decade of the twenty-first century is “the product of the convergence of key elements in the teachings of Islamism with the ideals and understanding of justice in America in these very specific decades” (Ahmed, 2011:294). Islamism developed in the space of four or five decades from a “marginal” into “the dominant” form of *al-Islām* within the West and elsewhere (Ahmed, 2011:300). The resurgence of veiling

²² For a brief overview of her life and work, cf. Thomas and Hook (2001).

started off as a marginal Egyptian “campus phenomenon” (Ahmed, 2011:83), but turned into a “quiet revolution” (Ahmed, 2011:116) in Muslim societies as well as in North America through “immigration of Islamism” (Ahmed, 2011:157) and female activism in relation to gender and women’s rights.

Ahmed concludes that “it is after all Islamists and the children of Islamists – the very people whose presence in this country had initially alarmed me – who were now in the vanguard of those who were most fully and rapidly assimilating into the distinctively American tradition of activism in pursuit of justice... and women’s rights in Islam” (Ahmed, 2011:303). The book unveils the complexities intertwined in the re-emergence of veil and argues that no single point of departure can fully explain the phenomenon of Muslim women deliberately choosing to don the *ḥijāb*. According to Zimmerman (2015:147), Ahmed identified “multiple meanings” attached to the resurging veil. Amongst others the *ḥijāb* was “a strong symbol of activism for Human and civil rights, social justice, and social change.”

1.3.3 Looking at the *ḥijāb* from a fashion point of view

Closely linked with the resurgence of the *ḥijāb* described in the previous section, is the emergence of “Islamic fashion” as a booming industry. Especially in “secular” Islamic states such as Turkey and amongst young Muslim women in Western countries, the *ḥijāb* is no longer only an expression of their religious and cultural identity, but also a statement about being “fashionably Muslim” in modern society. These women are known as *ḥijābistas*, Muslim women dressing fashionable, yet adhering to what is prescribed by their religion regarding modest dress (Hassan & Harun, 2016:477). Lewis (2013a:3) states that

... the younger generation of modest dressers... have grown up with consumer culture and expect to be able to express their identity through what they buy and what they wear. These young women are able to style modish modesty by engaging with mainstream fashion rather than having to rely on ‘ethnic’ and ‘traditional’ clothing.

The “Islamic revivalist movement in the 1970s and 1980s encouraged a growing number of women to start to wear recognisably Islamic, covered styles of dress.” Initially, it implied “a uniform and sober style, such as uniform full-length, wide coats in muted colours.” However, “(b)y the 1990s the Islamic revival movement had become more heterogeneous and had shifted from an anti-consumerist radical movement to a more individualised reformist trend with identities increasingly produced through consumption” (Moors, 2013:19). To Botz-Bornstein (2013:251) “(t)his is surprising if one considers that, in general, fashion is an ultimate symbol of materialism and secularism.” Gökarıksel and Secor (2009:7) state that

... the difficulty of the idea – if not the practice – of veiling-fashion can be traced out through the concept of fashion itself. Marked by cycles of rapid change, fashion is usually defined in relation to the rise of mercantile capitalism in Europe, new forms of social mobility, the abandonment of ‘tradition’ and the rise of the individualistic modern subject.

It seems that, whatever one’s point of departure – be it politics, feminism or fashion – the *ḥijāb* will always cause controversy and debate. Gökariksel and Secor (2009:7) argue that

... in short, veiling-fashion remains controversial because it combines two systems that are seemingly incompatible: veiling, with its powerful set of religious, cultural and political references, and fashion, an unmoored system of self-referential change associated with capitalism, modernity and a particular kind of consumer subject. And yet, this apparent contradiction dissolves in the everyday practices of the producers and consumers of veiling-fashion.

The Internet exploded onto the world scene during the 1990s, and online activities became the norm in most societies. This was a huge factor in modest Muslim female dress becoming a fashion. To name but two examples: In 1998 Dana Becker, a Muslim woman from Minnesota in the United States, started “The Modest Clothing Directory,”²³ a website where Muslim women and women from other religions who prefer to dress modestly, could shop for modest clothing (Moors, 2013:17-18). In the United Kingdom, Habida da Silva established a very popular website and blog advertising different styles of modest Muslim dress and giving advice on a wide variety of topics regarding the phenomenon.²⁴ She posted numerous YouTube videos where she promotes and explains the beauty of the *ḥijāb* style.²⁵ These Internet sites “tend to avoid taking a strongly normative stance on how to combine *al-Islām* and fashion.” They present the legitimacy of modest Islamic fashion “as more or less self-evident and, by doing so, contribute to its normalisation” (Moors, 2013:27). Moreover, in the face of the highly visible and controversial “militant or strictly-orthodox strands of

²³ <http://www.ourlovelydeseret.com/modest-shop-directory/modest-clothing-shop-directory/> (Accessed 29/09/ 2017).

• ²⁴ <https://habibadasilva.com/>; 29/09/2017; <https://habibadasilva.com/blogs/habiba-talks> (Accessed 29/09/2017).

²⁵ Cf. for example the following links:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T31YiQ4QdQY> (Accessed 29/09/2017);

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xAQ_ViovxyA (Accessed 29/09/2017);

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2PvQIBYnf0M> (Accessed 29/09/2017);

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HkxxvbyejrA> (Accessed 29/09/2017).

Islam,” the “Islamic culture industry” presents “the ‘friendly face’ of Islam online” (Moors, 2013:36).

Lewis (2013b:48) emphasises an important co-product of the “modish modest” online presence:

Women’s online discourse about modesty contributes a distinctively gendered strand to the emergence online of new forms of religious discourse often regarded as a male sphere of activity – as is the case with men’s well-documented Islamic presence online.

Women style mediators and entrepreneurs “are themselves constructing innovative forms of religious discourse online, creating cross-faith interactions that span commerce and conversation.” When women’s products and ideas “circulate in the blogosphere,” networks are created “with the potential to displace discourses about modesty into arenas beyond the traditional religious authority structures” (Lewis, 2013b:49). In the context of the intense debates regarding the role and status of Muslim women in society, the “modish modest” environment does not take an overly ideological stance. According to Lewis (2013b:49), “(w)hilst many participants are motivated to promote modesty, the field is not strongly characterised by the doctrinal judgementalism seen in other areas of religion online.” It has important implications for religious discourse in general and *al-Islām* in particular:

Religious discourse online is able to publicise forms of religious interpretation not usually given prominence, challenging existing hierarchies of religious knowledge with both new interpretations and new modes of transmission. The internet tends to fragment forms of hierarchical clerical communications (the one to the many) with self-selecting participatory networks (the many to the many). Writing on Islam, Bunt sees an inevitable standardisation of multiple rather than single interpretations, predicting that ‘rather than a single ummah [global community of believers] idealised as a classical Islamic concept, in fact there are numerous parallel ummah frameworks operating in cyberspace (Lewis, 2013b:61).²⁶

To Gökariksel and Secor (2009:7) the “rise of veiling-fashion as a transnational phenomenon positions women and women’s bodies at the centre of political debates and struggles surrounding what it means to be ‘modern’ and Muslim today.” It has important implications for Muslim women:

With its emphasis on the individual, even when part of an imagined national and transnational community of Muslims, veiling-fashion signals the emergence of a new female subject who navigates the multiple cross-currents of femininity, piety, modesty, sexuality, class, age and urbanity (Gökariksel & Secor, 2009:13).

²⁶ Cf. Bunt (2009).

In becoming “fashionably Muslim,” the veiling-fashion industry adds yet another layer of complexity in grasping the essence of the meaning of the *ḥijāb*, the piece of cloth that “visibly differentiates Muslim women from non-Muslim women” and thus becomes the ultimate “symbol of Muslim women” (Hassan & Harun, 2016:477):

Finally, it seems that the bringing together of veiling, that erstwhile marker of piety and modesty, with the showy and ostentatiously wasteful cycles of fashion cannot but lead to controversy. While fashion is notoriously unmoored from meaning and judgement, the veil as Islamic practice is most definitely supposed to mean something. What veiling-fashion does is to reveal the sliding gap between the signifier (the veil) and its desired signification (Islamic womanhood) (Gökariksel & Secor, 2009:15).

1.3.4 Looking at the *ḥijāb* from a religious and cultural point of view

Much of what has been discussed regarding the *ḥijāb* in the brief literature review up to this point has been influenced by Western perceptions and presuppositions. The Egyptian born anthropologist, Fadwa El Guindi (born 1941), brings an important corrective to the prevailing discussion of the *ḥijāb* in her book *Veil: Modesty, privacy and resistance* (1999). She warns against any one-sided approach to and explanation of a complex and controversial phenomenon such as the *ḥijāb*. El Guindi (1999:xi) indicates that in the vast amount of literature on the subject, the *ḥijāb* is “attacked, ignored, dismissed, transcended, trivialised or defended.” None of these approaches succeeds in analysing and explaining the *ḥijāb* as “a rich and nuanced phenomenon” (El Guindi, 1999:xii). El Guindi consequently calls for a holistic analysis of the *ḥijāb*:

A holistic understanding of humankind calls for comparative data from all available sources deemed relevant for understanding the meaning people themselves attach to their cultural constructions... I examine the veil in many contexts and synthesize many sources of data. In addition to ethnography and historical materials, this study consults three Arabic textual sources in their original form and language – the *Qur`an*, the *Hadith*, and the *Tafsir* – and integrates them through ethnographic analysis of contemporary and historical material to produce an understanding of the varied body of the relevant materials (El Guindi, 1999:xiii).

El Guindi (1999:13-22) indicates that the practice of “veiling” in ancient Mediterranean societies has a long history and indeed had different “meanings” over time and might have more than one meaning at the same time. The ideological model of Sumerian gender complementarity, the Assyrian/Persian model of class exclusivity, the Hellenic model of gender hierarchy, the Egyptian model of gender equality, and the Byzantine model of seclusion all played a role in ancient Mediterranean societies. Contrary to modern perceptions, one single model cannot “explain” the prevalence of veiling in ancient Mediterranean societies nor its manifestation in contemporary *al-Islām*.

El Guindi (1999:23) argues that the “Euro-Christian gaze at Muslim culture, whether expressed by word or picture, has been a gaze of violence, dominance, distortion and belittlement.” From this ideological perspective, the paradigm public/private, and its corollary honour-shame have been “imposed on Arab and Islamic cultural space to describe the division between the sexes.” This paradigm “is more appropriate to describe European Mediterranean and Balkan cultures” in particular and “Western culture” in general (El Guindi, 1999:79). From this perspective, an ethnocentric blueprint of “modesty-shame-seclusion” has been imposed upon Muslim practices that amounts to an “imposition on Arabo-Islamic culture” (El Guindi, 1999:83). El Guindi strongly argues that Muslim practices should be explained in the context of Arabo-Islamic culture. She states:

Arab privacy is based upon a specific cultural construction of space and time central to the functioning of Islamic society in general, in the dynamics of Arab gender identity, and for direct unmediated individual or collective communication with God. Space in this construction is relational, active, charged and fluid, ‘insisting’ on complementarities (El Guindi, 1999:77).

El Guindi (1999:77-78) indicates that the Islamic construction of space is unique in the sense that it “enables ordinary Muslims temporarily to convert any worldly place (street, shop, aircraft isle) into sacred space set apart, simply by marking it and occupying it in a ritually pure state facing Makka.” The ability to create “private” space is “the notion that, in its transformational fluid form, embraces the Arab cultural construction of space that connects space to time and gender” (El Guindi, 1999:81). The ethnocentric blueprint that best suits the Arabo-Islamic context is “sanctity-reserve-respect” (El Guindi, 1999:83). The Arabic root *حرم* *ḥrm* carries connotations of “the sacred,” and not “seclusion” as Western ideology would have it. The “*harim*” becomes the part of the home in which women are both privileged and protected from encounters with non-*mahram* men... Women are the center of the family and its sanctity, and hence the term extends to the family in general” (El Guindi, 1999:85) and therefore argues:

The veil, veiling patterns and veiling behavior are, therefore, according to my analysis of Arab culture, about sacred privacy, sanctity and the rhythmic interweaving of patterns of worldly and sacred life, linking women as the guardians of family sanctuaries and the realm of the sacred in this world... Dress in general, but particularly veiling, is privacy’s visual metaphor (El Guindi, 1999:96).

For El Guindi (1999:145), her insistence upon an authentic Arabo-Islamic interpretation of the Muslim female dress code has important implications:

Encoded in the dress style is a new public appearance and demeanor that reaffirms an Islamic identity and morality and rejects Western materialism, consumerism, commercialism, and values.

Ultimately, El Guindi (1999:172) argues that the veil “is a complex symbol of many meanings. Emancipation can be expressed by wearing the veil or by removing it. It can be secular or religious. It can represent tradition or resistance.” Botz-Bornstein (2013:249) eloquently states that

... the veil has been interpreted as a symbol of both oppression and resistance, as a means to bring about equality between the sexes as well as the exact contrary, it has been said that it confines women to a more ethical social space but has also been accused of facilitating flirtation and adultery. The veil has been seen as a symbol enhancing Islamic values and as the reduction of these same values. The decision to veil has been supported by feminist justifications, and explicitly feminist rationales. Add to this that the veil has also been interpreted as a desexualising device and at the same time, a means to raise women’s sexual appeal.

1.3.5 In search of a holistic interpretation of the *ḥijāb*

Departing from El Guindi’s remark above that the veil is “a complex symbol of many meanings” (1999:172), the researcher will argue that there is indeed scope for a new, holistic approach to the Islamic *ḥijāb*. The brief literature review illustrated that existing literature tends to look at the *ḥijāb* in isolation. The tendency in discussions on the *ḥijāb* is to regard it as **either** a political, **or** social, **or** fashionable symbol. El Guindi’s analysis makes a case for a contextual analysis of the phenomenon against the realities of Arabo-Islamic culture. The researcher concurs that El Guindi’s appeal for a “holistic understanding” (1999:xii) of the phenomenon acts as an important corrective in the current heated debates on the *ḥijāb* in the post-9/11 global environment.

In her book, *By noon prayer: The rhythm of Islam* (2008), Fadwa El Guindi (2008:xi) provides a contextual and holistic analysis of *al-Islām* as “an integrative whole and a unified and coherent phenomenon that is creative, generative, flexible, and dynamic.” She endeavours to develop “a theory of Islam...that incorporates the three cultural qualities of *qudsiyya* (sacred), *khususiyya* (privacy), *jama’iyya* (collectivity)” and argues that, by synthesizing these three elements into one unified theory, the rhythm of *al-Islām* can be revealed (El Guindi, 2008:xii-xiii). She says:

Approaches that still dominate studies of Islam tend to be componential and mechanistic. Reducing Islam only to the Five Pillars or to media-created single subjects like the veil, women’s piety movement, jihad, Islamism, among a few others, or breaking it into Shi’a versus Sunni, good or bad Islam, rewrites Islam in static, simplistic, and dichotomous terms. This superficial exercise is not sufficient even

descriptively to capture a multi-layered living phenomenon like Islam (El Guindi, 2008:xi).

According to El Guindi (2008:17), what is needed in an analysis of *al-Islām* is a “shift in paradigm from mechanism (parts and components) to holism (complex whole).” From an anthropological point of view, she argues that the Arabo-Islamic culture “humanizes time and collectivizes space” (El Guindi, 2008:93). As such, “a Muslim feels and lives Islam and experiences time and space in interweaving rhythm” (El Guindi, 2008:123). Without rhythm, “Muslim life becomes clinical, routine, prescriptive, and dry” (El Guindi, 2008:124). The Islamic year is “definitely fixed as a purely lunar year of roughly 354 days, the months to be calculated by the actual appearance of the moon. Islam went back to nature” (El Guindi, 2008:125). In Islamic life, the “fundamental instant” occurs “with the new moon, which must be watched for and established by two ‘witnesses of the instant’” (El Guindi, 2008:126). At the same time, naturally and without perceiving it as a contradiction, the five daily prayers of a Muslim are shaped by “solar temporality” – “dawn (morning), noon, afternoon, sunset, and evening” (El Guindi, 2008:129). El Guindi (2008:129) stresses that

... Muslim life maintains the rhythms of nature and the rhythms of culture in a seamless whole that characterizes the community. The daily prayer interweaves intervals of sacred and ordinary.

The rhythm of daily prayer is at the same time a rhythm of spatial transformation:

At prayer time, five times a day, a period begins within which a Muslim person moves temporarily out of ordinary time and space and into sacred time and space and back... This happens seamlessly... It could be anywhere... Any undesignated area, facing the direction of Makka, can be temporarily “designated” as sacred Muslim space by the act of prayer itself (El Guindi, 2008:134).

El Guindi (2008:153) concludes that the notion of rhythm provides a new “conceptual framework” that enabled her to arrive at “a more systematic understanding of Muslim life.” In *al-Islām* there is an

... alternate temporality and spatiality that brings together the calendrical, the cosmological, the astronomical, and the sociocultural constructions of sacredness, privacy, and temporal-spatiality into a unified understanding. Rhythm is the construct that best describes this unity.

El Guindi called for an overall re-interpretation of *al-Islām* as a religious and cultural system. In this study, the researcher will argue that there is a need to conduct a holistic analysis of a small piece of the complex puzzle that *al-Islām* presents to the global world, namely the *ḥijāb*. Such an analysis is urgently needed, because the *ḥijāb*

... is a contested, sacred and sometimes controversial symbol, but it is just a symbol. It is a symbol of Islam, a misconstrued, misunderstood religion that represents the most diverse population of people in the world – a population of more than one billion people (Herrington, 2012:14).

Departing from the symbolic nature of the *ḥijāb*, the researcher will maintain that an analysis of the phenomenon from the perspective of ecological systems theory and critical spatial theory will provide holistic perspectives on the phenomenon. It is to be expected that these perspectives will lead to a better understanding of and appreciation for a Muslim female's deliberate choice to wear the *ḥijāb*.

1.4 RESEARCH PROBLEM, RESEARCH QUESTION AND RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

In the light of the review of literature above, it is clear that the *ḥijāb* is a controversial and contested symbol of *al-Islām*. The review revealed a broad research problem, namely a misunderstanding and misrepresentation of Islamic symbolism in general. In his investigation of Islamic ritual, Denny (1985:71) gave voice to this problem and proposed a solution to it when he says:

What is needed is attention to the spatial-temporal dimensions and orientations of Islam for purposes of better understanding Islamic symbolism as it is understood from within. Space and time are universal categories, and the ways in which religious persons discern and relate to them are often widely shared. Yet, once the relatively low-level, albeit necessary, rehearsal of mythic and ethnographic parallels are accomplished, we still have to focus on the particular *Islamic* awareness and applications.

The researcher is of the opinion that the controversies and contestations regarding the Islamic *ḥijāb* reveal the misunderstanding of Islamic symbolism. This is due to the inability, perhaps even the unwillingness, to analyse the *ḥijāb as it is understood from within*. The scope of the present study will not allow the researcher to engage fully with temporal dimensions of *al-Islām*. She will, however, investigate the spatial dimensions of *al-Islām* in general, and the Islamic *ḥijāb* in particular, in her endeavour to create an awareness of the phenomenon as it is understood and applied from the ***perspective of a Muslim female***.

In this study, the researcher will argue that a holistic look at the Islamic *ḥijāb* from two theoretical perspectives, namely ecological systems theory and critical spatial theory, will elucidate the spatial dimensions of *al-Islām* in general, and the Islamic *ḥijāb* in particular. This, in turn, will create a particular ***Islamic*** awareness and application of the phenomenon. The research question can thus be simply formulated: *Will a holistic analysis of the ḥijāb from the perspective of ecological systems theory and critical*

spatial theory provide new insights into the symbolic meaning(s) the hijāb hold(s) for a female Muslim who deliberately chooses to wear it?

The rationale of the study emanates from and is an extension of the researcher's previous investigation titled ***Muslim female clothing practices: An exploratory study of ancient and modern perceptions*** (Bin Nafisah, 2015). In the current study, she intends to go beyond exploring the *hijāb* as a Muslim female clothing practice by investigating its deeper, ***symbolic*** meaning. She will argue that:

- the *hijāb* is an integral part of *al-Islām* as a religious and cultural ***system***;
- the *hijāb* functions as a very specific ***spatial*** marker within that system.

By combining these two perspectives, the researcher will be able to arrive at a ***holistic*** investigation of the phenomenon.

The study illuminates the significance of the *hijāb* for the Muslim female who consciously chooses to wear it. This act symbolically embeds the female Muslim in the very centre of *al-Islām* as a religious and cultural ***system***. From a spatial perspective, the *hijāb* demarcates the Muslim female body ***as*** space, and the wearing of the *hijāb* has significance ***from the inside***. The *hijāb* simultaneously demarcates the Muslim female body ***in*** space. Thus, the wearing of the *hijāb* has significance ***from the outside***.

If the researcher may hypothesise at this early stage of the research, she argues that – perceived from the perspective of *al-Islām* as a religious and cultural ***system*** with a unique way of constructing ***space*** – the *hijāb* functions as a ***border of cloth***. It serves as a visual symbol of a Muslim female's personal, cultural, and religious identity. However, as a ***border*** the *hijāb* presents challenges.

To the wearer it presents challenges ***from the inside***. What is the significance of ***this*** border and how does the Muslim female cross the border meaningfully and legitimately in her encounters with the “outside”? How does the nature of the “outside” influence the crossing of the border? To the perceiver, the *hijāb* presents challenges ***from the outside***. What is the significance of ***this*** border and how does the perceiver cross the border meaningfully and legitimately in his/her encounters with the “inside”? How does the nature of the “outside” influence the crossing of the border?

The study departs from the presupposition that there is an undeniable relationship between die *hijāb* and the differentiation between sacred and profane space. The researcher takes her cue from Eliade (1959:20):

For religious man, space is not homogeneous; he experiences interruptions, breaks in it; some parts of space are qualitatively different from others... There is, then, a sacred space, and hence a strong, significant space; there are other spaces that are not sacred and so are without structure or consistency, amorphous. Nor is this all. For religious man, this spatial nonhomogeneity finds expression in the experience of an opposition between space that is sacred – the only *real* and *real-ly* existing space – and all other space, the formless expanse surrounding it.

These observations imply that a border exists between holy and profane space(s). One moves from the one to the other via a threshold. For Eliade (1959:25) the threshold has great significance:

The threshold is the limit, the boundary, the frontier that distinguishes and opposes two worlds – and at the same time the paradoxical place where those worlds communicate, where passage from the profane to the sacred world becomes possible.

The researcher will argue that the *ḥijāb* functions as a threshold. When a female Muslim dons her *ḥijāb*, her **body** becomes the **paradoxical place** where holy and profane space interacts and communicates. Through the Muslim female body **as** space and her presence **in** space the **passage from the profane to the sacred world** and – as the researcher will argue – **from the sacred world to the profane world** becomes possible.

1.5 RESEARCH APPROACH

This research project falls within the **qualitative research paradigm**. This paradigm

... stems from an antipositivistic, interpretative approach, is ideographic and thus **holistic in nature**, and **aims mainly to understand social life and the meaning that people attach to everyday life**. The qualitative research paradigm in its broadest sense refers to research that elicits **participant accounts of meaning, experience or perceptions**. It also produces **descriptive data** in the participant's own written or spoken words. It thus involves identifying the participant's **beliefs and values that underlies the phenomena**. The qualitative researcher is therefore concerned with understanding... rather than explanation; naturalistic observation rather than controlled measurement; and **the subjective exploration of reality from the perspective of an insider**, as opposed to the outsider perspective that is predominant in the quantitative paradigm (Fouché & Delport, 2005:74).²⁷

Mason (2002:1) argues as follows:

Through qualitative research we can explore **a wide array of dimensions of the social world, including the texture and weave of everyday life, the understandings, experiences and imaginings** of our research participants, **the**

²⁷ Italics and emphasis added by the researcher.

ways that social processes, institutions, discourses or relationships work, and the significance of the meanings that they generate.²⁸

Mason (2002:1) adds that

... the qualitative habit of intimately connecting context with explanation means that qualitative research is capable of producing very well-founded *cross-contextual generalities*, rather than aspiring to more flimsy de-contextual versions.

According to Abu Bakr (2014:8), “qualitative methods of research and writing offer the opportunity to advocate for *situated knowledges*.” **Texts** will serve as the main **data source** in this research project. The researcher is “interested in the people or institutions which have produced them” as well as in “exploring discourse, discursive practices and the constitution of subject positions (rather than people), semantics, ideas, rules, laws and regulations, accounts of events” (Mason, 2002:53) contained in her textual sources. The texts utilised in the research project are **primary records** (i.e., the normative texts generated during the formative period of Islamic thought) and **secondary sources** (i.e., the writings of specialists in the field of history, religion, cultural studies and the social sciences) (Booth, Colomb & Williams, 2008:69). The study can in essence be described as a **document study** of the primary and secondary texts and the researcher’s **secondary analysis** of her sources (Strydom & Delport, 2005:314-326).

The **research strategy** falls in the broad field of **phenomenology**, which seeks “to understand and interpret the meaning that subjects give to their everyday lives... Eventually, the researcher utilising this approach reduces the experiences to a central meaning or the essence of the experience” and “the product of the research is a description of the essence of the experience being studied” (Fouché, 2005:270). The researcher follows an **interpretivist approach**. In this approach

... researchers follow the assumption that the access to reality, which is given or socially constructed, is transmitted through social constructions such as language, documents, consciousness, shared meanings and other objects that have meaning in people’s lives... In interpretive studies, an attempt is made to understand phenomena through the meanings that people allocate to them (Paruk, 2015:46).

The researcher analyses her textual sources in order “to get out of these... what they say about or how they are constituted in people’s individual or collective meanings” (Mason, 2002:56). The researcher strives to give the “insider view” rather than

²⁸ Italics and emphasis added by the researcher.

imposing an “outsider view” (Mason, 2002:56) in her analysis of the meaning(s) of the Islamic *hijāb*.²⁹

1.6 BRIEF REFLECTIONS ON THEORY: ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS THEORY AND CRITICAL SPATIALITY

In order to contextualise the present study, the researcher briefly highlights two theoretical approaches that will inform the bulk of her critical investigation, namely *ecological systems theory* and *critical spatial theory*.

1.6.1 Ecological systems theory³⁰

Ecological systems theory was developed by the Russian-born American psychologist Urie Bronfenbrenner. He developed this theory mainly with reference to a child’s development from childhood to adulthood. He asked how children’s development is affected by their social relationships and the world around them and argued that a person’s development was affected by everything in the surrounding environment. Bronfenbrenner (1979:12) argues that all human development and behaviour should be seen as “*development-in-context*” and thus an “ecological orientation” is needed when human behaviour and development are studied. According to Bronfenbrenner (1979:13) his approach is concerned

... with the progressive accommodation between a growing human organism and its immediate environment, *and* the way this relation is mediated by forces emanating from more remote regions in the larger physical and social milieu. The ecology of human development lies at a point of convergence among the disciplines of the biological, psychological, and social sciences as they bear on the evolution of the individual in society.

²⁹ The researcher is aware that the tension between an “outsider” perspective on Islam, mainly by Western experts in Islamic Studies, and an “insider” perspective by Muslim scholars themselves, is sometimes acute. Muslim scholars suspect their Western colleagues of covert, sometimes overt, colonial motives in their “scientific” analysis of Islam. Western experts in Islamic Studies accuse their Muslim colleagues of an excessive “religious” interest at the cost of scientific methods in their analysis of Islam. Abdul-Rauf (1985:179-188) gives an overview of these debates and calls on scholars working in the academic field of Islamic Studies “to go about it accurately and sensitively” (Abdul-Rauf, 1985:188). In the current study, the researcher departs from the presupposition that “the owner of an experience has privileged access to his or her experience, which cannot be shared by any other person” (Rahman, 1985:191). In that sense, her analysis of the *hijāb* is a subjective exercise. However, she concurs with Rahman (1985:195) when he says “while it is obviously the Muslim’s task to propound Islam, Muslims and non-Muslims can certainly cooperate at the level of intellectual understanding.”

³⁰ Ecological systems theory will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 2. An important aspect of this theory is that there are borders between various “layers” in an ecological system that are mutually permeable. Theories on borders and boundaries and their crossing (cf. 1.6.2.1) will also receive attention in Chapter 2.

Bronfenbrenner (1979:21) defines his “ecology of human development” approach as follows:

The ecology of human development involves the scientific study of the progressive, mutual accommodation between an active, growing human being and the changing properties of the immediate settings in which the developing person lives, as this process is affected by relations between these settings, and by the larger contexts in which the settings are embedded.

The fact that Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory is concerned with “the evolution of the individual in society” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979:13) implies that the theory can be applied not only to the development of individual children, but also to the contextual interaction between an individual and his/her environment in general. In the present study, the researcher will argue that each individual Muslim is influenced by *al-Islām* as a religious and cultural system as well as the interaction between this human being and his/her immediate and broader social context(s). A female Muslim choosing to wear the *ḥijāb* should thus be viewed as a **person-in-context**.

Bronfenbrenner (1979:22-26) divides a person’s environment into five levels: the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem, the macrosystem, and the chronosystem. The **microsystem** is the smallest and immediate environment in which a person lives. As such, the microsystem comprises the daily influence of home, family, school, work, peer group or community upon an individual. The **mesosystem** refers to the interaction of the different microsystems in which a person functions. It is, in essence, a system of microsystems and as such, involves linkages between home and school, home and work, between peer group and family, or between family and society. The **exosystem** involves linkages that may exist between two or more settings, one of which may not contain a person but affects him/her indirectly nonetheless. Such places and people may include workplaces, the larger neighbourhood, and extended family members. The **macrosystem** is the largest and most distant collection of people and places to a person that still exercises significant influence on him/her. It is composed of the person’s cultural patterns and values, specifically the person’s dominant beliefs and ideas, as well as political and economic systems. The **chronosystem** refers to the dimension of time, which demonstrates the influence of both change and constancy in a person’s environment.

The researcher will argue that each individual Muslim is influenced by **all** the systems in which he/she functions on a daily basis. *Al-Islām* is not a theory, but a religious and cultural system that deeply influences each individual Muslim’s behaviour and choices. *Al-Islām*, in turn, does not exist in isolation, but is influenced by and

influences the broader context in which it exists. In the global village that the world has become, all these systems influence each individual Muslim female and her choice to wear or not to wear the *hijāb*.

1.6.2 Critical spatial theory³¹

Elliott (2011) indicates that during the last third of the twentieth century there has been a clear and growing awareness amongst researchers in the broad field of religious traditions that “the social and cultural contexts of texts and traditions... needed more refined analysis and articulation.” This method of research and interpretation is called **social scientific criticism**. It basically departs from the principle that method(s) and approach(es) developed in the social sciences are of the utmost importance for the interpretation of religious traditions with a long and complex history. It endeavours to bring

social-scientific scrutiny to bear both on texts and on their geographical, historical, economic, social, political and cultural (including ‘religious’) contexts. The questions it addresses to these twin objects of analysis and the tools of its investigation are those of the social sciences, especially of sociology and cultural anthropology.” Social scientific criticism departs from the presupposition that “all knowledge is socially conditioned and perspectival in nature (Elliott, 2011).

Within the broad field of social scientific criticism, a specific perspective on space and spatiality developed amongst geographers and philosophers, commonly referred to as **critical spatiality**. Sleeman (2013:51) indicated that “since the mid-1990s” there was “a wider, transdisciplinary awakening to the importance of space within the humanities and the social sciences.” This trend is commonly called “the spatial turn.” Warf and Arias (2009:1) state that

...recent works in the fields of literary and cultural studies, sociology, political science, anthropology, history, and art history have become increasingly spatial in their orientation. From various perspectives, they assert that space is a social construction relevant to the understanding of the different histories of human subjects and to the production of cultural phenomena.

Berquist (1999) argues that space and spatiality are inclusive terms that

...refer to aspects of reality that involve concepts of distance, height, width, breadth, orientation, and direction, as well as the human perceptions, constructions, and uses of these aspects. Critical spatiality understands all of these terms and delineations to be human constructions that are socially contested. The study of space finds natural allegiances and shared language with a diverse range of fields, such as critical human

³¹ Critical spatial theory will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

geography, geology and geography of specific areas under study, psychological analyses of sensory perception, physics, sociology, and postmodern philosophy.

Critical spatial theory draws heavily upon the work of the French philosopher Henri Lefebvre (1991) and the American geographer Edward Soja (1996). Lefebvre (1991:1) argued that space is not a strictly geometrical concept, but a social phenomenon. Space is *produced* in the interaction between human beings and their environment. Lefebvre (1991:11) proposes a trialectic approach towards space where space is at the same time a physical, mental, and social construct. Lefebvre calls physical space “perceived space,” i.e., nature, cosmos, and place. Mental space is “conceived space,” i.e., representations of space or conceptualised space. Social space is “lived space,” i.e., spaces of representation, space as experienced (Lefebvre, 1991:38-39). Soja (1996:66-67) calls this trialectic of spaces *Firstspace*, *Secondspace* and *Thirdspace*. **Firstspace** is physical space, concrete space, perceived space. **Secondspace** is imagined space, conceived space, abstract space. **Thirdspace** is lived space, the confrontation between various social groups and their space(s), reflecting the spatial ideology of society. Soja (1996:68) emphasizes the importance of Thirdspace as “the terrain for the generation of ‘counterspaces,’ spaces of resistance to the dominant order...to lived space as a strategic location from which to encompass, understand, and potentially transform all spaces simultaneously.”

The “spatial turn” had a marked influence in research on religion (Knott, 2010:29-43). Much research has been done in terms of the spatial interpretation of Hebrew and/or Christian religious documents (cf., for instance, Prinsloo & Maier, 2013). Surprisingly little, however, has been done in this regard in Islamic studies. The researcher is of the opinion that a spatial interpretation of the concept of the *ḥijāb*, especially the *ḥijāb* as a border/boundary and how it defines the female body **as** space and **in** space as well as the role it plays in the “othering” of both Muslims and non-Muslims, is a theme that merits a detailed investigation. The current study is an attempt to do just that. Critical spatiality “elucidates the importance of notions of spatiality for understanding human behavior” (Prinsloo, 2013:7). As such, it will serve as a helpful key to explain the significance of Muslim female clothing practices in its ancient and current religious and cultural contexts.

With critical social scientific criticism and spatial theory as framework, the following themes will receive special attention in this research project:

1.6.2.1 Borders and boundaries³²

Closely related to critical spatial theory is the theory of borders and boundaries. Any notion of spatiality implicitly also carries notions of “the line, the border, the boundary” (Soja, 1996:130). Van Houtem and Van Naerssen (2002:126) argue that a border is not a fixed line on a map, but rather a social agreement among people:

Bordering processes do not begin or stop at the demarcation of lines in space. Borders do not represent a fixed point in space or time, rather they symbolize a social practice of spatial differentiation.

The notion of borders by its very nature contains a paradox (Van Houtem & Van Naerssen, 2002:126):

Bordering rejects as well as erects othering. This paradoxical character of bordering processes whereby borders are erected to erase territorial ambiguity and ambivalent identities in order to shape a unique and cohesive order, but thereby create new or reproduce latently existing differences in space and identity – is of much importance in understanding our daily contemporary practices.

Borders thus implicitly cause “othering” (Soja, 1996:56), which can be defined as the “discursive process by which powerful groups who may or may not make up a numerical majority, define subordinate groups into existence in a reductionist way which ascribes problematic and/or inferior characteristics to these subordinate groups” (Jensen, 2011:65).

Othering in itself contains a paradox, because the process of “othering” plays “an important role in the formation of the identities of the subordinates” as it gives them a choice – either to accept the process of “othering” or to rebel against it (Adendorff, 2016:32).

In this study, the researcher will emphasise the implications of Muslim women’s deliberate choice to “other” themselves by wearing the *hijāb* and the ways the *hijāb* creates a border between private and public, clean and unclean, and holy and profane space. The deliberate choice becomes a powerful tool – it “means that the human body becomes a centre of power in its own right, through the potentiality of taking the power to act” (Adendorff, 2016:32).

³² Theories on borders and boundaries can make a significant contribution towards ecological systems theory (cf. Section 1.6.1) and will consequently be discussed in Chapter 2 (cf. Section 2.2.2). These theories also have an impact on constructions of space, hence relevant aspects of these theories will also be discussed in Chapter 3 (cf. Section 3.2.3).

1.6.2.2 Bodies³³

Tuan (2008:34) observes that “if we look for fundamental principles of spatial organization we find them in two kinds of facts: the posture and structure of the human body, and the relationships (whether close or distant) between human beings.” He argues that “(e)very person is at the center of his world, and circumambient space is differentiated in accordance with the schema of his body” (Tuan, 2008:41).

It implies that the term “body” contains a paradox. On the one hand, the term is objective. It describes anatomical, biological and physiological function(s) (Adendorff, 2016:36). On the other hand, it is subjective. The body can “mediate the relationships between persons and the world: We meet the world through our bodies” (Reischer & Koo, 2004:307). Adendorff (2016:36) argues that “(n)ature dictates the general anatomy of a human body, but a society dresses it, and dictates the way in which is it adorned, and the way it moves.”

As such, the body simultaneously *is* a space that functions *in* space. In this study, attention will be paid to the Muslim female body *in* space (Adendorff, 2016:44-52), and *as* space (Adendorff, 2016:52-58), departing from the principle that the “body is a social construction, much as space is a social product” (Adendorff, 2016:44). According to Low (2003:12), a very close link exists between body and space: “The body is at the same time the original tool with which humans shape their world and the substance out of which the world is shaped.” She argues that the concept of “embodied” space “draws these disparate notions together, underscoring the importance of the body as a physical and biological entity, lived experience, and a center of agency, a location for speaking and acting on the world.”

In this research, the researcher will argue that a female Muslim choosing to wear the *hijāb* embodies her religious convictions and thus becomes a uniquely defined body *as* space and a significant body *in* space.

1.6.2.3 Clothing

When the researcher refers in this research report to Muslim female clothing practices and a Muslim female’s deliberate choice to wear the *hijāb*, it should be obvious that clothing implies more than the mere functional human convention of wearing clothes as protection against outside elements such as heat or cold. Feder (2013:443-444) states that

³³ Theories on body and the concept of embodiment play a crucial role in critical spatial theory and will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3 (cf. Section 3.2.3).

...clothing is deeply embedded within social, cultural, and religious contexts... Moreover, clothing visually signifies a multitude of 'ideas, concepts, and categories' that ascribe meaning to the body... Given the complexity of these functions, many forms of dress have been subject to considerable debate... Yet few articles of clothing have attracted the same degree of scrutiny as the veil, and by extension the practice of veiling.

In her discussion of the English term *veil*, El Guindi (1999:6) indicates that at least four dimensions should be taken into account when the phenomenon is analysed, namely "the material, the spatial, the communicative, and the religious." She argues as follows:

The material dimension consists of clothing and ornament, i.e., the veil in the sense of a clothing article covering head, shoulders, and face or in the sense of ornamentation over a hat drawn over the eyes. In this usage "veil" is not confined to face covering, but extends to the head and shoulders. The spatial sense specifies the veil as a screen dividing physical space, while the communication sense emphasizes the notion of concealing and invisibility.

"Veil" in the religious sense means seclusion from worldly life and sex (celibacy), as in the case of the life and vows of nuns (El Guindi, 1999:6).

In the analysis of the *ḥijāb* conducted in this study, the researcher will argue that no single perspective on the phenomenon can embrace the multiple meanings the decision to don the item of clothing holds for a Muslim woman. As with the English term "veil," multiple dimensions of the *ḥijāb* should be combined in order to analyse and interpret the phenomenon. Apart from the material perspective, the spatial, communicative, and the religious dimensions of the *ḥijāb* will receive attention in this analysis of the phenomenon.

For Muslim women who adhere to traditional clothing practices, their deliberate choice to do so holds vast religious importance (Bin Nafisah, 2015:2). In this thesis, the researcher will argue that – perceived from a spatial perspective – Muslim female clothing practices can be regarded as an embodiment of the essence of *al-Islām*'s virtues and values. For Muslim women deliberately choosing to wear the *ḥijāb*, the very act is an affirmation of faith. To them, the *ḥijāb* is not a fashion statement or a functional dress used simply to cover the more private parts of their bodies. Cregan (2012:29) asserts that clothing "in all its forms – apparel, adornment, dress and fashion – is always symbolic." For Muslim women the way they dress symbolizes their faith.

In essence, the present study brings together five themes: the researcher explores the Islamic *ḥijāb* (**clothing**) as a border of cloth (**borders and boundaries**) when it is donned by a Muslim woman (**bodies**) from a **spatial** and **ecological systems**

perspective. She will argue that the *ḥijāb* covering the female body acts as a boundary system for the physical body and the context around it. By wearing it the Muslim woman defines her identity on a personal, cultural, and religious level (Feder, 2013:443-459).

1.7 AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The primary aim of the study is to elucidate the meaning of the *ḥijāb* by analysing the phenomenon through a combination of ecological systems theory and critical spatial theory. The analysis will emphasise the **symbolic** meaning of the *ḥijāb*. Ecological systems theory will shed light on the role of the *ḥijāb* as an integral part of *al-Islām* as a religious and cultural **system**, while critical spatial theory will illuminate the *ḥijāb*'s function as a very specific **spatial** marker within that system.

The following objectives are formulated in order to attain aim of the research project:

- to investigate the significance of *al-Islām* as a religious and cultural system;
- to investigate a female Muslim's place within that system;
- to investigate Islamic constructions of place and space;
- to investigate the nature of the border(s) between holy and profane, clean and unclean, and public and private spaces in Islamic constructions of space and the rules for legitimately crossing these borders;
- to investigate the place and role of women in these Islamic constructions of space;
- to investigate the female Muslim body as space;
- to investigate the female Muslim body *in* space.

In the final analysis the study aims to illustrate that the *ḥijāb* functions as a **border of cloth** which demarcates the female Muslim body **as holy space** (consequently also as clean and private space) and enables her to engage meaningfully and legitimately **in profane space** (which is then, according to Islamic constructions of space, also unclean and public space).

1.8 OUTLINE OF THE STUDY

This thesis consists of five chapters, which are briefly described below.

Chapter 1: Introduction and orientation provides the background to the study. The study departs from the observation that the wearing of the *ḥijāb* and *niqāb* has become a controversial subject in current society and calls for a holistic approach in any analysis of its significance. After a clarification of terminology used for female dress, a brief literature review of the subject is provided. The chapter then addresses the research question and the rationale for the study; the research approach; brief

reflections on two theoretical approaches, namely ecological systems theory and critical spatial theory; the study's aim and objectives and a brief outline of the study.

In **Chapter 2: The *ḥijāb* as border of cloth: An ecological systems theory perspective** the researcher discusses the *ḥijāb* as an integral part of *al-Islām* as a religious and cultural system. She provides a brief overview of the ecological systems theory as explained by Bronfenbrenner. She then applies the theory in two ways. First, she argues that *al-Islām* can be regarded as an ecological system where each part of the system is influenced by all other parts, but in turn also influences all other parts. There are borders between the various parts of the system, but these borders are permeable from the inside and from the outside. Second, she applies these principles to each individual Muslim female who chooses to don the *ḥijāb*. Such a woman becomes an integral and indispensable part of *al-Islām* as a system. She is influenced by every part of the system, and in turn influences every part by her conscious choice to give visual expression to her religious identity.

Chapter 3: The *ḥijāb* as border of cloth: Towards Islamic constructions of sacred space is concerned with a critical-spatial analysis of *al-Islām* as a system. The researcher first provides an overview of critical spatial theory with special attention given to classifications of space in this theory. In addition, and with reference to insights from social scientific criticism, the spatial implications of borders and boundaries, bodies and clothing will also be discussed. Finally, the researcher will discuss worldview(s) and spatial orientation(s) as important themes in the religious imagination of humankind. These theoretical perspectives will then be applied to Islamic constructions of space. A brief overview of physical, abstract and social space in *al-Islām* will elucidate these constructions. This, in turn, will provide the background for Islamic perceptions of borders and boundaries, bodies and clothing. It will also illustrate the uniquely Islamic worldview and spatial orientation towards the *Ka'ba* as centre or navel of the universe. The importance of the *Ka'ba* is discussed from the perspective of physical, abstract and social space. This will elucidate the role the *Ka'ba* plays in the lived space of *al-Islām* as a religious and cultural system in general and the real-life experience of every individual Muslim in particular. The researcher will argue that the *Ka'ba* serves as the focal point for every Muslim's lived space.

In **Chapter 4: The *ḥijāb* as border of cloth: Towards Islamic constructions of the female body as sacred space**, the principles of Islamic constructions of sacred space are applied to constructions of the female body as sacred space. First, the focus falls on Islamic prescripts and expectations regarding modest dress in general and female modest dress in particular. The chapter is concerned with an exposition

of Islamic abstract space as it pertains to the female modest dress code. Second, the focus shifts towards a thirdspatial interpretation of the Muslim female modest dress code. Insights from Chapters 2 and 3 are applied to the *ḥijāb* as visual expression of Islamic gendered sacred space. The researcher will argue that the female Muslim body in *ḥijāb* is a metaphor for sacred space and a representation of the *Kaʿba* as sacred space. The female Muslim body in *ḥijāb* becomes an integral, essential and indispensable part of *al-Islām* as a religious and cultural system and of Islamic constructions of sacred space.

Chapter 5: The *ḥijāb* as border of cloth: Revisiting, reflecting, and revisioning, in the final instance explains the results of the study by providing a summary of key findings of each chapter. An answer is provided to the initial research question: *Will a holistic analysis of the ḥijāb from the perspective of ecological systems theory and critical spatial theory provide new insights into the symbolic meaning(s) that the ḥijāb holds for a female Muslim who deliberately chooses to wear it?*

The researcher hopes that the **internal logic** of the research report will become clear as she systematically analyses the *ḥijāb* as phenomenon. In Chapters 2 and 3 she will focus on her theoretical points of departure, namely ecological systems and critical spatial theory and how it can be applied to *al-Islām* in general and Muslim women in particular. Central to these chapters is the notion of **sacred space**, especially as it finds expression in secondspatial representations and thirdspatial applications of the *Kaʿba*. Chapter 4 contains specific applications of these concepts to the Muslim female body by focusing on Islamic representations of the female body in its normative literature, and then on the female body as representational space in the lived experience of a Muslim female deliberately choosing to don the *ḥijāb*.

1.9 PRACTICAL MATTERS

At the outset of this study, the researcher deems it prudent to make readers aware of some practical matters, especially conventions she followed regarding transcription and orthography. The following remarks are relevant:

- Arabic words in general and especially popularized words such as *ḥijāb* or *Qurʾān* are represented in transcription rather than in their Anglicized forms (hijab or Quran). As a rule of thumb, such Arabic words are also presented in *italics*. When the researcher quotes from another source, the convention present in the source is retained.
- There are various conventions regarding the transcription of Arabic words. The researcher endeavours to consistently follow the system suggested by Reichmuth (2009:515-520) in the *Encyclopedia of Arabic language and linguistics*. When the

researcher quotes from another source, the convention present in the source is retained.

- Unless explicitly stated to the contrary, *italicized* words in quotations from another source are present in that source.

1.10 CONCLUDING REMARKS

This study departs from the observation that the wearing of the *ḥijāb* by Muslim women is a highly controversial subject in contemporary society. In spite of a plethora of studies on the subject, analyses of the phenomenon tend to provide one-sided perspectives on an individual Muslim female's conscious decision to wear the *ḥijāb*. The *ḥijāb* has been described as a political symbol of resistance against western hegemony; a symbol of, or paradoxically, resistance against patriarchy and the oppression of women; a symbol illustrating that an established religious and cultural dress code can at the same time be fashionable; and as an expression of Arabo-Islamic's ethnographic blueprint of sanctity, privacy, reserve and respect. What is lacking in the current debate is a perspective from the "inside," taking both the experience of individual Muslim females as well as appropriate responses in their unique cultural context into consideration.

The researcher concurs that "it is a noble ideal to try to see things from another person's point of view," but that "this is impossible in the final analysis" (Rahman, 1985:192). However, she firmly believes that "(g)iven honesty, open-mindedness, and fairness of mind on the part of the outsider" (Rahman, 1985:195), it will be possible for readers of this thesis to "cut across outsider-insider differences at the intellectual level" and appreciate her ecological systems and critical-spatial analysis of the Islamic *ḥijāb*. The researcher argues that the *ḥijāb* is a complex symbol with many meanings; therefore, a holistic approach is needed to explain fully an individual Muslim female's choice to wear it. She posits that insights from ecological systems theory and critical spatial theory will provide new insights into the symbolic meaning(s) the *ḥijāb* hold(s) for a female Muslim who deliberately chooses to wear it.

CHAPTER 2

THE *HIJĀB* AS BORDER OF CLOTH: AN ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS THEORY PERSPECTIVE

Islam is present in every aspect of... life through time, space, discourses and actions. More than a common reference, Islam is a system bonding people, objects, ideas, time and space.

(Barylo, 2017:194).

2.1 INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

In the previous chapter, the researcher made a case for a *holistic* interpretation of the *hijāb* as a phenomenon associated with the Muslim female's modest dress code. The *either/or* approach so often present in analyses of the phenomenon, especially by authors departing from a Western point of view, cannot explain the *full* meaning the *hijāb* holds for Muslim women who deliberately choose to don it. The researcher concurs with the following remark:

Across a wide range of literature on the Orient, one finds a bundle of persistent themes in which the Orient is the passive object of the critical and rational gaze of the West in which the very passivity of the Orient as object justifies the superiority of the Western observer (Turner & Nasir, 2013:93).

Moreover, the researcher is acutely aware that

...scholarship around modern Islam continues to be deeply divided by ideology and politics. It is difficult to find any neutral ground by which research on Islam can be conducted without suspicion, acrimony and personal criticism (Turner & Nasir, 2013:19).

The division by ideology and politics is also present in publications by Muslim scholars themselves, as can be seen in the collection of essays published by Moaddel and Talattof (2000), containing contributions published by "prominent theologians, scholars, and academics in the Islamic world from the last quarter of the nineteenth century to the late twentieth" (Moaddel & Talattof, 2000:1). The contributions display "the dynamic nature of the religion of Islam, far from its image that has been portrayed in certain media as a monolithic and stagnated system of ideas" (Moaddel & Talattof, 2000:1). The authors classify their material in two categories: The first, "covering a period between the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, consisted of a set of interrelated discourses that sought to bridge Islam with modernity" (Moaddel &

Talattof, 2000:1).³⁴ The second “came in *pari passu* with the decline of liberal-nationalism between the 1930s and 1950s... and its end almost always through right- or left-wing military coups. In marked contrast with the previous ideologies, this new discourse categorically rejected the Western model and outlook” and can be labelled as “fundamentalism” (Moaddel & Talattof, 2000:2).³⁵ The “Islam versus the West” is thus “not simply a debate between Islamic fundamentalism and the Western world. It is rather an ideological/theological debate within Islam itself” (Moaddel & Talattof, 2000:viii).

In the present study, the researcher wishes to avoid the “*al-Islām* versus the West” debate. She deliberately does not depart from an overtly ideological point of view. Her approach is quite simple – she wants to analyse the *ḥijāb* as an expression of a **female Muslim’s desire** to visually exemplify her complete submission to *Allāh*. The researcher avoids taking an overtly ideological stance, and rather applies two approaches from the social sciences, namely ecological systems theory and critical spatial theory to the *ḥijāb* as a phenomenon.³⁶ The researcher is not aware of applications of either theory in isolation, or particularly not the two theories in combination, in an analysis of a phenomenon belonging to the broad field of the study of *al-Islām*.³⁷

In this chapter, the researcher applies the Russian-born American psychologist Urie Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) **ecological systems theory** to the phenomenon of the *ḥijāb*. She argues that the *ḥijāb* forms an integral and indispensable part of a complex system. El Guindi (2008:xi) criticised the tendency in the global environment of “atomizing, dichotomizing, or fragmenting Islam.” There is a great need to look “analytically at ‘a one Islam,’ an integrative whole and a unified and coherent phenomenon that is creative, generative, flexible, and dynamic.” El Guindi (2008:xii) proposes an approach to *al-Islām* “in which life is conceptualized as a web of nested interconnections and embeddedness.” Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory affords the researcher an excellent opportunity to analyse *al-Islām* as “a web of

³⁴ Cf. Moaddell and Talattof (2000:23-196) for various contributions belonging to this category.

³⁵ Cf. Moaddell and Talattof (2000:197-372) for various contributions belonging to this category.

³⁶ Cf. Section 1.6.1 for a brief overview of ecological systems theory. The theory is discussed in more detail in Section 2.2. A brief overview of critical spatial theory is given in Section 1.6.2 and the theory is discussed in more detail in Section 3.2.

³⁷ The researcher’s supervisors combined an ecological systems theory and critical spatial approach in an analysis of a text from the Hebrew Bible (Prinsloo & Prinsloo, 2013:158-178). They argued that the two approaches complemented each other “in an interdisciplinary and intertextual reading” (Prinsloo & Prinsloo, 2013:178) of the story of Dinah in Genesis 34. The researcher similarly combines the two approaches in her analysis of the Islamic *ḥijāb*.

nested interconnections and embeddedness.” The guiding premise is that the total system of Islamic faith and traditions contains the overarching principles upon which Muslim women base their choice of dress. Viewing an individual Muslim female as part of an overarching and all-encompassing system will provide a new perspective on the phenomenon of the *ḥijāb* from the point of view of a Muslim woman donning it.

With ecological systems theory as guiding principle, the researcher will analyse the Muslim concept of private and public space(s), and how it relates to Muslim women in particular. She will indicate that boundaries exist between the constituent parts of *al-Islām* as a religious and cultural system. However, these boundaries are mutually permeable. Each individual part of the system influences all other parts and is, in turn, influenced by all other parts. Thus, borders and boundaries can be – and should be – crossed, but according to the protocols and expectations of *al-Islām* as a complex system. The social interaction of an individual Muslim female deliberately donning the *ḥijāb* should be interpreted and evaluated in the context of the entire system instead of “atomizing, dichotomizing, or fragmenting Islam” (El Guindi, 2008:xi). Ecological systems theory illuminates the mutual interactions between an individual Muslim female and all other constituent parts of her religion and culture.

2.2 ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS AND BORDERS AND BOUNDARIES: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

2.2.1 Ecological systems theory

In this section, the researcher briefly describes Bronfenbrenner’s ecological model of human development and especially the role of the so-called *focal individual* in that model.³⁸ She then briefly defines the various interrelated systems identified by Bronfenbrenner.³⁹

2.2.1.1 Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Model of Human Development

Bronfenbrenner (1979:21) defines ecological systems theory as follows:

The ecology of human development involves the scientific study of the progressive, mutual accommodation between an active, growing human being and the changing properties of the immediate settings in which the developing person lives, as this process is affected by relations between these settings, and by the larger contexts in which the settings are embedded.

³⁸ Cf. Section 2.2.2.1.

³⁹ Cf. Section 2.2.1.2.

For the purpose of the application of Bronfenbrenner's theory to *al-Islām* as a religious and cultural system, it is important to note two assertions. First, human development should be viewed in the light of both constancy and change in the "immediate settings in which the developing person lives." Second, there are "relations between these settings" and between "the larger contexts in which the settings are embedded" (Bronfenbrenner 1979:21). For Darling (2007:204) this perspective on human development implies three facets:

First, the central force in development is the **active person**: shaping environments, evoking responses from them, and reacting to them. Second, a fundamental premise of ecological system theory is its **phenomenological nature**: "[I]f men define situations as real they are real in their consequences" (Thomas & Thomas, 1929, p. 572). Finally, because different environments will have different affordances and will be responded to in different ways by different individuals, experienced and objectively defined environments will not be randomly distributed with regard to the developmental processes and the individuals one observes within them. Rather, one will find **ecological niches** in which distinct processes and outcomes will be observed.⁴⁰

For the application to *al-Islām*, this remark has important implications. First, individual Muslims are **active persons** who shape their environments, evoke responses from their environments and, in turn, react to their environments. Second, the **perceptions and experiences** of an individual Muslim are **real** in the sense that it is his/her perceptions and experiences. His/her actions should be evaluated in that light, and not by any measure applied from the **outside**. Third, *al-Islām* does not constitute a random environment in which individual Muslims should be observed and judged, but an **ecological niche** in the global environment with its own distinct processes and outcomes.

Gardiner and Kosmitzki (2011) apply ecological systems theory in their cross-cultural research, asserting that "(we) all grow up in cultures where we understand what happens around us because the experiences are a familiar part of our environment and our daily lives. These experiences are not always easily understood by those living in different ecological settings" (Gardiner & Kosmitzki, 2011:2). Cross-cultural awareness prevents researchers from falling into the trap of **ethnocentrism**, which can be defined as

... the tendency to judge other people and cultures by the standards of one's own culture and to believe that behaviour, customs, norms, values, and other characteristics of one's own group are natural, valid, and correct while those of others are unnatural, invalid and incorrect (Gardiner & Kosmitzki, 2011:9).

⁴⁰ Italics and emphasis added by the researcher.

Gardiner and Kosmitzki (2011:10) further argue that a cross-cultural approach to human development aids researchers in separating “**emics**, or *culture-specific concepts*, from **etics**, or *universal or culture general concepts*.” They indicate that the

... **emic** (insider) **approach** focuses on a single culture, using criteria that are thought to be relative to it, and studies behaviour from *within* the system itself, making no cross-cultural inferences with regard to the universality of any observations (Gardiner & Kosmitzki, 2011:10).

Instead of taking an **ideological** stance when she analyses the *hijāb* as a phenomenon, the researcher will rather follow an **emic** approach, arguing that the phenomenon should be judged against Arabo-Islamic cultural behaviour, customs, norms, and values.

The researcher’s approach links with Gardiner and Kosmitzki’s (2011:10) assessment of the ecological systems model as a tool allowing researchers “to see and understand (within a broad framework) how patterns of interaction within the family and the wider society are influenced by and, in turn, influence the connection between development and culture.” Bronfenbrenner (1979:10) asserts that “the environment as it is *perceived* rather than as it may exist in ‘objective’ reality” is what matters “for behaviour and development.” This perception influences one’s expectations and activities. Acceptance of the critical role played by the cultural or environmental context is particularly suited to the study of human behaviour and development. Within the context of this study, the critical role of the religious, cultural, and environmental context of the Muslim woman wearing the *hijāb* should be recognised.

Gardiner and Kosmitzki (2011:25) emphasise that the ecological systems model allows researchers to go “beyond the setting immediately experienced” and “permits the incorporation of indirect, but nevertheless very real, effects from other settings, as well as from the culture as a whole.” Neal and Neal (2013:727) regard the **setting** as the fundamental building block of ecological systems theory. Bronfenbrenner (1979:22) views each system as arising from a setting, which he defines as “a place where people can readily engage in face-to-face interaction.” Social interactions form a key component in each system (Neal & Neal, 2013:726). These interactions commence in the smallest system, the family, and from there branch out into the wider systems to create social networks. Neal and Neal (2013:726) argue that “family membership – the smallest social circle/system – fully determined the ecological forces impacting one’s development.”

Bronfenbrenner (1979:3) describes this ecological environment “as a set of nested structures, each inside the next, like a set of Russian dolls.” He conceptualises it “as

a nested arrangement of concentric structures, each contained within the next. These structures are referred to as the *micro-, meso-, exo-, and macrosystems*” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979:22). Later, Bronfenbrenner (1986:724) adds a fifth system – the chronosystem. It focuses on time and socio-historical conditions as the background against which all other systems function. He argues that “the complex of nested, interconnected systems is viewed as a manifestation of overarching patterns of ideology and organisation of the social institutions common to a particular culture or subculture” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979:8). Each of these systems involves relationships defined by expected behaviours and roles. If relationships in these systems result in harmony, development proceeds easier and smoothly (Gardiner & Kosmitzki, 2011:25). It implies that a Muslim female donning the *hijāb* does so in the context of larger and more complex systems, each involving relationships defined by expected behaviours and roles.

Neal and Neal (2013:727) warn against an over-simplified conceptualisation of Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory. They argue that

... the ecological influences brought to bear on individuals are far more complex than a simple nested/concentric configuration of social circles/systems could adequately capture. However, simply redrawing the traditional graphic representation of EST using intersecting, rather than nested or concentric, circles does little to clarify the underlying theoretical model. For this job, we turn to **social networks** and the importance of patterns of **social interaction**.⁴¹

Neal and Neal (2013:735) argue for a **networked** rather than **nested** metaphor when conceptualising ecological systems. They state:

We contend that although EST is traditionally described using a nested systems metaphor, it is more usefully viewed as an overlapping configuration of interconnected ecological systems. Thus, we present an alternative ‘networked’ model of EST that defines ecological systems in terms of patterns of social interaction.⁴²

According to Neal and Neal (2013:735), a **networked** model “brings the relational perspective” in Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems model to the fore and presents the following as the benefits of their adaptation of Bronfenbrenner’s model:

Firstly, it reconceptualizes settings, drawing attention to social interactions as the building blocks of ecological systems. Secondly, it clarifies how ecological systems are related to one another, highlighting that they are not necessarily nested, but instead

⁴¹ Italics and emphasis added by the researcher.

⁴² EST is the authors’ abbreviation for ecological systems theory.

overlap in complex ways. Finally, it establishes the potential for a direct linkage between EST as a theory and social network analysis as a method.

Neal and Neal (2013:723) bring two important perspectives to ecological systems theory. First, they argue that “ecological systems should be conceptualized as networked” rather than nested. Second, where Bronfenbrenner specifically focuses on “the developing person” (1979:22), Neal and Neal (2013:723) broaden the scope of ecological systems theory by not focusing exclusively on the developing person, but **a focal individual**. In their *networked* model, “each system is defined in terms of the social relationships surrounding a focal individual, and where systems at different levels relate to one another in an overlapping but non-nested way.” They argue that “social interactions” form “the building blocks of ecological systems” (Neal & Neal, 2013:735). In the application of ecological systems theory to *al-Islām* as a religious and cultural system, and specifically the role of an individual female in the context of the system, the emphasis will fall on **a focal individual** and her **social interactions** in the various building blocks of **ecological systems**.

Neal and Neal’s (2013:723) conceptualisation of ecological systems as *networked* rather than nested, adds an important perspective to ecological systems theory. Bronfenbrenner’s *nested* conceptualisation is visually depicted as a set of concentric circles (Figure 1). The depiction might trigger two misconceptions: First, that ecological systems theory implies an uncomplicated interaction between immediately consecutive systems. Second, that there are fixed boundaries between the various consecutive systems. Neither assertion is true.

The French sociologist, Edgar Morin (1992), argues that “anthropo-social science needs to articulate itself on the science of nature and that this articulation requires a reorganization of the very structure of knowledge” (Morin, 1992:3). A human being should be conceived as a “*ternary concept*” **at the same time** individual, society, and species. Moreover, “*one cannot reduce or subordinate one term to another*” (Morin, 1992:4). Scientific method in the social sciences is inherently flawed if it reduces “*a complex datum to a mutilating principle*” (Morin, 1992:13). Instead of avoiding circular reasoning, it should be embraced when it forces the researcher to be “*reflexive and generative of complex thought*” (Morin, 1992:13). Such reasoning enables the researcher to transform “*vicious circles into virtuous circles*” (Morin, 1992:13). When a human being is the object of analysis, there is a lesson to be learned from nature. Morin (1992:96) argues that

... the **human being** belongs to a **social system**, in the heart of a **natural eco-system**, which is in the heart of a **solar system**, which is in the heart of a **galactic system**: it is constituted of **cellular systems**, which are constituted of **molecular systems**, which

are constituted of **atomic systems**. There is, *in this chain, overlapping, mortising, superpositioning of systems*.⁴³

In the end life “is a system of systems of systems” (Morin, 1992:97). According to Morin (1992:97), “*the chain of systems breaks the idea of the closed and self-sufficient object. We have always treated systems as objects; it is a matter henceforth of conceiving objects as systems.*” In the context of ecological system theory the challenge is to conceive of an object (the *ḥijāb*) as a **system**, which Morin (1992:99) defines as “*a global unity organized by interrelations between elements, actions, or individuals.*” Morin (1992:102) indicates that it is “not possible to give a system a substantial, clear, simple identity. A system presents itself at first as *unitas multiplex*...namely as paradox: considered in respect to the Whole, it is one and homogenous; considered in respect to the components, it is diverse and heterogeneous.”

This **complex** nature of systems should be kept in mind when Bronfenbrenner’s conceptualisation of micro-, meso-, exo-, macro-, and chronosystems as a nested arrangement of concentric structures is applied to *al-Islām* as a religious and cultural system. The visual conceptualisation of Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory is represented in the figure below (Figure 1). Both Neal and Neal’s (2013:735) notion of ecological systems as a **networked** rather than a **nested** model, and Morin’s (1992:102) notion of a system as **unitas multiplex** should be taken seriously when Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory is applied to *al-Islām* in general, and Muslim women in particular. Bronfenbrenner’s concentric circles are used simply as a tool to visualise ecological systems theory.

⁴³ Italics and emphasis added by the researcher.

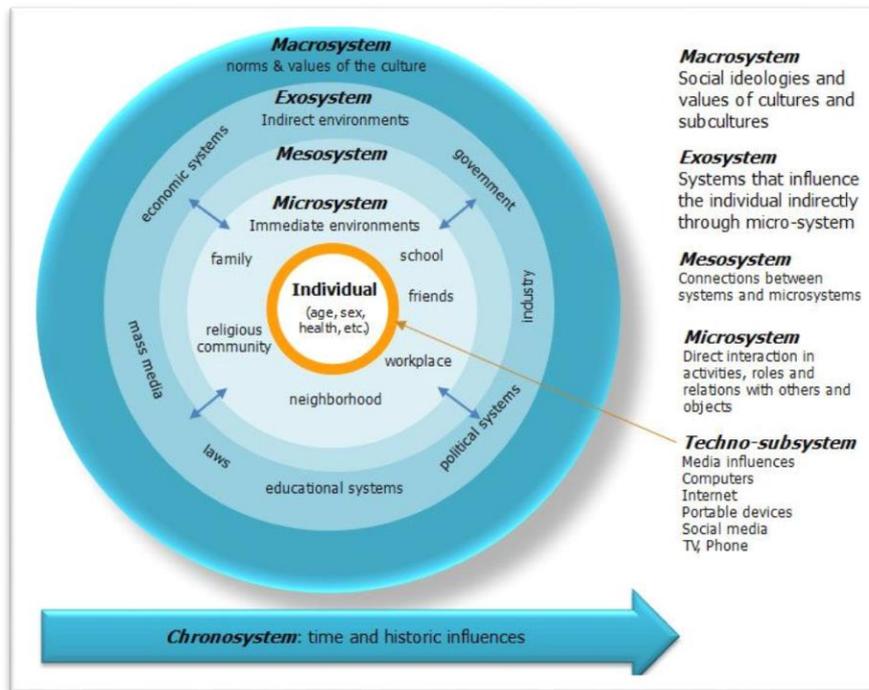


Figure 1
Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems model of human development⁴⁴

2.2.1.2 Systems within Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems model

In this section the five "layers" in Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems model will be briefly defined.

2.2.1.2.1 Microsystem

Bronfenbrenner (1979:22) defines a microsystem as "a pattern of activities, roles, and interpersonal relations **experienced** by the developing person in a given **setting** with particular physical and material characteristics."⁴⁵ Neal and Neal (2013:724) adapt this definition to focus on the importance of a single individual when they define a microsystem as "a setting – that is, a set of people engaged in social interaction – that includes the focal individual." Paat (2013:956) emphasises the importance of this "focal individual" when she states that the microsystem encompasses individuals' "intimate contacts in which they have interpersonal connections, family members, and special events or settings that often serve as their point of reference." The microsystem can be classified as a focal individual's **immediate** environment.

The two critical terms in Bronfenbrenner's definition above are **setting** and **experienced**. A "setting" is "a place where people can readily engage in face-to-face

⁴⁴ <http://drewlichtenberger.com/6-shaping-influences-human-development/> (Accessed 15/09/2017).

⁴⁵ Italics and emphasis added by the researcher.

interaction” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979:22). Neal and Neal (2013:724) emphasise the social nature of a setting when they define it as “a set of people engaged in social interaction, which necessarily occurs in, and is likely affected by the features of a place.” In Chapter 3, the important **spatial** implications of different settings in ecological systems theory will be highlighted.

For Bronfenbrenner (1979:22) the term **experienced** in his definition of microsystems implies that “the scientifically relevant features of any environment include not only its objective properties but also the way in which these properties are perceived by the persons in that environment.” Bronfenbrenner (1979:22) thus asserts that ecological systems theory departs from a distinctly “phenomenological view.” It confirms this study’s **phenomenological research** strategy.⁴⁶ Chapter 6 will emphasise that a Muslim female donning the *ḥijāb* perceives her environment from **her** perspective. **Her ḥijāb** should be analysed in the light of **her** experience and of **her** lived space.

2.2.1.2.2 Mesosystem

Bronfenbrenner (1979:25) defines a mesosystem as “the interrelations among two or more settings in which the developing person actively participates... A mesosystem is thus a system of microsystems.” A mesosystem is “formed or extended whenever the developing person moves into a new setting” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979:25). Neal and Neal (2013:724) emphasise the social aspect of mesosystems when they state that a mesosystem is “a social interaction between participants in different settings that both include the focal individual.” Mesosystems thus “include social interactions between two of the focal individual’s settings” (Neal & Neal, 2013:725) and, as such, are in essence a “network of *microsystems*” (Paat, 2013:956) influencing the focal individual. A mesosystem functions as “a linkage between two lower-level ecological settings” (Paat, 2013:956) and can jointly influence an individual’s social outcome. The mesosystem can be classified as a focal individual’s **intermediate** environment, the interface enabling the focal individual to interact with other systems.

2.2.1.2.3 Exosystem

According to Bronfenbrenner (1979:25), an exosystem “refers to one or more settings that do not involve the developing person as an active participant, but in which events occur that affect, or are affected by, what happens in the setting containing the developing person.” Neal and Neal (2013:724) define an exosystem as “a setting – that is, a set of people engaged in social interaction – that does not include, but whose participants interact directly or indirectly with, the focal person.” An exosystem thus

⁴⁶ Cf. Section 1.5.

“incorporates remote social settings that have an indirect effect” on a focal person (Paat, 2013:956). The exosystem can be classified as a focal individual’s *indirect* environment.

2.2.1.2.4 Macrosystem

Bronfenbrenner (1979:26) defines macrosystems as “consistencies, in the form of lower-order systems that exist, or could exist, at the level of subculture or culture as a whole, along with any belief systems or ideology underlying such consistencies.” Neal and Neal (2013:724) again emphasise the importance of social networks when they define macrosystems as “the social patterns that govern the formation and dissolution of social interactions between individuals (e.g., homophily, transivity, and so on), and thus the relationship between ecological systems.” For Paat (2013:956) the macrosystem can be “broadly defined as the large overarching set of social values, cultural beliefs, political ideologies, customs, and laws that incorporate the *microsystem*, *mesosystem*, and *exosystem*.” The macrosystem can be classified as a focal individual’s *remote* environment.

2.2.1.2.5 Chronosystem

Bronfenbrenner (1986:724) indicates that notions of time changed in circles focusing on the scientific study of human development. Traditionally “the passage of time has been treated as synonymous with chronological age; that is, as a frame of reference for studying psychological changes within individuals as they grow older.” However, since the mid-1970s “an increasing number of investigators have employed research designs that take into account changes over time not only within the person but also in the environment and - what is even more critical - that permit analysing the dynamic relation between these two processes.” He uses the term chronosystem “for designating a research model that makes possible examining the influence on the person’s development of changes (and continuities) over time in the environments in which the person is living.” For Neal and Neal (2013:724) the chronosystem rests on the “observation that patterns of social interactions between individuals change over time, and that such changes impact the focal individual, both directly and by altering the configuration of ecological systems around him/her.” The chronosystem thus emphasises “life transitions and individual changes through time” (Paat, 2013:956). The chronosystem can be classified as a focal individual’s *global* environment.

For Gardiner and Kosmitzki (2011:24) ecological systems theory brings two important perspectives on the study of human behaviour.

First, it creates awareness that an individual human being is seen

... not as passive or static, and an isolated entity on which the environment exerts great influence, but as a dynamic and evolving being that interacts with, and thereby restructures, the many environments in which it comes into contact. These interactions between individual and environment are viewed as two-directional and characterized by reciprocity (Gardiner & Kosmitzki, 2011:24).

Second, it emphasises that

... an individual's perception of the environment is often more important than "objective reality" and that this perception influences one's expectations and activities. A recognition and acceptance of the critical role played by the cultural and environmental context seem particularly suited to the study of human behaviour and development. The ecological model allows to go beyond the setting immediately experienced, and permits the incorporation of indirect, but nevertheless very real effects from other settings as well as from the culture as a whole (Gardiner & Kosmitzki, 2011:25).

2.2.2 Theoretical perspectives on borders and boundaries

Whether one adheres to Bronfenbrenner's conceptualisation of ecological systems as "nested" or to Neal and Neal's proposition that ecological systems should rather be viewed as "networked,"⁴⁷ the fact remains that there are borders or boundaries **both separating and connecting** the various layers in any ecological system. It is therefore prudent at this stage to summarise briefly theories on borders and boundaries as they have been developed in the social sciences since the 1980s.⁴⁸ Its specific application in critical spatial theory, and especially the notion of "othering" as it functions in this theory,⁴⁹ will be discussed in more detail in Chapters 3 and 5. In the present section, the focus falls on borders and boundaries as such, with the explicit aim in the end to argue that the *ḥijāb* functions in *al-Islām's* ecological system as **a border of cloth**.

Popescu (2010:292) indicates that "(b)oundaries and borders signify limits or discontinuities in space." The terms are not only used to signify territorial lines of division in a political sense, but "can be applied in a range of situations such as cultural (i.e., language), economic (i.e., class), or legal (i.e., property) contexts" (Popescu, 2010:292). While the two terms are used as synonyms in everyday language, the term **border** is often used "to designate the formal political division line between

⁴⁷ Cf. the discussion in Section 2.2.1.

⁴⁸ For an overview of research, cf. Hagan (2015). Lamont and Molnár (2002:167-195) indicate that the study of boundaries has become a focal research area in anthropology, sociology, history, political science, and social psychology. To this list can be added political geography (Minghi, 1963:407-428) and human geography (Newman, 2006:143-161). Most studies focus on boundaries and boundary formation as a relational process when they discuss issues such as social and collective identity, class, ethnic/racial and gender/sex inequality, communities, national identities, and spatial boundaries.

⁴⁹ Cf. Section 1.6.2.1 and Van Houtum and Van Naerssen (2002:125-136).

territorial units” (Popescu, 2010:292), while **boundary** signifies “the cultural and social group difference that may or may not be marked on the ground by division lines” (Popescu, 2010:292). In the present chapter, **boundary** will be used to signify the **separating and connecting** limits between the various layers in any ecological system, in this case specifically *al-Islām* in general and a Muslim female in *hijāb* in particular.

Hernes (2004:10) argues that “boundary setting is intrinsic to the very process of organizing” and that the process of setting boundaries is a characteristic of any “social system” because such a system “emerges through the process of drawing distinctions, and it persists through the reproduction of boundaries.” He emphasises that boundaries “emerge and are reproduced through interactions” (Hernes, 2004:11). They play a crucial role in the demarcation of **social systems** and in the formation and maintenance of **social identities**. Van Houtem and Van Naerssen (2002:21) indicate that bordering processes “do not begin or stop at demarcating lines in space. Borders do not represent a fixed point in space and time, rather they symbolise a social practice of spatial differentiation.” Looking at borders/boundaries from a **social** point of view will prove to be fruitful in evaluating *al-Islām* as an ecological system and the place of a Muslim woman in *hijāb* in that system.

The very act of bordering, or of making and marking a place, is

... an act of purification, as it is arbitrarily searching for a justifiable, bounded cohesion of people and their activities in space which can be compared and contrasted to other spatial entities (Van Houtem & Van Naerssen, 2002:126).

The notion of boundaries as markers of purified space links closely with Eliade’s (1959:20) observation that space is not homogenous for religious man.⁵⁰ Boundaries **demarcate** sacred space from profane space (Eliade, 1959:20), and at the same time serve as **thresholds** allowing these boundaries their paradoxical qualities – they are at the same time borders demarcating holy space and thresholds enabling the borders to be permeable (Eliade, 1959:25; Hernes, 2004:9). Boundaries serve as markers between different spaces, as thresholds between these spaces, therefore they are at the same time markers of **liminality**. Liminality refers, according to Turner (1967:93), to a period or a space of transition, of being “betwixt and between.” As a liminal space, a boundary also signifies danger, because the transition between various states of

⁵⁰ Cf. Section 1.4.

existence holds the possibility of being trapped in “the middle state” (Douglas, 1966:33), of being neither here nor there (Turner, 1969:106).⁵¹

Barth (1969:9) explains the paradoxical nature of boundaries as having at the same time a demarcating and mutually penetrating character via the notion of “boundary maintenance.” He asserts that “one finds that stable, persisting, and often vitally important social relations are maintained across such boundaries” (Barth, 1969:10). *Al-Islām* as an ecological system can be compared to what Barth (1969:10) called an “ethnic group” in the sense that adherents of *al-Islām* share “fundamental cultural values, realized in overt unity in cultural forms.”⁵² They “make up a field of communication and interaction,” and have “a membership which identifies itself, and is identified by others, as constituting a category distinguishable from all categories of the same order” (Barth, 1969:11). It is precisely because Muslims maintain their religious and cultural boundaries (Barth, 1969:14) that they can persist as a significant unit in the global world, in spite of numerous interactions on various and complex levels with the non-Muslim world.⁵³

For *al-Islām* as a social system to survive, a “systematic set of rules governing... social encounters” (Barth, 1969:16) are indispensable. Barth (1969:16) states:

Stable inter-ethnic relations presuppose such a structuring of interaction: a set of prescriptions governing situations of contact, and allowing for articulation in some sectors or domains of activity, and a set of proscriptions on social situations preventing inter-ethnic interaction in other sectors, and thus insulating parts of the cultures from confrontation and modification.

Viewing *al-Islām* from the perspective of ecological systems theory and the role and place of a woman in the context of *al-Islām* as a social system, is an example of such a systematic set of rules governing social encounters. This system allows Muslims to interact with non-Muslims in the global world, and yet retain their identity as Muslims. This perspective is indispensable for a proper and valid interpretation of the phenomenon of the *hijāb*.

⁵¹ The notion of liminality plays an important role in studies on religious ritual, especially with regard to rites of passage. The theme will surface again in Section 3.2.3.

⁵² For a discussion of *al-Islām* as an ecological system, cf. Section 2.3.

⁵³ Lamont and Molnar (2002:169-170) explain that the segmentation between “us” and “them” is a key concept in social identity theory. This theory “has been particularly concerned with the permeability of what we can call symbolic and social boundaries and its effect on individual and collective mobility strategy.” This notion will be discussed in Chapter 3 when the focus turns to critical spatial studies and the notion that the very act of “bordering” and “ordering” also imply “othering” (Van Houtum & Van Naerssen, 2002:125-136).

In the context of ecological system theory, boundaries should be viewed as a complex system. Boundaries are “composite,” which implies that they “operate within multiple sets of co-existing boundaries.” At the same time, they are “central” to the functioning of any organization, as they “reflect the substance of the organization.” Because boundaries play a crucial role in the demarcation of social systems and in the formation and maintenance of social identities, they are “constantly subject to construction and reconstruction” (Hernes, 2004:10). Following Lefebvre’s distinction between physical, mental, and social space (Lefebvre, 1991:11),⁵⁴ Hernes (2004:13) distinguishes between physical, mental, and social boundaries. **Physical boundaries** refer to “formal rules and physical structures regulating human action.” **Mental boundaries** indicate “core ideas and concepts that are central and particular to the group.” **Social boundaries** relate to “identity and social bonding tying the group or organization together” (Hernes, 2004:13).⁵⁵ Hernes (2004:15) further argues that boundaries have “three different effects” on organisations: “boundaries as ordering devices, boundaries as distinctions and boundaries as thresholds.” As **ordering devices** boundaries regulate internal interaction in organisations; as **distinctions** boundaries constitute a clear demarcation between the internal and external spheres; as **thresholds** boundaries regulate the flow or movement between the internal and the external spheres (Hernes, 2004:13, 15-16; Adendorff, 2016:35). Hernes (2004:16) suggests that

...the two sets of three dimensions (physical/social/mental and ordering/distinction/threshold) can be plotted against each other, thereby forming an analytical framework of nine different combinations to assist in the analysis of organizational boundaries.

The researcher is of the opinion that Hernes’s analysis of boundaries as “two sets of three dimensions” is an important aid in analysing and explaining the boundaries between the various systems identified by Bronfenbrenner in his ecological systems theory when it is applied to *al-Islām* and to an Islamic woman as a focal individual.⁵⁶ In Chapters 4 and 5, the notions of mental and social boundaries as ordering devices, distinctions, and thresholds as it involves Muslim females will receive special attention.

⁵⁴ Cf. Section 1.6.2.

⁵⁵ For a detailed discussion of the three categories, cf. Hernes (2004:14-15).

⁵⁶ Cf. Section 2.3.1 and 2.3.2.

2.3 AL-ISLĀM AS AN ECOLOGICAL SYSTEM

In this section, the researcher will argue that *al-Islām* can be viewed as a complex ecological system in the sense of Morin's (1992:102) notion of *unitas multiplex*. She will briefly, especially with reference to the notion of holy and profane space (Eliade, 1959:20), illustrate how *al-Islām* functions as a system and how each individual Muslim plays a distinct role in the system (cf. section 2.3.1). She will then indicate how an individual Muslim female as a *focal individual* (Neal & Neal, 2013:723) becomes an indispensable to and crucial for *al-Islām* as an ecological system (cf. 2.3.2).

2.3.1 *Al-Islām* as a religious and cultural ecological system

In her book, *By noon prayer: The Rhythm of Islam* (2008), Fadwa El Guindi (2008:xi) makes a passionate case for *not* "atomizing, dichotomizing, or fragmenting" *al-Islām*. El Guindi (2008:xi) argues that *al-Islām* should be analysed as "'a one Islam,' an integrative whole and a unified and coherent phenomenon that is creative, generative, flexible, and dynamic." El Guindi argues that what is needed in the current debate on *al-Islām* is a "shift in paradigm" and a "new scholarship" insisting "on the receding of mechanism and moving to holism, from substance to pattern, from quantity to quality, from static configurations of components to the perspective of phenomena as a whole" (El Guindi, 2008:167).

The researcher connects El Guindi's (2008:xi) call for an analysis of "a one Islam" with Morin's (1992:102) notion of an *unitas multiplex*. *Al-Islām* presents itself in contemporary society in diverse ways. *Al-Islām* in a Muslim society such as Saudi Arabia does not necessarily bear a resemblance to *al-Islām* in a predominantly Western society where Muslims represent a minority. *Al-Islām* cannot be considered a monolithic entity. Neither should *al-Islām* be reduced to "only the Five Pillars," or "to media-created single subjects like the veil, women's piety movement, jihad, Islamism, among a few others, or breaking it into Shi'a versus Sunni" (El Guindi, 2008:xi). What is needed is a "shift in analysis to a framework called complexity" which "combines qualities of holism, emergence and nonlinearity" (El Guindi, 2008:xii). In a new framework, "analysis shifts from objects to relationships, from quantity to quality, from substance to patterns" (El Guindi, 2008:xii).

El Guindi calls for a "deep ecology" analysis of *al-Islām*, "a deeper and broader perspective, in which life is conceptualized as a web of nested interconnections and embeddedness" (El Guindi, 2011:xii). In this regard, Barylo (2017:183) argues as follows:

Islam – and perhaps religion in general – is more of a complex system, itself part of wider and even more complex systems, interacting together in various dynamic relations. Exploring the idea of Islam as a matrix could be a tool for describing other systems, not necessarily linked to religion, as ensembles of ideas, beliefs, ethics, practices and principles that take part in the construction of the human persona.

What Barylo (2017:183) calls “the idea of Islam as a matrix,” the researcher prefers to call ***al-Islām as an ecological system***. Eliade’s (1959:20) distinction and differentiation between ***sacred and profane space*** are key to the construction of *al-Islām* as a religious and cultural phenomenon as well as the construction of the individual human persona – what Neal and Neal (2013:723) call ***a focal individual***. At the heart of *al-Islām* lies the construction of “sacred space, and hence a strong, significant space” (Eliade, 1959:20) standing in opposition to “other spaces that are not sacred and so are without structure or consistency, amorphous” (Eliade, 1959:20).

The distinction between sacred and profane space should not be perceived as a ***binary opposition***. Barylo (2017:184) observes: “Studying Muslims therefore requires to maintain a certain level of complexity where faith, practice, rituals and daily life are interconnected.” Barylo (2017:187) defines religion as “an ensemble of several interrelated and connected components which comprise not only the ritual or practical, doctrinal or philosophical, mythic or narrative dimensions, but also the experiential, emotional, ethical, legal, organisational, material and artistic dimensions.” *Al-Islām* represents

...a personal choice, practiced collectively and individually at the same time...thus becoming a hybrid between ‘religion’ in the sense of an organised, institutionalised cult around rituals, myths, practices and a ‘spirituality,’ which is a relation between the self and a transcendent deity and a quest for self-transformation” (Barylo, 2017:188).

Al-Islām is more than a “social system, it is a personal decision and a personal commitment, a challenge, not a religion” (Barylo, 2017:189). It blurs the “boundary between religious and non-religious deeds” (Barylo, 2017:190). It can be argued that the world is no longer “divided between the mundane and the sacred: the mundane becomes sacred and vice versa. Daily life is religious, and religion is lived daily” (Barylo, 2017:190).

Ellethy (2017:118) asserts that “the very structure of Islam... combines unequivocally the spiritual with the material.” He defines *al-Islām* as follows:

Islam is constructed, symbolically, in a pyramidal form that is based on spirituality and moves toward the world of reality. At the foundation and core of this pyramid stands a creed of pure monotheism (*Tawhīd*), and through rituals (*‘ibādāt*), which are strictly linked to a complete system of morals and ethics (*akhlāq*), it reaches its top in the form of a behavioural system of interaction with all the mundane context (*mu‘āmalāt*).

The Islamic worldview encompasses “the balance between human intellect and divine revelation” (Ellethy, 2017:119). In the *Qur’ān*, the Muslim community and nation are described “as a middle and balanced *ummaḥ*” (Ellethy, 2017:119), as is asserted in the following quote from *Sūra* 2:143:

(قال الله تعالى) (Allāh the Exalted said:)
 وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا Thus We have made you a middle nation,
 لَتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ that you may be witnesses to humankind.

Sūra 2:143 (البقرة *al-Baqarah* / *The Cow*:143)⁵⁷

Yusuf Ali (1967:57, n. 143) indicates that the phrase أُمَّةً وَسَطًا, literally translated above as “a middle nation,” can also be translated as “justly balanced.” He states:

The essence of Islam is to avoid extravagances on either side. It is a sober, practical religion. However, the Arabic word (*wasat*) also implies a touch of the literal meaning of intermediacy. Geographically, Arabia is in an intermediate position in the Old World, as was proved in history by the rapid expansion of Islam, north, south, west and east.

Ellethy (2017:119) thus contends that the correct Islamic way of life is to constantly find the “*via media*” between the extremes of “the guidance of God” and “proper consideration to the role of intellect in scientific and civilizational development.” It confirms Barylo’s (2017:184) observation that *al-Islām* maintains “a certain level of complexity where faith, practice, rituals and daily life are interconnected.”

The researcher is of the opinion that El Guindi’s (2008:xi) notion of “a one Islam,” Barylo’s (2017:183) idea of “Islam as a matrix,” and Ellethy’s (2017:118) assertion that “the very structure of Islam... combines unequivocally the spiritual with the material” and that *al-Islām* “is constructed, symbolically, in a pyramidal form that is based on spirituality and moves toward the world of reality” support her conviction that *al-Islām* can be conceptualised as an **ecological system**. The system consists of an intricate and complex network of constant, mutual interrelations between *al-Islām* and the world, between individual Muslims, and between a Muslim as a focal individual and his/her existence in and interaction with this world.

As stated earlier, the researcher regards the distinction and differentiation between sacred and profane space as key to the construction of *al-Islām* as a religious and cultural phenomenon as well as the construction of the individual Muslim persona.

⁵⁷ Throughout this study, the Arabic text of the *Qur’ān* comes from the online version of *The Noble Quran* (available online: <https://quran.com/>). The researcher accessed this version of the *Qur’ān* on numerous occasions.

From a phenomenology of religions perspective, Van der Leeuw (1938:393-402) argued that sacred space is closely linked to notions of power. Sacred space is not merely a meaningful place, it is a powerful place because it is appropriated, possessed, and owned by human beings. Religious human beings “construct” sacred space, *inter alia* through ritual enactment. It happens across the range of human existence, from the most private and intimate sphere of the human body, to the public and communal sphere of the pilgrimage site. Van der Leeuw identifies a set of sacred spaces (he calls it “homologies”) across this range. Each space is, in turn, represented by a set of symbols (Van der Leeuw calls it “synecdoches”). The sacred spaces are home, temple, settlement, pilgrimage site, and human body. The associated symbols or synecdoches are heart, altar, sanctuary, shrine, and heart.

The researcher argues that these consecutive spheres of sacred space can be conceptualised as an ecological system where individual Muslims, through their agency, play an active role in the appropriation of sacred space, thereby transforming body, home, community, and the world into a powerful place.⁵⁸ The notion of each individual Muslim as an agent of power, together with El Guindi’s (2008:17) remark that “there is a continual flux of energy through a living system,” makes the notion of *al-Islām* as an ecological system a potent metaphor to conceptualise *al-Islām*’s agency in post-modern society. El Guindi (2008:18) argues that the notion of *al-Islām* as a complex system does not sufficiently explain this agency. She states:

In cultural domains that are primarily those of connections, interconnections, social networks, correlations among social systems, then tools of complexity might be adequate. While adequate these tools remain insufficient, since culture remains missing. There is more to culture than holism, emergence, and embeddedness; there is “interactive dance,” as it were (El Guindi, 2008:18).

The researcher is of the opinion that an analysis of *al-Islām* as an ecological system will become an invaluable aid to reveal the “interactive dance” of all components in the system. In Figure 2 she uses Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems model of human development (Figure 1) to visually represent *al-Islām* as an ecological system, as well as the symbolic functioning of an individual Muslim as a focal individual within the system. El Guindi (2008:138) argues that *al-Islām* is unique in terms of the so-called “Book Religions” in the sense that it allows for the “fluidity of space and rhythmic patterns of time.” It enables Muslims to constantly interweave space and time and to

⁵⁸ Knott (2008:1104) indicates that Van der Leeuw made a significant contribution to “the scholarly discussion of the location of the sacred.” In Section 3.2.3 the researcher will discuss Van der Leeuw’s contribution to the notion of human agency in the construction of sacred places.

“move in and out during the course of the day between worldly and sacred spheres” (El Guindi, 2008:138).

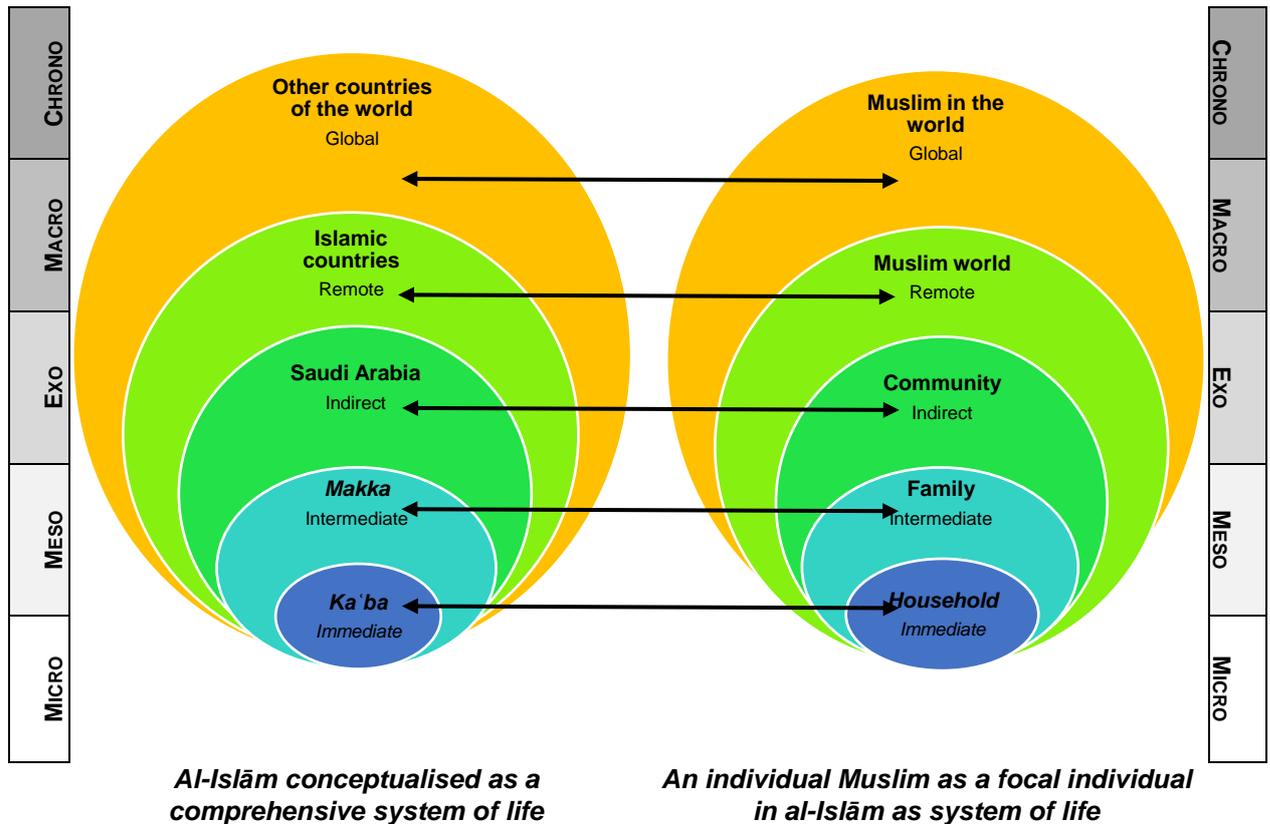


Figure 2
An ecological systems perspective on *al-Islām*

Following Bronfenbrenner (1979:22; 1986:724), the researcher argues that *al-Islām* can be conceptualized as an ecological system. Correspondingly, the life of each Muslim as a focal individual can be embedded in the system. The researcher will now explain how *al-Islām*, and each individual Muslim, function as a *micro-*, *meso-*, *exo-*, *macro-*, and *chronosystem*.

2.3.1.1 Microsystem

(قال الله تعالى) (Allāh the Exalted said:)
 جَعَلَ اللَّهُ الْكَعْبَةَ الْبَيْتَ الْحَرَامَ قِيَامًا لِلنَّاسِ
 وَالشَّهْرَ الْحَرَامَ وَالْهَدْيَ وَالْقَلَائِدَ
 ذَلِكَ لَتَعْلَمُوا
 Allāh made the Ka'ba, the Sacred House, an establishment⁵⁹ for humankind, as also the sacred months, the animals for offerings, and the garlands, that you may know

⁵⁹ The active participle قِيَامًا is derived from the root قوم “to stand.” In this *Sūra*, the *Ka'ba* is qualified as “the sacred house” and by قِيَامًا, which is often translated as “an asylum of security” (Yusuf Ali, 1967:273). In the Islamic construction of space, the *Ka'ba* is the most holy place on earth (cf. Section 3.3.3).

أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ
وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ
وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ

that Allāh has knowledge of what is in the heavens
and of what is on earth,
and that Allāh is well acquainted with all things.

Sūra 5:97 (المائدة) al-Mā'idah / The Table: 97)

This *āya* confirms the central position the *Ka'ba* holds for Muslims all over the world. It can be conceptualised as *al-Islām's* microsystem or immediate environment. It is *al-Islām's* most sacred place, thus it is regarded as the “navel” of the earth, the place where heaven and earth meet.⁶⁰ The *Ka'ba* as a holy place imbues every single Muslim with holiness, thus “(o)nce pilgrimage is performed a Muslim man or woman attains an irreversible state of sacredness and social respect accompanied by the acquisition of the irreversible title of *Haj* (for males) and *Hajja* (for females) (El Guindi, 2008:133). The circumambulation of the *Ka'ba* affords each Muslim a new identity, and from the *Ka'ba* they disperse their holiness into every sphere of life, wherever they go.

Yusuf Ali (1967:273, n. 805) indicates that “all sorts of people from all parts of the earth gather during Pilgrimage.” When they circumambulate the *Ka'ba* they are not strangers, they are in “the House of God, and He has supreme knowledge of all things, of all thoughts, and all motives.” The *Ka'ba* and every single Muslim affected by its holiness can be construed as *al-Islām's* microsystem. From there holiness and security spread over every part of the universe, wherever a Muslim goes.

Figure 3 illustrates how, in the perception of Muslims, the circle of the globe shrinks little by little until it is the smallest at the *Ka'ba*, the centre of the earth. Figure 4 illustrates that the *Ka'ba* becomes the focal point in the life of every Muslim performing *Hajj*. As the ecological centre point in the Islamic world, the holiness of the *Ka'ba* permeates the entire earth.

Similarly, every Muslim household/immediate family functions as a **microsystem**, a nucleus of sacred space, where each individual can freely act according to the principles of *al-Islām*. The household/immediate family acts as a safe haven, suffusing the individual with the collective holiness of his/her loved ones, enabling him/her to carry the light of *al-Islām* into the world. The constant interaction in this **microsystem** enables a Muslim as a **focal individual** to represent sacred space when he/she moves out into the world.

⁶⁰ Cf. Section 3.3.3.

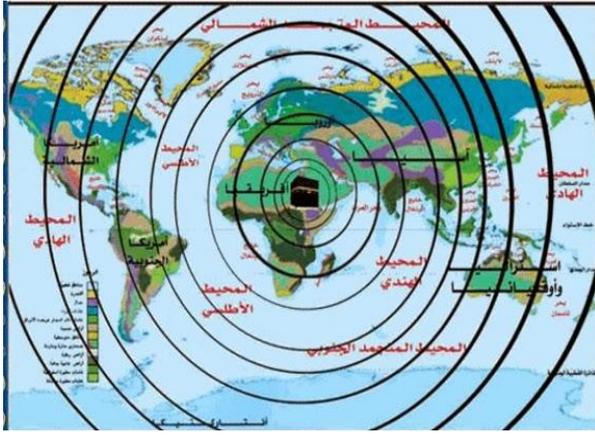


Figure 3
The Ka'ba as centre of the world⁶¹

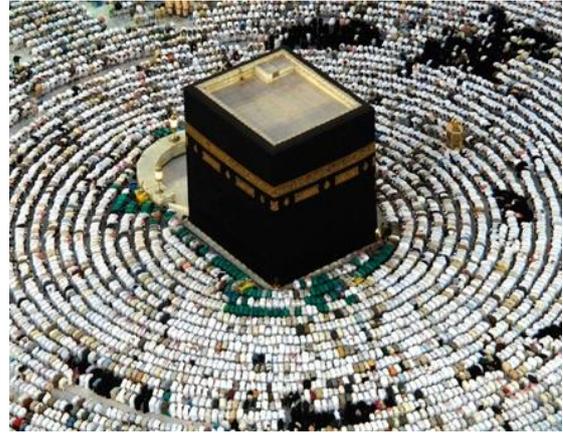


Figure 4
The Ka'ba as focal point for every Muslim⁶²

2.3.1.2 Mesosystem

(قال الله تعالى)	(Allāh the Exalted said:)
وَهَذَا كِتَابٌ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ	And this is a Book which We have sent down,
مُبَارَكٌ	bringing blessings,
مُصَدِّقٌ	(and) confirming
الَّذِي بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ	(the revelations) which came before it,
وَلِتُنذِرَ أُمَّ الْقُرَىٰ وَمَنْ حَوْلَهَا	that you may warn the mother of cities
وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ	And those who believe in the Hereafter –
يُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ	they believe in it,
وَهُمْ عَلَىٰ صَلَاتِهِمْ يُحَافِظُونَ	and they are guarding over their prayers.

Sūra 6:92 (الأنعام) al-An'ām / Cattle: 92)

The notion that is important in the present section is that of أم القرى “the mother of cities.” Yusuf Ali (1967:314, n. 913) indicates that it refers to *Makka*, “now the Qibla and centre of Islam.”⁶³ The city has traditionally been “associated with Abraham and with Adam and Eve (see ii, 125, and n. 217 to ii, 197)” (Yusuf Ali, 1967:314, n. 913) and is regarded by Muslims as the most important city in the world. It can be conceptualized as *al-Islām*'s mesosystem or intermediate environment.

⁶¹ http://mesbahyacine.blogspot.com/2014/01/blog-post_16.html (Accessed 31/10/2017).

⁶² <http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/07/22/227773.html> (Accessed 31/10/2017).

⁶³ In Arabic مكة *Makka*. It is often Anglicized as Mecca, but *Makka* is the more correct rendition of the Arabic word and reflects its actual pronunciation (Wolfe, 2002:56-57).

The proximity of the ancient city of *Makka* and its Holy Mosque, *al-Masjid al-Ḥarām* “the Holy Mosque,” to the *Ka‘ba* imbues the mosque and the city with holiness.⁶⁴ Because it is a holy city, non-Muslims are prohibited from entering it.⁶⁵ From there, Muslims spread all over the world after the *Ḥajj*, thus carrying *Makka*’s holiness into the world. This perspective on *Makka* can be seen in depictions of the city and its holy sites as casting light into the world. Figure 5 depicts light emanating from the clock tower of the *Abraj al-Bayt* (“the towers of the house”), a complex of skyscraper hotels only metres away from the world’s largest mosque and *al-Islām*’s most sacred site, the *Masjid al-Ḥaram*. Figure 6 depicts common Islamic ideology, pronouncing *al-Islām* as the way to survive in a complex modern world, with light emanating from the *Ka‘ba*, the *Masjid al-Ḥaram* and the city of *Makka*.

Similarly, every Muslim’s extended family acts as his/her intermediate environment, the interface enabling him/her to interact with the world at large. Family space is holy space. As there are rules in engaging *Makka* as a holy site,⁶⁶ there are also rules in engaging the Muslim family as holy space. This aspect will be discussed in Chapter 4 and 5 with specific reference to female clothing practices and their significance for *al-Islām* as an ecological system.⁶⁷



Figure 5
Light emanating from the clock tower of the *Abraj al-Bait*⁶⁸



Figure 6
Light emanating from the *Ka‘ba* and the *Masjid al-Haram*⁶⁹

⁶⁴ The English word “mosque” is derived from the French “mosque.” It reflects the Arabic noun مَسْجِد *masjid*, which is derived from the root سَجَد *sajada* “to bow down (in worship), prostrate oneself.” A *masjid* is thus literally a “place of prostration” or “a place of worship” for Muslims.

⁶⁵ Cf. Section 3.3.3.

⁶⁶ Cf. Section 3.3.3.

⁶⁷ Cf. Section 2.3.2.

⁶⁸ <https://mz-mz.net/751446> (Accessed 31/10/2017).

⁶⁹ <https://www.elanteem.com/vb/t488705/> (Accessed 31/10/2017).

constituted about 24 percent of the world's population, and it is estimated that this number will increase to 32 percent by 2060 (Clarke, 2017:13). The question arises: What made it possible for *al-Islām* to endure for fourteen centuries?

At least part of the answer is to be found in the attitude expressed in the *Sahīḥ* Muslim, Book 45, *Ḥadīth* 2585-2586.⁷³ In *Ḥadīth* 2585, *Allāh's* Messenger (ﷺ) is reported to have said:

الْمُؤْمِنُ لِلْمُؤْمِنِ كَالْبُنْيَانِ
يَسْتُدُّ بَعْضُهُ بَعْضًا

*A believer is like a brick for another believer,
the one is supporting the other.*

In similar vein, *Ḥadīth* 2586 reports *Allāh's* Messenger (ﷺ) to have said:

مَثَلُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ فِي تَوَادِهِمْ وَتَرَاحِمِهِمْ
وَتَعَاطُفِهِمْ مَثَلُ الْجَسَدِ
إِذَا اشْتَكَى مِنْهُ عُضْوٌ
تَدَاعَى لَهُ سَائِرُ الْجَسَدِ بِالسَّهَرِ
وَالْحُمَّى

*The similitude of believers in regard to mutual love,
affection, fellow-feeling is that of one body;
when any limb of it aches,
the whole body aches, because of sleeplessness and fever.*

The two *aḥādīth* imply that one Muslim should be a supporter to other Muslims wherever they are and whenever they are in need. *Al-Islām* knows no borders. The Muslim in the East is a brother to the Muslim in the West. The whole world is seen as *al-Islām's* chronosystem in terms of ecological systems theory. The notion is also present in the *Qur'ān*:

(قَالَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى) (Allāh the Exalted said:)
يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ
إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَى
وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ
لِتَعَارَفُوا
إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ
إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ

*O humankind!
Indeed We created you from a male and a female,
and made you nations and tribes
that you may identify yourselves with one another.
Indeed the noblest of you in the sight of Allāh is the most
righteous among you.
Indeed Allāh is all-knowing, all-aware.*

Sūra 49:13 (الحجرات) al-Ḥujurāt / Apartments:92)

According to Islamic perception, all of humankind descended from a single pair of human beings (Yusuf Ali, 1967:1407, n. 4933). Although they belong to many tribes and nations, human beings recognise themselves in one another. The righteous ones are they who act noble in the sight of *Allāh*, the One who knows everything and is

⁷³ Cf. *Sahīḥ* Muslim, Book 45: كتاب البر والصلة والآداب “The Book of Virtue, Enjoining Good Manners, and Joining of the Ties of Kinship,” available online: <https://sunnah.com/muslim/45; 31/10/2017>.

aware of everything. It is this belief that enables *al-Islām* as an ecological system and each Muslim as a focal individual to live worthy lives in an ever-changing world.

2.3.2 The female Muslim as a focal individual in *al-Islām* as an ecological system

In this section, the focus shifts to the individual female Muslim as a **focal individual** (Neal & Neal, 2013:723) and her **social interactions** (Neal & Neal, 2013:735) in the various building blocks of *al-Islām* as an **ecological system**. It is of particular importance for a contextual interpretation of the phenomenon of the *ḥijāb*. Understanding the position and role of a Muslim female in the context of *al-Islām* as an ecological system becomes an invaluable aid in analysing and interpreting the *ḥijāb* as a phenomenon. Analysing the *ḥijāb* as an element naturally belonging to Muslim female clothing practices, when the female is seen as an indispensable part of *al-Islām* as an ecological system, has several benefits.

First, it allows for an analysis of the *ḥijāb* from the perspective of the **experience** of a Muslim woman who consciously decides to wear it.⁷⁴ An ecological systems perspective on a female Muslim as a **focal individual** illustrates the complex nature of her experience (Tuan, 2008:8-9). As a focal individual, her experiences are fluid as she constantly moves between and interacts with her micro-, meso-, exo-, macro-, and chronosystems (Figure 7).⁷⁵

Second, it allows for an analysis of the *ḥijāb* in terms of Arabo-Islamic **culture**. Within the framework of her culture, a female Muslim as a **focal individual** functions in a complex system of interweaving expectations, prescripts, convictions, and devotions.⁷⁶ Her embeddedness in this complex cultural system is at the same time an objective and subjective experience (Triandis, 1994a:22). A Muslim female donning the *ḥijāb* **subjectively expresses** what Islamic **precepts objectively expect** of its followers.

Third, an ecological systems perspective on the *ḥijāb* allows the researcher to analyse the phenomenon from a deliberately contradictory point of view. It creates a space to look simultaneously at the *ḥijāb* from the perspective of **pluralism** and **holism**. **Pluralism** allows for the possibility that a Muslim female as a **focal individual** adheres to diverging expectations and precepts, and expresses complex convictions and devotion as she interacts with her micro-, meso-, exo-, macro-, and

⁷⁴ Cf. Section 1.1.

⁷⁵ Cf. Section 2.3.2.1-4.

⁷⁶ Cf. Section 1.1.

chronosystems. The “personal *experience* as well as *cultural rules*” (Miller-Spillman, 2010:12) both play a role in the analysis of the *ḥijāb*. On the other hand, an ecological systems perspective allows for a **holistic** interpretation of the *ḥijāb*. The *ḥijāb* holds deep personal meaning for the individual Muslim female, but reaches out “beyond the self” (Tuan, 2008:8-9) to become a **symbol**, an “active visual” representation of her body “as a holy space” (Tuan, 2008:6).

Fourth, concerning the theme of the female body as a holy space, an ecological systems perspective illuminates the function of the *ḥijāb* as a **border of cloth**. The *ḥijāb* demarcates the Muslim female body **as** a holy space **in** space as she interacts with her micro-, meso-, exo-, macro-, and chronosystems.⁷⁷ Her *ḥijāb* becomes a boundary marker.⁷⁸ The *ḥijāb* functions as a **physical boundary** in the sense that it sets up a physical structure “regulating human action” (Hernes, 2004:13). It functions as a **mental boundary** in the sense that it reflects the “core ideas and concepts” (Hernes, 2004:13) that are central and particular to *al-Islām*’s expectations and precepts regarding female clothing practices. Above all, however, it functions as a **social boundary** relating to a Muslim female’s “identity and social bonding” (Hernes, 2004:13). As such, the *ḥijāb* serves as an **ordering device** (Hernes, 2004:15) regulating the interaction of a female Muslim in and with her micro-, meso-, exo-, macro-, and chronosystems; as a **distinction** clearly demarcating the interaction between a Muslim female’s internal and external spheres; and as a **threshold** (Hernes, 2004:13) regulating the flow or movement between a Muslim female’s internal and the external spheres.

Three passages in the *Qur’ān* specifically relate to Muslim female clothing practices. All three illuminate the **contextual experience** of a Muslim woman who wears the *ḥijāb*; express the Arabo-Islamic **cultural** values of “sanctity, sanctuary, respect and privacy” (El Guindi, 1999:xvii); explain how the *ḥijāb* acts as a **symbol**, an “active visual” representation of a Muslim female’s body “as a holy space” (Tuan, 2008:6); and explains the function of the *ḥijāb* as a **border of cloth** demarcating the Muslim female body **as** a holy space **in** space.

In **Sūra 33:53** (the so-called “*āya* of *Ḥijāb*”) the root حجب *ḥjb* (“to hide”) occurs in a context directly related to the issue of interaction between the Prophet’s (ﷺ) wives and people from outside his household, in terms of ecological systems theory the interaction between a Muslim female’s micro- and mesosystems.

⁷⁷ Cf. Section 1.4.

⁷⁸ Cf. Sections 1.6.2.1 and 2.2.2.

(قال الله تعالى)

(Allāh the Exalted said:)

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا
لَا تَدْخُلُوا بُيُوتَ النَّبِيِّ
إِلَّا أَنْ يُؤَدَّنَ لَكُمْ إِلَى طَعَامٍ
غَيْرَ نَاطِرِينَ إِنَّا هُمْ
وَلَكِنْ إِذَا دُعِيتُمْ
فَادْخُلُوا
فَإِذَا طَعِمْتُمْ
فَانْتَشِرُوا
وَلَا مُسْتَأْنِسِينَ لِحَدِيثٍ
إِنَّ ذَلِكُمْ كَانَ يُؤْذِي النَّبِيَّ
فَيَسْتَنْحِي مِنْكُمْ
وَاللَّهُ لَا يَسْتَنْحِي مِنَ الْحَقِّ
وَإِذَا سَأَلْتُمُوهُنَّ مَتَاعًا
فَاسْأَلُوهُنَّ مِنْ وَرَاءِ حِجَابٍ
ذَلِكُمْ أَطْهَرُ لِقُلُوبِكُمْ وَقُلُوبِهِنَّ
وَمَا كَانَ لَكُمْ
أَنْ تُؤْذُوا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ
وَلَا أَنْ تَنْكِحُوا أَزْوَاجَهُ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ
أَبَدًا
إِنَّ ذَلِكُمْ كَانَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ عَظِيمًا

O, you who have believed,
do not enter the houses of the Prophet,
except when permission is given to you for a meal,
without awaiting its preparation.
But when you are invited,
then enter,
and when you have eaten,
then disperse
without seeking to remain for conversation.
Indeed, that [behaviour] was troubling the Prophet,
but he is shy of [dismissing] you.
But Allāh is not shy of the truth.
And when you ask them (i.e., his wives) for something,
ask them from behind a screen.
That is purer for your hearts and their hearts.
And it is not [conceivable] for you
that you harm the Messenger of Allāh,
or that you marry his wives after him, ever.
Indeed, that would be in the sight of Allāh an enormity.

Sūra 33:53 (الأحزاب al-Aḥzāb / The Confederates:53)⁷⁹

Relevant in the present context is the remark وَإِذَا سَأَلْتُمُوهُنَّ مَتَاعًا فَاسْأَلُوهُنَّ مِنْ وَرَاءِ حِجَابٍ ذَلِكُمْ أَطْهَرُ لِقُلُوبِكُمْ وَقُلُوبِهِنَّ “And when you ask them for something, ask them from behind a screen. That is purer for your hearts and their hearts.” What Allāh here prescribes is “a physical separation of the noble ladies from the common folk, by a barrier that could not be seen through. It secludes the Prophet’s (ﷺ) wives by giving them privacy and is simultaneously a symbol of their high status and dignity. The context of this *hijāb* is the separation of two spaces that are not to intermingle” (Aziz, 2010:76). El Guindi (1999:69) argues that حجاب “screen” here refers to a physical separation, but that it also functions on the level of the symbolic. The *āya* is concerned with the notion of sacred privacy and sanctuary. Originally, it was intended as a command for the interaction between the Prophet’s (ﷺ) wives and outsiders. However, in Muslim

⁷⁹ For a more detailed interpretation of the *āya*, cf. Bin Nafisah (2015:63-66).

tradition it has been applied to all believing women in their interaction with non-*maḥram* men. The Muslim female dress code thus becomes an issue not only of proper cultural conduct and social etiquette, but also of a highly significant religious implication directly influencing the relationship between a female Muslim and *Allāh*.

In ***Sūra 33:59*** the Prophet's (ﷺ) wives, daughters, and female believers are commanded “to bring down over themselves of their outer garments (مِنْ جَلَابِيهِنَّ).” It links with *Sūra 33:53* and is concerned with the interaction between a Muslim female and people from outside her household. This *āya* determines principles for interaction between a Muslim female’s micro-, meso-, exo-, macro-, and chronosystems.

(قَالَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى)	(Allāh the Exalted said:)
يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ	O Prophet!
قُلْ لَأَزُوجِكُمْ وَبَنَاتِكُمْ وَنِسَاءَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ	Tell your wives and your daughters and the women of the believers
يُذْنِبْنَ عَلَيْهِنَّ مِنْ جَلَابِيهِنَّ	that they must bring down over themselves [part] of their outer garments.
ذَلِكَ أَذْنَى	That is more suitable
أَنْ يُعْرَفْنَ	that they should be known
فَلَا يُؤْذَيْنَ	and not be harmed.
وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا	And Allāh is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

Sūra 33:59 (الأحزاب al-Aḥzāb / The Confederates:59)⁸⁰

This *āya* implies that the Prophet's (ﷺ) wives, his daughters, and the women of the believers in general have a special position in society. Due to their special position in the emerging Islamic community, they are encouraged to act as models for practising the proper dress code (Ahmed, 1992:55). The basic principle that can be deduced from this *āya* regarding a proper dress code is that the *ḥijāb* becomes a visible symbol of religious identity and protection. The *āya* confirms El Guindi's (1999:74) observation that *libās* (“clothes”) in Muslim tradition is linked to notions of “gender, sexuality, sanctuary, and sacred privacy.”

Sūra 24:30-31 calls upon men and woman to act with modesty and restraint when they enter the public sphere. Women receive guidelines regarding clothing practices in that sphere. These verses provide Muslims, particularly Muslim females, with guidelines regarding interaction in the micro-, meso-, exo-, macro-, and chronosystems.

⁸⁰ For a more detailed interpretation of the *āya*, cf. Bin Nafisah (2015:81-82).

(قال الله تعالى) (Allāh the Exalted said:)

قُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ	Say to the believing men
يَعْضُوا مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِمْ	that they should lower their gaze
وَيَحْفَظُوا فُرُوجَهُمْ	and they should guard their chastity.
ذَلِكَ أَزْكَى لَهُمْ	That is purer for them.
إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا يَصْنَعُونَ	Surely, Allāh is aware of what they do.
وَقُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنَاتِ	And say to the believing women
يَعْضُنَّ مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِنَّ	that they should lower their gaze
وَيَحْفَظْنَ فُرُوجَهُنَّ	and they should guard their chastity,
وَلَا يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ	and they should not display their adornment,
إِلَّا مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا	except what is apparent of it.
وَلْيَضْرِبْنَ بِخُمُرِهِنَّ عَلَى جُيُوبِهِنَّ	And they should draw their head covers over their bosoms,
وَلَا يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ	and not display their ornaments,
إِلَّا لِبُعُولَتِهِنَّ	except to their husbands
أَوْ آبَائِهِنَّ	or their fathers,
أَوْ آبَاءِ بُعُولَتِهِنَّ	or the fathers of their husbands,
أَوْ أَبْنَائِهِنَّ	or their sons,
أَوْ أَبْنَاءِ بُعُولَتِهِنَّ	or the sons of their husbands,
أَوْ إِخْوَانِهِنَّ	or their brothers,
أَوْ بَنِي إِخْوَانِهِنَّ	or the sons of their brothers,
أَوْ بَنِي أَخَوَاتِهِنَّ	or the sons of their sisters,
أَوْ نِسَائِهِنَّ	or their women,
أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُنَّ	or what their right hands possess,
أَوْ التَّابِعِينَ غَيْرِ أُولِي الْإِرْبَةِ	or the male servants not having physical desire among the men,
مِنَ الرِّجَالِ	or children
أَوْ الطِّفْلِ	who are not aware
الَّذِينَ لَمْ يَطَّهَرُوا	of private aspect of women.
عَلَى عَوْرَاتِ النِّسَاءِ	And they should not stamp their feet
وَلَا يَضْرِبْنَ بِأَرْجُلِهِنَّ	to make known
لِيُعْلَمَ	what they conceal of their adornment.
مَا يُخْفِينَ مِنْ زِينَتِهِنَّ	And turn to Allāh, all of you, o Believers,
وَتُوبُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا أَيُّهُ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ	that you may succeed.
لَعَلَّكُمْ تَفْلِحُونَ	

Sūra 24:30-31 (النور al-Nūr / The Light:30-31)⁸¹

⁸¹ For a more detailed interpretation of the āya, cf. Bin Nafisah (2015:74-81).

Sūra 24:30 urges Muslim men to look only at what is permissible for them to look at, and lower their gaze from forbidden things. If it so happens that a person's gaze unintentionally falls upon something forbidden, he should quickly look away. The principles advocated here are modesty, decency, and respecting one's own and the privacy of others. In *Sūra* 24:31 the same behaviour is expected from Muslim women, but more detail is given. A woman's *khimār* should also cover their bosoms. The word means "cover." Any cover can be called a *khimār*, such as a curtain, or a dress. In the *ḥadīth*, the *ḥijāb* is equated with the word *khimār* and interpreted as a head covering. In pre-Islamic *al-Madīna*, women tucked their *khumars'* two ends behind their heads and bind it there, thus exposing their ears and neck. In *Sūra* 24:31, *Allāh* orders the women to let the two ends of their headgear extend onto their bosoms to conceal their ears, neck, and the upper part of the bosom (Abdullah, 2006:10-11). Women should "not display their ornaments except what appears thereof" and then "only to their husbands or their fathers..." The Arabic word *zīnat* refers to natural beauty and artificial ornaments – in this context the first meaning in particular applies. The principle that can be deduced for a proper dress code is that women should not display in public the parts of their body, which carry any sexual connotations.

In Figure 7 the principles regarding a female's dress code and proper behaviour in her interactions with her micro-, meso-, exo-, macro-, and chronosystems are visually represented. The figure illustrates that the *ḥijāb* functions as a **border of cloth** demarcating the Muslim female body **as** a holy space **in** space as she interacts with her environments. The *ḥijāb* functions as a **boundary marker** for a female's **microsystem** (cf. **My Private Space 1**). It refers to the intimate circle of her household. It demarcates her **mesosystem** (cf. **My Private Space 2**), which indicates her immediate family. The *ḥijāb* is also a **boundary marker** for a female's **exosystem** (cf. **Public Space 1**), which refers to her interactions with and in the Muslim community. It also demarcates her **macrosystem**, classified in Figure 7 as **Public Space 2**, referring to a female's interaction with the Muslim world in general. Finally, the *ḥijāb* is also a **boundary marker** in a female's **chronosystem**, classified in Figure 7 as the **outside world**, referring to a female Muslim interacting with and in a non-Muslim environment. The role of the *ḥijāb* in each of the layers of *al-Islām* as an ecological system will be discussed below.

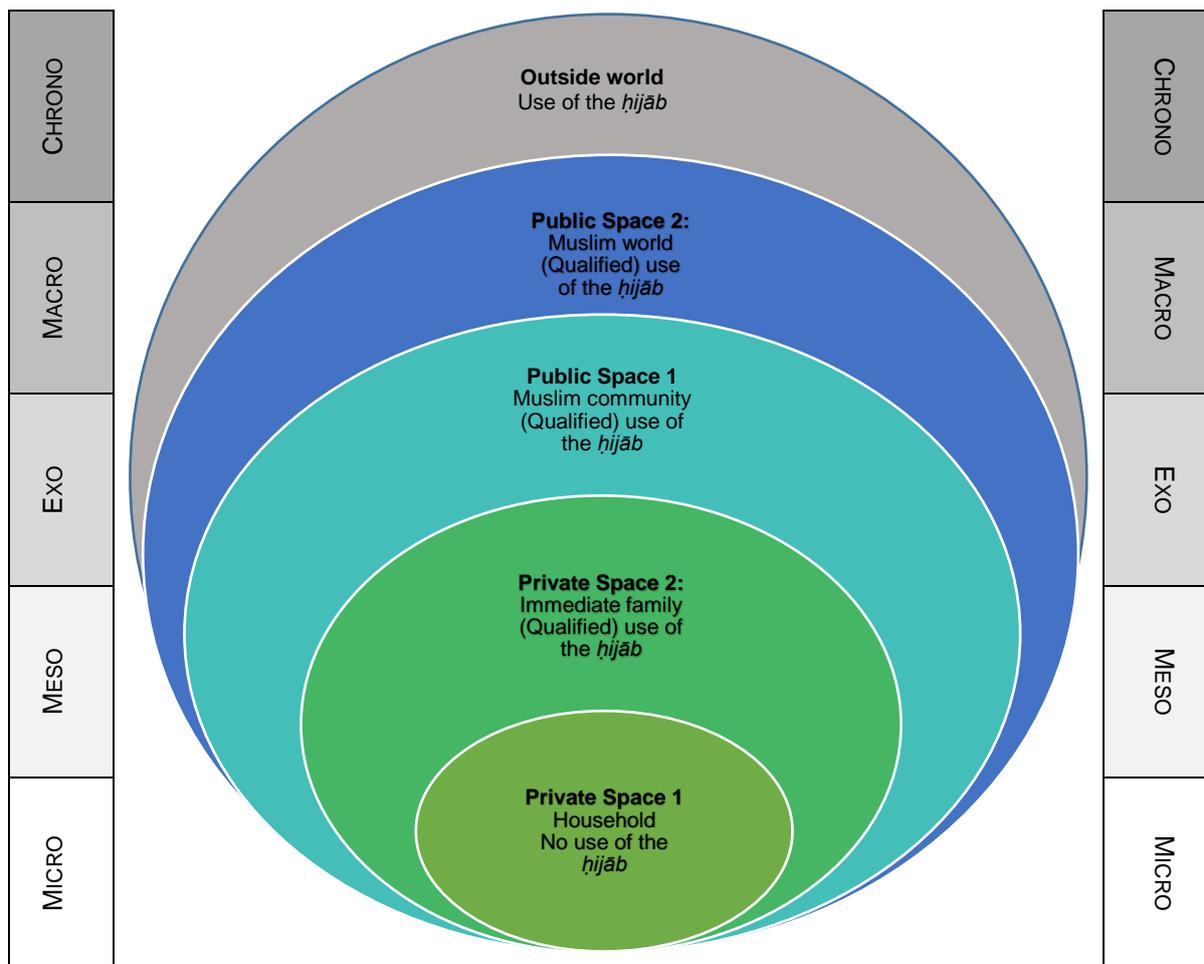


Figure 7
The individual female Muslim in the context of *al-Islām* as an ecological system

2.3.2.1 Microsystem

The first level – the microsystem – refers to the Muslim female as a **focal individual** and her interactions in her most **private space**. This typically refers to her household where the immediate family (i.e., husband and children) reside. In this instance, a Muslim woman is not expected to wear the *hijāb*, except if occasionally men who are not *maḥram* to her are present. As indicated in *Sūra 24:32*, a *maḥram* is her husband, father, grandfather, son, brother, nephew – indeed, any relative whom she is prohibited from marrying. In her most private space, a woman is regarded to be in *iḥrām* (the state of ritual consecration)⁸² and need not wear a face veil and gloves. It is confirmed in Muslim tradition. To name but one example, in the *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*,

⁸² In Arabic: إحرām *iḥrām*, from the root حرم *ḥrm* “to be forbidden, prohibited, unlawful; to enter into the state of ritual consecration (especially for a pilgrimage to *Makka*). In Islamic tradition, it refers most often to the sacred state which a Muslim must enter in order to perform the major pilgrimage (*Hajj*) or the minor pilgrimage (*‘Umrah*).

Book 11: The Rites of *Hajj*; *Hadīth* 106,⁸³ it is said that Ibn ‘Umar reported the Prophet (ﷺ) as saying:

المُحْرَمَةُ لَا تَنْتَقِبُ A woman in sacred state (i.e., wearing *iḥrām*) must not be veiled,⁸⁴
وَلَا تَلْبَسُ الْقَفَازَيْنِ nor should she wear gloves.⁸⁵

In the system closest to a Muslim woman, she has direct face-to-face contact with her intimate relatives in her daily life.

2.3.2.2 Mesosystem

The second level – the **mesosystem** – refers to the Muslim female as a **focal individual** and her interactions in her **private space** in a wider sense of the word, that of the extended family. Her space is still private, but interaction takes place in a woman’s direct social network. The mesosystem, so to speak, becomes the interface between a female’s micro- and exosystems. It can typically include social events such as weddings, social gatherings and religious events such as Eid ul Fitr. In such Islamic environments, women are not obligated to wear the *ḥijāb*, unless there are non-*maḥram* men in the immediate vicinity.

2.3.2.3 Exosystem

The third level – the **exosystem** – refers to the Muslim female as a **focal individual** and her interactions in her **public space** in a more restricted sense of the word. It typically refers to the interactions between a female and her community. Here, social institutions such as schools and other educational facilities, cultural institutions, workplaces, and everyday duties such as shopping and religious gatherings come into play. In these contexts, a qualified use of the *ḥijāb* is the norm. Where women are not in contact with non-*maḥram* men, e.g., during services at a mosque where there is a clearly defined space for women, women are not obligated to wear the *ḥijāb*. Contrary to the popular perception in Western ideology, female Muslims are not excluded from public space. On the contrary, it is exactly the use of the *ḥijāb* whenever non-*maḥram* men are present, that allows a female Muslim to fully participate in the public sphere and perform invaluable service in public facilities such as health and welfare organisations (Gardiner & Kosmitzki, 2011:27).

⁸³ Cf. *Sunan* Abī Dāwūd, Book 11: كتاب المناسك “The Rites of Hajj,” available online: <https://sunnah.com/abudawud/11> (Accessed 31/10/2017).

⁸⁴ In Arabic لَا تَنْتَقِبُ “she must not put on a veil,” the Jussive 3 fem. sing. of the verb نَقَبَ VIII “to put on a veil, veil one’s face.” The noun نِقَابٌ *niqāb*; pl. نِقَابٌ *nuqub* “veil” is derived from this root.

⁸⁵ In Arabic وَلَا تَلْبَسُ الْقَفَازَيْنِ “and she must not wear (لبس) two gloves.” The noun قَفَازَيْنِ is the accusative dual of قَفَازٌ *quffāz* “glove.”

2.3.2.4 Macrosystem

The fourth level – the **macrosystem** – refers to the Muslim female as a **focal individual** and her interactions in her **public space** in a wider sense of the word. It typically refers to interactions between a female and society. Here, also a qualified use of the *hijāb* is the norm. If interaction occurs only between females, women are not obligated to wear the *hijāb*. Typically, in Islamic countries, women will adhere to *sharī'a* laws and wear the *hijāb* in public places. It should be emphasised, however, that the wearing of the *hijāb* does not restrict a Muslim female from appearing in public spaces. While it defines her, according to Muslim culture, as a modest human being with no intention of drawing attention to herself (Moaddel & Talattof 2000:362), it does allow her to enter public space freely and with confidence. The principle is clearly illustrated in Figure 8, depicting a group of Muslim women in public space.



Figure 8
A group of Muslim women in public space⁸⁶

2.3.2.5 Chronosystem

The fifth level – the **chronosystem** – is used here to refer to the Muslim female as a **focal individual** and her interactions in **public space** in the widest sense of the word. It situates a Muslim female in the **global** world and acknowledges that in contemporary society Muslims reside everywhere, not only in Muslim countries. As indicated in Section 1.3.1, the wearing of the *hijāb* in non-Islamic countries has become a controversial issue. It is allowed in some countries, e.g., the United States of America, but prohibited in the public sphere in others, e.g., France. In non-Islamic countries, many Muslim women – although by no means all – wear the *hijāb* in

⁸⁶ <https://nomoi.hypotheses.org/454> (Accessed 02/11/2017).

accordance with their religious beliefs when they are in public and when they are in the presence of men who are not part of their immediate family. The fact that they adhere to their religious and cultural precepts, does not imply that they are not also good citizens of their countries of residence. It does, however, clearly mark Muslim females as Muslim, and as such becomes an expression of their identity. To the researcher's mind, Figure 9 captures her conviction that one can at the same time be true to one's identity as a Muslim, and freely interact in and with the global world



Figure 9
Being proudly Muslim in the global community⁸⁷

2.4 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the researcher argues that the *holistic* interpretation of the *ḥijāb*, called for in Chapter 1, can be attained if the phenomenon of the *ḥijāb* is analysed not from an overtly ideological point of view, but as an expression of the female Muslim's modest dress code. She avoided taking an overtly ideological stance by applying an approach from the social sciences, namely ecological systems theory, to the *ḥijāb* as a phenomenon.⁸⁸

The researcher argues that *al-Islām* as a religious and cultural system can be conceptualised as an ecological system, that each individual Muslim functions within this system in a unique way, and especially that every female Muslim functions across all levels of the system in a unique way. The researcher believes that this analysis

⁸⁷ https://www.google.com.sa/search?q=hijab+in+America+pdf&safe=strict&source=lnms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjHop2FpqrWAhUCIxoKHcX8AL0Q_AUICigB&biw=1366&bih=613#imgrc=OscZbwHk3ID_zM (Accessed 02/11/2017).

⁸⁸ Cf. Section 1.6.1.

addresses the need to look “analytically at ‘a one Islam,’ an integrative whole and a unified and coherent phenomenon that is creative, generative, flexible, and dynamic” (El Guindi, 2008:xi).

Ecological systems theory afforded the researcher the opportunity to analyse *al-Islām* as “a web of nested interconnections and embeddedness” (El Guindi, 2008:xi). Departing from the premise that the total system of Islamic faith and traditions contains the overarching principles upon which Muslim women base their choice of dress, the researcher sheds light on the phenomenon of the *ḥijāb* from the point of view of a Muslim woman donning it.

The researcher analysed the Muslim concept of private and public space(s) and how it relates to Muslim women in particular. She indicates that boundaries exist between the constituent parts of *al-Islām* as a religious and cultural system; however, these boundaries are mutually permeable and each individual part of the system influences all other parts and is, in turn, influenced by all other parts.

The social interaction of an individual Muslim female deliberately donning the *ḥijāb* should be interpreted and evaluated in the context of *al-Islām* as an ecological system, instead of “atomizing, dichotomizing, or fragmenting Islam” (El Guindi, 2008:xi). Ecological systems theory illuminates the mutual interactions between an individual Muslim female and all other constituent parts of her religion. The *ḥijāb* becomes a **border of cloth** demarcating the Muslim female body **as** sacred space **in** space as she interacts with her micro-, meso-, exo-, macro-, and chronosystems.⁸⁹

⁸⁹ Cf. Section 1.4.

CHAPTER 3

THE *ḤIJĀB* AS BORDER OF CLOTH: TOWARDS ISLAMIC CONSTRUCTIONS OF SACRED SPACE

A community's definition of what is sacred is integral to its identity. The sacred, whether a place, symbol, ritual, idea, or other, expresses and evokes shared beliefs and practices and binds the community together. Because the sacred is marked by special rules and regulations regarding its approach, respect for the sacred embodies respect for the religious and political authorities who articulate, maintain and control these regulations. The sacred, therefore, is shaped by and reinforces social hierarchy.

(Safran, 2005:21)

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, the researcher argued that ecological systems theory can be used as key to analyse the phenomenon of the *ḥijāb* from a **holistic** perspective. It allowed her to view the *ḥijāb* as part of “a one Islam,’ an integrative whole and a unified and coherent phenomenon that is creative, generative, flexible, and dynamic” (El Guindi, 2008:xi). In her analysis, she argued that the *ḥijāb* regulates a female Muslim’s **social interaction** and acts as a **boundary marker** demarcating the female body **as** holy space **in** space.

This chapter links with the previous chapter in the sense that it continues the theme of **social interaction** in *al-Islām*, but takes it a step further by contextualising this interaction in **spatial terms**. The researcher departs from the presupposition that there is an intimate relationship between social interaction and space. All social interaction, after all, occurs in a space of some kind. The intimate relationship between social interaction and space implies that space cannot be defined in strictly geometrical terms, but should *a priori* be described as “social space” (Lefebvre, 1991:1). The researcher’s ideal of a **holistic** interpretation of the *ḥijāb* can be attained by a simultaneous ecological systems and spatial analysis of the phenomenon. If she is correct in her assumption that the *ḥijāb* functions as a **border of cloth**, the implication is that it is a **spatial marker**, and hence can be subjected to spatial analysis.

The present chapter focuses on a spatial analysis of *al-Islām* in general. The spatial analysis will unfold in two stages. In the first stage, the researcher will give a brief overview of post-modern thinkers’ views on spatiality. In the second stage, she will

apply these views to *al-Islām* as a religious and cultural construct. She concurs with Berquist (1999) that the terms **space** and **spatiality** “refer to aspects of reality that involve concepts of distance, height, width, breadth, orientation, and direction, as well as the human perceptions, constructions, and uses of these aspects.” The study falls squarely in the field of **critical spatiality**, which “understands all of these terms and delineations to be human constructions that are socially contested” (Berquist, 1999).⁹⁰ Winkler, Rodríguez Fernández and Oddbjørn (2017:xi) indicate that it is exactly when space is regarded as more than a simple physical dimension that it becomes “a category that allows deeper and more penetrating insights” into the analysis of intercultural and interreligious phenomena.

In the first, theoretical stage of the analysis, the researcher investigates the important contribution post-modern philosophers like Henri Lefebvre (1991) and geographers like Edward Soja (1996) and Yi-Fu Tuan (2008) made to explain human spatial conceptions and behaviour. She argues that space is more than a concrete reality and an abstract conceptualisation. It is also a social construction, but at the same time more than a social construction – human spatial behaviour needs to be approached **holistically** for it to become a tool “for understanding human behavior” (Prinsloo, 2013:7). By focusing simultaneously on the physical, mental and social **dimensions** of space; the **properties** of space in terms of its configuration and propensity for simultaneity, extension and power, and the perceived, conceived and lived **aspects** of space, the “dynamism of space” (Knott, 2005b:158) becomes an invaluable tool in the analysis of human behaviour in general, and religious behaviour in particular.

The insights of critical-spatial analysis will then be utilised to elucidate classifications of space such as sacred and profane, clean and unclean, and public and private. The researcher concurs with Sander (2017:3) that modernity “established a binary code between the sacred and the secular, the religious and the profane, the spiritual and material sides of life.” From a critical spatial perspective, however, a space can be sacred and profane or public and private at the same time, depending on the human perceptions involved in viewing socially contested spaces. Sander (2017:4) asserts that “one space allows the possibility of a mutual presence of realities that are shaped by completely different discourses... This means that, through space, the difference between the sacred and the secular becomes a mutual relationship in which religion is part of the secular and the sacred is a response to the secular character of religion.” An analysis of these (not so) binary classifications will involve theoretical reflections on borders and boundaries, specifically the role boundaries play in othering fellow

⁹⁰ Cf. Section 1.6.2.

human beings,⁹¹ and in demarcating bodies **as** space and **in** space.⁹² All space is, in the end, **embodied** space. Finally, the researcher will argue that any society's spatial thinking is closely linked with its worldview(s) and spatial orientation(s).

In the second stage of analysis, spatial theory will be applied to Islamic constructions of space. The researcher will argue that a critical spatial analysis of these constructions will help researchers to interpret uniquely Islamic constructions and classifications of space, especially as it relates to the differentiation between sacred and profane, clean and unclean, and public and private spaces. The researcher analyses *al-Islām* as a firstspace or physical reality by reflecting on the origin of the religion in the seventh and eighth century CE, its rapid growth, its conflict with especially Western imperial power, and its massive and still growing presence in the current global environment. She reflects on *al-Islām* as a secondspace or mental representation, focusing on the sources that determine these representations and the beliefs and practices that developed from these representations. She engages in an analysis of thirdspatial applications of firstspace realities and secondspace representation, thus elucidating the principles underlying Muslim lived experience.

In the light of the critical-spatial analysis of *al-Islām*, the researcher then turns her attention to an analysis of specifically Islamic constructions of lived space. She indicates that Islamic lived space is determined by uniquely Islamic constructions of public and private and profane and sacred space, by the rhythmic interweaving of sacred and ordinary space and time, and especially by the ritual enactment of private and sacred space. She then argues that the Islamic worldview and uniquely Islamic constructions of space are determined by *al-Islām*'s spatial orientation towards a single, cosmic spatial centre, namely the *Ka'ba* in the holy city of *Makka*. This is crucial for understanding Islamic demarcations of the body **as** sacred space **in** space. In the next chapter, it will then be argued that this contextual approach to Islamic space is an invaluable aid in analysing the *ḥijāb* from an insider perspective and will contribute towards a holistic interpretation of the phenomenon.

In this context, it is important to reflect on the multidimensional meaning(s) of the term *al-Islām*. It is commonplace to see definitions of the term such as the following:

The word *islam* means that state of perfect harmony that exists between God and the whole of creation, and within creation itself, which is the way that God created it. It contains also the idea of submission, because this harmony can only come about when everything submits to the will of God and acts according to the plan of the creator. This

⁹¹ Cf. Section 1.6.2.1.

⁹² Cf. Section 1.6.2.2.

will lead to a state of absolute peace, which can only come about when everything is in harmony and obedience to God (Hewer, 2006:3).

While a definition such as this is a fair reflection of the meaning of the Arabic verbal root سلم *slm* and its derivatives,⁹³ it does not reflect the multidimensional usage of the term ***al-Islām***. The researcher concurs with Shepard (2009:2) that the word *al-Islām* may be understood on three levels.

The first level of meaning is deeply personal. Shepard (2009:2) states:

At the most basic level it means submitting or committing oneself to God, essentially an inward mental action though with outward consequences. The one who does this is termed a Muslim. This was the earliest meaning of Islam and Muslim.

This is a ***thirdspatial*** definition of the term,⁹⁴ focusing on *al-Islām* as a lived space.

Second, Shepard (2009:2) indicates that *al-Islām* can signify a religion. He states:

At the second level Islam refers to a religion, that is, a system of beliefs and practices believed to be ordained by God, and Muslims are adherents of this religion.

In the context of the researcher's spatial analysis of *al-Islām*, this is a ***secondspatial*** definition of the term,⁹⁵ focusing on *al-Islām* as a conceived space.

Third, Shepard (2009:2) argues that *al-Islām* can refer to a culture and a civilization. He says:

At the third level Islam may refer to a culture and a civilization, indeed several cultures and civilizations, created by Muslims over the course of time but also shared by many non-Muslims.

This is a ***firstspatial*** definition of the term,⁹⁶ focusing on *al-Islām* as a perceived space.

Al-Islām is neither the one nor the other; it encompasses all three perspectives at the same time. The spatial analysis of *al-Islām* in this chapter will be continued in Chapter 4, but then with particular focus to the application of the theory to female Muslims. Chapter 4 will first focus upon precepts regarding female clothing practices in *al-Islām*'s formative traditions; hence, it represents a secondspatial analysis of Muslim female conceived space. Then attention will shift to a Muslim female who has

⁹³ Cf. Section 3.3.1.1.

⁹⁴ Cf. Section 3.2.1 and 3.3.1.3.

⁹⁵ Cf. Section 3.2.1 and 3.3.1.2.

⁹⁶ Cf. Section 3.2.1 and 3.3.1.1.

consciously decided to wear the *hijāb* and will focus on her perceptions of her choice and the deeply personal implications the decision holds for her. The insider perspective on the meaning of the *hijāb* will thus be expounded fully. It represents a thirdspatial analysis of such a Muslim female's lived space.

3.2 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON PLACE, SPACE AND SPATIAL ORIENTATION

The Chinese-born American geographer, Yi-Fu Tuan (2008:8), indicated that the term **experience** can be used as “a cover-all term for the various modes through which a person knows and constructs reality.” Reality cannot be described **from the outside** as **a** reality; it cannot be prescribed **from above** as **the** reality; it can only be **experienced** by an individual and/or group **from within** as **his/her/their** reality. The experience of reality varies from person to person and involves three perspectives simultaneously: It exists objectively **outside** a person, it enforces itself upon humans from **above** without a person necessarily having control over it, but it is uniquely experienced by a person subjectively or **from the inside**. Tuan (2008:9) thus asserts that “emotion tints all human experience.” **Reality** used in this sense is a **spatial** concept, as all human experience is encountered in a space and/or at a place of some kind. Space is, objectively, “out there,” it enforces itself upon human beings without them being able to avoid what is “out there,” yet they react to it in uniquely personal, subjective, ways.

Up to the 1970s, space and place have been analysed through the lens of a positivistic worldview's binary logic. On the one hand, space has been perceived as a **concrete reality** – the domain of the natural sciences and the terrain of geographers. Conversely, space has been viewed as an **abstract conceptualisation** – the domain of architects and city planners and the terrain of cartographers. It is only during the 1980s and especially since the 1990s that space opened up, so to speak, for scholars in the humanities and social sciences in what is commonly called “the spatial turn” (Sleeman, 2013:51). There has been an increasing awareness that “space is a **social construction** relevant to the understanding of the different histories of human subjects and to the production of cultural phenomena” (Warf & Arias, 2009:1).⁹⁷ This perspective on space and place is now commonly referred to as **critical spatiality**. Schreiner (2016:340-341) describes the “spatial turn” as follows:

A spatial turn is sweeping through the wider scholarly world in the social sciences, humanities, and philosophy. Across the disciplines, the study of space has undergone

⁹⁷ Italics and emphasis added by the researcher.

a profound and sustained resurgence. Recent works in the fields of literary and cultural studies, sociology, political science, anthropology, history, and art history have become increasingly spatial in their orientation... Anthropologists now speak of gendered spaces, embodied spaces, inscribed spaces, contested spaces, transnational spaces, and spatial tactics... Many factors contribute to this trend, one of them being the postmodern **emphasis on the local and particular**. Another factor is the renewed **emphasis on the physical body**. Being embodied creatures means humans must also be 'emplaced' or rooted creatures.⁹⁸

The French philosopher Michel Foucault provided the stimulus for the development of critical spatiality in his 1967 lecture "Of Other Spaces" (Foucault, 1986:22-27).⁹⁹ He criticises the modernist spatial perception of people living in "heterogeneous" spaces that are clearly delineated and not superimposable on one another (e.g., sites of rest or sites of labour). Foucault proposes a postmodernist approach to spatiality and argues that human beings mentally and emotionally construct sites to neutralize or invert the set of relations reflected by heterogeneous spaces. Two such sites are utopias or heterotopias. **Utopias** are sites with no real place, where the relation to real space is inverted; **heterotopias** are counter-sites on the fringes of society, for example, cemeteries. Utopias and heterotopias are "spaces of *otherness*, imaginary places outside all places, in which new modes of sociality are imagined and practiced. They are neither here nor there, simultaneously physical and mental. They are physical representations of a utopia and social sites" (Schreiner, 2016:345).

Critical spatiality's insistence that the **social dimension** of spatial construction should receive its due attention has implications for the analysis of human behaviour. The most important implication is that people of different cultures may differ in how they construct their world, divide it into its constituent parts and assign value to these parts and even measure them (Tuan, 2008:34). On the one hand, cross-cultural similarities in spatial construction allow for "universal" spatial analyses, because in the end humans are the measure of all things. Tuan (2008:44) asserts that "(m)an is the measure. In a literal sense, the **human body** is the measure of direction, location and distance." On the other hand, it should be acknowledged that "every society... produces a space, its own space" (Lefebvre, 1991:31). Tuan (2008:34) observes that there are "two kinds of facts that form fundamental principles of spatial organization," namely "the posture and structure of the human body and the relations (be it close or distant) between human beings." Humans "impose a schema on space by their mere

⁹⁸ Italics and emphasis added by the researcher.

⁹⁹ The original title of the lecture is "Des Espace Autres." Foucault never published it, but the manuscript was released into the public domain shortly before his death. It was published in the French journal, *Architectur/Mouvement/Continuité*, in October 1984 and translated into English by Jay Miskowiec.

presence” (Tuan, 2008:34), but that schema vary from culture to culture. In her critical spatial analysis of the *hijāb*, the researcher will argue that the phenomenon should be interpreted in the context of the uniquely Islamic constructions of space, and not be measured against a schema imposed on it from the outside.

3.2.1 Critical spatiality: Brief reflections on theory

In the present study, **critical spatiality**, especially as developed in the theoretical work of the French philosopher, Henri Lefebvre (1991), and the American geographer, Edward Soja (1996), will receive close attention. Both argue against the positivistic binary classification of space as either physical or abstract, and thus as quantifiable, measurable and objective. Both emphasise that space is a social concept and thus the study of space becomes a tool “for understanding human behavior” (Prinsloo, 2013:7). Lefebvre (1991:26) pointedly states that “(social) space is a (social) product.” Lefebvre emphasizes that this axiom has two important consequences. The first is “that (physical) natural space is disappearing” (Lefebvre, 1991:30) in the sense that it serves as “the background of the picture; as décor” (Lefebvre, 1991:30) while “the productive forces of a variety of social systems have forged their particular spaces” (Lefebvre, 1991:31). The second is “that every society – and hence every mode of production with its subvariants (i.e., all those societies which exemplify the general concept) – produces a space, its own space” (Lefebvre, 1991:31). Spatial analysis must take into account that each society has “its own spatial practice” and hence forges “its own – *appropriated* – space” (Lefebvre, 1991:31).

Henri Lefebvre did seminal work in the study of spatiality in his *The production of space* (1991). Lefebvre (1991:19) proposes a trialectic approach towards space: “first, the *physical* – nature, the Cosmos; secondly, the *mental*, including logical and formal abstractions; and, thirdly, the *social*” (Lefebvre, 1991:19). Consequently Lefebvre (1991:39) distinguishes between **perceived space** (the spatial practice of society); **conceived space** (representations of space, conceptualized space, the dominant space in any society); and **lived space** (spaces of representation, representational spaces, space as experienced through images and symbols, space “which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate” (Prinsloo, 2013:7). Perceived or physical space “can be comprehended empirically by measurable configurations” (Schreiner, 2016:346). Conceived or mental space “is the spatial working of the mind and the perception of space. These are all the signs, codes, and knowledge that allow the material practices to be talked about and understood” (Schreiner, 2016:346). Lived space or social space implies that space is “a social product, a construction, a process. It is more than matter, motion, or physical properties. Social space represents ways in which new meanings and possibilities of spatial practice can be

imagined” (Schreiner, 2016:346-347). According to Knott (2005a:12), the importance of Lefebvre’s work lies in the fact that he “proposes a theoretical reunification of the physical, mental, and social dimensions of our lived experience.” Lefebvre thereby deconstructs the notion of abstract space, which “conveys a sense of emptiness, of being a passive container for bodies and objects, of being homogenous” (Knott, 2005a:12).

Soja (1996) modifies Lefebvre’s theories in his *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and other real-and-imagined places* (1996). According to Schreiner (2016:347-348) Soja’s spatial project “is not merely theoretical for at the heart of Soja’s work lies a concern for human welfare. Thus he investigates class, gender, and sexually based oppression.” Soja (1996:66-67) also proposes a trialectic of spaces: **Firstspace** (physical/concrete/perceived space), i.e., the description of a place or an environment; **Secondspace** (imagined/conceived/abstract space), i.e., “space produced by language, metaphor, and ideology” (Maier, 2008:103); **Thirdspace** (lived space), i.e., the confrontation between various social groups and their space(s). For Soja (1996:57), thirdspace is where “everything comes together.” Schreiner (2016:348) summarizes Soja’s views on thirdspace as follows: “Subjectivity and objectivity, the real and the imagined, the knowable and the unimaginable, everyday life and unending history all collide” in thirdspace. It implies that thirdspaces “are mental inventions, but mental inventions that can open up new possibilities for spatial practice. They provoke other-worlds, or spaces beyond what is presently known, where alternative territories or worldviews are explored” (Schreiner, 2016:348).

Kim Knott (2005b:153-184) refines the theories of Lefebvre and Soja by distinguishing between the **dimensions**, **properties**, and **aspects** of space. In order to decode space, all three perspectives should be identified and combined in a unified theory of spatial analysis (Knott, 2005b:158).

- The **dimensions of space** are physical, mental, and social space. Knott (2005b:159) indicates that space can no longer be restricted to the notion of geometric coordinates and the physical domain. Space “is also a mental or conceptual dimension” which “might float free of any physical mooring.” As such, the notion of space can be used “metaphorically and may provide a means of imagining and giving expression to human possibility, cultural difference, the imagination itself, as well as social relations” (Knott, 2005b:159). The notion of space is thus **at the same time** physical, mental, and social. Space is the “dynamic summation” (Knott, 2005b:160) of its physical, mental, and social dimensions.
- The **properties of space** refer to its configuration, particularly space’s simultaneity, extension, and power. **Configuration** refers to space’s “propensity

to gather and configure” (Knott, 2008:1109), with the result that “in and through space these very dimensions are brought together” (Knott, 2005a:22). Spatial analysis allows for “disciplines to be united in their examination” of “social spatialisation” (Knott, 2005a:22). **Simultaneity** reflects the “*interconnectedness* of events and the *relational nature* of the persons, objects, and places that constitute space” (Knott, 2005a:23). According to Knott (2005a:23) it is especially applicable to spaces of religion. Such spaces are

... synchronically dynamic because at any time they are overlapping, co-existent, in parallel with other spaces, and because they are internally in tension, being made up of multiple, contested, real, and imagined sites and relations.

Extension refers to space’s diachronic dynamic. All synchronous spaces “contain the past within them” (Knott, 2005a:23). A particular place “enfolds its social, physical and cultural history within it, the various phases in its development layering through it and sometimes engaging instrumentally with one another along the way” (Knott, 2005b:161). Extension convey “the sense of time flowing through space and the way in which ‘stratified places’ reveal the traces of earlier times and different ethnic and religious regimes” (Knott, 2008:1109). Consequently, the final spatial property is **power**. Knott (2008:1110) argues that space “is not an empty container, but an arena of struggle.” The social constitution of space “opens it up to the pursuit and exercise of power” and “the capacity of space to be shot through with ideology” (Knott, 2005a:25) makes it powerful. Dominant groups utilise space “in the exercise of power,” and “through the construction and manipulation of boundaries” (Knott, 2005a:26) space is used to include and exclude.

- The **aspects of space** refer to Lefebvre’s (1991:30) spatial triad, “three interconnected aspects which refer to the way in which space is perceived, conceived and lived by people” (Knott, 2005b:162-163). **Perceived space** refers to “the way in which space is generated, used and perceived by people in everyday life” (Knott, 2005b:163). According to Knott (2005a:39), perceived space “is experienced through practical perception, through commonsense, and is taken for granted.” In the second and third aspects, though, the movement is away from the way space is perceived “to the ways it is represented and then apprehended” (Knott, 2005b:163). **Conceived space** or **conceptualised space** contains **representations of space** (Knott, 2005a:36). It comprises “those dominant, theoretical, often technical, representations of lived space that are conceived and constructed by planners, architects, engineers, and scientists of all kinds” (Knott, 2005a:36). According to Knott (2005a:36), “ideology, knowledge, and power” are always embedded in such representations. Conceived space is thus a reflection of “the dominant order” (Knott, 2008:164). **Lived space** or **spaces of representation** refers to space “as directly *lived* through its associated images and symbols” (Lefebvre, 1991:39). Knott (2005a:37) argues that lived space is characterised by

...the intervention of culture, not as ideology (as in *conceived space*), but through the imagination as tradition and symbol... Such *lived* spaces, imbued

with distinctively local knowledge, often run counter to spaces generated by formal, technical knowledge.

According to Knott (2005b:165-166), the unified theory of spatial analysis as suggested by philosophers like Lefebvre and human geographers like Soja, with the resulting simultaneous focus on the **dimensions**, **properties**, and **aspects** of space, is an illustration of “the dynamism of space.” The triad of dimensions and aspects does not imply a historical development of space or a linear analysis of the manifestation of space. All three aspects should be seen “as ever present spatial possibilities that vie for ascendancy” (Knott, 2005b:165). Knott (2008:1111) argues that development in the field of critical spatiality

...has reconceived ‘space’ as dynamic, in terms of its relationship to power, history and time, its condition of simultaneity and the various ways in which it is experienced and represented. No longer is it seen as the passive container or backdrop for human activity. It is thoroughly enmeshed in embodiment and everyday practice, knowledge and discourse, it is enmeshed in religion no less than in other areas of social and cultural life.

Adendorff (2016:32) summarizes of critical spatial theory as follows:

Through **social practices** which occur in a given place, **representations of space** are made, which lead to the existence of **representational spaces**.¹⁰⁰

For the sake of ease and brevity, the researcher will use the terms **firstspace**, **secondspace** and **thirdspace** proposed by Soja when she analyses the **dimensions**, **properties**, and **aspects** of Islamic constructions of space.¹⁰¹ She concurs that critical spatial theory “analyzes the production of space from three dimensions that are intrinsically intertwined” (Maier, 2013:108) and not three different spaces. Berquist (2007:3) maintains that “a critical perspective on space requires analysing space from all three understandings and integrating the results.” Berquist (1999) furthermore posits that “(s)pace is location and context simultaneously; in fact, one might say that space is the interrelatedness between a point and its context.” An analysis of any space is at the same time an analysis of the physical space (firstspace), the space as symbol (secondspace), but also of “an interrelated set of an infinite number of symbols, held by the minds of those who perceive it, each from a different perspective in space/time” (thirdspace). The relational character of space

¹⁰⁰ Italics and emphasis added by the researcher.

¹⁰¹ When the researcher uses Soja’s terminology as general labels for the dimensions and/or aspects of space, she regards the terms as sufficiently familiar in spatial studies by now for them to be regarded as common nouns. She consequently uses the terms **firstspace**, **secondspace**, and **thirdspace** as nouns, and the terms **firstspatial**, **secondspatial**, and **thirdspatial** as adjectives without capitalizing the first letter.

intrinsically links a spatial analysis of *al-Islām* to the ecological systems perspective on a female Muslim as a **focal individual** called for in the previous chapter.

Sander (2017:11) emphasizes that for both Lefebvre and Soja their theory of a trialectics of space does not imply that the three “types” of space can be viewed in isolation. In fact, “all three are mutually related to one another and cannot be reduced to a binary coding or to a singularity. Surprises are unavoidable in spaces. One cannot avoid being confronted by others because they live in the same place at the same time” (Sander, 2017:11). Lived space does not synthesise perceived and conceived space. One “cannot have any one of these three dimensions alone in space” (Sander, 2017:11). According to Schreiner (2016:349), every space “exists as all three spaces simultaneously. Any one location can and should be analysed for its manifestations of all three spaces.” Experiencing first-, second-, and thirdspace **at the same time** has the profound implication that “(w)e do not live in space; we live space. Lived space without perceived space and without conceived space is not lived space” (Sander, 2017:11).

Berquist (2007:8) indicates that any notion of Lefebvre and Soja’s “theoretical contributions as providing a new and tripartite ontology of space” should be avoided. He argues:

The three spaces of Firstspace, Secondspace, and Thirdspace are not different realities of space or even different modes of spatiality. Rather, they represent what the interpreter sees when examining space in different ways.

Critical spatial theory has important implications for the interpretation of religions and religious phenomena. Generally speaking, any religion can be viewed as a lived space. Sander (2017:11) remarks:

In Islam, the Qur’an and the *umma* may be seen as lived spaces. Such Thirdspaces are possible only by way of Firstspaces and by their presentation as Secondspaces. To function as Thirdspaces, they cannot exist uncontested by others. They can never be living expressions of religious positions if they are not exposed to contestation by others. Relativity is necessary so that a common ground on them can be found in lived space.

Thirdspace becomes a crucial concept. According to Soja (1996:68) it is “the terrain for the generation of ‘counterspaces’, spaces of resistance to the dominant order arising precisely from their subordinate, peripheral or marginalized positioning.” Thirdspace can also be called “Thirling-as-Othering,” because it “produces what may best be called a cumulative *trialectics* that is radically open to additional otherness, to a continuing expansion of spatial knowledge” (Soja, 1996:60-61). Soja (1996:68) regards “*lived space as a strategic location* from which to encompass, understand,

and potentially transform all spaces simultaneously.” In this light, an analysis of spatial constructs in the religious experience of humankind becomes an important endeavour. Knott (2010:35-36) indicates that, since the spatial turn,

...space has indeed become more than a ‘theater’ or backdrop for the study of religious groups and their activities. Researchers of religion have sought to confront and examine the relationship between space and power, whether they see power as inherent and manifest in places and/or the sacred... or as a property of contested spaces, of the dominant and demotic discourses and practices by which groups seek to make or retain space for themselves.

The researcher hopes that her spatial analysis of *al-Islām* in general in the present chapter, and of the *ḥijāb* in particular in Chapters 4 and 5, will illustrate that, what Knott (2010:38) has argued for the study of religion in general, is also applicable to the study of a specific religious and cultural symbol in *al-Islām*. Knott (2010:38) argues that

...the spatial turn has been extremely fruitful for research on religion. It has brought together scholars from a variety of disciplines, and has connected outward not only to traditional areas such as sacred space and pilgrimage, but also to new ones such as embodiment, gender, practice, and religious-secular engagements.

3.2.2 (Not so) binary classifications of space

Tuan (2008:34) remarks that “man, out of his intimate experience with his body and with other people, organizes space so that it conforms with and caters to his biological needs and social relations.” One of the most basic ways in which humankind organizes space is by classifying space – in broad terms – as positive or negative, as safe or dangerous, as near or far. What is near and known is safe and positive; what is far and unknown is dangerous and negative. Tuan (2008:47) argues that

... the demonstrative “this” and “that” are only a pair and so lack locational range; perhaps as a result their meanings become polarized and can carry high emotional charge.

Tuan (2008:50) asserts as follows:

A distinction that all people recognize is between “us” and “them.” We are *here*; we are *this* happy breed of men. They are *there*; they are not fully human and they live in *that* place. Members within the we-group are close to each other, and they are distant from members of the outside (they) group.

Closely related to these remarks, is the following observation by Eliade (1959:29):

One of the outstanding characteristics of traditional societies is the opposition that they assume between their inhabited territory and the unknown and indeterminate space that surrounds it. The former is the world (more precisely, our world), the cosmos; everything outside is no longer a cosmos but a sort of “other world,” a foreign, chaotic

space, peopled by ghosts, demons, “foreigners” (who are assimilated to demons and the souls of the dead).

These remarks elucidate humankind’s tendency to classify place and space in terms of apparently binary pairs. Three such binary classifications are relevant to the discussion of critical spatiality and the application of the theory to *al-Islām* in general and the *ḥijāb* in particular. The three are related to each other and all three play an important role in Islamic constructions of space.¹⁰² These are the classification of space as **sacred/holy** or **profane/unholy**; **clean** or **unclean**; and **private** or **public**.

These classifications are particularly relevant for and applicable to what Eliade (1959:62) calls “the religious experience of space.” For religious man, “life is lived on a twofold plane; it takes its course as human existence and, at the same time, shares in a transhuman life, that of the cosmos or the gods” (Eliade, 1959:167). Eliade (1959:171) asserts that “every human experience is capable of being transfigured, lived on a different, a transhuman plane.” For religious man “space is not homogeneous; he experiences interruptions, breaks in it; some parts of space are qualitatively different from others” (Eliade, 1959:20). There is “a sacred space, and hence a strong, significant space; there are other spaces that are not sacred and so are without structure or consistency, amorphous” (Eliade, 1959:20). The sacred manifests itself in the profane world through – following Eliade’s (1959:11) terminology – a *hierophany*, which simply means “that *something sacred shows itself to us*.” Secular societies experience “a certain uneasiness before many manifestations of the sacred” (Eliade, 1959:11) and find it “difficult to accept the fact that, for many human beings, the sacred can be manifested in stones or trees, for example” (Eliade, 1959:11-12).

From a critical spatial perspective, however, human experience of the sacred can be regarded as a thirdspace, a “counterspace” (Soja, 1996:60), “another” world – or maybe more correctly – “an other” world. Soja (1996:5) indicates that the concept of thirdspace “opens up our spatial imaginaries to ways of thinking and acting politically that respond to all binarisms, to any attempt to confine thought and political action to only two alternatives, by interjecting an-Other set of choices.” It is exactly a human being’s capability to imagine **an other reality**, which allows a **religious** human being to embrace “the paradox represented by every hierophany... By manifesting the sacred, any object becomes *something else*, yet it continues to remain *itself*, for it continues to participate in its surrounding cosmic milieu” (Eliade, 1959:12).

¹⁰² Cf. Section 3.3.

In the **religious experience of space**, the manifestation of the sacred “is not a matter of theoretical speculation, but of a primary religious experience that precedes all reflection on the world” (Eliade, 1959:21). The manifestation and experience of **sacred** space reveals to religious human beings “the fixed point, the central axis for all future orientation. When the sacred manifests itself in any hierophany, there is not only a break in the homogeneity of space; there is also revelation of absolute reality, opposed to the nonreality of the vast surrounding expanse. The manifestation of the sacred ontologically founds the world” (Eliade, 1959:21). Eliade (1959:28) argues that

...the sacred is pre-eminently the *real*, at once power, efficacy, the source of life and fecundity. Religious man’s desire to live *in the sacred* is in fact equivalent to his desire to take up his abode in objective reality, not to let himself be paralyzed by the never-ceasing relativity of purely subjective experiences, to live in a real and effective world, and not in an illusion.

From the perspective of thirdspace, **living in the sacred** does not stand in binary opposition to **living in the profane**. A religious human being lives simultaneously on both planes. Here, Eliade’s (1959:25) notion of a **threshold** becomes meaningful. He argues as follows:

The threshold that separates the two spaces also indicates the distance between two modes of being, the profane and the religious. The threshold is the limit, the boundary, the frontier that distinguishes and opposes two worlds – and at the same time the paradoxical place where these worlds communicate, where passage from the profane to the sacred world becomes possible... The threshold, the door *show* the solution of continuity in space immediately and concretely; hence their great religious importance, for they are symbols and at the same time vehicles of *passage* from the one space to the other (Eliade, 1959:25).

The experience of **sacred space** is closely linked to the concept of **wholeness**, which is a fundamental value in religious experience (Neyrey, 1998b:204). To experience wholeness, is to experience the sacred. The opposite of wholeness is **dividedness** or to be **blemished** or **maimed** (Neyrey, 1998b:204). According to Neyrey (1998b:205), the concept of wholeness finds “vivid expression in terms of the human body. One aspect of a ‘holy’ body is that it must be bodily whole.” Furthermore, wholeness is concerned “with the integrity of human thought and action.” Wholeness of thought and action enables a human being to be **whole**, and thus **holy**. In terms of thirdspace, a holy human being’s spatial imagination opens up ways of thinking and doing (Soja, 1996:5) which enables him/her to embrace the paradox between sacred and profane space (Eliade, 1959:12), and thus to become an **embodied** sacred space **in** profane space.

There is an intimate link between the concept of **wholeness** and the concept of **purity**. Pilch (1998:170) asserts that this value “directs each member of a society to respect and observe the system of space and time lines that human groups develop to have everything in its place and a place for everything.” Purity thus “marks a person who knows how to be clean rather than unclean, pure rather than polluted – in other words, how to maintain honor and avoid shame” (Pilch, 1998:170). According to Pilch (1998:171), purity comes under threat in one or more of the following ways: “(1) from outside; (2) from inside; (3) at the margins or boundaries; and (4) from inconsistencies or internal contradictions.” In essence, religious man becomes unclean when he/she allows profane space to encroach upon sacred space. It happens when outsiders are allowed to be brought into the “holy community” (Pilch, 1998:171); when “lines that create distinct places and roles for everyone” (Pilch, 1998:171) inside the holy community are crossed or averted; when boundaries between the sacred and the profane “become porous and permeable” (Pilch, 1998:171); and when “(i)nconsistencies or internal contradictions” put a system “at apparent war with itself” (Pilch, 1998:172).

One possible inconsistency, which potentially can put a system at war with itself, is the issue of behaviour applicable to **private** and **public space**. This is especially an issue of gender roles with its roots in the religious imagination of ancient Mediterranean people. Neyrey (1998a:136-137) states the following:

Cultural attitudes towards women... directed that they be defensive of their chastity. This concern was expressed by the expectation that women would be orientated toward the private space of the house, which would keep them from public areas where their virtue might be compromised. Such concern for female virtue was also realized in the expectation that women's bodies be clothed as fully as possible, with the result that loss of clothing was synonymous with loss of virtue.

Neyrey (1998a:140) argues that **clothing** then becomes “a boundary for the physical body, which is a microcosm of the social system. Nudity means the complete absence of boundaries; the body is accessible to any and every one, thus destroying its exclusivity as something ‘set apart.’ Boundaries must be maintained, and so nudity is unclean.”

Modern Western perceptions of the private and the public sphere are heavily influenced by the ancient Mediterranean views on private and public spheres referred to above, possibly due to the prominent role the Christian Bible and knowledge of ancient Near Eastern societies played in the development of so-called “Western” culture. Hence, current Western perceptions of the private and the public sphere are quite incongruous. On the one hand, the boundaries between the private and public

spheres have become “porous and permeable” (Pilch, 1998:171) and the distinction between the two spheres are no longer easily recognisable. The extreme popularity of social media platforms resulted in the virtual destruction of private space. It often “would seem that private and public sometimes collapse into one another” (Ryan, 2003:12).

On the other hand, possibly as a direct result of the deconstruction of private space, private and public space are regarded as binary opposites and the maintenance of boundaries between the two are frowned upon. The banning of the *hijāb* in France,¹⁰³ for instance, is an excellent example where “public authority emphatically overrules private preference” (Ryan, 2003:12). Mazumdar and Mazumdar (2001:303) argue that Western perceptions of cultures maintaining boundaries between the private and public spheres are negative. Much of what is written on the subject “implicitly or explicitly focused on the subordinate status of women in a rigidly segregated social system.” Mazumdar and Mazumdar (2001:303) summarise arguments about the private/public binary as follows:

The emphasis has been on the public-private dichotomy – with the public world of men associated with power, status, control of information and decision making, and the private world of women associated with relative powerlessness and domestic life.

From a spatial perspective in general, and a thirdspatial perspective in particular, the prevailing Western evaluation of private and public space is questionable. The American feminist historian, Mary Ryan (2003:19), argues that it “is time to surrender the a priory assumption that man is to public as woman is to private.” She indicates (2003:10) that an overview of women’s history reveals that the concepts of public and private space “could not be tidily shuffled onto one side or the other of some putative boundary between public and private.” Ryan (2003:10) concludes that the “critique of the concepts of public and private as an abstract and obfuscating dualism” is valid. What should rather be strived for is an analysis of the concepts from “that old feminist slogan, ‘the personal is political.’”

These remarks relate to Tuan’s (2008:8) notion that the term **experience** can be used as “a cover-all term for the various modes through which a person knows and constructs reality” and forces analysts of human behaviour to focus “on those social spaces and practices that are designated as private or public in specific times and places” (Ryan, 2003:11). As thirdspaces, or counterspaces (Soja, 1996:60), “the

¹⁰³ Cf. Section 1.3.1.

spatial differentiation of public and private falls far short of gender segregation or female imprisonment” (Ryan, 2003:13). Ryan (2003:13) observes that

... from a trans-historical and global perspective, a division of social space into private and public sectors is discernible, even prominent, but it is hardly a tidy pattern, nor one in which male and female inhabited starkly segregated or stratified places.

The reality is that both women and men “can be found exercising power and influence anywhere along the continuum between public and private life and space” (Ryan, 2003:15). In the analysis of the concepts, the “personal or cultural norms” (Ryan, 2003:24) at stake should be taken into account. Moreover, every analysis should strive “to maintain a balance between the coequal values of open, public discourse and of the rights of private conscience, pleasure, and contemplation” (Ryan, 2003:24).

In Section 3.3.2.1 the researcher will indicate that the critical spatial discussion of (not so) binary classifications of space is extremely relevant for the interpretation of the Islamic *hijāb*. Two remarks are important at this stage. First, the researcher is of the opinion that there is a link between sacred/clean/private space and profane/unclean/public space. She will argue that it is at this level that the *hijāb* functions as a border of cloth, demarcating the Muslim female **as** holy/clean/private space. At the same time, it enables the Muslim female to engage with and function **in** profane/unclean/private space. Second, she concurs with Eliade’s (1959:165) statement that “man conceives of himself as a microcosm” and that “the cosmos becomes the paradigmatic image of human existence.” Eliade (1959:172) then argues for a “body-house-cosmos” conceptualization of religious man and states: “His dwelling is a microcosm; and so too is his body.” These remarks are relevant for the discussion of the body **as** space and **in** space in the next section.

3.2.3 Space, body, embodiment, bordering, othering, and the ritual sacralisation of space

Eliade’s (1959:172) **body-house-cosmos** schema and Tuan’s (2008:34) assertion that the body is an “object rather than an animated and animating being,” an “it,” which is “in space or takes up space,” makes the concept **body** a crucial subject in discussion of critical spatial theory. Knott (2005b:156) points to the inseparable link between critical spatiality and the human body when she says:

The first principle of a spatial approach for the location of religion is the foundational role of the body for our experience and representation of space, and – because spatial metaphors are central for cognition and representation... for talking about our environment, the nature of our society and relationships, time and progress, and the sacred.

According to Knott (2005b:157), the three basic spatial dimensions or regions of space, namely “front and back,” “left and right,” and “above and below,” are described in relation to the body. She argues that “the different positions, parts, regions of space are understood relationally by way of our bodies,” and “the way we orient places physically and mentally derives from our asymmetrical bilaterality” (Knott, 2005b:157). Davidson and Milligan (2004:523) assert that

...our first and foremost, most immediate and intimately *felt* geography is the body, the site of emotional experience and expression *par excellence*. Emotions, to be sure, *take place* within and around this closest of spatial scales.

Low (2003:9) agrees that the body is “an integral part of spatial analysis.” Tuan (2008:34) observes that “the posture and structure of the human body, and the relationships (whether close or distant) between human beings” are “fundamental principles of spatial organization.” For every human being, his/her body “is at the center of his world, and circumambient space is differentiated in accordance with the schema of his body” (Tuan, 2008:41).¹⁰⁴ According to Lefebvre (1991:405), “the whole of social space proceeds from the body.” Low (2003:14) describes the body as “a mobile spatial field’ that can be understood as a culturally defined, corporeal-sensual field stretching out from the body at a given locale or moving through locales.” The body *is* a space that simultaneously exists and functions *in* space. In Section 2.3.2 the concept of the female Muslim body as a “mobile spatial field” functioning on different levels in the context of *al-Islām* as an ecological system has already been addressed. The concept will be elucidated again in Section 3.3.2.3 and in Chapter 4.

The body is a *microcosm* (Eliade, 1959:165), in terms of critical spatiality at the same time a first-, second-, and thirdspace (Adendorff, 2016:45). The body is a “physical location proper” (i.e., a firstspace). It is open to “individual cognitive associations” (i.e., a secondspace). It is accorded “cultural meanings that are explored in terms of the social dynamics that occur within it subjectively and reflectively” (i.e., a thirdspace) (Adendorff, 2016:29). The notions of *subjectivity* and *reflectivity* will become important in the analysis of the *ḥijāb* as a spatial boundary.¹⁰⁵ To regard the *ḥijāb* as a boundary is a thirdspatial construction. Adendorff (2016:30) states that “the place and location of the body is given meaning both by the self of the person whose body it is, as well as by the other people in the society within which that body functions.” Any critical spatial analysis of the concept *body* is at the same time an ecological

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Section 1.6.2.2.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Section 1.6.2.1.

systems reflection on the meanings and functions of the body in the context of its complex, bi-directional connections in its ecological system.¹⁰⁶

As a *microcosm*, the body is more than an *object* with “an everyday, material grounding” (Low, 2003:10), which can be described in terms of its anatomical, biological and physiological function(s) (Adendorff, 2016:36). The body is also more than a *subject* open to “an experiential, cognitive, and/or emotional understanding” (Low, 2003:10). The body functions at “the intersection and interpenetration of body, space and culture” (Low, 20013:10). As such it can “mediate the relationships between persons and the world: We meet the world through our bodies” (Reischer & Koo, 2004:307). Adendorff (2016:36) argues that “nature dictates the general anatomy of a human body, but a society dresses it, and dictates the way in which it is adorned, and the way it moves.”¹⁰⁷

According to Low (2003:10), the body is an “embodied space.” The term underscores “the importance of the body as a physical and biological entity, lived experience, and a center of agency, a location for speaking and acting on the world” (Low, 2003:10). *Embodied space* “is the location where human experience and consciousness take on material and spatial form” (Low, 2003:10). Embodiment can be described as “the *process* by which the *object-body* is actively experienced, produced, sustained, and/or transformed as a *subject body*” (Waskul & Vannini, 2016a:3).¹⁰⁸ Embodied space “is being-in-the-world, that is, the existential and phenomenological reality of place: its smell, feel, color, and other sensory dimensions” (Low, 2003:13). At the same time, embodied space, a human being’s “being-in-the-world,” transforms that person into an actor, “a truly embodied space in which the body, conceived of as a moving spatial field, makes its own place in the world” (Low, 2003:14). In Chapter 4 the researcher will argue that the concept of the body as *a moving spatial field* is crucial for her interpretation of the *hijāb* as a border of cloth.

As a spatial *microcosm*, the body functions at the same time *as* space *in* space. Low (2003:11) argues that “it is an obvious fact that human beings ‘have bodies’ and ‘are bodies.’” As such, human beings “are embodied and everyday life dominated by the details of corporeal existence” (Low, 2003:11). However, the body *as* a space “is also inherently social and cultural” (Low, 2003:11) and consequently functions *in* a space. The body can become “a spatial metaphor and representational space” (Low,

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Section 2.2.1.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. Section 1.6.2.2.

¹⁰⁸ Italics and emphasis added by the researcher.

2003:12), a “medium of communication,” because it creates “a direct relationship of spatial arrangements and social structure beginning with the symbolism of the body and body boundaries” (Low, 2003:12). Every human being meets the world through his or her body (Reischer & Koo, 2004:307). In essence that world “is a socially constructed world within which that body has to function” (Adendorff, 2016:37). For the notion of the body **as** a space acting **in** space, Reischer and Koo (2004:298) use the terms “symbolic body” and “agentic body.” The “symbolic body” refers to “the representational or symbolic nature of the body as a conduit of social meaning.” The “agentic body” refers “to the role of the body as an active participant or agent in the social world.” These terms “demonstrate the extraordinary capacity of the body not only to symbolise the social world, but also to participate actively in the creation of that world” (Reischer & Koo, 2004:315). Smith (1987:28) asserts that “it is the relationship to the human body, and our experience of it, that orients us in space, that confers meaning to place. Human beings are not placed, they bring place into being.”

Joyce (2005:140) indicates that “the body – as metaphor for society, as instrument of lived experience, and as surface of inscription – has come to occupy a central place in contemporary social theory.” Body ornaments and adornment provide the unique opportunity of

...demarcating and inscribing the body’s surface as the point of articulation between an interior self and an exterior society, between a physical body and its symbolically transformed social presentation.

In Section 2.3.2 the researcher already indicated how the Muslim female body in *ḥijāb* acts as a symbol and agent of *al-Islām* as an ecological system. Through her *ḥijāb*, a Muslim female symbolises her religious and social world and actively participate in the creation of that world. In Sections 3.3.2.3 and 3.3.3 and especially in Chapter 4 these themes will be expounded in terms of critical spatial theory.

If the body is a spatial **microcosm** functioning at the same time **as** space **in** space, it is per definition also a space demarcated by **borders and/or boundaries**.¹⁰⁹ According to Low (2003:13), the body “is a site of spatial orientation with multiple screens for interacting with others and the environment.” Spatiality inherently carries notions of “the line, the border, the boundary” (Soja, 1996:130). In terms of the body as an embodied space borders/boundaries do not represent a fixed line on a map, but rather a social agreement among people (Van Houtem & Van Naerssen, 2002:126). From a critical spatial perspective, body borders/boundaries can be

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Sections 1.6.2.1 and 2.2.2.

physical, mental, and social (Hernes, 2004:13).¹¹⁰ The body naturally has a physical boundary in the form of the skin. However, humans “may be the only creatures that steadfastly refuse to let nature alone dictate their appearance” (Reischer & Koo, 2004:297). Human beings’ “capacity for self-modification and adornment is a central and essential feature of our humanity, though the particular ways in which we alter our bodies are clearly a cultural phenomenon” (Reischer & Koo, 2004:297). In terms of the theme of the present research, clothing as an example of self-modification and adornment is of special importance. Clothing represents a physical barrier (firstspace), but moves beyond the physical to also represent mental (secondspace) and social (thirdspace) boundaries.¹¹¹ It stems from the fact that “clothing is deeply embedded within social, cultural, and religious contexts” and “visually signifies a multitude of ‘ideas, concepts, and categories’ that ascribe meaning to the body” (Feder, 2013:443-444).

As a boundary demarcating a body, clothing has three different effects upon society (Hernes, 2004:15).¹¹² It serves as an **ordering device**, a **distinction** and a **threshold** (Hernes, 2004:15). As **ordering devices**, clothing demarcates and regulates boundaries in the internal interaction between members in a given socio-cultural context, e.g. between male and female. As **distinctions**, clothing constitutes a boundary between the internal and external spheres. As **threshold**, clothing regulates the flow or movement between the internal and external spheres (Hernes, 2004:13, 15-16; Adendorff, 2015:35). Clothing thus marks “the symbolic significance of the body” (Reischer & Koo, 2004:299) and can be “viewed metaphorically as a text that can be ‘read’ as a symbol or signifier of the social world that it inhabits” (Reischer & Koo, 2004:300). As such, clothing has the potential to signify **othering**.

Any boundary explicitly and/or implicitly cause **othering** (Soja, 1996:56). Adendorff (2016:10) argues that “otherness is exemplified in the context of lived space, as this is where the power dynamics of the space’s inhabitants become lived.” The process of othering “plays an important role in the formation of the identities of the subordinates (Adendorff, 2016:33). It provides them with agency, because they can accept their identity as “others” or rebel against it (Adendorff, 2016:33). The process of othering implies that “the human body becomes a centre of power in its own right, through the potentiality of taking the power to act, and becoming a space of othering when physical ramifications for other behaviour are exacted upon the body”

¹¹⁰ Cf. Section 2.2.2.

¹¹¹ Cf. Section 1.6.2.3.

¹¹² Cf. Sections 1.6.2.1 and 2.2.2.

(Adendorff, 2016:33). In Chapter 4 the researcher will argue that a Muslim female in *hijāb* deliberately “others” herself as an expression of her identity and faith.

As a moving spatial field functioning both as space and in space, the body plays a crucial role in the construction of space. Especially in the context of the study of religion, critical spatiality opens avenues for the investigation of the role of the human body in the **construction of sacred space**. Knott (2005b:169) argues that critical spatiality play an important role to move

... the discussion of “sacred space” from its roots in an ontological conception of the holy or sacred to a critical interrogation of the human processes involved in making space “sacred” – in producing, constructing, contesting and imagining sites the position, value and meaning of which are held by their creators, owners and followers to be non-negotiable and categorically special and different.

In this regard, Van der Leeuw (1938:393-402) argues that the manifestation of the sacred, which he associates with the notion of “power,” is not a simple matter of the ontological revelation of a meaningful place, but also of human agency in the appropriation, possession, and ownership of space, and thus the creation of a powerful place.¹¹³ Jonathan Smith (1978b:101) postulates that a dichotomy exists between “a *locative* vision of the world (which emphasizes place) and a *utopian* vision of the world (using the term in its strict sense: the value of being in no place).” Neither vision exists ontologically, “both have been and remain coeval existential possibilities which may be appropriated whenever and wherever they correspond to man’s experience of the world (Smith, 1978b:101). In a later publication, Smith (1987:105) substantiates his views on the coeval existence of a locative and utopian vision of the world by arguing that **ritual** is the means by which sacred space is created. Ritual “is not an expression of or a response to the ‘Sacred’; rather, something or someone is made sacred by ritual” (Smith, 1987:105). Ritual “is a means of performing the way things ought to be in conscious tension to the way things are” (Smith, 1987:109).

Picking up on these notions, Knott (2005b:171) argues that ritual is “a creative process whereby people make a meaningful world that they can inhabit.” Ritual becomes the interface between the body and the sacralisation of space. According to Knott (2005b:175)

¹¹³ In Section 2.3.1 the researcher indicated that Van der Leeuw’s theory on the location of the sacred played a role in her conceptualisation of *al-Islām* as an ecological system.

...sacred-making activity is contingent upon human embodiment and socio-spatial location, which together provide the basis for cognitive categorisation and the emergence of the “sacred” as a category boundary.

The notions of threshold, othering, and the ritual enactment of sacred space have a direct bearing on yet another perspective on the role of the body in the experience of lived space, namely embodiment and **liminal space**.¹¹⁴ Van Gennep (1960:10) engaged in a detailed study of the role of ritual in humankind’s religious experience. He distinguished between rites associated with transitions in the passage of time (e.g. new year), and rites marking the transition of a person or social group from one status to another. The former can be called **calendrical rites** and the latter **critical rites**. The second group is also called **rites of passage** that mark “*transitions* in any society” (Thomassen, 2009:6). Van Gennep (1960:11) identified three categories of rites associated with transitions from one status to another, namely rites of separation (**preliminal** rites), rites of transition (**liminal** rites), and rites of incorporation (**postliminal** rites) (Thomassen, 2009:6). Turner (1967:93) calls the state of transition a state of being “betwixt and between.” As indicated earlier,¹¹⁵ this state signifies the danger of being trapped in “the middle state” (Douglas, 1966:33), of being neither here nor there (Turner, 1969:106). On the other hand, through ritual enactment, this state holds for humans the possibility of being transformed, hence it becomes “a realm of pure possibility whence novel configurations of ideas and relations may arise” (Turner, 1967:97).

In Section 3.3.2.3 the significance of the notions of body, embodiment, bordering, othering, liminality, and the ritual sacralisation of space in Islamic constructions of space will be discussed. In Chapter 4 these principles will be applied to the female Muslim body **as** sacred space **in** space.

3.2.4 Worldview(s) and spatial orientation

A critical spatial analysis of the concept **body** illustrates the importance of the body as a central point of orientation in human existence and any human being’s worldview.¹¹⁶ When the concepts of **worldview** and **spatial orientation** are discussed in this section, it is not intended to be an ontological exposition of contemporary theories on the state of the universe. The researcher uses the term **worldview** to indicate an individual or society’s “particular philosophy of life or

¹¹⁴ Cf. Section 2.2.2.

¹¹⁵ Cf. Section 2.2.2.

¹¹⁶ Cf. Sections 3.2.1 and 3.3.3.

conception of the world.”¹¹⁷ The researcher departs from the following remark by Bloomer (1975:8):

Body experience provides us with a matrix by which we order our essential perception of space, a matrix which is more complex and naturally knowable than the mathematical matrices we so often employ as design tools. From birth the body learns to operate within a body-dependent “sphere” of space which is richer in texture and more sophisticated geometrically than we generally allow.

This observation implies that worldview(s) and spatial orientation are not determined only by firstspace realities, but by secondspace conceptions and thirdspace experiences with the individual human body – or **body image** – as the central point of orientation. Bloomer (1975:8) states that “centricity is fundamental in the spatiality of the body image.” According to Bloomer (1975:8), body image can be defined as follows:

A body image is a gestalt. It is a whole percept that one has of one’s own body, and necessarily, therefore, a *percept of the space in which one’s body operates*.

Tuan (2008:35) argues as follows:

Among mammals the human body is unique in that it easily maintains an upright position. Upright, man is ready to act. Space opens out before him and is immediately differentiable into front-back and right-left axes in conformity with the structure of his body. Vertical-horizontal, top-bottom, front-back and right-left are positions and coordinates of the body that are extrapolated onto space.

According to Bloomer (1975:8), a **psychic boundary** surrounds the physical body. This boundary “has elastic, abstract and extendable qualities. That psychic boundary unconsciously separates and defines inside personal space from outside, extra-personal space.” Bloomer (1975:8) postulates as follows:

The space within the psychic boundary is far more vast, complex and influential on our perception of the world than we normally allow in conscious thought.

The psychic boundary determines a human being’s worldview and spatial orientation. That orientation can be summarized as follows:

Psychically there resides within the bodyscape a set of co-ordinates. FRONT-BACK, RIGHT-LEFT and UP-DOWN. UP and DOWN are always orientated to gravity, while the orientation of FRONT-BACK, RIGHT-LEFT is determined by the position of the head (Bloomer, 1975:8).

¹¹⁷ Quoted from the Oxford Dictionary, available online: https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/world_view (Accessed 30/11/2017).

From this centre, a human being classifies and orders space. Perceived from the centre, “right and left is a property that incorporates the entire body, we orient ourselves about a psychic plane... which intersects the two sides of the body and projects forward from the face into deep space” (Bloomer, 1975:8). Front “is the primary orientation which implies strength and virtue. Back has private and earthy (spatially lower) implications” (Bloomer, 1975:8). According to Tuan (2008:40), “frontal space is ‘illuminated’ because it can be seen; back space is ‘dark,’ even when the sun shines, simply because it cannot be seen.” The right side of the body “has come to be associated with power, rationality, dexterity and self-assertion” (Bloomer, 1975:8). The left side “is sinister, evil and weak” (Bloomer, 1975:8). The vertical signs “are unstable, mysterious, and reversible in value, as well as being the most animate and splendid. Upward, meaning upward from the center of the body, means striving, fantasy and aloofness. Downward is insecure, realistic and depressing” (Bloomer, 1975:8).

According to Tuan (2008:38), “the prestige of the center is well established. People everywhere tend to regard their own homeland as the ‘middle place,’ or the center of the world.” This centre is, in essence, the body of each individual, “and circumambient space is differentiated in accordance with the schema of his body” (Tuan, 2008:41). Eliade (1959:21) indicates that this spatial differentiation “is not a matter of theoretical speculation, but of a primary religious experience that precedes all reflection on the world.” The departure from the centre “reveals the fixed point, the central axis for all future orientation.” When this centre is associated with a hierophany, or an experience of the sacred, “there is also revelation of an absolute reality.” This “manifestation of the sacred ontologically founds the world.” According to Eliade (1959:22), it is “for this reason that religious man has always sought to fix his abode at the ‘center of the world.’ *If the world is to be lived in, it must be founded* – and no world can come to birth in the chaos of the homogeneity and relativity of profane space.”

For religious man, the centre of the universe is a cosmic mountain.¹¹⁸ That is where heaven and earth connect and where the sacred reveals itself in profane space. The sacred mountain “is an *axis mundi* connecting earth with heaven, it in a sense touches heaven and hence marks the highest point in the world” (Eliade, 1959:38). Eliade (1959:43) argues that “*the religious man sought to live as near as possible to the Center of the World.*” From this centre, religious man extrapolates that his/her house is “at the Center of the Universe and, on the microcosmic scale, to reproduce the universe.” It then follows that “*every construction or fabrication has the cosmogony*

¹¹⁸ Cf. Section 3.2.2.

as paradigmatic model" (Eliade, 1959:45). In the end, "man conceives of himself as a microcosm... He finds in himself the same sanctity that he recognizes in the cosmos... As a divine work, the cosmos becomes the paradigmatic image of human existence" (Eliade, 1959:165). For religious man, not only his dwelling, but also his body "is a microcosm" (Eliade, 1959:172).

Bloomer (1975:10) aptly summarizes how a human being orientates him-/herself on the level of second- and thirdspace in the firstspace realities of the universe:

We transact with the external world through our bodies (which carry within their boundaries an inner world rich with meanings and spatiality); and by attempting to ignore the body we are suppressing a cosmos of feelings and legacies which is the stuff of being human. The body matrix not only gives us our essential knowledge of space, it also includes a palate of meanings, transparencies, central places, hard and soft edges, memories and the rhythms which constitute our human identity.

How this worldview and spatial orientation manifested itself in the religious experience of the ancient Near Eastern, including in ancient Israel, has been well documented (cf. Wyatt, 2001). In Section 3.3.3 the researcher will indicate how it manifests in the spatial constructions of *al-Islām*. In Chapter 4 she will indicate that this worldview and spatial orientation can be extrapolated and applied to the individual Muslim female body in *ḥijāb*.

3.3 ISLAMIC CONSTRUCTIONS OF SPACE AND PLACE

An analysis of Islamic constructions of space is per definition an analysis of the perceptions and constructions of, what Eliade (1959:62) calls "the religious experience of space." For a Muslim, life is lived "on a twofold plane; it takes its course as human existence and, at the same time, shares in a transhuman life" (Eliade, 1959:167). Islamic constructions of space in essence exemplify Eliade's (1959:171) assertion that "every human experience is capable of being transfigured, lived on a different, a transhuman plane." These observations imply that an analysis of Islamic constructions of space is not primarily an analysis of firstspace realities, but of secondspace abstractions and thirdspace experiences.

3.3.1 *Al-Islām*: a critical-spatial perspective

Following Shepard's (2009:2) multidimensional definition of the term *Islām* referred to above,¹¹⁹ a holistic analysis of *al-Islām* as a religious and cultural system calls for

¹¹⁹ Cf. Section 3.1.

an analysis of its firstspace realities, secondspace abstractions and thirdspace experiences all at the same time.¹²⁰

3.3.1.1 *Al-Islām*: firstspace realities¹²¹

There is no denying the fact that *al-Islām* is a firstspace reality (Soja, 1996:66-67). Esposito (1988:3) states that *al-Islām* “is indeed a world presence and force.” Following Lefebvre (1991:19), *al-Islām* can consequently be described in **physical** terms as a **perceived** space which “can be comprehended empirically by measurable configurations” (Schreiner, 2016:346). Its origin and development can be traced from its modest beginnings in the seventh century CE to the global religion and culture it has become in the twenty-first century. The aim of the present section is to briefly trace that development and reflect on *al-Islām* as a firstspace reality.

Ahmed (2002a:1) states:

The twenty-first century will be the century of Islam. Muslim civilization will be central to understanding where we will be moving in the future. Consider the facts: a population of 1.3 billion and growing; 55 states – and one of them nuclear; about 25 million living permanently in the West and many of them now making an impact on social, political, and economic life; and a religion that comes with commitment and passion.

Understanding Islam is therefore imperative to anyone wanting to make sense of living in the twenty-first century.

The prediction that *al-Islām* is growing fast is confirmed by recent statistics. According to a report published by the Pew Research Center, “The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010-2050” (Pew Research Center, 2015), an estimated 1.6 billion people in the world belonged to the Muslim faith in 2010 and the numbers were expected to increase to 2.8 billion by 2050. About 23% of the world population currently belongs to the Muslim faith, and the percentage is expected to increase to 30% by 2050. Consequently, in another report published recently by the Center, significantly titled “The Changing Global Religious Landscape” (Pew Research Center, 2017) it is argued that *al-Islām* is currently the fastest growing religion in the world. By 2035, the number of babies born to Muslims is expected to exceed births to Christians by a small margin.

¹²⁰ Cf. Section 2.3 for a discussion of *al-Islām* as an ecological system. In the present section, this system is analysed from a critical-spatial perspective.

¹²¹ Space does not allow for a detailed discussion of *al-Islām* as a firstspace reality. The researcher will briefly refer to the current state of *al-Islām* in the world in the light of its origins, divisions, and developments in the sixth and seventh century CE. This section is an updated and reworked version of Section 3.2 of the researcher’s MA dissertation (Bin Nafisah, 2015:49-54).

The researcher concurs with Ahmed's (2002a:1) assumption that understanding *al-Islām* as a firstspace reality is "imperative to anyone wanting to make sense of living in the twenty-first century." Brown (2009:5) remarks:

The contemporary Muslim community, the *umma*, is worldwide. Muslims live, work, raise families, and pray everywhere, from China to California, from Chile to Canada; there is almost no place on earth where Muslims have not settled. This simple fact turns out to be both easily forgotten and immensely important to understanding contemporary Islam. The modern Muslim diaspora is shaping the course of Islam, and of the world.

This massive firstspace presence grew from modest origins in the sixth and seventh centuries CE. *Al-Islām* was established in the narrow Northwest Arabian coastal region of *al-Hijāz* on the eastern shore of the Red Sea (Brown, 2009:19-32). The century before the emergence of *al-Islām* is known in the Muslim world as the *jāhiliyyah* period, literally the "time of ignorance" or the "time of barbarism" or the "age of ignorance" because the Arabs had "no dispensation, no inspired prophet, no revealed book" (Hitti, 1970:87; cf. also Ahmed, 2002b:29-30). The term appears in the *Qur'ān* in *Sūra* 3:148; 5:55; 33:33; 48:26 to refer to Arabia's pre-Islamic, pre-monotheistic period.¹²²

Muslims regard the birth of *al-Islām* through divine revelation to the Prophet Muḥammad ibn Abdullah (ﷺ)¹²³ as the last and final message from *Allāh* (God) to humankind.¹²⁴ Muḥammad (ﷺ) "was the last and greatest of the Apostles of God, sent as the Seal of Prophecy to bring the final revelation of God's word to mankind" (Lewis, 1970:47).¹²⁵ According to Esposito (1988:9), with this revelation

¹²² For a contextual understanding of the genesis of *al-Islām* it is important to take note of conditions in pre-Islamic Arabia as well as the pre-Islamic Near East. Especially important is the fact that *al-Islām* was born in a world dominated by two empires, the (Christian) Byzantine Empire and the (Persian) Sassanian Empire. Also important is the religious context of pre-Islamic Arabian idol worship as well as trends and tensions within and between various Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian groups. These issues, important as they are for a contextual interpretation of the Prophet Muḥammad's (ﷺ) calling and mission, as well as the early development and growth of Islam, do not have a direct bearing on the theme of the current study. Concise information regarding these issues is provided by Brown (2009:19-48) and Shepard (2009:13-27).

¹²³ In Arabic the Prophet's (ﷺ) full name is أبو القاسم محمد ابن عبد الله ابن عبد المطلب ابن هاشم "Abū al-Qāsim Muḥammad ibn 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib ibn Hāshim."

¹²⁴ In Arabic God is called *Allāh* الله. Smith (2002:13) explains the meaning of the Arabic word as follows: "Allah is formed by joining the definite article *al* (meaning 'the') with *ilah* (God). Not a god, for there is only one. Literally *Allāh* means 'The God.'" Hewer (2006:2) indicates that *Allāh* simply means "the one and only God." The noun *ilah* "god" also occurs in other Near Eastern languages like Hebrew, Aramaic and Syriac. In Arabic, however, it is used as the personal name of the one and only God.

¹²⁵ In Islamic tradition, Muḥammad is the last and final Messenger of *Allāh* in a chain of prophets starting with Adam and including figures well-known from Jewish and Christian tradition like Abraham, Ishmael, Joseph, Moses, David, Solomon, Jonah, and Jesus (Hewer, 2006:15-18).

... Muhammad joined that group of individuals whom Semitic faiths acknowledge as divinely inspired messengers or prophets of God. Muhammad continued to receive divine revelations over a period of twenty-two years (610-632). These messages were finally collected and written down in the Quran (“The Recitation”), Islam’s sacred scripture.

For Muslims, “Muḥammad cannot be located on any single plane, whether it be social, political, psychological, or religious. In history of religions terms, he is a paradigmatic figure” (Waugh, 1985:42), hence his Prophet-image can be taken “to be inexhaustible, that is, to carry with it meanings which may be developed and even explored beyond that found in its original setting” (Waugh, 1985:58).

The Prophet Muḥammad’s (ﷺ) “original setting” is reconstructed mainly from a literary genre known as السيرة النبوية *al-Sīrah al-Nabawīyyah* “the Prophetic Biography,” or سيرة رسول الله *Sīrat Rasūl Allāh* “Life of the Messenger of God,” or simply السيرة *al-Sīrah* “the Biography.”¹²⁶ The term refers to traditional Muslim biographies of Muḥammad (ﷺ). They are “the oldest Muslim historical material in Arabic to come down to us” (Waugh, 1985:49). In addition to the *Qur’ān* and *Ḥadīth* literature,¹²⁷ historical information about the Prophet (ﷺ) and the early period of *al-Islām* is derived from these Biographies.

The most famous example of this genre is the سيرة رسول الله *Sīrat Rasūl Allāh* “Life of the Messenger of God” by Muḥammad ibn Ishāq ibn Yasār (85 AH / 707 CE) (Waugh, 1985:49). This work “provides our first coherent outline of Muhammad’s career” (Brown, 2009:49). Ibn Ishāq’s work is not extant and is only available through the edited version of his text by the ninth century scholar, Ibn Hishām (Brown, 2009:50).¹²⁸

It should be noted that the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) never regarded himself as the founder of a “new” religion, but rather as a religious reformer. Esposito (1988:15) states:

Muḥammad maintained that he did not bring a new message from a new God but called people back to the one, true God and to a way of life that most of his contemporaries had forgotten or deviated from. Worship of Allāh was not the evolutionary emergence

¹²⁶ The noun سيرة *sīra* pl. سير *siyar* “conduct, demeanor, behaviour, biography, history” is derived from the root سير “to move, set out, travel, journey.” With the definite article (i.e., السيرة *al-Sīra*) it is used as a technical term to refer to a literary genre, namely the “biography” of the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ).

¹²⁷ Cf. Section 3.3.1.2.1.

¹²⁸ Ibn Ishāq’s monumental work is accessible in English via Alfred Guillaume’s translation (Guillaume, 1955).

of monotheism from polytheism but a return to a forgotten past, to the faith of the first monotheist, Abraham.

Muḥammad (ﷺ) called this “faith of the first monotheist” *Islām*, i.e., “submission” to the will of *Allāh* (Hamidullah, 1957:9).¹²⁹ The term occurs in *Sūra* 2:208; 3:19, 85; 5:3; 6:125; 9:74; 39:22; 49:17; 61:7. Hitti (1970:129) remarks that the “submission of Abraham and his son in the supreme test, the attempted sacrifice by the father, expressed in the verb *aslamā* (sūr. 37:103), was evidently the act that provided Muḥammad (ﷺ) with the name for the new faith.” Ibrāhīm (Abraham) “was neither a Jew nor a Christian but a *muslim*” (Arkoun, 1994:15) in the sense that the word

... indicates an ideal religious attitude symbolized by Abraham’s conduct in conformity with the Pact or Covenant (*mīthāq*) described in the Bible and the Qur’an. It is for this reason that Abraham is called the Father of the Believers. He incarnates the founding religious attitude of monotheism *before* the establishment of rituals and legislation that would eventually define and particularize the three monotheistic religions (Arkoun, 1994:15).

It can thus be argued that *al-Islām* as a firstspace reality regards Ibrāhīm as the firstspace founder of monotheism.

The Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) was born in 569-570 CE as a member of the *Banū Hāshim* clan of the Quraysh tribe – an important merchant tribe that controlled *Makka* and its *Ka‘ba* shrine.¹³⁰ Brown (2009:27) postulates:

The seventh-century city of Mecca allegedly had three features which rendered it suitable as the birthplace of a new religion and civilization: an important religious shrine,

¹²⁹ In Arabic الإسلام *al-’Islām* “the submission.” The noun (actually an infinitive used nominally) is related to the Semitic root سلم which has the connotations of “wholeness, safeness, peace.” For Muslims the word indicates the total and voluntary submission to the will of *Allāh*. Ahmed (2002b:12) indicates that the noun *al-Islām* is derived “from the root *s-l-m*, which means primarily ‘peace’ but in a secondary sense ‘surrender,’ its full connotation is ‘the peace that comes when one’s life is surrendered to God.’” An adherent of الإسلام is called a مسلم *Muslim*, the active participle of the same verbal root, i.e., someone who voluntarily submits to the will of *Allāh*.

¹³⁰ In Arabic الكعبة *al-Ka‘ba*, “the Cube.” It falls outside the scope of this study to discuss the *Ka‘ba* as firstspace (physical) reality in detail. “The flat-roofed building sits on a narrow marble base on mortared courses of blue-gray local stone, and its dimensions are not exactly cubical” (Peters, 2003:37). It is approximately 13 m high. The northeastern and southwestern walls are 12.86 m long, and the northwestern and southeastern walls slightly shorter at 11.03 m. The interior walls are clad with tiled, white marble halfway to the roof, with darker trimmings along the floor. The floor of the interior stands about 2.2 m above the outside ground area, with the building’s single door towards the eastern corner of the northeastern wall, also about 2.2 m above the outside ground level. Inside, “there is an empty room, with a marble floor, and three wooden pillars supporting the roof. There are some inscriptions on the walls, hanging votive lamps, and a ladder leading up to the roof. Built into the eastern corner of the Kaaba, about four feet above the ground, is a blackish stone of either lava or basalt, which is fractured and now held together by a silver band. The building is draped with black brocade cloth embroidered in gold with quranic texts; the bottom edge can be raised or lowered by a series of cords and rings” (Peters, 2003:37-38). The building’s “corners rather than the walls are orientated toward the compass points” (Peters, 2003:37).

the Ka'ba; an annual pilgrimage connected with the shrine; and a tribal ruling elite, the Quraysh, who adroitly leveraged control over shrine and pilgrimage to political and economical advantage.

Muḥammad's (ﷺ) father, 'Abdullāh, died before the baby's birth and his mother, Āminah when he was about six years old. He was raised first by his grandfather, 'Abd-al-Muṭṭalib, and upon his death by his paternal uncle, Abū Ṭālib (Hitti, 1970:111; Ahmed, 2002b:29-31). From a young age, Muḥammad (ﷺ) was involved in *Makka's* well-developed and thriving caravan trade. At the age of about 25, he was employed by a wealthy widow, Khadijah, as a steward for her trade caravans. He subsequently married her. The couple had six children. Two sons died in infancy, but four daughters survived beyond infancy (Ahmed, 2002b:31-33). Two daughters were subsequently married to the Prophet's (ﷺ) earliest followers. The eldest daughter, Zainab, was married to 'Uthmān, who would become the third Caliph after Muḥammad's (ﷺ) death. The youngest daughter, the well-known Fāṭimah, married 'Alī, who was to become the fourth Caliph after Muḥammad's (ﷺ) death (Esposito, 1988:8; Ahmed, 2002b:33).

Muḥammad (ﷺ) was often noticed where he secluded himself in a cave (*ghār*) on a hill outside *Makka* called *Hirā'*. During one of these periods towards the end of the month of Ramadan in August of 610 CE when Muḥammad (ﷺ) was about forty years old, he experienced his first revelation (*waḥy*) when the archangel Gabriel revealed to him the words of *Sūra* 96:1-5 (Hitti, 1970:112; Esposito, 1988:9; Ahmed, 2002b:33-35), accepted as "the first direct Revelation to the holy Prophet" (Yusuf Ali, 1967:1760):

(قَالَ اللهُ تَعَالَى)	(Allāh the Exalted said:)
أَفْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ	¹ Proclaim in the Name of your Lord
الَّذِي خَلَقَ	who created.
خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ	² He created humankind from a clot of blood.
أَفْرَأْ	³ Proclaim!
وَرَبُّكَ الْأَكْرَمُ	And your Lord is most generous,
الَّذِي عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ	⁴ He who taught by the pen,
عَلَّمَ الْإِنْسَانَ	⁵ (He who) taught humankind
مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ	what he knew not.

Sūra 96:1-5 (العلق) al-'alaq / *The Clot of Blood*:1-5

The hill is known as the *Jabal an-Nur* ("the mountain of light") and the night of the first revelation as the لَيْلَةُ الْقَدْرِ *laylat al-qadr* ("the night of power") (Hamidullah, 1957:7; Smith, 2002:17; Ahmed, 2002b:33-35). That was the beginning of Muḥammad's (ﷺ)

public office as a prophet in *Makka*. Among the first converts to his message of absolute monotheism was his wife Khadījah and his cousin 'Alī, later to become the fourth Caliph (Lewis, 1970:39).

After the initial revelation, a period of about three years passed during which the Prophet (ﷺ) devoted himself to prayer and spiritual enrichment. He also had to endure the scorn of some of his fellow tribesmen who heard about the revelation he received in *Ghār Ḥirā'*. As revelations to Muḥammad (ﷺ) returned and increased and he turned towards more aggressive proclamation of his monotheistic message, so opposition against him and his followers grew. Some followers of the Prophet (ﷺ) moved to Abyssinia in 615 CE. Muḥammad (ﷺ) fearlessly continued his preaching in *Makka*, but at the same time prepared for him and his followers to leave the city as opposition against his teaching and persecution of his followers increased (Hamidullah, 1957:8-9).

During the three years before he left *Makka*, three important incidents occurred in the Prophet's (ﷺ) life. First, his beloved wife Khadījah died, then his uncle, protector, and leader of the Banū Hāshim, Abū Ṭālib, also died. In this period also falls "the dramatic *isrā'*, that nocturnal journey in which the Prophet (ﷺ) is said to have been instantly transported from al Ka'bah to Jerusalem preliminary to his ascent (*mi'rāj*) to the seventh heaven" (Hitti, 1970:114). Around 620 CE, some tribes from Yathrib (*al-Madīna*) met the Prophet (ﷺ) and showed interest in his message. In 622 CE, a delegation from Yathrib invited him to relocate to their city. Preceded first by about two hundred of his followers, the Prophet (ﷺ) finally arrived in *al-Madīna* on 24 September 622 CE – the official birth date of *al-Islām* (Hitti, 1970:116; Ahmed, 2002b:35-37). The *hijrah* "migration" introduced a new era in Muḥammad's (ﷺ) prophetic activity. He became leader of a community, which he could govern according to the principles he initially preached in *Makka* (Lewis, 1970:41).

Enmity between the Prophet's (ﷺ) followers in *al-Madīna* and his kinsmen in *Makka* continued to exist. In March 2 AH / 624 CE, three hundred Muslims under Muḥammad's (ﷺ) leadership attacked a caravan from *Makka* at Badr. In the spring of 5 AH / 627 CE an army from *Makka* besieged *al-Madīna*, but soon had to withdraw. In the spring of 6 AH / 628 CE Muḥammad (ﷺ) led an army against *Makka*. The initially hostile expedition soon became a peaceful pilgrimage. Negotiations ensued and the Muslims were granted the right of pilgrimage to the *Ka'ba* once a year and to stay in *Makka* for three days. After more tension between the two cities *Makka* was finally subdued in January 8 AH / 630 CE. The mission of the Prophet (ﷺ) was now virtually fulfilled. Little is known about his activities in the final years of his life. In March 632, Muḥammad

(ﷺ) made what is known as his “Farewell Pilgrimage” to *Makka*. He then set the precedents for future pilgrimages to the *Makka* with the *Ka‘ba* as the focal point of the event. Since then, the area around *Makka* has been regarded as *ḥarām* “forbidden” for non-Muslims. He delivered his famous Last Sermon (خطبة الوداع *Khuṭbatu l-Wadā‘*) in the Uranah valley of Mount Arafat on the ninth day of *Dhū l-Hijjah* (Ahmed, 2002b:39-40; El Guindi, 2008:124-126; Brown, 2009:66-67).¹³¹ After a short illness he died on 8 June 10 AH / 632 CE (Lewis, 1970:45-47).

Upon the death of Muḥammad (ﷺ), the Near and Middle East were divided between the Christian Byzantine Empire and the Sassanid Persian Empire. Within the next century, the so-called “wars of conquest” led to the demise of these empires and the establishment of a new empire. Hitti (1970:121) states: “From al-Madīnah the Islamic theocracy spread all over Arabia and later encompassed the larger part of Western Asia and North Africa.”

There was no tradition of hereditary leadership among the Arabian tribes at the time of Muḥammad’s (ﷺ) death. Hence, the question of who should be Muḥammad’s (ﷺ) successor led to a crisis that was resolved by three of Muḥammad’s (ﷺ) oldest friends and closest companions, Abū Bakr, ‘Umar, and Abū ‘Ubaida. They appointed Abū Bakr “as sole successor of the Prophet” (Lewis, 1970:51). Abū Bakr was given the title of *Khalīfa* “deputy, successor” of the Prophet (ﷺ). It is called “Caliph” in English. Abū Bakr’s election “marks the inauguration of the great historic institution of the Caliphate” (Lewis, 1970:51).

With Abū Bakr’s reign in 10 AH / 632 CE commenced the period of the four “Orthodox, Righteous, Rightly Guided” Caliphs (*ar-Rāshidūn*).¹³² The period of their reign is known as the period of *aṣ-ṣaḥābah* (literally, the Companions),¹³³ when *al-Islām* was led and influenced by people who knew the Prophet (ﷺ) personally and were his friends and family. The four *ar-Rāshidūn* lead the fledgling Islamic movement from 10-40 AH / 632-661 CE as follows: Abū Bakr (10-12 AH / 632-634 CE); ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (12-23 AH / 634-644 CE); Uthmān (23-36 AH / 644-656 CE); ‘Alī (36-41 AH / 656-661 CE). The period saw the writing down and finalisation of the *Qur’ān*, the growth of Islamic tradition, and the spread of *al-Islām* through the entire Arabian

¹³¹ Cf. Section 3.3.1.2 and 3.3.2.2.

¹³² In Arabic الخلفاء الراشدين *al-Khulafā‘u ar-Rāshidūn* “the Rightly Guided Caliphs.”

¹³³ In Arabic الصحابة *aṣ-ṣaḥābah* “the Companions.”

Peninsula, Syria, Iraq, Persia, and North Africa.¹³⁴ Adherents of this group came to be known as the *Sunnī* (traditionalists, orthodox).¹³⁵

After the leadership of the four *ar-Rāshidūn*, various successive caliphats reigned over the expanding Muslim *Umma*: It falls outside the scope of the present study to discuss the history of *al-Islām*'s spectacular spread during the first two centuries of the Islamic era,¹³⁶ or to give an overview of its subsequent trials, tribulations, and triumphs.¹³⁷ The first caliphate was the Umayyad caliphate with its capital at Damascus (41-132 AH / 661-750 CE). The dynasty was defeated by the 'Abbāsīd caliphate with its capital at Baghdād (132-656 AH / 750-1258 CE). The so-called Fāṭimid caliphate ruled in Egypt from 296-566 AH / 909-1171 CE. Another Umayyad caliphate ruled from Cordova in Spain from 317-422 AH / 929-1031 CE. The last Islamic caliphate was non-Arab, that of the Ottoman Turks in Constantinople (923-1342 AH / 1517-1924 CE) (Hitti, 1970:179-184; Lewis, 1970:64-130; Esposito, 1988:37-67; Brown, 2009:103-146, 217-248). The present study can also not trace the history of the global spread of *al-Islām* during and after the West's colonial dominance in the nineteenth and until the mid-twentieth century. It is sufficient to note the fact referred to at the beginning of this section, namely that *al-Islām* indeed at present is a global firstspace entity (Esposito, 1988:162-202; Brown, 2009:249-298).

The advent of *al-Islām* brought an end to what is known in Muslim tradition as the *Jāhiliyyah* (Arabic: جَاهِلِيَّة "ignorance"), the Islamic portrayal of the period before the dawn of the new era of monotheistic faith in Arabia. It is often translated as the "Age of Ignorance" or the "Age of Barbarism." The noun is derived from the root جهل *jahala* "to be ignorant, stupid, act stupidly." Pre-Islamic Arabia was a Bedouin tribal society, with "various tribes pursuing a pastoral and nomadic lifestyle" (Esposito, 1988:5), with the landscape "dotted with oasis towns and cities" (Esposito, 1988:5). Two prominent cities were "Mecca, a centre of trade and commerce, and Yathrib (Medina), an important agricultural settlement" (Esposito, 1988:5). Of paramount importance was

¹³⁴ For the purpose of this study, the historical detail is not important. Cf. Hitti (1970:139-186) for a detailed discussion.

¹³⁵ *Sunnī* (سُنِّي *sunnī* pl. *ūn* "Sunnitic, Sunnite") is derived from the Arabic noun سُنَّة *sunna* "well-trodden path, custom, practice." The noun refers in the first place to the example that "the prophet Muḥammad laid down either by word, deed, or tacit approval" (Nigosian, 2004:45) as it is recorded in the tradition (*ḥadīth*). Adherents of this example are known as أهل السنة والجماعة "people of the tradition (of Muḥammad) and the consensus (of the *umma*)." The *umma* (أمة) refers to the broader Muslim community.

¹³⁶ For a brief discussion of the early history of *al-Islām*, cf. Hewer (2006:60-74); Shepard (2009:38-51).

¹³⁷ For a brief discussion of *al-Islām* "in the world," cf. Miller and Kenedi (2002:75-164); Shepard (2009:195-282).

“tribal ties, group loyalty or solidarity (*asabiyya*), as the source of power for a clan or tribe” (Esposito, 1988:5). The religion of Arabia “reflected its tribal nature and social structure. Gods and goddesses served as protectors of individual tribes, and their spirits were associated with sacred object – trees, stones, springs, and wells” (Esposito, 1988:5).

The advent of *al-Islām* radically influenced Arabian society. Hamidullah (1957:16) summarises the Prophet (ﷺ) and *al-Islām*’s contribution to the world as follows:

He bequeathed to posterity, a religion of pure monotheism; he created a well-disciplined State out of existent chaos and gave peace in place of the war of everybody against everybody else; he established a harmonious equilibrium between the spiritual and the temporal, between the mosque and the citadel; he left a new system of law, which dispensed impartial justice, in which the head of State was as much subject to it as any commoner, and in which religious tolerance was so great that non-Muslim inhabitants of Muslim countries enjoyed complete juridical, judicial and cultural autonomy.

3.3.1.2 *Al-Islām: Secondspatial representations*¹³⁸

Since its inception in the eighth century CE, *al-Islām* did not present only a firstspace reality, but also engaged in lively *mental* reflections on what it means to be Muslim. These secondspatial reflections (Soja, 1996:66-67) are intricately linked to its firstspace realities. An analysis of *al-Islām*’s *mental* space (Lefebvre, 1991:19) will illuminate the logical and formal abstractions associated with Muḥammad’s (ﷺ) life and teachings and their implications for his followers. Following Lefebvre (1991:39), this section will briefly reflect on *al-Islām*’s **conceived space**, or on Islamic representations and conceptualizations of space. The researcher will argue that *al-Islām*, as a firstspace reality, cannot be separated from secondspatial reflections on the religion that guide adherents of *al-Islām* to this day. These reflections represent “space produced by language, metaphor, and ideology” (Maier, 2008:103) and can be classified as “Islamic tradition.” This tradition shapes and directs Muslim identity, both individually and collectively. The researcher will focus upon the sources serving as the foundation of Islamic tradition and, as indicated in the previous section, briefly discuss the core beliefs of *Sunnī* Muslim theology. Following Nigosian (2004:45), the researcher defines the term *Sunnī* as follows:

The term Sunni indicates the traditional way of the consolidated majority of the Islamic community as opposed to the *Shīʿī* (partisan) dissenters.

¹³⁸ This section is an updated and reworked version of Section 3.3 of the researcher’s MA dissertation (Bin Nafisah, 2015:54-62).

Sunnī Muslims constitute about 80 percent of the world’s Muslim population (Brown, 2009:9-10). Their constructions of space will be the focus point in the remainder of this chapter.

3.3.1.2.1 Sources

The researcher’s starting point in her discussion of *al-Islām*’s secondspatial representations of the firstspace realities elucidated in the previous section, is the **sources** that are used to define the term “Islamic tradition.” These sources are fourfold, the first two are primary sources and the last two secondary. The **primary sources** are the *Qur’ān* and the *Sunna* (practice) of the Prophet (ﷺ) as it finds expression in the *Ḥadīth* literature. The **secondary sources** are the **Sharī’a** “canonical law” and **Fiqh** “jurisprudence” (Shepard, 2009:124-125).

Prime position belongs to the **Qur’ān**.¹³⁹ The Holy Book of *al-Islām* was revealed to the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) gradually over a period of roughly 22 years, from the initial revelation in August of 610 CE until his death in 11 AH / 632 CE. Three perspectives are important in an analysis of the *Qur’ān*’s role in *al-Islām*’s secondspatial representations. First, for Muslims the *Qur’ān* literally represents the Word of God. Esposito (1988:20) states:

For Muslims, the Quran is the Book of God (*kitab al-Allāh*). It is the eternal, uncreated, literal word of God (*kalam Allāh*) sent down from heaven, revealed one final time to the Prophet Muhammad as a guide for humankind (2:185).

Hewer (2006:45) explains the significance of this belief as follows:

In Islam, God speaks, and what God speaks cannot be defined as a separate reality... In the Qur’anic model, the Qur’an is literally the Speech of God in book form or *inliblate*, as one might say, to use a Greek term. This may be contrasted to the Christian theological understanding of Jesus as the Word of God *incarnate*, that is in human form.¹⁴⁰

The *Qur’ān* is regarded as “the earthly deposit of the Speech of God in Arabic,” but in the transcendent world, the world of God, there exists the *Kalam Allāh*. This is the speech or self-communication of God. It exists only in the transcendent world and not here on earth” (Hewer, 2006:46). The *Kalam Allāh* “is contained on the Preserved Tablet, *al-Lawh al-Mahfuz*, in the transcendent world (Q. 85.21-22). From here it has

¹³⁹ In Arabic القرآن *al-qur’ān*, literally meaning “the recitation.” The word is a verbal noun of the Arabic verb قرأ *qara’a* “he read, he recited.”

¹⁴⁰ According to Smith (2002:21), the comparison between Christ and the *Qur’ān* can be stated as follows: “If Christ is God incarnate, the Qur’an is God Inlibriate.” “Inlibriate” is derived from the Latin *liber* “book.” The comparison emphasizes that “the created Qur’an is the formal crystallization of the infinite reality of the Uncreated Qur’an.”

been sent down to various Prophets in various languages throughout human history” (Hewer, 2006:46).

Second, for Muslims the *Qur’ān* represents God’s word sent down “one final time” (Esposito, 1988:22). God revealed Himself to humanity in several forms, in “nature, history, and Scripture” (Esposito, 1988:20). As Scripture, the *Kalam Allāh* has been sent to *Ibrāhīm* (Abraham) in Hebrew as *Suhuf* “leaves, sheaves” (*Sūra* 4:163), to *Musa* (Moses) in Hebrew as *Taurat* “Law” (cf. the Hebrew Bible concept of Torah; *Sūra* 6:91-92). To *Dawud* (David) it has been sent in Hebrew as *Zabur* “Psalms” (*Sūra* 17:55). *’Isa* (Jesus) received it in Aramaic as *Injil* “Gospel” (*Sūra* 5:46). These Scripture have all been taken from *Allāh*’s “heavenly Scripture (*al-Kitāb*, or *Umm al-Kitāb*, ‘Mother of the Book,’ i.e., the Book *par excellence*)” (Graham, 1985:29). From a Muslim perspective, the Scripture as revealed to the other prophets is incomplete, carelessly copied and preserved, and thus not reliable (Hewer, 2006:46-50). Finally, the *Kalam Allāh* was revealed one last time to the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) (*Sūra* 2:97) in Arabic (*Sūra* 41:44; 42:51-52; 43:1-5). Graham (1985:29) argues that

... the character of the Qur’ān as the verbatim speech of God sets it apart. Whereas the divine presence is manifest for Jews in the Law and for Christians in the person of Christ, it is in the Qur’ān that Muslims directly encounter God.

Third, the most appropriate translation of the Arabic noun القرآن *al-qur’ān* is “The Recitation.” According to Arkoun (1994:30), “in the word ‘Qur’an’ itself, the root *q-r-* has the sense of reciting more than of reading” (cf. *Sūra* 75:16-17). The “principal idea is that of a recitation conforming to a discourse that is heard, not read” (Arkoun, 1994:30). It is as a discourse that is **heard** that the *Qur’ān* has been revealed to Muḥammad (ﷺ). Arkoun (1994:31) indicates that the Islamic conception of revelation is important. He states:

The Islamic conception of revelation is called *tanzīl* (“descent”), a fundamental metaphor for the vertical gaze human beings are invited to cast toward God, transcendence. *Tanzīl* refers to the object of a revelation; the Qur’an speaks also of *waḥy*, which is the very act of revelation by God to the prophets.

Graham (1985:30) emphasises that “the primary and most authoritative form of the qur’ānic text, unlike the biblical, is oral, not written.” It is “indeed as a recited text above all that the Qur’ān has played its major role in the piety and practice of Muslims” (Graham, 1985:30). This significant role of the *Qur’ān* will be investigated in Section 3.3.2.3.

The *Qur'ān* consists of 114 *Suwar* “chapters,”¹⁴¹ each in turn subdivided into a number of *āyāt* “verses” (literally, signs).¹⁴² Each *Sūra* has a name or title taken from a prominent or unusual word in the *Sūra*. With one exception (*Sūra* 9), each *Sūra* commences with the *Bismillah*, i.e., the phrase *بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ* “In the Name of *Allāh*, the Compassionate, the Merciful.” The first *Sūra*, *al-Fatiḥah* “the Opening” is a short prayer. The last two *Suwar*, *al-Falaq* “the Dawn” (*Sūra* 113) and *al-Nās* “the Mankind” (*Sūra* 114) are short prayers promising God’s help against human and spiritual onslaughts. The remaining 111 *Suwar* are arranged roughly according to length, from *Sūra* 2 with its 286 *āyāt* to *Sūra* 112 containing only four *āyāt* (Watt, 1970:58). *Suwar* thus do not appear in the chronological order in which they have been revealed to the Prophet (ﷺ). It is generally accepted that the shorter *Suwar* appearing in mainly the latter part of the *Qur'ān* belong to the earlier (*Makka*) period of the Prophet’s (ﷺ) mission, while the longer *Suwar* in the first part belong to the *al-Madīna* phase of his mission (Watt, 1970:108-109). In traditional Muslim scholarship, 86 *Suwar* are assigned to the *Makka* period and 28 to the *al-Madīna* period.¹⁴³

In general it can be said that

... the verses revealed prior to the Hijrah concentrated on Aqīdah (theology and doctrine) establishing the existence of *Allāh* and responding to the non-Muslims and reaffirming the finality of the prophethood of the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) in the hearts of the believers” (Ahmed, 2005:18).

However, after the establishment of the Muslim community in *al-Madīna*

... more and more of the laws were revealed in order to govern the affairs and lives of the individuals and the community and the newly founded Islamic State (Ahmed, 2005:18).

It falls outside the scope of this study to discuss views on the scribal activities resulting in the eventual standardization of the *Qur'ānic* text, traditionally believed to have

¹⁴¹ In Arabic سورة *sūra*, pl. سور *suwar*. It should be noted that “chapter” is not an exact rendition of the way the word is used in the *Qur'ān* itself (cf. *Sūra* 10:38; 11:13; 28:49). In the *Qur'ān* the word is used in the sense of “revelation” or “Scripture” (Watt, 1970:58).

¹⁴² In Arabic آية *āya*; plural آيات *āyāt*.

¹⁴³ According to the traditional Muslim view, the *Makkan Suwar* in chronological order are: 96, 68, 73, 74, 1, 111, 81, 87, 92, 89, 93, 94, 103, 100, 108, 102, 107, 109, 105, 113, 114, 112, 53, 80, 97, 91, 85, 95, 106, 101, 75, 104, 77, 50, 90, 86, 54, 38, 7, 72, 36, 25, 35, 19, 20, 56, 26, 27, 28, 17, 10, 11, 12, 15, 6, 37, 31, 34, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 51, 88, 18, 16, 71, 14, 21, 23, 32, 52, 67, 69, 70, 78, 79, 82, 84, 30, 29, 83. The *Madīnan Suwar* in chronological order are: 2, 8, 3, 33, 60, 4, 99, 57, 47, 13, 55, 76, 65, 98, 59, 24, 22, 63, 58, 49, 66, 64, 61, 62, 48, 5, 9, 110. Cf. in this regard four articles by 'Allamah Abū 'Abd Allāh al-Zajani originally published in Persian in the journal *al-Tawḥīd* 4/3 (1407 AH = 1987) and 5/1-3 (1408 AH = 1988) under the title “The history of the Qur'an Part 1-4.” It was translated into English by Mahliqa Qara'i and is available online as a single PDF document at <http://www/tanzil.net/pub/ebooks/History-of-Quran.pdf>. Accessed 28/02/2018.

happened during the reign of the third Caliph of *al-Islām*, Uthmān (23-36 AH / 644-656 CE). This history has been and still is the subject of intense debate.¹⁴⁴ What is important in a study on the role of the *Qur'ān* in Islamic constructions of space is the following remark by Hewer (2006:52):

It must be emphasized repeatedly that the primary deposit of the Qur'an was and still is in the hearts of the memorizers, for whom any written form acted only as an *aide memoire*. This emphasis prevents any thoughts of discrepancies entering into the recited text.

Muslims believe that *Allāh* will preserve the *Qur'ān* “intact without error for all time (Q. 15:9). This is regarded as the primary miracle of Islam” (Hewer, 2006:52). It explains a Muslim’s reverence for the *Qur'ān* and the important role it plays in the life of individual Believers, the Muslim *umma* and in Islamic constructions of space. These themes will be discussed in Section 3.3.2.3.

The second primary source for the construction of *al-Islām*’s secondspatial representations is the **Sunna**. It contains “the statements, actions, acknowledgements and descriptions of the Prophet Muḥammad” (Ahmed, 2005:19), and sometimes wider anecdotes from his companions as well (Hitti, 1970:242).¹⁴⁵ The process of relating and recording the *sunna* of the Prophet (ﷺ) already commenced in his lifetime, and increased steadily after his death as those who were eyewitnesses of his *sunna* documented it in order to preserve it for posterity. Hewer (2006:143) states that “the teaching and lived example of Muhammad was the model or pattern for putting the guidance of the Qur’an into daily life.” This documentation came to be known as the **Ḥadīth literature**, “which contain what Muhammad said, did and the things of which he approved” (Hewer, 2006:54).¹⁴⁶ Characteristically, a *ḥadīth* consists of two parts: (1) a chain of authorities (*isnād*) who could attest to the historical reliability of the *ḥadīth* and could ultimately be traced back to an eyewitness of the Prophet’s (ﷺ) *sunna*, and (2) the text of the *ḥadīth* in question (*matn*) (Hitti, 1970:394).¹⁴⁷ In the third Muslim century the vast number of *aḥādīth* had eventually

¹⁴⁴ For an overview of this theme, cf. Arkoun (1994:35-40); Hewer (2006:52-53); Shepard (2009:66-68).

¹⁴⁵ In Arabic سنة *sunna* “well-trodden path, custom, practice.”

¹⁴⁶ In Arabic حديث *ḥadīth*, pl. أحاديث *aḥādīth* “report, account, narrative.” In a technical sense the noun refers to “Prophetic tradition, narrative relating deeds and utterances of the Prophet and his Companions.” The noun is derived from the root حدث “to happen, occur, take place, come to pass,” II “to tell, relate, report.”

¹⁴⁷ Literally thousands of *aḥādīth* circulated in the first two or three centuries after the death of the Prophet (ﷺ), some reliable eye-witness reports of Companions of the Prophet, others fabrications of people who never met the Prophet or his Companions. Consequently the “science of *ḥadīth*” developed to test and confirm the reliability of every single *Ḥadīth*. In a “perfect” *ḥadīth*, the “chain” of witnesses

been compiled “into six books which have since become standard” (Hitti, 1970:395). The most authoritative of these is the *al-Ṣaḥīḥ* (the genuine collection) of Muḥammad ibn-Ismā‘īl al-Bukhārī (194-256 AH / 810-870) who arranged his *aḥādīth* according to subject matter (Hitti, 1970:395). Also highly valued are the *al-Ṣaḥīḥ* of Muslim ibn-al-Ḥajjāj (199-261 AH / 815-875), the *Sunan* (customs) Abī Dāwūd of al-Baṣrah (d. 275 AH / 888), the *Jāmi‘* (summary) of at-Tirmidhi (d. 279 AH / 892), the *Sunan* Ibn-Mājah of Qazwin (d. 273 AH / 886 /) and the *Sunan* al-Nasā‘i (d. 302 AH / 915; Hitti, 1970:395).¹⁴⁸

Related to the *Ḥadīth* literature are various *Tafsīr* (interpretation, commentary)¹⁴⁹ on the *Qur’ān*. A *Tafsīr* explains the content of the *Qur’ān*, provides additional information such as places and times not given in the *Qur’ān*, and often engages in discussions of different views and opinions of scholars. Of importance in the context of this study are the following commentaries: the *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān* by Muḥammad ibn-Jarīr al-Ṭabari (223-311 AH / 838-923), the *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān* by Ismail ibn Kathīr (699-775 AH / 1300-1373), and the *Tafsīr al-Jalaylan* (the two “Jalals”), i.e., Jalal al-Din al-Mahalli (d. 863 AH / 1459), and his pupil Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti (d. 911 AH / 1505) (Hitti, 1970:390-391; Hewer, 2006:54).¹⁵⁰

The two **secondary sources**, namely the **Sharī‘a** “canonical law” and **Fiqh** “jurisprudence” became important in the context of the rapidly growing Islamic Ummayyad and Abbasid Empires. The *Qur’ān* contains more than six thousand verses. Only about two hundred verses, especially in the Medinan *Suwar* 2 and 4, “may be classed as strictly legislative. It soon became evident that these statutes were not sufficient to cover all cases – civil, criminal, political, financial – which might and did arise under new conditions and varied situations encountered in Syria, al-‘Iraq and other conquered territories” (Hitti, 1970:397; cf. also Ahmed, 2005:18). The “two scriptural sources of Islamic law, the *Qur’ān* and the Sunna,” needed to be “extrapolated and applied to new situations” (Brown, 2009:158). Scholars studying

ultimately lead back to the Prophet (ﷺ). *Aḥādīth* are classified according to their reliability as صحيح *ṣaḥīḥ* “sound,” حسن *ḥasan* “good,” ضعف *ḍa‘īf* “weak” or موضوع *maudū‘* “fabricated, forged” (Hitti, 1970:393-396; Ahmed, 2005:21). For a summary of the “Science of *Ḥadīth*” cf. <http://www.islamic-awareness.org/Hadith/Ulum/hadsciences.html> (Accessed 20/02/2018).

¹⁴⁸ The Arabic text and an English translation of all six these sources are available online at <http://sunnah.com/> under the title “The Hadith of the Prophet Muḥammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم) at your fingertips.” The researcher made extensive use of this online source in sections 3.4 and 3.5.

¹⁴⁹ In Arabic تفسير *tafsīr* “interpretation,” the Arabic word for exegesis.

¹⁵⁰ The *Tafsīr* Ibn Kathir is available online in Arabic with English translation at <http://qtafsir.com/> under the title Quran Tafsir Ibn Kathir. The *Tafsīr* al-Jalaylan is available online in Arabic with English translation at <http://www.altafsir.com/>. The researcher made extensive use of these online sources in sections 3.4 and 3.5.

the *Qur'ān* and *Ḥadīth*, known as the '*ulama*' "knowers, learned,"¹⁵¹ started to develop principles for the application of the Islamic code of life to new contexts and circumstances (Shepard, 2009:114). These learned men became the experts in *Sharī'a* "law."

The ***Sharī'a*** (الشرعة) refers to the revealed or canonical law of *al-Islām*. The noun is derived from the root شرع "to enter, begin, prescribe, make laws." The word "literally means a road or highway; a well-beaten path that leads to a definite place" (Hewer, 2006:139). It often denotes a path leading to water. Its symbolism when used in the technical sense of "canon law" is clear. It indicates "the path God has laid out for us to walk in our lives to reach the waters of true life" (Shepard, 2009:124). The term refers to the basic Islamic legal system, which is derived from the precepts of *al-Islām* as revealed to humankind through the Prophets in general, and through the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) in particular, as recorded in the *Qur'ān* and the *Ḥadīth*. Each Prophet "set a pattern or model of *Islamic* living for their followers to initiate. When this pattern is later drawn up as a complete code of life" in the *Qur'ān* and the *Sunna* of the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ), "it is called a *sharī'a*" (Hewer, 2006:139). *Sharī'a* thus refers to the "totality of God's requirements for human behavior," and to "Islamic law in its ideal form" (Brown, 2009:306). It is "a divinely ordained way that the Prophet implemented and human beings are to follow in obedience to the will of God" (Hewer, 2006:139). Muslims regard the "Sharī'a of Islam" as "the final, most perfect and universal *Sharī'a*" (Hewer, 2006:140).

The *Sharī'a* is not "a set of 'dos' and 'don'ts'" but "a moral classification of actions. In principle all possible human actions can be placed in one of five categories (*ahkam*, sing. *hukm* (valuations or qualifications)" (Shepard, 2009:125). They are:

- *Fard* or *wajib* "obligatory": It refers to actions that must be performed by all Muslims. Some of these are *fard 'ayn*, i.e., obligations required of every Muslim, such as "the principal religious duties of *salat*, *sawm* and so on" (Hewer, 2006:147). Others are *fard kifaya*, i.e., obligations required of the community, "but the obligation can be discharged by a group of people on behalf of the whole, such as looking for the new moon or taking part in the funeral prayers for a deceased Muslim" (Hewer, 2006:147).
- *Sunna* or *masnun* "recommended": It refers to obligations that are "highly desirable but not required" (Shepard, 2009:125), such as "giving the greeting *salam alaykum* when one Muslim meets another" (Hewer, 2006:147).

¹⁵¹ In Arabic علم *alīm* pl. علماء '*ulamā*' "knowing, informed, learned, erudite." The noun is derived from the root علم '*alima*' "to know, have knowledge, perceive, discern."

- *Mubah* or *jaiz* “permissible, neutral”: It refers to acts “to which the Shari‘a is indifferent” and “neither reward nor punishment is attached to such actions” (Hewer, 2006:147). Examples of this category are “choice of career or literary tastes, provided that they fall within the boundaries of acceptable norms of Shari‘a” (Hewer, 2006:147).
- *Makruh* “reprehensible”: These actions “are disapproved of but no specific punishment is attached if they are committed,” like smoking tobacco (Hewer, 2006:147).
- *Haram* “forbidden”: For these actions, “one is punished by God for committing them and rewarded for avoiding them. Among the best known examples are the consumption of wine or pork and the committing of murder, robbery and fornication” (Shepard, 2009:126).

During the lifetime of Muḥammad (ﷺ), the *Qur’ān* and the *Sunna* were sufficient as *uṣūl al-fiqh* “the roots of jurisprudence.” After the death of the Prophet (ﷺ) and due to the spectacular growth of *al-Islām*, however, additional methods were needed “for guidance to be given based on the Qur’an and Sunna” (Hewer, 2006:140). The science of ***Fiqh*** “understanding” arose. *Fiqh* “was the science through which the canon law of *al-Islām* (shari‘ah), the totality of *Allāh*’s commandments as revealed in the Koran and elaborated in the *ḥadīth*, was communicated to later generations” (Hitti, 1970:396; cf. Ahmed, 2005:23-25). *Fiqh* “came to mean the practical understanding of the Qur’an and the Sunna that allowed one to apply them to actual situations in life and actual cases that came before courts” (Shepard, 2009:125). It developed into “one of the most important aspects in the life of a Muslim, because it provides the individual with rulings for the practical aspects of his daily life” (Ahmed, 2005:7).¹⁵² The experts in *fiqh* are called *faqih*s (Shepard, 2009:125).

To the two principal *uṣūl al-fiqh* “roots of jurisprudence” (the *Qur’ān* and the *Sunna*), the following secondary principles came to full fruition in the time after Muḥammad’s (ﷺ) death (Ahmed, 2005:18).¹⁵³

- *Ijtihad* “effort”: It can be defined as “the *faqih* putting forth all of the effort he is capable of in order to solve a case” (Shepard, 2009:127). It refers to “the toil and

¹⁵² In Arabic *fiqh* فقه “deep understanding, full comprehension.” In Modern Standard Arabic it is the technical term for “jurisprudence.”

¹⁵³ Ahmed (2005:18-111) identifies four stages in the development of *Fiqh*. The first stage is the period of the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) and can be classified as the developmental and foundational stage (Ahmed, 2005:18-36). The second stage is from the death of the Prophet (ﷺ) until the end of the second century AH (Ahmed, 2005:37-68). The third stage can be called the period of maturity from 300-400 AH (Ahmed, 2005:69-88). The final stage is from the beginning of the fifth century AH until the present (Ahmed, 2005:89-111).

effort exerted by a scholar in seeking to discover the intent of the Lawgiver on a given point of law” (Brown, 2009:158).

- *Qiyās* “analogical reasoning”: It occurs “when we apply the ruling of a former issue to a new issue because of a common reason or factor” (Ahmed, 2005:23). When “the rationale (*illa*) of a command is known, other similar cases can be judged according to the same rationale” (Brown, 2009:158).
- *Ijmā’* “consensus”: It is defined “as the agreement and consensus of the Mujtahids of the Muslim community after the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) in a particular era on a specific ruling” (Ahmed, 2005:23).
- *Maslaha* “welfare”: It refers to the welfare of the Muslim community. When the other approaches do not give a definitive result, “the one that is in the best interests of the community” (Shepard, 2009:128) is preferred.

The science of *Fiqh* gave rise to different schools of jurisprudence (*madhhab*).¹⁵⁴ For the purposes of this study, a complete discussion of the subject is impossible.¹⁵⁵ The researcher briefly refers to the four *Sunnī madhāhib*.¹⁵⁶

- **The *Ḥanīfī madhhab***: The founder of this *madhhab* was Abū Ḥanīfah al-Nu’mān ibn-Thābit (80-150 AH / 699-767 CE) of Persian descent. He was influential in al-Kūfah and Baghdād in al-Irāq. He imparted his teachings orally to his followers. One of them, Abū-Yūsuf (d. 182 AH / 798 CE), preserved his master’s teachings in his *Kitāb al-Kharāj*. The Hanīfite *madhhab* emphasised the importance of analogical deduction and is regarded as the most moderate school of jurisprudence. In contemporary *al-Islām* its followers can be found in Turkey, the Balkans, Central Asia, the Indian subcontinent, China and Egypt (Hitti, 2007:397-398).
- **The *Mālikī madhhab***: The founder of this *madhhab* was Mālik ibn-Anas (96-179 AH / 715-795 CE). He was influential in al-Madīna. His *al-Muwaṭṭa’* (the levelled path) contains the oldest existing corpus of Muslim law. This school emphasises

¹⁵⁴ In Arabic مذهب *madhhab* pl. مذاهب *madhāhib* “doctrine.”

¹⁵⁵ Ahmed (2005) meticulously traced the development of Islamic jurisprudence (*Fiqh*) from the period of the Prophet (ﷺ) until the present. The four *Sunnī* schools of jurisprudence emerged in the so-called Third Stage (The Period of Maturity) in the development of Islamic jurisprudence (i.e., in the period 300-400 AH; Ahmed, 2005:69-88). It was preceded by the Foundational Phase established by the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) (Ahmed, 2005:18-36) and the Second Stage (from the death of the Prophet (ﷺ) until the end of the second century AH; Ahmed, 2005:37-68). In the Fourth Stage (the period of ‘degeneration,’ i.e., 500 AH to the present; Ahmed, 2005:89-111), Islamic jurisprudence developed into full-fledged schools of thought.

¹⁵⁶ In an article published online titled “المذاهب والأئمة الأربعة” “The Doctrines/Schools (*madhāhib*) and the Four Imams,” Sheikh Hamza Bilal provides an overview of the development and basic interpretational principles of the four *Sunnī madhāhib*, cf. <http://alkeltawia.com/site2/pkg09/index.php?page=show&ex=2&dir=dpages&cat=1117> (Accessed 23/02/2018). For a brief discussion of the four *Sunnī* schools of jurisprudence, cf. Esposito (1988:75-79); Hewer (2006:147-149); Brown (2009:154-155); Shepard (2009:130).

the importance of the *Qur'ān* and *Ḥadīth* as sources for jurisprudence and is more conservative in application of the law than the Ḥanīfites. It prevails today in North Africa, West Africa and several of the Arab states of the Persian Gulf (Hitti, 1970:398).

- **The *Shāfi'i madhhab***: The founder of this *madhhab* was Muḥammad ibn-Idrīs al-Shāfi'i (150-205 AH / 767-820 CE). He belonged to the Quraysh family and was influential in Baghdād and Cairo. In application of Islamic law it is less moderate than the Hanīfites, but also less conservative than the Mālikites. Today its followers can be found in Kurdistan, Indonesia, Malaysia, Egypt, East Africa, Yemen, Somalia and the southern parts of India (Hitti, 1970:398).
- **The *Ḥanbalī madhhab***: The founder of this *madhhab* was Aḥmad ibn-Ḥanbal (d. 241 AH / 855 CE), a student of al-Shāfi'i. He was uncompromising in his adherence to the letter of the Ḥadīth and was especially influential in Baghdād. This school strongly emphasises the prevalence of the *Qur'ān* and *Ḥadīth* as sources for jurisprudence and is regarded as the most conservative of the *madhāhib*. Today it is the prevalent school in Saudi Arabia (Hitti, 1970:399).

3.3.1.2.2 Beliefs, obligations, and practices

Islamic tradition developed based upon the sources discussed above. The researcher uses “tradition” in a very broad sense of the word as “an inherited, established, or customary pattern of thought, action, or behavior (as a religious practice or a social custom).”¹⁵⁷ What should be more carefully defined now is what is meant by “**Islamic**” tradition.

In spite of clear links with the other two monotheistic religions (Judaism and Christianity), *al-Islām* has “an independent and distinct system of belief” (Hitti, 1970:128). Departing from the words in *Sūra* 3:19 إِنَّ الدِّينَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الْإِسْلَامُ “verily, the religion with *Allāh* is *al-Islām*,” Muslims believe that *al-Islām* is **the religion** (*dīn*) intended by *Allāh* for the whole of humankind. For Muslims, their religion comprises three aspects: *īmān* (religious belief), *ibādah* (acts of worship, religious duty) and *iḥsān* (right-doing).

’Īmān (religious belief)¹⁵⁸ comprises **six fundamental doctrines**¹⁵⁹ that are included in the *’Aqīdah* (Creed)¹⁶⁰ universally accepted by all Muslims. The *’Aqīdah* is based upon the *Qur'ān*. A number of examples will elucidate the term.

¹⁵⁷ Merriam-Webster Dictionary. <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/tradition> (Accessed 24/01/2018).

¹⁵⁸ In Arabic الإيمان *al-īmān* “the faith.”

¹⁵⁹ In Arabic أركان الإيمان *arkān al-īmān* “the Pillars of Faith.”

¹⁶⁰ In Arabic عقيدة *’aqīdah* pl. عقائد *’aqā’id* “creed.” The noun is derived from the root عقد *’aqada* “to tie, knot.”

In *Sūra* 2:177 it is said (and similar views are expressed in *Sūra* 2:285):

(قال الله تعالى)	(Allāh the Exalted said:)
لَيْسَ الْبِرَّ	<i>It is not righteousness</i>
أَنْ تَوَلُّوا وُجُوهَكُمْ قِبَلَ الْمَشْرِقِ	<i>that you turn your faces towards the east or the west;</i>
وَالْمَغْرِبِ	
وَلَكِنَّ الْبِرَّ	<i>But righteousness is</i>
مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ	<i>that he believes in Allāh,</i>
وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ	<i>and the last day,</i>
وَالْمَلَائِكَةِ	<i>and the angels,</i>
وَالكِتَابِ	<i>and the book,</i>
وَالنَّبِيِّينَ	<i>and the prophets;</i>
وَأَتَى الْمَالَ عَلَى حُبِّهِ	<i>and (that) he gives wealth, in spite of his attachment</i>
ذَوِي الْقُرْبَىٰ	<i>(to it)</i>
وَالْيَتَامَىٰ	<i>to those (who are) near relatives,</i>
وَالْمَسْكِينِ	<i>and the orphans,</i>
وَابْنَ السَّبِيلِ	<i>and the needy,</i>
وَالسَّائِلِينَ	<i>and the traveller,</i>
وَفِي الرِّقَابِ	<i>and the beggar,</i>
وَأَقَامَ الصَّلَاةَ	<i>and for (the ransom of) the slaves;</i>
وَأَتَى الزَّكَاةَ	<i>and (that) he maintains the prayer,</i>
وَالْمُوفُونَ بِعَهْدِهِمْ	<i>and (that) he practices charity.</i>
إِذَا عَاهَدُوا	<i>And those who fulfil their promise</i>
وَالصَّابِرِينَ فِي الْبَأْسَاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ	<i>when they make a promise,</i>
وَحِينَ الْبَأْسِ	<i>and those who are patient in suffering and hardship,</i>
أُولَٰئِكَ	<i>and in the time of adversity,</i>
الَّذِينَ صَدَقُوا	<i>those are the ones</i>
وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُتَّقُونَ	<i>who are true.</i>
	<i>And those ones – they are the righteous.</i>

Sūra 2:155 (البقرة) al-Baqarah / The Cow:155)

The ‘*Aqīdah* is repeated in the *Ḥadīth*-literature. In the *Forty Ḥadīths* by Imam Nawawi (1234–1277),¹⁶¹ for instance, it is told on authority of ‘Umar that a man (later revealed

¹⁶¹ In Arabic الأربعة النونية *al-arba‘in al-nawawiyya*, a collection of forty-two fundamental *aḥādīth*, mainly compiled from *Saḥīḥ* Muslim and *Saḥīḥ* al-Bukhārī. <http://sunnah.com/nawawi40/2> (Accessed 07/04/2018).

to be the angel *Jibrīl* [Gabriel]) once sat down in the company of the Prophet (ﷺ) and the following conversation took place:

قَالَ	He (i.e., the man) said:
فَأَخْبِرْنِي عَنِ الْإِيمَانِ	“And inform me about <i>Īmān</i> (faith).”
قَالَ	He (i.e., the Prophet) answered:
أَنْ تُؤْمِنَ	“(It is) that you believe
بِاللَّهِ	in <i>Allāh</i> ,
وَمَلَائِكَتِهِ	and His angels,
وَكُتُبِهِ	and His books,
وَرُسُلِهِ	and His messengers,
وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ	and the last day.
وَتُؤْمِنَ	And (it is that) you believe
بِالْقَدَرِ خَيْرِهِ وَشَرِّهِ	in fate – its good and its evil.”
قَالَ	He (i.e., the man) said:
صَدَقْتَ	“You have spoken the truth.”

Following these examples, the six fundamental doctrines of *al-Islām* can be summarized as follows:

- The first and most important dogma is that ***Allāh is the one and only God*** (Hewer, 2006:75). There is no god whatsoever but *Allāh*. The phrase لا إله إلا الله *lā `ilāha `illā-llāh* “there is no god but *Allāh*” expresses the concept of توحيد *tawḥīd* “the oneness” of God and communicates Islam’s belief in absolute monotheism. Hitti (1970:128) summarises the belief in the one and only God as follows:

He is the one true God. The profession of His unity receives its most poignant expression in sūrah 112.¹⁶² God is the supreme reality, the pre-existent, the creator (sūrs. 16:3-17; 2:27-28), the omniscient, omnipotent (13:9-17; 6:59-62; 2:100-101; 3:25-27), the self-subsistent (2:256; 3:1). He has ninety-nine excellent names (*al-asmā` al-ḥusna*, sūr 7:179) and as many attributes.

Hitti (1970:129) states: “In this uncompromising monotheism, with its simple, enthusiastic faith in the supreme role of a transcendent being, lies the chief strength of Islam.” The gravest sin in *al-Islām*, which will not be forgiven (Sūra 4:48), is to assign divinity to anyone or anything but *Allāh*. Such actions are called شرك *shirk* “polytheism, idolatry” (Hewer, 2006:75) and should be avoided at all cost.

¹⁶² Cf. Section 3.3.1.3.

- The second dogma is that **Muḥammad (ﷺ) is the Messenger of Allāh**. The phrase *محمد رسول الله Muḥammad rasūlu-llāh* “Muḥammad (ﷺ) is the Messenger of Allāh” expresses the belief that Muḥammad (ﷺ) is the last and most important of a long line of prophets. The *Qur’ān* explicitly names 25 of these prophets, but it is not intended to be a complete list (Hewer, 2006:15). Muḥammad (ﷺ) is the “seal” of the prophets (*Sūra* 33:40; Hitti, 1970:129). Muslims “are required to believe in all Prophets without distinction but it is Muhammad for whom the most accurate and extensive data of his life and teaching exists” (Hewer, 2006:80).
- The third dogma is that **the Qur’ān is the Word of Allāh** (*kalām*, cf. *Sūra* 9:6; 48:15). The *Qur’ān* contains Allāh’s final revelation to humankind (*Sūra* 17:107-108; 97:1; 44:2; 28:51; 46:11), it is uncreated, the greatest of all miracles, impossible to repeat or recreate (Hitti, 1970:129). All previous divine Scripture are important because “all taught the *muslim* way of life” (Hewer, 2006:80). However, the “criterion for judgement on all earlier Books is the Qur’an, as it is preserved intact from the time of revelation until the present” (Hewer, 2006:80).
- The fourth dogma demands **belief in Allāh’s angels** with the archangel *Jibrīl* (Gabriel), the bearer of Allāh’s revelation (*Sūra* 2:91), as the most important angel (Hitti, 1970:130). Angels are “spirit beings ‘created of light’ and therefore have subtle bodies, which means that they can take on different forms, appear and disappear and do not eat, drink or reproduce (Q. 19.64-65; 35.1)” (Hewer, 2006:78). They are messengers of Allāh who “guide human beings” and “convey that guidance to earth without any possibility of corruption on the way” (Hewer, 2006:78). Angels have no “freewill and so are always absolutely *muslim*” (Hewer, 2006:78). Every human being “is being accompanied through life by two recording angels (Q. 6.61; 50.17-18). One is charged with recording every good deed and the other records every bad deed. At the final judgement, these records will be produced and everyone judged according to their deeds” (Hewer, 2006:79). *Jinn* (sing. *jinnī*) are “beings made of invisible fire who may harm or help humans and may be believers or unbelievers” (Shepard, 2009:64; cf. *Sūra* 46:29-31).
- The fifth dogma demands **belief in the Day of Judgment and in the Resurrection** (life after death). *Sūra* 75 in its entirety is devoted to the Resurrection (*al-qiyāmah*) while terms such as the “day of judgement” (*Sūra* 15:35-36; 82:17-18), the “day of resurrection” (*Sūra* 22:5; 30:56), the “day” (*Sūra* 24:24-25; 31:32), and the “hour” (*Sūra* 15:85; 18:20) constitute an important theme in the *Qur’ān* (Hitti, 1970:130). *Sūra* 82:1-5 gives a vivid description of the Last Day and is exemplary of Muslim representations of this cataclysmic event (Shepard, 2009:64):

(قال الله تعالى)

(Allāh the Exalted said:)

- | | | |
|----------------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| إِذَا السَّمَاءُ انْفَطَرَتْ | 1 | When the heaven is rendered apart, |
| وَإِذَا الْكَوَاكِبُ انْتَبَرَتْ | 2 | and when the stars are scattered, |
| وَإِذَا الْبِحَارُ فُجِّرَتْ | 3 | and when the seas are poured forth, |
| وَإِذَا الْقُبُورُ بُعْثِرَتْ | 4 | and when the tombs are overturned, |

عَلِمَتْ نَفْسٌ ⁵ then a soul will know
 مَّا قَدَّمَتْ what it has put forth,
 وَأَخَّرَتْ and (what) it has kept back.

Sūra 82:1-5 (الإنفطار) *al-Infīṭār / The Rending:1-5*

- The final dogma is the **belief in the divine decree of good and evil** (Sūra 9:51; 3:139; 23:2) (Hitti, 1970:138), i.e., in destiny or fate. Religions grapple with the question of striking a balance between holding human beings responsible for their acts and maintaining the absolute power of God. *Al-Islām* believes that “all human beings are capable of living an ethical life by following the *shari‘a* that has been laid out for them,” and that every human being “can rely upon the mercy of God on the Day of Judgement” (Hewer, 2006:82). Every human being has “freewill” and “can rebel against the commands of God, even to the point of ultimate rebellion and thus end up in Hell” (Hewer, 2006:83). On the one hand, “all power lies with God and God wills everything that happens (primary causality), God knows everything outside of time (God has foreknowledge” (Hewer, 2006:83). On the other hand, “just before a human being does an act, the responsibility for how that act is performed (secondary causality) is attributed to him or her so she or he is responsible for it and not God” (Hewer, 2006:83).¹⁶³

‘Ibādah (acts of worship, religious duty)¹⁶⁴ should be distinguished from *mu‘amalat* (Esposito, 1988:89). The former refers to ritual actions, the latter to duties humans owe to each other (Shepard, 2009:84). *‘Ibādah* has a general aspect – to constantly work towards living a better life in this world. However, it centres primarily on the so-called five Pillars of *al-Islām* (أركان الإسلام *arkān al-Islām*), i.e., the religious duties considered mandatory for all believers and the foundation of Muslim life. These duties are enumerated in Sūra 2:177, 285 discussed above, and summarised in a *ḥadīth* in the *Forty Ḥadīths* by Imam Nawawi (1234–1277) referred to above. It is told on authority of ‘Umar that a man (actually the angel *Jibrīl* [Gabriel]) had the following conversation with the Prophet (ﷺ):

وَقَالَ And he (i.e., the man) said:
 يَا مُحَمَّدُ أَخْبِرْنِي عَنِ الْإِسْلَامِ “Oh Muḥammad, inform me about al-Islām!”
 فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ And the Prophet of Allāh (may Allāh bless him and grant him peace) replied:
 الْإِسْلَامُ “Al-Islām is

¹⁶³ The belief in the divine decree of good and evil sparked complex and controversial debates. The scope of the study does not allow for a discussion of the issues of freedom and determinism in various Islamic schools of thought. For a brief summary, cf. Brown (2009:174-176).

¹⁶⁴ In Arabic عبادة *‘ibāda*, a noun related to the root عبد “to work, toil, slave.”

أَنْ تَشْهَدَ	that you should testify
أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ	that there is no god but Allāh,
وَأَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ	and that Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allāh;
وَتَقِيمَ الصَّلَاةَ	and that you should perform the ritual prayer;
وَتُؤْتِيَ الزَّكَاةَ	and (that) you should pay the zakah;
وَتَصُومَ رَمَضَانَ	and (that) you should fast during Ramadān;
وَتَحُجَّ الْبَيْتَ	and (that) you should perform pilgrimage to the House
إِنْ اسْتَطَعْتَ إِلَيْهِ سَبِيلًا	if you can find a way towards it.”
قَالَ	He (i.e., the man) said:
صَدَقْتَ	“You have spoken the truth.”

The five Pillars of *al-Islām* can be summarised as follows (El Guindi, 2008:118):

- شهادة **Shahāda** pl. –āt “testimony, witness”: The noun is derived from the root شهد *shahida* “to witness, experience personally, testify.” When it is used to name the first Pillar of *al-Islām*, it refers to the fundamental double testimony:

لا إله إلا الله	<i>lā 'ilāha 'illā-llāh</i>	There is no god but Allāh;
محمد رسول الله	<i>muḥammad rasūl-ilāh</i>	Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allāh.

Shepard (2009:86) calls the *shahāda* “the basis of everything else in Islam.” The two parts of the testimony are “inseparably linked” (Hewer, 2006:91). The first is a more abstract expression of absolute monotheism, testifying that “nothing else is worthy of worship” (Hewer, 2006:91) but *Allāh*. The second gave concrete expression to the first by indicating that the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) is the human agent through whom *Allāh* revealed his absolute claim to exclusive divinity one last time.

The *shahāda* literally accompanies a Muslim throughout his/her lifetime (Hitti, 1970:130). It is whispered into a baby’s ears just after birth (Shepard, 2009:86) and it is professed at the deathbed (Shepard, 2009:99). From the foundation of the *shahāda*, the other four Pillars grow as witness to the “praxis orientation of Islam” (Esposito, 1988:90).

- صلاة **Ṣalā** pl. صلوات *ṣalawā* “(Islamic) prayer”: The noun is derived from the root صلو *ṣalo* II “to pray, worship, perform the *ṣalā*.” It specifically refers to the ritual prayer performed five times a day by every faithful Muslim throughout the world. The obligation to perform *ṣalā* is prescribed in the *Qur’ān* (*Sūra* 11:114). The determination of the number of ritual prayers is explained in the *Sunna* of the Prophet (ﷺ). In the *Saḥīḥ* Muṣṭafī it is narrated that during the Prophet Muḥammad’s (ﷺ) Night Journey and ascension into heaven (الإسراء والمعراج *al-’Isrā’ wal-Mi’rāj*), Allah instructed him that Muslims should pray fifty times a day. Moses advised Muḥammad to beg *Allāh* for a lighter burden, because the *Umma* would not be able to bear this burden. In the end, *Allāh* determined that there

would be five daily prayers, but that performing them would bear the reward of fifty prayers (Bennett, 1994:91).¹⁶⁵

Since then, five times a day, Muslims are publically called to worship by the *mu'adhhdhin* "caller to worship" (often called the *muezzin*, the Turkish word for the Arabic) from "atop a mosque's minaret" (Esposito, 1988:90). The five times are: *Fajr* (between dawn and sunrise); *Zuhr* (between when the sun is at its zenith and when an object's shadow equals its length); *'Aṣr* (between the end of *zuhr* and immediately before sunset); *Maghrib* (after sunset, but before the disappearance of twilight); *'Ishā'* (between the end of *maghrib* and dawn) (Brown, 2009:162).

Ṣalā can be performed individually, in groups, or in a mosque, the last being regarded as more efficient (Hewer, 2006:99). Before commencing the *ṣalā*, one must be "both spiritually and ritually clean" (Hewer, 2006:101), the last being obtained by "performing the ritual washing or *wudu*, which requires "the hands, arms, mouth, nose, ears, head and feet" (Hewer, 2006:101) to be washed.¹⁶⁶ In addition, *ṣalā* needs to be performed in sacred space, which each individual Muslim can activate by simply marking out a spot (usually by spreading a prayer mat) and facing Makka (El Guindi, 1999:78).

Having established the *qibla* "direction,"¹⁶⁷ i.e., facing the *Ka'ba* in *Makka* (*Sūra* 2:144), and by marking out sacred space, the prayer ritual itself can commence. It starts with the declaration of intent (*niyya*) to perform the applicable prayer of the time of day (Denny, 1985:72). Esposito (1988:91) summarises the prayer ritual as follows:

The prayers themselves consist of two to four prostrations (*rakas*),¹⁶⁸ depending on the time of day. Each prostration begins with the declaration, "God is most great," and consists of bows, prostrations, and the recitation of fixed prayers that include the opening verse of the Quran (the *Fatihah*) and other passages from the Quran.

At the end of the set number of *raka'āt* at each *ṣalā*, prayer is formally ended by reciting the *shahāda*. The devotee then "invokes God's blessings upon Muhammad and his family as well as Ibrāhīm and his family. The conclusion comes when each turns in unison to the right and to the left and gives the greeting *al-Salamu 'alaykum* (Peace be with you)" (Esposito, 1988:103). The formal end of prayer is known as the *taslīm* "salutation, greeting, peace greeting" (Denny, 1985:72; Esposito, 1988:91).

¹⁶⁵ Cf. *Saḥīḥ* Muṣlīm, Book 1: كتاب الإيمان "The Book of Faith," *Ḥadīth* 322, available online: <https://sunnah.com/muslim/1> (Accessed 28/04/2018).

¹⁶⁶ Cf. Section 3.3.2.3.

¹⁶⁷ Cf. Section 3.3.3.

¹⁶⁸ Correctly rather *rak'a*, from the Arabic noun ركعة *rak'a* pl. ركعات *raka'āt* "prostration" (in Muslim prayer ritual). It is derived from the root رَكَع *raka'a* "to bend the body, bow." For the respective daily ritual prayers the number of *raka'āt* are as follows: *Fajr* (2); *Zuhr* (4); *'Aṣr* (4); *Maghrib* (3); *'Ishā'* (4) (Brown, 2009:162)

The *ṣalā* is always made in Arabic, which implies that every Muslim “is required to have memorized some verses of Qur’an in order to be able to pray” (Hewer, 2006:103). This applies also to those not understanding Arabic at all.

The Friday *ẓuhr* (noon) prayer has special significance because it is a congregational prayer. In Arabic, it is known as the صلاة الجمعة *ṣalā al-jum‘a* “congregational *ṣalā*,” which should preferably be recited at the official central mosque, then referred to as the جمعية *jam‘iyya* “place of congregation”.¹⁶⁹ The congregational *ṣalā* is led by an امام *imām* “leader,” which is usually “the oldest or most knowledgeable person” (Shepard, 2009:88) in the congregation. The *ṣalā* ritual also includes a خطبة *khuṭba* “public address, speech, oration,” a kind of sermon based upon quotations from the Qur’an (Shepard, 2009:89). It is delivered from the منبر *minbar* “pulpit, platform.” For Muslim men it is obligatory to attend the Friday congregational *ṣalā*, while it is recommended for women. Women usually congregate “in a separate room or behind the men” (Shepard, 2009:87). After the meeting, people go about their business as usual (*Sūra* 62:10; cf. Shepard, 2009:90).

- زكاة **Zakā** pl. زكا *zakan* زكوات *zakawāt* “purity, integrity, almsgiving”: The noun is derived from the root زكو “to thrive, grow, be pure in heart, be just, righteous.” It refers to the obligation of giving of one’s savings to the poor and needy as a voluntary act of love. *Sūra* 9:60 and Islamic law “stipulate that alms are to be used to support the poor, orphans, and widows, to free slaves and debtors, and to assist the spread of Islam” (Esposito, 1988:92; cf. also *Sūra* 2:40, 77, 192, 263-269, 273-275, 280). It instils in Muslims “a sense of communal identity and responsibility” (Esposito, 1988:92). The word *zakā* signifies “purity,” “and part of the meaning is that by paying over part of one’s wealth one purifies the rest of it” (Shepard, 2009:90). In the Qur’an (cf. *Sūra* 2:40, 77; 9:5), *zakā* is often associated with *ṣalā* and is thus perceived as an indispensable part of Muslim piety (Hitti, 1970:132). *Zakā* “is not considered a ‘donation’ but rather something that already belongs by right to the recipients” (Shepard, 2009:91). Paying *zakā* is obligatory for all Muslims “who have a stated minimum of wealth (*nisab*)... On most forms of wealth it is figured at 2.5 percent of one’s total possessions above the *nisab*” (Shepard, 2009:90).
- صوم **Ṣawm** “fasting”: The noun is derived from the root صوم *ṣāma* “to abstain.” It refers to the fasting and self-control exercised during the holy month of *Ramaḍān*, the ninth month in the Arabo-Islamic lunar calendar.¹⁷⁰ The fast “requires that all adult Muslims do not eat, drink or engage in sexual relations, from before sunrise in the morning until after sunset at night” (Hewer, 2006:112). The fast is based upon prescripts in the Qur’an (*Sūra* 2:183-187). It is regarded as a special illustration of devotion to *Allāh*, an exercise in self-discipline, and a time for reflection, “for expressing gratitude for God’s guidance and atoning for past sins,

¹⁶⁹ These nouns are derived from the root جمع *jama‘a* “to gather.”

¹⁷⁰ Cf. Section 3.3.2.2.

for awareness of human frailty and dependence on God, as well as remembering and responding to the needs of the poor and the hungry” (Esposito, 1988:92).

The “breaking of the fast, *iftar*, occurs just before the *maghrib salah*” (Shepard, 2009:91). A small amount of food will be taken before the *ṣalā*, while a proper meal will follow after the ritual. *Ramaḍān* evenings contrast markedly from the hardship experienced during daytime, especially during long, hot summer days (Esposito, 1988:92-93). The evenings are spent with family and friends.

Ramaḍān holds special significance in Muslim tradition, for it is the month in which the *Qur’ān* was first revealed to Muḥammad (ﷺ) during the Night of Power.¹⁷¹ Moreover, the Battle of Badr, when Muḥammad (ﷺ) and his followers finally subjugated *Makka*, also occurred during *Ramaḍān*.¹⁷² The month is a community event. All Muslims fast together, which “builds up a sense of unity and community support” (Hewer, 2006:112). It therefore “reinforces the sense of solidarity of the *umma*” (Shepard, 2009:92).

The end of *Ramaḍān* is a joyous occasion. The day following *Ramaḍān* “is a festival day known as *‘Id al-Fitr* (the festival of the breaking of the fast) or lesser *‘Id*... There is a special *salah* for the *‘Id* in the morning, followed by visits to cemeteries, and then parties with gifts for children and the like... There is also an obligatory *Zakat al-fitr*, in which each person who can gives the value of one meal as charity” (Shepard, 2009:93).

- حج **Hajj** “pilgrimage”: The noun is derived from the root حج *hajja* “overcome, defeat, make the pilgrimage.” It refers to the obligation of every Muslim who is financially and physically able (*Sūra* 3:97) to make the Pilgrimage to *Makka* at least once in his/her lifetime (Shepard, 2009:93). It “stands at the heart of Islamic life” (Hewer, 2006:21) and is explicitly ordered as a duty for Believers in the *Qur’ān* (*Sūra* 22:26-38). Shepard (2009:93) describes it an event of the utmost importance for everyone who completes it. He states:

For most this is the high point of their life. Poorer people often save for a whole lifetime to be able to do it. After completing it they are entitled to call themselves *Hājj* or *Hajji*, a title of considerable prestige.

The term *Hajj* is used for two sets of rituals, the *عُمْرَة ‘Umra* and the *Hajj* proper. *‘Umra* can quite literally be translated by “a visit to a populated place.” The noun is related to the root *عمر ‘amara* “to inhabit, fill, cause to thrive.” It is often called the “lesser Pilgrimage” (Shepard, 2009:95) and can be performed at any time of the year. It entails only the first part of the ritual actions associated with the *Hajj* proper, namely those performed at the *Ka‘ba* and in the area enclosed by *الْمَسْجِدُ الْحَرَامُ al-Masjid al-Harām* “the Sacred Mosque” (Taylor, 2011:265). The *Hajj*, on the other hand, can only be performed annually on five specific days during *Dhū l-Hijjah*, the last month of the Islamic calendar (Taylor, 2011:265). Its focus is the *Ka‘ba*, “the cube-shaped House of God, in which the sacred black stone is

¹⁷¹ Cf. Section 3.3.1.1.

¹⁷² Cf. Section 3.3.1.1.

embedded” (Esposito, 1988:93).¹⁷³ By association, *Makka*, the city where the *Ka‘ba* is located, is regarded as Muslim sacred space and the area around the city has been declared *ḥarām* “forbidden” for non-Muslims (*Sūra* 9:28; Shepard, 2009:940).¹⁷⁴

The nature of the *Hajj*, including the rites associated with the event, has been determined by the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) during his Farewell Pilgrimage to *Makka*. It took place in the year 10 AH (6 March 632). On that occasion, the Prophet (ﷺ) also delivered his famous Last Sermon (خطبة الوداع *Khuṭbatu l-Wadā‘*) on the ninth day of *Dhū l-Hijjah* on the Plain of Arafat (Ahmed, 2002b:39-40; El Guindi, 2008:124-126; Brown, 2009:66-67).¹⁷⁵

The pilgrimage is associated with a set of comprehensive rites. Campo (1991:78) summarizes the sequence of rites as

...sacralisation (*iḥram*), circumambulating the *Ka‘ba*, running between Safa and Marwa, standing in the plain of ‘Arafat, stoning the pillars at Mina, sacrifice, and desacrillization.¹⁷⁶

However, the ritual acts already commences before leaving for *Makka*. Pilgrims “must pay their debts, make arrangements for any dependants and otherwise settle their affairs” (Shepard, 2009:94). As with prayer, the *Hajj* requires ritual purification (Taylor, 2011:265). Before entering the sacred precinct around *Makka*, Muslims wash, clip nails and hair and put on *iḥrām* “purity,” i.e., special clothes symbolising their ritually sacred state (Taylor, 2011:265). For men, *iḥrām* consists of two unsewn white cloths wrapped around the upper and lower body. Women wear a plain dress and head covering, but without a *niqāb* and gloves (Hewer, 2006:22). Many women prefer a white dress and head covering (Esposito, 1988:94).

When Muslims enter “into the spirit of Hajj, they must do no harm to any living creature, and refrain from all aggressive speech and sexual relations” (Hewer, 2006:22). They wore neither jewellery nor perfume (Esposito, 1988:94). All these measures are markers of ritual purity, but also of “the absolute equality of human beings before God” (Hewer, 2006:22). As pilgrims approach the city of *Makka*, they recite the تلبية *talbiya* “following, obeying,” signifying their intent to perform the *Hajj* and declaring that they are in the presence of *Allāh*. The words of the *talbiya* express a Muslim’s core belief in *Allāh* as the only God and his/her willingness to submit completely to *Allāh* (Esposito, 1988:94; Shepard, 2009:95):

لَبَّيْكَ اللَّهُمَّ لَبَّيْكَ	<i>Labbayka Allāhumma labbayka.</i>	<i>Here I am at your service, o Lord, here I am.</i>
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¹⁷³ Cf. Section 3.3.3 for *al-Islām*’s thirdspatial interpretations of the *Ka‘ba*, making the shrine the single cosmic centre of the universe.

¹⁷⁴ Cf. Section 3.3.3.

¹⁷⁵ Cf. Section 3.3.1.1 and 3.3.2.2.

¹⁷⁶ Cf. also the brief summary of the rites by Esposito (1988:94).

لَبَّيْكَ	<i>Labbayka.</i>	<i>Here I am at your service.</i>
لَا شَرِيكَ لَكَ	<i>Lā sharīka laka</i>	<i>You have no partners.</i>
لَبَّيْكَ	<i>Labbayka.</i>	<i>Here I am at your service.</i>
إِنَّ الْحَمْدَ وَالنِّعْمَةَ لَكَ وَالْمُلْكُ	<i>Inna l-ḥamda wa n- ni'mata laka wal-mulk</i>	<i>Indeed, praise and bounty are yours, and sovereignty.</i>
لَا شَرِيكَ لَكَ	<i>Lā sharīka laka</i>	<i>You have no partners.</i>

The pilgrims first perform the rites of 'Umra. It entails the following:

After ablutions, pilgrims go directly to the mosque Al-Masjid Al-Haraam and perform the Tawaf.¹⁷⁷ It involves circling the Ka'ba seven times in a counter-clockwise direction... The pilgrim recites prayers during the rotations and says Allahu Akbar each time he or she comes around to the black stone. Thus, the ritual is not a mere physical ritual. The pilgrim is an active participant in praying to Allah and praising Allah's name... Moreover, it is an outpouring of gratitude and memory for Abraham and Ishmael who returned the stone to its rightful place as an object dedicated to the worship of Allah (Taylor, 2011:265).

Next, the pilgrim "goes to the Sa'ee area, east of the Ka'ba" (Taylor, 2011:265).¹⁷⁸ There, he/she

... walks between two hills (Safa and Marwah), making seven rounds in all. Men walk quickly between two green columns, and menstruating women are not allowed to perform Sa'ee at all. The Sa'ee is, however, more than just a walking ritual. It is an explicit re-creation of the memory of Hagar in distress, without water and seemingly abandoned by all, even Allah. It recreates Hagar running in search of water for a weak and dying Ishmael. The faithful believe that Allah revealed the spring to her, and through its lifegiving waters, Ishmael was revived. The pilgrim then drinks the water of the Zamzam well, believed to be the spring Allah disclosed to Hagar. This completes the 'Umrah (Taylor, 2011:265).

For the *Hajj* proper, the pilgrim

... travels to Mina on the eighth day of Dhul-Hijah... anytime before noon. On the next day, the pilgrim undertakes the trek to Arafat. The pilgrim must reach Arafat on that day or the pilgrim's Hajj will be void. Arafat is the location of the Mount of Rahmah, the mount of mercy (Taylor, 2011:266).

¹⁷⁷ طواف *Tawāf*; literally "going about." The noun is derived from the root طوف "to go about, walk about, circumambulate." The circumambulation of the *Ka'ba* demonstrates the unity of the believers in worshipping *Allāh*, the One and Only God. They move in harmony around the *Ka'ba*, while supplicating to God. For the lived experience of Muslims taking part in this ritual, cf. Section 3.3.2.3.

¹⁷⁸ Taylor's (2011:265) "the Sa'ee area," refers to Arabic السعي *al-Sa'y*, the ritual of running seven times between *Şafā* and *Marwa* during the *Hajj*. The noun is derived from the root سعى "to move quickly, run."

At sunset, the pilgrim moves on to Muzdalifah and spends the night there. After sunrise, the pilgrim then

... travels back to Mina and goes to the Jamrat al-Aqabah. There the pilgrim throws seven pebbles at a pillar from the Jamarat bridge (“Stoning the Devil”) on the great feast day of Eid-UI-Adha. Traditionally, Muslims believe that the pebble-throwing ritual takes place at the location where Satan tempted Abraham on his way to sacrifice his son Ishmael (Taylor, 2011:266).

The pebble-throwing rite is symbolic of a Muslim fighting against the temptations of Satan. The pilgrim then

... performs the necessary Eid sacrifice by having ritual sacrifices slaughter a sheep... The pilgrim must also have his head shaved if a man, or hair cut about one inch if a woman (Taylor, 2011:266)

The pilgrim returns to Makka and again “performs Tawaf and Sa’ee,” and “once again goes to Mina” (Taylor, 2011:266). The pilgrim then

... throws the pebbles three more times, each time throwing seven pebbles, this time at all three pillars located at the Jamrat al-Aqabah. The pilgrim finishes the Hajj by returning to Mecca and performing a final farewell Tawaf. The pilgrim then departs for home (Taylor, 2011:266).

Pilgrims return from *Hajj* “with a sense that they are truly *muslim*, that they have submitted all to the will of God and stand in great humility before their Lord” (Hewer, 2006:24).

جهاد **Jihād** “fight, battle, holy war” is sometimes (but not officially) regarded as a sixth Pillar of *al-Islām*. Esposito (1988:95) remarks as follows:

In its most general meaning, it refers to the obligation incumbent on all Muslims, as individuals and as a community, to exert themselves to realize God’s will, to lead a virtuous life, and to extend the Islamic community through preaching, education, and so on...¹⁷⁹ A related meaning is the struggle for or defence of Islam, holy war.¹⁸⁰

In the last sense of the word, it refers to an obligation to make war against polytheists. According to Brown (2009:164), this is regarded by Muslim jurists as a collective and not an individual duty, hence “as long as some within the community fulfilled the duty, the requirement was fulfilled for all.”

¹⁷⁹ It is known as the “greater *jihād*,” and refers to “the constant struggle against the wayward self (Q. 17.19; 29.5-6; 47.31; 76.22)” (Hewer, 2006:153).

¹⁸⁰ It is known as the “lesser *jihād*,” and refers to “the legitimate use of force against those who would ‘do evil upon the earth’ (Q. 2.190-193)” (Hewer, 2006:154).

Iḥsān (right doing)¹⁸¹ refers to the obligation upon every Muslim to display one's inner faith (*īmān*) in outward deeds and actions. It emphasises a sense of social responsibility borne from religious convictions. It urges a Muslim to do "beautiful" things, to serve *Allāh* as if they see him in the conviction that He, who cannot be seen, is indeed constantly watching over them (Hitti, 1970:138). In the same *Forty Ḥadīths* by Imam Nawawi (1234-1277) referred to above the following conversation took place between *Jibrīl* and the Prophet (ﷺ):

قَالَ	He (i.e., the man) said:
فَأَخْبِرْنِي عَنِ الْإِحْسَانِ	"Inform me about <i>Iḥsān</i> ."
قَالَ	He (i.e., the Prophet) answered:
أَنْ تَعْبُدَ اللَّهَ	(It is) that you should serve <i>Allāh</i>
كَأَنَّكَ تَرَاهُ :	as if you can see Him.
فَإِنْ لَمْ تَكُنْ تَرَاهُ	Even if you cannot see Him,
فَإِنَّهُ يَرَاكَ	yet, certainly, He sees you.

The immense importance of this exchange between Muḥammad (ﷺ) by the angel *Jibrīl* regarding *īmān* (faith), *Islām* (submission to *Allāh*), and *Iḥsān* (right doing) is illustrated by the following conversation between the Prophet (ﷺ) and 'Umar when *Jibrīl* departs:

ثُمَّ انْطَلَقَ	The he (i.e., the man) departed.
فَلَبِثْتُ مَلِيًّا	I waited a while.
ثُمَّ قَالَ	Thereupon he (i.e., the Prophet) said:
يَا عُمَرُ أَتَدْرِي	"O 'Umar, do you know
مَنْ السَّائِلُ	who the questioner was?"
قُلْتُ	I answered:
اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ أَعْلَمُ	" <i>Allāh</i> and his Messenger know better."
قَالَ	He (i.e., the Prophet) answered:
فَإِنَّهُ جِبْرِيلُ	"That was <i>Jibrīl</i> ,
أَتَاكُمْ	He visited you
يُعَلِّمُكُمْ دِينَكُمْ	to teach you your religion."

¹⁸¹ Arabic إحسان *iḥsān* "perfection, excellence."

The brief overview of *al-Islām*'s origins, beliefs, obligations and practices created the necessary context to understand Islamic constructions of space and place. Graham (1985:24) stresses the importance of "a continuing focus upon particular written texts that have come in various traditions to carry the sacred and normative, usually inspired, authority of scripture." However, Graham's (1985:25-26) word of caution should be heeded:

The study of scripture in the major orientalist and biblical fields has, even up to the present, meant the study of documents and the historical context in which they arose...As a result, the ongoing role of a text as scripture in the subsequent life and faith of a given tradition has received relatively little scholarly attention.

In the remainder of this chapter the researcher will argue that an analysis of *al-Islām*'s firstspace realities and secondspace reflections provides dry facts if it's sole aim is to focus on "scientific classification and 'objective' analysis" (Graham, 1985:27). An indispensable perspective on Islamic tradition is the question how it is "*understood by those for whom it is more than*" tradition (Graham, 1985:27). *Al-Islām*'s firstspace realities, and especially its secondspatial representations in what may be called "scripture," should be "properly seen in its relational context of meaning" (Graham, 1985:27-28) as "a living, immediate reality in people's lives rather than merely a completed, transmitted piece of writing" (Graham, 1985:28). Consequently, the focus now shifts to thirdspatial applications of *al-Islām*'s firstspace realities and secondspace reflections.

3.3.1.3 *Al-Islām*: Thirdspatial applications

An analysis of *al-Islām* that reduces it to only firstspace realities or secondspace representations is bound to provide a one-sided and distorted view of *al-Islām* as a religious and cultural system. Lefebvre's (1991:19) insistence upon a trialectic approach towards space where the *physical*, the *mental*, and the *social* aspects of space should be integrated in a holistic analysis is particularly relevant in an analysis of *al-Islām*. El Guindi (1999:xv) states that *al-Islām* should be approached "as a living phenomenon" and the *Qur'ān* "as a living document." It is a reminder that *al-Islām* is not only a **perceived** or **conceived** space, but also (and especially) a **lived space** (Lefebvre, 1991:39). To billions of Muslims, *al-Islām* is more than a religion, more than a belief system, it is simply to them a way of life. The researcher concurs with El Guindi (2008:17) that it is a superficial and mechanistic exercise to reduce *al-Islām* "to only the Five Pillars or to media-created single subjects" like the veil. An approach to *al-Islām* is needed that will do justice to "a multi-layered living phenomenon" (El Guindi, 2008:17), which plays a crucial role in the daily lives of billions of Muslims. The researcher concurs with El Guindi (2008:18) that "Islam began as a

geographically local idea,” but that it “inherently contained a universality of thought, action, and community.” In terms of first- and secondspace, *al-Islām* “had to build on some existing patterns,” but in terms of thirdspace, “it widened its horizons, refined its meanings, and broadened its scope.” A Muslim does not belong to *al-Islām* or practise *al-Islām*, he/she “feels and lives Islam and experiences time and space in interweaving rhythm” (El Guindi, 2008:123). This lived space perspective on *al-Islām* will be discussed in the next section.

In this section, the researcher will discuss the basic tenets of a specific Islamic worldview. In the next section, attention will shift to uniquely Islamic constructions of space, while the final section in this chapter will investigate the implications of Islamic constructions of sacred space and *al-Islām*'s orientation towards a single cosmic centre. In Chapter 4, these principles will then be applied to female Muslims in general and to the phenomenon of the Islamic *ḥijāb* in particular.

Islamic constructions of space and a Muslim's orientation of him-/herself in the world are intricately linked with what the researcher would call a uniquely Islamic worldview.¹⁸² A worldview (from the German *Weltanschauung*) can in essence be defined as

...the set of beliefs about fundamental aspects of Reality that ground, and influence all one's perceiving, thinking, knowing, and doing. It is a study of the world; a view of life; literally, a perception of the world; a particular philosophy of life; a concept of the world held by an individual or a group” (Abdullah & Nadvi, 2011:270).¹⁸³

According to al-Attas (1995:2), in terms of *al-Islām* worldview can be defined as follows:

What is meant by ‘worldview’, according to the perspective of Islam, is then the *vision of reality and truth* that appears before our mind's eye revealing what existence is all about; for it is the world of existence in its totality that Islam is projecting. Thus by ‘worldview’ we must mean *ru'yat al-Islam li al-wujūd*.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸² The researcher deliberately uses the phrase “a uniquely Islamic worldview” and not “the Islamic worldview.” She acknowledges that there might be differences in perception amongst various branches of *al-Islām*. What she presents, is a perspective from her own background as a conservative *Sunnī* Muslim.

¹⁸³ The meaning of the term “worldview” and how its use developed over time has been described in great detail by Naugle (2002). He emphasizes the importance of the concept, because it expresses “the way an individual, a family, a community, a nation, or an entire culture conceptualizes reality” (Naugle, 2002:345).

¹⁸⁴ The Arabic expression رؤية الإسلام للوجود can literally be translated by “the vision/perception of Islām regarding existence.”

Al-Attas (1995:2-3) argues that the Islamic worldview is not one of changing paradigms in line with changing perceptions in the world. Al-Attas (1995:4) states:

Islam is not a form of culture, and its system of thought projecting its vision of reality and truth and the system of value derived from it are not merely derived from cultural and philosophical elements aided by science, but one whose original source is Revelation, confirmed by religion, affirmed by intellectual and intuitive principles. Islam ascribes to itself the truth of being a truly revealed religion, perfected from the very beginning, requiring no historical explanation and evaluation in terms of the place it occupied and the role it played within a process of development.

For a contemporary Muslim, his/her constructions of space and orientation in the world are intricately linked with *Allāh*'s revelation in the *Qur'ān* as "interpreted and demonstrated by the Prophet in his words and model actions" (Al-Attas, 1995:4). It is as relevant to him/her now as it has been at the time of revelation. *Al-Islām* acknowledges a "process of interpretation and elaboration which must of necessity occur in alternating generations of believers of different nations," but which always "refer back to the unchanging Source" (Al-Attas, 1995:4). The Islamic worldview "is basically a theistic and ethical worldview which contrasts sharply with the secularist or atheistic alternatives" (Abdullah & Nadvi, 2011:270).

According to Abdullah and Nadvi (2011:271), the Islamic worldview is based upon three fundamental principles: (1) توحيد *tawḥīd* "oneness," i.e., the principle of "theism" (Abdullah & Nadvi, 2011:272), the profession of the unity, uniqueness and oneness of God; (2) خلافة *khilāfah* "vicegerency," i.e., the belief that humankind is afforded a special position in creation by acting as *Allāh*'s vicegerents over creation in accordance with his laws; (3) عدالة *'adālah* "justice," i.e., the "concept of moral rightness based on ethics, rationality, law, natural law, religion, or equity, along with the punishment of the breach of said ethics" (Abdullah & Nadvi, 2011:274).

Central to Islamic constructions of space is the belief that *Allāh* is the one and only God (Hewer, 2006:75), the origin and creator of the universe (i.e., the principle of توحيد *tawḥīd* "oneness"). Bennett (1994:88) states: "The whole Islamic system, whether we are thinking about its theology, its politics or its epistemology, develops from the fundamental concept of *tawḥīd*, unity, balance, or making one." Abdullah and Nadvi (2011:272) say:

Islamic worldview reveres Allah as the one and only God, the only creator and Supreme Lord of the universe. He is Omnipotent, Omnipresent, and Sustainer of the world and mankind. He is the Creator of the Heavens and the earth, and the Cosmic Object, the one who gives rain and gives life to the parched land.

Hewer (2006:75) indicates that the belief in the oneness of *Allāh* is not only “an intellectual thing,” but “it also requires action.” The purpose of the creation of human beings was to worship *Allāh* (*Sūra* 51:56), and “to love God is to obey God” (Hewer, 2006:76). In the Islamic construction of space, “nothing must be allowed to come between the worshipper and submission to the only being worthy of our love and worship, namely God” (Hewer, 2006:76).

The principle is illustrated below in a number of prominent examples from the *Qur’ān*, sometimes as elaborated upon by *Sunna*. The principle that *Allāh* is the one and only God is beautifully expressed in the brief but profound *Sūra* 112:1-4. Yusuf Ali (1967:1805) states:

This early Makkah *Sūra* sums up in a few terse words the Unity of the Godhead – often professed, but frequently mixed up in the popular mind with debasing superstitions.

(قَالَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى)	(Allāh the Exalted said:)
قُلْ	1 Say:
هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ	“He is Allāh, (He is) One,
اللَّهُ الصَّمَدُ	2 Allāh is the All-embracing.
لَمْ يَلِدْ	3 He does not beget,
وَلَمْ يُولَدْ	nor is He born,
وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ	4 and there is not for Him an equal – a single one!
Sūra 114:1-4 (الإخلاص) <i>al-Ikhlāṣ</i> / The Sincerety:1-4)	

This *Sūra* is a succinct proclamation of *al-Islām*’s absolute monotheistic belief in *Allāh* as the one and only God. The *Sūra*’s name (الإخلاص) *al-Ikhlāṣ* “The Sincerety”) conveys the notion of sincere devotion, loyalty, and fidelity. As such, it is a confession of a Muslim’s total and unconditional dedication to *Allāh*. The *Sūra* makes six proclamations regarding *Allāh*, three positive and three negative.

The three positive proclamations affirm *Allāh*’s divinity, his Oneness and eternity. Yusuf Ali (1967:1806, n. 6296) indicates that the phrase هُوَ اللَّهُ “He is *Allāh*” implies that God’s “nature is so sublime, so far beyond our limited conceptions, that the best way in which we can realise Him is to feel that He is a Personality, “He”, and not a mere abstract conception of philosophy. He is near us; He cares for us; we owe our existence to Him.” This God is أَحَدٌ “One.” He is “the One and Only God, the Only One to whom worship is due; all other things or beings that we can think of are His creatures and in no way comparable to Him” (Yusuf Ali, 1967:1806, n. 6296). *Allāh* is also الصَّمَدُ “the All-embracing.” The concept is difficult to translate into English. The root صمد conveys the notion of “to repair” or “to withstand.” As attribute of *Allāh*, the

noun صَمَدٌ can be translated as “eternal” or “everlasting.” Yusuf Ali (1967:1806, n. 6298) translates the term by two terms, namely “Eternal, Absolute.” He argues that “absolute existence can only be predicated of Him; all other existence is temporal or conditional.” Furthermore, *Allāh* “is dependent on no person or things, but all persons or things are dependent on Him.” As such, the attribute conveys the notion that *Allāh* is eternal, “without beginning or end, Absolute, not limited by time or place or circumstance, the Reality before which all other things or places are mere shadows or reflections” (Yusuf Ali, 1967:1806, n. 6296).

The three negative statements are related in the sense that all three negate anthropomorphism or “the tendency to conceive of God after our own pattern” (Yusuf Ali, 1967:1806, n. 6300). The fourth and fifth statements (112:3) warn against assigning to *Allāh* the notion of fathership (لَمْ يَلِدْ “He does not beget”) or sonship (وَلَمْ يُولَدْ “and He is not born”). It implies that “we must not think of Him as having a son or a father, for that would be to import animal qualities into our conception of Him” (Yusuf Ali, 1967:1806, n. 6296). To the contrary, “He is not like any other person or thing that we know or can imagine: His qualities and nature are unique” (Yusuf Ali, 1967:1806, n. 6296).

In *Sūra* 2:255, *Allāh* is praised as the Creator who sits enthroned above the heavens and the earth.¹⁸⁵

(قَالَ اللهُ تَعَالَى)	(<i>Allāh the Exalted said:</i>)
اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ	<i>Allāh – there is no deity except Him,</i>
الْحَيُّ	<i>the Ever-Living,</i>
الْقَيُّومُ	<i>the Sustainer (of all that exists).</i>
لَا تَأْخُذُهُ سِنَّةٌ	<i>Slumber does not overtake him,</i>
وَلَا نَوْمٌ	<i>nor does sleep.</i>
لَهُ	<i>To Him belongs</i>
مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ	<i>whatever is in the heavens</i>
وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ	<i>and whatever is upon the earth.</i>
مَنْ ذَا	<i>Who is the one</i>
الَّذِي يَشْفَعُ عِنْدَهُ	<i>who can intercede with him</i>
إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ	<i>except by his permission?</i>

¹⁸⁵ In this *āya* the noun كرسي “throne” is used to refer to *Allāh*’s heavenly throne. The noun also occurs in *Sūra* 38:34, where it refers to Solomon’s throne. In all other instances in the *Qur’an* where a reference to the throne of *Allāh* occurs, the noun عرش “throne,” pl. اعراش; عروش is used.

يَعْلَمُ *He knows*
 مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ *what is before them*
 وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ *and what is behind them.*
 وَلَا يُحِيطُونَ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنْ عِلْمِهِ *And they do not encompass a single thing of his knowledge*
 إِلَّا بِمَا شَاءَ *except what He willed.*
 وَسِعَ كُرْسِيُّهُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ *His throne extends over the heavens and the earth,*
 وَلَا يَئُودُهُ حِفْظُهُمَا *and the guarding of both of them does not tire Him.*
 وَهُوَ الْعَلِيُّ الْعَظِيمُ *Indeed, He is the Most High, the Most Great.*

Sūra 2:255 (البقرة) al-Baqarah / The Cow:255)

This *āya* is known as the *Āyat-ul-Kursī* “the Verse of the Throne” (Yusuf Ali, 1967:102, n. 296). It reflects on the incomparable greatness of *Allāh* as the only source of life. Yusuf Ali (1967:102, n. 296) states:

He lives, but His life is self-subsisting and eternal: it does not depend upon other beings and is not limited to time and space. Perhaps the attribute *Qaiyūm* includes not only the idea of ‘Self-subsisting’ but also the idea of ‘Keeping up and maintaining all life,’ his life being the source and constant support of all derived forms of life.

All Muslim constructions of space depart from this belief.

Similarly, in *Sūra 7:54*, *Allāh* is praised as the Creator who made the universe in six days and established his throne above the heavens and the earth.

(قَالَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى) *(Allāh the Exalted said:)*
 إِنَّ رَبَّكُمْ اللَّهُ *Indeed, your Lord is Allāh,*
 الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ فِي سِتَّةِ *who created the heavens and earth in six days,*
 أَيَّامٍ *(who) then established Himself above the throne.*
 ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ *He covers the night with the day,*
 يُعْشِي اللَّيْلَ النَّهَارَ *(the one) chasing (the other) rapidly.*
 يَطْلُبُهُ حَثِيثًا *He (created) the sun and the moon and the stars,*
 وَالشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ وَالنُّجُومَ *subjected by his command.*
 مُسَخَّرَاتٍ بِأَمْرِهِ *Unquestionably, His is the creation and the command.*
 أَلَا لَهُ الْخَلْقُ وَالْأَمْرُ *Blessed is Allāh, Lord of the worlds.*
 تَبَارَكَ اللَّهُ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ

Sūra 7:54 (الأعراف) al-A`raf / The Elevations:54)

This *āya* is comparable to *Āyat-ul-Kursī* “the Verse of the Throne” (2:255). As in that verse, *Allāh*’s throne (‘*arsh*) is “a symbol of authority, power, and vigilance” (Yusuf

Ali, 1967:355, n. 1032). Yusuf Ali (1967:355, n. 1032) is of the opinion that “*kursi* perhaps refers to majesty, while ‘*arsh* refers to power; and the slightly different shades of meaning throw light on the two passages.” *Sūra* 7:54 focuses on the creation of everything in six days, while *Sūra* 2:255 reminds readers that “the Creation was but a prelude to God’s work, for his authority is exercised constantly by the laws which He establishes and enforces in all parts of his creation” (Yusuf Ali, 1967:355, n. 1032).

The notion that *Allāh* sits on a throne in the highest heaven is also present in *Sūra* 9:129; 10:3; 11:7; 13:2; 17:42; 20:5; 21:22; 23:86; 23:116; 25:59; 27:26; 32:4; 39:75; 40:7; 40:15; 43:82; 57:4; 69:17; 81:20; 85:15. The notion that He created the heaven and the earth in six days also occurs in *Sūra* 10:3; 11:7; 25:59; 32:4; 57:4. Heaven is conceived in the *Qur’ān* as consisting of seven levels. The throne of *Allāh* is situated in the highest heaven. An example of this view of heaven and *Allāh*’s throne can be found in *Sūra* 23:86.

(قال الله تعالى) (Allāh the Exalted said:)

قُلْ Say:

مَنْ رَبُّ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ Who is the Lord of the seven heavens

وَرَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ and the Lord of the Great Throne?

Sūra 23:86 (المؤمنون al-Mu`minūn / The Believers:86)

The throne is conceived of as the dome of heaven, as is explained in a *ḥadīth* narrated in the *Sunan* Abī Dāwūd, which reported the Prophet (ﷺ) as saying:¹⁸⁶

أَتَدْرِي مَا اللَّهُ Do you know how great Allāh is?

إِنَّ عَرْشَهُ عَلَى سَمَوَاتِهِ لَهَكَذَا His throne is above the heavens thus:

وَقَالَ بِأَصَابِعِهِ مِثْلَ الْقُبَّةِ عَلَيْهِ He said this with his fingers like a dome over him.

In Islamic conception, the immenseness of the universe attests to the greatness and glory of *Allāh*. It is clearly expressed in the following *ḥadīth* narrated in *Jāmi` at-Tirmidhī*, which reported the Prophet (ﷺ) as asking his Companions:¹⁸⁷

ثُمَّ قَالَ Then he said:

هَلْ تَدْرُونَ 'Do you know

¹⁸⁶ Cf. *Sunan* Abī Dāwūd, Book 42: كتاب السنة “Model Behaviour of the Prophet,” *Ḥadīth* 4726, available online: <https://sunnah.com/abudawud/42> (Accessed 20/12/2017).

¹⁸⁷ Cf. *Jāmi` at-Tirmidhī*, Book 47: كتاب تفسير “Chapters on *Tafsīr*,” *Ḥadīth* 3611, available online: <https://sunnah.com/tirmidhi/47> (Accessed 20/12/2017).

مَا فَوْقَكُمْ *what is above you?*

قَالُوا *They said:*

اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ أَعْلَمُ *'Allāh and His Messenger know better.'*

قَالَ *He said:*

فَإِنَّهَا الرِّقِيعُ سَفْتُ مَحْفُوظٌ *'Indeed it is the firmament, a preserved canopy*
وَمَوْجٌ مَكْفُوفٌ *whose surge is restrained.'*

ثُمَّ قَالَ *Then he said:*

هَلْ تَدْرُونَ كَمْ بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَهَا *'Do you know how much is between you and*
between it?'

قَالُوا *They said:*

اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ أَعْلَمُ *'Allāh and His Messenger know better.'*

قَالَ *He said:*

بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَهَا مَسِيرَةٌ خَمْسِمِائَةِ سَنَةٍ *'Between you and it [is] a journey of of five-hundred*
years.'

ثُمَّ قَالَ *Then he said:*

هَلْ تَدْرُونَ *'Do you know*

مَا فَوْقَ ذَلِكَ *what is above that.'*

قَالُوا *They said:*

اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ أَعْلَمُ *'Allāh and His Messenger know better.'*

قَالَ *He said:*

فَإِنَّ فَوْقَ ذَلِكَ سَمَاءَيْنِ *'Verily, above that are two Heavens,*
وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا *and what is between the two of them*

مَسِيرَةٌ خَمْسِمِائَةِ عَامٍ *is a journey of five-hundred years'*

حَتَّىٰ عَدَّ سَبْعَ سَمَوَاتٍ *– until he enumerated seven Heavens –*

مَا بَيْنَ كُلِّ سَمَاءَيْنِ *'What is between each of the two Heavens*

كَمَا بَيْنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ *is what is between the heavens and the earth.'*

ثُمَّ قَالَ *Then he said:*

هَلْ تَدْرُونَ *'Do you know*

مَا فَوْقَ ذَلِكَ *what is above that.'*

قَالُوا *They said:*

اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ أَعْلَمُ *'Allāh and His Messenger know better.'*

قَالَ *He said:*

فَإِنَّ فَوْقَ ذَلِكَ الْعَرْشَ *'Verily, above that is the Throne,*

وَبَيْنَهُ وَبَيْنَ السَّمَاءِ بُعْدٌ *between it and the heavens is a distance*

مَا بَيْنَ السَّمَاءَيْنِ [like] what is between two of the heavens.'

ثُمَّ قَالَ Then he said:

هَلْ تَدْرُونَ 'Do you know

مَا الَّذِي تَحْتَكُمْ what is under you?'

قَالُوا They said:

اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ أَعْلَمُ 'Allāh and His Messenger know better.'

قَالَ He said:

فَإِنَّهَا الْأَرْضُ 'Indeed it is the earth.'

ثُمَّ قَالَ Then he said:

هَلْ تَدْرُونَ 'Do you know

مَا الَّذِي تَحْتَ ذَلِكَ what is under that?'

قَالُوا They said:

اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ أَعْلَمُ 'Allāh and His Messenger know better.'

قَالَ He said:

فَإِنَّ تَحْتَهَا الْأَرْضَ الْأُخْرَى 'Verily, below it is another earth,

بَيْنَهُمَا مَسِيرَةٌ خَمْسِمِائَةَ سَنَةٍ between the two is a journey of five-hundred years.'

حَتَّىٰ عَدَّ سَبْعَ أَرْضِينَ – until he enumerated seven earths –

بَيْنَ كُلِّ أَرْضَيْنِ مَسِيرَةٌ خَمْسِمِائَةَ سَنَةٍ 'between every two earths is a distance of five-hundred years.'

ثُمَّ قَالَ He said:

وَالَّذِي نَفْسُ مُحَمَّدٍ بِيَدِهِ 'By the One in Whose Hand is the soul of Muḥammad!

لَوْ أَنَا كُمْ دَلَيْتُمْ رَجُلًا بِحَبْلِ إِلَى الْأَرْضِ السُّفْلَى If you were to send a man down with a rope to the lowest earth,

لَهَبَطَ عَلَى اللَّهِ then he would descend upon Allāh.'

ثُمَّ قَرَأَ Then he recited:

هُوَ الْأَوَّلُ وَالْآخِرُ وَالظَّاهِرُ وَالْبَاطِنُ He is the First and the Last, the Ascendant and the Intimate,

وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ and He has knowledge over all things."¹⁸⁸

Allāh's intention when He created this immense universe and everything that is in it, is to give all glory and praise to Him. It is clearly stated in *Sūra* 17:44:

¹⁸⁸ The phrase هُوَ الْأَوَّلُ وَالْآخِرُ وَالظَّاهِرُ وَالْبَاطِنُ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ "He is the First and the Last, the Ascendant and the Intimate, and He has knowledge over all things" is a quote of *Sūra* 57:3.

(قال الله تعالى) (Allāh the Exalted said:)
 تُسَبِّحُ لَهُ السَّمَاوَاتُ السَّبْعُ وَالْأَرْضُ وَمَنْ فِيهِنَّ The seven heavens and the earth and whatever is in them exalt Him.
 وَإِنْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ And there is not a thing
 إِلَّا يُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِهِ that does not exalt [Allāh] by its praise,
 وَلَكِنْ لَا تَفْقَهُونَ تَسْبِيحَهُمْ but you do not understand their exalting.
 إِنَّهُ كَانَ حَلِيمًا غَفُورًا Indeed, He is ever Forbearing and Forgiving.

Sūra 17:44 (الإسراء) al-Isrā' / The Night Journey:44)

This āya indicates that all creation, “animate and inanimate, sings God’s praises and celebrates His glory – animate, with consciousness, and inanimate, in the evidence which it furnishes of the unity and glory of God” (Yusuf Ali, 1967:706, n. 2229). Only human beings wilfully reject the natural trend of creation and seek glory for themselves! Humanity is indeed in need of *Allāh*’s forbearance and forgiveness. It is in this context that the special status of humanity in general and the community of Believers in particular play an important role in Islamic constructions of space and worldview.

The cornerstone of a Muslim’s worldview and his/her constructions of space and spatial orientation in the world is the belief that *Allāh* – the incomparable Divine Being, the One to whom all praise is due – is the one and only God. Abdullah and Nadvi (2011:272) state:

Unity of Allah sums up the Islamic way of life and presents it in a nutshell, the essence of Islamic civilization. It is the one term which describes the process of the Islamic transformation of an individual or a society. The Principle of *Tawhīd* lays the foundation of Islamic social order, which teaches man that his socio-economic activities must be guided by the principles from a single common source, All.

This cornerstone of a Muslim’s worldview, the principle of *tawhīd* “oneness,” has a profound influence on a Muslim’s perception of him-/herself, his/her role in *Allāh*’s creation and his/her privileges, responsibilities, and obligations. This is summarized in the principle of *khilāfah* “vicegerency.” The term defines humankind’s proper place in *Allāh*’s creation. On the one hand, the Islamic worldview does not assign to human beings the status of sovereignty. Sovereignty belongs to *Allāh* alone (Abdullah & Nadvi, 2011:273). On the other hand, it does ascribe to human beings a special place in *Allāh*’s creation. *Allāh* appoints human beings as his vicegerents upon earth. Abdullah and Nadvi (2011:273) state:

Anyone who holds power and rules in accordance with the laws of Allāh would undoubtedly be the vicegerent of the *Supreme Ruler* and would not be authorized to exercise any powers other than those delegated to him.

The noun خلافة *khilāfah* “vicegerency” is derived from the root خلف *khalafa* “to be the successor, to follow, to take the place of someone.” In Islamic tradition, the derived noun خليفة *khalīfah* “vicar, deputy, successor, caliph” is used as a title for a leader of the Muslim community, specifically a spiritual leader claiming succession from Muḥammad (ﷺ). In the present study, the researcher will not focus on the term as it has commonly been used in Islamic tradition after the death of the Prophet (ﷺ). Azmeh (2016:227-263) provides an excellent overview of the development of the Caliphate in *al-Islām* and the revival of the Caliphate ideal in certain Muslim circles in recent years. His research prompts him to conclude: “The system of governance called *khilafa* (caliphate) was developed by the Prophet’s companions after the Prophet’s death” (Azmeh, 2016:143).

In the context of this study, the researcher focuses on the notion of خلافة *khilāfah* “vicegerency” as a principle that can be linked directly to *Qur’ānic* evidence. Azmeh (2016:243) pointedly states that there is no evidence for the Caliphate as a system of governance in the *Qur’ān*. The verb خلف *khalafa* and its derived nouns are applied first and foremost in the *Qur’ān* to humankind in general and to Believers in particular (cf. *Sūra* 2:30; 38:26). Azmeh (2016:243-244) remarks that

... there is no special mention of Muḥammad or his followers as being a khalifa (caliph) in the *Qur’an*. Moreover, when the word khalifa is mentioned in its plural form in the *Qur’an*, it is explicitly describing those who call on God as the inheritors/vicegerents of earth (*khulafa*: plural of *khalifa*-caliph). It does not imply any political post.

Two key passages in this regard will now briefly be discussed. In *Sūra* 2:30, *Allāh* declares to the angels:

(قال الله تعالى) (Allāh the Exalted said:)
 إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً Indeed, I will make upon the earth a vicegerent.
Sūra 2:30 (البقرة) al-Baqarah / The Cow:30

The angels question *Allāh*’s intention due to the very nature of humankind:

(قال الله تعالى) (Allāh the Exalted said:)
 أَتَجْعَلُ فِيهَا مَن Will You place upon it someone
 يُفْسِدُ فِيهَا who causes corruption therein,
 وَيَسْفِكُ الدِّمَاءَ and sheds blood,
 وَنَحْنُ نُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِكَ while we declare Your praise
 وَنُقَدِّسُ لَكَ and sanctify You?
Sūra 2:30 (البقرة) al-Baqarah / The Cow:30

Yusuf Ali (1967:24, n. 47) indicates that the contrast between humankind and the angels exemplifies humankind's special place in creation. He states:

We may suppose that the angels had no independent wills of their own: their perfection in other ways reflected God's perfection but could not raise them to the dignity of vicegerency. The perfect vicegerent is he who has the power of initiative himself, but whose independent action always reflects perfectly the will of his Principal.

Sūra 24:55 adds an important perspective to humankind's special position in creation as *Allāh's* vicegerents. The exalted position is specifically intended for those who believe in *Allāh* and perform righteous deeds.

(قال الله تعالى) (*Allāh the Exalted said:*)

وَعَدَ اللَّهُ	<i>Allāh has promised</i>
الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْكُمْ	<i>those who believe among you,</i>
وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ	<i>and do righteous deeds,</i>
لَيَسْتَخْلِفَنَّهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ	<i>that He will surely appoint the vicegerents on the earth,</i>
كَمَا اسْتَخْلَفَ	<i>just as He had appointed as vicegerents</i>
الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ	<i>those who were before them,</i>
وَلَيُمَكِّنَنَّ لَهُمْ دِينَهُمُ	<i>and that He will surely establish for them their religion</i>
الَّذِي ارْتَضَى لَهُمْ	<i>which He has approved for them,</i>
وَلَيُبَدِّلَنَّهُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ خَوْفِهِمْ أَمْنًا	<i>and that He will surely change their state to security after their fear,</i>
يَعْبُدُونَنِي	<i>because they worship Me,</i>
لَا يُشْرِكُونَ بِي شَيْئًا	<i>they do not associate Me with anything.</i>
وَمَنْ كَفَرَ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ	<i>And whoever disbelieves after that</i>
قَآؤْلِكَ هُمْ الْفَاسِقُونَ	<i>it is indeed they who are the transgressors.</i>

Sūra 24:55 (النور al-Nūr / The Light:55)

According to Abdullah and Nadvi (2011:273), the implications of this verse for every believer

... is that the power to rule over the earth has been promised to the whole community of believers; it has not been said that any particular person or class among them will be raised to that position. From this it follows that all believers are repositories of the Caliphate (Khilāfah). The Caliphate granted by *Allāh* to Man is popular vicegerency and not a limited one. There is no reservation in favour of any family, class or race. No individual is inferior to other. Every believer is a Caliph of *Allāh* in his individual capacity. By virtue of this position, he is individually responsible to *Allāh*.

As a matter of principle, the notion of *khilāfah* “vicegerency” has two important implications. First, it implies that all believers are equal before *Allāh*. *Allāh* does not discriminate between believers on grounds of race, gender, or status (Abdullah & Nadvi, 2011:273). Second, it implies that humankind

...is the vicegerent of Allah on this earth, and all the resources of this world are at his disposal as a trust. This concept is pertinent to every Muslim individual. Attainment of such conceptual maturity will undoubtedly create a just and caring society (Abdullah and Nadvi, 2011:273).

Al-Islām “views humans as quite distinct from other beings, as humans are the trustees of God on earth” (Abdullah & Nadvi, 2011:282) and “regards the universe as a tool helping mankind to perform his role as trustee of God on earth” (Abdullah & Nadvi, 2011:282).

The principle of *khilāfah* “vicegerency” expresses a believer’s immense privilege as *Allāh*’s vicegerent on the one hand, but also his/her enormous responsibility. As stated in *Sūra* 24:55 quoted above, believers are under an obligation to righteous deeds (الصَّالِحَاتِ) precisely because they have been appointed vicegerents upon the earth. Abdullah and Nadvi (2011:273) indicate that every believer is “individually responsible to *Allāh*.” The principle of *khilāfah* “vicegerency” thus naturally leads to the third principle determining the Islamic worldview, namely *‘adālah* “justice.” Abdullah and Nadvi (2011:274) define the concept as understood in *al-Islām* as follows:

Justice is a concept of moral rightness based on ethics, rationality, law, natural law, religion, or equity, along with the punishment of the breach of said ethics; justice is the act of being just and/or fair.

In the context of *al-Islām*’s thirdspatial constructions of space and worldview, two notions are of importance. The first is the concept of justice, the second – and related – concept is that *Allāh* holds those whom He appointed as vicegerents accountable for their deeds and rewards or punishes them in this life and the next.

Different verbal roots and their derivatives are used in the *Qur’ān* to convey the notion of “justice.” In the discussion of selected passages from the *Qur’ān* below, attention will be given to three important roots, namely *qasaṭa* IV “to act justly, in fairness, equitably”; *‘adala* “to act justly, equitably, with fairness”; *ṣalaḥa* “to be good, right, righteous, pious, godly, just.” As will be indicated below, semantically all of these terms fall under the broad umbrella of *birr* “reverence, piety, righteousness, devoutness.”

In *Sūra* 2:177 discussed above,¹⁸⁹ it has been argued that the concept بر “righteousness” in *al-Islām* goes beyond the notion of mere religious formalism. A righteous person translates his/her *īmān* (religious belief) into *‘ibādah* (acts of worship, religious duty) which, in turn, finds expression in *iḥsān* (right-doing). Right-doing finds expression in acts of fairness, equitability and justice. In *Sūra* 5:8, the roots قسط *qasaṭa* and عدل *‘adala* occur together to emphasise that *Allāh* expects those who believe to act fairly towards all people.

(قال الله تعالى) (Allāh the Exalted said:)

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا O you who believe,
كُونُوا قَوَّامِينَ لِلَّهِ شُهَدَاءَ بِالْقِسْطِ you must be standing firm for Allāh (as) witnesses in
justice,
وَلَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شَنَاَنُ قَوْمٍ and don't let hatred of a people prevent you
عَلَىٰ آلَا تَعْدِلُوا from not being just.
اعْدِلُوا Be just
هُوَ أَقْرَبُ لِلتَّقْوَىٰ (for) that is nearer to righteousness.
وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ And fear Allāh.
إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ Indeed, Allāh is acquainted
بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ with what you do.

Sūra 5:8 (المائدة al-Mā'idah / The Table:8)

Sūra 57:25 states that *Allāh* revealed his message for humankind to establish justice.

(قال الله تعالى) (Allāh the Exalted said:)

لَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلَنَا بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ Indeed, We have sent Our messengers with clear
evidences,
وَأَنْزَلْنَا مَعَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْمِيزَانَ and We sent down with them the Scripture and the
Balance,
لِيُقِيمُوا النَّاسَ بِالْقِسْطِ that the people may establish justice.

Sūra 57:25 (الحديد al-Hadīd / The Iron:57)

In *Sūra* 16:90, justice in a Muslim's dealings with relatives is prescribed as a divine order.

(قال الله تعالى) (Allāh the Exalted said:)

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالْإِحْسَانِ وَإِيتَاءِ ذِي
الْقُرْبَىٰ Indeed, Allāh orders justice and good conduct and giving
to relatives,

¹⁸⁹ Cf. Section 3.3.1.2.2.

وَيَنْهَىٰ عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ وَالْبَغْيِ *and He forbids immorality and bad conduct and oppression.*
يُعِظُكُمْ *He admonishes you*
لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَذَكَّرُونَ *that you may be reminded.*

Sūra 16:90 (النحل al-Naḥl / The Bee:90)

However, in *Sūra 4:135* “standing firm in justice” is a special obligation that *Allāh* places on those who believe, irrespective of time, place, person or circumstance.

(قال الله تعالى) (Allāh the Exalted said:)

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا *O you who believe,*
كُونُوا قَوَّامِينَ بِالْقِسْطِ *you must be standing firm in justice,*
شُهَدَاءَ لِلَّهِ *(you must be) witnesses for Allāh,*
وَلَوْ عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِكُمْ أَوِ الْوَالِدِينَ *even if it is against yourselves or the parents*
وَالْأَقْرَبِينَ *and the relatives*
إِنْ يَكُنْ غَنِيًّا أَوْ فَاقِرًا *Whether one is rich or poor,*
فَاللَّهُ أَوْلَىٰ بِهِمَا *indeed, Allāh is closer to both of them.*
فَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا الْهَوَىٰ *So do not follow desire*
أَنْ تَعْدِلُوا *lest you do not be just.*
وَإِنْ تَلُؤُوا *And if you distort*
أَوْ تُعْرَضُوا *or (if) you refrain,*
فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ خَبِيرًا *then Allāh is acquainted*
بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ *with what you do.*

Sūra 4:135 (النساء al-Nisā' / The Women:135)

According to Abdullah and Nadvi (2011:276), passages from the *Qur'ān* like the examples above indicate that the Islamic

... standards of justice transcend considerations of race, religion, color, and creed, as Muslims are commanded to be just to their friends and foes alike, and to be just at all levels.

Central to Islamic conceptions of justice is the notion that *Allāh* rewards Believers for their deeds in this world, but especially in the next world. Human existence on earth is conceptualized as temporary, but filled with blessings and tests by *Allāh*. *Sūra 2:155-157* emphasizes that *Allāh* tests believers “with a measure of fear and hunger and a loss of wealth, lives, and fruits,” but also “give good news to the patient, those who, when an affliction visits them, say, ‘Indeed we belong to *Allāh*, and to Him do we indeed return’” (2:155-156). They receive the following promise (2:157):

(قال الله تعالى) (Allāh the Exalted said:)

أُولَئِكَ Those are the ones
عَلَيْهِمْ صَلَوَاتٌ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ وَرَحْمَةٌ upon whom are the blessings of their Lord,
and (His) mercy,
وَأُولَئِكَ those are the ones
هُمُ الْمُهْتَدُونَ who are the (rightly) guided.

Sūra 2:157 (البقرة) al-Baqarah / The Cow:157)

Once the predestined time of the Muslim has been fulfilled on earth as decreed by *Allāh*, the soul of the human will be returned to its rightful Owner and Giver of life. Human beings are thus accountable for their actions on earth and in life and will only enter heaven (Jannah) if good and rightful deeds as prescribed by the Holy *Qur'ān* and the teachings of the last and final Messenger of *Allāh*, the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ), are fulfilled. In this expectation, the notion of justice plays a central role. *Sūra* 21:105 states:

(قال الله تعالى) (Allāh the Exalted said:)

وَلَقَدْ كَتَبْنَا فِي الزَّبُورِ مِنْ بَعْدِ الذِّكْرِ And we have already written in the book [of Psalms]
after the [previous] mention
أَنَّ الْأَرْضَ يَرِثُهَا عِبَادِيَ الصَّالِحُونَ that the land [of Paradise] is inherited by My
righteous servants.

Sūra 21:105 (الأنبياء) al-Anbiyā' / The Prophets:105)

In *Sūra* 39:71-75 the concept of every human being receiving his/her just reward, depending upon the nature of their deeds on earth, is described in detail. The unfortunate fate of the Unbelievers is spelled out in *āyāt* 71-72. In direct contrast to that, the fortunate fate of the Believers is spelled out in *āyāt* 73-75 (Yusuf Ali, 1967:1258, n. 4351). Of the Unbelievers it is said: “وَسَيُوقَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِلَىٰ جَهَنَّمَ زُمَرًا” and those who disbelieved will be led to Hell in crowds.” There they will receive *كَلِمَةُ الْعَذَابِ عَلَىٰ* “the word of punishment against the Unbelievers” (39:71) and spend eternity in *مَثْوَى الْمُنْكَرِينَ* “the abode of the arrogant” (39:72). Of the Believers it is said: “وَسَيُوقَ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا رَبَّهُمْ إِلَىٰ الْجَنَّةِ زُمَرًا” and those who feared their Lord will be led to the Garden in crowds.” To them the gates of the Garden will be opened and the gatekeepers will tell them: “سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ طِبْتُمْ فَادْخُلُوهَا خَالِدِينَ” “Peace be to you! You are welcome! Enter it to remain [forever]” (39:73). Of this group, *Sūra* 39:74 then states:

(قال الله تعالى) (Allāh the Exalted said:)

وَقَالُوا They will say:
الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ "Praise belongs to Allāh
الَّذِي صَدَقْنَا وَعَدَهُ who has fulfilled for us his promise,
وَأَوْرَثَنَا الْأَرْضَ and made us inherit the earth,
نَتَّبِعُ مِنَ الْجَنَّةِ that we may settle in the Garden
حَيْثُ نَشَاءُ wherever we wish!"
فَنِعْمَ أَجْرُ الْعَامِلِينَ How excellent is the reward of the workers [of
righteousness]!

Sūra 39:74 (الزمر al-Zumar / The Throngs:74)

Departing from the three fundamental principles of توحيد *tawḥīd* "oneness;" خلافة *khilāfah* "vicegerency;" and عدالة *adālah* "justice," *al-Islām* is regarded as the one, true, universal religion. El Guindi (2008:18) indicates that "Islam began as a geographically local idea," but that it "inherently contained a universality of thought, action, and community." In *Sūra* 3:19 it is said: إِنَّ الدِّينَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الْإِسْلَامُ "Indeed, the religion with *Allāh* is *al-Islām*." In a *ḥadīth* transmitted in the Musnad Aḥmad,¹⁹⁰ the following saying is attributed to the Prophet (ﷺ) during his famous Last Sermon:¹⁹¹

O people, your Lord is one and your father Adam is one. There is no virtue of an Arab over a foreigner nor a foreigner over an Arab, and neither white skin over black skin nor black skin over white skin, except by righteousness.¹⁹²

This basic notion of *al-Islām* as a universal religion is expressed in Figure 10, designed for the researcher by a friend to illustrate the point.

¹⁹⁰ Cf. Section 3.3.1.2.

¹⁹¹ Cf. Section 3.3.1.1.

¹⁹² Musnad Aḥmad, *Ḥadīth* 22978 (graded by Al-Albanias *Saḥīḥ*). Available online: <https://abuaminaelias.com/dailyhadithonline/2011/12/30/farewell-sermon-your-lord-is-one-your-father-is-one-your-lives-are-sacred/> (Accessed 23/05/2018).



Figure 10
Al-Islām for the whole world

3.3.2 Reflections on Islamic constructions of lived space

The brief consideration of *al-Islām* as a **firstspace reality** in the light of **secondspatial reflections** on *al-Islām*'s normative tradition and **thirdspatial applications** of these reflections, now calls for a discussion of the question: What makes Islamic constructions of space unique? In what ways are Islamic constructions of space different from the religious experience of humanity in general and from the other peoples of the Book in particular? The researcher concurs with El Guindi (2008:17) that an analysis of *al-Islām* as a **lived experience** calls for a “shift in paradigm from mechanism (parts and components) to holism (complex hole).” El Guindi (2008:21) insists:

In order to fully to comprehend Islam as lived by Muslims, we need a new language and a new synthesis not only to go beyond the mechanistic identification of components, but also to move beyond complexity straight to the heart of Islam.

Three perspectives on Islamic constructions of lived space brings one close to grasping the “heart of Islam” (El Guindi, 2008:21) as it is lived by Muslims. These are: (1) Islamic constructions of private and sacred space; (2) the rhythmic interweaving of private and sacred space and time with public and profane space and time; (3) the ritual actualization of private and sacred space.

3.3.2.1 Islamic constructions of private and sacred space

El Guindi (1999:78-79) regards “the interweaving of space and time, as individuals move in and out during the course of the day between worldly and sacred spheres”

as “distinctly, perhaps uniquely, Islamic.” She argues that Arabic culture gives a connotation to the notion of “privacy” which differs from connotations attached to the term in Western culture (El Guindi, 1999:77). In Western culture, the term describes “the right of the individual to non-intrusion” (El Guindi, 1999:77), thus, the entry of a stranger may turn a private space into a public one (Ardener, 1993a:3). Arab privacy, on the other hand

...is based on a specific cultural construction of space and time central to the functioning of Islamic society in general, in the dynamics of Arab gender identity, and for direct unmediated individual or collective communication with God. Space in this construction is relational, active, charged and fluid, ‘insisting’ on complementaries (El Guindi, 1999:77).

Ardener (1993a:4) warns that space is “not a simple concept.” It is especially true of Islamic space, which is more often than not categorized in simple binary terms such as private–public or sacred–profane space, and “private” space *ipso facto* equated to “female” space, associated with the construct *harem-veil-polygamy* and hence “with female weakness and oppression” (El Guindi, 1999:10).

Ardener (1993a:2) emphasizes that “*space reflects social organisation*” and “once space has been bounded and shaped it is no longer merely a neutral background: it exerts its own influence,” hence “*behaviour and space are mutually dependent*.” On the one hand it can be argued that “*space defines the people in it*” (Ardener, 1993a:4) and on the other hand it is equally true that “*people define space*” (Ardener, 1993a:4). Spatial analysis should be sensitive to the fact that “every society... produces a space, its own space” (Lefebvre, 1991:31).

In this context, El Guindi (2008:21) argues that Muslim constructions of space should be comprehended “as lived by Muslims” and not as perceived from the outside. Islamic culture has a unique way of constructing space, described by El Guindi (1999:77-78) as follows:

A distinctive quality of the Islamic construction of space is how it turns a public area into private space, without the entry of a stranger. It enables ordinary Muslims temporarily to convert any worldly place (street, shop, aircraft isle) into sacred space set apart, simply by marking it and occupying it in a ritually pure state facing Makka.

According to El Guindi (1999:78), this space conversion is “effected singly or collectively.” Collective space conversion is activated once a week in the mosque during the Friday noon prayer and once a year during the annual pilgrimage to *Makka*. However, for the construction of Islamic lived space, the daily individual activation of sacred space is of utmost importance. Every day

...an ordinary faithful individual turns any worldly place into an individual sacred space by performing the five prescribed daily prayers (El Guindi, 1999:78).

Individual space conversion can literally be enacted wherever a Muslim is. He/she “prays in a spot that he or she marks out, perhaps by spreading a mat or a carpet or newspapers” (El Guindi, 1999:78). A Muslim “smoothly and spontaneously” flows “in and out of ordinary space and time and sacred space and time” (El Guindi, 1999:78). In this sense

...Arab privacy does not connote the ‘personal,’ the ‘secret,’ or the ‘individuated space.’ It is applicable to particular core spheres in Arab sociocultural systems, namely those of family and women. It is specifically in those two spheres that privacy is considered sacred and is collectively guarded (El Guindi, 2008:15).

This gendered perspective on private and sacred space will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4. At this point, however, it is important to note three key terms in the quotation above, namely **privacy**, **sacred**, and **collectively guarded**. Islamic constructions of space is based upon a cultural construct consisting of these three qualities, which El Guindi (2008:xii) calls “*qudsiyya* (sacred), *khususiyya* (privacy), *jama’iyya* (collectivity).” Uniquely Islamic constructions of space can only be appreciated when these three elements are synthesized “into one unified theory” to reveal “the rhythm of Islam” (El Guindi, 2008:xiii).

- قدسية *qudsiyyah* “holiness, sacredness, sanctity”:¹⁹³ The noun is derived from the root قدس *qadasa* “to be holy, pure”; II “to dedicate, consecrate, revere” and conveys the notion of sacredness. In Islamic spatial construction, sacred space can be contrasted to ordinary space, but ordinary space cannot be equated to secular space. Sanctity is concerned with the rhythmic interweaving of sacred time and ordinary time and sacred space and ordinary space throughout the day, every week, every year, for a lifetime. The interweaving of the sacred and the ordinary implies the sanctity of a Muslim’s total existence. Religious space is not separated from “ordinary” space. The concept of قدسية *qudsiyyah* is closely linked with the notion of حرام *ḥarām* “forbidden, prohibited, unlawful, taboo, sacred.” Derived from the root حرم *ḥarama* “to be forbidden, prohibited, unlawful,” the word is used “widely in the Arabic vocabulary to mean forbidden, taboo, prohibited, unlawful, and sacred, which evokes constraint and heightened sanctity” (El Guindi, 2008:142). It is the opposite of حلال *ḥalāl* “allowed, permitted, lawful, legitimate” (derived from the root حل *ḥalla* “to untie, unfasten, unravel, decode, resolve”). حرام *ḥarām* can be construed as “sacred taboo” and derivatives of the root have distinct spatial implications. It can indicate taboos regarding marital relations, where a woman is not allowed to marry her محارم *maḥārim* “close relatives.” It can designate “the part of the Arab home in which Arab women are both privileged

¹⁹³ Cf. El Guindi (2008:141-147) for a detailed discussion of the concept.

and protected from encounters with non-mahram men” (El Guindi, 2008:142). It can refer to “the taboos surrounding places of worship,” for instance regarding mosques or “the area around the three holy cities of Islam: Makka, Madina, and al-Quds (Jerusalem)” (El Guindi, 2008:142). The notion of **sanctity** thus permeates Islamic individual and collective spatial construction.

- خصوصية *khuṣūṣiyyah* “particularity, privacy”:¹⁹⁴ The noun is derived from the root خص *ḥaṣṣa* “to distinguish, single out, dedicate, apply in particular.” The noun is often used to convey the notion of **privacy** “in terms that correspond with the Western notion, such as ‘personal,’ ‘secluded,’ ‘secrecy,’ and ‘solitary’” (El Guindi, 2008:149). In terms of Islamic constructions of space, El Guindi (2008:149) uses the term to denote “the Arab concept of a valued right over body and space for women and over space for the family.” Especially in Western feminist literature, privacy is associated with the private-public polarity and presented as a gendered construct. The public domain is described as a “highly valued sphere” (El Guindi, 2008:148) in which men are active, while the private sphere is associated with women, domestication, seclusion – “a private domain of women less valued universally” (El Guindi, 2008:148). El Guindi (2008:148) argues that the public-private polarity does not adequately illuminate the Arabo-Islamic constructions of **private space**. She says:

Two spheres considered private in the Middle East are women and family. Here I find the notion of privacy closer to cultural understanding; it reflects better culture conceptualization than the rigidly imposed private-public polarity (El Guindi, 2008:148).

El Guindi (2008:149) indicates that in Arab and Islamic societies

... there is a culture that cultivates and guards privacy in such a way that family remains a core foundation of the culture, and women can simultaneously be most private and most public.

For El Guindi (2008:149), the term *khuṣūṣiyyah* expresses the notion of Arab privacy, which

... is not personal but collective, not secret but sacred. It is carefully guarded and concerns primarily the two core cultural spheres of women and family. Arab privacy is neither about individualism nor seclusion. It is relational and public.

In Arab cultural constructions of space, **privacy** intersects not only with gender, but also with time and space. The interweaving of sacred time and space and ordinary time and space allows for a construction of **private sanctity** that “accommodates privacy in public” (El Guindi, 2008:149) and allows for relational and public collectivity.

¹⁹⁴ Cf. El Guindi (2008:147-152) for a detailed discussion of the concept.

- *جماعية jamā'iyah* "collectivity":¹⁹⁵ The noun is derived from the root جمع *jama'a* "to gather, collect, unite, combine." It is a root with a "rich corpus of derivatives. They all have one thing in common: a meaning relating to group or collectivity" (El Guindi, 2008:152). El Guindi (2008:152) argues that Islamic spatial constructions cannot be fully appreciated without taking into account the "culture that weaves richness of expression around the notion of collectivity" and "stands in stark contrast with ideologies that emphasize individualism." Arab culture

...does give primary significance to the group, from family, to larger kin forms, to community. We discussed earlier how the realm of the sacred includes constructs of home, house of worship, womanhood. In other words, the realms of the sacred intersects the realm of collectivity and both intersect the realm of privacy (El Guindi, 2008:153).

According to El Guindi (2008:153), it is significant that the only day "of the Islamic week that is not named according to consecutive numbers is the day of collective public worship, which its distinctive name, al-Jum'a, denotes." For Muslims, Friday is the day of "public collective prayer" (El Guindi, 2008:153). Collective prayer enhances the basic values of Arabo-Islamic culture where "collective concerns, group activity, community support, family and kin are highly valued" (El Guindi, 2008:153). Consequently, El Guindi (2008:153) proposes

...that the conceptual element of al-Jama'iyya in relationship with the other two identified earlier, al-Khususiyya and al-Qudsiyya, make up the necessary components of an Arabo-Islamic theory of rhythm.

The notion of the **interweaving** of private and sacred space and public and profane space, and the individual and/or collective **activation** of private and sacred space, is an indispensable element of Arabo-Islamic constructions of space. In *al-Islām*, the private and the public, the sacred and the profane, the individual and the collective are not experienced as binary opposites, but as a natural rhythm of life that "integrates spheres of lived experience and brings thought processes and categorization of thought into it. It takes understanding beyond the common cliché of religion versus state, or the overused separation of church and state" (El Guindi, 2008:153). In the following section, the notion of Islām's **rhythm** will be discussed in some detail.

3.3.2.2 The rhythmic interweaving of sacred and ordinary space and time

El Guindi (1999:79) regards the "fluidity of space and rhythmic patterns of time" as a distinctive characteristic of Arab culture and of Islamic constructions of space. It is quite remarkable how "(t)he two interweave throughout the ordinary day" (El Guindi, 1999:79). According to El Guindi (1999:81) this fluidity of sacred and profane space

¹⁹⁵ Cf. El Guindi (2008:152-153) for a detailed discussion of the concept.

and time renders their representation as binary opposites inappropriate in an Islamic context. In the Arab cultural context, space

...is nuanced and dynamic, so much so as to accommodate privacy in public. This polarity is too rigid and static to apply particularly to Arab and Islamic space, which is characterised by the spatial and temporal interweaving pattern – the moving between sacred space and time and ordinary worldly space and time throughout the day every day. Sacred space and rhythmic time are both public and private (El Guindi, 1999:81).

El Guindi (2008:123) argues that “Muslims experience time intimately and move comfortably in and out of Muslim space.” The result of the interweaving of sacred space and time and ordinary space and time is that *al-Islām* “humanizes time and collectivizes space” (El Guindi, 2008:93). It differs markedly from Western culture that “mechanizes time and individuates space” (El Guindi, 2008:93). It is impossible to understand Muslim life without taking cognisance of the uniquely Muslim experience of space and time. El Guindi (2008:20) says:

One cannot understand Muslim life without understanding, not Islam’s structure, but Islam’s rhythm – how Muslims weave in and out, from ordinary space and time to sacred space and time, throughout the day, every month, throughout the year for a lifetime.

Al-Islām “humanizes time and collectivizes space” (El Guindi, 2008:93) through a unique conceptualization of time. Christianity fully adopted a solar calendar (El Guindi, 2008:80-82). Judaism follows a lunisolar calendar. Months are based on lunar months, but years are based on solar years. This results in the addition of an intercalary month every two or three years, for a total of seven times per 19 years, in order to align lunar and solar years (El Guindi, 2008:104-106). *Al-Islām*, on the other hand, seamlessly allow for the “interweaving of sun and moon” (El Guindi, 2008:20) in its calendar.¹⁹⁶ It results in the typical “Arabo-Islamic rhythm” (El Guindi, 2008:20)

¹⁹⁶ The scope of the present study does not allow for a detailed discussion of the concept of time. El Guindi (2008) deals with the subject at length in her analysis of the rhythm of Islam. She indicates that conceptualizations of the concept “time” tend to sway between two extremes, namely “cyclical time and teleological time” (El Guindi, 2008:6). On the one hand, time can be conceptualized as the repetition of recurrent events, such as the annual cycle of seasons. On the other hand time can be conceptualized as a linear chain of non-repeatable events (El Guindi, 2008:23-37). El Guindi (2008:25) then adds a third possible conceptualization, where time is not about calendars, but about social relations and personal interactions. This conceptualization locates time in society and the “rhythm of social life” becomes the “basis of the category of time and space” (El Guindi, 2008:35). El Guindi (2008:33) then argues that the third possibility profoundly influences conceptualizations of space. Space acquires new properties, namely, “quality rather than quantity, discontinuity rather than continuity, indivisibility rather than the capability of infinite subdivision, interpenetration rather than exteriority.” For El Guindi (2008:35-37) this conceptualization of time allows for the fluidity of space in *al-Islām*.

experienced by every Muslim every day, every month, and every year of his/her life. In this rhythmic interweaving of sacred space and time and ordinary space and time

...the beginning of the month is determined by the new moon, the month would be based on lunations, while the sun determines seasons and the related rhythm of life (El Guindi, 2008:20).

For a Muslim, this specific rhythm is “embedded in the very essence of the culture – a rhythm that Muslim people feel, experience, live by, think with, and internalize” (El Guindi, 2008:21).

Muslim **daily rhythm** is determined by “solar temporality” (El Guindi, 2008:129) and is regulated by sunrise and sunset. This natural rhythm is reflected in the Muslim daily prayer ritual. El Guindi (2008:134) states:

At prayer time, five times a day, a period begins within which a Muslim person moves temporarily out of ordinary time and space and into sacred time and space and back. Intermittently throughout the day a Muslim person briefly leaves what he or she is doing, irrespective of its nature or importance, and, if already cleansed, stands facing Makka and prays. This happens seamlessly. It could be anywhere – at home, at work, in a shop, in the aisle of an airplane, in the airport, or in the street.

Five times a day, at “dawn (morning), noon, afternoon, sunset and evening” (El Guindi, 2008:129), the “call for prayer is publicly chanted” (El Guindi, 2008:129). Upon hearing the اذان *adhān* “call to prayer” (derived from the root اذن *adhina* “to hear, listen”), a Muslim actively engages in a rhythmic process of **space conversion** (El Guindi, 2008:134), from ordinary worldly space to sacred space and back. El Guindi (2008:135) describes it as follows:

Any undesignated area, facing the direction of Makka, can be temporarily “designated” as sacred Muslim space by the act of the prayer itself. An area is marked as prayer area when a Muslim of either sex, in a cleansed purified state, performs any of the daily prayers.

The very act of prayer itself “turns a public area into a private space” (El Guindi, 2008:136). At the same time, “(a)n individual faithful turns any worldly place into individual sacred space by performing the daily prescribed five prayers” (El Guindi, 2008:136). The whole Islamic week keeps this natural rhythmic pattern (El Guindi, 2008:129) of individual space conversion. The one exception, is “the day of worship, *yawm al-jum‘a* (the day of collectivity, equivalent to Friday), which is the one day of the week that is not named as a number and is for collective worship” (El Guindi, 2008:130). It is specifically the **noon prayer** on a Friday that is designated for collective space conversion (El Guindi, 2008:136). The Friday noon prayer in itself provides a natural rhythmic pattern to the Muslim week. The “week begins at sundown

on Friday and runs through to the sundown of the following Friday” (El Guindi, 2008:118), with “the collective jum‘a prayer” the natural climax and “the sacred moment” of the week (El Guindi, 2008:117).

Both the daily private prayer and the weekly collective prayer bind Muslims everywhere to the same rhythmic pattern of space conversion. For all Muslims, all over the world, the holy city of *Makka* and the holy *Ka‘ba* in *المَسْجِدُ الْحَرَامُ* *al-Masjid al-Harām* “the Sacred Mosque” become the single cosmic orientation point five times a day.¹⁹⁷ The rhythmic interweaving of private and collective prayer, of sacred and ordinary space and time, creates

...a Muslim web of life.. that has been developing out of a creative idea since the seventh century. Moving in and out of the five daily prayers (*salat*) establishes a particular quality to the pattern of the day. It creates a distinctive Muslim rhythm, which is established by this interweaving of daily prayers in daily life. More than any other daily practice or task, intermittently praying throughout the day weaves a rhythm of fluid, interwoven temporality and spatiality that makes daily life of and for a Muslim distinctive and unique. The public call for prayer chanted five times a day (*athān*) by human voice from the minarets of mosques reflects and establishes this rhythmic pattern (El Guindi, 2008:137).

Muslim **annual rhythm** is determined by the lunar calendar, which “measures the time it takes for the moon to orbit the earth twelve times, 354.3667 days. The lunar year is eleven days shorter than the solar year” (El Guindi, 2008:95). Muslim annual rhythm is determined solely by the lunar calendar, without any intercalation, consequently the “lunar months regress with respect to the seasons making one complete cycle every 32½ years” (El Guindi, 2008:128). Islamic rhythm thus “follows the moon in its monthly pattern and the sun in its daily pattern” (El Guindi, 2008:128). In the Muslim annual rhythm, two months are regarded as particularly sacred, and each of these months is associated with a major festival. The annual lunar rhythm with the two sacred months and their associated major feasts instil in Muslims a sense of obedience, discipline, and cleansing (El Guindi, 2008:133).

The first sacred month is *رمضان* *Ramaḍān*, the ninth month in the Arabo-Islamic lunar calendar. *Ramaḍān*

...is the month during which Muslims fast from sunrise to sunset. This pattern intersects structurally with the rhythmic pattern of prayer and integrates seamlessly the two experiential modes, praying and fasting. It is interesting that while the month of Ramadan is based on the lunar cycle, fasting is based on the solar cycle (El Guindi, 2008:132).

¹⁹⁷ Cf. Section 3.3.3.

The month of *Ramaḍān*, like the daily prayer times, binds Muslims everywhere (El Guindi, 2008:132). It creates a sense of collectivity, community and sociality in the global Islamic *umma* (“nation”). El Guindi (2008:131) emphasises the link between *Ramaḍān* and *umma* when she says:

An individual fasting Ramadan breaks fast every day alone or with family and friends, but at some level would be joining a seemingly tangible community of folk across global time and space who would be fasting and breaking fast following the same pattern at equivalent time. This becomes the open and unbounded Islamic community in its contemporary transformation of the form already conceived fourteen centuries ago in Yathrib.

The end of *Ramaḍān* “is marked by ‘Eid al-Fitr (the feast of breaking the fast, called the small ‘Eid in some places). It lasts for three days, or from the first through the third of the Islamic month of Shawwal” (El Guindi, 2008:132).

The second sacred month is ذو الحجة *Dhū l-Hijja*, the last month of the Islamic calendar. It is the month of pilgrimage. The “Hajj marks the last phase of an individual’s religious maturity and completes the required pillars of Islam” (El Guindi, 2008:133). The expectation is that every adult Muslim will fulfil this obligation of *al-Islām* at least once in his/her lifetime. The *Hajj* and its associated rituals hold particular spatial significance.¹⁹⁸ They are especially associated with space conversion.¹⁹⁹ El Guindi (2008:133) describes it as follows:

Once pilgrimage is performed a Muslim man or woman attains an irreversible state of sacredness and social respect accompanied by the acquisition of the irreversible title of *Haj* (for males) or *Hajja* (for females).

The “Eid al-Adha (the feast of sacrifice, called the big feast in some places) marking the pilgrimage” (El Guindi, 2008:132-133) is the second major festival in the Islamic lunar calendar. It takes place for five days (from the tenth to the fourteenth day of *Dhū l-Hijjah*). This feast “commemorates Prophet Ibrahim’s intent to sacrifice his son, Ismail” (El Guindi, 2008:133).

For Muslims, “the rhythmicity of interweaving spatiality and temporality” (El Guindi, 2008:137) is intrinsically linked to the *Qur’ān* and the *Sunna* and follows the example set by the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ). For about two centuries before the advent of *al-Islām*, the holy city of *Makka* and specifically the area around the *Ka’ba* served as a site of pilgrimage for the major Arabic tribes. *Makka* was a centre of trade, which “became the most important capital-accumulating occupation in the otherwise largely

¹⁹⁸ Cf. Sections 3.3.2.3 and 3.3.3.

¹⁹⁹ Cf. Section 3.3.2.1.

barren land of western Arabia” (El Guindi, 2008:103). It was important for the populous tribe of Quraysh to keep *Makka* neutral during times of tribal warfare and to preserve the stability of intertribal trade. Four months of the year were regarded as sacred months during which tribal warfare was forbidden (El Guindi, 2008:108). The “long established custom of observing four months as those in which fighting was forbidden” (Yusuf Ali, 1967:450, n. 1295) is alluded to in *Sūra* 9:36. However, in pre-Islamic Arabia a lunisolar calendar was followed

...that fixed sacred months to an intercalated cycle that subordinated the sacred to the seasonality of trade. Instead of performing the rites of hajj during sacred months as they shifted across the seasons, sacredness was fixed to the seasons, and rites were performed annually in the spring. Sacredness stipulated that during those times there would be no wars, battles, or any bloodshed. It was a time for pilgrimage rites and equally the season for active trade (El Guindi, 2008:125).

The *Qur’ān* prohibits the custom of intercalation. *Sūra* 9:36 declares the (lunar) year to consist of twelve months, of which four are sacred: *إِنَّ عِدَّةَ الشُّهُورِ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ اثْنَا عَشَرَ شَهْرًا فِي كِتَابِ اللَّهِ يَوْمَ خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ مِنْهَا أَرْبَعَةٌ حُرْمٌ* “Indeed, the number of months with *Allāh* is twelve months in the register of *Allāh*, from the day He created the heavens and the earth; of these, four are sacred. That is the correct religion.” *Sūra* 9:37 then stipulates:

(قَالَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى)	(Allāh the Exalted said:)
إِنَّمَا النَّسِيءُ زِيَادَةٌ فِي الْكُفْرِ	<i>Indeed, the postponing is an increase in disbelief.</i>
يُضِلُّ بِهِ	<i>They are led astray by it –</i>
الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا	<i>those who have disbelieved.</i>
يُجَلِّوْنَهُ عَامًا	<i>They make it lawful one year,</i>
وَيُحَرِّمُونَهُ عَامًا	<i>and they declare it unlawful another year,</i>
لِيُؤَاطِنُوا عِدَّةَ	<i>in order to adjust the number</i>
مَا حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ	<i>which Allāh has made unlawful,</i>
فَيُجَلِّوْا	<i>thus declaring lawful</i>
مَا حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ	<i>what Allāh has made unlawful.</i>
زُيِّنَ لَهُمْ سُوءُ أَعْمَالِهِمْ	<i>The evil of their deeds is made pleasing to them,</i>
وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْكَافِرِينَ	<i>but Allāh does not guide the disbelieving people.</i>

Sūra 9:37 (التوبة) *al-Tawbah / The Repentance:37*

The noun نسيء “postponing” is derived from the root نَسَأَ “to postpone, delay” and refers to the pre-Islamic custom of intercalation (El Guindi, 2008:107). The practice allowed professional intercalators (*an-Nasa’a*) to manipulate the lunar and solar calendar and thus declare months ordinary or sacred according to their needs (El Guindi,

2008:105). The *Qur'ān* declares this practice as كفر “unbelief,” and thus as “an act against faith” (El Guindi, 2008:107).

The *Qur'ān* urges Believers to respect the natural order as created by *Allāh*. He created both sun and moon as lights and as harbingers of the natural rhythm of time:

(قال الله تعالى) (Allāh the Exalted said:)

هُوَ *It is He*
 الَّذِي جَعَلَ الشَّمْسُ ضِيَاءً وَالْقَمَرَ نُورًا *who created the sun a shining light*
and the moon a reflected light.
 وَقَدَرَهُ مَنَازِلَ *And He determined for it phases*
 لِتَعْلَمُوا عَدَدَ السِّنِينَ وَالْجِسَابِ *that you may know the number of years*
and the count (of time).
 مَا خَلَقَ اللَّهُ ذَلِكَ *Allāh did not create this*
 إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ *except in truth.*
 يُفَصِّلُ الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ *He explains the signs to a people*
 يَعْلَمُونَ *who understand.*

Sūra 10:5 (يونس Yūnus / Jonah:5)

The sun and moon each follows their orbit according to “the natural (divine) order” (El Guindi, 2008:109), as is stated in *Sūra* 36:40:

(قال الله تعالى) (Allāh the Exalted said:)

لَا الشَّمْسُ يَنْبَغِي لَهَا *It is not permissible for the sun*
 أَنْ تُدْرِكَ الْقَمَرَ *that it overtakes the moon;*
 وَلَا اللَّيْلُ سَابِقُ النَّهَارِ *nor does the night overtake the day,*
 وَكُلٌّ فِي فَلَكٍ يَسْبَحُونَ *but each, in an orbit, is swimming.*

Sūra 36:40 (يس Yā Sīn / Yā Sīn:40)

From these verses, it is clear that “Muhammad’s concern was about restoring the stability of nature, the divinity of sacredness, and the morality of values” (El Guindi, 2008:109). Henceforth, intercalation “was abolished and forbidden” (El Guindi, 2008:109) and since then “both moon and sun guide the Islamic cycle of life” (El Guindi, 2008:109). Seeing the new moon “is pivotal in the Islamic cycle of sacred rhythms” (El Guindi, 2008:112) and the “crescent is the symbol *par excellence* of Islam” (El Guindi, 2008:113).

In *al-Islām*, Muḥammad’s (ﷺ) restoration of “the natural (divine) order” (El Guindi, 2008:109) is of immense significance and it is intimately **experienced** in *al-Islām*’s

rhythmic interweaving of sacred and ordinary space and time. Denny (1985:71) describes *al-Islām*'s appearance in world history as follows:

With the appearance of Islam in world history, the old Arabian way of life, *al-jāhiliyya*, the "Time of Barbarism," had been superseded. A new era and a new dispensation had begun, and zero point was the dramatic emigration of Muḥammad and his Companions from Mecca to Medina. The new calendar was arranged, without intercalation, to be independent not only of the old Arabian lunar year but especially of all solar reckoning which was traditionally linked to the structures of agricultural society and religion.²⁰⁰

That the rhythm of *al-Islām* was of primary concern for the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) is evident from the fact that it was one of the themes in his famous Last Sermon (خطبة الوداع *Khuṭbatu l-Wadā'*) delivered on the ninth day of *Dhū l-Ḥijja* in the year 10 AH (6 March 632) during what has become known as the Prophet's (ﷺ) Farewell Pilgrimage (Ahmed, 2002b:39-40; El Guindi, 2008:124-126; Brown, 2009:66-67).²⁰¹ The Prophet (ﷺ) quotes *Sūra* 9:37 and then states:

Time has completed its cycle and is as it was on the day that God created the heavens and the earth. The number of months with God is twelve; four of them are sacred, three consecutive and the Rajab of Mudar, which is between Jumādā and Sha'bān (Guillaume, 1955:651).

Muḥammad (ﷺ) thus directed Believers to convert space according to a natural rhythm:

He asked believers to leave nature's rhythms alone and to re-embrace the moon to shine on their path, in sacred glory and in its natural synergy with the sun, in and out of the rhythm of Islam. The moon was back in center stage in Arabia then, and around the world of Muslims today (El Guindi, 2008:112).

El Guindi (2008:114) states that

... it becomes evident that Islam embraces a relationality between moon and sun in such a way that binds the polarity in patterned movements used to mark time for Muslims.

²⁰⁰ The official birth date of *al-Islām* is 24 September 622 CE (cf. Section 3.3.1.1). It represents the start of the Islamic calendar. The calendar is called سنة هجرية *sana hijriyya* "year of the emigration." It is abbreviated as AH in Western languages, derived from the Latin *Anno Hejirae* (El Guindi, 2008:95).

²⁰¹ The Prophet's (ﷺ) Last Sermon is mentioned in a number of books of *Ḥadīth*, for instance in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Bukhāri (cf. Book 25, *Ḥadīth* 217, 218, 219), the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Muslim (Book 15, *Ḥadīth* 159); the *Sunan* Abī Dāwūd (Book 23, *Ḥadīth* 9); the *Jāmi'* at-Tirmidhī (Book 12, *Ḥadīth* 18); the *Sunan* ibn-Mājah (Book 9, *Ḥadīth* 1924). The Arabic text and an English translation of these sources are available online at <http://sunnah.com/> under the title "The Hadith of the Prophet Muḥammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم) at your fingertips" (Accessed 19/04/2018). An extensive version of the Sermon appears in Ibn Ishāq's *Sīrat Rasūl Allāh*. An English translation is available in Guillaume (1955:649-652). El Guindi (2008:124-125) provides a brief summary of the Sermon's content.

In terms of constructions of time and the interweaving of time and space, “Islam went back to nature” (El Guindi, 2008:125).

3.3.2.3 The ritual enactment of sacred and private space

The researcher argued that the unique characteristic of *al-Islām*'s constructions of lived space is the rhythmic and seamless interweaving of sacred and ordinary, of private and public space – throughout the day, every day; throughout the year, every year – for a lifetime. An important theme in this regard is the crucial role that **ritual enactment** plays in Islamic constructions of space. Denny (1985:72) regards it as significant that the Islamic ritual year resolutely follows the lunar calendar, without intercalation, as directed by the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ):

The Islamic ritual year comprehends and dominates the mundane year, resolutely denying any intrinsic value to seedtime and to harvest, to breeding and lambing... and to other meaningful and satisfying seasonal activities, while at the same time blessing them all with its lordly progress in a regular round of visits.

The researcher deliberately chooses the term **ritual enactment** to describe the role of ritual in Islamic constructions of space. On the one hand, it would be possible (and valid) to equate Islamic **ritual** to *‘ibāda* “worship, service.”²⁰² The *‘ibāda* are the five Pillars of *al-Islām*, each Pillar is associated with ritual acts, and there are guidelines in the *Qur’ān* and/or the *Sunna* for the rituals of each Pillar. The rituals also have strong temporal and spatial reference, summarized by Denny (1985:69) as follows:

The five Pillars constitute the main categories of Islamic ritual... Four of the five Pillars have a strong communal reference... Two of the Pillars also have a strong spatial reference, for both Salat and Hajj are focused on the Ka’ba in Mecca. Three – Salat, Sawm, and Hajj – also have strong time references. So we have in these several ritual clusters a full range of dealings in sacred space and time.

Analysed from this perspective, Islamic ritual is a **secondspatial construct** – the following of a set of **rules** determined by *al-Islām*'s normative tradition. Shepard (2009:84) states that “(r)itual actions, especially the Pillars and matters related to purification are considered *‘ibadat*, ‘acts of worship’. These are *duties owed* directly to God.”²⁰³

On the other hand, **enactment** implies that Islamic ritual entails more than the following of sets of rules associated with *al-Islām*'s daily and annual rhythm. Islamic rituals are, in fact, perceived as the active engagement in a process of **spatial**

²⁰² Cf. Section 3.3.1.2.2.

²⁰³ Italics added by the researcher for emphasis.

conversion. Hewer (2006:138) indicates that it is a Muslim's ideal to live "a life of *taqwa*," which means to live a life of piety and complete obedience to God. In practical terms it means to live constantly remembering God.²⁰⁴ Esposito (1988:32) argues that a Muslim is acutely aware that *Allāh* is as close to him/her as his/her "jugular vein" (*Sūra* 50:16). He "commanded submission or obedience to His will," and before Him "the Muslim is morally responsible and accountable" (Esposito, 1988:32). In order to attain the ideal of complete obedience to *Allāh*, **ritual enactment** plays a crucial role.

Islamic rituals should be conceived as **at the same time** secondspatial constructs and thirdspatial activities. Rituals become creative and life-changing acts. Metcalf (1996b:3) indicates that in *al-Islām*

... it is ritual and sanctioned practice that is prior and that creates "Muslim space," which thus does not require any juridically claimed territory or formally consecrated or architecturally specific space.

Metcalf (1996b:3) adds that, although Muslims might be engaged in their personal or community lives in a global world with all the complexities and challenges associated with that space, they

... essentially exclude the outside world to carry with them a world of ritual, relationships, and symbols that creates some variety of Muslim space wherever they are present.

The researcher concurs with Denny (1985:66) when he says: "Ritual is for the participant a re-enactment of a profound truth," or to put it in spatial terms, a process of spatial transformation, of "ritualized changes of status" (Denny, 1985:75), at the same time a secondspatial representation and a thirdspatial application.

Denny (1985:64) describes the interaction between the secondspatial representation and thirdspatial application as follows:

Islamic ritual is an expression of Islamic doctrine, but this is not to say that the latter is either logically or chronologically prior to the former. The two are mutually confirmatory moments in a unified process of religious discovery and discipline. *Tawhīd* is not merely a matter of theological propositions, but also a living realization: the "making one" of God by total submission and service. At the center is the experience of God, which is then articulated and maintained by religion.

²⁰⁴ Arabic تقوى *taqwā* "godliness, devoutness, piety." The noun is derived from the root تقى *taqā* "to fear (God)."

It is obvious “that Islam itself places great emphasis on ritual activities” (Denny, 1985:63). Following Van Genep (1960:10-11),²⁰⁵ Denny (1985:74-75) argues that Islamic rituals can broadly be classified as rites of passage belonging to the transition or liminal phase of such rites. Some of the rites are **critical** (i.e., rites marking the transition of a person or social group from one status to another), and others are **calendrical** (i.e., rites associated with transitions in the passage of time).²⁰⁶

- The **critical** rites are primarily focused on individuals, but implicitly are also geared to the needs of the community as a whole. Two of the five Pillars of *al-Islām* can be included in this category, namely the rituals involving daily prayers (*ṣalā*) and the giving of poor-tax (*zakā*). To this category also belong a number of life cycle rituals, particularly rituals involving birth, circumcision, marriage, and death. A “seldom investigated but nonetheless fruitful topic for the study of Islamic ritual behaviour is *Qurʾān* recitation” (Denny, 1985:75) and can also be classified as a critical ritual.
- **Calendrical** rites focus on the needs of the community as a whole, but implicitly are also important for the individual. To this category belong the rituals associated with the two main events in the Islamic lunar calendar, both also included in the obligations of *al-Islām*’s five Pillars, namely the annual fast (*ṣiyām / ṣawm*) during the month of Ramaḍān, and the annual pilgrimage to *Makka* – an once-in-a-lifetime obligation – during *Dhū l-Ḥijja*, the last month of the Muslim lunar calendar. Denny (1985:75) emphasises the particular importance of these two events due to “the highly imperialistic lunar calendar which dominates and slowly makes its way around the seasons as a sort of guardian of time.”

Denny (1985:75) indicates that all the Islamic rituals, whether they are classified as critical or calendrical, hold great significance in *al-Islām* due to the fact that they effect a ritualized change of status. As such, all the rituals – whether they are focused primarily on the individual or the *umma* – symbolize **space conversion** to a state of حرام *ḥarām* “sacred,” and at the same time, they symbolize the **embodiment** of sacred space.

According to Bennett (1994:91), a Muslim’s “fundamental commitment to *tawḥīd*, to ‘making one’, to holding in balance ‘world’ and ‘religion’, means that Muslims are encouraged to integrate those activities that especially focus their thoughts on the divine, which we can call *ʿibādah* (worship), with their more mundane day-to-day chores.”²⁰⁷ In *al-Islām*, there is no real “distinction between ‘religion’ (*dīn*) and ‘world’

²⁰⁵ Cf. Section 3.2.3.

²⁰⁶ The five Pillars and the associated ritual performances have been briefly described in Section 3.3.1.2 (cf. also Brown, 2009:163; Shepard, 2009:84-101). Here the focus falls upon the role of the rituals in space conversion.

²⁰⁷ Cf. Section 3.3.1.3.

(*dunyā*)” (Bennett, 1994:88). A Muslim strives to maintain balance in all spheres of life. Although some spaces are regarded as “sacred,” *al-Islām* “never loses sight of its fundamental conviction that all space is sacred space, and, through worship, architecture and traditional city planning, tries to sacralise all space by extending the ‘sacred’ into the ‘secular’” (Bennett, 1994:89).

The sacralisation of space is realised through different ritual activities, some on the level of *al-Islām*’s daily rhythm, some on the level of annual rhythm, some once-in-a-lifetime experiences. All these ritual activities are especially concerned with the **construction of sacred space**. Denny (1985:69) agrees that there is no sharp distinction between the sacred and the profane

... but a kind of shading off from the one to the other, as in the sequence *jā`ir* and *mubāḥ* (neutral) toward *farḍ* and *wājib* (performance rewarded, omission punished), and from *sunna* and *nafl* (performance rewarded, but omission not punished) all the way to *makhrūh* (disapproved but not punished) and finally *ḥarām* (absolutely prohibited, with punishment) (Denny, 1985:69).

These intricate distinctions between actions “along a gradation” (El Guindi, 2008:119) that lie somewhere between the extremes of *ḥarām* “forbidden” and *ḥalāl* “permitted” are legal concepts that “reflect the primary notion of obedience to God’s command” (Denny, 1985:69). However, they are at the same time expressions of a deep desire to construct – individually and collectively – a uniquely Muslim sacred space.²⁰⁸ In the construction of sacred space, the noun حرام *ḥarām* becomes a complex concept with distinct spatial implications. It means “sacred,” but

... not in the English sense, which is restricted to the notion of the “holy.” Rather in the French sense of... “things set apart and forbidden.” There is ambiguity in the term, for it can be interpreted as “forbidden: unclean” and also “forbidden: ultraclean” (Denny, 1985:69-70).

At the heart of the classification of acts and objects on the continuum between the extremes of *ḥarām* and *ḥalāl* lies the desire of **pollution avoidance**, i.e., the desire to avoid what is forbidden and consequently unclean. This desire “has considerable **ritual** meaning for Muslims” (Denny, 1985:70).²⁰⁹ Denny (1985:70) argues that the *ḥarām-ḥalāl* polarity “is one of the most prominent indicators of the general bipolarity of things in Islam.” This **general bipolarity of things** is indicative of a Muslim’s **fundamental spatial orientation**, which is characterised by the desire to avoid being

²⁰⁸ Cf. Section 3.3.2.1.

²⁰⁹ Italics and emphasis added by the researcher.

polluted and thus becoming unclean. Denny (1985:70) describes this fundamental Muslim spatial orientation as follows:

Each of these orientations has a direct connotation with purity (right) and pollution (left). So benefit and blessing proceed from the right whereas baleful effects are to be expected from the left. One enters a mosque with the right foot first; one leaves leading with the left. The opposite is the case when entering and leaving a privy. The left hand is used for humble tasks, whereas the right is reserved for eating and touching others. The Ka'ba itself has been orientated from most ancient times according to a right-left sense, and this has been maintained in Islam though not without some alteration and confusion.

The desire to avoid pollution reflects a Muslim's "will to *tawhīd*" (Denny, 1985:70), i.e., the fundamental desire to honour the oneness of *Allāh*. Pollution avoidance lies at the heart of Muslim rituals, and particularly at the heart of Muslim dietary laws. According to Douglas (1966:72), dietary laws in the Hebrew Bible are

... like signs which at every turn inspired meditation on the oneness, purity and completeness of God. By rules of avoidance holiness was given a physical expression in every encounter with the animal kingdom and at every meal.

Denny (1985:71) argues that these principles also apply to dietary laws in *al-Islām*. The fact that holiness is given "physical expression" (Douglas, 1966:72) through the most basic of human needs, namely the intake of nutrition, illustrates the importance of **embodiment** in Islamic ritual. According to Shepard (2009:100), the "body is brought into the ritual life in a major way at several points, e.g. purification, fasting, circumcision." A brief analysis of Islamic rituals, which accompany a Muslim from the cradle to the grave, will be given below. In order to contextualise all Islamic ritual behaviour and the role ritual enactment plays in the lived experience of every Muslim, two preliminary observations are in order.

The **first** preliminary remark is to emphasise that the **embodiment** of a Muslim's will to *tawhīd* literally accompanies him/her **from the cradle to the grave**.²¹⁰ It happens in the form of the daily hearing of, the audible expression of, and indeed the visual representation of the most fundamental of all Islamic beliefs, namely the **shahāda**.²¹¹ Two profound texts accompany a Muslim through life – every day, the whole day; every year, the whole year; for a lifetime – namely the words of the first *Sūra* of the *Qur'ān* (الفاتحة) *Al-Fātiḥa* "The Opening"), and the words of the *أَذَان* **adhān**, the Islamic

²¹⁰ Cf. Section 3.3.1.3.

²¹¹ Cf. Section 3.3.1.2.

call to prayer– recited publically, audibly, five times a day –wherever Muslims are present in the world

Both texts assert that *Allāh* is the only God, and the numerous repetitions of these texts throughout the day play a crucial role in shaping a Muslim and his/her world and worldview. They create a lens, so to speak, through which a Muslim looks at the world. The daily repetitions of these two texts for an entire lifetime are firstspatial realities.²¹² They are repeated wherever Muslims are. They are secondspatial representations.²¹³ They are repeated and enacted because that is what is prescribed in the *Qurʾān* and the *Sunna*. But they are also thirdspatial applications.²¹⁴ Both texts play a crucial and active role in the construction of Muslim sacred space and both become instruments in the process of space conversion enacted through Muslim rituals.

Sūra 1:1-7, aptly called الفاتحة *Al-Fātiḥa*, the “Opening,” serves as introduction to the *Qurʾān* and is, without doubt, the best known and most repeated passage from *al-Islām*’s holy book (Shepard, 2009:59). It is recited in each *rakʿa* of the Islamic prayer ritual (*ṣalā*),²¹⁵ in fact, “no *salāt* is valid without recitation of at least the *Fātiḥa*” (Graham, 1985:37). *Sūra* 15:87 refers to the seven verses of *Al-Fātiḥa* as the “often repeated” verses. The *Sūra* “is reiterated by the faithful Moslem about twenty times a day. This makes it one of the most often repeated formulas ever devised” (Hitti, 1970:131).²¹⁶ It captures most of the central themes of Islamic faith and “sum up the whole teaching of the *Qurʾān*” (Yusuf Ali, 1967:652 n. 2008).

(قال الله تعالى) (Allāh the Exalted said:)

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ | 1 In the name of Allāh, the Compassionate, the Merciful: |
| الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ | 2 Praise is (due to) Allāh, the Lord of the worlds, |
| الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ | 3 the Compassionate, the Merciful, |
| مَالِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ | 4 the Sovereign of the Day of Judgement. |

²¹² Cf. Section 3.3.1.1.

²¹³ Cf. Section 3.3.1.2.

²¹⁴ Cf. Section 3.3.1.3.

²¹⁵ Cf. Section 3.3.1.2.

²¹⁶ A moment’s reflection provides staggering results. In the Muslim lunar calendar year of 354 days, a devout Muslim recites *Al-Fātiḥa* formally at least 7080 times. In a lifetime of seventy years, it amounts to about 500 000 times! From a spatial perspective, it illustrates how the lived space of a Muslim is shaped by one single, but profound text.

إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ	⁵ You we worship,
وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ	and You we ask for help.
اهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ	⁶ Guide us to the straight path,
صِرَاطَ	⁷ the path
الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ	of those upon whom you bestowed favour,
غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ	not of those who have evoked (your) anger,
وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ	or of those who go astray.

Sūra 1:1-7 (الفاتحة) Al-Fātiḥa / The Opening:1-7

The significant role of *Al-Fātiḥa* in the lived experience of a devout Muslim is summarized by Yusuf Ali (1967:14 n. 18) as follows:

By universal consent it is rightly placed at the beginning of the *Qur'ān*, as summing up, in marvellously terse and comprehensive words, man's relation to God in contemplation and prayer. In our spiritual contemplation the first words should be those of praise. If the praise is from our innermost being, it brings us into union with God's will. Then our eyes are all good, peace, and harmony. Evil, rebellion, and conflict are purged out. They did not exist for us, for our eyes are lifted up above them in praise. Then we see God's attributes better (verses 2-4). This leads us to the attitude of worship and acknowledgement (verse 5). And finally comes Prayer for guidance, and a contemplation of what guidance means (verse 7).

The *اذان adhān*, the Islamic call to prayer, "is part of the universal experience of Muslims" (Brown, 2009:10). Closely related to the *adhān* is the *إقامة iqāma*, the second call to Islamic Prayer, given immediately before the prayer begins. Ideally, the words of the *adhān* and the *iqāma* are the first words whispered into a newborn's ears just after birth, in his/her left and right ear respectively (Hewer, 2006:116). These words "will be heard at the start of every act of worship throughout his life" (Brown, 2009:12). The words of the *adhān/iqāma* are a profound testimony to the unrivalled greatness of *Allāh*, emphasised in the *Sunnī* tradition by the six-fold repetition of the phrase *اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ* "Allāh is most great." The testimony also includes the *shahāda* and a twofold invitation, namely to come to prayer, which at the same time is a promise of success. The words of the *adhān*, with an indication of the number of times specific phrases are repeated in the *Sunnī* tradition, are given below:²¹⁷

²¹⁷ There are subtle differences between the *Sunnī* and *Shi'a* versions of the *adhān* (cf. Hewer, 2006:99; Brown, 2009:11). The researcher's interest is in the *Sunnī* version.

Repeat 4X	اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ	Allāh is most great!
Repeat 2X	أَشْهَدُ أَنَّ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ	I testify that there is no god but Allāh!
Repeat 2X	أَشْهَدُ أَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ	I testify that Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allāh!
Repeat 2X	حَيَّ عَلَى الصَّلَاةِ	Come to prayer!
Repeat 2X	حَيَّ عَلَى الْفَلَاحِ	Come to success!
Repeat 2X (only for <i>fajr</i>)	(الصَّلَاةُ خَيْرٌ مِنَ النَّوْمِ)	(The prayer is better than the sleep)!
Repeat 2X	اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ	Allāh is most great!
	لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ	There is no god but Allāh

Brown (2009:11) concisely summarizes the significance of the *adhān* when he says:

With the call to prayer we would seem to encounter the Islamic belief system at its most elemental, stripped of commentary or controversy: God is One and without rival, the messenger of the One God is Muhammad, and worship is God's most basic requirement of his creatures.

The **second** preliminary observation is to emphasise that, in principle, what is of primary importance in the performance of any ritual act is not the act itself, but the worshipper's **ritual purification** and **intention**.

- طهارة **ṭahāra** “(ritual/cultic) purity, holiness, sanctity”: The noun is derived from the root طهر **ṭahara** “to be clean, pure.” *Sūra* 2:222 states that “Allāh loves those who turn to Him constantly and He loves those who keep themselves pure and clean.” A *ḥadīth* transmitted in the *Saḥīḥ* of Bukhārī attributes the following saying to the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ): “Cleanliness is half of faith.”²¹⁸ In a *ḥadīth* transmitted in the *Jāmi’* at-Tirmidhī, the following saying is attributed to the Prophet (ﷺ): “The key to Paradise is *Ṣalā*, and the key to *Ṣalā* is *al-wuḍū’* (i.e., ritual purification).”²¹⁹ No ritual activity can be performed “without being physically and ritually clean. The **physical cleaning** may take the form of a shower or washing as necessary and clean clothes should be worn if possible. **Ritual cleanliness** is achieved through performing the ritual washing or *wuḍū’*.²²⁰ This requires that the hands, arms,

²¹⁸ Cf. *Saḥīḥ* al-Bukhārī, Book 2: كتاب الطهارة “The Book of Purification,” *Ḥadīth* 432, available online: <https://sunnah.com/muslim/2/1> (Accessed 28/04/2018).

²¹⁹ Cf. *Jāmi’* at-Tirmidhī, Book 1: كتاب الطهارة “The Book of Purification,” *Ḥadīth* 4, available online: <https://sunnah.com/tirmidhi/1/4> (Accessed 28/04/2018).

²²⁰ Arabic الوضوء *al-wuḍū’* “purity, cleanliness, ritual ablution before prayer.” The noun is derived from the root وضو *waḍu’a* “to be pure, clean.”

mouth, nose, ears, head and feet are washed” (Esposito, 1988:101) with pure, clean water.²²¹ This is in accordance with the instruction in *Sūra* 5:6:

(قال الله تعالى)	(Allāh the Exalted said:)
يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا	O you who believe,
إِذَا قُمْتُمْ إِلَى الصَّلَاةِ	when you rise to [perform] prayer,
فَاغْسِلُوا وُجُوهَكُمْ وَأَيْدِيَكُمْ إِلَى الْمَرَافِقِ	wash your faces and your forearms to the elbows,
وَامْسَحُوا بِرُءُوسِكُمْ وَأَرْجُلَكُمْ إِلَى الْكَعْبَيْنِ	and wipe over your heads, and your feet to the ankles.

Sūra 5:6 (المائدة) *al-Mā'ida* / *The Table*:6)

Al-wuḍū' can be performed at home or in a mosque, where the necessary ablution facilities are provided (Hewer, 2006:101). The cleansing act “is related to cleanliness but is primarily a matter of sanctity” (Shepard, 2009:85).

In the case of major impurity, such as contact with a dead body, after sexual activity, and in the case of women after childbirth or the completion of their monthly menstruation cycle, purification by *wuḍū'* is not sufficient. The said occurrences, as well as external objects like alcohol, pigs, dogs, and carrion, cause *najāsa* “pollution.” A full bath, called *ghusl*, is then required.²²² During menstruation,²²³ women cannot maintain a state of ritual purity and are exempted from the daily ritual prayers (Hewer, 2006:102).

In certain situations, water might not be available for ritual purification. It can be replaced “by cleansing with clean earth, called *tayammum*” (Shepard, 2009:85)²²⁴ The ritual is prescribed in *Sūra* 4:43: “And if you are ill or on a journey or one of you comes from the place of relieving himself or you have contacted women and find no water, then seek clean earth (فَتَيَمَّمُوا صَعِيدًا طَيِّبًا) and wipe over your faces and your hands [with it].” Similarly, it is stated in *Sūra* 5:6: “But if you are ill or on a journey or one of you comes from the place of relieving himself or you have contacted women and do not find water, then seek clean earth (فَتَيَمَّمُوا صَعِيدًا طَيِّبًا) and wipe over your faces and hands with it.”

Through ritual purification, a Muslim person strips temporarily from the worldly identity. It symbolizes breaking off from normal, mundane activities to concentrate exclusively on *Allāh* and his will (Hewer, 2006:101). Purification in essence provides a Muslim with an individual “sacred” space in which they can perform their ritual actions. With the body thus **marked** as sacred space and within the

²²¹ Italics and emphasis added by the researcher.

²²² Arabic غسل *ghusl* “washing, ablution, major ritual ablution.” The noun is derived from the root غسل “to wash, cleanse, purge.”

²²³ During menstruation, a woman is in a state of جنب *junub*, i.e. a state of major ritual impurity (cf. *Sūra* 5:6).

²²⁴ Arabic تيمم *tayammum* “dry ablution.” The word is related to the root يم *yamma* V “to resort, aim, intend.” It links with the notion of نية *niyya* “intention.” The intent to perform ritual purification is more important than the means of purification.

border of sacrality, a Muslim can proceed with his/her devotion to *Allāh* (El Guindi, 1999:78). The act of purification is thus at the same time a process of **space conversion**.

- نية **niyya** “intention”: The noun is derived from the root نوى *nawā* “to intend, propose, purpose, plan, have in mind.” In a number of *aḥādīth*, the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) emphasised the importance of intention before rites are performed. An action is valued according to its intentions (Brown, 2009:162). Every ritual action, therefore, is preceded by a devout Muslim’s declaration of intent to perform that specific action (Hewer, 2006:102). Without proper attention, a ritual act is invalidated (Brown, 2009:162). Every statement of intention must also “be specific to that particular act of worship” (Brown, 2009:162). The intention should be stated “consciously and, if possible audibly” (Shepard, 2009:85).

The **ritual enactment** of **sacred space** is observable in *al-Islām*’s **daily**, **annual**, and **once-in-a-lifetime** rituals. The prevalence of ritual actions illustrate their importance in Muslim perceptions, conceptions, and lived experience of sacred space.

- **Daily rituals** centre around the performance of the prescribed rituals associated with the Pillar of **Ṣalā** “(ritual) prayer.”²²⁵ Denny (1985:72) describes the significance of *ṣalā* as follows:

The five daily prayers provide a vigorous testimony to the dominance of ritual concerns in people’s lives by calling them from mundane occupations to remembrance of their ultimate orientation. Each performance of the Salat is an exercise in **liminality** marked off by the ablution and “intention” (*niyya*) at the beginning and the “peace” (*taslīm*) at the end.²²⁶

El Guindi (1999:78) affirms that, during prayer, “a Muslim, stripped temporarily of worldly identity, is in a sacred state.” For Bennett (1994:89), the rhythm of *al-Islām* as embodied in daily ritual amounts to the transformation of time and body-space. The fact that *Ṣalā* “prayer” is said five times a day, enables a Muslim to also “sanctify the time spent between prayer, at work or at leisure” (Bennett, 1994:91). At the same time, “Muslim prayer involves the worshipper’s body, mind and soul.” It implies “the sacralisation of the human body” (Bennett, 1994:91). The fact that *Allāh* initially instructed Muḥammad (ﷺ) that Muslims should pray fifty times a day,²²⁷ “excellently illustrates that the Islamic ideal is to pray without ceasing, to dedicate all time to remembering God” (Bennett, 1994:91).

The notion that, through *Ṣalā*, *al-Islām* makes on Believers an all-inclusive, comprehensive, and universal claim, is symbolised by the fact that all Muslim ritual prayers are offered facing one single direction (the *qibla*), namely the holy *Ka’ba*

²²⁵ Cf. Section 3.3.1.2.

²²⁶ Italics and emphasis added by the researcher.

²²⁷ Cf. Section 3.3.1.2.

in the holy city of *Makka*.²²⁸ Through ritual prayer, the individual body becomes part of the communal body in worshipping and praying to *Allāh*. By standing shoulder to shoulder, facing towards the holy *Ka'ba*, and doing the exact same motions at the exact time, irrespective of geographical or other physical or universal borders, the Muslim *Ummah* exemplifies the unity, the essential **Oneness** of *Allāh*. The global spread of *al-Islām* implies that the Muslim ideal of constant prayer, focusing on the one and only God, has been attained. Hewer (2006:100) states:

Muslims are turning to offer their *salat* in the direction of the *Ka'ba* at every second of every day and have been doing so for centuries. Thus they form a single worldwide community united both in time and space.

The sense of unity, of the collectivity of the universal *Umma*, is enhanced by the fact that the Friday *zuhr* (noon) prayer is a congregational prayer (صلاة الجمعة *ṣalā al-jum'a* “congregational *ṣalā*”) (Shepard, 2009:87-88).²²⁹ Whether the Islamic prayer rituals are performed individually or in congregation, they encapsulate the **bodily experience of interacting with Allāh**. The body becomes the axis between vertical and horizontal orientation. Theologically, and therefore metaphorically, the Believer “has exchanged his own body-centredness for a God-centred existence” (Coetzee, 2003: 43).

Associated with the daily, formal, liturgical prayer rituals of *Ṣalā* are “*du'a* or the informal prayer of supplication or ‘speaking to God’, and *dhikr* or the training of the heart constantly to remember God and thus ascend to a state of *taqwa*” (Hewer, 2006:95). *du'a* “invocation, supplication” is derived from the root *da'a* “to summon, appeal to, implore.” It refers to “the raising of the mind to God in supplication, praise, thanksgiving and in seeking forgiveness. It is part of the personal relationship between the Muslim with God as Creator, Sustainer, Lord, Friend, Guide and All-merciful” (Hewer, 2006:95). Muslims are enjoined to “punctuate the day with prayer... from waking in the morning to going to sleep at night (Q. 33.41-42)” (Hewer, 2006:95). Muslims firmly cling to *Allāh*'s promise: “Call on Me; I will answer your (prayer)” (*Sūra* 40:60).

dhikr “recollection, remembrance” is derived from the root *dhakara* “to remember, recall, recollect.” It refers to devotional acts in *al-Islām* in which short phrases or prayers are repeatedly recited – silently or aloud – as a way to constantly train Muslims “to raise their hearts to God” (Hewer, 2006:96). Through *dhikr*, a Muslim “develops a sense of thankfulness to God (*shukr*) in every aspect, for example by repeating the phrase *Al-hamdu li'llah* (All praise/thanks be to God)” (Hewer, 2006:96), or “*subhan allah* (praise be to God)” (Shepard, 2009:99), or to repeat *Allāh*'s “ninety-nine excellent names” (Hitti, 1970:128).²³⁰ As a memory aid, such repetitions are often counted on a set of prayer beads (*misbaḥa* / *سُبْحَة* / *مِسْبَحَة*).

²²⁸ Cf. Section 3.3.3.

²²⁹ Cf. Section 3.3.1.2.

²³⁰ Cf. Section 3.3.1.2.

subḥa “rosary”), comparable to the rosary of Catholic tradition, containing thirty-three, sometimes eleven or ninety-nine beads” (Shepard, 2009:99).

The **ritual role of the Qur’ān** in the daily lives of Muslims cannot be underestimated. The Qur’ān is a crucial element in *al-Islām*’s constructions of sacred space. Of primary importance is the fact that the Qur’ān is literally regarded as the Word of God. It should be treated with the utmost respect. Before a Muslim handles the Qur’ān, he/she performs ritual ablution (*al-wuḍū’*), just as before prayers. Moreover, many Muslims “follow the tradition of covering their heads whenever the Qur’an is read aloud or recited, or when they study the text of the Qur’an” (Hewer, 2006:56). Every Muslim, whether he/she understands Arabic or not, learns passages from the Qur’ān, such as the prescribed passages recited during the *ṣalā* ritual, by heart (Hewer, 2006:57). Many Muslims make a conscious effort to learn the entire Arabic text of the Qur’ān by heart. Those who accomplish the task, “will be shown respect with the title of *hafiz* (fem. *hafizah*) as they ‘carry the Qur’an in their heart’” (Hewer, 2006:57). Moreover, “phrases such as *al-hamdu lillah* (praise be to God), *insha’allah* (if God wills) and *Allahu a’lam* (God knows best) are constantly on people’s lips” (Shepard, 2009:58).

The Qur’ān is primarily a book that should be recited and listened to (Shepard, 2009:58). **Qur’ān recitations** in public can be considered a form of art. Qur’ān recitation contests can attract crowds (Esposito, 1988:23). Denny (1985:75) argues that Qur’ān recitation can also be regarded as a form of Islamic ritual behaviour. It implies more than a secondspatial application of rules for “the correct practice of recitation based on the knowledge of ‘readings’ (*qirā’āt*), and the rules of pronunciation, stops, and starts (*waqf wal-ibtidā’*).” Thirdspatial issues such as the “condition of the reciter, the place of performing the recitation, and the attitude of the listeners are also of critical importance.” Recitations of the Qur’ān can take place individually or in groups. Such recitations usually aim “at a *khatam*, a ‘completion’ of the entire text within a set period, which may be a day, three days, a week, a month, or other time frame, pacing the progress by means of the liturgical divisions of the text” (Denny, 1985:75). When the *khatma* is achieved, the first *sūra* (*al-Fātiḥa*), and the first five verses of the second *sūra* (*al-Baqara*) are immediately recited again. It “symbolizes the eternity of the Qur’ān as a perfect cycle that keeps pace with the calendar and indeed adds to the sanctification of Islamic time. Reciting the Qur’ān is akin to a sacramental act in that divine power and presence are brought near” (Denny, 1985:75-76).

Over many centuries, traditions grew of “wearing portions of the Qur’an written on pieces of parchment and placed in a leather pouch (*tawiz*) for protection” (Esposito, 1988:57). These parchments function “rather like a talisman which protects and guides man” (Denny, 1985:76). To a devout Muslim, the mere physical presence of a Qur’ān carries a great grace or **barakah** with it” (Denny, 1985:76).²³¹ The Qur’ān is also closely associated with the art form of **calligraphy**. *Sunnī* tradition does not allow for the drawing or painting of animate objects, but calligraphy developed into a renowned art form. Verses from the Qur’ān are

²³¹ Emphasis added by the researcher.

gracefully presented on the walls of mosques or other public buildings (Shepard, 2009:58). It can indeed be claimed that the *Qur'ān* “informs the daily lives of the Muslims” (Denny, 1985:76).

The *Qur'ān* lives in the hearts of Muslims. Smith (2002:24) states that

... it regulates the interpretation and evaluation of every event. It is a memorandum for the faithful, a reminder for daily doings, and a repository of revealed truth. It is a manual of definitions and guarantees, and at the same time a roadmap for the will. Finally, it is a collection of maxims to meditate on in private, deepening endlessly one's sense of divine glory. “Perfect is the Word of your Lord in truth and justice” (6:115).

- **Annual rituals** centre around the performance of the prescribed rituals associated with the Pillars of **Zakā** “almsgiving” and **Ṣawm** “fasting.”²³² **Zakā** is strictly speaking not a ritual act, but rather a moral obligation on Muslims to give of their savings to the poor and needy. It is a voluntary act of love and kindness towards less fortunate members of the Muslim *Umma* (*Sūra* 9:60). However, the very fact that the noun is related to a word suggesting “purity” indicates that the concept belongs to the constellation of words marking sacred space and ritual purity. Denny (1985:76) argues that

... Zakat has its strict rules and applications, is included among the *'ibādāt* (“acts of worship”), and is frequently mentioned in the *Qur'ān* right after Salat (e.g., S. 2:43, 83; 5:12; 9:5). With reference to the Islamic calendar, certain kinds of property are taxed at the end of the year, and *zakat al-fitr* comes at the close of Ramadan. Zakat is something more than the practice of civic virtue, or even charity, for it has a transcendental basis and embraces the entire Muslim community. And, with respect to pollution issues, Zakat is reckoned to make pure that property remaining to the giver.

The researcher is thus of the opinion that **Zakā** is a marker of sacrality and a building block in *al-Islām*'s constructions of individual and communal sacred space.

Ṣawm “fasting” during the holy month of *Ramaḍān* is, without doubt, the most important annual ritual activity for the Muslim *Umma*. The fact that a Muslim must refrain from some of the most basic of human needs, namely to eat, drink or engage in sexual relations, from before sunrise in the morning until after sunset at night (Hewer, 2006:112), is not only an exercise in self-discipline and self-control. In fact, it is even more than a special illustration of devotion to *Allāh*, a time for reflection, for expressing gratitude for God's guidance, or for awareness of human frailty and dependence on God (Esposito, 1988:92).

From a spatial perspective, *ṣawm* symbolizes space conversion – from individual and collective mundane space to individual and collective sacred space. The period of daily fasting for a full lunar calendar month becomes an extensive exercise in liminality (Denny, 1985:72). The fact that every Muslim intimately

²³² Cf. Section 3.3.1.2.

experiences the hardship associated with *ṣawm* (Shepard, 2009:92), also makes it an embodied exercise in liminality. All Muslims share it at the same time across the globe, making it a collective embodied exercise in liminality. *Ṣawm* thus symbolizes the ritualized sacralisation of space and time (Denny, 1985:69). The joyous *ʿĪd al-fiṭr*, which marks the end of the *Ramaḍān* fast, becomes a celebration of each individual Muslim’s deeper experience of embodied sacred space. At the same time it is a celebration of the Muslim *Umma*’s experience of being a sacred community completely dedicated to the service of *Allāh*, *al-Islām* in the true sense of the word.

- **Once-in-a-lifetime** rituals centre around the annual *Ḥajj* “pilgrimage” to the holy city of *Makka*, and specifically to the holy *Kaʿba* in *Al-Masjid Al-Ḥarām* “the Sacred Mosque.” It is an obligation every Muslim who is financially and physically able (*Sūra* 3:97) is expected to make at least once in their lifetime (Shepard, 2009:93). The primary concern of the *Ḥajj* is space conversion, the construction of sacred bodies in sacred space. The complex rites involved in performing the *Ḥajj* have already been discussed briefly (and, admittedly, inadequately).²³³ Because the *Ḥajj* is so central to Muslim life, numerous مناسك الحج *manāsik al-Ḥajj* “rituals of the *Ḥajj*” have been compiled to “guide pilgrims through the entire process in an orderly, if abstractly perfect, textbook fashion” (Denny, 1985:68).²³⁴

The manuals suggest that “each Hajj is the same... and the attention of the faithful toward achieving perfect performance of the rites is a testimony to abidingness” (Denny, 1985:68). These are secondspatial instructions, however, and cannot reflect the full picture of each individual Muslim’s personal experience of the *Ḥajj* as a life-changing event. To complete the picture, thirdspatial accounts of the Muslim experience of the *Ḥajj* must also be taken into account. Wolfe (2002:52) describes his experience of the rite as transformative, because “your life could be changed by it forever.” Wolfe (2002:52) adds: “In the minds of most contemporary Muslims, you hadn’t really lived till you’d made the Hajj.”

Wolfe (2002:71) indicates that, for him, the *Ḥajj* “offered a climax to religious life” that was unimaginable when he “viewed the Hajj as a journey to a physical destination” before he actually experienced it. He experienced it as remarkable that, in spite of the fact that the *Ḥajj* is a most public event, performed by millions of Muslims from all over the world at the same time, “the experience was intensely personal.” Many Muslims testify that the *Ḥajj* symbolizes for them a life-changing event (Shepard, 2009:93). They proudly bear the title *al-Ḥājj* (male) or *al-Ḥājjā* (female) after the Pilgrimage (Hewer, 2006:24). Moreover, the *Ḥajj* demonstrates “that Islam is part of a much older tradition that goes back through Muhammad, through Ibrahim, to be linked with Adam and Eve and thus the whole human family down through the ages” (Hewer, 2006:25).

In Islamic constructions of space, this is significant. The *Ḥajj* illustrates the solidarity of the entire Muslim *Umma* with the first human pair, and with the

²³³ Cf. Section 3.3.1.2.

²³⁴ مناسك *manāsik* is the plural of منسك *mansik* “ceremony, ritual.” The noun is derived from the root نساك *nasaka* “to lead a devout life.”

Abrahamitic family of faiths. Since Muslims regard Muḥammad (ﷺ) as the Last and the Seal of the Prophets (Hewer, 2006:26), in Muslim constructions of space *al-Islām*, with its unique, once in a lifetime rituals associated with the *Hajj*, and its individual and collective focus on the *Ka'ba*, is the ultimate example of submission to *Allāh*. A *Hājj/Hājja* completed the ultimate obligation of his/her faith, and fully experienced the ultimate space conversion exemplified by the *Hajj*. He/she is “truly *muslim*” (Hewer, 2006:24).

- **Life cycle rituals** are associated with the natural cycle of human life. They “mark major stages in the individual’s life” (Shepard, 2009:98). Although they do not have the status of the rituals associated with the Five Pillars, they nevertheless illustrate how the embodiment of a Muslim’s will to *tawḥīd* literally accompanies him/her from the cradle to the grave. It commences at birth when the *adhān* and the *iqama* are whispered into a newborn’s ears (Hewer, 2006:116). It continues when males are circumcised (*khitan*) between the ages of seven to thirteen years, depending on local customs (Shepard, 2009:98). It is present when a Muslim couple is getting married (Shepard, 2009:98). And finally, when

... a person is dying his or her face should be turned toward Mecca and the first part of the shahada recited... *Sura Ya Sin* of the Qur’an (36) should also be recited. After death the body is washed (this is essential) and wrapped in a shroud. A special *salah*... is performed, either in a mosque or elsewhere. The body is then carried in procession to the place of burial, where it is buried on its side in the grave with the head facing toward Mecca. These procedures are accompanied by Qur’anic and other recitations (Shepard, 2009:99).

In closing the reflections on Islamic constructions of lived space, a final remarkable characteristic of a Muslim’s constructions of space and his/her place in the universe should be recognised, namely *al-Islām*’s specific perspective on sacerdotal power. According to Arkoun (1994:66), in ancient Jewish tradition “sacerdotal power lay in offering victims to God.” In Christianity, priests or other clergy “perform the sacerdotal function as an act of mediation.” However,

... there is no sacerdotal power in this sense in Islam; each believer enters into a direct relationship with God in prayer, makes the pilgrimage to Mecca (*hajj*), individually fulfils the duties of fasting during Ramadan, and perform almsgiving as specified by the law... The imam who leads the ranks of the faithful in collective prayer has no sacerdotal function.

Each Muslim’s direct relationship with and access to *Allāh* explain the importance of space conversion in *al-Islām* which has been discussed in this section. The *Qur’ān* emphasises each Muslim’s **individual responsibility** before *Allāh* (*Sūra* 3:115-116). Through ritual enactment and the rhythmic interweaving of sacred and ordinary space and time, every Muslim individually, and the entire Muslim *Umma* collectively, are engaged in a constant process of being and becoming holy space. In the next section, it will be argued that Muslim space conversion – from public, mundane, profane space

to private, sacred space – has a cosmic origin. Every Muslim individually, and the Muslim *Umma* collectively, embody sacred space. A Muslim becomes a mobile spatial field (Low, 2003:14) that presents, illustrates, and embodies complete submission to *Allāh*. Esposito (1988:30) emphasises that, according to Islamic worldview, “human responsibility and mission are of cosmic proportion, and people will be judged on the cosmic consequences of their acts.”

3.3.3 Islamic worldview and spatial orientation towards a single cosmic centre

As is common in Ancient Near Eastern constructions of space, spatial orientation, and worldview (Prinsloo, 2013:9-11), “the Quranic universe consists of three realms: heaven, earth, and hell” (Esposito, 1988:29). Heaven is the realm of *Allāh* and his myriads of angels who “serve as the link between God and human beings” (Esposito, 1988:29). Angels are “created out of light, immortal and sexless, they function as guardians, recorders, and messengers from God” (Esposito, 1988:29). Earth “is inhabited by human beings and spirits (angels, jinns, and devils) who are called to obedience to the one, true Allah, the Lord of the Universe” (Esposito, 1988:29). Jinns are “somewhere between angels and humans... In contrast to human beings, the jinns were created from fire instead of earth (7:12; 55:14-15). They have the ability to assume visible form and, like humans, can be good or bad, sin as well as be saved (46:29-31)” (Esposito, 1988:29). At the “opposite end of the spectrum from God, the principle of good, is Satan (*shaytan*, adversary), the principle of evil” (Esposito, 1988:29). He is the fallen angel Iblis, who refused to pay homage to Adam, the first human being, when *Allāh* instructed him to do so (2:34; 7:11-12). He became the leader of a band of “other fallen angels and jinn, disobedient servants of God who tempt human beings in their earthly moral struggle on earth” (Esposito, 1988:29).

Heaven represents absolute sacred space. Heaven is conceived of as having seven levels. The seventh heaven contains البيت المعمور *al-bayt al-ma‘mūr* “the Inhabited House.” It is a heavenly sanctuary visited by the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) during his *Mi‘rāj* or Night Journey.²³⁵ Some Islamic traditions “suggest that the *Inhabited House* is the place in which God resides, in others the Throne of God is directly above the House” (Burge, 2009b:226). Quite a number of *aḥādīth* “describe the angels worshipping God in the *Inhabited House*” (Burge, 2009b:229). In a collection of *aḥādīth* about the role of angels in *al-Islām*, Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (1445–1505 CE)

²³⁵ Cf. Section 3.3.1.1, 3.3.1.2 and 3.3.1.3.

relates that seventy thousand angels pray in the *Inhabited House* every day.²³⁶ The angel Gabriel is the heavenly *mu'adhdhin*, calling the angels to pray, and Michael is their *imām*, leading them in prayers. The angels congregate and circumambulate the *Inhabited House*; they perform their prayers and pray for forgiveness.²³⁷ An “angelic cockerel calls out during the night, which in turn causes earthly cockerels to rouse Muslims from their sleep in time for the dawn prayers” (Burge, 2009b:231).

The absolute sacred space of heaven, exemplified by the angels constantly worshipping *Allāh*, is replicated on earth through the sacred site of الكعبة *al-ka'bah* “The Cube,” the cube-shaped building in المسجد الحرام *Al-Masjid Al-Ḥarām* “The Sacred Mosque” in *Makka*.²³⁸ In Muslim constructions of space, this shrine is the most holy place on earth. It is also called بيت الله *Bayt Allāh* “the House of *Allāh*.” The *Ka'ba* is linked directly to its identical counterpart in heaven, the *Inhabited House*, where the angels worship *Allāh* (Campo, 1991:73; Burge, 2009b:224). The *Ka'ba* is located directly below its heavenly archetype (Burge, 2009b:224). In the *ḥadīth* related by al-Suyūṭī referred to above, a direct connection between the two sacred places are made. When the seventy thousand angels complete their prayers at the *Inhabited House*, they come down to circumambulate the *Ka'ba*, where they bless the Prophet (ﷺ).²³⁹ The *Inhabited House* is thus the divine archetype of the earthly sacred site (Burge, 2009b:221). It is “the Islamic ‘replica’ of the *Ka'ba* in heaven” (Burge, 2009b:224). The *Ka'ba* is the *axis mundi*, the centre of the universe, where heaven and earth connect (Eliade, 1959:38). Burge (2009b:226) asserts that the “alignment of Throne, *House* and *Ka'ba* establishes an important theological link between the two poles of the *axis mundi*.” The *Ka'ba* is aligned with the cosmic centre of the universe.

The *Ka'ba* has a long history. It served as a shrine in pre-Islamic Arabia and already had an established ritual practice of an annual pilgrimage at the dawn of the Islamic era (King, 1982:17). In Muslim tradition, the sanctity of the *Ka'ba* as a Muslim sanctuary is emphasised in various ways (Campo, 1991:68). Apart from the association with angels, the *Ka'ba* is linked to the first human pair. When they were expelled from Paradise, *Allāh* gave Adam as recompense the privilege of revering

²³⁶ The source was not accessible to the student. She relies on the translations of the original provided by Burge (2009a). The abovementioned reference comes from *Ḥadīth* 21 (Burge, 2009a:201).

²³⁷ Al-Suyūṭī, *Ḥadīth* 83 (Burge, 2009a:225).

²³⁸ Cf. Section 3.3.1.1, note 130.

²³⁹ Al-Suyūṭī, *Ḥadīth* 21 (Burge, 2009a:201).

Him at the *Ka‘ba* (Burge, 2009a:161). Al-Suyūṭī transmitted the following *ḥadīth*: “Then God inspired Adam: I have a Sanctuary located directly under my Throne; so go to it and circumambulate it, as the angels circumambulate my Throne; and pray there, as they pray at my Throne, for there I shall answer your prayer.”²⁴⁰ This *Ka‘ba* of divine origin was destroyed during the Flood. *Allāh* then instructed Ibrāhīm and his son, Ismā‘īl, to once again purify his House “for those who perform *Tawaf* and those who are staying there for worship and those who bow and prostrate in prayer” (*Sūra* 2:125). Ibrahim and Ismail then raised the foundations of *Allāh*’s House (*Sūra* 2:127). Revering *Allāh* at the *Ka‘ba* degenerated in subsequent centuries, and the holy site became defiled when the Arabian tribes in the coastal region of *al-Ḥijāz* revered their idols there until the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) appeared on the scene.

The Prophet of *al-Islām* (ﷺ) is linked to the *Ka‘ba* in significant ways. Four specific instances are important in the present context. First, Muḥammad (ﷺ) was selected by the Meccans to **install the sacred black stone** in the south-eastern corner of the *Ka‘ba* (Burge, 2009b:227). Muḥammad ibn Ishāq relates in his *Sīrat Rasūl Allāh* that – already before the *hijra* – Muḥammad (ﷺ) gained the reputation of being a trustworthy man. Early in the period of his Prophethood, the tribes of the Quraysh were engaged in a project to rebuild the *Ka‘ba*. A dispute arose about which tribe should place the sacred black stone in its place. The oldest man of the Quraysh at the time suggested that the first man to enter the precinct of the *Ka‘ba* should adjudicate in the dispute. It happened to be the Prophet (ﷺ). He suggested that the black stone should be placed in a cloak and carried by members of each tribe to its proper location in the south-eastern corner of the *Ka‘ba*. There he placed the black stone with his own hands (Guillaume, 1955:86), thus linking *al-Islām* with the most holy of objects associated with the *Ka‘ba*.²⁴¹ King (1982:19) indicates that “the most sacred corner of the Kaaba is the southeastern corner, in which is embedded the Black Stone.” In Muslim tradition, there is a direct link between the black stone and heaven, and via Adam and Ibrahim with the Prophet (ﷺ), as is illustrated in the following remark by Al-Ṭabarī in his *Tarikh al-Rusul wa al-Muluk* “History of the Prophets and Kings”:

God sent down a jewel (*yāqūt* [“ruby”]) of Paradise where the House is located today. Adam continued to circumambulate it, until God sent down the Flood. That jewel was

²⁴⁰ Al-Suyūṭī, *Ḥadīth* 687 (Burge, 2009a:159).

²⁴¹ Cf. Section 3.3.1.2.

lifted up, until God sent His friend Abraham to (re)build the House (in its later form) (Rosenthal, 1989:293).²⁴²

Second, Muḥammad (ﷺ) **purified the Ka'ba of idols** (Campo, 1991:70; Burge, 2009b:227). The Prophet (ﷺ) thus restored the original sacrality of the Ka'ba. Ibn Ishāq relates the following incident after Muḥammad (ﷺ) and the Believers conquered *Makka* in the spring of 6 AH / 628 CE:

The apostle entered Mecca on the day of the conquest and it contained 360 idols which *Iblis* had strengthened with lead. The apostle was standing by them with a stick in his hand, saying, "The truth has come and falsehood has passed away; verily falsehood is sure to pass away" (*Sūra* 7:82). Then he pointed at them with his stick and they collapsed on their backs one after the other.

When the apostle prayed the noon prayer on the day of the conquest he ordered that all the idols which were round the *Ka'ba* should be collected and burned with fire and broken up (Guillaume, 1955:552).

Third, Muḥammad (ﷺ) **established the rites and rituals** that should be performed during the annual *Hajj*, with the *Ka'ba* as its focal point (Burge, 2009b:227). He did this especially during the Farewell Pilgrimage. Ibn Ishāq remarks that the Prophet (ﷺ) "continued his pilgrimage and showed the men the rites and taught them the customs of their *hajj*" (Guillaume, 1955:650). He continues as follows:

The apostle completed the *hajj* and showed men the rites, and taught them what God had prescribed as to their *hajj*, the station, the throwing of stones, the circumambulation of the temple, and what He had permitted and forbidden. It 'was the pilgrimage of completion and the pilgrimage of farewell because the apostle did not go on pilgrimage after that (Guillaume, 1955:652).

Finally, and most significantly, the Prophet (ﷺ) **established the Ka'ba** as the *قِبْلَة* **qibla** "direction" of ritual prayer. Initially, Muḥammad prayed towards *القدس* *Al-Quds* "The Holy One" (i.e., Jerusalem) (King, 1982:18). However, in 13 AH / 623 CE the following words were revealed to him:

فَوَلِّ وَجْهَكَ شَطْرَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ So turn your face toward al-Masjid al-Ḥarām,
وَحَيْثُ مَا كُنْتُمْ And wherever you are,
فَوَلُّوا وُجُوهَكُمْ شَطْرَهُ turn your faces toward it (in prayer).

Sūra 2:144 (البقرة) *al-Baqarah / The Cow*:144)

²⁴² Rosenthal's (1989) translation of of Al-Ṭabarī's monumental *Tarikh al-Rusul wa al-Muluk* is available online, cf. https://archive.org/stream/TabariEnglish/Tabari_Volume_01#page/n5/mode/2up;01/05/2018.

Since then, all Muslims, all over the world, turn their faces in the direction of the *Ka'ba* during *Ṣalā* “(ritual) prayer” five times a day. Moreover, the annual pilgrimage to the *Ka'ba* became an obligation upon every able-bodied Muslim to be performed at least once in his/her lifetime. The *Ka'ba* thus serves as “pivot of the daily prayers and the seven circumambulations, the *tawaf*” (Hoffmann, 1999-2000:25) during the annual *Hajj*. The *qibla* has a “cosmogonic dimension” (Safran, 2005:24) because “the orientation of prayer toward Mecca expresses how the identification of the sacred center orientates the believer in the world and hence creates his/her world” (Safran, 2005:24).

According to Burge (2009b:224), “the connection between heaven and earth through the locus of Mecca, and by extension through the *qibla*, is an extremely important part of the interaction between humans and God.” Every single Muslim experiences multiple times during the course of each day that he/she is aligned towards a single cosmic centre. The *Ka'ba* is not regarded as “a place of direct communication, nor are its rituals restricted to a select few, such as a priestly class” (Burge, 2009b:225). The *Ka'ba* does, however, symbolise a true *axis mundi* and the *qibla* “establishes the *Ka'ba* as the religious and spiritual centre in Islam” (Burge, 2009b:225). Safran (2005:24) argues that

...every sacred place has cosmogonic and cosmological significance as the reproduction of an archetype, the sacred center that creates a world system by providing orientation in an otherwise undifferentiated (profane) landscape, the *axis mundi* where heaven, earth, and the underworld meet.

Muḥammad (ﷺ) “did not seek to institute the *Ka'ba* as a *new* sacred site” (Burge, 2009b:227), but through his actions asserts that “the sacred centre at Mecca is not new, but the *original* centre” (Burge, 2009b:228). The “narratives about Adam, Abraham and Muhammad create a direct link between this world and the next from its very inception” (Burge, 2009b:228). The importance of the *Ka'ba* as sacred centre in *al-Islām* can hardly be overstated.²⁴³ King (1982:20) says:

For Muslims the Kaaba is indeed the center of the world, the physical goal of their lives, a symbol of their religion, and, above all, a pointer to God Himself.²⁴⁴

²⁴³ Cf. King (1995:253-274) for a wide-ranging discussion of the orientation of medieval Islamic religious architecture and cities towards the *qibla* or “sacred direction” in Islam.

²⁴⁴ *Al-Islām* recognises three cities as imbued with holiness, namely *Makka*, *Al-Madīna*, and *Al-Quds* (Jerusalem) (El-Awaisi, 2017:30). For the purpose of the present study, the sanctity of *Makka*, directly linked to the holiness of the *Ka'ba* as *axis mundi*, is of primary importance. *Al-Madīna* is a sacred space due to the fact that it was the home of the Prophet (ﷺ) since the *Hijra*. In *al-Islām*, الْمَسْجِدُ النَّبَوِيُّ, *Al-Masjid al-Nabawiyy* “the Prophet’s Mosque” in *Al-Madīna* is regarded as the second most sacred place on earth. It is also where Muḥammad (ﷺ) and his relatives are buried. *Al-Quds* is associated with holiness due to its close association with the prophetic tradition of which Muḥammad (ﷺ) is the Seal.

Association with the *Ka'ba* as cosmic centre of the universe, also imbues other places with holiness. Holy places are demarcated by boundaries “connecting them with a supernatural authority” (El-Awaisi, 2017:25). The *Ka'ba* is enclosed by الْمَسْجِدَ الْحَرَامَ *Al-Masjid Al-Ḥarām* “The Sacred Mosque,” the biggest mosque in the world and the most sacred mosque in Muslim constructions of sacred space. The Sacred Mosque encloses other significant sites associated with the annual *Hajj*, including the Black Stone, Well of Zamzam, Station of Ibrāhīm, and Safa and Marwa. The mosque is thus a boundary marker for Muslim sacred space.

The Sacred Mosque is, in turn, enclosed by the city of *Makka*. The city and its sanctuary “were a vital part of earlier religions in the whole of Arabia” (El-Awaisi, 2017:25). Already then, it was a pilgrimage site (Taylor, 2011:264). Arabian tribes were forbidden to wage war in the city and surrounding area during the four sacred months (El Guindi, 2008:108). The custom is alluded to in *Sūra* 9:36.²⁴⁵ The “sacred space closely associated with a holy house or a shrine” (El-Awaisi, 2017:25) was declared *ḥarām* “forbidden,” and was “delineated by boundary markers or cairns” (El-Awaisi, 2017:26).

In *al-Islām*, *Makka* is appropriated as Muslim sacred space.²⁴⁶ In *Sūra* 3:96 the sanctity of the city is linked to *Allāh*’s establishment of the *Ka'ba* as a sanctuary:

إِنَّ أَوَّلَ بَيْتٍ وُضِعَ لِلنَّاسِ لَلَّذِي بِبَكَّةَ مُبَارَكًا وَهُدًى لِّلْعَالَمِينَ
Indeed, the first House (of worship) appointed for humankind was (the one) that is in Bakka,²⁴⁷ full of blessing and guidance for the world.

Sūra 3:96 (آل عمران) *Āl ‘Imrān / The Family of ‘Imrān:96*

Al-Quds is a sanctuary whose precincts have been blessed by *Allāh* (*Sūra* 17:1). The city is closely linked to the Prophet (ﷺ) through his Night Journey and ascension into heaven (الإسراء والمعراج *al-‘Isrā’ wal-Mi‘rāj*). It should be noted, however, that neither *Al-Madīna* nor *Al-Quds* has a *qibla*. In *al-Islām*, the *Ka'ba* represents sacred space *par excellence*. Bennett (1994:88-114) provides a wide-ranging overview of Islamic views on all three sacred cities.

²⁴⁵ Cf. Section 3.3.2.2.

²⁴⁶ In Muslim tradition, various world maps came into being that indicate mathematically that *Makka* is the centre of the earth. Cf. in this regard the discussion of various such maps in King (1999). Wazeri (2017:86-92) discusses various mediaval maps indicating that the *Ka'ba* is “with respect to the inhabited parts of the world... like the center of a circle with respect to the circle” (Wazeri, 2017:87). Wazeri (2017:90) adds data generated with computer programmes and satellite imaging to conclude: “The accurate scientific measurements and the satellite images proved that the sacred mosque of Mecca (the *Ka'ba*) is the center of the dry land.”

²⁴⁷ بَكَّةَ *Bakka* is another, perhaps older (Yusuf Ali, 1967:147 n. 422), name for مَكَّةَ *Makka*.

This āya emphasises the “the cosmic significance of the Ka‘ba” (Campo, 1991:73). *Makka* shares in the *Ka‘ba*’s cosmic qualities. *Makka* is called أُمُّ الْقُرَى “the Mother of Cities” (*Sūra* 6:92; 42:7). Just as in the case of the *Ka‘ba*, *Makka* is linked to creation by *Allāh* and purification by *Ibrahim*. In several *aḥādīth*, *Makka* and creation are connected, as in the following *ḥadīth* transmitted in the *Saḥīḥ* al-Bukhārī (Campo, 1991:73):²⁴⁸

فَإِنَّ هَذَا بَلَدٌ حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ
يَوْمَ خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ،
وَهُوَ حَرَامٌ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ
بِحُزْمَةِ اللَّهِ

*Indeed, Allāh has made this place a sanctuary
since the day He created the heavens and the earth.
And it will remain a sanctuary until the Day of
Resurrection,
because Allāh has ordained its sanctity.*

Ibrahim purified the city, again illustrated in a *ḥadīth* transmitted in the *Saḥīḥ* al-Bukhārī:²⁴⁹

أَنَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ حَرَّمَ مَكَّةَ
وَدَعَا لَهَا
وَحَرَّمْتُ الْمَدِينَةَ
كَمَا حَرَّمَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ مَكَّةَ

*Indeed, Ibrahim has made Makka a sanctuary,
and he asked blessing for it.
And I made Al-Madīna a sanctuary,
just like Ibrahim made Makka a sanctuary.*

Al-Islām thus confirmed the inviolability of the city and accepted the “the institution of the haram around Makkah centered around the *Ka‘bah*” (El-Awaisi, 2017:26). Fighting was forbidden within the boundaries of the *ḥarām* (*Sūra* 2:191). In the year following the conquest of *Makka* (8 AH / 630 CE), Muḥammad (ﷺ) prohibited idolaters (*al-mushrikin*) from entering the *ḥarām* or forbidden area, because “they are *najis* (impure)” (El-Awaisi, 2017:33):

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّمَا
إِنَّمَا الْمُشْرِكُونَ نَجَسٌ
فَلَا يَقْرَبُوا الْمَسْجِدَ الْحَرَامَ بَعْدَ عَامِهِمْ هَذَا

*Oh you who have faith!
Indeed, the polytheists are impure,
so do not let them enter the Sacred Mosque after this,
their (final) year.*

Sūra 9:28 (التوبة) al-Tawba / The Repentance:28)

This has been the custom ever since the time of the Prophet (ﷺ). After the conquest of *Makka* (6 AH / 628 CE), the boundary markers of *Makka*’s *ḥarām* were renovated at

²⁴⁸ Cf. *Saḥīḥ* al-Bukhārī, Book 28: كتاب جزاء الصيد “The Book of the Penalty of Hunting,” Ḥadīth 14, available online: <https://sunnah.com/bukhari/28/14> (Accessed 28/04/2018).

²⁴⁹ Cf. *Saḥīḥ* al-Bukhārī, Book 34: كتاب البيوع “The Book of Sales,” Ḥadīth 81, available online: <https://sunnah.com/bukhari/34/81> (Accessed 28/04/2018).

the command of the Prophet (ﷺ). A large region, spanning “over forty kilometres in width and thirty kilometres in length at its maximum limit” (El-Awaisi, 2017:35), was thus demarcated as sacred space. The sacred space of *Makka* was thus enclosed by the *ḥarām*.²⁵⁰

Another circle of sacred space was added in *al-Islām*, this time enclosing the sacred space of the *ḥarām*, namely the ميقات *mīqāt* pl. مواقيت *mawāqīt* “stated place,” which refers to the boundary “where a pilgrim should not pass without going into the state of *ihram*” (El-Awaisi, 2017:39), whether it is for the *Ḥajj* or the *‘Umra*. The Prophet (ﷺ) “designated four of these stations, the furthest from Makkah being 450Km away to the north” (El-Awaisi, 2017:39).²⁵¹ The researcher concurs with El-Awaisi (2017:41) when he says:

A prototype seems to have developed in early Islam, with the spatial and religious concept of the Ka’bah and its regions being centralised; the Ka’bah being the centre of the sacred mosque, the mosque is the centre of the Haram... the Haram being the centre of the *mawāqīt* region.

Muslim constructions of sacred space depart from the centrality of the *Ka’ba* and moves outwards in concentric circles, “starting from the core and moving outwards” (El-Awaisi, 2017:41). Departing from this principle, it can be argued that Saudi Arabia, the country where the *Ka’ba* is situated, constitutes the next level of sacred space. Muslim countries would form the next level. When one moves into local communities, it can be argued that the local mosque, with its *qibla* towards the *Ka’ba* in *Makka* and its *mīhrāb* indicating the direction of prayer, constitute yet another layer of sacred space. Gale (2007:1017) states that

... there are ways in which space and place gain significance for Muslims through repeated, ritual use. Thus, while mosques are not consecrated in the manner of churches or synagogues, their use for prayers, always preceded by ritual washing (*wuzu*), gives them an important status as religious sites.

According to Serageldin (1996a:8), “(i)n all Muslim societies the mosque is the most important building in the community and arguably in the townscape, providing a sense of identity and place.” It is at the same time a spiritual and a secular place, a place for prayers as well as a place where important matters affecting the community are

²⁵⁰ The notion of a demarcated sacred space that is accessible only to “insiders” is common in religious constructions of space. To name but one example: According to the Hebrew Bible, the inner shrine of the Tabernacle, also known as the Holy of Holies” (i.e. the most holy space), could be entered only once a year, and only by the Israelite high priest (Leviticus 16).

²⁵¹ Cf. *Saḥīḥ* al-Bukhārī, Book 25: كتاب الحج “The Book of Pilgrimage,” Ḥadīth 16, available online: <https://sunnah.com/bukhari//25/16> (Accessed 28/04/2018).

discussed and resolved (Serageldin 1996b:13). On a local level, the mosque becomes a space where the sacred and the profane are interweaved, creating for each individual Muslim a space to *live al-Islām*. In that sense, mosques can be conceptualised as “symbolic replicas of the sanctuary in Mecca” (Safran, 2005:24). It is important to emphasise that mosques are not sacred space in the sense that it is “the domain of a priestly class like the temples of the ancient Near East or, in a different manner, like contemporary churches” (Safran, 2005:26). The mosque is “accessible to all believers” (Safran, 2005:26).

In the final instance, each individual Muslim can be regarded as sacred space. The daily interweaving of sacred and mundane space, exemplified especially through the obligation of *ṣalā*, impresses upon every Muslim his/her responsibility to be *Allāh*'s vicegerent, to embody the Islamic ideal that

... everything that exists is 'sacred', nothing, and nowhere, 'profane'. 'Sacred place' in Islam fulfils, ultimately, a 'making-one' function as an earthly manifestation of divine *tawhīd*. Replication of Islam's archetypal sacred place throughout the Muslim world, in mosques, mausolea, shrines, as well as in living links with the cosmic order, who themselves represent a replication of the archetypal model, Muhammad, is part of a process by which everything that exists is being restored to its original perfection (Bennett, 1994:113).

Islamic constructions of **sacred space** confirm what has been argued in Chapter 2, namely that *al-Islām* can be conceived of as an ecological system. The present analysis of *al-Islām*'s orientation towards a single cosmic centre illustrates that the notion of **sacred space** permeates *al-Islām* as an ecological system. Figure 11 illustrates how, starting from the most sacred object in *al-Islām* – the Black Stone in the south-eastern corner of the *Ka'ba* – sacred space permeates Islamic constructions of the universe in ever-expanding spheres of holiness.

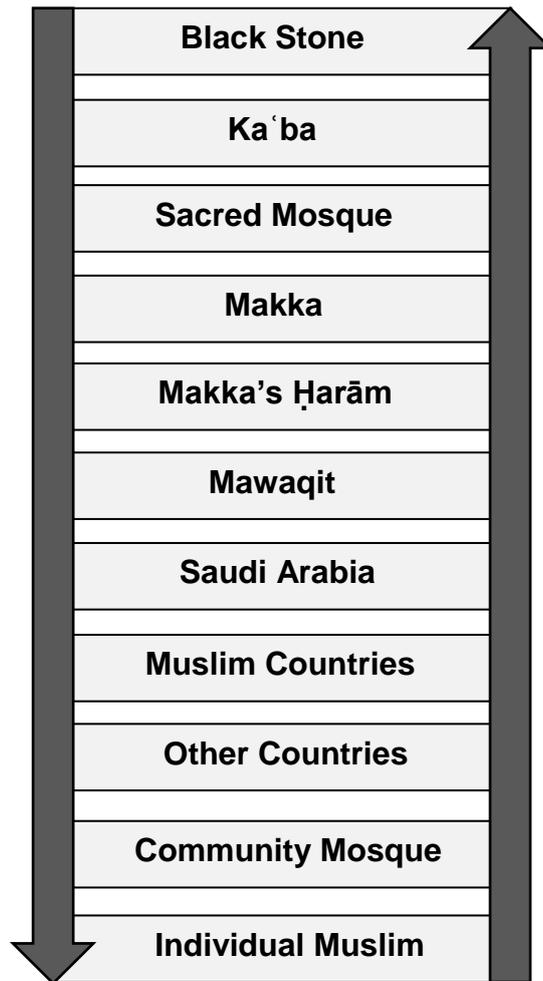


Figure 11
Al-Islām's ever-expanding spheres of sacred space

3.4 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In this lengthy chapter, the researcher departed from the presupposition that there is an intimate relationship between social interaction and space. It implies that space cannot be defined in strictly geometrical terms, but should a priori be described as “social space” (Lefebvre, 1991:1). The chapter consequently focused on a critical-spatial analysis of *al-Islām* in general.

The spatial analysis unfolded in two stages. In the first stage, the researcher gave a brief overview of post-modern philosophers, as for example Henri Lefebvre (1991), and geographers Edward Soja (1996) and Yi-Fu Tuan (2008), who contributed towards spatial analysis. She argued that space is at the same time a concrete reality, an abstract conceptualisation, and a social construction – human spatial behaviour needs to be approached **holistically**. The **dimensions**, **properties**, and **aspects** of space should be analysed to reveal the “dynamism of space” (Knott, 2005b:158).

Insights of critical-spatial analysis were then utilised to elucidate classifications of space such as sacred and profane, clean and unclean, and public and private. Following Sander (2017:3), the researcher argued against an analysis of these classifications as binary pairs. From a critical spatial perspective, a space can be sacred and profane or public and private at the same time, depending on the human perceptions involved in viewing socially contested spaces. An analysis of these (not so) binary classifications involved theoretical reflections on borders and boundaries, specifically the role boundaries play in othering fellow human beings, and in demarcating bodies **as** space and **in** space. The researcher concluded that all space is, in the end, **embodied** space. Finally, she indicated that any society's spatial thinking is closely linked with its worldview(s) and spatial orientation(s).

In the second stage of analysis, the spatial theory developed was applied to Islamic constructions of space. The researcher argued that a critical spatial analysis of these constructions would elucidate uniquely Islamic constructions and classifications of space, especially as it relates to the differentiation between sacred and profane, clean and unclean, and public and private spaces. The researcher analysed *al-Islām* in terms of firstspace realities, secondspace representations, and thirdspace applications. She thus elucidated the principles underlying Muslim lived experience.

In the light of the critical-spatial analysis of *al-Islām*, the researcher turned her attention to an analysis of specifically Islamic constructions of lived space. She indicated that Islamic lived space is determined by uniquely Islamic constructions of public and private and profane and sacred space; by the rhythmic interweaving of sacred and ordinary space and time; and especially by the ritual enactment of private and sacred space. She then argued that the Islamic worldview and uniquely Islamic constructions of space are determined by *al-Islām*'s spatial orientation towards a single, cosmic spatial centre, namely the *Ka'ba* in the holy city of *Makka*. This is crucial for understanding Islamic demarcations of the body **as** sacred space **in** space.

In the next chapter, it will be argued that this contextual approach to Islamic space is an invaluable aid in analysing the *ḥijāb* from an insider perspective and will contribute towards a holistic interpretation of the phenomenon. The chapter will focus on precepts regarding female clothing practices in *al-Islām*'s formative traditions. It will then turn to a Muslim female who has consciously decided to wear the *ḥijāb* and will focus on her perceptions of her choice and the deeply personal implications the decision holds for her. The insider perspective on the meaning of the *ḥijāb* will thus be fully expounded. It represents a thirdspatial analysis of such a Muslim female's lived space.

CHAPTER 4

THE *ḤIJĀB* AS BORDER OF CLOTH: TOWARDS ISLAMIC CONSTRUCTIONS OF THE FEMALE BODY AS SACRED SPACE

In the Muslim context, wearing the hijab is more than just covering one's hair; it symbolizes modesty, morality, natural beauty and the harmonious interaction between a Muslim woman and society. The hijab is a symbol of Islamic belief that differentiates the role of women from that of men. According to Islam, the hijab functions as a shield for a woman against the lustful gaze of men... The hijab is intended to avoid disparagement between men and women... Wearing the hijab discourages men from judging women sexually and encourages them to respect women for their inner values, such as their intelligence and kind heart.

(Hassan & Harun, 2016:478)

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 1, the researcher already highlighted the extraordinary focus on the phenomenon of the *ḥijāb* in the contemporary geopolitical context. Especially in countries where the Muslim population constitutes a significant minority, the preoccupation with the *ḥijāb* has become a “hysterical obsession” (El Guindi, 2008:143). According to Hammer (2013:29), behind this obsession lies

...a spectrum of political positions and ideological strategies that are aimed at generating or increasing fear, hatred, and distrust of Muslims and Islam. They serve a range of ideological and political purposes and have become part of a register of strategies to other, marginalize, exclude, and at times also hate those who are not identified as white, Protestant, and thus mainstream.

As an item of clothing, the *ḥijāb* has the potential to mark “the symbolic significance of the body” (Reischer & Koo, 2004:299). A Muslim female donning the *ḥijāb* immediately and unavoidably creates the potential for her body to be “viewed metaphorically as a text that can be ‘read’ as a symbol or signifier of the social world that it inhabits” (Reischer & Koo, 2004:300). Per definition, the *ḥijāb* functions as a **border of cloth** marking the Muslim female body **as** space **in** space. Hammer (2013:29) indicates that “Muslim women’s bodies have become a canvas for inscribing... political objectives” (Hammer, 2013:29). Roald (2001:254) highlights the irony in this process of “reading” and “inscribing” the Muslim female body in *ḥijāb*:

A Christian nun wearing a veil might be seen as an image of sincere religiosity, purity and peace, whereas a Muslim woman wearing a veil is likely to be seen as a symbol of oppression of women and as making a political-religious statement. She may invoke anger from non-Muslim westerners because they believe her to be betraying the

struggle for woman's rights by submitting to her own oppression in wearing the veil. Furthermore, she is perceived to be displaying the fact that she is at odds with the prevailing social and religious norms. An extreme reaction might even see her as dangerous for she might support or participate in so-called 'Islamic terrorist organisations' that threaten social stability.

In Chapter 2, the researcher utilised ecological systems theory to argue that the social interaction of an individual Muslim female deliberately donning the *ḥijāb* should be interpreted and evaluated in the context of *al-Islām* as an ecological system, instead of "atomizing, dichotomizing, or fragmenting Islam" (El Guindi, 2008:xi). Awareness of the mutual interactions between an individual Muslim female and all other constituent parts of her religion allows for a contextual and holistic analysis of the *ḥijāb* as a religious and cultural phenomenon. The *ḥijāb* functions as a **border of cloth** demarcating the Muslim female body **as** sacred space **in** space as she interacts with and within her micro-, meso-, exo-, macro-, and chronosystems.

In Chapter 3, the researcher engaged in a critical-spatial analysis of *al-Islām* as the lived experience of billions of Muslims all over the world. She elucidated *al-Islām*'s firstspace realities, secondspace representations, and thirdspace applications. She focused on specifically Islamic constructions of lived space, notably uniquely Islamic constructions of public and private and profane and sacred space; the rhythmic interweaving of sacred and ordinary space and time; and especially the ritual enactment of private and sacred space. She argued that the Islamic worldview and uniquely Islamic constructions of space are determined by *al-Islām*'s spatial orientation towards a single, cosmic spatial centre, namely the *Ka'ba* in the holy city of *Makka*.

In this chapter, the researcher will argue that these constructions of sacred space, emanating from the ultimate source of the Sacred, the One and Only Deity, *Allāh*, is crucial for understanding Islamic demarcations of the body, and specifically the female body, **as** sacred space **in** space. The chapter contains an application of the analysis of *al-Islām* as an ecological system in Chapter 2 and the critical-spatial analysis of *al-Islām* in Chapter 3 to the Muslim female body in *ḥijāb*. The application will develop in three phases. First, the researcher will indicate that, in principle, women are afforded equal, albeit a uniquely female status in *al-Islām*'s formative tradition in general, and in the *Qur'ān* in particular. Second, the researcher will revisit the prescriptions regarding Muslim female clothing practices in *al-Islām*'s formative traditions. This phase of the research can be conceptualised as the secondspatial representations of Muslim female clothing practices. Third, the researcher will investigate the symbolic meanings attached to the *ḥijāb* in the lived experience of a Muslim female who deliberately chooses to don it. This phase of the research can be

conceptualised as the thirdspatial applications of female clothing practices. This two-pronged application of the research project's theoretical points of departure will aid the researcher in attaining the primary aim formulated at the outset of the study, namely to illustrate that the *ḥijāb* functions as a **border of cloth** which demarcates the female Muslim body **as sacred space** and enables her to engage meaningfully and legitimately **in profane space**.²⁵²

4.2 A FEMALE'S STATUS IN *AL-ISLĀM*: PRINCIPLES AND PERSPECTIVES FROM THE *QUR'ĀN*²⁵³

At the outset of the analysis of Islamic constructions of the female body as sacred space, the researcher deems it of critical importance to indicate that – in principle – the *Qur'ān* affords equal status to men and women. She concedes that “the realities in Muslim families around the world do not always follow these prescriptions” (Hewer, 2006:130). Al-Mannai (2010:82) indicates that there is

...a significant gap between the status of males and females... The level of women's rights and roles in many Arab countries prevents women from improving their economic growth and development. This gender gap is the result of social, religious, cultural, and gender inequality. More specifically, it results from structural constraints faced by women.

However, three facts should be conceded. First, gender inequality is neither a new, nor a specific Islamic issue. There is “gender discrimination almost everywhere” (Al-Mannai, 2010:82). Second, there is “great misunderstanding in many aspects of public consciousness about the role of women in Arabic society” (Al-Mannai, 2010:82). Third, the advent of *al-Islām* brought about a significant change in the status of women (Al-Mannai, 2010:83).

During the *Jāhiliyya*, women were subjected to a precarious existence. In pre-Islamic *Makka*, baby girls were often buried alive (*Sūra* 81:8). If a girl “survived to adulthood, she would find herself essentially the property of her father, then her husband, with no economic or social independence or rights” (Brown, 2009:26). Pre-Islamic poets' “tendency to conflate sexual charms of a woman with the qualities of his camel seems

²⁵² Cf. Section 1.7.

²⁵³ It falls outside the scope of the study to discuss the issue of women's rights in *al-Islām* in detail. The debate about the issue is characterised by conflicting, and often contradictory points of view, not only between Western critics and Islamic apologetes, but also within each of the traditions. Roald (2001:144) points to the fact that “Islamists tend to observe the gap between theory and practice in the host society, whereas non-Muslims point to the gap between the theory of Islam and the practice of Muslims.” Roald (2001:145-184) provides a detailed analysis of gender relations in *al-Islām*, including interpretations of important *Qur'ānic Suwar* and perspectives on the issue from the *ḥadīth*-literature.

bound to offend both modern Western and Muslim sensibilities” (Brown, 2009:26). Against this background, “the rise of Islam brought a stunning improvement in women’s status” (Brown, 2009:26).

Al-Islām “granted women their rights without their having to demand or fight for them” (Al-Mannai, 2010:83). The basic equality of male and female Muslims is beautifully expressed in *Sūra* 33:35:

إِنَّ	Indeed –
الْمُسْلِمِينَ وَالْمُسْلِمَاتِ	the Muslim men and Muslim women,
وَالْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ	the believing men and believing women,
وَالْقَانِتِينَ وَالْقَانِتَاتِ	the obedient men and obedient women,
وَالصَّادِقِينَ وَالصَّادِقَاتِ	the truthful men and truthful women,
وَالصَّابِرِينَ وَالصَّابِرَاتِ	the patient men and patient women,
وَالْخَاشِعِينَ وَالْخَاشِعَاتِ	the humble men and humble women,
وَالْمُتَصَدِّقِينَ وَالْمُتَصَدِّقَاتِ	the charitable men and charitable women,
وَالصَّائِمِينَ وَالصَّائِمَاتِ	the fasting men and fasting women,
وَالْحَافِظِينَ فُرُوجَهُمْ وَالْحَافِظَاتِ	the men who guard their private parts and the women who do so,
وَالذَّاكِرِينَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا وَالذَّاكِرَاتِ	and the men who remember Allāh often and the women who do so –
أَعَدَّ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةً وَأَجْرًا عَظِيمًا	for them Allāh has prepared forgiveness and a great reward.

Sūra 33:35 (الأحزاب) al-Aḥzāb / *The Confederates*:35)

The *āya* lists a number of Islamic virtues, “but the primary message is that these virtues are applicable to both women and men. Both sexes have human rights and duties to an equal degree and the rewards of the Hereafter are available to men and women alike” (Al-Mannai, 2010:84).

Allāh created humankind “out of one living entity” (*Sūra* 4:1; 6:98; 7:189; 30:21; 31:21; 39:6), which reflects “the spiritual equality between men and women” (Roald, 2001:124). Male and female offspring are both in equal measure a gift from *Allāh* (*Sūra* 42:49). A wife is “a source of comfort to her husband, as he to her” (Al-Mannai, 2010:83), as *Sūra* 30:21 clearly states. Al-Mannai (2010:83) contends that “Islam sees a woman as a mother, sister, wife, helper, and supporter.” Her “responsibility in faith is exactly the same as a man. A woman also has full financial status as that of a man” (Al-Mannai, 2010:83). Esposito (1988:97) indicates that

... contrary to pre-Islamic Arab customs, the Quran recognized a woman’s right to contract her own marriage. In addition, she, not her father or other male relatives as

had been the custom, was to receive the dower (*mahr*) from her husband (4:4)... The right to keep and maintain her own dowry was a source of self-esteem and wealth in an otherwise male-dominated society. Women's right to own and manage her own property was further enhanced and acknowledged by the Quranic verses of inheritance (4:7, 11-12, 176).

A woman usually keeps her own name after marriage (Hewer, 2006:130). In addition

... she is permitted to make her own will to dispose of her goods after death. She has an entitlement to education at all levels equal to that of a man. She is entitled to sexual fulfilment. She has the right to engage in any profession or business. She should be consulted in public affairs, following the example of Muhammad who habitually sought the opinion of some of the Muslim women before making a decision. She has the right to keep and control her own earnings, it being the duty of the husband to meet all domestic expenditure, house his family and educate his children (Q. 4:34) (Hewer, 2006:130).

Al-Islām does, however, recognise that men and women are not identical. Therefore, the relationship of husband and wife

...is viewed as complementary, reflecting their differing characteristics, capacities, and dispositions, and the roles of men and women in the traditional patriarchal family. The primary arena for men is the public sphere; they are to support and protect the family and to deal with the "outside" world, the world beyond the family. Women's primary role is that of wife and mother, managing the household, raising children, supervising their religious and moral training (Esposito, 1988:97-98).

These observations call for a balanced interpretation of Islamic constructions of the female body as sacred space. Roald (2001:119) argues that "Muslim feminists tend to be selective in readings of religious texts in a similar manner to Muslims with an androcentric attitude." The positive characterisation of female Companions of the Prophet (ﷺ) deconstructs the stereotype "of timid and restrained Muslim women which has penetrated the non-Muslim world" (Roald, 2001:119). Especially "Ā'isha, the wife of the Prophet, enjoys a particularly elevated status in the hadith literature. It is interesting to note that Ā'isha is portrayed as a very strong personality who also took part in political disputes" (Roald, 2001:119). In her secondspatial and thirdspatial readings of the *hijāb* as a border of cloth in the next two sections of this chapter, the researcher departs from the presupposition that the *Qur'ān* – in principle – depicts men and women as equal, but not identical, human beings.

4.3 SECONDSPATIAL REPRESENTATIONS: THE *HIJĀB* ACCORDING TO *AL-ISLĀM*'S FORMATIVE TRADITION²⁵⁴

Akou (2010:332) indicates that the “practice of modesty or ‘covering’ known as *hijab* (which is not limited to wearing a headscarf or even modest dress) has become one of the most visible and controversial elements of Islamic practice in the twenty-first century.” For Muslims and non-Muslims alike, the “*hijab* is a flash point in debates over feminism, neo-colonialism, and the secular state” (Akou, 2010:332). Akou (2010:332) identifies an important cause for the intense debates regarding the *hijāb* in contemporary society:

It is important to recognize, however, that these debates exist in part because the Qur’an, the foundation of knowledge in Islam, gives very little guidance on the subject of *hijab*, requiring believers – or at least trusted scholars – to decide for themselves the appropriate course of action. This process of interpretation is called *ijtihad*, a powerful idea that also plays a critical role in jurisprudence (*fiqh*)... While this concept has existed for centuries, new technologies such as the Internet have opened up many new questions as well as new reasons for using *ijtihad* to develop an Islamic way of living suited to the twenty-first century (Akou, 2010:332).

In this section, the researcher revisits information in the *Qur’ān* and the Islamic tradition based upon this “foundation of knowledge in Islam” (Akou, 2010:332) regarding the Muslim female dress code. It is done from her deliberately critical-spatial point of departure. She will argue that the prescriptions and expectations regarding female dress code in *al-Islām*'s formative tradition serve as the secondspatial representations informing the deliberate decision of a Muslim female to don the *hijāb*. The next section will then illustrate how these secondspatial representations aid a Muslim female in developing “an Islamic way of living suited to the twenty-first century” (Akou, 2010:332).

The researcher will not trace the use of the root حجب *hjb* “to hide” and nouns related to it in the *Qur’ān*. It has been done in detail by Aziz (2010:70-97). Aziz discusses the meaning of the term in *Sūra* 7:46; 33:53; 38:32; 41:5; 42:51; 17:45-46; 19:17; and 83:15 and concludes that the term “is used as a visible or invisible barrier between two spaces. The groups in each space are not allowed to mix. There is a definite physical, mystical or psychological reason for this separation” (Aziz, 2010:88). The researcher will elucidate specific instances where the word حجب *hjb* “to hide” is used in the *Qur’ān* to indicate a physical and/or symbolic boundary marker, demarcating sacred (*Sūra* 33:53) and private (*Sūra* 33:32-33) space. She will discuss prescriptions

²⁵⁴ This section is an updated and reworked version of Section 3.4 of the researcher’s MA dissertation (Bin Nafisah, 2015:63-98).

in the *Qur'ān* regarding female clothing practices in general and indicate how these prescriptions have been applied and interpreted in the four *Sunnī madhāhib*. This will aid her in a synthesis of *al-Islām's* secondspatial representations of female clothing practices.²⁵⁵

4.3.1 Interpreting the *ḥijāb* as boundary marker

4.3.1.1 The *ḥijāb* as marker of sacred space: *Sūra 33:53*

Sūra 33:53 plays a crucial role in Muslim representations of the female body and gendered space. It is called the “*āya* of *Ḥijāb*.” The *āya* is directly related to the issue of interaction between the Prophet’s (ﷺ) wives and people from outside his household. The Arabic text and English translation of the *ayā*, as well as a brief discussion of the content, appeared in Section 2.3.2. The *ayā* pertinently links the notions of حجاب “partition, screen” and طهر “purity,” as is evident in the remark وَإِذَا سَأَلْتُمُوهُنَّ مَتَاعًا فَاسْأَلُوهُنَّ مِنْ وَرَاءِ حِجَابٍ ذَلِكُمْ أَطْهَرُ لِقُلُوبِكُمْ وَقُلُوبِهِنَّ “And when you ask [his wives] for something, ask them from behind a partition. That is purer for your hearts and their hearts.” On this phrase the *Tafsīr* al-Jalalayn remarks:²⁵⁶

And when you ask anything of [his] womenfolk, in other words, the wives of the Prophet, **ask them from behind a screen**, a curtain. **That is purer for your hearts and their hearts**, than [entertaining] sinful thoughts.²⁵⁷

In his *Tafsīr*, Ibn Kathīr explains this verb under the theme **The Etiquette of entering the Houses of the Prophet** and the **Command of *Ḥijāb***.²⁵⁸ He remarks: “This is the *āya* of *Ḥijāb*, which includes several legislative rulings and points of etiquette.” According to Ibn Kathīr, the *āya* was revealed to the Prophet (ﷺ) under the following circumstances:

Al-Bukhari recorded that Anas ibn Malik said: “Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb said: ‘O Messenger of Allāh, both righteous and immoral people enter upon you, so why not instruct the Mothers of the believers to observe *Hijab*?’ Then Allāh revealed the *āyah* of *Hijab*.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁵ In Section 4.2, the researcher extensively quotes from the *Qur'ān*, *Ḥadīth*-literature, and various *Tafsīr* (in translation). It is done deliberately because the literature is largely unknown outside Muslim circles. Taking into account that this is a study in Ancient Culture Studies and that the intended readers include non-Muslims as well, the researcher deemed it essential to introduce her religious and interpretative tradition in such a way that all readers will be able to follow her argument.

²⁵⁶ Cf. Section 3.3.1.2.

²⁵⁷ <http://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=0&tTafsirNo=74&tSoraNo=33&tAyahNo=53&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&Languageld=2> (Accessed 06/05/2018).

²⁵⁸ Cf. Section 3.3.1.2.

²⁵⁹ http://www.qtafsir.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1836&Itemid=89;

Ibn Kathīr explains the phrase *وَإِذَا سَأَلْتُمُوهُنَّ مَتَعًا فَاسْأَلُوهُنَّ مِنْ وَرَاءِ حِجَابٍ* “And when you ask (his wives) for anything you want, ask them from behind a screen” as follows:

Just as it is forbidden for you to enter upon them, it is forbidden for you to look at them at all. If anyone of you has any need to take anything from them, he should not look at them, but he should ask for whatever he needs from behind a screen.²⁶⁰

The rulings in this *āya* became necessary because the Prophet (ﷺ) and his family lived in modest rooms attached to the first mosque built in *al-Madīna*. The Prophet (ﷺ) did not have the luxury of reception facilities like a king in a palace. Aziz (2010:76) describes the significance of the phrase as follows: “There is a physical separation of the noble ladies from the common folk, by a barrier that could not be seen through. It secludes the Prophet’s (ﷺ) wives by giving them privacy and is simultaneously a symbol of their high status and dignity. The context of this *hijāb* is the separation of two spaces that are not to intermingle.” In this case, the *hijāb* can be interpreted as a boundary marker demarcating sacred space. On the level of the daily functioning of the Prophet’s (ﷺ) family, it is reminiscent of the the boundary markers of *Makka’s harām*,²⁶¹ declaring the noble ladies’ private space forbidden to outsiders.

It confirms the observation by El Guindi (1999:69) that any discussion of the *hijāb* as part of the Muslim female dress code should recognise that it does not only function on a physical level, but also on the level of the symbolic. In this *āya*, the notion of sacred privacy and sanctuary is clearly present. It is suggested by the fact that this *āya*, originally intended as command for the interaction between the Prophet’s (ﷺ) wives and outsiders, has in Muslim tradition been applied to all believing women in their interaction with non-*maḥram* men.²⁶² In the *Sunan Ibn Majah* (Book 33: Etiquette; *Ḥadīth* 95) the *hijāb*, for instance, is interpreted as a “screen” between a believing woman and *Allāh*:²⁶³

(Accessed 06/05/2018).

²⁶⁰ http://www.qtafsir.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1836&Itemid=89
(Accessed 06/05/2018).

²⁶¹ Cf. Section 3.3.3.

²⁶² In Muslim tradition, a *maḥram* is a close relative who a woman can never marry (cf. the discussion of *Sūra* 24:30-31 in sub-section 3.4.2.2 below). In Arabic: محرم *maḥram*; pl. محارم *maḥārim* “Something forbidden, inviolable, taboo; someone unmarriageable, being in a degree of consanguinity precluding marriage according to Islamic law.” The noun is derived from the root حرم *ḥrm* “to be forbidden, prohibited, unlawful.”

²⁶³ Cf. Section 3.3.2.

It was narrated from Abū Maliḥ al-Hudhaliyya that some women from the people of Hims asked permission to enter upon ‘Ā’ishah. She said: “Perhaps you are among those (women) who enter bathhouses? I heard the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) say: ‘Any woman who takes off her clothes anywhere but in her husband’s house, has torn the screen between her and Allāh.’”²⁶⁴

The Muslim female dress code thus becomes an issue not only of proper cultural conduct and social etiquette, but also of a highly significant religious implication directly influencing the relationship between a female Muslim and *Allāh*.

4.3.1.2 The *ḥijāb* as marker of private space: *Sūra 33:32-33*

Linked to the notion of *ḥjb* “to hide” as it is used in *Sūra 33:53*, is another passage in the same *Sūra*, namely 33:32-33. It reads as follows:

يَا نِسَاءَ النَّبِيِّ	³² O wives of the Prophet,
لَسْتُنَّ كَأَحَدٍ مِّنَ النِّسَاءِ	you are not like anyone among women.
إِنِ اتَّقَيْتُنَّ	If you fear (Allāh),
فَلَا تَخْضَعْنَ بِالْقَوْلِ	then do not be soft in speech [to men],
فَيَطْمَعَ	lest he should be moved with desire,
الَّذِي فِي قَلْبِهِ مَرَضٌ	he in whose heart is disease.
وَقُلْنَ قَوْلًا مَّعْرُوفًا	But speak with appropriate speech.
وَقَرْنَ فِي بُيُوتِكُنَّ	³³ And abide in your houses,
وَلَا تَبَرَّجْنَ تَبَرُّجَ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ الْأُولَىٰ	and do not display yourselves (with) the display of the former times of ignorance.
وَأَقِمْنَ الصَّلَاةَ	And establish prayer,
وَأَتِينَ الزَّكَاةَ	and give alms,
وَأَطِعْنَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ	and obey Allāh and His Messenger.
إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ	Allāh only wishes
لِيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمُ الرِّجْسَ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ	to remove from you the impurity, people of the household,
وَيُطَهِّرَكُم تَطْهِيرًا	and to purify you with (thorough) purification.

Sūra 33:32-33 (الأحزاب) *al-Aḥzāb / The Confederates:32-33*

From the context it is clear that these words are addressed in the first place to the “wives of the Prophet” as women in a special position “not like anyone among women”

²⁶⁴ Cf. <http://sunnah.com/ibnmajah/33/95> (Accessed 23/07/2015). It is classified as *ḥasan* “good” (Darussalam). A similar *ḥadīth* is narrated in the *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, Book 33: Hot Baths (Kitab al-Hamman); *Ḥadīth* 2; <http://sunnah.com/abudawud/33/2> (Accessed 23/04/2018). It is classified as *ṣaḥīḥ* “sound” (Al-Albani).

(33:32). The wives of the Prophet (ﷺ) should take care to behave with proper restraint towards other men so that they do not entice them. They should “abide in your houses and do not display yourselves as [was] the display of the former times of ignorance” (33:33) precisely because of their special obligation towards the Prophet (ﷺ) and the newly established principles of *al-Islām*. Ibn Kathīr makes the following remarks regarding this passage in his *Tafsīr* :

This *āya* is addressed to the wives of the Prophet who chose *Allāh* and His Messenger and the Home of the Hereafter, and remained married to the Messenger of *Allāh*. Thus it was befitting that there should be rulings which applied only to them, and not to other women, in the event that any of them should commit open Fahishah. Ibn 'Abbas, may *Allāh* be pleased with him, said: “This means Nushuz (rebellion) and a bad attitude.” Whatever the case, this is a conditional phrase and it does not imply that what is referred to would actually happen... Because their status is so high, it is appropriate to state that the sin, if they were to commit it, would be so much worse, so as to protect them and their *Hijab*.

These are the good manners which *Allāh* enjoined upon the wives of the Prophet so that they would be an example for the women of the Ummah to follow. *Allāh* said, addressing the wives of the Prophet that they should fear *Allāh* as He commanded them, and that no other woman is like them or can be their equal in virtue and status.

“But speak in an honourable manner:” Ibn Zayd said: “Decent and honourable talk that is known to be good.” This means that she should address non-Mahram men in a manner in which there is no softness, i.e., a woman should not address a non-Mahram man in the same way that she addresses her husband.

“And stay in your houses,” means, stay in your houses and do not come out except for a purpose. One of the purposes mentioned in Shari'ah is prayer in the Masjid, so long as the conditions are fulfilled, as the Messenger of *Allāh* said: “Do not prevent the female servants of *Allāh* from the Masjids of *Allāh*, but have them go out without wearing fragrance.” According to another report: “even though their houses are better for them.”

“and do not Tabarruj yourselves like the Tabarruj of the times of ignorance:” Mujahid said: “Women used to go out walking in front of men, and this was the Tabarruj of Jahiliyyah.” Qatadah said: “‘and do not Tabarruj yourselves like the Tabarruj of the times of ignorance,’ when they go out of their homes walking in a shameless and flirtatious manner, and *Allāh*, may He be exalted, forbade that.” Muqatil bin Hayyan said: “‘and do not Tabarruj yourselves like the Tabarruj of the times of ignorance,’ Tabarruj is when a woman puts a Khimar on her head but does not tie it properly.” So her necklaces, earrings and neck, and all of that can be seen. This is Tabarruj, and *Allāh* addresses all the women of the believers with regard to Tabarruj.

“and perform the Salah, and give Zakah and obey *Allāh* and His Messenger:” *Allāh* first forbids them from evil, then He enjoins them to do good by establishing regular prayer, which means worshipping *Allāh* alone with no partner or associate, and paying Zakah, which means doing good to other people.

“and obey *Allāh* and His Messenger:” This is an instance of something specific being followed by something general.

“*Allāh* wishes only to remove Ar-Rijs from you, O members of the family, and to purify you with a thorough purification:” This is a clear statement that the wives of the Prophet are included among the members of his family (Ahl Al-Bayt) here, because they are the reason why this *āyah* was revealed, and the scholars are unanimously agreed that they were the reason for revelation in this case, whether this was the only reason for revelation or there was also another reason, which is the correct view. Ibn Jarir recorded that `Ikrimah used to call out in the marketplace: “*Allāh* wishes only to remove Ar-Rijs from you, O members of the family, and to purify you with a thorough purification” This was revealed solely concerning the wives of the Prophet.” Ibn Abī Hatim recorded that Ibn ‘Abbas said concerning the *āyah*: “*Allāh* wishes only to remove Ar-Rijs from you, O members of the family’ It was revealed solely concerning the wives of the Prophet.” `Ikrimah said: “Whoever disagrees with me that it was revealed solely concerning the wives of the Prophet, I am prepared to meet with him and pray and invoke the curse of *Allāh* upon those who are lying.” So they alone were the reason for revelation, but others may be included by way of generalization.

When the question of the nature of female clothing practices in Muslim tradition is considered, these *āyāt* raise two important questions: (1) Are the admonitions in these *āyāt* applicable only to the wives of the Prophet (ﷺ)? (2) Should these admonitions be understood as indicative of the **seclusion** of Muslim women?

The *Tafsīr* Ibn Kathīr throws light on the first question. In Muslim tradition it is understood as first and foremost directed to the wives of the Prophet (ﷺ). They were regarded as members of his household and as such they, even more than any other Muslim woman, carried the responsibility of ensuring proper conduct both in and outside their homes. By way of generalisation this principle can then be applied to all Muslim women.

The second question then becomes important. Does the admonition “abide in your houses and do not display yourselves as [was] the display of the former times of ignorance” (*Sūra* 33:33) then imply the **seclusion** of **all** Muslim women? Is a woman’s place at home and should she preferably never be seen in public? Again the *Tafsīr* Ibn Kathīr throws light on the subject when it states “and do not come out except for a purpose.” No doubt this admonition emphasises the responsibility of every Muslim woman to ensure “a pure atmosphere at home so that she can perform her household duties properly and contribute to improve the whole society” (Abdullah, 1990:30).

However, the researcher concurs with El Guindi (1999:82-83) that gender seclusion is not characteristic of Arabo-Islamic culture but rather of early Christian culture as embodied in the Byzantine Empire. Gender seclusion defies the “logic” of the *ḥijāb*. The *ḥijāb*, broadly defined, symbolises “Arab privacy” (El Guindi, 1999:82) and it, in

turn, entails “two core spheres – women and the family.” In this regard El Guindi (1999:82) states:

For both, privacy is sacred and carefully guarded. For women it is both a right and an exclusive privilege, and is reflected in dress, space, architecture and proxemics behaviour. Their economic and marital autonomous identity is not connected to domesticity. A woman is guardian of the sanctity that is fundamental to the community.

The “logic” of the *hijāb* is precisely its ability to allow any Muslim woman to instantly construct her own private space. El Guindi (1999:77-78) argues that it is distinctive of the Islamic construction of space

...how it turns a public area into private space, without the entry of a stranger. It enables ordinary Muslims temporarily to convert any worldly place (street, shop, aircraft aisle) into a sacred space set apart, simply by marking it and occupying it in a ritually pure state facing Makka.

If this happens every time a Muslim prays, it can be argued that it also happens every time a Muslim woman dons her *hijāb* and enters the “outside” world. She is, so to speak, enshrined in her sacred space and as such she is the “guardian of the sanctity that is fundamental to the community” (El Guindi, 1999:82).

4.3.2 Broadening the horizons: *hijāb* and *libās*

Aziz (2010:89) maintains that the term *حجب* *hjb* “to hide” as it is used in the Qur’ān “does not assist in defining the specific dress code for Muslims, so we need to look at other words and verses in the Qur’an for further understanding of this concept.” The researcher concurs with this conclusion. In Section 4.3.2.1 she will do exactly what Aziz suggested and “look at other words and verses in the Qur’an for further understanding of this concept.” The researcher links this suggestion with a remark by El Guindi (1999:69) that more attention should be paid to the use of the term *لباس* *libās* (dress, garment) in the Qur’ān. El Guindi (1999:69) argues that *libās* shares with the English word “dress” the “qualities of comprehensiveness and inclusiveness” and that it has been used “since the pre-Islamic era in a general, comprehensive, and inclusive way.” El Guindi also proposes that *libās* should be looked at not only from a “socio-cultural framework that treats dress as a **material phenomenon** with meaning communicated at the **social and cultural** level,” but especially as a representation of the “realm of the **invisible, intangible sacred domain**, in which ideas and concepts can be made observable by **symbolic analysis**” (El Guindi, 1999:69).²⁶⁵

²⁶⁵ Italics and emphasis added by the researcher.

4.3.2.1 Clothing and clothes in the *Qur'ān*, *Ḥadīth*, and *Tafsīr*

Three broad themes will be discussed in this section. First, a broad overview on clothing, nakedness, and female dress code in the *Qur'ān* will be given (Section 4.3.2.1.1). The researcher will briefly discuss three groups of *āyāt*: (1) *āyāt* referring to لباس *libās* “dress; garment,” *Sūra* 2:187; 7:26, 27; 22:23; 35:33; 25:47; 78:10); (2) *āyāt* referring to its counterpart, the stripping of clothes to reveal nakedness (سوات, *Sūra* 7:20, 22, 26, 27; 20:21 or فروج, *Sūra* 23:5; 24:30, 31; 33:35; 50:6; 70:29); (3) *āyāt* referring to specific items of female clothing (خمر, *Sūra* 24:31 and جلابيب, *Sūra* 33:59). Second, *āyāt* in four *Suwar* where these terminology intersect, namely 2:187; 7:26-27; 24:30-31; 33:59, will be discussed in more detail. In the discussion, attention will also be paid to expositions of relevant *āyāt* in the *Ḥadīth* and *Tafsīr* (Section 4.3.2.1.2). Third, a number of *aḥādīth* addressing the issue of female clothing will be discussed briefly (Section 4.3.2.1.3). The three themes will be used as a basis to determine *Qur'ānic* principles for female (and male) clothing practices.

4.3.2.1.1 Clothing, nakedness, and female dress in the *Qur'ān*: An overview

Forms related to the root لیس *lbs* occur 22 times in the *Qur'ān*. Essentially the root means “to cover.” It has the following connotations:

- Put on / take off clothes: 7:26 (2X), 27.
- Wear special clothes in Paradise: 18:31; 22:23; 35:33; 44:53.
- Wear ornaments extracted from the sea: 16:14; 35:12.
- Husband and wife as clothing for each other: 2:187.
- Cover truth with falsehood: 2:42; 3:71.
- Cover belief with injustice: 6:82 (2X).
- Be enveloped with confusion: 6:9 (2X); 6:65; 6:137; 50:15.
- Be enveloped with fear or hunger: 16:112.
- Be enveloped by the darkness of night: 25:47; 78:10.

In the context of this study, the *Suwar* concerned with the putting on or taking off of clothes (7:26, 27) and the metaphorical use of لیس to describe the relationship between husband and wife (2:187) are of particular importance and will be discussed in detail in Section 4.3.2.1.2.

Two words are used in the *Qur'ān* to denote “nakedness,” namely سوءة *saw'ah* “shame, disgrace, private part” and فرج *farj* “opening, gap, breach, (female) private part.” سوءة is derived from the root سوء *sw'* “to be bad, wicked, evil, to torment, offend, displease.” The root occurs 167 times in 151 *āyāt*, most of the time in the sense of “evil” (e.g. 2:81, 169; 3:30); “torment” (2:49); “misdeed” (2:271); “distress” (3:120); “harm”

(3:120). In five instances, the noun سوءة occurs with the sense “nakedness, private parts,” namely in 7:20, 22, 26, 27 and 20:121. In both *Suwar*, the word occurs in a context where the first human beings, Adam and his wife, are misled by Satan and “by deceit he brought about their fall” (7:22). Their سوءة was then exposed to them (7:20, 22; 20:121). In these contexts, the emphasis falls upon the human pair’s shame because they transgressed *Allāh*’s command. *Allāh*’s reaction – providing them with لباس “clothing” to cover their سوءة “shame” is prominently emphasised in 7:26-27 and will be discussed in more detail in Section 4.3.2.1.2²⁶⁶

The second word to denote “nakedness” is فرج *farj*, plural فروج *furūj*. It is derived from the root فرج *frj* “to open, separate, cleave, breach.” The root occurs only nine times in the *Qur’ān*. In two cases (*Sūra* 50:6; 77:9), the term refers to heaven as being structured and adorned by *Allāh* without فُرُوج “rift, cleft.” However, on the “Day of Sorting out” (77:13) it will be فُرِّجَتْ “cleft asunder” by *Allāh*. In the other seven instances, the term refers to “private parts,” i.e. male or female genitals. *Sūra* 21:91 and 66:12 refer to Mary, the mother of Jesus, who guarded فَرْجَهَا “her chastity.” *Sūra* 23:5 and 70:29 describe true Believers as those who guard لِفُرُوجِهِمْ “their private parts” in the sense of refraining from illicit sexual relations. *Sūra* 33:35 lists the virtues of Muslim men and women, amongst them the guarding of فُرُوجِهِمْ “their private parts.” Especially important in the context of this study is the command to believing men to lower their gaze and guard رُوجَهُمْ “their private parts” in *Sūra* 24:30 and the same command to believing women to guard فُرُوجَهُنَّ “their private parts” in 24:31. These two *āyāt* will be discussed in Section 4.3.2.1.2

Twice in the *Qur’ān*, references to specific items of female clothing appear. In *Sūra* 24:31 female believers are urged “to wrap [a portion of] their head covers (بِخُمُرِهِنَّ) over their chests (جُيُوبَهُنَّ)” and in *Sūra* 33:59 the Prophet’s (ﷺ) wives and daughters and the women of the believers are commanded “to bring down over themselves (يُدْنِينَ عَلَيْنَهُنَّ) [part] of their outer garments (مِنْ جَلَابِيبِهِنَّ).” These two *āyāt* will be discussed in detail in subsection 4.3.2.1.2.

²⁶⁶ The researcher differs from El Guindi (1999:74) who remarks that according to the narrative regarding the sacred origin of humanity in the *Qur’ān* (*Sūra* 7:20, 22; 20:121) it is Satan who made the human pair slip (*Sūra* 2:36), but that “*saw’at* (pl. for *saw’ah*) does not mean nakedness or sex or sexuality. It means genitals. No “shame” is linked in these passages to Islamic human beginnings.” The overview of the use of the term سوء *sw’* in the *Qur’ān* clearly indicates that the term is inextricably linked with the notion of “shame.” There is no “shame” in the origins of humanity, but in the human pair’s disobedience and the subsequent exposure of their nakedness. Hence the researcher regards the wilful and public display of human nakedness as “shameful” as is illustrated by the first human pair’s frantic attempt “to cover their bodies with leaves from the Garden” (7:21).

4.3.2.1.2 Clothing, nakedness, and female dress: *Suwar* 2:187; 7:26; 24:30-31; 33:59

El Guindi (1999:70) makes the following important observations regarding the use of the term *لبس* *lbs* in the *Qur'ān* and *Hadīth*:

Its usage not only denotes material forms of clothing and ornament for women and men, but also includes diverse forms of the veil and veiling... it embodies an invisible, intangible realm of the sacred in which cultural ideas are relationally embedded.

In this section, the researcher will illustrate how references to clothing, nakedness and female dress interact in the *Qur'ān* to embody “an invisible, intangible realm of the sacred” (El Guindi, 1999:70) and how *al-Islām* re-interpreted existing cultural ideas regarding female clothing practices and re-applied it to a new religious context.

- ***Sūra* 2:187:** This *ayā* appears in the context of 2:183-188, which contains precepts regarding the fast during the holy month of *Ramaḍān*. Of importance for the current study is the remark: هُنَّ لِبَاسٌ لَّكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ لِبَاسٌ لَهُنَّ “they (female gender) are clothing for you (masculine gender) and you (masculine gender) are clothing for them (female gender).”

(قَالَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى)	(Allāh the Exalted said:)
أُجِّلَ لَكُمْ لَيْلَةَ الصِّيَامِ	It has been made permissible for you the night preceding fasting
الرَّفَقْتُ إِلَى نِسَائِكُمْ	to go to your wives [for sexual relations].
هُنَّ لِبَاسٌ لَّكُمْ	<u>They are clothing for you,</u>
وَأَنْتُمْ لِبَاسٌ لَهُنَّ	<u>and you are clothing for them.</u>
عَلِمَ اللَّهُ	Allāh knows
أَنَّكُمْ كُنْتُمْ	that you used
تَخْتَانُونَ أَنْفُسَكُمْ	to deceive yourselves,
فَتَابَ عَلَيْكُمْ	so He turned towards you,
وَعَفَا عَنْكُمْ	and He forgave you.
فَالآنَ بَاشِرُوهُمْ	So now, have relations with them,
وَابْتَغُوا	and seek
مَا كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ	that which Allāh has decreed for you.
وَكُلُوا	And eat,
وَأَشْرَبُوا حَتَّى يَتَبَيَّنَ لَكُمُ الْخَيْطُ الْأَبْيَضُ	and drink until becomes distinct to you the white thread
مِنَ الْخَيْطِ الْأَسْوَدِ مِنَ الْفَجْرِ	from the black thread of dawn.
ثُمَّ أَتِمُّوا الصِّيَامَ إِلَى اللَّيْلِ	Then complete the fast until the sunset.
وَلَا تُبَاشِرُوهُمْ	And do not have relations with them
وَأَنْتُمْ عَاكِفُونَ فِي الْمَسَاجِدِ	as long as you are staying for worship in the mosques.

تِلْكَ حُدُودُ اللَّهِ *These are the limits (set) by Allāh,*
فَلَا تَقْرُبُوهَا *so do not approach them.*
كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ آيَاتِهِ لِلنَّاسِ *Thus does Allāh make clear His ordinances to the*
لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُونَ *that they may become righteous.*

Sūra 2:187 (البقرة) al-'Baqara / The Cow:178)

This remark confirms an observation by El Guindi (1999:74) regarding the *Qur'ān's* representation of the male and female as a pair:

The emphasis is on gender mutuality and the completeness of a heterosexual pair that reproduces humankind. In the sacred Islamic imagination there is no shame in sexuality and no gender primacy communicated in the story of creation.

The symbolic nature of clothing in the remark in *Sūra 2:187* should be recognised. The researcher concurs in this regard with El Guindi (1999:74) when she says: "In the Islamic construction, dress, in addition to its material connotation, links in metaphoric terms notions of gender, sexuality, sanctuary, and sacred privacy." When *Sūra 2:187* describes husband and wife as لباس *libās* to each other it confirms the symbolic value of "clothing" as an act of mutual care and the fulfilling of mutual needs and obligations. According to the *Tafsīr* al-Jalalayn the phrase is "a metaphor for their embraces or their need for one another."²⁶⁷ In his *Tafsīr* on this *āya*, Ibn Kathīr remarks:

Ibn 'Abbas, Mujahid, Sa'id ibn Jubayr, Al-Hasan, Qatadah, As-Suddi and Muqatil ibn Hayyan said that this *āyah* means, "Your wives are a resort for you and you for them." Ar-Rabī ibn Anas said, "They are your cover and you are their cover." In short, the wife and the husband are intimate and have sexual intercourse with each other, and this is why they were permitted to have sexual activity during the nights of Ramadan, so that matters are made easier for them.²⁶⁸

- ***Sūra 7:26-27***: Of particular importance in the present context is the remark: أَنْزَلْنَا كَمَا أَخْرَجَ أَبْوَيْكُم مِّنَ الْجَنَّةِ يَنْزِعُ عَلَيْكُمْ لِبَاسًا يُّوَارِي سَوْآتِكُمْ وَرِيشًا "We have bestowed upon you clothing to conceal your private parts and as adornment" in *Sūra 7:26*, and the phrase كَمَا أَخْرَجَ أَبْوَيْكُم مِّنَ الْجَنَّةِ يَنْزِعُ "as he drove your parents from Paradise, stripping from both of them their clothing to show both of them their shame" in *Sūra 7:27*.

²⁶⁷ Cf. <http://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=0&tTafsirNo=74&tSoraNo=2&tAyahNo=187&tDisplay=yes&User Profile=0&LanguageId=2> (Accessed 20/02/2018).

²⁶⁸ <http://www.alim.org/library/quran/AlQuran-tafsir/TIK/2/187> (Accessed 20/02/2018).

(قال الله تعالى) (Allāh the Exalted said:)

يَا بَنِي آدَمَ²⁶ O children of Adam,
قَدْ أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكُمْ لِبَاسًا indeed, We have sent down upon you clothing.
يُؤَارِي سَوْآتِكُمْ وَرِيشًا It covers your shame and (as) an adornment.
وَلِبَاسُ التَّقْوَى ذَلِكَ خَيْرٌ But the clothing of righteousness – that is best.
ذَلِكَ مِنْ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ That is from the signs of Allāh,
لَعَلَّهُمْ يَذَكَّرُونَ so that they might remember.

يَا بَنِي آدَمَ²⁷ O children of Adam,
لَا يَفْتِنَنَّكُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ let not Satan tempt you
كَمَا أَخْرَجَ أَبَوَيْكُم مِّنَ الْجَنَّةِ as he drove your parents from Paradise,
كَمَا أَخْرَجَ أَبَوَيْكُم مِّنَ الْجَنَّةِ stripping from both of them their clothing,
لِيُرِيَهُمَا سَوْآتِهِمَا to show both of them their shame.
إِنَّهُ يَرَاكُمْ هُوَ وَقَبِيلُهُ Indeed, he sees you – he and his tribe,
مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا تَرَوْنَهُمْ from where you do not see him.
إِنَّا جَعَلْنَا الشَّيَاطِينَ أَوْلِيَاءَ Indeed, we have made the devils allies
لِلَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ of those who do not believe.

Sūra 7:26-27 (الأعراف) al-A'raf / The Elevations:26-27)

The *Tafsir* al-Jalalayn expounds this *āya* as follows:

O Children of Adam! We have sent down on you a garment, that is, We have created it for you, **to conceal**, to cover up, **your shameful parts**, and **feathers**, meaning all that one adorns oneself with of garments, and **the garment of God-fearing**, righteous deeds and virtuous traits (read as *libāsa 'l-taqwā*, 'the garment of God-fearing', as a supplement to the preceding *libāsan*, 'a garment'; or read as *libāsu 'l-tawqā* as the subject, the predicate of which is the [following] sentence) **that is best; that is one of God's signs**, the proofs of His power; **perhaps they will remember**, and believe (the address shifts from the second [to the third] person).²⁶⁹

With regard to this *āya*, Ibn Kathīr says:

Allāh reminds His servants that He has given them *Libas* and *Rish*. *Libas* refers to the clothes that are used to cover the private parts, while *Rish* refers to the outer adornments used for purposes of beautification. Therefore, the first type is essential while the second type is complimentary. Ibn Jarir said that *Rish* includes furniture and outer clothes. 'Abdur-Rahman ibn Zayd ibn Aslam commented on the *āyah*, وَلِبَاسُ التَّقْوَى "and the *Libās* (raiment) of

²⁶⁹ <http://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=0&tTafsirNo=74&tSoraNo=7&tAyahNo=26&Display=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=2> (Accessed 20/02/2018).

Taqwa...” “When one fears *Allāh*, *Allāh* covers his errors. Hence the ‘Libas of Taqwa’ (that the *āyah* mentions).”²⁷⁰

Reverence of *Allāh* and righteous behaviour, knowing that *Allāh* is watching everyone, are basic rules for the dress code in the *Qur’ān*. The *āya* maintains that any human being knows what is decent and acceptable, what is revealing and unacceptable. Significantly *Allāh*’s bestowment of clothes upon humankind is linked to righteous behaviour and to a “sign” of *Allāh* that will be remembered and believed. It is a visible expression of an invisible principle, that “clothing to conceal your private parts and as adornment” is a gift from *Allāh* to Believers specifically intended to conceal سَوَاتِكُمْ, which – in the light of the discussion in Section 4.3.2.1.1 – might be translated as “your shame.” It confirms El Guindi’s (1999:74) observation that *libās* carries connotations linked to notions of “gender, sexuality, sanctuary, and sacred privacy.”

- **Sūra 24:30-31:** In these two *ayāt*, modest behaviour and respect for privacy are obligations for both male and female believers. The Arabic text and translation appeared in Section 2.3.2. The *Tafsīr* al-Jalalayn expounds this verse as follows:

Tell believing men to lower their gaze, from what is unlawful for them to look at (*min* [of *min absārihim*, ‘their gaze’] is extra) **and to guard their private parts**, from doing with them what is unlawful [for them to do]. **That is purer**, in other words, better, **for them. Truly God is aware of what they do**, with their gazes and private parts, and He will requite them for it.²⁷¹

Ibn Kathīr has a lengthy explanation for this verse:

This is a command from *Allāh* to His believing servants, to lower their gaze from looking at things that have been prohibited for them. They should look only at what is permissible for them to look at, and lower their gaze from forbidden things. If it so happens that a person’s gaze unintentionally falls upon something forbidden, he should quickly look away.

Muslim recorded in his *Sahih*²⁷² that Jarir ibn ‘Abdullah Al-Bajali, may *Allāh* be pleased with him, said, “I asked the Prophet about the sudden glance, and he commanded me to turn my gaze away.” In the *Sahīḥ* it is narrated that Abū Sa’id said that the Messenger of *Allāh* said:

إِيَّاكُمْ وَالْجُلُوسَ عَلَى الطَّرِيقَاتِ *Beware of sitting in the streets.*

They said, “O Messenger of *Allāh*, we have no alternative but to sit in the streets to converse with one another.” The Messenger of *Allāh* said:

²⁷⁰ Cf. <http://www.alim.org/library/quran/AIQuran-tafsir/TIK/7/26> (Accessed 20/02/2018).

²⁷¹ Cf. <http://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=0&tTafsirNo=74&tSoraNo=24&tAyahNo=30&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&Languageld=2> (Accessed 20/02/2018).

²⁷² Cf. Section 3.3.1.2.

إِنْ أَبَيْتُمْ *If you insist,*
فَأَعْطُوا الطَّرِيقَ حَقَّهُ *then give the street its rights.*

They asked, "What are the rights of the street, O Messenger of *Allāh*?" He said:

غَضُّ الْبَصَرِ *Lower the gaze,*
وَكَفُّ الْأَدَى *and restrain the annoyance.*
وَرَدُّ السَّلَامِ *Return the greeting of Salam,*
وَالْأَمْرُ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ *enjoin what is good,*
وَالنَّهْيُ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ *and forbid what is evil.*

Abū Al-Qasim Al-Baghawi recorded that Abū Umamah said: "I heard the Messenger of *Allāh* say:

اَكْفُوا لِي سِتًّا *Guarantee me six things,*
أَكْفُلُ لَكُمْ بِالْجَنَّةِ *and I will guarantee you Paradise:*
إِذَا حَدَّثَ أَحَدُكُمْ *When any one of you speaks,*
فَلَا يَكْذِبْ *he should not lie;*
وَإِذَا انْتُمِنَ *if he is entrusted with something,*
فَلَا يَخْنُ *he should not betray that trust;*
وَإِذَا وَعَدَ *if he makes a promise,*
فَلَا يُخْلِفْ *he should not break it;*
وَعُضُوا أَبْصَارَكُمْ *and lower your gaze;*
وَكُفُّوا أَيْدِيَكُمْ *and restrain your hands;*
وَاحْفَظُوا فُرُوجَكُمْ *and protect your private parts.*

Since looking provokes the heart to evil, *Allāh* commanded (the believers) to protect their private parts just as he commanded them to protect their gaze which can lead to that. So he said: "تَلِّمُوا لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ يَعْضُوا مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِمْ وَيَحْفَظُوا فُرُوجَهُمْ" "Tell the believing men to lower their gaze, and protect their private parts." Sometimes protecting the private parts may involve keeping them from committing *Zina*,²⁷³ as *Allāh* says: "وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِأَفْوَاجِهِمْ حَفِظُونَ" "And those who guard

²⁷³ Arabic زنا *zinā* "adultery, fornication." The noun is derived from the root زنى *znj* "to commit adultery, fornicate, whore."

person's gaze unintentionally falls upon something forbidden, he should quickly look away. The rule for Islamic dress code that can be deduced from this *āyah* is modesty, decency, and respecting one's own and the privacy of others.

In the next *āya* (24:31), the same behaviour is prescribed to Muslim women, but in more detail. The *Tafsīr* al-Jalalayn expounds this verse as follows:

And tell believing women to lower their gaze, away from what is not lawful for them to look at, **and to guard their private parts**, from what is not lawful for them to do with them, **and not to display their adornment except for what is apparent**, namely, the face and the hands, which may be seen by a stranger, when there is no danger of [either or both falling into] temptation — this being one of two opinions. The second [of these] is that [even] this is forbidden because there is a presumption that these [parts] will cause temptation — and this is the preferred opinion, if one must settle this topic [with a definitive opinion]; **and let them draw their veils over their bosoms**, that is, let them cover up their heads, necks and chests with veils, **and not reveal their**, hidden, **adornment**, namely, all that is other than the face and the hands, **except to their husbands** (*bu'ūl* is the plural form of *ba'l*, 'male spouse') **or their fathers, or their husbands' fathers, or their sons, or their husbands' sons, or their brothers, or their brothers' sons, or their sisters' sons, or their women, or what their right hands own**, all of whom are permitted to look thereat, except for the part from the navel down to the knees, which is unlawful for any other than their husbands to see; **'their women'**, however, excludes disbelieving women, for it is not permitted for Muslim women to reveal themselves to these; **'what their right hands own'** comprises slaves; or such men who are dependant, on what food may be left over, not (*ghayri*, read as an adjective, or read *ghayra* as an exceptive) possessing any sexual desire, [not] those men who are in [sexual] need of women, so for example those whose male member cannot become erect; or children who are not yet aware of women's private parts, in [the context of] sexual intercourse, and so to these they may reveal themselves except for that part from the navel to the knees. **And do not let them thump with their feet to make known their hidden ornaments**, as in a rattling anklet [and the like]. **And rally to God** in repentance, **O believers**, [repenting] of the occasions on which you may have looked at what is forbidden [to look at] of such [parts] and otherwise, **so that you might be prosperous**, [so that you might] be saved from such [sinful acts] when your repentance thereof is accepted — in this verse the prevalent address is to males over females.²⁷⁸

Ibn Kathīr explains the verse with several references to aḥādīth in his discussion of two topics, namely "The Rulings of *Hijāb*" and "The Etiquette of Women Walking in the Street."

The Rulings of *Hijāb*: This is a command from *Allāh* to the believing women, and jealousy on His part over the wives of His believing servants. It is also to

²⁷⁸ <http://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=0&tTafsirNo=74&tSoraNo=24&tAyahNo=31&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=2>; 20/03/2018.

distinguish the believing women from the women of the Jahiliyyah²⁷⁹ and the deeds of the pagan women. The reason for the revelation of this *āyah* was mentioned by Muqatil ibn Hayyan, when he said: “We heard -- and *Allāh* knows best -- that Jabīr ibn ‘Abdullah Al-Ansari narrated that Asma’ bint Murshidah was in a house of hers in Bani Harithah, and the women started coming in to her without lower garments so that the anklets on their feet could be seen, along with their chests and forelocks. Asma’ said: ‘How ugly this is!’ Then *Allāh* revealed: وَقُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنَاتِ يَغْضُضْنَ مِنْ أَبْصَرِهِنَّ “And tell the believing women to lower their gaze...” (24:31). And *Allāh* says: وَقُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنَاتِ يَغْضُضْنَ مِنْ أَبْصَرِهِنَّ “And tell the believing women to lower their gaze,” meaning from that which *Allāh* has forbidden them to look at, apart from their husbands. Some scholars said that it is permissible for women to look at non-mahram men without desire, as it was recorded in the Sahih that the Messenger of *Allāh* was watching the Ethiopians playing with spears in the Masjid on the day of ‘Īd, and ‘Ā’ishah the Mother of the believers was watching them from behind him and he was concealing her from them, until she got bored and went away.

وَيَحْفَظْنَ فُرُوجَهُنَّ “and protect their private parts:” Sa’id ibn Jubayr said: “From immoral actions.” Abū Al-‘Aliyah said: “Every *āyah* of the Qur’ān in which protecting the private parts is mentioned means protecting them from Zina, except for this *āyah* – وَيَحْفَظْنَ فُرُوجَهُنَّ “and protect their private parts” – which means protecting them from being seen by anybody.”

وَلَا يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا “and not to show off their adornment except that which is apparent,” means they should not show anything of their adornment to non-mahram men except for whatever is impossible to hide. Ibn Mas’ud said: “Such as clothes and outer garments,” meaning what the Arab women used to wear of the veil which covered their clothes and whatever showed from underneath the outer garment. There is no blame on her for this, because this is something that she cannot conceal. Similar to that is what appears of her lower garment and what she cannot conceal. Al-Hasan, Ibn Sirin, Abū Al-Jawza’, Ibrahim An-Nakha’i and others also had the same view as Ibn Mas’ud.

وَلْيَضْرِبْنَ بِخُمُرِهِنَّ عَلَىٰ جُيُوبِهِنَّ “and to draw their veils all over their Juyub,” means that they should wear the outer garment in such a way as to cover their chests and ribs, so that they will be different from the women of the Jahiliyyah, who did not do that but would pass in front of men with their chests completely uncovered, and with their necks, forelocks, hair and earrings uncovered. So *Allāh* commanded the believing women to cover themselves, as He says: يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ قُلْ لَأَزُوجَكَ وَبَنَاتِكَ وَنِسَاءَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ يُدْنِينَ عَلَيْهِنَّ مِنْ جَلِيبِهِنَّ ذَلِكَ أَدْنَىٰ أَنْ يُعْرَفْنَ فَلَا يُؤْذَيْنَ “O Prophet! Tell your wives and your daughters and the women of the believers to draw their cloaks all over their bodies. That will be better, that they should be known, so as not to be annoyed” (33:59). And in this noble *āyah* He said: وَلْيَضْرِبْنَ بِخُمُرِهِنَّ عَلَىٰ جُيُوبِهِنَّ “and to draw their (Khumur) veils all over their Juyuibn” Khumur (veils) is the plural of Khimar, which means something that covers, and is what is used to cover the head. This is what is known among

²⁷⁹ *Jahiliyyah* refers to the pre-Islamic era, cf. Section 3.3.1.1.

the people as a veil. Sa'id ibn Jubayr said: *وَلْيَضْرِبْنَ* “and to draw” means to pull it around and tie it securely.

بِخُمْرِهِنَّ عَلَى جُيُوبِهِنَّ “their veils all over their Juyub” means, over their necks and chests so that nothing can be seen of them. Al-Bukhari recorded that ‘Ā’ishah, may *Allāh* be pleased with her, said: “May *Allāh* have mercy on the women of the early emigrants. When *Allāh* revealed the *āyah*: *وَلْيَضْرِبْنَ بِخُمْرِهِنَّ عَلَى جُيُوبِهِنَّ* “and to draw their veils all over their Juyub,” they tore their aprons and covered themselves²⁸⁰ with them.” He also narrated from Safiyyah bint Shaybah that ‘Ā’ishah, may *Allāh* be pleased with her, used to say: “When this *āyah*: *وَلْيَضْرِبْنَ بِخُمْرِهِنَّ عَلَى جُيُوبِهِنَّ* “and to draw their veils all over their Juyub” was revealed, they took their Izars (waistsheets)²⁸¹ and tore them at the edges, and covered themselves with them.”

وَلَا يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا لِبُعُولَتِهِنَّ أَوْ آبَائِهِنَّ أَوْ آبَاءِ بُعُولَتِهِنَّ أَوْ أَبْنَائِهِنَّ أَوْ أَبْنَاءِ بُعُولَتِهِنَّ أَوْ إِخْوَانِهِنَّ أَوْ بَنِي إِخْوَانِهِنَّ أَوْ بَنِي أَخَوَاتِهِنَّ أَوْ أَخَوَاتِهِنَّ أَوْ بَنِي أَخَوَاتِهِنَّ أَوْ بَنِي أَخَوَاتِهِنَّ أَوْ بَنِي أَخَوَاتِهِنَّ “and not to reveal their adornment except to their husbands, or their fathers, or their husband’s fathers, or their sons, or their husband’s sons, or their brothers or their brother’s sons, or their sister’s sons,” all of these are a woman’s close relatives whom she can never marry (mahram) and it is permissible for her to show her adornments to them, but without making a wanton display of herself. Ibn Al-Mundhir recorded that ‘Ikrimah commented on this *āyah*, *وَلَا يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا لِبُعُولَتِهِنَّ أَوْ آبَائِهِنَّ أَوْ آبَاءِ بُعُولَتِهِنَّ*, “and not to reveal their adornment except to their husbands, or their fathers, or their husband’s fathers..., “the paternal uncle and maternal uncle are not mentioned here, because they may describe a woman to their sons, so a woman should not remove her Khimar in front of her paternal or maternal uncle.” With regard to the husband, all of this is for his sake, so she should try her best when adorning herself for him, unlike the way she should appear in front of others.

أَوْ نِسَائِهِنَّ “or their women,” this means that she may also wear her adornment in front of other Muslim women, but not in front of the women of Ahl Adh-Dhimmah (Jewish and Christian women), lest they describe her to their husbands. This is prohibited for all women, but more so in the case of the women of Ahl Adh-Dhimmah, because there is nothing to prevent them from doing that, but Muslim women know that it is unlawful and so, would be deterred from doing it. The Messenger of *Allāh* said:

لَا تُبَاشِرِ الْمَرْأَةُ الْمَرْأَةَ *A woman should not reveal another woman,*²⁸²
فَتَنْتَعَهَا لِزَوْجِهَا *and describe her to her husband*
كَأَنَّهُ يَنْظُرُ إِلَيْهَا *as if he is gazing at her.*

²⁸⁰ The verb used in the original is derived from the root *خمر* “to cover, hide, conceal,” the same root involved in the noun *خمار* *khimār*, pl. *خمر* *khumur* “veil covering head and face of a woman.”

²⁸¹ Arabic *ازار* *izār*, pl. *ازر* *uzur* “loincloth, wrap, shawl, wrapper, covering.”

²⁸² *بشّر* *bashara* III “to touch, be in direct contact, have sexual intercourse.” A woman should not describe another woman to her husband in such detail as if the other woman stands naked before him.

It was recorded in the Two Sahihs from Ibn Mas'ud.

أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُنَّ “or their right hand possessions.” Ibn Jarir said, “This means from among the women of the idolaters. It is permissible for a Muslim woman to reveal her adornment before such a woman, even if she is an idolatress, because she is her slave-girl.” This was also the view of Sa'id ibn Al-Musayyib. *Allāh* says: أَوْ النَّبِيِّينَ غَيْرِ أَوْلَى الْإِزْبَةِ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ “or *Tabi'in* among men who do not have desire,” such as hired servants and followers who are not at the same level as the woman and are feeble-minded and have no interest in or desire for women. Ibn 'Abbas said, “This is the kind of person who has no desire.” 'Ikrimah said, “This is the hermaphrodite, who does not experience erections.” This was also the view of others among the Salaf. It was narrated in the Sahih from 'Ā'ishah that a hermaphrodite used to enter upon the family of the Messenger of *Allāh* and they used to consider him as one of those who do not have desire, but then the Messenger of *Allāh* came in when he was describing a woman with four rolls of fat in front and eight behind. The Messenger of *Allāh* said:

أَلَا أَرَى *Lo! I think*
هَذَا يَعْلَمُ *this person knows*
مَا هَهُنَا *what they are!*
لَا يَدْخُلَنَّ عَلَيْكُمْ *He should never enter upon you.*

He expelled him, and he stayed in Al-Bayda' and only came on Fridays to get food.

أَوْ الطِّفْلِ الَّذِينَ لَمْ يَطْهَرُوا عَلَى غُورَتِ النِّسَاءِ “or children who are not aware of the nakedness of women.” Because they are so young they do not understand anything about women or their 'Awrah or their soft speech or their enticing ways of walking and moving. If a child is small and does not understand that, there is nothing wrong with him entering upon women, but if he is an adolescent or approaching adolescence, so that he knows and understands these things, and can make a distinction between who is beautiful and who is not, then he should not enter upon women.

It was recorded in the Two Sahihs that the Messenger of *Allāh* said:²⁸³

إِيَّاكُمْ وَالذُّخُولَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ *Avoid entering upon women.*

It was said, “O Messenger of *Allāh*, what do you think about the male in-laws?” He said:

الْحَمُّ الْمَوْتِ *The male in-law is death.*

The Etiquette of Women walking in the Street: *Allāh*'s saying: وَلَا يَضْرِبْنَ بِأَرْجُلِهِنَّ “And let them not stamp their feet...” During Jahiliyyah, when women walked in the street wearing anklets and no one could hear them, they would stamp their feet so that men could hear their anklets ringing. *Allāh* forbade the believing women to do this. By the same token, if there is any other kind

²⁸³ Cf. Section 3.3.1.2.

appears thereof” and then “only to their husbands or their fathers...” The Arabic word *zīnat* refers to natural beauty and artificial ornaments – in this context the first meaning in particular applies. In short, the principle that can be deduced for proper dress code from this *āyah*, is that women should not display in public the parts of their body which might carry any sexual connotations.

- **Sūra 33:59:** The text of the *Sūra* appeared in Section 2.3.2. In the *Sunan* Abī Dāwūd, Book 34: Clothing; *Ḥadīth* 82, the following *ḥadīth* regarding this *āyah* is related:²⁸⁵

Narrated Umm Salamah, Ummul Mu'minin: When the verse "That they should cast their outer garments over their persons" was revealed, the women of Ansar came out as if they had crows over their heads because of the outer garment.²⁸⁶

On this *āya*, the *Tafsīr* al-Jalalayn remarks as follows:

O Prophet! Tell your wives and daughters and the women of the believers to draw their cloaks closely over themselves (*jalābīb* is the plural of *jilbāb*, which is a wrap that covers a woman totally) — in other words, let them pull part of it [also] over their faces, leaving one eye [visible], when they need to leave [the house] for something. That makes it likelier that they will be known, to be free women, **and not be molested**, by being approached. In contrast, slave girls did not use to cover their faces and so the disbelievers used to pester them. **And God is Forgiving**, of any occasion in the past when they may have neglected to cover themselves, **Merciful**, to them in His veiling them.²⁸⁷

Ibn Kathīr explains the verse under the topic “The Command of *Ḥijāb*”:

Here *Allāh* tells His Messenger to command the believing women -- especially his wives and daughters, because of their position of honor -- to draw their *Jilbabs* over their bodies, so that they will be distinct in their appearance from the women of the Jahiliyyah and from slave women. The *Jilbāb* is a *Ridā'*,²⁸⁸ worn over the Khimar. This was the view of Ibn Mas'ud, 'Ubaydah, Qatadah, Al-Hasan Al-Basri, Sa'id ibn Jubayr, Ibrahim An-Nakha'i, 'Ata' Al-Khurasani and others. It is like the Izar used today. Al-Jawhari said: “The *Jilbāb* is the outer wrapper.” Alī ibn Abī Talhah reported that Ibn 'Abbas said that *Allāh* commanded the believing women, when they went out of their houses for some need, to cover their faces from above their heads with the *Jilbāb*, leaving only one eye showing. Muḥammad ibn Sirin said, “I asked

²⁸⁵ <http://sunnah.com/abudawud/34/82> (Accessed 24/03/2018).

²⁸⁶ In Arabic *مِنَ الْأَكْسِيَةِ* “from the outer garment.” *الْأَكْسِيَةِ* is the gen. masc. pl. of the noun *كساء kisā'*; pl. *اكسية aksiyah* “garment, dress.”

²⁸⁷ <http://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=0&tTafsirNo=74&tSoraNo=33&tAyahNo=59&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=2> (Accessed 24/03/2018).

²⁸⁸ In Arabic: *رداء ridā'*; pl. *اردياه ardiyah* “loose outer garment, cloak, robe.”

'Ubaydah As-Salmani about the *āyah*: يُذْنِبِينَ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنْ جَلْبِيبِهِمْ 'to draw their Jalābīb over their bodies.' He covered his face and head, with just his left eye showing."

ذَلِكَ أَذْنَىٰ أَنْ يُعْرِفْنَ فَلَا يُؤْذَيْنَ "That will be better that they should be known so as not to be annoyed" means, if they do that, it will be known that they are free, and that they are not servants or whores.

وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا "And *Allāh* is Ever Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful" means, with regard to what happened previously during the days of Jahiliyyah, when they did not have any knowledge about this.

The Prophet's (ﷺ) wives, due to their special position in the emerging Islamic community, are encouraged in this *āyah* to act as models for practising the proper dress code (Ahmed, 1992:55). The basic principle that can be deduced from this *āyah* regarding proper dress code is that the *hijāb* becomes a visible symbol of religious identity and protection. Since that time until now Islamic women respect that dress code.

4.3.2.2 *Aḥādīth* clarifying issues of female clothing practice

After scrutinising references in the *Qur'ān* to the use of *libās* and specific references to female clothing, there might still be some questions regarding exactly which parts of the female body should be screened from non-*maḥram* men (*Sūra* 24:30-31) and when appearing in public (*Sūra* 33:59). The researcher is of the opinion that a number of *aḥādīth* will clarify these issues.

First, the researcher refers to a number of *aḥādīth* forbidding women in *iḥrām* (the state of ritual consecration) to wear a face veil and gloves.²⁸⁹ In the *Sunan* Abī Dāwūd, Book 11: The Rites of Hajj; *Ḥadīth* 106, it is said:

Ibn 'Umar reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) as saying: A woman in *iḥrām* (wearing *iḥrām*, i.e. the sacred state) must not be veiled or wear gloves.²⁹⁰

Confirming this custom, Abū Dāwūd relates another *ḥadīth* in his *Sunan*, Chapter 11: The Rites of Hajj; *Ḥadīth* 113:

Narrated 'Ā'ishah, Ummul Mu'minin: Riders would pass us when we accompanied the Messenger of *Allāh* (ﷺ) while we were in the sacred state (wearing *iḥrām*). When

²⁸⁹ Cf. the discussion in Section 2.3.2.1, footnote 82.

²⁹⁰ "Must not be veiled": In Arabic لَا تَنْتَقِبْ "she must not put on a veil," the Jussive 3 fem. sing. of the verb نَقَبَ VIII "to put on a veil, veil one's face." The noun نِقَابِ niqāb; pl. نِقَابِ nuqub "veil" is derived from this root. "Or wear gloves": In Arabic وَلَا تَلْبَسِ الْقَفَازَيْنِ "and she must not wear (لبس) two gloves." The noun قَفَازَيْنِ is the accusative dual of قَفَازِ quffāz "glove." Cf. <http://sunnah.com/abudawud/11/106> (Accessed 29/03/2018). The *ḥadīth* is classified as *ṣaḥīḥ* "sound" (Al-Albani). The *ḥadīth* also occurs in the same source as *Ḥadīth* 105 and *Ḥadīth* 107; <http://sunnah.com/abudawud/11/105>; <http://sunnah.com/abudawud/11/107> (Accessed 29/03/2018). A similar *ḥadīth* was transmitted in the *Muwatta* Malik, Book 20: Hajj; *Ḥadīth* 724; <http://sunnah.com/urn/407310> (Accessed 29/03/2018).

they came by us, each one of us would let down²⁹¹ her outer garment²⁹² from her head over her face, and when they had passed on, we would raise it^{293, 294}.

A *ḥadīth* is transmitted in the Muwatta Malik, Book 20: Hajj; *Ḥadīth* 725, which seems to contradict the abovementioned custom:

Yahya related to me from Malik from Hisham ibn Urwa that Fatima bint al-Mundhir said, “We used to conceal our faces²⁹⁵ when we were in *iḥram* in the company of Asma bint Abī Bakr as-Siddiq.”²⁹⁶

The *ḥadīth* is classified as *ḍaʿīf* “weak” in Muslim tradition, the main reason being that this is the only *ḥadīth* expressing the view that women went veiled **while in iḥrām**. It nevertheless confirms the custom of veiling amongst the first generation of Muslim women.

These *aḥādīth* make it reasonable to assume that **outside iḥrām** Muslim women from the Prophet’s (ﷺ) time – at least since the revelation of the *āya* of the *ḥijāb* – covered their faces and hands in front of non-*maḥram* men or when they appeared in public.

In his *Sunan*, Book 34: Clothing; *Ḥadīth* 85, Abū Dāwūd relates a *ḥadīth* which seems to contradict the abovementioned assumption:

Narrated ‘Ā’ishah, Ummul Mu’minin: Asma’, daughter of Abū Bakr, entered upon the Messenger of *Allāh* (ﷺ) wearing thin clothes. The Messenger of *Allāh* (ﷺ) turned his attention from her. He said: O Asma’, when a woman reaches the age of menstruation, it does not suit her that she displays her parts of body except this and this, and he pointed to his face and hands.

Abū Dawud said: This is a *mursal* tradition (i.e. the narrator who transmitted it from ‘Ā’ishah is missing) Khalid ibn Duraik did not see ‘Ā’ishah.²⁹⁷

²⁹¹ سَدَلَتْ “she let down,” perf. 3 fem. sing. of سَدَلَ “to let something hang down, fall down, to let down, drop, lower.”

²⁹² In Arabic جَلْبَابِهَا “her *jilbāb*,” cf. Section 1.2.3.

²⁹³ In Arabic كَشَفْنَاهُ “we would raise it,” from the root كَشَفَ “to pull away, remove, take off, raise.”

²⁹⁴ <http://sunnah.com/abudawud/11/113> (Accessed 29/03/2018). The *ḥadīth* is classified as *ḍaʿīf* “weak” (Al-Albani). A similar *ḥadīth* is transmitted in the Sunan Ibn Majah, Book 25, *Ḥadīth* 3047; <http://sunnah.com/urn/1279650> (Accessed 29/03/2018).

²⁹⁵ In Arabic نَخَمَرُ وُجُوهَنَا “we used to conceal our faces.” نَخَمَرُ is an imperf. 1 pl. of خَمَرَ II “to cover, hide, conceal.” وُجُوهَنَا is the acc. masc. pl. of the noun وَجْهٌ وَجْهٌ *wajh* pl. *wujūh* “face, countenance, front.”

²⁹⁶ <http://sunnah.com/urn/407320> (Accessed 23/03/2018).

²⁹⁷ <http://sunnah.com/abudawud/34/85> (Accessed 23/03/2018).

Abū Dawud himself indicates that this is a *mursal* tradition.²⁹⁸ It implies that the “chain” to the ultimate source that can be traced back to the Prophet (ﷺ) (in this case his wife, ‘Ā’ishah) is not sound because there is a broken link. In spite of the fact that the *ḥadīth* is classified as *ṣaḥīḥ* “sound” and used in some circles to argue that a Muslim woman does not need to cover her face and hands, other *aḥādīth* confirm the assumption made above.

In Book 2: Prayer; *Ḥadīth* 249, Abū Dawud relates the following:

Zaid ibn Qunfudh said that his mother asked Umm Salamah: In how many clothes should a woman pray? She replied: she would pray wearing a veil²⁹⁹ and a long shirt³⁰⁰ which covers the surface of her feet.³⁰¹

In the Muwatta Malik, Book 8: Prayer in Congregation; *Ḥadīth* 326, it is stated:

Yahya related to me from Malik from Muḥammad ibn Zayd ibn Qunfudh that his mother asked Umm Salama, the wife of the Prophet, may *Allāh* bless him and grant him peace, “What clothes can a woman wear in prayer?” She said, “She can pray in a shift³⁰² that reaches down and covers the top of her feet.”³⁰³

In the *Riyad as-Salihin* by Al-Nanawi,³⁰⁴ Book 4: The Book of Dress; *Ḥadīth* 23, it is stated:

Ibn ‘Umar (May *Allāh* be pleased with them) reported: Messenger of *Allāh* (ﷺ) said, “On the Day of Resurrection, *Allāh* will not look at the one who trails his lower garment out of arrogance.” Umm Salamah (May *Allāh* be pleased with her) asked: “What should women do with the hem of their clothes?” He (ﷺ) said, “They might lower them a hand’s span.” She said: “But their feet would still remain exposed.” He said: “Let them lower those equal to arm’s length but not more than that.”³⁰⁵

²⁹⁸ In Arabic مرسل *mursal* “hurried.”

²⁹⁹ In Arabic أَلْخِمَارِ, cf. footnote 277.

³⁰⁰ In Arabic الدِّرْعُ السَّابِغِ. The noun درع *dir’* occurs often in a military context and refers to a “coat of mail, hauberk.” When it refers to female clothing it is usually translated by “chemise, shirt.” When the adjective سابغ *sābigh* refers to clothing, it can be translated with “long and loose fitting.”

³⁰¹ <http://sunnah.com/abudawud/2/249> (Accessed 23/03/2018).

³⁰² In Arabic أَلْخِمَارِ, cf. footnote 61.

³⁰³ <http://sunnah.com/malik/8/37> (Accessed 23/03/2018).

³⁰⁴ Arabic رياض الصالحين *Riyādh as-Sālihīn* “The Gardens of the Righteous,” a compilation of verses from the *Qur’ān* and *ḥadīth* by Abū Zakaria Muhiy ad-Din Yahya ibn Sharaf al-Nawawi (1233–1277), a *Sunni* Muslim author on *Fiqh* and *Ḥadīth* literature.

³⁰⁵ <http://sunnah.com/riyadussaliheen/4/23> (Accessed 23/03/2018).

In the *Riyad as-Salihin* by Al-Nawari, Book 18: The Book of Prohibited Actions; *Ḥadīth* 123, it is stated:

Abū Hurairah (May *Allāh* be pleased with him) said: The Messenger of *Allāh* (ﷺ) said, "There are two types of people who will be punished in Hell and whom I have not seen: men having whips like the tails of cows and they will be beating people with them, and, women who will be dressed but appear to be naked, inviting to evil; and they themselves will be inclined to it. Their heads will appear like the humps of the Bactrian camel inclined to one side. They will not enter Jannah and they will not smell its fragrance which is perceptible from such and such a distance."³⁰⁶

In the *Saḥīḥ* Bukhārī, Book 10: Call to Prayers; *Ḥadīth* 258, this *ḥadīth* is transmitted:

Narrated 'Ā'ishah: When *Allāh*'s Messenger (ﷺ) finished the Fajr prayer, the women would leave covered in their sheets³⁰⁷ and were not recognized owing to the darkness.³⁰⁸

A similar *ḥadīth* is related in Book 8: Prayers; *Ḥadīth* 84:

Narrated 'Ā'ishah: *Allāh*'s Messenger (ﷺ) used to offer the Fajr prayer and some believing women covered with their veiling sheets³⁰⁹ used to attend the Fajr prayer with him and then they would return to their homes unrecognized.³¹⁰

Bukhārī relates a similar *ḥadīth* in Book 9: Times of Prayers; *Ḥadīth* 54:

Narrated 'Ā'ishah: The believing women covered with their veiling sheets³¹¹ used to attend the Fajr prayer with *Allāh*'s Apostle, and after finishing the prayer they would return to their home and nobody could recognize them because of darkness.³¹²

In the *Sunan* Ibn Majah, Book 1: The Book of Purification and its Sunnah; *Ḥadīth* 699, it is stated:

³⁰⁶ <http://sunnah.com/riyadussaliheen/18/123> (Accessed 23/04/2018). A similar *ḥadīth* is transmitted in the *Saḥīḥ* Bukhārī, Book 37: The Book of Clothes and Adornment; *Ḥadīth* 190; <http://sunnah.com/muslim/37/190>; Book 53: The Book of Paradise, its Description, its Bounties and its Inhabitants; *Ḥadīth* 63; <http://sunnah.com/muslim/53/63> (Accessed 23/04/2018).

³⁰⁷ In Arabic بِمُرُوطِهِنَّ "in their (woollen) cloaks." The noun مرط *marṭ*; pl. مروط *murūṭ* refers to a "cloak, shawl" woven from wool.

³⁰⁸ <http://sunnah.com/bukhari/10/258> (Accessed 23/04/2018).

³⁰⁹ In Arabic بِمُرُوطِهِنَّ, cf. footnote 304.

³¹⁰ <http://sunnah.com/bukhari/8/24> (Accessed 23/04/2018).

³¹¹ In Arabic بِمُرُوطِهِنَّ, cf. footnote 304.

³¹² <http://sunnah.com/bukhari/9/54> (Accessed 23/04/2018).

It was narrated from ‘Ā’ishah that the Prophet said: “*Allāh* does not accept the prayer of a woman who menstruates (i.e., an adult woman) except with a head cover”³¹³.³¹⁴

In his *Sunan*, Book 34: Clothing; *Ḥadīth* 81, Abū Dāwūd relates the following:

Safiyah, daughter of Shaybah, said that ‘Ā’ishah mentioned the women of Ansar, praised them and said good words about them. She then said: When Surat an-Nur came down, they took the curtains, tore them and made head covers (veils) of them³¹⁵.³¹⁶

It is clear from this overview that in these *aḥādīth*, Muslim women are expected to cover themselves from head to the top of the feet when they appear in public. The clothes should not be transparent and should not reveal the natural contours of the body. El Guindi’s (1999:74) observation that *libās* in Muslim tradition is linked to notions of “gender, sexuality, sanctuary, and sacred privacy” is confirmed not only by the *Suwar* discussed above, but also by *aḥādīth* related to female clothing practices.

At this point the researcher wishes to emphasise that the practice of “veiling” was not introduced into the Arab world by Muḥammad (ﷺ). The practice already existed in some social classes in the ancient Mediterranean geographical area for a very long time (Bin Nafisah, 2015:12-47). The question can indeed be asked what perspective(s) could have been added to an existing cultural practice by *al-Islām*. Byng (2010:110) argues that *al-Islām* re-interpreted an existing cultural practice through the lens of **religious** values, attitudes, and identity. For believing women, the *ḥijāb* becomes the visible symbol of these values and attitudes and especially of their identity as **Islamic** women. In *al-Islām*, an existing cultural practice is reinterpreted on a religious level. “Veiling” becomes a symbol for modesty, privacy, identity, and visual religious expression. It has practical value as a form of protection when women appear in the public sphere.

4.3.3 Female clothing practices in the four *Sunnī* schools of Islamic jurisprudence

4.3.3.1 Introductory remarks

The researcher has already referred to the role of the four *Sunnī* schools (*madhāhib*) in the development of the canon law of Islamic jurisprudence (*sharī‘ah*), namely the

³¹³ In Arabic بِخِمَارٍ, cf. footnote 277.

³¹⁴ <http://sunnah.com/urn/1256540> (Accessed 03/02/2018).

³¹⁵ In Arabic خُمُرًا, cf. footnote 277.

³¹⁶ <http://sunnah.com/abudawud/34/81> (Accessed 03/02/2018).

*Ḥanifī, Mālikī, Shāfi'ī and Ḥanbalī madhāhib.*³¹⁷ The aim of the present section is to briefly indicate what role these schools played in the development of a consensus opinion regarding the Islamic female dress code. The subject is broad and the sources available are numerous volumes of *sharī'ah*-law collected and developed over centuries by a great number of Islamic scholars. Most of the sources are available only in Arabic and will be intelligible only for specialists in the field. In the context of this study the researcher will only give examples of scholarly opinions on Islamic female dress code by representatives of the four schools. She will focus on one particular aspect, namely which part(s) of the female body is regarded as عورة 'awrah "nakedness" according to representatives of the four *Sunnī* schools of jurisprudence.³¹⁸ The researcher concurs with El Guindi (1999:142) when she argues that 'awrah (nakedness) implies "protection, safety, vulnerability, security, and privacy with regard to a home." عورة 'awrah (nakedness) is not a negative word (blemish), but rather carries positive connotations (inviolate vulnerability). Two themes will be addressed in this section. In Subsection 4.3.3.2 it will be argued that the existence of four *Sunnī* schools of jurisprudence is not indicative of the formation of "sects" in the *Umma*, but rather of the rich diversity in the application of Islamic principles in different contexts. In Subsection 4.3.3.3 a brief discussion of representative opinions on the female dress code in the four schools will follow.

4.3.3.2 Four *Sunnī* schools of jurisprudence: dividing sectarianism or sound diversity?

It should be acknowledged that adherents of the different *Sunnī madhāhib* are often defensive about their own particular interpretation of Islamic tradition and quickly accuse followers of another school as being on the wrong road or following a false version of *al-Islām*.³¹⁹ Ahmed (2005:112) argues that there are in the Muslim

³¹⁷ Cf. Section 3.3.1.2.

³¹⁸ Arabic عورة 'awrah, pl. عورات 'awrāt "defectiveness, deficiency, imperfection; pl. pudendum, genitals, weakness, weak spot: is derived from the root عور ا "to lose an eye;" II to damage, mar, spoil." An underlying notion present in all the translation possibilities proposed for the word, is that of "vulnerability." A common English translation for the term is "nakedness." In Muslim tradition it became the technical term for the part(s) of the male and female body that should not be exposed in public. It is then often translated with "private parts" or "intimate parts," but it should be noted that not only the genitals as such is included in the term. Detail will be discussed in the remainder of the chapter, but in general it can be said that for a male Believer the part of the body between the navel and the knees is 'awrah, while for a female Believer the whole body is regarded as 'awrah.

³¹⁹ This is a cause of lively discussion in current religious discourse in the Muslim *Umma*, also in the social media. For interesting perspectives on the issue cf. the blog entry by Mohamed Ghilian, "My Ummah Will Split Into 73 Sects... & That's It!" posted on 10 November 2011; <http://mohamedghilan.com/2011/11/10/my-ummah-will-split-into-73-sects-thats-it/> (Accessed 23/03/2018).

community some who are “even inclined to refer to these schools as ‘sects’ or something that can be and should be eradicated from the Muslim society.” The researcher is of the opinion that the existence of the four *Sunnī madhāhib* is **not a sign of the splitting of the one religion into sects but rather a manifestation of diversity** in the application of *sharī‘ah* in different times and contexts.³²⁰ On the basic principles at the root of *sharī‘ah* there are no contradictions between the founders of the *Sunnī madhāhib* (Ahmed, 2005:112).

The *Ḥanifī*, *Mālikī*, *Shāfi‘ī* and *Ḥanbalī madhāhib* unanimously **agree** about the four legislative sources, namely the Holy *Qur‘ān*, the *Sunna* of the Prophet (ﷺ), *Ijmā‘* (consensus) and *Qiyās* (deductive analogy).³²¹ Each Imam of the different *madhāhib*, however, had his own requirements regarding approval of the transmission of the *Sunna*, consensus, and deductive analogy, hence the differences between them. Moreover, other sources are recognised by the different *madhāhib*, but not in equal measure and not necessarily by all the *madhāhib*. These sources are: discretion, abiding by other revealed injunctions, reclamation of public good, common convention, a doctrine of a companion, legislations of previous religions, and preferences of the people of Medina. The variety of opinions between scholars of the various *madhāhib* should not become a source of division and strife in *al-Islām*, but should be embraced as a necessity as Islamic jurisprudence interacts with various aspects of practical life in different parts of the world under different circumstances and at different times (Ahmed, 2005:113-119).

In this regard the words of *Allāh* in *Sūra* 23:52-53 should be taken to heart:

(قال الله تعالى)	(Allāh the Exalted said:)
وَإِنَّ هَذِهِ أُمَّةً وَّاحِدَةً وَأَنَا رَبُّكُمْ فَاتَّقُونِ	⁵² And verily, this Brotherhood of yours is a single Brotherhood, and I am your Lord, therefore fear me.

³²⁰ In an online article (in Arabic) titled المذاهب والأئمة الأربعة “The Doctrines/Schools (*madhāhib*) and the Four Imams” Sheikh Hamza Bilal identified six factors which led to the development of Islamic jurisprudence during the third and fourth phases: (1) the active support provided by the Caliphs to scholars of jurisprudence; (2) freedom of opinion for every eligible and qualified scholar; (3) the availability of extensive databases of *aḥādīth* and other legal sources based on the *Qur‘ān* and *Sunna*; (4) a variety of unique everyday situations due to the spread of Islam; (5) the influence of other nations’ unique cultures and sciences; (6) the recording of material which facilitated the pursuit of knowledge and provided access to various issues, branches, opinions and judgments in a short time; <http://alkeltawia.com/site2/pkg09/index.php?page=show&ex=2&dir=dpages&cat=1117> (Accessed 23/03/2018).

³²¹ Cf. Section 3.3.1.2.

فَتَقَطَّعُوا أَمْرَهُمْ بَيْنَهُمْ زُبُرًا⁵³ But the people divided their affair among them into sects,
كُلُّ جَزْبٍ بِمَا لَدَيْهِمْ فَرِحُونَ each faction, in what it has, rejoicing.

Sūra 23:52-53 (المؤمنون al-Mu'minūn / The Faithful:52-53)

The warning against dividing the one religion of *al-Islām* into various sects is repeated by the Prophet (ﷺ), according to numerous *aḥādīth*. The researcher mentions a number of examples:

In the *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, Book 42: Model Behaviour of the Prophet; *Ḥadīth 1*, it is stated:

Narrated Abū Hurayrah: The Prophet (ﷺ) said: The Jews were split up into seventy-one or seventy-two sects; and the Christians were split up into seventy-one or seventy-two sects; and my community will be split up into seventy-three sects.³²²

From the same book, *Ḥadīth 2* adds:

Abū `Amir al-Hawdhani said: Mu`awiyah ibn Abī Sufiyan stood among us and said: Beware! The Apostle of *Allāh* (ﷺ) stood among us and said: Beware! The people of the Book before were split up into seventy-two sects, and this community will be split into seventy-three: seventy-two of them will go to Hell and one of them will go to Paradise, and it is the majority group.³²³

In *Jāmi` at-Tirmidhi*, Book 40: The Book on Faith; *Ḥadīth 36*, a similar *ḥadīth* explains the Prophet's (ﷺ) words in more detail:

Narrated `Abdullah ibn `Amr: that the Messenger of *Allāh* (ﷺ) said: "What befell the children of Isra'il will befall my Ummah, step by step, such that if there was one who had intercourse with his mother in the open, then there would be someone from my Ummah who would do that. Indeed the children of Isra'il split into seventy-two sects, and my Ummah will split into seventy-three sects. All of them are in the Fire Except one sect." He said: "And which is it O Messenger of *Allāh*?" He said: "What I am upon and my Companions."³²⁴

In the *Sunan Ibn Majah*, Book 36: Tribulations; *Ḥadīth 67*, the following *ḥadīth* occurs:

It was narrated from `Awf ibn Malik that the Messenger of *Allāh* (ﷺ) said: "The Jews split into seventy-one sects, one of which will be in Paradise and seventy in Hell. The Christians split into seventy-two sects, seventy-one of which will be in Hell and one in Paradise. I swear by the One Whose Hand is the soul of Muḥammad, my nation will

³²² <http://sunnah.com/abudawud/42/1> (Accessed 26/03/2018). A similar *ḥadīth* is narrated in *Jāmi` at-Tirmidhi*, Book 40: The Book on Faith; *Ḥadīth 35*; <http://sunnah.com/tirmidhi/40/35> (Accessed 26/03/2018).

³²³ <http://sunnah.com/abudawud/42/2> (Accessed 26/03/2018).

³²⁴ <http://sunnah.com/tirmidhi/40/36> (Accessed 26/03/2018).

split into seventy-three sects, one of which will be in Paradise and seventy-two in Hell.”
It was said: “O Messenger of *Allāh*, who are they?” He said: “The main body.”³²⁵

It should be clear that this narration of the Prophet (ﷺ) cannot be used to attack the following of any particular *madhhab*. Such a notion implies the fallacious use of the words of the Prophet (ﷺ). In another often repeated narration the Prophet (ﷺ) clearly indicated what he regarded as the *Sunna*, the well-trodden path of Muslim custom and practice. In a *ḥadīth* transmitted in the *Sunan* Abī Dāwūd, Book 42: Model Behaviour of the Prophet; *Ḥadīth* 12, a man is said to have asked the Prophet (ﷺ) one day when he gave an exhortation: “Messenger of *Allāh*... what injunction do you give us?” The Prophet (ﷺ) answered:

أُوصِيكُمْ	<i>I enjoin you</i>
بِتَقْوَى اللَّهِ	<i>to fear Allāh,</i>
وَالسَّمْعِ	<i>and to hear</i>
وَالطَّاعَةِ	<i>and to obey</i>
وَإِنْ عَبْدًا حَبَشِيًّا	<i>even if it be an Abyssinian slave,</i>
فَأِنَّهُ مَنْ يَعِشْ مِنْكُمْ بَعْدِي	<i>for those of you who live after me</i>
فَسَيَرَى اخْتِلَافًا كَثِيرًا	<i>will see great disagreement.</i>
فَعَلَيْكُمْ بِسُنَّتِي	<i>You must then follow my sunna,</i>
وَسُنَّةِ الْخُلَفَاءِ الْمَهْدِيِّينَ الرَّاشِدِينَ	<i>and the sunna of the rightly-guided caliphs.</i>
تَمَسَّكُوا بِهَا	<i>Hold to it,</i>
وَعَضُّوا عَلَيْهَا بِالنَّوَاجِذِ	<i>and stick to it with stubbornness.</i>
وَإِيَّاكُمْ وَمُحَدَّثَاتِ الْأُمُورِ	<i>Avoid novelties,</i>
فَإِنَّ كُلَّ مُحَدَّثَةٍ بَدْعَةٌ	<i>for every novelty is an innovation,</i>
وَكُلُّ بَدْعَةٍ ضَلَالَةٌ	<i>and every innovation is an error.</i> ³²⁶

The researcher concurs with Ahmed (2005:123) when he says:

The four schools of jurisprudence are not a negative aspect in our religion. Instead, they are healthy because these schools provide us with a wealth of literature. They assist us in situations when a single school failed to provide an adequate solution for a problem. When this happened then scholars and jurists from one school looked towards one of the other schools.

³²⁵ <http://sunnah.com/ibnmajah/36/67> (Accessed 26/03/2018). A similar narration occurs in the immediately following *ḥadīth*, cf. <http://sunnah.com/ibnmajah/36/68> (Accessed 26/03/2018).

³²⁶ <http://sunnah.com/abudawud/42/12> (Accessed 24/04/2018).

4.3.3.3 Female dress code according to the four *Sunnī* schools of jurisprudence

4.3.3.3.1 'Awwrah "nakedness" in the *Qur'ān* and *Ḥadīth*

The question of exactly what encompasses a female Muslim's عورة 'awrah "nakedness, private parts, intimate parts" has been answered similarly, but at the same time diversely, by adherents of the four *Sunnī madhāhib*. This subsection will briefly indicate how the term is used in the *Qur'ān* and *Ḥadīth*. In Section 4.3.3.3.2 voices from the four schools on the subject will be heard. In Section 4.3.3.3.3 the researcher will give a summary of the consensus opinion regarding the female dress code as expressed in the four *Sunnī madhāhib*.

The root عور 'wr occurs only four times in the *Qur'ān* in three *āyāt*, every time as the noun عورة 'awrah. In *Sūra* 24:31 the noun occurs in the context of a command to believing women "to wrap [a portion of] their head covers over their chests and not expose their adornment" except to close family members and household servants who can be classified as *maḥram*. Amongst the *maḥram* are الطِّفْلِ الَّذِينَ لَمْ يَظْهَرُوا عَلَىٰ عَوْرَاتِ النِّسَاءِ "children who are not yet aware of the private parts of women." Here the plural of the noun عورة 'awrah refers to the female genital area.

The notion of not exposing the 'awrah to others and hence display behaviour characteristic of modesty and respect for fellow human beings' privacy is repeated in a number of *aḥādīth* and is applied to both male and female Believers in their relations to each other and amongst Believers of the same gender as well. In the *Saḥīḥ Muslim*, Book 3: Book of Menstruation; *Ḥadīth* 91 the following *ḥadīth* occurs:

This *ḥadīth* has been narrated by Ibn Abu Fudaik and Dabbik ibn 'Uthman with the same chain of transmitters and they observed: The place of 'awrah – (it is) the nudity of the man and the nudity of the woman.³²⁷

Of interest in the present context is the phrase مَكَانَ عَوْرَةِ - عَوْرَةِ الرَّجُلِ وَعَوْرَةِ الْمَرْأَةِ "the place of 'awrah – (it is) the nudity of the man and the nudity of the woman." Noteworthy is the word play between the nouns عورة 'awrah "nakedness, private parts, intimate parts"³²⁸ and عرية "nakedness, nudity," respectively derived from the roots عور I "to lose an eye;" II "to damage, mar, spoil" and عرى "to be naked, nude, undress." If the observation made earlier that the underlying notion associated with عور "vulnerability" is valid, then this *ḥadīth* implies that any human being's vulnerability lies in his or her nudity, hence it needs to be covered. Against this background the often repeated

³²⁷ <http://sunnah.com/muslim/3/91> (Accessed 03/04/2018).

³²⁸ Cf. the discussion in footnote 315.

ḥadīth that the Prophet (ﷺ) said of the male human body that “the thigh is ‘awrah,”³²⁹ but of the female human body that “the woman is Awrah, so when she goes out, the Shaitan seeks to tempt her”³³⁰ emphasise the importance of modesty and privacy in Muslim tradition. The same is true of the admonition that “a man should not see the private parts of another man, and a woman should not see the private parts of another woman,” repeated in a number of *aḥādīth*.³³¹ In a number of *ḥadīth* women are admonished not to look up when men prostrate themselves in prayer “lest they should see the private parts of men.”³³²

In *Sūra* 24:58 the noun occurs in the context of a command to believers that even a *maḥram* who is allowed to see a woman without “their head covers over their chests” (24:31) should ask permission before entering in a Muslim’s private quarters at three times during a day: “before the dawn prayer and when you put aside your clothing [for rest] at noon and after the night prayer.” These are the three times of day an adult Muslim will be most likely to not be fully clothed. The *āya* continues: ثَلَاثُ عَوْرَاتٍ لَكُمْ “[These are] three times of privacy for you.” Here the plural of the noun عورة ‘awrah refers to the possibility that the “private parts” might be exposed and the emphasis is on privacy.

The importance of the principle of sacred privacy in Islamic thought is illustrated by several references to this *āya* in the *Ḥadīth* -literature. Especially insightful in this regard is a fairly lengthy *ḥadīth* transmitted in the *Sunan* Abī Dāwūd, Book 43: General Behaviour; *Ḥadīth* 420:

Narrated Abdullah ibn Abbas: Ikrimah said: A group of people from Iraq said: Ibn Abbas, what is your opinion about the verse in which we have been commanded whatever we have been commanded, but no one acts upon it? The word of *Allāh*, Most

³²⁹ For instance in *Jāmi’ at-Tirmidhi*, Book 43: Chapters on Manners; *Ḥadīth* 3025-3028; <http://sunnah.com/urn/730190, .../730200, .../730210, .../730220> (Accessed 03/04/2018). Similarly in the *Sunan* Abī Dāwūd, Book 33: Hot Baths; *Ḥadīth* 6; <http://sunnah.com/abudawud/33/6> (Accessed 03/04/2018).

³³⁰ *Jāmi’ at-Tirmidhi*, Book 12: The Book on Suckling; *Ḥadīth* 28; <http://sunnah.com/tirmidhi/12/28> (Accessed 03/04/2018).

³³¹ For instance in the *Saḥīḥ* Muslim, Book 3: Book of Menstruation; *Ḥadīth* 90; <http://sunnah.com/muslim/3/90> (Accessed 03/04/2018). Similarly in *Riyad aṣ-Ṣālahin*, Book 18: The Book of Prohibited Actions; *Ḥadīth* 117; <http://sunnah.com/riyadussaliheen/18/117> (Accessed 03/04/2018); *Sunan* Ibn Majah, Book 1: The Book of Purification and its Sunnah; *Ḥadīth* 706; <http://sunnah.com/urn/1307050> (Accessed 03/04/2018); *Jāmi’ at-Tirmidhi*, Book 43: Chapters on Manners; *Ḥadīth* 3023; <http://sunnah.com/urn/730170> (Accessed 03/04/2018).

³³² *Sunan* Abī Dāwūd, Book 2: Prayer; *Ḥadīth* 461; <http://sunnah.com/abudawud/2/461> (Accessed 03/04/2018). A similar *ḥadīth* is transmitted in the same source in *Ḥadīth* 195; <http://sunnah.com/abudawud/2/195> (Accessed 03/04/2018).

High, reads: “O ye who believe! Let those whom your right hands possess, and the (children) among you, who have not come of age, ask your permission (before) they enter your presence on three occasions: before morning prayer, while you are undressing for the noonday heat, and after late-night prayer. These are your three times of undress; outside those times it is not wrong for you or for them to move about.”

Al-Qa'nabi recited the verse up to “full of knowledge and wisdom.”

Ibn Abbas said: *Allāh* is Most Clement and Most Merciful to the believers. He loves concealment. The people had neither curtains nor curtained canopies in their houses. Sometimes a servant, a child or a female orphan of a man entered while the man was having sexual intercourse with his wife. So *Allāh* commanded them to ask permission in those times of undress. Then *Allāh* brought them curtains and all good things. But I did not see anyone following it after that.

Abu Dawud said: The tradition of 'Ubaid *Allāh* and of 'Ata, weakens this tradition.³³³

The *ḥadīth* implies that asking permission to enter out of respect for the privacy of others and thus to avoid accidentally looking at their 'awrah is important because *Allāh* “loves concealment” and He ensures it by bringing to Believers “curtains and all good things.”

Finally, in *Sūra* 33:13 the noun occurs twice in the singular. The *Sūra* is read in the context of a *Makkah*-led attack against the Prophet (ﷺ) and his followers in *al-Madīnah* in 5 AH. A party among the people of *al-Madīnah* was hesitant to fight on the Prophet's (ﷺ) behalf and encouraged their people not to fight: “O people of Yathrib, there is no stability for you [here], so return [home].” Some implored the Prophet (ﷺ) to allow them to go home. They said: إِنَّ بُيُوتَنَا عَوْرَةٌ “Indeed, our houses are unprotected!” In fact it happened وَمَا هِيَ بِعَوْرَةٍ “while they were not exposed.” In both cases *'awrah* implies vulnerability.

4.3.3.3.2 'Awrah “nakedness” according to the *Sunnī* schools of jurisprudence

The researcher emphasises again that the brief overview of statements by adherents of the four *Sunnī* schools of jurisprudence regarding a woman's 'awrah is by no means complete. In the context of this study it would have been impossible to provide an overview of the literally thousands of available sources. It would indeed also have been undesirable as these sources are mainly available in Arabic and would be unintelligible to non-Muslim readers. Consequently the researcher focuses on well-

³³³ <http://sunnah.com/abudawud/43/420> (Accessed 03/04/2018). Similar *aḥādīth* have been transmitted in *Jāmi'* at-Tirmidhi, Book 42: Chapters on Seeking Permission; *Ḥadīth* 20; <http://sunnah.com/tirmidhi/42/20> (Accessed 03/04/2018); *Al-Adab al-Mufrad*, Book 42: Asking Permission to Enter; *Ḥadīth* 2 and *Ḥadīth* 13 (Accessed 03/04/2018); <http://sunnah.com/adab/43/2> and <http://sunnah.com/adab/43/13> (Accessed 03/04/2018).

known representatives of the four schools of *Sunnī* jurisprudence and relies mainly on quotes regarding a woman's 'awrah available in the public domain.³³⁴

- **'Awrah according to the the Ḥanifī school:** Abū Ikhlas Hasan ibn 'Ammar ibn 'Ali al Shurunbulali al Wafa'i (994-1069 / 384-461 A.H.), a major Ḥanifī *imam*, said in his book *Nur al-Idah* (The Light of Clarification): "The whole body of a free woman is 'awrah except her face, hands and feet; meaning the palms and back of the hands and the top of the feet and underneath are permitted to uncover and both sides of her hands (the palm and the back). This constitutes the most correct opinion and the preferable one as well."³³⁵

Abū Ja'far Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Ṭaḥāwī (853-933 / 239-321 A.H.), a famous *Sunnī* Islamic scholar who followed the Hanafi *madhhab*, said: "a girl is to hide her face only for the fear of temptation not because it is an 'awrah." Damad Efendi Shaykhizadeh (d. 1667 / 1078 A.H.) said in his *Majma' al-Anhar*, a commentary on Ibrahim al-Halābī's (d. 1549 / 956 A.H.) *Multaqa al-Abhur*: "a girl is to hide her face to prevent temptation. However, in our time it is a fundamental practice or even obligatory for the high probability of temptation. 'Ā'ishah narrated that the whole body of a free woman is (awrah) except for one of her eyes, a provision driven by necessity because 'if she finds no escape from walking on the road, then it is necessary that she opens her eye to see the road, so it is permissible for her to uncover one of her eyes due to this necessity, and what is established by necessity should not go beyond the scope of the necessity."

Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Abī Sahl Abū Bakr al-Sarakhsi (d. 1096 / 489 A.H.), traditionally known as *Shams al-A'imma* (the sun of the leaders), a Persian scholar of the *Ḥanafī* school, argued in *al-Mabsut* that "It is permissible to look at the area of apparent adornment of women and not the hidden [adornment]" (with reference to *Sūra* 24:31). He indicated that the *Ḥanafī* school agree with 'Ali and Ibn 'Abbas' view that "what appears thereof" is kohl and the ring." Because "the face is the site of kohl and the hand is the site of the ring" and because of the fact that "there is no doubt that it is permissible to look at her garment, and fear of temptation is not considered in this... looking at her face and hands is the same." However, Shams al-A'imma indicates that all of this is only applicable "when looking is not with desire (*shahwah*). If one knows that if he looks, he will become desirous, then it is not permissible for him to look at any part of her."

- **'Awrah according to the Mālikī school:** Mālik ibn Anas ibn Mālik ibn Abī 'Āmir al-Asbahī (711–795 / 92-179 A.H.), simply known as "Imam Malik," and founder of the Mālikī *madhhab*, refers in his *Al-Muwatta* to the following *ḥadīth*: "Hisham ibn

³³⁴ Enlightening in this regard are the following sources available online: Sheikh Hamza Bilal, المذاهب والأئمة الأربعة "The Doctrines/Schools (*madhāhib*) and the Four Imams;" <http://alkeltawia.com/site2/pkg09/index.php?page=show&ex=2&dir=dpages&cat=1117> (Accessed 23/07/2017); Mufti Muḥammad Taqi, "The *Hijab* of Women and its Boundaries" (translated by Zameelur Rahman), <http://www.deoband.org/2010/06/hadith/hadith-commentary/the-hijab-of-women-and-its-boundaries/> (Accessed 23/03/2017).

³³⁵ <https://archive.org/stream/NurAl-idah-TheLightOfClarification/Nur-al-IdahArabic-english#page/n135/mode/2up/search/face> (Accessed 23/03/2017).

Urwa narrated from Fatima bint Al Mundhir that she said: "We used to veil our faces when we were in *iḥrām* (a state of ritual consecration) in the company of Asma bint Abī Bakr as-Siddiq." He adds: "a woman in the state of ritual consecration (*iḥrām*) may cover her face to keep it hidden from the eyes while she shall do so if temptation is certain or of a high probability or people tempted to look at her for the pleasure of the sight." This is confirmed by the narration of 'Ā'ishah who said: "We were with the Prophet, peace be upon him, and we were in *iḥrām*. When a rider met us we would lower our garments from the top of our heads, and when he has gone, we would lift them up again."

Muḥammad Abū 'Abd Allāh ibn Muḥammad at-Tarabūsi al-Hattab al-Ru'yani (1497–1547 / 902-954 A.H.), commonly referred to in Islamic scholarship as al-Hattab or Imam al-Hattab, states in his book *Mawahib al-Jalil*, a major commentary on Khalil's *Mukhtassar*: "If temptation is expected, a woman shall hide her face and hands." Similarly, 'Abd al-Baqi ibn Yusuf al-Zarqani (d. 1710 / 1122 A.H.) said in his commentary on al-Khalil's *Mukhtasar*: "'*awrah* of a free woman in front of a marriageable Muslim man is her whole body except for the face and the hands. Therefore, this Muslim man may see the face and both sides of the hands (palm and back) without any justified reason like witnessing or medical purposes unless there is a fear of temptation or pleasure of the sight, then it is prohibited on him."

- **'*Awrah according to the the Shāfi'ī school***: Abū 'Abdullāh Muḥammad ibn Idrīs al-Shāfi'ī (767-820 / 150-205 A.H.), often referred to as "Shaykh al-Islam" or "Imam al-Shāfi'i," founder of *Shāfi'ī madhhab*, said in his *Kitab al-Umm*: "The man and the woman must not pray unless their '*awrah* is fully covered." He continues: "The man's '*awrah* is from the navel to the knees although the navel and the knees themselves are not from his '*awrah*. And the woman in prayer has to cover all her body except her face and hands." Thus according to al-Shāfi'ī a woman's face and hands are not '*awrah* or else she would have to cover them when praying.

Abū Zakaria Muhiy ad-Din Yahya ibn Sharaf al-Nawawi (1233–1277 / 630-676 A.H.) said in his *Kitab al-Nikah* on the issue of a man looking at a woman: "It is forbidden to look at her '*awrah*, and to her face and hands if he fears *fitna*. If he does not fear *fitna* there are two views: Most of the associates (i.e. the *Shāfi'ī*), especially the earlier ones, say it is not forbidden because of the saying of *Allāh*: "They do not show their adornment (*zina*) except that which is apparent" and this is understood to mean the face and hands. But it is disliked, as stated by Shaykh Abū Hamid [al-Ghazali] and others. The second [view]: it is forbidden. Al-Istakhiri and Abū Ali al-Tabari stated it, and Shaykh Abū Muḥammad and al-Imam preferred it. The author of al-Muhadhdhab (al-Shirazi) and al-Rawayani declared it certain." Thus al-Nawawi concludes: "It is prohibited for a mature male to look at the '*awrah* of a mature foreign free woman, and similarly [it is prohibited to look at] her face and hands when one fears temptation, and also when safe from temptation according to the correct opinion."

- **'*Awrah according to the Ḥanbalī school***: Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Ḥanbal Abū 'Abd Allāh al-Shaybānī (780-855 / 163-241 A.H.), founder of the Ḥanbali school of Islamic jurisprudence, said – according to Imam 'Abdur-Rahman ibn Al-Jawzi Al-Bakri (d. 1200 / 596 A.H.) in his *Zad ul-Masir Fi 'Ilm it-Tafsīr* (The Provision

of the One Who is Going to Study the Knowledge of *Tafsīr*): “Everything, including any part of the free woman even nails, is ‘*awrah*.”

Imam Mawaffaq ad-Din ‘Abdullah ibn Aḥmad ibn Qudama al-Maqdisi (d. 1223 / 620 A.H.) states in *al-Mughni*: “As for men looking at a foreign woman without a reason, it is prohibited entirely according to the apparent statement of Aḥmad.” Yusuf ibn ‘Abd Al Hadi Al Maqdisi Al Hanbali (d. 1503 / 909 A.H.) said in his *Mughni dhawil afham*: “A man shall not look at a marriageable woman except for the old women and the youngsters that are not normally seditious. If seen, a man shall avert his eyes, and a woman shall cover her face if she reaches places with marriageable men.”

Muḥammad ibn Abū Bakr (also known as Ibn al-Qayyim or Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah; d. 1350 / 751 A.H.) said in his *I‘laam ul Muwaqqi‘een ‘an Rabb il ‘Aalameen* (Information for Those who Write on Behalf of the Lord of the Worlds): “The ‘*awrah* is of two types: an ‘*awrah* in the *Salāh* (prayer) and an ‘*awrah* in looking (*‘awratu fin-nathr*). So, as for the free woman, it is (allowed) for her to pray while her hands and face are uncovered, and it is not (allowed) for her to go out in the markets and gatherings of people like that (i.e. it is not allowed for her to go out without the face and hands covered).”

4.3.3.3.3 The consensus of the four schools of jurisprudence pertaining to *ḥijāb*

When the positions of the four *Sunnī* schools of jurisprudence pertaining to the *ḥijāb* are considered, it becomes clear that they all agree on the prohibition of looking at the face of a woman with the intention of desire or when there is possibility of temptation. The *Ḥanafī* and *Mālikī madhāhib* tend to lift the prohibition when there is no intention of desire or danger of temptation. The *Shāfi‘ī* and *Ḥanbalī madhāhib* agree that the prohibition is not valid during prayer – then a woman need not cover her face and hands. However, meeting the condition of safety from desire or temptation is so difficult, especially in the modern era with all its influences and temptation, that followers of the *Shāfi‘ī* and *Ḥanbalī madhāhib* tend to absolutely prohibit the uncovering of any part of the female body in public.

Figure 12 visually expresses what the Islamic female dress code entails in Muslim societies where the *Ḥanafī* and *Mālikī* point of view is dominant. Figure 13, on the other hand, illustrates what the dress code entails in societies where the *Shāfi‘ī* and *Ḥanbalī* point of view is dominant.



Figure 12
Female dress code according to the
Ḥanafī and Mālikī madhāhib
 Contemporary³³⁶



Figure 13
Female dress code according to the
Shāfi'ī and Ḥanbalī madhāhib
 Contemporary³³⁷

The researcher is of the opinion that taking into consideration the time that we live in and the high probability of temptation and sedition all four schools of *Sunnī* jurisprudence are unanimous in their views on the obligation of covering the face and hands and the prohibition of revealing them.

4.3.3.4 Female dress code according to Islamic tradition: A synthesis

In the light of the preceding discussion, a synthesis can now be given of what proper female dress code entails according to Islamic tradition. It is not the researcher's intention at this point to provide a detailed description of Muslim female dress code in the light of this tradition. It has been done elsewhere. Abdullah (1999) provides a detailed analysis that need not to be repeated here. The researcher will rather focus on some principles and general definitions.

Āyāt from five *Suwar* have been discussed in detail in this chapter. From these *āyāt* the following general principles for a proper female dress code have been determined. With reference to *Sūra* 33:53 the researcher has argued that the *ḥijāb* marks a **sacred space**, hence the wearing of the *ḥijāb* should not be interpreted only as proper cultural conduct and social etiquette in its historical context. For a Muslim woman the *ḥijāb* becomes a religious symbol of her relationship with *Allāh*. *Sūra* 33:32-33 suggests that this religious connotation also implies that the *ḥijāb* marks sacred, **private space**. Donning the *ḥijāb* symbolises that the Muslim woman's body becomes a sanctuary, a private space to be respected. *Sūra* 2:187 provides an important perspective on this

³³⁶ <http://veil.unc.edu/religions/islam/law/> (Accessed 30/04/18).

³³⁷ <http://veil.unc.edu/religions/islam/law/> (Accessed 30/04/18).

sacred, private space. Although a woman is different from a man, notions of **gender mutuality** in this *āya* imply that a woman is not inferior to a man. Motivated by reverence for *Allāh*, the ultimate provider of *libās* “dress” (*Sūra* 7:26) both man and woman are admonished to be **modest** and to **respect the sacred privacy** that is dear to *Allāh* (*Sūra* 24:30-31). *Sūra* 33:59 emphasises that the dress code prescribed in the Qur’ān enables the female Believer to publicly and **visually portray her identity** as a Muslim and becomes a **mechanism of protection** against harassment when she has to venture into the public domain.

In the light of these Qur’ānic principles and its application in the *Ḥadīth* literature and in the development of Islamic jurisprudence, Aziz (2010:127) summarises the basic minimum requirement for a dress code that will probably be supported by all *Sunnī* Muslims as follows: “the basic requirement for a woman’s dress is that she should have a loose, non-transparent outer covering and a proper head-covering.” As indicated in Section 4.3.3.3, for some adherents of the *Ḥanafī* and *Mālikī madhāhib* this definition would be sufficient. El Guindi (1999:143) defines this interpretation of the *ḥijāb* as follows:

A muhajjaba (a woman wearing *hijab*) wore *al-jilbab* – an unfitted, long-sleeved, ankle-length gown in austere solid colors and thick opaque fabric – and *al-khimar*, a headcover that covers the hair and extends low to the forehead, comes under the chin to conceal the neck, and falls down over the chest and back.

For adherents of the *Shāfi‘ī* and *Ḥanbalī madhāhib* this definition is not sufficient. To the above description they would, again following El Guindi (1999:144), add the following:

A munaqqabah (a woman wearing the *niqab* or face veil) more conservatively adds *al-niqab*, which covers the entire face except for the eye slits; at the most extreme, she would also wear gloves and opaque socks to cover her hands and feet.

Abdullah (1999:30) regards this definition of the *ḥijāb* as the most appropriate in the light of the *Qur’ān* and Islamic tradition and describes the *ḥijāb* as “the dress that covers the whole body of the woman including her head, face, hands and feet. It should be long, loose and plain not defining her shape.” Abdullah (1999:30) argues that the basic rationale behind this dress code “is to safeguard women from the biased looks of men and to provide her a pure atmosphere at home so that she can perform her household duties properly and contribute to improve the whole society” (*Sūra* 33:59). From the perspective of Muslim tradition the strict interpretation of the *ḥijāb* provided by Abdullah above is not a sign that the female is a “lesser” human being. On the contrary, the veil entitles the woman to a respectable position and protects her from sexual harassment.

The proper dress code for a Muslim female can thus be summarised as follows: She should wear an outer garment that should be long, loose, and opaque. It should hide the woman's entire body, including her head, hair, face, hands, bosom, and the rest of the body down to her feet. She should not wear anklets and bracelets whose tinkling can attract men's attention. The outer garment should be plain and undecorated so as not to attract unnecessary attention to the woman (Abdullah, 1990:32).

In Muslim society this dress code is regarded as advantageous for several reasons. It protects a Muslim woman from wicked eyes and visually identifies the woman as a Muslim. It emphasises her honoured position in her society and acts as a barrier between men and women to keep both sexes from sinning. It ensures a woman's chastity and acts as a reminder of *Allāh's* provision for humankind. It teaches men to respect women and to protect them. It finally symbolises the high morals and social values of Muslim society (Abdullah, 1999:33-34).

On the other hand there are clear disadvantages in unveiling. Apart from it being a violation of the *Qur'ān* and *Ḥadīth*, it also sends the wrong message to society. It implies that the Muslim woman is weak in faith, and available. Unveiling becomes a temptation for both men and women and brings into question a woman's modesty, which is an integral element of Islamic faith. It subjects a woman to harassment and diminishes her dignity as a faithful Muslim (Abdullah, 1999:34).

4.3.4 **Secondspatial perspectives on the Muslim female body as sacred space: A synthesis**

In this section the researcher paid attention to female dress code according to Islamic tradition. From a number of *āyāt* in the *Qur'ān* (*Sūra* 33:53; 33:32-33; 2:187; 7:26; 24:30-31; and 33:59) as well as its expansion in the *ḥadīth* and its interpretation in the *Tafsīr*, the researcher established basic principles for female dress code in Islamic tradition. These can be regarded as the secondspatial perspectives on and expectations of Muslim female dress code. Akou (2010:335) states:

Along with the *hadiths* – which record the behaviors and teachings of the Prophet Mohammed and his Companions – these verses from the Qur'an have formed the basis for scholarly opinions on the appearance and practice of dress for hundreds of years, even as styles, aesthetics, and cultural influences have changed dramatically.

First and foremost, it has been established that the *ḥijāb* is a boundary marker. It serves as a marker of **sacred and private space** that symbolises **gender mutuality, modesty** and **respect** for the **sacred privacy** that is dear to *Allāh*. It is a **public** and **visual** symbol of Muslim identity in general (*Sūra* 24:30) and of **female Muslim identity** in particular (*Sūra* 24:31). *Sūra* 33:59 emphasises that the dress code

prescribed in the *Qur'ān* enables the female Believer to **publicly** and **visually portray her identity** as a Muslim. Furthermore, the dress code acts as an **effective shield of protection** against harassment when a female Muslim ventures into the public domain. According to these *ayāt*, the *ḥijāb* can be described as a **border of cloth** demarcating the Muslim female body **as sacred space** when she engages **public and profane space**. Muslim female dress code empowers the Muslim female to interweave sacred and profane space in an unproblematic and legitimate way.

The researcher briefly indicated how these principles were applied and interpreted in the four *Sunnī* schools of jurisprudence. She concurs with Abdullah (1999:32) that, according to Muslim tradition, a female should wear an outer garment that should be long, loose, and opaque. It should hide the woman's entire body, including her head, hair, face, hands, bosom, and the rest of the body down to her feet. She should not wear anklets and bracelets whose tinkling can attract men's attention. The outer garment should be plain and undecorated so as not to attract unnecessary attention to the woman. This, briefly, is the secondspatial representations of the Muslim female dress code.

4.4 THIRDSPIATIAL APPLICATIONS: THE *ḤIJĀB* AS SYMBOL OF SACRED SPACE

According to Roald (2001:254), "(f)ew religious manifestations have aroused such strong feelings as has Islamic 'veiling'. Muslims and non-Muslims alike have produced books, articles, television programmes, etc., discussing various aspects of veiling." Unfortunately, much of the attention focused upon the *ḥijāb* is based upon pre-conceived stereotypes about the role of Muslim women in society, and the grave irony – often the blatant discrimination and disrespect – in the negative stereotyping of the *ḥijāb* as a religious and cultural phenomenon seems to escape those who uncritically perpetuate this stereotyping. Roald (2001:254) indicates that the **visibility** of a Muslim woman donning the *ḥijāb*'s **religious commitment** often **evokes resentment** in the non-Muslim. In secular Western constructions of space, religion is supposed to be a "private" affair that should be kept from the "public" eye. A common view is that

... religiosity should not be visible but should be a matter of the heart and one's innermost feelings'. The acceptance of the nun's veil seems unaffected by such complaints against the Muslim woman's veil, even although both share the same visibility. Why? Because the nun represents commitment to the prevailing religious tradition. She is an 'insider'. The Muslim woman, on the other hand, symbolises the intrusion of alien beliefs contrary to the prevailing religious tradition.

In this section, the researcher will intentionally apply her **qualitative research paradigm** to the *ḥijāb* as a religious and cultural **phenomenon**.³³⁸ It will allow her to advocate for **situated knowledges** of the phenomenon (Abu Bakr, 2014:8). In terms of her critical-spatial analysis of the *ḥijāb* as a **border of cloth**, this section will reflect the **lived experience** of a Saudi-Arabian woman who consciously and deliberately decides to don the *ḥijāb* when she engages with the public and – in terms of her religious and cultural convictions – the profane sphere. The researcher’s thirdspatial analysis of the *ḥijāb* will be a **subjective account of her lived experience** (Tuan, 2008:8-9), a **contextual religious-cultural interpretation** of the *ḥijāb* by Saudi-Arabian female as a **focal individual** and her **freedom to construct her lived space** in the light of **her experience**. For her, the practice holds a deeply personal meaning. It also reaches out “beyond the self” (Tuan, 2008:8-9) to become a symbol, an “active visual” representation of her body “as a holy space” (Tuan, 2008:6). What will be heard in this section is – so to speak – a voice from **from inside** the *ḥijāb*. The researcher in *ḥijāb* demarcates her body as a **mobile spatial field** (Low, 2003:14). She deliberately enshrines her body in **a border of cloth** and **other** herself to convey a profound symbolic message:³³⁹ My body **is sacred space** wherever and whenever I move **in space**.³⁴⁰

4.4.1 The *ḥijāb* as symbol of sacred space: Deconstructing stereotypes

The heated debate on the phenomenon of the *ḥijāb* in the contemporary geopolitical context is dominated by an ideological discourse that projects a complex of stereotypical practices and institutions on *al-Islām* that is inherently foreign to the Arabo-Islamic culture. El Guindi (1999:3) calls this the **veil-harem-eunuchs-seclusion-polygamy** stereotype. It has been projected upon the Muslim world by Western society since the colonial era. Consequently, Muslim women donning the *ḥijāb* are depicted as “stupid, repressed and pitiful” (Timmerman, 2000:22). The *ḥijāb* is portrayed “as an oppressive patriarchal symbol that reflects the backwardness and inferiority of Muslim cultures, and, ultimately, justifies Western colonization” (Feder, 2013, 446). According to Carland (2011:469), “the ‘feminist hawks’ of today... openly state that they advocate the use of force to liberate Muslim women from persecution and burkas.” El Guindi (1999:3) argues as follows:

³³⁸ Cf. Section 1.5.

³³⁹ For the notions of bordering and othering, cf. Section 1.6.2.1; 2.2.2; 3.2.3.

³⁴⁰ For the notion of the body as symbol, cf. Section 1.6.2.2; 3.2.3.

From a feminist perspective, this complex set of institutions is considered either a direct cause or expression of women's oppression through the ages. Western-ideology feminists (in the East and the West) have dominated the discourse on the veil, viewing it as an aspect of patriarchy and a sign of women's backwardness, subordination, and oppression. This uni-dimensional approach narrows the study of the veil to single-context analysis and leads to a distorted view of a complex cultural phenomenon.

In a previous study (Bin Nafisah, 2015:109), the researcher acknowledged that the analysis of the *ḥijāb* as a religious and cultural symbol is a complicated undertaking due to the fact that "the veil is a complex symbol of many meanings" (El Guindi, 1999:172). The donning of the *ḥijāb* is not always a simple matter of freedom of choice. It is certainly important "to recognize that some women are compelled to take up veiling practices under serious threats of both state-sanctioned and community-based penalties (and violence)" (Feder, 2013:444). Cultural practices prevalent in some Muslim societies amount to violations of human rights, such as so-called "honour killings." These cultural practices reflect old patriarchal customs and traditions not authenticated in the *Qur'ān* and are a contradiction of the basic and vital Islamic teachings (Salhi 2013:65). *Al-Islām* in its great diversity is constantly challenged to reform laws that discriminate against women and to find a foundation that maintain their rights as human beings which basic Islamic teaching preserves for them (Salhi 2013:74). In this regard it should be noted that Islamic perspectives on human rights are universal and inclusive (Al-Sheha, 2013:11) and hold that "men and women are created equal in their basic humanity, and all have the shared lineage and dignity of *Allāh*'s creation" (Al-Sheha, 2013:11).

However, the indiscriminate stereotyping of Muslim women wearing the *ḥijāb* in a world that is supposed to be global and accepting, amounts to a one-sided, non-contextual, and non-scientific analysis of a complex religious and cultural phenomenon. It blatantly ignores the possibility that the *ḥijāb* might have deeply personal and highly significant meanings for a Muslim woman who consciously and deliberately dons her *ḥijāb*. Such stereotyping is dangerous, as is argued by Wagner et al. (2012:538):

Cultural stereotyping and projecting an unjustified uniformity are a potent and dangerous mix, which can lead to violence and, above all, help sustain a bigoted form of religion. Banning the veil as contemplated in the West is likely to be a futile exercise and may well create the ghost it is supposed to adjure.

El Guindi (1999:77) calls for a **contextual** and **culturally sensitive** interpretation of the *ḥijāb* as a religious and cultural phenomenon. El Guindi (1999:77-78) points to *al-Islām*'s unique constructions of private and sacred space which affords every Muslim the possibility to instantly turn "a public area into private space." By marking space as

sacred space with a prayer carpet or other means and by occupying it “in a ritually pure state facing *Makka*,” every ordinary Muslim is allowed “temporarily to convert any worldly place... into a sacred space set apart.” It is a “distinctive quality of the Islamic construction of space” and affords men and women the ability “to enjoy privacy and be in public.” Through “dress code, cleansing by *wudu*’, facing *Makka*, and performing prescribed rites of worship” a Muslim is “stripped temporarily of worldly identity” and is “in a sacred state.”

El Guindi (1999:81) proposes **privacy** “as the notion that, in its transformational fluid form, embraces the Arab cultural construction of space that connects space to time and gender.” This becomes an important concept in understanding a Muslim woman’s choice to wear the *hijāb* when she appears in public. The *hijāb* draws a symbolic **boundary** between public and private space (Furseth, 2011:373). “Arab privacy” does not connote the “personal,” the secret,” or the “individuated space” typically associated with the term in Western culture (El Guindi, 1999:82). According to El Guindi (1999:82), privacy

... concerns two core spheres – women and the family. For both, privacy is sacred and carefully guarded. For women it is both a right and an exclusive privilege, and is reflected in dress, space, architecture and proxemics behaviour.

Timmerman (2000:22) indicates that women

... are central to the social and moral order in the Middle East. Women appear to be the perfect embodiment of the dignity and authenticity of the Islamic nation. This carries with it a great responsibility, as any immoral or indecent behavior on the part of women is seen to reflect badly on society.

Seen against this background, El Guindi (1999:83) contends “that the modesty-based code – modesty-shame-seclusion – represents an ethnocentric imposition on Arabo-Islamic culture.” The cultural code appropriate to Arabo-Islamic culture is rather “sanctity-reserve-respect.” “Sanctity” (حرمة *ḥurma*, related to the verb حرم *ḥrm* “prohibit”) is a key concept in this respect (El Guindi, 1999:84). The verb denotes “all that is prohibited by divine authority.” The noun *ḥarām* refers to “the part of the home in which women are both privileged and protected from encounters with non-*maḥram* men” (El Guindi, 1999:85). “Reserve” (سترة *sutra*, related to the verb ستر “to shield, cover, protect, veil”) is linked to “sanctity,” indicating that it is something that should be protected and treasured (El Guindi, 1999:88). “Respect” (حشمة *ḥishma* “polite reserve, self-restraint, good judgement, respect”) is especially associated with the protection of group reputation and identity (El Guindi, 1999:88).

El Guindi (1999:88) observes that “the quality *hurma* (which centers womenhood and home in the culture) embodies a pervasive complex of values that identifies primary social and religious spheres as sanctuaries – sacred and inviolable.” Thus, there is a “link between dress, women and the sanctity of space” that is also “reflected in the Islamic rituals of ‘dressing’ the *Ka’bah*, the center of the holy site of pilgrimage in Makka” (El Guindi, 1999:95). Therefore, El Guindi (1999:96) concludes:

The veil, veiling patterns and veiling behaviour are therefore, according to my analysis of Arab culture, about sacred privacy, sanctity and the rhythmic interweaving of patterns of worldly and sacred life, linking women as the guardians of family sanctuaries and the realm of the sacred in this world... Dress in general, but particularly veiling, is privacy’s visual metaphor.

The implication of the discussion above is important. In contemporary society the first impulse is to emphasise the “otherness” of a woman in *hijāb* and regard her as a “foreigner” instead of attempting to understand and accept her ***in her context***. The researcher concurs with Salem (2013:80):

Instead of taking a step back and judging women in the Middle East according to their history, values, beliefs, cultures, and the politics of the region, it has been assumed they are weak because they do not live like women in the U.S. and Europe.

The researcher supports these deconstructions of the stereotypes regarding a Muslim female who consciously and deliberately dons the *hijāb*. She calls for a thirdspatial analysis of the *hijāb*, an analysis of the phenomenon as it is “directly lived through its associated images and symbols” (Lefebvre, 1991:39). She contends that “(o)utside the sphere of nation states and global politics, diverse cultures and world religions, there also exists for each individual a “private space” filled with deeply personal experiences and unique meanings” (Bin Nafisah, 2015:116).

A Muslim woman appearing in public space wearing the *hijāb* is making a profound statement. She is “creating” her own ***private and sacred space*** in public. She is aligning her behaviour with her religious beliefs and values. The *hijāb* constantly reminds the woman to control and guard her behaviour and to set an example as Muslim woman. The *hijāb* becomes a tool providing a woman with greater control over her body. The *hijāb* helps preserve and protect intimate relationships, in marriage and in family. Ultimately, the *hijāb* allows a woman to share beauty with only one person – allowing only her husband to see every aspect of her person as a whole person. Droogsma (2007:294-319) argues that Muslim women wearing the *hijāb* feel empowered by their choice to veil, not only as individuals but also as a group.

A Muslim woman who chooses to wear the *hijāb* is also acutely aware that a distinction should be made between ***religious obligations*** and ***cultural practices***.

Several female authors have in recent years argued that the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) in essence envisioned an egalitarian society with equal opportunities for male and female. It is often pointed out that women played a crucial role in the foundational phase of *al-Islām*. Women were poets, transmitters of *ḥadīth*, and warriors. They participated in debates on political and religious matters. Many, including the Prophet's (ﷺ) first wife, *Khadījah*, were businesswomen (Mernissi, 1991a:184-187). While the differences between the sexes and their different roles in society are acknowledged and recognised as “of the essence of creation, part of God’s wisdom as he provided for balance and harmony in life” (Smith, 1980:65), these authors insist that *al-Islām* was inherently egalitarian (Mernissi, 1991a:11) and that there “are no Islamic laws preventing women from working, holding political office, or seeking education” (Salem, 2013:81). Mernissi (1975:11-25) emphasises the importance of distinguishing between the “official” law and practice of *al-Islām* in contemporary Muslim countries and the underlying “ideology” of *al-Islām*. In this ideology, men and women are equal. Mernissi (1991b:191) argues that the insistence that Muslim women who appear in the public sphere in *al-Madīna* should be “covered,” was a practical measure giving expression to the Prophet Muḥammad’s (ﷺ) dream “of a society where women could move around freely because of the faith of the Muslims” (Aziz, 2010:137).

Borneman (2009:2748) is correct in his assessment that “the veil is about women’s dress in public.” Women who deliberately choose to veil “do so in order to enter the public sphere on particular terms.” The veil of necessity alters the vision of both the onlooker and the veiled woman. Veiled women “illuminate one part of the face by setting it in relief to the part they conceal,” therefore one “sees the veiled woman, in public, and the veil frames how she is seen” (Borneman, 2009:2749). The intelligibility of a veiled woman “is initially determined by the dynamics of vision alone” (Borneman, 2009:2750). By wearing the veil, “women seek to remove themselves from the public gaze, especially from an economy of objectification and exchange controlled by men” (Borneman, 2009:2751). Borneman argues that the deliberate decision to veil is linked with Muslim women’s wish “to assert their autonomy” (Borneman, 2009:2757; cf. also Williams & Vashi, 2007:271).

4.4.2 The *ḥijāb* as symbol of sacred space: Like a bride...

In the previous section, the researcher briefly referred to El Guindi’s (1999:95) argument that there is a link between female clothing practices and the sanctity of space that is also “reflected in the Islamic rituals of ‘dressing’ the Ka’bah, the center of the holy site of pilgrimage in Makka.” This notion will be explored in more detail in

the present section. The researcher contends that the *hijāb* is not only “privacy’s visual metaphor” (El Guindi, 1999:96), but also **sanctity’s visual metaphor**.

In Section 3.3.3, the immense significance of the *Ka’ba* in *al-Islām*’s constructions of sacred space, spatial orientation, and worldview has been elucidated. The *Ka’ba* serves as cosmic point of orientation for the entire Muslim *Umma* – five times a day during ritual prayer (*Ṣalā*), and once a year during the annual pilgrimage (*Hajj*). The *Ka’ba* symbolizes sacred space *par excellence* because it is the earthly representation of the heavenly sanctuary, the *Inhabited House*, which is circumambulated by thousands of angels in reverence of *Allāh*, the One and Only God. As *axis mundi* or centre of the universe, the *Ka’ba* is the location where heaven and earth connect. The *Ka’ba* is thus “a pointer to God Himself” (King, 1982:20).

Young (1993:285) points to “the role gender plays in the pilgrimage rites in Mecca” and argues that there are remarkable similarities between Islamic female clothing practices and “the Islamic rituals of ‘dressing’ the *Ka’ba*” (El Guindi, 1999:95).³⁴¹ The focus of Young’s study is not on the rituals of “dressing” the *Ka’ba* as such, but rather on the way gender roles were temporarily transformed during the liminal phase of the *Hajj* (Young, 1993:285).³⁴² He argues that these transformations “could be utilized when negotiating and renegotiating gender roles in everyday life” (Young, 1993:285). In the present context, the researcher highlights only one perspective in Young’s study, namely that “Arab pilgrims served, addressed, and even dressed the *Ka’ba* like a bride” (Young, 1993:285).

This observation suggests that *al-Islām*’s most sacred space, the *Ka’ba*, deserves to be demarcated as such, to have a **boundary** symbolizing its **sacrality**. That boundary consists of a number of elements showing “a striking analogy” with “Arab women’s

³⁴¹ Young (1993:285-300) focuses his attention upon ritual practices regarding the “dressing” of the *Ka’ba* at the beginning of the twentieth century “because it produced some of the most complete eyewitness accounts of what pilgrims actually did, as opposed to what normative manuals told them to do” (Young, 1993:286). Young’s study can thus be classified as a thirdspatial analysis of pilgrims’ ritual behaviour during *Hajj*.

³⁴² Young (1993:286) follows Van Gennep’s (1960:10-11) notion of preliminal, liminal and postliminal rites in his analysis of the importance of gender in the rituals associated with the *Hajj*. He also points to Turner’s (1967:97) theory that rites associated with the liminal state holds for humans the possibility of being transformed, hence it becomes “a realm of pure possibility whence novel configurations of ideas and relations may arise.” For Young (1993:286), the period between sacralization and desacralization during the *Hajj* (Campo, 1991:78) represents a liminal phase that inverts or contradicts “the norms of ordinary social life; they temporarily transform the ‘structure’ of society into ‘antistructure.’” During *Hajj*, “ordinary conventions for the physical separation of the sexes (by veiling, seclusion, or other means) were eliminated and the polarity between the sexes was reduced... Both men and women joined in the same task – worship – and mingled in the crowd with only symbolic (rather than physical) barriers between them” (Young, 1993:296).

traditional dress in general” (El Guindi, 1999:95). The researcher will highlight two specific analogies. First, she will argue that the **dress**ing of the *Ka‘ba* in general has analogies with the clothing practices associated with weddings and **married females**. Second, she will highlight the significant analogy that the *Ka‘ba* is in **ihram** during the *Hajj*, “as if it were a pilgrim” (Young, 1993:294), specifically a **female pilgrim**.

First, it should be noted that the *Ka‘ba* is **dressed** like a **bride** throughout the Muslim lunar liturgical year. The *Ka‘ba*’s “dress” consists of a number of elements:

- كسوة الكعبة *Kiswat al-Ka‘ba* “the Covering of the *Ka‘ba*,” or الكسوة *al-Kiswa* “the Covering”: The noun is derived from the root كسو *kasā* “to clothe, dress, drape, cover.” It refers to the cloth hiding the stone face of the *Ka‘ba*. It is made of black silk and consists of eight panels, two for each side of the cube-like building (Young, 1993:292). According to Young (1993:292), the “inside of the *Ka‘ba* was also ‘dressed’ with an interior *kiswa* made of red satin decorated with silver thread.”
- ثوب *thawb* pl. اثواب *athwāb* “garment, dress, cloth, material”: The noun is derived from the root ثوب *thāba* “to return, come back, recover.” Each of the eight panels of the *Kiswa* consists of a number of *athwāb*, i.e. strips of cloth sewn together. Because the *Ka‘ba* is not a perfect cube, the two panels of the longest side contain eighteen strips each; the two panels of the opposite side (containing the *Ka‘ba*’s door) have sixteen strips each; the pairs of panels on the shorter sides respectively fifteen and thirteen strips each (Young, 1993:292).
- حزام *hizām* pl. احزمة *aḥzima* “belt, girth, girdle”: The noun is derived from the root حزم *ḥazama* “to tie up, bundle, wrap up, girth, fasten.” It refers to the decorative band of gold brocade encircling the *Ka‘ba* about one third of the way down from its top. The band consists of eight *aḥzima* “belts”, each mounted on a panel of the *Kiswa*. Verses of the *Qur‘ān* are embroidered on the belts with gold thread (Young, 1993:292).
- برقع *burqu‘* pl. براقع *barāqi‘* “veil”: The noun is derived from the root برقع *barqa‘a* “to veil, drape.” The noun has traditionally been used to refer specifically to the “married woman’s veil” (Young, 1993:292). When used of the *Ka‘ba*, it refers to the cloth covering the double doors to the *Ka‘ba*’s interior. It is embroidered with gold and silver thread and is made of black silk and red and green satin (Young, 1993:292).

Young (1993:292) argues that, at the turn of the previous century, for

... many of the Arab Muslims living near the Hijaz the colors and materials of the *kiswa* were evocative of women’s clothing... a married woman’s clothing consisted of a black outer dress with colored decorations, black face-and-head coverings with gold and silver decorations, and a red underskirt... Thus, the combination of black and red in the *kiswa* was strongly reminiscent of women’s dress in the region.

Moreover, the “materials out of which the *kiswa* were made also had strong feminine connotations,” because gold thread, silk, and satin “were seldom used in men’s

clothing,” but “women were expected to decorate their clothing with gold tread” (Young, 1993:293). These colours are also closely associated with the clothing the *Qurʾān* associates with paradise (*Sūra* 18:31; 22:23), and thus with sacred space. Traditionally, the *kiswa* was made in Egypt and transported to the *Kaʿba* in a *محمل mahmil* “camel-borne litter” (Young, 1993:290). This too, is suggestive of the traditional transportation of a bride to her new home (Young, 1993:290). Young (1993:290) argues that none of these elements suggest that the *Kaʿba* is a woman or bride “in a literal sense.” It does suggest, however, that feminine names are given to objects associated with the *Kaʿba*, and those objects, in turn, are associated with Muslim female clothing practices.

Second, it should be noted that the *Kaʿba* is in *ih̄rām* when it is dressed annually in its new *kiswa* on the ninth day of the month of *Dhū l-Hijja*, the day pilgrims leave for the plains of Mount Arafat during the *Hajj*.³⁴³ During the *Hajj*, a female Muslim’s liminal state (*ih̄rām*) is symbolized in her clothing practice. Young (1993:291) describes it as follows:

If she usually wore a face veil (*niqāb*) she removed it, but continued to cover her head and hair; it was recommended, however, that her head covering be long enough to fall down to her face... Both sexes wore white, both wore sandals rather than stiched footwear, and both removed their jewelry and refrained from using perfume.

Figures 14 and 15 contain visual representations of the Muslim female dress code “outside” *ih̄rām* and “in” *ih̄rām*:



Figure 14
Muslim female dress code “outside” *ih̄rām*³⁴⁴



Figure 15
Muslim female dress code “in” *ih̄rām*³⁴⁵

³⁴³ Cf. Section 3.3.1.2; 3.3.2.3.

³⁴⁴ <http://www.dw.com/en/saudi-arabia-prince-says-women-should-decide-whether-to-wear-robeface-veils/a-43043071> (Accessed 20/05/2018).

³⁴⁵ <https://www.halaltrip.com/other/blog/what-to-observe-in-the-state-of-ihram-women/> (Accessed 20/05/2018).

Similarly, Young (1993:294) indicates that the *Kaba* is ritually put in *iḥrām*, as if it were a person. The curtains of the *Ka‘ba* are tucked up to reveal the bottom four rows of bare stone. Moreover, “a pilgrim’s waist garment (*izār*) of white cloth... goes around the *Ka‘ba* at its lowest part.” The *Ka‘ba* is thus “symbolically equated with a person, as if it were a counterpart and equivalent of the pilgrims who came to visit it” (Young, 1993:294). For Young (1993:296) this is significant in terms of the *Ḥajj* as a temporal-spatial representation of liminality. When the *Ka‘ba* (as *al-Islām*’s cosmic analogy of sacred space), as well as Muslim worshippers are in *iḥrām*, the worshippers are drawn “closer to the next world.” Figures 16 and 17 contain visual representations of the *Ka‘ba* covered in its *kiswa* during the Muslim lunar liturgical year and then during *Ḥajj*:



Figure 16
The *Ka‘ba* “outside” *iḥrām*³⁴⁶



Figure 17
The *Ka‘ba* “in” *iḥrām*³⁴⁷

El Guindi (1999:95-96) indicates that the care, protection, and respect shown in *al-Islām* towards its sacred centre, the *Ka‘ba*, is reflected in Arabo-Islamic culture in the care, protection, and respect shown towards the Muslim female as “the center of the family and its sanctity” (El Guindi, 1999:85). The researcher contends that the Muslim female in *ḥijāb* becomes a metaphor for the *Ka‘ba* in its *kiswa*. The female in *ḥijāb* becomes **sanctity’s visual symbol**. The *kiswa* draws a boundary around the *Ka‘ba* as sacred space. It marks the *Ka‘ba* **as** sacred space **in** space. Similarly, the Muslim female in *ḥijāb* draws a **boundary** around her **body**. She marks her body **as** sacred space **in** space. The female body in *ḥijāb* ultimately **embodies** Muslim sacred space.

This notion links with the observations the researcher made in Chapter 2 regarding *al-Islām* as a religious and social system that can be conceptualised as an ecological system. In the context of *al-Islām* as “a web of nested interconnections and

³⁴⁶ <http://hajjandumrahnews.blogspot.co.za/2016/10/beautiful-clicks-of-kaaba-grand-mosque.html> (Accessed 20/05/2018).

³⁴⁷ <https://www.emirates247.com/news/6-million-gold-laced-kiswa-at-hajj-2013-10-13-1.524355> (Accessed 20/05/2018).

embeddedness” (El Guindi, 2008:xi), two symbols of sacred space play a crucial role. The first, the holy *Ka‘ba*, the cosmic orientation point of the entire Muslim *Umma*, constitutes the sacred focal point of *al-Islām from the outside in* as every single Muslim focuses his/her attention upon it five times a day during ritual prayer, and at least once in a lifetime during *Hajj*. The second, the Muslim female body in *ḥijāb*, constitutes the sacred focal point of *al-Islām from the inside out* as she purposefully moves from the sacred space of her house’s *ḥarīm* into the world.

The Muslim female body embodies *al-Islām’s* sacred privacy and sacred sanctity. Ultimately, women are “the guardians of family sanctuaries and the realm of the sacred in this world” (El Guindi, 1999:96). When she engages public space, the Muslim female body in *ḥijāb* becomes a **visual metaphor** for *al-Islām’s constructions of sacred space*. Her body in *ḥijāb* becomes a metaphor for and concrete reminder of *al-Islām’s* universal, cosmic sacred centre. The *ḥijāb* becomes a **border of cloth** demarcating the Muslim female body **as sacred space in space** as she interacts with her micro-, meso-, exo-, macro-, and chronosystems.

4.4.3 The *ḥijāb* as symbol of sacred space: Appreciating metaphors...

In this section the researcher concludes her thirdspatial analysis of the lived experience of a Muslim woman who consciously and deliberately chooses to wear the *ḥijāb*. She highlights three significant symbolic or metaphorical values such a woman’s choice holds for her. As will be argued below, the first symbolic meaning reaches **forward** from the cosmic past, and the second reaches **backward** from the cosmic future to intersect in the **present** – in the **lived experience** of the Muslim female body in *ḥijāb*. By elucidating these highly symbolic meanings of the *ḥijāb*, the researcher hopes to illustrate the extent to which a Muslim female **embodies** her religious convictions, cultural practices, spatial orientation, and functional worldview when she dons her *ḥijāb*.

The analysis commences with a general remark regarding the significance of metaphorical language in the *Qur’ān*. In the *Qur’ān*, parables and similes are used extensively, in a variety of forms and covering many themes. They have the unique ability to fire up the human imagination and to deliver ideas into readers’ hearts and minds in a powerful way. Often when *Allāh* wants to explain an important idea, He uses a powerful figure of speech, a story or a metaphor that lingers in the memory and helps readers to take hold of the message and fix it firmly into their hearts. Generally, a parable or simile refers “to something that might naturally occur, through which information regarding spiritual and moral matters are conveyed (Kakakhel, 2010:127). *Sūra* 18:54 states:

(قال الله تعالى)

(Allāh the Exalted said:)

وَلَقَدْ صَرَّفْنَا فِي هَذَا الْقُرْآنِ لِلنَّاسِ مِنْ كُلِّ مَثَلٍ
وَكَانَ الْإِنْسَانُ أَكْثَرَ شَيْءٍ جَدَلًا

Certainly We have made this Qur`ān interspersed with every kind of parable for humankind, but the human being is the most disputatious of creatures.

Sūra 18:54 (الكهف) al-Kahf / The Cave:54

Similarly, Sūra 39:27 states:

(قال الله تعالى)

(Allāh the Exalted said:)

وَلَقَدْ صَرَّفْنَا لِلنَّاسِ فِي هَذَا الْقُرْآنِ مِنْ كُلِّ مَثَلٍ
لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ

Certainly We have drawn for humankind in this Qur`ān every [kind of] parable, so that they may take admonition.

Sūra 39:27 (الزمر) al-Zumar / The Throngs:27

The Arabic noun *مثال* *matal* “likeness, metaphor, simile, parable” appears in a variety of contexts in the Qur`ān (Kakakhel, 2010:130) to “make abstract concepts and spiritual realities comprehensible for ordinary individuals” (Kakakhel, 2010:129). Based upon this principle, readers of the Qur`ān are sensitive to possible similes helping them to enrich their understanding of Allāh’s Word.

The first symbolic value a female Muslim attaches to her decision to don the *ḥijāb*, reaches back into the **cosmic past** to exemplify the love Muslims have for the most sacred of all places, the holy *Ka’ba*, their absolute dedication to it, and their deep desire that every ritual associated with it should be performed with a clean and pure body and soul. In the previous section, the researcher already argued that there are similarities between the ritual practice of dressing the *Ka’ba* in a black silk *kiswa* and a Muslim female donning her *ḥijāb*. Here, she argues that Muslim spatial constructions of the *Ka’ba* as sacred space and their devotion to it, become metaphors for constructions of the female body as sacred space and the devotion between a female and a male and the sanctity of that relationship.

Sūra 14:37 refers to the intimate relationship envisaged between sacred place (the *Ka’ba*) and sacred people (all Muslims) when *Ibrāhīm* established Allāh’s Sacred House “in an uncultivated valley.”

(قال الله تعالى)

(Allāh the Exalted said:)

رَبَّنَا إِنِّي أَسْكَنْتُ مِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِي بِوَادٍ غَيْرِ ذِي زَرْعٍ
عِنْدَ بَيْتِكَ الْمُحَرَّمِ
رَبَّنَا لِتُقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ

Our Lord, I have settled some of my descendants in an uncultivated valley near your Sacred House,

our Lord, that they may establish prayer.

فَجْعَلْ أَفئِدَةً مِنَ النَّاسِ تَهْوِي إِلَيْهِمْ

So make hearts among the people incline toward them,

وَأَرْزُقُهُمْ مِنَ الثَّمَرَاتِ *and provide for them from the fruits,*
لَعَلَّهُمْ يَشْكُرُونَ *that they might be grateful.*

Sūra 14:37 (ابراهيم) Ibrāhīm / Abraham:37)

Similarly, such an intimate relationship is envisaged between male and female human beings since creation. *Sūra 30:21* states:

(قال الله تعالى) (Allāh the Exalted said:)

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ *And of his signs is*
أَنْ خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا *that He created for you from yourselves mates,*
لِتَسْكُنُوا إِلَيْهَا *that you may find tranquillity in them;*
وَجَعَلَ بَيْنَكُمْ مَوَدَّةً وَرَحْمَةً *and He placed between you affection and mercy.*
إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ *Indeed in that are signs for a people*
يَتَفَكَّرُونَ *who give thought.*

Sūra 30:21 (ابراهيم) Ibrāhīm / Abraham:21)

Both the *Ka'ba* and a Muslim woman symbolise intimate unity. The *Ka'ba* symbolizes the unity of Muslims who face the same direction and worship one God. A Muslim woman symbolizes belonging to one man for whom she has no restraints. The *Ka'ba* was the first house put on earth for people to worship the Creator of the universe, as is stated in *Sūra 3:96*.

(قال الله تعالى) (Allāh the Exalted said:)

إِنَّ أَوَّلَ بَيْتٍ وُضِعَ لِلنَّاسِ *Indeed, the first House (of worship) appointed for*
لِلَّذِي بِبَكَّةَ *(the one) that is in Bakka,*
مُبَارَكًا وَهُدًى لِّلْعَالَمِينَ *full of blessing and guidance for the world.*

Sūra 3:96 (آل عمران) Āl 'Imrān / The Family of 'Imrān:96)

Similarly, the woman was the first being created from and for the man, as is stated in *Sūra 7:189*:

(قال الله تعالى) (Allāh the Exalted said:)

هُوَ *It is He*
الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ *who created you from one soul,*
وَجَعَلَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا *and (who) created from it its mate,*
لِيَسْكُنَ إِلَيْهَا *that he might live with her.*
فَلَمَّا تَعَشَّاهَا *And when he covers her,*
حَمَلَتْ حَمْلًا خَفِيفًا *she bears a light burden,*

فَمَرَّتْ بِهِ *and continues therein.*
 فَلَمَّا أَنْقَلَتْ *And when it becomes heavy,*
 دَعَا اللَّهَ رَبَّهُمَا *they both invoke Allāh, their Lord:*
 لِنُنْ أَنْتِنَا صَالِحاً *“If You should give us a good [child],*
 لَنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الشَّاكِرِينَ *we will surely be among the grateful.”*

Sūra 7:189 (الأعراف al-A`rāf / The Elevations:189)

Both the *Ka`ba* and a Muslim woman symbolise purity. In *Sūra 2:125* it is said of the *Ka`ba*:

(قال الله تعالى) (Allāh the Exalted said:)
 وَإِذْ جَعَلْنَا الْبَيْتَ مَثَابَةً لِّلنَّاسِ وَأَمْناً *And (be reminded) when We made the House a place of*
 وَاتَّخِذُوا مِن مَّقَامِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ مُصَلًّى *assembly for humankind and a place of safety;*
 وَعَهِدْنَا إِلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ *and take the station of Ibrāhīm as a place of prayer;*
 أَن طَهِّرَا بَيْتِيَ *and we covenanted with Ibrāhīm and Ismā`īl*
 لِلطَّائِفِينَ *that they would sanctify My House*
 وَالْعَاكِفِينَ *for those who circumambulate it,*
 وَالرُّكَّعِ *and (for those who) are staying there for worship,*
 السُّجُودِ *and (for those who) bow in prayer,*
and (for those who) prostrate themselves.

Sūra 2:125 (البقرة al-Baqara / The Cow:125)

In *Sūra 17:32*, women are admonished to refrain from adultery in order to keep themselves pure:

(قال الله تعالى) (Allāh the Exalted said:)
 وَلَا تَقْرَبُوا الزَّوْجَىٰ *And do not approach adultery,*
 إِنَّهُ كَانَ فَاحِشَةً *for indeed, it is a shameful deed,*
 وَسَاءَ سَبِيلًا *and it is evil as a way (of doing).*

Sūra 17:32 (الإسراء al-Isrā` / The Night Journey:32)

The importance of the sanctity of the *Ka`ba* and the sanctity expected of every believer, is emphasized in a *ḥadīth* transmitted in the *Sunan Ibn Mājah*.³⁴⁸ It is reported that while the Prophet (ﷺ) circumambulated the *Ka`ba* he said: “How good you are and how good your fragrance; how great you are and how great your sanctity. By the One in Whose Hand is the soul of Muḥammad, the sanctity of the Believer is

³⁴⁸ Cf. *Sunan Ibn Mājah*, Book 36: كتاب الفتن “The Book of Tribulations,” *Ḥadīth 7*, available online: <https://sunnah.com/ibnmajah/36> (Accessed 07/05/2018).

greater before *Allāh* than your sanctity, his blood and his wealth, and to think anything but good of him.” In the researcher’s thirdspatial reflections on the *hijāb* as border of cloth, she contends that the *Ka’ba* as symbol of the **cosmic past** instills in a Muslim woman the urgency to embody sacrality, intimate unity with *Allāh* and her husband alone, and absolute and uncompromising purity. For the reasearcher, the image in Figure 18 exemplifies the metaphorical connection between a female Muslim’s love for the *Ka’ba* and her desire to preserve the sanctity and purity of her body.



Figure 18
Love for sacred space³⁴⁹

The second symbolic value a female Muslim attaches to her decision to don the *hijāb*, extends **forward** into the **cosmic future**. Descriptions of Paradise in the *Qur’ān* compare the female companions awaiting Believers with “pearls well-protected.” *Sūra* 56:22-24, for instance, says:

(قال الله تعالى) (Allāh the Exalted said:)

وَحُورٌ عِينٌ 22 And for them are fair women with large eyes,
كَأَمْثَالِ اللُّؤْلُؤِ الْمَكْنُونِ 23 like pearls well-protected,
جَزَاءً بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ 24 a reward for what they used to do.

Sūra 56:22-24 (الواقعة) *al-Wāqi’a* / *The Imminent*:22-24)

In this simile the women in paradise are compared to well-guarded pearls. The simile emphasises their value, seemliness, and prudent behaviour – all attributes a male values greatly in a female. When a woman in paradise is described as a pearl in its shell, that comparison implies a much deeper meaning. A man always longs for what

³⁴⁹ <http://www.fanpop.com/clubs/islam/images/31274263/title/love-makkah-photo> (Accessed 14/12/2017).

is distinctive and private. When a woman openly flaunts her beauty, it becomes something commonplace. In *al-Islām*, a wife is considered as her husband’s own haven and sanctuary, which must be kept dignified and venerable. Nobody is allowed to infringe upon her privacy, nor is it prudent for her to exceed the limits of her privacy. *Al-Islām* allows a couple their own, pure, immaculate world finding the ultimate enjoyment and fulfilment in each other. Every time the man, who has the right, opens the closed pearl shell again, he finds it unpolluted and feels renewable enjoyment. Marital life is, then, completely confined within a boundary of complete privacy and sanctity as it should be. The simile enjoins Muslim women to be “pearls well-guarded” in this life, not only in the next.

Sūra 37:48-49 describes a similar picture:

(قال الله تعالى) (Allāh the Exalted said:)

وَعِنْدَهُمْ قَاصِرَاتُ الطَّرْفِ عِينٌ ⁴⁸ And with them will be female companions, restraining their glances, with beautiful eyes

كَأَنَّهُنَّ بَيْضٌ مَّكْنُونٌ ⁴⁹ as if they were eggs well-protected.

Sūra 37:48-49 (الصافات) *al-Ṣaffāt* / *The Ranged Ones*:48-49)

Again, the simile emphasizes that privacy is sacred, like “eggs well-protected.” When a man doesn’t see any displayed beauty but his wife’s and visa versa, the matrimonial bond is stronger and the couple can enjoy fulfilment in each other. The principle is beautifully illustrated in Figure 19:



Figure 19
Like pearls well-protected...³⁵⁰

The description of the female companions in Paradise “restricting their glances” is reminiscent of the Prophet’s (ﷺ) admonition in *Sūra* 24:30-31 that both men and

³⁵⁰ <https://www.istockphoto.com/za/illustrations/pearl-oyster?excludenudity=true&mediatype=illustration&phrase=pearl%20oyster&sort=mostpopular> (Accessed 14/05/2018).

women “should lower their gaze and guard their modesty.” The bliss awaiting Believers in the cosmic future becomes the paradigm for their behaviour in the present.

The third symbolic value a female Muslim attaches to her decision to don the *ḥijāb*, is that she lives at the **intersection** of cosmic past and cosmic future – **in the present**. For a woman who is aware that her body is a metaphor for the holy *Ka‘ba* and thus an embodiment of sacred space, and who is aware that the sacredness of her body is a precious gift that needs to be well-protected, the donning of the *ḥijāb* in the present becomes a highly symbolic and highly significant conscious act of submission to *Allāh*. The very act makes her *Muslim* and illustrates her intention of total and voluntary submission to the will of *Allāh* (Ahmed, 2002b:12). To her, her dress code is strongly linked with the values, attitudes, and religious identity of an Islamic woman (Byng, 2010:110). The *ḥijāb* bonds her to all female members of the Muslim *Umma* and gives visual expression of her dedication to her religion (Furseth, 2011:370-372). The researcher concurs with El Guindi (1999:xii) when she says: “In movements of Islamic activism, the veil occupies center stage as symbol of both identity and resistance.”

For Muslim women who don the *ḥijāb*, the act has meaning: “They understand this to be Allah’s will, they see it as proper Islamic behavior, and many feel it deflects unwanted male attention” (Ali, 2005:526). According to Williams and Vashi (2007:285), the act is an expression of Muslim women’s “autonomous selves.” According to Timmerman (2000:24), the *ḥijāb*

...protects women against male harassment. Moreover, it gives young women a greater degree of social freedom: it makes it easier for them to interact with male colleagues or fellow students without being branded as an ‘immoral’ person. Through this style of dress, they are able to claim their own legitimate place in society outside the confines of the family. Women also use the headscarf as a means to enter, without recriminations, into the public domain.

A poem published online by an anonymous female Muslim eloquently expresses the metaphorical and symbolic meaning her *ḥijāb* holds for a woman who chooses to wear it:³⁵¹

³⁵¹ <http://islamiliveforit.blogspot.co.za/2011/02/poetry-you-look-at-me-and-call-me.html> (Accessed 24/04/2018).

You look at me and call me oppressed,
Simply because of the way I'm dressed,

You know me not for what's inside,
You judge the clothing I wear with pride,

My body's not for your eyes to hold,
You must speak to my mind, not my feminine mold,

I'm an individual, I'm no man's slave,
It's Allah's pleasure that I only crave,

I have a voice so I will be heard,
For in my heart I carry His word,

"O ye women, wrap close your cloak,
So you won't be bothered by ignorant folk",

Man doesn't tell me to dress this way,
It's a Law from Allaah that I obey,

Oppressed is something I'm truly NOT,
For liberation is what I've got,

It was given to me many years ago,
With the right to prosper, the right to grow,

I can climb mountains or cross the seas,
Expand my mind in all degrees,

For Allaah Himself gave us LIBERTY,
When He sent Islam,

To You and Me!

The researcher thus contends that the *ḥijāb* is indeed “a complex symbol of many meanings” (El Guindi, 1999:172). As a Muslim female dons her *ḥijāb*, it reaches forward from the **cosmic past** as a symbol of ultimate sacred space, it reaches backward from the **cosmic future** as a symbol of ultimate, sacred, Paradisial privacy, and it allows her to express the **lived experience** of the Muslim female body **in the present**. A Muslim female indeed **embodies** her religious convictions, cultural practices, spatial orientation, and functional worldview when she dons her *ḥijāb*.

4.5 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the researcher argued that Muslim constructions of sacred space, emanating from the ultimate source of the Sacred, the One and Only Deity, *Allāh*, is crucial for understanding Islamic demarcations of the body, and specifically the female body, **as** sacred space **in** space. This chapter was informed by the analysis of *al-Islām* as an ecological system in Chapter 2 and the critical-spatial analysis of *al-*

Islām in Chapter 3. The principles discovered in these two chapters were applied to the Muslim female body in *ḥijāb*.

The application developed in three phases. First, the researcher indicated that, in principle, women are afforded equal, albeit a uniquely female status in *al-Islām*'s formative tradition in general, and in the *Qur'ān* in particular. *Allāh* created humankind "out of one living entity" (*Sūra* 4:1; 6:98; 7:189; 30:21; 31:21; 39:6), which in essence implies the spiritual equality between men and women.

Second, the researcher revisited well-known prescriptions regarding Muslim female clothing practices in *al-Islām*'s formative traditions. This phase of the research was conceptualised as an analysis of the secondspatial representations of Muslim female clothing practices. First and foremost, the researcher established that the *ḥijāb* is a boundary marker, serving as a marker of sacred and private space. The *ḥijāb* symbolises gender mutuality, modesty and respect for the sacred privacy that is dear to *Allāh*. It is a public and visual symbol of Muslim identity in general (*Sūra* 24:30) and of female Muslim identity in particular (*Sūra* 24:31). *Sūra* 33:59 emphasises that the dress code prescribed in the *Qur'ān* enables the female Believer to publicly and visually portray her identity as a Muslim. Furthermore, the dress code acts as an effective shield of protection against harassment when a female Muslim ventures into the public domain. The *ḥijāb* can be described as a border of cloth demarcating the Muslim female body as sacred space when she engages public and profane space. Muslim female dress code empowers the Muslim female to interweave sacred and profane space in an unproblematic and legitimate way.

Third, the researcher investigated the symbolic meanings attached to the *ḥijāb* in the lived experience of a Muslim female who deliberately chooses to don it. This phase of the research was conceptualised as the thirdspatial applications of female clothing practices. The researcher deconstructed stereotypes labelling the *ḥijāb* as a metaphor for female oppression, backwardness and seclusion. She called for a contextual and culturally sensitive interpretation of the *ḥijāb* as a religious and cultural phenomenon and argued that a Muslim woman appearing in public space wearing the *ḥijāb* is making a profound statement. She is "creating" her own private and sacred space in public. She is aligning her behaviour with her religious beliefs and values. The *ḥijāb* constantly reminds the woman to control and guard her behaviour and to set an example as Muslim woman. The *ḥijāb* is a visual metaphor for Arabo-Islamic privacy and sanctity. A woman in *ḥijāb* becomes a metaphor for the *Ka'ba* in its *kiswa*. The *kiswa* draws a boundary around the *Ka'ba* as sacred space. It marks the *Ka'ba* as sacred space in space. Similarly, the Muslim female in *ḥijāb* draws a boundary

around her body. She marks her body as sacred space in space. The female body in *ḥijāb* ultimately embodies Muslim sacred space. The donning of the *ḥijāb* has cosmic implications. As a Muslim female dons her *ḥijāb*, it reaches forward from the cosmic past as a symbol of ultimate sacred space, it reaches backward from the cosmic future as a symbol of ultimate, sacred, Paradisial privacy, and it allows her to express the lived experience of the Muslim female body in the present. A Muslim female indeed embodies her religious convictions, cultural practices, spatial orientation, and functional worldview when she dons her *ḥijāb*.

CHAPTER 5

THE *ḤIJĀB* AS BORDER OF CLOTH: REVISITING, REFLECTING, AND REVISIONING

Space and place are basic components of the lived world; we take them for granted. When we think about them, however, they may assume unexpected meanings and raise questions we have not thought to ask.

(Tuan, 2008:3)

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This study commenced with Tuan's (2008:3) remark quoted above that space and place, as basic components of the lived world, should not be taken for granted. The concepts should be analysed and questioned – should indeed be revisited and reflected upon – because they might then assume unexpected meanings which might aid researchers in revisioning traditional and stereotypical analyses of religious, social, and cultural phenomena.

The theme of the current study was a specific example of a religious, social, and cultural phenomenon, namely the *ḥijāb* worn by Muslim women when they engage public space. The term *ḥijāb* was used as a broad term to refer to any form of Muslim female modest dress. Few subjects have become so controversial in contemporary society as the wearing of the *ḥijāb* – a controversy that can indeed be described as a “hysterical obsession” (El Guindi, 2008:143). The *ḥijāb* has become a constant cause for debate, a phenomenon to be explained, investigated, dissected, condemned and defended in both Muslim and non-Muslim countries.

Examples of analyses of the Islamic *ḥijāb* from a political, social, fashionable or cultural-religious point of view are readily available. Very little, however, has been recorded in academic literature from the perspective of Muslim women themselves, particularly from Muslim women who consciously choose to wear the Islamic *ḥijāb* without hesitation or the desire to explain and defend their choice continuously to anyone. The researcher is such a woman. She is a Saudi-Arabian woman who consciously chooses to adhere to the precepts of *al-Islām* regarding modest female clothing practices and who experiences this choice as a deliberate expression of her identity. To her, the *ḥijāb* visually defines her identity as a Muslim woman whenever and wherever she enters the public sphere. The researcher departed from the presupposition that the voices of such women should be heard and should become part of the debate on the *ḥijāb*.

The study was conceptualised as a deliberate re-examination of a well-known and often debated phenomenon, but from a point of departure not taken – to the best of the researcher’s knowledge – in previous studies. The study wanted to recognise the voices of Muslim women who consciously decided to wear the *ḥijāb*. For the voices of such women to be heard, the *ḥijāb* has been analysed as a phenomenon from the perspective of the **experience** of a Muslim woman who consciously decides to wear it, specifically in the context of her Arabo-Islamic **religious and cultural** experience. The study followed an interdisciplinary approach in the analysis of the *ḥijāb* as a single phenomenon in the broad spectrum of *al-Islām* as a religious and cultural system, and made a case for a **contextual** religious-cultural interpretation of a Muslim female donning the *ḥijāb* as a **focal individual** and her freedom to **construct her lived space** in the light of her **experience**.

5.2 THE *ḤIJĀB* AS BORDER OF CLOTH: REVISITING THE RESEARCH REPORT

The research report consisted of five chapters. In **Chapter 1: Introduction and orientation**, this study departed from the observation that the wearing of the *ḥijāb* by Muslim women is a highly controversial subject in contemporary society. In spite of a plethora of studies on the subject, analyses of the phenomenon tend to provide a one-sided perspective on an individual Muslim female’s conscious decision to wear the *ḥijāb*. The researcher provided a brief clarification of terms used to describe Muslim female, so-called “modest” clothing practices. She gave an brief literature review and indicated that four themes dominate the current debate regarding the *ḥijāb*: From a geopolitical point of view, the *ḥijāb* has been described as a political symbol of resistance against Western hegemony. From a social point of view, it has been described as a symbol of, or paradoxically, resistance against patriarchy and the oppression of women. From the point of view of fashion, the *ḥijāb* becomes a symbol illustrating that an established religious and cultural dress code can at the same time be fashionable. From a religious and cultural point of view, the *ḥijāb* is seen as an expression of Arabo-Islamic’s ethnographic blueprint of sanctity, privacy, reserve and respect. What is lacking in the current debate is a perspective from the “inside,” taking both the experience of individual Muslim females as well as appropriate responses in their unique cultural context into consideration. The researcher argued that the *ḥijāb* is a complex symbol with many meanings; therefore, a holistic approach is needed to explain fully an individual Muslim female’s choice to wear it. She posited that insights from ecological systems theory and critical spatial theory will provide new insights into the symbolic meaning(s) the *ḥijāb* hold(s) for a female Muslim who deliberately chooses to wear it. In essence, the study brought together five themes: the researcher

explored the Islamic *ḥijāb* (**clothing**) as a border of cloth (**borders and boundaries**) when it is donned by a Muslim woman (**bodies**) from a **spatial** and **ecological systems** perspective. She argued that the *ḥijāb* covering the female body acts as a boundary system for the physical body and the context around it. By wearing it, the Muslim woman defines her identity on a personal, cultural and religious level.

In **Chapter 2: The *ḥijāb* as border of cloth: An ecological systems theory perspective**, the researcher discussed the *ḥijāb* as an integral part of *al-Islām* as a religious and cultural system. The researcher utilised ecological systems theory to argue that the social interaction of an individual Muslim female deliberately donning the *ḥijāb* should be interpreted and evaluated in the context of *al-Islām* as **an ecological system**. She provided a brief overview of the ecological systems theory as explained by Urie Bronfenbrenner. She then applied the theory in two ways. First, she argued that *al-Islām* can be regarded as an ecological system where each part of the system is influenced by all other parts, but in turn also influences all other parts. There are borders between the various parts of the system, but these borders are permeable from the inside and from the outside. Second, she applied these principles to each individual Muslim female who chooses to don the *ḥijāb*. Such a woman becomes an integral and indispensable part of *al-Islām* as a system. She is influenced by every part of the system, and in turn influences every part by her conscious choice to give visual expression to her religious identity. Awareness of the mutual interactions between an individual Muslim female and all other constituent parts of her religion allows for a contextual and holistic analysis of the *ḥijāb* as a religious and cultural phenomenon. The *ḥijāb* functions as a border of cloth demarcating the Muslim female body as sacred space in space as she interacts with and within her micro-, meso-, exo-, macro-, and chronosystems.

Chapter 3: The *ḥijāb* as border of cloth: Towards Islamic constructions of sacred space was concerned with a critical-spatial analysis of *al-Islām* as a system and as the lived experience of billions of Muslims all over the world. The researcher first provided an overview of critical spatial theory with special attention given to classifications of space in this theory. In addition, and with reference to insights from social scientific criticism, the spatial implications of borders and boundaries, bodies and clothing were discussed. Finally, the researcher discussed worldview(s) and spatial orientation(s) as important themes in the religious imagination of humankind. These theoretical perspectives were then applied to Islamic constructions of space. She elucidated *al-Islām*'s firstspace realities, secondspace representations, and thirdspace applications. The researcher focused on specifically Islamic constructions of lived space, notably uniquely Islamic constructions of public and private and

profane and sacred space; the rhythmic interweaving of sacred and ordinary space and time; and especially the ritual enactment of private and sacred space. She argued that the Islamic worldview and uniquely Islamic constructions of space are determined by *al-Islām*'s spatial orientation towards a single, cosmic spatial centre, namely the *Ka'ba* in the holy city of *Makka*. The importance of the *Ka'ba* was discussed from the perspective of abstract and social space. It elucidated the role the *Ka'ba* plays in the lived space of *al-Islām* as a religious and cultural system in general and the real-life experience of every individual Muslim in particular. The *Ka'ba* serves as the focal point for every Muslim's lived space.

In **Chapter 4: The *ḥijāb* as border of cloth: Towards Islamic constructions of the female body as sacred space**, the principles of Islamic constructions of sacred space were applied to constructions of the female body as sacred space. The researcher argued that these constructions of sacred space, emanating from the ultimate source of the Sacred, the One and Only Deity, *Allāh*, is crucial for understanding Islamic demarcations of the body, and specifically the female body, **as sacred space in space**. The analysis developed in three phases. First, the researcher indicated that, in principle, women are afforded equal, albeit a uniquely female status in *al-Islām*'s formative tradition in general, and in the *Qur'ān* in particular. Second, the researcher revisited the prescriptions regarding Muslim female clothing practices in *al-Islām*'s formative traditions. This phase of the research was conceptualised as the secondspatial representations of Muslim female clothing practices. Third, the researcher investigated the symbolic meanings attached to the *ḥijāb* in the lived experience of a Muslim female who deliberately chooses to don it. This phase of the research was conceptualised as the thirdspatial applications of female clothing practices. This two-pronged application of the research project's theoretical points of departure, aided the researcher in attaining the primary aim formulated at the outset of the study, namely to illustrate that the *ḥijāb* functions as a **border of cloth** which demarcates the female Muslim body **as sacred space** and enables her to engage meaningfully and legitimately **in profane space**. The *ḥijāb* is the visual expression of Islamic gendered sacred space. The researcher argued that the female Muslim body in *ḥijāb* is a metaphor for sacred space and a representation of the *Ka'ba* as sacred space. The female Muslim body in *ḥijāb* becomes an integral, essential and indispensable part of *al-Islām* as religious and cultural system and of Islamic constructions of sacred space.

Chapter 5: The *ḥijāb* as border of cloth: Revisiting, reflecting, and revisioning in conclusion explained the results of the study by providing a summary of key findings of each chapter. An answer is provided to the initial research question: *Will a holistic*

analysis of the hijāb from the perspective of ecological systems theory and critical spatial theory provide new insights into the symbolic meaning(s) that the hijāb holds for a female Muslim who deliberately chooses to wear it?

5.3 THE HĪJĀB AS BORDER OF CLOTH: REFLECTING ON THE RESEARCH THEME AND RESEARCH APPROACH

This thesis took as point of departure a broad **research problem**, namely a ***misunderstanding and misrepresentation*** of Islamic **symbolism** in general, and then narrowed it down to misunderstandings and misrepresentations of a single phenomenon, namely the Islamic **hijāb**. She argued that the **hijāb** can be conceptualized as a **spatial marker**, consequently she investigated the spatial dimensions of *al-Islām* in general and the Islamic **hijāb** in particular in her endeavour to create a particular Islamic awareness and application of the phenomenon. The researcher formulated the following as **research theme**: *A border of cloth: Ecological systems and critical spatial perspectives on the Islamic hijāb.*

The researcher argued that a **holistic** look at the Islamic **hijāb** from two theoretical perspectives, namely **ecological systems theory** and **critical spatial theory**, will elucidate the spatial dimensions of *al-Islām* in general and the Islamic **hijāb** in particular. This, in turn, will create a particular Islamic awareness and application of the phenomenon. She formulated the following **research question**: *Will a holistic analysis of the hijāb from the perspective of ecological systems theory and critical spatial theory provide new insights into the symbolic meaning(s) the hijāb hold(s) for a female Muslim who deliberately chooses to wear it?* She argued that the **hijāb** is an integral part of *al-Islām* as a religious and cultural system and that the **hijāb** functions as a very specific spatial marker within that system.

To address the research problem and answer the research question, the researcher followed a **qualitative research paradigm**, which allowed her to explore “a wide array of dimensions of the social world, including the texture and weave of everyday life, the understandings, experiences and imaginings” of Muslim females who choose to wear the **hijāb**, and “the ways that social processes, institutions, discourses or relationships work, and the significance of the meanings that they generate” (Mason, 2002:1). **Texts** served as the main **data source** in this research project. The texts utilised were **primary records** (i.e., the normative texts generated during the formative period of Islamic thought) and **secondary sources** (i.e., the writings of specialists in the field of history, religion, cultural studies and the social sciences) (Booth et al., 2008:69). The study was, in essence, a **document study** of the primary and secondary texts and the researcher’s **secondary analysis** of her sources

(Strydom & Delpont, 2005:314-326). The **research strategy** fell in the broad field of **phenomenology**, which seeks “to understand and interpret the meaning that subjects give to their everyday lives” (Fouché, 2005:270). The researcher followed an **interpretivist approach**. She analysed her textual sources in order “to get out of these... what they say about or how they are constituted in people’s individual or collective meanings” (Mason, 2002:56). The researcher strived to give “the ‘insider view’, rather than imposing an ‘outsider view’” (Mason, 2002:56) in her analysis of the meaning(s) of the Islamic *hijāb*.

The researcher took her theoretical point of departure in two theoretical approaches that informed the bulk of her critical investigation, namely **ecological systems theory** and **critical spatial theory**. Ecological systems theory was developed by the Russian-born American psychologist Urie Bronfenbrenner. Bronfenbrenner (1979:12) argued that all human development and behaviour should be seen as “development-in-context” and thus an “ecological orientation” is needed when human behaviour and development are studied. **Critical spatial theory** has its roots in **social scientific criticism**. It basically departs from the principle that method(s) and approach(es) developed in the social sciences are of the utmost importance for the interpretation of religious traditions with a long and complex history. **Critical spatial theory** draws heavily upon the work of the French philosopher Henri Lefebvre (1991) and the American geographer Edward Soja (1996). Lefebvre (1991:1) argued that space is not a strictly geometrical concept, but a social phenomenon. Space is *produced* in the interaction between human beings and their environment. Lefebvre (1991:11) proposes a trialectic approach towards space, where space is at the same time a physical, mental, and social construct. Soja (1996:66-67) calls this trialectic of spaces *firstspace*, *secondspace* and *thirdspace*. **Firstspace** is physical space, concrete space, perceived space. **Secondspace** is imagined space, conceived space, abstract space. **Thirdspace** is lived space, the confrontation between various social groups and their space(s), reflecting the spatial ideology of society. Soja (1996:68) emphasizes the importance of thirdspace as “the terrain for the generation of ‘counterspaces,’ spaces of resistance to the dominant order...to lived space as a strategic location from which to encompass, understand, and potentially transform all spaces simultaneously.”

The **primary aim** of the study was to elucidate the meaning of the *hijāb* by analysing the phenomenon through a combination of ecological systems theory and critical spatial theory. The following **objectives** were formulated in order to attain aim of the research project:

- to investigate the significance of *al-Islām* as a religious and cultural system;

- to investigate a female Muslim's place within that system;
- to investigate Islamic constructions of place and space;
- to investigate the nature of the border(s) between sacred and profane, clean and unclean, and public and private spaces in Islamic constructions of space and the rules for legitimately crossing these borders;
- to investigate the place and role of women in these Islamic constructions of space;
- to investigate the female Muslim body as space;
- to investigate the female Muslim body *in* space.

In the final analysis the study aimed to illustrate that the *ḥijāb* functions as a **border of cloth** which demarcates the female Muslim body **as sacred space** and enables her to engage meaningfully and legitimately **in profane space**.

5.4 THE *ḤIJĀB* AS BORDER OF CLOTH: REVISIONING A RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL PHENOMENON

In the first chapter, the researcher indicated that the Islamic *ḥijāb* is the object of close scrutiny and obsessive analysis in the current geopolitical context. In spite of a flood of publications and the *ḥijāb* being a cause for debate, a phenomenon to be explained, investigated, dissected, condemned and defended in both Muslim and non-Muslim countries, there is a lack of holistic, contextual, and culturally sensitive analyses of the phenomenon. The researcher proposed a re-examination, indeed, a re-visioning of the phenomenon that does not amount to a simple repetition of well-known and often worn-out arguments for or against the *ḥijāb*. She analysed the phenomenon, as indicated above, from a new vantage point by combining an ecological systems analysis and a critical spatial analysis of the phenomenon. This approach allowed her to look at the phenomenon from the perspective of the personal experience of a Muslim female who deliberately chooses to don the *ḥijāb*. It also created space for a culturally sensitive and contextual analysis of the phenomenon.

The main findings of her **ecological systems theory analysis** are that each individual Muslim is influenced by *al-Islām* as a religious and cultural system as well as the interaction between this human being and his/her immediate and broader social context(s). A female Muslim choosing to wear the *ḥijāb* should thus be viewed as a **person-in-context**. Bronfenbrenner (1979:22-26) divided a person's environment into five levels: the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem, the macrosystem, and the chronosystem. The researcher argued that each individual Muslim is influenced by **all** the systems in which he/she functions on a daily basis. *Al-Islām* is not a theory, but a religious and cultural system that deeply influences each individual Muslim's behaviour and choices. *Al-Islām*, in turn, does not exist in isolation,

but is influenced by and influences the broader context in which it exists. In the global village that the world has become, all these systems influence each individual Muslim female and her choice to wear or not to wear the *ḥijāb*.

The main findings of her **critical spatial analysis** are that *al-Islām* is a firstspace reality that is built upon and defined by the secondspatial representations in *al-Islām*'s normative tradition. In the light of these representations, *al-Islām* produced unique constructions of space. The researcher concurs with El Guindi (2008:17) that an analysis of *al-Islām* as a lived experience calls for a "shift in paradigm from mechanism (parts and components) to holism (complex whole)." Three perspectives on Islamic constructions of lived space bring one close to grasping the "heart of Islam" (El Guindi, 2008:21) as it is lived by Muslims, namely Islamic constructions of private and sacred space; the rhythmic interweaving of private and sacred space and time with public and profane space and time; the ritual actualization of private and sacred space. Through these constructions, every Muslim individually, and the Muslim *Umma* collectively embody sacred space. A Muslim becomes a mobile spatial field (Low, 2003:14) that presents, illustrates, and embodies complete submission to *Allāh*. Esposito (1988:30) emphasizes that, according to Islamic worldview, "human responsibility and mission are of cosmic proportion, and people will be judged on the cosmic consequences of their acts." This is illustrated in the fact that the Muslim worldview and spatial orientation focus on one single place, namely the *Ka'ba* in *Makka*. The Islamic worldview and uniquely Islamic constructions of space are determined by *al-Islām*'s spatial orientation towards a single, cosmic spatial centre. This is crucial for understanding Islamic demarcations of the body **as** sacred space **in** space.

In the **application** of the principles of Islamic constructions of space to the Muslim female body in *ḥijāb*, the researcher found the following: In *al-Islām*'s formative tradition in general, and in the *Qur'ān* in particular, women are afforded equal, albeit a uniquely female status in *al-Islām*. *Allāh* created humankind "out of one living entity" (*Sūra* 4:1; 6:98; 7:189; 30:21; 31:21; 39:6), which in essence implies the spiritual equality between men and women. In an analysis of well-known prescriptions regarding Muslim female clothing practices in *al-Islām*'s formative traditions, the researcher established that the *ḥijāb* is a boundary marker, serving as a marker of sacred and private space. The *ḥijāb* symbolises gender mutuality, modesty and respect for the sacred privacy that is dear to *Allāh*. It is a public and visual symbol of Muslim identity in general (*Sūra* 24:30) and of female Muslim identity in particular (*Sūra* 24:31). *Sūra* 33:59 emphasises that the dress code prescribed in the *Qur'ān* enables the female Believer to publicly and visually portray her identity as a Muslim.

Furthermore, the dress code acts as an effective shield of protection against harassment when a female Muslim ventures into the public domain. The *ḥijāb* can be described as a **border of cloth** demarcating the Muslim female body as sacred space when she engages public and profane space. Muslim female dress code empowers the Muslim female to interweave sacred and profane space in an unproblematic and legitimate way.

The researcher elucidated the powerful symbolic meanings of the *ḥijāb* in the lived experience of a Muslim female who deliberately chooses to don it. She deconstructed stereotypes labelling the *ḥijāb* as a metaphor for female oppression, backwardness and seclusion. She called for a contextual and culturally sensitive interpretation of the *ḥijāb* as a religious and cultural phenomenon and argued that a Muslim woman appearing in public space wearing the *ḥijāb* is making a profound statement. She is “creating” her own private and sacred space in public. She is aligning her behaviour with her religious beliefs and values. The *ḥijāb* constantly reminds the woman to control and guard her behaviour and to set an example as Muslim woman. The *ḥijāb* is a visual metaphor for Arabo-Islamic privacy and sanctity. As such, a woman in *ḥijāb* becomes a metaphor for the *Ka‘ba* in its *kiswa*. The *kiswa* draws a boundary around the *Ka‘ba* as sacred space. It marks the *Ka‘ba* **as** sacred space **in** space. Similarly, the Muslim female in *ḥijāb* draws a boundary around her body. She marks her body **as** sacred space **in** space. The female body in *ḥijāb* ultimately **embodies** Muslim **sacred space**. The donning of the *ḥijāb* has **cosmic** implications. As a Muslim female dons her *ḥijāb*, it reaches forward from the cosmic past as a symbol of ultimate sacred space, it reaches backward from the cosmic future as a symbol of ultimate, sacred, Paradisial privacy, and it allows her to **express the lived experience of the Muslim female body in the present**. A Muslim female indeed embodies her religious convictions, cultural practices, spatial orientation, and functional worldview when she dons her *ḥijāb*.

At the outset of the research project, the researcher asked the following **research question**: *Will a holistic analysis of the ḥijāb from the perspective of ecological systems theory and critical spatial theory provide new insights into the symbolic meaning(s) the ḥijāb hold(s) for a female Muslim who deliberately chooses to wear it?* At the conclusion of the study she answers in the affirmative. In the final analysis, the study illustrated that the *ḥijāb* functions as a **border of cloth**, which demarcates the female Muslim body **as sacred space** (consequently also as clean and private space), and enables her to engage meaningfully and legitimately **in profane space** (which is then, according to Islamic constructions of space, also unclean and public space).

5.5 THE *HIJĀB* AS BORDER OF CLOTH: A FINAL WORD

By interpreting the *hijāb* as a *spatial* phenomenon, the researcher endeavoured to analyse and question notions of place and space as basic components of the lived world. This analysis allowed the Islamic *hijāb* to assume unexpected meanings which might aid researchers in revisioning traditional and stereotypical analyses of religious, social, and cultural phenomena (Tuan, 2008:3).

The researcher believes that her analysis of the importance of the *Ka'ba* as *al-Islām's* single, cosmic point of orientation – consequently as symbol of sacred space *par excellence* – and the notion of the Muslim female body in the *hijāb* as a metaphor of the *Ka'ba*, provides a new perspective on an ancient religious and cultural phenomenon. It opens avenues for deconstructing stereotypes of the *hijāb* in the current geopolitical context. It allows for a revisioning of the practice in the light of the deeply personal meanings a Muslim female attaches to her decision to deliberately don the *hijāb*. It allows a voice “from inside” the *hijāb* to be acknowledged.

If the researcher's voice were to be acknowledged, she believes this study has a message for Muslims and non-Muslims alike. For Muslims, the study implies that a female can wear her *hijāb* with pride, because it is part of her, it symbolizes who she is, strives to be, and is meant to be. It is part of her religion, and part of her freedom. She wears it to please her Creator, to keep her head grounded, and her spirit pure. She wears it to remind her of *al-Islām*, of her five daily prayers, her fasting, her charity, and her pilgrimage.

For non-Muslims, the study implies that the *hijāb* is not something Muslim women need saving from. It is part of who a Muslim woman is, it is her choice to serve her Creator in that way. It might be difficult for a post-modern, secular Western woman to comprehend, but by “unveiling” a Muslim woman who chooses to don the *hijāb*, she is “exposed” to things she would rather not be exposed to. Freedom does not mean the same thing in all cultures, and women can and should enjoy their unity in diversity as women across the globe.

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