

The American Veil: Media Inspired (Mis)Conceptualization of Muslim Women of the Middle East

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OVERVIEW

With our nation's current military engagement in the Middle East, the American public is highly reliant on mass media for information about the politics, economies, religions, peoples and cultures of the region. Unfortunately, the mass media does not provide a thorough or accurate representation of the richness and complexities of peoples and systems of this region. The inability of mass media to accurately portray the multitude of people and experiences is not a new phenomenon. Since the early 1800s Americans have been reliant on mass media as their source of information on the Middle East, and have been presented with second-hand, stereotyped and myopic images and views. Muslim women of the Middle East have been particularly stereotyped. The current media imagery and narrative depict Muslim women of the Middle East as powerless and oppressed. This imagery and narrative does not accurately depict the multiplicity of experiences that exist for women who bear this identity.

The historical background of this unit traces the development of media portrayal of Muslim women of the Middle East from the late 1800s until today. During this time the media has presented changing but monolithic images of Middle Eastern women. These images have been shaped by the country's political and economic involvement in the region and these images have in turn shaped American popular conceptualizations of Muslim women of the Middle East.

This unit seeks to guide students' recognition of the role of mass media in shaping their knowledge and understanding of this region. It also seeks to guide students' evaluation of their own conceptualization of Muslim women of the Middle East, and provide them with less popular voices, images and points of view to serve as points of comparison with popular conceptualizations. Students will begin this unit by analyzing population distribution maps of peoples of the Muslim faith. Next, each student will create country profile fliers that compile population, political, religious and economic data of a country in the Middle East. Then, students will work in small groups to create semantic maps that identify, analyze and evaluate their own conceptualization of Muslim women of the Middle East. Students will also discuss and evaluate the validity of their sources of information. Finally, students will analyze articles to compare the points of view presented in these sources to the point of view presented in American mass media.

This unit is intended for 9th grade students studying world history. The unit will last five days. Computer access is for the review of interactive maps and for the creation of reports and fliers is suggested, though not mandatory.

RATIONALE

With America's current military involvement in the Middle East, students should develop a better understanding of geography, population, politics and religion of the region. Additionally, it is important for students to begin to recognize the role of media propaganda in shaping their understanding and conceptualization of people and cultures around them. This recognition of the influence of media imagery is pertinent not only in the study of Muslim women of the Middle East, but to everyday life.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In October 2009, The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life published a comprehensive study of over 200 countries and found that there are 1.57 billion Muslims living in the world. This population of Muslims makes up 23% of the world's population.¹ The largest percentage of Muslim population exists in Asia-Pacific, followed by the Middle East region.

Muslim Population by Region²

	Estimated 2009 Muslim Population	Percentage of Population that is Muslim	Percentage of World Muslim Population
Asia-Pacific	972,537,000	24.1%	61.9%
Middle East-North Africa	315,322,000	91.2%	20.1%
Sub-Saharan Africa	240,632,000	30.1%	15.3%
Europe	38,112,000	5.2%	2.4%
America	4,596,000	0.5%	0.3%
World Total	1,571,198,000	22.9%	100%

The region of the Middle East is comprised of approximately twenty³ countries spanning Southwest Asia and North Africa. These countries vary greatly in their forms of government: from the theocratic republic of Iran to the constitutional monarchy of Jordan, to the republic of Georgia. Within each of these countries the condition and experiences of women in urban populations differ from those in rural populations. Further, the conditions of upper class women vary from the conditions of middle and lower class women. Despite the expansive variation in conditions and experiences of Muslim women in the Middle East, there is a stereotyped monolithic conceptualization of these women that exists in the American popular consciousness.

In the present-day American conceptualization the Middle Eastern Muslim woman is oppressed and powerless at the hand of a fundamental and misogynistic Islam. Despite the prevalence of Muslim

¹ <http://pewforum.org/Mapping-the-Global-Muslim-Population.aspx>

² *ibid.*

³ The geographic classification of the Middle East pertains to a region of the world, as such, the nations that belong to this region vary depending on the scholar. Additionally, over time, the numbers of nations that exist within this classification has changed, due to the consolidation and creation of nations.

women in other areas of the world, particularly, Asia-Pacific, this conceptualization of women in relation to Islam is not ascribed to other regions. In this paper, I will discuss the shaping of the American conceptualization of Middle Eastern Muslim womanhood. Using the works of Edward Said and Douglas Little, I argue that the American conceptualization of the Middle Eastern Muslim woman is not based on scholarship, discourse or authentic experience, but rather is a byproduct of the American political and economic agenda in the region.

In his book *Orientalism*, Said explains that Western perspective of the Middle East is based on a colonial paradigm. He describes orientalism as a hegemonic, “self-serving view of Asians, Africans and Arabs, as decadent, alien and inferior, a view that (was) later used to rationalize (the West’s) own imperial ambitions...”⁴ Said explains that this colonial paradigm continues to bias and corrupt post-colonial personal and political views. In *American Orientalism*, Little furthers the discussion with specific focus on the America brand of orientalism. He describes America’s relationship with the region as being largely shaped by the political and economic issues of oil, Israel, the Soviet threat and U.S. national security.

The current stereotype of the veiled and oppressed Middle Eastern woman is born of the nation’s political and economic agenda in the region and is served to the American public through media imagery. The image of the Middle Eastern Muslim woman has not been static. As the economic relationship with the region developed, so too did the media imagery and in turn, the American conceptualization of the Middle Eastern Muslim woman. Through the media, the multiplicity of Middle Eastern Muslim nationalities, experiences and conditions have been reduced to monolithic representations. Little refers to this reduction as the “intellectual shorthand, reflected in everything from feature films and best-selling novels to political cartoons and popular magazines.”⁵ The media presents archetypical characters that the American public internalize to be representative of the entirety of this population. Through the media, the conceptualization of the Middle Eastern Muslim woman was turned into a commodity for American consumption. The internalization of this commoditized image in turn engenders public support of the national agenda that begot it.

From the late 1800s until today, there has been a drastic shift in the conceptualization of the Middle Eastern woman; from one of exoticism and sexuality to one of oppression and powerlessness. This shift is directly tied to America’s political and economic interests. This paper will explore the development of Americans’ shifting conceptualizations of the Middle Eastern Muslim woman focusing on four archetypical characters. The first two characters present the woman of the Orient⁶ as an exotic, sexualized being. Little Egypt was a famous belly dancer from the 1890s and Fatima was the seductive Turkish character whose image covered Liggett & Myers cigarette boxes in the 1920s. Both archetypes meant to stir sexual interest, curiosity and a desire for the exotic. As America’s relationship with the region progressed from one of intrigue and exploration to one of dependence for natural resources and dependence as a strategic geographic blockade against the spread of Soviet influence, so too did the media imagery and the American conceptualization of the Middle Eastern woman.

America’s military engagement in the region was presented to the American public as support of freedom and liberty in the region. It was under these conditions that the “Afghan Girl,” the iconic image of an Afghan refugee that covered the June 1985 National Geographic Magazine and later the

⁴ Little, 10

⁵ Little, 10

⁶ Orient a term derived from the term oriens, latin for East refers to the region of the world East of Europe. This term pre-dates the used of the term Middle East

unidentifiable woman in a burqa of the 2000s emerged as the archetypes of the victimized Middle Eastern Muslim woman.

Prior to the 1800s Americans knew very little about the Middle East. In 1776 what little the average American knew about the Middle East and its people came from the King James *Bible*, in its mention of people from Arab lands, and from Sheherazad's *One Thousand and One Nights*, a collection of folk stories from South Asia and the Middle East.⁷ By 1869, Mark Twain's *Innocents Abroad*, became Americans' major source of information about the Middle East selling 100,000 copies⁸ within two years. This novel recounts Twain's experience travelling to Europe and the Middle East. Twain presents Muslims as "a people by nature and training filthy, brutish, ignorant, unprogressive and superstitious."⁹

Mosques are plenty, churches are plenty, graveyards are plenty, but morals and whiskey are scarce. The Koran does not permit Mohammedans to drink. Their natural instincts do not permit them to be moral. They say the Sultan has eight hundred wives. This almost amounts to bigamy. It makes our cheeks burn with shame to see such a thing permitted here in Turkey.

Chapter 34

Greek, Turkish and Armenian morals consist only in attending church regularly on the appointed Sabbaths, and in breaking the ten commandments all the balance of the week. It comes natural to them to lie and cheat in the first place, and then they go on and improve on nature until they arrive at perfection.

Chapter 34

Although most of his interactions are with men of the region, in *Innocents Abroad* Twain presents glimpses of women. These women were covered, seen and not heard.

...about are squads of Turkish women, draped from chin to feet in flowing robes, and with snowy veils bound about their heads, that disclose only the eyes and a vague, shadowy notion of their features. Seen moving about, far away in the dim, arched aisles of the Great Bazaar, they look as the shrouded dead must have looked when they walked forth from their graves amid the storms and thunders and earthquakes that burst upon Calvary that awful night of the Crucifixion. A street in Constantinople is a picture which one ought to see once—not oftener.

Chapter 33

All the veiled women we had seen yet, nearly, left their eyes exposed, but numbers of these in Damascus completely hid the face under a close-drawn black veil that made the woman look like a mummy. If ever we caught an eye exposed it was quickly hidden from our contaminating Christian vision

Chapter 45

Oriental women, came down in their old Oriental way, and carried off jars of the water on their heads, just as they did three thousand years ago, and just as they will do fifty thousand years hence if any of them are still left on earth.

Chapter 54

In 1893 the American public had its first direct exposure to the woman of the Orient during the World's Columbian Exposition, also known as World's Fair in Chicago. The exhibition "Street in

⁷ Little, 13

⁸ *ibid*

⁹ Little, 14

Cairo” provided the 25 million¹⁰ tourists with Islamic architecture and Egyptian actors, forming a colorful stage set, where tourists could buy exotic souvenirs and ride on donkeys and camels.”¹¹ It was in this exhibition that the American public was exposed to a female dancing group from the Orient. “The basic movements employed by the performers highlighted the free flow of energy to every part of the female body that society ladies’ corsets were meant to restrict.”¹² The juxtaposition of the woman of the Orient to the Victorian American woman is a striking contrast to the paradigm that exists today. This belly-dancing troupe provided an open display of female sexuality; they were exotic, erotic and taboo.

Following the fair, Americans’ fascination with belly dancing as an erotic art form grew and was commonly included in burlesque dance and vaudeville shows.¹³ Farida Mazar Spyropoulos was a Syrian dancer in the troupe who bore the stage name Little Egypt. (Image 1) With the growing popularity of this style of dance, other dancers adopted the moniker “Little Egypt.” In addition to the dancers and troupes that were inspired by the exhibition, Thomas Edison’s Film Production Company created two popular film shorts *Princess Rajah* and *Ella Lola* featuring young women performing belly dances.

The American public received another image of the sexualized Middle Eastern woman through the Fatima cigarette ads of the 1920s. (Image 2) Fatima cigarettes were produced by Liggett & Myers, a Virginia-based tobacco company. Fatima cigarettes were marketed as “an exotic blend of Turkish tobaccos.” The woman on the carton is seductively veiled with a transparent cover of her nose and mouth. The ads have implicit sexual connotations with slogans such as “it gives better satisfaction” and “Have you had the pleasure?” Images created by the tobacco company etched a seductive character into the American consciousness. Because of limited alternative images, this image of Fatima became the dominant image of Middle Eastern women in the American conceptualization. This popular image was manufactured by an American cigarette company, and thereby reflects America economic interest in the region.

Through the characters Little Egypt and Fatima, the American public received sexualized archetypes of the Middle Eastern woman. She was a great deviation from the veiled and robed woman described by Twain, and she was also a deviation from the standards of American-womanhood espoused during the early late 1800s and 1900s. Through these characters the Middle Eastern woman was conceptualized divorced of Islam. She was a source of intrigue, exoticism and entertainment.

The characters of Little Egypt and Fatima were reflective of America’s limited engagement with the region. America’s relationship with the region was unofficially governed by the policy of non-interventionism into Europe’s affairs, established under the Monroe Doctrine.¹⁴ Britain and France were the main imperial powers in the region and America did not intervene in what was interpreted to be their colonial lands. During this time period, America’s involvement in the region was limited to missionary work, philanthropy and some business.¹⁵ From the 1920’s to the 1940’s America’s activity in the region expanded from one of relief and philanthropy to one of exploration of oil. In

¹⁰ <http://www.chicagohs.org/history/expo/ex2.html>

¹¹ <http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/3894.html>

¹² Jarmakani

¹³ *ibid.*

¹⁴ Mousa, 19

¹⁵ Mousa, 21

1933 Saudi Arabia granted oil concession to California Arabian Standard Oil Company, beginning Aramco, an oil company.¹⁶ During WW2, America established air bases and began to develop economic relations in the region.¹⁷

During the Cold War (1947 – 1991) the United States and the U.S.S.R. never engaged in direct military conflict, however their political and economic competition caused these two nations engage in a proxy wars. Because of its geographical location the Middle East was often caught in the figurative crossfire of these two nations. Seeking favorable trade conditions and geographically strategic alliances, the U.S. and U.S.S.R. gave military support to some Middle Eastern nations. The 1979 conflict between pro-Soviet government of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan, and the insurgent *mujahideen* (freedom fighters) provided the two nations with the opportunity to engage in a proxy war in the Middle East. The U.S.S.R. later actively engaged in combat, and the conflict came to be known as the Soviet-Afghan War. America's involvement was through the indirect support of various militias fighting against the Soviets, as well as through support of Afghan refugees. During the war, America was the largest donor to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugee fund for Afghan refugees.¹⁸ America's support of the Afghan refugees and anti-Soviet militia forces were strategic plays in the competition against the U.S.S.R. to gain and maintain favorable relationships with, and in some cases, domination of the oil-rich region.

During this period, the mainstream image of the Middle Eastern Muslim women changed drastically from the sexualized figures of Little Egypt and Fatima into one of a victim of the Soviets. Steve McCurry's *National Geographic* photograph of the "Afghan Girl" became the iconic image of that era.¹⁹ (Image 3) The image is a part of a piece on the Soviet's invasion of Afghanistan. Living in Pakistan, having fled her home in Afghanistan the Afghan girl is depicted as one of the millions of women who are seeking peace and safety away from the Soviet attacker.

The image of the Afghan girl and several other similar media images became part of a campaign that portrayed the women of this region as victims, and the Soviets as villains. The result of this campaign was that it elicited the sympathy of the American people as well as their political support of the expenses made to protect political and economic goals. America's financial support of the region during the Soviet-Afghan War was linked to political desire to arrest the spread of Soviet influence, as well as by economic goals to protect oil sources.

In 2001, the media imagery of the victimized Middle Eastern Muslim woman became more extreme. On September 11, 2001, America was attacked by Al Queda terrorists. The pursuit of terrorists led America back to Afghanistan, launching America's War on Terror. In his September 20th, 2001 address to a joint session of Congress, President George W. Bush, described the conflict as one about freedom:

On September the 11th, enemies of freedom committed an act of war against our country... Tonight, we are a country awakened to danger and called to defend freedom... All of this was brought upon us in a single day, and night fell on a different world, a world where freedom itself is under attack... They hate our freedoms: our freedom of religion, our freedom of speech, our freedom to vote and assemble and

¹⁶ www.saudiaramco.com

¹⁷ Mousa, 21

¹⁸ <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2002/04/afghan-girl/index-text>

¹⁹ This young woman remained nameless throughout the 1985 article. It was not until 2002, when Steve McCurry sought to follow up on his image that we learn the name of this young woman, Sharbat Gula.

disagree with each other... This is not, however, just America's fight. And what is at stake is not just America's freedom. This is the world's fight. This is civilization's fight. This is the fight of all who believe in progress and pluralism, tolerance and freedom... I will not yield, I will not rest, I will not relent in waging this struggle for freedom and security for the American people.²⁰

The American War on Terror was framed not only as a war to protect American freedom, but also as a war to bring freedom to the oppressed of the region. To promote the rhetoric of freedom that pervaded the War on Terror, the media portrayed an image of the oppressed unidentifiable woman in a burqa. (Image 4) “American and British media demonized the burqa as “Afghanistan’s veil of terror,” a tool of extremists and the epitome of political and sexual repression.”²¹ Through the media imagery, the American conceptualization of the Middle Eastern Muslim woman was that of a victim under the hand of an oppressive Muslim regime.

Influenced by the current predominate image of the burqa-wearing Middle Eastern Muslim woman, present-day feminist discourse on the condition of the Middle Eastern Muslim women is often focused on the veil, or more accurately, the garb of Muslim women. Critics of the garb argue that they inhibit movement, they isolate women from society, and that they close off the sensory realm. Proponents of the veil and burqa argue that “the covering of the Muslim woman is not oppression but a liberation from the shackles of male scrutiny and the standards of attractiveness.”²²

Proponents of the veil and other forms of modest dress base their beliefs in chapter 24, verse 31 of the Qur’an. The Center for Muslim-Jewish Engagement of the University of Southern California provides three translations of the text:

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

PICKTHAL: And tell the believing women to lower their gaze and be modest, and to display of their adornment only that which is apparent, and to draw their veils over their bosoms, and not to reveal their adornment save to their own husbands or fathers or husbands' fathers, or their sons or their husbands' sons, or their brothers or their brothers' sons or sisters' sons, or their women, or their slaves, or male attendants who lack vigour, or children who know naught of women's nakedness. And let them not stamp their feet so as to reveal what they hide of their adornment. And turn unto Allah together, O believers, in order that ye may succeed.

SHAKIR: And say to the believing women that they cast down their looks and guard their private parts and do not display their ornaments except what appears thereof, and let them wear their head-coverings over their bosoms, and not display their ornaments except to their husbands or their fathers, or the fathers of their husbands, or their sons, or the sons of their husbands, or their brothers, or their brothers' sons, or their sisters' sons, or their women, or those whom their right hands possess, or the male servants not

²⁰ <http://archives.cnn.com/2001/US/09/20/gen.bush.transcript/> (Transcript of President Bush’s address, September 20, 2001.

²¹ McLarney

²² <http://www.jannah.org/sisters/hijbene.html>

having need (of women), or the children who have not attained knowledge of what is hidden of women; and let them not strike their feet so that what they hide of their ornaments may be known; and turn to Allah all of you, O believers! so that you may be successful. ²³

Muslim women and cultures have interpreted these commands differently and wear different types of clothing. The word *hijab* generally means clothing, but is commonly used to mean headscarf. A *burqa* or *abaya* (Image 5) is a cloak-like garment that covers all but the head and hands. The *jilbab* (Image 6) is an outer-garment that covers all but the head and hands and worn over the regular clothing. A *khimar* (Image 7) is a type of head covering that also covers the ears, neck and breast. A *niqab* (Image 8) is a face veil that covers the entire face usually with a headband that goes around the forehead and ties behind the head. The *half niqab* (Image 9) covers from the nose down. Some niqabs cover the eyes with screen.

Americans' interpretation of the garb of Muslim women is heavily influenced by media imagery and its context. When associated with America's War on Terror and as a byproduct of misogynistic governing powers, the burqa is seen as dehumanizing and oppressive for women. However, in Spring 2006, the burqa broke away from its reputation as a tool of oppression and emerged on Paris runways as high fashion. Designers such as John Galiano for Christian Dior, Carolina Herrera and Givenchy all featured burqas in their exhibitions.²⁴ (Images 10 -12) In July 2007, burqas and veils were featured in *Vogue* magazine. Joan Juliet Buck, former editor-in-chief of French *Vogue*, writes that burqas are "this season's sun protection. It not only keeps her skin looking young, but frees her from having to expose everything that other women display, the curve of this, the swell of that, the skin...I can see you, you can't see me.... I am safe and I am free."²⁵ When presented in the context of high fashion, the burqa takes on a completely different meaning from being dehumanizing and oppressive to being fashionable and emancipating.

The American tradition of conceptualizing the Middle Eastern Muslim woman as a sexualized object or as a victim has clouded the recognition and acknowledgement of feminism or female assertion of power in the region. The depiction of Middle Eastern Muslim women as a homogeneous group of powerless victims overlooks the way women transform their situations.²⁶ In her book *Women, Islamisms and the State*, Azzaz Karam describes three types of popular feminist movements: Islamist Feminism, Muslim Feminism and Secular Feminism.

Karam describes Islamist Feminism, the most popular form, as a feminist discourse and practice articulated within an Islamic paradigm.²⁷ Islamist feminism seeks to reach a higher level of Islam in which the genders are compatible rather than in competition. It seeks to reinstitute Islamic principles in which the traditional role of women within the family is valued. "Women are not less than men, but equally important in different ways."²⁸ For Islamist Feminists men and women are equal, but equality does not mean sameness. Western feminists commonly overlook this form of feminism because it does not fit the western paradigm of feminism. Muslim Feminism uses Islamic texts to show the total equality between men and women. This form of feminism argues against

²³<http://www.usc.edu/schools/college/crcc/engagement/resources/texts/muslim/quran/024.qmt.html>, Center for Muslim-Jewish Engagement, Translations of the Qu'ran.

²⁴ McLarney

²⁵ McLarney

²⁶ Bahramitash

²⁷ Ahmadi

²⁸ Afkhami (22)

patriarchal hierarchies, and believes that men and women are equal in all areas of life. Secular Feminism simply seeks to empower women and is not grounded in Islam.

The development of internet infrastructure is providing a new frontier for feminist discourse in the Middle East. The internet has enabled women, veiled by online pseudonyms and blogger names, to talk openly about political, social, and cultural issues, but also about their personal lives, opinions, feelings, and aspirations for the first time.²⁹ The online community, referred to by some academics as Weblogistan, has changed the way women in the region communicate to each other and the world about their lives.

The American conceptualization of Muslim women from the Middle East has changed drastically from the late 1800s until today. This popular conceptualization is largely shaped by media imagery, and media imagery is shaped by America's political and economic relationship with the region. These popular, monolithic images do not represent the multiplicity of peoples and experiences in the region. In spite of these media images, Americans must be conscious of the historical and present-day biases that shape popular conceptualizations of Muslim women of the Middle East.

MINI-UNIT OVERVIEW

DAY 1: MUSLIM POPULATION DISTRIBUTION

Objectives:

- 1) Analyze maps and graphs of Muslim population distribution
- 2) Synthesize population data to create population graphs

Material Included for Day 1:

- Pew Center Article: "Mapping the Global Muslim Population"
- Worksheet on article above
- Pew Center Graph: Size and Distribution of World Muslim Population with questions
- Pew Center Weighted Map of World Distribution of Muslim Population
- Worksheet on map above
- (Source of articles, maps, charts: <http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1370/mapping-size-distribution-worlds-muslim-population>)

Student deliverable:

- 1) Text Coding Worksheet
- 2) Size and Distribution Graph Worksheet
- 3) Weighted Map Worksheet

DAY 2/3: POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY OF THE MIDDLE EAST

Objectives:

²⁹ Hendelman-Baavur

- 1) Identify countries of the Middle East
- 2) Synthesize country data into country profile flyer
- 3) Present country profile flyer using a class gallery walk

Material Included for Day 2/3:

- Outline map of the Middle East (Source: www.graphicmaps.com)
- Cut-out list of countries
- Country profile assignment description/grading rubric
- Country profile sample

Student deliverable:

- 1) Country Profile Flier
- 2) Country Profile Instruction/Grading Rubric

DAY 4: WHAT WE THINK and OUR SOURCES

Objectives:

- 1) Analyze existing knowledge and conceptualizations of “Muslim” “Middle East” “women” and “Muslim women of the Middle East” through small group semantic mapping
- 2) Identify their sources of information on Muslim women of the Middle East
- 3) Evaluate the comprehensiveness and legitimacy of their knowledge and conceptualizations through group discussion and short response questions

Materials Included for Day 4

- 4 worksheets for pairs or small group semantic mapping (Muslim, Middle East, Women, Muslim Women of the Middle East)
- Worksheet for evaluation of sources

Student Deliverable

- 1) Semantic Maps (completed in pairs or small groups)
- 2) Source Evaluation Worksheet

DAY 5: WOMEN’S POWER IN SPORTS, FASHION and POLITICS

Objectives:

- 1) Analyze image of Muslim, Middle Eastern women being conveyed in articles
- 2) Compare and contrast popular image to image being presented in article

Materials Included for Day 5

- Article Review Template
- 4 Articles
 - a. “Unveiling Myths: Muslim Women and Sport” (www.womenssportsfoundation.org)
 - b. “Iran's sportswomen adapt to religious custom” (http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/3570040.stm)
 - c. “Globalized Fashion a Political Statement in the Middle East” (www.policyinnovations.org)
 - d. “Cairo protest over anti-women vote” (<http://english.aljazeera.net/news/middleeast/2010/02/201021810571229586.html>)

Student Deliverable

1) 2 Article Review Sheets

ASSUMED PRE-KNOWLEDGE: Basic information on Islam as one of 5 major world religions
Use of Microsoft Word

MATERIALS

Mapping the Global Muslim Population

A Report on the Size and Distribution of the World's Muslim Population

October 8, 2009

SOURCE: pewforum.org/Muslim/Mapping-the-Global-Muslim-Population



A comprehensive demographic study of more than 200 countries finds that there are 1.57 billion Muslims of all ages living in the world today, representing 23% of an estimated 2009 world population of 6.8 billion.

While Muslims are found on all five inhabited continents, more than 60% of the global Muslim population is in Asia and about 20% is in the Middle East and North Africa. However, the Middle East-North Africa region has the highest percentage of Muslim-majority countries. Indeed, more than half of the 20 countries and territories¹ in that region have populations that are approximately 95% Muslim or greater.

More than 300 million Muslims, or one-fifth of the world's Muslim population, live in countries where Islam is not the majority religion. These minority Muslim populations are often quite large. India, for example, has the third-largest population of Muslims worldwide. China has more Muslims than Syria, while Russia is home to more Muslims than Jordan and Libya combined.

Of the total Muslim population, 10-13% are Shia Muslims and 87-90% are Sunni Muslims. Most Shias (between 68% and 80%) live in just four countries: Iran, Pakistan, India and Iraq.

These are some of the key findings of Mapping the Global Muslim Population: A Report on the Size and Distribution of the World's Muslim Population, a new study by the Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion & Public Life. The report offers the most up-to-date and fully sourced estimates of the size and distribution of the worldwide Muslim population, including sectarian identity.

The Pew Forum report is based on the best available data for 232 countries and territories. Pew Forum researchers, in consultation with nearly 50 demographers and social scientists at universities and research centers around the world, acquired and analyzed about 1,500 sources, including census reports, demographic studies and general population surveys, to arrive at these figures -- the largest project of its kind to date. (See methodology for more detail.)

Continue reading the full report online, including a series of interactive demographic maps, or download a complete PDF of the report at pewforum.org.

1 For a definition of "territories," see the methodology.

2 See, for example, CIA World Factbook; Foreign Policy magazine, May 2007; Who Speaks for Islam: What a Billion Muslims Really Think, 2008; Adherents.com; and IslamicPopulation.com.

3 See, for example, IslamicWeb.com; "Shia Muslims in the Middle East," Council on Foreign Relations, June 2006; and "The Revival of Shia Islam," Vali Nasr speaking at a Pew Forum event, July 2006.

TEXT CODING INSTRUCTIONS

- 1) UNDERLINE 4 STATISTICAL FACTS IN THIS ARTICLE.
- 2) PLACE AN EXCLAMATION POINT "!" NEXT TO 2 PIECES INFORMATION THAT SURPRISE YOU.
- 3) PLACE A QUESTION MARK "?" NEXT TO 2 PIECES OF INFORMATION THAT YOU HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Mapping the Global Muslim Population A Report on the Size and Distribution of the World's Muslim Population

FOUR STATISTICS FROM THE "MAPPING THE GLOBAL MUSLIM POPULATION ARTICLE"

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)

TWO SURPRISING PIECES OF INFORMATION

- 1)
- 2)

TWO ISSUES I HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT

1)

2)

THE ARTICLE PROVIDES MANY STATISTICAL FACTS. ACCORDING TO TH TEXT, LIST 3 SOURCES THAT WERE USED TO COMPLIE THIS DATA.

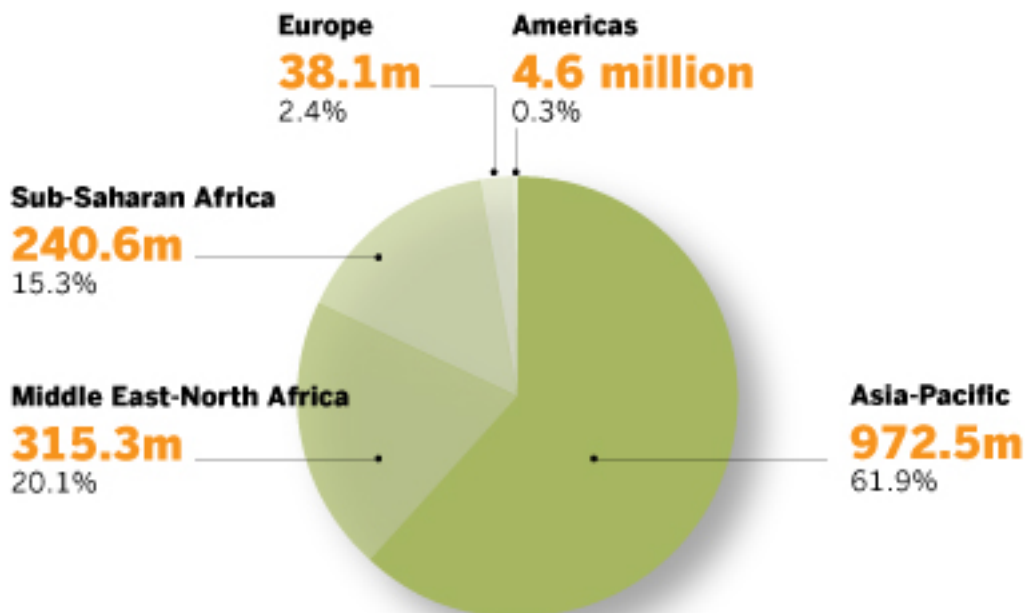
1)

2)

3)

Size and Distribution of World Muslim Population

SOURCE: pewforum.org/Muslim/Mapping-the-Global-Muslim-Population



1. What information is being depicted in the graph above?

2. According to the graph above, which region has the largest number of Muslim people?
3. According to the graph above, which region is home to approximately 20% of Muslim population?
4. Place the regions in order according to the size of their Muslim population from largest to smallest.

1. _____ (Largest)

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____ (Smallest)

World Distribution of Muslim Population Map

1. According to the map above, which 3 countries have the largest Muslim population?

1) _____ with _____ Million

2) _____ with _____ Million

3) _____ with _____ Million

B. According to the map above, what is the approximate number of Muslims living in:

1) The United States: _____ Million

2) Nigeria: _____ Million

3) China: _____ Million

4) Bangladesh: _____ Million

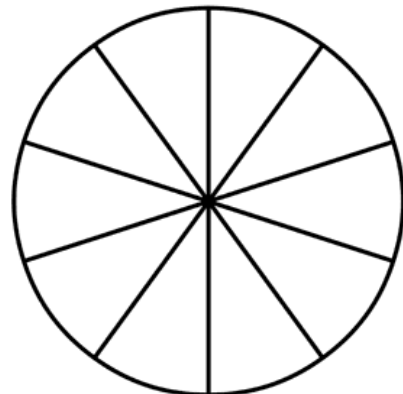
5) Argentina: _____ Million

2. According to the map above, which country in Africa has the largest number of Muslims?

C. According to the map above, which country in Asia has the largest number of Muslims?

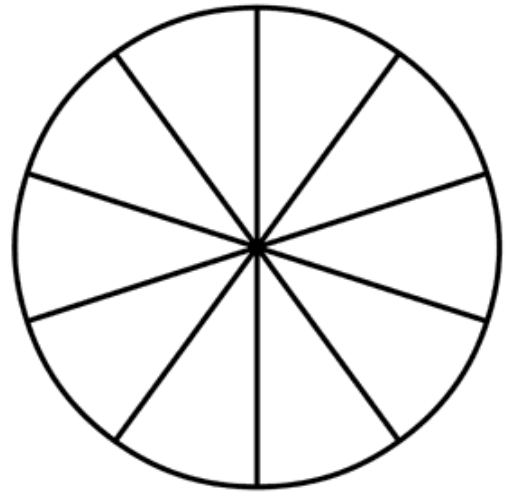
D. According to the map above, there are _____ million Muslims living in Egypt. If the total population of Egypt is approximately 80 million, what percentage of Egyptians are Muslim?

Depict this percentage in the pie chart to the right.



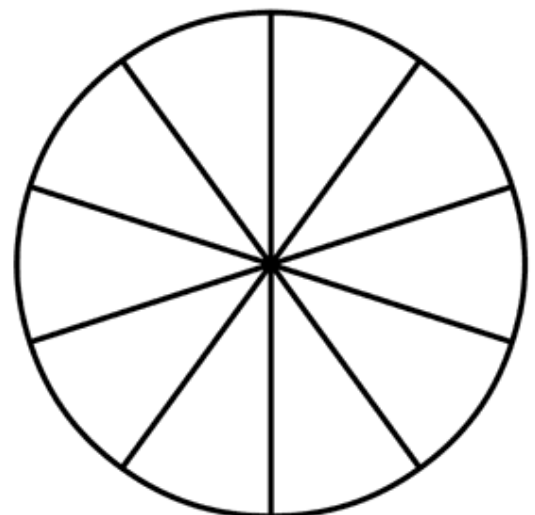
E. According to the map above there are _____ Muslims living in India. If the total population of India is approximately 1.1 billion, what percentage of Indians are Muslim? (Remember: 1 billion= 1000 million)

Depict this percentage in the pie chart to the right.



F. According to the map above there are _____ Muslims living in China. If the total population of China is 1.3 billion, what percentage of Chinese are Muslim? (Remember: 1 billion = 1000 million)

Depict this percentage in the pie chart to the right.



Name: _____

Date: _____

Instructions: Using your textbook or class map, label the countries of the Middle East region.

Middle East www.graphicmaps.com

Name the Country!

1 _____	6 _____	11 _____	16 _____
2 _____	7 _____	12 _____	17 _____
3 _____	8 _____	13 _____	18 _____
4 _____	9 _____	14 _____	19 _____
5 _____	10 _____	15 _____	20 _____

COUNTRIES OF THE MIDDLE EAST FLYER

Use as cut-outs. Allow students to select country at random.

Afghanistan

Bahrain

Iraq

Israel

Kuwait

Morocco

Pakistan

Sudan

Tunisia

Qatar

Algeria

Egypt

Iran

Jordan

Libya

Oman

Saudi Arabia

Syria

Yemen

United Arab

Emirates

COUNTRY PROFILE

Use Microsoft Word to create a 1 page country profile. Select 10 data pieces from the list below to include in your country profile. Include 3 images that depict the people, landscape or flag of your country. Use CIA World Factbook for country data. (See Sample Country Profile for an example.)

COUNTRY: _____

1. Continent/Region	19.	Labor Force by Occupation
2. Total Area	20.	Unemployment Rate
3. Climate	21.	Population Below Poverty Line
4. Natural Resources	22.	Oil Production/Consumption
5. Environment Current Issues	23.	Exports
6. Population	24.	Telephones
7. Urbanization	25.	Internet Users
8. Infant Mortality Rate	CRITERIA	POINTS
9. Life Expectancy	10 Facts	7 points each
10. Fertility Rate	3 Images	10 points each
11. Nationality	TOTAL POINTS	100 points
12. Literacy Rate		
13. School Expectancy		
14. Conventional Long Form Name		
15. Government Type	YOUR PROFILE	POINTS
16. Capital	_____ Facts	
17. GDP	_____ Images	
18.	TOTAL POINTS	

LEBANON

Lebanon is located in the Middle East. The capital is Beirut. The land area is 10,400 sq km, approximately the size of Connecticut. The climate is Mediterranean and ranges from mild to cool. Current environmental issues include deforestation and air pollution.



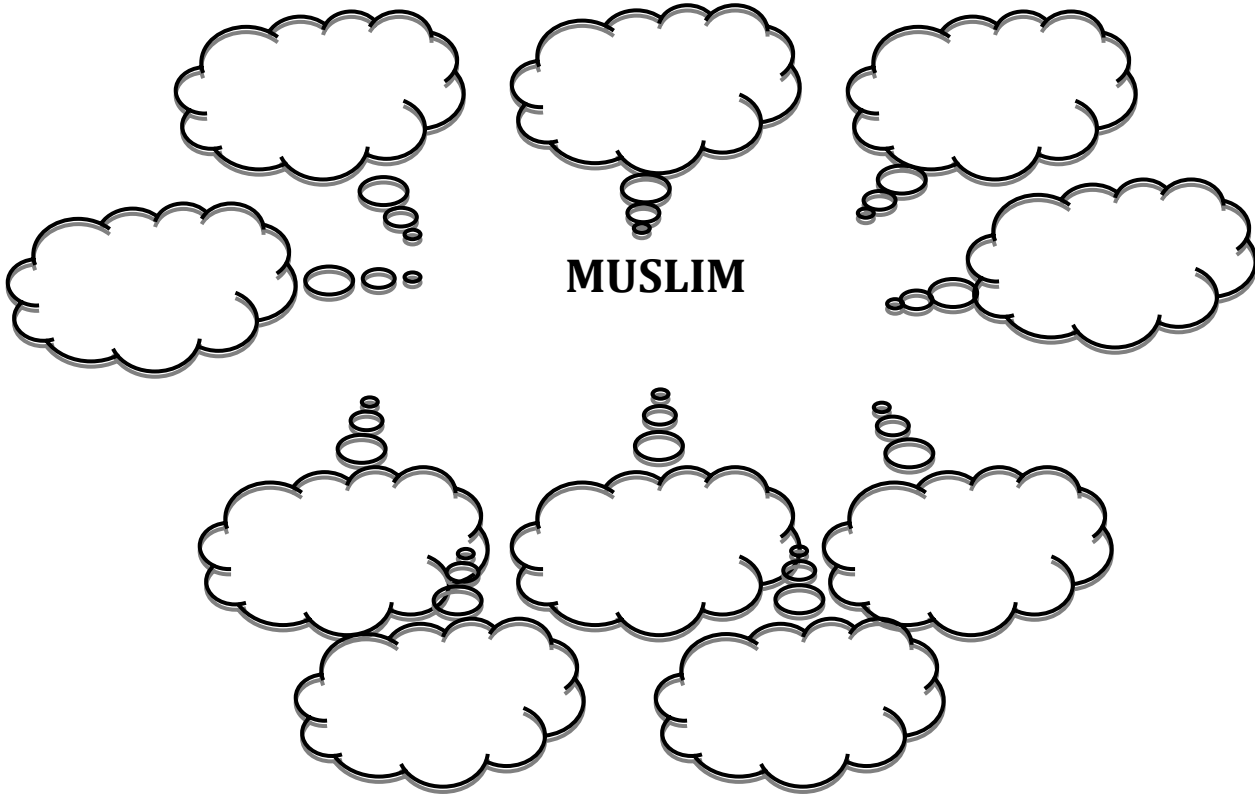
The population of Lebanon is 4.1 million people. The people are called Lebanese. 87% of the population is urbanized and 87% is literate. The average life expectancy is 75 years of age. 59% of the population is Muslim and 39% is Christian.



The GDP is \$53.68 billion. 2.1 million people use the internet.

Name: _____

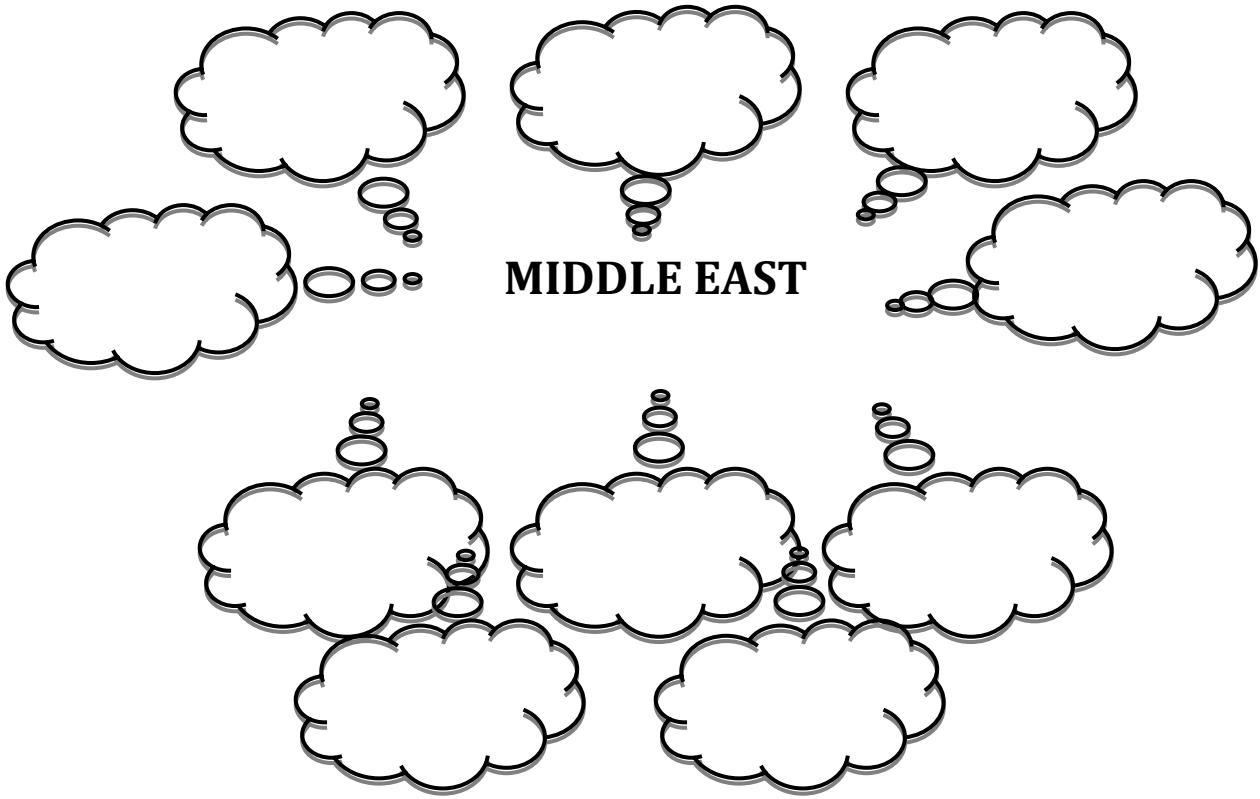
Date: _____



My sources of information

Name: _____

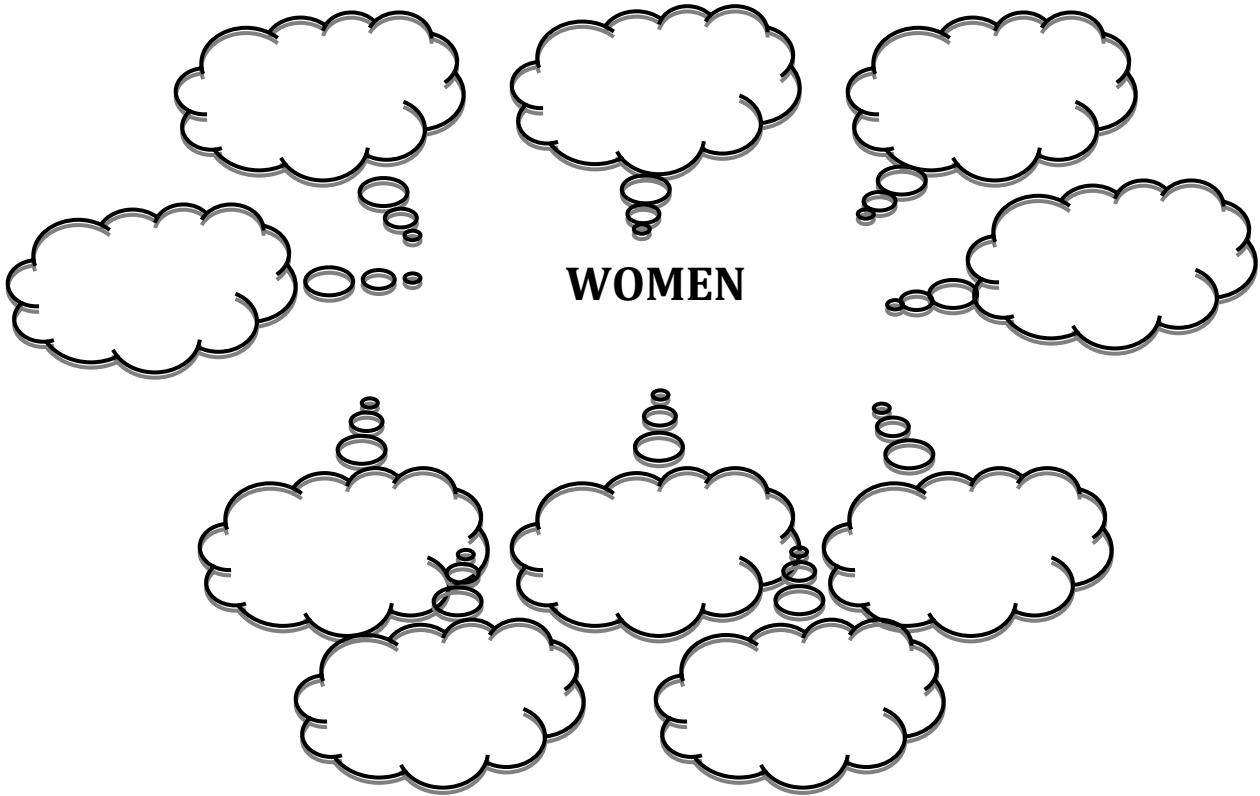
Date: _____



My sources of information

Name: _____

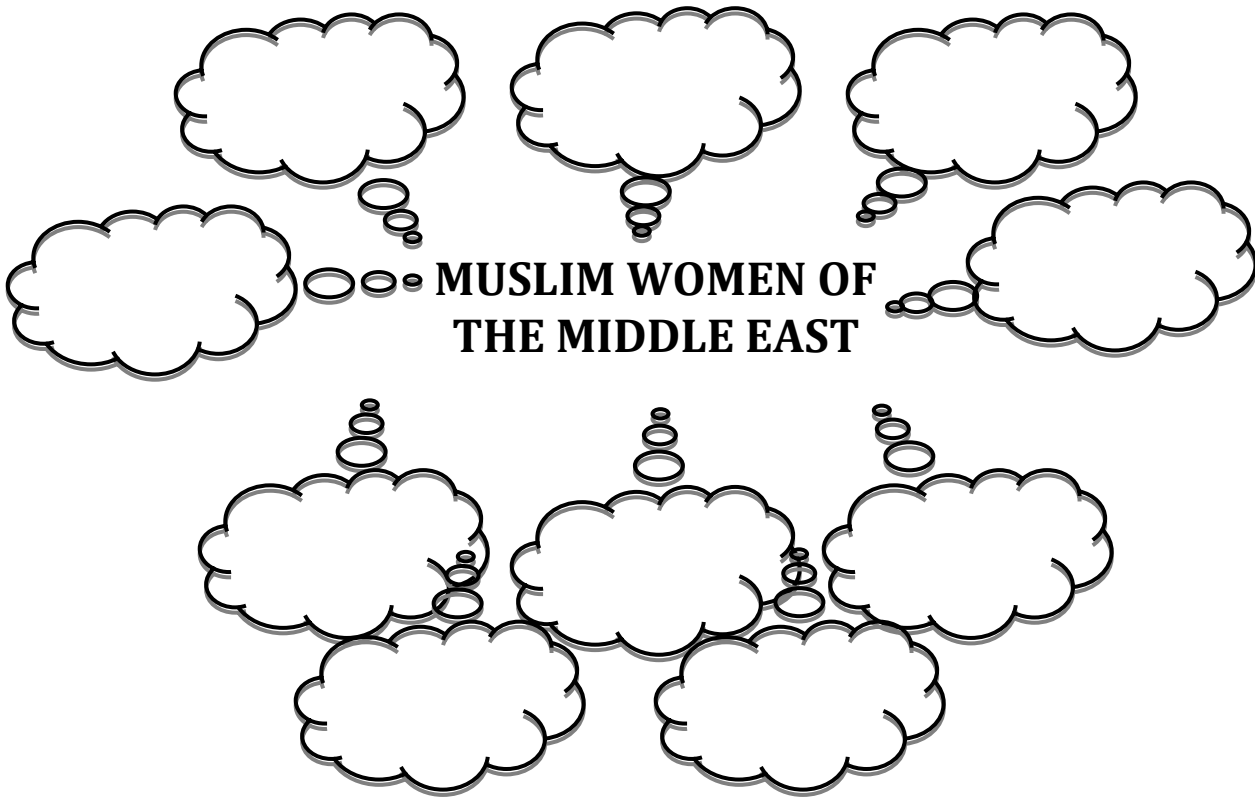
Date: _____



My sources of information

Name: _____

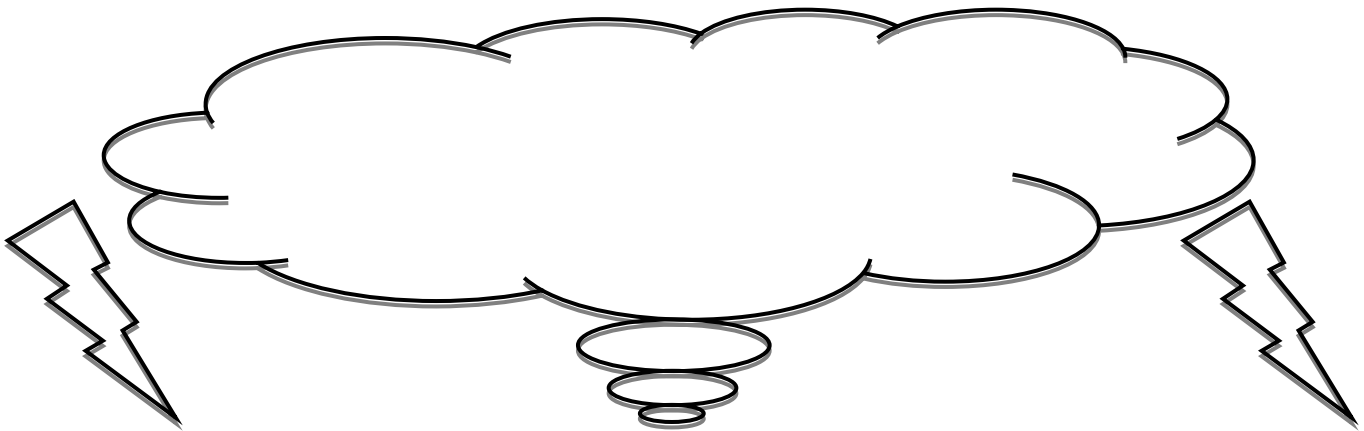
Date: _____



My sources of information

CLASS BRAIN STORM

If I wanted to get more information on Muslim Women of the Middle East, where would I go? What types of resources would I use?



Do you believe that your current sources of information on “Muslim”, “Middle East” and “Women” are reliable and valid? Provide 3 reasons to support your response.

My Opinion

Reason #1

Reason #2

Reason #3

Name: _____

Date: _____

Article Review

Instructions: Select two articles. Complete an Article Review for EACH article.

1) List 3 main ideas presented in the text

1.

2.

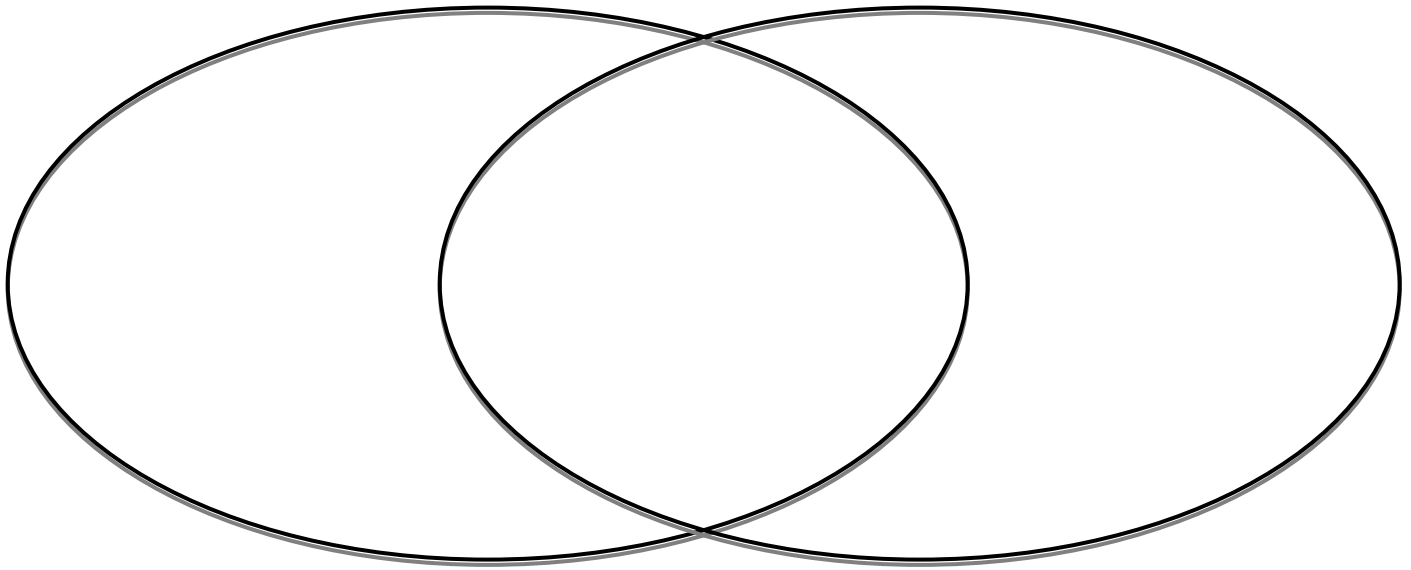
3.

2) What image of Muslim women of the Middle East is being presented in this article?

3) Using a venn diagram, describe how this image of Muslim women of the Middle East is similar to your previous image of Muslim women of the Middle East and how it is different.

New Image

Old Image



Unveiling Myths: Muslim Women and Sport

By Sarah J Murray

Published: January 16, 2002

SOURCE: www.womenssportsfoundation.org



Imagine a woman draped in a traditional Muslim headscarf and dress. What do you presume exists behind that shield of modesty? Do you envision a sports bra beneath those folds? How about chiseled abs and a competitive sneer? Although it is entirely possible that an athlete exists in the hijab, rarely does she exist in our imagination. Many Americans have been conditioned by media, politics and prejudice to associate women of Islam with notions of oppression and indignity. This pity is both disempowering and largely misdirected.

The Koran actually encourages physical activity among women - it is the interpretation and extremity of application of the Prophet's words that dictate the practical applications of Islam relative to women. For example, not all Muslim women follow the same dress code. Some interpretations of Islam mandate that not even a woman's face be revealed, while others have little or no clothing restrictions. Now, more than ever, we must raise our gaze and open our understanding of women's sports to include the diverse experiences of our Muslim sisters.

As our war tore through Afghanistan this fall, thousands of women gathered in Tehran, Iran, for the third Muslim Women's Games (formerly the Islamic Countries'

Women's Games). This event opened the doors of international athletic competition to millions of Muslim women who wear the hijab by addressing one of the most outstanding dilemmas these Muslim women face in athletics: how do elite female athletes compete in athletic attire when their interpretation of the Koran mandates refraining from revealing the beauty of their bodies to men? The answer - create a female-exclusive environment in which to play. The Muslim Women's Games were only open to men and photographic media during the opening ceremonies when women were covered. Once the games began, males were prohibited from attending, and women were able to compete in volleyball, handball, basketball and even swimming in performance clothing. Although the stadiums with seating capacities of 15,000 were practically empty, the energetic thrill of this athletic opportunity filled each venue. Seven hundred and fifty-three competitors enjoyed unprecedented benefits of a women-only sporting environment including no gender inequity and an all-female support staff - from coaches to trainers, referees and even journalists. The women taking part in the Muslim Women's Games were not pleading to play with the boys - they were creating a sports sphere to call their own.

The Women's Sports Foundation exists as the center of belief in the power of play in girls and women's lives. We believe that the benefits derived from sport are keys to universal notions of good health, confidence, success and overall happiness. To promote truly global growth of female athleticism, we must sow and nurture the seeds of recognition, empowerment and equality in Muslim countries as we do at home. It wasn't long ago that American female cyclists wore petticoats and tennis players donned corsets. What matters is not what an athlete wears to play but the fact that she participates and takes from the sporting experience. We have struggled for decades to provide women with equal opportunity in sport and have overcome both the prejudices and extremist discrimination that keep Muslim women's sports unexposed and underdeveloped today. For the sake of unity and humanity, it's time to unveil the myths and truly celebrate the glorious participation of all women in sports.

Iran's sportswomen adapt to religious custom

Miranda Eeles

BBC correspondent, Iran

SOURCE: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/3570040.stm



Nassim Hassanpour, a teenage markswoman in the 10 metre air pistol event, is the sole female athlete the Islamic Republic of Iran sent to the 2004 Olympics. She was able to take part in Athens because shooting is one of the few events that allows Muslim women to wear the obligatory headscarf and long coat, thus respecting the cultural and religious values of the Iranian authorities.

Nineteen-year-old Nassim Hassanpour concentrates hard on the target in front of her. Her arm is still and her grip on the air pistol is steady. She fires and the bullet passes through the middle of the target. Her face remains impassive as she reloads.

In the weeks running up to the Games, Ms Hassanpour was working on her skills for more than six hours a day. The burden on her shoulders was huge.

Not only is she the only Iranian female taking part in the Olympics, she is also the youngest competitor on the team.

"Because I am representing Iranian women I feel special. I just want to deserve to be there and to achieve a good result. If I do, it might inspire other Iranian women," she says.

Future star

Her coach Javad Kuhpayezadeh says she has the qualities of a future star.

"Marksmen and women have to be able to have good levels of concentration, otherwise they cannot be successful. They also have to be physically fit and self confident," the coach explains.

"She has all these qualities. She is also a gymnast so her body is well trained. We have high hopes for her at the next Games in China in 2008."

Shooting is not Ms Hassanpour's number one sport. Her passion is gymnastics but because of Iran's strict Islamic dress code, she cannot compete in it internationally. So when talent scouts came to her sporting high school in Tabriz, north-western Iran a few years ago, she decided to follow their advice and take up marksmanship.

"I didn't choose shooting. I wasn't even interested in it as I had a different concept about what shooting meant. But I'd like to achieve something internationally for my country so that's why I decided to take it up."

Long coats and headscarves

Iran won't exempt women from wearing the required Islamic clothing for events such as the Olympic Games. The International Olympics Committee also has its own rules governing dress.

The result is that women are increasingly turning to sports such as golf and riding where the strict dress code can be adhered to in public.

“ It's very hard for women to reach a professional level here in Iran, for the very fact that they provide us with fewer facilities. Basically women are not valued the same as men ” Nassim Hassanpour

At Enqelab sports club in the centre of Tehran, half a dozen women line up to practice their drive shots.

Dressed in loose scarves and long coats they say that although the bulky clothes are a hindrance in the heat they can at least play at all times of the day.

"You can't deny that hejab [Islamic dress] gets in the way," says Firouzeh Zamani, who has been playing golf for more than 10 years.

"But you adapt. For example I wear stretchy material which enables me to move freely and I tie my scarf behind my neck, not in front. It's a lot better than 10 years ago, so things are improving."

Limited access

The problems facing women in sport in Iran are not only about wearing the obligatory headscarf and long coat. Women still have limited access to facilities, with most clubs only open for them in the mornings.

At Tehran's largest sports club, there are six times more tennis courts for men than there are for women. The few that women can play on are covered.

"It's very hard for women to reach a professional level here in Iran, for the very fact that they provide us with fewer facilities," says Ms Hassanpour.

"Basically in our society, women are not valued the same as men. In the same way, here in sport, we have less, especially in my field where you need to have good equipment and a proper hall."

Some believe if flexibility is shown on both sides, then the situation for women athletes would improve.

"I think if we design a new dress code that will be accepted by the international authorities and stay within our laws, then I'm sure there would be other sports that our women can take part in," says Farideh Shojaie, deputy head of Enqelab sports club. Competitions designed for Muslim women do take place. The Islamic Women's Games allows women to take part in all sports in normal attire.

There are just no male judges or spectators allowed to attend. But for those Iranian women whose hearts are set on an Olympic medal, the choice of sport will remain limited long after the games in Athens are over.

Story from BBC NEWS:

http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/middle_east/3570040.stm

Published: 2004/08/16 13:59:47 GMT

© BBC MMX

Globalized Fashion a Political Statement in the Middle East

By *Negar Rachel Treister*

June 25, 2006

SOURCE: www.policyinnovations.org



Photo by Nick Leonard, January 18, 2003.

In a region where governments have long tried to curb Western influences, the women of the Middle East increasingly use fashion to make a political statement—blending Western concepts with distinctively Islamic elements.

In Iran, a black headscarf and loose-fitting black manteau (a long, coat-like covering) became obligatory after the 1979 revolution, but many women have challenged the state dress code by wearing colorful, fashionable coats with head coverings to match. The way women wear the manteau has even become a fashion statement in and of itself, with lengths and colors changing from season to season. In response, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad announced national-dress legislation last May calling for a boycott of Western fashions in Iran. Ironically, during the reign of the

last Shah, Iranian women challenged a government prohibition against head coverings by specifically wearing the garment in large numbers.

In Saudi Arabia, a country that follows the most traditional interpretation of Islamic dress, women have always had access to high-end designer clothing and makeup, worn indoors in mostly female settings. Despite its strict dress code, which requires women to don a flowing, black, head-to-toe robe, Saudi Arabia surpassed the more liberal Dubai as the biggest importer of German fashion products in the Middle East.

Western fashions and influences are not banned in Saudi Arabia, but sometimes adjusted to meet Islamic standards. For example, girls all around the Middle East have replaced their Barbies with Fulla, a doll with a Muslim, Middle-Eastern look. Fulla has displaced Barbie as a top seller in Middle Eastern markets.

In a similar trend, Elle magazine recently launched its Middle Eastern version, featuring glossy pages of women in conservative clothing and a mixture of Eastern and Western fashions. The first issues appeared on newsstands in Lebanon, Morocco, and Jordan in June 2006 and will arrive in Syria, Egypt, Dubai, and Kuwait in the coming weeks.

Cairo protest over anti-women vote

Saturday, February 20, 2010

11:29 Mecca time, 08:29 GMT

SOURCE:

<http://english.aljazeera.net/news/middleeast/2010/02/201021810571229586.html>



Dozens of Egyptian women and human rights activists have staged a protest in Cairo against a recent decision that bars women from holding judicial positions.

Thursday's protest came after the Council of State's association voted on Monday by an overwhelming majority

against the appointment of women as judges in the council, an influential court which advises Egypt's government.

Up to 80 women showed up at the protest with most of the activists holding up posters that read in Arabic: "This is a black day for Egypt's history."

"Three-hundred and eighty judges took part in the general assembly and voted, with 334 rejecting the appointment of females to judicial posts and 42 agreeing, with four abstentions," the Egyptian MENA news agency reported on Tuesday.

May el-Sallab, an Egyptian women right's activist who attended the protest, told Al Jazeera: "This move shows the flawed nature of Egypt's legal system because the vote is unconstitutional as it contradicts article 40 of the Egyptian constitution.

"The kinds of people representing Egypt's legal system obviously do not want women to be part of the decision-making process," she said.

El-Sallab said: "How can we talk about justice when those implementing the law choose to discriminate against women?"

According to article 40 of Egypt's constitution: "All citizens are equal before the law. They have equal public rights and duties without discrimination between them due to race, ethnic origin, language, religion or creed."

Rippling effects

The country's supreme judicial council, which has jurisdiction over criminal and civil courts, selected 31 women in 2007, who were later appointed by presidential decree. But the decision angered conservatives who said women were not suited for the role. Up until 2007, Egypt had only one woman serving as a judge who was appointed by Hosni Mubarak, the president, to the constitutional court.

Azza Kamal, a leading Egyptian women's rights activist who also attended the protest, told Al Jazeera: "This is a very discriminatory act and it will carry a rippling effect onto Egypt's culture because it tells society that women do not know how to handle roles associated with so much responsibility.

"In that sense, we, as women's rights activists, are losing the battle, we are losing the war to change minds and the present stereotypes that prevent us from gaining the rights that we are now being told to stay away from," she said.

Hossam Bahgat, an expert on human rights law and director of the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights, also criticised the judges' decision.

"I'm disappointed to see that there is a deep-seated bias prevalent among judges against women," he said.

Bahgat said the decision could technically be overruled by the Special Council, a supervisory body that oversees the Council of State.

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Sources of Images in Appendix (sites visited May 2010)

Image 1: <http://definitiveink.typepad.com/photos/uncategorized/littleegypt.jpg>

Image 2: <http://nuseiba.files.wordpress.com/2009/05/fatima-turkish-cigarettes.jpg>

Image 3: <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2002/04/afghan-girl/index-text>

Image 4: http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/ni/woman-with-burka_64.jpg

Images 5 – 9: <http://www.islamicboutique.com/prodimages/khimar-007.jpg>

Images 10 – 12: <http://www.millionlooks.com/images/abaya-show-02.jpg>.

APPENDIX



Image 1. Little Egypt

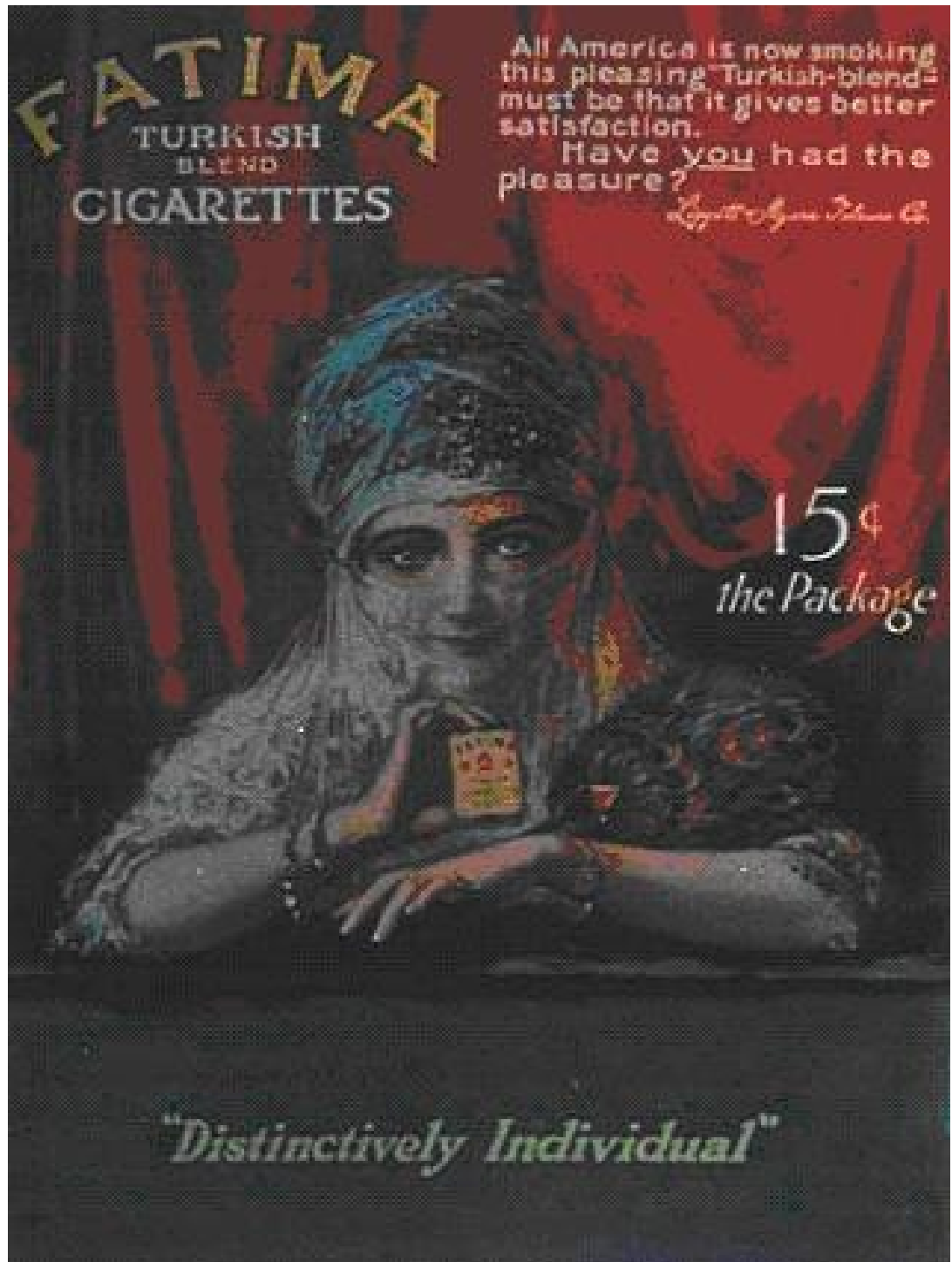


Image 2. Fatima advertisement c. 1920

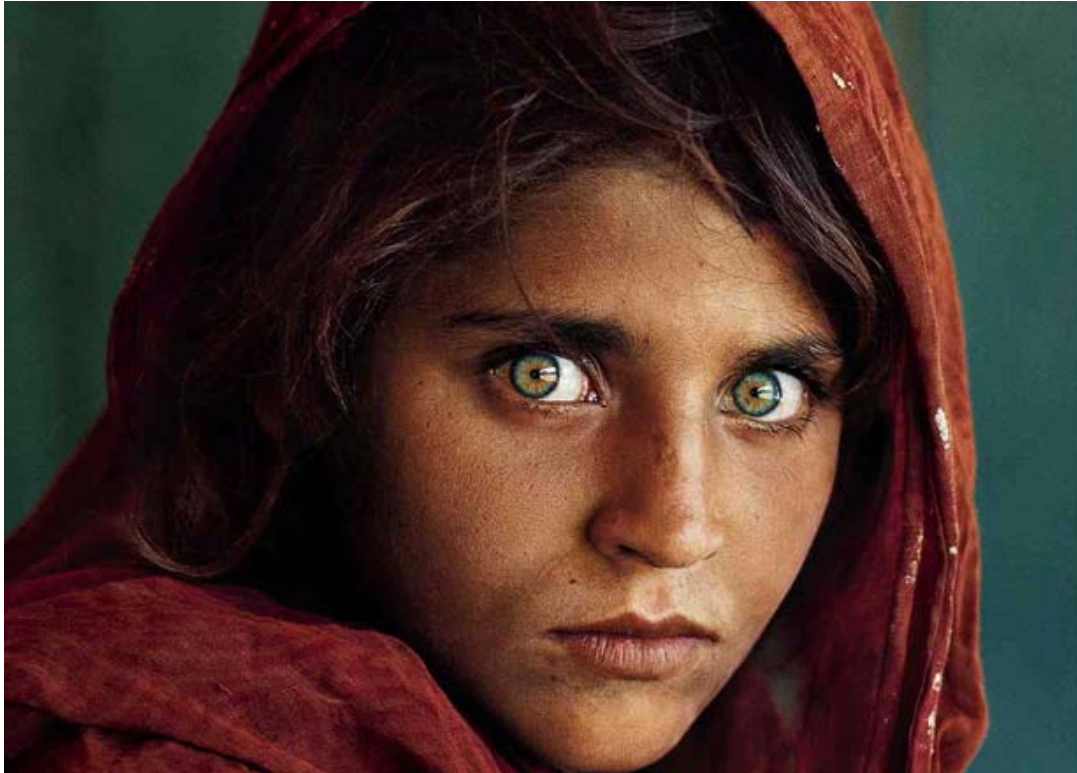


Image 3. "Afghan Girl" *National Geographic*, 1985.



Image 4. Unidentifiable Women In Burqa and Niquab

Image 5. Burqu or Abaya



Image 6. Jilbab



Image 7. Khimar



Image 8. Niqab





Image 9. Half-Niqab

Image 10. Burqa as high fashion



Image 11. Burqa as high fashion



Image 12: Burqa as high fashion

