REFASHIONING THE HIJAB:
NEGOTIATING PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SPACE IN THE MATERIAL AND VIRTUAL WORLDS OF IRANIAN WOMAN

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Abstract

In this thesis, I explore the commodification of the *hijab* in Iran through the attempts of fashion designers who are forming a new and growing market for Islamic modesty dress to represent their designs and fashion merchandise in 'public' spaces. In particular, I focus on how these designers find ways to circumvent some of the state restrictions by using the virtual sphere, with a focus on how they focus their advertising in "counterpublics" which are in this case social media sites such as Instagram. These forms of media provide a special sphere in which individuals can display another part of their everyday life which they are not able to advertise or even exhibit in Iran's 'public' spaces. The thesis examines the historical context and chronology of modesty-dress regulations and legislations by the Islamic state, and analyses the construction of illegality and how laws that limit and confuse the limits of modesty dress for women operate as part of the government's use of power to establish order in society. Furthermore, the thesis demonstrates how the government controls Iranian women in two ways: first the legal mandates on modesty dress follow the model of "technologies of power" as discussed by Foucault in his work on power - in this case literal state power to adapt laws to their needs; and secondly, the state polices the bodies of women through "technologies of the self" where women fear the undefined boundary of the law and thus self-police their dress as a means of trying not to break the laws. The emerging fashion designers that I discuss in the thesis find ways to actively circumvent these restrictions by using social media as a form of resistance, and also in terms of turning modesty-dress, which has long been a form of enforcement by the Iranian state into an object that can be commodified. My thesis provides a new way of exploring how young women – in this case fashion designers – challenge the state and the legislation put forward by the Iranian government that regulate their bodies by enforcing Islamic coverings in public spaces.

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Contents

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In the newly emergent "Islamic" culture industry, a series of images, practices, knowledge, and commodities are marked specifically to 'Muslim women'. Muslim women have been active participants in this industry as both consumers and producers (authors, editors, models, designers, and as business owners) (Gökariksel and McLarney 2010, 2).

Islam is the fastest growing religion globally, including a huge surge of followers in Asia, and given the vast audience of over a billion people, there is the potential for a huge market of veiled[1]/hijabi women that the fashion industry can exploit for capital gain. Despite the fact that Muslim women have long been ignored and marginalized from the fashion world, the emergent trends suggest that designers are eager to gain more profit through creating new consumers of veiled Muslim women. Well-known brands such as Channel, Gucci and Dolce and Gabanna have started to design new collections specifically for the needs and desires of Muslim women who wear hijab[2].

This trend in catering to Islamic modesty fashions is arguably developing differently in Iran in comparison to other emergence markets. This new fashion trend is growing somewhere between non-practicing Muslim designers and government politicizing to shape a new Islamic-Iranian Fashion Industry. Mandated hijab as a law with criminalized aspect makes it also different. In this research I trace how hijab fashions became commodified within the context of governmental cultural policies and regulations after the Islamic Revolution. I will explore how

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[1] "Veil" means "a piece of thin material worn by women to cover the face or head (Cambridge Dictionary)". Words like Veil and Hijab refer to some western stereotypes of Muslim women's wearing include head and face covering and sometimes the whole body but applicable meaning of these words is different in countries and historical periods. In Iran During Reza Shah era "Unveiling women" means banning women from covering their face but "re-veiling" after Islamic revolution doesn't refer to forcing women to cover their faces. Women were forced to cover their hair and use "Chador" or "Manteau" to cover their body.

Chador means "a loose female garment covering the body"(http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/cador-a-loose-female-garment-covering-the-body-sometimes-also-the-face). Women used to wear colored chador before Islamic Revolutions but after that wearing black chador became quite common among women.

[2]See https://www.ft.com/content/a5de6502-0283-11e7-aa5b-6bb07f5c8e12

the hijab or veil has become a fashion commodity in Iran even though the current administration's cultural politics are clearly against allowing this fashion trend to develop. My focus in this thesis will be on this virtual space or sphere and how it offers to Iranian women a way to represent their designs. I will analyse the emergence of this new 'counterpublic' or new sphere for Iranian clothing fashion in terms of what this represents in terms of the contemporary meaning of the practice of wearing *hijab* in Iran. As Warner (2002) discussed counterpublic refer to publics that are shaped in contrary to dominant public. "These kind of publics are socially marked by their participation in (special) kind of discourse(Warner2002,86)". The primary focus of my study will be on how the hijab has become a fashion item in Iran, and at the same time how the sacred religious hijab become a fashion commodity that contradicts the meaning and definition of head coverings for women after the Islamic Revolution. I seek to explain how fashion manufacturers were able to negotiate the tensions between the sacred and profane in changing how society interpreted the *hijab* as not only a religious symbol but also part of a developing fashion trend. The government uses different policies and regulations regarding women and it has been changing in relation to internal political disputes like holding fashion festivals and events. There is also evidence that changes in economic and cultural policies indicate that the government adopted twofold and contradictory procedures with regard to *hijab*, on the one hand holding Islamic-Iranian fashion festivals and live fashions under supervision of National Islamic Fashion and Clothing Foundation(*Bonyad-e-Melli-e-Mod-va-Pooshesh-e-Eslami*[3]), and on the other hand restricting access on the part of designers, models and consumers to the advertising, fashion shows, materials, designs and mode of consumption. How, then, do challenges and contradictions in government policies help this process of commodification, and how does this shift in the meaning of hijab occur in the context of governmental advertisement on Islamic dress?

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[3] See http://www.iranmode.com/page.php?id=3&news_id=477 , Also http://modelebas.farhang.gov.ir/fa/home

Veiling, unveiling, re-veiling, correct hijab, improper-hijab (*Bad-hijabi*) are all terms that shape women's everyday lives in Iran after the Islamic Revolution. It was a part of the discourse of government and was shaped by politicians and religious leaders in a process of power relations. Hijab as a part of Ideological apparatus of government is changing in the context of global marketing, cultural and political (engaging in capitalist world-system) policies of the state. Growing fashion designing add more colours and styles to women clothing in public spaces and this is simultaneously happening in government cultural and economic policies despite of contradictions. It leads to a self-policing among women as a 'technology of self' and makes hijab as challenge of boundaries of covering women's body.

Processes of modernization in Iran that impact this emerging market within the borders of the country are impacted by the specific national context of international sanctions and the role of the religious authorities in restricting women's access, movement, and fashion trends within this industry. 'Correct' Islamic dress, according to the standards of *Hijab* Law in Iran is one of the most challenging issues that women are faced with in everyday life. Iranian women face many contradictions about the form that 'correct' Islamic dress should take, and this has been modified many times since the period of the Islamic Revolution in 1979. "Women, who appear in public places and roads without wearing an Islamic *hijab*, shall be sentenced to ten days to two months' imprisonment or a fine of fifty thousand to five hundred Rials"[4].Sedghi (2007) explains how the *hijab*'s form changes over time, for instance, the black chador is a kind of *hijab* is worn mostly by female officials or more religious women or at religious gathering. The other form is wearing scarf with loos tunics and loose trousers, which is favoured by most urban women. Sedghi (2007) also adds that in 2002 many women worn colourful scarves and tight knee-high *manteau* in public places in Tehran. Also in 2005, short and tight *manteau* and

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[4] http://iranhrdc.org/english/human-rights-documents/iranian-codes/1000000351-islamic-penal-code-of-the-islamic-republic-of-iran-book-five.html

jackets with sometimes sandals became common in large cities. Women wore make up in streets and even in International organization they didn't wear hijab. In 2016, according to my own observation, some women in larger cities use jackets and *manteaus* without any button in front of them with leggings or long colourful dresses. The fabrics became more colourful and even sometimes transparent.

There were, and still are, plenty of social and cultural policies used by the government to restrict social resistances against restrictions on women's clothing. After 1979, head-coverings and the floor-length *manteau* became mandatory for women. Coverage of these changes in the international news media reflected inconsistencies and the Orientalist rhetoric that the US promoted to depict women in Iran as being second-class citizens who were subservient to the violent and 'uncivilized' tendencies of Muslim men. However, as is so often the case, the actual lived reality for women was much more complicated by the enforcement of the mandatory hijab law.

There are different discussions about different groups, their social and political claims about wearing rights and an important process of changing during years after Islamic revolution even in government.

As access to social media sites such as Facebook and Instagram have loosened somewhat over the past five years, veiling fashion has developed an interesting following amongst Iranian woman. Due to the limited space for developing fashion trends and marketing across social and economic categories of women, more and more designers are taking to Instagram to market their hijabs and *manteau* with the use of fashion models. Instagram as a marketing tool creates an opportunity for some designers to use it as a place to advertise and also sell their products. Even putting pictures of celebrities wearing their abaya/*manteau*/scarfs on their Instagram page is another way of advertising for these designs since they do not have access to other forms of advertising – such as in fashion magazines or on billboards within the

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country. These forms of media provide a new virtual space or in this case it can be understood as a "radical space". A Bell Hooks explains about "margin as a space of radical openness" these women "make a radical creative space (Hooks1989, 209)". Despite of marginalizing, these women choose a new language to articulate their presence within which individuals can for the first time display the many different 'publics' of Iranian women's lives.

One of the most startling aspects of this new fashion trend in designer Islamic dress for women is the high cost of many of the pieces, with some selling for as high as $850 USD. Not everyone can afford these designs. Despite the different price range of these products, they are assigned to middle class to upper ones. What is evident from a cursory glance at the fashion photography that the designers post to their Instagram and FB pages is that these are professionally photographed models in their early to mid-twenties – a trend that would have been impossible when the Revolution started thirty-seven years ago. Perhaps the most fascinating aspect of this emergent trend is the government's response through new policies and strategies designed to control and organize the fashion designing according to the strict and conservative standards of the Hijab law.

A historical context of modesty-dress regulations in modern Iran: Unveiling, Re-veiling

In 1936, the question of 'correct' Islamic head coverings was brought into the public sphere in Iran for the first time. The beginning of Reza Shah's reign is an era that ushered in the establishment of a new system of governmentality accompanied by a series of social and cultural reforms for Iran. On January 7 1936, the Shah shocked the country when he announced a ban on veiling, and in historical records of the period this event stands out in terms of its long-term significance for Iranian women for the next eighty years. For the first time, the modern state regulated women's dress, demanding that all women be prevented from veiling in public places. One of the dimensions of the experience of modernization and modernity in Iran is "the

generality of women's issues and review of its relevant policies (Sadeqi, 2006: 17)". The generality of this issue can be perhaps attributed to the turn of the century 'Constitutional Era' (A revolution that leads to first parliament in Iran), but it was Reza Shah who initiated policies that directly impacted women's dress and head coverings. An interesting and dividing figure in the modern development of the nation, Reza Shah "… favored some changes in women's status… Efforts to support women's participation in public affairs were expanded," (Mahdi 2007, 430). His emphasis on supporting women's participation in the public sphere was supported in part by his belief that women needed to be modernized in order to participate effectively in social, cultural and economic life of the nation. His banning of the veil speaks to these beliefs that women could be 'brought into' modernity, and could thus become part of the backbone of modern Iran.

One of the most important influences of the Shah was Mustafa Kemal Pasha who was at the time advancing ambitious modern reforms in the newly modern nation-state of Turkey. When the Shah visited Turkey in June, 1934, he returned with he returned with ideas and examples that he hoped to implement in Iran as part of a more serious turning point in his goals to modernize Iran to bring it in line with other modernized western powers. It was this trip that solidified the Shah's beliefs that until the situation of women in Iran – including their participation in social and cultural life – could not be advanced without significant changes to their everyday 'traditional' practices and rituals. "Instead, this trip to Turkey sped up the steps that Reza Shah already desired for his social reforms (Abuzarjamhari2005: 13)".

Many have looked to the first Pahlavi Shah's reign as one of positive modern reform for Iranian women, however, due to the fact that these measures were imposed on women, it is during the second Pahlavi era that we see a more balanced developing idea that promoted a social policy where women were given the choice of whether or not to veil in public places. Although the main difference in this era was more cultural policies to westernize the country.

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Even at the end of this era government approved some rules to oppress women who wear *chador*. The politics of unveiling was a part of the government project for a new Iran. Since this era veiling or unveiling has been a tool of the state to control women's bodies through a system of policing their bodies both within the home/family, and in 'public' by their employers, religious leaders, political leaders, networks of women activists, etc.

The story of women's dress codes did not end with the second Pahlavi era, but instead continued until after the end of the Islamic Revolution in 1979. From 1977–78, women were an important revolutionary force in the growing resentment towards the Shah, and as author Mahdi explains: "seeing this massive outpouring of women against the Shah, some younger, secular, unveiled women resorted to the chador (veil) in a symbolic defiance of the Shah's Westernized dictatorship and in solidarity with the massive women's participation," (Mahdi 2004, 433). Furthermore, "soon after the establishment of the Provisional Government of Mehdi Bazargan, Ayatollah Khomeini ...ordered the implementation Sharia laws in the country, and issued a decree demanding women dress properly (ibid,434)." As Mahdi explains, a female group of "vigilante group (*dokhtar"an-e Zaynab*) was organized to maintain state codes of female appearances in public (and even some private) arenas (ibid, 434).

In 1980, Ayatullah Khomeini criticized the state about women's proper Islamic clothing in government departments and offices. Following this repeated and continuous demand for women to wear 'correct' dress, the *hijab* once again became compulsory in all government Ministries and agencies, although this was initially considered an unwritten law. The first law on women's dress-codes was approved in Article 102 of the Penal Code, and approved by the Iranian Parliament on 9 August 1983[5]. This article stated that the women who appear in public without Islamic hijab will sentenced to pay fine and imprisonment, as I will discuss further in

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[5] http://iranhrdc.org/english/human-rights-documents/iranian-codes/1000000351-islamic-penal-code-of-the-islamic-republic-of-iran-book-five.html

chapter one. This process of politicizing the dress codes of women in Iran has since this time continued to dominate both political and social debates regarding not only women's head coverings but also their role and place within multiple 'publics'. Furthermore, this discourse has shifted as the government's methods of controlling women's dress and fashion has infiltrated their desire to exclude women from all aspects of resistance against the state on the part of other women but also as important voices in social debates on this topic. As Sharzad Mojab(2001) argues, "if Reza Shah used state violence in order to unveil women, the Islamic Republic, too, unleashed extensive repression to re-impose the veil on all Iranian women, Muslim or non-Muslim, rural and urban," (Mojab 2001, 129).

During the tenure of reformist president Mohammad Khatami in the 1990s and early 2000s, the regulations regarding women's 'proper' dress changed once again to support the direction of the government party's political and social reforms. Women gained the chance to partially show hair and wear more colour, and to some extent were permitted the options of adopting more Western-style clothing along with their scarves (head-coverings). Indeed, year after year dressing styles, make-ups, colours and headscarves have shown that change has been gradual, and shifts in unveiling and re-veiling have also impacted changes within the kinds of issues targeted by the state and the morality police groups like *Gashe-e-Ershad* who are a particular branch of the morality police designated in public places in cities to arrest women who does not wear proper hijab. In Iran different morality police were used to control the women hijab after Islamic revolution. The most current one is *Gasht-e Ershad* that its task is preventing improper-hijab(Bad-Hijabi) in public places.

Iran has had many different 'morality police' since the Revolution. *Gashe-e-Ershad* is the current one that enforces Iran's Islamic code of conduct in public. Their task is policing the proper hijab in publics and other mandatory rules about women.

Literature review

Previous literature about commodification of hijab by fashion mostly has concentrated on the contradiction of fashion and hijab as a modesty dress and the role of market in consumerism. In an article by Gökarıksel and Secor(2010) ,"Marketing and Consuming Women's Islamic Dress", the authors discussed *Tessetur*(A term used to refer to Islamic practice of hijab) and Fashion. They questioned whether *tesettur* is a spiritual term or a fashion signifier. They focused on *tesettur* industry as a fashion tool to service Islam. Focus group and critical visual was used as a method to gain the reaction and reasons of Turkish Muslim women to those *tesettur* fashion Industries through fashion catalogue pictures.

Turning symbols of Islam like hijab into a commodity form that can be commercialized are analyzed by some other literatures. Another book on this topic is "Expressing Islam: religious life and politics in Indonesia" by Greg Fealy (2008). In chapter 2 of this book named "Consuming Islam: commodified religion and aspirational pietism in contemporary Indonesia", Fealy(2008) discussed about the role of technology, information and growing wealth in the shaping a new form of religious expression. He focused on Islamic commodification and it role in changing "religious, cultural and economic life". But he argued about this process of this Islamic commodification in a general view.

Other recently work that focuses on hijab as a commodity which it focused on Iran is "Hijab as commodity form: Veiling, unveiling, and misveiling in contemporary Iran" by Rebecca Gould (2014). She argued reinforcing modern capitalism through mandatory hijab in Iran. She analyses the commodification process of hijab through feminist theories and tried to show how incorporating hijab into the capitalist system is shaping in Iran.

Work done by Gökariksel and McLarney (2010) named "Muslim Women, Consumer Capitalism, and the Islamic Culture Industry" focused on consumer capitalism, women, and the Islamic culture industry. They discussed the new construction of Muslim identities through

consumption and commodification. They examined the gender role in this new industries and how religion and society are both capitalizing.

There is also more recent work with focus on Instagram like "The Veiled Identity: Hijabistas, Instagram and Branding in The Online Islamic Fashion Industry" by Kelsey Waninger (2015) that concentrated on construction of "Muslim womanhood" in neoliberal society. As she wrote, she examined how hijabi fashion bloggers frame their Instagram to fit within the fashion mainstream and also the tensions of hijab and fashion.

My main contribution in my research is going to be about focusing on reciprocal effectiveness of governmental policies about hijab and women agency in changing expressions of shaping the veil to a commodity. Hijab and related laws in different countries is one of the important challenges of different political systems and also women as subject of those laws. Hijab in Iran is one the ideological basis of government and this characteristic put it in a different situation. Commodification of hijab and women bodies in Iran is more complicated than stereotypes that represent Iranian women as oppressed subjects in medias. Most of articles that focus on women Islamic hijab as a sacred object and modesty dress only analyses its contradiction with fashion. Cultural policies and challenges of mandating hijab law made a different situation for none-practicing Muslim women and also practicing ones (religious women who wear hijab without any obligation). What made Iran case different from other Islamic countries is mandated hijab and criminalization it by legislating and regulating.

My thesis is divided into two empirical chapters, the first will discuss at the level of the state (and in particular the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance) and its regulating approaches in relation to formal and informal spheres and their actors. I will also use the Foucault concept of technologies of power and technologies of self to show how these law and plans control women. The second chapter will focus on fashion designers who advertise their

Islamic dress fashions on medias like Instagram or Facebook, and their challenges with government as 'counterpublic'.

Methodology

A qualitative research method was developed in this thesis to satisfy the aims of the project. As Yow (2005) argues, "qualitative research does not involve manipulation of a few variables," (Yow 2005, 5). Drawing from the ethnographic works of ethnographers and sociologists, I developed a method that would allow me to use online media sources as well as in-depth interviews with participants that were Iranian fashion designers. Yow (2005) also explains that the qualitative method makes our research inductive, and different variables are interpreted as interrelated in the context of life. As she describes further:

One advantage in using qualitative methodology is that, because the researcher does not adhere to an unchangeable testing instrument, he or she is open to observing the informants' choice of topics. In this way, the researcher learns new things not in the original hypothesis—in fact, many qualitative researchers do not form hypotheses at the beginning of the research. (Yow 2005, 6).

I tried as much as possible to develop an interview question list that was broad and open to the possibility, as Yow discusses, to be able to change between topics depending on what the informants wanted to discuss. I think that this method was effective since I had to conduct some of the interviews over WhatsApp, and so it allowed the conversation do develop naturally. But there were also limitations, such as this being a very time consuming method, so I did not get the change to conduct as many interviews as I would have liked. I did 10 interviews with these designers.

Methods of data collection

For the purpose of this thesis, I used semi-structured interviews. "Semi-structured interviewing is based on the use of an interview guide. This is a written list of questions and topics that need to be covered in a particular order," (Bernard 1995, 210). I interviewed ten fashion designer who have pages on Instagram and have posted pictures of their models, and

are using this form of social media as a virtual space to advertise their products. I tried to choose my interviewees from different backgrounds (i.e. work experience, age, beliefs). So my sample covered fashion designers from different groups, and I conducted the interviews both face to face (during my travel to Iran) and also through WhatsApp (during the period that I was in Budapest). Apart from one of them that I connected to through one of my friends, I sent others a message via Instagram pages and explained to them my project and asked them if they would allow me to interview with them. Since some of the women have already had problems with the state because of their advertising and designs, I had to consider their safety and the future of their business online in protecting the identity of my informants, which I do in my thesis by using pseudonyms so that all of the names of the designers are changed whenever it was relevant to make them unknown to the reader.

My other method of data collection was using online archives. I used the websites of following organization to search the laws, reports and plans about women hijab in Iran:

- Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance

- Islamic Parliament of Iran

- Islamic Parliament Research Center of the Islamic Republic of Iran

I also used online archive of newspapers and related news about women *hijab*.

 Among those scholars who I mentioned in literature review, Gökarıksel and Secor (2010) used interview method and spoke with those women who use *hijab* fashion designs. I liked the way they interviewed with women and collect their data through their reflection on fashion catalogue pictures. But at the same time their focus is more on fashion industry in turkey. In my research I tried to use my data from both interviews and archives in relation to each other.

Theoretical Framework
Commodification of the sacred object: Commodity, Space and Power

The analysis of this new emerging sphere in the commodification of modest-dress in Iranian fashion design points to the shifting meaning of the practice of veiling in Iran. I started the research with the simple question: how has the veil become fashionable, and a fashion accessory in Iran? How does this process of commodification of veiling/hijab as a cultural/religious commodity occur? The government uses different cultural policies regarding women to make and control changes to their daily dress in public spaces, and as I discuss in the next chapter, there is a long history of the state using women's dress as a mechanism of maintaining social order from the time of the Iranian Revolution. I use theoretical approaches that are based in Marx's analysis of commodity as discussed and analysed in Harvey's work (2010), Warner's work on 'publics' and counterpublics, and Foucault's discussion of power and governmentality (technologies of power and technologies of the self) to articulate these changes.

The analysis of commodity," shows that it is, in reality, a very queer thing, abounding in metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties," (Marx 1887, 47). For Marx, commodities "acquire metaphysical objectivity through their social relations: 'not an atom of matter enters into the objectivity of commodities as values" (Gould2014, 222). I analyse the social relation of women's *hijab* as a commodity, including how this commodification changes the meaning of a sacred concept to a marketized one. I'm also interested in the role of Islamic Republic of Iran's governmental politics and how these shape this commodifying of women's modesty-dress. I show through this analysis how these policies work to commodify and marketize women's *hijab* through the framework of global capitalism.

Marx's critique of commodity in the capitalist mode of production in the first volume of *Das Capital* provides the foundation for my definition of commodity and commodification. As Marx states:

> A commodity is, in the first place, an object outside us, a thing that by its properties satisfies human wants of some sort or another. The nature of such wants, whether, for instance, they spring from the stomach or from fancy, makes no difference. Neither are we here concerned to know how the object satisfies these wants, whether directly as means of subsistence, or indirectly as means of production (Marx 1981, 27).

But as Harvey has also analysed much more recently, "in the form of society to be considered here" (i.e., capitalism), commodities "are also the material bearers . . . of . . . exchange-value," (Harvey 2010, 16). Harvey further explains that, "Marx was concerned with the capitalist mode of production not ancient or socialist ones," (ibid, 1). Commodities are everywhere and they surrounded us in everyday life. For Marx, the nature of commodities is not important, but rather it is the act of consuming – of buying commodities - that is important.

For Harvey (2010), the following factors are important in a study of commodity:

1.   Commodities are traded in the market,

2.   The commodity is something that meets a human want, need or desire,

3.   It is something external to us that we take possession of and make ours

(Harvey 2010, 16).

By applying these factors to my own work, I found that Islamic hijab fashions follow these three characteristics. The hijab, though it is advertised primarily on social media is traded in the market, it certainly meets a need in Iranian women to wear a fashionable form of the mandatory garment, and also it is possible to understand the serious effort of the government to create policies and laws that limit the scope of this market, that it is a possession that is both enforced and also made optional in the way that it is worn through the designs of these fashion entrepreneurs.

It is interesting that Marx considers a commodity to change upon possession, as he discusses: "as soon as an object steps forth as a commodity, it is changed into something transcendent…just as little does it proceed from the nature of the determining factors of value" (ibid.47). Since these hijabs also have spiritual meaning both in the context of the hijab as commodity but also in what the hijab represents to Muslim women. Marx also mentioned the relation between human being and the form of relation between things. He also then emphasizes the importance of religion:

> We must have recourse to the mist-enveloped regions of the religious world. In that world, the productions of the human brain appear as independent beings endowed with life and entering into relation both with one another and the human race. So it is in the world of commodities with the products of men's hands. This I call the Fetishism which attaches itself to the products of labor, so soon as they are produced as commodities, and which is, therefore, inseparable from the production of commodities, (ibid, 48)

Marx's ideas here can be applied to debates about morality and economy in the case of Iran, because there is a continued moral debate between political authorities in the government over this issue. In fact, the coherent concept of *hijab* is challenged by different Islamic thinkers and even the *ulema*, which indicates that the position of the hijab as a tool of state to police women's bodies is also changing.

What I also found was that changing economic policies in Iran also affect these new interpretations of the Islamic *hijab*. Fashion designers who I interviewed focused on how they shape their space on the Instagram as a public space. Using social media sites as spaces that resist the authority of the center can also allow us to consider these spaces of advertising as counterpublics as Warner (2002) discusses. Warner offers the idea that publics are ambiguous and unstable, and so they are "fictions of modern life," but they still have important meaning for how "our social world takes place,"(Warner, 2002). This idea refers to publics that 1. are subordinate groups, and 2. have unequal access to political power. These counterpublics also "define themselves through performances so distinctively," (Warner 2002, 73) that it makes

them a very useful way to think about what is going on when these women use these sites as part of their capitalist production.

Despite the fact that power operates across publics/counterpublics in Iran, this power is uneven. The state's "technologies of power" operate across multiple publics to shape the ways that women 1. design fashion wear in Iran - i.e., it caters to a ready market for fashionable Islamic modesty dress, but nevertheless, it is catering to modesty dress out of necessity - hijab is a mandatory garment for all women, 2. it operates in a counterpublic as Warner (2002) discusses because the state restricts it from the dominant public spaces, 3. it uses social media to prevent 'illegality' but also because this is a public in which many Iranian women live a prominent part of their lives - social media has huge meaning for a younger generation that spend much of their day partly on these sites.

How the government uses power against these fashion designers within these counterpublics can also be understood through "technologies of power" and "technologies of self" that are developed by Foucault (1991). As Lemke (2002) discusses, "Foucault uses the notion of government in a comprehensive sense geared strongly to the older meaning of the term and adumbrating the close link between forms of power and processes of subjectification," (Lemke 2002, 2). Foucault links the "technology of self and technology of domination," which he argues "are in fact through concept of governmentality," (ibid, 3) where these two technologies constitute "the subject and the state," (ibid, 2).

The 'technology of self' acts as a set of mechanisms that self regulates the body. This led me to the question of how these "technologies of the self" construct the modern subject and the body? It seems in Foucault's view the subject and the body are constructed through regulative and punitive mechanisms. The mechanisms that fuel these are often legal or institutional – part of the "technologies of power" but these also impact how "technologies of the self" affect the internal dynamic of women's understanding of how to 'correctly' wear

the hijab (Lemke, 2002). What I will develop in my analytical chapters is how these mechanisms operate for Iranian women fashion designers, and in what ways they resist the authority of the state to police their bodies and their position within the market.

In the introduction I explained the historical context of modesty-dress regulations in modern Iran. This chapter traces the development of the laws legislating the hijab as a requirement for women in public spaces in Iran from 1979 onwards. Through this development, I also trace how political change and power in Iran after the Islamic Revolution allowed the state to construct parts of women's bodies as illegal if not covered. Furthermore, I argue that the state government used these 'hijab laws' as a "technology of power" and a means of establishing order in society.

I will focus on governmental challenges about hijab within the context of broader shifts that have produced and reproduced the state's message onto the material corporeal body of the women. I want to draw attention to a chronology of state-development, political change and power after the Islamic revolution in the case of women *hijab* and show the construction of illegality and how mandatory hijab law as a "technology of power" works for government as means of establishing order in society.

Legislation and regulation of Islamic modesty-dress in Iran

When I was a young girl in elementary school I would walk to school every day and notice the paintings that covered the walls of the city. In one area, the walls were covered with these paintings, and the central focus was a profile of a woman in *chador*[6] that was drawn without any detail in her face. Under the picture there was a message for women, and it read: "It is addressed to you from Fatima (Daughter of Prophet Muhammad), Woman: The most valuable ornament of women is protecting their hijab". In that time most of promoting methods of wearing hijab in society were completely ideological and conceptual ways of referring to

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[6] A loose female garment covering the body, sometimes the face. (http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/cador-a-loose-female-garment-covering-the-body-sometimes-also-the-face)

hijab as a symbol of an Iranian Muslim woman. Years passed and I entered university and during this time I was an observer of changes of the meaning of hijab in my country. Those abstract slogans and drawing now turns to more objectified ideas such as chocolates, chairs. "From the outset, unveiled women became a social anathema but veiled women acquired revolutionary credentials (Sedghi2007,211)". The following two pictures are examples of advertising hijab during recent years specially in universities and cultural institutions. You can see in this promotional photos that how the designers of posters compare the privileges of veiled women to unveiled ones. As it is shown in the posters, concealing women's body with hijab is extolled. It is also important how those abstract and ideological wall-painting change to these concrete and commodified photos. These photos directly refer to women bodies as a subject.

Figure 1http://www.hijab-poster.ir/post-97.aspx

Hijab in Iran is not just a social or cultural characteristic of the society but is part of the political identity of the Islamic government and also plays an important role in policing of women and their bodies. The 1979 Revolution was a new phase in women's history:

> It revered veiled women as powerful revolutionaries, and it devalued secular women as Westernized, monarchical (*Taquti*), and indecent. The symbolic meaning of re-veiling became almost as potent as the loud voices of the participants who

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chanted "Death to the Shah and Imperialism" (*Marg bar Shah va Emperialism*) (Sedghi2007,200).

As I explained above veiling and *hijab* became a symbol of Islam and Islamic revolution and shifted the meaning of re-veiling to a part of revolution identity: Resistance against west. "Using religious themes and rituals glorifying women, especially those revolving around Fatima Zahra and Zaynab Kobra[7] as symbols of resistance to unjust rule, the ulama were able to bring these women out to open demonstrations against the Shah (Mahdi2004,433)" Articulation of religious ideology through these famous Shia figures and inscribing it to hijab as one of the aims of revolution was the way that the government emphasized on promoting it.

As Sedghi (2007) argues re-veiling plays a crucial role in "politics and society" . "As a poweful political symbol, it legitimizes the Islamic state, almost as significant as the idea and practice of the nation itself or the national anthem or even its flag (Sedghi2007,210)".

It is mentioned in an evaluative report by Islamic Parliament Research center on Protecting hijab plan "*Tarh-e-Sianat az Hijab*"(2014,Oct,25) that according to the Islamic Revolution discourse women as a part of family unit, change from an objective and commodified situation and regain their very important and valuable duty as mothers in bringing up believers. To reach this aim, considering the hijab issue is very important to government. It's not just "unveiling" that is prohibited by religious leaders and the government authorities but "improper veiling". Many challenges about hijab focused on improper veiling and many women were arrested during thses years for not conforming to hijab law properly.

The first law on women's dress code in the country was approved through the Article 102 of the Penal Code approved by Iranian Parliament on 9 August 1983 .According to Iranian Islamic penal code,

Chapter Eighteen- Crimes against public prudency and morality:
Article 638- Anyone in public places and roads who openly commits a *harām* (sinful) act, in addition to the punishment provided for the act, shall be

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[7] Fatima is the daughter of Prophet Muhammad and Zeynab was daughter of Imam Ali (The first Shia Imam) and Fatima and also The sister of Imam Hussein(the third imam of Shia). Both of them are great figures of piety in Islam.

sentenced to two months' imprisonment or up to 74 lashes; and if they commit an act that is not punishable but violates public prudency, they shall only be sentenced to ten days to two months' imprisonment or up to 74 lashes.

Note- Women, who appear in public places and roads without wearing an Islamic *hijab*, shall be sentenced to ten days to two months' imprisonment or a fine of fifty thousand to five hundred Rials[8].

As Comaroffs (2009) brings a quote from Benjamin(1978) that 'Lawmaking is power making' but 'power [is] the principal of all … lawmaking'. In sum, "to transform itself into sovereign authority, power demands an architecture of legalities or their simulacra" (Camaroff2009, 39). Hijab law was a sign of preserving identity and aims of Islamic revolution for the state. One of the slogans of Islamic revolution was removing the western appearances of the previous regime and hijab law and some other law making were according to this aim. Reza shah unveiling and other westernized cultural policies in his son's era are still mentioned by Iran's religious authorities and unveiling women by Pahlavi's dynasty is an important anti-religion historical event.

Here is a good example of what the government claims about the meaning of the hijab:

"One of the most important cultural objectives of Islamic Republic of Iran government is maintaining women dignity and avoiding objective view of them but at the same time, providing the opportunity for social activity of women. To achieve this goal, government tried to destroy the context of improper-veiling (*bad-hijabi*) as one of the appearances of the objective view on women by legislating in hijab realm (Islamic Parliament Research center evaluating Report on Protecting hijab plan "*Tarh-e-Sianat az Hijab*", 2014, Oct ,25)

According to Comaroffs (2009)

It is not only the politics of the present that are being judicialized. The past, too, is being fought out in court. …history enters the law in diverse ways, often insinuating itself into the cultural underpinnings of everyday jurisprudence, into its ways and means, its materialities and motivations. But we mean here something yet more specific: the struggle actually to repossess and reposition the past (Comaroff and Comaroff2009, 36).

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[8] http://iranhrdc.org/english/human-rights-documents/iranian-codes/1000000351-islamic-penal-code-of-the-islamic-republic-of-iran-book-five.html

It's not just about the ruling society and making order in a political-religious way, it is about as Sedghi (2007) discussed a new representation of women through an interpretation of "Islamic and Shi'I history". It is about a dichotomy of immoral west culture and Islamic culture and imposing social control on women through "law, culture and tradition" in a religious way. At the same time, this kind of law making represent its power against western culture as an Islamic state and emphasize on the elimination of irreligious signs of previous regimes. Criminalization of hijab also is based on this interpretation through religious history.

Comarrofs (2009) discusses that this kind sovereignty is built on cultural and religious differences. The kind that decline the contradiction between public and private. It has also inflexible ontology and inconsistency in its governance. It also may be self-limiting.

But this process of politicizing and legalizing dress-codes of women in Iran and discussions around that have continued till recent years. In fact, the government politicized women bodies through dress-coding. Different parts of this process change a lot during these years, for example governments laws and methods of controlling the women's hijab, women style and way of dressing, type of resistances and political debates on this topic. Both changing in political system and political economy helped this changes to happen. Also grassroots resistances challenged the political boundaries of the government. These big changes result in public debates between agreeing and disagreeing ideas on women rights and the domination on their public lives. In following parts, I will plot government/political changes with dress-reforms.

In 1986, related law was approved about the methods of investigation of violations and punishments of the clothes sellers and shopkeepers that sell clothes that are against law and public morals. After the passing of the laws, products that did not follow the correct codes of dress as established by the state were deemed as crimes of either 'improper-veiling' or 'unveiling' for women. As the law states, "these criminal penalties are applicable to all who are present in Iran, even those who are in transit, regardless of their nationality, religious

affiliation, or permanency or temporary nature of their residency," (Tamadonfar 2015, 63). However, the law failed to clearly define a 'correct' or 'incorrect' hijab, and this opened vast grey area in which the state could still negotiate its power over women's dress, and the state left it open to the interpretation of judges to decide if women had indeed broken the law. By passing a law with such vague language, the state was able to use the hijab as a strategy of implementing "technologies of power" since the transgressing or the results were entirely arbitrary. One of the many ways in which this impacted young Iranian women was in terms of what garments were now deemed fit for women's bodies to be allowed to enter government-regulated institutions such as schools and Universities. In most universities, girls had to wear a special head scarf called "*Maghnae*". Security guards of universities are allowed not to let a student with a shawl or other head scarfs go inside in some universities. The situation differs in other public spaces like streets, shopping malls, theaters and etc. In those places women use different types of *hijab* and are faced with other criteria to use them. Even women who are displayed in TV programs use hijab in a stricter manner (like TV presenters and actresses who play in television shows) than who play in Cinema films and theaters.

A very important point here is that undefined boundaries of hijab has two aspects: The first is that it let the government use the law with more power to control women bodies, visibility and movements and the other is that it makes the law a challenge-ground among people who don't believe in mandatory hijab. This ambiguity of the definition of proper hijab let women engage in this battle-ground and seek legal justification to push government boundaries back. There is no exact definition of hijab and the way that women should practice it in public places in the law. Also there is not mentioned in the law that what is improper-veiling(*Bad-Hijabi*). As Lemke (2002) discussed the Foucault's discussion, "The point is that it is not sufficient to focus on the destruction of forms of identity without taking into account the production of new modes of subjectivity linked to governmental technologies (Lemke2002,12)". In this case government in Iran controls the individuals in two ways here, as I demonstrate – the law is a

"technology of power" in this case literal state power to adapt laws to their needs. The other one polices the bodies of women through "technologies of the self" where women fear this undefined boundary and self-police as a means of trying not to break the laws, which can result in more conservative dress overall since it is safer to cover more rather than less of the body. Technology of self is "the strategy of rendering individual subjects "responsible" (Lemke2002,12)".

Every summer (because of weather in the summer more clothes with less covering are worn by women) newspapers starts to publish news about how some women wear clothes and challenges about moral police, oppositions and resistances about that. Every year many changes happens in the way wear hijab for example, the length, tight, fabric types, colors and etc. As I will explain in next chapters after spreading the use of social medias like Facebook and Instagram a new public space emerged that the government could not control completely.

Different interpretation and implementing of this law change during the emergence of different political groups and their interest in relation to international powers (especially in debates like human rights challenges and so on) and also political economy strategies. This wide implementing process change from confining women to wearing clothes in dark colors after Islamic revolution (blue, black and brown) in official places to facing cash fines for women drivers with improper hijab to maintain hijab law boundaries:

> Then, the head of Tehran's traffic police Brigadier General Teymour Hosseini warned women who loosened their hijab or weren't wearing one at all could lose their vehicles. According to the AFP News Agency, Hosseini was quoted on Tuesday as saying officials had recorded more than 40,000 "cases of bad hijab" since March. "In most cases, the cares were impounded and cases were referred to the judiciary," he said, according to the ISNA news agency. Those who were pulled over also faced potential cash fines[9].

The relation of the government and violence is also important in this case in using violent methods to cultural ones. The exercise of governmentality to control over lives should

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[9] http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/thousands-of-women-in-iran-have-cars-impounded-for-not-wearing-hijab-properly-a6774366.html

be discussed as an aspect of Iran hijab law. Another example of this regulating is a part of a news of Mizan online news agency[1] that referred to the "moral security plan in the squares, commercial centers, streets and highways" by using hidden patrols with 7000 troops to fight against unveiling in cars, improper veiling and etc.

On the other hand, those women in the society who don't agree to mandatory hijab or do not believe in wearing hijab resist in many different ways in different political periods from demonstration in 1979 to become active in virtual spheres in recent years and do not practice hijab in their pictures to show other parts of their lives. About the criminalization aspect of hijab, there is good explanation in Islamic parliament report on evaluation a protecting hijab plan. (Protecting Hijab plan is a plan was presented by a group of Parliament members that was criticized by Islamic Parliament Research Center.) A crucial point here is a plan was suggested by a group of members in the parliament to bold the criminal aspect of Hijab law, but it was criticized by another group in the Parliament. It's a good example of oppositions against some policies about *hijab* in the government. In the evaluating report it is mentioned that criminal aspect of government policies is inevitable in Iran:

> Reviewing the laws and policies of Hijab shows that due to adoption of Article 136 of Islamic Penal code with the subject of fines and imprisonment of women without religious hijab(hejab-e-shar'ee) from 10 days to two month, criminalization of "bad-hijabi" is an inseparable part of official policy of government in this realm, however policies were made in order to culture making about hijab and modesty (Islamic Parliament Research center evaluating Report on Protecting hijab plan "Tarh-e-Sianat az Hijab", 2014,Oct,25).

In another part of this evaluating report it is mentioned that there is a clear explanation about contradiction of government policies according to parliament report. It is also important that this report is published in Islamic Parliament and refer to the lack of consensus among policy makers:

> Regarding criminalization of improper-veiling/Bad hijab, there is not consensus among experts and policy-makers. So that we face two major theories(the

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[1] http://www.mizanonline.ir/fa/news/162226

report is referring to two different policies with two theoretical background in government[1]) in this field. One perspective, due to its cultural backgrounds attached to the inefficiency of criminalizing improper-hijab. Other view while accepting the effectiveness of criminalization believes that the reason of expansion of improper-hijab is lack of law enforcement and complete implementation by administrators. In other words, from this perspective, if the law was implemented in a correct and comprehensive way, the improper-hijab /unveiling didn't expand. The most important argument of this group is that the duty of Islamic government is fighting against any kind of moral corruption in the society. Since improper-hijab /unveiling underlies the growth of moral corruption in the society so criminalization and facilitation of the its process of implementation is essential (Islamic Parliment Research center Report on Protecting hijab plan "Tarh-e-Sianat az Hijab", p5,2014, Oct,25)".

During recent years, there are other hijab related laws and policies that I refer chronology of the most important ones and their aims. A very important part of these laws refers to cultural policies. But the important point here is the criminalized aspect of the first law that I mentioned before about mandated *hijab*. So these laws and policies play an important role as 'technology of power' as a tool to control women clothing in the society.

- **Organizing fashion and clothing law (2006)**

According to this law Ministry of Culture and Islamic Culture should undertake the management of this law. Article5 of this law emphasize that Ministry of Commerce is responsible for holding the seasonal fashion and clothing exhibitions that comply with Islamic-Persian patterns.

- **Executive Regulations of Fashion and clothing law (2008)**

According to this document different Ministries should commit their duties due to the Organizing fashion and clothing law. I just refer to some of them:

- communication and cultural exchange with other Muslim countries to hold exhibitions and international festivals with the objective of designing and promoting Islamic fashion in Islamic Republic of Iran.

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[1] The emphasis is written by me [1]

- Familiarizing students with strategies and forms of Western cultural invasion in the field of promoting behavioral patterns, false fashion and makeup

- Supporting Manufacturer of Islamic-Iranian clothing and Chador

- Representing National Islamic fashion festivals and exhibitions and introducing successful designers in Television programs

- **The road map of The Fashion Organizing Committee (2010)**

Some of important points of this road map are:

- Development of National discourse of Islamic-Iranian fashion and clothing

- Focusing on promoting happiness, dignity and motivation of consumers by the use of materials and colors

- Presenting leading fashion patterns and expanding geographical area of activity and then presence in global market and achieving superior brand among Islamic countries

- Supporting private investors in field of fashion industry in the country

- Reviewing and extracting Islamic frameworks, criteria and etc. in the realm of Fashion and clothing

- Stablishing free schools of fashion and clothing, first official fashion journals, fashion and clothing television channels

As it is shown above, despite the contradiction of the meaning of hijab as an identity concept for government, policies and related regulation are changing. Two main strategies were followed after Islamic Revolution about promoting hijab. The main policy was criminalizing hijab and approving the law of mandatory hijab. The other one is cultural policies by Ministry of culture and Islamic Guidance that during recent years mainly focused on organizing Islamic fashion and clothing. Here the important role of these policies of expanding Islamic-Iranian fashion in enforcing ideology of government in the society is very important. The crucial point

here is on one hand Government by approving policies to expand Islamic-Iranian Fashion is going to fight the western fashion system and on the other hand it is marketizing a sacred object. Here despite of role of these policies as 'technologies of power' as Foucault discuss, they affect the 'technology of self'. This emphasis of law and related policies to *hijab* force women to police themselves according to what to wear and how to cover to act according the law. On the other hand, this technology also leads to shaping feminine 'counter publics' as Warner (2002) discussed. These publics can play as resistant margins. So the story will not end here, those fashion designers who are increasing every day their designs and models are not compatible with Islamic criteria made a lot of challenges to government. This trend improves very quickly and suddenly government faced a situation that it could not prevent it through those previous physically strategies. There was a new virtual sphere that fashion designers use it as a marketing space by posting their models pictures without proper hijab for example without head covering. This progressing trend was published through news media's titles such as "An Iranian fashion revolution ?[1] " and represented a new picture of Iranian women hijab and the process of changing practicing hijab among them. In next chapter I will explain through the interviews with fashion designers that how they represent these changes in their Instagram pages as a virtual space.

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[1] http://www.yourmiddleeast.com/culture/an-iranian-fashion-revolution_16545

CHAPTER 3: THE IRANIAN ISLAMIC MODESTY FASHION ON INSTAGRAM

A recent trend in Iran is the emergence of a fashion industry that caters to wealthy Iranian women with a focus on fashionable Islamic modest dress. The focus of this chapter will be *hijab* fashion designers who follow this trend and use various social media sites, including Instagram, to advertise or sell their products. Since internet usage has risen primarily over the past five years to include a rapid growth in the number of Facebook and Instagram users in Iran, I will focus on this period in the chapter. These forms of social media have provided new virtual spheres that are used by women as a new kind of private space within which they can practice a particular kind of advertising that would otherwise not be possible due to the legal restrictions placed upon advertising for women's clothing by the state. These forms of communication let women live another part of their lives without the threat of being watched in the streets, or in offices or classes. Step by step this new sphere has become a virtual public space, which follows Warner's (2002) theory of "publics and counterpublics," since these women are operating in a counterpublic. These social medias as a space for these designers is a kind of "social totality" (warner2002), that work as a site of resistance for these women against their restrictions and makes it a counterpublic.

For the purpose of the chapter, I will focus on a part of this virtual space that works as a market space for *hijab* fashion designers. The focus of their fashion designing is on the *manteau* (a French word which means coat and it is used to name the long coats and scarves that women have been required to wear over their clothes when entering 'public' spaces since the Iranian Revolution). In this chapter I will elaborate Hijab fashion designers on Instagram through interviews with different designs. These designers are from different groups and backgrounds. There are those who have their own politics and try to make political statements for or against wearing hijab or even more "just sell" things. In the previous chapter I discussed

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the chronology of legislation and regulation of Islamic modesty-dress in Iran and changing of the state policies after revolution. In this chapter I look at fashion designing Instagram pages and how women fashion designers articulate this change through marketing a sacred object.

The Iranian Islamic Modesty Fashion on Instagram and modeling challenges

During the two months while I was observing the Instagram pages of *hijab* designers, two famous designers suddenly deleted all the pictures of their models and just 3 or 4 new pictures replaced all other previous pictures. One of those designers whom I wanted to speak with refused to answer my correspondence. I followed the story and I found that the probable reason was confirmed by others and also in the media. It was because government started to arrest those models and designers who posted their photos without hijab on the Instagram. Here is the picture of before and after deleting pictures:
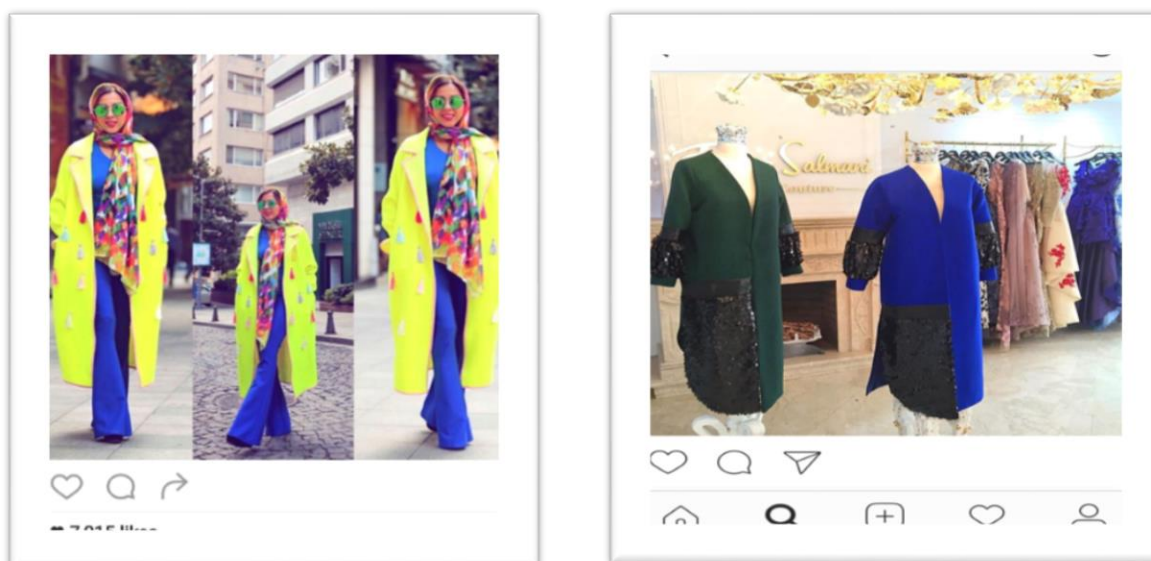

Figure 2https://www.instagram.com/farnazsalmani_dress/

As it is shown above, in the right photo the Manteau has no button. The cloths under this *Manteau* is a tight one. In new photo (the left one) that was posted after deleting all old ones, designer just used manikins instead even without head. Before deleting this page contained short video clips of the live model. Fashion designing and photo modeling is a new

economic-cultural phenomenon to Iranian society. As Farzaneh (a designer who believes in *hijab* and wear it) explained:

> After the Islamic revolution and after that due to the war between Iran and Iraq nobody thought of fashion. It's around 10-12 years or so that authorities in Ministry of guidance and also people reached to this conclusion that there is no idea about designing Iranian clothes. In every part of the world Muslim women has their own special style of *hijab* (their own national clothes). In Iran maybe the reason was *chador* (she means *chador* covered women body so nobody thinks of designing for clothes under it). In fact, in recent 10-12 years, special clothes designing is shaped and grew. So ministry of guidance found that this process was going out of its control so it is natural that they consider some responsible authorities to establish order among those who design and sell clothes to follow specified rules (Interview with the author, Tehran, 2017April).

As she referred to the point, It's less than 10 years that fashion designing was not raised as a serious subject society. War between Iran and Iraq made the economic situation unstable. Here is very crucial to know more about the economic barriers of emerging fashion in Iran.

By the end of 8 years of war between Iran and Iraq in 1988, Iran's economy was moving to a new period. "The election of Ali-Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani to the presidency in the same year, was an opening up the country to the outside world and granting some civil rights to the public" (Haeri2009,130). War was ended and country was going to experience a more stable situation. More liberal economic policies were done and Iran's economy was gradually tried to engage in a capitalist world. After Islamic Revolution in 1979 the role of the state increased so much in economy till 1988.

> "The war added rationing of essential commodities, which further tightened the state's grip on the economy. Relaxing these controls was the goal of the first Rafsanjani administration, which moved swiftly to end rationing and increase the role of markets in setting prices for essential commodities," (Salehi-Esfahani 2009, 28) with his pragmatic and liberal economic policies.
>
> As Salehi-Esfahani (2009) discusses, these reforms and reconstructions lead to

competitions in markets and fading the role of the state in production. During the rise of President Khatami (1997–2005), Iran has faced a "reform of the political process, which did not go very far, but the experience of their eight years in office seems to have convinced many of

the coalition's top thinkers that economic dirigisme was incompatible with democracy," (ibid, 33). Many Iranian thinkers of this period believed that "the idea that centralization of economic power is incompatible with decentralized politics has thus entered serious intellectual debate in Iran, where political thinking is still dominated by socialist and Marxist ideas," (Tabibian, Ghani-Nezhad, and Abbasi as quoted in Salehi-Esfahani2009, 33).

This era also in the post-revolutionary history of Iran is a mile stone that opened up the dialogue of political reforms, civil society, women rights etc. Even about the hijab, women's scarves became loosened and they could wear more colorful clothes in publics.

My first interviewee (Raheleh, designer) who designs for television TV presenters and also attended a lot of Fashion festivals in Iran like Fajr Fashion and Clothing Festival told me a story that was also confirmed by my other interviewees. As I explained in the previous chapter, the Islamic Parliament Research Center of Iran evaluation report of Protecting Hijab Plan (Tarh-e-Sianat-az-Hijab, Oct 25 2014) argues that the "legislation of Practical Strategies of Modesty and Hijab Culture Plan by Supreme Council of Cultural Revolution (*Shoraye-Aali-e-Enghelab-e-Farhangi*)in 2006/Jan/3 which now the most important representations of it are moral police (Gasht-e-Ershad) and law[1] of Organizing of Fashion and Clothes in 2007/Jan/2 aimed at cultural aspects and procedures (Evaluation report of Protecting Hijab Plan2014,3)". An important point here is the contradiction between these two strategies. The first one is a physical preventive and punitive strategy and the second one focuses on cultural policies.

As I explained this report on Protecting Hijab Plan was done by Parliament Research Center and in fact this contradiction of policies is referred by the government.

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[1] http://honari.farhang.gov.ir/fa/rules/rule7

Government set policies to establish an Islamic fashion industry on one hand and on the other hand Parliament suggested a plan to bold the criminal aspect of mandatory hijab law. These two strategies are followed-up by the government with different contradictions. I will explain more about this contradiction in this chapter.

Rahele told me that,

> Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance approved a Clothes Live Show Regulation Book that contained laws about organizing fashion Live Show, modeling and its qualifications. These points are mentioned in it: Models should not wear tight clothes. Their body curves should not be seen. They should not catwalk on the stage. They should not do anything against Islamic norms/criteria and etc. (Interview with the author, Budapest(WhatsApp), 2016 November).

According to Ziba, fashion designers that are under the supervision of the Fashion Organizing Committee should design garments with buttons in the front and the fabric that is used is not in any way transparent. She also mentioned that she didn't know anything about the fashion organizing committee until they called upon them: "They (Fashion Organizing Committee[1]) told us that our designs are considered approved by them and they chose us to participate in an international hijab festival as one of Iranian representatives (Interview with the author, Tehran, 2017April)."

According to her answer government tried to police all these designers even through virtual space and medias. I asked her if they received any written instruction by that committee to indicate how they were breaking the law. She answered that they didn't but introduced me to a website that belongs to the fashion organizing committee. I could not find online any indication of this regulation book nor could I find anything through the Ministry website. Even though the official websites did not indicate that official changes had indeed been made, there

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[1] It's a committee under supervision of Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance. See chapter 1

was media coverage within Iran of changes that were affected fashion designers. Here is a part

of related news with the title: "Modeling in the path of Islamization and Legalization":

> The secretary of organizing committee of fashion and clothing of Ministry of culture and Islamic guidance informed about taking measured to reregulate the "modelling" and the use of Islamic models to advertise clothing in the country (Fars news, March3,2014)[1] .   [5]

It is also mentioned in the news that this organizing committee asked a question of the Supreme

Leader about Sharia and Fashion or modelling. Asking Supreme leader and also other famous

religious leaders legitimize the proceedings of the government in commodifying hijab through

fashion. Here is the text to follow:

> Is there any problem with Sharia Law with the activity of men and women promote and advertise correct and approved Islamic clothing, it means their images published in the approved medias with a proper coverage or others watch their clothes that they wear?

> Answer:
> By maintaining full coverage and Islamic religious rules(Sharia) and regulations, there is no problem.

Raheleh explained me that this ministry started to establish an institution to hold

workshops for models to give them legal document so no model can work without this legal

document.

My interviewee told me that so many eager girls and boys attend these workshops. But after

afew months some of these models posted pictures without hijab on their pages and this

situation was out of control of governments. So during recent months, government started to

arrest those models who did this and ask designers to delete their photos and asked some of

them to pay a fine for that. After these events the ministry and legislative authorities declared

about the cancellation of workshops. One of my other interviewees, Farnaz, who was arrested

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[1] http://www.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=13921211001580

several times because of her designs told me that even before cancellation and arresting the

models, the ministry didn't hold these modelling workshops but some agencies did it under

Ministry's supervision.

also added:

> All famous designers (whose models pictures were published without correct *Hijab*)
> committed and changed the pictures in their Instagram pages. If they post live
> models in their pages for the second time they fined 400,000,000 Rials(around
> 10,000 $) and if they do it for the third time they will be known as "Mofsed-e-
> Fel'arz" [1] (It is the title of the capital crime in Islamic Republic of Iran) (Interview
> with the author, Tehran, 2017April).

The other interviewees (Shima, designer) who started her Instagram page recently

explained:

> when I called my photographer to do my modeling photographing, she told me that
> models were scared to work these recent months because of arresting. And if you
> look at famous designer's pages in Instagram, you will see all of them deleted old
> pictures and posted new pictures without any model (Interview with the author,
> Tehran, 2016November).

To understand more about this story, I searched the news medias and newspapers to find

different cases like these:

> Admins of 450 Sites, pages, mobile social networks and Telegram channels
> and groups summoned or arrested (Tabnak,2016). It is also added in official website
> of Iran special military(*Sepah*) that Iran judiciary spokesman in his press conference
> mentioned the news about arresting 8 people who were active in Instagram
> modeling. He explained that these people are networked to handle these pages and
> try to promote a western lifestyle that is contrary to all religious and social norms of
> Iran (Gerdab,2016). Also around 50 makeup artist, 50 photograph studio and 50
> dress meson were arrested by intelligence service and many pages were
> closed(Gerdab,2016).

These medias as a counterpublic for these women became a cite to challenge the enforcement

of government policies, and also a gendered logic of covering as a means of governing the body.

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[1] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mofsed-e-filarz

One of my interviewees(Farnaz) according to many online news is one of the first designers who started this trend of fashion designing in Iran. She had a background in theater and studied graphic design, and she completed her first collection of photography in 2011. She posted the photos of her designs on Facebook and they have gained the attention of many people. Then she held her own exhibition in Shiraz (a historical city in Iran) and she claimed that her whole collection was sold. I asked her about how do government arrest these designers or models? Because there are hundreds of pages and they are increasing every day. She answered me "most of the time people are arrested whose pages have more followers and they are more famous in Instagram, that is enough for others to limit their activities (Interview with the author, Tehran, 2017April)".

Here is another contradiction in government policies toward fashion. As I explained about the Parliament evaluating report of Protecting Hijab plan, there are two contradictory strategies. Here also the happened. This designer or many other related people worked under supervision of the Ministry of Culture but she was arrested by another authority because of her designs.   Farnaz continued despite her investor and she worked under supervision of Organizing committee of Fashion and Clothing but:

> during these 5 years we always faced problems. One year our shop was closed by authorities; another year we were arrested or …the first time they closed our shop for 5 months. We didn't know who we should go to and we are accused of what. No body answered our correctly. In 2013 they called us to go to branch 6 of *Evin* prison. We went there and found that there was security branch and security police sued us. Our crime was Acting against national security (Interview with the author, Tehran, 2017April).

Women in this counterpublic are not reformers but they are aware of how they are policed and where the changes are happened:

> According to them(government) government basis is hijab. All things changed during these 40 years (after Islamic revolution) except hijab. Even hijab changed but they want to evade this point. They saw that the head-covering became looser, hairstyles changed, clothes became colorful, so they started to create diversity in *chador*. In recent years, at the same time with fashion issue different

plans were done due to hijab, chador and etc. The difference is their investment is on hijab and their pressure is on fashion part. Even there is National Institute of Fashion and Clothing. The asked me who support me and who invest in this work …(Interview with the author, Tehran, 2017April)

After her arrest she pledged not to take photos of her models in the streets and they should wear correct hijab. The judge told her that "your work let other people to appear in public even naked (Interview with the author, Tehran, 2017April)".

This feminine counterpublic is restricted and marginalized and they are always live with this challenge that what women bodies should look like when they are covered. But they are aware that monitoring and restricting them is not very easy to government in this space.

As I explained in the previous chapter, the *Hijab* Law in Iran is completely ambiguous. Whenever authorities feel changing occurs in wearing hijab, they can react in different strategies and move the boundaries. Farnaz added:

> The funny thing is that hijab is relative, for example in Tehran they asked us to cover the hairs of models or models should not wear tight leggings but in Shiraz court they wanted us to take photo of our models in a way that the body was covered except hand palms and faces. All of these rules are so personalization. There is no exact law about it. Even my lawyer stated in his objection that we mean hijab by norms of the society. Different authorities treat differently with hijab. The judge told me you insulted Islam and ….

Farnaz thought that there is a Dispute between the institutions in the government. She told:

> I objected the Judge that there is no law about fashion and modeling in Iran and so I didn't know how I should put my work in a special frame. Ministry of culture and Islamic guidance started to make laws for modeling in Iran but try to Islamize it. But still there were debates about it that the problem is about using women's body. Some argued that even catwalks of women for women is *Tabarruj* and it is *Haram*[1] . These challenges betwẽen different groups in government leads to cancellation of all modelling plans by Ministry of culture and Islamic guidance".

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[1] The act that is prohibited by Allāh.

As I discussed before, expanding the geographical area of activity is one of aims of the Fashion Organizing Committee (2010). Farnaz referred to this aim in the interview. She also explained about what kinds of contradictions this plans includes:

> Committee of Fashion and Islamic clothes claimed that we want to be the center of Islamic fashion in the countries of (the Middle east) region. But fashion has its own basis so you cannot be the center of fashion but omit the modelling from it. You cannot delete the cat walk from fashion. This plan (holding modelling workshops) provokes the challenges. They accused me of have modelling for fashion for the first time and this leads to disorder in the society.

Another important finding for me was that how interviewees tried to solve the contradiction of hijab as a modesty dress and a fashion commodity. One who designs head covering(Raheleh) told me that there is no proof that the covering style that Islamic government asked us to wear is the one that God asks us. She emphasized that *chador* didn't allow her to dress with style.

Ziba and her colleague are another clothes designer who focus on *hijab* as a main aim of their designing. I sent a message to her through Instagram and then visited her in her Show room. It is in one of the wealthiest districts in the North of Tehran. I chose her as an interviewee because her designing was Islamic and she believes in *hijab*. The models wear *hijab (head covering)* and the dresses completely covered their bodies. Her brand is also among those that are approved by the government and it won an award in Fajr International fashion and clothing festival. In her explanation about her brand in her page these points are mentioned:

- Abaya, Manteau and covering dresses
- Specialized designer of women covering dresses
- Under supervision of committee of organizing of fashion and clothing
- This page is dedicated to women.

Some the of the page captions are "Hijab, Covered, Long dress, I love Hijab, buy Iranian, Abaya, Wear Iranian, Women, New collection etc."

The owners state that they started their work because they think there are not proper clothes for Iranian women who wants to wear hijab in a good style and also Islamic. They had

both experiences in management, branding and advertising campaigns in different companies. Ziba explained me that "those experiences in advertising, business and management" helped her to use them in "clothing part and fashion". I ask her about sacred meaning of hijab that should cover women beauty and its contradiction with fashion designing. Her answer was interesting for me:

> This paradox is really existing but I should tell you that belief in hijab have different degrees. For a person hijab means just covering her body but not covering her hair. Another one believe in covering her whole body in dark colours. So everyone preference is different. For me even it is even different from my own designing. I never wear 80 percent of my own designing. We design them for different hijab preferences and different consumers. At the same time, we used the base line of hijab meaning according to our religion. We committed to our main principles. For example, we never design a Manteau with transparent fabric.

Here is the point about women's dress role as a symbol of Islam. There is no referring to hijab as a modesty dress in her explanation of hijab. But she added "we try not to use very flashy fabrics." She used the word "*Tabarruj*" to describe this sentence which means display of beauty in Islam and is forbidden.

> Dandyism, using perfumes and being clean are a Muslim's duty according to our prophet. First years after Islamic revolution this culture was growing that Muslims should wear untidy clothes but the reality is that a Muslim woman or man has this duty to wear in a stylish way. She/he should wear the best clothes according to her income.

> we (women), because of our special wearing (she means wearing hijab and covering hair and body) are the advertising sign of Islam. When everyone sees a woman who cover her whole body and just her face is uncovered, he/she would say she is a true believer. Such a woman with this sign has duty to be stylish and beautiful.

She explains about her dissatisfaction about Iranian woman clothing and those who designs so transparent and tight clothes and criticized those who wear them. She also mentioned that those designs are partly intentional. She added "People who believe in hijab have problem with buying clothes, they cannot find what is proper for them". As a religious woman she was

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not pleased with those clothes that she can buy in Iran as an Islamic country. I asked her idea about mandatory hijab in Iran and she answered:

> I don't agree with mandatory hijab at all. mandatory hijab doesn't encourage anyone to use hijab, the result will be vise versa. It also leads to improper was for people to escape. For example, during summer women wear very improper. Because of the mandatory manteaux and shawl, people use very tight clothes under their very transparent manteux and … you can ask an Iranian man who traveled to Europe that does Iranian women clothes are more (sexually)stimulator or European ones? He definitely answers you Iranian girls, because hijab is mandatory and to escape from it they try to design clothes that are more improper than you wear a T-shirt and jean without any hijab. Another reason is that people who really believe in hijab should use it and in this you respect everyone.

Two other Interviewees didn't believe in wearing hijab and another said that she didn't believe but she respects the law. An important point is that all of them think that state-mandated hijab boundaries is changing and women head-covering is looser. They wear more short and tight Manteau. Shima, my other interviewees emphasized that "everyone do whatever he/she wants in their public spheres, she gave an example of live fashion shows without hijab near her home that held in private houses". But all these beliefs do not mean that they are free to choose what they want to wear and I also should emphasize that they try to be cautious in speaking with me about political issues. Meanwhile, this is a fact that the way hijab is practiced in the Iranian society is changing both in policies and in the everyday life of people.

According to another designer whose dresses are more artistic (Setareh),

> Manteau/Abaya that after Islamic revolution became the main outerwear women clothes because it was long and loose and became the alternative of all outfits of women. For years this wearing was just in dark colors and without any beauty in it. Women were limited to wear whatever is long or loose but it seems during these years this limitation becomes a potential for the internal market to even export its designs. Designers change this long and loose dress to a fashion commodity.

I found a really strange range of prices from 100 dollars to 4000 dollars! And models have really different wages too. Some young models work for free and some others wages are between $ 54 per day and $ 800 per day. It is important to mention that this is not the price that

many women can afford to buy a *Manteau*. These designs were bought by mostly middle class or upper classes. Those designs with a very high price mostly are designed for actresses, celebrities or very wealthy women not for everyone.

Although this trend represents an aspect of material culture but at the same time it is narrating a process of commodifying of a sacred/ideological concept through the social-political contexts of Islamic Republic of Iran. This social-political context shapes this feminine counterpublic that is growing very fast. As I explained these women designers are not social reformers or women activists but this space for them is a way not only to earn but also to challenge the women bodies' policies. As warner (2002) argued, a culture is shaping among these strangers that will act as a project of transformation (of *hijab*).

CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSION

My research on post-revolutionary Iran has concentrated on the many contradictions and meanings of practicing 'correct' hijab due to the changing state policies on women's modesty-dress. As part of this struggle, young Iranian fashion designers have emerged on social media to advertise and commodify their fashionable modesty garments. During the Islamic Revolution, women played an active role in the demonstrations and they engaged with the issue of the *hijab* as part of an Islamic revolutionary identity. As I have discussed, the *hijab* has a long history as part of the struggle between women and the state over the past century, and it continues to be part of revolutionary ideology that inscribes meaning into the garment beyond its simple function which is to cover women's hair and body. Wearing special kinds of *hijab* such as the *chador* clearly reflects changing religious and political aims during times of unrest, and it has also been used by women who fought in the resistance to the Shah's policies that brought about the Islamic Cultural Revolution. Over a hundred years of veiling, unveiling and re-veiling has made the hijab an iconic symbol of the state's uneasy relationship with Iranian women, and its complex and contradictory status may now be shifting once again to accommodate a new kind of commercial commodification of modesty-dress for wealthy Iranian women.

Although the hijab may by now be considered part of a cultural dress-code for women in Iran given its century-long history as a tool of state but also as a site of resistance of women against the state. Most recently the first law on women's dress code was approved in 1983 by the new revolutionary state, and the *hijab* became mandatory for all women in public spaces in Iran. The undefined boundaries of this "technology of power" allowed Iran's government to change its implementation of this law by passing a series of confusing and vague 'moral policies' that followed the initial legislation, but these in no way made it more clear what exactly constituted 'correct' and 'incorrect' *hijab*. The law also criminalized 'incorrect' dress for

women and became part of a challenge launched by resistance groups and interests against what they saw as the abuses of governmental power. Furthermore, resistance to this legislation and the response from women and women's activist groups demonstrates how the process of implementing and socializing these dress codes led to a variety of ways in which they were interpreted and implemented, which inevitably made some women vulnerable to prosecution. And as I show in the thesis through the ways in which the laws on modesty-dress were revised and reimplemented, this furthered the use of this legislation as an unstabling force or "technology of power" to control women. It is as part of the resistance against these state changes and enforcements from inside and outside of Iran that we see the emergence of these fashion designers who are designing and selling luxury *hijabs* through social media sites that cannot be entirely monitored and policed by the state. The hijab as a symbol of resistance and freedom during the Revolution later became a tool of suppression through the act of establishing the mandatory *hijab* law in recent years. What is also changing, and what I focus on in the thesis, is the growing commercialization of women's bodies and women's fashions.

Despite government legalizing for shaping an Islamic fashion industry It still works as a power tool to policing women. Boundaries of the hijab law changes and still is changing during years after Islamic revolution. This challenge continues between government and women designers who use Instagram as a space to advertising their designs. Government legalizing focused on shaping an Islamic-Iranian fashion industry around modesty dress and try not to allow the designers to shift the boundaries.

My chapters offer a look at how Iranian women fashion designers of modesty-dress, and in particular fashion hijabs - advertise their designs on Instagram, and how they interpret these changes as well as their challenges with the state. I argue that this social media site gradually becomes a "counterpublic" that is also a site of resistance for women against the restrictions

and regulations on their bodies and dress, but also on trying to keep female fashion designers from advertising this from of modesty-dress where other young women can access the images.

Instagram Iranian *hijab* fashion pages accentuate the perceptions that women's fashion is changing the ways the *hijab* is worn by Iranian women. These fashion designing is in fact shifting the boundaries of *hijab* and head coverings in Iran. Since as I discuss in my chapters, they shaped a new lifestyle through fashion marketing and promoting consumption. These designers promote *hijab* designs through a combination of modesty and fashion for those who practice hijab and also for those who have to wear it according to law.

In case I extended my study I will look at both designers and costumers and the way they interpret resistance in this reals and will more focus on "technology of self". It can also important that to what extent do these designers are vehicles for social reform – do they even want to be part of reform? What is happening in the society of Iran about the challenges between women and government is more complex than looking at them as suppressed and dominant power. I believe in what Mahmood calls it "moving beyond the simple binary of resistance/subordination", because it should be understood in a deep historical context of domination of power and resistance (Mahmood2005,9).

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