



(Review A) The Niqab: A Cross-Religious COVID-19 Safety Measure in Madina Zongo

ANONYMOUS

ABSTRACT This is the first review of the preprinted article “The Niqab: A Cross-Religious COVID-19 Safety Measure in Madina Zongo.” The review will be taken offline once the final article has appeared.

KEYWORDS review, preprint

Summary Evaluation

Accepted with suggested minor/major revisions (B/C)

[1]

Original Article

The original article can be found under the following link: <https://er.ceres.rub.de/index.php/ER/article/view/8997>

[2]

1. Give a presentation of the article. What is its contribution to research?

This article addresses an interesting and important topic: specifically, the changing uses and meanings of the niqab, an envelopping dress/veil/headress/covering that is one of several different styles worn by many (though not all) Muslim women, and which is now being taken up by some women—both Muslim and non-Muslim—in the Madina Zongo of Accra, Ghana who did not previously wear it. Their reasons given primarily have to do with protection from COVID-19 contagion, though some additional reasons noted also have to do with fashion, prestige/status, and influence from Saudi Arabia. The analysis insightfully discusses what, in effect, is a moving from concerns with avoiding immodesty and by implication, religious sin, toward concerns with protection from biomedical disease contagion. The argument and

[3]

evidence/examples are clear and convincing. This article, once revised to include more concluding discussion of broader implications of its findings, will make a potentially valuable contribution to relevant studies in anthropology of religion and gender, cultural medical anthropology, and African and Middle Eastern Studies. Some additional relevant sources would enrich this considerably.

2. Assess the source materials and research literature.

There is a vast literature in anthropology of gender on veiling: for example, the author should also consult an article in *American Anthropology* by Lila Abu-Lughod, "Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving?" Also useful would be an edited volume by Elisha Renne on veiling in Africa; an article by Susan Rasmussen „Re-Casting the Veil in Culture & Psychology, as well as some literature on Tuareg men’s faceveiling (for insights into a contrasting case), such as chapters in *The Art of Being Tuareg* edited by Thomas Seligman and Kristyne Loughran. [4]

3. Assess the problem formulations; are they clearly stated?

The ethnographic problem formulation and questions addressed are very clear and well-organized. However, the article could further develop its theoretical focus, with some added sources (suggested above). [5]

4. Assess the analysis and conclusion.

The analysis and conclusion are insightful in suggesting the more nuanced concept of religious “entangling,” rather than simplistic concepts of hybridity or syncretism, but this section could be further developed to point out the contextual nuances, for example, wearer and viewer can have different interpretations of meanings of the niqab. Also, the conclusion could discuss the broader implications of these findings beyond the Ghanaian data. [6]

5. Summary, final verdict, and rationale for your decision:

This reader/reviewer recommends acceptance with minor/major revisions, but the suggested revisions and sources are important if the article is to make a contribution to anthropology of gender more broadly. [7]