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Modesty and Exposure of the Female Body on Beaches: Case Study in Abidjan

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Abstract	Original Research Article

Modesty is linked to the body, sexuality and the relationship with the other, governed by rules of behaviour to be adopted in society (Deschodt, 2010). Today, it is perceived as a traditional preoccupation, outdated and not in line with modern body values and standards. This is reflected in Western societies in the forms of body exposure and nudity in everyday clothing and beachwear. However, in Abidjan, on the beaches, which are legitimate spaces for exposing the body and distancing oneself from modesty, there are differences in the exposure of the body and nudity. The qualitative study conducted on two seaside sites in Côte d'Ivoire (Bassam and Jacqueville) aims to understand the social logic of wearing clothing that exposes and hides body parts on the beaches of Abidjan.
Keywords: Modesty, nudity, body, woman, beaches.

INTRODUCTION

Defined as an attitude of restraint that prevents one from saying or doing anything that might offend social codes, modesty is linked to the body, sexuality and the relationship with the other, governed by rules of behaviour to be adopted in society (Deschodt, 2010). Being aware of one's body as one's body, having passed the "mirror stage" as analysts say, is therefore the condition of possibility for modesty. Modesty is not immediate, it is constructed over time. But it would be wrong to deduce that it is not natural to man : because man is a political animal who lives under the gaze of others, it is in his nature to feel some discomfort at being reduced to this more or less animal body that is his. Modesty is therefore part of man's 'nature', because it stems from his very specific way of being in creation : that of a being who is both a spirit and a body (Fiat, 2007).

On the other hand, female modesty is not the same as the modesty taught to boys. In Greek antiquity, the female body was already the subject of a particular discourse, on the fringe of the discourse on the athletic body, the body of the citizen, the bodies of the statues : in a word, the victorious male body that was celebrated. Plato and Pliny, then Saint Paul a few centuries later, and finally the moralists (Polman, Duvernay, the Abbé Boileau, Bossuet, La Revnie, etc.) of the century we are dealing with, affirmed that a woman's body must be hidden. Female modesty is said to be "natural" and accepted as a state. The woman's body is "integrally saturated with sexuality" say Foucault and Leibacher-Ouvrard [1].

It is therefore to be expected that, depending on the roles assigned to them, women's and men's bodies are not subject to the same modesty. (Legeais B., 2006).

Legeais (2006) points out that men's modesty seems to be a field of study that has been little addressed. Fashion allows women to reveal certain parts of the body that modesty requires to be covered. Men, on the other hand, are covered from head to toe. The "charm of their faces", "the finesse of their hands", "their wit" and the brilliance of their clothes, which were, moreover, tightly fitted, were their only assets for seduction.

The rules of decency, which can be described as social modesty in the sense that it is a matter for the public domain, and respect for established social conventions, do not depend solely on clothing. Modesty is thus more a question of attitude and movement than

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[1] Lise Leihacher-Ouvrard. « Voiles de sang... ». in Hodoson (éditeur). Lci fenune au Xlll siècle p. 264

of physical appearance. This notion is similar to those of honour and decency, which are a function of the individuals making up a society. They are defined, most often tacitly, by a group of people who at the same time exercise social control. A decisive role is given to women as guardians of these rules, without leaving aside the implications they may have in relations with men. The notion of modesty is indeed deeply gendered ; it influences the relationships between individuals of both sexes. Clothing appears to be an essential element in the history of modesty, as various recent works have shown [2]. At once a bulwark against the gaze of contemporaries and God, and an indicator of modesty or, on the contrary, of debauchery, it allows the individual who wears it to integrate into a given society and, as such, participates in a code that makes it possible to claim one's belonging to that society.

The wearing of clothing is therefore linked to forms of exposure of the body and nudity. How does this translate on the beaches in the African context and more specifically in the Ivory Coast ?

African populations have a unique relationship with the beach (water, sand, sun, body). A sensory universe, a specific physicality, leads to an aversion to sand, an avoidance of the sun, the absence of body exposure, and a low interest in hedonic marine bathing. Historical, ethnic, anthropological and religious reasons contribute to shaping a beach culture that is far removed from the 4 S's (sea, sand, sex, sun) specific to Western civilisations. On the beaches of sub- Saharan Africa as well as in Madagascar, a specifically African beach culture, with very little borrowing and hybridisation with the 4 S's, has been established. (Rieucau, 2019).

In Côte d'Ivoire, it is almost the same context described in Cotonou (Benin) by Rieucau with the difference of a partial denudation of the body. Also, the practices of sunbathing and toplessness do not exist on Ivorian beaches, except on so-called private beach areas but never in public. Similarly, the beach also obeys rules, norms and codes related to modesty and nudity, even if these are not formal. Although there are no formal norms relating to dress and nudity, on the beaches there are two trends in the exposure of the body and nudity; on the one hand, a group of women with clothing that exposes the body (bikini, swimming costume, etc.) and on the other hand, hybrid clothing that reconciles exposure of the body and modesty (wearing a swimming costume with a loincloth, a T-shirt with cycling shorts, etc.).

Researchers became interested in the beach rather late. Previously, the beach was mainly studied by

2 O. BLANC 1989, « Historiographie du vêtement : un bilan », dans Le Vêtement : histoire, archéologie et symbolique vestimentaires au Moyen Âge, M. PASTOUREAU dir., Paris.

geographers for its coastlines. Historians and sociologists such as Alain Corbin, Rémi Knafou, J-C. Kaufmann, Jérôme Lageiste, have tried to renew the way in which it was apprehended. The beach is of particular interest to researchers because of the territorial appropriations it generates. It also reveals the tensions that run through society through the living-together to which it subjects us. Finally, the beach is a space where bodies are exposed ; the behaviours and cultural practices adopted at the beach have been analysed by many researchers in recent years.

In Africa too, very few scientific studies on the beach in Africa exist, apart from geographical approaches. Thus, as the beach is defined as a space of exposure of the body, outfits are created and authorised on this space. It should be noted that modesty, nudity and exposure of the body on beaches, including beachwear, have a history in the African context. Thus, after having historically been a highly codified and restrictive space in terms of body exposure and dress, beaches now appear to be legitimate public places for exposing the body and distancing oneself from modesty. However, this exposure of the body depends on the historical, cultural and social context of each country.

This observation places us at the heart of the work on modesty and the beach as a social space, more specifically on the exposure of the body and nudity. Kaufmann (1995) deals with the exposure of a part of the woman's body, the breasts, on the beach. Indeed, "exposing one's breasts to the public gaze is an act that not just anyone can perform anywhere, anytime, anyhow. It is easy to imagine that this new freedom of the beach is subject to rules that say a lot about the functioning of the social body and of the body in general' (Héran F. 1996 : 159).

Thus, exposing one's body or certain body parts on the beach obeys norms and rules linked to society and also to modesty. Various studies have addressed the issue of modesty : historical (Havelock 1889, Carol 2008.), anthropological (Maupetit G.1914), sociological (Kaufmann 1995, Bertrand 2008, Deschodt 2010) approaches.

For example, Deschodt (2010) defines modesty as a social construction because it varies from one individual to another and from one society to another. To this end, two theoretical currents on modesty have developed : modesty as a constructed notion, historically dated. It is an individual and collective social construction that evolves over time. And the second current states that modesty is something unconscious and natural.

Nudity has also been the subject of scientific studies. A historical approach to nudity has been addressed (Déchaux 2001 ; Granger 2008 ; Carol 2009);

a normative and legal approach (Lajoie, 2008); a geographical approach (Barthe-Deloizy, 2003); a sociological approach (Kaufmann, 1995; Deschodt, 2010).

The beach as an object of study in the social sciences has been the subject of several approaches. Thus, historical approaches focus on the norms of dress and body language at the beach and their evolution in Western societies. Indeed, these works show that beaches have not always been places of exposure of the body or of denudation. On the contrary, in reference to the principles of maintaining public order and respecting the minimum rules of decency, nudity and even partial exposure of the body were firmly prohibited. Regulations prescribed a "correct attitude" and the wearing of a "decent swimming costume". "The use of briefs or short pants and transparent swimwear is formally forbidden" (La Flotte, 1933) quoted by (Granger, 2009). Other more current works present the beach as an ideal meeting place between the body, the sea, the sand, the wind, the sun and the void (Corbin, 1988 ; Pradel & Gwendal, 2014 ; Devienne, 2015, 2017), as a place of total or partial denudation (Barthe-Deloizy, 2003). The geographical approach presents the beach as a public space, a place where all those who find themselves there can rub shoulders (Lévy, 1999); as a sensitive space in which perceptible and observable bodies evolve (Joseph, 1998) and finally as a place where the values and norms of groups and individuals are displaced (a transfer of urbanity) (Coëffé, 2003).

From a sociological point of view, the beach is analysed as a place where values and norms of societies are transposed through the attitudes and behaviours of individuals as well as the social relationships they maintain. Thus the beach is presented as a social space of contradictions (universal tolerance and stigmatisation), a place where freedom is subject to rules (Kaufmann, 1995 ; Pradel & Gwendel, 2014). All of these works concern Western societies.

There is very little work on the exposure of the body or on the norms of dress and body language on beaches in the African context. Those that do exist analyse the particular relationship of African populations to the beach (water, sand, sun and the body). Rieucau (2019) describes a sensory universe, a specific corporeality, which leads to an aversion to sand, an avoidance of the sun, the absence of body nudity, and a low interest in hedonic marine bathing. Historical, ethnic, anthropological and religious reasons contribute to shaping a beach culture that is far removed from the 4 S's (sea, sand, sex, sun) of Western civilisations. Indeed, he describes Fidjrossè beach in Cotonou, Benin. This beach is a public, open beach. The whole of Cotonou meets there. This place, especially for the youth of the country's economic capital, is fashionable for weekend partying (music, dancing, alcohol, hookah), mainly on Sunday afternoons. As for Corali (2007), she stresses that this relaxation area, without opening hours, would compensate for the lack of public green spaces for leisure in the centre of the agglomeration (gardens, public parks). This wide sandy strip serves as a vast area for play, recreation, rest and idleness (Rieucau 2019 : 1).

Europeans, even those dressed in Western clothing, who travel through this atypical territory to photograph and investigate, are well accepted by the population. On the other hand, the yovo (westerner or anything that is not black) cannot take place on the beach in a swimming costume (Coralli, op.cit.). Men and women, fully clothed, wear elegant, overdressed outfits, which are worn in the rest of the city on a holiday. The ostentation of beautiful clothing is part of the awareness of living an important and singular moment. Traditional African clothing, as opposed to westernised international dress, is used by two-thirds of those present. Unlike other black African beaches, clothing is not an identity marker, nor a religious affirmation (Kenya) (Rieucau, 2014). The virtual absence of bathing and the lack of heliolatry exclude the wearing of swimwear.

The work of Corali (2007) in Benin describes the same reality. On these beaches, traditional African clothes, as opposed to westernised international clothes, are used by two-thirds of the people present. The virtual absence of bathing and the lack of sunbathing preclude the wearing of swimming costumes. The author specifies that the Beninese dress as they would on a feast day ; it is an opportunity to show off a new outfit. The ostentation of festive clothing shows that it is a special moment. A Sunday afternoon at the beach is not experienced as a time to indulge in casual dress intended entirely for rest... One goes to the beach to look and show off and the 'yovo' (White, European) cannot fit into such a context in a swimming costume. (Corali : 37).

Scientific studies on the body and specifically the exposure of the body on beaches is a new field in Africa and particularly in Côte d'Ivoire, which is why this study is presented as an ethnography of the exposure of the body and the types of clothing worn by women on Ivorian beaches. It is found that body exposure and beachwear are linked to modesty according to beliefs, values, spaces, status and social categories.

This article therefore aims to understand the social logics of wearing clothing that exposes and conceals body parts on the beaches of Abidjan. To do so, it will answer the following questions: What are the social categories of women wearing these outfits ? What are the social representations, beliefs and values associated with the body, modesty and the beach that

legitimise these differences in the forms of exposure of the body and modesty ?

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted using a qualitative approach. It is an ethnography of women's modesty on the beach through the clothes they wear.

Location and survey population

The survey took place mainly in two of the main seaside sites near the capital Abidjan : Grand-Bassam [3] and Jacqueville [4]. The two seaside sites were chosen because of their histories, their geographical locations and the specificity of the populations that frequent them. Thanks to its rich tourist and historical heritage, Grand Bassam remains an essential destination for tourists (Western, Asian, American, African) visiting the country. The beaches of Grand Bassam are full of people from different backgrounds. The beaches of Jacqueville are much more populated by the indigenous population due to its isolation for many years.

Jacqueville owes its name to the fact that it was the first place where the flag of the United Kingdom was displayed. It developed as a French colonial slave port but is now mainly a fishing port and seaside resort. The site was landlocked due to the absence of a bridge for over a decade. This limited the access of the populations of the Ivorian capital to the various beaches of the city. Since the installation of the new bridge, the beaches of Jacqueville have become the new destination of the Ivorian population.

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[3] Grand-Bassam is a seaside resort close (43Km on the east coast) to the city of Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, and is known for its busy beach lined with coconut trees, which stretches along the Atlantic coast. The old town dates back to the French colonial period and was the capital at that time.

[4] Jacqueville, a coastal town to the east of the city of Abidjan. The town owes its name to the fact that it was the first place where the UK flag, the Union Jack, was planted when the British conquered the country.

Bassam Beach

In the interests of representativeness, the survey population was deliberately diversified within the two places of investigation, while focusing on the target population of women.

The data collection consisted of semi-structured and open-ended interviews with three categories of actors encountered on the various beaches. These were women, men and street vendors of beachwear. In total, twenty-five [5] (28) people were interviewed, distributed as follows: Seventeen (17) women, eight (8) men and three (3) beachwear vendors (one woman and two men) for the individual interviews.

Concerning the group interviews, there were six group interviews, three of which were conducted at the two sites (Bassam and Jacqueville) and three formal group interviews at the university site.

Direct and participant observations were carried out on both sites : by observing the different beach attire according to the different social categories, the occupation of spaces on the beaches, and the behaviour of both women and men.

Individual interviews and focus groups (three interviews with students because they are on the university campus and have leisure time at the beaches, so we thought it appropriate to bring them together and organise a focus group) were also carried out outside the beaches with people who are used to visiting the beaches.

The in-depth interviews lasted an average of one hour and were transcribed in their entirety and subjected to a thematic categorical content analysis. The analytical categories were constructed according to a twofold approach : a priori (according to the objectives and themes of the interview guide) and a posteriori (according to the themes that emerged from the observations made on the beaches).

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[5] Additional surveys were carried out during the year 2021 in March

Survey population	Number	age	gender	profession	Level of study	religion
People interviewed on the beaches	35 in Bassam 22 in Jacqueville	Between 18 and 65 years old	40 women 17 men	Seamstress, hairdresser, shopkeeper, teacher, businesswoman, student, unemployed	Primary, secondary, higher education ;	Christian Muslim Buddhist Animist
Beachwear vendors	3 in Bassam		2 men and 1 woman			
Spouses/Partners	9	Between 25 and 65 years	Male	Teacher, doctor, businessman, mechanic,	Higher, primary, secondary,	Christians, Muslims

Qualitative tools	Bassam seaside resort	Jacqueville seaside resort	Cocody University
Individual interviews	15	10	
Formal and informal group interviews	2 (with an average of 5-8 people for informal interviews)	1	2 formal group interviews with female undergraduate students (sociology and law) 1 group interview with sociology students
observations	Two days at two-week intervals in 2019 and March 2021	One day in 2019	Two days on campus

1. LOGICS OF BODY DISPLAY AND BEACHWEAR TYPE

In each society, certain parts of the bodies of men and women have been shown, sometimes generously, including the most intimate parts, sometimes more sparingly. From one society to another: rarely the same, in the same way and for the same reasons (Bologna 1986).

Thus, the exposure of certain parts of the woman's body and the wearing of certain beachwear obey social logics that are important to note.

1.1 Beachwear and Exposure of the Body: "Modesty" Versus "Indecency

If we refer to the criterion of modesty, we can distinguish two types of dress on the beaches of Bassam and Jacqueville. These are the so-called "modesty" outfits and the "indecent" outfits. Modest outfits are those that hide all the parts of a woman's body known as "sacred", namely the breasts, stomach, buttocks, thighs and hips. Indeed, the woman's body has always been considered sacred according to traditional and religious beliefs. It must be pure, covered, hidden so as not to attract not only curses from the deities, but also the gaze of others, more specifically men.

Immodest dress exposes these same parts of the woman's body. These include bikinis, monokinis, and panties flush with the buttocks. Whether or not an outfit is indecent also depends on the body type of the woman wearing it. For example, a two-piece beach outfit (bikini) worn by a heavyset woman with large buttocks and breasts is perceived as lacking modesty.

On the other hand, the same outfit worn by a thin woman is not seen as immodest. Imaginations have defined outfits according to morphology. Strong women have to hide their bodies because they are more attractive in the Ivorian context. They usually wear a one-piece swimming costume with a sarong tied around

the hips or a t-shirt with panties or a biker. Thin women have more freedom in what they wear on the beach. They often wear bikinis, which come with a band top that is tied at the neck, while a bottom is embellished with ruffles or bows to give volume to the hips. And, generally speaking, low-cut panties are worn to elongate the figure for slimmer legs.

Wearing these different outfits also depends on the type of beach. On private beaches, there is a lot more exposure of the body. On popular beaches, both trends meet.

Discourses and social imaginaries on the exposure of the female body on beaches

The wearing of so-called modesty outfits that hide or reveal very little of women's bodies on the beaches of Côte d'Ivoire finds meaning in several discourses and social imaginaries that legitimise the practice. These discourses and social imaginaries refer to socialisation, age, a physical handicap, marital status, professional status and religion. Firstly, socialisation and individual modesty influence whether or not a woman's body is exposed on the beach. Women who hide their bodies justify this by the education they have received.

This is evidenced by the words of a 22-year-old student:

"Education is also a factor influencing the exposure of the body. I was brought up with a style of dress and beachwear that was imposed on me.

The education received during the socialisation of the young girl is at the origin of individual modesty which also leads to covering her body at the beach. This is the case of this 42-year-old woman, a lawyer : "I've had my modesty from my adolescence to my adulthood. As a result, there are many things I can't reveal.

This individual modesty makes sense in interactions at the beach, in the eyes of others.

Secondly, wearing a certain type of outfit is a way of concealing a bodily defect or "handicap" from the eyes of those around you. In fact, so-called modest outfits are worn to hide certain parts of the body considered to be a handicap, such as a belly that has undergone transformations as a result of motherhood or an accident.

"When I go to the beach, I don't like to show my belly because I have a complex about my belly, a big scar from a burn. I always try to hide this scar by wearing beachwear that hides the scar," says a 32-year-old hairdresser.

Also, in the African context and in particular in Côte d'Ivoire, age is a variable, a determining factor in the exposure of the body at the beach. Older" women who have passed their forties wear outfits that expose little or no of their bodies, or at least parts of the body that have been "altered" by time.

"At the beach, depending on the age category, there are certain parts of the body that the woman exposes. A woman of a certain age, 50 to 60 or more, will never agree to wear a bikini because in general, we expose what we think is beautiful and which may or may not be attractive," says this woman in her fifties.

These comments are corroborated by those of a man (Teacher, 62 years old) met on the beach:

"We expose what we think is beautiful and women over 50 don't want to be criticised so they hide what they don't think is beautiful... when we say that men like big buttocks, we can classify these men according to age. It's mostly youth up to the age of 50 or 55. But beyond that age, men are a bit more attached to this modesty. Hiding the rather gross body parts."

Another determining factor is marital status. Marital status, more precisely the status of a married woman or a woman in a relationship, is frequently mentioned by both women and men as a reason for wearing a monokini or fabric over a swimming costume to hide buttocks or thighs.

"As a married woman, I can't come to the beach and wear a bikini or even a normal swimming costume with my buttocks, thighs out.

This modesty is very often a direct or indirect injunction from society and from the spouse : 'In my opinion, my wife can go to the beach but she must dress properly. If she wants to go in the water, she can wear a bikini with a cloth tied up to hide her private parts" (married man, 62)

Finally, socio-professional status and religious affiliation are factors in the concealment of the body and the exposure of the woman's body on the beach. Indeed, at the beach, professional status has an influence on the exposure of the body. Women from a certain socio-professional category (public or private sector executives) expose their bodies in different places on the beach. Private, remote beaches with few crowds are favoured by this professional category where women can put on their bikinis away from the public eye. Women who are executives, because of their social position in society, transfer this position to the beaches. In general, they come to the beach not to swim but to enjoy the positive effects of the sea air. When they want to swim, they go to private beaches far from the popular ones.

As for religious affiliation, women refer to religion to justify the wearing of so-called modest clothing. In Côte d'Ivoire, Christianity and Islam are two dominant religions that consider the body as

something sacred and more specifically that of the woman. These religions impose modesty on women and they must hide all parts of their bodies that tend to seduce men. This can be seen from the words of two respondents:

"I hide my body, especially the intimate parts, which can seduce or attract men's attention because of my religion. The Bible says that only the husband should uncover the wife's body" (woman, Christian);

"Religion teaches modesty. To avoid depravity, sexual disorder. Because there are clothes that provoke and can arouse envy or desire or provoke reprehensible acts such as rape. The woman's body is sacred" (Woman, Muslim).

On the beaches, bodies hidden or concealed in so-called modesty clothes stand alongside bodies exposed in so-called indecent clothes. The latter are also underpinned by various discourses and imaginaries.

Other perceptions explain the exposure of the body on beaches. This is the exposure of the body through the wearing of 'immodest' clothing. These imaginings illustrate the valorisation of the woman's body, seduction and respect for tradition. According to the women who expose their bodies (buttocks, breasts and thighs), the beach is the preferred place to showcase their innate or acquired physical assets through body transformation practices such as depigmentation and the enlargement of buttocks and breasts.

In the Ivorian context, these physical assets concern generous shapes or a "beautiful" figure with a relatively pronounced arch.

"I have a nice shape, buttocks and breasts, so I like to show them off by wearing a bikini ... and then with that I don't go unnoticed (laughs)", according to a 28-year-old young woman. For men, it is "(...) women who are fit (physically strong) and wear beachwear that attract attention".

The wearing of these outfits is also a seduction practice. The beach is a place of amorous encounters and prostitution of young girls, with "white" Westerners as the target. In fact, today in Abidjan, a new phenomenon is becoming more and more widespread, a form of prostitution in disguise. Most of these young girls who engage in this practice do not stop on the pavement like traditional prostitutes. They do not have prostitution as their main activity either, but practice it when the opportunity arises on the beaches. Their strategy is to identify the places that are popular with their targets, who are partly foreign diplomats, international civil servants, wealthy businessmen and especially European expatriates. They offer their services in order to get more money or to establish a future relationship with them for marriage.

Finally, the beach is seen as a space for the expression of tradition. In general, tradition is also used to justify hiding the body.

Tradition is also used to justify hiding the body. The dominant verbatim in African culture in this regard is 'in African tradition, the woman's body is sacred, it should not be exposed like that'. However, tradition is also used to justify the exposure of women's bodies on beaches. Exposing breasts or buttocks is not seen as a lack of modesty due to Western modernity. For many women and men, traditional dances and ceremonies of rejoicing are opportunities to showcase the assets of a woman's breasts and buttocks. The beach is therefore seen as a place of rejoicing similar to that of traditional ceremonies.

"In Côte d'Ivoire, there are cultures where certain parts of the body such as the breasts can be exposed. Depending on the choreography, one can expose the breasts or even wiggle the breasts or even wiggle the buttocks (among the lagoon people)" (Male, 62, married).

2. DISCUSSION
The results of the study show that beachwear and forms of exposure of the female body on the beaches of Bassam and Jacqueville are based on a logic that oscillates between individual and social modesty, as well as on a liberation from modesty norms. This makes the beach a space of contradiction. Indeed, the beach is a place where the unveiling of the body is authorised and each woman can do so as she wishes. However, society's gaze forces women to hide certain parts of their bodies.

2.1. Hiding the Body at the Beach: Reconciling Individual and Social Modesty
Covering one's body, i.e. hiding the so-called 'sacred' parts (the stomach, breasts, buttocks or thighs) from the viewpoint of discourse, is a matter of reconciling individual, instinctive modesty linked to the personality of each individual (Havelock, 1899). This individual modesty is coupled with a collective modesty that reflects the social codes of the society (Deschodt, 2010), in this case Ivorian society.

This collective modesty is built around the relative social roles and expectations about the female body. The beach is certainly a leisure space, but it is also a social space that expresses the configuration of society. The rules and norms of society are transposed onto the beach space. The social categories, statuses, social positions and roles of individuals are transposed onto the beach.

According to Droy (1990 : 58), the status of Ivorian women must be considered in its various aspects. Indeed, for her, "The role of Ivorian women in

the domestic sphere and in the market sphere, social and marital status, and the sexual division of labour are all factors that explain women's economic practices.

Social representations of women are generally part of the cultural context. Women as a gender have always been the object of curiosity, fear, admiration and criticism. Women as human and social entities are perceived as different from men in certain aspects of their morphology and biological functioning. As Hélène Koffi (2005:1) points out, 'the essential difference between these two entities is linked to the procreative or maternal function of the woman'.

The African family is a place where values are inculcated and it is women who transmit cultural values to their children from a young age. And among these values, modesty is one of them. For example, in Agni [6] country, in the social imagination, women deserve respect and veneration. Here, a woman's social status depends on her age and the person who values her (Boa Ano, 2012).

In the tradition, women must be modest and hide all the parts of their body that can seduce. These parts of the body are the belly, the breasts, the buttocks and the thighs. Despite the evolution of time and the advent of modernity, women must take into account their social status and position before revealing certain parts of their body.

Thus, in African society in general and Ivorian society in particular, the woman has a status, a role and a social position that makes her a woman who must reproduce these different expectations of society on the beach.

These expectations relate to age (a mature woman does not expose her body), marital status (the woman's body is reserved for the sole gaze of her spouse), religious affiliation and tradition (the woman's body is considered sacred and therefore cannot be explored in public) and socio-professional status. Also, as Pavard and Rennes (year) point out, not all naked bodies are equal in the public eye: while some are admired, others are prohibited, revealing social hierarchies.

2.2 Exposing the Body at the Beach: Breaking Free from Collective Norms of Modesty
The wearing of partially revealing clothing by women is in fact a kind of liberation from collective modesty. Collective norms require women to hide certain parts of their bodies (thighs, breasts, stomachs, etc.) that are supposed to be seductive. Thus, women who expose these parts of their bodies transgress these norms. By exposing their bodies or revealing parts that

can be considered intimate, young ladies adopt a behaviour in conformity with the "modern" and "universal" social representation of the beach as a place par excellence where the thresholds of modesty and embarrassment are quite porous.

This distancing from collective modesty can also be seen in one of the issues at stake, namely seduction and ostentatious enticement. This attitude is contrary to the social codification (Boëtsch and Guilhem, 2005) of seduction, which sees it as discreet.

2.3. The Beach as a Social Setting with Rules and Contradictions
The discourses and social logics behind the denudation or concealment of certain parts of women's bodies confirm the conception of the beach as a place of contradictions. Indeed, the different types of dress observed on the beaches demonstrate the ambivalence of the beach. On the one hand, there is the 'universal' proclamation of tolerance and bodily freedom on the beach, which is exploited by those who break free from collective modesty. On the other hand, we note that the beach is subject to the social norms and codes of global society in terms of modesty and aesthetics, with all that this implies in terms of valorisation or stigmatisation (Kauffmann, 1995). .

Pradel and Simon (year) affirm that the urban world has imposed itself on the beach. It circulates there in an ostensible way through the hotels and promenade spaces that line the shores, and spreads by recreating the public spaces of the cities via regimes of co-presence and civility (Coëffé, 2010), in the manner of a transfer of urbanity from the city to the beach. The reciprocity is also true, as the beach has become 'urban' by being mobilised within the framework of the cities' festive logic. This is the case of the Ivorian beaches surveyed. The people who frequent these beaches come from urban cities, specifically the Ivorian capital Abidjan. Thus, all the values of modernity are transposed onto these beaches. The different social classes as well as the behaviour of city dwellers are transferred there.

Ivorian society in its functioning combines both traditional and modern values. The norms related to women's modesty combine both tradition and modernity. The woman has the 'freedom' to expose certain parts of her body according to customs, places and times, but also these same parts of the body cannot be exposed according to certain customs, places and times. It is these contradictory norms that are transferred to the beach. For example, in the Ivorian context, generous shapes are valued at the same time as they offend modesty when they are too exposed by beachwear.

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[6] The AGNI are an ethnic group of the Ivory Coast and originate from the east of the country.

CONCLUSION

The Ivorian beaches are hybrid spaces if we refer on the one hand to the types of dress and body exposure and on the other hand to modesty and the social norms that legitimise them. On the beaches of Grand-Bassam and Jacqueville, we can observe so-called prudish outfits and so-called immodest outfits. The former refer to beachwear that reveals very little or even hides certain parts of the woman's body (breasts, thighs, buttocks and stomach) and the latter are those that expose them. These outfits and forms of exposure of the female body are underpinned by both individual and collective modesty, but also by a logic of distancing oneself from the first two types of modesty. This makes the beach in the context of the study a contradictory space. That is, a place of freedom but also a place subject to the constraints of the moral, aesthetic and bodily norms of the global Ivorian society.

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