Clothing and Colours in Early Islam

Adornment (Aesthetics), Symbolism and Differentiation

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Abstract: The article discusses the colour subtext in the founding texts of Islam, namely, the Koran and jurisprudence. These texts were the raw material to create a scale of colours appropriate and inappropriate for clothing, and to analyse the role of colours in differentiating among subjected groups. Colours were positioned on a scale as preferred, permitted or prohibited for clothing based on their symbolic interpretations and perceptions of adornment and aesthetics. The use of colours for clothing as a means to establish and reinforce gendered differentiation reflects the patriarchal and hierarchal nature of Muslim societies. The other use of colours was to create religious-political differentiation between the Muslim ruling elite and two different subject populations, namely, their non-Muslim tributaries and rebels against the regime.

Keywords: colour, differentiation, gender, Islam, jurisprudence

Historians of clothing and adornment base their research on two kinds of sources: actual garments or other material remains such as paintings, sculptures and book drawings, and written sources (Berward 1995), which serve as the core of the following research. Ronald Barthes's book *The Fashion System*, which discusses semiotics and in particular semantics, has influenced the theoretical concepts of this research. Barthes suggested that one can analyse the material 'vestment code' or, as he preferred, the 'written system' that is anchored on descriptions of clothing in the written sources. Barthes's analysis focuses on the way clothing is translated from a system of visual signs into texts. Although the reality of clothing usually preceded the written discussion, the texts establish and institutionalise this reality and define its borders. Therefore, Barthes's conclusion is that between reality and written text there is an interaction resulting in interdependence and coexistence. Thus, each mandates the

existence of the other. According to research that is text-based, the technological and plastic aspects of various garments are insignificant compared to the discussion of their symbolic meanings. Following Barthes, the present article will focus on the literal aspects of clothing, asserting that a conscious transformation was made from actual clothing to 'written clothing' as they appear in the texts (Barthes 1990).

Clothing in the pre-Muslim Arabian Peninsula was influenced by climate, life needs, social codes, religious demands and socioeconomic manifestations. By the rise of Islam in the seventh century, the holy scripture of the Koran established and institutionalised its existence economically, politically and religiously/spiritually. The Koran was the first written organised text of instructions for proper Muslim clothing, adornment and modest appearance. The great conquests of Islam and its expansion beyond the Arabian Peninsula brought under its rule foreign influences from various cultures and ethnic origins in almost every aspect of life. Hadith collections, Koranic exegesis and *fiqh* compendiums that were composed in the post-Koranic age were aimed at providing guidance to Muslim communities in a changed reality of time, place, socioeconomic conditions and foreign influences. The outcome was that the Koranic verses were extended and reinterpreted, thus reflecting the built-in tension between norms and realities. However, the basic and unwavering assumptions of Muslim clothing are: (1) the division into the private female sphere, and the public male; and (2) that garments were worn from under garment to upper garment so as to conceal every part of the body. Head covers were in use for men and women, but women were also obliged to cover some parts of their napes, necks, chests and face.¹

Cultures past and present use colours for various needs, such as expressing feelings or as a manifestation of their worldview in a visible, public manner. The discussion of colours is a part of social history because societies assign colours everything, from their changing names to their changing significance (Bolens 1992; Jones and Bradly 1999). Colours are a cultural phenomenon, hence any of their semiotics must be anchored historically in time, place, perceptions of aesthetics and religion (Bloom and Blair 2011; Gage 1999a).² In the language of colours,³ the potential power of colour associations is wide, but it is only partly derived from the surrounding materiality. Thus, the effect of colours should be interpreted according to various factors such as regional, historical, social, cultural and religious conditions (Rabab'ah 2014; Radu-Golea 2011). The employment of colour adjectives is an example of a lexical field that is very rich in connotations because it is culturally dependent. Colours are also used to describe human emotions, behaviours and some aspects of personal characteristics (Rabab'ah 2014).

This article will focus on the colour subtext discussion in the founding texts of Islam, namely the Koran and later jurisprudence. By analysing the appropriate and inappropriate colours for clothing for differentiated subject populations, a contribution will be made to the understanding of the religious,

gender and social structure of medieval Muslim societies. The discussion of the symbolic significance of colours will enlighten their importance and centrality in the construction and institutionalisation of the social strata of these groups within past Muslim societies.

The Koran refers to colours (*alwān*) nine times (30:22, 35:28, 39:21, 2:69, 35:27, 16:69,) as a divine grace for human beings of a multicoloured world, as evident from *sūra* 16:1: 'And that which He multiplied for you in the earth of diverse hues.' Some verses even mention by name the colours red, yellow, green, black, white and blue. Although the Arabic language during the time of the prophet Muḥammad was already rich, only six colours are mentioned by name in the Koran.

The colour terms of the Koran are a reflection of the pre-Islamic Arabic of the Arab Peninsula and of influences of local traditions and civilisations, and the conquests of early Islam as well. The cultural-religious meanings of colours that are encoded in the Koran are a reflection of the daily experience of ordinary people in the Arab Peninsula of the seventh century (Brenner 1999). Five of the colours that are mentioned by name are terms of the pre-Islamic vocabulary of Arabic, *abyad* (white), *ʾaswad* (black), *ʾahmar* (red), *ʾaṣfar* (yellow) and *ʾakhḍar* (green), while other colours are noticeably rare in the Koran (Devin 1999).

Colours appear in the Koranic context with a descriptive and/or metaphoric meaning, but only a few of the descriptive meanings refer to clothing or adornment of the human body. The metaphoric use of colours is a reflection of the biblical tradition and the pre-Islamic culture of the seventh century alike (Rippin 2001). In classical Arabic most of the names of colours were general, thus they lack the ability to describe different hues of a colour. Some of the colours' names come from the names of spices such as saffron and turmeric (hues of yellow), fruits and vegetables such as pomegranate (hues of purple) or animals (al-ʿAbidi 1980).

Since antiquity, the most widespread and important practical application of colours was in the production of textiles, mostly for clothing. This industrial manufacture was one of the mainstays of medieval Islamic economics, as fibers, dyestuffs and finished textiles were produced and traded throughout the Muslim empire (Devin 1999). The expansion of the Muslim empire speeded the processes of urbanisation, the development of new bourgeoisie and with it the demand for luxurious textiles as status symbols (al-Ṭaysh 2000). Shelomo Dov Goitein (1967) adds that people in medieval Mediterranean societies had a passion for brilliant and variegated colours in their clothing. According to him, the list of the most favorite colours in medieval Egypt was white, blue, green, red and yellow. It might be suggested that the prohibition to use human figures to adorn clothing influenced the frequent and wide use of colours (ʿAbd al-Rahmān 2011).

The following discussion of colours will focus on two main analytic aspects. The first is the use of some colours for adornment, thus implying codes of

beauty and aesthetics, and the second is the use of some other colours for differentiation. Because Islam is a jurisprudence-based religion, each of the colours will be introduced as it appears in the Koran, the holy Muslim scripture that shaped the basic roles and symbolism of colours. Medieval jurisprudence proposed to explain, develop and expend the Koranic scripture in order to respond to changes and the needs of Muslim communities. The outcome of their intensive work is a range of discussions of colours that reveal continuity and change regarding the social symbolic meanings of colours according to a classification of preference.

Colours: Adornment (Aesthetics) and Symbolism

The legal discussion on the appropriate colours for clothing is testimony to the importance of personal appearance in medieval Islam (Y. Stillman 2000). The presentation and analysis of the discussion of colours appropriate for men's and women's clothing demonstrates the impact of jurisprudence in Islam in everyday life. The following discussion will present the colours that are permitted, and even recommended, for clothing.

White

The Koran mentions white a few times (11) as the colour of creation, the quality of water in paradise or as Moses's hand that became white as a sign of God's grace (Blair and Bloom 2011; Fischer 1965). White in the Koran is the colour of the true believers' faces on the Day of Judgement, and is a symbol of their faith in the afterworld upon following the straight path in this world, and overcoming the obstacles and difficulties of this world ('Abd al-Rahmān 2011). The term *'abyaḍ* refers to various bright hues, not only to basic white. White is the most preferred colour for men and women, both during life and at burial: 'The prophet, peace be upon him, has said: your best cloth is white, thus wear it while living and bury your dead with it' ('Ibn Ḥanbal 1969). We can learn about the process in which various differentiations are created along the life cycle, as, for example, during childhood there is only a general reference to preferring the colour white and avoiding the dressing of males with colourful clothing. 'Abū Ḥamid Muḥammad al-Ghazālī (died 1111) recommends that boys wear only white clothing, and also not wear different kinds of silk, as this is the clothing of women, and of *mukhannathūn* (Lane 1980; 'Ibn Manzūr 1970; al-Firūzabādi 1995; al-Zabīdī 1965),⁴ i.e. those with no clear sexual identity (al-Ghazālī 1981).

The placement of white at the top of the priority list for men and women derives from its positive symbolic meanings, which are genderless. From the Koranic scripture, followed by medieval jurisprudence and up to present day, the colour white has kept its priority and established position as the most preferred colour in life as well as in death and burial.

White symbolises the positive and pure, while black represents the negative, as can be demonstrated by the Arabic expression *ibyaḍa wajhuhu*, which means his face became white from joy and satisfaction, while *iswada wajhuhu* means he was insulted (Borg 1999; Fatani 2005). The contrast between white and black is used to demonstrate the polarity between light and darkness, good and bad, pure and impure. White is free of evil issues and represents a pure mind, innocent and harmless (al-Adaileh 2012; Rabab'ah 2014). Other meanings that are related to white are cleanliness, virginity, priority and holiness.⁵

Based on its reputation both in pre-Islamic Arabia and at the eve of the birth of Islam, white was chosen as the appropriate colour for clothing during the fifth pillar of Islam, the hajj. Thus, a strong linkage was constructed between the symbolic meanings of white and the religious world of Islam and in particular the most important ceremony in the believer's life, the pilgrimage to Mecca. During hajj, Muslim men wear the same minimal dress (*iḥram*), which consists of two pieces of seamless white clothing signifying their equality and humility before God, with no socioeconomic or religious differences.⁶ It is interesting to note that women are excluded from some of the symbolic characteristics of the hajj, especially the dress of *iḥram*, although they perform the ceremonies together. Another example is the Iranian mystics, who are allowed to wear white robes only after they reach a high level of abstention from worldly pleasures (Elias 2001). This means that the uniqueness and high evaluation of the white colour has been adopted not only by orthodoxy in Islam, but also by mystics who have attributed to it the moral aspect of asceticism.

Green

Green appears in the Koran six times as an adjective and once as a participle. The Koran mentions green in two contexts: the first is the description of the believers' clothing and furniture in heaven, and the second is descriptions of vegetation and fertile lands.⁷ Green is a recommended colour for both men and women; green and white together constitute the primary colours of heaven. Although the symbolic meanings of green are contradictory, since on the one hand it is the colour of degeneration and yet on the other it is attributed to growth, Islam has chosen to adopt its positive meanings (Hutchings 1997). According to Islam, green in this world expresses birth, nature, growth and fertility; and in the world to come the angels are green and the rewarded believers in heaven will wear green cloaks (Amoretti 1979): 'He who clothed me with green clothing made of silk and silk woven with gold' ('Ibn Abī Dunyā 1986; Pastoureau 2001). Green is perceived as the colour of the Prophet Muḥammad and the prophetic lineage and it represents, with a mixture of material and spiritual meanings such as eternity, locality, spiritual hope, freshness and luxuriousness ('Abd al-Rahmān 2011). The prestigious status of green as the prophet's colour and as a representation of heaven still exists to this day. Green is the primary colour of many of the Muslim states'

flags as a manifestation of devotion to the Prophet and his way on one hand, and as an expectation of the world to come with its luxurious material life.

Black

Black appears in the Koran seven times, four of them connected with white as a demonstration of opposites, as black has always stood for powerfully opposed ideas. Five of its appearances are related to the description of the human face and in particular to the representation of the sinners' face in this world and their fate in the world to come. The Koran also uses black to describe the reaction to the birth of a girl as a reflection of the patriarchal structure that was common in the Arab Peninsula on the eve of Islam. Thus, we can learn that black was connected associatively with sadness. Another reflection of pre-Islamic times is presented in 'Antara's poetry. 'Antara (died 615) was a black poet who tried to challenge the negative connotations of black and blackness as well as the morals and prestige that were attributed to white and whiteness.⁸ In general, in most languages black has a more negative meaning than other colours, suggesting dirt, the unseen, strong magic and bad luck (Rabab'ah 2014).

Black appears in the Arabic language in a dual form and symbolises multiple contradictory meanings: death, melancholy, darkness, disasters, evil and bad luck on the one hand, and fear, respect, uniqueness and elegance on the other (al-Adaileh 2012). The Abbasid dynasty, for example, adopted black as their official colour as a representation of power, elegance and fear together with the need to differentiate themselves from the Umayyad dynasty, which was associated with white (Morabia 1991). 'The prophet, peace be upon him, had entered Mecca in the year of its conquest while wearing a black head cover' (Abū Dā'ud 1988). We can learn from this tradition that the Prophet chose to wear a black head covering as a symbol of power and victory while entering Mecca as the leader of the community, in contrast to his exile in 622. Centuries later, 'Ibn al-'Ukūhwa, in the fourteenth century, mentions that the preacher in the mosque was advised not to wear black clothing, but rather white ('Ibn al-'Ukhūwa 1937). Although black clothing was perceived as a symbol of power, in the fourteenth century the preference was diverted to the most recommended colour for clothing, white, with its symbolism of pure mind and holiness.

The contrast between white and black is used to differentiate between dark and light rather than between the colours black and white per se, as can be learned from the following tradition. 'Ibn Ḥanbal mentions the term *ṥawb ḥaddād* once, meaning black mourning clothing that the Prophet ordered a woman to wear during the three official days of Muslim mourning: 'My mother [the prophet probably called her by this nickname as he grew up in her house]: wear the mourning clothing for three days and then do whatever you like' ('Ibn Ḥanbal 1969). Although the black colour is not mentioned in this tradition,

according to dictionaries the term *ḥaddād* means dark clothing that was in use during mourning by close relatives (Matlūb 1995; 'Abd al-Jawāb 2002).

Another aspect that demonstrates the complicated symbolism of black is the fact that the most sacred relic of Islam is the black stone placed in the holy shrine of the Kaaba. Thus, black is not related to sin, fear and death, which are perceived as negative and frightening, but also to holiness and religious rituals, and especially to the fifth pillar of Islam. Another support for the religious ritual prestige of black is the fact that even nowadays, the special cover of the Ka'ba (*kiswa*) is black with embroidery in gold.⁹ In modern nomadic societies married women wear black veils that 'blacken the face; thus, they symbolize shame, particularly sexual shame' (Abu Lughod 1999). This means that Bedouin women's sexuality was classified as negative, as it might threaten the patriarchal structure.

Colours: A Means for Differentiation

The second group of colours is composed of colours that were used to create different kinds of differentiation.

Gendered Differentiation

Some colours were used to construct and preserve the hierarchy between men and women, as females in patriarchal societies are subjected to males in many aspects of life, including colours for clothing. Muslim jurists have divided colours into groups according to gendered differentiation, i.e. what is considered the appropriate colours for each sex.

Red

Red is mentioned in the Koran only once, in the description of the mountains, as a part of the multicoloured creation of God, but the Arabic language contains many terms to describe the various kinds and hues of red (Morabia 1991). In Islam, as in many other cultures, red has ambivalent meanings: it is the colour of ripe fruit and of love, both of which are positive, but at the same time, it is the colour of fire, which is both positive and negative (warming and burning), and the colour of war and blood (Ellis 1900; Gage 1999). The duality of red blood as a symbol is even more complicated; it is the blood of the sacred sacrifices and the blood of those who were killed or murdered, in addition to menstrual blood, which is impure, and the blood of birth, which represents the beginning of life.¹⁰ Abu Lughod (1988) adds that in modern nomadic societies married women wear red woolen belts that represent fertility and motherhood.

The gendered differentiation of red and its hues is more complex, as only some hues of red were prohibited for men. The Prophet has prohibited men

from wearing clothing that was dyed in the hue of *al-mufththam*, which means saturated in the red pigment (Lane 1980), but with no explanation why. On the contrary, other hues of red that were described by the root *h/m/r* (Lane 1980) (tending towards brown) were allowed for clothing, and there is a difference of opinion regarding some hues of deep red tending towards purple (*urjuwān*). 'The Prophet, peace be upon him, had worn his red [tending towards brown] cloak for the two festivals and for Friday' ('Ibn Sa'd 1905–1918). We can learn from this tradition that some hues of red clothing were perceived as prestigious and luxurious, and hence were considered appropriate for Friday and the festivals as a symbolic outward display of these important ritual dates.

Women are not mentioned in this discussion; consequently, we can assume that they were permitted to wear red clothing in its various hues. From a more gendered perspective, the basic assumption is that unlike men, women cannot fulfill all religious demands inasmuch as they were born imperfect. The jurists' solution was to lessen some of the prohibitions regarding the preferred and permitted colours and to allow women more freedom of choice regarding their colours of clothing.

Yellow

Yellow appears several times (five) in the Koran as a description of vegetation, in association with hellfire and once as a description of the colour of the cow that Moses was commanded to sacrifice (an image of the biblical calf) (Fatani 2005). Some of the negative symbolism of yellow lies in the fact that it describes the withering process of plants of all colours that must turn yellow during their natural process of death and decay. In addition, yellow is connected to fire, especially that of hell.

Yellow is the most prominent example of gender differentiation through colours insofar as it was prohibited only for males. According to hadith literature, the Prophet prohibited men from wearing yellow: 'The Prophet, peace be upon him, has prohibited us from wearing yellow clothing' (al-Nasā'ī 1988). The explanation for the prohibition of wearing yellow for men is complicated, combining gender with Muslim elitism. Imposing the prohibition of men wearing yellow with the explanation that it is the heretics' colour confirms females' inferiority and fortifies the assumption that only Muslim men can correctly represent the appropriate principles of personal appearance in Islam.

In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries 'Abū Zakāriyā Muḥī al-Dīn al-Nawawī and 'Abū al-Faraj 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. 'Alī 'Ibn al-Jawzī confirm this prohibition and add that yellow was the colour of concubines and female dancers' clothing. The description of dancers and concubines as wearing yellow clothing may reveal another use of yellow for demarcation between free, respectable, moral women, and non-respectable women whose profession is dancing or being under the patronage of a man as a concubine.

Another gendered distinction is the description of hermaphrodites (*mukhannathūn*) as wearing yellow clothing (al-'Adnānī 1999). This means

that those men whose personal appearance and behaviour in the public sphere is that of a woman are perceived as a deviation from proper masculinity and a threat to the patriarchal structure (Munss and Richards 1999). The presence of these *mukhannathūn* in a twilight zone that is neither feminine nor masculine caused the jurists to choose the strictest solution, i.e. defining their personal appearance as subjected to women's prohibitions. The inclusion of the *mukhannathūn* in the female sphere preserves the patriarchal structure and reconfirms the power relationships in which women and hermaphrodites are subordinated to men.

Political-Religious Differentiation

According to the political perception of Islam, there is a place for a non-Muslim population in the status of tributary subjects (*dhimmī*). This means that they are subjected to the Muslim regime, admit its supremacy and pay a special tax in return for personal security and the permission to observe their religion (Astren 2010; Cahen 1965; Cohen 1999; Friedmann 2012; N. Stillman 2005; Thomas et al. 2009). Muslim jurists have defined the supreme status of Islam, the youngest of the three monotheistic religions, through various exclusive norms, including personal appearance. The need for religious-social hierarchy side by side with the need for discrimination, marginalisation and humiliation of non-Muslims required visible delineation, thus through jurisprudence clothing became 'the alien residence card within the Islamic state' (Y. Stillman 2000).

The first stage of discrimination is reflected in a famous document referred to as 'the pact of Omar' in which the *dhimmī* (the tributary but protected people) must be identified by unique upper clothing ('Abū Yūsuf 1961; Bonner 2010; Cobb 2000; Cohen 1999; Perlmann 1965; Tritton 1970). The use of discriminative upper clothing was aimed at providing Muslims with easy identification of the *dhimmī* in the public sphere.

The second, and more sophisticated, stage of discrimination is characterised by the addition of different colours for Jews and Christians, as has been described by 'Abu Ja'far Muḥammad b. Jarir al-Ṭabarī (died 923) and later authors (al-Shayzārī 1996; al-Suyūṭī 1967; al-Ṭabarī 1968; al-Wansharīsī 1891–1983).

Yellow

It is interesting to note that yellow was used as a discriminative colour not only to differentiate between men, women and hermaphrodites, but also between Muslims and Jewish subjects, and between Muslims and rebels against the Muslim regime.

Jews were ordered to wear a yellow patch on their upper clothing, while Christians were ordered to wear a blue patch (see the following discussion on blue). There is no clear explanation why yellow was chosen for Jews, but

there is a connection between prohibiting men from wearing yellow clothing while women and hermaphrodites were permitted to use yellow for clothing, and Jews were commanded to do so. All three subordinated groups were compelled to be marked by gender or by religion from the ruling elite. Judaism, the oldest monotheistic religion, influenced Islam in many aspects, therefore Islam, the youngest but ruling religion, must delineate and define itself in order to maintain its uniqueness, exclusivity and supremacy over Judaism (Sadan 1995).

According to Maribel Fierro, *al-asfar* (the yellowed) was a nickname for anti-Umayyad rebels in the eighth century (Fierro 1993: 16, 1998: 196–213). The source of this nickname, which is perceived as negative, is a Yemenite custom of flying yellow flags during war. Another explanation is the custom of dying the body or face with a yellow colour to produce a whitening effect for aesthetics, or for defense from negative powers or climate injuries. This last example adds another aspect to the connotations of yellow as a symbolic negative colour, because it is not only identified with women, hermaphrodites and Jews, but also with rebels against the Muslim regime.

Blue

Blue appears in the Koran only once and has a negative connotation comprising part of the description of sinners' eyes (20:102). Its use to ward off the evil eye is absent from the Koran (Rippin 2001). However, this description has constructed the associations of blue as negative and inappropriate for Muslims, consequently enabling it to become a colour of discrimination for Christian subjects.

Blue clothing is almost absent from Arab sources, and it seems that blue was perceived as magical and inauspicious; consequently, the Arabs have been diligent not to mention it (Morabia 1991). In addition, it was perceived as a colour of foreigners and as a symbol of sin, although Persians and pagan Turks were fond of it. It might be suggested that the affection for blue that is attributed to Persians, Turks and Jews is the reason for Islam's negative attitude towards it as a part of constructing distinctive Muslim clothing (Shinar 2000). According to a different explanation, the Greeks, the most hated enemies of the Arabs, were blue-eyed so it became the most despised colour (Lane 1980). In ancient Arab poetry and in some modern dialectics there is no special term for blue, and *'akhdar* is used to describe hues of blue, while *'azraq* and *'asmar* are used to describe bad luck or a physical defect (Powels 1999). Another reflection of the negative attitude of Islam towards blue is the fact that the mystics' first robe was blue as a sign of mourning for being far from God in this world (Elias 2001). Blue also had a symbolic meaning of marginality in society, as in the example of Marwan the First (died 685), who was known as 'the son of the woman in blue', an indication that his grandmother during *jāhiliya* practiced prostitution, a profession indicated by a blue flag raised in front of the house (Shirley Guthrie 2000).

Based on the Koranic verse that describes foreigners as blue-eyed (20:102), blue was chosen by Muslim rulers as the discriminative colour for Christians. In the second stage of discrimination, when colours were added, Christian men in Mamluk Egypt were obliged to wear a blue turban (Mayer 1952). According to 'Ibn Kathīr, non-Muslims even proposed to pay an enormous amount of money to the Mamluk regime in return for abolishing the decree of coloured headdress and being content with a patch on their turbans ('Ibn Kathīr 1939; Mayer 1952; al-Suyūṭī 1967).

It is interesting to note that according to ethnographic descriptions of modern Muslim societies from a wide geographical range, blue is a dominant colour in the facades of Muslim houses. The common explanation is that blue repels the evil eye from the house and its inhabitants. Thus, a negative Koranic connotation of colour that received support from medieval jurisprudence found its way into modern societies through the same negative connotation for magical defensive purposes. According to a contradictory explanation, the pre-Islamic symbolism of blue as a means of protection from negative powers found its way into Islam, like many other pagan Arab symbols and values. It must be mentioned, however, that the modern use of blue as a means of protection from the evil eye was popular on the facades of houses but not for clothing, indicating that the negative attitude towards blue clothing still exists.

Conclusions

The aim of this article was to reveal the colour subtext discussion as it appears in the founding texts of Islam, the Koran and jurisprudence. These texts were the raw material to create a scale of colours appropriate and inappropriate for clothing, and to analyse the role of colours in differentiating among subjected groups. The preference of colours for clothing, a visible manifestation, as a means to differentiate between subject populations is based on a hierarchical scale of preferred, permitted and prohibited colours. This wide and complex use of colours is proof of their central role in the Muslim world of personal appearance.

Three main conclusions can be drawn based on the analysis that was presented in this article. First, colours were positioned on a scale according to the rank that they received as preferred, permitted or prohibited for clothing based on their symbolic interpretations and perceptions of adornment and aesthetics. This scale was an outcome of juristic work that reflected reality on the one hand, and the jurists' aspiration to create ethical and exclusive norms of outward appearance for Muslims on the other hand. The most preferred colour during life and death is white, sometimes popularly used with green, then green, and to a lesser degree, black. The second group consists of red in varied hues, and yellow, which is more problematic. At the bottom rank we

find blue, which is perceived as a negative colour, even though it appears in Muslim architecture.

Second, the use of colours for clothing as a means to establish and reinforce gendered differentiation reflects the patriarchal and hierarchal nature of Muslim societies. They identified the potential of colours as an instrument to preserve these structures. Red in some of its hues is gendered, but the most powerful example is yellow, which was prohibited for men, but permitted for women and hermaphrodites.

Third, another use of colours was to create religious-political differentiation between the Muslim ruling elite and two different subject populations, namely, their non-Muslim tributaries and rebels against the regime. There is also a subdivision within the subject population, as Jews were ordered to wear a yellow upper garment, while Christians were ordered to wear a blue upper garment. It appears from the sources that under the Umayyad regime some groups of rebels wore yellow clothing or painted their faces with a yellow hue. Therefore, yellow was also attributed to political resistance against the regime.

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Notes

1. Some of the basic research on Muslim clothing are as follows: A.D.R. Dozy (1846); L.A. Mayer (1952); K. al-'Adnānī (1999); Y.K. Stillman (2000); I. R. 'Abd al-Jawād (2002); H. Hirsch (2010a, 2010b, 2016).
2. For more research on the history of colours in the Western world, see Pastoureau (2001, 2008, 2014).
3. In their basic standard work in the field of colour terminology, Berlin and Kay (1969) offer four criteria for colour terms. For more about colours and colour investigation by medieval Islamic scholars, see Kirchner (2015).
4. For more about the legal discussion of sexual deviation, see al-Sarākhsi (1994).

5. White in the Bible also symbolises purity. See also Brenner (1982: 203, 1999: 200–207).
6. For more about the hajj and its ceremonies, see Kennedy (2012), Irwin (2012), Wensinck (1986) and Lazarus-Yafe (2006).
7. This similarity exists already in the Bible, where green symbolises growth and renewal. See also Brenner (1999).
8. For more see Btoosh (2014).
9. For more see Watt and colleagues (1987).
10. The multiple meanings of red are already reflected in the Bible, where red is related to sin on one hand, while on the other hand a special hue of red (*argaman*) is used to adorn the priests' clothing. For more see Brenner (1999). In modern Muslim societies, red has gone through a process of gendered differentiation, thus becoming an appropriate colour for women, particularly for married women, as it represents sexual maturity and maternal status. However, it must be mentioned that there are cases where men were permitted to wear red clothing. For more see Borg (1999) and al-'Adnānī (1999).

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