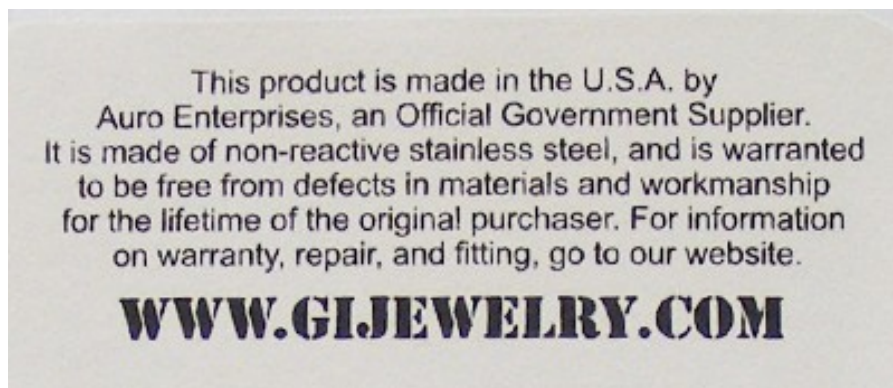


HENNA AND EVIL EYE TALISMANS
Protecting Military, Infants, Thresholds, and the Occasional Con Man
Catherine Cartwright-Jones PhD

The Evil Eye was believed to be a deadly and disabling force across North Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, the Levant and Southwestern Asia.¹ Malevolent spirits were often blamed for death and disease during the thousands of years that preceded the understanding of bacteria, viruses, and genetic disorders. Henna has long been believed to confer blessings, protection and luck. The khamsa, or hamsa, a shape representing for the hennaed hand with an eye, is meant to be protection from the Evil Eye, and luck as henna itself. This talisman is used by people who feel they need luck, blessings, and protection.



The above hamsa is genuine U.S. Military Issue Religious Jewelry. This hamsa is manufactured to protect people serving in the USA Military, and is listed in GI Jewelry's catalog as being produced for both Jewish and Muslim armed forces personnel.



¹ Dundes, A. 1980. "Wet and Dry: The Evil Eye: An Essay in Indo-European and Semitic Worldview". *Interpreting Folklore* 93 - 312. Indiana University Press



Malevolent spirits were often blamed for death and disease in the thousands of years that preceded the understanding of bacteria, viruses, and genetic disorders. People widely believed the Evil Eye to be a deadly and disabling force across North Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, the Levant, and Southwestern Asia². Scripture and persons also attributed illness and death to predatory supernatural spirits. Each religious and local group had slightly different narrations of these dangerous forces. Each cultural group had slightly different talismans, prayers, and magical symbols to protect themselves. Traditional treatment of disease involved both plant and mineral based therapies, coupled with prayers and symbols to avert the Evil Eye and demons.



² Dundes, A. 1980. "Wet and Dry: The Evil Eye: An Essay in Indo-European and Semitic Worldview". *Interpreting Folklore* 93 - 312. Indiana University Press

This hamsa is part of an ornament made to protect newborns; it is meant to be pinned to their cradle to protect them from harm and from the Evil Eye. Beautiful children were believed to especially vulnerable to attack by the Evil Eye.³



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The hamsa below was meant to be hung by the door to protect a house and the family within. The attributes, shown below, of this hamsa are the same attributes of luck often believed to be bestowed by henna!



³ “The Functions of Childbirth and Postpartum Henna Traditions” Catherine Cartwright Jones 2006 <https://www.tapdancinglizard.com/the-functions-of-childbirthand-postpartum-henna-traditions/>

⁴ This talisman pin to protect an infant from the Evil Eye was purchased on Ebay in 2002.



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This home protection talisman shows both the evil eye and henna patterns on the shape of a hand show how henna and belief in the Evil Eye were used together as protection from bad luck, ill health, barrenness, failure, and death.

A merchant who wanted to quickly sell his henna inventory made up a story about an infant being by, though another source blamed foreign intelligence. Shafaq News, May 16, 2012.⁶

"Shafaq News / Abu Hussein said to "Shafaq News", " Yesterday witnessed a great demand for the substance of henna by many customers, so I had a state of puzzlement, and I did not initially know the reason for this demand."

The Iraqi markets are witnessing a remarkable rush by women to buy henna material, where, according to Zainab Ali, who has purchased two bags of henna, the stain heads and hands and feet of their young children, especially the newborns "to save them from death!"

"Shafaq News", investigated the source of this matter , and how the market of henna has become and suddenly and strikingly a destination for women over the usual, . We knew more than a story, by the people who bought henna in the past two days, and they have either young children or newborns.

5 This home protection talisman was purchased on Ebay in 2006

6 <https://www.shafaq.com/ar>

However, the most frequent story on the lips of women, is that a child was born a short time ago, and the first moments it began to speak (as they claim), and warned them of the advent of a mysterious and deadly disease that affects children soon in Iraq through a dust storm. It advised them to stain the heads and hands and feet of their young children with henna substance, for keeping and protecting them from this epidemic. "

But the henna dealer in Shorja - the largest market in Iraq - Tehsin A'adil Ansari appears to be close to the heart of the matter, reported to "Shafaq News", the beginning of the story, "The news available to me says that there is a big and well known Iraqi merchant - who requested anonymity - agreed with the cleric after he brought large amounts of henna from India to narrate the public in one of his religious lectures to the story of the child's contrived prodigy, and promote it in coordination with other religious people to convince the people about the need to buy henna to save their children from death, in exchange of a generous amount of money given to the cleric. "

Commenting on the topic a researcher at the Sociology and Psychology, Nuha Darwish said to "Shafaq News", "societies in wars and conflicts are often subjected to many economic and psychological value collapses, and they become a fertile ground for rumors, that have a big impact on individuals who suffer psychological and moral depression. "

She explains that "Iraq has become a target of any every party that wants to achieve rapid economic gains, and may be traders who want to spread henna that is perhaps corrupted and not fit for human use are behind this thing."

The head of the Committee of Religious Endowments Ali al-Allaq in an interview with "Shafaq News", "from the religious aspect it is impossible to trust and rely on the news that does not have a ground out in the Islamic law," noting that " We are afraid that there are hidden political and intelligence hands behind such things as the matter of the child who spoke in its cradle seeking to move the issues to distract people from the basic requirements in their daily lives and disable them. "