**Human Body and Beauty in the Qur’ān: A Socio-Cultural Study in Stability and Evolution**

1. **Introduction**

The body is a place of convergence; where socio-cultural contexts meet myths of divine creation. Our social expectations and practices are inscribed onto it.[[1]](#footnote-1) Embodiment, constructed as the process of becoming a body in a social framework, is inherently contextual, contingent upon prevailing norms and practices.[[2]](#footnote-2) Two of the most basic qualities of the human body are its aesthetic and its beauty which are determined by holy scriptures and socio-cultural norms and realities. Abrahamic religious traditions posit that human embodiment is divinely ordained, and the embodied state of existence expresses the perfection of God's creation.[[3]](#footnote-3) Since embodiment displays the divine creative design, it follows that humans should express gratitude for their physical bodies, perceived as emblematic of social institutions.[[4]](#footnote-4) In contrast to the created earthly body, the resurrected body assumed an immortal and idealized semblance, albeit grounded in earthly traits as sexuality, gender and aesthetics perceptions.

Willemijn Ruberg’s *History of the Body* employs a methodology where lived experiences, ideologies, morals, socio-economic circumstances, and abstract concepts construct perceptions of the body, respective to cultural and religious paradigms.[[5]](#footnote-5) Through the concept of historizing the body, Ruberg endeavors to apprehend the body through fundamental principles that operate within varied contexts, often engendering tensions.[[6]](#footnote-6) Perceptions of the body and its beauty are dependent upon social, cultural, religious and economic context, and are contingent upon intracorporal dynamics with other bodies. Because of this, it is possible for historians to analyze ideas about the body and its beauty, and glean insights into politics, society, and culture in their historical context.

The concepts of the human body and beauty, within historical context, may be better understood through the lens of a theoretical **sociocultural framework.** This approach underscores the significance of cultural and social factors in the formulation and evolution of peoples' socio-cultural beliefs and values, thereby constructing their identity and reality.[[7]](#footnote-7) Additionally, it accords culture and society a pivotal role in establishing and enforcing moral standards and socio-religious norms.

This article focuses on the religious traditions of Islam as they appear in the Qur’an and its commentaries, and hadith traditions. The socio-cultural theory allows for a more nuanced understanding of the interplay between religious beliefs and socio-cultural contexts in shaping conceptions of beauty, human creation, and the detailed facial descriptions within the Qur’ānic discourse. Additionally, it underscores the dynamic interplay between culture, society, aesthetics, and human expression in configuring the individual and collective understandings of these interrelated concepts. Specifically, we aim to elucidate the Qur’ānic perception of the human body and beauty, constructing in beauty absence in the creation narrative with its methodological prominence in descriptions of human face. Such an analysis will allow us to understand the influence exerted by social and cultural realities on the consolidation of medieval Muslim communities. These narratives will underscore the interconnectedness between society and culture, highlighting their profound impact on the conceptualization and utilization of the concepts of the human body and its beauty as part of a divine creation.

The Qur’ān’s standards of beauty and aesthetics, molded by socio-cultural norms and historical context, are defined and discussed in several verses. Beauty and the creation of humanity are depicted as manifestations of divine benevolence, underscoring divine omnipotence and wisdom. However, descriptions of Adam - heralded as God's paragon of creation - eschew beauty terminology in favor of detailing the simple raw materials of his creation, underscoring the transcendence beauty as a yardstick of human worth. Additionally, beauty is most salient in descriptions of human faces, where it serves as an indicator of moral behavior. Such descriptions, whether of sinners or believers, function as didactic tools aimed at edifying the believers through allegorical portraits of beauty and ugliness as proxy for piety and transgression, respectively. Descriptions of sinners' faces are integral to the Qur’ān’s pedagogical paradigm, serving to admonish and exhort believers toward rectitude.

The Qur’ān finds its historical moorings in the socio-cultural and religious reality of the 7th century Arab Peninsula, yet, it concurrently endeavors to reshape the life of its contemporary inhabitants. The Arabian society of that era stood in a transitional juncture from the traditional tribal structure toward a more nuclear familial structure. Qurʼānic verses were a part of the mechanism that catalyzed a new conception of belonging.[[8]](#footnote-8) Despite its historical underpinning, Muslim belief posits the Qurʼān's messages as universal and eternal, transcending time and historical circumstances.[[9]](#footnote-9) The Prophet Muḥammad set the foundations of Muslim jurisprudence, ethics, and theology and the Qur’ān reflects his thoughts and ideas.[[10]](#footnote-10) The compiling of Muḥammad’s teachings into a codified scripture, endowed with prophetic significance, conferred upon him the legitimacy of divine revelation. Perceived by Muslims as the prophet of a new belief, Muḥammad’s teachings became the source of normative Muslim morality in every aspect of life. An analysis of the Qurʼānic verses pertaining to human creation, the human face, and human beauty, will unveil the socio-cultural world of the first believers, elucidating a process of consolidation characterized by both continuity and evolution. The Qur’ān, as a textual articulation of the body, is subject to discursive formation and socio-historical and cultural context culture.[[11]](#footnote-11) Commentaries on the Qur’ān demonstrate both continuity with scripture, and change.[[12]](#footnote-12) The absence of individualism in the creation story left room for future interpretations to contextualize the individual body within the parameters of time and space.[[13]](#footnote-13)

This paradigm of stability and evolution also applies to Ḥadīth literature and medieval Qur’ānic commentaries, which serve as additional sources in this research. Composed in the post-Qur’anic era, Ḥadīth collections and Qur’ānic exegeses sought to furnish guidance to Muslim communities in a changed reality of time, place, socio-economic conditions, and foreign influences. The outcome was that the Qur’ānic verses allowed for an expansive interpretation and extension. This trajectory mirrors a dialectic of stability and evolution. Ḥadīth compendiums used in this research are those six considered the most reliable by Muslim jurists.[[14]](#footnote-14) The classical medieval commentators chosen as representative for this research include al-Ṭabarī (d. 923), al-Zamakhsharī (d. 1144), al-Bayḍāwī (d. 1286/1291) and ʼIbn Kathīr (d. 1373).[[15]](#footnote-15)

**IV. The Qur’ānic concept of human beauty**

According to Abdulgafar Olawale, beauty encompasses aesthetic appeal and appreciation, intertwined with knowledge and functionality, while its perception is informed by cultural, social and economic paradigms.[[16]](#footnote-16) Widely debated and perennially resonant, beauty finds its conceptual roots in the realm of taste, with aesthetic considerations permeating various domains.[[17]](#footnote-17) Within the Qur’ān, terms pertaining to beauty appear at least dozen times, and they are predominantly imbued with moral rather than solely aesthetic connotations, emphasizing inner virtues over superficial appearance.[[18]](#footnote-18) While physical beauty is depicted as a divine gift to humanity, individuals are admonished to prioritize piety and moral behavior, as these constitute the essence of inner beauty. In medieval Muslim legal literature, physical-sensual beauty, as favored by human nature, is delineated by principles of symmetry, proportionality, the harmonious interplay between body parts and visual contrasts of shapes and colors.[[19]](#footnote-19) In non-Qur’ānic literature the concept of jamāl (beauty), serves as a linchpin in Jāhiliyya and Islamic contexts, encapsulating facets of appearance, characteristics and behavior.[[20]](#footnote-20)

In *al-Aḥz*ā*b* 33:52 the term ‘‘*husn*’’ (goodness and beauty) appears once, specifically alluding to the beauty of human females. This verse, situated within a broader discussion on the wives of the Muslim believers and the Prophet’s wives specifically, hints at the Prophet's inclination toward beautiful women, a trait deemed desirable within the patriarchal structure. While the verse acknowledges the transience of sensory beauty, it beckons toward a deeper appreciation of another form of beauty: intellectual and moral virtue.[[21]](#footnote-21)

Other notable mentions of female beauty are the detailed descriptions of the imaginary, heavenly *hur alayn*.[[22]](#footnote-22) Given the extensive coverage of this subject in research, only a concise overview focusing on their physical body and beauty, rather than their clothing and jewelry, will be provided here.[[23]](#footnote-23) The portrayal of the *ḥuris* reflects embodiment as perceived by men who are themselves embedded within the framework of Islam. The standard of *huri* beauty, described as unique and precious, stood in contrast to prevailing norms in the Arab peninsula. ʼIbn Kathīr draws a parallel between the beauty of the *ḥuris* and the descriptions of Yusūf by Zulayka, an interesting comparison between an earthly man and heavenly female creatures. It exemplifies a patriarchal perception wherein perfect female beauty is found exclusively in heaven, a promise which serves to entertain and captivate male believers.[[24]](#footnote-24) Al-Bayḍāwī likens the *ḥuris* to ostrich eggs, which were symbols of purity and held putative protective powers against the evil eye in Mediterranean cultures.[[25]](#footnote-25) Their skin is likened to the whiteness of feathers or pearls and is as delicate as the inner membrane of an egg, symbolizing purity, virginity, and innocence.[[26]](#footnote-26) The *ḥuris*' skin is clear and translucent like gemstones, allowing for the visibility of veins and capillaries beneath their silk garments.[[27]](#footnote-27) The *ḥuris* are depicted with beautiful faces, characterized by large, wide eyes which embody a perfect contrast between white and black.[[28]](#footnote-28) Notably, the descriptions refrain from mentioning other bodily parts, possibly adhering to patriarchal norms of female modesty which dictate that feminine anatomy should not be discussed or exposed in discourse.

Zulayka’s descriptions of Yusūf offer a remarkable portrayal of male human beauty, albeit with a distinct purpose. In 12: 31 women were captivated by Yusūf's beauty, yet the moral lesson embedded within the story serves to mitigate the significance of beauty and allude to its perils. Commentaries emphasize Yusūf's handsome and luminous countenance, with al-Bayḍāwī recounting instances where Yusūf concealed his face in the presence of women, in order not to inadvertently arouse their desire.[[29]](#footnote-29) In contrast to the earthly world where women were forcibly concealed in order to prevent temptation, Yusūf's voluntary act of concealment is a conscious choice rooted in the belief that beauty poses a threat, as an impediment to spiritual devotion. It may even be interpreted as a divine test intended to ascertain Yusūf's commitment to faith over physical allure. Al-Ṭabarī recounts traditions which suggest that Yusūf and his mother were endowed with one third or one half of the world's total beauty, traditions which hint at the notion that beauty is inherited via the maternal lineage. Al-Zamakhsharī draws parallels between Yusūf and the primordial Adam, as well as Yusūf’s grandmother Sara. These comparisons present a unique amalgamation of male and female beauty attributes. This may suggest a flexible model of male beauty which incorporates some feminine parameters like the *mukhannathūn* or homosexuals, extending the classic boundaries of males' beauty. Yusūf's unnatural beauty is a cautionary tale and didactic lesson warning against the allure of temporal, external charms at the expense of inner piety. Yusūf, not the archetypal patriarch, is passive and helpless; he is created handsome by God and seduced by women. At the same time, women are presented as assertive, aggressive and motivated by sexual desire while Yusūf is a victim who seeks for refuge from God.[[30]](#footnote-30) Yusūf's narrative is conspicuously from Ḥadīth literature, perhaps owing to its overtly sexual nature or a desire to distance Islamic traditions from their Jewish and Christian origins.[[31]](#footnote-31)

Implicit references to human physical beauty are also found in *al-Baqara* 2: 247 and *al-Munaffiqūn* 63: 4. The former presents a portrayal of a future king, emphasizing not only his wisdom but also his imposing physical structure, including height, beauty, and strength. Physical appearance serves as a criterion for the future chosen king, facilitating the establishment of credibility and authority. Commentators highlight Tault's towering height as an expression of his powerful demeanor, which instills fear in his adversaries.[[32]](#footnote-32) This narrative underscores the notion that God bestows prophets and kings with physical beauty, something which aids them in their mission, yet is devoid of supernatural powers. Beauty, thus, is depicted as a divine gift that may be deceptive and should not be pursed as an end itself. *Al-Munaffiqūn* 63: 4 warns believers against being deceived by the outward beauty of hypocrites, which belies their true faith. This disjunction between their superficial appearance and their deceitful sayings underscores the transient and misleading nature of beauty, cautioning against the temptation to judge based solely on external aesthetics.[[33]](#footnote-33)

Ḥadīth literature by its nature presents a spectrum of diverse and at times contradictory traditions.[[34]](#footnote-34) Women's beauty, while esteemed as a significant parameter for marriage, is also acknowledged as possessing a seductive and potentially negative influence that can be wielded as a form of manipulation against men.[[35]](#footnote-35) For instance, ʼIbn Māja devises against marrying beautiful women, cautioning that such unions may lead to the downfall of their husbands.[[36]](#footnote-36) Likewise, it is posited that on the day of resurrection, God will safeguard those who resist the allure of beautiful women, with Abu Daud emphasizing the primacy of a woman's ability to bear children over their physical beauty.[[37]](#footnote-37) Despite such admonitions, the prophet Muhammad himself demonstrated a preference for beautiful women, as evidenced by his decision to marry Ṣafiya upon hearing of her exceptional beauty, following her previous husband's death.[[38]](#footnote-38) Anecdotes relayed by Aysha further illustrate instances of competition among women for the Prophet's affection and admiration, based on their physical attractiveness and charm.[[39]](#footnote-39) In contrast, men's beauty is construed as a manifestation of God's power and grace, perceived as less inherently perilous than women's beauty.[[40]](#footnote-40) The ideal model of male beauty is the prophet Muhammad, a subject that finds elaboration not in the Qur’ān but rather in Ḥadīth literature and commentaries.[[41]](#footnote-41)

1. **The Qur’ānic human body**
2. **The creation of Adam**

The Qur’ānic version of the creation of Adam encapsulates a socio-cultural perspective concerning the manner and materials from which he was created, while also hinting at future socio-cultural constructs regarding the human body. Medieval commentaries serve as the legitimate cultural channel for transmitting and internalizing these ideas by individuals and communities. Adam, as depicted in the Qur’ān, emerges as an embodied being created by God, entrusted with the cultural mandate of shaping the trajectory of human flourishing. God's act of creation, described as forming Adam from dust and animating him with the breath of life into an embodied form, underscores the earthly origins of humanity's primordial ancestor. The first prophet of humankind was created from earthly materials such as dust, clay, mud, or dry clay, announcing his mortality and terrestrial nature.

*al-Ḥijr* 15 - 26, 28 delineates Adam's creation from wet clay, symbolizing pliability and malleability, yet solidifying into strength upon drying. Notably, the reference to dry clay, reminiscent of material used for crafting idols, underscores Adam's unique status as the recipient of divine life-breath. Commentaries on *al-Raḥman* 55: 14-15 expound upon the qualities of dry clay, renowned for its solidity that resembles the burned one, and absence of unpleasant odors. Others posit that the clay underwent a blending process with dust or sand, which rendered it pliable while in a wet state. Subsequently, upon drying, this amalgamation solidified into a robust and stable compound.[[42]](#footnote-42) Additionally, interpretations to *al-Imran* 3: 59 and *al-'Israa* 17: 62 elaborate on Adam's creation from dust and the fertile, aesthetically pleasing earth's surface. Al-Ṭabarī's commentary on *al-Taghābun* 64: 3 posits the distinctiveness of Adam's creation, fashioned directly by God's hands, in contrast to other living creatures.[[43]](#footnote-43)

Ḥadīth traditions further elucidate Adam's creation from a composite of earthly materials, an admixture which foreshadowed the diversity of human races, genders, physical attributes, and even levels of happiness.[[44]](#footnote-44) This diversity, delineated in commentaries to *al-*῾*Imrān* 3: 6; *al-'Infitār* 82: 7-8; *al-Tīn* 95: 3, 4; *al-A*῾*la* 87: 2; *al-Sajda* 32: 7; *al-Rūm* 30: 22, symbolizes divine intentionality in presenting multiple variations rather than a single perfection, reserving perfection solely for the divine realm.[[45]](#footnote-45) The uniqueness of Adam's creation ex nihilo serves as an expression of divine omnipotence. However, it is emphasized that subsequent generations of humanity will be engendered through the process of gestation within the wombs of women. Commentaries to *al-Ghāfir* 40: 64; *al-Taghābun* 64: 3 emphasize the assiduous construction of Adam's form, which was meticulously designed to fulfill his ordained role.[[46]](#footnote-46)

1. **The human Face**

The Qur’ān contains references to various body parts, some of which are imbued with allegorical significance.[[47]](#footnote-47) Among these, the head and face occupy a preeminent position within the hierarchy of body parts. This article opts to focus solely on the face due to its paramount importance, serving as it does as the primary conduit for non-verbal human communication. The face inherently draws attention to its expressions, encodes messages and simultaneously "decodes" the faces of people around. Indeed, the face is a canvas upon which emotions are painted and coded, thus facilitating interpersonal understanding. Moreover, the face holds a significant role in physical attractiveness, as it can be embellished with an array of temporary or permanent options; from expressions to make up and jewelry. [[48]](#footnote-48)

Within the Qur’ānic eschatology, the human face assumes a pivotal role in delineating the dichotomy between sinners and believers, through visible manifestations symbolizing public shame or glorification.[[49]](#footnote-49) The ensuing paragraphs delineate a hierarchical progression of facial imagery, starting with visual representations and culminating in physical affliction. This aims to underscore a didactic lesson concerning the consequences of actions, ranging from punishment to reward.

A. Marking

According to *Muḥammad* 47: 30 and *al-A'rāf* 7: 46 sinners and believers will bear distinguishing marks upon their faces, with specific emphasis placed on their eyes. However, other interpretations suggest that God will inscribe upon sinners' foreheads during their sleep, marking them with the sign of Hippocrates.[[50]](#footnote-50) These marks serve as a means of identification akin to the branding of cattle in the pasture or the application of tattoos, effectively subjecting sinners to public humiliation. Conversely, another version posits that these markings are visible only to the angels or are revealed through divine inspiration.[[51]](#footnote-51) In their commentary on *al-Rahman* 55: 41 ʼIbn Kathīr and al-Ṭabarī expound upon the notion that sinners will be blue eyed, drawing parallels to *Ṭa ha* 20: 102, where sinners are depicted as sightless or blue eyed, contingent upon the commentary in question.[[52]](#footnote-52) Blue was perceived as a color of foreigners and a symbol of sin, although Persians and pagan Turks were fond of it.[[53]](#footnote-53)

B. Expression of emotions

In accordance with commentaries on *al-Muṭafifīn* 83: 22-24; *al-Raḥmān* 55: 41 and *al-Ghāshiya* 88 2-3, 8-9, the countenances of true believers are described as exuding expressions of happiness, joy, and splendor, akin to those possessing wealth and luxury. Conversely, the sinners' faces are depicted as bearing signs of pain, sorrow, and misery.[[54]](#footnote-54) These interpretations suggest a correlation between one’s inner spiritual disposition and the outward manifestation of emotional state.

C. Colors

In the eschatological framework of the afterlife as depicted in the Qur’ān, a division is envisioned wherein individuals are categorized into those with white faces, symbolizing devoted believers, and those with black faces, representing sinners. Across various languages and cultures, the color black often carries negative connotations, denoting dirt, the unseen, potent magic, and misfortune.[[55]](#footnote-55) This contrast between the blackened countenances of sinners consigned to Hell and the white faces of the rewarded believers in Heaven is one of the strongest visual and symbolic motifs within the Qur’ānic eschatology, as exemplified in *al-Zumar* 39: 60; *al-*῾*Imrān* 3: 106-107; *al-Ḥajj* 22: 72; *al-Raḥman* 55: 41.[[56]](#footnote-56) Commentators expound upon the significance of this imagery, elucidating that the darkening or blackening of sinners' faces symbolizes their guilt, the falsehoods they propagated, and their apprehension regarding impendingpunishment.[[57]](#footnote-57) *Al-'Abas* 80: 41 further elaborates on the obscuring of sinners' faces with darkness, attributed to black dust, smoke, or mud. Notably, dark or black faces are associated with enslaved people, while white skin is held in higher esteem, as noted by al-Zamakhsharī, who likens the blackness to that of black slaves (zanj).[[58]](#footnote-58)

D.Inner radiance

From verses such as *al-'Abas* 80: 40 and *al-Qiy*ā*ma* 75: 22-25, an additional criterion for identifying true believers emerges, one that is less tangible and more imbued with spiritual significance. It is described as an inner radiance emanating from the depth of their devout souls, causing their faces to shine with a brilliance akin to the luminosity of sunlight.[[59]](#footnote-59)

E. physical facial injury

Among the descriptions of physical affliction in the Qur’ān, one of the most severe instances is given in *al-Kahf* 18: 29. This verse depicts sinners' faces being scalded on the day of resurrection, resulting in the skin falling from their faces as they attempt to drink.[[60]](#footnote-60) Such descriptions evoke feelings of fear, disgust, and pain. The inclusion of imagery associated with a mundane human activity like drinking, essential for sustenance, serves to intensify the horror by rendering this basic function agonizing or even unattainable. This approach underscores the Qur’ānic strategy of instilling terror by employing vivid and relatable scenarios to illustrate the dire consequences of moral transgressions.

1. **The creation of other entities**

Two other entities, namely the *jinn* and *'iblis*, are positioned as preceding the creation of Adam, God's final and most perfect creation. Both are characterized as simpler beings intended to inhabit the earthy world, thereby underscoring its imperfect nature.[[61]](#footnote-61) Despite commentaries expounding upon the impressive raw materials from which they were created, their creation ultimately serves to extol God, who created them from the humblest of raw materials. In *al-A'r*ā*f* 7: 12, the creation of *'iblis* from fire is depicted, a portrayal seemingly more illustrious than Adam's creation from dust. However, this element serves to exalt Adam's creation from dust, symbolizing life and enduring growth in contrast to fire's transience, destructive nature, and association with death.[[62]](#footnote-62) In the Qur’ānic story, when the devil refused to acknowledge Adam's superiority, he is called Iblis, whereas in the story of Adam and Eve’s temptation he is called shaytan.[[63]](#footnote-63) Iblis was accused of hubris and self-aggrandizement, asserting his superiority over Adam due to his creation from fire as opposed to Adam's creation from dust.[[64]](#footnote-64) However, the narrative subtly underscores that while fire may appear formidable and esteemed, dust extinguishes it.[[65]](#footnote-65) The jinn as described in *al-Ḥijr* 15: 27 is depicted as created before Adam from various elements such as smokeless flame, fire, sandstorm, or scorching hot wind.[[66]](#footnote-66)

1. **Conclusions**

The **sociocultural theory** offered a theoretical lens through which beliefs and values concerning beauty, human creation and the significance of the human face can be understood within the historical context of medieval Islam. This framework enabled the examination of how these concepts were employed to decipher the social and cultural realities of embodiment in medieval Muslim communities, elucidating their role in shaping beliefs, interpretations, concepts and practices. These narratives highlighted the intricate interplay between society and culture, emphasizing their profound impact across the following four spheres:

1. **Socio-cultural embodiment**

The evolution of perceptions of the human body, the notion of beauty, and the discourse of facial aesthetics has undergone an expansion of its embodiment's concepts from the Qur’ān to classic medieval commentaries. This expansion was facilitated by the intersecting influences of written sources and socio-cultural contexts. As a result, there emerged a broader conception of embodiment, shaped by the complex interplay of the holy scripture, esteemed interpreters thereof, and the lived experience, desires, and necessities of people.

1. **Physical appearance and nonverbal messages**

Established and accepted norms of beauty were utilized for didactic and pedagogical purposes, with the intension of instructing the believers not to be captivated by these standards, but rather to adhere to divine guidance, and the righteous path. The underlying premise posits that beauty holds significance in human life as an aspect of divine creation and divine grace; however it should not be given prominence over morality and pious behavior. The story of Yusūf introduces an additional aspect by highlighting the perils inherent in beauty, thereby urging a self-reflection which would guide believers towards prioritizing piety. A similar moral message is conveyed through descriptions of the human face, whereby beauty is heralded as a reward for the virtuous as ugliness is punishment for sinners. Adam's perfect creation from simple raw materials serves yet another testament to the boundless power of the divine.

1. **Power relations**

A hierarchical structure is clearly delineated, with the supreme God endowed with the unique power to create both Adam and the concept of human beauty. Positioned at the base of this hierarchy are human beings, who developed standards of beauty derived from prevailing ideas prevalent within in the Arab peninsula and territories under Islamic conquest. Additionally, there exist religious hierarchies of power, wherein Judaism and Christianity have exerted influence on Islam; however, the Muslim story of Adam’s creation presents a distinctive variation in the way it emphasizes God's supremacy. Notably, clay, traditionally employed as a basic raw material for crafting idols, is employed by God in the creation of Adam, serving as a clear affirmation of the supremacy of God over these idols, as He breathed life into clay to create a living entity.

1. **Shifting boundaries between religion and culture**

Islam, being a religion rooted in legal principles, has developed a complicated system of laws that govern every facet of Muslim life. \Between the Qur’ānic text and its commentaries, there exists a space for evolution, (although one yet balanced with the necessity for stability of religious concepts). The commentaries allocate greater significance to, and engage in more detailed discourse regarding, the human body and its aesthetic qualities, than does the Qur’ān itself; this reflects the realities, desires and needs of humans in defining and discussing beauty. Over time, the varying socio-cultural contexts of different Muslim communities have resulted in a growing flexibility of religious rules, in order to accommodate diverse interpretations of the Qur’ān and varying perceptions of beauty. These processes of socialization have fostered an environment conducive to the emergence of adaptations and innovations, thus facilitating the broadening and reinterpretation of the concept of beauty, alongside the Qur’ānic descriptions concerning the creation of Adam and the portrayal of human faces within changing socio-cultural circumstances.

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4. Ivan Crozier, “Introduction: Bodies in History - The Task of the Historian”, in *A Cultural History of the Human Body*, ed. Ivan Crozier (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2010), Vol. 6, pp. 1–22. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
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6. Oliver J.T. & John Robb, "Multiple Ontologies and the Problem of the Body in History", *American Anthropologist* 114(2012), p. 676.

   For more about historizing the body see Iris Clever and Willemijn Ruberg, "Beyond Cultural History? The Material Turn, Praxiography, and Body History", *Humanities* 3 (2014), pp. 546-566. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
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10. For more about the Qur’ān see: A.T. Welch, R. Paret & J. D. Pearson, “al-Ḳurʾān”, *EI2*,Vol. 5, 401-435. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
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13. Willelmijn Ruberg, *History of the Body* (London: Red Globe Press, 2020), p. 113. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. For more about hadith literature see [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. For more about Qur’ānic commentary see ei2/3 [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Fahm Abdulgafar Olawale, “‘Everything Has Beauty but Not Everyone Sees It’: An Islamic Alternative to Assessing Beauty”, *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research* 3(2020), p. 214. (211–26) [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
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20. For more see Jamāl al-Munajjid, *Jam*ā*l al-Mar*ā*'a ῾inda al-῾Arab* (Bayrūt: Dār al-Kitāb al-Jadid, 1969), p. 40. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Bolkhari, “Aesthetic and Concept of Beauty", p. 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. *Ḥur al-*῾*ayn* are mentioned in *al-Baqara* 2: 25, *al-῾Imrān* 3: 15, *al-Nisā’* 4: 57, *Yāsīn* 36: 55, *al-Ṣāfāt* 37: 48-49, *Ṣa* 38: 52, *al-Dhukhān* 44: 54, *al-Ṭūr* 52: 20, *al-Raḥmān* 55: 65, *al-Ma῾arij* 70: 74, *al-Wāqi῾ah* 56: 22-23. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. For more about ḥur al-ʿayn, see Arnet J. Wensinck, “Ḥur,” *EI2*, vol. 3, 581–582; Nerina Rustomji, “Are Houris Heavenly Concubines?” in *Concubines and Courtesans: Women and Slavery in Islamic History*, eds. Matthew S. Gordn & Kathryn A. Hain (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 266–277; Yvonne Y. Haddad & Jane I. Smith, ‘‘Women in the afterlife: The Islamic view as seen from the Qur’an and tradition’’, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 43 (1975). pp 47–48; Amina Wadud-Muhsin, *Qur’ān and Women* (Kuala Lumpur: Fajar Bakti, 1992), p. 55; S. Kahwaji, ‘‘Ilm al-Djamal’’, 1138–1139; Ibrahim Mahmud, *al-Jins fi al-Qur’ān* (London: Riyad al-Ris lil-Kutub wal-Nashr, 1994), p. 15. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. ʼIsmā῾īl ῾Umar ʼAbū al-Fidāʼ ʼIbn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* **(**Bayrūt: Dār al-Ma῾rifa,1997), Vol. 5, p. 57. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Nile Green, "Ostrich Eggs and Peacock Feathers: Sacred Objects as Cultural Exchange between Christianity and Islam", *Al-Masaq* 18(2006), pp. 27-78. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. *ʾ*Abū Jaf῾ar Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi*῾ *al-Bayān fi Tafsīr al-Qurʾān* (Bayrūt: Dār al-Fikr, 1978), Vol. 7, pp. 81.

    For more about the symbolism of white see: Alexander Borg, “Linguistic and Ethnographic Observations on the Color Categories of the Negev Bedouin”, in *The Language of Color in the Mediterranean*, ed. Alexander Borg (Stockholm: Almqvist & Iksell International, 1999), p. 140; Afan H. Fatani, "Colours", *The Qur’ān: An Encyclopedia*, p. 148; Bilal A. al-Adaileh, "The Connotations of Arabic Colour Terms", *Linguistica* 13(2012), p. 8; Rabab'ah Khalid, "Conceptual and Connotative Meanings of Black and White Colors: Examples from Jordanian Arabic." *Asian Culture and History* 6(2014), p. 257. (255-260)

    White in the Bible also symbolizes purity. For more see: Athalya Brenner, *Colour Terms in the Old Testament* (Sheffield: J.S.O.T Press, 1982), p. 203; Athalya Brenner, "On Color and the Sacred in the Hebrew Bible", *Stockholm Oriental Studies* (1999), pp. 200-207. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. ʼIbn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, Vol. 9, p. 90; *ʾ*Abū Jaf῾ar Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi*῾ *al-Bayān fi Tafsīr al-Qurʾān* (Bayrūt: Dār al-Fikr, 1978), Vol. 11, p. 102, [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi*῾ *al-Bayān*, Vol. 13, p. 20. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. ῾Abd ʼAlla b. ῾Umar al-Bayḍāwī, ʼ*Anwār al-Tanzīl wa-*ʼ*Asrār al-Ta*ʼ*wīl* (D.M., D. N, 1846), Vol. 5, p. 78. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Fedwa Malti-Douglas, *Woman's Body Woman's Word* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), p. 51. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. R. Firestone, “Yusūf”, *EI2*, Vol. 11, p. 353. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. ʼIbn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, Vol. 3, p. 40; al-Bayḍāwī, Vol. 2, p. 200; al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi*῾ *al-Bayān*, Vol. 7, p. 69; Muḥammad b.῾Umar al-Zamkhsharī, *al-Kashāf* ῾*an Ḥakā*ʼ*ik al-Tanzīl* (al- Qāhira: Dār al-Rayān lil-Turāth, 1987), Vol. 11, p. 97. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. ʼIbn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, Vol. 8, p. 213; al-Bayḍāwī, ʼ*Anwār al-Tanzīl*, Vol. 3, p. 237. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. For more about hadith literature see: [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Muḥammad b. Isma῾il al- Bukhārī**,** *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (Bayr**ū**t: Dar al-*῾*Arabiyya, 1985), Vol. 13, p. 99; Muḥammad b. ῾Isa al-Tirmidhi, *Ṣaḥīḥ Sunan al-Tirmidhi* (al-Riyad: Maktab al-Tarbiya al-῾Arabi, 1988), Vol. 7, p. 219. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Muḥammad b. YazidʼIbn Māja, *Ṣaḥīḥ Sunan ʼIbn Maja* (al-Q**ā**hira: **M. B.** al- Ḥalabī, 1972), Vol. 3 , p. 68. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. , Sulimān b. **’**Ash**‘ath** al-Sijistāni **’Abū** Dā’ud**,** *Sunan* ***’Abū*** *Dā***’***ud* **(al-Riyād: Maktab al-Tarbiya al-‘Arabī,** 1988), Vol. 11 p. 195. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. al- Bukhārī**,** *Ṣaḥīḥ* *al-Bukhārī*, Vol. 8, p. 237; ʼIbn Māja, *Ṣaḥīḥ Sunan ʼIbn M*ā*ja*, Vol. 9, p. 150. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. al- Bukhar**i,** *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukh*ā*rī*, Vol. 7, p. 151. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. ʼAbū al-Ḥusayn b. al-Ḥājj Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (Bayrūt: Dār al-kutub al-῾Ilmiyya, 1990), Vol. 13, p. 201. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. **’Abū** Dā’ud**,** *Sunan* ***’Abū*** *Dā***’***ud*, Vol. 7, p. 13; al-Tirmidhi, *Ṣaḥīḥ Sunan al-Tirmidhi*; Vol. 1, p. 103**; ’**Aḥmad b. Muḥammad ʼIbn Ḥanbal, *Musnad al-***’***Imām ʼIbn Ḥanbal* (Bayrūt: al-Maktab al-Islāmī lil-Ṭiba**‘a, 1969)**, Vol. 10, p. 208.

    For more about Muḥammad's beauty see Hadas Hirsch, "Personal Grooming and Outward Appearance in Early Muslim Sources", *al-Masaq* 23 (2011), p. 107 (100-116); Christiane J Gruber & Shalem, Avinoam eds., *The Image of the Prophet Between Ideal and Ideology: A Scholarly Investigation* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014); Christiane J. Gruber, ["Images"](https://www.academia.edu/8050999/_Images_of_the_Prophet_Muhammad_), *Muhammad in History, Thought, and Culture: An Encyclopedia of the Prophet of God*, pp. 287-294.

    For example, The prophet' height was average, his skin was light, he had big black eyes and perfect ears, wide forehead and thin eyebrows.

    For more see: **’**Ab**ū** Ḥamid Muḥammad al- Ghazālī**, ’***Iḥya****’a***῾*Ul****ū****m al-Dīn* (Bayrūt: D**ār al-Ma῾rifa, 1981), Vol.** 2, p. 283; MuḥammadʼIbn Sa῾d, *Kit****ā****b al-Ṭabak****ā****t* al-Kabīr (Leiden: Brill, 1905-1918), Vol. 1-2, pp. 125-129. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi*῾ *al-Bayān*, Vol. 9, p. 239, al-Bayḍāwī, ʼ*Anwār al-Tanzīl*, Vol. 14, p. 95; al-Zamkhsharī, *al-Kashāf*, Vol. 9, p. 71. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi*῾ *al-Bayān*, Vol. 14, p. 59. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Roberto Tottoli, "Adam", *EI3*, Vol. , p. ; Ebrahim Abdul Fadl Muhsin, "Biology as the Creation and Stages of Life", *Encyclopedia of the Qur’ān*, Vol. 1, p. 230. (229-232) [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. ʼIbn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, Vol. 4, p. 190; baydawi, ʼ*Anwār al-Tanzīl*, Vol. 5, p. 72; al-Zamkhsharī, *al-Kashāf*, Vol. 9, p. 43*;* al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi*῾ *al-Bayān*, Vol. 9, p. 22. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi*῾ *al-Bayān*, Vol. 4, p. 38; al-Bayḍāwī, ʼ*Anwār al-Tanzīl*, Vol. 9, p. 67; ʼIbn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, Vol. 7, p. 49; al-Zamkhsharī, *al-Kashāf*, Vol. 5, p. 19. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Qamar-ul Huda, "Anatomy", *Encyclopedia of the Qur’ān*, Vol. 1, p. 81-82. (79-84) [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Pamela C. Graves, "From Archaeology of Iconoclasm to an Anthropology of the Body", *Current Anthropology* 49(2008), pp. 14-45. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. For more about the Qur’ānic eschatology see: Roberto Tottoli, "Afterlife", *EI3*, Vol. 3, pp. 39-46; John B. Taylor, “Some Aspects of Islamic Eschatology”, *Religious Studies* 4(1968), p. 66; Andrew Rippin, “The Commerce of Eschatology”, in *The Qur*’*an as Text*, ed. Stefan Wild (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996), p. 126 (134-5); L. Gardet, “Djanna”, *EI2*, Vol. 2, pp. 447-452; C. E. Bosworth, "Nar", *EI2* Vol. 2, 448; Ragnar Eklund, *Life Between Death and Resurrection According to Islam* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksells Boktryckeri, 1941), pp. 9-10. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. al-Zamkhsharī, *al-Kashāf*, Vol. 2, p. 82. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. al-Bayḍāwī, ʼ*Anwār al-Tanzīl*, Vol. 7, p. 27; al-Zamkhsharī, *al-Kashāf*, Vol. 7, p. 93. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. ʼIbn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, Vol. 2, p. 10; al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi*῾ *al-Bayān*, Vol. 10, p. 74.

    For more about blue eyes and their association to negative characteristic traits see: Kristina Richardson, "Blue and green eyes in the Islamicate Middle Ages", *Annales islamologiques* 48(2014), pp. 13-29. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Alberto Morabia, "Lawn", *EI2*, Vol. 5, pp. 698-707. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. al-Zamkhsharī, *al-Kashāf*, Vol. 9, p.11; al-Bayḍāwī, ʼ*Anwār al-Tanzīl*, Vol. 9, p. 61; ʼIbn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, Vol. 3, p. 97. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Rabab'ah, "Jordanian Arabic", p. 259. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. For more about black and white faces in the Qur’ān see Christian Lange, "On that Day when Faces will be White or Black"(Q3: 106): Towards a Semiology of the Face in the Arabo-Islamic Tradition", *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 127(2007), pp. 429-445. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. ʼIbn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, Vol. 2, p. 84; al-Bayḍāwī, ʼ*Anwār al-Tanzīl*, Vol. 3, p. 65. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. al-Zamkhsharī, *al-Kashāf*, Vol. 5, p. 38. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. al-Zamkhsharī, *al-Kashāf*, Vol. 8, p. 53; al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi*῾ *al-Bayān*, Vol. 7, p. 190; ʼIbn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, Vol. 9, p. 200. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. ʼIbn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, Vol. 15, p. 80; al-Zamkhsharī, *al-Kashāf*, Vol. 9, p. 157; al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi*῾ *al-Bayān*, Vol. 7, p. 281. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. al-Bayḍāwī, ʼ*Anwār al-Tanzīl*, Vol. 10, p. 215. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. ʼIbn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, Vol. 4, p. 82. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. L. Gardet, "iblis", *EI2*, Vol.// , p. ; Christian Lange, "Devil (Satan)" *EI3*, Vol. / , p. . [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi*῾ *al-Bayān*, Vol. 7, p. 217. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. al-Bayḍāwī, ʼ*Anwār al-Tanzīl*, Vol. 4, p. 165. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. D.B. MacDonald, "Djinn", *EI2*, Vol. ??? , p. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)