

The Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Henna Day

Catherine Cartwright-Jones PhD

Photography by Roy Jones

In areas of the world where henna is part of traditional culture, henna is regarded as lucky and a blessing, and has been so for at least five centuries. There are, of course, unlucky days and henna has had a few of these. I found these unlucky days listed in the LexisNexis news and media database, and have copied the original tests here and not changed the original newspaper article text. These show that henna is embedded in the complexities of life, not simply bound in myth and tradition.



Two people were arrested and detained on suspicion of terrorism for carrying henna across an international border.

Suspicious powder was just hair dye: Two men held at border.

February 18, 2003

Copyright 2003 Essex Chronicle, National Post, Canada, February 18, 2003. Tuesday National Edition, Pg. A8. BYLINE: Adrian Humphreys¹

"The suspicious powder that set off a terrorism scare when it was found in the baggage of a Pakistani man arrested at the border in Niagara Falls, Ont., turned out to be henna powder, a natural hair dye.

¹ "Suspicious powder was just hair dye: Two men held at border." National Post (Canada). Date Accessed: 2013/04/13. www.lexisnexis.com/hottopic/academic.

"The two men, who arrived separately at the Canada Customs office at the Rainbow Bridge early Friday, are being held for alleged immigration violations but authorities have dismissed fears of a terrorist plot.

"It is always good to be cautious," said Jean D'Amelio Swyer, spokeswoman for the Niagara Falls operations of Canada Customs. "Our officers did everything according to their training."

"When the mysterious powder was found in a duffel bag of a man travelling with a Pakistani passport, it sparked concern it could be a biological agent.

The Canada Customs officer who came into contact with the powder was temporarily quarantined and the inspection room sealed.

Hazardous materials specialists and a member of the RCMP's anti-terrorist unit were brought in and public health officials and Canada's spy agency were both notified. A second man, arriving hours later, was also held.

Further examination, however, has shown the substance to be henna, a natural dye that is used as both a hair colouring and for decorative body markings, the National Post has learned.

Henna powder is often stored in large, unmarked bags that are then placed inside boxes which carry the printing of what is inside. Without the box, the bags of a heavy greenish powder can resemble explosive or toxic substances.

"There are no ongoing health concerns, officials said.

"We have been vigilant since Sept. 11 and we will continue to be, given what is going on in the world," said RCMP Corporal Michele Paradis.

"There are people who attempt to come across all the time. It just takes us a while, sometimes, to find out their story and follow it up."

Shahid M. G. Kiani, Pakistan's deputy high commissioner in Ottawa, expressed frustration with repeated reports linking Pakistani citizens to terrorist activity.

"During the New Year's celebrations, the FBI issued an alert for five men of Arab or Pakistani background that were thought to have slipped into the United States and could be linked to terrorist activities. The alert was later withdrawn.

"And this month in Italy, police claimed to have smashed an al-Qaeda terrorist cell after arresting 28 Pakistanis in Naples, whom a judge later freed saying they had nothing to do with terrorism.

"Our people don't indulge in terrorist activities. If they come to this country, they are looking for jobs, they are looking for work. The people in the Pakistani community in [Canada] are hard-working people," he said.

"Mr. Kiani said henna was a common product in the Pakistani community.

"They were foolish to carry that because it is mainly used by ladies. Men do use it in Pakistan, but mainly elderly people who use it on their hair to make it black or make it brown.

"Maybe they were carrying it for some relations, but it is very common in Toronto," he said.

"Rejean Cantlon, a spokesman for Citizenship and Immigration Canada, said both men were scheduled to appear together this morning for a detention review in Niagara Falls.



Nine people were arrested for indecency; one of the charges against them was the possession of henna.

**Nine suspected Sudanese gay men go on trial for committing "indecent acts"
February 21, 2013 Thursday.**

"Nine suspected Sudanese gay men go on trial for committing "indecent acts"." Excerpt from report by populist Sudanese newspaper Al-Watan on 21 February, 2013 BBC Monitoring Middle East - Political Supplied by BBC Worldwide Monitoring. February 21, 2013 Thursday.²

² Date Accessed: 2013/08/15. www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/lnacademic.

BBC Monitoring Middle East – Political Supplied by BBC Worldwide Monitoring February 21, 2013 Thursday

The public order court in Bahri yesterday began sessions in the trial of nine gay men who were arrested on accusations of committing indecent acts. The court heard statements by a police lieutenant who said information they received from investigators indicated that a flat in Al-Safia area, belonging to a well-known singer, was being frequented by young men who always leave the flat wearing clothes that incited the neighbors' anger.

The policeman said after a warrant was issued, the flat was raided by the head of Al-Safia police station by a number of officers and investigators. He said they found the singer wearing a skirt and two other suspects were in their underwear. He went on to say that in the suspects' possession they found women's dilka [body scrub], henna, face creams, coffee making utensils and a water pipe. [Passage omitted: Suspects deny accusations.]



A woman stabbed another woman fourteen times because she was dissatisfied with her henna.

**"Mum tells of hairdo nightmare." Herald Sun (Melbourne, Australia).
June 12, 2003, Thursday**

"A MOTHER of four told a judge yesterday that a hairdo from hell led to a violent confrontation in which she stabbed her hairdresser.³

"Irate customer Farhia Ali Mohamud, 34, said she confronted crimper Luul Jimale at her salon and they fought and pulled at each other's hair.

³ Date Accessed: 2013/08/15. www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/lnacademic.
Herald Sun (Melbourne, Australia) NEWS; Pg. 5 BYLINE: Norrie Ross

"The County Court has heard that Ms Jimale was stabbed 14 times and that one of the wounds punctured the victim's lung and came within a centimetre of killing her.

"Hairdressing. That's what caused me to have the fight," Mohamud said. "She put my hair in a bad way and insult my child."

"Mohamud told her barrister, Greg Hughan, she paid \$70 to have her hair reddened with henna but the result was so bad it shocked her and Ms Jimale, 34.

"Speaking through an interpreter, Mohamud said that after the "cut and colour" she ended up with yellow hair.

"I was not happy. She put yellow colour in my hair," said Mohamud. I was shocked. She was shocked."

"She said 'I did bad thing. Give me a call. Come Monday, I will do colour again'."

"But Mohamud told Judge Carolyn Douglas that when she spoke on the phone to Ms Jimale the hairdresser insulted her and made threats to kill her.

"Mohamud, who wears a scarf on her head, said Ms Jimale accused her of having illegitimate children and having a bad reputation in Melbourne's Somali community.

She said the next day she went to the salon and took a knife from her car which her husband used to cut fruit.

Ms Jimale came outside the salon and walked towards her screaming insults and accusing her of trying to ruin the reputation of her business.

"She (Ms Jimale) was screaming 'bitch', 'prostitute', 'big breasts' and (saying) I have illegitimate child," Mohamud told the court.

"We struggled and pushed each other and went into the shop. I got the knife from my pocket and stab her."

"The student said she left the shop and Ms Jimale chased after her brandishing a hammer, which she then used to smash her car.

"Mohamud, of Bell St, Heidelberg, pleaded guilty to intentionally causing serious injury and aggravated burglary at the Luulu Shop at The Mall in Bell St, West Heidelberg, on June 17 last year.

"Mohamud told the court she once shared a house with her victim and a cousin in West Heidelberg in the mid-1990s.

"Under cross-examination from prosecutor Alexander Albert, she admitted she told a number of lies to police after she was arrested for the assault.

"She admitted telling them that Ms Jimale had pulled out a screwdriver and she grabbed it from her and then stabbed her with it. Mohamud admitted she took the knife with the intention of using it on her hairdresser if necessary.

"The pre-sentence plea hearing was expected to continue today."