

Women | The Private Lives of Muslim Women

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An important ingredient in the application of eye make-up was kohl, made from a variety of sources including burnt frankincense, almond shells or Safflower plants. Believed to have medicinal benefits, kohl was also considered a powerful protection against the 'evil eye' and was kept in small decorative containers containing an applicator stick.



Name:
Kohl Container

Dynasty:
Hegira 8th–9th century / AD 14th–15th century Mamluk

Details:
Museum of Islamic Art
Cairo, Egypt

Justification:
An elegant kohl container which includes a stick attached to the lid for applying the substance to the eyes and eyebrows.



Name:
Small bottle for kohl (m'kihla)

Dynasty:
Hegira 1003 / AD 1594 Ottoman

Details:
National Museum of Antiquities and Islamic Arts
Algiers, Algeria

Justification:
Silver kohl containers of the Ottoman period often had a peacock on the top of the applicator stick.



Name:
Kohl jar

Dynasty:
Hegira 327–400 / AD 939–1010 Fatimid

Details:
National Archaeological Museum
Madrid, Spain

Justification:
A rock-crystal 'kohl jar' in which a wealthy woman would have kept kohl or antimony chloride, which was used as a cosmetic. This jar would have had a glass rod in it, used to dip into and apply the substances.
