In the Mamlūk Period of Egypt, Islamic authorities (ʿulamāʾ) were identifiable by the way they dressed. Preachers (khūtabāʾ) and judges (quḍāh) made great use of the manifold head-covers, prevalent in the Islamic traditional vestimentary system. Head covers such as the loose outer garment (ridāʾ), the head-band (ʿidhaba), the turban (ʿimāma) and the shawl (ṭaylasān), were at times considered the crown (tāj) of the Arabs. As a visible marker of religious identity, dress played an essential role in the formation of a sense of community, which oftentimes was accompanied by the creation of sartorial boundaries. Discussions leading to vestimentary provisions not only limited the freedom of choice of non-Muslims but also led to debates on sartorial choices of Islamic authorities, such as the wearing of the ṭaylasān.

In his Kitāb Adab al-khāṭib (The book of the craft of liturgical preacher), Ibn al-ʿAṭṭār (d. 724/1324) vents his anger against the ṭaylasān, a shawl-like head-cover, which he considered to be an innovation (bidʿa) and furthermore the attire of the Jews of Isfahan. Al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505) in contrast, defended the custom as being in accordance to the sunna of the Prophet Muḥammad in his al-Aḥadīth al-ḥisān fī faḍl al-ṭaylasān (Beautiful merits in favour of the ṭaylasān). Nonetheless, matters pertaining to the contested ṭaylasān, such as its accordance with the sunna of the Prophet, its alleged Jewish origins and its symbolism in Mamlūk society, sparked lively debates among Musim scholars.

The aim of this article is to present an outline of these discussions on the ṭaylasān that took place in the Mamlūk period and in this way elucidate its considerations as being a heretical doctrine (bidʿa) or a rightful practice (sunna). Information on specific garments like the ṭaylasān is rare and scattered across

1 The ridāʾ was a cloak worn over the shoulder and probably also covered the head, see Stillman, Arab Dress 43–5; Dozy, Dictionnaire. For the crowns of the Arabs see al-Subkī, Fatāwā 403; al-Nawawī, Tahdhib ii, 44.
2 For more information on the ṭaylasān and the turban (ʿimāma), see Ibn al-ʿAṭṭār, Adab 99–100.
textual sources. Historical sources such as Taqī l-Dīn al-Subkī (d. 756/1355), Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (d. 852/1449) and al-Turkumānī (d. 748/1348) contain only brief accounts of the ṭaylasān and comparable garments, with the exception of al-Suyūṭī's apologia al-Ḥādīṣ al-hisān fī faḍl al-ṭaylasān, which was edited and annotated by Albert Arazi in 1983. It is because of Arazi's scholarly research, published as “Noms de vêtements et vêtements d'après al-Ḥādīṣ al-hisān fī faḍl al-ṭaylasān” d'al-Suyūṭi,” that we possess a detailed enumeration of garments. For pre-modern dress sources, research like Yedida Stillman's Arab Dress, Dozy’s Dictionnaire détaillé des noms de vêtements chez les Arabes, and Mayer’s Mamlūk costume are of great importance.

### 1 The Importance of Islamic Dress

Clothing has always been a highly controversial topic, as human kind has always felt the need to turn the inner world to the outside. In the Muslim pious tradition, the subject of dress and the act of clothing the body appears to be a crucial and conscious element in the creation of communal identity. In pre-modern as well as in modern times, the holy Quran is generally recognized as the starting point of the demand to vest and wrap the body according to divine prescription. In the interpretation movement (tafsīr) for the Quran as well as the ḥadīth, which started in the eighth century, sartorial regulations and vestimentary requirements became the subject of discussions among the four Sunni-law-schools: The Shāfiʿī school of law, which was founded by al-Shāfiʿī (d. 204/820), the Mālikī school of law, founded by Anas b. Mālik (d. 179/795), the Ḥanbalī school of law, founded by Ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241/855) and the Ḥanafī school founded by Abū Ḥanīfa (d. 150/767). According to al-Suyūṭī it was the Shāfiʿī law school that argued that the prophetic traditions provide evidence for the wearing of the ṭaylasān by the companions of the Prophet Muḥammad.

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3 Al-Subkī, Fatāwā. See as well Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī, Tabaqāt.
4 Ibn Ḥajar, Inbā'.
5 Al-Turkumānī, Luma’.
7 Stillman, Arab Dress.
8 Dozy, Dictionnaire.
9 Mayer, Mamlūk Costume.
10 Goldziher, Islamic Theology 50.
11 Al-Suyūṭī, Aḥadīth 37.