The present volume concerns the social and cultural history of green in western Europe, not the history of this color on the global scale. For the historian the issues of a color are essentially social issues. That is why, in order to speak with relevance, one must limit oneself to a given cultural domain and not lapse into simplistic generalizations or a reductive scientism based on badly digested neurobiological observations. Humans do not live alone, they live in societies.

On the other hand, comparative studies can be fruitful, especially when they take into account neighboring societies in contact with one another. That is the case with Islam and the Christian West at the height of the Middle Ages. Before venturing further into the history of the color green in Europe, beyond the year 1000, let us look briefly at its history in the Muslim world. The Muslim world is extremely vast, extending from Morocco to central Asia and to the borders of India. Let us limit ourselves to its early Arab centers and to the period between and including the seventh and twelfth centuries: “Islam in its first grandeur” to echo the title of a famous work.19

The Quran, that is to say the whole of the divine revelations made to Muhammad through the archangel Gabriel, offers a fixed text only twenty years after the death of the Prophet, when the caliph Uthman had an “official” version of it established. Subsequently some changes occurred in it, but they remained minimal. The text is comprised of 114 suras (chapters) of varying length, with a total of 6,226 verses. Each sūra constitutes a whole, independent of the others. Some correspond to the Meccan period of the Prophet’s life and others to the Medinan period, which results in thematic fragmentation and sometimes repetition and contradiction.