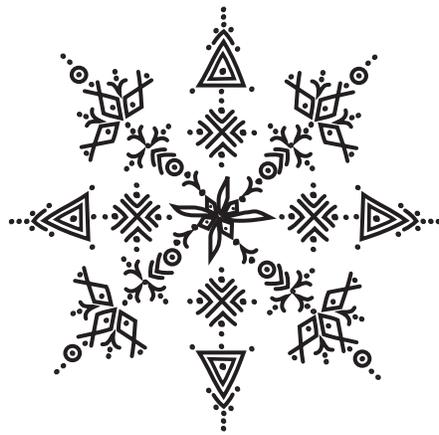


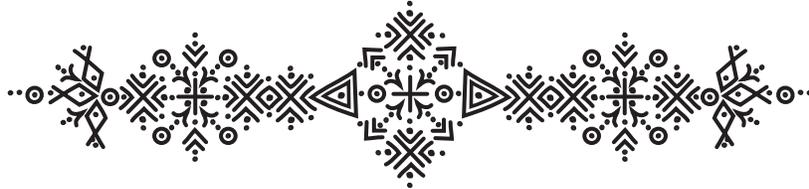
Harkus
The Tunisian Waterproof
Gall Ink for Body Painting



Design and Use
by
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for HennaTribe

Harkus, the Tunisian Waterproof Black Gall Ink for Body Painting

Harkus is a waterproof black ink, used for body painting, which comes from Tunisia. After the palms and soles are colored with henna, the backs of the hands and feet, as well as more intimate body parts, are decorated with small ornamentations in *harkus*.



Like henna, body painting with *harkus* is an ancient tradition in Tunisia. Its origins may date from the rise of Carthage, an important trading power on the North African coast. Small ornaments such as triangles, crosses, squares, and fish were all representative of the Punic (Carthaginian) sea and fertility goddess Tanit (Anath). These symbols can also be seen in the ruins of temples and tomb paintings of that time, as well as so-called Berber jewelry, handmade rugs, and pottery.

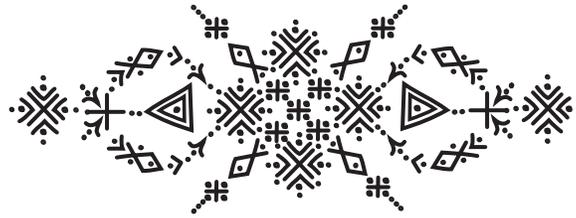


Harkus is a precious substance. In order to obtain just a few milligrams of this viscous ink, great patience and lots of time are required, as well as a relatively large amount of the raw materials: gallnuts, cloves, walnut tree bark, as well as iron or orpiment (arsenic sulfide), a naturally-occurring mineral. The end product, the dye used to make *harkus*, is developed through a relatively long process, cooked into a resin in a clay pot over a charcoal fire, through a process known as dry distillation (pyrolysis).

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Harkus is best applied onto the desired body part with the end of a tapestry needle. Fill the inside of the rubber cap of the *harkus* bottle which has simply been flipped over before being opened. The needle becomes the pen and the rubber cap the inkwell.



The drawing of these small ornamentations doesn't require that much skill in execution or planning; the artwork lies in the pleasing combinations achieved through the rich variation of the elements involved being made to fit each body part. The repetition of small ornaments continues to provide a pattern for the further ornamentation of the body with more *harkus* designs. On the following pages, you can find some ready-made patterns for hands and feet.



In order to be fairly certain in your combination of the various elements as you begin to apply *harkus*, we advise sketching the designs first on paper or directly on the appropriate body part with a watercolor pencil. You can then begin to get a feeling for the basic underlying principles of construction and then can change the design according to your own taste before the final application.

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Start the application on the hand by working around the henna-painted areas on the fingers. Then paint the designs on the finger, and finally the big starshaped ornament on the back of the hand.



In Tunisia, these kind of star-shaped ornaments are applied to the chest near the heart as well as on the hands and feet..

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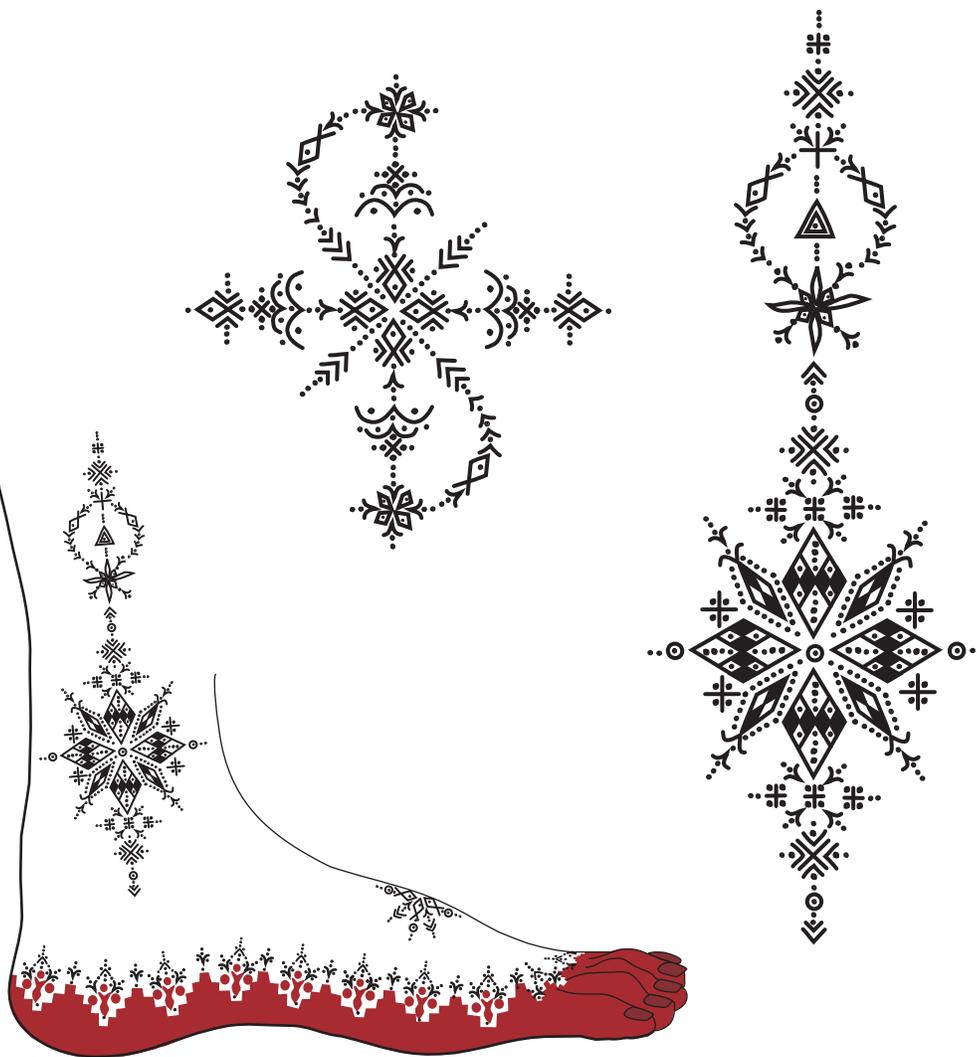
As with the backs of the hands, begin the palm designs by starting at the fingertips, then keep going down the fingers and finally complete the design in the palm using the design from the back of the hand, varying it with hooks and dots as you see fit.



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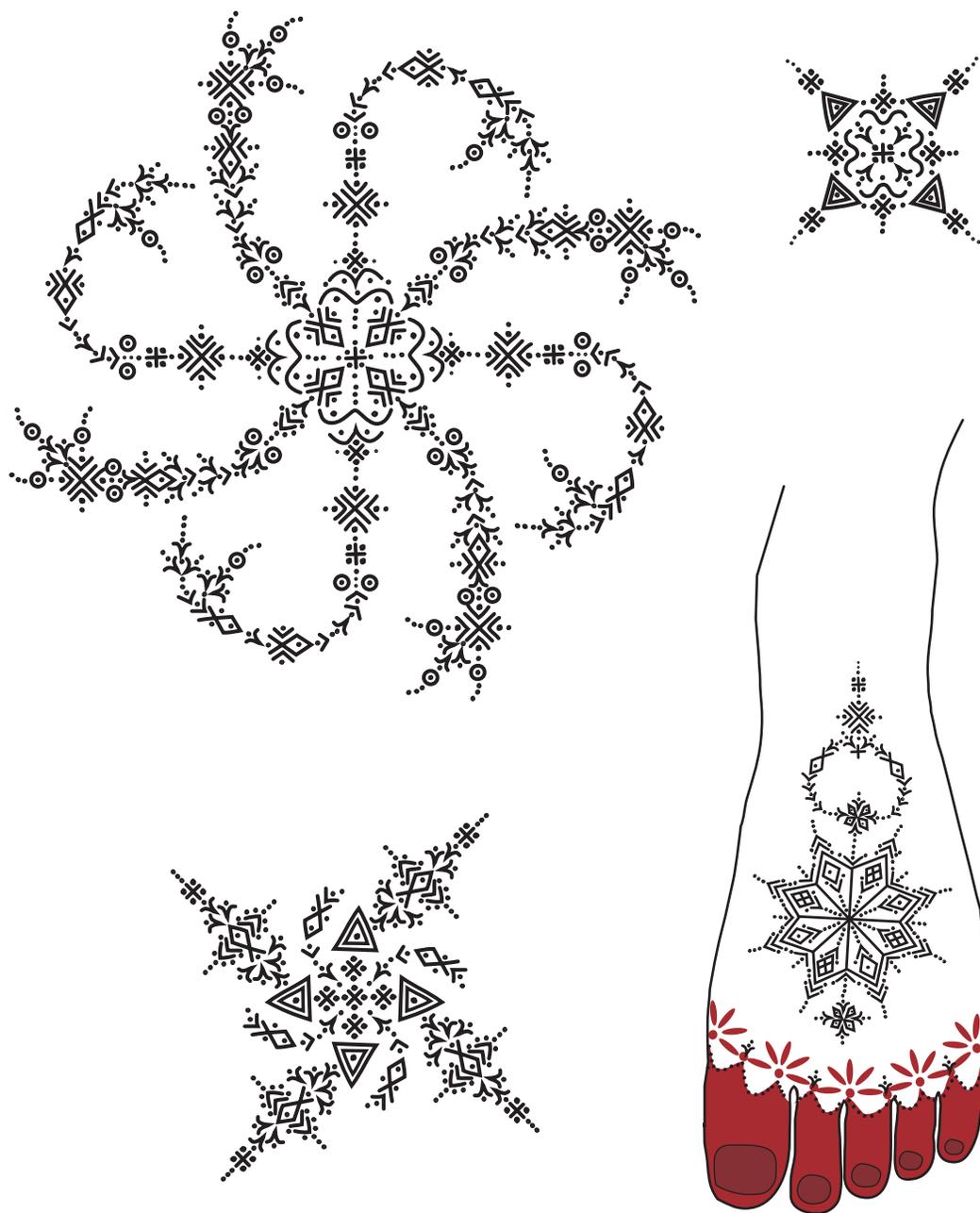
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For the feet, start painting in the same manner as with the hands – start with the smaller elements and, following the borders and indentations of the henna designs on the sides of the foot, move to the top of the foot and the toes.



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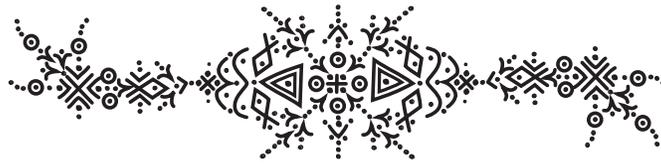
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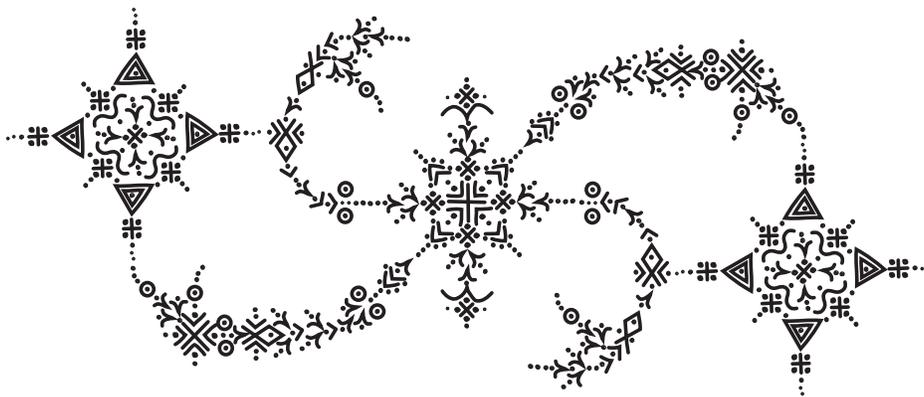
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After application, harkus needs about an hour to dry. At that point the color is matte and no longer shiny. After that, you can use the hand normally to perform any kind of daily tasks required and can also wash the hands with soap. However, you should be careful for the first day not to scrub the hands while washing, as this can affect the stain setting on the skin.



As with henna, harkus painting on the skin gradually disappears over ten to twelve days as the outer, dead skin cells exfoliate. Because of the inclusion of orpiment (arsenic sulfide) allergic reactions can occur. If you are sensitive to metal, you should do a patch test on a less visible part of the body, in order to determine if you should paint with harkus.



After use the harkus bottle should be kept airtight. Store it in a dry and dark place. The contents will last for two to three applications, depending of course on the size of the designs. If the remainder of the harkus solution starts to dry out along the sides of the bottle, you can wet it with a few drops of perfume and use up the rest.

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