Some references on the meaning and implication of zinah in verse 24:31

In interpretation of the verse 24:31, almost all the main exegeses say one of the following: either than 'zinah' means body parts as well as embellishments, or that although it literally means embellishment, here it refers to the body parts that wear those embellishments.

I have not seen (among the main books of exegeses of traditional scholars that I have looked at) a view that would say 'zinah' in 24:31 does not include or does not mean body parts.

Please note this is only to show references for the above. I am not necessarily agree with the views of these scholars on what needs to be covered.

(Farhad Shafti)

References:

Examples of those who say while zinah is embellishment, in 24:31 it actually refers to the body itself:

- Zamakhshari in Kashshaf: 3:230

و ذكر الزينة دون مواقعها: للمبالغة في الأمر بالتصوّن و التستر، لأنّ هذه الزين واقعة على مواضع من الجسد لا يحل النظر إليها لغير هؤلاء، و هي الذراع و الساق و العضد و العنق و الرأس و الصدر و الأذن، فنهى عن إبداء الزين نفسها. ليعلم أنّ النظر إذا لم يحل إليها لملابستها تلك المواقع- بدليل أن النظر إليها غير ملابسة لها لا مفال في حله- كان النظر إلى المواقع أنفسها متمكنا في الحظر

And it refers to zinah instead of the place (on the body) that it is on, to emphasise on instruction to protect and cover (these parts). This is because these embellishments are placed on those parts of the body that looking at them is not permissible for other than those (groups that the verse refers to). These are forearms, legs, arms, neck, head and ears, therefore the verse forbids showing the embellishment (of these parts) itself. So it is known that when looking at those (embellishments) is not permitted due to them being worn on those parts of body, therefore it is looking at those parts of body itself that is being forbidden. This is because looking at those (embellishments) when they are not worn is not an issue.

- Tabarani in Tafsiri Kabir, 4:422

قوله تعالى: وَ لا يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا ما ظَهَرَ مِنْها؛ أي لا يبدين مواضع زينتهنّ إلّا ما ظهر من موضع الزّينة

The word of the Almighty, 'and do not reveal their embellishment other than what is (normally) revealed', means do not reveal the places of embellishment other than those places of embellishment that are (normally) revealed.

- Zuhayli Tafsir Munir 18:217

... الزينة نفسها ليست مقصودة بالنهي، و على كل حال هناك تلازم بين الزينة و موضعها، و الغاية هي النهي عن أجزاء الجسد التي تكون محلا للزينة، كالصدر و الأذن و العنق و الساعد و العضد و الساق.

… embellishment itself is not the subject of forbiddance, in any case there is an association between embellishment and the place of embellishment (on body), the objective is forbidding

those parts of the body that are place of embellishment, like chest and ear and neck and forearm and arm and leg.

- Wahidi, alwajiz fi Tafsir al-Kitab al-Aziz, 1:466

وَ لا يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَ أي لا يظهرن مواضع الزينة لغير محرم

‘and do not show their zinah’ means do not reveal the places of embellishment for those who are not mahram

- Madudi, Tafhim Qur’an, in tafsir of this verse (translation from the online version):

some other commentators have interpreted the verse to mean "all those parts of the body which usually remain exposed or uncovered" and in this they include the hands and the face with all their adornments. This is the view of Hadrat Ibn `Abbas and his followers, and a large number of the Hanafi jurists have accepted it. (Ahkam-ul-Qur'an, AlJassas, Vol. III, pp. 388-389).

- Tabatabaí in Tafsir al-Mizan 15:111

المراد بزينتهن مواضع الزينة لأن نفس ما يتزين به كالقرط و السوار لا يحرم إبداؤها فالمراد بإبداء الزينة إبداء مواضعها من البدن.

The meaning of ‘zinatahunna’ is the places of embellishment, because what embellishes per se like earing and bracelet is not forbidden to reveal, so by revealing zinah it means revealing the body parts that wears it.

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Example of those who say zinah does include body parts:

- Razi in Mafatih al-Ghayb, 23:363

اختلفوا في المراد بزينتهن، و اعلم أن الزينة اسم يقع على محاسن الخلق التي خلقها الله تعالى و على سائر ما يتزين به الإنسان من فضل لباس أو حلى و غير ذلك، و أنكر بعضهم وقوع اسم الزينة عل الخلقة، لأنه لا يكاد يقال في الخلقة إنها من زينتها. و إنما يقال ذلك فيما تكتسبه من كحل و خضاب و غيره، و الأقرب أن الخلقة داخلة في الزينة، و يدل عليها وجهان: الأول: أن الكثير من النساء ينفردن بخلقتهن عن سائر ما يعد زينة، فإذا حملناه على الخلقة وفينا العموم حقة، و لا يمنع دخول ما عدا الخلقة فيه أيضا الثاني: أن قوله: وَ لْيَضْرِبْنَ بِخُمُرِهِنَّ عَلى جُيُوبِهِنَ يدل على أن المراد بالزينة ما يعم الخلقة و غيرها فكأنه تعالى منعهن من إظهار محاسن خلقتهن بأن أوجب سترها بالخمار

There is a difference of the view on what ‘zinatahunn’ means here. You should know that zinah is a noun that is given to beauties of creation that God the Almighty has created and is also given to other things that human beings beautify with them, like dress and ornaments and like that. Some (scholars) reject the use of the noun of zinah for creation (body parts) because not often it is said that a creation is zinah. This is only being said when something like kohl and colour and like that is used. The more likely view is that creation (body) is included in zinah, and there are two evidences for this. First is that many women rely on their

own creation (appearance) without any ornaments so if we consider it (i.e. zinah) to be creation we have given it a general dimension, and that does not avoid including other than creation (i.e. ornaments) in it. Second is His saying: “and they should put their cloth on their bosom”. This shows that zinah here has a general meaning that includes creation (body parts) and other than that (ornaments), the Almighty has forbidden them from revealing the beauties of their creation by making it obligatory to cover it with a cloth.

- Qurtabi, Tafsir, 15: 214

الزينة على قسمين: خلقية ومكتسبة، فالخلقية: وجهها، فانه اصل الزينة و جمال الخلقة ... و اما الزينة المكتسبة: فهى ما تحاوله المرأة فى تحسين خلقتها، كالثياب و الحلىّ و الكحل و الخضاب، و منه قوله تعالى: "خذوا زينتكم" (الأعراف: ٣٠)

Zinah is of two kinds, what is part of creation and what is added. (example of) What is part of creation is women’s face, so that is the main zinah and the beauty of her creation … and the added zinah is what a woman uses to beautify her creation, like dress jewellery and kohl and colour, and from this (second meaning) is the word of the Alimighty “take your zina” (Araf: 30).

- Tabari 18:94

أولى الأقوال في ذلك الزينة بالصواب: قول من قال: عني بذلك الوجه و الكفان، يدخل في ذلك إذا كان كذلك الكحل، و الخاتم، و السوار، و الخضاب

The most correct view about zinah is the view of the one that said it refers to face and hands, and in this way it (also) includes Kohl, ring, bracelet and colour

- Ibn Manzur, Lisan al-Arab 13:201

وَ لا يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَ إِلَّا ما ظَهَرَ مِنْها؛ معناه لا يبدين الزينة الباطنة كالمِخْنقة و الخَلْخال و الدُّمْلُج و السِّوار و الذي يظهر هو الثياب و الوجه

“and do not reveal your zinah other than what is (normally) revealed”, its meaning is that do not reveal the hidden zinah, like necklace and Khalkhal and armlet and bracelet; and the one (zinah) that is revleaed is dress and face