

“... AND HE WAS BORN CIRCUMCISED ...”

Some notes on circumcision in Ḥadīth

by

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To Professor R. Sellheim
as a token of esteem and respect

The ritual of circumcision, in practice throughout the Muslim world, is traced back to Ibrāhīm, the ancestor of the Jews and the Arabs. Arab tradition, like that of the Jews, holds that he was the first who circumcised himself on the order of God. His is said to have performed this ritual at the age of eighty and to have lived until the age of two hundred. Another tradition claims that he carried out circumcision at the age of one hundred and twenty, in a place named Qadūm. According to another tradition, the tool used by Ibrāhīm for the circumcision was named *qadūm*, a pick-axe¹.

¹ Abū Ḥudhayfa Ishāq b. Bishr, *Mubtada'u l-dunyā wa-qīṣaṣu l-anbiyā'*, MS Bodleiana, Huntington 388, fol. 187b. And see Shīfāwayh b. Shahridār al-Daylamī, *Firdausu l-akhhbār*, ed. Fawwāz Aḥmad al-Zimirī and Muḥammad al-Mu'taṣim bi-llāhi l-Baghdādī, Beirut 1407/1987, I, 58, no. 44; and see the references of the editors. Faḍlullāhi l-Jilānī, *Faḍlu llāhi l-ṣamad fī tawdīhi l-adabi l-mufrad li-abī muḥammadi bni ismā'ila l-bukhārī*, Ḥimṣ 1388/1969, II, 668, no. 1244, 673, no. 1250. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Anṣārī l-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi' li-aḥkāmī l-qur'ān = Tafsiṣu l-qurṭubī*, Cairo 1387/1967, II, 99. Ibn Qayyim al-Jauziyya, *Tuḥfatu l-mawḍūḍ bi-aḥkāmī l-mawḍūḍ*, Beirut n. d., pp. 120–124. Al-Ṭabarānī, *Musnad al-shāmiyyīn*, ed. Ḥamdī 'Abd al-Majīd al-Salafī, Beirut 1409/1989, I, 88, no. 124; and see the references provided by the editor. Abū l-Qāsim 'Alī b. al-Ḥasan, Ibn 'Asākir, *Tabyīnu l-imtīnān bi-l-amri bi-l-ikhtitān*, ed. Majdī Fathī l-Sayyid, Ṭanṭā 1410/1989, pp. 33–35, nos. 9–12 (he circumcised himself at the age of eighty) and pp. 37, 39, nos. 17–18 (he circumcised himself at the age of hundred and twenty); and see *ibid.* the references given by the editor. Al-Muttaqī l-Hindī, *Kanzu l-'ummāl*, Hyderabad 1395/1975, XXII, 36, no. 305. Ibn al-Mulaqqin, *Tuḥfatu l-muhtāj ilā adillati l-minḥāj*, ed. 'Abdallah b. Sa'āf al-Laḥyānī, Mecca al-mukarrama 1406/1986, II, 496, no. 1616; and see the references of the editor. Muḥammad b. 'Alī b. Ṭūlūn, *Faṣṣu l-khawātim fīmā qila fī l-walā'im*, ed. Nizār Ubāza, Damascus 1403/1983, p. 61. Aḥmad b. 'Alī b. al-Muthannā al-Tamīmī, *Musnad abī ya'la l-mawṣilī*, ed. Ḥusayn Salīm Asad, Damascus 1407/1987, X, 383–384, no. 5981; and see the abundant references of the editor. Al-Munāwī, *Fayḍu l-qadīr, sharhu l-jāmi'i l-ṣaghīr*, Beirut 1391/1972, I, 207–208, no. 284; and see *ibid.* the discussion whether *qadūm* or *qaddūm* is a name of a place or of a tool of a carpenter; a harmonizing assumption says that he circumcised himself with a tool named *qadūm* in a place called *qaddūm*.

Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad b. 'Abdallah al-Shiblī, *Maḥāsīnu l-wasā'il fī ma'rifati l-awā'il*, MS Brit. Library, Or. 1530, fol. 48b–49a: God told Ibrāhīm that he had already accomplished (the

A slightly divergent tradition about the circumcision of Ibrāhīm is recorded by Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. ‘Amr b. Abī ‘Āṣim al-Shaybānī, in his *Kitābu l-awā’il*²: Ibrāhīm carried out the circumcision at the age of one hundred and thirty years³. A peculiar tradition traced back to Abū Hurayra and recorded in Suyūṭī’s *al-Durr al-manthūr*⁴, says that Ibrāhīm circumcised himself in Qadūm at the age of thirty years.

Al-‘Aynī quotes a tradition recorded by al-Māwardī saying that Ibrāhīm circumcised himself at the age of seventy; according to Ibn Qutayba, after this event he lived for a hundred years and died at the age of one hundred and seventy⁵. Noteworthy is a tradition recorded by al-Bayhaqī in his *al-Sunan al-kubrā*⁶: God ordered Ibrāhīm to circumcise himself and he carried out the order using the *qadūm*, the pick-axe. When the pain increased and became too hard for him to bear, he invoked God. God then asked him why was he so hasty in carrying out the order and Ibrāhīm answered that he did it because he feared to delay the accomplishment of God’s injunction⁷.

There is, however, one tradition in which the circumcision of Abraham is not linked with an injunction of God. Abraham is said to have waged war with the Amalekites. Since many warriors of both the fighting troops fell in these battles, it was necessary to make a distinction during the burial of the dead between the believing warriors, fighting on the side of Abraham, and the unbelieving Amalekites. Then Abraham introduced the circumcision in order to distinguish by that mark the believing warriors from the unbelievers⁸. The

injunctions of—K.) his religious belief, *qad akmalta imānaka*, except a bit, *baḍ‘a*, of your body which you would remove; he then circumcised himself, using for it a pick-axe.

Another tradition says that God bade him clean himself on three occasions; at the first time he performed an ablution, at the second time he washed himself, at the third time he carried out the circumcision. And see: al-Baghawī, *Maṣābiḥu l-sunna*, ed. Muḥammad Salīm Ibrāhīm Samāra and Jamāl Ḥamdī l-Dhahabī, Beirut 1407/1987, IV, 18, no. 4428. Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī, *Silsilat al-aḥādīthi l-ṣaḥīḥa*, Beirut 1405/1985, II, 361, no. 725; and see the references of the author. *EP*, s. v. *khitān*.

Shams al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, *Ithāfu l-akhiṣṣa bi-faḍḍ‘ili l-masjidi l-aqṣā*, ed. Aḥmad Ramaḍān Aḥmad, Cairo 1984, II, 74 records some technical details of the circumcision: Ibrāhīm used the pick-axe, *qaddām* for the circumcision; he drew the pick-axe towards himself and hit it with a stick; then the prepuce fell down without any pain or flow of blood. See these details of the circumcision of Ibrāhīm in Ibn ‘Asākir’s *Tabyīnu l-imtīnān*, pp. 36–37, no. 15 and in ‘Alā’ al-Dīn ‘Alī Dadah al-Saktawārī al-Busnawī’s *Muḥāḍarat al-awā’il wa-musāmarat al-awākhir*, Būlaāq 1300, p. 38.

² Ed. Muḥammad b. Nāṣir al-‘Ajamī, al-Kuwayt 1405, p. 64, no. 19.

³ See *ibid.* the references provided by the editor.

⁴ Cairo 1314, I, 115 sup.

⁵ Al-‘Aynī, *‘Umdat al-qārī sharḥ ṣaḥīhi l-bukhārī*, repr. Beirut, n. d., XV, 246.

⁶ Hyderabad 1355, VIII, 326.

⁷ See this tradition: al-Suyūṭī, *al-Durr al-manthūr*, I, 115. Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, *Fathu l-bārī sharḥ ṣaḥīhi l-bukhārī*, Cairo 1301, repr. Beirut, X, 288, pp. 25–26. Ibn Qayyim al-Jauziyya, *Tuḥfat al-mawḍū‘*, p. 121. Al-Ṣaffūrī, *Nuzhatu l-majālis wa-muntakhabu l-naḥḍ‘is*, Beirut, n. d., p. 490 inf. Ibn ‘Asākir, *Tabyīnu l-imtīnān*, p. 36, no. 14.

⁸ Abū Ḥudhayfa Iṣḥāq b. Bishr, *Mubtada’u l-dunyā wa-qīṣaṣu l-anbiyā’*, MS fol. 187b. ‘Alā’

Muslim tradition is, however, almost unanimous in saying that Ibrāhīm performed the circumcision on the order of God.

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As there is no special verse in the Qurʾān enjoining the circumcision, commentators of the Qurʾān strove to find some indications in the Qurʾān implying that God enjoined Ibrāhīm to carry out the circumcision. Such was the verse 124 in sūrat al-baqara: . . . *wa-idhi btalā ibrahīma rabbuhu bi-kalimātin fa-atammahunna* . . . , “and (remember) when his Lord tried Abraham with certain commands which he fulfilled. . .” One of these commands, *kalimāt*, was, according to some scholars, the injunction of the circumcision⁹.

The story of the circumcision of Abraham according to God’s injunction and his suffering is confronted by the story of the circumcision of the Prophet. Unlike Abraham, the Prophet was granted the grace of being born circumcised. The tradition of the miraculous circumcision of the Prophet, as transmitted by his servant Anas b. Mālik, says that the Prophet stated: “For the sake of my honourable position at God’s Presence I was born circumcised and nobody saw my pudendum,” *min karāmātī ‘alā llāhi annī wulidtu makhtūnan wa-lam yara aḥadun sawʿatī*¹⁰.

Al-Munāwī, who recorded this tradition, adduced a remarkable list of reservations and many critical observations of Muslim orthodox scholars. Some

al-Dīn ‘Alī Dadah al-Saktawārī al-Busnawī, *Muḥāḍaratu l-awāʿil wa-musāmaratu l-awākhīr*, p. 38; and see *ibid.* details about Ibrāhīm as a military leader. Al-Thaʿlabī, *Qīṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ*, Cairo n. d., pp. 129–130. Al-Saffūrī, *Nuzhatu l-majālīs*, p. 491 sup.

⁹ See e.g. Ishāq b. Bishr, *Mubtaddʾu l-dunyā*, MS fol. 188b, sup. Ibn Abī Shayba, *al-Muṣannaf*, (reprint) XI, 521, no. 11877. Shihābu l-Dīn l-Khafājī, *Nasīmu l-riyāḍ fi sharhi shifāʾi l-qadī ʿiyāḍ*, Cairo 1327, I, 343 inf. Ibn Qayyim al-Jauziyya, *Tuḥfatu l-maudūd*, p. 164: . . . *wa-l-khitān kāna mina l-khiṣāli llatī btalā llāhu subḥānahu bihā ibrahīma khalīlūhu fa-atammahunna wa-akmalahunna fa-jaʿalahu imāman li-l-nāsi* . . .

¹⁰ Ibn al-Jauzī, *al-Wafā bi-ahwāli l-muṣtafā*, ed. Muṣtafā ‘Abd al-Wāhid, Cairo 1386/1966, p. 97. Abū Nuʿaym al-Iṣfahānī, *Dalāʾilu l-nubuwwa*, ed. Muḥammad Rawwās Qalʿajī and ‘Abd al-Barr ‘Abbās, Beirut 1406/1986, I, 154, no. 91. Ibn Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Dimashqī, *Jāmiʿu l-athār fi maulidi l-nabiyyi l-mukhtār*, MS Cambridge Or. 913, fol. 192b, quoted from Abū Nuʿaym’s *Dalāʾil*, and fol. 193a, quoted from al-Khaṭīb al-Baghādī’s *Tārīkh* and from Ibn ‘Asākir, evidently from his *Tārīkh dimashq*. Ibn Kathīr, *al-Sīra al-nabawiyya*, ed. Muṣtafā ‘Abd al-Wāhid, Cairo 1385/1966, I, 209. Shihābu l-Dīn al-Khafājī, *Nasīmu l-riyāḍ*, I, 363, inf.-364. Al-Zurqānī, *al-Mawāhibu l-laduniyya*, Cairo 1326, V, 244. Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad al-Diyārbakrī, *Tārīkh al-khamīs fi ahwāli anfasi nafīs*, Cairo 1283, I, 204 inf. ‘Alī b. Burhān al-Dīn al-Ḥalabī, *Insānu l-ʿuyūn fi sirati l-amīni l-maʿmūn = al-Sīra al-halabiyya*, Cairo 1382/1962, I, 59. And see: Muḥammad b. Yūsuf al-Šāliḥī, *Subulu l-hudā wa-l-rashād fi sirati khayri l-ʿibād = al-Sīra al-shāmiyya*, ed. Muṣtafā ‘Abd al-Wāhid, Cairo 1392/1972, I, 420. Ibnu Sayyidi l-Nās, *ʿUyūnu l-athār fi funūni l-maghāzi wa-l-shamāʾil wa-l-siyar*, Cairo 1356, I, 30. Al-Suyūṭī, *al-Khaṣāʾiṣu l-kubrā*, ed. Muḥammad Khalīl Harrās, Cairo 1387/1967, I, 132–133; and see *ibid.* the quoted sources. Al-Kāzarūnī, *Sīratu l-nabiyyi ṣallā llāhu ʿalayhi wa-sallam*, MS British Library, Add. 181499, fol. 43a. Mughultāy, *al-Zahru l-bāsim fi siyar abī l-qāsim*, MS Leiden Or. 370, fol. 70a. Ibrāhīm al-Bājūrī, *Hāshiya ʿalā maulidi l-ʿallāma bni ḥajarin*, MS Acre, al-Jazzār, fol. 38b, penult. Al-Jarrāḥī, *Kashfu l-khaṣāʾiṣ wa-muzīlu l-ilbās ʿammā shtahara mina l-aḥādīthi ʿalā alsinati l-nās*, Beirut 1351, II, 286, no. 2653. Al-Munāwī, *Fayḍu l-qadīr*, VI, 16, no. 8259.

scholars questioned the soundness of the tradition and scrutinized the lists of the transmitters. Some of them were skeptical to such a degree that they asserted that there is nothing firmly based in the tradition stating that the Prophet was born circumcised, *lam yathbut fīhi shayʿun*¹¹. Furthermore, the expression *makhtūnan* can hardly be accepted: *khatana* denotes “cutting” and refers in this case to the cutting of the prepuce of the Prophet. It is evident that this may raise the question of who performed the circumcision in Heaven.

A peculiar answer to this queer question was quoted by al-Ṣaffūrī in his *Nuzhat al-majālis*¹². God wanted the Prophet and some other prophets to be born circumcised; His order was then accomplished when He merely uttered the word “*kun.*” Thus there was no need to cut the prepuce; God’s Word was sufficient and no intervention of angel or man was required for the cutting of the prepuce.

But the argument put forward by the skeptical scholars doubting the reliability of the tradition about Muḥammad being born circumcised was indeed the tradition asserting that twelve or even more from among the prophets were born circumcised¹³. This tradition indicates clearly that the miracle of being born circumcised was not granted the Prophet as an exclusive distinction, *karāma*. He was merely one of a series of prophets who by God’s grace gained the distinction to be born circumcised.

Additionally, according to Shīʿī belief, every Shīʿī imām is born circumcised and purified¹⁴.

¹¹ See e.g. al-Diyārbakrī, *Taʾriḫ al-khamīs*, I, 205, 1.1.

¹² P. 490.

¹³ See the list of the prophets who were born circumcised, transmitted by ʿAlī: Ādam, Shīth, Idrīs, Nūḥ, Sām, Ibrāhīm, Dāwūd, Sulaymān, Lūt, Ismāʿīl, Mūsā, ʿIsā and Muḥammad, as recorded in al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, Tehran 1379, XV, 296. And see this list in Ibn Bābūyah’s *ʿUyūnu akhbāri l-riḏā*, ed. Muḥammad Mahdī al-Sayyid Ḥasan al-Kharsān, Najaf 1390/1970, I, 190. It is surprising to find in the list the name of Ibrāhīm, who is said to have suffered pain in performing the circumcision. Aḥmad b. ʿAbdallah al-Kindī al-Samdī al-Nazwī records in his *al-Muṣannaḥ*, ed. ʿAbd al-Munʿim ʿĀmir and Jādallah Aḥmad, Cairo 1979, II, 39–40 the tradition on the authority of ʿAlī. Al-Suyūṭī records in his *al-Khaṣāʾiṣu l-kubrā*, I, 133 a report of Ibn al-Kalbī on the authority of Kaʿb al-Aḥbār, containing a list of the prophets who were born circumcised: Shīth, Idrīs, Nūḥ, Sām, Lūt, Yūsuf, Mūsā, Sulaymān, Yahyā, Shuʿayb, Hūd and Ṣāliḥ; the last of these prophets was Muḥammad; it is evident that included in the list are two prophets from the Arab peninsula. Slightly divergent is the list recorded by al-Qurṭubī in his *Tafsīr*, II, 100, quoted from Muḥammad b. Ḥabīb, included in his *al-Muḥabbar*, ed. Ilse Lichtenstaedter, Hyderabad 1361/1942, pp. 131–132: it contains the name of an additional prophet, Ḥanzala b. Ṣafwān, the prophet of the people of Rass. Al-Ḥalabī records in his *al-Sīra al-ḥalabiyya*, I, 59 a versified list of the prophets who were born circumcised; one of these prophets was Yāsīn. See further the lists of the prophets born circumcised in al-Diyārbakrī’s *Taʾriḫ al-khamīs*, I, 205, sup., in al-Bājūrī’s *Ḥaṣhiya*, MS Acre, al-Jazzār, fol. 39a, sup. and in al-Khafājī’s *Nasīmu l-riyāḍ*, I, 364. Al-Ṣaffūrī records in his *Nuzhat al-majālis*, p. 490 a slightly different list including Ādam, Shīth, Nūḥ, Idrīs, Lūt, Yūsuf, Mūsā, Shuʿayb, Sulaymān, Yahyā, ʿIsā and Muḥammad.

¹⁴ Ibn Bābūyah al-Qummi, *ʿUyūnu akhbāri l-riḏā*, I, 169.

A weighty argument against the validity of the tradition saying that the Prophet was born circumcised is the religio-linguistic analysis of the verse. The pivot of the discussion is the word *ibtalā*, . . . "He tried Ibrāhīm." As suffering and pain was determined for the prophets in the highest degree, it stands to reason that the prophet Muḥammad should have been meted out the same amount of trial and suffering as Abraham, so that he should not be inferior to Abraham. Thus the assumption that Muḥammad was born circumcised cannot stand criticism¹⁵. Additionally a tradition attributed to the Prophet said that the ill fated Ibn al-Ṣayyād¹⁶ was born circumcised, with his umbilical cord cut¹⁷. Another story claims that the Byzantine king (*qayṣar, maliku l-rūm*), who ordered to poison Imru'ū l-Qays, was born circumcised. Imru'ū l-Qays noticed it when he entered the bath and saw the king naked¹⁸. He composed a satirical verse in which he alluded to the fact that the king was born "circumcised due to the moon (shining at this birth—K.). He was, nevertheless, considered an uncircumcised person¹⁹.

The best explanation of the *ḥadīth* of the miraculous circumcision of the Prophet was that he was born *as if he were circumcised*²⁰. Another explanation of the tradition is that the Prophet was born *not fully* circumcised and his grandfather completed the circumcision²¹.

A serious theological question asked by the scholars was why the Prophet was born circumcised, being thus cleaned from the dirt of the uncircumcised, while the cleaning of his heart from the lot of Satan was delayed until the opening of his heart²². The answer was given by Ibn 'Aqīl²³: God divulged the more simple purification, *adwanu l-taḥīrayn*, performed usually by the midwife and

¹⁵ See e.g. Ibn Qayyim al-Jauziyya, *Tuḥfatu l-maudūd*, p. 160.

¹⁶ See on him David J. Halperin, "The Ibn Ṣayyād Traditions and the Legend of al-Dajjāl," *JAOS*, 96 (1976) 213–226.

¹⁷ Ibn Qayyim al-Jauziyya, *Tuḥfatu l-maudūd*, p. 161; 'Abd al-Razzāq, *al-Muṣannaf*, ed. Ḥabību l-Raḥmān al-A'zamī, Beirut 1391/1972, XI, 396, no. 20831.

¹⁸ Ibn Qayyim al-Jauziyya, *ibid.*, p. 161.

¹⁹ See the verse in Ibn Qayyim's *Tuḥfatu l-maudūd*, p. 161 and in Ahlwardt's *Kitābu l-ṣiqḍi l-thamīn fī dawāwīni l-shu'arā'i l-jāhiliyyīn*, London 1870, p. 133, no. 26:

*laqad ḥalaftu yamīnan ḡayra kādhibatīn * annaka aḡlafu illā mā janā l-qamaru.*

²⁰ See al-Zurqānī, *al-Mawāhibu l-ladunniyya*, V, 244: . . . *annahu wulida makhtūnan, ay 'alā ṣurati l-makhtūn* . . .; and see this explanation in al-Ḥalabī's *al-Sira al-ḥalabiyya*, I, 58, ult., al-Munāwī, *Fayḍu l-qadīr*, VI, 16, no. 8259 and in al-Bājūrī's *Ḥaṣhiya*, MS Acre, al-Jazzār, fol. 38b.

²¹ Al-Ḥalabī, *al-Sira al-ḥalabiyya*, I, 59: . . . *wa-qad yujma'u bi-annahu yajūzu an yakūna wulida makhtūnan ḡayra tāmmi l-khitāni kamā huwa l-ḡhālibu fī dhālika fa-tammama jadduhu khitānahu.*

²² See al-Munāwī, *Fayḍu l-qadīr*, VI, 16, no. 8259. Al-Ṣāliḥī, *Subulu l-hudā*, I, 421. Al-Ḥalabī, *al-Sira al-ḥalabiyya*, I, 59.

²³ See on him: Ibn Ḥajar, *Taḥdhibu l-taḥdhib*, VI, 13–15, no. 19; his name was: 'Abdallah b. Muḥammad b. 'Aqīl b. Abī Ṭālib al-Ḥāshimī, Abū Muḥammad al-Madani.

the physician, *ṭabīb*, but concealed the more important purification, that of the Opening of his Breast and the removal of the black spot, the lot of Satan, delaying it for a later period, when it was performed by the angel Jibrīl²⁴.

Scholars who refuted the tradition that the Prophet was born circumcised with his umbilical cord cut²⁵ adduced another argument, asserting that many children are born circumcised. Ibn Qayyim al-Jauziyya records a case of such a child; his father was worried about it, but he was persuaded that there was no reason to be vexed about it, as God already carried out the circumcision of the child²⁶.

Some people hold a superstitious belief that children born circumcised are circumcised by the moon²⁷. This belief of the Arabs in the Jāhiliyya about the child “circumcised by the moon” “*khatanahu l-qamar*” is rationally explained by Ibn Qayyim al-Jauziyya²⁸. The belief was based on the opinion that the moon brings about a kind of circumcision, as the prepuce shrinks and becomes contracted, *taqallasat qulfatuhu wa-tajammaʿat*, if he is born in the evening in the light of the moon. The prepuce, however, does not disappear completely and only the head of the glans is visible; in this case it is necessary to perform the circumcision in order to expose the whole glans²⁹.

The scholars of the Shāfiʿī *madhhab* considered it desirable to pass a razor over the place of circumcision of a child born in this fashion, without further cutting the prepuce. Abū Shāma observed that children born in this fashion are not fully circumcised and only a part of the glans is visible; in this case the circumcision has to be completed (scil. by cutting the prepuce—K.)³⁰.

Finally it may be added that there is an odd tradition which contradicts the utterance of the Prophet that nobody has seen his pudendum: Ṣafiyya, the daughter of ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib, stated that she was eager to know whether

²⁴ Al-Ṣāliḥī, *Subulu l-hudā*, I, 421.

²⁵ See this tradition in ʿAbd al-Muʾmin b. Khalaf al-Dimyāṭī’s *Kitāb mukhtaṣar fi sirati sayyidi l-bashar*, MS Chester Beatty 3332, fol. 5b, on the authority of al-ʿAbbās b. ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib.

²⁶ Cf. al-Qurṭubī, *Tafsīr*, II, 100. And see the statement in al-Nazwī’s *al-Muṣannaf*, II, 43: ... *wa-idhā khalaqa llāhu ihlīla insānin makshūfa l-ḥashafati wa-l-khitāni lam yajib ʿalayhi l-khitānu, li-anna l-qaṣda bi-l-khitāni izhāru l-ḥashafati, fa-idhā zaharat fa-qad wujudat al-bughyatu*. And see: Ibn Qayyim al-Jauziyya, *Zād al-maʿād fi sirati khayri l-ʿibād*, Beirut, reprint, n. d. I, 18–19; Abū ʿAbdallah Muḥammad b. ʿUthmān al-Khalīlī reported that he was born circumcised and his parents did not arrange the operation of his circumcision. On Muḥammad b. ʿUthmān al-Khalīlī see: Mujīru l-Dīn al-Ḥanballī, *al-Uns al-jalīl bi-taʾrīkhi l-quds wa-l-khalīl*, ʿAmmān 1973, II, 213.

²⁷ Ibn Qayyim al-Jauziyya, *Zād al-maʿād*, I, 19 sup.

²⁸ *Tuḥfatu l-maudūd*, p. 156.

²⁹ A similar explanation is recorded by Ibn Ḥajar in his *Fathu l-bārī sharḥ ṣaḥīhi l-bukhārī*, repr. Beirut, n. d., X, 286: ... *wa-taẓʿumu l-ʿarabu anna l-ghulāma idhā wulida fi l-qamari fasa-khat qulfatuhu, ay ittasaʿat fa-šara ka-l-makhtāni*. And see the verse of Imruʾ l-Qays recorded above, note 19.

³⁰ Ibn Qayyim al-Jauziyya, *Tuḥfatu l-maudūd*, p. 156.

Āmina bore a male or female child; she managed to see that the child was male, and she saw that he was already circumcised³¹.

There exist two treatises concerning the tradition that the Prophet was born circumcised with his umbilical cord cut. One was composed by Abū l-Qāsim ʿUmar b. Abī l-Ḥasan b. Hibatullah b. Abī Jarāda, refuting the story, and another one was composed by Muḥammad b. Ṭalḥa confirming the validity of the story³².

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The birth of the Prophet and his circumcision are connected in several sources with the person of ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib, who acted in the absence of the father of the Prophet. According to a report, ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib was summoned on the day of his birth by Āmina, the mother of the Prophet, who told him about the miracles she had witnessed during her pregnancy and about the tidings of his birth. Some transmitters claim that ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib took the child, entered the Kaʿba with him, invoked God for his grandson and thanked Him for the precious gift granted him by the birth of the child. ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib then returned to Āmina and gave the child back to her³³.

Another version of this report supplies some additional details: ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib, summoned by Āmina, came with his children, took the child wrapped in a tattered piece of cloth, *khirqa*, and entered the Kaʿba with him. He thanked God for His grace and asked for His protection in verses which he recited. He then returned the child to Āmina³⁴. ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib was pleased with him and the child enjoyed his favour. ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib predicted that his son (i.e., his grandson, the Prophet—K.), will gain a high position, *la-yakūnanna li-bnī hādihā shaʿnun*³⁵. A significant version of this tradition is recorded in Bayhaqī's *Dalāʾil al-nubuwwa*³⁶: ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib was summoned

³¹ Ibn Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Dimashqī, *Jāmiʿ al-athār*, MS Cambridge Or. 913, fol. 193b, quoted from al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī's *Muʿjizāt al-nabiyyi ʿallā llāhu ʿalayhi wa-sallam*. Ibn Qayyim al-Jauziyya, *Tuḥfat al-maudūd*, p. 159 inf., 160.

³² See Ibn Qayyim al-Jauziyya, *Tuḥfatu l-maudūd*, p. 160, sup.

³³ See e.g. Ibn Hishām, *al-Sira al-nabawiyya*, ed. Muṣṭafā l-Saqqā, Ibrāhīm al-Abyārī and ʿAbd al-Ḥāfiẓ Shalabī, Cairo 1355/1936, I, 168.

³⁴ Al-Balādhurī, *Ansābu l-ashraf*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥamīdullāh, Cairo 1959, I, 81. Cf. Ibn al-Jauzī, *Ṣifatu l-ṣafwa*, ed. Maḥmūd Fākhūrī and Muḥammad Rawwās Qalʿajī, Beirut 1406/1986, I, 53.

³⁵ Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. al-Ḥusayn al-Bayhaqī, *Dalāʾilu l-nubuwwa wa-maʿrifatu aḥwālī ṣāhibi l-sharʿa*, ed. ʿAbd al-Muʿī l-Qalʿajī, Beirut 1405/1985, I, 114. Ibn ʿAsākir, *Tārīkh-tahdhīb*, Beirut 1399/1979, I, 283. Ibn Kathīr, *al-Sira al-nabawiyya*, I, 208–209. Ibn al-Jauzī, *Ṣifatu l-ṣafwa*, I, 52. Abū Nuʿaym al-Iṣfahānī, *Dalāʾil al-nubuwwa*, p. 154, no. 92; and see the references of the editor. Al-Maqrīzī, *Imtāʿu l-asmaʿ bi-mā li-l-rasūli mina l-anbāʾi wa-l-amwālī wa-l-ḥafadati wa-l-matāʿ*, ed. Maḥmūd Muḥammad Shākir, Cairo 1941, I, 4 inf. Ibn Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Dimashqī, *Jāmiʿ al-athār*, MS fol. 192; quoted from Ibn Saʿd's *Ṭabaqāt*. Al-ʿĀqūlī, *al-Rasf li-mā ruwiya ʿani l-nabiyyi ʿallā llāhu ʿalayhi wa-sallam mina l-fīʿli wa-l-waṣf*, Cairo 1406/1986, I, 20; quoted from Ibn Saʿd.

³⁶ I, 112.

by ʿĀmina the night when she bore the Prophet. He took the child and brought it to Hubal, who was placed in the Kaʿba; he invoked God and thanked Him for His precious gift, the birth of the Prophet³⁷.

One tradition links the entrance of ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib with the child into the Kaʿba with some socio-religious activities practiced in Mecca in the period of the Jāhiliyya. It was ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib who invoked in the Sanctuary for the child, it was he who named the child Muḥammad and it was he who invited Quraysh and prepared a party for them on the occasion of the birth of Muḥammad³⁸. Some traditions say that ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib circumcised the child, performing the ritual on the seventh day after his birth³⁹. Mughulṭāy confronts in his *al-Zahr al-bāsim*⁴⁰ the tradition that the Prophet was born circumcised with the tradition that ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib circumcised the child on the seventh day of his birth, arranged a party on this occasion and named him Muḥammad. Mughulṭāy notes that this tradition seems to be more acceptable than that of the Prophet being born circumcised⁴¹.

Some of the traditions saying that ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib circumcised the child stress that he performed it according to the practice of the Arabs⁴².

The reliability of the tradition saying that the Arabs practiced circumcision

³⁷ And see Ibn Kathīr, *al-Sira al-nabawiyya*, I, 208. Ibn ʿAsākir, *Taʾriḫ -tahdhīb*, I, 284. Al-Bayhaqī, *Shuʿab al-imān*, ed. ʿAbd al-ʿAlīy ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd Ḥāmid, Bombay 1407/1987, III, 555; and see references of the editor. Abū Ḥātim Muḥammad b. Ḥibbān al-Bustī, *al-Sira al-nabawiyya wa-akhbāru l-khulafāʾ*, excerpted from al-Bustī’s *Kitābu l-thiqāt*, ed. ʿAzīz Bek and alī, Beirut 1407/1987, p. 53.

³⁸ See e.g. ʿAbd al-Malik al-ʿIṣāmī, *Simṭu l-nujūmi l-ʿawālī fī anbaʾi l-awāʾili wa-l-tawālī*, Cairo 1380, I, 263 inf.–264.

³⁹ Al-Maqriẓī, *Imṭāʿu l-asmāʿ*, I, 5. Mughulṭāy, *al-Zahr al-bāsim*, MS Leiden Or. 370, fol. 70a, l.1. Al-Qurṭubī, *Tafsīr*, II, 100. Ibn ʿAsākir, *Taʾriḫ-tahdhīb*, I, 283.

⁴⁰ MS Leiden Or. 370, fol. 69 b.

⁴¹ Cf. Ibn ʿAsākir, *Taʾriḫ-tahdhīb*, I, 283.

⁴² See e.g. Ibn Qayyim al-Jauziyya, *Tuḥfatu l-maudūd*, p. 158: ... *anna jaddahu ʿabda l-muṭṭalibi khatanahu ʿalā ʿādati l-ʿarabi fī khitāni aulādihim*... Ibn Qayyim al-Jauziyya, *Zādu l-maʿād*, I, 19, sup. And see the utterance attributed to Ibn ʿAbbās in al-Suyūṭī’s *al-Durr al-manthūr*, I, 114, inf. ... *ʿani bni ʿabbāsin qāla: sabʿun mina l-sunnati fī l-ṣabiyyi yauma l-sābʿi: yusamma wa-yukhtanu wa-yumāṣu ʿanhu l-adhā wa-yuʿaqqu ʿanhu wa-yuḥlaqu raʾsuhu wa-yuṭṭakhū min ʿaqīqatihi wa-yutaṣaddaqu bi-wazni shaʿri raʾsihi dhahaban au fiḍḍatan*. Al-Ḥalabī, *al-Sira al-ḥalabiyya*, I, 59. Shihābu l-Dīn al-Khafājī, *Nasīmu l-riyāḍ*, I, 364: ... *anna jaddahu ʿabda l-muṭṭalibi khatanahu yauma sābʿihi wa-jaʿala lahu maʿdubatan wa-sammāhu muḥammadan, wa-kānati l-ʿarabu takhatinu li-annahu sunnatun tawḍrathūhā min ismāʾila wa-ibrāhīma ʿalayhimā l-salāmu*. And see al-Yaʿqūbī, *Taʾriḫ*, ed. Muḥammad Ṣādiq Baḥru l-ʿulūm, Najaf 1384/1964, I, 224: *wa-kānat adyānu l-ʿarabi mukhtalifatan bi-l-mujāwarāti li-ahli l-milali wa-l-intiqāli ilā l-buldāni wa-l-intijāʾati. fa-kānat qurayshun wa-ʿammātu wuldi maʿaddi bni ʿadnāna ʿalā baʿḍi dīni ibrahīma yaḥujjūna l-bayta wa-yuqīmūna l-manāsika wa-yaqrūna l-ḍayfa wa-yuʿazzimūna l-ashhura l-ḥuruma wa-yunakirūna l-fawāḥisha wa-l-taqṭuʿa wa-l-tazāluma wa-yuʿaqibūna ʿalā l-jarāʾimi, fa-lam yazālū ʿalā dhālika mā kānū wulāta l-bayti*...

Al-Khafājī emphasizes that circumcision among the Arabs was not caused by the neighbourhood of the Jews, *wa-laysa dhālika li-mujāwarati l-yahūd*....

in pre-Islamic times is convincingly demonstrated by Uri Rubin in his article: “*Ḥanifiyya* and Kaʿba, An inquiry into the Arabian pre-Islamic background of *dīn Ibrāhīm*.”⁴³

It is indeed noteworthy that the traditions transmitted by Ibn ʿAbbās emphasize the role of ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib and the continuity of the Jāhili customs, according to which ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib acted.

The practice of circumcision of females in the period of the Jāhiliyya is indicated in a verse of Nābigha al-Dhubyanī, in which he mentions young girls captured in a raid before they were circumcised⁴⁴.

A third group of traditions says that the angel Jibrīl performed the circumcision of Muḥammad in the abode of Ḥalīma, when he opened his breast and purified his heart⁴⁵.

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Arab sources emphasize the persistence of the Abrahamic beliefs in the Arab peninsula⁴⁶. A tradition recorded on the authority of ʿIkrima asserts that uncircumcised persons were not to perform the circumambulation of the Kaʿba. No uncircumcised person ever circumambulated the Kaʿba since the time of Abraham, the tradition says⁴⁷.

Al-Jāhiz is quoted as stating that the practice of female and male circumcision remains continuous since the time of Ibrāhīm and Hajar until now: . . . *qāla l-jāhiz: wa-l-khitānu fi l-ʿarabi fi l-nisāʾi wa-l-rijāli min ladun ibrahīma ʿalayhi l-salāmu wa-hājara ilā yauminā hādihā*.

Al-Jāhiz adds the following observation: . . . *thumma lam yūlad ṣabiyyun makhtūnan au fi šūrati makhtūnin. wa-nāsun yazʿumūna anna l-nabiyya ṣallā llāhu ʿalayhi wa-sallam wa-ʿisā ʿalayhi l-salāmu khuliqā makhtūnayni*⁴⁸.

The Arab character of the practice of circumcision is reflected in the story

⁴³ *JSAI*, vol. XIII (1990) 103: “. . . *The pre-Islamic deity of the Kaʿba was Hubal. His was the one and only statue situated inside the Kaʿba. The rituals performed in front of this statue contained typical Abrahamic elements, circumcision in particular. . .*” See the links established by Rubin between the circumcision practiced in pre-Islamic Arabia and Abraham as indicated by Rubin, *ibid.*, p. 104, based on the passage in Josephus Flavius’ *Antiquities of the Jews*.

⁴⁴ See Ibrāhīm b. Ishāq al-Ḥarbi, *Gharibu l-hadīth*, ed. Sulaymān b. Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad al-ʿĀyid, Judda 1405/1985, I, 270:

*fa-ukhidhna abkārān wa-hunna bi-ʾāmatin * a-jalnahunna mazinnata l-ʿadhāri*.

⁴⁵ Abū Nuʿaym al-Iṣfahānī, *Dalāʾil al-nubuwwa*, p. 155, no. 93; and see the references of the editor. Ibn Nāsir al-Dīn al-Dimashqī, *Jāmiʿ al-athār*, MS fol. 193b. Mughultāy, *al-Zahr al-bāsim*, MS Leiden, Or. 370, fol. 69b, penult. Al-Suyūṭī, *al-Khaṣāʾiṣ al-kubrā*, I, 133.

⁴⁶ See Uri Rubin, “*Ḥanifiyya* and Kaʿba,” *JSAI*, XIII (1990) 99–100 and his lucid exposition of the idea of *dīn ibrahīm* in pre-Hijra Mecca. And see e.g. Sulaymān b. Mūsā al-Kalāʿī, *al-Iktifāʾ fī maghāzī rasūli llāhi wa-l-thalāthati l-khulafāʾ*, ed. Muṣṭafā ʿAbd al-Wāhid, Cairo 1387/1968, I, 91: “. . . *wa-kānā ʿalā irthin min dīni abawayhim ibrahīma wa-ismāʾīla ṣallā llāhu ʿalayhimā wa-sallam*. And see above the quotation from Khafājī’s *Nasīmu l-riyāḍ*, I, 364.

⁴⁷ Al-Qurtubī, *Tafīr*, II, 99.

⁴⁸ Al-Nazwī, *al-Muṣannaf*, II, 39.

of the prediction that the “Kingdom of the Circumcised” is near⁴⁹. When Heraclius was informed about it he could hardly believe it, as he knew of only one people who practised circumcision: the Jews, and he could not believe that the Jews would rule the world. Then one of the people of Heraclius met an Arab, who asserted that the Arabs had the same practice. The prediction thus referred to the Kingdom of the Arabs, and it was true⁵⁰.

Al-Munāwī quotes the opinion of al-Qurṭubī about the continuity of the practice of circumcision among the descendants of Ibrāhīm and the followers of the religious communities related to his faith; circumcision is a practice enjoined by God in the Torah for the Banū Isrāʾīl. Banū Isrāʾīl continued to practice circumcision until the time of ʿIsā.

Nevertheless the Jews who practiced circumcision could not be considered *ḥunafāʾ* as one might conclude from verse 67 of *sūrat āl ʿimrān: bal millata ibrāhīma ḥanīfan*, as the Qurʾān plainly states that Ibrāhīm was neither a Jew nor a Christian⁵¹. A Shīʿī adherent asks the *imām* in a remarkable letter whether the believers should not abide by the rule of circumcising the children on the seventh day of their birth, because the Earth cries, complaining to God of the urine of the uncircumcised. No qualified circumciser being found among the believers, the adherent asks the *imām*, al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī, is it permitted to invite Jewish experts in order to circumcise the children of the believers? In his answer the *imām* affirms that circumcision should be performed on the seventh day since the birth of a child, but does not answer the question of whether it is permitted to invite a Jewish practitioner to carry out the circumcision of the children of the believers⁵².

Some groups from among the Christians interpreted the injunction of circumcision reported in the Torah as referring to the prepuce of the heart, not to that of the glans. They thus abandoned the injunction of the Torah concerning circumcision, replacing it by a kind of foolishness, *fa-tarakū l-mashrūʿa mina l-khitān bi-darbin mina l-hadhayān*.⁵³ Ibn Qayyim al-Jauziyya asserts⁵⁴

⁴⁹ I read: *mulku l-khitāni*, not: *maliku l-khitāni*.

⁵⁰ See e.g. Shihābu l-Dīn al-Khafāji, *Nasīmu l-riyād*, I, 364: ... *wa-qad warada ḥadhā fi qiṣṣati hiraql wa-wāqʿatihi llatl qila lahu fihā inna mulka l-khitāni qad zahara*... And see Ibn Kathīr, *al-Sira al-nabawiyya*, ed. Muṣṭafā ʿAbd al-Wāhid, Cairo 1384/1964, III, 501–502: ... *wa-saʿalahu ʿani l-ʿarabi fa-qāla: hum yakhtatināna. fa-qāla hiraql: ḥadhā mulku ḥadhīhi l-ummati qad zahara*... And see Ibn Taymiyya, *al-Jawābu l-ṣaḥīḥ li-man baddala dīna l-masīḥ*, ed. ʿAlī l-Sayyid Ṣubḥ al-Madanī, Cairo 1383/1964, III, 288–289. And see Ibn Qayyim al-Jauziyya, *Tuḥfatu l-maudūd*, p. 146: ... *wa-kānat al-ʿarabu tudʿā bi-ummati l-khitāni*. And see ʿAlī b. Mūsā b. Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad b. Ṭāwūs, *Faraju l-mahmūm fi taʾrīkhi ʿulamāʾi l-nujūm*, Najaf 1368, pp. 30–31. And see the evaluation of this tradition in Suliman Bashear’s “The Mission of Dīhya al-Kalbi,” *JSAI*, XIV (1991) 98.

⁵¹ See al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, ed. Maḥmūd and Muḥammad Shākīr, Cairo n.d., III, 107, no. 2099.

⁵² Ibn Bābūyah al-Qummī, *Man lā yaḥduruhu l-faqīh*, III, 314 inf.–315 sup., no. 1529.

⁵³ Al-Munāwī, *Fayḍu l-qadr*, I, 207–208, no. 284.

⁵⁴ *Tuḥfatu l-maudūd*, pp. 136 inf.–137 sup.

that Ibrāhīm obeyed God's injunction, circumcised himself and turned the practice into a *fiṭra* which will last in his posterity forever.

All the prophets summoned their peoples to carry on this practice. Thus the Son of the Virgin, the Word of God and His Servant (i.e., 'Isā—K.) followed the practice of God's Friend, Ibrāhīm and became circumcised; the Christians admit this and acknowledge that it is an injunction of the *injīl*. They nevertheless followed the bad inclinations of a people who went astray and misled others and wandered from the right way⁵⁵.

Ibn 'Abdūn recommends in his treatise⁵⁶ to alter the corrupted rules introduced in the Christian church, to compel the women in the household of a priest to marry, and to force the priests to undergo circumcision and to marry. The heads of the Christian Church twisted the faith of Jesus and imposed the prohibition of circumcision on the priests, even though they were aware of the fact that Jesus himself was circumcised and they observed the Feast of his circumcision.

Muḥammad b. Rushd states that the believer has to circumcise the male and female slaves in his possession, as circumcision is the purification of Islam; he is obliged to perform it with his servants as he is obliged to perform it with his sons and daughters⁵⁷.

As mentioned above, circumcision was considered an injunction of God. It formed one of the marks of the people who believed in God in the periods of ignorance, of the lack of knowledge of the existence of God, of brutality and savagery. This remarkable group, distinguished by its spiritual values, was known as the "People of the *fiṭra*." They followed the conduct of Abraham, *the sunan ibrahīma l-khalīl*⁵⁸.

⁵⁵ Comp. Bashīr Ahmad Orchard, "Religious Background" (of Circumcision—K.), *Review of Religions*, LXXXVI (1991) 29: . . . "It was not until Paul deviated from the teaching of Jesus by converting the Gentiles to his own brand of Christianity that a schism arose in the early church on the subject of circumcision" . . . Although every year on the first of January the Roman Catholic, Orthodox and Anglican churches observe the Festival of the Feast of Circumcision commemorating the circumcision of Jesus, circumcision is not obligatory for Christians. The practice is observed, however, by the Ethiopian Church." I owe the information about this article to Professor Yoḥanan Friedmann.

⁵⁶ Ibn 'Abdūn, *Risāla fī l-qaḍā'i wa-l-ḥisba*, ed. E. Levi-Provençal, Cairo 1955, pp. 48 inf.—49 sup.

⁵⁷ Abū l-Walīd Ibn Rushd: *al-Bayān wa-l-taḥṣīl*, Beirut 1984, II, 162—163: . . . *inna 'alā l-rajuli an yakhṭina min 'abīdihī wa-yakhfīḍa min imā'ihī mā yujmī'u 'alā imsākihī, li-annahum khawaluhu* (in text: *haulahu*, which is a mistake) *wa-mulku yamīnīhī, fa-yalzamuhu min khitānī dhukūrihim mā yalzamuhu min khitānī dhukūri wuldihī li-anna l-khitāna jahūru l-islāmi wa-shf'āruhu, fa-huwa sunnatun wājibatun; wa-yustahabbu lahu min khifāḍi ināthihim mā yustahabbu lahu min khifāḍi ināthi wuldihī, li-anna l-khifāḍa fī l-nisā'i makrumatun wa-laysa bi-sunnatin wājibatīn. . .* I owe this reference to Professor Joseph Sadan, who kindly sent me the passage.

⁵⁸ See al-Khafājī, *Nasīmu l-riyāḍ*, I, 343. And see on the *fiṭra* and the idea of the *ḥantf*: M. Gil, "The Creed of Abū 'Āmir," *IOS* XII, 1992, 9 ff. And cf. the explanation of the word *fiṭra* in

Al-Munāwī⁵⁹ gives a similar explanation of the *ḥadīth*: *khamṣun mina l-fiṭra*, marking the *fiṭra* as a *sunna* chosen by the prophets: ... *ay khamṣun mina l-sunnati l-qadīmati llati khtārahā l-anbiyāʿu wa-ttafaqat ʿalayhā l-sharāʿiʿu hattā šarat ka-annahā amrun jubilū ʿalayhi*... According to an interpretation recorded in Ibn Abī Shayba’s *Muṣannaḥ*,⁶⁰ one of the injunctions, *kalimāt*, of the verse: *wa-idhi btalā ibrahīma rabbuhu bi-kalimātin* of Sūra II, 124 refers to the injunction of the circumcision⁶¹.

Al-Māwardī in his *Tafsīr*⁶² mentions the injunctions which God imposed on Ibrāhīm, marking them as *sunanu l-islām*; among these injunctions was the practice of circumcision.

There is however no unanimity among scholars on the question of whether circumcision was one of the practices enjoined by God and obliging the people of the *fiṭra*. According to an utterance of the Prophet recorded by al-Ṭaḥāwī⁶³ the people of the *fiṭra* used to follow three practices: paring their nails, trimming the moustache and shaving the privy parts (*qaṣṣu l-azfār wa-akhdu l-shārib wa-ḥalqu l-ʿāna*).

In another list of God’s injunctions for the people of the *fiṭra* there were five practices that had to be followed; one of these practices was the circumcision. A third list provided by al-Ṭaḥāwī records ten practices; one of them was the circumcision. Al-Ṭaḥāwī gives a convincing explanation for the growth of the injunctions from three to ten: God enjoined the people of the *fiṭra* at the beginning to follow three practices. He extended this later to five practices, and added finally a further five, thus reaching the number ten⁶⁴. The traditions of the five injunctions and of the ten injunctions revealed to the People of the *fiṭra* were widely circulated⁶⁵.

Raḍiyy al-Dīn al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad al-Ṣaghānī’s *Kitāb mashāriq al-anwār, bi-sharḥ ʿʿmabāriq al-azhārʿʿ li-ʿizz al-dīn ʿabd al-latif b. ʿabd al-ʿazīz al-maʿrūf bi-bni l-malik*, Ankara 1328, II, 109: *al-fiṭratu khamṣun: wa-hiya l-sunnatu l-qadīmatu llati khtārahā l-anbiyāʿu, wa-awwalu man amara bihā ibrahīmu ʿalayhi l-salāmu wa-dhālika qauluhu taʿālā wa-idhi btalā ibrahīma rabbuhu bi-kalimātin fa-atammahunna, wa-nqaḍat ʿalayhā l-sharāʿiʿu wa-ka-annahā amrun jibilliyun futirā ʿalayhā; kadhā qālahu l-qādī. . .* And comp. M.J. Kister, “Pare your nails: A study of an early tradition,” *The Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society of Columbia University* 11, *Near Eastern Studies in memory of M.M. Bravmann*, New York, 1979 (1981), p. 63; and see *ibid.* note 1.

⁵⁹ *Fayḍu l-qadīr*, III, 455, no. 2953.

⁶⁰ XI, 521, no. 11877.

⁶¹ And see *ibid.* the references of the editor. And see above, note 9.

⁶² Ed. Khaḍīr Muḥammad Khaḍīr and ʿAbd al-Sattār Abū Ghudda, al-Kuwayt 1402/1982, I, 154, sup.

⁶³ *Mushkilu l-āthār*, Hyderabad 1333, repr. Beirut, I, 296–297.

⁶⁴ See the list of the ten injunctions ordered by God in Ṣaghānī’s *Mashāriq* II, 109. And see the list of the ten injunctions in Iṣḥāq b. Bishr’s *al-Mubtadaʿ*, MS fol. 188b, sup.

⁶⁵ See Sufyān b. ʿUyayna, *Juzʿ fīhi ḥadīth sufyān*... , ed. Aḥmad b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Ṣawayān, al-Kharj 1407/1987, pp. 68–70, no 11; and see the abundant references provided by the editor. Ibn Bābūyah al-Qummī, *Kitābu l-khiṣāl*, ed. ʿAlī Akbar al-Ghaffārī, Tehran 1389, I,

The circumcision, *khitān*, was linked with another expression referring to the People of the *fiṭra*, the *ṣibghatu llāhi*⁶⁶.

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Circumcision was unanimously agreed upon by Muslim scholars as a religious practice concerning males and females. There were, however, differences on whether it is an obligatory practice, *wājib*—considered even by some of the scholars as an injunction, *fard*—or merely a *sunna*, a customary religious practice which should be followed⁶⁷.

Some scholars were of the opinion that the circumcision of a male holds an intermediate position between a recommendation, *nadb*, and an obligatory practice.

The circumcision of a female was however considered of lesser importance than that of a male, and the observance of circumcision for females was to some extent treated more lightly⁶⁸.

There were indeed two contradictory opinions concerning the circumcision of females: the one considered circumcision obligatory for men and women alike, referring to the utterance of the Prophet: *idhā ltaqā l-khitānāni wajaba l-ghusl*⁶⁹, and the other one asserting that circumcision is obligatory only for

271 no. 11 records an utterance of the imām Mūsā b. Jaʿfar: ... *khamṣun mina l-sunani fi l-raʿs wa-khamṣun fi l-jasad ... wa-ammā llatī fi l-jasad fa-l-khitān wa-ḥalqu l-ʿana ...* ʿAlī b. Balabān al-Fārisī, *al-Iḥsān bi-tarīḥi ṣaḥīḥi bni ḥibbān*, ed. Kamāl Yūsuf al-Hūt, Beirut 1407/1987, VII, 409, nos. 5455–5458, records utterances about five injunctions, including circumcision, and mentions on p. 408, no. 5454 the utterance about the three injunctions, not including circumcision. Al-Suyūṭī records in his *Jamʿu l-jawāmiʿ*, Cairo 1390/1970, IX, no. 13682 a tradition counting five practices of the *fiṭra*: trimming the moustache, paring the nails, shaving the privy parts, plucking out of the hair of the armpits and using the tooth stick (the *siwāk*, made from the tree of *arāk*,—K.); there is, however, another version of this tradition in which the injunction of using of the *siwāk* is replaced by the injunction of the circumcision; and see *ibid.* the abundant references of the editors. And see the tradition about the ten practices of the *fiṭra* recorded by Munāwī in his *Fayḍu l-qadīr*, IV, 316, no. 5432, which however does not include the circumcision.

⁶⁶ See Qurʾān II, 138; *ṣibghata llāhi wa-man aḥsanu mina llāhi ṣibghatan wa-naḥnu lahu ʿabidūna*. See the explanation of this expression as referring to the circumcision in Ibn Qayyim's *Tuḥfatu l-maudūd*, pp. 145–148.

⁶⁷ See e.g. al-Zabīdī, *Iṭḥāfu l-sādati l-muttaqīn*, II, 417: ... *wa-lam yadhkuri l-muṣannifu ḥukma l-khitāni hal huwa wājibun au sunnatun, wa-qadi khtalafa l-ʿulamāʾu fihi, fa-dhahaba aktharu l-ʿulamāʾi ilā annahu sunnatun wa-laysa bi-wājibin, wa-huwa qawlu mālikin wa-abī ḥanīfata fi riwāyatīn, wa-fi ukhrā ʿanhu wājibun, wa-fi ukhrā ʿanhu yaṭṭhamu bitarkihī*.

⁶⁸ See e.g. Al-Zabīdī, *Iṭḥāfu l-sādati l-muttaqīn*, II, 417 the discussion concerning the circumcision of females. And see Ibn Bābūyah al-Qummī, *Man lā yaḥḍuruhu l-faqīh*, ed. Ḥasan al-Mūsawī l-Kharsān, Beirut 1401/1981, III, 314, no. 1582 the unequivocal statement of ʿAlī to the effect that there is nothing reprehensible in circumcision of a female, but circumcision of a male is a necessity, ... *qāla ʿaliyyun ʿalayhi l-salāmu: lā baʿsa an tukhtatana l-marʾatu, fa-ammā l-rajulu fa-lā budda minhu*. And cf. Ibn Qayyim al-Jauziyya, *Tuḥfatu l-maudūd*, p. 151: ... *qultu li-abī ʿabdi llāhi: fa-lā budda minhu? qāla: lā. fa-qīla lahu: innahu atā ʿalayhā thalāthūna wa-arbaʿūna sanatan, fa-sakata. qīla lahu: fa-in qadarat ʿalā an takhtatīna? qāla: ḥasanun*.

⁶⁹ See e.g. al-Nasaʿī, *Ishratu l-nisāʾi*, ed. ʿAmr ʿAlī ʿUmar, Cairo 1408/1988, p. 198, no. 241; and see *ibid.* the references of the editor. According to this tradition *khitān* denotes the vulva of

males, on the basis of the utterance of the Prophet: *al-khitānu sunnatun li-l-rijāli, makrumatun li-l-nisāʾi*⁷⁰.

The proper method of circumcision of females was defined by the Prophet in an advice given to a woman circumciser, Umm ʿAṭiyya. He advised her to excise gently a part of the prepuce of the clitoris, avoiding a total excision of all the parts of the clitoris: *ashimmī wa-lā tunhikī*; a total extirpation may annul the sexual lust of the woman and may even endanger the life of the girl⁷¹.

As mentioned above the difference between the degree of obligation of male and female circumcision was defined by the Prophet in his utterance: *al-khitān sunnatun li-l-rijāli, makrumatun li-l-nisāʾi*⁷².

There is, indeed, a difference between the purpose of male and female circumcision: the intent of female circumcision is to diminish her sexual desire; that of male circumcision is to secure the proper performance of his religious duties⁷³. Additionally, female circumcision can be deduced neither from an Islamic practice nor from a practice of the “people of the *fiṭra*.” It is therefore linked with the story of Hājar and the story of her strife with Sārah. The dissension between the two women was caused by the fact that Ismāʿīl overtook Ishāq

the female as well as the penis of the male. See the explication of the *khitānāni* in Ibn al-Jauzī’s *Gharību l-ḥadīth*, ed. ʿAbd al-Muʿī Amīn Qalʿajī, Beirut 1405/1985, I, 264 and the references of the editor.

⁷⁰ See the discussion in Ibn Qayyim al-Jauziyya, *Tuḥfatu l-maudūd*, p. 152: ... *wa-ʿan aḥmada* (i.e. Ibn Ḥanbal) *fi dhālika riwāyatāni: iḥdāhumā yajibu ʿalā l-rijāli wa-l-nisāʾi, wa-l-thāniyatū: yakhtaṣṣu wujūbuhū bi-l-dhukūr*. ... And see the argument of *idhā ltaqā l-khitānāni* used against a modern scholar who claimed that the traditions about the circumcision of females are “weak” none of them being sound, in Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī, *Tamāmu l-minna fi l-taʿlīq ʿalā “fiqhi l-sunna,”* al-Riyāḍ 1409, p. 67.

⁷¹ Faḍlullāhi l-Jilānī, *Faḍlu llāhi l-ṣamad*, II, 669–670, no. 1245. And see *ibid.* the explanation of the details of the practice: ... *wa-l-mustaḥiqq min khafḍi l-marʾati qaṣʿu shayʾin min jildatin takūnu fi ʿalā farjihā fauqa madkhalī l-dhakari ka-ʿurfi l-dīki min ghayri istiṣālin*. ... See also the tradition in Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī’s *Silsilatu l-aḥādīthi l-ṣaḥīḥa*, Beirut 1405/1985, II, 353–358, no. 722 and the abundant references of the author with different versions of the utterance. See also Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Isāba*, ed. ʿAlī Muḥammad al-Bijāwī, Cairo 1392/1972, VIII, 262, no. 12168; and note the version *ashimmī wa-lā tuḥṣi fa-innahu asrā li-l-wajhi wa-aḥzā ʿinda l-zauji*. A curious explanation of the words *asrā li-l-wajhi*, recorded by Faḍlullāhi l-Jilānī, *Faḍlu llāhi l-ṣamad*, II, 670, says that it refers to the beauty of the pudenda of the woman. See the traditions in al-Nazwī’s *al-Muṣannaḥ*, II, 40 and in Bayhaqī’s *al-Sunan al-kubrā*, VIII, 324. Compare also the argument concerning the desire of the woman being diminished by circumcision in Ibn Qayyim al-Jauziyya, *Tuḥfatu l-maudūd*, p. 148.

⁷² See al-Nazwī, *al-Muṣannaḥ*, II, 42: ... *wa-laysa hunna ka-l-rijāli fa-l-khitānu li-l-nisāʾi makrumatun wa-li-l-rijāli sunnatun, wa-qīla: farīdatun*. And see: Ibn ʿAdiyy, *al-Kāmil*, I, 272; al-Ṭabarānī, *Musnad al-shāmiyyīn*, I, 98, no. 146, and see the references of the editor. And see al-Bayhaqī, *al-Sunan al-kubrā*, VIII, 325; note *ibid.* the interpretation that the *sunna* in this utterance denotes the *sunna* of the Prophet. See al-Suyūṭī, *al-Durru l-manthār*, I, 114 inf., al-Daylamī, *Firdausu l-akḥbār*, II, 324, no. 2835 and the references of the editors. And see Ibn Qayyim al-Jauziyya, *Tuḥfatu l-maudūd*, p. 137 and al-Munāwī, *Fayḍu l-qadīr*, III, 503, no. 4129.

⁷³ See e.g. al-Zabīdī, *Ithāfu l-sādātī l-muttaqīn*, II, 418: ... *wa-ḥtajja l-qaffal li-wujūbihī bi-anna baqāʾa l-qulṣati yaḥbisu l-najāsata wa-yamnaʿu ṣiḥḥata l-ṣalāti fa-tajibu izalatuhā*. ...

in a race and gained the favour of Abraham. Sarah, enraged by Ishāq's loss in the competition, took a vow to cut three limbs of the body of her servant, Hājar. Abraham, wary of Sarah's demand, proposed a compromise, which was accepted by Sārah: the two ears of Hājar would be pierced, and she would be circumcised⁷⁴. A curious opinion of some scholars says that there is a difference between women in the East and in the West; women in the West do not possess the part of the pudenda which is destined for circumcision. Some scholars advised to draw a razor over the place where circumcision was to be carried out⁷⁵.

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As mentioned above circumcision in Islam was tied to the practice of the "people of the fiṭra," the "people of the *ḥanīfiyya*," and the "people marked by the *ṣibgha* of Islam."⁷⁶ It is thus possible that Islamic circumcision was conceived as a mark of the covenant between God and the believer. The believer is distinguished by the cutting of the prepuce (or the removal of the part of the clitoris—K.), an act that denotes subservience to God. This is reminiscent of the cutting of the edge of a slave's ear or the cauterizing of his forehead in order to indicate his servitude. In the same way circumcision helps to distinguish the servant of God, the *ḥanīf*, from other people who do not undergo this noble, cleaning and purifying treatment which moderates and calms desire⁷⁷.

The obligation of circumcision ceases with the death of the believer. An uncircumcised believer should not be made to undergo the ritual obligation after his death. That was the opinion of the religious leaders of Islam. There were, however, some *fuqahā'* who asserted that an uncircumcised believer should be circumcised after his death⁷⁸.

⁷⁴ See this version in al-Tha'labī's *Qīṣaṣu l-anbiyā'*, p. 105; and see other versions: al-Suyūfī, *al-Waṣā'ih ilā ma'rīfati l-awḍā'il*, ed. Ibrāhīm al-ʿAdawī and ʿAlī Muḥammad ʿUmar, Cairo 1400/1980, p. 20; al-Zabīdī, *Ithāfu l-sādātī l-muttaqīn*, II, 419; al-Ṣāliḥī, *al-Sīra al-shāmiyya*, I, 172 inf.—173; Ibn Qayyim al-Jauziyya, *Tuḥfatu l-maudūd*, pp. 148—149; al-Munāwī, *Fayḍu l-qadīr*, III, 503, no. 4129.

⁷⁵ See Ibn Ḥajar, *Fath al-bārī*, reprint, XII, repr. Beirut, n.d., X, 286 and Ibn al-Ḥājj, *al-Mudkhal*, III, 310: *wa-khtulifa fī ḥaqqihinna hal yukhfaḍna mutlaqan, au yufarraqu bayna ahli l-mashriqi wa-ahli l-maghribi; fa-ahlu l-mashriqi yu'marūna bihi li-wujūdi l-faḍlati ʿindahunna min aṣli l-khilqati, wa-ahlu l-maghribi lā yu'marūna bihi li-ʿadamihā ʿindahunna; wa-dhālika rājiʿun ilā muqtada l-taʿlīli fīman wulida makhtūnan. fa-kadhālika hunā sawḍun bi-sawḍin*.

⁷⁶ See e.g. Ibn Qayyim al-Jauziyya, *Tuḥfatu l-maudūd*, p. 127: *... wa-qāla ghayru wāḥidin mina l-salaf: man ṣallā wa-ḥajja wa-khtatana fa-huwa ḥanīf, fa-l-ḥajj wa-l-khitān shiʿāru l-ḥanīfiyya, wa-hiya fiṭratu llāhi llati fuṭira l-nāsu ʿalayhā...*

⁷⁷ Ibn Qayyim al-Jauziyya, *Tuḥfatu l-maudūd*, p. 148; and see *ibid.* p. 145, inf.: God ordered Ibrāhīm to circumcise himself and promised him to make him an *imām* of the people, a father of many nations, *shuʿūb*, to make kings and prophets among his progeny and turn the circumcision a mark of his covenant with God.

⁷⁸ See Ibn Qayyim al-Jauziyya, *ibid.* pp. 131, 157: *... fa-lā yajibu khitānu l-mayyiti bi-tiṭfaqi l-umma; wa-hal yustahabbu? fa-jumhūru ahli l-ʿilmi ʿalā annahu lā yustahabbu, wa-huwa qaulu l-aʿimmati l-arbaʿati, wa-dhakara baʿḍu l-aʿimmati l-mutaʿakkkhirīna annahu mustahabb...*

The day recommended for the performance of circumcision is the seventh or eighth day after birth⁷⁹. Some scholars, however, had some reservation as to the circumcision on the seventh day after birth, because this is the time of the circumcision prescribed for the Jewish children⁸⁰. The circumcision may, however, be delayed up to forty days from birth, or even until the seventh year of the child's life⁸¹.

There were, in fact, different opinions concerning the desirable age for the circumcision: some scholars argued that it is not permissible to circumcise a boy before he reaches his tenth year. It is at that age that a boy is punishable for not observing the prayer. Circumcision causes more pain than the punishment of beating caused by neglecting the obligatory prayer and should therefore be delayed until that age⁸². According to one tradition people did not circumcise their children before the age of puberty. Ibn ‘Abbās was circumcised at that age: at the death of the Prophet he was fifteen years old and was already circumcised⁸³.

It was indeed Ibn ‘Abbās who related that the people of the Jāhiliyya used to circumcise their children when they reached puberty⁸⁴.

⁷⁹ See e.g. al-Muttaqī l-Hindī, *Kanzu l-‘ummāl*, XXII, 37, no. 313 and al-Shaukānī, *Naylu l-‘auṭār*, I, 134.

⁸⁰ Ibn Qayyim al-Jauziyya, *Tuḥfatu l-maudūd*, p. 143, 144: ... *fa-karihat iḍḍifātun an yukhtatana l-ṣabiyyu yauma ṣābi‘ihi, kariha dhālika l-ḥasanu l-baṣriyyu wa-māliku bnu anasin khilāfan ‘alā l-yahūdi*. And see the discussion in al-Shaukānī's *Naylu l-‘auṭār*, p. 134: ... *qāla l-nawawī ba‘da an dhakara l-wajhayni: wa-idhā qulnā bi-l-ṣāḥiḥ ustuhibba an yukhtatana fī l-yaumi l-ṣābi‘i min wilādatihi, wa-hal yuḥṣabu yaumu l-wilādati mina l-ṣābi‘i au yakūnu sab‘atan siwāhu? fīhi wajhāni, aḥharuhumā: yuḥṣabu*. And cf. al-Ṣaffūrī, *Nuzhatu l-majālis*, p. 478: ... *wayustahabbu an tudhbaha* (i.e. the sheep of the ‘aqīqa—K.) *awwala l-nahāri yauma l-ṣābi‘i mina l-wilādati wa-yuḥṣabu yaumu l-wilādati mina l-ṣābi‘ati bi-l-nisbati li-l-khitāni*...; and see: Abū l-Faḍl Ṣāliḥ b. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, *Masā‘ilu l-imāmi aḥmad b. ḥanbal*, ed. Faḍlu l-Raḥmān Dīn Muḥammad, Delhi 1408/1988, II, 206, no. 778: ... (*ḥukmu l-khitāni yauma l-ṣābi‘i*), *qultu: yukhtatana l-ṣabiyyu li-ṣābi‘ati ayyāmin? qāla: yurwā ‘ani l-ḥasani annahu qāla: huwa fī‘lu l-yahūdi. wasu‘ila wahbu bnu munabbihin ‘an dhālika, fa-qāla: innamā yustahabbu dhālika fī yaumi l-ṣābi‘i li-khiffatihi ‘alā l-sibyān, fa-inna l-maulūda yūladu wa-huwa khadiru l-ṣābi‘i kullīhi, lā yajidu alama mā aṣābahu sab‘an fa-idhā lam yukhtan li-dhālika fa-da‘ūhu ḥattā yaqwa*; and see the references of the editor. And see Muḥammad b. ‘Alī b. Ṭūlūn al-Ṣāliḥī, *Faṣṣu l-khawātīm fīmā qāla fī l-walā‘im*, ed. Nizār Ubāza, Damascus 1403/1983, repr. 1987, p. 62.

⁸¹ See Faḍlullāhi l-Jilānī, *Faḍlu llāhi l-ṣamad*, II, 668. Comp. al-Zabīdī, *Ithāfu l-sādati l-muttaqin*, II, 417 and al-‘Asqalānī, *Faḥṣu l-bārī*, X, 289.

⁸² Al-Zabīdī, *Ithāfu l-sādati l-muttaqin*, II, 417. Cf. Faḍlullāhi l-Jilānī, *Faḍlu llāhi l-ṣamad*, II, 669 and al-‘Asqalānī, *Faḥṣu l-bārī*, X, 289.

⁸³ Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, *Taghīṭu l-ta‘līq*, V, 131–132; Ibn Qayyim al-Jauziyya, *Tuḥfatu l-maudūd*, p. 141; Ibn Abī ‘Āṣim, *al-Āḥād wa-l-mathānī*, ed. Bāsim Fayṣal Aḥmad al-Jawābira, al-Riyāḍ 1411/1991, I, 284–285, nos. 272–274, and see *ibid.* the references of the editor; al-Shaukānī, *Naylu l-‘auṭār*, I, 136.

⁸⁴ Ibn Qayyim al-Jauziyya, *Zādū l-ma‘ād*, II, 4; *idem*, *Tuḥfatu l-maudūd*, p. 141. And see Ibn al-Ḥājj, *al-Mudkhal*, Beirut, n.d., III, 311: *ammā l-khitānu fa-qad maḍat ‘ādātu l-salaf annahum kānū yakhtatinūna aulādahum ḥīna yurāhiqūna l-bulūgh*. And see about the different ages at which the circumcision is performed in various tribes: R.B. Serjeant, “Sex, Birth, Circumcision:

Some scholars, however, held fast to the tradition of circumcision on the seventh day after birth⁸⁵.

Fāṭima is said to have ordered to circumcise her children on the seventh day after birth⁸⁶. The Prophet is said to have circumcised al-Ḥasan and Ḥusayn on the seventh day⁸⁷. An accepted opinion was that there was no designated time for circumcision⁸⁸.

A widely circulated tradition was that Ibrāhīm circumcised his son, Ishāq, when he was seven days old, and his son Ismāʿīl when he was thirteen years old. The time of circumcision of each of the two, Ishāq and Ismāʿīl, became a *sunna* followed by the descendants of that son⁸⁹.

Many cases of death caused by circumcision raised the problem to what extent the circumciser or the man who took the decision to circumcise was responsible in cases of cold, heat or weakness of the child⁹⁰.

The opinion of the scholars concerning the circumcision of the converts to Islam was unanimous: the circumcision was a necessary condition. The Prophet is said to have stated: *man aslama fa-l-yakhtatin wa-in kāna kabīran*.

Another tradition, an utterance of the Prophet found allegedly in the scabbard of his sword, says that an uncircumcised person should not be left in Islam unless he would undergo circumcision even if he were eighty years old⁹¹.

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Circumcision was compulsory for embracing Islam. The convert had to per-

Some Notes from South-West Arabia," *Hermann von Wissmann-Festschrift*, Tübingen 1962, pp. 203–205 = R.B. Serjeant, *Customary and Sharʿah Law in Arabian Society*, (Variorum), London 1991, XIV.

⁸⁵ See e.g. al-Nazwī's *al-Muṣannaf*, II, 41. And see the utterance of the Prophet: *ikhtinū aulādakum yauma l-sābiʿi fa-innahu aṭharu wa-asraʿu nabātan li-l-laḥmi* in Ibn ʿAsākir's *Tabyīnu l-Imtīnān*, p. 42, no. 23; and see the references of the editor.

⁸⁶ Al-Nazwī, *al-Muṣannaf*, II, 41.

⁸⁷ Al-Suyūfī, *al-Durr al-manthūr*, I, 114 inf.; Ibn al-Mulaqqin, *Tuḥfatu l-muḥtāj*, II, 497, no. 1618; al-Shaukānī, *Naylu l-auṭār*, I, 134; Ibn al-Ḥājj, *al-Mudkhal*, III, 310 inf.; Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. Ṭūlūn, *Faṣṣu l-khawātim*, p. 62; Ibn ʿAsākir, *Tabyīnu l-Imtīnān*, p. 43, no. 25; and see the references of the editor.

⁸⁸ See e.g. al-Shaukānī, *Naylu l-auṭār*, I, 134: . . . *wa-aurada l-muṣannifu l-ḥadītha ft ḥadhā l-bābi li-l-istidlāli bihi ʿalā anna muddata l-khitāni lā takhtaṣṣu bi-waqtin muʿayyanin, wa-huwa madhhabu l-jumhūri, wa-laysa bi-wājibin ft ḥāli l-ṣiḡhar*. And see Ibn Qayyim al-Jauziyya, *Tuḥfatu l-maudūd*, pp. 144–145.

⁸⁹ See e.g. Ibn Qayyim al-Jauziyya, *Tuḥfatu l-maudūd*, p. 145. But see a different version in Ṣaffūrī's *Nuzhatu l-majālīs*, p. 478: *wa-qāla makḥūl: khatana ibrahīmu ishāqa li-sabʿati ayyāmin wa-ismaʿīla li-sabʿa ʿashrata sanatan*. And see Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. Ṭūlūn, *Faṣṣu l-khawātim*, p. 62.

⁹⁰ See e.g. Ibn Qayyim al-Jauziyya, *Tuḥfatu l-maudūd*, pp. 153–154. See the case of a woman circumciser charged by ʿUmar of the death of a circumcised girl: Ibrāhīm al-Ḥarbī, *Gharību l-ḥadīthi*, ed. Sulaymān b. Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad al-ʿĀyid, Judda 1405/1985, II, 553.

⁹¹ Ibn Qayyim al-Jauziyya, *Tuḥfatu l-maudūd*, p. 128, penult.: . . . *inna l-aqlafa lā yutraku fi l-islāmi hattā yakhtatina wa-lau balagha thamānīna sanatan*; al-Muttaqī l-Hindī, *Kanzu l-ʿummāl*, XXII, 37, no. 311; Ibn ʿAsākir, *Tabyīnu l-Imtīnān*, p. 31, no. 6; and see the references of the editor. And see al-Nazwī, *al-Muṣannaf*, II, 42; al-Bayhaqī, *al-Sunanu l-kubrā*, VIII, 324.

form circumcision even if he was of advanced age. The Prophet is said to have formulated this in the following utterance: *man aslama fa-l-yukhtatan wa-in kāna kabīran*⁹².

Another utterance of the Prophet, found allegedly in the scabbard of his sword, is even more explicit: a convert should not be left in the fold of Islam until he undergoes circumcision, even if he is eighty years old⁹³. “Eighty years” is, of course, an allusion to the age at which Abraham performed his circumcision.

Some scholars of Muslim Law were of the opinion that an old convert should undergo circumcision even if this might bring about his death⁹⁴.

A convert cannot be counted as a member of the Muslim community before his circumcision: his prayer is not accepted, he is not permitted to perform the pilgrimage to Mecca, he will not be allowed to act as witness in court, the believers are not allowed to eat the meat of an animal slaughtered by him⁹⁵.

There were, however, some scholars who held the opinion that circumcision should be delayed in case the child is weak or ill and it may endanger its life⁹⁶. The same applies to circumcision of an old person: if it endangers his life, the practice has to be considered void and the convert should be freed from this ritual⁹⁷.

According to Ibn Qayyim al-Jauziyya this opinion conforms to the consensus of the Muslim scholars, with slight exceptions.

A test case for this attitude is in the story of the converts of Kaskar. They embraced Islām and declared that they were Muslims. The governor of Baṣra

⁹² Ibn Qayyim al-Jauziyya, *Tuḥfatu l-maudūd*, p. 128. This tradition, transmitted on the authority of al-Zuhrī, is *mursal*, and is marked by scholars of *ḥadīth* as “very weak,” *fa-marāsīlu l-zuhrīyyi ‘indahum min aḍ‘afī l-marāsīli, lā taṣluḥu li-l-iḥtījāj*; see Ibn Qayyim al-Jauziyya, *ibid.* p. 133. And see Faḍlullāhi l-Jilānī, *Faḍlu llāhi l-ṣamad*, II, 675, no. 1252; al-Bukhārī records a tradition on the authority of al-Zuhrī saying that a convert should perform circumcision even if he was aged. The commentator emphasizes the dangers of circumcision of an old person.

⁹³ Ibn Qayyim al-Jauziyya, *Tuḥfatu l-maudūd*, p. 128: ... *inna l-aqlaḥa lā yutraku fī l-islāmi ḥattā yukhtatana wa-lau balagha thamānīna sanatan*; al-Muttaqī l-Hindī, *Kanzu l-ummāl*, XXII, 37, no. 311; Ibn ‘Asākir, *Tabyīnu l-imitnān*, p. 31, no. 6; and see the references of the editor. See also al-Nazwī, *al-Muṣannaḥ*, II, 42 and al-Bayhaqī, *al-Sunan al-kubrā*, VIII, 324.

⁹⁴ Ibn Qayyim al-Jauziyya, *Tuḥfatu l-maudūd*, p. 130, sup.

⁹⁵ See e.g. Ibn Qayyim al-Jauziyya, *Tuḥfatu l-maudūd*, pp. 128–129. Cf. Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, *al-Maṣālibu l-‘āliya bi-zawā’idi l-masānīdi l-thamāniya*, ed. Ḥabību l-Raḥmān al-‘Azamī, Beirut 1390, III, 12, no. 2740: ... *ṣa’alā rasūla llāhi ṣallā llāhu ‘alayhi wa-sallam ‘an rajulin aqlaḥa a-yahujju bayta llāhi, fa-qāla: lā. nahā rasūla llāhi ṣallā llāhu ‘alayhi wa-sallam ‘an dhālika ḥattā yukhtatana*. See al-Bayhaqī, *al-Sunanu l-kubrā*, III, 325; Ibn ‘Abbās stated that prayer behind an uncircumcised believer is not accepted, and that meat of an animal slaughtered by him is reprehensible and that an uncircumcised believer is unworthy to testify as witness. See also al-Suyūṭī, *al-Aḥādīthu l-maudū‘a mina l-jāmi‘i l-kabīr wa-l-jāmi‘i l-aḥzar*, ed. ‘Abbās Aḥmad Ṣaqr and Aḥmad ‘Abd al-Jawād, Beirut 1409/1988, p. 76, no. 273.

⁹⁶ See e.g. Muḥammad b. ‘Alī b. Ṭūlūn, *Faṣṣu l-khawātim*, p. 62.

⁹⁷ See Ibn Qayyim al-Jauziyya, *Tuḥfatu l-maudūd*, p. 157, sup.

ordered to check whether they were circumcised and commanded to circumcise those who were not. This was in autumn (*shittā*⁹⁸), and some of them died (because of the cold). Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī was displeased by the governor's action and remarked with anger that at the time of the Prophet many Abyssinians, Byzantines and Persians embraced Islam without the Prophet ordering to search them⁹⁸.

The problem of compulsory circumcision of converts to Islam was a controversial theme even in later periods of Islam. In the period of ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz the people of Khurāsān flocked to embrace Islam in order to be freed from payment of *jizya*. Some people advised the governor, al-Jarrāh b. ʿAbdallah, to put as a stipulation that they should undergo circumcision. ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz being asked about this ordered the governor to desist from forcing circumcision as a condition for conversion to Islam. "God sent the prophet Muḥammad and entrusted him to summon people to embrace Islam. He did not send him as circumciser."⁹⁹

The controversy as to circumcision as a compulsory condition for conversion to Islam is reflected in the polemics between the scholars of Islam¹⁰⁰. The contradictory views of the scholars are reflected in the chapter of ʿAbd al-Razzāq's *al-Muṣannaḥ*, dealing with the problem of eating the meat of an animal slaughtered by uncircumcised believers¹⁰¹. Ibn ʿAbbās is said to have regarded the slaughter of uncircumcised believers as reprehensible. The testimony of such people at court should not be accepted and their prayer is void. This opinion of Ibn ʿAbbās was contradicted by al-Ḥasan (al-Baṣrī) and by Ḥammād (b. Salama). According to Ḥammād there is nothing wrong in the slaughter of an uncircumcised believer; he is permitted to give evidence in court and his prayer is valid. Al-Ḥasan was of the opinion that circumcision of an aged convert should be avoided if this may endanger his life, and that there is nothing wrong in consuming the meat of an animal slaughtered by him¹⁰². Females captured in military operations, willing to embrace Islam, were entrusted to women who performed circumcision and were duly purified, i.e., circumcised¹⁰³. A con-

⁹⁸ See Faḍlullāhi l-Jilānī, *Faḍlu llāhi l-ṣamad*, II, 674, no. 1251; Ibn Qayyim al-Jauziyya, *Tuḥfatu l-maudūd*, pp. 132, 138 inf.–139.

⁹⁹ Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾriḫhu l-rusul wa-l-mulūk*, ed. Muḥammad Abū l-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, Cairo 1971, VI, 559: ...inna llāha baʿatha muḥammadan ṣallā llāhu ʿalayhi wa-sallama dāʿiyan wa-lam yabʿathhu khātinan.

¹⁰⁰ See e.g. Ibn Qayyim al-Jauziyya, *Tuḥfatu l-maudūd*, pp. 127–141.

¹⁰¹ Ed. Ḥabību l-Raḥmān al-ʿAzamī, Beirut 1391/1972, IV, 483–485, nos. 8562–8566: *bābu dhabīḥati l-aqlāfi wa-l-ṣabiyyi wa-l-akhrasi wa-l-zanjiyy*. Comp. al-Rāzī, *Taʾriḫ madīnati ṣanʿā*, ed. Ḥusayn b. ʿAbdallah al-ʿUmarī, Damascus-Beirut, 1409/1989, p. 372: ... "wa-kāna abī (i.e. Ṭāwūs—K.) yakrahu ʿizāma l-fili wa-kāna yakrahu dhabīḥata l-zanjiyyi an yaʿkulahā wa-yaqūlu: 'hal wajaḍta zanjiyyan qaṭṭu fīhi khayrun?'"

¹⁰² ʿAbd al-Razzāq, *op. cit.*, IV, 473–4, no. 8562.

¹⁰³ Faḍlullāhi l-Jilānī, *Faḍlu llāhi l-ṣamad*, II, 669, nos. 1245, 1249. And see Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Isāba*, VIII, 313, no. 12274.

controversial subject was the attendance of parties arranged on the occasion of circumcision. According to tradition, some of the Companions of the Prophet spurned attending such parties, while others arranged parties and even invited singers to comfort the circumcised boys and to alleviate their pain¹⁰⁴. According to an utterance attributed to the Prophet he recommended to arrange a party on the occasion of circumcision, *walīmatu l-īdhār*¹⁰⁵.

There were some unusual situations discussed in the sources. Among them was the case of a man with two active penises¹⁰⁶, and that of a hermaphrodite¹⁰⁷.

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It may be useful to draw the reader's attention to a few observations on the traditions concerning circumcision in the Arab peninsula during the period of the Jāhiliyya, on the utterances of the Prophet as to the obligatory character of this ritual practice, and on the conflicting opinions of the scholars of *ḥadīth* and religious Law connected with the implementation of the injunction.

According to early Muslim tradition, circumcision was one of the tenets of the faith of Ibrāhīm. This assumption is reflected in the reports about the practices of the people of the *fiṭra* and the people who observed the *sunan ibrāhīm*. Muslim scholars presumed that the unbelievers in the period of the Jāhiliyya abode by the *sunan ibrāhīm*. They acted according to the ritual practices followed by Ibrāhīm; these were the *baqāyā dīn ibrāhīm*, “the lasting tenets of the faith of Ibrāhīm” observed by the unbelievers in Mecca. Some Muslim scholars assumed that the Prophet himself shared with his people, the Quraysh, the ritual practices which originated in the tenets and principles of the faith of Ibrāhīm and Ismāʿīl. They formulated it in a significant definition: *kāna ʿalā dīni ibrāhīm*.

Circumcision, one of the ritual practices of the faith of Ibrāhīm, became a feature distinguishing the Arab population of the peninsula and they were called *ummatu l-khitān*.

¹⁰⁴ See Faḍlullāhi l-Jilānī, *Faḍlu llāhi l-ṣamad*, II, 671, nos. 1246, 1247; al-Suyūṭī, *al-Durr al-manthūr*, Cairo 1314, I, 114 inf.; Nūr al-Dīn al-Haythamī, *Majmaʿ al-zawāʿid wa-manbaʿ al-fawāʿid*, Beirut 1967, IV, 60; al-Ṭabarānī, *al-Muʿjam al-kabīr*, ed. Ḥamdī ʿAbd al-Majīd al-Silafī, n. p., 1405/1985, IX, 48, nos. 8381, 8382.

¹⁰⁵ See Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Faṣṣu l-khawātim*, p. 60: ... *al-walīmatu fī l-īdhāri ḥaqqun*...; and see Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Nihāya fī ghāribi l-ḥadīth*, ed. Ṭāhir Aḥmad al-Zāwī and Maḥmūd Muḥammad al-Ṭanāḥī, Cairo 1383/1963, III, 196. And see al-Ājurri, *al-Jawāb ʿan masʿalati l-samāʿ*, MS Hebrew Univ. AP Ar. 158, fol. 8b, penult.: ... *kāna ʿumarū bnu l-khaṭṭābi raḍiya llāhu ʿanhu idhā samʿa l-duffa wa-l-ghināʿa ankarahu, fa-idhā qīla khitānun au ʿursun sakata*.

¹⁰⁶ Al-Shaukānī, *Naylu l-auṭār*, I, 136, inf.: ... *wa-ammā man lahu dhakarāni fa-in kānā ʿāmilayni wajaba khitānukumā, wa-in kāna aḥaduhumā ʿāmilan dāna l-ākhar khutina*.

¹⁰⁷ Al-Shaukānī, *Naylu l-auṭār*, I, 136, penult.: ... *ukhtulifa fī khitāni l-khunthā, fa-qīla yajibu khitānuhu fī farjayhi qabla l-bulūghī, wa-qīla lā yajūzu ḥattā yatabayyana, wa-huwa l-aẓharu*. And see R.B. Serjeant, “Sex, Birth, Circumcision: Some Notes from South-West Arabia,” *Hermann von Wissmann-Festschrift*, ed. A. Leidlmaier, Tübingen 1962, p. 206; repr. *Variorum* 1991, n. XIV.

The *sunan ibrahīm* were adopted in Islām and became *sunan al-islām*. Circumcision became a compulsory condition for converts to Islām. Scholars considered it as a mark of Islam; some of them were of the opinion that it denoted servitude of the believer and his bondage to God, a visible sign that the believer carried out God's injunction. This is reminiscent of the Jewish idea of circumcision, according to which it is a sign of the covenant between God and His people.

Circumcision is said to have been imposed on males and females alike. Some scholars advocated, however, the idea that females may be treated with certain leniency, basing their opinion on the utterance of the Prophet: *al-khitānu sunnatun li-l-rijāli makrumatun li-l-nisā'i*, "circumcision is an obligatory ritual practice for men, a virtuous deed for women."

As to the circumcision of males, there was a clear tendency to avoid any thought that it had been influenced by the Jewish practice.

The early reports concerning circumcision state plainly that the Arabs were not influenced by their Jewish neighbours in that ritual practice.

Similarly scholars bade to refrain from following the Jewish date of the circumcision on the seventh day after the birth of the child.

A heated discussion concerning the problem whether the Prophet was born circumcised indicates that some scholars assumed that his circumcision was a miraculous event, following in this matter the traditions about other prophets who were born circumcised. It is noteworthy that in some lists of these prophets the names of some prophets from the Arab peninsula were added. Other scholars maintained that the Prophet's grandfather, 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, took the newborn child from his mother, brought him to the Ka'ba, circumcised him and named him Muḥammad. The tradition which maintains that he acted according to the Arab usage bears evidence that the tendency of the tradition is to stress the Arab custom of circumcision and the activity of the Prophet's grandfather in a framework of the old Arab tradition.

The simple and modest celebrations of the circumcision in early Islam turned into popular and sometimes sumptuous festivities in the various countries of the Muslim empire¹⁰⁸.

¹⁰⁸ See e.g. *ET*², s.v. *khitān*.