

“RAJAB IS THE MONTH OF GOD . . .”

A Study in the Persistence of an Early Tradition

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in memory of my student DAVID S. ELLER

The holy month of Rajab was observed during the period of the Jāhiliyya in spring.¹ It was the month of the *‘umra* and of offering of the sacrifices of the *‘atā’ir* to the pagan deities.² The people of the Jāhiliyya kept the sanctity of the month by refraining from raids and warfare.³ It is said to have been a month of devotional practices and of fasting.⁴ According to some traditions swearing

¹ See EI, s.v. “*Radjab*” (M. Plessner); S. D. Goitein, *Studies in Islamic History and Institutions* (Leiden 1966), pp. 92–93; J. Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentums* (Skizzen und Vorarbeiten) (Berlin 1887), pp. 74, 93; G. E. von Grunebaum, *Muhammadan Festivals* (New York 1951), p. 36; W. Gottschalk, *Das Gelübde nach älterer arabischer Auffassung* (Berlin 1919), pp. 106–107; K. Wagtendonk, *Fasting in the Koran* (Leiden 1968), p. 106; M. Gaudenfroy-Demombynes, *Le Pèlerinage à la Mekke* (Paris 1923), pp. IV, 192–198; C. Rathjens, *Die Pilgerfahrt nach Mekka* (Hamburg 1948), p. 66. [The above books are quoted by the names of their authors.]

² See EI² s.v. “*Atira*” (Ch. Pellat); F. Buhl, *Das Leben Muhammeds* (Heidelberg 1955), p. 88 (and see note 246, *ibid.*); al-Anbārī, *Sharḥ al-qaṣā’id al-sab’ al-ṭiwāl*, ed. ‘Abd al-Salām Hārūn (Cairo 1963), pp. 294, 484; Ibn Qutayba, *al-Ma’ānī al-kabīr* (Hyderabad 1949), I, 67; al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-arab* (repr. Cairo 1964), III, 120; Ibn Durayd, *al-Ishtiqāq*, ed. ‘Abd al-Salām Hārūn (Cairo 1958), p. 280 (with a divergent version: *inna ‘alā kulli muslimin fī kulli ‘āmin ‘atiratan, wa-hiya shātun kānat tudhbaḥu fī l-muḥarrami fa-nasakha dhālika l-aḥḥā*. The month of sacrifice here is Muḥarram, not Rajab); J. Wellhausen, pp. 94, 115–116; W. Gottschalk, p. 119; W. Robertson Smith, *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites* (London 1914), pp. 227–228; K. Wagtendonk, p. 36; al-Jāḥiz, *Kit. al-ḥayawān*, ed. ‘Abd al-Salām Hārūn (Cairo 1965), I, 18.

³ See J. Wellhausen, p. 94; al-Farrā’, *al-Ayyām wa-l-layālī wa-l-shuhūr*, ed. Ibrāhīm al-Ibyārī (Cairo 1956), pp. 12–13; al-Marzūqī, *al-Azmina wa-l-amkina* (Hyderabad 1332 AH), I, 282, 90, 278; al-Jumahlī, *Ṭabaqāt fuḥūl al-shu‘arā’*, ed. Maḥmūd Muḥ. Shākīr (Cairo 1952), p. 61; L’A, s.v. “*šmm, nṣl, rjb*”; al-Ṭurṭūshī, *Kit. al-ḥawādith wa-l-bida’*, ed. Muḥ. al-Ṭālibī (Tunis 1959), pp. 123, 125; ‘Alī al-Qārī, *al-Adab fī rajab*, Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Ms. Arabe 6084, Majmū‘a, fol. 65a (*wa-yuqālu rajabun al-aṣammū li-annahu lā yunādā fīhi “yā qaumāh” wa-“yā ṣabāḥāh” wa-li-annahu lā yusma‘u fīhi ḥissu l-silāḥi lā fī l-ṣabāḥi wa-lā fī l-rawāḥi*); Ibn Qutayba, *Tafsīr gharīb al-Qur‘ān*, ed. Aḥmad Ṣāqir (Cairo 1958), p. 185.

⁴ See S. D. Goitein, pp. 92–93; K. Wagtendonk, pp. 117, 120–122.

against the iniquitous and wrong-doers in this month was especially efficacious.⁵

The veneration of this month seems to have continued in the period of Islam and to have survived until recent times. Contradictory traditions attributed to the Prophet, recommending some practices of Rajab or interdicting it, bear evidence of divergent opinion on this subject in the Muslim community during the early centuries of Islam. Heated discussions among Muslim scholars concerning different aspects of these practices make it possible to understand them better. These Rajab traditions are to be surveyed in the following pages of this paper.

I

The widely circulated utterance of the Prophet *lā fara'a wa-lā 'atīrata*, "no sacrifice of the firstlings (of the flock) nor of the animals slaughtered in Rajab",⁶ indicates explicitly the interdiction to perform the sacrifices of Rajab. This *ḥadīth* is however contradicted by a tradition reported by 'Amr b. Shu'ayb.⁷ The Prophet, when asked about the *'aqīqa*, the *fara'a* and the *'atīra*, stated concerning the *'atīra*: *al-'atīratu ḥaqqun*, "the *'atīra* is obligatory" (verbatim: the *'atīra* is an obligation). The word *'atīra* is explained in the tradition as a sacrifice of a ewe, which the people of the Jāhiliyya used in Rajab to slaughter, cook, and whose meat they used to consume and feed from (scil. the needy and poor).⁸

More explicit about the obligatory character of the *'atīra*, the sacrifice of Rajab, is the tradition reported on the authority of Mikhnaf b. Sulaym.⁹ "Upon the people of every house, stated the Prophet, there is an obligation every

⁵ See al-Kalā'i, *al-Iktifā' fī maghāzī l-muṣṭafā wa-l-thalāthati l-khulafā'*, ed. H. Massé (Alger 1931), I, 123–124; al-Jilānī, *al-Ghunya li-ṭālibi tariqī l-ḥaqqi 'azza wa-jalla* (Cairo 1322 AH), I, 196.

⁶ Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, ed. Aḥmad Muḥ. Shākir (Cairo 1949–1956), XII, 104, No. 7135 and XIV, 171, No. 7737; al-Suyūṭī, *al-Jāmi' al-ṣaḡhīr* (Cairo 1320 AH), II, 202; L 'A, s.v. "fr"; comp. W. Robertson Smith, pp. 227, note 3, and pp. 462–465; al-Shaukānī, *Nayl al-auṭār* (Cairo 1347 AH), V, 119; Abū l-Maḥāsīn al-Ḥanāfi, *al-Mu'taṣar min al-mukhtaṣar* (Hyderabad 1362 AH), I, 274; Abū Dā'ūd, *Ṣaḥīḥ sunan al-muṣṭafā* (Cairo 1348 AH), II, 8; al-Ḥākim, *al-Mustadrak* (Hyderabad 1342 AH), IV, 236; al-Muttaqī al-Hindī, *Kanz al-'ummāl* (Hyderabad 1954), V, 48, No. 428; al-Tirmidhī, *Ṣaḥīḥ* (Cairo 1931), VI, 311–312; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ* (Cairo 1285 AH), II, 159; al-'Azīzī, *al-Sirāj al-munīr* (Cairo 1957), III, 473, ult.; al-Tibrizī, *Mishkāt al-maṣābiḥ* (Karachi), p. 129.

⁷ See on him al-Dhahabī, *Mizān al-i'tidāl*, ed. 'Alī Muḥ. al-Bijāwī (Cairo 1963), III, 263–268, No. 6383; Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb* (Hyderabad 1326 AH), VIII, 48–55, No. 80.

⁸ Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, XI, 4–7, No. 6713; al-Shaukānī, *Nayl*, V, 119; al-Suyūṭī, *al-Jāmi' al-ṣaḡhīr*, II, 67; al-Muttaqī al-Hindī, V, 48, No. 427; al-'Azīzī, II, 467, inf.

⁹ See on him Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, *al-Istī'āb*, ed. 'Alī Muḥ. al-Bijāwī (Cairo, n.d.), p. 1467. No. 2534; Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb*, X, 78; idem, *al-Iṣāba*, VI, 72, No. 7842.

year (to slaughter) a victim (scil. of the Sacrificial Feast) and a ‘*atīra*’. The ‘*atīra*’ is glossed in the tradition as “*al-rajabiyya*”. (‘*Alā kullī ahli baytin fī kullī ‘āmin uḍḥiyyatun¹⁰ wa-‘atīratun: ḥal tadrūna mā l-‘atīratu? hiya l-rajabiyyatu*’).¹¹

It is evident that these traditions are contradictory and reflect two diverse attitudes towards the continuation of the practices of the sacrifices of Rajab in Islam: the one approving of the *rajabiyya* and incorporating it into the body of Islamic sacrifices, authorized by the utterance of the Prophet; the other one aiming at the abolition of the Rajab sacrifice, it too basing its arguments on the utterances of the Prophet.

The two contradictory traditions (*lā fara’a wa-lā ‘atīrata* and *inna ‘alā kullī ahli baytin*) are discussed by Abū ‘Ubayd (d. 224 AH). Stressing the Jāhili character of the ‘*atīra*’, he remarks that this sacrifice was abolished by Islam. In his opinion, the *ḥadīth* of “*lā fara’a*” abrogates the *ḥadīth* of “‘*alā kullī ahli baytin...*” (*wa-l-ḥadīthu l-awwalu nāsikhun li-hādḥā*).¹²

Al-Khaṭṭābī (d. 388 AH) records the opinion of Abū Dā’ūd (d. 275 AH) about the tradition of Mikhnaf b. Sulaym, which is identical with the opinion of Abū ‘Ubayd. “The ‘*atīra*’, says Abū Dā’ūd, is (an) abrogated (practice)”, *al-‘atīratu mansūkhātun*.¹³ Al-Khaṭṭābī emphasizes the difference between the meaning of ‘*atīra*’ in the times of the Jāhiliyya and that of Islam. In the period of the Jāhiliyya ‘*atīra*’ denoted a ewe sacrificed for the idol; its blood was poured on the head of the idol — argues al-Khaṭṭābī. But in this *ḥadīth* (i.e. in the *ḥadīth* of Mikhnaf b. Sulaym) it denotes the sacrifices of an animal in Rajab. This, says al-Khaṭṭābī, fits the intent of the *ḥadīth* and is compatible with the prescription of the religion.¹⁴ Al-Khaṭṭābī does not consider the

¹⁰ In some traditions “*aḍḥātun*”.

¹¹ Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Iṣāba*, VI, 72; Abū Nu’aym, *Akhbār Iṣfahān*, ed. S. Dederling (Leiden 1931), I, 73; al-Shaukānī, *Nayl*, V, 117; L’A, s.v. “‘*atr*””; Abū l-Maḥāsin al-Ḥanafī, I, 274; ‘Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulī, *Dhakhā’ir al-mawārith* (Cairo 1934), III, 95; al-Suyūṭī, *al-Jāmi’ al-ṣaghīr*, II, 60 (with a slightly different version: ‘*alā ahli kullī baytin an yadhbaḥū shātan fī kullī rajabin wa-fī kullī aḍḥā shātan*’); al-Muttaqī al-Hindī, V, 48, No. 429 and V, 57, No. 500–502; al-Bayhaqī, *al-Sunan al-kubrā* (Hyderabad 1356 AH), IX, 260; Muslim, II, 159; Abū Dā’ūd, II, 2; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Nihāya*, ed. al-Ṭanāḥī (Cairo 1963), III, 178 (‘*alā kullī muslimin aḍḥātun wa-‘atīratun*’); Ibn al-Athīr, *Jāmi’ al-uṣūl min aḥādīth al-rasūl*, ed. Muḥ. Ḥamid al-Fiqqī (Cairo 1950), IV, 121, No. 1624.

¹² Abū ‘Ubayd, *Gharīb al-ḥadīth*, ed. Muḥ. ‘Azīm al-Dīn (Hyderabad 1964), I, 194–195; L’A, s.v. “‘*atr*”” (where the opinion of Abū ‘Ubayd is recorded differently: *wa-l-ḥadīthu l-awwalu aṣaḥḥu*); and see the note of the editor in Ibn al-Athīr’s *Jāmi’ al-uṣūl* IV, 122 (Abū ‘Ubayda stated that the *ḥadīth*: “*lā fara’a...*” abrogated the *ḥadīth*: “‘*alā ahli kullī baytin...*”).

¹³ Ḥamd b. Muḥ. al-Khaṭṭābī, *Ma’ālim al-sunan* (Ḥalab 1933), II, 226.

¹⁴ *Ib.*, (...*al-‘atīratu tafsiṛuhā fī l-ḥadīthi annahā shātun tudḥbaḥu fī rajabin wa-hādḥā huwa lladhī yushbiḥu ma’nā l-ḥadīthi wa-yalīqu bi-ḥukmi l-dīni* [in text: *l-tadayyuni*]); L’A, s.v. “‘*atr*”” (correctly: *l-dīni*); Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Nihāya*, III, 178 (correctly: *l-dīni*).

'*atīra* as abrogated; he seems to consider it lawful, although he has some reservations in connection with one of the transmitters of the *ḥadīth*.¹⁵

The opinion that the '*atīra* was abrogated by the Sacrificial Feast is plainly reflected in the *ḥadīth* reported on the authority of 'Alī. The Prophet said: "The Sacrificial Feast abrogated every sacrifice, the fasting of Ramaḍān abrogated every fasting... etc. (*nasakha l-aḥḥā kulla dhabḥin wa-ṣaumu ramaḍāna kulla ṣaumin...*).¹⁶

Between the two poles of interdiction of the '*atīra* and its recommendation, there are some traditions which reflect an attitude of toleration. This can be gauged in the tradition recorded on the authority of Abū Razīn.¹⁷ Abū Razīn said, asking the Prophet about the sacrifice of Rajab: "We used to slaughter in Rajab, to eat (scil. from the meat of the slaughtered animal) and to feed people who came to us." The Prophet then said: "There is no objection to it" (*lā ba'sa bihi*).¹⁸ Wakī' b. 'Udus¹⁹ the transmitter of Abū Razīn stated that he would never, following this tradition, abandon the sacrifice in Rajab.²⁰ Ibn 'Aun and Ibn Sīrīn used to sacrifice in Rajab.²¹

Slightly different is the tradition reported on the authority of al-Ḥārith b. 'Amr.²² The Prophet, when asked about the *farā'i* and '*atā'ir*, said: "He who wants to sacrifice the firstlings (of the flock) may do so; he who does not — may desist. He who wants to sacrifice the '*atīra* may do so, he who does not — may desist; there is a sacrifice on sheep" (*man shā'a farra'a wa-man shā'a lam yufarri*; *wa-man shā'a 'atara wa-man shā'a lam ya'tir*; *wa-fī l-ghanami uḍḥiyatuhā*).²³ It may be pointed out that this utterance of the Prophet, as reported by al-Ḥārith b. 'Amr, was given by the Prophet

¹⁵ Comp. Ibn al-Athīr, *Jāmi'* al-uṣūl IV, 122, note 1: *wa-qāla l-Khaṭṭābī: hādha l-ḥadīthu qa'ifu l-mukharraji, wa-Abū Ramlata majhūlun*.

¹⁶ al-Bayhaqī, IX, 262 sup.; al-Tirmidhī, VI, 312 (quoted in the commentary of Ibn al-'Arabī).

¹⁷ See on him Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, p. 1657, No. 2952; Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Iṣāba*, VI, 8, No. 7549.

¹⁸ Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghḍādī, *Mūḍiḥ auḥām al-jam'* wa-l-tafriq (Hyderabad 1960), II, 333, No. 177 (*kunnā nadhbahu fī rajab*); Abū l-Maḥāsīn al-Ḥanafī, I, 274; al-Bayhaqī, IX, 312; al-Shaukānī, *Nayl*, V, 118; Muslim, II, 159 (in the commentary of al-Nawawī).

¹⁹ See on him Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb*, XI, 131, No. 212.

²⁰ Al-Bayhaqī, IX, 312.

²¹ Abū l-Maḥāsīn al-Ḥanafī, I, 274; and see Ibn al-Athīr, *Jāmi'* al-uṣūl, IV, 122, note 1: *wa-kāna Ibn Sīrīn min bayni ahli l-'ilmi yadhbahu l-'atirata fī shahri rajabin wa-kāna yarwī fihā shay'an wa-lam yarahū mansūkhan*.

²² See on him Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, p. 294, No. 417; Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Iṣāba*, I, 298, No. 1454; idem, *Tahdhīb*, II, 151, No. 257.

²³ Al-Ḥākim, IV, 232; Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt* (Beirut 1958), VII, 64; al-Muttaqī al-Hindī, V, 48, No. 430; Abū l-Maḥāsīn al-Ḥanafī, I, 257; al-Shaukānī, *Nayl*, V, 118; Muslim, II, 159 (in the commentary of al-Nawawī).

at the *ḥajjat al-wadāʿ*, forming thus his last and definitive utterance in this matter. This cannot be changed of course by an abrogating tradition.

Close to the preceding tradition is the *ḥadīth* reported on the authority of Nubaysha.²⁴ When asked about the sacrifices of Rajab, the Prophet said: “Slaughter for God in any month (you like), bestow upon people (graces) for the sake of God and feed (poor people)” (*idhbaḥū li-llāhi fī ayyi shahrin kāna wa-birrū li-llāhi ʿazza wa-jalla wa-aṭʿimū*).²⁵

The difference between the tradition of Abū Razīn and the two preceding traditions is substantial: while in the tradition of Abū Razīn the *ʿatīra* is considered as lawful (*lā baʿsa bihā*) and meritorious, in the two preceding traditions no merit is attached to the sacrifice in Rajab at all; animals may be slaughtered in any month of the year; reward is given according to the good deed: the animals have to be slaughtered for God and their meat has to be given to the poor and needy.

The tendency of Muslim scholars, as might be foreseen, is to try and reconcile the conflicting opinions. Abū l-Maḥāsin al-Ḥanafī concludes that it may be supposed that the obligatory character of the *ʿatīra* (in Rajab) was abolished, but that it was left as a permitted and lawful sacrifice (*yuhṭamalu naskhu mā kāna wājiban wa-baqiya jāʿizan*).²⁶ This definition mirrors the opinion of al-Shāfiʿī; *lā faraʿa wa-lā ʿatīra* does not indicate interdiction, it merely negates the obligation, but leaves the *ʿatīra* as permissible and lawful sacrifice.²⁷ Some Muslim scholars even considered it favoured (*mustaḥabb*).²⁸ Some scholars considered the *ʿatīra* obligatory in Islam.²⁹

The contradictory traditions surveyed above concerning the sacrifice of Rajab, the *ʿatīra*, reflect already the struggle between the different groups of Muslim scholars over the subject of sanctity of Rajab in Islam. The pivot of the polemic is in fact the problem whether the sanctity of Rajab continues

²⁴ See on him Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr, p. 1523, No. 2652; Ibn Ḥajar, *al-Iṣāba*, VI, 231, No. 8674; idem, *Tahdhīb*, X, 417, No. 751.

²⁵ Al-Ḥākim, IV, 235; Abū Dāʿūd, II, 8; Muslim, II, 159 (in the commentary of al-Nawawī); Abū l-Maḥāsin al-Ḥanafī, I, 274; al-Muttaqī al-Hindī, V, 56, No. 490 (and comp. *ibid.*, 57, No. 499); al-Shaukānī, *Nayl* V, 118; al-ʿAzīzī, I, 189.

²⁶ Abū l-Maḥāsin al-Ḥanafī, I, 274 inf.-275 sup.; and see al-ʿAzīzī, I, 189.

²⁷ See al-Bayhaqī, IX, 313; al-Shaukānī, *Nayl*, V, 119; and see Ibn al-Athīr, *Jāmiʿ al-uṣūl*, IV, 122, note 1: *wa-qāla “lā faraʿa wājiban wa-lā ʿatīrata wājibatan” li-yakūna jamʿan bayna l-aḥādīthi*.

²⁸ Al-ʿAzīzī, I, 189, line 9, from bottom; Muslim, II, 159 (in Nawawī’s commentary); al-Bayhaqī quoted in Ibn al-Athīr’s *Jāmiʿ al-uṣūl*, IV, 122 commenting on the tradition of Mikhnaf b. Sulaym: *Hādḥā l-ḥadīthu, in ṣaḥḥa, fa-l-murādu ʿalā ṭariqī l-istiḥbābi, idh qad jamaʿa baynahā wa-bayna l-ʿatīrati; wa-l-ʿatīratu ḡayru wājibatīn bi-l-ijmāʿ*.

²⁹ See Ibn al-Athīr, *Jāmiʿ al-uṣūl*, IV, 122, note 1: *wa-qāla l-Yaḥsubī: wa-qāla baʿḍu l-salafī bi-baqāʾi ḥukmihā*.

in Islam and thus its merits were approved of by the Prophet, or whether its sanctity was annulled by the Prophet and thus its practices are reprehensible or at least of no value whatsoever. The opinion of Lammens that the Prophet forbade or prohibited the *'atīra* (*ḥarramahā au mana'ahā*)³⁰ and the opinion of Jawād 'Alī that Islam abolished it (*wa-qad abtala l-islāmu l-rajabiyyata, wa-hiya l-'atīratu, kamā abtala l-fara'a*)³¹ can hardly be accepted.

The *'atīra* forms in fact one aspect of this struggle. The controversy between the different groups of Muslim scholars extends to other observances of Rajab, like fasting, prayer and other acts of piety.

II

The partisans of the sanctity of Rajab emphasized the qualities of this month, basing their arguments — as usual — on the alleged utterances of the Prophet. In a tradition reported on the authority of 'Ā'isha the Prophet is said to have stated that Rajab was the month of God;³² it is called "the Deaf", *al-aṣamm*, because the people of the Jāhiliyya used to put down their weapons and refrained from fighting; people lived in security during this month.³³ An almost identical tradition is recorded in Shī'ī sources.³⁴

Ibn Ḥajar (d. 852 AH) comments on this tradition that although the content of this tradition might be true, it cannot be attributed to the Prophet (*lā yaṣīḥḥu 'an rasūli llāhi*). Two transmitters of this tradition, Ubayn b. Sufyān³⁵ and Ghālib b. 'Ubaydullah,³⁶ argues Ibn Ḥajar, were known as forgers of *ḥadīth*.³⁷

The idea of the continuity of the sanctity of Rajab in Islam is plainly expressed in a significant saying of Abū l-Dardā' about the fasting of Rajab: it was a month honoured in the times of the Jāhiliyya; Islam only enhanced its merit

³⁰ H. Lammens, *al-Ḥijāra al-mu'allaha* (al-Mashriq 1939), p. 97.

³¹ Jawād 'Alī, *Ta'rikh al-'arab qabla l-islām* (Baghdad), V, 238.

³² But see al-Bayhaqī, III, 4 and IV, 291 where al-Muḥarram is designated as "the month of God" (*wa-inna aḡḡala l-ṣiyāmi ba'da shahri ramaḡāna shahru llāhi lladhī tad'ūnahu l-muḡarrama*); Abū Tālib al-Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb* (Cairo 1932), I, 111, line 7; Ibn Mājah, *Sunan al-muṣṭafā* (Cairo 1349 AH), I, 530, ult. (and see *ibid.*, the commentary of Muḡ. b. 'Abd al-Hādī al-Ḥanafī).

³³ Ibn Ḥajar, *Tabyīn al-'ajab bi-mā warada fī faḡli rajab* (Cairo 1351 AH), p. 14; L'A, s.v. "*ṣmm*" (but there are two versions recorded: according to one version it was the Prophet who called Rajab "the month of God"; according to the other one the people of the Jāhiliyya named Rajab "the month of God").

³⁴ See Ibn Bābūyah, *Thawāb al-a'māl wa-'iqāb al-a'māl* (Teheran 1385 AH), p. 52.

³⁵ See on him al-Dhahabī, *Mizān al-i'tidāl*, I, 78, No. 272.

³⁶ See on him al-Dhahabī, III, 331, No. 6645.

³⁷ *Tabyīn al-'ajab*, p. 14.

(*kānat al-jāhiliyyatu tu‘aẓẓimuhu fī jāhiliyyatihā wa-mā zādahu l-islāmu illā faḍlan*).³⁸ This view is fairly exposed in Shī‘ī tradition as well.³⁹

The elements of “holiness” required for localities and cities, as analysed by G. E. von Grunebaum,⁴⁰ are inherent in the traditions of Rajab. The Prophet, claim some traditions, was born in Rajab.⁴¹ Al-Qaṣṭallānī (d. 923 AH) rejects this tradition. The Prophet, argues al-Qaṣṭallānī, was not born in Ramaḍān, Muḥarram or Rajab, nor in any other of the honoured months, as the Prophet is not honoured by time; on the contrary: time is honoured by him. If he had been born in one of these (honoured) months, one might have imagined that he was honoured by them. Therefore God fixed the date of his birth in another month in order to show His concern for him and the grace bestowed upon him.⁴²

According to another tradition, he “was put into the womb of his mother” in the first eve of Rajab; it was the eve of Friday, and God ordered Riḍwān to announce the tidings in Heaven.⁴³ Muslim scholars remark that this date (i.e. the first of Rajab as the date of beginning of pregnancy) fits the date established by tradition as the date of birth of the Prophet: Rabī‘ al-awwal.⁴⁴

Some traditions maintain that he received his revelation in Rajab.⁴⁵ This date is given as well by some Shī‘ī sources.⁴⁶ Some traditions assert that the event of *laylat al-mi‘rāj* occurred in Rajab.⁴⁷

The Prophet gathered the people in Rajab, according to a tradition reported

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

³⁹ See Muḥ. b. Fattāl, *Rauḍat al-wā‘iẓīn* (Najaf 1966), p. 396; Ibn Bābūyah, p. 52.

⁴⁰ G. E. von Grunebaum, “The Sacred Character of Islamic Cities”, *Mélanges Taha Husain*, ed. Abdurrahman Badawi (Cairo 1962), pp. 26–27.

⁴¹ Al-Zurqānī, *Sharḥ ‘alā l-mawāhib al-ladunniyya* (Cairo 1325 AH), I, 131, line 4; Ibn Ḥajar al-Haythamī, *al-Ni‘ma al-kubrā ‘alā l-‘ālam bi-maulidi sayyidi banī ‘Ādam*, Ms (in my possession), fol. 19a, line 1.

⁴² Al-Zurqānī, I, 132, line 19 (quoted from ‘Abdarī’s *Mudkhal*); and see Ibn Ḥajar al-Haythamī, *al-Ni‘ma al-kubrā*, fol. 19a, lines 3–6; al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, XX, 113, line 25 (lithogr. ed.); and comp. al-Suyūṭī, *al-Hāwī*, I, 305 sup.

⁴³ Ibn Ḥajar al-Haythamī, *al-Ni‘ma al-kubrā*, fol. 12b; al-Shāṭibī, *al-Jumān fī akhbar al-zamān*, Ms. Br. Mus., Or. 3008, fol. 48a.

⁴⁴ Al-Ḥalabī, *Insān al-‘uyūn* (Cairo 1932), I, 68; al-Zurqānī, I, 105, line 10.

⁴⁵ Al-Suyūṭī, *al-Durr al-manthūr* (Cairo 1314 AH), II, 235 ult.; Ibn Qayyim al-Jauziyya, *Zād al-ma‘ād* (on margin of Zurqānī’s *Sharḥ* I, 58); Ibn al-Jauzī, *Ṣifat al-ṣafwa* (Hyderabad 1355 AH), I, 27; al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’ ‘ulūm al-dīn*, (Cairo 1933), I, 328.

⁴⁶ Ibn Bābūyah, p. 57; al-Tūsī, *Amālī* (Najaf 1964), I, 44; al-Baḥrānī, *al-Ḥadā’iq an-nāḍira fī aḥkām al-‘itra al-tāhira* (Najaf 1384 AH), XIII, 362–363; al-Majlisī (Teheran 1386 AH), XVIII, 189.

⁴⁷ Al-Zurqānī, I, 306, 308; al-‘Abdarī, *al-Mudkhal* (Cairo 1929), I, 294, line 10; see al-Dīrīnī, *Tahārat al-qulūb* (Kafr al-Zaghārā 1354 AH), p. 93, line 11; EI, s.v. “Mi‘rāj”; Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī, I, 93; al-Ghazzālī, I, 328; ‘Alī al-Qārī, *al-Adab*, fol. 66a.

on the authority of Ibn 'Abbās, and informed them about the virtues of his pedigree.⁴⁸ All the rivers of the world visit in Rajab the well of Zamzam — according to a tradition reported by Wahb b. Munabbih.⁴⁹

The sanctity of Rajab was assessed in comparison with that of the other months in a peculiar utterance attributed to the Prophet. The Prophet said: "Rajab is the month of God, Sha'bān is my month, Ramaḍān is the month of my people."⁵⁰

Close to this tradition is a *ḥadīth* counting the rewards for the believers observing Rajab, Sha'bān and Ramaḍān and reported on the authority of Anas b. Mālik. It is recorded in al-Bayhaqī's (d. 458 AH) *Faḍā'il al-auqāt* and quoted by Ibn Ḥajar. "The month chosen by God is Rajab" — says the Prophet. "He who honours the month of Rajab — honours the order of God and he who honours the order of God — God will introduce him into the Gardens of Paradise and grant him His favour", etc.⁵¹ Al-Bayhaqī marks the *ḥadīth* as *munkar*, but Ibn Ḥajar differs, classifying it as "forged with obvious features of forgery" (*bal huwa mauḍū'un zhāhiru l-waḍ'i*) and attributes the forgery to one of the transmitters, Nūḥ al-Jāmi', "Nuḥ the Collector", about whom people used to say that "he collected everything except truth."⁵² Nevertheless al-Suyūṭī (d. 911 AH) recorded this tradition in his commentary of the Qur'ān.⁵³

A peculiar Shī'ī tradition sheds some light on the similarity of growth of pro-Rajab tenets in Sunnī and Shī'ī societies as well as on the manner of casting of the Shī'ī traditions in this matter. 'Alī, says the tradition, used to fast the whole month of Rajab, and he used to say: "Rajab is my month, Sha'bān is the month of the Messenger of God, Ramaḍān is the month of God."⁵⁴ It is evident that this is a Shī'ī re-moulding of the *ḥadīth* "Rajab is the month

⁴⁸ al-Qandūzī, *Yanābi' al-mawadda* (Najaf 1965), p. 16.

⁴⁹ Al-Dīrīnī, p. 93.

⁵⁰ Al-Sahmī, *Ta'rikh Jurjān* (Hyderabad 1950), p. 184; al-Sakhāwī, *al-Maqāṣid al-ḥasana fī bayān kathīr min al-aḥādīth al-mushtahira*, ed. 'Abdallāh Muḥ. al-Ṣadiq (Cairo 1956), p. 224, No. 510; al-Jarrāḥī, *Kashf al-khafā' wa-muzil al-ilbās* (Cairo 1351 AH), I, 423, No. 1358; al-Suyūṭī, *al-Jāmi' al-ṣaghir*, II, 21 inf.; Ibn Ḥajar, *Tabyīn al-'ajab*, p. 10 sup.; al-Jilānī, I, 200; al-Shaukānī, *al-Fawā'id al-majmū'a fī l-aḥādīth al-mauḍū'a*, ed. 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Mu'allamī al-Yamanī (Cairo 1960), p. 439, ult.; idem, *Nayl*, IV, 210; Ibn Bābūyah, p. 52; al-Pattānī, *Tadhkirat al-mauḍū'āt* (Cairo 1343 AH), p. 116 inf.; and see a divergent tradition: *sha'bān shahri wa-ramaḍān shahru llāhi...*, in al-Jarrāḥī's *Kashf* II, 9, No. 1551 and in Ibn Bābūyah's *Amālī*, p. 13; and see 'Alī al-Qāri', *al-Adab*, fol. 65a inf.; idem, *Risālat al-aḥādīth al-mauḍū'a*, *Majmū'a*, fol. 61a.

⁵¹ Ibn Ḥajar, *Tabyīn al-'ajab*, p. 13.

⁵² See on Nūḥ al-Jāmi': al-Dhahabī, *Mizān al-i'tidāl*, IV, 279, No. 9143.

⁵³ *Al-Durr al-manthūr*, III, 236 sup.; (and see Qāsim al-Qaysī, *Ta'rikh al-tafsīr* (Baghdād 1966), p. 132, about weak and forged traditions in the commentaries of al-Suyūṭī).

⁵⁴ Al-Bahrānī, XIII, 381 inf.; cp. Ja'far Maṣṣūr al-Yaman, *Ta'wil al-zakāt*, Ms. Leiden

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of God, Sha‘bān is my month (i.e. of the Prophet), Ramaḍān is the month of my people”.

Another assessment of Rajab in relation to other months is reported in a *ḥadīth* recorded on the authority of Anas b. Mālīk. The Prophet said:

“The superiority of Rajab over other months is like the superiority of the Qur’ān over other speech; the superiority of Sha‘bān over other months is like my superiority over other prophets; the superiority of Ramaḍān over other months is like the superiority of God over (His) believers.”⁵⁵

The scale of qualities is, in this *ḥadīth*, rather different. The highest rank is, like in the Shi‘ī tradition mentioned above, given to Ramaḍān.

III

One of the most controversial practices of Rajab was the practice of fasting. Just as in the case of the sacrifices of Rajab, the partisans of fasting in Rajab took recourse to alleged utterances of the Prophet⁵⁶ pointing to the merits of fasting and the efficacy of fasting during some particular days in this month. The antagonists rejected the sanctity of the month altogether, basing their arguments again on alleged utterances of the Prophet and marking the traditions in favour of fasting in Rajab as weak, untrustworthy or even forged. The lines of discussion on fasting resemble those of the discussion about the sacrifices.

“In Paradise there is a river called Rajab” — says a tradition attributed to the Prophet. “This river is whiter than milk and sweeter than honey.

Or. 1971, fol. 38a: *wa-qāla rajabun shahru llāhi wa-sha‘bānu shahrī wa-ramaḍānu shahru ‘aliyyīn*.

⁵⁵ Al-Samarqandī, *Tanbīh al-ghāfilīn* (Cairo 1347 AH), p. 116; Ibn Ḥajar, *Tabayīn al-‘ajab*, p. 14; al-Pattanī, p. 116 inf.; al-Sakhāwī, p. 299, No. 740; Ibn al-Dayba, *Tamyīz al-ṭayyib min al-khabīth fima yadūru ‘alā alsinatī l-nāsi min al-ḥadīth* (Cairo 1324 AH), p. 137; al-Shaukānī, *al-Fawā’id*, p. 440 sup.; and see an interesting Shi‘ī tradition in al-Majlisī’s *Biḥār XXXVII*, 53 (new ed.): Muḥammad among his believers is like Ramaḍān in relation to other months, the family of Muḥammad among the believers is like Sha‘bān in relation to other months, ‘Alī among the family of Muḥammad is like the best of the days of Sha‘bān, i.e. the fifteenth day of this month. The believers of the family of Muḥammad are like Rajab in relation to Sha‘bān.

⁵⁶ Comp. J. Goldziher, “Neue Materialien zur Litteratur des Überlieferungswesens bei den Muhammedanern”, *ZDMG* L (1896), p. 482: “allerdings haben die Theologen mit seltener Kühnheit in jedem auftauchenden Falle, den sie zu entscheiden hatten, ihre eigene Ansicht oder die der Lehrpartei der sie angehört als Spruch des Propheten ausgegeben, zuweilen Sprüche die lange Zeit als Urtheile angesehener Leute aus der Gemeinde des Islam bekannt waren, an den Propheten selbst angelehnt um dadurch grössere Autorität für dieselben zu erlangen.”

He who fasts one day of the month of Rajab — God will give him to drink from that river.”⁵⁷

“In Paradise” — asserts another tradition — “there is a palace (prepared) for the people fasting in Rajab.”⁵⁸

The obligation of fasting in Rajab is motivated by miracles of God, His aid and deliverance of the righteous after plight and distress and His favour and grace granted to His believers in this month. Fasting is in fact an act of gratitude. God bade Nūḥ to set out on his ark in Rajab. He fasted this month, thanking God for His grace and ordered the people of the ark to fast this month according to some traditions.⁵⁹ In Rajab God split the sea for Moses; Ibrāhīm and ‘Īsā were born during Rajab. God forgave the people of Yūnus their sins in Rajab; in this month too God forgave Ādam.⁶⁰ Rajab is nicknamed “the Deaf” (*al-aṣamm*), because the wrath of God was never heard of during this month; God punished peoples in other months, but never in Rajab.⁶¹ Rajab was also nicknamed *al-aṣabb*, “the Pouring”, because the mercy of God poured forth during this month and flooded His servants; God bestows on them in this month graces and rewards which never an eye has seen, nor an ear heard, nor had it occurred to the mind of a man.⁶²

Special rewards were promised, according to some traditions, for fasting on some particular days in Rajab. One of these especially venerated days is the twenty-seventh day of Rajab. On this day Muhammad was granted his prophethood. “He who fasts on the twenty-seventh day of Rajab will be granted by God the reward (otherwise) due for fasting sixty months”, says a tradition reported on the authority of Abū Hurayra and attributed to the Prophet.⁶³ In another version of this *ḥadīth*, he who fasts the twenty-seventh day of Rajab, and spends the preceding night awake (praying) will be rewarded just

⁵⁷ Al-Jilānī, I, 200; al-Suyūṭī, *al-Jāmi’ al-ṣaghīr*, I, 91 inf.; al-‘Azīzī, I, 513; al-Dhahabī, *Mizān al-i’tidāl*, IV, 189, No. 8797; al-Baḥrānī, XIII, 381; Ibn Bābūyah, p. 52; Ibn Ḥajar, *Tabyīn al-‘ajab*, pp. 5–8; Muḥ. b. Fattāl, p. 401; al-Muttaqī al-Hindī, VIII, 360, No. 2646; al-Zurqānī, VIII, 128; al-Ṭurṭūshī, p. 125; ‘Alī al-Qārī, *al-Adab*, fol. 65a; al-Suyūṭī, *al-Ḥāwī li-l-fatāwī*, ed. Muḥ. Muḥyī l-Dīn ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd (Cairo 1959), I, 145; and comp. al-Asyūṭī, *al-Kanz al-madfūn* (Cairo 1288 AH), p. 74.

⁵⁸ Ibn ‘Asākir, *Ta’rikh (Tahdhīb)*, ed. Aḥmad ‘Ubayd (Damascus 1351 AH), VII, 137; al-‘Azīzī, I, 513; al-Suyūṭī, *al-Durr al-manthūr*, III, 235; al-Muttaqī al-Hindī, VIII, 409, No. 2967–2968; al-Dīrīnī, p. 93, line 3; al-Zurqānī, VIII, 128; Abū Shāma, *al-Bā’ith ‘alā inkāri l-bida’i wa-l-ḥawādiṭh*, ed. Maḥmūd Fu’ād Miṣqāra al-Ṭarābulṣi (Cairo 1955), p. 55.

⁵⁹ Al-Jilānī, I, 197; Ibn Ḥajar, *Tabyīn al-‘ajab*, p. 17; al-Suyūṭī, *al-Durr al-manthūr*, III, 235; and see al-Shaukānī, *al-Fawā’id*, p. 440, line 12; ‘Alī al-Qārī, *al-Adab*, fol. 65a.

⁶⁰ Ibn Ḥajar, *Tabyīn al-‘ajab*, p. 17.

⁶¹ Al-Jilānī, I, 196 inf.

⁶² *Ibid.*, I, 197.

⁶³ Ibn Ḥajar, *Tabyīn al-‘ajab*, p. 28; al-Jilānī, I, 205.

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as if he fasted one hundred years and spent the nights of a hundred years awake.⁶⁴ According to a tradition reported on the authority of ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, the Prophet promised forgiveness of ten years (of sins) to the man who would fast that day and would supplicate at the breaking of the fast (*da‘ā ‘inda l-iṣṭār*).⁶⁵ It is noteworthy that ‘Abdallāh b. ‘Abbās — according to a tradition reported on the authority of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī — used to practice the *i’tikāf* on the twenty-seventh day of Rajab, and recite (among other *sūra’s* of the Qur’ān) the *sūra* of Laylat al-Qadr.⁶⁶ This may, of course, point to the continuity of the Jāhiliyya practice of *i’tikāf* during Rajab in the period of Islam and support the proposition of Wagtendonk about the link between the *laylat al-qadr* and the twenty-seventh day of Rajab.⁶⁷ The link between *laylat al-qadr* and the month of Rajab is indicated in some comments on Sūra XIII, 39. Mujāhid relates this verse to the former, while Qays b. ‘Ubād refers it to the tenth of Rajab.^{67a}

Of special merit was also fasting on the first day of Rajab. The Prophet, according to a tradition reported by Abū Dharr, said: “He who fasts the first day of Rajab, will get the reward equivalent to the fasting of a month.” The seven gates of Hell will remain closed — continues the tradition — for a man who fasts seven days of Rajab; he who fasts eight days — the eight gates of Paradise will be opened for him. God will turn into good deeds the wrong ones of a man who would fast ten days of Rajab. He who fasts eighteen days — a herald will call from Heaven: “God already forgave you (your sins), so start work (scil. of worship) again”.⁶⁸ Slightly different is the scale of rewards in a Shī‘ī tradition. Nūḥ embarked on his ark on the first day of Rajab and ordered the people of the ship to fast this day. The fire of Hell will keep a distance of one year’s journey from a man who fasted this day. The seven fires of Hell will be closed to a man who fasted seven days of Rajab. The eight gates of Paradise will be opened in the face of a man who fasted eight days of Rajab. The wishes of a man who fasts ten days of this month will be fulfilled. The sins of a man who fasted twenty five days will be forgiven and he will be told: “start again your (pious) work”. He who adds (days of) fasting — his rewards will be augmented.⁶⁹ A tradition reported on the

⁶⁴ Ibn Ḥajar, *Tabyīn al-‘ajab*, p. 27; al-Suyūṭī, *al-Durr al-manthūr*, III, 235 inf.; al-Jilānī, I, 205; ‘Alī al-Qāri’, *al-Adab*, fol. 65a.

⁶⁵ Ibn Ḥajar, *Tabyīn al-‘ajab*, p. 28.

⁶⁶ Al-Jilānī, I, 205.

⁶⁷ K. Wagtendonk, pp. 117–118.

^{67a} Al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, ed. Maḥmūd Muḥ. Shākir, XVI, p. 479, No. 20471 and p. 489, No. 20505.

⁶⁸ Al-Jilānī, I, 201.

⁶⁹ Al-Baḥrānī, XIII, 381; al-Suyūṭī, *al-La‘ālī l-maṣnū‘a fī l-aḥādīthi l-mawḍū‘a* (Cairo n.d.) II, 115; see Ibn Ḥajar, *Tabyīn al-‘ajab*, p. 23.

authority of Ibn 'Umar records as reward for fasting on the first day of Rajab the equivalent of fasting a year. If the believer would fast seven days, the seven gates of Hell would be closed for him. If we should fast ten days, a herald would announce from Heaven: "Ask (anything you like) and you will be granted (it)"⁷⁰. A gradually decreasing list of rewards is given in a tradition reported on the authority of Ibn 'Abbās: God will forgive the sins of three years for fasting on the first day of Rajab, two years for fasting on the second day of Rajab, one year for fasting on the third day of Rajab, then fasting on every following day will be counted with reward of one month.⁷¹ A considerable reward is promised for fasting on the first day of Rajab in another tradition: God will forgive sixty years' sins to the man who fasts on the first day of Rajab; God will bring a mild judgment upon a man (*ḥāsabahu ḥisāban yasīran*) who fasts fifteen days; God will grant His favour to a man (*kataba llāhu lahu riḍwānahu*) who fasts thirty days of Rajab and He will not punish him.⁷²

Some versions of the traditions quoted above do not mention the first day of Rajab, but mention only the rewards of fasting "a day of Rajab". Unusual in its generosity is a list of rewards reported on the authority of 'Alī. The Prophet said:

"The month of Rajab is a great month; he who fasts one day of this month — God will count for him (the reward of) fasting a thousand years. He who fasts two days — God will count for him (the reward of) fasting two thousand years. He who fasts three days of this month — God will count for him (the reward of) fasting three thousand years. He who fasts seven days — the gates of Hell will be closed for him..."⁷³

Among the fourteen nights of the year, which the faithful are urged to spend awake, there are three nights of Rajab: the eves of the first, of the fifteenth and of the twenty seventh of Rajab.⁷⁴ The eve of the first day of Rajab is counted among the five nights in the year; if its practices are properly observed by the believer he will enter Paradise.⁷⁵ Of special merit is also fasting on the first Thursday of Rajab (connected with the vigils of the eve of Friday and *ṣalāt al-raghā'ib*), the fifteenth and the last day of Rajab.⁷⁶

⁷⁰ Al-Muttaqī al-Hindī, VIII, 360, No. 2648.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, VIII, 360, No. 2647; al-Suyūṭī, *al-Jāmi' al-ṣaghir*, II, 45; al-'Azīzī, II, 391.

⁷² Al-Jilānī, I, 201 inf.

⁷³ See Ibn al-Jauzī, *Kit. al-mauḍū'āt*, ed. 'Abd al-Rahmān Muḥ. 'Uthmān (Cairo 1966), II, 206-207.

⁷⁴ Al-Jilānī, I, 202; Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī, I, 93; al-Ghazālī, I, 328.

⁷⁵ Al-Jilānī, I, 202.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, I, 204.

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A current tradition about fasting in Rajab reported on the authority of Saʿīd al-Khudrī gives a detailed account of the rewards of fasting on every day of the month. “Rajab is the month of God, Shaʿbān is my month, Ramaḍān is the month of my people” — says the Prophet. Therefore he who fasts one day⁷⁷ of Rajab out of belief and piety (*īmānan wa-ḥtisāban*) deserves God’s greatest favour (*istaujaba riḍwāna llāhi l-akbara*) and God will lodge him in the upper part of Paradise. He who fasts two days of Rajab will get a double reward; the weight of every single reward will be like the mountains of the world. He who fasts three days God will put between him and between the fire (of Hell) a ditch extending for a distance of a year’s journey.⁷⁸ He who fasts four days of Rajab, will be healed from madness, elephantiasis, leprosy, the trial of the false Messias (*fitnat al-masīhi l-dajjālī*) and the chastisement of the grave (*adhāb al-qabr*). He who fasts five days, will be protected from the chastisement of the grave (*wuqiya ‘adhāba l-qabri*).⁷⁹ He who fasts six days, will step out from his grave, his face shining more than the moon at the night of full-moon. He who fasts seven days — God will close for him the seven gates of Hell (closing for every day of fasting one gate). He who fasts eight days of Rajab, God will open for him the eight gates of Paradise (opening for every day of fasting one gate). He who fasts nine days, he will step out from his grave proclaiming *lā ilāha illā llāhu* and his face will not be turned away from Paradise. He who fasts ten days — God will lay for him at every mile of the path to heaven bedding (*farāsh*) on which he might rest. As for him who fasts eleven days — there will be at the Day of Resurrection no believer superior to him except a believer who would fast the same number of days or more. He who fasts twelve days — God will bestow upon him two garments, one of which would be better than the world and all that is in the world. He who fasts thirteen days — a table will be put up for him in the shade of the Throne (of God) and he will eat from it, while other people will remain in distress (*wa-l-nāsu fī shiddatin shadīdatin*). He who fasts fourteen days — God will grant him a reward which no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and which has not occurred to the mind of men (*wa-lā khaṭara ‘alā qalbi basharin*). He who fasts fifteen days — God will raise him on the Day of Resurrection in the stand (*mauqif*) of the believers.⁸⁰ He who fasts sixteen days — he will be among the

⁷⁷ “Yauman” omitted in Ibn al-Jauzī’s *Mauḍūʿāt* and in Suyūṭī’s *Laʾālī*.

⁷⁸ Comp. Muḥ. b. al-Ḥasan al-ʿĀmilī, *al-Jawāhir al-saniyya fī l-aḥādīth al-qudsiyya* (Najaf 1964), p. 140.

⁷⁹ The reward of five days is not mentioned in Ibn Jauzī’s *Mauḍūʿāt* and in Suyūṭī’s *Laʾālī*.

⁸⁰ Here the tradition stops in Ibn al-Jauzī’s *Mauḍūʿāt* II, 206, in Ibn Ḥajar’s *Tabyīn* p. 12 and in Suyūṭī’s *Laʾālī* II, 115, line 2 (there is however an additional phrase in Jilānī’s *Ghunya* I, 198: *fa-lā yamurru bihi malakun muqarrabun wa-lā nabiyyun mursalin illā qāla ṭūbā laka anta min al-āminīn*); it is continued in Jilānī’s *Ghunya* with the remark: *wa-fi lafẓin ākhara ziyādātun ‘alā khamsata ‘ashara wa-hiya...*; and see Ibn Ḥajar, *Tabyīn al-ʿajab*, p. 12 inf.

first who would visit the Merciful, look at Him and hear His speech. He who fasts seventeen days — God will arrange for him at every mile of the path to Heaven a resting place.⁸¹ He who fasts eighteen days — God will build for him a palace opposite the palace of Ibrāhīm and Ādam; they would greet him and he would greet them. He who fasts twenty days — a herald will proclaim for Heaven: “God has forgiven you what passed, begin thus anew your (pious) work.”⁸²

Some descriptions of the rewards of people who fasted the whole month of Rajab are of the type of stories of the *quṣṣās* and describe the palaces in Paradise, the meals and the *hūrīs* awaiting these people in Paradise.⁸³

A Shīʿī tradition gives the following vivid description of the Day of Resurrection.

“At the Day of Resurrection — says the tradition reported on the authority of Jaʿfar al-Šādiq — a herald will call from the interior of the Throne: “Where are the *Rajabīs* (people fasting in Rajab)?” Then will stand up people with faces shining for the gathered (crowds), on their heads will be crowns of kingdom inlaid with sapphires and pearls. On the right side of every man of them will be a thousand angels and on the left side a thousand angels. They will say: “O servant of God, mayest thou enjoy the grace of God”. Then will follow the call from God, the Exalted: “My servants and My maidens, I swear by My majesty and power: I shall honour your residence and I shall bestow upon you gifts in bounty. I shall introduce you into apartments in Paradise under which rivers will flow and you will be for ever in it. How good is the reward of the pious. You volunteered to fast for Me a month which I sanctified and whose observance I bade. My angels, Introduce My servants and maidens into Paradise”. Then Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad said: “That concerns also people who fasted a part of Rajab, even one day at the beginning of the month, in its midst or at its end”.⁸⁴

One of the most discussed topics involving the Rajab fast was fasting during the whole month.⁸⁵ The opponents of fasting in Rajab based their argument

⁸¹ See above the reward for fasting ten days.

⁸² Al-Jīlānī, I, 198–199; al-Suyūṭī, *al-Laʿālī*, II, 114–115; Ibn Ḥajar, *Tabyīn al-ʿajāb*, pp. 10–12, 29–30; comp. Ibn Bābūyah, pp. 52–57 sup. (continued until the thirtieth of Rajab); Muḥ. b. Fattāl, 396–400 (continued until the thirtieth of Rajab); and see al-Sahmī, pp. 56 inf., 302 inf.

⁸³ J. Goldziher, *Muh. Studien* (Halle 1890), II, 160; al-Bahrānī, XIII, 400; al-Zajjājī, *Amālī* (Cairo 1935), p. 134.

⁸⁴ Al-Bahrānī, XIII, 401 (and see *ibid.*, pp. 381, 396 about rewards for fasting of the first and the fifteenth of Rajab).

⁸⁵ See K. Wagtendonk, p. 121.

on the well-known *ḥadīth* reported on the authority of Ibn ‘Abbās: “The Prophet forbade fasting in Rajab”.⁸⁶ Later scholars transmitted this tradition with the addition of the word “whole” (*nahā ‘an ṣaumi rajabin kullihī*).⁸⁷ Partisans of fasting in Rajab criticized this tradition, emphasizing that two of its transmitters were “weak”. The two weak transmitters were Dā’ūd b. ‘Aṭā’⁸⁸ and Zayd b. ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd.⁸⁹ They argued further that the word “*nahā*” was erroneously inserted into the text, as the tradition referred originally to the actions of the Prophet; it was the transmitter who changed erroneously the word into prohibition (*wa-innamā l-riwāyatu fīhi min fī’li l-nabiyyi ṣallā llāhu ‘alayhi wa-sallama fa-ḥarrafa l-rāwī l-fī’la ilā l-nahyi*). If this version (i.e. *nahā*) is correct, the interdiction indicates merely a preventive measure (*thumma in ṣaḥḥa fa-huwa maḥmūlun ‘alā l-tanzīhi*). It has to be interpreted according to the opinion of al-Shāfi‘ī. Al-Shāfi‘ī stated that he would disapprove of fasting a whole month like the fasting of Ramaḍān, or fasting on a peculiar day. He was afraid that some ignorant person might imitate such practices considering it obligatory.⁹⁰ This opinion of al-Shāfi‘ī is quoted by al-Subkī (d. 771 AH),⁹¹ (like by Ibn Ḥajar), from al-Bayhaqī’s (d. 458 AH) *Faḍā’il al-auqāt*. Al-Bayhaqī records the opinion of al-Shāfi‘ī with a remarkable phrase: “*wa-in fa’ala fa-ḥasanun*”, and comments that as it is common knowledge among the Muslims that the only obligatory fast is Ramaḍān, the idea of reprehensibility (connected with fasting a whole month, in this case Rajab) is accordingly lifted (*fa-’rtafa’a bi-dhālika ma’nā l-karāhiyyati*).

Consequently it can be deduced from the arguments of al-Bayhaqī that the tradition of Ibn Mājah merely expresses disapproval of fasting the *whole* of Rajab if this fast is put on an equal footing with Ramaḍān as obligatory. As the Muslim community is aware of the fact that the only month of mandatory fasting is Ramaḍān, there is no reprehensibility in fasting a whole month (in this case Rajab); if the believer fasts this month — it is a good deed.

Although al-Subkī could not find the additional phrase *wa-in fa’ala fa-ḥasanun* in other sources — he accepts the version recorded by al-Bayhaqī

⁸⁶ Ibn Mājah, I, 531 (*anna l-nabiyya ṣallā llāhu ‘alayhi wa-sallama nahā ‘an ṣaumi rajabin*); al-Shaukānī, *Nayl*, IV, 210; comp. about the interdiction of fasting of the whole month of Rajab: Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, I, 231, No. 181; al-Ṭurṭūshī, p. 130; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, II, 227; K. Wagtendonk, p. 121 (and note 4).

⁸⁷ Ibn Ḥajar, *Tabyīn al-‘ajab*, p. 33; al-Dhahabī, *Mizān al-‘itidāl*, II, 104, No. 3015.

⁸⁸ See on him Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhib*, III, 193, No. 370; al-Dhahabī, *Mizān*, II, 12, No. 2631.

⁸⁹ See on him Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhib*, III, 417, No. 764.

⁹⁰ Ibn Ḥajar, *Tabyīn al-‘ajab*, p. 31 inf.-32 sup.; and see al-Shaukānī, *Nayl*, IV, 210, line 8 from bottom.

⁹¹ *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi‘iyya al-kubrā*, ed. al-Ḥilw, al-Ṭanāḥī (Cairo 1966), IV, 12-13.

as sound. As the interdiction of fasting of the whole month of Rajab is not a sound one — it has to be considered, states al-Subkī, as *mustahabb*, desirable (*wa-idhā lam yakun al-nahyu 'an takmilī ṣaumihī ṣaḥīḥan baqiya 'alā aṣli l-istiḥbāb*); the utterance of al-Shāfi'ī indicates that fasting the whole month of Rajab is good (*hādihā l-naṣṣu l-ladhī rawāhu l-Bayhaqiyyu 'an al-Shāfi'iyyi fihī dalālatun bayyinatun 'alā anna ṣauma rajabin bi-kamālihi ḥasanun*). This, al-Subkī states, confirms the opinion of 'Izz al-Dīn b. 'Abd al-Salām⁹² that he who forbids to fast in Rajab is ignorant of the principles of the Law (*man nahā 'an ṣaumi rajabin fa-huwa jāhilun bi-ma'khadhi aḥkāmi l-shar'i*).

Al-Shaukānī (d. 1250 AH) discusses the problem of fasting in Rajab in connection with fasting the whole month of Sha'bān and concludes that the traditions enjoining fasting during the holy months (*al-ashhur al-ḥurum*) include the recommendation of fasting of the month in Rajab. There are no traditions stating that fasting in Rajab is reprehensible (*makrūh*).⁹³

Al-Qaṣṭallānī discusses the contradictory traditions about fasting during the whole month of Sha'bān.⁹⁴ The reference to fasting on Sha'bān is indicated in the *ḥadīth* reported on the authority of Usāma b. Zayd in which the Prophet said: "That (i.e. Sha'bān) is a month neglected by the people, (a month) between Rajab and Ramaḍān. It is a month in which the deeds are brought before the Lord of the Worlds, and I want therefore that my deeds be brought before Him when I am fasting."⁹⁵ Al-Qaṣṭallānī remarks that many people think that fasting in Rajab is preferable to fasting in Sha'bān, because Rajab is one of the holy months (*al-ashhur al-ḥurum*); but it is not so (i.e. fasting of Rajab is not preferable to the fasting of Sha'bān). Al-Zurqānī supports the opinion of al-Qaṣṭallānī, quoting the *ḥadīth* reported on the authority of 'Ā'isha, that when people fasting Rajab were mentioned to the Prophet, he said: "How (poor are) they (in their reward compared to those fasting in) Sha'bān."⁹⁶ Nevertheless al-Qaṣṭallānī admits that some of the Shāfi'īyya considered fasting of Rajab as more meritorious than fasting of other months. Fasting in Rajab is recommended as Rajab is one of the holy months; the fast of these months is indicated in the tradition recorded by Abū Dā'ūd. 'Abdallāh b.

⁹² See below, p. 207.

⁹³ Al-Shaukānī, *Nayl*, IV, 209–210.

⁹⁴ Al-Zurqānī, VIII, 124–125.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, VIII, 126; and see al-Shaukānī, *Nayl*, IV, 210 sup.; al-Haythamī, *Majma' al-zawā'id*, III, 192.

⁹⁶ Al-Zurqānī, VIII, 126; this tradition is recorded by Ibn Hajar, *Tabyin al-ajab*, p. 33 with the following story: "A woman entered the home of 'Ā'isha and mentioned that she fasted Rajab. 'Ā'isha said: fast Sha'bān, as the merit is in (fasting) Sha'bān." She then quoted the utterance of the Prophet.

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‘Umar stated that the Prophet used to fast in Rajab and honoured this month. Although the *ḥadīth* of Ibn Mājah forbidding the fast of the whole month of Rajab is a weak one — the Ḥanbalis considered it as valid. They concluded on the basis of this tradition, says al-Zurqānī, that it was reprehensible to single out the month of Rajab as a month of fasting (*yukrahu ifrāduhu bi-l-ṣaumi*).⁹⁷

A significant passage quoted from a book of al-Damīrī (d. 808 AH) by ‘Alī b. Aḥmad al-‘Azīzī (d. 1070 AH)⁹⁸ records the favourable opinion of two scholars of the seventh century of the Hijra towards fasting in Rajab. Abū ‘Amr b. al-Ṣalāḥ⁹⁹ was asked whether fasting the whole month of Rajab was a sin or whether it was a rewarded practice. He answered that there was no sin in it at all. None of the Muslim scholars, argued Abū ‘Amr b. al-Ṣalāḥ, considered it as sin. It is true that some scholars of *ḥadīth* stated that there were no sound *ḥadīths* about the merits of fasting Rajab; that does not however imply any sin in fast; traditions about fasting in general and about fasting in the holy months in particular indicate that this fasting (i.e. in Rajab) is meritorious. The tradition of Ibn Diḥya claiming that the fire of Hell is kindled every year for the people fasting Rajab is not sound and its transmission is unlawful.¹⁰⁰

‘Izz al-Dīn b. ‘Abd al-Salām¹⁰¹ was asked about the opinion of scholars who denounce the fast of Rajab and its observance and whether fasting the whole month as a vow was lawful. ‘Izz al-Dīn gave permission to vow fasting the whole month arguing that none of the scholars of Islam included Rajab among the reprehensible periods of fasting (*fīma yukrahu ṣaumuhu*); on the contrary: it is a pious deed (*qurba*) as indicated by sound traditions and it is recommended. He who honours Rajab in a different way than the people of the Jāhiliyya, the argument says, does not imitate them. Besides, not everything practised by the people of the Jāhiliyya is forbidden to follow (in Islam), unless it is interdicted by the Law (*wa-laysa kullu mā fa’alathu l-jāhiliyyatu manhiyyan ‘an mulābasatihi illā idhā nahat al-sharī’atu ‘anhu wa-dallat...*). Truth should not be abandoned on the ground that people of falsehood practised it, says ‘Izz al-Dīn. Furthermore, he gives his statement about the ignorant scholar who forbids fasting on Rajab as quoted above from Subkī’s *Ṭabaqāt*.

Al-Damīrī sums up the two *fatwās* in a poem of ten verses, concluding that

⁹⁷ Al-Zurqānī, VIII, 127.

⁹⁸ *Al-Sirāj al-munir*, II, 391–392.

⁹⁹ See on him al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāz*, IV, 1430, No. 1141.

¹⁰⁰ See this *fatwā* in *Fatāwā Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ* (Cairo 1348 AH), p. 21.

¹⁰¹ See on him al-Kutubī, *Fawāt al-wafayāt*, ed. Muḥ. Muḥyī l-Dīn ‘Abd al-Ḥamid (Cairo 1951), I, 594, No. 234.

fasting the whole month of Rajab is recommended. A vow of fasting in the month is binding (*wa-bi-l-nadhri yajib*). In the opinion of Aḥmad (b. Ḥanbal) singling out the month for fasting is reprehensible, but the opinion that forbids it should be rejected. The prohibition of fasting was reported by Ibn Mājah, but the *ḥadīth* proved to be weak because of its (weak) *isnād*. The shaykh ʿIzz al-Dīn stated that he who forbade fasting in any case is heedless. He strongly rejected the opinion of scholars who forbade fasting, and stated that they should not be consulted for *fatwā*. The transmitters of the Shariʿa did not reprehend fasting the whole (month). The recommendation of fasting (in this month) is included in the recommendation of fasting in general and there is no sin upon the fasting (person). Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ stated that the *ḥadīth* about punishment for fasting in Rajab was not a sound one, and it was not permissible to attribute it to the Prophet. The merits of fasting in general, as stated in (valid) texts, indicate that it is even desirable (*mustaḥabb*) in particular — this is how al-Damīrī concludes his poem.

Ibn ʿAsākir (Abū l-Qāsim ʿAlī b. al-Ḥasan)¹⁰² devoted a special chapter in his *Amālī* to the merits of Rajab. He composed some verses in which the river Rajab in Paradise is mentioned:

O he who wants a drink from Rajab in Paradise,
If you desire it — fast for God in Rajab
And pray the prayer of the longing¹⁰³ and fast
Because everyone who exerts himself in (deeds of) obedience will not be
disappointed.¹⁰⁴

Orthodox scholars denied any merit to fasting in Rajab, basing their argument on the tradition reported on the authority of Saʿīd b. Jubayr.¹⁰⁵ When Saʿīd b. Jubayr was asked about the merits of fasting in Rajab, he said: “I was told by Ibn ʿAbbās that the Prophet used to fast (to an extent) that we thought that he would never break his fast, and he used to break his fast (so often) that we thought that he would not (start again to) fast.”¹⁰⁶ Al-Qaṣṭallānī remarks rightly that this tradition indicates that fasting in Rajab is neither forbidden nor recommended (*wa-l-zāhiru anna murāda Saʿīdin* — i.e. Saʿīd b. Jubayr — *bi-hādḥa l-istidlālu ʿalā annahu lā nahya ʿanhu wa-lā nadba fīhi, bal lahu ḥukmu bāqī l-shuhūri*).¹⁰⁷ The opponents of fasting in Rajab argue that this tradition

¹⁰² See on him C. Brockelmann, *GAL*, SI, 566.

¹⁰³ “*Ṣalāt al-rāghibīna*”: the *ṣalāt al-raghāʾib* is here, of course, alluded to.

¹⁰⁴ Abū Shāma, pp. 55–57.

¹⁰⁵ See on him Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-aʿyān*, ed. Aḥmad Farīd Rifāʿī (Cairo n.d.) VI, 127–136.

¹⁰⁶ Al-Ṭurṭūshī, p. 128; Ibn Ḥajar, *Tabyīn al-ʿajab*, p. 32.

¹⁰⁷ Al-Zurqānī, VIII, 127; and see al-ʿAzīzī, II, 392, line 23 (the opinion of al-Nawawī).

points clearly to the fact that the Prophet used to fast during different months of the year. It is accordingly evident that the Prophet did not single out any month for fasting, and therefore no special merit can be attached to the fasting of Rajab; the only meritorious month of fasting is Ramaḍān.

There is a version of the tradition of Saʿīd b. Jubayr quoted above, reported on the authority of ʿĀʾisha. “The Prophet used to fast (to an extent) that we thought... etc.” This *ḥadīth* has however a significant addition: “And I did not see the Prophet, states ʿĀʾisha, completing the fast of any month at all except Ramaḍān, and I did not see him fasting more (in any month — K) than in Shaʿbān.”¹⁰⁸ Two points in this tradition are noteworthy: the one stressing that the Prophet did not complete fasting in any month except Ramaḍān. This implies that it is not permitted to fast a whole month except in Ramaḍān. The other point emphasizes that he used to fast in Shaʿbān more than in any other month. One may not be surprised to find a contradictory tradition, reported on the authority of ʿĀʾisha, stating that the Prophet used to fast the whole month of Shaʿbān (*kāna yaṣūmu shaʿbāna kullahu*).¹⁰⁹ Another tradition, reported on the authority of Abū Hurayra, gives a different version: “The Prophet did not complete the fast of any month besides Ramaḍān except for Rajab and Shaʿbān” (*anna rasūla llāhi ṣallā llāhu ʿalayhi wa-sallama lam yutimma ṣauma shahrin baʿda ramaḍāna illā rajaba wa-shaʿbāna*).¹¹⁰ Ibn Ḥajar classifies the tradition as “*munkar*”,¹¹¹ because of the transmitter Yūsuf b. ʿAṭīyya,¹¹² who is considered as “very weak”.¹¹³ It is not surprising, however, that the *ḥadīth* on which opponents of fasting in Rajab based their argument is also reported on the authority of ʿĀʾisha: “The Prophet did not single out any month of the year for fasting” (*inna l-nabiyya ṣallā llāhu ʿalayhi wa-sallama mā kāna yakhuṣṣu shahrān min al-sanati bi-ṣaumin*).¹¹⁴

Opponents of fasting in Rajab attempted to prove that the Companions, like the Prophet, disapproved of fasting Rajab, did not attach any sanctity to the month and considered fasting during Rajab as adherence to Jāhiliyya observ-

9949), II, 77 ult., No. 711.

¹⁰⁸ Muḥ. Fuʿād ʿAbd al-Bāqī, *al-Luʿluʿ wa-l-marjān fīmā ttafaqa ʿalayhi l-shaykhān* (Cairo 1949), II, 22 ult., No. 711; Ibn Ḥajar, *Bulūgh al-marām*, ed. Muḥ. Ḥamid al-Fiqqī (Cairo 1933), p. 137, No. 701.

¹⁰⁹ Al-Haythamī, *Majmaʿ al-zawāʿid* (Cairo 1352 AH), III, 192; and see *ibid.*: *kāna yaṣūmu shaʿbāna wa-ramaḍāna yaṣiluhumā*.

¹¹⁰ Al-Haythamī, III, 191 penult.; Ibn Ḥajar, *Tabyīn al-ʿajab*, p. 9 inf.

¹¹¹ See about the definition of “*munkar*” Muḥ. ʿAbd al-Ḥayy al-Luknawī, *al-Rafʿ wa-l-takmil*, ed. ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ Abū Ghudda (Ḥalab, n.d.), pp. 92–99.

¹¹² See on him al-Dhahabī, *Mizān al-ʿitidāl*, IV, 488, No. 9877.

¹¹³ Ibn Ḥajar, *Tabyīn al-ʿajab*, p. 10, line 1.

¹¹⁴ Al-Ṭurṭūshī, p. 128.

ances. 'Umar, says the tradition, used to beat the hands of people fasting in Rajab when they lifted them from (dishes of) food and compelled them to put them into it. He used to say: "Eat because Rajab was merely adored by the people of the Jāhiliyya."¹¹⁵ In another version of this tradition, 'Umar used to flog people who fasted the whole month of Rajab.¹¹⁶

Another tradition states that Ibn 'Umar disliked to see people prepare for fasting Rajab. He told them: "Fast (some days) of it (i.e. of the month) and break the fasting; it is merely a month which the people of the Jāhiliyya revered".¹¹⁷ According to these traditions fasting on some days of Rajab, just as fasting some days of other months, is not forbidden; but fasting for the whole month and attaching sanctity to the month itself are not lawful.

The adoration of Rajab might endanger the position of Ramaḍān. This is reflected in a story about Abū Bakr. When he saw his people prepare for fasting Rajab he said: "Do you make (i.e. observe) Rajab like Ramaḍān?" (*a-ja'altum rajaban ka-ramaḍāna*).¹¹⁸ Ibn 'Abbās insisted that Rajab be not established as an obligatory feast ('*id*) like Ramaḍān. Al-Ṭurṭūshī concludes that these traditions indicate that "the honouring of Rajab by some people is a vestige of the bonds of the Jāhiliyya" (*dallat hādhihi l-āthāru 'alā anna lladhī fī aydī l-nāsi min ta'zīmihi innamā hiya ghabarātun min baqāyā 'uqūdi l-jāhiliyyati*).¹¹⁹ In summary al-Ṭurṭūshī states that fasting in Rajab is not obligatory, it is not a *sunna* of the Prophet and is not meritorious; it is reprehensible.¹²⁰

A special treatise against fasting in and veneration of Rajab, named *Adā'u mā wajaḥ min bayāni waq'ī l-waḍḍā'ina fī rajab*, was compiled by Ibn Dihya.¹²¹ From this treatise the following *ḥadīth* is with all probability quoted: "The Prophet said: 'Hell is kindled from year to year for the people fasting in Rajab'".¹²²

One of the main arguments of the opponents of the Rajab fast was the tenet

¹¹⁵ Al-Shaukānī, *Nayl*, IV, 210 (here the tradition is quoted from Ibn Abī Shayba's *al-Muṣannaf*. The remark of Wagtendonk, p. 121, note 3 that "these are late traditions" can hardly be accepted.); al-Ṭurṭūshī, p. 129; Ibn Ḥajar, *Tabyīn al-'ajab*, p. 32; al-Haythamī, *Majma' al-zawā'id*, III, 191; Jamāl al-Dīn al-Qāsimī, *Iṣlāḥ al-masājid min al-bida'i wa-l-'awā'id* (Cairo 1341 AH), pp. 76-77; al-Muttaqī al-Hindī, VIII, 409, No. 2966; Abū Shāma, p. 38; al-Manbijī, *Kit. al-samā'i wa-l-raḡṣ* in *Majmū'at al-rasā'il al-kubrā li-Ibn Taymiyya* (Cairo 1323 AH), II, 360 inf.

¹¹⁶ Al-Ṭurṭūshī, p. 129.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 129.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 129; al-Qāsimī, p. 77; Abū Shāma, p. 38.

¹¹⁹ Al-Ṭurṭūshī, p. 129 ult.-130 sup.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 130-131; Ibn Ḥajar, *Tabyīn al-'ajab*, pp. 34-35; al-Qāsimī, pp. 77-78; Abū Shāma p. 38 (all quoting al-Ṭurṭūshī).

¹²¹ See on him al-Dhahabī *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāz* (Hyderabad 1958) IV 1420 No. 1136.

¹²² Al-'Azizī, II, 391, line 6 from bottom; and see above p. 207.

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that the believer is not entitled to establish days or months of religious practices to which particular merits may be attached; this privilege is exclusively reserved for the Lawgiver (*fa-l-hāşilu anna l-mukallaḡa laysa lahu maṣṣibu l-takḡşşi bal dhālika ilā l-shāriʿi*).¹²³ As the tradition reported by Saʿīd b. Jubayr (stating that the Prophet used to fast through the whole year) refutes the traditions about fasting in Rajab, as the Companions reprehended this fasting, as the traditions about fasting in Rajab are weak and untrustworthy — the view that the Rajab fast may be included into the category of good deeds has to be rejected. Good deeds necessitate the approval of the Prophet, which the fasting of Rajab did not get. As the traditions about fasting in Rajab are lies, the fast is, of course, unlawful (*fa-in qīla- a-laysa hādhā huwa istiʿmāla khayrin? qīla lahu: istiʿmālu khayrin yanbagħi an yakūna mashrūʿan min al-nabiyyi ṣallā llāhu ʿalayhi wa-sallama; fa-idhā ʿalimnā annahu kadhibun kharaja min al-mashrūʿiyyati*).¹²⁴

Opponents of Rajab tried to show the weakness or the forgery of the pro-Rajab traditions, revealing the weakness of the *isnād*. Abū Shāma (d. 665 AH), who devoted a good deal of his *Bāʿith* to the rebuttal of pro-Rajab *ḥadīths*, and Ibn Ḥajar (d. 852 AH) in his *Tabyīn al-ʿajab*, a treatise with the same aim, both used the same method of scrutinizing *isnāds*. The tradition about the Rajab river in Paradise was rejected by Abū Shāmā¹²⁵ on the ground that Mūsā al-Ṭawīl¹²⁶ was a liar. The *ḥadīth*: “Rajab is the month of God, Shaʿbān is my month etc.” was discarded because the transmitter was al-Naqqāsh al-Mauṣili,¹²⁷ a famous liar and forger of *ḥadīth*. The *ḥadīth*: “*kāna rasūlu llāhi ṣalla llāhu ʿalayhi wa-sallama idhā dakhala rajabun qāla llāhumma bārik lanā fī rajabīn wa-shaʿbāna... etc.*”¹²⁸ was rejected on the ground that Ziyād b. Maymūn¹²⁹ was considered as “discarded” (literally: “abandoned”, “*matrūk*”). Maʿmūn b. Aḥmad al-Sulamī¹³⁰ and Aḥmad b. ʿAbdallāh al-Juwaybārī,¹³¹ transmitters of pro-Rajab *ḥadīths*, were known as notorious liars;¹³² Ibn al-Jauzī counts both Maʿmūn b. Aḥmad and Aḥmad

¹²³ Abu Shāma, p. 37.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 55 penult.

¹²⁶ See on him al-Dhahabī, *Mizān al-iʿtidāl*, IV, 209, No. 8888.

¹²⁷ See on him al-Dhahabī, *Mizān al-iʿtidāl*, III, 520, No. 7404.

¹²⁸ See Ibn al-Sunnī, *ʿAmal al-yaum wa-l-layla* (Hyderabad 1358 AH), p. 178; al-Suyūṭī, *al-Jāmiʿ al-ṣagħīr*, II, 105; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Muḏīḡ auḡām*, II, 473; al-Jarrāḡī, I, 186, No. 554; ʿAlī al-Qārī, *al-Adab*, fol. 65a, inf.; al-Majlisī, *Biḡār*, XX, 338 (lithogr. edition).

¹²⁹ See on him al-Dhahabī, *Mizān al-iʿtidāl*, II, 94, No. 2967.

¹³⁰ See on him al-Dhahabī, *Mizān al-iʿtidāl*, III, 429, No. 7036.

¹³¹ See on him al-Dhahabī, *Mizān al-iʿtidāl*, I, 106, No. 421.

¹³² Abū Shāma, p. 55.

b. 'Abdallah in the list of "big liars".¹³³ Both are accused of the transmission of the forged *ḥadīth*, in which the Prophet foretold: "Among my people will be a man called Muḥammad b. Idrīs; he will be more harming for my people than Iblīs"; one of them invented the *ḥadīth*.¹³⁴ By Muḥammad b. Idrīs, the imām al-Shāfi'ī is meant. It is quite plausible that al-Shāfi'ī's assessment of the personality of Ma'mūn b. Aḥmad was concise: *Ma'mūn ḡhayru ma'mūn*.¹³⁵ The *ḥadīth*: "He who fasts the twenty seventh day of Rajab, God will write for him a reward of sixty months; it is the first day when the angel Gabriel brought the Prophet the Message" is marked by Abū Khaṭṭāb (i.e. Ibn Dihya) as a spurious tradition. The tradition that the date of the *Isrā'* was the twenty seventh day of Rajab is marked as "the essence of lie".¹³⁶ One of the transmitters of the tradition: "He who fasts three days of Rajab — God will count for him (the reward of) fasting of a month... etc." was Abān (b. abī 'Ayyāsh).¹³⁷ Ibn al-Jauzī rejects the tradition as unsound because of Abān. He quotes negative opinions of scholars about Abān, and records the saying of Shu'ba¹³⁸ that he prefers adultery to transmission of the traditions reported by Abān.¹³⁹

The scholars opposing the fasting of Rajab faced the hostile attitude of the common people who practised fasting and special devotions in some nights of Rajab. They faced the pressure of the rulers as well. A peculiar case of this kind is reported in connection with the activities of 'Izz al-Dīn b. 'Abd al-Salām, whose favourable opinion about Rajab fasting was mentioned above. In the year 637 AH 'Izz al-Dīn acted as preacher and imām of the mosque of Damascus; he was a very learned and pious man, strictly following the *sunna*. Just before the beginning of Rajab, he preached in the mosque on Friday, and stressed that the *ṣalāt al-raghā'ib* was a *bid'a* and that the *ḥadīth* enjoining the practice of this prayer was a lie. 'Izz al-Dīn compiled a treatise in which he expounded his view and warned the people against the practice of this *bid'a*; he named it "*al-tarhīb 'an ṣalāti l-raghā'ib*". He was however compelled by the common people and the sultan to change his mind and to compile a treatise which contradicted his former treatise. In his second treatise he issued a favourable judgment about the *ṣalāt al-raghā'ib*.¹⁴⁰

The orthodox permission of the popular Rajab fast in the tenth century of the Hijra is fairly exposed in the treatise of the Ḥanafī scholar 'Alī al-Qāri'

¹³³ Al-Shaukānī, *al-Fawā'id*, p. 426.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 420; see al-Dhahabī, *Mizān*, III, 430; al-Suyūṭī, *al-La'ālī*, I, 457.

¹³⁵ Abū Shāma, p. 55, line 5 from bottom.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 56 sup.

¹³⁷ See on him al-Dhahabī, *Mizān* I, 10–15, No. 15.

¹³⁸ See on him al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḡuffāz*, I, 193, No. 187.

¹³⁹ Ibn al-Jauzī, *al-Mauḏū'āt*, II, 206. And see his assessment of *isnāds*, *ibid.*, pp. 207–28

¹⁴⁰ Abū Shāma, pp. 32–33.

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“*al-Adab fī rajab*”. Although he follows strictly the path of orthodox assessment of the *ḥadīth* concerning fasting Rajab, he nevertheless gives his consent to fasting Rajab and regards it rewardable. The interdiction of fasting Rajab in the *ḥadīth* of Ibn Mājah — argues ‘Alī al-Qāri’ — has to be considered as an interdiction of its obligatory character, as it was in the period of the Jāhiliyya (*wa-ammā mā rawāhu Ibn Mājah annahu ‘alayhi l-salāmu nahā ‘an šiyāmi rajabin fa-maḥmūlun ‘alā ‘tiqādi wujūbihi kamā kāna fī l-jāhiliyyati*).¹⁴¹ Except that (i.e. this reason for the reprehensibility of fasting) none of the scholars said that fasting in Rajab was reprehensible (*wa-illā fa-lam yaqul aḥadun min al-‘ulamā’ bi-karāhati ṣaumihi*).¹⁴² The opinion that every *ḥadīth* about fasting Rajab and prayers in some nights of Rajab is a forged one deserves to be re-examined. It is true that there are some forged traditions, but traditions about fasting in Rajab are numerous and they, although weak, strengthen each other.¹⁴³ Scholars agree, argues al-Qāri’, that it is permissible to perform pious deeds having recourse to “weak” traditions (*wa-ajma’a l-‘ulamā’u bi-jawāzi l-‘amali bi-l-aḥādīthi l-ḍa’īfati l-wāridati fī faḍā’ili l-a’māli*). The interdiction of fasting Rajab by some scholars and considering it a *bid’a* is therefore not plausible (*wa-lā ma’nā li-nahyi...*). What is required from the believers is worship and obedience according to their ability. Rajab, as can be deduced from tradition, is a month surpassing other months in merits.¹⁴⁴

Radical and uncompromising scholars rejected all the traditions about the virtues of Rajab and the merits of its fast. Ibn Taymiyya states that all the traditions about fasting in Rajab, fasting on the first Friday of Rajab and other merits are lies according to the consensus of the scholars. The best *ḥadīth* on this subject is, of course, the *ḥadīth* recorded by Ibn Mājah, stating that the Prophet forbade the fast of Rajab.¹⁴⁵

IV

Among the distinctive features of Rajab are the special prayers and supplications connected, of course, with the fasting. These special prayers, devotions and supplications were the subject of fervent discussions and were strongly reproved by orthodox scholars.

Rajab is a month of repentance, of refraining from sin and of doing pious

¹⁴¹ ‘Alī al-Qāri’, *al-Adab*, fol. 65b.

¹⁴² ‘Alī al-Qāri’, *al-Aḥādīth al-mauḍū’a*, fol. 61a.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, fol. 61a.

¹⁴⁴ *Idem*, *al-Adab*, fol. 65b.

¹⁴⁵ Al-Manbijī, II, 306; Ibn al-Jauzī, *al-Mauḍū’āt*, II, 208 (*mā ṣaḥḥa fī faḍli rajabin wa-fī šiyāmihi ‘an rasūli llāhi ṣallā llāhu ‘alayhi wa-sallama shay’un*); al-Jarrāḥī, II, 421.

deeds. This idea of Rajab is expounded in a tradition attributed to the Prophet. In a speech delivered a week before Rajab, the Prophet stated that the rewards for good deeds in this month were doubled, supplications responded to by God and distress relieved by Him. The Prophet bade the believers to fast the days of Rajab and to keep vigilance in its nights. He who prays during some days of Rajab fifty prayers, reciting in every *rak'a* passages from the Qur'ān — God will grant him rewards for his good deeds as much as the number of his hairs. He who fasts one day — God will reward him with the reward of fasting of a year. He who keeps his tongue (from bad speech) — God will tutor him in arguments of his defence when the two angels Munkir and Nakir would come to question him (in his grave). He who would give some alms — God will save his neck from the fire of Hell. He who does good deeds to his people — God will treat him kindly in this world and in his life to come, and will help him against his enemies during his lifetime. He who visits a sick person — God will order the noble of His angels to visit him and greet him. He who prays in a funeral ceremony during this month, is as one who revives a buried girl-child. He who gives food to a believer — God will lodge him on the Day of Resurrection at a table where Ibrāhīm and Muḥammad will be sitting. He who clothes a believer during this month — God will put on him a thousand of the suits of Paradise. He who bestows a favour upon an orphan and strokes his head — God will forgive him as many of his sins as the number of the hairs (scil. on the head of the orphan) upon which his hand passed. God will grant forgiveness to the believer who asks it. He who praises God once — will be counted in God's presence among the people mentioning God many times. He who completes in this month the reading of the Qur'ān — God will crown him and his parents with crowns inlaid with pearls and he will be assured not to be inflicted with the horrors of the Day of Resurrection.¹⁴⁶

'Abdallah b. al-Zubayr is said to have stated: "He who comforts a believer in his hardship during the month of Rajab, 'the Deaf', the month of God — God will grant him a palace in Paradise as big as his gaze can reach. Therefore, urges the tradition, venerate Rajab and God will bestow upon you a thousand graces."¹⁴⁷ He who gives alms once in Rajab — says a *ḥadīth* attributed to the Prophet — God will keep him away from the fire of Hell, at a distance equivalent to that which a crow flies during its lifetime (literally flight of a crow since flying as a chick until its death in decrepitude — a crow lives five hundred years).¹⁴⁸ A *ḥadīth* reported on the authority of Salmān al-Fārisī records the following utterance of the Prophet:

¹⁴⁶ Ibn Ḥajar, *Tabyīn*, pp. 25–26; al-Shaukānī, *al-Fawā'id*, p. 439, lines 9–12 (the beginning of the tradition).

¹⁴⁷ 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, I, 200.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, I, 200.

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“He who fasts one day of Rajab is (considered) as if he had fasted a thousand years. He who grants alms (once) is (considered) as if he would give alms of a thousand dinars and God will credit him for every good deed with a number of rewards equal to the number of his hairs. God will raise him a thousand steps, erase a thousand of his sins and credit him for every donation of alms with (the reward of) a thousand pilgrimages and of a thousand *‘umras* and build for him in Paradise a thousand courts and a thousand palaces and a thousand apartments; in every apartment there will be a thousand enclosures, in every enclosure a thousand *hūrīs*, who are a thousand times more beautiful than the sun.¹⁴⁹

According to a Shī‘ī tradition, an angel called al-Dā‘ī proclaims every night of Rajab from the seventh Heaven on the order of God: “Blessed are those who remember (Me), blessed are the obedient.” God the Exalted says:

I am the Companion of (the believer) who would sit by Me, I obey him who obeys Me, I forgive (the believer) who asks My forgiveness; the month is Mine, the servant is Mine, the mercy is Mine; he who would call Me — I shall respond to him; he who supplicates Me — I shall give to him, he who will ask my guidance — I shall guide him. I made this month a rope between Me and My servants; he who will hold fast by it — will reach Me.¹⁵⁰

Al-Shaukānī points out as a reprehensible innovation in Rajab and Sha‘bān, that people use to exert themselves in acts of obedience and adhere to religious prescriptions during these months, but neglect these actions during the rest of the year.¹⁵¹

Of interest is an Ismā‘īlī exhortation stressing the sanctity of Rajab (called *al-aṣamm*, *al-fard*, *al-aṣabb*) and summoning the faithful to practise fasting, repentance and submission to God. The rewards of good deeds in this month are multiplied.¹⁵²

The main point in the fervent discussion about Rajab devotions is the topic of *ṣalāt al-raghā‘ib*, a prayer performed on the eve of the first Friday of Rajab.¹⁵³ To this *ṣalāt al-raghā‘ib* the Prophet referred in a *ḥadīth* reported on the authority of Anas b. Mālik. The Prophet, when asked why the month of Rajab was nicknamed “the month of God”, answered: “It is because it is singled out (*makhṣūṣ*) with (the quality of) forgiveness. In this month blood-

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, I, 201.

¹⁵⁰ Al-Majlisī, XX, 338 (lithogr. ed.).

¹⁵¹ *Al-Fawā‘id*, p. 440.

¹⁵² *Al-Majālis al-mustashirīyya*, ed. Muḥ. Kāmil Ḥusayn (Cairo, n.d.), p. 112.

¹⁵³ But *ṣalāt al-raghā‘ib* was formerly called the prayer of the midst of Sha‘bān; see Abū Shāma, p. 29, line 8 from bottom.

shed is prevented. God forgave his prophets in this month and rescued his saints (*auliyā*) from the pains of punishment.” The Prophet further counted the rewards of fasting in Rajab and recommended to an old man, who had complained that he would not be able to fast the whole month, that he restrict his fasting to the first day of Rajab, to the middle day of Rajab and to its last day. “Do not be heedless — continued the Prophet — about the eve of the first Friday of Rajab; it is a night called by the angels *al-rahgā’ib*, “the large (desirable) gifts”.” This (is so) because after passing of the first third of this night no angel on Earth or in Heaven remains who does not gather in the Ka’ba or around it. God the Exalted has a look (at them) and says: “My angels, ask Me whatever you want”, and they answer: “Our need is that Thou mayest forgive the people fasting Rajab”. Then God the Exalted says: “I have done it already”. The Prophet enjoined the believers to fast the day of the first Thursday of Rajab and to pray in the first third of this night (i.e. the eve of Friday) twelve *rak’as* reciting in every *rak’a* the *fātiḥa* once, the *sūra* “*innā anzalnāhu fī laylati l-qadri*” three times, the *sūra* “*qul huwa llāhu aḥadun*” twelve times; between every *rak’a* a *taslīma* has to be recited. After this prayer the believer has to recite seventy times “*llāhumma ṣalli ‘alā l-nabiyyi l-ummiyyi wa-‘alā ālihi*”. Then he has to perform a prostration during which he has to say seventy times “*sabūhun, quddūsun, rabbu l-malā’ikati wa-l-rūḥi*”. Then he would raise his head and say seventy times “*rabbī ḡfir wa-rḡam wa-tajāwaz ‘ammā ta’lamu, innaka anta l-‘azīzu l-a’ẓamu*”. Then he should prostrate a second time repeating the supplication quoted above (in the first *sajda*). Then he pleads for his needs and his plea will be responded to by God. Every servant of God with no exception — says the tradition — praying this prayer, God will forgive him all his sins even if they were (as much) as the foam of the sea and numbering the number of leaves of the trees, and he will intercede for seven hundred of his people at the Day of Resurrection. At the first day of his stay in his grave, he will be visited by the Reward of this prayer. The Reward will greet him with a bright countenance and tell him: “O my beloved, rejoice because you were delivered from every woe”. He will then ask: “Who are you, as I have not seen a face finer than yours and I have not smelled a smell more fragrant than yours”. Then Reward will reply: “O my beloved, I am the Reward of the prayer, which you prayed that night of that and that month; I came this night to you in order to fulfil the obligation towards you and to cheer you up in your loneliness. When the Horn will be blown, I shall be the shade above your head. Rejoice, because you will receive bounty from your Lord.”¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁴ Ibn Ḥajar, *Tabyīn*, pp. 19–21; Abū Shāma, pp. 29–32; ‘Abd al-Qadir al-Jilānī, I, 204–205; al-Suyūṭī, *al-La’ālī*, II, 55–56; al-Shaukānī, *al-Fawā’id*, pp. 47 inf.–50; al-Majlisī, XX, 344 (lithogr. ed.); Ibn al-Jauzī, *al-Mawḍū’āt*, II, 124–125.

Al-Nawawī classifies the *ṣalāt al-raghā'ib* as a shameful *bid'a* (*hiya bid'atun qabīhatun munkaraturun*), which has to be abandoned, reprehended and prevented. In his *fatwā* he points out that although many people observe this prayer and that the *ḥadīth* about the merits of the prayer was recorded in Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī's *Qūt al-qulūb* and in al-Ghazālī's *Iḥyā'*¹⁵⁵ — it is nevertheless a futile *bid'a* (*bid'atun bāṭilatun*).¹⁵⁶

Ibn Ḥajar classifies this *ḥadīth* as forged. 'Alī b. 'Abdallah b. Jahḍam is accused of the forgery of this *ḥadīth*.¹⁵⁷ Al-Ṭurṭūshī mentions as the *ṣalāt al-raghā'ib* the prayer of fifteenth Sha'bān¹⁵⁸ and Rajab. The prayer of Rajab was introduced for the first time in Jerusalem: it happened after 480 AH.¹⁵⁹ Al-'Abdarī refutes in a special chapter,¹⁶⁰ the opinion that the *ṣalāt al-raghā'ib* is meritorious or even lawful. He records the *fatwā* of 'Abd al-Azīz b. 'Abd al-Salām¹⁶¹ strongly condemning this prayer. It is evident that this *fatwā* is the first *fatwā* of 'Izz al-Dīn mentioned by Abū Shāma. 'Izz al-Dīn was compelled, as quoted above, to compile a *fatwā* with a contradictory opinion about this prayer. Beside the detailed refutation of the lawfulness of this prayer in the special chapter — al-'Abdarī stresses the reprehensible features of the performance of the prayer: men and women mix together in the mosque during the *ṣalāt al-raghā'ib*. If somebody claims that there exists a *ḥadīth* recommending this prayer quoted by al-Ghazālī — then the prayer has to be performed by the believer privately (*fī khāṣṣati nafsihi*), not as a common prayer in the mosque. Further it is reprehensible to turn it into a continuous and obligatory *sunna* (*sunna dā'ima lā budda min fī'lihā*). The traditions about “merits of actions” (*faḍl al-a'māl*) have weak *isnāds* — argues al-'Adbarī; although Muslim scholars permitted believers to act according to these *ḥadīths*, they allowed it on the condition that the practice would not be a continuous one. Thus if the believer acts according to such a tradition even once in his life, he would be considered as obeying the (recommendation of)

¹⁵⁵ *Iḥyā'* (Cairo 1289 AH), I, 182 (al-Ghazālī remarks that the people of Jerusalem are eager to perform this prayer).

¹⁵⁶ Al-Nawawī, *Fatāwā al-imām al-Nawawī (al-masā'il al-manthūra)*, ed. 'Alā l-Dīn b. al-'Aṭṭār (Cairo 1352 AH), p. 28; al-'Abdarī, IV, 259.

¹⁵⁷ See Abū Shāma, pp. 30–31; al-Shaukānī, *al-Fawā'id*, p. 49, n. 1; al-Suyūṭī, La'ālī II, 56 inf., al-Dhahabī, *Mizān al-i'tidāl*, III, 142, No. 5879; Jamāl al-Dīn al-Qāsimī, pp. 105–106; al-Pattānī, pp. 43 ult.–44; 'Alī al-Qārī, *al-Aḥādīth al-mauḍū'a*, fol. 61 a. Ibn Jahḍam is said to have confessed to the forgery of this tradition before his death; cf. Sibṭ Ibn al-Jauzī, *Mir'āt al-zamān*, Ms. Karacelebi 284, fols. 272b–273b.

¹⁵⁸ See above, note 153.

¹⁵⁹ Al-Ṭurṭūshī, pp. 121–122; and see *ibid.*, note 4 of the editor, M. Talbi.

¹⁶⁰ *Al-Mudkhal* IV, 248–282.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 277–282 (he is, however, mentioned as Abū Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-'Azīz 'Abd al-Salām b. Abī Qāsim al-Sulamī al-Shāfi'i).

tradition — if it is indeed a sound one; if, however, the tradition has an *isnād* which is dubious and open to dispute (*wa-in yakun al-ḥadīthu fī sanadihi maʿʿanun yaqdaḥu fīhi*) — his action (performed according to this *ḥadīth*) would not harm (him) as he performed a good deed (*li-annahu faʿala khayran*) and did not turn it into a publicly performed rite (*shaʿīratun zāhiratun*), like Ramaḍān or other (obligatory) practices. He finally remarks that according to the *madhhab* of Mālik, the *ṣalāt al-raghāʾib* is reprehensible (*makrūh*).¹⁶²

ʿAlī al-Qāriʾ differs, as in the case of fasting Rajab, in his opinion about the *ṣalāt al-raghāʾib*. He records the tradition about this prayer in his *Risālat al-aḥādīth al-mawḍūʿa*¹⁶³ and in his *al-Adab fī Rajab*.¹⁶⁴ He quotes the opinion of al-Nawawī (d. 676 AH), as recorded in his commentary on Muslim's *Saḥīḥ*, that this prayer is a reprehensible *bidʿa* of error (*bidʿatu ḍalālātin*) and ignorance containing reprehensible actions (*munkarāt*). "May God curse the inventor of this prayer and the man praying it" — says al-Nawawī.

Al-Nawawī based his disproof of the prayer on a tradition forbidding the singling out of the eve of Friday by vigilance and the day of Friday by fasting (*la takhtaṣṣū laylata l-jumuʿati bi-qiyāmin wa-la takhtaṣṣū yauma l-jumuʿati bi-ṣiyāmin*).¹⁶⁵ ʿAlī al-Qāriʾ disagrees arguing that calling the prayer of the eve of Friday *ḍalāla* is subject to inquiry (*maḥallu baḥthin*), because prayer is the best deed. If this tradition is forged, the sin is upon its inventor, but no harm is on the believer who acts according to it. Besides, the singling out of the eve of Friday by vigils and the day of Friday by fasting are subject to discussion by the scholars: they contradict each other in their opinions on whether it is reprehensible. It seems that it is in fact a reprehensibility of violation of the preventive measure (*al-karāhatu al-tanzīhiyyatu*). The tradition about the prayer recorded only by Razīn is a weak one, but the famous scholar Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ permitted the prayer, the *ḥadīth* is recorded by al-Ghazālī and accepted by scholars and learned men. The argument that the prayer was invented in the fifth century of the Hijra does not justify its designation as *bidʿa sayyiʿa*, as the principle of prayer is well based on the Book and the Sunna. In fact, a *bidʿa sayyiʿa*, states ʿAlī al-Qāriʾ, is the mixing of sexes during the prayer, dancing, *samāʾ* and wasting money for lighting the mosques on the eve of the prayer.

The practice of the *ṣalāt al-raghāʾib* was formally forbidden by a decree of the sultan al-Kāmil Muḥammad b. ʿAbī Bakr b. Ayyūb (d. 1238 AD).¹⁶⁶ However, it seems that this order of the sultan was not effective for a long

¹⁶² *Al-Mudkhal*, I, 293–294.

¹⁶³ Fol. 61a.

¹⁶⁴ Fol. 65a.

¹⁶⁵ Al-Nabhānī, *al-Faṭḥ al-kabīr* (Cairo 1350 AH), III, 318.

¹⁶⁶ Jamāl al-Dīn al-Qāsimī, p. 105.

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period: the prayer remained a practice widely observed by common people and ṣūfī fraternities, and gained the approval of some scholars.

V

Rajab continued to be a venerated month in Islam. The tradition that the Prophet performed the ‘umra in Rajab was indeed questioned and subjected to discussion,¹⁶⁷ but the people of Mecca used to perform their ‘umra in Rajab.¹⁶⁸ ‘Alī al-Qāri’'s attitude towards performing the ‘umra in Rajab is a positive one. His arguments in the case of the ‘umra are very similar to those which he used in the case of fasting and prayers. He gives in fact his consent to the existing custom, arguing that the ‘umra, payment of *zakāt* and other pious deeds performed during Rajab are permissible and rewardable (*wa-kadhā ikhrājuhu l-zakāta min al-dirhami wa-l-dīnāri wa-ghayru dhālika min a‘māl al-abrāri fa-lā shubhata fī jawāzi dhālika wa-mazīdi l-ajri wa-l-thawābi hunālika*).¹⁶⁹ Although al-Qāri’ records the tradition about the ‘umra of the Prophet in Rajab and the categorical denial of ‘Ā’isha — he points out that when ‘Abdallāh b. al-Zubayr re-built the Ka‘ba, he ordered the people of Mecca to perform the ‘umra and slaughtered animals, dividing the meat among poor and needy; the celebration was performed on the twenty-seventh day of Rajab.¹⁷⁰ The Companions of the Prophet (in this case ‘Abdallāh b. al-Zubayr) — argues al-Qāri’ — should be imitated according to the utterance of the Prophet: “My Companions are like the stars: whomever you follow — you will then be following the right path” (*aṣḥābī ka-l-nujūmi bi-ayyihim iqtadaytum ihtadaytum*).¹⁷¹ Al-Qāri’'s consent to the popular practice of the ‘umra is further aided by an utterance attributed to the Prophet: “What the Muslims

¹⁶⁷ Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, VII, 233, 248 (No. 5383, 5416; and see the references given by the editor), IX, 3, 131, 210 (No. 6126, 6295, 6430); al-Zarkashī, *al-Ijāba li-trādi mā stadrakathu ‘Ā’isha ‘alā l-ṣaḥāba*, ed. Sa‘īd al-Afghānī (Damascus 1939), pp. 114–116; al-Bayhaqī, V, 11; M. Gaudefroy-Demombynes, p. 193, note 2.

¹⁶⁸ Al-Shaukānī, *al-Fawā’id*, p. 440; al-Pattānī, 117, line 11–12 (read *i’timār* not *i’timād*). See also al-Fāṣī, *Shifā’u l-gharām* (Cairo 1956), I, 98: *wa-ahlu Makkata ya’tamirūna fī laylati sab’in wa-’ishrīna min rajabin fī kulli sanatin wa-yansibūna hādhihi l-’umrata ilā bni l-Zubayri*. Comp. C. Snouck-Hurgronje, *Mekka in the Latter Part of the 19th Century*, tr. J. H. Monahan (Leyden 1931), p. 66.

¹⁶⁹ *Al-Adab*, fol. 65b.

¹⁷⁰ See K. Wagtendonk, p. 107.

¹⁷¹ See this tradition in Muḥ. ‘Abd al-Luknawī, *Iqāmat al-ḥujja ‘alā anna l-ikthāra min al-ta’abbudi laysa bi-bid’a*, ed. ‘Abd al-Fattāḥ Abū Ghudda (Ḥalab 1966), pp. 48–51 (and see the references of the editor, *ibid.*); al-Sulamī, *Ādāb al-ṣuḥba* (Jerusalem 1954), p. 80, note 239.

consider as good is considered as good by God”¹⁷² (*ma ra’āhu l-muslimūna ḥasanan fa-huwa ‘inda llāhi ḥasanun*)¹⁷³.

The attendance of large crowds of people in Mecca in Rajab in early times is attested by the report recorded by Ibn Ṣāhira, that Mu’āwiya used to send scents for prayers in the Ka’ba twice each year: in the season (of the pilgrimage) and in Rajab.¹⁷⁴ Khālid b. ‘Abdallāh al-Qasrī was the first who ordered to light lamps (on the way) between al-Ṣafā and al-Marwa during the time of the ḥajj and during Rajab; it occurred in the time of Sulaymān b. ‘Abd al-Malik.¹⁷⁵

The people of Sarw used to perform their ‘umra in Rajab; ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb is said to have guaranteed to them for this ‘umra the reward of a pilgrimage.¹⁷⁶

Snouck Hurgronje gives a vivid description of the Rajab caravans setting out from Mecca to Medina to visit the tomb of the Prophet and graves of saints.¹⁷⁷

The practice of *i’tikāf* in Rajab can be traced in early times in the story of a woman who vowed to practise the *i’tikāf* during Rajab in a mosque (although that year Ziyād ibn Abihi forbade women to practise this rite); Waki’ records the verdict of Shurayḥ (the judge) in this case.¹⁷⁸

Among the popular practices of Rajab was the payment of the *zakāt* during this month, which was reproved by orthodox scholars.¹⁷⁹

Orthodox scholars classified the traditions about the observances of the night which falls in the middle of Rajab¹⁸⁰ and of the first day of Rajab¹⁸¹ as forged. But the common people stuck to these popular celebrations. Al-‘Abdārī

¹⁷² See this tradition in Ibn al-Dayba’, p. 179 (and see the references *ibid.*); al-Jarrāḥī, II, 188, No. 2214; Muḥ. ‘Abd al-Ḥayy al-Luknawī, p. 53.

¹⁷³ ‘Alī al-Qārī’, *al-Adab*, fol. 66a.

¹⁷⁴ Ibn Ṣāhira, *al-Jāmi’ al-laṭīf fī faḍli Makkata wa-ahlihā* (Cairo 1921), p. 110 sup.

¹⁷⁵ Al-Suyūṭī, *al-Wasā’il ilā musāmarati l-awā’il*, ed. As’ad Ṭalas (Baghdad 1950), p. 35 (*awwalu man istaṣbaḥa bayna l-Ṣafā wa-l-Marwa Khālidu bnu ‘Abdillāh*); al-Fākihi, *Ta’rikh Makka*, Ms. Leiden, Or. 463, fol. 443a.

¹⁷⁶ Ibn al-Mujāwir, *Descriptio Arabiae Meridionalis*, ed. O. Löfgren (Leiden 1951), I, 26 ult. (*wa-ghāyatu ḥajji l-qaumi ‘umratu awwali rajabin wa-qad ḍamana lahum amīru l-mu’mīnīna ‘Umaru bnu l-Khaṭṭābi tilka l-‘umrata bi-ḥijjatin maqbūlatin*).

¹⁷⁷ *Mekka*, p. 60.

¹⁷⁸ Waki’, *Akhbār al-quḍāt*, ed. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Marāghī (Cairo 1947 II, 325, 360).

¹⁷⁹ Al-Shaukānī, *al-Fawā’id*, p. 440, line 6–7; and see ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jilānī, I, 196, line 6 from bottom; al-Pattānī, 117 line 10 (and see the differing opinion of ‘Alī al-Qārī’, above p. 219).

¹⁸⁰ Al-Shaukānī, *al-Fawā’id*, p. 50; Ibn Ḥajar, *Tabyīn*, p. 22; al-Suyūṭī, *al-La’ālī*, II, 57; Ibn al-Jauzī, *al-Mauḍū’āt*, II, 126.

¹⁸¹ See Ibn al-Jauzī, II, 123; al-Suyūṭī, *al-La’ālī*, II, 55; Ibn Ḥajar, *Tabyīn*, p. 17 (and see ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jilānī, I, 202).

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records some details about the customs of the celebration of the first day of Rajab. People used to prepare kinds of sweet shaped in different figures. He points out that it is an interdicted practice and states that people looking at these shaped kinds of sweet and not forbidding its usage must not be permitted to act as witnesses in courts. If these shaped sweets would even be broken into pieces — “people of merit” (*ahlu l-faḍli*) would have to avoid to buy them because these sweets were prepared in a way forbidden by the Law. People, and especially young couples and the betrothed, used to send expensive gifts to their relatives. Al-‘Abdarī draws a line between the pious predecessors (*al-salaf*) and contemporary people in observing Rajab; the pious predecessors used to increase in it their pious deeds and worship and to venerate in a proper way this month, the month of the improvement of actions (*tazkiyat al-a‘māl*), the month of blessing (*baraka*), the first of the four holy months (*al-ashhur al-ḥurum*). Contemporary people celebrate it by vying in eating and dancing and by spending money on expensive gifts.¹⁸²

The *ṣalāt al-raghā’ib* mentioned above was performed in lavishly lightened mosques; men and women crowded the mosques and the imāms led the prayers.¹⁸³

Similar practices are recorded by al-‘Abdarī concerning the eve of the twenty-seventh day of Rajab, the honoured night of the *mi‘rāj*:¹⁸⁴ people gather in illuminated mosques, carpets are spread out, food is brought and people eat and drink in the mosque. Qur’ān is read in a reprehensible way,¹⁸⁵ the *dhikr* is recited in a way that the words are almost not understandable (*lā yilāh yillāh* instead of the correct *lā ilāha illā llāhu*). Disorder prevails in the mosque, as some people recite poetry, while others recite Qur’ān. Cleanliness is not observed in the mosque and its surroundings, as people used to go out to relieve themselves; some ladies pass water in the mosque itself in vessels, which are collected and emptied by some men paid for this service.¹⁸⁶ E. W. Lane gives a detailed description of the celebration of the twenty-seventh day of Rajab, the *laylat al-mi‘rāj*, in Cairo.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸² Al-‘Abdarī, I, 291–293.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, I, 293.

¹⁸⁴ See on these prayers: ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, I, 205; Ibn ‘Asākir, *Ta’rikh*, VII, 344 (but the twenty-ninth day of Rajab is recorded, not the twenty-seventh); Ibn Ḥajar, *Tabyīn*, pp. 18, 27–28; ‘Alī al-Qārī, *al-Adab*, fol. 65b (quoted from al-Suyūṭī’s *al-Jāmi’ al-kabīr*); Ibn al-Jauzī, II, 124–126.

¹⁸⁵ *wa-l-qārī’u yaqra’u l-qur’āna fa-yazidu fīhi mā laysa minhu wa-yanquṣu minhu mā huwa fīhi bi-ḥasbi tilka l-naghamāt wa-l-tarjī’āt llatī tushbihu l-ghinā’a wa-l-hunūk* (? – probably: *wa-l-hanāt* — K) *llatī qad iṣṭalāhū ‘alayhā...* etc.

¹⁸⁶ Al-‘Abdarī, I’ 294–298.

¹⁸⁷ *The Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (London 1954), pp. 473–476.

Šūfīs and common people believed in a special group of the *abdāl*¹⁸⁸ called *al-rajabiyyūn*.¹⁸⁹

People of Lahj and Abyan used in ancient times (*fī sāliḥi l-dahri*) to set out in Rajab for pilgrimage.¹⁹⁰

Popular practices of Rajab in 'Irāq were recorded by Aḥmad Ḥāmid al-Sarrāj.¹⁹¹ Every Saturday of Rajab is called *sabt al-banāt*. In these Saturdays girls wear their best dresses and go out to visit the holy shrines (*mazārāt*). They use to sit down in the court of the *mazār*, near the shrine (*marqad*) and talk about subjects of interest to them. This custom is especially observed in big cities.

"*Ṣaum al-yatīma*" is a practice of fasting observed by girls in the last Tuesday of Rajab. It is connected with a tale of a girl ill-treated and persecuted by her step-mother. She fasted the last Tuesday of Rajab and vowed to fast on this day of Rajab for ever if God would deliver her from her distress. She cooked a meal of coarsely ground wheat (*jarīsha*) in a hidden place, fasted the day and supplicated God in prayer. After some time the wife of the sultan, who sought a bride for her son, was pleased by the beauty and manners of the poor girl and chose her as wife for him. They married and lived happily. Young girls follow the practice of the *yatīma*, cook in a hidden place the *jarīsha* and break their fast with a meal of it. They fast and supplicate God to fulfil their wishes.

The twenty-seventh day of Rajab is a venerated day in the Ja'farī community. On this day amulets and charms are prepared.

The fast of the last Wednesday of Rajab is called *Shābiryūn*. This fact is connected with a tale of a poor wood-cutter, who became happy fasting this day. Once, says the story, when he was sleeping under a tree in the desert, he saw three birds: *Shāhbiryūn*, *Māh-biryūn* and *Asmā-biryūn*. The birds told him that if he would fast the last Wednesday of Rajab and break his fast by eating barley-bread, sesame and sugar, place before himself a vessel with water and light a candle, praying to God — God would grant him his livelihood in abundance. He did so and indeed his wife who was barren bore a child; she was after some time taken to the palace of the king as a nurse for his child. The wood-cutter became a gardener in the garden of the king. When after a year of pleasant life the couple forgot to fast this day of Rajab, a distress befell them: a bird caught the jewels of the king's daughter when

¹⁸⁸ See EI², s.v. "*Abdāl*"; and see al-Jarrāḥi, I, 25, No. 35; al-Suyūṭī, *al-Durr al-manthūr*, I, 320–321.

¹⁸⁹ See on them Ibn al-'Arabī, *Muḥādarat al-abrār* (Cairo 1906), I, 245.

¹⁹⁰ Ibn al-Mujāwir, I, 105.

¹⁹¹ *Awābid al-shuhūr* (Les Superstitions attachées aux Mois), Loghat el-'Arab (1928), VI, 28–32.

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she was bathing in the company of the wife of the wood-cutter. The wood-cutter and his wife were accused of having stolen the jewels and were put in prison. In this month of Rajab, when in prison, they remembered the story of the birds and fasted the month. One day (of this month) the wood-cutter saw a man running hastily to rescue a dying man. The wood-cutter asked him to bring him the products needed for the breaking of the fast of Shābiryūn and promised him that the man would recover. In fact when the products were brought the wood-cutter and his wife consumed the products after the fast, put the vessel with water before them and lit the candle. The ill-man recovered and a bird came to the palace and brought in its beak the jewels of the king's daughter. The wood-cutter and his wife were freed and lived happily until the end of their days. Women in Iraq used to fast on the last Wednesday of Rajab until midday; this — they believe — brings the blessing (*baraka*). They buy barley-bread, sugar, sesame, light candles and the family sits down to a midday-meal. The fasting girl tells the story of Shābiryūn.

The first day of Rajab is a local holiday (*rajabiyya*) in Saiwun (Ḥaḍramaut) and various local festivals fall within this month — reports Philby. "The sighting of the new moon of Rajab — attests Philby — was announced by firing an ancient piece of artillery".¹⁹² This is reminiscent of course, of some practices pertaining to Ramaḍān.

The incessant struggle of the orthodox scholars against the practices of Rajab has not been entirely successful. Some of them yielded to the pressure of popular belief and granted their approval to some observances, counting them among the meritorious deeds of the faithful. Even the veneration of Rajab in the period of the Jāhiliyya got its recognition and was described by a contemporary Muslim scholar as "a remainder of the *ḥanifiyya*".¹⁹³ Only a small group of orthodox extremists of the type of Ibn Taymiyya remained stubbornly opposed to the Rajab practices. These survived and form until the present time an essential part of Muslim popular belief and devotion.

¹⁹² *Sheba's Daughters* (London 1939), p. 278.

¹⁹³ Ibn Qutayba, *al-Ma'āni al-kabir*, I, 67, note 3 ('Abd al-Raḥmān b. Yaḥyā al-Yamanī)