



Mansoura University
Faculty of Tourism and Hotels

**CIRCUMCISION IN EGYPT AND ITS CELEBRATIONS
DURING THE MAMLUK PERIOD**

By

Marwa Hamdi Taha Ibrahim
Al-Alson Higher Institute of Tourism and Hotel Managements

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الختان في مصر واحتفالاته في العصر المملوكي

الملخص العربي

شهدت الاحتفالات المرتبطة بالختان في العصر المملوكي رواجاً كبيراً سواء أكان بين الطبقة الحاكمة أو بين طبقات الشعب. ولقد أسهبت المصادر المملوكية بإمدادنا بأمثلة عديدة عن احتفالات الختان ومظاهرها والتي تبدو أنها كانت لازمة عقب كل عملية ختان وكأنما أنه لم يكن ليوجد ختان بغير احتفالية. فنجد السلاطين يقيمون الولائم وعليها ما لذ وطاب من الأطعمة والأشربة. وقد سجلت لنا المصادر أن احتفالات الختان آنذاك كانت تمتد لعدة أيام وعلي الأخص بين الطبقة الحاكمة. بل إنها قد تمتد الي شهر كامل في بعض الأحيان. وقد بلغت بعض الإحتفالات من الضخامة والفخامة أنها كانت جماعية؛ أي أن يقوم السلطان بدعوة أبناء الأمراء والعامّة أو حتي الأيتام ليُختنوا دون مقابل. هذا ويبدو أن مظاهر البذخ والإسراف تلك في الإحتفال بالختان قد أدت في بعض الأوقات الي فرض ضريبة علي الإحتفالية. أما عن احتفالات عامة الشعب، فقد اشتركت مع احتفالات السلاطين في تقديم الوليمة وكذلك في استقبال الهدايا والنقود ولكن بالطبع مع اختلاف مظاهر الفخامة. لذلك سنتلي الدراسة الضوء علي مظاهر تلك الاحتفالية وما تنطوي عليه من طقوس.

Abstract:

Celebrations were widely spread during the Mamluk period. They were varied such as religious, national and social. Celebration of circumcision was among the important social ones that was celebrated by all classes at that time. Mamluk sources provided us with different examples of these celebrations and their aspects. It seems that there was no circumcision

without a celebration. Sultans offered luxurious banquets to the public that would extend to a few days or a whole month in some cases. Regarding the public, they celebrated as well with almost the same process but in less aspects of extravagancy of course. Therefore, the study will highlight on the aspects and rituals of these celebrations.

The topic has been chosen as it deals with an important social celebration during the Mamluk Period that was always connected to circumcision.

Regarding the field of tourism guidance, the study shed the light on a celebration of a process that has its roots in Egypt since the ancient Egyptian time¹ and still exist in the present time due to its importance for the Egyptians. Relevant researches referred to these celebrations as an overview,² but it still need to be tackled in a detailed study in order to analyze and interpret these incidents.

Keywords:

Circumcision - celebration- barber-Mamluk.

¹Mona M. Raafat El-Sayed and Randa Alaa El-Din Fouad, An Insight into Egyptian Intangible Cultural Heritage Tradition: *The Hammām*, (IJHMS), vol.2, Issue, 1, (2020), 54; Mohamed Megahed, Ancient Egyptian Royal Circumcision from the Pyramid Complex of Djedkare, (Anthropology), XLIX/2, 2011, 156-161; May Farouk, Physical Health in Dynastic Egypt, The Ideal VS Reality, (JAAUTH), vol. 23 No.2, (2022), 172; Ellen Lutnick, Kevin Pranicoff, Kyle M. Waisanen, A Cut Above the Rest: The Historic Perspectives of Circumcision and Anesthesia, Vol. II (i), (July 2022), 9.

²Ġaylān Muḥammad 'Abbās, *Al-A'yād wa-l- Iḥitifālāt fi Miṣr al-Islāmīyah wa Ḡuduraha al-Tārīḥīyah mund al-Fatḥ al-'Arabī ḥatta Nihāyat 'Aṣr al-Mamālīk al-Ġarākisah*, Ph.D., unpublished, Faculty of Tourism & Hotel Management, Helwan University, (Cairo, 1996), 294-301.

Methodology:

The researcher followed a descriptive method to an analytic approach to the historical events. The researcher also followed a methodology based on a hypothesis of inductiveness to present the mentioned incidents of circumcision and extract the aspects of celebrations were connected to them. The study will be tackled from historical not religious point of view.

Objectives:

The study aims to display the celebrations connected to circumcision in Egypt during the Mamluk period.

Hypothesis:

- The aspects of celebrations were different in accordance to the social class.
- There were some basic rituals connected to the celebration.
- There was a certain person responsible for executing circumcision.
- There was a certain age for circumcision.

Introduction:

Circumcision is known as *ḥitān* in Arabic. Idiomatically; it is a term derived from the root *ḥ-t-n*, in this context means surgical removal of the skin covering the tip of the glans.³

Linguistically; it is cutting off a part of the male's genital organ⁴. This practice was acquired for boys in Islam. Circumcision is not mentioned in Qur'ān but in ḥadīth as it is among the features of natural religion (*fiṭrah*) in addition to clipping of nails, the use of toothpick, the cutting of moustache, the more profuse length of the beard.⁵

As for girls and their circumcision, it will not be a part of this study as it as we could not trace any examples in the available Mamluk sources.⁶

During the Mamluk period, sultans themselves were committed to implement this practice in a big celebration; the same thing was followed by their people as well but in accordance to their rank.

In this context, Ibn Taḡrībīrdī mentions that in 672 AH/ 1237AD during the first day of Great Bairam, sultan al-Zāhir Baybars ordered to circumcise his own son Ḥiḍr along with some other amirs' sons in the

³ Muḥammad Luṭfī al-Ṣabbāḡ, *Islamic Ruling on Male and Female Circumcision*, World Health Organization, (Alexandria, 1996), 2.

⁴ Muḥammad al-Hawwārī, *al-Ḥitān fī -l-Yahūdīyah wa-l- Masīḥīyah wa-l- Islām*, (Cairo, 1987), 5.

⁵ Ḥadīth Šarīf.

⁶ In sunnah circumcision for males is better to be announced in a celebration. On the other hand, circumcision for females -if done- should be without any celebrations. Al-Hawwārī, *al-Ḥitān*, 127-128.

square down of the citadel.⁷Al-Maqrīzī states that the sultan did not accept any present in order not to overload anyone.⁸The previous incident clarify that it was common to celebrate the event of the circumcision with the celebration of Great Bairam and clarifies that normally the circumcised boy used to receive presents.

In 692 AH⁹/ 1293 AD sultan al-Ašraf Ḥalīl celebrated the circumcision of his brother, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad ibn Qalāwūn, and his nephew Muẓaffar al-Dīn Mūsa, son of al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ □ Alā □ al-Dīn □ Alī b. Qalāwūn. The aspects of that celebration were playing *al-Qabaq*¹⁰ outside the gate of al-Naṣr¹¹ and all the guests were banqueted. After the circumcision, the amirs threw money as a gift in a basin according to their ranks as follows; amir of hundred knights threw 100 golden dinars, amir of fifty knights threw 50 dinars and so on¹², till the basin was filled

⁷Ibn Taḡrībirdī, *al-Nuḡūm al-Zāhirah fī Mulūk Miṣr wa-l- Qāhirah*, (Cairo, 2005), VIII,16.

⁸Al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk li-Ma'rifat Dūwal al-Mulūk*, (Cairo, 1936), I/II, 612.

⁹The same incident was mentioned by Ibn Taḡrībirdī in 690 AH. See: Ibn Taḡrībirdī, *Nuḡūm*, VIII,16.

¹⁰*Al-Qabaq*: Also known as *qibaq*. it is a Turkish term means pumpkin which was a game connected to horsemanship, it was widely common among the mamluks. For more details see: Luṭfī Aḥmad Naṣṣār, *Wasā'il al-Tarḡih fī 'Aṣr Salāṭīn al-Mamālīk*, (Cairo,1999),199-200.

¹¹The gate of al-Naṣr (known also as bāb al-'Izz) was built in 480 AH/ 1087AD. It locates to the north of Cairo. Aḥmad 'Abd al-Rāziq, *al-'Imārah al-Islāmīyah fī Miṣr munda-l- Fatḥ al-'Arabī ḥatta Nihāyat al-'Aṣr al-Mamlūkī*, *Dār al-Fikr al-'Arabī*, Cairo, 2009,79.

¹²Ibn Kaṭīr, *al-Bidāyah wa-l- Nihāyah*, (Beirut, 2021), XV, 569.

with gold.¹³ It is noticeable here that circumcision was expressed as “*ḥuhūr*” in Arabic and not “*ḥitān*” as usual.

We can assume that circumcision was celebrated with gifting money to the circumcised boy which was thrown in the same basin of circumcision.¹⁴

Aḥmad, son of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad b. Qalāwūn came from al-Karak¹⁵ to Cairo in 731 AH/1330 AD, he went up to the citadel served by some amirs and *ḥuḡḡāb*¹⁶ “chamberlains”. A few days later, he was circumcised and he stayed there in the citadel for a while.¹⁷ Al-Saḥāwī did not mention anything about the celebration, he only mentioned being circumcised in the citadel.

¹³ Ibn al-Ġadrī, *Tārīḥ Ibn al-Ġadrī*, (Beirut, 1998), I, 154-155.

¹⁴ Ṣawqī ‘Abd al-Qawī ‘Uṭmān, *Iḥtifālyāt al-ḥitān fī Miṣr*, 43 in Journal of “*Al-Mu’arriḥ al-Miṣri*, Faculty of Arts, Cairo University, (Cairo, Jan., 2017), no.50, 43.

¹⁵ Al-Karak is a fortress situated to the east of the dead sea. See: Encyclopedia of Islam, Art. al-Karak, (Leiden, 1978), IV, 609.

¹⁶ Sing. is *ḥāḡīb* “Chamberlain” the person responsible for guarding the door of access of the ruler, so that only approved visitors may approach him. al-Qalqaṣandī, *Ṣubḥ al-A’ša fī Ṣinā’at al-Inšā*, (Cairo, 1914), 19-20; IV, 19; Al-Saḥamāwī, *al-Taḡr al-Bāsim fī Ṣinā’at al-Kātib wa-l- al-Kātim*, released by Aṣraf Muḥammad Anas, (Cairo, 2009), I, 393; Maḥāsin al-Waqqād, *al-Ḥiḡābah Zaman Salāḥn al-Mamālīk*, JMIH, III, 2003, Cairo, 105-106; Marwah Ḥamdī, *al-Ḥiḡābah and al-Ḥuḡḡāb in Mamlūk Egypt and their Most Important Architectural and Artistic Works*, MA., unpublished, ‘Ain Šams University, Faculty of Arts, Tourist Guidance Dept., (Cairo, 2006), I, 2.

¹⁷ Al-Saḥāwī, *Waḡīz al-Kalām fī-l- Dail ‘alā Dūwal al-Islām*, (Beirut, 1995), II, 530.

Ṭuquztumur the viceroy¹⁸ ordered to circumcise his own son in 745 AH/ 1344 AD, he sponsored a big celebration; he sent grilled food and dessert to the “*ḥānqāwāt*” hospices¹⁹ and “*arbiṭah*” convents²⁰ as well.²¹ The previous incident shows that high-rank amirs used to celebrate that occasion in a big celebration as well. It was common as a part of the celebration with this event is to send food to the ascetic people in the religious places as a type of charity.

¹⁸ *Al-Nā'ib* or the viceroy was the highest ranking *amīr* in the *Mamlūk* Kingdom. He was signed, in the name of the sultan, the applications for fiefs (*qiṣaṣ*), and he was authorized to give out small feudal charters (*iqṭā'āt ḥāṭifah*) without consulting the sultan. See: Al-'Umarī, *Masālik al-Abṣār fī Mamālik al-Amṣār*, Cairo, IFAO, 1985, 55-56; al-Bāšā, *al-Funūn al-Islāmīyah wa-l- Wazā'if -l- Āṭār al- Arabīyah*, dār al-naḥḍah al- arabīyah, (Cairo, 1966), III, 1230-1236; David Ayalon, *Studies on the Structure of the Mamluk Army*, III, Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, XVI, (London, 1954), 57; Laila 'Abd al-Ġawwād, *Nā'ib al-Salṭanah fī-l- Qāhirah 'Aṣr Dawlat al-Mamālīk al-Baḥarīyah*, Miḡallat al-Mū'arriḥ al-Miṣrī, Cairo, 1st, 1988, 59-219; Muḥammad 'Abd al-Ġanī al-Aṣqar, *Nā'ib al-Salṭanah al-Mamlūkīyah fī Miṣr*, (Cairo, 1999), 23-25.

¹⁹ *Ḥānqāh*: A composite word of Persian origin means a building usually reserved for *Sūfis*. It was introduced into Egypt by Salāh al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī in 569/1173 as a center in which foreign *Sūfis* could live and worship. See: Donald, P. Little, *The Nature of Khānqāhs, Ribāts, and Zāwīyas under the Mamlūks*, Islamic studies present to Charles J. Asams, (New York- Leiden, 1991), 92-93; Dawlat 'Abdullāh, *Ma'āhid Taḍkīyat al-Nufūs fī Miṣr fī-l- 'Aṣrayn al-Ayyūbī wa-l- Mamlūkī*, (Cairo, 1980), 5.

²⁰ See: Al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Mawā'iz wa-l- I'tibār bi-Dīkr al-Ḥiṭaṭ wa-l- Āṭār*, released by Ayman Fu'ād Saiyed, (London, 2003), IV/II, 793-794; Samīr 'Abd al-Mon'im Ḥiḍrī, *al-Arbiṭah al-Bāqīyah bi-l-Qāhirah min al-'Aṣr al-Mamlūkī*, M.A. Thesis, unpublished, Faculty of Archaeology, Cairo University, (Cairo, 1998), 3-8.

²¹ Ibn Qāḍī Ṣuhbah, *Tārīḥ Ibn Qāḍī Ṣuhbah*, (Damascus, 1977), I/III, 407.

Regarding the duration of the celebration, it seems that it lasted for a few days. In this context, Ibn Duqmāq mentions that in 777 AH/ 1375 AD sultan al-Ašraf Šaḫbān ordered to circumcise his two sons amir Alī and amir Ḥāğğī, and celebrated with a banquet that lasted for seven days.²²

As for the rituals of such occasion Ibn Sūdūn mentions a typical celebration of the commoners. The father used to accompany his son on the day of circumcision to the public bath then the boy used to wear a special costume. Parents used to offer food and beverage to those who came to congratulate on this occasion. Congratulations were offered after circumcision; it was common to use the same basin of circumcision to receive money in.²³ Al-Maqrīzī also states that in 781 AH/1379 AD the nanny of sultan Ḥāğğī was punished till she showed up the head gear, the golden *ḫrāz*²⁴ (embroider) and the golden basin were made especially for him by his father sultan al-Ašraf on his circumcision.²⁵

²²Ibn Duqmāq, *al-Nafḥah al-Miskīyah fī-l- Dawlah al-Turkīyah*, (Beirut,1999), 215; al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, III/I, 250; al-Saḫāwī, *Wağīz al-Kalām*, I, 213; Saḫ ḫ Abd al-Fattāḫ ḫ Āšū, *al-Muğtamaḫ al-Miṣrī fī ḫ Aṣr Salāḫīn al-Mamālīk*, (Cairo,1992),139.

²³Ibn Sūdūn al-Bašbuğāwī, *Nuzhat al-Nufūs wa Muḫhek al-ḫ Ubūs*, (Leiden, 1998), 75.

²⁴Inscribing the names of sultans or their signature on their clothes with golden bands to be distinguished and remarkable. It was also granted to high officials. Lağnat Alfaḫ al-ḫaḫārah, *Muṣṭalaḫāt fī Alfaḫ al-ḫaḫārah (al-Aḫīmah wa-l Ašribah wa-l Malābis)*, (Cairo, 2017),145-146.

²⁵Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, III/I, 369.

So, the circumcised boy used to wear a special head gear and a golden embroider. Then, to lie in a basin for circumcision and to receive money in the same basin after circumcision.

In 800 AH/1397 AD sultan al-Zāhir ordered to circumcise his two sons, Faraḡ and Abd al-Azīz who ruled the country later on in addition to some other orphan boys who were sons of late amirs.²⁶The sultan only banqueted women in the citadel and he did not offer one for men saving for money.²⁷

Sources mention that "*al-mezaīyn*" the barber was the authorized person to circumcise boys. In this context, Ibn Ḥaḡar mentions that in 822 AH/1419 AD a man decided to circumcise his four sons who fortunately survived during the plague. He banqueted food and beverage to celebrate this event, but the boys died within an hour after circumcision. The father accused the barber who circumcised the boys as his scalpel might be poisoned, but the barber denied and injured himself with the same scalpel to prove that it was clean. When the father tried to trace the cause of his death, he realized that a huge dead snake lied in the dispenser of the syrup from which the boys drunk.²⁸This incident shows that even common people celebrated the event of circumcision in accordance with their status. It also clarifies that the barber was the one in charge of circumcision.

Nail al-Amal fī ²⁶Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, III/II,900; 'Abd al-Bāsīt al-Zāhirī, *Dail al-Dūwal*, (Beirut, 2002), released by 'Abd al-Salām Tadmury, (Beirut, 2002), II/I, 393.

²⁷Ibn Taḡrībirdī, *Nuḡūm*, XII, 80.

²⁸Ibn Ḥaḡar, *Inbā' al-Ġumr bi-Abnā' al-'Omr*,(Cairo,1994), III,199-200.

As for the cost of such surgery, according to Ibn Ḥaḡar in 827AH/1423AD sultan Barsbāy ordered to circumcise his own son Muḥammad, and he celebrated this event by a procession. The elite paid in the basin of circumcision a lot of golden dinars from which he paid hundred golden dinars to the barber and he sent the rest to the treasury.²⁹The thing that shows the large amounts were paid for the barber.

Regarding the appropriate average age of circumcision, in 837AH/1433 AD sultan Barsbāy ordered to circumcise his own son al-Ġamālī Yūsuf who was around eleven years³⁰ along with around forty other boys and offered them out fit as well. Two great banquets were prepared in the citadel for such event; one for men and another for women.³¹

According to Islam, boys should be circumcised before puberty in order not to reveal their genitals, in addition to the pain that the boy would feel.³²But in some cases, circumcision was performed for adults. In this context it worth mentioning that sultan Ġaḡmaq decided to get married to the daughter of prince of Ġarkas, both the bride and his daughter

²⁹Ibn Ḥaḡar, *Inbā'*, III, 325; al-Şayrafī, *Nuzhat al-Nufūs wa-l- Abdān fī Tawārīḡ al-Zamān*, (Cairo,1973), III, 55; 'Abd al-Bāsīt al-Zāhirī , *Nail al-Amal*, IV/I,149; Muhammad 'Aṭṭīyah, *al-Aḡwal al-Şeḡīyah wa-l-Ṭibbiyah fī Mişr wa Bilād al-Şām fi-l- 'Aşr al-Mamlūkī* (648-923/1250-1517), MA. Thesis, The Islamic University, Gaza, Faculty of Arts, History and Archaeology dept., (Gaza, 2012), 23-24.

³⁰It was mentioned by Ibn Ḥaḡar that he was nine years old. See: Ibn Ḥaḡar, *Inba'*, III, 511-512.

³¹Ibn Taġribirdī, *Nuġūm*, XV,41-42; al-Şayrafī, *Nuzhat*, III, 284; Al-Şaḡāwī, *Waġīz al-Kalām*, II, 530.

³²Ibn al-Ḥāġġ, *al-Madḡal*, (Cairo, no date), III, 296.

converted to Islam and then the father of the bride was circumcised.³³ So, it seems that circumcision was common for Muslem males as he converted to Islam in 853 AH/1449 AD regardless of his age.

In 855 AH/1451 AD al-Saḥāwī himself mentions that he got a baby boy, who was described by his father as blessed due to what the sultan have done upon his circumcision when he offered both; "*al-'Aqīqah*" the sacrifice³⁴ and the circumcision of his own brother.³⁵

Celebrating circumcision was known outside the country not just in side Egypt. In 860 AH/1455 AD sultan Iynāl received a congratulatory letter from sultan Murād Ibn 'Uṭmān of the Roman Empire on the occasion of circumcising his two sons³⁶.

The circumcision of the two sons of al-Zayn b. Muzhir Kātib al-sirr, al-Badr Muḥammad and Ibrāhīm was in 869 AH/ 1464 AD, he celebrated that event.³⁷ The aspects of celebration were not mentioned.

In 873 AH/1468 AD while preparing for the celebration of circumcision of al-Mū'ayyad Aḥmad's son in Alexandria, he died.³⁸ Nothing was mentioned about this celebration due to his death. Upon the arrival of

³³ Al-Saḥāwī, *Al-Tibr al-Masbūk fī Dail al-Sulūk*, released by Labībah Ibrāhīm Muṣṭafa and Naḡwā Muṣṭafa Kāmil, (Cairo, 2003), II, 182.

³⁴ *Al-'Aqīqah*: A meal offers in the seventh day of baby's birth at which relatives and friends are common to be invited. See: Ibn al-Ḥāḡḡ, *al-Madḥal*, III, 291-295; Laḡnat Alfaẓ al-Ḥaḍārah, *Muṣṭalaḥāt*, 51.

³⁵ Al-Saḥāwī, *al-Tibr al-Masbūk fī Dail al-Sulūk*, (Cairo, 2002), III, 94.

³⁶ Ibn Taḡrībirdī, *Hawādīt al-Duhūr fī Mada al-Aīyām wa-l- Šuhūr*, (Cairo, 1990), I, 507.

³⁷ 'Abd al-Bāsīt al-Zāhirī, *Nail al-Amal*, 6/2, 212.

³⁸ Al-Šayrafī, *Inbā' al-Hasr bi-Anbā' al-'Aṣr*, (Cairo, 1970), 16.

sultan al-Ašraf Qāyrbāy to Damietta in 880 AH/1475 AD, al-Manṣūr ‘Oṭmān son of al-Zāhir Ğaqmaq asked to circumcise his two sons. The sultan agreed and granted him two thousand dinars. He offered a luxuries circumcision and a procession at which the prominent amirs shared such as the Atābek³⁹ and Yašbak al-Dawadār.⁴⁰

In 887 AH/1482 AD it was the circumcision of al-Mū'ayyad Aḥmad's son in Alexandria during which he hired a famous singer named □Ali b. Riḥāb to sing on that celebration.⁴¹

Sources mentions that the two sons of the Ḥanafi judge al-Nāšir b. al-Iḥmīmī were circumcised in 894/ 1488 AD, it was such a big day during which so many rare things happened.⁴² Sources did not mention what are these rare things.

As for the duration of celebration Ibn Iyās mentions an incident shows that it could last for a whole month. In 895AH/1489 AD sultan al-Ašraf Qāyrbāy decided to circumcise his son Muḥammad al-Sibā□ ī he gave a great interest to such occasion which lasted almost for a month. Offering

³⁹ *Al-Atābik* or commander in chief of the army. It was common for him to succeed the sultan on the throne. One of the most common titles of *atābik al-‘Askar* was *al-amīr al-kabīr*. The office of *atābik* was called also *atābikīyah* or *atābikīyat al-‘Askar*. See: al-Qalqašandī, *Ṣubḥ*, IV, 18; Ayalon, *Studies on the Structure*, BSOAS, III, 1954, 58; al-Bāšā, *al-Funūn al-Islāmīyah*, I, pp. 3-11; André Clot, *L'Égypte des mamelouks l'empire des esclaves*, (Perrin, 1996), p. 59; Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Ġanī al-Ašqar, *Atābik al-‘Asākir fī-l- Qāhirah ‘Ašr al-Mamālīk al-Ġarākisah*, (Cairo, 2003), 21; Marwah Hamdī, *al-Ḥiğābah*, I, 38.

⁴⁰ Abd al-Bāsit al-Zāhirī, *Nail al-Amal*, 7/2 ,151.

⁴¹ Ibn Iyas, *Bada’i’ al-Zuhūr fī Waqā’i’ al-Duhūr*, (Cairo, 2007), III, 193.

⁴² Abd al-Bāsit al-Zāhirī, *Nail al-Amal*, 8/2 ,155.

presents to the sultan started from Rağab first to its end. The presents were varied such as silk clothes, sheep, cows, sweets and fruits. The circumcision itself was done on 20th of Rağab, it was such a busy day during which more than forty boys of prominent and non-prominent amirs' sons were circumcised, and the city was decorated on this occasion.⁴³

In 907 AH/1501 AD it was the circumcision of Ibn Alī b. Abī al-Ġawd burdadār⁴⁴ of sultan al-Ašraf Qāyṭbāy, during which there was a procession held in Cairo, the stores were decorated, the streets were lit with candles and glass lamps from madrasah of al-Ašraf⁴⁵ till al-Ṣalibah Street and prominent people shared as well. According to Ibn Iyās the celebration was even rival to the celebration of *al-maḥmal*.⁴⁶ The thing was described by Ibn Iyās as rare to happen.⁴⁷ Regarding the banquet of

⁴³Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i'*, III,371-372.

⁴⁴Burdadār is the one responsible for serving the officers in the *dīwān* "bureau". See: Muḥammad Aḥmad Duhmān, *Muḥāmmad al-Ašraf al-Ašrafīyah fi-l-Ḥaḍra al-Mamlūkiyyah*, (Damascus, 1990),32.

⁴⁵Al-madrasah al-Ašrafīyah was built by sultan al-Ašraf Barsbāy in al-Muḥāmmadīz street in 826/1422. See: Aḥmad 'Abd al-Rāziq, *al-Imārah al-Islāmīyah*, 355-356.

⁴⁶*Al-maḥmal* is a type of richly decorated palanquin, perched on a camel and serving transport pilgrims to Mecca. See: Encyclopedia of Islam, Art. *Maḥmal*, VI, 44-46; al-Ġazīrī, *Durar al-Fawā'id al-Munazzamah fī Aḥbār al-Ḥāğ wa Tārīḥ Makkah al-Mu'azzamah*, (Cairo, 1964),83-89; Jacque Jomier, *Le mahmal et la caravane égyptienne des pèlerins de la Mecque*, (Le Caire, 1953),1-9.

⁴⁷Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i'*, IV,29.

the circumcision, there was a certain banquet known as *al-A'dār* or *al-'Aḍīrah*.⁴⁸

Furthermore, the extravagant celebrations of circumcision encouraged to impose a tax on such celebration. “*Ḍāminat al-maḡānī*”⁴⁹ guarantor of songs was the authorized person to collect that tax. Such tax was for weddings, circumcisions and even prostitutions all over Egypt. There was *al-iḥlāq* which seems to be an approval from *Ḍāminat al-maḡānī* according to which a certain amount of money should be paid in the *diwan* bureau of the country. Such tax was rescinded from time to another as al-Maqrīzī states.⁵⁰

Conclusions:

- Both rich and poor people celebrated circumcision but in different aspects.
- Many sultans used to allow public to have their boys circumcised along with the sultan's sons in the same celebrations in a group.
- Rich people used to hire singers to sing on that celebration.
- The duration of the celebration could last for a whole month in big celebrations.
- Circumcision was executed by barbers not physicians.
- The age of circumcision should be before puberty.

⁴⁸Al- Nūwayrī, *Kitāb al-Ilmām*, V, 259; Nabīl 'Abd al-'Azīz, *al-Maṭbaḥ al-Sultānī Zaman al-Ayyūbiyyīn wa-l- Mamālīk*, (Cairo, 1989), 25, 61; Laḡnat Alfaz al-Ḥaḍārah, *Muṣṭalaḥāt*, 6.

⁴⁹Such job was authorized to a lady responsible for collecting taxes from singers, dancers and even prostitutes. Mervat Ḥasan 'Oṭmān, *Ṭā'ifat al-Maḡānī fī Miṣr fī -l-'Aṣr al-Mamlūkī*, AnIsl, (2009), 384-385.

⁵⁰Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, III/I, 266.

- The celebration of circumcision was sometimes held during the feasts.
- There were two different banquets at the celebration of circumcision; one for women and another for men.
- There was a special meal at the banquet of such celebration known as *al-A'ḍār* or *al-'Aḍrah*.
- There was a tax imposed on the celebration of circumcision during the Mamluk period.
- Distributing charity was common on such celebration such as sending food and beverage to religious places.
- There was a certain costume worn by the circumcised boy such as a head gear and an embroider.
- The boys used to be circumcised in a basin that was used for receiving money and presents on the same occasion.
- The presents of such celebration were varied among food, beverage, cattle or clothes.

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