

Research

BORDERS AND BORDER ZONES: DIFFERENCES AND EQUALITIES

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RITUAL PURITY ASSOCIATED WITH BIRTH AND RAISING A CHILD

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Abstract. Hygiene of the body is an important element of family rites associated with the birth and raising of a child. It depends on both Koran requirements of Islam, and rituals for acquiring new social status on a level of Islam taught within the family. The report follows this boundary between the Koranic tradition and the Islam in traditional folk customs, connected with the ritual purity in customs related to childbirth and child rearing of Bulgarian Sunni-Muslims. The main focus is on customs relating to the child and the woman in labor during the first 40 days after birth, and one of the biggest and most important celebrations in Muslim family - the circumcision ceremony of boys at the age of 6-7 years, called *syunnet*.

Keywords: hygiene, Islam, gender, ritual, Koran

Personal body hygiene is an important element of family rites at birth and child rearing. Rules which regulate the cleanliness rituals are placed both

by Quranic requirements, and the rituals to acquire a new level of social status in the everyday Muslim life. This level of “folk” canon differs from the religious canon and even often in conflict with it. The article traces this “border” between Quranic Islam and everyday Muslim practices (“folk Islam”) in the terms of the concept of ritual purity related to childbirth and child rearing in Bulgarian Sunni Muslims presented by both groups - Sunni Turks and Bulgarian Muslims in the period from the end of XIX to mid-twentieth century. The focus is brought to customs related to the newborn and the mother during the first 40 days after birth, as well as to one of the biggest and most important rite in the Muslim family called *syunnet* (circumcision ceremony), namely circumcision of boys at the age of 6-7 years which is perceived by Muslims as a sign of cleanliness and initiation into the manhood to the Islamic community. This virtual border in the structure of rituals under study acquires the following conceptual frameworks and working hypotheses: (1) Purification rites and rituals during the first 40 days after childbirth mark the boundary of the transition to acquire new social status for both the mother and the newborn. For the mother this boundary marks the passage from ritual impurity to ritual purity, for the child it marks the completion of a potentially dangerous 40-day period after birth; (2) Concept of physical dimensions of purity in Islam and those peculiar states of the female body, categorized as unclean imposing a boundary between the woman, “filthy” with blood and the surrounding world. This is implied by the Muslim belief that blood came out of the woman’s genitals is one of the most “dirty” things and one who touches her can be contaminated as committing a sin. Overcoming this boundary is the end of bleeding succeeded by obligatory required ablution of the body; (3) Concept of crossing the religious borders and circumcision transformation into a folk tradition with spectacular nature; making it a sign of boys’ social and religious belonging and cleanliness, as well as “border” that divides the orthodox Muslim from non-Muslim; (4) The end of the period (mid-twentieth century)

marks the boundary between traditional and modern interpretation of the subject on study. During this period, traditional customs and rituals associated with childbirth and raising a child, together with the accompanying religious practices and beliefs begin to decompose and narrow their field as a result of modernization changes that occur in the Bulgarian society in the second half of the twentieth century.

The article is based on already published studies and my personal researched- based on field studies among Sunni Muslims in the regions with the densest Muslim population in Bulgaria. By the method of conducting a focused interview, respondents from both target groups Sunni Muslims were deliberately selected by two main criteria - with and without religious education. Religious educated (imams, hodjas) are thoroughly fluent with canonical primary sources (Koran, hadiths) and entirely rely on them. The rest of the Muslim respondents rely on traditional religious beliefs passed down through the generations or the so-called everyday life Islam. Although not canonical, these beliefs also have one main focus – they emphasize the great importance of cleanliness and hygiene in Islamic tradition and to “preserve” the impure mother having delivered a child and other people around her from potential harm in breach of purifying rites.

Having a baby and raising a child was essential in a woman's life and the community. Only after giving birth to her first child, the mother was considered a member of the family and in a kinship group of her husband's family. Around these moments were performed a number of purification rituals designated to assist the proper initiation of mother and child into the new social group with a new status. They were related mostly to the first 40 days after birth.

The pregnant woman's routine as well as the mother delivered a baby within the first 40-day period after the childbirth, till the mid-twentieth century, was determined by the tradition shaped within Sunnah from Hanafi

School. According to the traditional beliefs, breach of common routine and behavior showed the way to terrible aftermaths both for the woman who delivered a baby, her family and for the people around her. The cycle ended with the ritual of purification, linked with the idea of ablution and purifying power of water. After the rituals were completed, the mother of the baby could return to the normal everyday routine of a married breast-feeding woman.

According to respondents till the mid-twentieth century births were given at home. The first bathing of the mother occurred immediately after birth, on the third day after the birth or in a week. Washing was performed over a wooden bowl attended by a family midwife - grandmother (*ebeanne*) or mother in law, as the young mother was thoroughly flushed with water, but no soap was used. In the village of Dinevo, Municipality of Haskovo the midwife boiled a braid of white onion, put it in a sieve on the head of the mother and poured water on her hair through it. Water was thrown into the garden or another place away from people's walk.

People believed that within the first 40 days after birth the woman who had given birth is unclean, that's why her contacts with others were barely permitted, contacts with her family – very restricted. She could not sit with others around the table but was served in a separate plate, which was designated for this purpose and was not changed during the 40 day period and stored in a separate place. The woman who had delivered a baby did not participate in the chores – she was kept away especially from making or baking bread, bringing water for the family as well as she had to stay away from her husband (Цанева, 1994). If the woman who had had a baby was visited by another not clean woman (the monthly period), the last had to whisper to the baby three times: “I am just like your mother”. It was believed that if the unclean woman did not admit her state, the child would suffer from the illness “*mundarlak*”, causing rash –small red dots on the person's face and body (Съботинова, 2002, p. 54). According to the respondents some women did it

deliberately to bring bad luck to the child, to do damage. Women visiting the young mother had to seek water or a fountain on their way and dip the food they carried as a gift to the mother telling: “May the milk of the mother runs as water runs with abundance”¹⁾

All these restrictions imply religious meaning and beyond above mentioned traditional prohibitions there are religious ones. According to Islamic canon the female immediately after childbirth is considered “impure” till the 40th day, which is called *nifas* literally meaning “postnatal bleeding”. During this period, Islam imposes on women clear prohibitions until the period finishes and she is considered clean. These prohibitions are related to the fulfillment of basic religious duties – it is absolutely forbidden to her to make prayers and worship *namaz*,²⁾ to do *oruch*³⁾ (to fast), touch and read the Quran, to enter the mosque, to make *tavaf*.⁴⁾ The main traditional rule that prohibits sexual intercourse⁵⁾ in the 40-day period of “unclean” status is confirmed by the canons, and the violation of the prohibition is considered as a sin (ЯЗЪДЖЪ, 2002, pp. 17-18).

Koran requires to the mother to take full ablution (*gyusyul*) on the 40th day. *Gyusyul* (*major ablution; full ablution*) is complete and triple washing the whole body under strict canonical rules. It is performed with pure water in the following way: washing the hands up to the wrists, washing the genitals, making small ablution (*abdest*),⁶⁾ washing of the head three times, wash the whole body three times, observing the sequence to start with the right half of the body. It is done three times, in order not to miss a part of the body in the washing “even as it is small like the needle tip” (ЯЗЪДЖЪ, 2002, p. 16). Unlike small ablution the major ablution “gyusyul” does not require a prayer to be read. If the body of the woman is not covered with something while taking bathing, the person taking ablution does not turned her body towards Mecca and does not speak. This canonical requirement for the mother crossing the border from “unclean” state into “pure” state coincides with the traditional

custom *kırklama* - ritual purification of the mother and the child on the 40th day after childbirth.

Till the first half of the twentieth century, a major figure in the customs and rituals around the childbirth was the community midwife. Usually she was called “Grandmother” because she was an elderly woman, a wife with a lot of children who could not be harmed by contacts with the impure woman in labor. Ever since the birth of the baby she was engaged with numerous ritual practices acts with purification nature.

Once the child was born, the mother-in-law or the midwife “grandmother” immersed the baby immediately in the slightly warm water to be healthy. Then the baby was wiped off, and wrapped in diapers. The diapers had to be white in color,⁷⁾ because if they were dark, this would ruin the child’s life. The baby should be swaddle with diapers made from the father and mother’ shirts or from old grandparents’ clothes implying the wish the child to have a long life like the grandfather. They were changed up to three times a day and were washed separately from those of adults. The first diapers were stretched to dry on a green stick. In Bulgarian Muslims they were brought home with the baby’s shirts before the sunset, to avoid any curse. If this happens, the child cried a lot at night. Until the baby was 40-days old the diapers could not be washed with soap so as not to invoke jinx the child. In some places there were requirements for diaper’s drying.⁸⁾ If the diapers were swiped away by the wind or picked up by a whirl or blizzard they had to be laundered again after that they were boiled under fire, or they were not used at wall, to avoid raising a sick child (Цанева, 1994).

According to traditional practice, within the 40-day period, the baby is given a shower twice a day-in the morning and in the evening. Eventually, the baby was given a bath once a day and gradually the bathing was taken in larger periods, and when the baby was grown – at least once a week. Bulgarian Muslims in the Rhodopi Mountain believed that baby’s crying was a “cloak”

from outside, through the magic from another child. In this case two women-neighbors in the evening took a pot with water and put it in the fire. One put in the water three times live chars and the other asked, “What do you extinguish?” And she told her: “I am extinguishing two voices, let’s just one stay.” They washed the child with the same water, and then disposed it together with the embers believing that the crying was dumped away as well (Цанева, 1994). Water which was used to bathe the child or to wash the baby’s clothes was discarded at a designated place in the yard (digging hole) until the 40th day came, away from the people walked, otherwise the child would be sick.⁹⁾

Till the 50s of the twentieth century, there were regional variations in tradition of the first bathing of the child. However, it was universal rule, to put an egg in the water of this first bath and over the next 40 days, in order to nourish the skin and to make it soft, another tradition was to put a bit of salt in the bathing water to prevent smelling and skin irritation. In the village of Ovcharovo, Municipality of Targovishte the midwife put a clean silver coin, in the water of first bathing, in order to make the child’s skin clean and healthy, for good luck, to provoke fluent speaking, to tinkle.¹⁰⁾ In Popovo the custom was, if this was a first child born in the family to bathe him/her with water, in which the mother’s wedding shirt (from the wedding night) had been laundered so to raise a beautiful child, “white as milk and red as blood”. Bulgarian Muslims in the Rhodopes, observed the following practices for the first bathing: poured mustard seed, placed in the pan a green twig, sprinkled walnut leaves, placed white silver coin and extinguished two or three charcoal with burning oil, all done against the evil eye (Цанева, 1994). Water from the first bathing was thrown over roses or young fruit tree so the baby grow nice and bloom like it. Throughout the 40-day period, the water used to bathe the child was discharged in a clean and remote location. It was discharged before evening because it was believed that the so-called *lausi*,¹¹⁾ or *djadırlar* (night creatures), bathe in it.

On the third day (rarely immediately after birth) “the grandmother” (midwife) added salt on the baby armpits and loins so that the baby not sweat as he/she grew, to have healthy skin and to prevent diapers rash. Salt was put three times in baby mouth so not to stink. The custom was called *tuzluma*, salting. Again for the same reasons till the seventh day after the birth, in some places up to 40th day, salt was put in the water for the baby bathing (Съботинова, 2002). Today this is done on the seventh day, when the mother and child return from the hospital.

Animal ritually sacrificed on the occasion of the birth of a child was known in Islamic tradition as *aqiqa*¹²⁾ (from arab. *aqiqa* - lock, bride). The custom was bound to the 7, 14 or 21st day after birth, for a baby boy were offered two, for a girl – one sacrificial animal (Люзанова, 1996). After the animal was slaughtered, the tradition imposed the baby head shaving then the parents gave as *sadaqah* (voluntary charity) of a poor neighbor a silver ornament with the weight of the cut hair. Nowadays, it is more common instead of silver to give money to its equivalent. There were places where the cut hair is weighed on “scales” made of sticks, at one end the hair is put, in the other - small banknotes.¹³⁾ According to Благоев (2004, p. 85), cutting the first hair is also a kind of sacrifice, even if it is bloodless. It has its roots in ancient Semitic tradition - young adolescents wore long hair and cut them was a formal sign of acquiring the status of a mature man. The transformation of the above mentioned practice into a childhood ritual was probably later innovation of the period before the emergence of Islam.

Apart from the described ritual the belief dictated to the age of one, child should not have a haircut in order not to get cut, not to shorten his life. At the age of one only the baby boys had had a haircut. When the first hair was cut, the mother buries it on a remote place where people did not step too often. Usually she dug a hole close to fence and there she hid the first hair the

place was chosen where no one could dig it out and found easily or a bad man could take it and use it to make magic upon her child.

Kirklama, 40th day after childbirth was associated with the concept of ritual purification of mothers and the belief that from this point on, it was harder for the evil forces to harm her and her child. According to the traditional belief, after 40 days the young mother was out of a state of impurity and returned back to normal life of a mother with a child. From this moment on, she was free to do any housework and field work, to go wherever she wanted, and was reunited with her husband. *Kirklama* was widespread practice, while bathing the child; the mother broke an egg and used the shell to pour water 40 times counting from 1 to 40 so the child grew as white as the egg white.¹⁴⁾ Coins are placed in the water so that the child grew healthy and strong as iron.¹⁵⁾ After bathing, egg shell was buried in a clean place in the garden where rarely set one's foot, the place was chosen especially to be difficult to be found by someone who could use it to cast magic upon the child. In some places, apart from the egg the mother put in the bathing water broom sticks and flowers in season, so that the child would love and keep up the house when the child grew, as well as the spell to smell nice like flowers (Съботинова, 2002). In the village of Devesilovo, Kardzhali, among the Bulgarian Muslims the practice existed when the young mother put in the bathing water 40 stones collected from places where she had passed to make the child healthy and sound as stone. She put the stones in a pot with water, washed the clothes of the child, her own clothes and bedding with that water, and then threw the stones into the river (Цанева, 1994).

So described the hygiene practices associated with childbirth and the crucial 40-day period thereafter, were strictly regulated both by tradition on one hand like a magical practices and the Islamic canon on the other hand, as mandatory religious rules. The mother was considered in a state of ritual impurity caused by post-natal bleeding as a result of which she was required to

follow strong prohibitions related to the fulfillment of her basic religious duties and communication with her family members or the community. The border, which had to be crossed to return to her normal state, was the ritual ablution of the 40th day after birth. Unlike the mother, the child was considered to be clean, but vulnerable to evil forces and “evil eye”, so the contacts with strangers were limited, even inadmissible. In this most dangerous 40-day period, purifying rituals on babies were desirable but their hygienic purpose was barely present, emphasize was put on inciting long life, health, happiness and fertility of the child.

One of the main hygienic recommendations in Islam is the circumcisions of the boys in their early years, perceived by Muslims as a sign of purity and belonging to the Islam community. We face here more than one border and their symbol crossing – crossing of the order posed by religion and extending the circumcision into a folk tradition, typical for the community with a spectacular nature; turning it into a sign of identity and making it a “border line” that divides the true Muslim from non-Muslim.

In the primary sources the circumcision is the emphasized Sunnah for boys (story of life and deeds of Mohammed). There it is strongly recommended as one of the hygiene instructions. In the books of hadith¹⁶⁾ narrated by Abu Hurairah, allegedly Mohammed said:

[T]he Sunnah of the prophets that we are commanded to follow, requires five things: circumcision, removal of pubic hair, trimming the mustache, cutting the nails and hair removal of the armpits (this version of the hadith is narrated by Bukhari, Muslim, Ahmad, Abu Daul, en-Nessa, Ibn Majah and at-Tirmidhi).

According to the Islamic religion, circumcision is one of ten personal hygiene Commandments, which Allah entrusted the prophet Ibrahim (Abra-

ham), and later found in the Sunnah of Mohammed. The first man who was submitted to circumcision was Ibrahim who did it by his own at the age of 120. Later, he circumcises his son Ishmael (Isaac) when he was 13. Islamic theology accepts Ishmael as one of 28 Major Prophets from whom comes all the family tree of Mohammed.

Another hadith narrated by Aisha says:

[T]en things come from the Sunnah of the prophets that we are commanded to follow: trimming the mustache, placing beard, cleaning teeth, cleaning the nose, cutting the nails, washing the space between fingers, hair removal on the armpits, removal of pubic hair and washing after toilet.

One of the narrators of the hadith (Musa' b ibn Scheiba) adds: "*I forgot the tenth thing which is probably rinsing of the mouth*" (Кенан, 2004, pp. 179-180). Al Qadi Iyad one of hadith scholars adds: "Maybe the tenth thing is circumcision as it is mentioned in the words of the Prophet" (Ал-Хилу, 2007). Although not required by the rules of Koran and prescribed only in the Sunnah, circumcision is strictly observed by devoted Muslims.¹⁷⁾ In the culture of both target groups the circumcision of boys is considered as having two main functions: first, was evaluated as a sign of confession, second, satisfies the requirement of purity,¹⁸⁾ and not only in the ritual sense, as it is believed that respecting personal hygiene is an essential part of good education of the Muslim and also a feature of religion "The circumcision (Syunnet) – is made for purity. The significance of this is the highest sign of a Muslim-ness" (Лозанова, 1996). The significant reason for crossing the border and turning the religious ritual of circumcision into traditional one, was the celebration of the passage of the child into the next age group (so-called Initiation). The ritual is a dedication of the young Muslim to faith and community, basic magical

and symbolic link to it. The meaning of this act exactly like a sign is encoded in saved in the ritual practice of placing point on the forehead of the child with blood, having apotropaic force (Груев & Кальонски, 2008).

In Muslim families, circumcision of boys was one of the biggest celebrations. The custom was called “*syunet*” and was performed when the boys reached the age of 6-7 before they start school. The celebration usually lasted a day or two, sometimes a week.¹⁹⁾ In people’s mind it represented a kind of child marriage and is called *syunet dyuyunyu* (*syunet düğünü*). The start of *Syunet* was done by performing a custom called *Danishik*. The ritual was performed around a week before the circumcision – the men relatives of the boy gathered to agree who would assume the duties around the circumcision. The next ritual was distributing bread. For the case ritual bread was prepared at home and the boy’s aunts gave it away to relatives thus inviting people on the *syunet*.

A special person in the village was appointed as “*dyulsaybiya*” who organized the celebration. The organizer was supported by wealthy people in the village who also had children for circumcision. He was to invite chefs and drummers. The day before the feast an animal slaughter and food was performed. The requirement was that the animal had to be no older than half to one year, white in color, having horns and healthy without flaws. The central place was given to the child. He was sitting on a high bed dressed like a king, richly embroidered clothes, having a special hat adorned with beads, tinsel and coins. Often he held a sham scepter in sign of regal authority (Съботинова, 2002). If several children were circumcised, they were placed on horses and formed a procession, like the wedding procession – a man walked ahead with a special flag of red calico with live flowers and napkin fixed on it. The procession went to the house of *dyulsaybiya* – the organizer of the celebration. There, the first child to be circumcised by the circumciser was the host’s child, and then the rest of the children came. By the mid-twentieth,

the little operation was carried out by a special person – circumciser. These were the imams or often the barbers in the villages. The tool generally used was a knife or a razor. The respondents told that after the intervention, red powder was applied onto the wound to stop the bleeding, which caused aching; washing disinfection was done in the morning and in the evening with infusion of sumac.²⁰⁾ According to an informant from the village of Yonkovo, Razgrad, if no one in the village could afford the celebration, the circumcision was informally organized – a dozen of children were gathered, the circumciser was brought. He circumcised the children, each father paid it separately.

These traditional customs and rituals associated with birth and raising a child, and the accompanying religious ritual practices and rites began to decompose and got rarer in the middle of the XX century. The negative attitude towards traditional hygienic and medical practices have root at this point of time, literally are described as negligent from medical point of view, in term of the process of birth. From that time all women must give birth in hospitals or maternity centers under the supervision of qualified nursing staff and extremely strict hygiene. This is one of the main reasons for which traditional customs associated with birth underwent complete destruction. The memory of what they were in the past fades. As with the Muslims as well as the Christians, these rituals are kept limited among women and today the ladies at the age of 50 knowing in detail the ritual practices, but very little of them are followed. They have heard from grandmothers, mothers and mothers-in-law today gladly tell about the customs. The majority of the customs and beliefs are dropped out. People remember them only in case of misfortune resembling to the consequences of non-compliance with prohibitions and customs of the past. Then if the medicine cannot help one can benefit from the experience of their grandmothers, the experience of the Christian Bulgarians are also not ignored.

Moving towards modernity we can tell that the main change is related to delivering birth in a hospital, which determines the narrower field of the ritual complex. Back in the spring of 1951, a decision of the Board of the Party paid special attention to medical care. Ministry of Public Health had to, within three months to complete “all vacancies in hospitals and other health services in the areas with Turkish population”. It was envisaged to accelerate the construction of new health centers and maternity centers (Трифонов, 1991). Moreover, the restriction of rituals could be acknowledged also in progressively overcome of the image of birth as a dangerous period from a mythological perspective.

Circumcision as a religious ritual and custom also has experienced changes in the second half of the twentieth century related to the public policy in the years of the communist regime. A number of rituals and practices directly related to the Islam were prohibited: in 1959 the Ministry of Public Health and Welfare stated that circumcision could be performed only by qualified doctors “for humanitarian reasons”. This decree was a kind of prohibition, as there were simply no Muslim doctors. “Recall” the ritual out of circumcisers’ hands and turning it into a simple medical intervention undermined and deprived this of act of initiation from its sacred nature. Changes were perceived by some of the Muslim population as the beginning of cultural assimilation, and these measures made sense for Muslims of cultural and historical boundary between their traditional life and modern times. This was why parents en masse tended to seek ways to avoid circumcision at health facilities and continued to seek the services of the well-known (and “safe”) circumcisers who already illegally continued to exercise their old career. Since the mid-60s the courts began to issue effective sentences upon circumcisers and eventually the parents of circumcised children were sentenced on the grounds of “committing a severe (or average) bodily injury”. This was not the first attempt to encroachment upon the circumcision as a sign of cultural and reli-

gious identity among Muslims. Back in 1937 organization “Rodina” has been established, whose main purpose was to nourish Bulgarian ethnic consciousness among the Bulgarian Muslims. Its Activists covered mostly areas of Central and Western Rhodopes Mountain. They attempted to reform everyday life, to eliminate traditional clothing, ending the practice of circumcision and re-naming of Bulgarian Muslims with Christian names. Immediately after World War II “Rodina” was dissolved as Bulgarian nationalist, reactionary and racist organization (Тодорова, 2010, p. 216).

The idea of purity – physical and spiritual – is fundamental to Islam; it pierces both the main ritual practices regulated by the Quran and the hadiths and traditional practices associated with ritual and everyday life of a Muslim. It sets limits – visible and virtual, which marks the transition to acquire new social status in all customs of the lifecycle of Sunni Muslims. In the customs relating to birth and raising a child, the idea of cleanliness and hygiene of the body marks the boundary of the young mother and child associated with their adoption into the family and society. For the mother ritual washing of the 40th day after birth is the boundary, which marks the passage from ritual impurity to ritual purity, for the newborn it marks the completion of a potentially dangerous 40-day period after birth. The circumcision of boys in their infancy perceived by Muslims as a sign of cleanliness poses the question for another boundary - confessional sign of identity that separates orthodox Muslim from non-Muslim.

NOTES

1. Informant No. 1: Rufie Kisyova, b. 1950 in the village of Dolen, Zlatograd area, Bulgarian-Mohammedan.

2. *Namaz* – the word is Persian and means prayer; this is the second of the five pillars of Islam.

3. *Oruch* - religious fasting in Islam (abstaining from eating, drinking and sexual intercourse from dawn to sunset), implemented during the ninth month of the

Muslim lunar calendar - Ramadan. Fasting during the month of Ramadan is related to the Quranic idea that then Allah through the angel Gibreel had given the Quran to the Prophet Mohammed as a revelation. The oruch is the fourth of the five pillars of Islam.

4. *Tavaf* – ritual circling around the Kaaba during the pilgrimage to Mecca, which is the third of the five pillars of Islam.

5. Religious sources indicate two more special states of the female body that are considered unclean and as a result, the Islamic canon prohibit sexual intercourse while the woman does not pass beyond them and is purified: haiz (menstruation) and istihada - bleeding, other from menstruation (haiz) or postnatal (nifas) and literally means "a state of apologetic disease".

6. *Abdest* in Arabic means enlightenment, clarity, purity, and Islamic law defines the abdest as washing parts of the body, especially those that are not covered and most easily pollute - hands, mouth, nose, face and legs, in order fulfillment of religious obligations. Hands are washed three times to the wrists. Rinse the mouth three times, taking water with the right hand. In the same way are washed the nose face. Then washed three times in the right arm to the elbow, and left after that. Moistened head, after that right and then the left ear. Finally, wash your feet to the ankles starting from the toes of the right foot and then left.

7. White color in Islamic religion is a symbol of ritual purity, chastity, color of God and of eternity.

8. In the village of Chakalarovo, Kardzhali, people believe that if diapers are stretch to dry on the stakes, the child will suffer from colics.

9. Informant No. 2: Nurten Ismail, b. 1961 in the village of Venetz, Shumen area, Turk.

10. Informant No. 3: Aysha Ismailova, b. 1960 in the village of Ovcharovo, Targovishe area, Turk.

11. In popular beliefs *lausi* are demons, which harm women in childbirth.

12. *Aqiqa* – ritual animal slaughter served as food is part of the socialization of the child as an individual and reflects the biological transition. There are opinions that it can be done no later than the age of 52. The number 52 is not chosen at random selected also for Mevlid celebration. It refers to the specific facts in the life of

Mohammed – his moving from Mecca to Medina (Hijra) was done when the Prophet was fifty-two years old, it marked the beginning of a new era and is a turning point in the history of Islam. It can therefore be relevant to the status of the individual.

13. There are regions in Turkey where the custom is to distribute the weight of gold, equivalent to the hair weight. Usually the mother distributes it among the seven men named Mehmet (Turkish version of Mohammed) to ensure the survival of the child.

14. Informant No. 4: Afize Mustafafova, b. 1939 in the village of Malomir, Varbitza area, Turk, woman-hodja.

15. Informant No. 5: Nefizi Kerova, b. 1937 in the village of Gluhar, Kardzhali area, Turk.

16. *Hadith* - from Arabian Hadith - news, notice, story; religious explanation - a tradition that goes back to the Prophet Mohammed.

17. In the two sacred Islam books – Quran and Sunnah, all hygienic requirements are narrated as moral commandments, they can be *farz* (individual duty commanded by Allah, absolutely obligatory to be performed, sent down in Qur'an, related to task that every Muslim is obliged to perform) or *sunnet* (principles, rules and instruction of Mohammed, described in the Sunnah, which are recommended to be followed by every Muslim).

18. Informant No. 6: Ramiz Ayti Tahir, b.1934 in the village of Rezbartci, Kardzhali area, Turk, imam.

19. The word "syunnet" before all means principle, rule and instruction of Mohammed, hence the traditional ceremony to circumcise boys is also called syunnet.

20. Informant No. 7: Mehmet Hasan Hyusein, b. 1936 in the village of Cherencha, Shumen area, Turk.

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