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Henna's Significance in Amazigh Id, Circumcision, and "Night of the Henna" Celebrations



Catherine Cartwright-Jones

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Henna's Significance in Amazigh Id, Circumcision and "Night of the Henna" Celebrations

Catherine Cartwright Jones 2002

Before the modern era, Moroccan villagers applied henna for Id al-Adha, circumcision, and the "Night of the Henna". This paper establishes the common ground of these events, and the importance of henna in the celebrations, based on eyewitness accounts from the late 1800's and early 1900's.

Religious holidays and major life events punctuated Moroccan village life with feasting, parties, celebrations and henna. Id al-Adha, male circumcision, and "Night of the Henna" were the most elaborate and joyous village celebrations, and families went to great expense to entertain guests with food, music, and hospitality at these events. Henna was an integral part of all of these celebrations in Morocco, although most people are only familiar with bridal henna use. An examination of henna application in these three disparate events can reveal the purpose of henna body art.

Id a-Adha

Id al-Adha is and was an Islamic holiday commemorating Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son Ishmael in obedience to God. For this observance, which was the culmination of the Hajj, every head of household who was financially able sacrificed a male domestic ruminant (such as a yearling ram) in honor of Abraham and as a demonstration of personal willingness to be obedient to Allah in all things. Three days of celebration and feasting followed the Id al-Adha sacrifice. People adorned the sheep, the sacrificer, and all the feast participants with henna.

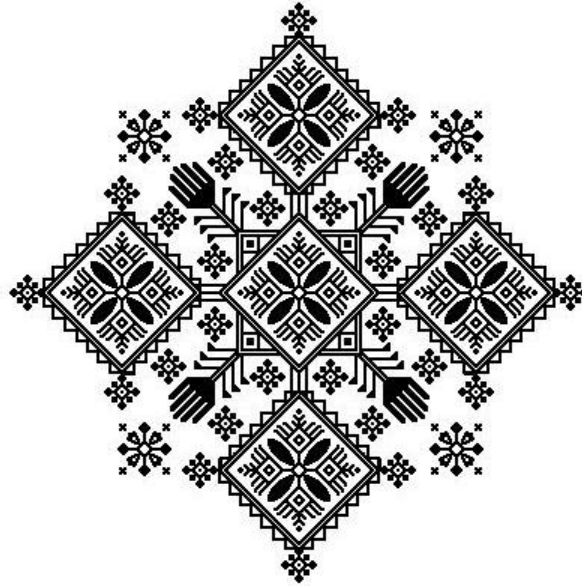
Circumcision

Islam requires male circumcision, the excision of penile foreskin. This surgery was performed in 19th and 20th century Moroccan villages on boys between the ages 4 and 14, in a public celebration (Westermarck 1926, vol 2: 417 – 18; Mouette 1710, p. 97). People adorned the son, the family, and all the guests at the circumcision party with henna for circumcision.

"Night of the Henna"

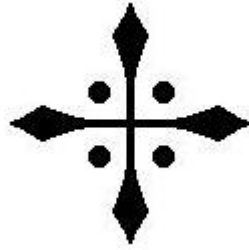
"Night of the Henna" was an elaborate family and community celebration for a bride prior to marital defloration (Westermarck, 1914). The "Night of the Henna" festivities were the most elaborate events in

Moroccan village life, with complex extensive henna applications to the bride, the groom, the family and all of the guests during the night's ritual actions. These traditions were widespread and well established during the late 19th century, when described by anthropologists Westermarck (1914, 1926), Legey (1926), Laouste (1921) and other visitors to Morocco. Though the use of henna in these rituals has declined since Moroccan independence in the 1950's, henna is still an important part of rural village life in Morocco.



Id, Circumcision, and “Night of the Henna” are dissimilar events, but people applied henna for all these occasions. Henna may have a purpose that serves the common ground of all these events.

The killing of a male sheep, the removal of a boy's foreskin, and the marital defloration of a girl are physically dissimilar activities. However, prior to 1930, Moroccan villagers applied henna in similar patterns on each of these occasions. These patterns were variants on the traditional North African "*Khamsa*" pattern: a cross with four dots surrounding; a square, circle or diamond shape with one dot within and four surrounding; hand shapes, and variations on these (Westermarck 1926: vol. 447 – 463). People applied henna and the "*Khamsa*" patterns to avert the "Evil Eye". This was to insure a successful outcome of Id al-Adha, circumcision, and marriage. Establishing the commonality of these three events in the rural Moroccan village life, the concern over the effects of the "Evil Eye" and henna's power to dispel it during these events, provides insight into the needs and risks addressed in these ritual performances, and defines the purpose henna body art in the performance of these ritual actions.



Henna body adornment in the celebration of Id al-Adha

Id al-Adha holiday sacrifice preparations began with the selection of a perfect yearling ram or other male domestic ruminant. Every head of household who could afford to do so obtained at least one animal for sacrifice. Failure to make the sacrifice was a sign of dire poverty, or religious apathy, both of which were socially undesirable (Newton, 1989: 22). The lamb was separated from the flock and brought home to live with the family. The children often tended the lamb, and treated it as a pet or sibling (Hammoudi, 1993:114). A lamb that had black rings around his eyes, resembling a bride's eyes rimmed with *kohl*, a black cosmetic was preferred, as the Prophet Mohammed preferred such a lamb (Westermarck 1926: 116). If the lamb did not naturally have black eye rings, the family women applied *kohl* to its eyes before sacrifice. They also they hennaed its hooves and head as if it were a bride, darkened its lips with *swak*, walnut root, and sometime even dressed it with a bridal veil and jewelry (Hammoudi 1993: 114 – 5). The lamb was kissed on the mouth before sacrifice. The sacrifice was public, surrounded in prayers and ritual actions, and was carried out in front of the household. The meat was shared: one third went to the household, one third to kin, and one third was given to the poor. All the meat was to be consumed during the following three-day celebration. Its meat, skin, blood, body parts and spirit achieved religious significance and redemptive qualities through correct completion of the ritual.

Through this ritual action, the lamb changed from an ordinary sheep to an instrument of redemption, and through it the sacrificer was absolved of sins committed during the previous year. The lamb's hide was used as a prayer rug (Trimingham, 1959: 80), its blood was supernaturally purifactory (Westermarck, 1923: 122-3; Hammoudi 1993: 118), and it was believed to carry the sacrificer to heaven as a steed after death. (Legey, 1926: 99; Masse, 1938:127)

Henna body adornment and the celebration of a boy's circumcision

The most important event in a boy's life was his circumcision, a requirement of the Islamic faith. This was done between ages four and fourteen in most Moroccan villages before 1950 (Westermarck, 1926: vol. 2: 417). This initiated the boy as a Muslim and as an adult male member of the community.

The boy was separated from children's activities and the women's part of the household prior to circumcision. The family arranged the most elaborate party they could afford, secured a mule for the child to ride on, had the child bathed and his head shaved, and dressed him in fine clothes. He was adorned with henna and *kohl* as if he were a bride. If the family was very poor, they borrowed clothing and a mule to make as lavish appearance as possible (Westermarck, 1926: vol. 2, 418). The child was paraded through the streets, and then circumcised in public with all his relatives in attendance, who were also adorned with henna. The family hired musicians, entertainers, and provided a feast and gifts to as many of family and villagers as they could afford to celebrate the circumcision. The child's foreskin was kept as a supernatural talisman, given to a woman who wished to become pregnant, or taken to a saint's shrine (Westermarck, 1926: vol. 2: 420-23). Circumcision ended a boy's status as child and inhabitant of the women's area of the household, and elevated him to a member of the adult male social and religious group, and inhabitant of the world outside the house.

Henna body adornment and the celebration of the "Night of the Henna"

Marriage was universal for Moroccan village women, as there was little social place for an unmarried adult woman. The "Night of the Henna", prior to marital defloration, was the most important, and anticipated day of a girl's life. The ritual performance of the "Night of the Henna" changed her status from a child in her father's house to a wife and potential mother in her husband's house.

A girl's parents often began arranging her marriage around the time of her first menstrual period, though childhood betrothals were common. When the grooms and bride's families agreed upon the wedding property exchanges, preparations and arrangements for the celebration began in earnest. The girl ended her usual childhood activities, and was ritually bathed and prepared for the "Night of the Henna", then secluded in her father's house. Distant kin came to visit for the wedding, as well as most of the village. The bride's family, having saved for years for the occasion, spent as much as they could possibly afford on musicians, entertainers, dancers, feasts, a parade and gifts for guests (van Niewkerk, 1995, Kingsmill Hart, 1994 56 – 66). The bride was adorned with henna, perfume and *kohl*, and dressed in her bridal garments. Once completely covered in her wedding finery, she was carried to a dais in her own home to be praised and celebrated by her kin throughout the "Night of the Henna". All participants in the wedding celebrations were hennaed during the festivities.

At the conclusion of the "Night of the Henna", the groom deflowered the bride, and cloth stained with the hymeneal blood was displayed to all the celebrants (Westermarck, 1914: 268). After the ceremonies, the bride was lifted with care to keep her from touching the ground onto a camel or mule, and was transported to her husband's house where she began her married life in his household (Legey, 1926: 190 – 2). This ritual process was done with many variations throughout the Middle East, Arabia, and North Africa as well

as Morocco.

Id al-Adha, circumcision and “Night of the Henna” have several areas of similarity. These ritual actions defined a change of status for the lamb and sacrificer, the boy, and the bride. If the ritual was successful, the individual’s status changed from a lower position to a higher position in the community social hierarchy. Id al-Adha, circumcision, and ‘Night of the Henna’ were all conducted in public; each required shedding and display of innocent blood. They were all accompanied by a dispersal of a family’s accumulated wealth through hospitality, feasting, gifts and entertainment from the family to kin and extended community. Henna patterns were applied to the hands and feet of the person or animal in the transitional ritual state, as well as to all the participants in the ritual performance. Villagers stated that the purpose of applying henna and patterns were to deter the “Evil Eye”, which imperiled the lamb, the sacrificer, the son, bride, guests, and onlookers.



Rituals, symbolic actions, are performed to achieve a goal, and usually that goal is at risk. If an outcome were assured, ritual would be unnecessary. Willingness to stage an elaborate, expensive ritual may indicate high level of risk, high level of desirability in goals, or both.

Many anthropologists have observed that rituals are staged to achieve an end (Howe, 2000: 67). This implies that if a ritual is performed, there is a desired outcome, and that outcome is at risk. Though Malinowski (1972) argues that ritual removes or minimizes risk, a ritual performed for an assured outcome would be superfluous. Id al-Adha sacrifice, circumcision, and “Night of the Henna” were the most expensive undertakings in village life, often requiring years of wealth accumulation and straining family resources to the limit. They each were done to achieve a goal, and in each case success was greatly desired but not assured. The concern over failure versus the desirability of those successful outcomes may be gauged by the elaborateness and complexity of ritual performance (Howe, 2000: 69).

The goals of Id al-Adha

There were several goals arising from Id al-Adha; one purpose of Id was to secure God’s blessing in the way of sufficient rainfall. Id al-Adha sacrifice was accompanied by prayers for rain and a good harvest, as demonstrated by prayers spoken at the moment of sacrifice: “Oh God, grant us your pardon and bestow a

good year upon us” or “Oh God give us rain” (Laouste, 1926: 99, 100). Expiation of sin was achieved through Id a-Adha, in that making the required sacrifice demonstrated obedience to God, who then forgave shortcomings.

The public nature of the sacrifice established the sacrificer visibly as an active member of the Muslim religious community. As Islam was the dominant religion in Morocco, a public demonstration of piety was helpful in securing the benefits of identification as a Muslim, rather than Jewish, animist or Christian. Favorable tax status, trade guild memberships, and one’s position in Moroccan society often were secured through acceptance of Islam, and denied to members of other religions.

The meat from the sacrifice was given to one’s family, kin, and the poor, showing that the sacrificer was a person of means. The poor were unable to afford meat (Briggs, 1960: 237- 40), and the middle class only could have meat infrequently (Hammoudi 1993:35). Purchasing animals and giving the meat away proved a person’s economic power. The visibility of this donation, and the volume of meat given, showed the sacrificer to be wealthy, generous, socially responsible, and pious. A wealthy householder might sacrifice numerous rams, or more expensive animals such as bulls or camels, and distribute the meat to the poor, thus establishing his prestige through this display of piety (Yehia, 2002).

Therefore, there were several goals to be achieved through the ritual performance of Id al-Adha sacrifice: the procurement of sufficient rain for agriculture, the expiation of sin, the identification of the person as a member of the dominant religious group, and the establishment of that individual’s economic power.

The goals of male circumcision

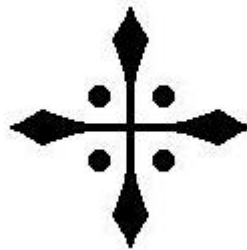
There were several goals of circumcision to be achieved through ritual performance. The first was to cleanse a child of his animal nature in order to establish a condition of moral and mental cleanliness (Persaud, Ahmed, 1987). Circumcision also established the child as an identifiable member of the adult male Muslim community. Animist and Christian people were not circumcised, and Jewish boys were circumcised at birth, therefore the public circumcision of the child between the ages of seven and fourteen informed the community that a family had a child whom they wished to assert was an adult male Muslim. The feasting, entertainment, adornment of the child in the most expensive garments obtainable and parading through the streets with entertainers and musicians, attempted to enter the child in into adult society at the highest possible position within the social hierarchy.

The goals of the “Night of the Henna”

There were many goals to be achieved through the ritual performance of the “Night of the Henna”. The

girl was to be changed from a child in her father's house, to a wife and potential mother in her husband's house. The extravagant display placed her at the highest possible social and economic position in village society, encouraging people's respect for her and strengthening her position in the hierarchy of her husband's family. The extravagance also was meant to place the girl's family in the best possible position, by demonstrating the family's economic power to the community through the ceremony.

The bride's family displayed sheets or undergarments stained with her hymeneal blood following the "Night of the Henna". The blood was the crucial test of the girl's honor, her family's power and respectability. If the families did not have this proof that the bride was virginal, chaste, and modest, she might be repudiated or killed. Her family would be dishonored, they as they would be seen as weak; unable to exert protection, control, and authority over their females and children (Westermarck, 1914: 250). People had further traditional activities and symbolic gestures at the "Night of the Henna" to insure that the bride would quickly become pregnant and give birth to male children (Westermarck 1926: 195 – 6), that she would have dominance in her household (Legey, 1926: 190) (Westermarck 1926: 146), and that the marriage would be happy (Legey 126: 192).



Id al-Adha, circumcision, and the "Night of the Henna" carried people's hopes and desires for an abundant life. Villagers knew that drought, disease, and barrenness were ever present, though they hoped for prosperity, health, and growing families. The "Evil Eye" was their personification of the force of calamity that withered crops, bodies, and hopes. They believed henna and henna patterns could avert the Evil Eye, so they applied henna for protection at these events.

Symbolic gestures in these celebrations indicate that an abundant future was not assured. Since these celebrations were the most expensive in Moroccan village life, the upward social transition and benefit from them must have been very desirable. Insufficient ritual is interpreted as undervaluing the level of risk or the desirability of favorable outcome (Howe, 2000; 68). However, the feasting, display of wealth, display of family prestige necessary to establish a family's relationships in the village would attract the "Evil Eye" as quickly as it would attract admiration. Therefore, these celebrations had the intrinsic risk of bringing destruction as much as they could bring extrinsic benefit from social ties (Castle, 2001: 1830 and Westermarck 1926: vol. 1: 417 – 8).

Each event was public, so though it was necessary for the family and village to see the sacrifice, the circumcision, the wedding, public exposure itself posed a risk to the outcome as a villager could cast the “Evil Eye” (Westermarck, 1926: vol. 1, 414) and ruin everything. Each of these celebrations involved shedding of innocent blood, so though blood may have been shed to minimize a risk, it may have also created another, as blood was considered to attract *jnun*, malevolent spirits (Westermarck, 1926: vol. 1: 237, 264, 275; Dundess, 1980).

The transitions of Id al-Adha, circumcision, and marriage were greatly desired: sin forgiven, a son becoming a man, a girl becoming a wife. The risk of failure was great, as demonstrated by the family’s willingness to expend their resources to insure these social transitions were successfully completed. However, larger ceremony escalated the risk of failure, as Moroccan culture held that display of wealth, celebration and blood attracted the “Evil Eye”, a force of supernatural disaster. Not only was the goal at risk from extrinsic forces of society and nature, but from the risks intrinsic to the ritual performance itself.

Moroccan villagers applied henna to all of the participants in these celebrations to deter the “Evil Eye” (Westermarck 1926, vol. 1 113; Tauzin 1998), to mitigate these same extrinsic supernatural malefic forces that the rituals attempted to overcome. They believed henna would deter the intrinsic risk generated by the display of wealth, the healthy son, the virgin bride, and innocent blood, which because of their desirability, were believed to draw “ Evil Eye”. Henna supplied “*baraka*”, the quality of blessedness that deters evil from entering and fouling the goals of the ritual performance (Briggs: 1960: 96). The “*Khamsa*” patterns drawn with henna also deterred evil forces from spoiling the desired outcome (Westermarck, 1926: vol.1: 450). Henna applied in patterns to avert the “Evil Eye” therefore plays a crucial role in managing extrinsic and intrinsic risk in these ritual performances by virtue of its “*baraka*” (Westermarck, 1926: 107)



Moroccan villagers believed the “Evil Eye” was the source of misfortune. They believed henna could avert the “Evil Eye”. They applied henna at these celebrations to avert extrinsic and intrinsic risk.

Moroccans had a saying, “ – *L-‘ain ‘anda t’ult ayin fe l-mqabar*”, “the evil eye owns two thirds of the graveyard” (Westermarck 1926: vol. 1, 414). They believed all calamities in life were the result of the “Evil Eye”. Its malevolent glance brought famine, drought, disease, madness, barrenness, death, and all forms of misfortune. People believed that the “Evil Eye” was the cause of many of the difficulties they tried to fend off through the symbolic acts of Id, circumcision and the “Night of the Henna”. Therefore, they used henna, and patterns drawn in henna to avert the malevolent “Evil Eye” from fouling the outcome of their rituals.

The belief in the “Evil Eye” was not universal, but it was widespread, and was in 36% of world belief systems (Roberts, 1976: 234). Most Indo-European groups have some belief in the “Evil Eye”, and it is most common in the Near East and North Africa. Foster (1965) proposes that the “Evil Eye” is the personification of the “Image of Limited Good”. This is expressed in the belief that there is a limited amount of good available in the world: health, wealth, beauty, food, water, love, luck, and life are not abundant enough for everyone to have all they wish. If one person possesses good in unusual abundance that automatically means that some other individual lacks a comparable amount of good.

Certainly, in Moroccan rural villages, there was a limited amount of food, water, and wealth. People often suffered from malnutrition and poverty, and if someone was seen to have abundance when others did not, envy was a frequent response to the inequality. Childhood disease claimed many children before their fifth birthday, so the public showing of a healthy young boy for circumcision could cause envy in people who were barren, whose sons had died, or who had only daughters. There was a limited number of attractive, healthy potential mates; rivalry and envy was a natural result of competition for the best possible marriage partner.

Many North African societies, including Morocco, believed that there were hazardous consequences in showing any variation from what was perceived to be the norm, as that would attract unwelcome attention and envy from the supernatural world, just as such is found in the social world (Castle, 2001:1829). An assertive display of abundance was believed to always attract attention from malevolent supernatural beings. The “Evil Eye” would attack food and healthy livestock if they were viewed and praised, poisoning the food, and killing the animals (Westermarck 1926: vol. 1 416). Food viewed by a hungry person was prone to attack by the “Evil Eye”, rendering it poisonous, so food was usually kept covered if it was carried outside of the household (Westermarck 1926: vol. 1: 426). A beautiful, healthy child could be attacked by the “Evil Eye”, if it overheard someone so unwise as to praise the child aloud, and the child would be infested with disease or death (Westermarck 1926: vol. 1: 417). If parents dressed the child lavishly,

malicious spirits could also be attracted (Castle 2001: 1820). So, beloved children were often marked with kohl, ragged clothing, or spoken to rudely, to keep lurking spirits from suspecting that the child was something desirable and enviable. Beautiful brides were especially prone to attack from the “Evil Eye”, resulting in infertility, miscarriage, disease, madness, or death in childbirth (Westermarck, 1926: vol. 1, 421).

The public display of food at Id al-Adha, a well-dressed, healthy son at circumcision, and a beautiful, lavishly adorned bride at her “Night of the Henna” all created opportunities for the “Evil Eye” to attack. The more wealth that was displayed to secure social status and enhance the success of the ritual, the greater was the risk of calamity from the “Evil Eye”. Henna, with its inherent blessedness, and its significant patterns, specifically averted the “Evil Eye”. In North Africa, henna’s primary and oldest virtue is that it protects a person, acting as a barrier between the bodies that it coats and the surrounding dangers of malevolent spirits and the “Evil Eye” (Tauzin, 1998). The use of henna in these ritual actions allowed the escalation of ceremony for greater potential gain while managing the intrinsic risk of attracting the “Evil Eye” to the extravagant public display.



Id al-Adha and extrinsic risks

The extrinsic risks addressed by Id ritual were God’s wrath and rejection of the disobedient or apathetic believer or the unrepentant sinner, evidenced through poverty, starvation, disease, or death (Westermarck, 1926: 271). In Moroccan communities, prayers for rainfall and fertility accompanied Id (Hammoudi, 1993, 23), and parts of the sacrificed animal were kept as cures for disease (Westermarck, 1926: 120 – 3). A Muslim’s willingness to bear the expense of purchasing one or more animals for Id al-Adha sacrifice indicates that the threat of God’s punishment through these natural disasters was taken very seriously.

Fatal protein deficiency malnutrition in weaned children was not uncommon (Briggs, 1960: 255 – 7), and childhood mortality was near 40% by age three in rural areas. Chronic undernourishment weakened the adults as well, making them susceptible to illnesses such as lung infections. Rheumatism and tuberculosis were common, as was venereal disease and hereditary syphilis (Briggs, 1960: 255). Water was always scarce, and what sources were available were frequently polluted with bacteria from animal corpses or feces, causing dysentery (Briggs 1960, 247 – 8, 257). Moroccan villagers believed the “Evil Eye”, the malevolent and jealous force of nature intent on destroying the health and vitality of mankind, caused these

calamities. *Jnun*, supernatural spirits personifying this evil force, were also blamed for causing these disasters (Westermarck, 1926: 271, 370), though the pious held that *jnun* only caused disaster at the behest of God, when he was displeased with a person (Westermarck, 1926: 249). The hazards of thirst, hunger, disease and death were omnipresent in rural Morocco, and ritual was undertaken to manage these supernatural extrinsic risks, by securing God's good will through sacrifice.

There were also extrinsic social risks to be addressed with Id sacrifice: if a head of household did not make a public sacrifice at Id, neighbors would view him as too poor or miserly to make sacrifice. Poverty was not only a mark of God's rejection, it was a mark of low social status, and associated with unworthiness, uncleanness, and powerlessness. In addition, people suffering from natural calamities, such as the famine in 1878, were often forced to sell themselves and their children into slavery to avoid starvation (Zaydane, 1878: p 179). A person who did not make public sacrifice would be diminished in social standing (Howe, 2000: 68), and might be perceived to be on the brink of disaster.

As Id sacrifice was required of all Muslims who could afford to do so, to not make sacrifice was to be marked as a Jew or infidel. Jews were often subjects of social exclusion and taunting (Hammoudi, 1993: 58 – 61), particularly during the festivities following Id (Hammoudi 1993: 159 - 60). Therefore, Id sacrifice prevented social shunning by the dominant group, as well as being perceived of as impoverished.

Circumcision and extrinsic risks

Circumcision was performed to manage several extrinsic risks. A child began his life as an adult Muslim at the moment of circumcision; a man who was not circumcised, and thus not identifiably an adult Muslim, risked exclusion from membership in the economic and social community or even capture for slavery (Ennaji, 2001). Arab Moroccans viewed an uncircumcised man as disgraceful (Westermarck, 1926: vol 2, 430). Not all Imazigh groups practiced circumcision (Rohlf's, 1872: 44, 45, 75), but those who did insisted that that a woman would refuse intercourse with an uncircumcised man, eliminating his potential to be a husband and father (Doughty: vol 1, 128). Others felt that an uncircumcised man would forever be unclean, and would never be able to enter a state of grace with God, participate in religious ceremonies, or pray at a mosque (Klunzinger p. 195). This implied, again, risk of God's disfavor and all of its attendant calamities.

If a young man were not established within the Muslim community, he would be perceived as untrustworthy, potentially dangerous, or prone to deviant behavior, as adherence to Islam implied moral rectitude and obedience to God. Circumcision managed the social extrinsic risk that a male child might not successfully make the transition from being a boy in his mother's care to a man accepted as a member of the dominant male social group.

The feasting, parading through the streets, fine clothing and entertainers hired by the boy's family to celebrate the circumcision attempted to mitigate the extrinsic social risk that the boy would be regarded as a man of no consequence, from a family of no economic status. Circumcision was the only social ritual less lavish than a wedding, and a family might save money for several years to provide a suitably impressive circumcision party. The public procession through the streets of the child, dressed in the most costly clothing obtainable, asserted the child's future status in the social hierarchy. Greater expense put forth for the circumcision party secured a better community position for the young adult, thus assuring he would not be considered a person of little worth.

The public nature and age of the Moroccan Muslim circumcision also marked the child as being Muslim rather than Jewish, as the Jews circumcised their children a few days after birth. Jews were considered by Moroccan Muslims to be cursed by God, and defiling to touch. If a person believed to be a Jew drank from a river, the water was believed to be subsequently defiled and undrinkable (Westermarck, 1926: vol. 2: 4). Such social exclusion was a risk not to be taken lightly.

Night of the Henna and extrinsic risks

A young woman faced serious extrinsic dangers during her rite of passage, stemming from attempting to change status from being a child to being a married woman. If she were found to not be a virgin at the culmination of her "Night of the Henna", she could be repudiated (Westermarck 1914: 253) and returned to her family who might either choose to sell her into slavery (Ennaji, 2001, p 66) or kill her to preserve the family's honor (Westermarck, 1914: 253). Since only 30% of women on average bleed at their first intercourse, blood from a fowl was often used to stain the bedding or undergarments to avert this disaster (Westermarck, 1914: 246), or a knife or sharpened fingernail of a trusted attendant provided vaginal blood.

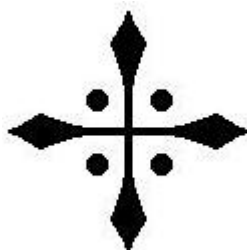
If she did not quickly become pregnant and give birth to healthy sons, her husband could divorce her, and her future would be bleak. Bearing healthy male children was not assured, as childhood mortality often averaged 30% in the first year (Briggs, 1960: 256). If she got along poorly with her husband, his mother, or co-wives, again she could be sent back to her father's home, where, at best, her family might be able to arrange another marriage for her as a "bargain" wife for a poor man who had little money for a brideprice. Though a woman had inheritance, property and dower rights guaranteed by law, if a woman was poor and illiterate, the law was often unable to protect her if she was cast out from her husband's household. A bride repudiated often had no future other than begging, slavery, or starvation (Ennaj, 2001: 66). Numerous rituals recorded by Westermarck (1914) at the "Night of the Henna" were performed by Moroccan women to avert barrenness, disagreement, disease, and rejection.

Other aspects of the “Night of the Henna” attempted to manage the extrinsic risk that the bride would be bullied, mistreated, or be unloved in her new home. During one such ritual performance, the bride straddled a hennaed ram who was proxy for the groom, and beat it with her slippers so that she would have the upper hand in her marriage (Westermarck, 1914:157 – 8). This countered the ritual performance of the groom slapping the bride so that she would always be afraid of him (Westermarck, 1914: 159).

The opulence of the bride’s costume and ceremony asserted her social position, to lessen the probability of being abused or scorned in her new household. The costliness of her jewelry asserted that she had financial resources to fall back on, and was thus not economically helpless. The extravagance of the ceremony showed that she was from a family of means who was willing to offer her their support. If the display were not opulent, she might be perceived as being from an impoverished and vulnerable family, or that her family did not value her personally, thus leaving her vulnerable to mistreatment (Howe, 2000: 69). The wedding of a divorcee’ was not extravagant, as she was of low status (Westermarck, 1914: 154).

The “Night of the Henna” was a public declaration that the union of the two people was legal and deliberate. The ritual marked the coupling as a legitimate marriage that would produce legitimate offspring. This could not be mistaken for a dubious affair with a prostitute, the taking of a slave or concubine, nor a rape, and it signified that both families agreed to the union. This averted local gossip about an illicit union, which would have ruinous consequences for the honor of the bride’s family, as the marriage was intended to be presented as a negotiated, legally bound, and virginal couple.

Therefore, many of the ritual performances of the “Night of the Henna” attempted to manage the extrinsic risks facing a bride: of being identified as dishonorable, a prostitute, barren, abused, unloved, and repudiated.



Id al-Adha, circumcision and “Night of the Henna” were performed to manage extrinsic risk, and henna had a place in averting the external risks of natural calamities caused by the “Evil Eye”, but rituals can themselves create the intrinsic risk of attracting the “Evil Eye”.

The intrinsic risks of Id al-Adha

Sacrificing an animal for Id al-Adha in a crowd in front of one’s home had intrinsic risks. The animal might become terrified, bolt and run away, signifying that God rejected the sacrifice (Westermarck 1926: vol. 2 116). If the animal simply struggled so that its head was not facing Mecca at the moment of death, the sacrifice would be unacceptable. If the animal was resisting or the cut were inept, in as much that the kill was not made in a single stroke at the top of the throat, the sacrifice was unacceptable. These intrinsic risks could be managed by hiring a professional butcher to do the slaughter, as well as having experienced, muscular assistants, and this solution was a common solution. The larger animals whose sacrifice elevated a person’s social stature, such as a bull or camel (Westermarck, 1926: vol 2 115), were more likely to pull away from their restraints (BBC, 3/7/2001), so escalation of sacrifice entailed escalation of intrinsic risk (Howe, 2000: 69). A small or weak animal, easier to manage, was seen as a meager sacrifice, lowering the risk of intrinsic failure, but also lowering the potential gain and potentially trivializing the sacrificer and his goals (Howe, 2000: 68).

The public Id al-Adha sacrifice created an intrinsic risk of attracting the “Evil Eye”. The beautifully adorned sheep, kept in the home and fattened, was certain to attract envious spirits, and the blood spilled on the ground was a magnet for malevolent spirits (Westermarck, 1926: vol. 1: 277). Poor people who awaited their share of Id al-Adha sacrifice meat were a source of intrinsic danger caused by the “Evil Eye”. Any impoverished person who looked upon food might infest it with the “Evil Eye”, through a hungry, craving, envious glance. If a man wished to make a greater Id al-Adha sacrifice to show his wealth and social position, to better manage the extrinsic risk of drought and poor harvest, more poor would wait at his doorstep for their share of meat (Yehia, 2002). The larger crowd of hungry poor increased the probability that disaster, inflicted through their envious gaze, and would beset his household. Henna, applied to the sacrifice, the sacrificer, and all the participants attempted to manage this escalating risk of intrinsic failure by averting the “Evil Eye”.

The intrinsic risks of circumcision

Circumcision itself had intrinsic risk, as circumcision surgery done by traditional village practitioners often resulted in uncontrolled bleeding, sepsis, urethro-cutaneous fistula and meatal stenosis (Ansaloni et al,

1997: 81). Inadvertent amputation of the penis or glans was an occasional but tragic result (Cek et al, 2001: 307). The surgical instrument was scissors, a razor, or a sharpened stone, resulting in cases of tetanus from the circumcision (Ansaloni et al, 1997:81). The circumciser was often the village barber, who had some experience in minor surgery, or the cutting might be done by a scribe or uncle with a steady hand and sharp knife (Westermarck, 1926, vol. 2: 427 - 8). The infections following circumcision were common and could cause urinary impairment, erectile dysfunction, and impotence. Death from infection or blood loss was a frequent enough problem for professional circumcisers to carry with them a string of foreskins to demonstrate their expertise and length of experience (Westermarck, 1923: vol. 2: 426). If a circumciser could prove by his collection of foreskins that he was not incompetent, people believed that the “Evil Eye” had caused disease or injury following circumcision. These strings of foreskins were successfully presented in court to demonstrate that death following a circumcision had occurred from malicious spirits rather than any fault of the surgeon.

Certainly some of the intrinsic risk of circumcision was managed by henna, as henna paste was applied to the circumcision wound. Henna paste has mild antibacterial properties, and is cooling on feverish or swollen skin. Villagers believed infection, sterility, disease and death could be caused by the “Evil Eye” gazing at the exposed penis (Manhart et al, 2000: 1237) and blood, so the henna body adornment was used to avert those intrinsic circumcision risks.

Another significant intrinsic risk inherent in the circumcision ritual was that the child would not be brave during circumcision, and thus appear unfit for manly society. Strong uncles held the child firmly for circumcision and urged them to not cry out. A surgical mishap was more likely on a squirming, frightened child. Women trilled *zgrit*, a loud, high-pitched celebratory ululation, at the moment of circumcision. This was ostensibly to avert the “Evil Eye” but it served the purpose of obscuring a child’s shriek (Westermarck, 1926: vol 2, 425).

Larger, more lavish circumcision celebrations increased the intrinsic risk of the “Evil Eye” from people and supernatural forces jealous of the child, causing disease or death. Larger celebrations also meant that more people might witness a serious mishap, undermining the hoped for ascent to manly, respected social status. Infection, dishonor and death, rather than manhood, might be the outcome of the ritual performance of circumcision. Henna body art and henna’s medicinal properties were used in to manage some of these intrinsic risks caused by the attack of the “Evil Eye” attracted to the public display of a beautiful son, his exposed penis and genital blood.

The intrinsic risks of “Night of the Henna”

A bride, the most desired, blessed, and admirable creature in creation, was believed to be in greatest danger

from *jnun*. *Jnun* were thought to be supernatural malicious spirits who were personifications of the “Evil Eye”, as they were deeply jealous of, and attracted to, the most desirable things. The bride had to be shown to the public, and fully adorned, to establish the legitimacy of the union, but this made her the prime target for envy’s malevolent intentions. The ritual actions, particularly henna, connected with weddings were done to protect them from the risks caused by exposure to evil forces (Westermarck 1926: vol. 1: 274).

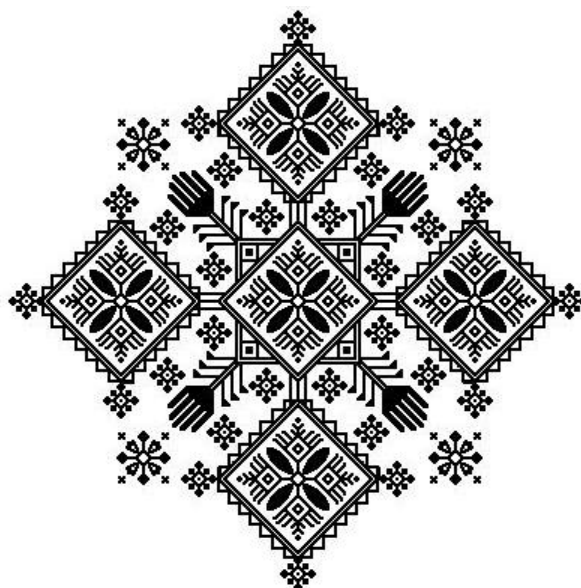
Because the bride was in a magical state during the “Night of the Henna”, her own gaze was considered by some groups to be potentially very dangerous. Full veiling, or ritually downcast eyes, prevented her from glancing at any person or animal and inflicting disaster. The Tsul and Ait Nder believed that if the bride looked at anyone, there would be fighting and manslaughter at the wedding (Westermarck 1926: vol. 1: 420). Certainly the larger the guest list at the wedding, and the more lavish the display of wealth, the more probable was rivalry or conflict, and North African weddings frequently included quarrels, fistfights, and occasionally violence (van Niewkerk, 1995: 52, 60). Hennaing all the guests at the wedding may have been an attempt to manage this risk, as each was then protected from an inadvertent rage-provoking glance.

A malevolent spirit may have been designated as the risk that the bride simply would refuse the marriage and flee. This *jnun* was the *hattaf la-rai*’s, or the “bride stealer”. If the bridal bed was found to be empty when the bridegroom entered the nuptial chamber, the supernatural “bride stealer” was blamed for stealing the bride for himself. The bride could later be miraculously found at her father’s house, and steps were taken to “cure” her of this demonic possession, then she would be returned to her husband’s home (Westermarck 1926: vol. 1: 274).

If the ritual actions were not properly performed through the “Night of the Henna”, the Devil himself, *Yeblis*, would cause domestic quarrels (Westermarck, 1926: vol. 1: 409).

The bride had to travel from her father’s home to her husband’s home, bringing her potential future fertility and fecundity to the new family. She was a prime target for the jealous spirits of the supernatural world as well as the envious gaze of all who viewed her during this journey. Any lapse of protection during this journey was considered the source of her future ruin through infertility, stillbirth, crop failure, water resource failure, marital discord, mental instability, disease, or death. The bride’s mother sprinkled henna powder inside the bride’s shoes in case they came in contact with the earth, where *jnun* dwelled. Henna was put on the mule’s saddle before the bride sat on it, so lurking spirits could not harm her. The bride’s attendants dressed her, hennaed her, covered her, and lifted her onto a mule, taking care that the bride would not touch the potentially polluting earth, then enveloped her in cloth so she could not be viewed as she traveled to her husband’s house (Westermarck, 1926: vol 1, 241). Her attendants led her seven times around a saint’s tomb to prevent malicious spirits from following her to her husband’s house (Westermarck, 1926: vol. 1: 324).

The bride might marry into a household that would suffer economic hardship, so the *Ait Tamsaman* tribe believed she should be silent while riding to her husband's new home as well as during her wedding, as silence was considered a protection against the "Evil Eye". If she spoke while riding to her new husband's household, crop failure would be the certain result (Westermarck 1926: vol. 1: 253, 314). When she arrived at the home, she sprinkled henna on the farm animals and into the well to insure their fertility. The *Ait Yusi* tribe included the ritual of having the bride hurl a lamb over the roof of the tent, so insure that there would be many sheep in the village (Westermarck, 1914: 204).



People used henna as and symbolic patterns to avert supernatural and social forms of the "Evil Eye" manifesting as misfortune from both extrinsic and intrinsic risk.

Henna use in Id al-Adha ritual actions to manage risk

Both Moroccan women and men felt they should purify and sanctify themselves in order to receive the benefits of Id sacrifice, so they bathed, shaved, trimmed their nails, perfumed themselves with incense and scented oils, acquired new clothing, and adorned themselves with henna to create a sense of "fitness" for ritual celebrations. The henna also served to deter the malevolent spirits who would be attracted by a display of food and wealth (Westermarck 1926: vol. 2: 107).

Women hennaed themselves on the eve of Id al-Adha with simple patterns to avert the "Evil Eye". In some villages the women only hennaed their feet, as preparation for the celebrations required busy hands. Children had their hands hennaed, though girls were more often hennaed than boys. Men hennaed, though

married men hennaed less than unmarried men. Malicious spirits were omnipresent at the Id al-Adha display of food, spilled blood, and wealth, and any person without henna would be a certain target, condemned to be plagued with disease or calamity in the following year. Women hennaed their hair so that the action of singeing the hair from the sacrificial animal would not inflame an evil spirit to rob them of their own hair. The *Ait Nder* tribal women hennaed their navels to manage the risk of indigestion from the feasting (Westermarck 1926: vol. 2: 107 – 8).

Animals were hennaed for Id al-Adha to protect them from the evil forces attracted to the celebration; horses, sheep, cattle, goats, mules, cows, and dogs were hennaed to insure their continued health and fertility (Westermarck 1926: vol. 2: 108). The roof posts of the tents or the door lintels were hennaed to prevent the “Evil Eye” from bringing catastrophe on the home.

The sacrificial ram, or other animal, was hennaed in patterns for sanctification, purification, and for supernatural protection (Westermarck 1926: vol. 2: 116). The animal was given a mouthful of barley, salt, and henna, with the prayer spoken three times “*Ya rabbi ssahha u lhena*”, “O God, health and quietness”. The henna was intended to insure that evil spirits would not pollute the prayer for a peaceful, healthy life. The poor who gathered for the celebrations were given henna, so if they felt jealousy or hunger, their potential “Evil Eye” in their gaze would not penetrate the meat and spoil it (Westermarck 1926: vol. 1: 422). All of the villagers were hennaed, to lessen the possibility that jealousies and rivalries sparked by the public display of wealth and abundance would bring disaster.

Henna use in circumcision ritual actions to manage risk

The circumcision feast was sometimes called *l-ars dyal la-htana*, “the wedding of circumcision”, and the series of circumcision rituals were parallel to wedding rituals (Westermarck, 1926: vol. 2, 423). Boys were hennaed, bathed and shaved on the day preceding their circumcision for purification, sanctification, and protection. A sheep or bullock was killed to celebrate the circumcision, and when guests arrived for the celebration, they each first went to the dish of henna to adorn themselves. The guests brought gifts of money for the boy, which were presented and placed in the child’s hennaed hand so the henna would avert evil attached to the gift, while a crier announced the amounts of the gifts, the names of the donors, and blessed each one.

In Fez, the boy’s mothers applied the henna to their hands and feet in the evening, and then fastened their garments with a *Khamsa*, a hand-shaped charm decorated to resemble a hennaed hand, to avert the “Evil Eye” (Westermarck, 1926: vol 2, 418). In the *Ulad Bu’aziz* tribe, a woman who was of good character, but not the child’s mother, applied the henna (Westermarck, 1926: vol. 2: 423).

The next day, the family dressed the boy in the finest clothing that could be purchased or borrowed. A *t'ehlil*, a silver case containing a written charm, was hung over his shoulder to protect him against the “Evil Eye”. He was carried from the house and lifted onto a mule so the evil spirits lurking in the ground could not attack him (Westermarck 1926: vol. 1: 241 – 2). His hood was pulled over his face, so that the “Evil Eye” could not gaze upon him when he was out in public; evil forces could infest and ruin the outcome of the circumcision. The child was often paraded through the whole town, and taken to a saint’s shrine for the circumcision. He was undressed at the shrine, where he was under the protection of his saint, and cut. Henna was often dabbed on the wound (Westermarck 1926: vol. 2: 423). Henna may have effectively managed the risk of sepsis and discomfort from circumcision by being slightly antibacterial and cooling.

The boy was dressed in different protective garments after the circumcision, and the bloody cloth was displayed to the guests at the circumcision, and then carefully preserved. The boy was carried back home, as touching the ground would create too great a risk of pollution by the “Evil Eye” (Westermarck 1926: vol. 2: 418 – 9). When the boy was home, he was secluded for two days protect him from the “Evil Eye” so that he would not become ill (Westermarck 1926: vol. 2: 422).

In Andjra, the boy had other protective body adornments in addition to henna. The child’s hands and feet were hennaed, and eyes were ringed with kohl to protect him with the *baraka*, or “blessedness”, inherent in those cosmetics. A vertical line drawn in blue over the ridge of his nose made an additional protection from evil. The boy’s mother tied amulets around his ankles, made of silk ribbon, a silver coin, a piece of blue, a bit of amber, and a hedgehog jawbone with its teeth still intact. This ribbon was left tied until the wound from the circumcision healed (Westermarck 1926: vol. 2: 424).

Henna was used in “Night of the Henna” ritual actions to manage risk

One of the first gifts sent by the groom to his intended bride was a gift of henna, and this gift was sent again at every religious feast until the wedding (Westermarck, 1914: 31). Negotiations between families to determine the worth of a bride were complex and often ended in failure, and henna was used as a symbol of *baraka*, or “blessedness”, to help facilitate discussions. The bride’s family wanted her to be as highly valued as possible, and asked for the greatest amount of material goods possible in exchange for her. The groom’s had a limit to the wealth they could afford to spend on a mate for their son, even though the young man himself may have worked for years to afford his bride. The parents usually arranged the marriages, and as such, the bride and groom submitted to the arrangements. Thus there was a perceived need for gifts that had *baraka* to smooth out difficulties. Henna was again among the gifts when the families met to finalize the bride price. When an agreement was reached on the number of slaves, mares, ewes, mules, cows and goods that would be a fair exchange for the bride, a meeting was arranged between the fathers who counted out the transaction in front of witnesses. The groom’s family brought henna, sugar, a sheep, a

cotton scarf, a shirt, and candles to this settlement (Westermarck 1914, 40). The girl's family always attempted to demand the best status for themselves and their daughter by demanding a high price, but excessively high demands risked rejection. With each rejection, the daughter grew older, and older unmarried daughters drew a lower bride price, so there was some drive to make a deal.

When the arrangements were agreed upon, more henna was sent to the bride along with clothing, household goods, food, domestic animals and ornaments. These gifts were loaded onto camels and taken in a public procession from the groom's house to the bride's house where they were exhibited to villagers (Westermarck 1914, p. 83). The bride's father gave some of the henna to everyone who came to view the gifts, but the bride herself stayed in seclusion. The townspeople commented on the quality of the gifts, the amount, and whether the exchange was satisfactory or not, whom it favored, whom it infuriated, and the implications for the local social hierarchy. This establishment of wealth payments as part of marriage events was a strategy for creating social allies, though it also created rivals. Increasing the value of marriageable children by expending wealth created the relationships of political, economic and supernatural support (Owens and Hayden, 1997, 124).

In Fez, five days before the wedding, the bride was taken to the *hamam*, the village bathhouse, to be purified with both water and henna. Before the bride could safely visit the *hamam*, women of the bride's family entered the bath house with a lit candle, and trilled *zgrit*, a loud, shrill, high pitched ululation, to ward off *jnun*, who haunted bathhouses. They repeated this ritual for three days to dispel malicious spirits lurking in the drains and sewers that might spoil the desired proceedings. Seven women bathed the bride with seven buckets of water "so that she would have no quarrel with her husband", speaking the words: "*L-ma aman u s-sarr ma kan*", "The water is safety and quarrel there is none" (Westermarck, 1914: 136). A bride might be divorced if she got along poorly with her husband; villagers believed domestic quarrels were provoked by demons, so they attempted to cleanse the bride of this potential problem.

On her return from the *hamam*, the bride went behind a curtain which had been set up in her room, and visited with unmarried girls of her own family. After dinner a *m'allma l'hannaya*, or a professional henna artist, was called in to henna the bride if the family was wealthy enough to afford one. The designs reserved for brides are called *l-hanna be t-t'qwisa*. (Westermarck 1914: 137)

The following day, the "Night of the Henna", female relatives assembled in the front of the house for a celebratory feast, with musicians and entertainment. The bride stayed behind the curtain and was ornamented again with henna to avert the "Evil Eye", was laden with amuletic jewelry, painted with kohl and saffron, perfumed, and ritually dressed with seven layers of clothing embroidered with symbols to avert the "Evil Eye". Only when she was completely enfolded with protective cosmetics, jewelry, and ritual clothing, was she safe from the potentially damaging gaze of admirers, she led from her room with her face

covered, and lifted to a low table. The praise “*t’bark allah*”, “May God be Blessed” was frequently spoken to avert the “Evil Eye” (Westermarck, 1914: 138). The celebration continued to daybreak with musicians, entertainers and dancers. Guests sang, danced, and presented gifts to the bride; women trilled *zgrit* at the presentation of each gift to deter jealous spirits from fouling the gift.

In Tangiers, a female musician mixed the henna while singing, accompanied by six other musicians. A married woman who had been married to a bachelor, not one who had married into a polygynous household, nor a divorced woman, applied the henna patterns. This was meant to insure that the bride would have a happy marriage, as plural marriages often gave rise to rivalries and jealousies. Among the *Shareefa* of *Wazan*, a wealthy elite, a professional henna artist ornamented the bride in delicate patterns, which were then heated over a charcoal fire. The henna was then embellished with *harquus*, a black cosmetic made of ashes, pitch, and spices (Westermarck 1914: 141). More complex henna patterning added additional elements for averting the evil eye. More elaborate patterning enhanced social status through a conspicuous display of wealth and leisure. A skilled artist did the complex henna work and spent many hours on the patterning that could cover most of a woman’s body. Servants attended the needs of anyone whose hands and feet were incapacitated with drying henna paste, or who wanted their henna patterns to stay lovely after application.

Women applied henna patterns to the bride’s hands and arms. Henna or black *harquus* patterns adorned her face. A woman rubbed *swak*, black walnut, on her lips. A woman dipped an ivory or silver pin into *kohl* and drew it between her closed eyelashes to blacken her eyelashes and eyelids. After the bride was hennaed and adorned, the men who accompanied the bride were also hennaed. In the *Ait Yusi* tribe, a married woman who had been married once and never divorced pounded the henna leaves into a fine pulp, imbuing the henna paste with the luck of marriage. If a divorced woman pounded the henna, her bad luck would transfer to the bride and she would be divorced (Westermarck 1914: 149). Women ornamented the bride with henna from her feet to her knees with patterns that would protect her from the evil eye. Slippers sent by the groom were put on her hennaed feet, with a needle or salt placed in the right slipper as charms against the *jnun*. When she removed her slippers, the scraps of henna were carefully shaken out into water, so that they could not be used in magic spells against her (Westermarck 1914, p 150). After an *Ait Yusi* bride had been hennaed, she was draped with a veil painted with a broad circle of henna, called *ayyur*, “moon” (Westermarck, 1914: 152) (Tazi, Viola; 1999:28 – 30). The hennaed veil covered her hair and face before she was presented to the groom.

The “Great Night of the Henna” was usually celebrated in the bride’s home the night after groom came to claim her. The groom, at his own home, was bathed, shaved, adorned with henna and celebrated. An *Ait Sadden* bride was clothed in her bridal attire and seated on a mat to be hennaed. Women sang, “Go out, may you give birth to male twins” and trilled *zgrit* during the henna application before she was presented to

the guests and the husband. Many of the village traditions required that the bride weep, or make the appearance of weeping through her “Night of the Henna”. She kept her eyes downcast (Westermarck, 1914: 157). The weeping may have been to make malevolent spirits believe that this was a sorrowful occasion, rather than joyous, so they would not be envious. Davis (1983: 36 - 37) and Kingsmill Hart (1994: 60) both observed the weeping to be genuine, as the bride and her family grieved because she would leave them and rarely see them again, and would face a possibly indifferent husband and probably hostile mother-in-law and family until her first pregnancy. A bride’s life in her new home could be bleak until she gave birth to a living male child (Davis, 1983: 37). The *Ulad Bu-Aziz* tribal brides encouraged themselves with “Night of the Henna” symbolic actions to avert this misfortune, including placing her foot on the stomach of the ram sacrificed for the wedding feast, to make her ruler of her new home, and eating the ram’s heart so that her husband would have a loving heart (Westermarck 1914: 158).

In some communities, the groom deflowered the bride at the culmination of the “Night of the Henna” at the bride’s home. In other villages, she was deflowered after she made the journey to the groom’s home. If there was blood following intercourse, the bride was declared to be a virgin and this blood was shown to all the guests. If blood was lacking, that could be concealed by the substitution of pigeon or chicken blood. A freshly killed pigeon’s heart, still full of blood, placed deep in a in a vagina, went unnoticed in the dark, and produced a satisfactory bloody mess on the bridal undergarments. If this subterfuge was discovered, the bride’s parents might bribe the groom to ignore the difficulty by offering to return half the bride price (Westermarck 1914: 229). The bloody garment was carried around the village, and exhibited in the groom’s village (Westermarck 1914: 159). The defloration blood was full of *baraka*, blessedness, and was celebrated as was the blood of the sacrificial ram at Id al-Adha and the blood from the circumcision.

When the bride was deflowered in her own home, villagers performed several symbolic actions to insure that the bride would be well treated in her new household. The bride was seated on a pack - saddle thrown over a weaving stool, and then washed with henna and water by the woman who had hennaed her. By riding the saddle, the bride was believed to gain power of her husband, as a rider has power over a mule (Westermarck, 1914, 153 - 4), and henna blessed the spell for success. To begin the journey, a mare or mule was beautifully arrayed (Kingsmill Hart, 1994: 65), and the saddle was smeared with henna to deter any potential evil arriving in the husband’s village with the bride (Westermarck 1914: 210). As the bride was taken out of the village to her husband’s house, women sprinkled her with a mixture of henna and milk, as milk and henna were believed to bring security and peace (Westermarck, 1914: 177). When the procession reached the groom’s house, the bride was taken in and again hennaed.

If the bride was to be deflowered in the husband’s home, the *ngagef*, the henna artist, brought her to the nuptial chamber and completed her adornment. The *ngagef* stained the bride’s lips with walnut root, and ornamented her cheeks with *harquus*, a black cosmetic made of pitch, ash and spice, used to make patterns

similar to those used in henna (Westermarck 1914: 193). Outside the tent, the bridegroom and his attendants were also adorned with henna, kohl, and *harquus*, prior to the defloration. When defloration was accomplished, and the bloody linens had been celebrated, the “Night of the Henna” and wedding party gradually dispersed. When the guests left the wedding party, they were given henna, figs, raisins and oranges (Westermarck 1914: 283).



Henna protects the wearer from the “Evil Eye” and *jnun* because it has *baraka*.

Baraka in Arabic means “blessing”. Henna was said to be able to avert evil because it had “*baraka*”, or the quality of “blessedness”. Henna was also called *nor n-nbi*, “the Light of the Prophet” because of its usefulness and protective influence. The henna stain was a barrier between the outer world of malevolent spirits, the “Evil Eye”, and potentially polluting or injurious forces, and the body and soul of the wearer. It defended the wearer against the attacks of a hostile and dangerous world (Westermarck 1926, vol. 1: 113 and Tazuin, 1998).

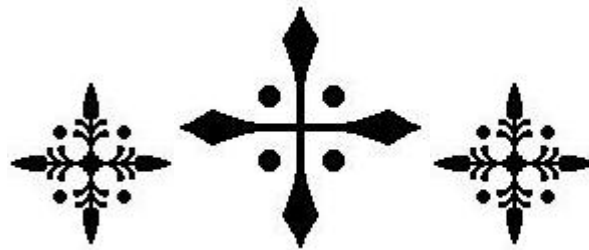
Henna stains on the hands were considered to protect the body from head to navel, and stains on the feet offered protection from the “Evil Eye” from the navel to the feet (Tazuin, 1998). Henna was applied to a bride’s feet and shoes repeatedly, presumably to offer additional protection to the woman’s womb. Walnut root, used to darken the lips, and kohl, used to outline the eyes were also believed to have *baraka*, and to be capable of averting the “Evil Eye”, so were used on the sacrificial animal, the boy, and the bride in conjunction with henna (Westermarck 1926, vol 1: 113).

***Baraka* is blessedness, and *baraka* repels the “Evil Eye”**

If extrinsic and intrinsic risks of a rite of passage are seen as being caused by the “Evil Eye”, then

adornments and symbolic actions that have *baraka* avert the “Evil Eye” during that celebration. Blessedness averts evil, therefore substances and symbols that have blessedness may be presumed to manage the risk of calamities that result from evil. The Moroccan villagers using henna, kohl, and walnut root said specifically that the “Evil Eye” was responsible for the extrinsic risks of death, disease, calamity, infertility, poverty, and famine; the adornments used in these rites of passage were applied to avert specifically to avert the “Evil Eye”.

If the intrinsic risks caused by the display of wealth and goods were social envy, and social envy was expressed by casting the “Evil Eye”, then adorning the celebrants at the festivities with henna blessed them so they would either feel no jealousy, or the jealousy they felt would not turn to malice.



Symbols are drawn with henna to enhance its ability to avert the “Evil Eye”

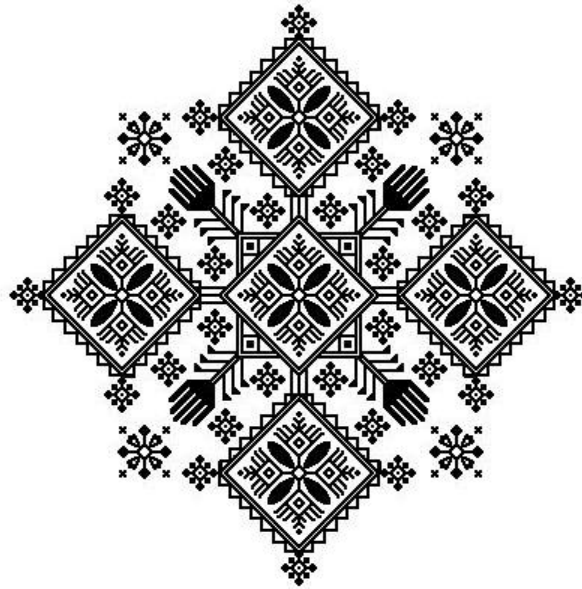
Henna was drawn into patterns that were believed to have the power to avert the “Evil Eye”, increasing henna’s effectiveness. Many of these patterns were symbols of hands and fingers used to “gouge out” or “poke out” the “Evil Eye”. Others were symbols of a staring eye that would force back the gaze of the “Evil Eye” or cause it to blink. Others were very complex patterns that would dazzle or confuse the “Evil Eye” entangling it so it could not enter the person and cause harm.

Symbols that avert the “Evil Eye”

The simplest henna pattern to avert the “Evil Eye” was an equal armed cross or X with five points, one dot between each right angle and the center dot. This was referred to as a *khamisa*, the word for five, which was a symbol of a hand reaching out to blind the “Evil Eye” before it could touch a person and do harm (Westermarck 1926: 445). The simple cross with dots was used when intricate work could not be done, such as on a greyhound’s forehead at Id al-Adha (Westermarck, 1926: 451), for impatient children, or men who didn’t want a fancy pattern but who wanted the protection. This pattern was often enclosed in a circle or diamond shape, and could be made very elaborate (Sigelmassi, 1974: 37, Thevoz, 1984: 70 – 1). These patterns were used in Moroccan jewelry, textiles, woodcarving, ceramics, and all domestic arts for beautification and protection (Courtney-Clarke, 1996).

The phrase “*Hamsa fi ainek*”, “five in your eye” often accompanied the gesture of averting the “Evil Eye”, stretching the fingers of the right hand out towards a person suspected of casting the “Evil Eye”. This implied the intention of reaching out with the fingers to gouge out, or blind, the “Evil Eye” to eliminate its threat. Henna patterns often have elements of *Khamsa*, a hand with two, three, or five fingers outstretched (Sigelmassi, 1974: 37, Thevoz, 1984: 70 – 1; Westermarck, 1926, vol 1: 449). These offered protection by extending fingers in all the directions from which the “Evil Eye” may approach, blinding or averting any malevolent force before it can do harm.

Diamond shaped patterns with a central dot were symbols of an eye, to “stare back” at an evil eye and cause it to blink. These “eye” patterns often formed the central figure in a henna design, repeated in series, and as an element in larger compositions of body markings. Henna and tattoo practitioners applied *Khamsa* and diamond patterns in henna, *harquus* and tattooing to bless and protect the wearer (Searight, 1984: vol 2).



Henna is used outside of ceremonial occasions in similar ways, but with decreased significance and without ceremony.

Henna was used in several folk remedies for minor injuries; particularly for cuts and burns, headaches, or to reduce fever to help heal cuts and burns (Al-Jawziyya, 1998, 183, 215 – 7, 279). However, in these circumstances, the application was neither public nor ceremonial; it was simply functional.

Henna in daily use was a utilitarian and beautifying cosmetic, employed for attractiveness and for skin and hair protection. Women applied henna to their hands and feet, particularly to fingertips and nails for

cosmetic improvement. Women apply henna after a menstrual cycle, and at the end of their postpartum “lying in” for purification (Westermarck 1926: vol 2, 398). People applied henna to their hair for beauty and conditioning (Merzouki et al, 2000, 297 and Mernissi, 194: 230 – 40), and women applied henna to their skin for those same reasons (Tauzin, 1998). Herdsmen applied henna to their sheep to identify members of the flock. Henna was applied to wounds to promote healing.

None of these applications required public ceremony. There was some sense that henna deterred malicious spirits in these applications, but it was a minor consideration in daily use, not a protection for a major status change.



There were some events similar to Id al-Adha, Circumcision and “Night of the Henna” but they had no public display, conferred no status change, and had little henna.

Id sacrifice compared to ordinary meat acquisition

Ordinary animals were butchered for feasts and guests, but were not set apart from the flock to live with the family. They were not adorned with henna and kohl and were not kissed on the mouth. Ordinary meat was simply captured, restrained, and slaughtered, though its head would have turned towards Mecca for *Halal* slaughter. Ordinary butchery blood was polluting, not redemptive. Spilled blood from butchery was avoided, and the sight of spilled blood was believed to cause supernatural harm to pregnant women, even causing a miscarriage. Ordinary slaughter was done within a household compound, not in public, with women attending to the butchery after the animal is killed by the head of the household, and the participants do not henna for the occasion (Hart, 1994: 24 – 31).

Circumcision compared to other childhood injuries

Other childhood minor spillage of blood, such as a cut or kitchen burn was treated with application of herbal folk medicine and concern with attack from the “Evil Eye” (Westermarck, 1926: vol 1 109 – 10), but there was no celebration, announcement to the community, or change of status. The blood from childhood injuries other than circumcision was not considered supernatural, nor was it displayed to the family and community. Accidental childhood bloodshed did not imply status change, nor is it publicly celebrated.

“Night of the Henna” Marital Defloration compared to ordinary intercourse

Ordinary marital intercourse was considered defiling, and a private matter, as opposed to supernaturally

blessed and public as was marital defloration. The “wet spot” of ordinary marital intercourse was not displayed to the community or celebrated, nor kept as a talisman as was hymeneal blood from marital defloration. The spillage from ordinary intercourse is considered unclean, and to be washed away before prayers (Westermarck 1926: vol. 2: 4–5).

Ordinary marital intercourse that is not a marital defloration did not change a woman’s status within the community. Though henna was always part of a woman’s personal beautification repertoire to keep a husband’s interest, henna was ordinarily done as solid fingertip and sole stains rather than elaborate patterning.

Weddings involving a divorced woman often did not include henna, or if henna was done, it was not as elaborate as for a virgin bride (Westermarck, 1914: 154). A woman who had been so unlucky to have been widowed was not even given henna for a remarriage, as the “Evil Eye” would find her so unattractive as to not be worth the trouble. She did, still, have a streak of saffron was painted across her forehead for protection (Westermarck 1926: vol. 1: 310).



The purpose of henna body art in Moroccan rites of passage and symbolic social actions

In Moroccan village belief, as across North Africa and the Middle East, henna protected a desirable person, animal or object by forming a barrier that the gaze of the “Evil Eye” and *jnun* were unable to penetrate. In this way, people believed henna deterred malevolent spirits from causing disease, infertility, mental illness, or death (Tauzin, 1998). Women used henna most frequently, though men, children used it also. Henna was applied to animals on occasions where there was a sense of heightened vulnerability from public exposure to supernatural influences during ritual action (Westermarck 1926: vol 1, 310). Moroccan

villagers said specifically that henna would deter *jnun*. If *jnun* and the “Evil Eye” were the personification of extrinsic and intrinsic risks in Moroccan villagers’ lives, henna was the risk management device against calamity.

The function of henna body art in Moroccan village life

Anything which was enviable, and which was also exposed to view, was apt to provoke rivalry or discord in village life. Resources were always limited, and there was never equal distribution of health, possessions, talent, water, children, beauty, food, and love. People who felt they had less than they wanted sometimes felt malevolent envy of those who had more.

Future abundance was uncertain as well. The “Evil Eye” and the race of *jnun* paralleled the human feelings of envy, and were blamed for life’s extrinsic risks of disease, property loss, ineptitude, drought, infertility, ugliness, famine, hatred and death in Moroccan village life. The social nature of Id al-Adha, circumcisions and weddings required that admirable things be placed in the public gaze during a rite of passage to elevate stature in the village hierarchy. If social status was asserted and elevated by opulent display, but attracted envy, then increasing ceremonial display increased intrinsic hazards (Howe, 2000: 69). Rivalries could arise as the family attempted to raise the head of household, the son, and the bride into the best possible position through an escalating display of wealth and dispersal of goods. When jealousies arose from hierarchical readjustment, they had to be smoothed over to avert social disruption. Henna averted the consequences of jealousy by dispelling the symbol of their jealousy, the “Evil Eye”. When a person was hennaed, they understood that their envious feelings arising from a perceived inequity were to be dispelled through blessedness. When a person was hennaed, they felt some protection from the malicious forces of nature. Henna, and the patterns created with henna, was intended to soften life’s calamities, and comfort hurt feelings arising from unavoidable sorrows and hardships in village life.

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