

Sünnet (181482)

Süslenme (181504)

distinction between humans and animals. It might be suggested that since the prohibition is phrased in a feminine form there is a declaration that women should not resemble animals that have to be marked with a tattoo as a proof of ownership.

Teeth modification

The sources mention some forbidden techniques of artificial intervention in the natural look of teeth as a means to create white, healthy, and sharp teeth that signify health and youth, two of the most esteemed values/traits of appearance. The most common techniques were smoothing the teeth (*barada*), sharpening the teeth or just the canine teeth, and making them thin and serrated (*washshara*), and having the teeth separated one from another, thus opening spaces, particularly between the front teeth (*tafallaja*).³⁷ In addition to health and youth, many popular beliefs ascribed the space between the front teeth as predicting future wealth and happiness.

According to the jurists' descriptions, the professionals who practiced teeth modifications and their clients were women who were interested in improving their personal appearance for men. The discussion is phrased in a feminine form of the practitioners and consumers alike, as befits a patriarchal system that attributes to women the need to employ these techniques. Although men are not mentioned, it is impossible to decide whether they did or did not use these techniques, or whether the jurists decided that it is more appropriate to ascribe these inappropriate behaviours to women.

Ear piercing (*Thaqab*)

The discussion of ear-piercing is gendered and jurists from different schools of law agreed that boys' ears should not be pierced, as this a needless mutilation, but there is a difference of opinion regarding the piercing of girls' ears.³⁸ The common explanation for piercing girls' ears is the need to improve their personal appearance, because according to patriarchal assumption, they were born imperfect and need artificial additions to increase their sexual attraction for men. Conversely, boys do not need to improve their appearance because they were born perfect and do not need to increase their sexual attraction. In addition, an adoption of feminine adornments by boys will threaten males' identity and hegemony, and encourage homosexuality, a deviation of God's will and the right path. al-'Asrushani (died 1234) claims that it is permissible to pierce girls' ears for purposes of adornment. Because it was already a popular custom at the time of the Prophet Muhammad, it is not a condemned innovation (*bid'a*), but rather a continuation of the ancestors' way.³⁹ It is possible that boys are not mentioned in this tradition because it was a unique custom for girls, or because it was more appropriate to attribute it to girls. Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (died 1350) permitted the piercing of girls' ears as a mean of adornment, but prohibited the piercing of boys' ears based on the

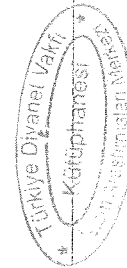
³⁷Ahmad b. Shu'ayb al-Nas'i, *Sahih Sunan al-Nasa'i* (Riyad: Maktab al-Tarbiya al-'Arabi, 1988), Vol. 8, 188; Muslim, *Sahih*, Vol. 7, 107; 'Abu Hamid Muhammad al-Ghazali, *Ihya' al-'Ulum al-Din* (Bayrut: Dar al-Ma'rifa, 1981), Vol. 1, 131; al-Nawawi, *Sharh al-Muhadhdhab*, Vol. 3, 140–1; Ibn Qudama, *al-Mughni*, Vol. 3, 77; al-Bukhari, *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Vol. 7, 36, 107, 532.

³⁸One verse in the Qur'an (43: 17) refers to female babies' adornment, but only in an indirect way. The classic Qur'anic commentators are those who expanded the verse's meaning and ascribed its content to women starting in early childhood.

³⁹al-'Asrushani, *Ahkam al-Sighar*, 146.

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argument that this is a mutilation with no religious or medical reason. 'As for piercing the ears of a boy, there is no use for it as this is a mutilation with no religious or medical reason and this is prohibited'.⁴⁰

Some jurists objected also to girls' piercing based on the following explanations: first, piercing is a painful and useless injury. Ibn al-Jawzi claimed that it is permissible to injure girls' bodies only for bloodletting as a medical treatment and for circumcision (*khitan*): 'There is no permission to pierce girls' ears for hanging earrings. This is a painful injury which is prohibited, unless it is for an important need such as bloodletting and circumcision'.⁴¹ Second, there is no importance to the adornment of girls; thus, the hanging of earrings is a needless exaggeration and it is preferable to be satisfied with the adornment of bracelets and necklaces: 'The adornment with earrings is not important, furthermore, their hanging is an exaggeration. They should be satisfied with bracelets and necklaces'.⁴²

Another aspect of females' piercing is the discussion of women's piercing and its connection to circumcision. According to Hadith tradition, Sara who was jealous of Hagar who was pregnant by Ibrahim, swore to mutilate three of Hagar's organs. Ibrahim was afraid that Sara would cut Hagar's ear or nose so instead, he permitted her to pierce her ears and to circumcise her. It is likely that Sara's intention was to wreck Hagar's face and make her unattractive; while Ibrahim who was fearful of the ruin of Hagar's personal appearance permitted Sara to pierce Hagar and circumcise her.⁴³

Circumcision

There is a difference between body modification rituals and body modification practices. While piercing, tattooing, and teeth modifications were modification practices, circumcision is a modification ritual. As a cultural ritual, circumcision reflects the traditions, symbolism and beliefs of society and it affects the individual participant and the group at the same time.⁴⁴ Bouhdiba adds that circumcision is a practice of Muslims and not of Islam thus, its main goal is to be manifested as a sign of membership in the Muslim community.⁴⁵

Circumcision of boys and girls is classified as body modification, although there is a special importance to the fact that it is practiced on the sex organs. The fact that the practice of the ceremony can take place anytime from a few days after birth until the eve of marriage is proof for its social-cultural context rather than for its physical one.⁴⁶ During the circumcision, like other cutting ceremonies, the individual is separated from his former group of membership, and after the cutting ceremony ends he automatically joins another defined group. The fact that the modification is permanent symbolizes the

⁴⁰Muhammad b. 'Abi Bakr 'Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Tuhfat al-Mawdud fi 'Ahkam al-Mawdud* (D. M.: Sharaf al-Din al-Kutubi wa-Awladuhu, 1961), 181.

⁴¹Ibn al-Jawzi, *Ahkam al-Nisa'*, 15.

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Tuhfat al-Mawdud*, 166.

⁴⁴Armando Favazza, *Bodies Under Siege* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University, 2011), 200–1. For more about circumcision as a rite of passage see: Arnold Van Gennep, *Rites of Passage* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1960), 65–74; Victor Turner, *The Forest of Symbols* (Ithaca: N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1967), 93–111; Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Ithaca: N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1969), 94–130.

⁴⁵Abdelwahab Bouhdiba & Abdu Khal, 'Festivities of Violence: Circumcision and the Making of Men', in Mai Ghousoub & Emma Sinclair-Webb eds. *Imagined Masculinities* (London: Saqi Books, 1999), 26–7.

⁴⁶For more about the age of males' and females' circumcision in Islam see: