

APPENDIX I

PUBLIC CEREMONIES

THIS Appendix is a supplement to Chapter IV. The public ceremonies for which kinsmen come together are described in two sections, Rites of Passage and Special Religious Occasions.

RITES OF PASSAGE

Childhood Rites

Infant mortality being quite high, the birth of a child is not celebrated elaborately. But if the child lives, the celebrations of his development as a social person successively grow in importance, culminating in the celebration of his marriage, for this is the symbol of his adulthood.

The women are the main persons to celebrate the birth and growth of a child prior to his circumcision. Before he is born, a few women closely related to the pregnant mother join her on a day called *kaalaa-buraani*, "clothes cutting," in order to prepare clothing for the infant. Fruit and rice and meat (*palaw*) is usually served by the more well-to-do families; otherwise bread, pastry, and tea.

Similarly, at the time of the appearance of a baby's first tooth a few closely related persons in wealthy families, mostly women, may eat a meal together called *dandaani* (*dandaan* = "tooth"). *Sarkali*, "headshaving," is done when a boy is one year old. One of the most elderly relatives of the child will shave the child's head in the presence of the close relatives in expression of the hope that the child will grow to the age of the man performing the act. A meal is provided for those who come. The female guests give petty amounts of money (5 to 25 afghanis) as gifts to women of the household. This is called *shakerreyz*, "sugar-pouring."

Circumcision is prescribed for all males of an Islamic community and initiates young men into the body of adult believers who pray together; until circumcised, children of Imami parents, considered unbelievers (*kaafar*), are not allowed to eat from the same dish as the men. In all the sects, boys are circumcised between the ages of three and nine, usually about five.

Circumcision is done in the fall of the year (early Mizan) by an itinerate group of two or three barbers from outside the community, usually Maydaan. They play music on the night before the circumcision. Usually feasts are served that night by the families circumcising a boy. Families who can afford it often spend much on such feasts and invite relatives from far and near to enjoy it with them. Those who cannot afford a feast consisting of rice and meat (palaw) will serve tea and pastry. Next day, before the barbers leave, all the designated boys in the community are circumcised at one time.

Marriage

Marriage initiates young persons into adulthood. It is considered a religious duty because the Prophet Muhammad married, and his life is considered a standard of faith and practice. To marry, many believe, is to gain merit with God. Not to marry is a sin.

Marriage ceremonies involve more relatives than any other rite of passage and epitomize the intricacy of reciprocal giving between kinsmen. A marriage is joined by a series of increasingly larger social gatherings through which the relatives of the bride and groom endorse the marriage by their presence and their witnessing of the presentations of goods, and express solidarity in the common consumption of food. The consensus of the relatives is the ultimate sanction of the marriage. Even though official registration is necessary, the government is nevertheless dependent on the testimonials of local elders for marriage registration.

The stages of progressive publicity and economic expenditure are the early search for a wife, the proposal, the engagement, the wedding, and the post-marital transactions. These stages are here described in detail because of the importance of the social bonds created by marriage.

When the men get together they talk among other things about girls: who is the new prospect for marriage, how much her bride price may be, who may bid for her, how old she is, whether her parents are ready to marry her off now, etc. They always ask whether she is pretty. Girls in rural communities, being unveiled, may easily be seen, though seldom does a man talk to a girl not closely related. Older men do not marry women they have not first seen. Older as well as younger men can take an interest in young girls because under Islamic law they may have four wives; even more are sometimes had by the very rich in certain remote districts.

The women know better who the prospective brides are and how suitable they may be as wives. While a girl's beauty is important to the men, her temperament is important to the women. Girls known for a bad temper and the daughters of ill-tempered women are not desired.

Arrangements for a first marriage are always made by parents or guardians.

Other marriages are initiated by the adult men themselves. In both cases, however, initial contact is made through representatives (*wakils*), who at first are usually women. A woman on behalf of her son, or (in the mother's absence) her younger brother, approaches the female relatives of the bride and proposes a marriage. Usually first proposals are refused or delayed, so it is expected that several visits will have to be made. Refusals and delays give the girl's family time to inquire about the suitor and to develop a consensus about the proposal. If the girl's family agrees, a male from the boy's family is sent to propose more formally to the girl's father or guardian.

Engagements are commonly made even when the children are quite young. A certain woman, for example, told me that her daughter was engaged to a boy named Mir Amad. He asked for her when she was very young, about five or six years old. He is now 25 and she 14. When he first asked for her the mother and father would not agree. But so many of his family visited them so often, always staying late, that they wore her family out. They finally agreed to give her to Mir Amad, but only later. They, the mother said, would wait another two years, but Mir Amad told me separately that he hoped to marry the next summer.

After the initial proposal is privately accepted a few men from the boy's close relatives—e.g., Fa, Br, FaBr, FaBrSo—bring lump sugar to the girl's family. Everyone eats lump sugar and drinks tea supplied by the girl's family. This is known as "the breaking of hard sugar" (*qand shekestaani*) and signals a private agreement of the marriage.

A few days later at a time set by the girl's father, they come again for a *shirini khori*, "eating sweets," which is the formal engagement ceremony. Tajiks bring only fruit and lump sugar; Hazaras send in advance the necessary ingredients for a feast.¹ If the food served is only fruit and lump sugar it is distributed among the guests by the father of the girl, sometimes in teacups, but sometimes (among the wealthier Tajiks) in small scarves which are then kept as favors by the guests. To the *shirini khori* more men from the boy's family come, sometimes as many as 50, for richer families, but usually only five or six among the poor. Relatively fewer relatives of the girl attend this feast.

The groom is among the guests. If a meal is served, after the meal the host tells the groom that it was cooked by a certain daughter of his. This indicates his acceptance of the marriage. Commonly, one of the boy's family forthrightly asks the girl's father three times if he has promised his daughter to this boy; each time of course he replies affirmatively. Then they eat the lump sugar and tea together in celebration of this engagement. Finally, they pray that God will bless this agreement. After the *shirini khori* the boy is allowed to visit his father-in-law but cannot stay overnight.

¹An example of the goods and amounts sent in advance for a typical *shirini khori* is the following: two sets of clothes, two or three rings, a pair of shoes, a watch; eight pounds of hard candy, one sheep, sixteen pounds of ghi; eighty pounds of rice.

The women also meet for *shirini khori*. Prior to the *shirini khori* some of the close female relatives in the groom's family bring a small gift to the mother of the girl, usually clothing, but sometimes money (perhaps 20 afghanis apiece). Later they bring clothing for the bride, consisting, for example, of gold earrings, a gold ring, a necklace, an embroidered blouse and pantaloons, and a head scarf. In addition to these things, the closest female relatives of the boy—his mother, sisters, and aunts—will each send similar personal items of clothing to the bride. All these gifts are brought to the girl's house on a tray covered with a cloth, and on the way they sometimes sing and play the tambourine. The tray of gifts is paraded on someone's head. At the girl's house, where the women of the bride's family have gathered, the groom's mother gives each item on the tray to the bride's mother, displaying it to everyone present.

The mother of the girl should later reciprocate the specific personal gifts of the groom's female relatives, and if possible, double the amount. The *shirini khori* among the women mainly consists of giving these gifts and consuming tea and hard sugar. At the very end, the bride sometimes gives her mother-in-law some lump sugar in an embroidered cloth for the groom.

Seldom does a marriage take place earlier than three months after an engagement, and usually it is much later. There are two reasons. One is that engagements are often made years before the girl, and often the boy, reach marriageable age. Another is that the boy's family needs time to muster the funds for the wedding costs and the bride price. In any case, the object of the early engagement ceremonies is to confirm publicly the verbal marriage agreement and to secure it until the marriage can be consummated.

Among the Hazaras agreement on the bride price usually occurs when the proposal is accepted. Customarily, the girl's father asks for an exorbitant amount and then eventually, if seriously interested in engaging his daughter to the suitor, comes down to a price current at the time.

Sometimes, when the marriage cannot be consummated for some months or years the Hazaras hold a *toykhord*, "little marriage," feast. This is essentially similar to the *shirini khori* but involves more people. The crucial object of *toykhord* is to make the engagement more public, and hence more secure, by a rather larger feast preliminary to an expected lengthy delay in the actual marriage ceremony. During this period of waiting the boy should take gifts of clothing to his fiancée and to her mother on special occasions, such as on Id or New Year's Day. In return, he is sometimes given a kind of pastry (*qadmal*). He is allowed to sleep in his father-in-law's house without conjugal rights.

When the boy's family is ready for the marriage, several men from the family call on the girl's father and indicate their readiness to have the marriage feast. Among the Tajiks this is the time for finalizing the bride price. As mentioned earlier, among the Hazaras the bride price has usually already been set.

A day for paying the bride price is set. Usually a meal is eaten by a number

of males from the two families, the food for it provided by the groom's family. This amount is perhaps around 80 pounds of rice, some firewood, meat, potatoes, ghi, etc. After the meal the bride price is counted out in front of everyone and given to the girl's father.

The amounts of the bride price vary in different areas. Tajiks on the markaz generally pay 10,000 afghanis cash plus the following goods consumed in the wedding feast: 1000 pounds of rice, 150 pounds of ghi, eight lambs or kids, 10 donkey-loads of wood, four loads of brush fuel, 150 pounds of wheat, eight pounds of kerosene, 30 pounds of salt, four pounds of tea, 35 pounds of sugar, 150 pounds of potatoes, 30 pounds of onions.² Usually these amounts are quoted in their cash value, as say, 10,000 afghanis for bride price and 3000 afghanis for the feast. Formerly, cash being scarce, most of the bride price was paid in goods. As an example, 20 years ago in the highlands a relatively wealthy man paid the following as bride price: three bulls, three large copper cooking pots, one muzzle-loading rifle and 3000 afghanis in silver coin.

Soon after the payment of the bride price a few of the groom's closest female relatives gather to eat a meal (usually) and pudding (always). Then as a group they take the wedding dress and ornaments for the bride to her house. They don't stay long except to have tea.

Shaw-i-khina, "the night of henna," takes place soon afterwards on the night before the wedding. On *shaw-i-khina* all the members, of the groom's qawm community gather at his house for a feast and put henna on his hands. If it is an intra-qawm community marriage the only members of the qawm community not likely to come are those most closely related to the bride. Her relatives gather at the same time in her house for a similar purpose and the food for this meal, as well as at the groom's house, is provided by the groom's family.

At the groom's house the relatives throw petty amounts of cash for him into a scarf carried by one of his friends. Closer friends are supposed to give more than others. As the gifts are thrown the person carrying the scarf calls out loudly twice the amount each person gave, praising him with the expression, *khanesh aabaad!*, "Long live his house!" This is done among both the women and the men.

The wedding takes place the next day. Sometime before the afternoon ceremony it is customary among the Imamis (and also among many Sunnis, despite the teaching to the contrary by Sunni authorities) for the groom and a few male friends to pay a visit to a nearby shrine. This is to protect him from any secret sorcerous attempts to render him impotent.

In the later afternoon the groom and his male relatives go to the house of the bride—singing, dancing, and shooting a gun, if available—where a large feast

² These specific figures are taken from the costs of a wedding that took place about two years ago. The family was not wealthy.

has been prepared from ingredients sent in advance by the groom's family. The mullah-imam of the community performs the marriage ceremony (*neka*). In a recorded ceremony in Shibar the mullah-imam began the ceremony with the following words:

You who are endowed with purity and greatness, who are in charge of this meeting, you are here with these honorable and respectable people to be witnesses of this event. We want to do this according to the law of Muhammad so that no one will have any complaint. [Then he asked three times if anyone had anything to say against the marriage.]

The *neka* ceremony concludes with the singing of official papers by the mullah-imam and the mir. Later the judge signs also.

After the *neka* the groom goes to the room where his bride is waiting with the other women. The groom's path is obstructed by a woman from the bride's family demanding a gift, called *nazr-i-bibi*, "vow or offering to Bibi" (i.e., to Fatema, the daughter of Muhammad). This is supposed to contribute to Fatema's merit in heaven and thus in return win her intercessory favor on their behalf. As the groom enters the room where the bride and other women are waiting, the bride's mother throws coins on him; this is her own money. He in return throws coins on his bride. The female guests pick up most of the money.

The groom and bride are escorted to their relatives, often singing, dancing, and shooting a gun, if available, to the groom's house. They go on foot if the groom's residence is in the same village or neighborhood, or, if further away, on horseback, by car, or truck. A woman from each family accompanies the couple to their home. The one from the bride's family remains over night to obtain the evidence of her virginity, which she carries back to the girl's family. When the wedding party reaches the groom's house the female members of his family throw coins (among the Tajiks) or pastry (among the Hazaras) on the couple. These are gathered up by other persons in the party.

After the girl is deposited in the house, the groom returns outside where his qawmi say a prayer (*duwas*) for him, that God will bless him and his household. In return he thanks his qawmi for their help. "You have gone to much trouble for my marriage," he tells them, and he concludes with a prayer, such as "May God give wives to those of you who have none and may He reward any supplication you make before Him."

Next day the women of the bride's family come to the groom's house for lunch with the women of his family. They bring the trousseau of the bride at this time.³ The boy's mother gives a gift known as *khela'at* to seven of the

³The items in one Tajik girl's trousseau were as follows: Three boxes of clothing, a mattress and pillow, blankets, a couple of *destarkhans* (cloths on which food is spread), a few handkerchiefs, a *chadari* (veil falling to the ankles), 20 dresses, 20 scarves, 20 pantaloons, four pairs of shoes, 30 hats, (all made by the bride herself), 30 embroidered drop cloths, 30

women closest to the bride, consisting of a scarf and a dress for each. That morning the women are allowed to see the bride but for this privilege they must pay a few coins to the woman who came with her for the night.

The fifth day after the wedding is the day of *takhtakani*, "hitting the board." This is the day when the bride begins to work in the household. The seven women to whom the groom's mother gave gifts supply most of the food for a feast to which the women of the girl's qawm come for a lunch. After this the bride goes to work.

A few days later the groom's mother distributes some of the smaller items (mainly the mirrors and hats) from the bride's trousseau to the women of the household.

A month or so after the wedding, the bride's mother invites her and her husband to come stay for a few days. This is called *paywazi*. They are accompanied on the first night by several men and women from the boy's family. If they live near enough, until the time of *paywazi* the bride's mother has daily sent a bowl of pudding to the newlyweds. At the *paywazi* the bride's father, if able, gives her an animal such as a cow, calf, or sheep as a personal gift.

Death

When a person becomes so sick that it is feared he will die, the relatives gather. The host feeds the visitors and provides them with bedding. The visitors and members of the family do what they can to make the sufferer physically comfortable, but they are equally concerned to support him spiritually. It is believed that the pain of death, though very great (more painful for the sinful man than the righteous), can be relieved by the recitation of the so-called Yasin Sura (XXXIV), which is in the exact middle of the Quran. A relative repeats the Yasin Sura for the afflicted one through his final moments of death. It is also believed absolutely necessary that he remember the muslim creed in order to identify himself as a true believer to the angels who are to examine his beliefs soon after his death; consequently, a relative continually repeats the creed to him. Further, as it is believed that immediately upon his death Satan will tempt him by offering him wine (which is forbidden to muslims) to quench his thirst, a relative will sprinkle droplets of water on his lips to assuage his thirst and thus help him to resist. The phrase "water is dropping on his lips" (*labesh ab chakak mekona*) is a euphemism for "he is dying."

draw-strings for her pantaloons, 30 mirrors, 30 combs, two pounds of thread, a box of cosmetics, one rather simple silver necklace and one expensive (valued at 500 afghanis) necklace, a pair of silver bracelets, and a pair of upper arm bands in which amulets are carried, 20 rings, a coat (*chapan*) for the groom, and turbans for his closest friends who took part in the marriage ceremony.

Immediately after death the hands are laid across the body and the legs are straightened. Should this not be done before the body stiffens, it is a cause of great embarrassment to the family, as it indicates their failure to care properly for their own. The body is washed by a close relative of the same sex, usually a father, brother, or son of a male; a mother, sister, or daughter of a female. The ritual of washing is done differently according to the stipulation of each sect. Then the body is wrapped in a cloth. It must be buried within 24 hours.

It is not considered proper to cry while the sufferer is still alive, but when he is clearly dead the female relatives of the deceased begin to wail. During the night before the burial, moreover, mullahs recite the Quran, if the family can afford to pay for this service. The very wealthy pay several mullahs or *qaaris* (men who have memorized the entire Quran) to recite the Quran through the night. In this case, they recite different portions all at the same time, so that the entire Quran can be recited in one night. (An edition of the Quran is published in fascicles for this kind of recitation.) At the end of the recitation of each section the mullah or qaari says "I have recited this on the behalf of _____," giving the deceased the merit in the hereafter. Those who recite through the night, besides their usual pay, are fed a meal by the host family.

Next day the body is carried on a cot to the cemetery by the male qawmi and friends of the deceased, each taking a turn at one of its corners along the way. The grave is dug by his qawmi. After the burial kinsmen and friends repeat parts of the Quran as prayers on his behalf. Three witnesses testify to his good character at the graveside. Imamis often eat a feast for the deceased at the grave. Finally, (mainly among the Sunnis) a few afghanis are given in small change to the poor who are present. The mullah imam is also paid his fee and in addition he sometimes keeps the small rug on which he said prayers at the graveside.

After a death the kinsmen are obliged to pay a courtesy visit on the family of the deceased. This is called a *faateya* (Arabic: *faatehah*). The family serves food to the visitors for the first three days after the death, and thereafter only tea. (Ismaili families serve no meals during the first three days, but afterwards slaughter a cow and distribute the parts raw to the kinsmen.) A visitor shows his grief by sitting far from the door and staying longer than others. To the family he is supposed to offer a few words of comfort: "He died, but we will all die too," "At least he was a good man: he was never a liar or thief, he never took another man's wife," "How lucky he was to have died on a Friday (or in a lucky month)," "Thank God he died with a good name, that he has many qawmi to bury him," "Thank God he didn't die in jail," etc. The visitor says a prayer for the dead after the meal or the tea that is served.

The *faateya* and several other meals that follow are known as *khayrat-e-morda*, "offering for the dead." A *khayrat-e-morda* feast is given on the seventh

night, and also sometimes on the first Friday⁴ after the death. This is no longer practiced among the Ismailis. At the next Id celebration it is also customary to give another khayrat-e-morda feast on behalf of the deceased, at which time visitors will say to their host, *Id-e-morda mubarak*, "a blessed Id for the dead."

One of the reasons for these feasts is that, as it is said, "the name of the deceased will not depart from the people's lips." It is important that many people should come to "do faateya" because this shows that the deceased and his family have many friends. Another reason for the feasts is to encourage the visitors to pray for the dead. This is an explicit purpose of the faateya meal and the other *khayrats* for the dead. "The value of the faateya," said one person, "is that the people pray for them." The mullah imam usually recites a prayer after the meal and all the men present raise their hands, palms up, and pray that God will forgive the deceased. One person said people come and pray no matter how they really feel about the dead person because they want to eat the food.⁵

Some people actually sponsor their own khayrat-e-morda before they die. The five children of an elderly wealthy woman gave a khayrat-e-morda for her before she died, because they believed a khayrat before death would be worth many times more than after death. After the khayrat she could not eat the khayrat food for anyone else. If she went to a khayrat feast she had to be fed by different food. After she dies, there may be another khayrat-e-morda for her.

Khayrat-e-morda feasts are sometimes undertaken at great cost to the surviving family. A certain man told me, for example, that the previous spring his wife had fallen through a faulty bridge and, as the river was at that time violently at flood tide, drowned. In order to get 2000 afghanis for the costs of the faateya for her, he had to turn over three *seyrs*⁶ of his land as security for a loan (called *geraw*). Altogether he had only seven *seyrs* of land, barely enough for him to live on already, so this amounted to the loss of almost half of his already meager capital assets. Though technically he could regain the use of this land by repaying the loan, he was not likely to do so for some time, if ever, because his resources were below the threshold of survival. He was attempting to supplement his income by managing a tea shop, but had very few paying visitors.

The rituals associated with death, while obviously aimed at helping a social person depart from the group, also brings the surviving persons into social interaction and mutual obligation. The members of the group come to the house of the bereaved family to assist in the work and to offer condolences; food is

⁴ This is the night before the day of Friday, as a night is counted as part of the day following it.

⁵ Islamic tradition assures that prayers for the dead are efficacious. One scholar, for example, writes, "If a community of Muslims, a hundred strong, perform the *salaat* (funeral prayers) over a Muslim and all pray for his sins to be forgiven him, this prayer will surely be granted" (Muslim, *Djanaliz*, tradition 58; quoted in Gibb and Kramers 1953, article on *shafa'at*).

⁶ A *seyr* is sixteen *paw* (= fifteen pounds). A *seyr* of land is a tract of land on which a *seyr* of seed is sown. The actual size varies according to the quality of the soil.

served; prayers are offered for the departed one as an expression of solidarity with the family who has served the food. In this way obligations are built up for future reciprocation as the circumstances require.

SPECIAL RELIGIOUS OCCASIONS

Most of the social occasions already described have religious implications: the rite of circumcision, as mentioned before, initiates the young man into the body of adult believers who pray together; marriage is considered a religious duty, as it emulates the Prophet's example; and funeral ceremonies of course conform to religious prescriptions. Certain other ceremonies through which kinsmen are drawn together, however, are solely justified in religious terms. These are the Id festivities, the religious distributions known as *zakat* (alms), and other religious contributions known as *khayrats*.

Id Celebrations

There are three festive occasions of the yearly calendar, Id-i-Fetr-i-Roza, "Festival of breaking the fast," Id-i-Qorban, "festival of sacrifice," and New Year's Day. Id-i-Fetr-i-Roza and Id-i-Qorban are essentially religious holidays, appearing on the lunar calendar and retrograding on the solar calendar 10 days per year. New Year's Day is based on the solar calendar and falls at the time of the vernal equinox (March 21). It is not actually a religious holiday to Sunnis, though many actually celebrate it in the same way as the other Id holidays, but to Imamis it is a day of special religious significance because on this day Ali took office as Calif. New Year's Day is therefore considered an Id (festival) and most of the routine observances of the day are the same as on the other Ids.

On an Id new clothes are worn, kinsmen of all sorts are visited, and prayers are said publicly. Also on an Id, food is shared. Usually on the night of an Id, each family eats its meal separately but sends gifts of cooked food from their own feast by the hand of a child to their relatives, affines as well as agnates. The next few days kinsmen may entertain each other in a reciprocal pattern known as *meymani dawra*, "feasting by turns (or circularly)." The families who participate in *meymani dawra* are those of the qawm community, usually terminological awdurs (FaBr) and awdurzadas (FaBrSo) of each other, but it may also include geographically close affines of the qawm community; sometimes closely interrelated qawm communities participate together in the *meymani dawra*. The following is a description of the *meymani dawra*:

On one day we gather, maybe 15 or 20 people from six or seven households—we're all awdurs or awdurzadas of each other—to have a noon

meal, say, at my house. We eat rice, meat, tea, etc., and afterwards there will be music, singing and talking. Then at the end we pray that God will advance Islam everywhere, and reward all his people, and that He will make everyone at peace.

Then before we leave, one of the others calls out, "Tonight you must come to my house." So everyone comes that night and greets each other, and eats together. The host may spend 500 or a 1000 afghanis on this meal.

At that meal another calls out "Brothers, all of you, you have eaten here and elsewhere. Tomorrow you must eat at my place; you cannot go anywhere else. I have spent 500 afghanis for a sheep and as much more on other things, so I beg you to come to my house." Of course we want to eat there—and if he didn't invite us, it would annoy us—so we say, "Don't be unhappy, we'll come."

Then at that meal another gets up and says, "All of you are rich and I am poor among you. But if I should only have some barley-and-fava bean bread and a few bowls of buttermilk, would you come and eat?" Then we say, "of course, a thousand times, our brother, you are a good friend to everyone. We will come." But when we go, instead of bread made from fava bean and barley, buttermilk and the like, there is a great feast prepared for us: rice, meat, soup—everything in abundance. So we all think to ourselves, "I should do more than this poor man." And they all try to do twice as much, lest people think badly of them. . . .

The meymani dawra continues for three or four days until those households which can afford it have taken their turn.

Religious Distributions

Distributions of food are made on the religious holidays and at certain other times during the year. The most important of these is the distribution of the fresh meat of a sheep, goat, or cow at Id-i-Qorban, "festival of sacrifice." This distribution is enjoined upon everyone who has enough to eat. Individual families slaughter a sheep or goat, but a few closely related families, usually brothers or awdurzadas (FaBrSo), sometimes jointly purchase and slaughter a cow. Before slaughter a prayer is recited over the animal, requesting God to accept it on their behalf.

The meat is shared with qawmi, neighbors and the poor. An effort is made to give to the poor, but in practice, whether to poor or rich, the distributions tend to flow to relatives. The distributions of fresh meat therefore are largely reciprocal exchanges among members of the kinship network.

Out of 30 families there may be 20 who slaughter a sacrifice but 10 families may be too poor. So these go to claim their meat from the others.

The 20 families cut the meat into as many pieces as there are households and send it to each. The others also do the same, so no one is left out. But also they give something to a traveller on the road. They do this without asking anything about him, where he is from, his qawm, or anything. But the members of the different sects do their giving separately among themselves. They are one group and we are another group.

Another kind of distribution enjoined on all muslims who are financially eligible is the giving of alms, *zakat*. The *zakat* is called by the Sunnis *khayrat-i-fetr-i-roza*, "offering for the breaking of fast," because it is given on the first day of *Id-i-fetr-i-roza*. The *zakat* is a contribution to the poor. The ideal order of preference is, first, to a poor relative, then to a poor muslim neighbor, then, if there is neither of these, to any poor muslim, and failing all of these, to a poor unbeliever. The amount of the *zakat* is figured variously, but is approximately one-fortieth of one's yearly gain.

Khayrats are special distributions of goods, usually food, given without regard for a return in order to gain God's favor. A khayrat can be the gift of a candle or a flag to a shrine, a morsel of bread to an animal, or even (according to a story told by an Imami mullah) water to a thirsty plant in the name of God. Most often khayrats are offerings of food.

The khayrat aims to win God's favor in two ways. One is by the sacrifice which the giver sustains in giving the khayrat as a kind of penance. As it is given, the donor says, "May God accept this." The khayrat is also aimed at educing a prayer of thanksgiving and intercession from the beneficiary of the gifts, for it is believed the intercession of others results in the spiritual credit of the giver. At the end of a feast, for example, those who enjoy it will ask God's blessing on the host or, for example, on a sick child for whose deliverance the feast is offered. Thus, the importance of the intercession of kinsmen before God, mentioned elsewhere, is further indicated by the expenditures for khayrats.

The more expensive khayrats are given as cooked food. Khayrats may be cooked at a shrine and passed out to anyone present, or cooked at home and served to friends invited in, or secretly cooked and eaten by only a few, as a woman might do when afflicted by a malady she could only share with her closest friends.

Some khayrat feasts are given voluntarily—offered, for example, to obtain relief from a distress, or to achieve conception. Other khayrats are specifically enjoined upon the believer, such as the khayrat-e-morda, the *zakat*, and the *qorbani* distributions described above. The Imamis frequently give khayrat feasts on the night of the tenth of Moharram in memory of the slaughter of Hosayn and his friends. Sunnis and Ismailis serve sherbet or pudding to friends. At the time of the vernal and autumnal equinoxes, Imami families eat a pudding at a local shrine or at a mosque as a khayrat. Smaller amounts of food are

sometimes given as khayrats at other times of the year in celebration of some religious event, such as the Prophet's birthday, or the twenty-seventh of the Arabic month of Rajab, when Ali is believed to have converted an acquisitive Jew by his generosity.