



Knowing the Origins of Customs and Practices:

An Advice to the Believing Women

By Abū al-Ḥasan Mālik Ādam al-Akhḍar

OVER A DECADE AGO, a question arose concerning the history and ruling of a practice popularized by the *Kuffār*, and adopted by some of our Muslim sisters: the practice of piercing the tongue. Regarding its origins, tongue piercing traces back to a ritual of the ancient Aztecs, Mayas of Central America, and the Haida, Kwakiutl, and Tlinglit tribes of the American Northwest. The tongue was pierced to draw blood to please their gods and to create an altered state of consciousness, so that the priest or *shaman* could communicate with their gods. Other cultures, like some in the Far East, pierced the tongue as an offering and “proof of trance state.”

So it was based upon these origins,* and the adoption of this practice by some believing women, that on the 17th of Ramaḍān 1424 H., corresponding with the 12th of November 2003, I called *al-‘Allāmah al-Shaykh* ‘Ubayd Al-Jābirī (حفظه الله), to ask him concerning this practice among the Muslims.

The *Shaykh* answered: “This practice is not permissible, as it is imitation of the disbelieving people, and the Muslims have been forbidden from imitating the *Kuffār* in the likes of these customs and traditions; so much so that the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) forbade us from praying at the times when the sun rises and sets.”*

* Knowing the origins of these practices and traditions is critical for the one who desires to protect herself from falling into—or perhaps even promoting—acts that are founded upon disobedience to Allāh, transgression, or disbelief. For example, the origin of masquerade balls/parties returns to the celebration of Carnival by some Christian sects (e.g. Catholics) right before Lent. As for white parties, perhaps it is not so well-known that they were popularized in the mid 1980’s by gay and lesbian groups in California to bring awareness to the concerns of the LGBT community. The believer should be ever-mindful that Allāh loves lofty matters, and hates those that are lowly, and there is no doubt that the aforementioned gatherings and celebrations fall into the latter.

* This was due in part to the fact that the *Kuffār* would prostrate to the sun at these times. In his *Ṣaḥīḥ* (no. 832), Imām Muslim collects the narration of ‘Amr b. ‘Abasah who said: “I said: O Prophet of Allāh, tell me that which Allāh has taught you, and what I don’t know. Tell me about the prayer.”

He said: ‘Observe the *Fajr* prayer; then stop praying while the sun is rising till it’s up, for it rises between the horns of *Shayṭān*, and at that time the disbelievers prostrate themselves to it. Then pray, for the prayer is witnessed and attended [by angels], till the shadow becomes about the length of a spear; then cease praying, for at that time Hell is heated up. Then when the shadow moves forward, pray, for the prayer is witnessed and attended [by angels], till you pray ‘*Asr*; then cease prayer till the

I then asked: “So should we say that this act is unlawful?”

He replied: “Yes, *muḥarram* (impermissible).”

May Allāh protect us and our beloved sisters from imitating the disbelievers in the likes of these customs and practices and remember what the Prophet (صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said to the people of Madīnah, when he found them celebrating two holidays whose origins went back to *al-Jāhiliyyah*: “Allāh has given you two days that are better than them: *Eid al-Aḍḥā* and *Eid al-Fiṭr*.”* For indeed what is with Allāh is better, and what is for Him remains.



sun sets, for it sets between the horns of *Shayṭān*, and at that time the disbelievers prostrate themselves to it.”

* This is from the narration of Anas b. Mālik who said: “When the Messenger of Allāh came to Madīnah, there were two holidays the people would celebrate. He asked them: ‘What are these two days?’ They said: ‘We celebrated these two days in *al-Jāhiliyyah*.’ Allāh’s Messenger said: ‘Indeed Allāh has replaced them with two better days: the day of *Aḍḥā* and the day of *Fiṭr*.’” This report has been collected by Abū Dāwud in his *Sunan* (no. 1134), and authenticated by al-Albānī in his *Ṣaḥīḥ Sunan Abū Dāwud* (no. 1134).