

ARABIAN RITES by "Anonymous"

My Ritual Childhood Circumcision

From the age of five I lived in Qatar, so consequently I grew up in close proximity to a number of Arab children. One of our neighbouring families, who spoke excellent English, had two boys with whom I was particularly friendly. Ahmed, who was my age, and Ali, who was two years older. We used to go swimming at the beach quite regularly, and it was on one of these trips that I noticed that Ali's penis looked different to mine or Ahmed's. When I got home that evening I asked my father about it. He explained to me about circumcision and how all little Arab boys had to have this small operation at a special ceremony "because they believed in it".

A few months later my father came to have a talk with me as I was getting ready for bed, in the course of which he asked me if I would like to be circumcised. I said I wasn't sure. However, when he told me that Ahmed was to 'done', and that I could be 'done' at the same time, my mind was made up. (Some years later my parents told me that they had been concerned about my tight foreskin for some time and the opportunity was too good to be missed.) The following morning I dashed round to see Ahmed to let him know that I was going to be going through the same ceremony as him. We were both wildly excited.

On the following Friday evening, Ahmed's parents gave a big party at their house, the circumcision itself being scheduled for the following day. Ahmed and I had on our best clothes and were the stars of the evening, being spoilt by all the guests who gave us money and sweets. Late in the evening Ahmed and I were packed off to bed (I was to sleep in his room so that the grown-ups could carry on with the party.) As we undressed for bed Ali, Ahmed's older brother came in and started to talk to us. He asked if we were scared, to which of course we said not. "It does hurt, you know", he said, but Ahmed and I were not bothered, we were too excited. I did, however, ask to take a close look at Ali's penis to know exactly what I was getting for myself. He obligingly pulled down his shorts and let me handle his willy. It was the first time that I had a really close look at a circumcised penis, and I ran my finger along the smooth line which ran around the shaft about halfway down, and examined his permanently exposed knob. Ali's penis stiffened as I tried to move the skin backwards and forwards on the shaft. Ali asked to look at mine, which I willingly let him do. He pulled back my foreskin gently but he could not expose the head to make my penis look like his; my foreskin was too tight. He then pulled my foreskin forewards holding the tip of my long soft tassel of skin between his thumb and forefinger. He said, "They will do this to you tomorrow, and then they will make the cut, so you will be like me." I could not wait.

Both Ahmed and I slept fitfully that night, our curiosity and excitement keeping us talking half the night. We were woken early and told to take a thorough bath. We scrubbed together in the same tub of water, slightly too cold for comfort, Ahmed's mother saying that this was to make us ready. After our baths we got dressed in a pair of the white dis-das gowns which had been given to us the evening before.

When we came downstairs the grown-ups were already gathered in the yard of the house, where a trestle table had been placed covered with a sheet. Ahmed's father made a brief speech and then called me forward - as guest it seemed I was to be the first. I was helped onto the table and my white gown was pulled up to me waist exposing my all to the watching crowd. My arms and legs were held gently but securely by a couple of the guests. A man whom I'd never seen before leant over me and said "Don't worry, I will do it quickly". The man then gently started to examine my penis, pulling my long, thin, foreskin backwards and forewards until I was stiff. By lifting my head I could watch everything. Once I had erected, the operator took a thin metal probe and he ran inside my foreskin. I felt the cold metal move around past my glans, a sensation that excited me even more, and sent tingling sensations all over my body. Surprisingly, I did not feel in the slightest bit scared or even embarrassed that my privates were on display to all. My father, standing beside me, smiled and said, "Look at me". As he said this I felt the operator pull hard on my foreskin, followed by a crushing sensation. I looked down and saw a wooden clamp, a bit like a wooden clothes peg, being placed on my foreskin. My father said, "No, look up at me", but I could not bring myself to take my eyes off what was being done to my body. The operator pulled hard with his left hand on the very tip of my tassel of foreskin, now stretched out a good inch and a half beyond the wooden clamp, which he was pushing on with his right hand. It started to hurt a lot and I remember crying out. Suddenly I was aware of a quick movement by my privates and I felt a warm glowing sensation in my penis. The painful pulling feeling vanished and was replaced by a sharp stinging sensation. I looked down again and saw the acorn-shaped tip of my glans for the first time ever.

The operator gently pushed back the remains of the inner skin, which did not hurt at all, and then wrapped the shaft of my penis in a gauze bandage, leaving my freshly exposed, moist, purple-coloured glans protruding for all to see. It was over. I was helped down from the table and my gown was replaced. My place was taken by Ahmed, who received the same treatment. I could not see what was going on, however, as I was led away by my father. He took me up to Ahmed's room and got me onto the bed of the night before. In minutes Ahmed was brought up by his father and put on his bed. Well-wishers came and told us how brave we had been, and we were brought drinks. After everybody had gone except our parents and Ali, our gowns were pulled up again and the bandages checked. My bandage had a little blood on it but obviously not enough to cause concern. I could see that Ahmed's was bandaged just like mine with the tip exposed. Both of us were then told to rest, which we did the lack of sleep the previous night catching up with us.

I spent the next couple of days convalescing at Ahmed's house, as our parents thought that we would like to be together. On the third morning after the ceremony we were both taken for a bath and Ahmed's mother removed the bandages as we soaked. I remember being a little frightened by the appearance of my penis, which looked bruised and tattooed with a scab running round it like a ring. However, Ahmed's looked just like it so I stopped worrying. Over the next couple of days we rapidly returned to our normal energetic little selves, running around and generally causing mayhem. I think that Ahmed's parents were quite glad to see me go back to

my house after that. Over the next couple of weeks both our wounds healed rapidly so that all that was left was a smooth red ring around the shaft (we compared our wounds as frequently as we could). Both our knobs changed from being shiny purple acorns, very sensitive to touch, to being pinker and less sensitive. Neither of us had any loose skin at all, the scar being halfway down the shaft with the glans rim being completely free from overhanging tissue. During comparisons we would both often get erections, which made us even more proud of our new status. I am still proud of my circumcision, which I consider to be very neatly done. I also remember the day of my circumcision with pleasure, and not as having been an ordeal; evidence that circumcision in childhood does not necessarily damage the psyche.

Experiences at Boarding School in UK

In 1969, when I was ten years' old, I was sent back to boarding school in England. The school was an all-boys school in an old country house in Yorkshire. Pupils were accommodated five to a bedroom, rather than in large dormitories. I quickly made friends with the other four boys in my room, who all knew each other from prep school. David, who had the next bed to mine, was particularly friendly and welcoming and I sensed that we would become good chums. The first evening at bedtime we all undressed very shy of the fact that we were exposing our bodies in front of others, but at the same time sneaking little glances at everyone else. Up to that time all my friends had been circumcised, like myself, but my rapid survey of my roommates that evening revealed that all of them were in possession of their foreskins. I was the only roundhead! The fact that I was different from them did not escape their attentions either, although nobody passed any comment; we were all too shy. Whilst in Qatar I was proud of my circumcision because I was one of the gang, in England all of a sudden I felt different.

The following evening we were told that we had to take a bath before bed, and to my surprise and horror it turned out that we had to share tubs in one large room fitted with several large baths. This was to be the moment of reckoning. We all undressed and climbed into the tubs and I felt that everyone's eyes were on me. I tried to ignore the stares but my embarrassment was plain for all to see. No one said anything until we were back in our room and getting ready for bed. Richard, the most outspoken of my roommates said, "I hope you don't mind me asking, but what happened to your dick?" I coloured bright red, and then mustered my courage to overcome my embarrassment and told my new friends about circumcision. They all eagerly asked questions and seemed shocked when I told them how the operation had been done. "Didn't it hurt?" asked John. "No", I replied. "Not at the time, and only a little bit afterwards." My friends seemed impressed, which made me feel much better about being different.

Richard asked to look at my willy, to whom I replied, "Yes, if I can look at yours". I sat on the bed and pulled my pyjama trousers down, exposing what had become the centre of attention. Richard looked closely and then felt my penis with his fingers, running his fingertips around the smooth scar, which encircled the shaft. The others I

could see were no less interested than Richard. Being the centre of attention made my penis stiffen to erection, making my permanently exposed little knob stand proudly out from my groin. "Let's have a look at yours then," I said and pulled Richard's pyjamas down for him. His penis was already firmly erect as I uncovered it, and his short foreskin had withdrawn just enough to expose the tip of his glans. I examined his penis and to my surprise discovered that his foreskin could be pulled back to expose the purple knob. I expressed surprise and said, "I didn't know you could do that" which made the others laugh. Richard said, "Come on you lot, let's have a look at yours as well, then". John and Paul enthusiastically exposed their willies for examination, as did David, who had been rather quiet throughout.

John and Paul both had penises like Richard's, with short thin, easily retractable foreskins, which both of them pulled back exposing their moist shiny little knobs. David's penis, by comparison, was completely different. Much smaller than any of the others, David's penis was endowed with a long, tapering foreskin that even in its erect state protruded a good quarter of an inch beyond the knob - the outline of which could be easily seen beneath the thin, pale hood. David, obviously embarrassed, said "Mine won't pull back and I have got to be circumcised, like Ian. I went to hospital last week and they are going to do it for me". As he said this we heard the steps of the duty master coming upstairs to turn off the lights, so well all quickly jumped under the covers and made like nothing had happened. After the lights went out and master had gone, I leant across to David and said, "Don't worry about it, you'll be ever so pleased after it's done". I had forgotten completely about being different.

That evening was the start of a process which saw the five of us became very close fiends. David and I became particularly close, and he frequently quizzed me about circumcision, obviously very nervous about what lay ahead for him. On the first day back from Christmas holiday, David came up to me and in a half-whisper said "I've had it done. It isn't that bad, is it?" That evening at bedtime, with obvious pride, he exposed his restyled penis as he was getting undressed for bed. I said, "Now there's two of us roundheads then" which got everyone else's attention. We all gathered 'round David who happily let us examine the surgeon's handiwork. David's circumcision was quite different to mine, his scar being right behind his small acorn-shaped knob, with very little of the pink inner skin remaining. As the others looked at his willy he grinned happily at me, obviously happy to be circumcised.

Out of my class of 20 boys, aged 11 in 1970, eight were circumcised. One boy had what I now know was a Jewish-type of circumcision, with a very tight result; three boys had loose circumcisions with an amount of inner skin remaining behind the rim of their glans; and three boys (including David) had tight results with no loose skin but with the scar near to the glans rim. I was the only boy to have a ritual Arab-type of circumcision.

Circumcision of My Children

Having told you about my circumcision and school experiences I thought I should complete the tale by writing about the circumcision of my children. After I left university I obtained a job in Dubai. Whilst there I met and married an American lady and a year later became the father of twin boys. There was no doubt in either of our minds that they should be circumcised. I was happy with my own and Jackie, being American, had only ever seen circumcised boys. What we were not keen on, however, was the prospect of our boys being circumcised just after birth in the maternity hospital. The results we had seen on some of our friends' children were far from neat, with ragged collars of inner foreskin remaining around the glans (out there most little boys are circumcised within the first couple of days of life, Muslim and non-Muslim alike).

I asked advice of one of my Muslim colleagues at work, who recommended me to a traditional Arab barber surgeon in the next Emirate. So, when the boys were about six months old, we arranged an appointment to see Ekrem the barber to have the boys 'done'. Ekrem turned out to be a delightful chap. Turkish in origin, he agreed to operate on the boys there and then; he was delighted that an English father should wish his boys to have a Muslim circumcision. I undressed the boys and lifted them onto the padded couch that was in the room. Ekrem said that he wished me to hold Paul for the operation, whilst Jackie looked after Thomas. We laid Paul flat on his back on the couch, me at the foot end holding my son's legs apart at an angle of 33 degrees. Ekrem prepared his instruments and then washed Paul's groin with a disinfectant solution. He then took Paul's tiny penis gently between his finger and thumb and massaged it until it became erect. He then took a thin metal probe and inserted it under the foreskin, sweeping it from side to side to separate the skin from the underlying glans. Having done that he made a little scratch with his thumbnail at the point where the edge of the glans could be seen through the thin foreskin. Next he gripped the tip of the foreskin with the finger and thumb of his left hand and pulled upwards, stretching the mobile skin to its full extent. Paul let out a whimper at this stage, which turned into a cry as Ekrem placed a clamp on the foreskin. The clamp was a thin metal disc with a V-shaped notch cut into it, into which the foreskin was slid. Using his right hand to slide the clamp down the foreskin so that the glans remained protected, he pulled as firmly as possible on the protruding tassel of skin with his left hand. Having placed the clamp in position he took a razor in his right hand and with a quick movement cut the foreskin along the upper face of the metal disc. The clamp fell away and then the outer shaft skin flicked back to a point about halfway down Paul's still erect penis. Ekrem pushed back the delicate layer of inner skin from the shiny plum-coloured glans so that it met the cut edge of shaft skin. He then applied an antiseptic gauze dressing; he then covered that with a lint bandage. There was only the smallest amount of blood spit, which was quickly soaked up by the lint. Paul's cries were quickly comforted and cuddled before Thomas was dealt with in exactly the same way.

After a cup of tea we paid Ekrem the princely sum of 20 dirrhams (two pounds) for his services and took the boys home. Both boys slept for most of the ride home, following which they acted as if nothing out of the ordinary had occurred. Following Ekrem's instructions we left the bandages on for two days before soaking them off in

the bath. When they came off, healing was already starting to take place, although they both had slightly bruised penises. After about two weeks the final scabs fell away leaving a clean, smooth result. Both boys had an identical result with no loose skin remaining. The red coloured scar which lay almost exactly halfway down the shaft of their penises rapidly turned into a thin white line, separating the slightly darker skin of the shaft from the pale remains of the inner foreskin. They are now six years of age and we have already had discussions with them about circumcision. They are both happy that they have been done as most (about 75% by their account) of their friends at school are circumcised too.

Since our experiences we have referred several other parents to Ekrem, all of whom been happy with his handiwork. I am firmly convinced that a Muslim circumcision is by far the neatest. Done expertly in childhood, it leaves a smooth scar with no loose skin, even when flaccid. The glans is permanently bare and is clean and dry. On erection the glans become well-defined, with its rim standing proud from the tight skin of the shaft, a situation which leads to delightful sensations on intercourse. The only disadvantage of a tight Muslim circumcision is that there is no loose skin on the shaft for masturbation. However, I get around this by stimulating my glans rim with my index finger and thumb in a ring. Ideally, I think that the operation should be done in the first year of life, although if delayed until later it is quite tolerable even without an anaesthetic as I recounted above.