

EID-UL-FITAR

CELEBRATIONS IN THE TIME OF THE FATEMI IMAMS IN CAIRO

“...On this day besides the procession to the mosque and the offering of salat ul-'id, a huge banquet was held for the people and another for the Imam and the royalty and nobility etc.

The procession was much the same as on other great occasions except for a few particulars: The Imam came out from the Bab al-'Id (one of the doors inside the great palace in the north-eastern part). The Imam carried the cane of the Prophet and there was a greater number of soldiers who were also placed in either side of the road the whole distance from the palace to the place of the prayer.

The 'Id prayer used to take place in the "Musalla" an open area founded by Jawhar al Siqilli east of the Great Palace by the side of the Bab al-Nasr. The formalities of the 'Id prayer proceeded in much the same lines as the Friday prayers except for the addition of the 'takbirat al-masnuna' and the fact that the Wazir and the Qadi and other important personages that the Imam wished to honour were called to stand up on the mimbar beside him while he delivered the Khutba. The Qadi called out the name of those who were so honoured (The Imam al-Amir changed the prevailing custom by calling the Wazir before the Qadi). These then came up, kissing each step of the mimbar, taking in his hand an edge of the banner – the Liwa al Hamd – that was fixed on his side so that finally the Imam and others on the mimbar were curtained off and hidden from view of the people. After the khutba each person on the mimbar would drop his edge of the banner as the outside of the mimbar, then descend backwards. The Imam would then come down and set out on the return procession. The Imam's custom was to visit the tomb of his ancestors on his way to the palace (as he did on all Fridays in procession) along with distribution of sadaqat and money.

Two banquets were held in 'Id al-Fitr. The first one was for the common people, it was held in a huge columned hall known as the 'Iwan al-Kabir' in which a long ma'aidat was laid, piled with different kinds of 'fitra.' After the morning prayer, the Imam would sit in the 'window' of the Iwan looking on to the people as they ate the 'fitra' and took away same as 'baraka.' Sometime later, another custom was introduced: those who did not break their fast that day (for example, Sunnis, if the moon had not yet been sighted) took the fitra but placed it in their sleeves, and took it away with them.

There was another banquet for the Imam, the nobility, aristocracy, and officials of state in the 'Golden Hall' after the salat al-'Id. A silver ma'aidah mudawwara (round thaal) was placed for the

Imam in front of the throne, and stretching from it right to the door another, ma'aidat—resembling a long heavy, very low table — of painted wood was laid. Special care was taken over this banquet, it was decorated with flowers and covered with dishes of gold and silver and china porcelain filled with delicious aromatic foods (21 fatty roasted sheep in 21 very long platters, 350 birds — chicken and pigeon, etc. all kinds of confection in elaborate shapes: a tree made totally-branches leaves and fruits- of sugar, 1000 figures made of sugar, 2 palaces made of halwa, etc.; the khubz (bread) was placed on the edge of the simat, each weighing 3 ratl.)

The Imam would enter having put on a new robe different from the one worn in the procession, the Wazir would go forward to receive him sit beside him on his right at the round ma-'ida, the rest of the guests sat at the long table according to rank. The Imam was served by four of the highest ustadhun muhanmakun and four of the khawas al-farashin, while other servants served the guests, carrying food water and incense burners. The feast continued till the Imam left a little before noon, followed by the Wazir, surrounded by other guests all of whom repaired to the Dar al-Wazara where after partaking of another simat laid there, they would leave.

Exactly the same type of banquet took place on 'Id al-Adha, (the first day), with the same formalities.

BAZAT-SAIFIYAH BINTE SYEDNA QUTBUDDIN TUS