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AN ATTEMPT TO TRACE THE ORIGIN OF THE RITUALS OF *ʿĀSHŪRĀʾ*

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I. Perhaps no other single event in Islamic history has played so central a role in shaping Shiʿi identity and communal sense as the martyrdom of Husayn and his companions at Karbala. Although prior to Husayn's death Muslims were already divided into two main sections in support of either ʿAli's family or Muʿāwiya, a Shiʿi community distinguished by its own rituals and collective memory did not yet exist. By contrast, the traditions and hagiography that elaborated on the episodes connected with the battle of Karbala created a religious symbol out of Husayn's suffering and martyrdom. This symbol established powerful and long-lasting moods and motivations among Shiʿis, reinforcing their Shiʿi communal sense and distinct sectarian identity as distinguished from the Sunni. Indeed, Shiʿi collective memory caught and retained the dramatic episode of the battle of Karbala, giving it a great and symbolic significance. In renewing the memory of Husayn every year, the Shiʿi community renews its bond with the twelve imams, the focus of devotion for Shiʿi believers.

The symbol of Husayn's martyrdom touches upon the cosmic problem of religious suffering. The problem, as Geertz has pointed out, is not how to avoid suffering but how to suffer, and how to make a physical pain, personal loss, or worldly defeat sufferable.[1] The Shiʿis came to regard Husayn as the prince of martyrs (*sayyid al-*

Author's note: I am indebted to Professor Michael Cook for his stimulating ideas as well as his comments on an earlier draft. Such shortcomings as may exist are mine alone.

[1] Clifford Geertz, "Religion as a Cultural System," in Michael Banton (ed.), *Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Religion* (London 1966) p 19.

shuhadāʾ). His suffering is taken to be a source of salvation for the community through its own internalization and emulation of the suffering of the imām.[2] It is believed that Husayn died so that Islam could be preserved as an ideal to inspire all subsequent generations of Muslims to strive to protect it. Husayn's martyrdom represents a symbol of sacrifice in the struggle (*jihād*) for right against wrong, and for justice and truth against wrongdoing and falsehood.[3]

Shiʿi historiography is scant in comparison with that of the Sunnis, containing relatively fewer and shorter historical works. Composed mainly of collections of traditions (particularly those attributed to the imāms), genealogical works, bibliographical works on the imāms, biographies of ʿulamāʾ, and lamenting and memorial literature, Shiʿi historiography bears a striking similarity to Jewish historiography of the Middle Ages in its approach to history. Both identified a wrong turn in the course of history. They became preoccupied with legitimizing authority (the imāms, and later on the ʿulamāʾ, in the case of the Shiʿi; the rabbis in the case of the Jews of the Middle Ages), and with the signs of the coming of the messianic figure who would bring history back to its right path. Both also lacked patrons or sponsors who would commission and pay for the writing of history.[4] Perhaps partly as a consequence, Judaism and Shiʿi Islam emphasized other vehicles for the transmission and revival of the great symbolic events of their formative period.

In the case of Shiʿism, the evocation of the Karbala episode was left for the rituals of remembrance that developed around the annual commemoration of *ʿĀshūrāʾ*. The importance of the rituals of Muḥarram in invoking the memory of Karbala cannot be overestimated, for it is in these rituals that the moods and motivations that are induced in the believers by the symbol of Husayn's martyrdom surface. And it is in these rituals that the world as lived and the world as imagined are fused together.

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[2] Mahmoud Ayoub, *Redemptive Suffering in Islām: A Study of the Devotional Aspects of 'Āshūrā' in Twelver Shiʿism* (The Hague, 1978), pp. 15, 52, 108.

[3] Ibid., pp. 93, 136, 141; Muḥammad Jawād Mughniyya, *al-Shiʿa fī al-mīzān* (Beirut, n.d.), pp. 396–97.

[4] Bernard Lewis, *History: Remembered, Recovered, Invented* (Princeton: NJ, 1975), esp. pp. 18–26. See also Yosef Haim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (Seattle, 1982), esp. pp. 31–32, 40–44.

Over a period of twelve centuries there developed five major rituals around the battle of Karbala. These rituals include the memorial services (*majālis al-taʿziya*), the visitation of Husayn's tomb in Karbala particularly on the occasion of the tenth day of *ʿĀshūrāʾ* and the fortieth day after the battle (*ziyārat ʿāshūrāʾ* and *ziyārat al-arbaʿīn*), the public mourning processions (*al-mawākib al-ḥusayniyya* or *al-ʿazāʾiyya*), the representation of the battle of Karbala in the form of a play (the *shabīh*), and the flagellation (*taṭbīr*).

These rituals of remembrance are the concern of this article. In attempting to trace the origin of the rituals of *ʿĀshūrāʾ* and demonstrate the diverse nature of Shiʿism, I will be concerned with two questions: How did socio-political change influence the development of the Muḥarram rituals? What role did various Shiʿi groups and other cultures, and religions play in shaping their nature?

II. The oldest vehicle for creating and transmitting the memory of Karbala was the memorial services in which Shiʿis narrated in Arabic the episodes connected with the battle, and lamented the death of Husayn and his companions. Traditions relate that the memorial services were begun immediately following Husayn's death by his womenfolk even before they were sent to Damascus. During the Umayyad period the mourning of Husayn's martyrdom was observed in secret in the homes of the imāms and their followers. It was probably already in this formative period of Shiʿism that the tradition of the commemoration of *ʿĀshūrāʾ* was first established.[5] By the early ʿAbbāsid period, the memorial services were no longer confined to private houses alone, but were also held in public mosques. Early ʿAbbāsid rulers, and more important, the rulers of Shiʿi dynasties, found it useful to bestow their patronage on the rites of ʿĀshūrāʾ. Thus, in the tenth century, there were already in Baghdad, Aleppo, and Cairo special gathering places, *ḥusayniyyāt*, built especially for these observances.[6] The function of the *ḥusayniyya* varied from one place and period to another, and it is possible that in some cities or villages this gathering place developed to be the focal point of the memorial services.

With the spread of Shiʿism in Muslim territories, the memorial

[5] Ayoub, *Redemptive Suffering*, pp. 152–53.
[6] Ibid., pp. 153–54.

services took on a more elaborate form. By the ninth century, the services incorporated acts of wailing and lamentation (*nauḥ*), and they were sometimes led by a poet or another person (*nāʾiḥ al-ḥusayn*) whose function was to chant elegies, and to read traditions and stories on the sufferings of the imāms from the martyrdom (*maqātil*) literature which was developing at that time.[7] It is difficult to determine, however, whether by the ninth century these persons were already paid for their role in leading the memorial services. The practice of using professional reciters, who were paid for their performance, probably developed only from the medieval period. In later periods, the memorial services were elaborated further until some Arabic and Persian texts developed to include ten different sessions (*majālis*), covering the affairs of the first ten days of Muḥarram. But until today, no one binding format has developed and the nature and scope of the services has differed from one place to another.[8]

The recitations in the Shiʿi memorial services fulfill a function similar to the Jewish practice of reading the Passover Haggadah in memory of the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt. Both practices seek to achieve a lasting impact on the audience which would extend beyond the time boundaries of the ritual itself. Thus, in reading the Haggadah Jews are reminded: "In each and every generation, each person should regard himself as though *he* had gone forth from Egypt."[9] In the Shiʿi memorial services a similar impact is achieved through powerful verses such as the following:

As if every place is for my eyes Karbala
and any time is the day of *ʿĀshūrāʾ*[10]

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[7] Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, vol. 44 (Tehran, 1965/6), pp. 293–96; ʿAbbās al-Qummī, *Safīnat al-biḥār wa-madīnat al-ḥikam wa al-āthār*, vol. 2 (Najaf, 1936), p. 615; Ayoub, *Redemptive Suffering*, pp. 153–54.

[8] Compare, for example, the texts as cited by Sharīf al-Jawāhirī, *Muthīr al-aḥzān fī aḥwāl al-aʾimma al-ithnā ʿashara* (Najaf, 1966); ʿAbd al-Ḥusayn Sharaf al-Dīn, *al-Majālis al-fākhira fī maʾtam al-ʿiṭra al-ṭāhira* (Najaf, 1967); Muḥammad ʿAlī al-Mūsawī al-Ḥāʾirī al-Baḥrānī, *Maʾtam al-ḥusayn* (Najaf, n.d.); Muḥammad Bāqir Malbūbī, *al-Waqāʾiʿ wa al-ḥawādith*, 5 vols. (Qum, 1962–1967).

[9] Central Conference of American Rabbis, *A Passover Haggadah* (New York, 1974), p. 56.

[10] Cited by Muḥammad Jawād Mughniyya, *al-Majālis al-ḥusayniyya* (Beirut,

The active participation of the audience in the reenactment of the episode of Karbala was vital for reinforcing their distinct Shiʿi identity and collective memory. This was achieved through weeping over the suffering of Husayn, his companions, and his family. Indeed, the literature of lament attaches great importance to the act of weeping. It is asserted that the imāms themselves encouraged their followers to weep for them, thereby seeking to evoke every year the sorrow and memory of Karbala, and to transmit it to generations to come.[11] The moral excellence of weeping (*faḍīlat al-bukāʾ*) is emphasized and the believers are encouraged to shed tears and to replace joy with pain.[12] This is also stressed through the use of poetry:

I shall exhaust my life weeping and sighing
in distress and grief I shall pass my lifetime[13]

The act of weeping joins the past with the present by linking Husayn's experience to that of the believer in his lifetime. This, Shiʿi sources tell us, enables the believer to identify himself with Husayn's cause and to voice his regret for not being able to be with him in Karbala and help him win the battle. Through weeping, the believer can also protest emotionally against injustice and oppression as he experiences it around himself.[14] Weeping has its future reward as well. Indeed, the mujtahid Muḥsin al-Amīn dedicates an entire session in the memorial services to the importance of weeping and the rewards to be gained from it.[15] Moreover, Shiʿi traditions relate that while weeping is a source of salvation for those who

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n.d.), p. 11, and by ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Kāshī, *Maʾsāt al-ḥusayn bayn al-sāʾil wa al-mujīb* (Beirut, 1973), p. 130.

[11] Muḥsin al-Amīn, *al-Majālis al-saniyya fī manāqib wa-maṣāʾib al-ʿitra al-nabawiyya*, vol. 1 (Damascus, 1954), p. 5; Sharaf al-Dīn, *al-Majālis al-fākhira*, pp. 13, 18–19; Baḥrānī, *Maʾtam al-ḥusayn*, pp. 38–9.

[12] Sharaf al-Dīn, *al-Majālis al-fākhira*, p. 20; Ḥusayn al-Baḥrānī, *al-Fawādiḥ al-ḥusayniyya wa al-qawādiḥ al-bayyiniyya*, 2nd ed. (Najaf, n.d.), pp. 32, 38–39; Abū al-Ḥasan al-Qazwīnī, *Ḥawla ʿaqāʾid al-imāmiyya* (Tehran, n.d.), p. 14.

[13] Baḥrānī, *al-Fawādiḥ*, p. 32.

[14] ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Mūsawī al-Muqarram, *Maqtal al-ḥusayn aw ḥadīth karbalāʾ* (Najaf, 1956), p. 91; Mughniyya, *al-Majālis al-ḥusayniyya*, p. 43; Kāshī, *Maʾsāt al-ḥusayn*, pp. 120–21.

[15] Amīn, *al-Majālis al-saniyya*, vol. 1, session 25, pp. 46–47.

choose to participate in a ritual that leads to a flow of tears, those who view *ʿĀshūrāʾ* as a day of blessing will be sentenced for hell. The following excerpt from a tradition attributed to the eighth imām, ʿAli Al-Riḍā (d. 818), clearly conveys this message:

He for whom the day of ʿĀshūrāʾ would be his day of calamity, sorrow, and weeping, for him God will make the day of resurrection a day of joy and happiness, and, delighted, he will be sitting with [the imāms] in heaven. But he who marks the day of *ʿĀshūrāʾ* as a day of blessing [*baraka*] ... will, on the day of resurrection, share the hottest flames of hell with Yazīd, ʿUbaydallāh ibn Ziyād, and ʿUmar ibn Saʿd.[16]

The poetry used in the memorial services was an essential tool for narrating the affairs connected with the Karbala episode, and for transmitting the memory of *ʿĀshūrāʾ* to later generations of Shiʿis. It is said that poets led the memorial services already during the period of the imāms, reciting elegies that they themselves composed. We are told that the imāms encouraged their followers to compose poetry despite the precautionary conduct (*taqiyya*) that they at times adopted and advised their followers to observe. The imāms considered poetry as necessary for the transmission of the memory of their suffering and sacrifice for their religion. They regarded it as a vehicle for both protecting Shiʿi Islam from obliteration and consolidating their own position among their followers as the legitimate successors of the Prophet.[17]

The composition of poetry in memory of the Karbala episode was not confined to the early periods of Shiʿism. Poems of this genre have been composed throughout Shiʿi history, not only by professional poets but also by renowned mujtahids.[18] One example from the poetry of the Iraqi Shiʿi mujtahid Muḥammad Ḥusayn Kāshif al-Ghiṭāʾ (d. 1954) will suffice:

Can I forget how your heads from the blades of the spears
appeared like the moon against luminous stars?

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[16] Cited by Muḥsin al-Amīn, *Lawāʿij al-ashjān fī maqtal al-imām abī ʿabdallāh al-ḥusayn* (Sidon, 1934/5), p. 6, and by Baḥrānī, *al-Fawādiḥ*, p. 37.

[17] Muqarram, *Maqtal al-ḥusayn*, pp. 103–108; Baḥrānī, *Maʾtam al-ḥusayn*, pp. 41–43.

[18] A good collection of the memorial poetry may be found in Jawād Shubbār, *Adab al-ṭaff aw shuʿarāʾ al-ḥusayn ʿalayhi al-salām min al-qarn al-awwal al-hijrī ḥattā al-qarn al-rābiʿ ʿashara*, 10 vols. (Beirut, 1969–1980).

Can I forget how the horses chased away over your bodies and
how they were treaded, being the object of piercing and beating?

Can I forget the blood that was shed and the tears
that poured out and the noble free [women] who were unveiled?[19]

The memory of Husayn's martyrdom was reinforced by the development of another ritual, viz., the visitation of his tomb, particularly on the tenth of Muḥarram and on the occasion of the fortieth day after the battle. Although there are conflicting accounts as to the place of burial of Husayn's head and body, Karbala emerged as the preferred site for Shiʿi pilgrims.[20] In the first decades following Husayn's death the visitation of his tomb in Karbala was still precarious, and it was observed mainly by the imāms and members of their families. By the ninth century, however, the imāms were already attempting to institutionalize the practice of *ziyārat ʿāshūrāʾ* and *ziyārat al-arbaʿīn*. The early traditions indicating such an attempt go back to the sixth imām, Jaʿfar al-Sādiq (d. 765).[21] In seeking to promote the visitation of Husayn's tomb, the imāms and their followers exalted Karbala's position. Traditions attached attributes of blessing and healing to Karbala's soil and highlighted the future rewards to be gained by Shiʿi believers performing the visitation of Husayn's tomb. One of these traditions, attributed to the sixth imām, even went so far as to suggest that "whoever visits Husayn's tomb on *ʿĀshūrāʾ* is like one who performs a pilgrimage to God's seat."[22]

As Karbala grew in sanctity, it began attracting a growing number of pilgrims. This development may have been one of the reasons for the decision of the ʿAbbāsid caliph al-Mutawakkil (d. 861) to destroy Husayn's tomb in 850 and to prevent pilgrims from gaining access to it.[23] The visitation of Husayn's tomb was performed on a

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[19] For the full poem see Shubbār, *Adab al-ṭaff*, vol. 10, p. 46.

[20] For accounts, which identify such cities as Damascus, ʿAsqalan, Cairo, Karbala, or Najaf as Husayn's place of burial see Taqī al-Din Aḥmad al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-khiṭaṭ al-maqrīziyya*, vol. 2 (Cairo, 1906/7), p. 284; Muḥammad ʿAlī Qāẓī Ṭabāṭabāʾī, *Taḥqīq dar bāra-yi rūz-i arbaʿīn-i ḥażrat sayyid al-shuhadāʾ* (Tabriz, 1973), pp. 199–240.

[21] Abū al-Qāsim Jaʿfar ibn Muḥammad Qūlawayh, *Kāmil al-ziyārāt* (Najaf, 1937/8), p. 174; Ṭabāṭabāʾī, *Taḥqīq dar bāra-yi rūz arbaʿīn*, pp. 264–65, 300.

[22] Ibn Qūlawayh, *Kāmil al-ziyārāt*, pp. 147–49.

[23] Abū Jaʿfar ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh al-rusul wa al-mulūk*, vol. 9 (Cairo,

massive scale following the establishment of Safavid Iran (1501) and the subsequent conversion of the bulk of Iranians to Shiʿism. With the collapse of the Safavid state in 1722, and the shift of the Shiʿi academic center from Isfahan to Karbala in the mid-eighteenth century, the visitation became closely linked to the socio-economic development of the latter city. The visitation of Husayn's tomb peaked in the nineteenth century as the bulk of Iraq's tribes were converted to Shiʿism. Its large scale at that time was also attributed to the relative improvement in Ottoman-Qajar relations after their last war of 1821–1823, which ended with the first treaty of Erzurum.[24]

The visitation of Husayn's shrine in Karbala has provided one of the basic elements of Shiʿi religious collective memory. The essential function of the visitation in Shiʿi Islam is to maintain the contact and understanding (*ʿahd*) between the Shiʿi believer and his imām, who is capable of interceding with God on behalf of the believer on the day of resurrection.[25] Besides serving as an act of covenant renewal between the believer and the imām, the visitation also has an important educational aspect. Its advocation already by the imāms demonstrates their conscious effort to propagate Shiʿism, and to promote those rituals that would preserve the collective Shiʿi memory and group identity as distinguished from that of the Sunnis. Moreover, like many other religious groups, the Shiʿis needed the support of some enduring object (the shrine) which claims to be unchanging while every other institution and custom is being modified, when ideas and experiences are being transformed.[26] Indeed, as Shiʿi believers entered Husayn's shrine and received instructions from the servants within it, their thoughts were profoundly shaped by this physical object. Hence the effort in Shiʿi piety to turn Karbala and

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1968), p. 185; ʿIzz al-Din Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī al-taʾrīkh*, vol. 7 (Beirut, 1965), p. 55; Abū al-Faraj ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam fī taʾrīkh al-mulūk wa al-umam*, vol. 11 (Beirut, 1992), p. 237.

[24] Yitzhak Nakash, "Shiʿism and National Identity in Iraq, 1908–1958" (Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 1992), p. 180.

[25] Muḥammad Riḍā al-Muẓaffar, *ʿAqāʾid al-imāmiyya*, 2nd ed. (Cairo, 1961/2), p. 93.

[26] On the role of holy sites in shaping the collective memory of religious groups see Maurice Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*, tr. by Francis J. Ditter, Jr. and Vida Yazdi Ditter (New York, 1980), pp. 152–53.

Husayn's shrine to a focus of devotion for the Shiʿis, which at times challenged the position of Mecca and the *Kaʿba*.[27]

The patronage which Shiʿi rulers bestowed on the rites of *ʿĀshūrāʾ* helps explain the appearance of yet another ritual, the public mourning processions. It seems that these processions were initiated under the Shiʿi Būyid dynasty in Baghdad (945–1055). Citing the account of the historian Ibn al-Athīr (d. 1234), both Shiʿi and Sunni sources trace the processions to the year 963, during the reign of Muʿizz al-Dawla, the first Būyid ruler:

> On the day of *ʿĀshūrāʾ*, Muʿizz al-Dawla forced the people to close the bazaars, to suspend their business, to mourn, and to place cupolas covered with wool [in the markets]. Wailing women, their cloths torn, walked in the streets, slapping their faces and lamenting Husayn.[28]

The form of the public processions varied from one place to another, reflecting a concrete social reality and the tensions within each individual society. It could very well be that in some places the *ḥusayniyya* served as the starting point of the Muḥarram processions; the participants would parade through the streets of their town or village, and then return to the *ḥusayniyya* for the actual conduct of the memorial services.[29] The processions incorporated acts of breast-beating and face-slapping (*laṭm*), a traditional form of mourning for the dead among the Arabs even before the appearance of Islam. The religious fervor created by the processions always had the potential to lead to Shiʿi-Sunni strife or to anti-government protest and thus, at times, both Sunni and Shiʿi governments sought to restrict or even abolish the processions altogether.[30]

The establishment of Safavid Iran (1501–1722) led to the development of a new ritual, the *shabīh*, i.e., the representation of the battle of Karbala in the form of a carnival-play. The Safavids encouraged the mourning rites of *ʿĀshūrāʾ*, giving them their

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[27] Ayoub, *Redemptive Suffering*, pp. 181, 187–188.

[28] Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī al-taʾrīkh*, vol. 8 (Beirut, 1966), p. 549. See also the earlier account of Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam*, vol. 14, p. 150.

[29] Ayoub, *Redemptive Suffering*, p. 154.

[30] According to Ibn al-Athīr, Sunni-Shiʿi strife erupted as early as 963 following the Muḥarram processions in Baghdad: *al-Kāmil fī al-taʾrīkh*, vol. 8, pp. 549, 558.

patronage. Consequently, the annual mourning ceremonies in commemoration of imām Husayn acquired the status of a national institution in Safavid Iran.[31] The Muḥarram observances developed into an integral part of Iranian culture, and Persian literature became centered on Shiʿi martyrs and saints.[32] Although it may be that by the tenth century people already incorporated some concrete symbols into the processions, we have no evidence for the appearance of the *shabīh* at that time. Indeed, only after the establishment of Shiʿism as the state religion in Iran can one clearly detect the development of a distinct ritual in the form of a carnival-play, representing the battle of Karbala. The appearance of the *shabīh* in Iran might have been inspired by the Christian Corpus Christi Processions, the theater of the Stations of the Cross, or by the European Corpus Christi plays of the post-Renaissance period which reenacted various events in the passion of Christ culminating in his crucifixion and resurrection.[33] It may also be that in its initial carnival-type format the *Shabīh* incorporated some features of ancient Iranian practices like the use of banners and horses in funeral processions.[34]

From the account of the Portuguese traveler Antonio de Gouvea, who watched the celebration of *ʿĀshūrāʾ* in Shiraz in 1602, it is clear

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[31] "ʿAzādārī," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, vol. 3, p. 176.

[32] The first years of Safavid rule coincided with the writing of perhaps one of the most popular works in the genre dealing with the martyrology of Husayn. Compiled by Ḥusayn Vāʿiẓ Kāshifī, *Rawżat al-shuhadāʾ* (The Garden of the Martyrs) is said to be a moving literary description of Husayn's sufferings and martyrdom. Probably the first such work to be written in Persian, it gave an impetus to the Muḥarram observances in Safavid Iran, inspiring a new type of activity, namely, the *Rawża-khwānī*, the recitation from *Rawżat al-shuhadāʾ*. The Garden of the Martyrs was an important work in the first pre-stage narrative genre of the *taʿziya* play which would develop in Qajar Iran on the basis of the *shabīh*. Another sixteenth century piece of importance was *Davāzdah band* (literally: The Twelve Bands), written by the poet Muḥtasham Kāshān (d. 1588). Like the Garden of the Martyrs, the Twelve Bands was one of the early examples of the genre of Persian elegies on the imāms. See Hildegard Müller, "Studien zum Persischen Passionsspiel" (Ph.D. diss., Freiburg im Breisgau, 1966), p. 99; Peter Chelkowski, "Bibliographical Spectrum," in his (ed.), *Taʿziyeh: Ritual and Drama in Iran* (New York, 1979), p. 256.

[33] For the development and nature of these Christian rituals see V.A. Kolve, *The Play Called Corpus Christi* (Stanford, 1966), esp. pp. 1, 4–5, 8, 10, 23, 265; Hardin Craig, "The Corpus Christi Procession and the Corpus Christi Play," *Journal of English and German Philosophy*, 13 (1914), 591, 594, 596, 598–600; "Stations of the Cross," *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, vol. 11, p. 856.

[34] "ʿAzādārī," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, vol. 3, p. 175.

that by that time Iranians already observed the *shabīh* in the form of a carnival. Gouvea recounted that on the tenth day of ʿĀshūrāʾ a group of camels covered with painted cloth, and carrying mourning women and a small child, paraded through one of the city's streets, representing Husayn's women folk and his son on their return journey from Damascus to Medina with Husayn's head.[35] The spread of the *shabīh* in Iran in the seventeenth century may be gathered from Shiʿi sources, which relate that the mujtahid Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī (d. 1699) consolidated the *shabīh* at a time when this carnival-play was only beginning to take shape.[36] Majlisī's act could have been an attempt to give the *shabīh* a unified format in the face of different popular forms that had taken shape in Iran from the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century.

Following the collapse of the Safavid state in the early eighteenth century, Iranian Shiʿism needed folk mysticism to endure in the face of Sunni Afghan invaders. This helps explain why in spite of the disorder in the country, the representation of the battle of Karbala developed toward the late eighteenth century into a full-fledged drama.[37] The straightforward form of the *shabīh* gave way to a more theatrical form, the *taʿziya* play, which was enacted on stage. As Müller suggested, the appearance of a theatrical form coincided with literary developments, most notably the use of a new dramatic literary genre instead of the old narrating literature.[38]. The *taʿziya* play reached its zenith during the Qajar period (1794–1925), stopping short of becoming an Iranian national theater early in the twentieth century.[39] Under royal patronage the play evolved into a com-

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[35] Antonio de Gouvea, *Relations des Grandes Gverres et Victoires Obtenves par le Roy de Perse Cha Abbas contre les Emperevrs de Turkvie Mahomet et Achmet son Fils. En Svite dv Voyage de Qvelqves Religieux de l'Orde de Hermites de S. Augustin Enuoyez en Perse par le Roy Chatholique dans Philippe Second, Roy de Portogal*, tr. from Portuguese (A. Roven, chez N. Loyselet, 1646), pp. 75, 76. For a Persian Translation of Gouvea's account see Naṣrallāh Falsafī, *Zindegāni-yi shāh ʿabbās-i avval*, vol. 3 (Tehran, 1920/1), pp. 9–10.

[36] ʿAbd al-Riḍā Kāshif al-Ghiṭāʾ, *al-Anwār al-ḥusayniyya wa al-shaʿāʾir al-islāmiyya*, pt. 2 (Bombay, 1927/8), p. 76.

[37] Roy Mottahedeh, *The Mantle of the Prophet*, (New York, 1985), p. 176.

[38] Müller, "Studien", p. 125.

[39] Farrokh Gaffary, "Evolution of Rituals and Theater in Iran," *Iranian Studies*, 17 (1984), 371.

plex melodrama, particularly in Tehran and in other large cities in Iran. The literary and artistic additions reached their peak during and shortly after the reign of Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh (1848–1896). While the main theme was still the battle of Karbala, much stress was laid on individual heroes around whom separate plays were written. To create a greater effect, authors of the *taʿziya* plays added new characters and transformed existing ones.[40]

During the rule of Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh, the play was reported by both European and Shiʿi sources to have become a national spectacle. Important mujtahids, notably, Mirzā Abū al-Qāsim Qummī (d. 1816), and Shaykh Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn al-Mazandarānī al-Ḥāʾirī (d. 1891) declared the Karbala representation lawful with some limitations.[41] European envoys were invited to attend the plays. Huge theaters, such as the Takiye-i Dawlat in Tehran, were built to hold the vast concourse of spectators. The Shah used to attend the plays and distribute largesse. Besides the likely possibility that the Shah himself enjoyed the good show which the plays provided, two other main reasons may account for his encouragement of the play. The first was his desire to foster some genuine Iranian spirit. The second was his attempt to exercise greater control over religion through state-sponsored rituals, and thereby to reduce the power of the Shiʿi clergy.[42] The prominence of the play and its central position in Qajar cultural life may also be deduced from the great attention paid

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[40] Peter Chelkowski, "Taʿziyeh: Indigenous Avant-Garde Theatre of Iran," in his *Taʿziyeh*, p. 4; Anayatullah Shahidi, "Literary and Musical Developments in the Taʿziyeh," in Chelkowski, *Taʿziyeh*, pp. 41–42; Peter Chelkowski, "Majlis-i Shahinshah-i Iran Nasir al-Din Shah," in Edmond Bosworth and Carole Hillenbrand (eds.) *Qajar Iran: Political, Social and Cultural Change 1800–1900* (Edinburgh, 1983), pp. 229–30. The dramatic and literary aspects of various *taʿziya* plays in Iran are well documented in the Western literature and need not be elaborated here. A survey of the literature may be found in Chelkowski, "Bibliographical Spectrum," in his *Taʿziyeh*, pp. 255–68.

[41] A translation of Qummī's *fatwa* may be found in Mayel Baktash, "Taʿziyeh and its Philosophy," in Peter Chelkowski, *Taʿziyeh*, pp. 107–108. Parts of this *fatwā* and that of Ḥāʾiri's are cited by ʿAbd al-Riḍā Kāshif al-Ghiṭāʾ, *al-Anwār al-ḥusayniyya*, pt. 2, pp. 77–79.

[42] Report on the Muḥarram Ceremonies: Historical Retrospect, Hoare to Simon, 27 October 1934, FO 371/17915/5471; Jean Calmard, "Muharram Ceremonies and Diplomacy," in Edmond Bosworth and Carole Hillenbrand (eds.), *Qajar Iran*, pp. 214, 216; Muḥammad Ḥusayn Kāshif al-Ghiṭāʾ, *al-Āyāt al-bayyināt fī qamʿ al-bidaʿ wa al-ḍalālāt* (Najaf, 1926/7), p. 13.

to it by foreign visitors, who were able to collect a very large number of *taʿziya* manuscripts in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Indeed, between 1950 and 1955 alone, the Italian ambassador to Iran, Enrico Cerulli, collected no less than 1,055 manuscripts from various localities in Iran, a collection now stored in the Vatican Library.[43]

The *taʿziya* play developed mainly in Iran and its rich theatrical dimensions reflected strong Persian influences. This is supported by what is known about the *shabīh* and the *taʿziya* play in other Shiʿi regions. Introduced into Iraq only in the late eighteenth century, the *shabīh* never developed into a full-scale theater and its nature was fundamentally different from that of the Iranian, reflecting the strong Arab tribal character of Iraqi Shiʿi society.[44] In Lebanon, oral traditions relate that the *taʿziya* play was introduced into Nabaṭiyya (a small Shiʿi town in the south) by some Iranians only in the late nineteenth century. It was not until 1970 that the play in Nabaṭiyya took on its current form, and was performed entirely on stage.[45] While the Azari Turks on the western bank of the Caspian Sea and in the frontier area between Iran and Turkey observed certain forms of the *taʿziya* play early in the twentieth century, the Shiʿi Turks in Anatolia did not develop a traditional *taʿziya* format, probably on account of the Sunni predominance there.[46] Although the *shabīh* in the form of public processions was introduced into southern India in the late 1820s by Shiʿis who migrated from Iran to Bombay, it is unclear whether it developed at all into a real play on stage.[47] As may be gathered from the accounts of Europeans, the *shabīh* in

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[43] Chelkowski, "Bibliographical Spectrum," pp. 259, 262.

[44] Nakash, "Shiʿism," pp. 153–56.

[45] Frederic Maatouk, *La Représentation de la Mort de l'Imam Hussein à Nabatieh (Liban-Sud)* (Beirut, 1974), pp. 2, 42–48, 197–98. The relatively late development of the play among Shiʿi communities in Lebanon is also evident in the case of another (unidentified) Shiʿi Lebanese village, the people of which according to the anthropologist Peters began observing the play only from 1952: Emrys Peters, "Aspects of Rank and Status among Muslims in a Lebanese Village," in Julian Pitt-Rivers (ed.), *Mediterranean Countrymen* (Paris, 1963), p. 196.

[46] Müller, "Studien", pp. 65, 101; Metin And, "The Muharram Observances in Anatolian Turkey," in Peter Chelkowski, *Taʿziyeh*, pp. 238, 248.

[47] Jim Masselos, "Change and Custom in the Format of the Bombay Mohurrum during the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries," *South Asia*, 5, n.s. (1982), 50.

Bengal and Bihar in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century took the form of public processions.[48] The *taʿziya* play also did not gain ground in the Shiʿi state of Awadh in northern India (1722–1859). It may be that the existence there of ample Hindu-style theatrical plays preempted the spread of the *taʿziya* play to that part of the Shiʿi world.[49]

The Muḥarram observances were further elaborated with the spread of yet another ritual: flagellation. Breast-beating and face-slapping, as has already been pointed out, were traditional ways of expressing personal grief and pain in Muslim societies. It is therefore not surprising that such acts were used to commemorate Husayn's martyrdom already during the Būyid period. It is more difficult, however, to determine just exactly when and where knives, swords, and chains were first used by Shiʿi mourners to shed blood for Husayn's death. The use of instruments to shed blood added a violent aspect to the Muḥarram rites. The flagellants sought to reenact Husayn's martyrdom in Karbala by shedding their own blood. Watching this, and the occasional death of some of the flagellants, the audience would witness a ritual of death.

Both the accounts of European travelers and Shiʿi sources point to the Caucasus and Azarbayjan as the place of origin of flagellation. The earliest accounts of travelers go back to the first half of the seventeenth century. Comparing the pre-nineteenth century accounts of travelers to Iran, Henri Massé noted a fundamental difference in the nature of the Muḥarram processions. In the southern cities such as Isfahan and Shiraz, the travellers Della Valle, Thevenot, Tavernier, and Le Brun (whom Massé considered noteworthy for their precision) did not mention any shedding of blood. In contrast, in the frontier-like, Turkish-speaking regions of the Caucasus and Azarbayjan in northern Iran, the travelers Kakasch, Olearius, and Struys wrote that devotees struck their heads with swords.[50] One of the earliest descriptions of the use of instruments to shed blood in

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[48] William Tennant, *Indian Recreations*, vol. 1, 2nd ed. (London, 1804), p. 219; Emma Roberts, *Scenes and Characteristics of Hindostan*, vol. 1, 2nd ed. (London, 1837), pp. 137–38.

[49] Juan Cole, *Roots of North Indian Shiʿism in Iran and Iraq: Religion and State in Awadh 1722–1859* (Berkeley, 1988), p. 114.

[50] Henri Massé, *Persian Beliefs and Customs* (New Haven, 1954), p. 128.

commemoration of Husayn's death is provided by the Ottoman traveller Evliya Chelebi who visited Tabriz in 1640 and attended the observances of the tenth of Muḥarram in that city:

> The finest show is in the variegated tent of the khan, where all the great men of Tabriz are assembled, and where a Hymn [*maqtal*] on the death of Husayn is recited .... The hearers listen sighing and lamenting, but when the reciter arrives at the passage where Husayn is killed by [the] accursed Shabr [Shimr], a curtain opens behind him, and a severed head and trunk of a body, representing that of the imām when dead, is thrown on the ground, when there rises such an uproar of cries and lamentations that everybody loses his wits. At this moment some hundred men mingle in the crowd with razors, with which they cut the arms and breasts of all loving believers, who desire to shed their blood on this day in remembrance of the blood shed by the imam; they make such deep incisions and scars, that the ground appears as if it was blooming with tulips. Some thousands brand the marks and names of Hasan and Husayn on their heads, arms, and breasts. They then carry Husayn's body away from the ground with much pomp, and finish the ceremony with great howlings.[51]

While flagellations as a form for reenacting the shedding of Husayn's blood had existed in the Caucasus and Azarbayjan at least from the seventeenth century, the practice is not reported in the central and southern cities of Iran, nor among Imāmi Shiʿis in the Arab world before the nineteenth century.[52] It is also unclear when Shiʿi in India began to observe flagellation, and in what forms exactly. The practice could have been transmitted into that country either by Iranian Shiʿi immigrants in the nineteenth century or perhaps even earlier by Shiʿi Qizilbash cavalrymen hired by Safdar Jang, the governor of Awadh, from Nādir Shāh following the withdrawal of the latter's army from India around 1740.[53]

The flagellations were introduced into central and southern Iran, as well as into Iraq, only in the nineteenth century. This proposition

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[51] Evliya Effendi, *Narrative of Travels in Europe, Asia, and Africa in the Seventeenth Century*, vol. 2 (New York, 1968), p. 138.

[52] Ibn Ṭūlūn reports that in Damascus in Muḥarram 907/1501 it was a mob of Persians, probably Qizilbash and wandering dervishes (*aubāsh al-aʿjām wa al-qalandāriyya*), who were engaged in the act of wounding their faces: Shams al-Dīn Ibn Muḥammad Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākahat al-khillān fī ḥawādith al-zamān*, vol. 1 (Cairo, 1962), p. 244.

[53] Cole, *Roots of North Indian Shiʿism*, p. 45.

is supported by the data provided by Shiʿi biographies and Iraqi Shiʿi oral history. The biographies identify Shaykh Mulla Āghā ʿĀbid al-Darbendī (d. 1868/9) as the first to introduce violent acts of self-flagellation into Tehran around the mid-nineteenth century. As his last name implies, Darbendī originated from a small coastal city on the western bank of the Caspian Sea (today known as Derbent). Darbendī was known for his deep love for imām Husayn. During the first ten days of Muḥarram many people would assemble by the pulpit from which he used to preach. Darbendī exhorted people to experience pain, urging weeping, lamentations, and self-flagellation. This would reach its peak on the tenth day when he used to exercise "demon-like" practices. Among Darbendī's works, Shiʿi biographies highlight one in particular: *Iksīr al-ʿibādāt fī asrār al-shahādāt* (The Elixir of the Acts of Devotion for the Secrets of Martyrdom). Darbendī is said to include in this work uncommon rituals, not to be found in other accepted Shiʿi Imāmi writings on the commemoration of *ʿĀshūrāʾ*.[54] The relatively late appearance of flagellation in Iraq is also evident from Shiʿi accounts. The Iraqi Shiʿi mujtahid Muḥammad Mahdī al-Qazwīnī is cited by Werner Ende as claiming around 1927 that the use of iron was initiated "about a century ago" by people not well versed in the rules of the Sharīʿa.[55] Indeed, Iraqi Shiʿi oral history traces the appearance of flagellation in Najaf and Karbala to the nineteenth century. It is related that the practice was imported to these cities by Shiʿi Turks, who came to Karbala and Najaf on pilgrimage from the Caucasus or Azarbayjan.[56] The introduction of flagellation into Iraq in the

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[54] Āghā Buzurg al-Ṭihrānī, *al-Dharīʿa ilā taṣānīf al-shīʿa*, vol. 2 (Najaf, 1937/8), p. 279; idem, *Ṭabaqāt aʿlām al-shīʿa*, vol. 2 (Najaf, 1954), pp. 152–53; Khānbābā Mushār, *Muʾallifīn-i kutub-i chāpi-yi fārsī va-ʿavabī*, vol. 6 (Tehran, 1965/6), pp. 278–79. Darbendī's work, which was not available to me, was published in Iran in 1965: Mulla Akhund Darbendī, *Iksīr al-ʿibādāt fī asrār al-shahādāt* (Tehran, Dār al-Ṭibāʿa, 1385/1965).

[55] Werner Ende, "The Flagellations of Muḥarram and the Shiʿite ʿUlamāʾ," *Isl.*, 55 (1978), 27–28. Ende cites Muḥammad Mahdī al-Qazwīnī, *Dawlat al-shajara al-malʿūna al-shāmiyya aw dawr ẓulm banī umayya ʿalā al-ʿalawiyya* (Baghdad, Dār al-Salām Press, 1927/8).

[56] Ṭālib ʿAlī al-Sharqī, *al-Najaf al-ashraf: ʿādātuhā wa-taqālīduhā* (Najaf, 1978), pp. 220–23; Kāẓim al-Dujaylī, "'Āshūrā' fī al-najaf wa-karbalā'," *Lughat al-ʿArab*, 2 (1913), 286–95.

nineteenth century was probably facilitated by the Ottoman reversal in 1831 of the Mamlūk ban prohibiting the observance of *ʿĀshūrāʾ* in public after they had resumed direct control of the country.[57]

It seems that the flagellations were introduced into Imāmi Shiʿism by extremist Shiʿi groups, probably by the Qizilbash, whose doctrine and rituals were regarded by Imāmi Shiʿi orthodoxy as exaggerated in reverence for the imāms. In the fifteenth century Turkoman tribes and Christian Armenians of eastern Anatolia, the Armenian highlands, and the Caucasus were converted by Safavid sufi shaykhs to whom the converts owed obedience in their capacity as their supreme spiritual leaders. The shaykhs made Ardabil in northern Iran a center designed to maintain the contacts between them and their new disciples (*murīds*). With the establishment of the Safavid dynasty, the *murīds* were given the nickname Qizilbash (redhead). They constituted the military backbone and aristocracy of the dynasty throughout much of the sixteenth century, before their power was reduced by Shāh ʿAbbās I (1588–1629) and his successors.[58] A Qizilbash soldier carried a formidable arsenal of weapons—bow, lance, sword, dagger, and battle axe.[59] Given that, it is perhaps not surprising that at least some of these weapons were used as instruments of flagellations.[60]

The Qizilbash observed ecstatic rituals of *dhikr* and maintained a spirit and an organizational form similar to that of a fraternity. While Shiʿi elements were predominant, Christian elements also played an important role in the Qizilbash doctrine. This was probably the result of the conversion of Armenians to Shiʿi Islam by the Safavid shaykhs, as well as the presence of other Christian sects in eastern Anatolia and the Caucasus where the Qizilbash had originated.[61] Sufi and Christian elements were fused in the rituals of the

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[57] Āghā Buzurg al-Ṭihrānī, *Aʿlām al-shiʿa*, vol. 2, p. 170; ʿAlī al-Wardī, *Lamaḥāt ijtimāʿiyya min taʾrīkh al-ʿirāq al-ḥadīth*, vol. 2 (Baghdad, 1971), pp. 109–10.

[58] "Ḳizil-Bāsh," *EI*^{2}, vol. 5, pp. 243–45; Matti Moosa, *Extremist Shiites: The Ghulat Sects* (New York, 1988), esp. pp. 32–35; F.W. Hasluck, *Christianity and Islam Under the Sultans*, vol. 1 (Oxford, 1929), pp. 139, 169.

[59] "Ḳizil-Bāsh," *EI*^{2}, vol. 5, p. 245.

[60] See the excellent portraits of nineteenth century Caucasian flagellants in Davoud Monchi-Zadeh, *Taʿziya: Das Persische Passionsspiel* (Stockholm, 1967), pp. 15, 17.

[61] Hasluck, *Christianity and Islam*, vol. 1, esp. pp. 10–11, 151, 154; Moosa,

Qizilbash.[62] As will be seen below, this was also evident in the flagellations, which reenacted the shedding of Husayn's blood in a manner similar to the reenactment of the shedding of the blood of Christ among Christian Catholics.

Ivar Lassy studied the Muḥarram rituals of the Azarbayjanis of south-eastern Caucasia early in the twentieth century. He observed that the flagellants were drawn from the poorest segments of the population. During Muḥarram they would gather in special halls, *takkas* (derived from *takīya*, a monastery of a sufi order). Using chain-scourges, and chanting scourge-elegies that emphasized the shedding of Husayn's blood, they scourged themselves rhythmically at a pace and vigor that accelerated like a *dhikr*. The self-scourging would cease only after the participants had collapsed. The procession of the tenth of Muḥarram included another, more violent, form of flagellation. A group of self-mutilators dressed in white robes would stroke their clean-shaven heads with swords and daggers. The gashing of the heads took place amidst loud exclamations and the stimulating shouts of their leader. The extreme excitement of the self-mutilators was assisted by drummers and cymbalists who ran up and down between the rows of the self-mutilators, creating a deafening din with their instruments.[63]

It may be that the practice of flagellation was transmitted from Italy into eastern Anatolia and the Caucasus, perhaps as early as the fourteenth or the fifteenth century. Voluntary flagellation as a form of religious penance was probably not practiced in early Christianity or even in the early days of monasticism.[64] The first serious expression of collective flagellation, aimed at seeking atonement for the sins of the world by reenacting the sufferings of Christ, began in Italy in 1260 in the form of the flagellant movement led by the Franciscans. The spread of the ritual was assisted by the pessimistic mood

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Extremist Shiites, pp. 40–42, 433–34; Ivar Lassy, *The Muharram Mysteries among the Azerbeijan Turks of Caucasia* (Helsingfors, 1916), p. 9.

[62] For a description of their rituals see "Kizil-Baş," *İslām Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 6, pp. 792–95.

[63] Lassy, *The Muharram Mysteries*, pp. 84–98, 114–17.

[64] I am not concerned here with flagellation as a form for appeasing the gods in paganism or the saints in Christianity, nor with flagellation as a form for subduing evil and the Black Death epidemic.

in the country after years of famine, plague, and civil strife. Apparently there was also a sense of standing on the frontiers of eternity, as if the whole world must prepare for death or judgement. The flagellants observed fasting and absented themselves from worldly festivals and public amusements. At times, thousands of penitents, preceded by priests who carried crosses and banners, marched in the streets scourging themselves. The flagellant movement provided a lasting inspiration for the observance of this ritual both in Italy and in other European countries.[65]

In Italy, well over a hundred permanent fraternities that practiced flagellation existed during the thirteenth to sixteenth centuries. By 1376 at least twenty-five flagellant fraternities existed in Florence alone. Venice had six such fraternities as late as 1552, composed of 500 to 600 members each.[66] Known as *Scuole dei Battuti* or *Scoule Grandi*, these devotional associations were initiated by laymen who sought social and religious solidarity outside the institutional church. Membership encompassed every occupation and trade. Flagellation in reverence of Christ and as a form of sharing his sufferings constituted an important ritual in the religious life of these fraternities, and this activity was believed to procure the salvation of those who engaged in it.[67] The members of the Florentine Crucifix of the *Bianchi*, for example, wore white linen robes and marched in procession while flagellating themselves. The *Scuola di San Giovanni* in Venice listed about a dozen days in every year on which the brothers would be summoned to hear mass, to give alms, and then to follow a cross and lighted candles through the city and to perform

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[65] John Henderson, "The Flagellant Movement and Flagellant Confraternities in Central Italy, 1260–1400," in Derek Baker (ed.), *Religious Motivation, Studies in Church History*, 15 (Oxford, 1978), pp. 147–49; Ronald Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhood in Renaissance Florence* (New York, 1982), p. 50; Brian Pullan, *Rich and Poor in Renaissance Venice* (Cambridge: Mass., 1971), pp. 34–36; Anon., *History of Flagellation* (New York, 1903), pp. 86–90; "Flagellants," *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, vol. 6, p. 49.

[66] Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhood*, p. 50; Pullan, *Rich and Poor*, pp. 33, 37.

[67] Pullan, *Rich and Poor*, pp. 40, 626, 640; Henderson, "The Flagellant Movement," p. 157; Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhood*, pp. 50, 54, 72–73, 75, 92–93, 95, 109; Patricia Brown, *Venetian Narrative Painting in the Age of Carpaccio* (New Haven, 1988), pp. 15–18, 20.

flagellation.[68] The ritual of flagellation was described by one eye witness in the sixteenth century as the "traditional display of the blood of Christ."[69]

I would like to suggest two potential channels through which flagellation might have been transmitted into eastern Anatolia and the Caucasus. By the mid-fourteenth century flagellation had spread to Sicily and Greece.[70] These territories in the Mediterranean, as well as other Italian strongholds in the Aegean Sea, were either invaded or lost completely to the Ottomans during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.[71] It may be that war captives or locals who were transferred from these territories transmitted the ritual to eastern Anatolia or the Caucasus. This possibility cannot be ignored particularly given the fact that from the mid-fifteenth century members of some of the Italian fraternities were used to man the galleys of the state in the wars against the Ottomans.[72]

There was also the very likely possibility that the ritual was transmitted through trade. Anatolia was an area of international commercial activity even before the Byzantine period. The coastal city of Trabzon in eastern Anatolia was the center at which the Black Sea trade route converged with the land route to the Caucasus. There, Italian merchants traded with Armenians, Caucasians, and Georgians who came to the city to purchase goods.[73] Italian commercial activity in the Black Sea area did not stop after the Ottomans established their rule in Anatolia and occupied Trabzon in 1461, nor after three Ottoman-Venetian wars in the fifteenth century (the last of which ended in 1502). The welfare of the Italian economy depended on international trade. Aware of this, the Ottoman sultans sought to detach Venice and the other Italian commercial republics from

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[68] Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhood*, p. 51; Pullan, *Rich and Poor*, pp. 50–51.

[69] Pullan, Ibid.

[70] *History of Flagellation*, p. 90.

[71] Stanford Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, vol. 1 (Cambridge, 1976), pp. 25, 31, 53; Brown, *Venetian Narrative Painting*, pp. 10–11.

[72] William Wurthmann, "The Scuole Grandi and Venetian Art, 1260–1500" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1975), pp. 106–112; Pullan, *Rich and Poor*, pp. 125, 143; Brown, *Venetian Narrative Painting*, p. 21.

[73] Speros Vryonis, *The Decline of Medieval Hellenism in Asia Minor and the Process of Islamization from the Eleventh through the Fifteenth Century* (Berkeley, 1971), esp. pp. 6, 9, 14, 15–16, 22.

Europe by keeping their navies out of the Christian coalition against the Ottomans. They hoped to achieve this by granting the republics trade privileges in the Ottoman dominions.[74] This allowed contacts between Italians and Caucasians in the coastal cities of the Black Sea throughout much of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, which could facilitate the transmission of flagellation into the Caucasus.

III. The development of the Muḥarram rituals demonstrated how socio-political change transformed the nature of Shiʿi Islam over a period of twelve centuries. The memorial services and the visitation of Husayn's tomb were the oldest vehicles for invoking the memory of Karbala and reinforcing Shiʿi collective memory. Whereas these two rituals were established in the formative period of Shiʿism, when the Shiʿis constituted a minority ruled by Sunni dynasties, the appearance of the public processions and the *shabīh* reflected the policies of Būyid and Safavid rulers who sought to elaborate the Muḥarram observances and use them to gain religious legitimacy in the process of Shiʿi state formation. The introduction of the ritual of flagellation by Turkoman tribes and Christian Armenians reflected the input of Shiʿi converts, demonstrating the influence of Christian practices on Shiʿism.

Over a period of twelve centuries the Muḥarram observances developed to include visual, theatrical, and violent aspects. The various Shiʿi communities did not adopt any one binding format and the rituals differed greatly from one place to another. Indeed, the diverse nature of the Muḥarram observances reflected the specific cultures and concrete socio-political realities within which they developed. As such, the comparison of the rituals of *ʿĀshūrāʾ* as observed by different Shiʿi groups can shed further light on the particular ethnic, social, and cultural attributes which have distinguished Shiʿi communities in the Arab world, Iran, India, and Turkey.

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[74] Shaw, *History*, vol. 1, pp. 42, 47, 62, 75, 91, 178, 179.