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The Flagellations of Muḥarram  
and the Shi'ite 'Ulamā'

## The Flagellations of Muḥarram and the Shi'ite 'Ulamā<sup>1</sup>)

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### List of main sources

- 1) AS = Muḥsin al-Amin al-Āmili: *A'yān al-shi'a*, 56 vols., vols. 40ff. ed. by the author's son, Ḥasan al-Amin. First edition Damascus/Beirut 1935—63, fourth edition Beirut 1960ff.\*)
- 2) DTS = Āghā Buzurg al-Ṭihrānī: *al-dhari'a ilā taṣānif al-shi'a*. — Available to me: Vols. 1—8, 9/parts 2—4, 10—20. Vol. 1 from 2nd edition (Tehran 1968), vols. 2—20 first edition (Najaf and/or Tehran 1936—70). Most vols. from 9 onwards are edited by two of the author's sons, 'A(ḥ) Naqī and Aḥmad al-Munzawī.
- 3) HA Ja'far al-Khalīlī: *Hākadhā 'araftuhum*, 4 vols. Baghdad/Beirut 1963—72.
- 4) HFA = Muḥammad Kāẓim Makki: *al-haraka al-fikriya wa-l-adabiya fi Jabal 'Āmil*, Beirut 1963.
- 5) MDA = Yūsuf As'ad Dāghir: *Maṣādīr al-dirāsa al-adabiya*, II/1 (Beirut 1956), III/1—2 (Beirut 1972).
- 6) MK = Khānbābā Mushār: *Mu'allifin-i kutub (...)*, 6 vols., Tehran 1962—66.
- 7) MM = 'Umar Ridā Kahhāla: *Mu'jam al-mu'allifin*, 15 vols., Damascus 1957—61.
- 8) MMI = Gūrgīs 'Awwād: *Mu'jam al-mu'allifin al-'irāqīyin*, 3 vols., Baghdad 1969.
- 9) RF Muḥammad Hādī al-Amīnī: *Rijāl al-fikr wa-l-adab fi l-Najaf*, Najaf 1964.
- 10) T = Muḥsin al-Amin al-Āmili: *al-tanzih (li-a'māl al-shabīh)*, 2nd edition Beirut s.d. (1973?).
- 11) TAS = Āghā Buzurg al-Ṭihrānī: *Ṭabaqāt a'lām al-shi'a*, 2 vols. in 6 parts: I/1—4 (= *nuqabā' al-bashar...*), Najaf 1954—68, and II/1—2 (= *al-kirām al-barara...*), Najaf 1954, 1958.

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<sup>1</sup>) The present article is the slightly enlarged version of a paper I read at the 8th congress of the *Union Européenne des Arabisants et Islamisants* held at Aix-en-Provence (France) in September 1976. It is part of the results of a research project concerning the socio-political and intellectual development of the Shi'ite (*imāmi*) community in the contemporary Arab World. A considerable part of the source material used here was collected during a visit to Lebanon, Iraq and Syria in 1974. This travel was made possible by a grant from the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, Bonn.

\*) There is no complete set of this work at my disposal. The volumes available to me are from different editions. In my footnotes the year of publication is therefore indicated in the case of each volume referred to.

One of the most spectacular features of the Shi'ite<sup>2)</sup> processions performed every year during the first ten days of the month of Muḥarram in commemoration of Imam Ḥusain's martyrdom (680 A.D.) is the appearance of men beating their bare chests with their fists, flagellating their shoulders and backs with chains and — on the tenth of Muḥarram — cutting their foreheads with swords. Those processions form a major part of the mourning ceremonies known by the overall name of *ta'ziya* (Persian *'azā dāri*). Among those ceremonies, the passion-play on the tenth of Muḥarram has often been an object of scholarly interest in the West.<sup>3)</sup>

In the present article I shall refrain from dealing once again with the much-discussed question of the origin and development of those dramatic performances, but shall confine myself to pointing out that many authors writing about the passion-play have hinted at the sceptical or even highly critical attitude of certain Shi'ite *'ulamā'* towards both the content of those plays and the way they are performed.<sup>4)</sup> To my knowledge, however, there does not exist in any western language a detailed analysis, based on Shi'ite source material, of the Shi'ite *'ulamā'*'s attitude towards the *ta'ziya* in general and/or some of its features in particular.<sup>5)</sup>

In the present article I have singled out the problem of their attitude towards the practice of chest-beating and the use of chains

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<sup>2)</sup> In the following passages, the term "Shi'ite" is used exclusively with reference to the Imāmiya (*iḥnā 'ashariya*).

<sup>3)</sup> The bulk of the material in western languages on the *ta'ziya*, especially with regard to the passion play, is mentioned in the bibliographies of two works on this subject published in German, i.e. H. Müller: *Studien zum persischen Passionsspiel* (Diss. Freiburg im Breisgau 1966), and D. Monchi-Zadeh: *Ta'ziya, das persische Passionsspiel* (. . .), Stockholm 1967. Some studies on the same and/or related subjects which have appeared during the last decade or so will be mentioned in the following footnotes. The Ph.D. thesis (Harvard University, 1975) by Mahmoud M. Ayoub: *Redemptive Suffering in Islam: A Study of the Devotional Aspects of 'Ashūrā' in the Middle Ages*, was not available to me.

<sup>4)</sup> Müller, op. cit., 53f.

<sup>5)</sup> The general problem of the ambivalent attitude of the Shi'ite *'ulamā'* towards certain beliefs and practices in "popular" Shi'ite Islam, among them the flagellations of Muḥarram, is at least touched upon in an article by a Shi'ite scholar from Iran teaching in Germany, i.e. Abdoldjavad Falaturi: *Die Zwölferschia aus der Sicht eines Schiiten. Probleme ihrer Untersuchung*, in: *Festschrift Werner Caskel*, ed. E. Gräf (Leiden 1968), 62—95, esp. 71—78. The author, while pointing out that many Shi'ite *'ulamā'* keep silent over practices which they themselves consider as unlawful, seems not to be aware that leading Shi'ite *'ulamā'*, for one reason or another, have *publicly endorsed* the flagellations (Nā'inī, Kāshif al-Ghiṭā' and others — see below p. 29 and 31).

and swords for self-torture during the processions. In the following passages, these practices will be referred to by the general term "flagellations".

About fifty years ago, a controversy among Shi'ites over the religious lawfulness of the flagellations and other Muḥarram practices caused a crisis in the Shi'ite communities of Syria/Lebanon and Iraq, a crisis which has been called "the great *fitna*" by a modern Shi'ite writer.<sup>6)</sup> As a preliminary step towards a more comprehensive treatment of the whole problem of *ta'ziya*-practices as seen by Shi'ite scholars, I would like to convey here some observations I made by studying both the literary history and the socio-political circumstances of that controversy. In fact an analysis of the Shi'ite *fitna* in the late twenties proves to be an excellent starting point for a general examination of the problem. Possible parallels to or repercussions of that controversy in Iran will not be discussed here.<sup>7)</sup>

The central figure of the Shi'ite *fitna* in the twenties is Sayyid Muḥsin al-Amin al-Āmilī (d. 1952), the well-known author of a vast biographical dictionary named *A'yān al-shī'a*.<sup>8)</sup> Sayyid Muḥsin, who was born at Shaqrā' in the Jabal Āmil (South Lebanon) in 1867 or '68, had studied in Najaf and later went to Damascus to become the spiritual leader of the Shi'ite community there. In the early twenties he published a work in five parts about the martyrdom of Imam Ḥusain b. 'Alī and the other Imams of the *āl al-bait*, called *al-majālis*

<sup>6)</sup> HA vol. 2, 20. — The only reference to the great Shi'ite *fitna* published so far in any western language seems to be the rather casual one to be found in an article by J. Berque: *Hier à Najaf et Karbalā'* (in: *Arabica* 9/1962/325—42). The value of the information given by Berque is somewhat blurred by that author's repeated mis-spelling of names and misunderstanding of events as recorded in his sources — see, e.g., his derivation of the word *umawiyūn* (= Umayyads), used in a denunciatory sense during the Shi'ite *fitna* (see p. 30 of the present article), from *umma* (= community, nation): Berque, 337.

<sup>7)</sup> For a survey of the continuance of Muḥarram ceremonies in Iran see E. Neubauer: *Muḥarram-Bräuche im heutigen Persien*, in: *Der Islam* 49/2 (November 1972), 249—72. The political and social relevance of the *ta'ziya* in general, but especially in Iran, is analysed by G. Thaiss: *Religious Symbolism and Social Change: The Drama of Husain*, in: N. R. Keddie (ed.): *Scholars, Saints, and Sufis* (Berkeley etc., 1972), 349—66. For the situation in modern Iraq see the thesis (Freie Universität Berlin) by Ibrahim al-Haidari: *Zur Soziologie des schiitischen Chiasmus. Ein Beitrag zur Erforschung des irakischen Passionsspiels* (published Freiburg im Breisgau 1975).

<sup>8)</sup> AS vol. 40 (1957) is exclusively devoted to the life and writings of Sayyid Muḥsin (ed. Ḥasan al-Amin). Further bio-bibliographical information about him is to be found in MDA II/1, 141—46; MK vol. 5, 206—10; MM vol. 7, 183—85.

*al-saniya*.<sup>9)</sup> While defending the traditional Shi'ite view of early Islamic history and stressing the religious merit of mourning for the martyrs, Sayyid Muḥsin in this work criticized certain practices performed in the Muḥarram processions, especially the flagellations. This criticism found an almost immediate reply from one of Sayyid Muḥsin's countrymen in the Jabal 'Āmil, Shaikh 'Abd al-Ḥusain Ṣādiq (d. 1942) of Nabaṭiya<sup>10)</sup> — a place known for its performance of the passion-play until recent years.<sup>10a)</sup> This reply, published in 1926 or early in 1927 with the title *Ṣimā' al-ṣulaḥā'*<sup>11)</sup>, was in its turn made the target of a refutation by Sayyid Muḥsin in a small, but very interesting booklet called *al-tanzīh li-a'māl al-shabīh*. It was written<sup>12)</sup> in Muḥarram 1346 H (July 1927) and published in Sidon late in 1928.<sup>13)</sup> This booklet, of which more will be said later on, triggered off the Shi'ite *fitna* and may be considered its basic document. In it, Sayyid Muḥsin declared as unlawful innovations (*bida'*) in the Muḥarram ceremonies not only the flagellations, but also, among other things, the use of musical instruments and the appearance in the processions of unveiled women impersonating Imam Ḥusain's female relatives.

Being a violent attack against those Shi'ite '*ulamā'*' who keep silent over — or even support — what Sayyid Muḥsin denounced as the result of the devil's intrigues, his *tanzīh* caused a chain of polemical replies, while, as Sayyid Muḥsin later claimed, only one author dared to defend it openly with a work of his own.<sup>14)</sup>

<sup>9)</sup> MDA II/1, 145; see MK vol. 5, 209, and DTS vol. 19, 360f. no. 1610. According to the latter, vol. 4 of *al-majālis al-saniya* (printed 1343 H/1924—25, has a *dhail* called *Iqnā' al-lā'im 'alā iqāmat al-ma'ā'im*, a defence of the Shi'ite's mourning for Ḥusain, see also DTS vol. 2, 275 no. 1115. MDA II/1, 143 has an edition Sidon 1344 H (1925—26) of the *Iqnā'*. — Later editions of *al-majālis al-saniya* have appeared in Damascus (3rd. edition 1954) and Najaf (1380 Hff.).

<sup>10)</sup> For some bio-bibliographical details about this person see TAS I/3, 1030—32, and HFA, 237 note 1.

<sup>10a)</sup> Ibrahim al-Haidari: *Die Ta'ziya, das schiitische Passionsspiel im Libanon*, in: ZDMG, Supplement III/1, 19. Deutscher Orientalistentag (.), Vorträge, hrg. von Wolfgang Voigt (Wiesbaden 1977), 430—37. and Frédéric Maatouk: *La Représentation de la mort de l'Imam Hussein à Nabatieh (Liban-Sud)*, Beirut 1974. Dr. Peter Heine (Münster) kindly drew my attention to the latter work, but it could be used here only in the case of footnote 26 as the present article was already at proof stage.

<sup>11)</sup> See DTS vol. 12, 292 no. 1961.

<sup>12)</sup> According to the colophon of the recent re-edition (Beirut s.d., 1973?), 32.

<sup>13)</sup> MDA II/1, 143f.; see also DTS vol. 3, 455 no. 2027 and the short notice in the Shi'ite journal *Al-'Irḥān* (Sidon), 17/1929/101.

<sup>14)</sup> AS vol. 40 (1957), 123f., see also HA vol. 3, 230.

This defence,<sup>15</sup>) and most of the refutations were published in Iraq, where Lebanese Shi'ites opposed to Sayyid Muḥsin had brought the news of what they considered a scandalous attack on the religious establishment. Those polemical pamphlets form a most valuable source material for the study of our problem, but are very difficult to obtain. Among the reasons for that I may mention the fact that libraries where this material can be found — especially in the Shi'ite centres of Iraq — cannot easily be used by non-Shi'ite foreigners. There is also a widespread hesitation among Shi'ites to talk about the whole affair to outsiders.

In fact the polemical pamphlets directed against Sayyid Muḥsin's works *al-majālis al-sanīya* and *al-tanzīh* have remained unavailable to me until now. Nevertheless, the names of the authors of some of those writings, together with all the relevant bibliographical data I was able to discover and corroborate, are given in the following passage. I hope that readers wishing to do further research in the history of Shi'ite controversies over the *ta'ziya* will find this list of some use:

- a) 'Abdallāh al-Subaitī: *Rannat al-asā fi ta'zīm sha'ā'ir al-'azā*, printed in Baghdad s.d. (Maṭb. al-Najāh). It is mentioned in DTS vol. 11, 254 no. 1552, and MMI vol. 2, 326. For information about the author see MK vol. 3, 992—93.
- b) Murtaḍā Āl Yāsīn: *Nazra dāmi'a, risāla tabhathu 'an al-muzāharāt fi 'Ashūrā' kull sana (Muḥarram)*, Baghdad, (Maṭb. al-Furāt). The title as mentioned in *Der Islam* 17/1928/341 no. 190 differs from that given in MMI vol. 3, 291. The year of publication as given in both sources (1927) would mean that this booklet cannot be directed against *al-tanzīh* (as mentioned in DTS vol. 4, 455 no. 2027), but may rather be a *radd* against *al-majālis al-sanīya*. — About Murtaḍā Āl Yāsīn see RF, 472 no. 2036.
- c) 'Abd al-Ḥusain al-Ḥillī: *al-naqd al-nazīh li-risālat al-tanzīh*, Najaf 1347 H (1928—29), see MMI vol. 2, 227, and TAS I/3, 1069—72. According to the latter, al-Ḥillī published another refutation of Sayyid Muḥsin's *tanzīh* with the title *Nuṣrat al-maẓlūm*, but under the name "Ḥasan al-Muẓaffar". This is corroborated by MMI vol. 1, 332 and vol. 2, 226, but the date of publication given there (1345 H/1926—27) does also not agree with that of the *tanzīh* (1928). Anyway it seems to be no sheer coincidence that al-Ḥillī should have used the name „al-Muẓaffar“ as a pseudonym (see below p. 33).
- d) Muḥammad Ḥusain al-Muẓaffar: *al-sha'ā'ir al-ḥusainīya*, Baghdad 1348 H (1929—30), Maṭb. al-Najāh (DTS vol. 14, 191 no. 2136, and MMI vol. 3, 154). About the author see TAS I/2, 646f.

<sup>15</sup>) *Kashf al-tamwīh 'an risālat al-tanzīh*, by Shaikh Muḥammad al-Ganjī (in some sources: Gabanjī), published in Najaf in 1347 H (1928—29), a work of 74 pages. It is mentioned by Muḥammad Hādī al-Amīnī: *Mu'jam al-maṭbū'āt al-najāfiya* (Najaf 1966), 284 no. 1188, and in MMI vol. 3, 232; see also DTS vol. 18, 24 no. 492 and MK vol. 5, 703. No other title of a work of this author and no biographical information about him are known to me.

- c) 'Abd al-Mahdī al-Muẓaffar: *Irshād al-umma li-l-tamassuk bi-l-a'imma*, Najaf 1348 H (1929—30), see DTS vol. 1, 512 no. 2510, and MMI vol. 2, 353. A passage from *Irshād al-umma* is quoted in AS vol.40 (1957), 122f. — In DTS vol. 12, 272 no. 1819 another relevant work by 'Abd al-Mahdī al-Muẓaffar is mentioned: *al-siyāsa al-dīniya li-daf' al-shubahāt 'alā l-muẓāharāt al-ḥusainiya* (Najaf s.d.). About the author see TAS I/3, 1240—42.
- f) 'Alī Naqī al-Lakhnawī (Lak-hnawī!): *Iqālat al-'āthir fi iqāmat al-sha'a'ir al-ḥusainiya*, Najaf 1348 H (1929—30), see DTS vol. 2, 263 no. 1072 (also vol. 4, 455 no. 2027). Amīnī: *Mu'jam al-maṭbū'āt* (see note 15), 88f. no. 158 has only an edition 1374 H (1954—55), Maṭb. al-Ghariy (59 pp.); about the author see RF, 390 no. 1650.
- g) A number of the most important statements by leading Shi'ite scholars in support of the flagellations and related practices are most probably to be found in a booklet published in 1957 by a certain Sayyid Mahdī al-Suwaij (or: al-Suwaijī): *al-fatāwā wa-l-taqārīr fi jawāz al-tashbih wa-l-'azā'* (Maṭb. al-Ghariy, 32 pp.). This booklet is also not available to me.<sup>16)</sup>

Fortunately, Sayyid Muḥsin's *tanzīh* was republished in Beirut about five years ago (1973?).<sup>17)</sup> His work provides us also with some information about the content of Shaikh 'Abd al-Ḥusain Ṣādiq's *Sīmā' al-sulahā'*, as Sayyid Muḥsin quotes several long passages from his opponent's book.<sup>17a)</sup> Thereby, he enables us to get an impression of some of the arguments used by certain Shi'ite scholars in order to defend the flagellations and related practices — such as Shaikh Ṣādiq's assertion that the cutting of the forehead as a sign of mourning for Imam Ḥusain was in a way similar to the medical practice of cupping and therefore must be equally allowed — or even more so, as it was done for a religious purpose.<sup>18)</sup>

<sup>16)</sup> It is mentioned in MMI vol. 3, 343, and by al-Amīnī: *Mu'jam al-maṭbū'āt* (see note 15 above), 261 no. 1059.

<sup>17)</sup> See my "List of main sources", no. 10.

<sup>17a)</sup> An outline of the contents of both the *Sīmā' al-sulahā'* and the *Tanzīh*, together with some background information, is given by Ibrāhīm Farrān: *Ra'yān mukhtalifān fi kaiḥiyat iqāmat 'Āshūrā'*, in: *Cahiers des Lettres* (= Cahiers de l'École Supérieure des Lettres, Beyrouth), no.5: *Colloque 'Ashura'*, 1974, pp. 20–45 (with French summary). Farrān is in favour of Sayyid Muḥsin's position. Due to its publication in a series generally not devoted to Islamic studies, and also as a result of lack of communication because of the civil war in Lebanon, this paper did not come to my attention until the present article was already at proof stage. Farrān's account fully corroborates the conclusions which I have offered here.

<sup>18)</sup> T, 20f. — As an argument used in order to point out the *spiritual* value of the flagellations, we may mention another author's assertion that these practices are an excellent means to inflame and keep alive the fighting spirit of the believers — especially the young ones — and to strengthen their readiness for sacrifice. Concerning the mockery and criticism which the flagellations may

In addition, the relative inaccessibility of the polemical literature of the Shi'ite *fitna* can be compensated for to a certain extent by a systematic use of modern bio-bibliographical works.<sup>19</sup> In this way, it is possible to reconstruct the literary history of the Shi'ite *fitna*, especially with regard to the biographical relations between some of the authors involved.

Finally, the memorial articles about contemporary figures published by the Iraqi Shi'ite writer Ja'far al-Khalilī<sup>20</sup> provide us with a wealth of additional information on the controversy over the Muḥarram practices, he himself having been one of the few partisans of Sayyid Muḥsin's cause in Najaf.<sup>21</sup>

Mainly on the basis of Sayyid Muḥsin's *tanzīh* and the other material just mentioned, I would like to comment on some details of the Shi'ite *fitna* and to draw some conclusions with regard to the attitude of the Shi'ite 'ulamā' towards the flagellations:

I. — Quite obviously, Sayyid Muḥsin never intended to have the mourning ceremonies of Muḥarram abolished. In a way, he even wanted to revive and expand them: by clearing the *ta'ziya* from all *bida'*, he hoped to transform it into an instrument of Shi'ite missionary work. For the achievement of this aim, he suggested that a new body of well-trained Muḥarram preachers should be established, who would supersede those who now spoil the image of the Shi'a by quoting false

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arouse among the non-Shi'ites, the same author reminds his readers of the example of Prophet Muḥammad, who did not give up preaching when he found that the Quraish received his religious mission with mockery and even contempt ('Abd al-Wahhāb al-Kāshī: *Ma'sāt al-Ḥusain baina l-sā'il wa-l-mujīb* [Beirut 1973], 127—29).

<sup>19</sup> The most important have already been mentioned in some of the foot-notes above: DTS, TAS, AS, RF, MK and MMI (see "List of main sources").

<sup>20</sup> See "List of main sources" no. 3. — About the author (born in Najaf in 1904) see MMI vol. 1, 245—47. His achievement as one of the leading Iraqi writers has been analysed in a Ph. D. dissertation submitted to the University of Michigan by John Thomas Hamel: *Jafar Al-Khalili and the Modern Iraqi Story* (1972). An Arabic translation of this dissertation was published as a book in Baghdad in 1977. — Ja'far's brother 'Abbās al-Khalilī (d. 1972), who after the Iraqi revolution of 1920 had emigrated to Iran, became a prominent journalist and writer there, see B. Alavi: *Geschichte und Entwicklung der modernen persischen Literatur* (Berlin 1964), 147—49; see also HA vol. 4, 75—192.

<sup>21</sup> It should be noted that Ja'far al-Khalilī comes from a family well known for religious learning: his grandfather, Mullā 'Alī al-Khalilī, was *marja' al-taqlid* (see note no. 23 below) in Najaf. The same position was held by his father's uncle, Mirzā Ḥusain al-Khalilī.



traditions, spreading superstitious legends, endorsing the flagellations etc.<sup>22)</sup>

II. — Sayyid Muḥsin was not the first who tried to eliminate the flagellations and several other innovations from the Muḥarram ceremonies. Written evidence of this reformist attitude, however, seems to appear in printed form only in the twenties of our century, i.e. more or less parallel to Sayyid Muḥsin's relevant works. Two names of scholars sharing Sayyid Muḥsin's attitude must be mentioned here: Sayyid Abū l-Ḥasan al-Iṣfahānī, until his death in 1946 supreme *mujtahid* (*marja' al-taqlid*) in Najaf,<sup>23)</sup> and Sayyid Muḥammad Mahdī al-Qazwīnī in Basra.<sup>24)</sup> Their statements against the flagellations appeared about two years earlier than Sayyid Muḥsin's *tanzih*.<sup>25)</sup>

III. — In the Jabal 'Āmil, closed *ta'ziyas* (i.e. *majlis-ta'ziyas*) are known to have been performed in the month of Muḥarram for many centuries. The processions of flagellants, however, were initiated — most probably not earlier than the last decade of the 19th century — by Iranian immigrants to Nabaṭīya.<sup>26)</sup> They were opposed by a native

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<sup>22)</sup> See, for instance, T 18 and (concerning the *ta'ziya* performed in modern times by members of the small Iranian Shi'ite community in Cairo) Sayyid Muḥsin's remarks in a book recording his travels: *Rihlāt al-Sayyid Muḥsin al-Amīn* (Beirut s.d. [1974?]), 61f.

<sup>23)</sup> For information about Sayyid Abū l-Ḥasan see MMI vol. 1, 60f., and AS vol. 53 (1962), 47—59; see also MK vol. 1, 137—40 and TAS I/1, 41f. — The religious office of the *marja' al-taqlid* is described by A. K. S. Lambton: *A Reconsideration of the Marja' al-Taqlid and the Religious Institution*, in: *Studia Islamica* 20/1963/115—35.

<sup>24)</sup> For biographical data see AS vol. 48 (1960), 149f., and MMI vol. 3, 253f. (identical with the one mentioned *ibid.*, 346).

<sup>25)</sup> Sayyid Abū l-Ḥasan's statement against the flagellations is said to have been issued in a Persian *risāla* (HA vol. 3, 229), by which is meant, I suppose, a collection of his decisions called *Anīs al-muqallidīn*, published in Najaf in 1345 H/1926—27 (DTS vol. 2, 466 no. 1812). In the same year, al-Qazwīnī of Basra had published in Baghdad his *Kashf al-ḥaqq li-ghaṣalat al-khalq*, a work containing critical remarks about the flagellations (DTS vol. 18, 32 no. 539). A short time later, he repeated his criticism in a book directed against a Sunnite Arab nationalist, who, in a book on the merits of the Umayyad Caliphate, had attacked the Shi'ite view of history (see note 42 below). Only this second work of al-Qazwīnī's is available to me: *Dawlat al-shajara al-mal'ūna al-shāmīya au daur zulm banī Umayya 'alā l-'alawīya*, Baghdad 1346 H (Maṭb. Dār al-Salām, 164 pp.).

<sup>26)</sup> The following passage of the present article is mainly based on Sayyid Muḥsin's account in T, 30f., and also — with some additional information — in his *Khīṭaṭ Jabal 'Āmil*, ed. Ḥasan al-Amīn (Beirut 1961), 119. To my knowledge, Sayyid Muḥsin's assertion that the flagellations were a relatively late

Shi'ite scholar, Shaikh Ḥasan al-Ḥubūshī, known as al-Makkī (d. 1907 or 1908),<sup>27)</sup> who called on the Ottoman *qā'im-maqām* of Sidon for help in that matter. The Ottoman *wālī* of Beirut, however, after intervention from quarters not specified in the sources available to me,<sup>28)</sup> instructed the *qā'im-maqām* not to interfere with the Iranians' religious ceremonies. Very soon non-Iranians joined them, and with the support of local notables the Muḥarram ceremonies of Nabaṭīya with its procession of flagellants and its passion-play developed into a popular *mausim* attracting both Shi'ite and non-Shi'ite spectators from the neighbouring villages and elsewhere. The „Iranian“ form of *ta'ziya* even spread to other places in the Jabal 'Āmil, especially the small town of J(i)bā'.<sup>29)</sup>

IV. — As far as Iraq and other countries with Shi'ite communities are concerned, Sayyid Muḥsin does not say anything about the first appearance of the flagellations. He only points out that at the time of the Buyids and other Shi'ite rulers in the medieval period the flagellations were unknown to the Shi'ite community, and therefore are not mentioned in the works of Shi'ite scholars of the time like Shaikh al-Mufīd, al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā and al-Sharīf al-Raḍī.<sup>30)</sup> Sayyid Muḥsin's fellow-combattant Muḥammad Maḥdī al-Qazwīnī, however, in a work finished in the month of Ramaḍān 1345 H (March 1927), claims that the use of iron, i.e. of chains and swords for flagellation,

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introduction into the Muḥarram ceremonies of the Jabal 'Āmil has never been challenged by any other writer. — Maatouk (see note 10a above), basing his account on oral information, confirms the leading role of Iranian immigrants in the introduction of the *public ta'ziya* in the Jabal 'Āmil (pp. 42—48). According to him, the introduction of public performances took place only from 1918 onwards.

<sup>27)</sup> About this person see AS vol. 24 (1961), 215—22, and HFA, 36f.

<sup>28)</sup> According to a Lebanese Shi'ite author, there was an Iranian consul residing at Sidon at the end of the 19th century (Waddah Chrara: *Transformations d'une manifestation religieuse dans un village du Liban-Sud (Ashura)*, Beirut 1968, p. 40 note 9).

<sup>29)</sup> This place is explicitly mentioned in a short notice about the publication of T in *Al-'Irfān* 17/1929/101. — For the appearance, from the late thirties onwards, of public Muḥarram processions even in a suburb of Beirut, and for the social significance of this development see Fuad I. Khuri in R. Antoun and I. Harik (eds.): *Rural Politics and Social Change in the Middle East* (Bloomington and London 1972), 205—07.

<sup>30)</sup> T, 31. — Other modern Shi'ite writers, however, in defence of the flagellations maintain that these practices have already been performed in the presence of early authorities like Shaikh al-Mufīd, al-Kulīnī, al-Ṣadūq, al-Sayyid al-Murtaḍā (etc.), and were not forbidden by them; see, for instance, al-Kāshī (note 18 above), 128.

was initiated “about a century ago” by people not well versed in the rules of the *shari‘a*.<sup>31</sup>) If it is assumed that al-Qazwini’s statement is meant to describe the history of the flagellations in Iraq only, this would agree with information found in other sources regarding Shaikh Bāqir b. al-Shaikh Asadullāh al-Dizfūlī (d. 1838 or ’39), who is mentioned as the first Shi‘ite scholar to introduce chest-beating ceremonies at the shrine of Kāzimiya.<sup>32</sup>) It is possible, however, that chest-beating and other forms of flagellation were known in Iraq much earlier, but performed only in those *majlis-ta‘ziyas* which, out of fear of Ottoman persecution, were held secretly in the cellars of private houses.<sup>33</sup>)

V. — Several details found in the various sources about the introduction of the flagellations in Iraq and South Lebanon seem to support the widely accepted view that the extreme forms of *ta‘ziya*, including the flagellations, first appeared in Iran and were brought from there to the Shi‘ites of the neighbouring countries. In the present article, however, we are not dealing with that problem. Rather, I should like to return to the Shi‘ite *fitna* of the late twenties of our century and the arguments exchanged by the ‘*ulamā*’ quarreling over certain Muḥarram practices.

VI. — It is to be expected that both defenders and critics of the flagellations would try to support their point of view by referring to earlier Shi‘ite authorities. Sayyid Muḥsin, however, regarding the flagellations etc. as quite recent innovations, seems not to have bothered very much to find proofs or precedents for his view earlier than Shaikh al-Makki’s action (see above). On the other hand, it is striking that his opponent, Shaikh ‘Abd al-Ḥusain Ṣādiq, mentions as proofs for his stand only a number of rather late — though quite important — Shi‘ite authorities.<sup>34</sup>) With regard to the first two names

<sup>31</sup>) *Dawlat al-shajara al-mal‘ūna* (see note 25 above), 136f.

<sup>32</sup>) TAS II/1, 170 no. 359, on the authority of Sayyid Ḥasan al-Ṣadr; see also ‘Alī al-Wardī: *Lamahāt ijtimā‘iya min ta’rikh al-‘Irāq al-ḥadīth*, vol. 2 (Baghdad 1971), 111.

<sup>33</sup>) Wardī, *ibid.*, 109—11.

<sup>34</sup>) The relevant passage is quoted by Sayyid Muḥsin in T, 31. — Besides Shaikh Ja‘far, Mirzā al-Qummī and Mirzā Ḥusain al-Nā‘inī (for the three of whom see next footnotes), the following authorities are mentioned by Shaikh Ṣādiq: a) Murtaḍā al-Anṣārī (d. 1864) in *Surūr al-‘ubbād* (a collection of his *fatwās*, see DTS vol. 12, 175 no. 1167); about al-Anṣārī see AS vol. 48 (1960), 43—46. — b) Shaikh Zain al-‘Ābidīn al-Ḥā‘irī (d. 1890/91) in *Dhakhīrat al-mu‘ād* (DTS vol. 10, 20 no. 101); about the author see MMI vol. 2., 14, and TAS I/2, 805f. no. 1311. — c) Shaikh Khiḍr Shallāl (d. 1839) in *Abwāb al-jinān* (DTS vol. 1, 74f. no. 367); about the author see AS vol. 29, 253—61 and C. Brockelmann, GAL SII, 794.

mentioned by Shaikh Ṣādiq, namely Shaikh Ja'far known as Kāshif al-Ghiṭā' (d. 1812)<sup>35</sup> and Mirzā al-Qummī (d. 1815 or '16),<sup>36</sup> Sayyid Muḥsin replies that their statements did not refer to the practices he was dealing with. He keeps silent, however, with regard to the other authorities mentioned by his opponent. Among them, we find one of Sayyid Muḥsin's contemporaries, a scholar of the highest repute: Mirzā Ḥusain al-Nā'inī in Najaf,<sup>37</sup> one of the most prominent supporters of the Persian constitutional movement<sup>38</sup> and (besides Sayyid Abū l-Ḥasan al-Iṣfahānī) until his death in 1936 the *marja' al-taqlid* of the Shi'ite community. His statement in favour of the flagellations was directed at the Shi'ites of Basra, who had been drawn into a quarrel over that issue as a result of the different attitude towards those practices taken by the two leading Shi'ite 'ulamā' there, the above-mentioned Shaikh Muḥammad Mahdī al-Qazwīni and Shaikh 'Abd al-Mahdī al-Muẓaffar (d. 1944).<sup>39</sup> Until today, this *fatwā* by a *marja' al-taqlid* (and — even more significantly — a “progressive” one) is considered by the defenders of the flagellations as one of the most important proofs for the religious correctness of their position.<sup>40</sup>

VII. — Ja'far al-Khalīlī describes<sup>41</sup> some of the methods employed by the defenders of the flagellations in Najaf — many of them being students and scholars from the Jabal 'Āmil — to silence Sayyid Muḥsin's supporters: in order to incite the uneducated masses against them, they started calling Sayyid Muḥsin's partisans “Umayyads”

<sup>35</sup> See *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., vol. 4, 703; AS vol. 15 (1962), 306—30; TAS II/1, 248—52. (Shaikh Ṣādiq refers to Shaikh Ja'far's famous *Kashf al-Ghiṭā'*).

<sup>36</sup> Shaikh Ṣādiq refers to his *Jāmi' al-shatāt*, about which see DTS vol. 5, 59f. no. 221, where also some biographical data are given.

<sup>37</sup> Shaikh Ṣādiq refers to his *fatwā* to the people of Basra (see below note 40 and page 33). For biographical information about al-Nā'inī see TAS I/2, 593—96 and AS vol. 26 (not available to me).

<sup>38</sup> About this aspect of his activity see Abdul-Hadi Hairi: *Shi'ism and Constitutionalism in Iran. A Study of the Role Played by the Persian Residents of Iraq in Iranian Politics* (Leiden 1977), 101ff., and also Fereshte M. Nouraiie: *The Constitutional Ideas of a Shi'ite Muḥtahid: Muḥammad Husayn Na'inī*, in: *Iranian Studies* (Boston/ Mass.), 8/1975/234—47.

<sup>39</sup> About al-Muẓaffar see above page 24, title e).

<sup>40</sup> The text of this *fatwā* is reprinted, e.g., in a book by Ibrāhīm al-Mūsawī al-Zanjānī: *'Aqā'id al-imāmīya al-ithnā 'ashariya*, 2nd edition (Beirut 1973), 289—91.

<sup>41</sup> Especially in HA vol. 1, 97ff. (memorial article about Abū l-Ḥasan al-Iṣfahānī), and vol. 2, 9ff. (about Shaikh Muḥammad Ridā al-Muẓaffar, one of the defenders of the flagellations).

(*umawīyūn*) — a most abusive term indeed if used in a Shi'ite milieu, and especially in a place like Najaf. For themselves, they reserved the name “‘Alids” (*‘alawīyūn*). By labelling their opponents as “Umayyads”, the defenders of the flagellations succeeded in convincing a large part of the Shi'ite population of Iraq that Sayyid Muḥsin's criticism of certain Muḥarram practices was equal to — or implied — the rehabilitation of the Umayyads, i.e. the dynasty responsible for the death of Imam Ḥusain, and synonymous in Shi'ite thought with total abjectness.<sup>42)</sup> In order to degrade Sayyid Muḥsin al-Amīn's name, his opponents in Najaf induced the men selling water to the mourners in the Muḥarram processions to change their traditional call. Instead of shouting “*La'ana llāh Ḥarmala . . mā'*!” — “God curse Ḥarmala [i.e. the Umayyad soldier who killed Ḥusain's newly-born son with an arrow] . . water!”, they now shouted “*La'ana llāh al-Amīn*”!<sup>43)</sup> The opponents also engaged a popular preacher, famous for his rhetorical mastery, to arouse the people against Sayyid Muḥsin and his supporters in Najaf.<sup>44)</sup> As a result of all that, the number of flagellants appearing in the Muḥarram processions of the year 1929 was larger than ever before, while the “Umayyads”, frightened by threats of murder, were forced to hide or even leave the town for some time.<sup>45)</sup>

In 1933, however, when Sayyid Muḥsin on a journey to the Shi'ite shrines of Iraq and Iran paid a visit to Najaf, he was received there with great honours even by some of those who had been active against him and his supporters during the *fitna*.<sup>46)</sup> In his own record of this

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<sup>42)</sup> In the beginning of 1927, a pro-Umayyad book published by a Sunnite teacher of Lebanese origin, Anīs Zakariyā al-Nuṣūlī, had caused an internal crisis in Iraq. For an analysis of this crisis see my book: *Arabische Nation und islamische Geschichte* (Beirut and Wiesbaden 1977, = Reihe BTS no. 20), 132—45. The book by al-Qazwīnī mentioned above (footnote 25) was directed against al-Nuṣūlī's work.

<sup>43)</sup> HA vol. 1, 209.

<sup>44)</sup> He is Sayyid Ṣālīḥ al-Ḥillī (d. 1940 or '41), about whom see HA vol. 1, 108ff. and *passim*, and also TAS I/2, 883—85 no. 1421. An example of his insulting verses against Sayyid Muḥsin is quoted in HA vol. 1, 208. (For a full understanding of this verse it is necessary to know that from the root j-l-q used there (meaning, *inter alia*, “to exhibit” [the pudenda]), a word denoting “emaciated old woman, prostitute” is derived, while on the other hand Jilliq/Jillaq means Damascus (see Yāqūt, *Mu'jam al-buldān*, s.v.), the town where Sayyid Muḥsin was living at the time of the Shi'ite *fitna*). The verse referred to may, however, have been composed by one of Sayyid Muḥsin's enemies from the Jabal 'Āmil and erroneously ascribed to al-Ḥillī only later (HA vol. 1, 208).

<sup>45)</sup> HA vol. 1, 212.

<sup>46)</sup> *Ibid.*, 215—17.

journey Sayyid Muḥsin keeps silent over this aspect of his visit to Najaf.<sup>47)</sup>

VIII. — A study of the history of the Shi'ite *fitna* reveals that quite a number of the most prominent Shi'ite 'ulamā' in Iraq and Lebanon — among them, for instance, Muḥammad Ḥusain Āl Kāshif al-Ghiṭā' (d. 1954) in Najaf<sup>48)</sup> and 'Abd al-Ḥusain Sharaf al-Dīn (d. 1957) at Tyre — spoke out in favour of the flagellations.<sup>49)</sup> On the other hand, the number of those calling publicly for an abolition of these and some related practices remained very small at the time. A great part of the Shi'ite 'ulamā' kept silent during the *fitna*. Even public statements in favour of the flagellations, however, do not necessarily mean that all the 'ulamā' concerned viewed every detail of the Muḥarram processions with full approval.<sup>50)</sup> Obviously, Sayyid Muḥsin was quite aware of the dilemma of those Shi'ite 'ulamā' who, out of fear of losing control over the uneducated masses of their community, endorsed the flagellations as a sign of piety, while at the same time refraining from joining these processions: if, Sayyid Muḥsin says, they really believed that this practice is recommendable (*mustaḥabb*), why is it then that none of the 'ulamā' was ever seen cutting his head or beating his chest at the Muḥarram processions?<sup>51)</sup>

IX. — A more general criticism of the Shi'ite 'ulamā's' hesitation to condemn popular *bida'* had been voiced in Iraq already 18 years

<sup>47)</sup> See his *Riḥlāt* (note 22 above), 79ff., especially where he describes his conversations with al-Iṣfahānī and al-Nā'inī (92—94).

<sup>48)</sup> About this person (a descendant of the scholar mentioned above p. 29) see, e.g., MDA II/1, 36—37; MMI vol. 3, 144—47; TAS I/2, 612—19.

<sup>49)</sup> Bio-bibliographical data about Sharaf al-Dīn are to be found in MDA vol. III/1, 626—29; MMI vol. 2, 228—29; TAS I/3, 1080—88. His role in the modern Shi'a is praised in a book by 'Abbās 'Alī: *al-imām Sharaf al-Dīn, ḥuzmat daw'* 'alā ṭarīq al-fikr al-imāmī, Najaf 1968. For his position in the *fitna* see HA vol. 1, 127 and 207 and vol. 3, 229, and also AS vol. 40 (1957), 120.

<sup>50)</sup> Ja'far al-Khalīlī, in a very interesting article about Muḥammad Ḥusain Āl Kāshif al-Ghiṭā' (HA vol. 1, 225—52), says (p. 232) that Kāshif al-Ghiṭā' did not support Sayyid Abū l-Ḥasan on the issue of the flagellations in spite of the fact that he agreed in principle with the call for the abolition of those practices. Al-Khalīlī considers personal rivalry with Sayyid Abū l-Ḥasan over religious leadership as the sole reason for this attitude. See also *ibid.*, 207, where al-Khalīlī remarks that Kāshif al-Ghiṭā' even issued a *fatwā* declaring the flagellations as lawful. The existence of this *fatwā* is corroborated by other authors, among them 'Abdallāh al-Qaṣīmī in his anti-Shi'ite book *al-ṣirā' baina l-Islām wa-l-wathanīya* (Cairo 1938, vol. 2), 44, and the Shi'ite author al-Kāshī (see above, note 18), *Ma'sāt al-Ḥusain*, 128.

<sup>51)</sup> T, 29.

earlier by Sayyid Hibat al-Dīn al-Ḥusainī al-Shahrastānī<sup>52</sup>) of Najaf (d. 1967) in his reformist journal *Al-‘Ilm*, which was published in Baghdad in the years 1911—12.<sup>53</sup>) In fact we find al-Shahrastānī, who had become Iraqi minister of Education in 1920—21, among those mentioned by al-Khalīlī as supporters of Sayyid Muḥsin’s partisans in Iraq.<sup>54</sup>)

X. — Concerning these supporters — among them the influential scholar and politician ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Jazā‘irī (d. 1962)<sup>55</sup>) — much more could be said with regard to their status, family background, and possible motives behind their stand in the controversy. There is, for instance, the surprising fact mentioned by al-Khalīlī that two of the few prominent ‘*ulamā*’ defending Sayyid Muḥsin’s *tanziḥ* in Najaf are otherwise known for their aloofness from any modernist tendency.<sup>56</sup>)

A full analysis of this and other points to be found in the sources is not possible within the scope of the present article. Therefore, I shall confine myself to say a few words about the obvious role of family relations and other personal bonds for the formation of the front-lines in the Shi‘ite *fitna*. To summarize a rather complicated story, it could be said that the campaign against Sayyid Muḥsin was, at least in the beginning, almost a family affair: the Āl Sharaf al-Dīn, a famous family of Shi‘ite divines from the Jabal ‘Āmil with branches in Iraq and Iran, organized the propaganda against Sayyid Muḥsin in Syria/Lebanon and Iraq. This they did in alliance with other influential families of ‘*ulamā*’ linked to the Āl Sharaf al-Dīn by intermarriage,<sup>57</sup>)

<sup>52</sup>) About al-Shahrastānī see TAS I/4, 1413—18 and MMI vol. 3, 438—41.

<sup>53</sup>) Article ‘*Ulamā’ unā wa-l-tajāhur bi-l-ḥaqq*, in: *Al-‘Ilm*, II/1911.

<sup>54</sup>) HA vol. 1, 210; see also al-Khalīlī’s very favourable portrait of his personality *ibid.*, vol. 2, 193—212.

<sup>55</sup>) HA vol. 1, 209; about al-Jazā‘irī see RF, 100 no. 359; TAS I/3, 1173—80, and (concerning his political role around 1920) ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Ḥasanī: *al-thawra al-‘irāqīya al-kubrā*, 3rd enlarged edition Sidon 1972, *passim* (foto on page 210).

<sup>56</sup>) They are Shaikh ‘Alī al-Qummī (d. 1952) and Shaikh Ja‘far al-Budairī (d. 1950), see HA vol. 1, 210. — For biographical data about al-Qummī see RF, 358 no. 1485 and TAS I/4, 1323—28; about al-Budairī RF, 62 no. 189 and TAS I/1, 278f.

<sup>57</sup>) Especially close are the family ties between the Āl Sharaf al-Dīn and the equally famous Āl Ṣadr — see, e.g., the biographical sketch of the above-mentioned ‘Abd al-Ḥusain Sharaf al-Dīn (by Muḥammad Ṣādiq al-Ṣadr) in a foreword to ‘Abd al-Ḥusain’s book *al-naṣṣ wa-l-ijtihād* (4th edition, Beirut 1966), 7. — Sayyid Mūsā al-Ṣadr, who as the head of the Supreme Shi‘ite Council of Lebanon has played an important role in the recent events there, is

for instance the Āl Yāsīn of Kāzimiya.<sup>58)</sup> Very soon the Āl Muẓaffar of Najaf, a family also known for religious learning, readily joined the campaign against Sayyid Muḥsin. Thereby they supported one of their descendents, the above-mentioned Shaikh 'Abd al-Mahdī, in his rivalry with al-Qazwīnī for the religious leadership of the Shi'ites of Basra.<sup>59)</sup> On the other hand, family relations may have played a certain role also in the formation of Sayyid Muḥsin's supporters.<sup>59a)</sup>

XI. — In view of all that it may even be asked whether the outbreak of the *fitna* cannot be traced, to a large extent at least, to the rivalry in Syria/Lebanon between the 'Āmilīs, i.e. families from the Jabal 'Āmil traditionally famous for religious learning throughout the Shi'ite world.<sup>60)</sup> This rivalry was nourished by the competition between them for important posts. When Sayyid Muḥsin, himself coming from one of the less influential 'Āmilī families of 'ulamā', succeeded in becoming the Shi'ite *mujtahid* of Damascus, this may have provoked the jealousy of 'Āmilī families well entrenched in the higher echelons of the religious establishment. Sayyid Muḥsin's criticism of certain Muḥarram practices afforded them — irrespective of their real opinion with regard to that matter — an opportunity to challenge Sayyid Muḥsin's position by inciting a large part of the uneducated Shi'ite population against him.

XII. — There is, however, another element which had its effects on the formation of the parties in the Shi'ite *fitna*: the principle of *taqlīd*, i.e. the religious duty of every ordinary Shi'ite (i.e. every *muqallid*) to adhere to the teachings of a *mujtahid*. In Najaf, the *muqallids* of the above-mentioned *marja' al-taqlīd* Sayyid Abū I-Ḥasan al-

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a descendant of the two families, see W. Ende: *Imām Mūsā aṣ-Ṣadr*, in: *Orient* (Hamburg/Opladen), 14/1973/103. A history of the two families with the title *Buḡhyat al-rāḡhibīn fī aḡwāl Āl Sharaf al-Dīn*, written by 'Abd al-Ḥusain Sharaf al-Dīn (DTS vol. 3, 132 no. 446), seems not to have been printed so far (*al-naṣṣ wa-l-ijtihād*, 4th edition, p. 20, title no. 12).

<sup>58)</sup> About the family relations between some of the authors mentioned so far in the present article (see especially list on page 23 f.) see AS vol. 40 (1957), 120.

<sup>59)</sup> See HA vol. 2, 20f.

<sup>59a)</sup> HA vol. 3, 231 line 4 from above.

<sup>60)</sup> A famous collection of biographies of 'Āmilī scholars up to the 17th century is the *Amal al-āmil* by Muḥammad al-Ḥurr al-'Āmilī (d. 1692), see DTS vol. 2, 350 no. 1400 and *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edition, vol. 3, 588 f. — For a general treatment of the importance of the 'Āmilīs in Shi'ite theology and literature see HFA, esp. 21—28 and 67—135, and (with regard to Safavid Iran) E. Glassen: *Schāh Ismā'īl und die Theologen seiner Zeit*, in: *Der Islam* 48/1972/254—68, esp. 263—65.



Işfahānī formed, to a certain extent, a line of defence against the attacking “Alids”. More important, however, for the relative safety of Sayyid Abū l-Ḥasan and the other known critics of the flagellations may have been another factor: ‘Aṭīya Abū Kalal, the leader of a *futuwwa*-like armed brotherhood dominating certain quarters of Najaf, called the *zukunft* (or *zuqurt*), was a *muqallid* of Sayyid Abū l-Ḥasan al-Işfahānī.<sup>61)</sup>

XIII. — A point only touched upon in the present article is the influence of political factors — like the Ottoman administration’s attitude towards the Shi‘ite community — on the development of the *ta‘ziya* in Iraq and Syria/Lebanon. As far as the Shi‘ite *fitna* in the late twenties is concerned, any analysis of its development has to take into account, besides other factors, the repercussions in the Shi‘ite milieu of the contemporary Wahhabite takeover in the Hejaz. Feeling alarmed by anti-Shi‘ite measures taken by the Wahhabites there as well as by a positive response to those measures in certain Sunnite quarters in Iraq etc.,<sup>62)</sup> the Shi‘ite religious establishment reacted with unusual severity to calls for reform coming from their own ranks, but sounding somewhat similar to Sunnite criticism of Shi‘ite practices.<sup>63)</sup> As a result of measures taken by the Iranian and other governments in the late twenties against the public *ta‘ziya*,<sup>64)</sup> there was, moreover,

<sup>61)</sup> HA vol. 1, 213; about the two warring factions of the population of Najaf and the role of Abū Kalal see AS vol. 15 (1962), 315—20 and vol. 40 (1957), 58—60, RF, 7—10, and also J. Berque (see note 6 above), esp. 332f. and 338.

<sup>62)</sup> Both a description and defence of those measures was published by Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, the editor of *Al-Manār* in Cairo, in his booklet *al-wahhābiyyūn wa-l-Ḥijāz*, Cairo 1344 H (1925—26). The Shi‘ite view of the same events and of the Wahhābiya in general is given, e.g., in Sayyid Muḥsin’s reply to Rashīd Riḍā’s booklet: *Kashf al-irtiyāb fī atbā‘ Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb*, Damascus 1928, 3rd edition Tehran s.d. (ca. 1973). For a sharp condemnation of Shi‘ite Muḥarrām practices by a (then) Wahhabite see al-Qaṣīmī (note 50 above), vol. 2, 44—55.

<sup>63)</sup> Sayyid ‘Abd al-Ḥusain Ṣādiq in his *Simā’ al-ṣulahā’* (see note 11 above) had in fact tried to place Sayyid Muḥsin’s criticism of certain Muḥarrām practices on a level with the Wahhabite’s destruction of tombs, including those of members of the *āl al-bait*, at the cemetery of Baqī’ al-Gharqad in Medina (T, 9).

<sup>64)</sup> Müller (note 3 above), 55, 71 and 111 and the sources mentioned there; for Hyderabad (Deccan) see J. N. Hollister: *The Shi‘a of India* (London 1953), 172. According to D. T. Lindell: *Muharrām in Hyderabad* (in: *Al-Basheer*, Hyderabad, III/1, 1974, 14—29), however, flagellations have been performed there in recent years (pp. 16, 22, 24). — Concerning the prohibition (in 1929) of flagellations in the Shi‘ite-Muslim territories of the Soviet Union see L. I. Klimovich: *Islam. Ocherki* (Moscow 1962), 242f.

a general uneasiness or irritation among the Shi'ites of Iraq with regard to any public discussion of that question, especially since many of their leading scholars were of Iranian origin (e.g. al-Nā'inī), but opposed to Reza Shah's policy for one reason or another.<sup>65</sup>) This tense atmosphere may have been decisive for the fact that Sayyid Muḥsin's appeal for reform received only small support.

XIV. — There are, finally, economic interests mentioned by Shi'ite critics as motives behind the 'ulamā's hesitation to speak out publicly against the flagellations and other *bida'* of Muḥarram. Sayyid Muḥsin, for instance, accuses certain people of seeking wordly profit from their aid in spreading these *bida'* in the Jabal 'Āmil.<sup>66</sup>) His countryman Muḥammad Jawād Mughniya, the Shi'ite Iraqi sociologist 'Alī al-Wardī and his former student Ibrāhīm al-Ḥaidarī have spoken of a collusion between certain 'ulamā' and businessmen drawing large profits from catering for the masses of mourners and spectators visiting the Muḥarram festivities at Shi'ite shrines.<sup>67</sup>) There are also, of course, the inevitable accusations of imperialist designs behind all that.<sup>68</sup>)

In my opinion, it is obvious that certain local business quarters would be interested in the continuance of Muḥarram practices, which, by their spectacular character, will attract large crowds of visitors to the Shi'ite centres — especially under present day circumstances when, by modern ways and means of transportation, a pilgrimage to those centres has become easier than ever before even for Shi'ites living in distant areas. As there often exist family relationships between those business quarters and certain families of 'ulamā', some Shi'ite scholars may have personal reasons for keeping silent over the flagellations, or even endorsing them.

XV. — There seems to be, however, a more general motive behind many 'ulamā's stand towards the flagellations and other features of the *ta'ziya* — at least in those parts of the Shi'ite world where the outstanding spiritual and social authority of the *Sayyids* among the

<sup>65</sup>) For information about this problem see N. R. Keddie: *The Roots of the Ulama's Power in Modern Iran*, and H. Algar: *The Oppositional Role of the Ulama in Twentieth-Century Iran*, in: N.R. Keddie (ed.): *Scholars, Saints, and Sufis* (see note 7 above), 211—29 and 231—55 respectively.

<sup>66</sup>) *Khiṭaṭ Jabal 'Āmil* (see above note 26), 119, third line from below.

<sup>67</sup>) Mughniya: *al-shī'a fī l-mizān* (Beirut 1973), 14; Wardī: *Wu'āz al-salāṭīn*, Baghdad 1954; Haidari (see note 7 above), *Zur Soziologie*, esp. 180—82.

<sup>68</sup>) Muḥammad Jawād Mughniya: *al-Islām ma'a l-ḥayāt* (Beirut 1959), 58—60.

'ulamā' still exists: as they are regarded as the descendants of Ḥusain and the other martyred Imams, the annual mourning ceremonies of Muḥarram, by way of both symbolic or direct identification, are reinforcing their claim to the leadership of the community, or at least to a respected place in it.<sup>69</sup>) As this position is threatened by modern developments, many of them may consider it unwise to forbid Muḥarram practices which can be interpreted, and to a certain extent really are, an expression of deep allegiance of the uneducated masses to the Sayyids.

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<sup>69</sup>) Emrys Peters: *A Muslim Passion Play. Key to a Lebanese Village*, in: *The Atlantic Monthly* (Boston/Mass.), October 1956, 176—80. Peters does not give the name of the village where he gathered his information. From internal evidence it can be concluded that it was J(i)bā'.