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TA'ZIYEH RITUAL AND DRAMA IN IRAN

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Foreword

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It would be commonplace to say that tradition, both good and bad, is being swept away by the onslaught of technology and modernism. We need not concern ourselves here with the reasons except to inquire: is this because of a hatred for the impoverished conditions of yesteryear's living, or because of an eagerness to embrace new Western ways, or because of an inherent weakness of the traditions themselves—or possibly a combination of the three? What is definite is that the third world, with the exception of miraculous Japan (these monks that brew modern electronics) and to a certain extent India, is giving up its traditions.

I am certain that if students of anthropology had turned to Ta'ziyeh forty-eight years ago when it was banned by the Iranian Government for sociopolitical reasons, a major share of the Iranian National Theatre today would be plays (with or without religious subject-matter) directly derived from Ta'ziyeh: but much to our regret, this was not the case. Ta'ziyeh had almost been isolated in certain distant villages when individual Iranian scholars such as Bahram Baizai (1965), Mayel Baktash and myself (1971) began to turn their attention to it.

In the autumn of 1959 a Ta'ziyeh fragment was included in Parviz

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Literary and Musical Developments in the Ta'ziyeh

ANAYATULLAH SHAHIDI

The purpose of this essay is to provide a brief analysis of the literary developments which have occurred in the Ta'ziyeh over the past two centuries. Since my topic is closely related to the musical and theatrical aspects, I will touch briefly on them as well. With few exceptions, I have relied solely on personal observation and original Ta'ziyeh scripts rather than on the assumptions and opinions of other critics.¹ By employing a comparative and analytical approach, I hope to shed light on changes which have taken place in the Ta'ziyeh.

Contrary to what many critics both past and present believe, the Ta'ziyeh is not a simple or well-defined cultural phenomenon which surfaced at a specific date in history. Rather, it developed gradually over the course of centuries as a result of various social, religious, cultural, artistic and philosophical factors. It assumed its current form sometime during the latter part of the Safavid period.² Like the Shi'a religion, the Ta'ziyeh first took root among the common people, both in the villages and in the cities of Iran. Gradually it spread to higher levels of society and finally gained popularity with the elite. This development did not occur everywhere at the same time, and in the majority of villages and small towns in Iran today the

Ta'ziyeh has retained its religious format. But in Tehran and in some of the other large cities, it gradually shed its simple, semi-theatrical aspects and evolved from a primitive Passion play into serious drama. The literary and artistic changes in the Ta'ziyeh which came about as a result of social and historical developments reached their peak during and shortly after the reign of Naser al-Din Shah.

Even a festive and entertaining version called *Gusheh* developed which had little or no relation to the real Ta'ziyeh. Ta'ziyeh performers stuck "reams of glue" on the traditional Ta'ziyeh format. In the process of its evolution from a straightforward Passion play into a detailed and complex drama, it acquired considerable embellishment. The theatrical and dramatic aspects increased while the opera-like qualities decreased. These changes resulted in improvements in both quality and content. While historians and critics frequently refer to these changes, they have never been adequately studied. For example, Shadravan Abdullah Mustowfi³ claims that in the time of Naser al-Din Shah charitable contributions were made to promote the Ta'ziyeh. Mustowfi claims that Ta'ziyeh scripts were revised by people like Mirza Muhammad Taqi and Mu'in al-Buka, and that other writers such as Shahab Isfahani developed and arranged new scripts under the patronage of Mirza Taqi Khan Amir.⁴ Unfortunately, Mustowfi's comments are brief and non-specific.

Changes in the fundamental elements of the Ta'ziyeh (the music, the poetry and the theatrics) were not uniform. Whenever one element changed, it naturally affected the others. This interconnection has never been thoroughly analyzed. While separating the music from the literature is not the most profitable way to study the Ta'ziyeh, in the interests of simplicity I have done so here, analyzing first the changes in the music and in some of the theatrical aspects, and second, the changes in the text, but always recognizing the interrelationship between these basic components.

The dimensions of the Ta'ziyeh can be broken into three categories. The Ta'ziyeh story-lines are either historical (like the *Ta'ziyeh of Muslim and Ali*) or pure fable (like *Div-e b'aerelm*) or a combination of the two (like the majority of Ta'ziyeh). The instruments and props can also be divided into three categories. Some are real, such as swords and horses, while others are symbolic, such as wash tubs, nets, and black veils. There are also some that are purely decorative such as nuptial chambers and flags. The characters may also be divided into three groups: the heroes, the villains, and those in-between. I do not intend to address the issue of the reality of these three categories or their historical, philosophical, or sociological roots, but only to draw attention to two fundamental points: (1) In its evolutionary cycle, the Ta'ziyeh took on a greater sense of theatrical realism while straying from its religious and historical roots. (2) The entertaining and pleasing literary aspects of the Ta'ziyeh are a result of extraordinary figures of speech which satisfy both the needs and the expectations of the audience.

If this style of composition had disappeared, there would be no Ta'ziyeh today. Efforts have continued to perfect the style and to improve all elements. One should not look at only one aspect of the Ta'ziyeh and try to pass judgment on the whole.

THEATRICAL AND ARTISTIC CHANGES IN THE TA'ZIYEH

The Ta'ziyeh was originally a simple Passion play about the events which occurred at Kerbela and the other tragedies which befell the House of the Prophet. It was an exercise in mourning, a religious custom severely limited in scope. The Ta'ziyeh reciters were coffee-house storytellers limited to straight narration of long-winded, repetitious monologues. Their poetry was simple, loose, and full of colloquial expressions. It was generally written in light verse called *masnavi* (poetry consisting of distiches rhyming between themselves) and sometimes had no rhyme at all. To capture the attention of the spectators and to fire their emotions, the Ta'ziyeh narrator would often mix groans and sighs with vulgar, market-place vocabulary. Colloquial expressions such as "Woe is me," "I'm your servant," "Brotherless," etc., were commonplace. The music consisted of a single monotonous beat and was sung in the pitch normally used by mourners. All action centered around the protagonists. The Ta'ziyeh writers were so violently opposed to the Imam's enemies that they de-emphasized the roles of the antagonists. With this simple standard as their guide, subjectively they made every effort to avoid the catastrophic events. "Audience," "reality," and "scene" were not yet issues.

The antagonists were made to appear ridiculous by the frivolous and buffoon-like behavior of the actors playing the parts. For example, an actor playing Shemr might attempt to elicit tears from the audience not by word or gesture but by imitating extremely savage, cruel behavior (such as pretending to behead a corpse and then dragging it across the stage).

There was no room for creativity or initiative. As for musical instruments, only the drum and the trumpet were utilized. But in this evolutionary period, the Ta'ziyeh writers gradually grew more sophisticated and more discerning. They developed a greater awareness of the importance of theatrical and artistic detail even though they were unable or perhaps simply did not wish to observe the logical relationships between the various Ta'ziyeh tales—perhaps because of their own prejudices and the particular place they occupied in the society of the time. Nonetheless, their view of the Ta'ziyeh differed greatly from that of the earlier writers. For example, they increased the number of scenes involving the antagonists. But, while they recognized Shemr and Ibn Sa'd as military leaders, they invariably portrayed them eating, drinking and reveling in the midst of their strategy sessions! The Ta'ziyeh writers were, in effect, killing two birds with one stone. While placing greater emphasis on the dramatic and epic aspects of

the Ta'ziyeh, they were also hanging the sin of drinking wine during the mourning period for the Imam around the necks of Shemr and Ibn Sa'd! They realized that the more forcefully they portrayed the roles of the antagonists the more heroic the protagonists would appear. At the time of Naser al-Din Shah, the Ta'ziyeh writer was a strict Shi'ite, a true believer who hated Shemr with such passion that he would overemphasize Shemr's wickedness and lack of mercy. But, contrary to the earlier Ta'ziyeh writer, he did not, perhaps for historical reasons, consider Shemr to be an infidel or polytheist.

Whether intentional or not, phrases like *enshallah* (if God wills it) crept into the lines spoken by the actor playing Shemr. For example, in a free verse version attributed to the city of Kashan, Shemr, while mounting his horse to journey to Kerbela, says:

It is time I make haste, Enshallah,
Stirrup the foot of high purpose, Enshallah,
Visit in Damascus the Great Sultan of the Faithful,
Bearing wine, I am on my way, Enshallah.

But even though the titles of the antagonists were elevated to their actual historical positions, in practice, the actors performing these roles continued to belittle and ridicule the characters. The ability of the best Ta'ziyeh writers to elevate the position of the antagonists while at the same time maintaining a sense of derision toward them was a real artistic accomplishment of the period.⁵ Changes were also made in methods of enacting battle scenes. Some performers developed extraordinary dexterity in swordsmanship and various other combat techniques. Gradually, props and equipment also grew more elaborate. Items such as flagstuffs, butcher's hooks, and even a throne and a court for Yazid were introduced. In order to portray animals, lions for example, actual skins were utilized. In Takiyeh Dowlat (the Government arena-like theatre especially constructed in Tehran for Ta'ziyeh performances) in the Ta'ziyeh *The Lion of Fasseh*, instead of a man dressed up in a lion skin, an actual lion was used.⁶

The musical instruments also became more varied. Kettle-drums, cymbals, horns, clarinets, and various trumpets were introduced. Special songs were written which corresponded to the respective positions and titles of the protagonists. For example Hurr and the Abbass were given tunes with rising epic-like melodies. Ali Akbar and Qasem were given *chahar gah*, *seh gah* and *Isfahan* modes while the Imam was given dignified serious tunes which, while somber, communicated a sense of peace and hope (such as *nava* mode). During this period, even happy songs with up-beat tempos were written for the protagonists' feasting scenes and for the noncombatant roles of Europeans, Zoroastrians, Jews, etc. An interesting point in this regard is the unique quality of the music. For example, when Gabriel or

another angel sang, bells chimed in an attempt to recreate a proper sense of heavenly revelation. The actors playing these parts spoke clearly and rapidly and in time with the music. They became specialists at drawing out the last word of a sentence.⁷ Even the voices of the dead were created with a view toward the particular status of the corpse. For example, the dead man whom Imam Reza helps during his first night in the grave recites poetry with a tune similar to the song of angels (Nakir and Munker) and that of the Imam. But the other dead, if they had been relatively good people, were made to groan and wail. They were portrayed in a mixed mode, between that of the villains and the saints. An other unique feature of this period is the use of symmetrical dialogue. For example, in a dialogue between Imam Hussein and Ali Akbar, if the Imam recites in one key, Ali Akbar had to use the same one. The writers utilized similar but different pitches in order to introduce variety and beauty to the verse while at the same time maintaining the principle that each character should recite in a meter suitable to his station in life. They were thus able ever so slightly to vary the quality and mode of the music.

For example, at the beginning of the *Ta'ziyeh of Muslem* (Tehran version, Takiyeh Dowlat and other bits of copy), the Imam recites in *nava* and Muslem in *mahoor*. As we know, the musical figures used in *rak* and *eraq mahoor* are common or similar to those used in *nava*. Obviously this type of artistry is impossible without talented and creative performing artists who have complete mastery of their subjects. Two points should be mentioned in this regard:

(1) In the Ta'ziyeh, the term "combination" singing⁸ which is frequently heard should not be confused with "irregular" singing or "mixed" singing commonly found in early Ta'ziyeh. Nor should it be mistaken for the same expression frequently used by musicians performing traditional Iranian music. According to one musical expert, "combination" singing may be defined as follows: "While singing in one key a very quick hint of another key is made. This hint must be made quickly, so delicately and so gently that the ear of the listener is not even slightly jarred and the listener is barely aware that a change in key has even occurred."⁹

(2) Except in a few cases, a Ta'ziyeh performer did not recite to a scale or to a connected musical score. Rather, the actors used whatever notes and melodies they needed for a particular scene.

Master Ta'ziyeh performers occasionally changed mode and tone as the action demanded. They even introduced unique rhymes and rhythms to the traditional dirges. The music, the voice, the face, the physique, and especially the particular role assigned to the performer were of prime importance to the spectators. Some veteran actors developed their own personal styles. These performers made unique contributions to the development of Ta'ziyeh music. For example, some invented special methods of poetry recital. They developed excellent timing, an ability to lay stress on

certain words and phrases, and an ability to raise or lower their voices along with many other theatrical gimmicks.¹⁰ Not every Ta'ziyeh performer with a good voice could master the art well enough to be successful.¹¹ Generally speaking, Ta'ziyeh poetry and its poetic format was selected with a view toward its compatibility with the music or particular theatrical setting. The task of the talented Ta'ziyeh writers (unfortunately not all were talented) was not simply to write poetry or poetic phrases but to concentrate on the dramatic and musical aspects as well. Thus, an analysis of the relationships between the poetry, the music, and the histrionics is essential.

LITERARY CHANGES IN THE TA'ZIYEH

Because of its simple and commonplace nature, the Ta'ziyeh from the standpoint of literature never attracted the attention of men of letters. Those critics who have come to appreciate the Ta'ziyeh as an art form consider its value to lie in its theatrical and cultural aspects. The poetry is viewed as slack, commonplace, and artless—doggerel which some feel has not progressed over the entire course of its history.¹² Critics have not even found fit to praise its simple language.

The descriptive terms "simple" and "popular" are, like everything else, only relative: why then, should we compare Ta'ziyeh poetry with other versified pieces? With which, from what standpoints, and by whose standards? ¹³ For example, during the reign of Naser al-Din Shah many varieties of mourning poetry were composed. Some were rather lengthy and eloquent, others were simple and geared to the masses. *Farhan Khuda Parasti* by Mirza Muharram might be considered one of the former variety and *Tuhfatulzakareen* by Bidel Mazandarani one of the latter. If we compare the poetry of these two works with Ta'ziyeh poetry, we discover just how rich the latter actually is; and, from the standpoint of literature, we realize that not every vacuous and tasteless poem can be considered popular literature and not every grandiloquent verse a literary work. Those who think this way undoubtedly are looking at the issue from a fixed, general viewpoint without taking into consideration the evolutionary changes in the Ta'ziyeh over the course of nearly two centuries. Generally speaking, from the standpoint of poetic beauty, Ta'ziyeh poetry is loose and written in the vernacular. It is simple but beautiful, flowing, eloquent, and charming.

The Ta'ziyeh as indigenous popular theatre naturally utilizes the ordinary speech of the market place and the street—and the everyday conversational language of common people is not uniform. But ugly, indecent and vulgar slang must not be substituted for simple speech. The contribution which the artistic and creative Ta'ziyeh writer made (not all of them, unfortunately) was to mix the plain language of the people with eloquent, literary expressions and subtle theatrical techniques. They created

valuable pieces of literature which should not be simply passed over. Ta'ziyeh scripts have never been carefully analyzed from a textual standpoint. The changes which took place were not simply stylistic; rather, they constituted an all-encompassing evolutionary process which affected all aspects of the Ta'ziyeh.

As has already been pointed out, early Ta'ziyeh poetry was generally loose, simple, and often unversified.¹⁴ Early Ta'ziyeh writers, because of their literary and intellectual limitations, resorted to market-place slang to express their emotions. Examples of this may be found in an old manuscript of the *Martyrdom of Abbas*. The dispute between Shemr and Ibn Sa'd appears more like an argument between two fools rather than a dispute between military commanders.¹⁵

You dog, fear not Abbas the General,
There stands a man, Abbas, the brave,
If I should meet the son of Sa'd tonight
I'll tell him, "Wait, you dog, 'till light."¹⁶

This was the quality of the poetry. Now, if we compare this script with later ones, we shall see a tremendous difference.

Let us turn to another example from the same scene. Shemr enters the stage from behind the backdrop. He is returning from Kufa. He says:

From Kufa I come with legions numerous,
To join Ibn Sa'd, the Commander luminous.
This perfumed land. Ah, 'tis a sight to embrace
A barren desert turned into a market place
As if the antelope's musk spilled onto this plain
Or King Solomon laid down goods from his train.

And in another text:

The King of Damascus and the King of Zanzibar. [blasphemy]
Raising high their standard, throw cruelty into heart of
the cruel legions.
While the moon's radiance shines on the firmament's
portico. . . .

Also in a similar fashion note Shemr's debate with Ibn Sa'd:

What ails thee, black-hearted friend of mine.
Why such haste to murder the House of the Ali.
Lay back and sip your wine.

Shemr: Come, cup bearer, fill my cup
By sipping it then my stature grows. . . .¹⁷

Early Ta'ziyeh poetry was generally written in a light verse style called *masnavi*. One can say that the use of the *masnavi* style is one of the distinctive characteristics of early scripts. The *chakamah* (elegy), the *mosammat* (multiple poem) and the *tarjih* (strophied poem) are among the various types of quatrains which inventive modern Ta'ziyeh writers contributed to the poetic arts. The addition of a *radif* format was another major contribution. Examples of this may be seen below in three different texts from the *Ta'ziyeh of the Elder Fatemeh*. Fatemeh is speaking and the texts read as follows:

Old Text:

O Moslems, may hope spring from your loneliness.
I am alone and my friends mourn their loneliness.
Where is a comrade to inquire after me,
O woe is me, woe betide me. . . .¹⁸

A Later Text:

Lord, with father's departure my courage has fled,
Both quiet days and sleepless nights I dread.
Happy days, there are no more for me,
Since father has gone away from me.¹⁹

A Modern Takiyeh Dowlat Text:

I am not well, a stranger in my homeland, O father, Other
than Jeddeh, I have no nurse, O father,
When you went to Kerbela, you failed to remember
That you left behind a sick daughter, O father.

Obviously, the use of *radif* makes the task of the poet more difficult and proper word selection all the more onerous. But there are several benefits. First of all, the poetry reads more easily and sounds better. Secondly, *radif* greatly affects the music because, in recital, the last sounds can be drawn out and made more musical. Thirdly, it adds freshness and variety because the limitations of the format force the poet to invent new rhetorical phrases to fit the meter. With free verse the average poet tends simply to regurgitate the thoughts and ideas of his predecessors. And finally, the use of *radif* increases the number of metaphors and allusions.²⁰

In early Ta'ziyeh, dialogue, whether in the form of question and

answer or narrative, was generally arranged in a multi-couplet framework. The number of distiches in each section sometimes ran as high as twenty to twenty seven. But, in recent years, conversation between two characters (question and answer) generally has taken the form of either two couplets or one couplet and a hemistich. The sections were thus reduced and allocated to a special form of chanting, an oratorical form, or to straight descriptive narrative. This change greatly affected the movement and theatrics of the Ta'ziyeh.

Repetitive phrases in the early Ta'ziyeh were frequent. They assumed several forms:

1. *The repetition of certain words or expressions*, such as: "Your slave," "I am a sacrifice," etc. Such phrases are so frequent in early Ta'ziyeh that many critics consider them characteristic of the unique style and literary tradition of the early scripts. Excess verbiage such as the colloquial use of the word *Ke* (that) at the beginning of a sentence is another trait. "That oh Orphan, Hassan should be your sacrifice. . . ." "That at your doorway an army of angels stands in need and. . .," are but two examples.²¹

2. *Repetition of meter and verse*. This flaw, in addition to making the poetry monotonous, makes the music tedious and boring. For example, in one of the early versions of the *Ta'ziyeh of Qasem* (ascribed to the latter part of the twelfth century, lunar hejiric calendar) only one meter is used from the time Qasem first seeks permission from the Imam to join the *Jihad* (the holy war) through his wedding and leave-taking scenes (*mujtas* meter). "That oh Orphan, Hassan should be your sacrifice. . . ." In more modern versions, however, a variety of verse is utilized.

3. *Repetitive Content*: Repetition was not limited to versification alone. The actual content, too, was repetitive. For example, in the *Ta'ziyeh of Qasem* ascribed to Chodzko, when Qasem begs the Imam's permission to participate in the *Jihad*, the dialogue between the two is composed of five or six versified segments, all of which share more or less the same meaning. But in modern Takiyeh Dowlat and Qazvin versions, each segment, even each couplet, carries a different meaning. If the content sometimes requires repetition, the style shifts. We can cite many examples where innovative Ta'ziyeh writers have breathed new life into the sterile corpus of earlier Ta'ziyeh poetry by creating new metaphors and allusions to replace the long discourses and literary prolixity of the early versions. For example, in the *Ta'ziyeh of the Martyrdom of the Imam*, there is a conversation between the Imam and Ibn Sa'd which occupies several segments. A relatively early version reads as follows:

The Imam: O Ibn Sa'd, black oppression's your code,
O woe unto you, cruel, worthless rogue,
Of the Almighty Lord, have you no fear?
For the Creator Himself to us shall appear.

Ibn Sa'd: I know of your rank and your stature, O Hussein
Of your power, your purity and of your Fame. . . .²²

But in a modern Takiyeh Dowlat version, after the Imam delivers his ultimatum to Ibn Sa'd the latter replies:

Is the leader commanding us with suras and logical
thought?
Your ignorance of the Koran affects us not.
You yourself comprehend the gist of my meaning.
For one must not seek wisdom in every Loghman's keening.
Listen to me and obey the Lord's servant's bid.
Yazid rules today from Arabia to Iransoxiana.
And how can the teeth be pained by a knot which the
Hands undid?

The Imam: How can I, O Lord, answer the words of this heathen.
He invites me to infamous Sham to give up my faith and
my reason.
To Khalilullah he says, come, worship idols.
To Zabihullah he says, come, share our leaven.
If the Word for this nation is the Prophet's Koran.
The Caliphate deems me worthy to open it and learn
from its wisdom.

Then, after a moment of silence,

Seeing me without troops he supposes me powerless,
If I want blood to cover this field like a sea. . . .²³

The use of various literary words and expressions combined with military, civil, and court expressions (such as Royal Farman, etc.) broadened the range of dialogue²⁴ and contributed greatly to the general quality of the poetry.

Borrowing phrases from the classical poets and embellishing Ta'ziyeh poetry with figures of speech merely to allow the poet to demonstrate his own craftsmanship or to amuse himself does not constitute good poetry. As mentioned earlier, borrowing was done primarily for theatrical reasons. Some wonderful poetry was created in the process. The following quotation which is attributed to an unknown poet from Saveh, called Savjeh, is a good example. It is taken from his version of the *Martyrdom of Abbas*.

I am Shemr who has eulogized you,
All mortal men I will host for you,
Now among my legions, now among our tents,
All this I have planned, all this is my desire for you. . . .²⁵

We should also note Shemr's challenge (*mubarezeh Khani*) to Ibn Sa'd in a modern Takiyeh Dowlat version of the *Martyrdom of the Imam*.²⁶

Leader, would you among Kings be a servant?
Ignite sparks in your heart, come out from your tent,
Like a giant dragon, mouth gaping in anger
Trotting and neighing, rolling thunder in springtime
Brave men surround you, rough rugged riders
With daggers drawn, curved like the arch of a
woman's brow.

This is an imitation of the famous elegy by Qaani.²⁷

In the excerpt quoted below, which is a conversation between Shemr and Ibn Sa'd, notice how the art of parallel construction is employed. The technique improves the poetry and greatly increases the overall dramatic impact.

- Ibn Sa'd:* You spread rancor, I will show cruelty.
You execute orders, I will give commands.
- Shemr:* You give commands, you general the field.
I will sever Hussein's head from his pure body.
- Ibn Sa'd:* You will sever Hussein's head from his pure body.
I will impale it on a pike.
- Shemr:* You will impale it on a pike.
I will grind his body into bits with horses' hooves.
- Ibn Sa'd:* You will grind his body into bits with horses' hooves.
I will cast terror into the hearts of those on the battlefield.
- Shemr:* You will cast terror into the hearts of those on the
battlefield
I will rope the necks of his weeping children, like gazelles.

Some Ta'ziyeh writers, however, were ignorant of the techniques and subtleties of composing poetry for theatre. They overindulged themselves in imitating the classical poets and in their use of literary rhetoric. For example, in this same conversation between Shemr and Ibn Sa'd, some writers borrowed heavily from classical Persian literature. An example of this overindulgence is cited below. In the example quoted, one of Hafez's lyric poems is stuck into the framework of a *mosammat* poem with unfortunate results.

Abbas: O shameless infidel, how long will you your religion ignore.
And sail a rudderless ship with no port in store,
Like me, you should willingly pass through our
Master's door,
Even though you be given a Kingdom, this I implore,
Your wealth amounts to nothing.

Almost all the distiches of this famous Hafez *qazal* have been borrowed in the form of a *mukhammas*²⁸ (a poem in which each stanza consists of five hemistiches), with Abbas reciting the first strophe and Shemr the following. This poetry, while aesthetically pleasing, was little utilized in Ta'ziyeh performances because the poet wanders far afield from the main subject of the play.

Another Ta'ziyeh writer, who allegedly lived during the reign of Muzzafar al-Din Shah, composed a similar elegy for Shemr's *mubarezeh khani* or call to combat, decorating and embellishing his verse with a particular form of rhetoric.

O Sultan astride the palace carpet and the Khan
Who ruled the world.
The great Sulaiman and the fair Loghman, wiseman and
astronomer,
All were created through your combat, your will-power
and your generosity.
The world was fresh and loving then.
Without sorrow or hatred or shame.
Thanks to the reality of you, the existence of you.
The presence of you.²⁹

The writer seemed unaware that this type of artificial poetry is completely inappropriate for Ta'ziyeh. Moreover, the main reason for having Shemr and Ibn Sa'd praise the Imam's virtues is to highlight more effectively the meanness of his enemies. The above quotation conveys no such meaning.

Generally speaking, the literary expressions which entered Ta'ziyeh poetry can be placed in two categories, the grandiose and the delicate. Words in the first category are to be found mainly in elegies, *mosammat* verse, and in combat descriptions and epic-like sections, while those in the second are used to express or describe grief. This categorization demonstrates well the artistic sensitivities of the Ta'ziyeh writers of this particular period. In the passage below, attributed to Mirza Huhammad Taqi al-Buka, the poet masterfully mixes colloquial words and expressions with literary rhetoric, thus creating a powerful work of art, which represents the very

best of Ta'ziyeh poetry. The dialogue takes place when Imam Hussein, astride his horse, Zuljenah, and about to depart for the battlefield is confronted by his little daughter, Rughiyeh. She is standing on a raised area and cries out to her father. With no musical accompaniment and in heart-rending, childish tones, she pleads with her father in broken, blank verse.

Rughiyeh: Father, you're going away, leaving me an orphan.

The Imam: O Heaven, above, what trials have you wrought?

Rughiyeh: Father, after you're gone, Shemr will bind me up.

The Imam: He will bind you and your sisters with one chain.

Rughiyeh: Daddy, my throat is so parched I'm burning.

The Imam: I too am burning with thirst.

Rughiyeh: Father dear, let me tell you something.

The Imam: Tell me, don't cry, Rughiyeh, my little daughter.

Rughiyeh: Get down from your horse, I am so sad.

The Imam: (dismounting and walking toward Rughiyeh)
May the Lord have mercy on the Shi'ites, my little darling.

Rughiyeh: Draw an emblem on your battledress to serve as my light.

The Imam: (caressing Rughiyeh)
My eyes, O light of my eyes, my little one, my little prisoner.

Rughiyeh: Let me go father, I'll kiss you under your throat.
(She kisses him under his throat).

The Imam: Kiss me, O my soul, I am a sacrifice to all your hopes and dreams.

The ability to write with specific detail and vividly portray various events and states of mind requires creativity, sensitivity, and a powerful imagination; qualities which the unsophisticated, early Ta'ziyeh writers lacked. They tended to summarize and generalize every event. As a result,

they found it necessary to fill up the time allocated for the presentation of the Ta'ziyeh, which was almost three hours, with long-winded dialogues. We have already seen examples of this in the *Martyrdom of Abbas* when Shemr meets Ibn Sa'd after returning from Kufa, when he goes in back of the Imam's and Abbas's camp, and when he sends a letter to Abbas pledging safety in return for surrender. The early Ta'ziyeh writers greatly oversimplified these events, describing them in only the most general terms. The modern writers, on the other hand, paid attention to detail. They carefully observed time frames and proper sequence of events. Shemr's monologue conveys a mixture of false bravado and a fear of Abbas. The audience can perceive Abbas as an undefeatable warrior while realizing, at the same time, that his martyrdom is imminent. Ibn Sa'd's quarrel with Shemr, their initial cautious policies, and man's violent yet sometimes frivolous nature are masterfully portrayed. Shemr's letter to Abbas is made to appear to be a deceitful ploy, which in fact it was. Shemr convenes a strategy session with the other division commanders. While drinking wine and carrying on, he screams out his orders, and after a few moments, gets up to head for Abbas's camp. Shemr awakens Abbas from his sleep. The argument which ensues is one of the finest debates in all Ta'ziyeh literature.

It has already been mentioned that early Ta'ziyeh performers excited the emotions of their audiences by imitating vulgar, despicable acts. The modern performers, however, achieved the same results through good theatre—excellent poetry, excellent direction, and excellent acting. The relationship between dialogue and acting is of particular interest. For example, compare versions of the same *Ta'ziyeh of Abbas* in the scene where Shemr and Ibn Sa'd attack Abbas's tents.

The early script reads as follows:

Shemr: O daughter of the Lord's messenger
Come out from the women's quarters
The time for your enslavement has come
And in misery and misfortune be carried off to Sham
[Damascus].

The Imam: How shameless is this misguided horde
By the Family of the Prophet, Allah Akbar! [God is great]
Zainab, fetch Ali's two-edged sword
And bring me my weapons of war.

In the latter version, the excitement of this dramatic confrontation is brought to a fever pitch, proper poetic symmetry is observed, a longer time-span elapses, and additional events take place simultaneously.

The following is an example:

Shemr, exuding false courage and bravado, encircles Abbas's camp with Ibn Sa'd and his soldiers.

O Zainab, sister of the evil-doer's offspring,
Admit now who is the better King.
Yazid's brutal and bloodthirsty army is here
To lay the foundations of his empire.
Awaken Hussein, tell him who makes this
 commotion
That it is Shemr out here yelling at him.

Zainab, startled and anxious, dashes from one side of the stage to the other, saying:

What tumult threatens the King of Ray, Woe betide us,
They're killing Zurrah's son, O woe, O injustice.³⁰

Ta'ziyeh writers paid special attention to developing to the greatest extent possible a sense of integrity and unity between the music and the action by carefully selecting the verse, the meter, and by alternating the timing between parts. *Rajaz-Khani* and epic poetry are generally in the *mutaqarib* meter. The *monkat*, a verse-form which is average in terms of length, was utilized when there was a need to convey urgency and anxiety. The poetry was written in light verse. *Musammāt* and *mustezād* were, as a rule, utilized for descriptive narrative, and *taraneh* for mournful dirges and hymns. For example, when Qasem falls from his horse and Shemr and Ibn Sa'd converse with him, a question-and-answer format is used in which one hemistich is written in a specific meter, appropriate for recital to the accompaniment of the quick rhythm of the music. Why? Because the denouement is approaching and the Ta'ziyeh writer wants to communicate to the audience a sense of impending crisis. Occasionally, a verse written in a somber meter was changed by the actor in the performance because in his judgment the original meter was not suitable for the character being portrayed. In such instances, the rhythm of the sentences and the syllables is very important. For example, in the Martyrdom of Abbas, when Rughiyeh goes to her uncle and confides in him, telling him her private thoughts, she recites a poem with no rhythm and in childish tones:

O General without troops
My gallant Uncle
Standard bearer of Hussein's army
Shah of my world
Do you remember, Uncle, in our homeland how you
 engaged my cousin
To marry Ali Khan?

Such a party, such festivities you arranged!
All of Medina was lit up then,
How my heart is filled with rue.³¹

Because the Ta'ziyeh performers' principal goal in changing the poetry of the script was to improve the performance and not simply to show off their own poetic talents, sometimes, instead of composing a totally new poem, they borrowed or adapted old texts. They did this in the following ways:

(1) When they found a poem in another poet's works which seemed suitable, they borrowed it verbatim, or changed a few hemistiches, or added or subtracted some couplets. For example, in the *Ta'ziyeh of the Elder Fatemeh*, a section of the opening poem is taken word for word from *Tufan al-Buka*.³² Also, in the *Ta'ziyeh of Muslem* (Tehran and Takiyeh Dowlat versions), the conversation in the opening section between the Imam and Muslem is adapted from the same book, the only difference being the rearranging of a few couplets and hemistiches.³³

(2) Some poems in the old Ta'ziyeh collections were ruined by attempts at improvement and adaptation. At first, we might theorize that the Ta'ziyeh writers had no well thought out purpose in selecting what they appropriated or in making their adaptations—that they only did it to make their own work easier and hence to avoid the agony of original composition: or else they happened by chance to find a suitable piece which they felt could be slipped into their own Ta'ziyeh. But a close examination of many plays proves this theory false. Not only is it more difficult for a poet to fit pieces from other poets into his own work than it is to write a simple original, but also there are other factors which prove that the Ta'ziyeh writers were completely aware of what they were doing. For example:

(a) The opening couplet which Za'far Jena recites in the *Ta'ziyeh of the Imam* (Tehran, Qazvin and perhaps other versions) is as follows:

I am your most insignificant servant, Za'far Jena
Your service has arrived. The army of Jena. . .

This is taken from *Tufan al-Buka*, cited earlier. But the response which the Imam gives to Za'far is taken from a poem by Bidel.³⁴

On this transitory earth, in this fleeting world
No man is ever immortal. . .

If the writer had simply wanted to find a piece of poetry which contained an answer for the Imam, it would have been much simpler to have lifted a complete section from either *Tufan al-Buka* or *Matemkedeh* because the Imam's response is in both. We note, however, that the writer went to the trouble of selecting one from each. Why? Because he realized that the meter

and the quality of the two poems differ and each is suitable for its particular place in the text.

(b) In the *Martyrdom of Imam Hussein*, there is a poem which Hussein addressed to Ibn Sa'd and his legions from Kufa:

I belong to the honored family of the Lord's worshippers
Recipient of Gabriel's tidings. . . .

This particular piece is taken from a book written by Mahmud Ibn Kazem Mazandarani. Only three or four couplets are borrowed. Others are taken from Bidel's book. An example is:

Although I am part Arab,
Today in my own land, I am a stranger.

The borrowed sections again consist of only a few couplets. If the writers had not recognized and understood the unique qualities of each they could not have made such wide selections.

THE EVOLUTION OF THE TA'ZIYEH PERFORMANCE

Different types of Ta'ziyeh performances evolved gradually. The texts of early versions were simple and overly generalized. Only later on were they embellished. These embellishments, meaning the *Gusheh* format and other amendments which were appended to the original versions, were part of the evolutionary process which changed passion plays into drama. Happy incidents, epic tales, and fables were inserted into the text; for example, Abbas's interception by Hurr, or Abbas by Ali Akbar, the ceremony in the *Martyrdom of Abbas* involving the four generals, and Qasem's fight with the sons of Arzagh do not appear in early versions. It should be recognized, however, that many of these new sections such as the incident depicting the coming of the Lord to help the Imam bring fire, water, and earth to aid him during his martyrdom, etc., were not often performed for various reasons.

Embellishments did not occur only in the old scripts. Another form called *Gusheh* was invented which was built around old stories and tales, some historical, some pure fable. These new Ta'ziyeh were amusing and humorous. While the *Gusheh* began even before the reign of Naser al-Din Shah, only a handful remain in existence today. *Gusheh* content is generally simple and popular such as 'Aghe Valadain, *Selling the Shi'a's Son*, etc. These Ta'ziyeh offshoots were performed as introductory pieces prior to the commencement of the actual Ta'ziyeh. Little by little, these *Gusheh* broke away from the original Ta'ziyeh and developed their own independent style. They were performed throughout the country all year round and not just during the mourning month of Muharram. It is said that a play exists

for every day of the year. (This writer, unfortunately, has witnessed only about two hundred.) Contrary to what is claimed, the *Gusheh* style is not limited to humorous tales. Love stories and tales of various historical figures and champions (as religious and social conditions permitted) also appeared. For example, the *Binding of the Devil* and the *Wedding of Fatemeh Zahra* are of the first kind.³⁵ The *Battle of the Gate of Kheybar*, the *Battle of Siffin*, *Abraham*, etc., are of the second variety. There are other stories which are partially love stories and partially religious and historical, such as *Yusef and Zulaikha*. Innumerable stories of this sort were written.

As should be clear from the excerpts from early and recent Ta'ziyeh cited earlier, "similar" poetry, from the standpoint of meter, verse, and rhyme, became fashionable for use in dialogue between two characters and for the question-and-answer format. This was not true in the early plays.

I spoke earlier about the art of improvisation (*badiyeh khani*) in Ta'ziyeh music. Ta'ziyeh performers would occasionally change the lines which they were supposed to recite to more suitable ones or extemporaneously recite their own poetry. These improvisations gradually infiltrated the original texts. In the early days, performers were not allowed to do this.³⁶ A large number of jokes, witticisms, and social customs which are reflected in the poetry today originated from this spur-of-the-moment improvisation by the performing artist. For example, in the *Martyrdom of Qasem*, the congratulations which Shemr and Ibn Sa'd extend to Qasem on the occasion of his wedding, and the gifts of sweets and cone sugar which Imam Hussein sends them in return are actions quite contrary to what the audience expects and are good examples of improvisation. The quarrel in the family of Hares in the *Ta'ziyeh of Muslem's Children* is similar. The limitations placed on the actors to restrict their improvisations were, of course, the audience itself and the particular character being portrayed. Some overdid it and reduced the dialogue to absurdity. While sometimes improvisation resulted in beautiful poetry, at other times it was mere banality.

Ta'ziyeh in which the Imam or the prophet are present in the opening scene, begin with their *munajat* or prayer (protestations of their innermost secrets and wishes to God, the universe, or the heavens). In the early years, only the Imam or the Prophet (the person playing the leadership role) performed this kind of prologue. Dialogue for the other protagonists was either straight narrative or in the question-and-answer format. In later years, however, a kind of *munajat* was written for the kinsmen of the Imam, which, from the standpoint of verse, meter, rhyme, and rhythm was similar to the poetry written for the Imam. But this *munajat* differed in content from the *munajat* written for the Imam and for the prologues of early Ta'ziyeh. The *pish khani* or prologue took the form of a song or a song-like wail which was presented in choral fashion. The child performers (or one of them) sang a special kind of tune. All the others, antagonists and protagonists together, repeated the first couplet. This took place before the actual

performance commenced in order to add a touch of resplendence and luster and to make the in-coming audience aware that the drama was about to begin. It served another function as well. It demonstrated that the men playing the antagonist roles were merely performers doing their job and that they, too, shared in the sorrow and mourning of the people. One of the fundamental conditions of performing the *pish khani* was the participation of all the actors in the cast in the *sarayeh* or choral singing.³⁷

In Ta'ziyeh such as the *Martyrdom of the Imam, Abbas, Ali Akbar*, and *Qasem*, prior to the *munajat* by the Imam and his family, Shemr and Ibn Sa'd rush to the battlefield and, in the expression of Ta'ziyeh actors, "issue challenges to combat." These sections are full of violence and threats yet, at the same time, contain high praise for the Imam. Shemr and Ibn Sa'd admit to the greatness of the Imam and confess to their own pettiness and meanness. Sometimes, a description of the battlefield is given, adding greatly to the audience's sense of impending excitement. Because the "challenge to combat" is not an important part of the Ta'ziyeh, performers sometimes added lines to the antagonists' parts. Early Ta'ziyeh did not have such a good standard of *mubarezeh khani*. Early writers expended their efforts attempting to make everything correspond to the visible action. *Mubarezeh khani* thus usually was only a simple conversation placed after the Imam's *munajat*.

Frequently, the new style of *mubarezeh khani* is mixed with old-style sermonizing. This mingling of styles has unfortunate results, giving the Ta'ziyeh a disjointed, uncoordinated appearance.

DIFFERENT VIEWPOINTS OF TA'ZIYEH WRITERS

At the beginning of this essay, I pointed out how the Ta'ziyeh encountered a variety of new ideas and viewpoints during the course of its development and how each made a contribution to the evolutionary process. Recent developments, however, have destroyed some of the traditional concepts and practices. We previously saw an example in which the Ta'ziyeh writer of one of the *Martyrdom of Hurr* Ta'ziyeh always refers to Yazid in vulgar, insulting tones:

'tis a letter from evil Yazid, the fraud.
Beside the Kufa's governor, Ibn Ziyad.

But in a Takiyeh Dowlat version, Yazid's and Ibn Sa'd's high rank is not repudiated and appropriate descriptive vocabulary is assigned to them even though no real respect is given them.

An auspicious command from Saturn's great heights.
By Ibn Sa'd, grandest of leaders and noblest of knights.

The modern Ta'ziyeh writers' love and devotion for the family of Hussein and their hatred for his oppressors is no different from that of the early writers. The difference lies in the handling. Many researchers claim that the martyrdom of the Nation of Believers for their sins is the indisputable, philosophical basis for Ta'ziyeh. Some even think that this concept was influenced by Christianity. The act of "intercession" has a long tradition in Shi'a Islam. In this case, "intercession" and "sin" are mingled with issues concerning fate, predestination, fatalism, and free will, and while each requires a separate treatment of its own, we can conclude here that the Ta'ziyeh writers gleaned different ideas from all of these concepts. In the *Martyrdom of Imam Hussein*, for example, Zainab asks the Imam: "Why did you leave Mecca and Medina and come to Kerbela to place yourself in this danger?" The Imam answers, "Because of the sins of the Nation of Believers." In another version he says, "Fate and the will of God dictated thus." But in another Ta'ziyeh, the *Martyrdom of Ali Akbar*,³⁸ a wiser and more logical justification for the martyrdom is given, which, to some extent, shows the enlightened thinking of the writer. The example comes from the scene in which the Imam is conversing with Zainab:

Zainab: Brother, you were never like this,
Never so alarmed and concerned as this. . . .

The Imam: Yes, to revolt is better than to endure.
Hatred of this infidel must not destroy our faith.
Even Solomon's Kingdom was transitory.
Although the Fiend works hand in hand with the Devil,
If Allah had not wanted Islam to spread
You and I would have no life.³⁹
Those who have not been struck by the Devil
Never ascend to Solomon's throne.
Summon young Ali Akbar, without him I have no life.

This section, aside from its delightful and pleasant-sounding poetry, contains many social and philosophical points which are not completely compatible with pure logic or normal Ta'ziyeh poetry. The gist of the Imam's speech is, "We have arisen to right society's wrongs and we follow this path of our own free will. Our actions are logical and consonant with the Will of God."⁴⁰

Unfortunately, when this new, dramatic form of Ta'ziyeh was gaining acceptance, Iran encountered Western culture and the Iranian Constitutional Movement developed. The Constitutional Movement was blind to Ta'ziyeh quality and it did away with the good as well as the bad. An anti-Ta'ziyeh bloc evolved among the foreign-educated or foreign-influenced

intellectuals who joined the ranks of critics in objecting to every national or religious custom. People no longer asked, What is a Ta'ziyeh? Ta'ziyeh offshoots were rarely performed, save by a performing troupe in some remote region of the country.⁴¹ Expanded research into this art form should be initiated before all documentation completely disappears.

NOTES

1. Fortunately, valuable books and articles have been written detailing the historical and social changes in the Ta'ziyeh. The reader may refer to the following: *Namāyish dar Irān* (Theatre in Iran) by Mr. Baizā'i and to a series of detailed and well-documented articles by our learned friend and researcher, Mr. Māyil Baktāsh, entitled "Taḥavvul-i Mawqī'-e Ijtimā'i va Jihat-i Arzyābi-yi Ta'ziyeh." (*Bāmshād* magazine, numbers 98 through 109, published in 1347.)

2. In addition to travelogs written by Western visitors, various Iranian biographies and literary miscellany confirm this fact. The subject is beyond the scope of this essay and should be handled separately.

3. Shādravān 'Abdullāh Mustawfī, *The Historical and Administrative History of the Qajars* (Tehran, 1334) I, 396-400.

4. Mīrzā Muḥammad Taqī was a well-known Ta'ziyeh producer who lived in the middle of the reign of Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh. He gave performances in Tehran and the Takiyeh Dowlat theatre between the years 1275 and 1290 (1859-73). He should not be confused with Muḥammad Taqī Nūrī, poet and Ta'ziyeh writer (1201-1263/1785-1847). Mīrzā Tāhir Iṣfahānī is a pen name associated with a poem in the book *Ganj-i Shāyghān* (Treasure of Shaygan). Contrary to popular belief, Shāhāb Iṣfahānī was not a Ta'ziyeh writer. He was only a performer. In my opinion, the various Ta'ziyeh attributed to him were written by others.

5. My point here is, obviously, the genuine Ta'ziyeh masters, not Ta'ziyeh writers in general. Many were nothing but artless frauds who over-indulged in producing worthless rubbish not worthy of the name Ta'ziyeh.

6. The reader must be aware that when I cite constructive changes which enhanced the quality of Ta'ziyeh as theatre I do not mean to imply that set design (decor) as it is known today was as yet a valid concept. The changes in quality were in the details, not in the basic framework.

7. The reason why I have used a verb in the past tense is because the majority of Ta'ziyeh performed in the small towns and villages of Iran today still do not observe this point. This is because most Ta'ziyeh producers are of the opinion that all Ta'ziyeh must be simple. Simplicity, however, must not be confused with artlessness and vulgarity.

8. In traditional Iranian music, the expression "murakkab-Khvānī" or combination singing means movement from one mode to another or a shift from one tune to another. The movement must take place within similar musical scores. In Ta'ziyeh, this method was also used for conversations between two characters.

9. This description is from Ibrāhīm Būzarī, a music master and student of the late Iqbal al-Sultān. Taken from the book, *Irfān va Mūsīqī-yi Irānī*, by Dr. Dāryūsh Saffat.

10. Ta'ziyeh music does not conform exactly with classical Iranian music. It is

thus a futile exercise to compare musical notes. To do so, one must make accurate recordings of Ta'ziyeh performances and if possible break out each individual note.

11. Every loud-mouthed, drunken brawler does not make a good *Shimr*, Yazid, or Ibn Sa'd!

12. Refer to "Namāyish Navīsī dar Adabiyyāt" by Hasan Bābak, *Third Iranian Research Congress*, I, 135.

13. If comparisons are to be made, the points in comparison must have common elements. Poems by poets like Muḥtisham and Yaqmā cannot and should not be compared with Ta'ziyeh poetry. The two books cited here, however, make for fruitful comparisons (for reasons which space prohibits me to detail). This is probably why the renowned German researcher, Hermann Etteh, cites Ta'ziyeh in his *History of Persian Literature*. He mentions Ta'ziyeh origins in a chapter entitled "The Culture of Believers in God." In two introductions which I wrote for the *Ta'ziyeh of Qāsim* and *Sulaimān and Bilqīs* I pointed out several of his misinterpretations.

14. I say "generally" because some old texts do contain lovely sections. The adjectives "loose" and "simple" nonetheless categorize the vast majority.

15. Quoted from sections of manuscript written by Mīrzā Taqī Nūrī.

16. The phrase "ṣabr bukun" which is in the printed version of the text is clearly inaccurate. In later years, after the Ta'ziyeh had developed further, this poem appeared as follows. In addition, one or two extra couplets were added:

If I meet the son of Sa'd tonight,
I'll tell him the secret from start to finish, tonight.

17. Numerous versions of the *Ta'ziyeh of 'Abbās* exist. The various texts frequently contradict each other and most do not observe poetic principles. These copies require major rewriting. This is true of most copies of the major Ta'ziyeh.

18. Tehran copy accredited to Shāibān 'Alī Baik.

19. Printed version.

20. For further information on the effect of "radīf" on Ta'ziyeh poetry, see *Shi'r uljam-i Shabli-yi Hindī* translated by Fakhr al-Dīn Gilānī, Vols. 3 and 4. See also *Surat-i Khayāl dar Shi'r-i Fārsī* by Shafī'i Kadkanī.

21. This copy is from an old collection. In the modern Ta'ziyeh which are performed throughout Iran's cities and villages many of the original couplets are changed. For example, see the Shiraz versions of the *Ta'ziyeh of Qāsim* collected by Sādiq Humāyūnī.

22. These Ta'ziyeh along with the revisions which I have made are scheduled for publication shortly by the Iranian Anthropological Center, which is affiliated with the Ministry of Arts and Culture.

23. Quoted from a handwritten manuscript of Muḥammad Taqī ibn 'Alī Nūrī Māzandarānī (1201-1263/1785-1847).

24. For example:

Your departure for Saturn elicited an Imperial Farman,
O Greatest of Leaders, Ibn Ziyad, most honored of nobles.

(narrator's copy, *Ta'ziyeh of Hurr*, Takiyeh Dowlat version)

O leader of Legions, speak frankly
Strike the drum and make ready.

(from the *Ta'ziyeh of Bare'elm*, written and recited by Mīrzā Muhammad Bāqir Mu'in al-Bukā'.)

25. Taken from Sa'dī.

26. The majority of "mubārizih khvānī" poetry (poetry written for one performer to use in laying down a challenge to another) was not specially patterned for each antagonist. Further explanation is given in the section devoted to "mubārizih khvānī."

27. This elegy was sung by Qā'ānī in praise of Mīrzā Taqī Khan Amīr. The opening verse is as follows:

Heaven's zephyr gently blows across the brooks,
The smell of musk blows over the meadows. . . .

See the complete works of Qā'ānī, numerous editions.

28. A "ghazāl" with the following opening lines:

My witchcraft, a mysterious voice emanating from the
tavern of the covetous.
Saying, oh, back on the threshold again.

29. I noticed this poem in one of the Borghan copies. While it is considered to be by the aforementioned veteran Ta'ziyeh performer, Sulaimān Savchi, the claim is not fully substantiated.

30. This section exists in uneven and defective form in old Tehran versions. The poetry consists of dissonant couplets lacking in symmetry. The opening lines are as follows:

Zainab, O sister of the King's son, with the odor of dust,
Dream and sleep, Hussain, son of Religious King.

Later poets apparently considered the rhythm appropriate, so they used it in a different format. What is in the text is from revised Takiyeh Dowlat versions.

31. I have not located this section among the numerous versions of the Martyrdom of 'Abbās which are in my possession. What is quoted above is what I remember from a performance I witnessed several years ago.

32. Mīrzā-Ibrāhīm Sarvi Qazvīnī, elegiac poet, died in Isfahan in 1252/1836.

33. The meaning of this section is:

O Ibn 'Amm, my name is Muslim, the wise,
Walk gracefully to me, in the path of Islam.

34. Bīdil is a pen name for a group of poets. Here we are talking about Bīdil Rūdbārī who died in 1266/1850.

35. For example, the *Ta'ziyeh of "Shīr-Afkan,"* with an introduction by Farrukh

Ghaffārī in the book entitled *Iranian Theatre*, published in the Festival Arts Series, 1350/1972.

36. Unfortunately, this point is not observed in many of the Ta'ziyeh performed today. Players performing the antagonist roles still create their own poems hoping to facilitate their acting. This is wrong and results in inappropriate, tasteless performances.

37. "Sarāyah" is an expression invented by Shādravān Rūh 'Allāh Khāliqī for group or choral singing. Also called "choeur" or choir.

38. From Takiyeh Dowlat copy. Appears in many other versions too.

39. Another copy of the same quality has the line, "Life could not be sacrificed"; but the meaning is exactly the same.

40. This is the same principle that followers of Shi'a Islam believe in.

41. Because *Gusheh* provokes far less agitation and passionate differences of opinion than regular Ta'ziyeh.