

The sight of this bloody ceremony calls forth a feeling of disgust and abhorrence. And yet these fanatics, who should be an abomination to gods and men, are the object of the unfeigned admiration of their brother Shiites. The crowd bewailing the death of Hussein join in the bloody men's loud lamentations, and rejoice to see human blood offered in honour of Hussein and for his sake. The men are convinced that by their self-mutilation they gain both temporal and eternal benefits. They are a means in the hands of the priests of rousing and maintaining the religious convictions of the undiscerning people, without which the priesthood would perish from hunger.

This scene on the tenth day of Moharrem is the culmination of the passion-play, and it was because of the wild passions that then break loose that the Governor had surrounded me with an especial guard. Pollak relates that the imagination of the mob is sometimes fired to such a degree that the actor who plays the part of Hussein's murderer is attacked and slain. The self-mutilators who have injured themselves badly are carried off when the circuit is completed to a hammam or bathroom, where they are bound up and taken care of by surgeons—one would think that they ought to be flogged instead. Those who are less hurt can go on their own legs to the bath, and of some of these I took a snapshot with my camera.

In conclusion, there is a procession of half-naked men, who beat their breasts only with their hands and stretch up their arms to heaven, throwing their heads to one side and yelling and bawling till froth lies on their lips. And behind them a tabernacle called *nakl* is borne by fifty men, like a cage covered with cloths and mirrors. Two men have climbed on to the frame, which is carried round the arena, and possibly represents the sarcophagus and funeral procession of Hussein. Lastly, the camels make another round of the court, and therewith the Moharrem of the year comes to an end.

Then the crowd dispersed and we also hurried from the bloodstained place. We wanted fresh air, so we went towards the outskirts of the town where there was no one. The south-western gate of the town was photo-