



Eternal Performance: Taziyeh and Other Shiite Rituals (Enactments)

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Over the centuries, observances of Muharram, the first month of the Islamic calendar, have traveled far from their origins at Karbala—a windswept desert plain that is now a town in present-day Iraq—where, according to tradition, Hussein, the beloved grandson of Prophet Muhammad, was brutally put to death together with seventy-two of his male companions on the tenth day of the month. For this reason, Muharram is synonymous with both the first month and the tenth day. Hussein's passion and death are considered the ultimate example of sacrifice for Shia Muslims and scores of rituals devoted to Muharram have developed during the last thirteen centuries, especially in Iran where Twelver Shi'ism became the state religion in the sixteenth century.

As Peter Chelkowski describes in *Eternal Performance*, many of these rituals were exported to other lands over time. They crossed boundaries and cultures from Iran and Iraq to Lebanon, the Indian subcontinent, North America, and the Caribbean. Yet all Muharram rituals, no matter where or how they are performed, have their origins in Karbala. The transformation and transmission of these observances to their present-day forms around the world are the result of the intersection of multiple races, religions, and artistic traditions. *Eternal Performance* explores the social, political, cultural, artistic, and religious significance of Muharram rituals for millions of global observers.

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Peter J. Chelkowski is professor of Middle Eastern and Islamic studies at New York University. He is the author of *Mirror of the Invisible World* and *Ta'ziyeh: Ritual and Drama in Iran*, among other works. He has been the recipient of awards and fellowships from the American Association of University Presses; the Smithsonian Institute; the Hoover Institute on War, Revolution, and Peace Fellowship; and the Social Science Research Council.

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