

Original Research Article

# Cultural Differences in Muharram Rituals

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**Abstract** | The cultural rituals of any society are the birth certificates of that society's culture, history, religion, and ethics. These rites and rituals are an important factor in fostering cohesion and unity among the people of a society who gather together in various ceremonies. Mourning ceremonies and rituals vary in different provinces, cities, and villages across the country, particularly during the first decade of Muharram. Iran is considered one of the inheritors of world culture due to its diverse and rich cultural rituals. The purpose of this research is to do a comparative and documented study of Muharram rituals in these two provinces so that by revealing the manifestations of cultural rituals and their differences and similarities, we can reach the deep and rich layers of the culture of these two provinces. This research intends to investigate the differences and similarities between the rituals of the first decade of Muharram and their cultural differences in the two provinces of East Azarbaijan and Khuzestan, using a descriptive-comparative study method. These two provinces have a deep cultural and religious background and an ancient civilization. The results of this research show that despite the great similarity in the performance of Muharram rituals in the two provinces in question, the diversity of mourning rituals is also visible in these two provinces. The varieties and differences are closely related to cultural, climatic, and linguistic differences in these two provinces. These two provinces' people have chosen to mourn in accordance with their religion, vegetation, culture, and language. The results of this research show that, in addition to these differences, the common points of this cultural ritual in the two provinces are the love of the Prophet's family and devotion to Ashura culture.

**Keywords** | East Azerbaijan, Khuzestan, Ritual ceremony, Muharram, Cultural rituals.

**Introduction** | From a long time ago, in Iran, before the arrival of Islam and after Islam prevailed over Iranians for hundreds of years, religious ceremonies and rituals have become a part of Iranian culture. These ceremonies and rituals throughout history, especially after the 1957 revolution, became so prominent that sometimes they surpassed religious principles and branches. One of these cultural-religious rituals is the Muharram decade ceremony. Culture and cultural elements are the basis for the growth of societies. This platform is the source of social moral values, beliefs, individual and social identities, and even the historical identity of a society. On the other hand, cultural rituals in any society are like the birth certificate and identity of that society. Iranian

society, due to having elements of national and religious culture, has various aspects. The Muharram ritual ceremony is one of the cultural-religious manifestations of Iran, which has its colors and smells, and rituals in different cities and even villages. This diversity is more in the form and type of mourning, but the core of it is the same, which is mourning for the third Imam of the Shiites, his family, and his companions.

"The culture of every nation is a diverse set of rituals, traditions, customs, beliefs, faith, stories, legends and myths of that nation, which has influence in the deepest layers of their collective soul and leaves its effects in individual and collective situations. These cultural elements, beyond race and skin color and other appearances, distinguish a nation from other nations and open the way for dialogue. Our nation has also received

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its cultural elements from pre-Islamic rituals and the Islamic period and its magnificent rituals, and over time, with intelligence and insight, it has connected them with the faith and spirit of Islam" (Sho'a, Anizadeh, Haj Mohammadyari, Dousti & Shayestehrokh, 2016, 11).

One of the importance of this research, in addition to the religious aspects and rituals of Muharram, is the existence of tourist attractions for domestic and foreign tourists. Paying attention to the Muharram ritual and its diversity in different provinces with the creative management of the tourism organization can increase Iran's tourist attractions during the Muharram days and provide opportunities for tourists and even Iranians to familiarize themselves with this passionate religious ritual.

Azerbaijan and Khuzestan provinces are two rich provinces in terms of national and religious cultural rituals. The purpose of this research is to investigate the comparative and documented rituals of Muharram in these two provinces so that by revealing the manifestations of cultural rituals and their differences and similarities, we can reach the deep and rich layers of the culture of these two provinces. The main question of this research is:

What is the origin of the differences and similarities between Muharram rituals in the provinces of East Azerbaijan and Khuzestan?

Heuristic question

What is the origin of the differences and similarities of Muharram religious rituals in the provinces of East Azerbaijan and Khuzestan?

## Research Background

In research entitled, Analysis of the effects of religious rituals in family life Arbaeen Hussein's study of the walking ritual, Ghiasi and associates identified the effects of the following factors and explained them. 1. Civilizing rationality; 2. Significant efficiency capacity in the economic, political, social, and cultural fields; 3. Creating dynamics and life based on kindness; 4. Consolidation and strengthening of divine identity; and 5. The harmony of different elements of the family was reached and explained and describes them (ghiasi, Borzooei & Nasiri, 2021). A study entitled the programmatic of Sunni and Shiite Ashura gathering in national unity showed that "change in attitude towards common religion, public morality, common knowledge, acceptable social behavior and fair politics were the theoretical functions of mourning that contributed to the fundamental components of national unity. Adjusting the demands of the "natural self" and transitioning from "people", reaching "nation" and "religious values", "human

dignity" and "one God" were the individual functions of mourning. "The reduction of religious differences", the expansion and deepening of "religious commonalities", "social solidarity" and "national unity" were reported as social and national effects of mourning (Mousavi, 2019). The research entitled "An analysis of the role of religious places in creating a sense of place in the residents of urban Neighborhoods," showed a significant relationship between the respondents' "duration of residence in the neighborhood" and "level of education" with their sense of place. Also, most of the respondents considered Hosseiniyeh as the main element of identity for their neighborhood and expressed their satisfaction with living there (74%). In addition, more than 85 percent of the respondents reported social participation as a sacred thing and they thought participation in it was the duty of all people (Heydari, 2019).

Rashidosh concluded in his article, " Anthropological analysis of the religious ceremony of Allah Allah Hossein Vena (Ihram ceremony) in Maragheh city," that "the performance of religious ceremonies and rituals preserves the social heritage of the society and, while enriching culture and solidarity, it transmits its sustainable values to future generations." (Rashidosh, 2018).

According to a study entitled "An image of the social mood of Iranians in the context of religious mourning based on the report of foreign travelogues," one of the most general and comprehensive cultural and identity elements of Iranian society is the mourning ritual of death. The views of the travelogue writers were reported to be at the center of attention. Based on the findings of the research, it seems that the function of the mentioned theories, which indicate the symbiosis between the tyranny of the rulers and the morality of the nations, should be viewed with doubt (Nazari Moghadam & Ahmadi, 2017).

According to the findings of Montazer al-Ghaem and Keshavarz's (2016) study entitled "Investigation of the social changes of Ashura mourning ceremonies and rites in Iran", Ashura mourning ceremonies and rituals in different historical periods were subject to various social changes in addition to different formulations." These changes, formed under the influence of society's social, political, and cultural conditions, contributed to growth and reproduction (Montazer al-Ghaem & Keshavarz, 2016). A study titled, Nakhil turning during Muharram in Derakhsh [Nakhil Gardani Dar Derakhsh]: an anthropological perspective showed how maintaining the relationship between the individual and society, strengthened the social cohesion of the collective identity and cultural solidarity, strengthening the collective conscience and generational connections in the village.

On the other hand, it affected a person's worldview and the formation of norms in their mind. This research showed that this ceremony is unique and at the level of South Khorasan, and despite its similarities with the Nakhil Gardani (palm carrying) ceremony in other regions of the country, there are differences in other regions of the country, in terms of the appearance of the Nakhil and the time and manner of performing the ceremony (Hamidi & Shateri, 2016).

Babai, in his research "Explaining the function of religious symbols in religious rituals case study: Tasu'a and Ashura ceremonies in Abyaneh", showed that "religious symbols, manifested in religious rituals, strengthened the emotional life of the followers of the religion. On the other hand, they played a significant role in creating unity, preserving lineage, restoring religious identity, and expanding collective participation and social discipline of the people (Babai, 2014).

Masikhi and Haghparast, in their research entitled, "A comparative study of the ritual of death between Muslims and Zoroastrians and the evaluation of their influence on each other", concluded that "divine religions rely on non-human teachings about this supernatural problem has presented more complete and detailed propositions that can bring a clearer perspective to their followers. Meanwhile, the two religions of Islam, as the claimant of the end of religions, and the religion of Zoroastrianism, as the claimant of the oldest divine religions, have each depicted this idea in detail with an eloquent expression." (Masikhi & Haghparast, 2013).

## Religious Rituals

According to Serajzadeh's definition, "religious rituals are actions that people perform within the framework of their religious life. In this case, we can refer to actions such as reading daily prayers, fasting, reciting the Quran, participating in congregational and Friday prayers, participating in celebrations and mourning ceremonies, etc." (Serajzadeh, 2011, 106). "Religion is a system of symbols that works to create strong, comprehensive, and stable states and motivations in humans, in such a way that it formulates concepts about the overall system of existence and wraps these concepts in such an aura of reality that states and motivations. It is said that this is difficult for humans to appear real" (Coleman & Watson, 2010, 19).

It can be said that religion is an inseparable part of the culture and history of all societies. "There is no known society in which some form of religion does not exist. In many societies, religion is a fundamental and essential part of the culture, which plays an important role in creating norms and social life" (Jamshidiha & Ghobadi, 2007, 2). Religion is a set of behaviors, actions, and beliefs that make

up the majority of people's actions, attitudes and thoughts. These collections have a high diversity, abundance, and geographical extent. The richer and more ethical this collection is, the richer and deeper its role in enhancing the culture and ethics of that society will be.

## Religious Rituals in Iran

As one of the great civilizations of the world, Iran has a great culture and history. On the other hand, Iran, as one of the civilizations in which great religions such as Zoroastrianism arose and accepted Islam with a time interval of fewer than 50 years, has enjoyed a culture mixed with religion and religious rituals. "The ceremony and rites of Islam in Iran are almost as old as the age of Islam itself. Since accepting Islam, Iranians have been performing religious rituals such as prayer and fasting, and later, by accepting the Shia religion, they added special ceremonies that were compatible with Shia beliefs to the set of norms, values, ceremonies, and rituals. Since then, these rites have flowed in Iranian culture with fluctuations that could happen to any cultural norm or behavior and have been passed down from one generation to another" (ibid., 7). On the other hand, "a historical look at the issue shows that the cultural and social changes, in the changes in the content of the religiosity and mourning styles of Muharram since Al-Buye era, are considered a key turning point for the life of Shia communities. It is from this period onwards that mourning traditions have become an important part of the cultural and social life of Shias and in some areas, they are the most important carriers of the cultural, social, and political identity of Shia societies. Some features of mourning rituals in the Shia religion, such as the structural fluidity of these rituals and the possibility of adapting them to local traditions and the exchange of content and form with these traditions, have caused that among Shiite communities, the most important collective arena of religious rituals is dedicated to mourning traditions. In the traditional world, these rituals were considered the main ground for the integration of the previous heritage of society into the new religious worldview and the continuation of the symbolic system of that culture. The integration of mourning rituals with the local and cultural traditions of Shia communities is the main reason for the diversity and abundance of these rituals" (Shoa' et al., 2016, 21).

Due to the devotion and the third Imam of the Shias - Imam Hussein - Iranians have performed the Muharram mourning ceremony much more passionately than other rituals. This ceremony, in a diverse way and mixed with the native culture of each region, has acquired the special color and smell of that region.

"Rituals and rituals are basic components of every

religion that followers of that religion perform to achieve the desired goals of their religion." The word Manasek (Rituals) is the plural of Mansek, and Mansek (Rituals) is the name of a place and means a secluded corner or angle (in Sufism) and comes from the root of Nasaka and Nasoka, which means to become pious and practice piety" (Azarnoush, 2004, 687). "Therefore, the term ritual has religious roots and in a general sense, it is a set of regular ritual actions related to religion. From the point of view of the followers of a religion, rituals, like the sacred text, represent the emergence or manifestation of the sacred, which becomes sacred through the performance of rituals. Rituals may include prayers or recitation of the holy text, praying, special actions, special sounds, special smells, symbols, and religious music, and all those things that contribute to the holy apparition. Rituals are probably the most common source of religious experience for the majority of people" (Momen, 2008, 104-105).

Durkheim considers religious rituals and rites, unlike functions and actions, to have a kind of spiritual and emotional connection between people in society, while economic actions of people do not have a collective connection, but rather have an individual and utilitarian aspect. "These faiths, beliefs, and tendencies provide unity and interest, and solidarity among the participants during the ceremony. The solidarity and unity that takes place through similarity in feelings and adherence to single value systems can connect activists. On the other hand, since religious traditions and customs in religious ceremonies are associated with collective crying and mourning and with special excitement, the activists feel a kind of purification and closeness to God with this religious act. This causes a kind of prosperity and vitality for the mourning activists. In fact, social entertainment in this ceremony, due to its special features and attractions, strengthens, moves, relaxes and rejuvenates the individual" (Jamshidiha & Ghobadi, 2007, 10).

Clifford Geertz, "pays more attention to rituals than belief, because rituals are the creator of the authenticity of religious teachings, and their flawlessness. In rituals, the world "as lived (ethics)" and the world "as imagined (worldview)" merge into a single world under the agency of a set of symbolic forms" (Givian, 2007, 25-26). "Although Geertz considers the ideal state to be unification or in other words, the harmony of worldview and ethics, he values ethics more. According to him, the world as imagined may shape the way we live in the world, but the world that is the result of our life is the real world because of where we live. Geertz says in "Islam in the center of observation" book that religion does not only include standing on the truth or knowledge of what

is thought to be the truth, but also bringing it to the fore, that is, living based on such a truth. Therefore, being one of the people of Bali is not only having a certain view of the person, time, and social behavior but also living with these views" (Munson, 1986, 16). "Actually, the main way of salvation is to perform rituals" (Firouzi, 2010, 98).

From the point of view of Talcott Parsons, every institution and phenomenon arises in a functional structure and assumes a role in the durability and consistency of that structure. "Because the flow of mutual action has a social character and values are effective in it, we cannot study social action without considering the social system, which itself is composed of the cultural and personality system. Action is formed under the influence of four subsystems, one of which is the religious institution. The religious institution is responsible for moral stability and takes care of the values of public culture. According to Parsons' cybernetic levels, the cultural sub-system in which the religious institution is a very important part of this sub-system causes monitoring, control, modeling, and socialization in the personality system" (ibid.). This personality system follows the principles, norms, and rules that are provided to the people through the cultural system and causes that personality system to become internal.

Paul Tillich, a contemporary cultural theologian, considers a deep and unbreakable link between the religion of societies and their culture. According to Paul Tillich, the appearance of every religion is based on the culture of that society, and the content of every culture is also rooted in the religion of that society. According to Tillich, the human condition throughout history has always raised questions that different cultures have expressed in different ways, and different religious traditions have given different answers to them. (Bashiriyeh, 1998, 26).

### Cultural Differences in the Implementation of the Muharram Ritual in Iran

The ceremony of the first decade of Muharram is a cultural ceremony that, like other cultural elements, is influenced by the ethnic, native, linguistic, and other roots of its people. "Ashura has become one of the elements of Iranian culture. Since the period of the Al-Buye government until now, except for a few years when this ceremony was closed during the first Pahlavi era, this ceremony has been held continuously. For this reason, it is part of the institutionalized norms, traditions, and values of our country. The extent of the Ashura ceremony can be examined and reflected on from two sides. On the one hand, because of the variety of actions that take place in it, such as the various types of actions that take place



in the form of mourning, on the other hand, because of the scope of its holding, which is held throughout the country in all urban and rural neighborhoods and with the presence of all strata and groups. (Jamshidiha & Ghobadi, 2007, 42).

## Research Method

The research used a comparative method to compare the cultural similarities and differences of Muharram rituals from the point of view of cultural rituals in two provinces of East Azerbaijan and Khuzestan. The data of this research are the documents and research and the researcher's field studies regarding the Muharram ceremony in two provinces. The choice of these two provinces is primarily due to the researcher's hometown (East Azerbaijan) and years of living (Khuzestan) in these two provinces.

## Muharram Ceremony in Khuzestan

Khuzestan province, in the decade of Muharram, like other provinces, has various ceremonies and rituals in each of its cities. Below we mention some of these rituals.

Alam Gerdani: "Alam<sup>1</sup> or Jarideh is a stick with a height of 10 meters and a diameter of 10 centimeters, with two meters of black cloth tied to it from top to bottom at regular intervals, and a brass or silver grid (claw) is attached to its tip. This Alam is known as the flag of Hazrat Abbas. When the wood is brought to the field to tie the cloth, people gather and enter the field with instruments, drums, and blessings" (Afshar Sistani, 2016, 23), (Fig. 1).

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### • Nakhl Gardani<sup>2</sup>

Nakhl Gardani is one of the most important and famous means of mourning in Khuzestan. Nakh is a symbol of the coffin and coffin of the martyrs, under which people mourn and beat their chests.

Dehkhoda (2007) defines Nakh as follows: "It is like a tree that is made of wood and decorated with all kinds of colorful silk scarves, precious fabrics, mirrors, lamps, etc., and decorated with flowers and greenery. On the day of Ashura, they take it to the place where the



Fig. 1. Alam Gerdani in Khuzestan. Source: <https://iqna.ir/files/fa/news>.

ceremony of reciting the rosary and passion-reading is held."

"Nakh, which is made to resemble the golden porches of blessed places, is a wooden surface of a board surrounded by plank teeth, and its shape is like the old porches, and it is decorated with the color of a wreath. Its maximum height is 6 meters and its width is 3 meters. They put another porch in front of it at a distance of 3 meters and connect both porches with wood and keep it empty in the middle. These sticks are decorated with colorful cloths and a colored net is installed at the end of the tip of this facade. This Nakh has stools, which are placed on four chairs in the middle of the square. The famous Nakh of Dezful is the palm of Kalbi Khan" (ibid.), (Fig. 2).

### • Sheydouneh

Sheydouneh is a type of hejleh (a small wooden room) that has been used for mourning deceased people for centuries. In Khuzestan, this ceremony is considered the Hejla of Hazrat Ghasem and has high respect and devotion among the people. "Sheydouneh is a square, arched structure made of wood, which has different dimensions. The walls of the Sheydouneh are in the form of a grid and are usually green. On one part of the wall, there are paintings of Imams or scenes from the events of Ashura. Sheydouneh is named after various Imams and their children, such as Sheydouneh Hazrat Ali, Sheydouneh Ali Asghar, Sheydouneh Hazrat Ghasem, and Sheydouneh Hazrat Zeinab. Each of the Sheydouneh is specific to a neighborhood and every year during the Muharram days, it is installed in a certain place in the same neighborhood and decorated with candles and henna. People also put their offerings including dates, halva, bread and dates, halva konji (sesame halva), etc. to welcome the mourning people. Sheydounehs were established in the city of Dezful near old mosques and neighborhoods such as Dezful Jame Mosque, Ali Ibn Abi Taleb Mosque (in the middle of the



Fig. 2. Nakhel Kolbi Khan Dezful. Source: <http://media.mehrnews.com>.



Fig. 3. Sheydouneh. Source: <https://fa.wikihussain.com>.

valley), Ababafan Mosque and old neighborhoods such as Pir Nazar neighborhood and Kornasian<sup>3</sup> (Fig. 3).

## Muharram ceremony in East Azerbaijan

### • Tasht Gozari<sup>5</sup>

This ceremony is performed before the decade of Muharram as a sign of watering Imam Hossein and his companions. In another tradition, this ritual is a sign of watering Hor and his companions by the companions of Imam Hussain. "The way of performing the ceremony is that on the night of the twenty-seventh in one of the mosques of the city, they move the bowls several times around the mosque and then put them in their special place and fill them with clear water and kiss them. Mourners ask for their needs while visiting Tubs. Sometimes, the ceremony of putting the wash-tubs in the house of the people who have vows may be held, in which case the groups of mourners, being present in that house, take the tubs to the mosques after the ceremony" (Rezaei, 2000, 155), (Fig. 4).

### • Shakhshi Vakhsi

This Shakhshi ceremony is held almost all over Azerbaijan. In this ceremony, groups of mourners, with loudspeakers in their hands and singing soul-searing lamentations in Azeri language, declare their readiness to fight alongside Imam Hussein.

"It is a kind of religious ceremony that is held during Muharram in some regions of Iran. This ceremony was originally a military dance and parade" (Rezapour, 2016, 177). The time of performing this ceremony is from the first nights of Muharram and it reaches its peak at the night of Tasua and noon of Ashura. Mourners hold a stick in their right hand, which is a symbol of a sword and hold their left hand on the waist of the person next to them. The importance of this ceremony is that it is unique to Azerbaijan and is not performed anywhere else (Fig. 5).

### • Sham Paylamakh<sup>6</sup>

spreading candles, or Sham Pailamakh, is one of the ceremonies that is performed in the cities of Azerbaijan and Ardabil. In this way, people prepare candles in advance. The number of these candles should be at least 41. Then in the evening of Tasu'a, in groups that have a leader, the salut reciters and singers go to 41 mosques and light their candles. In this ceremony, each of the mourners has small containers with them to drink or bring blessing and healing water. This water is in a bowl at the entrance of every mosque and where candles are lit (Fig. 6; Table 2).

By studying and applying this ceremony in the two provinces in question, the differences and similarities between these two provinces can be seen in the



Table 1. Muharram rituals in Khuzestan. Source: Authors.

Name of ritual	Brief Description	Time of Performance
The table of Hazrat Abolfazl and Hazrat Roghayeh	To be grateful for needs being fulfilled or needing or healing patients	The beginning of Muharram
Hazrat Ghasem's tray	A tray in which nuts, candles, and sweets are placed and a green cloth is placed on it. The mourners take something from that tray and vow their own needs that they will prepare a Ghasem's tray next year and distribute it among the mourners.	8 <sup>th</sup> Muharram
Breast beating se sang	This type of ceremony is performed in Behbahan. In this type of ceremony, the mourners sit on their knees and beat their chests slowly until the lamentation rises, and by saying the word "Ali", the mourners beat their chests three times in a row, and this method is repeated several times.	The beginning of Muharram
Carrying Torch	"One of the rituals of Behbahan city is in which they symbolically go to war with darkness by turning on the light; The main reason for these torches is religious thoughts. This ritual is performed in a similar way in Shoshtar."	Ashura
Carrying Sheydouneh	Carrying wooden boxes with bright colors, which have images of martyrs of Karbala and Imams engraved on them.	Ashura
Senj and Damam Zani	"Senj and Damam is an old tradition. which, according to many elders, was transferred from Bushehr and Bandar to Abadan, Khorramshahr, and finally Ahvaz. The philosophy of this is announcing mourning and gathering people."	Before the decade of Muharram
Women's Association	This ceremony is a kind of mourning among women in Behbahan.	The night of Ashura
The three-day ceremony	This ceremony is performed in Shuster and includes the burial of Ashura martyrs.	12 <sup>th</sup> od Muharram
Nakhl Moqom (Maqam) Hossein	"A wooden structure that is called "Nakhl" and is decorated with black cloth decorated with Ashuraic images and writings, is moved in a certain direction on the shoulders of men who are called "Nakhl Bearers" as a sign of the coffin of Seyed o Shahada and the martyrs of Karbala."	Tasua and Ashura
Alam Gardani	Turning a wooden flag, which is the symbol of Hazrat Abbas.	Tosua and Ashura



Fig. 4. Tasht Gozari Ceremony. Source: <https://www.bayanema.ir/news>.



Fig. 5. Shakhsi Vakhshi Ceremony. Source: <https://www.mehrnews.com>.



Fig. 6. Sham paylamakh and Blessed Water. Source: <https://www.yjc.news>.

performance of Muharram rituals. Table 3 refers to similar rituals with slight differences in the two provinces. Table 4 refers to rituals that are not similar in other provinces.

### Conclusion

Comparing the findings of this research with Durkheim's theory, the theory is consistent with the results of this research. Because Muharram rituals, as a factor of cohesion and unification, bring people together and give them mental peace and spirituality. The Theory is that "these faiths, beliefs, and tendencies provide unity, interest, and one-heartedness among the participants

Table 2. Muharram rituals in East Azerbaijan. Source: Authors.

Name of Ritual	Brief Description	Time of Performance
Takhta Chalanlar	This ceremony is performed in memory of Hazrat Ghasem and Hazrat Ali Akbar.	The evening of Tasua and the morning of Ashura
Alam Bandi & Alam Gardani	In this ceremony, wooden flags are rotated as a sign of saying goodbye to Imam Hussain's uprising and carrying the flag of his army.	From the third of Muharram to noon of Ashura
The Ceremony for Hejle Ghasem	In this ceremony, the chamber that symbolizes Hazrat Ghasem's Hejle is taken to the slaughterhouse.	Ashura
Demolition and burning of the chambers and tents	In this ceremony, the tents and chambers for mourning are destroyed and set on fire as a sign of showing the peak of the cruelty of the Yazid's companions.	13h of Muharram
Shakhsi Vakhsi	This ceremony is one of the oldest Azeri ceremonies, which is a special type of breast-beating with the repetition of the phrase "Shakhsi Vakhsi" which is probably a distorted pronunciation of "Shah Hossein Vay Hossein".	Decade of Muharram
Zoljanah Gardani	This ceremony is a kind of Ta'ziyeh after the martyrdom of Imam Hussain when his horse is brought back from the slaughterhouse to the tents.	Ashura
Tasht Gozari	The tub is a symbol of Euphrates water, and in this ceremony, the mourners show their devotion to the thirsty people of the Karbala desert by emptying the water of musk in the tub.	Before the beginning of Muharram
Ghasem Otaghi	A small room is built and carried as a sign of Hazrat Ghase's Hejle. This room is decorated with colorful fabrics and flowers	Tasua
Poolke Gardani	The ceremony of making fabric and oil-coated balls and setting them on fire	Tasua & Ashura
Allah Allah Hoseina	In this ceremony, mourners wear white clothes or towels to honor the last Ihram of Imam Hussain.	Ashura
Sham Paylamakh	In this ceremony, the needy light 41 candles in front of 41 mosques. This ceremony is sometimes performed with bare feet.	Ashura sunset

Table 3. Common rituals in both provinces. Source: Authors.

No.	Khuzestan	East Azerbaijan
1	Hazrat Ghasem's tray	The Ceremony for Hejle Ghasem
2	Carrying Torch	Ghasem Otaghi
3	Alam Gardani	Sham Paylamakh
4		Alam Bandi & Alam Gardani

during the ceremony. The solidarity and unity that takes place through similarity in feelings and adherence to single value systems can connect activists. On the other hand, since religious traditions and customs in religious ceremonies are associated with collective crying and mourning and with special excitement, the activists feel a kind of purification and closeness to God with this

religious act. This causes a kind of prosperity and vitality for the mourning activists. Social entertainment in this ceremony, due to its special features and attractions, strengthens, moves, relaxes, and rejuvenates the individual.”  
In examining the findings of the research Parsons thought that every institution and phenomenon is



Table 4. different rituals of each province. Source: Authors.

No.	East Azerbaijan	Khuzestan
1	Takhta Chalanlar	The table of Hazrat Abolfazl and Hazrat Roghayeh
2	Demolition and burning of the chambers and tents	Breast beating se sang
3	Shakhsi Vakhshi	Carrying Sheydouneh
4	Zoljanah Gardani	Senj & Damam zani
5	Tasht Gozari	Women's Association
6	Poolke Gardani	The three-day ceremony
7	Allah Allah Hoseina	Nakhl Moghom (Magham) Hussein

created in a functional structure and assumes a role in the durability and consistency of that structure. The findings of this research also consider Muharram rituals in both provinces as having functions for the people of the society. Based on the findings of this research, the theory of Paul Tillich, who believes that the human condition throughout history has always raised questions that different cultures have expressed in different ways and different religious traditions. Also, they have given various answers to them, confirming and considering the cultural differences between the two provinces in holding the Muharram ceremony to be caused by cultural, climatic, and historical differences.

The names of these ceremonies, such as Shakhsi Vakhshi, Ghasem Otaghi, or Sham Pailamakh ceremony in Azerbaijan, have Azeri names. Like the women's association, Sheydouneh or Nakhl Mogham (Magham) Hussein in Khuzestan, which was selected based on the dialect and local language of Khuzestan province. Every ritual and ceremony is a symbol of the culture and

history of the people of that region. In the meantime, rituals related to mourning, especially the mourning of the third Imam of the Shiites, have deep and historical diversity and significance. The two provinces of East Azerbaijan and Khuzestan, with their original and historical culture and also, the interweaving of this culture with love and affection for Imams, especially Imam Hossein, have a great cultural treasure in connection with all kinds of mourning. The comparison of these ceremonies in these two historical provinces shows that the roots of these rituals are in the local culture, the type of climate and vegetation such as the use of Nakhl in Khuzestan province, the language, and their economic facilities and natural resources. On the other hand, the common point of all these rituals is around love and devotion to imams and especially Imam Hussain, and fascination with Ashura culture. This principle is considered the central link of unity and empathy and also a school for learning values such as freedom, courage, loyalty, martyrdom, and courage.

Endnotes

1. A kind of Flag

2. Nakhl Carrying

3. <https://www.irna.ir/news>
4. Mashal Gardani (Persian)

5. Watering

6. Spreading Candles

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