

Standard-bearers of Hussein: “Women commemorating Karbala”

Directed by Ingvild Flaskerud

Date of production: 2003

Running time: 35'

Sound: Mono

Language of film: Persian

Subtitles: English

“*Standard-bearers of Hussein: Women commemorating Karbala*” is one of the first in the history of **anthropological films of Iran**, especially from the **post-revolutionary** period, that shows us the **rituals and ceremonies** of women during **Moharram Rituals**.

This film is the result of field research by a Norwegian anthropologist, Ingvild Flaskerud, which was carried out in the city of Shiraz, the third religious city of Iran, where the brother of Imâm Rezâ (the eighth Shiite Imam) *Shâh Cherâq* (the King of light) is buried.



Shiite women commemorating the martyrdom of Ali Asghar in a home. Iran, 2002 ©I. Flaskerud

In this film, she connects the history of the “**Battle of Karbalâ**” in a very logical manner to various elements of Moharram rituals in contemporary Iran. For the first time in this film we enter the sphere of the middle class societies of Shiraz and see how they are patrons of Shiite rituals.

The **space and place** of female Shiite rituals were always concealed from strangers (either Iranian or non-Iranian). Here, however, I. Flaskerud, in a very simple but real way, shows us the different places where female rituals are carried out.

We find out, for the first time in this film, how the Iranian Shiite community creates new rituals and ceremonies and how they connect these to traditional Moharram rituals. We also see how they create new beliefs and new **sacred** and **religious material cultures**. This film gives us an idea of how women share their religious duties, their emotions and their sadness.

In this film, we are also witnesses to a new wave of female **Healers** (Geriseurs) in Post-revolutionary Iran. We see a woman who is practicing biomedicine, and who combines her knowledge with religious and *Koranic* formulas, performing her activities in the form of music, signing and prayer to cure the physical and mental ailments of her female clients.

We see also how one simple *Rowzeh-Khani* changes her face and its functions to a sight of religious dance and body movement to recharge sadness and sickness of Hoseyn's female believers.

Standard-bearers of Hussein: "Women commemorating Karbala" is not only a successful anthropological film about **Female Muslim Shiite Rituals in Iran**, it is also one of the best educational support materials available to academic students and researchers who want to learn more about the rituals and religious life of contemporary Iranian women.

Review by:

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