CHAPTER 1

Alternating between Instrumentalism and the Discursive Tradition

The Iranian Revolution would be one of the key events that prompted social scientists to reassess the significance of religion in the public domain—challenging the assumptions of secularization theories, which had dominated in Western religious studies (Casanova 1994). Michel Foucault, a post-structuralist thinker who visited Iran as a journalist at the time of the Revolution, interpreted the uprising as an anti-imperialist movement deeply rooted in religion and was impressed by its political potential, with notable enthusiasm (Afary and Anderson 2005).[1]

Anthropologist Michael Fischer was the first to formulate the Shia religious worldview as a source of political power by terming it the "Karbala Paradigm." In his book *Iran: From Religious Dispute to Revolution*, originally published in 1980, Fischer argues that the narratives that comprise the Shia worldview serve as interpretive frameworks through which individuals understand their daily lives. At times, these narratives can catalyze political mobilizations. As Chapter 2 offers a detailed account of Shia history and its worldview, only a brief overview is provided here. In the Karbala Paradigm, people are supposed to live their lives by comparing their situation to a series of stories about Imam Hossein, who advocated for justice in Karbala (now located in Iraq), but was martyred in a battle there (the "Tragedy of Karbala"). According to Fischer, the Karbala Paradigm "provides models for living and a mnemonic for thinking about how to live," and he states that "there is a set of parables and moral lessons all connected with or part of the story of Karbala which are not obviously contradictory themselves and to which almost all of life's problems can be referred" (Fischer 2003: 21). Since its formulations, the Karbala Paradigm has frequently been referred to in subsequent studies of contemporary Iranian society (e.g., Khosravi 2008; Siamdoust 2017; Torab 2006; Varzi 2006) and studies of Shiism in other regions (e.g., Deeb 2006; Pinault 2001; Szanto 2013).

1 Foucault's views were later criticized as a projection of the aspirations of progressives onto the Third World (Afary and Anderson 2005). In contrast, Ghamari-Tabrizi (2016) attempts to ideologically recover the "political spirituality" that Foucault saw in the movement—something he argues cannot be dismissed by such criticism.

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A number of scholars, including Shahram Khosravi (2008) and Nahid Siamdoust (2017), have interpreted the Karbala Paradigm in Iran through an instrumentalist lens, emphasizing how the state mobilizes religious symbols to assert ideological control over its subjects. This approach builds on theoretical traditions rooted in Louis Althusserian ideology and Foucauldian discipline, viewing religious rituals as extensions of state power. For example, Khosravi asks, "how the new regime [the Islamic Republic] in Iran has used these symbolic resources [which are related to the Karbala tragedy] to implant the desired social order in its subjects" (2008: 33). He also argues that "[u]tilizing the tragedy of Karbala, the Islamic regime has sought to induce a 'sense of guilt' that would thrust people toward such self-reproach [for not being able to fight with Imam Hossein]" (Khosravi 2008: 51–52).

Siamdoust (2017), who studied the politics of music within the Islamic Republic, similarly declares that she uses the word "ideology" in an Althusserian sense and argues:

> Consequently, there can be competing worldviews, all of them socially constructed, but in the Iranian case the official ideology carries tremendous weight because the state attempts to enforce it both through its ideological apparatuses (including schools, the media, and the cultural field) and its disciplinary apparatuses (such as the judiciary, security forces, police, and prisons). (Siamdoust 2017: 10)

Both Khosravi and Siamdoust frame their arguments by reducing them to an instrumentalist schema in which the state uses religious symbols for governance. The theoretical premise for this schema is based on the arguments of Althusser (1984) and Foucault (1977), which focus on the formation of subjects through the apparatus of state power, and Michel de Certeau (1984), who focuses on people's practices as the residue of such an operation of its power.

Althusser (1984) conceptualizes the "ideological state apparatuses" as a complement to physical violence by "state apparatus." His theory asserts that ideology does "interpellation" to individuals as subjects through their daily lives and that these subjects internalize this ideology, which in turn forms the subjects. What is suggestive in Althusser's theory is that it views everyday practices—with the exception of forced subjugation with violence—as facilitating this internalization of ideology by the subjects. In this light, the religious rituals considered in this book can also be interpreted as part of the "ideological state apparatuses" that produce voluntary submission through daily (ritual) practices. By making people reaffirm an existing order rather than creating a new authority, rituals can be said to achieve subjectivation, and through this,

continue to reproduce the order under authority. In the same manner, Foucault (1977) in his book *Discipline and Punish* also highlights the process of subject formation, inheriting the Althusserian categories of power. What is important here is the distinction between sovereign power, such as repression and exclusion, and disciplinary power as a device, with the latter enabling the operation of panoptic surveillance through concretely ubiquitous procedures.

In contrast, de Certeau emphasizes that practice is always plural and is different—even when Foucault points out that ubiquitous power works consistently and in unity. To illustrate this point, de Certeau (1984: XIX) presents a pair of concepts: "strategy" and "tactic." A "strategy" is "the calculus of force-relationships which becomes possible when a subject of will and power … can be isolated from an 'environment.'" It is this strategic model on which economic, political, and scientific rationalities are modeled. Conversely, a "tactic" is a calculus which does not have its own proper place and, therefore, is constrained by time, capable only of momentary victories. It involves movements within a space controlled by an enemy and represents the art of people making do in a given situation. It can be argued that both Siamdoust and Khosravi, while assuming that Shia religious symbols and rituals are instruments of governance in the Islamic Republic (thus invoking the arguments of Althusser and Foucault), are trying to find de Certeau's "tactics" in the Iranian people.

This argument positioning the Karbala Paradigm as an instrumentalist device can also be inferred from Fischer. In an updated preface to the 2003 edition of his book *Iran: From Religious Dispute to Revolution*, Fischer says, "[i]t is therefore critical also to focus attention on the rhetorical and symbolic paradigms used to recruit and mobilize the revolutionary process proper in the fourteen months from November 1977 to February 1979" (2003: XIV). As noted previously, the Karbala Paradigm, presented by Fischer and invoked by others, has been envisioned as a system in which transcendent entities such as the state can remain outside the paradigm and utilize it in an instrumentalist manner.

However, it is worth bearing in mind anthropologist Marilyn Strathern's reconsideration of the "paradigm" concept. Strathern (1987) points out that the use of the concept of "paradigm shift" in the social sciences and humanities differs from the original meaning devised by philosopher of science Thomas Kuhn, who restricted the use of the concept to the natural sciences. A paradigm is a conceptual framework that defines the scientists of a given era, and some radical groups in the social sciences and humanities set themselves the goal of creating a paradigm shift. However, if we return to the original idea of the paradigm as advocated by Kuhn, Strathern argues, the paradigm shift can be found retrospectively as a consequence of scientific practices, which

means that scientists do not stand outside a paradigm and do not choose to do so. This contrast between the original and expanded meaning of paradigm is also important when considering the position of the Karbala Paradigm. While it was initially proposed as a narrative that defines people's thinking and guides their actions, later instrumentalist explanations have envisioned a situation in which there is an entity that stands outside of the paradigm and is actively utilizing it. Thus, the Karbala Paradigm in the Islamic Republic has often been interpreted as a device of the state to govern and control its subjects. How can we return to the original meaning of paradigm as proposed by Kuhn and reconfigure the Karbala Paradigm?

The Karbala Paradigm as the Discursive Tradition

In anthropology—in contrast to these discussions—efforts have been made to escape instrumentalist explanations by taking advantage of their central characteristic, which involves a tendency to criticize the naïve application of "Western modern" concepts to "others," and to try to overcome the limitations of these concepts (even if they must rely on other modern Western concepts). By following Niklas Luhmann's theory of social systems, it becomes an operation through which anthropology, as a subsystem of the science system, attempts to realize its own blind spots by using the semantic "we/they." Kosuke Sakai and I call this "transcendental relativization" of modern Western concepts (Tani and Sakai 2020). Such a radical stream within anthropology can be traced back to the work of Marcel Mauss in *The Gift* (2001) in terms of a conceptual comparison of "us" and "them." As an attempt by anthropologists involving fieldwork, it can be traced back to the discussions of Edward Evan Evans-Pritchard (1956, 1965), Godfrey Lienhardt (1953), and others at Oxford, and was later named "cultural translation" (Asad 1986a). More recently, an approach has been developed that dares to essentialize and depict the thoughts or cosmology (preferably called "ontology") of the subject people, and by contrasting this with Western modernity, seeks to highlight the limitations in concepts derived from modern Western society and attempts to extend and transform them ("ontological turn") (Holbraad and Pedersen 2017).

Clifford Geertz's argument can also be located within this anthropological tradition. In his book *Negara* on the royal festivals in Bali, Indonesia, Geertz strongly condemns the approach that views the state as merely a means of control focused only on social and economic aspects, and sees rituals only as expressions and reflections of society and economy. He then juxtaposes the

“theater state,” in which the purpose of the state is the performance of rituals, to the Western view of the centralized state. Geertz says:

> Thus the royal rituals … enacted, in the form of pageant, the main themes of Balinese political thought: the center is exemplary, status is the ground of power, statecraft is a thespian art. But there is more to it than this, because the pageants were not mere aesthetic embellishments, celebrations of a domination independently existing: they were the thing itself. (1980: 120)

As such, Geertz is heavily criticizing the Western political view that tries to discuss religious rituals only as a means of governance.

Anthropologist Talal Asad (1993, 2003, 2018) has a similar orientation to Geertz regarding the relationship between religion and politics despite being a harsh critic of Geertz’s concept of religion. Asad states in *Genealogies of Religion*:

> The attempt to understand Muslim traditions by insisting that in them religion and politics (two essences modern society tries to keep conceptually and practically apart) are coupled must, in my view, lead to failure. At its most dubious, such attempts encourage us to take up an a priori position in which religious discourse in the political arena is seen as a disguise for political power. (1993: 28–29)

According to Asad, the concept of religion as defined by modern Western scholarship is closely linked to the ideology behind the separation of the Church and state, which was formed in the West during the Reformation. Therefore, he argues that if we examine Islamic phenomena using Western concepts of “religion” and “politics” and the interrelationships between them, important issues will be overlooked. Asad’s notion opens the way to approach the Islamic Republic—which was established by a movement to establish an Islamic state—from a different angle rather than discussing the relationship between religion and politics in isolation.

During the Iranian Revolution, the leading members of the revolutionary movement who eventually assumed power espoused the doctrine of the “guardianship of the Islamic jurist”, a concept that, while not reflecting a consensus within the Shia community, emerged out of a long-standing tradition of theological and jurisprudential debate within Shiism. Therefore, Asad’s argument can be interpreted as a warning that the establishment of the Islamic

Republic should not be regarded as the state's use of Islam as a means of governance (i.e., instrumentalism). In his later book *Formations of the Secular* (2003), Asad is fiercely critical of the position that views religious movements, such as contemporary Islamist movements, as nationalist and therefore secular, despite their outward appearances (Asad 2003: 195–200), because this would deem political Islam to be a form of crypto-nationalism and nothing more than cultural nationalism.

Contrary to these instrumentalist explanations, Asad (1986b) proposes the concept of the "discursive tradition"[2] in his paper "The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam", which was later exemplarily demonstrated in ethnographies by Saba Mahmood (2005) and Charles Hirschkind (2006). This concept can also be seen as overcoming the dualistic approach which was taken before in anthropology of Islam. In general, interpretation of the Quran (ar., *Qur'ān*), the Holy Book of Islam, and the sayings and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad, leads to individualized and specific legal norms. Islamic Studies and Oriental Studies, established as modern Western disciplines, have adopted the approach of reading literature written by Islamic scholars and determining Islamic doctrine in an essentialist manner. Conversely, anthropology has focused on saint worship and polytheistic belief practices among typically uneducated Muslims, which are sometimes criticized by educated Muslims and Oriental scholars as un-Islamic, and has attempted to view these practices as expressions of Islam in its various regional manifestations from the perspective of cultural relativism. To grasp the relationship between the universality and the diversity of Islam, dualistic frameworks such as "Islam/islams" (El-Zein 1977) have been established. However, in recent years a phenomenon known as the "Islamic Revival" (i.e., the trend of Muslims orientating toward a "universal" Islam) has been proposed as a way to represent the formation process of belief systems by focusing on discourse, which the conventional dualistic approach cannot capture (Eickelman 1987; Roff 1987). Asad's notion of "discursive traditions" may also be seen as resonating with this trend.

The discursive tradition maintains that even when competitive practices, debates, and controversies over Islam manifest among Muslims, they should not be interpreted using an analytical framework from an external observer's perspective, but should be treated immanently and within the totality of Islamic discourse. For example, the self-flagellation ritual (which is discussed in detail in Chapter 5) is traditionally practiced in certain regions. During this ritual, people beat their heads with a dagger, spilling their blood in mourning

2 According to Asad (2018: 92), "discursive tradition is not a synonym for religion or for the absence of secular freedom."

for Hossein. This practice is now criticized by some Islamic jurists for several reasons, and this shift in attitudes may be seen as a consequence of modernization, which has introduced into Islam the idea that watching self-flagellation is uncivilized. However, what Asad advocates is the notion that reform itself is also a consequence of the arguments inherent in Islamic logic and, in that sense, inside the "discursive tradition." The "tradition" here is not discovered, manipulated, or objectified by the modern, recursive subject, as in the "invented tradition" (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983), but is assumed, as Alasdair MacIntyre asserts, to precede the subject and to constrain its mode of thinking: "all reasoning takes place within the context of some traditional mode of thought, transcending through criticism and invention the limitations of what had hitherto been reasoned in that tradition" (MacIntyre 1981: 222).[3] Asad argues that "[t]he history of reform of discursive tradition is precisely a matter of some Muslims trying to persuade others that what was hitherto thought to be 'outside' is really 'inside'—at least that it has always been potentially part of it" (2018: 93). Thus, Asad urges anthropologists to look at the reasonings inherent in Islamic tradition when Muslims affirm or exclude certain practices. In short, an approach that focuses on discursive traditions explains Islamic practices and their contemporary changes in ways that are inherent to Islamic logic.

If we recompose the Karbala Paradigm advocated by Fischer with Asad's discursive tradition, the Islamic Republic can be seen as a state established within the paradigm. Indeed, the first Supreme Leader Ruhollah Khomeini's theory of the "guardianship of the Islamic jurist" is also based on an accumulation of earlier Shia scholarship. Having studied in Qom, a center for Shia scholarship in Iran, Khomeini developed his arguments in Najaf, a center for Shia learning in Iraq, having been exiled in 1964 by the regime of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi under its secularization policy. Khomeini criticized the Pahlavi regime and the Western countries that supported it as agents (or puppets) of colonialism and called for their overthrow and the establishment of Islamic rule. Thus, we can say that Khomeini's arguments belong to the Islamic discursive tradition in that they appealed to the wider Muslim community (ar., *ʾumma*), even though their practical audience was limited to Shia Muslims.

As such, we can adopt the approach of portraying the totality of politics and religion in Iran as a process within the Islamic discursive tradition. Asad's adoption of this approach emphasizes the gap between Islamic logic and

3 Nevertheless, Chapter 5 demonstrates an understanding of Asad's approach, while also highlighting its limitations—particularly his emphasis on discourse—in the context of analysing self-flagellation rituals.

modern Western logic. For example, Asad says the nationalist notion of nation and the Islamic *ʾumma* are “grammatically quite different” (2003: 198). Also, when Islamists, who sometimes resort to extreme violence, are pitted against state power, it is possible to portray each side as based on a different logic. Thus, the discursive tradition can be seen as oppositional to instrumentalism.

Between Instrumentalism and the Discursive Tradition

Having confirmed the importance of the discursive tradition, describing the Islamic Republic only within this approach has limitations. This can be highlighted from two different perspectives. First, the instrumentalist explanation is also shared among the people being studied. Byron Good and Mary-Jo DelVecchio Good (1988) state that religious rituals have become a symbol of oppression for those who question the legitimacy of the regime. As illustrated by the examples of Jamshid and Youssef, mentioned in the Introduction to this book, some people distance themselves from rituals and understand rituals in an instrumentalist manner. Thus, provided there is a certain degree of instrumentalist interpretation of ritual by local people, the Karbala Paradigm should not be seen merely as the discursive tradition and regarded as the Western “other.” To do so would overlook the instrumentalist narratives that I encountered in my fieldwork; namely, the views of people who say that the Islamic Republic exploits religion to govern.

Second, it is necessary to consider the state. The objective of the 1979 revolutionary movement was to overthrow the Pahlavi regime, which was reliant on Western countries, and the first priority following the Revolution was to develop the country into an Islamic Republic.[4] Even if the ideal is to unify the *ʾumma* one day, as demonstrated by the “export of the revolution” policy, Iran is a nation-state with a territory.

Therefore, there is no doubt that the regime’s main concern is the smooth running of Iran as a nation-state. In fact, the Islamic Republic has developed a constitution that has the structure of a modern secular state, with a separation of powers; however, above the organs of the state is the Supreme Leader, who must be a high-ranking Shia jurist called “the source of imitation” (*marjaʿ-e*

4 This parallels Joseph Stalin’s articulation of “socialism in one country,” which he promoted in opposition to the theory of world revolution—most strongly associated with Trotsky—which held that the success of socialism in the Soviet Union depended on global revolutionary movements.

taqlīd). This distinctive Iranian structure, combining state and religion, creates a unique political dynamism. To capture this, it is necessary to refer to the state to some extent.

Saba Mahmood, like Foucault, emphasizes the operations of modern state power, but she sees secularization not as "the withdrawal of the state from the religious domain, but the state's reconfiguration of substantive features of religious life" (Mahmood 2013: 47). This means that the scope of modern state regulation expands to include social and legal norms derived from religious doctrine. From this perspective, it is essential to consider the commonalities of the modern nation-state system, whether it is a so-called liberal secular state or a religious state that rejects secularism and is heavily involved with religion, such as Iran (see Mahmood 2005). By following Mahmood, we can analyze the Islamic Republic in the same way as a secular state, by regarding Iran as having formed by the state's reconfiguration of religion.[5]

The political process surrounding the succession of the Supreme Leader is a noteworthy example. In 1989, Ayatollah Khomeini died and was succeeded by the then President, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, as Supreme Leader. This process illustrates the tension that exists between the state and religio-juristic authority. A feud between Khomeini and Grand Ayatollah Hossein-Ali Montazeri, who had been initially nominated as his successor (his nomination was officially withdrawn in 1988) meant that Khamenei was instead expected to become the next Supreme Leader. However, Khamenei did not meet the requirements of the *marjaʿ-e taqlīd* as stipulated by the constitution at that time as he had not written *A Clarification of Questions* (*towżīḥ-e al-masāʾel*), which was one of the criteria for being considered a learned and interpretative jurist within the Shia community. Immediately after Khomeini's death, Khamenei was elected Supreme Leader by the Assembly of Experts, but only in a temporary capacity because of the constitution's stipulations (Arjomand 2009). However, a referendum introduced a revised constitution, which removed the *marjaʿ-e taqlīd* from the list of requirements of being the Supreme Leader and gave political ability precedence over religious scholarship in the event of competing candidates. Khamenei was then officially acknowledged as Supreme Leader. According to Kenji Kuroda (2015), at that time, a binary division of roles separated politics and religion among the high-ranking jurists in Iran. Khamenei was introduced as the political leader and other clergies

5 The Islamic Republic inherited its bureaucratic apparatus from the earlier Pahlavi regime. Khomeini (2015) criticized the cumbersome nature of this bureaucracy, and even now—more than forty years after the revolution—the Islamic Republic has yet to resolve the issue, as I experienced firsthand during my fieldwork.

favorable to the regime as religious sources of imitation. However, Khamenei was later included on the list of religio-juristic authorities recommended by the state for the people (Shia Muslims) in Iran to follow, alongside the demand that he, as Supreme Leader of the state, should also be a religio-juristic authority. Linda Walbridge (2001) highlighted that since Khamenei became Supreme Leader, state power has intervened against Islamic jurists due to political expediency.[6] An approach that views the Islamic Republic merely as an internal part of the Shia discursive tradition would overlook the influence this modern state power has on the discursive tradition.

Two Dialectic Dynamisms

We have so far considered two viewpoints: an instrumentalist explanation based on the logic of the modern secular nation-state in which the state utilizes and exploits religion, and an explanation of Iran as a nation inside the Karbala Paradigm as the discursive tradition. Each of these perspectives can depict some aspects of the subject, but neither can adequately describe the dynamism of Shia rituals in contemporary Iran. To get closer to this dynamism means having to alternate between these two views while also maintaining the tension between them. Therefore, it does not involve a combination of the two explanations, but an alternation between them (Strathern 2004: x) to portray aspects of ritual that would be discarded by either approach. As such, it is not a question of adhering to one viewpoint or the other and attempting to argue for their legitimacy; rather it requires incorporating into anthropology the customs of local people who live within inherently contradictory perspectives.

In so doing, this book attempts to portray the duality of *submission* and *rebellion* that is inherent in Hossein's mourning rituals. Two types of dialectic dynamism are theoretically important to understanding the duality of these rituals: First, communality emerges from religious rituals involving bodily movements in opposition to the nation-state's unmediated connection

6 However, demonstrating intervention is difficult, as the views of religio-juristic authorities are internally self-contained, leaving no room for external influence. This mirrors the tension between jurisprudential and sociological approaches to law in the analysis of legal practice in modern legal systems. As Bruno Latour (2009) illustrates in his fieldwork on the French Council of State, legal sociology attempts to explain changes in legal interpretation by referring to factors external to the law (such as shifts in public opinion). In contrast, for legal practitioners, legal integrity is paramount: even when interpretations shift, such change is understood as arising from the internal logic of the law itself, leaving no space for external explanations.

between the whole and the individual. Second, bodily practices exist despite the state's attempt to control people's bodily movements through religious discourse. I will describe both and discuss their relationship to the duality inherent in rituals.

The first dynamism is the tension between state governance and communality that emerges from religious rituals. Japanese structural anthropologist Makoto Oda (1997) paraphrases de Certeau's contrast between "strategy" by the state and "tactics" by the people as the "synecdochical" imagination and the "metonymic/metaphorical" imagination. Synecdochical here means that a part and the whole are directly connected in the way that a part can be used to refer to the whole, or vice versa. Metonymic/metaphorical here switches depending on the situation, with metonymic meaning something that is substituted for another, which it is closely associated with, and metaphorical is used to mean that the identical boundary is determined each time by extension through analogy. Oda posits that the modern nation-state's attempt to directly govern its people is best understood as a relationship based on synecdochical imagination in that it directly links the whole and the individual without mediation. This imagination operates in the background, where identities are formed by *ad hoc* alternation between kinship or master-servant relationships and those whose boundaries are determined on a case-by-case basis through extension. Metonymic/metaphorical imaginations slip through the synecdochical imaginations like a taxonomical classification and one can say that these two imaginations work against each other.

As discussed in Chapter 2, Hossein's mourning rituals can be based on the metonymic imagination in the sense that it is a ground-based holding unit, and it launches "communitas" (Turner 1969) by performing physical actions that share the same place. These rituals are also metaphoric in the sense that the participants assign the relationship between Hossein and his enemies to themselves and others as an analogy. Thus, Hossein's mourning rituals, which are supposed to play an important role in maintaining the Karbala Paradigm among the people (Fischer 2003), we can ask how Shia communality against the synecdochical relationship with the state is created and acted upon.

What we will examine in this book is the tension created between the state, which is oriented towards such a synecdochical relationship and uses "strategies" to deal with the communality that resists it, and the communality of the people, which act as "tactics" against the state. Sound culture, which is discussed in Chapter 3, is a good example of this tension between strategies and tactics. While the state attempts to regulate music and dance according to Islamic standards, dance challenges this regulation by its communality through physical practice. The example of the Karbala pilgrimage, which is

discussed in Chapter 4, also illustrates how Shia communality, shared across state borders and nationalities, is a potential threat to the state, which aims to engage and control the pilgrimage; in this example, the outer edges of the religious community challenge the outer edges of the nation-state.

The second type of dialectic dynamism is the tension between discourse and bodily practices. Shia jurisprudential authorities have created a normative discourse on people's bodily practices, and in this sense, they are part of the discursive tradition that Asad refers to. However, as poststructuralist feminist Judith Butler (1990) notes, the body or bodily practices, which are constructed through people's speech, act as if they were an unchanging material exterior. Therefore, the body or bodily practices often appear as something that can subvert the dominant discourse with an excess that is not fully reducible to discourse, which may be an element that attracts people toward religious rituals. The discourse spun by Islamic scholars attempts to control the excesses. For the state, which is oriented towards the metaphorical relationship described previously, the community that emerges through religious rituals may be a potential danger, and acclimating this communality becomes an urgent task. Therefore, the state attempts to control people's bodies by using religious discourse in an instrumentalist manner. This interactive tension that exists between the state's attempt to control the excesses of the body through discourse and the bodily practices that are always-already slipping through the discursive controls in place, is different to—albeit in the same form as—the tension between the state and community discussed previously. The discourse of the Supreme Leader as the Shia juristic authority in the Islamic Republic is the nexus of state and religion. The conditioning of chest-beating rituals by religio-juristic authorities (which is discussed in Chapter 3), and state control of eulogists indicate that the state aims to control the excesses of people's bodily practices by controlling religious discourse. An example of the limits of this discourse-based control of bodily practices is the self-flagellation ritual discussed in Chapter 5. Self-flagellation rituals, which are excessive bodily practices based on faith, slip through the "strategies" employed by the state and religious scholars, both of whom attempt to exert control through religious discourse.

The communality of people against the state and the bodily practices of people against discourse can each be considered dialectic in the sense that Roy Wagner (1986) refers to. The two poles—state and communality, discourse and corporeality—are in a dialectical relationship of mutual innovation, with each conditioning the other. As Wagner states, "[t]he dialectic is *enabled* by an encompassing principle of figure-ground reversal, such that each pole of the dialectic is the limiting condition of the other" (1986: 25, original emphasis).

The dialectic here is not a Hegelian synthesis, but a process of schizogenesis between the two poles (Viveiros de Castro 2009: 119). These two dynamics represent distinct dialectics of a shared form. By distinguishing between them and examining various examples of Hossein's mourning rituals in detail, this book illustrates the dynamics of two contrary aspects of *submission* and *rebellion* that are inherent in the rituals under the Islamic Republic regime. I argue that this paradox cannot be seen by simply viewing these rituals as either instrumentalist or discursive traditions; it is only by alternating back and forth between the two aspects that this becomes apparent.