

MATERIALITY, RITUALS AND THE SENSES

THE DYNAMIC WORLD OF
LIVED SHI' I ISLAM



LUND
UNIVERSITY



19-21 OCTOBER 2022 • ISTANBUL

Swedish Research Institute



MATERIALITY, RITUALS AND THE SENSES

PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

Wednesday, 19 October 2022

- 16:00 - 18:00** **Opening session and joint keynote speech by Karen Ruffle (University of Toronto) and Babak Rahimi (UCSD)**
- 19:00 - 20:30** **Welcome reception** (at the invitation of His Excellency Peter Ericson, Consul-General of Sweden in Istanbul)

Thursday, 20 October 2022

- 09:30 - 11:15** **Panel 1: Shi'i Publics and Counter-Publics**
- 11:15 - 11:45** Coffee break
- 11:45 - 13:15** **Panel 2: Shrines and Architecture**
- 13:15 - 14:45** Lunch break
- 14:45 - 16:30** **Panel 3: Art, Materiality and Performance**
- 16:30 - 17:00** Coffee break
- 17:00 - 18:30** **Feature Film and Discussion**
The Sky Wept for 40 Days (by Sabrina Mervin)
- 19:00** Conference dinner

Friday, 21 October 2022

- 09:30 - 11:15** **Panel 4: Contested Sensory Forms**
- 11:15 - 11:45** Coffee break
- 11:45 - 13:15** **Panel 5: Materialities of Pilgrimage and Mourning**
- 13:15 - 14:45** Lunch break
- 14:45 - 16:30** **Between Culture and Religion: A Conversation with Shi'i Cultural Producers and Heritage Makers**
- 16:30 - 17:00** Coffee break
- 17:00 - 18:00** **Short Films and Discussion**
Ah, Zaynab! Islamic Statue Art in Kuwait (by Nada Al-Hudaid)
Ashura in Bushehr, Iran (by Babak Rahimi)
- 18:00 - 18:30** **Closing remarks and conclusion**
- 19:30** Conference dinner

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

WEDNESDAY, 19 OCTOBER 2022

16:00 - 18:00

Aesthetics of Karbala: Reflections on Sensational Shi'ism

Opening session and joint keynote speech by **Karen Ruffle** (University of Toronto) and **Babak Rahimi** (University of California in San Diego)

19:00 - 20:30

Welcome reception

At the invitation of His Excellency Peter Ericson, Consul-General of Sweden in Istanbul

THURSDAY, 20 OCTOBER 2022

09:30 - 11:15

Panel 1: Shi'i Publics and Counter-Publics

Chair: Oula Kadhum (Lund University)

Rhys Thomas Sparey (King's College London)

Mourning Friends, Mourning Martyrs: A Phenomenology of Digitally Mediated Grief among Shi'as during the Covid-19 Pandemic

Nargis Ali Virani (Emory University)

The Pandemic, A New Digital Media, and the Solidification of a Global Communal Identity: One Ismaili Jam'at

Epsita Halder (Jadavpur University)

Shi'a Online Sensorium as forms of Urban Contestation in Kolkata, India

Fizza Joffrey (University of Oxford)

Ashura in the City and Dynamic Visibility: Expressions of Shi'i Culture in Karachi

Radhika Gupta (Leiden University)

Shi'i Internationalism and the aesthetics of Muharram in a "remote" Himalayan locale

11:15 - 11:45

Coffee break

11:45 - 13:15

Panel 2: Shrines and Architecture

Chair: Nada Al-Hudaid (Lund University)

Mohammad Mesbahi (Islamic College, London)

An assessment of the prominence of Masjid-i Jamkarān, for the Shī'a ithnā-'asharī Muslims

Noor Zaidi (University of Maryland Baltimore County)

"The South Asian Zaynab:" Narrative, Politics, and Practice at the Bibi Pak Daman Shrine, 1970-present

Nooshin Shafaei (independent researcher) and **Hassan Pasyar** (independent researcher and documentary filmmaker)

The Saqqa-khaneh in Iran: Reconstructing the Saqqa-khaneh in the 21st Century Designing Traditional Devotional Architecture for a Contemporary Context

Ahmad Shekarchi (Shahid Beheshti University)

Extending the Sacred or Reserving the Memory?

13:15 - 14:45

Lunch break

14:45 - 16:30

Panel 3: Art, Materiality and Performance

Chair: Yafa Shanneik (Lund University)

Ankita Choudhary (University of Toronto)

The Power of Love ('ishq) in Ephemeral Ta'ziya: Makers and Materiality

Hawraa Al-Hassan (University of Cambridge)

Ta'ziyeh and the Colonial Imaginary: Transporting the Passion of Husayn to Victorian England

Lucy Deacon (University of Edinburgh)

Karbala from Canvas to Stage: The Influence of Pardeh-dārī (Storytelling, or Picture Narration) on the Iranian Ta'ziyeh

Ayso Milikbekov (University of Oxford)

Phenomenology of Maddô in Tajikistan: The lived experience of Maddô of the Shi'a Ismaili youth in Dushanbe.

Nada Al-Hudaid (Lund University)

In the Khidma ('Service') of Ahl al-Bayt: Agency and Social Capital in Religious Statue Art in Kuwait

16:30 - 17:00 **Coffee break**

17:00 - 18:30 **Feature Film and Discussion**
Moderator: Stefan Williamson Fa (Lund University)

The Sky Wept for 40 Days

Sabrina Mervin, CNRS (research director). 63 minutes (2022)

19:00 **Conference Dinner**

FRIDAY, 21 OCTOBER 2022

09:30 - 11:00 **Panel 4: Contested Sensory Forms**
Chair: Karen Ruffle (University of Toronto)

Stefan Williamson Fa (Lund University)

Husayn's Flag Will Never Fall: Muharram Mourning and its Detractors in the Caucasus

Samaah Jaffer (Yale University)

"I Saw Nothing But Beauty": Aesthetics of Excess in North American Memory of Karbala

Kabiru Haruna Isa (Bayero University of Kano)

Islamic Zambo: Hausa Anti-Shia Songs in Kano, Nigeria

Nabeel Jafri (University of Toronto)

Knowledge becoming: Performing 'ilm between the shirwānī and the 'amāmah

11:00 - 11:30 **Coffee break**

(including a demonstration of the Edinburgh University Library's manuscript collection by Dr Lucy Deacon)

11:30 - 13:15

Panel 5: Materialities of Pilgrimage and Mourning

Chair: Babak Rahimi (University of California in San Diego)

Fouad Gehad Marei (Lund University)

Beyond Belief: 'Rediscovering' the power of form and spectacle in Twelver Shi'ism—Ziyārat Al-Arba'in as an example

Rasool Akbari (Humboldt University of Berlin)

"The Haram heals": Contested spatialities of pilgrimage at Mashhad's Imam Reza Shrine

Sameer Hakim Hamdani (INTACH Kashmir)

Festive Illumination, Prayers, and Grave Visitation: Jeshan-i Nim Shaban Amongst Kashmiri Shi'a Community

Hasan Ali Khan (Arif Hasan and Associates)

From 'Ashura to 'urs, a medieval motif of the Qalandariyya in contemporary Pakistan

Ekaterina Kapustina (Russian Academy of Science)

Mount Shalbuldag Pilgrimage Infrastructural Projects and Local Shi'i Community

13:15 - 14:45

Lunch break

14:45 - 16:30

Between Culture and Religion: A Conversation with Shi'i Cultural Producers and Heritage Makers

Moderator: Fouad Gehad Marei (Lund University)

Maryam Hilli, United Kingdom

Filmmaker, TV Producer and Digital Marketing Expert, The Shia Voice (Imam Hussein TV) & Who is Hussain? campaign

Nazer Mehrli, Denmark

CEO and Founder, Virtual Reality Karbala

Sayed Abbaas Sohofi, Iran

Director, Museum of Shi'i Arts in Qom

Dr Meysam Tavakoli Bina, Iran

Scientific Advisor, Museum of Shi'i Arts in Qom

16:30 - 17:00 **Coffee break**

17:00 - 18:00 **Short Films and Discussion**

Ah Zaynab! Islamic Statue Art in Kuwait

Nada Al-Hudaid (research director). 30 minutes (2022)

Ashura in Bushehr (Iran)

Babak Rahimi (research director). 14 minutes (2022)

18:00 - 18:30 **Closing Remarks and Conclusion**

19:30 **Conference Dinner**

SATURDAY, 22 OCTOBER 2022

Istanbul guided city walk and tour (optional)

Important notice on papers and panels

Your presentation should have a max. length of 15 minutes to allow for sufficient time for questions and comments at the end of each panel.

Please be advised that the proceedings will not be recorded.

We also ask participants not to record presentations on their own devices or take photos of presenters or audiovisual presentations without explicit prior permission from presenters and conference organisers.

Important details

ARRIVING TO ISTANBUL

There are two airports in Istanbul. Istanbul Airport is the largest, located on the European side. The other, Sabiha Gökçen International Airport, is on the Asian side.

ARRIVING FROM ISTANBUL AIRPORT

There are two airports in Istanbul. Istanbul Airport is the largest, located on the European side. The other, Sabiha Gökçen International Airport, is on the Asian side.

Airport Shuttle Bus: A convenient and cheap way to go downtown is to take the airport bus to Taksim, a ride that can take up to an hour depending on the traffic. The bus currently costs around 50 TL, baggage included (stowed separately upon embarking the bus). **Payment is made by card, not cash.**

Taxi: Outside the arrival hall you will find yellow taxi cars lined up – follow the signs and don't accept taxi offers on your way out. Many taxi drivers don't speak English, but understand a little. The street where the institute is located – Istiklal Caddesi, the long shopping street that stretches between Tünel and Taksim Square – is normally not accessible by car by day but there are different options where to ask the driver to stop:

- Şişhane (pronounced Shish-hane), the metro station
- Tünel meydanı, the end station of the subterranean funicular from Karaköy
- Richmond Hotel, which can be reached by means of Asmalımescit sokak / Kumbaracı sokak

Currently (September 2022) the fare for a ride from the airport to any of the addresses above amounts to about 300 liras and takes about half an hour. **Payment is made by cash, not card.** All taxis are equipped with meters. If you suspect the driver of overcharging you, take the number of the cab which is written with big letters on the side of the vehicle. You can also ask for a receipt (fiş), which they are obliged to give you. The drivers normally don't expect a tip, but they do appreciate a few extra liras.

ATM machines can be found in the arrival hall of the airport and other nodes of communication.

ARRIVING FROM SABIHA GÖKÇEN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

Since Sabiha Gökçen is located further away from the centre than Istanbul Airport, taking a taxi is much more expensive. The price can also differ a lot depending on the traffic. The ride to any of the destinations listed above may easily take more than an hour, and the fare be 400 TL and upwards. So unless money is no object, the airport shuttle bus is to prefer. The end station to look for is Taksim.

GETTING AROUND BY OTHER MEANS THAN TAXI OR SHUTTLE BUS

Depending on how much you are likely to use public transport during your stay in Istanbul it is advisable to get an Istanbul Kart, which can be used on all public transport, including the boats. An Istanbul Kart costs 20TL and can be charged with any amount for the fares at machines at all major hubs of public transport.

ARRIVING BY OTHER MEANS THAN PLANE

Istanbul's old railway stations Sirkeci (on the European side) and Haydarpasa (on the Asian side) are currently not in use as such anymore. Trains from Greece and Bulgaria stop at Halkali on the western side of the city. From there, it is possible to take the Marmaray Metro line to Yenikapi and change there to the M2 metro line which stops at Şişhane, right next to the institute. The metro can be accessed with the Istanbul kart. Long-distance buses from Europe stop not far from Halkali, at the central "Otogar" which also has access to a metro line in the direction of Yenikapi and further on from there to Şişhane.

Venue and Contact Details

The conference will take place at the Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul

VISITING ADDRESS

Istiklal Caddesi 247,
Tünel - Beyoglu, Istanbul

PHONE

+90 212 252 41 19

E-Mail

info@sri.org.tr

POSTAL ADDRESS

P.K. 125 Beyoglu,
TR-344 33 Istanbul



FINDING THE INSTITUTE

If you have made it to Taksim, you can take the metro one station to Şişhane (M2, direction Yenikapi). The Swedish Research Institute is located inside the premises of Swedish Consulate General, next to the uppermost Metro station exit. If you prefer to walk from Taksim to the institute, you simply follow Istiklal, a walk of 15-20 minutes. Or you can take the nostalgic tramway to Tünel, using your Istanbul Kart. From Tünel Meydan or Richmond Hotel you have to walk only around 50-100 meters until you see the white, gothic-style gate of the Swedish Consulate General, located on Istiklal Caddesi 247.

ACCESS TO THE SWEDISH RESEARCH INSTITUTE IN ISTANBUL (SRII)

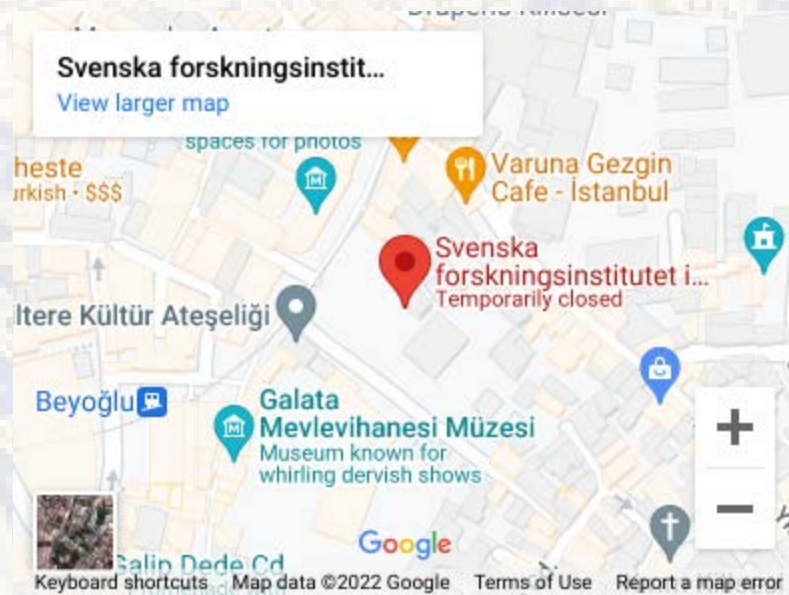
The SRII is located within the compound of the Swedish Consulate General and underlies its security regulations. Access to the compound is only granted to people who are expected or have registered with the secretary in before.

Daytime visitors are given a badge by the guards at the entrance in exchange for their passport or ID. This badge should be carried visibly whenever outdoors within the compound and handed back to the guard upon leaving, when they will get their passport or ID back.

The main building within the compound is the Palais de Suède or Consulate general. The institute's library, office spaces and auditorium are located in the Dragoman house to the left of it, down the slope to the garden. Most of the guest rooms are located in the Annex building next to it, which is built on a slope, meaning that they may be located below as well as above the floor where one enters from the garden.

Since the SRII shares the compound with the Consulate General, its guests are politely reminded to stay within the boundaries of the Annex and Dragoman house and not stray off to the consulate building and its garden.

More info: <https://srii.org/pages/information-for-visitors>



FOR INQUIRIES AND FURTHER INFORMATION

alterumma@ctr.lu.se

This conference is funded through a research grant of the European Research Council under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation program (Grant agreement No. 724557).



Al-Bīrūnī's *al-Āthār al-bāqiya 'an al-qurūn al-khāliya* (Edinburgh University Library OR. MS 161)

Edinburgh University Library's Centre for Research Collections (CRC) holds a collection of nearly 700 manuscripts from the Islamicate world, the majority of which are in Persian and Arabic, including many of potential interest to scholars of Shi'ism. These range from famous items such as a copy of al-Bīrūnī's *al-Āthār al-bāqiyah 'an al-qurūn al-khāliyah* dated 707 A.H. (1307 C.E.), and works on Islamic Law and theology, to poetry and *fāl-nāmah*-ha (divination materials). The majority of these items were brought to Scotland during the 18th and 19th centuries C.E. by employees of the East India Company. The CRC seeks to widen access to the collection and offers a free remote consultation facility using high-definition visualisation equipment (by appointment). Delegates are invited to join Dr Lucy Deacon for a live link up with the CRC team for a demonstration of the remote consultation process on **Friday, 20 October , at 11am during the coffee break.**





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The Art of Resistance in Islam

The Performance of Politics among Shi'i Women in the Middle East and Beyond

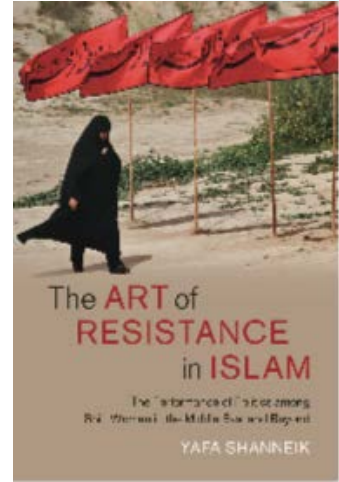
Yafa Shanneik
University of Birmingham

Based on first-hand ethnographic insights into Shi'i religious groups in the Middle East and Europe, this book examines women's resistance to state as well as communal and gender power structures. It offers a new transnational approach to understanding gender agency within contemporary Islamic movements expressed through language, ritual practices, dramatic performances, posters and banners. By looking at the aesthetic performance of the political on the female body through Shi'i ritual practices – an aspect that has previously been ignored in studies on women's acts of resistance –, Yafa Shanneik shows how women play a central role in redefining sectarian and gender power relations both in the Middle East and in the European diaspora.

Preface; Introduction; 1. Trajectories of Shi'is in the Gulf and their presence in Europe; 2. The rites of mourning within Shi'i Islam; 3. Performing the sacred: emotions, the body, and visibility; 4. Aestheticisation of politics: the case of taṭbīr; 5. Fatima's apparition: power relations within female ritual spaces; 6. The power of the word: the politicisation of language; 7. Conclusion.

"This exceptional study explores a movement among contemporary Shi'a women who have begun to incorporate bodily practices previously reserved for men within Shi'a mourning rituals (e.g. self-flagellation, walking on coals). With great subtlety and insight, Shanneik analyzes these emergent ritual forms as theopolitical practice, a response both to growing sectarian (anti-Shi'a) violence and to the patriarchal constraints of Shi'a traditionalism."

Charles Hirschkind, *University of California Berkeley*



December 2021

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Cover page:

Clockwise from top-left: Mawlid decorations at the shrine of Imam Husayn in Cairo, Egypt © Fouad Gehad Marei (2010) • Cassette tape recordings of Azeri reciter Salim Moazenzadeh in Tabriz, Iran. From the collection of © Stefan Williamson Fa (2016) • Installation by Kuwaiti statue artist Hayat Ashkanany at the *Ah, Zaynab!* exhibition in Kuwait City, Kuwait © Nada Al-Hudaid (2015) • Candles and other votive offerings decorating a *sufra*, a meal prepared to celebrate the birth of the awaited Imam Mahdi © Nada Al-Hudaid (2015) • *Taṭbīr* (ritual bloodletting) in Nabatiya, southern Lebanon © Fouad Gehad Marei (2010) • Prostration tablets, prayer beads and VR headsets: Paraphernalia of devotion and prayer in a Shi'i mosque in Cologne, Germany © Fouad Gehad Marei (2021) • Behesht-e Zahra in metropolitan Tehran, the largest cemetery in Iran © Fouad Gehad Marei (2008) • Kuwaiti artist draws charcoal portraits of pilgrims during Ziyārat Al-Arba'īn in Iraq © Nada Al-Hudaid (2015).
Center: Ritual lamentation ceremony in Karbala, Iraq © Fouad Gehad Marei (2015).

Background image (Programme Overview):

Zuljanah, the horse of Imam Husayn mourns the death of its master. Painting by Kuwaiti artist Marjan. Photograph by © Nada Al-Hudaid (2015).

Background image (Conference Programme):

Details from the cupola of the shrine of Sayida Roqaya in Damascus, Syria © Fouad Gehad Marei (2011).