

# 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

- 15:00 - 17:00** Opening session and joint keynote speech by Karen Ruffle (University of Toronto) and Babak Rahimi (UCSD)
- 17:00 - 17:30** Coffee break
- 17:30 - 19:00** **Panel 1: Shi'i Publics and Counter-Publics**
- 19:00 - 20:30** Welcome reception and dinner

### Thursday, 20 October 2022

- 9:30 - 11:00** **Panel 2: Art, Materiality and Performance**
- 11:00 - 11:30** Coffee break
- 11:30 - 13:00** **Panel 3: Contested Sensory Forms**
- 13:00 - 14:30** Lunch break
- 14:30 - 16:00** **Panel 4: Shrines and Architecture**
- 16:00 - 16:30** Coffee break
- 16:30 - 18:00** **Film screening: *The Sky Wept for 40 Days*** (by Sabrina Mervin)
- 19:00** Conference dinner

### Friday, 21 October 2022

- 9:30 - 11:00** **Panel 5: Changing Shi'i Rituals and Traditions in Azerbaijan**
- 11:00 - 11:30** Coffee break
- 11:30 - 13:00** **Panel 6: Materialities of Pilgrimage and Mourning**
- 13:00 - 14:30** Lunch break
- 14:30 - 16:15** **Between Culture and Religion: A Conversation with Shi'i Cultural Producers and Heritage Makers**
- 16:15 - 16:45** Coffee break
- 16:45 - 17:15** **Film screening: *Ashura in Bushehr, Iran*** (by Babak Rahimi)
- 17:15 - 18:00** **Closing remarks and conclusion**
- 19:30** Conference dinner

### Saturday 22 October 2022

Istanbul Guided City Tour



# Conference Programme

Wednesday, 19 October 2022

15:00 - 17:00

## *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)

17:00 – 17:30

## Coffee Break

17:30 – 19:00

## 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*

19:00 – 20:30

## Welcome Reception and Dinner

Thursday, 20 October 2022

08:30 – 09:30

## Coffee Lounge

09:30 – 11:00

## Panel 2: 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-dāri (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-Hudaïd** (Lund University)  
*In the Khidma ('Service') of Ahl al-Bayt: Agency and Social Capital in Religious Statue Art in Kuwait*



11:00 – 11:30

Coffee Break

11:30 - 13:00

**Panel 3: Contested Sensory Forms**

Chair: Karen Ruffle (University of Toronto)

- **Stefan Williamson Fa** (Lund University)  
*Intra-Religious Encounters: Contested Aesthetics of Devotion in a Diaspora Mosque in Europe*
- **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*

13:00 – 14:30

Lunch Break

14:30 – 16:00

**Panel 4: Shrines and Architecture**

Chair: Nada Al-Hudaïd (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 21<sup>st</sup> Century Designing Traditional Devotional Architecture for a Contemporary Context*
- **Ahmad Shekarchi** (Shahid Beheshti University)  
*Extending the Sacred or Reserving the Memory?*

16:00 – 16:30

Coffee Break

16:30 – 18:00

**Film Screening and Discussion**

- *The Sky Wept for 40 Days*  
Sabrina Mervin (research director). 63 minutes (2022)

19:30

Conference dinner



## Friday, 21 October 2022

08:30 – 09:30

Coffee Lounge

09:30 – 11:00

**Panel 5: Changing Shi'i Rituals and Traditions in the Republic of Azerbaijan**

Chair: Altay Goyushov (Baku Research Institute)

- **Kanan Rovshanoglu** (Center for Identity Studies, Azerbaijan)  
*Restoration of Pilgrimage to Shi'i Shrines in Iraq and Iran in Post-Soviet Azerbaijan*
- **Samira Alakbarli** (Baku Research Institute)  
*Social Justice in a Discourse of Contemporary Azerbaijani Shi'i Believers*
- **Araz Baghirov** (Baku Research Institute)  
*Muharram Rituals among Talysh Peoples of Post-Soviet Azerbaijan*
- **Javid Aghayev** (Ankara University and BNE Intellinews)  
*Ivory Lassy's "The Muharram Mysteries among the Azerbaijani Turks of Caucasia" as a Unique Source in the Study of Transformations of Shi'i Rituals and Traditions*
- **Anar Jafarov** (National Academy of Sciences of Azerbaijan)  
*Shi'ism in the National Identity of Contemporary Azerbaijanis*

11:00 – 11:30

Coffee Break

11:30 - 13:00

**Panel 6: 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 Hamdani** (INTACH Kashmir)  
*Festive Illumination, Prayers, and Grave Visitation: Jeshan-i Nim Shaban Amongst Kashmiri Shi'a Community*
- **Hasan Ali Khan** (independent researcher)  
*From 'Ashura to 'urs, a medieval motif of the Qalandariyya in contemporary Pakistan*
- **Ekaterina Kapustina** (Russian Academy of Science)  
*Mount Shalbudzag Pilgrimage Infrastructural Projects and Local Shi'i Community*

13:00 – 14:30

Lunch Break

14:30 – 16:15

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

Moderator: Fouad Gehad Marei (Lund University)

16:15 – 17:15

**Film Screening and Coffee Break: *Ashura in Bushehr, Iran***

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

17:15 – 18:00

**Closing Remarks and Conclusion (followed by conference dinner)**



**Saturday, 22 October 2022**

**Istanbul guided city walk and tour (optional)**

**For inquiries and further information [alterumma@ctr.lu.se](mailto:alterumma@ctr.lu.se)**

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### **Artwork and credits**

**Collage on cover page, clockwise from top-left:** Mawlid decorations at the shrine Imam Husayn in Cairo, Egypt © Fouad Gehad Marei (2010) • Cassette tape recordings of Iranian-Azeri reciter Salim Moazenzadeh in Tabriz, Iran. Photography by © Stefan Williamson Fa (2016) • Statue art Installation by Hayat Ashkanany at the Ah, Zaynab! exhibition in Kuwait © Nada Al-Hudaïd (2015) • Candles and votive offerings decorating a sufra, the meal prepared to celebrate the birth of Imam Mahdi © Nada Al-Hudaïd (2015) • Taṭbīr (ritual bloodletting) in Nabatiya, Lebanon © Fouad Gehad Marei (2010) • Paraphernalia of devotion and prayer in a Shi'i mosque in Cologne, Germany: Prayer beads, prostration clay tablets and VR headsets © Fouad Gehad Marei (2021) • Behesht-e Zahra, the largest cemetery in Iran © Fouad Gehad Marei (2008) • Kuwaiti artist draws portraits with charcoal during Ziyārat Al-Arba'īn in Iraq © Nada Al-Hudaïd (2015) • Ritual lamentation ceremony in Karbala, Iraq © Fouad Gehad Marei (2015).

**Background image (programme overview):** Zuljanah, the horse of Imam Husayn. Painting by Kuwaiti artist Marjan. Photograph by © Nada Al-Hudaïd (2015).

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