DIGITAL MOURNING:
Dutch Shi'a Muharram Practices
majalis, materiality, aesthetics online and offline

Introduction

Shi'a Muslims have fervently adapted to digital mediation. Majlis sermons are uploaded and live-streamed online, leading to changed material conditions/mediation. How does this influence deeply sensorial, embodied, collective ritual processes? What possibilities and limitations come with digitization?

Research Question
How do experiences/perception of majalis unfold online and otherwise?

Methodology
- Ethnography (online +offline)
- Phenomenology
- Interviewing majlis listeners and orators
- Fieldwork Muharram 2020–2023

Majlis
مجلسِ عزا

Majlis-e-Aza: Ritual sermon with embodied mourning. Annually commemorates Battle of Karbala and the Ahl-al-Bayt. Performed by orators. Audiences attend in-person and can watch videos/livestreams on TV & online.

Online majlis example:

Muharram

First Islamic month. Mourning period for the Shi'a. 10th Muharram marks the Battle of Karbala.

Shi'ism in the Netherlands

- Migration in 60s-70s: Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, Lebanon
- Youth groups+ Pakistani organisations
- Languages: Dutch, English, Urdu, Arabic

Results

DIGITAL MATERIALITY
- Puzzling the blurry online/offline divide
- Visuals/sounds
- Space virtual and otherwise
- Online objects/things/artefacts
- Online practices
- Drafting article

AUTHORITY
- Majlis orators: ulema/zaakireen
- Digital presence
- Gendered
- Processual: bottom-up
- Critical audiences
- Book chapter forthcoming

GRIEF
- Emotions + affect
- Lamentation
- Embodied emotion
- Collective, inter-sensorial/inter-relational experience
- Familial networks
- Drafting article

AUTHENTICATION
- Registers of authentication: processes by which something comes to be considered true, meaningful, powerful, or real.
- What is real? 'real' vs virtual
- Collective memory
- Discourse
- Article published

Memory Mediation Community Sensory experience Majlis practice

Theoretical influences
Intersectional feminism
De-/post-colonial theory
Thinkers: Birgit Meyer, Matthijs van de Port, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Thomas Csordas, Karen Ruffle,

Background image
The shahadat of Hazrat Abbas, depicting Hussain and Bibi Fatima