

EDITH SZANTO

MOURNING AND PERFORMING: TWELVER SHI'ISM IN BA'ATH SYRIA

Monday Majlis Online on the 17th of November, 17:00-18:30 (UK time)

[Centre for the Study of Islam](#), Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies, University of Exeter

Register please on this link:

<https://Universityofexeter.zoom.us/meeting/register/U4YI0PCMRYS7s9x-wO4f2A>



Bio: Edith Szanto is an Associate Professor in Religious Studies at the University of Alabama. Prior to coming to Alabama in 2019, she taught at the American University of Iraq, Sulaimani for eight years. She obtained her PhD in Religious Studies from the University of Toronto in 2012. Dr. Szanto works on Syria and Iraq, modern Twelver Shi'ism, mourning rituals, and more recently, religious conversion.

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Abstract: Dr Szanto's recent book, *Twelver Shi'i Self-flagellation Rites in Contemporary Syria: Mourning Sayyida Zaynab*, examines contested Muharram practices, as well as the institutions and authorities that promoted or condemned them until 2011, when most Shi'is fled Syria. For 40 years, the Syrian shrine town of Sayyida Zaynab was a place of miracles, where violence engendered healing.

In the spirit of the label 'Majlis' and also to make the talks even more interesting, our speakers present the topic discussed as embedded in their own journey.

You can watch the previous Majlises here

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL8YRkUahFj_81oJzCSDLTx4kVQQgeHLC-

However, we don't record the Q&A in order to keep the discussion free.

Please come and enjoy the talks and the discussions :) If you'd like to be included in the CSI (Centre for the Study of Islam, Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies, University of Exeter) mailing list, please write to me (I.T.Kristo-Nagy@ex.ac.uk).

We'll be happy to welcome you!

István T Kristó-Nagy <https://arabislamicstudies.exeter.ac.uk/staff/kristo-nagy/>



Tatbir in Karbala. Photo by Edith Szanto.

To experience miraculous healing, Shi'is attended mourning gatherings, studied at seminaries, self-flagellated, and frequented spiritual healers. Supported by the political establishment, Shi'i institutions arose to serve Iraqi refugees and Iranian pilgrims. Seminaries promoted various practices, some highly controversial. Wounded, traumatized, impoverished, and oppressed, asylum seekers from Iraq who performed flagellations sought salvation - a worldly restoration requiring saintly beneficence. In Syria, where Shi'is were often asylum seekers from Iraq, daily concerns centred on the here and now, on survival, and on the bitterness they felt. They prayed for justice and retribution, as much as for physical and psychological healing.