


Talal Hamza's poem "Jeddah Ghayr," or "Jeddah is Different." This sentiment of the city's otherness is meant to frame the study as an investigation into "the urban history of Jeddah in order to understand how people managed to live in a very diverse setting" (p. 4). The use of "difference" as a foundational analytical category in an urban history of a Red Sea port city is potentially productive, especially since this has been an interest of critical urban geography for some time, bringing to mind Michel Foucault's idea of "heterotopia" and Edward Soja's notion of a "third space" among other concepts. Freitag, instead, looks to the concept of "cosmopolitanism," a potentially fruitful lens for making sense of Jeddah's Ottoman and post-Ottoman history as a center of regional trade and the primary port of embarkation for the hajj. In an effort to work beyond a Kantian understanding of cosmopolitanism that is grounded in the post-Westphalian state order, Freitag suggests a possible vernacular, or Islamic, form of cosmopolitanism grounded in the concept of *ḍiyāfa*, or hospitality. Yet, the overall point of emphasizing Jeddah's difference seems, to a certain extent, to be contradicted by the very comparability of the city's institutions with other urban centers in the Ottoman Empire. Rather, Jeddah's difference seems to become visible primarily in relation to Riyadh and other towns in Najd; that is to say, Jeddah's "otherness" has emerged in the context of a modern Saudi state dominated by a Najdi elite and a religious sensibility influenced by so-called Wahhabi Islam. In short, Jeddah's difference is less ontological than historical and relational. Moreover, the conceptual work performed by Freitag in the introduction rarely informs the substantive chapters of the book. After the introduction, for example, the subject of cosmopolitanism is not discussed again until the final chapter of the book. The concept of hospitality, which has been central both to scholarship on the Indian Ocean and on cosmopolitanism (Jacques Derrida's *Of Hospitality*, for example), is similarly addressed in the introduction but plays no discernible role in the analysis that follows. As a result, the introduction seems somewhat disconnected from the rest of the text, which reads largely as a social history of urban life rather than a historical case study of a non-Western cosmopolitan urban form and practice.

These criticisms notwithstanding, *A History of Jeddah* is well worth reading closely. It is a deeply researched and well-written account of the city's history and a noteworthy contribution to the urban history of both the Middle East and the Red Sea.

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**The Art of Resistance in Islam: The Performance of Politics among Shia Women in the Middle East and Beyond.**  
**Yafa Shanneik (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2022).**  
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Mara A. Leichtman , Department of Anthropology, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI, USA ([maral@msu.edu](mailto:maral@msu.edu))

Cultural variations in the annual performances of Muharram rituals throughout the Shi'i world are well studied. Yet *The Art of Resistance in Islam: The Performance of Politics among Shia Women in the Middle East and Beyond* is not just another ethnography about the commemoration of the martyrdom of Imam Husayn during the Battle of Karbala. Yafa Shanneik offers a fresh approach and new analysis by bringing together ritual and performance studies with a rich examination of gender relations, sectarian politics, and resistance through artistic expression. She also engages in a transnational methodology that reverses our



understanding of the Middle East as the center of the Muslim world and the Gulf diaspora in Europe as a periphery.

This book tackles questions of Shi'ī women's agency through ritual and self-inflicted bodily pain, poetry recitation, religious sermons, material culture, and theatrical performances, as well as belief in supranatural apparitions. Case studies of women's performances (the author attended more than 260 performative events), grounded in multi-sited fieldwork conducted over the past decade, are located in Bahrain and Kuwait, as well as in London and Dublin. Shanneik brings together two underexamined areas—the Arab Gulf, and in particular Gulf women, and the Shi'ī diaspora in the UK and Europe. The book is thus an innovative expansion of the politics of performance and protest across geographical boundaries. Muharram rituals extend not only beyond the enclosed physical spaces of the *ḥusayniyyāt*, the Shi'ī congregation halls that are separate from mosques, and the streets, where Muharram parades, art, and graffiti are publicly displayed, but also to the virtual spaces of social media that transcend international borders.

There are many angles one could take in discussing this highly recommended book. I will focus on Shanneik's contributions to transnational studies and Shi'ī studies. Shi'a comprise approximately 15 percent of Muslims worldwide, and scholars of the Shi'a diaspora in the West have referred to the community as a minority within a (predominantly Sunni Muslim) minority. *The Art of Resistance in Islam* focuses on women who follow Ayatollah Shirazi, a minority group among already (at times doubly) minoritized Shi'a, which adds additional importance to this study. The Shirazi transnational network, as Shanneik explains, developed when the clerical family left Iraq in 1971 due to the oppressive policies of Saddam Hussein and the Ba'ath regime. The book's strength lies in its ability to shed new light on how Shi'ī ritual practices are interconnected in the Arab Gulf and its diaspora, and Shanneik ambitiously pushes the boundaries of traditional area studies.

The author argues that the distinct factional identity of the Shirazis, who position themselves in opposition to the Islamic Republic of Iran, is maintained through performing certain religious practices. In particular, Shanneik highlights women's participation in rituals from which they had traditionally been excluded—those that had previously been the domain of men—as an act of resistance. *The Art of Resistance in Islam*, thus, examines minority Muslim women's empowerment through focusing on bodily practices as responses to the geopolitics of sectarianism and the 2011 Arab uprisings. As Shanneik questions, "why would such an increasing number of women decide to use self-inflicted pain practices to express resistance to anti-Shi'ī politics and sentiments?" (p. 8). There is not a simple answer to this question, which the various chapters break down through discussions of the politicization of the female body, demonstrations against sectarian politics, and—most controversially—self-inflicted pain as an expression of gender equality. For readers unfamiliar with Shi'ī rituals, this aspect of the book might be the most difficult to grapple with. Yet Shanneik illustrates self-hitting, self-flagellation, walking on hot coals, and ritual objects that might include human and/or animal blood in a sensitive manner that captures these intense emotional ritual moments at their height.

There are many examples of embodiment presented in this book. I found Shanneik's discussion of *sufra* (women's sacrificial offerings) at the end of Chapter 2 to be particularly fascinating. This dining table, or cloth spread on the ground on which food is served, honors certain members of the Prophet's family and asks for their intercession. Not only do *sufra* link current injustices to the historic persecution of Shi'a, but the various ritual objects chosen and their particular placement also reflect symbolically the national identities and allegiances of various groups of Shi'ī women. Shanneik illustrates a sacrificial offering in London as a transnational space that is emblematic of how national differences can be overcome. The London *sufra*, she posits, "presents a form of supranational Shi'ī identity in a diasporic setting" (p. 89): Bahraini, Iraqi, Lebanese, Iranian, and Kuwaiti. In consuming ritual food, Shi'ī women share the pain and suffering of contemporary Middle Eastern conflicts across the Gulf and the diaspora. Shirazis, however, hold the *sufra* in disdain, as they

regard this to be an Iranian practice. Through a transnational and comparative methodology, then, Shanneik's book importantly illustrates some lesser-known internal differences among Shi'a, which she refers to as "inner-sectarian conflicts" (p. 134).

A major focus of *The Art of Resistance in Islam* is on pain practices, which enable Shi'a to physically partake in remembering the suffering of Imam Husayn on the Karbala battlefield. For women, Shanneik explains, pain is also a tool of punishment, and helps alleviate their guilt at not being able to fight alongside Imam Husayn. Pain unites Shi'a worldwide who commemorate the same loss, while strengthening their resolve to fight against injustice, which takes local politicized forms. Other scholarship on Muharram practices has developed the so-called Karbala paradigm—how the history of Karbala is ever present. The fateful seventh-century battle in Iraq has been exemplified by Shi'i struggles against the West, Israel, or other contemporary enemies, during the Iranian Revolution or Arab-Israeli conflicts. Shanneik extends this analysis to Gulf politics, where in Bahrain, in particular following the 2011 uprisings, this takes the form of Shi'a oppression by the Sunni state. In Kuwait, performances memorialize terrorist attacks by Islamic State fighters, who bombed the Imam al-Sadiq Mosque in 2015. In the diaspora in Britain, in contrast, narratives are transnationally oriented and focus on human rights violations imposed upon Shi'a in the Gulf.

Chapter 4 focuses on *taṭbīr* (self-flagellation), a controversial practice often negatively depicted in Western media as a prime example of Shi'i brutality and barbarism. Iranian Ayatollah Khamenei declared *taṭbīr* impermissible in a 1994 fatwa, leading to inner-communal Shi'i conflict; some Shi'a even began to donate blood as an alternative commemorative practice. Yet Shirazis use *taṭbīr* to present themselves, in opposition to Iran, as the "true" Shi'a. In this context, Shanneik decisively describes how Shirazi women in London claim to have initiated this practice among "new Shi'i women" who are "agent(s) of change" (p. 126). Women in the diaspora in Britain thereby influenced the participation of other women throughout Europe and the Middle East. The author puts the "self" in "(self-)flagellation" in parentheses. An interesting distinction in women's appropriation of this ritual is that their heads are cut by other women, whereas men typically cut themselves. This chapter offers fascinating analysis of women's discourses regarding control over their own bodies while carrying powerful implications for the direction of transnationalism. Shanneik highlights how the number of men performing *taṭbīr* in the Middle East has been decreasing, whereas in Europe the number of both men and women who engage in this contested ritual is growing. Furthermore, through social media platforms, women in Europe are influencing women in the Middle East to seek their right to unrestricted participation in religious practices, beginning in 2007 at the height of sectarian tensions in Iraq. *The Art of Resistance in Islam*, thus, turns the analysis that places the Middle East as the center of Shi'i knowledge and practice on its head by reversing the flow to originate from the European diaspora—at least in this one example of ritual performance.

The book covers many other themes, from apparitions and emotions to poetry and graffiti. Chapters are grounded in Middle Eastern and Islamic history and contemporary geopolitical context. Together, they powerfully illustrate transnational female empowerment, symbolic protest, and social activism against existing power structures, ranging from patriarchy at home and male domination of religion to political authoritarianism and global religious persecution. *The Art of Resistance in Islam* will be a welcome contribution to anthropology, Middle Eastern studies, gender studies, Shi'i studies, ritual and performance studies, and migration and diaspora studies (in particular the growing scholarship on Islam in Europe). Shanneik's beautifully written and original analysis of the ritual, political, and cultural place of Shi'i Muslim women in the Arab Gulf and the UK and Europe spans the humanities and social sciences. The book is an enjoyable read accessible to students and scholars at all levels.