

MOVING SAINTS, SELVES, AND
OTHERS ACROSS BORDERS

ZAINAB'S TRAFFIC



EMRAH
YILDIZ

Book Talk

*Zainab's Traffic:
Moving Saints, Selves, and Others across Borders*

EMRAH YILDIZ (SCAS & Northwestern University) will read from his new book *Zainab's Traffic: Moving Saints, Selves, and Others across Borders* (University of California Press, 2024) followed by a three-way conversation with **AYŞE ÇAĞLAR** (SCAS & University of Vienna) and **SHAHRAM KHOSRAVI** (Stockholm University), and a Q&A.

Thursday, 16 January, 4:00 p.m. sharp.

Venue: the Green Room/Library on the 4th floor of Linneanum, SCAS, Villavägen 6c, Uppsala
The event will be followed by a reception.

What is the value—religious, political, economic, or altogether social—of getting on a bus in Tehran to embark on an eight-hundred-mile journey across two international borders to the Sayyida Zainab shrine outside Damascus? Under what material conditions can such values be established, reassessed, or transgressed, and by whom? *Zainab's Traffic* provides answers to these questions alongside the socially embedded—and spatially generative—encounters of ritual, mobility, desire, genealogy, and patronage along the route. Whether it is through the study of the spatial politics of saint veneration in Islam, analysis of cross-border gold trade and sanctions, or examination of pilgrims women's desire for Syrian lingerie accompanying their pleas with the saint in marital matters, the book and this talk develops the idea of visitation as a ritual of mobility across geography, history, and category. Iranian visitors' experiences on the road to Sayyida Zainab—emerging out of a self-described “poverty of mobility”—demonstrate the utility of a more capacious anthropological understanding of ritual than our current analytical predicaments allow for. Rather than thinking of ritual as a scripturally canonized manual for pious self-cultivation, *Zainab's Traffic* approaches ziyarāt as a traffic of pilgrims, goods, and ideas across Iran, Turkey, and Syria.

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