THE WOMEN OF KARBALA

Ritual Performance and Symbolic Discourses in Modern Shi'i Islam

EDITED BY KAMRAN SCOT AGHAIE

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This book is dedicated to my wife Jackie.

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CHAPTER 6

Sakineh, The Narrator of Karbala
An Ethnographic Description of a Women’s Majles Ritual in Pakistan

SHIMEEM BURNEY ABBAS

This chapter consists of an ethnographic account of a women’s majles (plural majales) in Pakistan. The majles will be explored here as a communicative speech event where members of a speech community congregate and participate in an event based on common beliefs, values, and attitudes. The majles will be investigated as an event where speakers and listeners share the knowledge of rules for the conduct and interpretation of speech. The purpose of this essay is to provide a sociolinguistic mapping of the women nowheh-chanters’ discourse in the Pakistani languages using Hymes’ model of the ethnography of speaking and how ritual speaking is done in a cultural system. Communicative conduct within a community comprises determinate patterns of speech activity wherein the communicative competence of persons constitutes knowledge with regard to such patterns. I will discuss ways of speaking especially in regard to the Sakineh narratives, focusing on the relationships among speech events, acts, and styles, on the one hand, and personal abilities and rules, contexts and institutions, and beliefs, values, and attitudes, on the other. This is demonstrated through transliteration, translation, and linguistic representation of the order of a women’s majles. The transliterations represent the social interactional processes of the majles and the competence of the female nowheh khas (chanters). Because of the transliteration methodology, an analytical discussion of the political aspects of these rituals is not given, though these dimensions are manifest in the nowheh texts themselves and the highly politicized opposition that the poetic discourse generates based on the shared rules of performance among the speakers and the listeners. The transliterations are intended to provide the reader with a clearer under-
standing of the basic structure and style of a women's majles, which is fairly representative of the rituals analyzed in the other chapters.

This account demonstrates how Sakineh serves as the narrator of Karbala in the nowhehs, or mourning songs and chants, at these Shi'i majales, which are held during the annual Moharram celebrations in Pakistan. The Sakineh myth is concerned with the structural properties of the Karbala story and how it is narrated in the majales. I focus on the dynamic structure of the Sakineh texts by analyzing the stories in relationship to the contexts in which they are performed, in terms of the potential for openness of interpretation and in terms of the ways in which this potential is exploited during Moharram performance and the emotions generated therein. Sakineh is Imam Hosayn's daughter; she survived the tragedy of Karbala along with her paternal aunt, Sayyedeh Zaynab. Sakineh's age is not known with any real certainty, but she was a girl-child whose age was probably between five and twelve years. Many of her discourses in the oral tradition are addressed to her sister Soghra, who, according to some hadith, was left behind in Medina due to illness. Thus, while Sakineh is the speaker in the stories, Soghra is sometimes the listener to whom the stories are addressed. The nowhehs, a song of lament, can be sung as a dyadic unit in which two parties take turns in advancing the story, or it can be chanted as a monologue. Both women and men have participated in the tradition of chanting nowhehs. In a two- to three-hour majles, at least an hour is allocated to reciting nowhehs. Thus, in the chanting of the Sakineh nowhehs, there is a long tradition of mutually understood speech between speaker, hearer, and that which is spoken about, including the political dimensions of the discourse. The mutually shared speech is elaborated in communication theory, linguistics, semiotics, literary criticism, and sociology in various ways.

The nowhehs that are transliterated and translated here, along with the photos provided, were collected during fieldwork in Pakistan during Moharram in 2000. Sakineh embodies grief and evokes a sense of tragic empathy in the assembly of mourners when the nowhehs are chanted in this girl-child's voice. This is a special emotional feature of a Shi'i majles, according to Hymes' model. Sakineh as a survivor of Karbala tells many stories in the aftermath of her father's death. Girl-children are trained to reenact the stories of Sakineh at Shi'i majales in Pakistan during ritual Moharram celebrations. These rituals are characterized by the ritualized speech form of nowhehs, which involve linguistic play based on code-switching. Furthermore, the nowhehs have strongly embedded political references: the binaries of a high moral and ethical order versus expediency and moral corruption that led to the Battle of Karbala. Between speakers and listeners in the shared codes of communicative competence the references are mutually shared and interpreted.

The first ten days of Moharram constitute a period of ritual mourning among Shi'i in Pakistan. Majales are held to lament the martyrdom of Hazrat Imam Hosayn in the battle of Karbala in 680 AD. During the Moharram celebrations, majales are either held in public Shi'i emambarehs, which are supported through community funds, or in the private emam-
The zakereh opens the majles with rhetorical discourse in prose (Rawalpindi, 2000). © Shemeem Burney Abbas

Figure 6.2. The zakereh opens the majles with rhetorical discourse in prose (Rawalpindi, 2000). © Shemeem Burney Abbas

barehs that the well-to-do have in their homes in the cities and in rural areas. An emambareh is a public or private space in a Shi'i community for performing sacred rituals such as prayers, majales, and birth and death rites. The wealthy sayyeds, who are descendants of the prophet Mohammed and typically owners of large landholdings, have private emambarehs in which rituals are enacted in an elaborate manner. Generally, the pattern of the ten-day celebrations in the Moharram majales is as follows:

First to fifth of Moharram: reenactment of events on a day-to-day basis according to the Karbala tragedy, accompanied with ritual lamentations and self-flagellation (matam).

Sixth of Moharram: narratives about Karbala and enhanced matam.

Seventh of Moharram: new rituals are introduced, such as carrying a replica of Ali Asghar’s cradle, Qasem’s henna ceremony, and Sakineh’s nowhehs. *

Eighth of Moharram: Hazrat Abbas’ alam, or standard, raised with the panjatan.  

Ninth of Moharram: general intense mourning with narratives from Karbala.

Tenth of Moharram: Ashura—the day of Imam Hosayn’s martyrdom. Pakistani Shi’is fast on this day, breaking the fast in the late afternoon after noontime prayers. The final activity is the Sham-e Ghariban ritual, which commemorates the act of trying to find the corpses of the fallen martyrs. *

After Ashura and Sham-e Ghariban rituals, the following are observed:

Sevvom: Majales are held on the third day after Ashura and Sham-e Ghariban. These majales celebrate the martyrdom of Hazrat Imam Hosayn, his family, and his companions.

Chehelom: Majales are held for the same reason on the fortieth day after Ashura.  

In between the Sevvom and the Chehelom, majales are held in the enambarehs according to the schedule of the caretakers. However, there is no set pattern. The period of mourning during Moharram is called azadari. The mourners are azadar. During this period a part of the home in a Shi’i household may be temporarily converted into mourning space for the purpose of azadari. The mourning area is called an azakhaneh.

The women’s majales rituals this researcher observed at emambarehs in Rawalpindi, Wah, and Lahore inform this ethnographic account of speaking as a cultural system. However, the rituals documented here are based on a ritual observed on the seventh of Moharram, 2000, in the Baji Sabira ka enambareh in Chowk Marir Hasan in Rawalpindi, which is popularly referred to as the zaynabiyyeh. This enambareh is named after its owner,
Ms. Sabira Zaidi, who is an émigré from North India and who speaks chaste Urdu.17 The majales in this emambareh follow the elaborate pattern of Lucknow majales.18

The zaynabiyyeh was a 50 x 50 foot square structure built at the far end of Ms. Sabira Zaidi's home. The emambareh, compared with the rest of the house, was a newer structure and was carefully crafted after the design of Iranian mosques with arched windows and a handcrafted wooden door with intricate floral filigree carved on it. Inside the emambareh was a large crystal chandelier, perhaps of Turkish or Iranian origin. Outside the emambareh was a large courtyard lined with black marble for women azadars (i.e., the mourners or ritual participants) to sit when there were more attending, especially on the seventh, eighth, and ninth of Moharram. The courtyard was covered with catais (rush mats) or duris (thick cotton mats) during the majales for the azadars to sit on. Across the courtyard was a verandah where there were two bathrooms and a row of faucets for women azadars to perform ablation. The nazr-niyaz (ritual food offering for the sake of the emam), which were distributed after the majles and which were typically contributed by the azadars, were set up in the verandah.

Ms. Sabira Zaidi, who had been recently widowed, looked after the upkeep of the emambareh herself. Ms. Zaidi and her daughters worked to keep the emambareh clean for the azadars. Ms. Zaidi called herself the kaniz, or the handmaiden of the emambareh. This was evident in the well-maintained environment of the emambareh, as well as the owner's hospitality toward the azadars who had come for the majales. Inside the vast space of the emambareh there were large white sheets that covered the carpeting on the floor. The white sheets radiated expansiveness in the space in addition to making the female mourners feel they were welcome in the majles. During Moharram, the white sheets were replaced every day.

Women azadars who participated in the ritual majales were mainly Shi'i. However, there were also Sunni participants, called molais, there because they sympathized with Imam Hosayn's cause. Participants at the majles consisted mostly of working-class women such as laborers, maids, factory workers, or housewives from low- or middle-income groups. Among the mourners were also some professionals such as doctors, professors, and bank executives. Since the emambareh was in the army quarters and was centrally located, wives of Shi'i army officers were also well represented. Ms. Sabira Zaidi's emambareh has assumed a high stature due to the sophistication of the majales format and its diverse participants.

In this chapter I apply Hymes' mnemonic speaking model to the women's majles proceedings as recorded at the Rawalpindi emambareh.19
The sociolinguistic, social interactional model involves the following components:

Setting: *emambareh*; public or private; morning, afternoon, or evening.
Participants: *zakereh* (narrator of key sermon), *nowheh-khans* (chanters), hostess, spokeswomen, female audience.
Ends: lamentation, communication, messaging, demonstration, protest.
Act sequence: story, narratives, responses-ratification, interpretation.
Key: mournfully, grieving, passionately, seriously.
Instrumentalities: rhetorical Arabic, Persian, Urdu; chanted Panjabi and Urdu *nowhehs*.
Norm of interaction: rhetorical discourse and response; poetic discourse and response.
Genre: *majles*.

The women's *majles* reported here was a mutually achieved, mutually ratified speech event between speakers and listeners, performers and audiences. Various speakers took the floor according to a pattern of turn taking. The forms of speech—rhetorical, lament and *nowhehs* chanting, *darud* (prayer for the dead), *salam* (blessings), and *salawat*—were adjacent to each other and within the smaller units of talk, where speakers used the pattern of the adjacency pair as demonstrated in Erving Goffman's work on speech.

Briefly, Goffman posits that speech constitutes small units of talk; that talk is socially organized, not merely in terms of who speaks to whom in what language, but as a little system of mutually ratified and ritually governed face-to-face action, a social encounter. Accordingly, the performers of this *majles* who enacted the lamentation rituals participated on various levels, the highest being the *zakereh*, who initiated the *majles* proceedings with a well-researched rhetorical discourse about the moral, political, and ethical issues that led Hazrat Imam Hosayn to oppose Yazid. The *zakereh* initiated her speech with a verse in Arabic from the Qur'an, followed by the *hadith*, which are the sayings of the Prophet Mohammad or his family. The *zakereh* was a trained rhetorician and had been inducted into the discourse traditions from childhood. She patterned her moral and political arguments after Sayyedeh Zaynab, who led Hosayn's family after the Battle of Karbala. Sayyedeh Zaynab is said to have been a highly effective orator in Yazid's court, where she articulated the ethical, moral, and political polarities that led to the conflict in Karbala. Thus, the *zakereh* at a Shi'i *majles* often reenacts Zaynab's oratory, reaffirming Levi-Strauss' approach to analyzing myths across societies and his assertion that such myths or stories have an identifiable underlying or abstract structure. The *zakereh*'s speech invariably referred to the girl-child Sakineh and her infant brother, Ali Asghar, who was martyred in Karbala. The discourse of the entire...
The participants were assumed to know the underlying nuances of the discourse, the deeply rooted metaphors that a nowheh pointed toward, such as a male member like Qasem or Ali Asghar. The participants had grown and matured in the oral Shi'i traditions; they understood the signification. Thus, while chanting with the nowheh-khans or chanters, the participants were able to infuse an emotion into the assembly that resulted in intense lamentation, expressed through chest beating, or matam. The matam is a form of political protest.

During the majles proceedings at the zaynabiyyeh, the zakereh's speech was prompted by the hostess, Ms. Sabira Zaidi, who sat close to the menbar, or pulpit, at the feet of the zakereh. The hostess continuously ratified the zakereh's speech. Sometimes she ratified it with the salavat, or blessings upon the Prophet Mohammad and his family, in Arabic; sometimes she ratified the speaker's discourse with continued lament through her own weeping and utterances like “hai, hai.” This was particularly so during emotionally expressive outbursts devoted to Sakineh and the theme of Ali Asghar's thirst at Karbala. Again, one may draw upon Levi-Strauss: historical events or fables are transformed through abstract structures. The performers and participants themselves “posit underlying structures or meanings in the

Figure 6.7. The hostess of the zaynabiyyeh leading the matam ritual in the center while nowhehs are being chanted (Rawalpindi, 2000). © Shemeem Burney Abbas

majles, both the prose of the speakers and the poetry of the nowheh chanters, was loaded with political metaphors; the outcome of Hosayn's moral stance was the martyrdom at Karbala. The transliterations demonstrate the political tensions of the conflict: Hosayn's rejection of accepting Yazid's caliphate on moral grounds leading to his own death and the death of his supporters, who were male family members and loyal companions. Here one may also draw on Levi-Strauss' symbols of life and death, young and old, and men and women. Each nowheh narrative was immersed in po-

Figure 6.7. Children reenacting performances related to Sakineh (Rawalpindi, 2000). © Shemeem Burney Abbas
form of interpretations of the symbolism of the text and its message and—
the most important point—they do so as part of its very performance, for
an audience to hear, learn from and criticize." Lamination was communicat-
cated at many levels in the majles.24
In addition to the zakereh and the weeping hostess, the key performers
of this majles were the nowheh-khans, whose communicative competence
was demonstrated in their ability to chant the nowheh with an emotion that
brought their listeners to tears. The chanters accomplished this through
ritual speech, drama, and vibrant body language, beating their chests in
rhythm as they chanted the poetry of the nowheh. The chest beating had per-
cussion qualities that brought out the emotion in the assembly; these ele­
ments, put together as text and context, created the majles. The assembled
listeners, too, performed their function by ratifying every utterance, every
move; they were the ones who understood the ritual-ceremonial discourse
of Karbala and who understood the linguistic variety involved.25
The women’s majles ritual at Ms. Sabira Zaidi’s emambareh lasted for
more than two hours. The speech event constituted the speakers, listen­
ers and participants, and rhetorical and poetic narratives about Karbala.
The speech event was a mutually ratified, social interactional context that
use text and narratives and the relationships of the linguistic and emo­
tional components. Its basic linguistic and communicative structure was as
follows:

Salawat. Opening of the majles with recital of the darud by Ms. Sabira
Zaidi, the hostess of the majles: “Allah homma salli ala Mohammad va al-e Mohammad.” (O God, may thy blessings be on Mohammad and
his family). The participants repeated the salawat after the hostess.
Zakereh. Rhetorical prose majles discourse or sermon, which lasted
for thirty-five to forty minutes. It started with an Arabic quote from
the Qur’an. The zakereh’s speech was patterned on philosophical dis­
courses related to religious, ethical, social, and political issues.
Salawat. “Allah homma Salli ala Mohammad va al-e Mohammad.”
Darud. “O God may thy blessings be on Mohammad and his family.”
The darud, which was frequently repeated at key points in the dis­
course, was led by the hostess throughout the zakereh’s speech.
Nowhehs. Panjabi or Urdu chants about Karbala, often in Sakineh’s
voice.26
Matam. Passionate chest beating for lament, accompanied by
nowhehs.27

Salam. Prayers and eulogy in Arabic, Persian, Urdu, and Panjabi for
the Prophet Mohammad, his family, and the martyrs of Karbala. There
was always a reference to Sakineh.
Ziyarat. Invocation and closure in Arabic, Persian, Urdu, and Panjabi
for the Prophet Mohammad, his family, and the martyrs of Karbala,
again with a reference to Sakineh.

On this particular occasion, which was the seventh of Moharram, 2000,
Baji Sabira Zaidi had chosen to dedicate the majles to Qasem, Imam Ha­
san’s adolescent son who was about to be married. Thus, on 7 Moharram,
the groom’s (i.e., Qasem’s) henna ceremony was celebrated. The ritual was
a celebration as well as a lament for Qasem. After the zakereh completed
her rhetorical speech and the recitation of the salawat and darud that the
hostess initiated and that the participants repeated after her, the nowheh-
khans moved to the center of the emambareh, creating a little circle for them­
seves with the hostess among them. The assembly of participating mourn­
ers stood around the group of chanters, ready to join the ritual chanting
and the matam. The nowheh-khans chanted the key lines and the assembly
repeated the lines after them, establishing the communicative mode. The
following Panjabi nowhehs, which have been transcribed and translated,
demonstrate the communicative competence of the nowheh-khans, who are
inducted into these oral linguistic traditions from childhood. Girl-children
chanters took the floor immediately after the women nowhehs as a part
of their training. The group of women who chanted these nowhehs spoke in
the voice of a scribe, probably Sakineh, who writes a letter from Karbala
to her sister Soghra in Medina:28

1 Karbal tun peya likhda
2 hun vaqt reha koi nabin
3 men keya, men likhan
4 mere Awn-o Mohammad te
5 Asghar te javan jeba koi nahin
6 men keya, men likhan
7 Karbal tun peya likhda
8 mor vaqt reha koi nabin

(Next, lines 6–8 are repeated; followed by lines 3–5; followed by lines
6, 8, and 6)

The nowheh-chanters continued to beat their chests to create rhythm with
the poetic text:
The *nowheh*-chanters continued to sing the elegy, in Sakineh’s voice in Panjabi, thereby symbolically becoming Sakineh themselves. The audiences ratified the chanting by repeating the *nowheh* text, line by line after the chanters. The girl-children in the assembly chanted significantly as they beat their chests in harmony with the women, taking the floor independently as performers during a part of the chanting. They sang in Panjabi, leading the performance:

16 *jag nagar gai ujri*\(^{30}\) in the world destroyed
17 *hun kiyun dukh khani*\(^{31}\) tun now why grief you swallow?
18 *ommat ne hat aj lutiya*\(^{32}\) the followers have today looted
19 *Akbar di javani nun*\(^{33}\) Akbar’s youth
20 *phupian te mavan vala* paternal aunts and mothers him to
21 *churche de siva ko nahn* publicity only there is and nothing
22 *men kya men likhan* I what, what can I write?
23 *meri behnan de baten hun* on my sisters’ hand now
24 *rang koi reha nahn* henna none remains
25 *hun ki men likhan* now what can I write?
26 *Karabal tum peya likhda* from Karbala the scribe writes
27 *hun vaqt reha koi nahn* now time left none there is
28 *hun ki men likhan* now what can I write?

The Panjabi *nowhehs* at the *majles*, accompanied by the *matam*, were followed by another general *matam* led by the hostess, Ms. Sabira Zaidi. The communicative patterns of the speech event are illustrated through the following transliteration. This second *matam* was in Urdu and was characterized by a call-and-response pattern:\(^{39}\)

\[
\begin{align*}
H: & \text{Hosayn Hosayn} & P: & \text{Hosayn Hosayn} \\
\text{/th /th /th th} & \text{(repeating pattern)} & \text{/th /th /th th} & \text{(repeating pattern)} \\
H: & \text{Hosayn Hosayn} & P: & \text{Hosayn Hosayn} \\
H: & \text{Ali Mowla} & P: & \text{Ali Mowla} \\
H: & \text{Ali Mowla} & P: & \text{Ali Mowla} \\
H: & \text{Vali Mowla} & P: & \text{Vali Mowla} \\
H: & \text{Ya Abbas} & P: & \text{Shir Abbas}^{40} \\
H: & \text{Hai Sakineh} & P: & \text{Hai Pias}^{41} \\
H: & \text{Hai Sakineh} & P: & \text{Hai Pias} \\
H: & \text{Hosayn Hosayn Hosayn} & \\
\end{align*}
\]

The chanters at the sayyedanis sang another *nowheh* in Panjabi using Sakineh’s voice:

29 *manzur kiyun na boiyan* Why were they not accepted?
30 *ujri\(^{35}\) di an do’avan* My prayers, I the shattered one
(Repeat lines 29–30)
31 *kuub bol munh hon Akbar* Move thy lips and say something
Shall I go and call Soghra?
32 *Soghra nun ja bulavan* (Repeat lines 29–30)
33 *Sarvar de dil di halat* The state of Hosayn’s heart\(^{36}\)
34 *bas rab ki janda he* Only God alone is aware of
35 *manzur kiyun na boiyan* Why were they not accepted?
36 *Zaynab da dil he aza* Zaynab’s heart is in lament
37 *quebe men parh sunavan* Shall I read an elegy of it?
(Repeat lines 29–30)
38 *Saidanian te barish* On the sayyedanis\(^{37}\) is wreaked
39 *pathran di ho rahi he* The thunder of stones
30 *manzur kiyun na boiyan* Shall I go and call Abbas the
(Repeat line 36)
40 *Ghazi nun ja bulavan* Ghazi\(^{38}\)
31 *quesmat ne jad milaya* If fortune favors us and we meet
42 *Soghra gila kare gi* Soghra will complain
(Repeat line 36)
43 *Akbar nun sehra lavan* Shall I put the crown of flowers on
Akbar?
(Repeat lines 29–30)
44 *Hosayn Hosayn Hosayn* Why were they not accepted?
\(\text{/th /th /th th} \ (\text{repeating pattern})\)
45 *Ali Mowla* My prayers, I the shattered one
\(\text{/th /th /th th} \ (\text{repeating pattern})\)
46 *Vali Mowla* Move thy lips and say something
(Repeat line 36)
47 *Hai Pias* Shall I go and call Soghra?
(Repeat lines 29–30)
48 *Soghra gila kare gi* The state of Hosayn’s heart\(^{36}\)
(Repeat line 36)
49 *Ali Mowla* Only God alone is aware of
50 *Vali Mowla* Why were they not accepted?
51 *Hai Pias* Zaynab’s heart is in lament
52 *Shir Abbas* Shall I read an elegy of it?
53 *Hai Pias* Shall I go and call Abbas the
54 *Hosayn Hosayn* Ghazi\(^{38}\)
55 *Soghra gila kare gi* If fortune favors us and we meet
(Repeat line 36)
56 *Hai Pias* Shall I put the crown of flowers on
(Repeat lines 29–30)
57 *Hosayn Hosayn Hosayn* Akbar?
The communicative dimensions of the majles were evident as I could hear the voices of the girl-children in the background repeating “Hosayn” after the hostess. The text and context established its own relationship on many levels within the same time frame. The ritual chanting with lamentation, like jazz, was cyclical and not linear; there was much in the performance that was repetitive and generated emotion through linguistic play and verbal art on several simultaneous levels. Following the general lament transcribed above, the participants chanted another nowheh in Urdu, this time using Sayyedeh Zaynab as the mythical narrator. The passion was at its peak in the assembly and weeping could be heard in the background; the hostess, Ms. Sabira Zaidi, wept the loudest, her face covered with a white handkerchief. The social interactions were within the established frames of speech and the speech event:

ro ro karti^
(Zaynab wept and lamented, “Thirsty they killed,”)

ro ro kati Zaynab beyn piyasa mar lia
(Zaynab wept and lamented, “Thirsty they killed,”)
yu Nabi Kufion ne Hosayn piyasa mar lia
(“O Prophet, the Kufis killed a thirsty Hosayn,”)
mera bhai Hosayn piyasa mar lia
(“My brother Hosayn, thirsty they killed”)^

Intense, emotional matam followed the chanting of this nowheh, which was led by the hostess. Then there was a liturgy of Hosayn matam in which the participants chanted: “Hosayn Hosayn Hosayn” for several minutes, beating their chests in a group self-flagellation ritual. Throughout this matam, I could hear the loud lament and weeping of the hostess, now in the background. She was exhausted and had moved to the back of the assembly; she sat with her back resting against the wall. A different zakereh took over the proceedings in order to recite the salamat darud:

Ya Khoda
Is qowm ka daman gham-e Shabir
se bhur de
Valvala Awn o Mohammad de
Maon ko mile sani-e Zahra ka saligab
Behnon ko Sakineh ki do’aon ka asr de
Mowla tujhe Zaynab ki asiri ki qasam he
Be jorm yatimon ko rebai ki khabar de
Mowla koi gham na dena de seva gham e Shabir

Peace be upon you, O Fatemeh, the bold
Peace be upon you O son of Ali
Peace be upon you O sun and sunshine

For three minutes, the zakereh recited the prayers in Urdu. After the closure of the majles, nazr (food offerings) was distributed among the participants. The Pakistani majles described in this chapter reveals that much of the oral history of Karbala tragedy is reenacted in Sakineh’s voice. The nowhehs sung in Sakineh’s voice at this majales created “riqat,” or ritualized grief, among the female participants. Riqat was created through descriptions of the events at Karbala, from this girl-child’s perspective, and in her voice. Both male and female nowheh-khans commonly use this method for emotive effect. Sakineh therefore is a metaphor of grief in the folklore built around Karbala. As a vulnerable young girl, Sakineh serves as a highly sympathetic character in the context of the ethical and political issues that led
to the Karbala tragedy. Thus, in accordance with Hymes' model, Sakineh serves as the frame for the ethnography of speaking at a Shi'i majles during the Moharram lamentations.

Notes

2. Ibid., 37.
4. Ibid., 45.
6. Ibid.
9. Collected during a Moharram majales in Pakistan. I apply theoretical and methodological approaches from Richard Bauman, Verbal Art as Performance (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1977), and Hymes, "Toward Ethnographies of Communication."
10. For instance, the Gilani and Gardezi sayyeds in Multan and the Makhdooms in Sind.
11. Ali Asghar, infant son of Imam Hosayn, was slain at Karbala. Ali Asghar's cradle becomes a focal point of lament during Moharram rituals. Qasem was the adolescent son of Imam Hasan and a nephew of Imam Hosayn. Qasem was about to be married when he was killed at Karbala. Qasem's henna ceremony is celebrated among Shi'i female mourners in the subcontinent during Moharram majales. All nowhebs may not necessarily be in Sakineh's voice, but a large majority of them are sung as if she were the narrator. Sakineh's narrative creates a passionate lament in Multan and the Maktaba-e Imamia Trust, 1996.
12. Hazrat Abbas, a half-brother of Imam Hosayn, is believed to have inherited Ali ibn Abi Talib's valor. Abbas was martyred at Karbala as he carried the standard of Hosayn's forces while attempting to bring water back to the camp from the Euphrates. The flags were green. At the top of flagpoles, there were metal replicas of a human hand, called a panjatan, with each finger representing one of the five most holy persons for Shi'is. The panjatan include Mohammad the Prophet; his son-in-law, Ali; the Prophet's daughter, Sayyedeh Fatemeh Zahra; and the Prophet's grandsons, Imams Hasan and Hosayn. Hazrat Abbas is called upon as a protector of children in the Moharram majales.
13. W. and P. Japp Beach, "Storyfying as Time-Traveling: The Knowledgeable Use of Temporally-Structured Discourse," in Communication Yearbook 7, ed. R. Boström (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Books-ICA, 1983); and A. L. Ryave, "On the Achievement of a Series of Stories," in Studies in the Organization of Conversational Interaction, ed. Jim Schenkein (New York: Academic Press, 1978). Accordingly, in time travel, it was at zuhr, the late afternoon, when all of Hosayn's forces were eliminated. Hosayn's horse, Zuljenah, returned riderless to the camp. Thus, as part of lament rituals in Pakistan, Zuljenah processions are led by Shi'i mourners to a local Karbala in the city on Ashura. The evening of Ashura is when the women and children were left alone in the camp with Hosayn's ailing son, Ali Zayn al-Abedin. The women's camps were said to have been footloose. The evening of Ashura is called the Sham-e Ghariban, or Evening of the Oppressed. According to hadith, Imam Hosayn's sister, Sayyedeh Zaynab, was left to assume responsibility for the survivors, including the girl-child Sakineh.
14. In Shi'i households in Pakistan, Karbala is mourned for fifty days.
15. From the word azad, which means "to mourn." The word can also mean "condolence."
17. Out of respect for her grace, the azadars address Ms. Sabira Zaidi as "Baji," an intimate term for an elder sister. "Baji Sabira ka Emambareh" means "emambareh belonging to Baji Sabira."
20. Evring Goffman, "The Negotiated Situation," in Language and Social Context, ed. Pier Paolo Gaggioli (New York: Penguin Books, 1972), 54-55. Goffman's theory is that talk is based on small units of speech; utterances and sentences are placed adjacent to each other as speakers take turns to talk. This is demonstrated in some of the transliterations here, e.g., the hostess leading the majales: some of the transliterations here, e.g., the hostess leading the majales: some of the transliterations here, e.g., the hostess leading the majales: some of the transliterations here, e.g., the hostess leading the majales: some of the transliterations here, e.g., the hostess leading the majales: some of the transliterations here, e.g., the hostess leading the majales: some of the transliterations here, e.g., the hostess leading the majales: some of the transliterations here, e.g., the hostess leading the majales: some of the transliterations here, e.g., the hostess leading the majales: some of the transliterations here, e.g., the hostess leading the majales: some of the transliterations here, e.g., the hostess leading the majales: some of the transliterations here, e.g., the hostess leading the majales: some of the transliterations here, e.g., the hostess leading the majales: some of the transliterations here, e.g., the hostess leading the majales: some of the transliterations here, e.g., the hostess leading the majales: some of the transliterations here, e.g., the hostess leading the majales: some of the transliterations here, e.g., the hostess leading the majales: some of the transliterations here, e.g., the hostess leading the majales: some of the transliterations here, e.g., the hostess leading the majales: some of the transliterations here, e.g., the hostess leading the majales: some of the transliterations here, e.g., the hostess leading the majales: some of the transliterations here, e.g., the hostess leading the majales: some of the transliterations here, e.g., the hostess leading the majales: some of the transliterations here, e.g., the hostess leading the majales: some of the transliterations here, e.g., the hostess leading the majales: some of the transliterations here, e.g., the hostess leading the majales: some of the transliterations here, e.g., the hostess leading the majales: some of the transliterations here, e.g., the hostess leading the majales: some of the transliterations here, e.g., the hostess leading the mai...
26. In Pakistan, *nowhehs* are sung in languages such as Pashto, Balti, Sindhi, Siraiki, Baluchi, and regional dialects according to the speech communities.


28. According to belief, Soghra, a daughter of Imam Hosayn, was left behind in Medina because she was ill and could not travel. The women who chanted the *nowheb* beat their breasts as they sang. The *nowheb* can be sung as a dyadic unit in which two parties take turns in the storytelling process. The *nowheb* can also be chanted as a monologue. The participants stand in a circle for chanting *nowhebs* and doing *matam*.

29. Sons of Sayyedeh Zaynab killed in the Battle of Karbala.

30. This is the feminine form of the word meaning “one who is devastated.”

31. This is the feminine form of the word meaning “one who swallows.”

32. *Ommat* means “sect, people of the same religion.”

33. Akbar was Imam Hosayn’s adolescent son.

34. Could also mean “notoriety” in terms of the opposing forces of Yazid.

35. The repetitive use of “ujri,” or the devastated female Sakineh, is significant.

36. Imam Hosayn is called Sarvar here. *Sarvar* means “leader” or a “chief.”

37. Female descendants of the Prophet Mohammad’s family.

38. One who fights against infidels, a conqueror, a living hero. Ghazi is embedded in the Islamic concept of jihad, or fight against falsehood.


40. Abbas, the Lion, known for his valor.

41. A reference to Sakineh’s thirst.

42. Goffman, *Frame Analysis*.

43. Feminine verb form of “to do.”

44. The terms are intralingual.

45. Framing of the *majles* proceedings in this part by the weeping of the hostess in the background.

46. The opening verse of the Qur’an is also recited for the dead.

47. *Ziyarat* is a pilgrimage or visit. The hostess continued to weep as the *majles* was reaching closure through the prayers. The entire ritual was framed in the hostess’ weeping and lament, which the participants responded to. *Do’a* is a prayer that can be said in Arabic, as well as in an indigenous code such as Urdu or Panjabi.

48. Fondly called “Shabir,” which means a tiger or lion.

49. Also called “Zahra” or “Fatemeh the second” for her boldness and oratorical skills.

50. A political reference to current prisoners of conscience in the country.