



The Institute of Ismaili Studies

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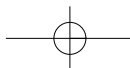
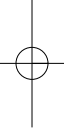


# People of the Prophet's House

Art, Architecture and Shi'ism  
in the Islamic World

An International Conference  
British Museum, London  
26 – 28 March 2009







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# People of the Prophet's House

Art, Architecture and Shi'ism  
in the Islamic World

**An International Conference**

## **PROGRAMME**

BP Lecture Theatre  
British Museum, London

26th – 28th March 2009

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*The contents of this programme were correct at the time of printing.  
However, the programme is subject to change without advanced  
warning and The Institute of Ismaili Studies cannot be held  
responsible for any inconvenience caused.*



## Introduction

### THE INSTITUTE OF ISMAILI STUDIES

The Institute of Ismaili Studies was established in 1977 with the objectives of promoting scholarship and learning on Islam, in historical as well as contemporary contexts, and fostering better understanding of Islam's relationship with other societies and faiths.

The Institute's programmes encourage a perspective which is not confined to the religious heritage of Islam, but seeks to explore the relationship of religious ideas to broader dimensions of society and culture. The programmes thus encourage an interdisciplinary approach to Islamic history and thought. Particular attention is given to the issues of modernity that arise as Muslims seek to relate their heritage to the contemporary situation.

Within the Islamic tradition, the Institute promotes research on those areas which have, to date, received relatively little attention from scholars. These include the intellectual, literary, artistic and ritual expressions of Shi'ism in general and Ismailism in particular. The Institute is currently identifying new research priorities and projects to expand its work in the area of Shi'i studies to create a sum of knowledge that presents a more inclusive understanding of Shi'i Islam while taking into account historical, doctrinal and intellectual developments in the history of Islam in general.

The Institute's objectives are realised through concrete programmes and activities organised by various departments of the Institute, at times in collaboration with other institutions of learning. These programmes and activities are informed by the full range of cultures in which Islam is practised today. From the Middle East, South and Central Asia, and Africa to the industrialised societies in the West, they consider the variety of contexts which shape the ideals, beliefs and practices of the faith.

By co-sponsoring this international conference with the British Museum – a preeminent institution that holds in trust for the nation and the world a renowned collection of art and antiquities from ancient and living cultures – the Institute's purpose is to encourage original research and analysis of relevant issues, which often result in a diversity of interpretations. While every effort is made to ensure that the conference papers are of a high academic standard, the opinions expressed in these papers must be understood as belonging to their authors alone.



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Calligram of the *Nade 'Ali* prayer in the form of a lion  
India, 17th C.

Ink, opaque watercolour and gold on paper

## Conference Programme

THURSDAY 26 MARCH

### OPENING DAY

#### 8:30 Doors Open (registration and coffee)

9:10 Azim Nanji, Stanford University  
"Opening Remarks"

### SESSION 1

#### PANEL: HISTORICAL CONTEXTS AND DEFINITIONS

Chair: Azim Nanji, Stanford University

9:20 Shainool Jiwa, The Institute of Ismaili Studies  
"Shi'ism: Narratives, Images, Perspectives"

10:00 Oleg Grabar, Institute for Advanced Study  
"Can We Identify Shi'i Features in Art and Architecture?"

10:40 Oliver Leaman, University of Kentucky  
"Defining Shi'i Art: Problems and Possibilities"

#### 11:20 Coffee Break

### SESSION 2

#### PANEL: THE HOLY SHRINES OF IRAQ AND IRAN

Chair: Sheila S. Blair, Boston College

11:50 James W. Allan, University of Oxford  
"The Shi'i Shrines of Iraq: History and Architectural Development"

12:30 May Farhat, American University of Beirut  
"Mashhad Under the Early Safavid Shahs"

#### 1:10 Lunch (not provided)

### SESSION 3

#### PANEL: PATRONAGE AND PILGRIMAGE: SHI'I SHRINES IN IRAN

Chair: Anna Contadini, SOAS, University of London

2:30 Sheila R. Canby, British Museum  
"The Gifts of Shah 'Abbas to Shi'i Shrines"

3:10 Melanie Michailidis, Carleton College  
"Pilgrims and Patrons: *Ziyarat* under the Samanids and Bavandids"

#### 3:50 Afternoon Tea

### SESSION 4

#### PANEL: PATRONAGE AND PILGRIMAGE: SHI'I SHRINES IN SYRIA

Chair: Doris Behrens-Abouseif, SOAS, University of London

4:30 Yasser Tabbaa, King's Academy  
"Architecture for Piety: The Shi'i Shrines of Syria"

5:10 Stephennie Mulder, University of Texas at Austin  
"Shrines of the Prophet's House: The Role of the 'Alid Shrines in Medieval Syria's Sacred Landscape"

#### 5:50 Adieu



# Conference Programme

FRIDAY 27 MARCH

## DAY 2

### SESSION 1

#### PANEL: AMULETS, DIVINATION AND ICONOGRAPHY IN SHI'Ī CONTEXTS

Chair: Emilie Savage-Smith, University of Oxford

- 9:20 Massumeh Farhad, Freer Gallery of Art and the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution  
"Between the Past and the Future: The *Falnama* (Book of Omens)"
- 10:00 Christiane Gruber, Indiana University  
"The 'Restored' Shi'ī *Mushaf* as Divine Guide?: The Practice of *Fal-i Qur'an* in the Safavid Period"
- 10:40 Venetia Porter, British Museum  
"Amulets, Heroes, and Shi'ism"

#### 11:20 Coffee Break

### SESSION 2

#### PANEL: SHI'Ī INSCRIPTIONS ON ART, ARCHITECTURE AND COINAGE

Chair: Alexander H. Morton, SOAS, University of London

- 11:50 Sheila S. Blair, Boston College  
"Writing about Faith: Epigraphic Evidence for the Development of Shi'ism in Iran"
- 12:30 Luke Treadwell, Ashmolean Museum  
"Shi'ī Inscriptions on Islamic Coins"

#### 1:10 Lunch (not provided)

### SESSION 3: ICONOGRAPHY BEYOND SHI'Ī CONTEXTS

Chair: Oya Pancaroglu, Bogaziçi University

- 2:30 Zeynep Yurekli-Gorkay, University of Oxford  
"Icon, Emblem, Amulet, Identity Marker: The Sword of 'Ali and the Ottoman *Ghazis*"
- 2:50 Fahmida Suleman, The Institute of Ismaili Studies  
"The 'Hand of Fatima', Origins and Significance"

#### 3:30 Afternoon Tea

### SESSION 4

#### PANEL: RITUAL EXPRESSIONS IN SHI'Ī CONTEXTS

Chair: Pedram Khosronejad, University of St Andrews

- 4:00 Mara Leichtman, Michigan State University  
"The Africanization of 'Ashura in Senegal"
- 4:40 Nacim Pak-Shiraz, SOAS, University of London  
"Cinema as a Reservoir for Cultural Memory"

#### 5:20 Adieu



# Conference Programme

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SATURDAY 28 MARCH

## DAY 3

### SESSION 1

#### PANEL: FATIMID CONTEXTS

Chair: Farhad Daftary, The Institute of Ismaili Studies

9:20 Jonathan Bloom, Boston College  
"Fatimid Architecture and Shi'ism"

10:00 Ruba Kana'an, York University  
"Between Realm and Resonance: 'Fatimid Style' in Yemen and Oman"

10:40 Nasser Rabbat, Massachusetts Institute of Technology  
"Maqrizi and the Fatimids"

**11:20 Coffee Break**

### SESSION 2

#### PANEL: SUMMARIES AND CONCLUSIONS

Chair: Andrew J. Newman, University of Edinburgh

11:50 Oleg Grabar and Oliver Leaman

**12:30 Adieu**



## Paper Abstracts and Academic Biographies

### AZIM NANJI

#### Opening remarks and panel chair, “Historical Contexts and Definitions”

Professor Azim Nanji (BA (Makerere), MA (McGill), PhD (McGill)) is Senior Associate Director of the Abbasi Program in Islamic Studies at Stanford University and has held several research and teaching posts across Canada and USA. He was Director of the Institute of Ismaili Studies (London) from 1998-2008 and was previously Professor and Chair of the Department of Religion at the University of Florida. His scholarly interests and numerous public lectures cover a range of subjects in areas ranging from Islam in South Asia, Africa and North America, to Ismaili and Shi'i studies, and from Muslim educational institutions and interfaith dialogue, to Islamic law, philosophy and architecture. Professor Nanji has authored, co-authored and edited numerous books, book chapters and articles including: *The Nizari Ismaili Tradition* (New York 1976); *Building for Tomorrow: The Aga Khan Awards for Architecture* (London 1994); *The Muslim Almanac* (New Haven 1996); *Mapping Islamic Studies* (Berlin 1997); *Historical Atlas of Islam* (with M. Ruthven, Cambridge 2004); and “What is Shiite Islam?” in V. J. Cornell (ed.), *Voices of Islam*, Vol.1 (with F. Daftary, Westport 2006). He was associate editor for the revised second edition of *The Encyclopaedia of Religion* (New York 2005) and recently published the *Dictionary of Islam* (with R. Nanji, London 2008).

### SHAINOOL JIWA

#### “Shi'ism: Narratives, Images, Perspectives”

Reverence to the Prophet and allegiance to his household (*Ahl al-Bayt*) have inspired a variety of expressions among Muslims, ranging from the aesthetic and literary to the ritual and doctrinal. For the Shi'a, it constitutes the essential principle of belief. As the opening session of the conference, this paper will explore the origins and evolution of Shi'i Islam by examining its historical foundations and conceptual developments. It will review the coalescence of the Shi'a over the course of time into distinct communities and reflect on the diversity of its interpretations and the plurality of its expressions. The notion and implications of imama, the Shi'i model of authority which espouses temporal and spiritual leadership of the *umma*, will be discussed. The presentation will also examine the evolving understanding of who constituted the *Ahl al-Bayt* and consider their status and role, which came to transcend the Sunni-Shi'i divide and offered opportunities, in some times and contexts, of fostering attitudes of rapprochement in the Muslim world.

Shainool Jiwa (MA (McGill), PhD (Edinburgh)) is a specialist in Fatimid history and has taught various courses in Shi'i history and thought over the past twenty years at the University of Edinburgh. A published author on various facets of the Fatimid age, Dr Jiwa's forthcoming publication is an annotated translation titled, *Towards a Shi'i Mediterranean Empire: Al-Mu'izz, Fatimid Egypt & the Founding of Cairo, A Biography of the Imam-Caliph al-Mu'izz li Din Allah from al-Maqrizi's Itti'az al-Hunafa'* (London 2009). Dr Jiwa is currently the Head of the Department of Community Relations and lecturer at The Institute of Ismaili Studies and was previously Coordinator of the Institute's Qur'anic Studies Unit (2001-2004). She has been involved with the International Baccalaureate Organization since 1998 and has been their Chief Examiner for Islamic history since 2001. Her publications include: “Inclusive Governance: A Fatimid Illustration” in A. Sajoo (ed.), *Companion to the Muslim World* (London 2009); and “Fatimid-Buyid Diplomacy in the Reign of the Fatimid Imam-Caliph al-'Aziz billah”, *Journal of Islamic Studies* 3/1 (1992): 55-71. Dr Jiwa is currently working on an introduction and annotated translation of, *The Springs of Knowledge and Varieties of Evidence. The Imamate of al-Mu'izz from the 'Uyun al-Akhbar wa Funun al-Athar by 'Imad al-Din Idris*.





## Paper Abstracts and Academic Biographies

### OLEG GRABAR

#### “Can We Identify Shi’i Features in Art and Architecture?”

The topic “Islamic art and Shi’ism” is an invitation to explore a major issue in our understanding of the arts from Muslim lands and in fact a major issue in visual culture and art criticism, even in the history of art. The issue is whether there are specific forms or restricted subjects which are inspired by discrete features of religious movements or which become associated, for whatever reason, with followers of a religious movement. Such forms and subjects allow then or even compel the identification of whatever one sees with that particular group. From the standpoint of a theoretical analysis of the arts, the issue is fundamental, as it deals with the ways in which we interpret (or should interpret) what we see. An appropriate parallel is that of the use of language, as we can (or could) identify the age, education, and origins of individuals from hearing them speak, as accents, vocabulary, and grammar do reflect one’s own history or that of the family to which one belongs. Clothes and jewellery are another category of forms which can lead to similar results, identifying a person or a thing with a restricted religious or cultural entity. My remarks will be limited to a few examples of the kinds of research needed to answer the more fundamental queries I have raised.

Oleg Grabar, Professor Emeritus at the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, has had a profound and far-reaching influence on the study of Islamic art and architecture. He received his PhD in Oriental Languages and Literatures and the History of Art (1955) from Princeton University at a time when there were few historians of Islamic art in the United States. Now, over fifty years on, Islamic art historians all over the world are indebted to Professor Grabar’s influence as a teacher and for his numerous publications and public lectures. His extensive archaeological expeditions and research trips cover the vast expanse of the Islamic world in Africa, the Middle East, and Muslim Asia. His first teaching post was at the University of Michigan and in 1968 he accepted a post as Professor of Fine Arts at Harvard University. He became the first Aga Khan Professor of Islamic Art and Architecture when that chair was established at Harvard in 1980 and joined the Institute for Advanced Study in the School of Historical Studies as Professor Emeritus in 1990, where he has since devoted himself full-time to lecturing and research. Professor Grabar has received several prestigious awards, including the Levi Della Vida award for distinguished scholarship in the field of Islamic Studies from the University of California and the Charles Lang Freer Medal for distinguished contribution to the knowledge and understanding of Oriental civilisations from the Smithsonian Institution. He has authored 18 books and more than 140 articles including: *Epic Images and Contemporary History: The Illustrations of the Great Mongol Shahnama* (Chicago and London 1982); *The Mediation of Ornament* (Princeton 1992); *The Shape of the Holy: Early Islamic Jerusalem* (Princeton 1996); *Late Antiquity: A Guide to the Post-Classical World* (with G. Bowersock and P. Brown, Cambridge 1999); *The Art and Architecture of Islam 650-1250* (with R. Ettinghausen and M. Jenkins-Madina, New Haven and London 2001); *Mostly Miniatures* (Princeton 2002); and 83 articles gathered in four volumes under the title *Constructing the Study of Islamic Art* (London 2005-06).

### OLIVER LEAMAN

#### “Defining Shi’i Art: Problems and Possibilities”

Religious differences often lead to differences in art. How would one investigate whether there are any distinctive features in Shi’i as compared with Sunni art? Is the notion of Shi’i art at all legitimate? Religious groups certainly wish to project their ideas, and art is a useful way to do this. Such a process has two aspects, one relating to the matter of art and one to the form. The matter consists of the themes in an art work and the tradition on which it rests, and the Shi’a might well be expected to favour certain ideas, narratives and even the representation of particular individuals in their



## Paper Abstracts and Academic Biographies

art. These would relate to the Shi'i view of the world, and in particular Islamic history, and the roles of particular individuals in that history. Differences in form would go further than this and would involve Shi'is constructing art in a different way from Sunnis as a result of their Shi'i principles. We should then be able to compare the art of these different groups and point to differences in how they are constructed, using religious ideology as the explanation of what we are viewing.

One might assume that the larger the difference between ideological positions, the greater the aesthetic differences between the work produced by each ideology. These differences actually represent the nature of the distinctiveness of each theological school. This is how traditionally in art history one is told that important differences in form develop and may be analysed. It will be argued that this approach is problematic here, although it certainly does capture our expectations of what should evolve from religious divisions. There is a tendency for each division to emphasise its commonality with the other, since they each wish to project themselves as traditional, authentic and original. This means that difference in doctrine may be represented by sameness in aesthetic depiction, not difference. But that means that there is no way of distinguishing between Shi'i and Sunni art, or so it might appear. By comparing images taken from art and architecture an attempt will be made to outline some of the conceptual issues that need to be addressed when we talk about art being linked closely with a particular theological standpoint.

Oliver Leaman is currently Professor of Philosophy at the University of Kentucky, USA. He previously taught in England and the Middle East. He writes mainly in the area of Islamic and Jewish philosophy, and his most recent publications are *Islamic Aesthetics: An Introduction* (Notre Dame and Edinburgh 2004); *Islam: The Key Concepts* (with K. Ali, London 2007); and *Jewish Thought: An Introduction* (London and New York 2006). He has just finished working on the second edition of Ninian Smart's *World Philosophies* (2008).

### JAMES W. ALLAN

#### “The Shi'i Shrines of Iraq: History and Architectural Development”

This paper considers the history and architectural development of the shrines of the Shi'i Imams located in Iraq, namely those of the 1st Imam, 'Ali, in Najaf, of the 3rd Imam, Husayn, in Karbala, and of the Twelver Imams, Musa al-Kazim and 'Ali al-Jawad, at Kazimayn in Baghdad, and the Imams 'Ali al-Hadi and al-Hasan al-'Askari at Samarra. The paper will demonstrate that architecturally the shrines grew up in a relatively haphazard fashion, with new architectural elements being added as late as the 19th century. It will also show, perhaps surprisingly, that they were the result not only of Shi'i patronage over the centuries, for example under the Hamdanids, Buyids, Safavids and Qajars, but of considerable Sunni patronage, especially in the late 12th – early 13th centuries under the Abbasid caliphs, and in the 18th century, under Nadir Shah.

James W. Allan is Professor of Eastern Art at the University of Oxford and a preeminent scholar of Islamic metalwork. He spent most of his career at the Ashmolean Museum, but for the last three years has been lecturing in Islamic art at the Khalili Research Centre for the Art and Material Culture of the Middle East at Oxford. His numerous publications include: “Early Safavid Metalwork” in J. Thompson and S. R. Canby (eds.), *Hunt for Paradise. Court Arts of Safavid Iran 1501-1576* (Milan and New York 2003); “My Father is a Sun, and I am a Star. Fatimid Symbols in Ayyubid and Mamluk metalwork”, *Journal of the David Collection* 1 (2003): 25-48; *Metalwork Treasures from the Islamic Courts, Museum of Islamic Art* (Doha 2002); *Persian Steel. The Tanavoli Collection* (with B. Gilmour, Oxford 2000); “Silver door facings of the Safavid period”, *Iran* 33 (1995): 123-137; “The Influence of the Metalwork of the Arab Mediterranean on that of Medieval Europe” in D. A. Agius and R. Hitchcock (eds.), *The Arab influence in medieval Europe* (Reading 1994); *Islamic Ceramics* (Oxford 1991); *Metalwork of the Islamic World: the Aron Collection* (London 1986); and *Islamic Metalwork: the Nuhad Es-Said Collection* (London 1982).



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**MAY FARHAT**

### “Mashhad Under the Early Safavid Shahs”

Mashhad, the shrine of the 8th Shi'i Imam (Imam 'Ali al-Rida or Imam Reza) in northeastern Iran, is arguably one of the largest and wealthiest sacred shrines in the world. The gilded dome over the Imam's mausoleum stands amidst an expansive and sprawling complex of courts, monumental gateways, libraries, museums, universities, guesthouses and administrative offices that cater to thousands of pilgrims who stream through its spaces, at all hours of the day and night. In this paper, I examine the period that established Mashhad as Iran's preeminent Shi'i pilgrimage centre, under the aegis of the early Safavid shahs. Appropriating the Timurid ecumenical shrine, the Safavid shahs' interventions refashioned the holy city into a site that celebrated the triumph of Twelver Shi'ism in the Safavid realm, and reinforced Safavid claims of legitimacy. While highlighting Shah Tahmasp's personal devotion to Mashhad, and his privileging of the shrine within Safavid sacred topography, the paper focuses on Shah 'Abbas's urban reshaping of Mashhad, and the architectural and institutional expansion of the shrine during his reign, that enhanced its status as the foremost spiritual centre in the Safavid empire, and aimed to rival other pilgrimage centres in the Islamic world.

May Farhat is Assistant Professor in the Department of Fine Arts and Art History at the American University of Beirut where she teaches Islamic art and architecture. She obtained her PhD at Harvard University where she specialised in the architectural history of Islamic Iran. Her interest extends as well to themes related to the development of the field of Islamic art, such as the collecting of Islamic art objects in the West and in the Middle East. She is currently preparing a book length study of the shrine of Imam 'Ali al-Rida in Mashhad, Iran.

**ANNA CONTADINI**

### Chair for the panel, “Patronage and Pilgrimage: Shi'i Shrines in Iran”

Dr. Anna Contadini graduated in Arabic and Islamic Art at the Oriental Institute of Venice University. Subsequently she completed her doctorate in Islamic Art at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. She was then appointed Baring Foundation Research Fellow in Islamic Studies at the Victoria and Albert Museum, and was then in Ireland, as Lecturer in Islamic Art at Trinity College Dublin, and Curator of the Islamic Collections of the Chester Beatty Library. Dr. Contadini is currently Reader in the History of Islamic Art at SOAS, and Director of the “Treasures of SOAS” project. Her publications include: *Arab Painting: Text and Image in Illustrated Arabic Manuscripts* (Leiden 2007); *Objects of Instruction: Treasures of the School of Oriental and African Studies* (London 2007); “Fatimid Ivories Within a Mediterranean Culture”, *Journal of the David Collection* 2 (2005): 226-247; “Travelling Pattern: A Qur'anic Illumination and its Secular Source” in S. Canby (ed.), *Safavid Art and Architecture* (London 2002); and *Fatimid Art at the Victoria and Albert Museum* (London 1998).

**SHEILA R. CANBY**

### “The Gifts of Shah 'Abbas to Shi'i Shrines”

This paper will focus on a group of Qur'ans given by Shah 'Abbas to the Shrine of Imam Reza in Mashhad. All of the Qur'ans contain a *waqfnameh* written by Shaykh Baha'i, the remarkable jurist, mathematician, architect and poet who helped Shah 'Abbas normalise the practice of Shi'ism in Iran in the early 17th century. In addition to considering the process by which the Qur'ans were chosen to be donated to the shrine, this paper will also review them in the broader context of Safavid attitudes to early Kufic Qur'ans. Of particular interest are those Qur'ans that contain “signatures” of the Shi'i Imams along with seals and librarians' notations. While Shah 'Abbas gave several Qur'ans of this type to the Shrine of Imam Reza, others appear to have remained in the



## Paper Abstracts and Academic Biographies

possession of the Safavid royal family. Along with the question of value, the group presents the possibility of Safavid library staff embellishing these early Qur'ans to strengthen the Safavid claim to direct genealogical and spiritual descent from the Shi'i Imams.

Dr. Sheila R. Canby has served as Curator of Islamic Art and Antiquities at the British Museum since 1991. Before that she curated the Islamic collections in several American museums. Her publications include *Islamic Art in Detail* (London 2005); *Hunt for Paradise: Court Arts of Safavid Iran, 1501-76* (co-edited with J. Thompson, Milan and London 2003); *The Golden Age of Persian Art, 1501-1722* (London 1999); *Rebellious Reformer: The Drawings and Paintings of Riza-yi 'Abbasi of Isfahan* (London 1996); and *Persian Painting* (London 1993). She is the curator of the British Museum's major exhibition, "Shah 'Abbas: the Remaking of Iran".

### MELANIE MICHAILIDIS

#### "Pilgrims and Patrons: Ziyarat under the Samanids and Bavandids"

The practice of *ziyarat* (pilgrimage to shrines) is generally classified as a Shi'i phenomenon which has characterised the sites of important Shi'i burials since the interment of the Imams 'Ali at Najaf and Husayn at Karbala. My examination of some of the earliest extant funerary monuments in northern Iran and Central Asia shows that, in the 10th and 11th centuries, this practice was not exclusively Shi'i. The Alborz Mountains were at this time divided between several Shi'i dynasties: the Zaydi rulers of the western Alborz did patronize local Shi'i shrines, whereas the Bavandids, their Twelver Shi'i neighbours to the east, did not. Moreover, the dynastic mausolea of the Bavandids themselves were built in a way which positively discouraged entry and the practice of *ziyarat*. The Sunni Samanids, on the other hand, constructed a dynastic mausoleum in Bukhara which they fully intended to become a focus of *ziyarat*, probably in order to replace pilgrimage to local Zoroastrian sites. The Samanids also patronised the shrines of prominent mystics in their realm, often located on pre-Islamic holy sites. Through my analysis of these examples I will show that the boundary between Shi'i and Sunni practices was not rigidly defined during this period and that the encouragement of *ziyarat* through architectural patronage was linked to both the political and religious goals of each of the various dynasties of Iran and Central Asia but was not determined by their confessional divisions.

Melanie Michailidis is a Mellon Post-doctoral Fellow in the Department of Art and Art History at Carleton College, USA. In May 2007 she completed her PhD in the History, Theory, and Criticism section of the Department of Architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Her dissertation was entitled "Landmarks of the Persian Renaissance: Funerary Architecture in Iran and Central Asia in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries". Prior to attending MIT, she studied History of Art and Archaeology at the School of Oriental and African Studies, where she earned an MA with Distinction in 2000. Fellowships which she has received include the Ittleson Fellowship at the Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts; a Fulbright Fellowship from the Institute for International Education; a Doctoral Fellowship from the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture at MIT; the Hyzen Fellowship from the Department of Architecture at MIT; and the Barakat Foundation MIT Grant.

### DORIS BEHRENS-ABOUSEIF

#### Chair for the panel, "Patronage and Pilgrimage: Shi'i Shrines in Syria"

Professor Doris Behrens-Abouseif (MA (AUC); PhD (Hamburg); Habilitation (Freiburg)) holds the Nasser D Khalili Chair of Islamic Art and Archaeology at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London and is a member of the Academia Europea. Before joining SOAS in 2000 Professor Behrens-Abouseif taught Islamic art at the American University in Cairo and at the Universities of Freiburg and Munich in Germany. She has been invited as visiting professor to a number of universities in the USA, Europe and Egypt. Professor Behrens-Abouseif's publications



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cover a wide range of subjects including architecture, decorative arts, urbanism, *waqf*, the cultural history of Egypt and Syria, and aesthetics in the Arab world. Her books include: *Egypt's Adjustment to Ottoman Rule* (Leiden, New York, Köln 1994); *Beauty in Arabic Culture* (Princeton 1999); and *Cairo of the Mamluks* (London 2007).

### YASSER TABBAA

#### “Architecture for Piety: The Shi'i Shrines of Syria”

The dawn of the 21st century has witnessed the resurgence of political and cultural Shi'ism and advanced the deeply rooted pluralism that lies at the foundation of Islam. Outmoded paradigms of essentialism or unity-within-diversity no longer suffice to explain the radically different forms presented by newly built Shi'i shrines in Syria and elsewhere nor with the sheer volume of this discordant production. Viewing these developments instead from the perspective of difference and disjunction, this paper aims to explore the significance of these forms and the social and political implications of recent Shi'i architecture in Syria.

Yasser Tabbaa received his PhD in 1983 from the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, where he specialised in Islamic art and architecture. In addition to his foundational work on the architecture of Nur al-Din, Tabbaa has published two books: *Constructions of Power and Piety in Medieval Aleppo* (University Park 1997) and *The Transformation of Islamic Art During the Sunni Revival* (London and Seattle 2001, 2002), a book that places the radical transformations undergone by ornament and calligraphy in the 11th and 12th centuries within the context of contemporary theological and political controversies. Tabbaa has also published articles on the Islamic garden, Islamic calligraphy and epigraphy, the history of the Islamic hospital, and the newly built Shi'i shrines in Syria. Yasser Tabbaa has taught Islamic art and history for more than 25 years in various American and Arab universities, including Oberlin College and the University of Michigan. He currently heads the department of Ethics, Philosophy and Religion at King's Academy in Jordan, where he also teaches history and art history.

### STEPHENNIE MULDER

#### “Shrines of the Prophet's House: The Role of the 'Alid Shrines in Medieval Syria's Sacred Landscape”

In medieval Syria (*Bilad al-Sham*), the Seljuk and Ayyubid periods are often characterised as an era of enmity toward Shi'ism. However, new evidence suggests that frequently, an ongoing and complex inter-confessional negotiation took place. By the 6th/12th century, the initial fervency of hostility toward Shi'i communities had faded. Remaining antagonism from the Ayyubid and Seljuk rulers was directed largely toward Shi'i groups that were perceived as *ghulat* or “heretical”, including the Isma'ili Shi'a, with the general acceptance of Imami (Twelver) Shi'ism as a legitimate, if “misguided”, variation of Islamic practice. In Syria, Sunni rulers recognised the political perils of openly antagonizing Shi'i communities, which, according to the medieval traveler Ibn Jubayr, constituted the majority of Muslims in the Levantine coastal plain and cities like Aleppo and Homs. Even the great Sunni ruler Nur al-Din found himself required to moderate his policies, as he played a delicate game of political conciliation that included the patronage and upkeep of Shi'i places of pilgrimage. All of this occurred during a period of great religious excitement, when the depredations of Crusader forces and the movement for the revival of Sunnism meant it was not uncommon for crowds of ordinary people to sleep in mosques in anticipation of hearing a particularly popular preacher. Against this vibrant backdrop, Syria became the stage for a profound and systematic alteration of its sacred landscape. Long home to Biblical holy sites, *Bilad al-Sham* was now transformed into a holy land specific to Muslims, with the foundation of hundreds of shrines and sanctuaries, devoted to a dizzying array of Islamic holy figures. A key role in the generation of this landscape was played by the patronage of shrines devoted to the 'Alids, or descendants of 'Ali. These shrines – revered nearly exclusively by Muslims and sacred to both Sunni and Shi'i – were uniquely Islamic and profoundly unifying in a time of vibrant Sunni revival.



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Stephennie Mulder (PhD (U Penn)) is Assistant Professor of Islamic Art and Architecture at the University of Texas at Austin. A specialist in architectural history and archaeology, she has worked for ten years as the ceramicist in Princeton University's excavations of the Islamic site of Balis, Syria. In 2004-2005, she conducted fieldwork for her current project, *The Architecture of Coexistence: Sunnis, Shi'is and the Shrines of the 'Alids in Medieval Syria*, which identifies, draws, and maps dozens of 'Alid shrines and argues for their role in medieval sectarian conciliation and accommodation. Professor Mulder's publications include: "The Mausoleum of the Imam al-Shafi'i", *Muqarnas* 23 (2006); and "Alternative 'Alids: How the Ottoman Sultan Abdülhamid II Transformed the Ordinary in the Cemetery of Bab al-Saghir in Damascus" in Z. Hirji and R. Kana'an (eds.), *Places for Worship and Devotion in Muslim Societies* (London 2009).

### EMILIE SAVAGE-SMITH

#### Chair for the panel, "Amulets, Divination and Iconography in Shi'i Contexts"

Emilie Savage-Smith has recently retired as Professor of the History of Islamic Science at the University of Oxford. She is continuing senior research consultant at the Bodleian Library and Emeritus Fellow & Archivist of St Cross College, Oxford. Recent publications include a collaborative project between the Oriental Institute (Oxford) and the Bodleian Library that resulted in the electronic edition and translation of an early 11th-century Arabic cosmology, available since March of 2007 at the website hosted by the Bodleian Library titled *Medieval Islamic Views of the Cosmos: The Book of Curiosities* (<http://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/bookofcuriosities>). Her recent books include *Medieval Islamic Medicine* (with P. E. Pormann, Edinburgh 2007), awarded the 2008 British-Kuwait Friendship Society Prize in Middle Eastern Studies; *A Descriptive Catalogue of Oriental Manuscripts at St John's College, Oxford* (Oxford 2005); *Medieval Views of the Cosmos* (with E. Edson, Oxford 2004); and *Magic and Divination in Early Islam* (Aldershot 2004).

### MASSUMEH FARHAD

#### "Between the Past and the Future: The *Falnama* (Book of Omens)"

Notable for its monumental scale, boldly conceived images, and unusual text, the *Falnama* (Book of Omens) stands out among traditional illustrated text of 16th-century Iran. At least four monumental copies are known and include representations of the Prophet Muhammad and his descendants, in particular Imam 'Ali, Abrahamic prophets, the constellations, legendary heroes, and the eschaton. Although the illustrations lack a clear art historical genesis, they belong to a long-established tradition of divinatory devices popular for centuries in the Islamic world. Instead of dreams, the alignment of stars, or the verses of Hafiz, seekers now depended on painted images, in particular depictions of Shi'i Imams and their miracles, to gain insight into the unknown. This paper will introduce some of the most salient characteristics of the monumental pictorial *Falnamas* and explore the reasons for Safavid and Ottoman interest in these extraordinary texts.

Massumeh Farhad joined the Freer Gallery of Art/Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, in 1995 as Associate Curator of Islamic Art. In 2004, she was appointed Chief Curator and Curator of Islamic Art. She is a specialist in the arts of the book from 16th- and 17th-century Iran. Farhad has curated numerous exhibitions on the arts of the Islamic world at the Freer and Sackler, including *Art of the Persian Courts* (1996), *Fountains of Light: The Nuhad Es-Said Collection of Metalwork* (2000), *Love and Yearning: Mystical and Moral Themes in Persian Painting* (2003), and *Style and Status: Imperial Costumes from Ottoman Turkey* (2005-6). She received her BA from Wellesley College (1978) and her PhD in Islamic Art History from Harvard University in 1987 and has written extensively on 17th-century Persian painting and recently co-authored *Slaves of the Shah: New Elites in Safavid Iran* (London 2004).



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### CHRISTIANE GRUBER

#### “The ‘Restored’ Shi‘i *Mushaf* as Divine Guide?: The Practice of *Fal-i Qur‘an* in the Safavid Period”

This paper argues that the exponential growth of divinatory texts known as *falnamas*, attributed variously to the Imams ‘Ali, Husayn, and Ja‘far al-Sadiq, included at the end of Qur‘ans produced during the Safavid period provide further evidence for the widespread interest in divination during the 16th and 17th centuries in Iran. Treatises on divination by the Qur‘an (*fal-i Qur‘an*) reveal that it was considered permissible to “seek guidance” (*istikhara*) by means of Holy Scripture at this time. On a more symbolic level, however, *fal-i Qur‘ans* can be understood as a kind of restoration of the “defective” ‘Uthmanic codex by re-Shi‘ifying it – if not by reinserting supposedly dropped verses on the *Ahl al-Bayt*, then at the very least by systematically adding terminal divinations attributed to the figureheads of Shi‘i Islam. This particular practice therefore follows the general “Shi‘ification” trends found in a number of cultural and artistic practices of the Safavid period, which also are discernible within the domain of Qur‘anic production.

Dr. Christiane Gruber (PhD (U Penn)) is Assistant Professor of Islamic Art at Indiana University, Bloomington. She is the author of *The Timurid Book of Ascension (Mi‘rajnama): A Study of Text and Image in a Pan-Asian Context* (Valencia 2008), and *Selections of Arabic, Persian, and Turkish Calligraphies* (Washington 2006). She also wrote the entry on “Divination” in J. Meri (ed.), *Medieval Islamic Civilization: An Encyclopedia*, Vol.1 (New York and London 2006).

### VENETIA PORTER

#### “Amulets, Heroes, and Shi‘ism”

The use and meaning of amulets in Iran and the Shi‘a world belongs within the broader context of amulet use in different parts of the Muslim world. The objects that will be discussed in this paper, however, contain elements that associate them firmly with the Shi‘a world. Based largely on amulets in the collection of the British Museum, which range in date from the Safavid period or earlier, and up to amulets made in Iran today, this paper will examine what defines a Shi‘i amulet, the content and style of the inscriptions engraved upon such amulets, and the materials that are used to make them. Some of these amulets are engraved in reverse, whereas others are engraved in positive. They take the form of objects that are worn or placed in the home. The examples that are engraved in reverse belong in a category of amulet-seals that were made to be impressed, but these impressions do not survive, and how these amulets were used remains unclear. Also discussed will be the choice of particular Qur‘anic texts on these amulets and how they combine with “Shi‘i phrases”. Other amulets that will be examined contain symbols and other esoteric elements which place them within the realm of magic. Finally, the context for the wearing of amulets in Iran will be touched upon using as an example the amulets worn by *jahan pahlavan* – world heroes – from the epic hero of the *Shahnameh*, Rostam, to the heroes of today.

Venetia Porter is a curator in the department of the Middle East at the British Museum. She studied Arabic and Persian at the University of Oxford where she also did an M Phil in Islamic art. Her doctorate from the University of Durham is on the medieval history and architecture of the Yemen. At the British Museum where she has been since 1989, she is responsible principally for the collections of Islamic art from the Arab world and modern Middle Eastern art. Her research and publications have covered the areas of ceramics and tiles, coins and inscriptions, aspects of medieval Yemen, and modern Middle Eastern art. She has also been working on seals and amulets and her catalogue of the British Museum’s collection of this material will appear in 2009. Articles on amulets include: “Amulets With the Names of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus in the British Museum” in F. Suleman (ed.), *Word of God, Art of Man: The Qur‘an and its Creative Expressions* (Oxford 2007); “Water and Magic and Magical Inscriptions on ‘Frozen Water’” in S. Blair and J. Bloom (eds.), *Rivers of Paradise: Water in Islamic Art and Culture* (New Haven 2009). She is also the curator of “Takhti: a Modern Iranian Hero”, an *Objects in Focus* exhibition which coincides with the British Museum’s major exhibition “Shah ‘Abbas: the Remaking of Iran”.



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ALEXANDER H. MORTON

### Chair for the panel, “Shi‘i Inscriptions on Art, Architecture and Coinage”

A. H. Morton used to teach Persian at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. He has written on various aspects of the history and culture of Iran. His translation of Michele Membré’s account of his diplomatic mission to Shah Tahmasp, *Mission to the Lord Sophy of Persia* (1539-1542), appeared in 1993. More recently he has produced a critical edition of *The Saljuqnama of Zahir al-Din Nishapuri*. Articles on Safavid and other topics include the following: “The Ardabil Shrine in the Reign of Shah Tahmasp I”, *Iran* (1974): 31-64 and (1975): 39-58; “The Early Years of Shah Isma‘il in the *Afdal al-Tawarikh* and elsewhere” in C. Melville (ed.), *Safavid Persia: The History and Politics of an Islamic Society* (Cambridge 1996); and “The Letters of Rashid al-Din: Ilkhanid fact or Timurid fiction?” in R. Amitai-Preiss and D. O. Morgan (eds.), *The Mongol Empire and its Legacy* (Leiden 1999).

SHEILA S. BLAIR

### “Writing about Faith: Epigraphic Evidence for the Development of Shi‘ism in Iran”

Twelver Shi‘ism has a lengthy, if intermittent, history in Iran before its establishment as the state religion in Safavid times, and this paper investigates the material evidence for its development, specifically the inscriptions on buildings and objects. In the 10th century the Buyids recognised forms still practiced by Shi‘a Muslims today. Mu‘izz al-Dawla, for example, consecrated the lamentations of ‘*Ashura* and created the festival of Ghadir Khumm. So little Buyid art remains, however, that it is difficult to assess its sectarianism. We are on safer ground by the 12th century during the period of Seljuk rule when such cities as Qum and Kashan had become major centres of Shi‘ism. The earliest remains at the shrine of Fatima al-Ma‘sumeh at Qum comprise the lavish revetment of lustre tiles on the cenotaph dated 3 Rajab 602/13 February 1206 and signed by Muhammad ibn Abi Tahir and Abu Zayd, the most important potters of the period and members of related families of Hasani and Husayni *sayyids* in Kashan. The same pair of artisans carried out an even more ambitious redecoration of the shrine at Mashhad a decade later, and in Safar 623/February 1226 their compatriot Hasan ibn ‘Arabshah made an enormous, though simpler, *mihrab* (prayer niche) ensemble that was later installed in the Maydan Mosque in Kashan and then removed to the State Museum in Berlin. In the early 14th century the Ilkhanid sultan Uljaytu briefly mandated Shi‘ism as the state religion. To mark the change, he had a new type of coin that incorporated the names of the Twelve Imams issued from AH 708/AD 1309, and in Safar 710/July 1310 his vizier Sa‘d al-Din Savaji ordered a splendid *mihrab* for the congregational mosque of Isfahan, a recalcitrant city whose occupants were said to have resisted the change in faith. This paper discusses the inscriptions on these objects and the relationship of text to form and decoration.



Sheila Blair is co-holder (with her husband Jonathan Bloom) of the Norma Jean Calderwood University Professorship of Islamic and Asian Art at Boston College and the Hamad bin Khalifa Endowed Chair of Islamic Art at Virginia Commonwealth University. Author of a dozen books and hundreds of articles, she writes on many aspects of Islamic art, but her special interests are writing and the arts of Iran. Her latest works include a survey of *Islamic Calligraphy* (Edinburgh 2006) and a biographical article on the potter Abu Zayd in *Muqarnas* 25 (2008).

LUKE TREADWELL



### “Shi‘i Inscriptions on Islamic Coins”

The earliest ‘Alid (rather than Shi‘i) numismatic inscriptions are found on the coinage of the Zaydi rulers of the Caspian region and the Idrisids of North Africa. These comprised mainly selected Qur’anic inscriptions which highlighted the status of the Prophet’s family and their right to lead the *umma*. Inscriptions of a sectarian Shi‘i nature begin with the Fatimids and, like the earlier ‘Alid legends, these contain programmatic messages which give substance to the priority that the Fatimid rulers





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claimed over their Abbasid rivals. Shorter tags (such as *'Ali wali Allah*) occur on the coins of the Fatimids' Iranian contemporaries (e.g. the Bavandids), establishing a tradition that continued intermittently in northern Iran. It was only with the Ilkhanid ruler Uljaytu that extended Shi'i numismatic legends appear (including the names of the Twelve Imams). Thereafter Shi'i phrases occur occasionally until the Safavid period, again mostly in the mints of northern and eastern Iran. In some cases, a ruler might choose to place a pro-Shi'i inscription on the coinage of a particular mint, only to be prevented from doing so by the local scholars (e.g. the Timurid Husayn Bayqara who wanted to place the names of the Twelve Imams on the coinage of Harat in AH 873, but, according to Khwandamir's *Habib al-Siyar*, was prevented from doing so by the Hanafis of that city). With the advent of the Safavids, the Shi'i *kalima* and the names of the Twelve Imams became standard features of the coinage and later Safavid rulers introduced self-abasing devotional epithets into their numismatic titulature (e.g. *kalb-e astan-e 'Ali*). Some evidence for Shi'i legends is also to be found in Indian Islamic coinage of the same period. In Iran, the tradition continued until the reign of Fath 'Ali Shah of the Qajar dynasty.

Dr Luke Treadwell is University Lecturer in Islamic Numismatics and Curator of Islamic Coins, Ashmolean Museum. His research interests include the history of the Islamic Mashriq before the Seljuks, 'Abd al-Malik's coinage reforms, and coinage of the Islamic world before the Mongols. He also lectures in the Master's programmes in Islamic material culture at the Khalili Research Centre for the Art and Material Culture of the Middle East at Oxford. Dr Treadwell's publications include: *Buyid Coinage: a Die Corpus (322-445 A.H.)* (Oxford 2001); "A New Text on Ismailism at the Samanid Court" in C. F. Robinson (ed.), *Texts, Documents and Artefacts: Islamic Studies in Honour of D. S. Richards* (with P. Crone, Leiden 2003); "The account of the Samanid dynasty in Ibn Zafir al-Azdi's *Akhbar al-duwal al-munqati'a*", *Iran* 43 (2005): 135-171; "'Mihrab and Anaza' or 'Sacrum and Spear' – A Reconsideration of the Iconography of an Early Marwanid Silver Drachm", *Muqarnas* 22 (2005): 1-28; and "The Copper Coinage of Umayyad Iran", *Numismatic Chronicle* (2009, forthcoming).

### OYA PANCAROGLU

#### Chair for the panel, "Iconography Beyond Shi'i Contexts"

Oya Pancaroglu is currently Associate Professor in the Department of History, Bogaziçi University, Istanbul. She received her PhD in Islamic Art in 2000 from Harvard University with a thesis on transformations in figural representation in the medieval eastern Islamic world. Between 2000 and 2006, she held appointments at the University of Oxford as Post-Doctoral Research Fellow and as Departmental Lecturer. Her research interests include the literary extensions of the visual arts in the greater Iranian world of the early and medieval Islamic periods and the architectural reflections of the social and religious contexts of medieval Anatolia between the 12th and 15th centuries. She teaches survey and thematic courses on medieval Islamic art as well as courses on early Islamic and Turkic history. Since 2008, she is serving as an advisor for the medieval Islamic (Abbasid) period finds of the Tarsus excavation project (Gözlükule mound) led by Bogaziçi University. Her publications include: *Perpetual Glory: Medieval Islamic Ceramics from the Harvey B. Plotnick Collection* [exh. cat.] (New Haven and London 2007); "Caves, Borderlands and Configurations of Sacred Topography in Medieval Anatolia", *Mésogeios* 25-26 (2005): 249-81; "The Itinerant Dragon Slayer: Forging Paths of Image and Identity in Medieval Anatolia", *Gesta* 43/2 (2004): 151-64; and "Signs in the Horizons: Concepts of Image and Boundary in a Medieval Persian Cosmography", *Res: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 43 (2003): 31-41.

### ZEYNEP YUREKLI-GORKAY

#### "Icon, Emblem, Amulet, Identity Marker: the Sword of 'Ali and the Ottoman Ghazis"

According to common belief and several accounts, the Prophet Muhammad gave the legendary sword Dhu'l-fiqar to 'Ali b. Abi Talib during the battle of Uhud, and later on, Imam Husayn used it at the battle of Karbala. Represented usually either with a slightly tilted and two-pointed blade or two diverging blades, it became an attribute of Imam



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'Ali in pictorial art. In the Ottoman context, Imam 'Ali was depicted using it on the battlefield in the illustrated histories produced in the court workshop of the life of the Prophet and his family. However, the Dhu'l-fiqar motif alone gradually became a symbol of Shi'i affiliation, with its depictions and abstractions appearing frequently in the pictorial art, calligraphy and architectural decoration of Shi'i-inclined groups in the Ottoman empire, especially the Bektashis. Interestingly, despite the sectarian undertones of the symbol, it decorated Ottoman banners and garments of the 16th century, when the military energy of the Sunni Ottomans was largely channelled towards defeating the Shi'i Safavids. A few scholars have noted the multiple meanings associated with the use of the motif on Ottoman banners. Most notably, Jane Hathaway has focused on its function as an icon whose meaning depended on the audience. The Dhu'l-fiqar motif thus seems to have carried a multitude of religio-cultural and sacred meanings. However, this paper focuses on its function as a political indicator of commitment to the *ghazi* ethos in an Ottoman imperial context. Various depictions of, and literary references to, the Dhu'l-fiqar are examined in order to provide a glimpse of the complex nature of the relationship of the Ottoman state with an imperial "subculture", namely the culture of *ghaza*, or *ghazi*-hood.

Dr Zeynep Yurekli-Gorkay received her PhD in History of Art and Architecture from Harvard University in 2005, and has taught Islamic art and architecture, Ottoman literature and medieval Anatolian and Ottoman history courses at Bilkent and TOBB Universities in Turkey. She is currently a Departmental Lecturer in Islamic Art and Archaeology at the University of Oxford. Her research interests include architecture, manuscript painting, patronage, Sufism and hagiography in the early modern Islamic world.

### FAHMIDA SULEMAN

#### "The 'Hand of Fatima', Origins and Significance"

The iconography of the open human hand with fingers and thumb outstretched is an ancient and ubiquitous symbol in many cultures and religions. In many parts of the Muslim world it appears as a talismanic symbol used to ward off the evil eye and is commonly, though by no means exclusively, identified as the "Hand of Fatima", referring to the daughter of the Prophet Muhammad and Bibi Khadija, Fatima al-Zahra, a figure revered by Sunnis and Shi'is alike. This paper will examine the origins and significance of this multivalent motif in the Muslim context and investigate how it became associated with the historical figure of Fatima who was also the wife of the 1st Shi'i Imam, 'Ali b. Abi Talib, and the mother of the 2nd and 3rd Imams, al-Hasan and al-Husayn. The paper will also demonstrate how this symbol has transcended beyond confessional Sunni and Shi'i boundaries.

Fahmida Suleman (BA (Islamic Studies, U Toronto), DPhil (Islamic Art and Archaeology, Oxford)) is the conference organizer and a Research Associate at The Institute of Ismaili Studies. In 2008 she was Curatorial Research Assistant to Dr Sheila Canby for the British Museum's major exhibition, "Shah 'Abbas: The Remaking of Iran". Using Arabic literary sources, her doctoral thesis at the University of Oxford focused on interpreting the figural iconography of lustre ceramics from Fatimid Egypt and what it conveys about medieval Mediterranean society. In addition to Islamic iconography, Dr Suleman's research interests include the study of Muslim religious iconography. Her publications include: "The Image of 'Ali as the Lion of God in Shi'i Art" in P. Khosronejad (ed.), *The Art and Material Culture of Iranian Shi'ism* (London 2009, forthcoming); "From Shards to Bards: Pottery Making in Historic Cairo" in F. Daftary et al. (eds.), *Living with the Past: Historic Cairo* (London 2009, forthcoming); *Word of God, Art of Man: the Qur'an and its Creative Expressions. Selected Proceedings from the International Colloquium* (editor and introduction, Oxford 2007); and "Ceramics", "Gifts and Gift Giving" and "*Kalila wa Dimna*" in J. Meri (ed.), *Medieval Islamic Civilization: An Encyclopedia*, Vol.1 (New York 2006).



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### PEDRAM KHOSRONEJAD

#### Chair for the panel, "Ritual Expressions in Shi'i Contexts"

Pedram Khosronejad is currently the Goli Rais Larizadeh Fellow of the Iran Heritage Foundation for Iranian Studies at the University of St Andrews' Department of Social Anthropology. His PhD thesis examined religious material culture, its visual representation and the techniques of its creation amongst the pastoral nomads of Iran. For his research he was particularly interested in how religious and oral beliefs regarding death and dying lead to the creation of mortuary material culture and mortuary visual representation. More recently he has been researching the themes of death and dying vis-à-vis war and martyrdom and their visual representations in documentary film and photography in Iran and the larger Muslim world, particularly in Shi'i communities. He is the editor of three forthcoming titles: *Les Lions en pierres chez les Nomades Bakhtiari* (Leuven); *The Art and Material Culture of Iranian Shiism* (Conference proceedings, London); and *Unburied Memories: Martyrs Grave Photographs and Funerary Memorial Objects*, as guest editor for the *Journal of Visual Anthropology*. His recent articles include: "Where is the Anthropology of Iran After 70 Years?", *Anthropology News* 48/2 (Feb 2007); "The Anthropology of Islamic Shiite Art and Material Culture", *Anthropology News* 47/6 (Sept 2006); and "The *Shahnameh* in Bakhtiari Nomadic Society: Anthropological Aspects of Heroes and Heroism", *Iran* XLIV (2006): 321-26.

### MARA LEICHTMAN

#### "The Africanization of 'Ashura in Senegal"

The first ten days of the month of Muharram, during which the martyrdom of Imam Husayn, his family, and army is commemorated, is often taken as an essential cultural paradigm for Shi'i Islam, both by academics and by Shi'i Muslims themselves. Scholars have written extensively about 'Ashura practices in Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Pakistan, and elsewhere, where the mourning period is marked by reenacting the story of the battle of Karbala, including self-flagellation. Over the past two years, Senegalese converts to Shi'i Islam have begun to commemorate 'Ashura in their own way. They insist that these Arab or Persian practices are not essential to Shi'i Islam, stressing in contrast their Senegalese or African Shi'i identity. Converts in Dakar have organised public debates which cater to a Senegalese Sunni Muslim audience in a mixture of Wolof, Arabic, and French languages. In Senegal, 'Ashura overlaps with *Tamkharit*, a festive occasion with pre-Islamic origins where members of the Sufi orders feast on couscous and girls dress as boys and boys as girls. Some believe this holiday celebrates the Muslim New Year, although it falls on the 10th and not the 1st of Muharram, and is linked to other Qur'anic events. Senegalese Shi'a hope that through educating the Senegalese population about 'Ashura they will sensitize them to the sadness of this date and avoid conflict. Conferences and television and radio appearances discuss whether 'Ashura is a celebration or a day of mourning and play up the closeness that African Sufis also feel toward the family of the Prophet.

Mara A. Leichtman is Assistant Professor of Anthropology and Muslim Studies at Michigan State University. During the 2007-2008 academic year she was a visiting fellow at the *Zentrum Moderner Orient*/Centre for Modern Oriental Studies in Berlin, Germany, and the International Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World (ISIM) in Leiden, the Netherlands. She has been conducting research and teaching in Senegal since 2000. Her research is multi-sited, including fieldwork in Lebanon, France, and England examining ties between Senegal and Lebanon, and linkages with transnational Shi'i institutions headquartered in Europe. She has published various articles and book chapters on Shi'i Islam. She recently published a co-edited volume with Mamadou Diouf titled *New Perspectives on Islam in Senegal: Conversion, Migration, Wealth, Power and Femininity* (New York 2009). She is also working on a book manuscript preliminarily entitled *Becoming Shi'a in Africa: Lebanese Migrants and Senegalese Converts*.



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**NACIM PAK-SHIRAZ**

### “Cinema as a Reservoir for Cultural Memory”

In recent years, officials of the Islamic Republic have banned some of the popular practices commemorating the martyrdom of the third Shi'i Imam, al-Husayn, during the month of Muharram. Even though the tensions between the official and popular discourses on Imam Husayn are historically rooted, the recent banning appears to stem from concerns about the disrepute that these practices might bring to Shi'ism in the wider context of the Muslim *umma*. The events of Karbala and the martyrdom of Imam Husayn have also inspired many Iranian filmmakers. This paper argues that in the face of these increased pressures on popular practices, Iranian films have provided a new medium of expression for one of the oldest Shi'i narratives. I particularly examine how elements from *ta'ziya* plays, a re-enactment of the events of Karbala that culminated in the death of Imam Husayn, are employed in film and how film can be seen as a reservoir for cultural memory.

Nacim Pak-Shiraz is a Lecturer at The Institute of Ismaili Studies. She is currently completing her PhD at the University of London's School of Oriental and African Studies on the engagement of film with religion in Iranian Cinema. She has made a documentary film on Iranian asylum seekers and authored a number of articles on Iranian cinema including: “Filmic Discourses on the Role of the Clergy in Iran”, *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 34/3 (2007); re-published in L. Ridgeon (ed.), *Iranian Intellectuals, 1997-2007* (London 2008); and an entry on “Cinema in the Islamic World” in M. Ruthven with A. Nanji (eds.), *Historical Atlas of Islam* (Cambridge 2004).

**FARHAD DAFTARY**

### Chair for the panel, “Fatimid Contexts”

Farhad Daftary (PhD (U California, Berkeley)) is Acting Director and Head of the Department of Academic Research and Publications at The Institute of Ismaili Studies, London. He is a consulting editor of *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, co-editor of *Encyclopaedia Islamica*, as well as the general editor of the “Ismaili Heritage Series” and “Ismaili Texts and Translations Series”. An authority on Ismaili history, Dr. Daftary's publications include: *The Isma'ilis: Their History and Doctrines* (Cambridge 1990; 2nd ed. 2007); *The Assassin Legends* (London 1994); *A Short History of the Ismailis* (Edinburgh 1998); *Intellectual Traditions in Islam* (London 2000); *Ismaili Literature: A Bibliography of Sources and Studies* (London 2004); *Ismailis in Medieval Muslim Societies* (London 2005); and *The Ismailis: An Illustrated History* (with Z. Hirji, London 2008). Dr. Daftary's books have been translated into Arabic, Gujarati, Persian, Turkish, Urdu and numerous European languages.

**JONATHAN BLOOM**

### “Fatimid Architecture and Shi'ism”

The Fatimids were the most important Shi'i patrons of architecture in the Islamic lands before the advent of the Safavids in the early 16th century. From the 10th to the 12th centuries, the Fatimids established flourishing cities in North Africa and Egypt which were graced with large and small mosques, palaces and shrines ordered by members of the dynasty and their associates. Over the course of the last century, scholars have attempted to identify specifically Shi'i features in Fatimid architectural patronage. This paper will examine the nature of these buildings and how they might have differed – if at all – from those erected by their Sunni contemporaries, as well as how they were perceived and used by their successors.

Jonathan M. Bloom shares the Norma Jean Calderwood University Professorship of Islamic and Asian Art at Boston College and the Hamad bin Khalifa Endowed Chair of Islamic Art at Virginia Commonwealth University with his wife and colleague, Sheila S. Blair. He is the author, editor, co-author, or co-editor of a dozen books and hundreds

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of articles and reviews on many aspects of Islamic art, particularly the arts of the Islamic Mediterranean region and the history of paper in the Islamic lands. Among his recent books is *Arts of the City Victorious: Islamic Art and Architecture in Fatimid North Africa and Egypt*, published in 2007 by Yale University Press in association with The Institute of Ismaili Studies.

### RUBA KANA'AN

#### “Between Realm and Resonance: ‘Fatimid Style’ in Yemen and Oman”

The artistic style of the Fatimid Shi'is was the product of evolution and consolidation. Fatimid style came to be recognised for its use of particular architectural elements, decorative motifs, and inscriptions. This style was emulated and reproduced throughout the Fatimid realm and well beyond the Fatimid period. This paper examines the articulation and resonance of Fatimid style in Southern Arabia with a focus on a group of stucco-decorated *mihirabs* (prayer niches) dating between the 11th to the 16th centuries in Yemen and Oman. While Yemen was part of the Fatimid realm under the Sulayhids (1038-1138), its neighbour Oman was not. Oman was ruled by Ibadhi Imams whose interpretation of Islamic doctrine was different from that of the Shi'is and Sunnis. More specifically, the paper will discuss the *mihrab* of the Great Mosque of Jibla in Yemen commissioned by the Sulayhid Queen Arwa bint Ahmad in 1087 and the *mihrab* of the Great Mosque of Sa'al in Oman dated to 1252. This paper demonstrates how these and other *mihirabs* share a common decorative and structural language, despite doctrinal and political differences between Yemen and Oman.

Ruba Kana'an (DPhil (Oxford)) is currently Noor Visiting Chair of Islamic Studies at York University, Toronto. She has held the posts of Dean and Research Fellow at the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies, Faculty Member of Oriental Studies and Research Fellow at the University of Oxford, and Visiting Fellow at the Aga Khan Programme for Islamic Art at Harvard University. Her current research includes the socio-legal development and artistic influences on the historical mosques of Oman, and the interface between art and law in Muslim contexts. Her recent publications include “The *de jure* Artist of the Bobrinski Bucket: Production and Patronage of pre-Mongol Metalwork in Khurasan and Transoxiana”, and “The Carved-Stucco *Mihirabs* of Oman: Form, Style and Influences”. She is currently co-editing a book on *Places of Worship and Devotion in Muslim Societies* for Berghahn Press and completing a volume entitled *Ten Masterpieces of Islamic Art* for Saqi Books.

### NASSER RABBAT

#### “Maqrizi and the Fatimids”

After the fall of the Fatimids, Egyptian historiography tended to either ignore them or to call them al-'Ubaydiyyun as a rejection of their claim to a Prophetic lineage. In that charged scholarly environment, it was audacious to cast the Fatimids in a positive light, and very few Egyptian *'ulama* did. The most prominent among them was Taqiyy al-Din Ahmad ibn 'Ali al-Maqrizi (1364-1442), the historian with the most expansive repertoire of his generation, if not the entire 15th century, of Mamluk historiography. In two of his compendia, *al-Mawaiz wa-al-I'tibar bi-Dhikr al-Khitat wa-al-Athar* and *Itti'az al-Hunafa bi-Akhbar al-'Imma al-Fatimiyyin al-Khulafa*, Maqrizi offers a flattering portrayal of the Fatimids and their achievements. In the *Khitat*, he lauds their Caliphate and describes the many spectacular structures and the order and decorum it established in Egypt. In the *Itti'az*, which is a chronicle of the Fatimid period, he mounts a fervent defense of the authenticity of their lineage and urges his readers to “examine the facts fairly and not be deceived by the fabrications of the Fatimids’ detractors.” In this paper, I will analyse Maqrizi’s writing on the Fatimids, highlight its uniqueness in Egyptian historiography, and offer several plausible reasons for his distinct stance. These include his own lineage, his strict and uncompromising religious doctrine, and his critical stance vis-à-vis his contemporary rulers of Egypt, the Circassian Mamluks.



## Paper Abstracts and Academic Biographies

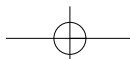
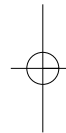
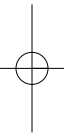
Nasser Rabbat (B Arch (Damascus), M Arch (UCLA), PhD (MIT)) is the Aga Khan Professor of Islamic Architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), where he has taught since 1991. His scholarly interests include the history and historiography of Islamic art and architecture, urban history, and post-colonial criticism. His books include: *The Citadel of Cairo: A New Interpretation of Royal Mamluk Architecture* (Leiden 1995); *Thaqafat al Bina' wa Bina' al-Thaqafa (The Culture of Building and Building Culture)* (Beirut 2002); and *L'art Islamique à la recherche d'une méthode historique* (Paris, forthcoming). He is currently completing a book on the historian al-Maqrizi, *Historicizing the City: Al-Maqrizi and his Cairo Khitat* (Leiden, forthcoming). In addition to publishing articles in specialised scholarly journals and edited collections, Professor Rabbat regularly contributes to a number of Arabic newspapers, magazines, journals, and websites on art, architecture, and critical and cultural issues. He serves on the boards of various organisations concerned with Islamic cultures, lectures extensively in the USA and abroad, consults with various international design companies on urban and architectural projects in the Middle East, and maintains several websites focused on Islamic architecture and urbanism.

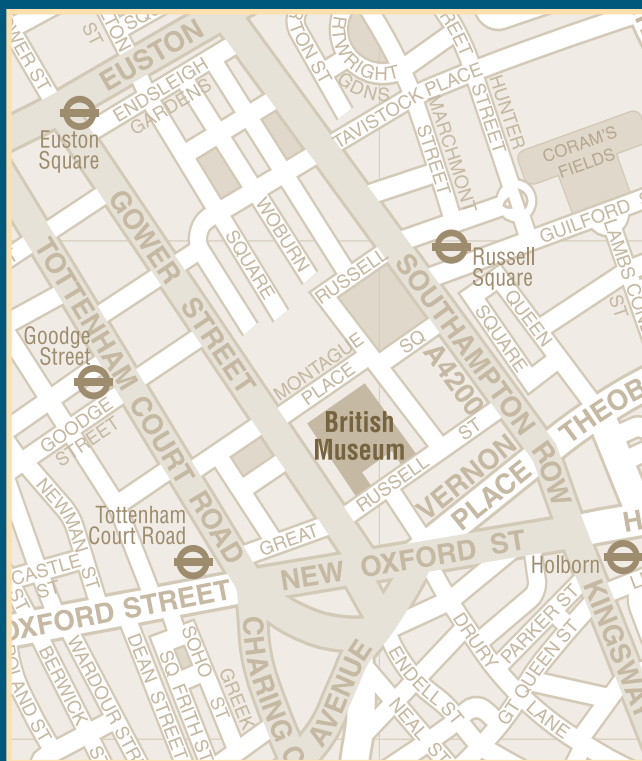
### ANDREW J. NEWMAN

#### Chair for the panel, "Summaries and Conclusions"

Andrew J. Newman is Reader in Islamic Studies and Persian at the University of Edinburgh. He has published two monographs, *The Formative Period of Shi'i Law: Hadith as Discourse Between Qum and Baghdad* (Richmond 2000) and *Safavid Iran: Rebirth of a Persian Empire* (London 2006). The latter was awarded the International Book of the Year prize in 2008 in the field of Islamic Studies. He has also published some ten articles on aspects of Safavid and Iranian society and Twelver Shi'i doctrine and practice. He is presently writing an introductory volume on Twelver Shi'ism for Edinburgh University Press.







## Conference Venue

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