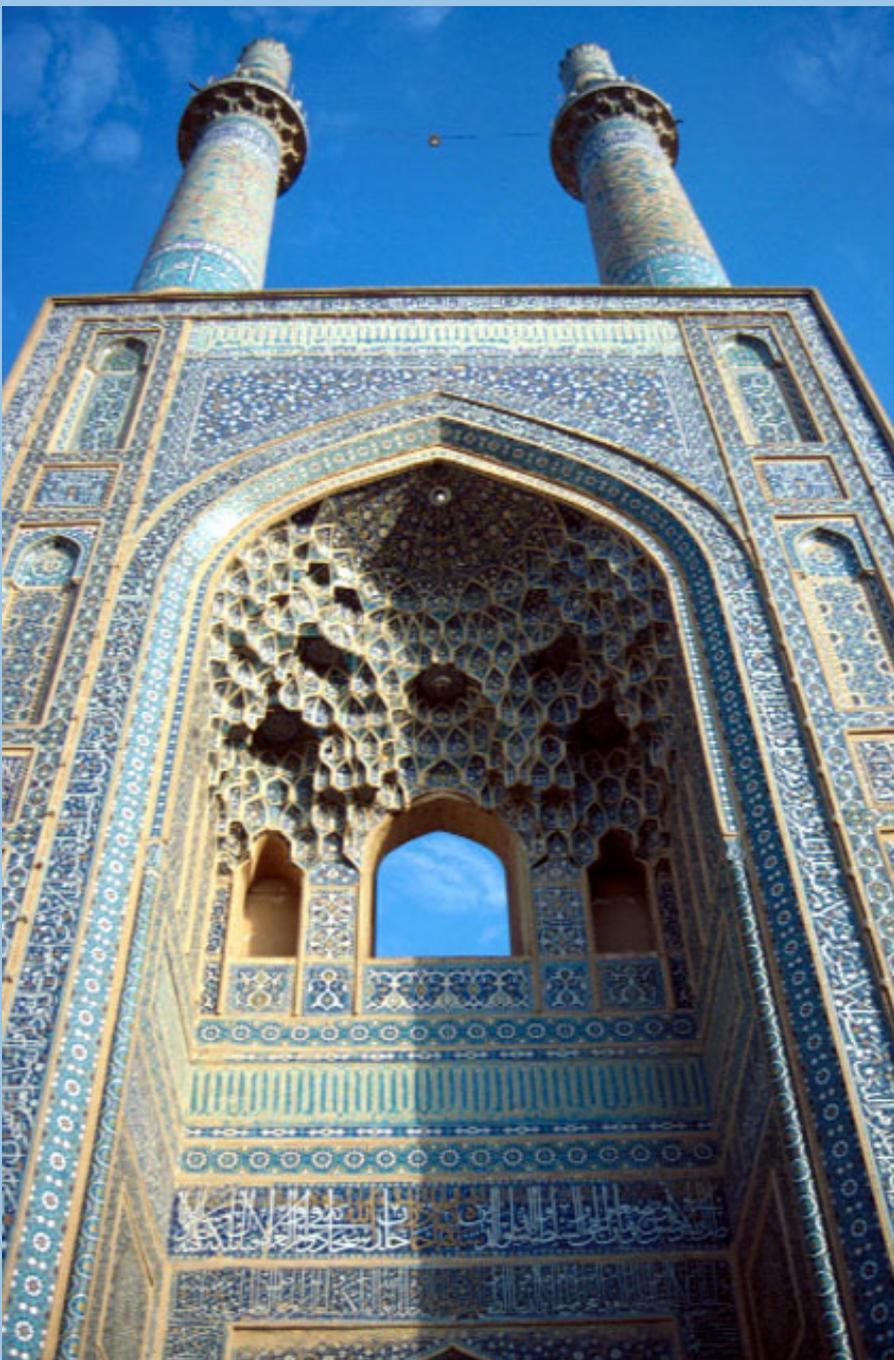


The Idea of Iran: Renewal in the Age of Post-Mongol Prestige



Saturday 20 February 2016 Brunei Gallery Lecture Theatre
SOAS, University of London

The Idea of Iran: Renewal in the Age of Post-Mongol Prestige

9.30 **Registration and Coffee**

9.55 **Welcoming Remarks**

Sussan Babaie, Andrew W. Mellon Lecturer in the Arts of Iran and Islam, The Courtauld Institute of Art

Morning Session *Chaired by Derek Mancini-Lander, Lecturer in the History of Iran, SOAS*

10.00–10.45 **The Iranian Interlude: from Mongol decline to Tamerlane's invasion**

Shivan Mahendrarajah, Research Fellow, American Institute of Afghanistan Studies, Kabul

Three periods characterize Iran between Mongol and Turkic domination: 1220-78, when Iran was attacked and exploited by the Mongols; the years 1278-1335, where social and economic uptrends were evident; and 1335-81, where concomitant with the decline of Ilkhanid rule, independent regional polities, Turk and Tajik, Sunni and Shi'a, manifested across Iran. This was the 'Iranian interlude,' and terminated by Tamerlane in 1381. As with the 'Iranian intermezzo,' this critical interlude witnessed continuities and changes via emerging polities. The Karts of eastern Khurasan (r. 1245-1381), and the Sarbadars of western Khurasan (r. 1336-81), reveal competing vehicles for 'the idea of Iran': the Kartid state's self-image was of a 'traditional' Persian *Padishah* protecting Iran from Turan (the Chaghatay) and Islam from Shi'ism (the Sarbadars). Meanwhile, the Sarbadars, of iconoclastic and confessionally ambiguous beginnings, evolved into a resolutely Twelver Shi'a Iranian state.

10.45–11.30 ***Sufism in Late Mongol and Timurid Persia, from 'Ala' al-Dawla Simnani (d. 736/1326) to Shah Ni'matullah Wali (d. 835/1431)***

Leonard Lewisohn, Senior Lecturer in Persian and Iran Heritage Foundation Fellow in Classical Persian and Sufi Literature, Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies, University of Exeter

This lecture is divided into six parts. In part one, an overview of the social situation of Sufism in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Persia is given, in which the political relations between Sufis and various Mongol and Timurid princes and their courts, conflicts between exoteric *Shari'a*-minded clerics and Sufis, and the spread of the *Khanaqah* institution through greater Persia are summarized. In part two, various schools of Sufi theosophy in medieval Persia are examined, with a focus on the school (and Iranian followers) of Ibn 'Arabi (d. 638/1240) and the legacy of Rumi's *Mathnawi* and *Divan-i Shams* throughout greater Persia. In the third part, the rise and spread of the Persian Orders (*ṭariqas*) during this period will be analysed, focusing primarily on the Kubrawiyya, Naqshbandiyya, Kaziruniyya, Suhrawardiyya, Qadiriyya, Mawlawiyya and Yasiwiyya. In part four, the key Persian Sufi prose texts of the period will be surveyed, followed in part five by an overview of the key Persian Sufi *mathnawi* and *ghazal* poets of the period, from 'Ala' al-Dawla Simnani (d. 736/1326) down to Shah Ni'matullah Wali (d. 835/1431) and his followers such as Shah Qasim-i Anwar (d. 837/1433) and Shah Da'i Shirazi (d. 869-70/1464-65). In part six, I offer tentative conclusions about why some of the teachings and doctrines of fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Persian Sufism—viz. its 'Religion of Love (*madhhab-i 'ishq*)', its humanistic ethics, its theories of symbolism, metaphysical imagination and Unity of Being, its tolerant ecumenical and anti-clerical teachings—remain timelessly relevant to the 'Idea of Iran' today.

11.30–12.00 **Coffee**

12.00–12.45 **Persian Narrative Poetry in the Fourteenth to Early Fifteenth Centuries and the Legacy of Firdausi's *Shahnama***
Julia Rubanovich, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

The presentation offers a review of Persian narrative poetry of the fourteenth to early fifteenth centuries from the standpoint of its intertextual relationship with Firdausi's *Shahnama*. Four major tendencies are discernible in the evolution of the epic's reception in the period discussed: a direct continuation of the *Shahnama's* thematic and stylistic patterns in a genre of historical–heroic epic with a growing admixture of religious – Islamic and Sufi – elements; a partial and mediated adoption of the heroic–epic tradition epitomised in the *Shahnama*, where Nizami's romantic poems on the one hand, and the so-called 'secondary' epics complementing the Sistani cycle on the other, act as intermediaries; a satirical emulation of Firdausi's work and the *Shahnama* tradition as an impetus for the development of classical Judeo–Persian epic literature. The speaker will examine the literary and historical reasons behind the development of the above-mentioned tendencies, focusing on their interrelationship and interplay.

12.45–13.30 **Reprising the Question: why was the *Shahnama* illustrated?**
Marianna Shreve Simpson, Visiting Scholar, University of Pennsylvania and Guest Curator, Princeton University Art Museum

The 2010 millennial celebration of Firdausi's epic poem occasioned an outpouring of publications and exhibitions, and attracted scholarly and public attention alike. Five years on, interest in the Book of Kings remains unabated, as evidenced by ever more articles, entire journal issues, collected studies, monographs and catalogues. This presentation takes a historiographic look at both recent twenty-first and late-twentieth-century scholarship on the illustrated *Shahnama* tradition in an attempt to sort out perspectives on the still-challenging question of how – and especially why – this iconic work of Persian literature developed into deluxe works of Persian art during the Ilkhanid and later periods.

13.30–14.45 **Lunch**

14:45-15:45 ***Music-Poetry: Light of Music Recital-Hafez, Rumi***
Introduced by Narguess Farzad, Senior Fellow in Persian, SOAS

Light of Music is a London based company established 7 years ago with the aim of introducing and promoting various forms of Iranian and Western arts to the community through concerts, world music, dance classes, and seminars. Light of Music believes that various forms of art are a manifestation of beauty and should be easily accessible to everyone at all levels.

Hamid Rasti (Santour) Hamid has played alongside various famous groups such as Mastan and Soroush, as well as famous maestros such as Ostad Rahmatollah Badi'i. His music has been broadcast on television and radio. *Shahriar Shahi (Vocalist)* *Shabnam Homayouni (Reciter)* Shabnam's interest in classical Persian poetry began at university and this led to her first recital on stage in the 'Intoxication of Hafez' performance in 2012. Shabnam was also involved in the translations and recital of the poems for the 'Rumi's Spiritual Odyssey' concert in 2013. *Ardeshir Haghighi (Daf & Kouzeh)* Ardeshir was born into a musical family in Kermanshah. He was taught Daf and Tanbour at a young age by the late Parviz Zolnori. Since 1999, he has been teaching music in Iran & the UK and performing in venues such as The National Portrait Gallery, The British Museum, The Fitzwilliam Museum and Edinburgh University.

Afternoon Session *Chaired by Scott Redford, Nasser D Khalili Professor of Islamic Art and Archaeology, SOAS*

15.45–16.30 **The Jalayirid and Muzaffarid Architecture of Iran**
Bernard O’Kane, Professor of Islamic Art and Architecture, American University in Cairo

Sandwiched between the Ilkhanids and Timurids, the Muzaffarids do not usually receive much credit for their architectural patronage. However, their innovations in vaulting and in decoration, particularly in tilework, deserve to place them in the first rank of benefactors. This presentation will explore some of these topics in the architecture of Isfahan, Yazd and Kerman, particularly with regard to the Friday mosques of these cities. The evidence for domestic architecture of the Muzaffarids in Yazd will also be considered. It will also be argued that the tomb of Shaykh Safi and the Dar al-Huffaz at Ardabil should be re-dated to the Jalayirid period, from the second rather than the first half of the fourteenth century as has often been thought.

16.30–17.00 **Closing Remarks**
Sussan Babaie, Andrew W. Mellon Lecturer in the Arts of Iran and Islam, The Courtauld Institute of Art

17.00 **Coffee**

The Idea of Iran: Renewal in the Age of Post-Mongol Prestige

The Mongol invasions of the first half of the thirteenth century set in motion profound transformations in the historical trajectory of Islamic West Asia. The previous symposium in this series on the *Idea of Iran* investigated the immediate effects of Mongol rule during the Ilkhanid period, which had sponsored the reinstatement of Iranian cultural identities in Greater Iran, Iraq, Anatolia, and the Caucasus. Rather than moving immediately to the next major dynasty in the region, the present symposium will explore the fourteenth century in its own right as the time of the emergence of local Iranian dynasties in the face of continuing Mongol prestige following the collapse of the Ilkhanid dynasty and the development of alternative models of authority. By the middle of the 1330s, the Ilkhanate in Iran had been replaced by regional successor polities, making room for a multiplicity of cultural, political and religious arenas with their own regional centres. The most prominent among these local polities were the Jalayirids, Muzaffarids, Sarbadars and Karts.

This period also witnessed the increasing use of the Persian language, already dominant in the literary sphere, for administrative, historical and scientific writing. Princely patrons with aspirations to the Iranian seat of kingship continued to support large building projects in Tabriz, Yazd and Kerman among other cities and commissioned luxury manuscript copies, especially of the *Shahnama* and its imitations. Several of the greatest Persian poets – including Khwaju Kermani (d. 1341 or 1352), Ubayd-i Zakani (d. 1371) and Hafez (d. 1389) – and major historians such as Hamdullah Mustawfi (c. 1335), Muʿinal-Din Yazdi (c. 1356) and Nezamal-Din Shami (c. 1404) were active during this period.

In the realm of intellectual history, the fourteenth century was extremely important with such major theologians as ʿAdud al-Din al-Iji (d. 1355), Saʿd al-Din Taftazani (d. 1390) and Sayyid Sharif Jurjani (d. 1413). Among the prominent Sufi figures, eponyms of important socio-political movements and Sufi *tariqas*, were Baha al-Din Naqshband (d. 1389), Fazl Allah Astarabadi (d. 1394) and Shah Neʿmat Allah Vali (d. 1430). The period saw the rise and consolidation of distinct Sufi groups with origins in the thirteenth century: the Mawlawiyya, Kubrawiyya and Safaviyya.

This symposium, the twelfth in the series, explores aspects of the cultural complexities of reinventing the idea of Iran during this period of political decentralisation, focusing on representations of cultural longevity and fluid transformations in light of the competing cultural, political and religious aspirations in the post-Mongol world.

The Centre for Iranian Studies, SOAS and The Courtauld Institute of Art are deeply grateful to the Soudavar Memorial Foundation for its continued support for this series.

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A Symposium

9.30 - 17.00, Saturday 20 February 2016
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Convened by:

Dr Sussan Babaie, The Courtauld Institute of Art, University of London

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