

# The Yarshater Lectures in Persian Art



## *Four Central Asian Shrines: Islamic Architecture in Society*

Four lectures by Robert D. McChesney, Emeritus Professor,  
Department of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies, New York University

7.00pm, Thursday 12th, Friday 13th, Monday 16th  
and Tuesday 17th January 2017

## The Yarshater Lectures in Persian Art

The Yarshater Lectures in Persian Art at SOAS are sponsored by the Persian Heritage Foundation. They are a series of academic lectures dedicated to Iranian art and culture and are intended for publication. The lectures and publications carry the name of Professor Ehsan Yarshater in recognition of his scholarly achievements.



Robert D. McChesney is Emeritus Professor in the Department of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies at New York University. In this lecture series he will examine the architectural development of four major Central Asian shrines found today in Afghanistan and Uzbekistan and relate the development to their social and political contexts. Three of the shrines date to the 15th century: the tomb of Tamerlane (d. 1405) in Samarqand, the mausoleum of Khwajah Abu Nasr Parsa (d. 1460) at Balkh, and the burial place at Mazar-i Sharif of the Fourth Sunni Caliph and First Shi'i Imam, 'Ali, son of Abi Talib, (d. 661 A.D.). The fourth shrine—the Mantle of the Prophet—was founded in the 1770s at Kandahar. Each has been a continuous force in the histories of their cities. All remain important today to the communities they serve. The lectures will trace the evolution of the architecture of these structures, their changing commemorative functions, and the formation of both local and foreign constituencies invested in preserving as well as changing them.

**The Persian Heritage Foundation (New York) and SOAS, University of London, are pleased to invite you to:**

**Four lectures by Robert D. McChesney, Emeritus Professor in the Department of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies at New York University.**

***Four Central Asian Shrines: Islamic Architecture in Society***

**Thursday 12th January 2017**

***Abu Nasr Parsa's Tomb: Reconfiguring Sacred Legacies***

**Friday 13th January 2017**

***The Rawza of 'Ali at Mazar-i Sharif: Centring a City***

**Monday 16th January 2017**

***Tamerlane's Tomb: Conjuring a Greater Glory***

**Tuesday 17th January 2017**

***Kandahar's Mantle of the Prophet: Sanctifying Fibre***

The first lecture will introduce the phenomenon of shrines in Central Asian history and then focus on a shrine at Balkh and the way society's needs shaped its different legacies. The second lecture considers the ways in which a shrine could encourage formation of an individual tradition of exclusive claim to the shrine and its material benefits and how that tradition led to the formation of a new city. The third lecture suggests how the meaning of a building conceived to commemorate the glory of an individual and his descendants could be reshaped to legitimize new ideologies and the final lecture considers the sacred space created by a holy artefact and the ways in which its community exploited that space. All the lectures will link the ever-changing architecture to the societal contexts.

# Yarshater Lecture Series in Persian Art

London Middle East Institute, SOAS

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## Dates

7.00pm, Thursday 12th, Friday 13th, Monday 16th  
& Tuesday 17th January 2017

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## Venue

Khalili Lecture Theatre  
SOAS University of London  
Russell Square  
London WC1H 0XG

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## Admission

Admission Free - All Welcome

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## Organised by

SOAS University of London in association with the London  
Middle East Institute, SOAS

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## Sponsored by

Persian Heritage Foundation (New York)

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## Convened by

Professor Scott Redford, Nasser D Khalili Professor of Islamic  
Art and Archaeology, SOAS

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## Enquiries

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