

Special Lecture

**Sufis, Shi'ites, and Shahs:
The Great Shrines of Iran,
1500–1650**

Thursday, March 13, 2008, 6:30 p.m.



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Brown Auditorium Theater
The Caroline Wiess Law
Building
The Museum of Fine Arts,
Houston
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www.mfa.org

Admission is free
and open to the public.

A reception follows
the program.

Above, left to right:
Portrait of Shah 'Abbas
by Bishn Das, Mughal Indian,
c. 1619, opaque watercolour and
gold on paper, British Museum,
1920,0917.0.13.2.

Dervishes Drinking, Isfahan,
c. 1640, ink and opaque
watercolour on paper, British
Museum, 1920,0917.0.33.

Front: The Shrine of Imam
Riza at Mashhad

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Sufis, Shi'ites, and Shahs:
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*Presented by Dr. Sheila Canby
Curator of Islamic Art and Antiquities,
The British Museum, London*

The Safavids ruled Iran from 1501 to 1722. A dynasty of Azerbaijani and Kurdish origins, the Safavids declared Shi'a Islam as the official religion of their empire, marking one of the most significant turning points in the history of Islam. Dr. Sheila Canby examines the roles that the Ardabil Shrine, the dynastic heart of the Safavid Dynasty, the Shrine of Imam Riza in Mashhad, and the Shrine of Fatimah Ma'sumeh in Qum, played in establishing Shiism as the state religion of Iran and the Safavid rulers as its protectors.

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