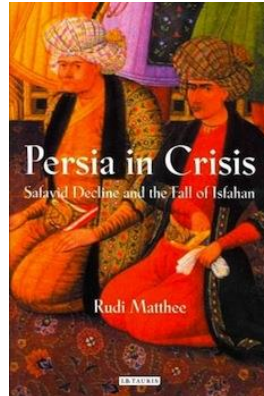


With the Support of the Jahangir and Eleanor Amuzegar Chair in Iranian Studies

Bilingual Lecture Series on Iran

present

Reasons behind Safavid decline and the lessons that can be learned from them



A lecture by Professor Rudi Matthee, University of Delaware

* Lecture in Persian

Sunday, March 30, 2014 | 6:00 – 8:00 PM | 121 Dodd Hall

Dr. Matthee will be speaking about his new book: *Persia in Crisis: Safavid Decline and the Fall of Isfahan*.

ABOUT THE BOOK:

The decline and fall of Safavid Iran is traditionally seen as the natural outcome of the unrelieved political stagnation and moral degeneration which characterized late Safavid Iran. *Persia in Crisis* challenges this view. In this ground-breaking new book, Rudi Matthee revisits traditional sources and introduces new ones to take a fresh look at Safavid Iran in the century preceding the fall of Isfahan in 1722, which brought down the dynasty and ushered in a long period of turbulence in Iranian history. Inherently vulnerable because of the country's physical environment, its tribal makeup, and a small economic base, the Safavid state was fatally weakened over the course of the seventeenth century. Matthee views Safavid Iran as a network of precarious alliances subject to perpetual negotiation and the society they ruled as an uneasy balance between conflicting forces. In the later seventeenth century, this delicate balance shifted from cohesion to fragmentation. An increasingly detached, palace-bound shah; a weakening link between the capital and the outlying provinces; the regime's neglect of the military; and its short-sighted monetary policies combined to exacerbate rather than redress existing problems, leaving the country with a ruler too feeble to hold factionalism and corruption in check and a military unable to defend its borders against outside attack by Ottomans and Afghans. The scene was set for the Crisis of 1722. This book makes a major contribution to our understanding of Iranian history and the period that led to two hundred years of decline and eclipse for Iran.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR/SPEAKER:

Rudi Matthee studied Persian and Arabic language and literature at the University of Utrecht, The Netherlands. In 1976-77 he lived in Iran as an exchange student, and in 1981-83 he spent two years studying in Egypt. In 1991 he received his Ph.D. in Islamic Studies from the University of California, Los Angeles. Since 1993 he has been teaching at the University of Delaware, where he is a Distinguished Professor of Middle Eastern History. He is the former president (2002-05 and 2008-11) of the Association for the Study of Persianate Societies (Anjoman-e Javame`-ye Farsi-Zaban). He served as book review editor for the journal, *Iranian Studies*, 1996-2006, is coeditor of the journal *Der Islam*, and the consulting editor for Safavid history for the *Encyclopaedia Iranica*. In 2002-03 he was a fellow at the Institute of Advanced Study, Princeton. In 2011 he served as the Roshan Professor of Persian Studies at the University of Maryland. Matthee has published some fifty articles on Safavid and Qajar Iran as well as Egypt. He authored *The Politics of Trade in Safavid Iran: Silk for Silver, 1600-1730* (Cambridge University Press, 1999), recipient of the prize for best non-Persian language book on Iranian history, 1999, awarded by the Iranian Ministry of Culture; honorable mention, British-Kuwaiti Friendship prize for best book on the Middle East published in Great Britain, 1999; as well as *The Pursuit of Pleasure: Drugs and Stimulants in Iranian History, 1500-1900* (Princeton University Press, 2005), recipient of the MESA (Middle East Studies Association) Albert Hourani Book Prize, and of the International Society of Iranian Studies Saidi Sirjani Prize; *Iqtisad va siyasat-i khariji-yi `asr-i Safavi*, trans. and ed. Hasan Zandiyeh (Tehran, 2008); *Persia in Crisis: Safavid Decline and the Fall of Isfahan* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2012), recipient of the British-Kuwaiti Friendship Prize and the Jayezeh-ye jahani-ye ketab, prize for best book on Iranian history awarded by the Iranian Ministry of Culture (to be published in Iran in 2014 as *Iran dar zavval: Inhitat-e Safaviyan va soqut-e Isfahan*; Tehran: Namak); and, with Willem Floor and Patrick Clawson, *The Monetary History of Iran, 1500-1925* (London, I.B. Tauris, 2013). He coedited *Iran and Beyond: Essays in Honor of Nikki R. Keddie* (with Beth Baron, Mazda, 2000); *Iran and the Surrounding World: Interactions in Culture and Cultural Politics* (with Nikki Keddie, University of Washington Press, 2002); and *Portugal, the Persian Gulf and Safavid Persia* (with Jorge Flores, Leuven: Peeters, 2011).

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