



POURDAVOUD CENTER LECTURE SERIES



***GREAT KING / KING OF KINGS***  
**SURVIVAL AND TRANSFORMATION OF A**  
**PERSIAN TITLE IN THE HELLENISTIC PERIOD,**  
**C. 330–30 BCE: FROM THE ACHAEMENIDS**  
**TO THE PARTHIANS**

JANUARY 10, 2018 | 4:00 P.M. | 306 ROYCE HALL

**ROLF STROOTMAN (UTRECHT UNIVERSITY)**

The Old Persian imperial titles **Great King** and **King of Kings** (*xšāyaθiya vazarka* and *xšāyaθiya xšāyaθiyānām*) disappeared after the Macedonian conquest of the Achaemenid Empire in 330 BCE. But already before the Parthians reestablished Iranian kingship in Iran, the title Great King had returned in a Greek version: *basileus megas*. That title was adopted around 205 BCE by the Seleukid emperor Antiochos III ('the Great') and by several of his successors. When later the Parthian rulers Mithradates I and Mithradates II assumed pretensions to the titles of Great King and King of Kings respectively, they too used Greek renderings of these titles, until finally the Sasanians introduced the Middle Persian title of *šāhān šāh* (King of Kings). What did these titles signify? Did their meaning change in the course of time? And how were they transmitted across their c. 125-year period of absence?

**SPEAKER**



**Rolf Strootman** is associate professor of ancient history at Utrecht University, the Netherlands. He studied history and archaeology at the University of Leiden and received his PhD for a study of royal courts in the Hellenistic empires. He is the author of two monographs and many articles on aspects of empire and monarchy in the Near East and Iran after Alexander. With M. J. Versluys he edited the recent volume *Persianism in Antiquity* (2017), which explores the memory of the Achaemenid Empire from the Hellenistic period to Sasanian times. Rolf Strootman is currently a Getty Scholar, working on a project entitled 'Iranians in the Hellenistic World'.

The mission of the Pourdavoud Center for the Study of the Iranian World is to engage in transformative research on all aspects of Iranian antiquity, including its reception in the medieval and modern periods, by expanding on the traditional domains of Old Iranian studies and promoting cross-cultural and inter-disciplinary scholarship.

**Advanced registration is requested and seating is limited.**

**For more information and to RSVP:**  
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