

Rudi Matthee. « Negotiating across cultures: the Dutch Van Leene Mission to the Iranian court of Shah Sulaymān, 1689-1692 ». *Eurasian Studies*, III/1, 2004, pp. 35-63.

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- 1 Another contribution by Rudi Matthee to the subject of Safavid-European encounters, and one which confirms the importance of diplomatic history for the study of mutual perceptions. The Author considers the relationship between Safavid Persia and the European powers (and their India Companies) as a form of “controlled relationship” (following the definition provided by Urs Bitterli) rather than of “contained conflict” (in the words of Sanjay Subrahmanyam). The mission of the VOC envoy Johan Van Leene is used here as a case study of this “controlled relationship”: Van Leene visited the Safavid court in 1690-91, with the aim of settling the differences about “the nature and volume of Dutch silk purchases” (p. 50), and possibly negotiating a new silk treaty. The Author follows closely the negotiations between Van Leene and his Persian counterparts, showing the difficulty experienced by a lone foreign envoy dealing with “a full administrative apparatus” and its “arsenal of negotiation skills” (p. 58) – and stratagems. After more than 15 months spent in Eşfahān, Van Leene was allowed to leave after virtually accepting the terms offered by the Safavid court, and in the same time without settling the issue of the silk purchases in a permanent way. Matthee also discusses four important aspects of the negotiations between Safavid officials and foreign traders (“gift-giving”, “mutual dependence”, “perceptions and status”, and “mutual manipulation”)– aspects which hardly made negotiations easier and were a continuous source of disappointment and misunderstanding.

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**Thèmes :** 4.2.1. Safavides et Qâjârs

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