

03 - LATE ANTIQUITY: PATTERNS OF CHANGE

The period usually defined in the terms of Late Antiquity, spanning the time of the transformation of the late Roman East and West, offers a complex field of research, marked by the profound change of sociocultural circumstances. Considering the complexity of the issues concerned, the goal of this workshop is merely to attempt to address a few specific thematically various questions which arise when one faces this subject. The themes offered are chosen in order to examine this period from different angles, varying from political and cultural to religious ones. However, they are but a set of guidelines on which aspects of the period one may concentrate, and the specific paper topics may be formulated according to personal interests.

PAPERS/Case studies

1. Diocletian and the re-establishment of political stability

The reign of emperor Diocletian and the Tetrarchs figures prominently among the political mayhem of the third century. Administrative, financial and military reorganization, supported by ideological recourse to traditional Roman religion, helped to stabilize the empire while at the same time laying the foundations for the fourth century Constantinian imperial order.

2. The questions of changing Roman identities

The preserved books of *Historiae* written by Ammianus Marcellinus, considered last great Roman historian, trace the reigns of emperors Constantius, Julian, Jovian, Valentinian and Valens (AD 354-378) and the contemporary scene which formed the background to the composition of his work was rife with tension between rival political and religious factions both in the imperial court as well as on broader social scale.

3. The disintegration of the Roman Empire: case studies

The political crisis in the West after year 400 left the old military structures and frontier system abandoned. Any direct military and imperial presence in remote provinces ceased and the Western imperial court retreated to Italy. The aim of this topic is to examine the effective end of Roman rule and further developments in the West, focusing on particular case studies: Britain, Gaul, Hispania, Italy, Africa, Pannonia, Dalmatia...

4. Pagans and Christians: an uneasy co-existence

After Constantine, with the brief exception of his nephew Julian, emperors embraced Christianity as an acknowledged religion and a basis for imperial ideology. Paganism was not repressed or outlawed until the reign of Theodosius I, but for the most of the fourth century lived in an often awkward co-existence with Christianity. By the last decades of the fourth century, local campaigns of Christian officials against pagan worship demanded an imperial reaction, which came in the form of outlawing traditional cults.

5. The Council of Nicaea and the emergence of new spiritual elites

The nature of the Christian community itself also transformed and the tensions created by the shift from a persecuted sect to an established majority religion are often used to explain the prevalence of doctrinal disputes intertwined with the notions of “heresy” and various ascetic movements which aimed at becoming new spiritual elites. Perhaps a more nuanced approach, taking into consideration all the social and cultural complexity of the fourth century and the role which different Christian beliefs played in subtle political games of its elites, is needed to deal with these issues.

6. The intellectuals in Late Antiquity:

The intellectuals of antiquity were thoroughly integrated in urban society, be it the poet, the grammarian teaching in a school or the philosopher leading a discussion in the gymnasium. Their position in the social sphere was determined within the boundaries of city life, and it underwent the same kind of transformation. The notion and nature of intellectualism changed according to prevalent cultural paradigms, and their social roles followed suit.