

**CALL FOR PAPERS: NINTH CELTIC CONFERENCE IN CLASSICS
UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, DUBLIN 22-25 JUNE 2016**

**PANEL TITLE: THE ROMAN IMPERIAL COURT
FROM THE ANTONINES TO THE THEODOSIANS**

Organizers: Caillan Davenport (Queensland) & Meaghan McEvoy (Frankfurt)

Panel Description

The Roman imperial court was a central institution in the government of the Roman Empire. The court was a physical location – an audience hall and reception rooms on the Palatine in Rome, or an alternative imperial ‘capital’ or villa – as well as a community, populated by the emperor, his family, friends, advisers, generals, senators, and administrators. From the mid-second to mid-fifth century A.D., both the physical location of the court and the composition of the community underwent a series of significant changes.

Some of these developments were cyclical in nature. The Italo-centric and largely sedentary reign of Antoninus Pius stands in stark contrast to his successor Marcus Aurelius and the third-century emperors, who were forced into long periods of campaigning outside Rome, resulting in the rise of other imperial ‘capitals’ at Trier, Milan, Antioch, and eventually Constantinople. Yet after a period in which itinerant emperors were the norm across the third and fourth centuries, in the fifth century, the emperor and his court can be found largely stationary at Ravenna or Rome in the west, and Constantinople in the east.

Other changes were longer lasting, notably the creation of a new court hierarchy with grades of *comites*, uniforms and titles delineating status and precedence, and extravagant court ceremonial. This represented a profound and irreversible movement away from the first-century world of the *civilis princeps*, despite this ideal still being cited in late antique texts in praise of emperors. As the nature and function of the imperial office itself underwent significant changes across this period – from military to civilian, and from traditional pagan religion to Christian – the court around the emperor, its key power groups and officials, changed along with it. The emperors’ espousal of Christianity brought with it new pressure groups congregating at the court in the form of bishops and other holy men.

Although the Roman imperial court was relatively neglected as a subject of scholarly study for most of the twentieth century, the past twenty years have witnessed a significant increase in individual studies of the court in the first and second centuries (Wallace-Hadrill 1996; Winterling 1999; Pani 2003), as well as edited collections setting the Roman imperial court of the early and late empire in the wider context of the ancient world (Winterling 1997; Spawforth 2007; Potter and Talbert 2011). The aim of this panel is to highlight the transformation of the court between the age of the Antonines and the Theodosians, focusing on identifying both continuities and changes in the institution, location, and community of the court and its impact on Roman political culture and the exercise of government. While chronological divisions are in many ways a scholarly necessity, the timeframe from the second to fifth centuries has been specifically chosen to avoid traditional starting and end points, such as the

demise of the Severan dynasty in 235 and the accession of Diocletian in 284, in order to allow for a better and more productive dialogue between studies of the court in the high and late empire. We welcome papers that deal with large scale changes or continuities across the period as a whole, as well as papers offering specific case studies of individual problems, incidents, or periods that illuminate the workings of the court.

In particular, prospective participants might like to consider the following themes and questions (but papers are not limited to these topics):

- The Antonine imperial court is often considered together with the Julio-Claudian and Flavian imperial courts. But are there grounds for suggesting that the Antonine court was a different type of institution?
- To what extent were the changes of the late empire of the fourth and fifth centuries, such as court ceremonial, prefigured by the events of the third century?
- How differently did extra-constitutional agents such as philosophers and bishops act as advisers and guardians at the imperial court across this period? Are there parallels to be drawn between these extra-constitutional groups?
- What impact did the movement of the imperial court between Rome and Constantinople and the capitals in the provinces have on the workings of the court as an institution and the ability of individuals to exert influence?
- Can we draw parallels between the workings of different courts in different time periods, such as during the second century under Antoninus Pius and the fifth century under Theodosius II?
- Did the presence and role of senators at court change between the second and fifth centuries A.D.?
- How did the role of generals at the imperial court change over time, particularly in relation to transitions between campaigning and non-campaigning emperors?
- How do the different configurations of power at court across this period reflect changing ideologies and methods of legitimization of imperial rule and the influential groups involved in such legitimization?
- How did the adoption of Christianity change the configuration of power groups at court?
- What was the role of the consistory in imperial decision making, and to what extent did that vary over time, depending on who was emperor?
- How did the growing professionalisation of the imperial bureaucracy change the dynamic between the emperor and his administration, and how did this manifest itself at court?
- How was the court perceived by outsiders not intimately involved in imperial politics?

Submission of Abstracts

The Celtic Conference provides panels with up to 15 hours of papers and discussion across three days. Each speaker will be allocated 50 minutes for his or her session. For our 'Imperial Court' panel, we invite papers of 30-35 minutes in length, leaving 15-20 minutes for questions and discussion. In selecting papers for the panel, we will be looking to ensure a good chronological and thematic range of topics. We hope to use the papers presented at the conference as the nucleus for an edited volume on the Roman imperial court from the second to fifth centuries A.D.

Please submit titles of proposed papers together with abstracts of no more than 300 words (excluding any relevant bibliography) to both Caillan Davenport (c.davenport@uq.edu.au) and Meaghan McEvoy (McEvoy@em.uni-frankfurt.de) by Wednesday, 9 December, 2015. Papers may be presented in English or French (the official languages of the Celtic Conference in Classics).

Preliminary information on the 9th Celtic Conference in Classics is available at the Dublin web site (<http://www.ucd.ie/classics/conferences/firstcallforpanels/>). Further details of the conference, such as the cost of registration, will be available from the web site in due course.

Bibliography

Pani, M. (2003), *La Corte dei Cesari: Fra Augusto e Nerone*, Bari.

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