



**GHENT
UNIVERSITY**

MEMORY OF EMPIRE

THE POST-IMPERIAL HISTORIOGRAPHY OF LATE ANTIQUITY

Peter Van Nuffelen 29.11.2017

ORIGINAL AIM

The project offers the first comprehensive interpretation and reconstruction of all historiographical traditions in the Mediterranean from the 4th to the 8th c. AD, the crucial transitional period from Antiquity to the Middle Ages. Including for the first time all languages and traditions (Greek, Latin, Syriac, Armenian, Coptic and Arabic) in a single study, it advances the hypothesis that the historiography of this period should be understood as ‘post-imperial’: the literary, cultural, and political traditions of the Roman empire remained the point of reference at a time when that empire had, by the seventh century, largely disintegrated. New realities were thus still understood and described with long-lived categories – a situation that generated both tensions and great creativity in the genre. In order to be able to test this hypothesis, the project makes new sources available, increases the accessibility of existing ones, and explores different methodologies.

Output: a database (including all attested works); editions of fragmentary texts; studies of transmitters; synthetic studies

BACKGROUND

- ‘Classicism’: the ancient world ends ca. 300
- ‘Brownism’: cultural reading of religious texts = neglect of traditional sources
- Many languages, usually divided over different disciplines
- Poverty of approaches

TEAM LATE ANTIQUE HISTORIOGRAPHY

- ERC, FWO/NWO, FWO, BOF
- (Dr.) Andy Hilkens, (Dr.) Emerance Delacenserie, Drs Lorenzo Focanti, Drs Marianna Mazzola, Drs Panagiotis Manafis, Drs Raf Praet, Drs Matthew O'Farrell, Drs Matteo Antoniazzi
- Dr. Maria Conterno, Dr. Lieve Van Hoof, Dr. Herbert Verreth, Dr. Tine Scheijnen
- Sara De Decker

DATABASE

- Clavis historicorum tardae antiquitatis
- 2018
- Metadata on author and work
- Complete 300-800, but includes more (846 works)
- Possible uses: studies of titles, geographical distribution, social background, bibliographical references (esp. editions), literary history, ...

EDITIONS OF FRAGMENTARY WORKS

- Late antique patria (2017); latin fragmentary historians (2018); Greek chronicles after Eusebius (2019); Syriac ecclesiastical historians and Dionysius of Tell-Mahre (2021)
- Make material available
- Bridge the methodological and disciplinary gap between classicists and Byzantinists/scholars of Syriac and Arabic/...

INTERPRETATION

- Space (2018); intercultural exchange (2018); rhetoric (2018)
- Cultural history of Late Antique historiography (2020?)
 - A late ancient poetics of history (reality cannot be fully grasped by language)
 - The naturalisation of time (cosmic structure, ‘salvation history’, and human time coincide)
 - Social valuation of genres (e.g. political biography as unbecoming for social élite)

WHAT'S NEXT?

- Finishing publications
- Syriac fragmentary historians (FWO 2019-2021)
- Representing action in late Antiquity (2020?)
- Histoire de Rome (Fayard, 2022)
- Sacred space; universalism in Rome; philosophy in early Christianity

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