## Contested Monarchy. Integrating the Roman Empire in the 4th Century AD.

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From the 9th to 11th July 2009, the historical council chamber of Konstanz in Southern Germany hosted the international conference „Contested Monarchy. Integrating the Roman Empire in the 4th Century AD". The conference was organised by Johannes Wienand (University of Konstanz) as part of the Collaborative Research Centre „Norm and Symbol. The Cultural Dimension of Social and Political Integration", which is funded by the German Research Foundation.

In late antiquity, monarchy was a political system without a serious alternative. However, no emperor could take the continuous loyalty of his *apparatus imperii* for granted, but was forced to invest substantially in the legitimisation of his rule. The conference addressed this phenomenon in three thematic sections: Administering the Empire, Performing the Monarchy, and Balancing Religious Change. The papers accordingly centred around three major areas of interest: the relationship between the emperor and the population of his empire, especially the elites; the function of ceremonial and rituals in mediation processes between the sovereign and his subjects; and the emperor's rôle in religious change and religious conflict.

The contributions to the first section raised important questions in the current debate about the rôle of elites within the imperial government. The need for a redefinition of the political and social status of elites within the imperial system of the 4th century appears as a direct result of an increasingly centralised and bureaucratic form of government. This development rendered traditional arrangements of elite patronage and imperial control superfluous, and caused the need for a redefinition of the complex relationship between the emperor and the elites.

Two contributions focused on the transformation of the senatorial elites and investigated the changes in the self-understanding and internal stratification of the aristocracy. JOHN WEISWEILER delineated the changes that occurred in the self-conception of the Roman aristocracy in the later fourth century. With the absence of the imperial court from the city of Rome, it was more difficult to gain access to the imperial centre. Additionally, there was competition for patronage and influence between the traditional Roman senators and their new provincial rivals. As a result, the Roman nobility developed a new understanding of Rome and its elites which located it more strongly in the empire as a whole. That awareness impacted upon the way the Roman nobility presented themselves outwardly but also internally.

A logical corollary of this increasing competition for imperial access was the empowerment of the late Roman emperors, who were now in a position to control and profit from elite competition, as SEBASTIAN SCHMIDT-HOFNER showed. His analysis of imperial laws concerning elite ranks issued in the late fourth and early fifth centuries exposed the intriguing dynamics of imperial conferment of both privileges and honours to individuals and elite groups, exposing a powerful emperor at the centre of an unsystematic, but efficient, system of conferment of ranks.

MALCOLM ERRINGTON contributed a paper on the discrepancy between the central rôle of the emperor in the imperial administration in actual terms and the rather scant attention a large proportion of literary sources (especially panegyrics and historiography) pays to the emperor as a civilian administrator. He argued that as contemporary authors focus mainly on the emperor's military activities, there is a need for a reassessment of the priorities in imperial government. The subsequent discussion centred on the question of whether the nature of the sources supports this conclusion, as there are some noteworthy exceptions to this pattern. MICHAEL KULIKOWSKI considered the gradual integration of late Roman regional elites into the Roman monarchy, tracing strong continuities that overarch the traditional divisions bet-

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ween Principate and Late Antiquity. Kulikowski argued that it was mainly the creation of multiple imperial residences and the necessary reliance of the court on regional aristocracies which prompted the inclusion of provincial elites into the imperial administration on a previously unknown scale. He concluded with the proposition that regions along the *limes* but physically beyond its notional line should be considered in the same way as those within the *limes*.

The growth of the imperial administration in the provinces and the level of central control over their resources led also to a redefinition of the relationship between the imperial centre and the local elites, as JOHN DILLON's detailed analysis of legal and literary sources from the reign of Constantine showed. Dillon argued that Constantine was keen to provide his provincial subjects with a tool to address the emperor without the interference of provincial governors. This direct communication gave the emperor closer control and cross-checking of both the provincial administration and population.

Usurpation and imperial legitimisation were considered next. The first set of contributions in this second section analysed how imperial representation changed in situations of usurpation and civil war. JOHANNES WIENAND's reexamination of the consequences of Constantine's victory over Maxentius for the field of imperial representation observed that Constantine deliberately and radically broke with traditional ways of exploiting victories in civil war, to be explained mainly by the Tetrarchic insistence on the emperor's military achievements as a necessary aspect of the formation of loyalty and obedience in the *apparatus imperii*.

MARK HUMPHRIES' contribution continued on a similar note, highlighting the rôle of civil war in shaping the relationship between the emperor and the political elite of Rome. Starting from an analysis of imperial visits in the wake of usurpations, he concluded that not only did usurpation constitute an important dynamic for the interaction of Rome with the imperial court, but also that civil war significantly influenced the way in which imperial power was articulated and received in the city. The fourth century A.D. also witnessed a change in the ways in which the symbolic presence of the absent emperor was represented in the cities of the empire. CHRISTIAN WITSCHEL analysed the empire-wide patterns of representations of the imperial court and the administration in the provinces. He highlighted how the traditional imperial cult lost its rôle as a pivotal medium of communication between the centre and the periphery of the Roman monarchy and detailed how it was replaced by other, more centrally controlled, means of interaction.

The next two papers dealt with Constantine and the representation of his relation to Rome and Constantinople respectively. BRUNO BLECKMANN called for a reappraisal of the traditional view that Constantine's conversion was the driving force behind his way of dealing with the city of Rome. His contribution developed an interpretation of Constantine's „Romprogrammatik" that locates the Constantinian Roman imagery instead in an ideological context which merged aspects from both the tetrarchic tradition and Constantine's rivalry with Licinius.

NOEL LENSKI examined the religious and political function of Constantine's rededication of the cult of the city goddess of Constantinople. In a detailed contraposition of Constantinian coinage depicting Constantinopolis and literary sources on its imperial festivals and monuments, Lenski delineated how Constantine cautiously interfered into the centuries-old pagan tradition of the cult of the Tyche of Byzantium/Constantinople, in order to turn it into a deity better suited to the political and religious agenda of Constantine and his new city. CHRISTIAN RONNING offered an analysis of ostentatious acts of inclusion or exclusion primarily in the sphere of criminal proceedings, observing both an intensification of dramatic public performances of punishment as well as an expansion of criminal law to cover a continuously growing range of offences. Criminal proceedings provided an arena for the theatrical self-portrayal and self-description of the Roman emperor as the ultimate reference point of punishment and mercy, i.e. of justice.

The third and final section of the conference dealt with the emperor's rôle in religious change and religious conflict. GIORGIO

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BONAMENTE reexamined some of the propositions advanced in the recent studies of the Constantinian Revolution. Bonamente argued for the view that Constantine's action show that he primarily aimed at the rôle of a mediator responsible for the well-being of all his subjects, independent of their respective religious affiliation. STEFFEN DIEFENBACH returned to the question of the political impact of the religious policy of Constantius II. His contribution suggested that the church-internal conflicts of this time were not triggered by Constantius II' „Bekenntnispolitik". Rather, the stasis-like conditions that can be observed in some cities resulted from the enhancement of the status of members of the clergy, which again was a necessary precondition for an increasing and intensifying faction-building on both local and regional levels. RITA LIZZI TESTA reassessed the theory of a pagan reaction against the Christianising tendencies of the Roman emperors. Her reconstruction of the „altar of Victory controversy" revealed that a complete rejection of the thesis, as is common in recent scholarship, fails to account for the fact that even politically influential citizens were able to retain a pagan identity up to the fifth century.

Finally, the adoption of Christianity by the imperial family necessitated the formulation of a Christian definition of monarchy. HAROLD DRAKE examined how the idea of a Roman emperor as part of the divine sphere, a conception inherited from the imperial ideology of the Tetrarchic era, was gradually reformulated to correspond to Christian cosmology. Drake's study started with an examination of Eusebius' Tricennial Oration and its consensual portrait of the emperor as a quasi-divine figure, which had an unfortunate fate in subsequent Christian discourse. Later Christian thinkers contested the imperial views on privileged access to the divine and on a corresponding pre-eminence in church affairs. This resulted in a gradual deconstruction of the emperor as the final arbiter in the world: in a Christian empire, the final judgment rested with the Christian God.

To summarise, the contributions to this conference revealed the rich insights that can be gleaned from an analysis of competition and negotiation in the period of Christianisation. The social and religious changes of the 4th century greatly affected the disintegrative potentials within the highly complex political system, and these in turn helped to shape and bolster imperial strategies of integration and legitimisation. This development can be traced in the changing interaction between the emperor on the one hand and the military and civil elites and civic populations on the other, in the innovative forms of monarchic self-representation, and in the emperor's intervention in religious affairs. The results of the conference will be published in due course, including papers by additional contributors to cover aspects of the development which have not been systematically taken into account during the conference – such as the relation between the emperor and the army, the establishment of imperial dynasties and collegial rule among others.

**Conference Overview:**

Horst Frank (Mayer of Constance): Welcome
Ulrich Gotter (Konstanz): Welcome
Johannes Wienand (Konstanz): Opening remarks

*Section I: Administering the Empire*

Malcolm Errington (Marburg): Images of Reality: Some Views of the Emperor as Civilian Administrator

John Weisweiler (Cambridge): The Making of an Imperial Élite. Integrating the Urban Aristocracy of Rome

Sebastian Schmidt-Hofner (Heidelberg): Rechtsrangeleien. Kaiser und Elitenkonkurrenz im 4. Jh.

Michael Kulikowski (Knoxville): Regional Dynasties and Imperial Court

John Dillon (Heidelberg): Akklamationen und die Kontrolle der Verwaltung unter Konstantin

*Section II: Performing the Monarchy*

Johannes Wienand (Konstanz): Der Kaiser als Sieger. Zur Topographie triumphaler Herrschaft im 4. Jh.

Mark Humphries (Swansea): Emperors, Usurpers, and the City of Rome. Performing Power

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from Diocletian to Theodosius

Christian Witschel (Heidelberg): Die (symbolische) Präsenz des Kaisers in der spätantiken Stadt

Bruno Bleckmann (Düsseldorf): Konstantin, Rom und die Christen

Noel Lenski (Boulder): Constantine and the Tyche of Constantinople

Christian Ronning (München): Inklusion und Exklusion in den Ritualen der spätantiken Monarchie

*Section III: Balancing Religious Change*

Giorgio Bonamente (Perugia): Nochmals die konstantinische Wende

Steffen Diefenbach (Augsburg): Kaiser, Kirche, Konfession. Zum Verhältnis von Reichskirchenpolitik und politischer Integration im römischen Imperium unter Constantius II.

Rita Lizzi Testa (Perugia): Christian Faith, Ancient Writers, and Daily Life: The Impact of Christianity at the End of the Fourth Century

Harold Drake (Santa Barbara): Speaking of Power. Christian Redefinition of the Imperial Role in the Fourth Century

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