

## *Call for papers*

### **An End to Unity? East and West in the Fourth Century**

The fourth century was a pivotal age in the history of the Roman Empire, an age of transition: New residencies of imperial power emerged in both West and East, with Constantinople as upcoming principal court and stage for imperial triumphs and celebrations. The attitude of the emperors towards Christianity changed from proscription to prescription, though religious belief and practice – Christian as well as traditional – were still diverse. Rome's ever-growing status as *the* Christian city culminated in its claim for primacy over other sees in the early 380s. The political division between East and West after the death of Theodosius I, in 395, would, in retrospect, be a definitive end to administrative unity.

The concepts of *concordia* and *discordia* pervade late-antique textual and visual as well as material sources. Romans developed and exploited these notions with fairly different (geo-)political, religious, geographical and social ambitions in mind: some strove for unity within the empire, others pursued unity within Christianity. There were advocates for unity among 'real' Romans opposed to threatening 'barbarians' and agents for (a cultural) unity within the senatorial aristocracy. And there were those who rejected these initiatives for uniformity and opted for separation: the split of the empire in 395 was final, but it was certainly not the first division. Besides occasional geographical separate entities, the Latin speaking West and the Greek oriented East had been polarized in intellectual and theological matters. From a religious perspective, Christian and traditional groups rejected or extricated themselves from the binding Christian doctrine, some going underground as 'heretics', others as monks dwelling in isolated places. At the same time, traditional cults still persisted or revived, of which Mithraism is but one example.

In all cases, people used the concepts of unity and discord in constructing their identity. As a result, the Roman Empire in late antiquity was – maybe more than other periods in its history – characterised by its many identities and different groups trying to control the empire.

This conference seeks to explore the degree of unity and discord between East and West in the fourth century from different angles. Therefore we invite scholars of all fields working on Late Antiquity to present their views on the topic. Our hope is that this meeting will prompt a dynamic interchange among scholars with a focus on ancient history, literature, archaeology, architecture, religion, law and philosophy, (but also on) cultural memory and identity building. Comparisons of political, social or cultural phenomena in the Eastern and Western part of the Empire are as much appreciated as papers which discuss fourth century views on unity (or separation). With this conference, we hope to deepen our understanding of the complexities of unity and discord in the late Roman empire.

- **Practicalities**

**Organisation:** drs. Roald Dijkstra and drs. Sanne van Poppel, Radboud University Nijmegen

**Location:** Radboud University Nijmegen (the Netherlands)

**Date:** 24-26 October 2012

Papers are accepted in English, German or French (30 minutes length).

The conference opens with a keynote lecture by prof. dr. David Potter (University of Michigan) on the 24th, followed by a reception, for both of which everyone is cordially invited. There will be an optional dinner afterwards (on own expenses). Confirmed speakers are offered hotel accommodation for two nights (24 & 25 October) and conference meals (breakfast, lunch and refreshments; dinner on the 25th). Given our restricted budget, we kindly ask participants to declare travel expenses at their own institution.

**Abstract** (500 words) should be sent in **before 1 May 2012** to [unity@let.ru.nl](mailto:unity@let.ru.nl). 15 May at the latest, you will be informed about your admission to the conference. For further questions, please mail to the address mentioned above.

- **Confirmed speakers:**

Dr. Jan Willem Drijvers (University of Groningen) - *tba*

Prof. dr. Christian Gnilka em. (Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster) - "Die Reichsidee des Prudentius"

Prof. dr. Mark Humphries (Swansea University) - "The Centre and the Centrifuge: Imperial Unity and Civil War in the Fourth Century"

Prof. dr. Hervé Inglebert (Université Paris Ouest Nanterre La Défense) - "Concordia, Romania et Ecclesia catholica : les discours de l'unité romaine au IVe siècle"

Prof. dr. David Potter (University of Michigan) - "Can we measure the might of Rome?"

Dr. Alexander Skinner (Cardiff University) - "Aristocrats and Imperial Service: Observations on an East-West Contrast"

Prof. dr. Paul Stephenson (Radboud University Nijmegen) - *tba*

- **Chairs:**

prof. dr. Sible de Blaauw (Radboud University Nijmegen)

prof. dr. Bas ter Haar Romeny (Leiden University)

dr. Daniëlle Slootjes (Radboud University Nijmegen)