Call for Papers

"Gaining imperial favor: Competition and Cooperation in Late Antiquity"

An International Workshop

Organizer: Emmy Noether-Gruppe „Macht und Einfluss. Einflussnahme auf den Herrscher zwischen Antike und Mittelalter”

Date: 2./3.12.2016

Place: Tübingen

Deadline: 31.5.2016

Today leading politicians are subjected to many influence attempts. Family members, grey eminences, lobbyists and sycophants compete with each other in their pursuit of various agendas that can range from protecting their own interests to the struggle for what they see as a common good. Late Antiquity abounded in political players aiming at influencing rulers (be they emperors, "barbarian" kings, usurpers or guardians of child emperors). Philosophers, priests of the traditional cults, bishops, wonder-workers, ascetics, members of the imperial council and of the ruler’s family all wanted to assert themselves with their piece of advice. They applied diverse methods (such as ideological polemic, money donations or explicit threats) to legitimize their position and to disqualify their adversaries. Those who managed to beat the competition were consequently able to use the power available to their rulers to expand their own power.

When leaving behind the common negative notion of competition, the analysis and comparison of various competitive relationships may further our understanding of late antique leadership. However, this subject (apart from studies on the religious competition in Late Antiquity) has to a large extent escaped the attention of scholars. Therefore, the Tübingen workshop "Gaining imperial favor: Competition and Cooperation in Late Antiquity" invites discussion on this topic. The proposed papers should address the following or similar questions:

-In which areas and in which situations did the competition for the favor of a ruler take place? Who were the competing agents?

-What were the motivations of the various competing individuals and groups? What kind of argumentation did they employ and which approaches did they take?

-Was cooperation an alternative to competition? Under which circumstances could various parties unite for a common cause?

-To which extent was the competition institutionalized at a ruler's court?

-How do the late antique sources portray this competition? Which stereotypes, polemics and discourses were employed by the ancient authors and the agents they describe?

Please email the proposed topics including a half-page abstract to Fabian.Schulz@uni-tuebingen.de by Thursday, 31 May, 2016.