

CONVENORS:

Matthias Hächler (University of Zurich)
Nikolas Hächler (University of Zurich)

Special Workshop “Religious Pluralism in the Roman Empire (1st-5th century A.D.)”

The workshop centres on the rich scientific field of religious pluralism as a phenomenon of Roman Antiquity in the period from the first to the fifth century A.D. This includes empirical research on the spread of religious beliefs and cults and their co-existence in different parts of the Empire, but also an analysis of how religious pluralism as well as differing religious behaviour is perceived by different parts of the Roman society through time. In order to analyse these topics, it is necessary to investigate the conditions of the formation of religious belief in Antiquity as well as the presentation and reception of religious identities through the careful study of literary (*i.e.* political, legal, religious or theoretical treatises, private letters or travel reports) and documentary sources (*i.e.* inscriptions, coins, documentary papyri or archaeological remains). On this basis, it will be possible to examine the various kinds of social reactions to religious pluralism (*e.g.* acceptance and simple co-existence; hostile rejection and “othering” of seemingly strange or foreign beliefs; benevolent toleration; or even syncretistic developments and adaption of certain elements of worldviews and rites).

One focal point of the workshop consists in the examination of the legal regulation of religious plurality and faith-based practices. Do we know of specific norms that not only address special needs of certain religious groups, but the relation between different groups as well? If religious diversity and deviance from a majority religion is granted, how far does this liberty reach and what are the specific reasons for these kinds of regimes? And can first elements of a theoretically sound justification of religious freedom be found in the sources available? These considerations offer the opportunity to determine the factors that have an impact on legal regulation, such as economic, political, and military events, internal and global crises, or the rise of new religious movements such as Christianity.

Especially the latter necessitates a radical transformation of the Roman society. From the beginnings of the early Christian cults to the regimes of toleration and, ultimately, the declaration as state religion, the influence of Christian thought, organisation and ideals on Roman society has increased steadily. This leads to interesting questions concerning the relationship between polytheistic and monotheistic systems and the change in the regulation of minority religions in the Empire during this period of transition. However, religion does not only have an impact on politics and legal regulation, but is inherently political as well: On the one hand, religion is a resource of ideological power and legitimation, giving religious leaders the possibility to have a strong impact on believers and non-believers alike. On the other hand, religion has to be considered a public affair, as religious matters may not only lead to political actions, but bear also significance to the self-understanding of a community. Further studies that engage in the analysis of this political character of religion and its consequences for the regulation of religion are highly relevant, not the least because they discern abstract preconditions of religious co-existence and tolerance. As these questions need to be addressed in an interdisciplinary manner, this workshop will contain papers from historical and religious studies, sociology as well as legal philosophy.

Programme (Thursday, 11.07.2019)

12:45 | Official welcome and introductory remarks

Session I: Transformation and Continuity of Religious Cults within the Pluralistic Roman Empire – the Legacy of Material Culture

13:00-13:20 | M. Vitale: Bedeutung und Funktion des Kaiserkults im Römischen Reich
13:20-13:40 | A. Lawrence: Power of Practices – Practices of Power. The Transformation and Persistence of Cult Sites and Cults at the Legionary Fortress of Vindonissa (Ct. Aargau, CH)
13:40-14:00 | L. Dubosson-Sbriglione: Les contorniates: un témoignage du pluralisme religieux des IV^{ème} et V^{ème} s. ap. J.-C.
14:00-14:30 | Discussion

Break (10 min)

Session II: Networks of Faith – Networks of Power and New Styles of Life

14:40-15:00 | A. Brändli: Ambrose of Milan and the Limits of Christian Friendship
15:00-15:20 | M. Hahn: Das Zeitalter der Wachsamkeit? Die Rolle der Laien für die Überwachung und Kontrolle von Klerikern im Kontext des nordafrikanischen Schismas
15:20-15:40 | R. Schär: Stellung und Funktion des christlichen Mönchtums in der römischen Gesellschaft
15:40-16:10 | Discussion

Break (30 min)

Session III: Shifting Frontiers of Tolerance

16:40-17:00 | N. Hächler: Paganism’s Last Stand. Religious Thought in the Writings of Julian the Apostate
16:00-17:20 | M. Hächler: Persecution of Religious Deviation under Theodosius I. An Analysis of the Thesis of Structural Connections between Monotheism and Intolerance
17:20-17:40 | C. S. L. de Arruda: A Feminist Insight of Religion: Position, Influence and Authority of Women in Pagan, Jewish and Christian Societies within the Roman Empire and their Consequences
17:40-18:10 | Discussion
18:10-18:20 | Concluding Remarks