De Africa Romaque – Merging Cultures across North Africa

CONFERENCE DATE AND VENUE

26th - 27th October 2013
University of Leicester
Ken Edwards Lecture Theatre 2
University Road, Leicester LE1 7RH (UK)

PROGRAMME AND SESSIONS

This two day international conference will explore the mutual relationships between North African peoples and Rome in a time-frame comprised between the 2nd century BC and the 4th century AD. The encounter of different cultures represents a very current, fascinating and vibrant field of study. In recent years, scholarly research has moved away from a Rome-centred viewpoint which used to portray local populations as passive recipients of Rome’s superior culture. Attention has been turned instead to the multiple ways in which these peoples re-created or reinforced their identity and negotiated with the imperial power of Rome.

The aim of the conference is to focus the debate around the following questions (and beyond): How did local traditions manage to survive, and how were they altered or revived under Roman rule? Is it possible to trace the role played by other legacies – such as the Punic and Hellenistic substrata – in this process? How did Roman influence and innovation in art, architecture, economy, technology, town planning and agriculture suit to local needs and vice-versa? Did the diverse regions of North Africa react differently to the power of Rome?

Presentations will embrace research on the archaeology and ancient history of Roman period North Africa, art and architecture, North African civilization and language, placing strong emphasis on archaeological fieldwork, material approaches and theory, epigraphy and philology. The conference aims to cover a broad geographical area, hopefully including a variety of countries such as Libya, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt and Morocco. The official language of the event is English. However, contributions in Italian, French, German and Spanish are also welcomed.

Session 1 – Creating a Lasting Impression: Artistic and Decorative Motifs in North Africa

This session will particularly focus on how Roman period art and architectural decoration were perceived and re-elaborated by the various North African cultures. It will also look at the persistence and re-invention of Punic and Hellenistic motifs, thus resulting in very diverse expressions of local identities and substrata.

Session 2 – Shaping the African Landscapes: Architecture, Urbanism and Rural Settlements

Evolution and changes in settlement patterns during the Roman period will be investigated here. Discussion will focus both on rural sites and on urban realities, in order to highlight the effects of local engagement in this process, the development of urban trajectories, and the use of private and public spaces across North Africa.

Session 3 – Economies of North Africa: Technology, Tradition and Innovation

The session aims to analyse the character of the North African economy by looking at the different regional productions. This will provide information on the survival of traditional technologies, on the impact of the Roman conquest in the productive process, and on any changes to local economic life.

Session 4 – Africans and Romans: Perspectives from the Written Evidence

The interrelation of cultures is approached here through the information provided by literary texts and epigraphic documents: looking at how local populations were perceived by Rome (and vice-versa), how the elites interacted with the imperial system, and what was instead the impact on the rest of the provincial community.

ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

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