



Press Release

DFG backs new center of advanced studies into migration and mobility in the first millennium

Tübingen historians reexamine a turbulent period of European history, focusing on universally burning issues

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“Migration and Mobility in Late Antiquity and Early Middle Ages” is the title of a new research project starting in 2017 at the University of Tübingen. The new center of advanced studies is sponsored by the German Research Foundation (DFG) and headed by Professor Mischa Meier of the Institute of Ancient History. Other key contributors are Professors Steffen Patzold and Sebastian Schmidt-Hofner of the Department of History.

“The new center of advanced studies will shed light on a period of history usually summarized as the Migration Period of the first millennium,” Meier explains. “The term traditionally referred to the movement of Germanic tribes in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages.” Research into the area has tended to focus on war and plunder, or on the ethnicity and identity of the historical players, Meier says. “This new research unit will broaden the perspective by placing mobility and migration in focus as social phenomena,” he explains. “We will be examining various, even everyday forms of migration - be they that of individuals or varying social groups such as agricultural laborers, clerics, or merchants.”

The researchers are also planning to expand the period of time under examination, investigating the era from 250 to around 900 A.D. “Traditionally the Migration Period was defined as the time from the Hun invasion of Europe in 375 A.D. to the Lombard invasion of northern Italy in 568,” Meier explains. “Yet there is much to be said for an examination of a much longer timeframe, because migration did not suddenly cease in 568.” The historians will integrate current approaches and theories from the field of Sociology regarding migration today, according to Professor Meier. They hope to come up with results which will be helpful in creating models for other disciplines. In this way the new center of advanced studies will be contributing to a better understanding of a phenomenon which is of enormous relevance today. For instance, the researchers will

be examining the migration of farm laborers - a mass phenomenon even in those days which the elites of the time sought to prevent, fearing a loss of their own workforce. The research unit will make comparative analyses of the effects of such labor mobility on local communities.

DFG centers of advance studies are specially designed to accommodate Humanities research and aim to promote new ideas and exchange. They enable selected researchers to concentrate on special projects and introduce a Fellow Program allowing guest lecturers both from within Germany and abroad to visit and share their ideas. Centers of advance study are sponsored for a period of four years and may be extended for an additional four years.

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