



Session Proposals Limes Congress 2021

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Dress and adornment in frontier communities

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Session Abstract: This session explores the way people living in Roman frontier communities dressed, adorned and cared for their bodies. The theme encompasses various technologies of the body, consisting of objects, practices and products used in the care and presentation of the body. The session aims to discuss how social identities may have been created, maintained or adapted using these means, in the context of the unique nature of frontier societies, where military and civilian, local and newcomer communities coexisted. How did developments in this cultural sphere reflect the changing social and cultural make-up and orientation of frontier societies?

This session aims to address interaction between pre-existing dress, bodily care and adornment practices in the frontier regions and those introduced under Roman rule, as well as such interaction between military and civilian elements. What kinds of practices characterised the different communities, and how, and by whom, were new practices adopted and pre-existing practices transformed, replaced or retained? One of the themes of the session will be to explore the concept of ‘anchoring innovation’: the idea that the success of new ideas and inventions that affect social life depends on their potential to be somehow embedded (‘anchored’) in pre-existing norms and practices of that society (<https://www.ru.nl/oikos/anchoring-innovation/>).

The session welcomes contributions on a wide range of topics such as:

- dress and dress accessories
- hair removal and hairdressing
- bodily modifications such as tattooing or piercing
- toilet instruments
- cosmetics
- jewellery
- footwear

We welcome papers that go above and beyond mere typologies of objects to explore what bodily practices meant to the make-up and dynamic of frontier communities. The theme encompasses socio-cultural as well as technical innovations and the interplay between them.