

# Day 1: August 29, 2022

## Keynote Lectures

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17:00–17:30 **Welcome and Coffee**

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17:30–18:00 **John Haldon (Princeton):**  
  
Collapse, Complexity and Collaboration: How the East Was Not (Quite) Lost

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18:00–18:30 **Paul Erdkamp (Brussels):**  
  
Climate, Population and Society in the Roman World from a Comparative Perspective

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18:30–19:00 **Lee Mordechai (Jerusalem)**  
  
Reflecting on Late Antique Climate Change: Seeking Causal Links, Evaluating Impacts, and Contextualizing Discourse

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19:00 **General Discussion**

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19:30 **Dinner**

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# Day 2: August 30, 2022

## Panel 1: Climate Proxies for the RCO (chair: Sabine Huebner)

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09:30–10:00 **Markus Stoffel (Geneva) and Christophe Corona (Clermont-Ferrand):**  
  
Potential and Limitations of Subfossil and Archaeological Wood Remains to Understand Temperature and Precipitation Changes in the Roman Period

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10:00–10:30 **Joe McConnell (Reno, NV):**  
  
Indicators of Climate Drivers and Roman Economic Activity in Arctic Ice: 200 BCE to 600 CE

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10:30–11:00 **Coffee**

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11:00–11:30 **Michael Sigl (Bern):**  
  
New Insights on the Sources, Magnitudes and Climate Effects of Volcanic Eruptions During the Antiquity from Polar Ice Cores and Climate Model Simulations

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11:30–12:00 **Dominik Fleitmann (Basel):**  
  
The End of the Roman Climate Optimum Recorded in Stalagmites from Central and South-East Europe and the Middle East

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12:00 **General Discussion**

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12:30 **Lunch**

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## Panel 2: The Roman West (chair: Brandon McDonald)

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14:00–14:30 **Annalisa Marzano (Reading/Bologna):**  
  
Climate Change or Societal Factors? A View From Late-Imperial Roman Italy

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14:30–15:00 **Krešimir Vuković (Munich):**  
  
The Floods of the Tiber in the Imperial Period and the Roman Climate Optimum

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15:00–15:30 **Juan Manuel Martín Casado (Málaga):**  
  
Possible Relationship Between High-Energy Marine Events and Climate Change in Hispania During Late Antiquity

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15:30–16:00 **Coffee**

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16:00–16:30 **Gabriele Cifani (Rome):**  
  
Environmental History of Central Italy in the “Roman Climate Optimum” (200 BCE to 150 CE)

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16:30 **General Discussion**

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19:30 **Dinner**

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# Day 3: August 31, 2022

## Panel 3: Roman Egypt (chair: Matthias Stern)

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09:30–10:00 **Sabine Huebner (Basel):**  
  
The Unruly River: Historical and Paleoclimatic Nile Flood Proxies and the End of the Roman Climate Optimum in Egypt

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10:00–10:30 **François Blondel (Geneva):**  
  
Mummy Labels From Roman Egypt: Dendrochronological Potential for a Climatic Reading

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10:30–11:00 **Brandon McDonald (Basel):**  
  
Instability in the Western Desert of Egypt: Transitions in Climate, Environment and Settlement in the Roman Period

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11:00–11:30 **Coffee**

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11:30–12:00 **Petra Vaiglova (Gold Coast):**  
  
Building an Animal Stable Isotope Proxy for Inferring the End of the Roman Climate Optimum in Egypt

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12:00 **General Discussion**

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12:30 **Lunch**

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**Panel 4: The Roman East**  
(chair: Markus Stoffel)

**14:00–14:30** **Charlotte L. Pearson (Tucson):**  
Tree-Ring Tales from the Theodocian Harbour, Istanbul

**14:30–15:00** **Paolo Cimadomo (Haifa):**  
A View From the East: The Impact of Climate Change on the Life of the Roman Near East

**15:00–15:30** **Paolo Maranzana (Istanbul):**  
Roman Cities in Times of Change: Environment and Urbanism in Western-Central Anatolia

**15:30–16:00** **Haggai Olshanetsky (Basel) and Lev Cosijns (Oxford)**  
Understanding Trends and Climate in Late Antiquity: The Use of Settlement Patterns in Syria-Palestina as a Case Study

**16:00** **Coffee**

**16:30–17:00** **Timothy Newfield (Washington, DC):**  
What's a Plague Without a Diagnosis? The Impulse to Diagnosis and the Influence of Diagnoses in Histories of Ancient Disease and Climate

**17:00** **Final Discussion**

**19:30** **Dinner**

## Program September 1, 2022

### Departure Day

## The End of the Roman Climate Optimum and the Disintegration of the Roman Empire

Palaeoclimatologists believe to have identified a period of unusually warm and humid weather in Europe and the Mediterranean that expanded from roughly 200 BCE to 150 CE, which they called the 'Roman Climate Optimum' or the 'Roman warm period'. Some historians have linked this overall perseverance of unusually stable and favorable climatic conditions to the expansion of the Roman Empire to its greatest height, and argue that these predominantly warm and humid conditions in large parts of the Empire enabled the delivery of sufficient supply to the growing urban population around the Mediterranean and to the Roman army.

This international conference organized within the frame of the SNSF-Project «The Roman Egypt Laboratory: Climate, Change, Societal Transformations, and the Transition to Late Antiquity» (PI: Sabine Huebner) will be the first that is specifically devoted to the notion of a Roman Climate Optimum and its impact on the fate of the Roman Empire. The conference will examine the implications of a Roman Climate Optimum for writing Roman environmental, political, social and economic history, and will bring climate scientists, ancient historians and environmental archaeologists around one table. Special emphasis will be placed on the challenges of a collaboration between ancient historians, archaeologists and palaeoclimatologists, the methodological difficulties in distinguishing between correlation and causality, and methods of assessing the impact of climatic variability or change on ancient societies without oversimplifying causal connections.

## Organization

**Organizer:**

Sabine R. Huebner, Institute of Ancient History, Department of Ancient Civilizations, University of Basel (Switzerland)

SNSF-Project «The Roman Egypt Laboratory: Climate Change, Societal Transformations, and the Transition to Late Antiquity»  
[ancientclimate.philhlist.unibas.ch](http://ancientclimate.philhlist.unibas.ch)

**Registration:**

Attendance via Zoom is possible, please register with Sabine Huebner to receive the link.  
[sabine.huebner@unibas.ch](mailto:sabine.huebner@unibas.ch)

**Location:**

Hotel Ofenhorn  
Ackerstrasse 1  
3996 Binn  
[ofenhorn.ch](http://ofenhorn.ch)

