

Classics and Classical Civilization

Research Programme of the Classics and Classical Civilization

Introduction

The central area of enquiry in our research programme is that of OIKOS, the National Research School of Classical Studies in the Netherlands, which is administered and directed by Leiden University. Our research question is the analysis and interpretation of the processes of formation and transmission of culture in Greco-Roman Antiquity. This includes the analysis and interpretation of changes in culture and mentality, and of the connection between such changes and the societal structures in which they occur (programme track II).

The basis for the study of Greco-Roman culture are the texts and other sources that form our primary window into the ancient world. These texts must be made accessible and interpreted through editions and commentaries. On the other hand, access to these texts requires a thorough study of ancient culture (programme track I).

The study of Greco-Roman antiquity further requires critical reflection on the image of Antiquity in the classical period itself and in later periods. Therefore, research also includes the significance and reception of the Greco-Roman heritage in Western civilization (programme track III).

Our researchers study culture in its full diversity and its historical development. Culture is taken to include not only products of art, architecture, literature, philosophy and science, but also material culture, the production and exchange of products, infra-structure, political and social rules, norms and conventions. All researchers are involved in the interpretation of the languages and cultures of the Greco-Roman world, but with different accents.

The central research projects for all our researchers can thus be summarized as follows: the analysis and interpretation of the languages, texts and cultures of Greco-Roman antiquity and their reception.

There are three programme tracks in which the researchers within our programme are organized: *Texts and sources* (1), *Formation and transmission of culture* (2) en *Theory and historiography of the discipline* (3). In programme track 1, the texts themselves are the focus of attention; in programme track 2, studying the sources forms the basis for answering research questions about cultural context; in programme track 3, there is critical reflection on the methods and results of programme tracks 1 and 2, against the background of historical developments in the discipline.

1 Texts and sources

The study of Greco-Roman culture is impossible without an adequate interpretation of the texts and other sources that have come down to us from Antiquity. These texts therefore should be made accessible by means of critical editions, publication of sources, (multidisciplinary) commentaries and other tools. Linguistic research, literary analysis and

iconographic research are means to the same end. The interpretation of sources, textual and otherwise, is taken in a wide sense that also includes the societal function of texts.

It is an important and internationally appreciated feature of the Dutch research tradition in classical studies that it has a solid philological basis. We strive to maintain and perpetuate that tradition.

Examples of work along these lines are the research projects of Dr. M. van Raalte and Dr. A.M. Rademaker (an edition of Theophrastus *De ventis*); Prof. Dr J. Booth is preparing a commentary on Propertius, *Elegies I* (Cambridge Greek and Latin Classics); Prof. Dr I. Sluiter is working on a commentary on Plato's *Cratylus*; Prof. Dr K.A. Worp is preparing editions of Greek and Latin papyri, ostraka and wooden tablets from the Dakhleh Oasis in the Western Desert of Egypt); Prof. Dr L. de Ligt (History Department) plans a new commentary on the epigraphic *lex agraria* of 111 BC.

2 Formation and transmission of culture

An important part of the research programme is formed by the study of the relation between cultural products and their historical and societal context. Special attention is paid to processes of the formation and transmission of culture. The formation of culture takes place in all areas of a society and includes widely divergent activities. Participants in this process are individuals or groups, and political and social structures influence the process. The transmission of culture always involves groups: it is a collective phenomenon, to which individuals contribute in that they give new form or meaning to the transmitted cultural values. The tension between the collective identity and the individual's creative input is object of research.

Examples of this line of research: the Penn-Leiden Colloquia on Ancient Values (a biennial series of conferences co-organized by our Department and the Dept. of Classical Studies of the University of Pennsylvania); Prof. Dr I. Sluiter is co-authoring with Prof. Dr Rita Copeland (Univ. of Pennsylvania,) an annotated sourcebook of Medieval Grammar and Rhetoric; Prof. Dr J. Booth is editing collections of papers on *The Inveictive of Cicero* and (with Dr. R. Maltby (Leeds) on *Personal Names in Latin Literature*; Dr. Stephan Busch is working on the narrative techniques of Julius Caesar; Dr. R.M. van den Berg is writing a monograph on the reception of Plato's *Cratylus* in Antiquity; in the department of History, ancient historian Prof. Dr L. de Ligt is researching demographic, economic and legal change in Roman Italy from 202-88 BC; Prof. Dr F.A.J. de Haas (Faculty of Philosophy) is working on an interpretation of Aristotle's *De Anima*.

3 Theory and historiography of the discipline

The third and last programme track is that of the theory and historiography of the discipline. This programme track focuses on the critical analysis of ancient and modern perceptions of Greco-Roman antiquity.

Examples of this line of research: Prof. Dr I. Sluiter is working on a monograph on the rhetorical practices of ancient commentaries; Prof. Dr K.A.E. Enenkel is working on Renaissance and Humanist autobiographies.

Methods

Although our researchers do not belong to one research paradigm, there is a clear connection in the way in which they approach research questions. This connection is apparent from the following points:

- The basis for the study of Antiquity and the interpretation of ancient culture is the study, philological (in the wide sense) and otherwise, of the sources. All of our researchers work with original textual sources, which are interpreted in a contextualizing reading in the light of historical and cultural background.
- This contextualizing approach entails a selective and eclectic use of theory, models and methods from other (specialist) disciplines, such as linguistics or literary studies, economy, anthropology, sociology, religious studies, etc. The primary aim is not to perfect these theories and models, but to exploit them for the contribution they might make to the understanding of ancient culture.
- This ‘integrated’ approach, with its openness to insights from the most diverse disciplines, may be considered characteristic of the study of Greco-Roman antiquity in Leiden and in the Netherlands more generally.