

EIHS Lecture:

Big Cities, Food, and Migration in the Later Roman Empire: A Simple Model

Speaker: Raymond Van Dam, University of Michigan

Host Department: Eisenberg Institute for Historical Studies (EIHS)

Date: 09/10/2015

Time: 16:00 pm

Location: 1014 Tisch Hall

Description:

Abstract: Ancient Rome was the first city in world history with a population of one million residents; the population of Constantinople reached perhaps 600,000 residents. Big cities imposed huge burdens on preindustrial agrarian economies. One was the importation of grain from provinces in North Africa and Egypt; another was the supply of new residents. Because unsanitary overcrowding and diseases elevated mortality rates, big cities had to rely on immigration to maintain very large populations. As tribute from the provinces the Roman imperial administration hence extracted both food and people. The existence of big cities helped emperors to maintain control over provincials and their resources.

Raymond Van Dam is a professor in the Department of History at the University of Michigan, and adjunct professor in the Department of Near Eastern Studies and the Department of Classical Studies. His books include *Rome and Constantinople: Rewriting Roman History during Late Antiquity* (2010).

Free and open to the public.

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