

Call for Papers:

## **Compilations and excerpt collections of historiographical material: A workshop**

Ghent University, 24-25 March 2016

Compilations and excerpt collections are a common genre in late antique and medieval literature. Practices of excerpting have often been situated in the context of tenth-century 'encyclopaedism' (P. Lemerle, A. Dain), but that image may be misleading. The practice of gathering and excerpting starts much earlier than the 10th century and 'encyclopaedism' is a modern term that may distort our understanding of 'culture of *sylloge*' (P. Odorico). For a long time, compilations and collections only received attention as sources for the works they rely on and not as works of literature in their own right. Recently, scholars have suggested to take them seriously as a literary phenomenon and study them as texts in their own right. This workshop adopts this perspective by focusing on historiographical texts.

We are in particular interested in the following aspects of the compilation and collection:

- a. The workshop will aim at tracing the origins of the practice of 'copying and pasting'. Are excerpt collections and compilations a typically medieval phenomenon or do they have a classical ancestry, possibly now hidden from sight?
- b. The workshop will focus on the format, working methods and formal characteristics of compilations and collections: Are they stable entities or can they be considered as 'living texts' that are changed in transmission? What is the relationship, if any, between compilations (such as Cassiodorus' *Historia Tripartita*) and excerpt collections? To what extent was the selection of excerptors influenced by contemporary cultural and political ideas?
- c. The workshop will aim at exploring the role played by specific social contexts in the practices of organising historical material. What view on history do they presuppose? What do compilations and collections teach us about their author, patron, and intention? What conception of knowledge do compilations and collections presuppose? Do they aim at structuring and providing complete, exhaustive knowledge?

The workshop will focus primarily on the study of historiographical collections and compilations produced between Late Antiquity and the twelfth century, composed in Greek, Latin, Syriac, Armenian, Arabic, and other languages. We welcome papers dealing with specific collections and compilations, as well as more general contributions and comparative studies.

Each paper will last approximately 25 minutes and will be followed by a discussion.