

## Description for the general public

The Roman Empire belongs to the most successful states in European history. At its peak, it covered territory from southern Scotland to northern Mesopotamia. Moreover, it managed to keep together this geographical area inhabited by a heterogeneous population for over five hundred years (31 BC – AD 476) without many notable rebellions and despite numerous violent attacks from outside. Neighbourhood to the Roman Empire could hardly remain without consequences. Transcaucasia, was not only situated on the frontiers of the Roman Empire but also on the frontier to Rome's foremost rival, the Empire of Parthia / Sassanid Persia. Many studies have investigated Roman relations with its great eastern neighbour. Some scholars studied the possible reasons for the position of the outer limits of Roman provincial territory, while others analysed the complex role neighbouring allied kingdoms played in the Roman world. There has, however, been no attempt to systematically analyse the role and importance of Transcaucasia as a whole in Roman foreign politics, or the impact such politics had on the region as a whole. Nor has the nature of Rome's relations with Transcaucasia been fully investigated, for they are generally interpreted only as a part of Roman strategic objectives on its eastern frontier.

This project will re-evaluate such analyses. Moreover, it will reconstruct the ancient transit routes through Transcaucasia and, wherever possible, their internal hierarchy. Next, it will investigate the extent of the influence of long distance trade (and its taxation) on Roman politics in Transcaucasia. Finally, it will examine the impact (cultural, economic, and political) imperial Roman politics, objectives and presence had in Transcaucasia in the period under investigation. Together, these results will allow a new assessment of the role Transcaucasia played in the Roman world and the impact of imperial neighbourhood on life in these parts during the period of investigation. The results will also significantly contribute to a reconsideration of Moses Finley's verdict (still generally held to be true), that the Romans had no awareness, let alone policy, for generating wealth for the Roman treasury by foreign trade, that there were no commercial or commercially inspired wars in Roman history, and that the Roman imperial governments never undertook measures to promote trade with the East. A reassessment of such questions in connection with interpretations by earlier scholars may not only shed new light on Roman imperial foreign policies but may also provide a more satisfying analytical framework for many of the Roman remains in Transcaucasia. In order to achieve these goals, there will not only be library-based research but also two field trips to the region and an international congress at the university of Warsaw with specialists on the impact of the integration of Transcaucasia into the Roman sphere of influence.