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Childhood on the Roman frontiers

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Session Abstract: Recent studies on aspects of childhood in the Roman world have been reshaping the study of children in antiquity, especially in advocating interdisciplinarity to counterbalance the dominance of literary and documentary approaches towards illuminating children's lives in ancient society. Children's experiences differed according to their location, time, gender, and social context, and great strides have been made in considering these factors in scholarly enquiry. Yet, one important context in which there are serious gaps in study is that of military communities and families on the frontiers in any part of the empire. Growing up in a potentially dangerous location dominated by soldiers and combative professionals, who were accompanied by women and families to varying degrees, depending on time and place, may have influenced and impacted the life of a child in very different ways than in a purely civilian milieu in Rome, Italy or other places distant from the frontier zones. Non-Roman children on the fringes of and outside the empire may have had their lives irreversibly altered as well. There is a clear need for an interdisciplinary approach to the study of childhood in this environment. This session will explore the physical environments in which children lived, including the forts, the *vici*, and *canabae*, and nearby settlements; the objects and material culture given to children; their place in the household and their social connectivity in military and civilian sectors; their role in the families of serving and veteran soldiers; the experiences children might have had, both negative and positive; the depiction of children as Romans and non-Romans; and the evidence for socialisation and gendered behaviour in life and death. It will utilise funerary commemoration and epigraphy, texts, artefactual evidence, visual imagery, skeletal data, and demographic studies.