

6 October 2008

Professor Edward Corp (University of Toulouse)

### **The Stuart Court in Rome**

Having written the definitive study on the exiled court of James II at St Germain-en-Laye, Edward Corp is now working on a sequel covering the court of James III (the 'Old Pretender') in Rome. He began his paper by stressing that, so far as the papal court was concerned, James III was a king *de jure* and so was always treated as such. The Jacobite court was therefore able to become an important feature of the social life of Rome for almost half a century. It was centred on the Palazzo del Re (formerly the Palazzo Muti) in the Piazza dei SS. Apostoli. Enough is now known to allow a conjectural reconstruction of how that building was used. The subsidy James received from successive popes was not as generous as that he and his father had received in France from Louis XIV, but he was still able to maintain a household numbering about 100 servants. In one significant respect, however, he departed from the traditional practice of the English court, in that there was no separate household for his queen, Maria Clementina Sobieska. This was an important factor in the estrangement between the two of them from 1725 onwards and their imperfect reconciliation was achieved only after James had conceded to her demands for her own servants. The composition of both households became markedly more Italian as the years passed. The number of Scottish courtiers was far fewer than one might expect. The court's cultural role took several forms. As at St Germain, its musical life was distinctive and influential. Corp also suggested that the courtiers around James III played a significant part in popularising those artists, such as Antonio David and Pompeo Batoni, favoured by British Grand Tourists. He sees this as an example of wider role performed by James's household. In the absence of British diplomatic relations with the papacy, the Palazzo del Re served as an unofficial embassy for British visitors to Rome. This was as true for those Hanoverian loyalists as it was for the Jacobite faithful. That contact with this English-speaking community away from home was supposedly taboo only added to its illicit appeal for the numerous young men from the British Isles visiting the Eternal City. **AB**