

Peripheral Regions and Centres in Pre-Modern Europe, c.1100-1700: one-day workshop.

The workshop held at Manchester Metropolitan University on 3rd May 2011 re-examined the idea of the border regions in selected European Peripheries: the Anglo-Scottish border; Lorraine and Luxembourg; views of Eastern Europe in English texts; and the role of hunting and hunter routes in the core and periphery of Medieval Anglesey.

The first two papers discussed the Anglo-Scottish border. Jonathan Gledhill (MMU/Huddersfield) discussed loyalties and lordship in the eastern border. He highlighted how in times of war, English had a greater need for administration and thus created more posts, whereas in Scotland there were less positions to fill and thus over-mighty magnates, like the Percys in Northumberland, did not appear. Anna Groundwater (Edinburgh) then went on to look at the Early Modern border, and suggested that the frontier line which has so often been blurred here needs to be put back in place. She cautioned that most previous models used to look at the Scottish border have been European, where territorial demarcations were more fluid and subject to change.

Spencer Smith took an archaeologists approach to looking at centre and core, considering how archaeological evidence could help to reconstruct the routes taken by hunters when pursuing their prey, and highlighted the difference between hunting activity on the coastal regions of Anglesey with the routes which could be traced around the core of the island. Zsuzsanna Reed Papp (Leeds) followed with a paper on the attitudes to Eastern Europe in Medieval English Histories, and asked how the relatively peripheral nature of this area may have impacted upon its depiction in English works. Interestingly, although English works took an interest in a region they saw as remote and often barbarous, Eastern European works showed no reciprocal regard.

The final set of papers looked at two duchies on the French border in the late medieval and early modern period: Luxembourg and Lorraine. In the first paper, Pit Peporte (Luxembourg) argued that the period after 1443 was not one of great administrative change in the region, as Luxembourg still relied on a few noble families for control. There was however now strong 'top-down' authority to create an identity Luxembourg. This was not the case in Lorraine, where Jonathan Spangler (MMU) explained that a few key elite families saw themselves as in control of the region even though the western border with France was very porous. This was because the Lorraine nobility were loyal to themselves, rather than to a place which was potentially open to external influence, with competition between the elite, the French king, and the three imperial bishoprics.

There was lively debate in the roundtable discussion which concluded the day, and Anna Groundwater told us more about a new resource aimed at bringing people working on border areas together (<https://www.wiki.ed.ac.uk/display/TheBordersForum/Home>)