

## **Around and Beyond the Medieval Frontier**

### An invitation to retheorise boundaries

This document attempts to lay out the agenda with which I conceived this project, and some of the possibilities I see in it. I invite its critique, challenge and deconstruction, and am aiming for its replacement with something that we can all feel answers a collective agenda for taking the project forward from here. Everything in this document can and probably should be changed, not least because I know that I don't know half of what's going on in this field; there is much more in the footnotes here than I have not read than that I have.

Still, I lay things out here in four sections: the problem as I see it; a characterisation of the current effective theoretical toolkit of the frontier medievalist; a possible framework for future enquiry; and some special cases I can't make fit. Your thoughts and responses to any or all of these will be most welcome!

### **The Way I See It**

Borders are hot right now, as states all around the Mediterranean and beyond struggle to close them and police traffic across them in new (or very old-fashioned) ways. And where there's a border, of course, there's a frontier. But frontiers have been hot for a long time, arguably since Frederick Jackson Turner made them crucial to the development of the American West in the 1930s, and lots of exciting things have been written about frontiers as between spaces, as hard or soft boundaries, as permeable barriers or indeed, and especially in recent years, as zones of cultural contact and even creation.<sup>1</sup> Here

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<sup>1</sup> Frederick Jackson Turner, The Importance of the Frontier in American History (New York City 1935); see for discussion Daniel Power, 'Frontiers: terms, concepts, and the historians of medieval and early modern Europe' in *idem* & Naomi Standen (edd.), Frontiers in Question. Eurasian Borderlands, 700-1700 (Basingstoke 1999), pp. 1-12 As for the modern work, some examples might be: Christine Timmerman, Johan Leman, Hannelore Roos & Barbara Segaert (edd.), In-Between Spaces: Christian and Muslim Minorities in Transition in Europe and the Middle East, Gods, Humans and Religions 18 (Brussels 2009), or Mark Luccarelli and Sigurd Bergmann (edd.), Spaces In-Between: Cultural and Political Perspectives on Environmental Discourse (Leiden 2015); Annette Weber, Boundaries with Issues: Soft Border Management as a Solution? (Berlin [2012]); Martin W. Lewis, 'International Land Borders, Hard and Soft', *Geocurrents* 11 May 2011, online at <http://www.geocurrents.info/geopolitics/international-land-borders-hard-and-soft>, last modified not stated as of 16 July 2017; John J. Bukowczyk, Nora Faires, David R. Smith & Randy William Widdis, Permeable Border: The Great Lakes Basin as Transnational Region, 1650-1990 (Pittsburgh 2005); Mary Louise Pratt, 'Arts of the Contact Zone', Profession 10 (1991), pp. 33-40, and Ria O'Sullivan-Lago and Guida de Abreu, 'Maintaining Continuity in a Cultural Contact Zone: Identification Strategies in the Dialogical Self', Culture and Psychology 16 (2010), pp. 73-92. The fact that all these recent works were easily locatable by websearch shows how busy this area of interest is in both geography and political science. A round-up of that scholarship as of 2005 can be found in Henk van Houtum, 'The Geopolitics of Borders and Boundaries', Geopolitics 10 (2005), pp. 672-679.

the idea of 'borderlands' has been hugely influential in both literary studies and modern US and world history (if by that latter one is allowed to mean history of non-white populations and their polities by western historians); it would be impossible to list here all the books that invoke the word in their titles, let alone in text, and there are several journals with the word in their title.<sup>2</sup> In general, the world of frontiers studies is not short of buzz and exciting work, and this doesn't even address the amount of related work being done in linguistics, anthropology (especially) and various forms of cultural studies.

Quite a lot of this seems to have passed medieval historians by, however. (I do mean historians, too; it seems to me easier to find archaeologists dealing with such issues.<sup>3</sup>) It's not that we don't study frontiers in the medievalist community, quite the reverse, but when one finds Turner still being invoked years after the US history world left him behind, or the now forty-year-old debate about whether medieval frontiers were lines or zones still carrying on (frustrating not least because provoked by a work on Roman history, written for quite political purposes by one of Reagan's chief defence analysts arguing for a similar policy as he thought Rome had adopted for the US with regard to its NATO allies!<sup>4</sup>), one feels entitled to wonder whether medievalists are really paying attention. We don't even really do our otherwise-normal trick of raiding 1970s anthropology for parallels and calling

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<sup>2</sup> Obviously this is an older word (e. g. Wilfrid Wilson Gibson, Borderlands (London 1914), a book of poetry, or indeed Robert W. Lecker (ed.), Borderlands: essays in Canadian-American relations selected by the Borderlands Project (Toronto 1991), and the Journal of Borderlands Studies has been going since 1986. but nevertheless the wellspring of the modern academic usage is Gloria Anzáldua, Borderlands / La Frontera: the new mestiza (San Francisco 1991, 4th edn. 2012), also poetry in large parts, and pursued in both literary and historico-political directions by e. g. Monika Reif-Hüsler (ed.), Borderlands: negotiating boundaries in post-colonial writing (Amsterdam 1999) or e. g. Vera Pavlakovich-Kochi, Barbara J. Morehouse & Doris Wastl-Walter (edd.), Challenged Borderlands: transcending political and cultural boundaries (Aldershot 2004). Borderlands, an open-access e-journal published from the University of Sydney since 2012, is more clearly derived from such work than is The Journal of Borderlands Studies: see <http://www.borderlands.net.au/issues/index.html>, last modified 20 February 2017 as of 16 July 2017, for themed issues. So much has Borderlands become a reference point that Michel Agier, La condition cosmopolite : L'anthropologie à l'épreuve du piège identitaire (Paris 2013), was given the word as a new title on appearing in English as Borderlands: towards an anthropology of the cosmopolitan condition, trans. by David Fernbach (Malden MA 2016), even though the original title has nothing resembling it, and between 2011 and 2013 the journal LIMES: Cultural Regionalistics (2008-2010) was retitled LIMES: Borderlands Studies before settling on the less misleading Creativity Studies (2014-).

<sup>3</sup> Two cites grabbed by rapid search: Peter S. Wells, 'Creating an Imperial Frontier: Archaeology of the Formation of Rome's Danube Borderland', Journal of Archaeological Research 13 (2005), pp. 49-88, or Akinwumi Ogundiran, 'The Making of an Internal Frontier Settlement: Archaeology and Historical Process in Osun Grove (Nigeria), Seventeenth to Eighteenth Centuries', African Archaeological Review 31 (2014), pp. 1-24; cf. for maximum combination of reference points Duncan Wright and Pamela Ricardi, 'Both Sides of the Frontier: the 'contact' archaeology of villages on Mabuyag, western Torres Strait', Quaternary International 385 (2015), 102-111, DOI: 10.1016/j.quaint.2014.09.028.

<sup>4</sup> Edward Luttwak, The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire from the First Century A.D. to the Third (Baltimore 1976, many repr.); the interpretation here is that of Tim Cornell, 'The End of Roman Imperial Expansion' in John Rich and Graham Shipley (edd.), War and Society in the Roman World, pp. 139-170 at p. 143.

it interdisciplinary.<sup>5</sup> I am not aware of any medievalist work invoking the term ‘borderlands’ with any awareness that there is a scholarship hanging round it, for example, still less where that scholarship began or what its (equally political) aims were.<sup>6</sup>

The other thing we don’t do is compare. That sounds ridiculous, perhaps: how many comparative volumes of medieval historians working on frontiers can you think of? (I can manage ten.<sup>7</sup>) And yet in all of these, each chapter presents one frontier, and even when they were presented in the same forum before publication, these almost never make explicit comparison to one another, rarely even cross-referencing. The only people explicitly comparing, if any, are the editors, and that not as often as you’d suppose.<sup>8</sup>

This is all the more frustrating because we have such good material with which to work, and to compare, in this field. My lightbulb moment of realisation with this came in 2009, and was provoked by an article of Ronnie Ellenblum’s considering the line/zone question with respect to the Crusader kingdom of Jerusalem, which he thought unhelpful, and one can see why:

*One could live according to the customs of a province without coming under the jurisdiction of its prince. Every person knew what the border of his property was and what belonged to his neighbour. But such a property could have been divided between two or more rulers. The owner of the property knew*

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<sup>5</sup> Usually Mary Douglas, Purity and Danger: an analysis of concepts of pollution and taboo (London 1966), Clifford Geertz, The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays (New York City NY 1973) or Victor Turner, The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual (Ithaca NY 1970), all of which are landmarks, but now far from the cutting edge.

<sup>6</sup> E. g. Ralph-Johannes Lilie, ‘The Byzantine-Arab Borderland from the Seventh to the Ninth Century’ in Florin Curta (ed.), Borders, Barriers, and Ethnogenesis: frontiers in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages (Turnhout 2006), pp. 13-21, or Joachim Henning, ‘Civilization versus Barbarians? Fortification Techniques and Politics in the Carolingian and Ottonian Borderlands’, *ibid.* 23-34, both apparently unaware even though Lilie comes close to an Anzáldua-like vision of his chosen frontier space (pp. 17-20). One possible exception, albeit low-key (the concept being buried in a subsection of one chapter) is Paul Milliman, ‘The slippery memory of men’: the place of Pomerania in the medieval Kingdom of Poland (Leiden 2013), but his citation does not make the source of his ideas obvious.

<sup>7</sup> Jerome O. Steffen, David Harry Miller, William W. Savage Jr. & Stephen I. Thompson (edd.), The Frontier: comparative studies (Norman 1977-1979), 4 vols; Robert Bartlett & Angus MacKay (edd.), Medieval Frontier Societies (Oxford 1989); Wolfgang Haubrichs & Reinhard Schneider (edd.), Grenzen und Grenzregionen - Frontières et régions frontalières - Borders and Border Regions (Saarbrücken 1993); Ralph W. Mathisen & Hagith S. Sivan (edd.), Shifting Frontiers in Late Antiquity (Aldershot 1996); Power & Standen, Frontiers in Question; Walter Pohl, Ian Wood & Hemut Reimitz (edd.), The Transformation of frontiers from late antiquity to the Carolingians, The Transformation of the Roman World 10 (Leiden 2001); David Abulafia & Nora Berend (edd.), Medieval Frontiers: concepts and practices (Aldershot 2002); Curta, Borders, Barriers, and Ethnogenesis. One might politely add works that deploy the frontier thematic in particular areas of enquiry, like Emilia Jamrozik and Karen Stöber (edd.), Monasteries on the Borders of Medieval Europe: Conflict and Cultural Interaction (Turnhout 2013) and Alan V. Murray (ed.), The North-Eastern Frontiers of Medieval Europe: The Expansion of Latin Christendom in the Baltic Lands (Aldershot 2014).

<sup>8</sup> Exceptions: Power, ‘Introduction A: frontiers, terms, conceptions, and the historians of medieval and early modern Europe’ in Power & Standen, Frontiers in Question, pp. 1-13; Standen, ‘Introduction B: nine case studies of pre-modern frontiers’, *ibid.* pp. 13-27; but cf. Abulafia, ‘Introduction: seven different types of ambiguity’, in *idem* & Berend, Medieval Frontiers, pp. 1-34, for scepticism that this could even be useful.

*to whom he was obliged to pay taxes and offer gifts on religious holidays, who would try him if he committed a heinous offence and who would try him if he committed a lesser offence. In the event of war, he usually knew where danger lay and on whose side he should be in order to fulfil his auxilium duties. But all these spheres did not necessarily overlap.<sup>9</sup>*

He goes on to try these different concepts as ways to draw a line between notional Christian and Muslim fortresses at the edge of the Latin Holy Land, and concludes that every way would put the line in a different place.

What model of the frontier does this situation not break? Why is it not us who are for once generating theory for others to use, based on the unparalleled richness of the world we study in pre-national, post-imperial and otherwise non-current political and cultural formations (and indeed imperial ones of sorts not usually recognised, the so-called 'empires of faith' or 'nomadic empires') to test, stretch and force change upon models based on an increasingly distant twentieth-century situation?<sup>10</sup>

### **Some Attempt at a Current Theorisation**

I have, in some sense, been working on frontiers since 1998 or so, when I selected Catalonia as a good place to study the edges of the reach of the Carolingian Empire and its project. It took me a while longer to be able to explain why, and that such spaces offered choices to their occupants not available nearer the centres of polities to dissent, detach or disengage, or indeed to form alternative loyalties. Nonetheless, in an interview in 2013, by which time I had identified frontiers as one of my research interests, I was asked to define the word 'frontier' and utterly floundered, because I couldn't think of a definition that wasn't full of holes. I just about got to 'a space between two larger and differing entities', but could already see the objections possible from the perspective of an open frontier, with nothing on the other side (or nothing that counted, anyway, *pace* Turner), and so on. I didn't get the job.

When I reflect on that now, however, all that would really have changed is that I would have been more robust about our lack of an adequate definition. Like 'feudalism', 'frontier' is a word that perhaps gathers in too many concepts to be actually useful, though for now the collection of them together still serves to identify likeness rather than to confound the unrelated, I think.<sup>11</sup> It's not hard to come up with these, and this perhaps constitutes the

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<sup>9</sup> Ronnie Ellenblum, 'Were there Borders and Borderlines in the Middle Ages? The Example of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem' in Abulafia & Berend, Medieval Frontiers, pp. 105-118 at p. 109.

<sup>10</sup> Peter Sarris, Empires of Faith: the fall of Rome to the rise of Islam (Oxford 2011); Gerard Chaliand, Nomadic Empires: From Mongolia to the Danube (London 2006).

<sup>11</sup> Elizabeth A. R. Brown, "'The Tyranny of a Construct: feudalism and the historians of medieval Europe' in American Historical Review 79 (1974), pp. 1063-1088, repr. in Lester K. Little & Barbara H. Rosenwein (edd.), Debating the Middle Ages: issues and readings (Oxford 1998), pp. 148-169.

discipline's existing, and not well-recognised, body of frontier theory:

1. natural frontiers, changes or divisions of geographical space across which passage is, or is held to be, impractical, especially mountain ranges, seas or rivers (though this last idea would confuse a Roman or a Viking...).
2. linear frontiers, as per Luttwak, mappable lines that mark known edges in some sense agreed or enforced by the populations on one or both sides thereof.<sup>12</sup>
3. national frontiers, in the modern sense, lines more or less notional between points of entry into polities, through which passage is restricted in a more or less effective mutual way. This being the concept of frontier that most of us deal with whenever we leave our countries, its effect on us may not be explicit but is hard entirely to shake!

(It is important to observe that this concept does not **require** a linear frontier, although for our age it almost certainly involves one. In fact, where entry is only permitted through certain points, it is only those that constitute the frontier in this, legalistic, concept; any other spaces via which one might gain entry to a polity (such as coastlines) are nonetheless **inside** it, in as much as the only **legitimate** routes to them are via the points of entry, that making the difference between importing and smuggling.)

4. Open frontiers, the Turnerian concept of the edge to a 'civilised' or otherwise demarcated zone beyond which no significant (an intentionally subjective term) social organisation exists and into which the civilised zone looks to expand.
5. Zonal frontiers, a concept largely constructed in opposition to Luttwak's linear conception of the Roman *limes*, not least by Christopher Whittaker, but which also corresponds to the Arabic concept of *thūghr* or the medieval one of *Marches*, areas which are defined as separate from a central polity in terms of settlement, jurisdiction or loyalties and in which persons or entities from outside and inside that central polity may meet.<sup>13</sup>
6. Borderlands, as discussed above, an anthropological concept initially driven by work on the mestizo culture of the Southern United States driver; this model attempts to shift emphasis from a centre that defines practice and cultural expression to a zone in which contact with external influences in fact centres cultural production in the contact zone, and to which the centre responds.<sup>14</sup> One strength of this model is that unlike some

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<sup>12</sup> Luttwak: see n. 4 above.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*; cf. Christopher Whittaker, *Les frontières de l'empire romain* (Paris 1989), transl. as *Frontiers of the Roman Empire: a social and economic study* (Baltimore 1994), Eduardo Manzano Moreno, *La Frontera de al-Andalus en Época de los Omeyas*, Biblioteca de Historia 9 (Madrid 1991), esp. pp. 25-69, or R. Amitai-Preiss, "Northern Syria between the Mongols and the Mamluks: political boundaries, military frontier and ethnic affinities" in Power & Standen, *Frontiers in Question*, pp. 128-152.

<sup>14</sup> See n. 2 above. Many monographs on contemporary history have positioned themselves in this *mouvance*, perhaps most immediately relevant to us in Leeds being Elizabeth Leake, *The Defiant Border: The Afghan-Pakistan Borderlands in the Era of Decolonization, 1936-65* (Cambridge 2016). A

of the above, it does not limit itself to geographical expressions of boundaries, but can include cultural and class divisions.

These fall fairly naturally into opposed diads or triads:

- natural/political
- linear/zonal
- national/linguistic/ethnic
- open/closed
- barrier/bridge

Doing this makes it clear how baggy this concept 'frontier' is made by all these things we carry around in it; some of them can be combined, some exclude each other, all can more or less ignore each other. We might, however, with most practitioners' basic agreement, be able to break these down into categories of the frontier, like:

- geographic: places beyond which passage is difficult or impossible, like coastlines or mountain ranges;
- political: boundaries set by a governing power as a limit of its or another's authority (though this raises conceptual quibbles about where points of entry sit with respect to it: is a port inside a country or on its border? And although for us this is almost always a linear boundary, Ellenblum's example above shows that it need not be...);
- jurisdictional: similar to the above in some senses (the sheriff's jurisdiction in the USA that ends at the state line) but not in others, where geographically overlapping judicial competences are involved (again, the US proffers the difference between federal and state business, and Catalonia does this with citizenship, thus conflating it with several other categories...);
- linguistic: the place where one language fades out to be replaced by another, rarely hard and fast or discrete but sometimes used to set political or jurisdictional boundaries anyway;<sup>15</sup>
- religious: contact or conflict between two or more differing or opposed systems of belief;
- class: is the glass ceiling a frontier? High Table? The door to a spit-and-sawdust pub? I could go on and probably shouldn't, but how about the differences between the Three Orders, knight and sergent-at-arms or monastic and secular Church?<sup>16</sup>

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historiographical reflection on this boom field can be found in Pekka Hämäläinen and Samuel Truett, 'On Borderlands', *The Journal of American History* 98 (2011), 338-361.

<sup>15</sup> E. g. Peter Sahlins, *Boundaries: the making of France and Spain in the Pyrenees* (Berkeley 1989).

<sup>16</sup> Georges Duby, *Les trois ordres, ou l'imaginaire du féodalisme* (Paris 1978), trans. Arthur Goldhammer as *The Three Orders: medieval society imagined* (Chicago 1980); Helen J. Nicholson,

- gender: this is probably where the liveliest work in anthropology is going on now, as the binary between male and female becomes increasingly fluid, or just inadequate to describe the manifold different social roles expected of men and women depending on partnership status, age, background and so forth, yet difficulties crossing or even approaching the middle of the gender continuum are still very evident to many; much literary work on such issues readily invokes the language of frontiers or borderlands, but is it doing what we mean?<sup>17</sup> or
- cultural: the weakest, not least because it could be internal to a culture (like class, but also many others) or external to a culture (contact with an external Other, which may of course still be geographically inside the zone of the other's dominance), whatever a culture actually be, as well as with any concept of 'high/élite' and 'low/popular' culture, especially where these govern entry to other social institutions (for example examinations for the Song Chinese civil service or the importance of poetic improvisation in court standing in later al-Andalus);<sup>18</sup>

but are all these types of frontier really the same thing? If not, which ones are in our definition and which without? And since other disciplines would likely not agree, what are we or they missing?

### **A Framework for Enquiry**

So, rather than attempt a definition, which seems fated to shipwreck on our own or others' preconceptions, it may be better to start by coming up with a set of questions we can ask of any situation that might fall under the frontier

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Medieval Warfare: theory and practice of war in Europe, 300-1500 (Basingstoke 2004), pp. 39-46; Julia Barrow, The Clergy in the Medieval World: secular clerics, their families and careers in North-Western Europe, c. 800-c. 1200 (Cambridge 2015), pp. 71-114.

<sup>17</sup> See e. g. Antonia Castañeda, Susan H. Armitage, Patricia Hart & Karen Weathermon (edd.), Gender on the Borderlands: The Frontiers reader (Lincoln NB 2007), or Madina Vladimirovna Tlostanova, Gender Epistemologies and Eurasian Borderlands (New York City NY 2010), both being further evocations of Anzáldua, Borderlands. For the anthropology of multiple gender roles see Henrietta L. Moore, 'Desire, Agency and Subjectivity: a renewal of theoretical thinking', in Lisette Josephides (ed.), Knowledge and Ethics in Anthropology: obligations and requirements (London 2015), pp. 61-78, which is a critical response to Marilyn Strathern, The Gender of the Gift (Berkeley 1988), or more widely some of the papers in Denise Y. Arnold (ed.), Gente de carne y hueso: Las tramas de parentesco en Los Andes (La Paz 1998). This does not even touch the growing literature on non-binary or 'third' (or fourth, fifth, etc.) gender identities, as opposed to normalised social roles: for the basics on those, see Robert J. Muckle and Laura Tubelle de González, Through the Lens of Anthropology: An Introduction to Human Evolution and Culture (Toronto 2015), pp. 256-263, though note that here the multiplicity of physical and psychological experiences of sex and gender have overwritten this earlier concern to complicate the gendering of social roles.

<sup>18</sup> Hilda de Weert, Competition over Content: Negotiating Standards for the Civil Service Examinations in Imperial China (1127-1276) (Cambridge MA 2007); numerous examples of promotion by poetry in al-Andalus in Paul de Gayangos (ed./transl.), The History of the Mohammedan Dynasties in Spain, extracted from the *Nafhu-t-tib min ghosni-l-Andalusi-r-rattib wa tarikh lisánu-d-dín Ibni-l-Khattib* by Ahmed ibn Mohammed al-Makkari, a native of Telemsan (London 1840-1843), and for analysis see Salma K. Jayyusi, 'Andalusí Poetry: The Golden Period' in *eadem* (ed.), The Legacy of Muslim Spain (Leiden 1992), pp. 317-366.

definition, which might imply a matrix of categories into which each situation might be placed, some of which we might potentially not call 'frontiers'. Here are my suggestions:

1. Is it marked by difference beyond it (in any or all of political jurisdiction, language, religion, 'ethnicity', literary genre, law...)
2. How big is it? Does it have width, can one live in it? Does it itself have central places within it?
3. Who sets its location and extent, and who pays attention when that is done? (This can also be applied to those who write about it, and probably should be...)
4. What does that process of setting change about what people do or are permitted to do?
5. For whom is it a frontier? Do the same restrictions or lack of them apply, for example, to kings, merchants, churchmen, soldiers or farmers?
6. What is on the other side, an Other or Another (or neither)? From which side are we looking at it anyway?
7. Who crosses it, and why? Who knows that this happens?
8. Does this area (if it is an area) have its own culture, and is that culture importing or exporting?

These seem to me good ways to start to distinguish cases, but there may, nay, must be more, and perhaps these aren't good ones. What do you think?

### **Special Cases**

There are also some special cases where I don't find the answers to the above very helpful, and think I need to think harder or differently.

One closely-related concept much more usually used by medieval historians is that of a division between core and periphery.<sup>19</sup> There are ways in which the periphery in such a formulation is the frontier: it is where the self-definition of the polity or organisation weakens and runs out, beyond which it ceases to be recognisable, and it is potentially a zone of low control where alternatives develop; it may indeed be the borderland. But its relation to the whole or which it is part is conceptually inward-looking, not outward-looking; it is not inherent that there is anything outside. Does it belong in our diads above, or is it a different one that looks similar? And what, if anything, is between 'core' and 'periphery'? Is there a frontier space within this concept?

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<sup>19</sup> Michael Rowlands, 'Centre and Periphery: a review of a concept' in Kristian Kristiansen & Rowlands (edd.), Social Transformations in Archaeology: global and local perspectives (London 1998), pp. 219-242.



Then, for a while in the 1990s and 2000s it was fashionable in certain quarters to talk of medieval (and indeed other) territorial organisation as being nodal, not zonal; that is, one could locate and map *points* that belonged to a certain formation or structure, and link them to a centre or to each other, but one could not use that map to construct a discrete zone all of whose contents were inside a boundary relating them to that central or shared identity; a monastic territory might include estates far beyond its reserve or central lands, so might some kingdoms, some states still do (Ceuta, Gibraltar, etc.)<sup>20</sup> Where is the frontier in such cases? Firstly it cannot always easily be continuous; secondly it may, if viewed in certain ways, be very deep within the notional core (because this also messes with core and periphery as geographical expressions).

Enclaves and exclaves, already touched on in the previous paragraph, also threaten some of the concepts above. But this is probably enough now! Can all this be brought together, and if not, what needs discarding? This is the point where I turn it over to you...

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<sup>20</sup> My default reference for this is Elizabeth Zadora-Rio, 'La mesure et la délimitation des terres en Anjou-Touraine (IXe-XIIIe siècle) : perception et représentation de l'espace' in Laurent Feller (ed.), Écriture de l'espace social : Mélanges d'histoire médiévale offerts à Monique Bourin (Paris 2010), pp. 267-290, but I guess that she did not invent the idea; the most relevant antecedent I can locate is J. C. Wilkinson, 'Traditional Concepts of Territory in South-East Arabia', The Geographical Journal 149 (1983), pp. 301-315.