

Mario Damen and Kim Overlaet (eds), *Constructing and Representing Territory in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2021). 366 p. ISBN 9789463726139.

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Every historian has encountered and/or used the term ‘territory’ at one point or another. The concept of territory, however established as it might be, and its meanings, are not without its debate. In fact, this book builds on those debates, with the clear intent to further problematize both the concept and its debates by looking at the application of territory in medieval and premodern Europe. The book’s twelve chapters – excluding the introduction and conclusion by the editors, Damen and Overlaet – are divided into three equal parts to serve this purpose.

The first part is dedicated to the ‘Multiplicity of Territory’, with each chapter problematizing the applicability and content of the term territory. The first two chapters, by Hardy and Zenobi, apply this to the rich history of the German lands of the Holy Roman Empire and Italy respectively, both showing the complexities of territorial practices and claims in these regions and challenging the often-prevalent top-down perspectives. Van den Hoven van Genderen, in his chapter, shines a much needed light on the role of the clergy in creating territories and influencing its modern conception, resulting in a successful indictment of the state-centric focus of past research on territory. Van der Meulen focuses more on the practices behind ‘territories’, by looking at the territorial integrity of the duchy of Guelders.

In the second part, the ‘Construction of Territory’ takes central stage. Oostindiër and Stapel begin with a classic approach of the construction of the territory of a state: fiscality – yet fuelled by new insights thanks to the large-scale mapping of demographic and fiscal data of the duchy of Brabant in GIS. In Govaerts’ chapter, the conceptualization of ‘foreign military serves’ is discussed and how this relates to growing ideas on loyalty bound by territory. Also focusing on military aspects, Murphy discusses the role of cartography during Henry VIII’s conquest of the county of Boulogne. Lastly, De Meulder showcases how the travelling monarch – or regent – was a vital part for the construction of an ‘unified’ territory in a composite state such as the early modern Low Countries.

The third part looks at the ‘Representation of Territory’. Damen and Meren discuss the role of heraldry in claiming territories, and how these claims were sometimes received. Both the chapters by Caers and Stein

and by Demets focus on narrative sources, especially chronicles, and on how these were used to legitimize (sometimes conflicting) territorial claims by respectively the duke (and the nobility) of Brabant and by the cities in Flanders. In the last chapter, Ritsema van Eck turns to Franciscan cartography and how their maps of the Holy Land, containing both accurate and 'imagined' biblical data, represented their claims to the Holy Land, especially when considering the surrounding context of these maps.

Because of its broad approach, this book is certainly a recommendation not just for those interested in the concept of 'territory' and its applicability to preindustrial history, but also for those with a general interest in medieval and premodern history. The book successfully showcases both the importance of problematizing the concept of territory within history, as well as how it can be applied and researched – especially demonstrating the complexity of the historic 'territories' and the broadness of approaches to it by looking further than the past state-centric approaches. The book is also beautifully illustrated, with the one complaint that some images were not suitably adapted to grey-scale – especially the maps of Oostindiër and Stapel have lost their richness and clarity because of this.

Although the book aims to build on past scholarship, it mostly builds on the works of Stuart Elden on territory. His work is, of course, dominant within the field, but its prevalence as the main referral point in almost all chapters sometimes makes the book feel more like a collection of responses to Elden's theses rather than a self-contained work. This is especially aggravated by authors referring to elements of Elden's work, assuming that readers will be familiar with it. For example, Caers and Stein claim their usage of territory corresponds to what Elden calls 'territoriality', without any explanation. Elden's main theses are summarized in the introduction by the editors. Considering the reliance of most authors on those theories, however, a more thorough introduction could have benefited the less informed readers.

The volume certainly leaves one wanting more. Sometimes in a negative sense, as elements are hinted at without further exploration. Zenobi, for example, mentions the Italian cities appropriating and even selling assets of the rural communities, yet does not connect this with the rich research on the commons of those communities. Van den Hoven van Genderen briefly remarks that the new bishoprics were not well received by everyone and Govaerts' chapter contains many brief references to larger conflicts and events, but neither offers further context.

Luckily, for the most part it is wanting more in the positive sense, as the authors touch upon many different aspects that deserve further exploration. For example, considering Damen and Meren's chapter: what with the heraldic symbols of the nobility and their claims on both their own territory and the territory of their lord? Or concerning Van den Hoven van Genderen's chapter: what with parishes whose territory didn't correspond to the territory of their village – which was sometimes the case in Brabant. And what about the sometimes contentious interplay between the territories of ecclesiastic institutions and those of a lord or a city? Also, as the editors themselves admit, the role of local communities and how they claimed, constructed and identified with territories remains largely underexplored in this volume – notwithstanding the efforts by several authors to apply bottom-up perspectives. Let's hope that this outstanding and rich volume will indeed inspire more future research!

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Victor Enthoven (ed.), *Nederland in last. Vijfhonderd jaar overheidsfinanciën in de Lage Landen, 1500-2000* (Leiden: Primavera Pers, 2021). 320 p. ISBN: 9789059973459.

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In honour of its twentieth anniversary, the *Stichting Geschiedenis van de Overheidsfinanciën* published its fourth edited collection on the history of public finances in the Low Countries. For this special occasion, as editor Victor Enthoven clarifies in his foreword, the choice was made not to set a specific theme. Hence, the fourteen contributions the publication contains are quite diverse. Although all concern the 'Northern Netherlands', they cover a wide array of topics – from taxes to debt, to political-fiscal conflict and expenditure – from the late middle ages to the modern and even the colonial area. Due to its political importance, the French and Batavian period is covered in three articles. The book ends with a chapter sketching the challenges facing public finances in the future.

This is certainly an occasion to celebrate. From a Belgian perspective, the historical research that has been published on the northern part of the Low Countries – not least thanks to organizations like the *Stichting Geschiedenis van de Overheidsfinanciën* – is remarkable. One can only hope this will inspire similar initiatives in the southern part.