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Mario Damen and Kim Overlaet

This volume contributes to ongoing debates on the nature and character of territory as a meaningful spatial category and analytical tool for historical studies on power relations in late medieval and early modern Europe. As a concept, territory is often associated with state-formation processes and (perhaps unwittingly) with modern ideas of the nation state. This association makes it difficult for historians of pre-modern Europe to use the term without risking an ahistorical approach. Inspired by the historical geographer Stuart Elden, who in his work shows the usefulness of the concept of territory as an analytical tool, we invited several historians and literary historians to tackle these conceptual and methodological challenges via analyses of the ways in which different political actors were involved in the construction and representation of (feudal, judicial, fiscal, and military) territories and boundaries. The idea central to this volume is that the concept of territory allows us to grasp pre-modern relations between power, people, and space, as long as its meaning is not narrowed down to simply an enclosed geographical area. Moreover, to grasp territorial practices and the perception of territory by different political actors in society, it is important not to limit case studies to administrative sources, but also to include narrative texts, heraldic images, and cartographic sources.

The first section of this volume addresses the methodological and conceptual challenges that historians face when studying the construction of territory by political actors with both divergent and convergent interests. All authors of the chapters in this section problematise the use of spatial concepts related to territory, such as 'territorial practices' and 'territorial integrity'. Duncan Hardy rightfully stresses that our modern 'territorial vocabulary' is closely linked to ideas on state-formation processes and

present-day cartographical conventions and rules. To avoid an ahistorical approach, he confronts this modern vocabulary with pre-modern spatial concepts and categories like *terra(e)* and *land(e)* in administrative sources produced by the most important political actors in the late medieval and early modern Holy Roman Empire. Hardy demonstrates that the political power of both the imperial monarchy and the many princes, nobles, and cities claiming 'quasi-sovereignty' was not primarily spatially determined. Instead, in this patchwork of entities with overlapping administrative, jurisdictional, and political authority, political power was based on constant negotiations and interactions on the one hand, and on shared cultural structures and particularities on the other. According to Hardy, labelling the semi-autonomous principalities like the Palatinate and cities in the Holy Roman Empire as 'territories' *stricto sensu* falls short of the reality, which was more complex and dynamic. He proposes a more dynamic approach, which pays closer attention to the ways in which actors could simultane-ously maintain overlapping (and sometimes contradictory) alliances and affiliations, and to the fact that spatial claims in this period often were 'more rhetorical than tangible in practice, and always had to be negotiated' (p. 47).

In his essay on different phases and processes of 'territory-making' in late medieval Italy, Luca Zenobi likewise shows that late medieval 'territorial practices' relating people and power to space were essentially the result of intensive negotiations between seigneurial lordships, rural communities, towns, and other semi-autonomous political entities claiming authority in a specific space. Such negotiations – and disputes – typically involved the jurisdictional and fiscal rights and privileges granted by superior lords to the rulers and inhabitants of specific regions. These rights and privileges – together with the inhabitants' social interactions (including, for example, their participation in religious ceremonies or civic militias), the formalisation of institutions for self-government, and the increasing importance of demographic information (e.g. population censuses and lists) – were key to a process of region-based identity formation. Hence, according to Zenobi, territory-making in late medieval Italy (and beyond) must be understood as mainly driven by the social, political, economic, and cultural interaction and negotiations between individuals and power groups. Finally, and in comparison to the situation in the Holy Roman Empire, these interactions and discussions could be both vertical and horizontal. Much like the communities and power groups involved, areas of jurisdiction could exist alongside each other and often overlapped.

Taking a social approach to the construction of territory, Bram van den Hoven van Genderen stresses the importance of the clerics as an

often-neglected power group in late medieval and early modern Europe. The Church had both a religious and a practical approach to space. His analysis of the writings by two mid-fifteenth-century clerics, (the later) Pope Pius II and Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa, reveals that the *societas christiana* formed 'the basis of the ecclesiastical administrative division of the world, with Christian dioceses under an acting bishop' (p. 90). Although both geographers and historians tend to focus on secular spaces ruled by (city-) states, he notes that kings and emperors, popes, cardinals, and bishops governed, controlled, and managed their papal dominions, (arch)dioceses, and parishes surprisingly independently. Moreover, as Van den Hoven van Genderen demonstrates, these ecclesiastical institutions had a remarkably stable spatial basis throughout the pre-modern period, and even employed various territorial practices often associated with lay rulers, such as taxation and population censuses. The author shows that – like the formation of lay 'territories' – the establishment of new bishoprics and parishes in the late medieval Low Countries (1559) was the outcome of the interaction between various power groups, from the papal court and secular princes to bishops and urban governments, who sometimes shared jurisdictional and fiscal authority in a specific region.

In his contribution, Jim van der Meulen proposes the concept of 'territorial integrity' to add an interactive dimension to research on the construction of territory. As Van der Meulen puts it, this term refers to 'the long-term *stability* of loosely defined spatial bounds of the ruler's area of jurisdiction', which was the result of cooperation between princes, lords, and urban elites who could have similar or different military, fiscal, and economic motives (p. 118). His analysis of the negotiations between the princes ruling the Duchy of Guelders and the manifold seignorial lords and ruling elites of the towns and shires constituting this small composite state in the Low Countries confirms that all power groups shared a keen interest in spatial stability and the maintenance of the duchy's borders. Moreover, the noble holders of high lordships in this region often owed allegiance to several neighbouring princes, which allowed them to function as 'territorial buffer zones' for negotiations about the duchy's territorial integrity. In other words, Van der Meulen argues that 'the lordship became an intermediate link in a chain connecting local spatial politics to the level of the principality' (p. 130). In this he joins the other authors in this section by strongly arguing for a social approach to territorial practices and the relations between people, power, and space in the past.

Continuing this line of thought, the second section of this volume focuses on the construction, management, and contestation of space (whether by

military or other means) by different stakeholders and political actors as expressed in princely and urban administrative sources, as well as via cartography. Indeed, if pre-modern territories should be understood as social *constructs*, different social groups had different perceptions of the links between people, power, and space. The question central to this section is how inhabitants, trespassers, and rulers or conquerors of pre-modern towns, principalities, and composite states experienced, constructed, and managed these areas' political, economic, and juridical rights, privileges, and spatial boundaries. In the first chapter of this section, Arend Elias Oostindiër and Rombert Stapel focus on the way in which fiscal relations could bind a territory together as a coherent relational space. Concentrating on the Duchy of Brabant, their hypothesis is that the Burgundian dukes, who had integrated Brabant into their composite state in 1430, acquired unprecedented 'territorial knowledge' due to the fiscal reform they introduced in the course of the fifteenth century. By combining an analysis of administrative sources with a GIS reconstruction of the boundaries of the towns and villages in Brabant, Oostindiër and Stapel show that the fiscal reform, which introduced hearth counts, was instrumental in the construction (and perception) of the fiscal internal borders of the duchy. Clearly, the reform did more than merely stabilise the dukes' sources of income. Since the hearth counts required contributions based on economic resources rather than on political power, the reform went hand in hand with a detailed mapping of the wealth of all Brabantine towns and villages. Using their political power to master the duchy's socio-economic space, the Burgundian dukes gained much more detailed territorial knowledge than their predecessors, which greatly influenced their bargaining position during (fiscal) negotiations. Oostindiër and Stapel show that the power to acquire and use specific knowledge (in this case, fiscal information) was key to both the construction and management of pre-modern territories.

The next case study confirms the paramount importance of information for rulers and those engaged in managing and administrating territories. Via a detailed study of military law, court records, and fiscal accounts, Sander Govaerts analyses the evolution of the territorial practice of 'foreign military service' in the medieval Meuse and Rhine regions (1250-1550) and demonstrates the medieval origins of this modern concept. According to Govaerts, the sixteenth-century official ban on military service in the army of a ruler of a territory other than the one where a soldier was born or lived must be seen in the context of two interlinked developments. First, fiscal and juridical sources illustrate that both urban authorities and noble lords found it increasingly important to be able to control the movement of soldiers

and others, 'linking people to spaces' (p. 193). Second, Govaerts links this 'territorial' evolution to the gradual transition of a military recruitment system based on feudal obligations, to a military service based on a formal contract stipulating conditions and payment. Men-at-arms often maintained ties of loyalty to multiple and sometimes competing lords and cities, as is demonstrated in other chapters of this volume. In theory, a soldier could not fight against his own lord, but the feudal system allowed many loopholes and could cause confusion. This gradually changed, as a soldier's connection to a specific space by birth or residence became more important than other (more personal) ties of loyalty.

In a military conflict it was crucial to acquire 'spatial' information, and this information was crucial for the construction of a territory. Neil Murphy demonstrates this in his chapter on the invasion of France by the English king Henry VIII (1491-1547) in the summer of 1544. In the following years (1544-1546), Henry conquered the town of Boulogne and the surrounding area of the Boulonnais. The latter was partially leased out to English settlers and carefully mapped by Henry's military engineers using the latest geometric methods. Inspired by Henri Lefebvre's idea that the production of space can be closely linked to violence, Murphy argues that this conquest was a turning point in the development and use of cartography in the Late Middle Ages. Through an analysis of maps and plans, and the associated letters, surveys, and treaties, the author shows how cartographic images and texts were used during the military campaign and the following peace negotiations, which eventually culminated in the Treaty of Camp (June 1546). The English maps are highly detailed and reveal which landmarks were considered vital for the exercise of power and control in a specific region: mills, rivers, and harbours. Moreover, one of these maps is considered as perhaps the earliest example of a cartographic representation of a boundary, in the form of a dotted line. According to Murphy, this confirms that Henry's maps and plans did not serve a purely representative or informative goal, as they were also used to convert (or to 'construct') the conquered lands into a demarcated English territory, in France.

Given that the centralisation of information and institutions proved vital to exercising territorial power, the establishment of one central capital city can be expected to be an important way to exercise 'territorial power'. This issue is addressed by Yannick De Meulder for the Habsburg composite state, where the concept of a 'capital' was perhaps absent. Through a reconstruction of the residence patterns of two important regents of the Low Countries, Margaret of Austria (r. 1507-1515) and Mary of Hungary (r. 1530-1555), he analyses whether Brussels could function as a capital city in

the Habsburg composite state, despite the absence of the ruling monarchs, Maximilian of Austria (r. 1493-1519) and Charles V (r. 1515-1555). It appears that regardless of the presence of central institutions and a spacious royal palace, the Coudenberg, Brussels remained just one of the multiple political and economic centres (*hoofdsteden*) of the Low Countries, together with other major cities such as Mechelen, Antwerp, and Ghent. According to De Meulder, Maximilian and Charles V's physical absence largely explains, on the one hand, why they had to continue the tradition of Joyous Entries in the multiple towns of the Low Countries, explicitly recognising the lack of a capital, and on the other hand, why they were unable to establish a single administrative centre in the Low Countries. At the same time, local elites were eager to invite their princes to visit their principalities, as they expected them to confirm the local rights and privileges on these occasions. In other words, despite the centralising efforts of both regents, in the composite Habsburg state an itinerant court largely remained the most efficient way to exercise power over people.

The chapters in the first two sections of this volume demonstrate that the construction of late medieval and early modern territories should be studied in the context of the constant interaction between the political actors involved (e.g. kings, princes, clerics, nobles, and urban elites). It is important to remember that territorial integration was not a linear process involving the development of clear borders and 'a capital'; the development of manifold kinds of information channels and administrative systems proved vital tools for rulers to take control of the construction of territory. Analysis of these tools and their application contributes to and informs our understanding of how rulers could exercise control over people in a specific territory.

Focusing on the concept of territory as manageable land or terrain fails to do justice to the fact that territories were above all *lived* spaces, which were perceived and imagined quite differently by different actors. Therefore, the third and final section of this volume addresses the question of how rulers, power groups, and inhabitants in pre-modern Europe perceived and represented the territories they were living in or travelling through. Analyses of contemporary representations of territorial affiliations in different media confirm that territories were socially constructed, and that claims over a territory needed to be communicated (and acknowledged) in order to be effective. Mario Damen and Marcus Meer advocate the study of heraldry as a dynamic means of territorial communication. In cities and principalities in the Burgundian Low Countries and the Holy Roman Empire, as well as elsewhere in Europe, coats of arms acquired spatial meanings in the course

of the Late Middle Ages, which allowed them to represent territorial claims. Damen and Meer show how political actors in this period used various media to communicate the links between princes, noblemen, or even towns, and certain territories they possessed or claimed to possess: from armorials, stained-glass windows, chronicles, and architectural decorations to the tableaux vivants constructed on the occasion of Joyous Entries. Political actors used all these media to communicate the nature and grandeur of their territory to a large audience. Moreover, the authors' analysis of several armorials shows that the heraldic representation of territory allowed remarkably great flexibility. Damen and Meer show that heraldic signs were inextricably linked not only to the representation, but also the construction of political structures and authority in a specific space, and were thus vital to communicating territorial claims.

Bram Caers and Robert Stein demonstrate that historiography could have similar communicative functions to heraldry. Chronicles such as Hennen van Merchtenen's *Cornike van Brabant* (1415) present the Duchy of Brabant as an idealised union of towns and lordships, and as 'an object of recognition and love for its inhabitants' (p. 279). Caers and Stein argue that this Brabantine 'imagined community' was based on a perception of the duchy as a specific territory linked to a specific dynasty. Brabantine chroniclers writing in the context of the ducal court were interested equally in the continuity of the ducal dynasty and in the historical development of titles and the territorial claims that came with them, such as the title *dux Lotharingie*. Moreover, by confronting courtly 'canonical' historiography with vernacular literature, Caers and Stein show that the dukes of Brabant were not the only ones aware of the communicative function of historiography in relation to claims over territory. The *Grimbergse oorlog*, an epic tale written in the first half of the fourteenth century, illustrates how local historiographical traditions reflected the point of view of other political actors, such as the bannerets, high noblemen whose titles also laid claim to lordships within the ducal territory. In other words, just like heraldic signs, historiographical texts were used by different political stakeholders – from noble patrons to urban elites – to represent their claims of authority and power (as well as political, economic, and jurisdictional privileges) in a specific space.

The idea that local urban elites could use historiography to communicate their territorial claims is also central to the analysis by Lisa Demets. Her research on the relation between the (de)construction of regional identity politics and territorial entities in late medieval Flanders reveals the political dynamics behind ideological representations of the county in narrative sources. Key to these dynamics were the constant negotiations between

the ruling dukes, the counts of Flanders, the local nobility, and urban elites. According to Demets, the sentiment of local particularism was relatively high and remained important in Flanders, despite the centralising efforts of the Burgundian dukes and the supposed 'unifying' role of the princely dynasty. In the fifteenth century, urban political elites eagerly sponsored the rewriting of regional chronicles since the inclusion of urban legends and features legitimised the role of the towns in the politics of the county. The reconstruction of the political context in which these urban historio-graphical texts were produced allowed Demets to link the evolution of this literary genre to the institutionalisation of the Four Members of Flanders, a representative institution in which representatives from Ghent, Bruges, and Ypres, together with the Franc of Bruges, gathered to negotiate with the Flemish counts about, for instance, the rights and privileges tied to specific urban jurisdictions. Her in-depth contextual analysis of two fifteenth-century historiographical texts shows that in the county of Flanders regional particularism, legitimised in regional chronicles, was the urban answer to the increasing centralising efforts of the Burgundian dukes.

A final chapter expands the geographical span of this volume beyond pre-modern Europe. Whereas historians often tend to focus on the practical purposes of cartography, Marianne Ritsema van Eck considers late medieval and early modern maps primarily as social artefacts, which are to be studied in relation to the specific context in which they were made and used. The central idea of her case study is that maps, no less than heraldic signs and chronicles, could be produced and used to represent abstract imagined (and aspired to) territories, rather than real relationships between people and space. Her careful analysis of Holy Land maps produced by the Franciscans in the course of the seventeenth century shows that a scholarly focus on the often emphasised 'accuracy' of these maps fails to do justice to their important religious goals and meanings. As the hosts and guides of all Western pilgrims, these friars exercised a great influence on perceptions of the Holy Land in Western Europe, not least thanks to their publications, which often included maps of the Holy Land and which reached a relatively wide European audience. However, and in sharp contrast with the maps central to the peace negotiations between the English and the French kings highlighted in Murphy's chapter, the main aim of the maps made by the Franciscans was not to yield an accurate representation of the Holy Land. According to Ritsema van Eyck, these maps rather communicated territorial – and essentially biblical – claims and ambitions, only acquiring meaning through the interaction with the content of the books in which they appeared.

Van den Hoven van Genderen rightfully stresses that, in constructing the 'birth of territory', Stuart Elden relied heavily on 'the theorists of temporal power and the great names of Western political thought' (p. 104). This volume did not aim to antedate that so-called 'birth' to the (later) medieval period. Rather, it shows how territory 'worked' in practice in the minds of princes, nobles, ecclesiastics, and urban elites. Whereas the ideas and practices of secular powerholders like kings, princes, and urban elites seem relatively well studied, this is definitely not the case for nobles and clerics. Several contributions to this volume show how necessary it is to involve all political actors in the argument, since it was especially the mutual interaction of these actors that influenced territorial notions and practices. Seven of the twelve contributions analyse these practices in the Low Countries and northern Italy, polities where urban power was relatively strong, and royal or princely power was not uncontested. This definitely produces different outcomes from the ideas on, and perceptions of, territory than in the cases of more 'centralised' polities as England or France.

This volume demonstrates that research on the concept of territory in pre-modern Europe should go beyond the 'great thinkers' who operated in princely and royal settings. The focus was rather on power groups such as urban elites, clerics, and the nobility providing mostly 'cadastral' or top-down, views on territory. Future research should pay careful attention to the vocabulary and discourse of not only these but also other more humble groups concerning territory, boundaries, and borders. Still, the question remains how local communities, both in town and countryside, throughout Europe experienced territory. Admittedly, this point of view remains largely unexplored in this volume. Research on the concept of territory in pre-modern Europe would greatly benefit from a bottom-up approach, involving the different social strata in the towns apart from the urban elites, and peasants and daily labourers in the countryside. An example to follow would be Andy Wood's approach towards the ways 'ordinary people' relate to the environments, landscapes, and places they inhibit in his book *The Memory of the People* (2013). This may give us a better understanding of how the perception of territory changed over time. Finally, an analysis of the negotiations between these groups on a macro, meso, and local level is imperative, since these were vital to both the perception of territory and the maintenance of spatial stability or 'territorial integrity'. In this way the concept of territory may serve as a fruitful hermeneutic tool for historians to study pre-modern relations between people, power, and space. If we perceive territory as a dynamic, or even an imagined, social concept, it allows for a far greater and more nuanced insight into the constructions

and perceptions of different political actors and 'ordinary people' that would otherwise be overlooked. If potential pitfalls, such as ahistoricity and teleology, are avoided through applying careful methodological and conceptual approaches, we can broaden our understanding of territory beyond a modernistic and somewhat static conception, towards a more dynamic interpretation.

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