Core, Periphery, Frontier – Spatial Patterns of Power

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The fifth international conference organized by the Collaborative Research Center 1167 „Macht und Herrschaft – Premodern Configurations in Transcultural Perspective" at Bonn University looked into „Core, Periphery, Frontier – Spatial Patterns of Power". Altogether 14 speakers from diverse fields (Ancient History, Art History, Chinese studies, Eastern European History, Egyptology, Japanese studies, Pre- and Early Historical Archaeology, Sociology, Tibetan studies) presented case studies, methodological approaches, and theoretical discussions covering Asia, Europe and Northern Africa from prehistoric times to the late medieval period. The sessions were organized broadly along disciplinary fields.

Where is the center? And where is the periphery? At first glance, the center is where the ruler is. The conference revealed, however, different meanings of the terms 'center' and 'periphery'. These different meanings undermine simple settings and lead to a better understanding of the historical processes and observed phenomena with regard to power and authority. Quite unlike the conference title might suggest, covered themes were not restricted to the spatial dimensions of power and authority and transcended the conceptual pair of center and periphery beyond geographic terms.

After welcome addresses by VOLKER KRONENBERG (Bonn), Dean of the Philosophical Faculty, and JAN BEMMANN (Bonn), one of the organizers, the conference kicked off with two case studies on Japan. Through his discussion of 8th-century Japan and its slow and not overly successful incorporation of the northeast, KARL FRIDAY (Saitama) debunked the old narrative of a completely centralized and uniform Japan by 710 CE. Building on former research[1], Friday discussed the so-called 'pacification era' in Japanese history between 774 and 811, during which ten campaigns were sent to the not yet 'transformed' Emishi people in order to annex their territories. Military actions fell through, however, due to the Emishi's guerilla tactics. Although the political situation in the northeast had not much changed from the time before the military interventions – there were still recurrent rebellions in these provinces well into the 10th and 11th centuries – the court declared the Emishi pacified. Thus, Friday presented a lesson in source criticism, since the successes claimed by the Japanese court can be rightfully classified as propagandistic. In this sense, the Japanese did not follow the modern concept of borders as fixed lines but viewed them as frontier zones inhabited by people not yet culturally transformed to their ideals. According to Friday, this understanding of ruling not so much over territories but people implies that there were no clear spatial borders to the early Japanese court.

This notion was taken up by KUROSHIMA SATORU (Tokyo) who discussed the relations between Japan and Ming China during the 15th and 16th centuries. He presented the back and forth of Japanese policy with regard to pirating activities in the periphery on small islands to the west of the Japanese main islands. Kuroshima showed that these shifts in control over the outer islands were closely related to the political relations between the Muromachi or Ashikaga shogunate and the Ming court. While Ming China deemed Japan a retainer and awarded titles accordingly, Japan saw itself as equal to its neighbor. Therefore, the shogunate either followed China's request of dealing with the pirates or refused, explaining that these islands were outside its control. In this way, the frontier zone was effectively used as an intermediate scene for negotiating outer politics be-

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[1] Karl Friday, Pushing beyond the Pale: The Yamato Conquest of the Emishi and Northern Japan, in: Journal of Japanese Studies 23,1 (1997), 1–24.

tween two powers.

Although DIANA ORDUBADI and PE-TER SCHWIEGER (both Bonn) presented two very different case studies, many cross-connections unfolded through their discussions of Moscow as third Rome in the 16th century and the genesis of territorial and societal centers and peripheries in premodern Tibet. Ordubadi emphasized differences between the inner and outer perception of center and periphery; while Moscow acted as center for Muscowy or the Grand Duchy of Moscow in the 16th century and claimed to be successor to the Eastern Roman Empire after the fall of Constantinople in 1453, from the viewpoint of the western powers it was located in the periphery. Moscowy's claim to the legacy of Rome created potential for conflict, since in religious matters Moscow depended on the Byzantine Patriarch. The conflict unfolded in the 1580s when Moscow's wish to establish a patriarchal see of its own was refused by the Patriarch of Constantinople. In the end, Boris Godunov, de facto regent for Tsar Feodor I, emerged victorious from this conflict, and the Metropolitan Iov became the first patriarch of Moscow and thus autocephalous head of the Russian Orthodox Church.

Peter Schwieger presented Tibet in the 17th century as another example, in which worldly and religious power were combined in one center. He expanded his theme on the backdrop of the first era of Tibetan unification from the 7th to the 9th century. During this period, the Tibetan kingdom was characterized by a polycentric network of residences and assembly places to secure loyalty among different clans. Tibet's image is deeply intertwined with Buddhism as a structuring power, which transgressed into the worldly sphere. In the 17th century the fifth Dalai Lama (re-)established Lhasa as worldly and religious center of a unified Tibet. Schwieger introduced Niklas Luhmann's systems theory as conceptual framework for his analysis of Tibet during this time. As in Luhmann's theory, which favors open spaces of communication over strictly set boundaries, Tibet's concept of itself was one of openness; although Lhasa could not claim political authority in its peripheral regions especially vis à vis the imperial advances of Qing China, it did claim its place as moral and religious center.

STEFAN BREUER (Hamburg) concluded the first day of the conference with an evening lecture on „Center and Periphery in Sociological Perspective". He concentrated his tour de force of sociological approaches to center and periphery on Anglophone discussions of the subject, since German scholarship had remained mostly silent on the point, according to Breuer. Nonetheless, as Schwieger did before him, Breuer saw great potential in Niklas Luhmann's take on center and periphery as third mode of differentiation besides segmentary and functional differentiations. Other than Luhmann elaborated in his works, however, Breuer emphasized that center and periphery retained its potential even in segmentary societies.

A methodological approach was also taken by ANNA FLÜCKIGER (Basel) who gave a concise and critical evaluation of center and periphery concepts in Pre- and Early Historical Archaeological scholarship. She focused on Walter Christaller's theory of central places published in 1933 and its application in German speaking Pre- and Early Historical Archaeology. Flückiger forcefully spoke against the use of Christaller's model, however, due to its role in the Second World War; that Christaller's theory formed part of the theoretical foundation for Nazi territorial expansion has long been discussed in geographical works.[2] As a promising alternative, Flückiger introduced network analysis developed from Bruno Latour's actor-network theory as a means to display and analyze relations among different entities.

Loosely following notions of sociological network theories, TIMO BREMER (Bonn) presented his case study, in which he portrayed the effect of supra-regional communication networks on everyday lives as exemplified by the village of Inden-Pier, Germany, from the early to the high medieval period. Starting from the premise of Cologne's impact on these rural hinterlands, his data rather indicated the opposite; through a combined analysis of a multitude of material remains, economic practices such as pottery production,

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[2] Karl R. Kegler, Deutsche Raumplanung. Das Modell der „zentralen Orte" zwischen NS-Staat und Bundesrepublik, Paderborn 2015.

and their respective distribution he unveiled intense exchange networks that functioned on parallel, overlaying, and dynamic levels. Accordingly, these networks were not necessarily centered on Cologne, as one might have expected beforehand.

ANDREW REYNOLDS (London) focused on the creation of socio-political identity during the early medieval period in England. He pursued a similarly broad approach to different material legacies as well as traditions of places, building his thought-provoking case by following several lines of arguments, which he combined into a convincing whole. Thereby, he went well beyond simple equations such as „monumentality is the corollary of power concentrations". Following Robert David Sack's framework of territoriality[3], he argued that social complexity was much more evident in spatial configurations of power through differently constructed territorialities. Just to mention one example that resounded particularly well with other themes already discussed, Reynolds cited the example of the spatial distribution of execution sites and assembly places in Cambridge and Staines in the 8th century. These expressions of the emerging Anglo-Saxon kingdoms were situated at the boundaries between the supra-regional polities, marking the frontier zone, not the respective centers.

A more theoretical approach to the question of how different cultural groups or polities shaped mutual contacts, how these contacts were impacted on by different power differentials, and how different actors received and possibly re-shaped different goods (objects or ideas) was chosen by CHRISTOPH ULF (Innsbruck). Ulf's typology of contact zones which puts the actors in the center of attention has been published a decade ago and received ample discussion in a dedicated volume.[4] Still, his contribution was highly important for the transdisciplinary discourse of the conference, as his model can be fruitfully applied irrespective of traditional disciplinary boundaries and might provide a new avenue to raise the potential of other case studies for transcultural comparisons.

The History of Art session added yet another layer of meaning to the conference theme; where was the center of artistic pro-

duction? First, MARTIN BÜCHSEL (Frankfurt am Main) put the famous painting of the Gotha Lovers (*Gothaer Liebespaar*) from the end of the 15th century center stage. This painting is counted among the works of the Master of the Housebook Group (*Hausbuchmaler Gruppe*). According to Büchsel, it occupies a key position concerning the question if Frankfurt or the Middle Rhine region can still be considered a center of artistic creation at that time. Through his reinterpretation of the semantic contexts of the symbols depicted, Büchsel created a new understanding of the artistic environment of that time. In his interpretation, Frankfurt can no longer be seen as a center of artistic creation. Through its fair, however, the city offered a degree of internationalization and a close exchange between artists and clients that made the Gotha Lovers possible in the first place.

The second contribution from the field of art history by CHRISTIAN FREIGANG (Berlin) discussed the artistic production at the Burgundy courts of the 15th century. Here, objects were attributed with political meaning in the context of gift exchanges. Because of their high artistic standards and material value, items were invested with prestige that reflected on the power of the giver. These objects, though not necessarily manufactured in the perceived centers of their time, became ambassadors of the ruler's power in peripheral areas and thus functioned as 'movable centers'. In this vein, Freigang pointed to the dynamic relation between center and periphery.

A similar use of objects or symbols as 'centers on the move' was identified by DAVID SABEL (Bonn), who looked at the use of standards on ceramics and rock art in pre- and early dynastic Egypt. At the same time, his contribution echoed the questions discussed

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[3] Robert D. Sack, Human Territoriality: Its Theory and History (Cambridge Studies in Historical Geography 7), Cambridge 1986.

[4] For the original paper see Christoph Ulf, Rethinking Cultural Contacts, in: Ancient West and East 8 (2009), 81–132. For the dedicated volume see Robert Rollinger / Kordula Schnegg (eds.), Kulturkontakte in antiken Welten. Vom Denkmodell zum Fallbeispiel. Proceedings des internationalen Kolloquiums aus Anlass des 60. Geburtstages von Christoph Ulf, Innsbruck, 26. bis 30. Januar 2009 (Colloquia Antiqua 10), Leuven et al. 2014.

earlier by Reynolds: how were claims over territories communicated through the use of different physical markers? In Egypt, this was done by means of depictions of boats on ceramic wares and the use of the royal standard to form a common identity in the newly unified state. In this way, rock art functioned as a powerful communicator of the king's might even in peripheral regions. LUDWIG MORENZ (Bonn) presented another example of the Egyptian ruler's power that reached well into the periphery. In this case, royal inscriptions in the Wadi al-Malik in the south of Egypt near Elephantine from the late fourth millennium BCE communicated this area to be a royal domain.

The final talk of the conference by ISHAYAHU LANDA (Jerusalem/Bonn) detailed the power relations between the capital of the Yuan Empire and its provinces, especially to the north. A special situation ensued as the former capital of Karakorum was located there, which had no particular economic value to the center but was of strategic ideological importance to the Yuan emperors who originated from the steppes.

Overall, the papers highlighted the openness of the conference theme with its overlapping relational configurations of center and periphery, be it politically, socially, religiously, or culturally (especially in the case of art production). How center and periphery were negotiated, communicated, and enforced still prove to be vibrant research questions. Therefore, we look forward to the publication of these papers in a collective volume as was announced at the end of the conference. Besides, it will be particularly interesting to observe how the transcultural and transdisciplinary setting of this conference possibly changed the perspective of maybe one or another of the speakers.

Conference overview:

Introduction: Volker Kronenberg, Jan Bemmann (both Bonn)

Session I
Chair: Detlev Taranczewski (Bonn)

Karl Friday (Saitama): How the North Was Won: Japan's Eighth-Century Pacification Wars in Perspective

Kuroshima Satoru (Tokyo): Awareness of Borders in Medieval Japan

Session II
Chair: Dittmar Dahlmann (Bonn)

Diana Ordubadi (Bonn): Moskau als drittes Rom und Konstantinopel: Das Verhältnis zweier christlich-orthodoxer Zentren im 16. Jahrhundert

Peter Schwieger (Bonn): Zur Herausbildung territorialer und gesellschaftlicher Zentren und Peripherien in der tibetischen Geschichte

Evening Lecture, introduced by Matthias Becher (Bonn):
Stefan Breuer (Hamburg): Zentrum und Peripherie in soziologischer Perspektive

Session III
Chair: Jan Bemmann (Bonn)

Anna Flückiger (Basel): Zentrum und Peripherie in der (ur- und) frühgeschichtlichen Archäologie: ein Überblick

Timo Bremer (Bonn): Colognes Impact on the Rural Hinterland in Early and High Medieval Times: Economic Specialization, Social Networks and Elite Control

Session IV
Chair: Susanne Reichert (Bonn)

Andrew Reynolds (London): Borders and Places: Creating Socio-Political Identity in Early Medieval England

Christoph Ulf (Innsbruck): Der Einfluss von Macht auf Kontaktzonen und Rezeptivität

Session V
Chair: Harald Wolter-von dem Knesebeck (Bonn)

Martin Büchsel (Frankfurt): Das „Gothaer Liebespaar". Die Ausformung unterschiedlicher Künstlermilieus am Mittelrhein

Christian Freigang (Berlin): Künstlerische Universalität als Legitimation von Macht: Strategien der spätmittelalterlichen Hofkunst im französischen Kontext

Session VI
Chair: Ludwig Morenz (Bonn)

David Sabel (Bonn): The Power of Mobility, the Mobility of Power. „City"-standards on

Peripheral Rock-Art in Pre- and Early Dynastic Egypt

Ludwig Morenz (Bonn): Das Königsgut des Herrschers SKORPION. Ein Zentrum in der Peripherie des frühen pharaonischen Territorialstaates im späten 4. Jahrtausend

Session VII
Chair: Ralph Kauz (Bonn)

Ishayahu Landa (Jerusalem/Bonn): The Strategic Communication between the Yuan Imperial Capitals and the Regional Powers at the Empire's Northern Frontiers

Wrap up: Detlev Taranczewski, Daniel Schley (both Bonn)

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