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# Regions and Frontiers in the British Isles

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## ABSTRACT

The twin themes of the present volume on regions and frontiers have not been a major focus of British or Irish historiography in recent times. As regards frontiers, this is perhaps largely because, for most of the modern period, the British state (including Ireland) has not had to contend with the rule and defence of remote territorial frontiers. From 1603 to 1920, the boundaries of the state conveniently coincided with the coasts of Britain and Ireland. Before 1603, however, the English state had long had at least two frontiers, formed with the kingdom of the Scots to the north, and with the independent Gaelic lordships in Ireland. The accession in 1603 of King James VI of Scotland as King James I of England eroded the importance of the Anglo-Scottish border as a territorial frontier between two nations; whilst at the same time the completion of the Tudor conquest of Ireland eliminated altogether the English state's only other remaining territorial frontier. In essence, the dynastic union of 1603 subsumed the erstwhile Anglo-Scottish frontier region into a British multiple monarchy in which the border line was now merely an internal administrative and judicial boundary, while Ireland's medieval frontier disappeared altogether. Thereafter, until Ireland was partitioned by the 1920 Government of Ireland Act and a new frontier established between the newly-independent Irish Free State and Northern Ireland (which remained part of what was now officially restyled the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland), the European boundaries of the British state were maritime ones.

Since partition, British historians have tended to discount the Irish frontier, and indeed Northern Ireland more generally, as an imperial anachronism which did not substantially detract from the state's insular identity<sup>1</sup>. Nonetheless, throughout its medieval

history, from the origins of the Anglo-Saxon kingdom at least until 1453, the administration of long landed frontiers had remained a pressing problem of English royal government, with other territorial frontiers in northern and western France and also, until 1283, in Wales. Unlike its modern British successor, the medieval English state was an extremely diverse patchwork of lordships, duchies, towns and kingdoms, with many marches to patrol and defend<sup>2</sup>. In this respect, history has not been well served by the teleological focus of much British historiography, with its emphasis on the rise of individual nations, the fulfilment of Britain's island destiny, or traditional arguments for English exceptionalism. Until relatively recently, there were few in-depth studies of territorial frontiers *per se* in the British Isles<sup>3</sup>, although local histories often included some discussion and there were a few antiquarian works on border institutions. Within the last twenty years, however, interest and analysis of territorial frontiers has been stimulated by two particular historiographical developments. In the first place, the shift in focus from individual, nation-based histories to a more comparative, or holistic, account of relations between the constituent parts of the British Isles (the so-called New British history) has pointed up the significance of territorial frontiers in the context of state formation<sup>4</sup>. Second, the growing interest among historians elsewhere in the field of Frontier Studies has spilled over into Britain and Ireland, prompting collaborative projects of a comparative nature including the British frontiers<sup>5</sup>.

## ENGLAND

In certain respects, similar reasons may be advanced to explain why English regionalism has not been a major concern of British historiography. In modern times, as one political scientist has recently observed, "England has had almost no tradition of regional politics or identity"<sup>6</sup>. In other words, since regional differences and divisions have not been an important aspect of modern English politics, their role and significance in earlier ages have not figured very prominently on the English historical agenda. Here, a partial exception to the rule, Ireland's English Pale around Dublin, can be explained away. The "four obedient shires" of the late medieval English lordship (revealingly re-labelled "the English Pale" in 1495) were clearly a distinct region of the English state. They were geographically distinct: the fertile coastal plain of Ireland's eastern seaboard, as opposed to the mountains to the north and south and the midland bogs to the west. Culturally and politically, they constituted the English heartland of the medieval lordship, surrounded on all sides by independent Gaelic chieftaincies. Administratively, they formed a distinct unit of the late medieval lordship. And the Palesmen themselves had also developed a marked regional sense of identity which distinguished them both from the English of England and also from English communities living elsewhere in Ireland<sup>7</sup>. The evidence for the English Pale as a distinct region of the late medieval English state seems strong; but it has not been much studied in this context. From 1541,

moreover, the Pale was gradually subsumed in a second Tudor kingdom, and after 1920 the Pale region was no longer part of the British state anyway.

Arguably, another reason why regionalism has not been seen as an important aspect of English politics and identity is because of the highly centralized character of English royal government and the uniformity, at local level, of its administrative institutions. The medieval English territories were quintessentially lordships of conquest, having been assembled by a process of invasion and settlement extending through the Anglo-Saxon invasions, the Norman conquest of England, expansion into Wales and the invasion of Ireland. This process, plus the lack of suitable alternative administrative structures in Wales and Ireland, meant that English common law and local administrative structures were also in large measure extended to these conquest lordships, so creating a relatively uniform system of local government based on counties, with sheriffs, escheators, coroners and, later, peace commissions. The continental territories, Gascony and Normandy, were in a different position, having been acquired by dynastic inheritance; but the insular territories were, with small exceptions, all governed by king, council, and the central courts in accordance with English common law as modified by statute. By and large, there was no intermediate power base interposed between king, court, and council (increasingly based on London) at the centre and the system of shire government in the provinces. In general, therefore, the centralized character of English royal government, with its uniform structures and common law, cut across the development of regional centres and loyalties. The counties themselves were too small for this purpose, even though, as has been argued, a sense of county community sprang up in the later middle ages<sup>8</sup>. There was, for the most part, little to tie a cluster of neighbouring counties together as a region.

Such are some of the reasons, supposedly, why English regionalism is “the dog that never barked”<sup>9</sup>. When, a decade or so ago, government proposals first emerged for the establishment of elected regional assemblies in England, the rationale for this innovation was its importance for economic development, although the policy was also in some respects a natural progression from the devolution of power to elected assemblies or parliaments in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. No account was taken of historical arguments for political devolution in England. At present, England is divided into nine regions, but these are essentially units of central government planning. As Mark Sandford remarks, their boundaries, drawn during the 1940s, “take no particular account of local or regional economies or networks, and [regions] have never had any role in English political life”: indeed, the midland and southern regions are “virtually artificial constructs”. The major exception to this pattern is the north, considered historically to be a distinctive part of England: “such regional identity as exists” corresponds very roughly to the present regions of North-East, North-West, and Yorkshire & Humber<sup>10</sup>. The continuities between the historic North and the three present northern regions may indeed be largely coincidental, without influence on government planning. Even so, the reasons for Northern exceptionalism and the existence there of a

sense of regional identity are important historical questions. Much has been written on the historic basis of Northern identity, by local scholars, antiquarians, and professional historians: there is also a successful scholarly journal, “Northern History”<sup>11</sup>. Even so, there is scope for a fresh look at this question, particularly in the wider context of what has been called “A Europe of Regions”, and given the relatively underdeveloped character of British historiography more generally on this subject.

Within the broader context of the English state, too, Ireland, Wales, and the English north may be seen as exceptions to the rule. These outlying parts had subordinate administrative centres (regional councils, presidencies) established at various dates, and sometimes also quasi-military structures (marcher lordships, wardenries, liberties). The councils and presidencies were there chiefly to coordinate royal government rather than to represent the interests of the provinces to the centre (although, at times, this latter might happen). In some circumstances, however, marcher conditions might promote a sense of regional identity (in the English north, or the English Pale in Ireland); and the presence in these parts of non-English population groups, with their indigenous Celtic customs and culture, also gave them a very different appearance. Ireland and Wales at least looked sufficiently different as to be viewed as distinct regions of the English state; but as is argued below, these territories, together with Scotland, are more often viewed as the distinct national territories of separate nations.

## IRELAND

Traditionally, regional history – study of a non-nation-state territory on the basis of the territory’s apparent distinctive characteristics – has not been a major aspect of Irish historiography. Predictably, national perspectives have long been important and continue to account for a great deal of publications and university syllabus content; but local history – the study of localities either for antiquarian interest or in order to discuss ‘national’ problems at a micro level – has proved immensely popular. From the close of the 19th century, there was a large expansion in Irish history publishing. Understandably, ‘national’ perspectives were very popular at this time. The methods of von Ranke were current and infectious, and, in the revolutionary decades of the early 20th century, hostile Anglo-Irish relations were reflected in historians’ use of the national lens to create a history that was relevant to contemporary concerns. In the intervening period, Irish historians have debated the ‘grand narrative’ of Irish history created during these decades, and the so-called revisionist debate has maintained the privileged position of the national perspective within Irish historiography<sup>12</sup>. The development and scholarly credibility of the regional perspective, particularly of the variety espoused by the Annales school, have been stymied by the national paradigm and the discourse it has stimulated.

In addition, the late-19th century also saw the rise of local history. The period abounds with town histories, diocesan histories, and – particularly – county histories<sup>13</sup>. These

civil or administrative units do, undeniably, have a value of their own and may even be classed as regional history in certain cases (especially when a county's boundaries reflect the limits of long-established social and political features)<sup>14</sup>. Nonetheless these units in other cases are artificial and do not take into account distinct social, economic and political developments and characteristics which transcended their borders and encompassed greater areas – in short, *regions*. However, since its beginnings local history has gained in popularity: virtually every county in the island has a local history society and journal. Moreover, universities have maintained the trajectory of local history, with many history departments including local history aspects in their syllabi and offering lectureships to specialists in the field. In many ways this is reflective of the localism inherent in Irish society, a country where one's county of residence is a prime marker of heritage and identity. Popular interest in the local parish/county/diocese has created an economic imperative for the continued emphasis on local history; but it has restricted the growth of regional history. A new publishing company was established in the mid-1970s, which aimed to specialise in regional and local history; but thus far, apart from a popular series of county histories, there has been precious little output on other territorial units<sup>15</sup>. With such popular and academic currency behind local history, it is unsurprising that '*landesgeschichtlich*'-oriented monographs and theses continue to be produced in large number, while the volume of work on regions is comparatively slim. For example, there is an abundance of scholarship on the four medieval shires which comprised the English Pale in Ireland, but very little has been published which examines the experience of the entire territory, despite its distinct political, economic and social characteristics<sup>16</sup>. Major monographs which identify a region within Ireland as autonomous in terms in society or economy are scarce, though some important recent works may suggest that slowly this pattern is altering<sup>17</sup>. However, one, or even two, swallows do not make a summer, and the incipient movement towards examining Irish history in terms of individual regions is inhibited by the absence in Ireland of university departments and centres and academic journals dedicated to regional history<sup>18</sup>.

An important exception to this trend is the case of Ulster. The northern province has a rich historiography of its own. In many ways, of course, this is because the majority of the province is part of the United Kingdom, and is therefore an exceptional territory – and one capable of provoking very different interpretations by historians, depending on their side of the political/confessional divide. Over the past twenty years, however, responding to popular frustration at the futility of the armed struggle between republicans and loyalists, the historiography of Ulster has shifted to focus more on connections between Ulster and the rest of the island, and joint initiatives by the Irish and British governments have encouraged the island's historians and greater population to look at the present-day border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland as part of a greater historical region characterised by common developments in terms of politics, economy and society<sup>19</sup>.

Another recent trend which has suggested alternative ways of writing Irish regional history is offered by Ireland's shared history with Britain. It is possible to view the island itself as being part of a larger region encompassing the British Isles. Economic historians, for instance, have identified Irish coastal towns in the middle ages and the early modern period as part of a greater commercial system spanning the Irish Sea<sup>20</sup>. Practitioners of the so-called New British history have argued that the Gaelic language, political organization and migration which connected Gaelic Ulster with western Scotland and the isles in the medieval period point to the existence of a supranational region, 'the Gaelic world'<sup>21</sup>. Historians of the later 16th and early 17th centuries have also shown how early modern Ireland can be seen in an 'Atlantic' context, where migration and the transfer of ideas united Britain, Ireland and the New World<sup>22</sup>.

## WALES

Despite its small size, Wales is well suited for regional history. Its mountainous landscape and the influence of neighbouring England have encouraged the emergence of significant regional variations. Before the English conquest in 1282, Wales was characterised by many independent kingdoms and the gradual encroachment of independent English marcher lordships in the southern and eastern lowlands. After 1282, the newly-conquered north and west of Wales was made into a united principality under royal control; the rest of Wales, however, remained a patchwork of marcher lordships. It was only in 1536, as part of the union with England, that a territorially united Wales was created. Despite the removal of the power of the marcher lords and the establishment of an English county system, the geography and political divisions of Wales have encouraged the continuation of regional distinctions until the present day.

Regional history could play an important and useful role in Welsh history. In practice, however, this has not been the case. In the 19th century, the influence of the state-centred methodology of Leopold Von Ranke and William Stubbes undermined the validity of Wales, after 1282, as a field of historical study<sup>23</sup>. Questions about our ability to write a history of the stateless Welsh nation lingered well into the 20th century<sup>24</sup>. More recent historiography has been characterised by a pro-national backlash against these doubts that has hindered the introduction of modern regional history into Welsh historiography. Most studies of regionalism in Wales are in fact attempts to establish its validity as a category of historical analysis. Regionalism is presented as an obstacle that must be overcome in order to write the history of a united Welsh nation<sup>25</sup>. Despite the dominance of national history, various instances of the use of regional history can be discerned in Welsh historiography. Furthermore, some historians have recently begun to recognise that a more systematic engagement with regional history could be of great benefit to the history of Wales.

For several leading Welsh historians, counties have provided the divisions for regional study<sup>26</sup>. Welsh counties, an artificial creation of the English government in 1282, when

they were applied to the Principality lands, and 1536, when they were applied to the marches, are not perfect candidates for regional history. They were, however, the stage for local politics until the local government reorganization of 1974 and many Welshmen felt great loyalty to them<sup>27</sup>. In the 20th century, most Welsh counties were subjects of books on county history, often running to multiple volumes<sup>28</sup>. Also, all the Welsh counties have, at some stage, had their own local history journal<sup>29</sup>. Before the establishment of the “Welsh History Review” in 1960 these county journals acted as a vital publishing tool for Welsh historians, which inspired a range of useful county focused studies<sup>30</sup>. The Research Assessment Exercise, which began in Britain in 1986, has, however, severely lowered the status of these journals. This has discouraged professional historians from studying county history in recent years. Also, in 1974 the thirteen old counties were replaced by eight new ones, partly based on the native kingdoms of the middle ages. Although some of the original counties were reinstated in 1996, the reorganisation severed the link between the modern Welsh administrative system and its historical equivalent. The disappearance of many of the old counties could be seen to be partly responsible for the decline of county studies in Wales. Some historians have attempted to use the post-1974 counties as regions for historical study. Merfyn Jones, for example, has studied the new county of Gwynedd, made up of the old counties of Anglesey, Caernarvonshire and Merioneth, as a 19th-century region, a decision he justifies by the shared dire economic condition of the three counties in that period<sup>31</sup>. Such studies, however, are rare; county history in Wales seems to be a dying discipline.

The most persistent division in Welsh history is that between north and south Wales. Communications in Wales, from Roman roads to the railways, have almost always run from east to west. Travel, trade and social contacts between north and south Wales have, therefore, been minimal. North Wales has tended to have closer links to the English cities of Chester and Liverpool, while south Wales, until the growth of its own large industrial cities in the 19th century, looked to Bristol as a cultural and economic centre. This has led many historians to treat the two peninsulas that make up Wales as separate regions<sup>32</sup>. Such studies have been criticised, however, for failing to question the extent to which north and south Wales can be presented as integrated regions. More methodologically aware studies have demonstrated that studies of north or south Wales artificially impose unity on areas that are themselves politically, culturally and economically diverse<sup>33</sup>.

A contrasting approach to regionalism in Welsh historiography has been to divide Wales into ‘inner’ and ‘outer’ regions. This approach has its roots in geography and medieval history. The historical geographer, E.G. Bowen, argued that Wales’s physical geography protected the north and central west from external influences, encouraging the formation of a Welsh cultural core<sup>34</sup>. This model mimics the political realities of medieval Wales, which was divided into a *Pura Wallia* (pure or native Wales) in the north-west, and the Marches in the south and east. The 1536 union with England removed the political differences between the two regions, but ‘inner’ Wales remained

far more culturally and linguistically conservative. In the 19th century, the success of industrialisation in the south and east contributed further to this division. The ‘inner’ and ‘outer’ Wales model successfully demonstrates the regional economic, cultural and political differences within Wales. It has, however, been extensively used by the Welsh nationalist movement to demonstrate the plight of Welsh culture and to condemn the Anglicisation of the south and east<sup>35</sup>. The politicisation of this model has meant that few historians have effectively utilised it for regional history<sup>36</sup>.

Therefore, despite Wales’s suitability for regional study, it has not been subject to systematic and effective regional analysis<sup>37</sup>. A possible way forward has been demonstrated by historians working on 19th-century Wales, in particular Neil Evans<sup>38</sup>. Evans has argued that the search for static regional borders or an all encompassing regional model for Wales should be abandoned. Rather, it should be recognised that regions, in Wales and elsewhere, are unstable and change over time. The coherence of a region at a particular time can be defined by the interaction of cultural, political, economic, geographic and social factors that differentiate it from surrounding regions<sup>39</sup>. By following this more rigorous approach to regional history, Welsh historians will be able to carry out effective comparative studies between Welsh regions and with regions outside of Wales. Such studies will help to build an understanding of what has caused regionalism within Wales and what effects this has had on Welsh history. This need not, however, be at the expense of Wales’s history as a nation. Systematic analysis of the interaction between its changing regions will help us to construct a history that overcomes Wales’s fragmented nature and demonstrates the bonds that hold its disparate communities together<sup>40</sup>.

## SCOTLAND

In one of the earliest attempts to write a coherent history of the Scottish nation, the late 14th-century chronicler, John of Fordun, noted that Scotland was divided into two linguistic regions, namely the *Gaidhealtachd* of the Highlands and Islands where ‘Scottish’ (or Gaelic) was spoken, and the ‘coastal’ Lowlands, where the ‘Teutonic’ (or English) language predominated<sup>41</sup>. This linguistic division, given expression in Scotland’s physical geography, was the basis of Fordun’s broader characterization of the divergent manners and customs of the inhabitants of these distinct regions. This regional paradigm has influenced – and continues to influence – the nation’s historiography. Historians have recognised and explored the different historical experiences of the Highland and Lowland Scots<sup>42</sup>.

Therefore, from its beginning, Scottish historiography has acknowledged the importance of relating regional diversity to the master-narrative of nation-building. Distinct regional identities contributed to the formation of the Scottish nation and despite its connotations of an ethnically unified people, the name ‘Scotland’ disguises the country’s multi-ethnic character and origins. The formation of the medieval kingdom in the

period between c.900 and c.1350 was characterised by successive royal dynasties extending their control over regions dominated by other distinct ethnic groups. Scotland, like England, was a kingdom built on conquest<sup>43</sup>. The kings, initially operating from core territories in central Scotland, gradually extended their influence into neighbouring lands to the west, north and south. Often these regions were independent provinces (sometimes, like Fife, also known as ‘kingdoms’), or part of a lordship that extended beyond the confines of what we now know as Scotland<sup>44</sup>. For example, the historical experience of the northern isles of the Hebrides, Orkney and Shetland, together with mainland Caithness, was shaped by extensive contacts with the Scandinavian world. Until 1266 there was a Norse-Gaelic Kingdom of the Isles, which dominated much of northern Scotland. Indeed, it was not until the mid-15th century that Norwegian claims in the region were surrendered<sup>45</sup>. Similarly, a hybrid Gaelic-Norse people, the *Gall Gaidheil* (‘Scandinavian Gaels’) ruled the semi-independent lordship of Galloway in the south-west of Scotland<sup>46</sup>. In such cases the seas lapping the Scottish mainland formed important communication routes rather than barriers to external contacts. Increasingly, Scotland’s historiography has explored these external contacts and their influence on the formation of the nation-state<sup>47</sup>.

Scotland has only one national land frontier, the Anglo-Scottish Border, a political frontier that cuts across older ethnic units. In the early middle ages, the northern frontier of the Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Northumbria was marked by the river Forth. Scottish expansion southwards culminated in control over the region between the Forth and the river Tweed. Thus members of the Anglian (English-speaking) society of Northumbria found themselves divided between two growing kingdoms: Scotland and England. In the west, the ancient British kingdom of Strathclyde-Cumbria was also divided when the Scots kings assumed control of the region to the north of the Solway Firth. Studies of this frontier region, known as ‘the Borders’, have been an important aspect of late medieval and early modern historiography in both England and Scotland<sup>48</sup>.

This shared frontier, together with the Union of the Crowns of Scotland and England in 1603 and, especially, the Union of Parliaments in 1707, have provided significant impetus for Scottish historical writing since the 18th century<sup>49</sup>. Anxieties over the effect of the closer relationship with England, and the desire to rationalise the surrender of parliamentary sovereignty invigorated Scottish historical writing in the 18th and 19th centuries. On the one hand the fear of loss of identity in a British state dominated by England prompted investigations of aspects of Scotland’s past in order to provide material to resist the “Anglicising” trends that were becoming evident. By contrast, those who supported the Union of 1707 saw Scotland’s independent past as an impediment to constitutional progress. The debate between unionist and nationalist historians was provided with renewed vigour on the reopening of an independent Scottish Parliament in 1999. The remarkable success of Tom Devine’s *The Scottish Nation, 1700-2000* was attributed by its author in part to the coincidence of its publication with the opening of the Holyrood Parliament<sup>50</sup>. The

relationship with England and Scotland's place within a British state continues to exercise a strong historiographical influence and the recent election successes of the Scottish National Party seem likely to continue the trend<sup>51</sup>. As the relationship with England altered, particularly with the re-assertion of Scottish political identity, so the regions of Scotland acquired a higher profile. As Scotland's position within United Kingdom strengthened, so it became less politically divisive to acknowledge regional diversity.

The construction of Scotland's national identity and, particularly, the strong cultural influences of the Gaelic Highland region, have been an important strand in Scottish historical writing since the early 19th century<sup>52</sup>. Representations of Scotland and the Scots have drawn heavily upon Gaelic cultural iconographies, which were largely developed at a time when the nation's political identity was obscured by the ideology and rhetoric of British Imperialism. It is still the romantic image of the kilted Highlander that dominates popular representations of Scotland and its people<sup>53</sup>. In many ways it is remarkable that this Gaelic identity has been embraced by those living in non-Gaelic Scotland<sup>54</sup>.

In the 1830s William Forbes Skene, Historiographer Royal for Scotland from 1881, took the lead in studying Gaelic Scotland, with the publication of a number of monographs and editions of medieval texts<sup>55</sup>. However, Skene's emphasis on the importance of the Gaelic-speaking regions in Scotland's national story was largely neglected until the growth in "Celtic studies" witnessed in the latter half of the 20th century<sup>56</sup>. However, since the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act of 2005 and the establishment of the Bòrd na Gàidhlig (Gaelic Development Agency), the distinctive cultural heritage of the Highland region has been recognised and protected by the Scottish Parliament<sup>57</sup>. It is thus tempting to connect the growing interest in the various Scottish regional identities with the nation's growing political self-confidence with respect to its neighbours to the south.

The separate historical experience of the Highlands has been explored in various studies of the region's society, culture and economy<sup>58</sup>. Similarly, there has been a re-evaluation of the Lowlands, testing assumptions about that region's relationship with the pre-1707 Scottish kingdom and the post-Union British state. For example, the differing economic experiences of Highland and Lowland Scotland have been explored in a series of studies beginning as early as 1808<sup>59</sup>. The phenomenon of internal migration between regions, especially in the aftermath of the Highland Clearances of the early 19th century, warns against employing facile stereotypes<sup>60</sup>. For example, the assumption that the Jacobite rebellion of the 18th century, which aimed at the restoration of the Stewart monarchy, received little support in Lowland Scotland has been questioned<sup>61</sup>. Regional studies have illuminated important aspects of the major themes of Scottish history such as religion and economic development<sup>62</sup>. This research demonstrates that there was no single representative 'national' history, but, rather, a patchwork of regional histories.

All in all, a regional approach to Scottish history has facilitated a more nuanced reading of the Scottish past. Just as the nature of British history benefited from regional inter-

rogation, so too will the characteristics of Scotland's national identity. In exploring the development of Scottish regional identity, historians provide material that can be used to question the assumptions that lie behind monolithic presentations of Scotland's national identity. Regional history in Scotland has provided an essential counter-balance to the court-centred and Edinburgh-based histories of Scotland. They have also emphasised the links between the Scots and other peoples, such as the Irish and the Scandinavians. The national agenda is still powerful as the numerous studies of members of Scottish ruling dynasties demonstrate, but the study of Scotland's regions allows a more representative answer to the questions: who were – and who are – the Scots?

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> See, for instance, K. Robbins, *Great Britain: Identities, institutions and the idea of Britishness*, London 1998, which, however, sees the problem (pp. 5-6, 278-280, 339-340); M. Pugh, *Britain since 1789: a concise history*, London 1999, which simply ignores Northern Ireland.
- <sup>2</sup> S.G. Ellis, *Frontiers and identities in the historiography of the British Isles*, in L. Klusáková, S.G. Ellis (eds.), *Frontiers and identities: exploring the research area*, Pisa 2006, pp. 67-68; Id., *Integration, identities and frontiers in the British Isles: a European perspective*, in H. Gustafsson, H. Sanders (eds.), *Vid Gränsen: Integration och identitet i det förnationella Norden*, Gothenburg 2006, pp. 19-23. See also, more generally, H. Gustafsson, *The conglomerate state: a perspective on state formation in early modern Europe*, in "Scandinavian Journal of History", 1998, 23, pp. 189-213.
- <sup>3</sup> Honourable earlier exceptions were D.L.W. Tough, *The last years of a frontier: a history of the borders during the reign of Elizabeth*, Oxford 1928; T.I. Rae, *The administration of the Scottish frontier, 1513-1603*, Edinburgh 1966; W. Rees, *South Wales and the March 1284-1415: a social and agrarian study*, Oxford 1924.
- <sup>4</sup> For example, A. Grant, K. Stringer (eds.), *Uniting the Kingdom? The making of British history*, London 1995; B. Bradshaw, J. Morrill (eds.), *The British problem c.1534-1707: state formation in the Atlantic archipelago*, Basingstoke 1996; S.G. Ellis, with C. Maginn, *The making of the British Isles: the state of Britain and Ireland, 1450-1660*, London 2007.
- <sup>5</sup> For instance, R. Bartlett, A. MacKay (eds.), *Medieval frontier societies*, Oxford 1989; D. Power, N. Standen (eds.), *Frontiers in question: Eurasian borderlands, 700-1700*, Basingstoke 1999; Gustafsson, Sanders (eds.), *Vid Gränsen* cit.; S.G. Ellis, R. Eßer (eds.), *Frontiers and the writing of history, 1500-1850*, Hannover-Laatzten 2006.
- <sup>6</sup> M. Sandford, *English regionalism through the looking glass: perspectives on the English question from the North-East and Cornwall*, in "National Identities", 2006, 8.1, pp. 77-93, at p. 79.
- <sup>7</sup> S.G. Ellis, *Tudor frontiers and noble power: the making of the British state*, Oxford 1995, ch. 1; Id., *An English gentleman and his community: Sir William Darcy of Platten*, in V.P. Carey, U. Lotz-Heumann (eds.), *Taking Sides? Colonial and confessional mentalités in early modern Ireland. Essays in honour of Karl S. Bottigheimer*, Dublin 2003, pp. 19-41. See also below, ch. 7.
- <sup>8</sup> On county communities, see, for instance, C. Carpenter, *Gentry and community in medieval England*, in "Journal of British Studies", 1994, 33, pp. 340-80; R. Virgoe, *Aspects of the county community in the fifteenth century*, in M.A. Hicks (ed.), *Profit, piety and the professions in later medieval England*, Gloucester 1989, pp. 1-13; C. Holmes, *The county community in Stuart historiography*, in "Journal of British Studies", 1979-80, 19, pp. 54-73; B.G.C. Smith, *A County Community in Early Fourteenth Century Ireland: the case of Louth*, in "English Historical Review", 1993, 108, pp. 561-588.

- <sup>9</sup> C. Harvie, *English regionalism: the dog that never barked?*, in B. Crick (ed.), *National identities: the Constitution of the United Kingdom*, Oxford 1991, pp. 48-61.
- <sup>10</sup> Sandford, *English regionalism through the looking glass* cit., pp. 77-81 (quotations, p. 79).
- <sup>11</sup> The journal was established in 1966 under the auspices of the School of History, University of Leeds.
- <sup>12</sup> C. Brady (ed.), *Interpreting Irish history: the debate on historical revisionism*, Dublin, 1994.
- <sup>13</sup> Important county journals which emerged at this time include the “Journal of the Co. Kildare Archaeological Society” (1891-); “Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society” (1892-); “Journal of the Galway Archaeological and Historical Society” (1901-); “Journal of the Co. Louth Archaeological and Historical Society” (1904-).
- <sup>14</sup> Bernadette Cunningham described East Breifne/Co. Cavan as “this south Ulster region”: B. Cunningham, *The Anglicisation of East Breifne: the O’Reillys and the emergence of County Cavan*, in R. Gillespie (ed.), *Cavan: essays on the history of an Irish county*, Dublin 2004, p. 51; D. Edwards, *The Ormond lordship in County Kilkenny, 1515-1642*, Dublin 2003, esp. p. 11.
- <sup>15</sup> Geography Publications (established 1975) and its *History and Society* series: [www.geographypublications.com](http://www.geographypublications.com).
- <sup>16</sup> An exception is S.G. Ellis, *The Pale and the far north: government and society in two Tudor borderlands*, Galway 1988.
- <sup>17</sup> Edwards, *Ormond lordship* cit.; D. Dickson, *Old world colony: Cork and south Munster, 1630-1830*, Cork 2005.
- <sup>18</sup> Compare with England, which boasts, among other organs and institutions, “Northern History”, the Manchester Centre for Regional History, and the Regional History Centre at the University of the West of England, Bristol.
- <sup>19</sup> See especially the works of R. Gillespie; notably, R. Gillespie, H. O’Sullivan (eds.), *The borderlands: essays on the history of the Ulster-Leinster border*, Belfast 1989; [www.crossborder.ie](http://www.crossborder.ie).
- <sup>20</sup> R. Britnell, *Britain and Ireland, 1050-1530: Economy and Society*, Oxford 2004; P. Borsley, L.J. Proudfoot, *Provincial towns in Britain and Ireland: change, convergence, and divergence*, Oxford 2002.
- <sup>21</sup> S.G. Ellis, *The collapse of the Gaelic world, 1450-1650*, in “Irish Historical Studies”, 1999, 31, pp. 449-469. Also important here is the Centre for Irish-Scottish and Comparative Studies, at the University of Dublin (Trinity College).
- <sup>22</sup> For instance, D.B. Quinn, *England and the discovery of America, 1481-1620*, London 1974; N.P. Canyn, A. Pagden, *Colonial identity in the Atlantic World 1500-1800*, Princeton 1987.
- <sup>23</sup> N. Evans, *Finding a new story: The search for a usable past in Wales, 1869-1930*, in “Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion”, 2004, new series 10, p. 149.
- <sup>24</sup> G. Williams, *Local and National history in Wales*, in D.H. Owen (ed.), *Settlement and Society in Wales*, Cardiff 1989, p. 15.
- <sup>25</sup> Tellingly the use of questions is common in the titles of these studies: see for example, E. Jones, *Where is Wales?*, in “Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion”, 1995, new series 1; G.A. Williams, *When was Wales?*, Harmondsworth 1985; G.H. Jenkins, *Whither Wales?*, in Id., *A concise history of Wales*, Cambridge 2007, pp. 301-306.
- <sup>26</sup> A.H. Dodd (1891-1975), for example, carried out several studies of his native Caernarvonshire.
- <sup>27</sup> See, for example, the strong affection George Owen of Henllys (1552-1613) held for Pembrokeshire: D. Miles (ed.), *The Description of Pembrokeshire: George Owen of Henllys*, Llandysul 1994.
- <sup>28</sup> For example, J.A. Bradley, *A History of Monmouthshire*, 4 vols, London 1904-33; J.E. Lloyd (ed.), *A History of Carmarthenshire*, 2 vols, Cardiff 1935, 1939.

- <sup>29</sup> The first being “Collections historical and archaeological relating to Montgomeryshire” (1868) and the last established being “The Pembrokeshire Historian” (1959).
- <sup>30</sup> For example, G. Williams, *The Reformation in Pembrokeshire down to 1553*, in “The Pembrokeshire Historian”, 1959, 1, pp. 6-16; A.H. Dodd, *The Civil War in East Denbighshire*, in “Denbighshire Historical Society Transactions”, 1954, 3, pp. 41-89.
- <sup>31</sup> M. Jones, *Notes from the margin: class and society in nineteenth century Gwynedd*, in D. Smith (ed.), *A people and a proletariat: Essays in the history of Wales, 1780-1980*, London 1980, pp. 119-214.
- <sup>32</sup> See for example, A.H. Dodd, *The Industrial Revolution in North Wales*, Cardiff 1933; E.T. Davies, *Religion in the Industrial Revolution in South Wales*, Cardiff 1965.
- <sup>33</sup> N. Evans, *Regional dynamics: North Wales, 1750-1914*, in E. Royle (ed.), *Issues of Regional Identity: In honour of John Marshall*, Manchester 1998, pp. 201-202.
- <sup>34</sup> E.G. Bowen, *The Geography of Wales as a background to its history*, in H. Carter, W.K.D. Davies (eds.), *Geography, Culture and Habitat: Selected essays of E.G. Bowen*, Llandysul 1976, p. 22.
- <sup>35</sup> P. Gruffudd, *The Welsh language and the geographical imagination, 1918-1950*, in G.H. Jenkins, M.A. Williams (eds.), *‘Let us do our best for the ancient tongue’: The Welsh language in the Twentieth Century*, Cardiff 2000, p. 118.
- <sup>36</sup> For a notable exception, see D. Smith, *Wales! Wales?*, London 1984.
- <sup>37</sup> Evans, *Social history* cit., p. 489.
- <sup>38</sup> Id., *Two paths to economic development: Wales and the north-east of England*, in P. Hudson (ed.), *Regions and Industries: A perspective on the industrial revolution in Britain*, Cambridge 1989, pp. 201-227; M. Jones, J. Lovecy, *Slate workers in Wales, France and the United States: A comparative study, 1870-1920*, in “Llafur”, 1986-7, 4, 4, pp. 9-19.
- <sup>39</sup> Evans, *Social history* cit., p. 489; Id., *Regional dynamics* cit., p. 202.
- <sup>40</sup> Evans, *Social history* cit., pp. 489-491.
- <sup>41</sup> For a general introduction to Scottish history, see M. Lynch, *Scotland. A New History*, London 1991. A convenient bibliographical introduction is found in M. Lynch (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to Scottish History*, Oxford 2001, pp. 684-706. For an introduction to the themes of Scottish historiography, see R. Mitchison (ed.), *Why Scottish History Matters*, Edinburgh 1991, and the special editions of “Scottish Historical Review”, *Whither Scottish History?*, 1994, vol. 73; *Writing Scotland’s History*, 1997, vol. 76.
- <sup>42</sup> “The manners and customs of the Scots vary with the diversity of their speech. For two languages are spoken amongst them, the Scottish and the Teutonic; the latter of which is the language of those who occupy the seaboard and the plains, while the race of Scottish speech inhabits the highlands and outlying islands. The people of the coast are of domestic and civilized habits, trusty, patient, and urbane, decent in their attire, affable, and peaceful, devout in Divine worship, yet always prone to resist a wrong at the hands of their enemies. The highlanders and people of the islands, on the other hand, are a savage and untamed nation, rude and independent, given to rapine, ease-loving, of a docile and warm disposition, comely in person, but unsightly in dress, hostile to the English people and language, and owing to diversity of speech, even to their own nation, and exceedingly cruel. They are, however, faithful and obedient to their king and country, and easily made to submit to law if properly governed.” Johannis de Fordun, *Chronica Gentis Scotorum*, ed. W.F. Skene, Edinburgh 1871-1872, i, p. 42 cited in G.W.S. Barrow, *The Lost Gàidhealtachd*, in Id., *Scotland and its Neighbours in the Middle Ages*, London 1992, pp. 105-126. The translation is from *John of Fordun’s Chronicle of the Scottish Nation*, ed. W.F. Skene, trans. Felix J.H. Skene, 2 vols., Edinburgh 1872; reprinted Llanerch 1993, I, p. 38.
- <sup>43</sup> A.A.M. Duncan, *The Kingship of the Scots, 842-1292. Succession and Independence*, Edinburgh 2002.
- <sup>44</sup> In 1996 the ten Scottish governmental regions were reorganised into 32 local authorities. The pre-1996 regions were: Strathclyde, Dumfries and Galloway, Borders, Lothian, Central, Fife, Tayside, Grampian,

Highland, Western Isles together with Orkney and Shetland. It is noticeable that these regions preserve memories of ancient territorial identities; e.g. the kingdom of Fife, Strathclyde, Borders, Highlands.

- <sup>45</sup> For example, B.E. Crawford, *Scandinavian Scotland: Scotland in the Early Middle Ages*, Leicester 1987; A. Grant, *Scotland's 'Celtic Fringe' in the Late Middle Ages: The Macdonald Lords of the Isles and the Kingdom of Scotland*, in R.R. Davies (ed.), *The British Isles 1100-1500. Comparisons, Contrasts and Connections*, Edinburgh 1988, pp. 118-141.
- <sup>46</sup> R. Oram, *The Lordship of Galloway*, Edinburgh 2000; K.J. Stringer, *Reform Monasticism and Celtic Scotland: Galloway, c.1140 to c.1240*, in E.J. Cowan, R.A. McDonald (eds.), *Alba. Celtic Scotland in the Medieval Era*, East Linton 2000, pp. 127-65; K.J. Stringer, *Acts of Lordship: The Records of the Lords of Galloway to 1234*, in T. Brotherstone, D. Ditchburn (eds.), *Freedom and Authority. Historical and Historiographical Essays Presented to Grant G. Simpson*, East Linton 2000, pp. 203-234.
- <sup>47</sup> For example, G. Donaldson, *A Northern Commonwealth*, Edinburgh 1990; S. Murdoch, A. Grosjean, *Scotland, Scandinavia and Northern Europe 1580-1707*, Aberdeen 1998; G.G. Simpson (ed.), *Scotland and Scandinavia, 800-1800*, Edinburgh 1990; G. Walker, *Intimate Strangers: Political and Cultural Interactions between Scotland and Ulster in Modern Times*, Edinburgh 1995.
- <sup>48</sup> For example, G.W.S. Barrow, *The Anglo-Scottish Border*, in Id., *The Kingdom of the Scots*, London 1973, pp. 139-61; C.J. Neville, *Violence, Custom and Law: the Anglo-Scottish borderlands in the later Middle Ages*, Edinburgh 1998; M.M. Meikle, *A British Frontier? Lairds and Gentlemen in the Eastern Borders, 1540-1603*, East Linton 2004.
- <sup>49</sup> It could be argued that the foundations of medieval Scottish historical writing are to be found much earlier in the response to Edward I of England's attempts to justify his claims to lordship over Scotland: see C. Given-Wilson, *Chronicles. The Writing of History in Medieval England*, London 2004, pp. 65-69.
- <sup>50</sup> T. M. Devine, *The Scottish Nation, 1700-2000*, Harmondsworth 1999; R. Oram, *The past, present and future of Scottish History. An interview with Tom Devine*, in "History Scotland", 2006, 6:3, pp. 47-54.
- <sup>51</sup> R.J. Finlay, *Review Article: New Britain, New Scotland, New History? The Impact of Devolution on the Development of Scottish Historiography*, in "Journal of Contemporary History", 2001, 36, 2, pp. 383-393.
- <sup>52</sup> C. Kidd, *Gaelic Antiquity and National Identity in Enlightenment Ireland and Scotland*, in "English Historical Review", 1994, 434, pp. 1197-1214.
- <sup>53</sup> R.D. Clyde, *From Rebel to Hero: The Image of the Scottish Highlander 1745-1830*, East Linton 1995.
- <sup>54</sup> See the provocative essay by H. Trevor-Roper, *The Invention of Tradition: The Highland Tradition of Scotland*, in E. Hobsbawm, T. Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge 1983, pp. 15-41. See also, C. Withers, *The Historical Creation of the Scottish Highlands*, in I. Donnachie, C. Whatley (ed.), *The Manufacture of Scottish History*, Edinburgh 1992, pp. 143-56; Kidd, *Gaelic Antiquity and National Identity* cit., pp. 1197-1214.
- <sup>55</sup> W.F. Skene, *The Highlanders of Scotland: Their Origin, History and Antiquities; with a Sketch of their Manners and Customs, and an account of the clans into which they were divided, and of the state of society which existed among them*, London 1837; Id., *Celtic Scotland: A History of Ancient Alban*, 3 vols., Edinburgh 1876-80. Skene's work is discussed by E.J. Cowan, *The Invention of Celtic Scotland*, in E.J. Cowan, R.A. McDonald (eds.), *Alba: Celtic Scotland in the Middle Ages*, East Linton 2000, pp. 1-23 at p. 3.
- <sup>56</sup> Cowan, McDonald, *Preface*, in *Alba* cit., pp. 13-14; D. Broun, *The Irish Identity of the Kingdom of the Scots in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries*, Woodbridge 1999.
- <sup>57</sup> According to the 2001 census, there were around 92,000 Scots who were able to speak, read or write Gaelic in a population of some five million.
- <sup>58</sup> T.M. Devine, *The Great Highland Famine: Hunger, Emigration and the Scottish Highlands in the Nineteenth Century*, Edinburgh 1988.

- <sup>59</sup> J. Walker, *An Economical History of the Hebrides and Highlands of Scotland*, 2 vols., Edinburgh 1808; D.A. Newlands, *The Regional Economies of Scotland*, in T.M. Devine, C.H. Lee, G.C. Peden, (eds.), *The Transformation of Scotland: the economy since 1700*, Edinburgh 2005, pp. 159-183.
- <sup>60</sup> C.W.J. Withers, *Urban Highlanders: Highland-Lowland Migration and Urban Gaelic Culture, 1700-1990*, East Linton 1998.
- <sup>61</sup> A.E. MacRobert, *The 1745 Rebellion and the Southern Scottish Lowlands*, Edinburgh 2006; M.G.H. Pittock, *The Myth of the Jacobite Clans*, Edinburgh 1995.
- <sup>62</sup> For example, J. Macinnes, *The Evangelical Movement in the Highlands of Scotland, 1688 to 1800*, Aberdeen 1951; F.D. Bargett, *Scotland Reformed: The Reformation in Angus and the Mearns*, Edinburgh 1989; M.H.B. Sanderson, *Ayrshire and the Reformation*, East Linton 1997. On the economy, see, for example, T.M. Devine (ed.), *Farm Servants and Labour in Lowland Scotland, 1770-1914*, Edinburgh 1984; H.D. Smith, *Shetland Life and Trade, 1550-1914*, Edinburgh 1984.

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