Territorial Boundaries & Topographies of Power in the Celtic West

Research Seminar Thursday 25 February 2016

Seminar Room 203, Arts/Science Building, NUI Galway.

Places are limited. To register, email: elizabeth.fitzpatrick@nuigalway.ie
This seminar explores territorial boundaries in relation to the pre-modern concept of territory as a dynamic process between a natural place and power. While it has been argued that ‘we cannot simply find a birth of territory, a singular moment, which could be outlined and its lineages traced backward’ (Elden 2013), the identification of notable and enduring boundary places in the territories of Celtic-speaking peoples of north Atlantic Europe suggests that birthplaces of medieval territories can be found.

The seminar will work with the idea that geologic anomaly was integral to the birthplace and production of territory in the Celtic west and that this paradigm may also apply to the broader European landscape and especially to locations that became major Roman frontier forts. Several of the seminar papers present the ongoing findings of the NUI Galway-based project, Atlas of Finn mac Cumail's Places, which investigates the relationship between notable landforms and the archaeologies, geologies, mythologies and toponyms of territorial boundary places among medieval Gaelic peoples.

The programme is a collaboration between archaeology, Celtic studies, geology and medieval history. It explores the topographies, natural resources, place-names, mythologies and geological signatures of boundary places and the range of archaeologies, including complex boundary graves, prehistoric funerary and ritual monuments, forts and fortifications, medieval assembly places, battle sites, and hunting grounds, associated with them.

Programme

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09.00 Welcome address. Prof. Máirín Ní Dhonnchadha (Director, CAMPS NUI Galway)

09.15-09.45 Finn and the birthplace of territory. Prof. Elizabeth FitzPatrick (NUI Galway)
09.45-10.15 Boundaries from the spatial to the textual in the Acallam na Senórach. Keynote lecture Prof. Joseph F. Nagy (UCLA)
10.15-10.45 The hidden revealed: boundaries in Ireland before 1169. Dr Paul MacCotter (UCC)
10.45-11.00 Discussion

11.00-11.30 COFFEE

11.30-12.00 Finn: an indicator of geologic anomaly. Dr Ronan Hennessy (NUI Galway)
12.00-12.40 Two Finn places in Connemara. Dr Paul Naessens (NUI Galway) with Richard Long (postgrad student NUI Galway)
12.40-12.55 Discussion

12.55-02.00 LUNCH

02.00-02.30 Boundary ferta in Iron Age and early medieval Ireland. Dr Elizabeth O’Brien (Discovery Programme, Mapping Death Project)
02.30-03.00 The goddess Bui and watery places: a mythology of the littoral fringe. Colette Allen (postgrad student NUI Galway)
03.00-03.15 Discussion

03.15-03.45 COFFEE

03.45-04.15 Disentangling boundary, frontier and transitional space in the Hadrian’s Wall landscape. Dr Robert Collins (University of Newcastle)
04.15-04.45 Finlaggan Islay: boundary and centre. Dr David Caldwell (Society of Antiquaries of Scotland)
04.45-05.00 Discussion and close of seminar

RECEPTION Archaeology 5.15PM