



Conquerers, Conquered.
Perceptions of Identity in the Middle Ages in Europe
(9th-15th Century)
7-8 November 2014
Paris-Sorbonne University (Paris-IV)

This first interdisciplinary conference organised by the CEMA (Centre d'études médiévales anglaises de Paris-Sorbonne) aims at promoting the exchange of ideas by researchers from all backgrounds on the influence of all types of conquests on ideas of identity. This topic, which is particularly relevant for the British Isles, as they were invaded several times from the Dark Ages to the end of the Scandinavian era in Ireland and Scotland — concerned a great part of Europe at one point or another during the Middle Ages.

Whatever the mode of expansion originally chosen (summer raids by the Vikings in the British Isles, banditry by the Normans in Southern Italy in the 10th century, crusades headed by Germanic and Polish princes in the Slavic territories in the 13th century, etc.), in the situations when brute force gave way to less violent forms of colonisation or domination, some forms of relationships were established between the invaders and the invaded, especially when the conquering people did not bring with them ruin and desolation only. Examples include the Slavic territories mentioned above as well as Wales, where more efficient agricultural methods were implemented, or Ireland, where the Vikings laid the foundations of many ports. Those relationships were often complicated, of course, but when they endured, it was precisely because of their complex nature.

This conference will not focus so much on the history of conquests, as lived by kings and princes and reported by their chroniclers. Instead, it will deal with how such periods of conquest and settlement were experienced by those who could only put up with the situation as best they could: the common people of town and country. We will try firstly to establish how various identities were forged that would later contribute to the elaboration of nationalisms or regionalisms. Many sociologists and historians, especially in France, see the beginning of the 21st century as a period of expansion of all kinds of sectarianism, as opposed to more positive forms of multiculturalism. Our conference is therefore especially relevant, as we will endeavour to examine the various forms taken by ideas of cultural identity over a very long period of time and throughout Europe. During the Middle Ages the political upheavals and population displacements due to war, famine, epidemics or expansionist policies created the perfect conditions for identitarian closure, yet they were also the sources of cultural exchanges which made the creation of a regional or national identities more complex because they had to include more people of varied origins.

Relevant topics may include (but do not have to be restricted to) forms of active or passive resistance (for instance in the survival of the original language of the invaded people), or on the contrary examples of domination that were less one-sided and had some positive consequences which may or may not have been readily acknowledged by the people who had been conquered. The continued existence of old grievances, of wounds still fresh after decades or even centuries would also be a fruitful avenue of inquiry, as they are likely to be transmitted through various channels: chronicles, works of literature and art.

Abstracts of ca. 300 words are to be sent to Tatjana Silec (tatjana.silec@gmail.com) and Alessandra Stazzone (Alessandra.Stazzone@paris-sorbonne.fr) by 15th June 2014.