“Where are you from?” That is one of the first questions asked when you meet someone new. Your answer informs your new acquaintance of your cultural background and current geographic affiliation. Your identity is at least partially informed by where you live, or where you originated. A geographically defined identity is recognizable in the archaeological record. The regions of a culture group vary in their material culture and practices, but are still recognizably related. Among these variations of identity, the frontier identity is distinctly different from those in the cultural centre, or in the hinterlands. Traditionally, discussions of regional identity have focused on the core and periphery, but in this session we aim to focus on the tripartite of core, periphery and frontier, and how we can distinguish these archaeologically. Living on borders with other culture groups, or the unknown, adds a different dimension to the identity of the group and individuals requiring them to adapt and reinforce their cultural identities in different ways. This session will explore the construction of a frontier identity through various means in a variety of contexts.

**Keywords**: identity; frontier; hinterland; culture contact

**Papers**

**Life on the Danubian Frontier 7000 Years Ago**

*Peter Bogucki (Princeton University, bogucki@princeton.edu)*

During the second half of the sixth millennium BC, early farming communities dispersed throughout central Europe, eventually halting at frontier zones in the north and west that would persist for a millennium or more. While much thinking has been done about the farming diaspora itself, little attention has been paid to the generations that followed it, when people from different directions converged on established communities along the farming frontier. We can envision the effects of such convergence as different generational cohorts from various regions came together, especially its potential for complicating social processes. Among possible effects might be a struggle for cultural ownership with newcomers asserting a claim to a more authentic “Danubian” identity while threatening the host community’s own connection with its past. This discussion can be informed by studies of recent migrant communities as newcomers arrive.

**Constructing frontier identities in the face of Roman imperialism: Landscapes of resistance in the northern fringes**

*Manuel Fernández-Götz (University of Edinburgh, M.Fernandez-Gotz@ed.ac.uk)*

Frontiers are liminal spaces of interaction that are crucial for the construction of various levels of nested identities. Pressures from imperial powers can lead to the constitution of frontier identities very much shaped by resistance to external agents. However, resistance is a broad concept that has often been used in a rather loose way. In order to develop a more subtle approach, in this paper I follow Gonzalez-Ruibal’s (2014) terminological distinction between ‘resilience’, ‘resistance’ and ‘rebellion’ to explore the effect of Roman imperialism in two cases studies from
Western Europe: northern Gaul and northern Iberia. By doing so, I will explore not only active military resistance to the Roman army, but also cultural strategies aimed to minimise the perceived threat to traditional ways of life and identities.

‘Whose Identity Are We Talking About? The Imperial Melting Pot in Cheshire’

Peter Carrington, Chester Archaeological Society, p.carrington@tiscali.co.uk

Arguably from the first to the third centuries the ‘core’ areas of Roman Britain were the garrisons of the north and west, with the richer areas to the south and east representing the periphery. The intermediate ‘frontier zone’ of west Cheshire was a landscape of colonisation, populated to boost local supplies to the garrisons of the region.

The civilian population could have been as diverse in origin as the garrisons, of varying legal status, and in the countryside lived in small communities. Political and social organisation is unclear, and it is uncertain if the civitas Cornoviorum had any meaning. From the outside the distinctive character of the area may have been its social fragmentation, deep creolisation and dependence on the military. On the inside identities and loyalties again seem likely to have been fragmented. So far only one possible marker of local identity has been recognised, the ‘Wirral-style’ brooch.

Investigating Frontier Identity in Roman Cheshire

Kevin Cootes (Liverpool John Moores University, K.V.Cootes@ljmu.ac.uk)

The Roman frontier in North-West Britain has long been the subject of academic study, primarily focused on military installations such as the legionary fortress at Chester. The current state of knowledge regarding fortifications, structural layout and the lives of ordinary soldiers is often highly detailed. This contrasts starkly with the lack of information on rural land-use and interactions with the indigenous Iron Age population. Continuing excavations at Poulton in Cheshire have shed light on this enigmatic period, in the form of later prehistoric occupation which continued into the first millennium AD. A large and varied material assemblage has been recovered which has enabled tentative interpretations of an affluent society benefiting from contact with the Roman military. This rare incite suggests a group adapting to the needs of the military, whilst retaining their Iron Age identity and land-use strategies.

Hadrian’s Wall and Frontier Identities across Time

Richard Hingley (Durham University, richard.hingley@durham.ac.uk)

This paper addresses the idea of Britain’s famous Roman monument as a multi-temporal frontier work (cf. Hingley 2012; Hingley 2018). Addressing the creation of frontier communities in Roman times has been made to interact with the perceived roles of the monument through time as a national and international divider. Three periods in the Wall’s history are explored—the second to fourth centuries, the Renaissance (late C16 to early C17) and the present. The aim is to identify the ways that ideas about the identities of the communities of this frontier landscape at these times have been created through reference to the monumental Roman past.
Religion on the Frontier: Identity and Ritual Adaptations after the Anglo-Saxon migration

Brooke Creager (University of Minnesota, crea0046@umn.edu)

The Anglo-Saxon “frontier” was the inhabited British Isles, where the native culture had a clear influence on the religious practices. Religious changes in response to frontier interactions represents a change in identity and worldview. The Anglo-Saxon groups adapted their religious practices in their new landscape. Religious rituals and materiality are tangible representations of how groups interact with the supernatural and conceptualize them. Religion is a defining aspect of identity formation and a frontier existence would have modified the nature of the practice compared to other geographic regions of the society. Residents along the frontier of a society would have had a distinctly different view than those in the core. This paper will explore what it meant to practice religion on a frontier compared to the core, where the religion was based, by contrasting Anglo-Saxon ritual practices in Britain and the Continent. A frontier mentality would have influenced the interactions between a religious practitioner and their supernatural beings, the concerns and needs expressed would have reflected the nature of their frontier existence.

Facing the Ocean: Assembling an Early Medieval Cosmic Frontier on the North Sea Coast of England

David Petts (Durham University, d.a.petts@durham.ac.uk)

In the early medieval period, a distinctive aspect of the siting of early medieval Northumbrian ecclesiastical establishments was in prominent coastal locations. The notion that this represents an engagement and confrontation with the Ocean, which constructed the sea as a metaphoric equivalent of the Egyptian desert where the first monastic pioneers sought isolation is a well-established one. This paper however develops this notion highlighting the pre-existing extent to which the coast was seen as freighted with symbolic meaning and how the distinctive nature of the North Sea as compared with the Mediterranean, particularly regarding the presence of tides, led to a distinctive engagement with the coastal landscape in Northern England.

Keeping Up Appearances: A look at burials on the Viking frontier

(Rachel Cartwright, University of Minnesota, cartw054@umn.edu)

Viking Age archaeology essentially began in the 1800s with the excavation of graves, with the burials in the Scandinavian homeland being the most intensively excavated. While there are some patterns in the burials that connect with those on the frontiers, there are also some very distinct differences that are important to examine. This paper looks at those differences and discusses the changes in the formation of Scandinavian society and identity on the frontier. The settlement of frontiers such as Northern Scotland and Iceland show how burial practices morphed, thus showing shifts in identity both on an individual and group level. The differing practices seen illustrate the ways in which the frontier had changed society amongst the Scandinavians migrating throughout the North Atlantic.
Discussant

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