



Panel

## 7.4. Conflict and Negotiating Conflicts in Pre-Modern Rural Societies. Part II

**Panel organiser:** Muller, Miriam, University of Birmingham, UK

This panel will examine questions regarding the nature of different types of conflicts rural societies experienced in their communities, and how they dealt with, negotiated and resolved these conflicts. Traditionally conflict in rural communities in medieval society in particular has typically been associated with conflict between lords and peasants. While the papers in this panel will explore conflict between communities and authorities, like lordship, they will also consider intra-communal strife. There is a strong theme in some of the papers in this panel of communal relationships to water, including the exploitation of the sea, and the communal maintenance of drainage and embankments, as well as conflicts over common land. A main purpose of this panel is to examine issues of communal dispute comparatively. To this end the papers in this panel will span from the medieval into the early modern. Since communities located in such marshland or coastal areas might have faced similar topographical circumstances, which required comparable economic solutions, including drainage work and the exploitation of similar local natural resources, such comparative explorations can be particularly fruitful.

**Chair:** Van Bavel, Bas, University of Utrecht, Netherlands

Wednesday, 21 August 2013 // 0900 – 1030 // Session 7 – Room A 201

### 7.4.1. Negotiating the common fields: making and breaking boundaries in Norfolk villages in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries

Paper

**Whyte, Nicola, University of Exeter, Great Britain**

This paper examines the survival of common fields in Norfolk, well into the eighteenth century in some villages, as not so much the outcome of 'small men' holding fast to the customs of the common fields, but rather as the result of the appropriation and monopolisation of commonable grazing rights by landowners and their lessees engaged in large-scale sheep farming. While research has shown that open field farmers were innovative and productive, the apparent longevity of open field systems found in some parts of the county should not necessarily equate with a lack of aspiration among commoners to enclose. This paper considers the motivations behind the piecemeal enclosure of arable land as a form of resistance among tenant cultivators against the activities of landlords and flockmasters. Hostility to enclosure was not the exclusive preserve of dispossessed commoners, but was also found among lords and wealthy farmers determined to maintain access rights to commonable arable land held by tenant farmers, often of similar socio-economic status. This paper thus explores conflicting ideas about the most profitable way to use the land, and highlights how enclosed and open landscapes came to represent diverging social and cultural aspirations among landowners and tenant farmers.

### 7.4.2. Irrigation and Rural Conflict in Medieval Iberia

Paper

**Furio, Antoni, University of Valencia, Spain**

The Mediterranean Spain is a dry, arid, water scarce country. But the peasants from Mediterranean Iberia had to learn to fight against the water: against its scarcity and against its excess. The development of irrigation systems, implemented with the Arab conquest of the peninsula, made it possible to domesticate the water and to convert these arid lands and marshes near the coast in rich and ferocious spaces (huertas). In addition to vertical confrontations between peasants and lords for control and use of water (particularly the confrontation between the mill and the irrigation), horizontal clashes between peasant communities located upstream or downstream of rivers also took place. The disputes, solved by specialized courts, also negotiated the use of water by several proceedings, such as the division of time, or splitting water into measurable amounts, in order to avoid confrontation. Within the community itself, the distribution of water generated tensions between users, while the maintenance and conservation of the water network contributed to the community cohesion. In the ancient kingdom of Valencia irrigation was introduced by the Arabs before the year Thousand, and many of the institutions and practices that have governed social practices of irrigation after the feudal conquest in the thirteenth century date back to the Muslim period. Moreover, some courts to judge conflicts between irrigators have reached us today.

### 7.4.3. Water, boundaries, local economies and conflict in 13th and 14th century English villages

Paper

**Muller, Miriam, University of Birmingham, UK**

This paper will examine the importance of water in social relationships comparatively at two manors in later medieval England. One was a coastal manor in Norfolk and one a manor situated in a river valley in Wiltshire. In both manors water played important roles in the local economy, by providing waterways, delineating boundaries, by offering various economic resources – as power for water-mills, fulling mills, or providing fish (both river and sea), and through drainage in the Norfolk manor. As such water was frequently the focal point for conflict, both between peasants and between lords and peasants. This paper will explore aspects of these conflicts and how these conflicts were solved.

#### Participants

##### **Furio, Antoni**

Antoni Furio is professor in medieval history at the University of Valencia. His research interests are in the field of rural history, peasants, lordship, economic growth and social change, and standards of living and patterns of consumption.

##### **Muller, Miriam**

Miriam is a lecturer in Medieval History at the University of Birmingham. She teaches on a range of subjects relating to social and economic history of later Medieval Europe, including the impact of the Black Death. Her research interests centre around peasant communities, primarily of later medieval England. She has a particular interest in social structures, and developments in the lord-peasant relationship. She is also very interested in gender, and the position of women in the medieval village.

##### **Van Bavel, Bas**

Bas van Bavel is professor of Economic and Social History of the Middle Ages and head of the section of Economic and Social History at Utrecht University. His main research interests include long-run changes and divergences in economic and social development and long-run institutional change, mainly in a comparative perspective.

##### **Whyte, Nicola**

Nicola Whyte is a lecturer at the University of Exeter. Her PhD thesis formed the basis of her first book, *Inhabiting the Landscape: Place, Custom and Memory 1500-1800* (2009). She has since worked with Professor Andy Wood (UEA) as his Research Assistant on an AHRC funded project investigating custom and popular memory in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In 2008 she was awarded a two year Early Career Fellowship by the Leverhulme Trust to carry out research on 'Landscape, Memory and Identity in Early Modern Wales'.