



Call for papers

Identity, Ethnicity and Nationhood before Modernity: Old Debates and New Perspectives

24–26 April, 2015

The Oxford Centre for Research in Humanities

The organizing committee of the conference 'Identity, Ethnicity and Nationhood before Modernity: Old Debates and New Perspectives' invites paper proposals from prospective speakers.

In spite of the flow of publications over the last thirty years on ancient and medieval ethnicity and national identity, modernism – the view that nationhood is an essentially modern phenomenon and was non-existent or peculiarly unimportant before the 18th century – remains the dominant paradigm in ethnicity and nationalism studies. It is time, we believe, to reopen this debate. Scholars working on pre-modern collective identities too often avoid the challenge of modernism, either by using allegedly unproblematic terminology of ethnicity or by employing the vocabulary of nationhood uncritically. This conference, therefore, aims at tackling these difficult theoretical issues head on. This can only truly be achieved by bringing together a range of researchers working on ancient, late antique, early medieval, high medieval, late medieval, and early modern ethnicity and nationhood. Thus we hope to reinvigorate discussion of pre-modern ethnicity and nationhood, as well as to go beyond the unhelpful chronological divisions which have emerged through surprisingly fragmented research on pre-modern collective identities. Overall, our conference's goal is to encourage systemic conceptual thinking about pre-modern identity and nationhood, and to consider the similarities and differences between the construction and use of ethnic and national categories both within those periods, and in comparison with modernity.

The conference welcomes papers from classics, all periods of ancient, medieval and early modern history, oriental studies, sociology, social anthropology, literary studies. We also warmly invite papers from modernists that aim to compare pre-modern and modern ethnicity and nationhood. Priority will be given to papers that situate their particular studies within the broader conceptual debate on pre-modern and modern identity.

The keynote lectures will be given by Caspar Hirschi, Len Scales, Walter Pohl, Susan Reynolds and Tim Whitmarsh. To stimulate the discussion our keynote lectures will be responded to by the leading experts on modern national identity and nationalism Monica Baár, Stefan Berger, John Breuilly and Oliver Zimmer, as well as Azar Gat, the author of a recent book on the long history of ethnicity.

Prospective speakers are invited to submit abstracts of approximately 300 words. Submissions should include name, affiliation and contact details. The deadline for submissions is **1 November 2014**. For more information about the conference or to submit an abstract, please email the committee at: ilya.afanasyev@history.ox.ac.uk; nicholas.matheou@pmb.ox.ac.uk

We intend to publish selected papers from the conference as a special journal edition.

The conference is supported by the Oxford Research Centre in Humanities (TORCH) and Oxford's Faculty of History.

Organizing Committee: Ilya Afanasyev and Nicholas Matheou.