

Perception of political boundaries and their role in the division of geographical space: the Irish-British and Bohemian-German boundaries between 1750 and 1850

Abstract

This thesis aims to assess changing perceptions of political boundaries and space as represented in German travel literature about Bohemia and British travelogues about Ireland between 1750 and 1850. Both countries had multi-ethnic and multicultural features, historically defined boundaries and were parts of more extensive political units. The perception of political belonging is examined especially in the context of integration tendencies coming from the state cores. The thesis also examines the importance of alternative types of boundaries, e.g. geographical boundaries (sea and mountains that were often described as “natural boundaries”) and cultural boundaries. It is presumed that confessional, linguistic and ethnic boundaries, as well as boundaries between different types of landscape (mountains or lowland) and between poor and prosperous regions, will be of importance in Bohemia and Ireland.

Although the presence of cultural boundaries could have a manifestation in the physical appearance of landscape, the construction of the cultural boundaries is considered to be a product of observers'/travellers' mind. Therefore the thesis analyses not only the text but also the authors of the travel literature and their sociocultural backgrounds. 18th- and 19th- century readers regarded travel literature as an important source of information about political, economic, social and cultural conditions of the visited countries. Thus, travel literature not only mirrored the “sociocultural background” of the authors but it also helped to form the milieu.