



Networks, News and Communication: Political Elites and Community Relations in Elizabethan Devon, 1588-1603



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Abstract

Focusing on the 'second reign' of Queen Elizabeth I (1588-1603), this thesis constitutes the first significant socio-political examination of Elizabethan Devon – a geographically peripheral county, yet strategically central in matters pertaining to national defence and security. A complex web of personal associations and informal alliances underpinned politics and governance in Tudor England; but whereas a great deal is now understood about relations between both the political elite and the organs of government at the centre of affairs, many questions still remain unanswered about how networks of political actors functioned at a provincial and neighbourhood level, and how these networks kept in touch with one another, central government and the court. Consequently, this study is primarily concerned with power and communication. In particular, it investigates and models the interconnected networks of government within late-Elizabethan Devon and explains precisely how the county's officials (at every level) shared information with the Crown and each other. The *raison d'être* of this study is, therefore, to probe the character and articulation of the power geometries at the south-western fringe of Elizabethan England. The closing years of the reign of Queen Elizabeth I represent a decisive phase in the evolution of the English nation state, one that saw the appointment of lord lieutenants on a more widespread and long-standing basis, the consistent training of certain sections of the county militias, the expansion of the pre-existing government post-stage service, a heightened degree of dealings between every echelon of administration and an obvious increase in the amount of information that flowed from the localities into the capital. The primary causes of each of these developments were the Elizabethan war with Spain (1585-1604) and the rebellion in Ireland (1594-1603), and it is demonstrated throughout this thesis that Devon, a strategically essential county during this period of political turmoil, provides an excellent case study for evaluating the impact that each had on the Crown's ability to control the periphery whilst being spatially anchored at the court. Furthermore, by examining each of these developments the thesis fundamentally undercuts the tenacious assertion that geographically marginal regions of Tudor territory were inward-looking, remote and disconnected from events that were unfolding on a national and international level.

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Currently, the important problems of network communication and the political elite are mainly outside the scope of comparative studies of political regimes. The purpose of the article is to identify the specifics of the adaptation of the elite and its political regime to the conditions of modern network communications. Legitimacy communication in the media reveals when elites become attentive to international organizations' (IOs) legitimacy and whether they support or question their legitimacy. The intensity and tone of this communication results in communicative support or legitimacy pressures on IOs. Extant research gives few insights into the scope and nature of elite legitimacy communication and the factors that shape it. The Elizabethan politics and general overview of the treatment of life was very brutal in comparison to today. In fact, if you were being charged with a severe crime, you may have to endure several types of torture. Many people were tortured to bring out other peoples names if they thought they had necessary details that they wanted. During Elizabethan times, the Queen held supreme power according to law, heredity and the doctrine of divine right; she was the primary source of patronage and had the last word on all state policy. Government was viewed as the monarch's private business and its success therefore depended greatly upon the ruler's strength of character and political acumen.