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Roads in a Liminal Zone: Trade and Travel across the Western Border of Medieval Hungary

The paper aims to deal with the potentials of transfers and interactions across the western border of Hungary between the eleventh and fifteenth centuries. The direction and number of roads in Western Transdanubia depended on various geographical, military, political and economic factors. The chain of low mountains belonging to the Fore-Alps covered with dense extended forests, as well as rivers along the border imposed strong limitations on communication possibilities to the west. These natural features can be considered relatively static throughout the centuries. In contrast, human factors changed to a great extent from the Árpád period to the late Middle Ages providing thus a different historical background for the infrastructure. The north-south directed triple defensive system that considerably limited the number and direction of communication routes between Hungary and the Holy Roman Empire, for example, dissolved by the late thirteenth century, which brought about a complete transformation of the road network, as well. The fact that some roads became more frequented in time, while others faded away could also have economic reasons (such as fairs, toll collection places, or staple right). In my paper I will investigate how these and other factors defined the layout of the road network and the frequency of routes in different centuries in the liminal zone of Western Transdanubia.