

individuality of historical forms of borders with the help of a differentiated terminology in certain languages. On the other hand, the historian Reinhard Schneider (Saarbrücken), in his paper "Linear borders. From the early to the late Middle Ages", analysed the origin and early development of a form of political border that has become dominant since the beginnings of the absolutistic state in the 17th century. What proved significant above all was the fact that linear borders existed even in medieval times, both in eastern and western Europe.

Another three lectures focused on the history of the Franco-German border in the Saar-Moselle region from an archeological, linguistic and historical point of view. In her contribution, Frauke Stein, the Saarbrücken representative of pre- and early history probed the archeological finds of late antiquity and the Merovingian period with respect to their ethnic significance. Is it possible to regard the ratio of the Romance and Frankish populations (as inferable from the archeological sources) as a precondition for the development of the German-French language border? In a comparative contribution, Wolfgang Haubrichs examined the question whether linear language borders always develop from bilingually mixed areas and disperse structures. These three examples of contact zones between the Romance-speaking and the German-speaking areas (the region of Salzburg, Switzerland, the Saar-Moselle region) seem to suggest that from the very beginning there have been, besides disperse structures, also linear borders, which still require a special historical explanation. In his contribution "The German-French border between 1871-1918", the historian François Roth (Nancy) examined the period of the "Reichsland" Elsaß-Lothringen between the Franco-Prussian war and the First World War. This period is of great significance if one wants to understand the complex situation of our own time (divergence of national and linguistic borders) and the difficult situation of a bilingual region whose inhabitants had to live with the tension caused by two nations turning their respective language into a national standard.

The subsequent lectures compared the situation in the Saar-Moselle region with the situation of borders in other contact or mixed areas in Europe. Volker Bierbrauer (Munich) examined, from the perspective of the archeology of settlements, the multiple and mutual stratification processes of the Romance and the Lombardian population in the border region of the central Alps in the 6th and 7th centuries. Guntram Plangg (Innsbruck) described the gradual and extremely complex emergence of the linguistic borders in the Romance-speaking Tyrolean Alps (mainly in the contact area of Ladinians, Italians and Bavarians in southern Tyrol), a development that lasted many centuries and which even today has not come to a standstill, but whose dynamics are still dependent on political factors. Ernst Eichler (Leipzig), who during the last few decades has certainly been the most eminent scholar in the field of the history of linguistic contacts between Germans and Slavs, offered a brilliant overview of the language border(s) between Elbe and Oder in central Germany. Research on this language border is methodologically very important because the sources are rich in material with respect to the origin of its settlements. Numerous sources containing a wealth of information also permit documentation of the history of the Northumbrian border