



Spatial Representation of the Frontier as one of the Components of Historical Geography

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ABSTRACT

The article considers the spatial representation of the frontier as one of the components of historical geography. The purpose of the study is to determine the affiliation of the concept of 'frontier' to the problem field of historical geography on the basis of scientific and cartographic studies of historians in the context of the formation of Ukrainian territories. The research methodology is based on the principles of historicism, systematicity, and scientificity. The following general historical methods are used: historiographical analysis, terminological analysis, typological, comparative, and cartographic. The study found that the concept of the frontier as a border or border strip can be considered in the context of the problems of historical geography, and the Ukrainian lands are at the intersection of different border contact zones.
Keywords: Frontier, Historical Geography, Great Steppe Border, Ukraine

Introducing the Problem

The issue of the theory of 'frontier' is a very relevant topic today, because it can be traced at the intersection of problem fields of geography and humanities, including history, and historical geography. In its understanding, historical geography concretizes the idea of the historical process in spatial coordinates, connecting the latter with certain areas. And one of the directions of historical geography as a special historical discipline is actually historical political geography, whose research of aims at establishing and transforming state and administrative borders, defining regional centres, etc. Therefore, the concept of the frontier as a border or border strip can be considered in the context of the problems of historical geography.

The border is determined primarily by its geographical location, being a contact zone. This concept was first considered by the American historian F.J. Turner in the late 19th century on the history of the development of the empty spaces of the American continent and the impact of these events on the formation of state-building and nation-building processes. Later, this theory was considered by historians of other countries. According to frontier theory, a similar contact zone was considered on the European continent – the Great Border between West and East. In historical science, this topic has repeatedly been the subject of research by Ukrainian historians such as M. Hrushevsky, S. Rudnytsky, D. Yavornytsky, etc at different times. However, a significant contribution to the development of the theoretical basis of the concept of 'frontier' in the late 80's was made by J. Dashkevych. The issue of the 'Great Border (*frontier*)' occupied an important place in the oriental heritage of the historian. J. Dashkevych emphasized the "mobility of Ukrainian borders" and defined its phenomenon – the Cossacks. The historian developed a theory about the Great Border, inscribing the territory of Ukraine in its longevity. J. Dashkevych had no doubt about the location of Ukrainian lands in the past at the intersection of various natural and anthropogenic borders. In particular, the scientist identified several such borders: biological (ecological) – between the steppe and forest; hydrographic – European watershed between the Black and Baltic Seas; socio-economic – nomadic way of life and settled; ethno-confessional – Christianity and Islam; and ethno-cultural – the culture of the West and East. And based on such a set of borders, J. Dashkevych added the origin of the name 'Ukraine', which replaced the ancient name 'Russia' and is nothing more than the embodiment of the Great Border: Ukraine – the land, country, outskirts, outskirts of one world, opposed to another¹.

Of course, the research of this topic is intensifying for the Ukrainian territories, because almost the entire territory of Ukraine and its history can be considered as a zone of continuous historical-geographical and chronological front. Historian S. Lepyavko, in contrast to J. Dashkevych, considers the idea of forming the Great Steppe Border, pointing out that the line of the Great Border, in particular in the Northern Black Sea Coast, overlapped with the original

1 Ya. Dashkevich, "Ukrayina na mezhi mizh shodom i Zahodom (XIV-XVIII st.)" *Zapiski naukovogo tovaristva imeni Shevchenka*, Lviv, 1991, №222, pp.28-44

steppe border. And accordingly, the adjacent territories were a wide strip of “land on the border”, “countries on the border”. While for most European states the Turkish factor gradually lost its significance or remained an instrument of diplomatic intrigue, for the peoples on the Great Border it remained decisive not only in the political but also in all other spheres of society. According to the historian, the Ukrainian lands were at the forefront of this border from the 16th century and some confrontation of these lands in the future². Historian T. Chukhlib who in one of his articles explores the use of the political identification phrases ‘side of Ukraine’, and ‘otherworldly Ukraine’, among others, touches on the topic of belonging to Ukrainian lands. Chukhlib claims that similar terms in the 17th century were reflected in the diplomatic correspondence of European states³.

‘Ukraine’ – Border Land, Border

This article discusses several aspects of the spatial representation of the frontier. First, the concept of ‘Ukraine’ is represented by the term, *frontier*, because from the very beginning of its existence, since the days of Kievan Rus, it was identified with the peripheral land. In addition, the representation of the frontier was reflected both in the scientific works of historians and in cartographic works. Already in the early 20th century, Ukrainian historians have interpreted the concept of the front in the name “Ukraine” – border land, border. One of them was the geographer and geopolitician S. Rudnytsky, who saw the peculiarity of the geographical position in its “outskirts”. Geopolitically, Ukraine has become a certain border between the Mediterranean and Central Asian world⁴.

The same opinion was held by the historian M. Hrushevsky, who pointed to the “old name Ukraine, Ukrainian, used in Old Russian times in the general sense of the border, and in the 16th century specialized in application to the middle Dnieper, which at the end of the 15th century becomes so dangerous. It was placed in exceptional circumstances, exposed to eternal Tatar attacks by the frontier, acquires special significance from the 17th century, when that eastern Ukraine becomes the centre and representative of the new Ukrainian life and desires, dreams and hopes of modern Ukraine”⁵.

Secondly, the concept of the front is considered as an integral part of the Ukrainian lands; the Black Sea, the Wild Field, Sloboda Ukraine, etc. At one time, the Black Sea acted as a contact zone and a certain frontier for obvious geopolitical reasons. Therefore, it is not surprising that at different times all state formations on Ukrainian lands naturally sought to establish control

2 S. Lep'yavko, “Velikij kordon Yevropi yak faktor stanovlennya ukrayinskogo kozactva (XVI st.)”, *Zaporizka spadshina, Zaporizhzhya*, 2001, №12. pp. 53-59

3 T. Chukhlib “Uzhivannya politiko-identifikacijnih spoluchen”storona Ukrayini”, “togobichna Ukrayina”, “oboh storin Dnipra”, “toj bik Dnipra”, “Zanipryanska storona” (1673-1686 rr.)”, *Chornomors'ka mynushyna*, 2019, №14, pp.20-29

4 S. Rudnickij, “Ukrayinska sprava zi stanovisha politichnoyi geografii” *Rudnickij S. Chomu mi hochemo samostijnoyi Ukrayini?*, Lviv, 1994, pp. 94-208

5 M. Grushevskij, “*Istoriya Ukrayini Rusi*”, Kiyiv, 1913, T.1, p. 648

over the northern coast of the Black Sea. The very logic of historical circumstances forced Ukrainians to enter the sphere of Black Sea relations and influences, what M. Hrushevsky defined as “Black Sea orientation”. In his opinion, “historical living conditions oriented Ukraine to the West, geographically oriented to the South, to the Black Sea... When the circumstances were favourable, Ukraine went so far as to widely take over the Black Sea coast and become a strong foot here”⁶. That is why historians have already represented Ukraine in the context of the contact zone in the political aspect.

Contact Frontline Zones - Wild Field, Black Sea, Budzhak

However, both the territory of Ukraine as a whole and its individual regions can be characterized as a separate border, where the Wild Field region is a clear example of this. Even based on the dictionary interpretation of the term “frontier”, which is a wide strip of uninhabited lands, which for a long time unable to put under its reliable control, neither society located on either side clearly fits into the idea of the Wild Field region. The difference between the front line and the usual state border may be the actual lack of clear demarcation – lines of demarcation and delimitation. In most cases, the territorial boundaries of the front are quite conditional and are formed spontaneously, and therefore can change dynamically depending on the balance of forces of the surrounding communities. Usually the frontier is also understood as a contact zone of cultures, civilizations, etc⁷. Indeed, the concept of frontier includes in its interpretation and not only territorial affiliation, but also the contact zone in the context of colonization processes, the development of previously uninhabited areas, which in any case leads to certain assimilation processes in neighbouring nations.

The wild field as a region in its general sense clearly fits into the concept of such a contact frontline zone as it is the traditional name of the Black Sea steppes in the 16th and 17th centuries. Historically, this region surrounded Rus'-Ukraine from the south, and in the Middle Ages no neighbouring state controlled it completely. And only with the advent of such a phenomenon as the Cossacks, we can talk about the beginnings of development and colonization in the future of this region.

The historian M. Hrushevsky also pointed out the peculiarity of this region in his *History of Ukraine-Russia*, emphasizing the uncontrolled border, which began with the middle Dniester valley. “The Russian state of the 11-13th centuries actually ended here, followed by the steppe, the ‘field’, which already lived in completely different circumstances, completely outside the influence of Russian state life, or only in a weaker dependence on it”, he noted⁸.

According to S. Rudnytsky, the geographical position of our country “is the most important natural element in the political life of Ukraine since ancient times”. He divides Ukrainian lands into three groups: central, border and Ukrainian colonies in Eurasia. As a contact zone or

6 M. Grushevskij, “*Na porozi novoyi Ukrayini: gadki i mriyi*”, Kiyiv, 1918, p.120

7 V. Brehunenکو, “Frontir”, Enciklopediya istoriyi Ukrayini, Kiyiv, 2013, T.10. pp.335

8 M. Grushevskij, “*Istoriya Ukrayini Rusi*”, Lviv, 1905, T.2, p. 634

border, he defines the Black Sea steppes, pointing to the catalyst for political and geographical relations – the Tatars. The geopolitician outlined this region, which separated the Turkish-Tatar territories from the Polish-Lithuanian and Moscow ‘outskirts’, which later became the region of settlement of the Ukrainian Cossacks. In addition, he stressed out that this region had important political significance, calling the Cossacks a product of the unfortunate political and geographical situation of Ukraine, S. Rudnytsky emphasized the role of the Cossacks in this context. It was the Cossacks who managed to create an independent strong political and military organization here. And from the end of the 18th century the decline of the Tatar state led to colonization processes and the expansion of the Ukrainian national territory to the shores of the Black Sea⁹.

Historian and Cossack scholar D. Yavornytsky is of the opinion that the Cossacks mastered the steppes “began to settle spontaneously near the Dnieper River, below the rapids, in empty places and wild fields”. In addition, the researcher clearly delineated the borders. On the eve of the fall of the Sich, the boundaries of the liberties of the Zaporozhian Cossacks were defined as follows: From the Bakhmut River below the ‘old’ Ukrainian line, built in 1733, which stretched from the mouth of the Eagle to the top of the Seversky Donets, to the river Bug, 600 miles long, from the mouth of the Byrd to the ‘old’ Ukrainian line, 350 miles long; in the east with the land of the Don Cossacks; in the south and the west by the Turkish lands – Ochakov and Crimea, and opposite to Kuban – to Azov Sea.¹⁰

Actually, with the development of the steppes by the Cossacks up to the Black Sea, the concept of the *Wild Field* gradually became obsolete, which was reflected in the cartographic aspect. In the scientific research of A. Baitsar, the reflection of the Wild Field on the maps of Dutch, French and German cartographers during the 17th and 18th centuries is studied. The historian notes that it was the Dutch cartographer Isaac Massa who introduced into European science the Ukrainian name of the southern Dnieper steppes *Wild field*, which began to be marked on the maps as ‘Wild field’. However, having studied the map in detail, you can see a certain bias in the region, because on the map the Moscow Ryazan region is shown as Ocraina, south of which is Dikoia Pole (Wild Field)¹¹.

Thus, at the beginning of the 20th century, M. Hrushevsky in his map, which was included in the *Short History of Ukraine* gave the Ukrainian ethnic lands, but signed the region as the Black Sea lowlands¹². Geopolitician and cartographer S. Rudnytsky in his *Ethnographic Overview Map of Ukraine* also points to Chem Saporogebiet¹³. So actually in the early 20th century, on

9 S. Rudnickij «Chomu mi hochemo samostijnoyi Ukrayini?», Lviv, 1994, p.416

10 D. Yavornickij, «Istoriya zaporozkikh kozakiv», Kiyiv, 1990, pp. 596

11 A. Bajcar, «Nazvi «Okraina» ta «Dike Pole» na kartah gollandskogo kartografa Isaaka Abrahamsona Massa (persha pol. XVII st.)», 2018, <http://baitsar.blogspot.com/2018/01/xvii.html>

12 M. Grushevskij, „Ukrayinski etnichni zemli“, 1915, 1 karta

13 S. Rudnickij, „Etnografichna ogyadova karta Ukrayini“, *Visnik geodeziji ta kartografiji*, Kiyiv, 2010, № 5 (68), p. 46

Ukrainian maps of the Black Sea or the South of the Ukrainian lands it is in scientific use and means exactly the same territories as the Wild Field.

The frontier plays a significant role in shaping the ethnic composition of the population as the contact zone of different ethnic groups is usually formed in such frontline or border areas. A peculiar phenomenon in the context of this concept is part of the southern Ukrainian territory, *Budzhak*. This name is translated from Turkish and reflects the concept of 'border' or 'corner'. Already in the early 19th century active migration processes took place in this territory, in particular the mass resettlement of the Bulgarian population from the right to the left bank of the Danube, as a result of which the Bulgarians became the largest ethnic group in the south of Ukraine, in particular in Budzhak. At the same time, ethnic maps of the territory of the Russian Empire began to be created, which depicted the peculiarities of the settlement of various ethnic groups, including the Bulgarian population. Quite often, it was depicted on maps as a separate ethnic community. One of the first ethnic maps where the author turned to the cartographic representation of the ethnic population is P. Keppen's. He was one of the founders of the *Russian Geographical Society*. His *Ethnographic Map of European Russia* (1851) was part of a larger *Ethnographic Atlas of European Russia* (1848)¹⁴. In Russia this is the first map of the ethnic composition of the state on the basis of 'tribal affiliation'. The map shows the areas of settlement of 38 ethnic groups, including the *Bulgarians*. According to the map, a significant number of Bulgarians lived in Ackerman County, Bessarabia Province. You can also find a small number of Bulgarians in the modern Zaporozhye region of Ukraine. Thus, the map gives a clear understanding of the population of the region and other ethnic groups, which in the future is a confirmation of the formation of contact zones.

Conclusion

Thus, the concept of 'frontier' first proposed by the American historian J. Turner in the late 19th century, quickly came into use by Ukrainian historians to study Ukrainian lands. Ukrainian historians have pointed out that the frontier is already directly reflected in the name 'Ukraine', which means outskirts. Other Ukrainian lands; the Black Sea, the Wild Field, Slobidska Ukraine, Budzhak are constantly at the intersection of several contact zones due to their territorial location. And the history of the Ukrainian Cossacks is the history of the frontier and frontier community, which clearly fits into the study of historical geography. Thus, the frontier is an integral part of historical geography as it by definition involves the study of territorial and ethnic aspects over a period of time.

14 P. Keppen, Etnograficheskaya karta Evropejskoj Rossii, Reprintnoe izdanie 1851 g., SPb.: Alfaret, 2008., 18 l.: 1 k.

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