



## The Frontier Person and the Border: in Search of the Native (Southern Ukraine of the 18<sup>th</sup> and Early 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries)

Svitlana Kaiuk<sup>1</sup>



**Corresponding author/Sorumlu yazar:**  
Svitlana Kaiuk (Assoc. Prof.), Oles Honchar  
Dnipro National University, Candidate of  
Historical Sciences, Department of History,  
Dnipro, Ukraine.  
E-posta: skaiuk22@gmail.com  
ORCID: 0000-0002-2452-2642

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### ABSTRACT

The article explores the development of the frontier population's daily practices along the officially established state borders. The Zaporozhian Cossacks were found amidst the endless Eurasian Steppe and closely interacted with the Turkic community. Since the very beginning, the frontier corporations have built their own lifestyle, which they associate with the freedom of choice and movement not limited either by religion, language, or social identity. The establishment of state borders as lines intended for separation and opposition actually emphasized the frontier population's desire to look for common ground, to easily change religion, language, citizenship in order to preserve the native, which is associated with free life.

**Keywords:** Frontier, Frontier Population, Zaporozhian Cossacks, Tatars, Crimean Khanate, Ottoman Empire, Russian Empire, The Russo-Turkish Treaties



The period covering the late 20<sup>th</sup> – early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries proved to be surprisingly productive for Ukrainian historians. Shaking themselves off the ideologies and history-based stereotypes nurtured in the Soviet past, Ukrainian historians had an opportunity to create their own national narrative expanding the sources of research, the scope of questions and themes via applying new methodological guidelines. The task undertaken by a new generation of historians was not only to build a new historical narrative of Ukraine purged of colonial influences, but also to close the methodological gap that occurred within the last decades. Frontier studies has offered an opportunity in this respect. The idea that the Frontier thesis, advanced by the American historian F. Turner in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, should be applied to the Eurasian Steppe was suggested in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century by O. Lattimore and W. McNeill.<sup>1</sup> Y. Dashkevich, a well-respected domestic historian widely-known among Ukrainian scholars, was the first (1989–1991) to highlight the possibility and importance of applying the thesis to the South-Ukrainian steppes, which for centuries have been a home for the representatives of Slavic and Turkic ethnic groups.<sup>2</sup> These remarks were pursued vigorously by a group of researchers, primarily those involved with exploring the history of Ukrainian Cossacks which led to noteworthy works by S. Lepiavka, V. Brekhunenko, V. Grybovsky, B. Milchev and several others.<sup>3</sup> Ukrainian historians perceive the Frontier thesis as a great tool to enforce the main message that the Cossacks played a crucial role in Ukrainian history. For it is a well-established fact that the “Cossack Myth”, peculiar both to nation idealization, largely depicted in folklore, and of academic works by many generations of researchers, occupies a predominant position in Ukrainian historiography.<sup>4</sup>

The Eurasian Steppe has embraced the history of numerous border military corporations similar to the Cossacks – men’s unions.<sup>5</sup> The Frontier thesis makes it possible to clarify several

- 1 <sup>1</sup>Owen Lattimore, “Inner Asian Frontiers: Chinese and Russian Margins of Expansion”. *Studies in Frontier History. Collected Papers*. Paris, 1962. P. 138–152. 6. Owen Lattimore, “The Nomads and South Russia”. *Archeion Pontou*. 1979. Vol. 35. P. 193–200.; William N. McNeill, *Europe’s Steppe Frontier, 1500–1800*. Chicago, 1964.
- 2 Yaroslav Dashkevich, “Bolshaya granitsa Ukrainyi (etnicheskii barer ili etnokontaktnaya zona)” *Etnokontaktnyye zony v evropeyskoy chasti SSSR (Geografiya, dinamika, metody izucheniya)*. Moskva. 1989. S. 7–20. Yaroslav Dashkevych, “Ukrayina na mezhi mizh Skhodom i Zakhodom (XIV—18th st.)” *Zapysky Naukovoho tovarystva im. Shevchenka*. T.CC21thl: Pratsi istoriko - filosofskoyi sektsiyi. 1991. - S. 28–44.
- 3 Viktor Brekhunenko, “Kozaky na Stepovomu Kordonu Yevropy. Typolohiya kozats’kykh spil’not XVI – pershoji polovyny XVII st.”. Kyiv, 2011.; Serhiy Lep’yavko, “Velykyy Kordon Yevropy yak faktor stanovlennya ukraiyins’koho kozatstva (XVI st.)”. Zaporizhzhya, 2001; Serhiy Lep’yavko, “Ukrayins’ke kozatstvo i teoriya Velykoho Kordonu” *Kozats’ka spadshchyna*. 2005. №2. S. 14–18; Volodymyr Mil’chev, “Narys z istoriyi zaporoz’koho kozatstva 18th st.”. Zaporizhzhya, 2009. Vladislav Gribovskiy, Dmitriy Sen’, “Frontirnyye elity i problema stabilizatsii granits Rossyiskoy i Osmanskoj imperiy v pervoy treti 18th v.: deyatel’nost’ kubanskogo seraskera Bakhty-Gireya”. *Ukraina v Tsentral’no-Skhidnyy Evropi*. Vip.9-10. Kyiv: IJU NANU. 2010. S. 193–226; Svitlana Mohul’ova-Kaiuk, “Zaporoz’ke kozatstvo i Velykyy Stepovyy kordon”. *Istoriya: Dopovid i ta povidomlennya Chetvertoho Mizhnarodnogo konhresu ukraiyinistiv*. Odesa, Kyiv, L’viv. 1999. Ch. 1. S. 241.
- 4 Serhiy Plokhiiy, “Brama Yevropy. Istoriya Ukrayiny vid skifs’kykh voyen do nezalezhnosti”. Kharkiv, 2016.; Serhiy Plokhiiy, “Kozats’kyy mif. Istoriya ta natsiyetvorennya v epokhu imperiy. K., 2014.; «Poverkh kordonu»: kontseptsiya prykordonnya yak ob’yekt doslidzhennya. Forum” *Ukrayina moderna*. 2011. №18.
- 5 Vladyslav Hrybovskyy, “Zaporoz’ke kozatstvo i cholovichi soyuzy Kavkazu ta Tsentral’noyi Azii v komparatyvnyy perspektyvi”. *Hileya: naukovyy visnyk: Zbirnyk naukovykh prats*. K., 2011. Vyp. 52. S. 116–130.

issues related to the contemporary history of Ukraine and Russia. However, while Ukrainian researchers found it necessary to use this thesis for their practical needs and to generally emphasize the frontier's positive role in the South-Ukrainian steppe reclamation, Russian historians, on the contrary, left the Frontier thesis in the history of Cossack communities on the margins, highlighting solely the "frontier complex" or "social/cultural trauma" in poor reclamation of the vast Asian, primarily Siberian, land.<sup>6\*</sup> Modern Ukrainian researches go hand-in-hand with the reflections of their Western colleagues A. Rieber and A. Kappeler upon the vision of the Eurasian Steppe frontier.<sup>7</sup> Thus, the South-Ukrainian frontier serves as a zone of interaction, mutual impacts, simultaneous confrontations and mutual understanding.<sup>8</sup>

The Ukrainian Cossack community was built amidst the frontier and Turkic neighbourhood. The Tatar nomadic hordes bordering the Cossack settlements (who were no settlers at all), the emergence of the Crimean Khanate and the rise of the Cossacks, which was officially recognized by the Polish government in the second half of the 16th century, and their enclaves by the Dnieper steeps determined the history of the South-Ukrainian Steppe for centuries to come. This is the history of confrontation and interaction, as well as development of similar daily practices and behavioural patterns. Yet, it was the frontier setting that built its own identity, which further framed the image of Cossack as a frontiersman.<sup>9</sup> The image of the Tatars is still waiting for its unprejudiced researchers.

The frontier develops its own types of social arrangement. The unique nature of the South-Ukrainian frontier compared to Central and East-Ukrainian lands, which also gave room for border military corporations, lies in a quite long "withdrawal", uncontrollability and inability of the central government to influence the affairs initiated by the border communities. At the same time, an attempt to reclaim the Ukrainian part of the frontier was made by people sharing the political ideas of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, following which they believed in

6 Vladimir Maslak, "Otsiya stepnogo frontira Evropy v sovremennom rossiyskom i ukrainskom kazakovedenii". *Rossiyskiy gumanitarnyy zhurnal*. 2014. T. 3. №4. S. 297-304; Irina Basalayeva, "Sotsial'naya dinamika v lokal'nom sotsiokul'turnom prostranstve". Avtoreferat dissertatsii na soiskaniye uchenoy stepeni kandidata filosofskikh nauk. Kemerovo. 2013.

\* A good exception are the works by Russian scholar D. Sen', who frequently participates in joint Ukrainian-and-Russian research projects exploring the Eurasian Steppe frontier and Cossack organizations: Dmitriy Sen', "Vzaimootnosheniya kalmukov i kubanskogo sultana Bakhty-Gireya: taktika i strategiya pogranychnogo sotrudnichestva (seredina – vtoraya polovina 1720-kh gg.)" *Magna adurgit: historia studiorum*. Elista: KalmNTS RAN. 2019. №1. S.125–161.

7 Andreas Kappeler, "Yuzhnyy i vostochnyy frontir Rossii v XVI-18th vekakh". *Ab Imperio*. 2003. №1. S. 47–63; Alfred Rieber. "Menyayushchiesya kontseptsii i konstruktssii frontira: sravnitel'no-istoricheskii podkhod". *Novaya imperskaya istoriya postsovetskogo prostranstva*. Kazan', 2004. S. 108–219; Alfred Rieber, "The Struggle for the Eurasian Border-lands: From the Rise of Early Modern Empires to the End of the First World War". New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014.

8 Viktor Brekhunenko, Vladyslav Hrybovs'kyy, Yuriy Mytsyk, Valentyna Piskun, Ivan Synyak, Ina Tarasenko, Mizh konfrontatsiyeyu ta vzyemodiyeyu: ukrayies'ko-kryms'ki ta ukrayins'ko-nohays'ki stosunky v XVII – pershiy polovyni XX st. Za red. V. Brekhunenka. K.: IUAD. 2018.

9 Svitlana Kaiuk, "Frontyrna identychnist". *Etnonatsional'nyy svit Prydniprov'ya: kolektyvna monohrafiya*. Kharkiv. 2018. S. 153-163.

the exclusiveness and superiority of armed man with ability to fight, in their right for legal recognition by government officials of the frontier-neighbouring states. At that point, the Ukrainian Cossacks were found amidst constant interaction with the Turks and encountered the practices of a steppe lifestyle.

Tough frontier conditions cultivated forms of self-organization within the representatives of traditional culture (whether agricultural or cattle-breeding) that perceive democracy in its original, “barbaric” meaning, i.e., the power of the strongest and the most agile – those who have the best survival skills. If someone with even better survival skills appears the next day, they were to be chosen for yielding authority. An adverse option would seriously hamper the surviving capability of the entire group of self-sufficient individuals who solely recognized a prime form of power. A frontier leader should not so much meet physical requirements, as be able to interpret socio cultural environment, apply extra-frontier life experience to skilfully resolving disputes with neighbouring countries and their politicians. It was namely frontier leaders who would often change a political map of their region via building new state-like formations through conquests. For the South-Ukrainian frontier, such a leader was Bohdan Khmelnytsky, who was fully aware of the political situation both in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and in the Ottoman Empire, and thus managed to expand the territory of the Zaporozhian Army far beyond its original domains. Initially, the frontier was multi-ethnic, multi-religious, multilingual and diverse, yet it adhered to its inner laws of existence.

The frontier’s daily practices shaped individual characteristics, out of which belligerence predominates, as otherwise it is impossible to survive in an area with no law enforcement; other traits include proactive attitude, confidence, cunningness, agility, early intervention, which entails leadership and consequently, permanent changeability. The natural conditions of the Steppe as an open space give rise to mobility and dynamism. As a result, we encounter a prototype ahead of its time, a person of the New age. This entails a conflict that cannot easily be detected inside the frontier (although its daily life is full of routine, yet non-constant clashes), but outside its borders – a conflict with the so-called Hinterland, which has over time become hostile.

The South-Ukrainian frontier personality was shaped via the image of the territory, which had become a place of permanent residence – *Own land / unique Place* – endless Eurasian Steppes, *illimitable*, immense area – the one that does not limit either freedom of movement, or freedom of action, on the contrary, grants a right of choice, with the condition that one has to accept self-responsibility. Such a frontiersman is not burdened or bound by state rules, but has to elaborate on a set of survival laws. In the course of time, these norms turned into traditions zealously protected by frontier corporations as being life-essential. This explains the desire to stick to their customary law, to look for new territories to enjoy this right, even when linear borders were supposed to contain human activity and the frontier was about to disappear.

The South-Ukrainian frontier was formed between two political bodies – the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the Ottoman Empire and the Russian Empire, which at different times tried first to interact, and then to conquer and reclaim these areas. Yet, the integrity of frontier practices appeared to be more effective than the empires' desires. It was particularly effort-consuming for the Russian Empire, who, in their effort to seize the Northern Black Sea coast in the second half of the 18th century, had to cope with Ukrainian-Turkic (Tatar and Turkish) confrontation. Self-sufficient frontier life of long centuries free of government intervention cultivated into a behavioural consistency within the frontier communities (Cossacks and Tatars intensively interacting with the Ottoman Turks which ensured the defeat of the Novorossiia Russian project and gave rise to Southern Ukraine. This also surprisingly happened at a time when the frontier line was under constant pressure from central governments that preferred an abolishment of uncontrolled border areas.

The time when state borders had emerged was determinant for the South-Ukrainian frontier, as it tested the stability of everyday life practices and communities' ability to defend themselves, adjust to new conditions and elaborate new survival patterns. The emergence of new borders means gradual vanishing of the frontier setting. Hence, it was possible to trace back for what exactly represented the greatest value for people who for a long time had been building their own lifestyle; what exactly they wished to preserve and what they were ready to give up. This period can vividly demonstrate the frontier people's nature and, consequently, answer the question whether the South-Ukrainian frontier was separating or uniting.

The first attempts to establish the border between the Ottoman Empire and the Tzardom of Muskovy were recorded in the 1700 treaty signed in Istanbul (Tzargorod, according to the Muskovy version) and called "peace in the form of a ceasefire".<sup>10</sup> Yet, the treaty does not indicate a clear boundary between the states; on the contrary, it emphasizes the expansion of an empty area between the lands of the Zaporozhian Sich, Turkish Ochakiv and Tatar Perekop. Certain settlements along the Dnieper, such as Kizikermen, Sagin Kerment and others, were to be razed. The territorial landmark was a ten- or twelve-hour horse-ride from particular fortresses and cities. In other words, the treaty provided no clear information, but was highly beneficial to the Tatars and Turks whose horses were more agile. The major statement of the treaty encouraged the Tatars and the Cossacks not to attack each other and not to violate peace, but once borderline misunderstandings and conflicts arose, they were dealt with by border officials and khans. Yet, further attempts to meet peace requirements and, consequently, to remove fortifications or to build new ones, produced an opposite effect: the Zaporozhian Sich and the Crimean Khanate decided to unite forces against Moscow and Istanbul's attempts to invade the territory they considered their own. This initiative belonged to the Crimean khan Devlet Geray, who was unsatisfied with the changing status of the Crimean Khanate, since it now lacked the right to collect tribute from Moscow. Hence, the shift in political affairs

10 Polnoe sobranie zakonov Rossijskoj imperii. T. 4. Sankt Peterburg. 1830. S. 66-72.

induced the Crimean khan towards laying claim to the Ottoman Porte and thinking over new alliances. The emergence of Moscow fortresses within the frontier was not appealing either to the Cossacks, or to the Tatars.<sup>11</sup> Thus, those who were defined by the Istanbul treaty as constant potential enemies decided to unite in order to defend the territory they considered their own. This alliance outlined the trend of events to come pertaining to the confrontation between the empires and the frontier communities. Faith, language, cultural and ethnic differences did not hinder this cooperation.

Istanbul and Moscow were even more deeply surprised by the frontier communities and their leaders' activity against land delimitation and border establishment carried out by government agents. Kost Gordienko, Kish otaman of the Zaporozhian Sich, clearly presented territorial claims and emphasized the Cossacks' awareness of the territory they believed to be their heritage.<sup>12</sup> In fact, notwithstanding the joint committee's delimitation effort, the line-shaped border appeared only on paper; the frontier life reality did not allow empire officials even to place any borderline signs or to declare state presence in this area.<sup>13</sup>

In another political episode of history, the alliance between Ukrainian Hetman I. Mazepa and the Swedish king against Muscovy tsar Peter I, which ended with a military defeat, led to the first wave of Ukrainian political immigration and Cossacks migration to the Ottoman Empire. The frontier communities that rather fought against each other than found common ground now had to compromise. For several decades, the Zaporozhian Sich became part of the Crimean Khanate and lived under the supreme sovereignty of the Crimean khan and the Turkish sultan. The Ochakiv steppe, the mouth of Dniester, some parts of Kuban and the Danube lowlands became new long-term Cossack settlements. Hence, their living area expanded, yet did not lose the frontier peculiarities. Environmental conditions were very similar to those at the Dnieper, and intermingling with the Muslim daily practices was not overwhelming. Thus, borderlines marked by Ottoman and Muscovy diplomats in the early 18th century proved invalid and laid the foundation for a new tradition, which is not to pay attention to delimitation marks intended for separation. In this case, state borders united communities that were supposedly dwelling on the opposite sides of an imaginary line. This union was by no means hindered by different religious identities – Christian and Muslim, which were referred to as confronting. This illustrates A. Rieber's view of the borders that are rather porous than impenetrable.<sup>14</sup>

11 Vladislav Gribovskiy, "Razgranicheniye stepnykh vladenyi Osmanskoj i Rossijskoj imperij v 1704 i 1705 gg." *Scriptorium nostrum*. 2014. № 1. S. 225-246.

12 Kordony Viys'ka Zaporoz'koho ta diyal'nist' rosijs'ko-turets'koyi mezhovoyi komisiji 1705 r. (za dokumentamy RDADA). [uporyadnyk V. Mil'chev].

13 Vladislav Gribovskiy, "Razgranicheniye stepnykh vladenyi Osmanskoj i Rossijskoj imperij v 1704 i 1705 gg." *Scriptorium nostrum*. 2014. № 1. S. 225-246.

14 Al'fred Riber. "Menyayushchiesya kontseptsii i konstruktsii frontira: sravnitel'no-istoricheskij podkhod". *Novaya imperskaya istoriya postsovet'skogo prostranstva*. Kazan', 2004. S. 108–219.

Further attempts to establish the Russo-Turkic border and to stabilize the borderline brought about the same results, i.e. they were fruitless. These attempts only underlined the formidable influence of the role of the frontier elites in the empires' attempt to arrange the frontier territory and to establish linear borders.<sup>15</sup>

The change in the geopolitical environment in the early 1730s and the Russian Empire's preparation for war with the Ottoman Empire caused the Zaporozhian Sich to return to their old Dnieper territory, under the patronage of the Russian emperor. However, the Kuban Nogai, who had settled in the area in the absence of the Zaporozhians, triggered a complicated confrontation within the frontier.<sup>16</sup> The Russo-Turkish War of 1735-1739 led to bloody clashes on the stepped borderline and split the frontier communities apart, as the Budgak, Bilhorod and Nogai Tatars fought on the Ottoman side, and the Zaporozhian Cossacks fighting for the Russian Empire. The same line of events repeated during the Russo-Turkish war of 1768-1774, but it resulted not necessarily in an absolute confrontation between the frontier communities; on the contrary, it elaborated new practices better suited for the conditions of a great war between regular armies.<sup>17</sup> The 1739 Treaty of Belgrad actually confirmed and specified the regulations of the Treaty of Karlowitz and the Peace of Istanbul.<sup>18</sup> Just like in previous treaties, old borders were preserved. To establish the borderlines, however, the parties were to send selected commissioners that would legally be working under the authority of the Crimean khan (article 15). In order to understand the frontier situation, especially religion-wise, it was important to lean on those clauses of the treaty that kept record of and legalized religious conversion by those who would cross the border (articles 7,8). Only those captives who converted to Christianity in Russia and to Islam in the Ottoman Empire could return. Similarly, only those fugitives who wished to change religion were not to be delivered to the opposing parties. Thus, religious conversion within the frontier population crossing the imaginary border was frequent and was considered an obvious fact by the political authorities in these years. Consequently, Christianity and Islam as religion and lifestyle were equally plausible to the frontier population on both side of the border and did not serve as separating factors. The documents of the New Sich Kosh Archive (1734-1775) confirm this phenomenon at various times.<sup>19</sup> Even with the emergence of borders as separating lines, the frontier remained multi-religious and multi-cultural. Sometimes it testifies to indifference to religion and all necessary

15 Vladislav Gribovskiy, Dmitriy Sen', "Frontirnyye elity i problema stabilizatsii granits Rossiyskoy i Osmanskoy imperiy v pervoy treti 18th v.: deyatelnost' kubanskogo seraskera Bakhty-Gireya". *Ukraina v Tsentral'no-Skhidniy Evropi*. Vip.9-10. Kyiv: IIU NANU. 2010. S. 193-226.

16 Dmitriy Evarnitskiy, *Istochniki dlya istorii zaporozhskikh kazakov*. Vladimir. 1908. T.2. S.1113-1114.

17 Svitlana Kaiuk, "Lyudy frontyru v umovakh viyny: pochatok rosiiys'ko-turets'koyi viyny 1806-1812 rr. u zhytti zaporoz'koho kozatstva". *Mizhdystyplinarni humanitarni studiyi. Ser. : Istorychni nauky*. 2015. Vyp. 2. S. 64-72.

18 *Polnoe sobranie zakonov Rossijskoj imperii*. T. 10. S. 899-904.

19 *Arkhiv Kosha Novoyi Zaporoz'koyi Sichi. Korpus dokumentiv 1734-1775, T. 2 / Uporyad.: Histsova L. Z., Avtonomov D. L., Demchenko L. Ya., Drozd Ye. I. ta in. K., 2000.*



rituals as a mandatory life constituent, particularly from the Cossacks' side.<sup>20</sup> Survival and quick adjustment to new conditions, which under approximating empires becomes a constant component of the frontier line, remain predominant and the most motivating for the frontier people under the emergence of linear borders.

The mid-18th century, at a time when the New Sich emerged, was marked with qualitative changes in the life of the South-Ukrainian frontier population. Despite frequent migrations of the Tatar hordes (Попри часті міграції татарських орд (Edichkul, Yedisian etc), the proximity of their nomad camps to Zaporozhian settlements, frequent territorial misunderstandings and conflict, the situation at large was returning to normal. The steppe borderline population increased, trade relations were improved, and agriculture (on Cossacks' end) was gradually rising. New economic relations required the frontier lifestyle to encompass tranquillity and standardization. Yet, both the Cossacks, and the Tatars saw a possibility to establish contacts and control over the borderline life without any intervention on the part of the Empires' governmental institutions.<sup>21</sup>

The Northern Black Sea Coast experienced dramatic change upon the termination of the Russo-Turkish War of 1768-1774 and establishment of the new Russo-Turkish border. The Zaporozhian Cossacks' participation in the war on the Russian side clearly showed for a part of the Cossacks that it did not make sense to return to Russia. The empire was approaching the lands of the Zaporozhian Army, establishing its order and control, a fact that became apparent during the Cossacks' Danube expeditions led by Russian military leaders.<sup>22</sup> Zaporozhians had a good knowledge of the Danubian lands since the early 18th century; their former stays in the Northern Black Sea area of the Crimean Khanate and the Ottoman Empire assured the Cossacks of the possibility to live a better life and to preserve their frontier traditions: the Cossack right, elective government, independence from the central government, freedom of movement etc.<sup>23</sup> During the war, the Old Ritualists, another frontier community of the Nekrasovites, migrated from Kuban to the Danube region and joined their co-religionists.<sup>24</sup> So, the frontier communities demonstrated proactive behaviour: they moved faster than the linear borders and sought to keep away from as far as possible. When choosing a route, their main concern was the possibility to preserve their own rights and traditions as well as to stay

20 Svitlana Kaiuk, "Relihiynist' frontyrnoho naseleння pivdenoukrayins'koho rehionu v ostanniy chverti 18th – na pochatku 19th st." *Mizhdystyplinarni humanitarni studiyi. Ser. : Istorychni nauky*. 2017. Vyp. 3. S. 146-155.

21 Svitlana Andryeyeva, "Dyplomatychni znosyny Zaporoz'koyi Novoyi Sichi z Kryms'kym khanstvom" *Naukovi pratsi istorychnoho fakul'tetu ZDU. Zaporizhzhya*. 2009. Vyp. 26. S. 104-108.

22 Olexandr Ryabinin-Sklyarevs'kyy, "Zaporiz'ki bunty dunaytsiv 1771–1774 rr. i pochatok Zadunays'koho Kosha". *Naukovyy zbirnyk UAN*. Kyiv. T. 26, 1927, S. 65–83.

23 Svitlana Kaiuk, "Zadunays'ka Sich: sproby zaporozhtsiv prodovzhyty svoyu istoriyu za mezhamy pervisnoyi terytoriyi". *Naukovi pratsi istorychnoho fakul'tetu ZDU*. Vyp. VIII. Zaporizhzhya. 1999. S.255- 259.

24 Dmitriy Sen', "Pereseleniye kubanskikh kazakov-nekrasovtsev v Osmanskuyu imperiyu v 18th v.: diskussiya, novyye istochniki, perspektivy izucheniya" *Lipovane: istoriya i kul'tura russkikh staroobryadsev*. Red.-sost. A.A. Prigarin. Odessa. 2008. Vyp. 5. S.23-38.



away from the state border. Even the borders outlined in the Treaty of Kuchuk-Kainarji were not able to impose any hindrances. Few government institutions appearing in this region (such as quarantine posts, border guards) did not limit the freedom of moving around the land of the Black Sea Coast. Government institutions dealt only with those who sought official recognition. Others kept living an ordinary life adjusting to Russia's stricter intervention and its attempt to establish control.<sup>25</sup>

The Treaty of Kuchuk-Kainarji of 1774 is well-known for its acknowledgement of the Crimean Khanate's independence from the Ottoman Empire and, consequently, for paving the way for a possible incorporation by the Russian Empire; in addition, the treaty assigned Kerch and Enikale to Russia, while the lands between the Bug and the Dniester remained with the Crimean Khanate.<sup>26</sup> However, the treaty's major purpose was to outline a framework to be referred to by future generations for solving highly disputed, border-related problems. In this respect, the highest importance belongs to the repetition of the clauses that had already been included in all previous treaties of 1700. Particularly, not a single person (either a robber, or a deserter, or a fugitive peasant) crossing the border could return if they had clearly announced a shift in their religious identity: Islam in the Ottoman Empire and Christianity in the Russian Empire. Hence, for those who wished to change citizenship while crossing the border, the practice of religious conversion remained a key factor. Thus, the linear border proved to be conflict-resolving and uniting. It is noteworthy that all this was happening within the framework which became determinant for the Russian Empire, as since the second half of the 18th century, the supporters of Russian conquest in the region had clearly envisioned a justification for Russian military endeavours as the defence of the Orthodox Christian faith. In this regard, converting to Islam by those to whom Russia had commonly referred as the Christian chivalric order (the Cossacks) was highly significant.

The last quarter of the 18th century dramatically affected the lives of the frontier communities of Southern Ukraine: in 1775, the Zaporozhian Sich was destroyed and in 1783, the Crimean Khanate was occupied. They were the consequences of 1774 the "peace". A part of the Cossacks and the Tatars, who wished to stay in their accustomed frontier circumstances, preferred to move away from the Russian Empire and official state borders. This gave rise to a long-term immigration wave to the Ottoman Empire, along the Danube and farther. Obviously, Russian government officials did not like such a turn of events, for the frontier communities appeared to be disobedient, uncontrollable and actually forced the Empire to solve the so-called "Cossack Issue".

25 Svitlana Kaiuk, "Karantynni ustanovy yak instytutsiyi, abo frontyrne naselennya v novykh derzhavnykh umovakh". *Chornomors'ka mynushyna: Zapysky Viddilu istoriyi kozatstva na pivdni Ukrainy*, Odesa. Vyp. 11. 2016. S. 24–38.

26 Polnoe sobranie zakonov Rossijskoj imperii. T.19. S. 957-967.

The correspondence between the borderline officials and the central government testifies to a close attention to Cossacks' and Tatars' migration on part of the Russian government. Reports from Russian spies on the whereabouts of the Cossack and Tatar fugitives were thoroughly analysed and transferred to supreme authorities. The correspondence, which is kept in the Military Science Archive (the MSA stock of the Russian State Military History Archive, hereinafter – RGVA), demonstrates that in the second half of the 1770s (i.e. in the first years after the Zaporozhian Sich destruction), some Cossack groups have settled in the Danubian region (around Kiliya, Vylkove, Izmail, Kaushan, Balta etc.)<sup>27</sup> The pasha of Bender allowed the Zaporozhians to freely settle in the areas they had arrived at, although Russian diplomats and the frontier administration deemed this permission as a violation of the peace treaty. Russian agents also reported that the Crimean khan wrote to the Ottoman sultan expressing his desire to re-enter his patronage.<sup>28</sup> The Bug River remained an imaginary, virtual border, which was duly neglected both by the Cossacks, and the Tatars, who crossed it seamlessly and sometimes committed robbery. Many Cossacks were involved in fishing at Tylihul, but the pasha gathered them on the Danube island (it was further documented as Karaurman as a place for settling the Sich).<sup>29</sup> Keeping in mind constant rumours of possible war with the Turks, Zaporozhians' stay in the Ottoman lands seemed dangerous for the Russian government officials. Yet, the Zaporozhians preferred the following option: belonging to other religion (Orthodox Christianity) in the Muslim territory did not limit or put pressure on the Cossacks. Violating the peace treaty of 1774 (the Zaporozhians did not massively convert to Islam, but stayed in the Turkish territory) neither hindered their relatively quiet residence and the desire to become Ottoman citizens.

It is noteworthy that the Zaporozhians tended to establish their temporary settlements close to the Russian Old Ritualists, the Nekrasovites, and there are no records of reciprocal miscommunication during the tough time of searching for a new *Land / Place*. However, this state of affairs did not last for a long time. In the future, narrowing of the frontier lands and the expansion of the state borders would lead not only to tension and confrontation between the Zaporozhians and the Nekrasovites, but to bloody clashes and actual war.<sup>30</sup> The Nekasovites adhered to completely different Orthodox Christianity compared to the Zaporozhians, and they spent centuries migrating in search of a place where their ancient rituals could have been preserved. Yet, "at the time of Christian-Muslim opposition", as it was presented by the Russian spokesmen, there seems to be evidence of Christian league against Muslims who

27 RGVA . F. VUA. Spr. 192.

28 RGVA. F. VUA. Spr. 192.T Ark. 4.

29 RGVA. F. VUA. Spr. 192.T Ark. 41.

30 Olena Bachyns'ka, *Kozatstvo v "pislyakozats'ku" dobu ukrayins'koyi istoriyi (kinets' 18th – 19th st.)*. Kyiv. 2011; Anatoliy Bachyns'kyi, Olena Bachyns'ka, *Kozatstvo na Pivdni Ukrayiny. 1775–1869*, Odesa. 1995; Anatoliy Bachyns'kyi, *Sich Zadunays'ka. 1775–1828. Istoryko-dokumental'nyy narys*, Odesa. 1994; Aleksandr Prigarin, *Russkiye staroobryadtsy na Dunaye: formirovaniye etnokonfessional'noy obshchnosti v kontse 18th – pervoy polovine 19th v.* Odessa, Izmail, Moskva. 2010.

were regarded as strangers and disbelievers. Nevertheless, we admit the possibility of the existence of different Orthodox denominations, their clashes and real war in the Muslims' lands.

In the late 18th – early 19th century, the Zaporozhian Cossacks took an active part in the suppression of a rather large-scale uprising led by the Vidin Pasha Osman Pazvantoğlu; therefore, they sided with the government troops of the Ottoman Porte under the command of Brailov Nazir.<sup>31</sup> The Nekrasovites were on the side of Pazvantoğlu. The Porte acknowledged Zaporozhians' effort by allowing them to occupy the best lands around Kiliya and Akkerman, on the Danubian shores, closer to the Russian border (so that they could replenish their population with Russian refugees).<sup>32</sup> The Nekrasovites were not satisfied with this concession and took advantage of the Russo-Turkish War of 1806 and the Ottoman government's inability to control the Danube region and waged war against the Zaporozhians.<sup>33</sup> Thus, we deal with the confrontation inside the frontier communities which support different political powers of the same state – in this case, the Ottoman Empire. Hence, they were separated not by the border or the frontier, but by the desire to adjust to new political reality and to retain the lands they considered valuable. The Zaporozhians proved to be more agile, as they initially supported a potential winner – the central government and its local representatives. It is obvious that with the state borders approaching and the frontier lands diminishing, internal fights between the frontier corporations became harsher. In this case, linear state borders did not play any significant role. They remained solely on paper for a while; they were easily crossed and almost completely neglected.

The Treaty of Jassy signed in 1791 clearly outlined the borders between the two empires along the Dniester River.<sup>34</sup> The eighth clause of the treaty likewise confirmed the possibility of all those willing to return to their empires, excluding those who had voluntarily converted to a different religion. The Treaty of Bucharest signed in 1812 delineated the border along the Prut River, and from its mouth down the Danube; hence, the Danubian islands at the mouth of Kiliya were to be unpopulated and did not belong to any empire.<sup>35</sup> Adherers of different religions were in the same way provided assurance and an opportunity to within 18 months solve their property issues and move to the Ottoman Empire (for Muslims) or to the Russian Empire (for Christians). Yet, the treaty did not mention that it was only applicable to those who had recently converted to another religion. Therefore, the practice of religious conversion as a means to secure oneself from forced return gradually disappeared. The frontier population was able to seamlessly cross the border facing no religion-based challenges. Those who referred

31 Arkhiv vneshey politiki Rossiys'koï iimperii (AVPRI). F.69. Op.69/1.Spr.254.Perepiska general'nogo konsula s konsul'skim agentom v Galatse P. Renskim.1798.; AVPRI. F.312. Op.575. Spr.2.Zapiski Bukharestskikh i zadunayskikh novostey. Prilozheniya k pis'mam i doneseniya. 1801.

32 RGVIA. F. VUA. Spr. 348.

33 AVPRI. F.69. Op.69/1. Spr.141. Perepiska s generalom Mihel'sonom.

34 Polnoe sobranie zakonov Rossijskoj imperii. T.23. S. 287-292.

35 Polnoe sobranie zakonov Rossijskoj imperii. T. 32. S. 316-322.

to themselves as the Danubian Zaporozhians, adhered to Orthodox Christianity and resided in the lands of the Muslim sultan. The documents do not indicate any religion-related conflicts.

Frequent Russo-Turkish wars of the late 18<sup>th</sup> – early 19<sup>th</sup> century and, consequently, territorial changes within the state developed in the frontier communities a new behavioural pattern. They paid very little attention to the borders, changed citizenship seeking benefits and privileges on both sides of the imaginary border. Although the Cossacks could fight on opposite sides, in different armies, it did not affect their sense of belonging to the particular Cossack frontier corporation, which has the right for specific living conditions, freedom of movement and adherence to their own specific laws and tradition. This is exactly what the frontier community meant for the local population. Therefore, they agreed to leave Dnipro floodplains and to move to the Danubian islands, but they sought to preserve their customs, the tradition to freely elect their leaders, the freedom of movement despite linear borders, etc. Even war did not build a stable image of an enemy and did not assign to it the traits of native and strange. Thus, fighting on the side of the Russian Army, the Cossacks could seamlessly move to the Ottoman territory upon the termination of war. Everything depended on which state's citizenship could allow for preserving one's own rights.

*The Case of the Danube Islands Delimitation to Determine the Border Between Russia and the Ottoman Porte*, which started in 1816 and lasted until 1828, was dismissed only due to the outbreak of the subsequent Russo-Turkish War.<sup>36</sup> Yet, a clear delimitation did not take place; the islands were being populated, fishermen emerged on both sides of the border, but in the presence of the Russian government officials they identified themselves as Ottoman citizens. This means that they did not look for any particular citizenship.

Consequently, throughout the late 18<sup>th</sup> – early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Eurasian Steppe between the Kuban and Danube rivers remained the frontier territory, regardless of the emerging state borders. The frontier people tended to preserve their independence from the state emphasizing the right for *Own territory*, which meant to the Zaporozhian Cossacks a possibility to preserve the frontier traditions.

Due to the specificity of the South Ukraine Steppe landscape, a state border could only be determined by rivers as a form of interstate borders. Yet for people who had always been living on the opposite shores of these rivers, such borders were imaginary, and not real. Environmental conditions and frequent territorial changes ensured the possibility of free movement. Hence, even state borders did not become separating lines. Any attempt to strictly delimitate and determine the borders at the level of international treaties only testified to imaginary union, which made it possible to change religion and stick to that side of the border which under particular circumstances perfectly met the frontier population's requirements. The traits of the frontier as multicultural and multi-religious environment were not only preserved, but even

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36 State archives of Odessa Region (Ukraine). F.1. Op.214. Spr. 23, 1816 r.

became more powerful. With the narrowing of the frontier territory, borderline communities actually elaborated interaction practices in order to preserve their traditions which gain the highest significance and are associated with the native, but, most importantly, to prevent government intervention.

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