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**‘Borders and frontiers in the history of Russian South’  
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*Abstract.* This review is devoted to the collection of articles ‘Borders and frontiers in the history of Russian South’, which included articles covering, to various extent, problems within the framework of the interdisciplinary approach towards borders and frontiers, known in Russia as the science of limology. The review discusses advantages and disadvantages of the collection compilation, covers the articles themselves, based on their scientific relevance and authors' specialization, as well as reviews on the topic of Austrian military frontier as a specific example for historical comparativistics.

*Keywords:* frontier, borders, borderzone, limology, historical geography, history of Russian South, one's own – another's, cultural memory, Cossacks

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In autumn 2014, the all-Russian conference was held in Rostov-on-Don, dedicated to the borders and frontiers in the history of Russian South. Following the conference, a collection of papers, further revised into articles, was published. The compilers forwent the principle of grouping the articles as per their problems, but rather arranged the material in the alphabetical order by the authors' names<sup>1</sup>. In this review, an attempt is made to present a thematic analysis of the articles in the context of their applicability to the study of history of military frontiers in Habsburg monarchy.

### **1. Terminology and methodology**

Per the statement of A.V. Baranov expressed in the article ‘Methods of investigating frontier communities in historical geography (on the materials of Russian

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<sup>1</sup> The digest of articles has already been reviewed by Y.D. Anchabadze, and in several shortcomings the author calls the absence of a problematic approach to the composition of the volume. See: *Retsenziia na: Granitsy i pogranich'e v iuzhnorossiiskoi istorii. Materialy Vserossiiskoi nauchnoi konferentsii (g. Rostov-na-Donu, 26–27 sentiabria 2014 g.)* [Review on: Borders and borderland in the history of Russian South (the materials of the all-Russian scientific conference), Rostov-on-Don, 26-27 September 2014]. *Etnograficheskoe Obozrenie*, no. 3, pp. 180–183.

South)', the contact zone is defined as the periphery of the center (core) of civilization, whilst not necessarily being on the outskirts of the state geographically. Its main feature is dependence on the centre, and the imitation of it (p. 72). The contact zone is formed by real objects of three types – area (territory), boundaries (linear contours) and metropolitan centers. In this case, the area of the contact zone can be small; its main quality is 'permeability' for the mutual influence of communication participants (p. 72).

Another author, E.I. Malety, gives the following definitions of key concepts: a border is a line of external limit of the territory of one state, which separates it from the adjacent territory of another state; borderlands are contact zones, in which the interaction of cultures, neighboring countries, peoples and regions actively occurs. At the same time, these are the zones of potential territorial conflicts (for example, interethnic or religious) and struggle for spheres of influence (p. 347). The definition of a border per Malety fully corresponds to its traditional understanding in Russian limnology (Latin 'limes' – English 'line') – the science of borders and borderzones as a kind of their general interdisciplinary trends of study, the foundations of which was laid by the American geographer F. Turner.

Meanwhile, the frontier is also a moving border. One of the article written by a team of authors from Tambov (D.S. Zhukov, V.V. Kanishchev, S.K. Lyamin) maintains that the "frontier dynamics is not just the movement of the border; it is transformation of space, transition to a new quality" (p. 235). At the same time, they give the following definition of a frontier: "a territory that at a certain stage of history is not identical to the future metropolis, but which after a while becomes a completely homogeneous part of the 'motherland' state and society (p. 235). The authors rested upon the available statistical data to provide an example of a mobile frontier and modelled the process of incorporating the territory of almost uninhabited and very poor cultivated Russian 'wild field' into the Russian state itself from mid-16<sup>th</sup> to mid-19<sup>th</sup> century.

However, consideration of the term 'frontier' is possible in other foreshortenings. O.S. Yakushenkova in the article on 'Transformation of corporeality under the conditions of frontier heterotopy' gives the following interpretation to the subject of her research: most often it is "a special territory between the settled, cultivated or civilized world and the wild or virgin world". Hence derives the term 'frontier body' – space (in the Fouconian sense), which naturally appeared to be the bearer of this savagery, unbridled features and so forth (p. 613). The man on the other side of the frontier is an 'Alien' – a savage, a child of nature, i.e. equivalent to the animal environment (p. 614). Being on the border of the oecumene, the Alien has a 'natural' body (p. 615), which even if perceived to be close to the human one, was endowed with certain properties that bring it closer to the nature. As an example, the strange language of the Alien was close to the language of the beasts (p. 616). We can say

that the author finds the key to the understanding of the problem of stereotypes in neighbouring or contacting peoples. However, her theory does not seem to be quite appropriate for the understanding of the 'body' of such artificial frontiers as the military boundary of Habsburg Monarchy.

In the article 'Significance of the cultural memory under the conditions of frontier heterotopy', S.N. Yakushenkov based his research on historical memory. He writes: "Modern intercultural dialogue on the territories that can be attributed to frontier zones is not possible without orientation to certain significances, usually tied up to the cultural memory of frontier ethnic groups" (p. 605). A sign inscribed in the historical context and acting as a value reference is meant by significances in this respect; it is also fixed in any form of praxis. Because "on the frontier territory, a wide variety of ethnic actors participate in the formation of cultural memory", their significances are as diverse and sometimes mutually exclusive" (p. 606).

L.V. Baeva in her article "The zone of the northern Caspian and the lower Volga region as a frontier: classification and characteristics" pays much attention to the typology of the concept of 'frontier'. The author distinguishes civilizational, intercultural, confessional, ethnic (anthropological), linguistic, military-political, technological, information and value frontiers as well as mental, theoretical and paradigmatic frontiers (pp. 56–57). She notes that 'a frontier person' is a special phenomenon of the frontier, a person open to new decisions, elections, changes in places, characterized by high receptivity to the new, mental freedom, creative, syncretic vision of reality, adventurousness, intolerance of restrictions, strict regulations and organization of life" (p. 61).

To complete the description of the articles devoted to the methodology of studying borders and borderzones, I would like to disagree with Y.D. Anchabadze, who writes about the inability to view the frontier in the same manner as a zone of conflict and intercultural communication<sup>2</sup>. In fact, any frontier can not be imagined without these two factors, and this is confirmed by specific historical studies in the reviewed collection.

## ***2. Cossacks as border community***

R.G. Takidjian in the article 'The problems of transformation of Don Cossacks in the system of Russian south-east frontiers in the 16<sup>th</sup>–20<sup>th</sup> centuries' offers original periodization of the history of Don Cossacks. At the first stage, from the 14<sup>th</sup> until the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, "the predecessors of the Cossacks and the first permanent Cossack communities", 'paramilitary communities' in the geographical area of Don-Azov region and the steppe of Ciscaucasia, which was associated with the disintegration of the Golden Horde. It was at this stage that the Cossack "sub-ethnos (co-

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<sup>2</sup> Anchabadze Y.D. Review on: Borders... p. 181.

ethnos) of the great Russian people” was established, which consisted of three main ethnic and confessional groups: number one – east Slavic ‘Orthodox old believers’, Turkic-Caucasian Muslims and Oirat Lamaism. The second stage covers end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century up to the 1860s. There was inclusion of the lands belonging to Cossack into the Russian Empire and transformation of the Cossacks themselves towards early 19<sup>th</sup> century into ‘sub-ethnic quasi-condition’. At the third stage – before the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the areas of the Don army was finally established as a ‘ethno-social unity’ of Cossacks as opposed to the visiting population. At the fourth stage, or in the Soviet period in the history of the Cossacks (1917–91), a policy of decossackization’ was pursued against them. Finally, nowadays the revival of ‘neo-Cossacks’ is observed (pp. 542–47).

A more general periodization of the historian researching the Cossacks S.V. Chernitsyn has several differences from above. In his article ‘The Don military and their neighbours. The trends of ethnocultural contacts with the ethnic metropolis under the conditions of a military frontier’, he points out two periods in the pre-Soviet history of Don Cossacks. The first (the turn of the 15<sup>th</sup> –16<sup>th</sup> centuries – first quarter of the 18<sup>th</sup> century) covers the formation of Don Cossacks up to the “active political integration of the ‘Donskoy’ land into the Russian Empire”, which was accompanied by the loss of autonomy, as well as the start of social and cultural changes. In the second period (the first quarter of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries), the Don Cossacks turned into an estate, and the Cossacks became a sub-ethnic group of the Russian people (pp. 570–71).

Another historian of the Cossacks Y.A. Bulygin in his article ‘The origins of Don Cossacks’ business on the southern border of the Russian Empire’ draws our attention to the natural and climatic factors. “Steppe stretches have always been a symbol of freedom for the Russian people: steppe is praised in songs, representing the object of dreams; it involves a love for wandering, and search for will” (p. 144). He also concludes that the policy of the authorities became one of the factors involving the Cossacks into entrepreneurship. “The government’s actions contributed to the development of Cossack land ownership, legally securing this land for the army, as well as the noble status for big officials and officers, which led to the emergence of a whole layer of entrepreneurs emerging from the Cossack environment” (p. 152). The historian names “the need to sell the ‘war booty’ obtained because of military campaigns” as one of the reasons to give a “natural answer to the realities of time”, which prompted the Cossacks to enter the market (p. 152).

The contribution of the contemporary Austrian historian studying peoples of the Russian Empire is considered by N.A. Mininkov in the article ‘The Cossacks as a boundary community in the historical concept of A. Kappeler’. His conclusion is quite interesting in that “the steppe boundary was a place not only of a fierce durable and persistent struggle. This was also the place of various contacts between the local

communities and individuals”. Kappeler puts attention to the contacts – commercial and cultural ones (p. 373), as well as the phenomenon of ‘personal ties’ with the steppe zone, from where the very diversity of Cossack ethnicity originated, the presence of elements from the neighbouring cultures in the Cossack culture itself (p. 373). Mininkov notes that the concept of the Cossacks as a border community, is given by Kappeler a ‘new perspective’, proceeds “from recognizing it as a community capable of establishing diverse contacts with their neighbours” (p. 373).

Using the Turner theory of the frontier, Kappeler points out “some similarities between the Cossacks and the communities of the ‘wild West’, such as open borders and presence of confrontation in the relations of Cossacks with the neighbouring nomads. Moreover, the ‘frontline signs’ established in the Cossack milieu were only ‘extinguished’ by the Soviet authorities; so Kappeler no longer considers the modern ‘renaissance’ of Cossacks after the collapse of the communist ideology as revived Cossacks, but rather ‘neo-Cossacks’, although he sees the continuity of ‘neo-Cossacks’ with regards to the Cossacks of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (p. 378). Finally, the Austrian historian calls the Cossacks only one of the manifestations of a certain way of life, spread from the Adriatic to the Urals; thus, building a bridge from the Russian and Ukrainian Cossacks to the borderlands of Habsburg monarchy and the ‘uskoks’ on the Adriatic coast.

The article of the Rostov historian A.Y. Peretyatko ‘Assessment of the border role in the history of Don Cossacks by the authors of the 1860s–1880s: N.I. Krasnov, M.N. Kharuzin, S.F. Nomikosov is dedicated to an important period in Cossacks history in Russia and the ‘granichars’ (Grenz infantry) in the monarchy of Habsburgs (1860s–1880s). In fact, unlike Habsburg monarchy, where the transformation of the empire into a dualistic Austro-Hungary occurred, and the military frontier was completely abolished together with the estates of the ‘granichars’; in Russia, the Ministry of Defence decided not to disband the Cossack troops, including the Donskoy field of troops. If one of the reasons to abolish the military border in Habsburg monarchy was the loss of any threat from the south (from the Ottoman Empire), then in Russia, as the historian of the Cossacks N.I. Krasnovin wrote in the 1960s, the need for Cossack troops was caused historically by their border position (p. 426). After a decisive statement of the Ministry of Defence not to abolish the Cossack troops, Krasnov radically changed his position. Now he and S.F. Nomikosov argued that the Cossacks rather did not exist because of that border, however they existed despite it, and that after losing the border location, the Cossacks would even win because the border had always hampered their civil development (p. 426). M.N. Kharuzin was one of the first to draw attention to the fact that the Cossacks originated on the border of the sedentary and steppe worlds. In addition, considering the history of the Cossacks from a Slavophile point of view, the scientist concluded that their life was a typically Russian option, however formed under the steppe conditions (p. 426).

### 3. ‘Zasechnye’ (abatis) features of the Russian state and development of the ‘wild field’ in the 16<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Relations with the Ottoman Empire, Crimean Khanate and the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth.

D.A. Lyapin in his article ‘Specificity of the structure of local self-government in the cities of upper Don in the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century’ provides data that can be compared with the construction of the military boundary of Habsburg monarchy. The peculiarity of the Russian zasechnye (abatis) features of the 17<sup>th</sup> century was in the fact that the time was characterized by weakening of the central power in the country after the experience of the Distemper (Vague time). Therefore, the development of the local self-government bodies was considered, including that on the border line. Thus, the local administrative functions were carried out by the local world community. However, the city's population also chose such important posts as ‘*gubnoi starosta*’ (‘guba’ meant ‘estate’) and the siege head. Thus, for a long time, only the post of a voivode was appointed from those above.

At the example of Gribovsky’s article, it can be understood how the border between the monarchy of Habsburgs differed from that of Russian lands with the vassals of the Ottoman Empire, primarily Crimean Khanate. In the first case, the border was accurately defined on the terrain, in the second – the borderland served as a wild field not delimited between the states. Moreover, in this case Russia was an obvious exception from Europe. The author notes that “for Poland (as well as for Habsburgs – *A.D.*), a careful attitude was peculiar towards the borders and the acts regulating them” (p. 187). Moreover, Poland insisted on the continuity with the possessions of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania; during the negotiations with Porte it defended its possessions and its access to the Black Sea. Whereby the southern border of Russia was not fixed at all in international treaties. The author explains this phenomenon by the fact that “the Black Sea steppe was much more difficult to differentiate because of the motley and rapidly changing striped landscape formed as the result of the almost uncontrolled resettlement of the inhabitants of the borderland” (p. 190).

An important feature in Gribovsky's article is the description of the phenomenon related to the possibility of cooperation between the bordering societies, having nothing in common both religiously and linguistically; and moreover, traditionally hostile to each other in case of an external threat common to each of them. Thus, at the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, during the attempt to draw an exact boundary between Russia and the Ottoman Empire across the steppe, which the Zaporozhian Cossacks and the Crimean Khanate considered to be theirs, the Cossacks and Tatars began to draw closer and tried to jointly resist both Russians and Turks. Thus, the Turks had to pacify the obstinate vassal-khan by using force, and the Russians had to show extreme diplomatic efforts to keep Zaporozhians from rebelling, whereas on the Don the uprising still broke out.

#### 4. *The Caucasian frontier*

The meaning of the arrangement of the north Caucasian frontier is mentioned in the article by I. K. Tkhamokova ‘The Caucasian line and Kabardians: to the problem of ethnocultural borders’. In the article, the author explains the creation of a strengthened border in the North Caucasus because “the actual inclusion of Kabarda in the empire was a long and complex process”, while “the authorities sought to separate Kabarda from the steppe Ciscaucasia, which was rapidly conquered by the Russian settlers” (p. 560). The historian notes that the “people who lived on the different sides of the Caucasian line, although they were considered subjects of the same state, differed for a long time in socio-political and legal system, religion, language, economic features, material and spiritual culture”. This was expressed in the fact that “on one side of the border, the power of the tsarist administration operated, whereas the laws of the Russian Empire were active on the other – the Kabardinian princes maintained their rights, whereas the norms of customary law and Sharia functioned” (p. 563). The contacts of the Russian population on the line and Kabardian behind it acquired the form of mostly fighting clashes or smaller skirmishes. Therefore, the Cossacks adopted only weapons, combat equipment and the shape of the saddles, as well as military clothing from the mountaineers. Tkhamokova notes the stability of the ethnocultural borders in the Caucasus in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Thus, the Kabardian princes who received Russian education and even got such education in Petersburg, did not feel Russians themselves; they served in the Russian army, grew up in rank, received military awards; but when they returned to their homeland, they were removed and dealt with in accordance with the mountain traditions. Thus, the intersection of the line meant for them a change in the social role (pp. 568–69).

In the article ‘The trade relations of highlanders and official power: the way to overcome the North Caucasian frontier in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century’, E.G. Berberova writes that the “trade in the borderlands was concentrated in the hands of representatives of certain nationalities, mainly Armenians, Greeks and Jews”, because “for many mountaineers, it was not simply prestigious, but rather disgraceful to be engaged in trade” (p. 106). In addition, the author points out that “educated in the spirit of the cult of a warrior, the mountaineers arrogantly treated those who did not share their views”. At the same time, “we see similar prejudices in the Cossacks, who were mentally close to their rival neighbours” (p. 106). The important thing in the author's description regarding the interaction of the mountaineers with the Russian borderline is as follows: “Freedom in moving along the line for trade purposes was one of the conditions for the mountaineers to take an oath of allegiance to the imperial throne” (p. 110). At the same time, per the situation at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as Tkhamokova maintains, the Kabardian could cross the Caucasian

line only based “on the tickets of the Russian police officer” that were issued under the warrant of the supreme prince of Kabarda” (p. 562).

The North Caucasian frontier of Russia was like the military frontier of Habsburg monarchy in the fact that the Germans also moved here. In the article of T.N. Plokhotniuk ‘The German vector of the North Caucasus frontier’, the narration is centred around the story about two main waves of German colonization in the North Caucasus. These waves represented resettlement of Lutheran Germans dating back to the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Before this time, the colonization of these places by the Germans was proceeding slowly because of the fear of living on the line of combat operations (p. 439). However, the Russian authorities helped settle only those from the first wave. Plokhotniuk explains this by the desire of the authorities to use the settlers primarily as a ‘certain catalyst’ or a ‘fixer’ to the processes in both production and spiritual spheres so that in the next contact zone of the Christian and Islamic world, it would not only be the strength of Russia's geopolitical position that was ensured, but also the stability of the Christian civilization” (p. 445). Thus, unlike Habsburg monarchy, where only Catholic Germans resettled on the military border to strengthen the state religion on it, the Russian authorities were interested in Protestants, who in contrast with the Catholics, were less Orthodox than the Orthodox Christians, but could Christianise the Muslim mountaineers, and convert to Orthodoxy themselves over a course of time.

The idea of a significant difference between the Russian frontier and other European borders, namely its mobility (the goal of moving the border to the south) is further developed in the article by Y.Y. Klychnikov ‘The influence of specific features of the Crimean frontier on the military-political activities of A.P. Ermolov’. Thus, the author absolutely agrees in concept with the Tambov team of historians (D.S. Zhukov, V.V. Kanishchev, S.K. Lyamin) regarding the mobility of the frontier, as well as with L.V. Baeva and her ‘energy of the frontier man’.

Considering the Cossack regions through the prism of the boundary methodology, the concept of ‘one's own – another's, historical memory, psychohistory, etc., Russian researchers have advanced in the development of the domestic interdisciplinary research in the relevant areas. A special contribution is made to the progress of Russian limology as a domestic variation of a larger trend of interdisciplinary boundary studies.

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