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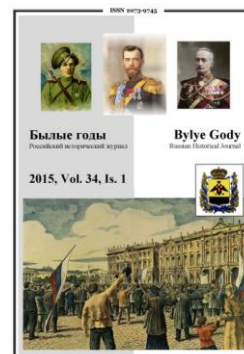
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**South-east frontier of the Russian Empire and the processes on the division of the Ural River left bank area between Kirghiz-Kaysaks and Ural Cossacks in the second half of the XIX century**

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**Abstract**

The article highlights the issue related to the peculiarities of formation of the south-east frontier of the Russian Empire and with the process on separation of the border areas of the Orenburg line (in particular of the Ural River left bank area) between Kirghiz-Kaysaks and Ural Cossacks in the second half of XIX century. The author pays particular attention to the problem of the resolution of disputes between the Ural Cossacks and Kirghiz-Kaysaks by local and central authorities.

**Keywords:** the Russian Empire; south-east frontier; Orenburg border line; separation; disputed territory; the Ural left bank territory; the Kirghiz-Kaysaks; Ural Cossacks.

**Introduction**

The term “frontier” was introduced into scientific use for the first time by the American historian Frederick Turner. In 1893 he introduced to the American Historical Association a new concept of the American history where there was made the first attempt of a thorough investigation of the process of American colonization. Turner’s academic pursuits laid the foundations of all subsequent American historiography, and “the Frontier Thesis” has deservedly won the international acclaim.

Today, the term “frontier” has pushed the limits of the American historical science and has become ingrained in the Russian historiography (according to Turner’s definition, “frontier” is a place where the most rapid and effective Americanization of the frontiersmen from Europe and where ever the conditions were being constantly reproduced in which the specific American institutions formed). It’s mostly historians studying the social and economic development of the geographic suburbs of Russia who make extensive use of this term. But it happened relatively recently in connection with a long ideological opposition between Soviet and American historians. Currently, the national historiography having got rid of ideological clichés tries to apply some of the concepts of “frontier” to the study of the Russian regions development.

**Materials and methods**

The main sources of this article were the documents of the Russian State Historical Archive (RSHA) and State Archive of the Russian Federation (SARF). The methodological basis of the research is the traditional general scientific principles of historicism and objectivity. The principle of historicism makes it possible to address the process on the division of the Ural River left bank area between Kirghiz-Kaysaks and Ural Cossacks in the XIX century in light of certain specific conditions that are unique to the study period and area. The main methods are problem-historical, chronological and the method of the historical comparative analysis, the use of which is caused by the objectives set out in the study.

## Discussion

It should be pointed out that the historiography of this area is quite extensive. Since the end of the XIX century, that is, from the works of F.D. Turner himself [1-7], the world scientific thought develops the "frontier theory" [8-15], and no exception was the national historical science [16-26]. The foreign historiography of the frontier concept did not slight the Russian history too [27-34].

In this article we will consider the question related to the peculiarities of formation of the Russian Empire south-east frontier and cover the processes on separation of the border areas of the Orenburg line (in particular of the Ural River left bank area) between Kirghiz-Kaysaks and Ural Cossacks in the second half of XIX century. It should be pointed out that in the national and foreign historiography this problem is covered rather poorly.

## Results

In the historiography dedicated to the formation processes of Russia as a multinational state, in relation to the nations that joined it at different times, the three-stage scheme of this process is proposed. Initially, there took place the actual joining as the establishment of the Russian citizenship, perhaps the nominal one, then there came the gradual incorporation into the structure of the state and the final stage was the assimilation. The process itself took place against the background of two trends - unification and Russification.

Scientific urgency of the problem is connected with the fact that it is the Urals-Volga region of the Russian state where the basic principles of management of the national suburbs were formed, and the Russian government formed here its first experience of regional policy. It should be noted that this scheme of joining the Russian state by non-Russian nations fully fits the frontier model of imperial suburb [35].

Note that the term "frontier" for the Russian history has a slightly different nature than it was put by F. Turner in the late XIX century. With regard to the history of Russia, namely the Ural region, the following main components of the frontier are outlined: 1) it is a border line represented as a chain of forts, outposts and redoubts, which gradually moved in the process of the adjacent lands development; 2) it is the special military units that bore the commission on the line (the Cossacks, landmilitsiya, garrison regiments, etc.), herewith an inherent part of the frontier was the recruitment of local residents to state military service; 3) the flexible national policy pursued by the government was inherent to frontier; 4) The characteristic feature of the frontier was the land policy of the state, which was aimed at ensuring the loyalty of the local population to it and at the same time at providing the repopulating border with land for bondman building and its distribution among settlers. However it should be noted that the Russian frontier, in particular in the southern Urals, there was always present the dominance of the military necessity, military factor above all other. The social, economic and confessional factors were subject to it [36].

Moreover, note that the government strongly supported the Russian population of the region (in particular, the Ural and Orenburg Cossacks that were in a close proximity with the nomadic nations of the region) and tended to provide all-round support in the development of the border lands. This support became especially evident in the XIX century.

Numerous historical sources indicate that the local Cossacks' fight for space with the neighboring nations (Kirghiz-Kaysaks, Kalmucks, Bashkirs, etc.) took place continuously. One of the disputed territories claimed by Yaik (Ural) Cossacks across the whole boundary line protected by them was the left bank area of the Yaik (Ural) river [37]. Most likely the Yaik Cossacks used both sides of Yaik since their appearance on the river. They sincerely believed that they owned both sides of Yaik, referring to the king's letters (in particular the well-known letter of Tsar Mikhael I), laws and governmental prescriptions of different times. "If you own a river on one side only, they said, then the water should not belong to the Cossacks too?!" For the Cossacks, the left-bank bottomland meadows (used for haying) and salt lakes, where the salt was actively produced, as well as the feeder of Yaik and large water bodies that already from the XVIII century become the place of the active Cossack fishery, considered the particularly attractive [38; 39].

In the first half of the XVIII century, the process of settlement of Yaik Cossacks along the line is activated. Orenburg expedition (Commission) activities on strengthening of the south-east boundary line, growth of the Cossack population of the south-Ural region and its economic development, marked the beginning of the processes of expanding the territory of Yaik troops. And from that time an urgent problem arises of development of the Yaik river left bank. It is worth noting that in the XVIII century, the only settlement of the Yaik Cossacks on the Yaik left side was Iletsk town that was founded in 1737 and is located in Yaik-Ileksky interfluve at the boundary with the Orenburg Cossacks' lands. Having settled on the right side of Yaik, Iletsk Cossacks tried to expand their lands, but in that century, due to the active opposition to the neighboring Kirghiz-Kaysak clans, they failed to do it [40; 41].

About the same time, the processes of growth of the Kirghiz-Kaysak population in the region are observed. On the Asian side of the Urals there were getting more and more Kirghiz tents. From statistical sources we learn that in the 60s of the XIX century on the left bank of the Ural River, along the lands of the Ural Cossack troops, there were 20,000 tents or about 100 thousand Kirghiz wintering on an ongoing basis. Subsequently, due to the lack of grazing places, they began to use actively the bottomland meadows on the left side of the Ural River, and even to move to the right side, thereby increasing the number of conflicts on the border between the Cossacks and the Kirghiz-Kaysaks [42; 43].

It is worth noting that the local authorities tried in every way to lessen the confrontation of the conflicting parties. They saw the demarcation of the Cossacks and Kirghiz-Kaysaks' possessions as one of the solutions in this situation. The first attempts to demarcate the left bank Ural lands were made at the beginning of the XIX century. But over fears of the emergence of disturbances, particularly among the Kirghiz, the works has been suspended indefinitely. Despite this at the end of XVIII – the beginning of XIX centuries, the government could secure to the Ural Cossacks the exclusive right to use haymaking in some areas on the left side of the Ural River. Also from the XVIII century on the left bank of the Ural Cossacks were officially allowed to fish in the three large lakes (Cherkhalskoe, Inder and Gryaznoe) [44; 45].

In the first half of the XIX century the Orenburg provincial government and the Directing Senate of the Russian Empire issued a series of decrees that have contributed to the fastest demarcation of the disputed territories. Most of the lands of the Ural River left bank, as the results of several specially created commissions of survey, were given to the Cossacks and the Kirghiz-Kaysaks in co-ownership, but it was just a temporary solution. The final demarcation of the disputed areas occurred only in the second half of the XIX century.

Despite all the measures taken in the first half of the XIX century on the temporary demarcation of the lands on the Ural left bank, the opposing of the sides was only growing. In the report of the Minister of War on July 15, 1864 under №1801, Orenburg and Samara Governor-General A.P. Bezak noted that in the early 60-ies of the XIX century the Kirghiz-Kaysaks actively complained of harassment by the Ural Cossacks in the use of haymaking meadow plots and other lands on the left bank of the Ural River. However, the following rule has long been established: when the hay time comes, the Transural Kirghiz-Kaysaks are given the right to hay on the boundary line from the lands of Iletsksk Cossacks to Kachansk picket, and then from the Kachansk picket to Guryev town the Kirghiz were given the special places for haying in such amount that the Ural Cossacks had enough hay to feed the horses of service. Also, after 20 days of haying by the Ural Cossack troops, Kirghiz-Kaysaks were allowed to all meadow places except forests and the banks of the Ural River [46; 47].

The Governor-General Bezak in 1864, trying to identify the causes of discord between the Ural Cossacks and Transural Kirghiz concerning the owning the left side of the Ural River, noted that there had been a long debate between them about the rights of either on the owning the left bank of the Ural River and Transural salt lakes. In resolving of this dispute, in his opinion, the government should have taken into account the needs of the Ural Cossack troops and Kirghiz-Kaysaks, while it was impossible not to give the preference to the last in such a case. It was enough just to visit the Kirghiz wintering grounds, he says, to see how cramped they were in the use of land [48].

At the same time there appeared a question about the constraint of Kirghiz-Kaysaks in the camps on Gogolsky Island near the town of Guriev. Note that even since the time of the reign of the Russian Empress Anna Ioannovna, the Cossacks began to settle in the town of Guriev, while protecting and defending Yaik downstream from the raids of nomadic Kirghiz-Kaysaks. Together with this settlement the local Cossacks began to use both fishing at the mouth of the Yaik and meadows in the whole valley formed by this river and its arms. According to the Senate report consolidated by the Imperial Court on May 25, 1752, all Guryevsk trap nets were put under the jurisdiction of the Yaik Cossack troops. At the same time fishing at the mouth of the Yaik River was relieved from the jurisdiction of the Astrakhan province and transferred to the Orenburg province [49; 50].

It is worth noting that the Cossacks and the Kirghiz-Kaysaks began to fight for Gogolsky island since its formation off the coast of the Caspian Sea on the Transural side. It was formed as a result of the shallowing of the Caspian Sea, at the same time it appeared not only in the valley between Yaik and its tributary Sokolok, but also on the space of the Caspian coast, granted to the Ural army by the Imperial Edict of November 22, 1846. As the Cossacks thought, the rights to this island belonged to them only, especially since the decline of the water in the Caspian Sea almost every year there formed shoals in the troops' lands, which, gradually increasing, reached the size of the islands and then served as a shelter for cattle in the winter. Naturally, all similar islands (as well as Gogolsky) they considered to belong to troops, substantiating it with the fact that the coastal areas of the Cossack waters are limited by the Granniy knob on one side, and Porokhovoy knob on the other and that they were in the 20-30 miles from the town of Guriev [51].

But the most important fact in determining the rights of the Cossacks for the Gogolsky island and the entire valley of the Ural River, was considered to be Clause 9 of the Part I of the Ural troops' manning document consolidated by the Imperial Court in 1803, which said that the Ural troops were necessary to be satisfied with their allowance from those advantages and benefits, which they then used [52].

Disagreement between the Cossacks and the Kirghiz over the ownership of Transural area led in the spring of 1865 to the creation of a special commission to demarcate the left side of the Ural River, which consisted of officials of the Ural Cossack troops and the Regional Government of Kirghiz-Kaysaks. To regulate the alleged work of the Commission, there had been prepared the special Supreme established "Guidelines for the demarcation of the Ural River left bank valley between the Ural Cossacks and Transural Kirgiz of Little Horde", which consisted of fifteen sections. According to the approved plan, the Commission had to work from Muhranovsk outpost to the Caspian Sea [53].

Based on the results of the work of the Commission, the Minister of War was given a report (№47 dated September 3, 1865) signed by the Chairman General-Lieutenant Dlotovskiy, which described its

results. In this document, the Commission proposed to give the Kirghiz Kaisaks land on the left side of the Ural River in the following areas and dimensions: 1) For the first Kirghiz distance from the Yamanhalinskiy outpost to the head of the Sokolok River from the Ural River, give three plots with a total area of 11116 dessiatines, including the water meadows with total area of 5760 dessiatines, 2) For the second Kirghiz distance from the Ostraya river bend, lying in front of the Yamanhalinskiy outpost, give six plots with a total area of 965 dessiatines, including the water meadows with total area of 664 dessiatines, 3) For the third Kirghiz distance from the Kumok grave to the the Ostraya river bend, located in front of the Orlovskiy outpost, give seven plots with a total area of 2284 dessiatines, including the water meadows with total area of 945 dessiatines, 4) For the fourth Kirghiz distance from the Cakharnaya fortress to the Kumok grave located in front of the Kalmykovskaya fortress, give seven meadow plots with total area of 5544 dessiatines, including the water meadows with total area of 1,510 dessiatines, 5) For the fifth Kirghiz distance from the Kolovertniy picket to the Krasnaya Cossack village, located in front of the Cakharnaya fortress, give nine meadow plots with total area of 12465 dessiatines, including the water meadows with total area of 6020 dessiatines. Upon that, these plots included soughs, overgrown with reeds, small lakes and partially salt marshes [54].

The report on the management of the Orenburg Territory of Governor-General N.A. Kryzhanovsky for 1865-1866 years, describes the effects of the special Commission work. It notes that the Commission has performed task imposed on her with complete success, on the basis of special instructions. However, the Ministry of Internal Affairs made some comments on the work of the Commission that caused a delay in the approval of the results of the Transural territories demarcation. However, this delay had also a profitable direction. The whole winter, that is exactly the time when in previous years the robberies were made by the Kirghiz-Kaysaks and disputes occurred with the Ural Cossacks because of land holdings, went quietly and calmly for the first time. There were, of course, violations of property rights, but they were not out of the usual, so the project of demarcation drawn up by the Commission had had a good effect in practice [55].

In the following report for 1866-1867 Kryzhanovsky made a comment on the delay in the execution of the Commission's conclusions, noting that the work of the Commission, completed with such a success in September 1865, was not approved because the Ministry of Internal Affairs insists on separation of some more lands from the Ural River valley in favor of the Kirghiz-Kaysaks [56; 57].

In spite of all the delays in 1871 the final conclusion followed for this case. In the opinion of the State Council consolidated by the Imperial Court, "On the demarcation of the river left bank valley between the Ural Cossacks and Transural Kirghiz" states that: "The Council of State in the Department of State Economy and in the General Assembly, having considered the submission by the Minister of War of the demarcation of the left bank of the river valley between the Ural Cossacks and Transural Kirghiz, agreed: The boundary of distribution between the Ural Cossack troops and Transural Kirghiz of the Ural river left bank valley from the mouth of the Bolshoy Ilek River to the flowing of the Ural River to the Caspian Sea, approve under the assumption over a map by the Highest established in 1865 Commission, and leave the earth given to the Cossacks in the permanent use of the Ural Cossack troops, and meadow passings of this valley given to the Transural Kirghiz, give to Kirgiz" [58].

However Kirghiz were allowed to pass to the Ural River through the Cossack lands for cattle watering, and Cherhalskoe Lake located in the Kirghiz steppes outside the troops' lands was decided to be temporarily given to the Cossacks for fishing till the development of the economic life of the Kirghiz-Kaysaks. It was ordered to immediately prepare and publish the rules determining the place and full access order of the Kyrgyz cattle to the river and the lake for the sake both Kirghiz cattle breeding and Cossacks fishing.

Thus, in the last quarter of the XIX century the eastern borders of the Ural troops' lands were finally established and the rights of Cossacks for Transural lands were secured. The border ran from the mouth of the Sokolok passage, along the stream of the last up to its separation from the Ural River (near the Kandaurovsk village). Next on the left side of the Ural till the confluence of the Bolshoy Ilek River, along the stream of the last up to the confluence of the Bolshaya Peschanka River. Ural Cossacks used Cherhalskoe Lake on the left side of the river, where they were fishing, as well as lakes Inder and Gryaznoye, where they produced salt.

### Conclusions

Thus, it should be noted that some of the concepts of "frontier", introduced in the scientific use in the late XIX century by the American scientist F. Turner, can be applied to the study of the history of the suburban Russian territories development. Historiography of this issue shows the special attention of foreign and local historians to the theory of the frontier model of the Russian Empire suburbs development. It is fair to say that the scheme of the joining the Russian state by non-Russian nations also fits this theory.

A special place in the colonial history of Russia is given to the construction processes of the south-east boundary line and settlement of border areas. Cossack troops (Ural and Orenburg Cossacks) played the major role in the development of lands bordering the Kirghiz-Kaysak steppe. In particular, in the XVIII-XIX centuries in the south-eastern border of the Russian Empire the interests of the Cossacks and the Kirghiz-Kaysaks collided, mainly concerning the economic development of the Ural River left bank.

It should be noted that for a long time, the Ural River was the natural border separating the nomads and the Cossacks. With the development of economy and demographic growth of the local population the

struggle for territory also intensified. The left bank of the Ural was attractive because of the water meadows, hayfields, reeds, fishy and salty lakes.

The Ural River left bank began to get developed actively in the beginning of XIX century. Further, for several decades, local Cossacks systematically occupied the Transural side not letting many Kyrgyz tents to the Ural River for the wintering. All this has led to a heated conflict, which was resolved mainly through law.

In the second half of the XIX century the Orenburg local provincial government and the Directing Senate of the Russian Empire issued a series of decrees that have contributed to the fastest demarcation of the disputed territories. Most of the lands of the Ural River left bank were divided between the Ural Cossacks and Kirghiz-Kaysaks as a result of several specially created Commissions of boundary.

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**Юго-восточный фронтир Российской Империи и процессы по разграничению  
левобережья реки Урал между киргиз-кайсаками и уральскими казаками  
во второй половине XIX века**

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**Аннотация.** В статье освещается вопрос, связанный с особенностями формирования юго-восточного фронта Российской империи и процессами по размежеванию приграничных территорий Оренбургской линии (в частности левобережья реки Урал) между киргиз-кайсаками и уральскими казаками во второй половине XIX столетия. Особое внимание автор уделяет проблеме разрешения споров между уральскими казаками и киргиз-кайсаками местными и центральными властями.

**Ключевые слова:** Российская империя; юго-восточный фронтир; Оренбургская пограничная линия; размежевание; спорная территория; левобережье Урала; киргиз-кайсаки; уральские казаки.