

Field Report for the course “Frontier Theory in the comparative historical scholarship” prepared by Elena V. Khakhalkina (Assistant Professor, Tomsk State University)

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The issues of the Frontier have recently attracted scholars of various fields due to its interdisciplinary character. Frontier Studies is topical given the current conditions of Integration and Globalization. These phenomena have brought with them issues of identity, migration and multiculturalism. In order to understand the fundamental reasons of these challenges is useful to reveal the Frontier Concept from a historical perspective.

The Frontier thematic is quite topical. Many publications of humanitarian specialists feature frontier studies in different aspects such as geographical, political, cultural and metaphorical meanings of frontier or borders. The very situation of borderland confronts society with the choice of life strategies. And this choice is defined by ability of society to react on civilizing challenges not losing characteristic features of mentality. Therefore a solving of questions of what adaptation reserves a given society or its separate groups can muster to react to critical historical situations has acquired a special topicality today. So the capacity or incapacity of society to overcome a confrontation model of development imposed by historical realities is a very important issue of art and policy.

Nowadays except territorial or frontier/boundary conflicts the main characteristics of modern world are globalization and integration. The most serious reflections of these processes are national conflicts, issues of migration problem and problem of national identity and multiculturalism. Much of current scholarship accent the metaphorical meaning or international context of the Frontier theory presented by F.J. Turner. During my work in the California University Library at Berkeley I collected necessary materials to complete my syllabus. Among such materials are rare ones, for example, volume *Frontiers of the Future. Lectures delivered under the auspices of the committee on international relations on the Los Angeles campus of the University of California 1940* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, university of California press, 1941). This volume we can consider not only as a collection of research on frontier thematic but also as

a resource of historiography study. These lectures were delivered on the eve of the Second World War, when frontier problems were topical ones. *In Preface* editors argued that “one of the root causes of the war – that of unsettled, or unsatisfactory, **frontiers**” (P.V). Among the other most well-known and outstanding works which I have find at the Berkeley California University Library are the following:

1. *Maier Ch.S.* Among Empires. American Ascendancy and Its Predecessors. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, L., England, 2006. – 373 p.
2. *Religion and the Conceptual Boundary in Central and Eastern Europe. Encounters of Faiths.* Ed. by Thomas Bremer. L., Palgrave, Macmillan. 2008.
3. *Ryan D.* US Foreign Policy in World History. N.Y., L., Routledge, 2000.-ix, 255 p.
4. *Shulman E.* Stalinism on the Frontier of Empire. Women and State Formation in the Soviet Far East. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008.
5. *The Transformation of Frontiers. From Late Antiquity to the Carolingians.* Ed. by W. Pohl, I. Wood and H. Reimitz. Leiden, Boston, Koln, Brill, 2001.
6. *Whittaker C.R.* Rome and its Frontiers: the Dynamics of Empire. L. and N.Y., Routledge, 2004.-x, 246 p.

Continued interest in Frontier studies is explained by increasing problems joined with migration, crimes, and territorial conflicts and as a cause problem of definition of national identity in the modern world. In the second half of the 20th century the concept of identity is on popular in the result of spreading of ideas of multiculturalism, rising interest of scholars to examination of confrontations with “Other” and major changes in world politics and communication technology. Perception of mechanisms and processes of adaptation of the some socio-cultural system to other realities (regional, economical, legal, confessional, etc.), which invariably are formed in circumstances of borderland, has given a new impetus for studies on cultural identity. In the last few decades borders have been analyzed as the realm of state-centric studies and as a term of discourse existing at the level of various ideas and symbolic form. In this interpretation of borderland phenomenon different historical realities could be the objects of study – from of system of international relations (macro-level) to religious self-identification by an individual (micro-level).

Different aspects of Frontier meaning are supposed an investigation of examples of border /frontier explanation in History. Border or borderlands were special areas or zones symbolized conditional lines from barbarians or “others”.

The novelty of frontier studies in metaphorical context in theoretical aspect is an investigation of problems of frontiers and borderland as a term of discourse existing at the level of various ideas and symbolic forms, representing narratives of both visible and invisible lines, and part of international geopolitical landscape, the nation and nation-state system and regional and local life experience. Scholars also attempt to determinate the typology of frontiers, verification of meaning content of terms, used in “anthropology of borders”; create the analytical pattern of migration and adaptation of confessional group.

In practical aspect – within the framework of study of real and mental borderland is taken an attempt of researching of mechanisms of cultural identity in the project is supposed to reveal and analyze on different material, which is reflected macro- and micro-levels of society’s existence. In the present instance the very variety of material is speaks to the reliability of theoretical and practical conclusions and appraisals.

The purpose of this course is to explore the different approaches to study of Frontier phenomenon by consideration of such aspects of Frontier as geographical, political, cultural and metaphorical meaning of Frontier Concept and to understand distinctions of definition.

The present course is new for students from different points of view. As a rule they will be unfamiliar with Frontier Theory. This specific course is supposed fill the lacuna in this knowledge. The term “frontier” has novelty for Russian not American historiography, and this moment needs explanation.

This specific course is addressed to the students of the Department of Modern, Contemporary History and International Relations and to students who graduated at International Relations Division, History Faculty.

During my stay in California University at Berkeley I acquainted with specialists who are interested frontier studies in different aspects. Their advices and help of all people with whom I’ve dealt during my stay at Berkeley were very useful and important for me. I’ve got to know in during my fellowship the new forms of syllabus preparing and teaching methods with using of the modern technical achievements. Knowledge and experience of personal and professional contacts are very significant for my personal and scientific growth and further research of my specific thematic.