

ГОСУДАРСТВЕННЫЕ И АДМИНИСТРАТИВНЫЕ ГРАНИЦЫ. РАЗМЕЖЕВАНИЕ И КОНТАКТИРОВАНИЕ «СВОИХ» И «ЧУЖИХ»

УДК 94 (970.22)

SEARCHING BACK THE OLD BORDER. THE BORDER BETWEEN RUSSIA AND SWEDEN IN THE EARLY MODERN PERIOD

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The eastern border of Finland is at present the longest of all the borders between member states of the European Union and Russia, and certain parts of it represent one of the oldest national borders to be found anywhere in Europe, dating from the peace treaties of Tälssinä and Stolbova in 1595 and 1617, respectively. One notable border in Europe that is older is that between England and Scotland, the first known mention of which is in documents from around 1237.

In Early Modern times – from the first half of the 16th century to the Age of Revolutions – this eastern border served as the dividing line between the realms of Sweden and Russia, and its actual location varied with time on account of wars between these two nations and the peace treaties that followed them.

In the discussion below we will examine the early history of the border mainly in terms of two questions: What physical form did the border take on in the Early Modern period, and was it guarded, and if so, for what reason?

Key words: eastern border, emigration, border, cross-border trade, borderlands, border control, plague, Early Modern times.

Юкка Кокконен. ИССЛЕДОВАНИЕ ДРЕВНЕЙ ГРАНИЦЫ. ГРАНИЦА МЕЖДУ РОССИЕЙ И ШВЕЦИЕЙ В НАЧАЛЕ НОВОГО ВРЕМЕНИ

В наши дни восточная граница Финляндии – самая длинная из всех между странами Европейского Союза и Россией, а ее отдельные части представляют собой один из старейших государственных рубежей в Европе, возникший в результате Тязинского и Столбовского мирных договоров 1595 и 1617 гг. соответственно. Более древней в Европе является граница между Англией и Шотландией, впервые упоминаемая в документах, датированных примерно 1237 г.

В начале Нового времени – с первой половины XVI в. до эпохи революций – эта восточная граница служила разделительной чертой между шведской и российской державами, а ее фактическое местоположение менялось в связи с войнами между этими двумя государствами и следовавшими за ними мирными договорами.

В статье исследуется ранняя история этой границы, исходя, главным образом, из двух вопросов: Как была оформлена граница в начале Нового времени, и охранялась ли она, а если охранялась, то в каких целях?

Ключевые слова: восточная граница, эмиграция, граница, трансграничная торговля, приграничье, пограничный контроль, чума, начало Нового времени.

From ancient marker stones to a modern border

It must be said from the outset that we should approach our topic by forgetting completely the connotations attached to modern state borders. Nowadays the boundaries between sovereign states are in the nature of precise demarcation lines that are frequently manned by border patrols and customs officials, but in the Middle Ages and Early Modern times countries were separated from one another by borderlands or border zones that were often highly indeterminate in character. This was the case with the border in the north between Sweden and Muscovy, or Russia, which could be described most appropriately as a «sieve-like frontier». An official boundary existed in the form of a series of border posts or markers and had been ratified in treaties and by the certain religious rite*, but even so it allowed the free passage of people and goods in both directions.

The oldest known political division connected with the territory of present-day Finland and the country's eastern border was that agreed upon in the Treaty of Pähkinäsaari (in Finnish, Russ. *Oreshek*, but at first *Schlüsselburg* (German), Swed. *Nöteborg*) in 1323. The purpose of this treaty was above all to ensure freedom of international trade on the River Neva, but it also served as a guarantee that no new fortresses would be built in Karelia (following the construction of the castle at Vyborg by the Swedes in 1293) [Korpela, 2006. P. 456–457; 2007. P. 49]. A further detail in this agreement was the drawing of a boundary between the spheres of interest of the King of Sweden and the Prince of Novgorod, but the question of how this boundary was decided upon is something that has occupied scholars for centuries. The current understanding of the situation is that the boundary

was defined precisely in the area where settlement was densest, i.e. from the Gulf of Finland coast to Särkilahti on Lake Saimaa, but for the stretch between Särkilahti and the termination of the line on the coast of the Gulf of Bothnia the extant copies of the treaty mention only five points about a hundred kilometres apart that define its course. There was, in fact, no need to establish a denser system of boundary markers, as the whole area was extremely sparsely inhabited at that time. In addition, modern interpretations of the early boundary are inclined to the view that there were two boundaries in the northern parts of the area, so that the western boundary of Novgorod was located at the Gulf of Bothnia while the eastern boundary of Sweden was around Kandalaksha on the White Sea. Thus, the northern regions – more or less the area referred to nowadays as Northern Finland – were used jointly by both parties. It should be mentioned in passing that a similar border arrangement was concluded between Norway and Novgorod in the far north in 1326 [Katajala, 2006. P. 90–92, 102–103].

The next east-west agreement regarding the border within the present-day area of Finland was concluded in 1595, but a great deal had happened by that time. In the first place the Principality of Muscovy, in the process of gathering together the lands inherited from the state of Kievan Russia, had overthrown the power of the mercantile state of «Great Novgorod» (Russ. *Veliky Novgorod*) during the 1470s (first in 1473 and then finally in 1478). At the same time, Muscovy had taken upon itself the border disputes and territorial claims that Novgorod had pending with Sweden. Secondly, Sweden had broken away from the Medieval power complex known as the Union of Kalmar in the early 1520s to become a sovereign state ruled over by the Vasa dynasty and had begun to expand its territories considerably from 1560 onwards. Colonial settlement in the area of Finland had spread beyond the border of the spheres of interest as laid down in the Treaty of Pähkinäsaari during the Late Middle Ages and Early Modern times, and this had resulted in conflicts and punitive raids on both sides, culminating in three wars between Sweden and Muscovy (Russia), in 1495–1497, 1555–1557, and 1570–1595.

* By kissing the Holy Cross of Christ (Russ. *krestnoe tselovanie*). It was a scary religious ritual, where a person, who swore incorrectly, endangered his salvation hereafter. In Russia, official governmental contracts and private contracts, such as wills, were confirmed with kissing the Cross. Even the Peace Treaty of Tälssinä between Sweden and Russia on May 18th 1595 was first sealed and signed and, after that, confirmed by kissing the Cross [Almquist, 1907. P. 12–14; Ahnlund, 1956. P. 68–69; Flier, 2006. P. 388].

In early times the eastern border had been marked only at its most significant points, generally within reach of major thoroughfares, so as to make it quite clear to passers-by where the border ran in the district and what usufructuary rights existed there. Most of the markers were natural features that stood out in the landscape, such as rock faces, large boulders, bodies of water (rivers, lakes, springs or pools), watershed areas and sometimes even peatlands. All these were highly suitable for the purpose as they couldn't be interfered with by human action (i.e. moved or destroyed). The least suitable in this respect were trees, as they could relatively easily be removed, but sometimes these, too, had to be made use of if there was nothing better available [Kokkonen, 2010b. P. 136].

The Treaty of Täyssinä, signed in 1595, led to a change in this practice, in that the boundary began to be marked in the terrain in the form of lines joining the markers. It is known, for instance, that corridors were cleared through the forest on the Karelian Isthmus by cutting down the trees and other vegetation to make these lines as clearly visible as possible [Katajala, 2010a. P. 191]. A crucial ideological change had also taken place prior to the Treaty of Täyssinä, in that both Sweden and Russia had adopted the new concept of national territory that assumed that a state had a certain geographical extent marked by its boundaries, and that this was a sovereign territory, i.e. the lands, waters and resources within these boundaries were to be immune from all forms of external interference. These lands and boundaries were regarded as «sacred», and the inhabitants began to speak of their «fatherland». At the same time the people who had been born and lived within the borders of a country came to be regarded more firmly than ever as the «subjects» of a certain king ordained by God, and had certain duties that they were required to perform for their king and also certain rights. Thus, borders gained a far greater significance than heretofore. They were to be maintained as they stood, or preferably extended, but under no conditions should they be retracted.

A long «border line» (Swed. *gränslinje*) or «border alley» (Swed. *gränsallé*) – a border in the modern sense – arose as a result of the adjustments following the Treaty of Stolbova (1617), when Russia ceded the province of Käkisalmi (Finn. *Käkisalmen lääni*, Russ. *Korela uezd*, Swed. *Kexholms län*) and the area of Inkerinmaa (Engl. *Ingria*, Finn. *Inkeri*, *Inkerinmaa*, Swed. *Ingermanland*) to Sweden. An opening several hundred kilometres in length was cut through the forests early in the 1620s

from the point at which the border left the Gulf of Finland to its end point on the shore of Lake Ladoga at the latitude of modern-day North Karelia. At the same time this border began to be drawn as a continuous line on maps, as it now had a concrete existence. Also, more attention began to be paid to the physical maintenance of the border, the checking of the route and removal of tree growth from the clearing under the supervision of Swedish and Russian border commissars. This was the procedure at least in the 1620s, 1650s and 1660s, the manual work being done by «borderland peasants» from both sides, i.e. *gränsebönder*, as these inhabitants of the nearby areas were referred to in the Swedish documents of the time [Kokkonen, 2010b. P. 137].

At the latitudes of present-day Northern Finland, however, the eastern border remained anything but a distinct feature for a very long time. Demarcation of the border in the late 1590s, following the Treaty of Täyssinä, came to an end around Alakitka in the parish of Kuusamo on account of a dispute between the Swedish and Russian border commissars, and its course north of this point was defined only by the general outlines laid down in the treaty itself, and, of course, by the usufruct practices of the inhabitants on both sides. The official, ratified location of the border in the areas north of Kuusamo was resolved only in 1833, when the boundary between the province of Oulu in the Grand Duchy of Finland and the *gouvernement* of Arkhangelsk in Imperial Russia was finally defined – and then only after more than ten years of work [Kokkonen, 2010b. P. 140].

Where it had been laid down in the treaties of Pähkinäsaari (1323), Täyssinä (1595) and Stolbova (1617) that the border should take account of natural markers in the terrain, local land use practices and regional administrative units (e.g. provincial boundaries), later decrees regarding the border took on quite a different character. Under the Treaty of Uusikaupunki (Swed. *Nystad*), concluded in 1721, the border was to be a much straighter line that simply cut through villages, individual farms, parishes and local entities without paying any attention to local or regional conditions, not to mention private rights of ownership. One consequence of this was that the subsequent Treaty of Turku (Swed. *Åbo*) in 1743 gave rise to a peculiar «no-man's land» close to the area of the present-day town of Savonlinna which remained beyond the jurisdiction of both Sweden and Russia right up to the incorporation of Finland into the Russian Empire in 1809 [Katajala, 2010b. P. 94–96].

Patrolling the border

Although the eastern border developed and altered both ideologically and physically in Early Modern times, it was a long time before it came to be patrolled in any regular fashion. The only permanent border guard station on the northern boundary between Sweden and Russia in the 17th century was at Rajakontu in Salmi on the eastern shore of Lake Ladoga, the point at which it was crossed by the militarily and economically important road between the Swedish province of Käkisalmi and the Russian district of Olonets [Kuujo, 1963. P. 107; Kokkonen, 2010. P. 169]. Otherwise neither party had any need for constant supervision of the border or the traffic crossing it. There were various reasons for this. In the first place, the border was exceedingly long and the majority of it passed through «wilderness», so that any attempt at patrolling would have been a severe drain on a country's finances, and indeed impossible to accomplish in any comprehensive manner given the resources and equipment of the day. In any case, there was no patrol system at any other land boundary in Europe at that time. Where there were patrols, they were usually restricted to cases of acute need, and generally to places which were significant thoroughfares in terms of either the volume of traffic or military strategy. Otherwise borders were mainly patrolled at times of war or the threat of war, and occasionally on account of raiders. The earliest recorded instance of patrolling in a border region in Finland is from the Middle Ages, when inhabitants of areas on the Gulf of Bothnia coast are believed to have seen it necessary to mount a patrol on Lake Oulujärvi [Luukko, 1954. P. 719–720]. The reason for this was that colonization from the west had penetrated beyond the agreed demarcation line between the spheres of interest of Sweden and Novgorod, giving rise to conflicts and to forays or raids across the border.

There were many people, however, who crossed the border simply for the purposes of trade. The importance of such trading is shown by the fact that the treaties between Sweden and Russia regularly guaranteed subjects of both countries the right to trade in the other, although admittedly on certain specified conditions: (1) trading was permitted only in places intended for that purpose (in towns or at market places), (2) customs dues should be paid to the Crown on all goods, and (3) persons crossing the border should possess the necessary document, a passport or the like. In practice, however, both people and goods moved back and forth across the border without any formalities, and

smuggling and other unauthorized movements were everyday occurrences [Kokkonen, 2010a. P. 169; 2010b. P. 151].

In the spirit of its 18th-century mercantilist economic policies, the Swedish Crown tightened its grip over commercial contacts across the eastern border, establishing «border customs houses» (Swed. *gränstullkammare*) at strategic points to improve its supervision of trade and traffic and to exact customs dues. The first of these was set up at Lappeenranta in 1723, and the network was then expanded northwards from the beginning of the following decade, to Kajaani, Kitee and Pielisjärvi. As a result of the border arrangements required at the time of the Swedish-Russian war of 1741–1743, new customs houses were opened in the south-east of Finland, at Ahvenkoski, Keltti, Loviisa, Mikkeli, Puumala and Rantasalmi. The north of the country nevertheless remained without any permanent border control point for some time, presumably until the customs house at Kuusamo was opened in the 1770s. Finally, at the very end of the period of Swedish rule, a further customs house was opened at Anjala [Kokkonen, 2010a. P. 169–170]. It should also be mentioned that customs and supervision arrangements on the Russian side of the border had been stepped up in the second half of the 17th century, when a customs station was built at Paanajärvi, which was one of so-called «the seven parishes, or *pogosty*, of Lapland», and lay on the important trade route from the coast, or *Pomorje*, of the White Sea to Sweden and its significant market towns on the coast of the Gulf of Bothnia. At the same time the collecting of customs dues was intensified at all points where trade took place on the border with Sweden [Tšernjakova, 1995. P. 136].

The prevention of smuggling at the local level was the responsibility of separate officials, known as «border riders» (Swed. *gränseridare*), in addition to whom small parties of armed soldiers would be sent out from time to time to assist the actual customs officials if the situation in connection with the charging of customs dues or the confiscation of goods threatened to become violent. Serious acts of violence were sometimes perpetrated on the Swedish customs officials by the Russians as well. Cases of smuggling or evasion of customs dues on the Swedish side were heard in separate «border customs courts» (Swed. *gränstullrätt*) [Kokkonen, 2010a. P. 170].

Apart from traders, others who would have crossed the border were those seeking to emigrate, who may be classed into four groups. Firstly, there were those who were leaving in search of work or a better livelihood. Those

moving to Russia were often attracted by the metalworking industries (mines and ironworks) of Olonets, or from the beginning of the 18th century onwards by the metropolis of St. Petersburg, founded in 1703. Secondly, there were various criminals, tramps and vagabonds who were escaping from justice or the prospect of imprisonment. It was often possible for these people to continue their wandering life by moving to another country. The third group consisted of those fleeing from their obligations to the state, principally either the payment of taxes or conscription (Swed. *utskrivningar*), i.e. recruitment as an infantryman in their country's army. Finally the fourth group consisted of those who were fleeing from religious discrimination or persecution in their own country. Especially important in this connection was the flood of emigration to Russia on the part of the Orthodox population of the easternmost areas of Sweden, the province of Käkisalmi and the area of Inkerinmaa, during the 17th century. There was a similar migration of the Old Believers (Russ. *raskolniki*) from Russia into Sweden from the 17th and 18th centuries onwards, but the numbers involved were fairly small.

Finally it should be mentioned that no official right to migrate from one country to another existed in the Early Modern period, and that both Sweden and Russia maintained a tight hold on their subjects and forbade them to leave the country. Anyone who did so without permission was referred to in the administrative documents as a «deserter» (Swed. *förrymd, rymling, rymmare*, Russ. *begly* > Karelian *biegla*). The ruling classes realized how important their subjects were to them as farmers and as workforce, as taxpayers and as soldiers [Kokkonen, 2010b. P. 142–146].

Soldiers holding back the plague

In the early 1770s the eastern border was closed entirely to passenger and goods traffic for a time, as part of a major operation which was the first of its kind in that area. Similar measures had admittedly been resorted to in 1740 and 1763, but on a much smaller scale [Halila, 1954. P. 399; Kokkonen, 2010a. P. 171]. The reason for this tightening of security was an outbreak of plague in Russia. It had first appeared in the country's southern neighbour, the Ottoman Empire, and had spread via Ukraine to Poland and to Moscow in the summer of 1770. Conditions were favourable for the advance of this greatly feared disease, as Russia was at war with the Ottoman Empire for the period 1768–1774. It is estimated that between 52 000 and 100 000 persons died of the plague in Moscow alone

[Alexander, 1980. P. 101–124; Melikishvili, 2006. P. 24–26]. According to other estimates the death toll is between 60 000 and 100 000 lives. In October of 1771, the death toll in Moscow stood at 17 651, but January of 1772 only at 330. In November of 1771 Empress Cathrine II already announced that the Moscow plague epidemic was over [Melikishvili, 2006. P. 26].

News of the presence of the plague in Russia spread rapidly from St. Petersburg to Stockholm through diplomatic channels, and, fearing that it could be brought to their country by a ship, the Swedes stepped up their inspections of shipping in autumn 1770. The traditional means of defence against the plague, as implemented in earlier times elsewhere in Europe, chiefly in England, Austria, Switzerland and the Mediterranean, were to impose periods of quarantine on those arriving by sea or deny them entry to the country entirely and to patrol or close all land boundaries. Sweden had similarly mounted a military guard (Fr. *cordon sanitaire*) on its border with Denmark in the early 1710s in order to secure it against the plague [Persson, 2001. P. 73–74, 276–284, 428; Kallioinen, 2005. P. 183–184], and it now adopted the same tactics, with a military system for closing its eastern border in 1770–1772 that extended from the land boundary at the Kymi River in the south-east to Kuusamo in the north. This came to be known as the «Plague Chain» (Swed. *Pest-Cordon*). The person appointed towards the end of 1770 to command this operation in Finland was Field-Marshal Augustin Ehrensward (1710–1772), better known for the construction of the fortress of Sveaborg (Finn. *Viapori*) off the coast of Helsinki.

A gradual withdrawal of the Plague Chain was commenced in spring 1772, when information reached Sweden from St. Petersburg that the plague was no longer regarded as a threat in Russia. Indeed, rumours began to spread in autumn of that year that the border guards had been removed completely, but in the event supervision was maintained until the end of the year, largely for foreign policy reasons. King Gustav III of Sweden had accomplished a reform of the Constitution in August 1772 and was afraid that Russia might interfere militarily in these affairs. This was conceivable, as Prussia, Denmark and Russia had agreed in autumn 1769 that the smallest alteration to the Swedish Constitution would be a sufficient reason for declaring war and had mentioned in passing the possibility of dividing the Kingdom of Sweden up between them. In the end, the King's fears of a Russian intervention proved unfounded, but tension on the border did not abate until 1774 [Suolahti, 1991. P. 281–311; Kokkonen, 2010a. P. 171].

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