

Mgr. (MA) Arkadiusz Filip Siwko

*The Borderlands („Borders”) of Rus’: 10th – 13th century.
Narrative Strategies, Socio-Political Functions, Terminology*

SUMMARY OF THE DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

The dissertation is an attempt at a source-reading approach to the problem of the borderlands (‘borders’) of the domain of the Rurikids’ dynasty from the 10th to the end of the 13th century. Through the prism of the oldest monuments of Russian historiography, the author described how the bookmen (Old Russian erudites) perceived the peripheries of the state and their political and social functions, including the role of such areas as a place of conflict and exchange. The author's sphere of interest included zones of contact with various neighbours of the Russian state: countries of Latin civilisation (Poland, Hungary), the Byzantine Empire, nations of the steppe (Pechenegs, Polovtsians) and other non-Christian peoples (Volga Bulgaria, Finno-Ugric ethnoses, Lithuania, Yotvingians).

The primary source material consisted of three extensive narratives comprising the Hypatian annalistic historical collection: the *Primary chronicle* compiled in the second decade of the 12th century), the Kyivian annals (end of the 12th century), and the *Chronicle of Halych-Volhynia* (it took the shape we know at the turn of the 13th and 14th centuries). These are representative because, although each shows a different stage in the development of Russian historiography, collectively they constitute a coherent lecture on the history of Southern Rus’ during the considered period. Therefore, such a selection of sources allowed a glimpse into how, at different times, intellectuals working in the circle of princes of the Rurik dynasty perceived and described the borderlands of their motherland. Meanwhile, each of these monuments provides testimony to the ongoing regionalisation of historiography. In addition, in a separate chapter, the author discusses two specific Old Russian texts, rarely analysed by historians, in which the problem of borders and borderlands occupies a very important place: the *Lay on the ruin of the land of Rus’ under Grand Prince Yaroslav* and the *List of the Russian further and closer gords*. Both sources are examples of the concept of the ‘ideal boundaries’ of the Rurikids’ domain (then already conquered by the Mongols) which was in existence around the second half of the 13th century.

A key issue for analysis was the narrative strategies of the bookmen (including the aim of creating a particular narrative, the inspiration as well as other circumstances of its origin) and the terminology used by them referring to the way they perceive “us” (Rusians, Christians) and “strangers”. The author sees the entire Hypatian collection, as well as its individual elements, as the result of a process of erudite compilation in which older texts were used to create works of new quality. Within the study, several motifs and landmarks, often of a symbolic character, were identified. Many of them appeared very early, for example in the *Primary chronicle*, and then played an important role in later narratives. Equally, it is important to note that certain elements emerged only at a certain stage in the development of Russian historiography, for example due to its ongoing regionalisation.

The thesis is arranged in a factual and, partially, chronological manner. Every chapter is focused on a certain monument (starting with the oldest *Primary chronicle* and ending with 13th century sources) and includes subsections on specific topics in that source. Furthermore, the dissertation includes an Introduction which, besides the objectives of the dissertation, discusses the history of research on borderlands in the Middle Ages with particular emphasis on the borderlands of Rus'. The methodological section features as a separate chapter, within which terminological issues are also included.

Keywords: medieval Rus', borderland, borders in the Middle Ages, Rurikids (Rurik dynasty), letopises.