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LINE, ZONE OR SIEVE? CONCEPTUALIZING THE 1617 RUSSO-SWEDISH BORDER

ЛИНИЯ, ЗОНА ИЛИ РЕШЕТО? КОНЦЕПТУАЛИЗАЦИЯ РОССИЙСКО-ШВЕДСКОЙ ГРАНИЦЫ 1617 г.

Аннотация: Проанализировано употребление использовавшихся для указания на российско-шведскую границу 1617 г. шведских слов *gräns* и *rå*: во-первых, в тексте Столбовского договора; во-вторых, в описании границы, составленном шведскими комиссарами в 1621 г.; в-третьих, в протоколах сессий местных судов на территории Кексгольмского лена. Показано, что слово *rå* в XVII в. часто обозначало сам пограничный знак, тогда как *gräns* имело более абстрактное значение и указывало либо на (линейную) границу между двумя государствами в относительно абстрактном смысле (прежде всего в официальных документах), либо на пограничную территорию (в сохранившихся судебных протоколах). В практическом смысле, однако, эта граница— *gräns* была вполне проницаема.

Keywords / Ключевые слова: Sweden, Russia, Treaty of Stolbovo, Province of Kexholm, 17th century, border, concepts / Швеция, Россия, Столбовский договор, Кексгольмский лен, XVII в., граница, концепты.

The Russo-Swedish border moved several times during the early modern period (i. e. from the 16th to the end of the 18th century). The most important new border demarcations took place after the treaties of 1595, 1617, 1721, 1743 and finally after the Treaty of Hamina (Swedish *Fredrikshamn*, Russian *Фридрихсгам*) in 1809, when the territory of Finland was separated from Sweden and annexed to the Russian Empire as an autonomous Grand Duchy. The border defined after the treaty of 1617 (known as the Treaty of Stolbovo, named after the small village in Ingria where it was confirmed) has been especially important for Finns. The border came to separate the autonomous Grand Duchy and the Russian Empire in the 19th century, and it was the border between the independent Republic of Finland and the Soviet Union in the 1920s and 1930s.

In recent decades, there has been a lively discussion about the nature of medieval and early modern borders. Expressed in brief, the main question in the debate has been whether the early modern borders were linear in nature, enclosing defined territorial states inside their limits, or if, in many cases, they were zone-like ill-defined borderlands of rather shapeless realms. Perhaps close reading of early modern peace treaties, border descriptions and sources describing how the border was understood in practice can shed some light on this problem. This article is focused on the nature of the 1617 border. In that treaty, Russia ceded the

provinces of Kexholm and Ingria to Sweden, and they remained under Swedish rule up until the Great Northern War 1700—1721, when the border was moved again.

From border markers to the linear border

Like the nature of the borders themselves, the concepts and terms used to describe them have changed over the centuries in most languages. I have presented these terminological and characteristic changes in my previous study about the evolution of European borders from antiquity to the early modern period.¹ In brief, I concluded that while the evolution of borders from the middle ages has not been straightforward, some generalizations can be made. In many instances, the borders between medieval realms could be well defined and linear but in many other cases, especially in regions remote from the centres, borders were often zone-like frontiers. A major change occurred in the 16th century when the linear border between early modern realms emerged as a part of the state-building process. At the beginning of the 17th century, the idea and concept of the demarcating borderline between states was quite fully developed, which also becomes visible in the change in cartographic presentations of the era.² These developments can often be traced through the change in border concepts used, as well.

Alexander Tolstikov has started to focus his research on the changing conceptualization and reality of the border between the Swedish and Russian Empires.³ He has paid particular attention to medieval and 16th-century border concepts. I agree with his observation that the principal shifts in the use of border concepts occurred in the 16th century. This fits well with the results of my study about the development of border mapping: the line representing the course of the linear border in terrain appears on cartographic presentations in the latter half of the 16th century. This is linked to the development of measuring methods (triangulation, especially) and birth of the idea of the modern territorial state. The lines drawn on maps predating the 1550s were most often abstract presentations of the divisions between the realms, but it was impossible to use them to trace the exact course of the border in terrain. The first maps with a reasonable degree of accuracy in presenting the course of the Russo-Swedish border date from the first decades of the 17th century.⁴ Therefore, Tolstikov focuses mainly

¹ See Kimmo Katajala, 'Drawing Borders or Dividing Lands? The Peace Treaty of 1323 between Sweden and Novgorod in a European Context', *Scandinavian Journal of History* 37: 1 (2012).

² Kimmo Katajala, 'Maps, Borders and State-Building', Marko Lamberg, Marko Hakanen & Janne Haikari (eds), *Physical and Cultural Space in Pre-industrial Europe. Methodological Approaches to Spatiality* (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2011), 58—91.

³ Alexander Tolstikov, 'From Mezha and Rån to Rubezh and Gränsen: Conceptualizing the Russo-Swedish Border in the Late Middle Ages and Early Modern Period' *Revue d'Histoire Nordique — Nordic Historical Review* 19 (2015): 31—55.

⁴ Kimmo Katajala, 'Maps, Borders and State-Building', 78—83.

on the preceding centuries. My aim here is to raise some new aspects of how the Russo-Swedish border was conceptualized and understood in the 17th century.

Analysis of the source material inevitably requires a short introduction to the problems of present and past border concepts. There is a fundamental disparity in the English-language use of the terms “borders”, “frontiers” and “boundaries”. In British English, “frontier” refers to international political barriers, a line separating two countries. In American English, “frontier” has a specific meaning of the extreme limit of settled land beyond which lies wilderness. A “boundary” in British English is a line which marks the limits of an area below the state level but in American English, it means an international borderline. However, the academic use of these terms does not follow either of these principles: “borders” are set between states, “boundaries” lie between the administrative areas below the state level and the term “frontier” refers to a zone-like border region.⁵ In this presentation, I follow the latter usage of the terms.

According to Alexander Tolstikov, the introduction of the concept of *gräns* in the 16th century meant, “that the concept of frontier became noticeable in the case of Russo-Swedish border only in the beginning of the sixteenth century.”⁶ The term *gräns* was primarily associated with abstract division between the two realms. This division was understood, according to Tolstikov, not only as a line, but also as a zone-like borderland (*gränsområde*), or frontier. The medieval term for borders, *rå*, “continued to mean a specific borderline but not in an abstract sense”. According to Tolstikov “the new aspects seem to have been exactly (1) the ‘zoneness’ and (2) securing that meaning of an abstract border(line).”⁷ In this presentation, I will analyse the use and content of the concepts of *gräns* and *rå* through the peace treaty of 1617, the border description made by the Swedish border commissaries in 1621 and the local court rolls of the 17th-century province of Kexholm.

The source material and previous research

The medieval and early modern Russo-Swedish peace treaties and descriptions of defined borders have been published in several document collections. For this presentation, I have used the texts published in the journal *Suomi, tidskrift i fosterländska ämnen 1842*. The publisher used the original treaty text and the description of the border commissaries from the Swedish National Archives and compared it with a copy of the Russian original text from the

⁵ Malcolm Anderson, *Frontiers, Territory and State Formation in the Modern World* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996), 9; Daniel Power, “Frontiers: Terms, Concepts and the Historians of Medieval and Early Modern Europe”, Daniel Powers & Naomi Standen (eds), *Frontiers in Question. Eurasian Borderlands 700–1700* (London: Macmillan Press, 1999), 2–3; J. R. V. Prescott, *Political Frontiers and Boundaries* (London etc.: Allen & Unwin, 1987), 9.

⁶ Alexander Tolstikov, “From Mezha and Rån to Rubezh and Gränsen”, 54.

⁷ *Ibid.*

Archive of Foreign Affairs in Moscow. Therefore, the publication can be seen as reliable and faithful to the original text. This is most important when studying the concepts used in times gone by.

In the 1950s, the National Archives of Finland started to record the court cases in the protocols of the 17th-century local courts. The records were made in card registers, based on a long list of entries or key words. During the 1980s, it became clear that this work was proceeding very slowly and the economic depression of the early 1990s put an end to it. In the 2010s the part of the record that had been finished was transferred from the cards to digital format. One of the key words is “state border” (*valtakunnan raja*) and, luckily, the province of Kexholm, at the Russo-Swedish border, is included in the finished records. According to the digital record, there were about 100 court cases where the concept of state border was mentioned. The study of the court cases showed, however, that this was not always the case. For example, in many cases there was only a mention that a person had moved, travelled or escaped to the “Russian side” (*till Ryska sidan*). Therefore, the main corpus of mentioning the state border as a concept covers only about 50 cases between the years 1641 and 1700.

When using historical source material for conceptual history, we must always ask who “speaks” in the documents we are studying. In most cases, the court judge or his Swedish-speaking secretary wrote the court rolls. In many instances, the court roll describes the testimony of a local peasant. However, the peasant’s words are interpreted and translated into Swedish. Therefore, the concepts used in the court rolls are the conceptions of the establishment. Very seldom were the words of Finnish-speaking peasants written in Finnish — as it was spoken — on the court roll. Because of this process of interpretation, we can barely trace the concepts used by borderland peasants to describe the border. Keeping this critical view in mind, we can try to find some hints of the local understanding of the 1617 border. Nevertheless, in most cases we can see how the local establishment thought about the border concepts used.

The descriptions which the local court rolls serve about the life on the borderland are quite well-known to Finnish historical research. As early as the beginning of the 1960s, Erkki Kuujo wrote a book about life in “Border Karelia” in the 17th century.⁸ In it, he describes many of the most important and informative court cases about life in the borderland. Jukka Kokkonen’s doctoral dissertation analysed the cross-border contacts of settlers in the Karelian borderland in the latter half of the 17th century.⁹ Kokkonen has also published about the early

⁸ Erkki Kuujo, *Raja-Karjala Ruotsinvalian aikana* (Joensuu : Karjalaisen kulttuurin edistämisseura, 1963).

⁹ Jukka Kokkonen, *Rajaseutu liikkeesä. kaimuun ja Pielisen Karjalan asukkaiden kontaktit Venäjän Karjalaan kreivin ajasta sarkasotaan (1650–1712)* (Helsinki: Hakapaino Oy, 2002).

modern Russo–Swedish border issue in some international journals.¹⁰ My own book about life in the Karelian borderland is devoted mostly to describing the nature of what is known as the conglomerate state and governing the borderlands of the Swedish realm in the 17th century.¹¹ The most detailed description about the work of the commissaries defining the border of 1617 is still Arvi Korhonen’s 1938 monograph.¹² In his detailed work, Korhonen used sources from Swedish and Russian archives.

Concepts in the treaty of 1617 and border letter of 1621

Firstly, I shall analyse the use of border concepts in the 1617 peace treaty between Russia and Sweden, which was made in the village of Stolbovo in Ingria.¹³ With only one important exception (which will be presented below), the peace treaty consistently uses the concept *gräns* (in the forms *Grentze*, *Grentzer*, *Gräntze*, *Gräntzer*, *Gräntzen*) to describe the planned border between the two states. The concept *gräns* is used in the peace treaty agreement in the following contexts: the King of Sweden was to give back to the Tsar of Russia the captured fortresses, towns and villages with all their belongings and old borders (*gamble Grentzer*);¹⁴ the boyars, their children and the burghers were to be allowed to move from the areas ceded to the Swedish realm to the Russian side if they arrived at the nearest borders within fourteen days (*nästa Gräntzer beledsaga skole*);¹⁵ all war prisoners were to be set free at the border (*vidh Gräntzen*) but those prisoners who resided so far away that they could not immediately come to the border (*til Gräntzen*) were to be taken to the border (*til Gräntzen*) on 1 July 1617 at the latest;¹⁶ the bailiffs in the border fortresses (*på Gräntze Befästningar*) on both sides were to hunt criminals and forest bandits;¹⁷ in the event of local disputes, the bailiffs of the nearest border fortresses (*näste Gräntze befästningar*) were to meet “up on the border” (*uppå Gräntzen*), mediate and settle the conflict;¹⁸ the legates of the rulers were to be equipped with a convoy at the border (*vidh Gräntzen*) to ensure their safe passage to Moscow

¹⁰ See for example Jukka Kokkonen, “Überlokale Kontaktflächen der Grenze. Die nördlichen Grenzgebiete zwischen dem schwedischen Reich und dem Grossfürstentum Moskau im 17. Jahrhundert” *Kirchliche Zeitgeschichte, Internationale Zeitschrift für Theologie und Geschichtswissenschaft. Thema: Grenzen als Barrieren – Grenzregionen als Chancen*, 23. Jahrgang, Heft 1 (2010); Jukka Kokkonen, “Searching back the old border. The border between Russia and Sweden in the early modern period” *Trudi Karelskovo nauksnovu tsentra RAN* 6 (2011): 66–71.

¹¹ Kimmo Katajala, *Suurvallan rajalla. Ihmisiä Ruotsin ajan Karjalassa* (Helsinki: SKS, 2005).

¹² Arvi Korhonen, *Suomen itärajan syntyhistoriaa* (Porvoo—Helsinki: WSOY, 1938).

¹³ The analysis is based on the text of the 1617 treaty published in *Suomi, Tidskrift i fosterländska ämnen*, 5. heftet (Helsingfors, 1842): 34–68. The publication compares the Swedish and Russian versions of the treaty.

¹⁴ “Fredz fördragh Emillan Sverige och Ryssland, oprättadh i Stolbowa then 27 Februarii årh 1617”, *Suomi*, 5. heftet (1842), 41 (article 2).

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 47 (article 5).

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 55–56 (article 18).

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 56–57 (article 21).

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 57 (article 22).

and back to the border again (*til Gräntzen igen*);¹⁹ and finally, both parties were to send their legates to meet at the border (*vidh Gräntzen*) to mark a separation in the middle with a border (*mitt oppå rätte Gräntze skillnaden*).²⁰ At the end of the treaty, these legates of the parties are called border commissaries (*Gräntze Commissarier*).²¹

What can we learn from this? At first, everything seems to point to the fact that the concept *gräns* refers to an exactly defined linear borderline. However, a closer look can raise some objections. When the Swedish king promises to return the conquered fortresses, towns and villages to the tsar, the Swedish variant of the treaty chooses the expression “with all their belongings and old borders.” It can be thought that the “old borders” are equated with the expression “all belongings” and therefore it could be interpreted as a zonal frontier or belonging to one of the parties. However, the Russian variant uses the expression “after the old borders” which refers to a linear border concept.²² In both cases, the word “border” is used in its plural form.

The plural is in use as well in the article regulating the right to move to the Russian side, if one only comes within fourteen days to the “nearest borders”. Therefore, the border of the realm was understood as series of borders: the border between the province of Kexholm and Russia was one border, the border of Ingria and Russia another. Another case which gives reason to suspect that the term *gräns* meant frontier is that of the border fortresses (*Gräntze Befästningar*) mentioned in the treaty. In the medieval border system, the demarcation between realms could be strictly defined and marked in terrain, but in practice the land between the border fortresses functioned as the border.²³ However, there is nothing confirming that this reasoning had continued up to the 17th century. Expressions such as “at the border” (*vidh Gräntzen*), “to the border” (*til Gräntzen*) and especially to “make a separation in the middle with a border” (*mitt oppå rätte Gräntze skillnaden*) clearly refer to a dividing borderline.

Then, we come to the above-mentioned exception to the rule that *gräns* (*Grenze / Gränze*) was used to mean the border of the realm. Alexander Tolstikov has noted that the medieval Swedish treaties with Novgorod and Russia from the 14th to the 16th centuries most often used the expressions *rå* and *landemärke*, that is, landmarks meaning the demarcation between the realms. Then, in the course of the 16th century, “the new loan word *gräns* increasingly displaced *rå*”.²⁴ According to Tolstikov “the former had wider

¹⁹ Ibid., 62 (article 27).

²⁰ Ibid., 63 (article 30).

²¹ Ibid., 68.

²² Unfortunately the expression is not presented in its Russian form but as a translation (“*och*” *star i Ryskan* “*efter*”) in the document publication, see *ibid.*, 41 (note *).

²³ Kimmo Katajala, “Drawing Borders or Dividing Lands?”, 30—31.

²⁴ Alexander Tolstikov, “From Mezha and Rån to Rubezh and Gränsen”, 50, 55.

meaning of both ‘a marked border line’ and a borderland or a frontier.” The latter continued to mean a “marked borderline”. “*Gräns* seems to have been the principal word when it was necessary to mention the people living at the Russo-Swedish border,” writes Tolstikov. The border markers were called *rå* and *rå och rör*.²⁵

Now, in the peace treaty of 1617, the use of border concepts changes in article eleven, which describes how the Tsar Vasilii Ivanovich (Shuiskii) has promised the province of Kexholm to the Swedish King Carl the Ninth for the support he gave to the tsar against the Poles. The province was given “with all its territory, land, people, riches, taxes and rights on land and water, with its all correct borders and landmarks used this far” (*här til brukelige Gräntzer och Landemärken*).²⁶ The next article gives advice on how to manage if there is some dispute about the “landmarks” (*af Landmärken*) and gives an order for the commissaries of both parties to “set division and border markers” (*upsättia skildnat och råmärken*) so that the lands of the king and the tsar will be separated “*medh Råå och Rööör*” from each other.²⁷

In this part of the text of the treaty, it becomes evident that *gräns* is understood as a linear borderline, “*Landemärken*” refers to the landmarks on a somewhat abstract level and the expression “*Råå och Rööör*” means the concrete separate border markers in the terrain. This reasoning can be confirmed from the document the border commissaries made in 1621, when the border was finally marked in the terrain. This detailed description of the border uses the concept “*Gräntze*” in the linear sense throughout. This becomes very clear from the verbs chosen to illuminate the course of the border. The border (*Gräntze*) “runs” (*löper*),²⁸ “follows” a road (*föllier Grentzen med vägen, föllier Grentzen med landzryggen*), “rises to the right” (*stiger Grentzen på högre handen*), “goes” through a forest and swamp (*går Grentzen igenom brukelig skog och Kärr*). When the document is referring to individual border markers, the border is described as follows: “is a birch as a border marker” (*ähr till Råmärcke en Biörck*) “a pile of burned coal to be a border marker” (*en hop kohl brände till Råmerke*), a stone... ..is raised up to a border marker (*en Steen... ..är uprest till Råmerke*), “there is on a stone a pile of stones for an old border marker” (*där är på en Steen till gammalt Råmerke Steenar ihop lagde*).²⁹

There are two exceptions to the rule described above: in two instances, the document calls stones which were raised to stand as border markers “*Grentzemerke*”.³⁰ The concept

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ “Fredz fördragh 1617”, 23ff. (article 11).

²⁷ Ibid., 49 (article 12).

²⁸ “Svenske Commissariernes Rågångsbreff emellan Kåxholms och Nougorodz lähn, dhen 3 Augusti 1621”, *Suomi*, 6. heftet (1842), 21—53.

²⁹ Ibid., 49.

³⁰ Ibid., 21, 30.

of border stone (*Råsten*) is mentioned once where the border stone situated “since old times” (*af ålder*) at the place where the boundary of the parish of Ilomantsi in the province of Kexholm ended against the *pogost* (parish) of Rebola of the province of Novgorod.³¹ The specially mentioned stone seems to have been a well-known old border marker in the crossing of the borders of provinces and parish boundaries. The commissaries had to define the northern part of the border in the wilderness, where the course of the previous border was unclear or perhaps had never before been marked in the terrain. It is noteworthy that in the latter part of the description of defining the border, piles of stones are twice mentioned functioning as “old border markers” (*af ålder till Råmärke Steenar ihooplagde*).³² This is quite near to the original meaning given for the expressions *rå*, *rör* and *rå och rör*. According to the medieval provincial law of Västmanland, *rör* is a border marker of five stones, four together and one in the middle. The same law defines *rå* as a stake with a stone and bone.³³ However, when borders are discussed in medieval documents, the concepts are usually used together in the form *rå och rör*, referring to the division indicated with several border markers at various points.³⁴

We have to pay attention to one more expression in description of the commissaries preparing the border of the 1617 treaty. In the latter half of the border description, the expression *rå vägen*, a “border road” appears several times. For example, “there in the border road are marked a stone in the terrain and a spruce with crowns and a cross” (*där som en jordfast Steen och en Furu i Rå vägen äre med Cronor och Korss bemärkte*) and “there is a stone in the border road marked with a crown and a cross” (*där som en Steen i Råvägen är bemärkt med Crona och Korss*).³⁵ Although it is not explicitly stated in the description of making the 1617 border, it is evident that the borderline was opened in the vegetation on the terrain and this opened line was called a *råvägen*, or border road. The border road was not very wide, which we can conclude from the correspondence of the Swedish King Gustavus II Adolphus in 1627. Six years after it was cut, the vegetation on the borderline had already grown so much that it was sometimes difficult to trace the course of the border in the terrain, wrote the king. Therefore, he gave an order to mark the border again by clearing the vegetation.³⁶ In a similar manner, the commissaries defining the border of the 1595 treaty

³¹ *Ibid.*, 45.

³² *Ibid.*, 34.

³³ Vestmanna lagen, bygninga balk, § XVIII: Carl Johan Schlyter (ed.), *Samling af Sveriges gamla lagar*, vol. 5 (Lund: Berlingska Boktryckeriet, 1841), 217—218.

³⁴ Kimmo Katajala, “Drawing Borders or Dividing Lands”, 34.

³⁵ “Rågångsbreff 1621”, 37—40.

³⁶ Gustavus II Adolphus to the Governor of province of Kexholm Henrik Månsson, 5 March 1627: Copies of the Register of the Realm (Riksregistraturet), Finnish National Archives (Kansallisarkisto). See also Kimmo Katajala,

wrote to Regent Duke Charles (later King Charles IX) that they had “made all the space between the border markers flat so that each marker could be seen from one to the next (*Gjordes och på alle ruum slett mellan råår, Szå att then ene råån syntes till den andre*).³⁷

The 17th century Russo-Swedish border in the court rolls

Next we will take a glimpse at how the concept of the border was used in the local court rolls of the Kexholm province during the 17th century. We do not have the time and space here for a thorough quantitative or qualitative analysis of the whole source corpus but we must settle for some examples which can illustrate the early modern use of border concepts. The most common expression in the court protocols is “*öfwer gräntzen/grentzen*”, that is, over the border. For example, the local court of Ilomantsi parish announced in 1641 that almost all inhabitants of the village of Riihijärvi had escaped over the border (*öfwer gräntzen*).³⁸ In 1682, at the local court of Salmi and Suistamo parishes (the parishes nearest to the border) a murder case was investigated. A maid had stuck a knife into another woman, who had died of the wounds. The killer had escaped with her husband “over the border to the Russian side” (*på Ryska sijdan med sin man Simon Mygrä öfwer grentzen första reesan förfogat*).³⁹ There are many more examples like these.

Sometimes the border was defined with the epithet “Muscovian”. For example, the 1641 protocol of the court of Kitee, Liperi and Pielisjärvi parishes described how people had escaped over the Muscovian border (*som förrymbdt hafwuer öfwer Muskofwiske grentzen*).⁴⁰ In the same year, at the court of Tohmajärvi and Ilomantsi parishes, the border bandits had “withdrawn over the Muscovian border” (*draga öfwer Muskofwiske grentzen*)⁴¹ and in Pälkjärvi parish a murderer had escaped “over the border to the Muscovian side” (*öfwer*

“Zwischen West und Ost. 800 Jahre and der Ostgrenze Finnlands”, *Kirchliche Zeitgeschichte, Internationale Zeitschrift für Theologie und Geschichtswissenschaft. Thema: Grenzen als Barrieren — Grenzregionen als Chancen*, 23. Jahrgang, Heft 1 (2010): 87—88.

³⁷ Commissaries to Duke Charles, 20 October 1595: *Diplomatica Muscovitica, Huvudsamlingen 1323—1808, Brev och handlingar ang. Sveriges gräns med Ryssland, Gränskommissioner 1595—1761, i anledning af freden i Teusina 1595*, Vol. 543: *Brev och handlingar 1595—1596, Gränsen från Finska viken till Varpavuori*. Swedish National Archives (Riksarkivet, Sverige). See also Kimmo Katajala, “Viipurin Karjala rajamaakuntana 1534—1617”, Yrjö Kaukiainen & Jouko Nurmiainen (eds), *Viipurin läänin historia III. Suomenlahdelta Laatokalle* (Lappeenranta : Karjalan kirjapaino 2010), 191.

³⁸ Local court rolls of the province of Käkisalmi. Local court of Ilomantsi 15 February 1641: Finnish National Archives, Digital archives, fol. 81v—82v. URL: <http://digi.narc.fi/digi/view.ka?kuid=3717316> (23.12.2017).

³⁹ Local court rolls of the province of Käkisalmi. Local court of Salmi and Suistamo parishes 3—4 March 1682: *ibid.*, fol. 285—286v. URL: <http://digi.narc.fi/digi/view.ka?kuid=3720859> (23.12.2017).

⁴⁰ Local court rolls of the province of Käkisalmi. Local court of Kitee, Liperi and Pielisjärvi parishes 19 August 1641: *ibid.*, fol. 100—100v. URL: <http://digi.narc.fi/digi/view.ka?kuid=3717349> (23.12.2017).

⁴¹ Local court rolls of the province of Käkisalmi. Local court of Tohmajärvi and Ilomantsi parishes 21 August 1641: *ibid.*, fol. 103—104. URL: <http://digi.narc.fi/digi/view.ka?kuid=3717355> (23.12.2017).

grentzen förrymbd hafwer in opo Muskofwiske sidan).⁴² However, this expression, referring to the medieval and 16th-century Muscovian Grand Duchy, can be found in the court rolls of the year 1641 only. Therefore, perhaps we should not emphasize this issue too much. It may be it only one district judge used these words. In the court rolls of the latter half of the century, the border is defined as “Russian”. For example, in 1684 in Pyhäjärvi parish local court, it was announced that a murderer had died in the parish of Salmi “by the Russian border” (*i Salmis sochn wed Ryska gräntzen sedan dödh blefwen*).⁴³ In turn, when two peasants were returning from the Russian side, they noticed a wooden building burning “only one *verst* from the Swedish border” (*I wirst wäg allenäst från Svenska grentzen*).⁴⁴

All these examples seem to confirm the reasoning made from the texts of the peace treaty of 1617 and the description of the border commissaries. *Gräns* seems to refer to a dividing, clearly defined borderline. However, the court rolls give evidence of a more diverse understanding of the concept of *gräns*. For example, in 1687 the court of Sortavala and Suistamo parishes was hearing a very complicated case. Soldiers who had escaped from their regiments and some other men were charged with serious crimes. They had robbed local peasants and then escaped over the border several times. During the handling of the case a local police officer said that it was quite common for such bandits to roam around the land, especially here by the border (*i synnerheet här på gräntzen*). The lay jurymen on the case concluded that they had to punish the accused man with the death penalty because “here on the border [*här opå grentzen*] it has become too common that the Finns are running over the border to Russia and letting themselves be baptized anew in the Russian faith”.⁴⁵

In these examples, the concept *gräns* seems to have the content of frontier, a “borderland”, or regions near the border. Even more clearly, this can be seen at the court roll of Pielisjärvi parish in 1684. The local lieutenant taking care of the small fort in the parish had died. It was necessary to choose a new lieutenant because “such a person there on the border is much needed because of bandits and conflicting parties” (*en sådan Person der på grentzen för*

⁴² Local court rolls of the province of Käkisalmi. Local court of Pälkjärvi 24 August 1641: *ibid.*, fol. 104v. URL: <http://digi.narc.fi/digi/view.ka?kuid=3717359> (23.12.2017).

⁴³ Local court rolls of the province of Käkisalmi. Local court of Pyhäjärvi 20 October 1684: *ibid.*, fol. 251—252v. URL: <http://digi.narc.fi/digi/view.ka?kuid=3723373> (23.12.2017).

⁴⁴ Local court rolls of the province of Käkisalmi. Local court of Joukio and Uukuniemi 29—30 October and 2 November 1686: *ibid.*, fol. 147v—152. URL: <http://digi.narc.fi/digi/view.ka?kuid=3724297> (23.12.2017). A *verst* (Russian: верста) is a Russian unit of length, about 1066 metres.

⁴⁵ Local court rolls of the province of Käkisalmi. Local court of Sortavala and Suistamo 21—28 February 1687: *ibid.*, fol. 43—54v. URL: <http://digi.narc.fi/digi/view.ka?kuid=3724622> (23.12.2017).

Röfware och ströfwande partier wäll behöfwes).⁴⁶ In these examples, *gräns* referred not only to the borderline but also to the regions near the border.

Then, we have still the concept of *rå* to consider. How do the court rolls use this? In almost all cases, *rå* refers to boundaries of landed properties or boundaries between parishes. In only one case, which I will consider last, is *rå* used to refer to the border between realms. For example, when the local court of Ilomantsi and Suojärvi parishes was inspecting the boundaries between the Ilomantsi and Pielisjärvi parishes, the court roll inclusively used the word *rå*, never the term *gräns*.⁴⁷ In 1679, some villages in the Suistamo parish were quarrelling about the boundaries between them. The court roll uses the word *rå*, and when the trusted men were ordered to define the uncertain boundary, this process was called “*rååläggning*”, or setting the boundary.⁴⁸ In this respect, the concept of *rå* is used in the sense of boundaries of lower administrative units such as parishes or villages. The use of the concept in the court rolls differs drastically from its use in the treaty of 1617 and in the report of the commissaries in 1621.

At last, we come to the interesting case in which the concepts of *gräns* and *rå* are used almost synonymously. In 1690, a special local court session examined the boundary disputes between the villages of Noisniemi in Sakkola parish in the province of Kexholm and Päiväkivi village in the Äyräpää parish of the province of Vyborg. Before the treaty of 1617, the Russo-Swedish border had followed the Vuoksa River at this point. The border between the realms was marked with a cross on a big stone (*Udenkiwi*) in the backwater of the river. The previous border between the realms had remained in force as the boundary between the two provinces and villages. Now, long after the treaty of 1617, some dispute had occurred about the course of the boundary line. The court had at hand an old document called a “*Grentze och råå breef*” (border and boundary letter) for defining the disputed boundary between the villages. However, it seems that the scribe of the court roll has added the word “*grentze*” to the protocol in this case in order to confirm that the document defined the border between the realms before the treaty of 1617. Later in the same protocol, the boundary letter is entitled “an old boundary letter of the year 1320” (*gambla rååbrefwet, af åhr 1320*).⁴⁹ Elsewhere in the court roll, the

⁴⁶ Local court rolls of the province of Käkisalme. Local court of Liperi and Pielisjärvi 9 September 1684: *ibid.*, fol. 170. URL: <http://digi.narc.fi/digi/view.ka?kuid=3723212> (23.12.2017).

⁴⁷ Local court rolls of the province of Käkisalme. Local court of Ilomantsi and Suojärvi 1—2 March 1683: *ibid.*, fol. 63v—65. URL: <http://digi.narc.fi/digi/view.ka?kuid=3720396> (23.12.2017).

⁴⁸ Local court rolls of the province of Käkisalme. Local court of Suistamo 6—8 March 1679: *ibid.*, fol. 892v. URL: <http://digi.narc.fi/digi/view.ka?kuid=3722065> (23.12.2017).

⁴⁹ Local court rolls of the province of Käkisalme. Local court of Sakkola 19—20 September 1690: *ibid.*, fol. 180v. URL: <http://digi.narc.fi/digi/view.ka?kuid=3729310> (23.12.2017). If the year mentioned in the court roll is correct, it means that the court had an agreement about the border between the realm of Novgorod and Sweden

boundaries of the villages are labelled as “village boundaries and divisions” (*bye råår och skillnad*).⁵⁰ In the course of the centuries, the concept of *rå* in the sense of a border between realms had been replaced with the word *gräns*. At the end of the 17th century, the word *rå* had come to mean a boundary.

Conclusions

In the peace treaty of 1617 and in the report of the border commissaries of 1612, the use of border concepts is very consistent. “*Gränze / Grenze*” is used to mean a borderline between realms. According to Tolstikov, the concept *rå* and the word pair *rå och rör*, referring in the middle ages to the borders between realms as well as to boundaries between landholdings, had still meant a border between political entities, or states, in 1620, but in 1712 they were defined as “boundaries of lands, forests or fields”.⁵¹ In this detail, my results do not perfectly dovetail with Tolstikov’s reasoning. In early 17th-century documents, the word *rå* refers clearly to border markers. In the document of 1621, the concept “*råå väg*” refers to the concrete linear border opened in the vegetation on the terrain. The term *gräns* is used in a more abstract sense in these documents.

The concept of *gräns*, the state border, was understood in at least three ways in the used source material. First, it refers to the linear boundary between the two states. The concept is, at least to some degree, abstract. The concrete borderline opened in the vegetation on the terrain was referred to as *rå vägen*, or border road. Second, in the court rolls, *gräns* refers to the frontier, or borderland nearest to the borderline. Third, we can see from the examples above that although the border was exactly defined and marked in the terrain it really was by no means an enclosing barrier between the two states. Although a border guard and customs existed in the Salmi parish, and border guards rode along the borderline, in practice, as Jukka Kokkonen has described it, the border was like a sieve: despite the markers and guards, it was easy to cross in the wilderness. However, when we think about the border in terms of state-building, these three levels should not be mixed. *Gräns* as a concept was a well-defined border, a line. In the court rolls we find the same concept in “loose talk” referring to the frontier, or borderland. The third understanding is connected to the way in which the border functioned in practice: it was a zone-like sieve.

(*Proof-reading of the English text — Kate Sotejeff-Wilson*)

that was made three years before the famous Peace Treaty of Nöteborg of 1323. It is possible that the court made a mistake in interpreting the year. Perhaps the correct year is 1380.

⁵⁰ Local court rolls of the province of Käkisalmi. Local court of Sakkola 19—20 September 1690: *ibid.*, fol. 180—182v. URL: <http://digi.narc.fi/digi/view.ka?kuid=3729309> (23.12.2017).

⁵¹ Alexander Tolstikov, “From Mezha and Rån to Rubezh and Gränsen”, 47.

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