SPIRITUAL FRONTIERS: THE RUSSIAN FRONTIER MYTH OF THE URALS REGION AGAINST A EUROPEAN AND NORTH AMERICAN BACKGROUND*

Natalya ZAVYALOVA**

Introduction
The concept of “frontier” is multifarious and complex. In this paper we follow the idea that the “frontier” myth is observed at three levels: geographical, spiritual and linguistic. The frontier triad (fig. 1) is indispensable for a comprehensive vision of this phenomenon. However, this paper discusses the transitional character of all elements of this triad. The study directly relates to traditional descriptions of the frontier myth, as well as some new dimensions of socio-cultural descriptions. The central question of our research and the primary hypothesis are connected with the debatable point of geographical frontiers and spiritual frontiers. We argue that geographical frontiers are not spiritual frontiers, and that even linguistic labels - such as the incorporation of the stem for “frontier” into a territory name - do not necessarily signify their importance as a spiritual frontier of a nation. The secondary hypothesis of the paper is related to various representations of the frontier myth in German, Russian and North American cultural frameworks. The theoretical implication of the study lies within the domain of understanding nations, as well as their intricate correlations with the localities they occupy. The practical outcome of the article is a new hybrid method of analysis of big linguistic data, blended with historical facts and interpretations, which can be further applied for various purposes within modern historiographical approaches, adopting linguistic philosophy as a methodological basis.

The concept of geographical frontiers is well defined by the geographical positions of localities and people, though scholars also observe its multi-faceted, transitional nature. Based on research in Nunavik, the northern third of Quebec, Canada, N. Gombay (2015) describes the formation of frontier community psychology, united by a common territory.

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and frontiers, and

[…] focuses on how, through wildlife management, notions of personhood are being legally codified, particularly in relation to property […] examines the degree to which official ideas of personhood coincide with Indigenous ones in the construction of citizenship, and considers how these combine with property relations in the performance of subjectivities. Enforcing state wildlife regulations has altered the moral codes that define what persons are and determine how they should interact with one another.¹

Fig. 1. The frontier triad

However, spiritual frontiers are even harder to detect. In the age of digital environments, some scholars prefer to describe the frontiers of the iOS and Android platforms, rather than tangible geographic frontiers. In this connection we pay special attention to the attempt described in research which “analyses the platform environments in which content providers (CPs) may succeed by using a meta-frontier analysis that compares the efficiency of different groups in identical industries.”² The digital aspect is also objectified in the sphere of computer game names, such as “Brave Frontier” and “Dead Frontier.”

Another spiritual domain of frontier is the so-called “frontier mentality.” In her article Frontier Mentality Has No Place in the Arctic, Y. Kakabadse vehemently condemns modern powers in their wish to set frontiers in newly developed lands in the Arctic zone.³ No matter how right she is, we have to stress the fact that the frontier mentality is deeply rooted

¹ Gombay 2015, p. 11.
² Lee et al. 2015, p. 553.
³ Kakabadse 2015, p. 55-59.
in human mindsets and may be traced back across centuries. The linguistic aspects of frontiers are reflected in linguistic units containing a “frontier” stem. By means of illustration we use the example of the “frontier” stem in the Slavonic term Okraina (developed later into Ukraina, the modern Ukrain) which is of much importance within Russian culture. History experts believe that within the period of the twelfth to seventeenth centuries, the term okraina/ukraina related to a vast majority of Russian frontier territories, known as the Tatarskaya ukraina, the Kazanskaya ukraina and even the Nemetskaya ukraina. The people at the service of Russian tsars defending the territories of Russian frontiers were called ukraintsy. They belonged to a special social stratum and were also often called kazaks/“Cossacks” (казаки). The term ukraintsy came into use as the name of an ethnic group in the second half of the nineteenth century within the circles of radical Russian intellectuals. And only in the mid-twentieth century did this term reach wide circulation in the USSR and become officially accepted as an ethnic group name, which later gave birth to the country name Ukraina/Ukraine.4 Here the question arises: if a certain territory is called a “frontier” or contains the linguistic stem for “frontier,” can it automatically be classified as a geographical and spiritual frontier? The answer is that geography changes and the spiritual atmosphere is also very unstable. The case of the Slavonic term ukraina is a very convincing example. Thus, our main questions arise. What does it take and cost to be a spiritual frontier? What is the spiritual frontier made of? How do spiritual frontiers relate to collective mentality and the ideas of great nations, such as “Great Germany” or “Great Russia”?

Data and Methods
The above-given literature overview has demonstrated a huge variety of approaches towards the understanding of frontier problems. However, the word “frontier” itself is a subject of constant change. Modern big data and data mining technologies make it possible to compare traditional visions of frontiers with digital content, reflecting a present-day state of the problem which falls in line with a “linguistic turn” in historiography. With the help of the Serelex system which finds semantically related words in Wikipedia we have obtained the following representations of the “frontier” concept in digital space.5

The information, presented in the graph, testifies to the fact that present-day frontiers lie within the domain of new technologies. Here people use quickeys (quick keys to make computer work fast), ccars (comprehensive capital analysis and review), mopads (monitor isolation pads), search kaltix (a

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5 Panchenko et al. 2013, p. 837-840.
personalized search engine) and think about the human genome. Obviously, this idea of frontier is connected with science and technology frontiers. However, the terms “Etruscans,” “Phoenicians,” “Nuzi” and “Cypriots” reflect people’s interest in historical frontiers. Historical and cultural reflections on the concept of “frontier” are at the heart of this paper.

Fig. 2. Serelex graph of the request form “frontier”

The next stage of our analysis is based on data obtained from the BabelNet encyclopaedia which makes it possible to get various sets of visual and factual data in the majority of modern languages, along with the number of connections, i.e. mentions in annotated texts. For the purpose of understanding the modern European frontier landscape, we explored the data in German. The Russian frontier concept was analysed based on material presented in Russian. Finally, we decided to compare these two visions of frontier content against the English language frontier’s frameworks. It is hoped that this type of cross-cultural analysis will be conducive to a deeper understanding of our main question regarding the spiritual frontiers of a country. Finally, we discuss the results of these findings against the background of Russian historical data, describing the time period of the mid-nineteenth to twentieth centuries. This description provides us with answers about the essence of the spiritual frontier in Russia.

Results
Basically, if we take a more precise look at definitions of “frontier,” we will see that diachronically the concept of “frontier” is deeply culturally bound,

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and that understanding this concept offers quite a number of practical outcomes. With the help of the BabelNet encyclopaedia we have obtained the most relevant aspects of this concept in German, which can be visualized in the form of the following taxonomy. We observe a technologically bound perception of frontier as a key term in thermodynamics and the mathematical field of topology.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BabelNet Search Results</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grenze, Abgrenzung, Gemerke - 3843 connections</td>
<td>Eine Grenze ist der Rand eines Raumes und damit ein Trennwert, eine Trennlinie oder eine Trennfläche [A border is the edge of a room and therefore a release value, a separation line or separation surface]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grenzland, Grenze - 375 connections</td>
<td>Grenzland ist ein Überbegriff für mehrere Arten von Grenzbereichen zwischen menschlichen Gesellschaften [Borderland is an umbrella term for several types of boundaries between human societies]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thermodynamisches System, Natur, System, grenze - 331 connections</td>
<td>Ein thermodynamisches System ist ein räumlich eingegrenzt betrachtetes physikalisches System, für das eine Energiebilanz - beim offenen System zusammen mit einer Stoffbilanz - erstellt werden kann [A thermodynamic spatially limited system. One physical system for which an energy balance - the open system with a mass balance - can be created]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rand (Topologie), grenze - 175 connections</td>
<td>Im mathematischen Teilgebiet der Topologie ist der Begriff Rand eine Abstraktion der anschaulichen Vorstellung einer Begrenzung eines Bereiches [In the mathematical field of topology, the term border is an abstraction of the philosophical notion of a boundary of an area]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limes (Kategorientheorie), grenze - 103 connections</td>
<td>In der Algebra oder allgemeiner der Kategorientheorie ist der projektive Limes eine Konstruktion, mit der man verschiedene in gewisser Weise zusammengehörende Strukturen verbinden kann [In algebra, or more generally, the category theory of projective limit is of a design in which one can combine in some way different structures which belong together]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 1.** BabelNet search results of the request form *grenze*[^8]

The collected data vividly highlights German nation as a culture of practical activities, very efficient in the field of special descriptions. We draw the inference that the concept of frontier for Germans is devoid of any emotional attachment, probably due to the fact of changing transitional

nature of German borderlines within the historic development of the country. The concept of “Great Germany” is achieved here from a practical angle, exhibiting Germany as a nation of great achievements in the world of mechanics and topology.

The analysis of the Russian word *granitsa*/frontier also testifies to the fact that in Russian this linguistic unit is not culturally specific. On top of that, Russian BabelNet results refer users to the French concept with the transliterated French word *frontière*/frontyr, which was later developed in the North American idea of the frontier of the Wild West.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The state border - 3843 connections</th>
<th>The state border-line and passing along this line - the vertical plane defined by the limits of the state of the country, that is the spatial limit of the country</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frontier, the outskirts - 375 connections</td>
<td>Frontier in American history - the zone of the Wild West, located in what is now North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, Kansas, Nebraska and Texas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limit - 320 connections</td>
<td>Limit - one of the basic concepts of mathematical analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The boundary (topology) - 175 connections</td>
<td>The boundary of A - the set of all points located arbitrarily close to both points in the set A, and to points outside of A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2.** BabelNet search results of the request form *granitsa* ⁹

The above taxonomy of Russian representations of frontier directly fits into the cumulative understanding of Russian culture. On the one hand, these representations exhibit imperial inclinations, limiting the lands and territories which directly relate to the concept of “Great Russia.” On the other hand, we perceive Russia as a receiving culture, attentive to scientific developments and other cultures’ stereotypes.

The analysis of the “frontier” concept in English testifies to the fact that its main representations here are connected with the concept of the “Wild West frontier,” deeply rooted in North American history.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frontier - 1661 connections</th>
<th>The western United States during its frontier period</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frontier - 375 connections</td>
<td>A wilderness at the edge of a settled area of a country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frontier - 175 connections</td>
<td>In topology and mathematics in general, the boundary of a subset S of a topological space X is the set of points which can be approached both from S and from outside of S</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. BabelNet search results of the request form “frontier”¹⁰

Analysis of this taxonomy confirms that the Anglo-Saxon perception of frontier is culturally bound and finds its manifestations not only in the geographical and scientific domains, but also in the names of new plants, villages and restaurants.

Discussions
Social and philosophical perceptions of the frontier myth are universally associated with the name of Frederick Jackson Turner, an American historian who declared the formative function of the frontier in the process of the development of American democracy. “American democracy was born of no theorist’s dream; it was not carried in the Susan Constant of Virginia, nor in the Mayflower Plymouth. It came out of the American forest and it gained new strength each time it touched a new frontier.”¹¹ The American frontier myth is skilfully actualized in a number of present-day studies. Z. H. Carney and M. E. Stuckey observed that many modern politicians

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¹¹ Turner 1920, p. 293.
[...] use the frontier myth and the rhetoric of the Indian Wars as a heuristic for analysing four racial valences in presidential rhetoric on the War on Terror. First, the naming of the enemy in both instances racializes and conflates identities, amplifying a potential threat and justifying a similarly amplified reaction. Second, the war zone is characterized by shifting borders and alliances, suggesting a racialized political hierarchy in which the United States wars against non-white tribal leaders. Third, presidents distinguish between savagery and civilization in war practices such that technology, specifically contrasted to trickery, is a marker of whiteness. Fourth, in both wars, the disciplining of non-white bodies is justified as the means to spreading and preserving democracy.12

K. L. Gibson and A. L. Heyse analyse a chapter from Sarah Palin’s best-selling book *America by Heart: Reflections on Family, Faith, and Flag*: We argue that Sarah Palin draws upon the mythology of the American frontier in “The Rise of the Mama Grizzlies” in order to legitimate a conservative feminism. Our analysis demonstrates how Palin appropriates the history of the women’s rights movement and the symbols and language of feminism to position her audience of contemporary conservative women as the rightful heirs of distinctly American frontier feminism.13

These examples prove the idea that “frontiers” exist spiritually in spaces which cannot be described geographical terms.

We analyse the European frontier myth through the prism of the Black Forest region - Schwarzwald. The Romans called this region “Marciana Silva” when it was under their control, which it was until the fourth century AD. Our choice of this region, rather than the borders of modern Germany, let alone the European Union’s borders, is justified by a rich stratum of folklore devoted to this region in the European cultural background.

Schwarzwald is a forested mountain region about 200 km long and 60 km wide, located in the state of Baden-Württemberg, south-western Germany. Because of its unique beauty and exquisite geographical position this region has for centuries been at the heart of the European mythological consciousness. Numerous stories about forest gods and goddesses are connected with this place, which is also famous for its watch production and mineral spring resorts.

The region is rich in folklore and is often introduced as an imaginary line between the actual world and the world of forest spirits. It is therefore productive in terms of understanding European socio-cultural acquisition to study this place in depth.

12 Carney, Stuckey 2015, p. 163-165.
Fig. 3. Shears for cutting sheet iron erected in the historical centre of Yekaterinburg

Fig. 4. A cutting press erected in the historical centre of Yekaterinburg

And what about the Russian frontier myth? Is there any special region which may correlate with the American Wild West frontier’s generative power? The answer is not Ukraine, despite the above-described etymology of this term, which uses the “frontier” stem. The Russian frontier, the heart of Russian industry and economics, is located within the region of the Urals Mountains. The boundary between Europe and Asia runs along the eastern side of the Urals Mountains. It was in this area, specifically in the Nizhny
Tagil Mining Plant, that in August 1834 the first steam engine of the Russian Empire whistled. This signal announced the beginning of a new era of rail transport in the mining and metallurgical industries. Within half a century, this region supplied the whole country with world-class metal. The equipment to produce the metal was bought from the best factories of that time. This period of spectacular growth of metal production is still remembered in the Urals and commemorated in a public display of metallurgical equipment in Yekaterinburg, the capital of the Ural region (fig. 3-4).

The Urals became a huge construction site for a gigantic plant in Uralmash, in 1933. The company’s website states:

For decades, [the] Uralmash plant JSC has been a key provider of basic machinery for mining, metallurgical, oil-and-gas and power engineering industries, since fundamental national industries have originated here, at the Ural Heavy Machinery Plant.  

The Urals region is of great importance to Russia geologically, due to its unique mineralogical diversity. As academic A. Fershman writes:

[…] there is no land in the world so abundant in resources. In total, 87 minerals have been discovered over years of extensive study of the Urals. Six new chemical elements separated out from them have taken their places in Mendeleev’s periodic table. The past millennium gave us about 4,000 mineral types. Approximately a quarter of all known mineral types are found in Ural underground deposits.

From 1745 to 1917, 704.2 tons of gold were mined in the Urals, including 559.2 tons from the gold fields. In the Soviet period gold output amounted to a total of 1,200 tons. Strikingly, unlike in North America, Australia or Africa, the gold fields in the Urals were not well developed before their commercial exploitation. On the contrary, first came the gold and later, in 1814, fully fledged gold fields were initiated to exploit the Beryozovsk deposits.

In 1924, the Soviet academic A. N. Zavaritsky observed that “the most remarkable peculiarity of the Ural metal deposits is the platinum deposits. These are the largest concentrations of the rare-earth element [and] very significant for our cultural progress.”

One of the biggest myths of the Ural region is connected with malachite and the name of P. P. Bazhov. In his fairy tale Malakhitovaya shkatulka, this famous Soviet writer expressed the beauty of the Ural region through a thrilling series of tales describing the mysterious goddess of the

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16 Ibid., p. 19.
17 Ibid., p. 23.
Ural Mountains. Ural malachite has gained international renown as a mineral of rare beauty. The world’s leading museums, including the Hermitage and the Louvres, contain marvellous collections of cut pieces of Ural malachite.

The above-mentioned facts bring us to the conclusion that frontiers are set in the hearts of people, rather than on geographic maps. The frontier myth is actualized in the form of local legends and myths, transported from one generation to another. Despite the fact that other regions may have a “frontier” stem in their names, they are not spiritual frontiers which build and unite nations.

Conclusions
This study has been limited to small-scale cross-cultural analysis. We find it fruitful and important to consider a bigger set of nations with their visions of frontiers. The discussion of frontiers is of vital importance even in the age of globalism, as territorial limitations have always been deeply rooted in human psyche.

This paper confirms our proposition that geographical edges do not coincide with the spiritual frontiers which form the building blocks of a nation. There are several questions which arise from the issues discussed in this study: the power balance between frontiers and the capital; differing concepts of frontiers in the varied and diverse cultures found on the planet; and the roles of leaders in final decision making. Leaders need to be more concentrated on local traditions, people and the best way of delivering the message of the present, adjusting it with the conditions, inherited from the past. Successful communication enriches the poor, heals the wounded, nourishes the starved and rejuvenates the injured. The theoretical and practical outcomes of this research lie within the domain of socio-cultural acquisition in German, Russian and North American nations.

Spiritual Frontiers: The Russian Frontier Myth of the Urals Region against a European and North American Background

(Abstract)

The focus of this paper is the concept of the frontier as a three-fold model, incorporating aspects of locality, spirit and language. The paper describes modern visions of the frontier myth based on the data obtained from big data resources, putting forward the idea that all three dimensions can be considered as multi-faceted units in transition. The primary stress of the article lies within the domain of the spiritual frontiers of a nation, arguing that geographical frontiers do not necessarily coincide with the spiritual edges of a nation. The Russian spiritual frontier of the Urals region is set against the background of the German

Natalya Zavyalova

Schwarzwald (Black Forest) and the North American “Wild West” frontiers within the time span of the mid-nineteenth to end of the twentieth century. The author builds a linguistic taxonomy of the concept of “frontier” in German, Russian and English based upon the methodologies of linguistic philosophy. The paper is mainly based on ethnographic descriptions and linguistic data analysis. The ultimate conclusion of the article is the observation that the German linguistic representations of the concept of “frontier” are predominately based on technical and practical applications in such branches of science as thermodynamics and the mathematical field of topology. Meanwhile, the German Schwarzwald frontier myth is treated as an imaginary linear border between the actual world and the world of spirits. However, Russian and North American concepts of “frontier” are to a great extent culturally bound and present an area, rather than a linear representation. The article is a point of interest for both theoretical and practical applications. Theoretically speaking, the research offers new directions of exploring frontiers, based on linguistic data, obtained from online linguistic corpora. Practically speaking, the author describes new approaches to frontier identification which may be useful in the tourism industry.

Bibliographical Abbreviations


Lee et al. 2015 - Changjun Lee, Dachho Lee, Junseok Hwang, Platform Openness and the Productivity of Content Providers: A Meta-Frontier Analysis, in TP, 39, August 2015, 7, p. 553-562.


Spiritual Frontiers: The Russian Frontier Myth of the Urals Region


Turner 1920

Zavyalova 2014

Keywords: big data, frontier myth, linguistic turn, culture, spiritual frontier.
<table>
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<th>Abreviere</th>
<th>Descriere</th>
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<tr>
<td>AÉ</td>
<td>Archaeologiai Értesítő a Magyar régészeti, művésztörténeti és éremtani társulat tudományos folyóirata. Budapest.</td>
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<td>AIIAI/AIIX</td>
<td>Anuarul Institutului de Istorie și Arheologie „A. D. Xenopol” Iași. (din 1990 Anuarul Institutului de Istorie „A. D. Xenopol” Iași).</td>
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<td>AIIN</td>
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<td>AISC</td>
<td>Anuarul Institutului de Studii Clasice. Cluj.</td>
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<td>AM</td>
<td>Arheologia Moldovei. Institutul de Istorie și Arheologie „A. D. Xenopol” Iași.</td>
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<td>AMZ</td>
<td>Arheološki muzej u Zagrebu. Zagreb.</td>
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<td>AnB</td>
<td>Analele Banatului (serie nouă). Timișoara.</td>
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<tr>
<td>ArchKözl</td>
<td>Archaeologiai Közlemények. Pesten.</td>
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Lista abrevierilor

ArhMold - Arheologia Moldovei. Institutul de Istorie și Arheologie „A. D. Xenopol” Iași.
ASS - Asian Social Science. Canadian Centre of Science and Education. Toronto.
Astra Salvensis - Astra Salvensis. Cercul Salva al ASTRA. Salva.
AUASH - Annales Universitatis Apulensis. Series Historica. Universitatea „1 Decembrie 1918” din Alba Iulia.
BCȘS - Buletinul Cercurilor Științifice Studențești. Universitatea „1 Decembrie 1918” din Alba Iulia.
BG - Bylye Gody. Sochi State University. Sochi.
BMS - Bibliotheca Musei Sabesiensis. Muzeul Municipal „Ioan Raica” Sebeș.
Caietele CIVA - Caietele CIVA. Asociația „Cercul de Istorie Veche și Arheologie” Alba Iulia.
CArh - Cercetări arheologice. București.
Carpica - Carpica. Complexul Muzeal „Iulian Antonescu” Bacău.
CH - Church History. Cambridge University Press. Cambridge.
ComŞtMediaş - Comunicări Științifice. Mediaș.
CPF - Cahiers des Portes de Fer. Beograd.
Danubius - Danubius. Muzeul de Istorie Galați.
<table>
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<td>Forschungen zur Volks- und Landeskunde. Sibiu.</td>
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<td>Îndrumător pastoral</td>
<td>Îndrumător pastoral. Episcopia Ortodoxă Română de Alba Iulia.</td>
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<td>JBSM</td>
<td>Jahrbuch des Burzenländer Sächsischen Museums. Kronstadt (Braşov).</td>
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<td>JeKO</td>
<td>Izdatelskiy Dom ECO. Novosibirsk.</td>
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<td>Abreviere</td>
<td>Titlu enunțat</td>
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<td>Medieval Archaeology. Society for Medieval Archaeology. London.</td>
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<td>Niva. Petrograd.</td>
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<td>Pontica</td>
<td>Pontica. Muzeul de Istorie Națională și Arheologie Constanța.</td>
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<td>Porțile Cetății</td>
<td>Porțile Cetății. Sebeș.</td>
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<td>PUM</td>
<td>Programm des evangelischen Unter-Gymnasium A. B. in Mühlbach. Sebeș.</td>
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<td>RGI</td>
<td>Revista generală a învățământului. București.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abreviere</td>
<td>Titlu complet</td>
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<td>RIR</td>
<td>Revista istorică română. Institutul de Istorie Naţională din Bucureşti.</td>
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<td>RJTP</td>
<td>Regional'naja jekonomika: Teorija i praktika. Finansy i Kredit. Moskva.</td>
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<td>RSM</td>
<td>Rossiya i sovremennyj mir. Institut nauchnoj informacii po obshhestvennym naukam Rossijskoj akademii nauk. Moskva.</td>
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<tr>
<td>SAA</td>
<td>Studia Antiqua et Archaeologica. Universitatea „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” Iaşi.</td>
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<tr>
<td>SAI</td>
<td>Studii și articole de istorie. Societatea de Științe Istorice și Filologice a RPR. București.</td>
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<tr>
<td>SCIM</td>
<td>Studii și cercetări de istorie medie. București.</td>
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<td>SCIV(A)</td>
<td>Studii și cercetări de istorie veche. București (din 1974, Studii și cercetări de istorie veche și arheologie).</td>
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<td>Studii și materiale de istorie modernă. Institutul de Istorie „Nicolae Iorga” București.</td>
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<td>SMK</td>
<td>Somogyi Múzeumok Közleményei. A Somogyi Megyei Múzeumok.</td>
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